

Problem Mapping in Career Counseling: The Nexus of Career and Mental Health Counseling

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Common Questions from Clients in Career Counseling

- What should I major in?
- What jobs or occupations are suitable for me?
- I've just been laid off and need a job. Can you help me?

How can a counselor and client acquire a full appreciation and common understanding of the life context out of which these questions arise?

Problem Mapping

A projective technique that enables a client to construct elements of the problem space

Career Problem Space

All cognitive and affective components contained in working memory as individuals approach a career problem-solving task

Problem Space Worksheet

- A list of all elements in the problem space
- A spatial representation of elements in the problem space

The Purpose of Problem Mapping

- A screening measure used in intake assessment
- An assessment of complexity in readiness for career counseling
- An exploration of the Communication Phase of the CASVE Cycle
- A component in the development of an ILP

Procedures

- STEP 1: Elicitation
- STEP 2: Construction
- STEP 3: Elaboration
- STEP 4: Individualized Learning Plan

STEP 1: ELICITATION

- Compose elements of the problem space

STEP 2: CONSTRUCTION

- Draw a spatial representation of the space

STEP 3: ELABORATION

- Explore
 - Influence of each element
 - Relative influence of each element
 - Relationship among elements
 - Relationship to other assessments
 - Elements that require further exploration

STEP 4: ILP

- Develop an Individualized Learning Plan

CASE STUDY: Ned

- 24 year-old computer programmer
- Married, no children
- Complains of boredom, monotony
- Wants a more exciting career path

Screening Assessments: Ned

- Interview
- Problem Space Worksheet
- Career Thoughts Inventory

Ned's List of Elements

Problem Space Worksheet

Name NED Date _____

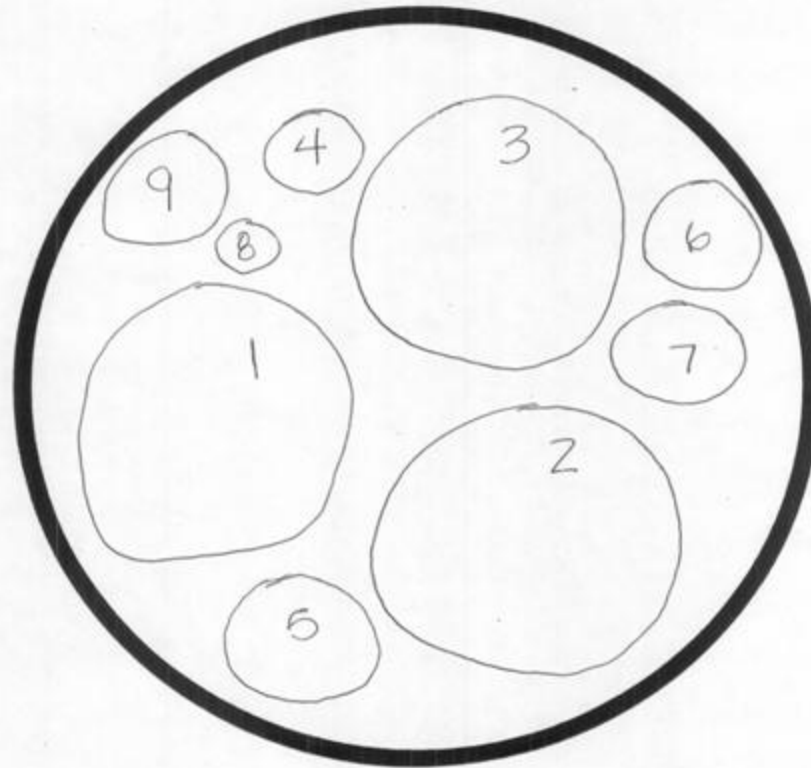
The career decision you are considering CAREER / POSTGRAD STUDIES

The **Problem Space** can be thought of as the mental and emotional environment in which an individual approaches a problem or task. Below, please list all thoughts, feelings, circumstances, people, or events that bear on the career decision you are considering.

