Birth Order Effects on Vocabulary Persist Throughout the Lifespan
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Questions
1. Does birth order affect vocabulary?
2. Does the effect persist in adulthood?
3. Is it specific to languages learned at home?

Background
- Birth order: Strong test of Nurture
- Controversial, conflicting results [1-3]
- Small samples, confounds
- Limited age ranges
- Clearer effects:
  - IQ, relationship-formation [4-6]
  - Environmental differences re: language [7-9]
  - Eldest: more adult input, “tutor effect”
  - Younger: Simpler input, richer social environment, hurried social maturation
  - Many Nurture effects dissipate in adulthood [10]

Method
- online vocab quiz at gameswithwords.org

Results: Native Speakers

- N = 108,312
- 4-91 yo
- Native and non-native English
- De-confound family size

Summary
1. Eldest children have larger vocabularies
2. This persists across the lifespan
3. Not specific to languages learned at home
4. (Bonus) Children from larger sibships have larger vocabularies (ps<.05)

UNCLEAR: Differences among laterborns

Discussion
- Suggests not merely effect of exposure
- Evidence for tutor effect (only ! eldest)
- Effect of IQ?
- Effect of napping <— (pure speculation)

Future Directions
- Confirm results in other languages
- Differences between laterborns?
- Napping schedule study

References
5. Kristensen, P., & Bjorkdahl, T. (2007). Eldest children have larger vocabularies (ps<.05). Top-Right: This persisted across the lifespan (most ps<.05) for families with two children and (Left) three children. Larger sibship sizes excluded for insufficient N.

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