Demographic Variables Related To The Fear Of Success

Susan Stevens
Carroll College, Helena, MT

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholars.carroll.edu/psychology_theses
Part of the Psychology Commons

Recommended Citation
https://scholars.carroll.edu/psychology_theses/57

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Psychology at Carroll Scholars. It has been accepted for inclusion in Psychology Undergraduate Theses by an authorized administrator of Carroll Scholars. For more information, please contact tkratz@carroll.edu.
CARROLL COLLEGE

DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES RELATED TO THE FEAR OF SUCCESS

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE DIVISION OF THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY

BY

SUSAN ANNE STEVENS

HELENA, MONTANA
MARCH 1988
This thesis for honors recognition has been approved for the Department of Psychology.

Thomas S. Hamilton 3/28/88
Director Date

O. B. Novemew 11
Reader Date

Robert E. Jostart 3-28-88
Reader Date
ABSTRACT: Fear of success has been defined as the motive to avoid success in situations wherein an individual is capable of accomplishment but perceives the potential costs of such success as outweighing the potential gains. Some research has focused on expectations associated with social roles as being functional in producing the fear of success (i.e. sex, age and race in certain social matrices). The purpose of this experiment was to study whether or not there was a relationship between birth order and fear of success. One hundred and fifty-seven undergraduate college students were selected according to birth order: youngest-child, middle-child, and oldest-child. The Fear of Success Scale (FOSS) designed by Zuckerman and Allison (1976) was administered to each subject.

The data analysis indicated an inverse trend with youngest-child subjects scoring higher and oldest-child subjects scoring lower on the FOSS. However, these differences were not statistically significant. These results were discussed in view of factors that may impede one from demonstrating his/her ability.
Demographic Variables Related To The Fear Of Success

The rationale for this experiment was to examine the Theory of Boundary Maintenance as described by Tresemer (1977). The major concept behind this theory was role. Social roles were defined as a set of expectations produced by one's position in a network of social relationships. According to this definition people perceive themselves in relation to their status in social contexts, and the socially prescribed rights and obligations of that status affects how they behave (Veroff and Feld, 1970). According to Tresemer's Boundary Maintenance theory, certain boundaries accompany social roles and people are motivated to stay within the boundaries prescribed by their social roles in a given context.

A person may concurrently hold various roles within the social system. For example, a person may assume the various roles of parent, sibling, employee, spouse, and female. The dominant role at any given time will be the determinant for appropriate behavior. When role conflicts exist one is motivated to use various methods to overcome contradictions between behavior and socially prescribed expectations. One method for overcoming such contradictions has been described as the fear of success on the motive to avoid success in situations wherein the person is capable of accomplishment, but perceives the potential costs of success as outweighing the potential gains (Tresemer, 1977).

Commitment to role conformity is learned early
in life by a means of various processes. Role demands have power over individuals because they are linked with: (1) fundamental affiliative rewards (Blau, 1964), (2) the main values and norms of society (Eisenstadt, 1954), (3) the achievement of a sense of self with "inner continuity and sameness" (Erikson's definition of "identity"), and (4) one's sense of reality (Berger and Luckerman, 1966). Deviance from socially prescribed expectations associated with various roles is avoided through conformity. A person is faced with negative sanctions deployed by social systems for nonconformity and is motivated to maintain the equilibrium of the social matrix.

Legal and informal systems select and label persons as deviant in order to define the normative boundaries of society (K. Erickson, 1966; Currie, 1968; Douglas, 1966). Thus, in some contexts individuals are more motivated to avoid potential costs of a successful act than to seek potential gains. It is within these contexts that a fear of success develops.

While normative functions are mediated by subtle knowledge as to what behaviors are expected, comparative functions also result from repeated contacts with one's reference group.

