

Defining the Self

A Matter of Style

“I celebrate myself, and sing myself...”

— Walt Whitman, *The Song of Myself*

Guide to this chapter:

- Howardian Person—A Template for Defining One’s Self
- How Did We Get to Be That Way?
- Subtleties of Style
- Changing Styles
- 6 Common Styles

You are what you are becoming. The Self is a beach that rhythmically suffers encroaching, then receding tides, gets pooped on by terns and gulls, gets peed on by unconstrained toddlers and inebriated vacationers, hosts the carcasses of jellyfish, sand crabs, men o’ war, and discarded fishermen’s bait, gets baked for hours by nature’s hottest oven, gets battered by typhoons, pelted by rains, dug up and shaped by the spades of toddlers, disrespected by spilled beer and flipped cigarettes, has her innards picked up and tracked back home to wherever, and has her tummy tucked periodically by the Corps of Engineer’s dredgers. Yet the beach that I see at Oak Island, N.C., on this gift of an August day in 2015 is no different than it was on my 70th birthday in 2011, nor when I visited it as a child in the 1950s.

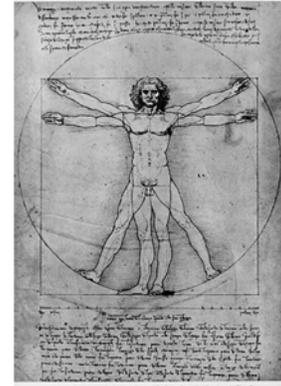
We humans are much like this beach. We suffer daily indignities and illnesses, scrapes and scorns, laughs and lonelies, bores and boos, touches and taunts, but we endure. In this chapter I will offer a template for defining our beachhead, our Self. We will begin with the palette of who we are.

Howardian Person—A Template for Defining One’s Self

We are what we are becoming. Like the beach, we are what we are today, what we used to be, and what we are in process of becoming. The palette of who we are remains the same throughout our life, throughout our culture’s history, but some options on the palette remain the same for a lifetime, while other options fade or rise. Figure 5.1 shows a high-level view of the palette of who we are, which I have dubbed Howardian Person, an echo of da Vinci’s Vitruvian Man. To recap, five raw materi-

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als make us who we are: mental abilities (e.g., verbal ability), behavioral traits (e.g., extraversion), physical characteristics (e.g., vertigo), experiences (e.g., military), and values (e.g., Status). In Figure 5.1, I have divided mental abilities into two principle groups: brain tools and mental talents. The tools are like an operating system on a computer—temporary memory, long-term memory, processing speed. The talents are most commonly listed as eight—verbal (e.g., vocabulary, verbal analogies, and language learning ability), mathematical (e.g., logical ability, computer programming, statistics), visual/spatial (e.g., sketching ability, depth perception), auditory (e.g., pitch discrimination), kinesthetic (e.g., physical coordination), taxonomic (e.g., phylum and species organization), intrapersonal (e.g., knowledge and management of one's own emotions), and interpersonal (e.g., knowledge and management of others' emotions). The head appropriately represents the brain tools, the right arm (as Howardian Person faces you) represents the eight mental talents, and the left arm refers to the Big Five personality traits (Emotional Reactivity vs. Resilience, Extraversion vs. Introversion, Originality and Openness to Experience vs. Practical and Traditional, Adaptation vs. Challenge, and Focus vs. Spontaneity). The torso represents physical characteristics (e.g. color blindness, vertigo, reaction speed, skin quality); the right leg represents the sum of all of your experiences to date, which are stored as core memories; and the left leg represents our special interest in this book: values.



"Vitruvian Man,"
Leonardo da Vinci

Figure 5.1 Howardian Person—High View

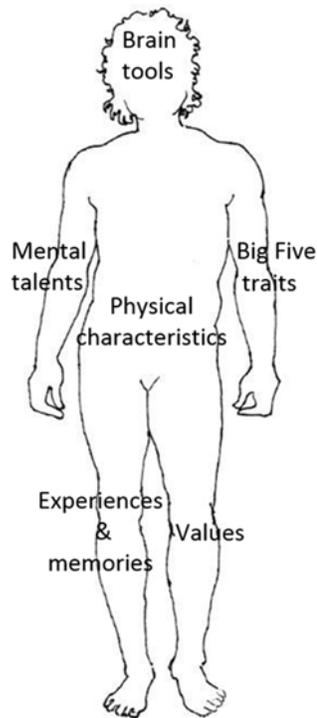


Figure 5.2 Howardian Person—Detail View I have entered only those qualities that apply to me—see Appendix D for a complete list; also see Chapter 6 in Howard (2013), which includes definitions.



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In most cases, each variable (e.g., memory, extraversion, Power, reaction speed, school memories) is a continuum. A continuum means the variable can vary from a little of the thing to a lot of the thing, like tall to short or hungry to stuffed. “Hmmm,” you may muse, “how do you see memories as continua? Memories are memories—neither more nor less.” Here is where we need a little understanding of how memory works in the brain. Every memory that makes its way into long-term storage has an emotional valence attached to it. An emotional valence can vary from strongly positive through neutral to strongly negative—a continuum from ecstasy to despair, from bliss to repulsion. The strength of the emotional valence associated with each memory plays a major role in future decisions about whether to repeat or avoid experiences like the one that formed the memories originally and similar experiences ever since. When subsequent experiences are similar to previous similar experiences, that similarity strengthens the attraction or repulsion for the original experience. Serve me cold, bland eggs frequently enough, and I’ll stop patronizing you.

