

Sorting Career and Life Values

You will need from one to two hours to complete this exercise. *Please make sure that you will not be interrupted*, for although the exercise is relatively simple it will require careful concentration. Select a space that is quiet—no music please—and that has a minimum of visual stimuli. The intent here is to reduce all external stimuli as much as possible so that you are left with your thoughts and feelings as your primary focus.

You will also need a large flat table or counter-top the size of a large desk. A card table is about as small a surface as will function well. You will also need a pencil, an eraser, several sheets of 8½" × 11" typing paper, and maybe some 3 × 5 cards, scissors, and cellophane tape.

The pages at the end of the book contain two kinds of cards—"aspect" cards and "values" cards. Remove these pages from the book and cut them apart along the dotted lines. Note that there are several blank aspect cards and several blank values cards.

Sorting the Aspect Cards

Your first task is to arrange the aspect cards at the top of your table from left to right in descending order of their importance to you now. As you sort the cards, you may feel that two or more are equally important. Think carefully about such groups of

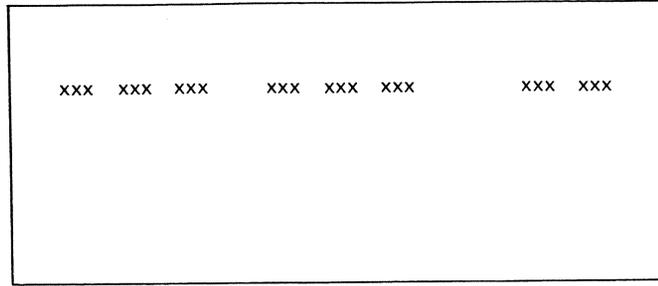
cards and try to rank them. If you cannot, cluster the two or more equally important cards together by leaving a space between them and the next card or cards.

An alternative method is to cluster cards within three groups—Most Important, Moderately Important, and Least Important. But do not feel any pressure to use this division. If you have sorted the cards into clusters, go back to each cluster and force yourself to set priorities *within* each cluster. This may be difficult. Nevertheless, *do it*. Ask yourself the question: "If I could have everything I wanted in just *one* of these categories, which one would I choose?" Then, having chosen one aspect card and placed it on the left-hand side of that cluster, ask yourself the same question for the cards remaining in that cluster.

If you think of aspects of your life that are not included in the aspect cards, feel free to label a blank card and include it in the exercise.

As you sort the cards from left to right, use the width of the table to provide a rough guide of importance. If one value or cluster of values is much more important than the next value or cluster, separate them by a wider space than the space between two equally important values.

Once you have carefully sorted the aspect cards, note their order and relative spacing at the top of the long side of a piece of typing paper. Your diagram may look something like this:



If the paper is not long enough, tape another sheet to the right-hand edge and continue.

Sorting the Values Cards

Now that you have the aspect cards arranged in order of importance, sort the values cards beneath them, toward you from top to bottom, in descending order of importance. This exercise is intended to help you identify both *what* is important within each aspect of your life and *how important* those things are. We have provided a number of values cards to help you get started, but we encourage you to write in your own answer to the question:

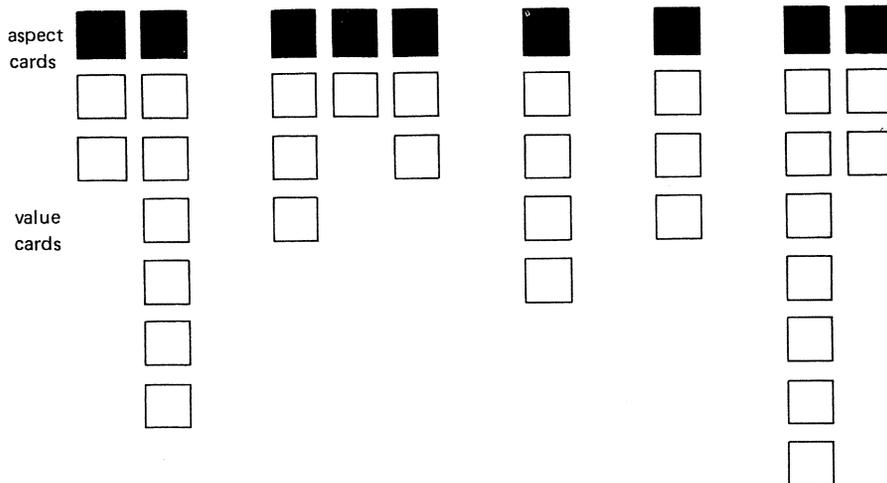
WHAT IS IT ABOUT THIS ASPECT OF MY LIFE THAT IS IMPORTANT TO ME?

