

Fall 12-7-2018

## Analysis of Self

Nathan Wood  
woodna@mnstate.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://red.mnstate.edu/thesis>



Part of the [Student Counseling and Personnel Services Commons](#)

Researchers wishing to request an accessible version of this PDF may [complete this form](#).

---

### Recommended Citation

Wood, Nathan, "Analysis of Self" (2018). *Dissertations, Theses, and Projects*. 97.  
<https://red.mnstate.edu/thesis/97>

This Project (696 or 796 registration) is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate Studies at RED: a Repository of Digital Collections. It has been accepted for inclusion in Dissertations, Theses, and Projects by an authorized administrator of RED: a Repository of Digital Collections. For more information, please contact [RED@mnstate.edu](mailto:RED@mnstate.edu).

Nate Wood Analysis of Self

A Final Project Presented to  
the Graduate Faculty of  
Minnesota State University Moorhead

By

Nathan Daniel Wood

In Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Science in  
School Counseling

November 2018

Moorhead, Minnesota

## Table of Contents

Abstract.....	3
Relevant background information.....	4
Relationships.....	6
Academic / Career / Work.....	7
Mental Health.....	9
Chemical Health.....	9
Physical Health.....	9
Culture.....	10
Values/beliefs.....	10
Healthy Coping / Maladaptive Coping / Stress Management.....	11
Strengths/Resilience.....	11
Activities / Hobbies.....	11
Assessment.....	12
Interviews with significant others.....	12
Theoretical conceptualization.....	13
Impact of self-analysis on Person as the Therapist or Student Affairs Professional.....	14
Plan for continued development as a person and professional.....	14

### Abstract

The following analysis of self is narrative and reflection of the life and beliefs of the author.

Information used within this reflection include the authors background information in domains related to relationships, academics, career, work, mental health, chemical health, culture, coping skills, strengths, resilience, and hobbies. Interviews with significant others are used to evaluate others perception of the author. This reflection also analyzes the impact this research has on the author in terms of their professional identity and future plans for development are discussed.

*Relevant background information:*

Reflection of self is something that I have always been interested in and so this option for a capstone project was perfect. I will begin this journey of self-reflection with some autobiographical information, as well as experiences that have shaped me into the individual I am today. I was born in Newburg, New York to lower middle class parents. Both had grown to adulthood on the east coast (my dad in Massachusetts, my mother in New York) and they had recently gotten out of the air force when I was born. I think that both my parents having grown up in the 1960's had some remnants of that counter-culture mentality and I was born at home with a midwife.

When I was one, we moved to central MN as my father was pursuing his dream of operating a dairy farm. This was where I would grow up and where my sister and two brothers were born. I am incredibly lucky for the time and learning that I received from my parents over the course of my childhood, as well as the valuable lessons that living on a dairy farm provides. I was taught from an early age to work hard and have empathy for all, but never compromise my beliefs. For most of my elementary years I was homeschooled with brief periods of attending public school. I think this was beneficial in many ways even if I did not realize it at the time. I was able to learn at my pace and in turn tested very well.

Starting in 8<sup>th</sup> grade, I attended public school fulltime and went on to have a wonderful high school experience. I attended a small high school, graduating in a class of 36. I was lucky enough to establish a close friend group and we learned a great deal about life. I had a great high school experience, participating in as many activities as I could. I was in football, Knowledge Bowl, Mock Trial, One Act Play, and as many other activities as I could be.

After high school I attended the University of Minnesota, Morris. I played football and majored in Social Science Education. I really enjoyed the college experience. The small campus really allowed me to be involved, which after high school I enjoyed. I worked on a dairy farm and for the City of Morris until it was time to student teach. I did my practicum in Sisseton, SD and then student taught in Irondale in the Twin Cities.

After college, I was hired to teach and coach in Sisseton. I have a special place in my heart for this place, as I feel this is where I really grew up. I was still a kid when I went there and became a man over my years there. It was a challenging place, my first real experience with the effects of poverty. However, I was given the chance to be a leader in the school and to have my first head football-coaching job.

The next big transition in my life was moving back to MN. I worked for Mark Lee Excavating and thought I would take some time off from teaching. The spot in West Central opened up and it turned out to be a perfect fit.