Figure 5.2 fills in the detail for these aspects of the Self. A complete discussion of all the possible components is beyond the scope of this book. However, for your convenience, I have included a checklist as Appendix D. You will find a complete treatment in Howard (2013), in Chapter 6, titled *Fit: Building on Your Strengths*. I have pulled from that master list the variables that I think make me who I am today—they are salient in that I am most satisfied with life when the strong features are engaged in my everyday life and the weak features are avoided or at least minimized. Knowing this information about me is helpful both to me and others—it helps me avoid poor career and personal decisions, and it helps others know how to relate to me in a way that is motivating, pleasing, considerate, maybe even flattering. If I were to volunteer for a political campaign committee, or a school PTSA, or join a new church, or start a new job, it would be terribly efficient to hand them a copy of this figure and say, “Hi, I’m Pierce. This is who I am. How shall I best fit in here and be of value in a way that serves your needs and pleases me?” You will recognize the similarity of this material to *What Makes Me Tick?*, which is Figure 4.1 in Chapter 4.

So, what is my style? Traditional, modern, rebellious? Most authors of style models describe the various styles in one word or phrase: a “visionary” leadership style, an “emotive” coping style, an “autocratic” management style, a “flamboyant” presentation style, a “swims with the sharks” style, or some such. However, here we are trying to capture the style of a human being in its totality. Albert Einstein is credited with saying that everything should be made as simple as possible, but not simpler. So, not one word, but not Howardian Person either—it has too many terms. Or, as Mozart was told by the Emperor and his court musicians in the 1984 film *Amadeus*, “Too many notes.” Indignant, Mozart retorted, “I don’t understand. There are just as many notes, Majesty, as are required. Neither more nor less.” And when the Emperor tried to get out of this tangle with a “Cut a few and it will be perfect,” Wolfie quipped, “Which few did you have in mind, Majesty?” There you have it—which of the many elements in Howardian Person do we trim from our total Self in an attempt to summarize our personal style? I would suggest that this is an ideal task for you (or me) and a significant other person in our life—partner, parent, friend, associate. First, try your hand at drawing your own version of Howardian Person, and then try to highlight no more than, say, six terms that jump out front to say, “Here, use me to tell others who you are at the next cocktail party you attend!” Then, compose a personal style

statement and run it by your significant other. Ask them if it captures your essence, their sense of your Self. Together, wordsmith it until you get it right.

The half-dozen I picked from Figure 5.2 (this was hard!) are:

- Intellect
- Independence
- Sedentary
- Beauty
- Relationships
- Pleasure

Notice that I picked five values and one trait (sedentary, as opposed to active). At first, I picked variables other than values, but I was having a hard time limiting myself to six. Then, I realized that values are rather broad categories, and include many of the other variables that are salient for me. For example, I wanted to pick Taxonomies, Creativity, Long time span, and Critical thinking, but I realized that they are all included under Intellect. Similarly, Hearing and Classical music are included under Beauty. And so forth.

Now I need to use these six terms as the raw material, or beginning point, for writing a simple (but not too simple!) description of my sense of self—one that I might use to introduce my Self to others. Here goes: “I am an independent cuss who has almost always worked for myself and insisted on balancing work with my personal life. My work energy goes into research, writing, and teaching, while my away from work energy goes into enjoying my family and friends, being an active member of the arts community, and enjoying the pleasures of the senses.”

Next: Run this by my wife and longtime business partner ... [*time passes*] OK. She says I left out the bit about being a voracious reader! Oh, my. Yes, that. Hmm. ... I’ll add the phrase “and lifelong learner,” as that should include both reading, observing, conversing, questioning, and other forms of information- and idea-gathering. Here’s my current version:

I am an independent cuss and lifelong learner who has almost always worked for myself and insisted on balancing work with my personal life. My work energy goes into office-based research, writing, and teaching, while my away from work energy goes into enjoying my family and friends, being an active member of the arts community, and enjoying the pleasures of the senses.

Now, you try that for yourself:

1. Fill in Howardian Person with your own characteristics.
2. Pick the six most critical terms in describing how you see yourself.
3. Compose a short paragraph that could serve as a way of introducing your Self to others and could lead to an engaging conversation.
4. Share it with someone significant in your life—someone who knows you well—and ask if it omits anything major, and whether it should be modified in any way.
5. Remember that, if you were to do this exercise again in five or 10 years, your statement may or may not change—but if it changes, it’s likely to be in a small way.

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Whenever you use this way of introducing yourself, I can almost guarantee you that you will find at least one person, new or familiar, whom you find to be a new friend from making a connection based on your statement, or to be an old friend with whom you find a new way to relate.

How Did We Get to Be That Way?

How did we come to be who we are? Our self is like a frame in a motion picture film, or a photo of a beach at any point in its life. Much has gone before, and much will come after. Figure 5.3 depicts how the Self picks elements from experience and retains these elements as part of the Self. These elements may be discarded in the future, or they may stay in our core for a lifetime. Recall the character of 11-year-old Riley Andersen in the 2015 film *Inside Out*, whose moods and choices are influenced by the core memories that enter her brain and either get reinforced to remain there or ignored and go quiet or even vanish. I am reminded of the 1977 Neil Diamond song “You Don’t Bring Me Flowers.” The lover established romance in part by bringing flowers, and this act was stored in the partner’s core memory bank with the gift of flowers associated with feelings of romance, just as Pavlov’s dog associated the ring of a bell with the arrival of fresh food. The dog salivated at the sight—the partner became aroused at the gesture. However, over time, the food stops coming, and the dog’s salivating response is extinguished from lack of reward. So the romantic partner’s lapse in attentiveness by failing to continue to bring flowers becomes a signal that the romance may have cooled.

