

5-1992

# A Comparison Study Between the Peer Relations of Only Children and Children with Siblings

Katrina J. Schaller  
*The College at Brockport*

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalcommons.brockport.edu/ehd\\_theses](https://digitalcommons.brockport.edu/ehd_theses)

 Part of the [Elementary Education Commons](#)

To learn more about our programs visit: <http://www.brockport.edu/ehd/>

---

## Repository Citation

Schaller, Katrina J., "A Comparison Study Between the Peer Relations of Only Children and Children with Siblings" (1992). *Education and Human Development Master's Theses*. 841.

[https://digitalcommons.brockport.edu/ehd\\_theses/841](https://digitalcommons.brockport.edu/ehd_theses/841)

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Education and Human Development at Digital Commons @Brockport. It has been accepted for inclusion in Education and Human Development Master's Theses by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @Brockport. For more information, please contact [kmyers@brockport.edu](mailto:kmyers@brockport.edu).

A COMPARISON STUDY BETWEEN  
THE PEER RELATIONS OF ONLY CHILDREN  
AND CHILDREN WITH SIBLINGS

THESIS

Submitted to the Graduate Committee  
of the Department of Reading  
State University College at Brockport  
in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Science in Education

by

Katrina J. Schaller  
State University College at Brockport  
Brockport, New York

May 1992

SUBMITTED BY:

Katrina J. Schaller

APPROVED BY:

June L. Begg 4/27/92  
Project/Thesis advisor date

Arthur E. Smith 4/27/92  
Second Faculty Reader date

Harold Ammerman 4/27/92  
Chairman, Graduate Policies Committee date

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Abstract.....	ii
CHAPTER I	
Statement of Problem.....	1
Purpose of the Study.....	1
Question to be Answered.....	2
Need.....	2
Definitions.....	3
Limitations of the Study.....	3
Summary.....	4
CHAPTER II	
Purpose of the Study.....	5
Question to be Answered.....	5
Review of the Literature.....	5
Summary.....	13
CHAPTER III	
Purpose.....	14
Null Hypothesis.....	14
Subjects.....	15
Instruments.....	15
Procedure.....	16
Statistical Design.....	16
CHAPTER IV	
Purpose.....	17
Example of t test.....	19
Analysis of Data.....	21
Analysis of Each Question.....	22
Summary.....	28
CHAPTER V	
Purpose.....	30
Conclusions.....	30
Implications for the Classroom.....	32
Further Research.....	33
REFERENCES.....	35
APPENDIX A.....	38
APPENDIX B.....	39

## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate the peer relations of only children at the primary grade level, K-2. The difference between the peer relations of only children and the peer relations of children with siblings was investigated.

Teachers in a suburban, Western New York school district were asked to fill out surveys for each of the only children in their classrooms and the children with siblings that the researcher randomly selected.

The study was designed to determine if, on 10 items, there was a significant difference between the peer relationships of only children and children with siblings.

A significant difference was found between only children and children with siblings on eight of the ten questions asked by the researcher. The results of this study reinforce previous research which has been conducted in the area of peer relations of only children.

## Chapter 1

### Statement of the Problem

Presently, the number of parents voluntarily having a one-child family is increasing. This may result in a child psychologically different from the only child of past generations.

Only children appear to be mentally healthy, with many studies indicating that only children are underrepresented in psychiatric literature (Falbo, 1983). The number of studies of only children when compared to studies of children with siblings is much lower thus making it more difficult to represent in literature. This also enhances the purpose of this study, to investigate the peer relations of only children at the primary level.

### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate and compare the peer relations of only children and children with siblings at the primary level.

### Question to be Answered

Are the peer relations of only children significantly different than the peer relations of children with siblings?

### Need

Research has indicated that there are varying opinions about only children. Investigations have been conducted regarding the only child and the following variables: intelligence, achievement, affiliation, peer popularity and self esteem. However, most research is conducted with toddlers or with the upper grades (intermediate, junior high, high school and college levels). Further research directed at the primary levels (kindergarten, first and second grade) is necessary in order to get a better understanding of the only child.

