

Benchmark: Career Self-Assessment and Exploration

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Abstract

This project was created to teach me what my future may look like as a career counselor. It taught me how complex the online survey processes can be. It also taught me how to not only operate an online counseling survey, but also how to provide it for my future clients. The project also proved me with a new learning experience. Until I did this project, I had no knowledge of occupational exploration. I learned a great deal about it, and I feel confident that I will be able to help my future clients go through the process as well.



Career Self-Assessment

I began my Career Self-Assessment journey by using a government counseling website called O*Net. This website offers evaluations that help people find potential jobs that they might be interested in pursuing. This evaluation or test gives you a score that helps you find a particular job. I got a O*Net score of twenty-three. Your score helps to narrow down jobs that you may like. O*net also takes your score and couples it with John Holland's personality types. Niles and Harris-bowlsbey (2021) talk about John Holland's personality types. John Holland came up with a system that describes a person's personality and compares it to jobs that that person may or may not enjoy. He starts by creating six personality types and six environments (job areas) a person may like. The six personality types are *realistic, investigative, artistic, social, enterprising, and conventional*. Of these six I identify with three of them. The first is the social type. Niles and Harris-bowlsbey (2022) describe the kind of job a social type of person may have. They describe them as teachers, religious workers, and even counselors. They go on to describe the characteristics of a social person. They are social, cooperative, kind, sympathetic, friendly, and patient. I have been described by other people in this way. I have a high patient tolerance and I also have a heart for helping others in need. That is why my current job is working in a school designed specifically for children and adults who have severe medical and mental needs. My O*net score of twenty-three says that people with this score tend to have a heart for others, based on my Holland personality type I truly believe that the social personality type describes me the best. The second personality type I can identify with is the investigative type. Niles and Harris-bowlsbey (2021) describe the investigative type as an occupation in which a person may like to observe things and record things in detail. They offer up jobs such as biologists, chemists, physicists, and geologists. They also describe the characteristics of an

investigative person as independent, modest, and intellectual. I see some of these characteristics in myself. I also really enjoyed science when I was in school. I thought about becoming a biologist, but that was before I realized all the math involved. That is one area in which I am educationally weak. The third Holland personality type can I identify with is the artistic type. Niles and Harris-bowlsbey (2021) talk about the type of jobs artistic people like. They include music composers, singers, dancers, painters, and actors/actresses. Artistic types are also characterized as expressive, independent, and open. I find myself in this personality type because I enjoy art. One of my hobbies is that I like to draw and paint whenever I have free time to do so. After navigating the O*net website and reading through Hollands personality types, I found two occupations that I believe that I would enjoy. They are childcare workers and flight attendants.

In addition to the O*net website, I also worked through the *Value Sort Activity* and the *Spiritual Discernment Decision Making Factors Survey*. The value sort activity is a tool that helps guide people in finding what they value the most. The chart lists between seventy-five to one hundred different values that people may believe in. the object of the tool is to help the person narrow it down to just one core value. A person accomplishes this by going through a specific process. First, a person must find ten core values from the long list. Next, they must cross off five of the ten. Once they do that, they must cross off four more leaving them with only one core belief. A person should only cross off a value after giving it great consideration as to why it is important but not important enough to be the number one core value. Once a person has found their one deep core value, they are ready to use it on the O*net website. The O*net website takes the core value and puts it into a program that will help provide a type of job related to the person's value. This process was a major struggle for me. I had so many values it was very hard for me to pick just one! I had three core values that I struggled over. It was very hard for me to

choose just one to use for the O*net website. The three values I struggled with the most were honesty, purity, and religion. I believe that a person should strive to be honest in all that they do. We live in a world today that glorifies lying. No one is truthful with each other or even themselves. The culture tells us to do whatever you want if it brings you happiness. This includes lying to get what you want. I was raised differently. I come from a Christian background, and I was taught from a very early age that lying is a sin, so honesty is a core value that I hold dear to my heart. Purity is the second value that I had a hard time crossing off the list. Our culture thrives on sex. The phrase “sex sells” is a very common one in the business world today. As I Christian I believe that sex should never be flaunted or even talked about in public. I believe that sex is something that is done between one man and one woman under the boundaries of marriage. The culture tells Young people that purity is old and outdated. They should have fun and sleep around as much as you want. They say that sleeping around is ok as long as a girl doesn’t end up pregnant. This goes completely against the things I believe. I wanted to find a job that holds purity to a higher standard. The final core value I chose was religion. I realized that the other two values that I hold so dear, fall under my religion. As mentioned earlier, I am a Christian and my religious beliefs are very important to me. I wanted a job where I could share them with the people I work with. The top two jobs that appeared in my search were childcare worker and personal care aid. These jobs do reflect a major part of my religious belief which is to love God and to love others! Childcare and personal care aid are jobs that will give me the freedom to do just that.

