Birth Order and Behavior in a Team Setting

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Abstract

This is a literature review of scholarly journals regarding the effects birth order has on a person’s personality, behavior, educational attainment and occupational choice with a goal to understand how one might consider, adapt, and incorporate the concept of birth order when working with a team in a professional work environment. While there is a significant body of research on birth order and its’ influence on the areas listed above, there is an opportunity for additional research and study to correlate these influences and apply it to human capital management in a professional setting in an effort to achieve better and maximum results from individual employees and teams.
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The Impact of Birth Order on a Person’s Professional Behavior in a Team Setting

Introduction

With an understanding that a family of origin’s constellation and subsequent birth order has a significant impact on a person’s lifestyle and belief system, one can expect to see this influence present itself in several areas including social, educational, romantic and professional settings. Additionally, there exists an ever-changing and ongoing challenge for business owners and professionals to attract, hire, and manage the best talent available to help advance an organization’s mission and objectives. Considering these two areas, one can explore the correlations between a person’s birth order and their professional aspirations and talents, specifically how they will behave and perform in a professional teamwork setting. Previous research by Gary E. Popp at the University of Texas-El Paso and Herbert J. Davis at Virginia Commonwealth University (1979) has determined only-born top managers were found to be statistically over-represented when compared to other ordinal positions in the petro-chemical manufacturing industry. Based on this finding and other recent research, can birth order be a valuable area to explore and consider when managing individuals that work in specific roles within a team structure? And if so, what are some effective questions to ask and proper interpretations to apply during the onboarding and various employment stages and ongoing initiatives? This paper will review and summarize current research on this topic to identify correlations between a person’s birth order and optimal professional roles with the intent to show value in considering this aspect of a person’s lifestyle during their employment and perhaps more importantly, the value of and need for additional research in this area.

It is worth noting here there are both federal and state regulations that guide both acceptable and illegal hiring practices. According to Sec. 2000e-2 of the Civil Rights Act:
Unlawful employment practices, “It shall be an unlawful employment practice for an employer - (1) to fail or refuse to hire or to discharge any individual, or otherwise to discriminate against any individual with respect to his compensation, terms, conditions, or privileges of employment, because of such individual's race, color, religion, sex, or national origin” (FindUSLaw, 2014). Additionally, state and federal laws make discrimination based on certain protected categories, such as national origin, citizenship, age, marital status, disabilities, arrest and conviction record, military discharge status, race, gender, or pregnancy status illegal (Giang, 2013). While birth order is not a specifically identified category in which an employer can base a hiring decision from, it is extremely important to further explore the reason for gaining information on a candidate’s family constellation and birth order and how that information will be used during the hiring process and subsequent managerial decision as it could be considered protected information as it is something outside of a person’s control and not always indicative of a person’s ability to successfully fulfill employment requirements. Additional research and legal review is required in these areas before one should implement the acquisition and use of birth order into the screening process and hiring decision. For the purpose of this research and recommendation, the concept of birth order and family constellation is something that hiring managers should seek and utilize only with current employees in an effort to maximize their contributions, efficacy, and satisfaction within the job.

Alfred Adler has been known for many contributions to the field of psychology including birth order. The importance of birth order was first identified and described by Alfred Adler in 1918 (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1956, p. 2). Since then, Adlerian psychologists have made considerable use of the concept in their clinical and psychoeducational work (Carlson, Watts & Maniacci, 2006, p. 51). Through practice and study, birth order has emerged as both an
interesting and influential force that impacts several aspects of a person’s life including their social relationships and professional choice and success. The following review and discussion of literature on this topic is intended to provide insights and clarity on how a person’s ordinal and psychological birth order can influence their professional behavior, specifically in a team setting.

Additionally, this body of research and gained insights will significantly relate to and help this author in my current role as a division leader for a private college that leads both a management team and directly supervises a group of staff; ultimately with over 70 full-time employees and several hundred adjunct faculty that report up through the division. The need to develop and best align employees to college-initiated tasks and initiatives is imperative to the success of the students, employees, and college knowing every employee is a member of at least one work group or team and often interacts with several staff and faculty each day. The goal of better understanding each individual to best help them professionally grow and maximize their contributions and sense of social interest is the foundation of this author’s research and work.

**Birth Order**

Alfred Adler was born on February 7, 1870 in Vienna, Austria and is most widely-known for his development of the theory of *Individual Psychology*. Adler was the second of six children and throughout his life he was known as a physician, educator, philosopher and an author. As a young child, Alfred Adler was often sick and suffered from physical problems that often caused academic challenges for him in his younger years. Later, Adler became motivated to compensate for his learning weakness (Carlson, Watts, & Maniacci, 2006, p. 17). Throughout his professional career and adulthood, Adler believed in personal freedom, social responsibility, and the rights of children and women so it was no surprise that he was considered more of a humanist than a socialist, despite being interested in philosophy and politics, especially socialism.
and the ideas of Karl Marx. Adler was a father of four children and husband to his wife, Raissa Epstein who was known as an active Russian socialist and feminist who was very liberal-minded (Carlson, Watts, & Maniacci, 2006, p. 17). Adlerian psychologists believe that Alfred Adler was a product of his times. “He endured many personal and professional hardships and with the social movement from autocratic to democratic living was occurring in Europe, Adler found himself at the forefront of with his own liberal views as well as the revolutionary ideas of his wife and friends” (Carlson, Watts, & Maniacci, 2006, p. 18). In addition to earning the respect of his peers, Adler’s work and ideas made an impact on those in the general public. Adler’s book, Understanding Human Nature, was one of the time’s best sellers and significantly increased the demand for him as a public speaker (Carlson, Watts, & Maniacci, 2006, p. 18).

The study of Adler’s theories, writings, and practice have formed a field of study known as Adlerian Psychology. According to Heinz L. and Rowena R. Ansbacher, there are several basic propositions of Individual Psychology including “The individual cannot be considered apart from his social situation. Individual Psychology regards and examines the individual as socially embedded” (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1956, p. 2). One major aspect of the socially embedded individual is an understanding of the influence and impact a person’s family of origin has on their social context and formation of their thoughts, beliefs, and actions as components of their lifestyle.

“As an elaboration of the socially embedded individual, Adler was one of the first theorists to incorporate the concept of psychological birth order into his work” (Carlson, Watts & Maniacci, 2006, p. 51).

