The Adlerian Resume – Development of a Multiculturally Competent Adlerian Tool for Employment Counseling and Potential Therapeutic Interventions

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Abstract

Racial disparities in unemployment and mental health care are significant in the United States and in Minnesota particularly among Black populations. High incarceration rates among Blacks as well as higher than average rates of African refugees significantly contribute to the disadvantaged status of Black Minnesotans. Historically founded mistrust of Western counseling practices have created resistance among Blacks in utilizing such services. During a two-year internship experience at a metropolitan non-profit agency the author discovered an opportunity to implement Adlerian theory in resume development while serving as an employment and relational counselor for members of the surrounding community. As application of the techniques improved a natural transition between employment concerns and broader life issues became common in employment counseling sessions. Use of Adlerian principles appeared to bridge cultural differences including race, education and socioeconomic status between the counselor and the African American clients being served. Research indicates that an Adlerian framework for employment counseling may provide a more culturally competent, holistic approach that is better able to serve Minnesota’s disadvantaged Black populations. This paper introduces the Adlerian Resume tool designed to address the mental health needs Black Americans as well as those of other racial minorities and those in low socioeconomic circumstances. The author also explains the applicability of the tool for broader therapeutic settings.

Keywords: Adlerian psychology, therapeutic interventions, employment counseling, racial disparities, incarceration, immigration, poverty, African American, Black Americans
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The Adlerian Resume – Development of a Multiculturally Competent Adlerian Tool for Employment Counseling and Potential Therapeutic Interventions

In the summer of 2010 the author was accepted as a graduate level student intern at a community based non-profit organization. Although the organization offered a variety of services including youth programs, parenting enrichment seminars, senior meal and chore services and a job bank, a formal counseling and therapy service had not been in place. With off-site supervision the author agreed to try to develop a program offering individual and relational counseling and therapy sessions in addition to parenting education programs. Eight months into the experience a connection of any kind with members of the community had scarcely developed much less one that could have been considered counseling or therapeutic in nature. Although numerous outreach efforts were attempted including family bingo nights, parenting education courses and sitting at the street corner bus stop with a smile, handshake and information about the organization, a counseling program failed to materialize. Cultural differences between the counselor and community including race, education, cultural understanding and socioeconomic status appeared to serve as barriers in the author’s ability to successfully begin the development of counseling programs. A new approach to the neighborhood was needed if any kind of beneficial therapeutic encounters were to materialize in the community.

At this time an opportunity to develop a dual-role position, serving clients with employment counseling needs and/or personal counseling needs became available. The author reasoned that since community members did take advantage of the small job bank that was available at the center then perhaps assistance with job searches would provide an opportunity to develop meaningful relationships. Upon first accepting the position of
Employment and Family Counselor the author applied Adlerian techniques solely for the purpose of helping clients develop a more concrete resume presentation to aid in their employment goals. Although it was assumed that a personal counseling client base could result from positive experiences with employment counseling, combining the two areas in a single session was not part of the original vision.

The overlap of employment concerns and those of additional life roles came about naturally in discussions intended for resume development. Further, implementation of Adlerian principles helped to establish a bridge over cultural barriers augmenting client-counselor alliances. This afforded opportunities for both employment and broader life-role discussions that may not have otherwise been possible. This experience has lead the author to investigate three key variables in her work including 1) The suitability of combining employment and personal counseling, 2) an in-depth understanding of African American culture in Minnesota, which accounted for the author’s primary client base, and 3) the application of Adlerian principles in a resume format for employment and broader counseling and therapeutic interventions.

**Limitations**

There are at least two limitations of the research that should be noted. First, the Black American population being considered was limited to only those in Minnesota who were classified as disadvantaged. Second, the refugee population and corresponding mental health findings discussed were limited to the Somali community alone. Research on mental health findings with other African immigrant populations should be considered.
The Suitability of Combining Employment and Personal Counseling

Considerable research has suggested that a significant connection exists between employment concerns and personal functioning across additional life roles including personal relationships, self-esteem and motivational orientations (Bezanson, 2004; Blustein, 1997; Davidson, Nitzel, Duke, Baker, & Bovaird, 2012; Evans & Larrabee, 2002; Renfro-Michel, Burlew, & Robert, 2009; Toporek & Flamer, 2009). The diversification of the U.S. population has also brought substantial attention to the need for counselors of all specialties to implement Multicultural Counseling Competencies (MCC) in their service offerings in order to adequately address the counseling needs of diverse populations (Amundson, Westwood, & Prefontaine, 1995; Blustein, 1997; Evans & Larrabee, 2002; Sue & Sue, 2008; Toporek & Flamer, 2009). This indicates that employment-counseling services, as they exist today are steadily declining in their overall social and economic value.

The state of Minnesota currently experiences significant struggles pertaining to its Black populations including ranking the highest in the nation for Black unemployment (Austin, 2012). Although Minnesota has a lower than average overall Black population it has also experienced a population growth of nearly 60% between 2000 and 2010 within the Black community (Minnesota Department of Administration, 2013). In Minnesota Black communities are also becoming more culturally diverse due to substantial increases in African immigration accounting for 18% of the resident population as opposed to 4% native African settlement nationwide (Owen, Meyerson, & Otteson, 2010). Of those, roughly one in five African immigrants in Minnesota are classified as refugees or asylees (Owen et. al., 2010). Minnesota also contends with one of the largest black-white
incarceration rate disparities in the nation contributing to a “felon class” of citizens that is predominantly of African decent (Uggen, 2011). These groups of Black Americans are prone to particular barriers including severe mental health considerations affecting their ability to function in the life-tasks including the capacity to find and maintain work.

Securing employment is a primary concern for immigrants and ex-offenders alike and consequently both groups are traditionally directed to employment counseling services upon arrival in the United States or release from correctional facilities (US Department of State, 2012; National Institute of Corrections, 2011). Yet, because Western counseling practices have historically subjected minority clients to various forms of discrimination, social control, and oppression, establishing client trust with such populations is an ongoing issue (Sue & Sue, 2008; Corey, Corey & Callanan, 2011).

Adlerian psychology is considered to be fundamentally adept in Multicultural Counseling Competencies (MCC) in that its focus is on the individual person from within their social context (Corey, 2009). In addition, Adler believed that contribution to the work life-task was an indication of overall mental health (Carlson, Watts, & Maniacci, 2006). Because racial minority clients disproportionately experience unemployment in the United States the implementation of Adlerian psychology in employment counseling may be ideally suited for successful employment and mental health interventions in that it is both multiculturally competent and grounded in an understanding that life’s tasks are inextricably woven.

The Clients

The United States Small Business Act (2008) defines socially and economically disadvantaged individuals as those who have been subjected to racial or ethnic prejudice
or cultural bias because of their identity as a member of a group and whose ability to compete in the free enterprise system has been impaired due to diminished capital and credit opportunities. Although Black racial minorities account for just 5.4% of Minnesota’s population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012) they are nearly five times more likely to live in poverty as compared with their White counterparts (Kaiser Family Foundation, 2010). In addition, Minneapolis has the highest black-white unemployment ratio in the nation with Black unemployment at three times that of White unemployment (Austin, 2010). Minnesota at large has the highest overall Black unemployment rate in the nation at 27.4 percent (Austin, 2012). Although census data does not break down distinctions between foreign-born and native-born Black Americans there are significant cultural variances to take into account when considering employment and mental health counseling needs.

**Socially and Economically Disadvantage Black Americans**

Because of the encompassing nature of census data and due to the fact that the terms Black American and African American are used interchangeably in the research, these terms will also be used interchangeably for this paper unless otherwise noted by use of the terms *native-born* or *foreign-born* Black American.

As a whole, Black Americans experience both poverty and unemployment at a rate approximately 2 times the national average (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011). Social and institutional constraints contribute to the instability of Black communities. It is estimated that one-third of Black women are victims of blatant sexual abuse by the age of 18 (Townsend, 2008). Black women also have the highest percentage of single female-headed households with children at over 2 times the national average (U.S. Census
Bureau, 2012). Approximately 33% of African American adult males have been incarcerated comprising a total incarceration rate of more than 2 times the national average (Uggen, 2011). Although there are significant numbers of highly successful black men in the United States, Sue and Sue (2008) found that 6 in 10 of those men earning $75,000 or more reported being victims of racism, and that someone close to them had been in jail or murdered.

In the state of Minnesota 48% of Black Americans live in poverty (Kaiser Family Foundation, 2010). Minnesota also has the highest overall Black unemployment rate in the nation at more than 3 times the national average and nearly 4 times the state’s overall average unemployment rate (Austin, 2012). Additionally, Minnesota’s black-white incarceration disparity of 9:1 is among the highest in the United States (Frase, 2011). Research has shown that incarceration histories have a significant impact on an individual’s ability to successfully participate in the labor market, participate in democratic processes such as voting, secure housing, further education, and maintain healthy relationships (Frase, 2011; Massoglia, 2008; Uggen, 2011).