Spiritual Discernment Decision-Making Factor Survey was a survey created by a man named Dennis Horton. Horton (2009) wrote this article from a biblical worldview. He created six spiritual discernments regarding God and how Christians find His will for their lives. Of the six

discernments I identify with the one Horton (2009) calls *Biblical Wisdom Emphasis*. The idea behind this discernment is that Christians who are looking for God's will in their lives need to do so by looking mainly at the Bible itself. Those who use this discernment believe that God will use the bible to reveal himself. Along with the bible, a person should also rely on their God-given talents and seek wise counsel from others. Those who believe this also believe that God does have a plan for our lives, but he does not have a specific detailed plan made up for us. Rather they believe that God has a plan for us but has given them a wide range of jobs that will still bring him honor and glory as long as the person is doing the job while seeking God. My life experiences have taught me that this is true for me. When I was younger, I thought God's will for my life was to be a missionary in another country. I had the mindset that this was the only thing God wanted for my life. I was wrong. I obeyed the calling that God put in my heart, and I went away and lived in another country with a missionary team. The experience was life-changing! I learned to draw closer to my God, but I also learned that I was not necessarily made to live a life as a "typical missionary". At the end of my journey abroad I came back home to the United States and did a lot of soul searching. I found that for me, God was pleased with my decision to go to the mission field but was also pleased with my returning home and starting a new career in the USA. Since then, God has given me a few different job opportunities and even a desire to become a school counselor. I believe that I am in the will of God because with every job decision I make I seek his wisdom first. Once God opens a new door for me, I walk through it in faith that he will protect and guide me.

Going through the process of learning how to use the O*net website and the Holland code descriptors, I have gained much insight into my life. I was very skeptical about the O*net website and the Holland code of descriptors. I have never been a big fan of tests, especially

personality tests. I felt like they would put me in a box or label me as something I'm not. I was surprised at how both O*net and the Holland code of descriptors described me with fair accuracy. My self-perception was that these tests were a waste of time and that they were fake. I used to believe that other people made them so that they could feel better about themselves. I have since then concluded that my line of thinking is wrong. Holland's social personality type truly describes me. I love to work with and help people. I didn't think that a test could tell me what I already know but I was wrong. I was also surprised by my O*net results. It was ironic to see that the jobs that were offered to me were and are still jobs that I am doing currently! I do believe that my past experiences and my religious background played a great role in my answers to both of those tests. I did not always have a love for people as I do now. God took me through a deep journey to change how I view him and the world around me. It started in high school. I was an angry kid and feared others and was not very social. It wasn't until I met my best friend Jona Torres that my personality started to change. Jona showed me that there is some good in all people. He was always helping me find the answers to my problems. He did this by pointing me to God and the bible. His friendship has helped to influence how I approach spiritual discernment.

The instruments used (O*Net Interest profiler and Holland's personality types) to create future jobs have taught me a lot about how I view occupational counseling. It has taught me that there is a lot of science, planning, and research involved in making programs such as these. They must consider the facts of race, age, gender, and people with disabilities when creating these programs. I know for me my race, age, and gender influenced my test results. I am a Latino male in my late twenties. History has proven that Latinos get lower-paying jobs than those of their white counterparts. I am also still young and can use technology fairly well. My older family

members could not have taken any of these tests or surveys. They struggle with using modern technology such as computers. Those who create these tests have to consider all of these things when applying them to counseling.

I am working toward becoming an educational counselor and this exploration has helped to prepare me for some of the things I will face shortly. O*Net and Holland go hand in hand. They can both be equal and somehow opposites at the same time. They balance each other out. Holland helps you find your deepest most important core value and O*net then takes that value and provides you with a job. I found this to be true while I worked through these instruments (O*Net and Holland's personality types). The three personality types by Holland helped me to find an occupation I may like on O*net. The best work environment fit for me from my Holland scores is a job in which I get to help serve other people. As a Christian and a future school counselor, I would approach the use of O*Net and Holland in a different way. If I am working with Christian students, I would start by using Horton's spiritual discernment decision-making factors survey. Horton (2009) makes valid points on how a student may find his or her way to finding out God's will for their lives. Next, I would try and find a way to simplify the tests given on O*net. I am fairly smart and well educated and it took me a very long time to fully understand the O*net system. When I become a school counselor, I will use the system, but I hope to find one that is more user-friendly for a younger generation. Overall, I enjoyed this experience and hope to use it to help my future students find their way in their time of need.

Occupational Exploration

Using the results from my O*Net scores, I have found an occupation that I would like to explore further. That occupation is a *Personal Care Aide*. This occupation speaks to me because it has many of the values that I look for in a job. It also may provide me with another way to give back

to the people. Unless otherwise cited, the career information presented in this paper was obtained from O*NET On-Line (National Center for O*NET Development, 20XX). The O*NET SOC Code for this occupation is 31-1122.00. I have chosen to explore personal care aid because of my three Holland types. My three Holland types are social, investigative, and artistic. Personal care aids seem to have a blend of all three types. This is why I believe this job would be great for me.

