

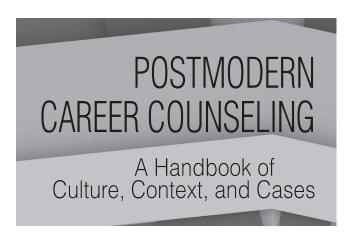
A Handbook of Culture, Context, and Cases

edited by
Louis A. Busacca and Mark C. Rehfuss



AMERICAN COUNSELING Association

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10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

American Counseling Association 6101 Stevenson Avenue, Suite 600 Alexandria, VA 22304

Associate Publisher Carolyn C. Baker
Digital and Print Development Editor Nancy Driver
Senior Production Manager Bonny E. Gaston
Copy Editor Kay Mikel

Cover and text design by Bonny E. Gaston
Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
[to come]

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Chapter 19

Using the One Life Tools Narrative Framework: From Clarification to Intentional Exploration With an East Asian Female

Mark Franklin and Rich Feller

Postmodern career interventions call for reexamination of the nature, structure, and practice of career counseling. Career interventions that move clients to further and more purposefully design their work and life roles are increasingly augmenting mechanistic and static approaches. Constructivist and narrative approaches (Savickas, 2012) that account for clients' personality and their socially derived meanings rely on highly engaged processes and tools. The One Life Tools/CareerCycles (OLTCC) framework and practices for career counseling, and tools such as the "Who You Are Matters!" game (Franklin, Feller, & Yanar, 2014) prove useful to diverse groups by integrating key elements of optimistic emotions in positive psychology (Frederickson, 2001), creating psychological capital (Luthans, Youssef & Avolio, 2007) and multicultural competency (Lee, 2012), facilitating and clarifying career and life stories, and initiating intentional exploration.

In this chapter, we explain the OLTCC framework and illustrate the use of face-to-face and digital interactions with a client named Angela to clarify and transform her career and life stories into inspired action. With her self-clarification comes a greater sense of possibility and motivation to engage in intentional exploration.

Changes in Careers Call for New Clarification Processes

Most people spend the majority of their waking hours doing something they consider to be a job, a career, or a calling, and career counseling has long been identified with one's job and engagement with paid work. The National Career Development Association (1997) defines career counseling as "the process of assisting individuals in the development of a life-career with focus on the definition of the worker role and how that role interacts with other life roles" (p. 1). Swanson (1995) sees it as is an "ongoing, face-to-face interaction between a counselor and client in which the focus is on work or career-related concerns" (p. 245). The importance of placing career issues within the broader context of individual development is enhanced by Franklin's (2014) definition of career: "The full expression of who you are and how you want to be in the world. And it keeps on expanding as it naturally goes through cycles of stability and change" (p. 456).

Dramatic changes in the employee–employer relationship, in work options, and in the learning, earning, and opportunity structures, which have occurred in response to technological innovation and globalization, make courageous career choices on the part of workers necessary (Feller & Whichard, 2005). Helping clients integrate life roles while designing a purposeful life requires a more holistic, diverse, and strengths-based conceptualization of career development (Gysbers, Heppner, & Johnston, 2014).

With a "proliferation of career counseling approaches underpinned by postmodern and constructivist philosophies" (McMahon, Watson, Chetty, & Hoelson, 2012, p. 127), theories of vocational personalities and work environments continue to hold value. This integration of efforts calls for examination and stimulation of "new ways of gathering client information as career counseling unfolds" (Gysbers et al., 2014, p. 3).

Narrative assessment offers an opportunity to fully engage clients by honoring their past and by building the psychological capital (Luthans, Youssef, & Avolio, 2007) necessary to navigate a life characterized by transitions. When clients go through the career and life clarification process (Zikic & Franklin, 2010), they generate hope, optimism, confidence, and resilience (Luthans, Avolio, et al., 2007), as well as curiosity and exploration (Kashdan, Rose, & Fincham, 2004), with evidence for this claim coming from a recent outcome study (Franklin, Yanar, & Feller, 2015). Collectively, this psychological capital (Luthans, Avolio, et al., 2007) ultimately leads to greater clarity and satisfaction with career and life choices. Angela's case study illustrates the use of the OLTCC narrative "method of practice" (a term drawn from the *Canadian Standards and Guidelines for Career Development Practitioners*, 2012) with an Asian female client.

