Early Recollections for Vocation Direction and Defining One’s Calling

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Abstract

As individuals search for meaningful work in a world where the workplace is constantly shifting, the focus of work becomes more about personal fulfillment than security. Helping individuals find what they are vocationally called to do, and guiding them in making the personal changes necessary to reach their goals will become increasingly important for counselors of all disciplines. This research investigates one avenue to finding that information, early recollections. Early recollections are researched for validity as a theory, along with the notion of having a vocational calling as opposed to other styles of work, along with issues that can interfere with the work life task; this research as a whole is then investigated to see if early recollections can give insight into the work life task in order to find one’s vocational calling.
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Early Recollections for Vocation Direction and Defining One’s Calling

Young people often struggle with the question, “what am I supposed to do for work that will be meaningful?” while older adults often want to change their careers to find something more meaningful, but are unsure of which direction to take and often just end up staying in what they already know. Too often work is approached as being something outside of oneself, but this is not the case. As Stone (2007) points out,

[c]hoosing a career is more than picking an occupation. A career is part of one's total being. Adler makes this clear in his emphasis upon the unity of the personality. This means that everything a person does in life is part of this unity. Work is not something outside of personality and integrated only with a person's interests and choices. What a person does for a living is an integral part of his or her personal self. How he or she accomplishes his or her labor speaks even more strongly. (p.104)

This speaks to the impact that having meaningful work has on the rest of one’s life; it is not something that can be compartmentalized and separated from the whole.

This research topic is important because work makes up more than one-third of the waking life of most adults; finding meaningful work would logically seem to help one’s life to be much more fulfilling (Wrzesniewski, McCauley, Rozin, & Schwartz, 1997). Many people today are caught in a cycle of “…fulfillment not through working, but through the fruits of work in an endless cycle of working and spending” (Dawson, 2005, p. 226). People feel trapped by their lifestyle of spending for fulfillment that often has no lasting meaning, forcing most to spend more to recapture the lost fulfillment once the excitement of a purchase wears off, in what can basically be seen as an addictive cycle. Also important is the fact that many people have trouble figuring out their vocational calling or have self-defeating behaviors that interfere with fulfilling
it. Finally, this research is important because therapists are generally under-trained at dealing with the work life task and the issues around it (Stone, 2007).

**Significance of the Study**

Surveys have shown that 44 percent of college students believe they have a vocational calling, while 28 percent are actively searching for a vocational calling; only nine percent have no inclination towards a vocational calling at all (Duffy & Sedlacek, 2010). Surveys of adults have found that one third to one half of employees from a variety of different occupations feel that they have a vocational calling to their work (Wrzesniewski, McCauley, Rozin, & Schwartz, 1997). Taken together, these statistics demonstrate the merit of this research; half of the working population does not feel called to their work, and almost a third of students are still seeking their vocational calling, which is a large percentage of the population who are less than fulfilled in their work life task, or unsure of how to find meaningful work.

The pursuit, need, and interest in meaningful work has increased as work has become more of a subjective experience in recent generations with the decline of one track one company careers. According to Hunter, Dik, and Banning (2010):

> [T]his rather new stage in the U.S. and other developed nations has become relevant over the last few decades and is a product of an increasing number of years between adolescence and adulthood. As the average age by which people marry continues to rise, the widening interval between adolescence and marriage creates more time for exploration and a greater expressed desire for work that is meaningful compared to past generations. (p.180)

Since the objective trend of settling down, finding a steady job, and starting a family has culturally been postponed or even sometimes eliminated the subjective pursuit of exploring what
is meaningful through career pursuits has increased lending significance to the need for this type of study.

**Statement of the Problem**

It is problematic when a large percentage of the population has not found meaningful work and do not know how to go about discovering what work would be meaningful. Since such a large portion of a human life is spent working if one hates their job this will affect the rest of one’s life. Everyone should have the opportunity to find meaningful work in order to have a rich and fulfilling life.

**Thesis Question**

Can one use early recollections to help a client find insight into the work life task in order to find their vocation?

**Research Questions**

The questions to be investigated in this research are:

1. Are early recollections a valid projective technique for gathering information about a client?

2. What problems interfere with a successful fulfillment of the work life task?

3. Are there different kinds, types, or approaches to careers?

4. Is there a precedent for individuals having a vocation or a calling to a particular career?

5. What role does social interest play in forming meaningful careers?

6. What role does the development of consciousness play in career development?

7. Do all the previous questions come together to answer the thesis question? “Can one use early recollections to help a client find insight into the work life task in order to find their vocational calling?”
Limitations and Assumptions

This study is limited by the availability of research on these topics and by the subjective nature of some of these issues. Additionally, the theory of the Adlerian work life task and the subtopic theories found under that heading are for the most part assumed by this researcher to be theoretically true.

Biases

1. The author believes everyone could benefit from therapy, especially if they are having trouble finding or attaining their vocational calling.

2. That everyone has a calling to do a specific task in life that usually centers around the work life task.

Purpose of the Study

The goal of this project is to provide evidence that early recollections can reveal information that will help individuals lead more fulfilling lives with the intention of helping counselors to see the importance of the issues and the benefits of using this technique if the hypothesis is true.

Definition of Terms

*Early Recollections:* Memories from before the age of ten that are recalled by the client when asked for that are considered to contain information about where the individual providing the memories is having difficulties or is inhibited.

*The Work Life Task:* An umbrella category for any aspect of life having to do with whatever needs to be done to survive, make a living, and provide for oneself and ones loved one.

*Vocation/Calling:* A career path in which one feels they have been born to do a specific career or feel they are directed by forces outside of themselves down this career path.
Social Interest/Community Feeling: An attitude that puts the needs of others before one’s own, that is that compassion, caring, and bonding with our environment. This could be described as the opposite of a self-centered attitude.

Development of Consciousness: The development of self-awareness, in particular to one’s actions and behaviors. This manifest as continual self-evaluation of why one is acting they way they are and discernment into how to stop self-defeating behaviors.

The Role of Early Recollections for Vocation Direction and Defining One’s Calling

Early recollections may be a good technique for helping both young and older individuals to find their vocational calling. Since early recollections are a qualitative/projective assessment, they may give insight that is otherwise hidden from one’s conscious awareness.

Early Recollections

The primary purpose of this section is to describe what early recollections are, and to ascertain whether or not they are valid as a technique. This is done by analyzing either studies that use early recollections to differentiate between two groups of people with different personality traits, or research that statistically compares the results of early recollections to standardized psychometric assessments. The subject matter of the studies chosen do not relate to the thesis question, other than to demonstrate that early recollections can help to identify a wide range of traits and characteristics. However, some theoretical clarification on this type of assessment technique may be helpful in understanding the process.

