

Early Recollections as Predictors of Study Area Choice

Jon Kasler and Ofra Nevo

Abstract

One hundred and thirty young Israeli adults studying in a pre-academic program at an academic college in Israel participated in an empirical study designed to test whether early recollections could successfully predict their study area choice. Early recollections were obtained from the participants in accordance with the method described by Manaster and Perryman (1974). Using a content analysis design developed for this research, two judges attempted to ascertain from the early recollections what area of study the students would choose in accordance with Holland's (1985) classification. The participants also responded to Holland's Self-Directed Search questionnaire and answered two questions that aimed to identify desired and actual study area choice. Results show that early recollections predict career area choice as well as the SDS questionnaire does. However, because of the paucity of cases in the Investigative, Enterprising, and Conventional fields, the research results are robust only in the Social, Realistic, and Artistic fields.

A basic tenet of Individual Psychology holds that early recollections often tell a great deal about the underlying direction and purpose of an individual's behavior and outlook on life. "Early Recollections are selections, distortions, or inventions of past events by the individual to fit his underlying mood, purpose, and interests . . . and the stated earliest recollection in particular reflects the prototype of his style of life" (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1956, p. 350). In this study, we tested the central hypothesis that content analysis of early recollections can help to reveal career interests and preferences.

Alfred Adler, the founder of Individual Psychology, pioneered the use of early recollections as a diagnostic tool to reveal primary personality characteristics (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1956). This tool has since been widely used for diagnostic purposes (Barrett, 1980; Elliot, Fakouri, & Hafner, 1993; Mosak, 1979) and, more recently, as an assessment tool in counseling (Clark, 2001). In addition, there has been some interest in the use of early recollections for the purpose of identifying career preferences (Elliot, Amerikaner, & Swank, 1987; Hafner & Fakouri, 1984; Manaster & Perryman, 1974). The theoretical basis for our study rests on the Adlerian interpretation of early recollections and upon Holland's (1985, 1997) work on the psychology of career choice.

Holland's Theory

As a major result of his research, Holland (1985, 1997) has provided one of the most popular tools for career-preference testing, namely, the Self-Directed Search (SDS), as well as other valuable counseling tools. Holland proposed a theory of career choice based on the assumption that one of the main reasons for an individual's choice or lack of choice of a career is personality. Holland identified six career types, which reflect both the main types of personalities and their corresponding career environments: Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, and Conventional. These environments reflect workplace situations that require corresponding personality characteristics. His studies indicate a strong relationship between a person's interest and vocational preferences and his or her personality type (Holland, 1997). The Self-Directed Search questionnaire was developed for the purpose of revealing individuals' dominant career preferences according to Holland's six career types.

According to Holland (1985), people who fit a certain type are likely to seek environments that are congruent or, in other words, that encourage the corresponding attributes and discourage behavior that is foreign to the individual's personality. "People search for environments that will let them exercise their skills and abilities, express their attitudes and values, and take on agreeable problems and roles" (Holland, p. 4). In general, some individuals are more likely to fit a particular type or types than others. Holland claimed that people in congruent environments are more satisfied and less prone to change careers than those in incongruent environments (Holland, 1985, 1997).

Recently, several studies have shown similarities between Holland's types and other personality measures (e.g., Sullivan & Hansen, 2004). Holland's view of career choice has also been confirmed in many empirical studies (for a review, see Holland, 1997; Spokane, Meir, & Castalano, 2000).

In Holland's theory, the extent to which an individual has a well-defined profile is defined as the *degree of differentiation*. The individual's profile may present a particular type with little trace of characteristics of other types. On the other hand, poor differentiation would be reflected in a profile that includes characteristics from different types. In a case where there is lack of differentiation, it may be difficult to define an individual as reflecting any particular type.

