



5

Comparing Sibling Ties in Inter-ethnic and Intra-ethnic Families in Germany

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Introduction

The relationship between siblings can be described as potentially life's longest lasting; however, the sibling relationship is one of the most understudied in sociological research. Certain similarities and differences in sibling ties across families can on the one hand be explained by societal and cultural factors. On the other hand, family factors, such as parenting style and parental behaviour, also play an important role in the socialization of children and the evolving variation in sibling ties (Milevsky et al. 2011). Accounting for culture as a dimension of family values and parenting helps to answer some migration-relevant questions: How do cultural beliefs and values related to sibling dynamics organize social relations within multi-cultural families? What are the connections between parenting processes and conflicts emerging from cultural differences in multi-cultural families?

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In the present research, we primarily focus on investigating the link between cultural background and the quality of sibling relationships. In a Western European country with a long immigration tradition, such as Germany, in which an increasing number of multi-cultural relationships and individualization and pluralization processes are taking place, the sibling relationship is growing in importance. Ciciirelli (1994), a researcher on siblings, studied the role of culture and culturally acquired value systems in sibling relationships by comparing industrialized and non-industrialized social contexts. However, beyond this research, relatively little is known about the nature of sibling ties in multi-cultural families.

This chapter aims to fill the gap in sociological research by studying the quality of sibling relationships in different cultural contexts by distinguishing between individualistic, collectivistic, and multi-cultural family backgrounds in the case of Germany. The main question we aim to answer is how do cultural differences in multi-cultural families affect the relationship between siblings? The cultural context on which we focus refers to (a) societal value orientation and (b) family values and parenting. Based on the cultural differences between individualistic and collectivistic factors, we will apply warmth and conflict dimensions, as well as frequency of contact, as measurement indicators to assess the differences in sibling relationships. To test our hypotheses, we use secondary data from the Panel Analysis of Intimate Relationships and Family Dynamics (pairfam), which is a large-scale study that allows for an analysis of intimate relationships and family dynamics (Brüderl et al. 2016a, b). We will utilize linear regression with clustered standard errors as the method of analysis.

This chapter continues in the next section with a brief literature review of the role of sibling ties in relation to cultural differences. After that, we introduce the cultural factors that are known to influence the differences in the quality of sibling relationships and from which we derive our hypotheses. We then explain the societal-value orientation by placing an emphasis on the differences between individualistic and collectivistic cultural contexts and the role of family values and parenting styles that also influence the sibling relationship. In the next section, we describe our data and method and summarize the findings. We end our chapter with a discussion on the limitations of the analysis and the improvements required to engage in further research.

Literature Review

As one of the most enduring relationships in the course of a person's life, the sibling relationship represents a unique context that is important for the cognitive, social, and emotional development of an individual. Cross-cultural studies from the fields of developmental psychology, sociology, and cultural anthropology focus on four specific dimensions of sibling relationships: companionship and interdependence, roles and functions of siblings, emotional intensity of the relationship, and structural characteristics. As companions in daily activities in childhood and adolescence, siblings form a significant part of an individual's life. There are differences, however, in sibling roles and their relationship dynamics between cultures. In most non-Western societies, it is a principal norm for siblings to be interdependent (Nuckolls 1993) and provide support to each other, such as elder siblings assuming the role of caregiver to their younger siblings (Cicirelli 1994). In Western cultures, the parent-child bond is the primary family relationship whereas sibling ties have a rather independent and autonomous character (Weisner 1993). However, most of comparative studies have investigated the link between culturally established norms and values and sibling relationships across cultures. By contrast, little sociological research includes examples from immigrant or ethnic minority families when exploring the nature of sibling relationships (McHale et al. 2007; Pyke 2005; Voorpostel and Schans 2011).

