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Predicting Self-Esteem based on Perceived Parental
Favoritism and Birth Order

A thesis
presented to
the faculty of the Department of Psychology
East Tennessee State University

In partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree
Master of Arts in Clinical Psychology

by
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ABSTRACT

Predicting Self-Esteem based on the Perception of Parental Favoritism and Birth Order

by

Kristy Adkins

Parental favoritism is the preference or perception of preference of a parent for one child over another. The present study examines parental favoritism as well as the effects perceived favoritism has on one's self-esteem and if the effects are based on birth order. Participants were 325 undergraduate college students enrolled in introductory level classes. The mean age of the participants was 21.4 with 60% being women and 40% being men. Participants completed a parental favoritism questionnaire developed by the experimenter which assessed if the participant thought his/herself to be favored by a parent compared to a sibling. Self-esteem was assessed by the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Inventory. Results indicated no statistically significant main effects or interactions for gender, birth order, or perception of favoritism based on self-esteem. Results also indicated that women perceive favoritism slightly more often than men. Critiques of the present study and implications for future research are also discussed.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Parental favoritism is the preference or perception of preference of a parent for one child over another. Despite the fact that Freud and Adler often alluded to the concept of parental favoritism, there has not been a significant amount of research done on the topic. However, parental favoritism has been of interest in literature throughout history with stories of Cain and Abel in the Bible, Faust by Goethe, and of course the fairy tale of Cinderella. Even though parental favoritism has not generated mass amounts of scientific literature, theorists have suggested that the phenomenon can influence an individual's development. Adler once stated:

It is of utmost importance that neither the father nor the mother should show any favoritism among their children. The dangers of favoritism can hardly be too dramatically put. Almost every discouragement in childhood springs from the feeling that someone is preferred. . . . If one child develops especially well it is quite likely that he will receive most attention and favor. It is a pleasant situation for him, but the other children feel the difference and resent it. It is not possible for a human being to bear without disgust and irritation the position of being put on a lower level than someone else (1932, p. 144-145).

The present study examines parental favoritism as well as the effects perceived favoritism have on one's self-esteem. Is it possible that a person could have low self-esteem because his or her mother or father favored a sibling, or could one's birth order be related to the perception of favoritism? Questions such as these are what the present study seeks to answer. Also, hopefully,

the study will broaden the psychological literature on the topic of parental favoritism and the effects it may have on children.

Theoretical Background

Social Learning Theory

Social Learning Theory has its roots in the behavioral notion of human behavior as being determined by learning, particularly as shaped by reinforcement in the form of rewards or punishment (Nietzel, Berstein, & Milich, 1998). In regards to parental favoritism, the theory implies that the parental social rewards each child receives result in different types of responses and behavior patterns by each child. Thus, if a child is nonfavored and receives few parental rewards, that child will exhibit positive behaviors infrequently or will repeatedly exhibit the negative behaviors for which he or she is getting attention.

Self-efficacy is an integral part of Social Learning Theory. Perceived self-efficacy is defined as people's beliefs about their capabilities to produce designated levels of performance that exercise influence over events that affect their lives. Self-efficacy beliefs determine how people feel, think, motive themselves, and behave (Bandura, 1994).

Bandura (1994) states that a strong sense of efficacy enhances human accomplishment and personal well being in many ways. People with high assurance in their capabilities approach difficult tasks as challenges to be mastered rather than as threats to be avoided. They set themselves challenging goals and maintain strong commitment to them. They attribute failure to insufficient effort or deficient knowledge and skills that are acquirable. They approach threatening situations with assurance that they can exercise control over them. This outlook produces personal accomplishments, reduces stress, and lowers vulnerability to depression.

However, people who doubt their capabilities shy away from difficult tasks they view as personal threats. They tend to have low aspirations and weak commitment to the goals they choose to pursue. When faced with difficult tasks, they dwell on their personal deficiencies, on the obstacles they will encounter, and all kinds of adverse outcomes rather than concentrate on how to perform successfully. They slacken their efforts and give up quickly in the face of difficulties. It does not require much failure for them to lose faith in their capabilities, thus they fall easily to stress and depression (Bandura, 1994).