In addition to ordinal birth order, which refers to the actual order of birth of children;

Adler introduced the concept of psychological birth order which refers to the role a child
adopts in his or her interactions with others which includes a total of five different
psychological birth order positions: (1) only children, (2) oldest borns, (3) second-born,
(4) middle children, and (5) youngest borns. (Carlson, Watts & Maniacci, 2006, p. 51)

Each of the birth positions have generally accepted and regularly observed behaviors
worth noting here. Actual Birth Order (ABO) refers to the numerical rank order in which
siblings were born into or entered the family of origin. Adler believed that because each person
seeks a unique way to belong, the order in which a person enters the family to some extent
affects the available routes by which siblings find a way to achieve significance and belonging
(Stewart, 2012). As expected, actual birth order can present itself as a minor influence compared
to the psychological birth order as an individual seeks to belong. Although one’s actual position
along with knowledge of the wider family constellation may allow Individual Psychologists to
make inference about coping and personality processes, among other things, Adler always places
more emphasis on the person’s self-perceived position in the family, as this contributes to ways
the child approaches the tasks of completion and belonging (Stewart, 2012).

A person’s birth order influences each child about how relationships work and how they
should interact with others. The development of such a family role marks a significant milestone
in the journey to fulfill the basic human need to belong and to play a meaningful part in the
family, work, and community groups (Stewart, Stewart, & Campbell, 2001). In an effort to
expand the foundational knowledge on the concept of birth order and general behaviors and
tendencies of each position, the following is a brief overview of each of the five positions
outlined in Adlerian psychology that includes traits, influences, and themes demonstrated as a
child and adult.
It is important to note that Alfred Adler proposed some guidelines when establishing psychological birth order and the identity of a sibling. Most importantly, siblings are typically born within 5 years of each other due to the lack of direct contact with the younger sibling because the older is at school the majority of the day. If there are more than 5 years between siblings, the psychological birth order can reset resulting in the oldest being more of an only and the second-born being more of an oldest. Another consideration Adler promotes is the influence of a handicap or disability. As explained by Carlson, Watts and Maniacci, “If the first-born boy (ordinal position) has Down syndrome, then psychologically he may take on the role of the youngest born (psychological position), while the second-born boy (ordinally) may take on the role of the oldest born (psychologically)” (2006, p. 52). Finally, gender can also influence the psychological order if the parents demonstrate distinct gender biases resulting in a second-born boy demonstrating oldest born qualities if the oldest is a daughter born into a family with male-dominated biases (Carlson, Watts, & Maniacci, 2006).

**Only Children**

*Only children* never have to share their worlds with other siblings. They grow up using parents (or significantly older siblings) as models. Hence, they tend to be perfectionists who are used to having their way. They set their goals exceedingly high and tend to prefer polite distance from people (Carlson, Watts & Maniacci, 2006, pp. 52-53). While these traits may generally be viewed as positive, *only children* are also viewed as spoiled because they are the only focus of the family (McGuirk & Pettijohn, 2008). According to Eckstein (2000) *only children* show the greatest need for achievement and actually show the highest level of achievement of all children except oldest children, are most likely to go to college, and manifest behavior problems (Eckstein & Kaufman, 2012).
Only children tend to fall somewhere between the first born and the last born children as far as their personality goes, they tend to be closer to first-born’s in the fact that they are willing and accepting to experiences due to the fact that a majority of their time is spent with people in the adult world and they also identify with authority figures as well. (Sulloway, 1996, p. 22)

While several bodies of research work to identify, summarize, and contrast only children from all other birth order positions, Dr. Kevin Leman (2009) in his book, The Birth Order Book, grouped several qualities and attributes of only children and firstborns together. “Firstborns and only children are reliable and conscientious, they tend to be list makers and black-and-white thinkers. They have a keen sense of right and wrong and believe there is a right way to do things. They are natural leaders and achievement oriented” (Leman, 2009, p. 20). He does go on to share that while several traits can be similar among these two groups, only children do have traits that often appear to be unique to that ranking. “Only children take those characteristics a step further. Books are their best friends. They act mature beyond their years—they are little adults by age 7 or 8. They work independently. And, they can’t understand why kids in other families fight” (Leman, 2009, p. 20).

Oldest Born

Oldest borns are used to being number one. They were typically voted in their class yearbooks most likely to carry their own caskets to their graves, in that they are used to doing things themselves. They are in charge and like being that way. Oldest borns tend to be analytical, detailed, and methodical, and they usually overvalue control (Carlson, Watts & Maniaci, 2006, pp. 52-53). Oldest children receive all the attention and care from parents until a second child is born, creating a challenge and conflict for the oldest child. The first-born child
becomes dethroned from their position as the one and only child and also therefore does not become the sole receiver of love and attention by being the only child in the family (Adler, 1927). After this feeling of dethronement, the child works to regain the love and attention that has been lost to the younger sibling by often regressing in their behavior as a young child. Additionally, the perspective of the oldest child in the eyes of the parent changes as the oldest child can appear more mature and capable as the parents compare the younger child to the oldest. Oldest children are considered the highest achieving of all positions, often showcase the greatest academic success with the fewest academic problems, have the highest motivation and need for achievement, are overrepresented among learned groups such as college students and faculty, and most affinitive when under stress (Eckstein & Kaufman, 2012). It is possible this motivation and need for achievement is one of the main reasons first-borns have been found to be overrepresented in a variety of managerial, leadership, political, and religious roles.

**Second-Born**

Second-borns play a teeter-totter game with oldest borns, in that where one goes up, the other goes down. This opposing effort is most often the result of the second child looking to seek attention by excelling or performing in ways the oldest born has chosen not to. If the oldest born is good in math, the second-born will typically choose to ignore math and focus on something the oldest born ignores, such as sports. This pattern of seeking out areas that the first born is not strong in does carry through into academic, athletic, and professional choices as well. Just as this occurs with academics, it also occurs with personality traits. Second-borns tend to be rebellious and independent, to dislike order, and to be responders (rather than initiators, like their elder sibling) (Carlson, Watts & Maniacci, 2006, pp. 52-53).
Middle Children

*Middle children* are diplomats; they are people pleasers who dislike conflict but desire fairness and justice for all. But, “middle borns can be the hardest to pin down of all birth orders, but they’ll be the opposite of the child above them in the family. If the first born is very conventional, the second will be unconventional” (Leman, 2009, p. 21).

