

# The Publican: The Makings of an Alcoholism Rehabilitation Counselor

RICHARD W. BRADLEY

In my life as a counselor educator, I work with interesting people daily, but only a few are truly fascinating! One of these was and still is the Publican. I felt his story should be captured; therefore, I asked if I could interview him with the indirect purpose of tracing his career development. What follows are the main portions of an interview conducted when he was 39 years old in the spring of his second year of doctoral studies, and a postscript almost 6 years later when he was 45 years old. The Publican's story is offered in narrative form to *Career Development Quarterly* readers for review. Two theoretical orientations not previously discussed in the *Getting Down to Cases* column will be used for analysis. These are the perspectives offered in the works of Anne Roe and a variety of Adlerians.

## EXCERPTS FROM THE INTERVIEW

**Publican:** For the first 5 years of my life, I was the only child and the attention focused upon me. Then came my brother's birth, and for perhaps another 5 years I had to share the attention. There was a certain amount of rivalry between us. Since I was older and also, at least so far as school work was considered, brighter and faster, my poor brother usually came out second best. My parents tried to protect him from being overshadowed by me. Some of this rivalry was not especially healthy. When my brother died of leukemia, I think I had a guilt trip, like, "Hey, wouldn't it have been better if I had been nicer, and now he's dead."

I remember all that pretty clearly because it was a very scary experience. This was my first contact with death. I remember his death mainly

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*This interview was conducted and edited by Richard W. Bradley, Professor of Educational Psychology, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale. The Publican wishes to remain anonymous.*

through the effect it had upon my parents. That was the first time I ever saw my father weeping, which had a profound effect upon me. It was by no means the first time I had seen my mother weeping. She was sort of a "hysterical personality" and would cry at the slightest excuse. All her weeping and wailing had a very traumatic effect on me. Now, as I look back, I think this is where I learned a lot of my anxiety reactions, I was not inherently and genetically a scared kid; I believe I learned to be scared. My mother taught me to be fearful and anxious because she seemed to be fearful and anxious about almost everything. My father, on the other hand, was a very remote and aloof sort of person. He was raised in England in the old English traditions—children are seen but not heard! The only communications I got from him were ambiguous.

My parents were always proud of me being a bright little kid. They were very social-climbing type people and perhaps thought their kind of humdrum, average lives might be redeemed in some way through me. I was always number one in all my school classes, and they pushed me. Since I was the brightest kid in the class, they had great visions I would be a doctor or lawyer or a highly successful person who would move into the upper middle class. Consequently, my school successes were something they encouraged and pushed. Even in the third and fourth grades they were pushing me to do better and better. In the sixth grade, my teachers gave me some sort of a standardized test. I made such high scores, the damn teacher called and told my mother that her son was a genius and should never make below an A in any course. This was a kind of pernicious thing to say because all through high school, whenever I got lackadaisical about courses, which in most cases involved teachers I did not like, my mother would remind me. If I had a teacher I liked, I did splendidly well. If I did not like the teacher, I would do nothing! So, whenever I came home with a B or C, my mother would have a fit. She harassed me about grades all through high school, and some of my later behavior in early college years probably was in rebellion against this harassment.

Then, of course, my father had a drinking problem. I'd say he was a borderline alcoholic as far back as I can remember. When I was 5 or 6 years old he had a good job and made quite a bit of money working for a big corporation. He got fired and I never did find out exactly why, but I suspect his drinking had something to do with it. In later years, when I developed a drinking problem, my mother made references like, "Well, your son is going to be just like you, another drunk." My mother always tried to cope with my father's drinking. She drank a lot to keep up with him and consequently had a drinking problem herself. Around the age of 15 or 16, I, too, discovered alcohol. It was the solution to all my problems. No more anxiety, no more self-esteem problems. Just drink some alcohol, and I was on top of the world. This remained a very viable solution until I was about 32, at which point alcohol started to kill me. My first 10 or 15 years of drinking were just wonderful. I didn't accomplish much, but I did a lot of splendid drinking. As long as I didn't run out of booze, I thought well of myself.

I did, however, have self-esteem problems. I was a fat little kid, and I didn't look like the other kids in my neighborhood. I didn't think like them, and my interests were not the same as theirs. I was a literary kid. I wanted to read books. I spent a lot of time alone.

In my early years, I lived in a fantasy world. I was not comfortable in the world of my peers, so I very readily isolated myself in the world of fantasy: Bomba the Jungle Boy, Tom Swift, and other increasingly sophisticated things. By the time I was 12 or 13, I was reading George Orwell, Aldous Huxley, and Jean Paul Sartre. My teachers were amused, to say the least, by some of the stuff I was reading at 13 or 14. It was not commonly considered ninth grade reading material. I was an unhappy little kid because I was fat and very much alienated and rejected by my peers because they were interested in girls, cars, and football. I was never able to identify any clear-cut common interests with my peers.

About this time my parents railroaded me into the Boy Scouts. They had become alarmed that I just stayed home and read books all the time. That was probably a good move because I got a lot out of my scouting experiences, and I did need some more socialization and more contact with other kids. I see that now. I had to give my parents good marks for that. I had pictures of myself when I was about 13 or 14 dressed up as a Boy Scout with more badges than a Bolivian field marshal. There was a certain amount of pomp and circumstance I enjoyed.

