

# Chapter 4

## The Case of Leslie

### PRESENTING ISSUE

Leslie is a 35-year-old White woman with a bachelor's degree in secondary education. She is seeking career counseling because she is considering quitting her current job as a math teacher in a large suburban high school. Leslie lives in a midsize metropolitan area in the Midwest; she is married, with a 10-year-old stepson.

Leslie reports a considerable amount of dissatisfaction with her current job, particularly related to the stress of many responsibilities and long working hours, as well as the impersonal nature of the school. Leslie reports that her dissatisfaction has been accumulating for several years but that recent events have brought it to the forefront. First, a newly hired principal has instituted administrative tasks to demonstrate teacher effectiveness that Leslie finds insulting to experienced teachers, such as requiring teachers to keep a weekly log of their activities, submit lesson plans for review, and file quarterly reports on teaching goals. She reports that these activities are “oppressive” and feels quite angry toward the principal. She also is frustrated by the increasing use of student performance on standardized achievement tests as a basis for teacher evaluation. Second, Leslie has had several interactions with parents this year that discouraged her greatly: On one hand, she has spent a considerable amount of time dealing with parents who closely monitor their children's grades online and contact Leslie frequently to discuss assignments; on the other hand, some parents showed little involvement in their children's school activities yet expected her to go “above and beyond” her responsibilities as a teacher. This is particularly frustrating because Leslie sees students dealing with increasingly difficult problems at home. She also is frustrated by the lack of intellectual challenge in her job.

On the positive side, Leslie reports that she did have an opportunity last year to teach an elective advanced math course, in which her students were more motivated and capable, and that she continues to enjoy the one-on-one aspects of teaching. She feels she is a good teacher, and she values the relationships that she develops with students. She displays considerable enthusiasm when discussing what she likes about teaching.

Leslie is unclear at this point whether or not she will quit her current job and, if so, whether she will look for another teaching position or a new career. She wants to explore options to remain in education, whether in a traditional classroom or in some other venue. She also wants to explore new career options outside of teaching. She has thought about a wide range of possible career shifts, such as financial planning, social work, technical writing, and engineering. She is willing to consider pursuing further education if necessary for the career direction that she chooses.

## CAREER AND WORK HISTORY

Leslie grew up in a predominantly White suburban area, where she attended public schools. Leslie excelled in a number of subjects in middle school and high school, including math, science, and social studies. She was a member of the French club, was a math tutor for middle school children, and won first place in the high school science fair during her senior year. She did not actively seek out any positions of leadership within the school but was often viewed as a leader by others, in part because she assumed many organizational responsibilities.

Although her family expected her to go to college, she received little direction from them or her high school guidance counselor in choosing a college or selecting a field of study. She delayed making a decision about attending college until the summer after high school graduation and then decided to enroll at a local community college. She chose the community college because many of her friends were going there, it was close to home, and she was unsure about her motivation to pursue a college education and whether she would be successful.

During her first semester at the community college, she enrolled in general English, math, chemistry, and psychology courses. During this time, she ended a relationship with her high school boyfriend and began dating a college student who was home for Christmas vacation. The relationship flourished during her second semester, and he encouraged her to join him at the state university 90 miles from home. She finished her first year at the community college and decided to transfer to the state university, in part to join her boyfriend but also because she was disappointed by the lack of challenge in the math and science classes at her community college.

She entered her sophomore year at the university with a number of possible majors in mind but declared herself as “undecided.” She enjoyed taking a variety of classes while in college, and she contemplated a number of diverse options—mathematics, engineering, creative writing, psychology, and premedicine—prior to choosing her major. She enjoyed the challenge of her math classes but did not do well in mechanical drawing. She did not enjoy being one of the few women in her advanced math classes, particularly because she had some negative experiences with professors who singled out her mistakes. A number of factors detracted from her serious consideration of a degree in mathematics, including lack of encouragement from professors and not wanting to commit to pursuing a graduate degree. Her lack of motivation to pursue postbaccalaureate training also precluded her from declaring a major in psychology or premedicine, and she decided not to major in engineering because two professors told her she would have a difficult time combining that career with a family. Leslie finally decided to major in secondary education, with an emphasis in mathematics education, because she could easily combine teaching with raising a family, she could still use her math skills, and teaching would not require schooling beyond a bachelor’s degree. In addition, she remembered enjoying her experiences as a math tutor in high school in which she had feelings of accomplishment when her students understood difficult concepts for the first time.

