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Stop! Don't flip that electric switch!

Chronicling the experience of Ed English - Camera-man for Stanley Milgram's experiment

As cameraman and editor for Stanley Milgram's original documentary "Obedience," I have, over the years, come to believe that his experiment never attained the impact on society at large that it might have had. I suggest, in this personal comment, that it was too powerful to receive acceptance at a time when the authority of the government and military establishment were being challenged. The many comparisons of the study to the tragedy of the Holocaust overshadowed most applications of the study to the war in Vietnam. Sadly, the more sensational aspects of the study were emphasized, often out of context, except among an informed minority. My hope is that scholars will work to correct this for Milgram himself, the psychology profession, and the good of society.

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Alfred Adler's profound understanding of social motivation

By *Eva Dreikurs Ferguson, Ph.D.*

Abstract

Alfred Adler (1870 -1937) developed a holistic and dynamic theory that emphasized social motivation and goals as the basis of thought, emotion, and actions. For Adlerans, Gemeinschaftsgefühl (Social Interest) is the key to mental health and is inextricably interwoven with the need to belong, and democratic relationships with equality of value of each individual help enhance well being.

Alfred Adler's profound understanding of social motivation

Early in the 20th century, Alfred Adler, a Viennese psychiatrist, postulated that humans, and social animals generally, have a basic need to belong that has evolutionary and survival value (Ferguson, 1989). Adler's theory is built on the concept that humans, as part of their evolutionary heritage, have a need to feel belonging (Ferguson, 2010). When they feel belonging they thrive, and they feel inadequate when they do not feel belonging. Well-being occurs when one feels belonging, of having value as an equal among equals. Malaise occurs when one feels one does not belong. Although it is called a 'feeling' it contains cognitions ("I am convinced I do not belong") and emotions ("I feel hurt"). Feeling one does not belong can lead to various emotional and behavioral disorders. Long before Baumeister and Leary (1995) wrote their seminal paper on the need to belong, Adlerian counselors, educators, and psychotherapists identified the symptoms of discouragement and disorder in children and adults as a result of the feeling that one does not belong.

Equality and need to belong

According to Adlerian psychology, the feeling of belonging involves a conviction that the person has value as an equal among equals (Dreikurs, 1999). The feeling that one has value is amplified when one's contributions to the 'greater good' of the community in which one lives is valued.

Whereas much of psychology in the past century has focused on negative emotions, in part stemming from the influence of Freud (1900, 1936a, 1936b), Adlerians can be said to be the first 'positive psychologists' (Ferguson, 2009). Aggression as behavior and anxiety, fear, and alienation as emotions were viewed by Adlerian psychologists as outward symptoms of a more fundamental process of discouragement

Adler (1933) postulated that Gemeinschaftsgefühl (loosely translated as Social Interest) was the crucial motivation that assures well being. When humans have high social interest, of caring for and being committed to the welfare of all members of the community, physical and mental health are increased.

with respect to being valued and feeling belonging. Adler (1929, 1931, 1933) viewed humans as fundamentally social beings, and their motivation, thought, emotion, and action can be understood only in social terms. Because humans live in groups, they share characteristics with other social animals, as Seyfarth and Cheney (2012, 2014) and de Waal (2013), among others, have notably indicated.

Early social psychologists, like Kurt Lewin (1948), understood the link between personality, social identity, and various psychological processes. Years before Lewin, but congruent with him, Adlerians emphasized the importance of 'equality' as essential for well being. One cannot feel 'belonging' if one does not feel 'equal.' The work of Kenneth Clark (1967), in providing research evidence that led to the end of segregation in public schools in the USA, was based on Adler's concept of the need to belong and the importance of feeling equal with others.