1. INTERESTS
2. FEAR OF BOREDOM / TENDENCY TO GET BORED EASILY
3. FAMILY
4. AVAILABILITY OF JOBS
5. JOB LOCATIONS
6. BOREDOM AT PRESENT JOB
7. FEAR OF NETWORKING
8. ETHICS
9. ANXIETY / UNCERTAINTY
10. _____

Ned's Problem Map

The large circle below represents the **Problem Space** of your career decision. Draw circles within the large circle to represent each item on your list. Use the size of the circles you draw to represent the relative importance of each item. Be sure to label each circle.



Ned's CTI

- Total T=61
- Decision-Making Confusion T=60
- External Conflict T=60
- Commitment Anxiety T=69

Ned's ILP

Individual Career Learning Plan
The Career Center
Florida State University

Goal(s) #1 Explore options for a graduate degree

#2 Improve networking skills

#3 Increase social interactions among family members

Activity	Purpose/Outcome	Estimated Time Commitment	Goal #	Priority
Individual career counseling	Enhance knowledge of Self and career options	On-going	1 & 2	1
Complete Self-Directed Search	Enhance self knowledge	30 minutes	1	2
Explore available graduate degree programs	Enhance knowledge of options	On-going	1	3
Complete MMPI	Enhance self knowledge; explore factors affecting career decision;	2 hours	1 & 2 & 3	4
Practice interacting with other people at work and in neighborhood	Gain experience in interactions	On-going	2 & 3	5
Cognitive restructuring techniques and reality testing	Learn to manage anxiety in certain situation	On-going	2 & 3	6
(Revised) Consult with university psychiatrist regarding chronic anxiety and depression	Improve quality of life and improve outlook	One week	1 & 3	7

This plan may be modified by either party based upon new information learned in the activities of the action plan. The purpose of the plan is to work toward a mutually agreed upon career goal. Activities may be added or subtracted as needed.

