

Revitalizing Alfred Adler: An Echo for Equality

This article explores the work of Alfred Adler's Individual Psychology and argues its direct significance and application to contemporary social work practice and education. The paper introduces the tenets of individual psychology and offers a historical biological sketch of Adler and his work as a medical doctor, psychoanalyst and colleague of Freud to his divergence from psychoanalysis to begin his own psychological and education movement which focused on social reform. Individual Psychology is examined in detail including original case examples, his influence on and compatibility with contemporary social work theories, and empirical evidence supporting present day application of his theory. This article concludes with Adler's relevance to social work today and argues why it should be explicitly taught in social work curricula.

"Individual Psychology does not condemn, but endeavors to improve; it takes the blame from the individual's shoulders and assigns it to failures of our civilization, in whose imperfections all of us are implicated, and it demands co-operation for their removal." (Adler, 1938, p. 104)

Introduction

During these highly divisive and turbulent times in current society, the somewhat forgotten wisdom of Alfred Adler and his Individual Psychology movement comes to mind, and seems to beg for a reincarnation of the dialogue which was largely shut down by the Nazi regime. Adler's work was, in part, an educational movement geared towards bringing people together with its emphasis on the healing power of connection. He found that "false individualism" is at the heart of neurosis and that society as a whole suffers from this faulty ideal (Adler, 1930, p. 29). This article is intended as an exploration of Alfred Adler's Individual Psychology and argues why it should be explicitly taught in social work curricula.

While Adler and his teaching seem to be woven into actual social work practice, his ideas seem to have become so diffuse that very little seems to be attributed to him. Ellenberger (1970) wrote, "It would not be easy to find another author from which so much has been borrowed from all sides without acknowledgement than Alfred Adler" (p. 645). This sentiment was shared as early as 1939, when Wittels wrote, "The field of 'social' etiologies was the exclusive object of Alfred Adler's research, and although his heirs rarely quote him, the 'new' discoveries in this field are based on his theories. For this reason I call this school which is now in formation the Neo-Adlerians"(1939, p. 433). Wittels was referring to the interpersonal school, also known by most as the Neo-Freudians. The importance of Adler's work has been largely neglected, and while there do exist Adlerian schools today, their influence is not mainstream. This is especially unfortunate for the field of social work, as Adler's ideology seems to be born out of societal ills and directly address their prevention. Ansbacher, H (1992) labeled Alfred Adler a "pioneer in the prevention of mental disorders" (p. 3). This article will attempt to not only illuminate Adler's contributions, but to show how his many principles are shared within the field of social work, and how

social workers and society, as a whole, can directly benefit by familiarizing themselves with Adler's Individual Psychology ideas.

Cushman's ideas fully support Adler's idea that false individualism is at the heart of all societal ills. He argues that we have a moral obligation to examine the historical roots of psychotherapy. Cushman says, "If we situate psychotherapy historically, we might be able to develop social practices that will shape a slightly new configuration of the self, one that will be comprised of new moral understandings and capable of developing new political and economic structures, structures that could lessen the country's capacity to injure and destroy its own citizens and those of other nations" (Cushman, 1995, p. 24). This author contends that Alfred Adler is an important part of that history.

At a time when society, especially the profession of social work, is examining and trying to combat white supremacy and looking to current scholars who are advocating for change, we would be wise to listen to what Adler had to say almost a century ago, "All institutions, our traditional attitudes, our laws, our morals, our customs, give evidence of the fact that they are determined and maintained by privileged males for the glory of male domination" (Adler, 1927, p. 123). Todman & Mansager, (2011) espouse that the topic of social exclusion needs to be an interdisciplinary dialogue and sees how an "innovative Adlerian philosophical thought-stream" (p. 95) can help link the professions in combatting social injustice. This author argues that the social work profession should be in the forefront of such discussions.

Adler was a feminist who fought for social reform; this was the reason for his break with Sigmund Freud and psychoanalysis (Bankart, 1997). That said, in fighting for reform, Adler did not abandon clinical work, in fact, he created his own complete psychology which explicitly valued social justice. Adler is a stellar example of a professional who successfully embraced and advanced both the micro and macro world of mental health, something social work students often struggle to understand as possible. Adler's Individual Psychology is part of the required curriculum for masters of psychology students (Sommers-Flanagan & Sommers-Flanagan, 2012, Corey, 2017). Bankart purports (as cited in Sommers-Flanagan & Sommers-Flanagan, 2012), "Adler's influence on the developing fields of psychology and social work is incalculable" (p. 146). Why should social work students be deprived of the wisdom of Alfred Adler? His contributions are perfectly aligned with the ideals and mission of the social work profession.

Throughout this article, illustrations of Adler's Individual Psychology in both its historical and modern context will be illuminated. Theories that social workers embrace including social learning theory and systems theory can be linked to Adler (Balla, 2019). Also examined will be ways in which Adlerian psychology compliments contemporary theories of social work, including attachment, object relations, and interpersonal theories. Research studies including an evidence-based Adlerian play therapy (AdPT) (Mealy-Whalen, 2020); an Adlerian video-based treatment for African American parents (Farooq, Jefferson, & Fleming, 2005); the Parent Reunification Model (La Guardia and Banner (2012), and the Adlerian Parent Training programs (Fashimpar, 2000) will be examined. Finally, this article will show how one of Adler's main concepts, "the inferiority complex" was instrumental in advancing civil rights as can be gleaned in the following quote by Clark: " To the extent that Adlerian thinking influenced my own thinking and research, and ... that my thoughts and writings have influenced in any way the civil rights movement, determines, at least in part, the extent to which the ideas of Alfred Adler have contributed to the accelerated quest for racial justice in America" (as cited in Griffin & Powers, 1984, p. 30).

Who was Alfred Adler?

