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Position and Power: Birth Order and its Relationship to Personality Type

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Position and Power:
Birth Order and its Relationship to Personality Type

Lesa M. Chastain
Lindenwood University

An Abstract Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School
of Lindenwood University in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements of the Degree of
Master of Arts

1999

Abstract

This study investigates the relationship between birth order and other factors with psychological personality traits. Students from seven public and private elementary schools, in a mid-western state, participated in this study. Those included in this study had to meet the following requirements: students could come from families that had up to four consecutive children, none of which were more than three years apart in sibling age. There were sixty-five elementary students who participated. Participants completed a blind questionnaire and were then given the children's version of the MBTI called the Murphy-Meisgeier Type Indicator for Children. The questionnaire revealed their birth order and the ages of their siblings. The family socioeconomic status was also requested when permission to test was obtained by parents. The type indicator for children revealed results which indicate that there are similarities between the birth order in children and their personality type.

Position and Power:
Birth Order and its Relationship to Personality Type

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Lindenwood University

An Thesis Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School
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Requirements of the Degree of
Master of Arts

1999

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Dedication

To my husband, Charlie, and my children, Tiffany, Amanda, Chad, and Chelsea. Their support, patience, encouragement, and love inspired my creativity and their belief in me allowed fulfillment of one of my dreams. To my parents, Clay and Carol Jones, who by example have taught the power of commitment in any success. To my great friends, Judy and other co-workers, who always believed in me and strengthened my pursuit to finish. Thank-you and may I always strive to exemplify these qualities, to all others daily, that which you have inspired in me.

Acknowledgments

I would like to acknowledge the efforts of my children who assisted me in scoring all the MBTI's over their Thanksgiving holiday. Also, to my husband whose insight and suggestions were an invaluable assistance, whose wisdom I appreciate, and who provided the vision I lacked. I count it a great privilege to be your mother and wife.

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Chapter I

Introduction

In real estate there are only three factors worth considering- location, location, and location. Investors know the importance of position. Buying the worst house or property on the best street is considered a smarter option than buying a terrific property in a less than desirable location. Position is also important in human development. Keen observers of human behavior realize the importance of birth order and its affects on a child's behavior, personality and performance. It is fascinating to look at the similarities and differences between children in families according to the perspective of birth order.

Procreation has been an essential task for all human beings in order to continue the existence of the species. Before the advent of modern medicine and birth control, common sense would dictate that females would give birth to a large number of children, helping to ensure that at least one would survive to adulthood and thus create children of his or her own. However, as time has passed, humans have become able to control the number of children they have. Many choose to have more than one child, some choose to have none at all. Still others choose to have only one. Whatever the decision, the number and order of birth of human offspring seems to have at least a small effect on their personality development.

Alfred Adler's Individual Psychology continues to be recognized by counselors as a popular theoretical orientation

(Smith, 1982). According to Adler (1931/1958, 1956), one of the most important elements in conceptualizing clients and their difficulties is the concept of personality. Kefir (1981) defined personality as "the perceptive ways one looks at oneself and the external world, and how one moves behaviorally through life toward an idealized goal of superiority" (p. 402). Dreikurs (1989) claims personality characterizes everything that the client thinks, feels, and does. "His thoughts, actions and wishes seize upon definite symbols and conform to definite patterns. The life style is comparable to a characteristic theme in a piece of music. It brings the rhythm of recurrence into our lives" (p. 44). Adlerian counselors believe that understanding clients' personality and helping clients acquire insight into their personality type are key components in the therapeutic process.

Personality Theory

Within the practice of individual psychology, there are many strategies for gathering information that can foster the counselor's understanding of the client's personality (Eckstein & Bartath, 1996; Powers & Griffith, 1987; Shulman & Mosak, 1988; Wheeler, Kern, & Curlette, 1991). One of the more recently developed approaches to understanding personality was originated by Kefir (1971) and further developed by Pew (1974), Brown (1976), Dewey (1991), and Langenfeld and Main (1983).

The development of the concept of personality priorities had varying opinions. Kefir (1971, 1981) originally posited the idea of

personality priorities as a way of expanding the counselor's understanding of the client and his or her personality. She stated that after working for several years with the basic Adlerian tool of the lifestyle, "I found that uncovering it does not show the therapist or the client the individual's mode of behaviors but only one's perception of the self, one's outlook on life and the way in which other people are perceived" (p. 402).

Kefir believed that an understanding of personality must include both the individual's convictions about how he or she acquires belonging, significance, and a sense of mastery and the behavior based on those convictions. To understand both of these components of the client's personality, she developed the complimentary concepts of priorities and impasse. Kefir viewed personality priorities as avoidance strategies, methods of moving away from a perceived traumatic event (an impasse) and achieving a sense of mastery over chaos and fear. Her list of personality priorities included the controller, the pleaser, the morally superior, and the avoider (Kefir, 1981). Kefir believed that the primary way of understanding a person's personality and changing his or her behavior patterns was to understand what that person wished to avoid. In this topology, the controller wishes to avoid being ridiculed or humiliated; the pleaser wishes to avoid rejection; the morally superior person wishes to avoid anonymity and meaninglessness; and the avoider wishes to avoid stress.

Pew (1974) used the term number one priority to describe a

similar concept. He defined the number one priority of a person as "a manifestation of our self-created, self-consistent style of living, a theme which runs through all of our human transactions" (Pew, 1976, p. 1). According to this definition, a personality priority is a person's characteristic way of thinking about situations and interacting with others.

The development of personality priority has been a major focus of human psychology for many years and goes much deeper than reaching an agreed upon definition. In the past 40 years personality research has seen at least one full cycle of uncritical enthusiasm turn into bleak pessimism and again to enthusiasm. Recent events suggest that the field is again becoming a focal area of psychological study (Berger, 1994). Exciting discoveries are being made in behavior genetics. Research indicates a relationship between personality traits and emotional states. We are beginning to see adult personality theorists exchange ideas with theorists of childhood temperaments. Finally, long term studies of personality development across mans entire life span is showing new revelations (Berger, 1994). The recent Handbook of Personality (Pervin 1990) has uncovered exciting discoveries detailing the progress that has been made since the previous edition (Borgatta & Lambert 1968). Many of the tentative findings of the early fifties (Eysenck 1952; MacKinnon 1951; Sears 1950) have led to substantial contributions that continue to influence our thinking.

