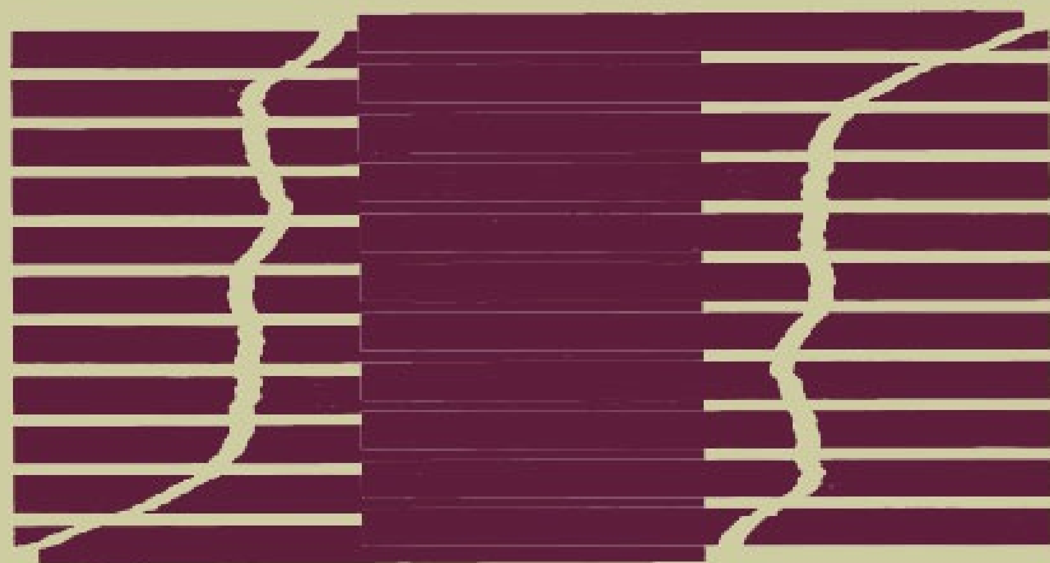
Career Counseling with Men



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Career Counseling with Men

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> A man would never get the notion of writing a book on the peculiar situations of the human male, (de Beauvior, 1953/1976, p. xv)

Ms. Beauvior was correct . . . in 1953. Let's face it, one only writes about the plight of people who are recognized as suffering or discriminated against in some way. Although male writers have certainly portrayed individual men in painful, tragic situations, from Job in the Bible to Willie Loman in "Death of a Salesman," there has been until recently almost nothing written about the "peculiar situation of the human male."

Feminism and the women's movement have forced males to notice that there *is* a male condition. Women's issues have received so much press and exposure that all but only the most unaware males could help reflecting on their place in the world and/or the quality of their lives. In the past men did not think much about such things. They were faced with issues related to surviving and getting ahead. Today, most men come from traditional families where fathers were breadwinners and mothers were homemakers and part-time workers.

The traditional male models of work that most men have introjected are now colliding with other societal realities of the 1980s such as the demands and conflicts of dual-career marriages; the integration of women into traditional male occupations; changes in technology; new expectations about balancing work with family relationships; and the stress of maintaining the traditional male belief that occupational success equals high self-esteem.

This collision of traditional male values with these new forces is a source of great intrapersonal and interpersonal conflict for men as well as women. As others have pointed out (Berger & Wright, 1978; O'Neil, 1981; Pleck, 1981; Skovholt & Morgan, 1981), male socialization has taught men that work is primary. Men have learned that they are known by what they do, how much they earn, and how much status they have. The bottom line is that they must work and support their family. All other roles are considered secondary.

The challenge of these traditional male paradigms and values strikes at the heart of masculinity. The result is that men are anxious and confused. It is a time of action and reaction: Often they are asked, told, even mandated to make changes instigated by women.

These "forced" changes can generate anger and fear in men because there is so much at stake. With most of their identity tied up in career, they feel that they have more to lose. In addition, they are being asked by women to make changes that are not traditionally male or valued by other men. Essentially they have to learn about living more intimately and cooperatively with their wives and children.

