

Birth Order and Romantic Relationship Styles and Attitudes in College Students

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This study examined the relations between birth order and romantic relationship attitudes and styles. Birth order position (oldest, middle, youngest, only) was predicted to influence how participants behave and think in relationships. One hundred male and female college students answered survey questions on jealousy, attitudes toward love, love styles, attachment, and their own romantic relationships. The middle birth order position participants reported significantly higher jealousy ratings than the oldest birth order position participants, and the youngest birth order position participants reported significantly higher romantic ratings than the oldest birth order position participants. Other results reveal trends for a possible birth order effect in romantic relationship styles and attitudes.

Family relationships can have a strong impact on individuals' lives. People's siblings and parents can teach them ways to interact with others, how to deal with jealousy, how to share, how to love, and so forth. Unique family experiences and perspectives, such as birth order, have been theorized to shape people's personalities and foster certain traits more than others (Adler, 1927; Sulloway, 1996). Even though siblings are generally raised together, differences in birth order position may result in perspectives on life and relationships being quite different between siblings. When people seek romantic relationships as they grow up, might they have a tendency to transfer what they have learned in their family relationships to their romantic ones? Will a person's early family experiences impact their later attachment to a relationship partner? If a person has dealt with being jealous of siblings, are they more or less likely to be jealous in romantic relationships? Do personality traits associated with a particular birth order make a person more likely to develop a particular love style or attitude? Will a person be more or less attracted to someone who shares his or her birth order due to similarities or differences in personalities? The present study will attempt to answer these types of questions.

Alfred Adler (1927) initiated an interest in people's birth order and the impact it had on personality. It has been theorized that each birth order position carries with it a set of personality traits. Firstborn children

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are often viewed as leaders, who follow the rules (Adler, 1927; Gfroerer, Gfroerer, Curlette, White, & Kern, 2003; Stewart, 2004). Firstborns are often ambitious, more conforming, have a closer identification with parental authority (Sulloway, 1996), and tend to have higher self-esteem than laterborns (Falbo, 1981). Children in the middle birth order position may feel slighted and out of place, and may take longer to find their role within the family (Adler, 1927; Stewart, 2004). They may strive for fairness in their struggle to stay ahead of their younger sibling and keep up with their older sibling (Adler, 1927; Stewart, 2004). Middle birth position children are often the peacemakers in the family (Gfroerer et al., 2003). Youngest children are often viewed as spoiled or babied (Stewart, 2004), and tend to be more free-spirited, social, and cooperative than firstborns (Sulloway, 1996). Only children are also viewed as spoiled because they are the only focus in the family (Adler, 1927; Stewart, 2004; Gfroerer et al., 2003). They may simultaneously reflect some firstborn traits and some lastborn traits. Only children may be leaders, but they may also be used to being the center of attention (Stewart, 2004). Empirical support for Adler's theories has been limited. More support tends to come from archival research than controlled methods (e.g., Ernst & Angst, 1983; Leman, 1985; Sulloway, 1996). Some studies look more at how specific traits, such as intelligence, relate to birth order (e.g., Belmont, Stein, & Wittes, 1976; Bjerkedal, Kristensen, & Skjeret, 2007). Supported findings allow for greater generalization for the theory, however, unsupported findings have value in that they may lead to revisions or focus on different aspects of the theory.

The experience of birth order position, and its associated personality traits and family attention, may impact the way individuals behave and think in romantic relationships. Birth order may be important in understanding the development of jealousy, attitudes toward love, love styles, attachment, and similarity in romantic relationships.

