



MARTIN-LUTHER-UNIVERSITÄT
HALLE-WITTENBERG



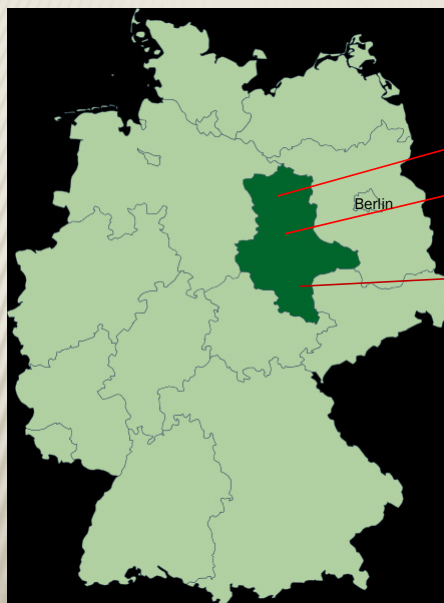
SIBSHIP AS A MENTAL HEALTH FACTOR IN FAMILIES

EMOTIONAL ENRICHMENT OF SIBLING RELATIONSHIP

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Germany

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First: Regional Geography

Stendal

Magdeburg (Capital
of Saxony-Anhalt)

Halle(Saale)

**University of Applied Science
Magdeburg-Stendal** – Applied
Childhood Studies – first of its kind
in Germany
**Martin-Luther-University Halle-
Wittenberg** first European Masters
in Childhood Education and Care

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MAIN RESULT OF MY THESIS:

An infants' arrival on earth is a tremendous experience for its older brothers and sisters **AND** promotes a healthy psychological development for both. Babies were influenced in their development as well as the elder ones. It can be called an emotional capital which arises in families with more than one child.



STATE OF THE ART

- ✗ Astonishingly there is hardly no empirical research about the transition after birth with regard to the older siblings.
- ✗ Sociology as well as other related disciplines like childhood studies, psychotherapy, attachment theory and even family psychology do not pay attention on the positive aspects of sibling's relationship yet
- ✗ Studying sibship-relations focused on structural factors like birth position or on conflict and rivalry

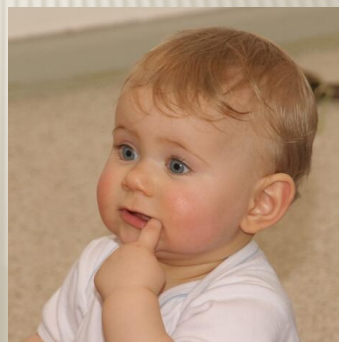
SANDERS, ROBERT (2004) SIBLING RELATIONSHIP. THEORY AND ISSUES FOR PRACTICE

„Interestingly, for some children there are positive changes associated with the arrival of a new baby. ... more surprisingly, nearly as many children go from having insecure attachments before the birth to having secure attachments after (26 %) ... That the transition from insecure to secure attachments may be a reflection of the total commitment of the mother's psychological resources to the impending arrival...“

AIM OF THE STUDY – MY INTEREST

- Focus on positive aspects for the older siblings after birth: Are there any consequences which arise beside the presumption of dethroning and retardation?
- How does the inner notion of their family change?
- Which impacts do develop in the dynamic of their existential relevant affiliation system?
- Can we construct new categories which are essential to look at siblings – beside structural topics?

Researchers' attitude:
Look at the material
curiously!

