

Career Planning Project
Coun 568: Career and Lifestyle Planning
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A. Student Overview and Personal Variables

The student I am working with is an 18 year old male high school senior. He is of Caucasian descent. His great-great-grandparents immigrated to the united states from Europe in the 1800's and his family has been settled in this area from that time.

This student's immediate family includes a mother, a father, and an older sister. His father works as a draftsman and engineering manager among other past work experience. Along with being a homemaker, this student's mother is a daycare provider and a classroom volunteer. His older sister is currently attending the local university and is in the process of attaining her graduate degree. His mother and father are especially involved in this student's interests and activities. They are very supportive of his ambitions and desires to explore his many interests. They like to see him pursue the many opportunities that are open to him. Similarly, his grandparents are a very important to him. They are also involved in his activities and actively support him. He looks up to them a lot. This student's immediate family is very important to him and is a significant support system from which he has and continues to develop his sense of values.

This student's life outside of his family is a very active one. He is a good student and consistently achieves good grades in school. As of this year this student is enrolled in the school's AP history class. He currently holds a 3.5 GPA. He is involved in sports, basketball mostly. He can have a competitive personality when it comes to sports and other games and he is able to attune to his competitive side by being involved in sporting activities. Other activities include honor society and camp counseling. He likes to work with kids at the summer camp he works at. He has a small group of close friends that he is able to connect with at school. The school he attends has a majority of African-American students to he is actually of the minority there. Thus, his family and friends are very integral to him and his individual identity.

B. Application of Brown's Values-Based Theory of Career Development

The basic premise of the values-based theory to career development is that the individual formulates their views and goals for a future career by examining their own personal values as well as the valued of their family and culture. The impact or importance of family or cultural value systems can vary from one individual to the other however; there is not a rigid formula that fits everyone.

An individual's values function as a way for individuals to meet their needs. Values help people to center themselves in life and attain a level of consistent functioning. They act as a meter stick for people; individuals are able to use them to measure and evaluate their behaviors and make sure they are behaving in a congruent fashion. A major role that values play is that they allow an individual to make sure they are functioning in a manner that is consistent with social norms. Thus, the values held by the predominant culture that an individual is surrounded by can act as a significant contributor to the development of an individual's values. Adopting the values of one's culture happens through a learning process involving experience, modeling and reinforcement. Typically an individual adopts the values of one dominant culture but it is

possible that people's values are influenced by two or more cultures. This is not always the case though; some people's values are highly individual and have little connection to the overarching values of the dominant culture they are in. This is an example of how such a theory of career development accounts for the uniqueness of each individual in the development of one's values.

Another major role of one's values is they are used to evaluate the self and others. By measuring individual behaviors or the behaviors of others against one's values, an individual is able to assess whether such behaviors are in line with their values and are acceptable or whether change is necessary. This role of values is particularly important in goal setting behaviors. As a method for setting goals, this values-based theory becomes integral in the process career development. One's values help to guide a person toward a career that fills that individual's needs, that is culturally acceptable (if cultural values play a significant role in a person's value set), and that aligns with the life goals a person has. Just as one's values can be extremely helpful in guiding an individual through the career development process, there can also be obstacles through this process that are associated with one's goals and values.

First, for those who value individualism, they would be best served in a career choice in which they are free to pursue their individual values, the occupation is highly correlated with their values, values-based information is available for those careers and there are sufficient financial resources available to pursue those career options. This being said, there are difficulties that these types of individuals face. Factors such as low socioeconomic status (SES), belonging to a minority group, mental health issues, physical disabilities, gender, and a fear of being discriminated against in a profession all limit someone who values individualism. It is important for this group of people to have many career options to consider so that they may find one that correlates well with their set of values and each of these obstacles listed above will limit those possible career options. The obstacles differ for those who value collectivism.

For those who hold the collective values of the group rather than define their values as an individual, their occupation will likely relate less with their work values and more with the social values that they hold. This type of individual might be more restricted in their career choices. Since the dominant culture often values sex-stereotyped roles, a person who also follows these values will likely seek occupational options that follow such sex-stereotyped roles. Fear of discrimination is also an obstacle for those who value collectivism as they value their inclusion in a group. Also, it is less important for these types of individuals to have a lot of values-based information on many occupations since they more often turn to their in-group for guidance on values. As a comparative between individual value systems and collective value systems, those who are more individually minded in their values tend to make and act on decisions during important and natural transitional periods in life than are those people who are more collective in their values.