Birth Order Theory

It remains a widely accepted fact that no two personalities are exactly alike. Over the years, researchers have identified various factors that influence the development of personality. One of the most surprising results of psychological research in the last 20 years is the discovery that brothers and sisters raised together are almost as different in their personalities as people who grow up in separate families (Kidwell, 1982). In other words, a shared family environment has little influence on personality. By studying identical and fraternal twins raised together and apart, behavioral geneticists have discovered that only 5% of the variance (individual differences) in personality traits is a result of common family environment, whereas 35% can be attributed to environmental influences that are not shared, about 40% is genetic, and 20% is associated with measurement error (Earnst & Angst, 1983).

These findings have begun to revolutionize the understanding of personality development and family dynamics by suggesting that the family is not a single environment but a collection of microenvironments or niches. Berger (1994) believed the most important systematic sources of these microenvironments was gender and birth order. Psychologists have been investigating birth order ever since Charles Darwin's cousin Francis Galton pointed out in 1874 that eldest sons were over represented in the membership of the Royal Society (Dreikurs,

1953). After breaking away from Sigmund Freud to found his own school of psychoanalysis, Alfred Adler highlighted social influences on personality development, including birth order. Adler, a second born, regarded firstborns as "power-hungry conservatives" (Shulman & Mosaic, 1977). He described later borns as typically competitive (middle children) or spoiled and lazy (youngest children).

During the half century since Adler's speculations, psychologists have conducted more than 2,000 studies on the subject, and this literature has often been attacked. Critics argue that the results are conflicting and that in many cases most of the studies have inadequate controls for social class, family size, and other influences that correlate with birth order effects and could lead to false conclusions (Forer, 1976). In reality, these effects which were thought to be false are confirmed by using meta-analysis. Meta-analysis a way of combining findings from different studies to enhance their statistical power and reliability. Considering those well-designed studies that adjust for social class and family size, meta-analysis reveals consistent birth order differences for many personality traits (Ernst & Angst, 1983). Among these identifiable factors remains birth order.

Adler (Weiten, 1998), best known for his theories regarding striving for superiority, was also concerned directly with the effects of birth order on personality. Adler had a successful older brother, but Adler was weak as a child and thus was most likely affected

with the desire to assert himself and prove his worth. Adler's theory stressed the social aspect of personality development and, therefore, proposed the possibility of birth order and its significance in the interpersonal relationships of family life. He felt that each position in the order, whether first or last, had distinct characteristics. For example, he hypothesized that firstborns are problem children and that only children are likely to be spoiled due to parental overindulgence (Weiten, 1998).

Interest in birth order research continued to grow during the 1960's and the 1970's. In fact, by 1976, more than 1,000 articles on birth order had been published (Klein, 1984). However, birth order studies came under fire in the late 1970's. Criticism was directed at research designs that failed to explore aspects of personality and birth order with related family variables such as age spacing, gender, and socioeconomic status (SES) (Earnst & Angst, 1983; Singh, 1990; Steelman & Powell, 1985).

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between birth order and other factors with specific psychological personality traits. Other factors include the gender and socioeconomic status. Specific psychological personality traits examined will be Extraversion or Introversion and Judging or Perceiving.

Statement of Hypothesis

The use of the MBTI personality testing as it relates to birth

order is not found in literature reviews. Though other instruments have been used in the area of birth order and personality; it is thought that these attitude scales could be significantly influenced by birth order and other family variables. It is hypothesized that a child's birth order in a family having all siblings born within two years of each other will have similarities between their particular birth order and their personality type characteristic of either Extraversion or Introversion and Judging or Perceiving.

Chapter II

Review of Literature

In general, literature research indicates that there are personality differences between children depending on birth order. The idea that intersibling differences exceed their similarities on personality measures has a considerable history (Crook, 1937; Lykken, Tellegen, & DeRubeis, 1978; Plomin & Daniels, 1987; Scarr & Grajek, 1982; Woodworth, 1941). Examining monozygotic (MZ) and dizygotic twins (DZ), Loehlin and Nichols (1976) found MZ twins more similar than DZ twins on three widely used personality instruments. Dixon and Johnson's (1980) related study yielded correlations on various personality measures between nontwin siblings that ranged from .03 to .19. Previous research has consistently indicated that siblings raised in the same family environment showed little resemblance on personality measures, especially nontwin siblings. The observation that MZ twins were most similar, followed in turn by DZ twins, and then by nontwin siblings, suggests that genetics may be an important contributor in shaping personality.

Personality Theory in Birth Order

Although researchers agree that siblings differ on personality measures, there is less agreement about the reasons for such differences. The family constellation variables of age, birth order, and gender have been extensively studied and suggested as possible explanations (Abramovitch, Corter, Pelper, & Stanhope, 1986; Hilton, 1967; Jacobs & Moss, 1976; Lohman,

Lohman, & Christenson, 1985). The findings of most studies have shown that these variables account for less than 10% of intersibling variance and cannot account for sibling personality differences (Ernst & Angst, 1983; Daniels & Plomin, 1985; Hauser & Sewell, 1985; Plomin & Daniels, 1987; Plomin & Foch, 1981; Scarr & Grajek, 1982; Scarr, Webber, Weinberg, & Wittig, 1981).

Characteristics in Birth Order

According to Rowe and Plomin (1981), research on the importance of unique factors has rarely been attempted because, by definition, such experiences could not explain personality differences in the general population. Research on family constellation variables has been discussed. Incongruent data regarding parental differences in raising their children has shown that some parents perceived that they had treated siblings similarly (Daniels, Dunn, Furstenberg, & Ploman, 1985), whereas other researchers found that siblings often perceived important differences in their treatment by parents (Hilton, 1967; Jacobs & Moss, 1976). Also, some researchers have found that siblings interact mutually (Abramovitch, Corter, & Lando, 1979; Lamb, 1978), whereas Dunn (1983) characterized sibling interactions as complementary.

Rowe and Plomin (1981) concluded that extrafamilial relationships (peer groups and teachers) may also be important to the development of intersibling differences in personality. Popular literature research indicates that each child's personality also can

be influenced by factors such as parenting style, age spacing, gender, and socioeconomic status (Ernst & Angst, 1983; Kidwell, 1982; Pfouts, 1980; Steelman, 1985).