O*NET has shown me that this career has so much to offer. It describes the job as providing personalized assistance to individuals with disabilities or illnesses who require help with personal care and activities of daily living. The nature of the work for a personal care aide is both hard yet also rewarding. Duties for this job may change from day to day depending on the client (the person who is receiving the aide). This includes but is not limited to preparing a person's meal, cleaning a client's house, and doing their laundry. Some skills a personal care aide must have to do the job successfully are being able to listen to their clients, communicate with them through speaking, and being on the lookout for problems from the client. Just like the duties of the job change from day to day, so do the activities. Many activities will be done while working with a client. They include but are not limited to toileting (changing a client's diaper), bathing, dressing, and feeding. Because of the nature of this job, there is no such thing as a "typical workday". Each day presents itself with something new and exciting. This is another reason I find myself drawn to this type of job. I find myself getting bored easily and often but with this everchanging job, I don't think boredom will be an issue.

A personal care aide (also known as a PCA) often gets to experience wonderful working conditions. They get to work in an environment that is often changing. They do this by going to the different homes of their clients. They get to work many flexible hours. This is appealing to many people especially those who are parents of a newborn child. The father or mother can work

with a client in the morning and be home in the afternoon to help take care of their child. The opposite is also true. If a PCA has a client that only needs help at night, then they can spend the whole day with their newborn. This type of job also provides good experiences for both introverts and extroverts. Those who are introverts often do not like to talk or work with a lot of people. This job is great for them. Once they get over their fear of their new client then they have a new friend. Working with the same client for an extended time helps them build a therapeutic relationship. The opposite is also true. Extroverts are people who get energy and thrive off of being with other people. They also may enjoy this type of job. An extrovert who becomes a PCA may have many clients. This allows for them to continue to meet new people and grow from the positive experience. I find myself in the middle of the spectrum. I am not super introverted to the point where I want to be alone all the time, but I am not one to go out and join huge groups of people. This aspect piques my interest because I can meet new people but not too many people at once. In addition to working with others, this job also provides its employees with a good balance of supervision. Many jobs tend to have either too much or too little supervision. You either have a helicopter boss who is always around you judging and nitpicking at your work, or you tend to have a boss who you never see and doesn't care what you do. This job gives you a boss who provides good supervision yet is not overbearing on you. Another perk of working as a personal care aide is that you will get to meet a diverse population of people groups. You will work not only the wealthy but also the poor. You will work with people from all socio-economic levels. This may bring some challenges. People from low-income housing often have to deal with violence in their neighborhoods. This may lead to higher stress levels and increased crises. Being a caregiver to someone in these conditions will be a challenge but it will push me to be a

stronger and more compassionate person in the end. Knowing that I was able to help someone during a hard season of life is a great reward for me.

Like all jobs, personal care aides require preparations and qualifications. This includes education, personal people skills, and life experiences. According to O*Net the minimal level of education needed for this job is a high school diploma or a GED. This provides a wonderful job for a wide range of people. Higher education is not for everyone, and some people do not have the resources to go to college. Many people who go into the workforce after high school often build a repertoire of positive life experiences and personal traits. Being able to use such skills in this type of work is a positive thing.

The profession of a professional care aide provides much opposition for one's future. One positive is the size of the workplace environment. For those people like me, who do not like to work in big offices with lots of people, find this to be enjoyable. When I look for a potential job, I look at the size of the company to see if I would fit well in that situation. Another future opportunity would be for travel. I enjoy seeing new places, so this job provides that. If I end up having multiple clients, then I will end up traveling to multiple locations. Traveling also includes going from state to state. Personal care aide positions can easily transfer from one state to the next. This is very helpful if you are in this career and decide to move to a new state. One final future benefit of this career is job security. Every state across the United States has a large group of people who need assisted living. This means that there will always be a need for this type of job.

Every job has its ups and its downs, being a PCA is no different. Choosing a career as a personal care aide has both positive benefits and some disadvantage as well. The positive benefits include financial stability and non-economic benefits. According to O*NET the average salary of

a PCA is roughly twenty-five thousand dollars a year. This may not seem like a lot but since the worldwide pandemic of COVID -19 in 2020 the world market has taken a hit. Twenty-five grand is a lot of money in today's economy. Another positive of working as a CPA is the personal and psychological rewards of helping others. I know that for me I love to help other people. In a life experience, I had someone help me during a very hard time in my life and since then I have been trying to pay it forward by helping others. Some of the negatives or disadvantages of working as a PCA include irregular work hours, nighttime work, and unforeseen hazardous situations. Overall, I believe there are more positives to working as a PCA than negatives.

