

AN ONLY GIRL AMONG BROTHERS

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This is in no sense an article but rather a running case report by an Individual Psychologist who is a "Visiting Counselor" in the rural public school system of San Joaquin County, California. At the time of writing the case is still active, although the child is symptomatically improved.

The seven groups of interviews recorded in detail cover a period of some four months, the eighth statement being made at the close of a year of therapy.

Rose M. was referred because of a speech defect. The teacher, as was the custom, referred Rose to the general supervisor. As the general supervisor was in agreement, a referral blank, duly filled in, was forwarded to the visiting counselor.

I.

In the teacher's own words, Rose was referred because she did not "speak clearly." She was six years old and in the first grade of a two-teacher school. A brother, in the second grade, was in the same room. Rose, an only girl, was the fourth of five children. Ronald was fifteen; Paul, thirteen; Bill, eight; and Francis, fourteen months. Both parents were living. The father owned a dairy.

The referral blank also included the information that the family was of Portuguese extraction. On the Lee Clark Reading Readiness Test given on October 17, 1940, her score was 46, considerably above the average. Her scholarship in relation to her abilities was said to be excellent, her attendance was good. In regard to her social adjustment it was stated that she did not get along with other children. No special abilities or disabili-

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ities were noted, but the teacher stated that she liked to draw.

At the first interview Rose was found to be a rather slender, attractive looking child. Her speech was inarticulate, rapid, and of a type commonly known as "baby talk." Among others, she substituted "w" for "r," "d" for the voiced "th," "f" for the unvoiced "th," she had a lingual protrusion lisp and there were vowel substitutions. A catch in her breath, the rapidity of her speech, and intense hyperactivity were some of the factors which caused us to regard her as a potential stutterer.

She appeared to be extremely friendly and eager to please. She drew pictures and chattered volubly. Her movements were graceful and unusually well-co-ordinated for a girl of her years. Paul, an older brother, when interviewed, stated that she cried easily. This was later corroborated by the teacher. It was suggested that she be given a rest period daily and not be forced in any way to do academic work.

The home visit revealed a rather shambling wooden house, clean and orderly. The baby was asleep on our arrival. The mother appeared to be the same physical type as Rose, intelligent and eager to cooperate. She stated that the father had been a stutterer, that Ronald still stuttered occasionally, that the father was very fond of his children when they were infants, made much of them, and tended to ignore them as they grew up. Ronald, her oldest child, and Billy had been unwilling to attend school on the first day, but both Paul and Rose had gone eagerly.

A physical examination was suggested for Rose. As the family had no pri-

vate physician the mother was asked whether she would be interested in taking Rose to the Health Center to be examined by the County pediatrician. The visiting counselor later referred the matter to the public health nurse, who made arrangements for Rose to attend the clinic.

-- At the end of this first series of interviews certain tendencies were noted. We decided to watch for further indications of social maladjustment arising out of a feeling of inferiority with respect to the younger child in the family, and for evidences of antagonism to the mother and of feelings of inadequacy in relation to the father and brothers. The marked interest in drawing, in conjunction with the felt inadequacy, expressed partly through a speech defect, gave rise to a question of handedness.

II.

The teacher reported that Rose was having a rest period in school, that she was stuttering at times and was teasing the other children on the playground. Many of them disliked her already.

The interview with Rose included the following:

"Does your mother like you?"

"Yes, my daddy likes me."

"Whom does your mother like best, you or the baby?"

"She likes the baby best; it is a little bit sick. Sometimes I am a little bit sick." The time devoted to the baby on account of its helplessness was explained. She spoke of a trip which she was probably going to take. She said she might miss some school, but she would study hard on her return so that she would not have to stay in the first grade. At this point she was reassured. She was going to visit her grandma. In answer to a question she said there was no other child at her grandma's and immediately added, "She likes me." Again she was reassured about her mother's attitude toward her. Spontaneously and at the same time making an inviting gesture

with both hands she said, "I remember when I was little, I was under a soft blanket and my mother made kitchy, kitchy to me."

She told of her older brother teasing her. "He is nice to me in school--you know--because of the teacher and all. My brother fights with my mother at home. My mother gets cross, then she talks loud to me. Why does she talk loud to me? I haven't done anything."

-- In this interview the child verbalized her competition with the younger brother, her feeling of being unfairly treated by her mother and older brother, her leaning toward her father, and her desire to return to a pampered babyhood.

III.

The public health nurse stated that Rose was home with influenza.

IV.

Physical Examination Findings:

Age 6, Ht. 47-1/2", Wt. 49-1/4 lbs., Range 50 - 59 lbs.

P.E.: Negative, small tonsils, tongue and mouth normal.

V.