Jealousy was defined by Pfeiffer and Wong (1989) as a largely negative emotion that is multidimensional in its complexity. Applied to romantic relationships, jealousy involves the fear of losing someone who is cared about and valued. Jealousy can also occur in many other types of relationships, such as family relationships and friendships (Buunk & Dijkstra, 2000). Certain personality characteristics can make people more susceptible to jealousy, such as attachment style, low self-esteem, and emotional dependency (Hendrick, 2004). We predicted the middle child participants would report the most jealousy followed by the youngest child participants, only child participants, and the oldest child participants would report the least jealousy. These predictions are based on research by Buunk (1997), in which laterborns were found to be more jealous in romantic relationships than first-borns after controlling for

personality differences between first and laterborns, differences in attachment style, gender, and occupational level of the father. Why would the oldest be the least jealous? It might be due to the fact that oldest children are forced to deal with jealousy issues early in life when they receive a new sibling and must compete for attention. According to Ansbacher and Ansbacher (1956), Adler believed that siblings were striving for niches in family. When the oldest children find their niche, it may reduce feelings of jealousy because they have won, or given up in certain areas like intelligence or achievement. This idea may lead to older children adapting to competition, which they would apply to other situations like romantic relationships. They might be more confident and feel less threatened due to past successes at overcoming jealousy towards siblings. The laterborn children are “stereotypically babied” by the entire family (Adler, 1927; Stewart 2004), so they may not experience or deal with as much jealousy as the older siblings. Laterborns and only children may be more jealous in relationships because they are not used to attention being taken away from them, and in a relationship, they might feel that they will lose their partner to someone else.

Knox and Sporkowski (1968) identified romantic love and realistic love as being the two primary attitudes towards love. Romantic love is characterized by a tendency towards a belief in ideas such as ‘true love comes only once,’ ‘love is the only criteria for marriage,’ and ‘love at first sight.’ Realistic love was defined as the antithesis of romantic love and as being a calmer, more solid, and more comforting type of love. We predicted the oldest child participants would report the most realistic love attitudes, followed by the middle child participants, the only child participants, and the youngest child participants would report the most romantic love attitudes. The oldest could be more realistic because they are exposed to more responsibilities earlier in life and they also might observe more of their parent’s relationship as a romantic couple than younger siblings (Suloway, 1996). Older children are more likely to see their parents as realistic in their love orientation whereas younger children are more likely to see their parents as romantic in their love orientation because couples are likely to go through a developmental change in their conceptualization about love (Knox, 1970). Specifically, Knox (1970) found that couples married less than 5 years often adopt more realistic love orientations due to all the challenges of making a living and raising a family and couples married more than 20 years shift to a more romantic love orientation. In addition, younger siblings are often babied and protected by members of the family (Adler, 1927; Stewart, 2004; Suloway 1996), thereby creating an idealized, positive view of the world without realistic responsibilities. Therefore, youngest children may view their parents in the more romantic stages of their

relationship more so than the older siblings, and this idea coupled with a more open view of the world may result in more romantic ideas of love and relationships.

Lee (1973), and later Hendrick and Hendrick (1984; Hendrick, Hendrick, & Dicke, 1998) defined different kinds of love that people have a tendency toward when they are in romantic relationships. Eros is a more physical, love at first sight kind of love. Erotic lovers tend to focus on the ideal beauty of the body. They have a need to be physically close and intimate in relationships almost immediately. Ludus is a game playing or playful love. Ludic lovers tend to be more casual in their relationships as they do not want to allow any partner to become too involved. They tend to date several people at once to keep their options open, and there is also a degree of insincerity involved. They do not have strong preferences about the people they play the game with the way that Erotic lovers do. Storge is a friendship-based love. It is a natural feeling type of love that is unexciting and often uneventful. It is more difficult to move Storgic love into a more committed romantic relationship because people tend to expect excitement from romantic love. The development of relationships with a Storgic lover tends to move at a slow pace. Pragma is a practical kind of love. Pragmatic lovers consider their needs over passion. They tend to measure compatibility by social and personal qualities over sexual ones. They can usually list specific qualities they would like in a partner. Mania is an obsessive type of love. Manic lovers are completely wrapped up in their partner and center their life on them. They have a strong need for affection and attention that is almost insatiable. They are constantly worried about their partner pulling away. Agape is an unselfish, giving type of love that is often associated with Christian love. It is compassionate and altruistic. The Agape lover may hope for reciprocation, but never acts on the expectation of it. They give of themselves completely, even when they receive nothing in return. Based on the personality characteristics proposed by Sulloway (1996) and Adler (1927) to be associated with each birth order position (e.g., that oldest children tend to be conforming, leaders; middle children tend to be mediators, and struggle to fit in; youngest tend to be social and open to experience; onlies tend to be somewhat conforming, and so forth), we predicted that the only child participants would score highest in the love styles of Eros and Mania, the youngest child participants would score highest in Ludus, the oldest child participants would score highest in Pragma, and the middle child participants would score highest in Agape and Storge.

