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Birth Order and Gender Differences in Family Members' and Observers' Rating of Parent-Adolescent Interactions

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Previous research focusing on outsiders' views and insiders' views of family interaction ratings have found that there have been low correlations of ratings between family members and observers (Surra & Ridley, 1991), yet family members' reports have been both positively and significantly correlated (Schwarz, Barton-Henry, & Pruzinsky, 1985). Because most of the studies have focused on single dyadic subsystems, previous research may have glossed over the fact that different dyadic relationships do not occur in isolation (Dekovic and Buist, 2005) and that each parent-child dyad impacts the other family subsystems (Cox & Paley, 1997). Other findings suggest that these interaction ratings could be affected by both birth order and gender differences within the family. Some research suggests that second-borns were found to have more decision-making autonomy than firstborns, particularly during early adolescence (Campione-Barr, Lindell, Short, et al., 2015), which may affect the ways that first-borns and second-borns interact with their parents (and the quality of those interactions) during adolescence. Gender also plays a role in family dynamics, as female-only dyads (e.g., mother-daughter, sister-sister) tend to be more effectively intense than all other combinations (Campione-Barr & Smetana, 2019). Therefore the present study aimed to investigate the differences in ratings between observers, parents, and adolescents during a semi-structured adolescent disclosure task, and whether those ratings are affected by adolescent birth order and gender.

This study evaluated 123 families with at least two children ($n = 246$ parent-adolescent dyads), predominately White (85%) and 2-parent families (72%). The majority of the parents come from well-educated and upper-middle class incomes. First-born adolescents were on average 13.93 years old and second-born adolescents were an average of 11.47 years old. Results of a 3 (Rater: observer, mother, and adolescent) X 2 (Birth order: first- vs. second-born) X 2 (Adolescent gender: girls vs. boys) mixed model ANOVA will be presented.