



## 社会：独生子女偏见

### Society: Prejudice Against Only Children

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适用领域：独生子女、社会偏见、家庭观念

单元要点：了解西方社会对独生子女的偏见及问题根源，积累独生子女相关表达，学习用清晰的观点讨论独生子女社会现状及优劣势。

#### 精读预习

1. 听录音，填空（每个空格填写一个单词，含连字符的单词算一个）。

Why Are People \_\_\_\_\_ About Only Children?

"Onlies" don't seem to be any worse off than kids with siblings. So why do stereotypes about them \_\_\_\_\_?

(1) When I was a child, my lack of siblings was often a source of bewildered concern. Don't you get lonely? people would ask. But as I grew up, sympathy was overtaken by suspicion. You're such an only child became a \_\_\_\_\_ mantra, whether I'd asserted a strong opinion or played sick to avoid dodgeball. In the cultural consciousness, only children are frequently pegged as weirdos: maladjusted, selfish, spoiled, \_\_\_\_\_, or just unusually precocious. We are at once pitied for our sibling-less childhood and judged for the supposed eccentricities it left us with.

(2) Research doesn't support the idea that only children are any worse off than those with siblings, but kids as young as 8 have still been found to hold \_\_\_\_\_ against only kids. You can hardly blame them: That bias is woven right into our lexicon. The moniker "only child"—rather than, say, "solo" or "individual" child—suggests a sense of \_\_\_\_\_. It's one consonant away from "lonely child." Where does this weirdness about only children come from?

(3) The \_\_\_\_\_ persona of the only child can be traced back as far as 1896, when a Clark University fellow named E. W. Bohannon conducted a study of "Peculiar and Exceptional Children." After observing more than 1,000 children, he declared of the 46 onlies, "They have imaginary companions, do not go to school regularly, if at all, do not get along with other children well, as a rule, and are generally spoiled by \_\_\_\_\_." Notably, many of his subjects lived in isolated farmhouses, where they worked long hours; it made sense, then, that kids with siblings would be better-adjusted than those who hardly interacted with other children at all.

(4) Depictions of onlies in movies, TV, and literature haven't helped our case. Eloise, the children's-book character who lives at the Plaza Hotel, and Veruca Salt, who's tossed into the garbage chute at Willy Wonka's Chocolate Factory, are both spoiled \_\_\_\_\_. Hermione Granger is the annoying know-it-all of the Harry Potter series. Indeed, being an only child is regularly used to convey otherness, whether exceptionally bad or good.

(5) Today, only children are much more common than they've been in the past. Our World in Data reports that the average number of births per American woman shrank from 3.6 in 1957 to 1.7 in 2021. According to Toni Falbo, who researches only children, financial considerations and career ambitions may take \_\_\_\_\_ over having multiple children—especially now, with record-high student-loan debt and child-care costs. Women are also having a child later in life than ever before, leaving less time to do it again. Still, Falbo believes that onlies \_\_\_\_\_ people's understanding of what a family should look like.

(6) Of course, sibling relationships can be rich and formative; maybe some people can't imagine growing up without a built-in playmate and \_\_\_\_\_. But other relationships can fulfill these functions—and perhaps without the typical sibling conflicts and competitiveness. Research shows that only children tend to be closer to their parents and to \_\_\_\_\_ them with more warmth and respect than people with siblings do. They may feel more at ease interacting with teachers, probably because they speak mostly with adults at home. And unlike Bohannon's junior farmers, kids today spend most of their waking hours with peers, at school and during playdates and extracurriculars.

(7) Indeed, most \_\_\_\_\_ studies don't find any notable disadvantages for only children. Onlies actually tend to have higher intelligence-test scores and more ambitious educational goals—perhaps in part because they face less competition for their parents' emotional and financial resources. But these advantages seem to \_\_\_\_\_ out in adulthood. According to a National Institute of Child Health and Human Development study, only children and children with siblings ultimately have the same employment rates, marriage outcomes, levels of mobility, and average number of kids.

(8) The one \_\_\_\_\_ that might separate them is sociability. A longitudinal study—for which more than 400,000 teenagers were interviewed in 1960, and again one, five, and 11 years after they graduated from high school or were supposed to—concluded that onlies are more interested in solitude and less likely to join group activities. (As a kid, I spent long hours every summer \_\_\_\_\_ through Scholastic-book-fair hauls, thinking I was in the best possible company among fictional characters, unaware that I was tanking my sociability score.) And in 2016, researchers in China took MRI brain scans and found that, compared with kids with siblings, onlies showed greater flexibility—a measurement of creativity—but lower agreeableness.

