

DISSERTATION

THE LIFE AND CAREER GAME *WHO YOU ARE MATTERS!*[®] AMONG UNIVERSITY
STUDENTS: A BRICOLAGE IN POSTMODERN CAREER COUNSELING

Submitted by

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In partial fulfillment of the requirements

For the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Colorado State University

Fort Collins, Colorado

Summer 2020

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ABSTRACT

THE LIFE AND CAREER GAME *WHO YOU ARE MATTERS!*[®] AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS: A BRICOLAGE IN POSTMODERN CAREER COUNSELING

Career counseling has been expanding from traditional trait and personality models to constructivist models that emphasize subjective experiences, holistic interventions, psychological resources, narratives, and context. This study examines the narrative life and career game *Who You Are Matters!*[®] to learn about player experience, stories, and actions gaining a deeper understanding of the processes of storytelling and storylistening in life and career exploration and goal setting. Participants in the study were female, first-year, second-year, and/or first-generation college students who ranged between 18-23 years of age.

Experiences and stories are explored through multiple lenses including well-being, psychological capital, agency, and transformational learning. Gratitude and broaden-and-build are also briefly examined as contributing factors that amplify player benefits. The findings are presented loosely as a bricolage that shapes the construction and interpretation of meanings and patterns that inform career exploration in game play.

Findings suggest that the structure and context of game play focuses and funnels intentional goal setting and action through six synergistic themes. The study demonstrates how the game *Who You Are Matters!*[®] is efficacious in promoting life and career exploration, engendering psychological capital, and cultivating well-being, answering the National Career Development Association's call for more creative and holistic interventions that equip and inspire action and agency.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I want to express my appreciation to the members of my committee, Dr. Laurie Carlson, Dr. Rich Feller, Dr. Louise Jennings, and Dr. Bryan Dik, for their deliberate questions, thoughtful suggestions, insights, and constructive feedback that drove greater clarity in both content and design of my dissertation. I would further like to convey my gratitude to my advisor Dr. Laurie Carlson for providing instrumental feedback, encouragement, and assistance in navigating the dissertation process.

In addition, I want to acknowledge the following professors for their passionate and inspirational andragogy: Drs. Rich Feller, Laurie Carlson, Nat Kees, Sharon Anderson, Gylton Da Matta, Louise Jennings, Sue Lynham, David Most, Gene Gloeckner, Karen Kaminski, James Banning, Don Quick, Jenn Matheson, Lauren Shomaker, and William Timpson. Each contributed to my deeper learning of counseling, education, and research. Thank you for being great role models.

A special note of gratitude goes to Dr. Rich Feller and Mark Franklin M.Ed. for creating *Who You Are Matters!*[®]. Your passion and knowledge to empower and equip others is inspirational. It has been a privilege. It is also important to recognize the generous and indefatigable Dr. Carole Makela and the Wednesday night PhD cohort and other PhD students along the way for their engagement, feedback, and support.

I would also like to acknowledge the support staff and research partners across Colorado State University for answering questions, collaborating, scheduling events, managing processes, and supporting graduate students.

I also wish to thank the many bright and kind student staff members I supervised over the years, and my colleagues who were a constant source of learning and encouragement. I also want to express my gratitude to those who supported and encouraged me along the way. Every connection, conversation, or celebratory moment provided fuel and motivation.

A sincere word of appreciation goes to my research participants. I appreciated their authentic engagement in *Who You Are Matters!*[®]. Through their life and career stories, I learned a great deal about life and career exploration, hope, resiliency, and courage. I wish each a life full of optimism and meaning.

To my family of origin, my gratitude for the gifts of industry, perseverance, creativity, and humor. To my husband, Mirko, thank you for your sacrificial love, devotion, and patience. You challenge me to think more broadly, deeply, and critically. To my daughter, Brittany, thank you for believing in me and for your often-timely words of encouragement and affection. To that which is larger than self—faith, meaning, community, and the days and stories ahead.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Current pressures, volatility, and uncertainty (Bennett & Lemoine, 2014; Feller & Whichard, 2005) call for more dynamic life and career exploration interventions to foster client action and to harness “hope, self-efficacy, resilience, optimism, intentional exploration, clarity and curiosity,” a “HEROIC mindset” (Feller, 2017, paras. 2-8). Furthermore, there is a need to serve individuals with more holistic interventions that encourage adaptation and meaning over the life-span (Association for Counselor Education and Supervision [ACES] & National Career Development Association [NCDA], 2000; Bennett & Lemoine, 2014; Corr & Mutinelli, 2017; Hunter et al., 2010; Luthans, Youssef-Morgan, & Avolio, 2015; Schlesinger & Daley, 2016; Vess & Lara, 2015). To this aim, this study explores players’ experiences, stories, and actions within the context of the exclamatory life and career game *Who You Are Matters!*[®] (*WYAM!*). At present, there are no known studies that solely analyze the experiences of a structured narrative game to promote life and career exploration and goal setting. Previous inquiries of *WYAM!* were encapsulated within broader or programmatic studies. This study was exploratory and descriptive with the intent to glean meaningful explanations of players’ experiences, stories, and actions as a result of *WYAM!* while investigating its narrative and storied processes to promote action and goal setting. Moreover, the study investigated how the tenets of positive psychology, psychological capital, narrative career counseling, and transformational learning theory inform and broaden our current understanding of narrative game play in life/career counseling (Luthans et al., 2015; Seligman, 2013; Mezirow; 2009; Whiston & Blustein, 2013). It is these theories that inform the discussion and explanation of findings while exploring the granular interests of state-like qualities, well-being, and agentic goal behavior.

By studying participants' experiences and stories, the proposition of intentional and actionable life and career exploration was addressed. In particular, studying player experiences and stories, yielded an understanding of progression, process, and game benefit informing practice. The study aimed to reveal how participants experienced game play (i.e., game and stories) and what players did as a result. Further, the manifestation of psychological capital and well-being promulgated from playing *WYAM!* can be examined and its expressions described and understood in the context of game play and player narratives. As such, three questions were considered. Question one was the driving question, and questions two and three were subsumed:

1. How do participants experience the game *Who You Are Matters!*[®] ?
2. How do features of PsyCap and well-being manifest in the experience of game play?
3. What post-game play actions do participants take?

To deeply understand players' experiences, construct findings, and render meaningful interpretations (Earthy & Cronin, 2008), participant narratives and questionnaire responses were collected and analyzed. For this study, three game sessions were video recorded. In total, there were eight game participants, or nine due to no shows when I stepped in as a participant observer in one game play. As a result, my narratives are counted in the primary data set of stories. The aim of the study was to provide a thick description (Geertz, 1973) of participant experiences, story processes, and psychological happenings. Participation took approximately 2 hours for each game day session. This included 5-15 minutes for intake forms, and 10-20 minutes to complete a questionnaire immediately following game-play. Although I allotted 2 hours and 35 minutes for each session, these games moved more quickly due to a single table top of three players for each session. Participants also completed an electronic follow-up questionnaire sent

out via *SurveyMonkey* link at two to three weeks post-game play. This questionnaire was expected to be completed within 10 minutes. For all components of the research study, the total time commitment from participants was anticipated to be no longer than 2 hours and 45 minutes.

Significance of the Study

The study was embedded in the convergence of career theory and practice with particular attention given to holistic practices (Franklin et al., 2015b) that focus on individual development and well-being (Adler & Seligman, 2016) while utilizing constructivist/narrative approaches. This distinctly postmodern approach emphasizes features of agency, coping, adaptability, (Ebberwein, Krieshok, Ulven, & Prosser, 2004) and psychological capital (Luthans et al., 2015) to imbue career exploration and development with passion and purpose (Dik et al., 2015). The study may extend our understanding of individual and group experiences of career exploration and expand practices that seek to develop psychological capital, well-being, and agentic behavior. The study may illuminate the following:

1. Identify features and expressions of psychological capital and well-being in relation to agentic behavior and life/career exploration.
2. Illuminate experiences and connections between psychological capital and life/career exploration, subsequent exploration, and agentic behavior in relation to goal horizons.
3. Aid career counselors/practitioners in optimizing or leveraging psychological capital and well-being to motivate agentic behavior through action and extension during the life/career exploration process.
4. Establish beneficial effects of psychological capital on life/career exploration.
5. Contribute to the growing knowledge of narrative, holistic life/career exploration.

6. Demonstrate benefits and limitations of game play as a delivery method for narrative life/career exploration.

Historical Context

In order to deeply understand the experience of game play, it is important to explore the socio-historical situatedness of the game (Kincheloe, 2001, 2008a; Rogers, 2012). To this end, what follows is a brief history of a few key constructs, assessment tools, and theories in career counseling. For reference, Appendix A provides a useful list of acronyms. Vocational guidance, now referred to as vocational psychology or career counseling, emerged from the work of Richards, Gordon, and Parsons (Savickas, 1994, 2013a). Richards' book *Vocophy* (1881) focused on individual traits and "fitness for the right place" (p. 14) and launched the field of career counseling. Gordon's (1908) greatest contribution was a comprehensive nomenclature delineating types of work and the importance of education and training to "keep the mind active, and make some progress" (p. 10). Gordon's insights captured the importance of worker engagement and types of skills needed to fulfill a variety of roles. In *Choosing a Vocation* (1909), Parsons also emphasized fit, and designed a series of purposeful questions and methods to garner information about a person's aptitudes and experiences advancing a scientific approach to career exploration (Brott, 2001). Parsons' theory of vocational guidance is summed up as "character linked with ability – power and training of mind and body can accomplish almost anything" (Parsons, 1909, p. 36). Parsons also planted the seeds of narrative career counseling with probing open-ended questions getting to the core of a person's natural abilities and interests. Here is a brief sampling of a few questions:

What are your favorite books of all you have read? If you were at the World's Fair what would most attract you? What man in history, or what living man, would you be like if you could choose? How do you spend your spare time? (Parsons, 1909, p. 18)

These types of open-ended questions naturally draw out what we would refer to today as “life themes” (Savickas et al., 2009, p. 7) and agentic career narratives (Franklin, Yanar, & Feller, 2015b).

Historically, in America, the matching model has been paramount in the evolving field of career counseling. Early interventions were predominantly counselor directed focusing on assessment and diagnosis (Brott, 2001; Brown et al., 2002; Savickas, 2013; Schlesinger & Daley, 2016). The initial response to vocational guidance was to primarily assist youth and middle-aged individuals in securing jobs that best fit their traits or characteristics (Gordon, 1908; Parsons, 1909; Richards, 1881).

The matching model still reverberates in vocational psychology and career counseling. For example, some of the most recognized and used assessments in the field of career counseling utilize trait-and-factor/person-environment fit, such as the Strong Interest Inventory and the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (Harrington & Long, 2013). Long established, careers are typically organized around vocational types: Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, and Conventional (RIASEC), which are an integral part of career counseling and used to assess fit (Holland, Magoon, & Spokane, 1981). These codes help clients and counselors visualize the world of work based on personality and occupational domains (Gottfredson & Holland, 1996).

The Strong Interest Inventory was first published in 1927, and “item responses are summarized as scores on six general occupational themes (GOT); realistic, investigative, artistic, social, enterprising, and conventional based largely on Holland’s vocational classification system” (Jenkins, 2009, p. 312). The strong scales were normed on a diverse sample of 2,250 individuals and demonstrate a high test-retest reliability of .71 to .93 over a period of 2 to 23 months (Jenkins, 2009, p. 314). Additional studies by Donnay and Borgen (1996) and

Rottinghaus, Lindley, Green, and Borgen (2002) provide evidence of the validity of clustered occupational themes as an important and accurate conceptualization in the world of work.

As an extension, *O*NET* is an online, interactive career exploration tool that clients can utilize to explore a plethora of work options grounded in Holland's RIASEC codes. *O*NET* describes six domains for exploration: worker characteristics, worker requirements, experience requirements, occupational requirements, workforce requirements, and occupation-specific information needed to explore the world of work. *O*NET*'s platform allows career explorers to search jobs and worker characteristics in a variety of ways including tasks, skills, abilities, and education (O*NET, 2018). The model is the fruition of the trait-and-factor/person-environment approach in career counseling.

Another mammoth in assessment is the MBTI; it is given to millions of people a year. It is based on forced choice dichotomies that place individuals into one of 16 basic personality types derived from introversion/extroversion, sensing/intuition, thinking/feeling, and judging/perceiving (Mastrangelo, 2009; Pittenger, 1993). The basic types suggest commonalities with others, preferences, and environments, but Mastrangelo (2009) questioned consistency.

Although it is true that responses from the four MBTI scales show very high levels of internal consistency (typically $>.90$) and test-retest reliability (.83-.97 for a four week interval), these analyses are irrelevant in testing the consistency of dichotomous classifications. (p. 404)

Mastrangelo further notes that the type classification could have misleading implications for career explorers (2009). In the article "Cautionary Comments Regarding the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator," Pittenger (2005) cites numerous studies that question the reliability of the MBTI, and the view of personality "as an invariant set at birth" (2005, p. 212). Instead, Pittenger (2005) asserts, "the link between the personality dimensions measured by the MBTI, cognition, and work behaviors is tenuous" (p. 212). As many as 50% of MBTI takers in one test-retest study by

McCarley and Carskadon exhibited a different type in a 5-week period contradicting the notion of type stability (as cited in Pittenger, 2005, p. 214). The biggest criticism, however, is that the MBTI reduces people to sixteen types (Lloyd, 2012). The MBTI suggests individuals are fixed and contained by personality; moreover, in *Me, Myself, and Us: The Science of Personality and The Art of Well-being* (2014), Little emphasizes the adaptive nature of individuals. However, these instruments are convenient having been used in career exploration for over 70 years (Jenkins, 2009). As such, these key instruments grew out of the matching models of early career theorists and are considered traditional career exploration tools (Axinte & Soitu, 2013; Savickas, 1994; Schlesinger & Daley 2016).

The Strong Interest Inventory and MBTI do provide career explorers with preference vocabulary and an opportunity to open a discussion with a practitioner (i.e., career counselor, vocational psychologist, career professional, school counselor, etc.) who may provide a broader context for holistic and collaborative interpretation (Mastrangelo, 2009). These resources and tools aid clients in clarifying vocational abilities, interests, skills, and preferences to explore a variety of career choices. In sum, 21st century career counseling retains identifiable features of trait-and-factor, which can be seen in a myriad of assessments and interventions to aid clients and/or students alike in the process of life and career exploration (Bader, Salinas, & Maslin-Ostrowski, 2017; Harrington & Long 2013). Although there are many tools, assessments, and interventions available to further career exploration, this study examined the holistic and narrative life and career game *WYAM!* that represents the shift to more holistic interventions.

Shifting: A Holistic Career Counseling Response

Who You Are Matters![®] incorporates more recent theories and constructs drawn from the frameworks of narrative career counseling, positive psychology, and psychological capital

(Franklin et al., 2015a; ACES & NCDA 2000; Whiston & Blustein, 2013). These newer directions in life/career counseling are embedded in holistic practices and adaptable narratives that informed the study (Franklin et al., 2015a; Franklin et al., 2015b; Super, Savickas, & Super, 1996; Zikic & Hall, 2009). Further, a meta-analysis of 57 studies by Whiston, Li, Mitts, and Wright (2017) concluded that “counselor support (ES = 0.825), values clarification (ES = 0.522), and psychoeducational interventions (ES = 0.506)” were the “critical ingredients” for effective career interventions (p. 180). Whiston et al. (2017) found that individual, class, group, and workshop interventions were the most promising delivery methods, and recommended at least 4-5 counseling sessions to maximize benefits. This supports the evolution of trait-and-factor, now called person-environment fit, which looks more specifically at interactions among fit and values, demands, organizational culture, and desirable personal outcomes (Edwards & Shipp, 2007). As such, *WYAM!* flexes several of these “critical ingredients” in particular values clarification, personal growth, and group delivery motivating goals and promoting accountability related to career decision-making and next steps (Whiston et al., 2017, p.180).

It is this shift to holistic life/career interventions that primed the development of *WYAM!*, and this study of its narrative processes. *WYAM!* integrates the value of person-environment and emphasizes the importance of personal narratives that are contextual and adaptive. *WYAM!* was “designed as an alternative to traditional career assessments” and as a tool to generate meaningful conversations to motivate clients toward desired outcomes through intentional planning and action (Franklin, 2015, p. 450).

Overview of Theoretical Framework

There are several theories and constructs that grounded the study. First, it is important to note that career as a singular term can be limiting and discount the many dynamic components

that a fuller conceptualization can offer. For example, postmodern theorists view career as “personal” (Savickas, 1993, p. 212), flexible, and holistic compared to previous connotations. Career is further understood as the collection of roles played across the life-span (Super, 1980) as interrelated moving parts defined by processes, decisions, roles, and environments (Chen, 1998) in which “individuals are viewed as active agents in the construction of their careers” (Patton & McMahon, 2014, p. 279). Savickas (2015) articulates this transition well, moving from “scores to stages to stories” incorporating a more holistic view of life/career construction (Savickas, 2015, p. 5). This is a clear shift in language and communicates adaptability and subjective value through stories. For this study, career was holistically and broadly defined as “the full expression of who you are and how you want to be in the world, which keeps on expanding as it naturally goes through cycles of stability and change” (Franklin, 2015, p. 451). It is this definition that grounded the study of life/career in a constructivist lexicon in which narratives are understood.

In general, career counseling is defined as “career interventions that use psychological methods to foster self-exploration to help clients choose and adjust to occupations” (Busacca & Rehfuss, 2017, p. 341). This definition encompasses many approaches to career counseling; however, it does focus on the outcome of occupation selection and adjustment. On the other hand, narrative career counseling focuses on story, context, and meaningful life/career integration and development in a constructivist framework (Busacca & Rehfuss, 2017). The later promotes a specific approach to career counseling that is holistic, narrative, and contextual to promote meaning. Narrative career counseling is embedded in constructivist theory which rounded out the conceptual framework for the study because it focuses on the significance and use of flexible narratives that articulate vocational identity and the development of meaningful goals (Cochran, 1997; Savickas, 2005). It is this postmodern approach to career counseling that

undergirded the study with its importance on holistic and contextual interventions that emphasized narratives to promote career exploration.

Positive Psychology and PsyCap

In addition, this study was grounded in positive psychology, a prevailing cultural movement which seeks to promote well-being through strengths, engagement, and positive emotions like gratitude, pride, and satisfaction (Csikszentmihalyi, 2009; Peterson & Seligman 2004; Seligman, 2006). The constructs born out of positive psychology hold significant promise in boosting life and work satisfaction under the construct of flourishing (Magyar-Moe, Owens, & Conoley, 2015; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Specifically, Seligman's (2013) theory of well-being was an integral model for the study, and it is represented by the acronym PERMA. The model's five component constructs/elements are positive emotions, engagement, positive relationships, meaning, and accomplishment.

Another important concept to the study was adaptability, which is reflected in state-like qualities that are amenable to change expanding both possibilities and performance in life and work (Luthans, Youssef-Morgan, & Avolio, 2015). There are many potential state-like qualities debated in the literature, but Luthans et al. (2015) have specifically identified "hope, efficacy, resiliency, and optimism" (HERO) as the four constructs that demarcate the current bounds of psychological capital's (PsyCap) state-like qualities (p. 36). These are relevant to the study because contemporary theorists assert the adaptive usefulness of state-like qualities for optimum functioning in the world of work (Newman, Ucbasaran, Zhu, & Hirst, 2014) and to ease navigation in a world characterized by "volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity" (VUCA; Bennett & Lemoine, 2014).

To develop PsyCap and to learn the state-like qualities of “hope, efficacy, resiliency, and optimism” (Luthans et al., 2015, p. 36), individuals need interventions to compel and sustain life/career development, which may include many different jobs, positions, environments, teams, changes, challenges, and life roles (Super, 1980). *WYAM!* is designed to draw out stories addressing possibilities over the life-span (Zikic & Franklin, 2010). In life and career exploration, Feller (2017) adds to psychological capital’s allegoric acronym HERO with the addition of “intentional exploration,” and “clarity and curiosity” to promote a “HEROIC mindset” open to possibilities in times of instability and change (paras. 2-8) to cultivate more satisfaction by using natural aptitudes in more rewarding environments (Feller & Chapman, 2018, p. 69-70). In sum, a HEROIC mindset is the adoption of a set of beliefs and internal resources that encourage intentional exploration, adaptation, and skill acquisition to harness the benefits of “hope, self-efficacy, resilience, optimism, intentional exploration, clarity and curiosity” which move life and career goals forward (Feller, 2017, paras. 2-8). In support, other theorists assert the need to be flexible (Csikszentmihalyi, 2009) and to utilize adaptive psychological processes to one’s advantage (Bridges & Bridges, 2016). These adaptable or state-like qualities were examined in player narratives for manifestation and function.

Narrative Career Counseling

Narrative career counseling brought further structure and understanding to the study. At the 2013 NCDA conference, Savickas, a forerunner in career construction, used the words “uniqueness, community, adaptability, story-telling, career construction, co-construction, life-design, action, mattering, and contextual” to describe the future of the career counseling field (Savickas, 2013a). The field has expanded from fit and placement to personal construction (Amundson, 2010; Cochran, 1997; Savickas, 2013a). This is the context that informed the study.

Career counseling is viewed as a collaboration in which the client is the expert of their story (Savickas, 2015, p.11). Narrative career counseling offers clients the opportunity to be more engaged in constructing and forecasting their own lives, and thus, encouraging greater autonomy/agency (Feller & Chapman, 2018; Schlesinger & Daley, 2016). Further, this narrative/constructivist approach is utilized in the game *WYAM!* which provides the context to create meaningful stories that motivate intentional career exploration.

Together, the extant theories and constructs of positive psychology, psychological capital, and narrative career counseling create a robust foundation for transformative learning experiences to motivate and inspire meaningful life and career exploration, aspirations, personality expression, values, and goals that are integral to life and career development (Corr & Mutinelli, 2017; Hunter, Dik, & Banning, 2010; Luthans et al., 2015; Savickas, 1993; Schlesinger & Daley, 2016; Vess & Lara, 2015). It is the study of this convergence manifested in experience and stories that was explored. It was the investigation of experience, agentic expression, and psychological resources that give rise to the possibility of intentional life/career exploration. This study sought to explore and reveal how players' expressed their stories and transform as a result of game play. That is to say, the interactions generated by game play may foster the expression of adaptive functioning, utilization of psychological capital, greater well-being, and life/career satisfaction, thus, igniting individual meaning making and optimism for career development and exploration over the life-span (Franklin et al., 2015b).

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this chapter is to explore literature and constructs that are relevant to the study. First, I provide an overview of the importance of positive psychology as a cultural backdrop that has influenced beliefs about the purpose of intervention(s) to promote well-being and optimal functioning. Next, I discuss the value and contributions of state-like qualities to promote adaptability and enhance life/work satisfaction. This is relevant to the study because I examined how state-like qualities manifested and contributed to participant experience and stories. Next, I look at the influence of multiple theories and approaches that embrace a more postmodern, holistic, narrative, and inclusive ideology that inform life and career counseling. *Who You Are Matters!*[®] has emerged from this framework and fits within its cumulative aspirations. Lastly, I examine the contributing features of agency and transformational learning to the study. Theory grounds the study in context and provides a framework to understanding player experience.

Positive Psychology

Positive psychology, phrased as such, was introduced by Maslow in *Motivation and Personality* (1954), a reflection of humanist thought, which seeks to elevate the more positive aspects of experience, emotions, being, and potential. Positive psychology supplies the foundation for the inquiry as it offers the broadest conceptualization of optimal human functioning (Seligman, 2013). Work in positive psychology has continued and is, now, largely attributed to Seligman (2013) who has focused on well-being and virtues. Fundamentally, positive psychology seeks to impact individuals and workplace environments in an effort to encourage more positive experiences and meaning in a variety of contexts (Csikszentmihalyi,

2008; Seligman, 2013). The evolved and succinct definition of positive psychology is “the scientific study of the strengths that enable individuals and communities to thrive” (Positive Psychology Center [PPC], 2017, para. 2).

Seligman’s (2013) theory of well-being champions flourishing. This extrapolates to functioning in a variety of roles and activities, and specifically to the world of work where many may spend significant amounts of time dedicated to developing and expressing identity (Csikszentmihalyi, 2014; Savickas et al., 2009). More specifically, positive psychology seeks to cultivate human potential and positive experiences through the “elements” of PERMA (Seligman, 2013, p. 16). The elements are positive emotions, engagement, positive relationships, meaning, and accomplishment. It is important to note that in Seligman’s conceptualization, PERMA is supported or undergirded by strengths or virtues (Seligman, 2013). That is to say, strengths are a foundational and integral substrate to PERMA/well-being.

Similarly, subjective well-being provides granularity with a multidimensional construct that includes such components as life satisfaction, health, job satisfaction, and positive affect (Diener et al., 2017, pp. 87-88). “SWB is defined as people’s overall evaluations of their lives and their emotional experiences” (Diener et al., 2017, p. 87). In relation to work, companies, and organizations are responding to the need for subjective well-being by offering employees more “autonomy” and “flexible work plans” (p. 88). In longitudinal studies, subjective well-being has been shown to be malleable over the life-span by both individual action and circumstances (Diener et al., 2017) and is closely allied with PERMA well-being (Seligman, 2018).

In contrast to well-being, “overwhelming exhaustion, feelings of cynicism and detachment from the job, and a sense of ineffectiveness and lack of accomplishment” have been known as job burnout since the “1970s” (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001, pp. 398-399).

People are dissatisfied with life/career due to a plethora of reasons including globalization, poor working conditions, low wages (Gordon & Schnall, 2009), social problems, poverty, and lack of opportunities like underemployment that undermine well-being (Hodzic, Ripoll, Lira, & Zenasni, 2015). In sum, people are disengaged and demotivated at a rate of 70% in America (Feller & Chapman, 2018). In *Positive Education: Positive Psychology and Classroom Interventions*, Seligman, Ernst, Gillham, Reivich, and Linkins (2009) asserted that well-being should be taught because “everything is better, that is, everything except morale” (p. 294). Some of this learning or well-being development can occur in life and career exploration and management possibly boosting hope and positive morale—benchmarks of work satisfaction (Adams et al., 2003). Additionally, well-being has been linked to higher levels of achievement, creativity, optimism, and the development of a growth mindset (Jarden & Jarden, 2015; Seligman et al., 2009).

In fact, evidence suggests that a lack of strengths utilization reduces initiative and performance (Lisbona, Palaci, Salanova, & Frese, 2018). As an antidote to disengagement and wasting, Peterson and Seligman (2004), wrote *Character Strengths and Virtues* to promote well-being across life domains. Likewise, Clifton and Anderson (2002) promote strengths as the path to expression, agency, meaning, and fulfillment. They asserted, “a strength is the ability to provide consistent, near perfect performance in a given activity” (Clifton & Anderson, 2002, p. 8). In general, people report more positive feelings, psychological capital, and satisfaction when applying their strengths (Clifton & Anderson, 2002).

Further, in a longitudinal instrument validation study conducted by Wood, Linley, Maltby, Kashban, and Hurling (2011), 270 individuals measured their strength use over time and found a positive correlation between strengths utilization and measures of well-being and positive emotions. Similarly, a diary and questionnaire study examined the use of strengths by 65

civil engineers from 43 organizations, confirming a relationship between strengths and engagement on the job (van Woerkom, Oerlemans, & Bakker, 2016). “Also, at the within-person level, weekly strength use, self-efficacy, work engagement, and proactive behavior(u)r were all significantly and positively correlated” (van Woerkom et al., 2016, p. 390).

It is asserted in *StrengthsQuest* (Clifton & Anderson, 2002) that people’s strengths are more salient to achievement and motivation than other contributing factors like education. It is natural talent that compels the development of strengths and adaptation to meet the demands of life and changing work conditions as a result of cultivated skills. Hence, the “primary focus in career planning should be yourself, rather than the career” (Clifton & Anderson, 2002, p. 222).

One of *WYAM!*’s key features is to identify and utilize identified strengths to effectively explore and develop personal meaning (Franklin et al., 2015b). Like *CliftonStrengths*, *WYAM!* promotes fulfillment, optimism, and achievement through the development and application of strengths and relevant goals (Clifton & Anderson, 2002; Franklin, Feller, & Yanar, 2015a; Franklin et al., 2015b). It is the fulfilling use of one’s strengths that renders a satisfying life and career.

In *Flow*, first published in 1990, Csikszentmihalyi’s (2008) flow and creativity relate to both PERMA and PsyCap. In the PERMA model, flow is the expression of engagement and absorption (Seligman, 2013). Likewise, this absorption seems to be reflected in the construct of subjective well-being and life/work satisfaction (Diener, 2000). While on the other hand, qualities such as initiative, engagement (Lisbona et al., 2018), and creativity are viewed as antecedents, mediators, or moderators respectively for performance or productivity (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996). These state-like qualities and/or traits have the potential to influence well-being and psychological capital, which is amenable to development (Seligman, 2013;

Luthans et al., 2015). Together, these seem to suggest an opportunity to strengthen life/career exploration and agentic behavior (Gupta & Singh, 2014; Rego, Sousa, Marques, & Cunha, 2012).

Each of these tenets from positive psychology are exceedingly relevant to life/career development over the life-span (Super, 1980) and are linked to the state-like qualities of hope, efficacy, resiliency, and optimism (Luthans et al., 2015). It is on this foundation of positive psychology that a greater focus on “valued subjective experiences: well-being, contentment, and satisfaction (in the past); hope and optimism (for the future); and flow and happiness (in the present)” have risen in the culture and in life/career development (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000, p. 5). Positive psychology promotes people as active agents endowed with capacity—purveyors of possibility and hope (Bandura, 1986; Seligman, 2013).

These theorists fit under the umbrella of positive psychology and contribute to the push for greater utilization of strengths, agency, and well-being/fulfillment (Salanova & Schaufeli, 2008), which resonates with the life and career game *WYAM!*. Although life and career goals differ for individuals, positive psychology provides fertile ground for career interventions that promote meaning and flourishing in a range of domains including career development, exploration, and the world of work (Seligman, 2013). Positive psychology and its constructs of potential, strengths, adaptability, psychological capital, well-being, agentic behavior, flow, and flourishing may relate directly to a person’s vocational persistence and satisfaction over the life-span. For the purpose of this study, the construct of life and career exploration bounded the direction and focus of agentic behavior, psychological capital, and well-being.

Psychological Capital

Psychological capital (PsyCap), an ally to positive psychology, is a broad term for state-like qualities that can be learned or developed through interventions to impact or enhance performance particularly in work settings (Luthans et al., 2015; Schaufeli, Bakker, & Salanova, 2006). By developing internal resources, positive psychology and psychological capital may be an answer for career explorers to be better and/or differently prepared to be proactive against threats to well-being. For example, in a study of 450 college students, self-efficacy was shown to be a mediating factor in career exploration contributing to confidence and decision-making (Lent, Ireland, Penn, Morris, & Sappington, 2017). Newman et al. (2014) who wrote “Psychological Capital: A Review and Synthesis” summarized its history and development. Psychological capital has its roots in positive psychology, positive organizational scholarship, and positive organizational behavior. Luthans et al. (2015) explicated this lineage, as well, in the book *Psychological Capital and Beyond*. It was from these sources that Luthans and colleagues identified criteria and culled the state-like qualities of hope, efficacy, resiliency, and optimism (HERO; Luthans et al., 2015). To be included, a construct had to meet rigorous standards of theory, research, measurement, promotion of positive outcomes, be a state-like quality, and be learnable (Luthans et al., 2015). To show the conceptual location of state-like qualities within the canon of trait and state scholarship, Figure 1 is replicated with minor modifications from Luthans et al. (2015, p. 25). The culmination of Luthans et al. (2015) investigation was a higher order construct PsyCap that combines the state-like qualities of hope, efficacy, resiliency, and optimism for greater performance impact and perceived well-being.