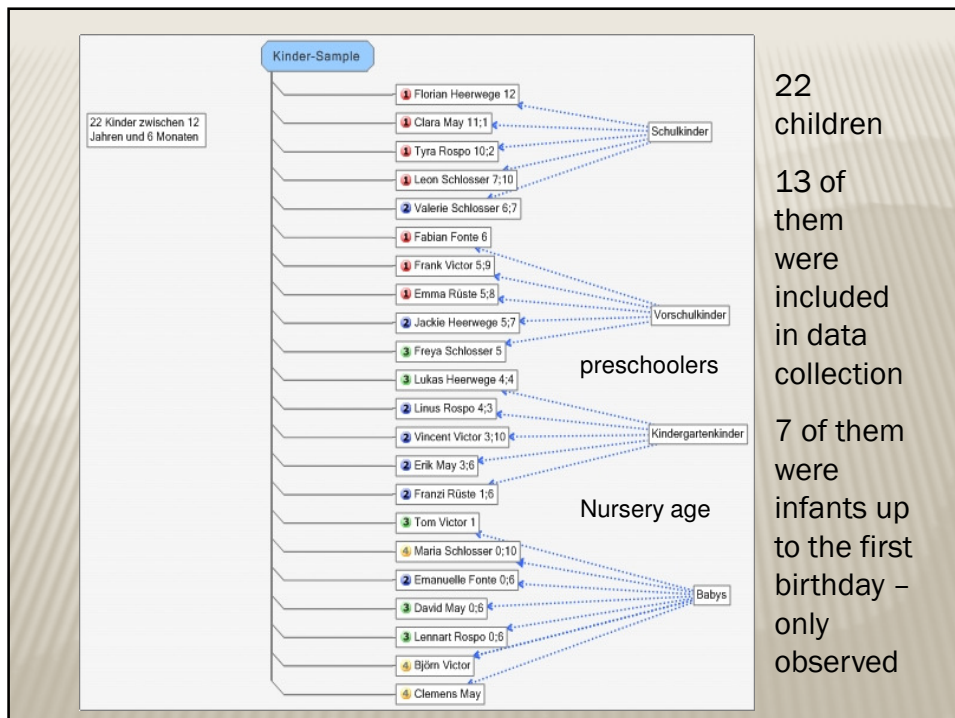
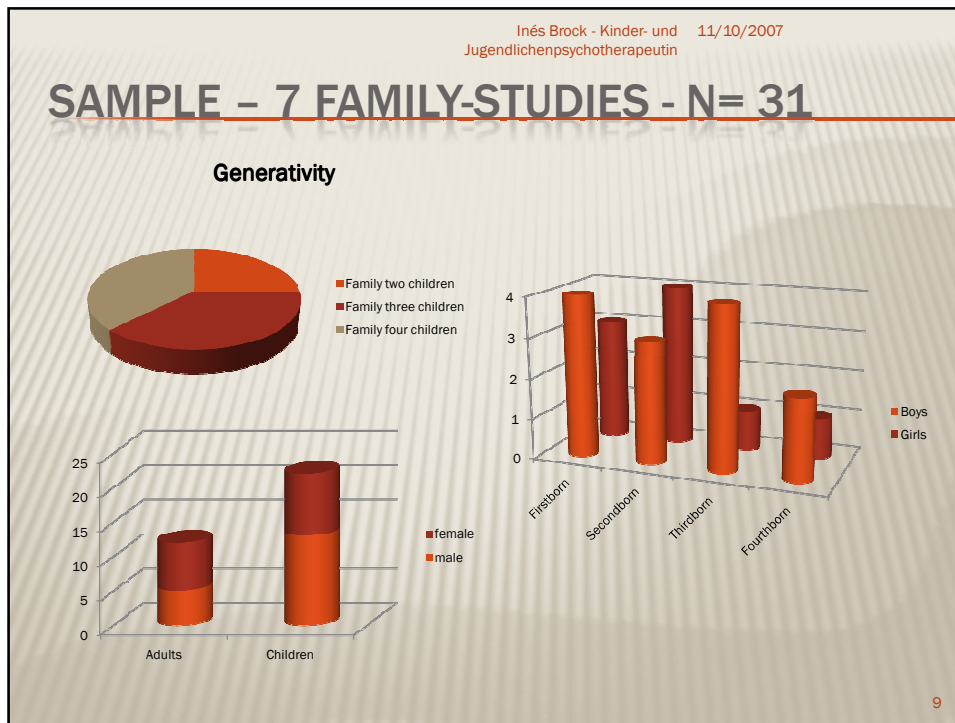