Leslie had a satisfying student teaching experience in a medium-sized high school in her hometown, and she received positive feedback and excellent evaluations from her supervising teacher. This experience led her to feel excited and confident about her decision to become a teacher.

After graduating from college, Leslie took a teaching position in a small town about 2 hours from the city in which her family lived. Her first year in the position was very stressful, but she also loved being a teacher. As the only math teacher in the school, she taught a diverse range of classes and students, and she enjoyed the challenge of taking sole responsibility for her classes. She also enjoyed being a part of the community. However, she worked every night and weekend to keep up with lesson preparation and grading. She was the youngest teacher in the school and found it difficult to meet people with whom she could socialize outside of work. She also missed being close to her family, and her workload made it difficult for her to see them on weekends. Her relationship with her boyfriend suffered, and they ended the relationship during her second year of teaching.

After 3 years, Leslie found a teaching position in a large school district in the city in which her family lived and looked forward to being closer to them. She soon discovered that her new teaching position, although slightly less stressful, offered fewer rewards than her previous position. Because she was teaching in a

larger school system, she was assigned five sections of freshman algebra, the least desirable teaching assignment. She found her students to be disinterested in the subject, and because they came from a wide geographic area, she no longer felt part of a community. She was also frustrated by the large bureaucratic structure of the school system. She was, however, able to find a greater degree of social support outside of work, including her family and high school friends. She has been in this position for 10 years.

Leslie has a number of interests outside her job, although she does not have much time to pursue any of these interests during the school year because of the time demands of her job. She enjoys several hobbies during the summer, including gardening and other outdoor activities, and teaches swimming lessons at the local YMCA. She also volunteers at the science center, where she maintains the membership records, and she teaches meditation classes.

## FAMILY INFORMATION

Leslie is the second of three children, with an older brother (age 38) and a younger sister (age 30). Her brother has a bachelor's degree in electrical engineering and works for a company that designs computer equipment. He was recently promoted to vice president of one of the company's product divisions in which he coordinates all aspects of a particular product line, from research and development to marketing and sales. He is married to a woman who is a personnel manager for a retail chain; they have two children. Leslie's sister has a bachelor's degree in nursing and has worked at a number of hospitals and home health agencies. She is currently out of the workforce while she cares for two young children; her husband is the district sales manager for a pharmaceutical company.

Leslie's parents are in their early 60s. Her father is a corporate attorney for a midsize manufacturing firm, specializing in product liability and patents. His bachelor's degree was in chemistry, and he worked as a research and development chemist for 10 years before pursuing a law degree. Her mother attended several years of college but left school when she married Leslie's father. She has been involved in community arts organizations by, for example, volunteering as a docent at the art museum and serving on the board of the symphony orchestra. She did not work outside the home until Leslie's younger sister was in high school. At that time, she found a position with a small business specializing in office interior design, where she continues to work part-time as an administrative assistant.

During college, Leslie's parents stated their support for whatever she chose as a major and provided the financial resources for her college education. Her father strongly encouraged her to major in business, but Leslie found that these classes

were her least favorite. Her mother felt that the specific major was not critical as long as Leslie received a good education; she expected that Leslie would not remain in the workforce after marrying and having children. Leslie's family expressed some impatience when it was difficult for her to choose a major; Leslie's brother teased her for "changing her mind so often."

Leslie and her siblings all live within the same metropolitan area as her parents, and they see one another frequently. Leslie has discussed her job dissatisfaction with her family, and they have given her conflicting advice: Her father has renewed his encouragement of Leslie's pursuing a business career, her mother and sister have suggested that now would be a good time for Leslie to have children, and her brother has advised her to quit complaining about such inconsequential aspects of her job.

## MARITAL INFORMATION

Leslie has been married to Joe (age 39) for 5 years. Joe has an associate's degree from a local community college and is currently a finish carpenter for a residential contractor. He enjoys his work and takes a great deal of pride in his reputation as a highly skilled craftsman; however, he has been thinking about finding a different line of work because of the job's physical demands and the seasonal fluctuations in available work.