It is interesting to look at theories of development and compare them to my own life, as well as see development in action through my students. I have always identified very well with Erikson's Stages of Development. As a refresher, these stages are Trust vs Mistrust, Autonomy vs Shame and Doubt, Initiative vs Guilt, Industry vs Inferiority, Identity vs Role Confusion, Intimacy vs Isolation, and Integrity vs Despair. I feel that I can look back at events in my life and see how they fit in with the various stages of development. It is vital, now as an adult, to be self-aware and attempt to do things that lead to the positive sides of these stages of development. I find being a young adult seems often like a blend of industry vs inferiority and intimacy vs isolation. This is a good example of how we can be in different stages of development

simultaneously and is important to keep in mind when working with students. (Amidon and Ortwein, n.d)

It is also important, now as a counselor, to understand how a positive experience growing up sets the stage for a sense of self-worth and accomplishment as an adult.

*Relationships (family, peers, romantic)*

Relationships are a facet of human life that I have come to believe are the most important aspect of a healthy, happy life. I have been lucky enough to have had great personal and professional relationships in my life and I think this impacts how I go about my interactions.

My parents and my sister were my first and closest relationships. I was lucky to have parents who were stern but also talked to me like an adult from a young age. My sister was 2 years younger than I was and we were fast friends from an early age. These interactions talk me to listen, to value others opinions and that friendship is a give and take.

As I moved into young adulthood, I was lucky enough to be influenced by many other amazing people. I had a close-knit group of three other peers in high school. It was an interesting dynamic being in a small school. We were the academic students, the jocks, the theater kids, all at the same time. I still keep in contact with to this day in contact with these people.

In college most of my relationships revolved around being a member of the football team. I people I met and associated with revolved mainly within this group. However, I have always enjoyed meeting new people and expanded my social circle wider than some of my teammates may have. I built particularly strong bonds with my fellow education students.

As an adult, I have noticed the interesting phenomenon that it is harder to build close friendships. So much of relationships are built on the premise of shared experiences and this is

more difficult as an adult due to the fact that we all are in so many different places. My relationships formed in the Army National Guard reaffirm this fact. Once again, it is a shared experience and I have formed some very close bonds with soldiers I have served with. This counseling program has also provided some very close friendships as we have progressed through the coursework together.

Romantically I look back at four serious relationships. In high school, I did not date until my senior year. I always felt intimidated and unsure around females up until this point. I dated a close friend my senior year and learned a great deal about what being in a relationship meant. This was the first time I felt romantic love. However, moving to different colleges was a situation that did not allow us to continue. I spent freshman year single and started dating another girl sophomore year. We dated for three years and this was where I really learned what being in a committed. This was where I first understood what it was like to complexly support and be supported by another person. I also went through the feeling of falling out of love and working o ending a relationship amicably. My third serious relationship was the one where I learned what being in an unhealthy relationship is like. This person was someone who really struggled with commitment and I learned the hard lesson of how to advocate for one's self. I also came to realize that everything is a learning experience and that if there were good moments this makes the relationship worth it. My fourth relationship is the one I am in currently. This has been full of new experiences. The first being how to interact with children and step into the role of a father figure. The other is what it is like to come to terms with the concept of being with someone for the foreseeable future. I really feel like these experiences have made me a better person.

Romantic love is still one of those concepts that fascinates me. In and of itself it often does not follow a logical progression. However, it is such a huge part of the choices made by so



many people. Keeping this in mind is especially important in working with school age students, as so much of the problems and situations revolve around the concept of romance. I feel lucky to have experienced all parts of the spectrum and this helps me guide the students I see.

### *Academic / Career / Work*

The next topic to discuss is where most time has been spent for many years, school and work. My educational path started somewhat strangely, as I have mentioned. Being homeschooled gave me a different perspective on school. It taught me to value the interactions and social aspects that school provides. Academically I have always been capable of doing well but it has only been as an adult that I have really learned to love learning for its own sake. High School and college I was much more focused on friends and the social aspect. This was not all bad however, as I have great memories of both high school and college. As I have gotten older though, I have become much more focused on learning for its own sake. Graduate school has really shown me how much I enjoy being more educated.

As far as my career goes, I have been incredibly blessed to do something I truly love and feel that I do well. I have taught since I graduated college. As it is for most people, my first year of teaching was a steep learning curve. One of the hardest lessons to learn was how to say no and be firm. Teaching is a forgiving career though, as every year allows one to get better. Moreover, while we never can be perfect, we can always strive to improve.