Adler and his younger colleague Rudolf Dreikurs (1999) recognized that 'well being' and 'belonging as an equal' were irrevocably linked. Adler (1933) postulated that Gemeinschaftsgefühl (loosely translated as Social Interest) was the crucial motivation that assures well being. When humans have high social interest, of caring for and being committed to the welfare of all members of the community, physical and mental health are increased. Social interest is a potential in all humans, but like language, it needs to be taught. Without social interest, humans become self-oriented. This in the long run leads not only to poor social relationships but to diminished health. Social interest is reciprocally related to the human need to belong as an equal. The process involves a positive spiral: when humans feel belonging and equal they are more likely to have high social interest and seek to contribute to the larger community, and when they have strong social interest this is likely to lead them to increase their feeling of belonging as equals.

For Adlerians, social relationships that involve reciprocity, collaboration, and mutual support are more likely to occur when humans in their beliefs and actions relate to each other as equals. This is also found in non-human social animals (de Waal, 2013). Autocratic relations among human beings, based on an 'obedience' model (Milgram, 1974), do not involve equality nor mutual support, and thus, in terms of Adlerian psychology, the autocratic process leads not only to social and societal difficulties but also to various kinds of psychological disturbances.

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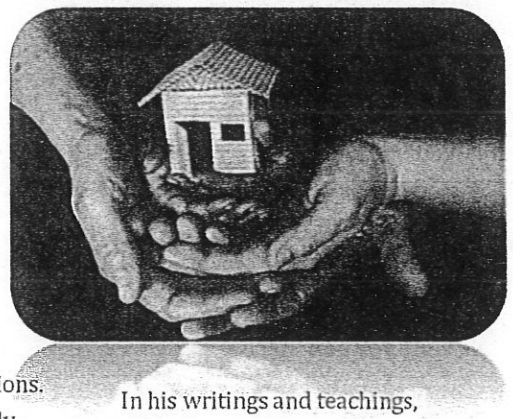
The importance of goals

Adler's theory is teleological in the sense that human motivation, emotions, and actions are goal-directed (Ferguson, 2014). Whereas other theories emphasize a variety of sources for motivation and emotion, Adlerians postulate that human motivation and emotion is a function of goals the individual is seeking. If one wishes to change the motivation or the emotion it is necessary to change the goal. Goals within Adlerian psychology are primarily based on 'private logic,' which is the private reasoning each person gives to the immediate situation. Adler showed that one is not necessarily aware of one's goals and private logic nor, ordinarily, need one have such awareness. However, when one faces life problems that one tends not to be able to solve readily, understanding one's private logic and unaware goals helps one find solutions.



Educators and parents, especially, have gained increased benefit by learning about the mistaken goals of children (Dreikurs, 1947, 1958). Children's disturbing behavior can be readily altered if the adults understand the mistaken goals of the child and if the adults have learned effective ways of dealing with these goals. The effective solutions have the aim of increasing the child's social interest and increasing the child's feeling of belonging. Specific Adlerian methods have been developed that help children meet the challenges they encounter (Dreikurs, Cassel, & Ferguson, 2004; Dreikurs & Soltz, 2014; Gfroerer, Nelsen, & Kern, 2013; Nelsen 2011).

Democratic processes increase mental health

According to Adlerian psychology, just as autocratic processes diminish the sense of being an equal among equals, democratic process more likely increase the feeling of belonging. According to Dreikurs (1958; Dreikurs, Grunwald, & Pepper, 1999), democratic processes involve freedom with order. This contrasts to the obedience-based autocratic processes, in which there is order without freedom. In the third kind of process, called 'laissez faire,' people do as they like without regard to others and there is freedom without order. The parenting and education methods developed by Adlerians separate these three styles of leadership. The Adlerian model, which emphasizes the democratic style of leadership, shows the kinds of problems that occur with autocratic and laissez faire styles of parenting and education.

In his writings and teachings, Dreikurs showed that problems in homes and schools would occur when parents and teachers used autocratic and laissez faire methods that minimized the feeling of belonging and equality. When children are trained to be responsible and caring with high social interest, and when they understand the consequences of their behavior, they feel encouraged and function in prosocial ways. This requires democratic procedures, in which the children are partners in the rules and decision making. In autocratic homes and schools, the children follow rules set by the authorities. They are not contributing as equals to the life of the community.