There are various sources for the development of self-efficacy with family being one of the primary sources (Bandura, 1994). The newborn has no sense of self upon arrival. Successful experiences in the exercise of personal control are central to the early development of social and cognitive competence. Parents who are responsive to their infants' behavior and who create opportunities by providing an enriched physical environment have infants who are accelerated in their social and cognitive development (Bandura). Because initial efficacy experiences are centered in the family it is important to see how perception of favoritism is important to the development of that efficacy. The favoritism may have the ability to produce a child who is outgoing, goal oriented, and has the capacity to try many new things. On the other hand, one could develop a low sense of efficacy and go through life without taking risks and challenges and living life afraid of trying new things.

Symbolic Interaction Theory

Closely related to social learning theory is the theory of symbolic interaction. The theory posits that a child's self-esteem is a function of the parent's reflected appraisal of the child's

inherent worth, which occurs during the course of parent-child interaction (Gecas, Calonico, & Thomas, 1974).

Theorists of symbolic interaction theory have assumed that supportive parental behavior, which has been defined as nurturance, warmth, approval, and other positive sentiments from the parent to the child, transmits to the child's information pertaining to his/her inherent worth (Gecas, 1972). The main effect of the information transmitted to the child is the confirmation in the child's mind that his/her parents accept him/her as a competent, effective, and worthwhile individual (Gecas, 1972). As a parent interacts with the child in supportive ways the child will feel as if he/she is a worthwhile individual with the capability of acting upon and reacting to his/her immediate family and environment.

Theory of Birth Order

Birth order is defined as the "sequential position of a person among his/her siblings in respect to the order of birth" (Adler, 1979). According to Adler (1956), each child is born into a predetermined class of birth order and is attributed different characteristics due to his/her position and the family environment in which he/she lives. Adler suggests these characteristics are learned and may be responsible for many behaviors throughout one's lifetime. These behaviors may also be due to how the child interprets his/her position.

The birth order of a child in a family produces problems specific to that birth order. The older child or first-born is usually looked upon as the leader of the group. The middle-born is often seen as the negotiator, and the last-born is seen as dependent and under his/her parents' wing (Kidwell, 1982). Research does suggest being raised in a certain ordinal position does

account for specific personalities and differing behaviors. Thus, how parents perceive these positions and interact with the children in these positions may also differ.

In the beginning of life, the first-born child receives all the attention from his/her parents. The first-born enjoys this role of the only child until the birth of another child. At this point attention must be shared. Adler (1956) states the first-born may take over a parenting role for the other child and step up to become a leader. However, from the beginning the middle-born must share the parents' attention. This may lead to the middle-born children perceiving favoritism toward the first-born children. The last-born or youngest child is said to face the difficulties of being too pampered and over-protected. Thus, the youngest child may never become fully independent because he/she was spoiled by his/her parents (Adler, 1979). This may make the first-born as well as the middle-born children perceive the last-born as receiving favoritism.

Empirical Studies

Perception of Parental Favoritism

Brody, Copeland, Sutton, Richardson, and Guyer (1998) explored parental favoritism in a sample of university students from four aspects. The authors looked at siblings' agreement on the existence and direction of favoritism in their families; disfavoritism, defined as negative or no interaction between parent and child, as well as favoritism; the relationship between favoritism, disfavoritism, and other individual characteristics, such as self-esteem, anxiety, shame, and anger; and how other aspects of family process might relate to the process of favoritism or disfavoritism.

Brody et al. (1998) predicted that siblings would agree on the presence or absence of family favoritism or disfavoritism as well as to whom it was attributed. It was also predicted that

siblings who were disfavored would have increased depression and lower self-esteem while those who were favored would have increased anxiety symptoms.

Favoritism was measured by asking questions such as, “How much did you feel that one child in your family was favored?,” with a 5-point Likert scale response choice. Sibling agreement was measured by the Sibling Inventory of Differential Experience (SIDE) and self-esteem was measured with the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES). The participants’ emotions were assessed with the Personal Feelings Questionnaire 2 (PFQ2) and the Emotion Story Task (EST).

Results of the Brody study indicate that 65% of the subjects said favoritism existed in their families and 24% said that disfavoritism existed in their families. Results also indicated that participants who were disfavored reported more intense fear and more frequent shame than those participants who reported that their siblings were disfavored or that no disfavoritism existed in their families. There was no difference in depression, self-esteem, and anxiety between disfavored and favored children, even though disfavoritism was associated with more negative family processes and more dysphoric affect like shame and guilt.