When we arrived at the school the teacher informed us of the mother's request that, since the pediatrician had found Rose in good condition, merely using a little "baby talk," she would prefer that Rose would not rest in school, as it would take her away from her work. The teacher ignored the request, explaining to Rose that she was resting during drawing period, hence did not miss any of her reading or number work. We commended the teacher, adding that we thought it would be just as well if Rose rested during part of the reading class and that we would handle the home situation.

During the interview Rose drew pictures, spoke of the fact that she had been ill and, for the first time, directed a verbal attack against the baby, saying that he had "messed up" her playhouse. She had slapped him

and he had hit back.

We discussed her attitude toward other children on the playground, children who teased her, and how we made and kept friends. The teacher had reported that Rose had cried and complained of the boy behind her pulling her braids and that the other girls did not want to play with her on the playground. Questioned, the other children had stated that Rose did not want to play because she could not always be first. We spoke of these incidents and Rose stated that the other girls did not allow her to choose. We suggested that she might have to wait quite long for her turn to choose, and we made up a game in which we decided exactly what she was to say when she was teased.

On the back of her picture of a man, drawn for test purposes, was a drawing "of a lady dancing" which she colored to suit herself. She called attention to the chandelier overhead and also to the fact that the lady had yellow hair and said yellow hair was "pitty." Her own hair was brown and that of her mother dark. The dress conformed to the latest dictates of fashion. The profiles of both drawings faced right, a possible indication of sinistrality.

The Goodenough Drawing Scale results were: C.A. 6-5, M.A. 12-0, I.Q. 187. Experience with this test has taught us that such a high I.Q. in a child so young is to be considered merely as an indication of the general group into which the case falls, here "superior." For more exact measurement a Binet test was indicated.

After Rose had been dismissed we saw Paul in his classroom. The pediatrician had suggested that he see a specialist about his knee. Nothing had been done about it. Resistance of the mother was further evinced during the home visit by the fact that she was unwilling to recognize that Rose did not get on well with the other children at school. She kept repeating that Rose got on well with other children who visited in the home. We congratulated her on the fact that

Rose's rest periods in school were being continued and were partly responsible for her improvement in speech. She had not been stuttering either at home or at school. The mother accepted the congratulations, making no mention of the fact that she had asked discontinuance of rest periods. We spoke to the father suggesting that he give Rose more of his attention. The picture of the family was rather clearer at this interview than at the last. The father found use for both boys in the barn, but had no place for Rose there because she was so small and a girl. Indoors, he played with and petted the baby, and the mother spent a good deal of her time caring for it.

We left while the mother assured us that she would try to influence the father along the lines indicated, although she seemed to feel rather helpless in the matter. She said that they were going to take Paul to a specialist.

-- In this interview the child verbalized her attack against the baby brother, we gained the mother's cooperation despite her resistance, first steps were taken in the re-education of the child in regard to her attitude toward her contemporaries, and for the first time we met the father.

VI.

When we reached the school we found that Rose was not present. Paul, her older brother, stated that she had "gotten mad" on the way to school and had returned home. He reported that she had insisted upon walking in the middle of the road; that she had not obeyed him when he called her to the side; that he had then pulled her and that she had become very angry and had refused even to ride to school in the car of an acquaintance who happened to be passing.

The teacher felt that she was showing some improvement socially, but that she tended to refuse to play with a group when things did not go her way. She was not stuttering and had not

done so since our last visit. She was resting regularly. The mother called for her recently, while she was resting, and reacted cooperatively.

A Binet test was given her in her own home. The mother was most cooperative and we had a room with a comfortable space in which to work. It was the family living room and the mother and her visitors were careful to use the back door while the test was in progress.

When we arrived Rose was seated in a little chair on the porch next to the baby's high chair and they were both eating bread and jam. Rose insisted upon breaking the bread for him, although this act did not improve the situation. The baby objected a little but soon quieted down and amicable relations were apparently reestablished. Later in the afternoon she started a "slapping game" with her little brother. The slaps progressed from gentle to much less gentle until interrupted. She also said of the baby, "Don't let him come in there with us."

The mother's visitor had brought her a gift of a rose taffeta dress. Later Rose showed us a rather similar dress of the same color which hung in her closet. She seemed to enjoy the clothes. During the lunch period the conversation among the women dealt with preferences for certain colors. Blue was mentioned and the counselor added that she also enjoyed a shade of brick red similar to the shade of the sweater that Mrs. M. was wearing. Rose, who up to this time had said little, promptly remarked, "I don't like brick red." The father ignored her throughout the meal although she sat beside him.

Rose ran into the bedroom and came out with a stick of gum which she offered the counselor as a gift. During the test she remarked, "I am going to be a teacher like you when I grow up." The counselor said, "Oh, so you are going to be a school teacher!" "No," said Rose, "A teacher like you."

