THE MEDIATING ROLE OF A SIBLING IN IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT: CONTEMPORARY PSYCHOANALYTIC PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

The main aim of this paper was to open the space for discussing siblings' mutual effects on their identity development, fostering a specific contemporary psychoanalytic perspective – Lacan's identity topology. By exploring the mother's and the father's 'phallic functions' in the subject's identity development, I tripped over the same stone as classical psychoanalytic theory, which nudged me to challenge the sole relevance of the parental roles and pose a question of what the sibling-function in the process of developing identity would be. I adapted Lacan's R-schema to honour these delicate family relationships and understand their underlying structure. Lacan emphasised the importance of siblings through the intrusion complex in his earliest work but ceased to deal with this topic afterward. However, he tended to preserve the foundations he had laid with the mirror stage and Oedipus complex – concepts based on identification. Therefore, in this work I tried to look at the co-constructing relationship between siblings in the context of the (de)identification phenomenon while taking into account Lacan's latter works.

Key words: siblings, identity, intrusion, de-identification, R-schema.

МЕДИЈАТОРСКА УЛОГА БРАЋЕ И СЕСТАРА У РАЗВОЈУ ИДЕНТИТЕТА: САВРЕМЕНА ПСИХОАНАЛИТИЧКА ПЕРСПЕКТИВА

Апстракт

Главни циљ овог рада био је да отвори простор за дискусију о међусобном утицају браће и сестара на њихов развој идентитета, негујући специфичну савремену психоаналитичку перспективу, Лаканову топологију идентитета. Истражујући улогу „фалусне функције" мајке и оца на субјектов развој идентитета, можемо се спотаћи о исти камен као и класична психоаналитичка теорија,

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што нас наводи да преиспитамо једино признат утицај родитељских улога и поставимо питање која би била функција брата/сестре у процесу развоја идентитета. У овом раду, прилагођена је Лаканова R-схема како би се испоштовали деликатни породични односи и разумела њихова подлежућа структура. У свом најранијем тексту, Лакан је истицао значај браће/сестара кроз комплекс интрузије, али је овом темом сасвим престао да се бави у даљем раду. Међутим, настојао је да очува основе које је поставио кроз концепте стадијума огледала и Едиповог комплекса, који се базирају на идентификацији. Дакле, овај рад представља покушај сагледавања ко-конструишућег односа између браће/сестара у контексту феномена (де)идентификације, узимајући у обзир Лаканове потоње радове.

Кључне речи: браћа и сестре, идентитет, интрузија, де-идентификација, *R*-схема.

INTRODUCTION

The Relevance of Siblings for Psychoanalytic Theory

Neither the contemporary nor the classical psychoanalytic opus features exhaustive and detailed theoretical hypotheses about the significance of the relationship between siblings for the development of their identities[1]. Nevertheless, the idea of siblings steering one another's identity development is undoubtedly in the backdrop of the more relevant relationships they form with their parents. Interestingly, Sigmund Freud (1955a) noted that the bond between followers and their leader was unfairly emphasised in psychoanalytic literature, to the detriment of the relationship between followers themselves. This hierarchy of relationships could be transferred to family members, where parents would be seen as leaders and children as followers. The relationship between followers might be explored in more detail by analysing sibling dynamics. As Juliet Mitchell stated (2013): "siblings need to be autonomous aspect of the theory", since "the experience of them is generalizable—something we all experience", and "if it is to play a role in the construction of the unconscious aspect of the human psyche" (p 16).

Identity Development in Psychoanalytic Theory

The concept of identity has always been a subject of dispute among scholars. Brubaker and Cooper (2000) made a humorous remark on how an 'identity crisis' has persisted as a concept in social sciences to this day, because the concept designates everything, and thus nothing in

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[1] For a review of the psychoanalytic literature on siblings, consult this article: Colonna, A.B., & Newman, L.M. (1983). The Psychoanalytic Literature on Siblings. *The Psychoanalytic Study of the Child, 38*(1), 285-309.
- Useful reading also includes Alfred Adler, who elaborated on siblings' birth positions: Adler, A. (1929). *Problems of Neurosis: A Book of Case Histories.* Routledge - Taylor & Francis.

particular. Although these authors distinguished many meanings of the term identity, one is especially interesting for this paper – the fluctuating and fragmented nature of the contemporary self. Post-structuralism awoke skepticism regarding the formerly preferred notion of identity, and dialectically challenged the romanticised idea of *fundamental sameness*. From the phenomenological epistemological position, sameness reflects in recognising oneself as the constant in the synchrony and diachrony intersections, but from a 'realistic' position, this sameness appears to be an illusion. The question arises: "who would be the same as whom?"