Historically, theorists have emphasized the importance of "generalized others," and "looking-glass self" as having been involved in how one compared one's self with his/her reference group. Generalized other is Mead's (1934) term for the composite expectations of all the
other role players with whom one interacts. Being aware of the expectations of the generalized other is equivalent to having learned the norms and values of the culture. Cooley (1922) described the looking-glass self as the process of learning to view one's self as one thinks others view him or her. Leon Festinger (Festinger, 1957, 1964; Brehm and Cohen, 1962) further postulated the influence of cognitive dissonance on the comparison of one's self with one's reference group. Festinger believed that one has a "need to know" about one's self. Often a behavior or attitude has no external objective measurement and one has a desire to seek out similar others in order to compare oneself with them. But in order to remain similar there is a pressure to conform to the opinions and behaviors of the reference group as discerned by the person (Festinger, 1954). When one's behavior is not consistent with the socially prescribed norms of the reference group, he/she experiences dissonance and is motivated to reduce this state by conformity (support for Festinger's hypothesis was found in the reviews of this literature).

In critique of Festinger's theory, Nissen (1954) felt that the "need to know" did not account fully for conformity. He identified "gregariousness, as a drive to be part of and identify with the group" (Tresemer, 1977), as being an operative factor. Later research emphasized both self-perception and the perception of the "generalized other" as being an important influence
on conformity (e.g., Asch, 1956; Latane, 1966; Bem; 1972).

Veroff and Feld (1970) expressed these statements in the principle of congruity. Basically stated, the behavior or opinions which breach the boundaries of one's reference group are role-incongruent because the socially prescribed role and the enactment contradict each other. Thus, in cases of conflict one is motivated to return to role-congruence.

Research has confirmed that a drive for self-evaluation leads to group joining and conformity (e.g., Schachter, 1959; Rasmussen and Zander, 1954). Nonconformity often leads to a sense of failure, a discrepancy between ones behavior and an internalized standard for behavior. Research on "fear of success" documents this phenomenon in which public success is also a private failure because of the conflict between the socially prescribed and the personally enacted role. Tresemer (1977) gave an example of this phenomenon in the case of a fifth grade girl whose teacher told her mother that her daughter's superior performance warranted skipping a grade or, better, attending a private special school. The young girl responded,

Mother, if I'm smarter, I don't want anybody to know it. I'm going to stay with my own grade. I'm going to go to the same school that I go to. I'm going to live here the rest of my life and I'm going to be with these people, and I don't want them to think I am one whit different or better than they, (Options in Education, 1976, Part 4, p.5)

Other theoretical approaches which demonstrate success avoidance in order to maintain boundaries include Homan's (1961) two forms of fundamental societal norms
of distributive justice. Those forms included equity and equality. In both forms there are similar responses to inappropriate success. Experiments performed regarding the equity theory (e.g., Jacques, 1961; Adams and Rosenbaum, 1962; Adams, 1963) have shown that those who have received more than they deserved felt distressed, and acted to reduce rewards to a perceived equitable level. Evidence has shown that within more cohesive groups the sharing of rewards was preferred as the solution to equality, which in turn led to more homogenization of behavior. Analogous to Homan's studies of equality and equity were the larger social forces which restrained individual potential by extreme equalitarianism and heredity stratification within existing glasses (Gardner, 1961; Burt, 1975). The person who exceeded the boundaries of the system attempted to reduce the stress through self-deprivation, self-punishment (Walster, 1973), self-deprecation, ingratiation (Blau, 1964), self-criticism (Aronfreed, 1964), self-accusation (Fromm, 1942), or "tactical conformity" (Jones and Gerard, 1967).

Irwin Katz (12964) gave an example of "social threat" for black children that exemplified the boundary-maintenance conception of success avoidance. He stated that the social threat to black children impaired their academic performance by causing them to abandon efforts to excel, to prevent further prejudice from whites. When academic success was expected to cause white reprisals, then the motive to achieve created anxiety, and thus defensive
avoidance to achieve was learned. Katz further stated that the key was the attribution of "coercive power" to the strong social environment. The conflict between personal success and personal failure produces success-avoidant behavior. In Katz's conception, inappropriate high performance leads to social threats, which in turn causes a threat to the moral basis of social order (R.D. Laing, 1970). Thus, reaction to transgression within social boundaries are social and personal.