Even when she became very stimulated

as a result of trying to solve rather difficult problems, she did not stutter. She concentrated well, showing a tendency, as she tired, toward hyperactivity, increased muscular tension, and a propensity to giggle.

During the interview with Rose the counselor asked casually why she had not come to school that day. She answered that she had been crying and that she did not want the teacher to see her cry. That this was a rationalization becomes more obvious when taken in conjunction with an answer to one of the questions on the test. Asked what she would do on her way to school and was in danger of being late she replied, "Turn around and go back home."

The test results were as follows: Revised Stanford-Binet, Form L:C.A. 6-6, M.A. 7-10, I.Q. 121.

At the close of the test Rose helped to put away the materials and to pack the brief case. She said, "You have so many things in your bag, you must be a very important lady." Then she asked for help in rearranging her play corner, in which we had been working.

First steps were taken toward correction of her articulation of "th." This was motivated for the child by the counselor's remark that since she was teaching the baby to speak, "It would be nice if she could speak like a teacher." She cooperated and succeeded in pronouncing the sound adequately. Previously she had pronounced "th" as "f." It was necessary to allow her to use some lingual protrusion in order to make the sound required. The work on "s" and "r" was postponed until her front teeth should be well grown.

Rose told a joke. She said, "Do you know what you say to a guy who has his thumb out on the road? You stop your car and you say, 'Do you like walking?' And when he says, 'No,' you say, 'Why don't you run?' and ride away."

Asked where she had heard the joke, Rose answered, "My brother told it."

I copy him."

Returning to the school after the test the counselor made a report to the teacher, suggesting that the visual aids department material be used to stimulate the child, and informed her of the first steps taken in speech correction.

The teacher stated that Rose wrote unusually well for a child of her years. During the test she took a pencil from us with her left hand and also spoke of the fact that she had made the loop of the "l" in the wrong direction until her mother had corrected her. Her drawing aptitude and the facility in writing might well have been an overcompensation, indicating that Rose was a **re-educated** sinistral. However, the counselor did not discuss this aspect of the case at this time as she believed it advisable for the child to continue in the use of her right hand. Later we could educate for increased ambidexterity.

-- In this interview other indications of high intelligence were corroborated as were family attitudes. Because the child was not stuttering, work on articulation was begun. The child's emotional dependence on the therapist began to be apparent.

VII.

A home visit was made. The mother was in the house alone with the baby, the father in the barn. The mother said that she was 36, the father 40. Both parents were born in the Azores. The mother came to this country at seven. She recalled that, when she was eight years old, an aunt had made fun of her poor speech. Asked if it was a foreign accent she said, "No, I was talking Portuguese." She was the third of six children. She went through the sixth grade. Always poor in spelling she had her son, Donald, correct the spelling of her letters.

The father was the oldest of seven children. The next three in the family constellation were girls. At the table he often read the newspaper,

despite his wife's protests. If listening to the radio, he would not come to a meal set on the table. He ignored the older boys as well as Rose a good part of the time. The tendency of his group to undervalue women was strong in Mr. M., inasmuch as he had been an oldest child in close competition with younger sisters.

The couple had made some desultory attempts at birth control, the husband cooperating as well as the wife. She had not wanted Rose. "I thought I had enough. When this baby boy came I didn't mind so much. I thought I would get a little sister for Rose. When it was a boy I didn't care." In regard to relations with her husband, she said, "We don't come together much now. You'd be surprised how little."

The baby was extremely friendly and affectionate, evidently much petted. He slept in the room with his parents. Rose had a crib in her brothers' room.

Mrs. M. reported that a short time after the last visit, Rose had said, "I'm going away from here. You don't want me." Asked where she would go, she answered, "I'll go live with Miss M. (the counselor)."

At this point the mother was reassured and informed of the frequent occurrence of such remarks in young children in Rose's position. She agreed that Rose enjoyed the extra attention she was getting.

The counselor suggested to the mother that it might be desirable to keep an eye open for a piano, as Rose might some day learn to play. The mother agreed that Rose probably would enjoy it as she frequently imitated the gestures of a piano player. The suggestion was made, first, to prepare for some creative outlet for the child, and second, to encourage ambidexterity.

-- Interesting points in this interview were that the mother's resistance now took the form of personal jealousy of the worker and that she had rejected Rose before birth. There was also

indication of some strain in marital relations.

At school the teacher reported that Rose's behavior on the playground was improving and that she was making an attempt to pronounce "th" correctly.

Rose was resting on a cot in an ante-room when we arrived. She seemed pleased to see us. Some tongue exercises were taught her. These she mastered quickly and practiced words with "th" sounds. She was making the sound with less lingual protrusion and less effort.

We had lunch with a group of children. Rose clowned with hands and body and face. The children laughed sympathetically. When we went to the piano, she moved her hands imitatively and listened smilingly while the counselor played. She remembered that Barbara, whom she knew, had come to meet her the first day of school.