Foreign-born Black Minnesotans

Minnesota’s foreign-born population makes up approximately 7% of the total state population and an estimated 18% of those individuals are native to Africa (Owen et al., 2010). Minnesota is home to African immigrants from 16 different countries with the largest populations originating from Somalia, Ethiopia, Kenya and Liberia (Minnesota Department of Administration, 2012). In the state, immigrant families are 3 times more likely to live in poverty as compared to native-born families (Owen et al., 2010). Nationally, foreign-born Blacks have a higher rate of unemployment at 12.5% versus
9.6% overall unemployment (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2012). Contributing to the economic hardship of foreign-born Black Americans is the fact that professional licenses acquired in their native countries are often not recognized in the United States (Remington, 2008). This prevents many immigrants from obtaining employment or compensation consistent with their actual abilities. According to Owen and colleagues (2010) Minnesota has an unusually large refugee population comprising nearly half of the state’s total immigrant population. Political unrest, famine and natural disasters are primarily responsible for the large number of Africans seeking refugee status in the United States (Remington, 2008).

In terms of the psychological status of African refugees a study by Kroll, Yusuf and Fujiwara (2009) found that male Somali refugees in Minnesota have high rates of psychosis likely due to a history of trauma, age at which trauma occurred, starvation and malnutrition, excessive khat use in adolescents followed by marijuana use as adults and the implications of cultural role expectations of young men (Kroll et al., 2009). Women had high rates of co-morbid depressive and Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) symptoms related to cumulative trauma in the form of exposure to violence, sexual assault, bereavement about the loss or losses of one or many children and stress associated with post-resettlement, acculturation and perceived discrimination. Overall the population was found to be quite disabled with very few having even part-time temporary employment, and no young adults were able to enroll or complete college or technical courses.

Foreign-born members of the United States population face a wide range of barriers including a rudimentary hesitance to seek assistance for fear that this may
indicate an inability to live in the U.S. independently (Sue & Sue, 2008). However, Kroll and colleagues (2009) assert that despite cultural resistance to recognizing mental illness the violence and dislocation of Somali refugees have brought about psychiatric syndromes that cannot be contained, particularly in urban environments or within a family unit already fractured by migration.

**Black Americans and Mental Health Services**

African Americans tend to be one of the most vulnerable and underserved populations in terms of mental health care (Briggs, Briggs, Miller & Paulson, 2011). Mistrust of the system due to well-documented mistreatment of African Americans is partly to blame (Briggs et al., 2011) however, lack of access to the mental health system due to the effects of low wage employment are primarily responsible for the disparity in mental health care among African Americans. In addition, incarceration plays a major role in the accessibility of health care in that drug related felony convictions, for which African Americans are primarily charged (Uggen, 2011) preclude them from obtaining work of any kind much less employment that provides health care benefits (Briggs et al. 2011; Frase, 2011; Massoglia, 2008; Uggen, 2011). The challenges faced by disadvantaged African Americans are significant and no doubt lend themselves to a variety of mental health needs that impact employability.

**Employment Counseling and Assistance Programs in Minnesota**

According to statistics from the Policy, Planning, and Measures Unit (2012) the state of Minnesota offers at least 35 programs aimed at assisting individuals with finding employment through skill training programs and employment counseling services. These services include; career exploration, training in job-seeking and job-keeping skills,
employment supports and/or placement services, assistance completing degrees, diplomas/GED, certificate or other credentials, assistance with independent living, resource referrals, basic skills training, work-based learning and youth support and mentoring services (Policy, Planning and Measures Unit, 2012). Yet Austin (2011) reports that the disparity between black-white unemployment has continued to steadily increase in Minnesota and the nation since even before the recession started in late 2007.

A significant portion of America’s Black population is subject to societal and institutional limitations that contribute to their severe unemployment rates. Without interventions that address the broad nature of the struggles Black Americans experience there is little indication that the statistics will change in the near future. In light of increased population diversification and persistent racial disparities in Minnesota’s unemployment rates, counselors need to implement two trends in employment counseling to effectively serve their clients; These include a holistic approach to career and job exploration and counselors who are skilled in MCC.

A Holistic Approach to Employment Counseling

There is wide consensus that employment counseling can serve as a legitimate access point for deeper therapeutic interventions with racial minority clients (Amundson et al., 1995; Bluestein, 1997; Evans & Larrabee, 2002; Toporek & Flamer, 2009). For refugees in particular, employment counselors are frequently among the first points of contact as they begin to establish themselves in the United States (Amundson et al., 1995). Evans and Larrabee (2002) remark that personal and career concerns have become more difficult to separate and that ignoring social-emotional concerns could hinder a
client’s career development. Working within the constructs of narrative therapy Toporek and Flamer (2009) found that helping a client develop a resume can create opportunity to not only demystify career and counseling services for those clients who are unfamiliar, but also to bridge cultural gaps and give clients an opportunity to identify and address potential workplace discriminations and microaggressions previously experienced.

Renfro-Michel et al. (2009) also found that assessing a client’s attachment orientation could play a major role in enhancing the client’s ability to understand the world of work and enhance their career development and success. In consideration of these findings the author considers a “holistic approach” to employment counseling to include both a broad view of the client’s life and the implementation of broad counseling techniques as appropriate.

The Relevance of Multicultural Counseling Competence

Most contemporary theories of counseling and therapy are grounded in Western assumptions, yet most other world views differ from mainstream U.S. culture (Corey, et al., 2011). As Corey and colleagues (2011) also explain Western counseling practices have often been used to exercise social control and conformity over minority groups rather than psychological well-being. When a minority group has consistently been a victim of discrimination and oppression then it has good reason to be mistrustful (Sue & Sue, 2008). Although census data for the demographic make-up of current employment counselors scarcely exists disparities in overall education attainment (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009) would reasonably indicate that racial minorities are still largely underrepresented in the counseling professions. For these reasons there has been a great deal of emphasis on the importance of implementing MCC into all forms of counseling
work (Amundson, et al., 1995; Blustein, 1997; Evans & Larrabee, 2002; Sue & Sue, 2008; Toporek & Flamer, 2009).

According to Sue and Sue (2008) MCC include three primary categories of knowledge and understanding; a) counselor awareness of own assumptions, values and biases, b) understanding the worldview of culturally diverse clients, and c) development of appropriate intervention strategies and techniques (pp. 44-45). The basic model has been greatly elaborated by the Association for Multicultural Counseling and Development (AMCD) (Arredondo, Toporek, Brown, Janet Sanchez, Locke, Joe Sanchez, & Stadler, 1996). Some of these expansions include recommendations for counselors to seek out social opportunities to become involved in the client cultures they serve in addition to developing skills for institutional interventions on behalf of their clients (Arredondo et. al, 1996). A complete exploration of MCC exceeds the scope of this paper however they can be reviewed at the AMCD web site located at www.amcdaca.org.

**Adlerian Psychology**

Because of the extraordinary cultural differences that both socioeconomic status and race impart, counselors and therapists working within these populations must develop skills that reach beyond clinical pragmatism in order be effective in helping their clients. Adlerian Psychology is a time-limited, present and future oriented, directive, integrative and eclectic, socially embedded theory that recognizes the individual nature of private logic and goal orientation (Carlson et al., 2006). Adlerian Psychology, also known as Individual Psychology, operates from the perspective that a person is an indivisible unit and must be understood in his or her totality (Mosak and Maniacci, 1999). It is a social
psychology that attempts to see and understand an individual from within his or her social context (Stein & Stein, 2012).

The central concept of Adlerian Psychology is *Gemeinschaftsgefühl* or social interest (Stein & Stein, 2012). The theory is that a feeling of interconnectedness among people is essential for both social living and personal development. Adler reasoned that because individuals are born as social beings they could only develop their potential if they have an interest in life, which in turn means an interest in each other (Stein, 2006).

Adler alleged that there were three life-tasks a person must master in order to be mentally healthy including social relationships, love-intimacy, and work (Carlson et al. 2006). Adler contended that each life-task was an extension of the others and that none of the tasks or problems occurs by chance (Stein, 2006). In regard to the social relationships task, Adler determined that human beings needed to find cooperative ways to behave with and toward each other as a matter of basic survival (Stein, 2006). The love-intimacy task is how human beings maintain their fundamental existence. The task of work furthered the other tasks in that human beings must work in order to continue to exist. Therefore Adler concluded that contributing useful work is not a personal task but something we do for all mankind.

**Adlerian Therapy as Multiculturally Competent**

Corey (2009) suggests that Adler introduced concepts with multicultural implications long before multicultural competence was regarded as necessary for proficient counseling. Included among these ideas were the importance of cultural context, 2) focus on health versus pathology, 3) life and people as holistic,
4) understanding individual goals and purposes, 5) freedom within societal constraints or soft determinism and, 6) a focus on prevention and proactive approaches to dealing with problems.

