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608 older adults (329 men, 279 women) (average age = 64.6 years) provided self-report data about their sibling relationships and well-being. Results from a new questionnaire measure of sibling relationships (ASRQ-VSF) showed that the sibling relationship was characterized by independent dimensions of: warmth, conflict, and rivalry / favoritism. Sister-sister pairs had the warmest sibling relationships. Sibling conflict and rivalry / favoritism were positively associated with symptoms of depression, anxiety and hostility. Loneliness mediated the associations between sibling relationship quality and well-being.

Researchers working from life course, family systems, and attachment perspectives, have documented associations between family relationships and a variety of well-being outcomes. Yet, sibling relationships, the longest lasting relationship in most people's lives, have received less research attention than other family relationships.

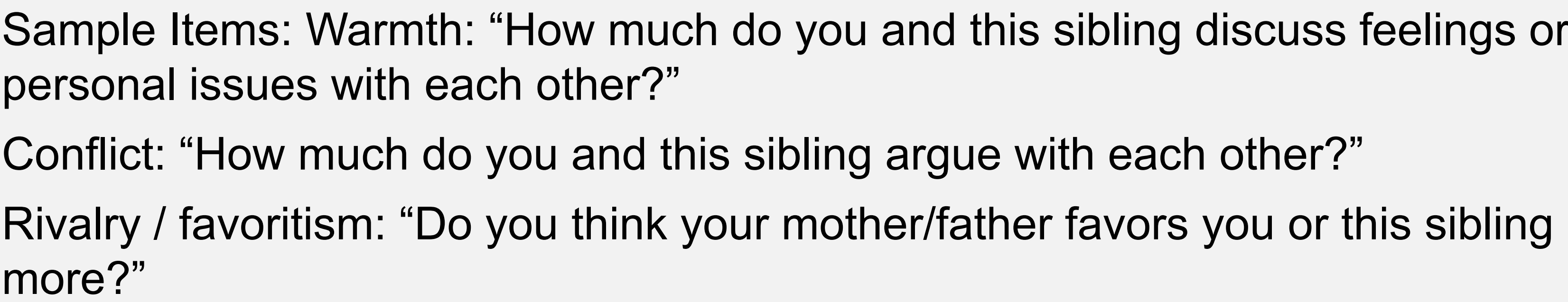
Recent demographic changes indicate that Americans are living longer, divorcing later in life, and having fewer children (Furstenberg, et al., 2015). These demographic shifts suggest that siblings may become increasingly important as Americans age. However, we know very little about sibling relationships in older adulthood.

1. To introduce a new measure of sibling relationships in older adulthood
2. To provide descriptive information about the nature of sibling relationships in older adulthood and examine predictors of individual differences in older adults' sibling relationships
3. To investigate associations among the quality of sibling relationships, loneliness, and well-being in later life.

- 608 older adults (329 males; 279 females)
- Mean age = 64.6 years, sd = 4.6 years
- 502 participants were married (406 to another participant)
- Mean education = 13.8 years, sd = 2.1 years
- Median family income = \$72,122
- 100% of the sample was Caucasian

- Adult Sibling Relationship Questionnaire- very short form (ASRQ-VSF, Lanthier & Stocker, 2014). Warmth: 6 items ( $\alpha = .93$ ), Conflict: 6 items ( $\alpha = .88$ ), Rivalry / favoritism ( $\alpha = .86$ ).
- UCLA Loneliness Scale, V3 (Russell, 1996). 20 items ( $\alpha = .92$ ).
- Symptom Checklist -90- R (SCL-90-R, Derogotis, 1983). Depression: 13 items ( $\alpha = .89$ ), Anxiety: 10 items ( $\alpha = .86$ ), Hostility: 6 items ( $\alpha = .65$ ).

Confirmatory Factor Analysis supported the predicted factor structure of the ASRQ-VSF with 3 independent factors: Warmth, Conflict and Rivalry / favoritism (see Figure 1).



Similar to findings from earlier developmental periods, sister-sister sibling pairs had higher levels of warmth than any other sibling gender combinations ( $F=16.55$ ,  $df=3, 632$ ,  $p<.001$ ).

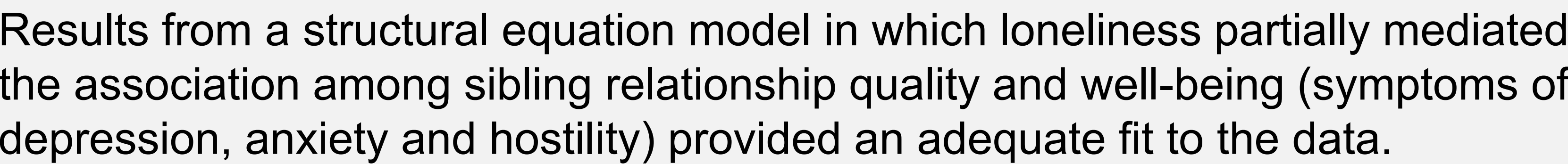
Contact between siblings was positively associated with warmth and negatively associated with rivalry / favoritism (see Table 1).

Siblings who lived further apart had higher levels of conflict than siblings who lived closer together (see Table 1).

Correlational analyses showed that sibling conflict and rivalry / favoritism were positively associated with symptoms of depression, anxiety, and hostility, and with loneliness. (see Table 1).

Sibling warmth was negatively correlated with loneliness and was not significantly associated with measures of well-being (see Table 1).

Given that levels of loneliness are high in older adulthood and that numerous studies have found associations between loneliness and poor mental and physical health (Hawkey & Cacioppo, 2010), we tested whether loneliness mediated the associations between sibling relationship quality and well-being.



- Americans are living longer than in previous generations, and the sibling relationship, the longest lasting relationship in most people's lives, may become increasingly relevant for older adults.
- The ASRQ-VSF is a new questionnaire measure about sibling relationship quality that is appropriate for use with older adults.
- Older adults' sibling relationships were characterized by independent dimensions of: warmth, conflict and rivalry / favoritism.
- Levels of sibling conflict were lower among older adults than typically found in childhood and adolescence.
- Sister-sister sibling pairs had warmer relationships than any other gender combination.
- Sibling conflict and rivalry / favoritism were positively correlated with symptoms of depression, anxiety, and hostility and with loneliness. Sibling warmth was negatively associated with loneliness and was not significantly associated with well-being.
- Loneliness may be one emotional pathway that connects sibling relationship quality to well-being.

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