Qualitative Assessments

Traditionally career assessments have been quantitative in nature, measuring traits abilities, and interests, but with changes in the post-modern world in the nature of career paths and the environment of the workplace qualitative assessments are gaining a much greater
Qualitative assessments (sometimes referred to as informal forms of assessment) are flexible, open-ended, holistic, and non-statistical tools that help counselors get clients to open up and understand themselves better by giving them a subjective focus and context in which the stories of their lives can be contained. Qualitative assessments place emphasis on the relationship between the client and the counselor instead of a focus on services rendered that usually accompany formal quantitative assessments. This allows for a more therapeutic counseling experience instead of the client being a passive responder to quantitative test questions. This also changes the role of the counselor from being the expert to being an inquiring participant. This change can be summarized as going from being objective to subjective or from scores to stories. This causes the gap between career counseling and personal counseling to become much smaller. Qualitative assessments encourage clients to tell their stories that help to reveal their subjective vocation and other life themes. According to Savickas (1992) counselors in this situation become “…biographers who interpret lives in progress rather than as actuaries who count interests and abilities” (p. 338). In other words qualitative assessments allow the counselor to help the client re-author their life story going into the future.

Constructivism theory. Theoretically qualitative assessments are based on constructivism, which is a learning theory that explains how individuals subjectively formulate their world to try and make sense out of the things that happen to them (Gysbers 2006). This theoretical structure allows qualitative assessments to provide a structure in which individuals can reflect on their experiences by using narratives and then crafting meaning and identity from those narratives. According to Bingham (2001) “Clients could be encouraged to ‘tell the story’ of their lives, and through that narrative, identify the recurrent themes. Then the manner in which they organize those themes and make sense of them becomes the basis for extrapolating about
the future” (p. 26). The counselor’s role is to engage in the meaning making process with the client as a fellow discoverer of who the client is meant to be.

**Projective assessment theory.** The theory behind projective assessments is that the meaning making part of the human psyche takes vague and ambiguous stimuli and transfers meaning onto that stimuli in order to make sense out of it but what ends up happening is the meaning transferred is reflective of the individuals current internal psychological condition, whether they are conscious of it or not (Kaplan & Saccuzzo, 2009). For example, a child will project their fear of the unknown onto a shadow in the closet and see a monster and likewise (theoretically) a client will project their most relevant psychological issues onto ink blots or early recollections.

**Adlerian theory of early recollections.** According to Adlerian theory, the memories called forth when a therapist asks the client for a childhood memory from before the age of nine do not come to mind by chance, but are rather held onto or brought forth at that time because it is relevant to the subject’s view of the world or current state of mind (Marcus, Manaster, & Spencer, 1999). These memories are known as early recollections, and theoretically they reveal what the subject senses as threatening and should be avoided, and what is regarded as valuable and to be chased after (Adler, 1937). Early recollections also reveal the subjective world perceived by the subject and how he or she deals with that world, revealing what guiding principles color the subject’s attitudes. It is not believed that the memories are necessarily accurate, nor is it at all necessary that they are objectively true because whatever is remembered or imagined provides the necessary projective insight.

The therapeutic benefit behind projective techniques such as early recollections is that they provide open and unbiased information; the client does not see an old memory as revealing
anything about their current situation, whereas more direct questions may elicit a more guarded or polished response that the subject will think makes him or her look better (Kern, Belangee, & Eckstein, 2004).

**Standardized assessment.** This subsection analyzes research that compares early recollections to various standardized psychometric assessments to see if early recollections are statistically valid. A study to determine early recollections as predictors of self-disclosure and interpersonal style compared results from two standardized psychometric assessments (Jourard’s Self-Disclosure Questionnaire and the Interpersonal Checklist) for 69 college student participants using two early recollections interpreters (Barrett, 1983). The interpreters were in agreement as to the meaning of the early recollections 86 to 90 percent of the time. A significant correlation (p < .05) was found between the quantity of words and details in a subject’s early recollection and their level of self-disclosure in their interpersonal interactions with others; the more words in the early recollections, the higher the self-disclosure scores were. This shows that early recollections can reflect the current state of mind of the subject. Interestingly, however, the results showed that when males used more words in early recollections, there was a correlation with dominance in their interpersonal interactions; conversely, when females used more words there was a correlation with friendliness in their interpersonal interactions. When asked for their earliest memory, a significant negative correlation was found; the older the subject was when having the early recollection, the less self-disclosing that person was and the more hostile the nature of the early recollection was. This lends support to the age limitation on early recollections and the theory that subjects who resist participating will have few recollections, starting with ones that are older, as the earliest memory so there will be fewer.
Research into the performance of early recollections to detect a person with anxiety problems versus what the Taylor Manifest Anxiety personality assessment could detect found that the coefficient between the two was .33 (p < .005) (Sattler & Brandon, 1967). In the same study, the performance of early recollections in detecting the subject’s tendency for introversion or extroversion was compared to the R scale of the Inventory of Factors STDCR, and it was found that early recollections did not do as well at predicting introversion or extroversion, with a coefficient of .17 (p > .05). Since the early recollections detected anxiety as well as the written assessments did, this study lends support to the technique’s validity.

Differentiation assessment. This subsection investigates if early recollections can differentiate between two or more groups of people with a specific character trait or worldview to help determine the validity of early recollections. In research involving 100 subjects (50 from each group) the early recollections of counselor-trainees and psychotherapy clients were compared using the Manaster-Perryman Manifest Content Early Recollections Scoring Manual (Marcus et al., 1999). Psychotherapy clients were found to have significantly more non-family members ($x^2 = 7.14, p < .01$) or animals ($x^2 = 5.26, p < .05$) in their early recollections, leading researchers to think that this may imply that the subjects felt they did not have a sense of belonging to their respective families. Additionally, psychotherapy clients mentioned significantly more often either injury or disease ($x^2 = 8.32, p < .01$) and death ($x^2 = 4.00, p < .05$), and had early recollections with markedly negative affect ($x^2 = 5.09, p < .05$) in which they played a passive role ($x^2 = 4.84, p < .05$). Conversely, the counselor-trainees’ early recollections showed positive affect ($x^2 = 4.46, p < .05$), and they were more active ($x^2 = 4.84, p < .05$) participants in the memories. Counselor-trainees were found to have early recollections that reflected their helping nature and general social interest, while the early recollections of
psychotherapy clients showed mistaken beliefs and low social interest. This research distinctly shows how early recollections reflect one’s state of mind.

A study of 18 delinquent teenage children was conducted to determine if a correlation existed between their current style of social participation (active or passive) and the role one plays in their early recollections (Kopp & Der, 1982). The teens were divided into either an active or a passive social participation group and then early recollections were collected by an interviewer that did not have knowledge of the group the subject belonged to. The mean score of the social activity level of the early recollections collected was significantly higher (t = 2.06, p < .05) for the active group when compared to the passive group. Additionally, it was shown that the early recollections of the active group where on average 27 percent longer (more words) than the passive group. This lends support to the ability of early recollections to differentiate personality traits.