Most of the research has involved the child or parents when investigating the characteristics of the only child. The intention of this study was to use a different avenue, the child's

classroom teacher. The classroom teacher can give his/her observations of the child's interactions with peers in different settings (academic and non academic).

### Definitions

**Only Child:** A child who does not have siblings (step siblings included) living with him/her permanently.

**Multiple Children:** A child with one or more siblings (step siblings included) living with him/her permanently.

### Limitations of the Study

This study was conducted between April and June, an extremely busy time of the year for teachers. This posed a problem for this study as many teachers could not spend as much time on the surveys as they would have liked. Several teachers were unable to find the time to complete the survey.



If there had been a larger sampling of "teachers as only children" their responses could have been compared and included in this study.

Some children with siblings that have extreme gaps in their ages were raised as only children but are not considered to be only children in this survey. Although not surveyed, these children could pose interesting results.

### Summary

The purpose of this study was to investigate and compare the peer relations of only children and children with siblings at the primary level.

## Chapter 2

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

#### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the peer relations of only children and children with siblings at the primary level.

#### Question to be Answered

Are the peer relations of only children significantly different than the peer relations of children with siblings?

#### The Only Child

The only child is spoiled, dependent, selfish, demanding, rigid, over protected, tyrannical, attention seeking, and non-social. Chances are they are also neurotic, egocentric, driven and not well adjusted. It has also been said that they are less cooperative, less affiliative and more maladjusted than sibling children (Jiao, 1986). This was the general belief in the baby boom era, during those days when families with three and four (and more) children dominated (Falbo, 1983; Pollit, Nuttall, Nuttall, 1980; Rosenberg, 1983; Steiner, 1984).

*you have article*

Research varies about this issue. Falbo (1983) found only children to be more likely to make cooperative versus competitive moves in games. Miller and Maruyama (1976) nevertheless found only children to have fewer friends and to be less affiliative than others. Sutton-Smith and Rosenberg (1965) concluded that the only boy is more feminine than other males and the only girl is more masculine. Belmont (1977) reported that only children are more likely to be diagnosed as psychologically disturbed than others.

When Blake (1974) and Thompson (1974) conducted studies with college samples they found that this sampling population prefer childlessness to having a single child.

Thompson (1974) stated that the negative beliefs about the only child has been called cultural truism. This may be so deeply instilled in our culture that it is perceived as an unchallengeable given. This enhances the need for further research. The current research results should be shared with educators and parents to update our culture on only children.

Despite these negative stereotypes, smaller families in general, and one child families, are growing in popularity. In 1970, 18% of American

families had only children as compared with 21% in 1981 (Rosenberg, 1983).

With the growing popularity comes the need for more research on only-child stereotypes. The research that has been recently conducted has failed to demonstrate that only children are at serious psychological or emotional disadvantage when compared with individuals who have siblings (Pollt, Nuttall, Nuttall 1980).

The reasons for having a one child family are dependent upon many different variables. Steiner (1984) states:

Changing family patterns, economic concerns, medical reasons and new roles for women may contribute to parents' choosing the one child option. Divorce rates and the tendency for couples to marry later in life may contribute to shorter marriages and potentially fewer children. Inflation and high unemployment, contributing to reduced family income, may encourage parents to have smaller families. The majority of women are now employed before they have children. The benefits of this added income and involvement in careers may lead women to postpone child bearing and bear fewer children (p.3).

reason to have 1 child

The increased numbers of voluntary one child families may result in a child psychologically different from the only child of past generations. Rosenberg (1983) quoted Claudy advising, "There's no reason not to have an only child. Don't have a second child just to avoid having an 'only child (p.53).'" There are steps parents can take to

minimize the potential disadvantages of being an only child (Falbo, 1983; Rosenberg, 1983).

Thirty-three months old, only children were found to be more assertive in a frustrating situation, more socially successful, more likely to seek positive attention from peers, more popular and more likely to engage in peer play. It was found in this study that only children at this age have been found to experience the greatest amount of parent-child interaction at home (Snow, Jacklin and Maccoby, 1981).

