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**Information-Seeking Behavior:
Updating Career Video Resources
for Gen Z Students**

Robert C. Reardon, Guest Editor

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Information-Seeking Behavior: Updating Career Video Resources for Gen Z Students

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Information-Seeking Behavior: Updating Career Video Resources for Gen Z Students

Abstract

Prior research revealed that audiovisual presentations modeling information-seeking behavior (ISB) with vicarious reinforcement can increase engagement in career decision-making activities. This article describes a strategy for updating effective counseling strategies initiated by John Krumboltz and others fifty years ago. However, technology-based resource delivery, as well as the preferences and values of today's Gen Z students, have led to new options for how ISB can be portrayed and delivered. This article revisits and updates a theory- and research-based technological career intervention for contemporary counseling services.

Key Words: vicarious learning, counseling, information seeking, career, Krumboltz

Reinforcing career information-seeking behavior (ISB) can increase the number of strategies used by individuals researching career options. The video script described in this article about an effective technique is based on extensive research conducted by Dr. John Krumboltz and his associates in the 1960s and 1970s. They published more than 10 studies in scholarly journals regarding the efficacy of model-reinforced learning in audio and video recordings for career information-seeking behavior with secondary and postsecondary students (e.g., Jones & Krumboltz, 1970; Krumboltz & Schroeder, 1965; Krumboltz & Varenhorst, 1967). Later studies were based on these same research procedures (Bertoch, Reardon, Richer, Lumsden, & Ruff, 2011; Fisher, Reardon, & Burck, 1976; McHugh, Lenz, Reardon, & Peterson, 2012) that replicated earlier findings. These studies demonstrated the effectiveness of a model-reinforced video in career counseling with students in First Year Experience groups and in a career class.

In one study, Krumboltz and Schroeder (1965) randomly assigned 54 eleventh grade students seeking educational and vocational counseling to three groups: a) reinforcement counseling (information-seeking responses reinforced), (b) model-reinforcement counseling (tape-recording of a male counselee played to each client prior to reinforcement counseling), and (c) a control group. They reported four outcomes of the study. First, students in both experimental groups engaged in more information-seeking behavior outside the interview (external ISB) than students in the control group. Second, students in reinforcement counseling engaged in significantly more external ISB than those in the control group for females but not males. Third, students in model-reinforcement counseling with the tape recording produced significantly more external ISB than those in the control group for males but not females. Fourth, the ratio of information-seeking responses to other responses in the interview was positively correlated with external ISB.

In another study, McHugh et al. (2012) observed 280 undergraduates enrolled in a career planning course. Half of the students watched a 10-minute model-reinforced video based on Krumboltz's prior work which also demonstrated how to use career resources. Students seeing the video, compared to those who did not see it, increased ISB using a wider variety of career resource materials and also using them more frequently. This video featured a male student receiving career advising from a female career advisor. The script used verbal and non-verbal reinforcement as rewards by the career advisor when the student successfully sought information as portrayed in the video. The career advisor also modeled the use of career resources in the

video with the client to strengthen incidental learning. This video focused on six information-seeking words originally used by Krumboltz and others: read, write, listen, visit, observe, and talk (Fisher et al., 1976; McHugh et al., 2012).

In the process of updating our ISB video, it became clear that the nature of career advising and counseling in our setting had changed significantly over a decade. For example, the O*NET and Internet were now available along with scores of new online resources, and our center was in a new facility which contained 21 computers available for client use.

Addressing the Needs of Generation Z

In this section, we review information relative to Gen Z and the implications for contemporary counseling services. The Pew Research Center has studied public attitudes on education and social policy extensively for decades, including across generations (Dimock, 2019). Their research work specifies that anyone born between 1981 and 1996 is considered a Millennial, and anyone born from 1997 onward is part of a new generation, Post-Millennial or Generation Z, i.e., Gen Z. We recognize that these distinctions between generations are not exact or precise, but they do provide a method for analyzing generational trends and are reported often in the media. For example, Gen Z is the first group to have Internet technology readily available at a young age, and most members of this generation have used digital technology throughout their lives and are comfortable with the Internet and social media.

