The Career Development Philosophy of Dana Flanigan

- Personality
- Genetics
- Luck
- Values
What kinds of skills does one need to obtain in order to be a successful career counselor? As a career counselor is gaining the skills and understanding to become a competent professional, there are some areas of importance for this particular member of the field. As a career counselor, it is of vast significance that a specific philosophy of career counseling is developed. The philosophy should be developed out of the fundamental beliefs of the counselor that is grounded in research, theory, and personal experience. It is in these fundamental beliefs that a counselor can competently and confidently detect the most pertinent influences in the career of their clients. Also, with the knowledge a career counselor has in these influential factors, they must also have a grasp on several interventions that can be conducted for each. The four influential factors that will be discussed by this counselor includes: Genetics, Personality, Family, and Luck.

**Factor 1 – Genetics**

It is hard to deny the significant influence that genetics play in the lives of the clients. The genetic code of the client will determine such aspects of their lives as: what types of special abilities they may have, as well as to what degree; what their range of intellectual capability is; what kind of biological predispositions that they are born with that will possibly affect their natural demeanor, physical characteristics, as well as their overall health and their probability for many kinds of disease and dysfunctions. Although there are ways to diminish or enhance some of the genetic forces, they continue to have influential power over the career developmental process of all men and women throughout the world. As a career counselor, it is important to know in what ways that genetics specifically influence the career development process of their clients.

To understand how genetics influence the career development process, take a look at these two scenarios. First, imagine that you love baseball more than anything, and have always dreamed of playing in the majors. Through the years, you trained and practiced from sunrise to sunset. You put in the time, the effort, and have maximized your skills to their absolute extreme. So you will definitely make it to the pro’s, because there are thousands of guys in the major leagues and there is no way that everyone is working is hard as you, right? It does not take a rocket scientist to see the lack of sincerity in that last question. Look, training hard and striving to perfect your skill are crucial in the process of obtaining and maintaining a career in professional
In the world of sports, it is the athletes with that special ability bestowed upon them by their genetic endowment that gives them the edge on the other guy busting his butt to make it to the big leagues. For instance, the Yankees have a player named Brett Gardner. He has one skill that allows him to excel behind the plate and in the field. This skill is his blazing speed. If his speed was a result of his hard work, then a ton of guys would have his speed, and he would probably not have a job. However, do to the speed he was blessed with, he has been able to play an important role in the Yankees lineup. It is the special abilities that Gardner was born with, that have allowed him to find a career in professional baseball.

The second scenario involves a man, who has dreamed about winning a noble peace prize, finding a great discovery, working for NASA, and being a success that no one in his family has ever been able to do. Much like the man who aspired to play pro baseball, this individual dreams and aspires to become successful by means of intellectual virtue. He works tirelessly to gain the skill and knowledge to one day achieve his goal. With all of his hard work, he is able to reach his absolute maximum intellectual capability. However, his IQ scores and career aptitudes indicate that this individual will barely qualify for mid-level positions, and is most suited for jobs in the low-end of the intellectual job pool. So if this individual is reaching his maximum intelligence, why is he not splitting the atom and curing cancer? The answer to this question is simple. This man did not have the genetic makeup to ever reach those heights. Therefore, this individual’s career development would be deeply influenced by his genetic limitations. If anyone suggests that the interests of the client are one of the most significant influencing factors in the career development process, they just got trumped on this one. This client indicated his interests, but genetics stepped in and told him they he is going to have to get some new interests.

The theory that bests represent the influence of genetics on the career development process is the Social Learning Theory by Krumbolts. In Krumbolts theory, he recognizes that certain inherited characteristics can be restrictive influences on the individual, much like a biological constitution. Some examples of these inherited characteristics include race, gender, and physical appearance. Other factors for which inheritance, at least in
part, may set limits include various special abilities, such as intelligence, musical and artistic ability, and physical coordination.

In my personal experience, I faced the concept of understanding my genetic limitations as I have developed through my career development. The first time this happened was when I aspired to play pro baseball, because I have always had strong interest in the sport. Unfortunately my 63 MPH fastball was never going to earn me a roster spot on most fast pitch female softball leagues, let alone a major league team. I also have always had an interest in helping people, and have wanted to change the lives of millions somehow. I have since learned that I have a decent level of intelligence, but it has a limit. Therefore, I may never be able to make those monumental changes in the lives of millions. However, I could possibly become a counselor and help one client at a time, and do what I am capable of doing.

There are many interventions related to this concept that a Career counselor could use with their clients. One intervention that is big in Krumbolts theory is to use behavior rehearsal and cognitive practice to prepare clients for career-related tasks and direct them to role models they can emulate. I would try to counter beliefs that limit growth and learning and assist clients to establish both proximal and terminal goals. Another intervention would be to use positive reinforcement techniques for effort and achievement, recognizing that some clients exist in negative environments.