Since more counselors are increasingly confronted with male clients who are affected by these societal changes, it is important that they appreciate these male dilemmas and refrain from focusing entirely on the intrapsychic world of their clients. This chapter is aimed at developing an understanding of both the internal and external forces that shape and influence men's work-related lives, so that counselors can more comprehensively treat men with career-related concerns.

Self-Esteem, Status, and Upward Mobility

If self-esteem is connected with respecting oneself, feeling positively toward oneself, and thinking that one is worthy and useful, then it would follow logically that those people whose definition of success is the most narrow are at the greatest risk of becoming anxious, disillusioned, and unfulfilled. Many men fall into this category. For most men, work success accounts for most of their sense of self-worth/esteem (Goldberg, 1977; Morgan, Skovholt and Orr, 1979; Pleck, 1981).

Since much of men's self-esteem and gender identification is measured in terms of what they do, it is understandable that men are obsessed with achievement and success (O'Neil, 1981). Although the degree to which these male values affect men's career and personal development varies depending on age, social class, ethnic background, and gender-role socialization, few men escape the strain and conflict of pursuing "manliness."

Besides the narrowness of the success formula, the king-of-the-hill aspect of the pursuit is stressful and exhausting. No one is or can be really secure in a competitively based world. In Alan Sillitoe's short story, "The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner," the main protagonist, a cross-country runner, states,

"All I knew was that you had to run, run, run, without knowing why you were running, but on you went . . . and the winning post was no end to it . . . because on you had to go" (Sillitoe, 1971, pp. 37-38).

This short quote contains much of what constitutes gender-role strain and conflict in men. Since men's sense of maleness is so dependent upon getting somewhere without being allowed to stop and savor what they have achieved, it is no wonder that men with one eye on the winning post and the other looking over their shoulder, are more emotionally distant and anxious than women.

This seems to be a pretty grim picture of how men live. One might wonder why most men don't recognize their condition and become more proactive about changing it. But the fact is that much of manliness is associated with enduring pain and suffering. As Osherson in his work *Finding Our Fathers* (1986, p. 64) states, "Many men learn from their fathers that to be in the work world means to suffer, indeed that manhood itself is a kind of dreadful obligation."

Paradoxically, men have felt a sense of masculine pride in their suffering as breadwinners. In the past, even if their jobs were unheroic and uninteresting, they could at least feel that supporting the family was man's work. Essentially, men have been united by sharing perseverance and sweat. However, with the large influx of women in the workplace, this "privilege" of the breadwinner's role has been reduced. There are fewer and fewer domains that men can label as "man's."

As tenuous as it might have been, maintaining and keeping women at home enhanced men's sense of self-worth and made them feel like more of a man because it made them unlike women. This aspect of male socialization is critical to men's sense of self-esteem: Much of what passes for masculinity is a reaction to femininity. Being a man means being unlike a woman. Much of being male is based upon *not* being certain things, that is, avoiding feelings, behaviors, awarenesses, and activities that might evoke unmanly responses (Gerzon, 1982; Jourard, 1971; Liss-Levinson, 1981; O'Neil, 1981; Skovholt & Hansen, 1980).

The constriction of the male role makes men even more vulnerable concerning their work. In this adult variation of king-of-the-hill, the real truth is that few men ever "make it. " Those who do get there live in dull fear and apprehension and those who are looking upward feel a sense of failure because they can't get there. The truth is that there are only so many spots at the top. As Harris (1986, p. 8) has

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noted, “Most [men] work in jobs where they cannot live out the ‘American Dream’ as portrayed by the media. The number of individuals in professional white collar occupations account for only 15% of all employed men, or 8% of the total male population. Indeed only twenty-nine percent of men in the U.S. make $25,000 or more.” Harris (1986, p. 9) adds that most men will never get status jobs. He notes that 45% of working men are in blue-collar jobs, many without college educations. These vast numbers of men in the working class are in jobs that are often dull, dangerous, and repetitive. Even if they are making a decent income, they often feel inadequate when faced with the “failure” to live up to the media’s image of the successful male.

