

CHAPTER II

THE PORTRAYAL OF MIDDLE CHILD IN JANE AUSTEN'S *PRIDE AND PREJUDICE*: A BIRTH ORDER THEORY PERSPECTIVE

This chapter presents the answers to the research questions outlined in the previous chapter. It consists of two subsections that discuss the characteristics of the middle child and the factors contributing to its portrayal in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* (1813).

2.1. The Characteristics of the Middle Child Portrayed through Mary Bennet

In the novel *Pride and Prejudice*, Mary Bennet is portrayed as the less prominent child within her family. The Bennet family has five daughters, each with distinct personalities. The birth order in the Bennet family is as follows: Jane is the eldest, Elizabeth, commonly known as Lizzy, is the second, Mary Bennet is the third, followed by Kitty and Lydia as the fourth and fifth children, respectively.

The distinct characteristics of her sisters place Mary in a position that went largely unnoticed among them. Amid her sisters' dominance, Mary found it difficult to establish her own place within the family. This circumstance led Mary to seek alternative ways to gain her parents' attention, such as consistently striving to earn recognition through her intellectual and moral abilities and by demonstrating her piano skills in front of others. However, all her efforts to obtain attention were seldom appreciated by her parents.

2.1.1. Highly Competitive

This characteristic can be observed through Mary's efforts to distinguish herself from her sisters by emphasizing her intellectual abilities, knowledge, and accomplishments rather than physical appearance or social charm. Throughout the novel, Mary attempts to demonstrate her knowledge, moral understanding, and accomplishments whenever she has the opportunity. Her competitive behavior reflects her efforts to establish an identity that is different from those of her sisters. This tendency can be identified through several dialogues and narrative descriptions presented by the narrator.

The first evidence can be found in the Volume I, Chapter V when Mary joins the conversation about Mr. Darcy by stating, "Pride," observed Mary, who piqued herself upon the solidity of her reflections, "is a very common failing, I believe. By all that I have ever read, I am convinced that it is very common indeed" (Austen, 1813, p. 18). This dialogue shows how Mary attempts to distinguish herself from her sisters through her intellectual abilities rather than through beauty or social charm. While her sisters are discussing Mr. Darcy, Mary takes the opportunity to contribute her opinion by referring to the knowledge she has gained from reading.

Austen's choice of the word "observed" is significant because it presents Mary as someone who is not merely participating in the conversation but attempting to express an opinion that appears thoughtful and well considered. This word distinguishes Mary's manner of speaking from that of her sisters, as she attempts to

present herself as analytical and intellectually mature. Through this choice of word, Austen portrays Mary as a character who seeks to establish herself through intellectual ability.

The phrase “who piqued herself” further reinforces this portrayal. Austen does not state that other people admired Mary’s intelligence; instead, Mary herself takes pride in the quality of her own reflections. This distinction shows that Mary places importance on her own intellectual abilities and attempts to establish her worth through what she believes she knows. Her confidence is therefore closely connected to her perception of herself as a knowledgeable person. This attitude reflects her competitive behavior because Mary attempts to prove her worth through intellectual achievements, particularly in a family where she cannot compete with Jane’s beauty or Elizabeth’s social and intellectual qualities in the same way.

Austen also uses the phrase “the solidity of her reflections.” The noun “solidity” suggests intellectual depth and seriousness, while “reflections” indicates thoughtful consideration and moral reasoning. Through these words, Austen portrays Mary as someone who wants her opinions to be regarded as meaningful and authoritative. She constructs an identity based on intellectual seriousness and moral judgment, using these qualities to distinguish herself from her sisters. Thus, Mary’s competitive behavior is not expressed through direct rivalry but through her efforts to demonstrate that she possesses intellectual qualities that can distinguish her from the other members of her family.

The phrase “by all that I have ever read” is also important because it reveals the source of Mary’s confidence in expressing her opinion. Mary relies on the knowledge she has gained through reading to support her argument. Books become an important means through which she develops and presents her intellectual identity. By referring to what she has read, Mary attempts to establish authority in the conversation and demonstrate that her opinion is based on knowledge. Since she does not possess the same natural advantages as her sisters, she emphasizes knowledge as an area in which she can distinguish herself.