According to recent reports in China it was found that about 90% of the kindergarten children in urban areas are only children. The only child is described as having all the love and attention of the parents and the grandparents (in many cases four grandparents). The school staff have found that the students who do not listen to their parents and who do only what they want, to be the only children. These children are seen as having difficulty sharing with others and being part of a group (Spodek, 1989).

The Chinese people are trying to eliminate this problem. In kindergarten the children are taught to share with one another and to help one another. It has been found that children with siblings do not need as much of this intervention. The Women's Federation is also trying to help the parents of only children. They have established "Parent's Schools," where parents learn to deal with the problems of raising an only child. The only child problem

is expected to persist and remain significant although reports indicate a rising birthrate in China (Spodek, 1989).

In the study conducted by Jiao, Ji and Jing (1986) they observed several beliefs of only children to be true. Both rural and urban sibling children possessed the positive social behavioral qualities of cooperation, peer prestige and were more persistent to a greater extent than did only children. Only children were found to be more self directed than sibling children. Sibling children were rated by their peers as better in cognitive skills and more socially competent in general. Only children on the other hand are seen by other children as acting according to their own interests while sibling children are seen as joining others in play and participating more in collective activities. Peers more readily accept sibling children than only children as their leaders.

Affiliation is belonging to organizations or clubs to enhance social life. Only children have been found to be less affiliative than others, which may be the result of the relatively large amounts of affection they receive from their parents, rather than a lack of social skills (Falbo, 1983). Only children show greater "internality" or feeling that they have control over their environments (Mott and Haurin 1982).

Self-esteem studies have placed only children above, below and at par with children with siblings (Falbo, 1983).

Studies have shown that only children perform better academically than children with siblings. This may be the result of parental expectation, financial abilities and an uninterrupted relationship with the child (Falbo, 1983).

Mott and Haurin (1982) have suggested that the optimum child position in a family to be the only child. This, due to confluence theory that the IQ of the family is pulled down with each additional birth in a family. In addition to a higher IQ the economic resources are more available in an only child family. Thus, the only child has no economic restraints and a higher intelligence.

Fenton (1928) and Rosenberg (1965) have found only children to be somewhat more confident and to have more positive self-concepts than other individuals.

Belmont and Morolla, 1973 as cited by Mott and Haurin (1982), found that being an only child is not optimum and that first born children in smaller families are intellectually more advantaged than only children. The first born is more intelligent than the later born because the first born is able to tutor younger siblings. This has a positive effect on the learning capabilities of the older children.

There seems to be conflicting studies which complicates our understanding of only children. There are very few data to support the view that only children are maladjusted, abnormal or handicapped socially. The only

paraphrase of part  
in paper

child has often been found to possess traits that are considered desirable by our society (Pollit, 1980).

Cruse and Cruse (1989) found through their research that only children were found to surpass all others, except firstborns and children from two-child families, on achievement and intelligence. They also surpassed other children in character and the positive nature of the parent-child relationship. Across all developmental outcomes, only children were indistinguishable from first-borns and children from small families.

Solomon, Clare and Westoff (1956) conducted a multiple choice study some time ago, the findings are worth noting. When asked what the parents' reason for having a second child was, "not wanting an only child" was a clear first choice. The other choices being: 1) The desire to insure against childlessness is an important reason for having a second child. 2) The interest in and desire for brothers and sisters affects the size of family. In their research they found that 75% of the general public consider being an only child a disadvantage. The reasons people believed was not researched.

In previous years it was noted that there was a higher incidence of only child families in the higher socio-economic groups. Thus Solomon, Clare and Westoff (1956) looked at their findings. It appeared that both wives and husbands in the "high" socio-economic group are most concerned with avoiding an only child. This may be due



to the great awareness of the problematic potential of only-child families. It was also evident that wives and husbands who themselves were only children do not consider this factor a great handicap. Spouses married to only children did find being an only child a handicap and they attribute faults in their spouses to this type of environment.

Polit, Nuttall, Nuttall (1980) and his team found that the only child as an adult appeared to be functioning well in the educational and occupational areas. They seemed to have an advantage over the adults who had siblings. Contrary to the hypothesis they made that only children are less well-adjusted as adults than are people who grew up with brothers and sisters. Being first born or an only child may be associated with a higher achievement motivation. These children should aspire to higher status occupations and ultimately be more successful in their career choices. Lower fertility and higher career goals is a similar outcome with these two groups also (Mott and Haurin, 1982).