Harris and Howard (1984) investigated parental favoritism by studying 631 high school students. The study looked at the adolescent’s emotional life and his or her sense of identity. The results indicated that 36% of the boys and 54% of the girls from two-child families reported parental favoritism. Fifty-one percent of the boys and 63% of the girls from three-child families perceived favoritism. Thus, the perception of favoritism was more frequent in three-child families than in two-child or in four-or-more child families. Harris and Howard explained this by the greater likelihood of being the odd-man-out in a three-child family. The study also found girls more often than boys perceived parental favoritism – 56% versus 43%. Members of both

sexes who perceived favoritism to be a part of the family were found to have a more angry emotional life, be criticized more often for egocentric attitudes and behaviors, and as a future parent felt that they would be more nurturing.

Harris and Howard (1984) suggested that parental favoritism arises out of some personal need on the part of the parent that a particular child gratifies. Children who can gratify these various needs are probably more likely than other children in the family to become the objects of parental favoritism. Additionally, it appeared the perception of favoritism is associated with a more troubled emotional state in adolescence. Depressive and angry feelings as well as some identity confusion are more frequent in those who perceive favoritism than in those who do not perceive favoritism.

Self-Esteem

Consistent with favoritism studies, findings from research on self-esteem indicate that the parent-child relationship may be extremely influential in the development of self-esteem in children. Studies have shown that parental support and acceptance, warmth, and democratic child-rearing practices foster high self-esteem in children (Zervas & Sherman, 1990).

Zervas and Sherman (1990) investigated the relationship between self-esteem and the perception of parental favoritism more comprehensively than had been done in past research. To do so, the Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory (SEI), a favoritism questionnaire, and a demographic sheet were administered to 91 participants. Results of the study indicated that 62% of the participants perceived parental favoritism. Participants indicated that parents most often favored a child because of the child's perceived intelligence, positive behaviors (such as being dependable), creativity, and birth order. It was also indicated that more parents showed

favoritism in psychological ways (e.g., giving more attention and praise) than by providing material things. Self-esteem was also found to be significantly related to parental favoritism. The favored and no-favoritism subjects (meaning no favoritism in the home) had higher self-esteem than the nonfavored subjects did.

Feinberg, Neiderhiser, Simmens, Reiss, and Hetherington (2000), also examined differential parental treatment and self-esteem. The participants were 709 families representing 47 states with a wide range of income and education. Families were interviewed twice in their homes approximately 2 weeks apart. Each visit included administration of questionnaire forms and videotaped interactions of family members discussing areas already agreed upon. Each family completed the Sibling Inventory of Differential Experience (SIDE) and child self report on the Global Self-Worth subscale of the Harter Perceived Competence Scale for children represented self-esteem. The intended purpose of the study was to investigate if sibling comparison processes related to evaluation of parental treatment are similar to social comparison processes by examining whether self-worth, emotionality, and gender (which have been found to moderate social comparison) also moderate sibling comparison.

Results from the SIDE analyses suggested that global self-worth (self-esteem), and emotionality moderate adolescents' report of the degree of parental differential treatment. Siblings with low self-esteem tended to report greater levels of differential treatment in the family. However, Feinberg et al.(2000) reported that significant findings for siblings low in self-esteem also suggested that this was the group who perceived greater parental affection directed toward themselves rather than their siblings.

Birth Order

Birth order has also been associated with the perception of parental favoritism. Toman (1976) stated that parents tend to have high expectations for the older child and set the oldest up as an example for younger children. Thus, the parents are more tolerant of the younger child. Toman also stated that middle siblings tend to feel somewhat neglected and less important than their older and younger siblings. Kidwell published findings in 1982 that stated that middle-born children hold distinctively different attitudes than their siblings concerning self and family roles. Middle-borns reported feeling cheated of parental attention and supportiveness as well as possessing low self-esteem and a shaky sense of identity.

A study by Chalfant (1994) looked at birth order, number of siblings, perception of favoritism, and a measurement of feelings about parents' warmth and acceptance. Two different samples were used, the first sample consisted of college students under 25 years of age, the second sample consisted of volunteers aged 25 years and older. Each participant received a questionnaire asking him/her to rate his/her feelings about his/her parents' warmth and acceptance. The subjects also indicated his or her birth order and the amount of perceived favoritism in his or her family on the questionnaire. Results of the Chalfant study indicated 41% of the subjects in the combined samples reported that they were favored by one or both parents with more women than men reporting favoritism (44% and 37% respectively). In the over-25 age group 33% of first-borns, 36% of middle-borns, and 38% of last-borns reported favoritism. In the under-25 age group, 45% of first-borns, 50% of middle-borns, and 50% of last-borns reported favoritism. Results also indicate that when favoritism was reported it was more often from the opposite-sex parent meaning father and daughter or mother and son. Chalfant proposed that parents might tend to have higher expectations for their same sex children. The restrictions

and demands these expectations place on the children may be seen as less perception of favoritism from that parent.