Even so, my mother always had an agenda with me. She was very average in intelligence and not at all inspired in her thinking. I doubt if my mother had an original, creative thought in her whole life. The fact that my wit and my talents were sort of outstanding, perhaps a little mercurial but certainly impressive, in that small southern community, she always felt put down by this. Many times she would make comments like, "Well, you're such a 'smart ass' little kid." But then she would turn around and say things like, "My little brain child," and she would want to hug and love me.

As I try to think back to where career choice might have come into this process, my teachers recognized I had quite a bit of talent in science and math. They probably could have discovered I had talent in other fields, too. It's just that none of them had any interests or talents in some of the other things that interested me, like literature. I only had one decent English teacher all through school who recognized I also had some interesting talents in writing and literature. Of course, this was in the Sputnik period and there was the big push on to identify any little kid that had manifest talent in science and math. I see now, in retrospect, that I was railroaded into a career in science. I was good and liked it from a very early age. I think I had my first chemistry set when I was about 9 years old. With increasingly larger and more profound chemistry sets, I finally had the whole garage filled with tubing and glassware contrivances. About once a month I'd blow up or burn something.

I also liked science fiction. I read a lot of science fiction and still have a profound interest in this area. Perhaps science fiction is a crossover

point in my own development between pure science and literature. It means a lot to me. I'm reading a science fiction novel right now. It seems like I'm always reading one, and maybe five or six other books at the same time, but there is always a science fiction novel in the stack.

**Bradley:** *Was science more of a concrete activity while your explorations in literature were more fantasy, where you could get away from the world? I want to explore if science and mathematics were areas you moved into because of reinforcement and identification. Could you elaborate on these for a moment?*

**Publican:** I'm having to reflect a bit because that's really getting pretty close to the center of my personality. I've always liked Rogers's definition of personality: A group of experiences of which one feels oneself the center. There were alternative pathways in my life. To be sure, I received very little reward directly for all my reading. My reading was omnivorous. I consumed every field of thought, even from a very early age. At 12, I was interested in everything. I made lists of all the things I was going to study, and they were all-encompassing. If you had asked me "What are you going to study when you grow up?" I would have said anthropology, history, philosophy, religion, you name it, it was there. As for which things I got rewarded, my fame, if you can call it that, in a combined junior-senior high school in a little Florida town was in the sciences. I was consistently rewarded by my teachers and peers for outstanding successes in math, chemistry, and biology; any of the pure sciences. Even when I was in the seventh grade, I was asked by the twelfth grade physics class and the eleventh grade chemistry teacher and students to deliver 20-minute mini-lectures, and sometimes even a whole class period, on timely subjects. This was unheard of for a seventh grader to be lecturing to twelfth grade physics classes on research in thermonuclear fusion or speaking to the ladies club or the Eastern Star about life on other planets. This dubious notoriety resulted in my being interviewed by one of the local newspaper reporters. I was sort of an engaging little rascal, I suppose. There was a front page article in the paper with such crap as "Hometown genius builds strange things with chemistry set." I still have a copy of that somewhere in my archives.

Even with this sort of superficial fame I was still an unhappy little kid. I was not happy with the fact that I was overweight and did not have athletic success. My reading was an escape. I was happy in this world of fantasy. I had a really active day-dream life. This carries over right through to the age of 39. I still spend a lot of time daydreaming. Of course, I have a very lively interest in night dreaming, too. Even now, I've been reading books on dream theory and oneirology, the science of dreams. If one were to point a finger at me at the age of 12, or 18, or 28, or 38 and say, "Hey, this guy is a dreamer," I'd plead guilty. There's a big, important central portion of me that lives dreams. Anything involved with contemplation or speculation. Once again we get back to science fiction, the twilight zone between science and fantasy.

Maybe I'm happiest in the world of science fiction because the good, the true, and the beautiful all come together for me. There, I'm concerned

with human destiny. Where is the human race headed? That's a wild thing to be thinking about, yet I was thinking about that when I was 12 as I still am today. It's been a thread throughout my whole life. If I had to live in an existence where I could not speculate, I couldn't live. I couldn't survive without that freedom.

At the present time, I'm happier than I have ever been. Probably because I'm more free than I've ever been. Of course, I'm free of the old tyranny of alcohol addiction. In many respects, my life began at 36 when I quit drinking. The 20 years between 17 and 37 were sort of a twilight period in some respects. I was only operating at about 50% of my capacity because of alcohol addiction. In the early years, it was a strange experience. I feel no bitterness about any of it. There's just not a shred of bitterness about what has gone before, because for good, better or worse, it was mine. It was my pilgrimage. I'm not sure I'm getting to the point you want me to be. Why don't you respond to some of this?