The psychological capital questionnaire (PCQ) is the standard and accepted measure of PsyCap (Lorenz, Beer, Putz, & Heinitz, 2016). Luthans et al. (2015) relied on construct measures

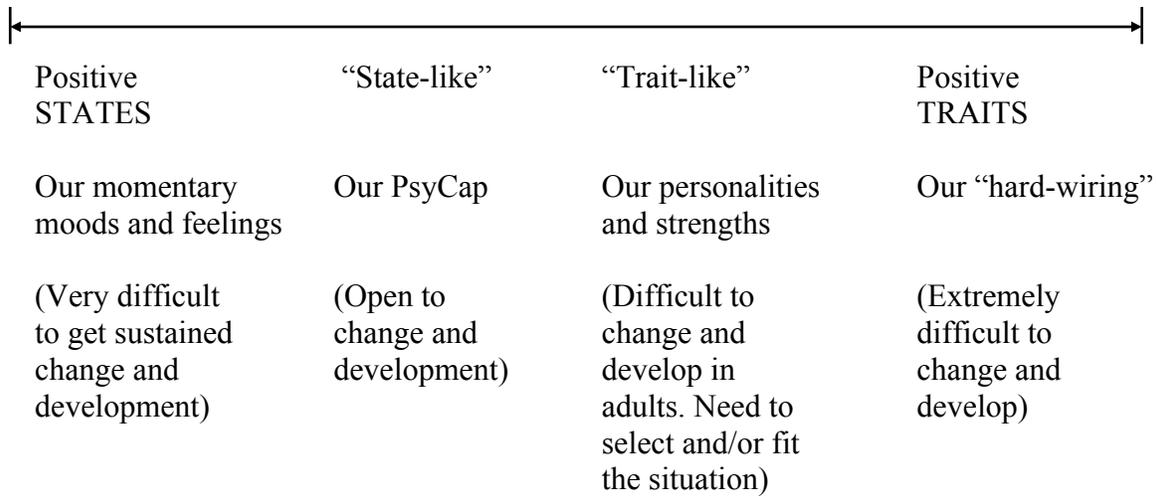


Figure 1. Conceptual Location of State-like Qualities. Adapted from Psychological Capital and Beyond (p. 25), by F. Luthans, C. M., Youssef, and B. F. Avolio, 2015, Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press. Copyright 2015 by Oxford Publishing Limited (Academic). Original figure information: 2.1 An evidence-based continuum of PsyCap change and development. Reproduced with permission of the Licensor through PLSclear

from the field of positive psychology and subject matter experts to develop the PCQ, which uses a continuous likert scale. In addition, they established the higher order construct with supportive literature and by using regression analysis to determine “discriminate validity” when compared to other similar construct measures (Luthans, Avolio, Avey, & Norman, 2007, p. 545). This was demonstrated through repeatable high Cronbach alphas of over .88 and model fit confirmatory factor analysis “at or above .95” (Luthans et al., 2007, p. 558). In addition, based on extensive use across many countries, a range of studies involving hundreds of participants and model comparisons, psychological capital founders are confident that the PCQ has a high degree of both validity and reliability (Luthans et al., 2015). Substantial research in PsyCap has demonstrated that the state-like qualities of hope, efficacy, resiliency, and optimism can be cultivated to engender greater levels of work satisfaction and well-being (Luthans et al., 2015; Wright & Cropanzano, 2004). However, Luthans et al. (2007) acknowledged limitations as a result of self-report scales. In general, Self-report data have common distortions and biases based

on time, memory, approval needs, self-perception, presentation, and regulation of a congruent intrapersonal image (Paulhus & Vazire, 2007). Paulhus and Vazire's (2007) critique of self-report was based specifically on personality factors which are distinct but conflated or blurred with manifestations of psychological capital as evidenced by some scholars identifying and comingling trait and state-like constructs (Dawkins, Martin, Scott, & Sanderson, 2013).

Further, Dawkins et al. (2013) highlighted the need for the "critical evaluation of the conceptualization of PsyCap and its psychometric properties" due to "overreliance on paradigm-sanctioned methodologies" (p. 349). For example, an alternative explanation of PsyCap is that each component "could be understood as 'markers' of an overarching multidimensional core construct" instead of the currently promoted higher order construct (p. 350). Moreover, it was asserted that state-like manifestations are an expression of the more trait-like qualities of personality and that there may be a stronger link between PsyCap and personality than implied (Dawkins et al., 2013). In addition, discriminant validity is questioned due to observable overlap with core self-evaluations and test-retest reliability (Dawkins et al., 2013).

Another example, building off of positive psychology and psychological capital Schaufeli et al. (2006) specifically examined "work engagement" which is described by "vigor, dedication, and absorption" creating state-like effect(s) (p. 702). They go on to describe a "mental resilience" to respond and cope with circumstances and a "willingness" to "invest" in activity (Schaufeli et al., 2006, p. 702). These descriptions are reminiscent of resiliency, hope, and flow in the work of Luthans et al. (2015) and Csikszentmihalyi (2008) respectively. It maybe, as suggested by Luthans et al., that Schaufeli and colleagues' conceptualization of work engagement serves as a possible outcome or mechanism triggering PsyCap, or it may be possible that engagement and/or flow could be considered a potential resource for inclusion in the PsyCap

model as a contributing element to PsyCap (Luthans et al., 2015). Or, as Dawkins et al. (Dawkins et al., 2013) suggested, the elements of PsyCap and engagement and/or flow are part of an “overarching multidimensional core construct” (p. 350). The caution is to maintain rigor and openness to explore alternative explanations to understand the phenomenon known as PsyCap. As an antidote, Dawkins et al. (2013) encouraged more investigation “outside the founding PsyCap research team” (p. 349).

The foundation of PsyCap rests on state-like qualities that allow for adaptive functioning. Indeed, substantial research in PsyCap has demonstrated that the state-like qualities of hope, efficacy, resiliency, and optimism can be cultivated to engender greater levels of work satisfaction and well-being (Luthans et al., 2015; Wright & Cropanzano, 2004). As a result, PsyCap can be used to examine career interventions to inspire adaptive career exploration and functioning over the life-span. Clients, no matter life development, or work setting, warrant life and career interventions that engage and generate state-like qualities of hope, efficacy, resiliency, and optimism. To illustrate more specificity, the next section will delineate each component of PsyCap.

In 1991, Snyder, Irving, and Anderson (1991b) defined hope and validated the construct with their instrument: the hope scale. In its simplest terms, hope is composed of three parts: agency, goal setting, and way-finding. Below is one of the most useful and often-cited definitions for hope and is cited in Luthans et al. (2015) as being the foundation for their conceptualization of hope:

A positive motivational state that is based on an interactively derived sense of successful (a) agency (goal directed energy) and (b) pathways (planning to meet goals). (Snyder et al., 1991b, p. 287)

Snyder et al. (1991a) suggested that hope has a fixed point, which is relatively stable across time and situations, referring to hope as an “enduring disposition” (p. 571); conversely, they also promoted hope’s cognitive and flexible components. In relation to hope, Luthans, Youssef-Morgan, and Avolio (2015) acknowledged the importance of agency to funnel self-determination and will to motivate goal-seeking behavior; however, the main ingredients responsible for cultivating PsyCap hope are the developmental or augmentable aspects of “pathways” and “alternative pathways” (Luthans et al., 2015, p. 83). Thus, it is the expandable components of hope that psychological capital identifies with more closely.

The definition of efficacy is based on the scholarship of Bandura (1997) who emphasized belief and performance in social cognitive theory:

Efficacy is a generative capability in which cognitive, social, emotional, and behavioral sub skills must be organized and effectively orchestrated to serve innumerable purposes. Self-referent thought activates cognitive, motivational, and affective processes that govern the translation of knowledge and abilities into proficient action. In short, perceived self-efficacy is concerned not with the number of skills you have, but with what you believe you can do with what you have under a variety of circumstances. (Bandura, 1997, p. 36-37)

Stajkovic and Luthans (1998) distilled the conceptualization of Bandura’s work and defined PsyCap self-efficacy as “one’s belief about his or her ability to mobilize the motivation, cognitive resources, and courses of action necessary to execute a specific action in a given context” (p. 66). Fundamentally, efficacy can be framed as belief and confidence (Kanter, 2004).

As defined by Luthans in 2002, PsyCap resiliency is the “developable capacity to rebound or bounce back from adversity, conflict, and failure or even positive events, progress, and increased responsibility” (as cited in Luthans et al., 2015, p. 29). This definition is grounded in adaptation processes, resources, and perceptions of adversity as set forth by Cutuli, Herbers, Masten, and Reed (2018).

PsyCap optimism is grounded in attribution theory/explanatory styles and coping that influence personal expectations (Carver, Scheier, Miller, & Fulford, 2009; Seligman, 2006). For example, attribution theory asserts that people interpret events based on internal or external causes, stable or unstable explanations, and global or local interpretations (Seligman, 2006). Further, career optimism is the expectation of favorable outcomes that influence both career “aspirations” and “exploration,” and in turn fuels adaptability in life (Garcia, Restubog, Bordia, Bordia, & Roxas, 2015, pp. 10-11). Based on the prior work of Carver et al. (2009) and Seligman (1998), Luthans et al. (2015) defined PsyCap optimism “as a generalized positive outlook or expectancy” (p. 29)

The higher order construct PsyCap combines the four state-like constructs of hope, efficacy, resiliency, and optimism to reflect growth and capacity for positive adjustment and performance. Together, the four have a greater performance impact based on highly related core coping features that contribute to the personal assessment of performance (Dawkins et al., 2013). Luthans et al. (2015) typically viewed PsyCap as antecedents to performance while acknowledging PsyCap can also function as moderators or outcomes. A comprehensive definition of PsyCap is provided below:

An individual’s positive psychological state of development that is characterized by (1) having confidence (efficacy) to take on and put in the necessary effort to succeed at challenging tasks; (2) making a positive attribution (optimism) about succeeding now and in the future; (3) persevering toward goals and, when necessary, redirecting paths to goals (hope) in order to succeed; and (4) when beset by problems and adversity, sustaining and bouncing back and even beyond (resiliency) to attain success. (Luthans et al., 2015, p. 2)

In a qualitative study conducted in South Carolina in coordination with the Education and Economics Development Act (EEDA), high school seniors ($N = 71$) were selected randomly from seven schools to receive career development interventions for the purpose of boosting academic and career success through intentional guidance (Stipanovic, Stringfield, & Witherell,

2017). These students engaged in a number of career exploration activities such as learning about career pathways, completing assessments, engaging in work-based learning experiences, and meeting with their school counselor to create or revise their IGP (individual graduation plan) or to engage in academic planning and/or to discuss postsecondary goals. Over a five-year period, the researchers interviewed students using social cognitive career theory as a framework to explore the benefits of participating in a program that focused on career development, career driven majors, goals, and pathways (Stipanovic et al., 2017). At the conclusion of the study, participants demonstrated greater “academic and career self-efficacy” as an outcome of systematic career services (Stipanovic et al., 2017, p. 217). Findings supported gains in self-efficacy and optimism as a major contributor to goal development and success. Success was gauged in terms of course engagement, attendance, and optimism, which were reflected in student interviews. Participant comments are below:

- It gave me a lot to look forward to, and it gave me a reason to work harder in school.
- Kind of pushes you, it helps you to keep yourself in that direction [toward a career]. It gives you direction in life once you do graduate.
- It gives you the motivation to do well. And, it also gives you the tools.
- Made me more motivated ... it gave me, I guess, like a plan as to what I need to do.

(Stipanovic et al, 2017, p. 215)

In this study, intentional career exploration and development generated motivation, confidence, and optimism (Stipanovic et al., 2017). Growth was based on actionable plans that supported discovery and affirmed identity (Stipanovic et al., 2017). The holistic career interventions seemed to tap into state-like qualities that students found motivational. Goals and pathways have been found to distinctly correlate with the expression of hope and persistence (Kibby, 2015;

Snyder et al., 1991a). These state-like qualities can drive purposeful goals and meaningful career development and exploration. Similarly, *WYAM!* emphasizes intentionality, accountability, and action.

A pilot study with management college students and a main study with managers was conducted by Luthans, Avey, Avolio, and Peterson (2010) comparing PCQ scores administered three days prior to the intervention and three days post intervention. The psychological capital intervention (PCI) was comprised of a collection of exercises and facilitated discussions designed to improve individual PsyCap. The intervention was delivered in two hours. Among the PCI group ($N = 153$), participants demonstrated an increase in PsyCap scores post intervention (Luthans et al., 2010). The change was compared to a control group ($N = 89$), which received a different intervention and did not show changes in PsyCap. This study focused on developing PsyCap through a series of exercises focused on goal setting, obstacle identification, group feedback, asset building, and cognitive awareness that impacts performance (Luthans et al., 2010). The main study was comprised of 80 managers from across industry (Luthans et al., 2010). The participants received the same PCI intervention over a two-hour period as the pilot participants. The intervention was promoted as a leadership workshop. “This sample had an average age of 36 years with, on average, a little over a dozen years of full-time work experience. The population was 54% male and predominately white (76%; 4% were African-American, 9% Asian, 7% Hispanic, and 1% Native American)” (Luthans et al., 2010, p. 51). Both samples demonstrated improved PCQ scores suggesting that the PCI was effective at generating psychological capital.

By extension, PsyCap may be developed or exercised through the process of career exploration as it similarly engages agency, goal setting, feedback, insight, and future

potentialities. PsyCap may be harnessed to infuse career interventions with energy and motivation to foster action. Career seekers could potentially benefit from career interventions that engage and generate state-like qualities of hope, efficacy, resiliency, and optimism. These state-like qualities may drive more purposeful goals and meaningful career exploration. In general, development of psychological capital suggests greater adaptation, functioning, and success in life and work (Luthans et al., 2015).

Holistic and Intentional Life/Career Exploration

As indicated, the concept of career exploration has changed over time. As discussed in chapter one, early career theorists focused on trait-and-factor models primarily for youth and middle-aged individuals. Today, the focus is more holistic emphasizing career exploration over the course of a lifetime (Zikic & Hall, 2009). However, many theories, models, and approaches to career counseling are currently used in the field. For example, constructivist approaches have added significantly to career counseling but have not supplanted other models (Blustein, 2013; Savickas, 2013a; Zikic & Hall, 2009). Theorists/practitioners, in general, acknowledge the utility of many and varied approaches to offer a range of services and interventions to assist clients across a wide range of needs, transitions, and developmental spaces (Blustein, 2013; Savickas, 2013a). Nonetheless, Busacca and Rehfuss (2017) summarized our current understanding of life and career counseling that reflects a postmodern orientation and fleshes out the “core facets of counseling – adaptability, meaning, purpose...life stories...active agency” and “nature of assessment – qualitative...nonstatistical, flexible, holistic” (p. 35). Their complete conceptualization of postmodern career counseling can be viewed in Appendix B. In addition, Blustein (2013) promoted a clear emergence of a new “psychology-of-working” that embraces a more holistic and integrative approach to career counseling with an emphasis on social

constructionism (p. 6). The model is more inclusive highlighting interventions that include historically marginalized people and a definition of “decent work” that “cuts across privilege and identity statuses” with an aim toward “well-being” (Duffy et al., 2016; pp. 127-128). Further, the concept of work has individual meanings along a continuum from job to career to calling (Duffy & Dik, 2013; Wrzesniewski, McCauley, Rozin, & Schwartz, 1997). That is to say, work’s purpose varies among individuals so for this study, career is expansive and holistic encompassing life’s broader roles and pursuits.

In addition, given rapid change and work instability, career counseling and practices have broadened to incorporate the construct of chaos or complexity while recognizing the restricted capacity of individuals to make choices due to limited control, contextual forces, and changes in workplace, globalization, politics, and economic realities (Pryor & Bright, 2011). Chaos career theory (CCT) emphasizes the complexity of career development and exploration with multiple shifts or disruptions during the life-span that call for flexibility. CCT also questions the usefulness of person-environment fit citing low correlation to desired outcomes. In other words, fit is not the focus of life/career exploration but openness and flexibility guided by the functions of agency. That is to say, career is conceptualized as an ongoing process complete with disruptions that influence or change a person’s career and/or functioning (Pryor & Bright, 2011). Zikic and Hall (2009) supported this inclusion of complexity and encourage “focusing on examining the process of career exploration as embedded in the current notions of complex” (p. 182). Chaos takes into account the many other factors that influence career development and exploration such as the influence of others, adaptive functioning, meaning, and life narratives (Pryor & Bright, 2011). As suggested in *The Chaos Theory of Careers* (Pryor & Bright, 2011), people seek meaning, make meaning, develop purpose, and cultivate social connections as

anchors in career development and exploration. Masterpasqua sums up chaos' influence on psychological functioning succinctly stating, "it is a state of maximum readiness for an emerging reorganized self-system" (as cited in Pryor & Bright, 2011, p. 41). Through the life-span, individuals intermittently have to reorganize to adapt to new life/career demands and challenges. In support, other theorists assert the need to be flexible (Csikszentmihalyi, 2009) and to utilize adaptive psychological processes to one's advantage (Bridges & Bridges, 2016). It is asserted that *WYAM!* provides opportunities for individuals to reorganize and transform (Franklin, 2015). More recent career theories, practices, and applications embrace this awareness and call to orient people to work, career, and life differently than previous models emphasizing trait-and-factor almost exclusively (Pryor & Bright, 2011; Savickas, 2013b).

Further, Krumboltz (2009) purported the power and influence of happenstance learning theory (HLT), which, like CCT, supports the complexity of career over time and multiple influences over individual lives. Career decision-making is channeled through a wide variety of experiences including instrumental and vicarious learning, education, family, environment, and peers that impact career development by opening and/or restricting opportunities (Krumboltz, 2009). HLT acknowledges uncertainty as a given and promotes openness as a key to healthy career functioning asserting the value and importance of opportunity and potential over prediction in career development and exploration. HLT highlights many life transitions that require adaptation. "For example, there are transitions from work to layoffs, from single to married, from couple to parent, from work to retirement, and from life to death" (Krumboltz, 2009, p. 142). This is similar to disruption and shift found in CCT.

From a practitioner point of view, Krumboltz (2009) merged roles and asserts "counselors are educators" (p. 141). This is particularly salient because *WYAM!* brings together

the qualities of both educator and counselor as a life and career development/exploration facilitator. Life and career exploration are about discovery and generation of opportunities “both planned and unplanned,” and HLT points to and supports specific examples of agentic behavior as detailed below (Krumboltz, 2009, p. 135). To be effective, to make a change, to move forward—career exploration must be converted by agentic motivation that compels action (Krumboltz, 2009). “It requires taking effective *Actions*, for example, exploring, interviewing, researching, expressing interests, establishing contacts, joining clubs, volunteering, or trying part-time jobs” (Krumboltz, 2009, p. 141; emphasis in original). One of HLT’s objectives is to help clients live “more satisfying career and personal lives—not to make a single career decision” (Krumboltz, 2009, p. 135).

Now, career theories or approaches are drawn to constructs and concepts that provide individuals with greater personal and vocational integration resonating with values and life themes found in personal narratives (Savickas, 2015). Career counseling has developed a complementary track to trait-and-factor/person-environment fit that is more phenomenological and constructivist (Savickas, 2015). By extension, postmodern life/career exploration resides at the intersection of agency, psychological capital, and well-being, which engenders adaptability. “Among adult populations, career adaptability has been related to job performance ratings, career satisfaction, life satisfaction, hope, and general well-being and longitudinal research has found that those who are adaptable are more likely to be satisfied with their jobs” (Duffy, Douglass, & Autin, 2015, p. 46).

Narrative Career Counseling

As a call for change in career counseling, McMahon and Patton (2006) delineated the emergence of systems theory to frame career counseling (life/career) utilizing a constructivist

approach to understand individuals within the broader context of society, thereby, encouraging individuals to define and create their own life narratives. This paradigm shift from positivist to constructivist promotes personal meaning and the significance of career over the life-span (Brown & Associates, 2002). It is asserted that constructivist approaches are “more relevant and responsive to the times” (Patton & McMahon, 2006, p. 352), honoring the whole person in context by merging personal and career counseling. Career is viewed in the wider life context of identity development, role expression, work, and globalization (Patton & McMahon, 2006). “We can no longer speak confidently of career development nor of vocational guidance. Rather, we should envision life trajectories in which individuals progressively design and build their own lives, including their work careers” (Savickas et al., 2009, p. 3).

Of significance are numerous assumptions or principles that grew out of systems and constructive approaches:

1. “Multiple realities” exist that inform thinking, feeling, and doing (Peavy, 1995, para. 5) which influence chance and opportunity (Patton & McMahon, 2006).
2. People are “self-organizing,” and use stories to guide decisions and behavior. (Peavy, 1995, para. 6).
3. People seek meaning embedded in relationships and context (Patton & McMahon, 2006; Peavy, 1995).
4. Individuals are creative, reflective, and agentic (Patton & McMahon, 2006; Peavy, 1995).

In support, Lengelle, Meijers, Poell, and Post (2013) wrote extensively about career identity citing the emergence of “narrative theories and approaches to career guidance” to manage the challenges of defining an adaptable self that can navigate emerging potentials through articulated

stories in changing times (p. 419). A story provides the framework to describe, define, and guide aspirational and intentional outcomes that honors “life themes” (Savickas, 2015, p. 27) and the importance of self-directedness or agency in the development of career identity (Reid & West, 2016). Career construction theory provides a framework to integrate subjective experiences through acknowledgment and need for agency, mattering, and meaning making over the course of a lifetime through stories and themes (Savickas, 2013b). Career construction theory grounds and influences career exploration and development in a complementary manner with its emphasis on narrative giving rise to meaning making and identity congruence (Savickas, 2015), extending the importance of self-concept, roles, and lifelong development (Super, 1980).

The intent of career construction theory is to help individuals develop and retain an authentic identity while navigating change (Savickas, 2002). Extending Super’s (1980) ideas, Savickas (2002) anchors career construction theory in social contexts, flexibility, themes, and development over time. As Savickas (2002) proposed, “attitudes, beliefs, and competencies” and “concern, control, conception, and confidence” are foundational to move beyond trait-and-factor placement (pp. 156-157). One approach that has emerged as a result of synthesizing theory and practice is a narrative process called “life-design counseling” (Savickas et al., 2009, p. 6). Co-constructing occurs in counseling when a story or revised story is generated that imbues hope and new direction. Intention and extension serve as the foundation for career exploration and adaptation in this model. Life designing is holistic, subjective, contextual, and relevant for the inclusion of PsyCap to navigate challenges in today’s world (Savickas et al., 2009; Savickas, 2013b). Savickas’ theory resonates with PsyCap. Hope, efficacy, resiliency, and optimism are closely linked to life designing as transformational nutrients. As a result of life designing, new or

evolved stories are developed that create agentic options and actions for career exploration and next steps (Savickas, 2015).

In addition, “protean and boundaryless career attitudes might motivate engagement in certain career development behaviors that result in positive work outcomes, even in uncertain contexts” (Briscoe, Henagan, Burton, & Murphy, 2012, p. 309). A protean career is driven by internal psychological factors and values that influence career development; whereas, boundaryless career attitudes are characterized by openness to possibilities (Briscoe, Hall, & DeMuth, 2006). Stories and life themes provide flexibility and cohesion, pulling together disparate experiences into a self-actualized identity (Lengelle et al., 2013; Savickas, 1997).

The narrative/constructive approach integrates experience, honors identity, and the potential for psychological capital as motivational factors in life and career exploration. These various approaches to life and career construction are linked to PsyCap, PERMA, and agency through constructs that aim to create greater resiliency and control over one’s direction, purpose, and meaning through adaptation (Luthans et al., 2015; Savickas, 2002).

Origins of *Who You Are Matters!*[®]

CareerCycles (CC), a method of career counseling established by Franklin, synthesized postmodern constructivism, narrative counseling, and positive psychology (Zikic & Franklin, 2010). Citing the influences of Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000), CC offers holistic interventions that generate positive states and move clients toward a deeper and more fulfilling expression of self:

The CC method draws on positive psychology that encourages clients and counselors to focus on valued career and life experiences: in the past, well-being, contentment, and satisfaction; for the future, hope and optimism; and the present, flow and happiness. (Zikic & Franklin, 2010, p. 183).

The CC method is grounded in practice having been utilized with thousands of clients (Zikic & Franklin, 2010). Practitioners utilize a narrative process to empower clients to flex and adapt through greater self-awareness. The method guides clients through a series of reflective exercises to explore new career and life possibilities (Zikic & Franklin, 2010). Through the process, clients examine strengths, preferences, temperament, assets, influencers, and abilities. Zikic and Franklin (2010) explained,

For many, it is perhaps the first time that they are articulating what is truly important to them, what they authentically want to do, who they really are, and the possibilities about which they are most curious and want to explore. (p. 185)

Career is viewed flexibly and holistically emphasizing life and self under construction rather than as a defined outcome or occupation (Zikic & Franklin, 2010).

In 2013, Franklin and Detwiler queried, “Does CareerCycles Method increase clients’ psychological capital, personal growth initiative, and curiosity and exploration” (p. 3)? Utilizing both surveys and interviews, they demonstrated an increase in “six key measures: hope, optimism, confidence, resilience, curiosity and exploration, and personal growth initiative” (Franklin & Detwiler, 2013, p. 5). Findings demonstrated promise in helping clients tap internal strengths and capacities for meaningful career exploration. The game *Who You Are Matters!*[®] grew out of this framework.

Additionally, a retrospective outcome study of ($N = 68$) clients utilizing tools and methods from CareerCycles, indicated positive relationships between measures of psychological capital, initiative, and exploration behavior after participants experienced a variety of interventions (Franklin et al., 2015b). The CC framework stages proactive behavior, and the "method of practice" has over 40 tools and interventions to offer clients (Franklin et al., 2015b, p. 13, 14). *WYAM!* fits within this framework as a group exploration experience. The study also

utilized in depth interviews with seven former clients to support their robust quantitative findings. Here are a few participant comments demonstrating insight, fear reduction, confidence, and optimism after experiencing a range of interventions. Results demonstrated participants expanded possibilities and developed a growth mindset:

- Well, I think it just allows me to have more hope and kind of a broader mindset about what the opportunities for me are.
- 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. (Franklin et al., 2015b, p. 18)

The study demonstrated effectiveness as the “CareerCycles Narrative Method of Practice” (Franklin et al., 2017-2018). Interventions appear to generate greater psychological flexibility, which is described by Kashdan and Rottenberg (2010) as the ability to adapt to changing demands and contexts, to shift behaviors and approach strategies in diverse situations, to balance life domains, and to make choices that are congruent with personal values.

OneLifeTools was not mentioned directly in this study, but *WYAM!* is listed on the visual graphic as a tool. At this point, OneLifeTools may have been in the formation process. Nonetheless, intentional career and life exploration is evident in the CareerCycles method. These methods included story telling, generating possibilities, and working toward life/career “clarification” (Franklin et al., 2015b, p. 13). As such, these features and processes are also part of *WYAM!* In sum, it is fair to say that narrative counseling, career construction theory, and OneLife Tools/CareerCycles echo changes in life/career counseling that emphasize process, context, adaptability, complexity, identity expression, meaning, and stories (Alessandria & Nelson, 2005; Franklin et al, 2015b; Patton & McMahon, 2014; Savickas, 2015).

Who You Are Matters![®]

Games have a long history in education, and can be a powerful experience increasing engagement, learning, and growth (Eng, 2017; Kolb, 2015; Plass, Homer, & Kinzer, 2015). Career counseling games are rooted in the idea of interaction, self-discovery, and exploration by asking questions such as these: “How can I make the most of my opportunities?”; “How can I learn more about myself and the world of work?”; “How can I manage expected and unexpected job transitions?”; and “How can I develop meaningful and individually tailored career and life plans?” (Whiston & Blustein, 2013, para. 2). Recall that life/career is “the full expression of who you are and how you want to be in the world, which keeps on expanding as it naturally goes through cycles of stability and change” (Franklin, 2015, p. 451). The life/career intervention *WYAM!* relies on this postmodern definition of career that compels curiosity, and “group discovery” designed to engage participants in intentional life and career exploration (Franklin et al., 2015a, p. 11).

The game challenges players to look at their experiences in novel ways, which in turn is intended to create hope and inspire action. Life and career exploration is the experiential product of game play that may motivate next steps through the interaction of various psychological constructs including psychological capital, well-being, and agentic behavior. The game offers a hands-on experience in which players take turns selecting relevant statements from a range of Element Cards, sharing stories, providing feedback, and creating novel life/career directions to explore. Using CareerCycles practices and *WYAM!*, clients share stories to explore and construct modified or new stories that inform and affirm direction (Franklin et al., 2015a, 2015b).

As such, the experience is dependent on participant engagement. An assumption is that players provide useful feedback to help each other see possibilities by re-imagining career and

life roles. Clear directions guide the quality of social interactions, stories, and feedback. “The exploration of career as self-realization and growing experiences is implemented using action and narrative” (Conkel-Ziebel & Grier-Reed, 2009, p. 27). *WYAM!* is promoted as a holistic career intervention that has the potential to help life and career explorers develop meaningful goals and action steps (Franklin et al., 2015b).

The components of game play draw upon numerous theories and approaches including positive psychology, narrative counseling, and transformational learning theory to drive intentional action on the part of individuals to act as self-determined agents (Franklin & Detwiler, 2013). The game helps individuals explore life/career through the lenses of identity, values, strengths, time, and life roles at any point during the life-span (Franklin & Feller, 2017; Super et al., 1996) and life trajectory (Savickas 2015).

Agency

Agentic behavior (Bandura, 2001) is a thematic constant in positive psychology (Adler & Seligman, 2016), psychological capital (Newman et al., 2014), career construction theory (Patton & McMahon, 2014), and in *WYAM!* (Franklin & Feller, 2017), all of which ground and motivate individuals toward a life of reflection, meaning, and action. Agency is intentionality that is guided by self-efficacy compelling forward movement (Bandura, 2008). In other words, agency is the belief that choices and actions matter and can produce desirable outcomes. It is this belief that motivates us to take action toward aspirations. Bandura (2008) is passionate about agency and self-efficacy being a cornerstone of optimal functioning, decision-making, and environmental selection to express who we are fundamentally. Additionally, Bandura (2006) acknowledged that we do not function in a vacuum, and that we do not have full autonomy. The core features of agency enable people to play a part in their self-development, adaptation, and

self-renewal with changing times” (Bandura, 2001, p. 2). Nonetheless, Bandura (2006) delineated four properties of agency. Intentionality is comprised of developing goals and methods (Bandura, 2006). Forethought represents visualized potentials that motivate “direction, coherence, and meaning to one’s life” (p. 165). Self-reactiveness is the process of “multifaceted self-directedness” that “operates through self-regulatory processes” while pursuing goals (p. 165). Self-reflectiveness is the capacity to reflect on one’s course of actions, efficacy, and meaning to enable course corrections for desired outcomes (Bandura, 2006). Likewise, reactive resilience (Luthans, Vogelgesang, & Lester, 2006) overlaps with agentic functions of regulation, reflection, and adjustment—the ability to bounce back from adversity (Luthans et al., 2015). The following quote serves to summarize Bandura’s view and importance of agency:

People conceive of ends and work purposefully to achieve them. They are agents of experiences, not just undergoers of experiences. These belief systems are a working model of the world that enables people to achieve desired futures and avoid untoward ones. (Bandura, 2006, p. 168)

Moreover, in an analysis of vocational psychology literature, Brown and Lent (2016) noted the repeated occurrence and importance of “the social justice zeitgeist of contemporary vocational psychology: promoting agency in career development...and well-being” (p. 543). Career exploration operates within the construct of agency, and the centrality of work in people’s lives to express agency or self-determination in a complex world (Bandura, 2006; Blustein, 2013). As such, agency is a necessary ingredient of fruitful career exploration although its expression may have limits based on a variety of inequities, biases, and lack of opportunities that exist in the culture (Blustein, 2013). Bandura (2001) encapsulated the significance and function of agency:

To be an agent is to intentionally make things happen by one’s actions. Agency embodies the endowments, belief systems, self-regulatory capabilities and distributed structures and functions through which personal influence exercised, rather than residing as a discrete

entity in a particular place. The core features of agency enable people to play a part in their self-development, adaptation, and self-renewal with changing times. (p. 2)

The theorists in this section emphasize people as active agents that seek meaning and adaptation in a variety of contexts to fulfill innate drives and needs (Bandura, 2006; Deci & Ryan, 2000; Luthans et al., 2015).

