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ABSTRACT

The Self-Directed Search is a self-administered, self-scored instrument constructed to enable persons to assess their resemblance to each of 6 occupational types (realistic, investigative, artistic, social, enterprising, and conventional) thereby aiding them in achieving greater vocational success and satisfaction. The purpose of this study was to determine if the results of the SDS vary according to the level of education attained by the parents of those completing the instrument. The sample students were divided into a high and low group. The high group students had fathers who had at least a college education, and the low group students had fathers with less than a high school education. Results indicate that students from both high and low groups aspire to similar occupations, but that low group students generally choose occupations requiring less education. This indicates that social class tends to perpetuate itself. The writers conclude that the SDS does include a measure of socioeconomic level, and the implications of using the SDS without the aid of a counselor could be great. (Author/HS)

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SOCIOECONOMIC LEVEL DIFFERENCES ON HOLLAND'S SELF-DIRECTED SEARCH (SDS)

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Research Report # 1-72

Abstract

The purpose of the study was to determine if the results of the Self-Directed Search (SDS) vary according to the level of education attained by the parents of those completing the instrument. A stratified random sample of entering freshmen completing the SDS in the summer of 1970 was chosen to represent a group whose fathers had at least an undergraduate college degree (High group) and a group whose fathers had less than a high school education (Low group). Analyses were done using χ^2 and t at the .05 level. Results indicated that the High and Low groups aspired (dream code) to similar occupations, but that there was a significant discrepancy between dream and summary codes for the Low group. The Low group obtained more Conventional and fewer Artistic summary codes compared to dream codes, and chose summary codes requiring less education than did the High group.

The writers conclude that the SDS does include a measure of socioeconomic level and the implications of using the SDS without the aid of a counselor could be great.

The Self-Directed Search (SDS) is a self-administered, self-scored instrument constructed to enable persons to assess their resemblance to each of six occupational types (realistic, investigative, artistic, social, enterprising and conventional) thereby aiding them in achieving greater vocational success and satisfaction (Holland, 1971). The SDS is based on the theory of vocational choice developed by Holland (1959). According to his theory, the choice of an occupation is an expressive act which reflects the person's motivation, knowledge, personality and ability, and therefore interest inventories are personality inventories (Holland 1965, 1966).

The SDS consists of two booklets; the planning booklet and the classification booklet. The planning booklet asks each participant to list five "occupational daydreams," defined as occupations one has considered in thinking about his future (Holland, 1970). Using the classification booklet which lists broad occupational titles arranged and coded according to input from three personality types, the codes of the daydream occupations are copied in the planning booklet. The body of the planning booklet consists of five sections; activities, competencies, occupations, and two self-estimates. Two of these are in behavioral terms, one a motivational assessment (occupational attraction), and two are self-appraisal scales. Using the three highest letter ratings, representing the personality types, in each of the five sections, a final three letter summary code is obtained. Referring again to the classification booklet, the participant is asked to consider the occupations defined by his summary code, including an estimate provided of the number of years of education necessary to achieve these occupations.

Holland maintains that occupational daydreams should be confirmed by the results of the instrument, which he considers a crude check on the validity of the summary code (Holland, 1970).

The validity of the SDS is based on Holland's theory of personality types and on his assertion that the best way to ascertain what occupational choice a person will make is to ask him directly. Holland (1970) reported reliability coefficients (KR20) for individual scales of the SDS ranging from .53 to .87 for men and women. O'Connell and Sedlacek (1971) provided test-retest reliabilities of summary codes over a 7-10 month period for 65 college freshmen of .75 (Pearson), .92(Spearman Rho), and .87 (average common elements).

Kimball, Sedlacek and Brooks (1973) hypothesized that the SDS might be culturally biased toward blacks. They found that Realistic occupations, those not requiring a college education, did not occur any more frequently across races, but that blacks tended to obtain more Social codes than whites. Collins and Sedlacek (1971) found that college students satisfied with their summary codes received more Artistic and Investigative codes, while the dissatisfied group received more Conventional codes. Based on the structure of the SDS, it was hypothesized that educational and cultural backgrounds rather than vocational interests may be accounting for these outcomes.