Case of Angela

Background Information

The CareerCycles practice has been used with clients from more than 180 countries of origin, throughout the life span, from early to late career. Clients have been diverse in religious beliefs and first languages and have come from all points on the spectrum of gender identity and sexual orientation. In selecting "Angela" (her name and personal details have been changed) for this case study, we necessarily focus only on aspects of diversity that

have an impact on career development and management practice.

When Angela came for career counseling, she was a later career professional in her early 50s. She had professional career experiences largely in the financial services sector, with additional stints in media and education. Angela and her husband had immigrated to the United States in their 20s, having left their East Asian country of origin for better opportunities. Angela completed a multisession career counseling program.

Career Concern

Having reached a senior role at the financial institution where she worked, a change in leadership led to an amicable parting accompanied by a severance package that provided time to allow Angela to reimagine her career and life. She came to career counseling saying, "I have many plans, but no PLAN. What should I do next? I have a few ideas—should I choose one of them, or something new? And how will I make any plan actually happen?" Like many clients in transition, Angela experienced both positive and negative emotions. Although her work of the past few years had left her drained and bored, and the transition in which she found herself was worrisome, the prospect of change and the freedom it promised felt good. Asked to locate herself on a scale of 1 to 10, where 10 is feeling great about her career and life situation and 1 represents complete despair, Angela gave herself a 6 and said "freedom feels good!"

In the first session, Angela identified many possibilities for the next steps in her career and life. Among these were jobs with organizations that "do good" (such as an international agency or university), self-employment (such as a career in executive coaching), as well as some volunteer and lifelong learning possibilities.

Generating Optimism and Hope in First Session

Clients like Angela begin their career counseling and career education process by speaking to a counseling service manager in an interactive intake interview. The counseling service manager listens to the client's questions and concerns, then probes and draws the client out, usually in a phone conversation lasting 15 minutes. Clients often do not know what to expect when contacting a career counselor or career professional (we use these terms interchangeably), and there are many services provided by career professionals, so it is important to ensure the clients' questions are aligned with the appropriate services. The client service manager makes an initial judgment call about this alignment, provides an overview of the OLTCC narrative model, introduces the career professional who will work with the client, schedules a first session, and provides details of the conversation to the career counselor.

In the first session, the career professional answers any questions the client has, and then explains the intentions of the session: (a) it will be useful in and of itself even if the client only attends this single session; (b) all details will be kept confidential; (c) the career professional will take notes during session that will be sent to the client or be made available

in their online account; and (d) at the end of session, the career professional will take a few minutes to explain possible next steps in terms of programs and team member match.

Next, the career professional uses a *First Session Note Page* (italics indicate OLTCC tools) to guide three initial interventions and to collect data for the initial part of the session. For the first of these interventions, the client is prompted to formulate a career question. Angela's response (shown above) began with "I have many plans . . .". Second, the client is asked to name all the career and life possibilities that are "on your radar screen." Angela is curious about a job in an organization that does good, for example, the United Nations, a university, or a government department. She is also interested in a leadership position in a local nonprofit or a growing startup. She also has been considering taking a coaching certificate course and becoming an executive coach. Rounding out the list is a volunteer position in a youth program.

In her career and life, Angela desires variety and new experiences, to be productive, to see projects through to completion, and to do good for the world by having a positive impact on people's lives and sharing wisdom. These initial desires most often come from "flipping" complaints and dislikes, which is the third intervention. For example, Angela disliked the long hours and heavy responsibilities of her previous leadership position. The flipside of these easily articulated dislikes is "a sense of freedom."

At this stage, roughly 15 minutes into the session, the career professional reframes the conversation by introducing the "becoming empowered and proactive" model. The career counselor says, "let me take just a few minutes to step back and reframe what you've told me so far so that we can move forward. I would like to start with this model. Please have a look as I walk you through it briefly." Clients respond well to using the term *roadmap* when describing this model, metaphorically illustrating the career management process as a journey using a map on which the client can locate herself, then follow along a mapped course.

Using notes from the handwritten First Session Note Page, the career counselor works with Angela to refine her career question and then writes it into the Questions & Notes page of her online account. Much of the OLTCC framework, including Questions & Notes, is implemented within a suite of online tools to allow for scalability and blended delivery. The career counselor creates a client account before meeting with the client and accesses the client's account during the first session, after which the client can access it on her own. After the Questions & Notes, Angela is introduced to the online Career Sketch, which is a helpful and holistic tool used to gather and organize all the elements of her situation. The "Desires" element of the Career Sketch was introduced as "what you want and what's important to you," and the career counselor added the items identified thus far. The "Possibilities" that Angela had named were also added, as well as the "Thoughts & Feelings" that she'd shared.

