Providing Career and Mental Assistance to a Diverse Population: Using Theory to Inform Practice

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Focus on the connection between career and mental health issues in the context of theory, research, and practice
Career, Work, and Mental Health

• Individuals seeking career counseling often present a complex array of issues …

• Difficult for counselors to separate career satisfaction and development from other mental health issues…

Career and Mental Health Issues are Inextricable in Many Cases

• Linda is depressed because she has not done well in high school and she has been very discouraged about her options after she graduates. Is this a career problem or a depression problem?

• Alberto is worried about getting into medical school. He is not sleeping well at night and has become upset because his family and girlfriend are putting pressure on him. Is this a career problem or a relationship problem?

• Fred returns home after work each day with high stress; he suffers verbal abuse from a punitive supervisor, is experiencing anxiety attacks, and high blood pressure. Is this a career, mental health, or medical problem?

(Adapted from Krumboltz, 1993)
FSU Career Center Mission

- Provide comprehensive career services
- Train career service practitioners
- Conduct life/career development research
- Disseminate information about life/career services and issues to the university community, the nation, and the world.
Organizational factors to consider in combining career and mental health assistance: The institution

- Institutional culture, policies, & procedures
- Administrative structure
- Space
- Records
- Tools & resources
Factors to consider in combining career and mental health assistance:

Staffing, training, & supervision

- Professional identity
- Staff credentials
- Supervision & training
- Liability
- Specializations
Staff

• PhDs on site for training & supervision
• Access to students enrolled in counseling, counseling psychology, career counseling programs
• Training materials
Synthesis of three career services dimensions: client needs, intervention complexity, staff competencies

A. Level of Client Needs

B. Level of Career Intervention Complexity

C. Level of Competencies and Skills of Counselors and Staff

Case Example: FSU Career Center

Key elements:
• mission
• theory base
• staff credentials & expertise
• existence of accredited counseling programs at Master’s & PhD level
• nature of training provided to paraprofessionals
Career theory connected to practice

• Holland’s RIASEC theory and secondary constructs
• Use of cognitive information processing (CIP) theory
• Connection to other counseling theories (e.g., Beck)
Holland’s RIASEC Theory

- Impact of personality characteristics on life/career issues
- Connection of secondary constructs (e.g., congruence, differentiation, profile elevation, vocational identity) to mental health factors
CIP Pyramid Domains

Thinking about my decision making

Knowing how I make decisions

CASVE Cycle

Knowing about myself

Knowing about my options

Client Version
CASVE Cycle

- Knowing I Need to Make a Choice
- Knowing I Made a Good Choice
- Understanding Myself and My Options
- Expanding and Narrowing My List of Options
- Choosing An Occupation, Program of Study, or Job
- Implementing My Choice

Communication

Execution

Analysis

Valuing

Synthesis

Floridia State University 1851
Executive Processing Domain

- Metacognitions—Thinking about decision making
  - Self-talk
  - Self-awareness
  - Control and monitoring
Assessment of Readiness

• Two Issues:
  - Capability
  - Complexity
Readiness

The capability of an individual to make appropriate career choices taking into account the complexity of family, social, economic, and organizational factors that influence career development.

Readiness also includes possessing adequate language skills and literacy skills for communication and learning.

Capability

• The cognitive and affective capacity to engage in effective career choice behaviors

• How are my career choices influenced by the way I think and feel?
Factors inhibiting capability

- Disabling emotions
- Dysfunctional career thoughts
- Goal instability
- Tension or urgency to make a decision
- Self concept as a decision maker
Complexity

- Contextual factors, originating in the family, society, the economy, or employing organizations, that make it more (or less) difficult to make career choices

- How does the world around me influence my career choices?
Factors contributing to complexity

- Personal conflict
- Number of personal, social, occupational issues
- Financial
- Family
- Relationships
- Quality of life
Levels of Service Delivery

