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Autoethnography 2

The college transition is a time of colliding change. Change in individual time management, evolving subject interest, and new academic expectations. However some of the toughest challenges in college transitions do not have to do with academic related items. For some the hardest challenge is living with a roommate for the first time. This transition is so frequently an issue that the university, and others alike, have published tips on making a roommate relationship healthy [(“The first year: a guide for parents and families of incoming Emory students”, 2008)](http://autoethnographic2.weebly.com/annotated-bibliography.html) What stood out as the most important consideration is to be certain in ones own morals, and to be able to communicate them from the start.

Another commonly reported issue was trying to find balance in ones schedule [(Central College- making the transition)](http://autoethnographic2.weebly.com/review-of-literature.html). This is different from time management since in this case one is trying to level out academic work with exercise and social activities, making sure one does not excessively commit to any. Specifically personality traits cause one to be more prone to having a harder time in one area than another. For example people who struggle in expressing anger or dealing with conflict will have more of an issue in their social situations. If a person is naturally an independent thinker and is less prone to frustration they may find academic and time management an easier change compared to others. I was interested to explore if these qualities differ between peoples childhood environment. After further research some of the qualities I listed above are attributed to being an only-child or a being a child with siblings. In the study by [Jaio et al 1986](http://autoethnographic2.weebly.com/review-of-literature.html) they found that children with siblings typically are more persistent, cooperative, and better able to express their feelings than only-children in the same age bracket. Therefore children with siblings I would generalize to be better equipped for the social transition of college. Only-children have been reported to have excessive sensitivity and trouble expressing anger [(Eischens, 1998.)](http://autoethnographic2.weebly.com/review-of-literature.html) This makes only-children have trouble with conflict, which could hinder their social transition into new friend groups. However mentally only-children have been reported as being more precocious.  As adolescents only-children tend “to have and pursue a strong sense of personal agenda for themselves and be independent in that way" [(“the adolescent Only Child”.)](http://autoethnographic2.weebly.com/review-of-literature.html) Generally only-children therefore are good at making schedules. Order and constancy are important factors to have in their lives.

Being an only-child I was interested in if these qualities are true in people that I know who just made the college transition. I interviewed an only-child and a person growing up with a lot of siblings. I also reflected on my own college transition.

Gracie Rogers is an only-child and now freshman at Emory.