Even highly educated men have aspirations that don’t fit with the reality of available top level positions. There are only so many prestigious schools, organizations, and firms; consequently, these men are forever struggling for the limited positions available. This highly competitive struggle is not only stressful and unhealthy, it is more often than not discouraging and dispiriting. Furthermore, without support and communication from other men, men will continue to feel inadequate, internalizing their “failure,” assuming they must be at fault or that someone else is to blame.

Failing to see the Horatio Alger myth for what it is, men will continue to work harder and experience fatigue, stress, illness, and ongoing disillusionment. The blind circuitousness of this process perpetuates a demoralizing sense in men that life is meaningless and empty.

Although most men don’t literally think that winning and getting ahead are a matter of life and death, the fact is that most men *behave* that way. The tendency to compete and push so strongly and doggedly comes from a view that one is either a winner or a loser. This strong focus on winning is not only the result of connecting masculinity with competing, but is linked with men’s fear of being feminine. As Tooley (1977, p. 191) has stated, “Fear of emasculation, whether expressed as the boyhood fear of castration or the grownup male fear of impotence, remains the core organizer of adult male life experience.”

The interaction of these two forces is very potent. The key phrase “core organizer,” stresses that much of this behavior is unconsciously embedded in the male psyche so that men are driven by the fear of not being potent. Their lives revolve around avoiding the feminine sides of themselves because they

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associate feminine behaviors with weakness—that is, impotence.

This obsession with winning and upward mobility also means that men cannot feel good about themselves if they choose to stay where they are. They cannot appreciate who they are or what they are doing. A part of the need to achieve is the drive to accumulate visible symbols of success in the form of prestigious positions, beautiful homes, expensive cars, and other worldly goods. These are symbols to him and the world that he is successful and moving forward.

Since much of masculinity is predicated on accumulating these symbols, rather than on feeling intrinsically rewarded, it is almost a cliché to note that competent, satisfied workers “advance” to positions of greater prestige and authority. Teachers become principals; competent researchers are pushed into administration; and skilled workers become supervisors and foremen. This process is fueled by both the success orientation of the individuals and the organizational norms that demand it.

These career-related binds are costly and complex, colliding in men’s psyches, rendering them frightened, confused, and threatened. O’Neil (1981) notes that this constant male role conflict and overload often causes men to implode at work and explode at home, resulting in family violence and discord. The opposite may also be true. Unable to feel competent at home, a man brings his discontent to work. Other writers (Crites & Fitzgerald, 1980; Harrison, 1978; Korzman, 1986) have documented and discussed the extent to which men’s health is threatened by these work-related conflicts and demands, showing that men greatly exceed women in stress-related deaths and illnesses.

Balancing Work and Other Priorities

As previously stated, the male paradigm emphasizes invulnerability and independence to such an extent that men are often isolated from friends and family; consequently, males often ignore learning and caring about intimacy. They continue to look toward work and career to fulfill personal needs. But turning toward work doesn’t meet most men’s needs for intimacy and it further distances them from significant others simply because they are not around enough to relate.

Unable to rectify their discontent and to understand their predicament, they often seek solace and pride in their suffering. Although much of this suffering is real, it is also a shield from the demands of

others for intimacy, a way to legitimize distance and noninvolvement (Druck & Simmons, 1985). A wife and children can hardly criticize a man for supporting them and making their lives more comfortable.

One of the most difficult questions men have to deal with is whether they can be both ambitious at work and successful as a father and partner. For men who are trying to "make it" at work, the job usually comes first, family second. Several authors have discussed the conflicts men have between work and family, and how the need for task completion can be a detriment to relationship maintenance and really "being there" for one's children (Berger & Wright, 1978; Goldberg, 1977; Nichols, 1975; Osherson, 1986; Pleck & Sawyer, 1974).

Male socialization and role conflicts aside, it is important to understand how hard most people must work just to make ends meet. Work for many men often leaves them too tired to manage a social life, unless it's handed to them when they get home. Some men consider it a luxury to be able to focus on things *other* than work. As a result of this stress, many men adopt the belief that if they become successful they will be able to stop work and enjoy themselves. Few make this belief a reality; for others it is often too late.