Adler was a medical doctor and psychoanalyst who Hirsh (2005) contends that before World War I, was the second most significant intellectual after Sigmund Freud. Adler was known to be outgoing and gregarious. He enjoyed sitting for hours with friends and colleagues at Café Dom in Vienna, passionately debating philosophical and social ideas (Hoffman, 1994). While Adler and Freud were affiliated for close to a decade, Adler was not a student of Freud (Ellenberger, 1969, Lantz, 1980, Makari, 2008) and eventually his own ideas became too incompatible with Freud's psychoanalysis and their paths diverged. Whereas Freud hewed to a theoretical orientation centered on the individual instinct and biology, Adler leaned towards appreciation of how societal concerns and family dynamics shaped the individual.

Alfred Adler was born in a Vienna suburb on February 7, 1870. His family was lower-middle class and from Jewish descent. Adler was the second child in his family, and had an older brother whom he always felt inferior to. He had many younger siblings, including one who died at a young age; this traumatic experience is one of the reasons he decided to become a doctor. The other experience that informed this decision was Adler's poor health as a child; he suffered from rickets and had breathing and mobility problems (Ellenburger, 1970). Adler completed medical school and developed his practice serving predominantly the poor. Adler's first published ideas

were in the field of social medicine, as he believed much of disease to be a product of society. His monograph was called *Health Book for the Tailor Trade*; in this monograph he calls for new labor legislation to ensure improved working conditions that he believed would decrease disease among tailors (Ellenburger, 1970). Adler was said to be a socialist but rejected any affiliation with the communist movement. Adler's focus on social medicine was in play years before he joined Sigmund Freud's Wednesday night discussion group, and the psychoanalytic movement. His initial presence was eventually replaced by his all-consuming drive to educate the public on the teachings of his Individual Psychology (Ellenburger, 1970).

Adler's first book on organ inferiority was valued by Freud, and considered complimentary to his ideas; while Adler did not originate the concept of organ inferiority, he was the first to develop a systematic theory around it (Ellenburger, 1970). This concept explained that neurosis can develop when a person's organs are not fully functional, and their physical limitations make them feel inferior, thus they develop maladaptive ways of compensating for this lack. While for a time, an admiration and respect existed between Freud and Adler, their affiliation was severed in 1911. Their irreconcilable differences can be best explicated by Ansbacher's statement, "The theory of sexuality of Alfred Adler is best characterized as the opposite of Freud's. Whereas Freud believed a person's sexuality determines his personality, Adler asserted that the total personality, the style of life, determines the sexuality" (Adler, 1982, p. v). In essence, Adler replaced Freud's libido with aggression (Ellenburger, 1970, Makari, 2008). Adler believed that rather than being driven by pleasure, people are driven by an aggressive need to overcome their sense of inferiority. While Adler believed in the unconscious, he also looked closely at conscious behaviors to determine an individual's life goal. He felt that instead of being victims of their inner drives, that people actually have choices (Adler, 1930, O'Connor, 1992); a critical task of Individual Psychology is to help people to see these choices. While Individual Psychology grew to be something very different than psychoanalysis, both influenced the other in important respects. Adler's work stresses the importance of early childhood, something he attributed as originating from Freud. He also learned from Freud the importance of dreams. Individual Psychology uses dreams to uncover a person's unconscious goals. Adler also influenced Freud, though it is unclear whether or not Freud ever admitted this. Freud vehemently dismissed Adler's theory of aggression, yet years later he adopted his own theory of aggression in the death instinct (Ellenburger, 1970). While Freud and Adler went their separate ways, and Freud's psychoanalysis would eventually become a grand theory, Adler enjoyed his own success for a significant period of time. This success was fed by the political situation after World War I.

The climate of the time, particularly the collapse of the Austrian-Hungarian Empire, supported Adler's teaching and transformed his work into a socio-ethical movement that had worldwide reverberations (Ellenberger, 1970). Ellenberger (1970) contends the years between 1920 and 1934, before the Nazi suppression of socialism, were Adler's most successful years. After the World War I defeat of Austria, the Social Democrats came to power, paving the way for the implementation of Adler's ideas. The new political state instituted new welfare institutions with a particular focus on educational reform; this political climate allowed Adler and his associates to establish twenty-eight child guidance clinics by 1930 (Adler & Associates, 1930), making Vienna the first city in the world where school children had access to free educational therapy (Ellenberger, 1970).

Adler's past popularity has faded, and his contributions are often unrecognized, his work swept up in the psychiatric deluge of the time (Borenzweig, 1971). That said, it appears that Adler's work informed many diverse practice genres including: prevention, ego psychology, child guidance, cognitive theory, social action, group and family therapy, day treatment programs, multiple therapy, and the development of more effective education methods (Lantz, 1980). Adler's approach is very strengths-based, practical, and trauma-informed.

Adler's Individual Psychology

While an exhaustive look at Individual Psychology is beyond the scope of this paper, I hope to highlight the most pertinent contributions and how they might be utilized by social workers today. Adler coined his own psychology, "Individual Psychology" which many consider to be a psychology of values (Stein, 2011). The mission of the social work profession is also very much rooted in a set of core values. Throughout this paper, I hope it will become clear how Adler's own actions and values reflect those of the National Association of Social Worker's core values: service, social justice, dignity and worth of the person, importance of human relationships, integrity, competence (1996/2008).

The name Individual Psychology stems from Adler's belief in the uniqueness of every individual. All of his interventions considered the nuances of each person he treated. He cautioned the use of classifications systems as anything more than a guide as he did not feel humans should be pigeonholed into classifications (Adler, 1930). Ironically, the name, Individual Psychology, belies its underlying premise that people are inherently shaped by their environment. Adler was admittedly, an idealist and his psychology aimed at bringing people together as is seen in the following statement, "We are approaching a time where everyone will take his place as an equal, self-reliantly

and freely, no longer in the service of a person, but in the service of a common idea” (Adler, 1964, p. 55). Adler spoke out vehemently against the marginalization of minority groups, campaigned for women’s social equality and predicted both the Women’s liberation and Black Power movements (Watts & Pietrak, 2000). According to Miller (1973) and Jordan (2010), Adler was the first psychoanalyst to condemn society’s conception of women, as well as illuminate its cause in the psychological problems of women and children. These conceptions led to feelings of false inferiority; Adler espoused that masculine dominance was unnatural (Adler, 1927) and “the historical movement of humanity is to be regarded as the history of its feelings of inferiority and of its efforts to find a solution of its problems” (Adler, 1938, p. 97). Social equality was considered by Adler to be the ideal, and the solution to the problems of humanity. If everyone was treated equally, then people would work together, instead of trying to constantly compete and their efforts would be less focused on neurotic self-interest and trying to prove their own worth; instead they would use their energies to contribute to society. Individual Psychology endeavors to help people become more productive and connected in their lives, specifically in three areas: society, work and love.