In an obedience-oriented home or school the child tends to have two possible behavior routes: to obey or to rebel. Dreikurs warned in his writings and speeches that until homes and schools learn democratic leadership and the methods developed by Adlerians, children are increasingly likely to rebel. Whereas in centuries of punitive control the authorities could beat the children into submission and obedience, in the democratization of modern society, when such punitive methods were removed, new methods of democratic parenting and leadership were required. Countless books and articles were written by Adlerians (e.g., Dreikurs, 1958; Dreikurs & Soltz, 2014; Nelsen, 2011) that described Adlerian methods for parenting and educating children and youths. These methods were based on the democratic model of 'freedom with order.' In his description of methods, Dreikurs (Dreikurs, Grunwald, & Pepper, 1999) credits the work of Lewin, Lippit, and White (1939) for demonstrating the crucial elements of autocratic, democratic, and laissez faire styles of leadership.

Research by Ferguson, Hagaman, Grice, and Peng (2006) has found that modern parenting styles are likely to be a mixture of democratic and laissez faire styles. Follow up studies verified that not only do young adults, when reporting how their parents raised them, show confusion between the democratic and laissez faire styles but that parents themselves have this confusion. Parents who themselves were raised by autocratic methods know they do not wish to adopt these methods in raising their own children, and so they follow what they consider to be the opposite styles of parenting. In the process, although they often call their parenting style 'democratic,' they in fact follow many laissez faire procedures. The data obtained by Ferguson, Hagaman, Maurer, Mathews, and Peng (2013) and in many related studies showed that parents and their young tend to have a 'binary' set of concepts, that parenting is either autocratic and based on obedience or it is what they call 'democratic' and based on unlimited freedom given to children.

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This binary belief system leads to many homes having a laissez faire and not a democratic style of parenting, as defined by Lewin (1948) and Dreikurs (1958). In the Adlerian approach, a clear distinction is made between democratic methods, that involve freedom with order, and laissez faire methods that involve freedom without order.

From the point of view of Adlerian psychology, just as social interest can be learned, democratic methods of human relationships also can be learned (Ferguson, 2007). Thousands of parents and teachers in the United States and abroad have followed the methods offered by Adlerians and have found that unruly and disgruntled children become cooperative and appreciative members of the family or school community. They grow up to be responsible and caring members of the larger society, in work and in their many personal relationships. The Adlerian methods apply equally to the workplace and to international relations (Ferguson, 2012), and they are used effectively in many treatment programs in counseling and psychotherapy (e.g., Shulman & Mosak, 1988; Sperry, 2009, Walton, 2012).

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General Psychology Trivia Quiz **Part 2**
By John D. Hogan, PhD *

The brief descriptions below all refer to past-presidents of the APA. How many can you identify? (Correct answers can be found on p. xx. Don't peek! :)

1. His first name was Burrhus but he preferred to be called Fred.
2. She was the first woman to receive a PhD degree in psychology.
3. More APA presidents received their doctoral degrees from this university than any other.
4. William James referred to this as a "bloated tumefied mass." What was he referring to?
5. One past-APA president wrote this to another past-APA president about the book of a third past-APA president: "It is chock full of errors, masturbation, and Jesus. The man is a mad man." The people involved? The book?
6. She was likely the oldest member of APA ever.
7. This highly regarded U.S. Western university, home to several APA presidents, is so large, it resides in two different zip codes.
8. She was the only woman to receive a PhD degree under the mentorship of Wilhelm Wundt.
9. The brain of this pioneer psychologist is on display in a case outside the psychology department of his home university.
10. The birth name of this future psychologist was Harold Israel, but he was known professionally by a different name.

Bonus Question: Josiah Royce was a Harvard faculty member and a president of the APA. His home in Cambridge, MA was later bought and lived in by a very prominent television personality. Which TV personality lived in Josiah Royce's house?

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