Continuously comparing people to who they were before a given moment would lead to those first objects of identification, the *specular images* and *ideals*. Both Freud and Lacan, as well as other relevant authors (e.g., Fonagy, Winnicott, Bion, Kohut), developed identity theories around the concept of *identification*. This approach implied focusing on the developmental process and non-normative understanding of the term identity, consisting of representations (Cs. and Ucs.) that are internally devised by the active defence mechanisms (Vanheule & Verhaeghe, 2009). Identification is inevitable and ever-binding, and as it gives the subject a new identity, it erases some traces of a previous self. Bearing in mind hysterical identification, Freud wrote: "The identification is not simple imitation but assimilation on the basis of a similar aetiological pretension; it expresses a resemblance and is derived from a common element which remains in the unconscious" (1979a, p. 150). Freud indicated that identification stands for something more than a psychic infection based on imitation.

Namely, Jacques Lacan aspired to interpret Freud's work in accordance with the contemporary postulates of (post)structuralism. In terms of this paper, arguing whether he was successful in his agenda of 'saving Freud from himself' would be less fruitful than emphasising their theoretical *quilting points*. Lacan's theory determines identity as the effect of double congruence (Jevremović, 1998), both alienating the subject from what was immanent to him/her[2]. In order to bring readers closer to his understanding of relevant concepts concerning identity development, Lacan used schemas (L, R, I) as analogies. He wrote that schema is "just a way of fixing our ideas, called for by an infirmity in our discursive capacity" (1997, p. 235). The twofold identification/alienation comprises important mother and father functions that will be further explained

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[2] This perspective principally differs from the mainstream identity development psychology of that time. Sarcastically, Lacan ([S2] 1988, p. 11) draws attention to a point of view he strongly disagrees with by saying "Mr Hartmann, psychoanalysis's cherub, announces the great news to us, so that we can sleep soundly – the existence of the *autonomous ego*". Explaining why he finds this remark naïve and illusory, Lacan noted that, since Freud, the only thing that could be said about the ego is that it is in conflicts.

throughout the paper[3]. Could siblings become a part of Lacan's schemas, and how would they fit into them?

THE AIMS OF THIS STUDY

By relying on identity topology and Lacan's idea of the mirror stage, this work intends to briefly analyse the influence of the complex relationships between siblings on developing their identities, in the context of the relationships with their parents. The R-schema would be used in order to provide more detailed explanations of these early dynamics. Reciprocally, studying aspects of sibling relationships related to identity development might inspire different interpretations of the mentioned schema.

Siblings had been sharing their parental figures before they started sharing identities. In Lacan's theory, the mother and father represent the *functions* in a subject's life. Therefore, the mother could also play the father-figure, and vice versa. However, the actual mother and father mostly correspond to these functions. Do siblings have their function as well? Even if a subject does not have an actual sibling, this function might still play an important role in their identity development. Some studies showed that the sibling counterpart is vividly imagined ('empty space for a sibling') and supposed by children who do not have their own brothers or sisters (Mitchel, 2013, pp. 18-20).

THE IDENTITY TOPOLOGY AND FAMILY ROLES

Freud mentioned that identifying objects mostly come down to the closest others, to whom the libidinal cathexes are attached (Freud, 1979a). He interpreted one interesting dream (pp. 146-149) that seems to have several relevant points for this paper: (1) the *intrusions* of another into a close relationship with a significant other; (2) *envy*, *rivalry*, and *ambivalent* feelings towards the intruder; and (3) the *identification* with both the object of desire and the intruder. Further on, Freud (1955a, p. 105) recognised two types of emotional ties that subsist before the Oedipus complex, without mutual influence: *object-cathexis* and *identification*. The so-called object-cathexis relates to those first objects (the mother usually being the most important one) that fulfil a subject's narcissistic needs. On the other hand, the identification assumes an ideal for the subject to identify with, and Freud primarily linked this role with the father-figure. It is noteworthy that the identification determines what one wants *to be* and

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[3] Ricœur (1970, p. 225) emphasised that identification with mother and father figures can be both positive and negative. Let us say that, with the father, negative identification would manifest in the form of rivalry, and positive identification would manifest in the form of imitation.

the object-cathexis determines what one wants *to have* (Freud, 1955a, p. 106). These parental functions are crucial for understanding Lacan's early work on identity development. Although the notion of identification became even more complex throughout Lacan's latter work (e.g., S9, *L'identification*), it seems that he tended to preserve the foundations he had laid with the *mirror stage* and *Oedipus complex*.

Mirror Stage

Muller and Richardson described the very core of the mirror stage: "human form be the external image in which the infant discovers both himself and the [reality] around him, but presumably that human form … is more likely to be – the mothering figure" (1982, p. 30). The function of this *image* implies "giving form to something" (*ibid.* p. 28); it is created in a mirror-like relationship with the significant other and guides the subject's further development. The mirror stage happens between 6 and 18 months of infanthood, although its effects prevail throughout the whole life. The subject is "truly captured by another [person's] image" (Lacan, 2006a, p. 147), which coincides with the lack of differentiation. The mirror stage is closely connected to *transitivism*, a phenomenon characteristic for small children that includes inversion: when $child_1$ slaps $child_2$ in the left cheek and $child_2$ starts crying, $child_1$ also cries and grabs its own right cheek (Lacan, 2006b, p. 92). The in-forming specular image that the subject identifies with represents the "threshold of the visible world" (Lacan, 2006a, p. 77), an illusion that creates primitive distortions, i.e., *méconnaissances* in knowledge (Muller & Richardson, 1982).