Middle-born children, by definition, never have the opportunity of being an only child like the oldest-born; they always have to compete for and share attention and love from their parents and family members. They often feel squeezed by their siblings and complain that they have neither the rights or privileges of oldest borns nor the pampering and attention of the youngest borns (Carlson, Watts & Maniacci, 2008, pp. 52-53). Middle children demonstrate the fewest acting-out problems, are most sociable, and experience the greatest feeling of not belonging (Eckstein & Kaufman, 2012). Additionally, a middle child has parents who have already experienced being parents before and are subsequently more experienced, leading them to being more relaxed as parents and influencing the middle child to be more relaxed themselves and possibly not as driven as the oldest or first-born. “Being the middle child means living in a sort of anonymous haziness. But, that’s not all bad. If a middle child is anonymous, he can get away with occasional laziness and indifference” (Leman, 2009, p. 21). Again, by definition the middle child is the youngest born for a period of time, but this change isn’t as stark as it is for the oldest child since they have always had to share attention and resources of their parents. “Middle children are not pushed as hard or expected to accomplish quite as much as the one who came before him. The drawback is that without being pushed, he may never fulfill his potential” (Leman, 2009, p. 21).
As middle-born children grow and become adults, middle birth position children are often peace peacemakers in the family (McGuirk & Pettijohn, 2008). “The middle child of the family is often the negotiator who tries to keep the peace” (Leman, 2009, p. 21). Middle children often do well in occupations that require personal charm like sales or politics.

**Youngest Born**

Youngest borns are frequently excitement-seekers who crave stimulation and are masters at putting others into their service. They are used to having things done for them, and they know how to play people’s emotions very well. Additionally, youngest borns can often become the most ambitious in the family; because they feel so far behind, they desire to catch up with the older ones to prove they are no longer babies (Carlson, Watts & Maniacci, 2008, pp. 52-53). Eckstein (2000) summarized the youngest child is overrepresented in psychiatric disorders (if from a small family), is the most empathetic, and has the greatest tendency toward abusing alcohol. “These social, outgoing creatures have never met a stranger. They are uncomplicated, spontaneous, humorous, and high on people skills. To them, life’s a party” (Leman, 2009, p. 22). And while these basic traits and description may appear overall positive and productive, there are some limitations and negative attributes that can present themselves.

But, there’s also a flip side to being the youngest. Although they’re the little star in the family constellation, it’s no fun being the smallest, because it means they spend a lot of their time wearing hand-me-downs that are ragged, incredibly out of style, or too big. Being the youngest also means they get picked on from time to time and maybe get called an unflattering nickname. (Leman, 2009, p. 22)

These feelings of being picked on can result in a youngest-born feeling like they are being picked on or unfairly treated as an adult and even in the workplace. Furthermore, if
individuals in positions of authority experience these feelings, they may act inappropriately and treat their employees unfairly.

**Alternative Birth Order Theories**

While working to understand the concept and patterns within Adlerian birth order, both biological and ordinal, it is important to acknowledge there are alternative and complimentary models of birth order that have been presented and studied. And the concept and impacts of birth order on various behavior and personality attributes hasn’t gone without criticism and debate. The primary contest to correlating birth order with various lifestyle features and attributes is that it doesn’t account for several other social, economic, and regional factors that have also been proven to influence thoughts, beliefs and behaviors. Furthermore, it is important to understand how the various models both compliment and align with each other. One of the most comprehensive papers to compare and contrast four main models is that written by Kyla J. Mills and Gillian A. Mooney (2013) titled “Methods of Ranking Birth Order: The Neglected Issue in Birth Order Research.” Within this paper, the authors attempted to provide evidence for trusting birth order research by presenting correlations among data using the various methods. And, while the data was primarily inconclusive, the paper did provide valuable elements and comparisons among the four methods of ranking birth order including Adlerian, dichotomous, serial, and continuous. Briefly stated, the dichotomous method of birth order places siblings into one of two groups: first-borns and later borns. The premise of this approach is that first-borns are the only children that would have parental resources all to themselves; all subsequent siblings will have to share parental resources (Mills & Mooney, 2013). The serial method of analysis simply numbers each child in the order in which they were born starting with 1 and ending with the total number of children born in that family. Finally, the continuous method of birth order is
a bit more complicating in that it divides the number of older siblings by his or her total number of siblings. For example the third born of five children would have the value 2/4.

Mills and Mooney note the Adlerian method can be beneficial in that it indicates birth order grouping within the family and can highlight the effects of being the first, middle, last, or only child compared to other groups. The major concern here is that middle children fall into one mass category while the positions of oldest, youngest, or only child are reserved for one child in each family, which could complicate results—especially in large families (Mills & Mooney, 2013).

**Family Constellation**

The term *family constellation* derives from astronomy, wherein a group of stars referred to as a constellation has its own order and can be identified at a glance (McQuillin & Welford, 2013). A common example of this is the constellation, Ursa Major, also known as “The Great Bear” or the “Big Dipper.” The goal of identifying and naming constellations is to ease and expand the understanding of star locations and groupings as well as pass along cultural stories and norms. Shulman and Mosak elaborate the aspect of family constellation and how this influences an individual’s life style in their text, *Manual for Life Style Assessment* (1995). As noted in their text, Alfred Adler first used the term in a 1937 paper which he discussed the influence of family constellation on life style. In their text, they highlight how Adler discussed the importance of the relationship between the parents and children, how parents model behavior and the effect of certain parental behaviors such as pampering and rejection. Over time, Adlerian psychologists, including Rudolf Dreikurs, have elaborated on this concept and built tools to use when working with individuals and families, most specifically the Lifestyle Inventory (LSI), to best understand the family atmosphere and relationships among the different and unique family
members (Shulman & Mosak, 1995, p. 2). For the purpose of general understanding a Lifestyle Inventory Assessment is a tool used to capture a person’s dominant life story and how they see and understand the world around them. In addition to understanding how an individual sees and understands the world around them, it is also important to understand the basic structure and organization of the family. Dreikurs described the family constellation as a sociogram of the group at home during the formative years which reveals the field of early experiences, the circumstances under which there developed personal perspectives and biases, concepts and convictions…fundamental attitudes and approaches to life which are the basis for…personality (Shulman & Mosak, 1995, p. 2).

In addition to Dreikurs, Psychological birth order is recognized as a critically important variable in birth order research (Jordan, Whiteside, & Manaster, 1982); however few studies have attempted to classify individuals by psychological rather than ordinal birth order (Lohman, Lohman, Christensen, 1985). Findings in birth-order research have suggested several factors that may affect how and where individuals perceive themselves in their families. Age, gender, blended nature of the family, number of parents, death, divorce, step-parenting are but a few factors which have been identified that significantly affect the family (Campbell, White, & Stewart, 1991). As one would expect, these perspectives, biases, concepts and convictions learned during the formative years of a person’s life can influence all aspects of a person’s life style including their professional accomplishments and roles. Additionally, birth order and family constellation are unique aspects that are interdependent and have general agreement that they significantly impact the individual and their overall life style. This self-consistent personality structure is what Adler calls the style of life. “It becomes firmly established at an
early age, from which time on behavior that is apparently contradictory is only the adaptation of different means of the same end” (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1956, p. 2).