There is also an important component of self-efficacy that relates to one's values and career choice. For those who value individualism, it is important that they have the ability to accurately estimate their abilities, values, and skills they will need to use in an occupation is very important whereas for those who value collectivism, the feedback they receive from their in group is valued more than their individual ability to estimate their skills and abilities. The result of this is that, due the high demand on individually minded persons to accurately judge themselves, there is a higher likelihood that errors will be made in the process. They may find themselves in an occupation that has values which do not necessarily match up well with their own values. This higher likelihood of errors can result in lower job satisfaction, less success in a given occupation and more turnaround in their jobs. A person will be most likely to continue

with an occupation when there is a strong overlap between the values of the worker, the employer and the person's coworkers.

For this student, Brown's values-based theory of career development is an appropriate lens through which to examine their process of career development. Although this student does not face some of the challenges related to implementing his values in his career choice (Low SES, mental health problems, poor academic achievement), there are some important factors to his story that will affect his career development. As mentioned previously, he is of Caucasian descent yet he is part of the minority in his high school. This means that his values may differ in significant ways from many of his peers since he operates in a different cultural context and aligns more with the collective values of his family than the values of many of his peers.

This student is also the type of person who is more collective in his value system; he looks to his family and social group for a fair amount to help him define his value system. Some of the important aspects of his families values include hard work, respect for others, and a high value on education. Each of these values will play a significant role for this student as he looks towards his career future.

C. Qualitative Assessment Summary

Through a career style interview, I was able to learn more about how this student prefers to learn and what working situations are the most ideal for him. He sees an adventurous and imaginative nature in one's personality as a desirable quality. He admires people who muster the courage to enter uncharted territory and who are open to new and untested experiences. Additionally, he values people who cherish their close and meaningful relationships. He likes people who respect and care for others. He sees many of these character traits in his own personality. To go along with this, this student has expressed that a significant drive for him in life is the overcoming of fears. This drive and struggle fits well with his admiration for adventure and bravery in others. He works well in an environment that incorporates some form of analytical thinking skills and supports social connection among peers or coworkers. He would prefer to work in an environment in which he can find fulfillment in his value for such social connections while also utilizing his analytical thinking skills. This preference of his is highlighted in his interest in history topics in which there is a fair amount to analytical skill required but also focuses a great deal on the human condition and the individual stories of important figures throughout history. His preferred problem solving style involves investigative work that helps him to better understand a problem and trying to get to the root of the issue. Again, he works well when he is able to carry out this process with others which helps him fulfill his value for social connections and relationships. His value for connecting with others could also be utilized in the problem itself. He has expressed a strong curiosity to understand others and their stories so it would be appropriate to work in an environment where helping other's with problems is a central task. It seems that separate from his needs in a work setting, this student's interests fall into being active and competitive. These seem to fall outside the realm of his occupational needs but are still important to fulfill.

In examining and talking with this student about his family career genogram, it becomes clear how his close family members have impacted his own values. He spoke of how between his mother and his father, he was able to view a full spectrum of the career world. While his father works as a draftsman, a particularly precise profession, his mother works more in the education and human services field as a daycare provider and classroom assistant. He receives a considerable amount of push from his father to work toward a profession that will utilize the

analytical thinking skills that this student's father sees in his son. However, this student has clearly expressed a propensity for work that has much more of a social component to it which he admires in the type of work that his mother does. She sees this in him and supports that side of him. He would ideally like to enter a working environment that values both of these skills. Also, it has become clear that higher education is an important value in his family. His father has been to school in order to enter his profession and this student's sister is currently in college. This student has also expressed a desire to continue his education beyond high school.