Thoman (1957) described another research phenomenon, that of disconfirmed expectancies. Disconfirmed expectancies were defined as any unexpected success. For example, if one was expecting a hard history test but upon taking the test found it to be easy, an unexpected success resulted. His research showed that disconfirmed expectancies were found to be generally unpleasant. Unexpected success was experienced as being unpleasant and led to changing already correct answers on a test or "faking bad" to reduce dissonance (Aronson and Carlsmith, 1962; Carlsmith and Aronson, 1963).

Aronson and Carlsmith (1962) further showed that subjects who experienced unexpected success avoided further success and/or "sought to fail." Self-esteem was found to be the main variable producing this phenomenon (Silverman, 1964; Deutsch and Solomon, 1959). Maracek and Mettee (1972) found that when people's success was inconsistent (i.e., subjects with low self-esteem), they would reject or reduce success if they were aware of their low self-
assessment and the success was self-determined. Therefore, low self-esteem, the degree of reliability experienced concerning the information about one's previous level of performance and the degree of responsibility felt for the disagreeing successful event were found to be critical in producing this phenomenon (Tresemer, 1977).

Research has suggested that these effects are greater for high achievers because their performance level is more easily inhibited than bolstered. Festinger (1954) suggested that high achievers face a "unidirected drive upward" in their abilities, plus pressures to conform. Thus, the conflict between behavioral tendencies and social norms was greater for high performers. According to this theory high achievers are more alert to their own differences from others, and are more exposed to anxieties and external social pressures for deviance from social norms. In connection with this evidence it has been cited that gifted children often performed far below their capacity, showed greater behavioral maladjustments by withdrawal, and generally doubted their intelligence despite evidence to the contrary (Lewis, 1943; Zorbaugh, 1951). In addition, Horner (1968) did a study to explain why women had not performed like men in two previous decades of achievement-motivation studies, Horner hypothesized that women had a motive to avoid success in intellectual competence. She believed that women viewed femininity and achievement as two desirable but mutually exclusive ends, and that women were more likely than men to develop this motive.
Horner's hypothesis was confirmed in that women were found to show higher Fear of Success (FOS) imagery than males (Horner, 1968).

A review of the literature reveals a number of studies that focus on the relationship between social-psychological variables and the fear of success. For example, Tresemer (1974) hypothesized that gender differences are related to the fear of success. According to this hypothesis females have lower expectancies for success than males and are less likely to attribute their successes to their own efforts than are males. The purpose of this study is to provide an in-depth examination of the relationship between one's birth order (sex and rank in the family constellation) and the fear of success. According to the Boundary Maintenance theory described above it seems feasible that specific social roles with associated behavioral prescriptions are defined by one's familial position. It also seems feasible then that one's position in familial order may be related to the fear of success. Specifically, younger born children may learn commitment to a social role wherein they are more motivated to avoid the potential costs of personal success than they are to seek the personal gain. Potential costs of success may be subtle negative sanctions deployed within the family system and thus the younger sibling may acquire the motivation to maintain social equilibrium by avoiding success. The remainder of this paper examines this issue.

The birth order or sibling status of a family consists
of brothers and sisters in one's own nuclear family and is a nonvoluntary relationship. Alfred Adler (1962) hypothesized that a relationship existed between birth order and personality development. He felt that the position of children within the family constellation introduced specific problems to each child; those experiences were associated with birth order and resulted in a characteristic personality regarding ordinal birth positions.

Welch (1977), Stenger (1975), and Olson (1973) have done extensive reviews on the literature and revealed four major categories of sibling order: (1) first-born, (2) middle-born, (3) youngest-born and (4) only. Within each of these categories there are general descriptions and trends in relation to birth order and personality characteristics. The following is a synopsis of these descriptions.