Many men are secretly or unconsciously angry and depressed by the traditional bargain they have made with their wives; having been consigned to the world of work and primary economic responsibility and thus being cut off from their families. Having made this bargain, as the "natural" order of things, they feel trapped and powerless to make changes in their role. Some experience a great sense of loss. Further, many men agree in principle with equal parental leave but cannot see themselves taking time off to care for a child for fear that taking a paternity leave would negatively affect their careers.

How much has the traditional pattern given way to more equal roles for men and women? Bell (1982) suggested that more men today give relationships greater precedence over work. Skovholt and Morgan (1981) felt that there had been a shift in the conceptualization of roles for men and women with (1) biological differences in sex being deemphasized and the (2) work achievement role for women and the personal affiliation role for men being stressed more. It is still a question as to how far most men in today's world have actually broadened their lives to make relationships and personal issues more important. Certainly some men have made these changes.

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The significant problem facing men is adjusting to a different image of what a man is. Can men learn to live in situations of less control and greater dependence? It is likely that men fear not only being overshadowed by the capability of the women they are with but, more important, also losing status and therefore control of their life situations. The feeling that women should not support men or be the primary breadwinner is deeply ingrained in both sexes. Most men feel either guilty or threatened in situations of less pay or no pay, even when income is no problem. Many men are not able to handle the "opportunity" of not working—for example, to follow a woman who goes on paid leave for a year. Basically it is a problem of having less control. A common response for men in such situations is consciously to suppress feelings of fear and anger, in order not to appear vulnerable or nonsupportive. These unacknowledged feelings, however, often surface as resentment, a kind of backlash that undermines intimacy. Ambiguous feelings such as these are common in relationships in the midst of change. Counseling at these times can help unravel these hidden agendas and conflicts, helping couples to discuss their feelings more honestly and openly.

Developmental Issues

A number of authors have discussed career issues from a developmental perspective (Brim, 1976; Bookneck, 1976; Cohen, 1979; Levinson, 1978; Sheehy, 1977; Thomas, 1981). Levinson (1978) argued that we all live through the same developmental periods in adulthood, and that for men in particular life passages revolve around work. The adult life cycle theorists generally describe a more or less regular and predictable life work pattern for men who are "successful," from first career choice to retirement. The pattern involves: (1) career choice; (2) education and preparation; (3) getting ahead, playing the game, workaholic, absent from family, spouse's goals subordinated; (4) midlife crisis—facing limits or failure, change in career—may "return to family," who may be leaving; (5) retirement.

These authors have generally emphasized the turmoil and stagnation that can occur at different stages in men's career development along with the possibility of renewal and adjustment to a new stage. Possible alternatives to the more traditional life-work developmental pattern might involve the integration of work and family responsibilities, as in a dual-career marriage, part-time employment, or even as house-husband. It seems true, however, that these alternatives often do not really arise as conscious possibilities for men until about midlife, a time when many men seek counseling.

The so-called midlife period, usually occurring around the time when men approach 40, can be a particularly stressful time. For many men divorce catapults them into doubt and confusion at midlife. For other men it may be a forced career change, illness, or the loss of a loved one. By the time men are fortyish, they have spent a number of years "getting somewhere" and many are "lost" in their work. By this time, however, many begin to know, or at least suspect, that wealth, status, fame or power cannot be a shield from life's realities. Midlife is often a time when men start to realize that they are vulnerable to age, illness, and death; many have experienced the death or illness of parents. It can be a time for them to consider renegotiating the contract, for asking themselves if they want to continue jeopardizing their health and relationships in exchange for more money and status. At the heart of this assessment is the issue of self-respect. Taking the risk at this time of life to confront these existential questions exposes men to deep feelings of vulnerability. For many it can be easier to rush back to work and avoid the awkwardness of these strange feelings. Excessive work may be hard and costly to a degree, but it is familiar and predictable.

Erikson (1963) described midlife as potentially offering ways of becoming interpersonally "generative," an opportunity to nurture and actualize untapped resources in oneself. Unfortunately, in one study, Farrell and Rosenberg (1981) found only one-third of a broad sample of normal men at midlife achieved a positive "generative solution" at midlife.