DESIGN

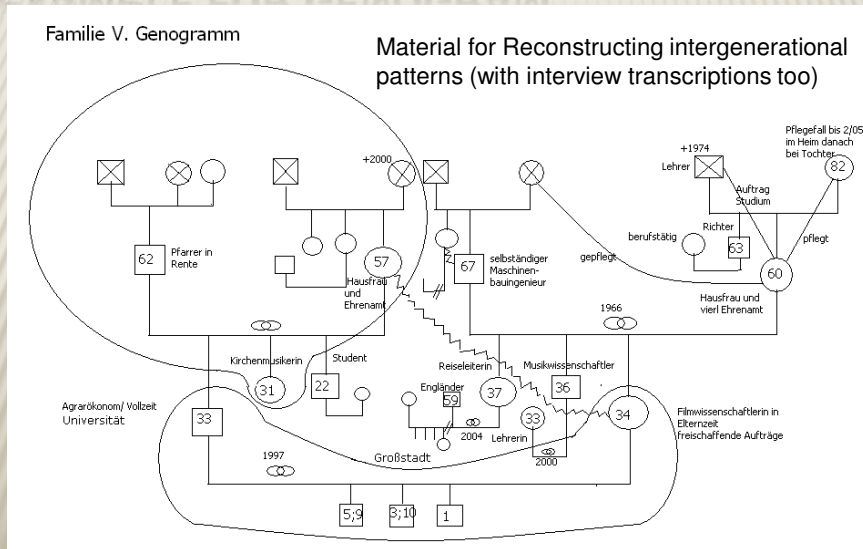
- ✗ Case Study with qualitative approach
- ✗ Triangulation of four diagnostic Methods
 - + **Genogram** with interview sequences
 - + **Children's drawings** ("Family in animals"- *Imagine, I could cast a spell on your family, which transforms everyone into a special animal, what do you think your younger brother would be? What could he do best?*)
 - + **Semi-structured interview** with the parents/mother
 - + **Family board** (project the inner notions of family relations in a simple order at a 50x50cm board of wood with simple wooden stones/figures)

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

- ✗ **Grounded Theory** - systematic research methodology in the social sciences developed by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss† emphasizing generation of theory from data
- ✗ **System Theory of Families** according to Helm Stierlin, Fritz Simon, Kurt Ludewig
- ✗ **Family Psychology** according to Klaus Schneewind, Manfred Cierpka, Heidi Keller



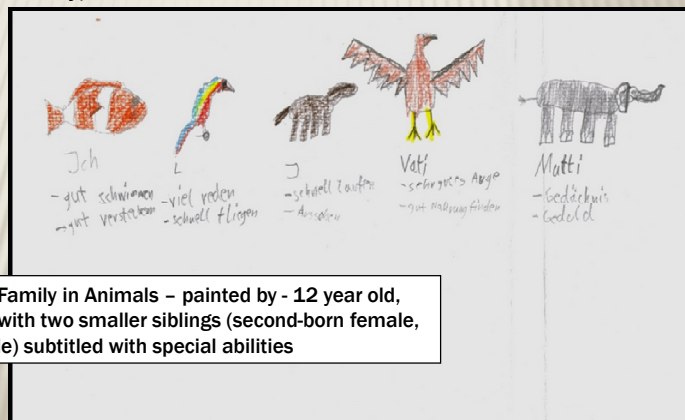
EXAMPLE FOR GENOGRAM



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EXAMPLE FOR THE DRAWINGS

Research Method: Qualitative approach with nonverbal projective psychological method for younger children (to represent their inner notion of the family)



Picture of his Family in Animals – painted by - 12 year old, first born boy with two smaller siblings (second-born female, third-born male) subtitled with special abilities

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Inés Brock - Uni Halle
Kinderpsychotherapeutin

CODE: CO-CONSTRUCTION OF REALITY (VINCENT VICTOR 3;10 SECONDBORN OF THREE)

VINCENT'S PAINTING IS AN EXPRESSIVE SELF-DISCLOSURE AND DURING THE DESIGN-PROCESS HIS OLDER BROTHER TAKES THE DINO-SUBJECT INTO HIS OWN DRAWING. BOTH OF THEM CREATE A DINO-FAMILY WITH THEIR OWN IDEAS.



incorporated little brother
internalized his own kind of pregnancy

Inés Brock Psychotherapist of Children 9/8/2009

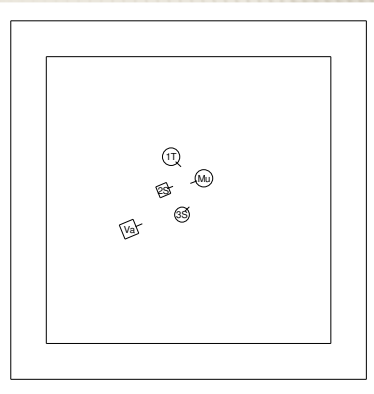
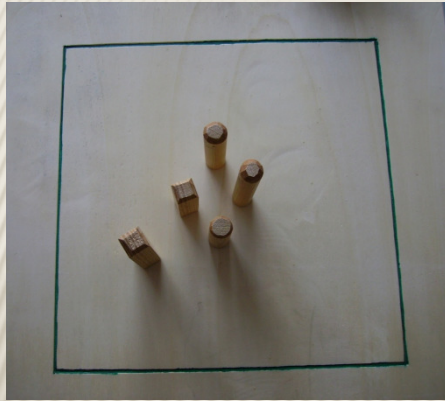
EXAMPLE INTERVIEW-SEQUENCES