Therefore, Mary’s tendency to rely on intellectual knowledge rather than physical attractiveness or social charm illustrates one of the clearest manifestations of her highly competitive behavior. Instead of competing directly with her sisters, Mary develops an area in which she believes she can demonstrate her value. Her intellectual abilities become a means through which she attempts to establish a distinct position within the family.

The second evidence can be found in the Volume I, Chapter VI where the narrator describes Mary as someone who “worked hard for knowledge and accomplishments” (Austen, 1813, p. 23). This description further demonstrates Mary’s effort to develop qualities that can distinguish her from her sisters. The phrase “worked hard” indicates that Mary’s knowledge and accomplishments are not simply presented as natural abilities but as the results of continuous effort and application.

The phrase “worked hard” is significant because it conveys Mary’s determination to develop herself through learning and practice. Her knowledge is not portrayed as something that comes naturally to her. Instead, she puts considerable effort into acquiring it. This suggests that Mary recognizes the need to develop qualities that can give her a more distinctive position among her sisters. Her efforts therefore reveal her tendency to compete in an area that she can control through practice and dedication.

The narrator also uses the word “knowledge,” which is significant in understanding the identity Mary attempts to construct. Austen does not simply portray Mary as a girl who enjoys reading; knowledge becomes one of the main qualities through which Mary defines herself. Because she does not possess the same physical attractiveness or social charm associated with some of her sisters, she makes intellectual knowledge an advantage that can distinguish her from other members of the family.

The phrase “and accomplishments” further clarifies the nature of Mary’s efforts. Her desire to develop herself does not stop at acquiring knowledge through reading. It also extends to other skills and abilities that she can demonstrate to others. This can be seen in several scenes in the novel, particularly when Mary performs on the piano at Netherfield. Therefore, the description of Mary as someone who “worked hard for knowledge and accomplishments” provides an important connection between her personal efforts and her tendency to demonstrate her abilities publicly.

When viewed in relation to her highly competitive behavior, Mary's efforts show that she chooses areas in which she believes she can establish her own advantage. She cannot compete with Jane's beauty or Elizabeth's natural wit and social confidence. Therefore, Mary focuses on qualities that can be developed through effort, particularly knowledge and accomplishments. Her efforts to develop these qualities indicate her desire to prove that she also possesses abilities that make her worthy of attention and appreciation.

The narrator further describes Mary as "the only plain one in the family" who "worked hard for knowledge and accomplishments" and was "always impatient for display" (Austen, 1813, p. 23). The phrase "the only plain one in the family" highlights Mary's lack of the physical advantages associated with her sisters. The word "plain" emphasizes the contrast between Mary and her sisters and helps explain why she seeks other qualities through which she can distinguish herself.

This description is important because Mary does not simply remain passive because of her lack of physical attractiveness. Instead, she works hard to develop knowledge and accomplishments. The phrase "always impatient for display" is particularly significant because it shows that Mary does not only want to possess these abilities; she also wants opportunities to demonstrate them. Her impatience to display her accomplishments strengthens the portrayal of her competitive behavior, as she seeks to make her abilities visible to others.

Thus, the combination of “the only plain one in the family,” “worked hard for knowledge and accomplishments,” and “always impatient for display” creates a clear contrast between Mary and her sisters. Mary lacks some of the qualities that naturally attract attention to her sisters, so she develops knowledge and accomplishments as alternative qualities through which she can establish herself. Her efforts demonstrate that she attempts to compete in areas that can be developed through hard work and practice.

Mary’s competitive tendency is not limited to intellectual discussions or personal study. It is also evident in her attempt to display her musical accomplishment in front of others. This can be seen in the first volume, chapter eighteen, when the Bennet family attends a party at Netherfield. The narrator states that “such an opportunity of exhibiting was delightful to her,” but immediately describes that “Mary’s powers were by no means fitted for such a display: her voice was weak, and her manner affected” (Austen, 1813, p. 98).