The theory that each person has an innate individuality from birth would appear to confirm the fact that children from the same family are different from their siblings (Dreikurs, 1953). Research on birth order has mainly correlated different birth positions with particular behavioral characteristics. The investigations have frequently focused on unusually narrow behavior patterns thus, inferential meaning has been severely constricted. The birth-order literature reveals many contradictory findings. It also reflects a dramatic decline in birth-order research in the United States during the past 20 years. The forces influencing these changes in research interest are not clear, although the decrease in American research may be a response to both the limited theoretical structure and somewhat conflicting research findings. The many differences in the populations examined and the considerable variations in measurement procedures have also made descriptions of birth order characteristics difficult to replicate (Toman, 1993).

Research on birth order most frequently has underscored characteristics of first-born children. The first born position is most often viewed as the favored position when surveyed (Ernst & Angst, 1983). Upon sampling 139 college graduate and undergraduate students their findings clearly indicated that 73%

thought that the first born position was the favored position.

Even if parents do not obviously favor the oldest, sibling rivalry influences the dynamics of family life because competition among children serves to limit favoritism. That competition involves the cultivation of family niches that correspond to differences in birth order (Dunn, 1983). Firstborns, for example, often seek the favor of their parents by acting as surrogate parents toward their younger siblings. As a result, they tend to be parent-identified and conservative. Later borns, who obviously cannot babysit themselves, are likely to seek an unoccupied family niche by cultivating latent talents that can be discovered only through experimentation. Thus they are often more flexible and open to experience (Howarth, 1980).

Another reason for the divergent personalities and interests of siblings is the different strategies they use in their relations with one another. Because firstborns are bigger, they are more likely to use physical aggression and intimidation, and, in general, they are more likely to boss and dominate younger brothers and sisters (Leman, 1989). Later borns tend to use low-power strategies, such as whining, pleading, cajoling, humor, social intelligence, and, when expedient, appealing to parents for help. Two or more later borns may also form coalitions against the firstborn. Middle children are most inclined to diplomacy and cooperation; they are more tender-minded and flexible than either firstborns or last borns (Joubert, 1989).

Only children represent a controlled experiment in birth order research. Because they experience no sibling rivalry, they are not driven to occupy a particular family niche and so vary considerably in personality (Dunn, 1983). Like other firstborns, they are generally ambitious and conform to parental authority, but in other ways they are intermediate between firstborns and later borns (Leman, 1989).

There is often a greater difference between a firstborn and a second born, or between a second born and a third born, than between the firstborn and the third born. The reason is that sibling competition promotes differentiation in order to minimize direct conflict, and children who are farther apart in age have less need to compete (Leman, 1989). This process of sibling differentiation extends to relationships with parents as well. For example, when a firstborn identifies more strongly with one parent, the second born is likely to identify with the other (Pfouts, 1980).

Since the first born position seems to be the favored position, extensive research can be found describing the characteristics of the first born. Specific results include that they achieved higher professional status than their later born siblings (Schachter, 1963); recalled fewer dreams (Ward, Ward, Randers-Pehrson, & Runion, 1973); were more popular with peers (Alexander, 1966); were less popular with peers (Miller & Maruyama, 1976); had low anxiety levels (Howarth, 1980); had high anxiety levels (Lahey, Hammer, Crumrine, & Forehand,

1980); had higher IQ scores (Zajonc, 1983); had high scores in a personality inventory that measured dominance, good impression, and achievement by conformity (Phillips, Bedelan, Mossholder, & Touliatos, 1988); and had higher narcissism scores on a personality inventory (Joubert, 1989).

Middle-born children were over represented in a sample of teenage delinquent males (Neld, Ward, & Edgar, 1977); they displayed more emotional stability on a personality inventory among college students (Kaur & Dheer, 1982); and they showed the fewest personality problems among children (Joubert, 1989).

Last-born children scored highest on exhibition in a personality inventory given to university students (Zajonc, 1983). Among American undergraduates, children with no siblings ("only children") had lower social interest scale scores (Schneider & Reuterfors, 1981).

Patterson and Tinsley (1980) examined birth order, vocational choice, choice of college, and personality patterns among African American college students and found no significant differences among birth order groups. They raised questions about the validity of birth order theory for Black college students.

Results of experiments dealing with expectations (Miller & Turnbull, 1986; Rosenthal, 1966) indicate that anticipatory perceptions dramatically influence performance consequences--attitude is linked with behavioral outcome. Therefore, one's perceptions may both anticipate and confirm values and

experience associated with any given birth position.

Though there may be some conflicting findings; there are also some strong agreements among several literature reviews. For example, firstborns tend to seek greater acceptance and have a stronger need for achievement. They are more goal orientated (Phillips, Long, & Bedeian, 1990). They often achieve their high intellectual goals and are judged as more serious, more seclusive, and more sensitive than later-born children (Adler, 1927, 1954; Forer, 1976; Leman, 1989; Phillips, Bedeian, Mossholdre, & Touliatos, 1988; Phillips, Lang, & Bedeian, 1990). By contrast last borns typically are more popular, more friendly, more socially orientated, and judged to be more carefree, affectionate, and persuasive than firstborns (Adler, 1927, 1954; Kidwell, 1982; Perlin & Grater, 1981). Although less research has focused on middle borns, they are generally described as nonconfrontive and noncompetitive, compromising, and diplomatic resulting from their position between older and younger siblings (Adler, 1927, 1954; Kidwell, 1982; Perlin & Grater, 1981).

Birth Order and Self-Esteem Relationship

Birth placement may affect a person's level of self-esteem. Falbo (1981) conducted a study to examine the relationship between birth order and certain personality characteristics. Participants included 841 male and 944 female undergraduate students which were each paid three dollars to complete several personality instruments and a background questionnaire,

including a 16-item device used to measure self-esteem. Falbo (1981) found that self-esteem was higher among firstborn children than later born children. He also found that firstborn children tend to be more competitive than their younger siblings.

An individual's relation to his siblings may affect his self-image. Gates, Lineberger, Crockett, and Hubbard (1988) conducted a study about birth order and how it relates to depression, anxiety, and self-concept. This study used three different scales including one designed to measure the level of self-concept. The children questioned ranged in age from 7 to 12 and were selected from public and private schools. All items were read to all children to account for possible differences in reading levels. The study found that the self-concept scores were higher for firstborn children than second-born and youngest-born children. A high self-concept score indicated a high level of self-esteem.

