Connecting Career and Mental Health Counseling: Integrating Theory and Practice

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Career, Work, and Mental Health

○ Individuals seeking career counseling often present a complex array of issues, and thus it is difficult for counselors to separate career satisfaction and development from other mental health issues...

Zunker, V. (2008). *Career, work, and mental health*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

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 burdened with insoluble problems and the victim of a punitive supervisor. He feels sexually impotent with his wife. Is this a career problem or a problem of sexual dysfunction?

(adapted from Krumboltz, 1993)

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Research on Work and Mental Health

- Unemployment, problematic work relationships, and stressful work conditions play significant roles in the development of physical and mental health problems and many times are indicators of the onset of mental illness.[1]

- Work and family factors interact and influence job and marital satisfaction.[2]

- Stressful life events, including those career-related, have been repeatedly identified to precede the onset of mental illness. Stressors can trigger underlying biological, physiological, and psychological illness.[3]

1. (Brenner, 1987; Frese & Mohr, 1987; Levi, 1984; Rose, Hurst, & Herd, 1979; Joelson & Wahlquist, 1987).
2. Metz, B. A. (1992). Toward an understanding of the reciprocal relationship between work and family. *Dissertation Abstracts International, 53*(3-A), pp. 722.
3. Kleinman, A. (1988). *Rethinking psychiatry: From cultural category to personal experience.* New York: The Free Press.

Research Continued…

○ Clients who present for career concerns also feel the need to address education-related issues and egodystonic emotions related to work.[4]

○ Personality factors that affect mental health are also related to career choice, career progression, and work behaviors[5] and that these personality traits are hereditary and remain stable over the course of the lifespan.[6]

4. Niles, S. G., Anderson, W. P., Jr., & Cover, S. (2000). Comparing intake concerns and goals with career counseling concerns. *The Career Development Quarterly, 49*, 135-145.
5. Eyeseck, H. J. (1990). Genetic and environmental contributions to individual differences: The three major dimensions of personality. *Journal of Personality, 58*, 245-261.
6. Schultz, D. P., & Schultz, S. E. (2005). *Theories of personality* (8th ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Thomson..

V. Zunker, 2008

○ Holds two fundamental assumptions for conceptualizing and integrating clients' career and personal development:

- Holism; Whole-Person Approach
- Biological, psychological, and social/cultural influences; Integrative Approach

The incredible potential for facilitating change through Career Counseling

"There is continuing acknowledgement that the influences upon career choice and adjustment throughout the life span are complex and psychological, as well as social, political, and economic.
Such a reality gives growing credence to viewing career counseling as ***a therapeutic modality*** that goes ***beyond*** dispensing and discussing information or focusing on one's work life as an isolated piece of behavior."
(Herr, 1989, p.13)

Program Implementation: The Institution

- Institutional history
- Policies & procedures
- Administrative structure
- Space
- Records
- Tools & resources