(9) Then again, it's possible that onlies tend to be less sociable because the culture doesn't embrace them. That's generally the issue with studying only children: It's tough to distinguish \_\_\_\_\_ only-child qualities from those that develop in a sibling-centric world. Bohannon's stereotype has stuck to the culture like gum to a shoe, and as an only, I've spent years trying to pick it off. I wrote this entire essay arguing that only children aren't self-obsessed or lacking in social skills. But now that I've reached the end, I'm not sure whether I've proved that idea or \_\_\_\_\_ it. Detailing how normal only children are is, perhaps, exactly what an only child would do.

2. 阅读文章后，请用英语回答下列问题。

(1) According to the article, how did the prejudice against only children begin and what has strengthened the stereotype?

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(2) What has recent research found about the differences between only children and those with siblings?

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(3) What is the author's attitude towards the stereotype of only children?

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## 精读 (1)

**Why Are People Weird About Only Children?**

*“Onlies” don’t seem to be any worse off than kids with siblings. So why do stereotypes about them persist?*

(1) When I was a child, my lack of siblings was often a source of bewildered concern. Don’t you get lonely? people would ask. But as I grew up, sympathy was overtaken by suspicion. You’re such an only child became a recurring mantra, whether I’d asserted a strong opinion or played sick to avoid dodgeball. In the cultural consciousness, only children are frequently pegged as weirdos: maladjusted, selfish, spoiled, uncompromising, or just unusually precocious. We are at once pitied for our sibling-less childhood and judged for the supposed eccentricities it left us with.

(2) Research doesn’t support the idea that only children are any worse off than those with siblings, but kids as young as 8 have still been found to hold prejudices against only kids. You can hardly blame them: That bias is woven right into our lexicon. The moniker “only child”—rather than, say, “solo” or “individual” child—suggests a sense of deprivation. It’s one consonant away from “lonely child.” Where does this weirdness about only children come from?

(3) The mythic persona of the only child can be traced back as far as 1896, when a Clark University fellow named E. W. Bohannon conducted a study of “Peculiar and Exceptional Children.” After observing more than 1,000 children, he declared of the 46 onlies, “They have imaginary companions, do not go to school regularly, if at all, do not get along with other children well, as a rule, and are generally spoiled by indulgence.” Notably, many of his subjects lived in isolated farmhouses, where they worked long hours; it made sense, then, that kids with siblings would be better-adjusted than those who hardly interacted with other children at all.

(4) Depictions of onlies in movies, TV, and literature haven’t helped our case. Eloise, the children’s-book character who lives at the Plaza Hotel, and Veruca Salt, who’s tossed into the garbage chute at Willy Wonka’s Chocolate Factory, are both spoiled brats. Hermione Granger is the annoying know-it-all of the Harry Potter series. Indeed, being an only child is regularly used to convey otherness, whether exceptionally bad or good.

### 精读 (1) 练习

#### 1. 请翻译下列表达。

- |              |       |                |       |
|--------------|-------|----------------|-------|
| (1) (情况) 更差  | _____ | (2) 对……抱有偏见    | _____ |
| (3) 对……的刻板印象 | _____ | (4) 被融入到……     | _____ |
| (5) 把某人当作    | _____ | (6) 适应性差的 adj. | _____ |
| (7) 一般来说     | _____ | (8) 缺乏……       | _____ |

**2. 请翻译下列原文句子。**

- (1) We are at once pitied for our sibling-less childhood and judged for the supposed eccentricities it left us with.

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- (2) Notably, many of his subjects lived in isolated farmhouses, where they worked long hours; it made sense, then, that kids with siblings would be better-adjusted than those who hardly interacted with other children at all.

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**3. 请运用括号中的表达写出下列句子。**

- (1) 人们对独生子女有诸多刻板印象, 比如认为他们适应力差、自私、不愿妥协、被娇纵坏了, 这些刻板印象已经融入了我们的语言。虽然关于他们的偏见持续存在, 研究却表明独生子女的境况不比有兄弟姐妹的孩子更好或更差。(stereotype, uncompromising, indulgence, weave, persist)

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- (2) 这个小孩基本不和同龄人来往, 即使来往也相处不来。她的爸爸多次发现她自言自语, 怀疑她有假想的玩伴。不过医生让她爸爸不必过分担心, 因为随着孩子慢慢长大, 假想玩伴通常会自己消失。(get along well with, if at all, imaginary, as a rule)

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## 精读 (2)

(1) Today, only children are much more common than they've been in the past. Our World in Data reports that the average number of births per American woman shrank from 3.6 in 1957 to 1.7 in 2021. According to Toni Falbo, who researches only children, financial considerations and career ambitions may take precedence over having multiple children—especially now, with record-high student-loan debt and child-care costs. Women are also having a child later in life than ever before, leaving less time to do it again. Still, Falbo believes that only children's upbringing agitates people's understanding of what a family should look like.

