

Temperament

Psychology



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Temperament Sibling rivalry has its origins in early childhood as children compete for position in their limited strata ity. The oldest, having the advantage, will often assume the leadership role for the rest of the children. The youngest will, by necessity, be a follower of the older siblings. The middle child, faced with no clearly defined role, will often become more independent, free spirited, and isolated from the family group. In children this is generally non-gender specific as they have not yet developed a gender identity.

Parents reinforce the children's hierarchy of dominance by applying differing parenting techniques to varying birth order as well as the gender of the children. The firstborn's period of being an only child instills certain attitudes in the child and the parents, while gender differences can instill differing parental expectations. These conflicting attitudes can manifest themselves in daily activities such as attention, seating arrangements, gift giving, and dating. This develops a child's temperament and shapes their personality, which carries over into later life.

Firstborn children, given a leadership role from birth, are also subjected to parental pressure to succeed. This can be especially acute in the case of the firstborn male. First borns are often known to be high achievers and well organized. The firstborn is expected to be a role model to the other children, family members, and friends. This can reduce the willingness of the first child to take risks and can develop a personality with an exaggerated fear of failure.

While the oldest child is prodded to succeed, the younger child will often be coddled and favored. This is influenced by the parents' desire to cling to parenthood as long as possible and will perpetuate the image of the

youngest as a child. This will form the child's personality as one who is dependent on others and insecure in self-reliance. This will continue into later life as the adult can never shed the self-image of being the “ baby” of the family.

Middle children, whose own self perceived image is one of ignored, will usually isolate themselves from the family unit and develop a more independent temperament. The parents will develop expectations of the middle children that may include looking after the younger siblings. As adults, they may continue to accept responsibility without authority by being unassertive, quiet, or meek. They may also reject their childhood learning and become more independent in their work by becoming a loner with no reliance on anyone outside themselves.

Social mores play into the perception of gender as it relates to temperament. Women's rights and public awareness have altered parental expectations of female children. With a greater expanse of career and educational opportunities, the personality development of females has evolved in recent decades. They have benefited from more choices, fewer obstacles, and have thus been able to achieve ever higher levels of success and equality.

Progressive attitudes toward the masculine role have affected the demands made on the male in society. It has resulted in less pressure to perform and has given men more independence to seek a less traditional position in career choice and family status. They have gained the ability to work in areas demanding more emotional output as well as being less constrained when working in occupations that require pure analytical decision-making. This has allowed men the opportunity to assume the less traditional, emotionally demanding female function within the family.

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The development of temperament and personality is directly affected by social views and expectations. More accepting attitudes toward defining the role of male and female has resulted in greater choices and fewer limits for both men and women. The ultimate adult personality will be influenced by the extent that the family is able to integrate these attitudes into the raising of their children and may even play a greater role.