It has been found through research that only children prefer to have smaller families, attain high levels of education and hold high-status jobs. It has been found that only children have the same expectations of their family members. Adult only children are as happy and satisfied with their lives as adults who grew up with siblings. Only children were found

to be more achieving, more achievement oriented, and more secular than non-onlies (Pollit, Nuttall, Nuttall, 1980).

Only children appear to be mentally healthy, with many studies indicating that only children are underrepresented in psychiatric literature. The amount of only children when compared to children with siblings is much lower thus making it more difficult to represent in literature. This also enhances the purpose of this study, to investigate the peer relations of only children at the primary level (Falbo, 1983).

#### Summary

The only child research of the past and present have conflicting theories. It is evident that the only child is changing with the times and this child will continue to change. Research suggests that parental economic and educational differences play a part in the development of an only child. Individuals should not have a mindset of the characteristics of an only child as many factors play a part in the development of a character.

## Chapter III

### Design of the Study

#### Purpose

The purpose of this study was to investigate and compare the peer relations of only children and children with siblings at the primary level. The question to be answered was: Are the peer relation of only children significantly different than the peer relations of children with siblings?

#### Null Hypothesis

There will be no statistically significant difference in the proportions of positive responses between children with siblings and only children. A ten item questionnaire will be tested, item by item at the 95% confidence level and the results of each of these t tests for the significance of the difference between proportions will be reported separately.

## Methodology

### Subjects

The subjects of this study were 174 students at the primary level (kindergarten, first and second grade):

Eighty-seven students did not have other siblings older, younger or the same age living in the same house.

Eighty-seven students did have other siblings older, younger or the same age living in the same house.

The subjects attend a large suburban school district in Western New York. The subjects are from mixed socio-economic and racial backgrounds. The children were chosen from six primary buildings within the suburban district. All subjects that participated in this study were of varying ability levels. The reasons they were only children was not a research factor of this study.

Instruments: A questionnaire designed by the researcher was used for both the only children and the children with siblings (See Appendix A).

## Procedure

Permission was granted from each of the six principals involved to use the staff for questioning. The researcher then spent an average of five minutes with the entire faculty explaining the process involved.

A data form (See Appendix B) was then distributed to all the teachers to determine the number of only children and the total number of children they had in their homerooms.

After the data forms were returned the researcher randomly selected children with siblings in each homeroom. The number of children with siblings researched corresponded to the number of only children in each homeroom. Questionnaires were distributed to the appropriate teacher (See Appendix A).

## Statistical Design

A t test was calculated for each of the questions asked to determine the difference between the peer relations of only children and the peer relations of children with siblings. A 20 point difference in percentages of yes responses was used.

## Chapter IV

### Findings and Interpretation of Data

#### Purpose

The purpose of this study was to investigate and compare the peer relations of only children and children with siblings at the primary level. The question to be answered was: Are the peer relations of only children significantly different than the peer relations of children with siblings?

A questionnaire was distributed to 55 teachers to be filled out for each randomly selected child with siblings and each only child in their homeroom. The total number of children surveyed was 174. Eighty-seven were children with siblings and eighty-seven were only children.

The information was charted and statistically analyzed using a series of t tests. The t test was used to determine if there was a significant difference between the peer relations of the only children and the children with siblings.

Example: The calculation of the t test for the significance of the difference between proportions.