There is considerable evidence that issues of race and racism continue to be prevalent in the United States at both the societal and institutional levels, which adversely affect Black Americans (Massoglia, 2008; Sue & Sue, 2008; Uggen, 2011). Adler directly addressed the issue of racial prejudice suggesting that it is one of three great troubles including war and capital punishment that damage human beings and their development (Stein, 2006). Adler proposed that growing up in a hostile world makes a person unable, or scarcely able to develop a healthy degree of cooperation and contribution (Stein, 2006). In addition, Adler was one of the first theorists to publicly advocate for the equality of women and to recognize the social influences on the constructs of femininity and masculinity (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1956; Carlson et al., 2006; Corey, 2009). Although it is a basic tenant of Individual Psychology to see and understand a person from within his or her social context it was Adler’s awareness and acknowledgement of the surrounding world that made his philosophy multiculturally competent at a foundational level.

**Adlerian Theory in Employment Counseling**

Although Adler is not specifically credited with having influenced some of the therapies currently gaining recognition in employment counseling practices, the significant similarities are well documented by both Adlerians and non-Adlerians alike (Corey, 2009). For example, Bezanson (2004) discusses the beneficial applications of solution-focused therapy in employment counseling including the emphasis on 1)
exploring personal meaning, 2) establishing a future-oriented focus and 3) empowering the client through exploration of client strengths and establishing an egalitarian counselor/client alliance (pp 189-190). Each of these strategies is a core element of Adlerian theory and practice (Carlson et al., 2006; Corey, 2009; Mosak & Maniacci, 1999, Stein, 2012). Because access to mental health care is limited for African Americans in poverty any opportunity to assist such clients should be approached as the only opportunity. Therefore it is important that therapists develop culturally competent brief therapy strategies to maximize therapeutic efficacy. Adlerian Therapy has been referred to as the first brief therapy (Carlson et al., 2006) further reinforcing its suitability as the framework for cross-cultural interventions. In addition, Solution Focused Brief Therapy (SFBT) interventions include strategies specifically aimed at working with clients who have offender histories and are subject to mandated counseling requirements (Berg, n.d.). This is an important consideration for the disproportionate number of African Americans in contact with the correctional system.

Narrative Therapy also shares Adlerian characteristics (Carlson et al., 2006). In their use of Narrative Therapy Toporek & Flamer (2009) determined that the style was effective in employment counseling due to its ability to 1) discover extensive client information in a short amount of time, 2) provide the client a supportive atmosphere to deconstruct and reconstruct life stories, and 3) potentially discover and address social justice issues a client may have experienced. Each of these priorities operates in parallel to Adlerian principles (Carlson et al., 2006; Corey, 2009; Mosak & Maniacci, 1999, Stein, 2012). Feminist theory also recognizes the importance of empowerment and the influence of social constraints on individual well-being and economic success. As such,
the practice of Feminist Therapy is founded on the idea that *the personal is political* and an active *commitment to social change* is key to successful therapeutic intervention (Corey, 2009).

Additional approaches in employment counseling that reflect Adlerian concepts include the implementation of attachment theory and how childhood relationships influence adult interaction patterns (Renfro-Michel et al., 2009). This idea closely resembles Adler’s work with birth order and family constellations (Shulman & Mosak, 1988). In addition Blustein (1997) discusses in detail the interconnectedness of career in relation to additional life roles. The idea of interconnectedness or wholeness of the individual and their experiences is of course an underlying assumption and guiding principle in Adlerian theory.

**Introduction to the Adlerian Resume**

Because the dominant culture has come to regard employment as a measure of achievement rather than a basic building block in survival, alternative or underlying motivations for finding employment can be overlooked in employment counseling. For African Americans struggling with poverty finding a job is not about making the house payment or saving for the next vacation as such luxuries are rarely accounted for within this population. Instead basic medical needs, transportation and child care top the priority list (Kim, 2009). Yet even within the realm of basic needs the underlying impetus for employment goals may only be manifest by the regulations of imposing institutions such as corrections or welfare. Ideas of a better future are masked by the necessities of the moment. Generational poverty makes the ability to even conceive of an alternative future unlikely (Pfarr, 2011). Consequently, people in poverty tend to seek jobs that are short-
term in nature but will satisfy immediate needs. Careers, largely characterized by long-term future oriented investments including education, are considered lavishness outside of the struggling client’s reach if such a concept is even considered at all (Pfarr, 2011).

For the reason that the need to support oneself is universal, employment counseling and resume development can serve as an ideal place to provide broader meaning to the concept of employment. Exploration of what Adler called soft determinism or choices within limits in combination with a strong emphasis on encouragement and social interest in resume development can assist clients in achieving employment goals that truly can improve their overall lives.

Adlerian theory attempts to give clients insight by helping them recognize how their movements affect the pursuit of their ultimate personal goal. The same phenomenon exists on a smaller scale within the pursuit of each of our seemingly smaller intentions. Employment objectives serve as one such example of these small-scale pursuits. Viewing employment as a building block for a child’s future, the key to healthcare for a sick loved one, or a stepping stone out of despair for one’s culture or community instead of merely satisfying a rent or parole requirement, may generate the motivation that helps a client maintain long-term employment. Such a perspective can serve as the catalyst for additional healthy behavioral changes including constructive confrontation and management of addictions, relational problems, societal constraints, education and other barriers to personal growth. Destructive mentalities of unworthiness and hopelessness can be replaced by positive self-images grounded in a sense of self-esteem and personal accountability stemming from personal growth and the ability to contribute to family and community.
Implementation of the Adlerian Resume

Upon first meeting with clients the author offered a business card identifying her position as “Employment and Family Counselor.” The author then explained that her job was to work for the client assisting in their employment pursuits in whatever way they needed. This included identifying skills, resume writing, interview coaching and assistance with on-line job searches. The author distinctly explained that any suggestions or ideas for the client’s employment needs were merely suggestions and that the client should feel free to accept or reject these ideas as they determine appropriate. The client was also informed that the author was a therapy student and could assist the client with additional personal concerns if they should choose.

A tangible structure for applying various Adlerian principles throughout resume development began to take shape based on the frequency in which clients utilized the resume building opportunity to also explore deeper therapeutic topics as they pertain to their broader life experiences. These transitions were identified as those discussions that moved to explore:

- Issues with self-esteem or self-worth as it pertains to employability and other life roles.
- Concerns about race or gender and their effect on employment or lifestyle.
- The impact of a mental health diagnosis or addiction on employability and personal life.
- Discussion about how an offender history has impacted employment goals and personal relationships,
• Discussion about how family responsibilities/parenthood have impacted employability.

• Exploration of patterns of behavior or attitudes that have adversely affected long-term employment histories.

• Exploration of future career goals and the creation of a start-up plan for achievement.

• Establishing motivation for long-term employment success.

• General concerns about the lagging economy and its impact on personal security.

• Exploration of ways to become socially involved and the impact social interest has on overall well-being.

Because the Adlerian Resume is designed to be both an aid in career development and a tool for potential therapeutic interventions, client sessions may lend themselves to the development of two separate but entirely correlated resumes. The first of these reveal the value of the client as a human being. The second resume demonstrates how the client’s particular characteristics may be applied to an employment position. The latter is what would be understood as a standard resume.

**The Adlerian Resume**

The Adlerian Resume operates from within the framework of a standard resume format highlighting 8 key areas including 1. objective, 2. qualification highlights, 3. additional skills/abilities, 4. work history 5. community involvement 6. awards & achievements 7. hobbies & interests and, 8. education. The tool is ideally suited for individuals with limited work history or education or individuals currently experiencing a major life transition. The primary focus is to encourage clients to believe in their own
employability by helping them recognize and have confidence in their existing skill sets and general self-worth. Through a series of Socratic questions and shared storytelling, client and therapist work in partnership to discover client strengths as both an employee and a person. In this way a shared language is identified and utilized in a manner that is inviting to the client and insightful to both client and counselor.

Within each of the 8 resume areas are specific therapeutic focuses. 

*Encouragement* and *social interest* are underlying goals for all categories of the resume although they are more central to the discussion in some areas versus others. This outline highlights the Adlerian techniques most commonly used by the author at various stages of resume development. Other variations are certainly possible and per Adlerian practice application of techniques should maintain *flexibility* in order to adequately address the unique needs of the individual.

**Contact Information**

Although general identifying information such as the applicant’s name, address and contact information appear to serve a basic function in resume development they can also provide critical insight regarding the client’s current life situation and self-perception. The name the client chooses can lead to information regarding culture, heritage, or an understanding about the client’s interpretation of respect or success. The choice to use a formal name such as Thomas instead of Tom or the decision to exclude a name that is not traditionally Western are two occasions which could potentially illustrate this point. Does the client believe that a formal name sounds more credible? Does the client fear a non-Western name may create a negative bias? Investigation of such possibilities can serve as an immediate doorway into the client’s worldview or what
Adler referred to as their schema of apperception. Exhibiting genuine interest in the client’s choice of name also provides an opportunity to begin establishing an alliance with the client. Adler considered the relationship between client and counselor to be of principal importance in effective therapeutic intervention (Corey, 2009).

Gathering contact information such as a living address, phone number or e-mail address immediately offer the counselor insight into the extent to which the client may be coping with barriers associated with basic resources. Is the address a house, apartment, shelter or PO box? Does the client have access to phone service or computer based technology? Are they comfortable using e-mail or other computer related tools in their job search? If not, how will this affect their ability to find and maintain work? Contact information provides the counselor a first glance at the environment in which the client functions. Carefully attending to this kind of environmental information is what characterizes Adlerian psychology as a social field theory (Mosak & Maniacci, 1999).