- Self-Help Services
- Brief Staff-Assisted Services
- Individual Case-Managed Services
## CIP Readiness Model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Complexity (high)</th>
<th>Capability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low readiness</td>
<td>Low readiness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High degree of</td>
<td>Moderate readiness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>support needed</td>
<td>Moderate to low degree of support needed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Individual Case-</td>
<td>(Brief Staff-Assisted Services)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managed Services)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate readiness</td>
<td>High readiness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate to low</td>
<td>No support needed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>degree of support</td>
<td>(Self-Help Mode)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>needed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Brief Staff-Assisted Services)</td>
<td>(low)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Levels of Readiness Assessment

Direct behavioral observations

Career decision state

Low-cost, theory-based assessments

Psychological mental health appraisals

Intake

• Behavioral Observations:
  • “no options interest me”
  • “my teacher, parents, partner told me to come here”
  • Irregular speech patterns—slow/fast/broken
  • Not making sense, confusion
Career Decision State

• Possible assessment tools:
  – Occupational Alternatives Q. (OAQ)
  – Career Tension Scale (CTS)
  – Goal Instability Scale (GIS)
Occupational Alternatives Questionnaire

(OAQ)

• Measures career decision state:
  – degree of certainty pertaining to a career choice
  – satisfaction with current choice
  – assesses clarity of occupational aspirations
  – content indicates level of maturity and level of occupational knowledge
OAQ

Scoring the OAQ:
1  1st choice, no alternatives
2  alternatives and a 1st choice
3  alternatives, no 1st choice
4  neither alternatives, nor 1st choice

Note: this is an ordinal scale
Correlates of OAQ

• Decision-Making Confusion (DMC)  $r = .33$
• Commitment Anxiety (CA)  $r = .25$
• CTI Total  $r = .22$
• Beck Depression  $r = .19$
• No choice = moderate depression

Walker & Peterson (in press) Journal of Career Assessment
Career Tension Scale (CTS)

- A measure of career stress or urgency to make a decision

Correlates of CTS

- NEO Neuroticism $r = .44$
- DMC $r = .37$
- CA $r = .28$
- EC $r = .36$
- OAQ $r = -.04$

Goal Instability Scale (GIS; Robbins & Patton, 1985)

- Measures lack of focus, low drive and energy, confusion about self

Career Theory-Based Assessments

• Examples:
  • Career Thoughts Inventory (CTI; capability)
  • Decision Space Worksheet (DSW; complexity)
  • Self-Directed Search (SDS; capability)
    • Secondary constructs as window into mental health issues (e.g., low differentiation)
What is the CTI?

- Self-administered
- Objectively scored
- 48-Item measure of dysfunctional thoughts in career choice
Theoretical Basis of the CTI

- Cognitive Information Processing (CIP) Theory
- Beck’s Cognitive Theory
The CTI in Needs Assessment

• Identifying the specific nature of negative thoughts
• Three CTI Construct Scales
  - Decision-making Confusion (DMC)
  - Commitment Anxiety (CA)
  - External Conflict (EC)
• Specific career interventions can be related to specific construct scores
Mental health constructs directly correlated with dysfunctional career thoughts

- indecision
- neuroticism
- anxiety
- angry hostility
- depression
- hopelessness
- impulsivity
- vulnerability

For additional information visit: www.career.fsu.edu/techcenter
Assessing the personal and social context

- Decision Space Worksheet (DSW)
- A measure of complexity

Decision Space Worksheet

• Page 1: list elements

• Page 2: draw circles within a given circle in proportion to the importance of an element
Decision Space Worksheet (DSW)

Name____________________________ Date________________

Decision you are making__________________________

Please list all thoughts, feelings, circumstances, people, or events that bear on the decision you are making.