These two descriptions create a contrast between Mary’s eagerness to display her ability and the narrator’s assessment of her limited performance. The phrase “such an opportunity of exhibiting was delightful to her” shows how pleased Mary is to have the opportunity to demonstrate her musical ability before an audience. The word “exhibiting” is particularly significant because it indicates that Mary is not merely interested in playing music for personal enjoyment. She is eager to present her accomplishment before others.

The word “delightful” also suggests that the opportunity gives Mary considerable satisfaction because it allows her to demonstrate the result of the effort she has invested in developing her musical ability. This scene therefore continues the pattern established in the previous evidence: Mary develops an accomplishment and then seeks an opportunity to display it. Her behavior reflects her effort to establish herself through qualities that distinguish her from her sisters.

However, Austen immediately contrasts Mary’s enthusiasm with the narrator’s statement that “Mary’s powers were by no means fitted for such a display.” The phrase “by no means fitted” indicates that Mary’s abilities are not considered sufficient for such a public performance. This contrast is important because it shows that Mary’s determination to display her ability does not necessarily correspond to the quality of the ability itself. Nevertheless, she continues to take the opportunity to perform.

The narrator further states that “her voice was weak, and her manner affected.” The word “weak” suggests that Mary’s singing ability is not strong enough to make a remarkable impression, while “affected” suggests that her manner of performing appears unnatural or forced. Despite these limitations, Mary still chooses to perform before the guests. Her willingness to display her ability despite the weakness of her performance demonstrates her determination to prove herself through her accomplishments.

This tendency becomes even clearer when Mr. Bennet interrupts her performance by saying, “That will do extremely well, child. You have delighted us

long enough. Let the other young ladies have time to exhibit” (Austen, 1813, p. 98). Although the statement initially appears to be a form of praise, the context reveals that Mr. Bennet is speaking sarcastically. Rather than encouraging Mary to continue, he publicly ends her performance and gives the other young women an opportunity to perform.

Mr. Bennet’s interruption is significant because it occurs while Mary is attempting to demonstrate one of the accomplishments she has worked hard to develop. Instead of allowing her to continue, he dismisses her performance in front of the other guests. This response contrasts with Mary’s eagerness to demonstrate her ability and further reveals the difference between her efforts and the recognition she receives from her family.

The narrator later states that “Mary, though pretending not to hear, was somewhat disconcerted” (Austen, 1813, p. 98). The phrase “pretending not to hear” indicates that Mary attempts to conceal her reaction to her father’s interruption. However, the phrase “was somewhat disconcerted” reveals that she is emotionally affected by the incident. Her reaction demonstrates that the performance was important to her and that she is sensitive to how her efforts are received by others.

This scene therefore reinforces Mary’s competitive behavior because it shows that she actively seeks opportunities to demonstrate the abilities she has developed. Although her performance does not receive the appreciation she expects, she nevertheless attempts to establish her worth through her accomplishment. Her behavior

is therefore not expressed through direct rivalry with her sisters, but through her efforts to develop and display qualities that can distinguish her from them.

The evidence discussed above demonstrates a consistent pattern in Mary's behavior. She quotes from books when discussing pride, takes pride in the "solidity" of her reflections, works hard to acquire "knowledge and accomplishments," and eagerly takes opportunities to display her abilities. These behaviors indicate that Mary attempts to construct an identity based on intellectual and personal accomplishments. Her competitiveness is therefore expressed indirectly, through her efforts to prove that she possesses qualities worthy of appreciation.

Mary's behavior also reveals her desire to be acknowledged within her family. However, this desire does not constitute a separate characteristic; rather, it strengthens the understanding of her competitive behavior. Mary's efforts to demonstrate her abilities can be understood as attempts to establish her value in a family where her sisters possess qualities that naturally attract attention. Her desire to distinguish herself therefore motivates her to develop and display the qualities she believes can give her a more meaningful position.

