

Schooler C. Birth order effects: not here, not now! *Psychol. Bull.* 78:161-75, 1972.
[National Institute of Mental Health, Bethesda, MD]

A review of published and unpublished birth order data reveals almost no reliable evidence for birth order effects among men living in the US in the mid-1960s, and only a marginal increase in such evidence when such restrictions in time, place, and sex are removed. [The *Social Sciences Citation Index*® (SSCI)® indicates that this paper has been cited in over 150 publications since 1972.]

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"At the National Institute of Mental Health in the early 1960s, I was involved in investigating the effects of social interaction on the functioning of chronic schizophrenics. One of the approaches I took was to modify social psychological experiments that had been done with normal subjects in ways that I hoped would explain the nature of schizophrenics' aversion to social interaction. An especially logical candidate for modification was Schachter's¹ experiment on affiliative behavior. Since his findings seemed to indicate that later-born individuals were less affiliative when anxious, it was a natural extension to test the possibility that schizophrenics are likely to be later-born.

"At about the same time, I worked with William Caudill on a study of symptom patterns in Japanese mental patients. Caudill predicted that Japa-

nese culture would interact with birth order to produce different symptom patterns. Several papers I wrote in the mid-1960s supplied confirmatory evidence for both strands of thought. However, subsequent more carefully controlled analyses on better samples did not replicate the earlier findings. In addition, the more I thought about it and the more I read, the more likely it began to appear that my original findings were due to the absence of controls for such relevant factors as social class and changing trends in family size. As my doubts mounted, I decided to search the literature thoroughly to see whether there were any reported birth order effects that would hold up to reasonable scrutiny. 'Birth order effects: not here, not now!' was the result.

"In that paper I concluded, 'The general lack of consistent findings...leaves real doubt as to whether the chance of positive results is worth the heavy investment needed to carry out any more definitive studies. On the other hand, I suspect that...investigators, including myself, will not be able to resist the temptation of taking a cheap bet on a long shot by collecting birth order data on their subjects as they pursue studies more central to their interests.' (p. 174) The fact that the article has been cited often enough to become a *Citation Classic*™ attests to the irresistibility of the temptation. Whether the bet has paid off is another matter. Zajonc and Markus received the 1975 AAAS Social Psychology Award for their confluence model of birth order effects on intellectual functioning.² On the other hand, in 1982 after extensively reviewing the evidence, Galbraith concluded, 'The contribution to date of the confluence models to understanding intellectual development (and the birth order puzzle) may best be described as 'Not here, not yet.'³ (p. 173)"

1. Schachter S. *The psychology of affiliation: experimental studies of the sources of gregariousness.* Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1959. 141 p.

2. Zajonc R B & Markus G B. Birth order and intellectual development. *Psychol. Rev.* 82:74-85, 1975.

3. Galbraith R C. Sibling spacing intelligence and the confluence model. *Develop. Psychol.* 18:151-73, 1982.