Program Implementation: The Personnel

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

Synthesis of three career services dimensions:
client needs, intervention complexity, staff competencies
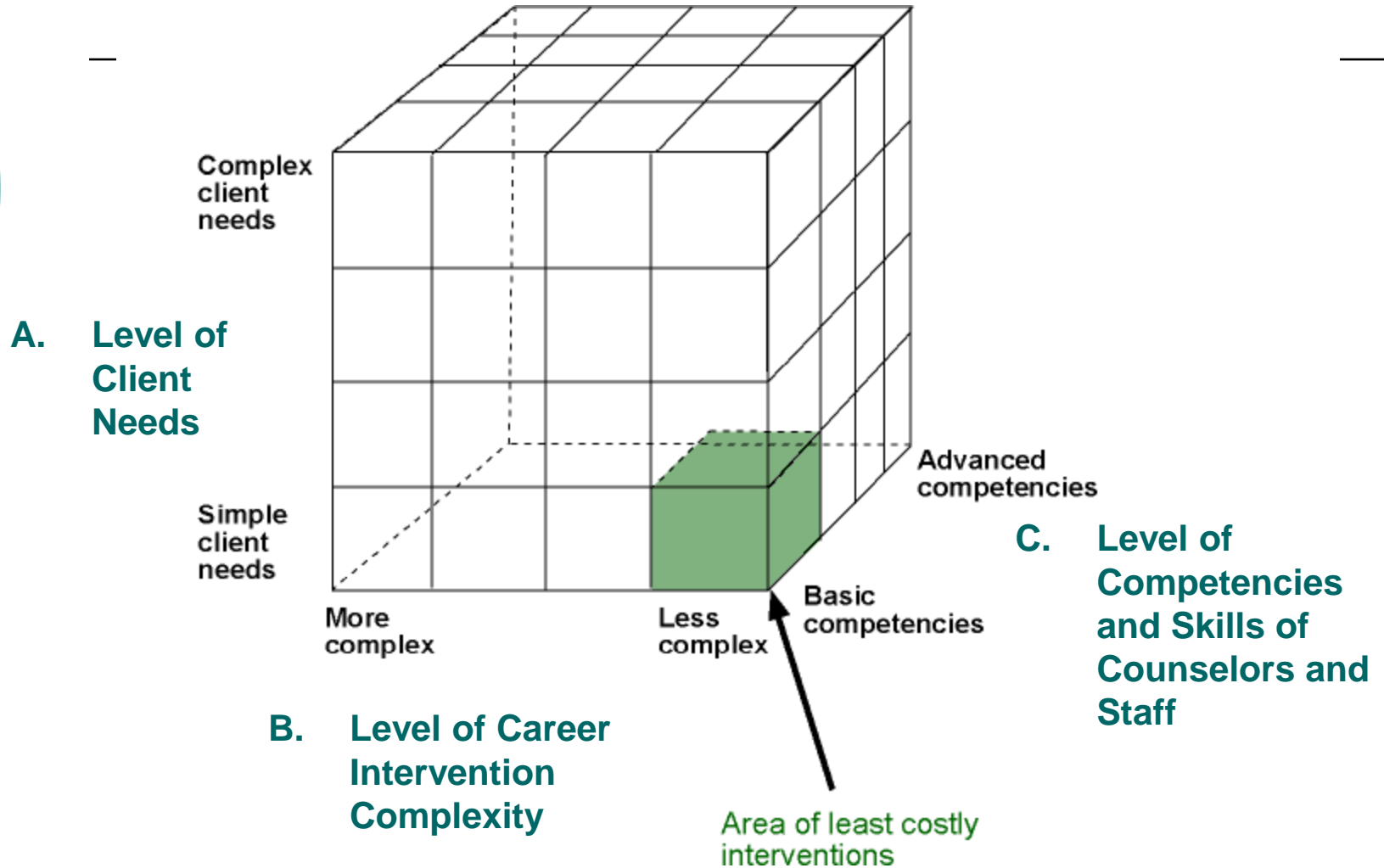
Source: Sampson, J. P., Jr., Reardon, R. C., Peterson, G. W., & Lenz, J. G. (2004). *Career counseling and services: A cognitive information processing approach.* Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole.

Case Example: FSU Career Center

Key elements--

○ mission

○ theory base

○ staff credentials & expertise

○ access to students in accredited counseling programs at Master's & PhD level

○ nature of training provided

Mission

The mission of The Career Center is to:

- 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.
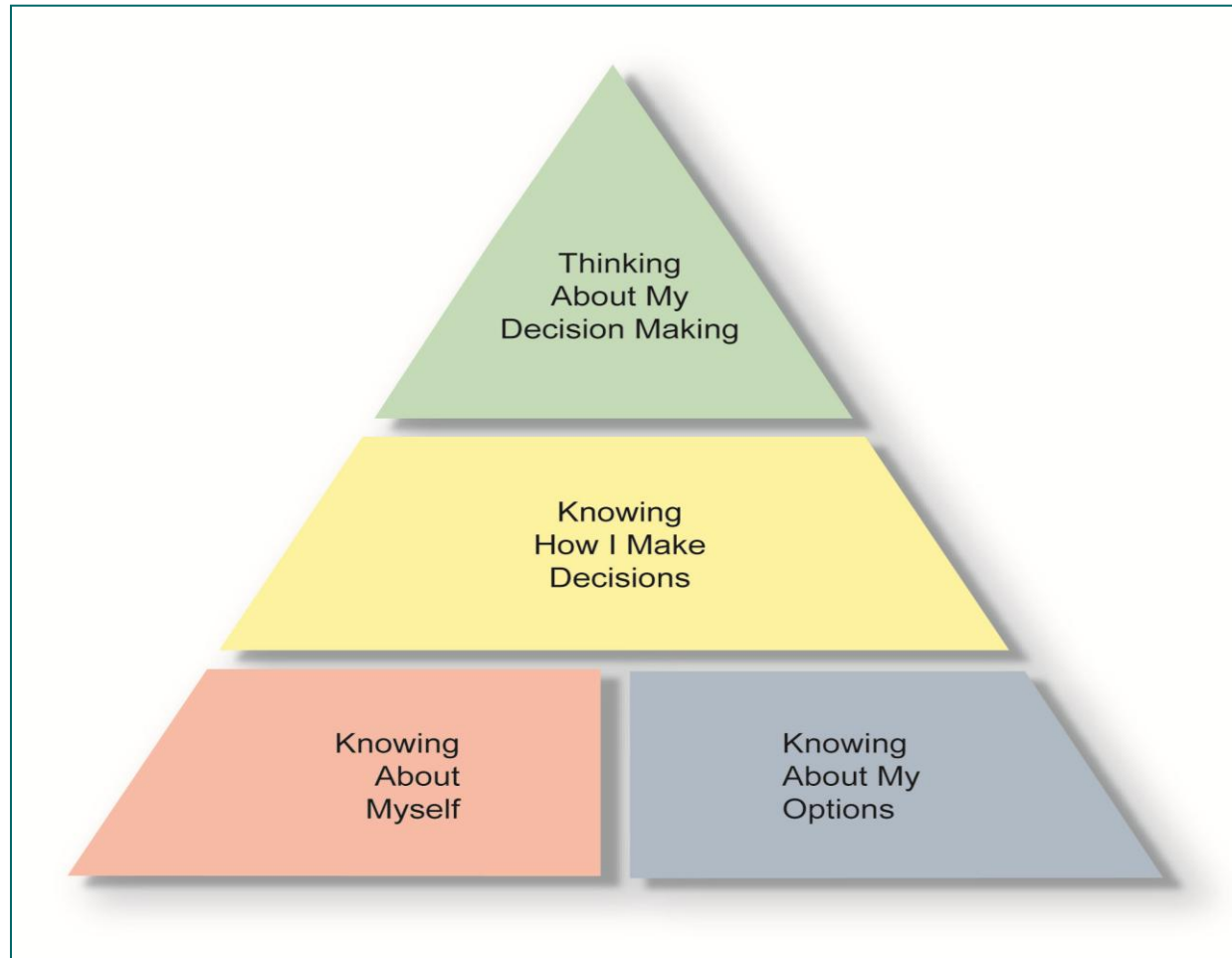
Career theory connected to practice

- Use of cognitive information processing (CIP) theory

- Connection to other counseling theories and interventions (e.g., Beck)

- Constructs from Holland's theory that point to mental health issues, e.g., profile elevation, low vocational identity—"I am unsure of myself in many areas of my life"