(2) Of course, sibling relationships can be rich and formative; maybe some people can't imagine growing up without a built-in playmate and confidant. But other relationships can fulfill these functions—and perhaps without the typical sibling conflicts and competitiveness. Research shows that only children tend to be closer to their parents and to regard them with more warmth and respect than people with siblings do. They may feel more at ease interacting with teachers, probably because they speak mostly with adults at home. And unlike Bohannon's junior farmers, kids today spend most of their waking hours with peers, at school and during playdates and extracurriculars.

(3) Indeed, most contemporary studies don't find any notable disadvantages for only children. Only children actually tend to have higher intelligence-test scores and more ambitious educational goals—perhaps in part because they face less competition for their parents' emotional and financial resources. But these advantages seem to even out in adulthood. According to a National



Institute of Child Health and Human Development study, only children and children with siblings ultimately have the same employment rates, marriage outcomes, levels of mobility, and average number of kids.

(4) The one trait that might separate them is sociability. A longitudinal study—for which more than 400,000 teenagers were interviewed in 1960, and again one, five, and 11 years after they graduated from high school or were supposed to—concluded that onlies are more interested in solitude and less likely to join group activities. (As a kid, I spent long hours every summer tearing through Scholastic-book-fair hauls, thinking I was in the best possible company among fictional characters, unaware that I was tanking my sociability score.) And in 2016, researchers in China took MRI brain scans and found that, compared with kids with siblings, onlies showed greater flexibility—a measurement of creativity—but lower agreeableness.

(5) Then again, it's possible that onlies tend to be less sociable because the culture doesn't embrace them. That's generally the issue with studying only children: It's tough to distinguish inherent only-child qualities from those that develop in a sibling-centric world. Bohannon's stereotype has stuck to the culture like gum to a shoe, and as an only, I've spent years trying to pick it off. I wrote this entire essay arguing that only children aren't self-obsessed or lacking in social skills. But now that I've reached the end, I'm not sure whether I've proved that idea or undermined it. Detailing how normal only children are is, perhaps, exactly what an only child would do.

## 精读 (2) 练习

## 1. 请翻译下列表达。

- (1) 从……减少至…… \_\_\_\_\_ (2) 优先于…… \_\_\_\_\_
- (3) 性格特征 \_\_\_\_\_ (4) 对……怀有某感情 \_\_\_\_\_
- (5) 自在、安心 \_\_\_\_\_ (6) 稳定下来、使平均 \_\_\_\_\_
- (7) 将 A 与 B 区分开来 \_\_\_\_\_ (8) 醒着的时间 \_\_\_\_\_

## 2. 请翻译下列原文句子。

- (1) A longitudinal study—for which more than 400,000 teenagers were interviewed in 1960, and again one, five, and 11 years after they graduated from high school or were supposed to—concluded that onlies are more interested in solitude and less likely to join group activities.

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- (2) As a kid, I spent long hours every summer tearing through Scholastic-book-fair hauls, thinking I was in the best possible company among fictional characters, unaware that I was tanking my sociability score.

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3. 请运用括号中的表达写出下列句子。

- (1) 对独生子女来说, 三口之家意味着他们无需面对兄弟姐妹之间的冲突和竞争, 能和父母有更亲密的互动。但随之而来的是对他们社交能力的质疑, 人们认为没有兄弟姐妹的成长环境会让他们的社交能力受损。 (sibling, sociability, undermine)

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- (2) 我们很难区分独生子女的固有特质和他们在以兄弟姐妹为中心的环境中形成的特质。例如, 独生子女似乎更关注自我, 缺乏社交技能, 但这可能是因为社会并不接纳他们。 (distinguish...from..., inherent, -centric, -obsessed, lacking)

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## 写作练习

请按照课程视频要求完成相应写作练习。

Blank lined paper with a faint watermark reading 'Copyright © All Rights Reserved' diagonally across the page.