She said she dreamed of sticking her tongue out the back door. Something tried to grab her and her mother kept it away. Then she dreamed of a "boogie man" chasing her around the living room. She then started a long story about a "boogie man" she had seen in a Mickey Mouse picture. She held a pencil in her left hand and gesticulated expressively with her right. When asked, "Is the 'boogie man' real or make believe?" she answered, "Make believe."

When the counselor shook hands on leaving, Rose started to give her left hand, then corrected herself.

Billy, her brother, in the same room as Rose, was given a Goodenough Drawing Test. The results were as follows: C.A. 9-3, M.A. 9-9, I.Q. 105. The teacher stated that he had a reading difficulty.

We suggested that Rose be given clay work and other manual exercise which might encourage ambidexterity.

-- Indications of sinistrality were corroborated at this session. Attempts at improving articulation did not result in stuttering. The fact that the

mother, apparently intelligent, had a marked spelling difficulty and that Billy, apparently of normal intelligence, had a marked reading difficulty led to the question as to whether they were not also sinistrals.

While we were not convinced of the direct physiological relationship between handedness and speech, nevertheless, there is doubtless some psychological connection. The sinistral in our society has to make more difficult adjustments than a right-handed person. However, re-education of left handedness might prove more harmful than otherwise in the case of a child of six and one-half, especially when both mental and motor development are accelerated.

The early school recollection and the fact that her school relations were improving led to the belief that the prognosis for social adjustment to her contemporaries was good. The dream indicated dependence on the mother, her negative attitude toward the baby (who followed - "chased" her), and some fear of men (as the father and brothers). The therapist may have been represented in the dream of "sticking out the tongue."

VIII.

During the spring and fall the counselor saw Rose at home and in school several times. Her speech had so improved that in June she was given an important part in the school exercises. As a matter of fact, she was given a poem to recite that was originally to have been said by her brother, Billy. This was doubtless a difficult experience for the boy and not too desirable for Rose, herself. She informed her mother that it "wasn't fair" but proceeded to enjoy her success.

The following September a new teacher replaced the former one. Billy reported to his mother that she "liked him," which feeling apparently did much to offset what feeling of displacement he may have experienced in the spring.

Rose's relationship to this new teach-

er was also satisfactory. She was consistently speaking more slowly and clearly. She played on the grounds in group games. With one first grader she had difficulty at first. When asked to help the younger girl overcome some of her fear of other children, Rose countered with, "But she don't like me." She was told that the little girl didn't understand how to play with others; that fear, not dislike, was the cause of her behavior. The counselor added, "Maybe you can't do it. Maybe it is too hard. But you are a good teacher. See how you are teaching Francis to talk."

At the end of ten days both girls had improved on the playground. As Rose's difficulties this year seemed to come toward the end of the noon recess, it was decided to give her a rest period of twenty minutes at this time.

The mother became more and more appreciative of the help the girl gave her in the home.

Closing Remarks

At the close of a year's supervision

the need for continued treatment is still seen. The interest in this case lies to a great extent in the fact that this girl doubtless would have become a true stuttee had not therapy prevented rather than corrected the symptom, which scarcely made its appearance. What were some of the important factors in this treatment? The mother began to accept her own rather than the father's evaluation of the girl, thereby decreasing the compensatory activity which resulted from a strong masculine protest. The teachers encouraged her success in social contacts as well as in academic work; this increased her feeling of adequacy. The therapist gave the child opportunity to speak freely of her interests and her problems, accepting her and at the same time interpreting for her. The being singled out of the group which she experienced was for a time a valuable aspect of therapy for a girl with so strong a feeling of inferiority, although recently she has shown less and less dependence on the therapist, the intervals between visits being gradually increased.

Chicago Group

A beginning class in the fundamentals of Individual Psychology was completed in six weekly meetings. Members of this class are now eligible for our Associate group. The next monthly combined meetings for the Associate and Central group members will present a speaker on "Semantics and Its Relation to Psychology," Dr. Rudolf Dreikurs will talk on "Problems of Neurosis," Dr. Nita Arnold on "Problems of Insanity," and Eleanor Redwin on "Problem Children."

On December 12 a "Psychological Puzzle" was presented to the members. Early recollections, experiences, and dreams of four individuals were mixed together and then sorted out by the members to build up the four separate life

stories.

An advanced class meets twice monthly for the purpose of discussing the writings of Alfred Adler. His various books are distributed among the members. A careful study was made at the first meeting of what Adler had to say on the subject of early recollections. The second meeting centered around the topic of the lifestyle, the next one around the inferiority feeling.

The general meeting on January 9 was devoted to the discussion of what we can do in regard to the present war situation. Several plans of practical contributions were discussed and more meetings are planned, the results of which will be reported later.