Are people who don’t have siblings more selfish?

Nowadays, more and more people choose to have only children. According to the article “What’s Better: One Child or Siblings?” by ABC News (2006), over the last two decades, the number of American women who have only one child has doubled. However, many people like saying that only children are spoiled and selfish. Is it true? Will growing up without siblings affect children’s development? To figure out this question, I did a survey about whether people without siblings are more selfish. This will help people think about whether having a very close connection with others during growth of children can help children care more about others.

The participants of this survey are 20 Chinese students. 50% of participants don’t have siblings, 50% participants have siblings. In the group of students who have siblings, 50% of the respondents are female, the other 50% are male. 30% of them are under 20 years old. The other 70% are 20 or over 20 years old. In the group of students who don’t have siblings, 80% of the respondents are female, the other 20% are male. 30% of them are under 20 years old, and 70% of them are over 20 years old. All of these participants were surveyed online by Wechat. They were asked five questions, including two free-response questions, one multiple choice question, and two yes or no questions. The questions are all about if they like sharing and care about others’ feelings.

Question 1 was how often you restrain yourself from saying what you think in order to protect others’ feeling. This question was about whether they pay attention to others’ feeling. In
group who have siblings, 10% of them never restrained themselves to protect others’ feeling, and just said what they wanted to say. 20% of them usually did that, and 70% of them did that almost every time. In the group of students who don’t have siblings, 10% of them never did that. 20% of them seldom did it; they just paid attention to some important people’s feeling. 40% of them usually do restrained their words to protect others, and 30% of them always did that.

The second question shows if they like sharing. It asked about how many times a week you share your food or snacks with someone. 30% responders who have siblings only shared their food 1 or 2 times a week. 10% of them usually shared their food. 60% of them shared their food every day. In group who don’t have siblings, 30% of them seldom shared their food. 40% of them usually did it. 30% of them always did it.

The next question is a multiple choice question. I provided a hypothetical scenario: if you and your friends like the same clothes, but there was only one in the store, will you buy it for yourself or give it to your friends? I wanted to know if they could make sacrifices for their friends. 50% of participants who have siblings chose to buy it for themselves. The other 50% chose to give it to their friends. In the group who don’t have siblings, 30% of them chose to buy it for themselves, and the other 70% of them chose to give it to their friends.

Moreover, the fourth question shows if people will hurt others to get money. The question asked whether participants would be willing to hurt their friends if they could get 1 million dollars by doing that. Among the responders who have siblings, 30% of them would do that to get money, while 70% would not do it. Compared to participants with siblings, 40% of participants who don’t have siblings chose 1 million dollars. The other 60% would not hurt their friends for 1 million dollars.
The final question was about if participants feel jealous of their friends’ success, and the results showed that only one responder would feel jealous of their friends. Among participants who have siblings, 100% of them answered that they would not feel jealous of their friends. For those participants without siblings, 90% of them would not feel jealous of their friends, and only 10% of them would feel jealous when his/her friends became successful.

These five questions were all about whether participants care only about themselves and not about other people. If people just focus on themselves and don’t care about others, we can know that they are selfish. I compared the answers of participants who have siblings with the answers of only children. There were some interesting findings. Firstly, according to participants’ answers of my survey, we can know people who have siblings are less likely to be selfish. They are more likely to care more about their friends. The result is the same as that I predicted. This suggests that having siblings helps people to have a very close and inseparable connection with them during whole lifetime. We will grow up together and get used to sharing with siblings. This helps us develop self-giving and empathize with others. As a result, people with siblings may become less selfish.

Another thing that is worth being noticed is the result of question three. Its result is different from the other questions. The results of 4 questions all show that people with siblings are less likely to be selfish. However, the answer of question 3, which was about if they would like to give the clothes that they like to their friends, showed that participants who don’t have siblings are more likely to give clothes to their friends. This means that, in this case, participants who don’t have siblings are less likely to be selfish. Although the result of this question is different from the other, it’s possible that the reason why participants are willing to give clothes to their friends may be because they don’t care about clothes or clothes are replaceable.
The answers of question four can support this possibility. This question is about whether participants will hurt their friends to get money. 40% of participants without siblings chose to hurt their friends to get money. However, compared to the answers of questions three, 30% of participants who don’t have siblings chose to buy the clothes for themselves. This shows that more participants who don’t have siblings chose to hurt their friends to get money than participants who chose to buy clothes for themselves. Everyone cares about money, but not everyone cares about clothes. For some people, the clothes are not a kind of lure. Therefore, when they meet the lure of money, their answer will show the real themselves.

Overall, my survey is about whether people who have siblings are less selfish. The survey results suggest that people who have siblings are less selfish according to the answers of participants. However, this research still has some limitations. Firstly, we still can’t know if siblings really affect the degree of selfishness. The number of participants is not too many, so two group’s data is very little different. It is hard to get clear results. Moreover, the majority of participants are people who I know. They sent me the answers by Wechat. As a result, they may tell lies about some survey questions to keep their good impression. I can’t believe that only one person will feel jealous of their friends. If we want to study deeper and get a more accurate result, we need more participants who we don’t know.

In the end, although my research should be improved in some ways, we can learn that having a close connection with others during the growth of children can help them be less selfish and care more about other’s feeling. We can understand further about the development of children by considering this result. Parents should pay more attention on helping children build a social connection with others.
# Appendix A: Survey

## Background questions:

1. What is your gender?
2. How many siblings do you have?
   - a. 0
   - b. 1
   - c. 2
   - d. more than 2
3. How old are you?

## Survey Questions:

1. How often do you restrain yourself from saying what you think in order to protect others' feelings?
2. How many times a week do you share your food or snacks with someone?
3. If you and your friends like the same clothes, but it is the only one, will you buy for yourself or give it to your friends?
   - a. Buy it for myself
   - b. Give it to friends
4. If you can get 1 million dollars, but you have to hurt your friends, would you do that?
   - a. Yes
   - b. No
5. When your friends achieve good results, will you feel jealous of their success?
   - a. Yes
   - b. No