

Effects of Older Siblings on Early Childhood Development in Low-Income Families

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Introduction & Aim

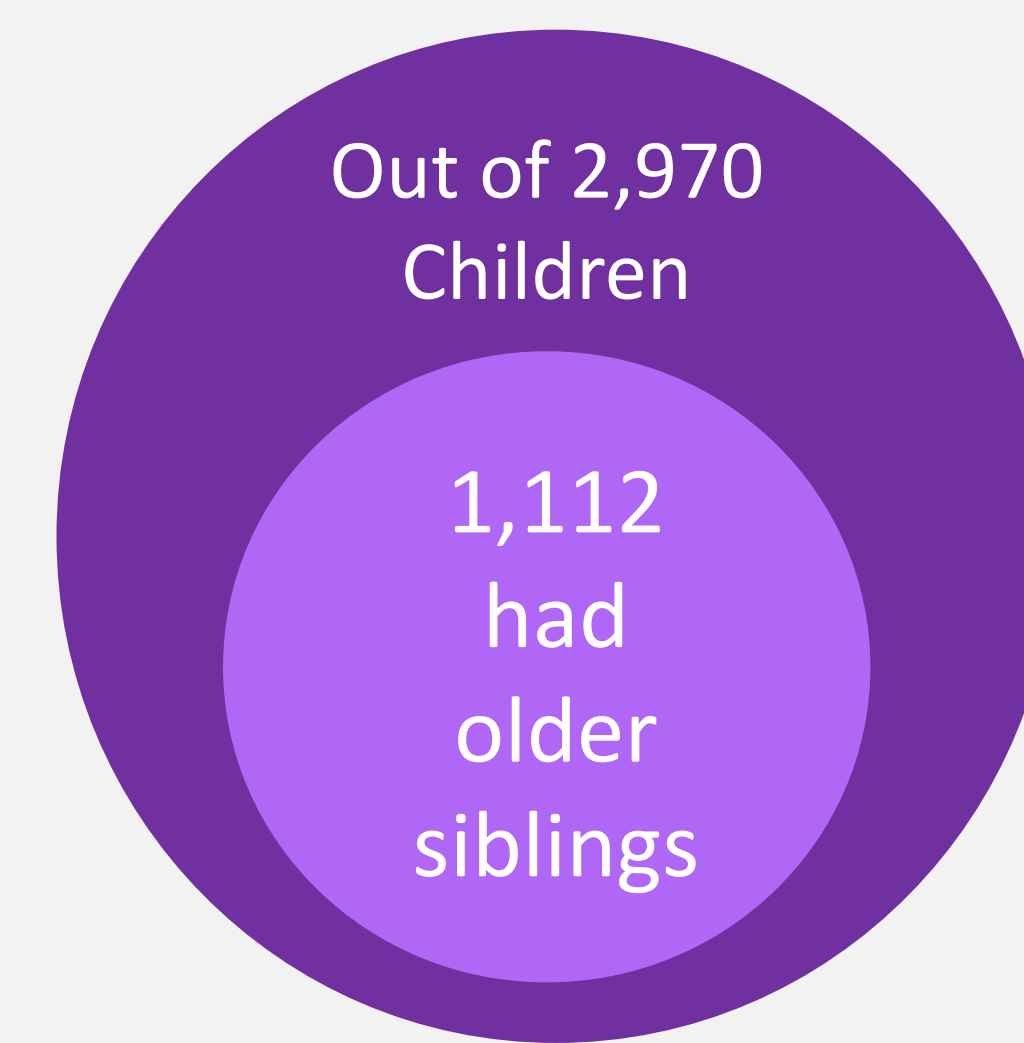
Siblings can be important for early development.

- Siblings promote cognitive development by teaching younger siblings new concepts (Brody, 2004)
- Having conflicts with siblings leads to opportunities to respond effectively when upset and learn to identify, express, and regulate negative behaviors and emotions (Kramer, 2014).
- Siblings help draw attention to tasks while teaching younger siblings (Dunn, 1983).

Purpose of this study: To see how having an older sibling can influence young children's development at 36 months in low-income families.

Methods

Extant data from the Early Head Start Research and Evaluation Project (EHSREP). The Early Head Start program is designed to help children's school readiness in low-income families. It serves pregnant women and children ages 0-3.



