Narrative Method of Practice Increases Curiosity and Exploration, Psychological Capital, and Personal Growth Leading to Career Clarity: A Retrospective Outcome Study

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Abstract

The paradigm in career counselling is shifting from traditional matching assessments to narrative methods. Storytelling approaches, life design principles, and evidence-based methods of practice are integrating theory into practical tools that career professionals want to use and can easily learn. Evidence of effectiveness of such methods are key to their being implemented, and broad career management variables beyond employment status need to be identified. The retrospective outcome study of one such method reported here explored variables of hope, optimism, resilience, self-efficacy, collectively psychological capital, personal growth, and curiosity and exploration. Participants (N=68) were clients of a busy career management social enterprise. Analyses revealed statistically significant increases in all six career management variables, and identified key correlations with person-job fit, career clarity, and employment status. These results make a case for the continued adoption of narrative methods, and move this particular method into the realm of evidence-based practice.

Narrative and storytelling-based approaches to coaching, counselling, and advising are gaining more credence in the career management field, including post-secondary career centres, government-funded organizations, and private practices. In order to understand why these narrative-based techniques are proving effective, we must explore how they are employed by career professionals to support clients in identifying key insights and making desired changes. The purpose of this article is to provide an overview of one such narrative approach – the CareerCycles Narrative Method of Practice (Franklin, 2014, Zikic & Franklin, 2010) – and to share results of an outcome study that measured the effect this approach had on attributes such as hope, confidence, curiosity and exploration, defined in this study as "broad career management variables."

Review of Literature

By taking these variables into account, the career management field is undergoing a shift toward a more personalized, holistic approach to understanding and supporting clients. Moving beyond a traditional approach rooted in job matching, narrative approaches including those incorporating elements of positive psychology, are gaining recognition among career professionals and scholars alike (e.g., Cochran, 1997; Franklin, 2014; Savickas, 2012; Stebleton, 2010). From a practitioner perspective, a paradigm shift has taken place, which incorporates a life design paradigm (Savickas, 2012) inclusive of narrative and emergent approaches to working with clients and building on traditional vocational guidance and career education. Although traditional job matching models have provided valuable learning about the importance of clearly defined career plans and the development of marketable skills, the narrative method goes one step further, highlighting the complexity of individuals' lives and their rapidly changing environments.

In a 'VUCA' world of work characterized by volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity, (Bennett & Lemoine, 2014), it no longer makes sense for a career counselling process to result in a list of occupations. Individuals need tools and to understand their personal attributes to navigate a VUCA world. A suite of tools are described in this article. In using such tools, the central question for the authors was, 'what personal attributes of an individual, which when strengthened, will meaningfully contribute to that individual's ability to manage their careers in a VUCA world?' The retrospective outcome study presented in this article reflects the authors' belief that these personal attributes include hope, confidence, optimism, resilience, curiosity and exploration, and personal growth.

Distinct from the growth of the narrative-based technique, research has also begun to emerge in the areas of non-conscious decision-making processes (e.g., Haidt, 2006; Krieshok, Black & McKay, 2009). From the authors' experiences of training career professionals, client debriefings, and one-on-one client interviews, it is fair to suggest that a significant number of clients seeking career management support draw on non-conscious processes to make ca-

reer decisions (Krieshok et al., 2009). Indeed, many clients have used terms such as 'fluke', 'fell into it', and 'luck' to describe their career experiences (Zikic & Franklin, 2010), and it is in light of this seemingly unconscious reality that career professionals must find methods of effective client support.

In response to the abundance of these chaotic career stories, how can career professionals be most helpful to their clients? Career professionals can listen to their clients' stories in new ways. Storytelling in this way has three purposes: one, it can draw out and emphasize clients' strengths, desires, natural interests and other elements; two, it nudges clients toward experiencing more positive affect about their own stories; and three, it generates promising career and life possibilities (Franklin, Feller & Yanar, in press). Together, these three purposes may engage clients' curiosity and willingness to explore possibilities.

Better than handing a client a job title, experienced career professionals instinctively know they have been truly helpful when clients are excited to explore possibilities such that they practically run out of the session with hope, optimism, and curiosity. Career counselling practice like this aligns with scholarly theory of this new paradigm, including notions of occupational engagement (Krieshok et al., 2009), life design (Savickas, 2012), and other narrative approaches which collectively have their own strengths and weaknesses (Stebleton, 2010).

