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CHAPTER 4

ADLER'S INDIVIDUAL PSYCHOLOGY

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Concepts and Principles

- **Individual psychology:** understanding the behavior of each person as a complex, organized entity operating within a society
- Struggle for perfection:
 - **Teleological position:** belief that goals determine behavior; behavior is directed and shaped by a designing force
 - **Fictional finalism:** imagined goal that guides a person's behavior
 - **Superiority:** striving to attain perfection
 - Striving for superiority to attain completion leads to psychological health
 - Striving for personal superiority leads to neurosis
- **Social interest:** innate tendency in human beings to help and cooperate with one another as a means of establishing a harmonious and productive society

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Feelings of Inferiority and the Striving for Superiority

- It is not the defect itself that produces the striving, but the person's attitude toward it
 - **Attitude:** learned tendency to respond to an object in a consistently favorable or unfavorable way
- **Organ inferiority:** biologically based defect that gives rise to feelings of inadequacy
- **Masculine protest:** attempts by an individual, male or female, to compensate for feelings of inferiority by acting as though superior to others
- **Overcompensation:** exaggerated attempts by individuals to overcome their feelings of inferiority by acting as though they are personally superior to others

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Style of Life and the Creative Self

- **Style of life:** individual's distinctive personality pattern, which is basically shaped by the end of early childhood
- **Creative style:** people have the ability to create actively their own destinies and personalities

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Personality Development

- Three developmental problems of life:
 - **Society or communal life:** we must learn to affirm our fundamental connections to others
 - **Work:** people need to learn how to do things, to take responsibility for their actions, and to contribute to society through work
 - **Love:** people must treat their loved ones with respect and dignity

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Parental Influence In Early Childhood

- **Mother**
 - Loves her children: teaches them the skills necessary to secure their welfare
 - Dissatisfied with her role: preoccupied with trying to prove her own personal superiority by showing off children
- **Father**
 - Must prove that he is a worthwhile human being by contributing to the welfare of his wife, his children, and his society

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Birth Order

- Each child is treated uniquely by its parents, and this special treatment is typically, but not inevitably, related to the child's order of birth within the family
 - **First-borns** - understand the importance of power, dominance, and intellectual achievement
 - **Second-borns** - likely to be rebellious and highly competitive
 - **Youngest borns** - family members tend to spoil them
 - **Only borns** - likely to lack social competence

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Birth Order Research Evidence

- Confluence model (Zajonc) - support for Adler's views of first-borns
- Falbo's research suggests Zajonc was wrong about only borns
- Inadequacies of confluence model (Steelman and Rodgers)

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Adler's Four Major Lifestyle Types

- **Ruling type:** person who strives for personal superiority by trying to exploit and control others
- **Getting type:** person who attains personal goals by relying indiscriminately on others for help
- **Avoiding type:** person who lacks the confidence to confront problems and avoids or ignores them
- **Socially useful type:** person who actively and courageously confronts and solves his or her problems in accordance with social interest

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Assessment Techniques

- **Early recollections:** earliest memories provide insights into life style
- **Dream analysis:** technique used to uncover unconscious goals in accordance with his or her life style
- **Birth order analysis:** analysis of the effects of patients' birth positions on their subsequent behavior helps build confidence

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Evaluative Comments

- **Comprehensiveness:** broad scope
- **Precision and testability:** not very precise and very difficult to test adequately
- **Parsimony:** too simplistic and reductionistic
- **Empirical validity:** weak support for most aspects of the theory
- **Heuristic value:** major contributions to existential psychology and psychiatry and on the humanistic psychology movement
- **Applied value:** has high-applied value