

Creative Prâslea and the Golden Loves. Specific Psycho-Behavioral Elements of the Psychological “Last Born” in a Relationship Context

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Abstract

Introduction: This article is part of a comprehensive work, which analyzes specific psycho-behavioral elements, in the light of the participants' psychological birth order, both at the individual level and in relational context. This work aims to prove that, if the psychological birth order has a direct influence on one's personality, it will be noticeable in the context of a relationship too. This excerpt is centered on the youngest born, a resonant figure in Romanian culture, resonance given by the myths and the folkloric stories regarding the roles in the family of origin.

Objectives: The objectives of the research are:

- a. to assess specific individual psycho-behavioral traits according to the psychological type;
- b. to capture the specific approach of the relational context for the psychological type: eldest, youngest, the only child.

Methods: The final group consisted of 344 participants, women and men in equal shares, divided into 172 couples. The research is based on three complex stages of analysis. PBOI (White, Stewart, Campbell, 1991), DAS Scale and the Belbin Test were used. The statistical processing was performed with SPSS15.

Results: The results showed that the psychologically “youngest” presented clear tendencies towards receiving confirmation from others: affection demonstration, unorganized general aspect, team player, driven by massive socialization and new experiences, even when high risk is involved. In a relationship, they seem to be more undecided, highly passionate, extremely creative and dynamic, with egocentric tendencies that aim to satisfy their own need for love and affection. The best relationship in terms of satisfaction seems to be “eldest-youngest”, while the most conflicting relationship is established between two psychologically “youngest”.

Conclusions: In conclusion, the statistical data led to the confirmation of the hypothesis according to which psychological birth order can be used as a predictor for decisions and for the manners of approaching relationships. Results can serve as a basis for new ways of approaching individual and couple psychotherapy.

Keywords: birth order, youngest, eldest, couple, PBOI, affection

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1. Introduction

Although the birth order topic has been discussed since the 19th century, it is still one of the most controversial topics, because of its character, which is difficult to describe, regarding the impact on the formation and development of the human personality.

Psychological birth order and the way it participates in the psycho-behavioral development has always attracted antithetic reactions. It divided scientists into two categories, according to their scientific research direction: the authors whose research is involved in minimizing the influence of birth order on human development and the authors whose studies bring significant statistical arguments for the predictability of psycho-behavioral traits, depending on the birth order.

Taking into account F. Galton (1874), S. Freud (1902), A. Adler (1927), Darwin (Ospovat, 1981), G. Allport (1991), F. Sulloway (1996), C. Isaacson (2002, 2004), W. Cane (2008), L. Blair (2011), A.E. Stewart (2011) and D. Eckstein (2012), it is easy to note the interest of scientific personalities in the birth order influence topic over time.

Over time, research has shown results with diverse characters, sometimes different from one author to another. Therefore, there were different attitudes towards this topic. The general opinion was to admit the complexity of this topic and the difficulty of quantifying the statistical results that were obviously put in an empirical manner.

Age, gender, the number of siblings and some traumatic experiences (parental divorce, the death of one or more family members) were included among the criteria mentioned in literature as having a strong influence on the results regarding the birth order effect (Blair, 2011). All these were used in research with the purpose of unifying the image of birth-order influence, but there was no common point.

Over time, the perspectives concerning birth order have changed for several times, leading to a new and improved perspective in the 21st century: *the psychological birth order* reflected in specific psycho-behavioral traits is not related to the chronological birth order.

Alfred Adler (1965) was the first major scientific personality to emphasize the psychological interpretation of the type of brother. He stated: "In the formation of the character the numerical order of the child is not that important, but the family context in which he grew up and the manner in which he interpreted himself in that context is important". In the current specific literature, this definition has been preserved as one of the most relevant and comprehensive for the understanding of the psychological birth order concept. The psychological

birth order is also described as the role an individual believes he has in his family of origin and the interpretation he gives to his family experience is directly influencing personality formation and development (Kiedaisch, 2006).

The psychological type of a person may or may not overlap the chronological type of the same person, but the assumed psychological role is the most important for oneself and one's personal development (Campbell, 1991).

The present study was based on the idea that, if the psychological birth brother has a direct influence on the formation and development of certain specific coordinates of personality, these coordinates will also be found in the manner of approaching and managing partnership relations, either social or couple relationships.