For over 10 years, scholars have been showing career professionals how they should take into account chaos theory and emergence (Bright & Pryor, 2005; Bloch, 2005), narrative methods (Brott, 2001; Cochran, 1997), and, happenstance (Mitchell, Levin, & Krumboltz, 1999). From a practitioner's

perspective, however, three problems limit the application and implementation of scholars' recommendations. First, there is a weak link in career development communities around North America between scholarly research on the one hand, and practitioners on the other, in part because, unlike fields in which evidence guides practice (i.e. medicine), until recently there was little pressure on the career management field to engage in evidence-based practice. Fortunately, new research and practice is emerging on transforming the culture of evaluation in career and employment services (Hiebert & Magnusson, 2014). Second, many career management ideas and interventions spring from a researcher's perspective and thus are not developed into a readily applicable method of practice. Consequently, career management has not been a field known for numerous and effective links between theory and practice.

Third, many career professionals rely on 'safe' methods to which they have become inured, especially regarding familiar and traditional assessments to help clients clarify career direction, such as the Strong Interest Inventory. In their pan-Canadian mapping study of the career development sector, Bezanson, O'Reilly, and Magnusson (2009) found that there is a very limited training and development culture within the career development sector, and that career professionals are hungry for new tools and training to bring to life approaches that emphasize narrative, storytelling, positive psychology, constructivism, hope (Niles, Amundson, & Neault, 2011), cultural sensitivity (Arthur & Collins, 2011), and technology to automate routine aspects of the guidance process (Hooley, Hutchinson & Watts, 2011).

In this article the authors acknowledge the paradigm shift to-

ward narrative and emergent methods has already occurred (Savickas, 2012, Stebelton, 2010) and present a retrospective outcome study of an existing narrative approach that incorporates new paradigms and theories, namely the CareerCycles method of practice (Zikic & Franklin, 2010), a real-world, practitioner-tested framework. To support the real-world applicability of the CareerCycles framework are the 3500-plus individual clients who have experienced this method of practice served by the CareerCycles team of career professionals, and to date over 275 career professionals who have been trained and licenced in its readily implemented and practical tools.

The CareerCycles Narrative Method of Practice in Brief

To understand the results of the retrospective outcome study, we provide a brief overview of the CareerCycles framework and some of the method's key tools and interventions. The CareerCycles framework (Franklin, 2014, Zikic & Franklin, 2010) comprises five components: 1) the method of practice with over 40 documented interventions; 2) working tools and client handouts; 3) a training program; 4) a career definition; 5) a graphical model. The model illustrated in Figure 1 graphically depicts the method of practice. This figure shows two main processes: 'career and life clarification,' and 'intentional exploration.' Each intervention within the two main processes include a description as to when to use it, expected outcomes, career practitioner actions, and resources. Using a consistent method of practice is also in alignment with the Canadian Standards and Guidelines for Career Development Practitioners; its career counselling area of specialization identifies a competency to "develop

Figure 1. Becoming Empowered in Your Career and Life Choices
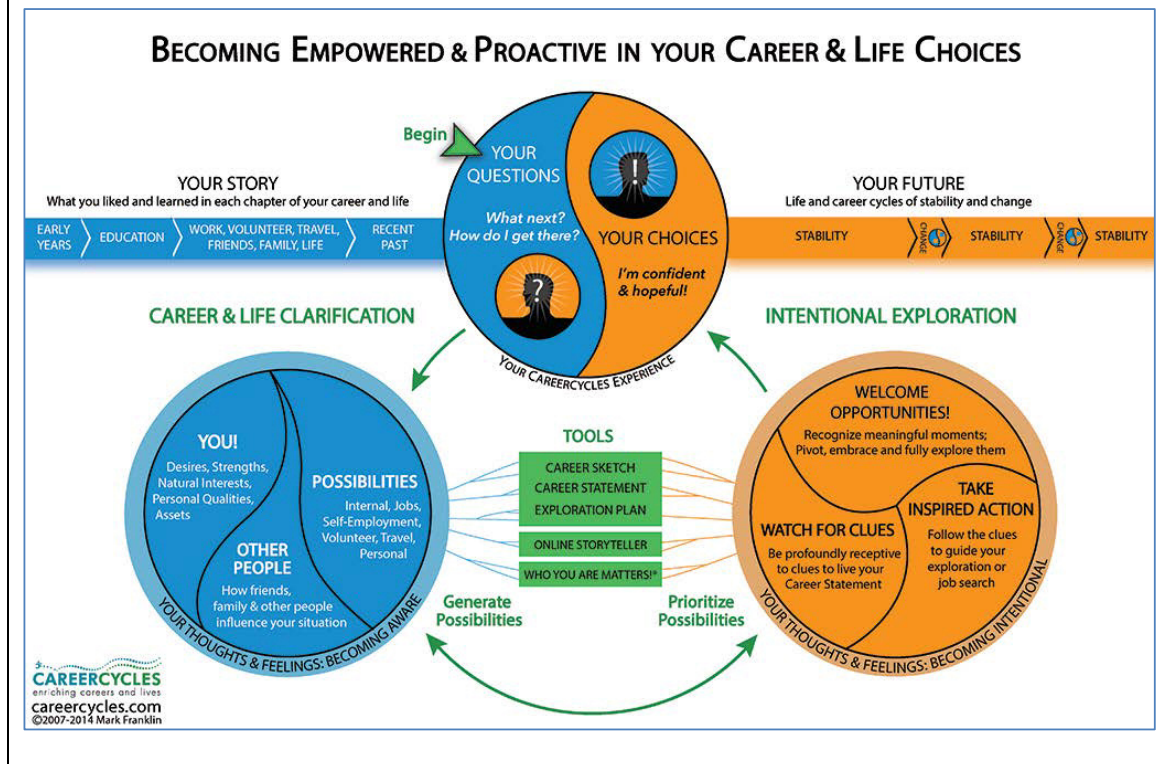
a method of practice that is grounded in established or recognized ideas" (National Steering Committee for Career Development Guidelines and Standards, 2012, Competency S3.2.1).