Joe is the older of two sons from a middle-class Latino family; both his father and mother are of Mexican descent. Joe's father is a midlevel manager in a hardware store chain. Joe's mother worked as a housekeeper while Joe and his brother were young, but she quit working outside of the home when Joe's father was promoted into management. She has strong connections with the Latino community through her involvement in church and neighborhood activities. Joe's brother works as a youth services coordinator, organizing programs at a city-funded community center.

Joe grew up trying to be "American" like the other kids in school. He did not want to acknowledge his Mexican heritage. He refused to speak Spanish at home, he and his parents had great conflicts during his adolescence when he refused to go to church, and he did not include the other adolescents from his Latino neighborhood in his circle of friends. His parents were particularly upset when he did not show respect for his grandmother, who came to live with them when he was 15.

Joe graduated from high school with a C average. He did not consider going to college, because he did not enjoy high school and wanted to be working and earning money rather than going to school. The only class he liked in high school was his woodworking class, and he became an apprentice carpenter after

graduation. He worked his way up to finish carpenter over 10 years. He has worked for the same contractor for the past 7 years.

After the conflicts with his family during and right after high school, Joe increasingly began to appreciate his Mexican heritage. He began to attend community and neighborhood events, although he chose not to live in the same community as his parents. He identifies himself as a Mexican American but has some resistance to the label “Latino.” He endorses many traditional Latino values: a strong emphasis on family, a preference for smooth interpersonal relationships, and respect owed to elders. He is more ambivalent about appropriate roles for men and women in the family. On the one hand, his mother’s highest goal was to stay home to care for her family; on the other hand, he realizes that some women want to work and to be more independent.

Joe’s first marriage was to a young Latino woman who grew up in the same neighborhood. They married at age 22, and his family was very happy that he would stay within their community. His wife, Maria Pilar, worked as a clerk in a small business. The conflicts in their marriage stemmed from her pressuring him to find ways to earn more money. Like his mother, her goal was to have a family and to be a homemaker. Maria was deeply involved in the Latino community and the church, and another source of conflict was his resistance to this level of involvement. Their marriage ended 2 years after their son was born. His first wife has since remarried and moved to another Latino community.

Leslie and Joe met through a common friend and dated for 6 months before marrying. Leslie’s family was not wholly supportive of her decision to marry Joe, although they did not express their feelings directly to Leslie. Joe’s family also had concerns about Joe and Leslie’s marriage; his mother was concerned that Leslie was too American. Their marriage has been relatively stable: Leslie describes herself as being happy in her marriage. She does, however, express some dissatisfaction with their relationship, primarily because of what she characterizes as their “lack of communication about important issues.” Leslie reports that Joe is supportive of her considering a career change, but she feels that he does not understand why she is unhappy with her job and that he seems hesitant about her returning to school. She speculates that some of Joe’s hesitation is due to questions about their ability to get by on only one income and forfeiting their access to health insurance through Leslie’s job.

Joe’s 10-year-old son from his first marriage now lives 300 miles from Leslie and Joe and spends school vacations with them, as well as an occasional long weekend. Leslie wants to have a child, and although Joe has expressed some ambivalence since before they were married, he has been supportive of Leslie’s desire. He expects that Leslie would postpone any career decisions if they were to have a child so that she could stay at home full-time until the child was in school.



This expectation is consistent with the division of labor that they have assumed, although Leslie is increasingly frustrated that Joe does not contribute more to household responsibilities. Leslie and Joe have had some difficulty related to pregnancy; Leslie had two miscarriages last year. The miscarriages were followed by marital tension and depression, for which Leslie sought individual therapy with a psychologist. Leslie reported that her previous experience with therapy was quite beneficial, although she now wishes that Joe had joined her in therapy.

### LESLIE'S EXPECTATIONS FOR CAREER COUNSELING

Leslie was referred to career counseling by a coworker who had heard about the availability of career services. She is enthusiastic about career counseling, she is hopeful that the career counselor will help her define her career direction, and she expects to receive information and perhaps advice from the counselor about her "best" career option. She is eager to take the tests that the counselor recommends, stating that she is waiting to hear what the tests will tell her to do.

Leslie feels that she is at a crossroads in her life and is ready to explore her options for her next step. She is evaluating many aspects of her career, family relationships, and marriage. She is looking forward to beginning counseling.