However, it has been argued that while an individual's interests, as tested in interest inventories such as Holland's SDS, do reveal career direction, they do not comprise the major factor contributing to career choice (Gottfredson, 1981, 1996). Long before interests stabilize, the individual makes choices that have profound bearing on career choice. Sex typing and the prestige ascribed to occupations narrow down the choices available to the individual

by the time interests have fully developed. Furthermore, it is reasonable to assume that interests themselves are influenced by these factors. This process of circumscription may prevent the individual from judging which professions are suited to his or her personality, while some distortion due to deeply ingrained beliefs is liable to distort further the perceptions of the suitability or appeal of many occupations (Gottfredson, 1981).

Personality attributes and interests are not the sole determinants of career preferences. Thus, it is important to differentiate between desired choice and actual choice. Unlike the actual career choice, stating a desired career choice may allow individuals to free themselves from the constraints of culturally based beliefs and/or economic considerations. We would therefore expect that an appropriate evaluation of personality would reveal desired choice better than actual choice.

Early Recollections in Career Counseling

In his discussion of the origins of the six personality types, Holland (1985) acknowledged that his types are similar to those lifestyle typologies described by Adler. Indeed, Adler's and Holland's interest in categorizing people into types that are distinguished by particular personality attributes indicates that they share a similar outlook on personality. This, in turn, suggests a theoretical basis for a comparison of the two, and the rationale for using an Adlerian tool, early recollections, for personality evaluation in the context of Holland's personality types. Providing that such an extension of the use of this Adlerian tool can be shown to be useful, its refinement may serve to improve the quality of career interventions. It must be borne in mind, of course, that according to Adler, categories or types are valid only in the context of the teaching of Individual Psychology, as the uniqueness of each individual remains essential to psychological analysis.

The use of early recollections for career choice analysis has yielded interesting results (Elliot et al., 1987; Hafner & Fakouri 1984; Manaster & Perryman, 1974). These researchers either devised or made use of inventories for classifying early recollections by personality variables and then demonstrated that individuals in particular vocations tend to express specific personality traits. By analyzing the early memories of individuals who had already made career choices, they were able to show that certain personality traits, as expressed in early memories, are connected to career choices made. In a systematic review of the research in this area, using the Manaster-Perryman scoring manual, Manaster, Mays, and Anderson (2001) confirmed the view that this line of research has yielded significant results, which form the basis for further consideration of the value of early recollections in promoting appropriate career choice.

Building on this important information, we looked at individuals before they chose their careers and attempted to use early recollections to predict their career choices. In addition, we relied on a holistic, impressionistic approach, where the career types, as defined after extensive research by Holland and his associates, were used as a basis for identifying probable career choice. This approach relied more heavily on "Adlerian intuition," assuming that overall focus of the early memory will reveal overall direction of the personality and, therefore, career choice.

Early recollections provide a window into the individual's personality, which provides the depth that may otherwise be lacking in other tools available to the career counselor. Adlerians often describe the moment of realization, when individuals make the connection between their present outlook and analyzed early recollections.

One of the great advantages of early recollections is that they are easily accessible and economical, for they can be either written down by the participant or given verbally, and the participant usually provides the early recollections with little difficulty, after a few moments of quiet thought (Mosak, 1958). Furthermore, the client is usually unaware that early recollections can be content analyzed and used to reveal basic personality traits and attitudes to life, so distortions are less likely than in other, more transparent methods. The process of early recollections interpretation serves three purposes in career counseling. First, it demonstrates to clients that the counselor understands them as individuals. Second, clients see that individual personality is highly relevant to career choice. Third, the process of interpretation may help clients better understand themselves, and better self-understanding enhances the process of decision making in general, and, in this case, in the area of career choice. Thus, the use of early recollections in career counseling should make the process less cognitive and obvious and more emotionally satisfying to the client.

An additional advantage of using early recollections in career counseling is that clients are not required to respond to a given stimulus, as is the case with other projective techniques (Verger & Camp, 1970). Therefore, they are not influenced by a particular stimulus, and the concern that a particular response may be more a function of the stimulus than of the subject is eliminated. Similarly, the distortion created by varying responses to given stimuli by different people is also avoided.