Transformational Learning

The philosophical underpinning of this study is reflected in the traditions of andragogy such as relevance of new learning, agency, value of experience, and motivational resources that drive growth and development (Merriam, 2001). Savickas (2015) specifically cited Kolb's (1984) experiential learning theory (ELT) as part of the life-design process, which advances clients from concrete experience to reflection and experimentation in order to develop new stories and new life/career directions (Savickas, 2015). Through the process of holistic career exploration (Savickas, 2015) and experiential learning (Kolb, 2015), individuals construct new possibilities through reflection, action, and agency (Bandura, 2006). CCT also supports personal transformation through reflective practices that lead to new interpretations of self and future possibilities (O'Doherty & Roberts, 2000). "Meaning and truth – via the agency of education, cognition, reflection, and the practice of some form of temporal planning and ordering – are restored or constructed" (O'Doherty & Roberts, 2000, p. 147). These theories and approaches to learning are contextual, holistic, and function within multiple domains of an individual's life (Kolb, 2015; Savickas, 2015; Zikic & Franklin, 2010).

Further, through the use of grounded theory and analytic descriptions, Mezirow (2009) developed, defined, and refined a phase theory of transformational learning:

1. A disorienting dilemma.
2. Self examination
3. A critical assessment of assumptions.
4. Recognition that one's discontent and the process of transformation
5. Exploration of options for new roles, relationships, and action.
6. Planning a course of

action. 7. Acquiring knowledge and skills for implementing one's plan. 8. Provisional trying of new roles. 9. Building competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships. 10. A reintegration into one's life on the basis conditions dictated by one's new perspective. (Mezirow, 2009, p. 19)

Updating transformative learning theory, Arnd-Michael Nohl (2015) analyzed biographical interviews of approximately 80 individuals from research projects carried out between 2001 and 2013 in Germany to substantiate and recontextualize Mezirow's theory. "Special attention was given to those 25 biographies in which the core life orientation changed over time" (Nohl, 2015, p. 38). Through a process of comparative analysis across a variety of social groups, Nohl arrived at a simplified five phase transformational learning model:

The transformation process begins with a (1) non-determining start and continues with (2) a phase of the experimental and undirected inquiry and a (3) phase of social testing and mirroring. The process is boosted during a (4) shifting of relevance and, finally, leads to (5) social consolidation and reinterpretation biography. (p. 39)

Transformative learning theory provides the substrate for the career game *Who You are Matters!*[®]. Transformative learning is engaging, encourages adaptation, and new applications of learning, and it is game play that converts experience and stories into potential action (Kolb, 2015; Mezirow, 2009). Mezirow (2009) explained,

Transformations may be epochal (involving dramatic or major changes) or incremental and may involve objective (task oriented) or subjective (self-reflective) reframing. In objective reframing, points of view are changed when we become critically reflective of the content of a problem or of the process of problem solving. A frame of reference is transformed when we become critically reflective of the premise of the problem and redefine it. (Mezirow, 2009, p. 23)

Transformational learning goes hand in hand with narrative counseling and career construction theory as all seek to support changes in awareness and knowledge that expands possibilities. Overall, theory funnels into interventions such as *WYAM!*, which provides opportunities for individuals to develop intentional plans through the processes of story and functions of agency promoting engagement and action (Franklin & Feller, 2017).

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Chapter three outlines the paradigmatic approach taken for the study, reflexive influences, and research design. The study focused on participant experiences playing the life and career game *Who You Are Matters!*[®] with the aim to explore, describe, discover (Corbin & Strauss, 2008), and interpret experience (Riessman, 2008).

Approach

A constructivist/interpretivist paradigm served as the point of departure to inform and examine subjective experience (Erickson, 2012). Based on the synthesis of many scholars, Savin-Baden and Major (2013) posited core concepts related to qualitative research and encouraged researchers to adopt or self-define one or more guiding ideas. The concepts that resonated for me as the researcher were “authenticity,” “rigour,” “relevance,” “goodness,” and “truth value” (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). Moreover, Charmaz (2008, 2011) highlighted the salience of voice, meaning, processes, perspective, nuance, reflexivity, justice, and interpretation to shape knowledge construction. Together, these captured fundamental ideas that guided the study.

As such, I sought to remain vigilant during data collection and analysis to arrive at a plausible understanding of player experience by triangulating findings to promote trustworthiness (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). Additionally, I embraced the role of researcher as an investigative scientist and artist purposely seeking to understand phenomena, to gain insight, and to tell stories of human experience (Fraser, 2004; Glesne, 2016). The magnanimous approach emphasized hermeneutics, storytelling, and hope (Denzin, 2012). Overall, the approach shaped the study and served rigor (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013).

Reflexivity and Positionality

My first step into qualitative research was autoethnography. I painted detailed portraits and landscapes that contextualized my identity through a visual narrative, a story in pictures. In concrete terms, I created a series of paintings that depicted people and locations that informed my identity development. Through this and other experiences, I learned that the researcher serves as the “primary data collection instrument” (Creswell, 1994, p. 163), collecting, constructing, and interpreting meaning from data (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

Likewise, positionality scholarship asserts the “researcher as primary research tool” and that our positions or identities mediate research (Choi, 2006, p. 437). In line with qualitative research, my positionality is shared because it influences and impacts methodology and interpretation (Bourke, 2014; Choi, 2006). For example, I subscribe to the philosophy that research is intersubjective, social, and should ideally function to lift or liberate people from limiting beliefs or constraints. This perspective is grounded in constructivism (England, 1994; Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011). This view is also supported by democratic and cooperative approaches to research (Heron & Reason, 1997). With this in mind, my positionality is influenced by my personal characteristics of being American, white, female, married, middle class, and a first-generation college student. Moreover, based on positionality scholarship, some of these characteristics may be perceived as dominant or privileged aspects of identity and/or as a position of power (Bourke, 2014). To mitigate this, the research process was as transparent as possible. For example, I provided common definitions for some key words in questionnaire 1, and I asked open-ended questions that gleaned participant reflections and meanings about their experiences of game play. This disposition allowed me to serve as a representative interpreter of multiple voices (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

Informing Experiences

The courses in my PhD program have prepared me to serve as researcher. From my experience and disciplines of study, I have learned to listen, observe, question, create, reflect, design, analyze, synthesize, construct, and apply. Bloom's taxonomy of educational objectives, a standard in pedagogy, are reflected in these ideas (Bloom, Engelhart, Furst, Hill, & Krathwohl, 1956). Krathwohl's (2002) revised terms are remember, understand, apply, analyze, evaluate, and create. The revised taxonomy expanded the original classification to include active manipulation through retrieving, constructing, and transforming knowledge. These dimensions were informative to the entire process of research. The changes in Bloom's taxonomy echoed and resonated with the constructivist/bricolage approach to inquiry and analysis which aims to understand experience and create new knowledge through the use of multiple lenses and methods. Investigation and interpretation skills were also reflected in a range of acquired counseling skills in particular the use of open-ended questions, listening (Miller & Rollnick, 2013), collaboration (Guterman, 2013), and practitioner qualities (Wosket, 2006).

Further, having worked in college admissions with diverse students and staff, I was challenged and privileged to see the world through multiple lenses—worldviews, cultures, ethnicities, and economic backgrounds. That is to say, I learned firsthand about identity development, which was pertinent to this research study. Specifically, as a practice, I asked student staff open-ended questions about their needs as I worked to incorporate their voices into our team. This style reflected a participatory approach to leadership and inquiry (Roberts, 2013). Overall, my experience, philosophical approach, and cultivated skills informed the study and influenced my practice as a qualitative researcher.

My Role

During game sessions, I functioned primarily as a facilitator and once as an integrated player. Joining one game play as a player was unanticipated. I notified my dissertation committee and Institutional Research Board (IRB) about joining a game play. This accommodation was ultimately allowed and approved by the IRB. Indeed, given the research paradigm, it did not seem out of the ordinary to join a game as an active participant observer. I weighed the pros and cons of retaining the data and determined that it would be usable; however, my participation brought a few unique dimensions to the findings. I will make a brief note of these here. Given that I was significantly older than the other players, my participation changed the general profile of the group and brought a greater awareness of development over the life-span to the group. As a result of my participation, my stories were analyzed as part of the data set of stories and texts. I did not block quote any of my specific stories in findings, complete a demographic form, or submit questionnaires.

Acquiring participants at large on a college campus brought unexpected challenges, and I would recommend future studies be conducted in alliance with one or two instructors or community programs to access participants more directly. Nonetheless, in this study, I might have been perceived as an insider or outsider to the participants, or I may have been perceived as filling a space between insider and outsider: modeling, teaching, and stepping in and out of group play or interactions as a guide (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). Furthermore, from a position of commonality, I viewed myself as a fellow traveler in career exploration and development seeking expansion and enrichment through the course of my life (Super, 1980). In short, I held the view that life/career exploration is personal, integral to personality expression, and a shared human experience.

Managing Myopia

All of these factors were considered as possible influences that could positively or negatively impact participant experience depending on previous experience with career exploration, facilitated instruction, and collaboration. Nevertheless, it is generally held that understanding can be obtained.

Interpretivists believe that when appropriate methods are employed, a researcher can grasp a truth/reality, know other's lives, and represent others from their perspectives. They suggest appropriate methods are in-depth interviewing, prolonged observation, member-checking, peer-debriefing and triangulation. (Choi, 2006, p. 437).

To this end, I incorporated appropriate practices to construct/co-construct knowledge from the study to honor “multivoice reconstruction” (Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011, p. 101). I employed prolonged engagement with the data, conducted a variety of analyses, employed constant comparison for thematic development, utilized theoretical sampling, supported research with literature, and interrogated the data critically which resulted in triangulation (Choi, 2006; Jonsen, Fendt, & Point, 2018; Lincoln & Guba, 1986; Wertz et al., 2011). As a useful reminder to approaching content, PsyCap stands for psychological capital and the higher order construct that combines hope, self-efficacy, resiliency, and optimism (HERO; Luthans et al., 2015). Additionally, PERMA is the acronym that represents Seligman's (2013) theory of well-being which is composed of five elements: positive emotions, engagement, positive relationships, meaning, and accomplishment. For the purposes of transparency and reflexivity my assumptions follow:

1. Assumptions of the life and career exploration game: *Who You Are Matters!*[®] (*WYAM!*)
 - a. Games are an engaging delivery method for relevant learning (Plass et al., 2015) and career exploration (Franklin & Feller, 2017).
 - b. *WYAM!* is holistic and generates life/career possibilities through a narrative process (Franklin & Feller, 2017).

- c. *WYAM!* caters to diverse populations over the life-span recognizing changes across time (Franklin & Feller, 2017; Super, 1980).
 - d. *WYAM!* has a specific structure that provides an opportunity for individuals to develop a HEROIC mindset (Feller, 2017).
2. Assumptions of participants playing the life and career exploration game: *WYAM!*
- a. Participants actively want to explore life/career because people are goal directed (Snyder, 1991a).
 - b. Participants will have a wide variety of purposes and definitions for career exploration. Career exploration is inclusive of and not limited to such concepts and constructs as life roles, life-span, life-space (Super, 1980), life themes, life designing (Savickas et al., 2009), work, job, career, vocation, avocation, volunteerism, legacy, calling (Duffy & Dik, 2013), retirement, etc.
 - c. Participants will be open, authentic, and in the moment to best serve self and others during game play. Participants will engage in a group intervention (Janeiro, Mota, & Ribas, 2014).
 - d. Participants will be comprised of similar and diverse individuals explicated in this chapter. Participants will have a variety of prior life/career exploration/management experiences and work experiences.
 - e. It is natural for participants to seek growth opportunities and/or peak experiences. Peak experiences might occur while playing the game or after as an extension of game play (Maslow, 1954).
3. Assumptions that serve the processes of life and career exploration.
- a. Life/Career exploration is a process, developmental experience (Johnson & Mortimer, 2002), and an expressive endeavor (Lengelle & Meijers, 2013).
 - b. Life/Career exploration is a subjective, personal, constructivist experience (Savickas, 2013b).
 - c. Life/Career exploration and agentic expression are based on wide and varied meanings and factors including but not limited to environment, life-span, abilities, competencies of exploration, development, psychological capital, social context, life roles, strengths, skills, interests, experiences, values, and characteristics/personality, etc...
 - d. Life/Career development are ongoing processes throughout the life-span (Savickas, 2015, Super, 1980).
 - e. Life/Career expression contributes to personal meaning and purpose (Dik et al., 2015) and contributes to well-being/PERMA (Seligman, 2013).
 - f. Life/Career exploration may require or benefit from psychological capital (PsyCap).
 - g. Psychological capital assumes goal driven behavior (Luthans et al., 2015).

Research Design

In general, Kincheloe (2005) defined bricolage as a fluid process that deploys a variety of methods and disciplines to construct and convey knowledge grounded in context. In addition,

Scribner (2005) described the use of bricolage as a “heuristic device” and “conceptual organizer” (p. 297). The use of bricolage was pragmatic, constructivist, creative, and multitheoretical (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Kincheloe, 2008b; Rogers, 2012; Sharp, 2019), representing the processes of research (England, 1994). It is a way of “seeing research” to strengthen the examination and telling of findings (Sharp, 2019, p. 52). Throughout the study, the bricolage approach served to maintain a deep appreciation for complexity and multiple perspectives in order to develop understanding in a distributed, contextual reality (Kincheloe, 2005). With this in mind, I used Kincheloe’s conceptualization of narrative bricolage to guide the study:

Narrative bricolage: appreciates the notion that all research knowledge is shaped by the types of stories inquirers tell about their topics. Such story types are not innocently constructed but reflect particular narratological traditions: comedy, tragedy, and irony. The bricoleur’s knowledge of the frequently unconscious narrative formula at work in the representation of the research allows a greater degree of insight into the forces that shape the nature of knowledge production. Thus, more complex and sophisticated research emerges from the bricolage. (Kincheloe, 2005, p. 336)

The story I tell is about players and their experience. As such, the narrative type for this study is better described as a quest/hero story—emphasizing progression and transformational learning (Feller & Chapman, 2018; Glesne, 2016; Nohl, 2015; Riessman, 2008). As suggested by narrative inquiry, the “relation between meaning and action” represents the evolving self or multiple selves and influences (Charmaz, 2011; Foubert, Nixon, Sisson, & Barnes, 2005; Riessman, 2008, p. 89). Findings and discussion are presented as “a sequence of representations connecting the parts to the whole” (Denzin, 2012, p. 85; Fraser, 2004) of a constructed understanding of game experience and players’ stories on the evolving self.

Overall, the bricolage was used flexibly and emergently (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011) to understand the experience of life and career exploration in the game *Who You Are Matters!*[®]. The study was bound (Glesne, 2016) by game play using three game sessions to understand and

interpret the experiences of participants. This approach allowed for a multiperspectival approach to narrative analysis (Kincheloe, 2005) that guided an understanding of player experience, expressions of agency, psychological capital, and well-being that motivate and inspire goal seeking behavior. The bricolage allowed for the construction/co-construction of meaning and knowledge to discern trustworthiness of data and transferability. (Lincoln & Guba, 1986). For more detailed discussions on bricolage refer to texts written by Kincheloe (2005), Rogers (2012), and/or Scribner (2005), and for a complete visual conceptualization of bricolage, refer to de Campos and Ribeiro (2016). In sum, bricolage has evolved over the years and represents a robust approach to research.

Research Questions

To deeply understand the experience of playing *Who You Are Matters!*[®], one key question was considered, and two questions were subsumed (Glesne, 2016).

1. How do participants experience the game *Who You Are Matters!*[®] ?
2. How do features of PsyCap and well-being manifest in the experience of game-play?
3. What post-game play actions do participants take?

The questions were supported by extensive literature that suggested agentic behavior (Bandura, 2006) and/or self-determination (Deci & Ryan, 2000) informs motivation and behavior through innate processes and needs that stimulate goal attainment (Luthans et al., 2015). Purposeful exploration is a natural motivator for agentic expression—a life of reflection, meaning, and intentional action. In this study, goal attainment is focused through the experience of structured game play. Further, a constructivist view of meaning was adopted. That is to say, people actively construct meaning and reality that affirms talent, strength, and purpose (Savickas, 2015). The

questions garnered thick descriptions (Geertz, 1973) of life and career exploration, player interaction, synergies, psychological capital, well-being, and action.

Participants

Multiple data collection techniques provided an opportunity for a deeper understanding of participant experience through construction and reconstruction from different data sources (Riessman, 2008). Effective data collection was achieved through preparation, consent, rapport building, transparency, recorded sessions, and open-ended questions that elicited a broad range of responses (Riessman, 2008). For reference, the consent form is located in Appendix C. Participants were recruited via recruitment letters, flyers, and networking. Recruitment materials are located in Appendix D. The study focused on the experiences of eight students. Tangentially, I became a player for one game to support an appropriate complement of participants, which is a minimum of three players. My participation was determined to have minimal impact on research goals and was approved by the Institutional Research Board. All approvals and amendments can be viewed in Appendix C. My stories were analyzed as part of the narrative data, but I did not participate in the questionnaires. Participants were all selected from a large four-year university in the Rocky Mountain region. Recruitment and participant criteria can be viewed in Appendix D. For all components of the research study, the total time commitment for participants was anticipated to be no longer than 2 hours and 45 minutes. All participants were female and ranged in age from 18-23. In addition, each student identified as a first generation college student, and/or as a first/second year college student, and/or as a first/second year seminar student. For their time, participants were given a gift card worth no more than \$10.00, and provided a letter of participation to pursue extra credit. A basic profile of each participant is provided below.

- Participant 1: Identified as an 18-year-old, White/American, first-year college student.
- Participant 2: Identified as a 23-year-old, Asian, first-generation international college student.
- Participant 3: Identified as a 20-year-old, Caucasian, first-generation college student.
- Participant 4: Identified as an 18-year-old, undeclared cultural identity, first-year college student.
- Participant 5: Identified as a 19-year-old, undeclared cultural identity, first-year college student.
- Participant 6: Identified as a 19-year-old, American, first-generation college student taking in the second year of college.
- Participant 7: Identified as an 18-year-old, American, first-year college student.
- Participant 8: Identified as a 20-year-old, Hispanic, first-generation college student.

In general, participants brought an array of background knowledge, experience, contexts, identities, expectations, and levels of readiness to benefit from the study (Darling-Hammond, Wilhoit, & Pittenger, 2014; Milner, 2007).

Data Collection

Data collection was comprised of multiple strategies, and Table 1 shows the research questions, collection methods, and analyses conducted. I have outlined each collection method and analysis. I started with reflexive analytic notes to capture questions, critical insights, curiosities, exceptions, tangents, and patterns (Glesne, 2016). The value of reflexivity is conveyed below.

Reflexivity not only highlights how human positioning influences the research processes, it exposes how an object of inquiry can be interpreted from multiple vantage points. In this way, reflexivity adds depth and plurality to the inquiry process. While a researcher’s positioning is embraced, a phenomenon’s intertextuality, interconnectedness, and relationships with other phenomena can be explored. (Rogers, 2012, p. 4-5)

Keeping reflexive analytic notes enabled me to track insights and evolutions in thinking and note relevant associations that would have otherwise been easily lost.

Table 1

Research Questions, Data Collection, and Analyses

Research Question	Data Collection	Analysis
Main question: How do participants experience the game <i>Who You Are Matters!</i> [®] ?	Analytic notes, Stories Questionnaire 1	Structural Narrative, Interpretive/thematic, Categorical, Diagrammatic, Poetic
Subsumed question: How do features of PsyCap and well-being manifest in the experience of game play?	Analytic notes, Stories, Questionnaire 1	Structural Narrative, Interpretive/thematic, Categorical, Diagrammatic, Poetic
Subsumed question: What post-game play actions do participants take?	Questionnaire 2	Categorical (pre-formulated)

To collect stories and manage the various activities associated with the study, I hosted one game at a time, but multiple games can be facilitated simultaneously (Franklin et al., 2017-2018). In total, I hosted three game sessions. I selected an appropriate and easily accessible site for participants to convene, a conference room at the university’s student center. The conference table was large enough to accommodate intake procedures and closing procedures at one end of the table, and to host game play at the other end. As a reminder, participation took approximately 2 hours for each game day session. This included 5-15 minutes for intake forms, and 10-20 minutes to complete a questionnaire immediately following game-play. I video recorded all

game sessions in order to collect and transcribe player stories and texts for analysis. Video recorded data allowed for extended and repeated listening to ensure accurate transcription of player stories (Glesne, 2016). Participant documents such as consent, welcome, debrief, and directions are located in Appendix D.

Two questionnaires were also administered. These grew out of a single follow-up questionnaire administered during the pilot project. For this study, I decided to create two questionnaires. This allowed me to split up questions by category of experience related to game session and post-game actions. The first questionnaire (questionnaire 1) immediately followed game play using eight open-ended questions (Bazely, 2013; Charmaz, 2011). The first four questions focused broadly on player experience. These questions tapped into participants' benefits, feelings, insights, and agentic reflections (Patton, 2002). The next four questions were specifically related to state-like qualities. I explicitly shared vocabulary and provided definitions to aid participants in reflection and sense making. This openness allowed for a sense of transparency and collaboration with participants by providing common ground and a window for co-constructed meaning to develop (Crotty, 2015; Jonsen et al., 2018). All eight participants responded to questionnaire 1. Players took approximately 10-20 minutes to respond to questionnaire 1, and responses were typically formatted as short paragraphs. The questions sparked shared, common, and unique reflections for analysis (Glesne, 2016). For reference, questionnaire 1 is located in Appendix E.

Participants also completed an electronic follow-up questionnaire (questionnaire 2) at two to three weeks post-game play. The follow-up questionnaire was created in *SurveyMonkey* and sent out via link to specifically explore the research question: What post-game play actions do participants take? This questionnaire took no longer than 10 minutes to complete. The follow-up

questionnaire (Appendix F) went through a variety of iterations and grew out of the original questionnaire from the pilot study. In the pilot study, there was only one question that explored actions taken, and it was composed of thirty possible action items. Participants checked all that applied. The original pilot questionnaire was inspired by an action list from a career worksheet created by MnCareers (2013). Their worksheets provide structure for job seekers to explore, take action, and learn by using such selections as “prepared a resume” followed by journaling prompts such as “what I learned” (MnCareers, 2013). After data collection from the pilot, I analyzed and organized the list according to five categories or types of actions related to life and career exploration. Then I brainstormed and extended the list with the input of PhD students and Dr. Makela, a research professor. To view questionnaire 2, see Appendix F. Doing the categorical analysis from the pilot allowed me to move from one broad question about actions taken to five categories or action types. Following additional feedback, I reflected and refined the action items associated with each category. As a result, questionnaire 2 (Appendix F) evolved into a matrix of five action categories and 60 action items. Participants selected all that applied. I also incorporated more game language into possible actions to more easily activate recall. The five resultant categories were (a) seeking information, (b) thinking and reflecting, (c) sparking meaningful conversations, (d) building relationships and making connections, and (e) creating deeper engagement. Here are a few example action responses: “researched my expanded possibility and/or inspired action” and “read a book, or article related to my expanded possibility and/or inspired action.” These two action responses were from the category seeking information. The resultant matrix allowed for a more granular examination of actions taken in relation to time horizons offered. Time horizons offered were “I have done this,” “I plan on doing this between now and 3 months,” and “I plan on doing this within the next 3-6 months.” Participants could

also select “I do not plan on doing this,” or “not applicable/not related to my expanded possibility and/or inspired action.” Participants could also write in their own option. This was done once. The categories are somewhat progressive and process oriented representing possible next steps participants might have taken as a result of game play. Six of the eight participants responded to the follow-up questionnaire (questionnaire 2).

Analysis

Strategically, bricolage allowed for an organic, creative, and eclectic approach to data collection and analysis promoting discovery and deep understanding of player experience (Kincheloe, 2005). I conducted a range of analyses to create a robust and complete story of research findings (Kincheloe, 2005). Methods included structural, thematic/interpretive, diagrammatic, poetic, and categorical methods representing “multiple ways of knowing” (Lincoln & Lynham, 2011). This allowed for conceptualization and rich description of experience and meaning (Lincoln & Lynham, 2011). These were aligned with reflexive, inductive, abductive, and interpretive processes of knowledge construction (Jonsen et al., 2018). The intent of using a bricolage approach was to honor complexity and context (Kincheloe, 2005).

Categorical analysis of questionnaire 1. Transcription of questionnaires (questionnaire 1) and analysis started following each game play. This data set was analyzed progressively through four stages of analysis and shed light on player experience. Each stage of analysis was retained to serve as an “audit trail” (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Player texts/comments were color coded and labeled for game origin and source of examples. Stage one of this process focused on open codes. I coded using in vivo phrases and/or descriptions of participant responses. These responses reflected a range of happenings (i.e., nature/types of codes: experiences, evaluation, processes, and psychological events in relation to learning) that occurred during game play. For

example, in stage one the in vivo open code (descriptor), “opportunity to hear other peoples’ stories,” led to the creation of an axial code labeled methods of learning. In stage two of analysis, the category/theme was designated as methods of learning and the property—vicarious learning, dimension—listening. The original open code, “opportunity to hear other peoples’ stories,” now became an example of occurrence as a method of learning. Stage three served to combine each individual question (from questionnaire 1) from across game plays. For example, all responses to question one were brought together to compare for patterns and to merge data. This original open code, “opportunity to hear other peoples’ stories,” became absorbed under a new integrative category label: activating agency and PERMA through game play processes under the property – community; dimension – interpersonal; attribute – vicarious; feature – listening as an example of occurrence. This was done for each question/response. Lastly, the fourth stage of analysis brought together all responses from questions 1-4 and questions 5-8 respectively. In the fourth stage of analysis, the open code, “opportunity to hear other peoples’ stories,” was consolidated with other responses and moved under a new category: transformational learning; property – community; dimension – vicarious learning. This process represented expansion and contraction of the coding process moving from open, axial, category/theme, property, dimension, and rarely used attribute and feature. I decided not to use attribute and feature labels because these were very rarely apprehended or coded. This process served to consolidate categories across game plays. Ultimately, after extensive time with the data looking for similarities and differences across game plays, the final analysis was structured according to category, property, and dimension. The resultant categories for questions 1-4 were (a) game structure and context, (b) constructing identity, (c) promoting PERMA/well-being, (d) transformational learning, and (e) PsyCap. In addition, there were 16 properties and 22 dimensions constructed. For questions 5-8

the process yielded the following categories (a) manifesting and accessing optimism, (b) PERMA/well-being, (c) transformational learning strategies, (d) accessing PsyCap, and (e) activating/cultivating agency. There were 20 properties and 53 dimensions constructed for this set of responses. The process of analysis (induction and deduction) allowed me to combine and reduce data in meaningful categories/themes across game plays (Wertz et al., 2011), thereby increasing trustworthiness (Riessman, 2008), and helped to explore and answer the first research question: How do participants experience *WYAM!*?

To practice due diligence, I examined this data for negative cases and alternative explanations that might contradict my findings and interpretation. This is a method recommended by Corbin and Strauss (2008) to challenge and strengthen research. With this in mind, two participants in particular expressed a limited shift or cultivation of psychological capital. That is to say, not all participants experienced a positive shift that reflected every element of psychological capital. These following comments were from questionnaire 1 immediately following game play and represented potential contradictions to analysis. Participant 2 reflected no shift in hope and efficacy, stating, “I’m not sure if I feel any significant shifts after playing this game,” and “I do believe I can . . . achieve my goal . . . before playing this game.” Participant 7 stated, “I did not experience any moments of resiliency.” In analysis, these comments were anomalous and represented 3 responses out of 32 responses related to PsyCap expression and/or development in questionnaire 1. These types of comments could be related to global development and/or a high PsyCap at game entry. Further, in analytic notes, I recorded an alternative explanation for the expression of PERMA/well-being (specifically related to the properties of relationships and meaning) as a possible expression of Adler’s construct

social interest (2011). Social interest is characterized by feelings of goodwill, connection, cooperation, and meaning that is encapsulated socially (Adler, 2011).

Structural narrative and thematic analyses. In *WYAM!* stories are represented by original stories and response stories in the first half of game play and expanded possibilities in the second half of game play. Player stories were analyzed using two methods. The first method was structural analysis, which allowed for systematic transcription and overview of story components (Labov & Waletzky, 1997; Riessman, 2008). I listened repeatedly to identify the structural components of each story. In this study, 134 stories were analyzed in this manner. In structural analysis there are six typical components to stories, but this expression can vary due to length and detail:

A “fully formed” narrative includes six elements: an abstract (summary and / or “point” of the story); orientation (to time, place, characters, situation); complicating action (the event sequence, or plot, usually with a crisis or turning point); evaluation (where the narrator steps back from the action to comment on meaning and communicate emotions—the “soul” of the narrative); resolution (the outcome of the plot); and a coda (ending the story and bringing action back to the present). (Riessman, 2008, p. 84)

In *WYAM!*, stories typically have two to five structural components: (a) declarations and appreciations were typically located in abstracts; (b) identity expression in relation to people and places occurred in orientations; (c) turning points, intensity, and challenges occurred in complicating actions; (d) value, meaning, and agentic functions occurred in evaluations; and (e) summations or ongoing applications in resolutions. A return to setting occurred in codas.

Table 2 represents an original story. Participant 5 highlighted the value of a summer job in her abstract, bringing her learning into the present for reflection on current significance. The orientation conveyed the experience in relation to duration and place. In her complicating action, she acknowledged that the opportunity “changed” her life, representing a significant turning point. The job held her interest, and she was able to glean greater self-awareness, influencing

PsyCap and PERMA. In the evaluation or soul of the story, she reflected that the job revealed her “values.” In the resolution, she stated current relevance—informing a possible career path. This story brought the experience to the forefront and allowed her to consider current relevance.

Table 2

Original Story: Participant 5

Phrase	Component / Function
I'd say a summer job	AB – Abstract (point of story)
I've had the past 2 summers.	OR – Orientation (orientation to time, place, people, and situations)
It's like really changed my life.	CA – Complicating Action (sequence, or plot, might represent a crisis or turning point)
It showed me, like, what my values are	EV – Evaluation (soul of narrative, meaning)
and possibly what, like, what career I may want to pursue and stuff.	RE – Resolution (outcome)
	CO – Coda (bringing back to present)

These types of stories appear to build internal resources growing self-efficacy/confidence. For players, *WYAM!* stories reveal patterns of importance and provide opportunities for reflection, meaning, and social consolidation to occur. Table 3 represents the response story to the original story found in Table 2. Generally, response stories communicate affirmation and resonance, which is guided by game structure. In her abstract, participant 3 related directly to the experience of participant 5, thus, affirming and elevating the significance of both players' stories and generating good feelings or resonance related to PERMA. In her orientation, she stated, “I,

recently, just did that last summer.” Due to similarity, this linked the players to common experience and life space, contributing to an emotional connection. This is easily traced to PERMA and gratitude amplification theory. Both theories/models ground aspects of meaning in community. In her complicating action, she relayed valence with the word “impactful.” In the evaluation, she conveyed the importance of trying things, which related to PsyCap efficacy and resiliency and brought the story’s relevance into the present. In her resolution, participant 3 reflected on the takeaway from her experience.

