

Adult Implications of Being an Only Child

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Abstract

The topic was undertaken to explore the personality dimensions of adults who experienced childhood as an only child. For decades, popular opinion and research have negatively portrayed this particular birth order, leaving only children unfairly stigmatized as selfish, spoiled, and problematic. Contemporary empirical data establishes positive advantages to the birth order position and no greater occurrence of negative features than their counterparts with siblings. This paper summarizes many academic articles exploring various facets of human existence, some directly related to only children and some more targeted to birth order in general. Topics covered include multidimensional perfectionism, relationship trends, political leadership, Type A tendencies, different types of onlies, cross-cultural data, parental interaction, and real life experiences of only children. In this paper, the data collected serves to generalize expected behaviors, trends, and adult implications of belonging to the birth order of Only Child.

Table of Contents

Title Page	1
Abstract	2
Table of Contents	3
Introduction	4
Article Summary: Birth Order and Relationships – Friends, Family and Sexual Partners	8
Article Summary: “I Always Knew Mom and Dad Loved Me Best”: Experiences of Only children	10
Article Summary: Gender and birth order as determinants of parental behaviour	13
Article Summary: Linking birth order to Political Leadership: The Impact of Parents and Siblings?	15
Article Summary: The Relationship of Multidimensional Perfectionism to Psychological Birth Order	18
Community Visit Summary	21
Summary	23
References	25

Introduction

Popular culture typically stigmatizes the birth order position of the “only child.” If asked, most average people would typically describe the personality characteristics of an only child negatively, indicating the assumption that only children are spoiled brats. After all, for their entire lives, they have been the sole recipient of the attention and love of their parents. Does this fact destine only children to a life of self-serving behavior? Are people with siblings merely jealous of the experiences had by only children? How does the ordinal position of the only child actually affect personality traits, life experiences, and ability to form interpersonal relationships? This paper explores the expected behaviors and adult implications of growing up an only child. It is important to remember that each person is unique, his or her experiences varied and motivations different. However, trends develop, and I will attempt to generalize common traits of an adult only child.

The choice of mothers to birth and raise only one child is becoming more common. In 1984, 12.2% of women gave birth to only one child and in 1994 this number increased to 17.1%. That is a 40% increase in only 10 years, and the trend continues to rise. (Fleck, 1997) A variety of reasons attribute for this trend, including women being more career-oriented, waiting to bear children, and the financial burden multiple children impose on parents. The decision to not have multiple children exemplifies the desire to invest the maximum parental energy, love and effort into one child. The passion and intent of these parents shines through in their singletons throughout their whole life.

Not every child or childhood is created equal and, with the human experience being dynamic and broad in scope, it is appropriate that each adult exhibits different

personality traits and flaws. According to Rosenberg and Hyde (1992), three types of onlies exist: type one, labeled as normal and well-adjusted; type two, labeled as impulsive and acting out; type three, labeled as first-bornish. Their research vastly spanned the human life span, with participants ranging from age eleven to late-sixties representing both genders. They concluded that each type remained consistent throughout the lifespan, however, some of the particular qualities diminished in later adult stages. The positive qualities exhibited by types one and two start to become similar in adult years, with both exhibiting dependability, productiveness, and other stable traits.

Statistically, only children perform higher on achievement tests than their age-mates with siblings. (Keller and Zach, 2002; Phillips, Long, and Bedeian, 1990; Roberts and Blanton, 2001; Rosenberg and Hyde, 1992; Smith 2004) This is typically attributed to the amount and quality of parental investment throughout the child's life. A pressure to please the parents by succeeding exists, often driving the child to fulfill expected goals. Academic superiority occurs in only children in other cultures. Since China enacted the one-child policy in 1979, many studies have been conducted to analyze the repercussions. Post and Falbo's 2000 study found the following:

In terms of academic achievement, urban only children were found to outperform their later-born peers, even after parental characteristics, gender, and nursery school attendance were controlled for. (p. 370)

Singletons and firstborns are the most overrepresented birth order positions in politics. According to a reference in a study by Andeweg and Van Den Berg, (2003) this fact applies to U.S. presidents, congress, and state governors, British and Australian Prime Ministers, and all offices of the Netherlands' government as well as other countries. This

cross-culture achievement and leadership of singletons has a multitude of empirically supported data to conclude that only children, in fact, have a consistent advantage over other birth order positions, especially laterborn children with multiple older siblings. (Roberts and Blanton, 2001)

