

# Birth order impact



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Have you ever questioned as to why you and your siblings are so different even though you all grew up together? Perhaps even once in your life time, the thought of them being adoptive has even crossed your mind. Are you guilty yet? You may not be the only one with such speculations. According to the Psychiatrist Alfred Adler, a person who brought forward the birth order theory, indicated that the order in which you are born in within your immediate family, has an effect on the development of your personality. Your personality is what makes you unique; it is the make-up of your feelings, motives, and behavior (Rathus). Some studies have even gone as far as to say that this birth order effect even has an effect on your Intelligence quotient (IQ). IQ is a score derived from a standardized Intelligence test (Merriam-Webster). Not only does it have an effect on your personality and IQ, but the birth order theory has an effect on who you associate with as well. Just like any other theory, there is always two sides to the issue and some have suggested that the family size and economic status are what influence a person's personality instead.

There are a variety of characteristics or traits that make each child within the family different. The oldest child tends to be very conscientious (Voo). This basically means that they are very careful and diligent with everything they do. Firstborns also are reliable, leaders, controlling, achievers, cautious (Voo). Sometimes firstborns are inclined to act as mini-adults (Voo). The influence of acting like mini-adults may be a result of them having to be responsible of caring their younger siblings at times or even having to be the role model or bigger person. On the other hand, the middle-child, who is not the leader nor the baby of the family has other characteristics that make

him/her different. For example, the middle-child is more likely to be people-pleasers, peacemakers, sociable, to thrive in friendships, and is fairly rebellious (Voo). In some cases, the middle child may even possess first born characteristics if they are of a different gender than their older sibling (Voo).

For example, the oldest may be a male but the middle child may be a female which would indicate that she is the first born female in the family, so this could explain why she would inherit some first born characteristics (Voo).

The youngest child, or the spoiled baby tends to have the characteristics that many wish to have. They are very free-spirited, fun-loving, uncomplicated, outgoing, attention-seeker, manipulative, self-centered (Voo). Of course, many would agree that they fit in their designated birth order category but they may still possess one or two characteristics from another category.

The birth order effect has also been linked to effecting a person's IQ. There are many studies that support the argument that the birth order theory has an effect on your IQ compared to your siblings. In 2007, two Norwegian epidemiologists by the names of Petter Kristensen and Tor Bjerkedal published convincing evidence from their work that there exists a negative correlation between IQ and birth order, which suggests that basically the more older siblings you may have, the lower your IQ may be (Hartshorne). This study included 250, 000 Norwegians so it is more likely that one relies on it than to doubt it (Hartshorne). Another study from psychologists at the University of Illinois, indicated that from the 377, 000 high school students, firstborns are most likely to have more higher point in their IQ in comparison to their younger siblings (Kauffman). Obviously these studies are in favor for all of those firstborns out there but it is not so favorable for all those younger

siblings. Even though this study may not be actually precise, personally it is very relatable and accurate-at least for now.

The people you associate yourself with may also be a result of the birth order effect. It has been said that you are more prone to being around people from your own birth order category (Hartshorne). Technically this seems very logical as you are friends with people who share the same similarities as you, so if you are a firstborn child you will be more connected in terms of friendship towards another firstborn child. Relationships correlate with personalities, personalities correlate with the birth order effect, and this would propose that relationships are based on the birth order effect (Hartshorne). With this being said, if you are the baby in the family you are most likely to get married to a first born, all for the simple fact that they will already know how to take care of you (Walcutt). The middle child may either marry a younger or older child for many reasons (Walcutt). You may have the urge to marry a younger individual because you will be more inclined to take care of them and if you marry an older individual you will most likely be the one being taken care of (Walcutt). Still, even this may seem very absurd but again, this theory is not one hundred percent accurate- at least for now.

Now of course, there is not necessarily a right or wrong side to this theory since it is still not one hundred percent accurate. Theorists have argued that the family size of a family is a factor that determines the child's personality. For example, family size can be determined significantly by ethnicity, education, and wealth (Hartshorne). It should also be noted that there is a correlation among smaller families and wealth. Wealthier families are typically made up of more educated individuals who in most cases prefer to

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have a smaller family. This would obviously explain why astronauts are commonly first-borns in their family (Hartshorne). In fact, twenty-one out of the twenty-three American astronauts first sent to space were first-borns while the remaining two were an only child (The Birth Order Book: Why You Are the Way You Are). By most of these astronauts being first born it could indicate that they fit the characteristics that are often associated with firstborns. But even so, research about birth-order effects still remain relatively flawed (Hartshorne).

The birth order effect which Alfred Adler first proposed, is in a sense related to the Psychoanalytic theory. The psychoanalytic approach is that one's personal behavior is solely determined by early childhood experiences (Psychology Lesson 1 Handout 2). This would support other theorists who believe that a person's personality is not determined by the birth order but by other factors such as: social/economic status of a family, changes in the family household, or even the amount of children that grew up in the home (Walcutt).

Whether you agree upon this birth order effect is your decision but there has been strong evidence suggested that birth order effects your personality, IQ, and the people you associate yourself with. Although these are strong points, others have suggested that your personality is derived from family size and economic status. You may agree with the theory or you may disagree with it and believe that it merely is just like astrology. For decades this theory has existed and it is no surprise that no accurate answer to this theory has yet to be given or discovered, considering that it involves such complexity. This theory still remains unresolved because there are factors which effect the

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theory such as cases with blended families or adoptions (Voo). Regardless of what you have read, your personality is a part of the nature vs nurture debate. You are what your genes say you are and according to personal experiences and your environment, you acquire other characteristics, which in essence is all part of your personality. Your personality is not solely determined by one factor, it is determined by several factors, some of which you personally may not even be fully aware of.

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