NED

Student/Client

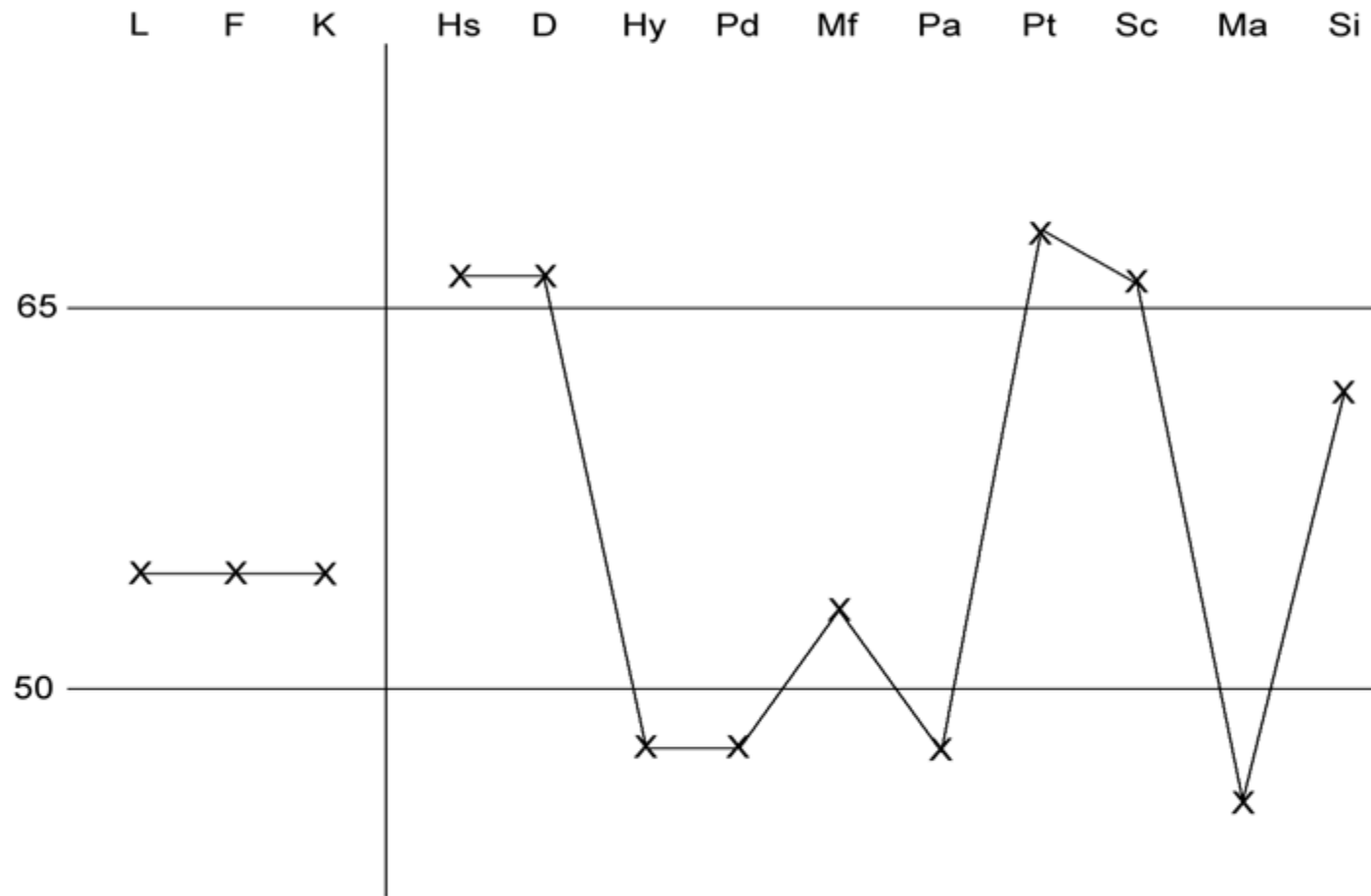
Date

Career Counselor

Date

Figure 2. Ned's Individualized Learning Plan

Ned's MMPI



MMPI Profile of Ned

Population Characteristics of Problem Mapping Task

- Participants were students enrolled in an undergraduate career planning course
 - $n=95$
 - 47 males, 48 females
 - 18-23 years old ($m=20$)
 - 59% Caucasian, 14% Hispanic-American, 14% African-America
 - 37% Business majors, 12% undecided

Procedures

- Group Administration
- Informed Consent
- Instructions Read Aloud
- 5 Minutes Recommended to List Factors
- 3 Minutes Recommended for Mapping
- Maximum Time Used: 11 Minutes

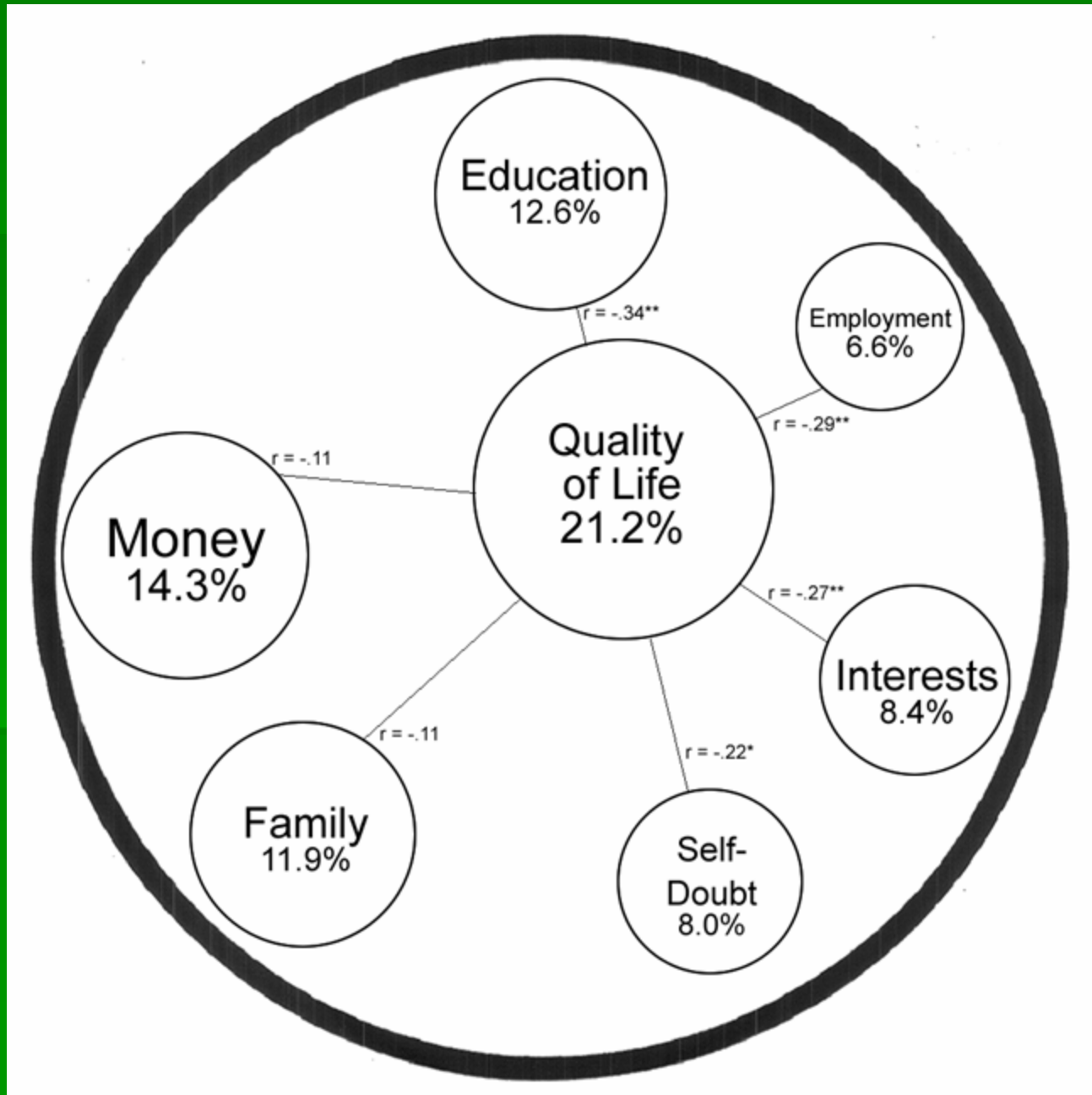
Classification Code for Possible Problem Space Worksheet Factors

