



## Individuation for adult replacement children: ways of coming into being

by Kristina E. Schellinski, Abingdon, Oxon & New York, Routledge, 2019, 228 pp., £29.99 (Pbk) ISSN 9781315733746, 1315733749

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To cite this article: A. Meltem Ustundag-Budak (2021): Individuation for adult replacement children: ways of coming into being, Journal of Reproductive and Infant Psychology, DOI: [10.1080/02646838.2021.1962826](https://doi.org/10.1080/02646838.2021.1962826)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/02646838.2021.1962826>



Published online: 02 Aug 2021.



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## BOOK REVIEW

**Individuation for adult replacement children: ways of coming into being**, by Kristina E. Schellinski, Abingdon, Oxon & New York, Routledge, 2019, 228 pp., £29.99 (Pbk)  
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The author, Kristina Schellinski herself, is a replacement child, a practicing Jungian training psychotherapist and supervisor who examines the replacement child condition. How can adult replacement children find a new relationship with their true self when they were expected to be replaced a deceased sibling? Understanding their experience can ease their suffering and help them deal with trauma and grief, offering hope for psychological growth. This recognition bears important implications for replacement children and their families as well as for therapeutic processes and procedures. As a practicing psychotherapist, researcher and mother of a child born subsequent to loss of an infant, I found this book intellectually stimulating concerning the questions of 'life or death' and the 'wholeness from missing other' notions.

It brings to light the not much-spoken-about experience of adult replacement children and their coming to terms of 'living under the shadow of a loss' and highlights how this condition can be passed on as a transgenerational trauma. Epigenetic studies urge professionals to address traumatic experiences, especially those not spoken about.

The book provides readers with rich personal accounts of adult replacement children finding ways of connecting with the person who really, they are. The author examines this process in terms of the Jungian individuation process and archetypal experiences, providing clinical vignettes and the author's personal experience, realising her replacing role and then uncovering the true self and finding a way to 'coming home to self'. Making conscious what was unconscious and becoming aware of emotions and thoughts and adopting a different behaviour help to reduce the psychological distress.

From the Attachment Theory's perspective 'coming home to self' is very important as well as re-organising the view of self and others, known as the internal working models, as suggested in the individuation process. Internal working models are the key cognitive schemas of how early care experiences and trauma are carried over into adulthood and transferred to the next generation. Unresolved status of mind – disorganisation due to an experience of loss hinders an individual's attachment and may require therapeutic investigation into the unresolved status of mind due to loss or trauma. Since both parent and the child experience the loss, the possibility of disorganisation applies to both, and clear identification of such loss experiences can help resolve such a loss or traumatic experience.

Replacement involves a parent who intentionally or unconsciously wishes to replace a lost child, or a child who on its own account, consciously or intuitively replaces a missing sibling, or a child who may feel replaced by a subsequently born or adopted child. The book focuses on adult replacement children reorganising their experiences and relationships with their parents and their siblings. There are also consequences for parents who replace their children and fail to acknowledge both the living and deceased children's individual existence. Letting go and 'coming home' is a need for both, parent and replacement child(ren). An experience of loss may lead a mother to engage with the deceased child through a living child. Rather than such a confusing co-existence, a mother keeping the memory of the lost child while seeing the alive

child for who she or he is can be a healthy response since then both the children's existence is acknowledged separately (Üstündağ – Budak et al., 2015).

Similar to a replacement child, parents of a child born subsequent to loss need to 'come home to self' as a parent and acknowledge the co-existence of children, the lost one in memory and the alive one in the family, but realise their separateness at the very same time. Pulling opposite forces of continuing bonds with the deceased child but letting go at the very same time. Recognition of such a dialectic's existence can be healing for both replacement child and parent, and their respective individuation process and this via a continuing bond with their self instead of broken or replaced bonds.

Jung noted that 'on the road to wholeness one cannot escape being suspended between the "opposites"'. This is depicted in Kristina Schellinski's disclosure throughout her book; her relationship with herself and the individuation process made a new soul-to-soul relationship with her deceased brother possible. An experience of wholeness, a renewed sense of oneness becomes possible. In my view, this also applies to the parent's soul-to-soul connection with their living and their deceased child, offering differentiation and authenticity. Radically accepting the pain of grieving brings the gift of consciousness and soul-to-soul connection and wholeness. This is true for Jungian therapy and for existential and psychoanalytic as well as acceptance-based third-way behavioural therapies. Trauma itself catalyses the change and suffering offers healing to the individual as suggested by Turkish Sufi master Rumi: 'The wound is where the light enters'.

The book's eleven chapters address specific structural elements of the replacement child condition, provides definition and research and focus on attachment, bonding experiences, identity formation, grieving and guilt, and practical treatment and prevention options. The book is a guiding tool for professionals but at the same time accessible to any reader affected by or interested in this condition.

On a personal note, when I was offered to review this book, I did not realise how academic and at the same time personal the journey of this review will be for me – indeed it became part of my own journey to 'come home to myself as a parent after an experience of loss'.

*Note:* The book also provides an online platform: [replacementchildforum.com](http://replacementchildforum.com) is a website co-founded by Schellinski and offers further resources for professionals and replacement children.

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<https://doi.org/10.1080/02646838.2021.1962826>