Adler was careful not to pathologize people. He felt that those who struggled with neurosis and psychosis had difficulty coping with life because they had become deeply discouraged. Adler identified many ways in which a person can become discouraged in life. The aforementioned organ inferiority is just one way that a child may feel inferior and disconnected; in addition, abuse and neglect, as well as poor family guidance, can cause these feelings (Adler & Associates, 1930). A group considered to be at high risk of becoming discouraged, is what Adler repeatedly referred to as “pampered children.” He said, “The mere fact that children are pampered is sufficient to generate in them a feeling of inferiority and to deprive them of self-confidence” (Adler, 1930, p. 131). He believed they would suffer feelings of inferiority, as they believe that the world revolves around them, until they begin school. At school, they are faced with reality, and often, have difficulty adjusting. The belief that they should, and, even need to be taken care of, coupled with a sense of entitlement, discourages their sense of creativity, initiative, and especially courage, to be a contributing member of society. Instead, Adler found, they strive for superiority, rather than learning to cooperate. The “inferiority complex” is what Adler coined the underlying problem, that which fed social disconnection (Adler, 1938). These cognitions of inferiority fuel what he coined the “superiority complex;” attitudes and fantasies of greatness which serve to defend against any feelings of inferiority, but instead, often contribute to a flight from reality, and ultimately, a deviation from society (Adler, 1938). Unstable attachment relationships coupled with chronic frustrating and depriving experiences can result in the increased stimulation of

aggression which “very quickly determines the whole inner development and creates, according to A. Adler, ‘a superior mental field’ which prevails over the developing inner world” (Lang, 2008, p. 98). Clinically, we see these complexes playing out in personality disorders with their common primitive defense of splitting. Clinically, they present as oscillating between self-hate and grandiosity. According to Adler, the two complexes are really just two sides of the same coin. The rhetoric and bullying that is becoming so mainstream in today’s society is an example of the inferiority and superiority complex’s destructive path. Social workers should be trained to look for and help correct such feelings of inferiority.

Individual Psychology looks at the cognitive assumptions that help guide, understand, predict, and attempt to control an individual’s experience (Lantz, 1980). If these cognitions are false, they would feed the person’s life plan and feelings of inferiority. Adler used the terms life style, style of life, or life goal interchangeably to describe that which a person uses to overcome inferiority feelings. This life style or goal is made up of cognitive assumptions. Every action and feeling, conscious and unconscious are driven by the perception of a goal (Adler, 1923). Adler sees the development of character as reflecting this early-established goal; he described character traits as tricks that the personality used to acquire recognition (Adler, 1927). He felt education required assessing any faulty information the child may be employing, helping them to see their mistakes and ultimately, increasing their cooperation and interest in other people. Adler believed that birth order, family constellations, life tasks and community feeling were to be used as assessment tools for an individual, couple or family’s social embeddedness which fueled a person’s goal. Balla (2019) describes the idea of social embeddedness, as a basic tenet of Individual Psychology, and described it as a foundation for both systemic thought and social learning as well critical to the development of one’s life narrative. Community feeling is a deep sense of connectedness to others and being a part of the human community whereas social interest is considered by Sommers-Flanagan (2012) “community feeling in action” (p. 84). Watts (2000) contends, “The ultimate goal for psychotherapy is the development or enhancement of the client’s social interest. As an individual’s social interest develops, so does the capacity for empathy and altruism” (as cited in Sommers-Flanagan & Sommers-Flanagan, 2012, p. 84).

Adler (1938) espoused that children are excellent observers, but also says they are terrible interpreters; therefore, they develop a “life style” around faulty information. Consequently, children set up concrete goals that go against their own welfare and the development of humanity. A technique Adler used to determine a client’s life plan

or guiding fiction was asking about a first memory, as well as a recent life event; in this way he would be able to see the continuous thread of the lifelong goal or life style (Adler, 1927; Ellenberger, 1970).

* An adult's first memory is of finding a tricycle hidden in the bathtub, and the excitement he felt. Within a day or so, the child's father died of a heart attack while he was present. This tragedy happened a day before the child's birthday. On some level, the child felt that his finding this hidden tricycle, a birthday surprise, and his excitement, caused his father to die. He experiences extreme guilt, and as an adult, he is always depressed around the time of his birthday. Consequently he has built his life around not owning things and has tried to avoid getting too excited about anything, believing on some level that ownership and excitement will result in loss and even catastrophe. He sublimated his feelings of inferiority, and threw himself into a respectable but hated career where he often makes a good living, but never invests in anything that will last or bring him too much joy. Adler contended, "As grown-ups, we are still making the use of prejudices and fallacies of our childhood as though they were sacred laws" (Adler 1927, p. 166). Adler saw the child as developing these often-faulty ideas by age four or five and called this a "prototype" for future development. He believed future thinking shapes behavior (Corey 2017).

* The author was given permission by the individual to use this case example

Another Adlerian tool is asking a client to write a future autobiography. This exercise is helpful in both the assessment process as well as a therapeutic technique. It can help identify a person's fictional goal and whether this ideal is helping or hindering the person's functioning. Therapeutically, it can be used to help a person create new images for their life, images that are more realistic and adaptive (Sommers-Flanagan, Sommers-Flanagan, 2012). This process can be lengthy and rewritten throughout the therapy. An example of this intervention follows: "Write the rest of your story from here on out. And as you do, keep this in mind: Write a story in which you are not perfect, one in which you make mistakes, but overall, live in an acceptable and loving way in the world" (Sommers-Flanagan & Sommers-Flanagan, 2012, p. 101). Bankart (1997) sees the future autobiography operating much like dream analysis as they are both used to uncover the life goal.

