



Jessica A. Garcia Dominican University of California

Background

- Birth order research and its affects on personality:
- Psychological perspective - Alfred Adler believed it is the role the child adopts from its interaction with others and the environment that creates its unique set of personality traits (Eckstein et al., 2010)
 - Evolutionary adaption - Frank Sulloway theorized a child develops certain characteristics in their fight for survival of parental investment (Eckstein, 2000)
 - Both have found conflicting evidence to support their work
- Current research:
- Questions if our expectations and predisposed judgements of a child can influence our interactions so much that it can impact children's personality development.
 - Are personality differences among birth order due to children behaving in a way that is a result of society and people's perceptions of what is expected of each child?

Methods

Participants:

N = 50, 84% women, ages ranged from 18 to 62

Undergraduate students from Dominican University of California were recruited from via personal contact by the researcher and subjects studied at non-Dominican locations

Only children are not included in this sample as only children and first-borns are thought to display similar qualities (Eckstein, 2010)

- Data collected from an only child have been combined with participants who selected themselves to be the oldest

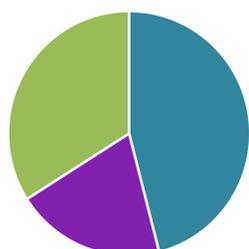
Procedure:

Participants completed an online survey consisting of demographic questions and two different personality measures; shortened versions of the Big 5 personality scale:

Measures:

The **Mini-IPIP** survey - Participants filled out this survey first as it was used to gather data on their self-reported personality traits. Once complete, were then asked to identify their birth order

The **TIPI** survey - Participants concluded the survey portion by taking the TIPI as it was used to evaluate their perception as to which traits they believe are to be expected of a child in regard to their assigned birth order.



● Only/Oldest ● Middle ● Youngest

Hypotheses

Hypothesis #1 - There is a positive relationship between people's **perception** of birth order traits and **self-reported** personality

Hypothesis #2 - People will perceive the **oldest** sibling to be the most conscientious and open/intellectual than the middle and youngest sibling

Hypothesis #3 -The **middle** sibling will be perceived to be the most agreeable than the oldest and youngest sibling

Hypothesis #4 - The **youngest** sibling will be perceived to be the most extraverted and neurotic than the oldest and middle sibling.

Results

Hypothesis #1 - Used 5 different Pearson R correlations, one for each trait, and found results that support there is a positive correlation between participant's self-reported personality traits and perceived birth order traits (see Figure 1 box highlights). However, the study found no correlation for the trait Agreeableness.

Hypothesis #2 - A one-way MANOVA was used to compare the oldest sibling to the middle and youngest on the dependent variables of Conscientiousness and Intellect.

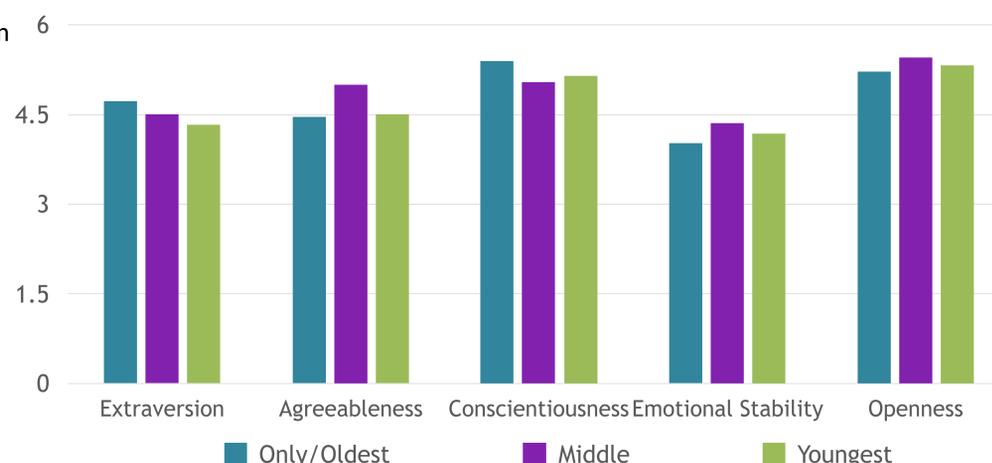
- No significant differences were found for Conscientiousness ($F(2) = .476, p > .05$) or Intellect ($F(2) = .175, p > .05$)

Figure 1

	Perceived Extraversion	Perceived Agreeableness	Perceived Conscientiousness	Perceived Emotional Stability	Perceived Openness
Self-reported Extraversion	.684***	-0.079	-0.087	.365**	0.076
Self-reported Agreeableness	0.134	.120	0.246	.303*	0.008
Self-reported Conscientiousness	0.144	0.261	.635***	0.215	0.128
Self-reported Neuroticism	-0.184	-.327*	0.007	-.550**	0.019
Self-reported Intellect	0.129	-0.168	-0.024	0.208	.499***

Note. $p < .05 = *$; $p < .01 = **$; $p < .000 = ***$

Figure 2 - Perceived Traits for Birth Order



Results

Hypothesis #3 - A one-way ANOVA was used comparing the middle sibling to the oldest and youngest on the dependent variable of Agreeableness.

- No significant differences were found ($F(2) = .942, p > .05$)

Hypothesis #4 - A one-way MANOVA was used to compare the youngest sibling to the oldest and middle on the dependent variables of Extraversion and Neuroticism.

- No significant differences were found for Extraversion ($F(2) = .385, p > .05$) or Neuroticism ($F(2) = .213, p > .05$)

Discussion

Findings

This study discovered that participants generalize the personality traits that they report of themselves onto a person who has the same birth order as them (see Figure 1)

We did not find a relationship for Agreeableness between participant's self-reported personality traits and perception of people of their birth order. Future research is needed to expand upon this.

For Hypothesis #2,3,4 we see no differences in how the participants perceive people of different birth orders to be across the personality traits (see Figure 2). The researcher suggests that the participants are not getting their information on personality traits and birth order from cultural norms or research literature.

The hypotheses were inaccurate descriptors of birth order traits and do not provide further support to past research whose findings conclude which personality traits are associated with birth order.

Future Directions

Need for future research to further study Adler's psychological perspective to increase our understanding of whether or not personality development is influenced by people's perceptions of birth order traits. Research should consider whether or not birth order has any effect on personality at all.

Future research should work towards identifying which personality traits accurately represent what is expected from people in different birth orders.

References

- Eckstein, D. (2000). Empirical studies indicating significant birth-order related personality differences. *The Journal Of Individual Psychology, 56*(4), 481-494.
- Eckstein, D., Aycock, K. J., Sperber, M. A., McDonald, J., Van Wiesner, V. I., Watts, R. E., & Ginsburg, P. (2010). A review of 200 birth-order studies: Lifestyle characteristics. *Journal Of Individual Psychology, 66*(4), 408-434.