The quality of the sibling relationship can differ between families and cultures as a result of its emotional intensity, which is determined by a combination of warm (positive) and hostile (negative) behaviour in sibling interactions (e.g. Noller 2005). For example, McHale et al. (2007) have found evidence for both positive (a high level of warmth and a low level of conflict) and negative (a low level of warmth and a high level of conflict) relationships among siblings in African-American families in the USA. A similar relationship quality pattern was evident among siblings with Mexican origin in the USA (Updegraff et al. 2010). European-American and Australian siblings, on the other hand, tend to have uninvolved relationships that are characterized by low emotional intensity of warmth and hostility (McHale et al. 2007). Sociological literature assigns

an important role to structural characteristics such as birth order, gender constellation, and age spacing in siblings' relationship dynamics. The effect of sibling structure is primarily mediated by parenting behaviour that may vary in different cultures. For example, in terms of birth order, Leyendecker (2003) has shown that siblings in immigrant families from collectivistic backgrounds—which are typical of the origins of immigrant families in Germany—reveal patterns of asymmetrical relationships characterized mainly by strong traditional and respectful behaviour toward older siblings. By contrast, in families of German ethnic origin, sibling relationships are more symmetric in terms of children's age difference. While a large age gap in families with individualistic value orientations may lead to less involvement between siblings and more conflict (e.g. Voorpostel and Schans 2011), and a small age gap is associated with a good sibling relationship quality, especially in childhood, in migrant families a small age gap is a major factor affecting the sibling relationship. In such cases, the eldest child is assigned a more mature and competent role than the younger one, so that the older child may be exposed to a risk of 'overexploitation and neglect' (Uslucan 2010).

Research has yet to be conducted in any of the abovementioned dimensions to explore sibling relationships within a multi-cultural family context. In this research, we consider different family systems, that is, family relations and role expectations embedded in multiple cultural contexts, and their effects on the quality of sibling relationships.

Theoretical Background

Societal Values

Cultural influences on sibling ties, related to socio-culturally transmitted value systems, have been examined in the contexts of industrialized and non-industrialized societies, with the latter also being known as collectivistic societies. It is argued that sibling relationships in industrialized societies tend to be rather discretionary, whereas in collectivistic societies they are rather obligatory (Cicirelli 1994). Individuals from non-Western and collectivistic backgrounds are more likely to maintain close personal

relationships with family members. Kinship ties are very important (see also Nauck 2007). A collectivist family context represents a system that is grounded in the interdependence between siblings. They are committed to supporting and helping each other for the duration of their lives. In contrast, industrialized Western societies are characterized by independent family ties and higher levels of individualism. Sibling ties in these individualistic cultures are likely to be characterized by less contact and activity (Cicirelli 1994). In Germany, the largest immigrant groups come from collectivist cultures¹ such as Turkey, Poland, Russia, Italy,² Greece and the former Yugoslavia (BMBF 2009), but ethnic German families are characterized by individualistic and autonomous family ties. Drawing on the assumption that sibling relationships in families with collectivistic values are more strongly associated with high contact frequency and supportive behaviour than those in families with individualistic values, we predict a higher level of emotional warmth between siblings in immigrant families from collectivistic backgrounds in comparison to sibling relationships in native German families (H1a). Since sibling ties are related to more involvement and interdependence in families with a migration history and collectivist value orientation, we assume that there is more opportunity for conflictual behaviour. Accordingly, we predict a more frequent contact but also a higher level of conflict between siblings from immigrant backgrounds than between native German siblings (H1b).

Family Values and Parenting Roles

It is widely accepted that parents and the quality of family relationships play highly relevant roles in children's socialization and in their acquisition and internalization of social and moral values (e.g. Dette-Hagenmeyer and Reichle 2015). Normative family values and their related role expectations are influenced by the cultural beliefs that prevail in the society in which individuals have been socialized (Inglehart and Baker 2000). These family values are transmitted to children through parenting, whereby different parenting strategies may affect the socialization of a child differently. An optimal parenting style must consider

the influences on children that come from cultural, community, and family relationships.