To shift the client's affect toward the positive and better utilize resources, restating Desires can be very helpful. In Angela's case, as her initial Desires

were added, the career professional asked, "Wouldn't it be great if you had variety and something new, and if your next step helped you be productive and see projects through to completion, and to feel that you're doing good for the world by making a positive impact and sharing wisdom?" Using the phrase "wouldn't it be great . . ." was inspired by Hicks and Hicks (2004). When Angela heard these Desires restated in such positive and personal terms, she immediately began nodding her head "yes." As a result of taking this approach, her affect was nudged toward the positive, thus invoking Fredrickson's (2001) "broaden and build" phenomenon. In career counseling terms, broadens refers to the number of career possibilities a client can see, and builds refers to internal resources such as hope and confidence for the upcoming intentional exploration.

Now that the client is familiar with the Career Sketch, the career professional can ask for a story or experience to add to the clarity emerging in the Career Sketch, to refine existing career possibilities, and to generate new ones. The client is given the following prompt: "I'd like to show you how this narrative process works. Please choose a story or experience you feel good about. It can be from work, volunteer, or personal experience. What comes to mind?"

Angela identifies a story about an opportunity she had to research and report on women in business for a local television station. Once a story is identified, the career professional asks a series of open-ended questions to "thicken" the story, a concept drawn from narrative therapy (White, 2007). One question might be "What did you like about this story?" Angela says she liked the diversity of topics and the sharing of wisdom, and these are added to her Career Sketch as Desires. When asked what skills and knowledge she drew on or developed, Angela lists researching, facilitating learning, reporting, creating stories, interviewing, and writing. All of these are added to Angela's Career Sketch as Strengths. She also mentions that she has been a good writer since childhood. When asked what personal qualities this story illustrates, Angela replies, "I'm very curious," and this is added to the Career Sketch under Personal Qualities.

Once confirmed with the client, all elements emerging from the story are added to the Career Sketch. As the content in the Career Sketch grows and clarification begins, the client becomes familiar with how this narrative approach works. At the end of each story, the career professional and the client can collaboratively identify new career Possibilities emerging from the story and its related Strengths, Personal Qualities, and other elements. The career professional might say something like this:

What career and life possibilities emerge for you from this story? As you and I both answer that question, let us "set the bar" at your curiosity. If you are curious about a possibility even if you know nothing about it, let us add it to your list. If you are not curious, it falls below the bar and we will discard it. Nevertheless, let us ask "why not," and in so doing we will identify desires that we may not have taken into account. For example, if I say, "how about being a long distance truck driver," and you say, "not interested," then I'll ask why not, and you might say, "because it's too isolating." Then we will know about another of your Desires, which will be the opposite of too isolating, maybe something like "I want to work closely with people." Ready to play?

In this manner, in Angela's case, three promising Possibilities are identified that she agrees to add to the list: reporting for a newcomer television station, management consulting through her network of executives, and instructor at an executive education center.

Once one of Angela's stories had been explored, it adds substantive material to her *Career Sketch*. Angela's East Asian cultural background and her immigration journey did emerge as relevant parts of her story in later sessions, but in the first session Angela acknowledged it (*Career Sketch* elements) in the form of language skills and the ability to connect with a wider multicultural audience in the television reporting experience. In later sessions, Angela and the career professional analyzed more of her career stories, and they illustrated both the challenges and the advantages of her immigrant status. In one story, she smartly leveraged her cultural background and language skills to win a position with the North American branch of an East Asian organization.

Because this case study is drawn from a fee-for-service career management practice, the end of the first session is the time to propose a program for a number of follow-up sessions to work through the processes of career and life clarification and intentional exploration. If referring the client to another career professional, this is the point at which to do so. In postsecondary education and agency settings where many OLTCC-trained career professionals work, there is no discussion of fees; however, clients are provided with an overview of the process using the roadmap, and trainees routinely report an increase in the number of second sessions. In Angela's case, she did agree to proceed with a program. Even if the client chooses not to proceed, the individual leaves this initial session having generated several new and promising possibilities and having clarified key Strengths, Desires, and other elements. After these initial sessions, clients usually report feeling more optimistic and hopeful.

Implementation of the "Becoming Empowered and Proactive" Program

At the end of session one, Angela is given the task of constructing a time line of her life. She is asked to add stories to an interactive time line in the categories of early years, education, and career and life. Each of these story categories is associated with a particular suite of narrative questions. These questions and the interactive time line are embedded in an *Online Storyteller* (another OLTCC tool), which interactively asks the user questions and allows short responses to be input. This material is displayed in a way that is similar to the texting feature on most smartphones. Using the *Online Storyteller* tool, Angela responds interactively to questions about each story, and these items are automatically added to her *Career Sketch*.