"She was torn, she was very ambivalent. She has even so..., this little sister she found amazing, she was so happy about, even as she wasn't born. Then she was there and she had recognized she took away some of her space. Then she was abrasive to her." (Mother of two girls)

"Well, you have the feeling, they feed each other lines. And they need each other. I believe that Frank also needs Vincent the little one. In terms of 'when you come with me then I also come. I'll do that thing too'. Because, he is quite ingenuous."

(Mother of three sons)

EXAMPLE FOR THE FAMILY BOARD



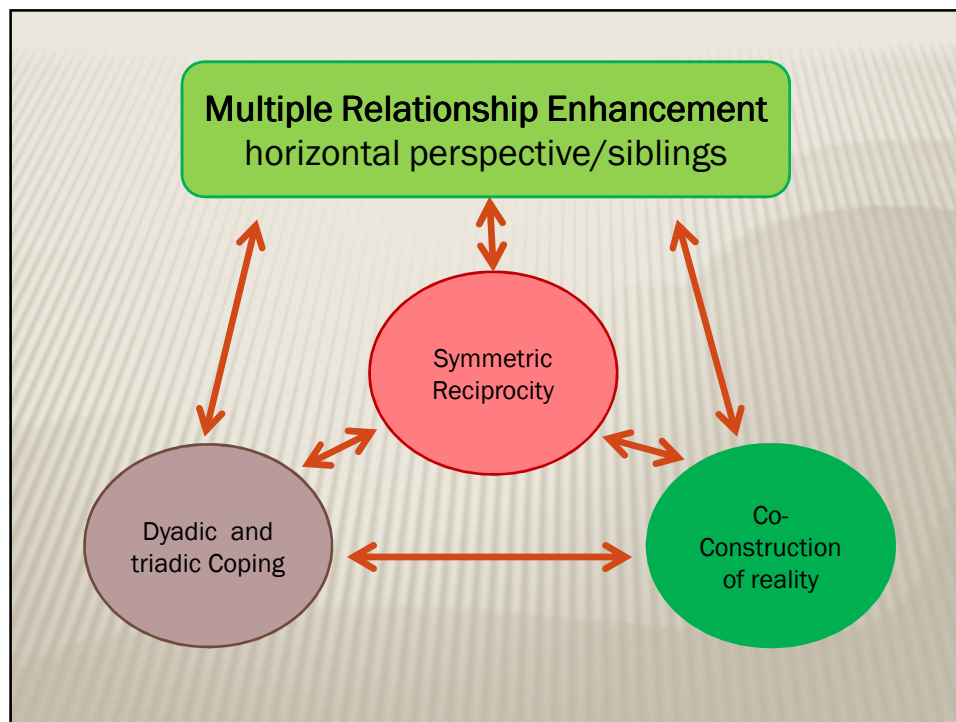
“Familienbrett” = Family Board as a structural projection to visualize relations inside the family, notions of position of the members

Family work together in the process of positioning. The nonverbal representation allows to be equal during data collection independent of age.

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OUTCOMES – EMOTIONAL REFERENCING

- ✗ Findings
 - + Siblings generate a unique intimacy
 - + Siblings develop special communication rules
 - + Changing coalitions encourage each other
 - + Understanding of equivalence and diversity – empathy leads to emotional referencing
- ✗ Results with regard to emotional capital
 - + Conceptualization of **Multiple Relationship Enhancement** in the horizontal perspective/siblings



KEY ISSUES

- Siblings receive many benefits in the development of empathy, social competence and strategies of conflict resolution
- Handling in the subsystem empowers the sibs in their development of self-assertion and self-confidence
- Further understanding of equivalence, reciprocity and justice within the family is promoted



Mental health promotion starts immediately after birth – enormous resilience factor

IMPLICATIONS

- ✗ The enormous impact that siblings have can be useful for professional interventions in the field of family support
- ✗ Further research should focus on siblings' resilience and mental health
- ✗ The concept of emotional capital can be strengthen the view on family life
- ✗ Competence during transitions within the family can be utilized for non-normative transitions such as into the kindergarten

THANKS!

- ✗ There are any questions?