Kiracofe and Kiracofe (1990) conducted a study looking at child-perceived parental favoritism and how that perception correlated with birth order. The subjects of this study were 495 clients who had been seen in a counseling practice over a 15-year period. The clients ranged in age from 14 to 66. Birth order as well as subjects' perception of favoritism in their family was assessed using a Life-Style Inventory. In relation to birth order a client would be in 1 of 5 categories: only child, first child, second child, middle child, and youngest child. Of the subjects reporting themselves to be a favorite of one or both of their parents, results indicated the following: second children (86%), only children (84%), oldest children (73%), middle children (67%), and youngest children (62%). Results of this particular study also indicated favoritism was most often attributed to the father: 38% of the cases as opposed to 30% for the mother. Twenty-six percent reported that favoritism was not apparent in the family and 7 percent considered themselves the favorite of both parents.

Statement of the Problem

The present study expands the research done on parental favoritism by investigating not only parental favoritism but also self-esteem and birth order as well. Taking into consideration previous literature and research several hypotheses will be tested. Hypotheses for Design A: 1) There will be a gender difference in self-esteem. 2) The last-born child will have higher self-esteem than the first-born or middle-born children. 3) In families where there is perception of parental favoritism, the first-born child will be the object of greater parental favoritism, followed by the last-born, and then the middle-born. Hypotheses for Design B: 1) Females will perceive

more parental favoritism than males across all birth orders. 2) The last-born child will receive more parental favoritism than the first-born or middle-born children.

CHAPTER 2

METHODS

Participants

Participants were 325 college students (male = 131, female = 194) enrolled in introductory level psychology courses at a southeastern university. The mean age of the participants was 21 with a range of 18 years of age to 62 years of age. Eighty-eight percent of the sample was Caucasian, 7.7% African American, .3% Asian, and 1.5 % of the sample was Hispanic American. The participants voluntarily participated in the study and received extra course credit for doing so which is consistent with the Department of Psychology procedures on use of undergraduate students as Research Participants.

Measures

Perception of Favoritism

A questionnaire developed by the experimenter based on information from previous research (Brody et al., 1998; Chalfant, 1994), was used to assess the perception of favoritism. This questionnaire was used to determine the participant's age, gender, and race as well as all of the participant's siblings. The perception of favoritism questionnaire also assessed if the participant perceived his/her mother or father as favoring one child over another, whether the participant or his/her sibling was favored, or if the participant perceived no favoritism and all of the children were treated equally. A test-retest pilot study indicated a reliability of 0.75 for the measure (see Appendix A).

Self-esteem

The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES) was used to measure participants' self-esteem. The RSES is a widely used self-esteem measure created by Rosenberg in 1979. The scale consists of 10 items, each rated on a 4-point scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Participants receive a score ranging from 0-30 depending on his/her answer for each question and then obtain a total score ranging from 0-30, with 30 indicating the highest possible score. A test-retest reliability of 0.85 has been reported for this measure (Rosenberg, 1979). Validity has been supported by evidence that those with low self-esteem scores appear depressed to others, report feelings of discouragement and unhappiness, and feel others have little respect for them. A high degree of convergent validity was reported when the RSES was correlated with other measures of self-esteem (Rosenberg) (see Appendix B).

Procedure

Following Institutional Review Board approval, participants were verbally informed that they were participating in a study. They were told they did not have to answer anything they felt uncomfortable answering and they were free to stop participating in the study if they felt necessary to do so at anytime. Participants were also informed that their answers will be kept completely confidential.

The RSES and parental favoritism questionnaires were handed out simultaneously. Participants were asked to complete both questionnaires. After approximately 20 minutes the experimenter gathered the questionnaires. Each participant then received a short debriefing of the study and a way to contact the experimenter should he/she have any further questions.