The next two sessions are dedicated to working collaboratively to review Angela's expanding *Career Sketch*, to analyze additional stories, and to make sense of the collected Strengths, Desires and other elements identified from the stories. It is during these sessions that the influence of Angela's home country experiences emerges.

During the cultural revolution in China, her family had been forced to move from the city to the countryside. Education was a strong value held by her parents, and as a capable young woman, Angela aspired to go to university. Despite her parents' emphasis on studying science and engineering, Angela was influenced by her sister and chose to study education and English instead. Having English language skills in particular later gave her the confidence to move to North America with her husband. In these sessions, Angela acknowledges the influence of the experiences of these early years—her parents' struggles and her supportive siblings—all leading her to want to succeed in career and life according to traditional measures of success, such as position and income. Indeed, these influences drove Angela's career in her adopted country, leading her away from teaching and into business, first in human resources then in finance, following additional training and a business degree. However, after experiencing career success, the influence of her upbringing in a collectivist society led to a renewed desire to do good in the world. Angela also explains that years earlier she had completed another strengths survey that had placed Fairness/Equity/Justice among her top character strengths, which she attributed to her upbringing. Adding external assessment results to one's Career Sketch, such as Angela's character strengths, illustrates how assessment results may be integrated into the OLTCC framework and tools.

Getting Feedback is another intervention suggested to Angela, and she is receptive to doing it. In this career and life clarification experience, Angela approaches three trusted allies to receive structured feedback using a list of questions sent via email, with follow-up phone calls to receive feedback. In the third session, Angela and the career professional analyze the feedback and add it to her Career Sketch. Samples of what emerged from Getting Feedback include work with like-minded people (Desire); strategic planning and decision making (Strength); fair and just, possesses humility (Personal Quality); gets things done (Personal Quality); could be more succinct when communicating (Personal Quality); public speaking (Possibility).

Toward the end of the third session, Angela's *Career Sketch* contains more than 50 items across the seven elements (Desires, Strengths, and so on) and 20 career and life Possibilities. Angela is asked to prioritize these Possibilities (high, medium, low) according to her interest in exploring them further. She is then asked to generate her unique *Career Statement*, incorporating the most important and relevant items in her *Career Sketch* and including the high priority Possibilities. An abridged form of Angela's *Career Statement* follows:

Here's what I want and what's important to me (Desires): I want to keep myself busy and productive; my plan is to do different things, have variety and "something new," and make a difference with people who appreciate my contribution. I want to do good for the world by making a positive impact. In all of this, I want to maintain a sense of freedom.

Here's what I want to do or use (Strengths): Facilitating learning, and strategic planning and decision making

Here's the kind of person I am and how others describe me (Personal Qualities): I'm very curious, and I get things done!

Here's what I bring with me (Assets): Financial services leadership experience, immigration experience, TV reporting experience

Here are my emerging interests (Natural Interest): supporting youth

I'm mindful of how these people have influenced or continue to influence my career and life choices (Other People): Parents said, "get an education!"; husband said, "let's move from here to North America."

These are the Possibilities I'm most curious about:

- Coaching certification program
- Organization that does good (e.g., UN, university)
- Executive coach
- Volunteer at a youth program
- Management consulting

When Angela reads her *Career Statement* aloud in the fourth session, she is energized and excited. The career counselor listens carefully, affirms, and helps to assure her that she can indeed bring this *Career Statement* to life. By personalizing the content of her *Career Sketch* and then reading it aloud, Angela increases her sense of ownership of the resulting *Career Statement*. This is a rich, memorable, and important moment in the career counseling process, one that many clients remark on later, and in Angela's case, it will give her hope and optimism for moving forward. The career counselor then introduces Intentional Exploration as a process to help Angela explore the five Possibilities she had named in her *Career Statement*.