CIP Theory
Pyramid of Information Processing

CASVE Cycle

Communication
Identifying the
problem - the gap

Analysis
Thinking about
alternatives

Execution
Taking action to
narrow the gap

Valuing
Prioritizing
alternatives

Synthesis
Generating likely
alternatives

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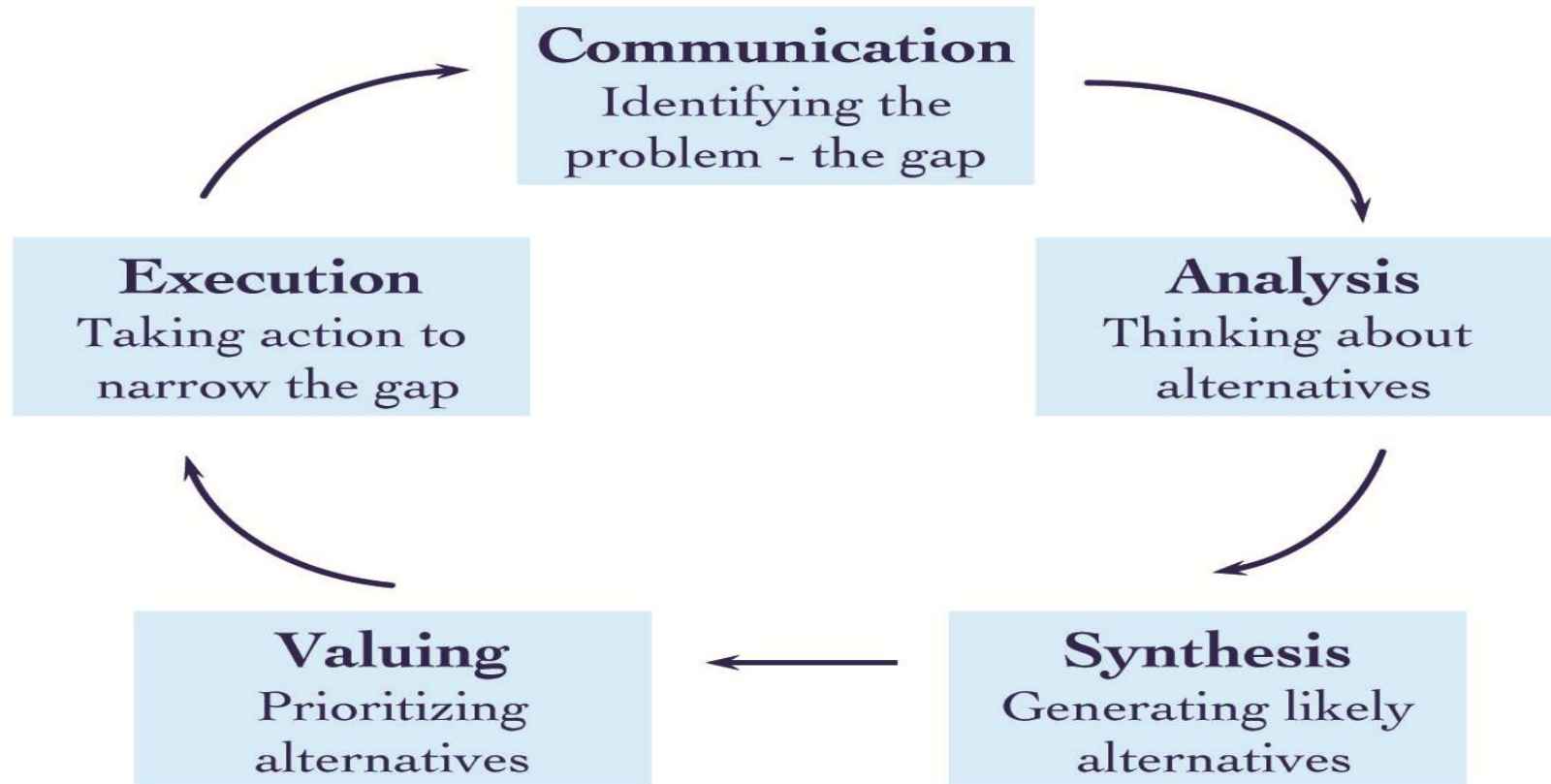
Executive Processing Domain

