

Takeaways from Journal Articles and Other Stuff

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January 2026

1 In The Thick of It

Journal Chosen

11) *P. Kristensen and T. Bjerkedal, "Explaining the Relation Between Birth Order and Intelligence," Science 316 (2007): 1717.*

- in the book states IQ "increases and resembles" that of an earlier birth order, but the paper shows these children score similarly from the start and there's no evidence of IQ increasing after sibling death. This is a crucial misrepresentation suggesting a causal intervention rather than a consistent social position effect.

- most influential models have emphasized explanations relating to interactions within the family and favorable conditions for intellectual stimulation for lowbirth-order children.

- the study clearly concludes with this, *This study provides evidence that the relation between birth order and IQ score is dependent on the social rank in the family and not birth order as such. Furthermore, conscripts with loss of siblings are disadvantaged compared with conscripts with no such loss regarding several factors associated with intelligence. Therefore, higher scores in the former group are hardly compatible with the artifact hypothesis* what strikes me is the fact that yes, that might be true but the way the authors are showcasing it in the book, it feels like IQ scores suddenly increase, the following bunch of sentences that they put down is absurd given the conclusion of the paper they're implying it in a way that would make the reader takeaway things from it differently.

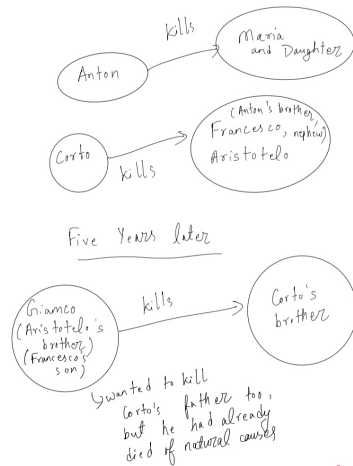
If you are a second-born son whose older sibling died while you were a child, your IQ increases and resembles the IQ of a first-born child. If you are a third-born child and one of your older siblings died, your IQ resembles that of a second-born child; and if both of your older siblings died, then your IQ resembles that of a first-born child.

- even if real, let's assume for the sake of it that birth order effects are typically 2-3 IQ points, kinda trivial, no? absurd to think about something so trivial (is

this what academia is about?, no puns intended)

Definitions

- *social network* - while network, like a group, is a collection of people, it includes something more: a specific set of connections between people in the group.
- *homophily* - conscious or unconscious tendency to associate with people who resemble us
- *core-discussion network* - with whom we can discuss important matters or spend free time



- This whole arc was already hard too keep track of even though the network is so small, so one can only imagine how hard it must be to make sense of the interconnections between us and how big of a domino effect everything really has in a real social network in a big scale. At least that was my thought when I went over this. And then came the 6 *degrees of separation* and 3 *degrees of influence* and that made so much sense.

- Quotes that caught my *attention*:

If you want to know who might take your life, just look at the people around you. In the US, 75% of all homicides involve people who knew each other, often intimately, prior to the murder.

- Loved the *button* analogy that says when we pick and throw random buttons on the floor and just them out with some strings randomly to one another, and pick a single one off the floor, all others connected would directly or indirectly get lifted to the air and the same thing when dropped. But the *network topology* remains the same

- idea of social networks having life of their own (e.g. traffic jams, stampedes, waves (*La Ola*) in soccer games)

- idea of social networks having emergent property. this analogy pretty much makes the idea clear: a cake has a taste not found in any of its ingredients nor is it the average of its ingredients
- 6 degrees of separation and 3 degrees of influence and the fact that evolutionary biology might have played a part for the latter as humans appear to have evolved in smaller groups

2 When You Smile, The World Smiles With You

Journal Chosen

M. J. Howes and others, "Induction of Depressive Affect After Prolonged Exposure to a Mildly Depressed Individual," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 49 (1985): 1110-13.

- When college freshmen are randomly assigned to live with mildly depressed roommates, they become increasingly depressed over a three-month period.
- Used the Beck Depression Inventory (BDI) at multiple time points. Compared roommates of:
 - 1) Persistently (unremitted) mildly depressed individuals
 - 2) Transiently depressed individuals
 - 3) Nondepressed individuals
- Key findings: Roommates of persistently depressed individuals showed a progressive increase in depressive symptoms, and this increase was significant by 5 weeks and persisted at 11 weeks. roommates of transiently depressed individuals showed moderate increases, but less severe. No comparable increase occurred in roommates of nondepressed individuals.
- Paper's Conclusion
Sustained exposure to a mildly depressed person can induce depressive affect in close social partners.
- in this case, the authors have indeed not exaggerated anything that they've cited from the paper. one of the reasons that made me choose this paper was the fact that most students tend to have not the best relation with their roommates for some reason and seeing *roommates* immediately made me want to go for this paper.
- the only things to point out were that the sample size in the paper is pretty low $n = 88$, and the reliance on self-report (BDI only) (but i guess there has to

some way of measure.) and maybe the fact that the mechanisms of transfer of this *depression* haven't been looked into that deeply in the paper.

