

Position in the Family in Relation to Teaching as a Career Choice

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The general conclusion from this research substantiates Adler's premise that the oldest child, as an adult, seeks an occupation that would place him in a position of authority. At this point this conclusion must be delimited to the occupation of teaching as evidenced by the majority of oldest siblings within the freshman population at a professional school. Along with this, the population manifested particular common temperament traits, as measured by a personality test in agreement with those hypothesized by Adler, which are characteristic of the oldest in birth order.

Educational and vocational counselors know that, because our present society is oriented toward competitiveness and achievement, one's choice to pursue higher education in preparation for a particular occupation may be motivated by certain temperament traits of the individual. Super and Bachrach (1957) in referring to the need for future research with an emphasis on a fusion of an interdisciplinary approach to existing psychological theories, stressed birth order and its relationship to vocational development as a needed research area.

Those familiar with the writings of Alfred Adler, as presented by Ansbacher (1956) and Dreikurs (1950), are significantly aware of the individual's place in the family constellation and his perceived life style upon subsequent behavior. Adler hypothesized that the oldest child as an adult would seek positions placing him in authority. The problem of this study, therefore, became that of investigating Adler's above-mentioned hypothesis.

For purposes of this research, positions of authority were delimited to the occupation of teaching as defined in accordance with descriptions set forth by the U. S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (1955) wherein the teacher, within his own field, serves as authoritative source of advice, information and leadership, and, by definition, is an authority in his respective field. Those who gained admission as freshmen into one professional school of teaching, by way of currently employed selective admissions criteria which rest heavily upon the applicant's academic and social achievements, served as representatives of the teaching profession. The fact that the applicant chose to apply, passed the rigors of competitive admissions, and finally registered for September classes, was deemed sufficient evidence for assuming his desire to enter the profession. It was hypothesized that if Adler's premise concerning birth order was invalid there

would be a significant difference between the relative birth orders of those entering teaching education as freshmen. If, however, it was valid such a significant difference would not exist.

Research findings by Angers (1960, 1963) as well as Shulman (1962) and Shyne (1959) support the significance of one's position in the family constellation and his life style upon behavior. Hypotheses originally advanced by Schachter (1959) and researched and substantiated by Becker and Carroll (1962), Capra and Dittes (1962), and Sampson (1962) point up the relationship between birth order, achievement, and affiliation to the group, that characterizes first borns. In such a context, demonstrated achievement and affiliation to the group (profession) can be viewed as typifying one who would choose to enter teaching and his resulting identification with the profession. The personality characteristics of the typical teachers college student as reported by Samenfeld *et. al.* (1963) indicates aggressiveness and the need of acceptance as commonly shared traits among the highest frequency of teacher college freshmen. The evidenced abilities of the freshman population at this institution as manifested through admissions data (Angers, Mercer, and Samenfeld, 1963) confirmed the view that those aspiring to enter the profession of teaching come from the ranks of the most highly qualified secondary school students on the achievement basis.

The data reported in this paper were mainly derived from information given by freshman orientation testing instruments, both those developed at the local level to determine the reasons for choosing the teaching profession (Angers and Mercer, 1963) and a standardized personality assessment commonly referred to as the MMPI.

METHOD

Birth Order

Information was obtained about the individual's birth order by means of a simple multiple-choice type item in which the subject was to indicate whether he was positioned within the familial constellation as the: (1) oldest child, (2) youngest child, (3) middle child (second or third in four), (4) only child, or, (5) member of a family of more than four children. Factors such as age distance between self and siblings were not taken into account because of the small number (100) in the random sample.

Testing Situations

There were two testing situations – one yielding information about birth order, the other yielding temperament qualities manifested through personality questionnaire results. The first situation consisted of administering a questionnaire to determine the reasons why the subject chose to enter the profession including the item concerning birth order. In the second situation a personality questionnaire was administered.

Subjects

In the testing situations listed above, 496 teacher college freshmen (397 women and 99 men) completed both the locally developed questionnaire on the reasons for choosing teaching (Angers, Mercer, and Samenfeld, 1963) and the MMPI. Both instruments were part of the freshman testing battery referred to earlier.

