

# Improving Career Interventions by Better Assessing Readiness for Decision Making

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# Organization of the Presentation

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- Conceptual Background
- Variables that contribute to low readiness for effective use of career interventions
- Potential negative consequences of clients' low readiness for effective use of career interventions
- Implications for Practice and Research

# Conceptual Background

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**Readiness for career decision-making** reflects an individual's state of preparation for engaging in the learning processes necessary to explore and decide among various options.

# Conceptual Background

From the Cognitive Information Processing (CIP) approach to career choice we define *readiness for career decision making* as:

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

# Conceptual Background

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Another way of viewing these two dimensions:

Capability represents Internal variables

Complexity represents External variables

# Conceptual Background

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- Different levels of readiness for career decision making can contribute to a career intervention being successful for one client and unsuccessful for another client (Sampson, Dozier, & Colvin, 2011).

# Conceptual Background

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- Apparent lack of awareness among practitioners of potential negative consequences of clients' low readiness to benefit from career interventions.
- Practitioners are not fully aware of the diverse measures that are available to assess readiness for career decision making.

# Gaps in Prior Research

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Variables such as:

- Literacy
- Learning Disability
- Prior Experience with Career Services

These can also have an impact on the effectiveness of career interventions.



# Schema for Organizing Readiness Variables

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- Personal Characteristics
- Personal Circumstances
- Limited Knowledge of Self, Options, and Decision-Making
- Prior Experience with Career Interventions

# Personal Characteristics

Personal characteristics include cognitive and affective variables related to **capability** in the CIP approach to career choice. These include:

- Acute and/or Chronic Negative Thoughts and Feelings
- Adjustment to Disability
- Limited Verbal Aptitude
- Language Proficiency
- Computer Literacy

# Negative Thoughts and Feelings

Acute and chronic negative thoughts and feelings can make it difficult for clients to initiate or sustain career decision making due to

- Absolute Thinking
- Fear of Failure
- Fear of Success
- Perfectionism
- Anxiety
- Depression

# Adjustment to Disability

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Clients may have temporary or continuing problems adjusting to a behavioral, emotional, cognitive, physical, or sensory disability that makes it difficult for them to attend to career decision-making.

# Limited Verbal Aptitude

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Clients' limited verbal aptitude can reduce their capacity to process the large amounts of often complex and symbolic information about self, options, and decision-making.

# Limited Language Proficiency

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- Limited language proficiency can compromise the capacity of clients to read and understand the content of career resources in a second language.

# Limited Computer Literacy

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- Limited computer literacy can make it difficult for clients to operate a computer or use the Internet to obtain the career resources, and ultimately career services, that they need.

# Personal Circumstances

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The second category of variables contributing to low readiness for the effective use of career interventions relates to personal circumstances.

Personal circumstances concern acute or chronic external barriers and include the existence of disabling **family**, **social**, **economic**, or **organizational** variables.



# Family Variables

Detracting *family* variables include:

- Multiple Family Responsibilities
- Multiple Family Stressors
- Deferral
- Role Overload
- Dysfunctional Family Input

# Social Variables

Detracting *social* variables include:

- Stereotyping
- Discrimination
- Lack of Role Models
- Bias in Education or Employment
- Harassment in Education or Employment

# Economic Variables

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- Detracting *economic* variables include rapid economic change and inadequate personal finances, such as poverty.

# Organizational Variables

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- Detracting *organizational* variables include complicated internal job markets, unstable organizations, and unsupportive organizational cultures.

## Limited Knowledge of Self, Options, and Decision-Making

- The third category of variables contributing to low readiness relates to limited knowledge of self, options, and decision-making.
  - Limited life experience
  - Limited inclination to reflect on self-knowledge gained from life experience
  - Limited knowledge of occupations, educational/training providers, or employers
  - Limited knowledge about the decision-making process

# Limited Life Experience

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Some clients lack the work, education, and leisure experience needed for them to articulate their values, interests, skills, and employment preferences.

## Limited Inclination to Reflect on Self-Knowledge Gained from Life Experience

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Some clients are disinclined to reflect on their life experience which can result in them having difficulty using their prior work, education, leisure, and family life as a basis for clarifying values, interests, skills, and employment preferences.

# Limited Knowledge of Occupations, Educational/Training Providers, or Employers

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Some clients find it difficult to generate plausible options due to a lack of knowledge about occupations, educational/training providers, or employers.



# Limited Knowledge about the Decision-Making Process

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Some clients are unable to initiate or sustain career decision-making due to a lack of knowledge about the decision-making process.

# Prior Experience with Career Interventions

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The fourth category of variables contributing to low readiness for the effective use of career interventions relates to the nature of previous experiences using counseling, websites, career courses, computer-based guidance systems, or other career tools.

# Limited Prior Experience with Career Resources

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Limited prior exposure to self-assessments or career information may leave clients confused about how to use the career resources that are available to them.

# Inappropriate Expectations about Career Choice and Career Services

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Career decision-making readiness can be negatively affected by the unrealistic belief that there is one perfect choice and all clients must do is find the one occupational, educational/training, or employment option they are seeking.