Self-esteem, including how one believes he is appraised by others, may be related to birth order. Schwab and Lundgren (1978) conducted two related studies. In the first study, 82 male and 82 female undergraduate students were questioned about their self-esteem, as well as their perceived public-esteem. The results showed that self-esteem was higher for firstborn children than for late born children. A second study, also conducted in 1978, was similar to the first. This study examined the possible differences between males and females. Self-esteem was still

higher for firstborn children as compared to later born children, regardless of sex.

Birth Order and Parenting Style Relationship

Parenting style has long been associated with birth order. Dreikurs (1953) noted that, in practice, parents never treat two children alike but rather behave very differently toward each child. Parental reports on educational and other achievement practices nearly unanimously point to greater demands being placed on firstborns than on later borns (Ernst & Angst, 1983). Baskett (1984) cited studies in which mothers responded differently to their firstborn children than to their later borns. Her study compared the interactions of children of similar ages but different birth order positions to their parents and to their siblings to see whether ordinal position influenced family behaviors. She concluded that because parents may exhibit more stringent standards and higher expectations for their firstborns than for their later borns, firstborns often model these parental behaviors in their own interactions with siblings and later with their own children.

Birth Order and Gender Relationship

Birth order and gender influence personality in similar ways because they have similar effects on the strategies used by siblings as they jockey for position within a family. Partly for genetic reasons and partly because of their socialization, females tend to be less aggressive than males, just as later borns are less aggressive than firstborns (Pfouts, 1980). Gender also modifies

the forms taken by aggression. Firstborn males are more physically aggressive; firstborn females are more verbally aggressive. Both groups, firstborn males and females, have an overall tendency to be more dominant, tough-minded, and ambitious (Leman, 1989).

Shulman and Mosak (1977) asserted that in some families the demands, that each role has placed upon it, is so complete that there is little need for siblings of the opposite sex to compete with each other. Girls in families where there is only one girl among a group of boys, for instance, hold the position of the "one and only." Because this usually is a unique position, there also is less need for competition. Children who grow up with brothers tend to be more dominant and aggressive than those who grow up with sisters. A boy with an older sister is more likely to be called a sissy; a girl with an older brother is often regarded as a tomboy (Lamb, 1978). Likewise, Kidwell's (1982) study of middle borns indicated, "being an only male among female siblings creates a self-esteem enhancing uniqueness of its own, helping to offset the lack of status which occurs when one is caught in the middle of the sibling structure" (p. 234). Other reported trends related to gender and birth order include introversion associated with second born males (Klein, 1984) and firstborn females tending to be more judging types (Myers & McCaulley, 1985).

Birth Order and Age Gap Relationship

Birth order effects are modified by both age gaps and

gender. The influence of birth order is muted when the age difference is so small that the relationship between siblings is nearly equal and also when it is so large that they do not compete for the attention of their parents (Bradley, 1982; Shulman & Mosak, 1977). Pfouts (1980) cited an early study by Koch indicating that when siblings are within two years of one another, both are more strongly affected by the sibling relationship than in wider spacings. In Kidwell's (1982) empirical study with middle borns, he found that having the two adjacent siblings spaced on the average of 2 years apart tended to be associated with decreased self-esteem as compared to 1-, 3-, or 4-year spacings. Ernst and Angst (1983) reported that data on age spacing seem to indicate that narrow spacing leads to some degree of interpersonal stress.

Closeness in age between siblings has shown to be associated with problematic academic and nonacademic behavior for both siblings in addition to being disadvantageous in family relations and personal adjustment (Pfouts, 1980). Pfouts's (1980) findings indicated that close age spacing is least associated with good personal adjustment, whereas it is most associated with good social skills. Toman (1969) noted that siblings who are six or more years apart display a tendency of growing up like only children. He noted that the smaller the age gap between siblings, the more severe their conflicts with each other seemed to be.

Birth Order and Socioeconomic Status

Socioeconomic status is identified as perhaps another

important factor in influencing personality (Ernst & Angst, 1983; Steelman, 1985; Steelman & Mercy, 1980; Steelman & Powell, 1985). Previous research has shown that children from socioeconomically advantaged families tend to experience greater social and academic success than do their counterparts; therefore, social standing of parents is positively associated with a child's educational success (Steeleman, 1985). Numerous studies strongly suggest that test performance is most negatively affected under lower SES conditions (Berger, 1994; Minuchin & Shapiro, 1983; Steelman & Mercy, 1980; U.S Department of Education, 1989).

Many research contributions could be added to this field of study as in depth investigations statistically calculate aspects of personality, birth order, and other important family variables. These particular studies could produce a greater contribution to the current knowledge base. The present study addressed the following research question: How do gender, age spacing, and SES interact with birth order to influence Extraversion/Introversion and Judging/Perceiving scores? In an attempt to answer this question, a psychological construct measuring personality topology should be used.

Myers-Briggs Type Indicator

One of the most widely used instruments for measuring and defining certain aspects of personality is the Myers-Briggs Type Inventory (MBTI). During the 1950s, Katharine Briggs and Isabel

Briggs Myer devised a personality type instrument based on the work and theory of Carl Jung (Jung 1923; Myers, 1980). The MBTI consists of four bipolar scales of personality dimensions of Extraversion / Introversion, Sensing / Intuition, Thinking / Feeling, and Judging / Perceiving. Jungian theory assumes that individuals cannot be both completely extroverted and fully introverted.

The Extraversion / Introversion and Judging / Perceiving scales are called the attitude scales. These scales differ from the so-called function scales of Sensing / Intuition and Thinking / Feeling which relate to mental activity and processes that effect how we acquire information and make decisions. The attitude scales indicate how people orient to and operate in the internal and external worlds. These attitudes greatly influence how people communicate with one another (Myers, 1980) and thus are important keys for helping people improve interpersonally.