Coaching has run parallel to my teaching/counseling career and has deepened this experience immensely. I have been a student of the game and tried every year to learn more about how to be a transformative coach. This has allowed me to be in the position to advance my career as a head coach twice. I have been humbled both times knowing that a school and community has put their trust in me to lead their team.

*Mental Health (counseling, psychotropic meds, si/hi; family history)*

Mental health has been an area that has always been important to me, mainly because I have seen firsthand how debilitating it can be. I have watched my mother struggle with depression and manic highs and lows, as well as intense paranoia. She refuses to get help and it has always been so tragic. She has a brilliant mind but struggles to function in society due to the fact that her perception of reality is so skewed. This has just shown me how important taking care of one's mental wellbeing is and being willing to accept that there is no shame in getting help when needed.

*Chemical Health (alcohol, drugs, prescription; family history)*

I feel my chemical health is fair. I do not do drugs and only drink on occasion. I do chew tobacco, which is a terrible habit but has been very hard to break. Overall, though, I have had a shift from when I was younger. At this point drinking seemed like what was necessary to have fun. I fully partook in binge drinking and definitely am lucky to have survived some of my poor choices.

*Physical Health (sleep, exercise, nutrition)*

Physical health is an aspect of life that is very important to me. This started with football in high school and college and has developed into a critical aspect of my life. After sports were over, I mainly worked out to look better. As time went on though it became something more for me. Working out provides my escape after a hard day. It allows me to strive physically to be better and this in turn helps me mentally improve as well.

Other aspects of a healthy lifestyle can be more challenging. Eating right and getting enough sleep seem to be the first things to be put aside when life gets crazy and busy. I feel I do a good job sometimes but need more consistency in allowing myself to be healthy in all aspects.

I also sometimes think that my struggles with a completely healthy lifestyle is indicative of societal problems. I am intentional in my desire to be healthy and still am stymied by convenience sometimes. If this is not a priority or you are in survival mode, it is easy to see how personal health can go by the wayside.

*Culture (race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender, disability, urban/rural*

I consider myself very lucky for the upbringing I experienced. I was raised by progressive parents in a small rural community. I like to think that I was exposed to the best of both viewpoints. From my parents I received an open mind and understanding of multiple points of view. From the community I learned the value of hard work and supporting one another. My sister often struggled with the close-minded traditionalist views of many of those in our community but I found myself able to look past that and appreciate the rural MN culture for what it was. The only struggle with this is that I feel I still must battle some of the stereotypes that are ingrained in these types of areas. I consider myself reflective enough to do so but it takes a conscious effort.

*Values/beliefs/worldview, religion/spirituality)*

My belief system is an interesting part of my personality. I am not religious in the least. As a younger person, I tried to go to church and believe in a higher power. This became concept I struggled with, as I got older. The more I learned about science and other beliefs the more my doubts grew. As I a student of history, I came to look at religion as a societal control over the general population. I have sometimes been envious of those that believe unquestioning but have concluded this is not for me. The interesting thing is that I still believe in goodness in the world. I feel that people can choose to make the world to be a better place and it does not take a Higher Power to do it.

*Healthy Coping / Maladaptive Coping / Stress Management*

I have been lucky in my life to have been able to handle the difficult situations I have faced. Nothing has seemed so overwhelming that I felt that I was unable to cope. I believe in mental toughness and feel that this is something I have strengthened through growing up on the farm, sports, and the National Guard. I do wonder though if healthy coping is a learned trait or innate. I feel this could make an interesting study but not sure how it would be conducted.

*Strengths/Resilience*

I think my greatest strength is that I try to maintain a positive attitude and reflect on experiences. I try to see the best in any situation and to use different situations to improve as a person. I also feel that I have empathy and understand where others are coming from. This honestly is difficult for me to write about as I find it a lot easier to focus on weakness and areas of improvement.

*Activities / Hobbies*

As we have learned during the MSUM counseling program self-care is vitally important. My main hobbies of working out and reading for pleasure are how I take care of myself. I sometimes wonder if coaching should fall under work or hobbies. After all, I do not have to do it and I enjoy it. However, some of the most stress and pressure comes from coaching.

Travel and seeing new places would be my other major hobby. I love going new places and seeing how big and diverse our world is. It always is interesting the new places I go are home for others. My goal is to visit every state and then as many countries as I can.

