

Examining the Personal Meaning of Inventoried Interests During Career Counseling

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The present article seeks to renovate the career counseling use of interest inventories as personality indicators by making explicit the link between inventoried interests and their personal meaning to clients. Interest denotes a relationship between the individual and the environment, one to the advantage of the individual. The chief advantage of an interest to the individual is that it cultivates a solution to a personal problem. Viewing interests as a developmental pathway encourages the interpretation of interest inventory results from a psychology of use. A focus on how the client uses an interest prompts counselors to trace a measured interest both backward to its origin in private preoccupations and forward to its expression in public occupations. Using interest inventories as personality indicators helps clients to conceptualize the impetus of their movement (needs), the direction of that movement (values), and the style of that movement (interests). Counseling that includes a coherent narration of the why, what, and how of an individual's movement in the world can clarify the client's occupational choices and enhance that client's ability to make career decisions.

From the objective perspective taken by modern science, interest inventory responses are patterns of likes, dislikes, and indifferent responses. The pattern of likes and dislikes can be scored for (a) basic interests using rationally constructed scales that consist of homogenous items, (b) occupational interests using empirically constructed scales that consist of heterogenous items, and (c) interest types such as RIASEC themes (Holland, 1985) using theoretically derived scales that consist of homogeneous items. Clearly the results obtained from each of these three types of inventories reveal an interest pattern that must relate to and reflect the respondent's personality (Bordin, 1943; Holland, 1985).

Much research has been collected that examines the intersection of interests and personality by correlating scores on interest inventories and personality inventories. Based on this research, a few clinicians have written articles that explain how to interpret interest inventories as personality inventories. Two exemplars of this type of article were written by Goldberg and Gechman (1976) about the Strong Vocational Interest

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Blank (Strong, 1951) and by Gobetz (1964) about the Kuder Preference Record (Kuder, 1977). Clinical training supervisors also teach counselors how to use interest inventories to assess a client's personality. For example, many counselors who use the Kuder General Interest Survey—Form E (Kuder, 1977) rely on the scale scores for music and art to assess the client's emotional expression. They may even have tried to interpret the relation between scores on the art and music scales similarly to the way that clinical psychologists interpret the relation between form and color (F:C) scores on the Rorschach's (1942) inkblots.

Given the long history of viewing interest inventories as personality tests, it seems surprising that the relation of interests to personality is no longer widely accepted nor used by contemporary career counselors. Of course, counselors still attend to extreme scores (e.g., percentage of like and dislike responses to screen for psychopathology), but counselors seem less inclined to integrate the personality aspects of interests into their career counseling sessions. Consequently, attention to interpreting interest inventories regarding personality seems to have fallen into disuse, if not disrepute. Fortunately, there appears to be a renewed interest in the relation between interests and personality, especially regarding interpersonal circumplexes (Boughton, Trapnell, & Boyes, 1991; Hogan, 1983), personality styles (Harmon, Hansen, Borgen, & Hammer, 1994; Strack, 1994), and the "Big Five" dimensions of personality (Costa, McCrae, & Holland, 1984; Holland, Johnston, & Asama, 1994).

The present article seeks to renovate the career counseling use of interest inventories as personality indicators by making explicit the link between public, objectively measured interests and their private, subjectively assessed meaning. In short, this article attempts to couple the objective view of measured interests portrayed on inventory profiles with the subjective view of manifest interests revealed in stories told by clients. Toward this end, this article explains how interest inventories contribute information about a client's personality, as well as how this information may be useful in career assessment and counseling. Also, the article discusses how the personal meaning of inventoried interests may be discussed effectively with a client. Before broaching these topics, the article sets the stage by briefly examining how theories of interests have conceptualized the relation of personality to occupational interests.