**Life Style**

In addition to birth order and family constellation, Alfred Adler introduced the concept of Life Style throughout his career and writings. Adler proposed that each human being has the creative capacity to develop a unique style of life, predictable patterns of reacting and behaving (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1956, p. 173). Life style may be defined as one's characteristic pattern of movement. It includes a unique method of perceiving, conceptualizing, behaving, and striving toward a subjectively determined goal of power. Adler believes that each individual is different from all others and that the creative self within each of us styles this unique personality (Croake, 1975).

Furthermore, while Adler often used the term in a collective sense (e.g.: the life style of a pampered child), he was at pains to point out that the life style of any individual was a singular pattern of thinking, feeling, and acting that was unique to that individual and represented the context (Zusammenhang) in which all specific manifestations had to be considered. (Shulman & Mosak, 1995, p. 1)

It is important to include that much of the movement and style of life Adler discusses was often in response to feelings of inferiority that stimulate and motivate them to action and a general direction, or what Adler referred to as a final, fictional goal. “This results in a person having a goal. Individual Psychology has long called the consistent movement toward the goal a plan of life. But because this name has sometimes led to mistakes among students, it is now called a style of life” (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1956, p. 173). A significant component of a person’s style of life is their career choice and performance in that profession. This conclusion is
yet another example of the value that can be gained by studying the relationship of birth order on a person’s career choice and subsequent performance in a professional team setting.

One of the most effective assessment and measurement tools related to a person’s psychological birth order and their life style is the use of the BASIS-A Inventory which measures five lifestyle themes and five secondary themes identified as the HELPS scale, which are designed to expand and facilitate the interpretation of the five primary themes (Gfroerer, Gfroerer, Curlette, White, & Kern, 2003). One of the most effective features of the BASIS-A Inventory is that it asks a person to recall childhood experiences creating a greater dependency and connection on a person’s younger, formative years when the family unit and subsequent birth order is more prominent, referred to, and being developed. The BASIS-A Inventory measures five major themes or interpersonal styles: Belonging-Social Interest, Going Along, Taking Charge, Wanting Recognition, and Being Cautious. Five additional supporting scales referred to as HELPS scales are used to enhance the understanding of the major interpersonal styles (BASIS-A Inventory, n.d.). The five major themes or interpersonal styles align closely with ongoing professional needs of individuals and areas that managers often seek to understand and utilize when working to create positive and productive work environments as well as find ways to meaningfully reward employees. For example, at this author’s current place of employment there are established employee and leadership competencies, such as self-motivation and effective communication, which are sought when hiring new employees as well as reviewed regularly by management during the annual review process. Additional competencies identified by this organization include adaptability, accountability, dependability, and self-motivation. As noted earlier these are behaviors that have been identified as traits and tendencies that are prominent and pronounced by certain birth order positions. While there is a
significant and growing body of work on the concept of birth order and its influence on educational attainment, personality traits, life-style, professional career and interpersonal relationships, there remains a lack of research on the influence of birth order on a person’s professional interactions and attainment.

**Birth Order and Personality**

Birth Order plays a critical role in several aspects of a person’s life style, predominantly in the development of their overall personality. Individuals make early decisions about their roles in their family groups based on their perceptions of significant experiences (Gfroerer, Gfroerer, Culette, White, & Kern, 2003). They then integrate these subjective perceptions into their lifestyle developments. Dr. Kevin Lehman (2009) highlights that so much of what shapes a person can be attributed to the environment of the family of origin. “There is no greater influence during your growing-up years than your family. The most intimate relationships in life are with your family. The relationship between you and your parents is fluid, dynamic, and all-important” (Lehman, 2009, p. 29). While the term personality is a general term that encompasses several qualities and attributes, for purpose of this paper and discussion optimism and procrastination will be the aspects of a person’s personality that will be discussed. These two personality aspects are discussed in detail here as they play prominent roles in a person’s professional ability and performance in a team setting. Often, a person’s level of optimism is a key factor in their ability to accomplish tasks, specifically in a stressful environment, and a positive attitude is often a key trait leadership looks for when hiring and promoting individuals into managerial and leadership positions. Additionally, a person’s tendency to procrastinate, while it can be constructive at times, most often can be viewed as a negative attribute by others,
especially when working in a team setting when roles and responsibilities are co-dependent and interconnected.

**Optimism**

Gencoglu and Kalkan (2015) report the results of their study examining the relationship between a person’s psychological birth order and their level of optimism. Using a sample size of 586 high school students studying at a variety of schools located in the Canik district in Turkey, individuals completed the White-Campbell Psychological Birth Order Inventory (PDSE), the Life Tendency Test, and a Personal Data form to submit their data. According to the results obtained, negative levels and meaningful relationships were found between optimism and oldest child psychological birth order and youngest child psychological birth order; and a positive level and meaningful relationships were found between middle child psychological birth order and only child psychological birth order (Gencoglu & Kalkan, 2015). These results are useful and meaningful as a person’s level of optimism can often play a vital role in a person’s professional success and professional roles (i.e.: Customer Service Representative, Entrepreneur, Manager) they assume throughout their career.

The experiment and results provided by Gencoglu and Kalkan align with results from previous research by aligning a person’s birth order with their psychological power level. It is found that there is a negative relationship between the oldest and youngest child psychological birth order and psychological power levels; it is found that there is a positive relationship between middle and only child psychological birth order and psychological power level, and that psychological birth order is a meaningful predictor of psychological power (Gencoglu & Kalkan, 2015). This study provides valuable confirmation of previous research conducted on this topic and provides affirmation of a significant and meaningful impact of a person’s birth order and
their beliefs and attitudes in life which ultimately can impact a person’s life style and career trajectory. As noted, the reaction that the young individual will show throughout his/her life will be shaped in the family setting, and will be functional in terms of behavior, cognitive and emotional dimensions (Gencoglu & Kalkan, 2015).

Following this study, the authors provides three recommendations, two of which this author agrees with and wants to highlight within this literature review. The first recommendation is to seek an understanding of an individual’s perception of their family relationships to best understand the individual. This recommendation aligns very closely with one of the key elements of Adlerian psychology; understanding the system in which an individual belongs. “Each person is born into a human group and will need to find his or her place in a family constellation. The interactions among family members are the most important factor in creating one’s personality” (Carlson, Watts, & Maniacchi, 2006, p. 11). The second recommendation is that due to relatively little literature currently available dealing with both psychological birth order and optimism, new research is needed to repeat the research and test the results. Gencoglu and Kalkan added that this is a positive indication that their research echoed the results of other recent research.