Other problems often compound the difficulties men experience in attempting to reevaluate their priorities. Very often a man's family depends upon his continued financial/ economic productivity in order to maintain a given level of status and to remain financially solvent and responsible. While women at midlife are often encouraged to emerge from the home and to find new vocations and interests in life, men are often not given the same encouragement. Society has a vested interest in keeping the midlife male locked into his traditional roles and responsibilities. Osherson (1986) discussed the problem that many men face at midlife when the wife and kids are off into exciting new work and experiences, while he feels a leveling off or decline in his career. For some men it seems like everyone in the family is going onto something bigger and better except him.

Similar conflicts and questions are often raised at the time of retirement. Most men are not prepared for retirement and its impact on their self-concept and emotions. Many men have still at this time defined

themselves almost entirely in relation to their work. Self-esteem and control issues can become particularly acute.

Skovholt and Morgan (1981) discussed a number of retirement issues, including the importance of physical health, financial security, and positive interpersonal relationships. They also described at length the problems of men who have had too much of their self-esteem connected with work. Others have described the traumas men experience in moving from significant activity in male-dominated places to inactivity in places dominated by wives; for most men the workplace has been their place of control in their adult lives (Skovholt & Hansen, 1980). Again, there are opportunities for growth and renewal as well as problems facing men at retirement. Counselors need to encourage men to find these opportunities. For those men who continue "too long" at any life stage to try and find all of their meaning through work there is usually a growing sense of emptiness coupled with a sense that one has never done enough. Those men who finally discover that work isn't everything have to struggle with the question of, "Now what?"

Counseling Issues and Approaches

During this time of rapid changes, an increasing number of men are experiencing career shifts, unemployment, midlife issues, retirement, and other identity crises. Some men want to change their jobs because of boredom or frustration. Corporate people often want out of the bottom-line-only mentality. Technical people sometimes want more contact with people. Some men want to change jobs out of a feeling of being unable to be assertive enough to get what they need from their present job or they may feel themselves losing out in a competitive struggle. Lack of status or insufficient income motivates many men to seek change. People in human service occupations talk about burnout or about being at a dead end. Many men leave jobs they like in teaching or human service work to go to higher-paying jobs in business and industry, sometimes because of status, but often because they cannot afford to remain.

Generally, those who make the most successful job switches are motivated not only to escape a particular job but also by positive attraction to something else. However, seeking career change can also be an attempt to avoid dealing with the real problem. The increasing complexity of career and life decisions, often involving difficult choices and compromises, means that men will increasingly turn to

counselors for help.

Career counseling is often initiated at a time of performance failure. Male issues may for the first time become relevant as men are faced with crises and difficult times. A man seeking career counseling might really be searching for legitimacy for the sides of himself that have been lost (O'Neil, 1981). Some men are looking for outlets for expression of feelings from conflicts and other stresses on the job.

Traditional career counseling has consisted mainly of discovering individual traits, analyzing occupational requirements, and matching the individual to the job (Weinrach, 1979). Increasingly, computer programs such as the *System of Interactive Guidance and Information* (1974), better known as "SIGI," are being developed and used for matching interests and values to available jobs. A common adjunct to traditional career counseling has been the teaching of job searching skills, such as interviewing techniques, application, and resume writing skills.

Although providing accurate information to clients about their interests, skills, and employment possibilities and helping them to find work are important, it is not enough. Much of a man's personal identity and sense of worth is connected to his work; therefore, career counseling must encompass examining many psychological factors and issues that go beyond aptitude, intelligence, and interest. An increased awareness and sensitivity to needs and feelings surrounding work increases the potential for making sound career choices.

Counseling may sometimes best be focused on enhancing the current work situation. A man may need greater self-knowledge or greater acceptance of his fears and other feelings he has while on the job. Osherson (1986) described how at work a man may unconsciously repeat his own father-son relationship through mentor-mentee relationships, with all the same problems and unresolved issues.