Table 3

Response Story: Participant 3 to Participant 5

Phrase	Component / Function
I’d like to appreciate you for the summer job.	AB – Abstract (point of story)
Cause I, recently, just did that last summer.	OR – Orientation (orientation to time, place, people, and situations)
And I realized how impactful it really is,	CA – Complicating Action (sequence, or plot, might represent a crisis or turning point)
like I didn’t realize, like I didn’t know, until, I tried it.	EV – Evaluation (soul of narrative, meaning)
How to connect and help them,	RE – Resolution (outcome)
So.	CO – Coda (bringing back to present)

She learned “how to connect and help” the population that she was working with. The story provided not only affirmation to participant 5 but also social resonance and energy to both players. This is the nature of gratitude amplification or appreciation (Watkins, 2014). This

intertextuality also provided an opportunity for players to co-construct and to consolidate social meaning related to transformational learning (Nohl, 2015). Both original and response stories become informing content as players move toward goal setting. In general, structural narrative analysis helped to identify the location of events or psychological happenings through the most utilized structural components of (a) evaluations, (b) abstracts, (c) orientations, and (d) complicating actions to communicate content related to—identity and salience (Riessman, 2008). Evaluations in particular revealed what matters most to individuals.

I then transposed the structural narratives into *Excel* for a detailed thematic/interpretive analysis, which shaped the understanding of player stories through constructed themes. I did not move over inconsequential words or phrases such as “so,” noted in codas. Codas brought narratives back to the present, but were not substantial beyond that. For reference, from the three game plays with nine participants, there were 134 stories and 74 additional texts analyzed in this manner. In general, stories represent both original stories and response stories, and texts represent inspired actions, feedback, and summary evaluations made during game play. The components of structural analysis were retained and became absorbed in this analytic process. Through open coding, constant comparison, and saturation, it was possible to construct themes that described player experience through story. I coded each line for data source, collection date, participant phrase, structural component, associated game element, initial/open code, axial (as useful), theme, sub-theme (as useful), property, dimension, related theory, and analytic notes (as useful). Through close examination and prolonged exposure to player narratives and texts, six themes were constructed based on gerund assignment to describe “processes and actions” that occurred in stories (Glesne, 2016, p. 196). These six themes were labeled (a) equipping, (b) cultivating wherewithal, (c) experiencing community, (d) disorienting awareness, (e) generating

ideas/possibilities, and (f) constructing/co-constructing meaning and identity. These are more fully described in findings. The process of line-by-line coding, constant comparison, and theoretical sampling (Palinkas et al., 2015; Riessman, 2008) emphasized “how and why” (Riessman, 2008, p. 11) and preserved distinctions and granularity (Bazeley, 2013). Both methods of narrative analysis (structural and thematic) helped to explore and answer the first two research questions: (a) How do participants experience *WYAM!*, and (b) how do features of PsyCap and well-being manifest in the experience of game play?

Poetic inquiry/analysis. Poetic inquiry was used to illustrate and synthesize the meaning and transformation reflected in players’ stories (Cahnmann, 2003). Poetic analysis represents a creative way to present and analyze data. This analysis allowed for the reconstruction of multiple voices presented as one free verse answering the first two research questions: (a) How do participants experience *WYAM!*, and (b) how do features of PsyCap and well-being manifest in the experience of game play? Most importantly, all eight research participants/players were represented in the poem making the poem a product of co-constructed meaning between researcher and participants (Glesne, 2016). I selected and composed the poem from the words and phrases participants shared in stories and response stories across game plays. The selection of words and phrases was based on how well each conveyed game experience, progression, and intertextual significance. Reflected in the poem are the six components of structural analysis, the four constructs of PsyCap, Agency, PERMA, transformational learning theory, and the six themes constructed from thematic analysis. In addition, the poem created reflects key game elements from Element and Star Cards such as personal qualities, strengths, desires, influencing others/roles, assets, natural interests, possibilities, expanded possibilities, and inspired actions. In sum, lines of the poem were selected to represent all aspects of the game experience according to

source, game element, structural component, theme, and theory. The poem conveys players' insights, PsyCap, well-being, emotion, and forward momentum communicating "essence," "wholeness," and "interconnectedness" of player and experience (Glesne, 2016, p. 253).

Diagrammatic analysis. Diagrams were created to convey connections, expressions, and processes found in game play. Four original diagrams/figures were created. Diagrams are located in chapter 4. In general, diagrammatic thinking and analysis allowed me to bring together observations, analytic reflections, story analysis, and categorical analysis from questionnaire 1. Diagrammatic thinking/analysis helped to examine the first two research questions visually. As a reminder, the first two questions were the following: (a) How do participants experience *WYAM!*, and (b) how do features of PsyCap and well-being manifest in the experience of game play? In chapter four, a high-altitude diagram shows the cycle of game play. As I examined and reflected on the variety of source materials, I was guided by the following analytic questions: What is happening? How do the parts of the game play and player experience go together? Is there a cycle? How do parts/constructs influence other parts/constructs? What is the most appropriate location of each part in the diagram? How do parts interact? What key components and features need to be represented? What is missing? What are the connections? How does the game experience flow? This abductive analysis drew from observations, prior knowledge about learning, reflections on literature, analytic notes, story data, and questionnaire 1. For example, the idea and influence of time in the game cycle came from player location or development across the life-span, experiences, and decisions found in players' stories and questionnaire 1 responses. This is not discussed at length in findings due to study priorities, but it was significant to mention as a component of game play. The construct of intentional action (Bandura, 2001), growth or "broadened mindset" (Fredrickson, 2013, p. 15), and "HEROIC mindset" (Feller,

2017, para. 2) came from both literature and stories that demonstrated progression, optimism, and inspired action. Furthermore, structure and context were identified as supplied conditions of game play. These were apprehended through observation, data found in questionnaire 1 and player stories that moved toward actionable goals. PsyCap and PERMA were further analyzed in data as an influence on agency and a contribution to active game play. To illustrate, the functions of agency were demonstrated in stories and worked to integrate experience and assign meaning. Agency served to influence both meanings of game play and pre-game play content. This was evident in line-by-line coding, and is denoted in the cycle of game play. Thematic analysis of stories led to the construction of six themes, which also influenced game flow and experience. This analytic process was useful to ascertain relationships between the game, players' stories, outcomes, constructs, and theory (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). The resultant diagram has 10 iterations, and I retained a version of each to show the evolution of thinking and the incorporation of new findings and insights as they occurred.

The dynamics of transformational learning are graphically detailed in chapter 4. Transformational learning relates to multiple themes in game play and represents change, development, and motivation to act through a variety of influences expressed at the individual and community levels. Several questions guided the examination of data. How does transformative learning occur in game play? What are examples of its occurrence? What contributes to transformational learning at the individual and community levels? The diagrammatic analysis of transformational learning relied upon line-by-line coding of stories and the categorical/thematic analysis of participant comments from questionnaire 1. In line-by-line coding, I was able to compare and contrast phrases and connect expressions with theory. There were 112 lines of code that related to the expression of transformational learning. Diagrammatic

thinking allowed me to make observations of the data and place notable expressions, influences, or inputs around each level of transformational learning. The categorical analysis of questionnaire 1 detailed above allowed me to see the levels of contributions more clearly. For example, participants were able to reflect on their game play experience, which highlighted the contributions of the social context, self-reflection, and game features that fostered transformational learning. Participant 4 conveyed this well: “I felt it was effective to first reflect on a personal level, then reflect at the group level to learn more about others and myself at the same time.” This analysis has 5 iterations.

Diagrammatic analysis also demonstrated the synergistic interaction of PERMA/well-being elements, and how it was cultivated and expressed in game play. Guiding questions for this analysis follow: What is the interaction between PERMA features? When does an element/feature occur? What does PERMA accomplish in stories? How is PERMA expressed and cultivated in game play? What does PERMA look like and sound like in stories? What are the best concepts to convey its occurrence? In general, PERMA is cultivated in the game community and historically through the recollection of stories. This was observed in line-by-line coding of stories and in participants’ questionnaire 1. The manifestation and expression of PERMA was observed in responses to questionnaire 1, line-by-line coding of stories, and in reflexive analytic notes. There were 244 lines of code that related to the expression or cultivation of PERMA in stories. To guide coding, I constantly referenced a list of PERMA elements and characteristics. This aided in seeing the connections between PERMA elements and expressions recorded in line-by-line coding. I recorded detailed descriptions of occurrences through dimensions and properties of PERMA elements. For example, positive relationships were expressed through lines of code that conveyed affirmation and resonance with other game

players. Similarly, positive relationships were often observed to connect with positive emotions. Connections are dynamic, and multiple connections are possible. Notable, the resultant diagram situates the influences of role models, resource development, agentic functions, and identity expansion in relation to PERMA elements. For example, participant 2's phrase of affirmation serves as an exemplar to this understanding: "I really appreciated (that) you're dependable. . . . It is really important." This was an effective phrase at affirming the other person, generating a positive relationship and exciting positive emotions within the game community. Data was constantly examined to arrive at the diagram. As key observations and manifestations were made it was added to the diagram. There are four iterations of this diagram.

Lastly, diagrammatic thinking demonstrated how PsyCap was expressed and cultivated. There were 95 disaggregated lines that related to PsyCap expression and cultivation in line-by-line coding of stories. Other data sources used for diagrammatic analysis were analytic notes and questionnaire 1. From these sources, I gleaned both obvious and subtle expressions and development of PsyCap. The guiding questions for this analysis were what does PsyCap expression look like? How do the various elements/features of PsyCap manifest? How do the elements of PsyCap relate to each other? How do the elements of PsyCap differ? What products are associated with PsyCap expression? How are features expressed individually and in community? Where and how do expressions and development of PsyCap occur? What does that look like? To guide coding and remain consistent, I constantly referenced a list of PsyCap elements and characteristics. As I explored the data, I noted observations. Participant responses in questionnaire 1 clearly depicted the manifestation and development of PsyCap. To illustrate, participant 6 stated that she experienced hope when she wrote "an action statement and put a deadline with it." Participant 3 felt more hopeful because she felt "better prepared." These appear

as entry points into PsyCap hope and as outcomes or products (goals and clarification sketch) of PsyCap influence. In stories, participant 4 offered a response story that encapsulated the expression and development of PsyCap:

(Name redacted), I really appreciate what you said about education and social justice. I think that is really awesome how all your other interests intersect with social science and education so you really know, like, what your drafting course is.

The second half of the response story represented PsyCap development. For example, the response player affirms the path of the original storyteller with “you really know...your drafting course.” This comment related directly to hope. Path and plan are clearly cited as attributes of hope (Luthans, 2015). By inference, the other PsyCap elements can be reached. For example, confidence relates to efficacy beliefs, and the response player boosted the confidence of the original storyteller by listening and affirming, “you really know...your drafting course.”

Resiliency is inferred through the process of game play. The experience becomes an opportunity to store resources for future use. Lastly, optimism is engendered because the response stories helped to create positive expectations for the original storytellers. This type of content was then translated into PsyCap expression and development. For example, paths are noted for hope, forecasting for optimism, developing resources for resiliency, and belief for an expression or point of entry to efficacy. Through inductive and deductive reasoning, patterns such as these were observed and noted utilizing diagrammatic processes. The resultant diagram went through six iterations, and focused the understanding of the second research question how do features of PsyCap and well-being manifest in the experience of game play.

Categorical analysis of questionnaire 2. I followed up with a second questionnaire at two to three weeks post-game play. This questionnaire focused solely on player actions taken since game play and were analyzed according to pre-structured categories of activity. Five

categories or action types represented players' actions following game play. These were (a) seeking information, (b) thinking and reflecting, (c) sparking meaningful conversations, (d) building relationships and making connections, and (e) creating deeper engagement. These categories represented broad and subtle responses. Responses, most often, directly related to expanded possibilities and/or inspired actions in game play. These data were analyzed for occurrence in *SurveyMonkey* and supported the claim that game play motivates goal setting and action. Six out of the eight participants responded to questionnaire 2. Out of 360 responses possible, 178 items were indicated for early action as defined by "I have done this" and/or "I plan on doing this between now and 3 months." Through this analysis subtly of action was explored gaining insight into a variety of actions that may be considered ancillary or latent to life and career exploration. Actions revealed motivation and engagement as a result of game play.

The multiple sources of data and analyses created a more complex and deeper understanding of player experience. Triangulation engendered trustworthiness into the bricolage (Bazeley, 2013; Kincheloe, 2005) and provided rich findings for the discussion in chapter 5.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

At the outset, the purpose of this study was to explore how participants experience *Who You Are Matters!*[®]. Two questions were subsumed. How do features of psychological capital (PsyCap: hope, efficacy, resiliency, optimism) and well-being (PERMA: positive emotions, engagement, positive relationships, meaning, accomplishment) manifest in the experience of game play? Lastly, what post-game play actions do participants take? In sum, this study explored players' experiences, stories, and actions as a result of *WYAM!* game play. To contextualize findings, sections are arranged according to research questions under major headings. In addition, a brief description of each participant is provided below and identified in findings by their corresponding participant number. It is important to note that all participants were female, and each assigned their cultural identity from an open-ended question. In other words, I did not offer a pre-determined list to select race or ethnicity, but I provided an open-ended question inviting participants to self-assign cultural identity. In addition, recall in order to play the game it requires three players. In one game, I stepped in as a player to accommodate the necessary number. Although my stories were used in structural and thematic/interpretive analysis I did not complete a demographic form or refer to my stories directly in findings. That is to say, I did not assign a participant number to myself or cite my stories directly. This information will aid readers in contextualizing findings and determining transferability to other settings and audiences.

- Participant 1: Identified as an 18-year-old, White/American, first-year college student.

- Participant 2: Identified as a 23-year-old, Asian, first-generation international college student.
- Participant 3: Identified as a 20-year-old, Caucasian, first-generation college student.
- Participant 4: Identified as an 18-year-old, undeclared cultural identity, first-year college student.
- Participant 5: Identified as a 19-year-old, undeclared cultural identity, first-year college student.
- Participant 6: Identified as a 19-year-old, American, first-generation college student taking in the second year of college.
- Participant 7: Identified as an 18-year-old, American, first-year college student.
- Participant 8: Identified as a 20-year-old, Hispanic, first-generation college student.

How do Participants Experience the Game *WYAM!*?

Broadly speaking, players experience game play through the processes of a comprehensive learning cycle. Figure 2 represents the game’s big picture creating context for the reader and acting as a primer for findings. The integrated cycle of game play is a product of observation, analytic notes, and analysis of questionnaires, stories, and texts. Some features of the cycle are not discussed given priorities of the study. The key features of this diagram are in bold. On the left side, the rectangle labeled structure and context represents *WYAM!*. The two squares below represent the contributions of PERMA and PsyCap in game play. The circles beneath PERMA and PsyCap represent model features. In addition, PERMA and PsyCap are adjacent and interact with each other. The solid lines signify the general direction or flow of the learning cycle, and dashed lines represent player contributions, pre-game and during game. For example, the agent comes to game play with attributes, experiences, prior learning, meanings,

and stores of PERMA and PsyCap contributing to game play. In addition, PERMA and PsyCap work in conjunction with *WYAM!* by supplying evolving and related content that is generated during game play. The circles on the right represent the themes constructed from players' stories and texts providing information to the agent for processing and meaning making. This processing occurs through the functions of agency as set forth by Bandura (2001). These are intentionality, forethought, self-reactiveness, and self-reflection. Through the reasoning processes of induction and abduction meaning making appeared to be amplified by positive emotions associated with gratitude amplification and broaden-and-build theories. This is designated by the square below meaning making. Lastly, actions or outcomes arose from transformational learning and/or an adoption or expansion of a growth mindset/HEROIC mindset. These outcomes are represented by the rectangles in the top left corner of the diagram. The diagram (Figure 2) follows on a subsequent page to allow it to be presented in its entirety. Overall, the diagram situates players' experiences, stories, and actions in the game's learning cycle or contextual frame.

Structure and Context of the Game

Structure and context are supplied conditions of the game. In questionnaire 1, implemented immediately following game play, almost all participants indicated benefit from the game's structure. Participants emphasized the game's progressive structure to elicit relevant self-reflection. Participant 1 commented on the game's utility to effectively evaluate experience.

Participant 1: A very useful evaluation of a person's life.

Participants 2 and 3 conveyed the processes of game play succinctly as "brainstorm–share–reflect," and as "steps." These processes provided structure and focus to the game experience.

Participant 2: Brainstorm–share–reflect. This structure is helpful for people to find out the answers.

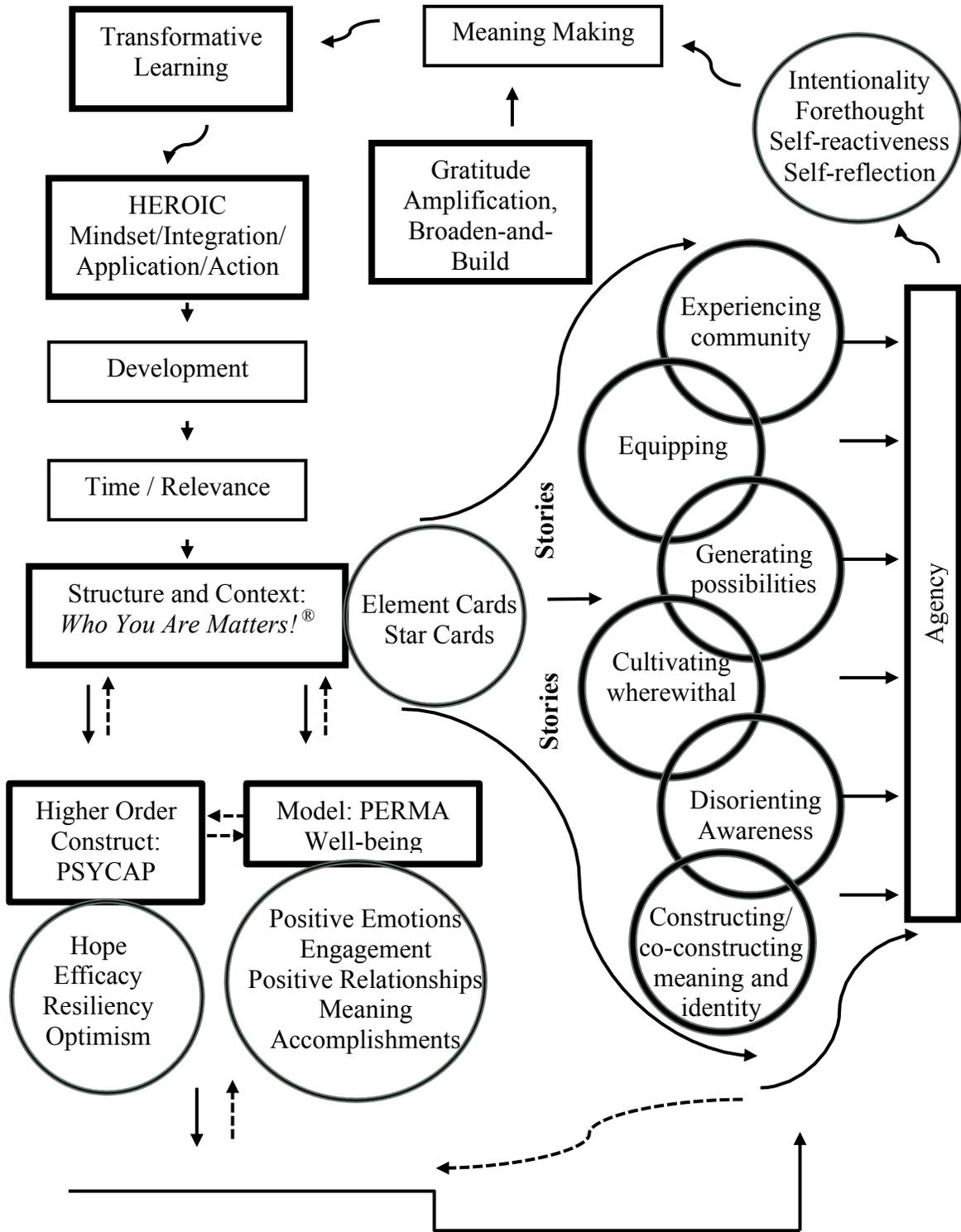


Figure 2. Integrated Cycle of Game Play. The diagram demonstrates the integrated cycle of game play moving participants/players through learning, development, story themes, agentic processes, integration, and action.

Participant 3: I liked...how thorough the game was. The steps of the game really inspired self-reflection. My most significant learning experience came when we began to connect all of the parts of the game.

Many participants also indicated a more faceted life/career assessment. Participants 4, 5, and 6 reflected on new insights indicating a more robust evaluation of interests and values reflecting the processes of meaning making and integration found in PERMA/well-being. For example, participant 5 was able to map out what was important. Thus, the structure of game play informed and shaped opportunities for transformational learning.

Participant 4: My most significant learning experience...completing my clarification sketch, which enabled me to learn more about myself and personal traits, as well as how my life experiences have shaped my views and goals.

Participant 5: The most significant learning experience I've had...is how to map out my personalities and the things that are important to me.

Participant 6: I liked...having the opportunity to answer questions about myself that I never really considered before....I realized that I'm more interested in service and in math than I thought I was.

Furthermore, the structure and context of game play provided intentional experiences to be heard. Listening was a component of game play that was facilitated by a timekeeper stick. This allowed stories to be told without interruption, and for players to offer response stories that confirmed listening and comprehension. In comments from questionnaire 1, all participants reflected a sense of community characterized by openness, similarity, and connection. In the categorical analysis of questionnaire 1 participants 3 and 7 demonstrated the benefit and impact of community to meet universal needs reducing anxiety, inspiring resiliency, and contributing to well-being and transformational learning.

Participant 3: I was surprised most by the responses of the other participants, and at how we shared a lot of experiences or desires. It was wonderful to know that I am not alone.

Participant 7: We can all relate to each other and understand each other.

Participants 1 and 4 expressed an appreciation for the openness of the social context. Players received support, encouragement, mirroring, and social consolidation found in transformational learning (Nohl, 2015).

Participant 1: I was surprised by the amount of encouragement and openness by the other players.

Participant 4: I felt it was effective to first reflect on a personal level, then reflect at the group level to learn more about others and myself.

These comments illustrated perceived value, benefit, and importance of the social context to players, and extrapolate to being valued and esteemed within the community.

Structural Narrative Findings

The bulk of the study was based on player narratives generated throughout game play. For reference, there were 134 stories that were analyzed according to structural components. Stories were generated from nine participants across three game plays utilizing personal attributes and possibilities (Element/Star Cards). Players took turns sharing an original story followed by other players sharing response stories. In general, the term stories represent both original and response stories. In findings, I am referring to original stories unless otherwise indicated.

Structural narrative analysis led to a broad understanding of how stories were constructed, and the structural location of significant findings within narratives. Structural narrative analysis demonstrated that the most pertinent findings occur in the most frequently expressed narrative components of (a) evaluations, (b) abstracts, (c) orientations, and (d) complicating actions to communicate content related to—identity and salience (Riessman, 2008). In abstracts, players typically declared interest, engagement, and ownership. In orientations, players located their interests in relation to people, time, and places. For example, this was where

players identified a setting or population to use a quality or strength. It aided in generating future possibilities. Complicating actions referred to challenges and turning points. Evaluations conveyed a range of meanings in original and response stories, and were related to the functions of agency through self-reflection and evaluation. Evaluations represented meaning, importance, and value. Resolutions and/or codas closed stories. For example, an original storyteller, in Table 4, conveys the salience of being creative with the following declaration. “One, of the ones, I chose was - I’m creative.” Abstracts created an opportunity to unequivocally be heard. Stories of personal qualities were declarative and influenced behavior in idiosyncratic directions. Personal qualities are probably best explained by trait theory (Luthans et al., 2010). That is to say, we integrate personal qualities into the framework of our identities informing the active processes of meaning making. These types of declarations were characteristic of abstracts in structural narrative analysis, which activated self-reflection connected to agency. Duranti (2004) would call these expressions “self- or ego-affirming” statements (p. 455). The phrase “thinking outside of the box” oriented the storyteller’s personal quality of creativity to people, situations, and environments, which served to deepen relevance and utility. The storyteller further extended the meaning of creativity by describing its value and function—“trying a different approach.” This represented the soul or evaluation of her story. She ascribed creativity’s purpose, meaning, and utility. This type of sharing serves to reinforce the significance of a quality, and brings the quality into the present. She closed the story citing the current significance of creativity in her life. In particular, she noted, “I like the different pathways that being creative can take you.” The resolution represented the echo and confirmation of her declarative abstract. This story demonstrated progression through salience, reflection, value, and meaning in the evaluation. This description of ownership, application, and evaluation is indicative of agency (Bandura, 2006).

The structural narrative highlighted progression, engendering the ownership of creativity as an informing and salient quality. As a result, the story appeared to generate well-being, and PsyCap—hope and optimism.

Table 4

Original Story: Participant 3

Phrase	Component / Function
One, of the ones, I chose was - I'm creative.	AB – Abstract (point of story)
I just think creativity is thinking outside of the box.	OR – Orientation (orientation to time, place, people, and situations)
It might be doing something that others have done before,	CA – Complicating Action (sequence, or plot, might represent a crisis or turning point)
but trying a different approach	EV – Evaluation (soul of narrative, meaning)
I like the different pathways that being creative can take you.	RE – Resolution (outcome)
	CO – Coda (bringing back to present)

On the other hand, response stories affirmed and connected players in a social context. Response players assigned community value and mirrored original storytellers. Response stories typically progressed through lines of appreciation and/or resonance or both—extending, enhancing, mirroring, adding value, and/or demonstrating resonance. This intertextuality appeared to support the co-construction of identity in relation to others, which is a feature of transformative learning (Nohl, 2015). The subsequent story in Table 5 represents a response story (unrelated to Table 4) that conveys primarily resonance. The response player stated,

“(Name redacted), I appreciate what you said because I also, like, have this aspect of helping others.” This was a frequently seen pattern in abstracts as players experience emotional connection (Watkins, 2014) and resonance developing positive relationships in game play.

Table 5

Response Story: Participant 3 to Participant 5

Phrase	Component / Function
(Name redacted), I appreciate what you said because I also, like, have this aspect of helping others.	AB – Abstract (point of story)
I feel like it is also important to not just help ourselves, but also	OR – Orientation (orientation to time, place, people, and situations)
to find ways	CA – Complicating Action (sequence, or plot, might represent a crisis or turning point)
to also help others.	EV – Evaluation (soul of narrative, meaning)
	RE – Resolution (outcome)
	CO – Coda (bringing back to present)

Specifically, this type of response story connected people in community, generated positive emotions through affiliation, and affirmed value. In addition, affirmation was also promoted through similarity and validated both original storyteller and response storyteller. This resonance provided opportunities for players to convey acceptance, worth, and dignity to others which influences PERMA and PsyCap generation and reserves. Response stories also capitalized on positive relationships and meaning, which are cited as part of Seligman’s (2013) model of well-

being. In addition, response stories provided mirroring and testing found in transformational learning (Nohl, 2015). This player further stated, “it is...important to not just help ourselves.” This orientation phrase communicated the value of the original storyteller’s interest and elevated its importance by extending and affirming its social relevance to both players. The complicating action “to find ways” served to challenge community members to develop possibilities not stated. The player’s evaluation conveyed a warm declaration “to also help others.” This was the soul of the story, which asserted agency, purpose, and connected the two players. This type of storied feedback appears to instill PsyCap, bolster well-being, and aid in identity development. Additionally, the process and story components appeared to move players into active social consolidation (Nohl, 2015) by acknowledging and asserting the importance of a quality and experiencing acceptance and support. I, then, moved the structural analysis and stories into *Excel* for open line-by-line coding procedures for thematic/interpretive analysis.

Thematic Findings

I first coded with one or a few words to describe what was happening, and then I began to inspect for patterns and occurrences. In this procedure, lines were often coded more than once. In addition, I remained open to changing and refining labels throughout the process. Constructing themes was important to understanding the processes and contributions of stories to players’ motivation, goal setting, and identity. Broadly, themes helped to explore what, when, how, location, and purpose of happenings within stories. The inductive process led to the development of descriptive dimensions, properties, sub-themes, themes, and theoretical connections. This expanded my understanding of the data in rich detail. To manage and reduce data, I constructed six themes that encapsulated findings. Themes are somewhat progressive and synergistic in manner moving players toward goal setting. The six themes were labeled: (a) constructing/co-

constructing meaning and identity, (b) cultivating wherewithal, (c) experiencing community (d) equipping, (e) generating ideas/possibilities, and (f) disorienting awareness. To create more context, Table 6 provides a frequency count of each theme's occurrence in 134 stories and 74 texts. Frequency is informative. It especially, illuminates the centrality of constructing/co-constructing meaning and identity in stories that promote active engagement, ownership, and identity construction. However, the frequency count can also be misleading because lines were often coded multiple times. For example, the phrase "trying a different approach" was coded in relation to the themes constructing/co-constructing meaning and identity, and equipping because it reflected meaning and purpose in relation to identity, and it served as a functional skill or capacity related to problem-solving. That is to say, many of the lesser coded themes were also coded as expressions of constructing/co-constructing meaning and identity due to overlap in function appearing to inflate counts related to constructing/co-constructing meaning and identity. Other themes were more distinct. Although other themes were coded less frequently, contributions of these were significant in moving players toward relevant goal setting. For example, the theme generating ideas/possibilities typically occurred when the elements of game play converged, and players assigned possibilities as a result of game progression. These possibilities took on a more specific intent evolving into inspired actions. Further, the theme disorienting awareness was expressed infrequently, but seemed to accentuate and call attention to needs that pressed on identity.

The theme constructing/co-constructing meaning and identity was the most frequently occurring theme in game play, and it was coded over 300 times. Meaning and identity are constructed and/or co-constructed in social settings, interactions, and mental processes (Jacoby & Ochs, 1995) signifying units of importance related to identity expression and/or the functions

of agency. In game play, meanings are derived from stories/narratives that, in effect, communicate identity (Johnstone, 2016). For example, participant 2 referred to reading a book as a life changing experience by recapitulating salience, “that was one important moment.” She identified an important influence and the resultant impact or meaning.

Table 6

Frequency Count of Themes in Stories

Themes in stories and texts	Frequency
Constructing/co-constructing meaning and identity	309
Cultivating wherewithal	188
Experiencing community	165
Equipping	100
Generating ideas/possibilities	45
Disorienting awareness	29

Participant 2: I, actually, chose...an author. The reason...that...moment... changed...my life...She was a travel writer, and I was inspired by different cultures. And that’s when I started to travel, and travel changed my life in some way....And that was one important moment and that was because of that writer.

Participant 3 cited a teacher/mentor as a significant influence on her possibilities and identity.

Most stories about relationships relayed mentors and teachers as influencers, and less frequently cited individuals from the creative arts. Overall, others in players’ stories often acted as inspiration, a scaffold, or as a source of feedback contributing to the various aspects of constructing/co-constructing meaning and identity.

Participant 3: I put a teacher or mentor influenced me. And, I think about my decision to come to college and pursue the career path I am on so far. I had a mentor that really helped me to see, realize that it was possible, and that I could do it if I gave it my all.

On the other hand, participant 7 recounted a story in which she served as the influencer. There appeared to be a deepening of one's responsibility and connection to family, and its impact on personal development, or identity construction. Agency and PERMA seemed to be the most activated models in this narrative engaging the theme constructing/co-constructing meaning and identity as indicated by a sense of belonging and responsibility to something larger than self as reflected in family.

Participant 7: I said my siblings and with this also my cousins because I feel like they look up to me sometimes, and I feel motivated to be like successful.

Further, stories of strength were related to the theme constructing/co-constructing meaning and identity. For example, participants 2, 6, and 8 demonstrated meaning and motivation of a strength related to the expression and development of PERMA.