**Objective**

The kind of position a client is in search of is of secondary importance in understanding their objective for seeking to work at all. Adler stated “We can never tell what actions will characterize individuals if we know only from where they came. But if we know where they are going we can predict their steps toward their objective” (Stein, 2004). Only when the counselor and more significantly, the client, come to understand the underlying motivations for finding employment can successful vocational counseling occur. Choice of occupation then is one of the more apparent ways we move toward what Adler explained as our final fictional life goal or our guiding self-ideal (Corey, 2009).
Mosak and Maniaci (1999) suggested that *final fictional goals* are differentiated along two dimensions: concrete versus fictional and long-range versus short-range. Fictional goals are subjective and state what must be achieved such as money, power appearances and so forth. Because significance can be achieved in other ways these are considered fictional goals (Mosak & Maniaci, 1999). Clients who lack basic resources are not future oriented in their thinking. They make decisions in the moment based on a survival mentality (Pfarr, 2011) therefore such clients may view work as simply a method by which to satisfy short-term needs. Applying Adler’s *Miracle Question* affords the opportunity to help clients consider how obtaining a particular position may affect their lives. How will your life be different if you are offered this job? Will it pay this months rent? Satisfy a condition of release? Satisfy a condition for receiving financial assistance? Provide socialization? Pay for childcare or other child related needs? Give the client a sense of purpose? Pay for school? Assist with medical bills? Allow the client to help a family member or friend? Understanding the broader meaning of finding and maintaining a job enables clients to look toward how steady employment impacts their future and helps to establish sound motivations for long-term employment success.

One of the goals of Adlerian therapists is to help clients better understand, challenge and change their life story (Corey, 2009). Employment counseling may be the first occasion where a client has been asked to consider their future. Therefore it is important to continually find opportunities to help clients develop a future story on which to base their decisions. Discussion of the objective can be aided by the implementation of such Adlerian therapeutic techniques as *role-playing* and *guided imagery* specifically in the form of mock interview questions. Adlerians may also augment such an interview by
asking clients to describe *three wishes* for their future to increase understanding of the client’s goals. In addition, by affording clients the opportunity to define their reasons for seeking a position the counselor can obtain their first glimpse of the client’s level of *social interest* as it pertains to the work life-task.

Because a lack of education can serve to hinder basic comprehension clients in disadvantaged circumstances may not truly understand the position for which they are applying. Helping bridge this gap in knowledge can serve to *encourage* clients through empowerment in four ways including: 1) saving valuable job-search time if the client is not qualified and/or interested in the actual position, 2) sparing the client *discouragement* which can result from not receiving a call on a position for which an applicant thought they were qualified 3) providing an opportunity to discuss how the client could become eligible for such a position 4) adding to the client’s general vocabulary, knowledge-base and general ability to sell themselves to employers. In addition, when clients are educated about the position for which they are applying this provides the counselor an opportunity to strengthen client-counselor *alliance* through genuine inquiry. When a counselor seeks the client’s expertise in understanding the position for which the counselor is helping the client apply, then an authentic sense of *egalitarianism* can further develop.

The kind of position an applicant seeks begins to provide insight into the client’s sense of *striving*. Discussions about a work objective can lead to remarks about how a type of work is “all I know” or “all I can expect in my situation.” These statements are rooted in *discouragement*, which Adlerians consider to be the foundation of poor social functioning (Corey, 2009). Clients may also hint at expectations for income or positions in a particular industry based on their previous experiences or desire to work. At this
juncture, an understanding of the clients' mistaken beliefs, faulty assumptions, guiding self-ideal and goals of perfection start to become visible in concrete ways. This is where the counselor begins to identify which client thought processes may need to be challenged as resume development continues.

Closely associated with the client’s sense of striving is the degree to which a client identifies with gender role socialization or what Adler explained as the masculine protest (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1957). When clients are asked about what draws them to a certain field, opportunities based on gender or gender related experience might surface in the discussion. Stay-at-home mothers returning to the work force may only consider careers in care giving as a reasonable re-entry point based on their parenting experience. Conversely male clients may reject care-giving roles based on cultural expectations and social norms. A thorough understanding of the employment objective speaks to far more than just the kind of position for which a person may be applying. It also lends itself to greater understanding of the client’s social embeddeness and how that plays into their personality and employment objectives.

According to Ansbacher and Ansbacher, (1957) Adler described four personality types to aid in understanding individual human behaviors. Three types including the ruling type, the getting type and the avoiding type are not prepared to adequately cope with life’s problems, including those of employment (Ansbacher and Ansbacher, 1957). These three types revolve around social problems and lack the ability to cooperate and to contribute. The fourth type is what Adler called the socially useful type. This personality is grounded in cooperation, contribution, and a certain degree of activity used for the benefit of others. Although Adler identified the personality types he always held that
clients must always be considered as individuals and that their behavior needs to be understood from within the client’s unique experiences. Understanding soft determinism, or choice within limits was one of the ways Adler illustrated this point. A client who expresses a dominant employment goal of excessive income and power may appear to be consistent with a criminal history of theft and assault. This person may initially come into view as a ruling or getting type. Yet if it is understood that this same client has never known what it means to have their basic needs met then money and power may be better understood as a desire for basic personal security. Therefore when helping clients establish employment objectives based on personality characteristics it is vital to investigate how those traits may shift to varying degrees under different circumstances.

**Qualification Highlights**

In terms of resume functionality the Qualification Highlights section makes direct connections between the demands of the position sought and the degree to which the applicant’s experiences satisfy the stated requirements. Discussion of a client’s qualifications provides ample opportunity to encourage the client as you explore the opinion they have of their own skills and circumstances, or what Adler would call their psychology of use (Mosak & Maniacci, 1999). This process can also be aided through the use of Socratic questions because Socratic questioning places the responsibility for conclusions and decisions in the hands of the client (Stein, 2012).

In this section counselors have a unique occasion to encourage clients by affording space to showcase expertise in their work-based experiences. Did you have any responsibilities for other people or for products? What was the most difficult part of your job? What did you enjoy the most? Did you ever have to maintain a schedule? Have you
ever trained anyone else in how to do something? In answering such questions clients come to identify components of their workplace value and proficiency. This in turn contributes to a strengthening client-counselor alliance by promoting egalitarianism.

Questions aimed at uncovering a client’s employment associated strengths are particularly encouraging when assisting stay-at-home parents or person’s with offender histories as these individuals often lack social connections that reinforce positive efforts. In addition, clients in these situations who are either returning to the workforce or just entering it for the first time, often lack a basic understanding of the kinds of skills and behaviors considered valuable in a workplace setting.

Once the client has described some of their employment qualifications the counselor is able to start making the connection between the demands of managing a household and those of managing an office, warehouse or similar setting. This kind of reorientation could give a client the confidence they need to apply for a job for which they did not realize they were already qualified. For example, clients who have recently been released by corrections may also underestimate the workplace value of skills they employed in handling their prison-based experiences. Patience, optimism, the ability to work with diverse personalities or to maintain focus in difficult circumstances are skills and experiences worth considering in resume development. Refugees who have struggled to escape extraordinarily oppressive circumstances in an effort to build a new and better future have likely already demonstrated resilience, determination, intelligence and commitment. Finding opportunities to identify talents and skills used to navigate otherwise negative situations not only adds to the client’s resume but may also serve to increase a sense of self-worth amid what may otherwise be considered a period only
characterized by indignity. The client’s perception of their own abilities exemplifies their *psychology of use*.

There are three areas of focus in assessing a client’s *psychology of use* including memory, emotions, and cognitive processes (Mosak & Maniacci, 2009). One cognitive process vital to employability is what Adler referred to as *common sense or private logic* whereby individual perceptions have a high degree of overlap with those of other people (Mosak and Maniacci, 1999). In terms of how *common sense* affects employability it can be argued that a high overlap in perception contributes to an understanding of shared goals and effective collaboration in achieving those goals.

*Socratic questioning* can aid in the assessment of a client’s level of *common sense* as it pertains to employability in a given industry. How does the client define multitasking and can they give an example of a situation in which they did so effectively? What does the client consider to be stressful? What would they do to handle stress productively? How does the client characterize proficiency and would this match the employers needs? If the client has a physical disability how do they think it will impact their ability to perform the job duties described? Does the client like working with others? Could they be considered a team player? The manner in which a client explains their perception of their qualifying experiences provides a window into their level of employability as it pertains to their understanding of the work-task.

Throughout resume development *role-playing and guided imagery* in the form of mock-interview questions can provide insight to both client and counselor about the applicability of various work-related experiences and overall suitability of a given occupation. You say you have experience successfully overseeing high volume
inventories. Can you describe what kind of products you maintained and how you dealt with a supply shortfall? How would you explain the situation to our customers? You describe yourself as skilled in finding solutions for dissatisfied customers. Our return policy clearly states that a receipt is required for returns or exchanges. How would you handle a situation in which an angry customer attempted to return an open product without a receipt? What would you do if they started to yell at you? A counselor could use a mock-interview to help the client better understand how they would feel in a given scenario and how those feelings may impact their ability to deal with the situation.