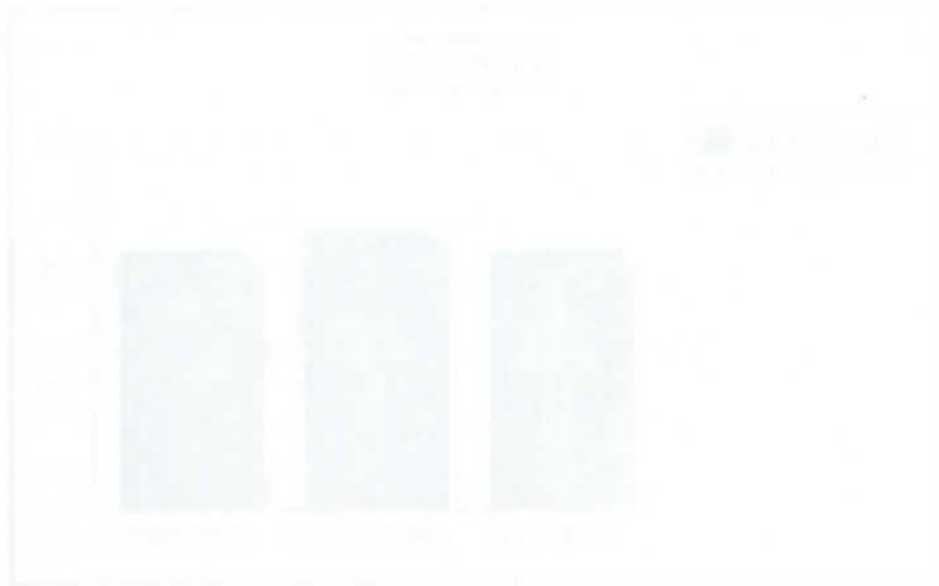
Extraversion and Introversion

Individuals with a preference for Extraversion tend to focus on and receive energy from the external world. They are action oriented and demonstrate higher levels of sociability. They tend to process their thoughts out loud and generally prefer being in the company of others rather than spending time alone (Myers, 1980). Unlike extraverts, who tend to focus their perception and judgment on people and objects, introverts focus their perception and judgment on concepts and ideas. They are oriented primarily

toward the internal world, preferring privacy and the opportunity to understand the world before experiencing it (Meyers, 1980).

Judging and Perceiving

The Judging / Perceiving scale identifies how people orient and behave toward the outer world. Individuals who take a judging attitude generally prefer organization and structure. They like to make decisions, reach closure, and move on. Perceiving types, on the other hand, seek to understand life rather than control it. They prefer spontaneity and staying open to new experiences (Myers, 1980).



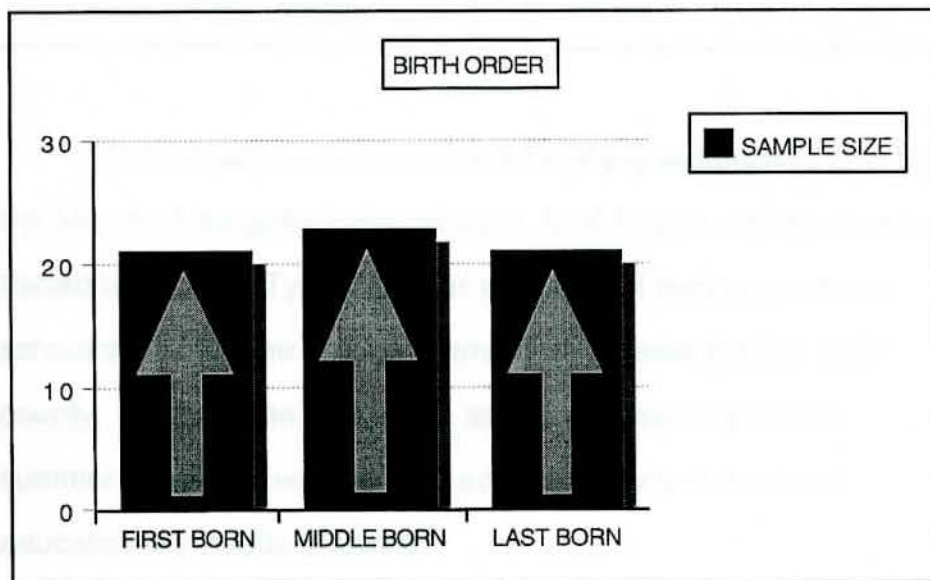
Chapter III

Method

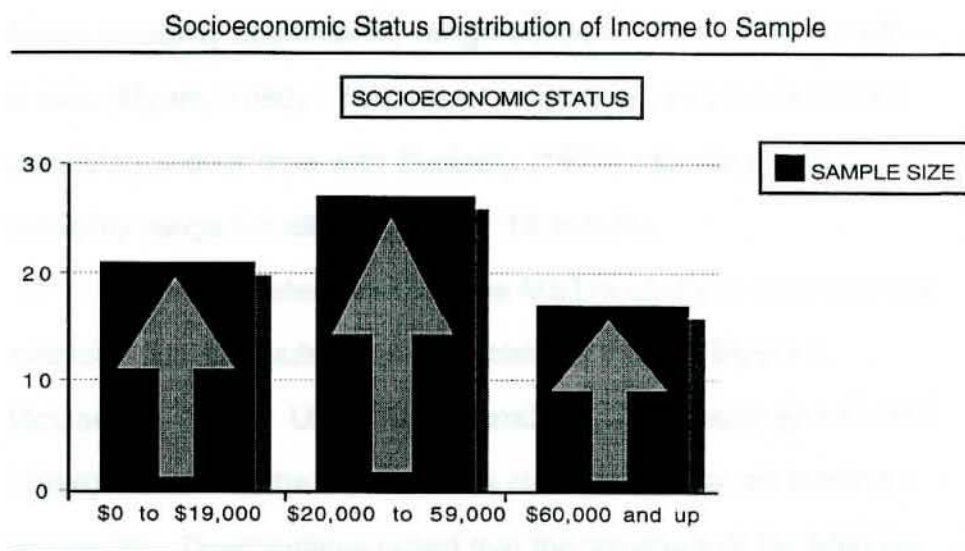
Participants

The sample consisted of 65 elementary school age children from second through fifth grade. They were 34 girls and 31 boys from all socioeconomic classes throughout the suburban city of 67,000 people in a community located in mid-western Missouri. The children all came from families who had one to three children, all born within two years of each other. Of this sample, 21 (32%) were firstborns, 23 (35%) were middle children, 21 (32%) were last born children. The subjects were predominantly Caucasian with a small portion being African American, Mexican, and mixed heritage.

Birth Order Distribution of First, Middle, and Last Born to Sample



The Socioeconomic status indicated 21 (32%) were in the lower income range \$0 to \$19,000, 27 (42%) were in the middle income range \$20,000 to \$59,999, and 17 (26%) were in the upper income range \$60,000 and up.



The subjects were asked to fill-out a questionnaire and take the Murphy-Meisgeier Type Indicator for Children. Subjects were invited to take the Type Indicator after school during a summer school session. The children came from all over the city and county. Both private and public school children attend this summer school as well as both educationally enriched and educationally needy children.

