Charting Unique Paths:
A New Vision for the
Career Development Course

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Agenda

- Objectives
- Methods
- Case Study and Discussion
- Conclusion
- Questions

Objectives

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- Provide career researchers and practitioners with an innovative approach to understanding career decision-making.

- Reduce stress, anxiety, and depression for undergraduate students, by confronting decision-making confusion.

- Explore the interactions existing among fear, difficulty, and confusion in career choice.

- Understand patterns existing between career indecision and mental health challenges among undergraduate students.

Florida State University (FSU)

- One of the USA's elite R1 universities for sciences, arts, humanities
- and professions.
- Strongly rooted in the traditions of liberal arts and critical thinking.
- Mid-size, located in Tallahassee, FL, with 43,000+ students from
- every county of Florida, all 50 states, and 130 countries.
- 75% of the student body are undergraduates.
- The average age is 20.
- Women account for 58% of total enrollment.
- Minorites account for 37% of total enrollment.
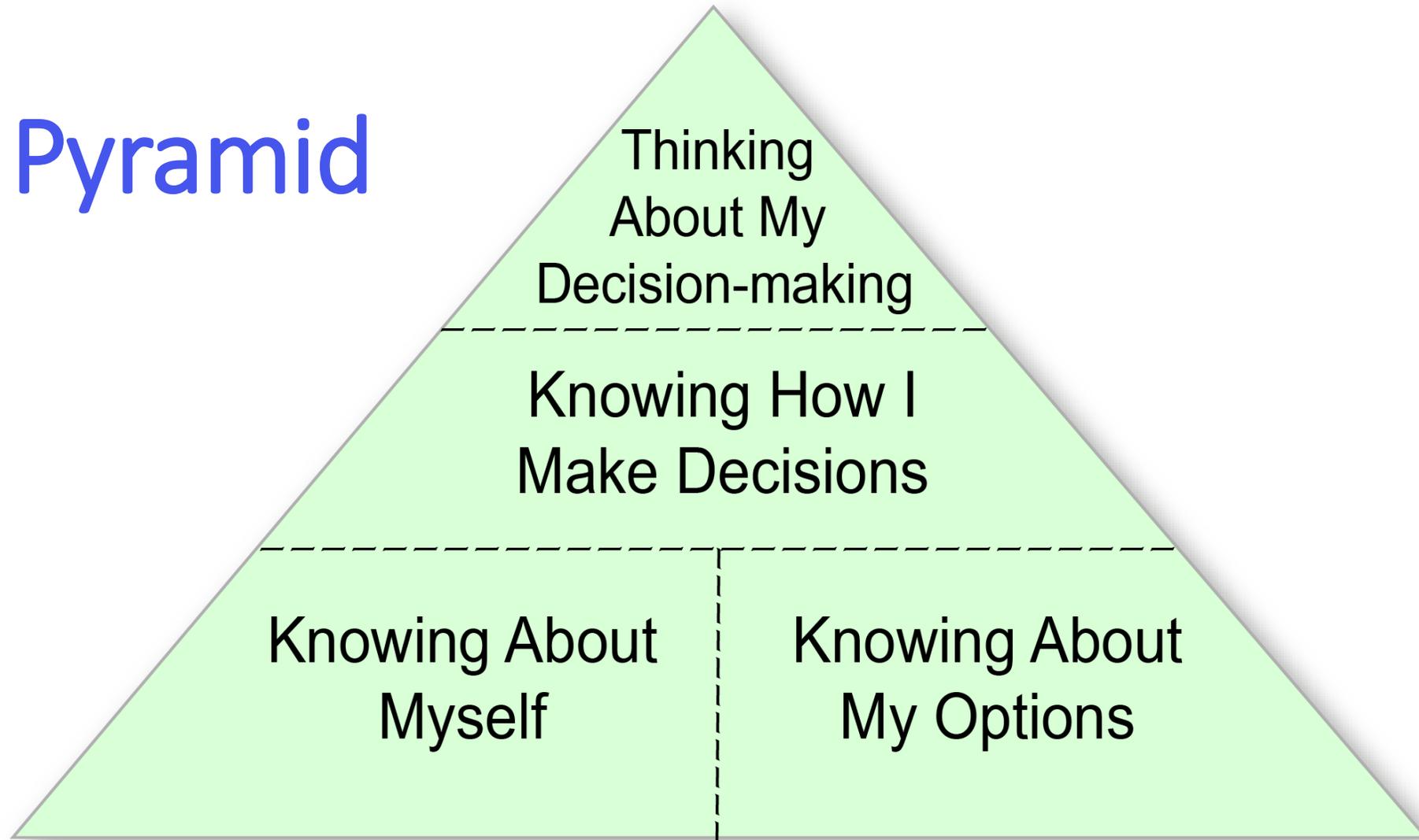
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Career Development Course