Research Design

A 2 x 7 Between Subjects Factorial Design was used to compute the analysis. This will be referred to as Design A. Gender is the first independent variable that is divided into two groups, women and men. The second independent variable is birth order of the participant combined with the perception of favoritism (BOSELF). BOSELF is divided into seven groups, 1) firstfav, 2) midfav, 3) lastfav, 4) firstnonfav, 5) midnonfav, 6) lastnonfav, 7) nofav. Appendix C will further explain the seven groups. The dependent variable was self-esteem.

As a separate non-parametric design (Design B) two chi-square analyses were computed. One chi-square assessed gender of the participant and the perception of favoritism. The second chi-square assessed birth order and the perception of favoritism.

CHAPTER 3

RESULTS

A 2 x 7 Univariate Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted for the dependent variable self-esteem. There were no statistically significant main effects for the gender variable, $F(1, 312) = .96, p > .05$. This indicates men's self-esteem ($M = 23.04, SD = 2.24$) is statistically equal to women's self-esteem ($M = 23.27, SD = 2.34$). Therefore, Hypothesis 1 for Design A which stated there would be a gender difference on self-esteem was not supported (see Table 1).

Hypothesis 2 stated the last-born child would have higher self-esteem than the first-born or middle-born children. However, there were no statistically significant differences between any of the birth order groups when assessing self-esteem $F(6, 312) = 1.52, p > .05$ (see Tables 1 and 2).

Hypothesis 3 stated that in families where there is perception of parental favoritism the first-born child will be the object of greater parental favoritism, followed by the last-born, and then the middle-born child. This hypothesis was not supported $F(6, 312) = 1.52, p > .05$ (see Tables 1 and 2).

Chi-square analyses were conducted to assess gender of the participant and the perception of favoritism as well as birth order and the perception of favoritism. Results indicated that female middle-born children perceived themselves as favored by a parent much less than expected (3.4, 39.8), $\chi^2 = 33.3 (1) p < .05$. Female youngest children perceived themselves to be favored by a parent much more than was expected (36.0, 20.0), $\chi^2 = 12.8 (1) p < .05$. Women were also found to be more likely than men to perceive a younger sibling as being favored by a parent $\chi^2 = 3.79 (1) p < .05$.

Thus, Hypothesis 1 for Design B which stated women would perceive more parental favoritism than men across all birth orders was partially supported. Hypothesis 2 for Design B stated that the last-born child would receive more parental favoritism than the oldest or middle-born children was also not confirmed.

Table 1

Analysis of Variance for Self-Esteem

Source		Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F
Intercept	Hypothesis	82203.57	1	82203.57	12025.97
	Error	87.41	12.79	6.84	
GENDER	Hypothesis	5.04	1	5.04	.96
	Error	1632.87	312	5.23	
BOSELF	Hypothesis	47.78	6	7.96	1.52
	Error	1632.87	312	5.23	

Table 2

RSES Mean and Standard Deviation Scores

GENDER	BOSELF	Mean	SD	N
Women	firstfav	23.41	2.46	32
	midfav	23.67	1.66	16
	youngfav	23.44	2.36	25
	firstnonfav	21.81	2.43	16
	midnonfav	23.23	2.95	14
	youngnonfav	23.67	1.21	6
	nofav	23.34	2.34	82
	Total	23.27	2.34	191
Men	firstfav	24.26	1.93	18
	midfav	22.89	2.47	9
	youngfav	22.39	2.17	18
	firstnonfav	22.57	2.88	7
	midnonfav	21.00		1
	youngnonfav	22.50	1.91	4
	nofav	23.01	2.20	72
	Total	23.04	2.24	129
Total	firstfav	23.72	2.30	50
	midfav	23.40	1.98	25
	youngfav	23.00	2.32	43
	firstnonfav	22.04	2.53	23
	midnonfav	23.13	2.90	15
	youngnonfav	23.20	1.55	10
	nofav	23.19	2.25	154
	Total	23.18	2.30	320

CHAPTER 4

DISCUSSION

Self-Esteem

Several hypotheses were developed concerning self-esteem. In today's society men are often seen as confident with women often being seen as inferior in that aspect. Women are identified with having lower self-esteem because of comments such as "I'm too fat," or because of the diverse measures available to "improve" her. For reasons such as these, hypotheses one stated there would be a gender difference on self-esteem. The expected outcome was that either men or women would have higher self-esteem but that the two groups would not be equal. However, this was not confirmed by the present study. It was found that men and women in fact had statistically equal levels of self-esteem. There are various explanations for these findings. For instance, in today's world women may be seeing more confidence and self-esteem emerge as more and more opportunities emerge. Women are becoming more educated and many more are leading professional lives. This may be influencing how women perceive themselves. Another explanation may be that men and women do remain equal on self-esteem levels but women are more apt to voice issues concerning self-esteem than men. One may be more likely to hear self-esteem concerns from women, whereas men may actually have the same or similar concerns but direct those concerns inward as opposed to voicing them. Thus, people are lead to believe women are more likely to suffer from lower self-esteem than men. However, as stated, this was not supported by the present study.