Early Play Recollections

Adler's use of early play memories together with early recollections in occupational counseling provides deep insight into the way individuals' psychological makeup determines their choices with regard to careers.

If ever I am called on for vocational guidance, I always ask how the individual began and what he was interested in during his first years. His memories of this period show conclusively what he has trained himself for most continuously: They reveal his prototype and his underlying scheme of apperception. (Adler, 1958)

Research Aims

The central aim of this research was to examine the effectiveness of an Adlerian-style content analysis of early recollections in predicting student choice of study area and validating early recollections as measures of career interest. The holistic approach intrinsic to Adlerian lifestyle analysis necessitates a qualitative method of analysis, and while in our view this is wholly appropriate, it may inevitably serve to weaken the robustness of the research conclusion. This is because replication of such research is complicated by such an approach, certainly in comparison with quantitative methods involving instruments that yield numerical scores, such as Holland's SDS.

Research Hypotheses

We developed three research hypotheses to guide our investigation.

1. Content analysis devised for this research, based on Holland's six types of early childhood recollections, will reveal the general direction of the participants' stated desired study area choice.
2. The early recollection analysis and SDS will predict desired study area choice more successfully than it will predict actual study area choice.
3. Where results of Holland's SDS and early recollections agree, there will be a higher rate of agreement with participants' desired study area choice than when SDS and early recollection results are viewed separately.

Method

Participants. The research participants were 130 young adults studying within the framework of an academic program for ex-servicemen and ex-servicewomen (60 men and 70 women, ages 20–25) provided by an academic college in Israel. This program of study is aimed at helping its students complete the national matriculation examinations for admission to institutions of higher education. At the time of the research, these students were making choices regarding their career direction, which involved further study and

training in a variety of educational and vocational frameworks. Therefore, the use of the term "study area choice" in this case is interchangeable with "career environment choice." While in some cases students came with clear career goals mapped out in advance, there were many with only a general idea of the direction they envisaged as suitable and still others who were altogether unsure what they wanted to do in the future.

Because the chief objective of this research was to validate a personality evaluation (early recollections) used for the purpose of predicting student study area choice, it should have been an advantage that the participants were questioned about their preferences at a stage shortly before they took practical steps to fulfill their goals. Moreover, they were not yet at the stage of participation in academic or vocational training in a particular work area, so their answers were not influenced by any need to justify decisions that had already been made. However, the downside of this approach was that there was no guarantee that enough participants would fall into each career type. A low number of participants for a particular type would lead to an inability to make meaningful predictions based on the participants for that type.

Holland (1997) recommended that respondents should be rated in accordance with the concept of differentiation. However, in our study, all respondents were included, regardless of the degree of differentiation among their respective scores.

Instruments. Three early childhood recollections were obtained from each subject in accordance with instruction guidelines set out by Manaster and Perryman (1974). In their study, which examines the validity of early recollection analysis for the purpose of career counseling, Manaster and Perryman achieved interjudge reliability of 93%. The instructions suggested in their work were translated into Hebrew for the convenience of the judges.

A method of content analysis devised for the purposes of this research was employed. Its validation was the primary goal of the research.

The Self-Directed Search questionnaire (Holland, 1973) was administered. This tool was adapted and validated by Meir for use in Israel (Feldman & Meir, 1976; Meir, 1973). The SDS is organized into five subscales: activities, competencies, occupations, and two scales of self-estimate. Six scores are calculated for each participant, representing summations of their positive answers to items that represent each of Holland's six types. The highest score denotes the person's dominant personality type.

