

Bringing Life to the Career Assessment Process

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Career Assessment

- My background with assessment

Three ways of understanding a person:

- What you can do, what you think you can or will do, and what you will do
- Performance with structure, self-report, performance with differing levels of ambiguity

Career Assessment

Today's Agenda:

- Understanding career theory/intervention history
- Link between psychology/counseling and career
- The postmodern approach
- Career Assessment history
- Narrative Career Assessment

Career Theory/Intervention History

- Difference between clinical and counseling psychology
- Vocation versus work
- Career theory and psychological theory; we are positioned well for career intervention work

Main Career Theories

- **Holland's Theory of Vocational Personalities** - How individuals and work environments interact; basic of Strong Interest Inventory



Main Career Theories

- **Super's Developmental Theory** - Growing and changing ways that individual deals with career issues over their entire life span (developmental stage theory)

Vocational Developmental Stages

- Growth (birth to 14-15)
- Exploratory (ages 15-24)
- Establishment (ages 25-44)
- Maintenance (ages 45-64)
- Decline (ages 65+)

Main Career Theories

- **Krumboltz's Learning Theory** - learning takes place through observation (social learning theory)
- **Trait and Factor Theory (Parsons)** - career choice involved knowledge of self and occupations and looking for a fit between the two
- **Work Adjustment Theory (Dawis & Lofquist)** - work personality and environment need to be compatible; your needs and the reinforcement system of the work environment need to be compatible (behavioral)

Main Career Theories

Problem with the above theories?

- **Meaning** - I'm an existential-oriented therapist, and thus there is a richness that does not fully exist in the above theories, much similar to psychological theory
- Match-making, adjustment, stage oriented

Psychological Theories

Where does pathology come from?

- **Psychoanalysis** - pathology comes from lack of insight into unconscious drive states and inability to regulate drives (too driven by superego or too driven by the Id)
- **Behaviorism** - you learned problematic behaviors either through classical conditioning or reinforcement/punishment (operant)
- **Cognitive** - You've developed maladaptive schemas that reflect problematic belief systems and distort incoming information

Psychological Theories

Where does pathology come from?

- **Systems/Attachment** - Pathology comes from your earliest relationship; insecure attachment styles and maladaptive systems that reinforce problematic coping skills
- **Existential** - Pathology comes from failure to acknowledge our freedom (i.e., dysfunctional identification with destiny or limits; e.g., depression, OCD, anxiety) or failure to acknowledge our limits (i.e., dysfunctional identification with our possibilities; e.g., narcissism, impulsivity, psychopathy)

Psychological Theories

Postmodern Problems with These Theories

- Rejects the idea that we can understand human beings universally
- Context is important/every person is different (back to some existential roots here)
- We all have intersecting identities that greatly inform who we are (e.g., family system, race, ethnicity, religious background, gender identity, sexual identity)

Psychological Theories

Postmodern Anthropology

- Language constitutes reality
- Language is not just a reflection of a person's deepest, structural feelings
- Language is socially constructed and representative of the meaning we assign to our experiences

Psychological Theories

Postmodern Anthropology

- To understand the person, we must understand the meaning they are giving to events
- There is not an inherent meaning to be discovered in all persons
- Meaning comes from a person's interpretations (think cognitions here)

Psychological Theories

Postmodern Anthropology

Bottom line: no need to dig deep to understand people because there is no inherent structure to understand

- Moving away from content and toward context and process.
- Moving away from symptom reduction and toward quality of life.
- Moving away from didactic therapy and toward experiential treatment.

Psychological Theories

Postmodern Anthropology

- **Why?** Have to understand the anthropology of perpetual happiness
- By their nature humans are psychologically healthy
- Distress is a disease or syndrome driven by unusual circumstances and pathological processes
- We need to avoid these circumstances and understand these processes so we can change them

Psychological Theories

Postmodern Anthropology

- Therapy is a partnership; believe in human agency
- Strengths based; don't care about earliest attachments and relational maps
- The problem is not internal – the problem is a problem of meaning and narration
- We want to hear the story a person tells about the situation

Intersection

Career decisions and postmodern theory

- Human agency
- Your story is pointing you in the direction you need to go
- Have to listen to it and organize it
- Problem is you are not listening to yourself

Career Assessment

Goals:

- Clarify for clients the influencing factors on their choice of careers
- Select an occupation or adjust to an occupation
- We are counselors first, and career is just a specialty area of focus.

Career Assessment

Two main areas:

- **Interests** – measures interests, values, needs, skills, abilities, and personality (although this is a broad term and not exactly accurate).
- **Career development process** – decision making, self-efficacy, career maturity

Career Assessment

Interest Measures:

- **Strong Interest Inventory** – probably the go to measure for standard career interest measurement; based on Holland’s six vocational personality types
- **Myers-Briggs** – because this focuses on “normal” personality instead of psychopathology, it’s particularly valuable as a career assessment tool; again though, this is not so much a personality assessment

Career Assessment

Personality Measures:

- **NEO-PI-3:** Measures 5 broad domains; describes strengths and weaknesses; provides a comprehensive/detailed assessment of “normal” adult personality

Narrative Career Assessment

- Developed by Mark Savickas, Ph.D.
- **Main goal** – we draw a life portrait that transforms little stories into a grand narrative that expresses identity and provides a superordinate view that comprehends the current transition and envisions future possibilities

