Lumina Spark as a Normalizing Psychometric Process

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The curious paradox is that when I accept myself just as I am, then I can change (Carl Rogers)

In the mid-seventies, as a young social worker with the Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB), providing counselling and rehabilitation services to a large population of people who were legally blind in the Toronto area, I came upon the work of Dr. Wolf Wolfensberger, an avid advocate for those with intellectual and developmental disabilities. As the originator of the *Principle of Normalization*, Dr. Wolfensberger promoted relevancy and potency; that whatever we do in our efforts to help others, these activities need to address people's significant needs (relevant) in a manner that is both effective and efficient (potent). Relevancy requires an active understanding of the needs of those who come to us for help regarding their physical, mental, or spiritual issues. The need to be "normal" has profound implications for those who do not consider themselves fitting into the mainstream of society. The resulting social exclusion can be life-limiting and painful.

At the CNIB, we decided to take the principles of normalization and apply them to our work with our clients. The practical application of these principles meant, for example, that if a person could not attend an appointment at the Institute's offices (and therefore other appointments and social interests) due to their visual impairment, then the reasons for this would be assessed and addressed, hopefully with relevancy and potency!

At the beginning of this conscious and focused approach to actively address this matter, we discovered that 90% of direct client contact was by way of home visits. Only about 10% of contacts were actual office visits. However, within a five year period of applying our new normalization approach, the amount of home visits went down to 35% with the remaining 65% being office visits, with the exception, of course, of newly diagnosed and often tragic cases of blindness or where people were too infirm or non-mobile.

So, what does this all have to do with Lumina, one might ask. Well, when it comes to personality, most psychometric instruments promote a dichotomy of differences within the person – you are either this or that (e.g. introverted or extraverted). In reality, we are far less dichotomous than we have been led to believe as we are *both* this *and* that. While one may refer to this as dissonance, the complexity of the human person incorporates a complex matrix of inner patterns which cannot simply be explained by binary thinking. In viewing people with physical disabilities, there is a strong social perception that the person is "disabled" and therefore, in relation to the social construction of personal inadequacy, is seen *as* their disability – as though this were the whole person, the individual's identity. Stigmatization can be a very subtle phenomenon and may in fact be incorporated into the identity/personhood by the bearer of the stigma him/herself. The demand for a

normalizing perspective becomes essential and also represents a first step in the process of personal empowerment. Thus, making it to an office appointment becomes a *big deal* for the individual who at one point was unable to do so.

Just as people with physical and mental disabilities tend to invalidate themselves due to their internalization of certain social constructs and perceptions, it seems that we have all incorporated feelings of personal inadequacy, at some level. I believe that Carl Jung, in his reluctance to release his theory of personality types, said that *typology can lead to pathology.* So, to simply categorize a person as this type or that is not only an over-simplification of the person, it acts to undermine the uniqueness of each and every individual.

In counteracting this, Lumina Spark, as a humanistic and strengths-based psychometric tool, not only avoids the trap of categorization but rather shows the fullness of the person's personality and normalizes the human tendency toward "dissonance". The acknowledgement and presentation of three levels of personality (underlying, every day, and overextended) provides the person with a fuller sense of self and immediately moves one's perspective of having a unitary personality style to the more complex place (where we all live!). While emphasizing strengths and potential areas for growth and development, this sophisticated model acts as a powerful tool for self-awareness, self-acceptance and ultimately, self-empowerment.

The shift from the reactive (unconscious) self to a more responsive (conscious) self promotes a stronger awareness and wisdom, along with an enhanced sense of self-mastery. Plato suggested that the highest form of governance is self-governance. We simply cannot achieve this outside of self-awareness. The interpersonal aspect of this is that we can now more consciously communicate with others and increase our effectiveness in this critical dimension of social functioning. Our communication with others is essential for our life and in fact determines the very quality of our life.

So, we all have much in common with the clients of the CNIB, and with the "clients" of every social agency that deals with physical, mental, or spiritual "disabilities". We have an innate need to be loved and to love, to be well and independent. Through this we can move beyond our dependency and become healthily interdependent. With awareness and acceptance of Self we can relate to ourselves and to others in a caring and loving manner. Lumina adds much to the detection and discovery of our own unique way. We can all make it to "the office"!

As an instrument of normalization, Lumina Spark is essentially second to none. With this comes hope based on understanding, and pursuant action based on clarity and intentionality.

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