**Summary.** When comparing early recollections to standardized psychometric assessments, this researcher has found that early recollections can compete effectively with standardized psychometric assessments. In researching the ability of early recollections as a technique to differentiate personality traits, this researcher has shown that early recollections can be used to discern a variety of personality traits. Additionally, support for other aspects of early recollection theory has also been shown, including that the age of an early recollection is significant, that brevity of words shows a guarded personality, and that the length of an early recollection is a reliable indicator of social activity. This researcher is satisfied that this analysis of available research has established the validity of early recollections as a viable technique, and believes that early recollections have the added benefit of accessing information that is either hidden from the consciousness of the client, or would otherwise engage the client’s defenses.
Insight into the Work Life Task

The work life task is something faced by most everyone, and centers around how one will manage to interact with the world in order to, at a minimum, accrue the necessary goods to survive; today we generally refer to this as “making a living” (Ansbacher 2011). This means different things to different people and cultures, both currently and in the past. No matter how heterogeneous one’s culture is, however, one is ultimately responsible for self-maintenance in some form, even if it is simply asking for what one needs in one’s convalescence. The work life task yields not only a contribution to society and support for oneself and one’s immediate family, but also ideally fulfillment and self-realization. The work life task is one of three aspects of life that tie one to the Earth, and it is the primary aspects of life that ties one to the larger community (Mansager & Gold, 2000). While most everyone needs to work, how one responds to and solves the work life task is unique to each individual.

Postmodern/protean careers. The workplace has changed significantly in the last 40 years; people no longer tend to stay on one career track, let alone at one place of employment, for their entire working lives. In fact, people change jobs, on average, every five years (Mullins, 2009). Additionally, many people today work from home, are freelance contractors, or are losing their jobs due to outsourcing and downsizing. The security of having a job for life is gone from most people experience and has been replaced by uncertainty and constant change (McMahon & Patton, 2002). The term “postmodern career” primarily refers to these changes in the workplace. According to Hall (1996) “In the 21st century, demand in the labor market will shift from those with know-how to those with learn-how. Job security will continue to fade in importance and will be replaced by the goal of employability” (p. 10). These changes can be summed up as the
need to be adaptable, versatile, and open to learning and by the significantly reduced role of job security and the removal of reliance on an organization for career advancement and affirmation.

A new mindset or attitude is required; one of freedom, self-direction, and choices driven by personal values (Briscoe & Hall, 2006) that need to be reassessed regularly as the individual or the environment changes (Hall, 1996). This lifestyle of continuous learning and identity changes is often referred to as a “Protean Career,” which derives its name from the Greek god Proteus, who could transform his shape at will and is used metaphorically in the name to imply how one should view their career (Hall, 1996). The ultimate form of protean career according to Briscoe and Hall (2006) “…would occur when the person’s attitude toward her career reflects a sense of calling in her work—that is an awareness of a purpose that gives deep meaning to the career” (p. 6).

The protean model of reward and compensation is significantly more subjective and psychologically based on personal goal achievement and internal affirmation for reaching those goals. “Consequently,” according to Hall and Chandler (2005) “subjective career measures such as job satisfaction, self-awareness and adaptability, and learning, essentially individual-level factors, rather than organizational-level factors, have taken on greater salience in today's environment” (p. 156). In other words, there is less dependence on external rewards and more focus on internal ones. While being this self-reliant can be challenging it also has more possibilities for success, because as Hall (1996) explains, “…there is only one way to achieve vertical success (making it to the top), [while] there are infinite ways to achieve psychological success, as many ways as there are unique human needs” (p.8). Success is therefore defined by the individual pursuing it rather than by a societal standard, producing much more freedom, creativity, and diversity.
The protean career orientation can be defined as having the values necessary to define
career identity and priorities while also being self-directed in adaptation, change, and learning
(Briscoe & Hall, 2006). By comparison in the protean career model there are three other
personality career types defined by how that type manages their career: dependent, reactive, and
rigid. The dependant type is not self-directed or values driven and is therefore dependant on
outside sources to do this for them. The reactive type is self-directed but is not driven by values
and therefore has no vision of what they are trying to accomplish. The ridged type is not self-
directed but is driven by values so they cannot forge their own path.

The protean career style requires high levels of self-awareness and the ability to take
personal responsibility for one’s life (Hall, 1996). According to Taber and Briddick (2011)
“Through self-awareness and the accompanying self-directedness, people can weather the storms
of career uncertainty and adapt to the changing work world as they maintain focus on what is
important to them” (p. 108). While some find protean autonomy freeing others find the perceived
lack of security and external support terrifying and most individuals will need a lot of help from
a counselor with overcoming mistaken beliefs and development of consciousness in order to
achieve this, which this author discusses later. Some helpful traits for this path are the ability to
readily change one’s identity, a willingness to adapt to new situations, embracing and learning
from diversity, and an attitude of relational learning that includes an attitude of interdependence,
mutuality, and reciprocity. Additionally, it is necessary to do away with hierarchal thinking and
attitudes and replace them with a relational model.

Development challenges. In order to have the most career success individuals need to be
developed in four areas: awareness of personal values, self-directed in career management, open
psychologically to change, and open to physical change (Briscoe & Hall, 2006). Different types
of development challenges are commonly encountered around these four traits for success and they can be categorized into a typology:

- **Trapped/Lost**: Lack awareness of inner values and have a restricted view of the possibilities over which they feel they have no control.

- **Fortressed**: Strong personal values but lacks adaptability and craves security/stability.

- **The Wanderer**: Is not hemmed in by boundaries or afraid of change but lacks vision and a sophisticated and developed ability to self-promote or implement ideas (waits for opportunities to appear).

- **The Idealist**: Is very driven by values and is relatively psychologically open but is limited in self-management and implementation and is often tethered to a physical location.

- **Organization Man/Woman**: Is strong at self-management and is psychologically open but lacks awareness of their values, instead relying on an organization to set the values and is often tethered to a physical location.

- **Solid Citizen**: Is values driven, psychologically open, and self-directed in career management, however, they are tenaciously tethered to a physical location which often limits the possibilities depending on the geographical area.

- **Hired Gun/Hired Hand**: Is psychologically and physically open, and self-directed in career management, however, they lack their own values and so metaphorically present as mercenaries or migrant workers.

- **Protean Career Architect**: Succeeds in all four dimensions bringing all elements together into the most employable package.
This typology helps for hypothetical learning and therapeutic conceptualization of the different client developmental possibilities.

Adaptability and creativity in one’s career has become absolutely necessary to survive in today’s job world (Del Corso, Rehfuss, & Galvin, 2011). However, according to Stone (2007) “…self-limiting thoughts expressed either from within or from others can keep the range of options narrow” (p. 105). These changes in the workplace require a creative and flexible outlook on the work life task, which can easily be interfered with by various factors including the influence of family, striving for fulfillment, mistaken beliefs, active/passive levels of social interest, and safeguarding behaviors; these are discussed individually below, followed by a discussion of different job types.

**Family influences.** Much of one’s relation to the work life task is formed in childhood, and according to Watkins (1984)

…the most basic and fundamental view of work comes through observing parents. The child discerns one’s parents’ feelings toward working via their attitudes, comments, and expressions about work. Also, interactions with parents, wherein the child and parent(s) work together on particular tasks, affect how the child regards oneself vocationally, the prospect of working and the world of work in general. (p. 35)

Whether intentional or unintentional, what is taught by one’s parents about work is brought forward into adulthood, whether the individual is conscious of it or not.