Holland (1973) described the Realistic type as being asocial, conforming, frank, genuine, materialistic, natural, normal, persistent, practical, self-effacing, inflexible, thrifty, and uninvolved. Holland characterized the Investigative type as being analytical, cautious, critical, curious, independent, intellectual, introspective, precise, rational, reserved, retiring, and unassuming. The Artistic type is seen as complicated, disorderly, emotional, idealistic, imaginative,

impractical, impulsive, independent, intuitive, nonconforming, original, sensitive, and open. The Social type is ascendant, cooperative, patient, friendly, helpful, idealistic, kind, persuasive, responsible, tactful, understanding, and warm. The Enterprising type is acquisitive, adventurous, agreeable, ambitious, domineering, energetic, exhibitionistic, flirtatious, self-confident, sociable, and talkative. The Conventional type is characterized as careful, conforming, defensive, efficient, inflexible, methodical, obedient, orderly, persistent, practical, thrifty, and unimaginative.

Each participant answered two additional questions. The first question ("What study area would you choose if all options were open to you?") was intended to allow the participants to express their career desires freely where no constraints or special circumstances are seen as limiting factors. The second question ("What study area will you choose in the light of the limitations of your situation?") highlighted the inevitable influence of other factors on study area choice. The judges categorized the participants' answers according to Holland's (1985) six career types, employing the content analysis method developed for this research.

Procedure. Content analysis of early recollections was performed by two independent judges, where reliability was established between the two (agreement between judges is defined as choice of similar career types by both judges when reviewing each individual set of early recollections). An interjudge agreement of 83% was attained after an interrater agreement of 90% was achieved during training of judges. The judges selected were postgraduate students who were familiar with Adlerian methods, having taken basic courses in Individual Psychology. They were instructed to look for the "telltale" signs of Holland's (1973) types in accordance with the salient characteristics contained in his descriptions of the types. However, the judges were also encouraged to try to form an overall impression of the personality type from reading each recollection as a whole. In this way, the holistic outlook inherent in the Adlerian style of analysis would not be lost to a more technical and perhaps fragmentary analysis of the individual recollections.

The classification of study area was carried out by experts in the career-counseling field in accordance with the principles of Holland's (1985) "occupational finder," using only the first letter of each study area. (These two experts were both experienced occupational psychologists familiar with Holland's theory and instruments.)

Results

Early recollections as expressions of Holland's types. The content analysis of early recollections requires the identification and interpretation of focal

or salient characteristics of a given early recollection. Cultural issues should be taken into account when performing such analysis.

Sometimes, on the surface, early recollections seem to fall into familiar story types. In Israel, because of the popularity of inexpensive public pre-school education, many people recall events that occurred in nursery school. However, while these memories fall into this familiar story type, the significance of the different memories may be surprisingly varied.

Three individuals remembered accidents in their respective kindergarten classes. This common childhood recollection may seem to provide little relevant information with regard to personality traits in general and career interest in particular. However, upon further examination this first impression may be misleading.

Person A: A child fell in the playground. The teacher picked him up and calmed him. Gradually the child recovered his composure and felt much better. The teacher was eventually able to put the child down and he went back to play with the other children.

Person B: A child fell in the playground. The strongest aspect of the memory for me concerns the bone that appeared to be sticking out of the child's leg. I was fascinated by this sight and wondered how the bone might be put back inside and the problem fixed.

Person C: A child fell down in the playground. I remember the blood. The deep red color of the blood, slowly growing into a pool on the ground. What a strong color!

Person A focused on the emotional aspect of the teacher's comforting the child, suggesting particular interest in the sympathy and support for the child. This might place Person A in the Social category. Person B was fascinated by the bone that stuck out and needed to be fixed. This suggests a more technical sense, perhaps placing Person B in the Realistic category. The color of the growing pool of blood is the strongest part of Person C's memory, so that he may well belong in the Artistic category.

When looking at the early recollection of any individual, we ask ourselves what the focus of the early recollection reveals about what is most important and of greatest concern to the individual. How does the recollection reflect a basic outlook on life that serves as a guide to behavior and decision making?

It is as if individuals respond to each particular challenge in life by asking themselves the question, "What have I learned from my experiences as a young child that can help me decide what to do now?" Thus, they develop "biased apperceptions," of which they are only dimly aware (Mosak, 1971); this is a fixed cognitive framework, a plan for life, a lifestyle. These are imperfect cognitive frameworks, which individuals draw on throughout life, when

faced with new situations, difficulties, and challenges. For example, the recollection of a painful event may serve as a warning not to get into such a situation again. This can either be negative or positive, depending on other characteristics of the individual's lifestyle.