- Metacognitions
  - Self-talk
  - Self-awareness
  - Control and monitoring

Screening

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
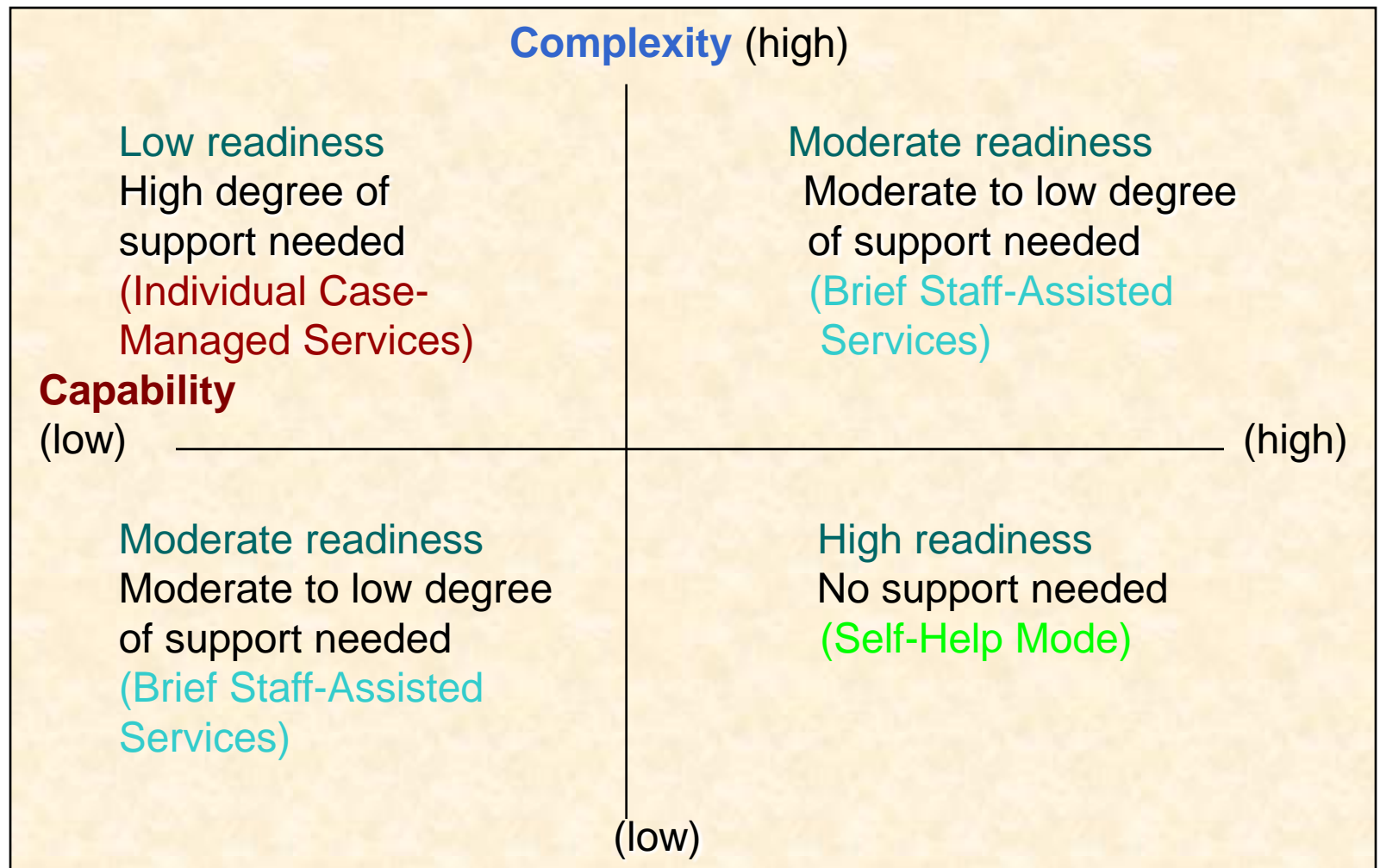
Source: Sampson, J. P., Jr., Reardon, R. C., Peterson, G. W., & Lenz, J. G. (2004). *Career counseling and services: A cognitive information processing approach*. Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole.