As with contemporary cognitive behavioral therapy—though in a different language--the uncovering, re-evaluating, and correcting of cognitive distortions is central to the Adlerian approach. This is why he felt that education was so critical, and why he trained teachers to assess and properly educate children at risk. He considered

the first five years to be the most important in terms of proper learning and developing a healthy life goal (contributing to society rather than being superior and disconnected) but acknowledged that by the time children go to school, this prototype is already developed. He believed that the proper education of children is critical and that the mother played the most important role in the education and encouragement of the child and that the child's sense of social connectedness could be glimpsed from just a few weeks old. Adler said, "We probably owe to the maternal sense of contact the largest part of human social feeling, and along with it the continuance of civilization" (1938, p. 221). He believed it was the therapist, teacher or child guidance counselor's role to provide education if the mother had fallen short. In the above case, it is possible that the mother was so grief stricken that she was not able to comfort her son appropriately, or even realize that her son felt he was at fault, and was in no position to correct the faulty cognition.

These days, we would substitute caregiver for mother. While many of Adler's ideas were progressive for his time, some of his ideas and terminology are outdated and the product of his time. For instance, one example of organ inferiority is left-handedness. This author is left handed, and her father, was also left handed but was forced to write with his right hand; this was socially accepted at the time. Likewise, homosexuality was seen by Adler as a lack of social interest and an actual choice, however, modern day Adlerians address this shortcoming in their writings (Brown, Londergan & Bluvshstein, 2020). They do not see homosexuality as either a choice or something that needs to be fixed. Individual Psychology strives for social adjustment, and I imagine if Adler were still alive today, his views would have adjusted to the new understanding of the times.

To address the shortcomings of caregivers, Adler and his associates established twenty-eight child guidance clinics by 1930 (Adler et al, 1930). These centers worked with parents, teachers, doctors, and social workers on how to impart proper education to children so that they could become secure and sufficiently connected to society. Adler saw proper child guidance and education as the lynchpin of prevention; he stressed the need for the communal participation of the family, teachers, and other helpers to be indispensable (Adler, 1938).

The following description is a historical illustration of the communal outreach that Individual Psychology used to spread its message:

The district parents' association of the twentieth Vienna city district, for instance, has organized this year for the second time a parent's guidance school where for six or seven evenings an introduction is given to Individual Psychology. Of the twenty-seven schools and five kindergartens of the district the course is frequented on the average by three or four parent's councils, and this means an average attendance of ninety persons. In this way there is no school in the district in which at least some of the parents have not been initiated into the ideas of Individual

Psychology. And these parents often induce us to give in their schools, for the benefit of all parents, lectures on educational problems from the point of view of individual psychology. This naturally results in a higher attendance at the guidance clinic maintained by the district parents' association. The work of the organization and enlightenment carried out by our teachers assumed such dimensions last year that for weeks the guidance clinic was compelled, owing to its excessive attendance, to open an annex (Zerner, 1930, p. 87).

Pedagogy was of great importance and the clinics taught parents to foster sociability in the child, never to beat or degrade a child, not to pamper or keep them in a state of dependence, to offer chances for reconciliation and making amends, and at times, even overlooking mistakes or acts of defiance (Friedmann, 1930). Adler et al. (1930) found that there were four steps integral in successfully educating the family. The first, of course, is building trust in those that are seeking guidance, after this has been established, it is imperative to locate any sources of educational errors, followed by encouragement and stimulating social sentiment. Tragically, at the peak of their popularity, these child guidance centers were closed down by the Nazi regime.

In Adlerian psychology, encouragement of the child is key to bringing about positive change. This is shown by Adler's own daughter, in the following description of technique used with a child who was doing poorly in the area of writing. Alexandra Adler (1930) explained:

We have won our game if we have succeeded in encouraging the child in some way or other. To be sure our starting point cannot be arbitrary. We must begin at the source of his errors. Since we aim above all to stimulate self-confidence and self-respect, we gladly attach ourselves to some positive achievement of the child. Thus we ask a backward child who likes to draw to bring us a drawing the next time. We are always astonished to see how gladly and punctually the children fulfill their task, how much joy our interest gives them, and how proud they are of our praise. After he has shown us the drawing, we tell him that he certainly could write equally well if he were willing to practice in writing as much as in drawing. We later have him bring some of his written work, pointing out to him even the smallest progress made (p. 115).

The child in the example above may have believed they could not write well, and this feeling of inferiority in writing, without intervention, may have led this child to lose courage and give up in writing, and perhaps in other areas of life as well. Alexandra Adler would say to a child, "You have believed that everything goes by itself, and because you have difficulties with your school work, you believe that you cannot succeed in anything and you give up the race" (1930, p. 114). She explicitly points out his faulty cognition. Working with parents and teachers was also key to the child's success. Individual Psychology would help to explicitly guide the parents on how to intervene with their child's faulty ideas. The following is an actual intervention suggested by Alfred Adler for a young girl who was acting out. He believed the child's acting out was because she felt the mother preferred her siblings.

Whenever she feels that she is menaced she fights, whenever she feels certain she is calm and does good work. I would advise you to go away for a few days with Frieda, but with Frieda alone, if this is possible for you. Then explain to her during a walk that you like her as much as her sisters, that the sisters, however, need more attention since they are small; tell her also that you are very proud of your big daughter who is such a proficient pupil. I believe that Frieda will give up her combativeness if you talk to her in such a spirit (Seidler, 1930, p. 187).