Figure 5.3 contains three phases: 5.3a depicts today, 5.3b a point in the future, while 5.3c shows the potential for a lifetime. Let’s start with today, 5.3a. The glob in the center of the image represents one’s core Self—elements that we would include in our personal sketch of Howardian Person. In this sketch, the core self is defined by being a math whiz, a helper, a runner, a loner, and a chef. They are like the six most salient elements that I chose earlier for my “letter of introduction.” This could be the Self of, say, a 30-year-old unmarried engineer who volunteers with several social service organizations and enjoys keeping in good shape by running and enjoys cooking gourmet meals from time to time and maybe occasionally cooking for a friend or visiting family member. A relatively quiet yet fulfilling life. Their highest values would probably be Health, Helping, Pleasure, Independence, and Intellect. This inner glob is like the nucleus of the Self, while the outer ring contains something like the cytoplasm of the cell of Self. This outer ring is similar to short-term memory, and the glob similar to long-term memory. During the week in which this snapshot was taken of their core Self, three events stand out: They started taking voice lessons with a new voice teacher, read a book on veganism, and got a promotion from being an individual contributor at work to being a manager/supervisor of other engineers. Perhaps this individual had always enjoyed music, and perhaps singing with a religious choir or community chorus, but had never thought they had a particular arresting voice. So they decided to take voice lessons to see whether their vocal apparatus was capable of blossoming into something more lovely. And during the same week, this meat-eater read a book on veganism that had been recommended by a friend. A really good book, it caused them to consider abandoning meat and embracing a plant-based diet. Rounding out the week, they had good news at work—promotion from being an engineer working on assorted projects to being a manager of other engineers.

Figure 5.3b shows a future point in time—perhaps a year later. The Self changes when a new element from the cytoplasm/short-term memory enters the set of core memories in the glob/long-

term memory/core Self. In the case of this engineer, it appears that the experience of reading the book on veganism remains just that—a memory—but has not made its way into the core. Meat is still on the table! The notion of becoming vegan may be gestating, as it still is in the cytoplasm, but veganism is not core for this individual at this point. If they were to develop a relationship with a potential life partner, it would be a good idea to share their thoughts about veganism—truth in advertising, you know. It could be that a potential life partner’s views could either nudge veganism into the core Self or push it out of the cytoplasm forever! It also appears that they are not particularly taken with themselves for having been promoted to management. They don’t see themselves as a boss and the fact of having management responsibility is not something they see as core. In introducing themselves to others at a cocktail party, for example, they would probably just say they were an engineer, or a mathematician. The singing, on the other hand, is another matter. Apparently, the new voice teacher has made quite an impact, and this loner’s voice has blossomed, as now they see themselves as a singer. Being a singer is now part of their identity, part of the core Self. Now the letter of introduction must be modified. Either singer will take its place alongside math whiz and the other identities, or it could actually displace one or more of the core elements.

This give and take with the entry of new experiences, the potential formation of new core memories, and occasional shifts in how we see ourselves—this is the story of our lives. One’s life is about identity formation, with some core elements lasting for a lifetime, like the sand on the beach, with other core elements shifting in emphasis and occasionally even dropping off. In my 30s and 40s, camping and canoeing were core to my identity, but that memory is now weak. I haven’t camped for 10 years—my back just won’t agree to it. However, in my 30s and 40s I would never have introduced myself as a writer, but now I embrace that identity readily. The Self thus changes over time, yet also stays mostly the same. Most of the elements in my core are unchanged over seven decades.

Figures 5.3a and 5.3b show close-up snapshots of a hypothetical engineer’s life. Figure 5.3c zooms out to provide some perspective at a higher level. You still see the glob at the center that is meant to hold one’s core elements, but none of them—math, chef, and so forth—are shown here, only assumed. Instead, we are looking at the full potential for one’s core. At the top of the image, we see four broad determinants of the Self:

- **Basic tendencies.** These are inherited levels of physical characteristics, behavioral traits, mental abilities, and basic needs. Each of the elements of these four categories has a set point at birth, but life events can alter them somewhat over time. In the case of our engineer, being a loner is a behavioral trait and math talent is a mental ability.
- **Unique adaptations.** These are ways that we build on our basic tendencies that reflect the circumstances and choices of our unique life histories. Values, belief systems, risk behavior, moral dimensions, and virtues are all examples of unique adaptations. Also, an assortment of styles—leadership style, coping style, conflict management style, communication style, problem-solving style, decision-making style—are unique adaptations. Finally, one’s needs, initially inherited, are shaped and changed over time based on the constraints and opportunities of one’s life. For our engineer, being a helper, a runner, a chef, and a singer are unique adaptations, with helping being built on an inherited altruistic behavioral trait, running based on kinesthetic mental ability and a high activity behavioral trait, chef based on

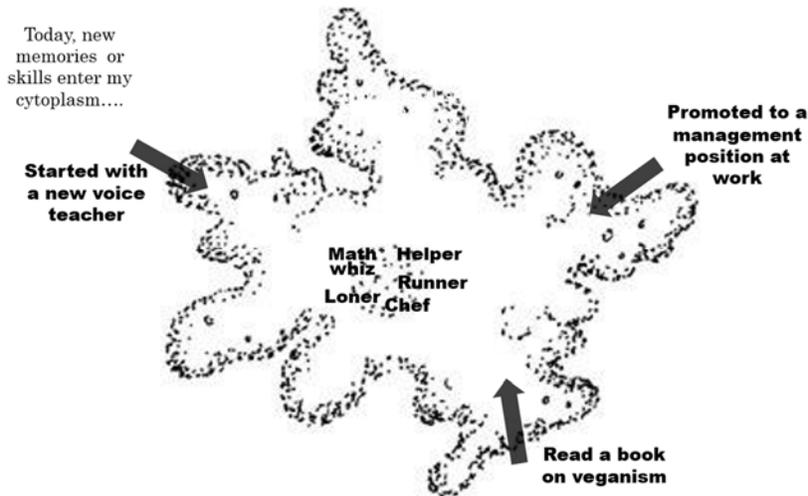
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the physical characteristics of heightened sense perception, and singing based on auditory mental ability.