PRINCIPLE DIMENSION	CONSTRUCT DEFINITION	EXAMPLES
Quality of Life	The manifestation of values in the work environment to which an individual aspires.	-Happiness -Prestige -Leisure Time -Travel -Variety
Money	Factors pertaining to the financial costs and benefits associated with a given career choice.	-Salary -Benefit packages -Cost of Education
Family	Issues surrounding members of the nuclear or extended family, individually or as a unit.	-Mother -Parents -Uncles
Education	All factors relating to the acquisition of the knowledge necessary for a given career choice.	-Major -Length of program -Difficulty of coursework
Interests	The emotional arousal associated with the career domain being considered.	-Interesting -Not boring -I enjoy working with computers
Self-doubt	Any statements that reflect an individuals' insecurity regarding their character or abilities.	-Can I do the job? -Am I smart enough? -I always change my mind
Employment	All statements referring to obtaining the desired career position.	-Job market -Can I get a job after graduation? -Advancement opportunities

Normative Distribution Across the Code

Dimension of Problem Space	Subcategories	Mean Area Used (%)
Work		82.3
	Values	21.2
	Money	14.3
	Education	12.6
	Interest	8.4
	Self-Doubt	8.0
	Employment	6.6
	Location	5.6
	Skills	5.5
Relationships		17.4
	Family	11.9
	Friends/Mentors	1.8
	Significant Others	1.6
	Multiple Categories	1.1
	Society	0.8
	Spirituality	0.2
Unclassified		0.3

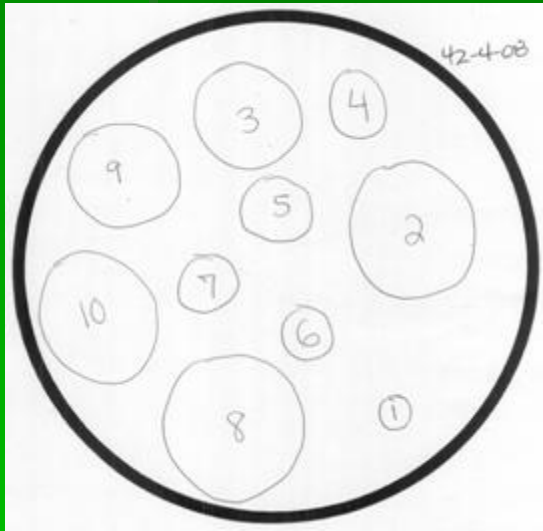
Modal Student Taking a Career Planning Course