### INITIAL IMPRESSIONS OF LESLIE

Before reading the subsequent section with Leslie's assessment results, use the following questions to formulate your impressions of her:

1. What have you learned about Leslie from the information presented thus far?
2. What general impressions do you have of Leslie? What impressions do you have of her as an employee? As a spouse? As a member of her family of origin?
3. What role do you think Leslie's gender has played in her life and career decisions? What role do you think her culture and socioeconomic status have played? What role do you think her husband's culture and socioeconomic status have played?
4. What more would you like to know about Leslie?
5. What observations or hypotheses do you have about Leslie that the assessment data might clarify? What specifically will you look for in the assessment results?
6. How would you describe her primary career issue(s)? How might you prioritize the direction of counseling? Where would you like to begin in working with Leslie?

## ASSESSMENT INFORMATION

Leslie completed four inventories at the beginning of counseling: the Strong Interest Inventory (SII), the Skills Confidence Inventory (SCI), the Minnesota Importance Questionnaire (MIQ), and the Adult Career Concerns Inventory (ACCI). These four inventories were chosen to assess a diversity of components typically considered in career counseling—namely, factors related to career choice *content* (interests, values, and personality) and factors related to career choice *process* (self-efficacy, beliefs, and life span career issues). Typically, clients would take one or two inventories; in Leslie's case, all four were included to illustrate the types of information that might be assessed as part of career counseling.

### Strong Interest Inventory (SII)

Leslie's SII profile is shown in sections in Appendix A, Figure 1. Compared with other women, Leslie's SII indicates that she has very high interest in the investigative theme (science and analysis), with high interest in the social theme (helping others) and moderate interest in the conventional theme (organization and structure). She has little interest in the realistic area (working with things) and very little interest in the enterprising theme (business oriented, selling) and artistic theme (creative self-expression). Leslie's primary General Occupational Theme code, then, would be investigative-social-conventional, or ISC.

In the second section, six of Leslie's Basic Interest Scales are in the "very high" range: research, mathematics, and science in the investigative theme; teaching/education and religion/spirituality in the social theme; and taxes/accounting in the conventional theme. She also has a high level of interest in computer hardware/electronics (realistic theme). Her lowest Basic Interest Scales are military (realistic theme) and performing arts, visual arts/design, writing/mass communication, and culinary arts (all artistic theme). All these scores indicate very little interest. The codes for her highest Basic Interest Scales are all investigative, social, or conventional, and the codes for her lowest Basic Interest Scales are artistic, enterprising, or realistic, consistent with the pattern of General Occupational Themes.

Leslie's interests on the Occupational Scales are most similar to those of women who are actuaries, mathematicians, software developers, financial analysts, mathematics teachers, university professors, medical technologists, biologists, bookkeepers, and financial managers; these occupational scales are the top 10 in terms of scores, and all are scores of 59 or higher. Her interests are also similar (scores of 50 or higher) to those of physicists, geologists, chemists, computer scientists, optometrists, science teachers, accountants, credit managers, production



managers, technical support specialists, foresters, network administrators, and engineers. There are an additional 12 occupational scales on which Leslie scored between 40 and 50 (see the SII profile for more information). Leslie's interests are least similar (scores of 0 or below) to those of women who are public relations directors, graphic designers, medical illustrators, art teachers, advertising account managers, reporters, English teachers, interior designers, and chefs.

The codes associated with Leslie's highest Occupational Scales are primarily investigative or conventional, and the codes associated with her lowest Occupational Scales are primarily artistic and enterprising. Again, the codes for these scales are consistent with the General Occupational Themes and Basic Interest Scales, with the exception of the social theme. Leslie's interests are moderately similar to only one occupation primarily coded in the social area: special education teachers.

Leslie's score on the Work Style Scale is 54, indicating that she has no marked preference for either working with people or working alone. Leslie scored 56 on the Learning Environment Scale, which indicates a slight preference for a traditional academic environment over practical learning. Leslie scored 45 on the Leadership Style Scale, showing some interest in working alone rather than assuming a high profile as a leader. Leslie's score is 34 on the Risk Taking Scale, indicating that she does not like risk-taking activities and prefers to be careful and play it safe. Finally, Leslie's score of 60 on the Team Orientation Scale suggests that she may enjoy collaborating with others in a team.

Leslie omitted one of the SII items (TR index of 317), and she did not respond in an unusual way. She indicated more dislikes than likes, particularly for items regarding occupations, leisure activities, and types of people. She seemed to be fairly sure about her likes and dislikes, as indicated by very few "indifferent" responses.