Research into family influence as a predictor of career decision-making self-efficacy has revealed that conflict and expressiveness were significant variables (Hargrove, Creagh, & Burgess, 2002). Growing up with high levels of conflict (violence, yelling, and aggression) has a negative effect ($\beta = -0.19$, $p < .05$) on career decision-making self-efficacy, while a family that
openly allows self-expression and is encouraging has a positive effect ($\beta = .18, p < .05$) on later career self-efficacy and decision-making confidence. There is also evidence that families who strongly emphasize and reinforce academic and career success help to develop a strong career identity ($\beta = .18, p < .05$). This research shows what most people would assume; namely that one’s family has an impact on how one sees and interacts with the world.

**Striving.** Striving for fulfillment (superiority) is seen by most people as a normal part of life, especially in the workplace. However, there are different types of striving that can be either positive or negative; it is the goal of the striving that defines, either how useful and normal, or how useless and distorted it is (Stone, 2007). This is an important distinction. One can strive to excel in his or her career either in a way that benefits the community or in a way that elevates him- or herself above others; it is the attitude and degree of self-centeredness that makes the difference. In Adlerian psychology this is often metaphorically visualized as horizontal or vertical striving (Ferguson, 2007). In horizontal striving one is moving along with everyone else, as is the normal mode of movement for humans on the earth, in an equal and relational manner, while in order to vertically strive one has to raise oneself above others and everyone is either above or below one and there is no equality because it is overshadowed by the need to be special. In society vertical striving can be seen in the expression climbing the corporate ladder. Vertical striving is based on self-centered base pursuits that According to Stone (2007),

…originate in order to compensate for inferiority feelings so that some people must obsessively pursue one or more personal goals. They must incessantly seek more status, more power, and more money. This need becomes insatiable. This occurs because the main issue is compensation for feelings of inferiority, not in solving the work task usefully or productively. There can be no lessening in their pursuit of such goals because
this insatiable desire brings no resolution to the fundamental issue—feelings of inferiority—no matter how much they accumulate. They will never understand their own behavior until they understand the hidden goal of their behavior and how it contributes to these insatiable desires. (p. 101)

This statement shows how striving can go awry, and how feelings of inferiority can interfere with the work life task and can never be satiated.

Striving can be healthy if one understands “…how to strive for success in one's work, without seeking to make it “solve” unrequited needs from childhood or provide compensation for feelings of inferiority” (Stone, 2007, p. 99). This statement is supported by Del Corso et al. (2011): “Career problems may result when occupational choices are made based solely on unmet childhood needs” (p. 93). If one has issues with striving to compensate for inferiority, therapy is often necessary to learn to deal with these issues in a more productive way. This is because Adlerian theory believes that feelings of inferiority inhibit courage, and that courage is necessary to solve life task problems creatively; otherwise, one lives out of one’s mistaken beliefs (Stone, 2007).

**Mistaken beliefs.** According to Adlerian theory, mistaken beliefs are an individual’s faulty conclusions about who they are and how the world works, drawn from childhood strivings to feel significant and find a sense of belonging (Dinkmeyer, Lingg, & Kottman, 1991). These mistaken beliefs collectively coalesce into a fictive goal, for example, “to feel significant I always have to do what others think I should do.” In career constructionism theory two common fictive goals (which they call “maladaptive repetition”) are repeatedly encountered centering around career indecision (Cardoso, 2012). In the first the individual is conscious of what is missing or obstructing in their life but cannot change or let go of their irrational beliefs and so
they behave in the same way in spite of their desire to be different. The second style is becoming frozen by the paradoxical goals of what their life themes are calling them to do for a career and what family and society says is successful or secure. According to Del Corso et al. (2011) “…individuals are not always aware of the motives [fictive goals] that guide their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors” (p. 91). Mistaken beliefs and fictive goals collectively influence a person’s “lifestyle,” which is defined by Del Corso et al. (2011) as “…the lens through which an individual perceives and moves in the world” they go on to say “However, this lens remains largely unconscious…” (p. 92). These unconscious influences are self-limiting and often keep one from achieving one’s consciously desired goals.

From this perspective, career choice is a compensation based on fictive goals in order to feel more significant, secure, or powerful (Del Corso et al., 2011). However, therapy can help individuals to become aware of how their mistaken beliefs and fictive goals influence their actions, allowing them to use these influences to design a career consciously to meet their need for significance and belonging rather than allowing these influences impede their progress.

Activity/passivity. According to Adlerian theory, engagement in the tasks of life is indicative of a person’s mental health, which is often referred to as active on one end of the spectrum, with higher degrees of activity producing social interest, and on the other end of the spectrum passive, defined by low social interest and maladaptive behavior patterns (Clark & Butler, 2012). Passive individuals assume that role because they feel incapable or deficient in social situations.

Adlerian psychology has developed a typology based on level of activity and level of social interest deriving four different types: ruling, getting, avoiding, and socially useful (Clark & Butler, 2012). The first three are lacking in some way and produce less than optimal results for
both the individual and the community. The ruling type has high levels of activity but is hurtful towards others because of self-centered interests or strivings, which can manifest as simply dominating others to achieve a sense of superiority or on the extreme end of the spectrum as antisocial criminal activity. The getting type (considered the most prominent) is also self-centered socially but are passive in activity in order to garner support and sympathy, which manifests as helplessness and dependency. The avoidant type also lacks social interest with a passive degree of activity, which manifests as withdrawal and avoidance of uncomfortable situations. The socially useful type is both social engaged and has high levels of activity, which manifests in socially useful and productive behavior in which the individual feels emotionally engaged with others in a relational way with the attitude of equality and cooperation. The first three types all avoid their vocational calling whether it is through narcissistic alienation from others or passive inaction.

The tendency to be active or passive can be seen in early recollections in whether they focus on being taken care of or having independent action and in whether one is receiving or contributing. The actions of a passive person are focused upon protecting their inferiority, because they keep the individual’s self-esteem safe from perceived threats. This can take two forms, either truly passive or excessively active, but ultimately neither form allows anything to get accomplished, with the exception of having the individual’s actions safeguard his or her self-esteem.

**Safeguarding.** Safeguarding avoids a directly active approach towards the life tasks, in which one tries to conceal deficiencies and preempt having to deal with perceived failures; this typically manifests itself as indecision, a lack of initiative, and avoidance of commitment (Clark & Butler, 2012). In addition, such behavior produces low social interest because of the
individual’s need to maintain a self-centered attitude. People who engage in safeguarding are often in distress, which elicits sympathy and favors from others, enabling the safeguarding person to stay stuck in that role.

During the counseling process an individual that is safeguarding will usually present as constricted, self-protective, and resistant because the client feel that taking risks will expose their inadequacies and that is presumed to be devastating (Clark, 2000). In order to overcome this the therapeutic relationship needs to provide a trusting and supportive space in which the client can recognize this maladaptive behavior and find it safe enough to implement change. According to Clark and Butler (2012), during therapy

…in an empathic climate, it becomes possible to identify ingrained patterns of passive or excessively active behavior that are diversions to straightforward problem solving.

Encouragement is key in providing support to clients who often feel threatened in challenging situations that perpetuate avoidance maneuvers. (p. 144)

A person who is safeguarding is a discouraged individual who has lost faith in his or her ability to perform adequately in a feared situation who attempts to cover it up through evasion or feigned disinterest and often has issues around perfectionism which will not allow him or her to have the courage to be imperfect (Clark, 2000). Depending on the situation a counselor could point out how adequately the safeguarding individual is at safeguarding; the careful planning and strategy that goes into this behavior, however misguided. Safeguarding is very common when thinking about changing one’s career or going back to school, when thoughts of inadequacy, financial strain, and risking security flood one’s mind.

