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CNS 736 CG SP 2017
SDS Reflection Paper
02/05/2017

The purpose of this paper is to reflect upon my experience of administering the Self Directed Search career assessment. I will do so by discussing four important processes. They are (1) the client selection, (2) preparation for administration of the assessment, (3) the client's experience and (4) the administrator's experience. Each will be elaborated upon in the following paragraphs.

Initially, I chose a 37 year old, African American male client who reported a felonious background during the course of counseling to participate in this assessment. He, was however sick on the day of administration of the test. I was therefore forced to choose a different client, with whom I had also discussed taking the assessment. Both would have equally benefitted from the insight gained, but for our purposes today, I will now turn and focus on the client who completed the assessment for this exercise.

This client is a 39 year old, caucasian female who presented early in counseling with a great sense of dissatisfaction with her life, having never fully experienced self-actualization. She is an accomplished linguist, with a master's degree in the Spanish language. She has been divorced once. She is remarried. She has two children from her previous marriage, and one from her current marriage. This client has consistently reported existential frustration about her purpose and about not having a career. Because the SDS is based upon Holland's RIASEC model, and emphasizes personality-environment fit, I thought this client would be an outstanding candidate for this particular assessment.

In order to prepare, I took four important steps. First, I wanted re-familiarize myself with John Holland's RIASEC model. To that end I searched for and found a particularly helpful scholarly article entitled, "*Individuals and Environments: Linking Ability and*

Skill Ratings with Interest.” Second, I wanted to make certain that I was well informed about the reliability, validity and psychometrics of the assessment itself (Bullock-Yowell, 2015, pp. 113-114). For this, I consulted the review of the SDS contained in the Mental Measurement Yearbook located in the course reserves for this course. I felt very positively about the theoretical underpinning of this assessment, and about its utility in therapy. Third, I wanted to be informed about the appropriate process for the administration of assessment. For this, I consulted the primary textbook for this course, *Assessment in Counseling, 5th Edition*, to ensure I was will informed about the assessment process. Fourth and finally, I wanted to make sure that I had visual aids available to reference during the session, so I created a simple slide show on my computer to use as a visual reference with the client.

I began the session with this client giving priority to anything that the client needed to discuss from the previous week. We had a brief check in, and then began the assessment about 20 minutes after the session began. I invited the client to share any expectations she had prior to taking the assessment. After a brief dialogue, I logged the client into the assessment and began to give the client some background in the theoretical underpinning of the assessment. I explained the basic ideas behind Holland’s RIASEC model, particularly that it was personality based and emphasized a personality-environment fit. I further explained that the idea of personality-environment fit was a recurrent theme in the client’s existential struggle. I believe this exercise will prove a valuable component in this particular client’s treatment plan. I then explained that upon completion the client had completed the assessment with would process the results together. I further explained that we would evaluate her thoughts and feelings about the

results, and explore their meaning. She did not have any questions or concerns at this point, so I handed the client my laptop and she began taking the assessment. It is my belief that the client was well prepared to take the assessment because she understood why I was administering the assessment for her specifically. I had asked her to take the assessment weeks ago, not intending her to be the client I chose for this particular exercise. The groundwork had been laid over several sessions.

During the assessment I checked in consistently throughout the assessment to see if the client had questions or concerns. She expressed a sense of ambiguity or discomfort with not knowing how to answer some of the prompts. All together the client took a majority of the remainder of our session to complete the exam. Once complete, we downloaded the report and began to examine the results. The client seemed to agree with the results initially, but was a bit surprised at the code she received (SEC). I believe her results were not fully congruent with her expectations based on the information I had provided before the assessment. We have not yet fully processed the results together. It is my plan to continue the interpretive and communication of findings stages of the assessment process during our next session together.

I believe that the client's experience was a positive one. I attribute this primarily to the reality that my client understood why I was administering this particular test in response to identified needs during the course of therapy. I also believe that the client may be anticipating resistance in the pursuit of a career, which may have been contributing to a sense of apprehension I experienced with her as we concluded our session together. This client is exploring her identity late in life, and remains perplexed and confused about her future. It is my hope that this assessment will shine some light into

the fog. As we move toward next steps, it is my plan to expose her to the numerous resources provided in the interpretive report, and to encourage her to avail herself of the seamless relationship between the Holland codes and “O-net” as she explores potential careers.

Personally, this was an invaluable experience for me professionally. This is the first assessment I have ever administered in any official capacity. As a result of the preparation process, I have become increasingly convinced of the validity and reliability of the personality-environment fit. I believe the theoretical underpinning is sound, and my professional experiences thus far only substantiate its claims. I have also gained some practical insight about how and when to begin an assessment like this. I now understand that I started administering the assessment too late in the session. As a result, the remaining time did not allow for the interpretive and communication of findings portion of the assessment process to occur within the same session.

The strengths of this assessment are clear. The validity, reliability and utility of this assessment are apparent and supported by much research. I am not convinced this assessment is for every client. The self-reporting nature and predictability of the assessment allows for the possibility of manipulation. Clients may, for instance, have an unrealistic or idealistic view of themselves which in turn affects the usefulness of this assessment in a negative way. The benefits and strengths of this assessment far outweigh any perceivable weaknesses. For that reason, it is my intention to keep this assessment in mind for clients who present with career concerns.

References

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