Culture-related differences in sibling relationships between immigrant or ethnic minority families and native families in Germany can be explained by value systems of collectivism and individualism. Good examples of cultural variations in parenting styles are Turkish or Moroccan parents with migrant backgrounds contrasted with German and Dutch parents. Characterized by collectivistic family values, Turkish and Moroccan parents are both likely to use authoritarian parenting techniques that are associated with high emotional attachment and closeness (Leyendecker 2003; Uslucan 2010; Van de Pol and van Tubergen 2014). The same parents tend to teach their children to behave respectfully towards all family members, especially their elders, and to attach particular value to them (Alamdar-Niemann 1992; Durgel and Van de Vijver 2015; Uslucan 2010). Parents from an individualistic background tend to practise a non-authoritarian parenting style and in terms of gender, treat their children to be equally self-controlled, whereas in collectivistic families, girls and boys are assigned traditional gender-specific roles (El-Mafaalani and Toprak 2011). Since parenting is culturally influenced, we assume that cultural beliefs and values, which are internalized in the family, are reliable predictors for the quality of sibling ties (e.g. Milevsky et al. 2011; Voorpostel and Schans 2011).

In a multi-cultural family context, we deal with inter-ethnic families who face the challenge of colliding cultural worlds. In these families, parents struggle to maintain a sense of their own identities and of certainty regarding parental roles and childrearing. Distinct family values and beliefs that dominate in multi-cultural families can lead to conflictual family relationships, especially when parents come from different societal contexts (collectivistic or individualistic). A failure to share cultural views and parental styles can lead to conflicts between parents, which affect their social development and manifest itself in problematic behaviour (Buehler et al. 1997). Parental conflict can also be transmitted to the parent-child relationship through the so-called spillover model (Krishnakumar and Buehler 2000) and influence child's behaviour.

Drawing on the reviewed theoretical concepts and empirical findings, we assume that parenting has a crucial role to play in children's socializa-

tion and consequently in shaping sibling relationships as well. We believe that in families with parents from the same cultural background, common parenting methods exist. Conflicts resulting from differences in family values and norms are reflected in the quality of the sibling relationship, particularly in families composed of different cultural backgrounds in which one parent comes from a culture exhibiting collectivistic tendencies when the other comes from a culture that emphasizes individualism. Accordingly, we predict that in multi-cultural families, sibling relationships are characterized by a lower level of warmth and a higher level of conflict than in families in which both parents come from either collectivistic or individualistic cultures (H2a). Based on what we know about the extent of family coherence, we assume that siblings in multi-cultural families have less contact than those in collectivistic families, but more contact than their counterparts in individualistic families (H2b).

Data and Method

To test our hypotheses, we apply a secondary data analysis to the quantitative data taken from the pairfam,³ which is a representative large-scale panel study of family relationships and dynamics in Germany. In general, quantitative secondary data analysis allows for the analysis of a great number of individuals, thereby providing results that are generalizable to society as a whole. Pairfam data are professionally prepared and extensively documented. It contains information on more than 12,000 individuals in the root-sample—the so-called anchor persons—and it includes the anchors' relationships with each sibling, which is crucial for the aim of our research. We use the fifth wave of the pairfam panel (2012/2013) as it is the first wave in which information on siblings was collected. Moreover, Wave 5 is less affected by panel attrition than later waves, meaning that information on more individuals is available.

Pairfam has a multi-actor panel design, i.e. interviews are conducted with anchors as well as their partners, parents and children in each wave of the survey. The structure of the data is complex as the information is provided separately for each wave and respondent group, resulting in several datasets of different formats. We applied a stacking procedure, that

is, the systematic nesting and matching of information that produces unique anchor-sibling dyads.⁴

Measures

Dependent Variables Based on Furman and Buhrmester's (1985) concept of the dimensions of sibling relationships, we defined two dimensions to measure the quality of sibling ties: 'warmth' and 'conflict'. *Warmth* between siblings was measured by the item: 'How close do you feel to [name of sibling] today?' The answer categories ranged from 1 'not close at all' to 5 'very close'. Perceived sibling *conflict* was measured by the items of the subscales of the Network of Relationship Inventory (NRI) developed by Furman and Buhrmester (1985). In pairfam, sibling conflict is assessed by two item scales: '[b]eing angry at each other' and '[a]rgue with each other'. Respondents rated the frequency of being angry at and having arguments with their sibling on a 5-point scale from 1 'never' to 5 'always'. We included *contact* as the third dependent variable in the model for measuring the frequency of contact between siblings by asking: 'How often do you have contact with [name of sibling] if you count visits, letters, phone calls, etc.?' The inverted variable for contact frequency ranged from 1 'never' to 7 'daily'.⁵