- Course draws from the fields of cognitive psychology, sociology, and economics to enhance the lifelong career decision-making process.
- Divided into three domains: (1) cognitive and social foundations, (2) the occupational world and work behavior, and (3) career choice and development in individuals and organizations.
- Open to all undergraduates and majors.
- Co-instruction model combines faculty, staff, graduate, and doctoral
-    students.
- Students can take variable credit for 1, 2, or 3 semester units.

Cognitive Information Processing Theory (CIP)

- Based on how we think and process information (Reardon et al., 2024)

- Depends on knowledge structures stored in memory.

- Key aim: help individuals learn to make more effective career decisions.

CIP Pyramid

Thinking About My Decision-making

Knowing How I Make Decisions

Knowing About Myself

Knowing About My Options

Pyramid of Information Processing Domains in Career Decision-Making

Note. Adapted from "A cognitive approach to career services: Translating concepts into practice," by J. P. Sampson, G. W. Peterson, J. G. Lenz, and R. C. Reardon, 1992, *The Career Development Quarterly*, *41*(1), p. 70. https://doi.org/10.1002/j.2161-0045.1992.tb00360.x. Copyright 1992 by the National Career Development Association. Adapted with permission.

Methods
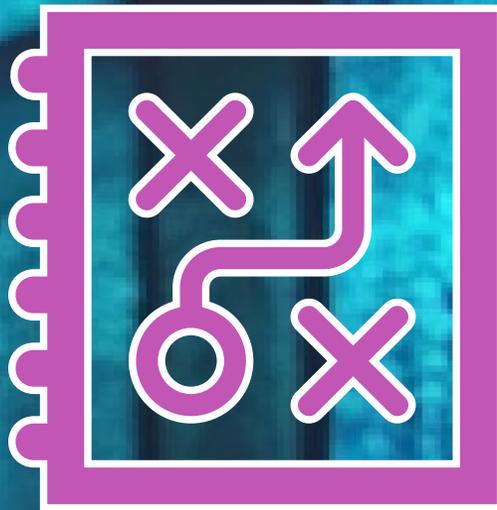
Career State Inventory (CSI)

The Career State Inventory (CSI; Leierer et al., 2022) assists practitioners in assessing individuals' readiness for career problem-solving and decision-making before or after an intervention.

The CSI can be administered either as a brief survey or a time-series format to assess changes during an extended career intervention, i.e., counseling or workshops.

The CSI can be described as a measure of career decision-making readiness (Leierer et al., 2022). It consists of five items measuring three career decision state dimensions: (a) certainty (1 item), (b) satisfaction (1 item), and (c) clarity (3 items).

The CSI typically takes no more than 5 minutes to complete and score.

Scores from the three dimensions are summed to provide a total CDS score ranging from 2 – 12.

- This workshop focuses on the final part of the CSI (c) career clarity as an indicator of vocational self-confidence with questions derived from John Holland's, My Vocational Identity Scale (MVS) (Holland et al., 1993).

- We offer an innovative approach to understanding career decision-making by utilizing three key items from the CSI-Clarity Scale (CSI-CS):

  - CSI-CS_3a ("If I had to make an occupational choice right now, I'm afraid I would make a bad choice"),
  - CSI-CS_3b ("Making up my mind about a career has been a long and difficult problem for me"), and
  - CSI-CS_3c ("I am confused about the whole problem of deciding on a career").

- These items will be explored through three distinct models, each structured around four quadrants representing the interaction between pairs of CSI-CS items.

3a. If I had to make an occupational choice right now, I'm afraid I would make a bad choice.
3b. Making up my mind about a career has been a long and difficult problem for me.

