

Stolen Identity

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Abstract: The fundamental purpose of human behaviour is the desire to become and be accepted, to find a place in the family and then in the society it is part of. Social progress is the main, not the secondary. The search for meaning and a place in society are the main objectives of each child and adult. Individuals cannot exist without social interdependence. The role that each individual plays in society and his response to social stimuli highlights the development of his personality.

In this article, through an Adlerian approach, I will try to capture both the characteristics of ordinal positions in the family and their influence on later adult development. The most trusted method to determine the lifestyle is from an analysis of the family constellation and the earliest childhood memories.

The methods and techniques used are: study case interview, observation, conversation, life style inventory, family analysis through Family Constellation Intermediate and Early Memories.

Keywords: anxiety, depression, family constellation, striving for meaning, coping strategies

Through this work, I will attempt, by reference to the cases encountered in my clinical experience, to expose the psychological consequences that the order of birth and the position of the child in the family may have upon the individual later.

The individual is directed to a purpose, to the struggle and to the significance. He engages in activities that have a meaning, he makes decisions and organizes his own life. Searching for significance and a place in society are the main objectives of each child and adult. Individuals cannot exist without social interdependence. The role that each individual plays in society and his response to social stimulus emphasizes the development of his personality.

The child is a social being, and his strongest motivation is to belong, this being his basic need. Everything he does is aimed at finding a place in the family and then in society. Since childhood, he is very preoccupied with exploring ways to become part of the family group. The place of the child towards his brothers plays an important role in the development of the character of the adult later.

Every person has his own line of movement, his path, his concepts and attitudes, which lead to a different assessment of family situations. A child may be a single child for a number of years, then change to the position of the first-born. The first one can be overcome by the younger brother or sister, who then becomes, in a way, a first-born. The greatest one can then function as a second born.

In terms of theoretical work, the most notable contributions came from Individual Psychology, particularly from Alfred Adler and Rudolf Dreikurs. For them, an important influence on the evolution of character in children and the development of a lifestyle was the constellation of the family and the position maintained by the child in it.

Characteristics of the unique child. Because he never had a rival, for the single child, brothers tend not to become competitors. He is often spoiled and will never learn to share with someone else. It may have some features in common with the firstborn, or vice versa, with the new born. As an adult, the single child is usually friendly and charming, and through his social behaviour plans to please, not to outdo.

Characteristics of the firstborn. The firstborn once had everything for himself and still prefers to be the first and the leader. He tends to feel that he is ranked and often turns to achievement. He or she tends to be conservative when it comes to change.

Characteristics of the second born. The second child remains with the feeling that he started the competition late and has to recover. Always someone seems to be ahead of him, a standard runner against whom they are measured. As an adult, the second child is a "runner", looking for a more successful, more revolutionary belief area, more eager to follow someone else's direction.

The features of the middle child. The middle child has a standard runner in front and a follower in the back. It can feel pressed, crammed into a small area looking for meaning, because it was surrounded by competitors. As an adult, the middle child tends to be susceptible to abuse or injustice. He fears that he will not be given his share.

Characteristics of the youngest. The youngest is never dethroned. For him the path is set and the landmarks are clear. On the other hand, it has much to recover to catch up. As an adult, the youngster, who often starts to catch up with others, will be very ambitious. If it has decided not to pursue, then it continues in a dependent role.

Each of these five positions corresponds to features related to early experiences. From the point of view of its characteristics, each position is unique, but none is better than the others. The way childhood activities responded influenced the adult's features later on.

The significance of the numerical position depends entirely on the significance given by the child, individually, as he interprets this. Not all first born children remain at the forefront. Each constellation of the family will be unique in accordance with the interpretations made within it. These early deductions leave a mark on the individual throughout his life.

We cannot rewrite our family history, but we can often reinterpret it when facts, unknown or forgotten events are introduced.

We find in Adler a classic description of the effects of the birth order with the following parts:

- 1) Children of the same family are not born in the same environment. The second child is born in a psychological situation different from the first;
- 2) The psychological situation is important, not the order at birth. If the eldest child is considered bad, the second born may assume the role of a firstborn;
- 3) The large age gap between brothers and sisters tends to decrease their competition;
- 4) The order of birth is only an influence, not an absolute determinant, (Adler, 1964a, pp. 96-120).

The most trusted method to determine the lifestyle is from an analysis of the family constellation and the earliest childhood memories - even if the lifestyle can be deduced from patterns of behaviour, from brief descriptions, or from rapidly observed behaviour.

The term "family constellation" includes a number of important elements, all of which are part of the child's early experiences. The main elements of the family constellation are: constellation of brothers and sisters, family values, family atmosphere, parental behaviour, and family role played by each child.

In the complete description of the family constellation, two conditions are considered:

- 1) Family constellation includes quite a lot of information about parents and siblings;
- 2) The Family Constellation Investigation highlights those aspects of childhood history that reveal the family dynamics encountered by the child and the characteristic direction of its movement in response. This direction of movement follows a fundamental law: the child trains those qualities through which he hopes to gain importance in the family structure (Dreikurs, 1953, p. 41).

From my work in the office, I would like to present a little more special case, which illustrates what has been said above.

Case description:

Patient aged 45 years, male, the eldest of three children of the family. He is a carpenter profession, with attempts to become a painter. He has a brother 2 years younger and another one 3 years younger. Middle brother works in construction, and the youngest brother is a successful lawyer in a multinational company.

The patient, emotionally unstable, comes to therapy with feelings of depression and lethargy. The patient cannot practice his job anymore. His performance and social functioning have been negatively affected. He is on extended medical leave for several months, he does not know if he "has the power to continue practicing his job. I do not know if I'm capable, what I want or who I am."