According to a *Chronicle of Higher Education* report (Selingo, 2018), Gen Z's values may influence preferences for the delivery of career resources and services. Our understanding of the motivations of contemporary students and their career needs formed the basis for our updating the ISB video used in prior studies. We show some of these Gen Z values and preferences below along with the strategies we used to address them in the revised script and video.

Like YouTube. The place where 80% of Gen Z students go to obtain information about products, services, and more (Selingo, 2018); we believe this revised ISB video could be shown on YouTube and used in distance counseling.

Want on-demand services. We updated the script to emphasize that career advising is offered without an appointment and on a drop-in basis in our setting.

Have increased rates of depression and anxiety. The updated script normalized feelings of distress and anxiety associated with educational and career decision making that would be more common in a time of uncertainty with the coronavirus pandemic.

Desire immediate access to information. The updated script referred students to the Internet and other online resources, emphasizing that ISB could occur at any time and in any location, including an individual's home.

Prefer "a guide on the side." Gen Z students seek active learning opportunities that are supported by tools and resources rather than relying on expert advice; these active tools and resources are included in the revised script and video.

Concise, direct information. We revised the earlier 10-minute video into two shorter three-minute videos portraying a student's initial visit for career advising and a later follow-up visit, given Gen Z preferences for shorter presentations.

Video Development Process

We drew upon the work of Fisher et al. (1974) and McHugh et al. (2012) in conceptualizing the student learner outcome goals for this program because they were all still relevant and

suitable for program development and evaluation activities. Individuals viewing the ISB video would: (a) engage in increased information-seeking behavior relative to six action words (read, write, observe, listen, visit, talk); (b) become informed of varied career resources available to students and others; (c) use more varied information resources in career exploration and planning; (d) be exposed to a positive example of career advising/counseling; and (e) engage in more self-directed educational and career planning. We made no changes in the use of the six action words in earlier videos or the techniques for reinforcing ISB because we did not want to deviate from the successful results in the earlier studies (Bertoch et al., 2011; Fisher et al., 1976; McHugh et al., 2012).

We revised and developed the script for the current study over a six-month period while obtaining consultation from career center staff and media specialists. Based on this information, we decided to create two shorter videos rather than one longer one in order to accommodate the apparent preferences of Gen Z students. The earlier videos were about 8-10 minutes long and the revised videos were each about 3.0/3.5 minutes. To reduce the length, we removed scenes of the client's off-site visits and observations, e.g., video studio visit, eliminated the narrative voice overs, and removed all credits for development and production. One video features a student at a first career advising session and the second shows the student at a returning session. (A third video combines the first two.)

The present videos, "Exploring Career Options," were produced over a two-day period in November 2019 by the center's marketing and communication manager and a marketing and communications intern. They featured a female career advisor and an undergraduate male career center volunteer as the student. Reardon (2020) described the development process of the revised ISB videos and provided a copy of the script showing scene blocking that can be adapted for use elsewhere with proper credit to the source. (Appendix A shows a copy of the revised video script which may be adapted for use elsewhere with proper credit.) In addition, a link to the ISB videos "Exploring Career Options" is provided on the Florida State University Tech Center website <https://career.fsu.edu/tech-center/resources/training-resources/videos>.

Updating Six Information-Seeking Words

As previously noted, all of the prior videos described in this report used six information-seeking words: read, write, listen, visit, observe, and talk. The revised script reinterpreted these words to better reflect a contemporary student's career research procedure. The updated script was written by the authors and the six action words with elaboration and details are discussed below.

1. **Read:** Although the career center's website was briefly referenced in the earlier videos, the primary focus was on reading paper resources stored in career center library files. The 2020 video updates the word "read" to include primarily online resources like O*NET (<https://www.onetonline.org/>), the *Occupational Outlook Handbook* (<https://www.bls.gov/ooh/>), online assessments, and online career events and job postings.
2. **Write:** The earlier videos advised sending physical correspondence to professional associations and societies, and only briefly referenced e-mail. The 2020 video refers exclusively to e-mail and online correspondence through platforms like LinkedIn (<https://www.linkedin.com/>).
3. **Listen:** In the prior videos, the student listened to DVD- or tape-recorded interviews with individuals in various occupations. The revised video discusses listening to online

streaming videos, as well as listening to in-person feedback received following a recorded mock interview.