Attachment has traditionally been studied in infants in relation to their caregiver. It is generally defined as a part of interaction with the caregiver that involves physical closeness, which implies emotional

affection (Hendrick, 2004). Through the work of Bowlby (1973), and Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, and Wall (1978), who expanded upon Bowlby's work, three traditional styles of attachment were proposed: secure, avoidant, and anxious/ambivalent. Attachment theory was later applied to romantic relationships by Hazan and Shaver (1987), who initiated the study of romantic attachment. Romantic attachment is defined as a behavior that involves closeness to and bonding with a romantic partner (Hendrick, 2004). When applied to romantic relationships, secure attachment is characterized by an ease of getting close to others and trusting them, avoidant attachment is characterized by an unwillingness to trust or get close to others, and anxious/ambivalent attachment is characterized by fear of abandonment and a strong desire to be very close to others (Hazan & Shaver, 1987). We predicted the only child participants would be the most likely to report secure attachment, then the oldest child participants, the youngest child participants, and the middle child participants would be the most likely to report insecure attachment. Only children have their parents' undivided attention and oldest children also experience this undivided attention until a second child is born, which may lead to increased security and attachment. The laterborn children are the babies of the family (Adler, 1927; Stewart 2004) and may receive attention from all family members and therefore develop stronger attachments than the middle children. The middle child is stereotypically always the child in the most competition for attention with older and younger siblings (Adler, 1927; Stewart, 2004). This competition for attention may lead to an uncertainty about parental relationship quality and a more insecure form of attachment in romantic relationships.

Past research (e.g., Byrne, 1971; Terman & Buttenweiser, 1935a, 1935b) has documented the importance of attitude similarity in interpersonal attraction and romantic relationships. Since personality is related to birth order, we predicted individuals would tend to report having relationship partners with the same birth order as themselves. These individuals would be most likely to share common personality traits and enjoy similar activities together which are important components of close relationships (Byrne, 1971; Terman & Buttenweiser, 1935a, 1935b). Sulloway (1996) also proposed that couples with different birth orders would be more likely to be divided by social revolution, such as in cases like the Reformation. He proposed that these revolutions bring out adaptive strategies that were learned in an effort to find their family niche, and sibling differences between spouses can reflect sibling strife. Therefore, in order to avoid major conflicts in their relationships, people would likely be drawn to others with the same birth order because their similar views would create less conflict.

In summary, if birth order positions are associated with certain personality traits and family attention, then birth order may impact individuals' attitudes and styles concerning romantic relationships. Our series of predictions for the study were based on this assumption. Generally, each birth order position was predicted to significantly differ from other birth order positions on the different measures. As a review, we predicted that:

1) the middle child participants would report the most jealousy followed by the youngest child participants; only child participants, and the oldest child participants would report the least jealousy;

2) the oldest child participants would report the most realistic love orientation, followed by the middle child participants; the only child participants, and the youngest child participants would report the most romantic love orientation;

3) the only child participants would score highest on the love styles of Eros and Mania, the youngest child participants would score highest on Ludus, the oldest child participants would score highest on Pragma, and the middle child participants would score highest on Agape and Storge;

4) the only child participants would be the most likely to report secure attachment, then the oldest child participants; the youngest child participants and the middle child participants would be the most likely to report insecure attachment;

5) participants would be most likely to report developing romantic relationships with others of the same birth order as themselves compared to others of a different birth order.