### **Skills Confidence Inventory (SCI)**

In addition to the SII, Leslie also completed the SCI (Betz, Borgen, & Harmon, 1996), shown in Appendix A, Figure 2. The 60-item SCI assesses the level of confidence an individual has in completing tasks associated with the six General Occupational Themes. The overall objective of the instrument is to identify areas for a client to explore. Each scale consists of 10 items, averaged to produce a score between 1 and 5, with 5 indicating very high level of confidence in that area. Leslie has the most confidence in the investigative area, followed by social and conventional (see Appendix A, Figure 2). She has very little confidence in her artistic and realistic skills.

The SCI profile is designed to coordinate with the SII, so the levels of confidence and interest are plotted for each General Occupational Theme. Three scenarios are

of particular interest in counseling: Confidence and interest are both high, confidence is higher than interest, or interest is higher than confidence. High confidence and interest in a theme are good areas for further exploration. These conditions apply for Leslie in the investigative, social, and conventional areas. Leslie has two themes (investigative and social) in which both her interests and confidence are equally high and one theme (conventional) in which her interests are lower than her confidence. All three areas are avenues of potential career exploration with Leslie, inquiring whether her interests and confidence could be further developed in these areas. A fourth scenario is represented by Leslie's enterprising, artistic, and realistic areas in which both her interests and skills confidence are low, suggesting that these areas are "low priority" for further exploration.

### **Minnesota Importance Questionnaire (MIQ)**

The LCT score for Leslie's MIQ profile is 92%, suggesting that her responses were highly consistent across the items. Leslie's highest needs on the MIQ are moral values ("I could do the work without feeling that it is morally wrong"), ability utilization ("I could do something that makes use of my abilities"), achievement ("The job could give me a feeling of accomplishment"), and social service ("I could do things for other people"). Her lowest needs are authority ("I could tell people what to do"), independence ("I could work alone on the job"), and company policies ("The company would administer its policies fairly"). Her highest value categories are achievement and altruism, and her lowest value is status.

Examining the clusters on the second page reveals that first, four of the six clusters have C index values in the satisfied range (Clusters A, B, C, and F). Leslie's highest C index is for Cluster A (0.68), which is characterized by the values of achievement and autonomy and the need of altruism. Cluster C (0.60), with the next highest C index, is characterized by the value of achievement and the needs of autonomy and compensation. Cluster A has a large number of occupations that correspond to Leslie's pattern of values and needs: 13 of the 15 occupations have C index values in the satisfied range.

The occupations in Cluster A include counseling psychologist, occupational therapist, speech pathologist, secondary and elementary school teacher, interior designer, architect, and recreation leader. Additional occupations found in Cluster C include real estate sales agent, beauty operator, and caseworker. Occupations with high C indexes are also found in other clusters, including librarian and medical technologist in Cluster F. The lowest C index is for Cluster E, characterized by the value comfort; none of the 15 occupations has a C index value in the satisfied range. The lowest indexes are for occupations such as production assembler, meat cutter, and solderer.

## Adult Career Concerns Inventory (ACCI)

The ACCI was developed by Super and his colleagues (Super, Thompson, & Lindeman, 1988) to assess issues related to developmental career tasks and stages. The ACCI provides scores on Super's four adult career stages (exploration, establishment, maintenance, and disengagement; see Chapter 8 for more detail), as well as scores for three substages within each stage. A client's scores can be interpreted relative to one another (intraindividually) or by using norms as a point of reference. Scores reflect the amount of concern that a client expresses about various tasks within the stages and substages. The ACCI can be useful in identifying minicycles within maxicycles of Super's theory, which is of particular interest with a client such as Leslie.

Leslie's ACCI profile (see Appendix A, Figure 4) reveals that her highest stage score is in exploration and that her scores decrease with each subsequent developmental stage (that is, establishment is the second highest score, maintenance is the third highest, and disengagement is her lowest stage score). Thus, her primary career concerns are tasks that are typical of the exploration stage of career development.

Moreover, the substage scales within exploration suggest that she is most concerned about the tasks related to specification, closely followed by crystallization, with lesser concern for implementation. Crystallization includes identifying and developing potential career directions, whereas specification emphasizes choosing a specific occupational direction; these two types of concerns are typical for individuals undergoing career transitions (Super, Savickas, & Super, 1996).