Procrastination

Research in the area of procrastination has provided strong evidence that it can negatively impact several aspects of an individual’s professional performance. Procrastination can be defined as a failure by a person to self-regulate their responsibilities and actions. High levels of procrastination is associated with lower salaries, shorter durations of employment, and a greater likelihood of being unemployed rather than working full-time. (Nguyen, Steel, & Ferrari, 2013). So, if there is a significant correlation between a person’s birth order and their likelihood of
procrastination, could there then be a correlation between a person’s birth order and their salary, duration of employment, and likelihood of employee turnover?

Another trait that can significantly impact a person’s professional choice and success within that role, is a person’s tendency to procrastinate. A study conducted by Chege Kimani Gabriel (2015) sought to identify the impact of birth order on procrastination among college students in Eldoret town. The study sought to achieve the following objectives: (1) to find the prevalence of procrastination among college students in Eldoret town, (2) to find out the relationship between birth order on procrastination among college students in Eldoret town, (3) to investigate the relationship between age and procrastination among college students in Eldoret town, and (4) to investigate the relationship between gender and procrastination among college students in Eldoret town (Gabriel, 2015). The study was an ex post facto design and participants included 20 first-born, 20 middle, and 20 last-borns from the KIM school of management…and the sample comprised 30 male and 30 female respondents. (Gabriel, 2015). This study concluded that there is a statistically significant relationship between procrastination and the respondent’s birth position. An examination of the cross-tabulation shows that most of those who procrastinated were last borns and a few middle borns with procrastination among first-borns being almost non-existent at 1.7% (Gabriel, 2015). This study also showed there is a higher association between procrastination and age and gender with 57.1% of the respondents who procrastinated were female compared to 42.9% were male.

While this study confirmed the correlation between birth order and a person’s tendency to procrastinate, along with the additional factors of age and gender, it also concluded that younger students procrastinated more than older ones (Gabriel, 2015). And, with the median age of participants being 20-years old, the findings of this study need to be explored further and caution
It is important to note that researching and correlating birth order to personal identity and personality does not come without criticism and challenge. While Sulloway can be credited with a renewed focus on birth order’s impact on a person’s development, a resurgence of interest in the role that birth order plays in personality development occurred with the publication of *Born to Rebel: Birth Order, Family Dynamics, and Creating Lives* (Sulloway, 1996). *Born to Rebel* removed the theoretical underpinnings of birth-order effects from a psychoanalytic perspective to a model based on evolutionary psychology (Dunkel, Harbke, & Papini, 2009). Dunkel, Harbke, and Papini proposed that birth order affects psychosocial outcomes through differential investment from parent to child and differences in the degree of identification from child to parent. In other words, a child’s effort to see themselves separate from their parent and as an individual also plays a role in a child’s behaviors, thoughts, and beliefs. Their study was conducted via a questionnaire in large group settings of 710 undergraduate students, majority women, from a large Midwestern university in the United States. Data collected included birth order (first, middle, or lastborn), maternal age and parental education, maternal closeness and rejection, identification with parents, identity, and personality and then attempted correlate birth order with the subsequent personality traits. This study produced a general absence of a relation for both first- and last-born individuals and for a direct and indirect effects on personality or identity. While their study failed to show strong correlations, their discussion of the survey did highlight the concern regarding the number of statistical tests performed throughout the preliminary examination of the potential covariates, moderators, and both direct and indirect effects for each of nine different outcome measures (Dunkel, Harbke, & Papini, 2009). While...
this study did not provide conclusive correlations, it did provide valuable insights into the challenges of analyzing and possibly overanalyzing birth order when attempting to draw conclusions. Additionally, a potential insight gained that may warrant further exploration is to consider not only a person’s psychological birth order, but also their perception of the relationship, independence, and identification of their relationships with their parent(s).

**Birth Order and Educational Attainment**

Understanding there is a direct correlation between a person’s level of education and their professional career, it is valuable to review and understand the correlation between birth order and a person’s educational attainment. This topic is rooted in the concept that the more formal education a person receives, the more opportunity for career choice and career advancement exist.

Research conducted by Ronni Pavan (2016) sought to acknowledge that first-borns tend to outperform their younger siblings on cognitive exams, wages, educational attainment, and employment and understand the impact parental investments across siblings has on these patterns. Pavan used data from the Children of the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1979 (CNLSY) as it contained information on 11,504 children from birth to 14 years old from 4,931 women (of the 6,283 women interviewed in the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (NLSY79) and sought to account for the over-sample of black and low-income white mothers and a variety of outlier factors including families with siblings more than 15 year apart, families with twins, and families with missing crucial information. The National Longitudinal Surveys (NLS) are a set of surveys designed to gather information at multiple points in time on the labor market activities and other significant life events of several groups of men and women. For more than 4 decades, NLS data have served as an important tool for economists, sociologists, and
other researchers (U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, n.d.). In 1986, a separate survey of all children born to NLSY female respondents began, greatly expanding the breadth of child-specific information collected. In addition to all the mother’s information from the NLSY79, the child survey includes assessments of each child as well as additional demographic and development information collected from either the mother or child. For children aged 10 and older, information has been collected from the children biennially since 1988 on a variety of factors including child-parent interaction, attitudes toward schooling, dating and friendship patterns, religious attendance, health, substance use, and home responsibilities. Biennially (since 1994), children ages 15 and older complete a lengthy child interview modeled on the NLSY79 questionnaire. Information collected includes their schooling, training, work experiences and expectations, health, dating, fertility and marital histories, and household composition (U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, n.d.).

Pavan’s findings reveal a sizeable birth-order effect in both cognitive skills and parental investments even after including several controls and family fixed effects. Using a similar method to that used by Cunha and Heckman in 2008 and Cunha, Heckman, and Shennach in 2010, Pavan finds that the difference in parental behavior across different siblings accounts for more than one-half of the birth order gap (Pavan, 2015). One of the major omissions of this study and subsequent analysis is the presence of non-cognitive skills which can play a critical role in a person’s professional choice, career path, and professional success. Hotz and Pantano (2015) sought to explore some of these non-cognitive skills that can influence a person’s performance in school related to their birth order and focused on the parent’s disciplinary actions. Hotz and Pantano provide robust empirical evidence that school performance of children in the National Longitudinal Study Children (NLSY-C) declines with birth order as does
the stringency of their parent’s disciplinary restrictions (Hotz & Pantano, 2015). This correlation of their disciplinary restrictions was identified by asking the parents how they will respond if a student brought home bad grades, parents state that they would be less likely to punish their later-born children. Taken together, these patterns are consistent with a reputation model of strategic parenting (Hotz & Pantano, 2015). Strategic parenting is defined by parenting a firstborn or older child in a more strict and visual manner as a means to set an example for younger and later-born children to learn from and work to avoid perceived negative consequences. While this study clearly concludes the correlation between a person’s birth order and their cognitive skills and there is a strong correlation between a person’s cognitive skills and educational attainment as well as a correlation between a person’s educational attainment and career path, there continues to be a lack of empirical data and study that correlates and connects the effect of birth order on a person’s performance in a professional setting.