In session, the career counselor adds Angela's Possibilities to the *Exploration Plan*, another online tool within the OLTCC framework. Then, one by one, client and career professional begin to expand the Possibilities collaboratively by identifying clues, naming inspired actions, and listing possible requirements. For example, one of Angela's priority Possibilities is management consulting through her network of executives. When asked for clues she has been noticing about this Possibility, Angela says she has been speaking to her friend Linda who has a company executive in her network who is seeking someone to help them with a "culture diagnosis." Angela feels excited about working with that company to learn about their needs and conduct a consulting engagement. This clue is added to Angela's *Exploration Plan*, providing both a spark for action and a reminder for later, once the exploration is under way. Emphasizing the importance of clues, and asking clients to actively watch for clues aligned

with their *Career Statement*, increases the likelihood of clients harnessing happenstance (Mitchell, Levin, & Krumboltz, 1999). Bloch (2005) introduced telling future stories that demonstrate the "strange links between events, links they describe as 'just luck' or coincidence" (p. 198) as a key part of her chaos theory of careers.

With clues identified and the associated good feelings that these clues engender, Angela is asked, "What do you want to do to explore this Possibility further?" This deceptively simple question can yield a number of inspired action steps the client is willing to do. It is deceptively simple because much of the career counseling process to this point is designed to make the inspired action so easy and so irresistible that the client will actually do it. Inspired action can naturally and easily follow close attention to clues linked to clients' stories. And indeed, an outcome study of this method of practice (Franklin et al., 2015) showed that clients experienced significantly increased levels of curiosity and exploration (Kashdan et al., 2009), leading to their inspired actions. For this Possibility, Angela wants to take the inspired actions of getting back into a conversation with her friend Linda and strategizing on a consulting practice using another OLTCC intervention focused on entrepreneurship. In a follow-up meeting, the career counselor checks with Angela about each of these actions. This kind of follow-up shifts the career professional's role from counseling to coaching. The results of inspired actions are assigned to a color-coded status, confirming whether the action was done, not done, how valuable it was, and possible next steps.

Inspired action can take many forms, including crafting experiments as clients go through a career change process. Ibarra (2003) refers to the notion of working identity and says that the biggest mistake people make when trying to change careers (and thus their working identity) is to delay taking the first step until they have settled on a destination.

The *Exploration Plan* is first written in Angela's fourth session, but a career professional can spend any number of sessions supporting clients through their Intentional Exploration. This number of sessions will depend on the organizational context and possibly the client's budget in the case of a fee-for-service practice.

Angela remains fairly optimistic and active during her Intentional Exploration. Many clients do experience emotional swings during this process, and to inoculate them against the emotional valleys, an intervention focusing on clients' thoughts and feelings is used, resulting in a positive thought constructed collaboratively. Angela's positive thought—"I am marketable, I am doing something I like and enjoy in my career and life. I am productive!"—when mentally rehearsed, can act as a touchstone for changing thinking habits and associated affect.

Guided by her *Exploration Plan* and career counselor, Angela engages in a productive Intentional Exploration, watching for clues and taking inspired actions for each of her priority Possibilities. In so doing, she is increasing her fund of self-knowledge and gaining clarity around her likes and dislikes in a process entirely aligned with "occupational engagement"

as described by Krieshok, Black, and McKay (2009). Through this process, Angela eventually connected with an organization that provides support to organizational leaders. A volunteer position led to a remunerated position at a related organization where Angela is presently giving her gifts, sharing her strengths, and living her *Career Statement*. See Table 19.1 for an application guide.

Conclusion

The cultural context is critical to serving diverse groups as they complete a lifetime of transitions. The One Life Tools/CareerCycles framework and face-to-face and digital tools offer a fresh, innovative set of principles and practices for multicultural career counseling. Its potential to provide clarity and confidence to clients is increasingly evident with research as career counselors/professionals are trained in its approach.

Table 19.1Practical Application Guide

Торіс	One Life Tools/CareerCycles Framework
General goals and purpose	 Explain the OLTCC framework to suggest an approach that will enhance clarification and intentional exploration. Highlight face-to-face and digital tools used in the system. Review the key elements of the "Who You Are Matters!" game.
Applicable modality	Individual, workshops, large group sessions
Applicable counselor settings	Private practice, college orientation sessions, career centers, community agencies, school and organizational settings
Recommended time to complete	Two to five sessions to complete in individual settings. Fewer sessions required when using Online Storyteller; 2 to 3 hours to complete game in workshop or other settings.
Materials/equipment needed	Handouts, Career Sketch and Career Statement and Exploration Plan, and for groups "Who You Are Matters!" game; Online Storyteller for blended delivery
Step-by-step outline of the process	A graphical model depicting the clarification and exploration processes guides the method and is shown to the client as a roadmap of the OLTCC experience.

Note. OLTCC = One Life Tools/CareerCycles framework from clarification to intentional exploration for diverse groups.

Recommended Resources

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