Clients may express a desire to overcome negative emotions related to a work-place situation in which case deeper therapeutic interventions may begin to take place.

The Qualifications Highlights section is not only a time to build self-esteem but also provide insight into the limits of reality. Adler often challenged skewed client perceptions by *spitting in the soup* which could be understood as presenting to the client the ways in which what they say and what they do are not aligned thereby making use of their distortions less appetizing (Carlson et al., 2006). Applying this technique in a resume framework offers a unique advantage to therapists and counselors in that the challenge may be understood as a shortfall in the function of a job rather than the discernment of the individual counselor. This provides a safe space to explore mistaken beliefs without sacrificing the client-counselor relationship. Throughout this section counselors may also employ *reorientation* and *reeducation* to assist clients in discovering qualification discrepancies or congruencies alike.
**Additional Skills and Abilities**

Individual Psychology operates from the standpoint that all people have potential for talent but that it must be developed and trained (Stein, 2004). Adler believed that *talent is not inherited* and the potential for any individual is not fixed (Stein, 2004). Adler also argued that individuals born to disadvantaged actually have an advantage because they have had to learn to adjust to accomplish the same tasks that come easily for others. Still, client’s who lack experiences fitting under a qualification highlights section, are in particular need of encouragement for the simple reason that one cannot learn to adjust if the opportunity is not there to begin with.

There are many scenarios in which a person may lack qualifying work experiences. Those clients most in need of discovering their hidden talents may include youth who have not yet had work experience, persons with offender histories, parents who have primarily worked within the home, individual’s who have struggled with addiction or were otherwise unable to perform well in their previous job duties and immigrants whose work experience may not readily resemble American workforce needs. For these reasons it is important to help clients explore additional life skills they may have developed within the other life-tasks that could be applicable to their employment goals. Investigation of the *family of origin* and the development of a *genogram* can be particularly useful at this stage of Adlerian resume development.

Adlerians view a person’s position within the family of origin as the first social role we experience and how a person responds to the family environment is indicative of how they will respond in other social roles throughout their life (Shulman & Mosak, 1988). How we chose to interact with our family and how we perceive our family’s
interactions with others and ourselves are extensions of how we interact in other cooperative environments. This makes the family of origin an ideal place for a client and therapist to uncover hidden skills and abilities that may serve them in obtaining their employment goals. The people who maintain the peace, care for siblings, cook meals, find social opportunities, finish school despite a lack of support, avoid addiction in the face of negative family patterns, assist struggling parents or even survive abusive situations have all developed particular skills that can be applied in other areas of their lives including employment. Base-line questions pertaining to relationships within the family of origin can be revealing. Who was your favorite sibling and why? Who was responsible for making dinner? Did you argue with each other? How did arguments typically get settled? What were the rules of the house? Although employment-counseling sessions do not often lend themselves to completion of a full lifestyle assessment, brief examination of family relationships can still provide valuable information about employment and other broader life skills.

Exploration of additional skills and abilities can also be aided by Adler’s use of early recollections in assisting clients with entry-level resumes. What a person remembers about the dynamics of family relationships and how they describe the manner in which they handled these demands speaks to their current level of functioning (Mosak & Di Pietro, 2006). This information in turn can aid in assessment of a client’s compatibility with a particular position. Early memories also serve as a clue to how a client employs psychological defenses, or what Adlerians understand as placing blame for their problems (Mosak & Maniacci, 1999). Is the client anxious about the memory of a work experience or does it invigorate them? Is the client’s answer indicative of their
ability to work under pressure? Did an experience of discrimination prompt the client to take action to improve a situation? Could this qualify the client as pro-active? Does the client value their time as a stay-at-home parent? Were they able to find opportunities for self-improvement while incarcerated? Maybe dedication or optimism could be considered valid selling points for a particular position. In keeping with Adler’s belief that everyone has talents to share, the Adlerian Resume strives to recognize how daily life experiences can demonstrate talents that translate into employability in addition to broader tasks.

**Work History**

The work history section of a resume can be anxiety inducing for those with minimal work experience or unexplained gaps in their work histories. In terms of counseling and therapy this section of a resume is perhaps the most beneficial because of its ability to reveal life patterns or what Adler referred to as the *style of life*. Adler believed that we ordered our experiences in a future focused manner that was self-selected, unified our personalities and gave direction to our life stories (Disque & Bitter, 1998). According to Pfarr (2011) people in disadvantaged situations rarely have a notion about a future life story, as thinking is orientated to the immediate situation as a function of survival. Pfarr (2011) also contends that people with low levels of education are more likely to share information in a casual storytelling manner rather than with formal chronology. Work histories provide an outline from which clients can share their employment stories including the personal and social obstacles that may have contributed to an inability to maintain on-going employment. For these reasons storytelling becomes
the primary vehicle for increased understanding of the client’s work experience in resume development.

*Patterns of behavior* become evident in the length of time a client stayed at a job and the reasons for discontinuing work. Discussions about what a client may or may not have appreciated at any particular work place are keys to personality, relational style, talents, and barriers. Conversations about why a client left a particular job can help a counselor understand a client’s schema of apperception and mistaken beliefs. Was employment ended voluntary or by termination? How does the client feel about the reason(s) for ending employment with a company? The length of time spent at each location reveals possible strengths or weakness in various occupations. Attitudes about the work environment, loyalty, co-workers and management style may also be revealed. Gaps in work history create opportunities to discuss potential personal struggles such as a period of lay-off, illness in the family, conflicts with the law or other possible relational concerns. Gaps could also indicate other life occurrences such as time spent in school, the birth of a new child or other significant event. The locations of previous employers may open the door to stories about a life of movement or stagnation. All of this information in turn has the potential to become a conversation about the parameters of *choice, environment,* and *soft determinism*.

Further characteristics of *personality type* are also revealed in the patterns of work history. Recognizing whether employment motivations revolve around a sense of having, controlling, belonging, or just surviving is indicative of the client’s level of cooperation and contribution. Does the client take pride in their work or just seek to get the job done? Does the client believe finding a job should require effort or should a job be provided to
them for a particular reason? Has organ jargon, the confusion of mental and physical symptoms, come into play or is there a verifiable physical concern that limits the client’s employment success? Does the client sincerely want to find work but is limited by societal constraints that truly reach beyond their control? How much responsibility does the client accept for his or her own well-being? Does the client believe in Adler’s understanding of the creative self and that we are both the artist and the painting of our lives or are these considered entirely separate entities? How the client describes their work history is key to understanding their present overall functioning.

**Achievements**

Adler stated that individuals only attain truly outstanding achievement by struggling with their inner or external difficulties (Stein, 2003). He also believed a striving for significance, in addition to a sense of belonging and safety, underscore all human motivations. There are two primary therapeutic focuses in this section. The first is to encourage the client by helping them to recognize their own accomplishments. The second is to gain an understanding of what the client considers worthy of recognition in themself and in others.

Adler believed misbehavior was rooted in discouragement. Here, mistaken ideas about personal self-worth can be explored and the client can be reoriented in their understanding of personal value. In this section the clients are given the opportunity to view their own achievements as noteworthy even if they have not been highly regarded by others. Some of these may include tangible awards such as an “employee of the month” recognition. Others may include self-taught skills such as learning a new language, cooking, or creating a more efficient process at a workplace.
The disadvantages associated with poverty can lend to an inability to obtain traditionally recognized achievements. For this reason the discovery of more covert accomplishments may prove to be the most beneficial in terms of understanding both employment goals and broader therapeutic focuses. Seemingly subtle accomplishments that have been entirely overlooked can in fact have extraordinary significance. Parenting five children, remaining sober, assisting a family member in need, struggles against an oppressive nation, relocating to an entirely different country and culture are all accomplishments that help identify individual strengths such as patience and perseverance. Additionally, discussions about the realities of soft determinism and its relationship to achievement can also be used to motivate clients to exercise social interest by actively participating in the promotion of change on a societal level.

Although not all personal achievements are suitable for a formal work resume, recognizing their private worth can provide the client with a sense of self-esteem and confidence that translates into employability. This is a chance for clients to simply discuss or discover something about themselves for which they can be proud. In addition, gaining a new sense of self-worth may also serve to help clients become better able to appreciate the contributions of others. This kind of outward admiration potentially translates into greater suitability for positions demanding a high degree of cooperation among team-members. Regardless of how directly applicable an achievement may be to a given position it is imperative that clients develop an awareness of their own successes in order to establish a foundation of needed confidence, accountability and usefulness as an employee and a person.
Community/Volunteer

In keeping with the hallmark of Individual Psychology the volunteer and community section of the Adlerian Resume specifically seeks to discover the client’s level of Gemeinschaftsgefühl or social interest. Similar to the awards and achievements section of the resume, exploration of a client’s community involvement aims to help clients understand for themselves the ways in which they choose to participate in the world around them. This section also affords the opportunity for the counselor to introduce and extrapolate on areas in which choice is available in an effort to further establish a sense of empowerment and accountability. Additionally, consideration of community involvement is another way to illustrate how we are indeed both the artist and painter of our own lives.

