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Intergenerational Solidarity in Native and Migrant Families in Germany: Adult Children's Perspectives in FReDA

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Abstract This study updates and extends previous research on native and migrant intergenerational solidarity differences in Germany, a country with one of the highest numbers of immigrants worldwide. Using baseline data from the German Family Demography Panel Study (FReDA), conducted in 2021, we assess two dimensions of intergenerational solidarity—contact frequency and emotional closeness—in non-coresident biological adult parent–child relationships (16,379 mother–child and 16,028 father–child dyads). We distinguish natives from first- and second-generation migrants originating from five different European and non-European regions. Overall, results of ordinary least squares regressions provide no evidence supporting the “conflict hypothesis” of weaker intergenerational ties in migrant families. Rather, first-generation migrants consistently report more frequent (nonphysical) contacts with their parents than natives do. Moreover, some patterns of intergenerational solidarity observed among first-generation migrants appear to be “transmitted” to the second generation. However, whereas (first-generation) migrants from Eastern Europe or the former USSR tend to be more similar overall to German natives than other migrant groups, second-generation immigrants with origins in the former USSR stand out, as their intergenerational relationship qualities (especially with fathers) were found to be substantially lower. Future research should continue monitoring differential developments in natives’ and migrants’ intergenerational solidarities.

Keywords Adult parent–child relations · Intergenerational contact · Emotional closeness · Immigrants · FReDA

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Intergenerationale Solidarität in einheimischen und Migrantenfamilien in Deutschland: die Perspektive erwachsener Kinder in FReDA

Zusammenfassung Die vorliegende Studie aktualisiert und erweitert frühere Untersuchungen zu Unterschieden in der intergenerationalen Solidarität zwischen Einheimischen und Personen mit Migrationshintergrund in Deutschland. Anhand von Daten der ersten Befragungswelle des familiendemografischen Panels FReDA aus dem Jahr 2021 untersuchen wir zwei Dimensionen der intergenerationalen Solidarität – Kontakthäufigkeit und emotionale Nähe – in nichtkoresidenziellen biologischen Eltern-Kind-Beziehungen (16.379 Mutter-Kind- und 16.028 Vater-Kind-Dyaden). Wir unterscheiden zwischen Einheimischen sowie Migranten und Migrantinnen der ersten und zweiten Generation aus fünf verschiedenen europäischen und außereuropäischen Regionen. OLS-Regressionsergebnisse liefern insgesamt keine Hinweise, die die sog. „Konflikthypothese“ und deren Annahme schwächerer intergenerationaler Bindungen in Migrantenfamilien stützen würden. Vielmehr berichten Personen mit Migrationshintergrund der ersten Generation durchweg häufigere (nichtphysische) Kontakte zu ihren Eltern als Einheimische. Zudem scheinen einige Muster intergenerationaler Solidarität, die bei Personen mit Migrationshintergrund der ersten Generation beobachtet werden, auch auf die zweite Generation „übertragen“ zu werden. Des Weiteren zeigt sich, dass Personen mit Migrationshintergrund der ersten Generation aus Osteuropa oder der ehemaligen UdSSR insgesamt eher deutschen Einheimischen ähneln als andere Migrantengruppen und dass die zweite Generation mit Wurzeln in der ehemaligen UdSSR jedoch insbesondere in Bezug auf ihre Väter eine besonders niedrige intergenerationale Beziehungsqualität aufweist. Zukünftige Forschung sollte auch weiterhin unterschiedliche Entwicklungen in der intergenerationalen Solidarität von Einheimischen und Personen mit Migrationshintergrund beobachten.

Schlüsselwörter Eltern-Kind-Beziehungen im Erwachsenenalter · Intergenerationale Kontakthäufigkeit · Emotionale Verbundenheit · Migrantinnen und Migranten · FReDA

1 Introduction

Against the background of increasing importance of multigenerational bonds in families (Bengtson 2001) as well as large migrant populations in Europe (Van Mol and de Valk 2016), interest in migrants’ intergenerational relationships—and how they compare to those of natives—has been rapidly growing over the past decade (e.g., Albertini et al. 2019; Hărăguș et al. 2021; see also Van Hook and Glick 2020). Studies typically build on the solidarity–conflict paradigm (Bengtson et al. 2002) and have considered different dimensions of intergenerational relationships—such as associational or functional solidarity (e.g., Bordone and de Valk 2016; König et al. 2021)—as well as a variety of migrant origins and European destinations, including France (e.g., Wolff 2019), the Netherlands (e.g., Karpinska and Dykstra 2019), and Germany (e.g., Baykara-Krumme 2008).