D. Quantitative Assessment Summary

Strong Interest Inventory

Results from the Strong Interest Inventory shows that this student's strengths rest in the social, realistic and artistic facets of the working world. His social strengths include working with others and helping others in the community. His strengths related to the realistic domain of work include working with machines, working in athletics and being outdoors; all aspects of working in the realm of the concrete and tangible. His artistic strengths relate to a drive for self-expression, communication and culture. These areas of interest correlate well to the areas of interest that were observed in the qualitative assessments by this individual. From the social realm, a person's values often include cooperating with others, being generous, and helping others. Each of these values can be confirmed from what this student has explicitly expressed. The realistic interests of this student that the "Strong" found relate to values of tradition, practicality and common sense which are highlighted in this student's interest in sports. His artistic strengths closely correlate with values such as originality and imagination. These values are highlighted in this student's admiration of personality types that seek adventure and novel experiences. The area of work that he is least interested in is investigative work. Areas here include science, mathematics and medicine type of areas. This is interesting because this student has expressed interest in analytical and investigative work in other assessments. This might indicate a preference for this type of work as an interest or hobby only and is less desirable in a working situation.

An interesting result from the Strong Interest Inventory comes in the area of personal styles. Most areas of preferred working styles were in the moderate range (meaning that this student was not preferential to one extreme or the other on any domain). However, on the domain of "Team Orientation" this student rated as more clearly preferring to work in collaborative teams as opposed to working on tasks alone. This social element of work is a recurrent theme throughout this career investigation process and is proving to be an essential element for a future career.

NEO PI-R

This student rated as average for many of the domains of personality which the NEO PI-R highlights. There were some which seem to stand out however. In areas related to worrying behavior (i.e. worry, social concerns, and sensitivity to stress) this student tended to score higher. There seems to be a considerable amount of anxiety in this student's life or he tends to worry in typical situations. To counter this however, this student did rate high in positive emotions. This may highlight that for this student, they highly value social connection in life and in work but feel at least a slight degree of anxiety surrounding that. This student also rated high for sympathy. This finding correlates well with the Strong Interest inventory since this student values relationship to a high degree

There were contradictions in this report however, both with the Strong Interest Inventory and even within itself. The NEO PI-R reported that this student's aesthetic sense was low however the "Strong" reported that one of the strengths of this student is his artistic ability or sense. This may be explained by noting that this student's artistic abilities were among the higher domains reported in the "Strong", but they were still relatively moderate. There was also a contradiction in the NEO PI-R itself. It reported that this student is both low on candor (being cautious and guarded) yet high on trust with others. In talking with the student, it seems an accurate interpretation of this is that the low score on candor may relate to the higher rates of worry and the higher score on trust with others might be a product of this student's high value for close relationships and social connections.

E. Summary

From this investigation into this student's career development, it becomes clear that he holds some values close to him. These values are an important part of him that must be considered at length when looking into possible work settings and career choices. He values social connections and relationships highly. His work interests seem to revolve around two main pillars: work related to social connection and concrete realistic problem solving. It is interesting too to see where these values might have originated from. It seems that his immediate family is an important support system for him and is a strong source of many of his values. This may mean that his family has helped instill some early values, but it does not necessarily mean that he is a collectivist when it comes to value formation. Connections to others are an important aspect of his value system but he also expressed a desire to be independent in his search for adventure in life. Some areas that this student may struggle in are also some of those areas that he values. Social experiences might also bring him a certain level of anxiety and worry. This is something to keep in mind as he may search for careers that involve a lot of social demands, he may be faced with some internal struggles related to this. This does not mean however that this type of work should be avoided. In fact, by working through such issues, this student may even find a heightened level of fulfillment and triumph.

Considering his strengths in working with others, helping others and being involved in active environments, I would suggest that this student investigate career paths in athletic training or counseling. Both of these professions involve working with others on a personal level which coincides well for this student's interests and values. As an athletic trainer, he would be able to pursue his interest in athletics and working with people. This student might look into the post-secondary college program at George Fox University. Here he would be able to pursue a bachelor's degree that prepares students to pursue a career in athletic training. This is a four year college. The yearly tuition is \$29,050.

Counseling would also suit this student well since it works with people. The student also talked about his enjoyment in working with kids as a camp counselor. School counseling would be an appropriate career for to match this experience. One must first pursue a bachelor's degree first, preferably in psychology, before they can go on to receive their graduate degree. For a graduate degree that would allow this student to stay close to his social support systems, Portland State would be a possible option to pursue after receiving an undergraduate degree. The yearly tuition is \$11,340 for residents and the application deadline is February 1st.