The *objectives* of this study were:

- To identify specific features, at the personality construct level, for three psychological patterns: "little", "eldest", "only child";
- To identify the increased predisposition to relational satisfaction in the couples' configurations, depending on the partners' psychological birth order type;
- To elaborate an evaluation of the specific psychological type of brother based on specific behaviors manifested in couple relationships.

The present article will focus on highlighting specific results from a more complex research, such as the psychological pattern of the "youngest", including both the little sister and the little brother. Based on this argument, the assumptions highlighted in this text are strictly related to the youngest person psychologically speaking.

Among the *research hypotheses* strictly related to the "youngest" status, there were:

- Couple satisfaction increases when following the "opposites attract" principle;
- The psychologically "youngest" type presents specific behaviors that aim to boost the relationship;
- The "youngest" makes the most satisfying couple with a psychologically "eldest" type.

The study's results underscore the predisposition of the individuals participating in the research towards specific psychological features, different from their numerical type of brother. At the same time, the results of the research indicate the existence of partnership configurations prone to satisfaction or dissatisfaction, based on the partners' psychological type of brother.

An instrument for assessing a person's psychological type of brother was conceived, based on the results obtained and on the specific psycho-behavioral indicators of his/her couple life.

It was confirmed that the psychological type had an influence on personality and a predictive value

for the success or failure of the partnership. Maybe much more than in other countries, the specific Romanian folkloric stories could have participated in the creation of an image related to roles and abilities, benefits and responsibilities depending on the brother's status, which might have been transferred from one generation to another, thus leading to specific psycho-behavioral patterns, integrated from early ages.

II. Method

The process of selecting the group of participants for the research was based on a number of criteria, including age: over 18-year-old Romanian citizens, coming from a fraternal dyad or having the "only child" status in the family of origin. In addition, the subjects had to be involved in a couple relationship of at least 6 month at the date of the research. The number of initial participants has changed along the raw data processing; therefore, the final group of subjects consisted of 344 individuals, women and men in equal shares, 172 couples.

The tools used for this research contain an element of novelty, in the form of the PBOI (Psychological Birth Order Inventory) tool, designed in 1991 and revised in 1998 by Alan Stewart and Linda Campbell. The PBOI was developed based on the brother status.

PBOI is validated on the American population, but the generality degree of the items forming the inventory makes it easily adaptable at the

Adlerian theory regarding brothers' personality development and it measures the personal perception on the experiences lived from the point of view of the level of other populations, even when different values of different cultures are involved.

In order to verify the accuracy of the results of this research and hypotheses, a satisfaction scale (DAS-Dyadic Adjustment Scale) and a test for determining the role in a significant group – the Belbin test, were used. The research was based on three work stages:

- The delimitation of the characteristic psychological type of each participant in the study;
- The identification of specific features in a working group, for each psychological type, starting from the overall patterns;
- The establishment of couple configurations according to the partners' psychological birth order type and the analysis of the satisfaction degree for each configuration.

Based on the obtained results, it was possible to design an evaluative tool, called the PBOI-RR (Psychological Birth Order Inventory in Romantic Relationships). The processing of raw data has been carried out with the SPSS statistical analysis, with the ANOVA option.

Fig. 1 – Numerical vs. psychological type in the same person

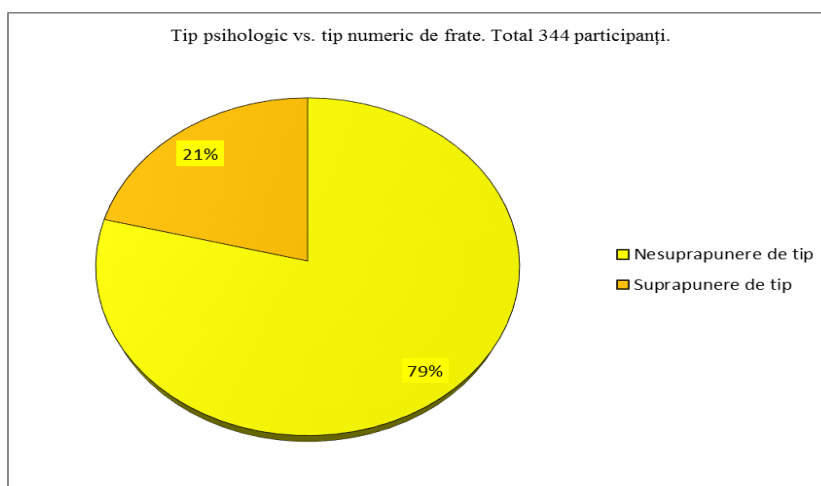


Fig. 1 is providing a clear image related to the mismatching phenomena between the numerical and psychological type at the level of the same individuals. At a rate of 79%, research participants manifested other

psycho-behavioral characteristics than the chronological type of brother. Further, the data analysis was based on interpreting subjects according to their psychological type of brother.