Independent Variables *Individualistic vs. collectivistic* cultural backgrounds are based on the parents' countries of birth.⁶ Variable *indi* distinguishes between parents born in countries with a collectivistic culture (value 0), those with individualistic cultural backgrounds (value 1),⁷ and those with multi-cultural backgrounds (value 2), i.e. one parent is born in an individualistic country and the other in a country with collectivistic societal values. Deduced from this base variable, several dummy variables were computed to adapt to the methodological necessities for testing the hypothesis. The variable indicating *family values* is an item that measures the attitudes of parents toward family and family life. Using a 5-point scale, the parent should rate to what extent they agree or disagree with the statement 'Parents and children should support each other mutually for a

lifetime'. *Family roles* is a mean index including three items on the role of parents: 'Usually I am willing to sacrifice my own desires for those of my child/children', 'I would endure anything for the sake of my child/children', and 'Often, I put everything else aside in order to support my child/children'. Here again, parents rated on a 5-point scale how strongly each of the mentioned parental roles apply to them. For both the family values and parental role variables, we generated a mean variable reflecting the mean value of both parents. Furthermore, a distance measure was computed to indicate the differences in the responses between parents in terms of family values and parental roles. The lowest value (0) of both distance measures indicates no difference between parents, while the highest value (4) means that the responses of the parents differ by four scale points.

Control Variables We control for the anchor's age and the structural characteristics of siblings, that is, the number of siblings and their gender mix (just brothers, just sisters or a mixture of the two) in the family.

From the total number of 7246 anchors, we excluded those without siblings and those with more than nine siblings. For the remaining 6387 anchors, information on their parents' countries of birth was used to compute the 'culture' variable referring to individualistic/collectivistic backgrounds. Fifty-seven per cent (mean percentage of both parents) of anchors' biological parents come from West Germany and a quarter of the sample (26 per cent) has an East German background. The remaining 18 per cent of parental backgrounds differ ethnically. The largest ethnic group was composed of Turkish parents with ca. 3 per cent of the overall sample, followed by Polish (2.4 per cent), and Russian (ca. 2.3 per cent). Parents born in West and East Germany, North, West, or Central Europe, and North America are assigned to the individualistic culture group. All other families with migrant backgrounds are considered to have come from collectivistic cultures. The anchors sample was transformed via stacking into 12,837 anchor-sibling dyads, referred to as sibling relations. We excluded relations without any information concerning the parents' countries of birth or with information for only one parent. Likewise, we excluded sibling relations with adoptive and stepsiblings and performed

listwise deletion on all the variables. These modifications led to a final sample consisting of 10,674 sibling relations.

Method

For our analyses, we apply generalized linear regression models (GLMs) with clustered standard errors. As our data have a complex structure with sibling relations clustered in anchor persons, one of the main assumptions for standard OLS is violated. The independence assumption—that the covariance of residuals is zero—does not hold for clustered data. This problem can be fixed by applying clustered standard errors (e.g. Wooldridge 2010; Petersen 2009). The models were calculated with data weighted by a design weight provided in the dataset which corrects for the disproportionate sampling across birth cohorts (Data Manual, pairfam Release 7.0. 2016).

Results and Discussion

Before estimating the influence of the societal values context on the three dimensions (H1a and H1b), we ran correlation analyses⁸ to test the theoretical presumption that the strength of family values and parental roles is higher in collectivistic families than it is in individualistic families. As can be seen in Table 5.1, mean family values (Model 1) and mean parental roles (Model 2) are significantly negatively correlated with a variable distinguishing between collectivistic and individualistic families, that is, in collectivistic families, family values and parental roles are stronger than they are in individualistic families.

As displayed in Table 5.2, regression coefficients for individualistic cultural backgrounds (highlighted in bold) are significant and negative for all three dimensions of sibling relations. First, that means that sibling relations in families of individualistic cultural backgrounds, which in our sample mainly consists of native German families, are less emotionally warm than they are in immigrant families with collectivistic cultural backgrounds ($b = -0.47$). This finding supports our hypothesis H1a.

