

Ch. 15: Nature, Importance, and Assessment of Interests

This chapter starts by discussing how many of the original career inventories may not have taken interest in direct consideration. These typically take both components and determinants into consideration. Components included personality, motivation, and drive, where determinants consider nature vs nurture. Where many tests indicate they are measuring interest without specifying what this is, this chapter states they will use interest, defined as preferences for activities expressed as likes and dislikes. Holland's Theory discusses interest best among the theories. Holland has six areas of consideration: Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, and Conventional (RIASEC). Holland provides a frame to help understand interest as it applies to people, work environments, and job tasks. The authors of the theory of work adjustment see interest as determining a person's satisfaction, performance, and tenure in a career. Super's theory indicates that interest helps shape personality and one's career identity but must be preceded by a willingness to make decisions. Career Construction Theory suggests that interests are a part of how a child's reputation develops among family, neighborhood, and school. CCT does not use a formal assessment to discover interest but is a part of the counseling conversation and displayed by areas of interest shared. Social Cognitive Career Theory also sees interest as being shaped externally. SCCT is more about considering how outside forces impact an individual's interest. When a person's self-efficacy and outcome expectation get rewarded through participation in a particular behavior or event, they are more likely to move towards that area of interest and keep doing it. Without going through every theory presented, the basic idea in the chapter is the theories and assessments vary in methods and the foundations they build

from. If using these tools, it is good to have a general understanding of which tools fit what group (e.g., does cost matter, age, etc.).

The whole idea of career theory seems a bit subjective. Theories can only help point you in the general direction. Theories are not firm enough to give definitive advice and taken as absolutes. Without a deeper understanding of the theories presented, they seem to offer possibilities that may or may not be suitable. Some of the theories, such as SCCT, seem intriguing to think about how self-efficacy and outcome expectations can affect a person's areas of interest. With the theories, seeing one small aspect of career counseling, like interest, so different causes one to wonder if there are many different reasonable ways to view interest or if there is confusion in the field.

Additionally, are self-accessed and scored assessments valid? These are less expensive, but one must ask if people are willing to be honest or score them with a slant toward their preconceived inclinations. The chapter indicates the Holland developed Self Assessment Search has been given some 35 million times. It is also a valid question to consider the validity of either self-graded or those assessments graded in other manners. Many people are confused about how to answer these types of tools, and the instructions are either too lengthy to bother reading or basic and do not clarify. Many people are confused about whether to answer how I am, how I want to be, or how others see me. These variations can give drastically different results. Even with all this, the SDS has been used in various research projects and claims a high success rate. Some data seems to support this, while other works point to less definitive findings.

It seems that many factors affect the outcomes of the tools. It would be interesting, if time and money were not factors, to do further research to try and develop or move towards career

tools that have more concrete findings. More research is needed in this field to consider ways to make the results more straightforward (e.g., considering ethnic, cultural, sex, religious, geographic location, etc., and their effect on the outcomes). The area of focus in this chapter spawned from work in the 1930's and yet still, the results seem a bit subjective. In addition to considering interest, the chapter's authors suggest that more should consider the roles of abilities, values, and personality.

When working with Master level students, it would seem wise to help them take Carl Roger's non-directive approach when working with clients and assessments. That is, to see these instruments as tools for generalized direction rather than a definitive nudge toward a particular area. Seeing a well-rounded, holistic person when helping clients think through a potential career path to consider is essential. A generalized knowledge base of career theory will enable the next generations of counselors to serve their clients well. Master students interested in career counseling need to understand Holland's Theory because of its vast influence over the years as a leading career thought-processing tool. An excellent free tool that masters students would benefit from knowing about is tools such as the O*NET (a free Holland's SDS type assessment). Students should be motivated to learn more about this field to both help their clients, as well as to help with research to improve the field.