Gestalt and Aggressiveness[4]. For identification to occur, a child must perceive the objects it encounters as suitable, and hence permanent, whole, and sustainable. New-borns come into the world 'fragmented,' immersed in motor incapacity and turbulent movements. Within the mirror stage, a child experiences itself as a whole by identifying with its reflections in the significant objects. Identification imparts feelings of enjoyment and satisfaction, or *jouissance*. This experience of wholeness, Gestalt, is the only possible indication of the self at such an early age (Muller & Richardson, 1982). However, the specular image is rather unstable and, sooner or later, something imposes a threat to the consoling Gestalt. This is when primitive aggressiveness occurs as a defensive reaction to the *imago of fragmented body* (Lacan, 2006b). Although the term imago disappeared from Lacan's latter work, it served to emphasise the emergence of primitive anxiety when the mirror image escapes the subject. Freud described how young Goethe aggressively threw ceramic ves-

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[4] Lacan (2006b) used this term instead of aggression, because it reflects "the tendency correlated with the mode of identification I [Lacan] call narcissistic".

sels as "a magic act against the intruder [new-born sibling]", who posed a threat to Goethe's relationship with his mother (Freud, 1979b). The image of another child on the mother's breast is one of the strongest threats to a child's experience of Gestalt, reminding not only of *jouissance*, but also the fear of being without it – not being at all. At this point, it seems that siblings could be both the initiators and the objects of defensive aggressiveness.

Lacan's Idea of Family Complexes

In his early work from 1938, Lacan wrote about the three essential complexes that guide the whole family and affect 'the formation of the individual' (Lacan, 2002). The usage of the term complex is ambiguous in both Lacan's and Freud's works[5]. However, the points Lacan made in his early work are suitable for understanding identity development. One observation seems particularly important: "jealousy at its most fundamental does not represent biological rivalry but rather a mental identification" (Lacan, 2002, p. 23).

The Weaning Complex. is the basis of the most archaic and stable sentiments uniting the subject and the family (Lacan, 2002). Weaning is a psycho-physical trauma and leaves consequences if conducted untimely and inadequately. Since the breast might be considered an object of early splitting[6], therein lie the beginnings of a subject's cognitive development. This differentiation is established only when breastfeeding ceases[7]. The weaning complex manifests later in life as an inability to separate from the family nest or as a heightened sentiment of a young mother (Lacan, 2002). In his fourth seminar, Lacan pointed to the importance of repetition, a quest for re-finding the *lost object* of weaning, and, by relying on the mother-function, the object presence-absence pairing introduces frustration prior to the depressive position (Lacan, 2020, p. 19-59). This is a clear reference to the work of Klein (2001), who pointed out the absence of a child's realisation that the same object contains both the capacity to provide love and destruction, until the onset of the depressive position.

The Complex of Intrusion. Lacan wrote: "... the complex of intrusion represents the experience that the primitive subject goes through,

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[5] Lacan wrote that the term complex was first defined by Freud (2002, p. 14), but omitted any definition. He also avoided mentioning Jung, who developed his work around the term "complex", designating complexes as a royal road to the unconscious [e.g., Jung, C. G. (1975). Structure & Dynamics of the Psyche. *The Collected works of C. G. Jung* (Vol. 8). Princeton University Press.]. Nevertheless, Lacan completely abandoned this idea of family complexes after 1938, with only a brief reference to them in 1950 (Evans, 2003, p. 27).

[6] Using the language of Melanie Klein (2001), a good and a bad breast.

[7] It is relevant to mention that the weaning is not the first rejection for a child. The separation from the mother's womb, the *birth trauma*, might also be considered as an initiator of early mental processes.

usually when he sees one or several of his fellow human beings share in domestic relationships with him; or to put it another way, when he realizes that he has siblings" (2002, p. 23). In each family-system, there is a certain position designated to the subject, so that she/he could either be the one in possession of the throne or the usurper; *infantile jealousy*[8] is inevitable. The timing of a sibling's arrival is very important; if it happens while the first child is still disorganised by the weaning trauma, the relationship between siblings would remain in the imaginary for much longer. Before entering the symbolic domain, there is no one else (other) to point out that the mother is a separate person who has her own place in the social order. Prior to that, children aspire to identify with the image of each other and the mother. However, the sibling-function is neither powerful enough nor hierarchically potent enough to introduce differentiation as well as the (oedipal) father-function would[9]. Lacan wrote that the family reduced to the mother and siblings mostly comprises a system in which reality remains abstract. To explain the connection between intrusion and the Oedipus complex, he stated:

> If on the contrary the intruder does not arrive until *after the Oedipus complex*, he is most often adopted by the assumption of a parental identification, which, as we shall see, has a greater affective density and a richer structure. He is then no longer an obstacle or a reflection for the subject but a *person worthy of love or hate*. Aggressive drives are sublimated into tenderness or severity.
>
> (2002, p. 34, my italics)

The Oedipus Complex. Relying on Freud, Lacan (2002) pointed out that the role of the father figure and his relationship to the mother figure is a threat to the child's egocentric needs. Freud (1961) ultimately reduced the resolution of the positive/inverse Oedipus complex on identification with mother or father figures, depending on the gender. Gradually moving on from Freud during the 1950s, Lacan released the Oedipal situation from the concrete figures, elevating it onto the level of abstraction and language by designating the Other as the "locus in which speech is constituted" (Lacan, 1997, p. 274). This position of the Other[10] is firstly

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[8] Jealousy could be considered a good sign of children's cognitive development because it assumes certain differentiation on the plan of I-other person, inside-outside. *You* have something *I* want, which calms me down (*inside*) from this anxious state.

[9] In her theoretical arguments, Mitchell (2013, p. 17) "... places a sibling trauma and the desires and prohibitions it unleashes as occurring between the stage of narcissism and the Oedipal stage". Moreover, sibling-function fits Lacan's (2020) later notion of *three* in (pre)oedipal situations.

[10] "We must distinguish two others, at least two – an other with a capital *O*, and an other with a small *o*, which is the ego. In the function of speech, we are concerned with the Other" (Lacan, 1988, p. 236).

occupied by the mother, the elusive *object a*. In a realm where the only law is her desire, a child experiences fundamental disappointment realising that its beloved mother lacks the imaginary phallus and that the child ultimately cannot fill this void but only persist as its temporary replacement (Lacan, 2020, pp. 73-78). The Oedipus complex sets in when the locus becomes occupied by the father, who interferes with the subject's imaginary relationship with object a. Symbolically threatening with castration, the father introduces the secondary identification, which alienates the subject once again from what was immanent to him/her (Jevremović, 1998). The phallus here is the signifier determined by its transformative function (Lacan, 2006d), held by the father who cuts the imaginary 'umbilical cord' and forces the child into a realm of law and order. The Oedipus complex is the backbone of Lacan's work, and although he altered the definition over the years, the significance he attributed to it was ever increasing. An important thread that connects all the attached meanings, and provides a sufficient basis for this work, finds its roots in Lacan's early text:

> It [Oedipus complex] implies the introduction of a third object which replaces the affective confusion and the ambiguities of the mirror stage with the competition of a *triangular situation*. And so the subject, who through identification is committed to jealousy, arrives at a new alternative where the fate of reality is played out. Either he goes back to the *maternal object* and insists on refusing the real and on destroying the other; or he is led to some other object and accepts it in the form characteristic of *human knowledge*, that is, as a communicable object, since competition implies both rivalry and agreement.
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> (2002, p. 33, my italics)

The R-Schema

For Lacan, "... topology is not simply a metaphorical way of expressing the concept of structure; it is structure itself" (Evans, 2003). Many aforementioned constructs could be represented by combining the τόπος and the λόγος of the subject. Topology considers the properties of the objects that are preserved despite the continuous deformations[11]. The topological space is not "a matter of localizations, but rather a relationship between loci, interposition, for example, of succession, sequence" (Lacan, 2020, p. 4). The following R-schema could be read in two ways, as a reflection of the static subject and, more importantly for this paper, as a process of development of the subject's ego (Lacan, 2006c, pp. 861-862).

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[11] According to Jevremović (2007), modern psychoanalysis parries Piaget with the *conservation* of the Self.
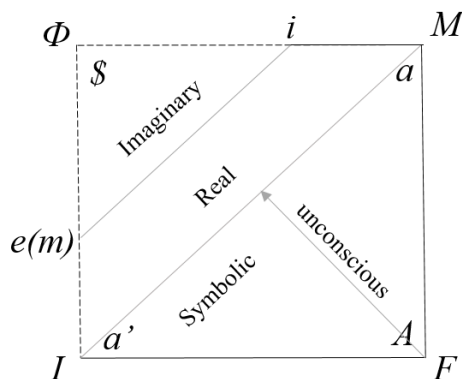
Figure 1. The R-Schema (retrieved from Lacan, 2006c).