The purpose of this study is to determine whether the results of the SDS vary according to the level of education attained by parents of those completing the instrument. Hodges (1964) states that social class distinctions are based on the fact that people live, eat, play, mate, dress, work and think at contrasting and dissimilar levels which are the product of occupational orientations, educational backgrounds, economic wherewithal and life experiences. Amount of income, source of income, housetype, dwelling area and education are the best measures of social status. Additionally, education and occupation are very highly related; the more education, the higher the earnings (Kahl, 1957). According to Rose (1951), education is perhaps not so important a

measure of socio-economic status as income, occupation and family background, but it certainly has the very important effect of being the major avenue of social mobility upward . It would indeed be unfortunate if an instrument designed to be used to compare dreams or aspirations with a summary code would serve to perpetuate socio-economic stratification by discouraging those of lower paternal educational levels from aspiring to and pursuing higher status positions. This is particularly crucial if the person completing the SDS does not see a counselor, which is Holland's intention in developing the SDS.

It was hypothesized that individuals with highly educated parents would: (1) have greater agreement between dream and summary codes, (2) have greater satisfaction with summary codes, (3) choose occupations requiring more education, (4) and choose more Artistic and fewer Realistic and Conventional occupations compared to those with less well educated parents.

Method

The subjects were 100 freshmen entering the University of Maryland, College Park, who took the SDS during the summer of 1970; 50 who indicated on the University Student Census[1] that their fathers had completed college, and 50 who indicated that their fathers had below a high school education. The group whose fathers had at least an undergraduate college education were designated the High group (males 25, females 25). The Low group (males 26, females 24) consisted of those students whose fathers had less than a high school education. Stratified random sampling was employed in assigning subjects to groups.

A three letter dream code was calculated by the same method as the summary code; i.e., by substituting the codes of the five daydream occupations for the five profiles of the planning booklet (Holland, 1970). The mean number of years

[1] The University Student Census is a biographical and attitude inventory given to all full time undergraduates each fall. Copies are available from the writers on request.

(1-6) indicated in the classification booklet to achieve the occupations specified by the summary code was calculated for each code. The data to be analyzed consisted of each subject's (1) dream code, (2) summary code, (3) mean number of years of education to achieve summary code occupations, and (4) level of satisfaction with summary code results, on a Likert scale of one to five, from strongly agree to strongly disagree.

The summary codes were all rechecked to make sure the correct self-scoring procedure was used. Minor errors in 21 of the Low group and 18 of the High group were found. Ninety-five percent of them were in second and third place letter reversals, omissions of ties, or erroneous inclusions of ties. Data were analyzed, using χ^2 and t at the .05 level.

Results

Differences between groups using the first, second and third letters of the dream codes are shown in Table 1 (not significant, using χ^2). Results of chi-square analyses of the first, second and third code letters between dream and summary codes by group are shown in Tables 2 and 3. The Low parental education group showed a significant discrepancy between dream and summary codes for second choice occupations.

There were no significant differences in mean satisfaction of summary code between groups (Table 4). Table 5 shows that the mean number of years of education necessary for summary codes chosen is greater for the High group.

Additional chi-square analyses (.05 level) of the frequencies of Realistic, Conventional and Artistic summary codes occurring in any position between groups indicated that the Low group had more Conventional codes and fewer Artistic codes.

Discussion

Since there were no significant differences in the daydream codes between those students whose fathers had less than a high school education and those whose fathers had at least a college education, it may be concluded that college students, regardless of paternal educational background, aspire to similar vocational goals. However, the Low group obtained more Conventional and fewer Artistic summary codes and chose those requiring less education on the average. Additionally, there was a greater discrepancy between dream codes and summary codes for the Low group than there was for the High group. While these may seem like reasonable and expected results, the reader should recall that the SDS is designed for use without a counselor. If we accept the idea that a counselor's role is, at least in part, to help clients overcome their backgrounds and realize their potential, it may be a disservice not to counsel, or at least point this out to a person taking the SDS. Undoubtedly many people completing the SDS would not seek further counseling as Holland suggests they can, and they may channel themselves into a more limited range of occupations.