Theories of Interests

Psychologists started forming theories about the origin and development of interests with Fryer's classic 1931 book, *The Measurement of Interests*, and continue to the present day with the recent addition of a sociocognitive theory of interests presented by Lent, Hackett, and Brown (1994). Interest theories can be grouped into three categories. A first group of interest theories emphasizes learning theory in asserting that individuals learn to be interested in activities that they do well. This tradition in interest theories originated with Fryer's statement that interests are acceptance or rejection of environmental stimuli. Strong (1943) elaborated Fryer's associative learning theory of interests by stating that an interest emerges

following the reward or recognition of abilities when they are used successfully. Furthermore, Strong added the dimension of motivation in conceptualizing interests as belonging in the motivational domain along with other motives such as needs, goals, ends, and desires. He distinguished interests from the "efficiency" variables of ability, aptitude, and achievement because he viewed these variables as means to an end.

Contemporary learning theorists relate these efficiency variables to the origin of interests by invoking a self-efficacy construct. Barak (1981) viewed interests as shaped, in part, by individuals' views about expected success and perceived ability. Similar to other learning-oriented vocational psychologists before them, Lent et al. (1994) defined interests as patterns of acceptances and rejections of occupational stimuli that children learn as they engage in activities, observe models, and receive feedback. They hypothesized that an individual's reinforcement history leads to a sense of efficacy for certain tasks, as well as expectations regarding the successful performance of those tasks. Enduring interests evolve for domains in which people judge themselves to efficacious and expect positive outcomes.

A second category of interest theories emphasizes personality and motivational constructs. As a group, these theories conceptualize interests as directions for satisfying personality development. Carter (1940) wrote of interests as offering "some basis for integration of personality" in adapting to complex cultures. These interests emerge through identification with some respected group. Darley (1941) viewed interests as an outgrowth of personality development. Bordin (1943) considered interests to be expressions of self-concept in occupational terms. These theorists were leaders in promulgating the interpretation of interest inventories as reflections of self-concept and personality. Their approach to the interpretive task involved assigning interests to the periphery rather than core of personality. They placed needs and personality structure at the core (Berdie, 1944; Roe, 1957). Interests could be seen as extensions of needs and, by following the trail of interests, counselors could discern the needs and personality of clients.

The third category of interest theories emphasizes social roles. Tyler (1951) viewed interests as roles that an individual has accepted. For her, awareness of and acceptance of a social role generates likes and dislikes. Gottfredson (1981), although not attempting to explain the origin of interests, did effectively document that differences in interests relate to social roles through her analysis of how race, sex, and socioeconomic class circumscribe occupational alternatives.

In a classic book, Darley and Hagenah (1955) integrated these three categories of interest theories by stating that interests are "the end-product of individual development and the bridge by which a particular individual pattern of development crosses over to its major social role in our culture" (p. 191). Despite the wisdom of this definition, researchers and counselors have continued to isolate the concept of interests from an individual's total personality and life style (Holland, 1985). This behavior is another example of Osipow's (1993) lament that vocational psychologists do not foster integration of career research with closely allied specialties in applied psychology—in this case, personality psychology.

Interests Defined

The metaphor of interests as a bridge that connects an individual to a social role (Darley & Hagenah, 1955) can be used to refurbish the modern concept of interests for the postmodern era (Savickas, 1993, 1994). As noted by Anygal (1941), interests are “symbolic elaborations of biospheric tensional states” (p. 126). Darley and Hagenah’s bridge metaphor and Anygal’s conception of interests as tensional relationships between an individual and the environment coincide well with the etymon of the word “interest.” In Latin, *inter* means between and *esse* means to be. The Middle English and Medieval Latin *interesse* were modified by Old French into *inter est*, *est* being the third person singular of *esse* and meaning it is. Thus, interest, meaning it is between, became the word to denote an attraction to something that concerns or seems to be advantageous to an individual. So, interest denotes a relationship between the individual and the environment, one to the advantage of the individual. This meaning is profound in its very simplicity. Interest is the motivational construct that symbolizes the relationship between an individual and the world. As Anygal asserted, to lack interest means to turn away from the world as seen in the posture of the depressed client and schizophrenic patient. Interests, as a mediational interface between the person and the environment, function as guides analogous to longitude and latitude on a globe. Interests situate the individual in the world and provide a unifying orientation for the individual’s movement in it.

