

Career Self-Assessment Paper

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Abstract

A Career counselor is responsible for guiding clients through plans for their future and career pursuits. To help clients recognize their career dreams, a counselor should be aware of their desires and dreams for a career. If a counselor does not know their desires for a job, they cannot wish to guide others to find their purpose in the workforce successfully. This paper goes over self-assessment in career choices and exploration for a future counselor. This paper has three parts: Career Self-assessment, occupational exploration, and practical application. The self-assessment is done in the first person by the author of this paper using resources such as the O*NET, CareerOneStop, Occupational Outlook Handbook, and the textbook used in this class, as well as other resources.

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Career Instrument Results

O*NET Interest Profiler

The O*NET Interest Profiler results revealed that my two interest areas are Social and Artistic. At first, I was a bit surprised by the social interest, but when I learned how it applied, I understood that my love language is an act of service, and that is where the connection originated. I am currently in Job Zone 4 as I have a bachelor's degree, and my future job zone will be five after I graduate with my master's.

According to the textbook Career Development Interventions (Niles & Bowlsby, 2022), John Holland's theory lists vocational personality types that align with the interests I pulled out from my test. The artistic type is described as a person who "prefers ambiguous, free, unsystematized activities that entail manipulation of physical, verbal, and human materials to create forms and products" (Niles & Bowlsby, 2022, p. 61). The creative, reflective, expressive, independent, open, idealistic, and original descriptions fit my personality regarding my ideals and values. I prefer not to conform to one idea but am always open to learning new things.

The second type is the social type, described as people who "prefer activities that entail manipulation of others to inform, train, develop, cure or enlighten" (Niles & Bowlsbey, 2022, p. 62). Although the word manipulation could be seen as unfavorable, I think it is used positively here. Some descriptions that fit my

values would be cooperative, kind, generous, patient, tactful, responsible, understanding, helpful, and warm. Friends and family have told me many times that I have a demeanor about me that makes me easy to trust and respectable. I have thought that my skills in this sense would help me become a better counselor in the future.

Thirdly, I tested high on the investigative type as well. According to Niles and Bowlsy (2022), an investigative type is a person who “prefers activities that entail observational, symbolic, systematic and creative investigation of physical, biological, and cultural phenomena to understand and control such phenomena” (61). As I mentioned previously, I love being open to learning new things. I genuinely desire to know and understand how things work for better knowledge and to invoke societal change.

Because of these three types and my test results from O*NET, I gained a better understanding of career choices that would fit me. Two of the jobs recommended to me were Music Therapist and Social Worker. Due to my artistic side, I prefer the Music Therapist. However, I also saw how being a social worker could satisfy my investigative tendencies and social desires.

Value Sort Activity

From the Value Sort activity (Niles & Bowlsbey, 2022, p.377), I had a list of ten essential values: affection, Community, Creativity, economic security, Growth, Friendships, Honesty, Loyalty, Inner Harmony, and Wisdom. Most of

these play vital roles in my life, but the few that play the most essential roles are community, honesty, and loyalty.

Community is essential. I value being a part of my family and friend communities, contributing my part to them, and receiving from them. The critical importance of community is being able to contribute your talents and skills to better your community and provide care for the people you love the most. It goes hand in hand with how you grow as a person and how your friendships build you. A person without a community is indeed a lonely person.

Honesty is the glue that holds communities, families, and friendships together. It is important to stress that honesty should be done with kindness and respect. If an honest opinion harms another person, it must not be voiced. If an opinion is harmful but necessary to help a person save face, it should be done with kindness and respect for the other person's emotions. Honesty, done in kindness, builds trust and rapport among peers and family.

Loyalty goes hand in hand with honesty. To remain loyal to your friends and family, you must be honest with them and share with them in the community. Loyalty is not about sacrificing your values for another but instead sacrificing yourself for the better of others. A Loyal friend is not someone who can be walked on but fully respects and trusts you based on the respect and rapport the two of you built. It is the person who is your ride or die. You can trust that they have your best interest and will always protect you, even at the risk of their own

life. Based on these values, being a social worker and an investigator are two jobs that pop up again to meet my values.