Narrative Career Assessment

- Deploying past experiences to consider future choices
- We do this by reconstructing the client's micro narratives into a first draft of a macro narrative and then eventually co-construct with them a final version authorized by the client
- The questions prompt responses that are not isolated stories; rather, the responses relate to each other in a way that systematically positions them in a framework

Narrative Career Assessment

- Once practitioners apprehend a possible pattern and career theme in a client's occupational plot, they search to confirm or disconfirm the pattern by identifying related episodes in the stories narrated by the client
- Emphasize meaning making over match making

Narrative Career Assessment

Format

- Five elements of inquiry, each chosen as a gateway to stories on a particular topic
- The topics flow smoothly and keep clients actively engaged in self-reflection as they describe themselves to the practitioner
- The stimulus questions ask about: (1) role models, (2) magazines, (3) favorite books, (4) mottos, (5) early recollections

Narrative Career Assessment

Question #1: Role Models

- Ask the clients whom they admired when they were young
- This helps the client articulate their self-concept through embodying them in characters whom they have admired
- Whom did you admire when you were about 6 years old? (e.g., whom did you respect, model yourself after; we're thinking famous person or fictional character)

Narrative Career Assessment

Question #1: Role Models

- We want three models and for them to describe the person to us, what we they like
- Listen to hear specifically what a client admires about the model
- It is these characteristics that the client has incorporated into his or her blueprint for self-construction
- It is not whom the client admires but what the client admires

Narrative Career Assessment

Question #1: Role Models

- If the client identifies a parent as a role model, we do not count the parent as one of the three; we want them to talk about someone other than their parents to ensure that the role model was a choice

Narrative Career Assessment

Question #2: Magazines, TV Shows, Podcasts

- This addresses vocational interests
- In career construction theory, interest denotes a psychosocial tensional state between an individual's needs and social opportunities to attain goals that satisfy those needs
- We are concentrating on those occupational settings in which the client believes they may pursue their purpose and fulfill their values

Narrative Career Assessment

Question #2: Magazines, TV Shows, Podcasts

- We are looking for an assessment of expressed interests; what they want to do in the future
- Best way to do this; assess inclinations made evident by a person's behaviors
- Performance versus self-report idea

Narrative Career Assessment

Question #2: Magazines, TV Shows, Podcasts

- Name favorite magazines, TV shows, podcasts
- People read a magazine or listen to a podcast to inhabit the world between its covers; what attracts the client to the magazine, or podcast

Narrative Career Assessment

Question #3: Favorite Story

- This question deals with enacting the self in the preferred work environment by performing a script
- This topic addresses life scripts
- This is the connection between the self and setting; it involves the public working out of personal possibilities
- Name your favorite story or stories

Narrative Career Assessment

Question #3: Favorite Story

- Which story or stories shape the client's life; after hearing the story, we ask them to tell the story
- We want the client to hear the story in their own words; we are listening for how the script unites the self and their preferred setting
- The client's favorite story typically portrays clearly a central life problem and how they think they might be able to deal with it

Narrative Career Assessment

Question #4: Motto

- Addresses the client's advice to themselves
- State your favorite saying; Repeat something they remember hearing or create something new if they can't recall one
- What they compose in the moment will draw out their own intuitive understanding of how to move forward
- Their motto will succinctly state their intuitive strategy for beginning to move to the next episode in their occupational plot

Narrative Career Assessment

Question #5: Earliest Recollections

- This is the most personal question and we ask it last
- Here, we are seeking to learn about the client's convictions about life by considering scenes which encapsulate their life stories
- These scenes are in the form of their earliest recollections
- This presents to the practitioner a client's perspective on life

Narrative Career Assessment

Question #5: Earliest Recollections

- We can view these early recollections as metaphors and parables that hold a person's central occupation
- Typically ask for three early recollections because clients often explore their preoccupations and problems in several stories
- For each recollection, we ask the clients to describe the setting, action, and results
- May also ask them to name the feelings they experienced when the action occurred

Narrative Career Assessment

Question #5: Earliest Recollections

- Often results in the clients reporting a feeling that they experience frequently or even the emotion that dominates their lives
- Having heard the three early recollections narrated by the client, we then ask them to review each story and give it a headline that captures its essence

Narrative Career Assessment

Summary

- Practitioners should give the best possible account of a client's life at that particular time
- We help them raise the dignity and significance of the life
- Compose the narrative in ways that opens possibilities
- Animate themes that extend the occupational plot; highlight thematic patterning by emphasizing the unifying argument or salient idea reflected in seemingly disparate events

Narrative Career Assessment

Summary

- Emphasize artistic and empirical inferences over interpretations; we are not interpreting symbols or making psychodynamic formulations; (e.g., finding beauty in a painting)
- It is better to emphasize the context for choices, not an explanation of a choice
- We listen for a story, not to a story

Narrative Career Assessment

Topic #1: Preoccupation - Search for the main idea by identifying the preoccupation or problem repeatedly faced

Topic #2: Self - Follow the preoccupation by describing how the client has built a self to manage the preoccupation

Topic #3: Setting - This section explains the social niche and preferred environment in which the client wishes to situate the self

Topic #4: Script - This unites the self and setting by recounting the script

Narrative Career Assessment

Topic #5: Advice - Explains to the client that they sought counseling at the end of an act; This is the deeper meaning of the favorite saying; it is the direction that the self-as-author gives to the self-as-actor

Topic #6: Future Scenario - restates the client's reason for seeking consultation and then relates the reason to the other sections of the life portrait; aim is to demystify the client's presenting problem by offering a plausible understanding of it