Children who are born first within the family constellation occupy unique positions concerning other family members. Generally, parents have more time and devote more attention to children in this position in comparison to children in other positions. Also, parents are more cautious, indulgent, and protective. Children in this position do not have to compete with older siblings and, until the family expands, have only adult models and standards of conduct to copy. Children in this position are more apt to receive scores at the upper ends on intelligence tests, tend to be highly motivated, achieve positions
of distinction and possess a high need for achievement. These children tend to be responsible and production-minded in achieving adult expectations. These children are conservative, conscientious, and cooperative with others in order to maintain their special position with their parents after the family expands. Other characteristics that are found in this position include a higher vulnerability to stress, dependence upon approval from others, task oriented and assertive. These children are found more in positions of authority and leadership. For example, they are over-represented in Congress, and as U.S. presidents, and are most likely to win elections. Those in this position believe in the superior importance of their views, have strict values, are easily influenced by those in authority, and are capable of cognition in a general way. They also show fears of losing their position status and have a need to be number one (Encyclopedia of Psychology, 1984).

Children born into the family constellation second assume the middle child position. Children in this position do not experience the uniqueness or privileges that are associated with the first-born position. They tend to work harder and compete to "take over" the first-born's position. In this position children tend to avoid competition in areas in which first-borns have achieved success. Adler (1962) termed this behavior the "teeter-totter principle." Children often feel less competent in comparison to those in first-born position and try to achieve
prominence in other areas. Children in this position tend to be sensitive to injustices, unfairness, and feelings of being wronged. These children lean toward artistic abilities, tend to be outgoing and accepting of others in general. They often take the role of being the diplomat, work well with team members, relate well to those older or younger than themselves, and maintain worthwhile relationships. In this position children show extreme trustfulness, respect the opinions of others, and generally focuses on others. This position of children is not authority minded. In general, children in this position are affective, tentative, and seek care-giver roles (Encyclopedia of Psychology, 1984).

Although those in the first-born position maintain a unique position within the family constellation, so do those who are born last. Children in the last position do not fear being pursued and/or of losing their position within the family. Parents are frequently indulgent upon this group of children; and those in this position tend to be pampered by other family members. The special care given to those in this position often results in dependent-impulsive personalities. They tend to be spoiled, which results in them having a sense of security and little feeling for competition. Members of this group work at being supported by others in their actions and tend to be the most powerful within the family constellation. In order to maintain their "power," those in this position often act out in aggressive ways, such as crying, or
resorting to more passive ways such as shyness, cuteness, or inadequacy. They learn to control others by modeling the behaviors of their brothers and sisters and taking advantage of their role in the family. In general, the youngest members of the family show the lighter side of their personality and tend to be fun-loving. They are often found to be charming and gentle, make good friends, and are popular. In relation to other siblings, they hold the highest self-esteem. They are humor lovers, creative, and tend to be humanitarians. In large families, they have the highest need to achieve and tend to be the best-adjusted. Yet, they are the most prone to failure in school, alcoholism, and have the lowest I.Q's (Encyclopedia of Psychology, 1984).

The last group, that of the only-child, receives the privileges of both the youngest and oldest role positions within the family. These children never have to worry about being pursued or having their position removed from them. Competing for attention is not a concern for members of this group; they have only adult behaviors and standards to copy. As in the youngest-child group, they also tend to be spoiled by parents. Thus, they are dependent upon others or attempt to meet and achieve adult competency. They have trouble maintaining close relationships, tend to lead lives as loners, and express feelings of being lonely. They also possess the lowest need for affiliation, and appear to be egotistic. Yet they are the easiest to please, and are the most autonomous
and show the least fear of failure. They are successful in school and possess the second highest (oldest children being first) I.Q's and need for achievement.

Specific research studies have shown that birth order has had some impact on personality development when other variables such as social class, sex of siblings, and the size of the family were held constant. The research indicated that first-born children are indeed more adult-oriented, more achievement-oriented, more conscientious and prone to quilt feelings, more conforming to social pressures, and more concerned with being cooperative and responsible (Altus, 1967; Fenton, 1928; Kagen and Moss, 1962; Rosenberg, Goldman, and Sutton-Smith, 1969; Sears, Maccoby, and Levin, 1957).