Because interests guide movement (Strong, 1943), they should be considered a motivational construct. Motivation refers to a state which energizes and directs a person toward a goal. Implicit in this definition of motivation are two other motivational constructs. Interests provide the direction, the other two constructs provide the energy and the goal. These two additional motivational constructs are commonly used by counselors when they conduct a comprehensive vocational appraisal. Counselors refer to the energy variable as needs and the goal variable as values. Interests are the bridge across which needs and goals seek gratification. Simply stated, needs symbolize what an individual requires to feel secure. Needs are gratified or fulfilled by objects in the environment. Those objects that satisfy one’s needs are valued as generalized goals which individuals seek from their environments. The pattern of needs defines which goals have value or meaning for the individual (cf. Anygal, 1941, p. 55). Needs and values are more stable and fundamental to the person than are interests. How people fulfill needs and values through their behavior, that is interests, depends on environmental affordances and the opportunity structure, thereby making interests less stable and harder to predict than needs and values.

Counselors recognize the importance of these three dimensions of motivation when they use three different assessment tools to measure a client’s needs, values, and interests. Interests are measured with inventories such as the Jackson Vocational Interest Survey (JVIS; Jackson, 1977), the Kuder General Interest Survey (Kuder, 1977), the Self-Directed Search (SDS; Holland, 1985), and the Strong Interest Inventory (SII; Harmon et al., 1994). The other two motivational constructs are measured with personality inventories. Needs are measured by structured inventories such as the

Edwards Personal Preference Schedule (Edwards, 1959) and the Personality Research Form (Jackson, 1974) or, specifically relative to the work environment, the Minnesota Importance Questionnaire (Gay, Weiss, Hendel, Dawis, & Lofquist, 1971). Values, the reinforcers or gratifications sought from the environment, are measured by instruments such as the Study of Values (Allport, Vernon, & Lindzey, 1970) and the Values Scale (Nevill & Super, 1986) or, more specifically relative to the work environment, the Work Values Inventory (Super, 1970).

Using the three types of measures in tandem allows counselors to better understand what moves the client, where the client wishes to go, and how the client moves. In the ordinary language of everyday life, a need states the *why*, a value states the *what*, and an interest states the *how*. Comparing results from measures of needs, values, and interests allows the counselor to clearly suggest to the client the why, what, and how of his or her motivation, that is, movement in the world. For example, many career counselors express needs to both nurture and dominate other people. This leads them to value altruism and eventually develop interests in social service occupations such as teaching, counseling, social work, and ministry. Each of these occupations permits its members to provide clients with helpful advice, thereby gratifying the needs for nurturance and dominance.

To this point, the discussion of interests has been descriptive rather than explanatory. Clearly, interests provide direction to a life and serve as a bridge between the individual's needs and his or her gratification in the real world. Nevertheless, this conclusion does not address the origin of interests. There may be another way to map the story of an individual's career motives in addition to that of objective scores on needs, values, and interest inventories.

Origins of Interests

Implicit within the previously stated definition of interests, and their relation to needs and work values, is a view concerning how interests originate. If interests truly bridge the individual and the context, counselors must ask, "Where do individuals construct their bridges?" I believe Adler (1956) provided a workable answer to this question when he portrayed the "line of movement" in an individual life as proceeding from a felt negative to a perceived plus. From this perspective, individuals construct their bridges at the base of their perceived problems and seek to span toward self-fulfilling solutions. Thus, interests are the bridge across which individuals reach out to the environment as they move to become more whole, more complete. Individuals traverse their self-constructed bridges to reach solutions to problems in growing up. In crossing the bridge, they gather from the real world those materials and resources that they use to develop themselves and conduct their life projects.

From this viewpoint, interests arise from unfinished situations and incompletely formed gestalten. They symbolically portray how one intends to transcend limitations and overcome personal deficiencies. Occupational interests implicitly state how individuals plan to use work as a way of making up for something that was missing in their childhoods. Interests are, to some degree, "yearnings."