- **Survival skills.** These are the three areas critical to a satisfactory work life, and are built on elements from the first two categories—career path, key result areas (KRAs), and competencies. Our overall career path is the sequence of jobs over our work history. Some are simpler and more traditional, such as private to sergeant to lieutenant to general, or instructor to assistant professor to associate professor to full professor, or sales rep to sales manager to vice-president of sales (and maybe ultimately president of the company).

Figure 5.3 How the Self Comes to Be

a. Today, or an Arbitrary Point in Time in the Life of an Imaginary Person



b. A Year from Today

Then, over time, one or more of these new entries may become salient and a new part of my Self.

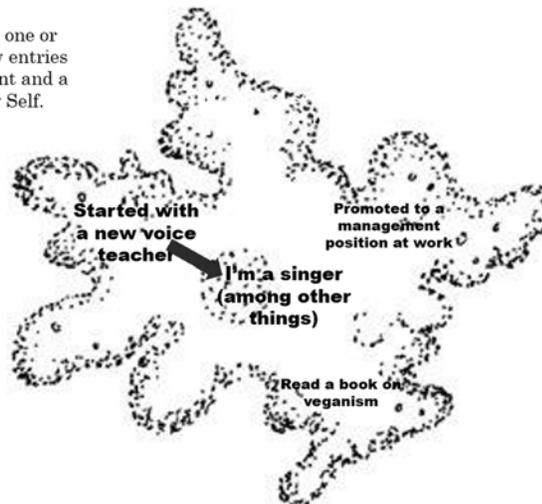


Figure 5.3 How the Self Comes to Be (cont.)

c. A Lifetime of Potential

The Four Determinants of Self



The KRAs are the quantitative measures that we agree to that determine our degree of successful job completion, such as number of papers published (for a professor), number of ribbons awarded (for a soldier), or volume of sales (for a salesperson). We must excel in competency areas to achieve our KRAs. Competencies are blends of traits, abilities, physical characteristics, values, knowledge, skills, and so forth—presentation skills and analytical ability for a professor, leadership skills and stress management for a soldier, and presentation skills and product knowledge for a salesperson.

- **External reinforcers.** These are various kinds of norms that exist in our local, regional, national, or global culture that our core selves bump up against daily. They include cultural dimensions (e.g., Hofstede’s (2001) individualist/collectivist, masculine/feminine, power distance), peer groups, corporate cultures, ethics codes, and a variety of cultures throughout one’s community (religious, political, civic, sport, entertainment, ethnic, linguistic, occupational, and so forth). Each of these entities has the potential to encourage an individual to emphasize certain personal qualities and modify or minimize others.

Note that there are two left-to-right dimensions at the bottom of the image. The first is an arrow that suggests time across the life span, with basic tendencies emerging early in one’s life, unique adaptations throughout childhood and early adulthood, survival skills throughout adulthood, and external reinforcers becoming more of a factor in adulthood as we leave our parents. “Nature” is at the left on the timeline and “Nurture” at the right, suggesting that the determinants toward the left are more genetically based, while the determinants to the right are more influenced by environment.

Each of these four sources of elements for the Self is capable of landing one of its own in our core. And, you can appreciate that thousands of elements reside in our core memory, with only a hand-

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ful being particularly salient at any one time in our lives. The movie *Inside Out* depicts 11-year-old Riley Andersen’s memory banks as a library of cylinders, with each cylinder being a memory of some kind—how to do something, what something smells like, what kind of clothes to wear in Paris, the names of the continents, and so on. Only a select few are prominent at any point in one’s life, especially as external reinforcers change.

In one sense, our Self is like a palimpsest (from the Greek for “scraped again”). Paper, or rather parchment, used to be scarce. You didn’t throw it away. When you were finished with what you had written on it, you did your best to scrape, scrub out, or otherwise obscure the previous writing or drawing and then write or draw over it. The photograph at right shows a c. 10th-century Greek parchment text written over a partially removed 9th-century text. As we get to know our friends and associates, in effect we are finding over time what lies beneath their current surface. What about them has survived, disappeared, changed? This quality of change over time is currently referred to as “emergence,” which Michael Gazzaniga (2011) describes as “when complex systems far from equilibrium self-organize into new structures, with new properties that previously did not exist, to form a new level of organization on the macro level.” The palimpsest is an apt metaphor for this quality of emergence.



Subtleties of Style

To label one’s style is to attempt to condense a complex pattern into a few words. Hence, “Persian” is a style of rug that would take many sentences to describe, and “hippie lifestyle” uses two words to refer to details of diet, dress, abode, politics, and so on. Earlier I tried to describe my style in a short paragraph. I would be tested severely to reduce that paragraph to a word or brief phrase—we humans are just not that simple. Even within hippie lifestyle, for example, individuals who might identify with that moniker would not be clones of one another. Individual variation within a type is infinite.

In this section I want to discuss several ways style—at least with respect to values—is subtle and not always apparent to the eye. First, while two individuals may embrace the same value to the same degree, they do not necessarily embrace that value for the same purpose. Recall that we have identified three purposes of values—systemic (necessary to life), instrumental (means to an end), and terminal (an end in itself). For example, I had a friend once who courted a woman who was bound and determined to win him over. He was an aesthete—classical music, poetry, ballet, painting, the works. During their courtship, she professed equal adoration to the arts and even contributed money to some of his favorite arts groups. On the surface, both valued the arts as an end in and of itself. However, soon after they married, she withdrew her financial support and began to demand that he begin to support some of her interests, including some music groups that he didn’t care for. For him, the arts

was a terminal value, while for her it was instrumental—a means to gain his esteem. In understanding one's values, it is helpful to explore why one places such importance on things. Is it necessary for life, necessary to gain something else, or valued solely for its own sake? Or some combination of the three? I do not mean to suggest that one purpose is more valid than any other—only that it is wise to understand one's purpose in valuing something, or in others valuing something that affects you.