Specific studies on achievement motivation were conducted by Elder (1962). In Elder's studies, a large sample of high school students were given five questionnaires that measured academic motivation. The studies showed a trend that declined in academic motivation with family size within social classes, though the decrease was not regular. Elder then restricted the sample to Protestant, high-achieving, 10th-12th graders. A consistent and significant decrease of college expectations with growing family size was apparent when sex and social class were controlled for.

Research has supported the claims that middle-born children tend to feel unloved, imposed upon, often turned to endeavors in which they could excel, are less anxious
and are easy going. They are also the most likely to attempt new tasks, activities, and behaviors. For example, Schachter (1959) performed a classical experiment in which he announced to 62 female psychology students that they would or would not be delivered a painful electric shock. Arousal of anxiety was measured with two self-rating scales. Under the pain condition, first-borns indicated a higher level of anxiety than later-borns and were more willing to withdraw from the experiment.

Research has supported the hypothesis that last-borns do resemble first-borns in that they tend to be spoiled and receive a lot of parental attention. They tend to remain "babyish," are less likely to foster feelings of independence and are easily discouraged with achievements and/or lack of achievement. They are more susceptible to high anxiety and personal problems relating to their constant need to negotiate, accommodate, and tolerate. They also show very few opportunities for taking over responsibilities (Encyclopedia of Psychology, 1984).

Deutsch (1975), and McGurk and Lewis (1972), found that only children tended to be the most dependent and achievement oriented. Children in this group viewed themselves as being misunderstood and treated unfairly. They preferred the company of adults, had trouble maintaining relationships with peers, and tended to be immature. They were found to be highly motivated, set higher expectations for themselves, followed rules, and expressed a need for more social contacts and approval. They exhibited
more fear, sensitivity to pain, and were less able to cope with anxiety in comparison to other birth-order groups. They were found to be more ambiguous in relation to their own roles. They also showed signs of being conservative and cautious.

Concerning the birth-order hypothesis, several problems arise, which leads to many disputed claims against the theory in general (Ernst and Angst, 1983). Ernst and Anst (1983) did a survey of the literature and have found several fallacies involved in the methodological techniques concerning birth-order studies. They listed the major fallacies as being: (1) failure to consider family size, (2) failure to consider the age spacing of the siblings, (3) failure to recognize that parental attitudes affects siblings, (4) failure to control for economic and social class positioning of family constellations, and (5) failure to recognize siblings influences upon each other. They further stated that when these variables were accounted for, many previous studies could be refuted. For example, Coopersmith (1967) did an experiment on self-esteem in which the variable of social class was controlled for. In the experiment a homogeneous middle-class sample of public school children in Connecticut were given a self-esteem inventory that was rated by their teachers for self-esteem. No association of self-esteem involving family size was found. Similar studies in which race and paternal education were controlled for were conducted which resulted in the same results
(e.g., Thomas, 1972; Dielman, 1974). Thus, these studies indicate that self-esteem is independent of family size when background variables are controlled for.

Although the empirical studies on birth-order appear disconnected and often offer conflicting findings, they do represent general characteristics and traits. It is important to remember that positions in birth-order represent only an influence, not a fact. It is equally important to remember that how parents treat their children also affects their physical environments and mental characteristics. Birth-order information cannot solely determine the total psychological picture for anyone. Birth-order statistics and characteristics are indicators that—when combined with physical, mental, and emotional factors—present a clearer picture of how demographics affect social behavior.

Given the parameters of the Boundary Maintenance theory and the general characteristics presented from the various studies on birth-order, could the phenomenon of fear of success be a factor affected by sibling roles?