Instruments

The MBTI determines personality type preference. Previous research (Carlyn, 1977; Sundberg, 1978; Thompson & Borello, 1986) has indicated that the MBTI's reliability is consistent over time. Split-half reliabilities are consistent with those of other personality instruments according to Myers and McCaulley (1985). Scale reliability coefficients, range between .71 and .89 for all scales (Myers, 1980). Test-retest reliabilities also have shown consistency over time with Sunberg (1978) reporting a .60 to .70 reliability range for all scales after 14 months.

Validity is determined by the MBTI's ability to demonstrate relationships and outcomes predicted by theory (Myers & McCaulley, 1985). Using factor analysis, Thompson and Borello (1986) found that the factors were clearly discrete, all loading above .30. Their findings noted that the structure of the MBTI is both generalizable and accurate.

Reliability studies reported in the Manual: A Guide to the Development and Use of the MBTI indicate that people scored the same on a subsequent administration of the MBTI about 75 percent of the time. Only 1 in 1,000 persons will change on all four scales. When change does occur, it is more likely on those scales where the original preference score was slight (0-9) or there was less than a five-point difference on the Self-Scorable Form G (Myers, 1980). Additional factors affecting test-retest reliability relate to participants' age, reading level, and achievement as

measured on intelligence tests. Older persons those with higher reading levels and those with higher IQ's tend to be more consistent from one MBTI administration to another (Myers, 1980).

The Thinking-Feeling scale is the most affected by social desirability factors. It also has the fewest items. It is probably for these reasons that it is the least reliable of the four preference scales (Myers, 1980). The best validity and reliability findings for the MBTI are found with Form G, a 126-item, forced-choice inventory (Myers & McCaulley, 1985). In the family of MBTI type inventories, the Childrens' Type questionnaire has not been as extensively tested for its validity and reliability, for it has not been published as long as its parent inventory the MBTI.

The Murphy-Meisgeier type Indicator for Children is a 70 question forced-choice questionnaire. Children in the 2nd grade through 6th grade are in the normative data range. With little training, this type indicator can easily be given to an individual or group. The subjects read from a booklet and answer the questions by filling in a scantron answer sheet. These sheets then can be computer scored or hand scored using four overlays. The questions are easy for children to read and understand. It was determined that the 70 questions are all easily understood and mimic the parent MBTI indicator questionnaire. It takes approximately 45 minutes to take this indicator.

The participants' instruments were hand scored. Each of the four overlays would determine one of eight individual

personality types. A key is given on each overlay with a range of numbers. The individual personality type is determined according to where the participants score fell in the range of scores. After all four overlays are scored a four letter code will then be determined. One of 16 different type preferences will be determined when scoring is finished.

Procedures

Prior to distribution of the selected instruments, a brief explanation outlining the the purpose of this study was presented by the researcher to each group. Students were informed that participants would be voluntary and that confidentiality would be maintained. Students and their parents participated by supplying demographic information on a personal data form. They completed a questionnaire which was administrated in a group. If the student had more than one sibling with a greater than three-year gap, the questionnaire and inventory was removed before scoring.

No names were used during the study. Instead, each participant received a three-digit number located in the upper right-hand corner of his or her instrument. This number served as the student's personal identification number to ensure participant confidentiality. Each student was informed of his or her responsibility to recall this identification number to receive interpretation results.

Each individual's type preference was determined by totaling the responses to questions on the personality type instrument. Type preference scores then revealed that person's four-letter type combination (e.g., ENFJ, ISTP). As each instrument was scored, the three-digit code was transferred from the participant's instrument to a preprinted sheet containing descriptions of that particular type combination.

Type description sheets containing the code numbers from each instrument were returned by the researcher to the respective students in each group within one month. The researcher then presented a brief interpretation of score results and was available to answer related questions. Each student also was given the opportunity to meet with the researcher individually at a later time to obtain more in-depth interpretation.

Because each participant's MBTI and demographic questionnaire were coded with the same three-digit number, the researcher was able to easily match personality type results with that individual's birth order and other pertinent information from the questionnaire.

Analysis

Descriptive statistics including means and frequencies were used to analyze the data. Analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to determine interactive and main effects of birth order on the dependent variables of Extroversion or Introversion and Judging or Perceiving. ANOVA was also conducted to determine

interactive and main effects of birth order on the dependent variables of Upper Class, Middle Class, or Lower Class. ANOVA was selected as the most appropriate statistical tool because previous research has indicated that the independent variable investigated, birth order, can significantly interact to influence aspects of personality (Steelman, 1985; Steelman & Mercy, 1980).

Chapter IV

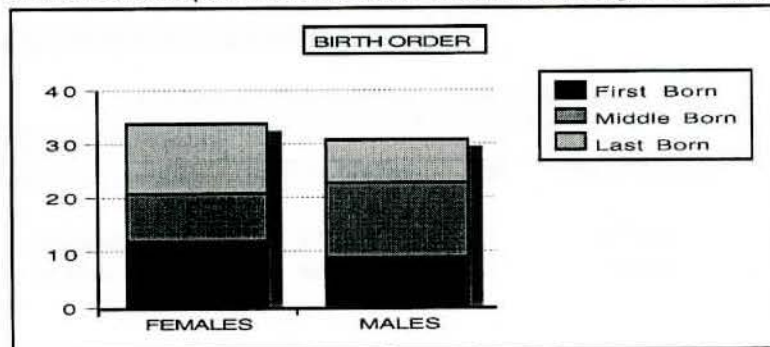
Results

A total of 85 students requested permission slips to participate in this study. From this number, 72 asked to participate because they met the criteria initially set. Demographic characteristics of the respondents were as follows. Of the 72 who participated, 65 were used in the study. Seven participants who were either a twin or an only child were not included in the results because their groups were significantly smaller groups than the totals from the other three birth order groups.

Their instruments were scored. Gender representation consisted of 34 (52%) female and 31 (48%) male. Age range was from 8 to 11 years old. Ethnic representation consisted of mainly Caucasian students, some African American, few Mexican, and a very few of mixed racial heritage.