Anamnestic data:

The patient grew up in a modest family with two younger brothers, being the firstborn. He was raised by the great-grandmother up to the age of seven, and after her death by grandparents. Since he was a young child he felt marginalized, the other brothers coalescing against him, being a much closer relationship between the other two. He always had to claim his firstborn place and leader among his brothers. He also tried to prove even to his parents that he is better than the other two brothers, trying to copy and imitate them. Since the first session he recalled with "pain in the soul" that was the difference including in sports activities, the other brothers practiced the sports together, like rugby, disc and hammer throw, while he was doing speed skating and judo.

As far as the relationship with the parents is concerned, the patient says that he always felt that the other siblings were more appreciated than he. He never felt that his own being is enough, which after many attempts to be accepted as he was he gave up, and tried to copy or do what he believed that others would appreciate more than his own person.

Currently, the patient says the relationship with siblings and parents is appreciated as a distant relationship, being disturbed by the fact that the other two siblings are very close to each other and their mother, the father being deceased.

In marriage, we meet the same scenario as in little childhood, where it cannot be expressed as a "family head" because the patient says it is "almost non-existent". His opinions almost never matter, and he says "I cannot find myself here either." The patient says he no longer knows who he really is, he does not know his own identity because his firstborn, leader and then "man in the house" position has been suppressed, even stolen.

Diagnosis and psychodynamic considerations

The patient came to therapy with resentment from childhood experiences, held with parents and brothers. These can be addressed in a general way, but it is much more effective to show a better understanding, with the more specific aspects of the birth order being discussed with the patient.

Each family has a distinct configuration. Following the interchange of responses and influences among its members, different personalities arise. The position of the individual in the constellation - the role he plays - will have an extended influence on the patterns of the whole family and on the personality of each of the brothers.

The significance of the numerical position depends entirely on the significance that the child gives it, individually, as he interprets this. Not all first-born babies are automatically in the forefront, as is the case presented above. Each constellation of the family will be unique in accordance with the interpretations made within it. These early deductions leave a mark on the

individual throughout his life. Many families are highly competitive, competition between the firstborn and the second and third is very intense, stimulating them to move in opposite directions. It is even more pronounced if parents turn their children against each other in the wrong idea that this stimulates them. In this case, each child yields the land of the most successful of the brethren and in his discouragement, it goes in the opposite direction. We also meet this situation in the case presented above, where parents did not succeed in a fusion between siblings, but on the contrary a separation.

There is no ideal family size. No matter how many children there are, there are always specific issues. They vary with the number of members and the interpretation they give to each place they have within the family. No matter the size of the family, there is constant influence and pressure among its members. Each child influences and parents alike.

From the beginning, we can see that there is an infinity of varied responses the child can give to various aspects of his or her external environment. There are no rules for a parent to determine what will happen. But the parent who is always in the constellation of the family has information that he can interpret in a much better way what once seemed mysterious. When we perceive a situation we are in a much better position to cooperate with it.

Child happiness is directly proportional to the self-differentiating ability. If this is low, it means that the child is affected by parental anxiety and cannot control its own emotionality, which influences its development. The effects are concretized in the fact that these children do not have autonomy in thinking, and as adults they cannot master the course of their own lives.

Rebuilding relationships with family through a reassessment and reconsideration of the basic beliefs we have created in and about our relationships with ourselves and our parents is one of the fundamental elements for eliminating vulnerabilities on certain dimensional relationships with others, especially with your couple partner. *Differentiation of Self* can be accomplished through a return to the home family and establishing with it honest, direct relationships without excessive emotionality and involvement in triangles.

Conclusions

People with no capacity for differentiation are subjected to emotionality, their reactions to others being transmuted by obedience or mistrust, with little autonomy, and the tendency to fuse emotionally with others. They share ideas, not thoughts, agreeing with anything, and at the same time, arguing for anything. People with self-differentiation have a self-sustaining capacity for emotional impulses, they are cognitively and sentimentally balanced, but they are also capable of emotion or spontaneity. Their thinking is autonomous, making firm decisions according to their own convictions.

Differentiation is described as a process of partial disengagement of a person by emotional family chaos, which requires the individual role to be analysed as an active participant in the relationship system, not considering the problems of others not belonging to them (Guerin, Fay, Burden and Kautto, 1987).

Children can be emotionally individualized according to their position in the family (Toman, 1969), which is also supported by Bowen. Frank Sulloway's book (1916) - *Born to Rebel*, contains conclusions drawn from a varied analysis of over a million biographical data. Frank Sulloway claims that the order of birth of children in a family is important in shaping the future personality because they compete with each other. Firstborn babies are usually dominated by the desire for fraternal authority, Adler considering them as "conservatives hungry for power". Examples of the firstborn are Winston Churchill, George Washington, Ayn Rand, Rush Limbaugh. The lastborn tends to oppress, but the desire to find a place in their own family makes them more open to

experience. Evidence is the explorers, or heretics in history: Ioana d'Arc, Marx, Lenin, Jefferson, Rousseau, Virginia Wolf, Mary Wollstonecraft, and Bill Gates.

Adlerians understand the competition between family members as a struggle to win some perceived places available in the group, with those who also aspire to the same places. Two children of the same family can fight each other not necessarily because they are rivals. Other possible reasons for fighting are: gaining parental attention, wanting to express anger to parents, playing roles.

An effect of brother and sister competition on occupying a significant place in the family is that each develops different behavioural traits, features and interests than the other brother. Another important effect of the competition is that the success of a brother or sister in an area can have a daunting effect on the competitor. A child, in response to the fact that the brother is very successful in gaining parental consent, may show obedience or passivity due to discouragement.

The features presented above are only probabilities, since each case is unique and may differ more or less from the average.

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