## 泛读文章

**The Truth About Only Children**

*More evidence that birth order is not destiny.*

(1) The fate of the only child has long been debated, with some of the most attention on the personality theory of Alfred Adler, a Viennese psychologist who was a disciple of Sigmund Freud. Adler became essentially the founder of birth order research with his characterization of the baked-in traits that siblings, and those without siblings, carry throughout their lives.

(2) Decades later, birth order research in personality has failed to establish reliable distinctions among oldest, middle, and youngest children. In part, the lack of clear differentiation may reflect the complexity within families based on child gender, age of parents, child age, and a host of other relationship qualities within families. Comparisons of children with siblings to only children thus become even more complicated.

**The Theory of the Only Child**

(3) In what might now be called the definitive study of personality comparisons between only children and those with siblings, University of Auckland's Samantha Stronge and colleagues embarked on their mission to settle the matter for good. They began their quest with the observation that only children may indeed have a host of potential advantages due to being the sole focus of their parents, ranging from the financial to the emotional. On the other hand, the solo child's "sibling deprivation" can negatively affect their personality development due to their missing out on socialization experiences with fellow children in the home.

(4) On balance, Stronge and her fellow researchers suggest that only children “should be more spoiled and self-centered, lack social skills, and struggle with anxiety.” However, the opposite can be true as well. Because they are the sole recipient of family attention and resources, they should also be “more mature and do better academically.” Yet, with polls consistently showing that only-child families are seen as less desirable in the U.S., plus those negative personal attributes most people associate with only children, even “clinicians expect a poorer prognosis” for them.

(5) Although prior researchers failed to establish any reliable personality differences that might back up these negative characterizations, the New Zealand authors note that earlier work was limited by small sample sizes and inconsistencies in measurement. Small sample sizes in particular could be a problem given that comparisons between only children and those with siblings are made more complex by the varying family composition in multiple-sibling households.

### **A Big Look at the Only Child**

(6) With this background in mind, you might wonder how Stronge and her collaborators could possibly tease out all the potential complexities of discovering how only children differ from their counterparts in multi-child families. To begin with, the authors were able to take advantage of an extensive multiyear probability sample of New Zealand adults, representing all adults eligible to vote. In 2016, the sample included nearly 21,000 adults averaging 50 years old (63 percent women), of whom 88 percent identified as New Zealand European.

(7) To measure personality, the Auckland researchers asked participants to complete a brief Five-Factor Model questionnaire, which assessed the component traits of:

- **Openness to Experience** (“I have a vivid imagination”)
- **Conscientiousness** (“I get chores done right away”)
- **Extraversion** (“I am the life of the party”)
- **Agreeableness** (“I sympathize with other people’s feelings”)
- **Neuroticism** (“I have frequent mood swings”)
- Adding the sixth factor often used in personality studies, **Honesty-Humility**, the authors also included items such as “I deserve more things in life.”

(8) Have you already started to construct your own hypotheses about what the authors might find? Did that last factor about deserving more than everyone else seem to ring true as you thought about the only child’s feelings of entitlement?

(9) If so, then you will be surprised to learn that patterns of personality traits across age groups for only children were almost indistinguishable from the patterns in adulthood shown by individuals from multi-child households. The personality traits of neuroticism and openness did vary by age group, showing slight dips in later adulthood, and honesty-humility trended upward. The sibling-no sibling comparison, though, yielded differences that were negligible or, as the authors conclude “vanishingly small.”

### **Are You Ready to Give Up This Myth?**

(10) There’s a great deal of reassurance in the New Zealand study that, if you never had anyone with whom to celebrate National Sibling Day, there’s nothing wrong with you.

(11) The child's status in the family unquestionably becomes a key component of the identity that people mature into as adults. You will always be that member of the younger generation whose position is determined by when your parents had you and how many other children they also produced, even if those other children came from one or two different parents. However, based on the New Zealand findings, there's no reason to equate that accident of your birth with your long-term prospects in life. Furthermore, the differences across age groups revealed in this study confirm prior work showing that personality can change in adulthood.

(12) To sum up, it may be fun to kick around the idea that being an only child, or not, helps define the adult you are today. However, it may finally be time to see your personal development as a function of the many other qualities that contribute to who you are as you continue on your own unique life's journey.

\* 摘自 Psychology Today 2022 年 4 月 9 日专栏文章



## 泛读阅读理解

(1) According to the article, what are the possible limitations of previous research on personality comparisons between only children and those with siblings?

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(2) What are the findings of the New Zealand study and what does the study indicate?

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(3) What is the author's opinion about the idea that "being an only child or not helps define the prospect of the child"?

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