**Bradley:** *You've brought up several patterns. For example, how science fiction has given you a vehicle to bring life experiences together. It seems you received more recognition for scientific endeavors than for literary ones. I wonder if there were cognitive aspects in your life that made you choose to study physics, mathematics and computer technology in college versus studying religion, philosophy and thinking that you seemed to have enjoyed so much throughout life. Somewhere in the process, you or other people helped you move in the scientific direction. It was a direction something created.*

**Publican:** How is it that I came to major in physics? At that time physics was considered by my peers and teachers to be the most difficult subject of all human knowledge. Or at least, that's what I thought. I think now that's not really true. Maybe all subjects are a springboard into deep thought, but today I look at it from a much more sophisticated viewpoint. In those days, the news was filled with atomic research, and the feeling in my community was that if a person were to become a nuclear researcher, that was the pinnacle of human experience. Only the best or the "creme de la creme" of the intelligentsia could be a nuclear physicist. So it was a goal I looked toward. There was a lot of "flim flam" in the media that science would solve all of humankind's problems, and the cutting edge was atomic physics research. There humanity would finally find the golden pathway to paradise. Now, I'm much more skeptical. I fault John Dewey and others for being a little too optimistic as to what science could or could not do. In terms of literary interests, if someone had suggested I go into philosophy or religion or psychology in my senior year in high school, I probably would have said, "Well, perhaps later, but right now, the important thing is instant fame through atomic physics." I wanted recognition fast.

**Bradley:** *Physics was the pinnacle. You perceived it as being very prestigious and where the breakthroughs were going to be made. This may have influenced your choice. Yet, when working in the science field, I got the impression you developed skills in working with people. Maybe the*



*people-orientation and skills in perception led you more into management than into researching and making scientific breakthroughs. I'm hypothesizing you became "Mr. Fix-it" when you patched up other peoples' problems because you could draw things together.*

**Publican:** Sure, I think you're right on there. The idea of research was very romantic for me. When I was in high school, I hadn't the foggiest idea what research was like. I had part-time jobs my first 2 years at the University of Chicago working in a microbiology lab and a computer lab. I saw researchers doing their thing, and it appeared to be the most grueling, dull work I'd ever seen. I became turned off to the whole idea of research. My course work also turned me off to research. I didn't like my first chemistry or physics courses where I was working in real labs and having to do required analyses. I liked the lectures and theory, but I didn't like working in the labs at all. If this was research, I wouldn't like it. I managed to muddle through and make B's or C's. I just barely graduated in physics because my average was so low. I didn't study. I was off reading science fiction. I was not a serious student at any time. I'm not entirely sure I'm really serious even now. I manage to muddle through.

Once on the job, my management ability seemed to develop quickly. When I actually got my first job as an engineer in 1965, with RCA on a NASA satellite tracking ship, I got promoted almost immediately into management. They said it was because I got along well with people. I seemed to be able to negotiate and arbitrate in order to smooth over difficulties and get people to talk to one another. I began to see that my real skills did not lie in working on equipment, but in the big open-ended engineering management program of a tracking ship. I was most valuable in bringing people together and functioning as a liason or staff man. At that time, I don't know if I could have verbalized this. In later years, I realized I'm quite social. I seem to come out highest on instruments which identify social environments and social reward systems.

**Bradley:** *In your early years, you were pretty much of a loner, an isolate who had few close friends. In the work world, this pattern of being the social person who drew others together was a new role for you. Maybe you had experienced this in the family when trying to negotiate between your mother and father, but how did you see yourself in this role? Did you seem to want to move into it more and more and away from the machines?*

**Publican:** Yes, very much so. I think you've identified something I'm just beginning to see for myself. When I took the tracking ship job, that was really the first time my powers of social cohesion and ability to bring people together were used. It was the first opportunity I had to use my social skills. I really learned something about myself from 1965 up to about 1971. I got promoted three or four times. For the last 4 of the 6 years, I was the head engineer on the tracking ship Mercury. I had quite a lot of responsibility. I got disparate groups to talk to one another; communicating between NASA, the Air Force and the Navy. I had never

had any inkling this was going to be my ability. The 4 years I spent in the Air Force from 1961 to 1964 I was just a very low grade sergeant, a flunky. I did a lot of menial work and had no real supervisory opportunities at all.

**Bradley:** *Let me trace the pattern I'm seeing. During your early rearing, you were wrapped up in your books and chemistry set. You were doing things by yourself. This continued, more or less, through college and into the Air Force period. In some respects, I would hypothesize you were complacent being a low-grade flunky because you could do your other things. You were a daydreamer; a night dreamer on the job. You got along by having the skills to carry out the function, but you really looked forward to other activities. I'm wondering if on the tracking ship, some different sorts of things occurred? Here you were functioning at a reasonably high professional level. You weren't trying to get distinctions. They fell on you. Working with people evolved. But during these different periods did your outside behavior, let's call them your avocational activities, change? Did you continue to read? Did you enter into more social interaction outside the job that became satisfying to you.?*

**Publican:** Yes, I think I did both. I can't really remember any time in my life when I didn't do a lot of reading. That's been sort of a uniformly high level throughout my life, except maybe the last 2 or 3 years of drinking. A lot of this time I was too sick to read. With this exception, I'd say my whole life has been a lot of reading. It's very important to me. In fact, reading is my major hobby, maybe my only hobby.

