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Sam (Interviewer):

This is Sam Tinaglia here with, what's your name sir?

Erik Park (Respondent):

My name is Erik Parks.

Sam:

Erik Park, how are you doing today?

Erik:

Doing good Sam how are you?

Sam:

Good. So Erik is one of the guys that lives down the hall from me in Newman Hall and I don't know him too well. I thought he has a interesting room, so why not ask him about his experience with his roommates. So, first of all what is it like living with other people?

Erik:

I think I got really lucky because the people that I live with in this room, this year and last year both, they're just very agreeable, very easy to get along with. So I don't know what it actually feels like to live with people who you disagree with a lot and you get into arguments and this and that, so I don't really know what that's like. I remember what it's like to live at home, but even then I didn't live in the same room as somebody else. So yeah it's different, you're not necessarily private or alone at any given time because all four people who live in this room have a right to be in here at whatever time, but there's just the fact that we didn't all grow up together, we didn't all live together until now. There's a maturity and respect that we have for each other where we respect each others privacy, we respect each other's wishes, desires and so. I think it's kinda nice because it allows us to focus on things that we enjoy together and we can kind of get past all the petty drama that you might have in your daily life in your own family.

Sam:

So would you rather have come here to Newman having known your roommates or is it better to have random roommates?

Erik:

Well I think that's a difficult question to answer, I mean you don't know who you're going to get at random, so you say to yourself, well maybe it's safer to live with someone who I do know. But even if you know them, that doesn't mean you're going to be a great roommate with them. I mean like I have several friends who, like looking back on it, i'm really glad I did not become

roommates with because we would have hated each other by the end of the year, it would have been just too much. But at the same time though, like random, you could get somebody who is, pardon my french, absolutely crazy. And you know what, if they are crazy and you don't get along with them, that's kind of miserable too. So it's not like I would say one versus the other really has the edge, I just think that, you know, you either collaborate and get things done together, you know you can study in piece and you can keep your room clean and stay organized or you don't and it's one of the two. It's not limited to whether it's random or previously selected.

Sam:

Are there ever times where you wish you lived alone or would there be any benefits in living alone?

Erik:

I think there are definitely times where I would have liked to have had a little bit more privacy, but during those times, this campus is so large that I can go find a place like the Chapel late at night or somewhere where I really needed to be alone with myself and my thoughts, I can be there. So I actually am very glad I have roommates in particular, not just suitemates, that sleep in the same room because I think for me, and this is probably more personal to me, but i'm sure there are lots of students on campus that may struggle with homesickness, they struggle with being alone, or barely have anyone that they can talk to, having somebody who lives in the same room as me, I know I don't have to have conversations, but it's right there if I choose it. And by choosing that in my college experience I made one of my best friendships here on campus, so I think that I'm much better off now because of the fact that I had somebody there. There are rooms here where you can just live by yourself and not like there's anything wrong with that, but I think that I gained the kind of support I needed, and when I say supports I mean in awkward times of the day, like late at night, early in the morning when I don't know who to turn to, don't know who to go to, I have people right there, so I think there is something to be said about that.

Sam:

So when you were coming in to U of I, like before you even decided on who you were going to room with, were you always thinking you wanted to have roommates?

Erik:

Yeah, I think that when I was looking at the rooms at Illinois, I was actually being told to live not in the north end, the suite style rooms, I was being told to live in the south end because that's where you make like the most friends, like a fraternity, you're constantly in the halls, brushing teeth, using the bathroom, showering, or whatever, so you're knocking on other people's doors, you're seeing them as they walk by and whatever. I think there must be some sort of truth to that. You meet more people, but I wouldn't say necessarily that would have been my best move. I'm happy I went with this room, where yes I still have roommates, I still have people, this was always kind of my plan for that reason because they recommended that I meet people and talk to

people, but I think that whether or not you live community, whether you live in a suite, having a roommate is something that I really wanted and something that I still benefited from even if it wasn't completely the traditionally college community experience.

Sam:

So a follow up question would be from having roommates do you think you have more friendships because you were with these people and that helped you branch off too?

Erik:

I think what it did was it got me out of my cliquy comfort shell, like last year I had a couple of friends who were in a fraternity and they would bring some of their friends from their fraternity and some of their friends were in sororities. I'd walk in and they'd be watching movies, hanging out, talking, having Coca-Cola's, just having a good time. I remember like meeting these people, getting introduced to these people, realizing we had some of the same friends around campus and now I still see them walking around. It's like I would have never gone up to these people had I not been introduced to them by my suite mates and so I think that having these suitemates, maybe they didn't make my closest friends on campus, but it got me more comfortable with introducing myself or like meeting new people and talking to people who aren't in my main daily circle.

Sam: Turning around, would you possibly have less friends or not have met as many people if you lived alone?

Erik: I don't think that's necessarily true. I think if I lived alone I would have spent more time studying upstairs in my room maybe cause I could have been more focused. And I think though, you may have such complete privacy, and I don't know about you, but I have struggled, spiritually, socially, I have all kinds of struggles and it can be easy to hide behind those struggles behind your own private closed door. But when you're constantly forced to interact with people, you can't hide those struggles, you need to bring out those things. Maybe not talk about them, but at least, you can't have a facade with those things. I think that, going back to what you said that it doesn't necessarily keep you from having a certain number of friends, but I do think it could encourage you to be a little bit more reserved and less outgoing and that could affect the maturity or the nature of your friendships as opposed to the number.

Sam:

Well thanks so much, I think that's all good.

Erik:

No problem, anytime.