Person Y: When I was little I very much liked to hit others and feel strong. Once I hit a classmate until he cried because he swore at me. At the time I was sorry and I told myself that I wouldn't hit anyone anymore and I wouldn't take any notice of curses and insults except to return them!

Person Y exhibited a desire to be strong and perhaps a little cruel. He also showed a degree of social interest in that he regretted hitting his classmate. However, the aggressive nature of the recollection reveals him as a Realistic type, while the concern shown for the victim suggests that Person Y is also a Social type. When this interpretation was provided, Person Y seemed to feel it was right, and he recognized that the memory expressed a major aspect of his personality and what was most important to him. He felt a certain satisfaction that he had been understood. The difficulty in determining the type in this particular memory may reflect problems of consistency as defined by Holland.

Following are examples of early recollections that approximate Holland's personality types as well as commentary describing the relationship between the two.

Person D: When I was a little boy I used to like to take things apart, especially electrical appliances. One day I wanted to find out what was inside the television, so I decided to take a knife and break it open. Because I was small I didn't have the strength and anyway my father caught me and yelled at me. And that's how it ended!

Person D's recollection displays great interest in technology. The primary goal expressed is the satisfaction of the individual's curiosity about the workings of electrical appliances in general and the television in particular. This is suggestive of the Realistic type.

Person A: In the third grade I remember in one of the lessons, they took us down to the air raid shelter. Everyone was frightened, asking each other what to do and the teachers were also a little stressed. But I remember sitting there on the side looking at everyone and thinking OK, so? An hour or two passed and they gave us all kinds of things to do. I didn't feel fear, just that it was strange that this was happening.

The tendency to observe an event that was clearly traumatic for the children around him from the sidelines suggests an attitude to life, or a lifestyle in which the ability to be objective, to analyze, and to describe without involvement is of paramount importance. This suggests the Investigative type, for whom such an approach is essential.

Person E: *I was about four, I was playing in the [Kindergarten] yard, and I took a caterpillar and played with it. In the end it found its way up my nose. I went to the teacher and told her that I had a caterpillar in my nose. She became agitated and tried to get it out. After he found his way out she became very angry with me and told me not to do such things. Today when I think about it I simply think that it was all out of curiosity and it makes me smile.*

“What an odd recollection!” is probably the reader’s first reaction. The manner of the description is also unusual. Person E was not upset by having a caterpillar up her nose. Nor did she identify with the teacher, who became agitated. Person E enjoys the unexpected and is passive and curious. She seemed to enjoy the confusion and concern she created! These characteristics are commonly found in the Artistic type individual’s memories.

Person R: *I went to nursery school for the first time in my life at the age of four or five. I don’t remember my feelings that day but I went with my mother and the moment I arrived I met my first friend in the nursery school, a boy by the name of P. I remember a clear picture of P playing on the railings and somehow I joined him. I had fun all day. Today I remember this event with joy as a memory from my childhood. I remember the event as a clear picture before my eyes.*

Person R remembers a social event, of meeting her first friend and developing a friendship, with great happiness. Person R remembers herself as sociable and enjoying social interaction. She reveals herself as a Social type.

Person I: *One day my parents went to work early, so that I would be the last to leave the apartment. I went downstairs and hid under the building until everyone was gone. Then I went back upstairs. The cleaner needed to get in but I didn’t open the door for her. I began inventing stories that I had fallen and received a knock and this was why I didn’t go to school. I also had a form that I got from school to show that I had been sick for a couple of days. So I changed the dates to include that day, as well.*

The attempt to circumvent the system shows the initiative that is characteristic of the Enterprising type.