In theoretical discussions, two competing hypotheses are typically formulated in the literature: the solidarity hypothesis and the cultural conflict hypothesis (e.g., Baykara-Krumme et al. 2011: Sect. II; see also Albertini et al. 2019; Steinbach 2018). The *solidarity hypothesis* assumes that the cultural backgrounds of migrant families as well as their migration experiences foster stronger intergenerational bonds. Many immigrants in Europe originate from cultural contexts in which extensive interactions and obligations between parents and children are common. Strong family orientation, high expectations regarding intergenerational relationships, and mutual support often play a more significant role than they do for native populations. Furthermore, the solidarity hypothesis views migration experiences and the resulting sense of being a stranger in a new social environment as key factors contributing to greater family cohesion among migrants. Strengthening family ties can be understood as a response to migration experiences and to a society perceived as foreign.

The *cultural conflict hypothesis* suggests that intergenerational conflict does not arise from the transfer of specific relationship patterns from the country of origin but emerges as a result of the migration context itself. The cultural conflict hypothesis is based on general assumptions in modernization theory, proposing that a more traditional family orientation of many immigrants and the functional individualism in most European host countries come into conflict. In migrant families, socialization in two different cultures may lead to cultural conflicts between generations. These conflicts primarily occur in families in which children are born in the host society, as their cultural orientation—shaped by their social environment—diverges from that of their parents, who were socialized in their country of origin. This divergence can lead to a loss of parental authority, which in turn results in intergenerational tensions.

The German case might be considered as particularly relevant and suitable for empirical investigations of this matter: Germany is one of the primary destinations for international migrants worldwide (Pison 2010, Fig. 1)¹ and represents an “average” case with regard to its dominant pattern of intergenerational solidarity, which is situated between the extremes of the (Western) European continuum of family ties (characterized by weaker ties in the Nordic countries and stronger ones in the Mediterranean countries; see Hank 2009, 2022). Using baseline data from the German Family Panel (pairfam), Baykara-Krumme et al. (2011) compared emotional closeness and conflict frequency in native intergenerational relationships and in Turkish as well as ethnic German repatriate (so-called *Aussiedler*) families. Whereas natives and repatriates barely differed from each other, respondents of Turkish origin expressed a substantially greater *emotional closeness* to parents. This gap remained even after accounting for sociodemographic characteristics and geographic proximity. Migrants were also less likely to report *conflicts* with parents, but this initial difference diminished (for ethnic German repatriates) or even disappeared (for Turks) once potential confounders—such as proximity, number of siblings, and value orientations—were controlled for. Moreover, analyzing data from

¹ Conversely, Germany is also a main sending country, supplying some of the highest numbers of international migrants. See Hank and Erlinghagen (2024) for an investigation of transnational intergenerational relationships of German emigrants.

the Generations and Gender Survey (GGG-I), Steinbach (2013) found more frequent intergenerational *contacts* in Turkish migrant families than among German natives.

Largely consistent with research investigating other migrant origins and destinations (e.g., Albertini et al. 2019), and in line with the solidarity hypothesis, the German studies thus support the notion that migrants tend to have stronger rather than weaker intergenerational ties (see also Baykara-Krumme 2008). This previous research is, however, limited in two important ways: *First*, we are not aware of any studies specifically considering the German destination context using data collected more recently than 2005–2006 (GGG-I; Steinbach 2013) or 2008–2009 (pairfam; Baykara-Krumme et al. 2011). Despite evidence of an overall stability in adult intergenerational relationship qualities in Germany over time (Steinbach et al. 2020), it still seems worthwhile to assess possible changes in differences between natives and immigrants. *Second*, even though some studies (Baykara-Krumme et al. 2011; Vogel 2012) included ethnic German repatriates in their analyses, there is a “bias” toward the consideration of Turkish migrant families (Steinbach 2013; see also Baykara-Krumme and Fokkema 2019), leaving out other quantitatively relevant immigrant groups.

