

prophecy is that parents try to "fix" the problem they have diagnosed in the child; for example, parents perceive their child to have low self-esteem, they repeatedly try to affirm the child, and the child's self-esteem grows dependent on their affirmation.

Parents often feel they have not given enough love, attention, or support to a child manifesting problems, but they have invested more time, energy, and worry in this child than in his siblings. The siblings less involved in the family projection process have a more mature and reality-based relationship with their parents that fosters the siblings developing into less needy, less reactive, and more goal-directed people. Both parents participate equally in the family projection process, but in different ways. The mother is usually the primary caretaker and more prone than the father to excessive emotional involvement with one or more of the children. The father typically occupies the outside position in the parental triangle, except during periods of heightened tension in the mother-child relationship. Both parents are unsure of themselves in relationship to the child, but commonly one parent acts sure of himself or herself and the other parent goes along. The intensity of the projection process is unrelated to the amount of time parents spend with a child.

In the previous two categories the couple relationship is the focus of anxiety without it significantly impacting on the functioning of the next generation. By contrast, the family projection process describes how children develop symptoms when they get caught up in the previous generation's anxiety about relationships. The child with the least emotional separation from his/her parents is said to be the most vulnerable to developing symptoms. Bowen describes this as occurring when a child responds anxiously to the tension in the parent relationship, which in turn is mistaken for a problem in the child. A detouring triangle is thus set in motion as attention and protectiveness are shifted to the child. Within this cycle of reciprocal anxiety, the child becomes more demanding or more impaired.

An example would be when an ill or injured child distracts one parent from the pursuit of closeness in the marriage. As tension in the marriage is relieved, both spouses become invested in treating their child's condition, which may in turn become chronic or psychosomatic. As in all of Bowen's constructs, 'intergenerational projection' is said to occur in all families in varying degrees. Many intergenerational influences may determine which child becomes the focus of family anxiety and at what stage of the life cycle this occurs. The impact of crises and their timing also influences the vulnerability of certain children. Bowen viewed traumatic events as significant in highlighting the family processes rather than as actually 'causing' them.

The Multigenerational Transmission Process

This process entails the way family emotional processes are transferred and maintained over the generations. The whole family may join in The Family Projection Process, for example, by reinforcing the beliefs of the family. As the family continues this pattern over generations, they also refer back to previous generations ("He's just like his Uncle so and so - he was always irresponsible too" or "She's just like your cousin Rafiki - she was divorced four times.").

The concept of the multigenerational transmission process describes how small differences in the levels of differentiation between parents and their offspring lead over many generations to marked