Spiritual Discernment Decision-Making Factors Survey

The decision-making factors described by Horton's (2009) article fundamental to me when making decisions are as follows:

- Depending on a sense of inner peace from the Holy Spirit. I often lean on the Holy Spirit for peace when I am conflicted and struggling with anxiety.
- Praying for wisdom to make godly decisions. I always want God to know that I respect his plan and want to obey his commands for my life wholeheartedly.
- Praying for specific guidance or answers from God. Again, I want God to help guide my life.
- Consulting with wise counsel. I respect the elder's advice to help guide my plans.
- Recognizing and responding to the needs of others. We are commanded to help and meet people's needs, just as Jesus did for us.
- Judging the consistency of the decision with Jesus's character/ethics. I want to live and walk as Jesus did. I want every decision to reflect the mindset Jesus laid out for us to follow.

Based on these factors, I am most likely to follow the Bullseye approach to spiritual discernment, as described by Horton. This approach teaches, “While

God may permit Christians to stray from the "perfect" plan for their lives, they are not able to stray beyond the so-called "permissive" will of God. The goal, however, is for Christians to hit the bull's-eye of God's will or plan for their lives by making the right decisions that are gradually revealed to them by God. To determine the "right" choice between seemingly good options, these Christians pray for specific guidance or answers from God” (Horton, 2009, p.8). I have always believed that no matter what, I was created to follow and obey God’s will in my life. His will for me was good, and He only ever desired the best for me. It goes back to what I said about loyalty. I have built respect and rapport with God, so I trust He has good intentions for my life.

Personal Reactions

As I stated above, I was initially surprised by the social interests and types on my O*NET Profile. However, as I read more, I began to understand the perception. According to Holland's theory, I do not entirely agree with the definition of the artistic type. As Niles and Bowlsy state: “Artistic people have an aversion to explicit systematic and ordered activities” (61). I can see where this is true, as I often desire freedom in my creative process; however, I disagree that we have an aversion. I usually enjoy having a structure in my freedom. I sometimes prefer to follow the rules and order of a particular skill to learn it. For example, the ordered activity of lessons to learn piano or the systematic writing style of a specific genre.

Regarding my spiritual discernment, my faith was a personal journey I took. Most of my faith values contributed to how I met Jesus when I was six. I had to trust Him to acknowledge that He was my savior entirely. Although my mom's guidance in my young faith helped me build a foundation, most of my faith journey and values were built on my study of His word and the words I heard from my pastors over the years. I came to Christ in a vulnerable place, and since that day, I have never been able to shake the desire to have Him as the master of my life forever.

Evaluation of Instruments

After taking the surveys from O*NET, Horton, and Niles & Bowsbey, I found that the reading level needed more advanced for understanding. The assessments were from a reliable peer-reviewed source. The test questions were generic to any gender, and only it was culturally fair for my American Christian culture. As for other cultures, some of the questions asked might conflict with specific cultural values and beliefs. I know that my disability and my age may have played a factor in my answers. I may change many of my answers since I still have time to mature. I also have a disability that affects my executive functioning, and memories might have influenced some of my answers to this.

Conceptualization

My results aligned well after taking the O* NET and the value test. My desire for community and creativity aligns with the concepts behind the artistic and social personality types. An investigator career that aligns with my values would align with my investigative personality. The jobs offered by the O* NET

aligned with my values and piqued my interest. As far as the Horton spirituality discernment test, it did not apply to the career world, but it gave me an awareness of how my faith played an essential role in my life.

Of my three Holland scores, the Artistic type rose above the others. The difference between the three was a 6-point difference between artistic and social, while investigative was a ten-point difference and a five-point difference from social. In summary, I am more creative than social and more social than investigative. Similar traits connect the three and provide consistency: curiosity, openness, complexity, idealist, tactfulness, and social ability (Niles & Bowsbey, 2022, pp. 61-62).

A job that fits all three Holland codes would be the Music therapy career. It was the one that fascinated me the most. I studied how music affects the brain while pursuing my bachelor's. It meets my artistic side, as I love music and fully believe in its ability to heal trauma. It is a social job as it requires me to use my skills and talents to help others, and it satisfies my investigative personality as I continue to study Neuromusicology and apply it to my work.

My spiritual discernment led me to this point. Because of God's calling, I am studying school counseling and leaning toward music therapy. I have always believed that my gifts and talents would be used for God's glory to help others come to Him. I have always thought that God would help me find a way to use my gifts for His good.