Ellenberger (1970) describes Individual Psychology as proceeding in three phases. The first phase is the engagement, and assessment of one's life plan. The second phase is meant to expose a client or client's parent to their secret life-goal as is shown in the above examples. In the third phase, the client decides whether he wants to change his goal, and if affirmative, work is done toward this end. Individual Psychology has been criticized for its lack of defined technique. This is because the treatment philosophy is actually what drives Adlerian technique (Lantz, 1980). Individual Psychology methods should all look at the whole of a person's personality, identifying and weighing their goal of superiority, along with the strength of their feeling of inferiority and how these directly influence their degree of social feeling and adjustment to society (Adler, 1938). Social workers should incorporate these methods into the assessment process.

Adler used the metaphor of "half and half" to describe how each person is equal. "We should not depreciate either ourselves or our environment; but, assuming that each is one-half in the right, affirm the reality of ourselves and others equally (....) The individual should affirm his part in everything which occurs to him, as his own half of it" (Adler, 1930, p. 22). People often see things as happening to them, rather than feeling their responsibility in the occurrences of life. Individual Psychology compassionately helps them to see their part. Perhaps, if the profession of social work consistently employed Adler's metaphor of "half and half" into a clinical nomenclature, eventually, the idea might become normalized and asking a person what their half of the equation is might feel less threatening, and perhaps accountability might become more common place. This metaphor seems especially apt during Covid-19 and the controversy around wearing masks.

Adler felt actions were more important than words, that good therapeutic technique carefully seeks to follow a person's actions, as if watching "a pantomime" (Adler 1964, p. 18). After observing a person in this way, the next step of Adlerian technique is to show a patient his faulty, and often, unconscious life-plan, so that he can properly take the action needed to regain contact with society and its demands (Adler, 1923). This can be seen in the following explanation by Adler:

We must decrease his feelings of inferiority by showing him that he really undervalues himself. We can show him the trouble with his movements and explain to him his tendency to be over tense, as if standing before a great abyss or as if living in an enemy country and always in danger.

We can indicate to him how his fear that others may be preferred, is standing in the way of doing his best work and making the best spontaneous impression” (1930, p. 117).

Stein (2014) purports to uncover the fictional goal, clinicians need to learn how to translate their case impressions into psychological movement, something that Adler emphasized repeatedly. She admits this is a skill that is missing from most Adlerian training today. Individual Psychology can gain insight from psychoanalytic defense analysis which both notices and interpret movements, often seen as defenses.

Adlerians believe insight without active change is fruitless, and the technique of encouragement is explicitly employed. As part of this process, the therapist encourages the patient, and helps to give him or her, the courage to overcome life’s hardships. According to Watts and Pietrzak (2000), Adlerian methods of encouragement seek to help clients identify and combat discouraging and false cognitions; create perceptual alternatives; and focus on the actual efforts of the client while emphasizing all resources and strengths. their techniques used include dream analysis. This analysis is used to uncover the unconscious life-plan and self-deception of the person (Adler, 1927, Ellenberger, 1970). Another technique is the use of the following question, “Supposing that you would not have this ailment, what would you do?” Adler believed the patients answer indicated exactly what they wanted to avoid (Ellenberger, 1970, p. 620). Adler felt that only with a trusting and positive therapeutic relationship can client learning take place. Adler was opposed to the use of the couch as part of the therapeutic frame; he felt that the therapist and client should sit face to face, undermining any power differential. In this same vein, he did not use hypnosis as he felt it to be degrading for both the client and analyst (Ellenberger, 1970). Writing about Adler’s Individual Psychology, Bankart (1997) says,

The goal is to teach the person about the potential emotional and psychological rewards that come with awakening the social-interest motive. The patient generally needs to abandon a neurotic fixation, a complex of self- protective strategies that have been in place since early childhood. This task requires the patient to have an enormous amount of trust in both the therapist and the world (p 145).

Adler’s psychology has been criticized as for being too pedestrian (Sommers-Flanagan & Sommers-Flanagan, 2012). Adler used language that all people, not just trained analysts, could understand. While it might not possess the cache of psychoanalysis, Adler's jargon-free language seems to this author, who is psychoanalytically-trained, to have immediate clinical value. Shame was an emotion that Adler saw as a feeling consequent to the experience of inferiority (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1956); important to his psychology was that such feelings be normalized and labeled as part of the human condition. In this way, the person feels less like an

outsider, and their feelings of inferiority lessened. Over the years, this writer has given many a psychoanalytic interpretation, however, the intervention that has seemed to consistently bring relief of shame is surprisingly straightforward in its Adlerian simplicity. When someone is expressing shame for the intensity of their feelings, which is known to be triggered by earlier experiences, I will offer a variant of the following, "It makes sense to me why you would be feeling this way. Feelings don't grow up. They are as important now as they were when you first felt them." This intervention speaks to the power and universality of feelings, helping to reassure the client that their emotional responses are normal, even a sign of their basic humanity.

Many clients are riddled with self-loathing when they fail to live up to a version of western philosophy that extols independence. As such, they feel immense shame in asking for help. Adler's theory sets this idea on its head in his underscoring how much we are interdependent. Shame in asking for help can be empathically engaged and social workers can educate their clients about the importance of interdependence and mutual connection. This interdependence is amply supported by both attachment theory and neuroscience (Bowlby, 1969; Karen, 1998).

Adler's Influence on Social Work Practice

As Ellenberger (1970) explicitly states, it is difficult to accurately trace Adler's influence on current psychology; it seems equally difficult to assess Adler's influence on the field of social work. While Individual Psychology is highly compatible with the principles of social work, and social workers were even staffed in his child guidance centers (Adler et al., 1930), it seems strangely removed. Many of Adler's ideas are implicit in social work practice, however, surprisingly little seems traced directly to him. Adler's idea of social embeddedness long preceded McGoldrick's common social work tools of investigation like the genogram or family life cycles and gender and cultural grounding (Balla, 2019). This author argues it is time to revisit his original ideas so that new tools can be still cultivated. A literature search yielded the following:

Not surprisingly, the majority of literature found is from the Journal of Individual Psychology. The most current finding (2020) highlights the overlapping concepts shared by Adlerian family therapy and family systems theory of social interest, holism and belongingness. The case of a transgender couple who is planning on having children is examined using these principles. (Brown, Londergan & Bluvshstein, 2020). The article also addresses Adler's outdated idea regarding homosexuality as a choice and how modern Adlerian psychology practices have readdressed this.