1.__________________________________________
2.__________________________________________
3.__________________________________________
4.__________________________________________
5.__________________________________________
6.__________________________________________
7.__________________________________________
8.__________________________________________
9.__________________________________________
10.__________________________________________

The Decision Space

Directions:
- The large circle below represents the total decision space.
- Within the large circle, draw smaller circles that represent the magnitude or the relative importance of each item listed on the Decision Space Worksheet (DSW).
Purpose of the Decision Space Worksheet (DSW)

- Cognitive mapping task
- Helps clients reveal thoughts, feelings, persons, circumstances associated with career decision
- Helps clients prioritize importance of contextual influences
- Can be used with middle school through college level students and adults
Typical Issues Revealed

- Cognitive distortion
- Disabling emotions
- Financial
- Family
- Education
- Interests
- Self doubt
- Employment
- Quality of life
Correlates of DSW

- Beck Depression Inventory: 0.21
- CTI CA: 0.19
- CTI EC: -0.18

- DSW is basically unrelated to measures of capability

Solomon, J. L. (2011). The Decision Space Worksheet, the Career Thoughts Inventory, and the Beck Depression Inventory-II as measures of mental health in the career decision-making process. The Florida State University. ProQuest Dissertations and Theses.
Assessments for Psychological/Mental Health Appraisal

• Examples:

  • Beck Depression Inventory (BDI)
    • Useful as a mental health screener
    • Item 9 concerns suicide ideation
  
  • Beck Hopelessness Scale (BHS)
    • Useful as a mental health screener, especially for depressed individuals or those at risk for suicide
    • Example item: “My future seems dark to me.”
Assessments for Psychological/Mental Health Appraisal (continued)

• MMPI-2 in Career Counseling
  – Assesses personal and social adjustment
  – Measures clinical syndromes that may interfere with or block effective decision making
  – Used following screening measures such as CTI, DSW, and interview
The Case of George

- 37 year old Cuban-American with a high school degree
- Sought assistance in finding a new job that would have more meaning
- Formerly employed in the construction industry
- Experienced dysfunctional family situation
- Lack of social support
- Previous counseling for depression
George’s CTI

- Total Score  T=78
- Decision-Making Confusion (DMC)  T=80
- External Conflict (EC)  T=74
- Commitment Anxiety (CA)  T=77
George’s DSW

Decision Space Worksheet (DSW)

Name: George  Date: 8/2/12

Decision you are making: what field to pursue in the future

Please list all thoughts, feelings, circumstances, people, or events that bear on the decision you are making.

1. Interests - not sure what else to consider
2. Availability of jobs
3. Relevant skills
4. Fear of networking
5. Anxiety about the future
6. Ability to succeed
7. Lack of income
8. Feeling isolated
9. 
10. 

The Decision Space

Directions:
- The large circle below represents the total decision space.
- Within the large circle, draw smaller circles that represent the magnitude or the relative importance of each item listed on the Decision Space Worksheet (DSW).
# George’s ILP

## Individual Career Learning Plan

**Goal(s):**
1. Identify alternative job options
2. Learn techniques for positive social interactions
3. Develop more positive thinking regarding my future

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Purpose / Outcome</th>
<th>Time Needed</th>
<th>Goal</th>
<th>Priority</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual Career Counseling</td>
<td>Enhance knowledge of career options and future goals</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>1, 2, 3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complete CTI</td>
<td>Explore how thinking is impacting career choices</td>
<td>16 min.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complete Dox Space Worksheet</td>
<td>Examine factors affecting my decision</td>
<td>30-45 min.</td>
<td>2, 3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take the Self-Directed Search</td>
<td>Expand my thinking about alternatives</td>
<td>45 min.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practice interacting with people</td>
<td>Gain confidence in social interactions</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use CTI workbook</td>
<td>Examine negative thinking to work on</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conduct info interview in 2 fields of interest</td>
<td>Gather information &amp; practice networking</td>
<td>1 hr.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This plan can 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.

**Student/Client:** George Span - 3/2/12  
**Career Advisor:** Sarah Hardy - 3/2/12
George’s Counseling Outcomes

- Identified areas of concern beyond the presenting career decision
- Formulated counseling goals and activities that integrated career and mental health issues
- Improved his quality of life related to career goals and social relationships
Summary

• Clear support in the literature for integrating these areas

• Important to consider organizational and programmatic issues

• Implementation requires attention to staff resources, internal & external factors

• Theoretical perspectives used in the setting may guide decisions about addressing career and mental health issues

• Assessment tools influence extent to which these factors might be considered and addressed in the counseling process
For More Information

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