Based on the discussion above, Mary Bennet's highly competitive behavior is manifested through her efforts to distinguish herself from her sisters by developing and displaying her intellectual and personal accomplishments. Her habit of quoting from books, expressing moral opinions, working hard to acquire knowledge, and demonstrating her musical ability shows that she actively attempts to prove her

capabilities. Although she does not compete with her sisters through direct confrontation, she seeks to establish her own advantage through areas that she can develop through effort and practice.

From the perspective of Alfred Adler's birth order theory, Mary's competitive behavior can be understood in relation to her position among her siblings. As a middle child, Mary occupies a position between her older and younger sisters, each of whom possesses characteristics that make them more noticeable within the family. Her attempts to develop knowledge, accomplishments, and other abilities can therefore be interpreted as efforts to establish her own identity and position. Thus, Mary's tendency to prove herself through intellectual and personal accomplishments demonstrates the highly competitive characteristic portrayed through her character.

2.1.2. Difficulty Adapting

The difficulty Mary experienced in adapting is evident from the first piece of evidence found in the Volume I, Chapter II where the narrative states "Mary wished to say something very sensible, but knew not how" (Austen, 1813, p. 5). The essence of this quotation lies in the contrast between Mary's desire to express her thoughts and her inability to do so. The phrase "wished to say something very sensible" demonstrates her strong intention to contribute to the conversation by expressing an opinion she considered meaningful. However, this desire is immediately interrupted by the phrase "but knew not how," suggesting that when the opportunity to speak arises, Mary

struggles to express herself appropriately. As a result, she loses the confidence to communicate her thoughts despite already knowing what she wants to say.

The phrase “knew not how” that follows is the most important part of this quote because it shows that Mary’s difficulty lay not in what she wanted to say, but in how she should say it. In other words, the obstacle Mary faced did not stem from a lack of intellectual ability, but from her difficulty in knowing how to position herself when interacting with others. Furthermore, the use of the word “how” suggests that Mary is struggling with how to express herself, not with the content of her thoughts. She seems to be overthinking how her opinion will be received, causing her to lose her spontaneity in conversation. While the other family members are able to respond naturally, Mary falls silent because she cannot find the right way to express her thoughts.

Further evidence can also be found in the Volume I, Chapter VI the narrator describes Mary as someone who “worked hard for knowledge and accomplishments” but “was always impatient for display” (Austen, 1813, p. 23). This quotation shows that Mary made great efforts to develop herself through knowledge and various skills. However, her constant desire to showcase these abilities causes her to struggle with adjusting her behavior to the social situations around her.

In addition, the portrayal of Mary as having “a pedantic air and conceited manner” reveals her difficulty in fitting in socially. The term “pedantic” refers to a person who is overly insistent on certain knowledge or rules, while “conceited” indicates an excessive sense of self-confidence in one’s own abilities. These two two

descriptive terms are important because they show that Mary's efforts to appear intelligent actually come across as stiff. Individuals who adapt effectively to social situations are generally able to adjust their speech accordingly, whereas Mary struggles to do so. Through this description, Austen illustrates that Mary does not fully understand how to convey her knowledge and abilities in social interactions. She focuses more on showing what she knows than on considering how others perceive her behavior.

Other supporting evidence showing that Mary truly struggles to adapt can be found in Volume I, Chapter VII in the scene where Elizabeth is about to go visit Jane, who is ill, and Mary Bennet responds with the comment, "Every impulse of feeling should be guided by reason; and, in my opinion, exertion should always be in proportion to what is required" (Austen, 1813, p. 30). It is evident that Mary fails to read the emotional context of the situation namely, that Jane is ill yet she comments as if she cannot empathize with Jane's situation, thereby imposing her own rigid framework of thought. Here, Mary also appears to lack empathy for what Jane is facing; what Jane needs in that situation is compassion, not judgment in the form of her moralizing advice.

Moreover, Mary's use of the word "should" in her statement suggests that she views emotions as something that must be controlled. For Mary, a person's actions must always be based on rational considerations. This way of thinking makes it difficult for her to adapt to situations involving emotions such as when someone shows affection

or concern for a family member so her response to the situation at hand ends up being out of place.