4. **Visit:** The earlier videos used the word “visit” to refer exclusively to physically visiting a professional in the field, a student organization, or a participant involvement activity. The revised video expanded upon the meaning of the word “visit” to include visiting digital resources.
5. **Observe:** Similar to “visit,” the prior video described observing in terms of watching individuals at work. The revised video encouraged students to observe their own recorded mock interviews at our center to improve on body language and non-verbal behaviors.
6. **Talk:** The revised video expanded on the interpretation of “talk” to include communicating with persons in occupations as well as career advisors, and especially advisors assigned to certain majors and occupational areas at our college, e.g., pre-health, fine arts.

A thesaurus for the six action words is shown below and this was used to assist actors in reinforcing information-seeking behavior in the video filming: (1) Read, study, examine, understand; (2) Talk, converse, chat, speak, discuss, consult; (3) Write, contact, compose; (4) Visit, call, meet; (5) Observe, watch, view, study, monitor; and (6) Listen, hear, attend.

Implications for Research and Practice

In reflecting on the theory, research, and practice relative to model-reinforced videos and information-seeking behavior initiated by Krumboltz and others, we were struck by the absence of sustained work in this area over time given the positive main effects obtained. Why and how did the promising line of research reported in this article and elsewhere fail to take hold in either ongoing career research or practice? We will explore this issue in the following sections.

Research

As noted at the beginning of this article, the earlier research findings in over a dozen studies repeatedly demonstrated the positive impact of model-reinforced learning in audio and video presentations on client information-seeking behavior for career decision making. This main effect was the core finding of this research, although other researchers often speculated about interaction effects, i.e., gender, age, ethnicity, or level of career maturity and vocational identity.

A lingering question in counseling services revolves around the implementation of research findings in practice, or how to transform and disseminate knowledge from the research laboratory to the field (Reardon, Lenz, Sampson, & Peterson, 2011)? Few articles in the literature describe how the process of moving from theory and research to practice should occur (Sampson, Hou, Kronholz et al., 2014). These authors noted that the lack of evidenced-based practice in our literature is an ongoing problem. We believe that question pertains directly to the work of Krumboltz and others regarding ISB. Does a model-reinforced video still positively impact client information-seeking behavior? Does this depend on client demand characteristics, i.e., level of readiness for career decision making? Such demand characteristics were not often reported in the earlier research.

In the process of examining the effectiveness of a video modeling ISB, Krumboltz and others studied the gender of both practitioners and clients. They found that clients receiving the ISB intervention preferred having counselors of the same gender, although female clients were more willing to engage with male counselors than were male clients with female counselors. When reviewing the research regarding the gender of those portrayed in earlier ISB audiotapes, male clients responded more positively to hearing audio of a male client/male counselor. In

contrast, female clients responded positively to hearing audio of same sex clients/counselors regardless of gender (Thoresen & Krumboltz, 1967). Future research might update these studies to examine Gen Z's attitudes regarding their more complex gender identity as reported by (Steinmetz, 2017), i.e., more than 60 options for gender listed in Facebook.

We wonder whether video length is really important to Gen Z students or other age-related cohorts. The tradeoff between a longer video showing more and varied ISB activity and a shorter one believed more attractive to contemporary students could be researched using videos of varied length for ISB outcome effectiveness.

Finally, with respect to program evaluation, the five goals of the ISB video program listed earlier could be examined using the evaluation forms and instruments reported in previous studies. In addition, instruments measuring changes in career thoughts, career decision self-efficacy, or the career decision state could be used as pre/post measures with an ISB video.

Service

Although this report focuses on an effective counseling intervention for contemporary college students, we believe the ideas presented here could be extrapolated in varied ways.