WHERE:

$$n_1 = \text{number of only children (87)}$$

$$p_1 = \text{percentages of yes's (le. } \frac{56}{87} = .64$$

$$n_2 = \text{number of multiple children (87)}$$

$$p_2 = \text{percentage of yes's (le. } \frac{72}{87} = .83$$

(.05) 1.96 \* s.e. prop

$$\bar{p} = \frac{n_1 \bar{p}_1 + n_2 \bar{p}_2}{n_1 + n_2}$$

$$\therefore \bar{p} = \frac{(87 * .64) + (87 * .83)}{87 + 87} = \frac{127.89}{174} = .74$$

If  $\bar{p} = .74$  then  $\bar{q} = .26$  ( $\bar{q} = 1.00 - \bar{p}$ )

and

$$\text{s.e. } \bar{p} = \sqrt{\bar{p} * \bar{q} * \left( \frac{1}{n_1} + \frac{1}{n_2} \right)}$$

$$= \sqrt{(\bar{p} * \bar{q} * (n_1^{-1} + n_2^{-1}))}$$

$$= (.74 * .26 * (87 + 87)) = .07$$

$$\therefore \text{s.e. } \bar{p} = .07$$



$$\text{allowance} = \text{s.e.p} * t_{\downarrow}\text{value}$$

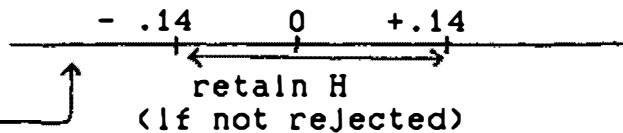
$$= .07 * 1.96$$

(1.96 from t table  
95% for 172 degrees  
of freedom)

$$= \bar{7} .14$$

If  $\bar{p}_1 - \bar{p}_2$  is between

$$p - P = .64 - .83 \\ = -.19$$



## Analysis of Data

The information gathered is represented in Table

1. The information was tested for significance by using the t test.

Table 1  
Data From Questions

Item	n1	p1	n2	p2	p	q	s.e.p	p<.05 t limit	t obt	statistically significant
1	89	.58	94	.80	.69	.31	.07	.13	-.22	yes
2	85	.63	83	.83	.73	.27	.07	.13	-.20	yes
3	96	.83	91	.97	.90	.10	.04	.09	-.14	yes
4	98	.39	94	.61	.50	.50	.07	.14	-.22	yes
5	96	.51	96	.71	.61	.39	.07	.14	-.20	yes
6	95	.74	96	.78	.76	.24	.06	.12	-.04	no
7	94	.67	97	.81	.74	.26	.06	.12	-.14	yes
8	99	.63	97	.86	.74	.26	.06	.12	-.23	yes
9	95	.64	93	.69	.66	.34	.07	.13	-.05	no
10	93	.57	92	.75	.66	.34	.07	.14	-.18	yes

### Key

Item= the number of the question asked

n1= number of only children

p1= percentages of yes

n2= number of children with siblings

p2= percentages of yes

p= proportion of total yes

q= proportion of total no

s.e.p= standard error of proportion

p<.05= 95% confidence limit for retaining null hypothesis

sign.= was the result significant or not

Analysis of Each Item in the Survey

## Item 1.

Does the child interact appropriately with peers during academic settings?

Reject the null hypothesis and conclude that there is a statistically significant difference between the only child group and the multiple child group in terms of the child being able to interact appropriately with peers during academic settings. The difference is statistically significant at the 95% confidence level.

The teachers concluded from their observations that proportionally more children in the multiple child group were able to interact more appropriately with peers during academic settings than the only child group.

**Item 2.**

Does the child interact appropriately with peers during non academic settings (e.g. playtime, free time)?

Reject the null hypothesis and conclude that there is a statistically significant difference between the only children group and the multiple children group in terms of the children being able to interact appropriately with peers during non-academic settings. The difference is statistically significant at the 95% confidence level.

The teachers concluded from their observations that proportionately more children in the multiple children group were able to interact more appropriately with peers during non-academic settings than the only child group.

**Item 3.**

Is the child willing to share his/her school supplies or toys?

Reject the null hypothesis and conclude that there is a statistically significant difference

between the only children group and the multiple children group in terms of the children being able to share his/her school supplies or toys. The difference is statistically significant at the 95% confidence level.

The teachers concluded from their observations that proportionately more children in the multiple children group were able to share their school supplies or toys than the only child group.

Item 4.

Does the child have a best friend?

Reject the null hypothesis and conclude that there is a statistically significant difference between the only children group and the multiple children group in terms of the children having a best friend. The difference is statistically significant at the 95% confidence level.

The teachers concluded from their observations that proportionately more children in the multiple children group had a best friend than in the only child group.