Thus, this dialogue shows that Mary's difficulty in adapting does not mean she does not understand the situation at hand, but rather that she is less able to adjust her way of thinking and her responses to the emotional needs involved in social interactions. She is more comfortable relying on the knowledge she believes in than attuning to the feelings of those around her. This aligns with the difficulty adapting characteristic of the middle child namely, difficulty in forming social relationships due to a discrepancy between how an individual perceives themselves and their surrounding environment.

The last evidence can be found in Volume III, Chapter V Mary's response remains consistent with her earlier dialogue regarding Lydia's elopement with Wickham. While the entire family is feeling anxious and devastated by the incident, Mary instead offers Elizabeth a moral reflection by saying this truncated dialogue "We may draw from it this useful lesson: that loss of virtue in a female is irretrievable", and "That one false step involves her in endless ruin" (Austen, 1813, p. 275). The phrase "We may draw from it this useful lesson" that Mary sees the event as a moral lesson to be learned, rather than as a situation that is causing suffering for her family. Mary's response pattern is still the same as in the dialogue when Jane was sick. From this, we can see how difficult it is for Mary to adjust to the situation at hand. While the whole family is filled with anxiety and worry, Mary instead shifts the conversation to general

principles. This shows that she has trouble adjusting her responses to the social and emotional context that is happening.

Futhermore, the statements “that loss of virtue in a female is irretrievable” and “that one false step involves her in endless ruin” further show how Mary views the events taking place. The word “irretrievable” implies that a woman’s loss of honor is something that cannot be fixed, while the phrase “endless ruin” describes consequences that are long-lasting and seem never-ending. These word choices show that Mary is more focused on the moral consequences of Lydia’s actions rather than Lydia’s situation as her sister who is facing trouble.

Through the various events Mary experiences in the novel, it becomes clear that her difficulty in adapting does not stem from a lack of intellectual ability or knowledge, but rather from the way she handles social and emotional situations. Mary often prioritizes logical thinking and the moral principles she holds dear over understanding the feelings of others. When faced with situations requiring empathy, she tends to offer opinions based on what she considers morally correct, rather than on the emotional states of those around her. This is what ultimately makes it difficult for Mary to build closer relationships with her family and social circle.

From the perspective of Alfred Adler’s birth order theory, Mary’s situation can be linked to her experience as a middle child striving to find her place and sense of self-worth within the family. Because she often found herself in the shadow of her siblings, Mary sought to establish her identity through knowledge, skills, and

achievements that she believed would make her more valued. However, these efforts actually make Mary stand out even more because she is unable to adapt the way she presents herself to the social situations around her. Therefore, Mary's difficulty in adapting is one of the characteristics of a middle child evident in her, as she struggles to balance her desire for recognition with her ability to understand the emotional needs of others.

2.2. Factor Contribute to the Portrayal of Middle Child in Mary Bennet in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* (1813)

One of the factor contributing to Mary Bennet's portrayal as a middle child is the limited attention and recognition she receives within her family, which places her in a relatively minor position compared to her sisters.

The first piece of evidence can be found in Volume I, Chapter I when Mr. Bennet describes his daughters by saying, "They have none of them much to recommend them," and then adds, "they are all silly and ignorant like other girls; but Lizzy has something more of quickness than her sisters" (Austen, 1813, p. 3). Although Mary is not directly mentioned by name, she is included among the sisters whom Mr. Bennet compares to Elizabeth. This statement shows that Elizabeth receives particular recognition from her father because of her "quickness," while the other daughters are described generally as "silly and ignorant."

The phrase "but Lizzy has something more of quickness than her sisters" is significant because Mr. Bennet specifically identifies a quality that distinguishes

Elizabeth from her sisters. In contrast, Mary's intellectual interests and accomplishments are not acknowledged in the same way. Although Mary is known for reading books, making extracts, and developing her knowledge, these qualities do not receive direct recognition from her father in this statement. This comparison places Mary in a less noticeable position among her sisters.