Person E: *I loved to play as a secretary and organize an office in my room. I loved to organize different piles of items in trays. One day I did this for so long that I forgot to eat lunch and got into trouble with my parents, who laughed and said that when I grew up a bit more I could help them in their business.*

Often memories of games are most relevant to later career choice. Person E’s recollection concentrates on organizing the “office,” suggesting the Conventional type.

The Binominal Approximation to the Normal Distribution Curve with correction for continuity (Magner-Harris, Riordan, Kern, & Curlette, 1979) was performed to determine whether the correlation between predictions

and career choice was significant. The resulting distribution of participants by study area choice and early recollections is presented in Table 1.

In the Realistic, Social, and Artistic fields, in which there were a significant number of observations, significant results were obtained. However, in the other three fields, Investigative, Enterprising, and Conventional, there were not enough observations to yield significant results. In 110 cases where interjudge agreement was achieved, 61 (55.45%) successful and 49 (44.55%) unsuccessful predictions were made. In 18 cases, interjudge agreement was not achieved. Therefore, if we include those cases where judge agreement was not achieved, we still obtain a success rate of 48%.

Chi squares were used to test the significance of these results. The null hypothesis whereby these results could have been achieved by chance was rejected ($p < .01$). Therefore, these results support the first and primary hypothesis of this research.

It was expected that early recollections would better predict desired study area choice than actual study area choice. Comparison of the results failed to confirm this. Early recollections predicted 55.45% of desired study area choice correctly, and the prediction of actual area choice was not significantly different (49.02%). While early recollections predicted desired study area choice slightly better than SDS did (SDS correctly predicted 44.62% of desired study area choice) and SDS predicted actual study area choice slightly better than early recollections did (SDS correctly predicted 52.88% of actual study area choice), these slight differences may well be explained by chance; thus these results fail to support hypothesis 2.

In 54 out of the 63 cases where the early recollections and SDS agreed, the predictions of desired career choice were correct; thus, a success rate of 84.87% was obtained. Using Chi squares, the null hypothesis whereby these results could have been achieved by chance was rejected ($p < .01$). The high success rate of the combined use of early recollections and SDS contributes to the concurrent validity of these two tests. These results support hypothesis 3.

Discussion

This study deals with the predictive power of early recollection content analysis with regard to career choice. The theoretical basis for the research is founded upon the overall assumption that there are important parallels between the personality theory of Alfred Adler, whereby people live their lives in accordance with a given lifestyle, and the theory of career choice developed by John Holland, whereby personality types can be identified and categorized in accordance with career preferences.

Table 1
 Distribution of Subjects by Desired Study Area Choice and by Early Recollections,
 according to Holland's Six Career Fields ($n = 110$)

By early recollections	By desired choice						Total N						
	Realistic N	Realistic %	Investigative N	Investigative %	Artistic N	Artistic %		Social N	Social %	Enterprising N	Enterprising %	Conven- tional N	Conven- tional %
Realistic	30	76.92*	4	44.44	4	23.53	4	10.81	1	16.67	1	50	44
Judge Investigative agree- ment	1	2.27	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Artistic	2	4.55	2	22.22	7	41.18*	2	5.41	0	0	0	0	13
Social	1	2.27	2	22.22	2	11.76	22	59.46*	1	16.67	0	0	28
Enterprising	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	16.67	0	0	1
Conventional	1	2.27	1	11.11	0	0	2	5.41	0	0	1	50	5
Judge disagreement	4	9.09	0	0	4	23.53	7	18.92	3	50	0	0	18
Total	39		9		17		37		6		2		110

Note. $n = 100$. * $p < .01$.

If, as Holland (1997) assumed, career choice is based primarily upon an individual's personality, then those basic traits that characterize it should be identifiable through content analysis of early recollections.

We set out to show that it is possible to identify the major personality types, as defined by Holland, by analyzing the early recollections of participants who are in the process of making career choices. Furthermore, we attempted to show that individual choice of study area (seen as a stage in career choice) can be predicted by content analysis of the early recollections, using Holland's types as the basis for this analysis.