Measures

Infant development was measured at 36 months

Cognitive Development	Emotion Regulation	Orientation/Engagement
How well children can process and remember information and solve problems	How well children can calm themselves and deal with difficult tasks	How focused children can focus and stay engaged and on a task; self-regulation of attention
Mental Development Index of the Bayley Scales of Infant Development (BSID-II) (Bayley, 1993)	Subscale of the BSID Behavior Rating Scales (Bayley, 1993)	Subscale of the BSID Behavior Rating Scales (Bayley, 1993)

Results

Cognitive Development for Children with Older Siblings compared with Firstborns

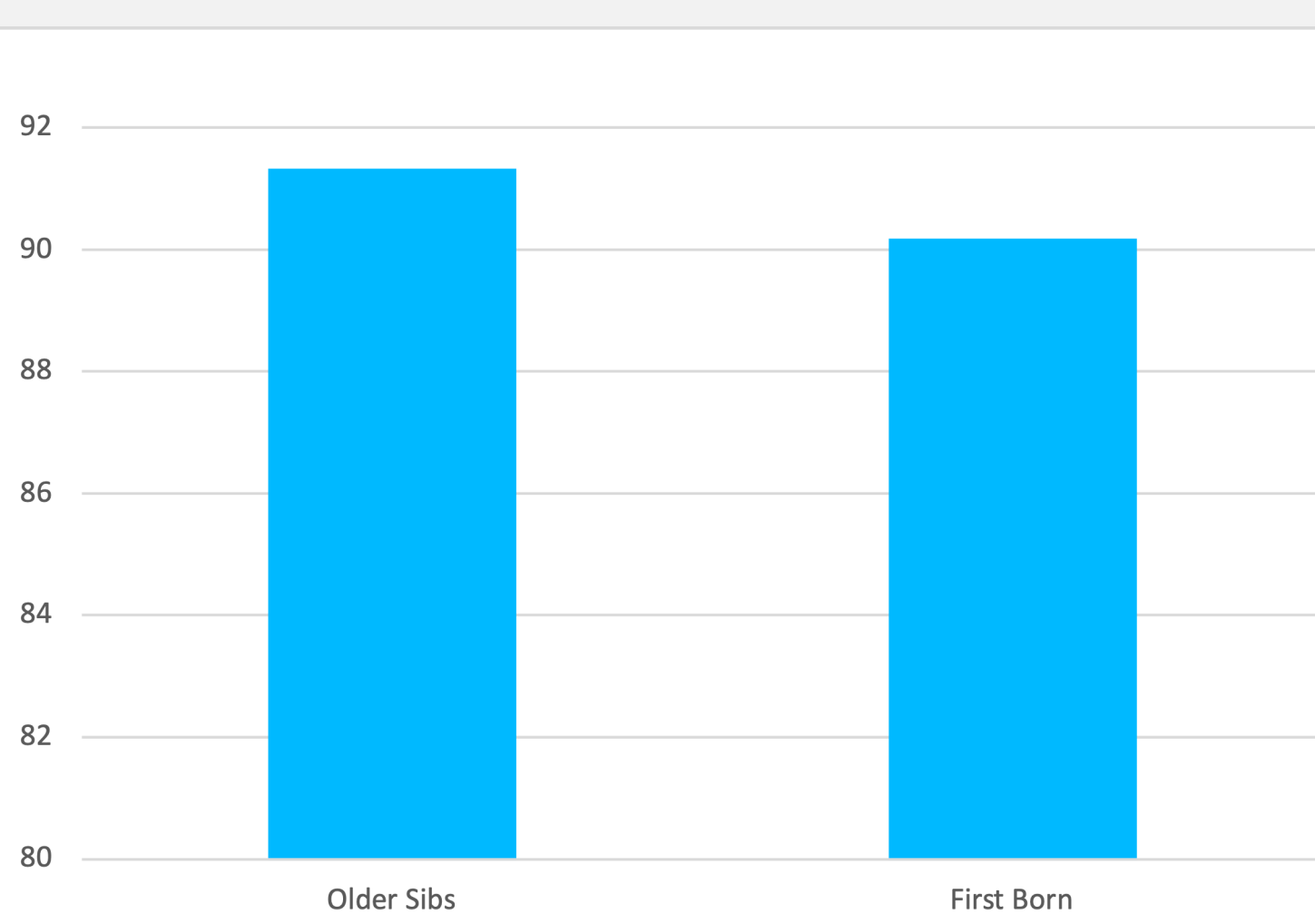


Figure 2 – Cognitive Development differences showed a trend but were not significant. T-test score = 1.80; p-value = .07

Emotion Regulation for Children with Older Siblings compared with Firstborns



Figure 3 – Emotion regulation differences were not significant. T-test score = -0.57; p-value = .57