METHOD

Participants

A total of 100 college students (75% women) participated in this study. Four participants were excluded from the final analysis because they indicated that their birth order position was "other." The majority of participants were from Introductory Psychology classes who participated in order to fulfill a course requirement. Participants ranged in age from 17 to 55 and their average age was 20.96 years ($SD=4.36$). The majority of participants were Caucasian (86.5%), and 5.2% were Latino, 2.1% were African American, 2.1% were Asian, 2.1% were Native American, 1% were European, 1% were other, and 1% did not indicate race. Participants' class ranks included 22.9% freshman, 11.5% sophomores, 33.3% juniors, 31.3% seniors, and 1% other. Approximately half of the participants indicated that they were currently single (49.5%), 45.3% indicated that they were currently in a relationship, 2.1% indicated they were married, 2.1% checked that they were engaged, 1.1% were divorced, and 1.1% did not indicate relationship status. Their sexual

orientations were primarily heterosexual (98%), with only 1% indicating homosexual, and 1% bisexual.

The vast majority of participants indicated that they had biological siblings (85.4%) and 17.7% checked that they had half, step or adopted siblings. The participants reported their own birth orders, but also listed the ages and sexes of their siblings, including half, step, and/or adopted siblings if applicable. If participants had step, half, or adopted siblings, they indicated at what approximate age they were when they received these siblings and whether or not they lived together. These questions helped to determine whether the participants' technical birth orders were consistent with the birth order position they were likely raised in. Forty-two percent indicated that they were the oldest, 14% were middle, 31% were the youngest, 9% were onlies, and 4% indicated that they were "other" because they did not fit clearly into one of the other four positions.

Materials & Procedure

All participants received the same composite survey on various aspects of romantic relationship styles and attitudes. The surveys included the *Attachment Style Questionnaire* (Hazan & Shaver, 1987), *Attitudes Toward Love* (Knox & Sporkowski, 1968), Pfeiffer and Wong's *Multidimensional Jealousy Scale* (1989), and the *Short Form Love Attitudes Scale* (Hendrick & Hendrick, 1998).

The *Attachment Style Questionnaire* (Hazan & Shaver, 1987) contains three descriptions of how a person experiences closeness in romantic relationships. The descriptions coincide with each attachment style (e.g. avoidant, secure, anxious/ambivalent) and participants must choose which description best captures how they experience their romantic relationships in general. The *Attitudes Toward Love* scale (Knox & Sporkowski, 1968) is a 29-item scale of statements about love. Participants were asked to rate their agreement or disagreement with each statement on a 5-point Likert-scale (1=*strongly agree* to 5=*strongly disagree*). Some examples of the statements are, "when love hits you, you know it," "love doesn't make sense, it just is," and "love comes but once in a lifetime." Pfeiffer and Wong's *Multidimensional Jealousy Scale* (1989) is a 20-item scale where participants rated their agreement or disagreement on a 7-point Likert scale. Examples of statements include, "I worry that my partner is secretly seeing someone of the opposite sex," and "I tend to think that some members of the opposite sex may be romantically interested in my partner." The *Short Form Love Attitudes Scale* (Hendrick & Hendrick, 1998) was a 24-item scale with four items coinciding to each of the love styles (e.g.. Eros, Ludus, Storge, Pragma, Mania, and Agape). Participants were asked to rate their

agreement or disagreement on a 5-point Likert scale. Statements were written in relation to a partner, such as, "I feel that my partner and I were meant for each other," and "I expect to always be friends with my partner." Each of these four frequently used measures has documented validity and reliability.

Finally, a questionnaire with questions regarding the demographics of age, sex, race, class rank, birth order, biological siblings, step, half, or adopted siblings, and sexual orientation was created for this study. In addition, this questionnaire had a section to report either a present or past significant other's birth order, whether they felt the person's personality was more similar to theirs or more different and whether they were first attracted to personality traits they had in common or were different.

The researcher passed out the packets of surveys, arranged in random order. After the participants completed the surveys, they were given a debriefing form, which explained the true purpose of the study.