Currently, I am working as a teacher for a Cooperative while trying to get my own business of teaching creative writing off the ground, and I am enjoying it a lot. I love teaching, and I am free to choose what I am to prepare for the semester, so I often teach subjects that I love. I find fulfillment in this job because it meets all my values and Holland's personality traits. I get the freedom to choose what I want to teach. I get creative and explore different topics while guiding students in growing their knowledge base. Based on these results and reviews, I recommend continuing to pursue my dream and increasing my knowledge daily.

Part II: Occupational Exploration

Career Field and Occupation of Choice Introduction

Unless otherwise cited, the career information presented in this paper was obtained from O*NET On-Line (National Center for O*NET Development, 2024). The Career I chose based on my three Holland Codes is Music Therapist (29-1129.02).

The Nature of the Work

According to the O*NET My Next Move Website, some skills required for being a music therapist are “social perceptiveness, active listening, and critical thinking” (Music Therapists at My Next Move, n.d.). Some of my duties would be to “design or provide music therapy experiences to address client needs, such as using music for self-care, adjusting to life changes, improving cognitive functioning, raising self-esteem, communicating, or controlling impulses. Also, designing music therapy experiences,

using various musical elements to meet client's goals or objectives” (*Music Therapists at My Next Move*, n.d.). Some activities I would be responsible for would be “Treating patients using psychological therapies and developing treatment plans that use non-medical therapies” (*Music Therapists at My Next Move*, n.d.). A typical workday might include doing duties such as “developing, designing, or creating new applications, ideas, relationships, systems, or products, including artistic contributions and providing personal assistance, medical attention, emotional support, or other personal care to coworkers, customers, or patients, also developing constructive and cooperative working relationships with others, and maintaining them over time” (*Music Therapists at My Next Move*, n.d.).

Working Conditions

The work environment usually involves working with others unless you have an office. With certification, you can practice music therapy without supervision. As a music therapist, I will work with different populations (age, socio-economic level, presenting issues). The psychological aspects of the work setting would be mild stress with paperwork and administration aspects of the job. Also, the emotional toll of providing therapy for patients could be a stress factor. As a therapist, I would have to find a release so as not to get burnt out. The vital part of working in therapy is not allowing the trauma to follow you back home.

Preparation and Qualifications

Most of the jobs of a music therapist require a four-year bachelor's degree. You must also get a certification to claim to be a music therapist. As a counselor, you are still allowed to use the techniques for music in therapy without accreditation. You do not need a license in Alabama to become a music therapist, but this field offers college pre and post-secondary educational programs. As I mentioned, one must have skills such as listening to others, not interrupting, asking good questions, and reading work-related information to become a music therapist. Also, a music therapist should have experience in music, dance, visual arts, drama, sculpture, therapy, and counseling. Some of the personal traits of a music therapist are concern for others, self-control, integrity, adaptability/flexibility, dependability, and cooperation.

Opportunities and Future Outlook

Alabama had 220 employees as of 2020, and its projected growth to 240 by 2030 is 9%(Long-Term Occupational Projections | Projections Central, n.d.). There are 3,200 projected job offerings for this job between 2022 and 2032. (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2019). As for the potential of gaining a job when done, the Occupational Handbook states, "Demand for recreational therapists is expected to increase in some industries. For example, psychiatric facilities use recreational therapy as a critical component of treatment for people struggling with mental illness or addiction. Recreational therapists will be needed to help these patients regain their physical and mental health and support their recovery" (*Recreational Therapists: Occupational Outlook Handbook: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics*, n.d.). (In the Handbook, Music therapists are called Recreational therapists).

Economic and Non-Economic Benefits

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics data, the average wage therapists earn in Alabama is 67,640 annually, equal to about 32/hour. When looking at a job in music therapy in Virginia, the benefits were listed: Challenging and rewarding work environment, competitive compensation & generous paid time off, Excellent Medical, Dental, Vision and Prescription Drug Plan, 401(K) with company match and discounted stock plan, SoFi Student Loan Refinancing Program, Career development opportunities within UHS and its 300+ Subsidiaries, Retention Bonus Program (if applicable), and Loan Forgiveness Program (if applicable) (*Job Finder | Jobs | CareerOneStop*, n.d.). Not only that but there is also a psychological reward in seeing the successful treatment of clients with music therapy. Also, I have personal pleasure in teaching and guiding others in music.

Disadvantages and Special Situations

In this career, irregular work hours or caseloads will likely be brought home. Lesson planning and personal study will be part of these indirect work hours and will cause added stress for the employee.