Intelligence and the ability to achieve certainly give adult only children an advantage in the workplace, collegiate life, and in other adult arenas. However, this expectation to reach high achievement levels can lead to Type A personality tendencies and unhealthy perfectionism. Firstborn and only children statistically score higher on the California Psychological Inventory (CPI), which is used to assess Type A status. Men statistically score higher than women do. The higher the score on the CPI, the more Type A tendencies and behavioral patterns a person possesses. Individuals exhibiting Type A tendencies are coronary-prone, hard driving, competitive, driven by achievement and obsessed with accomplishing more in less time. (Phillips, Long, and Bedeian, 1990) Similarly, singletons exhibit perfectionism of all levels, much like many types of onlies exist. No significant data exists to link a particular type of perfectionism to singletons, however those exhibiting Type A tendencies would likely exhibit maladaptive perfectionism, which causes a person to attempt to accomplish unrealistic expectations or achievements. (Ashby, LoCicero, and Kenny, 2003) Healthy perfectionism does exist and well-adjusted singletons exercise their intellectual superiority to achieve their realistic goals and aspirations in a healthy manner.

Achievement and intelligence certainly do not fulfill all the basic human needs. Every person needs love, companionship, acceptance, and social interaction. The nature of a singleton's interpersonal experience is that of loyalty and dedication. Typically, only children receive an enormous amount of love and attention from their parents and are

used to reflecting that energy in return. This directly affects the needs and offerings when interacting with friends and relationship partners.

According to Lorna V.'s article in the British publication *The Guardian*:

The absence of siblings means that only children are used to relating to others with a high degree of intensity. Intensity is, in fact, what characterizes most relationships for adult only children. In terms of friendship, it's not that friendship is hard to come by, more that it's not taken lightly.

With this intensity, comes a desire for independence and solitude; as well as deeply felt emotions when rejection occurs. The results of these incidents are varied, ranging from healthy alone time, paranoia, over-indulgence and deviant behaviors. Again, the exact reaction depends on the person, history, and motivation. (Lorna, 2002; Salmon, 2002)

Increased maturity and hyper-adult behaviors persist as singletons travel through adulthood. A tendency exists to associate with persons to their senior and to act older than they are. Combine this tendency with intensity and loyalty, and a parental archetype develops. It is common for singletons to give advice, be protective, and become "like a parent" to their friends and relationship partners. The stability of the friendship, confidence, and sincerity make only children great life-long friends. Research shows that middleborn children become experts at non-kin relationships because they do not feel a great deal of familial obligation. (Roberts and Blanton, 2001) Only children, however, build strong friendships and become well versed in creating lasting non-kin relationships to provide a substitute for the siblings they never had. It is almost as if they are adding to their family.

Eventually only children might like to have an only child (or two or three children) of their own. An article by Cao Li of the *China Daily* discusses the only-child

generation in China becoming parents. A survey administered provided results that only child parents made concerted efforts to excel and educate themselves in regards to their parenting skills. Only child parents put great importance in ready with their children as well as education their children on manners, values, and social conduct. “Nearly 80% of OCP’s (only child parents) tend to frequently review their ways of dealing with their children.” (Li, 2004) It seems as if there is a conscious awareness among only child parents on how they were raised, what advantages they had, what they would have done differently, and how they can best raise their child to be prepared for the world.

Article Summary: Birth Order and Relationships: Family, Friends, and Sexual Partners

Previous studies by Salmon and Daly have found that birth order along with sex is correlated with how a child acts and develops within the family. This study bridges the observation to non-kin interpersonal relationships ranging from friends to sexual partners. Only children were not specifically discussed in this article but the behavior of an only child can be compared to firstborn and lastborn data as only children are, by definition, the firstborn and lastborn of their families. Only children are similar to lastborns in that they are the only member of a multi-sibling family to receive “investment undiluted by the needs of a younger rival.” Similarly, firstborn children are the only in the family to have experienced this same undiluted investment without any rivals, younger or older. I will be using a combination of results from the firstborns and lastborns to make assumptions about only children.