Fig. 2 – Boxplot for IR role (Resource Investigator - Belbin)

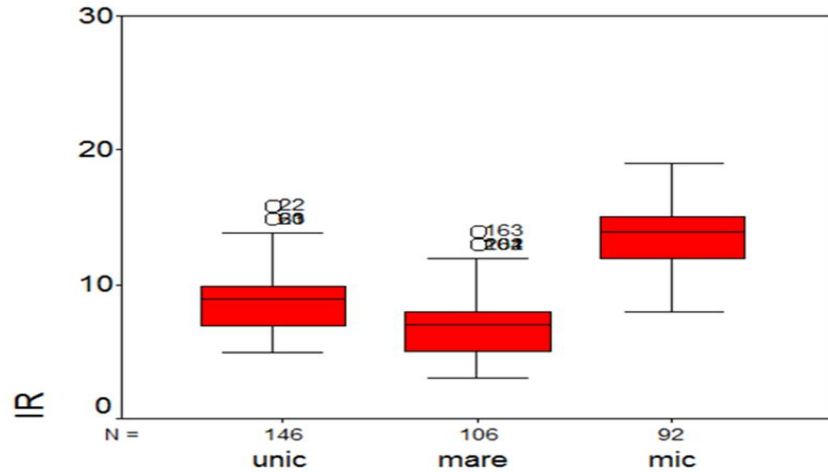


Fig. 3 – Statistical signification for M role (Modeler – Belbin) and the “youngest”

Correlations			
		Younger Brother	M
Younger Brother	Pearson Correlation	1.000	.695**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	344	344
M	Pearson	.695**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	344	344
		**. Correlation is significant at 0.01 level (2-tailed)	

Based on fig. 2 and fig. 3, we can establish the dominance of the category “younger brother” to manifest specific attitudes towards the Resources Investigator and Modeller-Monitor evaluator roles, as

described in the Belbin test. The research hypotheses concerning the psychological pattern of the youngest are confirmed.

Fig. 4. The descriptive statistics for the satisfaction means obtained in congruent and incongruent couples

		Mean	Std. Dev.	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval		Min.	Max.
					Lower	Upper		
Congruent	66	78.6790	21.6615	1.0021	90.6100	110.7480	28.00	107.00
Incongruent	106	109.013	30.4925	3.5689	101.8993	116.1281	34.00	133.00
Total	172	90.750	23.7125	1.4402	100.9172	111.5828	34.00	133.00

Based on the data obtained with the help of the PBOI, the couples participating in the research have been divided into two groups, according to the principle of complementarity. Thus, data have shown the existence of 66 situations out of the 172 couples, in which partners presented the same psychological type of brother, here referred to as “congruent” couples and 106 couples that were formed based on the “opposites attract” principle and which we have called “incongruent” couples. The analysis of the satisfaction values recorded for each couple (based on the sum of the DAS score for each partner of a couple) has enabled the correlation of the data with the two research groups, the “congruent” and the “incongruent”. It was found that the “congruent” group

showed a lower level of relationship satisfaction, with an average score of 78 points, while the “incongruent” couples obtained a higher satisfaction score, of 109 points. These data are revealed in Fig. 4.

The statistical results obtained in this phase confirm the assumption according to which couples are likely to be more satisfied if they were formed on the “opposites attract” principle. Here, the “opposite” must be understood in terms of attitudes or psycho-behavioral differences between partners of the same couple. Furthermore, the results confirm the hypothesis according to which satisfaction increases in couples made up of partners characterized by different psychological brother types.