Participant 2: I chose to help people or provide guidance or care.

Participant 6: I love to generate ideas or develop plans.

Participant 8: I said, I love to share ideas and teach.

Constructing/co-constructing meaning and identity were prominent features throughout many different types of stories.

The theme cultivating wherewithal incorporates the state-like expressions, or qualities of PsyCap and PERMA that contribute to and/or inform the functions of agency. The most frequently occurring manifestation of cultivating wherewithal across stories was expressing emphasis and excitement. To illustrate, original storyteller phrases are shared below.

Participant 4: I tend to be very focused.

Participant 5: I think it would be...really cool to...be super knowledgeable about something.

Participant 8: I really like to learn things and if that comes with some sorta hands on exploring, playing, messing with it, breaking it whatever - if it happens too - I love learning things.

Some of these players' words demonstrated positive emotions. "Love" for example clearly expressed a positive emotion, but other words were more representative of emphasis, elaboration, or excitement. Words such as "really cool" and "very" indicated this emphasis.

The theme experiencing community serves as the experiential ground or field in which storytelling and significant learning take place. Although experiencing community occurred throughout game play as a result of structure and context, the theme experiencing community was primarily constructed and situated within the intertextual experience of response stories. Players are encouraged to select and respond only to a player that inspires a supportive response. Game structure helps response players to state what is valued in an original storyteller's narrative by providing a sentence stem to complete. The stem is "I appreciate what you said because..."; as a result appreciation is clear and any other comments grow out of this guidance. Response stories typically progressed through lines of appreciation—extending, enhancing, and adding value to a person's quality, identity, or original story. In the following response stories, like-minded players affirmed an original storyteller's element or quality. In general, words and phrases such as "really cool" and "very important" elevated emotion and excitement about an original storyteller's quality or interest imbuing it with community significance related to transformational learning and co-constructing meaning and identity. Serving as an exemplar, participant 4 demonstrated a focused appreciation for an original storyteller.

Participant 4: I really appreciate what you said about education and social justice, cause I think that is really awesome how all your other interests intersect with social science and education. So, you really know...what your drafting course is.

On the other hand, participants 1, 3, and 7 demonstrated appreciation and resonance with such phrases as “I also have a passion for the environment,” and “I am also that way too” which revealed similarity.

Participant 1: I appreciate what you said-for travel....I want to study abroad so bad, so more travel would be great.

Participant 3: (Name redacted), I’d like to appreciate what you said (about the environment) because I also have a passion for the environment, and think it’s really important to help keep our world going.

Participant 7: I really appreciate what you said about like being a mathematical kind of person because I think I am also that way, too.

Often resonance was based on similar experiences, emotions, life-space, values, and interests. The game provides the social context for mattering (Savickas et al., 2009; Schlossberg, 1989; Seligman, 2013) through the giving and receiving of attention and appreciation (Schlossberg, 1989) in community.

The equipping theme represents personal qualities, strengths, desires, influencing others/roles, assets, and natural interests found in game play influencing life/career exploration. These qualities were expressed clearly by players, and by extension represent skill, knowledge, ability, or capacity deemed useful in a variety of settings. For example, participants 1 and 7 affirmed personal ability, skill, and/or competency.

Participant 1: I’ve always been called the Mom of the group. So, I always plan...any events that we do.

Participant 7: I feel like a problem solver type...,so I always...try to figure out how I can best help my friends or family better.

In tandem, players also develop the varied skills of life/career exploration and/or management such as self-reflection, accessing resources, and goal setting. Participant 8 reflected the importance of others to life and career development.

Participant 8: My bandleader in high school...and...so many teachers and different mentors have really influenced my growth as a person.

Participants 3 and 5 expressed and practiced active career management skills in the second half of the game. Both reflected active goal setting skills.

Participant 3: Setting up a meeting with the pre-vet advisor and discussing summer volunteer opportunities lined up already that I could apply for and by (specific date supplied).

Participant 5: I said to go the career center and...see if they can help me (with) exploring different things and I said by (specific date supplied).

Setting specific goals contributes to transformative learning, and increases the motivation to act. The stories and phrases demonstrated the theme of equipping by developing self-awareness and life/career exploration and management skills.

Generating ideas/possibilities is a process based on progressive self-discovery and reflective insight that occurs throughout game play. This theme occurred at various stages of game play, but appeared most frequently in stories of possibilities, expanded possibilities, and inspired actions. These narratives, typically, moved from general to specific, and related differently to time or action potential based on location in game play. That is to say, some ideas represented more distal possibilities, and others represented more immediate and actionable ideas. These were inspired actions. Participants 1, 3, and 4 represent this spectrum.

Participant 1: I choose starting a business. Cause, I thought it would be really cool to have. I want to be an optometrist possibly, to start my own optometry branch. That's a very far away goal.

Participant 3: I put, as my first one, I am curious about living somewhere else and ...being able to go somewhere else and learn about different cultures and communities and apply that to my own life. I feel like that's important.

Participant 4: I want to research...graduate school options...look at different schools around the country...and possibly talk to the career center and the College of Liberal Arts about career options, and where I can go after my undergraduate degree. And by (date removed).

The theme disorienting awareness is a process that occurs during game play when players experience a disruption to identity or story. The theme disorienting awareness provided insightful punctuation to player stories. It manifested in game play as cognitive dissonance, conflicting priorities, or as new discoveries needing accommodation. In structural analysis, these disturbances were typically identified in orientations or evaluations. Participants 2 and 7 demonstrated the theme of disorienting awareness. Participant 2's story reflected loss or dissonance expressed in her desire to "get back" to travel and adventure.

Participant 2: I choose I want to have more travel or outdoor activities or adventures. I am very adventurous...and I've been to 8 different countries by myself. And, but I actually have been...slowing down in recent years...because I...have more responsibility....and it can feel...hard to go do things....But, I want to get back to that.

Participant 7's story highlighted the conflict between roles in the midst of major life transitions.

Participant 7: I choose spend more time with my family and my friends. And, I choose that because I...find myself really busy and I don't have...time to go back home....as...a first generation student they don't...understand what it's like to be in college, and they want me to go home every weekend....it's really hard... when my (parent) calls me to go home, when I can't.

Agentic Findings

Players demonstrated interest, salience, and ownership of their narratives with declarations that assert identity, meaning, and promote direction. Participant 4 recounted salience with intensity and engagement.

Participant 4: I chose politics and law because for as long as I can remember I've been obsessed with like, I guess, knowing more about the government....and...getting involved with local campaigns and stuff like that.

Participant 6 reported faith as integral to her identity. This informed salience and values related to agency, which work to inform meaning, identity, and decision-making processes through self-reflection and forethought.

Participant 6: I would, say, my faith has really impacted who I am as a person and just all the experiences that come with...going to church or just growing as a person through God teaching me things.

Participant 8 demonstrated current salience, engagement, and positive emotions in her narrative about teaching others.

Participant 8: I said I love to share ideas and teach because it's really fun for me to...help someone else...understand, and...it kind of goes with...helping people...I like sharing knowledge if I have it.

Toward the end of the game, players outline their expanded possibility, receive supportive feedback, and conclude by developing an inspired action. Inspired actions are declarative statements (analyzed as texts) not necessarily stories per se, but a bridge to next steps, a vision for the future, and new stories to come. However, I analyzed these statements according to the same themes as used for stories. Given statements are brief, I examined statements as a whole, and coded with multiple themes. The most reoccurring themes in inspired actions were generating ideas and constructing/co-constructing meaning and identity. The structure of the game supports clear actionable goal setting. Participants stated a specific action and designated a due date. Most participants designated their goal to be completed within one to three months. Comments below demonstrated that players had generated momentum and were planning for action, which represented player progression.

Participant 3: Setting up a meeting with the pre-vet advisor and discussing summer volunteer opportunities...by (date removed).

Participant 4: I, said, I want to research possible graduate school options... around the country...and...talk to the career center and the College of Liberal Arts about career options...and by (date removed).

Participant 5: I said to go to the career center, and...see if they can help me (with) exploring different things, and, I said by (date removed).

Goal articulation focuses goal directed behavior. These texts externalize and press on agency to weigh options, contemplate choices, and resolve ambivalence for change motivating forward movement (Bandura, 2006; Miller & Rollnick, 2013).

Amplification

Game experience is amplified through extended appreciation and positive energy or emotion. This is represented in Figure 2 by the square gratitude amplification and broaden-and-build. Toward the end of the game, participants offer summary feedback to the group. Broadly speaking, participants shared appreciation for each other and demonstrated connection and good feelings. Participant 3 valued the comfort and connection found within the group.

Participant 3: I'll definitely take away that it's comforting to be able to talk in a group and explore options with each other.

Participant 5 expressed appreciation for new insight gleaned from hearing others' stories. This participant's reflection captured the tendency of people to compare and make assumptions about each other's experiences that can serve to distort reality and exaggerate perceptions of being alone.

Participant 5: Sometimes it feels like everyone has every thing figured out, and know(s) what they want to do. But...it's not always like what it appears to be.

Participant 6 appreciated being able to go in depth with the group, which served as a temporary community.

Participant 6: Really interesting to go in depth with people.

Participant 8 valued honesty and expressed positive energy.

Participant 8: Thanks for being honest, and it's been fun getting to know you guys.

Players also expressed how it felt to be supported and encouraged in game play. Participants generally expressed sentiments of connection, positive feelings, and motivation. Participant 1 expressed a reduction in distress finding the group encouragement comforting.

Participant 1: That's really helpful because it seems overwhelming.

Participants 4 and 5 acknowledged good feelings.

Participant 4: It felt good to receive feedback. Very positive.

Participant 5: Validating.

Participant 6 benefitted from the continued experience of community contributing to her expanded possibilities.

Participant 6: It was nice to hear good ideas, and I'll definitely check it out.

Participants 7 and 8 reflected that support was motivating and inspiring.

Participant 7: It was...motivational.

Participant 8: It was great to hear the ideas, and it was also kind of inspiring.

Explicitly, "benefit exchange" (Watkins, 2014, p. 6) was recognized solidifying and amplifying the positive experience of game play promoting well-being. This amplification occurred across the themes of constructing/co-constructing meaning and identity, cultivating wherewithal, and experiencing community.

Transformational Learning

In *WYAM!* transformational learning takes place through the game's structure and context. Refer back to Figure 2 to see the location of transformational learning, and view Figure 3 for a detailed representation of how transformational learning occurs in game play. Through the data analysis of stories and questionnaire 1, two levels of experience were noted—individual and community. The two circles in Figure 3 represent these levels. The loose words and phrases

are demonstrations and expressions of how transformational learning takes place. For example, two key abstractions of structure and context occurred throughout stories; these were offering opportunities for players to rehearse and test (Nohl, 2015) narratives of importance and to share the authentic and/or vulnerable self (Bialystok & Kukar, 2018). At the individual level,

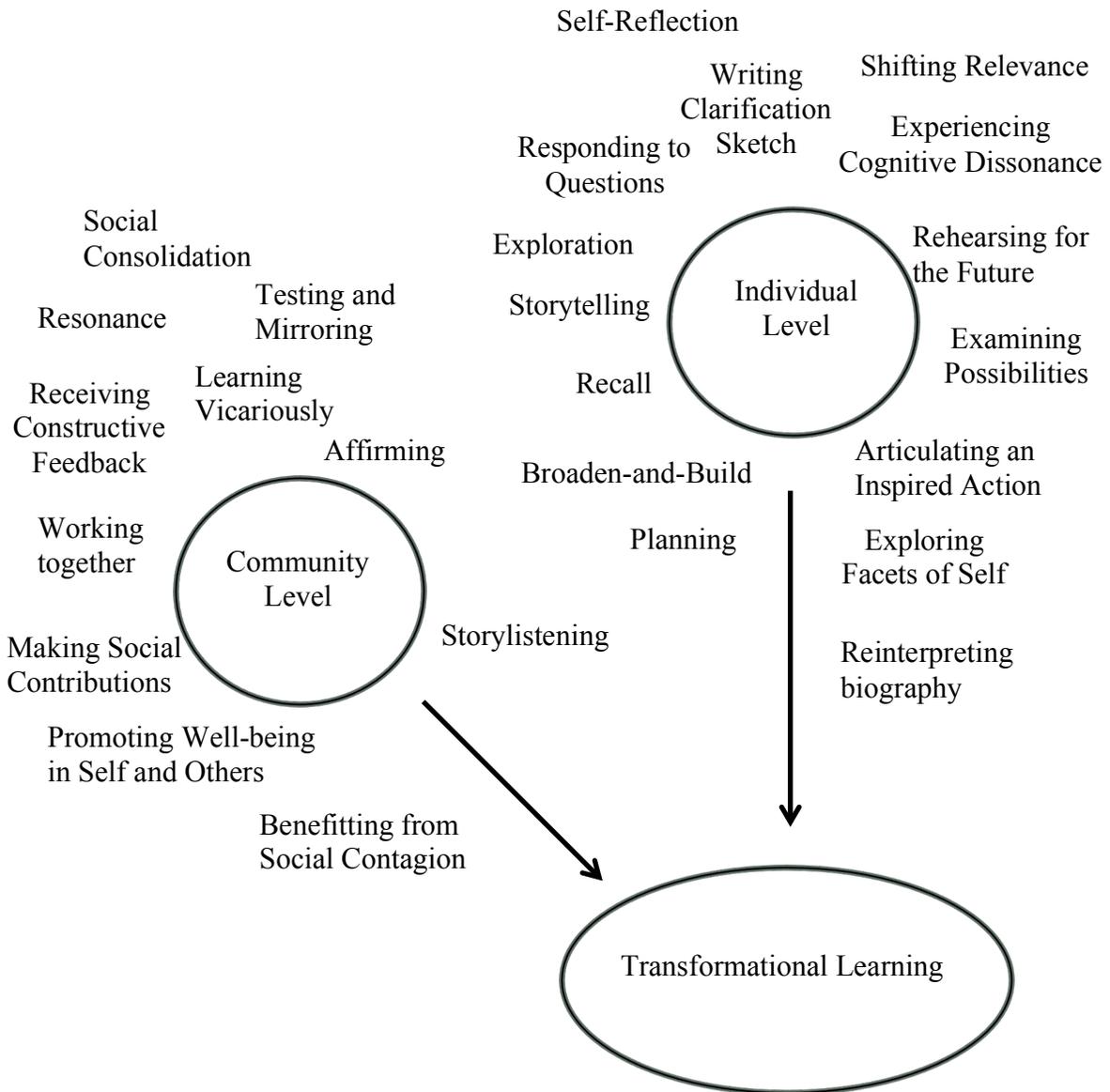


Figure 3. How Transformation Learning Occurs in *WYAM!* Transformational learning relates to multiple themes in game place and represents change, development, and action through a variety of influences expressed at the individual and community level. Notable influences are placed around each level.

this was expressed granularly by such expressions as exploring aspects of self, examining possibilities, and rehearsing for the future. These storied processes shifted significance and relevance of a quality, story, or goal characteristic of transformational learning (Nohl, 2015) by reorganizing player content and promoting new or greater salience and supplying increased motivation to act. These expressions were placed around the circle representing the individual level of transformational learning. At the community level, testing and mirroring, resonance, affirmation, and social consolidation represented some of the community contributions to transformational learning that occurred. Again, these phrases or contributing factors are placed loosely around the circle that represents the community level of transformational learning. In general, *Who You Are Matters!*[®] raises a player's consciousness and understanding of personal qualities and life themes in order to integrate the qualities into more robust narratives that move life and career forward which is indicative of transformational learning. Further, in the last reflective question responded to in game play about what most encouraged you today, players reflected transformational learning with an increase in positive emotions and greater confidence to plan and do with the following words and phrases. Participants 1, 7, and 8 conveyed the desire to act moving life and career goals forward.

Participant 1: Encouraging, inspiring...to...go forward in my life no matter who I meet—to surround myself with encouraging people to get things done.

Participant 7: I am encouraged to advocate for myself more and put myself out there for ...volunteer opportunities and opportunities in general.

Participant 8: I am encouraged to try to take action.

Participants 2, 3, 4, and 6 expressed greater curiosity and confidence.

Participant 2: Inspired me...to constantly be curious about the world.

Participant 3: Knowing that I can do it and the confidence to take away.

Participant 4: Realizing, knowing that there are multiple aspects to my future, and I don't have to get hung up on one thing.

Participant 6: I am encouraged to reach out to people.

In sum, each participant goes through the same game play conditions and sequence, which guides participants gently and progressively to disclose what matters, possibilities, and an action plan. This represents transformational learning in action as it flows through the game's structure and context at the individual and community level. The participants used their most relevant elements to construct and share their short autobiographical stories that informed possibilities within a social context (Cochran, 1997; McMahon, Patton, & Watson, 2004). Within each round, other players provide response stories of affirmation and connection. Then, after creating a list of possibilities to explore, the game progresses and participants focus their interest and commitment on one expanded possibility. Players outline their expanded possibility, receive supportive feedback, and conclude by developing an inspired action, which transforms into ownership and intentionality. The game's structure and context encourages meaningful storytelling, salient commitment, and action. Transformational learning supports identity expansion, and participant comments reflected the themes constructing/co-constructing meaning and identity, cultivating wherewithal, experiencing community, generating ideas, and equipping. Further, transformational learning and PsyCap were noted in comments from questionnaire 1. Participant statements demonstrated discovery, directionality, and confidence in the future.

Participant 3: The other players...really encouraged me to pursue my desires and I felt better prepared/informed...to take action.

Participant 5: I feel a shift in efficacy as a result of playing because I feel like I can actually discover and determine what, maybe, I can complete. I feel more motivated to take action, instead, of just being stressed and doubtful of my abilities. I felt it most when we were reviewing inspired actions.

Participant 6: I feel more solidified in my ability to act on my hopes/desires especially in regards to service.

Participant 8: I realized... some of my desires or short-term goals...and how...important (these are) to my life.

Poetic Inquiry: A Synthesis of Findings

To conclude the section answering the question how do players experience *WYAM!*, I offer a researcher free verse poem reconstructed from player words and phrases. Poetry represents a creative way to explore and represent data (Cahnmann, 2003). The words and phrases are extracted from all players to distill and demonstrate player experience and represent findings. Words and phrases are ordered according to original storyteller words and phrases presented in regular text, and response storyteller words and phrases represented in italic text creating a sense of the rich intertextual experience and co-construction that occurs in game play. The poem moves from personal qualities to inspired actions demonstrating progression and transformational learning. The poem reflects the six themes of stories and texts moving through the game's structure and context. As a reminder, the six themes are constructing/co-constructing meaning and identity, cultivating wherewithal, experiencing community, equipping, generating ideas, and disorienting awareness, which propel forward movement in life and career development and exploration. The flow and progression of game play is observable. Seen in this manner, personal qualities captured that which is easily known, and salient. The response lines demonstrated immediate affirmation and resonance. In the strengths section, engagement and emotion are elevated affirming personal significance, and value in community. Desires reflected player aspirations, disorientation, and idea generation. Influencing others and roles illuminated contributions that others make to our lives expanding possibilities, realizing potential, generating motivation, and boosting self-efficacy. Thus, players affirmed important

relationships in both original and response stories. Asset stories demonstrated the value of learning from experience affirming perceived capacities and beliefs. Natural interests grounded identity expression in natural proclivities, which is tethered to meaning, and constructing/co-constructing identity. Participant possibilities represented the tension between a player's current identity and tentative/emergent identity. Disorienting awareness surfaced and was accepted by the game community through shared angst. In contrast, generating ideas manifested hope and optimism. Players realized connections in their expanded possibilities bolstering integration and excitement. Players embraced and leaned into commitment; while, response players provided support and encouragement through statements and images of success and goal attainment. Lastly, original storytellers summarized how response player comments made them feel. Participants wrapped sessions feeling energized. In sum, the poem shows players moving through exploration, gathering insight, resources, and motivation to move into action with confidence.

Moving Forward

Personal Qualities

I chose, value.

Curious, pathways.

Thinking outside of the box.

I relate.

Strengths

A sense of accomplishment.

How—I can best help.

That resonated with me.

Sharing, strong, skill.

Desires

I want, I really wish.

Life changing, question.

Feeling guilty.

Connect, appreciate, opportunity.

Great—life.

Influencing others and roles

Realize, possible, look up.

Bandleader, tennis coach, friend, co-worker, writer, artist,
teachers, mentors, siblings influenced my growth, changed my life.

Influence. It pushes you—to be a better person.

Believe, beautiful, big, important.

Assets

Inspired, big, faith.

Defining factor.

Stepping out of your comfort zone.

Perspectives, I didn't know until I tried.

Impactful, shaped you.

Natural Interests

Giving back, passion, obsessed.

I can help.

Knowledgeable.

Interests intersect, it's really important.

I am that way too.

You, really, know your drafting course.

Possibilities

I'm still trying to figure it out.

Excited.

Willing, passion.

Not an easy decision.

I think that is really relevant in this day and age.

Good for you, community.

Expanded Possibility

Connected to—my desire, my personal quality.

I commit to explore—grow.

I encourage you...

A wish I have for you...

A lasting image of you...

Go for it!

Very positive, motivational.

Validating, encouraging, inspiring.

Great to hear ideas!

Inspired Action

Contact, talk.

Research, update, plan.

How do Features of PsyCap and PERMA Manifest in the Experience of Game Play?

By examining data closely, I observed that PsyCap and PERMA function interactively due to adjacency in the field of experience. This adjacency can be seen in Figure 2. In addition, a close up view of the expressions and manifestations of PERMA and PsyCap can be seen in Figures 4 and 5 respectively. These expressions were found in multiple themes, but were often associated with the themes of cultivating wherewithal, equipping, and constructing/co-constructing meaning and identity.

Figure 4 demonstrates the synergistic interaction of PERMA, and how it is cultivated and/or expressed in *WYAM!* In Figure 4, circles represent PERMA elements, which are positive emotions, engagement, positive relationships, meaning, and accomplishments. As Seligman (2013), posits each element and/or component of PERMA can be individually described, measured, and pursued with each adding to the construct and expression of well-being. In Figure 4, the dashed lines represent connections and/or potential connections between the individual elements and expressions of PERMA that interact dynamically to promote well-being (PERMA).

The loose words around each element of PERMA represent manifestations and development of PERMA in game play. PERMA was stimulated and observed in game play through meaningful stories and community affirmation. PERMA expressions occur in the game community among members and/or through the recollection of stories. All PERMA elements appear to relate significantly to time in the here and now through the formation of relationships during game play, to the past through the recall of stories, and/or to the future through planning and forecasting accomplishment. Therefore, the label time related is a significant contributor to each of the five elements of PERMA, and is generally emergent to the elements of game play. Both of these are listed around each PERMA element as a contributing factor to the expression and cultivation of PERMA/well-being. Further, broaden-and-build is listed around each PERMA element. It is a theory and phrase from Fredrickson (2013) that encapsulates the extension of qualities that appear to enrich meaning and significance, expressing a probably, direct, and active effect.

In general, players used words such as “love,” “fun,” and “best” to emphasize the importance of a quality, which added to the expression and cultivation of PERMA by activating or drawing out positive emotions. Stories about strengths evoked and/or excited the most positive emotions (PERMA element). Additionally, in the evaluative responses from questionnaire 1 players used such words as “enjoyed,” and “excited” which indicated positive end states. Rare in this study, but significant were player comments that demonstrated a reduction in negative emotions. For example, one participant commented in questionnaire 1 that she had been previously “very anxious,” another indicated that she “felt stress and fear” before game play. Both of these comments inferred a more positive emotional state and/or efficacy belief after game play reflecting PERMA and/or PsyCap. Collectively, these types of emotions were

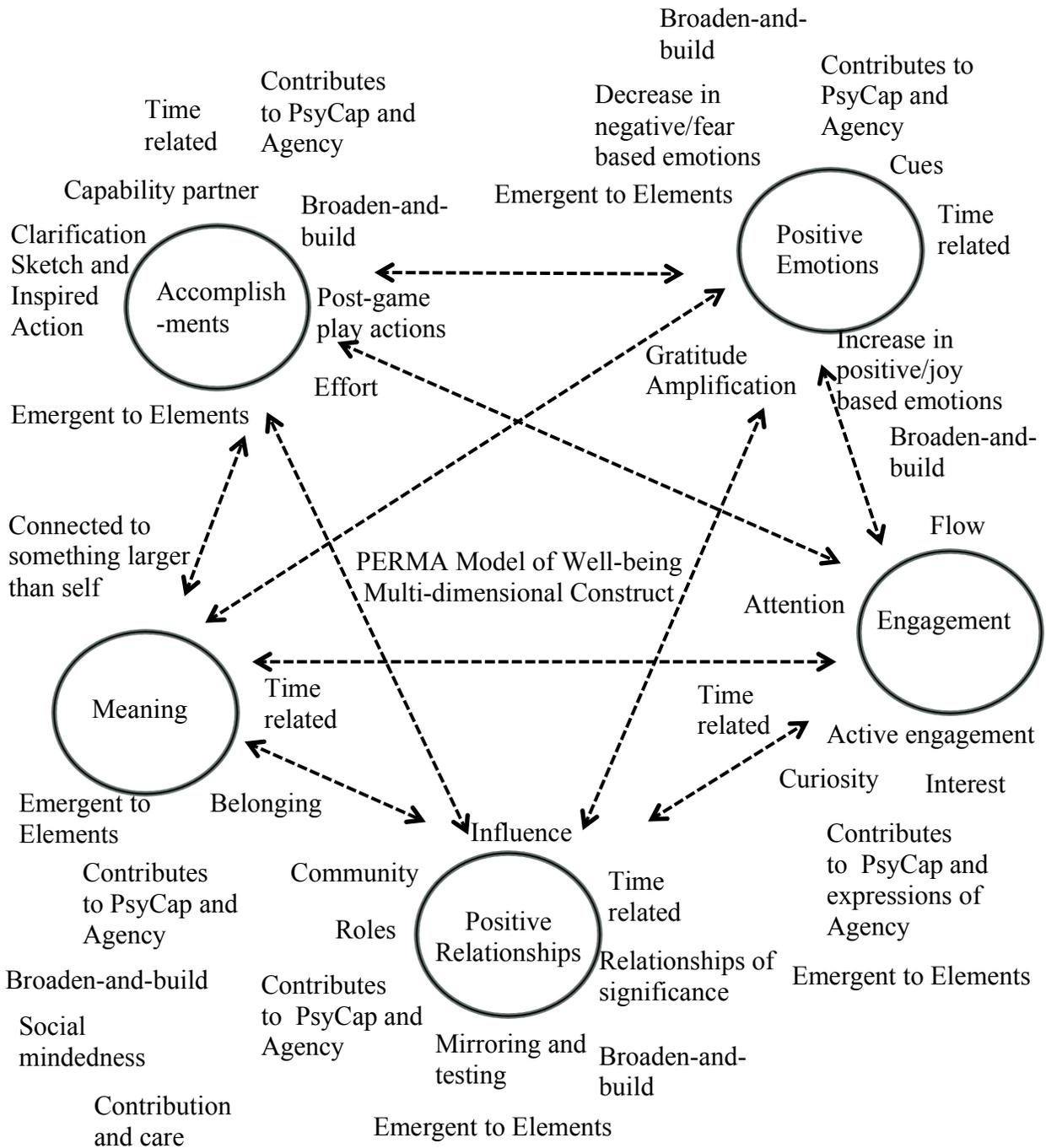


Figure 4. PERMA Expression and Interaction in *WYAM!* The diagram demonstrates the synergistic interaction of PERMA, and how it is cultivated and expressed in *WYAM!* The expressions occur in game community and/or through the recollection of stories.

collapsed into two phrases that represented positive (interest, hope, charity, joy, love, gratitude) and negative emotions (fear, alarm) as described by Schmidt (2017) as necessary to contribute to learning, memory, creativity, and decision-making. These contributors (labels/phrases) are noted around the positive emotions (PERMA element) circle as an increase in positive/joy based emotions and a decrease in negative/fear based emotions as recognizable expressions due to game play. Extending the importance, positive emotions, often, seemed to amplify the meaning and significance of original and response stories. This was noted in analysis as emphasis or excitement, and described and labeled as broaden-and-build in Figure 4, which appears around positive emotions (element of PERMA) and all elements of PERMA as a consolidated expression, manifestation, and/or benefit of game play. These emotion based and/or broadening manifestations were responsive and emergent to game structure and stories.

Synergistically, participants 1 and 5 extended the importance of a quality through positive emotions and meaning. Words like “really value,” “try,” and “very” heighten the salience, while words of application and utility such as “gotten me through a lot” and “do the best I can” demonstrated the extension, application and/or strength of meaning that may expand thoughts and possibilities. Participant stories linked positive emotions with the PERMA elements of positive relationships and meaning.

Participant 1: I chose dependable, because I, like, really value all my relationships in my life. And, I think its like what has gotten me through like a lot. So, I try to, like, relay that dependability to everyone in my life.

Participant 5: I chose help people...I feel like I'm very empathetic, and try to do the best I can for people who are struggling and to help them.

Participant 3 expressed a connection to something larger than self, and emphasized its importance with the words “first,” “big asset,” and “helps guide every decision I make” linking implicit emotions and meaning in PERMA.

Participant 3: I...put my spirituality first....I am not going through the world alone. That's a big asset for me personally. Helps guide every decision I make.

Participant 4 linked educational engagement, positive emotions, and previous accomplishment boosting PERMA well-being.

Participant 4: I said my education. In,...how I've learned, and how I've grown. Because, I feel, like, that has definitely been a defining factor. Especially in what I love to do.

Alternatively, in analysis, positive relationships were generated in the present with other players through testing, mirroring, acceptance, listening, resonance, and connection. These were terms used to express the intertextual experience of sharing stories that reflect constructs embedded in social exchange and transformational learning (Jones et al., 2019; Nohl, 2015). In data, this resonance was based on similar experiences, emotions, life-space, values, and interests, which were further amplified by expressions of appreciation and gratitude (Watkins, 2014) or positive emotions that members offered. Evidence suggests interaction and links occur between positive emotions, positive relationships, engagement, and meaning in player interactions. For example, participant 8 in a brief response story to an original storyteller affirmed the importance of siblings by explicitly stating an emotional connection and attributing shared meaning.

Participant 8: I really appreciated what you had to say especially about your siblings. I feel like my siblings often make me want to be a better person or to set a good example.

In sum, analysis of player stories and comments indicated that structure and processes endow positive emotions, motivational energy, hope, and anxiety reduction boosting well-being/PERMA.

On the other hand, Figure 5 represents PsyCap expressions and manifestations in game play. The circles represent the four key elements of PsyCap: hope, efficacy, resiliency, and optimism, and the corresponding lists next to each reflect expressions found in game play.

Although each psychological capital construct is unique and independent, it is common to trigger

more than one psychological capital construct or element at a time. In addition, intrapersonal and interpersonal labels indicate the location of PsyCap happenings and features, while products represent organizing tools that structure the experience of PsyCap. Thus, products/outcomes are retained and expressed through participant goals, inspired actions, and clarification sketch. These delivery or expressive avenues are reflected in the vertical columns. For example, Participant 7 recounted an experience that challenged her to stretch out of her “comfort zone.” Recalling that circles represent PsyCap elements, this story demonstrated past success affiliated with PsyCap efficacy and is represented in Figure 5 with the expression—leaning into challenge. This is manifested through the intrapersonal level as an evaluative story demonstrating experience and competency. The player also bolstered optimism by the expression label—assessing ability. In effect, through stories, PsyCap experiences were recalled conditioning a player to access and generate PsyCap fostering optimism and efficacy in the present and in the future.

Participant 7: I learned a lot...I am a shy introvert person. As a waitress, I really had to step out of my comfort zone, and it wasn't that bad.

Participant 3 demonstrated the capacity to broadly access PsyCap through a known quality. This reactivates a successful pathway to success, which is a hopeful expression. The brief story also expressed resiliency (PsyCap element) as indicated by the expression developing resources and efficacy (PsyCap element) reflected in the expression effort.