# Negative Prior Experience with Career Interventions

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Negative prior experience of clients with career interventions can result in anticipation of unsuccessful use of career interventions and consequently a self-fulfilling prophecy of failure in making an informed career choice.

# Consequences of Low Readiness for Effective Use of Career interventions

- Premature Disengagement
- Negative Perception of Skills
- Negative Perception of Interests
- Selective Acquisition of Incomplete Information
- Premature Choice Foreclosure
- Protracted Exploration
- Dependent Decision-Making Style
- Poor Evaluation of Options

# Premature Disengagement

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Clients may prematurely disengage their use of career resources and services due to a perception that difficulty in using career resources suggests failure to be helped.

# Premature Disengagement

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## Example

Clients may discontinue use of a computer-assisted career guidance system when the initial listing of occupations does not include current occupational aspirations.



# Negative Perception of Skills

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Clients may develop a negative perception of their skills due to their anticipated failure in completing the work tasks that would then lead to disappointment and embarrassment.

# Negative Perception of Skills

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## Example

Clients may underestimate their skills in an assessment resulting in an unnecessarily restricted list of potentially appropriate occupations that do not fully reflect clients' potential for success

# Negative Perception of Interests

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Clients may develop a negative perception of their interests after they imagine failure in applying skills associated with an interest.

# Negative Perception of Interests

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## Example

Clients may initially like public speaking and then imagine failure in front of others due to a lack of skill which results in reduced interest in speaking publicly.

# Selective Acquisition of Incomplete Information

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- Clients may selectively acquire incomplete information which then reinforces a preexisting conclusion that they would not be interested in or succeed in an occupation or education/training program.

# Selective Acquisition of Incomplete Information

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## Example

Clients selectively review occupational information topics that focus on the difficult aspects of work in an occupation and then decide not to pursue learning about the opportunities in that field.

# Premature Choice Foreclosure

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- Clients may prematurely foreclose occupational, educational, training, or employment choices to avoid the risk or effort involved in exploring other potentially appropriate options.

# Premature Choice Foreclosure

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## Example

Clients may prematurely discontinue use of the search for options feature of a computer-assisted career guidance system after one search in order to confirm an occupational choice that poses little risk of failure, even though clients have only minimal interest in the occupation.



# Protracted Exploration

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- Low readiness for career decision-making may also be affected by a compulsive need to find a perfect option.
- Clients may engage in protracted exploration of occupational, educational, training, or employment choices to avoid the risk of failure.

# Dependent Decision-Making Style

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- Clients may adopt a dependent decision-making style to avoid taking responsibility for a career decision that is favored by a significant other.

# Poor Evaluation of Options

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- Clients may engage in poor evaluation of options where the benefits are underestimated and the limitations are overestimated in a way that reinforces a preexisting conclusion that an occupational or educational/training option is inappropriate.

# Negative Consequences

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The two ultimate consequences of low readiness for career decision making include:

1. Making a poor choice when an absolute time limit is reached (often selecting by default the only option that remains).
2. Failing to select a good occupational, educational/training or employment option when it was available.

# Implications for Practice

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- For persons with moderate to low readiness for the use of career resources, brief staff-assisted or individual case-managed counseling interventions are needed.

# Implications for Practice

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- A four-step counseling model entailing *screening*, *recommending*, *orienting*, and *follow-up*, can be used in both brief staff-assisted and individual case-managed counseling.

## Conceptualizing Readiness: Is the Glass Half Empty or Half Full?

The readiness variables in this presentation are phrased in negative form to make it clear that some characteristics of clients, the circumstances in which they live, or both, can contribute to problems in making career decisions and that these problems need to be addressed when delivering career services.

## Conceptualizing Readiness: Is the Glass Half Empty or Half Full?

- While there is value in stressing the positive and focusing on strengths with clients, it is important for practitioners to help clients understand how their characteristics or circumstances may negatively impact their ability to make an informed career choice.



# Future Research

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- Research is needed to clarify the effects of readiness constructs on career intervention effectiveness and the ability of practitioners to incorporate readiness assessment into effective counseling practice.

# Future Research

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- It is important to investigate how multicultural and diversity variables impact the nature and prevalence of readiness variables among various groups.

# Thinking about Readiness Assessment

- Why do some persons experience difficulty in career decision-making while others do not?
- Parsons (1908) self-study questions
- A historical perspective from the 1960s
  - Williamson & Rogers debates--who won?
  - Diagnosis meant using tests, the medical model
  - “Counseling is good, good counseling is even better” (Ted Volsky, PhD)

# Readiness and Services

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- 42 readiness assessments identified, but are they
  - Standardized?
  - Published?
  - Current?
  - Theory and Research Based?
- Recognizing and addressing individual differences
- The demand vs. the supply side of service delivery—lessons from general education reform

# Readiness and Societal Good

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- Three CIP Service Levels
  - Self-help
  - Brief-Staff Assisted
  - Individual Case Managed
- The matter of costs in service delivery, or improving the efficacy of self-help and brief-staff assisted services.

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