

0.1 Chapter 1: capitalism: Media

0.2 Media

1 On Fame and Sibling Rivalry

When we see a picture of the siblings of celebrities, we instinctively think, poor things. What must it be like if your brother or sister were hugely famous and admired by millions?



INS News Agency Ltd

1.0.0.1 Oh dear, my brother has become president.

We think like this because we are instinctively aware of envy. We understand how having a famous brother or sister could make you feel deeply, thoroughly inadequate. The comparison would be so humiliating and saddening. We constantly ask: why not me? We all know envy when it comes at us in sibling form, so we feel for them a lot.



Jackson Lee/Splash

1.0.0.0.2 Being Brad Pitts brother

Our instinctive awareness of the difficulties of being a sibling to a famous person takes us to the heart of how envy works. We don't envy everyone equally. We envy people who we feel in some ways equal to, but who for one reason or another have achieved things we haven't. There's therefore no one we feel more equal to than those who grew up around us in our own family. They had the same advantages and disadvantages. We know them so well. They are in our heads all the time. Then why are we not the president, the film star or the plutocrat? Why didn't it happen to us? Now that they have them, their advantages have ceased to be abstract things that no ordinary mortal has: they become quite realistic propositions from which one is excluded. It's crushing and, on some days, just unbearable.



1.0.0.0.3 Stone and her sister

The problem is, increasingly in the modern world, everyone feels like a sibling to everyone else. That's because we live in societies with a very social egalitarian spirit (note: they aren't actually egalitarian at all but the mood is deeply relaxed and we're encouraged to think that anyone can do anything, just so long as they work hard and put their minds to it). This is nice, but it potentially turns everyone into that most awkward thing: a sibling-like person. Why shouldn't I be like them?, is the natural question we now ask of more and more people.



William Conran/PA Archive/Press Association Images

1.0.0.0.4 Victoria Beckhams sister

We need to go easy on ourselves. We are ready to see how tough it must be to be related to Barack or Brad. But were as yet slower to see that in key ways we are in exactly the same position ourselves already vis a vis lots of people, who are slowly driving us mad with their achievements. We have an almost spontaneous impulse to be kind and understanding around a sibling of Victoria Beckham or Sharon Stone. We need to be as kind to ourselves. The toys have been very unfairly or arbitrarily distributed. Thats an OK thing to feel sad and anxious about a lot of the time.



Diane Bondareff/AP/Press Association Images

1.0.0.0.5 Sarah Jessica Parkers brother