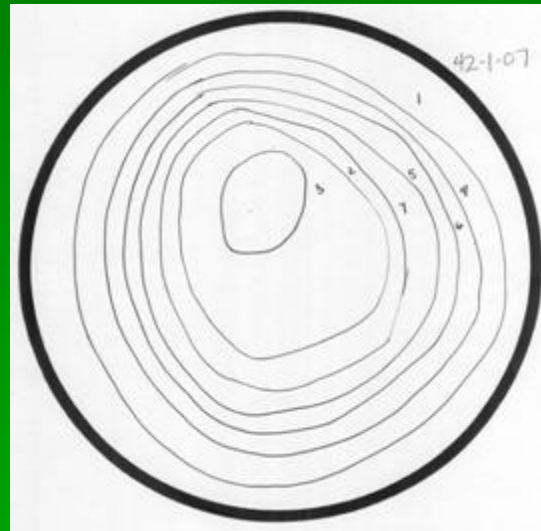
Correlation with CTI Total

Dimension of Problem Space	Subcategories	<i>r</i>
Work		-0.02
	Values	-0.17
	Money	-0.01
	Education	-0.01
	Interest	0.02
	Self-Doubt	0.17
	Employment	0.25*
	Location	-0.13
	Skills	-0.03
	Relationships	
Family		0.02
Friends/Mentors		-0.03
Significant Others		-0.06
Multiple Categories		0.12
Society		-0.05
	Spirituality	0.10
Unclassified		-0.00

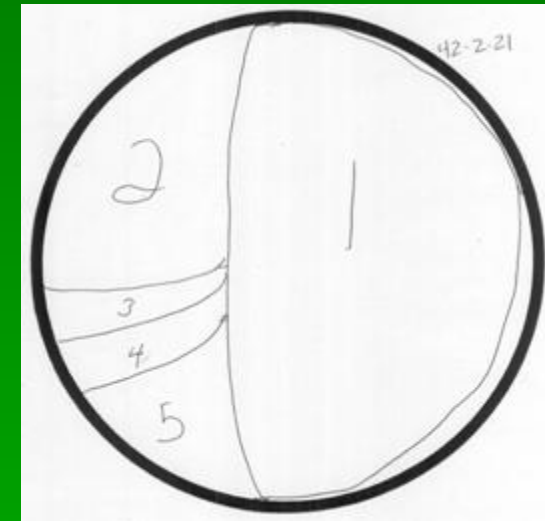
Variety of Maps



Random
Placement



Bull's
Eye



Pie
Shape

Interesting Examples

Problem Space Worksheet

Name _____ Date _____

The career decision you are considering _____

The **Problem Space** can be thought of as the mental and emotional environment in which an individual approaches a problem or task. Below, please list all thoughts, feelings, circumstances, people, or events that bear on the career decision you are considering.

1. religious beliefs
2. need to make good money
3. want to be a homemaker - not drawn towards career
4. fear won't find a husband
5. fear won't enjoy identity
6. not very good at science
7. want everyone to be proud of me
8. want to be the best I can
9. need to succeed in my career
10. worried I won't find the right career for me

Problem Space Worksheet

Name Shanon Ivan Date 2/5/04

The career decision you are considering Production work for a sports network

The **Problem Space** can be thought of as the mental and emotional environment in which an individual approaches a problem or task. Below, please list all thoughts, feelings, circumstances, people, or events that bear on the career decision you are considering.

1. moving away from family
2. afraid I will do a bad job
3. Always traveling with my job
4. Leaving my friends
5. Finding a significant other in Tallahassee before I leave?
6. Entering the real world
7. Supporting myself - paying back loans
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

Contradictions

Underlying Themes

Strengths and Advantages of Problem Mapping

- Holistic Appraisal
- Full Range of Factors
- Externalizes the Problem
- A Means for Organization of Thoughts
- Circumscribing Affect
- Common Mental Model
- Inexpensive and Easy to Administer

Limitations and Caveats

- Here-and-Now Perceptions
- Invokes Strong Emotions
- Counselor's Own Projections
- Unused Space
- Client's Level of Involvement
- Counselor's Level of Involvement

Questions?