My social development, I think, really started in the Air Force. For better or for worse, I would go to the NCO club and drink a lot with my comrades and sort of hold forth as a publican. I was the center of attraction because I could expatiate on any number of wacko subjects throughout the whole range of human experience. I was always welcome in the drinking groups. Among a group of so-called "bullshit artists," I was probably the best. This was the beginning of my social life. It carried over neatly when I got out of the Air Force. I went back and finished my last year of college, received my bachelor's degree in physics, and immediately went on the tracking ships. There was a smooth continuity between the Air Force technological drinking society into the tracking ship technological drinking society. I had a very active social life. I don't think I read any less, particularly because at sea there's immense amounts of spare time for reading. I just drank more and more and visited more and more taverns and pubs around the world. I drank in all the pubs in South Africa, Brazil, Australia and many islands and strange places in between. Sometimes we'd pull into these strange ports and never get beyond the waterfront bars. We knew them all! I was a good technological sailor. We called it the space age WPA and many cynical names because we were all overpaid and underworked. We spent our money on wine, women, and song and wasted the rest. That wasn't quite true because I sent home a lot of money.

My parents were having a lot of illnesses and, consequently, financial problems. I remember remarking to my first counselor that the only two worthwhile things I'd felt I'd done in my life were to quit drinking and pay \$10,000 worth of my parents' medical bills. That was kind of a cynical remark. I've probably done more than that in life. In fact, the notion of trying to do good things and identify what is good for humans to do is important to me.

One of my favorite philosophers, Immanuel Kant, started out his great critiques of pure and practical reason by asking questions like "What may a man hope? What can you do that's good? What will you do next?" I think about these things a lot. That's why I mention things like the good and the true and the beautiful all coming together in the world of science fiction. Maybe it began to come together for me in my own personal piece of science fiction. In a way, I was sort of living science fiction as an aerospace engineer. I was creating my own personal little living experience in science fiction on the tracking ship. It had some very practical, hard-nosed, scientific technological aspects, but there was a lot of romance and adventure in going off to foreign ports and swashbuckling type things like when we were kids. We were all a merry crew.

**Bradley:** *It appears that in the Air Force and on the tracking ship you had more camaraderie than you'd ever had in your life. Your group of associates looked to you as the head "bullshit artist." It was fun; it was enjoyable to be with them. It gave you an opportunity to think and talk about a lot of things and to have people question you about them. My speculation is if the alcohol hadn't become debilitating, this kind of lifestyle may have continued, but somewhere in the process the lifestyle and alcohol ran aground.*

**Publican:** Yes, that's true! I get a lot out of that way of life. I was on the track of human destiny. Even when I was holding forth as a publican in the taverns in all three strange places, I saw myself as an educator. I saw myself as a person who was going to convert normal, bar room conversation into a much higher thing. I wish I had some tape recordings of what we talked about. It was not trivial. We were talking about where the human race was going. We were talking about the implications of space and atomic research for human beings. We all might have been tipsy, but what we spoke of were deep things from the heart. I remember consciously trying to facilitate, elicit, and enable the deepest well-springings of thought and feeling among my comrades in the bars. I think that's probably one reason I was an extremely popular drinking partner. They knew we would get drunk and have a good time talking about great men and great ideas.

In later years, when I came to associate my alcoholism with the environment of aerospace business, I began to see it was not healthy for me to be around a bunch of heavy drinking people. When I ended up in the Air Force Hospital in Wiesbaden, Germany for acute alcoholism, it finally dawned upon me that there would have to be a major change of direction in my life. I would have to find myself a new group of people, and they



would not be aerospace technicians and engineers. These people were using alcohol as a form of escape from life that was not wholly satisfactory for them and a good deal less satisfactory for me.

There was still something missing. I was cut off from really direct participation in the things I now know I am most deeply interested in and that's religion, philosophy, anthropology, sociology, psychology, the social sciences and humanities. Before I'd been off in engineering and mathematics. Yet to this day I have very lively interest in all scientific fields. I pick up a *Scientific American* magazine and read everything in it, even the ads. I just have a profound interest in science. Nothing has changed. Now I want and *must* incorporate this into a larger way of looking at things. It's uncanny, but even as a little kid, I was concerned with metaphysics; I was concerned with some of the really basic things, like how do we arrive at knowledge? What are the pathways to knowledge? What are the purposes of knowledge? I was interested in death when 12 years old as well as 39.

When I began my alcoholic recovery process, I came in contact with a group of people in Germany who were counselors and high school teachers. They were my salvation. I began taking graduate level counseling courses. At first, I was doing this for free therapy. I pretty much thought that way. It wasn't quite free; it cost me \$200 a course. I was also seeing a counselor. I saw two different counselors, each for 3 months. I also started going to AA meetings. First, I went to two or three a week and then tapered off to one a week. Finally, after about 6 months, I really just pretty much dispensed with AA. I occasionally go to an AA meeting to more or less see what my fellow alcoholics are doing. The new group of counseling people met the needs I had as a recovering alcoholic. These last 2 ½ years that I've been sober and am pursuing counseling studies, has perhaps been the most fruitful period of my whole life. Now it's coming together. My world view, my reality is finally feeling big enough. It feels as if I'm finally looking at all the things I need to look at. If there's some field of human thought I haven't quite gotten to yet, my expectation is that by-and-by I will.