Participant 3: I put I love to organize. Cause I feel like whenever I have the time to organize a space or anything it helps keep me calm and gives me a sense of accomplishment.

In response stories, participants 6 and 8 valued a player's original story using positive words to affirm a player's strivings that engender efficacy and optimism. This is conveyed through the interpersonal domain and listed as affirmation that contributes to PsyCap development. The

specific expressions relate to inspiration under efficacy, and excitement and forecasting under optimism.

Participant 6: I think it's really cool that you are getting an engineering degree and applying it to...under represented minor people, groups.

Participant 8: I really like how you said you like to help people especially your family. I think that is really cool, and it shows that you can give of yourself.

Like-minded players affirmed original storytellers, which served to influence or embolden the original storytellers igniting PsyCap, and well-being which supplies energy for self expression. These experiences become fuel for PsyCap (Luthans et al., 2015), well-being (Seligman, 2013), expression, and development. The response stories complement experience by affirming and mirroring. As seen in Figure 5, these constructs work together to bolster PsyCap. In questionnaire 1, participant 4 conveyed PsyCap through the product/outcome of a clarification sketch boosting PsyCap.

Participant 4: I experienced a positive change in my resiliency (steady increase throughout game) as I completed my clarification sketch, and realized that my personal traits can apply to a wealth of careers I'm interested in.

Participant 5 expressed greater resiliency and hope through the expressions of belief and paths. Together, the effects of PsyCap are greater than its component constructs (Dawkins et al., 2013; Luthans et al., 2007).

Participant 5: I feel as though I have the ability and potential to determine a major and something that aligns well with who I am and what I value. I experienced it when I started to think that there are actually paths that I can take, and I have the ability to map it out.

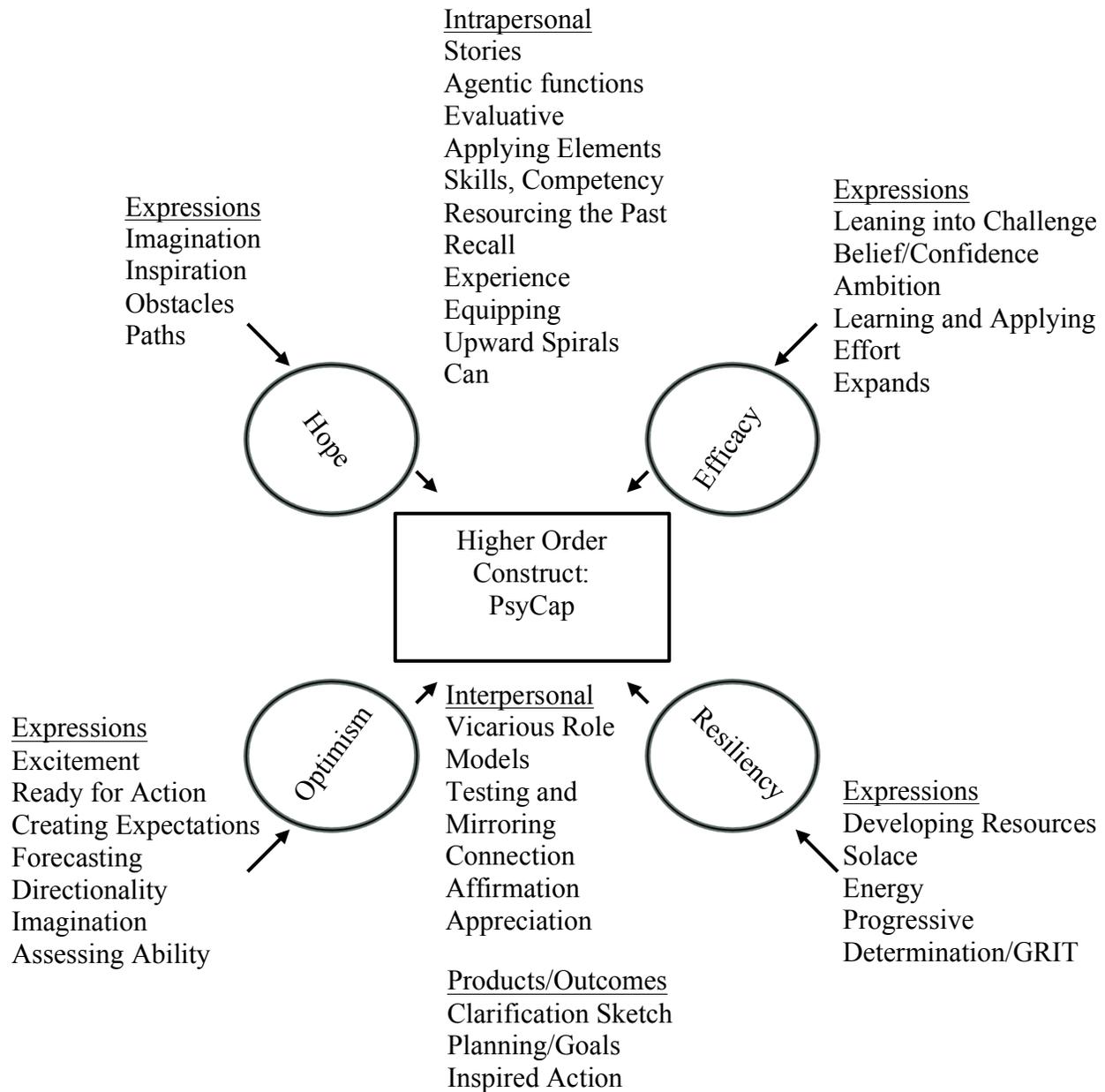


Figure 5. Manifestations and development of PsyCap in WYAM! The diagram demonstrates how PsyCap is cultivated and expressed in WYAM!

What Post-game Play Actions do Participants Take?

Findings from questionnaire 2 answer the last research question. Six out of the eight participants responded to the follow-up electronic questionnaire. In general, participants engaged in all categories demonstrating curiosity and momentum. These response categories were examined below in the order of occurrence. The first category, seeking information-actions, had many selections in the “I have done this” column showing significant early engagement. The possibilities of action items were listed in rows and capitalized on a variety of methods for acquiring more information. Types of modes included researching, reading, exploring online, observing, attending an event, signing up for a class, and taking an assessment. Out of the ten action items presented eight were selected in the “I have done this” column. The most popular selections were “researched my expanded possibility and/or inspired action” and “looked into furthering my education related to my expanded possibility and/or inspired action.”

In the thinking and reflecting-actions category, responses included actions that engaged the imagination and captured ideas by thinking, drawing, or writing. Five out of six respondents selected “I have done this” for the first two actions, which were thinking and visualizing possibilities. Other action items also indicated early expression, which were represented by “I have done this” and/or “I plan on doing this between now and three months.” These action responses were plentiful, and are listed below to view them more easily.

- Made a list of steps to attain my expanded possibility and/or inspired action.
- Reviewed my expanded possibility and/or inspired action.
- Thought about obstacles to my expanded possibility and/or inspired action and how to overcome them.
- Utilized an online product to reflect on my expanded possibility and/or inspired action.

- Drew a picture or mind map to visually capture ideas related to my possibility and/or inspired action.
- Wrote in a journal/wrote short stories related to my expanded possibility and/or inspired action.
- Made a visual board using images related to my expanded possibility and/or inspired action.

There were seven possible action items listed for the sparking meaningful conversation-actions category. These actions represented sharing with others and making your intentions known. Five of the six respondents shared stories about who they were with others, and four shared more specific stories or conversations about their expanded possibility and/or inspired action with someone. These were indicated as “I have done this.” Three of the six respondents also indicated that they had reached out to their capability partner and discussed their expanded possibility and/or inspired action.

Six possible action items represented the building relationships and making connections-actions category, and all six had an affirmative response at either “I have done this” or “I plan on doing this between now and 3 months.” These actions represented making a connection with someone in an area of interest, initiating a mentoring relationship, making an appointment with a professional (advisor, counselor, career coach etc...), joining an association, and/or creating a linkedin account. The creating deeper engagement-actions category held twenty-eight possible action items for participants, the most out of the five action categories. The action items were primarily based off of the game’s possibilities round, which highlighted clusters of possibilities related to an exploration theme. In game play, players selected from their possibilities in order to develop their expanded possibility and inspired action. Accordingly, most action items in the

category of creating deeper engagement are written to incorporate game language. Here are two action options to illustrate language usage. “Acted on my expanded possibility and/or inspired action related to volunteering or serving in a non-profit (ex: committee, board member, mentor, or tutor etc...),” and “acted on changing something in my environment to accommodate my expanded possibility and/or inspired action (ex. created a new space for a meaningful activity or hobby etc...).” Additionally, more concrete action items were updated a resume, and “bought tools or supplies to assist with an expanded possibility and/or inspired action.” These questions checked for purposeful action. Most action items had been carried out or were selected to be carried out between now and three months. The most popular selections for “I have done this” were “acted on my spiritual/religious expanded possibility and/or inspired action (ex. Prayer, meditation, service, reading etc...), “acted on my expanded possibility and/or inspired action related to leisure, retirement options (ex: playing games, cooking, downsizing, financial plans, join a club),” and “updated my resume.”

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

To recap, the purpose of this study was to explore participant experience playing *Who You Are Matters!*[®], expression and cultivation of psychological capital (PsyCap: hope, efficacy, resiliency, optimism), and PERMA/well-being (positive emotions, engagement, positive relationships, meaning, accomplishment) in game play and post-game play action. This study was unique in that it examined *WYAM!* separate from other allied interventions or as an embedded feature of a program. The study was exploratory and descriptive with the intent to glean meaningful explanations of players' experiences, stories, and actions as a result of *WYAM!*. Further, the study investigated how the tenets of positive psychology, psychological capital, narrative career counseling, and transformational learning contributed to game play. This chapter is organized by (a) discussion/interpretation of findings in relation to literature, (b) findings in relation to previous studies, (c) unexpected findings, (d) findings informing practice, (e) limitations and suggestions for future research, and (f) summary.

Discussion and Interpretation of Findings

Findings indicate that game play is an immersive and dynamic experience. Structure and context of game play allows for players to open up and share stories of meaning and significance with others. In *WYAM!*, a learning cycle characterized at the individual level as a loop of awareness, salience, affirmation, and exploration go hand in hand and act as prominent features motivating players to develop and carry out inspired actions.

Synergy-Amplification-Integration

The descriptive trio synergy-amplification-integration is a central or unifying construct to encapsulate the breadth and depth of game experience. Stories and texts ignite multiple themes:

(a) constructing/co-constructing meaning and identity, (b) cultivating wherewithal, (c) experiencing community, (d) equipping, (e) generating ideas/possibilities, and (f) disorienting awareness that work together to bolster exploration and goal setting. For the purposes of this study, an integral or integrating theory has been Bandura's (2006) conceptualization of agency, which is characterized by the functions or features of intentionality, forethought, self-reactiveness, and self-reflection that inform meaning through discovery, salience, and integration. Evaluative components in narratives demonstrate the theme cultivating wherewithal through expanding possibilities, resourcing past experiences for resiliency, and extending continuing valence. For example, stories that highlight the importance of mentors and teachers illuminate potential and paths not previously envisioned which relates directly to constructing/co-constructing meaning and identity through the functions of agency (Bandura, 2006). Mentors and teachers provide encouragement and infuse lives with PsyCap and well-being reserves. Likewise, mentors and teachers lend out and/or activate PsyCap by expressing belief and confidence in their students to help generate upward spirals and resources drawn from positive states (Fredrickson, 2013) and state-like qualities (Luthans et al., 2015) cultivated in the expression or recall of PsyCap and PERMA loaded stories. The value and importance of relationships are harnessed on multiple levels in game play. For example, the act of recalling significant others serve to reinforce personal value, good feelings, well-being, and inspiration (Fredrickson, 2013; Lee et al., 2015; Watkins, 2014). Similarly, positive relationships are generated in the present with other players through testing, mirroring, acceptance, listening, resonance, and connection (Jones et al., 2019; Nohl, 2015). Often this resonance is based on similar experiences, emotions, life-space, values, and interests, which are further amplified by expressions of appreciation and gratitude that members offer (Watkins, 2014).

The phenomenon of cultivating wherewithal takes place in this context with lines of narrative often representing multiple themes. *WYAM!* stories reflect the importance of qualities and relationships that guide and inform choices related to wayfinding and forecasting the future, which are further related to aspects of PsyCap, particularly hope and optimism. By exploring the data, it was evident that PsyCap and PERMA worked in alliance or intersect with the ideas of broaden-and-build (Fredrickson, 2013) to expand a person's outlook and/or mindset.

Alternatively, guided storytelling may act similarly to "positive spontaneous thoughts" (Rice & Fredrickson, 2017, p. 841), boosting engagement and motivation. Players become steeped in positive motivational stories and possibilities through recall and reconstruction amplifying experience. Amplifying reflections were not rigidly retained in structural analysis but were found across narrative components appearing in abstracts, evaluations, and/or codas. In the learning cycle, broaden-and-build and gratitude amplification theory amplifies experience through positive emotions, especially inspiration, appreciation, and gratitude. Stories may act as a mechanism to stimulate and garner salience and commitment, propelling desired goals or outcomes.

Further, the broaden-and-build theory supports discovery and possibilities generated in game play by opening up a person's receptivity through the experience of positive emotions, widening a person's range of thoughts and behaviors. In particular, these emotions and broadening effects were evident to some degree in all themes; however, broadening was most evident in experiencing community, cultivating wherewithal, disorienting awareness, and generating possibilities leading to transformational learning and motivated actions (Nohl, 2015). Fredrickson's (2013) broaden-and-build theory impacts the functions of agency, derived meanings, and resultant actions (Bandura, 2006).

Gratitude amplification theory works to deepen the value and meaning of player experience. The total social experience drives clarity about what matters and creates confidence in players. Synergistically this informs well-being, which energizes motivation and action. This effect is similar to broaden-and-build creating a well of resources for personal expansion (Watkins, 2014). PsyCap, PERMA, broaden-and-build, and gratitude amplification theory all appear to support and inform agency and meaning-making.

Theories and constructs overlap amplifying benefits as seen in the elevation of PERMA (Seligman, 2013) in game play, which can also be viewed as a healthy sense of self-efficacy or agency (Bandura, 2008) related to PsyCap expression (Luthans et al., 2015). There is a density of meaning that occurs in narratives, and it usually occurs in player evaluations. This happening fortifies discovery and salience with the intersecting themes cultivating wherewithal, equipping, and constructing/co-constructing meaning and identity. Additionally, PsyCap and PERMA help to strengthen and catalyze the construction and co-construction of meaning and identity. To say it another way, cultivating wherewithal appears to funnel information and resources into agentic functions (Bandura, 2006) which in turn constructs meaning and converts motivation into potential action creating a transformative learning experience (Nohl, 2015). The game serves to accelerate, expand, and illuminate participant possibilities due to game structure and social context, which capitalizes on the overlap and synergy of constructs that work in concert.

Transformative learning takes place through questioning and working through uncertainty, and stories allow this process to unfold gracefully. By pulling together various aspects of identity, players construct more whole, dynamic, and complex views of self, providing clarity. Players formulate a different, more integrated or transformed picture of self. Storytellers recount and/or demonstrate through goal setting the juncture of personal expansion and game

experience that spurs identity growth. Players read aloud their inspired action (goal) energizing salience (Rice & Fredrickson, 2017), acting to declare or affirm commitment (Duranti, 2004), and giving shape to identity through the functions of agency (Bandura, 2006). Expansion and growth are the products of this transformational learning process (Nohl, 2015) and were represented by intentional goal setting/inspired actions and preponderance of actions taken in questionnaire 2. Through engagement and narrative processes, players distill and organize their experience in a series of stories that generate a comprehensible sense of wholeness/integration, which informs agency and forward momentum (Bandura, 2001; Franklin, 2015; Franklin & Feller, 2017; Kim, 2016). Game play comes to fruition as players take new insights into the world and realize their inspired actions. *Who You Are Matters!*[®] ignites optimism and motivates agentic behavior in life/career exploration. This growth and expansion serves to conclude, but not close, the learning cycle represented in Figure 2.

Constructing/Co-constructing Meaning and Identity

In the theme constructing/co-constructing meaning and identity players declare insight, convey a sense of purpose, and integrate new information to create possibilities in order to pursue intentional goal setting or inspired actions. Players' stories arise from personal knowledge and experience and uniquely honor diversity and multiple identities. As such, comprehensive life/career programs like OLT/CC narrative assessment system (Franklin et al., 2017-2018), CCT and/or Life-Design (Savickas, 2015), and Integrated Life Planning (ILP) bring attention to the needs of diverse individuals, life roles, and context that impact life and career decisions (Hansen & Tovar, 2013). In player stories, meanings are derived, usually, from the evaluations in structural analysis and demonstrate nuance. Players externalize stories and newly examine qualities in a social context to expand what Harms, Vanhove, and Luthans (2017) would

describe as “conscious” personality expression (p. 83). Learning about self, in particular about strengths, promotes feelings of well-being, optimal functioning, and authenticity (Biswas-Diener, Kashdan, & Lyubchik, 2017). This process fosters an internal locus of control (Franklin, 2015) and well-being (Hefferon & Boniwell, 2011). In contrast, external locus of control diminishes investment and persistence (Hefferon & Boniwell, 2011). That is to say, literature supports links between well-being, life satisfaction, and strengths utilization (Duffy & Dik, 2013; Shaff & Hoyt, 2017-2018; Wood et al., 2011). Positive psychology and narrative career counseling equate courage and exploration in order to access meaning, authenticity, and purposeful action (Chen, 1998; Georganda, 2016; Seligman, 2013). The game cycle helps players to cultivate a sense of ownership indicative of agency (Bandura, 2006). Evident in findings, *WYAM!* structures narratives and provides a flexible means to understand and construct meaning promoting authenticity, investment, and ownership. The value and importance of narratives to promote authenticity and identity construction is extensively supported in literature (Bandura 2006; Georganda, 2016; Savickas, 2015; Seligman, 2013). The storied experience creates a “gestalt” (Nohl, 2015, p. 37) focused on constructing meaning and identity which generates motivation and coalescence moving life and career narratives forward with insight and energy.

Setting a specific goal or inspired action is the apex of game experience reflecting the themes of constructing/co-constructing meaning and identity, generating ideas, and equipping. The simple communicative act of setting a goal conveys a wealth of information. Setting a date asserts intent related to the theme constructing/co-constructing meaning and identity and helps players prepare for action and to “capitalize on . . . decision-making momentum” found in the preparation stage of change (Prochaska et al., 2006, p. 155). Together, game experience and stories catalyze identity construction. Further, a capability partner (an after game play support

person) elevates the gains, benefits, and inspired actions beyond the bounds of game play. Capability partners recognize and honor strivings and support agency or autonomous goal setting (Hall, 2013). These relationships can inspire PsyCap and engender positive emotions inspiring greater connection and meaning in a broader community of support (Jenkins, Lahr, & Fink, 2017, & Savickas, 2015). This transfer of learning (Mezirow, 2009) continues to promote an upward spiral of success by broadening-and-building (Fredrickson, 2013) opportunities within the wider community possibly increasing self-efficacy, expanding agentic behaviors (Bandura, 2015; Franklin et al., 2015), and inculcating goal attainment (Bandura, 2015; Seligman, 2013). That is to say, game processes allow players to consolidate meaning and identity in a relevant new context of support to reinterpret life and career narratives or autobiographical stories (Nohl, 2015).

Generating Ideas/Possibilities

Generating ideas and possibilities demonstrate active interest and problem-solving which is processed by the functions and products of agency—intentionality, forethought, self-reactiveness, and self-reflectiveness (Bandura, 2006) that filters meaning and stimulates a plan, motivation, and commitment to act in game play. In stories about possibilities, generating ideas moved from general to specific as players’ stories unfolded. Moreover, “knowledge emotions” such as curiosity and interest (Silvia, 2008, p. 57) may spur forward movement related to intrinsic motivation. In general, generating ideas/possibilities reflect self-directedness and planning for action. Intentionality expressed agency and excited PsyCap, elevating hope and optimism and stimulating efficacy and resiliency to plan, address obstacles, and move forward. A due date solidifies directionality in game play through self-reactiveness and takes advantage of the processes of change. Further, a due date prepares a player for action by expressing

motivation and transformation related to the themes of generating ideas, constructing/co-constructing meaning and identity, and equipping.

The theme generating ideas or possibilities harnesses positive emotions, meaning, and forecasted accomplishment that acted to motivate and inspire. This is represented in PERMA theory (Seligman, 2013). The equipping theme is also noted to act as an extension or in adjacency to the theme generating ideas. Equipping takes who, what, when, and where from generating ideas to a level of specificity. For example, acquiring and/or accessing a range of specific resources are collapsed into one descriptive dimension: accessing specific information, resources, and people. This reflects the diversity among types of instrumental and relational resources that are reflected, developed, or acquired for players to move possibilities forward. That is to say, some players cited a specific person as a resource to help them achieve an inspired action. Whereas, other players lacked a specific name, and therefore, named a program, college, office, or career center to acquire more information or assistance. Overall, these differences may relate to life and career development and goal location on a progressive continuum usually as a component of a larger or distal goal.

Cultivating Wherewithal

PsyCap and PERMA work together to influence transformative learning experiences in game play by cultivating wherewithal. The game serves as a PsyCap intervention cultivating hope, efficacy, resiliency, and optimism through storytelling and listening. Recalling experience through story generates PsyCap by re-igniting pathways that tap hope boosting feelings of confidence or efficacy and stimulating optimism. Hope is inferred from recalling stories of prior pathways to success generating positive emotions and past accomplishments, thereby fostering PERMA and PsyCap activation and/or expression in the present, which appear to provide

resources for future withdrawal (Fredrickson, 2013a; Luthans et al., 2015; Malik, 2013). It is this activation that generates and encourages internal state-like qualities. Although each construct is unique and independent, it is common to trigger more than one psychological capital construct or element at a time. This recall additionally strengthens agency pushing potential and goal expansion (Lyubomirsky, King, & Diener, 2005). Together, the effects of PsyCap are greater than its component constructs (Dawkins et al., 2013; Luthans et al., 2007). As seen in Figure 5, these constructs work together to bolster and empower agency. In fact, it has been suggested that PsyCap constructs are synergistic because each component relies on common “coping mechanism(s)” related to “psychological resource theory” and that the constructs may function as indicators of a “multidimensional core construct” that influence behavior and outcomes (Dawkins et al., 2013, p. 350). Stories convey past experiences infusing the present with hope and informing or energizing future goals.

Likewise, bringing the past into the present activates PERMA and serves to cultivate wherewithal through the flexible functions of agency (Bandura, 2006). Seligman (2013) posited that each component of PERMA can be individually described, measured, and pursued with each adding to the construct and expression of well-being. Seligman also illuminated that the elements often work together or manifest in relation to each other. In particular, Seligman discussed how positive relationships excite or express in relation to other elements of PERMA. In other words, relationships typically and easily involve positive emotions, engagement, meaning, and accomplishment (Seligman, 2013). In data analysis, this PERMA excitation is interactive and synergistic and observed implicitly and explicitly. For example, players would often share stories that demonstrated two or more PERMA elements. This type of synergy is illustrated in Figure 4. This creates “buffering,” as suggested by Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000, p. 12) or grit

(Duckworth, 2016), providing energy and resources to overcome inertia in the present to pursue desired outcomes for the future. PsyCap and PERMA cultivate wherewithal and supply resources for agentic decision-making impacting meaning and construction/co-construction of identity.

Experiencing Community

Experiencing community is an ongoing theme that was primarily reserved for response stories but was evident throughout game play. “Nothing is experienced all by itself. Indeed, everything is inevitably embedded in an enveloping context” (Cole & Reese, 2018, p. xii). Community provides the context and/or field, and participants are both distinct from the field and “of the field” (Cole & Reese, 2018, p. 9). The game serves as a ground or field that heightens the capacity for empathy and connection expanding creativity and new ways of seeing self and goals (Cole & Reese, 2018). Further, experiencing community serves as a source of interpersonal competence and reward contributing to positive states and well-being (Diener et al., 2017; Seligman, 2013). Together, players created a shared experience that addressed the need for “relatedness” (Lee et al., 2015, p. 88), perceived value, social support, understanding (Jones et al., 2019; Magyar-Moe et al., 2015), and positive emotions (Hefferon & Boniwell, 2011; Fredrickson, 2013) that reduced feelings of isolation (Bendassolli, 2017; Cole & Reese, 2018). This connection and resonance met universal needs. The theme of experiencing community triggers PERMA well-being, PsyCap, and agentic functions.

Questionnaire 1 revealed the benefits of social contagion related to inspired actions (Luthans et. al., 2015; Parkinson, 2011). In addition, the game harnesses the power of community to contribute to identity development through mirroring and testing of narratives that shift relevance, meaning, and engagement, expanding identity and encouraging new stories, trajectories, and/or autobiographies (Savickas, 2013b; Nohl, 2015). Likewise, the game provides

the social context for mattering (Savickas et al., 2009; Schlossberg, 1989; Seligman, 2013) through the giving and receiving of attention and appreciation (Schlossberg, 1989) in community. This meaning and mattering evolves through game play and is taken in by the integrative functions of agency (Bandura, 2006), equipping and expanding possibilities related to identity expression. This was evident in data. These experiences become fuel for PsyCap (Luthans et al., 2015), well-being (Seligman, 2013), and development.

Parkinson's (2011) view similarly likened mirroring and testing to "mimicry" and "social appraisal" related to "interpersonal emotion transfer" (p. 3). Alternatively, vicarious learning is evident in game play and appears to engender a greater sense of self-efficacy and hope that a goal can be pursued and attained (Luthans et al., 2010). Hearing about someone else's achievement puts a desired outcome in the realm of possibility. Distinctions could be made about the exact process producing the interaction and resultant outcome, but it is the practical impact that is noteworthy. Context and community matter, and people affect each other.

Further, response stories communicated excitement and amplification with words such as "really" and "awesome." This mirroring and testing comes with the meta-message—you got this, which aids players in integrating qualities and interests. Stories help players to identify salience, develop resources, and amass the courage to act (Georganda, 2016). This resonates with transformational learning as "a phase of social testing and mirroring" (Nohl, 2015, p. 39), contributing to the motivation to act. The response stories served to generate "hardiness" (Maddi, 2017, p. 105) and/or "grit" (Von Culin, Tsukayama, & Duckworth, 2014). Hardiness and grit are allied or similar to PsyCap and overlap with PERMA and agency. Gratitude amplification theory becomes more apparent as a result of the frequency and intensity of shared emotions and meaning (Watkins, 2014). Gratitude amplification exists across the themes of constructing/co-

constructing meaning and identity, cultivating wherewithal, and experiencing community. These positive experiences and emotions are related and appear to boost efficacy, draw out hope, and energize optimism for the future. That is to say, mutual benefit is reaped in which players give and receive responsive stories and feedback, cultivating wherewithal and constructing/co-constructing meaning and identity, which is socially influenced.

Additionally, players are bolstered and encouraged to pursue their ideal selves. That is to say, there is power, influence, and affirmation in community. Meaningful response stories and feedback capitalize on positive emotions and encouragement, boosting PsyCap and PERMA well-being. Response stories and feedback also enrich salience by tapping into broaden-and-build theory that asserts “positive emotions broaden cognition and build resources” (Fredrickson, 2013, p. 39). Game play flexes community, increasing intrinsic motivation cued by the social context of working together (Carr & Walton, 2014) toward a common purpose of self-discovery. Intertextual meaning encourages people to take chances and to move toward valued goals. Response stories and feedback create positive emotions and encourage valence and directionality of possibilities.

In reflective statements toward the end of the game, players cited interactions as being “open” and “comfortable.” In addition, the players found “much in common,” “inspiration,” “different interests,” and “unifying interests” in the group experience which were facilitated by “listening,” and “sharing.” The community experience provided opportunities for constructing/co-constructing meaning, motivation, and identity. The community imparts confidence or belief. Player feedback related to engagement or “interest” aptly labeled as one of the “knowledge emotions” (Silva, 2008, p. 57), which influenced exploration and learning for the whole group.

Lastly, the social context of game play increases intrinsic motivation (Carr & Walton, 2014). In terms of game play, motivation builds throughout game play prompting spontaneous stories of success, valued attributes, qualities, or experiences which act as cues to stimulate positive emotions prompting richer constructions of salience and meaning. It is the levels of engagement—self-discovery and community—that lead to transformational learning.

Equipping

All things considered, the game teaches participants to harness the functions of agency and community by going beyond preconceived notions of self to expand or construct/co-construct new possibilities, stories, and identities (Cole & Reese, 2018; Franklin & Feller, 2017; Fredrickson, 2013; Nohl, 2015). The equipping theme reflects the more concrete skills and competencies related to qualities and strengths, and how people use and apply that which is salient. Qualities and/or strengths function at a practical level reflecting the theme of equipping that overlaps with the agentic features of constructing/co-constructing meaning and identity. Characterized by openness (Krumboltz, 2009), these possibilities are reflected in the adaptable self (Lengelle et al., 2013), which promotes a positive, flexible, and HEROIC mindset (Feller, 2017). This is in line with transformational learning (Mezirow, 2000) and Bandura's (2006) conceptualization of agency, which is expressed in collaboration with others. We develop in social networks and in a variety of contexts that inform identity and its expression. With this in mind, the game is holistic and brings the value of social context, ongoing self-construction, and narrative approaches to the forefront of holistic, constructivist interventions (Franklin & Feller, 2017; Patton & McMahon, 2014).

Moreover, throughout game play, career and life skills are implicitly and explicitly taught. Players learn how to navigate life and career by exploring, connecting, listening, giving

feedback, developing what matters, setting goals, reaching out, generating ideas, demonstrating appreciation, creating motivational upward spirals, overcoming obstacles, being accountable, developing PsyCap, constructing meaning, and promoting intentionality. These findings were observed in data and represent the concrete career development and management skills related to the theme equipping. These skills may represent the path to a more satisficing life (Seligman, 2013). These are skills that profit the holder and engender greater well-being: the paramount goal of PERMA. To put it simply, game play boosts players' confidence by expanding the ability to explore, plan, and do. As part of the themes of equipping and constructing/co-constructing meaning and identity, these are instrumental benefits observed and described in data analysis. This learning is a democratizing feature of game play and aligns with movements to increase social justice (Magyar-Moe et al., 2015; Paradis, 2013) and foster interventions that are holistic (Franklin et al., 2015b).

Disorienting Awareness

Identifying obstacles is paramount for appropriate and necessary planning to achieve desirable outcomes. Luthans et al. (2015) brought this process into focus in *Psychological Capital and Beyond*. This disorientation serves to develop and expand the utilization of PsyCap. The theme disorienting awareness is especially relevant to seeking alternative pathways to success by cultivating hope and optimism and boosting confidence and capacity to persist, and thereby, developing efficacy and resiliency. Disorienting occurrences manifest as cognitive dissonance, conflicting priorities, and as new discoveries needing accommodation. More specifically, granularity is constructed along a continuum. For example, discerning direction reveals distress, deficit, or a press point. In stories, seeking clarity typically shows up as reflective inquiry, or as a decisional balance as seen in motivational interviewing (Miller &

Rollnick, 2013). The intensity and meaning of these disorienting comments are more significant than frequency. Additionally, evaluative components act as a precursor, or stimulant for hope by acknowledging the disorientation, possibilities, and challenges, thereby, initiating problem solving or wayfinding. This disorientation begins to focus “pathways” and “agency” to pursue goal directed behavior (Bandura, 2006; Luthans et al., 2015, p. 86). These processes externalize and press on agency to weigh options, contemplate choices, and resolve ambivalence for change motivating forward movement. These processes are described in agency and motivational interviewing (Bandura, 2006; Miller & Rollnick, 2013). This disorientation is also reflected in transformational learning theory, which would represent “a disorienting dilemma” (Mezirow, 2009, p. 19), or a “non-determining start” (Nohl, 2015, p. 39). Through various meaning making processes of agency and structured game play, storytellers bring unacknowledged or disenfranchised aspects of identity into conscious evaluation and assert current relevance.