First, the model reinforced video technique could be used to focus on job hunting, information interviewing, social networking, resume writing, and other topics. Having virtual resources to assist clients with a variety of career- and employment-seeking tasks has become even more critical as the impacts of the recent pandemic continue to be felt. The script shown in Reardon (2020) and Appendix A could be easily revised for this purpose with proper credit.

Second, as Ruff and Reardon (2009) noted that during Australia's great recession (2007-2009), unemployed adults living in remote areas might not have had direct access to in-person career counseling or a positive expectation about seeking counseling services. In such situations, an ISB video, such as the one described in this article and in prior research, could be shown on social media, public television, or a computer in order to create a positive impression of counseling and encourage persons to seek and benefit from such a service.

Third, an ISB video projected on a large screen in the campus career center could be shown to tour groups or provided to parents as a way to promote the career service as an effective student resource and to demonstrate career information-seeking behavior. It could also be used in staff training for career advising or for viewing by clients waiting to be seen for counseling services. In other situations where a personal career intervention is not possible, a model-reinforced video available in varied formats could be disseminated to the general public through public libraries, community-based resource centers, public television, or the Internet for little to no cost.

Fourth, given that many persons needing career services may not have the time or means to participate in individual counseling sessions, together with the fact that such services are costly to provide, it is important to consider more practical, efficient methods of providing career assistance, especially career information. The delivery of career assistance must be effective enough to facilitate learning in individuals so they will be able to find the information they are seeking, as well as to develop skills for effectively planning and executing future information-seeking activities. In response to an economic crisis and/or an increasing need for career services brought on by a pandemic, practitioners are ethically driven to advance more practical, efficient, and effective modes of delivering these services to the public, i.e., ISB reinforced videos.

Summary

The ISB model-reinforced video described in this article drew upon prior experience and research with this counseling intervention, and was developed and produced internally by staff in a university career center. A copy of the script is available online in a report by Reardon (2020) and in Appendix A, and it may be adapted for use by others with proper credit. The length of this revised video was reduced when changes were made including the removal of narration and addition of introductions between the career advisor and client, and removal of voiceovers in favor of directly providing visuals of the career advisor and client interactions. All uses of the six information-seeking words from prior research were maintained during the filming process. This article provides the backstory on the development, production, and future options for ISB videos in counseling services and the wider community.

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APPENDIX A
Information Seeking Behavior Video Script
Erin Connolly & Robert Reardon
December 2019

<p style="text-align: center;">PART 1</p> <p>CUT TO: Wide shot from behind client (Sean) walking into the Career Center library.</p> <p>CUT TO: Shot of Career Advisor (CA) standing in the donut. Show Assistant Director, Career Advising & Counseling on screen</p> <p>CUT TO: Shot of Sean approaching the donut.</p> <p>CUT TO: Over-the-shoulder shot of Sean, with CA and sign-in computer visible.</p> <p>CUT TO: Sean sitting down at one of the round tables while CA signs him in on computer, picks up a pen, Career Guide, and ILP, and meets him at the table.</p>	<p>CA: Hi Sean, my name is [Career Advisor smiling]. What brings you in today?</p> <p>Sean: Well, I'm a pre-med biology major but I don't really like it anymore.</p> <p>CA: Okay. Tell me more about that.</p> <p>Sean: Well, the classes aren't really what I thought they would be. I'm having a lot of trouble with organic chemistry.</p> <p>CA: That sounds frustrating and feeling stuck.</p> <p>Sean: Yeah, exactly. My parents are physicians so I always assumed I would be one too. I don't really know what else there is to do.</p> <p>CA: No clear idea of where you're going with your major and your occupation right now.</p> <p>Sean: That's it. I liked some electives but I don't know what kind of jobs I could get.</p> <p>CA: Which did you like?</p> <p>Sean: Well, I took Intro to Comparative Government and loved it. I also took Intro to Sociology and had a lot of fun with that one.</p> <p>CA: Tell me more about what you liked.</p> <p>Sean: Well, I really enjoyed thinking about worldwide problems and how to fix them. I especially liked learning about the role of governments. I think I really want to change my major to political science, but I'm not sure what kind of jobs I'd be able to get when I graduate.</p> <p>CA: So, wondering what kinds of job opportunities would be available with a political science major.</p> <p>Sean: Yeah, exactly.</p> <p>CA: Can you tell me more about what have you done so far to research occupations?</p> <p>Sean: I've talked to my parents and friends but that's it.</p> <p>CA: [smiling]You're here now, and that's the best first step. The Career Center library is an open workspace that's here when</p>
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The Authors