TABLE 1
THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BIRTH ORDER
OF TEACHER COLLEGE FRESHMEN

	Birth Order					Total
	Oldest child	Youngest child	Only child	Middle child	More than 4 children	
Teachers	42	27	7	12	12	100

Birth Order

Reference to Table 1 examines the distribution which results from the assumption that there was a significant difference in ordinal familial position between those choosing teaching as a career. These results seem to substantiate Adler's premise that the oldest in the birth order does gravitate toward positions of authority in greater proportion than do the middle or the youngest at least as demonstrated by the birth order of this random sample selected in this study.

Temperament Data

Temperament data is revealed by the MMPI profiles indicated for both sexes an energetic and outgoing attitude and a tendency to be expressive about feelings towards rules and regulations.

Over-all, both male and female want to be accepted and to belong but they may do things which might lead others to reject them (Angers, 1963). This finding seems to be consistent with Adler's feeling that the oldest sibling on the average understands the importance of power and authority and may tend to exaggerate the importance of rules and laws, as well as that power should be maintained in the hands of those who are entitled to it, that is the teacher.

DISCUSSION

The results of this study suggest that (a) Adlerian concepts as they relate to birth order and resulting life style do have validity in the counseling situation, (b) first born siblings tend to gravitate toward schools of professional training as delimited by teacher education in greater proportion than do later born siblings (42 of 100), and (c) average temperament traits common among teacher college

students typify individuals who tend on the average to be aggressive, dominant, and conscious of the importance of rules and regulations as well as being willing to do something about these rules and regulations if they were not satisfied with them.

The working assumptions yielded from these results indicate that Adlerian concepts which specifically relate to birth order and its resulting life style do have validity in the educational and occupational planning phases of the counseling process, especially as this planning would relate to counseling students who manifest interest in teacher education as a higher educational goal.

Attempting to relate Adlerian psychology to achievement, motivation, counseling, and guidance respectively, Angers (1960, 1963) found the use of Adler's concepts valuable, specifically, as these had their roots in the counselee's birth order and life style. He observed in 1960 the relationship between a sibling's choice of occupation and its congruency with the sibling's perceived life style. Here Adler's view as presented by the Ansbachers (1956) concerning the individual accepting educational goals that had a promise of success framed within the individual's life style was also supported. This conclusion was buttressed by the findings of the writer's research wherein the quality of those choosing to enter teaching was demonstrated (Angers and Mercer, 1963). Accepting the fact that the individual in general does choose educational goals that hold promise of success within his perceived life style, we assume that this too would be characteristic of the teacher college applicants who entered and passed the rigors of competitive contemporary admissions procedures and finally registered for fall classes. The completion of this application and admissions process, being motivated by the individual's perceived style of life, was achieved by a greater frequency of oldest rather than later born siblings.

Shulman (1962) termed the individual's perception of his relationship to his family constellation as perhaps the most important of all environmental influences. This influence as it would operate during the formative years was stressed in regard to ordinal position, not particularly the position itself that mattered but the sibling's evaluation of it. The oldest child in the family was seen in Adlerian terms as the one that was either dethroned or threatened. This perception caused the oldest to compete with younger siblings and to want to be first in all his activities. Shulman, through the individual's subjectively perceived evaluations of his early environmental experiences, again found factors of birth order and life style invaluable diagnostic tools for ascertaining present attitudes, motivation, and values. These findings are consistent with this present research whereby the counselor through investigation could utilize this information as part of his counseling rationale.

The investigation of Shyne (1959) signifies Adler's concepts of therapy. Not only the oldest child's perception of inner security from his familial position is

demonstrated but also the effects of dethronement by a younger sibling. Shyne also emphasized the importance of the relative ages of the children within the family as well as the function of sex distribution and its effect upon the child. At this point she contended along with Adler that the probable future development of the child could be based upon his family position which in turn would influence his life style and personality trait development. The present study demonstrated data through the temperament survey which also supported the results of the MMPI by Samenfeld, *et al*, (1963), inferring that teacher college students manifested similar personality traits of high energy levels, social aggressiveness, and the need to express their feelings toward rules and regulations. These results also support Adler's views.