**Types of work.** Different people approach the work life task with a distinct set of attitudes that form their perception of work. According to Watkins (1984),
In meeting the work task, a significant and decisive variable becomes the worker's basic mode of approaching work and the workplace. This mode of operation influences and largely determines the type of work to which an individual aspires, as well as the working environment which one finds suitable. (p. 34)

In other words, the lifestyle and attitude with which one approaches work defines how one views work, what kind of work one will do, and where one will do that work. There are basically three different types or categories of work: Job, Career, and Calling (Wrzesniewski, McCauley, Rozin, & Schwartz, 1997). A Job is defined as work that one does simply to sustain one’s life. If money were not an issue, someone with a Job would be doing something else with his or her time. At a Job, one basically resents work, longs for days off, and looks forward to retirement. A Career is defined as enjoyable work, but with a primary motive of achievement. A person with a career is occupied with his or her desire to win the next promotion, looking to move to a better position in a different company; the only goal is to get ahead, competing with his or her peers for superiority and recognition. A Calling is work that is a primary, defining, and vital aspect of one’s life; one would not choose to do anything else. Someone with a Calling feels what he or she is contributing to the world is of vital importance, and has little or no desire to ever retire.

These three types of work definitions were tested in a study of 196 subjects who worked more than 35 hours per week to see to what degree of agreement people surveyed could be defined by these types based on questions designed to identify each job type (Wrzesniewski et al., 1997). There was significant evidence found for the validity of these categorizations of work types as most participants could be easily placed in one of the types.

**Summary.** As demonstrated here, there are many different ways in which the work life task can become unhealthy or derailed, but there is also hope in overcoming these maladaptive
behaviors with therapeutic help. While the literature in this section was often not backed up by statistical research to prove these theories this researcher thinks that they are self-evident through observation of human behavior and their long-term use in individual psychology. Additionally, the statistical proof that conflict in one’s family is detrimental to the work life task while openness and encouragement sustain it helps to support the various theories of maladaptive behaviors described. The work types study lends credence to the thesis question by defining and proving that there are different types of work attitudes in the world.

**Client’s Vocational Calling**

The Latin root of the word vocation is vocatio, which means a calling (VanZanten Gallagher, 2007). The word vocation originally had religious roots, but has become increasingly secularized over the centuries (Dawson, 2005). According to Billett, Newton, and Ockerby (2010), “[v]ocation is also the commonly used term for the callings to which individuals are drawn…” (p. 51). This researcher has used the words “vocational calling” to incorporate both words, because (1) there is evidence that they refer to the same thing, and (2) most references use one or the other, or both interchangeably.

A person who is said to have a vocational calling has passion for what he or she does, along with a deep sense of purpose in his or her work. Many individuals with a vocational calling find that the call is religious or spiritual in nature, which is described by Dik and Duffy (2009) as “…a transcendent summons, experienced as originating beyond the self, to approach a particular life role in a manner oriented toward demonstrating or deriving a sense of purpose or meaningfulness and that holds other oriented values and goals as primary sources of motivation. (p. 427)
Here the word “calling” or “the call” is of a transcendent nature, meaning that one is drawn to something outside one’s everyday experience of self. VanZanten Gallagher (2007) describes having a vocational calling in even stronger spiritual terms but also relate it to service to one’s community:

A theological approach to vocation involves a sense of the transcendent, of purpose, and of community. To receive a call means someone or something outside the self is calling; what an individual is to do in response to that call provides the person with purpose; and this call and response occurs within, and is guided by, the larger community. (p. 34)

Thus the transcendent and the mundane are brought together for the betterment of the community; however, individuals with a vocational calling do not always perceive it as having originated from a transcendent source.

Some individuals find that the vocational calling simply fills them with a sense of purpose and the feeling that “this was what they were meant to do,” as in one’s primary life’s purpose; it is a “highly individual, subjective experience” (Hall & Chandler, 2005, p.161). This is most often found by “asserting one’s unique individuality” in a way that is helpful to the world or brings forth new ideas (Dawson, 2005, p. 225). The type of individuality that is necessary for following a vocational calling often goes against the grain of societal and familial expectations. As Palmer (2000) explains, “Our deepest calling is to grow into our own authentic selfhood, whether or not it conforms to some image of who we ought to be” (p. 16). While one serves society, he or she often also has to break society’s boundaries and norms in order to do so.

**Research on vocational calling.** In their research on work types, Wrzesniewski et al. (1997) found the “…highest life and work satisfaction for respondents who see their work as a Calling…” (p. 31). This is expected, as by definition, work that is a vocational calling has to be
personally meaningful and fulfilling. But what of the individuals who have a vocational calling, but have lost their jobs where they had realized this vocational calling? In a study of 194 adults, half of whom were employed or unemployed by choice, and half who were involuntarily unemployed, Torrey and Duffy (2012) sought to determine whether a relationship existed amongst core self-evaluations, vocational calling, and life satisfaction, with a special focus upon the question of whether core self-evaluations were a mediating factor between the other two factors (Torrey & Duffy, 2012).

Core self-evaluations are defined as the combined measure of the traits of self-esteem, self-efficacy, neuroticism, and locus of control. In the employed or unemployed by choice group it was found that all three variables were equally related with a significance of $p < .001$, while in the involuntarily unemployed group it was found that self-evaluations were a mediating factor between vocational calling and life satisfaction, also with a significance at $p < .001$. According to Torrey and Duffy (2012), “The results of the present study suggest that higher levels of calling (regardless of employment status) relates to life satisfaction via a more positive sense of self” (p. 415). To summarize, the presence of a vocational calling, combined with self-esteem, self-efficacy, an internal locus of control, and low levels of neurotic fretting have a correlation with life satisfaction; this is true whether the individual is employed or not. These findings have implications for counselors in determining how to help the involuntarily unemployed to stay mentally healthy, and to help them avoid falling into emotional turmoil over their situations.

Going from having a vocational calling to actually being engaged in one’s work could potentially contain many factors. In a large study of 529 educated working young adult professionals, Hirschi (2012)
…evaluates a model which suggests that the influence of callings on work engagement is mediated by work meaningfulness, occupational identity, and occupational self-efficacy and is conditional upon the degree of perceived person–job fit, controlling for a person’s core self-evaluations. (p. 479)

The bivariate correlations among the above assessed constructs were calculated using Cronbach’s alpha, and it was found that all correlations were significant at the p < .001 level, ranging from .81-.95. This study shows the relationship amongst all seven of these constructs. In further testing by Hirschi (2012) of the “hypotheses that the relation of presence of a calling to work engagement is mediated by work meaningfulness, occupational identity, and occupational self-efficacy,” it was found that work engagement was significantly indirectly affected by vocational calling, mediated by the above variables. However, it was found that self-efficacy was less influential than the other factors; the author hypothesized that this was likely because the subjects were young, and had perhaps not yet developed their self-efficacy, a trait which can take years of experience to mature. This study also supports previous research that vocational calling is a big factor in what makes work meaningful, and that a vocational calling facilitates identity (Hirschi, 2012).