Adlerian Play Therapy (AdPT) developed by Kottman in 1980's and based on Adlerian principles, has reached evidence-based treatment status (Meany-Walen, 2020). Meany-Walen's (2014) randomized control trial investigating the efficacy of AdPT on elementary school children was robust enough that it was adopted by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. They found AdPT to be a promising intervention reducing disruptive behavior in the classroom, improving children's on-task behaviors, as well as reducing teacher stress. AdPT therapists use a specific Adlerian treatment protocol detailed in the *Treatment Manual for Adlerian Play Therapy*. This manual was developed in 2009 but is continuously under revision to ensure the fidelity of treatment (Meany-Walen, 2020).

La Guardia and Banner (2012) highlight the importance of the Adlerian family reunification model that is being employed in the foster care system. The primary target of intervention when reunification is the goal, is the family, both the family of origin as well as the foster family. The authors encourage workers to develop ways to involve family members in treatment throughout the child's placement in foster care. They also contend that the children should feel that they also have a say in what happens to them. Parent training, family counseling, and community-based open forum interventions are needed if the goal is reunification of the family. Using a strengths-based perspective, this model helps children and families to learn useful communication skills, recognizes and reeducates maladaptive interactional patterns, and teaches mutual family respect and attaining democratic family solutions that do not create discouragement. This model also calls for an active recognition of cultural, socioeconomic, and mental health needs to determine appropriate treatment plans. This model combats pathologizing clients and families, something unfortunately inherent in many current social welfare policies. Edwards (2007) maintaining consistent parental involvement throughout entire process could help decrease the time a child is away from home up to a year (La Guardia & Banner, 2012, p. 364).

In 2005, Farooq et al, realized that the contemporary challenges of that time had caused parents to seek new knowledge around how to effectively parent compared to earlier times. They recognized few parenting programs were availability to minority populations. In response to this need, they created a study using an Adlerian video-based parent education program. Forty African-American inner-city parents raising children from ages eleven to eighteen participated and were assigned randomly to either a training or control group. Results showed those taking the Adlerian training had more empathic perceptions of their children's behavior and proved effective at also generating more authoritative rather than authoritarian or submissive parenting styles.

Adler is hardly mentioned in casework literature, even though caseworkers practice principles are often highly aligned with the Adlerian approach (Lantz, 1980). O'Connor (1992) explicitly writes about the use of a casework approach in a hospital setting, highlighting a case in which a resistant patient finally responds to Adlerian approaches; "As an Adlerian, I believe that resistance is a manifestation of the client and the counselor having different goals" (p. 121). Social workers also strive to stay with the client's goal. O'Connor undoes the resistance by aligning herself with the patients stated goals, and helps the patient to see she has a choice in being depressed or not depressed, encouraging her to look at the positives in her life. The ultimate successful placement of this patient in a therapeutic community demonstrates the importance of Adler's principle, of social feeling; this patient could now meet the needs of work and friendship, fostering her sense of belonging. This example highlights the need for a proper discharge plan, something social workers normally assume the responsibility for. A hospital social worker might ask in an Adlerian way, "What is the best way to help the patient meet his or her life tasks?"

Adler looked at family as critical in shaping individuals and their life goals. Fashimpar (2000) tests an Adlerian parenting training program, as it is a specific intervention employed by social workers when practicing family social work. Parenting training is often mandated by child protective services and juvenile courts, and is often recommended by family service agencies, private practitioners, and school social workers. Fashimpar contends that the lack of social work literature on parenting training creates deficits in appropriate replication of successful interventions, and creates this study to bridge this gap; the goal is to measure and evaluate the Adlerian parenting training. The goals of this specific Adlerian Parent Training (APT) are to alter communication patterns, democratize family roles, and increase respect among family members. The outcome of this study showed a decrease in serious parent-child relationship problems, specifically a reduction in corporal punishment. It also showed that it might be ineffective in changing empathy, developmental expectations, or family roles. A limitation to this study was its small sample size, n=35. More Adlerian studies are needed.

Yura (1983) writes from an Adlerian perspective on how best to raise a child with special needs. This parenting topic is specifically poignant in its relation to Adler's concept on organ inferiority. Adler believed that the parents of children, especially special needs children, were responsible for appropriately educating the child, and any failure or mistaken life view on the part of the child was their responsibility, and could not be attributed to the child's disability. He felt with the proper training and guidance, the disability could be turned into an asset in its ability to stimulate the child to overcome, and move toward even greater achievement (Yura, 1983). Adler warned

against special needs children becoming pampered, discouraged, and developing the belief that they cannot achieve. Parents must also recognize and correct purposeful behaviors that are not leading the child to secure a place of belonging in the world. Another child-rearing practice is using logical consequences as it teaches the relationship between behaviors and their consequences. Teaching their children to successfully cope with life's tasks is especially critical for parents of special needs children, and Adler's philosophy and techniques can help parents to feel more prepared to take on this, often times, overwhelming task (Yura, 1983).

Adler's Compatibility with Contemporary Social Work

Watts (2000) links Adlerian theory with current postmodern approaches taught in social work, specifically, constructivist therapy, solution-focused therapy, and narrative therapy. All of these theories elevate the client as capable collaborators to the therapist, and are all strength-based in their approaches (Reid, 2002). Adler (1923) felt one of the most crucial methods is to attribute the work and success of the cure to the client. Relational-cultural theory by Jordan (2010) asks us to look beyond the individual and identify the disempowerment and disconnection in the larger culture which is exactly Adler's sentiment and is currently reflected in the Black Lives Matter movement. Finding the degree of an individual's capacity for cooperation in society is paramount to Adler's Individual Psychology and it is what drives all of its interventions.