An example from everyday life shows how interests are yearnings. Consider the story of a woman who has recently been inducted into the United States Masters Weightlifting Hall of Fame, the first woman to achieve this recognition (Rosewater, 1994). The inductee stated, "I expected to do something like this. That's what I wanted. The Hall of Fame." She had spent the first 9 years of her life on crutches having been born with a defect in her left knee. At age 19, this only child sat with her father on his deathbed. Shortly before dying, he told her that he wished she had been a boy because a boy could carry on his name. Since that moment, she was determined not to let her name die. Eventually, after an encounter with a role model, she entered weight training with the goal of becoming a champion and the ambition of having a place in the Hall of Fame. Her interest in weightlifting was both an urge to grow (strengthen the weak knee) and a yearning to keep her father's name alive forever. In her own words, she "wanted to try something to keep my name forever."

The view that interests originate as solutions to problems or strategies for success is not new. It springs, in part, from Carter's (1940) conclusions that interests represent an individual's attempts at "a practical adjustment to environmental conditions" (p. 186) and interests are "solutions to their problems of adjustment" (p. 187). In this sense, an individual's interests reflect a search for the potential benefit in every problem. This view of how interests originate takes the perspective of purposivism which states that an individual does everything to grow toward a self-defined, final goal. Interests strive to maintain an individual's integrity by charting strategies for survival and adaptability. Interests cultivate a solution to problems in growing up. Moreover, interests propose a developmental path, a bridge that leads to opportunities for integrative adaptation, maximal development, and self-fulfillment.

Content of Interests

Given that interests arise as a proposed solution to problems in growing up, the content of an individual's interests must directly relate to the problems that the individual encounters in struggling to develop. However, unlike psychodynamic theorists, I do not believe that the actual content of interests is shaped by the problem. On the contrary, interests are shaped by the solutions. Admittedly, the problem reveals a part of the life pattern or theme (Adler, 1956; Csikszentmihalyi & Beattie, 1979). In fact, the problem that individuals wish to resolve above all others shows the core of the theme, the individual's chief preoccupation. For example, knowing that the overarching tension in a client's life is the desire to become independent does not reveal interests. This problem shows the tension, not the intention. To uncover interests, counselors must look to the client's models for how to become independent. In short, tension is to problem as intention is to interest.

Problems are formed and defined within the social matrix of the family of origin and later carried to and elaborated in the wider social environment. Where do answers come from? I believe that the simple response to this question is that role models present potential solutions to an individual who is struggling to flourish. Role models may be viewed as standard stories told by members of a culture to portray paths toward self-fulfillment offered within that society. These stories, which personify developmental pathways,

are crystallized and symbolized in the shorthand of role models. The dramatic actions of the heroine or hero depict specific interests and attitudes as a means of actively mastering what was at first passively suffered.

Active mastery relates to what contemporary counseling psychologists call agency. Freud described the process of active mastery as the "ego paradigm," or the process by which an individual turns suffering into strength and possibly even a social contribution. The most powerful statement of the ego paradigm appears in *Paradise Lost* when Milton (1640/1667) describes how Lucifer, upon his arrival in hell, turned to his followers and announced, "Our torments also may, in length of time become our elements" (p. 33). All individuals attempt to turn their torments into their element. In moving from victim to victor, the individual turns a tension into an intention. Freud called this preoccupation with mastery the repetition compulsion (Freud, 1948, p. 18) and, furthermore, viewed repetition with mastery as growth and repetition without mastery as neurosis. In today's language, counselors talk about effort attributions, self-efficacy, agency, and internal locus of control rather than mastery, but the meanings are fundamentally similar in that the individual converts a symptom into a strength.

The view of interests as solutions to problems in growing up is not esoteric. It is common sense, at least in the world of literature where novels and biographies get their validity from portraying coherently a life theme. Take as an example the lead character in a mystery novel by William Bayer (1987) entitled *Pattern Crimes*. The detective protagonist, in speaking with his own girlfriend, described his brother as follows:

But there was something wrong with him—I think I always knew there was. It was as if he was too perfect—perfect student, perfect son. And something bad was going on in the family. I still don't know what it was. Some kind of complicity between my parents—whispered conferences behind closed doors, my mother emerging with tears in her eyes, my father with his unhappy worried face. And then those quick silver alliances between the three of them. He paused, trying to recapture an old feeling of separateness, of being part of his family and apart from it too. She was watching him, her eyes large, her compassion written on her face.