A study of 435 undergraduate college students found that 68 percent (295 subjects) responded that a vocational calling was a relevant consideration for their career path (Hunter, Dik, & Banning, 2010). Further research with those 295 subjects was conducted to define what a vocational calling was to those subjects. There open ended survey answers where analyzed using emergent qualitative document analysis, also known as ethnographic content analysis. The 295 subjects defined calling as containing the traits of a guiding force, altruism, personal fit, and eudemonic well-being. For behavioral implications the subjects responded that the actions of
follow guiding forces, pursuit of interests/talents/meaning/altruism, and effortful dedication. The subjects also responded that the scope of a vocational calling included meaningful interactions, relationships, and activities and having effects on one’s lifestyle and character.

It could be said “…that a sense of calling is the ultimate form of subjective career success…” and a primary generator of identity, adaptability, meaning, and purpose (Hirschi, 2011, p. 60). In support of the benefits of having a vocational calling empirical research has shown a positive correlation between work and life satisfaction, self clarity, career decidedness, career choice comfort, meaning in life, choice-work salience, positive affect, and work enjoyment.

**Further definition of vocational calling through researching typology.** Because of a lack of consensus amongst researchers a study was commenced to define and clarify the concept of what a vocational calling is and to explore if there are different types of vocational calling from which a typology could be formed. There are basically three different camps or theorist groups on what defines a vocational calling. **Group A** defines vocational calling as a sense of purpose about the work one was meant to do and is one’s purpose in life, however they view this vocational calling as secular, originating from within (Hirschi, 2011). Additionally, the vocational calling serves the individual and/or community and is identified through introspection, reflection, meditation, and/or relational activities with the ultimate reward being personal fulfillment. In addition to a sense of purpose and meaningfulness **group B** separates vocation (secular) from calling, which they define as a transcendent summons originating beyond the self through a higher power that can include fate or society’s need. Service to others is seen as its primary motivation along with a need for ongoing evaluation and adaptation to what that need is and how it is best served. **Group C** defines vocational calling as “a course of action
in pursuit of pro-social intentions embodying the convergence of an individual's sense of what he or she would like to do, should do, and actually does” (Elangovan, Pinder, & McLean, 2010, p. 430). This view does not include a transcendent summons but instead focuses on what actions are taken to manifest one’s calling around pro-social intentions with clarity of what one’s mission and purpose is (Hirschi, 2011).

As can be seen there is no exact consensus of what a vocational calling is which this study attempts to define through research. The 407 undergraduate participants were from diverse backgrounds and 12 different study majors with a mean age of 23 (Hirschi, 2011). Taking the various views of the three groups several hypotheses were derived for testing. The questions were divided into essential constructs and optional constructs for having a vocational calling in regard to how the hypothesis questions were worded based on the various group’s theories.

- **Hypothesis 1a (essential).** People with a sense of calling in their career possess high clarity regarding and commitment to their career decisions and career goals. (Supported)

- **Hypothesis 1b (optional).** Active self-reflection is related to a sense of calling for some people but not for others. (Not Supported)

- **Hypotheses 2 (essential).** People with a sense of calling in their career show a high level of career engagement. (Supported)

- **Hypotheses 3 (essential).** People with a sense of calling in their career possess high confidence regarding their work and career development. (Supported)

- **Hypothesis 4a (optional).** Work is important for some people with a sense of calling but not for others. (Supported)

- **Hypothesis 4b (optional).** Religion is important for some people with a sense of calling but not for others. (Supported)
- **Hypotheses 5a (optional).** Self-transcendence work values (altruism, relations with others) are relatively important for some people with a sense of calling but not for others. (Supported)

- **Hypotheses 5b (optional).** Conservation work values (security, authority) are relatively important for some people with a sense of calling but not for others. (Supported)

- **Hypotheses 5c (optional).** Openness to change work values (variety, autonomy) are relatively important for some people with a sense of calling but not for others. (Supported)

- **Hypotheses 5d (essential).** Self-enhancement values (pay, prestige) are relatively unimportant for people with a sense of calling. (Not Supported)

- **Hypotheses 6 (essential).** People with a sense of calling have positive core self-evaluations (awareness of one's self-worth, effectiveness, and capability). (Not Supported)

The bivariate correlations results show that for the average subject the presence of vocational calling correlated positively with career decidedness, engagement, confidence, work centrality, altruism, transcendence values, and core self-evaluations while being negatively correlated with security and conservation values.

In order to derive a typology of different kinds of vocational calling, cluster analysis was applied using a person-centered and data-derived method to identify different types of study participants (Hirschi, 2011). This analysis showed seven groups of which three had between .5 and .7 standard deviations above-average calling scores and so these three groups where further analyzed to show what constructs went into the makeup of each group. All three groups had in common above-average career decidedness, engagement, and career confidence. The first type to
be derived from this research was named “Negative Career Self-Centered,” which had the characteristics of a very high importance of work and clear goals centering around self-enhancement with a lower level of self-exploration and below-average core self-evaluations. Being driven by work the Negative Career Self-Centered type is defined by their career with a strong likelihood of a self-serving attitude and a proclivity for not feeling that they are ever good enough. This type has many narcissistic tendencies and is similar to the “Career” type previously discussed under the Types of Work subheading.

The second type was named “Pro-Social Religious,” which had the characteristics of below-average work centrality while having above-average religious importance and self-transcendence values with pro-social intentions and a motivation to make the world a better place (Hirschi, 2011). The third type was named “Positive Varied Work Orientation,” which had the characteristics of strong decidedness, self-exploration, confidence, and engagement. Religion was not regarded as important to this group but work was an important factor even though their work values and goals varied significantly from one subject to the next. This group had the highest levels of core self-evaluation indicating a high level of self-sufficiency and a positive outlook. This study helps to show that there are different orientations to vocational calling so that counselors can be conscious of this when meeting with clients and to help dispel certain bias a counselor may have as to what constitutes a vocational calling.

**Social interest.** Social interest or community feeling is when one feels like he or she is part of a community, cares about that community, has the desire to contribute to that community, and seeks out a way to do so (Watkins, 1984). According to Del Corso et al. (2011),

Helping others, wanting to make a difference in the world, taking care of the needs of a family, or making decisions to be self-sufficient are all examples of how strivings for
significance, power, and security move individuals closer to others, thus fostering their sense of community feeling. (p. 93)

This statement explains that striving for significance, accumulating power, and seeking security are not necessarily antithetical to social interest, especially when they are motivated by a feeling of caring about others.

When striving for significance, accumulating power, and seeking security are devoid of social interest, they feed the individual’s fictive goals and usually do harm to others (Del Corso et al., 2011). One’s level of self-centeredness determines whether something has social interest or is feeding his or her fictive goals, which are generally like unto a “monster” that can never be satiated (Marcus et al. 1999). According to Watkins (1984)

While there are innumerable outlets for individuals’ social interest, one of the more primary is via work and work-related activities. For many people, work comes to be a prime means of contribution. That is, it provides them a way to “give to” the whole and, thereby, further society's existence and perhaps its longevity. (p. 34)

It does seem logical that since work is the primary way one interacts with the community, and since one spends so much time working throughout one’s life, that work would be the primary place where one would express social interest. Social interest should be a primary consideration when trying to find one’s vocational calling (Stone, 2007).