The fear of success was first hypothesized by Matina S. Horner (1969). She hypothesized that fear of success was a psychological barrier to achievement in women. In her classic study she asked 88 male and 90 female college undergraduates to write four-minute stories in response to several verbal cues. An example of the verbal cues were: "At the end of first term finals, Anne/John finds herself/himself at the top of her/his medical school
Female subjects were asked to write about Anne and male subjects were asked to write about John. The stories were scored according to: (A) the social rejection or fear of losing one's friends as a result of the success indicated by the cue; (B) the internal fears and negative effects that appeared because of the success; and (C) how bizarre or exaggerated the hostile responses were, or if there was a denial of the cue altogether.

Horner devised an eight-category system of thematic, TAT-type materials for the fear of success imagery, the measure of the motive to avoid success. Her study revealed that 56 of the females showed a fear of success to the imagery, while in comparison, only 8 of the males did so. Horner concluded that the fear or motive to avoid success existed because for most American women the anticipation of success involved competitive achievement activity (especially against men), thus produced an anticipation of negative consequences. On the other hand, being successful in competitive achievement situations for males was consistent with the male role, masculine identity, and other male goals. The idea of success was not as antagonistic to the male role in comparison to the female role.

However, later studies on the fear of success failed to support Horner's conclusions. Gelbort and Winer (1985) did a study on the multitrait-multimethod validation of the fear of success imagery. They cited numerous criticisms pertaining to the reliability of Horner's hypothesis (e.g., Condry and Dyer, 1976; Alper, 1974;
No reliable sex differences in the fear of success were found, and the fear of success measure could not be related consistently to any behavioral measure according to these criticisms.

Zuckerman and Wheeler (1975) suggested that the reason other studies did not support Horner's hypothesis was that the operationalization of the fear of success construct was at fault, not the theory itself. They felt that a new method to measure the fear of success was needed in order to test Horner's theory.

In 1976, Zuckerman and Allison constructed a new measure for the fear of success, which they labeled "Fear of Success Scale" or simply FOSS. The twenty-seven item FOSS was used to assess individual differences in the motive to avoid success. The questions were based on a seven-point agree-disagree scale. The statements described; (A) benefits of success, (B) the costs of success, and (C) the subjects' attitudes toward success when compared to other alternatives. Potential scores on the FOSS ranged from 27 to 189, with high scores indicating a high fear of success. Sixteen items were worded to reflect high fear of success with agreement. The remaining eleven items reflected a low fear of success with agreement. Zuckerman and Allison (1976) then administered the FOSS to 183 male and 193 female undergraduates. Females scored significantly higher on the FOSS than did males; Thus FOSS was positively related to Horner's projective measure of the fear of success. The results of this study also
supported the validity of the FOSS for future research.

No previous studies were found on the fear of success in relation to the birth-order theory. Thus, it was the purpose of the present study to investigate the influence of sibling rank-order on the fear of success. The specific hypothesis was: There was a difference in the fear of success as a function of sibling rank-order.

**METHOD**

**Subjects:** Subjects were 115 female (39 oldest-child, 41 middle-child, and 35 youngest-child) and 42 male (14 oldest-child, 19 middle-child, and 9 youngest child), undergraduate students from Carroll College, Helena, Montana.

**Apparatus:** M. Zuckerman's and S.N. Alloson's (1976) 27, 7-point agree-disagree statements, Fear of Success Scale (FOSS) was used to record each subject's fear of success score.

**Procedure:** The following steps were used in carrying out the procedure.

1. Instructors in undergraduate classes were asked to administer the FOSS to their students, which consisted of both male and female students, as a part of their regular classroom activity.

2. Students were told that in this questionnaire they would find a number of statements. They were told that for each statement a scale from 1 to 7 was provided, with 1 representing one extreme and 7 the other extreme.
In each case they were asked to circle a number from 1 to 7 which indicated whether or not they agreed with the statement. They were then instructed that there were no right or wrong answers, and asked to please answer all of the items.

3. Students were also asked to indicate their G.P.A., sex, birth-order (independent variable), and year in college after completing the questionnaire.