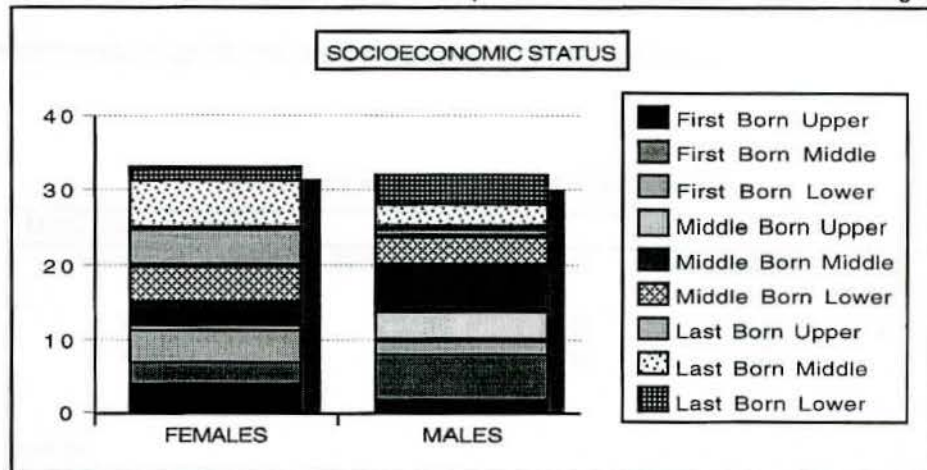
Birth order groups included 21 firstborns (females=12, males=9), 23 middle borns (females=9, males=14), and 21 last borns (females=13, males=8). The seven participants that were dropped included six only children (females=4, males=2) and one male twin; these two groups were not included in the analysis.

Birth Order Compared to Male and Female Percentages of Sample



In the first born group there were six Upper class (females=4, males=2), nine middle class (females=3, males=6), and six in the lower class (females=4, males=2). The middle born group had five in the upper class (females=1, males=4), nine in the middle class (females=3, males=6), and nine in the lower class (females=5, males=4). The last born group had six in the upper class (females=5, males=1), nine in the middle class (females=6, males=3), and six in the lower class (females=2, males=4).

Socioeconomic Status and Order Compared to Male and Female Percentages



Gender

Although gender, when compared to birth order, was not significant as a main effect on Extraversion and Introversion, it was found significant on Perceiving at (.01),

ANOVA for Gender Compared to Perceiving

Male/Female Perceiving				
Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F
Between	270.48	2	135.24	6.62
Within	858.06	42	20.43	

p < .01

and slightly significant on Judging at (.01) also.

ANOVA for Gender Compared to Judging

Male/Female Judging				
Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F
Between	165.40	2	82.70	6.28
Within	263.40	20	13.17	

p<.01

Male Judging and Perceiving were not significant, however; Male Introversion at (.01) was significant and Extraversion at (.01) was extremely significant as compared to birth order.

ANOVA for Males Compared to Introversion

Male Introversion				
Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F
Between	212.86	2	106.43	8.42
Within	126.40	10	12.64	

p<.01

ANOVA for Males Compared to Extraversion

Male Extraversion				
Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F
Between	219.36	2	109.68	11.82
Within	120.64	13	9.28	

p<.01

Female Perceiving had almost no significance. Female Extraversion at (.01) and Introversion at (.01) had slight significance compared to Judging at (.01) which was very significant when compared to birth order.

ANOVA for Females Compared to Extraversion

Female Extraversion					
Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	
Between	205.16	2	102.58	6.02	
Within	408.96	24	17.04		
p<.01					

ANOVA for Females Compared to Introversion

Female Introversion					
Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	
Between	52.32	2	26.16	8.75	
Within	26.91	9	2.99		
p<.01					

ANOVA for Females Compared to Judging

Female Judging					
Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	
Between	193.54	2	96.77	13.61	
Within	71.10	10	7.11		
p<.01					

Differences from the mean scores were found when comparing birth order to each of the four personality types and birth order to specific genders male or female. In Judging, Male Last born children have the greatest difference from the mean (4.7) and Female Middle borns have the greatest difference (3.53). Perceiving had no major differences. Females had no difference in Extraversion while First born Males had only a slight difference (2.03). Last born Males (4.17) and Females (4.16) both had the greatest difference from the mean in Introversion when compared to all the birth order positions.

Socioeconomic Status

Some differences were found when comparing birth order to Socioeconomic status as a main effect on each of the four personality types. Extraversion was significant in the Upper Class at (.01) and Lower Class at (.01).

ANOVA for Upper Class Compared to Extraversion

Upper Class Extraversion				
Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F
Between	244.36	2	122.18	9.79
Within	124.80	10	12.48	

p<.01

ANOVA for Lower Class Compared to Extraversion

Lower Class Extraversion				
Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F
Between	194.96	2	97.48	11.04
Within	97.13	11	8.83	

p<.01

Introversions was significant in the Lower Class at (.01) and extremely significant in the Upper Class at (.01).

ANOVA for Lower Class Compared to Introversions

Lower Class Introversions					
Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	
Between	1472.36	2	736.18	26.18	
Within	112.48	4	28.12		
p<.01					

ANOVA for Upper Class Compared to Introversions

Upper Class Introversions					
Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	
Between	612.92	2	306.46	106.41	
Within	5.76	2	2.88		
p<.01					

It was found only slightly significant on Perceiving Middle class at (.01),

ANOVA for Middle Class Compared to Perceiving

Middle Class Perceiving					
Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	
Between	123.58	2	61.79	6.85	
Within	133.30	2	9.02		
p<.01					

very significant on Middle class Judging at (.01), and extremely significant on Upper class Judging at (.01).

ANOVA for Middle Class Compared to Judging

Middle Class Judging				
Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F
Between	135.10	2	67.55	21.86
Within	15.45	5	3.09	

p<.01

ANOVA for Upper Class Compared to Judging

Upper Class Judging				
Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F
Between	148.96	2	74.48	39.83
Within	7.48	4	1.87	

p<.01

Differences from the mean scores were found when comparing birth order and each of the four personality types to each of the three specific socioeconomic groups. Judging, First born Middle class (6.78) and Middle born Lower class (4.78) scored high from the mean but, Last born Upper class scored the highest (58.20) due to the fact that no Last born Upper class children sampled in the area of Judging. Perceiving had First born Upper class (3.33) and Middle born Middle class (4.39) scoring the highest from the mean with Last born having no

significant difference. In Introversion, First born Upper class (3.33) scored higher from the mean than Middle born Middle class (2.35). Last born Upper class (56.17) scored highest due to the fact that no Last born Upper class children were sampled in the area of Introversion. Extraversion and the First born Upper class (3.23) had the only significant difference from the mean in this entire socioeconomic group.