It is important to note research referred to within this paper has been predominantly in the United States and Western Europe, both regions considered modern and affluent. So, when researching birth order and the effect it has on educational attainment, it is important to consider alternative outcomes based on different areas of the world and within differently developed nations. Research by Monique De Haan, Erik Plug, and José Rosero in 2014 examined the effect of birth order on human capital development in Ecuador. Ecuador is a developing country and one that is considered a medium-income country with an estimated Gross Domestic Product of 109 Billion which ranks 64th in the world according to the World Bank (2017) in 2016. In their research and analysis, they drew four empirical conclusions: (1) later-born children are ahead in their cognitive development in infancy and early childhood; (2) later-born children, in particular those who grew up in poor families, are more likely to go to school during their adolescent years;
(3) later-born children spend more time with their mothers on cognitive activities; and (4) later-born children are breastfed longer (Haan, Plug, & Rosero, 2014). Based on this study and subsequent conclusions, it is plausible to conclude birth order can have an inverse effect on a child’s cognitive development and educational attainment in a less economically-developed country compared to a more economically developed and successful nation. Therefore, when working to draw conclusions between a person’s birth order, educational attainment, and future career selection it is critical to understand the economic status of the nation; this is another area that appears to have a beneficial opportunity to conduct additional research and analysis.

To compliment the findings and results of Pavan and De Haan, Plug, and Rosero, research conducted by Lillian Belmont at the New York State Psychiatric Institute sought to explore if lastborn are over represented among those at the low end of the educational spectrum. Belmont found that lastborn at each family size are at greater risk than are first- and middle born of experiencing school failure as measured by (a) attendance at special schools for the mentally retarded, and (b) failure to graduate from lower school (first 6 years of school) (Belmont, 1977). Additionally, Belmont shared the findings occurred at a higher rate of children of parents that were in manual labor positions and came from larger families. It is important to note this study was conducted by reviewing data from over 400,000 men located in the Netherlands that were born between 1944 and 1947 so there are key limitations to their findings in that it only includes male participants at the age of 19 so it doesn’t account for any variations among gender and doesn’t represent a longitudinal perspective, specifically regarding the educational accomplishments are solely at the secondary educational level.

Another body of research conducted in Britain sought to explore the effect of family size and birth order on educational attainment. This research dedicated specific attention to the
challenge that birth order relates to family size more prominently in larger families. The first born in any family always has a higher probability of being in a small family than those children born later in the birth order (Booth & Kee, 2009). These influences and variables are sometimes accounted for in other surveys with either a control group or variable, but often does not truly account for this influence. Using data from the 13th wave of the British Household Panel Survey (BHPS), a nationally representative random-sample survey of private households in Britain conducted in 2003-04, Booth and Kee found that sibling shares [of parental resources] are decreasing with birth order. Controlling for parental family income, parental age at birth and family level attributes, they found that children from larger families have lower levels of education and that there is an additional negative birth order effect (Booth & Kee, 2009). Booth and Kee went on to share that their research has contracted earlier research that possibly didn’t account for other cultural variables. Family size effect did not vanish once they control for birth order, perhaps reflecting different cultural or institutional factors in the two countries (Booth & Kee, 2009).

In summary, it is clear to see that birth order plays a significant role in the educational attainment of an individual. First-borns tend to out-perform younger siblings on cognitive exams and educational attainment, but this correlation can present different patterns based on the economic strength of the country in which a family lives. In a more developed and economically strong country, first born outperform latter born where in a country like Ecuador, latter born outperform older siblings in educational attainment. Finally, not only does birth order impact a person’s educational attainment, so does the number of siblings and family size.

Birth Order and Romantic Relationships
While there are significant differences between a person’s romantic and professional relationships, there is also a body of Adlerian work that suggests all three pillars of life (love/sex, community/friendship, and occupation/work) are all connected and interrelated. As noted by Eva Dreikurs Ferguson, all three (life tasks) are linked with one another by the first. They are not accidental, but inescapable problems. (Ferguson, 2007). Therefore, there is value in briefly exploring birth order and its effect on romantic relationships to provide a perspective to incorporate into the greater conversation and study of a birth order and its impact on a person’s professional performance. A study conducted by Emily McGuirk and Terry Pettijohn (2008) sought to examine the relations between birth order and romantic relationships, attitudes, and styles including jealousy, attitudes towards love, love styles, attachment, and their own romantic relationships. Within this study, 100 college students (75% women) received a composite survey on various aspects of romantic relationship styles which included the Attachment Style Questionnaire, Attitudes Toward Love, Pfeiffer and Wong’s Multidimensional Jealousy Scale, and the Short Form Love Attitudes Scale and then has a variety of one-way analysis of variance tests were conducted (McGuirk & Pettijohn, 2008). While a variety of results revealed trends for possible birth order effect, two key trends emerged: 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 positions.

While these results focus primarily on romantic relationships, they do provide insights into the general needs, fears, and approach individuals take towards relationships. And, they also provide an opportunity for potential insights into how a person will behave when working with
other individuals in a professional setting, presumably in an ongoing, consistent, and sometimes stressful setting.

**Birth Order and Occupational Choice**

“Birth order continues to be revealing when you look at who is in what occupation” (Leman, 2009, p. 19). As one would guess, there is a growing body of researched attempting to understand the influence of birth order on not only a person’s personality, but also their career choice. For example, according to the definition that Dr. Kevin Lehman uses in his book, *The Birth Order Book*, which states an *oldest child* is someone who is born first in a family, is the first child of that gender in the family, or has a next closest same-sex sibling of at least five years older than them. Oldest children are overrepresented in a variety of positions including the President of the United State. Lehman shares 64 percent, 28 out of 44, US Presidents have been first borns. This helps affirm the correlation “that firstborns are more highly motivated to achieve than laterborns” (Leman, 2009, p. 21). Additionally, from an Adlerian perspective, career choices are viewed as compensatory. Individuals choose specific work roles and job occupations based upon what they believe will make them feel more secure, powerful or significant (Del Corso, Rehfuss, & Galvin, 2011). It can be understood that both birth order and the striving to compensate for perceived individual weaknesses both influence and direct a person’s professional choice and occupation.