Catherine Salmon conducted this study by administering a questionnaire to two hundred and forty-five undergraduate students at Simon Fraser University. All students were enrolled in an introductory course in psychology and this survey fulfilled an

experimental requirement. After dropping all twins and only children, two hundred and twenty-seven respondents remained. Most subjects were middle-income and their age ranged from eighteen to thirty-two with ninety-one percent being single and the remainder married or residing with their partner. Out of the two hundred and twenty-seven respondents, ninety-six were firstborn, seventy-two were middle-born, and fifty-nine were lastborn.

The results from this study agree with previous studies in suggesting that birth order has a significant impact on familial sentiment, with middleborns being the least family-oriented while firstborns and lastborns have the most obligation towards their family. The study also concludes that middleborns place greater value and more positive views of non-kin friendships than firstborns and lastborns. Both female and male middleborns were the least likely to report having cheated on a sexual partner with the females having a lower occurrence than their male counterparts. Overall, this suggests that middle-born children appear to be specialists in non-kin reciprocal relationships.

This study was limited to college students with a majority being of the participants being typical college age, eighteen – twenty-four. The author suggested that it would be beneficial to look at the interpersonal relationship question with a larger sample with more diverse age groups as the definition of a committed relationship is quite different at age 30 than it was at age 20. When multi-sibling non-human animals are observed, environment plays a large role in determine the pursuit of tactics and strategy. This study does not have the scope to cover all factors and variables in a participant's life span, which may have affected their behaviors. Having more evenly distributed numbers of each birth order would also lend to results that are more reliable.

Birth order in a multi-sibling family life is not something I had much experience with, but the results of this study confirmed my own assumptions after becoming aware of the topic. The study also confirmed my assumptions of only children when compared with firstborn and lastborn children. Only children receive their parent's undivided attention similar to firstborn children before the arrival of siblings and similar to lastborn children never having a younger sibling to competing for attention. According to Keller & Zach, (2002) "Firstborns are preferred over laterborns," which coincides with evolutionary generalization of "firstborns" being the prized child of the family. Only children are the firstborn by true definition as well as the lastborn by coincidence. Firstborn children are frequently the leader or protector of the younger siblings, have high expectations from the family to succeed, and tend to hold power within the family with a deep sense of familial obligation. Lastborn children are frequently referred to as "the baby" of the family, tend to be selfish, and tend to hold much regard to familial sentiment. In reference to interpersonal and romantic relationships, both lastborn and only children's selfish nature tend to shine through and they hold less regard and importance to these relationships. Conversely, a firstborn child's confidence, family dedication, and comfort with power and leadership allow them to succeed in interpersonal relationships, yet holding only a moderate importance to the maintenance of these relationships, which is also similar to the behavior of an only child.

Article Summary: "I Always Knew Mom and Dad Loved Me Best": Experiences of Only Children

This study set out to learn about the subjective experiences of young adults who grew up as an only child. Some objective research exists regarding outcomes of

educational achievement of only children but little information exists about the actual experiences of individuals. The demographic of only children is gaining numbers and the number of women intending to only have a single child is also increasing. In order for therapists to more accurately understand this phenomenon, more information about what it means to grow up as an only child must be gathered.

For the purpose of this study, an only child is defined as an individual who was the sole child of his parents (living or deceased) who never had another child in their home from birth to young adult hood. Young adults are individuals who are from the ages of twenty to twenty-nine. The sample group in this study consisted of twenty people who were recruited via announcements and word of mouth in university classes. Of the participants, twelve were women and eight were men; eleven were twenty to twenty-four years old and nine were twenty-five to twenty-nine years old. Four were adopted and the remaining sixteen were the sole biological children of their parents.

Although each participant varied in their experiences, certain patterns did emerge. As a group, they appreciated the lack of sibling rivalry, enjoyed time alone, and valued being the center of their parent's attention. At times, the participants reported they wished for a sibling, typically older, to assist and advise during adolescence. Some established bonds with surrogate siblings; cousins or close friends who could provide the emotional bond similar to that of a sibling. Many participants reported pressure to succeed in life; statistically only children are more likely to go to college than their counterparts are. Since much time was spent with parents and other adults, only children tend to grow up faster mentally and sometimes inhibiting their ability to identify with their age mates. Other concerns included being the sole caretaker of aging parents, never being a biological aunt/uncle, fear of raising more than once child since

there is no basis for knowledge on this matter, and losing all connection with their families after their parents' death. As with many experiences, there are many pros and cons; the reported experiences of this group of young adult only children certainly reflects that.

