

# Comparative Lifestyles in Two Sexually Homogenous Environments

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One of Alfred Adler's most significant contributions was his unified, holistic notion of an individual's "lifestyle," the constant theme of life and its variations. Because the term *lifestyle* has become so commercialized, we need to recall Adler's definition.

As Ansbacher and Ansbacher (1967) note, Adler equated the "style of life" with the self or ego, one's own personality, the unity of personality, individuality, individual form of creative activity, the method of facing problems, opinion about oneself and the problems of life, and the whole attitude to life. Rudolf Dreikurs (1953) followed Adler's holistic notion by noting that "the lifestyle is comparable to a characteristic theme in a piece of music. It brings the rhythm of recurrence into our lives" (p. 44). Although each individual's own style is unique, Harold Mosak, contemporary Adlerian authority on lifestyles, has identified (in Nikelly, 1972) 14 different, commonly observed lifestyles. Particularly relevant to this article is Mosak's (1959) description of the following: "The 'getter' exploits and manipulates life and others by actively or passively putting others into his service. He tends to view life as unfair for denying him that to which he feels entitled. He may employ charm, shyness, temper, or intimidation as methods of operation. He is insatiable in his getting" (p. 194).

We have observed that both incarcerated male juveniles and college females often present pampered lifestyles. This view is consistent with Adlerian literature (Adler 1964a, 1964b, 1967, 1970; Rattner in Nikelly, 1972). Perhaps the crucial difference in the two populations relates to the passive or active nature of such pampered lifestyles. Incarcerated male juveniles are typically aggressive "getters" in exploiting others; conversely, many females from upper middle-class families have chosen a more passive, dependent role in getting their way. Both populations contain many pampered lifestyles, but significant active-passive roles appear to have emerged.

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## Experiences in Juvenile Corrections

Several studies have been conducted concerning correctional populations (Ansbacher, Ansbacher, Shiverack, & Shiverack, 1967; Chaplin, 1967, 1970; Eckstein, 1978; Hillson & Worchel, 1958). Adler (1970) presented the following statements regarding delinquents and pampered lifestyles:

We assert that in criminals we invariably find evidence of the pampered lifestyle. Delinquents who have committed one or more crimes picture the world as a place where everyone else exists for their exploitation, where they have the right forcibly to take possession of the goods, health, or life of others and to set their own interest above the interest of others. In such cases we can always find a certain attitude which can be traced through the life history of the delinquent back to childhood. Delinquents are always individuals whose social interest suffered shipwreck in childhood, whose social interest did not attain full maturity. They begin very early to take forcibly anything which seems to them to belong to them. (p. 257)

At the risk of overgeneralization, we have found that many incarcerated males often feel unfairly treated by society, that they can break the rules and not have to suffer the "logical consequences," and that they are often discouraged. Having failed to gain attention in socially accepted ways, they resort instead to socially unacceptable, but personally enhancing, delinquent behavior.

Two specific Adlerian techniques found to be useful included what Nikelly (1972) described as "stroke-and-spit" tactics: "Stroking means that the therapist gives of his time and effort to help the client listen to himself and to cultivate an active, social interest. In *spitting* the therapist discloses the skillful maneuvers of the client, who may be seeking to avoid intimacy or who is directly hostile to others, and thereby exposes his ineffective ways of behaving (i.e., 'Look what you are actually doing'). Spitting implies that the disclosure is unpleasant enough so that the client no longer desires to continue this behavior" (p. 88). Thus, through encouragement, trust relationships between counselor and client are possible. A psychological investigation follows, including a lifestyle plus other relevant psychometric information. The crucial interpretation and reorientation phases involve sharing possible mistaken goals (i.e., undue attention, power, revenge, inadequacy), while encouraging the use of more socially appropriate ways of fulfilling the unique lifestyle.

Incarcerated juveniles appear to be sensitive to "society-oriented" counselors "unfairly" trying to change their lives; yet, they are often encouraged when they gain insights concerning possible explanations of their delinquent activities. A discussion of more socially appropriate methods of fulfilling the

same needs is included. Adler's personal discussion exemplifying the useful and useless nature of lifestyles has been especially appreciated by these adolescents. As a child, Adler had a fear of death, resolving to overcome it by becoming a physician. However, another person with a similar fear of death may become a grave digger, triumphing over death at each burial rite. Just as the incarcerated males can realize the useful-useless side of the same need, they can similarly employ more socially appropriate means of attaining their goals. It seems futile to argue whether the incarceration is justified; rather, encouragement in fulfilling their goals through more useful ways has proven to be more effective.

In addition to the use of lifestyles as a preferred method of treatment, many Adlerian family counseling techniques are appropriate. Since 30 to 35 boys were housed together, group cooperation and consideration should be stressed. We also learned that regular family-type problems occurred; for example, a recurring problem was that larger, aggressive boys would attack smaller, passive students in the dorm. Of course, the smaller boys instantly sought protection and retaliation through the counselor. Preventing such activities proved futile and frustrating for the counselor; however, realizing his error, he began to withdraw from such disputes, encouraging the students to work things out for themselves. Just as in normal family conflicts, the smaller boys often had provoked the wrath of the larger teenagers. By experiencing the natural consequences of their actions, such fighting became less prevalent.

As Dreikurs (1967) notes, many psychopathic personality types resist personal treatment, responding to group spirit instead: "It is easier to change the objectives and tendencies of the whole group than of an individual alone. New group values must be developed to increase and improve the social values of an individual" (p. 23). For this reason, group counseling is a preferred mode of treatment.