Regarding the practical application of this section in resume development and employment searches the volunteer and community section serves two purposes. First, it provides clients with limited work histories an additional opportunity to showcase their positive contributions to a potential employer. Although this may be thought of as space filler in an otherwise lacking resume the reality is that employers are increasingly interested in evidence of balance in a person’s life including concern for society’s broader issues (La Follette School of Public Affairs, 2012). Second, active involvement in the community on any level lends itself to networking opportunities that could lead to employment possibilities. In this way client’s can be introduced to the benefits of social interest as they begin to understand the ways in which society can give back.

Because community involvement is often associated with religious organizations addressing this space within the resume may generate discussion about a client’s sense of
spiritual connectedness or spirituality. Modern Adlerians, in addition to other contemporary schools of psychotherapy, have come to acknowledge the relevance of spirituality in overall mental health (Carlson, et. al., 2006). Adlerians refer to this dimension of personal functioning as the *spiritual life-task*. Religious ideologies, and the degree to which a client associates with those ideologies, may offer insight regarding underlying motivations and movements in both employment goals and broader life decisions (Carlson, et. al., 2006). On its most essential level the community and volunteer section is a discussion about a person’s sense of *belonging*, which Adler considered to be, the most basic of our inner drives (Corey, 2009).

**Hobbies and Interests**

Adler noted that occupational interest coincides with occupational aptitude (Stein, 2003). For this reason exploration of a client’s hobbies and interests is beneficial on two levels. First, helping a client recognize and learn to express their points of interest may provide direction for a lasting career choice. Second, the client’s ability to articulate their passions in a way that is meaningful to a potential employer may provide them with the advantage of a successful interview.

From a therapeutic perspective the exploration of hobbies and interests often affords a client an opportunity to reconnect with a more positive time in their life. Clients who have been disconnected from personal pursuits due to circumstances such as parenting obligations or periods of incarceration may have lost sight of the things that have previously brought them a sense of contentment or fulfillment. This is an occasion to help the client become reintroduced to positive pastimes that may again serve them well in the present. Use of Adler’s *early recollections* often proves helpful in this
endeavor. Although it is not out of the question to simply use this section on a resume to help build an otherwise deficient presentation, the greater value lies in the ability to help clients further establish a sense of confidence and self-esteem through encouragement and personal insight.

**Education**

Although work experience bears significant weight in hiring decisions, education and training are usually considered the most significant qualifying factors (La Follette School of Public Affairs, 2012). Racial minorities disproportionately experience socioeconomic disadvantages and correspondingly low levels of education. For this reason counselors would do well by their clients to commend any level of academic achievement in an effort to encourage interest in further learning. Identifying such a focus or interest among people existing within the limitations of a survival mentality may also be considered a personal strength worthy of praise. Clients who have taken coursework while incarcerated or raising a family may particularly benefit from the counselor’s admiration as accolades for self-improvement efforts such as education are scarcely available in socially isolating circumstances. Helping clients grasp how their actions for self-improvement may also positively impact those around them can also be very motivating and encouraging. For example, helping a mother to understand how her own level of education directly impacts her children’s educational success (Payne, 2005). This kind of relational thinking is the essence of social interest.

Conversations that stem from the education section afford another opportunity to engage the client in Adler’s notion of the creative self and people as both the artist and the painting of their own lives. Helping professionals need to be aware that clients who
determine they are ready to consider pursuing more education may need additional assistance in making it happen. Therapists and counselors who desire to help clients in this way should be ready to play the role of advocate and mentor which could mean assisting in anything from navigating a school’s web-site to helping the client formulate an admission essay.

The therapeutic benefit of this kind of assistance and advocacy has many levels when viewed from an Adlerian perspective. First, the counselor exceeding the client’s expectations reinforces the client’s belief in their abilities and personal value. Additionally, taking extra steps to assist the client in making changes provides the opportunity to model the power and importance of social interest. This kind of active real world help also provides a chance to demonstrate the efficacy of active movement toward a goal. Finally, client’s can gain a greater sense of empowerment as they improve their ability to navigate the educational system independently and pursue measurable steps in altering their life’s course.
The Adlerian Resume Overview

Name (1st indication of the clients schema of apperception, social environment, opportunity to begin establishing alliance through genuine interest)
Address (1st indicator of available resources and soft determinism)
Phone (indicator of available resources)
e-mail address (indicator of available resources & job related skill sets)

OBJECTIVE: Position for which you are applying:

Adler:
- Choice
- Goal Orientation
- Guiding Self Ideal
- Miracle Question
- Role Playing/Guided Imagery
- Three Wishes
- Social Interest
- Encouragement
- Degree of Discouragement
- Alliance through Egalitarianism
- Striving
- Mistaken Beliefs/Faulty Assumptions
- Spitting in the Soup
- Masculine Protest
- Social Embeddedness
- Soft Determinism

Complementary Theories: Solution Focused Brief Therapy (SFBT)
- Social Constructionist Theory
- Motivational Interviewing (MI)

QUALIFICATION HIGHLIGHTS: Examples of times you have successfully used the skills employers are seeking.

Adler:
- Encouragement
- Socratic Questioning
- Psychology of Use
- Reorientation/Reeducation
- Common Sense
- Spitting in the Soup
- Alliance Through Egalitarianism
- Role playing/Guided Imagery
- Mistaken Beliefs
Complementary Theories: Solution Focused Brief Therapy
Cognitive Behavioral Therapy
Family Systems Theory

**ADDITIONAL SKILLS/ABILITIES:** Emphasize additional transferable work skills and experiences.

Adler:
- Talent is Developed not Trained and Potential is not Fixed.
- Psychology of Use
- Encouragement through Insight
- Family of Origin
- Genogram
- Early Recollections
- Modest Attitude Change/Behavioral Change
- Reorientation and Reeducation

Complementary Theories: Cognitive Behavioral Therapy
- Attachment Theory
- Motivational Interviewing (MI)

**WORK HISTORY:** Chronological listing of previous employment positions held.

Adler:
- Style of Life
- Schema of Apperception
- Mistaken Beliefs
- Soft Determinism
- Choice
- Personality Types
- Patterns of Behavior
- Cooperation and Contribution
- Organ Jargon
- Creative Self/Artist and the Painting

Complementary Theories: Narrative Therapy
- Systems Theory
- Social Constructionist Theory

**AWARDS/ACHIEVEMENTS:** Showcase additional strengths as they pertain to employment.

Adler:
- Encouragement
- Degree of Discouragement
- Reorientation/Reeducation
Soft Determinism
Social Interest
Cooperation and Contribution
Belonging, Safety, Significance

Complementary Theories: Social Constructionist Theory
Cognitive Behavioral Therapy
Feminist Therapy
Motivational Interviewing (MI)

COMMUNITY/VOLUNTEER: Showcase personality and priorities. Evidence of community mindedness and personal balance.

Adler:
Gemeinschaftsgefühl or Social Interest
Belonging
Social Activism
Concrete steps to Improve Relationships
Spiritual Task/Family Task/Self Task
Cooperation
Creative Self

Complementary Theories: Cognitive Behavioral Therapy
Feminist Therapy

HOBBIES/INTERESTS: Showcase personality and priorities. Evidence of personal and social balance.

Adler:
Personal Insight
Social Embeddedness
Spiritual Task/Family Task/Self Task
Early Recollections

Complementary Theories: Feminist Therapy

EDUCATION: Explanation of applicable training.

Adler:
Reorientation and Reeducation
Alliance through Egalitarianism
Encouragement
Creative Self/Artist and the Painting
Empowerment
Concrete Steps toward Change
Complementary Theories: Cognitive Behavioral Therapy
Social Constructionist Theory
Feminist Therapy
Sample Adlerian Resumes

Adlerian Resume for a Home Maker (Jennifer)

Fictional Client Background: Jennifer is 33 year-old single mother of 5 children ages 6, 8, 9, 12 and 15 years. Having become pregnant at the age of 17 Jennifer dropped out of high school, married the father of her child and remained an at-home parent throughout the growth of their family. The couple lived paycheck to paycheck and just two years after the birth of their youngest child, Jennifer and her husband divorced creating a dire financial situation for Jennifer as a single parent without a work history or formal training of any kind. Relying on minimal child support from her ex-husband and some welfare assistance Jennifer managed to keep the family afloat over the past 3 years. Now that all of the children are in school Jennifer is seeking employment to improve her family’s circumstances.

Jennifer’s Personal Resume:

OBJECTIVE: Find a position that will increase personal financial security, provide the opportunity for socialization and personal growth while allowing for family priorities.