I found it most interesting that most of the participants an unusual maturity in terms of their chronological age. Parents and adult friends of their parents treated the participants like an "adult" earlier on than their counterparts with siblings. Personally, I always felt older than my age and was quite articulate very early in my development. The participants also reported that this caused problems when developing relationships with age mates as it was easier to identify with adults and teachers. Coincidentally, I was always young for the grade I was in and when I would go away to summer camp, I would always get along best with the camp counselors and kids who were five or more years older than I.

The limitations in this study include general volunteer bias and the fact that 100% of the participants were college educated. Those who had significant troubles growing up may not be inclined to volunteer for the study and since the recruitment only took place on a college campus, a lack of non-college-educated potential participants existed. Out of the twenty participants, nine were recruited through classes at the Child and Family Studies department, which may have increased their sense of self-awareness over the normal individual.

The results certainly agree with my only personal experiences as well as other studies I have read. According to a study conducted by Keller & Zach, (2000) "Firstborns are preferred over laterborns," in a multi-sibling family. Only children are by definition the first-born child and receive undivided attention through out their

whole lives. This includes the intellectual level invested by the parents. A study by Andeweg & Van Den Berg (2003) compared the family unit to an intellectual environment, which deteriorates with the addition of each newborn child. Since the quality of an only child's intellectual interaction with their parents is never jeopardized, the amount of mental stimulation and potential for growth remains stable. Only child are accustomed to being the center of attention and typically live in an atmosphere of constant parental concern for well being and success. (Ashby, 2003) All this attention may at times cause upset or angst, especially in teen years, however always knowing that someone cares, loves you, and knowing that you are the only one is a very comforting and reassuring feeling.

Article Summary: Gender and birth order as determinants of parental behavior

Developmental studies have established that the family can no longer be looked upon as a homogenous unit; rather it must be conceived as the presence of microenvironments and niches. This study intends to determine differences in parental treatment of children depending on birth order and gender of the child and gender of the parent. Respective differences between joint parental treatment of children and individual parental treatment were also noted. The study tests differences between first-born and later-born children, with the findings of first-born children being high relatable to the treatment of an only child.

Two equally sized sample groups used in a study totaling fifty-eight families participating. All of these families classified as affluent middle class, which is determined by the education of the father. All of the women started reproduction in their late twenties, with the decision to become pregnant planned and desired. First-

born families comprised twenty-nine of the families with sixteen boys and thirteen girls. An equal amount of later-born families participated with nineteen boys and ten girls. A majority of the later-born children were second-born, with only six of these children being third-born.

The study observed the presence of mothers, the presence of fathers, and face to face behavior of fathers with mothers as a means of measuring parental behavior. Birth-order preference offered the most pronounced data; with the existence of a distinct preference of first-born children over later-born children. Analysis of gender-related preference supported the same sex hypothesis; mothers preferred daughters while fathers preferred sons. However, fathers preferred daughters in terms of face-to-face behavior and preferred sons in the terms of presence. Consequently, first-born boys receive the most attention in reference to the simultaneous presence of both mother and father.

I found it most interesting that fathers preferred their daughters in face-to-face behavior to sons, but preferred the sons in preference to presence and attention. The cause or psychological reasoning behind this preference would be interesting to study further. I also found it interesting that first-born boys received the most attention, partially accounted by the preference previously mentioned.

Since the samples were unanimously composed of participants from affluent middle class backgrounds, a particular inclination and motivation for parental care exists, therefore not providing an accurate representation of lower-class and higher-class parenting trends. All the families consisted of both a mother and a father, with the mothers normally having at least one full year of maternity leave as is typical in Germany, the country which the study was conducted. It would be interesting to see the

results related to single parents, working families with little maternity leave, extremely affluent families, and families of different cultures. The most significant constraint of the study is the relatively small number of samples, although the authors feel that this did not cause a detriment to the results.

