



## The Richness of Sibling Relationships in Families

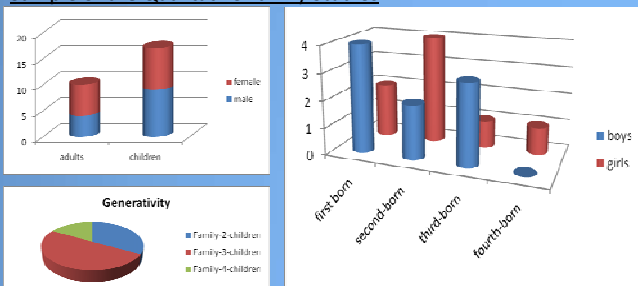
### Preface:

Apart from parental rearing patterns, siblings influence a person's mode of bonding. The sibling relationship is the most long-lasting kinship relationship and the most intensive experience of closeness and intimacy during childhood. In addition to considering familial upbringing in families with more than one child, the role of sibling relationships in enhancing a person's capacities will be addressed. In particular, children's ability to develop resilience is tied to the richness of relationship experiences within the family. For children, growing up in families with siblings results in manifold bonding and communication experiences, relieving the strain on parents in many respects.

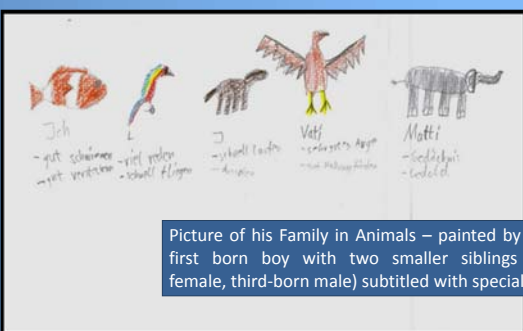
Expecting the demographic development especially in Germany the lack of children tends to result in disappearing solidarity associated with a reduced ability of attachment and care.

My own research is based on theoretical findings of Sociology, Family Therapy and Pedagogic with the focus on early childhood. My study shows an empirical view into families. I've analyzed six families. In these family studies I could unearth new evidence of this hypothesis.

### Sample of the Qualitative Family Studies



**Research Methods:** Qualitative approach with two nonverbal projective psychological methods for younger children (to represent their inner picture of the family), with analysis of a genogram (to recognize the intergenerational patterns) and with semi-standardized interviews with the parents (to understand their attitude and individual view of their family life).



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

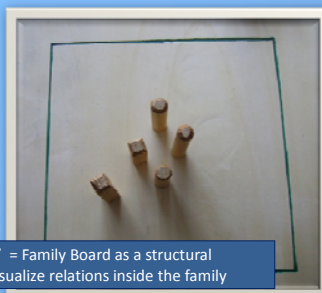
### Outcomes:

Growing up with siblings comprehend many special advantages which I call **Multiple Relationship Enhancement** (means Enrichment of interpersonal Relationships, in German: Multiple Beziehungsbereicherung).

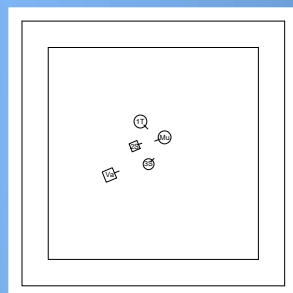
This strengthening of resilience happens in a horizontal level between siblings.

### Summary – with regard to children's perspective:

- Siblings orientate themselves on each other in acquiring of language, role-playing, socialization and imitation learning
- Siblings have got many benefits in development of empathy, social competence and strategies of conflict resolution
- Siblings' coexisting competition intensifies creativity and openness to experience
- Intimacy and love create affective closeness and manifold internal representation of attachment pattern (especially in the sib subsystem, in addition to parents-child-attachment)
- Children demand for justice in the family, gain frustration tolerance and knowledge of dependencies, show solidarity and behave with respect



"Familienbrett" = Family Board as a structural projection to visualize relations inside the family



Mother of 3 children shows the present time, first daughter agrees; and the graphical representation

**Multiple Relationship Enhancement** also occurs from a parental perspective. Families with many children (from 3 children up) show observable strengthening of their resources regarded in the vertical level. The richness of nurturing ability in large families can heighten the conscious experience of one's own effectiveness. It disburdens.

### Dimensions of relieves for parents:

- **Optimized Time Management** – reduced concentration in dealing with one child, space for horizontal learning between children, accustom patterns of action, familiarity with everyday life episodes, habitualization of care procedures and shared attention
- **Mental Relief** – relaxed handling with descendant children, practiced sequences of action, internalized the experience of child-rearing and communication patterns, ability to interpret children's signals and messages, development of routines
- **Motivational Strengthening** – reduced negative appreciation (themselves) of success of education, qualify one's sense of indebtedness and guilt, shared responsibility with the older siblings, because they influences the younger ones more intensive

### Conclusion:

When we realize that relationship enhancement developed in large families we have to recognize the prospect, that some of these cannot emerge in a society with a lack of siblings. Kinship would decrease in the further generations. This outlook for a society poor in siblings is bleak; a circumstance which has yet not entered discourse on population policy. The social capital of a society and the openness to experience is reduced when there no solidarity experiences could arise. Childhood as well as parenthood will be much more difficult and parents and children lose self-esteem in managing social relations.