**Factor 2 – Personality**

The next influential factor in my career development philosophy is personality. Personality has a link to the first factor that was discussed, genetics. According to Holland, an individual’s personality develops as a result of the interaction of inherited characteristics, the activities to which the individual is exposed, and the interests and competencies that grow out of the activities. Holland also believes that children shape their own environments to an extent, and they are exposed to a number of people in addition to their parents who provide experiences and reinforce certain types of performance. Finally, Holland goes on to state that the combination
of these influences produces “a person who is predisposed to exhibit a characteristic self-concept and outlook and to acquire a characteristic disposition. Ultimately, the personality emerges, which Holland suggests may not purely fit into the six pure personality types, which includes: realistic, investigative, artistic, social, enterprising, and conventional. Holland has defined each personality type, as well as the variety of occupations that would most likely be filled by an individual that matched that type.

**Realistic**

The Realistic personality consists of people who deal with the environment in an object, concrete, and physically manipulative. These individuals tend to avoid goals and tasks that demand subjectivity, intellectual or artistic expressions, or social abilities. These types of people are described as masculine, unsociable, emotionally stable, and materialistic. These personality types usually prefer agricultural, technical, skill-trade, and engineering vocations. Individuals with realistic personalities have been shown to like activities that involve motor skills, equipment, machines, tools, and structure, such as athletics, scouting, crafts, and shop work. These realistic individuals are most compatible with a realistic environment for their occupations and career development. Typical realistic work settings include a filling station, a machine shop, a farm, a construction site, and a barber shop.

**Investigative**

The Investigative personality consists of people deal with the environment by using intellect – manipulating ideas, words, and symbols. These individuals prefer scientific vocations, theoretical tasks, reading, collecting, algebra, foreign languages, and such creative activities as art, music, and sculpture. Individuals with this type of personality tend to avoid social situations and often see themselves as unsociable, masculine, persistent, scholarly, and introverted. They typically achieve primarily in academic and scientific areas and usually do poorly as leaders. These investigative individuals are most compatible with an investigative environment for their occupations and career development. Typical Investigative work settings include a research laboratory a diagnostic case conference; a library; and a work group of scientists, mathematics, or research engineers.
**Artistic**

The Artistic personality consists of people deal with the environment by creating art forms and products. These individuals rely on subjective impressions and fantasies in seeking solutions to problems. People with an artistic personality usually prefer musical, artistic, literary, and dramatic vocations and activities that are creative in nature. They tend to dislike masculine activities and roles, such as auto repair and athletics. They typically see themselves as unsociable, feminine, submissive, introspective, sensitive, impulsive, and flexible. These artistic individuals are most compatible with an artistic environment for their occupations and career development. Typical Artistic work settings include a play rehearsal, a concert hall, a dance studio, a study, a library, and an art or music studio.

**Social**

The Social personality consists of people deal with the environment by using skills to interact with and relate to others. These individuals are generally defined by their social skills and their need for social interaction. People with a social personality usually prefer educational, therapeutic, and religious vocations and activities, such as church, government, community services, music, reading, and dramatics. They typically see themselves as sociable, nurturing, cheerful, conservative, responsible, achieving, and self-accepting. These social individuals are most compatible with a social environment for their occupations and career development. Typical Social work situations include school and college classrooms, counseling offices, mental hospitals, churches, educational offices, and recreational centers.

**Enterprising**

The Enterprising personality consists of people deal with the environment by expressing adventurous, dominant, enthusiastic, and impulsive qualities. These individuals are characterized as persuasive, verbal, extroverted, self-accepting, self-confident, aggressive, and exhibitionistic; they prefer sales, supervisory, and leadership vocations and activities that satisfy needs for dominance, verbal expression, recognition, and power. These enterprising individuals are most compatible with an enterprising environment for their occupations and career
development. Typical Enterprising work settings include a car lot, a real estate office, a political rally, and an advertising agency.

Conventional

The Conventional personality consists of people deal with the environment by choosing goals and activities that carry social approval. These individuals approach problems in stereotypical, correct, and unoriginally. They tend to create a neat, sociable, conservative impression. They prefer clerical and computational tasks, identify with business, and put a high value on economic matters. Conventional people see themselves as masculine, shrewd, dominant, controlled, rigid, and stable and have more mathematical than verbal aptitude. These conventional individuals are most compatible with a conventional environment for their occupations and career development. Typical Conventional work settings include a bank, an accounting firm, a post office, a file room, and a business office.

Holland suggests that each of these model environments is sought be individuals whose personality type is similar to those controlling the environment. It is assumed that they will be comfortable and happy in a compatible environment and uneasy in an environment suited to a different personality type. Holland’s theory is very applicable to my career development journey. Of the six personalities described in Holland’s theory, I seem to fit best with the social personality. I have always had an interest in people, what makes them tick, and why and how they interact and behave. I always preferred social situations, and to interact with people over being in isolated environments. Also, I liked working as a team, working for the greater good, and trying to make people’s lives better. Therefore, when I went to college and was paired with courses related to the social personality (psychology, sociology, etc), it was a comfortable fit. Therefore, when working with future clients, Holland’s theory will be a valuable part of my career counseling repertoire and philosophy.