Table 5.1 Correlation of family values with differences between collectivistic and individualistic families

	Model 1	Model 2
	Mean parent values*	Mean parent role*
	Collectivistic/individualistic	Collectivistic/individualistic
Coeff.	-0.099***	-0.039***
N Collectivistic	192	187
N Individualistic	3437	3401
N Total	3629	3588

Significance levels: *** $p \leq .001$ ** $p \leq .01$ * $p \leq .05$

Table 5.2 The influence of sociocultural values context on sibling ties in contact, warmth, and conflict dimension

	Contact			Warmth			Conflict		
	b (s.e.)			b (s.e.)			b (s.e.)		
Intercept	5.834	(0.075)	***	4.085	(0.051)	***	2.393	(0.040)	***
Collectivistic	Reference category								
Individualistic	-0.670	(0.057)	***	-0.465	(0.040)	***	-0.117	(0.032)	***
Multicultural	-0.934	(0.119)	***	-0.480	(0.075)	***	-0.120	(0.058)	*
Age	-0.084	(0.002)	***	-0.021	(0.002)	***	-0.025	(0.001)	***
Brother siblings	Reference category								
Sister siblings	0.171	(0.050)	***	0.223	(0.035)	***	0.188	(0.027)	***
Diff-sex sibling	-0.232	(0.043)	***	-0.094	(0.029)	***	-0.015	(0.023)	***
Number of siblings	-0.180	(0.015)	***	-0.101	(0.011)	***	-0.112	(0.007)	***
N	10,674			10,674			10,674		
R ²	0.23			0.07			0.11		

Beta (*b*) unstandardized regression coefficient, *s.e.* standard errors, *N* sample size during parameter estimation, *R-squared* (*R*²) explained variation/total variation. Significance levels: *** $p \leq .001$ ** $p \leq .01$ * $p \leq .05$

Second, individualistic siblings demonstrate a lower level of conflict behaviour than siblings from collectivistic backgrounds ($b = -0.12$) and have less contact with their siblings ($b = -0.67$), providing evidence for our hypothesis H1b.

The results shown in Table 5.2 confirm the assumption that siblings with migrant backgrounds from collectivist societies tend to be more connected and involved and therefore their relationships are character-

ized by more frequent contact than those in the individualistic context. Moreover, although they are warmer, sibling relationships in collectivistic families are also more conflictual than in individualistic families. The straightforward explanation for this result would be that collectivist cultures are based on group or community values in which family and kinship are more important than they are in individualistic cultures.

However, the variation in the sibling dynamics between these two cultures may be a direct result of internalized societal values or/and a by-product of family values in terms of parenting styles exhibited in different family contexts. For example, conflictual behaviour among siblings is more likely to be specifically an outcome of authoritative parenting, with its more detached and less emotionally warm parent-child relationship, than a general attribute of families with individualistic cultural backgrounds. We test the theoretical presumption that the distance between parents' family values and their parenting roles, respectively, is significantly larger in multi-cultural families than it is in families with parents from the same cultural background.

The results of the correlation analysis between family values and parenting roles and parents' different cultural backgrounds are displayed in Table 5.3. Model 1 shows that there is no significant difference between multi-cultural families and families from the same cultural background concerning the distance between parents' family values and parenting

Table 5.3 Correlation of value distances between parents with multi-cultural family context

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	Same-culture/ multi-cultural Context		Collectivistic/ multi-cultural Context		Individualistic/ multi-cultural Context	
	Parent values	Parent role	Parent values	Parent role	Parent values	Parent role
Coeff.	-0.105	-0.008	0.122	0.047	-0.044	-0.010
N Multi-cultural	93	91	93	91	93	91
N Same	2287	2262				
N Collectivistic			99	98		
N Individualistic					2188	2164
N Total	2380	2353	192	189	2281	2255

Significance levels: *** $p \leq .001$ ** $p \leq .01$ * $p \leq .05$

roles. This would contradict the theoretical presumption. However, an explanation for this statistical insignificance could be that the effects for the sub-groups of families from the same cultural background, that is only individualistic or only collectivistic families, work in opposite directions and consequently offset each other. Therefore, in Models 2 and 3, we distinguished between multi-cultural and individualistic as well as multi-cultural and collectivistic backgrounds (where a multi-cultural family is coded 1). Indeed we find, on the one hand, a positive correlation between the distance of parental family values as well as parental roles and multi-cultural background, in comparison to collectivistic background (model 2). On the other hand, the relation between parental distances and multi-cultural family composition in comparison to individualistic backgrounds is negative (model 3). However, the coefficients in both models are still insignificant. Nonetheless, one should keep in mind that these descriptive analyses are based on comparatively small sub-samples.