Client and career professionals begin by collaboratively drafting a key career question, for example, "What should I do now in my career?" or "How do I create my future taking into account my whole life?" In the career and life clarification process, the career professional elicits the client's story and from it collaboratively gathers and organizes the relevant elements into a working document called a Career Sketch.

The approach involves looking at the client's life in narrative chapters, for example, early years, high school, college or university, internship, jobs, periods of unemployment, volunteering, extended travel, and recent past. Emphasis on early years may utilize clients' early recollections (Adler, 1964), as a projective technique. The career profes-

sional elicits the client's stories, probing and asking specific question, and using the client's narrative content. Importantly, this reflective task is done interactively and in full view of the client. This approach invites the client into new ways of making meaning from their experiences, drawing on the constructivist perspective of Peavy (1992), and in alignment with Savickas (2012), whose life design views clients as *authors* who may be characterized by autobiographical *stories* and who may be helped to *reflect* on life *themes* with which to construct their careers. An online storytelling application has also been developed, allowing the client to construct a timeline of their career and life stories, and then the application prompts the user with context-sensitive questions about each story, and the user's brief responses are added automatically to their interactive Career Sketch.

The client's relevant information builds from Bridges' (1998) D.A.T.A. (desires, abilities, tempera-

ment, assets), which is expanded in the CareerCycles method of practice to include desires, strengths, natural interests, personal qualities, assets, influences of other people, possibilities the client is curious about, and the client's named thoughts, feelings and insights. Using this narrative information, a Career Sketch is developed collaboratively, to gather and organize the client's important information and to generate new career and life possibilities. At its core this is a counselling process with career professionals demonstrating empathy, genuineness and unconditional positive regard, hallmarks of Rogers' (1951) client-centered therapy.

After the Career Sketch is completed, the client is encouraged to draft a personal Career Statement from the most important content of the Career Sketch. Clients who have a written Career Statement are then encouraged by the career professional to read it aloud in session. In many cases this is the first experience a client has had of articulating

for themselves in the presence of another, their most important truths, and in so doing begin to own their Career Statement.

Clients are encouraged to imagine how they would feel if they were to "live their Career Statement," in other words, if their desires were realized, their strengths were utilized, and so on. This approach aims to trigger the "broaden and build phenomenon" (Fredrickson, 2001), drawing on a key finding from the field of positive psychology—when a client feels good, say, about the possibility that their Career Statement will come to pass, they are able to "broaden" the number of career possibilities and "build" on their internal resources such as confidence, hope, optimism and resilience.

Immediately after the unique and shared experience of the client's having read aloud their Career Statement, the career professional introduces the second CareerCycles process of Intentional Exploration. Using the Exploration Plan tool for each priority possibility career professionals and clients interactively build an Exploration Plan using the following questions: 1) What clues have you been noticing about this possibility? 2) Given all these clues, what inspired actions do you want to take now? 3) What requirements, such as a degree, certification on skill, might you need to acquire in order to do this possibility?

In an Exploration Plan, after listing as many "inspired actions" that a client wishes to do, clients and careers professional collaboratively identify actions the client wishes to take to explore career possibilities, without the need for a career decision and with the expectation that good things will happen and unnamed possibilities may emerge. This is described in the CareerCycles model as 'welcome opportuni-ties,' aligning with the spirit of planned happenstance (Mitchell et al., 1999).