There are several effective interventions that can be conducted with clients using Holland’s personality theory. Instruments that have been developed out of this theory includes: The Self-Directed Search (4th ed.); The Strong Interest Inventory; The Harrington-O’Shea Career Decision-Making System, Revised; Find your Interests (part of the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery [ASVAB] Career Exploration Program; The
Career Key (Online); Interest Profiler (embedded in O*NET); Wide Range Interest and Occupation Test (2nd ed.) (nonverbal inventory for special populations). One instrument I would definitely like to use is the Self-Directed Search. This instrument consists of occupational titles and activities that can be divided equally among the six type areas. Each method of determining personality type yields a score. As stated earlier, Holland believes that all six types are descriptive of personality; this test suggests that the top three scores are the most telling factors. Thus the result of the assessment of type is a three letter code, known as a Holland Code. The second intervention that I believe would be quite helpful is the Career Key. This is another interest inventory instrument that produces Holland’s Code. The advantage to this instrument is that it is online, so it may provide more options to the clinician.

**Factor 3 – Luck**

What can be said about the role of Luck in the career development process? Luck is viewed by many people as being unpredictable and random. However, is there any way to increase your chance of getting good luck, or making your own luck? On the other hand, there are a lot of people who strongly believe in luck, and look at it in a positive light. The down side to these people is that they too think that luck is an unpredictable force that cannot be changed or altered. There are several components that go into the luck theory in terms of career development.

The concept of indecision plays a significant role in the Luck theory, which consists of both advantages and disadvantages. The disadvantages of career indecision include such issues as: aimlessness, wasting time, unfocused education, delayed work entry, missed opportunities, and unemployment. The advantages to career indecision includes: prevents impulsive moves, delays judgment. Indecision about making long-term plans is actually more sensible than making firm commitments when the future is so uncertain. First, when discussing indecision with clients, I would want to reframe this as open-mindedness. As we utilize the concept of living with it, we would approach two concepts: 1) tolerating ambiguity, and 2) develop an exploratory attitude.
There are great deals of interventions that can be conducted based out of the luck theory. First, I would want to teach clients how to become lucky. Encourage clients to take action, by generating luck, recognizing luck, and encouraging luck. Also, to utilize exploration techniques and skill development, which include such methods as: shadow experiences, internships, volunteer positions, and part-time positions. The skills that I could assist the clients into developing luck, includes: curiosity, persistence, flexibility, optimism, and risk-taking.

**Factor 4 – Values**

A person’s Values definitely have a strong influence on their career development process. Brown built on the work of Rokeach, Super, Beck, and others to formulate a holistic model of career and life-role choice making. In its conception, the theory was aimed primarily at people with traditional Eurocentric values, including individualism, full time orientation, moderate need for self-control, emphasis on activity, and core belief that humans should dominate nature. Career values have been identified as important variables in career development and vocational behaviors, but because these values vary across cultures, a comprehensive theory of career choice and development must take into account this variation. However, cultural values are not the only variables that influence the career choice-making process or the resulting satisfaction and/or success. Contextual variables, such as socioeconomic status (SES); family or group; discrimination are also considered.

Values are beliefs that are experienced by the individual as standards regarding how he or she should function. They are cognitive structures, but they have behavioral and affective dimensions. Values develop so that individuals can meet their needs in socially acceptable ways, and thus the behavioral aspect of values is shaped by the cultural context in which they develop. An individual’s values are the basis for his or her self-evaluation and the evaluation of others, and they play a major role in the establishment of personal goals. Work values are the values that individuals believe should be satisfied as a result of their participation in their work role. The major underlying assumption of this theory that is advanced in this article is that cultural and work values are the primary variables that influence the occupational choice-making process, the occupation chosen, and the resulting satisfaction with and success in the chosen occupation.
Values have been an important influence on me in making my scholastic, career, and personal decisions in my life. I was raised by my grandparents, who both worked hard to instill values in me. My grandfather sharpened skates and operated the Salamanca ice pond. One day, while he was working, I was watching him while I was relaxing in the warming hut. To my dismay, I saw a little punk come up to him, call him a name and spit in his face. He didn’t react, and simply went on about his business. Later in the day, the same punk kid was shivering by the window of the warming hut. My grandfather took the only dollar he had in his tip jar and gave it to that kid to go get a hot chocolate to get warmed up. At the time, I thought my grandfather was dumb for how he responded to this situation. However, as I grew and matured, I started to hold that moment as a standard for how to live. This moment became one of the key memory motivators for my values.

The values-based approach to career counseling can provide many different types of interventions for counselors. One important intervention would most likely be conducted at the beginning of the therapeutic alliance. I would want to engage in thorough interview process with each client and focus on the cultural values of each client. The reason this would be so significant, is that the cultural values of each client could provide the basis for the entire career counseling process that we are about to embark on. Another intervention I may conduct with client using the values-based model would be pattern identification. According to the pattern identification assessment strategy, the individual thinks about an activity from one of the life roles in which she or he has participated.