That the incidence of Conventional codes was greater for the Low group may simply reflect clerical skills gained in part-time employment due to necessity rather than true vocational desire, since the dream occupations reflect no differences between groups. Similarly, the greater occurrence of Artistic codes in the High group are likely a function of the sections of SDS which measure such activities and competencies as sketching, attending plays and playing musical instruments, to which the High group was more likely exposed. Again, whether this represents true vocational interests or simply socio-economic level is not clear. However, Kimball, Sedlacek and Brooks (1973) found that rescoring the SDS without the competencies section did not alter obtained

summary codes. Also, there were no differences in satisfaction between the High and Low groups in the current study, indicating that there did not seem to be a perceived problem in the Low group adjusting to the discrepancy between dream and summary codes.

Overall the findings of this study indicate that the SDS does include a measure of socio-economic background as an input into the final results of the instrument. Empirically, social class does tend to perpetuate itself (Hodges, 1965; Kahl, 1957). Thus the social implications of using the SDS without the aid of a counselor could be great. Additionally all counselors should be aware of the potential limitations and biases of the SDS when used in conjunction with counseling.

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Table 1.

A Comparison of Dream Codes of Groups High and Low on Father's Education

Dream Code	Group	Letter Code* R	I	A	S	E	C	Total**	χ^2
1st letter	High	3	23	9	15	3	1	54	2.96
	Low	3	25	4	20	3	2	57	
		6	48	13	35	6	3	111	
2nd letter	High	10	14	19	17	5	1	66	4.72
	Low	18	13	15	13	3	0	62	
		28	27	34	30	8	1	128	
3rd letter	High	6	15	18	17	8	1	65	9.70
	Low	5	11	17	8	11	8	60	
		11	26	35	25	19	9	125	

* R=Realistic; I=Investigative; A=Artistic; S=Social; E=Enterprising; C=Conventional.

** Totals add to more than 100 due to ties. No χ^2 significant beyond .05.

Table 2.

A Comparison of Dream and Summary Codes for Group High on Father's Education

First Letter Code*

	R	I	A	S	E	C	Total**	χ^2
Dream	3	23	9	15	3	1	54	8.65
Summary	6	10	12	23	4	2	57	
	9	33	21	38	7	3	111	

Second Letter Code*

	R	I	A	S	E	C	Total**	χ^2
Dream	10	14	19	17	5	1	66	6.13
Summary	3	15	14	16	9	0	57	
	13	29	33	33	14	1	123	

Third Letter Code*

	R	I	A	S	E	C	Total**	χ^2
Dream	6	15	18	17	8	1	65	6.76
Summary	6	14	9	9	13	3	54	
	12	29	27	26	21	4	119	

* R=Realistic; I=Investigative; A=Artistic; S=Social; E=Enterprising; C=Conventional.

** Totals add to more than 100 due to ties. No χ^2 significant beyond .05.

Table 3.

A Comparison of Dream and Summary Codes For Group Low on Father's Education

First Letter Code*

	R	I	A	S	E	C	Total**	χ^2
Dream	3	25	4	20	3	2	57	7.46
Summary	8	12	4	21	5	3	53	
	11	37	8	41	8	5	110	

Second Letter Code*

	R	I	A	S	E	C	Total**	χ^2
Dream	18	13	15	13	3	0	62	19.13 (significant beyond .05)
Summary	5	14	7	15	6	8	55	
	23	27	22	28	9	8	117	

Third Letter Code*

	R	I	A	S	E	C	Total**	χ^2
Dream	5	11	17	8	11	8	60	7.45
Summary	4	12	7	5	18	12	58	
	9	23	24	13	29	20	118	

* R=Realistic; I=Investigative; A=Artistic; S=Social; E= Enterprising; C=Conventional.

** Totals add to more than 100 due to ties.

Table 4.

Means and Standard Deviations of Responses to Item "My Summary Code Seems Reasonable For Me"*

	Mean	S.D.	N	t
High Group	3.41	.69	50	.46**
Low Group	3.51	1.38	50	

* 1=strongly agree; 5=strongly disagree
** Not significant beyond .05.

Table 5.

Means and Standard Deviations of Number of Years Needed to Achieve Summary Code Occupations

	Mean	S.D.	N*	t
High Group	4.89	.58	46	3.10**
Low Group	4.50	.62	46	

* Totals decreased due to no occupations listed in classification booklet for some summary codes.
** Significant beyond .05 (2 tailed).