Reflecting upon the possible reasons why clients are more likely to want to take action within this framework, the authors sought validated measures aligned with personal attributes such as hope and 'curiosity and exploration', which may form a new basis for measuring the effectiveness of career management interventions.

The Search for Broader Career Management Outcomes Using Existing Validated Scales

Aligned with the paradigm shift mentioned earlier, there needs to be an exploration of new and relevant measures beyond simply employment status. Employment status itself, that is, 'did the client get a new job?', is important and was included in the outcome study, however, there is no established link between employment status and employment quality (Kinicki, Prussia, & McKee-Ryan, 2000; Wanberg, Kanfer, & Rotundo, 1999; Werbel, 2000).

Over a period of approximately two years, through literature search and informal conversations with career professionals, appropriate outcome measures were explored to align with the experience of the new paradigm including narrative approaches, and that would lead to broader career management outcomes. The six career management outcome measures chosen were hope, optimism, resilience, self-efficacy, collectively psychological capital, personal growth, and curiosity and exploration. Each of these measures and their importance toward building a model for broader career management outcomes are expanded upon below.

Hope is defined as the perceived capability to derive pathways to desired goals, and motivate oneself via agency thinking to use those pathways (Snyder, 2002). Research shows that individuals who are hopeful, in this sense, are deemed to be better positioned to attain their goals as they have the capacity to both identify prospective routes and surmount barriers to goal attainment (Snyder et al.,1991; Snyder, 2002). Hope is important as a career management measure because when individuals have higher levels of hope they believe they can change their careers and can see pathways to make change.

A common connotation for optimism is having a positive outlook of the future. Individuals considering career change benefit from positive thoughts and beliefs about their future, and these cognitions make it easier to have hope and to take inspired action. In the Career-Cycles method of practice clients are encouraged to "jump in the sand box" and explore many possibilities from a position of strength instead of focusing on just one job or possibility.

High self-efficacy job seekers believe they possess the right skills and abilities to perform well in future jobs and are confident of being re-employed (Lim & Leng Loo, 2003). This belief and its association with the personal attribute of confidence provided a rationale for its inclusion in the outcomes study. In the CareerCycles method of practice, stories remind clients of their strengths, times when they experienced flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1992), and the positive affect associated with using those strengths. This in turn leads to an increase in confidence to explore alternative career possibilities. In contrast, when people do not feel confident, their fears and apprehensions can stifle exploration. Within CareerCycles, writing the Career Statement aims to start to build a client's confidence.

More than simply overcoming adversity, resilience enables individuals to 'bounce back' following a challenge and rebound with improved work performance (Luthans, Avey, Avolio, Norman & Combs, 2006). Zikic and Klehe (2006), in a study of people who lost their jobs, found positive outcomes of job loss by focusing on specific career adaptability activities of people in career transition. They called job loss "a blessing in disguise" suggesting recovery from a job loss set-back and the related erosion of self-identity that can accompany job loss. Using a Career Statement inoculates one against this diminished self-identity when one career possibility does not work out.

One such measure that incorporates these four concepts is "psychological capital" (PsyCap) (Luthans et al., 2006). As a validated measure, psychological capital incorporates hope, self-efficacy, resilience and optimism (often abbreviated as HERO). PsyCap has also been linked to job satisfaction (Cheung, Tang & Tang, 2011), employment status (Cole, Daly & Mak, 2009) and community involvement and negatively related to organizational cynicism, intentions to quit, and counterproductive workplace behaviors (Avey, Luthans & Youssef, 2010).

In order to conceptually address the description of PsyCap being compared to a 'state-like' entity (Avey et al., 2010), a continuum that is divided into the poles of state and trait has been suggested. This continuum positions PsyCap as the middle ground, hence the 'state-like' label (Luthans & Youssef, 2007). As such, PsyCap is seen to be distinct from extremely stable traits (e.g., intelligence; Schmidt & Hunter, 2000) and moderately stable traits (e.g., The Big Five personality traits, Barrick & Mount, 1991; Core Self Evaluations, Judge & Bono, 2001);

instead being understood as more flexible and having a greater degree of stability over time (Luthans, Avolio, Avey, & Norman, 2007).

Beyond the measures contained in psychological capital, it was important for this outcome study to consider curiosity and its impact on a client's willingness to explore possibilities that they are curious about. Curiosity is defined as a positive emotional-motivational system associated with the recognition, pursuit, and self-regulation of novel and challenging opportunities (Kashdan, Rose, & Fincham 2004). A curious personality is linked to tolerance of anxiety and uncertainty, unconventional thinking, and a non-defensive, non-critical attitude (Kashdan, Sherman, Yarbro & Funder, 2013) and is accompanied by increased engagement with the world. In the CareerCycles method of practice, as a client's stories are debriefed, career professionals and clients are engaged in generating possibilities that the client is curious about, from an exploratory perspective.