The research conducted by Alice Grinberg (2015) at Pace University in New York, NY focuses on the effect of birth order on a person’s occupational choice. As noted within her abstract and introduction, the majority of previous research has been conducted using small convenient samples, relationships between careers and birth order at a single point in time, or attempted to control for family size. Grinberg’s research attempted to make contributions to this
field of study to compliment and overcome these previous limitations as highlighted in conclusions by psychologist Frank Sulloway and research by economist Gary Becker (Grinberg, 2015).

For Grinberg’s research, the author utilized the large, high quality, nationally-representative survey funded by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the National Longitudinal Study of Youth 1979 (NLSY79). Throughout this research, Grinberg worked to account for several variables including family size, demographic, location, gender, as well as educational level of the mother. Various results of this research include finding that firstborns are indeed more likely to become managers. However, it is the result of receiving larger amounts of parental investment rather than their unique personality traits (Grinberg, 2015). This finding appears to better support the economic perspective between birth order and career choice. Furthermore, firstborns from smaller families are more likely to become managers because each child in a smaller family is rationed a larger portion of the parental resources. Therefore, children from lower-income families, as proxied by the mother’s years of education, are less likely to become managers because there are fewer resources to distribute to reach child. This research, while initially intended to resolve a variety of inherent challenges of previous research on this topic, provided a unique compliment and attribute that is worth researching further: the impact family size has on the pronouncement of a person’s birth order on their personality and future career choice.

Research conducted by Peter Dubno, Hrach Bedrosian, and Richard Freedman (1969) was the result of previous research and conclusions that aligned the relationship between birth order and a person’s academic and professional achievement and other research that aligned the relationship between birth order and conformity. They concluded and sought to confirm that achievement and conformity are also related (Dubno, Hrach, Bedrosian & Freedman, 1969).
This newer research intended to overcome a variety of methodology problems of earlier research, namely using subjects in elementary, secondary, or college levels in a somewhat controlled environment such as a class. It seems to us that, if birth order and conformity are related, the relationship should also hold true among adult subjects in real life situations (Dubno et. al., 1969). So, Dubno et. al. (1969) sought to find subjects in adulthood working in a managerial position, either top manager or middle manager roles in America’s 500 largest manufacturing organizations.

Their research resulted in two interesting findings that contradicted initial expectations. The first finding was firstborns were found among the lesser achievement group (middle managers) and no predominance of firstborns was found among the higher achievement group (top managers) (Dubno et. al, 1969). These findings highlighted some key assumptions and showcased the complexity of factors that attribute to someone attaining both middle- and top-level management positions. Their data suggests that conformists, as measured by birth position, are frequently screened out of top management ranks somehow and remain at middle or lower management levels throughout their business careers. This may be a result of the tendencies of top managers to be comfortable with taking risks and a general entrepreneurial spirit, but ultimately will remain unknown until the screening process for top-level managers is revealed and analyzed. The history of behavioral science research indicates that conformity, or any other single variable, is rarely sufficient cause for social effects (Dubno et. al., 1969).

Due to the unclear findings of the original research by Dubno, Bedrosian, and Freedman and subsequent questions raised, Peter Dubno and Richard Freedman (1971) conducted additional research in 1966 to test the moderating effect of educational level of managers on birth order to better understand this complex variable. Similar to their earlier research, a sample
of 2,445 top managers from America’s 500 largest manufacturing corporations were surveyed via a questionnaire. The results of this research showed that when the birth order characteristic of managers are explored with regard to college education as the moderator, a strong birth order effect occurs for college graduate populations but no birth order effect for the non-college graduates. However, when the analysis is shifted so that the birth order characteristics of managers are explored with managerial attainment as the moderator variable, the birth order effects tend to ‘wash out’ suggesting that there are a random number of firstborn and later born college graduates in either top or middle management levels in America’s largest business organizations, despite the fact that top managers have markedly more education than the middle managers (Dubno & Freedman, 1971). This new research and additional variables that were considered, highlighted the complexity of attempting to understand two basic variables (birth order and managerial attainment) and introduced the variable and effects that birth order has on educational attainment and how educational attainment the influences a person’s managerial attainment, at least in 1966 manufacturing companies.

This author agrees with the discussion and conclusion of Philip K. Berger and John M. Ivancevich (1973), both from Kentucky University, in that one problem in their research is the failure to include only children in their data an analysis. As observed and discussed through psychological research and literature, only borns have distinct and different attributes and behavior tendencies as compared to oldest, middle, and youngest borns.

The extent to which an individual can separate from the family is a central issue in looking at family influence. A family system that provides flexible boundaries by allowing for easy movement and encouraging individuality makes it relatively easy for the person to separate from the family enough to become autonomous (Bradley & Mims, 1992). The phenomenon of
“striving for significance” presents many implications for career decision making. Typically, if an older child moves in a particular direction and develops a role identity with certain attributes, subsequent siblings will move in different directions. Each person develops certain patterns and roles, and this gives each a sense of belonging and unique identity. These patterns and roles are often continued as expressions of self in the world of work (Bradley & Mims, 1992). Bradley further clarified three general rules for applying dyadic notions to career development. Rule 1 is that dyad members will not select the same careers. Rule 2 is that adjacent siblings in a family will not select the same career. Rule 3 is that roles played in the family often develop into occupations, and the senior members of dyads have greater opportunity in selecting roles (Bradley & Mims, 1992). These patterns and conclusions resonate with this author as within my family of origin, I have selected a different career path than my older brother and younger brother, but my youngest brother has selected the same career that I have. Additionally, the role that I predominantly played within my family of origin (mediator and leader), is the primary role I play in my current profession as a division leader at a local college where the majority of my time is dedicated to ensure a variety of departments are collaborating and working collectively to support the best interest of the student and their educational journey.

**Value of Researching Birth Order effect on Professional Teamwork**

As discussed throughout this literature review, a person’s psychological birth order and family constellation both play a critical role in the development of a person’s beliefs and lifestyle. Additionally, birth order influences several personality traits including optimism and the tendency to procrastinate in addition to their overall educational attainment. Stated again, educational attainment plays a significant role in a person’s overall career options and career path. Also, birth order and its impact has been studied as it relates to romantic relationships and
an individual’s chosen career path. Where current research and literature has a void is how birth order relates to a person’s ability to work as a professional in a team setting. While this topic and some basic correlations and patterns are briefly discussed in books and referred to within research reviews, there still exists a significant void and opportunity in research and writing on this specific topic. With ongoing value placed on a person’s interpersonal communication, or soft skills, within the workforce this correlation and relationships can prove valuable information for managers, leaders, business owners, and coworkers seek to gain the maximum value from each employee.

