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## Family Child Order and Effects of Having a Sole Child

I am an only child, and that has affected me more than I can explain. Due to the lack of predecessors, I have been the guinea pig for all of my parents' experiments. Every decision or mistake I made was on me from the beginning, and I have always had all of the attention of my parents. This is both a good and bad thing. In the positive respect, every accomplishment in my life has been amplified and every endeavor was supported to the fullest. On the other hand, every mistake, failure, poor decision, and passage of judgment was like a permanent mark on my existence.

My lack of family members, even in the extended family, has changed the way I act around groups of people. I never had an example to follow, and I never had to set an example for anyone. This has given me a strange sense of seclusion that I have grown to embrace. I find comfort in solidarity and I often feel nervous around people. Comparing myself to the chart of birth order characteristics, I find many similarities and a few significant differences. I am certainly a perfectionist, often having significant emotional breakdowns every time a deadline is approaching and a project is imperfect or incomplete. I am extremely organized and borderline OCD. It helps sometimes, but mostly it's just annoying. I'm a "driver" who will do almost anything to achieve a goal if I set my mind to it. I am logical, and scholarly. I spend most of my time alone listening to music or reading. On the other hand, I am the polar opposite of self-confident. I need approval from others, and often find myself working too hard or changing myself just so one person will think better of me. I also do not make lists, unless I have to pack for a trip. Even then, I record items in a very sporadic manner that makes sense to me, but almost no one else.

Many variables have affected my birth order traits. I am an only child, and I am adopted. I have one cousin, who is four years older than me. My family is extremely small, consisting of a mother and father, two aunts, two uncles, three cousins, and one grandma and grandpa. (until last year) One aunt and uncle live in Colorado with their 20 year old daughters, two of my cousins. Needless to say, they haven't affected my life dramatically. Many expectations that my parents had for me were based off of my virtually perfect cousin, giving me some traits of a last born, but not enough to be accounted for.

My mother is a middle child, born second out of three. Her brother was born four years before her, and her sister was seven years behind. Though the birth order normally resets after five or six years, it is apparent that my mother has taken on the traits of a middle child, or even an oldest. My mother wished for a baby sister on her sixth birthday, and by the time she was seven, my grandmother was expecting a little girl. After Missy was born, my mother took her in as if she was her own daughter. My grandma often told me stories about having to send my

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mom on errands so she would leave the baby alone. This dramatically affected her personality, and threw off the birth order completely.

Mom was a youngest child for seven years. Her older brother, Chuck, was by far the wildest of the family, earning himself a few years in military school by the time he was twenty. My mom learned from his mistakes, and took on the perfect daughter role by comparison. She was both a mommy's girl, and daddy's little princess. Until Missy arrived seven years later, my mom got everything that her parents had to offer. This constant attention and status of perfection in the shadow of her unruly brother gave my mom the perfect last-born qualities. When her baby sister arrived, she turned completely into a first born. She attempted to replace my grandmother as primary caretaker, and she almost succeeded. These qualities allowed her to raise me as a youngest, even though I am her only. She has been taking care of my aunt since she was born, and when my cousin was born, my aunt often came to my mom for advice.

My mother in herself is a major exception to the birth order rules. She was a youngest for seven years, displaying every trait perfectly. When my aunt was born, the entire order shifted. Normally the birth order resets itself every 5 years, but in this case it affected my mother more dramatically than if her sister would have been born closer to herself and her brother. Today my mom presents the traits of a youngest, and an oldest, intermittently. She is anything but a middle child.

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