Erin Connelly holds an M.S./Ed.S in Career Counseling from Florida State University, and a B.A. in Theatre and English from the University of Florida. Erin's work experience has centered around higher education career and academic services. Her research interests include higher education and career development, college adjustment, and integrating the arts with counseling.



Bob Reardon received a bachelor of science in social studies from Texas Lutheran College in 1963, and his graduate study at Florida State University in counseling and guidance and counselor education earned him M.S. and Ph.D. degrees in 1965 and 1968, respectively. Reardon held full-time counseling and teaching positions at FSU from 1966, when he was first employed as a counselor in the Counseling Center, through 2007 when he retired. He presently holds a courtesy appointment (unpaid) as emeritus professor in the FSU Career Center.



Project team filming the ISB video in a corner of the FSU Career Center during regular service hours



FSU Career Center ISB Video Project Team on the stadium deck. L-r, Jack Brooks, student/volunteer; Erin Connelly, career advisor; Yarden Ben-David, videographer/intern; William Lineberry, marketing/communications manager; Bob Reardon, project coordinator

Backstory

Robert Reardon, PhD

August 15, 2020

I suspect that every published article in a professional journal has a backstory, a story that tells what led up to the article. This could include why the author(s) decided to do it, how they organized the work, and what happened when they tried to publish it. This article has a 50-year backstory. These stories undergirding research are not often shared with an extended group of persons, and I am pleased that the editor provide the opportunity to share this one.

This story began in the early 1970s when I read how John Krumboltz had used behavioral counseling and model reinforcement theory to increase information-seeking behavior (ISB). We had created an extensive multimedia career library in our career center and were anxious to get students to use it. So, I got several people interested in the idea of using Krumboltz's research to create our own video showing a model vicariously reinforced for ISB. Tom Fisher was looking for a dissertation project and his son was an aspiring actor. I played the role of the career counselor and we shot the video in the university PBS TV station across the street from our career center. Fisher's study revealed that students viewing the video did increase ISB and this was reported in a journal article (Fisher et al., 1973). A video cassette tape of the simulated counseling session was played for counseling students as part of the center's ongoing practice. Unfortunately, the video quality declined from repeated use and when we went back to the TV studio to get a new one, we discovered that they did not keep master tapes and we were now without an ISB video in our center.

Fast forward to 2007 and another doctoral student, Liz Ruff, was looking for a dissertation project. She was very interested in media production so we explored university resources to help with the project and found a studio in the main campus library that had equipment for editing film and provided consultation services. We revised the Fisher script, obtained the services of a videographer and two actors, and shot the ISB video on a Saturday morning in the empty career center. This 10-minute video was in color and used the same six action words as before. Five career planning class sections alternated over two semesters viewing or not viewing the video and the results revealed that the amount and type of ISB increased when students saw the video. This study was reported in a journal article (McHugh et al., 2012). However, shortly after the video was completed the career center moved to another location which dated the product. In addition, the current staff judged that students would find it too long and it was not routinely used in the class or for career advising.

A decade later, I found another student looking for a project, Erin Connelly, and we set about to update the ISB script in terms of Gen-Z preferences as shown in this article (Connelly & Reardon, current issue). We also changed the video from a longer one to two shorter ones, viz., an initial and a follow-up career advising session. We were able to get assistance from three others for production and acting (Reardon, 2020) and the result is described in this article. The implications for research and practice highlighted in the article continue to trouble and perplex me even today, but I am pleased that we may have revived a tool for counseling services based on extensive research and theory.

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