QUALIFICATION HIGHLIGHTS:

- 17 years of parenting experience with 5 unique child/adolescent personalities.
- Ability to keep the family operating within the limits of minimal financial resources.
- Maintain positive relationships with school and recreational program administrators.
- Oversee scheduling and transportation for the commitments of 5 children and 1 spouse in addition to personal commitments.
- Create a healthy menu and prepare food for 7-member family.
- Mediate disputes; maintain effective leadership and implement disciplinary codes.
- Oversee medical needs and maintain general health of 7-member family.
- Experience motivating children and self to be positive and have self respect while under stressful circumstances.
- Recognize personal limits and seek assistance/additional training as needed.
ADDITIONAL SKILLS/ABILITIES:
- Multi-tasking
- Adaptable/Flexible
- Persuasive
- Accountable/Responsible
- Observant
- Determined
- Enjoys Learning
- Time Management
- Poised/Calm
- Works well Under Pressure
- Values Positive Relationships

WORK HISTORY:
Carlson Household – Minneapolis, MN 2002 – Present
Head of Household

ACHIEVEMENTS:
- Maintained a positive parental relationship with all 5 children despite ongoing struggles between spouses.
- Implemented suitable disciplinary actions when needed and usually obtained improved behavior.
- All 5 children remain in school and are maintaining grades that meet or exceed age-appropriate academic requirements.
- Assisted with school functions whenever I was able.
- Learned to recognized when I needed help and called on friends, family or community organizations for assistance.

COMMUNITY/VOLUNTEER:
Richardson Elementary – Field Trip Chaperone 2008-Present
St. Mary’s Church – Parish Festival Staff 2004-2008

HOBBIES/INTERESTS:
Church Choir, Assisting School Activities, Cooking, Coordinating Family Events,

EDUCATION:
17 years parenthood
15 years marriage
Basic Computer Operation – Minneapolis Public Library 2011
Job Corps – GED
Jennifer’s Pragmatic Work Resume:

OBJECTIVE: Retail Customer Service Associate

QUALIFICATION HIGHLIGHTS:
- Experience attending to multiple client needs simultaneously.
- Able to attend to complaints calmly and find mutually agreed upon resolutions.
- Experience maintaining a broad inventory of products.
- Able to work effectively with diverse personalities.

ADDITIONAL SKILLS/ABILITIES:
- Basic Computer Operation
- Multi-tasking
- Adaptable/Flexible
- Persuasive
- Accountable/Responsible
- Observant
- Enjoys Learning
- Time Management
- Poised/Calm
- Works well Under Pressure

WORK HISTORY:
Carlson Household – Minneapolis, MN                                             2002 – Present
   Head of Household

ACHIEVEMENTS:
Assisted with planning and chaperoning 6 school field trips with Richardson Elementary.

COMMUNITY/VOLUNTEER:
Richardson Elementary – Field Trip Chaperone                                        2008-Present
St. Mary’s Church – Parish Festival Staff                                            2004-2008

HOBBIES/INTERESTS:
Church Choir, Assisting School Activities, Cooking, Coordinating Family Events,

EDUCATION:
Basic Computer Operation – Minneapolis Public Library                                2011
Job Corps – GED
**Adlerian Resume for a Person with an Offender History (David)**

Fictional client background: David was incarcerated at the age of 16 for drug possession and assault with a deadly weapon. He was sentenced to 15 years of time served in addition to 5 years probation. Now, age 32 David has little work experience outside of prison walls. However, while incarcerated David cultivated a new mindset about life and took advantage of institutional work opportunities, classes and the prison library.

**David’s Personal Resume:**

**OBJECTIVE:** Find a position that will allow me to support myself, stay out of jail and reconnect with my family.

**QUALIFICATION HIGHLIGHTS:**
- Worked effectively with diverse team members and high inmate turnover.
- Maintained a positive attitude when surrounded by negative influences.
- Experience motivating self and others to stay positive, remain calm and work hard in undesirable circumstances.
- Processed laundry needs for 500+ inmates while meeting strict deadlines.
- Proficient with power tools.
- Physically and emotionally healthy and strong.
- Motivated to create a better life for my family and myself.

**ADDITIONAL SKILLS/ABILITIES:**
- Patient
- Level Headed
- Focused
- Works Well Under Pressure
- Exceeds Expectations
- Team Player
- On-Time
- Learns from Mistakes
- Asks for Assistance when Needed
- Listens to Direction
- Organized
- Positive

**WORK HISTORY:**
High Volume Laundry Laborer/Electrical Maintenance

**ACHIEVEMENTS**
- Resisted opportunities to become involved with crime while incarcerated.
- Convinced other inmates to resist negative opportunities.
• Developed positive relationships with prison staff.
• Self-taught small electrical repair.
• Quit smoking.
• Improved my reading and comprehension skills using the prison library.
• Earned my GED

HOBBIES/INTERESTS:
African American history, Youth Mentor, Social Justice, Developing positive relationships with family and friends. Strengthening my relationship with God.

VOLUNTEER/COMMUNITY:
Scared Straight Program – Guest Speaker – Minneapolis, MN 2010 – Present
St. Mark’s Church – Event Set-Up/Tear Down – Minneapolis, MN 2012

EDUCATION:
15 Years Incarcerated
Critical Thinking, Cultural Diversity, Basic Carpentry – State of Minnesota 2008
GED – State of Minnesota

David’s Pragmatic Work Resume:

OBJECTIVE: Warehouse Staff

QUALIFICATION HIGHLIGHTS:
• Experience working with diverse labor force and high employee turnover.
• Able to meet high volume labor needs and maintain deadlines.
• Experience mediating disputes and motivating co-workers.
• Manages stress in a positive pro-active manner.
• Proficient with Power Tools
• Able to Lift 75lbs+

ADDITIONAL SKILLS/ABILITIES:
• Patient
• Level Headed
• Focused
• Works Well Under Pressure
• Exceeds Expectations
• Team Player
• On-Time
• Learns from Mistakes
• Asks for Assistance when Needed
• Listens to Direction
• Organized
• Positive

WORK HISTORY:
High Volume Laundry Laborer/Electrical Maintenance
ACHIEVEMENTS
Self-taught small engine repair.
Quit smoking after 25 years.

HOBBIES/INTERESTS:
African American history, Youth Mentor

VOLUNTEER/COMMUNITY:
Scared Straight Program – Guest Speaker – Minneapolis, MN 2010 – Present
St. Mark’s Church – Event Set-Up/Tear Down – Minneapolis, MN 2012

EDUCATION:
Critical Thinking, Cultural Diversity, Basic Carpentry – State of Minnesota 2008
GED – State of Minnesota
Discussion

The use of Adlerian concepts and strategies within resume development brought about a natural overlap of personal and professional goals. This dynamic spoke directly to Adler’s understanding that people are a unified whole which can only be understood in their totality. Adler’s basic underlying theories regarding the tasks of life, the power of encouragement and the importance of egalitarianism became foundational components for pragmatic resume development. Clients not only walked out the door with a concrete tool to aid in job searches but also an apparent increase in confidence and self-esteem. As the development of the Adlerian Resume continued and expanded to include more in-depth personal exploration the resume began to take the form of both a therapeutic assessment and tool for intervention.

Examination of the family of origin became invaluable for identifying skills and talents among clients who doubted their most basic sense of self-worth. Early recollections provided a safe kind of distance for identifying and exploring self-defeating patterns of behavior in both employment and broader life pursuits. The use of role-playing and guided imagery helped clients generated a future focus that may otherwise have never existed. Additionally, working with Adler’s theory about life’s tasks provided a framework in which the Adlerian Resume could readily be applied across a variety of psychological concerns in an easily understood and collaborative manner. The task or “job” of work, parenting/family, spirituality, intimacy, community and self could each be broken down into similar simplified parts. Qualification highlights, additional talents, history of the problem and attempted solutions, community involvement,
hobbies/interests, education and resources were all topics that demonstrated relevance for examining each of life’s tasks.

The Adlerian Resume’s most significant contribution resides in how the tool assisted the counselor in generating a sense of egalitarianism and forging client-counselor alliances. Adler suggested that the relationship of equals was key to effective therapeutic interventions. As such Adlerian techniques are client-driven. The resume too is a pure product of partnership between client and counselor, as a counselor cannot begin to conceive of the client’s resume without the client’s input and expertise regarding their own work experiences or individual talents. Using an assessment and intervention tool that operates out of a conversation format also eliminates potential discomfort that may result from a client’s limited reading ability or vocabulary. The combination of Adler’s client-driven theory and the fundamentally egalitarian nature of resume development make for a tool grounded in a framework of human competence. At its most basic level the discussion of employment, how to support oneself and family or survive, is common to all people and transcends other human distinctions.

Because Adlerians are flexible and integrative as a core tenant of the theory it is particularly useful to Adlerian Resume development if practitioners become familiar with Adlerian principles as they are applied in other therapeutic disciplines. The use of guided imagery and role-playing in the form of mock-interview questions are similar to the interventions in Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (Corey, 2009). Adler’s investigation of social embeddedness is reflective of the Social Constructivist view of human behavior (Stein, 2012) just as Social Field Theory operates in parallel to both Adlerian and Feminist theory. The use of Narrative Therapy, particularly in the work history section of
the Adlerian Resume is also apparent. Counselors would do well by multicultural clients to continually strengthen their mastery of the wide range of modern counseling and therapy methods that share characteristics of Adlerian ideologies. In addition, the Adlerian Resume can be used to provide a customary framework for when and where to apply various complementary therapeutic techniques that are consistent with the individual practitioner’s strategy for intervention.