As I finished working through the O*NET system I found myself reflecting on all the great lessons I have learned during this journey. I have learned so much more about myself by going through the process. I learned that I truly have a deep desire to help those around me and have been given an outlet to do so. The occupational characteristics and requirements of being a Personal Care Aide have fit with my current career goals. I am studying to become a school counselor and the characteristics of a PCA are ones that can be applied to my future line of work. I must have the skills to be patient and willing to truly listen to my clients (students). I also have to be able to notice when there is a problem accruing in the life of my students. There are advantages and limitations to using these resources in my future. The advantage will be that I now have these wonderful resources at hand. I will be able to use them to help my future students find jobs in areas of life that they will enjoy. The only drawback I see would be to use the specific sources of becoming a personal care aide. I know many people who do not have a heart or motives to help others. If I try to make a do something they are against I will be doing them more harm than good. Overall, I found this experience to be a positive one that will help me be a better educational counselor.

Practical Application

I have been given the following case scenario to show how I would respond as a future counselor:

*An Asian-American client comes 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 yet another disappointment to them. She has completed the Interest Profiler which revealed a Holland type of SCI. She indicated a search on O*NET pointed her toward becoming a registered nurse; however, her parents are urging her to continue pursuing an Engineering degree. She states she is also struggling 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, it is evident that she has a different Spiritual Discernment decision-making style than you.*

The first thing I would do in this situation is to pray. Pray in the privacy of my office by myself. I would ask God for his wisdom to help me with this situation and how to best help this student. I know that my position and life experiences may influence how I help this girl. I also know a little bit about wanting to please my parents and God, but I cannot let them dictate how I will counsel my client. The next thing I would do would be to listen to her story. I want to make sure that intently listened to everything she had to tell me and that I do not interrupt her. Once I feel confident that she has told me all that she wants and needs to, then I will begin to walk her through the session.

I will explain to my client her rights to the counseling session. I will inform her of the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) and her rights to confidentiality. I will explain to her that everything she tells me stays between us to an extent. I will explain to her that I am legally obligated to give her information to the court system should she find herself in legal trouble with the law. I would also explain that if she is over the age of twenty-one then I do not have to tell her parents anything because she is a legal adult, but I would highly encourage her to do so. Once I have established a good therapeutic relationship and have adequately informed my client of her rights, I would start an in-depth conversation about her current situation.

I would start with my client's changing patterns. She said she has been getting headaches, is not sleepy, and has low energy. These are signs related to stress, but they may also be related to something medical. I would suggest she see a family doctor about those symptoms. Putting the physical symptoms aside for a moment I would begin to talk to her about her Holland scores, her O*NET tests, and her belief in God's will for her life.

Her Holland type says she is an SCI. This means she identifies with three of the six Holland types, they are social, conventional, and investigative. These combinations suggest that she has a heart for helping people and that she does well with math and science calculations. This is probably why her O*NET provided her with a job as a registered nurse. I think that my client should make the switch in her major and pursue becoming a nurse. I know that I cannot tell my client this because it would be unethical for me to do so. I would walk my client through the National Career Development Association (NCDA). I would explain to her that under the NCDA it is unethical and harmful for me to place my values on her. This does not mean that I cannot help her, but rather work with her to find the values she believes in. this includes her cultural beliefs and her spiritual ones as well. She has expressed that she has a different spiritual

discernment decision-making style than my own. This is not a bad thing, but it is something that must be discussed during our sessions together. Once my client explains to me the spiritual discernment decision-making style that she believes in, then we can move forward with a plan to help her. I will do my best to meet her where she is and help her through this difficult time in her life, I will do this by getting her to understand her own beliefs and values and to use them to build a stronger life for herself.

Once the first session with my client has ended, I would kindly suggest she continue to see me. In our next session, I would work through several different counseling strategies with her. The first of which would be an additional assessment. I hope that my client has taken my recommendation on seeing her family physician for her headaches, low energy, and sleeping problems. I would want to reassess the situation based on the information provided by her doctor.

The second strategy I would want to work on would be culturally responsive techniques. During the time between the first and second sessions with my client, I would re-familiarize myself with American Counseling Association (ACA). The ACA section A.2.C talks about a counselor's duty to develop a sensitivity to other people's cultures. I believe this would be appropriate since my client comes from a different culture than my own.

The third and final strategy I would work on would with my client would be the use of technology and information resources. The American Association of Christian Counseling (AACC) E.S2-200 defines a counselor's job regarding the use of technology and information. It states that it is the counselor's job to help his or her clients have access to modern and updated services. I would personally want to make sure my client (student) is continuing to grow her expand her knowledge in the field of mental health.

I hope that by the time our sessions come to an end, my student client will be able to learn more about her values and God's will for her life. I also hope that I will be able to guide her as she makes her decision-making process.

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