Our descriptive note therefore aims to update and extend previous studies on native–migrant intergenerational solidarity differences in Germany. Using baseline data from the *German Family Demography Panel Study* (FReDA; Hank et al. 2025), we assess two core dimensions of intergenerational solidarity—frequency of contacts and emotional closeness—in non-coresident biological adult parent–child ties. FReDA’s first wave was conducted in 2021, providing up-to-date information on more than 20,000 respondents aged 18 to 49 years. This large sample size allows us to distinguish first- and second-generation migrants from several European and non-European regions of origin. Finally, and different from GGS-I and pairfam, FReDA differentiates between personal and nonphysical contacts of adult children with their parents. This is important because nonphysical contact modes (phone, mail, e-mail, etc.) have already been shown to have gained in importance (e.g., Treas and Gubernskaya 2012), especially during the COVID-19 pandemic (e.g., Arpino et al. 2021), and might be particularly important in maintaining transnational intergenerational relationships (e.g., Baldassar et al. 2016).

2 Data and Method

Our analysis uses baseline data from FReDA (Bujard et al. 2024), specifically its freshly drawn FReDA-GGS sample, which constitutes the German contribution to a new round of Generations and Gender Surveys (GGG-II).² FReDA-GGS is nationally representative of the population aged 18 to 49 living in Germany and collects biannual self-administered (primarily web-based) interviews split across two sub-waves (see Hank et al. 2025, for details). Wave 1B, for which the questionnaire contains a module on respondents’ relationships with their biological parents, com-

² Note that from FReDA’s Wave 2, the German Family Panel’s (pairfam) longitudinal sample has been fully integrated into FReDA, now constituting the FReDA-pairfam sample (see Hank et al. 2025).

prises a total of 20,224 interviews. Excluding cases with both parents deceased (741) or co-residing with the adult child (2387), incomplete information on the respondent's migration background (350) or both parents' country of origin (194), as well as invalid information on age or sex (53), resulted in an analytic sample of 16,499 respondents reporting on 16,379 mother-child and 16,028 father-child relations. This sample comprised 12,987 respondents without migration background (that is, the respondent and both parents were born in Germany), 1810 first-generation migrants (that is, the respondent was born outside of Germany), and 1702 second-generation migrants (that is, the respondent was born in Germany, but at least one parent was born abroad).

Applying FReDA's calibrated design weights, we ran separate OLS regressions for non-coresident mother-child and father-child dyads by respondents' migration background for three dependent variables: *Frequency of contact* was assessed separately for face-to-face and nonphysical contacts, asking how many days per week, month, or year respondents had contact with their biological mother or father, respectively. From this information we generated indicators of the annual number of *personal* and *nonphysical* contacts (ranging from 0 to 365), respectively, with each parent. *Emotional closeness* to one's parents was measured by the question "How close do you feel to your biological [mother/father] today emotionally?," with response categories ranging from 1 = not at all close to 5 = very close.

Our main explanatory variable of interest is respondents' migration background and, more specifically, their ethnic origin. To assess the latter for natives as well as first- and second-generation migrants, we derived information on both *parents' region of birth*, provided in FReDA's scientific use file as a generated variable with 21 geographic categories, which we collapsed, separately for mothers and fathers, into six groups: Germany (reference category), Eastern Europe (e.g., Poland, Romania), former USSR (e.g., Russia, Kazakhstan, and including a substantial proportion of ethnic German *Aussiedler*), Asia (with Turkey being the single most important sending country), other European (e.g., Mediterranean countries, former Yugoslavia), and other non-European' (e.g., Africa, America). Note that a more fine-grained disaggregation of parents' region of birth—distinguishing, for example, between Northern and Southern Europe, or separating Turkey from other Asian countries—did not seem suitable for our main analysis given the small cell sizes (fewer than 70 parents in our sample originated from Northern Europe) and loss of statistical power (especially when running separate models for first- and second-generation immigrants).