Orientation/Engagement for Children with Older Siblings compared with Firstborns

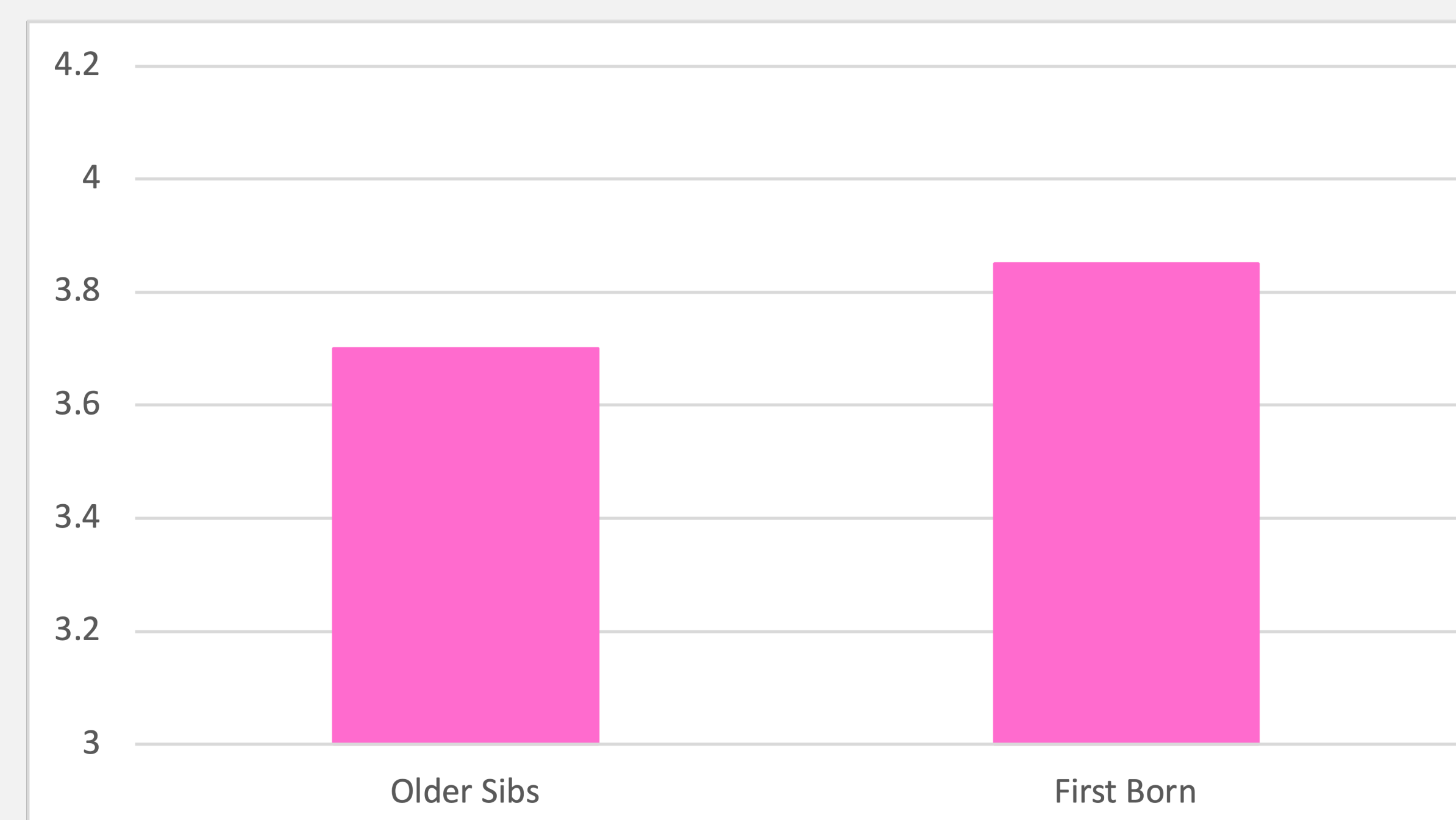


Figure 4 - Orientation/Engagement findings were significant. T-test score = -4.18; p-value = .00

Conclusions

Children with older siblings in low-income families had *slightly lower* Orientation/Engagement scores than firstborn children, showing only small differences, compared with firstborn children, in their ability to self-regulate their attention. They also showed *slightly but not significantly higher* cognitive scores than firstborns.

Overall, these findings suggest that children are not at a developmental disadvantage if they do not have a sibling. These factors are important indicators for school readiness; it is thus important to continue supporting young children in their families to further their development, regardless of birth order.

References

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- Dunn, J. (1983). Sibling Relationships in Early Childhood. *Child Development*, 54(4), 787-811. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1129886>
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