The final career management variable addressed, personal growth initiative, refers to the process or mechanisms of personal growth, rather than the specific content or outcomes of these efforts to change (Robitschek, 1998). In career clarification and exploration, people need to initiate change and become more proactive. In particular, in the CareerCycles Intentional Exploration process, the meaning of this process is knowing what one wants and having the mindset to achieve it. This mindset, 'I can take charge and make change,' signals the process of personal growth. Because the CareerCycles method of practice broadens clients' views of career management from 'career equals job' to a lifelong process of growth, the authors wanted an action-oriented personal growth measure,

where personal growth initiative is a skill set used to work through the process of working towards self-change (Robitschek et al., 2012).

The CareerCycles narrative framework is an example of a newer post-modern, constructivist, and narrative paradigm for career counselling. In the outcome study, the authors tested whether the CareerCycles narrative framework led to these broader career management outcomes.

In particular, the outcome study questions were:

1. Does the CareerCycles method of practice increases clients' Psychological Capital, Personal Growth Initiative, and Curiosity and Exploration?
2. Are these measures related with better career outcomes?
3. If so, how do clients' stories explain these relationships?
4. Finally, we wanted to know, how do these variables 'show up' in clients' stories?

Method

Psychological capital (optimism, hope, resilience, self-efficacy), curiosity and exploration, personal growth initiative, and career outcomes (employment status, person-job fit, and overall career and life satisfaction) were assessed via an online survey sent out to past CareerCycles clients. In addition to the online survey, one-on-one interviews with seven survey participants from different professional backgrounds were conducted (e.g., finance, management, social sciences, engineer, human resources) in order to gain a deeper understanding of their career experiences and perceptions about the CareerCycles program. Interviews were approximately one hour long and focused on two broad areas: (a) participants' overall experiences with

CareerCycles narrative framework and (b) how this narrative framework processes, tools, and exercises helped them moving forward in their career. The general guidelines of thematic analysis offered by Braun and Clarke (2006) were used for finding common patterns within the interviews. Qualitative analysis of the interview data was used to gain an in-depth understanding of survey results and will be discussed in relation to survey results.

Participants

Sixty-eight past clients from various educational and professional backgrounds responded to the online survey. The condition for selecting participants was such that they had to complete at least four sessions with a CareerCycles associate. Females represented 70% of the participants and 55% of the participants were between ages 25-44. In terms of education and employment, 81% had at least an undergraduate degree, and 64.5% were employed when they started their first session. 71% of the participants reported that they completed the program within 2 years of the survey with an average of 5 sessions. There were no significant differences in the study variables among different demographic groups.

Measures

In order to assess the changes in psychological capital, curiosity and exploration, and personal growth initiative, participants were asked to reflect on how they think, feel, and behave in relation to their career and life at the time of the survey as well as how they thought, felt, and behaved before they started the CareerCycles program, in other words, a post-pre or retrospective assessment (Hiebert & Magnusson, 2014). At the time of the survey, par-

ticipants had completed the program and the survey asked them to reflect on their experiences.

Psychological Capital (self-efficacy, optimism, hope, and resiliency) was assessed by a 24-item measure that was originally developed by Luthans and colleagues (Luthans et al., 2007) to measure the psychological capital of employees in organizations. The items were adapted, with permission from the author, to this client sample (e.g., the word "work" was replaced with "career and life"). Sample items were "I feel confident analyzing a long-term problem to find a solution," "I'm optimistic about what will happen to me in the future as it pertains to my career and life." *Curiosity and Exploration* was assessed by a 10-item measure developed by Kashdan and colleagues (Kashdan et al., 2009). Sample items included "I actively seek as much information as I can in new situations," and "Everywhere I go, I am out looking for new things or experiences." *Personal Growth Initiative* was assessed by a nine-item measure developed by Robitschek (1998). Sample items were "If I want to change something in my life, I initiate the transition process," and "I know what I need to do to get started toward reaching my goals."

We also assessed participants' *clarity about the initial career and life question* by first asking participants to briefly describe the career and life question they had when starting the CareerCycles Program. Participants were then asked to describe how they felt about this issue at the time of the survey and on a 5-point scale (1 = *not at all*, 5 = *a great deal*) indicate the extent to which they feel clarity about the career and life question or issue that they brought to their first session. *Career and life satisfaction*, consistent with Wanberg, Kanfer, and Banas (2000), was assessed with an

item that asked participants to indicate their satisfaction with their career and life on 5-point scale (1 = *not at all*, 5 = *to a large extent*). Participants were asked to indicate their *current employment status* by checking the most appropriate item from the following list: employed - full-time, employed - part-time, not employed - looking for work, not looking for work, self-employed, interning. *Person-Job Fit* was assessed by a four-item measure adapted from Lauver and Kristof-Brown (2001). Participants were asked the extent to which they see fit with their jobs in terms of their skills (e.g., "My knowledge and skills match the requirement of the job,") and personality (e.g., "My job is a good match for me").