We controlled for an array of sociodemographic and family-related variables that previous studies suggested to be relevant (e.g., Baykara-Krumme et al. 2011; Steinbach 2013). To begin with, we accounted for the core *sociodemographic characteristics* age, sex (binary: female vs. male), and education (four binary variables: in education (or incomplete data), low [ISCED 1–3], medium [ISCED 4–6; reference category], and high [ISCED 7–8]). *Family-related variables* include indicators of whether the respondent had a partner and/or own children (two binary variables), her/his number of siblings (ranging from 0 to 7 or more), and whether the respondent's parents were living together (vs. being separated, divorced, or widowed). Moreover, we assessed respondents' agreement with intergenerational norms based on responses to three items: (a) "Parents ought to provide financial help for their

adult children when the children are having financial difficulties”; (b) “Children should take responsibility for their parents’ care if they need help”; (c) “Children ought to provide financial help for their parents when their parents are having financial difficulties.” Participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with each of these statements on a scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. Adding up these individual answers, we derived an index ranging from 3 to 15, where higher scores indicated greater agreement. Finally, we accounted for respondents’ travel time to their mother’s/father’s residence in minutes (ranging from 0 to 1440 or more).

Table 1 Descriptive sample statistics by migration background (unweighted percentages or means with standard deviations in parentheses)

	Native Germans	First-generation migrants	Second-generation migrants
<i>Relationship to biological mother</i>			
Personal contacts/year	67.6 (81.5)	40.7 (61.6)	66.2 (78.3)
Nonphysical contacts/year	142.9 (110.0)	163.5 (123.0)	156.2 (115.1)
Emotional closeness	3.9 (1.1)	3.9 (1.1)	3.8 (1.2)
<i>Relationship to biological father</i>			
Personal contacts/year	58.3 (77.9)	36.8 (60.3)	55.9 (77.2)
Nonphysical contacts/year	90.0 (93.1)	105.3 (111.4)	95.7 (103.3)
Emotional closeness	3.5 (1.2)	3.5 (1.3)	3.3 (1.4)
<i>Foreign-born parent's region of birth (mother/father)</i>			
Eastern Europe	–	22.1/21.6	28.1/24.8
Former USSR	–	28.3/27.4	10.3/8.9
Asia (including Turkey)	–	18.6/18.5	22.0/23.4
Other European	–	19.5/21.0	31.8/32.4
Other non-European	–	11.6/11.6	7.8/10.5
<i>Sociodemographic characteristics</i>			
Age	35.3 (8.0)	36.7 (7.2)	34.8 (8.6)
Sex (female)	56.9	57.6	56.2
In education	3.4	7.0	3.9
Low education	28.3	25.1	32.2
Medium education	43.8	37.9	41.5
High education	24.4	29.9	22.4
<i>Family-related characteristics</i>			
Respondent has partner	81.6	82.6	80.0
Respondent has child(ren)	53.1	61.6	50.7
Respondent's number of siblings	1.6 (1.2)	2.1 (1.7)	1.8 (1.5)
Respondent's parents live together	58.8	58.5	52.0
Agreement with family norms	10.9 (2.6)	11.5 (2.7)	11.0 (2.7)
Distance to parent's residence in minutes (mother/father)	83.8 (125.4)/93.8 (145.5)	454.6 (475.0)/479.0 (484.6)	101.5 (181.2)/128.0 (230.4)
<i>N</i>	12,987	1810	1702

German Family Demography Panel Study Wave 1 (data file version 4.1.0); own calculations

Table 2 Ordinary least squares regression results for frequency of contacts (personal and nonphysical) with and emotional closeness to the adult child's biological mother—native Germans and first-generation migrants (95% confidence intervals in parentheses)