Emotional Contagion

- Emotions spread from person to person because of two features of human interaction: we are biologically hardwired to mimic others outwardly, and in mimicking their outward displays, we come to adopt their inward states.

3 Love The One You're With

Journal Chosen

14) L. Jin and others, "Reduction in Long-Term Survival in Men Given High Operational Sex Ratio at Sexual Maturity," *Demography* (forthcoming).

- the only significance i'd say is that it addresses a moderately interesting question about early-life social conditions affecting health

- Question that came

Why would competition at age 20 affect mortality at 75?

= 0.52) was about 1.6% higher. Given that in 1993 a 65-year-old white man, on average, could expect to live another 15.4 years (National Center for Health Statistics 2003), the increase in the hazard of death associated with higher sex ratios measured at the statewide level can be translated to a reduction of three months of life expectancy at age 65 (which is comparable in size to the benefits seen with various health behavior changes recommended for the elderly).

- also, the fact that the finding the paper had was reduction of *3months* of life expectancy. i'm not saying that *3months* is not a lot, but the way the authors have written the thing kinda, at least to me, like by a few years or so.
- also interesting is the fact that women show no effect. maybe more potential future work can address this better?

These WLS analyses suggested that the sex ratio was positively associated with the hazard of dying for men ($p = .02$, two-sided tests) but not for women ($p = .66$, two-sided tests). More specifically, net of controls, a percentage-point increase in the males in one's graduating class increased the hazard of dying before age 65 by about 1% for men. For

How I Met My Partner

- Because we're so sure of our individual power to make decisions, we lose sight of the extraordinary degree to which our choice of a partner is determined by our surroundings and, in particular, by our social network.
- another way to look at those magical moments when you randomly find that someone is that they might not be as random as we might think they are.

My Partner is Just Like Me

- best way to search your network is to look beyond your direct connections but not so far away that you no longer have anything in common with your contacts.
- to look at the chapters ahead, spouses become more similar over time because they influence each other (for example, in political affiliation, smoking behavior, or happiness).

Big Fish Small Pond

- We would rather be big fish in a small pond than bigger fish in an ocean filled with whales.
- People assess how well they are doing not so much by how much money they make or how much stuff they consume but, rather, by how much they make and consume compared to other people they know.

• In Pg.72 there was this creative experiment where respondents were asked which of the following two states they would rather be in:

A) Your physical attractiveness is 6; others average 4.

B) Your physical attractiveness is 8; others average 10.

In general 75% preferred being in situation A than B, but Harvard undergrads were skewed with 93% preferring situation A, which says a lot

an anecdote about outrunning the other person when the bear is chasing was also really insightful

• in the book, the authors say, *one investigation we conducted suggests that the higher the male-to-female ratio at a time when a man reaches his early twenties, the shorter his life. a man who is surrounded by other men has to work harder to find a partner, and this environment of elevated competition has long-term consequences for his health.* The whole claim seems like a joke made with a friend, and so I wanted to look at the journal(Citation 14).

4 This Hurts Me As Much As It Hurts You

Journal Chosen

23) H. Raspe, A. Hueppe, and H. Neuhauser, "Back Pain: A Communicable Disease?" *International Journal of Epidemiology* 37 (2008): 69-74.

- as far as the paper goes, they aimed to propose the hypothesis of BP(Back Pain) being a communicable disease.

- I found it particularly interesting and significant in the sense that it would an interesting thing if it were to be true as people don't normally think of it that way, i believe?
- liked this point: The two populations(EG, WG) share genes and history (the latter from 1871 till 1945).
- So, they had this as the source of their data. *The first comparison is based on results from two nearly concurrent population-based surveys, one representative for the territory of the former GDR (N = 2617 adults aged 18–79, response rate 70%), the other local covering the City of Luebeck in North West Germany (N = 3109 adults aged 25–74, response rate 81%). The first included a set of questions on BP identical to that from the Luebeck survey.* I don't know how much of an effect this can have, but it already feel like the survey population age difference is huge for a very age-sensitive factor such as BP. The difference in from 18-19 already feels huge(actually!) so 18-25 is like a huge leap already
- an interesting study to follow up on this topic would prolly be something along the lines of *Longitudinal individual-level studies linking exposure to specific narratives with later pain reporting or disability.* might've been too specific with that but yeah.
- In my view, this paper's greatest strength lies in its careful balance between empirical observation and theoretical restraint. The convergence in back pain prevalence following reunification is striking and strongly suggests that cultural and informational factors matter. However, the metaphor of "communicable disease," while provocative/attention-grabing, risks being misleading if taken literally. Cause what appears to spread is not pain itself, but ways of interpreting bodily sensations, legitimizing suffering, and responding to discomfort.