Fig. 5 – Partnership configurations according to the psychological type of brother

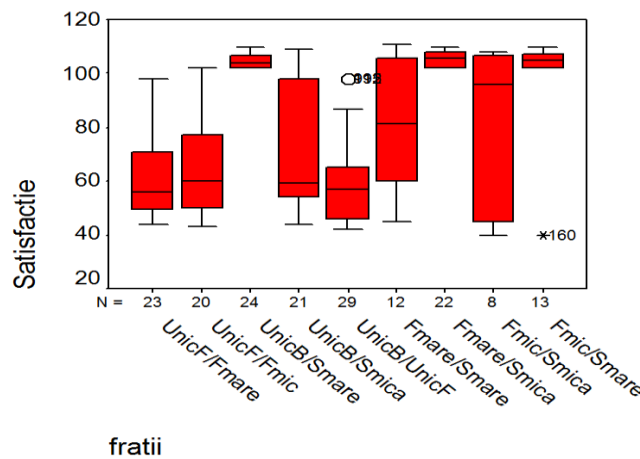


Fig. 5 is a boxplot for descriptive statistics regarding the partnership configurations analyzed in this research. Further, it went on to identify the

particular degree of satisfaction for each relational pattern and not only at a global level.

Fig. 6 – Descriptive statistics for the satisfaction mean in couples configuration

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Min.	Max.
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
Youngest male/Eldest sister	13	102.6154	20.8588	5.7852	09.0105	110.2202	82	113
Eldest brother/Youngest Sister	22	118.7273	8.4413	1.7997	96.9846	124.4699	85	133

Fig. 6 is about the high averages obtained for the satisfaction mean, within the “youngest male/brother - eldest sister” and “eldest male/brother – youngest sister” couples configuration. As the results have shown, the hypothesis according to which the

last-born establishes the most satisfying relationship with a first-born, generically speaking, is confirmed.

III. Results

Ever since the beginning of the research, results have shown significant cases of “mismatch” between the numerical and the psychological birth order type, emphasizing the participants’ psychological tendency to manifest specific psycho-behavioral attitudes for a different type of brother from the numerical one.

Further, the results have shown the specific traits of the persons participating in the research, according to the psychological birth order pattern. Thus, the last-born was highlighted as being mostly prone towards the Belbin roles of Resources Investigator and Modeller-Monitor Evaluator. Based on the research results, the specific psycho-behavioral attributes of the youngest are: extraversion, sociability, high communication skills, curiosity, openness, dynamism, creativity and involvement in risky activities.

Creative potential, as well as its expansion in life-long activities, is confirmed by this research, which evaluates the psychologically youngest born, that emphasizes the need for significant persons, attention seeking through new strategies, aiming to be noticed by others (Suloway, 1996). From this perspective, the last-born was forced by circumstances to make creative efforts in order to impress or draw the attention of the mother/parental couple, while the first-born status of the eldest ensured all the attention and affection without the person doing something special or different from other children.

All these attributes broadly outline the little brother’s dynamic nature and his dynamic and energetic approach towards others. On the one hand, his energy supports the work carried out and on the other hand, the dynamic nature can act as a causal link to the “burn of energy”, which may explain the lack of resources for the organization and completion of the commenced actions, one of the most common traits of the psychologically last-born. This idea is supported by indications in literature, according to which the youngest character is relatively chaotic, with inclinations towards nonconformity and rebellion (Blair, Suloway, Isaacson), exploratory cognitive tendencies, good negotiation, excellent communication skills.

According to the results obtained, the rapid onset of boredom, rapid lack of interest, switching to another activity when he has not finished what he started, tendency to coarseness, irritability, impatience, lack of discipline, the difficulty to track things to the end were among the negative traits specific to the “youngest”. The “youngest” shapes the dynamics of a group or a dyad.

At relational level, the partner dominated by the psychological characteristics of the “youngest” is

dominated by the attraction towards change, often being the initiator of change in the couple dynamics. He initiates and sustains new activities or directions, instigates the testing of the couple’s limits, he is prone to constructive criticism, which can be misunderstood because of the lack of tact and empathy in relationships with the peers. He manifests a rather egocentric attitude, but thanks to his creativity, he manages to handle those around them, aiming to satisfy his needs.

Results show that, even if the “youngest” has a complex and dynamic personality, he does not seem to have a satisfying relationship with a partner dominated by the same last-born psychological pattern. Most likely, the explanation occurs as a natural consequence of the resemblance, which quickly ignites partners and burns them, at relational level as well, in the absence of compensatory attributes, such as stability, steadiness, conservatism, anchoring into reality and values, orientation towards others.