**Bradley:** *In a way, I see you as a seeker of knowledge rather than a provider of knowledge. Although with your associative memory, you are able to draw things together. It has been the focus of your conversation for years. How does the dreamer in you see the future unfolding?*

**Publican:** Well, that's certainly something I've been thinking about! I haven't quite put all that together. These last couple of years have been so fruitful and have felt so good to me, there's been so much positive growth going on that sometimes I'm really very content to just live in the here and now. I like my job right now. I see limitations with it, so perhaps a year from now I'm going to be actively seeking a better job. I'd say it's all but a certainty I will want a better and more suitable job when I complete the doctoral program. People with doctoral degrees often get better jobs; not always, but sometimes they do. I guess I can conceptualize the future in terms of better jobs, more suitable jobs, jobs that give me

more pay, a fuller range of opportunity, a larger, more complete stage to work upon and bring more of my talents to bear. I guess we're still a bit fuzzy as to what my talents are.

## **FOLLOW-UP**

The above interview took place in the spring of his second year of doctoral studies. The Publican was employed by a mental health center within commuting distance of the campus. After the third year in the doctoral program, he took a position at a private residential substance abuse treatment facility in the south. With his departure from campus I wrote to ask permission to reproduce our interview for use in my career development course. He replied:

You are most welcome to use the interview, and I shall furnish you an update when on campus for my first dissertation committee meeting. I have begun my dissertation!

My new job at \_\_\_\_\_ is precisely that of publican-therapist. I am gaining priceless experience here and building a solid reputation as a therapist. I work hard and am gleefully amazed to be paid to do exactly what I need to do.

See you soon!

During the second interview, about a year and a half later, he talked a great deal about his experiences, and I continued to attempt to focus on the evolution of career in his life. This interview was insightful but is not included because of space requirements.

After the first and second interviews were complete, I asked the students in several graduate level pre-service classes I teach to read and analyze this case. I asked my students to analyze parts of the Publican's life and use them to illustrate career development theories. In the analysis process it became clear that parts of his early experiences were not adequately articulated in the interviews. I had observed the Publican depict these experiences as a student in my career development class several years earlier. For the class, I had enlarged as classroom visuals two figures Ann Roe devised to explain her theory. I asked for a volunteer to explain these figures. The Publican went to the front of the class and held us spellbound explaining the figures using his life experiences as the subject matter. To capture some of this, I asked him, some 6 years after the first interview, if he would talk into a tape recorder and reconstruct some of these earlier explanations. He immediately sent me an audiotape that captured the essence of his earlier presentation.

## **SELF-INTERPRETATION USING ANN ROE'S THEORY AS A GUIDE**

I would characterize my mother as my dominant parent. I spent more time with her, because my father was out working. Mother had an emo-

tional concentration on me as a child, yet more overprotective than really demanding. Whenever I chastize her as being, in my eyes, a little too demanding, I think that was just my childish perception. I don't really believe, in retrospect, that my mother was all that demanding. We didn't get along terribly well, but I think that was because there were some major intellectual differences between us. I think my mother's overprotective and overdemanding characteristics were manifestations of her love and acceptance. Her acceptance seemed a little conditional at times, but that may have just been the way it seemed to me.

It's no great surprise that my major orientation has always been towards people, rather than towards things or machines. It may be that I regard people as ideas, but I still move towards people.

One thing is abundantly clear: I have no interest in business organization or technology. My outdoor interest is sort of a mystical love of nature. As for science, I have immense respect for science and still read actively in this area, but as a practicing scientist I was quite clearly an occupational misfit.

It's clearer if you look at the Roe and Klos (1969) figure on Orientation to Purposeful Communications. [Note: This figure has not been reproduced. I believe the Publican's verbal explanation will be adequate.] On the horizontal axis, I have an orientation toward interpersonal relations, no question about it. I have an interest in my needs and the needs of others which would mean I would be qualified and apt to want to provide service to humankind. But on the other hand, I have a great love for the outdoors and nature. Therefore I have an orientation toward natural phenomena, the opposite end of the axis. Indeed, one of the things I seek to accomplish in my dissertation is to place the person, particularly the counselor, in a natural context. Now, on the vertical axis it's much clearer. My orientation there is toward purposeful communication and the word on the page that jumps out at me is ideas, first and foremost! I have a love for ideas and remember having felt, since a small child, a great thrill and excitement in the life of the mind. Enlightening people seems to be a most natural thing for me to do. As for the arts and aesthetic qualities, I'm really less sure. When I write a poem, I must say that if I can come up with a fine turn of phrase, that pleases me. Any form of ugliness disturbs me. I move away from ugliness and toward beauty. As for science, I'm very much fascinated with science whether there are any laws or not. Now, for the lower part of the figure, "Orientation Towards Resourceful Utilization," organization of any kind bores me. System, pure systems philosophy, and systems theories interest me as a branch of philosophy, but I'm very much turned off by any kind of methods and techniques. I think there are times when I'm quite persuasive in my work. The social psychology of influence is something I've studied and seek to know more about. But as for participating in the business world, I wouldn't be able to do that. I'd cost someone a fortune. As for technology and mechanics, with anything mechanical I'm hopeless. It'd be dangerous if I got near any kind of real machine.