RESULTS

A series of one-way analysis of variance tests (ANOVAs) were conducted to compare the mean scores of the participants' birth order positions (oldest, middle, youngest, only) for jealousy, attitudes toward love, and the love styles. Although no significant differences were found between the birth order groups on these measures, $F_s < 2.1$, these general analyses do not directly address our precise hypotheses. Therefore, we also conducted individual comparisons to investigate our specific hypotheses.

Scores on the *Multidimensional Jealousy Scale* (see Figure 1) showed no significant differences between the birth order groups, $F(3, 92) = 1.61$, $p = .19$. However, consistent with our predictions, the pattern of means revealed that the middle birth order group reported the greatest jealousy ($M = 3.73$, $SD = 1.0$), the youngest child group had the second highest mean ($M = 3.10$, $SD = 1.14$), followed by the only child group ($M = 3.04$, $SD = .91$), and the oldest child group reported the least jealousy ($M = 3.0$, $SD = 1.13$). The middle child was significantly more jealous than the oldest child, $t(54) = 2.15$, $p = .04$, $d = .59$.

Scores on the *Attitudes Toward Love* scale (see Figure 2), showed no significant differences between the birth order categories, $F(3, 91) = 1.18$, $p = .32$. However, consistent with our hypothesis, the means showed the youngest birth order position group ($M = 3.33$, $SD = .40$) to be the most

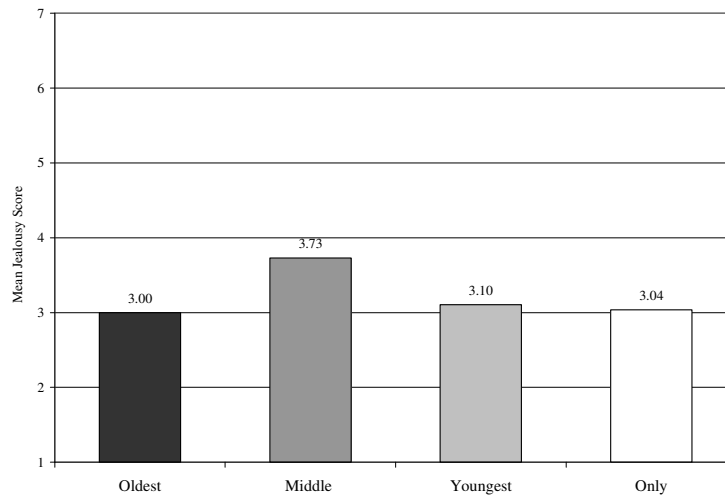


FIGURE 1 Mean jealousy scores by participant birth order. Responses ranged from 1=*strongly agree*, to 7=*strongly disagree*. Higher mean scores indicate a stronger tendency to be jealous.

romantic and the oldest birth order position group ($M=3.15$, $SD=.43$) to be the most realistic and the middle child group ($M=3.23$, $SD=.44$) and only child ($M=3.27$, $SD=.46$) groups fell somewhere between the oldest and youngest. In a direct comparison, the youngest child group was marginally more romantic than the oldest child group, $t(70)=1.89$, $p=.06$, $d=.45$.

The results of the *Short Form Love Attitudes Scale* (see Figure 3) found no significant differences between birth order position on the dimensions of Eros, Mania, Ludus, Storge, Pragma, and Agape love styles (all $ps>.11$). Looking at the means, the only child participants scored highest on Eros ($M=4.28$, $SD=.74$) and Mania ($M=3.42$, $SD=.68$), the middle child participants scored highest on Ludus ($M=2.02$, $SD=1.02$), and the youngest child participants scored highest on Storge ($M=3.48$, $SD=1.06$), Pragma ($M=2.93$, $SD=.93$), and Agape ($M=3.87$, $SD=.79$). The only child group was significantly more of a Manic lover than the oldest child group, $t(49)=2.14$, $p=.04$, $d=.61$, $M_s=3.42$ and 2.73 , respectively. Participants in the only child birth position scored higher in Mania than the middle child group, $t(21)=2.96$, $p=.007$, $d=1.29$, $M_s=3.42$ and 2.55 , respectively. Only children scored marginally higher on the Mania love style than the youngest children, $t(38)=1.92$, $p=.06$, $d=.62$, $M_s=3.42$ and 2.76 , respectively. The youngest child participants were

marginally more of an Agape lover than the middle child participants, $t(43)=1.91$, $p=.06$, $d=.58$, $M_s=3.87$ and 3.36 , respectively. The youngest children scored higher on the Agape love style than the only children, $t(38)=1.99$, $p=.05$, $d=.65$, $M_s=3.87$ and 3.25 , respectively.