A second subtlety in one's values style has to do with one's relation to the culture one inhabits. In truth, we all tend to inhabit multiple cultures. I, for instance, live in the cultures of a United Methodist church, a small business, a downtown neighborhood in my city, the city of Charlotte, the state of North Carolina, the South of the United States, the United States, and the Western Hemisphere. In each of these cultures, people who are introduced to me will make certain assumptions about my values, chiefly that I embrace all of the qualities that they associate with each of those cultures. For example, by belonging to a United Methodist church, people would assume Spirituality to be a higher value and Independence to be lower, and they would be wrong on both counts. My purpose for belonging to that church is its music program. I grew up with fine classical church music—Palestrina, Bach, Handel, Mozart, Brahms, Elgar, Britten, Vaughan Williams and more. And this church has what I believe is the best music program in Charlotte. It also boasts an organ transplanted from the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C., a magnificent instrument that growls deafeningly on Sunday mornings like huge gargoyles come to life to chase evil from the souls of the unrighteous! Hechter et al (1993) said it this way: "If choice occurs in a setting in which there is any conceivable motive to conceal one's true values, then some unknown part of the resulting choice may be due to strategic considerations rather than to values, and the equation of choice with values will mislead." (p. 13) Ralph Vaughan Williams' biographer, his widow Ursula, tells the story of how the nonbelieving composer and cousin of Charles Darwin was once marked absent from services at Trinity College, Cambridge. The beadle approached him the next day and suggested that Master Ralph had been hiding in the organ ranks enjoying the majesty of the mighty pipes and worshipping God in his own personal way. The college student grinned and quipped that he was, and he wasn't. (Williams, 1964) I can identify with that.

Similarly, when I have traveled the world, folks have assumed that as an American I embrace all that they know as American—rock and roll, fast food, wars on foreign lands—but they are mistaken. Or when I travel the United States, folks find I am from the South and assume certain things about my educational level, my artistic (in)sensitivity, and my views on race—and they are mistaken. Or they find that I own my own business, and they assume that I am like other business owners they know, and they would probably be mistaken about that, too. We live in our many cultures, but we may or may not embrace all of the values typically associated with those cultures. The only way to know someone is to look beyond the surface. As French poet Paul Valéry supposedly wrote (but in French!), "To see is to forget the name of the thing one sees." Names, like stereotypes, can blind us to substance. Values must come from choices, and the cultural affiliations do not all stem from our personal choices.

Hechter et al (1993, p.67) write about a particularly telling case of mistaken values identity based on cultural affiliation. In a study of civil rights demonstrations, interviews after the fact revealed that, especially for the leaders of the organizations, participation in the demonstrations was just as likely to be based on their position in the organizational hierarchy as on the strength of their beliefs in the values being expressed. In for an inch, in for a mile. Join a cause, and it becomes hard to pick and

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choose the details. Values are the result of choice, and when we have no choice, our expressions don't necessarily reflect our values.

An interesting variation on cultural associations is how we handle multiple, conflicting cultural demands, and how that reflects our values. Two incidents come to mind. When our younger daughter, Allegra, was in middle school, she enjoyed banter with her principal, Jim Murchison. On a typical day, he wore comfortable slacks with a tie and sport jacket. The school embraced an "open" philosophy that was characterized by student-centeredness and relative informality. Dr. Murchison embraced this low Power value culture by dressing down. However, Allegra espied him one day sporting a navy suit, starched shirt, and regimental stripe tie. She playfully accosted him with a "what meeting do you have at the Ed Center today, Dr. Murchison?" She had correctly deduced that her principal was headed for the power center of the school system, one characterized by ambition, structure, and formality. He blushed and joked, "I'm outed!" In order to be an advocate for his informal non-Power culture, he had to dress up when hobnobbing with the purse strings. To infer his values in either environment by observing his clothing would be risky. Around the same time—the 1980s—I was starting my own consulting business with three partners. We were asked to bid on a personnel research project for a large retail chain. To our knowledge, we were the only consulting firm asked to bid that could satisfy all of the details of the request for proposals, which asked for a unique research tool that only our firm possessed locally. However, we lost the bid. I called our contact there and asked if he would share with me the reasons for our failure, so that we could learn from our mistakes for future presentations. His response was simple: "You looked too much like a college professor, and they didn't trust you." Hmm... I had dressed to the nines, in my opinion: argyle socks, brown leather polished shoes, Harris tweed jacket, short-sleeve drip-dry shirt, and linen tie. I had no idea what I'd done wrong. I was single at the time, so I asked a female friend for advice. After hearing what I wore, she smiled and said, "You've got to start all over! First, read *Dress for Success*, and then I'll take you shopping." The next weekend, she helped me buy three dark suits, a half-dozen long sleeve, white, all-cotton shirts with button-down collars (with instructions to starch them), black shoes, solid dark socks, and a handful of silk, regimental stripe ties, mostly red. "Oh," she added, "those glasses—they've got to go." I was wearing clear plastic-rimmed frames—pinkish—that were Army issue from several years back. "Go to your optometrist and get something contemporary and corporate." I did, and I've not lost a bid since! However, when you see me in full dress, you don't realize that it is a costume and not the real me. In order to support my small business, I must occasionally dress in a way that is "not me"—in the same way that there are certain words I never used around my mother! The next time you see a suit, know that the attire may be a uniform and not a second skin, that it may be the result not of choice but of necessity, and hence is not a value. In other words, it expresses Conformity as an instrumental value, or perhaps even a system value—temporarily, until I can change clothes!