Skovholt and Morgan (1981) noted that it is sometimes important to teach clients how to focus their energy productively. This might involve teaching new work attitudes, stress or time management skills, or long-range planning skills. These skills are often best learned in structured workshops or experience-oriented classroom situations; therefore, it is important for the counselor to be aware of these opportunities in the local community. Some men may also need decision-making skills, interpersonal communication skills, and/or assertiveness training.

Increasingly the industrial sector is recognizing the need for such training and is offering programs for employees in these areas. Often men need help in learning how to deal with conflict and cooperation and how to discriminate between productive conflict and conflict that is excessive or dysfunctional. For this issue, group training sessions are often more useful than individual counseling.

Skovholt and Morgan (1981, p. 234), while observing that the work of the career counselor has been centered primarily on facilitating movement from powerlessness to power, noted that "facilitating upward mobility and increased consumption may no longer be totally virtuous work for career counselors." It is at least important to ask how career counselors can intervene to help men understand and deal with power and competition issues, problems of control, and career and family conflicts. How can counselors help men to clarify their values concerning their roles as breadwinner, husband, and father?

To begin with, it is important that counselors provide a great deal of active support for men and encourage them to express their feelings. Open questioning can help a man define how he sees the masculine role and its alternatives.

Providing readings may also be helpful. There is an ever growing number of useful books on men's issues concerning work, which can be recommended as an adjunct to counseling. Books such as Levinson's *The Seasons of a Man's Life* (1978), Sheehy's *Passages* (1977), and LaBier's *Modern Madness* (1986) have helped some men achieve a better sense of their experiences while going through the emotional turmoil brought about by major life and occupational changes. Osherson's book *Finding our Fathers* (1986) offers a useful understanding of men's feelings about their work in the context of upbringing and family relationships. Bowles's *What Color Is Your Parachute* (1987), which is revised yearly, provides concrete information about changing careers and applying for jobs.

Of particular importance in career counseling is helping men examine how gender-role conflicts influence their emotional, physical, and interpersonal lives. Sometimes men need counseling where deeper feelings may be explored and encouraged, where other potential sides can be exposed and developed, and where fears can be confronted. Counseling should work toward heightened awareness and understanding of feelings, offering a man expanded choices.

Counselors should encourage men to explore the limitations of the traditional male role, particularly needs for status and control. Many men are "workaholics" or are caught up in the seduction of money and power. Although counselors cannot deny the importance of social status, which is usually based on job and money, they can help a man to try and find a balance between this comparative type of status and other sources of meaning. Is it possible to lower work output (even to medium levels) in order to avoid self-destructiveness or to find other goals, such as establishing or enhancing personal relationships? Many men who would like to find greater balance in their lives have to confront fears of the "social demotion" involved in the reduction of their status as breadwinner. Career counseling should include examining ambitions and desires for achievement and wrestling with one's limitations.

As women take on traditional male work roles, denying the male-only association of these patterns, men need help dealing with losses of gender privilege and with confronting their fears about women moving into jobs that were once men's exclusive territory. The percentage of males entering traditional female occupations is smaller. This may be due to economic and desirability factors, as "women's jobs" traditionally pay less; however, studies suggest that there is also a larger stigma attached to men who do "women's work"(Yanico, 1978). Counseling can provide support for men who are considering or working in nontraditional work roles.

Most men experience gaps between their aspirations and their occupational realities. Their unhappiness at not "being something" often distracts them from the reality of what is now. For the unemployed man whose self-esteem is based primarily on comparative performance, these conflicts are particularly unbearable.

A typical example is David, who unexpectedly lost his job. He felt a devastating loss of face, but he was reluctant to acknowledge his major fear—that of not being able to support his family. As David mostly got encouragement and understanding from family and friends, he felt his fears were inexcusable. Although he did not admit to others his loss of self-confidence, thoughts of failure and self-incrimination gradually took over. David tried to find another job, but the possibilities were below his standards for income and prestige; for other positions he lacked the necessary training or credentials.

Gradually, David removed himself emotionally from family and friends, and his marriage

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deteriorated. He drank more and more. He felt no desire for sexual or other intimate contact with his wife. His wife's ultimatum that he see a therapist or she would leave finally convinced him to seek professional help. He was depressed, at times angry, and feeling increasingly hopeless.