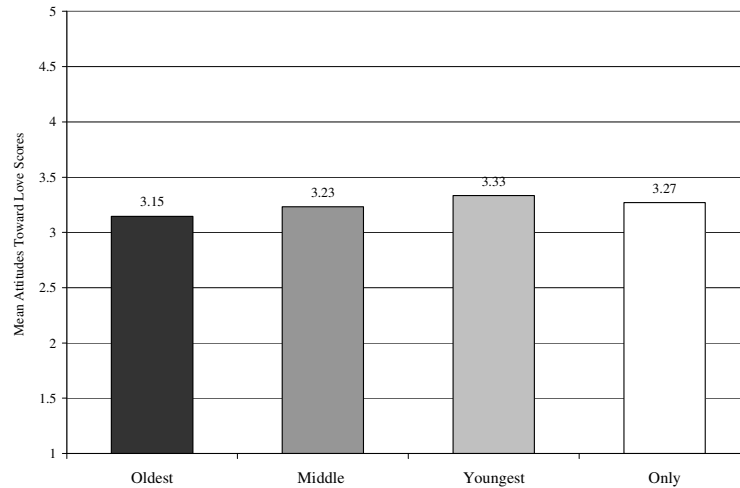


FIGURE 2 Mean attitudes toward love scores by participant birth order. Responses ranged from 1=*strongly agree*, to 5=*strongly disagree*, and were reverse scored. Higher mean scores indicate a more romantic love orientation whereas lower mean scores indicate a more realistic love orientation.

The *Attachment Style Questionnaire* revealed that 54.17% of participants indicated that they were securely attached, 39.58% were avoidant, and 6.25% were anxious/ambivalent. While there was no significant relationship between birth order group and attachment style, $\chi^2(6, N=96)=4.23$, $p=.65$, the middle children had the highest percentage of insecure attachment (57.14%) and the only children had the highest percentage of secure attachment (66.66%). Based on responses to the relationship partner survey, there was no support for the prediction that individuals tend to match up with someone with the same birth order as themselves, $\chi^2(3, N=87)=.047$, $p=.99$. Of the 87 participants who answered the question about the birth order of their partner, only 27.6% had a partner with the same birth order as themselves. However, there was a marginally significant interaction between birth order position and response to the question which asked if the participants were first

attracted to their partner because they had either a similar personality to theirs or a different one, $\chi^2(1, N=84)=3.62, p=.06$. Of the participants who had a partner with the same birth order,

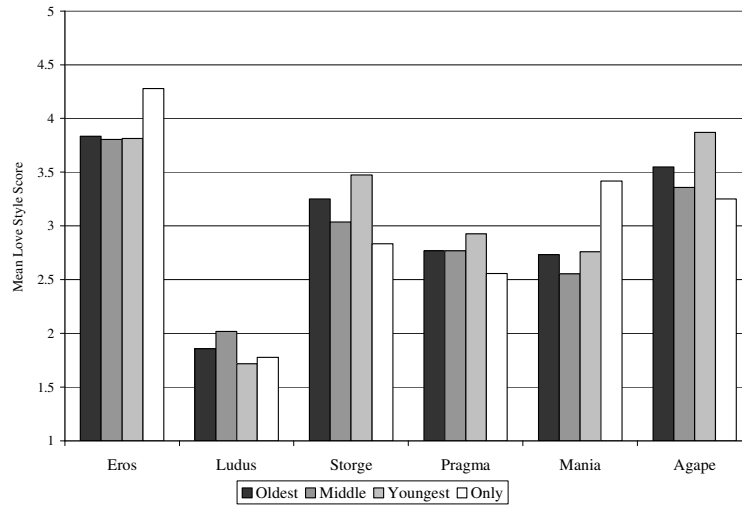


FIGURE 3 Mean love style scores by participant birth order. Responses ranged from 1=*strongly disagree*, to 5=*strongly agree*. Higher means indicate a tendency toward that love style.