In the second part of the regression analysis, we examine the influence of a family's cultural constellation on the three dimensions of sibling relations (H2a and H2b). We first describe the differences between multi-cultural and collectivistic backgrounds and then the differences between multi-cultural and individualistic backgrounds (both highlighted in bold). As displayed in Table 5.4, regression coefficients for collectivistic cultural backgrounds are significant and positive for all three dimensions of sibling relations. First, that means that sibling relations in families with multi-cultural backgrounds are less emotionally warm than they are in collectivistic families ($b = 0.48$), which supports H2a. Second, multi-cultural siblings demonstrate lower levels of conflict behaviour than siblings of collectivistic backgrounds ($b = 0.12$), which contradicts H2a. However, siblings of multi-cultural backgrounds do not differ from siblings of individualistic backgrounds with regard to emotional warmth and conflict behaviour, which contradicts H2a. Third, siblings of multi-cultural backgrounds have less contact than those from collectivistic backgrounds ($b = 0.93$), therefore providing evidence for H2b. Turning to the differences between multi-cultural and individualistic backgrounds, we find only a significant positive coefficient for contact. That means that

Table 5.4 The influence of cultural constellation of family on sibling ties in contact, warmth, and conflict dimension

	Contact			Warmth			Conflict		
	b (s.e.)			b (s.e.)			b (s.e.)		
Intercept	4.900	(0.109)	***	3.605	(0.073)	***	2.273	(0.055)	***
Collectivistic	0.934	(0.119)	***	0.480	(0.075)	***	0.120	(0.058)	*
Individualistic	0.265	(0.108)	*	0.015	(0.067)		0.002	(0.051)	
Multi-cultural	Reference category								
Age	-0.084	(0.002)	***	-0.021	(0.002)	***	-0.025	(0.001)	***
Brother siblings	Reference category								
Sister siblings	0.171	(0.050)	***	0.223	(0.035)	***	0.188	(0.027)	***
Diff-sex sibling	-0.232	(0.043)	***	-0.094	(0.029)	***	-0.015	(0.023)	
Number of siblings	-0.180	(0.015)	***	-0.101	(0.011)	***	-0.112	(0.007)	***
N	10,674			10,674			10,674		
R ²	0.23			0.07			0.11		

Beta (b) unstandardized regression coefficient, *s.e.* standard errors, *N* sample size during parameter estimation, *R-squared (R²)* explained variation/total variation. Significance levels: *** $p \leq .001$ ** $p \leq .01$ * $p \leq .05$

siblings from multi-cultural backgrounds have less contact than those from individualistic backgrounds ($b = 0.27$) and thus contradicts H2b.

Following these results, we can conclude that although siblings in multi-cultural families have the lowest contact frequency, the quality of their sibling relationship is not necessarily worse than that of siblings socialized in a family with mono-cultural background. They have fewer conflicts than siblings from collectivistic backgrounds and have similar levels of emotional warmth and conflict behaviour as siblings from individualistic backgrounds. In terms of warmth and conflict, similarity in the relations of siblings from multi-cultural and individualistic families—in contrast with multi-cultural and collectivistic families—might be explained by the fact that in our data, almost all families of multi-cultural backgrounds are half-German. In these mixed families, German individualistic values might influence the sibling relations more strongly than the collectivistic ones due to their greater exposure to individualistic German culture in everyday life.