Levels of Service Delivery

- Self-Help Services

- Brief Staff-Assisted Services

- Individual Case-Managed Services

CIP Readiness Model

Complexity (high)

Low readiness
High degree of
support needed
(Individual Case-
Managed Services)

Moderate readiness
Moderate to low degree
of support needed
(Brief Staff-Assisted
Services)

Capability
(low) ———————————————————————————— (high)

Moderate readiness
Moderate to low degree
of support needed
(Brief Staff-Assisted
Services)

High readiness
No support needed
(Self-Help Mode)

(low)

Staff

- PhDs on site for training, consultation, & supervision

- Access to students enrolled in in counseling, counseling psychology, career counseling programs

- Training materials

Assessment Issues

- How are career assessments influenced by mental health status?

- What are examples of assessments that bridge career and mental health domains?

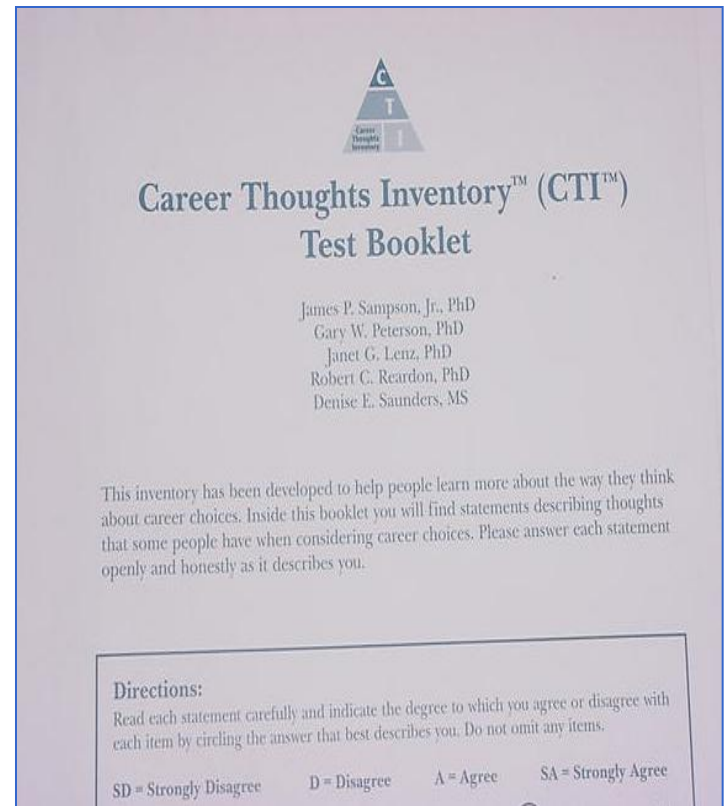- How are these used in developing an individualized learning plan?

Career/Mental Health Assessments

- Career Thoughts Inventory (CTI)
  - High career/low mental health
- Problem Space (re-named Decision Space) Worksheet
- MMPI
  - Low career/high mental health

What is the CTI?

- Self-administered

- Objectively scored

- 48-Item measure of dysfunctional thoughts in career choice

Career Thoughts Inventory™ (CTI™) Test Booklet

James P. Sampson, Jr., PhD
Gary W. Peterson, PhD
Janet G. Lenz, PhD
Robert C. Reardon, PhD
Denise E. Saunders, MS

This inventory has been developed to help people learn more about the way they think about career choices. Inside this booklet you will find statements describing thoughts that some people have when considering career choices. Please answer each statement openly and honestly as it describes you.

Directions:
Read each statement carefully and indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with each item by circling the answer that best describes you. Do not omit any items.

SD = Strongly Disagree   D = Disagree   A = Agree   SA = Strongly Agree

Theoretical Basis of the CTI

- Cognitive Information Processing (CIP) Theory

- Beck's Cognitive Theory

Career Thoughts Defined

Outcomes of one's thinking about

- assumptions,
- attitudes,
- behaviors,
- beliefs,
- feelings,
- plans, or
- strategies

related to career choice

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 <u>directly correlated</u> with dysfunctional career thoughts

- indecision
- neuroticism
- anxiety
- angry hostility

- depression
- self-consciousness
- impulsivity
- vulnerability

Sampson, J. P., Jr., Peterson, G. W., Lenz, J. G., Reardon, R. C., & Saunders, D. E. (1996). *Career Thoughts Inventory: Professional manual*. Odessa, FL: Psychological Assessment Resources, Inc.