The *M* represents the signifier for the mother-like primordial object[12] in the place of the other (*a*). The *Φ* is the phallus in the subject's place, representing the child's desire to be the phallus for the mother; this corresponds to the mother's desire to have the phallus, making her and a child co-dependent and immersed in the realm of desire. During the mirror stage, the particular subject (*S*) finds him/herself in the specular image (*i*), which is his/her reflection in the imitative gestures of the mother figure (among others) performing her nurturing function. The subject builds the first outlines of their early I (*e-ego = m-moi*), becoming alienated from themselves, which results in crossed out S - *$*. This crossed out subject (never again just S) is the only subject that can enter the symbolic register. The desired *object a* provides the *i*. The *a'* is a result of identification between *e(m)* and *i*. Lacan's I (ego) is not monolithic. Besides the narcissistic moi, there is also a discursive *Je* which is a product of the Oedipus complex. Therefore, the *F* in the Figure 1 stands for the "Name of the Father" in the place of the Other that introduces the symbolic order, with *A* being the actual father-figure. Lacan believed that this secondary identification enables a creation of the symbolic chain and, therefore, unconsciousness.

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[12] This primordial object is tightly connected to the primordial signifier, bearing the function of the subject's initial establishment. As Lacan (1997, p. 150-151) emphasized, it is not a stage but "a matter of a primordial process of exclusion of an original within, which is not a bodily within but that of an initial body of signifiers". This is the function of primary *Bejahung* opposed to *Verneinung* (p. 46).

THE MEDIATING ROLE OF THE SIBLINGS

(De)Identification

Throughout an intrusion complex, Lacan (2002) pointed out the relevance of identification between siblings. The intensity of this identification surely depends on the age difference between siblings[13]. A smaller age difference would imply stronger identification and transitivism, as well as emotional contagion, rivalry, and aggressiveness. Siblings are permanent members of the family, equally as wanted by parents and the broader family as the subject (in the best-case scenario), so they hold the desired attributes that make them suitable for identification. However, due to fundamentally desiring the mother who cares for all her children, siblings enter into competition for her attention. Although this is developmentally expected, it is a matter of life and death from the subject's point of view. Siblings have no need to be compensated for the lack of a phallus, like the mother does, nor do they have the power to initiate castration, as the father function. The sibling is simply a counterpart, an equal, an object of comparison rather than desire. If the mother and father figures revolve around an imaginary and symbolic phallus, how would the phallic function manifest in sibling relationships?

As a means of escaping the vicious circle of jealousy, siblings resort to de-identification. Schachter et al. (1976) officially proposed this phenomenon, although it sporadically appeared in Adler's (1929), as well as Abramovitch's (2014) work. De-identification is reminiscent of the extreme descriptions found in old myths about siblings (Schachter, 1985). This phenomenon represents siblings' tendency to see each other as distinctive as possible[14], consciously or unconsciously; it helps them reduce rivalry, establish their separate identities, and gain an equal amount of love from both parents (Whiteman et al., 2007). Sulloway (2001) pointed out that siblings take on opposing identities in order to claim their *niche* in the family system. The feelings of rivalry and jealousy become less intense, securing peace for the whole family[15]. As a defence mechanism against rivalry or even incest, siblings tacitly, and predominantly without conscious intention, reach an agreement. For example, one would occupy

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[13] According to Abramovitch (2014), if this gap excides eight years, the sibling relationship starts to gain parental like aspects, with the older sibling positioning him/herself as an authority to the younger sibling.

[14] Better yet to be seen as distinctive as possible by their mother.

[15] In "Totem and Taboo", Freud wrote about the rivalry between brothers in the primordial communities. Being forced to accept sharing their mother's love, brothers discovered another stronger rival. Driven by their simultaneous hatred and admiration towards the father, they united, killed, and ate him (removing, but preserving him). Unable to decide who would be the tribe's new leader and mother's new partner, they introduced the incest prohibition and therefore managed to preserve the peace in the tribe (Freud, 2014).

the position of being the smartest, so the other is then better in sports. One sister is very bright, so the other invests in being beautiful. Out of fear, or even guilt, they will do their best not to intrude in one another's domain. Moreover, intentionally choosing something that parents disapproved might be the other side of the same coin that could be interpreted as a need for attention (e.g., rebelliousness).

The situation seems easier for siblings of different genders, especially in traditional families, because gender roles explicate aspects of the identities. Abramovitch (2014) wrote that the more similar siblings objectively are (age, gender, talents, etc.), the more they try to de-identify. However, one exciting paradox pulls siblings even more into the imaginary: the more they want to be different, the more similar they actually are, due to the shared desire to differ. Differentiation from a sibling is an alienation as well, since the subject chooses in accordance with, or in spite of, the path of *the other*. Therefore, it could be theorised that the strength of this de-identification corresponds to the strength of the initial identification.

