

Running Head: International Adlerian Summer Schools

International Committee of Adlerian Summer Schools and Institutes (ICASSI):

World-Wide Learning of Adlerian Psychology

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Abstract

An international program for offering world-wide Adlerian training for professionals as well as individuals and families was established in 1962 by Rudolf Dreikurs, M.D. Dreikurs patterned the international summer schools after those established many years earlier by Alfred Adler himself. The summer schools brought together people from many countries who wanted to learn Adlerian psychology in a community setting without barriers in terms of race, ethnicity, gender, age, or any other divisions. During Dreikurs' lifetime he funded the schools privately, and after his death the International Committee of Adlerian Summer Schools and Institutes (ICASSI) became a non-profit educational organization that followed the structure and purpose of the early summer programs. The 45th Rudolf Dreikurs Summer Institute of ICASSI took place in July 2012 in Druskininkai, Lithuania. An international board continues what Adler and Dreikurs had envisioned.

Alfred Adler (1930, 1931, 1932) was a psychiatrist and younger colleague of Sigmund Freud in the early years of the 20th Century (Ferguson, 2010). He broke with Freud in 1911 over several basic constructs: (1) He rejected Freud's division of personality into Id, Ego, and Superego, and emphasized *holism* instead, stating that each person functions as an individual whole on the basis of choices and decisions. He called his approach *Individual Psychology* in order to put the emphasis on the whole individual. (2) He rejected Freud's assumption that the fundamental motivation in humans is sexual and emphasized that humans have *social* motivation, with the *need to belong* being the fundamental social motivation (Ferguson, 1989). When humans feel belonging, they have *Social Interest (Gemeinschaftsgefühl)*, which is the striving to contribute to human welfare. (3) He rejected Freud's assumption of historical/developmental determinism based on psychosexual stages and instead focused on self-set *goals* as the source of a 'soft determinism.'

Rudolf Dreikurs (1950, 1968, 1972), also a psychiatrist, was a younger colleague of Alfred Adler (Ferguson, 2001). When Adler died in 1937, Dreikurs fulfilled Adler's commitments to lecture in Brazil, where Dreikurs established the Society of Individual Psychology of Rio de Janeiro. In 1946 he returned to Brazil, and in the following years he traveled extensively in the United States. He worked in Israel in 1959 and he had traveled many times to Europe. He knew the needs for Adlerian psychology around the world. In 1962, in Denmark, Dreikurs established the first of a series of international summer schools that were patterned after the training programs Adler had established. He strove in Europe to help re-vitalize Adlerian psychology, which the fascist regimes had actively crushed. He saw the need for increasing *Social Interest* among people world-wide, and he sought to teach Adlerian methods and theory for improving human relations in the family, school, workplace, and nations. ICASSI would show the value of

living in harmony and peace, with encouragement and self-understanding replacing autocratic methods still used widely. Dreikurs hoped to hold the Summer Institute in a different country each year, wherever there was a group that wanted to learn and expand Adlerian psychology.

Following Dreikurs' death in 1972, the programs continued and ICASSI became a non-profit organization, registered in the United States (Ferguson, 2000). Dreikurs had trained a number of people in the last years of his life who wanted to continue his work and who knew the value he placed on world-wide needs for cooperation, cooperative problem solving, and mutual respect. Three of his closest colleagues became chairpersons of this new organization. One was an American psychiatrist (W. L. (Bill) Pew), one was an Israeli social worker (Achi Yotam), and one was a Swiss psychotherapist (Erik Blumenthal). These three, in addition to a Canadian counselor (Edna Nash) who served as Secretary and Treasurer, made up the first Executive Committee of ICASSI. An international Board was appointed and senior Adlerians from many countries became the faculty. In line with the principle of Social Interest, of contributing to human well being, none of the teaching faculty received any salary. Only their travel and living expenses were covered. In time, the organization included a salaried administrator and paid office support personnel. To this day, all officers (chairpersons and Board members) are also expert instructors, and they, as well as the other teaching faculty, do not receive any salary. They volunteer their time and efforts, in order to help expand the principles and methods of Adlerian psychology. They seek improved cooperation and insightful collaboration among all humans, and they teach Adlerian methods that help in the home, school, workplace, and in relations between nations.

The Summer Institute is bilingual, with plenary sessions in English and German. Courses are also in one or the other language, and some courses are bilingual. In rare cases, the plenary

sessions were tri-lingual. For example, in 1988 ICASSI was in Chios, Greece, and the morning plenary sessions were translated in terms of English, German, and Greek. In recent summer institutes the participants came from 25 nations and from all continents except Antarctica. An active scholarship program exists, which helps people from low-income countries to attend. Funding for scholarships comes from donations and some Foundation assistance.

Classes have a variety of formats, and the interested reader can see what is offered on the website: <http://www.icassi.net/> Demonstrations of interview techniques as well as many other Adlerian methods are typically part of the plenary sessions as well as part of classroom teaching. In addition to the many courses for professionals, there are some courses for individuals who wish to increase their self-understanding, and there is a large and active program for children and for adolescents. Expert instructors from many nations lead all classes, including those for children and teens. The aim of the Summer Institute is to help increase mutual respect and understanding of people from all ethnicities, religions, and ages. Families come, and in some cases three generations participate. I recall one family in which the teen-age daughter loved her cohort group, the parents (both professionals) took advanced courses, and the grandmother enjoyed introductory classes that introduced her to Adlerian psychology.

Adlerian psychology is applicable to all spheres of human endeavor. Non-psychologists attend courses dealing with work relationships (Ferguson, 2006, 2007), so that managers, health service workers, accountants, lawyers, and people in all kinds of occupations attend. They learn improved methods for their work as well as improved relationships within the family. Many return over a number of years, taking different classes and gaining new understanding. ICASSI provides a living example of how Adlerian methods are applied to everyday life. The encouraging atmosphere, in which people of many nations share and cooperate, provides a model

for how humans are able to live with mutual respect and increased feelings of belonging. ICASSI models hope and provides concrete steps for improving human well being for all.

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