Therefore, the statement demonstrates the unequal recognition within the Bennet family. Elizabeth is singled out for a particular quality, whereas Mary is included among the daughters who are described in general terms. This situation contributes to Mary's position as a less recognized member of the family. The lack of recognition is important because Mary later attempts to establish her own value through the qualities that she can develop, particularly knowledge and accomplishments.

The second piece of evidence can be found in the Volume I, Chapter II in Mr. Bennet's dialogue "What say you, Mary? for you are a young lady of deep reflection, I know, and read great books and make extracts; Mary wished to say something sensible, but knew not how." (Austen, 1813, p. 5).

At first glance, Mr. Bennet's statement appears to give Mary attention because he directly asks for her opinion and acknowledges her habit of reading books and making extracts. However, the context of the conversation indicates that his statement is not presented as straightforward appreciation. Instead, Mr. Bennet refers to Mary's

intellectual image in a manner consistent with his sarcastic attitude toward his family members.

The phrase “a young lady of deep reflection” describes Mary as someone who considers herself thoughtful and intellectual, while “read great books and make extracts” refers to her habit of reading serious books and recording passages from them. These expressions identify the qualities through which Mary attempts to construct her identity within the family. However, Mr. Bennet’s response does not provide the genuine appreciation that Mary might expect from a parent. Instead, her intellectual interests become part of his sarcastic remark.

This is further supported by the narrator’s statement that “Mary wished to say something sensible, but knew not how.” Although Mary wants to contribute to the conversation, she struggles to express her thoughts. This indicates that she does not occupy a strong position in the family conversation compared with her sisters, who are more active and confident in expressing their opinions. Thus, the scene demonstrates not only the limited recognition Mary receives but also her less prominent position within family interaction.

Another indication of Mary’s less noticeable position can be seen in the Volume I, Chapter V when she attempts to participate in the conversation by saying “Pride,” observed Mary, who piqued herself on the soundness of her reflections, “is a very common failing, I believe. By all that I have ever read, I am convinced that it is very

common indeed” (Austen, 1813, p. 18). In this scene, Jane and Elizabeth are discussing Mr. Darcy, while Lydia and Kitty are occupied with their own conversation. Amid this situation, Mary attempts to enter the discussion by expressing her thoughts about pride. Her statement demonstrates her effort to make her presence noticeable through her intellectual abilities.

The phrase “prided herself on the soundness of her reflections” indicates that Mary takes pride in her intellectual opinions. Her attempt to contribute to the conversation can therefore be understood as a way of demonstrating that she also possesses qualities worthy of attention. Unlike Jane, who attracts attention through her beauty, or Elizabeth, who attracts attention through her intelligence and wit, Mary relies on her knowledge and moral reflections to establish her own identity.

This evidence also shows the connection between Mary’s limited recognition and her attempts to establish a more meaningful position within the family. Because she does not naturally attract the same attention as her sisters, she attempts to make herself visible by emphasizing what she knows. Her intellectual opinions become one of the ways through which she tries to occupy a more noticeable position among her siblings.

This portrayal is further supported by the narrator’s description in the Volume I, Chapter VI, where Mary is described as “the only plain one in the family” who “worked hard for knowledge and accomplishments” and was “always impatient for

display” (Austen, 1813, p. 23). The phrase “the only plain one in the family” highlights Mary’s difference from her sisters. The word “plain” does not only refer to physical appearance but also emphasizes Mary’s lack of the qualities that naturally make her stand out among the Bennet daughters. Jane is admired for her beauty, Elizabeth for her wit and intelligence, and Lydia for her lively personality, whereas Mary does not possess the same qualities that attract immediate attention.

Consequently, Mary attempts to develop other qualities that can distinguish her from her sisters. This is reflected in the phrase “worked hard for knowledge and accomplishments.” The phrase indicates that Mary puts considerable effort into developing her abilities. Knowledge and accomplishments therefore become alternative means through which she attempts to establish her value within the family.

The narrator’s statement that Mary was “always impatient for display” further reveals that she does not simply want to possess knowledge and accomplishments; she also wants opportunities to demonstrate them to others. This desire to display her abilities indicates her need to make herself visible and recognized. Thus, Mary’s efforts to develop and display her accomplishments can be understood as a response to her less prominent position within the family.