**Item 5.**

Does the child have several best friends?

Reject the null hypothesis and conclude that there is a statistically significant difference between the only children group and the multiple children group in terms of the children having several best friends. The difference is statistically significant at the 95% confidence level.

The teachers concluded from their observations that proportionately more children in the multiple children group had several best friends than in the only child group.

**Item 6.**

Does the child change friends frequently (day to day or week to week)?

Retain the null hypothesis and conclude that there is no statistically significant difference between only children and multiple children in terms of the child changing friends frequently. The difference is not statistically significant at the 95% confidence level.

The teachers concluded from their observations that there was no difference between the only child group and the multiple children group in terms of the frequency in which they change friends (day to day or week to week).

Item 7.

Does the child's personality invite positive interactions with peers or discourage interactions with peers?

Reject the null hypothesis and conclude that the teachers see the only children as having a personality that discourages interactions with peers. The difference is statistically significant at the 95% confidence level.

The teachers concluded from their observations that proportionately more children in the multiple children group invited positive interactions with peers than in the only child group. They also concluded that the children in the multiple children group were less likely to discourage interactions with peers than the children in the only child group.

**Item 8.**

Does the child monopolize the teachers time?

Reject the null hypothesis and conclude that there is a statistically significant difference between only children and multiple children in terms of the amount of teacher time they require. The difference is statistically significant at the 95% confidence level.

The teachers concluded from their observations that proportionately more children in the only child group monopolized more of the teachers time than the children in the multiple children group.

**Item 9.**

Does the child exhibit passive behaviors?

Retain the null hypothesis and conclude that there is not a statistically significant difference between only children and multiple children in terms of the passive behaviors they exhibit. The difference is not statistically significant at the 95% confidence level.

The teachers concluded from their observations that there was no proportional difference between the only child group and the multiple children group and the exhibiting of passive behaviors.



Item 10.

Does the child exhibit aggressive behaviors?

Reject the null hypothesis and conclude that there is a statistically significant difference between only children and multiple children in terms of the aggressive behaviors they exhibit. The difference is statistically significant at the 95% confidence level.

The teachers concluded from their observations that proportionately more children in the only child group exhibited aggressive behaviors than the children in the multiple children group.

### SUMMARY

After the surveys were returned to the researcher, each question was statistically tested using the t test. Each question was translated into a proportion and percentage of yes and no answers as well as standard error of proportion and confidence limit for retaining or rejecting the null hypothesis.

Data from eight of the ten questions asked, rejected the null hypothesis. Children with siblings reacted more appropriately with peers during both academic and non-academic settings.

They were more willing to share their toys than only children. They had several best friends as well as a best friend while only children did not. Children with siblings had personalities that invited rather than discouraged interactions with peers. Only children tended to monopolize the teacher's time and to exhibit aggressive behaviors when compared to children with siblings.

Data from two of the ten questions asked, accepted the null hypothesis. It was found that only children did not change friends any more frequently (day to day or week to week) than did children with siblings. It was also found that they did not exhibit passive behaviors when compared to children with siblings.

## Chapter 5

### Conclusions and Implications

#### Purpose

This study was proposed to investigate the peer relations of only children when compared to the peer relations of children with siblings, at the primary level.

#### Conclusions

The results of this study showed that children with siblings reacted more appropriately with peers during both academic and non academic settings in eight of the ten questions asked.

The children with siblings were more willing to share their toys, had several best friends as well as a best friend, whereas children with siblings did not. Children with siblings invited rather than discouraged interactions with peers as only children's personalities did the opposite. Only children tended to monopolize the teacher's time and exhibited aggressive behaviors when compared to children with siblings.

On the other hand, two of the ten questions were in favor of only children. Only children did not exhibit passive behaviors or change friends as

frequently when compared to children with siblings.

A factor that could have waved the findings of this study could be whether or not the teacher was an only child and the age of the teacher. Although the teachers were asked to look at the child and his or her behaviors and not to let any beliefs or misbeliefs interfere with their answers, this may have been the case. The research of the past thirty years or so generally indicated negative stereotypes of only children. Whereas more current research is showing that being an only child may be in one's best interest.