	<i>Personal contacts/year ...</i>		<i>Nonphysical contacts/year ...</i>		<i>Emotional closeness ...</i>	
	without controls ^a	with controls	without controls ^a	with controls	without controls ^a	with controls
<i>Foreign-born mother's region of birth</i>						
(reference: Germany)						
Eastern Europe	-28.74*** (-38.13—19.35)	-5.12 (-14.38—4.13)	17.90 (-0.70—36.50)	25.96** (7.80—44.12)	-0.04 (-0.19—0.12)	-0.03 (-0.18—0.13)
Former USSR	-13.63*** (-23.77—3.48)	6.36 (-4.06—16.79)	23.89** (7.50—40.27)	27.03*** (11.25—42.80)	0.01 (-0.16—0.18)	0.01 (-0.16—0.18)
Asia (including Turkey)	-39.52*** (-52.39—26.66)	15.33* (0.51—30.16)	7.01 (-16.01—30.02)	44.43*** (19.89—68.96)	0.11 (-0.13—0.34)	0.17 (-0.09—0.42)
Other European	-33.32*** (-44.03—22.61)	6.72 (-4.69—18.14)	28.98** (9.66—48.30)	50.39*** (29.58—71.21)	0.17 (-0.02—0.36)	0.21* (0.00—0.41)
Other non-European	-46.16*** (-55.42—36.90)	24.30*** (11.22—37.38)	9.14 (-17.91—36.18)	54.25*** (26.83—81.66)	0.19 (-0.01—0.40)	0.35** (0.11—0.60)
<i>Sociodemographic characteristics</i>						
Age	—	-0.30 (-0.62—0.01)	—	-2.17*** (-2.63—1.71)	—	-0.00 (-0.01—0.00)
Sex (female)	—	12.27*** (8.33—16.21)	—	53.35*** (47.66—59.05)	—	0.12*** (0.06—0.18)
In education (reference: medium)	—	5.73 (-5.00—16.46)	—	7.41 (-8.64—23.46)	—	0.03 (-0.12—0.17)
Low education (reference: medium)	—	7.97** (2.49—12.01)	—	-2.58 (-9.40—4.23)	—	-0.04 (-0.12—0.01)
High education (reference: medium)	—	-13.66*** (-17.62—9.70)	—	-8.06* (-14.60—1.53)	—	-0.01 (-0.07—0.05)

Table 2 (Continued)

	<i>Personal contacts/year ...</i>		<i>Nonphysical contacts/year ...</i>		<i>Emotional closeness ...</i>	
	without controls ^a	with controls	without controls ^a	with controls	without controls ^a	with controls
<i>Family-related characteristics</i>						
Respondent has partner	—	-10.80*** (-15.97—5.63)	—	-0.84 (-8.57—6.90)	—	0.02 (-0.06—0.10)
Respondent has child(ren)	—	7.72** (2.83—12.60)	—	12.46*** (5.05—19.86)	—	-0.09* (-0.16—0.02)
Respondent's number of siblings	—	-3.92*** (-5.50—-2.34)	—	-11.82*** (-14.10—-9.53)	—	-0.03*** (-0.06—-0.01)
Respondent's parents live together	—	13.48*** (9.39—17.57)	—	2.15 (-3.91—8.21)	—	0.28*** (0.22—0.34)
Agreement with family norms	—	1.66*** (0.89—2.43)	—	3.92*** (2.83—5.01)	—	0.06*** (0.05—0.07)
Distance to mother's residence (minutes)	—	-0.08*** (-0.09—-0.07)	—	-0.03*** (-0.05—-0.02)	—	-0.00 (-0.00—0.00)
<i>Constant</i>	70.09*** (67.78—72.40)	65.03*** (50.12—79.94)	142.25*** (139.28—145.21)	166.40*** (144.52—188.29)	3.89*** (3.86—3.92)	3.21*** (2.98—3.43)
<i>N</i>	13,119	13,119	12,933	12,933	13,159	13,159
<i>r</i> ²	0.03	0.12	0.01	0.12	0.00	0.05

German Family Demography Panel Study Wave 1 (data file version 4.1.0); own calculations

^a Cases with missing values for any of the control variables were excluded from the regression*** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$

Table 3 Ordinary least squares regression results for frequency of contacts (personal and nonphysical) with and emotional closeness to the adult child's biological father—native Germans and first-generation migrants (95% confidence intervals in parentheses)