82.61% indicated that they were first attracted to their partners because they felt they had similar personalities, while only 60.66% of participants who did not have a partner with the same birth order indicated they were first attracted to their partners because of similarity.

Sex differences were also analyzed using a series of univariate ANOVAs to investigate interactions between birth order and sex for the dependent variables of love styles, attitudes toward love, and jealousy. No statistically significant main effects for sex were found on any of the variables. However, there was a marginally significant interaction between sex and birth order for the Eros love style, $F(3, 96)=2.35, p=.08$, where males scored higher than females in all birth order positions except for the oldest child position. On the Storge love style, there was a marginally significant main effect for sex, $F(1, 96)=3.68, p=.06$, where the males scored lower than the females. No significant main or interaction effects were found for the dependent variables of attitudes toward love or jealousy.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to discover whether people's birth order might influence their thoughts, attitudes, and behaviors about romantic relationships. There are many aspects of romantic relationships that could have been researched. This study was concerned with the areas of jealousy, attitudes toward love (realistic versus romantic), love styles (Eros, Ludus, Storge, Pragma, Mania, and Agape), romantic attachment, and whether similarities in personality may lead people to seek a partner with the same birth order as themselves. The predictions of this study were based on the assumption that people experience different family environments and develop certain traits related to their birth order position. This study found some support for the hypotheses that birth order may play a role in romantic relationship styles and attitudes, although no significant differences were found between all four birth order positions. However, there were significant differences between pairs of birth orders which supported some of our predictions, and trends in the predicted directions which suggest that birth order might play a minor but important role in the way people approach romantic relationships.

Jealousy results supported our predictions. As predicted, firstborns were the least jealous, and middle children were the most jealous, followed by the youngest and only children. It is important to note that in the Buunk (1997) study, laterborns did not necessarily mean the youngest. The middle child is a laterborn child, so the findings in the current study would align with the findings in Buunk's study since the laterborn groups were more jealous than the oldest children. The middle child is stereotypically always the child in the most competition for attention in the household because they can feel slighted or out of place (Adler, 1927; Stewart, 2004). Their jealousy issues may not fully be resolved in childhood and possibly may be carried into adult relationships.

The jealousy findings also appear to be consistent with the romantic attachment style results. The middle children had the highest percentage of insecure attachment out of the four groups in the current study and jealousy has been found to be related to attachment style (Hendrick, 2004). This relationship between jealousy and attachment was not apparent in the other birth order positions, though. The oldest had the second highest percentage of insecurely attached participants, yet they were the least jealous of the four, and the youngest had the second highest mean for jealousy, yet they had the second highest percentage of securely attached participants. It is possible that this finding could be explained by the uneven number of participants in each birth order

position, but additional study in this area might explore these relationships between birth order, attachment, and jealousy further.

The results for attitudes toward love were in the predicted direction, although not statistically significant. The oldest child was the most realistic of the group followed by the middle child, only child, and youngest child. Overall, all four groups' means were more on the realistic side. The differences suggest a stronger tendency for the youngest to be more romantic in their attitude than the oldest sibling. Knox and Sporakowski (1968) found that the age of people seems to make a difference in whether they are more romantic or conjugal in their attitudes. As people advance in college, and then through their relationships (Knox, 1970), their attitudes toward love tend to become more realistic. Further studies might focus on birth order positions in the same year in college and how attitudes towards love might differ when age is controlled for. Studies might also focus more on sex differences, as males were previously found to be more romantic than females (Knox & Sporakowski, 1968), even though the current study did not find significant interactions between sex and birth order.

