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ABSTRACT

This study explores the use of a self-counseling device, Holland's Self-Directed Search (SDS), as a diagnostic tool in identifying students who have encountered difficulties in college but persist in their attendance when they may have been better suited to vocational training programs. Thirty-seven students in the University of Maryland Office of Intermediate Registration (OIR) who met the above criteria were compared on the SDS with a random sample of 37 students entering the University at the same time. Results indicated that the OIR students received more "realistic" codes on the SDS, indicating a greater interest in such occupations as electrician, repairman, truck driver, mechanic, etc. Results were discussed in terms of their implications for self-counseling and in providing a diagnostic tool to indicate alternative educational routes for students who would otherwise attend the-University. (Author)

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DIAGNOSTIC USE OF HOLLAND'S SELF-DIRECTED
SEARCH WITH UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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SUMMARY

Vocational counseling may be aimed at too wide an audience, and those who do need guidance may be better able to profit from self-counseling materials rather than having to see a counselor. The purpose of this study was to explore the use of a self-counseling device (Holland's SDS) as a diagnostic tool in identifying students who have encountered difficulties in college but persist in their attendance when they may have been better suited to vocational training programs. 37 students in the Office of Intermediate Registration (OIR) who met the above criteria were compared on the SDS, with a random sample of 37 students entering the University at the same time. Results indicated that the OIR students received more Realistic codes on the SDS, indicating a greater interest in such occupations as electrician, repairman, truck driver, mechanic, etc. Results were discussed in terms of their implications for self-counseling and in providing a diagnostic tool to indicate alternative educational routes for students who would otherwise attend the University.

Holland (3) has noted that counselors often feel that vocational counseling theory and practice should encompass nearly everyone, rather than pragmatically focusing on the needs of the relatively few people who actually need guidance. Holland feels that those needing guidance should be provided with simple, inexpensive, and accessible assistance. He developed the Self-Directed Search for Educational and Vocational Planning (SDS) to meet this need. The SDS is a self-administering, self-scoring and self-interpreting device which has a potential for reaching a larger population than counselors normally serve. The SDS consists of two booklets: the self-administered Assessment instrument and the list of coded occupations. Upon completion of the Assessment booklet, the individual arrives at a three letter code. The Occupational Classification booklet is then used to determine the occupations which correspond to the code. [Discussed in Holland (2) .]

Holland's six personality types: Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising and Conventional provide the basis for the validity of the SDS. The three letter summary code which the individual obtains when completing the Assessment booklet represents a combination of three of the six personality types which best reflect his or her experiences and interests. Holland (3) has reported reliability coefficients (KR-20) for individual scales with a range from .53 to .87 for men and women. O'Connell and Sedlacek (7) provided test-retest reliabilities of summary codes over a seven to ten month period for 65 college freshmen of .75 (Pearson), .87 (average common elements) and .92 (Spearman Rho).

Research by Collins and Sedlacek (1) suggests that not all who complete the SDS are satisfied with the results. They found that dissatisfied users often obtained codes not listed in the Occupational Classification Booklet and that they more frequently received Conventional codes. Lewis and Sedlacek (5) found that the SDS favors individuals from the higher socio-economic levels. However, Kimball, Sedlacek and Brooks (4) found that the SDS could be used about equally well with either blacks or whites.

A potential problem with the studies noted above is that they have dealt with general groups of college students rather than with those having particular vocational problems. This is contrary to Holland's notions noted above. One specific societal trend which seems important and worthy of a great deal of attention by vocational counseling and guidance specialists is the overproduction of college graduates in the United States. Stewart (8) has discussed this problem and the National Advisory Council on Vocational Education (6) has called for many more youth to enter vocational training programs rather than college. Admittedly, the largest problem facing counselors may be that the society has oversold itself on the idea that everyone should go to college. To alter this stereotype is indeed a challenging task for vocational specialists, but equally important are the diagnostic tools used to reverse the trend. Do we have devices that are easy, inexpensive, self-scoring, and practical or must everyone in the country seek out a counselor before we have an answer?

The purpose of the current study was to explore the use of the SDS as a diagnostic tool in identifying students who have encountered difficulties in college but persist in their attendance when they may have been better suited to vocational training programs.

Method

The SDS was administered to nearly all entering freshmen at the College Park campus of the University of Maryland. One year later 37 of these students (20 male, 17 female) were enrolled in the Office of Intermediate Registration (OIR) which is required for students who wish to change colleges within the University but do not have a C grade point average. Thus these students were unsuccessful in their studies, were vocationally undecided since they wished to change colleges, but were persistent in wishing to remain at the University.

OIR provides a counseling staff to assist students. A control group of 37 students (20 male and 17 female) who were not enrolled in OIR and who had completed the SDS at the same time was randomly selected for comparison. Differences between means on the SDS were analyzed using a two tailed t-test at the .05 level.

Results and Discussion

Table 1 shows means and standard deviations on the SDS for the OIR and control groups. One of the six scales (Realistic) significantly differentiated the groups. While the differences between the two groups appear small, the fact that the Realistic scale did differentiate is worth further discussion. The Realistic scale clearly reflects an interest in many occupations which do not require college training such as electrician, repairman, truck driver, optician, jeweler, mechanic, etc. Thus while the sample is small, it would appear that the OIR students could have been encouraged to seek training other than college before they entered, and they likely should consider this alternative as they are in college. Obviously college, high school, and

community counselors could benefit from this information, but even more importantly, the opportunity exists for self-counseling through the SDS. If vocational guidance centers could be developed which were truly aimed at self help, where information and materials including the SDS were readily available without having to see a counselor, vocational information could be provided to a great many more people than are currently reached. Indeed, information and self-directed materials might be provided in ways and locations where people are located rather than hidden away in much less accessible counseling centers. Supermarkets, banks, department stores, etc. are but a few of the potential resource locations.

The writers realize that many of these thoughts will be viewed negatively by many counselors and guidance workers. However if the vocational guidance profession is serious about making significant interventions in social trends such as the overproduction of college graduates, a "public health" kind of approach seems logical. Take the counseling where the people are, and since it is impossible to be everywhere, develop self-help materials such as the SDS to do the job for us. The writers also realize that the study presents but a small sample of the kinds of information needed before any large scale self-counseling program can be generated. But the writers also hope that other work and research is done with self-help materials before they are viewed as another fad that the profession has tried half-heartedly and then abandoned.

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Table 1.

Means and Standard Deviations of OIR and Control Subjects on the SDS

<u>Scale</u>	<u>Group</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>Standard Deviation</u>
Realistic*	OIR	7.00	5.00
	Control	4.16	4.36
Investigative	OIR	8.38	4.06
	Control	7.67	4.35
Artistic	OIR	3.78	3.39
	Control	5.20	3.90
Social	OIR	7.86	4.50
	Control	9.63	4.29
Enterprising	OIR	5.00	3.61
	Control	5.51	3.49
Conventional	OIR	2.84	2.99
	Control	3.71	3.84

* Significant beyond .05 level using 2 tailed t-test