**Becoming more conscious.** The object is to become more conscious, both of what one’s vocational calling is, and how one’s mistaken beliefs and fictive goals interfere with carrying that out. Hall and Chandler (2005) assert that “…identity awareness (self-awareness) and adaptability” are two traits that “…greatly assist the person in continuously learning new career skills…” (p. 163). Thus, self-awareness and self-reflection (consciousness) of how one acts and
reacts, along with the ability to adapt to one’s changing environment consciously, are important skills. As this researcher has pointed out, there is much that can interfere with the successful completion of the work life task; therapy can help one get past these issues, however.

Often the work that one has a vocational calling for, that makes one feel significant, and that fills one with a sense of meaning is to in some way help others based on the personal pain that one has experienced (Del Corso et al., 2011). For instance, if one has lost a loved one in a fire becoming a fire rescue worker will have meaning and significance for that individual.

According to Del Corso et al. (2011), “…when individuals are aware of how their pain motivates them to move and act in the world, they can consider possible future roles that help them bring meaning to their suffering” (pp. 96-97). Once again, becoming conscious can lead individuals to their vocational calling.

**Summary.** By thoroughly defining what vocational callings are, the process that goes into developing them, and the research supporting their existence this researcher feels that the existence of vocational callings has been verified; furthermore, investigating how social interest and consciousness are necessary elements of a vocational calling has provided a greater understanding of the subject matter. It is part of human nature to strive towards this, and, according to Del Corso et al. (2011), “…social interest and significance are inextricably related whether individuals are aware of it or not. By and large, individuals want to do something with their lives that they find meaningful and worthy of their time and energy” (pp.90-91). However, finding this can be difficult, and often painful; it is necessary to become more conscious to find one’s vocational calling, and becoming more conscious involves what can often be painful exploration of one’s way of being in the world. Courage from within oneself, along with
encouragement from one’s support system, are key factors that will help an individual to find one’s vocational calling and to achieve his or her vocational goals.

**Final Literature Review Summary**

Can one use early recollections to help a client find insight into the work life task in order to find their vocation? Now that the validity and the precedent for all three variables have been established, do they all connect to validate the original question? According to many Adlerian authors, they do; for example, Kern et al. (2004) state that “Early recollections also provide the therapist and the client insight on how the client solves major problems related to the life tasks…” (p. 135). Watkins (1984) elaborates:

…early recollections can possibly indicate the potential worker’s: (a) occupational focus; (b) trend toward activity/passivity; (c) trend toward affiliation or isolation; (d) desire for leadership or subordinate status; (e) desire for superior, inferior, or egalitarian relationships with colleagues; and (f) orientation toward people, data, or things, among other aspects. (p. 39)

Thus, according to these authors, early recollections can potentially give a wealth of information that a counselor can use to help his or her clients to discern their vocational calling. While this is good news if it is true, is there evidence to back up these claims?

**Interrelated research.** Four studies are evaluated to see if early recollections can give insight into the work life task. In the first study, a group of 130 college students were used to compare the ability of the early recollection technique to predict their study area of choice, versus a commonly used assessment, the Self Directed Search (SDS). These researchers reported that “…early recollections predict career area choice as well as the SDS questionnaire does” with a success rate of almost 85 percent; in addition, early recollections were found to be a significant
predictor of career choice at the p < .01 level (Kasler & Nevo, 2005, p. 217). In the second study, 80 college students were tested to see if early recollections were as accurate a tool in predicting majors as was the Vocational Preference Inventory (Elliott, Amerikaner, & Swank, 1987). Here, the study results showed that the assessments were equally valid, with a mean correlation of .43 (p < .001).

In the third study, early recollections were collected from 90 college seniors with engineering majors to see if they could use the predictive information gathered to differentiate between the students who majored in mechanical, electrical, and chemical engineering (Hafner, Fakouri, & Etzler, 1986). Again, it was found that there was a significant difference between the three groups (p < .05 or less) using the Manaster-Perryman Manifest Content Early Recollections Scoring Manual. In the final study, a group of 90 students was selected, 30 from each of the majors of accounting, secondary education, and psychology. The goal of this study was to see if early recollections could determine the student’s vocational choice. The results showed that there were significant differences in the groups’ manifest content, with p < .005 to .02 across eight variables (Hafner & Fakouri, 1984).

These four studies showed that that early recollections can differentiate the content of different work choices, and that individuals that choose different tracks have significant differences in their early recollections. Thus, by correlation, early recollections should be helpful to individuals who are trying to figure out what work life task choices would be best for them to make. Given that it has been established that early recollects can help individuals with discernment around the work life task this researcher sees a clear potential for early recollections to be used to help individuals find their vocational calling since it has been shown that a Calling is one of the three different types of work along with Career and Job.
Work life task, social interest, and meaningful work. Why is it important to find insight into the work life task to help someone determine their vocational calling, and what does social interest have to do with any of this? The short answer summarizes what the research in the previous sections above have found, namely: “Addressing Adler’s work [life] task successfully requires individuals to do something that matters to others and is personally meaningful” (Del Corso et al., 2011, p. 103). In other words, the work life task and social interest are strongly connected with meaningful work, which have all been shown to be necessary factors for a vocational calling. The long answer, provided by Sperry, (2011) is:

In discussions of the work task and social interest, particular questions often arise:

Exactly how can individuals demonstrate social interest in their work? Is it simply a matter of a positive attitude or being nicer to others in the workplace, or is it more involved than this? In attempting to answer this question… two factors that appear to moderate the degree or extent of social interest a worker displays [are]: work orientation and stage of expertise. (p. 162)

Stage of expertise is not really relevant to this research; it basically says that if one has more expertise, they are less self-conscious, and can therefore focus more on helping others (Sperry 2011).

On the other hand, work orientation is very relevant, and has already been discussed under the heading of Work Types, where the three types of work, Job, Career, and Calling, were described. It can be seen in both the long and the short answer that it is necessary to have a vocational calling in order to complete the work life task successfully. This becomes obvious if one considers the three types of work in light of the necessary requirements to complete the work life task successfully: social interest and meaningful work. Someone whose work orientation is
simply a job that he or she does to make money is not going to find his or her work meaningful, and is not going to find social interest at work with that attitude. Someone whose work type is a Career is, by nature, striving for recognition and to get ahead in self-centered competition; that person is not going to find social interest either, and the work itself is probably not meaningful, beyond the adulation it may bring. By the process of elimination, then, only Calling is left as a means to successfully complete the work life task. Additionally, it has been shown that in order to find one’s vocational calling, it is necessary to become conscious of one’s behaviors surrounding the work life task, which has further implications for counselors.