The study concluded that a distinct preference of firstborn children existed which coordinates with the general evolutionary perfection of the high status of the firstborn. Mothers are less sensitive in their interactions with later-born children in comparison first born children, according to quotation in a study by Andeweg & Van Den Berg (2003). The novelty of the child rearing experience diminishes with the introduction of the second child and many of the anxieties and concerns experienced by parents have been proven overprotective by the results of the first child. All of the results relating to firstborn children apply to only children except a newborn is never introduced. The chance for a second child to be favored or a child of the opposite gender to gain the attention of the same-gendered parent does not exist.

Article Summary: Linking Birth Order to Political Leadership: The Impact of Parents or Sibling Interaction?

Statistics show that first-born children are overrepresented among incumbents in various political offices. Singletons are also statistically overrepresented while middle and later-born children are underrepresented. This study intends to develop a hypothesis as to the cause of this phenomenon. A child's birth order status affects development in two aspects: parental interaction and sibling interaction or lack thereof. Singletons receive all of their parents' investment, in means of attention, finance, energy, and enthusiasm. First-born children receive the same investment, until a second

child causes a reduction of parental resources. The existence of siblings provides first-born children with a different social experience that only children do not have the opportunity to receive.

The study utilizes data for nearly 1200 incumbents in local and national political offices in the Netherlands. Birth order data gained resulted from a mailed questionnaire consisting of brief questions about their age, sex, political office and 4 birth order questions: “Do you have an older brother?”, “Do you have an older sister?”, “Do you have a younger brother?”, and “Do you have a younger sister?” A random sample of one thousand three hundred and fifty local councilors were drawn from a list of twenty-five thousand, with nine hundred and eighty-three questionnaires were returned representing both councilors, part-time and fulltime alderman. All one hundred and fifty national Members of Parliament received the questionnaire and one hundred and nine replied. Birth order data of sixty-six national ministers was obtained by the questionnaire and date for three more obtained via published sources, however the total population is unknown.

Within the family unity, a particular birth order position determines the relationship with parents and to a particular pattern of behavior with siblings. The authors had two different hypotheses as to why certain birth-order statuses statistically held political office more than others: sibling interaction and parental investment. The findings of an overrepresentation of both first-born and only children suggest that parental interaction and investment affects the competence and ambition to obtain a political office. Results also suggest that birth-order distribution amongst sexes demonstrates no significant difference between male and female leaders. A larger percentage of female leaders held the status of first-born or only than their male

counterparts, however this is becoming less of a statistic through younger generations. Sibling interaction likely plays a role in providing a training ground especially to first-born incumbents, but does not outweigh the impact of attention, anxiety, and investment from parents.

The comparison to sibling rivalry to “training ground” is the most interesting point of this article for me. First-born children have to share parental resources after the birth of the second child, but gain experience wielding power over the younger siblings. Parents typically depend on the older children to fulfill certain roles such as helping their siblings with homework and baby-sitting while the parents are occupied. The point of this comparison, is to show that singletons do not experience this type of interaction with family members, however I think it is safe to assume that a child that never has to compete for attention for home may do so at school and other social environments. Only children are not isolated from interaction with age-mates, just typically limited in the very early years and in the home environment.

This study expanded on another study whose limitation was that it did not consider only children in its data, only first, middle, and last. It allowed the authors to be able to distinguish between the sibling interaction and parental investment theories unlike previous studies. This study mentions that trends are changing due to an overall change in society. This trend is moving towards a “slow erosion of the overrepresentation of singletons and first-born children.” Such societal progress as women’s liberation, feminism, increased quality of life, better parental education, child rearing planning, and the trend to have less children all affect the way current and future generations assume leadership roles. The results of this study may not apply in ten - twenty years when a new generation of incumbents take office.

This study speculates that firstborn and only children receive more parental investment thus increasing the capability and likeliness for these birth orders positions to hold political office. A survey of experiences by Roberts and Blanton (2001) observed that many only children felt like “small adults” and were comfortable connecting with other adults at an early age. Roberts and Blanton (2001) also saw this trend carry over into adulthood, with friends and relationship partners typically being a few years their senior. This ability to effectively relate and communicate with elders is a necessary talent for politicians. The reverse is also true; however, it is easier vote for and respect a mature, well spoken adult than a seemingly immature young adult. Firstborns and onlies learn confidence and are often pushed by the parents to succeed. A politician needs these qualities to win votes and be successful in office.