In fact, the truth-value of this assumption stems from the results obtained in this research, which indicate a satisfied couple configuration, formed by a youngest and an elder. The raw data of this study also pointed out the high level of satisfaction in the partnership configuration “big brother - little sister” and “brother-sister”: by following the complementarity principle, each partner brings his traits to counterbalance the other partner, thus having the opportunity to achieve a satisfactory, balanced partnership. Even more, at the level of the “elder sister-younger brother” couple, the relationship is harmonious thanks to some specific attributes of the elder and also to the maternal care that an elder female can offer to her partner, who, in this case, needs all the affection and care he can get.

Generically addressed “the youngest” has the creativity, energy, determination and courage to sustain a dynamic long-term couple. In addition, he rapidly loses interest. Therefore, in the absence of a balancing element that could direct his energy, the specific psychological attributes of the “youngest” can negatively affect him and his relationships.

Discussions

On the one hand, the current research aimed to address the participants in the evaluation group individually and relationally. The couple can be understood as “an interpersonal process of formation and development of personality, of awareness, evolution and fructification of tendencies, drives and unconscious trends, of self-discovery through inter-discovery” (Mitrofan, I., 1998). Considering this definition as the most edifying, with a high degree of application nowadays, the need for a better and complete analysis of the couple is easily understood. The information related to the partners’ personalities

and how they can influence the couple dynamics can serve as a real help toward a better and clearer image of an individual or a couple.

Birth order and the personality developed in accordance with this phenomenon play an important role in couple satisfaction. However, partners ignore these factors before choosing the partnership (Mukangy, 2010). The results showed the existence of some significant scores for the "satisfaction" mean of the couples from the research, which leads to the justified assertion that the welfare of the couple is not determined by a specific pattern of the partner, but by the actual reunion of patterns, in a couple or another. The criteria that make up a couple cannot be explained only by the partners' psychological birth order. However, this point of view can help understand the couple dynamics better.

Amid the various life situations, couples can develop dysfunctional mechanisms. After years of living together, most partners complain about the fact they have been living in an unsatisfying rapport (Knox and Schacht, 2002). The degenerative causality can be understood based on combined factors (challenging life situations, partners' specific personalities), especially on the pattern according to which these factors interact (Schmitt, 2002). Such scientific reports indicate the need for considering personal attributes as having major implications in the satisfaction of the couple. These attributes can be interpreted in terms of a partner's psychological birth order characteristics.

As a result of this research, it was possible to create an instrument for identifying the psychological type of brother, based on the specific items manifested in the couple relationship, named PBOI-RR. However, evaluative tools are still insufficient for an optimal highlighting of the psychological birth order influence, when in a couple. Further studies on this theme are required.

IV. Conclusions

The present study shows significant results in terms of the importance of the psychological birth order, but does not support its determinative character on the personality construct or relational dynamics, in their complexity. Thus, the results of the research have a high relevance for a better view and understanding of oneself or the couple. The psychological cohesion of a fraternal role needs to be regarded as a new interpretative perspective and as an indicator for the satisfaction, problems or specific traits that may occur at an intrinsic level or at a relational level.

Knowing that the "youngest" needs a more personal recognition, needs to feel in the center of attention, constantly seeking proofs of appreciation

from others could explain his actions and could lead to a lower anxiety and jealousy level of his partner, thus minimizing the aggressiveness potential. The understanding of your partner based on his psychological type could attract new and improved ways of acting toward emotionally securing the partner that could balance the couple.

The psychological type of brother appears to be significant for the attainment of a high level of adaptability and satisfaction in couple, minimizing or maximizing the relational potential, dealing directly with the configuration of the couple type the individuals can be found in.

How did the partners get in that relationship? What was the basis of their choice, be it conscious or not? How do they maintain a relationship that continues to exist despite a low level of satisfaction and why? The psychological birth order type of the partners cannot provide a fully comprehensive answer to all these questions.

The experiential and trans-generational psychotherapies are most likely capable of offering truly enlightening answers to all of these questions and a direction towards understanding the relationship process. The psychological birth order should only be seen as a landmark in the process of self-acknowledgement and interpretation of the existent differences when relating differently, with different people. The partners' psychological birth order type constitutes a new interpretive direction for a better understanding of the trends, preferences and personal choices, as well as those of the partner's without, however, explaining them in their depths.

The knowledge of somebody's psychological type can lead to valuable information related to the management of that person's specific trends and particularities, advantages and limits. The results of the research can be used in various fields, such as the organizational environment, psychotherapy or the psycho-educational field.

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