Consequences of the Intrusion

Considering mentioned complex relationships between family members from Lacan's early work (2002), a question remains whether the child-mother-child situation is triangular? Certainly, not like the Oedipal. Before the introduction of the symbolic domain, there is no actual *third*[16]. Children identify with each other and the image that their mother-figure provides. Lacan argued that the preoedipal child-mother-child formation (without the father function and with a predominant experience of intrusion) often tends to remain in the zone of imaginary relations, mentioning all sorts of possible related disorders[17]:

> The reaction of the sufferer to the trauma depends on his psychic development. If he is *surprised by the intruder* while still disorganized by weaning, this experience will be reactivated every time he sets eyes upon him. He then regresses in a way that will reveal itself according to the fate of the ego as a schizophrenic psychosis or as a hypochondriacal neurosis; or he may react by the imaginary destruction of this monster and this will result in either perverse impulses or obsessional guilt.
>
> (Lacan, 2002, 34, my italics)

Although siblings are not powerful enough to introduce differentiation, their mediating role is evident. An imaginary relationship could give

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[16] Ultimately, Lacan (2020) designated the Oedipus complex as a situation that contains *four* agents (father-mother-child-phallus) instead of three, characteristic for preoedipal phallus-mother-child constellation

[17] Interestingly, Vulević and Milić (2021) pointed to the fact that both neurosis and psychosis draw their roots from the same reality, that of narcissism.

a nudge to, or stall, the inevitable onset of the Oedipus complex. This is observable in children's language: an older child might, for example, exceed in language skills to be better than its younger sibling, or start regressing in speech to draw the mother's attention. As was previously mentioned, they could move back towards the *maternal object*, or forward to the *human knowledge* (Lacan, 2002). Nevertheless, the subject's acts substantially depend on the behaviour of the sibling.

Rigid defence mechanisms develop as a response to threatening fragmentation, as a consequence of the unstable mirror image (Lacan, 2006a). Since the mother cannot provide the same amount of attention to each child at once, defensive aggressiveness occurs. The sibling intrusion is not considered the source of traumatic neurosis, because there was no previous *surprising factor*. Freud (1955b) emphasised that the parents usually prepare the older child for the sibling's arrival, but the child often has its perverse fantasies about the event. Since this kind of intrusion, if not superimposed, is in the optimal frustration range, early experiences such as these might simply shape the further development of the subject's personality around rigidity and defensiveness. In order to preserve its fragile ego, the child uses insufficiently robust defence mechanisms and begins to rely on them, creating a solid armour. In conclusion, siblings might not traumatise, but they do affect.

Freud (1955b) also noticed that the child could take revenge on its mother through a play, for the pain she inflicted by depriving it of attention. The *fort-da* play helps the child learn how to regulate its inner states. As another example of controlled revenge, siblings might 'recruit' other significant figures to be 'on their sides.' Older children often turn to fathers (or other figures) for tenderness, while younger children occupy mothers' attention (Adamo & Magagna, 1998). Although these destructive urges appear, they are not acted out in reality, for fear of more considerable damage (Freud, 1955b). Hurting a sibling would be a kind of imaginary castration and the infliction of additional pain to the mother. Siblings, therefore, protect their family members from themselves, to avoid feeling unloved and forgotten by beloved object a. Moreover, due to transitivism, the image of a sibling being hurt might agitate the deepest personal fears connected to the imago of the fragmented body. Undoubtedly, these inner conflicts reflect the onset of the depressive position.

Aside from all this rivalry, jealousy, and aggressiveness, it is noteworthy to mention that siblings provide great emotional support for one another. They truly become allies when parental figures seem threatening or unavailable. As the mirror stage's consequences never fully disappear, the subject needs to identify emotionally with the mirror-like object, and its sibling counterpart is sometimes the only available figure. This safe and supportive feeling between equals is often regarded as kinship libido (Abramovitch, 2014).

Fitting the R-Schema

The aspects of the R-schema help further explain these family relations. Firstly, Figure 2 shows the child-mother-child[18] coupling in the realm of imaginary relations.
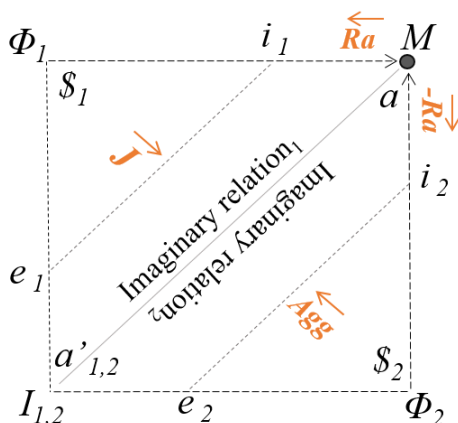

Figure 2. The Preoedipal Child-Mother-Child Action-Reaction Coupling[19].