At first, do not worry about sorting the values cards in order of importance. Rather, just stack them (us-

ing either our printed cards or your own written ones) beneath each aspect card. Some values may seem to relate primarily to one aspect or another. Other cards may seem to apply to several aspects. Feel free to duplicate cards in more than one stack if you choose.

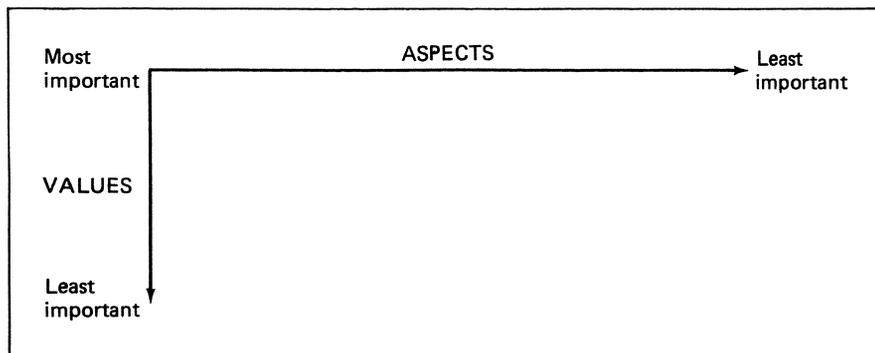
Once you have what is a relatively complete stack of things that are important to you in *each* aspect of your life, you are ready to sort each stack in order of its importance to you. Do so for each aspect, placing the most important value at the top just beneath the aspect card and the least important value closest to you at the bottom of the column. Again, use spaces to reflect the relative strength of the values you have selected. Try to be strictly honest with yourself. Do not order the cards according to what you think you *should* value, but what you *do* value. Think about choices you have made, the way you spend your time, your language, your emotions, your private thoughts—and what they tell you about the values you now hold.

When you have finished, your table will look something like this:



The cards will be sorted according to this value structure:

We have included copies of the values structures of two individuals, Steven Taylor and Carrie Baugh.



Now *write down* the arrangement you have on the sheet where you recorded your aspect values. The values in the upper left-hand or northwest quadrant will be your most important values, while those in the lower right-hand or southeast quadrant will be your least important values. You are now ready to begin interpreting your values structure.

Steve and Carrie were MBA students who took this course recently. We have their data for most of the instruments we will be using in the book, so you can practice on their data and talk about what they mean in class without revealing your own results. This is Step 4 in our self-assessment process (summarized in Exhibit 2-1 on page 8). If you are careful in your attempts to understand Steven's and Carrie's data as we go along, your ability to analyze will be much better developed by the time you get to your own data. (We have included a male's and a female's data so you can compare your results with either or both.)

Interpreting Career and Life Values Structures

NOTE:
DO NOT READ THIS UNTIL YOU HAVE COMPLETED
THE CAREER AND LIFE VALUES CARD SORT.

Before you look at Steven and Carrie's structures, though, remember Step 2 in our self-assessment process, and make an entry in your Feelings Record. Do that now while your experience of the instrument is still fresh in your mind. There is space for you to do this on the next page, if you like.

Identifying and ranking personal values is one of the most difficult tasks in making career decisions. The task is difficult because values shift in peripheral ways from day to day, and in moderately deep ways from chapter to chapter in one's life. Furthermore, it is often hard for us to sort out our deeper values except as they are confronted in demanding, behavioral situations; sometimes we think we hold a certain value, but when it is put to the test we find that another value supplants it. At the core, many of our values are remarkably stable over the years. A few core values may change, some with dramatic effect on our lives, but most will continue to guide our choices and activities throughout our lives. Our intent in this exercise is to help you gain a clearer picture of your own value structure in terms of the aspects of your life you value most highly and of the values you hold in each of them.

When you have finished your Feelings Record entry, you can begin practicing to interpret the values data by answering the questions below for both Steven and Carrie. Use your answers in your class discussion. After you have worked through Steven and Carrie's data alone and in class, then go on and draw inferences about your own results. We encourage you to write these down, as Carrie has, so that later on you won't have to reconstruct your thinking; that will save you valuable time as you begin to write your self-assessment paper.

Step One. First notice the array of aspects across the top of the page. Is there a pattern? Are the "personal" aspects clustered? If so, are they higher or lower than the "professional" or the "family" aspects? Or are the various aspects mixed in a seeming attempt to find a relatively even balance among them all? How are the aspects spaced? Where are the

gaps? What inferences could you draw from these data about this person? Write these inferences down on the Career Values Sort Inferences sheet.

Step Two. Next, look at the values cards *horizontally* across aspects. Which ones appear most often? Which ones least often? What does this tell you? Write down your inferences.