Another set of subtleties in values style is personal value statements that can be mistaken for other, unintended values:

- Someone wears a red tie because they love the color red or because they like the design of the tie (Beauty), whereas others might infer that they are trying to establish a dominant position by wearing a power tie (Power).

- Someone wears Birkenstock sandals because they find them comfortable (Pleasure) and attractive (Beauty), whereas others might infer that they are trying to identify with the hippie movement (Spirituality, Independence, or Justice).
- Someone drives a Volvo because it has a high safety rating (Relationships), whereas others might infer that they are driving such an expensive car as a status symbol (Status).
- A doctor wears a loose sport shirt rather than a suit or medical uniform because the research says patients find that less threatening and will provide better diagnostic information when relaxed (Helping), whereas others might infer that they are more concerned about being comfortable than being professional (Pleasure, Independence).

The last values style subtlety is masking, or covering. Hechter et al (1993) describe it thus: “People may conceal their values for strategic purposes ... [and] there is little cost in misrepresenting one’s values.” (pp. 10-11) My brother-in-law had a passion for decorative painting. The window casements, curtain cornices, and doorframes in his home were adorned by his meticulous and creative brush strokes. However, he worked in a corporate culture that ridiculed men who were artsy. Consequently, he hid his talent from his work associates—he never invited co-workers to his home for a meal, fearful that he’d be the joke of the office afterwards. Too bad! His wife liked to entertain, so they had to settle for hosting her friends and their neighbors, plus occasional visiting family.

Kenji Yoshino, formerly of Yale Law School and now with New York University School of Law, wrote *Covering* (2007) to tell his personal story of hiding his sexual orientation from his highly judgmental family. He hoped to help others gain confidence in understanding the dynamics of shame, embarrassment, and fear associated with possessing a quality that, if known by others, might result in harm to career or reputation. Covering can apply to any personal attribute that one attempts to keep hidden out of concern that it might make life more difficult. We are not talking here about German Jews hiding their Jewishness from the Gestapo, but rather a black person trying to pass for white, a gay trying to pass for straight, a Latina trying to pass for Anglo, an atheist trying to pass for a believer, someone of humble origins trying to pass for landed gentry, an artist trying to come across as a jock. In the 1970s, my brother-in-law, I suppose, had never heard of pro football player Roosevelt “Rosey” Grier, who broke gender-role boundaries in the 1970s with his public love of needlepoint. Yoshino’s point is that many of us hide a value that we think might not fly in one or more of our cultural circles. I covered earlier in my career with respect to my passion for medieval and Renaissance music. I was concerned that my clients and prospects would distrust someone like me as a business consultant with such esoteric, non-mainstream values. I no longer hide my viols, crumhorns, zinks, and recorders! My point here is that values are not always visible, because some of us strategically hide them.

Changing Styles

Style implies change. Fashion styles can change from year to year. For the most part, changes in style are superficial—raise or lower the hem, tighten or loosen the waistline, change the hues and the amount of visible skin. But though styles change, the function of the clothing doesn’t—the dress is still a dress, the pants remain pants, and the raincoat continues to redirect raindrops. Although some aspects of our sense of Self may change—we may learn a new language, abandon golf in favor of yoga, learn to play blues guitar, or return to school for another degree or certificate—our behavioral traits,

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mental abilities, and physical characteristics do not change. As they are largely genetically based, they are resistant to significant change. Values are more subject to change, however. A traumatic event is unlikely to change you from more extraverted to more introverted, but it could change you from more Materialistic to more Spiritual.

Just as a movie is a series of snapshots, our life story is a series of styles. So we are what we are becoming. We emerge from what we were, and we will re-emerge repeatedly until Faulkner's "last ding-dong of doom has clanged and faded from the last worthless rock hanging tideless in the last red and dying evening...." And even then when our successors remember us, they are likely to reinvent and shade and make us into styles of their creation. Yet our nature is to preserve our identity and resist being recomposed by external forces. Columbia University sociologist Harrison White writes (quoted in Hechter et al, 1993) that "Every identity seeks control by maintaining itself, and to that end, establishes, and breaks, ties with other such identities." (p. 68) Breaking ties with other identities in order to preserve our own—this is what happened to Jane and me when we terminated our 28-year association with a church because it tried to change our identity. New leadership wanted no more of singing in foreign languages, and Jane and I had built a treasure trove of German, French, Italian, Latin, and other church arias to offer as special music from time to time. When told "no more," we found another congregation more hospitable to our values. While we broke ties with one entity to preserve our values, we entered a contract with a new entity and risked acquiring new ways of expressing our values and experiencing the unanticipated consequence of changes in our personal style while maintaining the one element of singing church arias in foreign tongues. One unintended consequence has been new friends enticing us to go on wine-tasting weekends at regional vineyards. And there are more.

White also writes that a "change in values requires change in style and thus in style's social fitting." (p. 86) In the summer of my 20th year, I lost my faith. The result was an immediate shift from Spiritual values to Intellect. I was in a serious relationship with a girl who was planning to be a preacher's wife (mine), and I had to write her a letter from my dorm room at Transylvania College in 1961 to end our path together. I told her I was no longer the same person she had been in love with. My change in values made me more solitary for a period, as I was deep in study trying to find a replacement for my childhood religion. During this transition, I developed a taste for wine and the pleasures of the senses, and Pleasure made it to my top six values (it had occupied the cellar before). My mother had told me my body was a sanctuary and not to defile it with alcohol. Well, perhaps I could put a spin on taking in alcohol for its cleansing properties!