'I think that's why you became a detective,' she said. 'To figure out your family's mystery.' (pp. 52-53)

The Private Meaning of Public Interests

The previous view of interests as personality constructs encourages the understanding and interpretation of interest inventory results from a psychology of use. This perspective emphasizes the subjective role and meaning of interests as a means for understanding their origins in private preoccupations and their expression in public occupations. The idea in using interest inventories as personality indicators is to try to determine how a client uses the objectively measured interests to become more complete. Essentially, my approach to interpreting the personal meaning of measured interests seeks to transform the word "interests" from a noun into a verb. Interest scale scores on the JVIS, Kuder, SII, and SDS objectify interests and

report them as nouns. For example, the counselor might say, "you possess very high investigative interests." This leaves unexamined the question of how the client uses this possession and the role that investigative interests play in that person's life. To paraphrase a saying of Uncle Remus' (Chandler, 1881), it ain't what you got, it's how you use it. So counselors may translate the interest inventory score (noun) into its use (verb) in the client's life. Essentially, the counselor asks how a particular activity serves the client's advantage. The same approach applies to other motivational constructs. Motivation as a noun objectifies the verb move. Needs, as a verb, are strivings in that a person seeks things that make him or her feel more secure. Values, as a verb, are rankings of usefulness in satisfying needs.

To understand interests as personality indicators requires that counselors focus on client movement, the move from a felt minus to a perceived plus. Counselors seek to understand the impetus of client movement (needs), the direction of that movement (values), and the style of that movement (interests). The answers to the why, what, and how of movement can then be combined into narrative that describes the client's quest for meaning and livability.

Traditionally, counselors have used interest inventories to assess objectively the direction of a life in progress. In combination with interest inventories, counselors can also examine stories provided by clients to assess the subjective meaning and use of their measured interests. The stories explain the nouns (possessions/scale scores) as verbs (use). Moreover, the stories show how the variety of client interests relate to each other and to the life project.

Life Themes

To translate interests as objects of possession into useful movements requires concentration on a story line, the line of movement. A line is defined by two points, yet contains an infinite number of points. Any two of them define the same line. The same can be said of the continuity in a life. A biography is composed of an infinite number of stories, yet any two of them can reveal the theme. The centrality of a line or theme in personality theory is exemplified by the number of theorists who incorporate some version of it, including Adler's (1956) lifestyle, Allport's (1961) proprium, Berne's (1972) transactional analysis scripts, Erikson's (1968) ego-identity, Kelly's (1955) core role, Lecky's (1945) self-consistency, Murray's (1938) unity theme, Reich's (1933) character, and Sartre's (1943) project. The clearest explanation of life themes may be the one provided by Csikszentmihalyi and Beattie (1979): "A life theme consists of a problem or set of problems which a person wishes to solve above everything else and the means the person finds to achieve a solution" (p. 48).

Counselors may choose to identify a client's life line by focusing on a beginning point and an end point. To do so, the counselor elicits from clients stories about their early life and role models that they admire. These stories most often clearly reveal a main problem (felt negative) and a perceived plus (goal). Interests, then, can be viewed as the life line that connects the preoccupying problem as portrayed in the early stories and the solution as portrayed in the role models. People organize their lives around a problem that preoccupies them and a solution that occupies them.

Early Recollections

Stories about early childhood clearly reveal the central problem in a life (Watkins, 1984). To elicit such stories, a counselor merely asks a client to share a few stories about the earliest incidents in the client's life. From these stories a counselor can begin to discern the life theme by identifying the preoccupation along with recurrent patterns (e.g., repetition compulsion), crucial attitudes, private meanings, and guiding beliefs that structure the client's personal parables concerning the "story of life." McKelvie (1979) has written an excellent article about how career counselors can use stories that report early recollections.