Results

Table 1 below shows the means, standard deviations, correlations, and internal reliability of all study variables.

Paired-samples t-tests were conducted to assess the differences in participants' attributes after they completed the CareerCycles program. There was a significant increase in psychological capital, personal growth initiative, and curiosity and exploration after experiencing the CareerCycles narrative method of practice (Table 2). Participants felt higher self-efficacy, hope, resilience, and optimism about their career and life, expressed more curiosity about exploring opportunities, and took more initiative in their personal growth.

The narratives of the interview participants echoed this positive change in psychological capital through the process of writing and reflecting on the Career Statement. One of the participants explained how the Career and Life Clarification process leading up to writing her Career Statement helped her feel

Table 1

Means, Standard Deviations, Correlation Coefficients, and Reliabilities of Main Study Variables

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
1.Self-efficacy	4.79	.74	(.80)													
2.Hope	4.36	.94	.55**	(.86)												
3.Optimism	4.39	.85	.20	.43**	(.85)											
4.Resilience	4.60	.74	.43**	.54**	.29	(.76)										
5.Psychological Capital	4.54	.66	.78**	.89**	.51**	.74**	(.91)									
6. Personal Growth Initiative	4.44	.83	.61**	.68**	.43**	.41**	.73**	(.88)								
7. Curiosity and Exploration	3.26	.80	.56**	.59**	.23	.46**	.60**	.44**	(.84)							
8. Career and Life Clarity	2.40	.63	.47**	.33*	.23	.14	.46**	.53**	.32*	(n.a.)						
9. Career and Life Satisfaction	3.36	1.15	.43**	.56**	.25	.57**	.62**	.59**	.21	.47**	(n.a.)					
10. Person-job fit	3.48	1.09	.45*	.45*	.23	.63**	.58**	.42*	.21	.27	.82**	(.85)				
11. Employment Status (0=employed, 1=unemployed)	.21	.41	-.24	-.27	.10	-.35*	-.29	-.16	-.25	.082	n.a	n.a.				
12. Age	3.11	1.11	.22	.10	.21	.22	.23	.00	.05	-.21	.23	.25	-.24			
13. Gender (0=female, 1=male)	.25	.43	.14	.17	.12	.14	.18	.04	-.08	.03	.10	.15	.08	.07		
14. Education	4.52	1.79	-.23	-.19	-.10	-.34*	-.21	-.14	-.27	.00	-.38	-.43	.22	-.19	-.11	

Table 2

Paired-Sample t-tests

Study Variables	Before CC		After CC			95% CI for Mean Difference			
	M	SD	M	SD	n		r	t	df
Self-Efficacy	3.91	.87	4.79	.74	48	-1.12, -.63	.47*	-7.31*	47
Hope	3.39	.84	4.36	.94	47	-1.21, -.70	.55*	-7.57*	45
Optimism	3.75	1.04	4.39	.85	44	-.87, -.39	.66*	-5.28	43
Resilience	4.12	.86	4.60	.74	45	-.70, -.24	.55*	-4.18	44
Psychological Capital	3.79	.71	4.54	.66	43	-.96, -.52	.49*	-6.77	40
Pers. Growth Initiative	3.48	.99	4.44	.80	52	-1.27, -.74	.49*	-7.67	48
Curiosity & Exploration	2.98	.65	3.26	.80	50	-.39, -.16	.80*	-4.83	49

more confident and optimistic about her career exploration:

"It might be a certain sense of just like calmness and self-confidence and a certain amount of really kind of positive introspection to better articulate what you're good at and what you really want to achieve, so it's kind of related to their whole Career Statement process. To really make you feel positive about what you have to offer and not just constantly feel afraid and constantly reactive because the job market is bad and you feel kind of defensive and scared about this."

Another participant expressed how the CareerCycles experience helped her feel more hopeful about career opportunities and seek opportunities to grow:

"Well, I think that it just allowed me to have more hope and kind of a broader mindset about what the opportunities for me are. I still am in the job that I was in when I started CareerCycles and I think one of the things that I did discover was that there may be opportunity to manipulate the current position that I'm in right now, in order to give me more of the things that I'm looking for…I got the sense that there were more opportunities out there than I had really imagined."