To compliment the need for additional research focused on the impact of a person’s birth order to their performance in a professional setting, a review of current textbooks on the topic of leadership and communication styles at work was conducted. Unfortunately, only one text referenced a person’s family as an important aspect to consider when understanding a person’s communication style. In the text, *People Styles at Work and Beyond* by Robert Bolton and Dorothy Grover Bolton (2009), a single chapter is dedicated to the application of their communication styles inventory to parenting. While this chapter is focused primarily on how the communication of each person in the family can influence the greater family unit and will be valuable for the parent to understand, it does present one of the only correlations between a person’s family structure and the professional setting found in current leadership resources. “Accepting your children’s basic nature with all its inherent strengths and limitations is crucial to helping they flourish” (Bolton & Bolton, 2009, p. 151). Additionally, Lehman highlights in his text,

> There is no greater influence during your growing-up years than your family. During those early years, your parents and siblings (if any) make an indelible psychological
imprint, affecting your personality. And the family influence tends to persist through the years and across the miles as you grow up and move away. (Leman, 2009, p. 29)

Research conducted by Antoinette S. Phillips and Carl R. Phillips (1994) intended to investigate achievement contributions made by firstborns (including only children) relative to later borns. That is, identify the likelihood of a firstborn to associate a strong internal locus of control when assessing their own and other’s past good and poor performances. A firstborn manager may be more likely than a later born to hire a candidate whose past performance is attributed to that person’s efforts. Likewise, instances of poor performance may be weighted more heavily against an applicant or employee by firstborns than by later borns (Phillips & Phillips, 1994). Their conclusion went on to help identify a few issues of the firstborn’s self-assessment including higher stress levels. As noted in their conclusion, their findings suggest a possible interrelationship between familial experiences, occupational selection, self-appraisal and stress level when considered in combination with other research related to birth order, educational attainment, and occupational selection, but cannot be considered conclusive and highlight an area where more research is needed (Phillips & Phillips, 1994).

While the act of purchasing of a high-priced item may not seem to directly correlate to a stressful situation at work, research Clive Nancarrow, Len Tui Wright, and Beril Alakoc (1999) on the reaction of Top Gun Fighter Pilots to database marketing efforts showcased an interesting and relevant pattern. Based on Sulloway’s “Big Five” personality dimensions, they tested the hypothesis that first borns would be more likely to talk with a sales associate regarding a high-risk purchase to assure their decision compared to a later-born. Both research studies support the hypothesis that first-borns are more likely than later-borns to talk to others before and after a purchase in a high-anxiety purchase situation (Nancarrow, Wright & Alakoc, 1999). This
correlation and finding can be correlated to how birth order may impact a person’s need to talk to others before, during and after a high-anxiety project or experience at work in a team setting. Further research is needed to extend these findings into a professional setting.

In addition to finding brief examples and some inferences on the value of researching birth order and its influence and presentation on a professional team setting, this author has observed and generated several examples that illustrate how birth order does in fact present itself when working in a team setting and how a manager, director, or peer can use an understanding of birth order to best work with and maximize the value of an individual’s contributions to the greater work. While working in a variety of team settings ranging from leading a site-specific management team to leading a team of 13 student-facing employees to collaborating with other members of a large and geographically dispersed leadership team, this author would like to provide the following three scenarios and situations to help illustrate the value understanding birth order could have when working in a professional setting.

**Youngest Manager**

When working with a department manager who has the general reputation of being a “bully,” understanding the employee’s birth order could help establish a deeper understanding of her paradigm, insecurities, and intentions. Knowing this individual is the youngest of 4 children, could it be possible that the behaviors often classified as “bullish” are actually behaviors rooted in feeling like she is being left out and picked on by other departments and peers? Rather than focusing on the outward behaviors that intend to intimidate and keep others at a distance, could this person’s manager and peers understand it may that this person is resorting back to the beliefs and actions that served her well growing up; as a youngest does she feel she is most likely being picked on and often was able to get away with misbehavior due to more relaxed parents and less
time and attention from her parents? So, rather than focusing on the behavior, could a manager or peer focus on the idea that she isn’t being picked on, but rather productively challenged or being held accountable to clear and consistent expectations?

**Oldest Manager**

Similar to the findings by Phillips and Phillip (1994), during the annual review process would an oldest manager look to provide a more polarized annual review of their team members based on their specific results? Meaning, would the oldest manager attribute both success and failure primarily on the individual and perhaps minimize or avoid accounting for environmental or circumstantial factors that may have meaningfully impacted the overall employee performance? This variation in writing subject annual reviews could furthermore be compounded if the amount of annual increases are limited to a specific dollar amount that can be allocated across the employee base meaning there is a pre-set dollar amount available for annual increases and it is up to the manager to determine which employees get specific amount. Additionally, this could further become a human capital challenge or liability if there are several managers across a larger company all provided reviews to employees in similar positions resulting in inconsistent employee ratings and annual increases.

**Middle Born Customer Service Representative**

When looking to hire for positions similar to a customer service representative where a primary responsibility is to mediate frustrated customers and seek resolutions that keep customers, would a middle born individual have additional strengths and skills in the areas of mediation and negotiation? Knowing that a middle born is often in a position to mediate between younger and older siblings or learned to effectively negotiate with parents and siblings, these are skills that can transfer to various life scenarios including working in a professional
setting with customers. And while the screening and hiring process cannot be based on a person’s birth order, these qualities and examples would likely present themselves during the interview process and prove to be valuable to the employee while in the role resulting in professional success.

**Conclusion**

As noted in this paper, a person’s birth order and family constellation can make a significant and meaningful impact on a person’s style of life, or lifestyle. This lifestyle is composed of several aspects of an individual including their personality, romantic relationships, educational attainment and career choice among others. And, this author has attempted to highlight and showcase the valuable body of research in these areas, but note how the current body of research has yet to study and correlate these factors and inputs into how birth order can influence an individual in a professional team setting and furthermore the value that could be gained by both employees and managers to have greater awareness of these patterns and work to incorporate them into the regular management of individuals in a team setting to maximize both the employee’s fulfillment and value they can provide to their employer by acknowledging, embracing, and incorporating the concept of birth order and the long-term impact it has on an individual’s thoughts, beliefs and actions. While all business and organizations have clear missions and objectives, those missions and objectives are only fulfilled when individuals are brought together to coordinate, collaborate, and successfully complete specific tasks and duties. And, when working to maximize the likelihood and impact made by completing these specific tasks and duties, working to embrace the entire individual, including their birth order and subsequent influences of that birth order, only makes sense and is arguably an area that warrants additional research.
References