Using a Decision Space Worksheet (DSW)

- Cognitive mapping task

- Helps clients reveal all thoughts, feelings, persons, circumstances associated with the career decision

- Helps clients prioritize importance of contextual influences

Decision Space Worksheet

- Page 1: list elements

- Page 2: draw circles within a given circle in proportion to the importance of an element

Typical Issues Revealed

- Financial
- Family
- Education
- Interests
- Self doubt
- Employment
- Quality of life

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

Key MMPI-2 Scales

- K (Correction)
- Depression (D)
- Psychopathic deviate (Pd)
- Psychasthenia (Pt)
- Schizophrenia (Sc)
- Hypomania (Ma)
- Social introversion (Si)

CASE STUDY: Ned

- 24 year-old computer programmer

- Married, no children

- Complains of boredom, monotony

- Wants a more exciting career path

Screening Assessments: Ned

- Intake Interview

- Decision Space Worksheet (formerly called 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.

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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.

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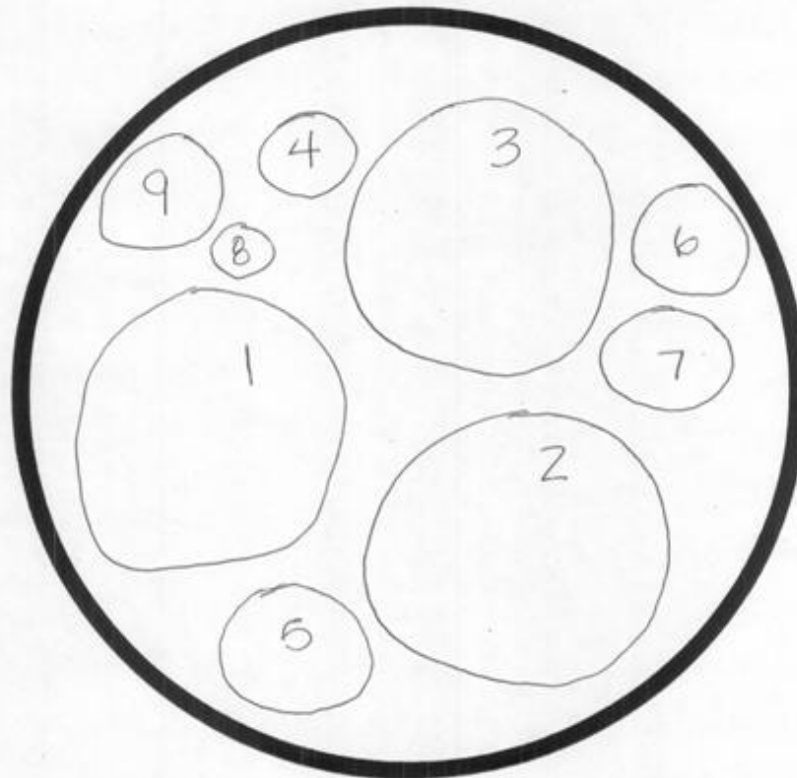
Ned's CTI

- Total Score   T=61

- Decision-Making Confusion (DMC)   T=60

- External Conflict (EC)   T=60

- Commitment Anxiety (CA)   T=69

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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 now 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