Article Summary: The Relationship of Multidimensional Perfectionism to Psychological Birth Order

This study investigates the association between psychological birth order and the levels of multidimensional perfectionism. The levels of perfectionism exist: adaptive, maladaptive and nonperfectionist. Birth order positions have developmental qualities that influence perfectionism; however, this study is more concerned with a person’s perceived birth order, which may or may not correspond to their ordinal position. The intent of this study is to use the Psychological Birth Order Inventory (PBOI) to measure a person’s perceived birth order position and determine if the lifestyle themes related to particular birth order positions influence the level of perfectionism.

Participants consisted of one hundred and thirty-six undergraduate college students enrolled in a psychology course in a Midwestern United States University. Out

of this sample, 68% were women and 32% were men with a median age of 21 and an age range of eighteen – fifty-one. Each participant voluntarily participated and some received extra credit. Each received packet containing a demographic questionnaire, informed consent form, the Psychological Birth Order Inventory (P BIO), and The Almost Perfect Scale -Revised (APSR) to fill out individually.

The study concludes that adaptive perfectionists, maladaptive perfectionists, and nonperfectionist significantly differ from each other when compared to psychological birth order statistics. Maladaptive and nonperfectionists exhibited characteristics associated with the middle-born psychological birth order. The qualities of a middle-born include feeling surrounded by competition, necessity to be the peacemaker or arbitrator, and feeling less important than siblings. Conversely, adaptive perfectionists exhibited fewer characteristics attributed to psychological middle-born birth order than maladaptive and nonperfectionists. Nonperfectionists exhibited characteristics attributed to last-born or youngest psychological birth order. The qualities of a last-born include being the pampered baby of the family, having many competitors but always coming out on top, and having others do for them. Conversely adaptive and maladaptive perfectionists exhibited fewer characteristics associated with the psychological last-born birth order than nonperfectionists did. There were no significant results related to the first-born and only child psychological birth orders in reference to adaptive, maladaptive, and nonperfectionists. The authors had hypothesized that psychological last-born position would exhibit some sort of perfectionist qualities, however the findings did not lead to any conclusion.

No conclusive or significant data for firstborns and only children? I am now dying to know what category these two birth orders most often fall into. But I assume it is a

combination of all three, which makes complete sense. Think of an only child, the way the parents raise their child will determine the level of multidimensional perfectionism. If the parents do everything for the child, the child will most likely be a nonperfectionist similar to the lastborn “babies” of the family. If the parents push to child to be the best at everything and try to implant the idea that the child has to be better than everyone else, maladaptive perfectionist behavior is likely to result. If the parents are not neurotic and manage to raise their child in a balanced, healthy manner, the child will most likely turn out to be an adaptive perfectionist.

The sample represented mostly Caucasians with only 5% of the sample representing African Americans and Asian Americans. A majority (68%) of the sample was female, causing men to be a minority. All one hundred and thirty-six participants were students in a psychology course, which may influence their perception of themselves and the questionnaires. No direct limitations were discussed in the study.

The study did not directly give much information into the perfectionist behaviors of only children, but did provide results for birth order positions that are unlike singletons. Depending on the interaction with the parents, each individual’s results would be different. Roberts and Blanton (2001) reported that some children felt pressure to excel or succeed because they were the only child and the only chance for the family. This particular interaction may cause maladaptive perfectionist behaviors in some singletons. Roberts and Blanton (2001) also reported that some only children felt the undivided attention and the ability to get “anything they wanted, how they wanted it, and when they wanted it,” caused them to become selfish. Depending on the individual experiences, this could cause any of the three types of multidimensional perfectionism.

It is quite interesting to imagine the various possibilities, parenting styles, and interactions that could lead to the depth of personality traits found in only children.

Community Visit

I spoke with Angie Stringer the Volunteer Coordinator of Girls, Inc about services they may provide about my topic. She stated that they did not receive inquires relating to only children or birth order positions and therefore did not provide services. Two other community organizations (Boy Scouts & Girl Scouts) replied to emails I sent stating that they did not offer services that related to my topic and treated all participants equally, no matter what family size. I also phoned the Boys and Girl Club attempting to make contact prior to visiting and was unsuccessful in reaching a point-of-contact and I am not sure if it was their workload or their lack of offering assistance in my topic.