Conclusion

The primary aim of this study was to fill a significant gap in the literature on sibling relationships by paying attention to the cultural backgrounds of families and parental values and roles. Previous studies have simply shown that families with immigrant backgrounds tend to be more collectivistic in their orientation, which can be characterized by more warmth and higher frequency of contact than individualistic families. These cultural factors can predict the quality of sibling relationships. However, since little is known about sibling relationships in multi-cultural families, the present analysis tries to explain the differences between siblings from multi-cultural and mono-cultural backgrounds based on indicators like societal and family value orientation. Our findings suggest that the cultural context of the family does matter for sibling relationships. In multi-cultural families, the lack of frequent contact does not necessarily mean that the sibling relationships in these families are weaker than the ties between siblings socialized in mono-cultural families.

The results highlight both indirect and direct relationships between family values with regard to parenting styles and the quality of sibling relationships. We can conclude that multi-cultural families, which are predominantly half-German, and individualistic families are more similar than multi-cultural families and collectivistic families with regard to warmth and conflict. The influence of the individualistic values of German culture on family and society could explain the approximation of multi-cultural and individualistic families.

Finally, there are some limitations in our study. There are many questions that remain to be explored and answered when investigating sibling relationships in the future. In this context, it would be interesting to examine whether there are cultural differences regarding gender roles and functions due to the age of the siblings. Additional research that focuses on sibling age and position would also be necessary because there is causality between age and the quality of the sibling relationship according to cultural background, as briefly mentioned in the theory section. Further research is also needed to investigate in-depth the relevance of religious and cultural values to different parental behaviours/methods and different sibling types (like half-siblings and stepsiblings) and their impact on the

quality of sibling relationships. Moreover, due to the small group size in this study, we were not able to differentiate between ethnic groups when considering sibling ties in immigrant populations in contrast with native German families. The length of residence of the parent with the immigrant and collectivistic background in an individualistic-oriented host country could be a factor explaining the similarities between multicultural and individualistic families. If parents have spent more time living in an individualistic country, then perhaps we can expect there to be an overlap of collectivistic and individualistic societal and family values. Likewise, it would be desirable for the variables to include different cultural orientations, like national identity or opinions on family values.

In light of the recent migration situation in Europe, it would be interesting to know whether family and sibling dynamics are shaped by the refugee status of a person or family. Are there any systematic differences in family values and role expectations between recent refugees and more established immigrant families in the country? In this light, prospective research should place a special focus on sibling relationships in a transnational context.

Notes

1. The argument is based on the country clusters defined in the GLOBE Study (House et al. 2004) according to the level of cultural similarity among societies. Collectivist societies are countries that score high on cultural dimension Collectivism II (In-Group) which refers to the degree to which individuals in the respective society express pride, loyalty and cohesiveness in their organizations or families.
2. According to the scores of the cultural clusters in the In-Group Collectivism dimension, Italy (as part of the 'Latin Europe' cluster) is positioned in the middle (mid-score cluster), meaning that its mean score is not significantly different from the rest (Javidan et al. 2006: 71). For this reason, we assigned Italian-origin respondents to the collectivist cultural cluster in order to maintain the dichotomy of the dimension.
3. <http://www.pairfam.de/en/>
4. All data modifications done in the course of data merging, cleaning and coding as well as the analyses are documented in SPSS syntax files, which

- are freely accessible for comprehension and/or replication at the data repository *datorium*, www.datorium.gesis.org (Kampmann 2017).
5. Contact correlates strongly with both warmth and conflict (Stocker et al. 1997; Lee et al. 1990). Since there are no theoretical implications for the direction of the causality, we prefer to include contact frequency between siblings in the regression model as explanandum rather than explanans.
 6. The countries of birth of parents and stepparents, respectively, are used as a reference for coding the cultural background of an anchor. The migration status of parents was not considered. To check for the influence of the host culture on the value orientations of the next generation, we ran a correlation analysis on individualistic/collectivistic backgrounds and family values.
 7. Generated individualistic and collectivistic culture variables are based on the Society Cluster Samples in the GLOBE study (House et al. 2004), to which parents' countries of birth were assigned.
 8. The correlation analysis was facilitated by an SPSS analysis procedure for complex/clustered samples (<http://www-01.ibm.com/support/docview.wss?uid=swg21481014>).

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