The type of day care that the child had before and during his beginning school years may have made a major change in these findings. If an only child was in a day care with several children or if a child with siblings was home all day with mom or dad he/she may develop different a personality or exhibit different behaviors.

As an employer, parent, teacher, citizen it is wise to keep an open mind when you meet or work with an individual, as personalities develop differently depending on enormous amount of factors.

### Implications for the Classroom

In order to get a good representation of the different characteristics between only children and children with siblings a teacher may want to do his/her own study. At the beginning of the school year, when all children are new to the teacher he/she may want to observe the children and make a hypothesis and a list of each child in the two categories. After making the list, the teacher could look into her files and identify the true list. The teacher may find that some children have only child characteristics but have a brother eleven years older, a baby sister or just has characteristics of an only child. The vice-versa could also be true. He/she may also want to look in the child's previous day care or schooling that could also play a part in the development of their characteristic.

Since the work force is somewhat turning towards the team approach to working it is important for all teachers to be aware of this. If teachers at the primary grades taught the need to cooperate and to work together, there might not be so much trouble once they get into the upper grades or into the work force. Although "leaders" are important, we need these leaders to be open to the ideas of others. We also need the "followers"

to be able to hold their own and not have others do their work.

Teachers also need to educate the parents of our children. We need them to realize the need to develop independence, but not the type of independence that they cook their own dinner and babysit themselves at age six. Rather, the kind of independence that they pick up their toys by themselves or do their homework without mom sitting right next to them.

### Further Research

The present study did not focus at all on the IQ of the only child versus the IQ of the child with siblings. Through the research it was evident that IQ is a variable that would prove to be an interesting study. As described in the review of the literature chapter of this thesis the confluence theory suggests that the smaller the family size the higher the average intelligence in the family. It would be interesting to know the validity of this theory.

The information gained in this type of study could be extended. A comparison could be made using adult only children and adults with siblings. The results may prove to be interesting if we asked some of the same questions and had their spouses or employers fill out the surveys.

Another question worthy of pursuit for additional research would be how the only child perceives himself verses how the child with siblings perceives himself. In addition, how do other children perceive the only child and child with siblings.

A study on the personalities of families that have extreme gaps between the age span of their children may prove to have interesting results. The age span may show for different personalities among the children. If for example, there were 10 years between the children's ages, they each may have characteristics representing only children.

Yet another area that could warrant further research and study would be the way only children would have his/her own family. If all variables were removed, would they chose an only child family or one with several children. On the contrary, would children from a large family want a family of an only child or several children.

## REFERENCES

- Arcus, D.M. (1987) Temperamental Stability as a Function of Change in Birth Order Status. Paper presented at the Biennial Meeting of the Society for Research in Child Development. Baltimore, MD.
- Belmont, L. (1977) Birth Order, Intellectual Competence and Psychiatric Status. Journal of Individual Psychology 33, 79-104.
- Blake, J. (1974) Can we believe recent data on birth expectations in the United States? Demography, 11, 25-44.
- Callan, V.J. (1985) Comparison of Mothers of One Child by Choice with Mothers Wanting a Second Birth. Journal of Marriage and the Family, 47, 155-163.
- Cruse, D.R. and Cruse, D. (1989) Single-Child Families and Death. Childhood Education, 65, 153-56.
- Falbo, T. (1983) The One Child Family in Perspective. Paper presented at the Annual Convention of the Southwestern Psychological Association. San Antonio, TX.
- Fenton, N. (1928) The Only child. Journal of Genetic Psychology, 35, 546-556.
- Houseknecht, S.K. (1982) Childlessness and the One-Child Family. Journal of Family Issues, 3, 419-430.
- Houseknecht, S.K. (1982) Voluntary Childlessness. Journal of Family Issues, 3, 459-471.
- Jiao, S., Ji, G., and Jing, Q. (1986) Comparative Study of Behavioral Qualities of Only Children and Sibling Children. Child Development, 57, 357-361.
- Miller, N., Maruyama, G. (1976) Ordinal Position and Peer Popularity. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 33, 123-131.
- Mott, F., Haurin R.J. (1982) Being an Only Child. Journal of Family Issues, 3, 575-593