An interesting feature of Leslie's ACCI profile is that, although her maintenance score is relatively low, one substage score is markedly higher than the other two within the stage. The maintenance stage is focused on continuation or further development within one's chosen occupation and position. Leslie expressed concerns related to the innovation substage, which indicates a desire to "do something different or at least to do it differently" within one's established occupation (Super et al., 1996). The innovation substage could be viewed as an "exploration and establishment" minicycle within the maintenance stage.

## Summary of Leslie's Assessment Information

Leslie has clear interests in the social area, such as teaching, social services, and religious activities, and it is important for her to do things for others and to feel good about what she does. She also has considerable confidence in her ability to do these types of activities, although her interest exceeds her confidence. She enjoys working with people but also values working independently. She is

comfortable working alone and frequently prefers doing so to being with other people. Her favorite part of teaching is the one-on-one interactions with students versus lecturing in front of the entire class. Her interest in working with people does not include leadership activities, such as managing, persuading, or directing others. She has neither interest nor confidence in enterprising activities.

Leslie appears very comfortable with structure and organization and demonstrates much attention to detail. She is less comfortable when situations are vague or ambiguous and may work to impose structure when none is forthcoming from the situation at hand. She likes developing systems to make her job more efficient.

Leslie also has strong interests in investigative-type activities. She is unfailingly curious and enjoys learning new things. It is important for her to feel that she is accomplishing something, and she enjoys being intellectually challenged. She is confident of her skills as a learner and problem solver. Although she does not have any interest or confidence in artistic activities, she enjoys the creativity involved in solving new problems or figuring out a new way to do a task.

Leslie would appear to be a good candidate for career counseling with many issues that could be profitably addressed in counseling. She is inquisitive and motivated to address her career concerns at this point. Presently, she seems particularly concerned with defining a new direction for herself or creating new opportunities within her original chosen career field. She has some external constraints to her career choices, most notably, difficulty undertaking a geographic relocation because of family obligations. She also has some internal constraints that the counselor might address, such as the power or influence that she gives to others regarding her career and the way in which she undervalues her own ability and performance. In addition, there might be conflicts due to culture that could benefit from exploration with a counselor.

### **WORKING WITH LESLIE'S CASE AND ASSESSMENT INFORMATION**

In Chapters 1 and 2, we discussed ways in which counselors might use background information and assessment results to develop hypotheses and form a “working model” of the client. Each hypothesis then may be tested by searching for evidence that either confirms or disconfirms the hypothesis, and the working model can be changed to reflect this new evidence. New hypotheses then emerge from the altered model, and the counselor’s view of the client is continually refined.

The information presented in this chapter now may be used to develop hypotheses about Leslie. We will present some broad observations about her, followed by specific hypotheses for further investigation.

## Observation 1

There seem to be some discrepancies about social-type activities, values, and personality style. For example, her social General Occupational Theme score is high, as are several social Basic Interest Scales, yet no social Occupational Scales are in the “similar” range. She also appears to be somewhat introverted, indicating that she has equal preferences for working alone or working with people but also a slight preference for working in teams.

### *Hypotheses*

- Leslie is likely to enjoy social-type activities, particularly those in which she is helping people, but may also find them tiring and stressful. She may need to withdraw from people to rejuvenate and regain her energy.
- Her interests are dissimilar to those of other women in social-type occupations (e.g., minister, physical education teacher, parks and recreation coordinator). Members of these occupations are likely to be fairly extroverted, and Leslie’s lower scores may reflect her relatively introverted nature.
- Leslie’s interest in social activities could reflect gender stereotyping; she may feel that she “should” like these activities because of gender-role socialization. The General Occupational Theme and Basic Interest Scales, in particular, may be more readily affected by these influences than are the Occupational Scales because of the transparency of the items.
- Leslie is probably most comfortable when she is in a defined or prescribed role in dealing with others, as is true when she interacts with students as a teacher. She may be less comfortable in less structured interactions.
- Her interest in social-type activities and in working with people might be limited to specific types of people; she indicated “strongly dislike” to over 60% of the items on the Types of People section of the SII.
- Leslie’s interest in the social-type activity of teaching also seems to be fairly circumscribed to mathematics. Mathematics teacher is her highest Occupational Scale directly related to teaching and indicates that she has interests very similar to those of other math teachers. In contrast, she has low scores on the elementary teacher, foreign language teacher, and social science teacher Occupational Scales.