Reflection

I was first attracted to music therapy because I was fascinated with neuromusicology. My love for and appreciation for music theory made me desire to share it with others. I was surprised that they offer programs and degrees in this subject, for I thought it was simply a certification. I see how this job meets all my values and interests. I can continue to satisfy my curiosity and creativity while using my knowledge to help clients heal from trauma.

My desire has always been to help others learn ways to process and possibly heal from the trauma they have experienced in the past. I wanted to know how to help people find healthy processing techniques to succeed in other parts of their lives. I had seen the story of lost people too many times to count and wanted to change the narrative. In this way, the music therapist career meets my desire for this dream to become a reality.

The advantage of using these resources in the future is helping people recognize factors about themselves that they may not have been aware of before. The limitation is that even when a person has a recognized talent or gift for a specific career, it does not always mean the job will be ideal for pursuing due to their current circumstances or their cultural values conflict.

Part III: Practical Application

*A 19 y.o. Asian-American clients come to you for counseling at the university's career counseling center. She has been worried about choosing a major and complains about struggling with sleep problems, headaches, and low energy. She has been getting average grades in her Engineering courses and fears she is a disappointment to her parents. She does not want her parents to know she is seeing you, as this may be another disappointment. She has completed the Interest Profiler, which revealed a Holland type of SCI. She indicated a search on O*NET that pointed her toward becoming a registered nurse; however, her parents are urging her to continue pursuing an engineering degree. She struggles to choose a major because "I am afraid that it may not be God's will." In addition to the cultural differences between you and the client, you notice from the start that she has a different Spiritual Discernment decision-making style than you.*

As a counselor attending to my client's career concerns, my position could influence how I address this client's problems. Since we have differing views, I must remember to separate my personal opinions from the situation and recognize the cultural differences. Therefore, I do not allow my influence as an authority figure to affect my

ethical and respectful behavior toward my clients, as stated in ASCA's Ethical Standards. "Provide students with a culturally responsive school counseling program that promotes academic, career, and social/emotional development and equitable opportunity and achievement outcomes for all students. (2022 ASCA Ethical Standards for School Counselors, Code A.3.a.). Also, as a counselor, I must remember my role for my client as stated in the NCDA Standard: "The primary responsibility of career development professionals is to respect the dignity and promote the welfare of the individuals to whom they provide service. This primary responsibility would include growing in cultural competence to effectively and respectfully serve those who seek career services." (2024 NCDA Code of Ethics Purpose, Code A.1.a).

According to the ACA Ethic Code A.4.b, "Counselors are aware of—and avoid imposing—their values, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors. Counselors respect the diversity of clients, trainees, and research participants and seek training in areas where they are at risk of imposing their values onto clients, especially when the counselor's values are inconsistent with the client's goals or discriminatory" (ACA 2014 Code of Ethics, 2014). With that in mind, I would probably use a strategy to ensure I do not impose my values on others by doing an objective interview. I will use the feedback from the client, a peer, and a supervisor to objectively view my work as a counselor. I will also continue my study of cultural beliefs and spiritual values. I can use the strategy of checking in with my client. My client is the only one who can let me know if they are experiencing a divide between us based on differences in opinion. Using their views of how I am treating them will keep me in check and guide me in becoming a better counselor. I will make sure it is more of a survey or interview style of checking

in and that I don't try to seek validation but rather critical feedback. I might have to first reassure my clients of no adverse reaction to the response of feedback to provide them an opportunity to be honest with me.

In the current case, I would build on my rapport with my clients and use strategies to help them gain clarity. I would support this client by first helping her create better expectations by offering interventions such as helping her assess the risks and rewards of the careers she is considering. She doubts how her parents would handle her switching careers, so a second technique we could do is role play. Either we could do a role reversal where I will be her, and she plays the role of her parents so that she could adequately understand her parents, or we could use the empty chair dialogue technique.

According to the article *Practical Counseling and Helping Skills*, The empty chair dialogue technique is described as a "practical intervention involves the client engaging in an imaginary conversation with another person; it helps "clients experience feelings both of unresolved anger and also of weakness and victimization" (Nelson-Jones, 2014, p. 347). It might also be helpful if I put my client in a group with similar concerns or issues. She may be able to find someone with common ground, and can help her find a solution that I might not be able to. Also, people of her culture and spiritual discernment might be able to provide a better perspective for my client than I can offer.

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