A good observation about Roe's theory is the need to consider mediator variables between parental interaction and the later development of the child. One possible intervening variable for me is cognitive style. From the viewpoint of my own rearing, I had my mom, my dad, my teachers, and then I had books. One thing you could certainly say would be that mom and dad let me read my books, and the reason I went for books is because the ideas were there. So my cognitive style had to be strongly influenced by my books and reading. My mom probably had a very weak influence on my cognitive style. My dad had some moral and spiritual influence because of his profound nobility and integrity. These qualities strongly influenced me. My teachers unquestionably had some influence on me, but they were such a motley bunch, it would be hard to get any coherent picture of them.

Now, for Roe's occupational categories, I end up in General Culture or Arts or Service, and of the three I would say ideas or the General Culture category would have to be preeminent. Second, the arts might involve writing poetry, and as a third, what I'm doing now, working as a counselor providing service to humankind. This is something I think I'll always be doing because I'm not sure I could make a living as a poet or writer, although that certainly remains to be seen.

In the origin of Roe's theory we have a concern for how mental energy or psychic energy is channelled. I think mine went into books, because that's where the ideas were. For me, it's significant that ideas are preeminent above all else. I'm somewhat concerned I may go towards people only because they're interesting and have ideas. They know things I want to know.

My need for ideas is a strong need. It may be an addiction of some sort because I run out very quickly. I then have to get more books. If I get down to three or four hundred books around the house I start getting antsy; going through withdrawal. I carry books all over the place. If I'm going somewhere where I have to wait for a few minutes, I'll carry along a book, so it's a pretty strong thing I'm dealing with.

My *Strong Vocational Interest Blank* profile suggests I might want to write or teach about nature or art. This is very congruent with my self-image as a natural philosopher of some sorts, and perhaps as an amateur metaphysical poet. It's interesting that Henry David Thoreau described himself pretty much that way. I feel a great commonality with this man. We share proclivities. I have a concern for meaning and beauty in nature, and in my writing I try to show how humankind is part of nature and is understandable, comprehensible, only in this context. In fact, one of the things I seek to do is to restore the connectiveness.

# An Adlerian View of the Publican's Pilgrimage

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The following paragraphs demonstrate how a counselor can use Adlerian vocational psychology (Watkins, 1984) to conceive the Publican's career pattern, relate it to his vocational behavior, and select counseling topics that could aid his career development. Adler's psychology offers a process theory of vocational behavior that comprehends purpose and self-construction in career development. Compared to other prominent career theories, it most resembles the work of Miller-Tiedeman and Tiedeman (1985). From this perspective, career is defined as the imposition of direction on vocational behavior. Thus, vocational behavior is a public act, whereas career is a private thought. We can perceive the Publican discussing ideas, reading books, majoring in physics, engineering, managing, and counseling, but we must conceive the self-chosen purpose that patterns these vocational behaviors into a career.

A career pattern is often difficult to conceive. Most clients are so embedded in their pattern that they do not recognize that they have one. In these cases, a career theory becomes a practical tool. Counselors can use a theory to conceptualize a client's career pattern, to help the client understand it, and to clarify the client's vocational choices thereby enhancing the client's ability to decide. To understand the Publican's career, an Adlerian counselor would begin by looking for the theme and style that characterize the career pattern in his vocational behavior.

## CAREER THEME

One overarching goal usually unifies vocational behavior by imposing direction on it. This results in a central theme, which may also be called a project (Sartre, 1962) or a dream (Levinson, Darrow, Klein, Levinson,

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& McKee, 1978). People objectify their themes through vocational interests and occupational behaviors. Through work, private projects take on public meaning. As the Publican noted, he now gets paid to do what he has always needed to do. The central theme of a life project or dream typically arises in response to some problem that a person wishes to solve above all others. Adlerians operationally define the theme as the problem that draws the most attention from a person (Csikszentmihalyi & Beattie, 1979). The Publican labeled his theme "concern with human destiny." He recognized that this theme has been a thread throughout his entire life. Since the age of 12, he has speculated about where the human race is headed, what good a person can do or hope for, and the meaning of death.

To understand a person's theme, an Adlerian counselor would investigate its origins. In this case, the Adlerian would need to look back to the time when the Publican was making up his mind about the meaning of life and where he fit in. He was born into a family drama with its own theme (Hess & Handel, 1959). Like all of us, the Publican had to write his own part in life's drama after observing what was happening and making sense of it. To move in his world he had to understand it.

To understand life, he looked to his parents. Adlerians believe that parents provide guiding lines, that is, images of life that guide self-construction. From observing his father, the Publican might have decided that a man is remote, aloof, close-mouthed, and ambiguous. He does not weep, and may drink to escape his problems. His father presented a puzzle. In the Publican's eyes, his father had been a successful man of great nobility and integrity, yet his whole world had collapsed; he lost his job and then his young son. His father's weeping profoundly affected the Publican. What went wrong for father was a mystery. The Publican may have wondered if this was human destiny; you work hard to succeed but something inexplicable ruins your life.

