

It's birth order, stupid

by the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

We're having trouble wrapping our feeble minds around this: A study of Norwegian men revealed that the firstborn are more intelligent by a couple of IQ points than their siblings.

This is something folks keeping track of Nobel Prize and National Merit scholarship winners have long noticed. The firstborn dominate here.

We say "feeble" minds because seven of 11 members of this Editorial Board are not firstborn. We will, of course, immediately start deferring on all matters to our four superior colleagues.

Or ...

The editorial "we" can proclaim this finding as hokey. Seconded. The motion passes. See? Democracy works.

Back to the study, published last week in the journal *Science*: It isn't genetics causing all these Norwegian men to be smarter but, more likely, the way their parents treat them. They get responsibility and leadership heaped upon them and, in rising to the occasion and generally higher expectations, get smarter than the younger siblings they torment - uh, nurture.

We'd note that other studies and experts say that pinning down the reasons for the hierarchy of sibling intelligence is difficult, owing to the many environmental and societal factors in play. And even the study's lead author said the odds of the eldest being more intelligent is only a 56.7 percent probability.

Seven of us on the Editorial Board, of course, beat those odds. And we take solace from a previous study that found that younger siblings develop talents and skills not possessed by older siblings. Including, apparently, the ability to enter into states of denial more readily than others.

Still, it would be interesting to see who among our elected leaders are firstborn as opposed to just born to lead (and spend). Now there's a study worth doing. With tax dollars. In Norway.

To read the study, go to www.sciencemag.org

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