Role Models

After identifying the preoccupation or main problem conveyed in the early recollections, the counselor can identify the client's role models because they symbolize the envisioned solution. Role models are cultural prototypes around which one can organize actions and goals. Models represent "escape from destiny by way of choice" (Powers, Griffith, & Maybell, 1994, p. 364). Consider as a single example, the words of Mary Hanna, a professor of political science at Whitman College, as she wrote about a role model from her adolescence. "Wonder Woman taught us important lessons: that any woman could acquire strength and skills, that a woman could be in love and still retain her identity, that family and friends were important, especially the friendship of women." Wonder Woman helped her "to dream about some day meeting Prince Charming but also of going to college, getting strong and earning my own living" (Hanna, 1994, p. 2-E).

An elegant statement that captures the function that Wonder Woman served for Hanna was written by Wayne Cobb (North Carolina). "My idea of a hero is someone who is to be cherished not so much for what they have accomplished in their own lives, but for what they have accomplished in mine, for how they have inspired me to grow and change and to become more of what I was created to be."

Interests crystallize with an ambition to become like the model. This ambition leads first to imitation of the model and later to role playing in reality. This role playing develops interests and skills that address the individual's chief preoccupation in life. In due course, an individual adds more models to address the nuances of the problem. One's collection of heroines and heros is a collection of selves. At first, the selves are unrelated. Eventually, adolescents integrate a cohesive, selective identification from among the attitudes and skills that they have been rehearsing. They then allow certain characteristics to dominate, they rehearse these characteristics further, and when the characteristics become dependably recognizable as enduring traits such as needs and values, they constitute the person's style. Some interest inventories measure this personal style using the modal orientations in Holland's (1985) RIASEC model of personal types or styles. The word "style" comes from the Latin word "stylus" meaning a writing instrument. With a style, one writes his or her life story using the context and its opportunities as dramatic material.

The final step in assessing the personal meaning of a client's interests is to understand explicitly how the problems revealed in the early stories are

resolved by the ambition to emulate the role models. In concluding the assessment, the counselor looks to the connections (life theme) among the early stories, role models, and interests by undertaking an investigation. The counselor starts the investigation by seeking the past problem inherent in the present interests. The model for the counselor as investigator is not Sherlock Holmes but John Watson (Powers, 1991). The client is Holmes. In discussing the stories and models, as well as how they seem to explain the client's interests, the counselor continually asks the client questions such as "How do you see it?" "To what is that connected?" "How do you put it together?" "How do you use it?" "What does it mean?" These questions clarify the personal meaning of the client's interests and how that client proposes to use his or her interests in constructing an occupational career.

Create a Narrative About Interests as Solutions

As a transition from career assessment to career counseling, the counselor may create, with the assistance of the client, a narrative version of the origin and purpose of the client's interests and how this purpose can clarify the client's career choices. A useful narrative about the client's life story aims to help the client conceptualize interests as a solution to problems in growing up and as a means of turning tension to intention, problem to opportunity, and preoccupation into occupation. The narrative should use the information drawn from the client to form a fictive truth and personal mythology for the client's life. The narrative should be like a novelization of the client's life, one that emphasizes a dramatization of interests. The narrative should describe interests as enabling constructs that help the individual address disabling crises. In short, the narrative should provide clients with a framework for knowing how their interests further their life projects.

The narration of interests as solutions should allow a client to understand the origins of interests (beginning of the story) as well as their meaning and significance (middle of the story), and do so in way that makes the future (continuation of the story) conceivable and attainable. To accomplish this, the narrative should clearly connect the client's interests with life preoccupations in order to create greater reality and a pattern of deeper meaning. Then the counselor can narrate how the client has turned problems into strengths. This part of the narration creates a unity for the client's life that can be extended into the future to clarify career choices by explaining how the strengths can become social contributions, one of which is occupational work (Richardson, 1993). Clarifying the client's life story and forging a narrative point of view in this manner greatly enhances clients' ability to make career decisions.

Case Example

A case example illustrates the process described herein. The client graduated from college as a premedicine, chemistry major but had hesitated about applying for medical school in the year since he graduated. He was unsure about why he had not yet pursued medicine. At the time of counseling, he sought information about training programs and careers in psychology. He had been brought to counseling by his mother who thought that if he was not going to go into medicine, then he should explore careers in psychology.