The same tendency can be seen in the Volume I, Chapter XVIII when Mary performs at Netherfield. The narrator states that “such an opportunity of exhibiting was delightful to her,” but then describes that “Mary’s powers were by no means fitted to

such a display: her voice was weak, and her manner affected” (Austen, 1813, p. 98). The phrase “such an opportunity of exhibiting was delightful to her” shows Mary’s enthusiasm when she receives an opportunity to display her musical ability before the guests. The opportunity is important to Mary because it allows her to make herself visible and demonstrate an accomplishment that she has developed through effort.

However, the narrator immediately contrasts Mary’s enthusiasm with the statement that “Mary’s powers were by no means fitted for such a display.” This indicates that Mary’s abilities are not considered sufficient for the performance she attempts to give. Nevertheless, Mary continues to take the opportunity to display her ability. This behavior demonstrates how strongly she desires to establish herself through her accomplishments.

Mary’s performance is then interrupted by Mr. Bennet, who says “That will do extremely well, child. You have delighted us long enough. Let the other young ladies have time to exhibit” (Austen, 1813, p. 98). Although the expression “delighted us” appears positive on the surface, the context indicates that Mr. Bennet is ending Mary’s performance rather than genuinely encouraging her to continue. He immediately asks Mary Bennet to stop and gives the opportunity to the other young ladies. Consequently, Mary’s attempt to participate and demonstrate her accomplishment is cut short.

This incident reinforces Mary’s less significant position within the family. She attempts to participate in the social situation by displaying her musical ability, but her

participation is not allowed to continue. Instead, the opportunity is given to other young women. The situation therefore demonstrates how Mary's attempts to make herself visible do not result in the recognition she expects.

The final supporting evidence can be found in the Volume II, Chapter XVI, where the narrator states, "She seldom listened to anybody for more than half a minute, and never attended to Mary at all" (Austen, 1813, p. 215). This quotation directly illustrates the lack of attention Mary receives from her younger sister, Lydia.

The phrase "never attended to Mary Bennet at all" is particularly significant. The word "never" emphasizes the complete absence of attention, while "at all" strengthens the meaning of Lydia's disregard. Although Mary is Lydia's older sister, Lydia does not pay attention to her in the same way that she interacts with other members of the family. Lydia's behavior also reflects the difference between their positions within the family. Lydia is outgoing, confident, and active, which allows her to dominate many family interactions. Mary Bennet, in contrast, remains in a less influential position. Although Mary Bennet is older, her position does not give her sufficient influence to attract Lydia's attention. Therefore, the evidence demonstrates that Mary's presence and opinions are often overlooked even within her sibling relationships.

Taken together, these pieces of evidence show that Mary's limited attention and relatively minor role are closely connected. Mr. Bennet's comparison between

Elizabeth and her sisters demonstrates the unequal recognition Mary Bennet receives, while his treatment of Mary's intellectual interests and musical performance further shows that her efforts do not receive the appreciation she seeks. Meanwhile, Lydia's failure to attend to Mary Bennet illustrates that this lack of recognition also exists within her sibling relationships.

From the perspective of Alfred Adler's birth order theory, the position of a child within the family can influence how a child understands their place and value among siblings. In Mary's case, being positioned between her more noticeable sisters contributes to her experience of being less recognized and less influential within the family. As a result, Mary Bennet attempts to establish her own value through knowledge, accomplishments, moral opinions, and musical abilities.

Based on the discussion above, it can be concluded that the limited attention and recognition Mary Bennet receives within the Bennet family contribute to her relatively minor position among her siblings. Mary Bennet is frequently overshadowed by her sisters and has fewer opportunities to occupy a prominent position in family interactions. Her response to this position is reflected in her efforts to develop and display her intellectual and musical accomplishments. Therefore, the lack of attention and her minor position within the family contribute to the portrayal of Mary Bennet as a middle child who seeks to establish her own place and value among her siblings.