Adler has often been mislabeled as a Neo-Freudian; this may be in part because the Neo-Freudians closely resemble Adler. For this reason, Wittels (1939) coined the term Neo-Adlerians. The interpersonal school including Fromm, Horney, and Sullivan have much in common with Adler and were likely influenced by him. All participated in the rising awareness of societal influences on individual development that arose in Germany during the inter-war years. Horney's own writings have much in common with Adler, specifically her focus on culture and feminism. According to Paris (1994), Horney did admit to being strongly influenced by Adler's notion of compensating for feelings of inferiority, and that she herself suffered from his masculine protest. It is curious why so many other current theories share his ideas, yet he is hardly mentioned. One possibility is offered by (Watts and Pietrzak, 2000) "Adler's ideas were marginalized because they were out of step with the dominant metaphors at the time, and consequently, his theory was discounted, even though many of his ideas have been assimilated into subsequent theoretical positions" (p. 445). According to D. Ingram, "the dominant metaphors shifted and centered around autocratic power. Integrated into psychoanalytic theory, the notion of the 'harsh superego' or, for Horney,

the 'tyranny of the shoulds.' As that historical era closed with the passing of powerful autocratic leaders, an inclination in the West towards egalitarianism evolved" (personal communication, August 11, 2020).

Attachment theory and object relations theory are important components of the contemporary social work curriculum. Adler's work reinforces both of these theories while lending an important, often missing, historical lens. In 1939, Wittels wrote, "Adler pointed out how secure and cheerful we feel when a part of the group in which we move and how we become victims of anxiety and inferiority when alone with ourselves—whence the flight into mental or nervous disease" (p. 236).

Karen (1998) in speaking about John Bowlby, the founder of attachment theory, says "He shows an unusual concern with matters outside the realm of psychiatry- in particular with social concerns and social policy" (p. 57). This "unusual concern" was shared by Alfred Adler. In fact, Adler's concept of a guiding principle has much in common with the internal working models described in attachment theory. The guiding principle is formed by the end of infancy and corresponds to preverbal representations and structures described by attachment research (Lang 2008, Sommers-Flanagan & Sommers-Flanagan, 2012). Lang (2008) contends that patients who are suffering from a developmental history of insecure attachment relations and early serious deficiencies along with their subjective transformations are reasons for the feelings of inferiority described by Adler. In addition, he believes Individual Psychology offers a way to help patients unlock creative forces in order to change their fixed personality structure, and if the therapy is successful, will help change both the conscious and unconscious opinion of himself and others in the world. Adler's focus on aggression offers a distinct lens into the psyche of traumatized individuals who suffer from personality disorders as can be seen by the following quote by Adler, "The neurosis is a self-torturing device for the purpose of enhancing the self and depreciating the environment. And indeed the first stirrings of the aggression drive against one's person originate from a situation in which the child wants to hurt the parents or wants to attract attention more effectively" (as cited in Ansbacher, 1956, p. 271).

Attachment theory and object relations theory are neatly aligned. Karen (1998) posits that the Bowlby's thinking was most compatible with, and likely influenced by Ronald Fairbairn. Adler's aforementioned guiding principle is complimentary to, and, in fact, preceded Fairbairn's object relations theory. Mitchell (1998) wrote, "It was Fairbairn's most far-reaching contribution to be among to intuit that the establishment and maintenance of relationships with others is as fundamental to the nature of the human organism as oxygen-breathing" (p. 118). Decades prior to Fairbairn's contributions to object relations theory, Adler (1927) said, "One can always observe

that the child directs his effort for affection toward others, not towards himself, as Freud believes” (p. 32). Adler’s aforementioned concepts of community feeling and social interest embrace human relations and drive Adlerian psychology. Research has supported the idea that social interest is positively related to human attachment (Sommers-Flanagan & Sommers-Flanagan, 2012).

Adler, like Fairbairn, felt that major psychological organization begins with the first frustrations in infancy. Fairbairn says that what the infant “experiences is a sense of a lack of love, and indeed emotional rejection on his mother’s part” (Fairbairn, 1952, p. 112). Lang (2008) espouses, “most important is the subjective experience of the baby, namely – according to A. Adler – the lack of satisfaction of his ‘need for tenderness’”(p. 98). Fairbairn’s endopsychic structure has much in common with Adler’s idea of a guiding principle. The endopsychic structure is an unconscious inner world consisting of objects, or internalized relationships, both good and bad, that the developing ego creates as a defensive maneuver to control rejecting external objects. This internal structure deeply influences a person’s life experience, especially their perceptions of the outside world and the ways they respond to it (Grotstein & Rinsley, 1994). Adler’s guiding principle also consists of inner structures that contain unconscious opinions of self and others, these inner structures are both active and goal directed (Lang, 2008). Adler’s emphasis on asking about a first memory can illuminate some of the content of these inner structures and help uncover a person’s style of life. Both Adler and Fairbairn agree that mental health is dependent on integrating new ideas and healthier objects into the person’s psyche. If Adler were alive today, and familiar with contemporary theories, he might say something akin to: our inner objects or internal working models guide our behavior, and if we are able to recognize and change our perceptions of our inner objects, we can change both our behavior and our faulty style of life, and in turn, become more fulfilled and connected to society. In this way, we see how he would integrate cognitive and psychodynamic work.

In addition to the aforementioned contemporary social work theories, Adler can be linked to and enhance social learning theory and systems theory (Balla, 2019). Adler’s work compliments other course work already taught in MSW programs, specifically, Human Behavior in the Social Environment Courses. Sociocultural Theory of Cognitive Development by Lev Vygotsky posits development is optimal when the child can interact with those that are more experienced and competent. He believes these interactions create a “zone of proximal development” where they can function at a higher level than they could on their own and eventually they will internalize these new forms of thinking and expertise (Haight and Taylor, 2013). Social workers also learn about Urie Bronfenbrenner’s

Developmental Ecological Systems Framework that describes how interacting, embedded systems, which he likens to Russian nesting dolls, and calls micro, meso, exo, macro and chrono systems, impact human development over the life span. Bronfenbrenner (1990) saw human development as taking place principally in the mind, and that while people, objects and symbols initially exist in the environment, they become internalized; but that during this process they are also transformed. Adler's Individual Psychology would be focused on this point of transformation, aiming to identify and correct any faulty educational errors, while simultaneously encouraging the individual and stimulating social sentiments. The very social nature of Adler's guidance centers also supports the "zone of proximal development" as can be gleaned below:

The work in our child guidance clinics proceeds in most cases with the doors wide open. The public character of these clinics has often been attacked. Our experience has shown, however, that the appearance of the child before a large gathering—that is to say, the public character of the guidance has a stimulating effect upon him. The publicity of the procedure suggests to the child that his trouble is not a private affair, since strangers are also interested in it. His social-mindedness is more awakened through this (Seidler & Zilah, 1930, p. 23).

