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# Career Decidedness

*Paul J. Hartung Ph.D.*

*Northeast Ohio Medical University*

## DESCRIPTION OF CAREER DECIDEDNESS

Difficulties with career decision ranks among the most common reasons people seek career counseling. A complex concept, decidedness relates closely to broader processes of career choice and decision making and serves as the focus of a sizeable amount of published literature (e.g., see Gati, 2013; Osipow, 1999; Phillips & Jome, 2005; Tinsley, 1992; Whiston & Rose, 2013). Historically, career indecision has denoted an inability to express an educational or occupational choice when asked to do so, and a delay in bringing closure to the career choice process (Slaney, 1988). Contemporary definitions further characterize indecision as a wavering, pause, or hesitation in vocational development (Savickas, 2011), an openness to alternative career pathways (Krumboltz, 2009), and a state of adaptive uncertainty (Krieshok et al., 2009; Phillips, 1997).

Leona Tyler (1959) was one of the first scholars to suggest that indecision denotes an acute, situational, state-based, developmental delay in making career decisions. By contrast, indecisiveness means a chronic, personological, trait-based, global delay in making decisions and characterized by high anxiety (Tyler, 1959). Individuals who experience career indecisiveness also tend to experience depression and career indecision (Rottinghaus, Jenkins, & Jantzer, 2009; Saunders, Peterson, Sampson, & Reardon, 2000). Conversely, career decidedness has a demonstrated direct relationship to positive states like subjective well-being (Uthayakumar, Schimmack, Hartung, & Rogers, 2010). Once conceived of as a simple dichotomy (i.e., decided or undecided) and as a point on a unidimensional continuum ranging from undecided to decided, career indecision today comprises a complex multidimensional construct. From a multidimensional perspective, counselors view clients as undecided for different reasons and provide interventions according to clients' presenting concerns and identified decision-making problems (see Brown et al., 2012; Gati, 2013).

## ASSESSMENT STRATEGIES

Career indecision assessment takes two forms. One form uses objective measures to yield scores indicating level and type of indecision. The other form uses subjective methods to gather stories indicating life themes and goals that may sustain indecision as well as guide movement within the decisional process. Counselors may use any of a number of assessment methods to discern levels and types of indecision with which clients may present.

Counselors may use instruments such as the *Career Decision Scale* (CDS; Osipow, Carney, Winer, Yanico, & Koschier, 1976) and the *Career Decision-Making Difficulties Questionnaire* (CDDQ; Gati, Krausz, & Osipow, 1996) to assess career indecision. The CDS measures overall level of indecision and can also be used to scale indecision subtypes (Savickas & Jarjoura, 1991). The CDDQ measures ten difficulty categories ranging from lack of information and readiness to internal and external conflicts that can impede the decisional process. Other measures include the *Career Factors Inventory* (Chartrand, Robbins, Morrill, & Boggs, 1990), the *Career Thoughts Inventory* (Sampson, Peterson, Lenz, Reardon, & Saunders, 1996), and the *Decisional Process Inventory* (Hartung, 1994).

Counselors use subjective or narrative methods like the *Career Construction Interview* (CCI; Savickas, 2011) to assess the personal meaning clients ascribe to the lived experience of being undecided. The CCI contains five questions that elicit short stories about clients' identities and intentions. Combining these stories into a larger narrative provides information about individuals' personal realities and promotes understanding and attending to their unique experiences of indecision, preoccupations and intentions, and possibilities for further constructing their life-careers.

Additional assessment resources include:

Free assessments provided at [www.vocopher.com](http://www.vocopher.com), [www.cddq.org](http://www.cddq.org), [www.vcc.asu.edu](http://www.vcc.asu.edu), and <http://mbcd.intocareers.org>.

Decisional Process Inventory available for free by email request at [phartung@neomed.edu](mailto:phartung@neomed.edu)

Computerized career guidance programs DISCOVER and SIGI available respectively at

<http://www.act.org/discover> and <http://www.sigi3.org>

Career information accessed easily via the Occupational Information Network (O\*NET) at

<http://online.onetcenter.org>

“My Career Story,” a narrative-based workbook for promoting career decidedness, available at [www.vocopher.com](http://www.vocopher.com)

## INTERVENTION STRATEGIES

Individual career counseling is effective in decreasing career decision-making difficulties and increasing career decidedness (e.g., Heppner, Multon, Gysbers, Ellis, & Zook, 1998; Heppner et al., 2004; Masdonati, Massoudi, & Rossier, 2009). The identification of career decision-making difficulties is an important first step in developing effective career interventions for resolving indecision (Whiston & Rose, 2013). Specialized workbooks can promote career decision making and reduce indecision (Brown et al., 2003), and Internet-based career decision-making programs can enhance career decidedness (e.g., Gati, Kleiman, Saka, & Zakai, 2003).

The combination of developmentally-based counseling interventions (which increase career adaptability) with cognitive-based interventions (which reduce negative career thoughts) can help alleviate deficits related to chronic career indecision (Kelly & Shin, 2009). Likewise, normalizing career indecision as a developmental process, and enhancing career decision-making confidence has been evidenced to foster adolescents' identity development (Jantzer, Stalides, & Rottinghaus, 2009). Finally, narrative interventions in which clients develop stories about their career development can promote decidedness among college students and adults (Bujold, 2004; Savickas, 2005, 2006, 2009; Taber, Hartung, Briddick, Briddick, & Reh fuss, 2011).

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