Chapter V

Discussion

As indicated by the results of this study, ANOVA revealed that the family variables of gender and age spacing interacted with birth order to influence scores on the Murphy-Meisgeier type Indicator for Children attitude scales. This information can assist children and family counselors, as well as other helping professionals such as school counselors, in gaining a clearer understanding of how personality type preference develops within the family system. The results of this study are applicable for facilitating what Carlson and Rifkin-Faiber (1991) called essential family counseling skills--teaching parents and other family members to better understand human behavior, personality development, and communication patterns.

Gender

Carlson and Rifkin-Faiber (1991) recommended that counselors develop a deep understanding of how gender influences personality development. Results from the present study indicate that Middle born females tend to have a preference for Judging, likewise Last born males tend to have this preference as well. Where Females show no difference in Extraversion, First born Males show a preference toward Extraversion. Both Last born Males and Females show strong preference toward Introversion.

Children and family counselors can increase effectiveness when they are aware of the likelihood for differences in type

preference between males and females of the same birth order. Carlson and Rifkin-Faiber (1991) noted that very rarely do parents and children communicate effectively. If counselors can aid parents and children in gaining sensitivity to gender and birth order as influences to personality development, then families can develop communication patterns that honor those who are more organized (Judgers) as well as those who are more quiet (Introverts).

Socioeconomic Status

As Carlson and Rifkin-Faiber (1991) asserted, the child's first exposure to life is within the family environment. Socioeconomic status is a huge influence on this environment. Although socioeconomic status did not appear to be extremely statistically significant as an interaction effect in this study, results did show that within the Middle class, Middle born children tend to be significantly more introverted and strong in Perceiving. The same was true for First born Upper class children.

Based on these findings, it appears that socioeconomic status is an influencing factor in the development of Perceiving and Introversion preference, especially in the Middle and Upper income groups. This supports findings from an earlier study by Robertson (1971) in which Middle borns from middle working class families were found to be significantly more introverted than individuals from other socioeconomic groups.

Socioeconomic status clearly influences how people view

and interact with the world around them. This knowledge can be of value to counselors when working with children and families from all socioeconomic groups, particularly clients with a Middle socioeconomic status. If counselors know that a parent is a Middle born from a middle-income family, then relating to that person while respecting his or her introversion can provide a "shortcut" to establishing a working alliance and can help the counselor to better shape strategies related to increasing family communication and understanding.

Conclusion

This study had several limitations. The sample consisted of largely elementary students who were not randomly selected. The mean age was 9 years, and ethnic groups were under represented. The study did not investigate other family-related variables (e.g., mental illness, physical disability, death) as potential influences. Personality was assessed using only the Myers / Briggs Murphy-Meisgeier type Indicator for Children.

Further investigation needs to be pursued related to the influences of birth order with other family variables on personality development using other personality assessments. Such investigations have important implications for assisting counselors in effectively and efficiently aiding families with leading mentally and physically healthy lives in today's stressful and changing world (Carlson & Rifkin-Faiber, 1991).

Appendix A
QUESTIONNAIRE PROFILE

NUMBER: _____

Gender: BOY _____ GIRL _____

Are You:

_____ an only child in your family

_____ a twin

_____ the oldest child with brother or sister younger than you

_____ the middle child with brothers or sisters older and younger

_____ the last child with no one younger than you at home

What is the age of all the girls living in your home: _____

What is the age of all the boys living in your home: _____

What is your Age: _____

What is your Grade: _____

School You Attend: _____

Socioeconomic status: (from parent information sheet)

_____ \$0 to \$19,000





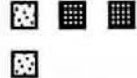











_____ \$20,000 to \$59,999

_____ \$60,000 and up


Appendix B

PICTOGRAPH OF:

BIRTH ORDER FIRST BORN
























ISTJ	ISFJ 	INFJ	INTJ
ISTP	ISFP 	INFP 	INTP 
ESTP	ESFP  	ENFP 	ENTP 
ESTJ 	ESFJ      	ENFJ 	ENTJ

 FEMALE (12)

 MALE (9)

PICTOGRAPH OF:

BIRTH ORDER MIDDLE BORN



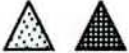
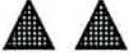













ISTJ 	ISFJ 	INFJ	INTJ
ISTP	ISFP 	INFP       	INTP
ESTP	ESFP    	ENFP    	ENTP
ESTJ 	ESFJ  	ENFJ  	ENTJ

 FEMALE (9)

 MALE (14)

PICTOGRAPH OF:

BIRTH ORDER LAST BORN

ISTJ	ISFJ 	INFJ	INTJ
ISTP	ISFP 	INFP  	INTP
ESTP 	ESFP   	ENFP     	ENTP
ESTJ 	ESFJ 	ENFJ  	ENTJ




 FEMALE (13)

 MALE (8)

PICTOGRAPH OF:

SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS FIRST BORN

ISTJ	ISFJ ■	INFJ	INTJ
ISTP	ISFP □ ■	INFP ■ ■	INTP ■
ESTP	ESFP ■ ■ ■ ■	ENFP □ ■	ENTP ■
ESTJ □	ESFJ □ ■ □ ■ □ ■	ENFJ ■	ENTJ

-  UPPER CLASS (6)
 MIDDLE CLASS (9)
 LOWER CLASS (6)

PICTOGRAPH OF:

SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS MIDDLE BORN

ISTJ ○	ISFJ ⊗	INFJ	INTJ
ISTP	ISFP ⊗	INFP ○ ⊗ ● ○ ● ● ⊗	INTP
ESTP	ESFP ○ ⊗ ⊗ ●	ENFP ⊗ ● ● ●	ENTP
ESTJ ●	ESFJ ○ ●	ENFJ ⊗ ⊗	ENTJ























○ UPPER CLASS (5)

⊗ MIDDLE CLASS (9)

● LOWER CLASS (9)

PICTOGRAPH OF:

SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS LAST BORN

ISTJ	ISFJ 	INFJ	INTJ
ISTP	ISFP 	INFP    	INTP
ESTP 	ESFP    	ENFP       	ENTP
ESTJ 	ESFJ 	ENFJ  	ENTJ

 UPPER CLASS (6)

 MIDDLE CLASS (9)

 LOWER CLASS (6)

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