	3b. Making up my mind about a career has been a long and difficult problem for me. (False)	3b. Making up my mind about a career has been a long and difficult problem for me. (True)
3a. If I had to make an occupational choice right now, I'm afraid I would make a bad choice. (False)	**Quadrant 1 False, False** A high percentage of participants in this quadrant indicate a level of confidence in their career decision-making abilities **(3a=False).** This could suggest a sense of clarity and stability regarding their vocational interests and choices **(3b=False).**	**Quadrant 2 False, True** Despite not fearing poor decisions **(3a=False),** these individuals may experience indecisiveness or confusion, suggesting a disconnect between perceived self-efficacy and the process of making a career decision**(3b=True).** They might benefit from targeted guidance or counseling to clarify their options and facilitate decision-making.
3a. If I had to make an occupational choice right now, I'm afraid I would make a bad choice. (True)	**Quadrant 3 True, False** These individuals may have a specific fear or concern about the outcome of their career choices **(3a=True).** Despite not experiencing prolonged difficulty in the decision-making process **(3b=False).** Anxiety about making the right decision could influence their behavior and attitudes towards career planning.	**Quadrant 4 True, True** Individuals in this category might struggle significantly with career indecision **(3a=True),** experiencing both fear and prolonged difficulty in the decision-making process **(3b=True).** They may benefit from comprehensive career counseling and support to address both the emotional and cognitive aspects of their career indecision.

3a. If I had to make an occupational choice right now, I'm afraid I would make a bad choice.
3b. Making up my mind about a career has been a long and difficult problem for me.

	3b. Making up my mind about a career has been a long and difficult problem for me. (False)	3b. Making up my mind about a career has been a long and difficult problem for me. (True)
3a. If I had to make an occupational choice right now, I'm afraid I would make a bad choice. (False)	**Quadrant 1 False, False** Count: 53 respondents Percentage within 3a: 47.3% Percentage within 3b: 89.8% Percentage of Total: 29.9%	**Quadrant 2 False, True** Count: 59 respondents Percentage within 3a: 52.7% Percentage within 3b: 50.0% Percentage of Total: 33.3%
3a. If I had to make an occupational choice right now, I'm afraid I would make a bad choice. (True)	**Quadrant 3 True, False** Count: 6 respondents Percentage within 3a: 9.2% Percentage within 3b: 10.2% Percentage of Total: 3.4%	**Quadrant 4 True, True** Count: 59 respondents Percentage within 3a: 90.8% Percentage within 3b: 50.0% Percentage of Total: 33.3%

3a. If I had to make an occupational choice right now, I'm afraid I would make a bad choice.
3c. I am confused about the whole problem of deciding on a career.

	3c. I am confused about the whole problem of deciding on a career. (False)	3c. I am confused about the whole problem of deciding on a career. (True)
3a. If I had to make an occupational choice right now, I'm afraid I would make a bad choice. (False)	**Quadrant 1 False, False** These individuals likely feel secure in their understanding of career options **(3a=False).** and confident in making occupational choices **(3c=False).** They might benefit from career planning that focuses on growth and development rather than foundational decision-making support.	**Quadrant 2 False, True** Despite their lack of fear **(3a=False),** their indecision could stem from an overload of options, lack of guidance, or insufficient information **(3c=True).** This quadrant might benefit from interventions that provide structured information and clarity about career pathways to help resolve confusion.
3a. If I had to make an occupational choice right now, I'm afraid I would make a bad choice. (True)	**Quadrant 3 True, False** Although not confused **(3c=False),** their fear of making a wrong choice indicates anxiety or concern about making career decisions, possibly rooted in perfectionism, fear of failure, or past negative experiences **(3a=True).** This group might benefit from confidence-building activities, reassurance, and strategies to manage anxiety about making career decisions.	**Quadrant 4 True, True** Individuals in this group are the most in need of comprehensive career counseling **(3a=True).** which might include cognitive-behavioral strategies, detailed career assessments, and structured guidance to explore and clarify their career options **(3c=True).**

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3a. If I had to make an occupational choice right now, I'm afraid I would make a bad choice.
3c. I am confused about the whole problem of deciding on a career.