His mother was frightened. The Publican might have wondered what scared her. She seemed to be protecting him from something, but what? Whatever it was, it left her hysterical, inconsistent, and bitter. Later he became curious about death. Unable to be indifferent to his family experience, he strove to make sense of it. His ambition became to solve the grand puzzle: Why a good man must suffer, why a woman must be frightened, why a 5-year-old boy must die. In other words, what is human destiny?

The Publican's theme began to take definite form in his childhood identification with Bomba and Tom Swift. These early role models represented what he thought it would take to overcome feelings of littleness or incompleteness and thus foretold his adult occupational interests. For example, Bomba was an only child who, in a series of adventures in exotic places, strove to solve the mystery of his father's identity and fate. Bomba was raised by a naturalist who was "moody and abstracted, letting days at a time go by without speaking" (Rockwood, 1931, p. 13). Left to himself, Bomba sought companionship with jungle life. Later he led his companions, who regarded Bomba with an equal blend of awe and admiration,

on adventures. Likewise, the Publican and his "merry crew" had adventures on the track of human destiny in Brazil, South Africa, Australia, and many strange places in between.

## CAREER STYLE

After identifying the career theme, Adlerians look for the client's career style, that is, the manner of acting, thinking, and perceiving that expresses the central theme (Mosak, 1977). Because the whole pattern exists in each part, Adler (1931, p. 71) wrote that in looking for the life style "we can begin wherever we choose, every expression will lead in the same direction." I start to conceive a client's style by thinking about the client's opening statement because with that statement the client enters a new situation. Lacking previous experience in that situation, the client must rely on his or her tested style of adapting. The Publican's opening statement tells us that his style is that of an only child who wants the attention focused on him. That you are now reading this page confirms the effectiveness of his style. As I talk with a client, I keep the client's opening statement in mind and relate it to what else the client says. The meaning of the opening statement becomes more comprehensible when we see its part in the whole. For example, when we link the Publican's opening statement to his later statement, "enlightening people seems to be a most natural thing to do," we see that his style involves enlightening people as a way of earning their attention.

Next I discern the client's style by considering my feelings toward the client. Usually these feelings have been elicited by the client's style, so they can point me directly to it. As I read the Publican's words, I felt intimidated by his superior intelligence, and I wondered if I would be able to help him. I do not usually react to clients this way, so I asked myself what had elicited this feeling of inequality. I concluded that he elicited this reaction with the heightening words he used to describe himself or other people's reactions to him: "always number one," "brightest," "genius," "wonderful," "splendid," "outstanding," "best," and "creme de la creme of the intelligentsia." In contrast, consider the lowering words he used to describe other people: his parents led average, humdrum lives; his brother was overshadowed; he only had one decent teacher, all the others were a motley bunch; and his colleagues were overpaid and underworked. I concluded that his style of enlightening others discourages him when it sets him apart from them. Then he must see himself as special to safeguard his demoralized self-esteem.

After I discern a client's style, I apply a birth order template (Forer, 1969) to understand how the client designed that style. The Publican's psychological position in the family configuration was in effect the first position he occupied in his career. Adlerians would conclude that the Publican learned his methods as an only child. In creating his style, he

did not have a brother with whom to interact. By the time he had a brother the Publican was in school all day. Thus, like most only children, the Publican learned to entertain himself. He developed a good imagination and a strong fantasy life through solitary, intellectual, and aesthetic activities such as reading. As an only child, the Publican relied on interacting with his parents to develop his style. He learned to act mature, to prefer adult ways of relating and communicating, to enjoy cultural and aesthetic activities, and to articulate his identity.

The Publican remembers being pushed by his parents. This too typifies only children (Claudy, 1984). Parents usually urge them to achieve and distinguish themselves. For most children, including the Publican, this pressure has a negative effect. Nevertheless, it instills a desire in the child to obtain the maximum possible education and a preference for socially prestigious occupations. Recall that his parents envisioned him in medicine or law and that the Publican chose physics because of its prestige. An early example of the resulting style can be seen in the Publican's experience as a Boy Scout. He approached scouting in a serious manner and drew attention to himself as he earned "more badges than a Bolivian field marshal."

The style he designed and practiced at home did not serve him well with his peers. He was alienated from and rejected by them. When forced to relate to his peers, the Publican probably adopted a parental posture. He may have learned from his parents how to enlighten his baby brother and other peers. He has maintained this style throughout his life. Like a dancer unaware of using a dance step he learned as a child, the Publican, without realizing it, was using the style he had adopted as a child when he became a high school lecturer, the best "bullshit artist" in a drinking group, the head engineer, a manager, and a fascinating graduate student.