The two client quotes above reflect clients' experiences in both the narrative career and life clarification process, as well as the more active intentional exploration process of CareerCycles. When

asked to reflect on the initial career and life question they brought to their first session and how they feel about this question at the time of the survey, 76% of the participants indicated that they gained somewhat to a great deal of clarity about their initial life and career question (M = 3.14, SD = 1.389).

Career and life clarity was positively related to psychological capital (r = .46, p < .05), personal growth initiative (r = .53, p < .05), and curiosity and exploration (r =.32, p < .05) (Table 1). Individuals with higher levels of psychological capital who take initiative for their personal growth and explore career opportunities had higher clarity about their initial life and career question. Field Research is a tool frequently used in the Intentional Exploration process to guide clients in how to set up and conduct an intentional conversation with someone familiar with one of the client's priority possibilities. One of the participants, a finance professional who was looking to change careers when she started the CareerCycles program, shared that conducting field research helped her gain more clarity about her interests and skills and eventually deciding to pursue a career in graphic design. Another participant, an experienced manager in the service sector, shared in the interview that focusing on his personal growth and paying attention to his passions and what makes him feel excited helped him became clear about getting more education in horticulture.

And, for another participant, writing her Career Statement helped her to pay more attention to the activities and skills she found meaningful, which led to more clarity about the next steps in her career:

"I think the biggest help is the awareness piece, so, the fact that I am, I have a better sense of why it is I was doing the things that I was doing in my work situation and in my volunteer situation. And I think the clarity around that allowed me to make, you know, when the opportunities come up within my current job to accept a project or pursue some line of work I can make sure that it's sort of focused either within the area of my interest or when I go and if I decide to move on from this position that I have a bit more of a focus to understand where it is I want to go."

Psychological capital (r = .62, p < .05) and personal growth initiative (r = .59, p < .05) were positively related to overall career and life satisfaction (Table 1). Individuals with higher levels of psychological capital who take initiative for their personal growth expressed more satisfaction with their careers and lives (Luthans et al., 2007).

In terms of employment change results from the outcome study, 80% of participants indicated that they were employed in some form at the time of the survey, representing a 15.5% increase in employment rates compared to employment status when they were CareerCycles clients. There was a significant difference in resiliency scores between employed (M = 4.74, SD = .77) and unemployed clients (M = 4.09 , SD = .36), t[42] = 8.58, p < .05, with clients who were employed reporting higher resiliency scores.

Person-job fit was positively related to higher psychological capital (r =.58, p < .05) and personal growth initiative (r = .42, p < .05). Individuals who had higher psychological capital and who committed themselves to personal growth also reported higher fit between their jobs and their skills and personality. One participant, a social scientist, said that as a result of the CareerCycles experience, she started looking at her current job within the context of her long term career aspirations and how this job helps her move towards that direction:

"I think, not necessarily because I've achieved that at the moment but I'm quite aware of the fact that this job that I have just taken is probably not the job that I'd like to be in five years time but I think that I was able to sort of reconcile and figure out that definitely there's enough in the job that interests me that I could use the skills….I'm trying to think about how I can make sure that time I have for research each week in this new post gets used effectively so I see this job very much as a stepping stone."

Discussion and Implications for Practitioners

From the perspective of a busy career counselling practice, clients often do not know what to expect when they seek career services when faced with a career problem or crisis. Contrast this scenario with an individual seeking dental services—people know what to expect at a dentist's office. Because they don't know what to expect from career counselling, it is up to career professionals to be able to clearly explain their method of practice and the results a client can expect.

Prior to conducting the outcome study described in this article, the client service staff at CareerCycles responded to prospective client questions such as, 'What do you do?' based on the consistent method of practice described above. A more difficult question was, 'What results can I expect? Do you get me a job?' This second line of questioning demonstrates the confusion on the part of prospective career clients among the services and roles of career counsellors and recruiters/job

developers. If career professionals do not 'get you a job' then what results can the prospective client expect? Based on the results of this study, a career professional using the CareerCycles method can respond confidently about their method of practice. In response to a prospective client's questions about results, a career professional using the CareerCycles method of practice could say, 'our clients report higher hope, confidence, optimism and resilience, after our program and these results are correlated with person-job fit, and career and life satisfaction'.

The findings of this outcome study support the trend in career counselling toward 'narrative' and 'storytelling' methods. These narrative and emergent approaches, distinct from traditional vocational guidance and career education, address the complexity of human lives and the rapidly changing worlds of work.