**Implications of research for counselors.** Professionals using individual psychology as a model should give significant attention to this matter, because it occupies a significant aspect of Adler’s theory of the life tasks and holism (Stone, 2007). Career choice, meaningful work, and related matters are an integral part of the unity of the individual. Since work deals so heavily with community, it is likely that aspects of lifestyle not otherwise evident will manifest in that environment, thereby helping the counselor and the client become aware of the client’s fictive goals. As Stone (2007) clearly states “Mental health workers should become knowledgeable in the area of occupational and vocational counseling in order to address fully the task of work” (p. 108). Unfortunately, the work life task is sometimes overlooked by therapists, along with and the institutions who train them. According to McMahon and Patton (2002) “it is too simplistic to adopt the approach that individuals can separate career issues from personal issues” (p. 56). Because they favor personal and social issues, the work life task if often left to career counselors; this attitude is unfortunate from the point of view of the Adlerian holistic approach to life, which is that people should not be compartmentalized (Stone, 2007).
Methodology

This chapter outlines the search strategy and the criteria for selection of literature for this research paper along with descriptions of the types of literature reviewed. The foundations on which the reviewed literature is based are then discussed.

Literature Criteria

Books and scholarly peer reviewed journals were considered for inclusion by looking for relevant articles that included any of the following:

- The scientific study of human behavior and the subfields of psychology
- Non-psychology content in related fields that has psychological or behavioral implications
- Original reports or replications of original research
- Surveys
- Case studies
- Theoretical reviews

Search Strategy

Research relevant to early recollections, the work life task, and vocational callings were identified by searching psychology and other social science data bases through EBSCOhost. Of the 44 sources cited 41 were journal articles from scholarly peer reviewed institutions and 3 were from books. The sources ranged in age from 1937 through 2012, with an approximate distribution of 5 percent from before 1980, 14 percent from the 1980s, 11 percent from the 1990s, and 70 percent from 2000 and newer. Relevant search terms from thesis and research questions were used along with correlating terms discover from the search process.
Summary and Conclusions

Summary

The qualities of the theories behind early recollections lend themselves well to the therapeutic process for several different reasons. The first reason is that qualitative assessments help generate narrative information which helps clients to open up and invest more in the therapy. The second reason is assessments based on constructivism help clients see how they subjectively formulate their worldview and helps them become more conscious of repetitive patterns in their lives. Finally projective assessments allow unconscious material to slip past ego defenses and come to the surface without the client becoming aware that they are divulging anything. Through comparing early recollections to standardized assessments supporting evidence has been accumulated that early recollections are as effective as standardized psychometric assessments in detecting character, personality, and neurotic traits. Additionally, evidence for early recollections being able to differentiate between different groups with different traits has also been shown.

The work life task is a part of everyone’s life in one way or another but it can take many forms depending on the person and the culture. Changes in the structure of the Western workplace in the postmodern era has brought about changes in how people can best look at their careers. This leaves people needing to develop their own advancement and subjective gratification systems and can lead people to finding and creating their own meaningful work because no one else is doing it for them. Traits, such as, self-awareness, self-directedness, and taking personal responsibility for one’s life are conducive to this new career style. Additionally, developmental challenges can be broken into four main areas: awareness of personal values, self-directed in career management, open psychologically to change, and open to physical change.
Adaptability and creativity are crucial for success in today’s career market, however, there are many psychological issues that can interfere with that. These include family influences, striving for superiority, mistaken beliefs, passive engagement in the life tasks, and safeguarding. Family influences how an individual perceives work; whether this is in a positive or negative way it is still very influential on one’s outlook. Striving for superiority can be a motivating factor to do better when used correctly or it can be alienating when it is used to try and gain superiority over one’s peers. Mistaken beliefs can take a myriad of forms but they basically come down to misperceptions that keep an individual stuck in a repetitive pattern that is not conducive to life or one’s conscious goals. Passive engagement in the life tasks allows an individual to be a victim and not take responsibility for one’s actions. Safeguarding is a form of passive engagement in which one never takes risks because of the perception that failure brings a loss of self.

Work can be defined as having three different styles: Job, Career, and Calling. A Job is what one does in order to make ends meet but has little or no meaning to the individual doing the work. A Career is work that the individual enjoys but is primarily motivated by achievement. While a Calling is a primary defining aspect from which one derives meaning and social interest. Calling as a career style has a long history that is defined by having a deep sense of purpose in one’s work and often includes the feeling of being called in a spiritual or religious sense by a higher power to follow that path and incorporates social interest by providing a needed service to a community. This type of work brings the highest levels of life and work satisfaction of the three types of work, especially when combined with self-awareness, self-directedness, and taking personal responsibility for one’s life while not being inhibited by psychological issues.
Conclusion

From this research the following questions were answered.

1. Are early recollections a valid projective technique for gathering information about a client? Evidence has been shown that analysis of early recollections are comparable to standardized assessments in evaluating character, personality, and neurotic traits and can differentiate between different groups of people that are separated by traits. Furthermore, the author would recommend the use of early recollections over the use of standardized quantitative assessment because early recollections have the added advantage of developing the therapeutic relationship through narrative expression and divulging unconscious content.

2. What problems interfere with a successful fulfillment of the work life task? Family influences form how one sees their relationship to work and how work should look to that individual. Neurotic blocks, such as vertical striving, mistaken beliefs, safeguarding, and passivity, interfere with successful completion of the work life task and the author would recommend therapy for anyone who is struggling to fulfill their vocational calling.

3. Are there different kinds, types, or approaches to careers? It has been shown that there are different kinds or types of work that have distinctly different characteristics. Additionally, there are different approaches to careers that present particular barriers to the fulfillment of a vocational calling that therapists can use to help conceptualize where a client is at and what it may take to get them to the place they want to go.

4. Is there a precedent for individuals having a vocation or a calling to a particular career? There is a historical precedent for individuals having a vocation calling to a particular career that have often involved a transcendent summons to that work. Additionally,
research provides evidence that those who are most satisfied with their careers and who find their work particularly meaningful view themselves as being called to that work. In order for client to receive the most satisfaction and meaning from the work life task this author would recommend that therapist help clients find their vocational calling, especially since work constitutes such a large portion of people’s lives.

5. What role does social interest play in forming meaningful careers? Social interest is the backbone of a vocational calling because a crucial element of a vocational calling is the feeling of contributing to the world in a beneficial and meaningful way. This author would recommend that therapist probe into in what areas a clients social interests lie and how those interests could be used in order to fulfill the work life task because work is the primary way that most individuals interact with the community.

6. What role does the development of consciousness play in career development? By combining a calling with the right attitude and psychological wellbeing one can become conscious of what life is asking them to do (ones vocational calling) and how to go about doing that, with the rewarding being a life of significance and meaning. Additionally, a vocational calling is an ever evolving construct that needs to be fed with self-awareness and self-reflection (consciousness) in order to develop and evolve. In the therapeutic setting the development of consciousness happens through developing in the client an awareness of their mistaken beliefs and unconscious behaviors.

7. Do all the previous questions come together to answer the thesis question? “Can one use early recollections to help a client find insight into the work life task in order to find their vocational calling?” This research supports that early recollections can give valid guidance towards finding a client’s vocational calling and what blocks them from
fulfilling that calling. With clients this author would recommend using early recollections to discover what a client’s vocational calling is and how they should go about fulfilling the work life task. Furthermore, this author would endorse using early recollection to see what psychological blocks or unconscious behaviors the client has that will interfere with fulfilling the work life task and what is at the root of these blocks.
References