4. The total number of responses on each questionnaire was then recorded (dependent variable).

DESIGN

The procedure was a quasi-field experiment. There were a total of 157 subjects, who were divided into 3 groups by sibling rank-order. The groups were as follows: Group 1, the youngest child, consisted of 44 subjects; Group 2, the middle-child, consisted of 50 subjects; and Group 3, the oldest-child, consisted of 53 subjects.

Scores on the FOSS for each group were compared using an analysis of variance.

RESULTS

The average score for the youngest-child (Group 1) on the FOSS was 108.32, with a standard deviation of 11.50. The average score for the middle-child (Group 2) on the FOSS was 105.78, with a standard deviation of 12.10. The average score for the oldest-child (Group 3) on the FOSS was 105.11, with a standard deviation of 10.28. An F-test was used to determine if there was a significant difference between the sibling rank-order
groups. The results were: $F(2, 154) = 1.05 p > .05$. Therefore, there was no significant difference in fear of success as a function of sibling rank-order.

---

**DISCUSSION**

The results of this experiment did not indicate a significant difference in Fear of Success as a function of sibling order. The data analysis did indicate and inverse trend with youngest-child subjects scoring higher and oldest-child subjects scoring lower on the FOSS. Thus, the youngest-child subjects appear to have learned a commitment to a social role wherein they are more motivated to avoid the potential costs of personal success than they are to seek the personal gain. Potential costs of success may take the form of subtle negative sanctions deployed within the family system, giving the youngest-child the motivation to maintain the social equilibrium by avoiding success. The youngest-child subjects, in an attempt to develop their self-concept, often look to an older sibling close in age and compare themselves (looking-glass self) to the sibling. The comparison made with the older sibling helps to determine the youngest-child's self-concept by the process of assimilating praise, condemnation, projection, and idealization. For example, if the youngest-child perceives the older sibling as being talented, strong, and smart, and himself as being the smallest, weakest, and least equipped to cope with life, and recalls earlier achievements (tying
shoes, learning to ride a bike, etc.) that were greeted with polite yawns of "Isn't that nice," or "Bill, do you remember how fast Johnny's older brother learned to do that?" it seems likely that a fear of success would develop.

**INSERT FIGURE I**

Given the significance level and the average FOSS for this study, the question of effect size arose. The customary practice in current research of setting a limitation on the probability level at .05 or less as the only criterion of the statistical significance of a study has been criticized by numerous authors (e.g., Cohen, 1962; Greenwald, 1975). Staying within the current boundaries of the present model of research, a person has two choices. The first choice was to reject the null hypothesis. The second choice was to accept the null hypothesis of no effect. Acceptance of the null hypothesis was seen as a reason to redesign the study or drop it (Greenwald, 1975).

In the present study the null hypothesis was accepted.

The probability level relied on the degree of truth of the hypothesized effect and on the sample size. It was found that by using many more subjects within a study of a proposed effect, there often resulted a statistically significant finding, even if the effect was very small. In a critique of this experiment the sample size was small in comparison to other studies. For example, there were a total of 157 subjects. The 157 subjects were classed into three groups by sibling-order. The youngest-
child group was composed of 44 subjects. The middle-child group consisted of 60 subjects. The last group, that of the oldest-child, consisted of 53 subjects. Figure 2 depicts the difference in birth-order groups. Further, of the 157 subjects, 115 were females, while only 42 were males. Figure 3 depicts the difference in sex contained in this study. Thus, the sample was not only smaller, it was also disproportionate.

The question, particularly for this study, was: "How big was this effect?" If other methods (cf Cohen, 1969) were used for calculating the effect size estimate from statistics that were not dependent on sample size, would the result be significant?

In a critique of the results contained within this study two options were available. The first option was to redesign the study according to the conventional model of research. If the study were to be redesigned the sample would have to be increased and more representative of the general population. The sample also would have to be more proportionate. The secondary variables of social class, size of family, and spacing between siblings would have to be controlled. The second option would be to analyze the data according to effect size.