Adler's Child guidance centers, while providing a rich historical example for the social work profession (as well as an example of the chronosystem), could also be used to illustrate the other four ecological systems. Bronfenbrenner also stresses reciprocity between systems which Adler's ideas highlight.

Conclusion: Why Include Alfred Adler in Social Work Curriculums?

Kenneth Clark, the first African American president of the American Psychological Association studied Adler's psychological principles and provided persuasive notes that greatly influenced the argument of an historic case before the Supreme Court against the "separate but equal" doctrine posed by *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) (Griffin & Powers, 1984). According to the lead lawyer, Thurgood Marshall (who later became the first African-American Chief Justice), Earl Warren, Chief Justice, said that Clark's emphasis, which relied on an understanding of Adler, was instrumental in helping "*Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka Kansas*" to overturn "*Plessy v. Ferguson*." This new legislation resulted in an end of support for legally segregated schools in the United States.

According to Individual Psychology, social equality needs to be explicitly taught and by means of the therapy of encouragement, to help free people from neurotic self-interest and to show them the true worth of their contributions toward society (Adler, 1930). As is seen in the aforementioned Supreme Court ruling, equal is not enough if people are separated. Clark used Adler's idea of the "inferiority complex" to show how segregation fueled feelings of inferiority (Griffin & Powell, 1984) and ultimately divided people.

Almost a century ago, Seidler and Zilah (1930), recognized the importance of Individual Psychology on the various systems and predicted, “More and more will the necessity be felt for applying Individual Psychology to the training of parents, vocational educations, teachers, officials, judges; in short, of all those who have to deal with children and education (p. 27). The current challenges of living through a pandemic have created an educational crisis. Learning from the Farooq et al, (2005) study using an Adlerian video-based parenting education program study, social workers familiar with Adler’s work might consider revitalizing some kind of virtual modern-day child guidance centers. This intervention would be timely, and likely welcomed, as parents have no choice but to assume a much more integral role in their children’s often online education. The following quote by Spiel and Birnbaum (1930), is especially relevant at this time,

Our guidance clinics in this way have become something more than guidance centers; they have become transformation centers and driving powers. Like all driving powers, they lead more and more to new forms of organization. The wide chasm between home education and education in educational institutions must be bridged by intermediary institutions (p. 83).

Social workers knowledgeable in Individual Psychology would be better able to act with teachers as intermediaries. Utilizing the latest technologies and Adlerian principles, an important goal would be to make parents allies, and teach them how they could better train their children to be both courageous and independent (Adler et al, 1930), while they navigate learning online in a very stressful time.

This author proposes that Alfred Adler be added to all social work curricula and taught along with Freud. Professionals trained in the School of Individual Psychology could be hired to lecture on Adler in our social work schools. Adler’s focus on prevention is a cornerstone of his theory; social workers are often on the front lines of child abuse protection and prevention, as well as in most schools, the place Adler felt could offer the best prevention of societal ills. “Adler’s Individual Psychology is taking a renewed interest in the ways in which laws, public policies, institutional behaviors and popularly-held attitudes can lead to such social problems as poverty, homelessness, hunger, illiteracy, sickness and judicial inequity” (Todman, & Mansager, 2011, p. 92). This is poignantly demonstrated in the aforementioned Supreme Court Case ruling . In Adler’s words, "What we call just and righteousness, and consider most valuable in the human character, is essentially nothing more than the fulfillment of the conditions which arise in the social needs of mankind" (Adler, 1927, p. 32). Individual psychology emphasizes that treatment of all of humanity, not just the wealthy (Ellenberger, 1970).

Perhaps if more social workers were familiar with the “pioneer of prevention” (Ansbacher, 1992), research efforts and grant writing might be galvanized to more successfully obtain much needed mental health prevention

funding. If Adler's psychology was persuasive enough for the Supreme Court on issues of social injustice in 1954; perhaps it would be equally as persuasive now. As we struggle through a pandemic, it is worth reiterating that Adler's first published ideas were in the field of social medicine and that he believed much of disease to be a product of society (Ellenburger, 1970). All of Adler's writing indicate he saw social interest as a solution. Adler's life work and its application to both the micro and macro systems can help bridge the split that has always divided the social work profession into an either/or debate; treating the individual vs. society. Adler spent his career compassionately treating clients; educating the public; creating programs that treated individuals and families; while also creating a psychology that explicitly valued social justice, and was robust enough for Albert Ellis to deem Adler, "The true father of modern psychotherapy" (as cited in Sommers-Flanagan & Sommers-Flanagan, 2012, p. 115). Who better to embrace Adler's ideas than the social work profession and what better time?

This author believes that educating social workers about Alfred Adler will do much to revitalize his important contributions; reciprocally, his contributions will add value to the social work profession. Posthumously, Adler seems to struggle from an identity crisis parallel to the one that the social work profession often faces, both at least partly based on a false dichotomy between the individual and society. The inseparability of the two represents the greatest and most unavoidable argument for equality. Sadly, one might wonder if Adler's campaign for women and minority equality may have contributed to his voice having been forgotten. Yet as voices for equality get louder, Adler's voice is one we might listen for across the years. One can imagine if he were still alive, he would kindly remind us all, "The fundamental law of life (...) is that of overcoming" (Adler, 1938, p. 7).

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