In sum, to state a client's pattern succinctly, Adlerians use an expanded syllogism that expresses the client's view of life, self-concept, opinion of others, and resulting theme and style. The client and counselor collaborate in forming the syllogism. Without the Publican's feedback, I can only approximate it. If I could talk with him, I would ask him to refine this syllogism: *Life is a mystery. I am a genius and an educator. Other people lack curiosity and creativity. Therefore, I will solve life's mysteries and enlighten them.* Assuming for now that this syllogism expresses the Publican's career pattern, I will relate this pattern to his vocational behavior.

## VOCATIONAL BEHAVIOR

Adlerians assert that interests do not determine career direction, but the direction in which a client moves determines what may become his or her interests. His career pattern dictates what activities or objects are useful or interesting to the Publican as he strives for significance. Ideas have always been his preeminent interest because he can use them to

speculate about mysteries and enlighten other people. The Publican identifies books as his major hobby because "that's where the ideas are." In addition to stirring his dreams and speculations, the Publican used books to isolate himself because he was "happy in the world of fantasy."

The Publican's career pattern also imposed direction on his academic interests. In trying to understand human destiny, he made use of anthropology, history, philosophy, religion, and social science. Physics, rather than metaphysics, however, brought a reward he needed—fame. Physics gave him a platform from which to enlighten people and in the process to remain the center of attention throughout junior and senior high school. He chose physics as a college major because he believed that science could solve all of humankind's problems and that he could achieve instant fame as a physicist. Thus, he used physics to manifest his theme and implement his style.

After college he entered the adult world as a member rather than a pretender. His jobs in the Air Force and in NASA allowed him to track human destiny, although only indirectly. More than anything, these jobs allowed him to fulfill his style. As an adult, his behavior did not distance him from his peers as it had in childhood and adolescence. In fact, his behavior fascinated his peers. He felt welcomed in drinking groups and became part of a "merry crew." They enjoyed his teaching, eliciting, and enabling, and the groups benefited from his ability to bring people together. For the first time in his life, he belonged. His interpersonal skills were finally rewarded, thus aiding his social development.

This new experience of acceptance from peers encouraged him to develop his career pattern more completely. His cognitive orientation had always been social. He was interested in humankind, curious about civilization, and espoused altruistic values. Now he developed social ability and sociability. The group was his salvation because they encouraged him. With new found courage, the Publican confronted his drinking behavior and dealt with his demoralization. His torments became his element as he turned his symptoms into strengths and then into a social contribution. As a counselor he contributes by "enlightening" other people. His career pattern remains the same, but it has become more effective and complete because counseling allows him to participate directly in what deeply interests him. His career pattern is more stable because its theme and style are better integrated. Now he operates in a wider context or, as he says, on a larger stage. He looks forward to feeling even more complete when he begins to write about human destiny and the solution to his mystery—connectedness.

## **CAREER COUNSELING**

Having discerned the Publican's career pattern and its relationship to his vocational experiences, we, as career counselors, can help him prepare

for his future. If he came for career counseling at this time, I would begin by discussing my observations about his career pattern. Then I would relate his career theme to his impending vocational choices and his career style to his vocational adjustment.

I would initiate counseling with these observations. Like his fellow travelers, the Publican has always strived for better adaptation to his world. Each problem he met along his path became an opportunity to develop his career pattern more completely. By actively mastering what he passively suffered, he became more than he had been. He continues to transcend previous limitations imposed by his career pattern as he expands its design to incorporate more challenges. He knows that his strengths have come from the suffering that he endured on his pilgrimage. He appreciates rather than resents this pilgrimage, realizing that the strengths he forged along the way now allow him to make a significant social contribution. He always knew that the meaning of life was to make a contribution. Now, as he contributes directly, he feels more connected than ever before. His earlier concern with *how* he does (e.g., fame, recognition) has been replaced with concern about *what* he does (e.g., teaching, healing, writing). The version of the dream that he now lives gratifies him more than earlier versions because it is socially embedded in the community.

In regard to vocational choices, I would affirm his choice of the counseling profession. It is a profession that welcomes scientific artists like himself. As a counselor, he can develop the community by expanding our common sense and helping us go beyond our current level of adaptation. His colleagues will help him push the leading edge forward. While he works as a counselor, I would encourage him to explore counselor education positions by teaching a practicum in a local university. I would also talk to the Publican about building on his strengths by continuing to develop expertise in substance abuse and anxiety problems. I would reinforce his work with groups because he knows what it feels like to be an outsider as well as how to make an outsider feel welcome. If he has not already done so, I would encourage him to address problems like adolescent identity crisis, adult existential neurosis, midlife crises, life review with the elderly, and grief counseling. Finally, I would discuss his next great adventure—writing about the connection between humankind, nature, and destiny. Writing will expand his stage even further and allow him to enlighten a larger audience.

In regard to vocational adjustment, I would help him feel a greater sense of belongingness and equality with peers. Inequality does not serve life. I would ask him to not let people look up to him because when they do, they feel put down and afraid. I would continue the metaphor by suggesting that the farther up he is, the more anxious he feels about falling or being put down. I would encourage him to focus even more on what he does (enlightening) than on how he does (fame). I would leave him with the thought that his true goal in enlightening people is not to impress them, but to be useful to them. To paraphrase Kant, he can help them



discover what they may hope; what good they can do; and what they will do next.

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