Either options one or two would be feasible given the changes suggested. Given these changes, the psychodynamics presented in this paper would elicit more enlightening
results in future research.
TABLE I.

STATISTICAL RESULTS OF SIBLING RANK-ORDER ON THE FEAR OF SUCCESS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SOURCE</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>DF</th>
<th>VAR. EST.</th>
<th>F-RATIO</th>
<th>SIG.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AMONG</td>
<td>269.71</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>134.86</td>
<td>1.05</td>
<td>0.3542</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WITHIN</td>
<td>19821.05</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>128.71</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>20090.76</td>
<td>156</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Fear of Success

FIGURE 1
FEAR OF SUCCESS AVERAGES PER GROUP

FIGURE 2
SAMPLE SIZE PER GROUP
Fear of Success

FIGURE 3
SAMPLE SIZE BY SEX
APPENDIX A

ATTITUDES INVENTORY

INSTRUCTIONS: In this questionnare you will find a number of statements. For each statement a scale from 1 to 7 is provided, with 1 representing never, and 7 representing always. In each case, circle a number from 1 to 7 to indicate whether or not you agree with the statement. This is a measure of personal attitudes. There are no right or wrong answers. Please answer all items.

1. I expect other people to fully appreciate my potential.
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7

2. Often the cost of success is greater than the reward.
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7

3. For every winner there are several rejected and unhappy losers.
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7

4. The only way I can prove my worth is by winning a game or doing will on a task.
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7

5. I enjoy telling my friends that I have done something especially well.
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7

6. It is more important to play the game than to win it.
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7

7. In my attempt to do better than others, I realize I may lose many of my friends.
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7

8. In competition I try to win no matter what.
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7

9. A person who is at the top faces nothing but a constant struggle to stay there.
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7
10. I'm happy only when I'm doing better than others.
   1  2 . 3  4  5  6  7

11. I think "success" has been emphasized too much in our culture.
   1  2  3  4  5  6  7

12. In order to achieve one must give up the fun things in life.
   1  2  3  4  5  6  7

13. The cost of success is overwhelming responsibility.
   1  2  3  4  5  6  7

   1  2  3  4  5  6  7

15. I become embarrassed when others compliment me on my work.
   1  2  3  4  5  6  7

16. A successful person is often considered by others to be both aloof and snobbish.
   1  2  3  4  5  6  7

17. When you're on top, everyone looks up to you.
   1  2  3  4  5  6  7

18. People's behavior change for the worst after they become successful.
   1  2  3  4  5  6  7

19. When competing against another person, I sometimes feel better if I lose than if I win.
   1  2  3  4  5  6  7

20. Once you're on top, everyone is your buddy and no one is your friend.
   1  2  3  4  5  6  7

21. When you're the best, all doors are open.
   1  2  3  4  5  6  7
22. Even when I do well on a task, I sometimes feel like a phony or a fraud.

   1 2 3 4 5 6 7

23. I believe that successful people are often sad and lonely.

   1 2 3 4 5 6 7

24. The rewards of a successful competition are greater than those received from cooperation.

   1 2 3 4 5 6 7

25. When I am on top the responsibility makes me feel uneasy.

   1 2 3 4 5 6 7

26. It is extremely important for me to do well in all things that I undertake.

   1 2 3 4 5 6 7

27. I believe I will be more successful than most of the people I know.

   1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Please complete the following:

1. I am male/female (circle one).

2. I am in high school/college (circle one).

3. Year in school, (circle one).
   Freshman
   Sophomore
   Junior
   Senior

4. My G.P.A. is ______

5. In relationship to your family are you an (circle one)
   Only child
   Youngest child
   Middle child
   Oldest child
REFERENCES


Horner, Matina S. A psychological Barrier to Achievement


Nissen, H.W. Comments on Dr. Featinger's Paper. In M.R. Jones (Ed.), Nebraska Symposium on Motivation.