Developing social interest can also be encouraged through such activities as coeducational dances with incarcerated females. Eckstein (1978) has demonstrated that information obtained through sociometric techniques has been helpful in determining friends who desire to attend such functions together.

Maslow's (1954) hierarchy of needs is also an important consideration for correctional counselors. Often such basic needs as safety, clean sheets and towels, soap, and toothpaste must precede higher levels of honesty, self-esteem, and self-actualization. Counselors who are not willing to deal with such primary needs initially may experience difficulties in correctional institutions. Perhaps the founder of the Salvation Army, General William Booth, had the right philosophy in his "soup, soap, and salvation" approach to such individuals.

Another important function of correction counselors involves community consultation. Frequent conferences with parents, especially in relation to the fallacies of authoritarian and permissive techniques, may provide insights into how they often make the adolescent's delinquent behavior productive. Whenever possible, participation in ongoing parent study groups through family education centers can be an important educational experience for such individuals.

### **Experiences in a Women's College**

Seemingly at the opposite extreme from the predominately lower middle-class, black-dominated, male juvenile correction facility would be a predominately upper middle-class, white-oriented, 4-year women's college. Yet, despite the apparent contrasts, some similarities should be noted. As previously mentioned, both environments contain many pampered lifestyles, the apparent difference being in the active-passive manner of approaching the environment. In the introduction to *Problems of Neurosis*, Ansbacher (Adler, 1964a) summarizes Adler's view of the pampered lifestyle: "All neurotic persons who have developed from a pampered prototype expect to be appreciated before they will do anything of social value instead of after having done it, thus expecting the natural course of things to be reversed in their own favor" (p. 77). Such people want "to take without giving" (p. 95), want "everything for nothing" (p. 94), and "all or nothing" (p. 55).

In one's early recollections, Adler (1964a) says that references to mother or to the birth of another child are often clues to a pampered lifestyle. Other references to aunts, uncles, or grandparents providing special gifts and favors also appear frequently in recollections of the students of a women's college. Although it appears that parents and close relatives are guilty of spoiling such children, Adler (1967) stresses the *personal responsibility* of each individual receiving preferred treatment:

It cannot be said that bad training given by the mother is the element which is responsible for producing the pampered lifestyle. The child stumbles into this mistaken way by himself when the mother is the only person with whom he makes contact. This attitude could not occur unless the child claimed for himself all the advantages to be had in such a relationship. In other words, the child, under the circumstances indicated, will always think of himself, will see only possibility of success in expecting everything from his mother, in contributing nothing, in always taking and never giving. (p. 257)

In discussing women's role from an Adlerian perspective, Deutsch (1970) stresses that equality between the sexes could be more readily achieved if women would try to make clear to men how cooperation, rather than competition for dominance (i.e., radical feminist groups), benefits both

sexes. She aptly notes: "Many men are simply not aware that women still encounter social inequalities. If this is brought to their attention in a non-combative spirit, and if they are shown how equality is of benefit to *men as well as to women*, men would more willingly participate in correcting any existing injustices" (p. 123).

Important and needed changes for women have occurred in recent years. The increased options of combining motherhood and personality-fulfilling careers have crucial implications for women college students. But change does not come easily, and we have noted that many women still enjoy the benefits (support, chivalry, etc.) of being the "fairer sex." Somehow it seems that the contemporary women's rights movement has often been received by female college students as "tennis-shoe stomping, bra-burning" radicals. Thus, it often seems unfeminine to become liberated.

It also seems that many female college students put themselves in a double bind. On the one hand, they are sensitive to present sexual inequities, but they still are seeking a strong male figure for support and guidance. Dreikurs' *The Challenge of Marriage* (1946) is still relevant concerning Adler's "masculine protest," reflective of both male and female resentment of masculine superiority; the fallacy of glamour and chivalry (pp. 39-40); and the fallacy of beauty and sex appeal (p. 74). Although female students generally score in the equalitarian range on various sex role questionnaires, many women still feel dependent on male approval for their own feelings of self-worth. And, when females are in a sexually homogenous environment with decreased opportunities to interact with males, increased feelings of unworthiness and loneliness often occur.

At the risk of overgeneralization, we have found several common concerns relating to students experiencing problems in a women's college. In addition to feeling dependent, of being pampered, and expecting other people to be of special assistance, it appears that many female students give lip service to eliminating sexism (especially in salaries) and having equalitarian male-female roles. But there also appear to be many feelings of inadequacy in such tasks as getting a job and supporting oneself. Traditionally, exclusive male privileges and responsibilities often seem very difficult and frightening to women who have learned to depend on others for their "OK" feelings. Thus, liberation involves shedding some antiquated, but nonetheless comfortable lifestyles. "Stroke-and-spit" tactics can insure that the needed transition will be faster and less painful. Confrontation regarding women's own sexist stereotypes plus encouragement to engage in emergent behaviors are needed for lasting liberation.

### Summary

Two specific, sexually homogenous situations are discussed from an

Adlerian perspective. Implications regarding incarcerated male juvenile offenders along with the cultural need and significance of the current women's rights movement are presented. Despite vast cultural, sexual, and racial differences between the two populations, a central theme is that pampered lifestyles frequently occur in both groups. The major difference appears in an active versus passive pampered orientation, with male juveniles being more aggressive than female college students.

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