Findings in Relation to Previous Studies

As stated in chapter 2, in general, OLT/CC methods and interventions have demonstrated positive correlations and outcomes (Franklin et al., 2017-2018). Using paired-sample t-tests, a retrospective outcome study of ($N = 68$) clients utilizing tools and methods from CareerCycles demonstrated a “significant increase in psychological capital, personal growth initiative, and curiosity and exploration” after experiencing a variety of interventions (Franklin et al., 2015b, p. 17). Validated measures such as the PCQ developed by Luthans et al. (2007) and person-job fit by Lauver and Kristof-Brown (2001) were used for statistical analysis which indicated increases in “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” (Franklin et al., 2015b, p. 17). The study also demonstrated positive correlations for the

following: “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 ($r = .32, p < .05$)”; “psychological capital ($r = .62, p < .05$) and personal growth initiative ($r = .59, p < .05$) were positively related to overall career and life satisfaction”; and “person-job fit was positively related to higher psychological capital ($r = .58, p < .05$) and personal growth initiative ($r = .42, p < .05$)” (Franklin et al., 2015b, p. 19). It is important to clarify that the study was not about *WYAM!* specifically, but the “narrative method of practice” (Franklin et al., 2015b, p. 12). *WYAM!* grew out of this practice and does fit within its framework as a group exploration experience. In general, interventions work together and/or overlap to elicit narratives and purposeful goal setting. However, study participants for this study were selected based on a minimum of four sessions with a CareerCycle’s associate, not for game play. Therefore, these results are indicative of an individualized narrative experience with a career practitioner. Overall, 76% of the study participants indicated, “that they gained somewhat to a great deal of clarity” as a result of these *WYAM!* affiliated interventions (Franklin et al., 2015b, p. 19). The study demonstrated that the “narrative method of practice” fostered the development of psychological capital and intentional career and life exploration through storytelling (Franklin et al., 2015b). Further, in-depth interviews supported their robust quantitative findings. Results supported the narrative approach to life/career exploration and indicated that participants’ experienced increases in psychological capital, which were correlated with both “person-job fit, and career and life satisfaction” (Franklin et al., 2015b, p. 20).

As an update to the Franklin et al. (2015b) study, Stebleton, Franklin, Lee, and Kaler (2019) conducted a qualitative study of a life/career course. The course was designed to address issues related to life/career development and management. The life/career course had a range of

interventions including readings, self-reflection exercises, developmental projects, and *WYAM!* Interviews were conducted examining the experiences of 10 graduate students following the course. The researchers, including one of the game developers, illustrated three themes with the most saturation (out of six created) based on interview responses, which included “fostering career awareness and exploration skills, finding affiliation with others, and developing optimism and confidence” (Stebbleton et al., 2019, p. 68). Their themes overlap with the six themes constructed in this current study. In particular, “fostering career awareness and exploration skills” overlaps with the equipping theme, which reflected, in part, concrete life and career development and management skills (Stebbleton et al., 2019, p. 68). “Finding affiliation with others” intersects with the theme experiencing community, and “developing optimism and confidence” (Stebbleton et al., 2019, p. 68) resonates with the theme cultivating wherewithal. Keep in mind that their study was of a broader program guided by different interview questions and study objectives. However, these studies and the current study independently confirm many of the same qualities and benefits; in particular, each study describes experiences related to life and career management skills, relatedness, and features associated with PsyCap development.

In contrast to the two studies delineated above, this study focused solely on the *WYAM!* game experience. True to a bricolage approach of knowledge construction, I was directed by my search for a greater understanding of player experience and by methods at hand that seemed to serve the purpose. This allowed for a deeper examination of player experience and a rich understanding of how stories function to support life/career exploration, to engender PsyCap and PERMA, and to motivate players in relation to game structure/context, agency, goal setting, and transformational learning. This study was exploratory and descriptive examining player

experience through the game's learning cycle. This study illuminated story processes specific to *WYAM!* and contributions to goal setting.

I examined the data from multiple perspectives and was able to detail synergistic patterns through the use of questionnaires, narrative structure, interpretive analysis, poetic synthesis, and diagrammatic thinking. The study revealed a comprehensive learning cycle, thematic contributions of a storied process of life/career exploration which lead to a range of motivated actions. Further, the study gave some indication as to how stories reveal salience and give shape to what matters most to people. In turn, theories and models informed observable features and/or dimensions of transformational learning, gratitude amplification, and broaden-and-build theories. Together, theory amplifies experience through positive emotions and relationships of resonance, which move players through self-awareness to inspired action. Structure and context of game play along with stories bring greater clarity to individuals.

It could be said that transformational learning is the goal of life/career exploration. The game *WYAM!* appears to generate opportunities to build psychological capital and PERMA and motivate players toward action. Motivation, inspiration, and/or transformation take place at the intersection that brings identity, PsyCap, and PERMA together. In the game, seeing things differently about self and/or others creates opportunities for growth and new understanding. Players make connections from one card to another building significance and clarity. Additionally, seeing similarities and appreciating differences between self and others generates acceptance and confidence.

This study aligns with literature and/or previous studies suggesting and/or demonstrating the benefits of life/career narratives to encourage agency and the development of PsyCap and PERMA (Luthans et al., 2015; Franklin et al., 2015b; Seligman, 2013). Specifically, literature

purports that a central function of psychological resources (Luthans et al., 2015) and life/career narratives is to enable resiliency and support adaptation (McMahon et al., 2004; Savickas, 2002). The current study adds to the growing body of research that demonstrates the value and utility of narrative interventions like *WYAM!* to engender psychological capital, well-being, and purposeful goal-setting. Narrative/constructivist approaches to life/career exploration serve to integrate a person's experience, qualities, and strengths which energizes life and career exploration, thereby, inspiring agentic action, resiliency, meaning, and adaptation. The game encourages players to cultivate a more optimistic, strengths oriented, or HEROIC mindset (Feller, 2017) to write and own stories of meaning to become authors or agents of their lives (Bandura, 2008; Jones-Smith, 2014). Evidence suggests that the game experience serves as an opportunity for participants to construct meaningful stories that move goals forward. To conclude, analysis was robust. Trustworthiness and triangulation were addressed through prolonged and close examination of data, multiple data sources, saturation of themes, and literature (Bazeley, 2013; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Glesne, 2016).

Unexpected findings

In the observed patterns of affirmation and resonance and emphasis and excitement that seemed to bolster the salience of original and response stories, more seemed to be occurring. Generally, these patterns were explainable as the manifestation or cultivation of PERMA and PsyCap, but I investigated other possible meanings and hidden benefits of such occurrences. This was important to the primary research question of how do players experience *WYAM!*? This led me to Fredrickson's (2013) broaden-and-build theory. The broaden-and-build theory supports discovery and possibilities generated in game play by opening up a person's receptivity through the experience of positive emotions, widening a person's range of thoughts and behaviors.

Fredrickson calls this phenomenon a “broadened scope of awareness” (Fredrickson, 2013, p. 15). Broadening gets manifested as greater creativity, flexibility, novelty, and integration, expanding a person’s resources, possibilities, and actions (Fredrickson, 2013). This broadening in game play is synergistic and capitalizes on many of the positive emotions cited by Fredrickson (2013) including interest, hope, pride, inspiration, and gratitude lending to and/or amplifying the benefits of game play and expanding thoughts and possibilities. That is to say, game play is a progressive and positive experience that promotes productive goal setting. In particular, these emotions and broadening effects were evident to some degree across game play in all themes; however, broadening was most evident in the themes experiencing community, cultivating wherewithal, and generating possibilities leading to transformational learning (Nohl, 2015) and motivated action.

Likewise, gratitude amplification theory works to deepen the value and meaning of player experience. The total social experience drives clarity about what matters and creates confidence in players. Synergistically this informs well-being, which energizes motivation and action. This effect is similar to broaden-and-build, creating a well of resources for personal expansion (Watkins, 2014). Together, broaden-and-build and gratitude amplification theory seemed to amplify player experience.

Findings Informing Practice: Selecting Holistic Narrative Interventions

Based on this study and literature review, I would recommend the following criteria for narrative based counseling interventions. Broadly speaking, the term intervention(s) represents the spectrum of tools, methods, techniques, practices, and products that can be used to aid students/clients in holistic life and career development. The criteria below represent intervention features, practitioner values, and student/client factors.

Intervention Features:

- Intervention utilizes narratives or stories to facilitate students/clients in constructing and conveying meaning, expressing identity (Savickas, 2015), and cultivating psychological resources (Lee et al., 2015) such as PsyCap and PERMA (Luthans et al., 2015; Seligman, 2013). Stories provide structure, guidance, and balance among the tensions of identity coherence, expansion, and change, promoting adaptability (Cardoso et al., 2016; Lengelle & Meijers, 2013; Savickas, 2002). This is reflected in the themes of constructing/co-constructing meaning and identity, cultivating wherewithal, experiencing community, and equipping within this study.
- Intervention provides an opportunity for mirroring, feedback, and support in a social context to amplify benefits (Fredrickson, 2013) of life and career explorers. Mattering occurs within and because of social context (Schlossberg, 1989). Storytelling and storylistening implies a community and/or an engaged practitioner that can provide an opportunity for social contact and the experience of community (Franklin, Botelho, & Graham, 2017-2018). This reflects the themes of experiencing community, cultivating wherewithal, and generating ideas/possibilities.
- Intervention positions salience and ownership as a fulcrum that balances or modulates the dynamic between agentic expression and community need and values. This is interpreted and adjusted by the functions of agency (Bandura, 2006). That is to say, individuals add or subtract perceived relevance based on contributions from both self as agent and community/context (Bandura, 2006). These weights change based on a variety of factors. The fulcrum also represents the capacity for adaptation based on changing demands and contexts, which are gleaned from internal and external meanings, processes, or events

(Savickas, 2015). Again these interpretations are made through the functions of agency (Bandura, 2006). As such, this criterion reflects the need for other(s) or community to mirror (Parkinson, 2011; Waytz & Mitchell, 2011), affirm, and encourage the storytellers as valued community members (Cole & Reese, 2018). This was demonstrated in the study through appreciative recognition or gratitude (Watkins, 2014), which cultivates positive emotions and aids in idea generation and motivation through the processes of broaden-and-build (Fredrickson, 2013). This criterion reflects the themes of constructing/co-constructing meaning and identity and experiencing community in narrative approaches to life and career exploration.

- Intervention provides an opportunity to develop or cultivate wherewithal to manage periods of “stability and change” over the lifespan that impact life/career narratives and trajectories (Franklin, 2015, p. 451). This is related to PERMA, PsyCap, and mindset (Luthans et al., 2015; Seligman, 2013; Feller & Chapman, 2018), and reflects the themes of cultivating wherewithal and equipping.
- Intervention stimulates directionality or clarity and motivates action (Franklin et al., 2015). This was demonstrated by the preponderance of actions taken as a result of game play in this study, and represents constructing/co-constructing meaning and identity and generating ideas/possibilities.

Practitioner Values/Approach:

- Practitioner recognizes the need for students/clients to develop agency and authorship of their life and career stories (Bandura, 2008, 2015; Georganda, 2016; Nohl, 2015). This may be reflected in a working alliance with a practitioner or in the utilization of a variety of tools (Franklin et al., 2017-2018). The game was the tool or assessment in this study

(Busacca & Rehfuss, 2017) and players represented the community or context for experiential learning and transformation (Nohl, 2015). Further, this reflects the theme of constructing/co-constructing meaning and identity and experiencing community found within this study.

- In order to develop stories of significance and ownership, the student/client is respected as the expert (Bandura, 2008, 2015; Franklin et al., 2017-2018; Koestner, 2008; Miller & Rollnick, 2013; Savickas, 2015). That is to say, students/clients are experts about who they are and who they want to be or do which intimately connects to self-efficacy beliefs and capacity (Bandura, 2015; Franklin & Feller, 2017; Luthans et al., 2015). The construct of ownership/agency also relates to the perceiving and integrating functions of self-reactiveness, self-reflection, intentionality, and forethought posited by Bandura (2006). This sense of ownership also functions as an accessible and expandable skill set that shapes directionality in choices and works to equip, promote, or cultivate life and career exploration skills and psychological resources related to PERMA and PsyCap (Luthans et al., 2015; Seligman, 2013). For example, games such as *WYAM!* promote the development and cultivation of well-being/PERMA and PsyCap which, in turn, influences disposition or mindset (Feller, 2017). This recommendation relates to the themes of constructing/co-constructing meaning and identity, cultivating wherewithal, and equipping.
- Practitioner values the centrality of stories to communicate, shape, and project identity and/or to offer opportunities for transformational learning and/or new stories that inform identity and life and career choices (Cordoso, 2016; Franklin & Feller, 2017; Nohl, 2015; Patton & McMahon, 2006; Savickas, 2015). This criterion is reflected in the themes of

constructing/co-constructing meaning and identity, disorienting awareness, and generating ideas or possibilities for goal pursuit.

- Practitioner recognizes that students/clients possess a wide range of innate qualities, strengths, experiences, knowledge, and desires that inform autobiographical stories (Franklin, 2015; Patton & McMahon, 2006). Student/client self-awareness, life and career exploration skills, and storied constructions may present on respective continuums based on disposition, social context, psychological resources, development, and experience. These contributions are viewed holistically, synergistically, and comprehensively representing a more complete picture or mosaic of life and career exploration and development (Busacca & Rehfuss, 2017; Super, 1980). It is the idiosyncratic constellation and dynamic interactionism of a student's unique elements and context (Maslow, 1954; Patton & McMahon, 2006) that give rise to possibilities, expressions, agentic behavior, and stories of significance (Bandura, 2006; Nohl, 2015). That is to say, it is the personal or subjective that imbues possibilities with meaning (Savickas, 2015; Seligman, 2013). This recommendation is based on the synergy of all six themes constructed in the study which include constructing/co-constructing meaning and identity, equipping, experiencing community, disorienting awareness, generating ideas/possibilities, and cultivating wherewithal.

Student/Client Factors:

- The student/client needs to be in a state of active exploration or dissonance to benefit from narrative interventions or approaches. It is this state of disorientation that gives intervention purpose (Mezirow, 2009; Nohl, 2015). As demonstrated in this study, telling stories brings out intrapersonal conflict, pending decisions, competing interests,

emotions, and tensions that invite resolution. Dissonance or conflict brings ambivalence and vacillation to the surface (Prochaska et al., 2006; Rogers, 1957) and helps students/clients to examine obstacles and build pathways to desires or goals boosting PsyCap and cultivating well-being (Luthans et al., 2015; Seligman, 2013). This relates to the themes of disorienting awareness, generating ideas or possibilities, cultivating wherewithal, and constructing/co-constructing meaning and identity crafted during analysis.

- The student/client has a desire or interest in serving as a community member providing adequate listening, mirroring, support, and feedback to other storytellers. Additionally, the community experience bolsters positive emotions and positive meaning assigned to interpersonal experiences and harnesses and encourages social interest to contribute to the “common good” in game play and beyond (Dik et al., 2015, p. 559). Figure 4 shows a range of social manifestations during this narrative intervention including contribution, care, and connection. This is conveyed through the theme experiencing community and is vital for storylistening and engagement in the development of others (Franklin et al., 2017-2018).

In our postmodern context, practitioners need to consider taking advantage of narrative interventions like *WYAM!* to generate and cultivate PsyCap and PERMA, to promote agency, and to facilitate a holistic approach to life and career exploration. Utilizing interventions like *WYAM!* highlights the adaptive capacity of storytelling and yields a variety of gains to meet (student/client/player) needs and services for life and career development. Players benefit from a high level of social interaction and engagement creating transformative learning opportunities that inform life and career construction. That is to say, stories in *WYAM!* are the foundation of

discovery, intentionality, and identity construction. Notably, the combination of game structure, context, and stories move players through the stages or processes of change or decision-making (Prochaska et al., 2006). Through stories, players “unlock” aspirations, visions, “possibilities,” and “meaning” (Savickas, 2015, p. 68). *WYAM!* and this study has confirmed that it meets many of the necessary features noted above as critical to a strong holistic and narrative intervention. The process of game play allows players opportunities to grow through stories, self-reflection, response stories, and feedback. The deliberate structure and context of game play increases what could be called “explicit” or “conscious” personality expression (Harms, Vanhove, & Luthans, 2017, p. 83). As shared in game play, knowing who you are and what matters to you serves to sharpen the view of a personally defined “North Star,” creating focus and direction (Franklin & Feller, 2014, Star Card 5).

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

The intent of this study was to gain an understanding of the richness of player experience through qualitative methods. Limitations are a reflection of study design, purpose, sample size, cultural identity, and gender of participants. Qualitative designs are not intended for generalizability but transferability determined by the reader (Creswell 1994; Simon, 2011). Further, a qualitative design cannot evaluate the efficacy of an intervention relative to a control group the way an experimental design can. Qualitative methods like the ones utilized for this study are best suited for exploration, description, meaning making, and/or theory building, not evaluation (Glesne, 2016). However, data clearly suggest that *WYAM!* does promote the cultivation of psychological resources and motivates action systematically through structure and context. Data and nuances also point to further interesting questions that could be examined using qualitative methods. Noted here are a few such questions: How might player experience be

similar or different across a variety of groups? What is the game experience like for players who already have an established rapport or group membership? In addition, I coded for mirroring but observed only two dimensions. These dimensions were valuing/affirming other and resonance/similarity. This leads to a few possible exploratory questions: What constitutes quality mirroring in game play? What would mirroring look like in different samples? In addition, the sample represents a very specific population. I intentionally recruited students that identified as first generation and/or as first and/or second year college students. In addition, although there was an attempt to recruit both men and women from diverse cultural backgrounds, only women participated and only two of these identified as other than white/Caucasian and/or American. Two other participants did not declare their cultural affiliation. Further research is necessary to verify if this study's findings hold true across samples. To expand our understanding of the *WYAM!* experience (as a stand-alone intervention) across groups, other studies could intentionally select for men or cultural identity. Use of a qualitative methodology to other distinct samples could increase our understanding of similarities and differences of game experience across groups and confirm consistency of findings.

Summary

The merit of this study was its range of findings and approach acknowledging complexity and the amplifying effects of broaden-and-build and gratitude. Together, these theories amplified experience through positive emotions and relationships of resonance, which moved players through self-awareness and to inspired actions. The study revealed both substantive content of what matters to people and demonstrated the expression of agency and cultivation of PERMA and PsyCap. In turn, these theories or models informed observable features and/or dimensions of

transformational learning. Literature, theory, multiple data sources, and a variety of methods demonstrated and triangulated findings (Cho & Trent, 2006).

This study was informative and asserts that *WYAM!* activates and develops PERMA and PsyCap expanding internal resources and life/career possibilities. *Who You Are Matters!*[®] pulls from extant theories and schools of thought, and in particular, positive psychology, transformational learning, and narrative career counseling to provide a structured and interactive experience for players to explore life and career goals no matter present development, diversity, life-span, or life-space (Franklin & Feller, 2017; Patton & McMahon, 2014; Ricouer, 1980; Super, 1980).

Game play is an immersive and dynamic experience. The game is a proving ground to know thyself, to get equipped, to cultivate wherewithal, and to intentionally guide the direction and meaning of one's life (Bandura, 2006). Through the structure and context of game play, participants open or broaden the view of self and possibilities (Frederickson, 2013), increasing PsyCap and PERMA. Findings strongly suggest that players go through a progressive and synergistic process of discovery, expansion, and integration initiating the functions of agency. Game play comes to fruition as players take new insights into the world and realize their inspired actions.

As discovered in data analysis, this process of transformation and integration seems best represented by the functions of agency, which are reflected in the themes. In general, life and career narratives are “based in . . . identities, values, and aspiration” (Grier-Reed & Conkel-Ziebell, 2009, p. 34) which makes them personal and motivational. Player experience is grounded in curiosity, interest, and investment to differentiate and connect (Cole & Reese, 2018) in meaningful ways that serve to reflect, share, and socially test what matters. Through the

structure and holistic processes of *WYAM!*, players distill and organize their experiences in a series of stories that generate a comprehensible sense of integration. This is governed by the processes of agency (Bandura, 2001) and generates forward momentum. Through game processes, players express and develop PsyCap, expand well-being, and integrate experience through agency to broaden-and-build possibilities, pulling together the effects of theory evident in data. Ultimately, the platform of storytelling and storylistening is natural, flexible, and adaptive which informs directionality—through stories that matter. *Who You Are Matters!*[®] ignites optimism and motivates agentic behavior in life/career exploration. This is a direct result of agency. In sum, findings suggest that the narrative experience of game play is sequential, synergistic, and transformational. In general, theory works synergistically to support agency and its functions serve to contextualize and integrate experience. The game is holistic and honors individuals and context. Altogether, the factors of structure and context and readiness and complexity, influences and interactions press agency to respond to new revelations that occur in game play. That is to say, stories work together to create expanded possibilities and achievable inspired actions, boosting motivation and identity development. Moreover, the preponderance of actions taken within two to three weeks by players is noteworthy. Awareness, knowledge, and resources players gain from *WYAM!* can be utilized for personal development and inspired action. This discovery process creates greater congruence; thus, players move toward aligning identity, goals, and environment to create a “best fit” (Feller & Chapman, 2018, p. 69; Franklin et al., 2015b). Lastly, the bricolage approach allowed for an understanding of both the whole and parts (Wertz et al., 2011) of players’ experiences, stories, and actions.

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APPENDIX A: ACRONYMS

1. CC – CareerCycles.
2. ELT – Experiential Learning Theory.
3. HERO – Hope, efficacy, resiliency, and optimism (Luthans et al, 2015).
4. HEROIC mindset – A heroic mindset is an adaptive approach to life and career. It is a mindset composed of beliefs and internal resources including PsyCap, intentionality, clarity, and curiosity that influence goals (Feller, 2017).
5. NCDA – National Career Development Association.
6. OLT – OneLifeTools.
7. O*NET – Occupational Information Network.
8. PCI – Psychological Capital Intervention.
9. PCQ – Psychological Capital Questionnaire.
10. PERMA – Model of well-being. “Positive emotion, engagement, meaning, positive relationships, and accomplishment” (Seligman, 2013, p. 16).
11. PSYCAP – The higher order construct of psychological capital. It is the combination of hope, efficacy, resiliency, and optimism (HERO). (Luthans et al., 2015).
12. VUCA – Volatility, uncertainty, complexity, ambiguity (Bennett & Lemoine, 2014).
13. *WYAM!* – *Who You Are Matters!*[®]

APPENDIX B: POSTMODERN CAREER COUNSELING

Parameter	Modernity	Postmodernity
Era	1900-1980s	1980s-present
Worldview Epistemology	Mechanism, organicism Realism	Contextualism, postmodern Psychological constructivism, social constructionism
Truth	Objectivity; verifiable, demand singular truths	Perspectivity; viable, appreciate multiple realities
View of self	Separate, isolated	Embedded, situated
View of culture	Monocultural	Pluralistic, contextual, relational
Language	Representational, language reflects reality	Formative, language produces reality
Socioeconomic era Labor market jobs Psychological contracts	Industrial and corporate Permanent workers Standardized jobs implicit	Information and global Contingent workers Nonstandardized assignments Explicit
Career service area	Vocational guidance; career education; career development; career placement; career coaching	Career counseling
Cultural stance	Multicultural counseling, monolithic, universal	Culture centered; context sensitive, intersecting identities
Core facets of counseling	Career maturity, occupational fit, decision making, developmental tasks	Adaptability, meaning, purpose, usefulness, life stories, themes, identities, reflexivity, active agency, relationship
Nature of assessment	Quantitative; norm referenced, interpreting scores, statistical, linear	Qualitative; idiographic, clinical judgment, nonstatistical, flexible, holistic
Forms of assessment	Interest inventories and ability tests	Cards sorts, timelines, reptest, genograms, early recollections, story, narrative, metaphor

Phases of counseling	Clear cut, linear	Overlapping, holistic
Counselor use of language	Conventional	Relational
Motivational process	Reason	Emotion
Counselor role	Prescriptive; expert	Dialogue; shared meaning
Client role	Passive	Collaborative
Therapeutic relationship	Content oriented	Process oriented
Ethical decision making	Responsibility of the counselor	Dialogue between counselor and client

*Note. Adapted from *Postmodern career counseling: A handbook of culture, context, and cases* (pp. 35-36), by Busacca, L. A., & Rehfuss, M. C., 2017, Alexandria, VA: American Counseling Association. Copyright 2017 by American Counseling Association. Original table information: denoted as Table I.1 titled: Parameters for Distinguishing Career Counseling During Modern and Postmodern Eras. Reproduced with permission.

APPENDIX C: IRB APPROVAL AND AMENDMENTS



eProtocol
Office of the Vice President for Research
321 General Services Building - Campus Delivery 2011 eprotocol
TEL: (970) 491-1553
FAX:

NOTICE OF APPROVAL FOR HUMAN RESEARCH

DATE: August 30, 2019
TO: Carlson, Laurie, School of Education
Faircloth, Susan, Canji, Martha, School of Education
FROM: Felton-Noyle, Tammy, Senior IRB Coordinator, BMR, CSU IRB Exempt
PROTOCOL TITLE: Protocol title: Playing the life/career game Who You Are Matters! Proposal title: The Life and Career Game Who You Are Matters! Among University Students: A Narrative Bricolage In Postmodern Career Counseling
FUNDING SOURCE: NONE
PROTOCOL NUMBER: 19-9125H

The CSU Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the protection of human subjects has reviewed the protocol entitled: Protocol title: Playing the life/career game Who You Are Matters! Proposal title: The Life and Career Game Who You Are Matters! Among University Students: A Narrative Bricolage In Postmodern Career Counseling. The project has been approved for the procedures and subjects described in the protocol.

Full Board Review: This protocol must be reviewed for renewal at least annually for as long as the research remains active. Should the protocol not be renewed before expiration, all activities must cease until the protocol has been re-reviewed.

Expedited Review: This protocol is approved for a duration of three years, unless otherwise notified. You remain obligated to submit amendments, deviations, unanticipated problems per policy.

Exempt Review: This protocol is approved for a duration of five years. You remain obligated to submit amendments, deviations, unanticipated problems per policy.

Important Reminder: If you will consent your participants with a signed consent document, it is your responsibility to use the consent form that has been finalized and uploaded into the consent section of eProtocol by the IRB coordinators. Failure to use the finalized consent form available to you in eProtocol is a reportable protocol violation.

If approval did not accompany a proposal when it was submitted to a sponsor, it is the PI's responsibility to provide the sponsor with the approval notice.

This approval is issued under Colorado State University's Federal Wide Assurance 00000647 with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP). If you have any questions regarding your obligations under CSU's Assurance, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Please direct any questions about the IRB's actions on this project to:

IRB Office - (970) 491-1553; RICRO_IRB@mail.Colostate.edu

Claire Chance, Senior IRB Coordinator - (970) 491-1381; Claire.Chance@Colostate.edu

Tammy Felton-Noyle, IRB Biomedical Coordinator - (970) 491-1655; Tammy.Felton-Noyle@Colostate.edu

Felton-Noyle, Tammy

Initial exempt determination has been granted August 22, 2019 to recruit with the approved recruitment and consent procedures. The above-referenced research activity has been reviewed and determined to meet exempt review by the



Knowledge to Go Places

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321 General Services Building - Campus Delivery 2011 eprotocol
TEL: (970) 491-1553
FAX:

Institutional Review Board under exempt category 2(ii) and 3(ii) of the 2018 Requirements. Approved documents include: Game-play debrief U1; Participation Conclusion E-mail; Protocol Participant Flow of Activities U1; Martha Canji Methods Section U1; Participant welcome and opening instructions U1; Protocol Consent Form U1; Protocol Demographic Intake U1; Protocol Video Audio Photo Release U1; Spreadsheet Participant Contact and Audit Trail Notes; Facilitators-Guide-v7.4 - Final May 21st; Participant guidebook; Picture of game and element cards; SOE 32; Dissertation Proposal Review (SOE-32) - Canji; Questionnaire Immediately after game-play U1; Questionnaire Follow-up at 2 to 3 weeks post U1; Directions for Questionnaire immediately following game; Directions for follow-up Questionnaire at 2-3 post email; Reminder Email to complete the follow; Confirmation of Participation U1; Protocol Recruitment Flyer U1; Participant Follow up email confirmation; Reminder Email for game-play; Protocol TILT Recruitment Letter U1; Verbal and Phone Script; Protocol Participant Recruitment Email Letter U2; Protocol Instructor Recruitment Email Letter U5; Verbal Phone Script for Flyer contacts v1; Sig-up sheet for Lory Res Hall Table Recruitment U1.

NOTICE OF APPROVAL FOR HUMAN RESEARCH

DATE: October 01, 2019
TO: Carlson, Laurie, School of Education
Faircloth, Susan, Canji, Martha, School of Education
FROM: Felton-Noyle, Tammy, Senior IRB Coordinator, BMR, CSU IRB Exempt
PROTOCOL TITLE: Protocol title: Playing the life/career game Who You Are Matters! Proposal tile: The Life and Career Game Who You Are Matters! Among University Students: A Narrative Bricolage In Postmodern Career Counseling
FUNDING SOURCE: NONE
PROTOCOL NUMBER: 19-9125H

The CSU Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the protection of human subjects has reviewed the protocol entitled: Protocol title: Playing the life/career game Who You Are Matters! Proposal tile: The Life and Career Game Who You Are Matters! Among University Students: A Narrative Bricolage In Postmodern Career Counseling. The project has been approved for the procedures and subjects described in the protocol.

Full Board Review: This protocol must be reviewed for renewal at least annually for as long as the research remains active. Should the protocol not be renewed before expiration, all activities must cease until the protocol has been re-reviewed.

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Exempt Review: This protocol is approved for a duration of five years. You remain obligated to submit amendments, deviations, unanticipated problems per policy.

Important Reminder: If you will consent your participants with a signed consent document, it is your responsibility to use the consent form that has been finalized and uploaded into the consent section of eProtocol by the IRB coordinators. Failure to use the finalized consent form available to you in eProtocol is a reportable protocol violation.

If approval did not accompany a proposal when it was submitted to a sponsor, it is the PI's responsibility to provide the sponsor with the approval notice.

This approval is issued under Colorado State University's Federal Wide Assurance 00000647 with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP). If you have any questions regarding your obligations under CSU's Assurance, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Please direct any questions about the IRB's actions on this project to:

IRB Office - (970) 491-1553; RICRO_IRB@mail.Colostate.edu

Claire Chance, Senior IRB Coordinator - (970) 491-1381; Claire.Chance@Colostate.edu

Tammy Felton-Noyle, IRB Biomedical Coordinator - (970) 491-1655; Tammy.Felton-Noyle@Colostate.edu

Felton-Noyle, Tammy

Amendment 1 has been reviewed on October 1, 2019 and determined to not alter the exempt determination. This amendment includes updated dates and location of research activities. The IRB has determined that the risk level



Knowledge to Go Places

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321 General Services Building - Campus Delivery 2011 eprotocol
TEL: (970) 491-1553
FAX:

remains no more than minimal. Approved documents include: Amendment 1 Game Days and Location; Amendment 2 Follow Up Email Prompt to Sign Up; Amendment 3 SOE Ad Slide for Visix Screen; Amendment 4 Game Day Options to Post Horizontal; Amendment 5 WYAM SOE; Amendment 6 Short Email to Handshake Undeclared Students; Amendment 7 Additional Recruitment Methods.