The findings for the love styles gave some support to the predictions made about each birth order position. These findings were interesting in light of the results on the other measures. The only child had the highest means for the Eros and Mania love styles as predicted. It was interesting that the only child did not have a higher mean for jealousy since manic lovers are often jealous (Lee, 1973). Again, it could be due to the lack of participants who were only children. The only child is often spoiled, babied, and likes attention, similar to the youngest child (Adler, 1927; Stewart, 2004). The other predictions were also based on certain personality traits that are associated with each position, although none of them seemed to match perfectly with the love styles. The youngest had the highest means for Pragma, Storge, and Agape. These findings are interesting considering the youngest was found to be the most romantic on the Attitudes Toward Love scale. The youngest child is usually considered more social and outgoing (Sulloway, 1996), so it is possible that they could have a tendency toward a Storge, or friendship based love. The Agape love style results were interesting because this style of love is selfless and giving, whereas youngest children have been characterized as spoiled and self-centered (Stewart, 2004). The result of the middle child being the Ludus lover was also interesting as the middle had the highest mean for jealousy, and Ludus is a game-playing type of love in which people enjoy love, but never allow it to become necessary. Ludus lovers tend to approach love more casually, so they would likely not be jealous. These findings indicate a need for further study in the area of love styles and birth order. It could be beneficial to do further research

using the original *Love Attitudes Scale* (Lee, 1973), which asks more questions regarding the different love styles. The tertiary love styles (Lee, 1973) might also be taken into consideration in the future.

The results from the questions about the participants' relationship partners indicated that people do not seem to have a strong preference for a partner with the same birth order as themselves. However, overall, similarities between partners were indicated to be valued more than differences. Also, there was a tendency for those who have or have had a partner with the same birth order to be first attracted to that partner because their personalities were similar. This finding might yield further study about when birth order personality traits could be an important factor in a relationship. The findings in the present study suggest that the similar personality might be more important in the initial stages of the relationship. Future studies might expand on this finding.

This study has several limitations. It was conducted with college students who may still be having several temporary romantic relationships because of their age and so their attitudes towards and styles of love may be transient. In previous studies using the scales, age did seem to be a contributing factor to the results, such as in the attitudes toward love (Knox & Sporkowski, 1968). There was also a problem with a lack of participants who were only and middle children. Comparison between the groups might be more valid if there were more participants in all the birth order groups, and if the groups were more equal in size. There was also a problem with the definition of a middle child. This child is usually the middle of three or one of the middle two of four, and supposedly in these positions the traits are more evident (Adler, 1927; Stewart, 2004). When there are more children and one falls in the middle, it is more difficult to speculate that they will take on the traditional middle child traits. In addition, even though mixed families were taken into consideration as far as asking if the participants had step, half or adopted siblings, when they came into their lives, and if they lived with them, it was still difficult to determine what kind of an impact these siblings may have had on the participants' personality development. Another problem was the questions in the relationship partner survey. Almost half of the participants indicated that they were single, so they were reflecting on a partner they had had in the past. It is possible that at one point they were matched with a partner of the same birth order as themselves, but they did not reflect on that person when answering the questions. Studies of couples in more permanent relationships might help to get a more accurate idea of a romantic partner preference.

The findings of this research would be important to help couples learn to relate to each other, and may help couples in therapy to know that their partner has a tendency think or behave a certain way in romantic

relationships, and if the couples' personalities are compatible. It might also be beneficial to know one birth order is more compatible with one over another, and what people can do to make their relationships work even if they happen to be involved with someone whose birth order is not their "ideal" match.

According to this study, people's birth orders likely do not have a strong affect on their thoughts or behaviors in romantic relationships for the aspects that were tested. However, because there were trends and significant individual comparison differences, it may be beneficial to consider birth order when considering romantic relationships. It is important to consider what factors can impact close relationships so that it is possible to have healthier and happier relationships. Knowing more about people's personalities, family history, and birth order position can help to strengthen relationships and prevent conflict. While people's birth order may not be a strong factor, it should be taken into consideration in order to help individuals develop and maintain well-adjusted and fulfilling romantic relationships.

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