

SEX AND BIRTH ORDER, AND FUTURE EXPECTATIONS OF OCCUPATIONAL STATUS AND SALARY

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This study reports an investigation of two important Adlerian concepts: birth order and the future. A person's ordinal position will influence how his family will respond to him. One's present subjective future expectations influence behavior; this form of stating the case avoids teleological determination of the present by future events, and points out, instead, the individual's subjective concept of what the future has in store for him as an important determinant of goal-oriented behavior (1, pp. 88-89).

Both birth order and the future have been the focus of recent research by the present authors. *Ss* with shortened future time perspective were found more externally oriented on the Rotter Internal-External Control Scale, and more anxious and less well-adjusted on the Cornell Index (9). Both birth order and sex differences were found to be associated with a variety of future time perspective measures (8).

The present study is based on a finding by Eisenman (4, 5) that first-born males and later-born females tend to behave similarly, in contrast to later-born males and first-born females: the former tended to be more creative than the latter. This is perhaps because first-born males are highly prized members of the family, often expected to follow in their father's footsteps, while first-born females are perhaps subjected to the most intensive socialization. Since over-socialization is detrimental to creativity (2), samples composed primarily of females would show less creativity in the first born. Schachter's research (11) was limited to female *Ss*, whereas the greater eminence of the first born which Harris (7) noted, was observed in males. The reason why birth order research has produced many contradictory results may be partially due to neglect to take sex into account (6).

¹Research conducted while author was at Slippery Rock State College.

The present research investigates the effect of birth order and sex on salary and occupational status expectations. We expected sex to be the stronger variable in view of the noticeable sex differences regarding work in our society.

METHOD

The *Ss* were 235 undergraduate junior and senior education majors at a state college. Their distribution by sex and birth order is shown in Table 1. *Ss* were asked in class in an anonymous questionnaire, what position in education they expected to have 10, 20, and 30 years from now, and what salary they expected to earn. They were presented with a standard list of occupations in education but could list any other occupation. "Superintendent of schools" was rated 2, the highest status position, "teacher" 10, the lowest status position. To make the higher status correspond to higher numerals, the reciprocals of 10 plus 2 are reported, so that now 2 stands for teacher, and 10 for superintendent. Statements on birth order and sex were also requested in the questionnaire.

RESULTS

The results are reported in Table 1. Regarding salary expectations, among the males, only-child *Ss* are highest, with first borns next, and later borns last. But this trend is statistically not significant, in part because it is not maintained at the 10-years-hence level

TABLE 1. MEAN ANTICIPATED SALARY (IN THOUSANDS OF DOLLARS) AND OCCUPATIONAL STATUS (IN RANKS FROM 2 TO 10), AS WELL AS STANDARD DEVIATIONS, 10, 20, AND 30 YEARS HENCE, BY SEX AND BIRTH ORDER

Years hence		Male			Female			
		Only child	First born	Later born	Only child	First born	Later born	
	N =	8	24	33	13	49	108	
<i>Salary</i>	30	M	16.25	15.47	14.21	8.75	10.80	10.79
		SD	3.42	4.65	4.12	2.90	2.00	3.86
	20	M	12.08	11.74	11.35	7.87	9.97	9.54
		SD	2.98	3.08	1.85	1.89	2.50	3.10
	10	M	7.21	8.57	7.80	6.76	7.58	7.06
		SD	1.49	2.36	1.61	1.43	1.76	0.84
<i>Status</i>	30	M	6.66	7.06	6.27	3.00	4.11	4.29
		SD	1.87	2.41	3.93	2.11	4.87	2.87
	20	M	5.23	5.70	5.00	2.45	3.70	3.83
		SD	1.69	2.96	2.13	0.74	1.51	1.47
	10	M	2.63	2.88	2.70	2.54	2.25	2.43
		SD	1.66	1.92	1.31	1.14	0.82	1.17

($F = 5.36$, $df = 2/221$, $p < .05$). Among the females, only-child *Ss* by contrast are lowest, first borns highest, and later borns closely next (binomial $p < .05$).

Regarding occupational status expectations, among the males, first borns are highest, only-child *Ss* next and later borns last (binomial $p < .05$). Among the females, later borns came first, first borns next, and only ones last, but this trend is not significant.

Thus while first-born males have relatively higher status expectations and lower salary expectations, first-born females have higher salary expectations and later-born females have the higher status expectations. Why this should be so is not obvious.

There is naturally also a highly significant tendency for all *Ss* to expect advancement in salary and occupational status as years go by.

DISCUSSION

The results show that *S's* sex is an important factor in the birth-order effect. They show further that only-child *Ss* must be considered separately from first borns. Also, as anticipated, sex was found to be a more powerful variable than birth order, consistent with society's emphasis on sex differences in work, while birth order is acknowledged by the social environment as being of importance.

While *Ss* generally displayed an optimistic outlook, expecting occupational status and salary improvement with time, first-born males expected highest status but not necessarily highest salary compared to the other two birth-order positions studied. This would be in accordance with Alder's observation of the first born's concern with status (1, pp. 377-379). Besides, there were non-significant trends for only-child males to expect higher salaries than any of the other groups. Perhaps they expect most to be valued by others, as they were by their parents.

Among females, first borns expected higher salaries, later borns higher occupational status than any of the other groups.

The position of being an only child represented in our sample apparently a quite different situation depending on whether the child was a boy or a girl. In the case of a boy, the only child had the highest salary expectations and second highest status expectations, while in the case of a girl, the only child had the lowest expectations on both counts.

The high ultimate salary expectations of the only-child males is in accordance with Rosenberg (10) who found only-child males were highest in self-esteem. Recently, Coopersmith (3) found that male first-born and only-child Ss were rated higher in self-esteem than later borns. The findings of the present study are consistent with these reports, since male first-born or only-child Ss tended to be higher in salary or occupational status expectations than their later-born peers.

SUMMARY

Based on Adlerian concepts of birth order and future time, a study was conducted on 235 Ss who expressed their expectation for future salary and occupational status 10, 20, and 30 years hence. With Ss classified by birth order and sex it was found: that first-born females expected significantly higher salary than only-child and later-born females, while first-born males had significantly higher occupational status expectations than only-child or later-born males. Among males, there were nonsignificant trends for only-child Ss to expect higher salary, and among females, for later-born Ss to expect greater occupational status.

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