Theorists such as Adler (1956), suggest that birth order affects many aspects of one's life including his/her self-esteem. Results by Kidwell (1982), discussed earlier, indicated that last-born children possessed lower self-esteem than first or middle-born children. Hypothesis two which stated last-born children would have higher self-esteem than first-born or middle-born children complimented Adler as well as Toman. However, results of the present study were contradictory. There were no significant differences between any of the birth order groups when assessing self-esteem. Middle-born children reported to have just as high levels of self-esteem as did first or last-born children. The present study contradicts the odd man out theory when there are three or more children in a family. In regard to self-esteem all children whether they are first, middle, or last develop equally.

Explanations for these results may refer back to symbolic interaction theory which was mentioned earlier. The theory states that a child's self-esteem is a function of the parent's reflected appraisal of the child's inherent worth, which occurs during parent-child interaction. Therefore, if the parent-child interaction is equal among all children within a family, the results would indicate the children's self-esteem would be equal as well.

Also as stated earlier, according to Adler (1956), children are attached roles depending on birth order. The oldest or first-born child is seen as the leader. The middle children are often the negotiators, and the youngest child is often labeled the baby of the family. Although, each of the roles is different and carries with it varying expectations and problems, it is possible that because every position is given a specific role, no matter what it may be, the end result is equal self-esteem among all birth orders. For instance, it does not matter if a child is the negotiator or the baby, he/she is still involved and playing a specific part. Everyone has a role or part, thus resulting in equal levels of self-esteem.

Parental Favoritism

It was also predicted that in families where there was perception of favoritism there would be a difference among birth orders. The present study hypothesized that the first-born child would be the object of greater parental favoritism, followed by the last-born, and then the middle-born. This hypothesis was also complementary to Adler (1979) who indicated that because of the predetermined roles each child plays, one child may see his/her sibling as being favored by one or both parents. Results of the present study did not agree with this hypothesis. There were no differences among birth orders and parental favoritism. If there was the perception of favoritism, it was not directed toward one particular birth order.

A simple explanation for these results is that parents are not treating their children differently. If one child in a family receives supportive parental behavior, the other children in the family do as well. This could also be indicative that negative consequences are equal within a family. One child does not receive more negative consequences while one receives more positive consequences. Also, even though a parent may identify more with the characteristics of one child versus another, he/she still does not show favoritism for that child.

It was found that in certain situations females did perceive more parental favoritism than males. If the female was the youngest child in the family she perceived more parental favoritism toward herself than expected. Females also indicated as perceiving a younger sibling as receiving more parental favoritism than males, but this result only occurred when assessing younger siblings. Those results are supportive of the Harris and Howard (1984) study which found that girls more often than boys perceived parental favoritism. However, that particular study looked at high school students whereas the present study assessed college students. These results may revert to the idea as stated earlier that the youngest child is often looked at as

pampered or overprotected. This overprotection may be seen as favoritism to females but not to males.

The fact that the present study found middle-born females to indicate lower levels of perceived favoritism than expected is complimentary to the Kidwell (1982) findings that middle-born children reported feeling cheated of parental attention. There are many theories on middle-born children and the amount of attention he/she receives. This may be due largely to self-fulfilling prophecy. If the middle child is always ridiculed or labeled as simply the middle child and always compared to the youngest and oldest child, he/she may begin to take on that roll. Also, as indicated by Adler (1956), the middle-born child comes into the world having to share his/her parents' attention. Unlike the first-born the middle-born is never the sole owner of attention. The youngest child also never has sole attention but is seen or labeled as the "baby" which in itself carries attention.

However, when looking at gender and the perception of favoritism males did not significantly perceive more parental favoritism than females in any circumstances. This finding could be indicative of how males and females view many situations differently. Where a female may see a parent as favoring a child a male may see the parent as only interacting with that child. Also, where females may see a younger sibling as being favored, males may see that younger sibling as needing protection by either himself or a parent and simply being protected.