The results indicate that in three fields, the general direction of choice made by the research participants (defined in accordance with Holland, 1985) could be identified through early recollections analysis. The three fields successfully predicted in this study were Social, Realistic, and Artistic. However, because of the paucity of participants who chose the three remaining environments—Investigative, Enterprising, and Conventional—no significant information is available regarding the predictive power of early recollections in identifying the types that would choose these environments. Any future research intended to support the predictive power of early recollections in career choice should include enough participants who would choose these three environments to enable statistical manipulations that would provide significant results. Notwithstanding this limitation, however, the present research does successfully show the efficacy of the content analysis of early recollections in predicting study path choice within the typological framework developed by Holland.

It should be noted that these are remarkable results, considering that we did not use refinements of Holland's analysis of types. We analyzed all questionnaires without eliminating those respondents who showed no differentiation (one clear type dominant over others), and yet we did get meaningful results.

Each participant was asked about his or her desired study area of choice and actual study area choice. It was expected that the answer regarding desired study area choice would better reflect the participant's personality, and, because early recollection analysis is solely based on personality evaluation, it was expected that this answer would better correspond with the result of the early recollection content analysis.

While the results supported Hypothesis 1 (that early recollection analysis would successfully predict desired career choice), they failed to show significant differences between desired and actual career choice, therefore failing to support Hypothesis 2. This might be attributed to response rate problems. While 114 participants responded regarding desired study area choice, 104 responded regarding actual study area choice. Thus, there is a degree of inconsistency that may weaken the clarity of these results. Hypothesis 3—that agreement between early recollection analysis and SDS results

would lead to a significantly higher degree of prediction of career choice—was certainly borne out.

The practical value of the validation of this method of content analysis of early recollections in the field of career counseling is that it provides a tool that relates directly to salient personality traits. In the counseling setting, it is important to address the central question posed by most clients, which focuses on their suitability to a given career or course of study that will lead them to a career. The early recollection evaluation provides a direct link between the client's personality and his or her likely career preference. Discussing the information revealed in early recollection analysis with clients should help them to concentrate on their major personality needs regarding career choice. By focusing on personality, early recollection analysis encourages individuals to regard their basic outlook on life as a guide to deciding what kind of career is most advisable. The individual learns from the counseling experience that job suitability is chiefly a matter of finding the career environment that suits his or her personality.

Practitioners will be interested in how the use of early recollections for career counseling may be implemented. In our experience, clients' understanding of their early recollections often allows them to make the leap from the more mechanical, step-by-step approach characteristic of most career counseling tools to an insightful recognition of what is most important to them and how this may affect their future career satisfaction. At the very least, the addition of early recollection analysis may strengthen the stability of testing results. For example, the emotional impact of recognizing the creative, intuitive, and often individualistic lifestyle revealed in the artistic type of early recollection may corroborate information obtained from standard career questionnaires, but the impact of the deepening self-awareness through early recollection analysis may make the results more meaningful to the client.

In addition, early recollection analysis may help when dealing with more difficult situations, such as those where students are disappointed at not being accepted for a chosen study path. Such clients may feel unable to pursue alternatives even with informative results obtained from standard career questionnaires. Focusing on the insights obtained from early recollection analysis may help the individuals free themselves from the dead-end situation in which they find themselves.

In general, it is our experience that early recollection analysis, when properly explained to the client, empowers individuals to think about who they are and what they want from a career and enables them to look at work environments from their individual point of view. This often facilitates the career counseling process and strengthens the clients' sense of purpose, adding meaning to the counseling process.

The standard questionnaires used in career counseling, such as SDS, do not directly address the question of personality and therefore may not satisfy the needs of clients who are seeking guidance. Moreover, some clients are uncomfortable with the format of the standard questionnaire, in which they are required to make choices that do not always seem as clear-cut to them as the "yes" or "no" answers solicited. Often clients feel they are ill prepared, not knowledgeable enough about the world of interests or too inexperienced in life to answer the questions posed in such questionnaires. Even if research indicates that these feelings on the part of the client do not result in poorer predictive or diagnostic power of testing, the very fact that clients doubt the face validity of present career-testing tools requires that practitioners find a means to increase clients' confidence. By doing so, counselors may enhance the counseling process, which is founded on the basis of cooperation between the career counselor and the client who comes in search of guidance. Early recollections provide a window into the personality of the individual that should be of great value in this respect.