White further asserts (in Hechter et al, 1993) that "a new style can emerge only from the superposition, for a time, of two or more existing styles, with attendant institutions, and then only if there follows an untangling and rejection between them." (p. 77) During my summer of 1961, I was indeed experiencing the superposition of two or more existing styles and attendant institutions: the innocent Eastern North Carolina family boy planning to be a minister, the summer school college student in Lexington, Kentucky, experimenting with new religions and lifestyles, the fraternity guy at Davidson College majoring in English literature, and the lost soul in search of meaning through reading and deep, late-night beer sessions with a few close friends. What emerged from this was rejection of some of my past, embrace of new beliefs, and continuation of other elements resulting in a new style.

In Chapter 12, my final chapter, I discuss the dilemma of how to go about intentionally changing a value, or, how to teach your inner elephant a new dance.

6 Common Styles

While personal style is about more than values, this book *is* about values. Thus, I want to close this chapter by identifying six common values styles—combinations of values that occur with some frequency in our society. White writes that “Values operate in sets. A value alone is like one hand without the other. ... The values in a set need not be seen as hostile, but instead may be viewed as natural complements like hammer and chisel.” (p. 66) In order to identify these sets, I conducted factor analysis on the first several hundred respondents to our values assessment—The Values Profile.™ The result was six clear clusters—six values styles, each composed of a set of high-scoring and low-scoring values. Why include low-scoring? Because to value one thing highly and another thing lowly is, in essence, to value the absence or inverse of the low value. To place low value on Power for example, is to place high value on being free of responsibility for managing, directing, or controlling other people. Perhaps you will recognize yourself in one of these six values styles. A reminder: These six styles are an ideal, in the sense that many people may match most of the value profile but might be off on two or three. For example, in the case of the Boss, you may find someone that fits the profile exactly save for Beauty, which for them is actually highly valued. So, if you see one that fits you except for a couple of values, you might say something like, “Yes, my style is the Boss, but I place more value on long-term, intimate relationships than most bosses, and I have a strong urge to correct social ills, which makes me value Helping higher than most bosses. Maybe you could call me a Boss with a soft heart. I put my aggression to work for the benefit of others.”

Social Dominance (“The Boss”). This style above everything else is driven to be Numero Uno. Winning is everything, and it is instrumental in gaining power over people and resources, and in achieving prestige and status that others look up to. They are consummate goal-setters who are workaholics in pursuit of those goals. As a key element that runs through these qualities, Bosses are Materialistic and see having, and being among, fine things as evidence of their successes.

As a consequence of their unrelenting goal pursuit, relationships tend to take the back seat, and they risk it all in the hopes of gaining power. Security now is secondary to the possibility of basking in the riches and accoutrements of success. Any altruistic tendencies are more likely instrumental to goal attainment, much as FDR’s focus on job creation was necessary to stay in power—similar to Clinton’s campaign reminder that “It’s the economy, stupid!” Along with inattention to Relationships, the Boss tends to be less attentive to lifestyle practices around Health, Aesthetics, and Spirituality.

Again, every type has its exceptions. While presidents and politicians generally exhibit all of the characteristics of Bosses, along comes a Jimmy Carter for whom Helping is a genuine terminal value, and Materialism seems to take a back seat to Spirituality.

<p>Highly valued: <i>Competition</i> <i>Power</i> <i>Status</i> <i>Achievement</i> <i>Materialism</i> <i>Activity</i></p>	
<p>Less valued: <i>Relationships</i> <i>Helping</i> <i>Stability</i> <i>Beauty</i> <i>Health</i> <i>Spirituality</i></p>	<p>The Boss Franklin D. Roosevelt</p>

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Social Nurture (“The Helper”). The Helper’s strongest motive, or value, is establishing Justice, be it economic, social, or otherwise. They will not rest until fairness rules their land, nor will they pass up opportunities to help those in need find a way to be served. Driving them toward Justice and altruism is a deep-seated Spirituality that is grounded in long-term, intimate relationships and a strong sense of loyalty to their people and traditions. Like bosses, the Helper is a goal-setter, and they focus on doing whatever it takes, even martyrdom in some cases, to achieve those goals.

The Helper is not driven by the hunger for Power, as it is unimportant that they have control over other people and resources. They also do not need Independence from the establishment, because they are as likely to work through the establishment as outside it. While independent of mind, they are not independent of organizations and institutions: Their will is honed to serve justice and social needs. Martin Luther King Jr.’s comment that “Love is the only force capable of transforming an enemy into friend” typifies the stance of the Helper, and his “I Have a Dream” speech galvanized people around his goals of social justice.

And while religious and human services professionals often exemplify the Helper profile, exceptions abound. There is televangelist Jim Bakker, who purported to serve the downtrodden but whose money-raising talents served Materialism, Power, and Status rather than Justice and Helping, and whose Relationships and loyalty were secondary to his aggressive drive toward financial goals. And there is Pat Robertson, another Helper whose drive for Power exceeded his drive for Justice and Helping, as witnessed by his unsuccessful campaign for the U.S. presidency in 1988.

<p>Highly valued: Justice Helping Spirituality Achievement Stability Relationships</p>	
<p>Less valued: Independence Power</p>	<p>The Helper Martin Luther King, Jr.</p>

Independent/Aesthete (“The Rebel”). Artists of various modes are exemplars of the Rebel. They value the life of the mind, including creativity as well as analysis and exploration, over acquisition of Power or Status. Typically ruggedly independent and often loners, they pursue a life both surrounded by Beauty in all of its forms—human, crafts, the fine arts, literature, nature—and consisting of waking every morning with the urge to create. The urge to create is not necessarily to gain Power or Status, but could be. Indulging in sensory Pleasures is in many ways instrumental to shaping the urge to create and build. They typically eschew affiliation with organizations, preferring to go it on their own. However, many find positions with universities and other institutions that provide them with security (which is important to some of them, but certainly not all), so long as their independence of mind and judgment is not constrained.