This dynamic coupling is meant to show identification, the experience of wholeness, enjoyment, threat to integration, and aggressiveness. Both siblings ($\$_{1,2}$) desire to become the phalluses for the same mother (*a*). By granting children this wish over paying attention to them, the mother provides the *responsive action* (*Ra*) which gives a child the sense of Gestalt, and the following feeling of jouissance (*J*). This immediately implies that the other child receives no attention, the absence of the mother's reaction (-*Ra*). As mentioned, this kind of frustration activates early fears and subsequent aggressiveness (*Agg*). Every action (*Ra*, -*Ra*) has its appropriate reaction (*J*, *Agg*). It is clear that early sibling constellations could never be apprehended separately from their first mutual object of desire[20]. Since the relationship between these instances is the transcendental aspect of the topology (Jevremović, 1998), *Agg* and *J* would be oriented towards it.

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[18] At this point, the number of siblings in a family is completely irrelevant, because only one of them could occupy mother's attention at the very moment, however brief that moment actually is.

[19] The *vectors* emphasize that the mother's response has both intensity and direction.

[20] Of course, it should not be considered separately from the symbolic domain either, but these segments of the R-schema are only used for the purposes of this paper and better explanations.

The *J* and the *Agg* are present simultaneously – e.g., when one child eats, the other also wants to; when the other child is denied food, it acts out independent of hunger. On the other hand, showing off with the mother's attention could make the 'lucky' child feel guilty because of its own 'memory of the anxiety' when it was in the position of the 'unlucky' sibling. This feeling might cause different reactions in the child, such as an empathetic response (e.g., asking for food for their sibling as well) or aggressiveness (e.g., teasing a sibling by eating unnecessary loudly). Of course, these responses become strengthened and develop children's character, through the parents' reaction to their needs. Figure 2 shows that the mother's actions could affect the specular images ($i_{1,2}$), and thus the developmental dynamic of the subjects' early ego and ideals ($e_{1,2}$, $I_{1,2}$).

In Lacan's theory, there are no stages and no particular moment in one's development when these changes happen. Therefore, the second alienation is not imaginable without the first one, and they have to be considered together to adequately explain the Oedipal situation. At the place of complete identification between the siblings ($a'_{1,2}$, Figure 2), the symbolic function makes a necessary cut and differentiates the mother and siblings (Figure 3). Their relationship is now dammed by the unconscious that reflects their separate histories.
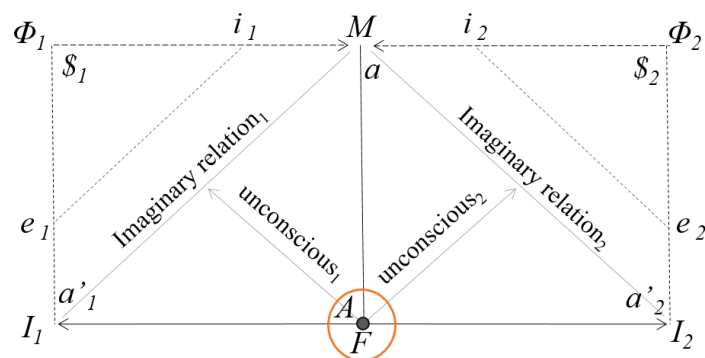

Figure 3. The Complete R^2-Schema with Two Siblings ($\$_1$ and $\$_2$).

Siblings are conjoined around the same *aA* axis. With the intrusion of the father, brothers and sisters face their roles in society (regardless of their choice to accept/refuse them) and learn how to become a part of it, which ensures their survival. Still driven by rivalry and jealousy, they start choosing their niches in agreement not to interfere in one another's domain. Figure 3 shows (de)identification and the onset of the Oedipus complex. The resolution of the intrusion complex will come with an independence of the siblings' choices from mutual effects, respectively, when the alienation finds its way to the consciousness.

CONCLUSION

This work aimed to explain how the sibling constellations may affect identity development, using Lacan's identity topology. Psychoanalytic literature is exhaustive when describing how parents steer children's identity development; however, this paper shows the manner in which these effects are mediated by the intrusive sibling-function. This function is not moderating, because moderation assumes the possibility of the sibling effect not existing (impossible, as previously discussed). When present, the moderator changes the relationship between actors, while the mediator remains a hidden factor that directs this relationship and explains the very nature of the actors. In this case, (ever-present) sibling figures primarily play the role of mediators in a subject's identity development. Parents are the ideals who provide security and material for identification, while siblings affect the nature of these relations by steering a subject's emotional reactions and choice of identity aspects.

At the beginning, a sibling is considered an intruder into a safe relationship with the mother, even more so if they are born before the solid differentiation imposed by the Oedipus complex. Since the mother loves all her children, they probably realise that hurting each other would hurt her, who they depend on. In order to keep peace in the family, children learn to cooperate, building defence mechanisms to cope with aggressiveness and jealousy, behind which lies the dreadful anxiety of non-being. However, the sibling's function could never be as intrusive and powerful as the father's is to elevate the child onto the level of symbolic operations. Accepting the Incest Prohibition Law, siblings choose different identities to maintain their relationships and secure the parents' equal attention. On the other hand, due to identification and aside from rivalry, siblings provide an inexhaustible source of support and calm when parents are unavailable or perceived as threatening.