References

- Adler, A. (1958). *What life should mean to you*. New York: Capricorn Books.
- Ansbacher, H. L., & Ansbacher, R. R. (Eds.). (1956). *The Individual Psychology of Alfred Adler*. New York: Basic Books.
- Barrett, D. (1980). The first memory as predictor of personality traits. *Journal of Individual Psychology*, 36, 136–149.
- Clark, A. J. (2001). Early recollections: A humanistic assessment in counseling. *Journal of Humanistic Counseling, Education & Development*, 40(1), 96–105.
- Elliot, D., Amerikaner, M., & Swank, P. (1987). Early recollections and the Vocational Preference Inventory as predictors of vocational choice. *Journal of Individual Psychology*, 43(3), 353–359.
- Elliot, D., Fakouri, M. N., & Hafner, J. L. (1993). Early recollections of criminal offenders. *Journal of Individual Psychology*, 43(3), 353–359.
- Feldman, S., & Meir, E. I. (1976). Measuring women's interests using Holland's vocational classification. *Journal of Vocational Behaviour*, 9, 345–353.
- Gottfredson, L. (1981). Circumscription and compromise: A developmental theory of occupational aspirations. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 28, 545–579.
- Gottfredson, L. S. (1996). Gottfredson theory of circumscription and compromise. In D. Brown & L. Brooks (Eds.), *Career choice and development* (pp. 179–232). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Hafner, K. L., & Fakouri, M. E. (1984). Early recollections and vocational choice. *Journal of Individual Psychology, 40*, 18–23.

Holland, J. L. (1973). *Making vocational choices: A theory of careers*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Holland, J. L. (1985). *Making vocational choices: A theory of vocational personalities and work environments* (2nd ed.). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Holland, J. L. (1997). *Making vocational choices: A theory of vocational personality and work environments* (3rd ed.). Odessa, FL: The Psychological Assessment Resources, Inc.

Magner-Harris, J., Riordan, R. J., Kern, R. M., & Curlette, W. L. (1979). Reliability of life-style interpretations. *Journal of Individual Psychology, 35*, 196–201.

Manaster, G. J., Mays, M., & Anderson, R. (2001). Manaster-Perryman Early Recollections Scoring Manual: Findings and summary. *The Journal of Individual Psychology, 57*(4), 413–419.

Manaster, G. J., & Perryman, T. B. (1974). Early recollections and vocational choice. *Journal of Individual Psychology, 30*, 232–237.

Meir, E. I. (1973). The structure of occupations by interests: A small space analysis. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 3*, 21–23.

Mosak, H. H. (1958). Early recollections as a projective technique. *Journal of Projective Techniques, 22*, 302–311.

Mosak, H. H. (1971). Lifestyle. In A. G. Nikelly (Ed.), *Techniques of behavior change* (pp. 77–81). Springfield, IL: Thomas.

Mosak, H. H. (1979). Adlerian psychotherapy. In R. J. Corsini (Ed.), *Current psychotherapies* (pp. 51–94). Itasca, IL: F. E. Peacock.

Spokane, A. R., Meir, E. L., & Castalano, M. (2000). Person environment congruence and Holland's theory: A review and reconsideration. *Journal of Vocational Behaviour, 57*, 137–187.

Sullivan, B. A., & Hansen, J. C. (2004). Mapping associations between interests and personality: Toward a conceptual understanding of individual differences in vocational behavior. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 51*, 287–298.

Verger, D. M., & Camp, W. L. (1970). Early recollections: Reflections on the present. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 17*, 510–515.

Copyright of Journal of Individual Psychology is the property of University of Texas Press and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.