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| I had a set list of questions for Gracie that I had pre made based off of my research. Each question testing addressing an only-child specific trait.  I started off simple. What was the hardest part of the college transition for you?  Expecting an answer dealing with social issues since only-children are generally seen at worse at cooperation and other social behaviors. However for Gracie her hardest part of the college transition was time management. She jumped into many activities including a lot of sports that were difficult to schedule around.  This answer intrigued me since from my research I understood that generally only-children proved better in independent thinking. However only-children did score lower in persistence with activities than children with siblings, indicating a potential trait of short temperedness, an issue in a tight schedule. I then asked Gracie about the level of obligation she felt to perform academically for her parents. The literature, a common thread is that only-children generally have a higher intrinsic motivation to perform better academically. Some of the reasons this is hypothesized is that parents give their all to their special child, and therefore the child in return feels the need to reciprocate.  Gracie fits into that mold. Although she says that her parents do not pressure her about her school work, she is motivated by her own self to succeed. This self-motivation could have been produced from growing up in an only-child environment.  Finally I was curious if an only-child would admit or consider themselves to be more egoistic than children with siblings. A trademark quality of an only-child is considering themselves before others, however this does not need to be all negative for example a selfish person. From the literature I understood that an egoistic person is just necessarily uncomfortable with others making decisions that would impact their day. This idea did not phase Gracie. She is very spontaneous and doesn't mind interrupting her plans to fill in some new ones.  Tessa Cafritz was my second interview; she is a freshman at Emory but at home shares the house with 3 siblings.  Tessa realized the importance to be true to ones-self.  She learned to identify and act on ones conscious. From past and current college experience she knows when she feels angry or depressed it festers and gets worse if she keeps it to herself. Her outlet is expressing it to others and therefore at the same time maintaining strong personal connections with old and new friends.  Although this is not a novel idea in common knowledge or in Tessa's world, college was the time it came to fruition for her. The increased intensity and ability to be distracted really creates a need to identify with oneself.  I suspected Tessa not to have an issue with the social changes coming from a large family home. Logically a large family setting at home would have people constantly around time for self-recovery may not be frequent. Also the larger home base could provide more of a support network. The importance of which is unparalleled in the transition to college. Tessa noted this benefit in her interview. "I was the last one in my family so they [parents] knew the ups and downs of the first year fairly well." However I did expect her to have more trouble with time management and logistical transitions than she let on. This assumption is based on my literature search. In the article ["The adolescent Only Child"](http://autoethnographic2.weebly.com/annotated-bibliography.html) it stated that only-children prefer order and constancy. I would have thought that children with siblings therefore, did not worry about this element as much. I think its is best to conclude that organization is a personal characteristic not largely affected by family structure.  Tessa loves having siblings and thinks they were helpful in the transition by lending support and advise. Overall Tessa mainly struggled with missing them.  Older siblings seem to provide a good preparation environment for college compared to my, only-child, transition.  Finally once I had conducted all my interviews I had a chance to sit down and reflect on my year. A major part of the transition is constant interactions with peers which I feel that only-children are at an initial disadvantaged with. Some of these constant peer interactions are roommates. Living with another person for the first time has the potential for conflict and discomfort, and how one deals with the conflict is most critical to maintaining a happy home environment. As an only-child I felt I had most trouble this with part of the transition for two reasons:   1. Compromise in living spaces is new to me since I did not have to deal with siblings in this way 2. I am uncomfortable with peer conflict since there was no practice at home   My initial thoughts were supported by literature I found.  "Only-children tend to be uncomfortable with conflict from not having the rough and tumble, push and shove competition with siblings, or much serious disharmony with parents" [("The Adolescent Only Child".)](http://autoethnographic2.weebly.com/annotated-bibliography.html) And only children are prone to having trouble expressing anger [(Eischens.)](http://autoethnographic2.weebly.com/annotated-bibliography.html)  Even though being an only has I think some social disadvantages in the college transition, there are many positives. One of the easier parts of the transition for me was creating and adhering to a personalized schedule. A common trait that only's are stigmatized with is egotism and social precociousness. These traits however are not always a negative, placing ones self in front in a subtle volumes could be positive for ones future self. I think my natural pull to consider oneself important gave me an advantage over peer pressure and the knowledge to be able to balance all activities I wanted to take part in.  Over all being an only child has served me with initial disadvantages and advantages in my first year college transition. It was difficult for me to learn how to compromise without losing ones own happiness when sharing close quarters with someone, but I had an easier time with scheduling and logistic transitions into college which is a common hardship. The first year of college is a growing step for all children whether they have siblings or the only. |  | Finally I was curious if an only-child would admit or consider themselves to be more egoistic than children with siblings. A trademark quality of an only-child is considering themselves before others, however this does not need to be all negative for example a selfish person. From the literature I understood that an egoistic person is just necessarily uncomfortable with others making decisions that would impact their day.  This idea did not phase Gracie. She is very spontaneous and doesn't mind interrupting her plans to fill in some new ones.  The generalizations for only-children: socially lacking,academically motivated, and egoistic were not all true in Gracie's case. While generalizations can only go so far, variability is inevitable. As is the case with Grace's transition to college not fitting her exact only-child mold. |

Only-children and children with siblings grow up in different familial environments, and that can change which college transitions are more difficult for them. Not much literature is on this topic so I make these generalizations with hesitancy, since again the personality linked advantages are only trends and can highly vary based on the person, not only the environment they were raised in as in the case of Gracie.