<p>Highly valued: Intellect Independence Beauty Pleasure</p>	
<p>Less valued: Justice Health Relationships</p>	<p>The Rebel Georgia O’Keeffe</p>

The Rebel is seldom an advocate for social justice, though not necessarily opposed to the concept. Their Health and Relationships could suffer because they are absorbed in their work and

inattentive to exercise, diet, and maintaining relationships. Of course, partnered with the right person, the relationship might not require much maintenance, as was the case with Georgia O’Keeffe and her husband, Alfred Stieglitz, who apparently pulled off a 26-year marriage while seldom speaking to one another.

And then there are exceptions, such as Wallace Stevens, who managed to win a Pulitzer Prize for Poetry while pursuing a career as an executive for a Hartford, Connecticut, insurance company.

Independent/Professional (“The Career Loner”). My image of the Career Loner entails a self-absorbed person who is dedicated to scholarship in their field of specialty and who alternates periods of intense study or creation with bursts of intense exercise, such as running, soccer, gardening, walking, or cycling. Supporting this intense and solitary lifestyle is a fastidious attention to healthy eating, sleep, and other behavior. They tend to be hard-working and low on the need for relaxation.

Such self-absorption means little time or desire to enjoy the pleasures of the senses, little need to have relationships that require daily maintenance, and little need to be judged favorably by others. They are intrinsically motivated and generally indifferent toward recognition and matters of prestige. They are more interested in quality of mind and body than in quality of material possessions or setting.

And of course we have exceptions here also, as in Thoreau’s contemporary Walt Whitman and his bohemian ways.

Nesting (“The Status Seeker”). The emphasis for the Status Seeker is on living in accordance with mainstream values, with an emphasis on obtaining appropriate promotions and titles at work in order to enjoy the respect of their mainstream peers. Their relatively conservative outlook values physical and mental health, as well as attention to their significant relationships—at home, at work, and in the community. While not self-absorbed, they are not particularly attracted to matters of social justice and the needs of the less fortunate. Part of their mainstream mentality is their appreciation for the arts and nature, valuing Aesthetic matters at least in part because they are instrumental in gaining respect and position. They are often collectors—perhaps of art, or baseball cards—as a way of surrounding themselves with possessions and nice things. They are likely to serve on boards as a show of commitment to the larger community.

Highly valued: <i>Health</i> <i>Intellect</i> <i>Activity</i>	
Less valued: <i>Pleasure</i> <i>Materialism</i> <i>Relationships</i> <i>Status</i>	The Career Loner Henry David Thoreau

Highly valued: <i>Beauty</i> <i>Status</i> <i>Health</i> <i>Relationships</i> <i>Materialism</i>	
Less Valued: <i>Stability</i> <i>Spirituality</i> <i>Pleasure</i>	The Status Seeker The Typical Bureaucrat

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Surprisingly, the Status Seeker places relatively low value on Stability, suggesting that they are more interested in the quality of their rather conservative lifestyle than in maintaining traditions that may seem irrelevant to current success. Emphases on Spirituality or Pleasure might seem to others as evidence of lack of self-control, so in the spirit of the Golden Mean they avoid such shows of excess, either physical or mental.

An interesting exception during these times leading up to the 2016 U.S. presidential elections is Donald Trump, who fits the Status Seeker profile except for his apparent love of Power. In terms of his apparent interest in Achievement, analysts¹ have debated whether Trump increased the value of his inheritance. In other words, they question whether he “achieved” his wealth.

Retreating (“The Ascetic”). Here we have a complex values style that loves being in charge but can’t hack the corporate world. Independent of mind and resistant to hierarchical authority, this deeply spiritual person yearns to achieve purity of mind and body through spartan living—a simple lifestyle away from the mainstream, perhaps even the kind of life associated with a commune. I have an image of the many corporate executives and other workers who have opted out of Center City in favor of homesteading and getting back to nature and living close to the land.

The Ascetic does not need to stay busy. Things must be under control, yes, but the life is casual and ideally stress-free. Their motive is neither study and the life of the mind nor helping the poor and downtrodden, but rather is directed toward finding a niche they can control and maintain. In its positive form, we see people escape from city to country, while in its malevolent form we see people forming cults and demanding that followers conform to their ideas and values.

Thoreau could be considered an Ascetic, although the high value he placed on Intellect and low value on Power make him something of an outlier.

Highly valued: <i>Independence Health Power Spirituality</i>	
Less valued: <i>Activity Helping Intellect</i>	The Ascetic David Koresh

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Clearly more than six values styles are out there. If we were to examine all possible combinations of the 16 values taken four at a time, we would have to describe 3,876 values styles! As we collect more data, we will conduct future factor analyses to see what other common combinations are lurking. The discussion of personal styles could continue, but that would defeat the point, which is to help the

¹ E.g., Brian Miller and Mike Lapham, “Exposing how Donald Trump really made his fortune: Inheritance from dad and the government’s protection mostly did the trick” on Alternet, July 9, 2012; excerpt from their book *The Self-Made Myth*, Berrett-Koehler, 2012.

reader get a handle on their own personal style. Up to now, we have focused on defining the domain of values. From this point, we will focus on applying values to individuals and other contexts. We will return to values style in Chapter 12, where we will invite you to affirm or reconfigure your values profile.