- Pankhurst, J.G. (1982) Childless and One-Child Families in the Soviet Union. Journal of Family Issues, 3, 493-515.
- Polit, D.F., Falbo, T. (1985) Siblings and Child Development: Evidence from a Meta-Analysis of the Literature on Only Children. Paper presented at the Biennial Meeting of the Society for Research in Child Development. Toronto, Ontario, Canada.
- Polit, D.F., Falbo, T. (1987) Only Children and Personality Development: A Quantitative Review. Journal of Marriage and the Family, 49, 309-325.
- Polit, D.F., Nuttall, R.L. and Nuttall, E.V. (1980) The Only Child Grows Up: A Look at Some Characteristics of Adult Only Children. Family Relations, 29, 99-106.
- Rosenberg, M. (1965) Society and the adolescent self-image. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Rosenberg, M. (1983) The Only Child: Separating Myth From Reality. American Baby, 45, 48-50.
- Snow, M.E., Jacklin, C.N., and Maccoby E.E. (1981) Birth-Order Differences in Peer Sociability at Thirty-Three Months. Child Development, 52, 589-595.
- Solomon, E.S., Clare, J.E., and Westoff, C.S. (1956) Social and Psychological Factors Affecting Fertility. Milbank Memorial Fund Quarterly, 34, 160-179.
- Spodek, B. (1989) Chinese Kindergarten Education and Its Reforms. Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 4, 31-50.
- Steiner, K. (1984) The Only Child. Clearinghouse on Elementary and Early Childhood Education. University of Illinois.
- Sutton-Smith, B., Rosenberg, B. (1965) Age Changes in the effects of Ordinal Position on Sex-role Identification. Journal of Genetic Psychology, 107, 61-73.

Thomson, V.D. (1974) Family Size: Implicit  
Policies and Assumed Psychological Outcomes.  
Journal of Social Issues, 30, 93-123.

## APPENDIX A

Dear (teacher's name),

March 9, 1989

I am a graduate student at SUNY @ Brockport. I am researching the peer relations of only children within the classroom. This will be a comparison study between the peer relations of only children and children with siblings. I need your help in surveying the characteristics of these children.

Could you please return the bottom portion to your school secretary by March 17. Within the next week I will then place the correct number of questionnaires in your mailbox. One questionnaire will need to be filled out per only child. Since this is a comparison study I would also ask you to chose the same number of typical children with siblings to also survey. (For example, if you have two only children I would then ask you to chose two typical children with siblings to also survey). At that time I will inform you of the return date.

This procedure will take you from 3-5 minutes per child being surveyed.

As a teacher, at Holmes Road School, I understand that your time is limited but I would appreciate any spare minute that you could give my research.

It is understood that this information is highly confidential.

If you have any questions you may contact me at 225-4120 during school hours.

Thank you,

Katrina Schaller

-----

PLEASE RETURN TO  
YOUR SCHOOL SECRETARY BY  
MARCH 17, 1989.

TEACHER  
NAME \_\_\_\_\_

GRADE TAUGHT \_\_\_\_\_

TOTAL NUMBER OF CHILDREN IN HOMEROOM \_\_\_\_\_

NUMBER OF ONLY CHILDREN IN HOMEROOM \_\_\_\_\_

APPENDIX B  
ONLY CHILD SURVEY

Teacher \_\_\_\_\_ Grade of child \_\_\_\_\_  
Circle one:     Male or Female  
                  Only child or Child with siblings

Are you (the teacher) an only child?   Yes    No

PLEASE FEEL FREE TO EXPAND UPON ANY QUESTION.

Does the child interact appropriately with peers during academic settings?

Does the child interact appropriately with peers during non- academic settings (eg. playtime, free time)?

Is the child willing to share his/her school supplies or toys?

Does the child have a best friend?

Does the child have several best friends?

Does the child change friends frequently?

Does the child's personality invite positive interactions with peers or discourage interactions with peers? (Circle one) Please explain.

Does the child exhibit passive behaviors?

Does the child exhibit aggressive behaviors?