

AUTONOMY DEVELOPMENT AND THE
INFLUENCE OF TEMPERAMENT

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ABSTRACT

This study examined how perceptions of adolescent temperament are related to parent-child conflict and the development of autonomy and how temperament might interact with sibling ordinal status. Participants were 145 families. Each family included at least one parent, a first-born in 8th, 10th, or 12th grade, and a second-born sibling. Participants were given questionnaires regarding adolescent temperament, conflict frequency and intensity in the parent-adolescent relationship, expectations for adolescent's behavioral autonomy, and parental authority legitimacy. Results partially confirmed the hypotheses revealing that temperament was related to parent-child conflict and, to a lesser extent, to autonomy development. In particular, parents and adolescents reported that temperamental intensity, persistence, and approach were related to conflict frequency, conflict intensity, and expectations for behavioral autonomy. Persistence was the only temperament that related to parental authority legitimacy. Also, results revealed that temperament interacted with sibling ordinal status, but only for the conflict measures. These reports were more significant for parent reports of adolescent temperament than for adolescent reports.