When David began counseling sessions he did not admit that he wanted help. He continued, however, and gradually began to let go of some of his pride. As he began to see himself more objectively, he looked at the images he had carried of what a man should be. He learned that his expectations had been projected as absolute male standards.

Later David joined a men's group and talked more openly about his feelings than ever before in his life. He also took a part-time job and went back to school in a field he had been interested in for a long time. Being in a classroom was an uncomfortable experience at first. This time David was able to talk about his anxiety with some of the older students. He found that others felt similarly. He began to develop a sense of himself, based on concrete experiences and feelings. He recognized that his previous sense of self had been based on his perception of his relative status amongst his working peers.

During this time, David's wife had begun working part-time, which at first made him anxious and uncertain. By talking with his group, he saw that his feelings stemmed from his fear of not being dominant in his family. Recognizing this fear, he gradually became more comfortable with the situation.

As David prepared himself for a new way of fitting into the work world, he realized that status had been the largest factor in his first career choice. Though status is still important to David, he no longer feels that it is running his life.

Counselor Variables

In addition to effective counseling skills, counselors need an awareness of how technical and personal skills and interests relate to the actual world of work. Further, career counselors working with men must understand how work for men fits into the broader cultural milieu.

Career counselors also need to have an awareness of their own gender-role issues, and to understand in particular their own level of commitment to the status quo. Even counselors' subtle

adherence to traditional masculine and feminine stereotypes can be restricting. Men exploring career questions or nontraditional lifestyles deserve a counselor who is accepting of nontraditional ways of thinking about work, marriage, and family life. Such a counselor will be able to support men effectively in dealing with their changing roles and facilitate more innovative solutions.

For males in our society, work is still primary; all other roles are secondary. This is certainly also true for most professional counselors. It is not uncommon to encounter male counselors who, while espousing feminist values, either deny, overlook, or are unconscious of their own male issues. Many counselors, even those with nontraditional values, still live more or less traditional lifestyles, and they often carry some combination of these factors or influences into their counseling work. Male counselors often fear feminism and in particular feminist therapists who make claims that women clients should see a woman (Dubois, 1978). This is partly a male economic and status issue, in which the breadwinner-provider role is threatened.

A number of authors who discuss traditional and nontraditional occupations have noted that it is often easier for counselors to support a female client in espousing values seen as traditionally male than to support a male client living in accord with values seen as traditionally reserved for women (Berger & Wright, 1978; Skovholt & Morgan, 1981). It has been shown (Broverman, Broverman, Clarkson, Rosencrantz, & Vogel, 1970) that many counselors—male and female—tend to share traditional male success values both privately and professionally; therefore, they are more able to support women in new roles because they are aspiring to male goals and attributes. Now counselors are confronted with male clients who are affected by these societal changes. Counselors can help men by supporting nontraditional/“deviant” roles that their clients are considering or have chosen. Support will come primarily from counselors who have examined their own value systems and who can support nontraditional behavior.

Another variable to consider here is the openness of the counselor and the use of self-disclosure. In working with men concerning career issues, it is often appropriate and useful for counselors to share some of their own discomforts that parallel the client’s presenting problems or struggles. Particularly coming from male counselors, such disclosure can help by giving permission and by modeling the expression of emotions. It can also promote a feeling of acceptance and collaboration. In addition, a

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therapists' self-disclosure usually helps a client to open up or admit to deeper fears and anxieties since he sees that others have the same fears or concerns. Sharing concerns may also be a way of modeling a willingness to explore and take risks while attempting to grow and understand one's own life more fully. Here again, a counselor's unexamined life can serve as a role model of avoidance.

Another counselor variable of prime importance has to do with social class differences. Most men and women in the helping professions were raised in the middle class and are largely ignorant of the problems facing working-class men. It is undoubtedly difficult for some counselors to understand being consigned to low status and feeling trapped with few choices. Therefore, it is especially important for counselors to have respect for and to try to understand men with problems of economic and class insecurity. Although it is not possible within the limited scope of this chapter to deal with the impact of such issues as race and sexual orientation on career choices and problems, it is important to acknowledge and draw attention to their importance in career counseling.

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