**XII. Assessment:**

Extroversion/Introversion

37

Intuitive/Sensing

38

Thinking/Feeling

60

Perceiving/Judging

46

### ISTJ - The Duty Fulfiller

Serious and quiet, interested in security and peaceful living. Extremely thorough, responsible, and dependable. Well-developed powers of concentration. Usually interested in supporting and promoting traditions and establishments. Well-organized and hardworking, they work steadily towards identified goals. They can usually accomplish any task once they have set their mind to it. I feel that assessments such as these can be a wonderful self-help tool. It is amazing to me how accurate they are. I think that these assessments have helped me to gain a better understanding of myself. I feel that the included example is consistent with other assessments I have taken.

#### *Interviews with significant others:*

This section was both one of the most daunting and interesting aspects of this project. I think we always have slight trepidation when asking completely honest questions about ourselves. The following questions are the ones

- *How have I impacted/influenced/challenge your life?*
- *What do you think is the most positive attribute about me?*
- *What do you think is my most negative attribute/area for self-improvement?*

- *How do you describe me to other people? Family members? Friends? Acquaintances? Co-workers?*
- *What is something you think I should try to accomplish in life?*

I asked I asked these of a variety of people, including my superior, my significant other, a close friend, and two co-workers. Analyzing the results was quite interesting. The results were overwhelmingly positive, which is a good thing but hard to write about. Of course, we all like hearing good things but it is sometimes difficult to then talk about them. I found area of self-improvement as one of the most interesting. The theme that came up was that my empathic, trusting personality is something that can make it difficult to advocate for myself. I think this one area that will be a continual area of growth but not something I am ashamed of.

I found it interesting that people that interact with me in very different contexts saw many of the same attributes. I see this as a positive thing, as means I am who I am in any situation and do not feel the need to be someone else. I think authenticity is one of the most important things that those involved in education can offer students.

Overall, this was an emotional experience. My father described me as a “good and righteous man” and I teared up reading that. He has always been supportive but never much for compliments so reading that meant a lot. It really reinforced my desire to be the person that people see me as. I think I do a good job of that, but we can always use motivation, and these interview questions provided that.

*Theoretical conceptualization:*

As I have mentioned at other points, my philosophy around life and work revolves around empathy and belief in the goodness of people. In turn, this builds positive relationships, and especially in education, I feel like relationships are everything. Due to these fundamental beliefs,

I feel that a person-centered approach is the right theoretical conceptualization. As teachers, counselors, and really anyone involved in a school person-centered is a viable orientation. Person-centered is based on building relationships and providing students with tools to be successful in life. As a coach and counselor, I think that encouraging and motivating students to make constructive changes in their life can be incredibly effective.

As a counselor, it is sometimes daunting because of the varied situations that arise. Person-centered therapy is helpful in this area because it does not require one to be an expert on everything that can arise. Instead, it allows one to use relationships and knowledge to help individual people.

*Impact of self-analysis on Person as the Therapist or Student Affairs Professional:*

Overall, I have found this to be an incredibly beneficial project. I am a huge proponent of self-reflection and this was a very in-depth way of doing so. I was proud to read that I make a positive influence on those around me (as the interview questions showed). It is reaffirming to feel that one is having a positive influence. Now the biggest challenge for myself is to avoid becoming complacent. I must continue to strive to learn more, work harder, and maintain positivity.

*Plan for continued development as a person and professional:*

The biggest part of developing as a person and profession for me is to continue to always improve. Too many times, especially in education, we see people become complacent or even worse bitter and negative. My goal is to strive to stay positive and never stop learning. I feel that I have just scratched the surface in knowledge of counseling. I need to continue to learn and improve in order to be as effective as possible. I plan on using the association conference as one way of doing this, as well as asking questions from the other counselors I know. I am still

considering if I want to get my administration degree. Running a school seems daunting and yet the thought also intrigues me. Only time will tell though, I am satisfied with where I am at now. I feel incredibly blessed for my experiences so far and look forward to the future.



## References

Amidon, J., Monroe, A., & Ortwein, M. (n.d.). Education, Society, & the K-12 Learner. Retrieved from <https://courses.lumenlearning.com/teachereducationx92x1/chapter/eriksons-stages-of-psychosocial-development/>