In particular, the way CareerCycles clients interviewed in this outcome study said that they used their Career Statement to direct their intentional exploration aligns with the emergent quality of career decision-making, very unlike the matchmaking approach of traditional assessments. Clients can allow career possibilities to emerge from their exploration if and only if they actually explore something. Test-and-tell approaches rely on a rational approach to career choice making, and yet clients draw abundantly on non-conscious processes to make career decisions (Krieshok et al., 2009). Funded with self-knowledge that has emerged from coralling elements from their stories, and with higher levels of psychological capital and increased curiosity and exploration, clients engage in career exploration that empowers them, as occurred with clients in this outcome study.

Implications for Practice

The implications for career professionals are more broadly stated to allow the new narrative and life design paradigms to flow into their practices. Career professionals tend to hang onto existing tools to which they have become accustomed, therefore a transition period during which these existing tools will be used alongside new approaches is recommended.

More specifically, the implications for career professionals and practitioners are to develop or get trained in an existing narrative method of practice that bridges theory with practice. This will allow them to become more consistent across clients, and increase consistency across different practitioners within career or employment centres. Using a consistent, narrative method of practice accrues many benefits to career professionals and administrators including: a) attract more clients and retain them; b) delivery consistent and consistently good service; c) make training and supervising easier; d) improve programming; e) allow for service evaluation and outcome study (Franklin, 2012).

Limitations and Further Research

The outcome study in this article presents a series of limitations. First, all data were collected at one point in time. Therefore, the direction of relationships between study variables cannot be determined, although, prior research and theory cited gave a logical understanding of the direction of the relationship between career management variables such as psychological capital and impact outcomes. Second, participants self-reported their experiences. Although this is a necessary approach given an interest in participants'

subjective career experiences, it would be valuable to collect information about these perceptions from different sources, such as participants' family and friends. Third, a post-then-pre methodology was adopted, also known as post-pre or retrospective assessment, in which participants were asked to answer questions about their attitudes and experiences retrospectively. Post-then-pre methods to identify self-reported behavioural and attitude changes can provide substantial evidence for program impact (Lam & Bengo, 2003; Pratt, McGuigan, & Katzev, 2000; Rockwell & Kohn, 1989).

However, there are limitations to the post-then-pre method including concerns about validity. Participants might assume that the program had the desired effect (implicit theory of change) and it is possible participants are enhancing the degree to which they have improved as a means of impression management (Nimon, Zigarmi & Allen, 2010).

Further, participants in this study were contacted in some cases up to two years after the program, which may result in memory effects over time (Nisbett & Wilson, 1977). To address validity concerns, future studies can track participant demographics allowing for the analysis of participant attrition. Alternatively, to address validity concerns a traditional pre/post design can be used.

Small sample size and representativeness of the sample are another limitations. Participants who volunteered to participate in the survey study may be unique from other past clients in terms of their motivation to find employment and advance their careers. Therefore, the voluntary aspect of the participation in the study poses a limitation on the generalization of the findings to reflect the experience of all clients.

A number of questions emerge from the experience of conducting this outcome study and its results: 1) Can the results of this outcome study be replicated in a longitudinal pre-post experimental design?, 2) How can the CareerCycles method of practice be integrated into other career service models?, and 3) What other career management interventions could be measured using the scales utilized in this outcome study?

First, further research could be conducted using a more robust experimental design, comparing the before and after experiences of clients who were provided career counselling using the CareerCycles narrative method of practice, with the before and after experiences of a control group. Opportunities for collaboration in this research exist with scholars working in colleges and universities where the CareerCycles narrative method of practice is in use, and with researchers examining methods and interventions to address the needs of the unemployed professionals.

Many career and employment centres, especially those that are funded by government, focus on reemployment measures. This limited focus shifts the emphasis of career professionals' work on a narrow set of job search interventions instead of broader career management outcomes discussed in this article. An area of further research could focus on the effect and results of integrating the CareerCycles method of practice into other career service models.

A third area for further research could look at other career management interventions that could be evaluated using the validated scales utilized in this outcome study. The personal attribute scales have generated considerable interest among career professionals at conference presentations. In-class career interventions, job-shadowing programs, internships and practica programs, and career and employment services at community employment centres may all benefit from measurement of personal attributes such as hope, optimism, confidence and resilience. Finally, two other interesting areas for further exploration and related research and practice are integrating research and data gather into online tools, and focusing on a single career counselling session.

Concluding Thoughts

As supported by literature and the findings of the study above, CareerCycles is an evidence-based method guided and informed by real practice. It utilizes over 40 fully documented interventions. The 275 helping professionals across Canada, the US and Europe trained and licensed to use it are enriching the careers of thousands of their clients from dozens of countries of origin. The narrative method has assisted those from postsecondary students to early-career professionals, and mid-career to adults approaching retirement.

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