Step Three. Finally, look at the vertical columns of values. Where are the gaps? Where are the most values listed? Which ones are at the top of each column? What do these things tell you about this person?

Feelings Record: Career and Life Values Sort

Steven Taylor's Life and Career Values Card Sort

Most Important Value Cluster

A1. Familial

Accepting others
Relaxing
Looking back
Helping people

A2. Marital

Feeling intimate
Looking ahead
Laughing together
Sharing risks
Admiring the beauty
Being able to voice my
uncertainties
Having spouse's support
Encouraging spouse

A3. Professional

Creating new things
Taking risks
Tackling a challenge
Planning ahead
Using energy and re-
sources wisely
Teaching people
Being independent
Helping people
Working on broad issues

B5. Physical

Moving quickly
Concentrating on one
thing
Achieving a goal

B6. Emotional

Lonesome for Sandi
Trying to show more, let
it out
Learning to let the hurt
out especially

Important Value Cluster

C1. Financial

Deciding what to do next
Planning ahead
Seeking independence

C2. Social

Meeting people
Variety
Questioning the role of
alcohol
Why are some large
gatherings uncomfort-
able?

C3. Recreational

Admiring the beauty of
it all
The tranquility
Being free
Relaxing

C4. Spiritual

Growing importance
Accepting others
Opening up
Voicing uncertainties

C5. Societal

Organizing things
Helping people
Building things

C6. Political

Creating new things
(slowly)
Expanding influence

C7. Ecclesiastical

On and off participation
Frustrated by dogma and
pomp

Very Important Value Cluster

B1. Parental

The product of our love
Creating the future
Raising confident,
independent thinkers

B2. Home

Building things
Independence at last
Finishing a task
Continuity (distinct
from workplace)

B3. Identity

Accentuating the
positive
Wrestling with self-
criticism
Regular check-ups

B4. Intellectual

Enjoying the activity
Tackling a challenge
Looking ahead (trying)

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Carrie Baugh's Value Card Sort

First-Tier Aspects

A1. Marital

Growing together
Keeping the passion
Continuing to appreciate
his wonderful self
Making time for each
other
Feeling happy
Feeling loved
Being praised by spouse

A2. Familial

Being close to others
Keeping a strong tie,
open community
Being able to help,
protect
Watching them grow,
enjoying life
Being praised by parents
Feeling loved

Second-Tier Aspects

B1. Professional

Enjoying work for sake
of it
Keeping integrity
Still thinking as an
individual
Achieving a goal
Expanding influence
Praise by work
colleagues
Teaching people
Move quickly
Tackling a challenge
Being encouraged
Planning ahead
Finishing a task
Taking risks
Changing activities
monthly
Working on details

A3. Balance

Admiring beauty of it all
Enjoying life's variety of
activities
Using energy and re-
sources wisely
Planning ahead, where
want to be
Learning new things,
having variety
Working on the broad
issues

A4. Identity

Integrity
Continual growth,
learning
Being independent
Being carefree
The tranquility

B3. Financial

Security
Getting rewarded fairly
for efforts
Getting ahead

Third-Tier Aspects

C1. Physical

Staying healthy
Being in good shape

C2. Emotional

Keeping perspective
Keeping stable, even
outlook

C3. Material

Living comfortably

Fourth-Tier Aspects

D1. Social

Enjoying friends,
company
Meeting people
Part of group? (low)

D2. Ecclesiastical

Renewing strength
through active, con-
sistent worship

B4. Recreational

Relaxing
Variety
Building things/hobbies
Teaching skills

C4. Intellectual

Being challenged

C5. Societal

Helping people
Making a real difference
in my community

D3. Political

Understanding the com-
plex issues
Voting

D4. Parental

Having children
Focus on well-being and
happiness of children
Providing a happy, lov-
ing, and accepting
home environment
Watching children grow
up

NOTES:

1. Marriage and Family are first and second most important aspects.
2. Identity is in first tier of aspects.
3. Balance aspect card added; included in first tier.
4. Professional attributes in second tier.
5. Social, Political attributes in fourth tier.
6. Feeling loved, being praised in both Marital and Familial aspects.
7. Integrity mentioned under Identity and Professional aspects.

INFERENCES:

Carrie is a person who:

1. Values family and marriage above other aspects of her life.
2. Seeks to balance her lifestyle.
3. Sees professional life as important, but subordinated to Family, Marriage, and Identity.
4. Will probably spend less time on social and political activities relative to personal goals.
5. Wants to be loved and praised by her husband and family.
6. Values integrity, especially as an individual and in her professional life.

Inferences from the Career and Life Values Sort

This is a person who

Data

Carrie Baugh

Steven Taylor