Final considerations open up a topic for further reflections. Namely, subjects are more defined by who they are not, than by who they are. Hegel (1979) argued that every abstraction is a negation of the negation. Therefore, the initial subject's self-realisation might go as follows: 'I am the child of my parents, concerning all those children who are not, which makes me special.' A sibling's arrival into the world sends the message that the very meaning behind this omnipotent experience of "identity" must be modified. A sibling threatens with the loss of Gestalt and (symbolic) death. Therefore, the subject might choose to rather be a slave (to the parents) in life than a master in death (requiring separation). De-identification might represent the subject's opportunity to negate this negation. Expected abstraction would assume complete independence of siblings' identities; it would not matter if they were similar or not; they would perceive each other as separate persons, worthy or undeserving of each other's love. Only then would the intrusion complex reach integration.

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МЕДИЈАТОРСКА УЛОГА БРАЋЕ И СЕСТАРА У РАЗВОЈУ ИДЕНТИТЕТА: САВРЕМЕНА ПСИХОАНАЛИТИЧКА ПЕРСПЕКТИВА

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Резиме

У досадашњем психоаналитичком опусу било је неоправдано мало речи о утицају браће и сестара на развој идентиета субјекта, премда је њихов значај евидентан. Иако је појам „идентит“ и даље предмет спора у друштвеним наукама, у овом чланку он се најпре ослања на појам „идентификација“. Идентификација подразумева процес са-обличавања субјекта са значајним објектима, чиме се заправо удаљава од онога што му је иманентно заложено (Јевремовић, 1998). Како би на ефикасан начин објаснио утицај родитељских функција на развој идентитета субјекта, Лакан (1997) се потпомогао топологијом. Стога, идеја овог рада је да управо размотри укључивање браће и сестара у такозвану R-схему,

што би подразумевало прецизирање значења „сиблинг функције“ у контексту односа са родитељима, и допринело разумевању породичне динамике у процесу настанка идентитета. Иако се фокус Лаканових теоријских истраживања мењао, могло би се рећи да је он остао доследан „стадијуму огледала“ и Едиповом комплексу. Стадијум огледала подразумева период развоја субјекта када са значајним другим улази у однос нарцистичне идентификације, без такозване диференцијације (Lacan, 2006a). Ова идентификација у развој субјекта уноси доживљај „гешталта“, целовите слике са којом се субјекат идентификује и гради прве обрисе свога Ја. Поменута слика подразумева присуство објекта који задовољава потребе, док његово одсуство изазива фрустрацију и буђење ране агресивности (Lacan, 2006b). Наиме, Лакан (2002) бригујућу функцију приписује фигури мајке, а описана ситуација се најпре везује за две породичне констелације које је врло рано препознао као важне - комплекс одбијања (од дојке) и комплекс интрузије. За овај рад је комплекс интрузије посебно значајан, јер се односи на развојне промене које изазива однос са братом или сестром. Што је мања узрасна разлика између сиблинга, што су они објективно сличнији (пол, изглед...), и док старије дете није у извесној мери разрешило Едипов комплекс, постојаће веће шансе за ексалацију страха од губитка мајчинске фигуре као упоришта, љубоморе када друго дете добија њену пажњу, као и (ауто)деструктивне реакције. За Едипов комплекс је задужена функција оца, односно, одвајање детета од мајке и увођење у друштво, односно, издизање на ниво симболичког поретка кроз идентификацију са оним што је социјално прихватљиво (Lacan, 2006d). С обзиром да браћа и сестре нису довољно моћни да испуне ове функције родитеља (док је разлика мања од осам година - Abramovitch, 2014), они имају другачију функцију у изградњи идентитета - медијациону. Пре свега, сиблинзи представљају наставак родитељске слике за идентификацију и угледају се једни на друге у специфичним околностима. Такође, идентификација подразумева емпатију, која омогућује пружање сигурности онда када она изостаје од родитеља. Браћа и сестре јесу најсличнији једни другима, али та сличност може представљати изазов за жељену пажњу. Стога, у односу између сиблинга спонтано долази до де-идентификације, која подразумева бирање поларизованих ниша, односно, различитих аспеката родитељског идентитета који им припадају и којима ће обезбедити њихову наклоност (Schachter, 1976). Дакле, де-идентификација подразумева вид диференцијације и представља значајан феномен у развоју идентитета. Медијаторска улога сиблинга огледа се у њиховој могућности да утичу на избор елемената за идентификацију, бојећи однос између субјекта и родитељских фигура. Ова функција јесте универзална, јер чак и када субјект нема брата или сестру, он њихову улогу везује за друге објекте који би им наликовали (Mitchell, 2013). У раду су поменуте констелације приказане дијаграмски, преко модификације R-схеме (Lacan, 2006c).