Definitions

What spreads from person to person is what social scientists call a norm, which is a shared expectation about what is appropriate.

- Quotes that caught my eye:
 - 1) Don't date your old partner's current partner's old partner.
 - 2) What a colossal waste of money it is for social scientists to prove the obvious.
 - 3) When people are free to do as they please, they usually imitate each other.
- In page 103, and as they back this sentence by citation 9 for chapter 4, *Sociologist Ed Laumann and his colleagues propped that STD rates were higher among blacks than whites because of differences in the two groups' sexual network patterns.*

Favorite section:

- (initially) Your Friends' Friends Can Make You Fat (felt that they were very superficial personally cause i, personally, wasn't convinced by the end of this section)

Maybe I was a little biased because I had heard of this before but had not paid much attention so it caught my interest real quick.

- Back pain as a *communicable disease*.

- People randomly assigned to be seated near strangers who eat a lot wind up doing the same, and the effect can be so subconscious that it has been called "*mindless eating*". Backed by citation 13, wanted to read the paper, but for some reason couldn't access it.

It is indeed pretty interesting that similar to spreading germs, such health-related phenomena can also spread from person to person and from person to person to person and beyond.

- *The Framingham Heart Study* also caught my eye (follow up: of course it did, it was quite central to this chapter)

The fact that I thought of the same effect (a pebble being dropped in a still pool of water and then a concentric circle of waves moving away from it) to visualize how the obesity would spread over 32 years like they had thought, but instead it was more like a whole handful of rocks being thrown in over a wide area creating chopping surfaces obscuring the impact of a single pebble and its waves was kinda funny yet made a lot more sense when I thought back about the network and how it's supposed to actually work.

- Norms can spread even if they do not affect a person's behavior, and as a result you might seem to affect your friend's friend without affecting your friend. This seems like an acceptable argument, but it's something I found that we can all think of, but I guess there are some things that we have to infer after all.

- *Pg.115* People see images of ideal body types in the media, but they are less influenced by such images, than they are by the actions and the appearance fo the very real people to whom they are actually connected. Presents a quote from citation 18(E.Goodman) (again found other journals that cited this but couldn't find this one out). I wanted to see how the article ended up making that conclusion.

- The separation of smokers and non-smokers over time was an interesting thing to learn. *The present wave of cessation mirrors in the obverse what happened sixty to one hundred years ago: when smoking fiest took root in our society, it did so among those with relatively high status. Ads from the 1930s and 1940s show smiling doctors enjoying and promoting tobacco as cited by journal 20.* Now, that is opposite.

- Initially found it funny that back pain can spread via social networks. Before Berlin Wall fell, East Germany had much lower rates of back pain than West Germany, but within ten years of reunification, rates had converged to be the same, with East Germany emulating West Germany's higher rates.
- Learning about *Koro* and seeing how the authors introduced it to tie it together with back pain as a culture-bound approach was interesting. also learnt *anorexia* and *bulimia* were a thing.

Contagious Suicide

- initial thoughts: kinda ridiculous to think that people would think of killing themselves just cause others do, but since the authors have brought it up there's prolly something interesting.
- two kinds of suicide cascades introduced: those that work through media contagion, and those that work through direct contagion among people who are connected to a person who has killed himself.
- interesting how *CDC* guidelines recommended that news reports not explain the method of suicide or mention how *wonderful* the deceased teenager was; they should also refrain from suggesting that the suicide helped solve the teenager's problems. felt like we've all once been there finding some kind of deaths in movies particularly beautiful. wouldn't think of how far people would take such moments in their own lives.
- *Citation 30*, as the authors cite, says how changes in the reporting of suicides were implemented in 1987, and there was an immediate and enormous drop in suicide attempts to roughly six per year thereafter. this is about subway system in Austria and how people flung themselves in front of the trains by the way. cause it was *cooler* way to die? people are interesting indeed.
- something about suicide being contagious particularly among young compared to the old which is not that surprising of a result, but the link between the subject's age and susceptibility is yet another illustration of how the attributes of the nodes on a network are crucial in determining the flow of the phenomenon at hand which was interesting to think of.
- read some of the descriptions provided from the small village in the far north of Canada, it was really interesting, cause *initially* you would think who would be *stupid* enough to follow people to death? but if we place ourselves in their shoes, and the way they have been brought of and have the experiences they've had. losing your friends/family to it, these are things in life that would probably make you want to question the value in living yourself? it's not like they are full grown adults, even for whom a few questions about life would maybe arise?