Although this paper only serves to present a theoretical foundation for the development of a new tool, the author did experience success with its use in employment counseling and in developing cross-cultural alliances with African American clients. This in turn lead to deeper therapeutic encounters with a population that historically has a deep seeded mistrust of Western mental health practices and is statistically underserved in mental health treatment. Additionally, the format provided a method to assist the author in the understanding and application of Adlerian theory, and when and where other theories were effective in augmenting treatment. Further research is needed to isolate the distinct variables involved in the efficacy of the Adlerian Resume tool and explore their corollary characteristics.

**Future Uses**

There are many places in counseling and therapy that could benefit from the use of the Adlerian Resume. Employment and vocational counseling programs are of course ideally suited for a resume-based intervention strategy. Specific populations including ex-offenders, persons of low socioeconomic status and racial minority clients may particularly benefit from the tool in that its design is grounded in a framework that is multiculturally competent, socially embedded and egalitarian in nature. Transitional
programs in prison systems could implement the design during their clients pre-release and re-entry stages of restitution. Classes in parenting, anger management, self-care or other relationship skill building programs could use the Adlerian Resume as a framework for a collaborative learning model. It can also be used as a collaborative training tool for increasing cultural sensitivity among employees working with diverse populations in prisons, employment counseling services, social services or any occupation that requires completion of a life task.

Because Adler defined mental health as the degree to which a person attends to the tasks of life the Adlerian Resume can also be applied to most therapeutic or educational settings. The various categories of the tool serve as a roadmap for the implementation of goal setting, encouragement, uncovering mistaken beliefs & private logic, challenging client assumptions, discovering hidden strengths, establishing motivation, recognizing patterns of behavior, reorienting and reeducating, recognizing personal accountability, selling clients on the impact of social interest, investigating lifestyle, discovering the client’s schema of apperception, employing Socratic questioning, identifying defenses, exploring the family of origin, role-playing, and understanding the parameters of soft determinism. Individual and system clients alike can use the resume to define their therapeutic goals and develop a plan grounded in their existing strengths to address their concerns. Even within family systems the Adlerian Resume could be applied to help a therapist discover individual perceptions about the presenting problem and then determine how to proceed with treatment planning.

A typical family session could develop an Adlerian Resume in which the Objective identifies the family’s ultimate goal for therapy. This may be multifaceted at
the onset of treatment as individual members often have differing objectives in therapy. Qualification Highlights could overview the family’s existing strengths for addressing the objective. Additional Skills and Abilities may serve to draw attention to untapped personal contributions of both the family as a whole or individual members alike. Work History provides a space to discuss any previous efforts the family has made in addressing the presenting problem. Awards and Achievements can provide space to underscore any successes the previous efforts may have afforded. The Community and Volunteer section can call attention to times when the family is functioning well together in an effort to create alliance among family members. Likewise, Hobbies and Interests provide an opportunity for the family to identify and change their focus to those areas that bond them together. And the Education section serves to give each member a chance to identify where they have come to their understanding of the presenting problem. A sample family resume may look like the following:
Potential Adlerian Resume for Family Therapy

OBJECTIVE:
- (Parents): Improve son’s grades. Convince son to become more accountable.
- (Son): Get parents off my back. Increase autonomy.
- (Family): Reduce conflict between parents and teenage son as it pertains to the son’s academic performance.

QUALIFICATION HIGHLIGHTS:
- Parents and son alike are intelligent individuals capable of expressing their thoughts in a clear, respectful manner.
- Parents have been teenagers and recognize the need for their son’s increasing freedom.
- Son is aware that the restrictions placed on his freedom are done out of concern and love.

ADDITIONAL SKILLS AND ABILITIES:
- Shared desire for improved communication.
- Respect for each other within the family system.
- Willingness to participate in therapy.
- Sense of humor among all family members.
- Shared desire for the son to succeed in life.

WORK HISTORY:
- Reward system offered for improved grades.
- Punishments including increased restrictions on curfew, use of electronics and participation in sports activities.

AWARDS AND ACHIEVEMENTS:
- Son’s grades did improve with reward system until reward was obtained.

COMMUNITY:
- Shared interest and participation in grandparent’s well-being including assisting grandparents with personal care on the part of the parents and assistance with yard maintenance on the part of the son.

HOBBIES AND INTERESTS:
- Family often hosts gatherings for viewing sporting events, which includes guests of the family as a whole in combination with friends stemming from both the parent’s and the son’s unique social circles.

EDUCATION:
- Parents believe academics are of paramount importance because they both came from family circumstances where financial security was limited. Both parents view their academic pursuits as key to having achieved a financially secure existence.
- Son believes parents are more concerned with family image than his individuality as a result of their high profile careers and corresponding social circles.
A course in parenting or similar topic could become collaborative and interactive if the Adlerian Resume was applied as a framework for class discussion. The following is a possible model for such a discussion with a group of men who are in re-entry halfway house programs after serving time in prison. Note: the language of the culture is maintained to sustain alliance, enhance learning and encourage participation.

**Potential Adlerian Resume for Collaborative Parenting Class/Group Therapy**

**OBJECTIVE:** To give our kids a safe, caring home and a life with a future.

**QUALIFICATION HIGHLIGHTS:**
- We love our kids.
- We want to be good dads.
- We have experienced bad parenting as kids ourselves and do not want to repeat it with our own kids.
- We admit parenting is hard.

**SKILLS/ABILITIES:**
- Can ask for help.
- Willing to offer help.
- Patience
- Desire to learn.
- See things from my child’s point of view.
- Can stop myself and back-off when angry.
- Can put what my kids need before what I want.
- Can do what I need to do with little sleep.
- Can find good things to say about my kid(s).
- Will stay clean/sober.
- Can cut off friends/family who will mess up me or my kids.
- Understand that how I talk to my kids is how they will talk to me and others.
- Understand that how I treat my kids is how they will treat me and others.
- Can see a better life for my kids than I have lived myself.
- Can love my kids no matter what they do or say.
- Can understand that just because my kids mess up that doesn’t mean they ARE messed up.
- Know that my kids want my attention because they love me.
- Understand that having kids is not the same as being a dad.
- Understand my kids need to feel safe, important and loved.
- Know I cannot be a dad and a friend to my kids at the same time.
WORK HISTORY:
   Father of 2 Kids                     2006 – 2012
   Father of 1 Kid                      2004 – 2006
   Responsible Older Brother            1988 – 2000

VOLUNTEER/COMMUNITY:
   Took Care of Cousin When Uncle was Shot   1998 – 2005

ACHIEVEMENTS:
   Provided money to my baby-mamma whenever I had work.
   Showed up to see my kids each time I promised.
   Played with my kids and told them I love them.

HOBBIES/INTERESTS I SHARE WITH MY KIDS:
   Sports, Ice Cream, The Zoo

EDUCATION:
   16 years raised by a crack-head mom.
   14 years of help from my grandma.
   20 years influence from my uncle who was a gang member

A final consideration in future uses for the Adlerian Resume lies in the understanding that Adlerians have been criticized for a lack of detail in their approach to psychotherapy and how and when it operates in ways similar to other therapeutic approaches (Mosak and Maniaci, 1999). The Adlerian Resume provides an outline for understanding where various Adlerian techniques may be most effective with clients and at what point Adlerian strategies resemble those of other complimentary therapeutic techniques. In this way the Adlerian Resume cannot only be used to enhance the useful conversations between theorists but also as a structural learning strategy for the presentation of Adlerian practice and principles.

Conclusion

Adler’s understandings of how goal orientations, encouragement and social interest impacted human behavior were considerations that truly placed him ahead of his time. More than seventy-five years after Adler’s death his ideas have been expanded
upon and relabeled, yet his basic argument has remained the same; human beings, regardless of race or culture, sex or gender are motivated by a desire to belong, feel safe and have significance. These goals their correlation to stable mental health are achieved through a person’s functioning in the life-tasks. The work life-task underscores each of these basic motivations in that it examines the extent to which a person’s essential survival needs are being met with consideration for the realities of the client’s social environment and soft determinism.

The Adlerian Resume is designed to assist clients and practitioners alike in looking beyond pathology of ineffective behaviors and attitudes. Systemic and cultural constraints are discussed to identify obstacles to be challenged and overcome rather than focusing on cause and effect dynamics. Client patterns and movements are assessed to discover their impact on additional life roles. In this way personal striving can begin to take on a horizontal quality as the impact of social interest and a broader picture begin to take on meaning. The objective of each resume is to move past symptoms by moving toward positive goals and newly understood teleology.

Finally, Adler asserted that clients will overcome their shortcomings to a greater or lesser extent depending upon the degree to which they are encouraged (Stein, 2003). The greatest motivation for the development of the Adlerian Resume resides in the repeated client disclosures that indicated these counseling sessions were the first occasions in which anyone had told the client that they had personal value of any kind. If there is but one outcome the author hopes will be achieved through the use of the Adlerian Resume, it is that the client walks away with an increased sense of personal worth through the discovery of strengths and abilities previously unrecognized.
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