Objective Measures

The counselor used the SDS, JVIS, and WVI to assess objectively his occupational interests and work values. On the occupational daydreams page of the SDS he wrote: physician, physician assistant, nurse, optometrist, retail sales, and commercial airline pilot. His SDS summary code was IAS. On the SDS occupations page, he scored 5 on four scales (I, A, S, and E) and scored 2 for the remaining two scales (R and C). His scores on the JVIS were very high for performing arts, social science, personal service, family activity, medical service, independence, and interpersonal confidence. His JVIS scores were very low for academic achievement and elementary education, and low for teaching, social service, technical writing, office work, and supervision. On the WVI, he scored high on altruism, independence, intellectual stimulation, surroundings, and security. Conversely, he scored low on management, prestige, variety, creativity, and associates. The pattern of his objectively measured values and interests coincided well with his hesitation about entering medical school and his expressed interests in allied health professions and sales.

Subjective Assessment

His two early recollections and two role models follow:

I remember my mother would drop me off at nursery school before going to work. I had to take a nap in a room full of people. I did not like being forced to take a nap. One time I remember waking up and thinking it was interesting because I was sleeping but it was not my house. I wondered if my mother was going to show up.

I wore glasses in the first grade. One day my teacher called me up to the front of the room so that she could clean my glasses. I was very embarrassed.

My model was Superman because of his strength. He could fly. He could do whatever he wanted. He did not show his feelings but he did use humor. He let people express themselves.

Another hero was a team of five people in a science fiction novel. It seemed neat to be on a team. My favorite character used goofy gadgets to foil the bad guys. He also had a plane.

From his stories, we learn that independence and individuality are important to him. In fact, he stated several times during the inquiry phase, "I enjoy my individuality." Nevertheless, he enjoys being part of a team. His role on the team is to use gadgets to solve problems. In addition, we learn that, although he relishes displaying his individuality, he keeps his feelings private. Also, he uses humor to cope with difficult situations. His view of school and teachers suggests a lack of comfort in the classroom. And his dirty glasses remind him constantly to remain clean and, if possible, fashionable.

In creating the narrative, the counselor emphasized that his project in life revolved around independence and self-expression of individuality, yet, this expression needed to be within a closely knit group or team of individuals who use science to solve problems. His role on the team is to maintain morale through humor, remain rational and dispassionate, and use gadgets. The

counselor also pointed out his view that schools suppress individuality and teachers embarrass people. Good times with his close-knit group of friends helped him to remain in college until he graduated. The ensuing discussion quickly led him to conclude that the reason he hesitated to become a physician was that he did not want the independent, decision-making authority nor could he envision remaining in school for as many years as it took to become a physician. He wanted to be a part of a group that solved problems with science and affirmed the individual contributions of team members.

Using the guiding narrative, he quickly decided to intensely explore three occupations (nurse anesthesiologist, optometrist, and pharmacist), one of which he eventually selected. Consider that his first recollection dealt with being put to sleep and that anesthesiology would allow him to actively master this central predicament and frequent feeling. His second story about cleaning glasses relates in a similar way to optometry. Also, consider that, similar to his second role model, all three occupations participate in health-care "teams" and use scientific "gadgets."

To encourage him to attend to how dependence upon others was stalling his career decision-making, the counselor drew the line from his role models' flying to his struggle for independence and his interest in being a commercial pilot. He briefly thought aloud about the possibility of starting, as a hobby, to learn how to fly a small plane. Then attention turned to his dealing with his mother's tremendous investment in his life decisions. Of course, much more could be discussed concerning this case, but the previous sufficiently shows how examining the personal meaning of inventoried interests can be useful in career counseling.

Conclusion

To understand interests as indicators of personality requires that the objective fact of their existence be weaved into a narrative concerning their use. Similar to a literary novel, these narratives about the personal(ity) use of interests claim their validity from the particularization of experience. The narratives are especially useful to career clients when the story line emphasizes interests as solutions to problems in growing up.

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