	3c. I am confused about the whole problem of deciding on a career. (False)	3c. I am confused about the whole problem of deciding on a career. (True)
3a. If I had to make an occupational choice right now, I'm afraid I would make a bad choice. (False)	**Quadrant 1 False, False** Count: 88 respondents Percentage within 3a: 78.6% Percentage within 3c: 82.2% Percentage of Total: 49.7%	**Quadrant 2 False, True** Count: 24 respondents Percentage within 3a: 21.4% Percentage within 3c: 17.8% Percentage of Total: 13.6%
3a. If I had to make an occupational choice right now, I'm afraid I would make a bad choice. (True)	**Quadrant 3 True, False** Count: 19 respondents Percentage within 3a: 29.2% Percentage within 3c: 17.8% Percentage of Total: 10.7%	**Quadrant 4 True, True** Count: 46 respondents Percentage within 3a: 70.8% Percentage within 3c: 100.0% Percentage of Total: 26.0%

3b. Making up my mind about a career has been a long and difficult problem for me.

3c. I am confused about the whole problem of deciding on a career.

	3c. I am confused about the whole problem of deciding on a career. (False)	3c. I am confused about the whole problem of deciding on a career. (True)
3b. Making up my mind about a career has been a long and difficult problem for me. (False)	**Quadrant 1 False, False** Individuals in this quadrant do not find making up their mind about a career a long and difficult problem **(3b=False)** and are not confused about the whole problem of deciding on a career **(3c=False).**	**Quadrant 2 False, True** Individuals in this quadrant do not find making up their mind about a career a long and difficult problem **(3b=False),** but are confused about the whole problem of deciding on a career **(3c=True)**
3b. Making up my mind about a career has been a long and difficult problem for me. (True)	**Quadrant 3 True, False** Individuals in this quadrant find making up their mind about a career to be a long and difficult problem **(3b= True)** but are not confused about the overall problem of deciding on a career **(3c= False).**	**Quadrant 4 True, True** Individuals in this quadrant find making up their mind about a career a long and difficult problem (**3b = True)** and are confused about the whole problem of deciding on a career **(3c= True).**

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3b. Making up my mind about a career has been a long and difficult problem for me.

3c. I am confused about the whole problem of deciding on a career.

	3c. I am confused about the whole problem of deciding on a career. (False)	3c. I am confused about the whole problem of deciding on a career. (True)
3b. Making up my mind about a career has been a long and difficult problem for me. (False)	Quadrant 1 False, False Count: 52 respondents Percentage within 3b: 88.1% Percentage within 3c: 48.6% Percentage of Total: 29.4%	Quadrant 2 False, True Count: 7 respondents Percentage within 3b: 11.9% Percentage within 3c: 10.0% Percentage of Total: 4.0%
3b. Making up my mind about a career has been a long and difficult problem for me. (True)	Quadrant 3 True, False Count: 55 respondents Percentage within 3b: 46.6% Percentage within 3c: 51.4% Percentage of Total: 31.1%	Quadrant 4 True, True Count: 63 respondents Percentage within 3b: 53.4% Percentage within 3c: 90.0% Percentage of Total: 35.6%1.

Summary of CSI

- The research has shown how these models help categorize individuals into different profiles based on their levels of fear, difficulty, and confusion regarding career choices.

- Each quadrant reveals unique patterns of career indecision, from those who are confident and clear about their career paths to those who are highly anxious and confused.

- To understand how this information can be used to help clients, a real-world case-study will now be explored.

Case Study and Discussion

Case Study Discussion

- Sarah is in her first year of school. She did very well in high school and did not expect college to be so complicated. Initially, she thought Engineering would be the best fit, and her father is a Petroleum Engineer.

- She was doing well in school but panicked when she did poorly in Physics. Sarah has switched to Finance and finds these classes much easier. She is good at math and is rewarded for it.

- However, she now misses Engineering and thinks she has made the wrong decision, and still finds herself very indecisive. Her parents only want the best for her. This has become an internal struggle regarding personal career choice and prompted her to take the career development course.

Conclusion

- Career decision making-confusion is complex and multifaceted.

- Practical strategies are needed to identify client patterns and use this understanding to inform career counseling approaches.

- By integrating career decision-making models with mental health perspectives, practitioners can better support individuals in navigating their career paths confidently and clearly.

- The end goal is to foster vocational satisfaction and well-being.

References

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Questions