Hypotheses advanced by Schachter (1959) assumed first born individuals who perceived dethronement by later born siblings manifested anxiety because of an imagined or real loss of love from their parents. This dethroned individual, according to Schachter would therefore become anxiety-ridden, seeking attention, approval, and support from others in his environment. Schachter's view would be in line with the writer's as shown by the results of the temperament questionnaires in which both male and female mean results demonstrated outgoing dominant individuals who tended to seek approval from others. This latter factor of seeking approval which is not forthcoming would lead the oldest sibling to experience feelings of rejection. This observation would be a legitimate inference drawn from the trait results demonstrated by the MMPI.

The work of Becker and Carroll (1962) and Capra and Dittes (1962) confirmed Schachter's (1959) observations on ordinal position, behavior in social situations and motivation. The results of Becker and Carroll's experiment implied that since affiliative needs were satisfied in the presence of others, individuals possessing such needs would tend to join similar groups. Securing such group membership, those with high affiliative tendencies would also tend to avoid behavior that would break their established relationship with the group. This high affiliative tendency group was composed of more first borns than younger siblings. The substantiation of Schachter's (1959) viewpoint by these researchers which in turn put Adler's hypothesis concerning ordinal position to an experimental test, validated this original Adlerian premise. Although the supposition was made by the writers that teachers would either presently or eventually manifest strong identification with their separate profession, this supposition, *per se*, was not investigated as part of this research. Observations of the activities of teachers, however, seem to reveal empirically that the members of the teaching profession do interact and identify with their local and national professional organizations, thereby warranting such an assumption valid.

Since the results obtained in this study were based upon data representing random samples drawn from a predominantly female population of teacher college students, the work of Sampson (1962) was found to be significant. His

research demonstrated the differences between achievement that existed between first born males and females wherein the first born female tended to achieve higher than the first born male. This fact is empirically validated by observation of any academic record of the female, irrespective of her birth order. Generally, females are higher achievers than males. Regarding the first born female, however, Sampson injects a relevant observation which helps explain the reasons for the difference in her performance as compared to that of the male. He logically assumes that immediately the first born female is more independent since the parent typically puts the responsibility of the care for younger siblings upon her seeing this as her eventual role as a future mother. The oldest male, however, since his future adult role is not that of mothering, would not have these responsibilities put upon him. Irrespective of the differences found in the degree of achievement by both male and female as the result of this early independence training, first borns were found to possess a greater degree of the need for achievement than did later borns. This general finding seems to fit in with the achievement data reported earlier in this study by the fact that those who did register for September classes, predominantly the oldest, presented the highest academic and social achievement records.

In this study the data generated concerning birth order and the psychological characteristics of the oldest did substantiate Adler's views. It is not, however, the present writer's intention to assume that birth order alone was the sole determinant of the results. Factors within each individual, such as aptitudes, interests, and special skills which are either developed or otherwise present, could also operate in determining his choice of higher education. Along this line of reasoning Kaplan (1959) suggested that factors such as age of parents, age-range between offsprings, family income and family residence could each in its own way, or in combination, also influence such choices.

In conclusion, additional hypotheses are suggested which would merit further investigation in future research projects. For example, one would expect first born children (a) to be more frequent among graduating classes of the various professional schools, (b) to be in greater proportion of supervisory positions in industry at the nonprofessional levels, (c) to manifest greater identification professionally or non-professionally with their respective occupationally related organizations than would later born children. Lastly, first born females achieve higher academically than first born males in the same professional school.

SUMMARY

The general conclusion from this research substantiates Adler's premise that the oldest child as an adult seeks an occupation that would place him in a position of authority. At this point the conclusion must be delimited to the occupation of teaching as evidenced by the majority of oldest siblings within the freshman population at one professional school. Along with this, this population

manifested particular common personalities which would be in agreement with those hypothesized by Adler as being common among the oldest in the birth order.

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