Critique of Present Study

Several problems may have impacted the present study. For instance, the participants were entirely college students enrolled in psychology courses. This indicates that all of the participants were higher functioning individuals. All of the participants were enrolled in college

which could have had an impact on the results. If done in a different population, the results on self-esteem may have been different or may have indicated a difference between genders on self-esteem. The predominant amount of participants were female, 59.7% and Caucasian 88.0%. Thus, a diverse proportion of the population was not adequately represented. Results may have differed if only one gender had participated in the study or if there had been more equal numbers of males and females and more ethnic representation across groups.

An additional problem which may have had bearing on the results of this study is the type of survey used to assess parental favoritism. The parental favoritism questionnaire was developed by the experimenter based on previous research (Brody et al., 1998; Chalfant, 1994). Some confusion on the part of the participants concerning the survey may have altered results.

Implications for Future Research

It would be interesting to see the present study replicated to see if complementary results would be found. Because this study was not a replication of previous research there is no exact data to compare the results to. A replication of the study would be interesting to determine the actual limitations or confounds.

Concerning the parental favoritism survey used, future studies may want to expand on the present study's questionnaire. If more information were obtained from the participant concerning parental favoritism, results may have varied. Also, more extensive analysis may have been conducted if more information was gathered concerning parental favoritism. This would allow the researcher to better understand the participant.

Future researchers may also want to consider examining siblings in a family. The present study determined if a participant had siblings and how that particular person felt concerning

favoritism within the family. It would be interesting to see if siblings agreed on favoritism, as indicated in the Brody et al. (1998) study, and then look at each sibling's RSES scores. Results may or may not indicate sibling agreement on parental favoritism and would also indicate self-esteem scores.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

PARENTAL FAVORITISM QUESTIONNAIRE

PLEASE ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS: YOU MUST BE 18 YEARS OF AGE OR OLDER TO FILL OUT THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONNAIRE

AGE: _____

GENDER: _____

RACE: _____

LIST ALL THE CHILDREN IN YOUR FAMILY INCLUDING YOURSELF IN ORDER OF BIRTH. INDICATE IF A CHILD WAS MOTHER'S FAVORITE, FATHER'S FAVORITE, OR IF THERE WAS NO FAVORITISM MEANING CHILDREN WERE TREATED EQUALLY.

GENDER OF
CHILD -
INDICATE
SELF

MOTHER'S FAVORITE

FATHER'S FAVORITE

NO FAVORITISM; ALL CHILDREN TREATED EQUALLY _____

APPENDIX B

ROSENBERG SELF-ESTEEM SCALE (RSES)

BELOW IS A LIST OF STATEMENTS DEALING WITH YOUR GENERAL FEELINGS ABOUT YOURSELF. IF YOU **STRONGLY AGREE**, CIRCLE **SA**. IF YOU **AGREE** WITH THE STATEMENT, CIRCLE **A**. IF YOU **DISAGREE**, CIRCLE **D**. IF YOU **STRONGLY DISAGREE**, CIRCLE **SD**. YOU MUST BE 18 YEARS OF AGE OR OLDER TO FILL OUT THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONNAIRE.

	1. STRONGLY AGREE	2. AGREE	3. DISAGREE	4. STRONGLY DISAGREE
1. I feel that I'm a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others.	SA	A	D	SD
2. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.	SA	A	D	SD
3. All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.	SA	A	D	SD
4. I am able to do things as well as most other people.	SA	A	D	SD
5. I feel I do not have much to be proud of.	SA	A	D	SD
6. I take a positive attitude toward myself.	SA	A	D	SD
7. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.	SA	A	D	SD
8. I wish I could have more respect for myself.	SA	A	D	SD
9. I certainly feel useless at times.	SA	A	D	SD
10. At times I think I am no good at all.	SA	A	D	SD

APPENDIX C

Explanation of BOSELF Variables

- Firstfav = Participant was the oldest/first child who was favored by either mother or father
- Midfav = Participant was a middle child who was favored by either mother or father
- Youngfav = Participant was the youngest child who was favored by either mother or father
- Firstnonfav = Participant was the oldest/first child who was not favored by either mother or father
- Midnonfav = Participant was a middle child who was not favored by either mother or father
- Youngnonfav = Participant was the youngest child who was not favored by either mother or father
- Nofav = There was no perception of either mother or father favoring the participant or his/her siblings, all children were treated equally

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