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Colleen Brickhouse is the founder of the Brickhouse Academy, which provides an array of services including tutoring, early-age education, aptitude and achievement testing. She interacts with every client of the center and oversees general operation, education policies, and individual achievement. I was referred to the center at the age of 14 for evaluation for admittance into Pine View. Tests administered to me included the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children (WISC-111) and the Woodcock Johnson Test of

Achievement. Colleen was quite please to see me after almost 10 years and was thrilled to be able to assist in my research.

The center does not provide any special services to only-children or their parents. All children are treated, tested, taught, and looked up as equals no matter what birth order, socio-economic status, or family size they come from. When I asked why she did not feel a need to address this special birth order, Colleen commented, "I myself am an only child and never saw it as anything special. I much enjoyed growing up and do not feel there is a need to treat only children any different than those with siblings." The services provided are created equal for all children, reducing any one from feeling awkward or singled out. Any child, not just only children, can become maladjusted and unstable. In these cases she refers the parents of the child to Timothy Redman, PhD, a psychologist specializing in Child Psychology, ADD/ADHD Depression, behavioral problems, and parenting. She expressed that I was welcome to talk with him for more information if I needed.

From my visit, I learned the importance of perception. If something is perceived with a certain connotation that it is likely to resonate. Once an expectation or classification is set, even if it isn't accurate, we tend to act in ways that are consistent with that expectation. By treating a child as different because of their birth order or lack of siblings, then this will make the child feel different and facilitate behavior according to what they think they should do. Treating children equally and encouraging their unique talents will be more healthy and aid in a more positive well-being.

I am not sure if a community center truly deals with my topic. I am under the impression that people are not publicly singled out for their birth order status. If the situation occurs that the child became maladjusted, developed behavioral problems, or

disrupted other children in school, the parents would be referred to a counselor, school or private psychologist. One resource does exist exclusively for Only Children. Only Child Enterprises, Inc. publishes a magazine dedicated to informing families and only children about this status. Articles in the magazine include interviews with only child families, interviews with famous only children, developmental articles, letters and answers with advice.

Summary

Myths about only children are nothing but that, myths. The negative connotation given to this birth order could, in fact, be given to anyone. The fact is, the human experience is different for all, but the main difference of growing up an only child is that in and of itself. You are the only child in your family. It is not better or worse, just different. At the end of the day, a large part of your personality is determined by the parental interaction and life experiences, not by ordinal birth order.

Advantages do exist. We gain undivided attention, lack of resource division, and no sibling rivalry. We enjoy statically scoring higher on tests and are given an advantage when we join the adult world as we have been treated as small adults most of our lives. We are very intense in our relationships with others and take those relationships seriously. We set high expectations for ourselves and those around us; constantly analyzing the actions and reactions of everyone and everything. Overall, it is a rewarding, yet exhausting experience. One I would never chose to live without.

My journey through studies, surveys, and articles has been quite fascinating. I now understand more about myself; especially my behaviors, feelings, and actions while growing up. Self-awareness is something I pride myself on and this experience has

helped me gain insight I may never have accomplished on my own. It is fascinating to me what the angles different researchers thought of and the variety of studies to choose from. I could not stop researching and found myself reading articles I never even used just to satisfy my own curiosity. I learned more than I had ever expected.

In reference to community resources, I am not sure what more could be offered. I think it is wonderful that some many resources exist online, since most parents are probably researching online in the comfort of their own home. The community programs that do exist offer social settings for all children, allowing interaction and growth without prejudice while providing parents with daycare services. The more children interact with each other in their formative years, the more healthy and well-adjusted they will be through all life stages.

Research certainly needs to continue, and I am sure as long as humans exist research on humans will also exist. One day, I would love to devise studies and research various birth order implications. I think that teenage years are most awkward and that this is a realm worth exploring. Interpersonal and romantic relationships also hold a great deal of my interest. Most interesting, would be how different birth order positions interact with each other. When researching, I think it best not to single out a particular birth order for a study, but to do comparison research to have a basis to judge the results. I also believe that preconceived and unfounded connotations should not bias the researcher unless empirically proven. It is unfair bias that got only children the bad rap we have worked so hard to shake off. 😊

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