## Observation 2

Leslie’s low artistic interests are matched by her lack of confidence in these areas, and she has not directly pursued any artistic activities. On the other hand, she does like the creativity that comes with solving problems and designing new methods.

***Hypotheses***

- Leslie may enjoy artistic activities such as going to concerts or attending museums, but her lack of confidence in her ability to perform artistic activities may have influenced her responses to items on the SII. Alternatively, she may be truly averse to artistic activities.
- Leslie may feel uncomfortable in artistic environments—those characterized by flexibility, creativity, and self-expression—because they are not as structured as she prefers.
- Her mother’s involvement in artistic organizations and activities is quite different from Leslie’s. Leslie may compare herself with her mother and feel that she is not as capable in artistic endeavors.
- Leslie seems to enjoy creativity as a means to an end—to solve problems or create new ways of doing things—rather than as an end itself.

**Observation 3**

Leslie also has low interest and confidence in enterprising activities. Moreover, she ranked as low the MIQ authority item (“telling others what to do”), and her score on the Leadership Style Scale of the SII suggests that she is not comfortable with taking charge or directing others in activities. She has been viewed by others as a leader but has not herself sought out leadership positions. Leslie seems to avoid (as opposed to merely being indifferent to) activities related to leadership or assumption of power or influence. Yet she has taken on administrative duties in her job and volunteer work.

***Hypotheses***

- Leslie seems to dislike and avoid enterprising-type activities or those that involve active pursuit of leadership roles. Her introverted nature may be antithetical to enterprising activities.
- Her father, with his interests in law and business, may be an enterprising type. Leslie may be disinterested in these activities to set herself apart from her father or because she feels that she cannot match his accomplishments in this area.
- Leslie has been successful in the administrative responsibilities that she has undertaken. These responsibilities may reflect her conventional interests in structuring and organizing details. Moreover, her administrative duties, such as her enjoyment of creativity, may be a means to an end.
- Leslie’s dissatisfaction with the new principal in her school may be due to her aversion to, or even distrust of, enterprising types. She may feel that he



discounts her because she is not like him nor does she value the same things. Leslie may also interpret the new procedures that he has instituted as a sign that he does not respect her ability and experience as a teacher.

#### Observation 4

Leslie dislikes taking risks and prefers to “play it safe.” Yet she has entered career counseling because she is thinking about changing her career direction, and she seems willing to try new activities and work hard toward goals that are important to her.

#### Hypotheses

- Leslie’s dislike of taking risks may be related to her concern about receiving the approval of others. She may be uncomfortable with trying something if there is a possibility that she will fail or will be judged as deficient by someone else.
- Her willingness to consider a radical career change, in light of her preference to avoid risk, seems to reflect the amount of dissatisfaction she is currently feeling. She may be more willing to take risks than is apparent from her inventory results.
- Leslie seems to have a clear sense of what she likes. Equally important, she seems to know what she dislikes. This fact may reduce the perceived risk of exploring a career change.

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#### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

Review all the material related to Leslie that has been presented in this chapter, remembering that there are multiple sources of information, including the background and career history, family information, and the results of the four inventories. The questions listed below will guide your review.

1. What other observations do you make from a review of Leslie’s background information? From the results of her assessments?
2. What consistent patterns occur within each separate source of information? Across all the information?
3. What discrepancies do you observe within each source of information? Across all the information?
4. List specific hypotheses that you have about Leslie.

5. How would you test these hypotheses? How will evidence that you gather confirm or change your working model of Leslie?
  6. How is your working model of Leslie shaped by your sex, culture, and socioeconomic background? How is it shaped by her sex, culture, and socioeconomic background?
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### **CONCEPTUALIZING LESLIE FROM VARIOUS THEORETICAL APPROACHES**

The material in this chapter provides sufficiently rich information to begin forming hypotheses about Leslie's career concerns. We now turn to specific theoretical perspectives on working with Leslie. In each chapter, we add supplementary information about Leslie as appropriate to the specific theory or approach. This additional information is particularly relevant to the "working model" of Leslie that a counselor using a particular theory would be likely to develop.