NOTICE OF APPROVAL FOR HUMAN RESEARCH

DATE: October 25, 2019
TO: Carlson, Laurie, School of Education
Faircloth, Susan, Canji, Martha, School of Education
FROM: Felton-Noyle, Tammy, Senior IRB Coordinator, BMR, CSU IRB Exempt
PROTOCOL TITLE: Protocol title: Playing the life/career game Who You Are Matters! Proposal title: The Life and Career Game Who You Are Matters! Among University Students: A Narrative Bricolage In Postmodern Career Counseling
FUNDING SOURCE: NONE
PROTOCOL NUMBER: 19-9125H

The CSU Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the protection of human subjects has reviewed the protocol entitled: Protocol title: Playing the life/career game Who You Are Matters! Proposal title: The Life and Career Game Who You Are Matters! Among University Students: A Narrative Bricolage In Postmodern Career Counseling. The project has been approved for the procedures and subjects described in the protocol.

Full Board Review: This protocol must be reviewed for renewal at least annually for as long as the research remains active. Should the protocol not be renewed before expiration, all activities must cease until the protocol has been re-reviewed.

Expedited Review: This protocol is approved for a duration of three years, unless otherwise notified. You remain obligated to submit amendments, deviations, unanticipated problems per policy.

Exempt Review: This protocol is approved for a duration of five years. You remain obligated to submit amendments, deviations, unanticipated problems per policy.

Important Reminder: If you will consent your participants with a signed consent document, it is your responsibility to use the consent form that has been finalized and uploaded into the consent section of eProtocol by the IRB coordinators. Failure to use the finalized consent form available to you in eProtocol is a reportable protocol violation.

If approval did not accompany a proposal when it was submitted to a sponsor, it is the PI's responsibility to provide the sponsor with the approval notice.

This approval is issued under Colorado State University's Federal Wide Assurance 00000647 with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP). If you have any questions regarding your obligations under CSU's Assurance, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Please direct any questions about the IRB's actions on this project to:

IRB Office - (970) 491-1553; RICRO_IRB@mail.Colostate.edu

Claire Chance, Senior IRB Coordinator - (970) 491-1381; Claire.Chance@Colostate.edu

Tammy Felton-Noyle, IRB Biomedical Coordinator - (970) 491-1655; Tammy.Felton-Noyle@Colostate.edu

Felton-Noyle, Tammy

Amendment 2 has been reviewed on October 25, 2019 and determined to not alter the exempt determination. This amendment includes updated research dates; updated incentives to participation; updated the ability for investigator to



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FAX:

engage in the play to ensure enough players for activities. The IRB has determined that the risk level remains no more than minimal. Approved documents include: Amendment 8 Additional Dates and Strategies.

APPENDIX D: PARTICIPANT FORMS AND INSTRUCTIONS

Recruitment Letter to Students

Recruitment Letter to Professors

Consent Form

Participant Welcome and Opening Instructions

Demographic Form

Directions for Questionnaire Immediately Following Game Play

Game Play Debrief Script

Directions for follow-up Questionnaire at 2-3 Weeks Post-Game

Photo/Video/Audio Release

Recruitment Letter to Students

Date

Dear Student Recruit / Participant,

My name is Martha Canji, Co-Principal Investigator and researcher at Colorado State University from the School of Education. We are conducting a research study on playing a life/career game. The purpose is to understand the individual and group experience. The title of our protocol/study is Playing the life/career game: Who You Are Matters! The Principal Investigator is Laurie Carlson, PhD.

We would like to invite your participation in the study. Participation will take approximately 2 hours for game play, 5-15mins. For intake forms, and 10-20mins. To complete a questionnaire immediately following game-play. Game day commitment approximately 2hrs. 35mins. Lastly, complete a follow-up electronic questionnaire sent out at 2 to 3 weeks post game-play. It will take 163pprox.. 10mins. To complete. Total time for all components of participation 163pprox.. 2hrs. And 45mins. Game-play will take place at CSU / School of Education. As a token of appreciation, you may select a \$10.00 gift card from one of the following local vendors. (Target, Starbucks, Panera's) These will be available the day of game-play. In addition, you will receive a signed participation confirmation form from the Co-Principal Investigator. You may ask your instructor if you can use the participation experience for extra credit. It is not guaranteed that you will receive extra credit. Please speak to your professor before you agree to participate if you will be seeking extra credit. Any points or extra credit will be at the total discretion of your professor and/or instructor. Your professor/instructor is welcome to call me with any questions. Your participation in this research is voluntary. If you decide to participate in the study, you may withdraw your consent and stop participation at any time without penalty.

All game sessions will be video/audio recorded and photos of guidebooks will be taken, with the contents remaining confidential. Martha Canji will maintain the video/audio/photo files on a restricted access computer that is password protected. Back-up video/audio/photos will be restricted access and locked in a file drawer. Names will be coded and/or a pseudonym will be used when reporting out results to protect your identity. Your privacy is very important to us and the researchers will take every measure to protect it.

Potential benefits to you for participating are clarifying what matters most to you, receiving useful peer feedback in a guided format, and identifying an action to further explore a life/career goal generated in game play. Game-play is a fun and engaging way to explore life and career. Eligibility criteria: You must be at least 18 years of age. A Colorado State University student taking a first or second year college student taking a seminar course, and / or be a first generation college student to participate in the study. Lastly, you have an interest in life/career goals. There are no known risks included with this study. It is not possible to identify all potential risks in research procedures, but the researcher(s) have taken reasonable safeguards to minimize any

known and potential (but unknown) risks. Game sessions will be organized during the first few weeks of the fall 2019 semester.

If you would like to participate in the study, please contact Martha Canji at 970 691-6074, Martha.Canji@colostate.edu or Dr. Laurie Carlson at 970 491-6826, Laurie.Carlson@colostate.edu. If you have any questions about your rights as a volunteer in this research, contact the CSU IRB at: RICRO_IRB@mail.colostate.edu; 970-491-1553.

Thank you!

Laurie Carlson, PhD, Assoc. Professor, and P.I.
Associate Professor and Principal Investigator

Martha Canji, PhD Candidate
Co-Principal Investigator

Recruitment Letter to Professors

Date

Dear Professor/Instructor,

My name is Martha Canji, Co-Principal Investigator and researcher at Colorado State University from the School of Education. We are conducting a research study on playing a life/career game. The purpose is to understand the individual and group experience of playing the game. The title of our protocol/study is Playing the life/career game: Who You Are Matters! The Principal Investigator is Laurie Carlson, PhD. For study details please see below.

If after reviewing the information below you feel like this study is a good fit with your course please announce and/or put up the attached flyer in your classroom. The study will take place in August and/or September 2019.

We would like to invite your students to participate in the study. Participation will take approximately 2 hours for game play, 5-15 mins. for intake forms, and 10-20 mins. to complete a questionnaire immediately following the game. Lastly, approximately 10 mins to complete a follow-up electronic questionnaire (2) sent out at 2 to 3 weeks after game play. Total time approximately 2hours 45mins. Game play will take place at CSU / School of Education. As a token of appreciation, students may select a \$10.00 gift card from one of the following local vendors. (Target, Starbucks, Panera's) These will be available the day of game play. In addition, students will receive a signed participation confirmation form from the Co-Investigator the day of game-play. If you choose to offer this event as an opportunity to your students, any points or extra credit will be at your total discretion (professor/instructor). You are welcome to call me with any questions. Participation in this research is voluntary. Students may withdraw consent and stop participation at any time without penalty.

POSSIBLE BENEFITS OF THE STUDY

- Learning about self and others.
- Generating interests, and possibilities for further exploration.
- Clarifying life/career goals.
- Giving & receiving useful peer feedback and supportive encouragement within a guided format.
- Learning or expanding life/career vocabulary.
- Identifying an inspired action and being accountable to explore a specific possibility generated in game play.

Note: The game is focused around story-telling and creating life narratives.

All game sessions will be video/audio/ recorded and photos of guidebooks will be taken, with the contents remaining confidential. Martha Canji will maintain the video/audio files on a restricted access computer that is password protected. Back-up video/audio/photos will be restricted access and locked in a file drawer. Names will be coded and/or a pseudonym will be used when reporting out results to protect participant identity. Privacy is very important to us and the researchers will take every measure to protect it. Potential benefits to your students are clarifying

what matters most to them, receiving useful peer feedback in a guided format, and identifying an action to further explore a life/career goal generated in game-play. The game is based on prompts that guide participants in creating life narratives, and story telling.

Eligibility criteria: Students must be at least 18 years of age. A Colorado State University student taking a first or second year seminar course, and / or be a first generation college student to participate in the study. Lastly, students need an interest in life/career goals. There are no known risks included with this study. It is not possible to identify all potential risks in research procedures, but the researcher(s) have taken reasonable safeguards to minimize any known and potential (but unknown) risks.

If you have students who would like to participate in the study, please have them contact Martha Canji at 970 691-6074, Martha.Canji@colostate.edu or Dr. Laurie Carlson at 970 491-6826, Laurie.Carlson@colostate.edu. If you have any questions about the rights as a volunteers in this research, contact the CSU IRB at: RICRO_IRB@mail.colostate.edu; 970-491-1553.

Thank you!

Laurie Carlson, PhD
Associate Professor and Principal Investigator

Martha Canji, PhD Candidate
Co-Principal Investigator

Consent Form

Research Integrity & Compliance Review Office (RICRO)

Institutional Review Board

601 S. Howes Street, Suite #208; Fort Collins, CO 80524

(970) 491-1553

RICRO_IRB@mail.colostate.edu | <https://vpr.colostate.edu/ricro/irb/>



Consent form begins on next page.



ADULT PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT
School of Education

Participant Study Title: Playing the life/career game: *Who You Are Matters!*

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Laurie Carlson, PhD, Associate Professor

CO-INVESTIGATOR(S): Martha Canji, PhD Candidate

WHAT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS?

For questions or concerns about the study, you may contact Martha Canji, PhD Candidate and Co-Principal Investigator at 970 691-6074, Martha.Canji@colostate.edu, or Laurie Carlson, PhD, Associate Professor, and Principal Investigator at 970 491-6826, Laurie.Carlson@colostate.edu. For questions regarding the rights of research subjects, any complaints or comments regarding the manner in which the study is being conducted, contact the CSU Institutional Review Board at: RICRO_IRB@mail.colostate.edu; 970-491-1553.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY?

The purpose of this research study is to understand the individual and group experience in playing the game *Who You Are Matters!*

WHY AM I BEING INVITED TO TAKE PART IN THIS RESEARCH?

You are being asked to participate in the study because you may fit the criteria below:

- You are a student at Colorado State University.
 - You further identify as a first or second year college student, or as a first generation student.
- You are at least 18 years of age.
- You have an interest in life/career goals.

WHERE IS THE STUDY GOING TO TAKE PLACE AND HOW LONG WILL IT LAST?

Game play will take place at Colorado State University. It will take approximately 2 hours to play the game *Who You Are Matters!*. It will take approximately 5-15 mins. to complete intake forms which include consent forms. A follow-up electronic questionnaire will be sent to you at approximately 2-3 weeks post game play. It is expected that the questionnaire will take you 15 to 30 mins. to complete. Your total time commitment for the study will be approximately 2hrs. and 45mins.

WHAT WILL I BE ASKED TO DO?

If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to do the following:

- Complete forms 1) demographic form, 2) consent form, 3) release form for video/audio/and photos for research purposes.
- Play the life/career exploration game: *Who You Are Matters!* with a small group.
- Consent to complete a follow-up electronic questionnaire about your experiences related to game play. This is an electronic follow-up questionnaire sent out at 2-3 weeks post-game play.

ARE THERE ANY BENEFITS FROM TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

As a result of your participation, you can anticipate:

- Learning about yourself and others.
- Generating interests, and possibilities for further exploration.
- Clarifying what matters most to you.
- Giving & receiving useful peer feedback and supportive encouragement within a guided format.
- Learning or expanding life/career vocabulary.
- Identifying an inspired action and being accountable to explore a specific possibility generated in game play.
- As researchers, we hope to learn about life/career exploration and your experiences to inform practices.
- If you are interested in the results of the study, please contact Martha Canji.

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS?

There are no known risks included with this study.

- While the level of risk is minimal, you may become uncomfortable with some prompts / questions related to your personal experience. Although you will be asked to reflect and share examples from your life to illustrate your thoughts only disclose what is comfortable for you.
- Learning in a group setting does implies reasonable social risk.
- Reasonable guidance will be provided to create what is typically considered a safe, and open learning environment in which life/career exploration can occur.
- Confidentiality will be requested of all participants as part of community guidelines, but total confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. Only disclose what you are comfortable disclosing in the group setting. [While we will ask all group members to keep the information they hear in this group confidential, we cannot guarantee that everyone will do so.]
- In the event that you feel that you need to talk to someone for any reason following your participation in the study, we recommend that you call the University Counseling Center. The Counseling Center can be reached at [\(970\) 491-6053](tel:9704916053), on call counseling support can be reached by the following phone number [\(970\) 491-7111](tel:9704917111).

WILL I RECEIVE ANY COMPENSATION FOR TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

- As a token of appreciation, you may select a \$10.00 gift card from one of the following local vendors. (Target, Starbucks, Panera's) These will be available the day of game play.
- You will receive a signed participation verification form from the Co-Investigator. You may ask your instructor if you can use the participation experience for extra credit. It is not guaranteed that you will receive extra credit. Please speak to your professor before you agree to participate if you will be seeking extra credit. Any points or extra credit will be at the **total discretion** of your professor and/or instructor. Your professor/instructor is welcome to call me with any questions. (Martha Canji, MEd, 970 691-6074)

WHO WILL SEE THE INFORMATION THAT I GIVE?

- All information gathered in this study will be kept as confidential as possible. Your privacy is very important to us and the researchers will take every measure to protect it. Your information may be given out if required by law; however, the researchers will do their best to make sure that any information that is released will not identify you. No reference will be made in written or oral materials that could link you to this study. Your game play will be recorded for data analysis. We will use a code or pseudonym when referring to any specific narratives, phrases, or words spoken by you. For this study, we will assign a code to your data so that the only place your name will appear in our records is on the intake/consent forms and in our data spreadsheet, which links you to your code. Only the research team will have access to the link between you, your code, and your data. All records needed for the Co-principal investigator will be stored in a restricted access computer folder and thumb drive; any hard copy materials will be kept in a locked file; any materials needing to be retained by CSU will be in a locked drawer in a restricted-access office at CSU for up to three years after completion of the study. After the storage time, the original source material and information gathered will be destroyed. At the completion of the research project all video / audio / photos will be destroyed / erased. We may be asked to share the research files with the CSU Institutional Review Board ethics committee for auditing purposes. No personal information will be retained for your gift card purchase.

Participation in a group activity involves some loss of privacy. The researchers will make every effort to ensure that information about you remains confidential, but cannot guarantee total confidentiality. Your identity will not be revealed in any publications, presentations, or reports resulting from this research study. While we will ask all group members to keep the information they hear in this group confidential, we cannot guarantee that everyone will do so.

The research team works to ensure confidentiality to the degree permitted by technology. It is possible, although unlikely, that unauthorized individuals could gain access to your responses because you are responding online as well for part of your

participation. However, your participation in this online questionnaire involves risks similar to a person's everyday use of the internet.

Mandatory Reporter Notice: You should know, however, that there are some circumstances in which we may have to show your information to other people. For example, the law may require us to show your information to a court OR to tell authorities if we believe you have abused a child, or you pose a danger to yourself or someone else.

DO I HAVE TO TAKE PART IN THE STUDY?

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate in this study or in any part of this study. You may withdraw at any time without prejudice to your relations with CSU. You are encouraged to ask questions about this study at the beginning or any time during the research study.

Participant Consent:

Your signature acknowledges that you have read the information stated and voluntarily wish to participate in this research. Your signature also acknowledges that you have received, on the date signed, a copy of this document containing 5 pages.

Signature of person agreeing to take part in the study _____ Date

Printed name of person agreeing to take part in the study

Name of person providing information to participant _____ Date

Signature of Research Staff

IRB No.: 19-9125H
Date of IRB Approval: August 22, 2019

Participant Welcome and Opening Instructions

Thank you all for coming. Please be patient, as I do need to read instructions verbatim. Begin by reading the consent form that is in front of you. Sign both copies of the consent form. Next please sign both copies of the photo/video/audio release form. Lastly, please take a few minutes to complete the demographic intake form. When you are done, please turn over for me to pick up, and keep a copy of the consent and release form for your own records.

In a few minutes, we will transition to the game room where you will be video/ audio recorded. It is very important that you feel comfortable, engaged, and open to learning and answering prompts as honestly as possible (to the extent that you are comfortable). Your interactions are only recorded so that your narratives may be transcribed for analysis. Any video/audio/photos will not be shown to the public. We will have a restroom break about halfway through game-play. Restrooms are located down the hall and to your left.

When game-play is complete we will return to this room for you to complete an open-ended questionnaire about your experience. I expect it to take approximately 10-20 minutes. After, I have read the debriefing statement, and you have turned in your questionnaire, you may select a token of appreciation, and pick up your confirmation of participation. Again, any extra credit is at the total discretion of your professor/instructor. Your instructor is welcome to call me with any questions.

Thank you for your cooperation and participation!

Demographic Form

Please answer the following questions. Circle yes or no as appropriate and / or provide a short answer as appropriate. Thank you.

Name	
Education level completed	
Email Address (To receive the link for the follow-up questionnaire and the research debrief.) Responses to the questionnaire are anonymous.	
Gender	
Age	
First generation college student	Yes No
Active Military / Veteran	Yes No
International Student	Yes No
Taking First-Year seminar	Yes No
Taking Second-Year seminar	Yes No
Accessing opportunity for development through TILT	Yes No
Cultural Identity	
How would you describe your learning style?	

IRB No.: 19-9125H
Date of IRB Approval: August 22, 2019

Directions for Questionnaire Immediately following game-play

This questionnaire is designed to deeply understand your experience of game-play. All questions are open-ended. There are 8 questions. I expect it to take you approximately 10-20mins. to complete.

When you are finished please turn the questionnaire over.

If you need more time please let me know, and you can remain after the debrief to wrap up. After 20 mins., I will read the debrief. It will include further directions for everyone as well, so it is important that everyone stay to hear the debrief.

There are no right or wrong answers. Please take your time and answer as openly as possible. All responses are valuable and appreciated. We can start now and go until _____.

Thank you!

Game-play debrief script

Thank you for participating in game-play today, and answering the questionnaire immediately following game play. This study has been designed to explore the experiences of playing the life/career Game Who You Are Matters! The data analysis will provide an opportunity to deeply understand the experience of game play. The reason this is interesting is because some theorists assert that career counseling has shifted to include more narrative and holistic interventions, and interventions that tap into psychological capital may inspire greater adaptation and well-being. Lastly, life/career activities are integral to expressing identity and growth through game elements to generate possibilities and goals.

Reminder of follow-up questionnaire. Please complete the follow-up questionnaire that you will receive by email link focused on your actions taken since game-play. This questionnaire should take approx. 10mins. to complete. Your responses will be reported back to me anonymously. You will receive this link at 2 to 3 weeks post game-play.

For this study, we will assign a code to your data so that the only place your name will appear in our records is on the intake/consent forms and in our data spreadsheet, which links you to your code. Only the research team will have access to the link between you, your code, and your data. All records needed for the Co-principal investigator will be stored in a restricted access computer and thumb drive; any hard copy materials will be kept in a locked file; any materials needing to be retained by CSU will be in a locked drawer in a restricted-access office at CSU for typically up to three

years after completion of the study. Original source material will be kept confidential. After the study is completed and/or retention of materials have expired following the School of Education and IRB guidelines/policies all original source material will be erased and/or destroyed.

In the event that you feel that you need to talk to someone for any reason following your participation in the study, we recommend that you call the University Counseling Center. The Counseling Center can be reached at (970) 491-6053, on call counseling support can be reached by the following phone number (970) 491-7111.

Thank you.

Directions for follow-up Questionnaire at 2-3 Weeks Post-Game

Thank you again for your participation in the study: Playing the life/career game: *Who You Are Matters!* Your signed consent on game day covers this follow-up questionnaire. Below is the link to the Follow-up Questionnaire.

Link removed

This questionnaire is designed to explore the actions you may have taken as a result of game-play. There are 5 categorical matrix style questions to answer. This questionnaire is expected to take approximately 10 mins. Your responses are anonymous, and will not be linked to you personally.

Please carefully read the prompt or action and select one answer (most appropriate response) for each row. There are no right or wrong answers. Please take your time and answer as openly as possible. All responses are valuable and appreciated.

Please let me know if you have any questions.

Thank you!

Martha Canji, PhD Candidate, Co-Principal Investigator
Martha.Canji@colostate.edu
970-691-6074

Laurie Carlson, PhD, Associate Professor, Principal Investigator
Laurie.Carlson@colostate.edu
970-491-6826

CSU IRB 970-491-1553

Photo/Video/Audio Release

Participant Study Title: **Playing the life/career game: *Who You Are Matters!***

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: **Laurie Carlson, PhD, Associate Professor**

CO-INVESTIGATOR(S): **Martha Canji, PhD Candidate**

Laurie Carlson, PhD
School of Education
970 491-6826
Laurie.Carlson@colostate.edu

Martha Canji, MEd
970 691-6074
Martha.Canji@colostate.edu

Please print

Name of Participant: _____

Address: _____

I am 18 years of age or older and hereby give my permission to Martha Canji to use any photos of artifacts, video/audio material taken of myself during her research project/protocol: Playing the life/career game: *Who You Are Matters!*. The photo/video/audio material will only be used for research purposes. Some materials may be used to present specifically to my committee and a few guests. No participant photos/photos of artifacts/video/audio will be shown/played for the public. My name will not be used in any publication. I will make no monetary or other claim against CSU for the use of the photograph(s)/video/audio material. As with all research consent, I may at any time withdraw permission for photos/video/audio footage of me to be used in this research project. Data will appear in the final dissertation and narratives (data) will be shared as a product of research. Identifiers will be left out. Original photos/video/audio will be destroyed according to School of Education and IRB guidelines/policy. Original source materials are typically kept no longer than 3 years.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Printed Name: _____ Date: _____

IRB No.: 19-9125H
Date of IRB Approval: August 22, 2019

APPENDIX E: QUESTIONNAIRE 1 (IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING GAME PLAY)

Questionnaire
(immediately following game-play)

1. What did you like most about the experience of playing *Who You Are Matters!* ?
2. What surprised you about your experience? (Examples: Aha(s), feeling(s), new insights, emerging themes for you, etc...)
3. What was your most significant learning experience from playing *Who You Are Matters!* ?
4. Anything else that you would like to tell me about your experience playing *Who You Are Matters!* ?
5. Tell me about (describe) any shifts or changes you may have experienced in hope as a result of playing *Who You Are Matters!* (Thinking prompts: How did you experience it? When did you experience it? What did you notice?)

Definition provided for reference:

Hope - A positive motivational state based on the interaction between agency (goal directed energy) and pathways (planning to meet goals).

6. Tell me about (describe) any shifts or changes you may have experienced in efficacy as a result of playing Who You Are Matters! Describe the shift. How did you experience it? When did you experience it? (Thinking prompts: How did you experience it? When did you experience it? What did you notice?)

Definition provided for reference:

Efficacy - A belief about the ability to mobilize motivation, and resources to take action.

7. Tell me about (describe) any shifts or changes you may have experienced in resiliency as a result of playing Who You Are Matters! (Thinking prompts: How did you experience it? When did you experience it? What did you notice?)

Definition provided for reference:

Resiliency - The capacity to bounce back from negative and positive events that occur in life.

8. Tell me about (describe) any shifts or changes you may have experienced in optimism as a result of playing Who You Are Matters! (Thinking prompts: How did you experience it? When did you experience it? What did you notice?)

Definition provided for reference:

Optimism - A positive outlook or expectation.

Thank you!

APPENDIX F: QUESTIONNAIRE 2 (TWO TO THREE WEEKS POST-GAME PLAY)

Playing the life/career game: Who You Are Matters!
 Follow-up questionnaire at 2 to 3 weeks post game play.

My experiences playing the life/career game: Who You Are Matters!

Your information will be confidential. Your questionnaire is not associated with your name. There are five matrix questions below. Please read the prompt or action and select one answer (most appropriate response) for each row. This questionnaire is about possible actions that you may have taken as a result of game-play. Thank you for taking your time to respond thoughtfully.

1. What information have you sought to explore your life/career since playing the game Who You Are Matters! Seeking Information Section

–	I have done this –	I plan on doing this between now and 3 months –	I plan on doing this within the next 3-6 months –	I do not plan on doing this –	Not applicable / Not related to my expanded possibility and/or inspired action –
–					
Researched my expanded possibility and/or inspired action					
–					
Read a book, or article related to my expanded possibility and/or inspired action					
–					
Sought more information related to my expanded possibility and/or inspired action					
–					
Used an online system to explore my expanded possibility and/or inspired action related to occupations and/or interests					
–					
Explored further my expanded possibility and/or inspired action with an online opportunity					
–					
Signed up for and/or took a personal/professional development class related to my expanded possibility and/or inspired action					
–					
Observed someone performing an action					

–	I have done this –	I plan on doing this between now and 3 months –	I plan on doing this within the next 3-6 months –	I do not plan on doing this –	Not applicable / Not related to my expanded possibility and/or inspired action –
in my expanded possibility and/or inspired action area of interest					
–					
Attended a fair/event in my expanded possibility and/or inspired action area of interest					
–					
Took an assessment/inventory for further exploration regarding my expanded possibility and/or inspired action (personality, interests, values, aptitude, strengths, occupational interests etc...					
–					
Looked into furthering my education related to my expanded possibility and/or inspired action					

Comment:

2. What thinking and reflecting have you done regarding your life/career exploration since playing the game Who You Are Matters! Thinking and Reflecting Section

–	I have done this –	I plan on doing this between now and 3 months –	I plan on doing this in the next 3-6 months –	I do not plan on doing this –	Not applicable / Not related to my expanded possibility and/or inspired action –
Thought about my expanded possibility and/or inspired action					
–					
Imagine my expanded possibility and/or inspired action					
–					
Made a list of steps to attain my expanded possibility and/or inspired action					
–					
Reviewed my expanded possibility and/or inspired action					
–					
Thought about obstacles to my expanded possibility and/or inspired action and how to overcome them					
–					
Utilized an online product to reflect on my expanded possibility and/or inspired action					
–					

–	I have done this –	I plan on doing this between now and 3 months –	I plan on doing this in the next 3-6 months –	I do not plan on doing this –	Not applicable / Not related to my expanded possibility and/or inspired action –
---	---------------------------	--	--	--------------------------------------	---

Drew a picture or mind map to visually capture ideas related to my expanded possibly and/or inspired action

–

Wrote in a journal / wrote short stories related to my expanded possibility and/or inspired action

–

Made a visual board using images related to my expanded possibility and/or inspired action

3. What types of meaningful conversations have you had to explore your life/career since playing the game Who You Are Matters!? Sparking Meaningful Conversations Section

–	I have done this –	I plan on doing this between now and 3 months –	I plan on doing this within 3-6 months –	I do not plan on doing this –	Not applicable / Not related to my expanded possibility and/or inspired action –
---	---------------------------	--	---	--------------------------------------	---

–

Discussed my expanded possibility and/or inspired action with my capability partner

–

Shared stories about who I am with others

–

Shared stories or had a conversation about my expanded possibility and/or inspired action with someone

–

Conducted an informational interview (informal conversation) with someone in my area of interest related to my expanded possibility and/or inspired action

–

Reviewed my clarification sketch / guidebook with a family member

–

Reviewed my clarification sketch / guidebook with a mentor

–

Reviewed my clarification sketch / guidebook with an academic advisor, teacher, professor, career counselor, counselor, etc.

4. What have you done to build relationships or connections to explore your life/career since playing the game Who You Are Matters! Building Relationships and Making Connections Section

	I have done this –	I plan on doing this between now and 3 months –	I plan on doing this within 3-6 months –	I do not plan on doing this –	Not applicable / Not related to my expanded possibility and/or inspired action –
–					
Made a connection with someone in my area of expanded possibility and/or inspired action					
–					
Initiated a mentoring relationship with someone in my area of expanded possibility and/or inspired					
–					
Made an appointment and/or attended an appointment with a professional: job coach, counselor, career counselor, career center, workforce center, academic advisor, mentor to explore my expanded possibility and/or inspired action further					
–					
Joined a professional organization that reflects my expanded possibility and/or inspired action					
–					
Joined an association to explore my expanded possibility and/or inspired action					
–					
Created a LinkedIn account to connect with others interested in my expanded possibility and/or inspired action area					

5. How have you continued to explore and cultivate commitment in your life/career expanded possibility and/or inspired action since playing Who You Are Matters!? Creating Deeper Engagement Section

	I have done this –	I plan on doing this between now and 3 months –	I plan on doing this within 3-6 months –	I do not plan on doing this –	Not applicable / Not related to my expanded possibility and/or inspired action –
–					
Acted on my expanded possibility and/or inspired action related to volunteering or serving in a non-profit (ex: committee, board member, mentor, or tutor etc...)					
–					
Acted on my expanded possibility and/or inspired action related to healthier habits (ex. eat better, yoga etc...)					

	I have done this –	I plan on doing this between now and 3 months –	I plan on doing this within 3-6 months –	I do not plan on doing this –	Not applicable / Not related to my expanded possibility and/or inspired action –
–					
–					Acted on my expanded possibility and/or inspired action to spend more time with family, caregiving, or parenting (ex. waking, visiting, reunions, having children etc...)
–					Acted on my spiritual/religious expanded possibility and/or inspired action (ex. prayer, meditation, service, reading etc...)
–					Acted on my expanded possibility and/or inspired action related to civic engagement, politics, and/or advocacy etc...
–					Acted on changing something in my environment to accommodate my expanded possibility and/or inspired action (ex. created a new space for a meaningful activity or hobby etc...)
–					Acted on my expanded possibility and/or inspired action related to leisure, retirement options (ex: playing games, cooking, downsizing, financial plans, join a club)
–					Acted on my expanded possibility and/or inspired action related to a new job or work role (ex: advance, move to a different department)
–					Acted on my expanded possibility and/or inspired action related to money and savings (ex: bought a ledger, logged money spent, created a budget)
–					Acted on my expanded possibility and/or inspired action related to care for my psychological/emotional well-being (ex: more fun, leisure, socializing, reached out for support)
–					Acted on my expanded possibility and/or inspired action related to personal and/or professional development interest (ex: certification in area of interest, attended seminar etc...)
–					Acted on my expanded possibility and/or inspired action related to starting a business, freelancing or consulting
–					

	I have done this –	I plan on doing this between now and 3 months –	I plan on doing this within 3-6 months –	I do not plan on doing this –	Not applicable / Not related to my expanded possibility and/or inspired action –
–					
Acted on my expanded possibility and/or inspired action related to travel					
–					
Acted on my expanded possibility and/or inspired action related to relocating					
–					
Acted on my expanded possibility and/or inspired action related to transitioning to a new or different educational opportunity					
–					
Acted on my expanded possibility and/or inspired action related to transitioning to a new or different employment opportunity					
–					
Acted on my expanded possibility and/or inspired action related to expanding my social circle or network (ex: clubs, committees, meet-ups)					
–					
Acted on my expanded possibility and/or inspired action related to healthy relationships (ex: spend more time with significant people in my life, learn skills to better communicate etc...)					
–					
Tangibly expressed my expanded possibility and/or inspired action through creative pursuits - writing, dancing, drawing, creating etc...					
–					
Updated my resume					
–					
Applied for a position(s)					
–					
Interviewed for a position(s)					
Signed up for a practicum or internship experience					
–					
Quit current job/position					
–					
Got a new job/position/role					
–					
Changed/cultivating a new desirable habit					
–					
Bought tools or supplies to assist me with my expanded possibility and/or inspired action					
–					
Acted on a different life/career expanded possibility and/or inspired action not listed above					

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