_____   _____
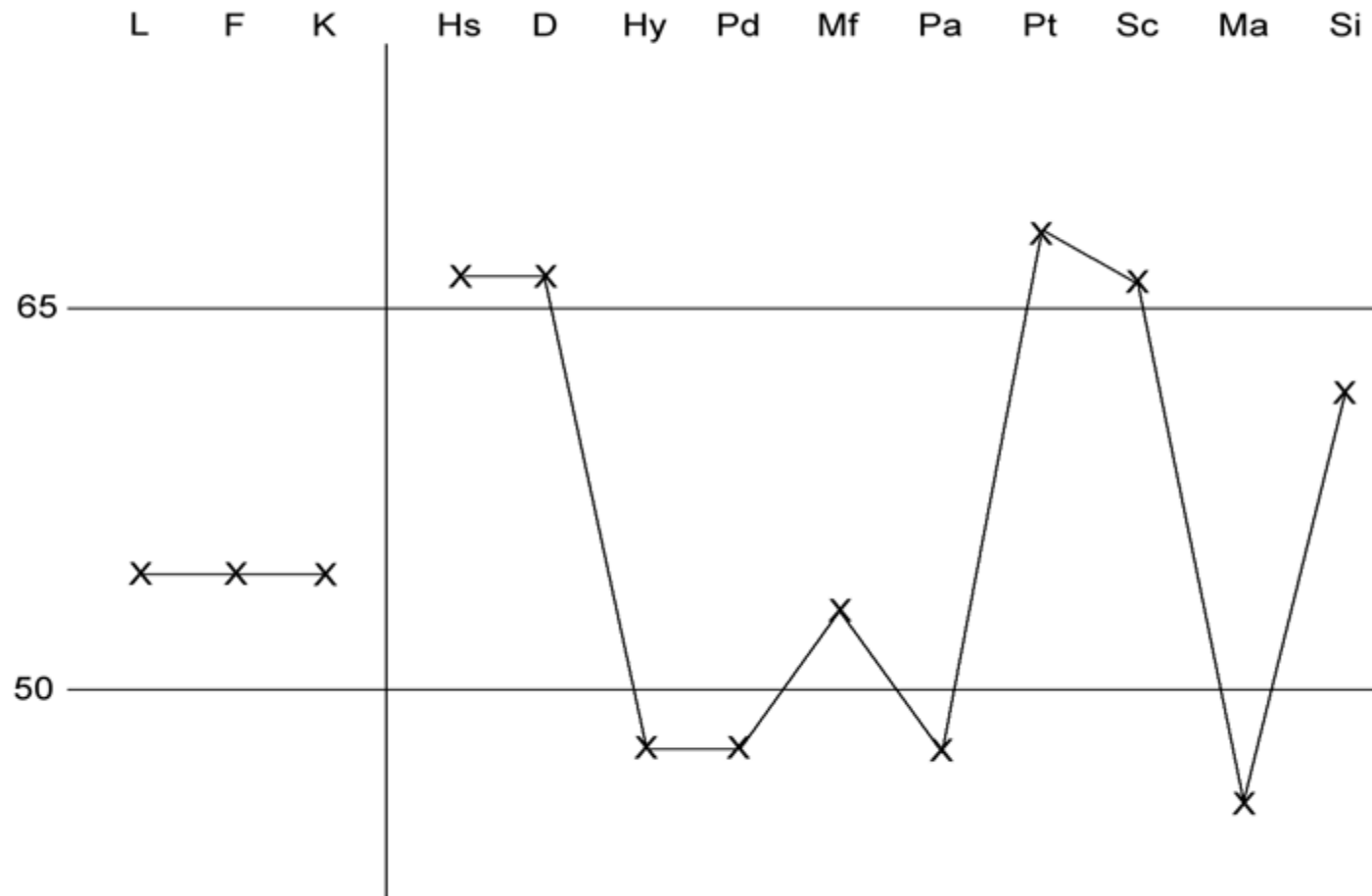.Student/Client   Date   Career Counselor   Date

Figure 2. Ned's Individualized Learning Plan

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Ned's MMPI-2

MMPI Profile of Ned

Ned's Counseling Outcomes

- Identified areas of concern beyond the presenting career decision

- Formulated counseling goals that integrated career and mental health issues

- Involved helping services beyond the career center

- Improved his quality of life related to career goals and peer and family relationships

Using CIP to integrate career and mental health counseling

- Provides a framework or model
- Encourages client involvement
- Identifies areas for exploration
- Builds on existing knowledge
- Enhances the counseling relationship

Using the CTI in practice

- Allows for a holistic approach
- Recognizes the complexities of the process
- Raises client awareness of issues
- Recognizes the impact of other life and mental health concerns

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
- Theory base can guide decisions about integrating career and mental health counseling
- Assessment tools influence extent to which these factors might be considered
- Unique issues to consider in private practice settings