	Personal contacts/year ...		Nonphysical contacts/year ...		Emotional closeness ...	
	without controls ^a	with controls	without controls ^a	with controls	without controls ^a	with controls
<i>Foreign-born father's region of birth</i>						
(reference: Germany)						
Eastern Europe	-10.79 (-25.06–3.48)	5.70 (-8.34–19.74)	17.11 (-2.00–36.23)	21.72* (1.84–41.61)	0.14 (-0.04–0.31)	0.08 (-0.12–0.28)
Former USSR	-11.67 (-23.39–0.04)	3.04 (-9.07–15.14)	19.95* (3.59–36.31)	21.81** (5.88–37.74)	0.00 (-0.19–0.19)	-0.08 (-0.26–0.11)
Asia (including Turkey)	-24.85** (-40.91–8.79)	20.37* (2.81–37.92)	17.90 (-5.15–40.94)	36.96** (12.59–61.33)	0.06 (-0.21–0.32)	0.11 (-0.16–0.38)
Other European	-27.71*** (-39.27–16.15)	6.04 (-7.50–19.59)	21.86* (3.24–40.48)	34.31*** (14.61–54.00)	0.12 (-0.08–0.33)	0.18 (-0.04–0.40)
Other non-European	-42.48*** (-51.78–33.19)	16.78** (4.33–29.24)	-10.28 (-32.07–11.51)	23.69 (-0.09–47.47)	-0.19 (-0.52–0.14)	0.14 (-0.18–0.47)
<i>Sociodemographic characteristics</i>						
Age	–	-0.02 (-0.36–0.33)	–	-0.94*** (-1.39–0.49)	–	0.00 (-0.00–0.01)
Sex (female)	–	2.53 (-1.65–6.71)	–	12.56*** (7.13–18.00)	–	0.04 (-0.03–0.10)
In education (reference: medium)	–	6.49 (-5.16–18.14)	–	0.10 (-14.46–14.66)	–	-0.07 (-0.25–0.11)
Low education (reference: medium)	–	7.06* (1.66–12.47)	–	3.16 (-3.56–9.89)	–	0.03 (-0.05–0.10)
High education (reference: medium)	–	-17.06*** (-21.03–13.09)	–	-11.26*** (-17.32–5.21)	–	-0.00 (-0.07–0.07)

Table 3 (Continued)

	<i>Personal contacts/year ...</i>		<i>Nonphysical contacts/year ...</i>		<i>Emotional closeness ...</i>	
	without controls ^a	with controls	without controls ^a	with controls	without controls ^a	with controls
<i>Family-related characteristics</i>						
Respondent has partner	—	-6.27* (-11.86–0.69)	—	0.34 (-6.77–7.45)	—	0.10* (0.01–0.19)
Respondent has child(ren)	—	3.49 (-1.98–8.96)	—	3.19 (-4.13–10.52)	—	-0.01 (-0.09–0.07)
Respondent's number of siblings	—	-2.97*** (-4.50–1.44)	—	-7.77*** (-9.94–5.61)	—	-0.03* (-0.06–0.01)
Respondent's parents live together	—	33.80*** (29.48–38.13)	—	34.01*** (28.29–39.74)	—	0.78*** (0.70–0.85)
Agreement with family norms	—	1.62*** (0.78–2.45)	—	2.54*** (1.48–3.60)	—	0.05*** (0.04–0.06)
Distance to father's residence (minutes)	—	-0.07*** (-0.08–0.06)	—	-0.02*** (-0.04–0.01)	—	-0.00** (-0.00–0.00)
<i>Constant</i>	62.01*** (59.63–64.39)	36.25*** (21.13–51.37)	92.53*** (89.84–95.23)	83.23*** (62.68–103.79)	3.59*** (3.56–3.63)	2.44*** (2.19–2.69)
<i>N</i>	11,566	11,566	11,365	11,365	11,620	11,620
<i>r</i> ²	0.02	0.14	0.01	0.07	0.00	0.12

German Family Demography Panel Study Wave 1 (data file version 4.1.0); own calculations

^a Cases with missing values for any of the control variables were excluded from the regression*** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$

Table 4 Ordinary least squares regression results for frequency of contacts (personal and nonphysical) with and emotional closeness to the adult child's biological mother—native Germans and second-generation migrants (95% confidence intervals in parentheses)

	Personal contacts/year ...		Nonphysical contacts/year ...		Emotional closeness ...	
	without controls ^a	with controls	without controls ^a	with controls	without controls ^a	with controls
<i>Foreign-born mother's region of birth (reference: Germany)</i>						
Eastern Europe	-12.52* (-23.33–1.70)	-6.17 (-16.33–3.98)	5.60 (-13.46–24.65)	11.82 (-5.70–29.33)	-0.05 (-0.23–0.13)	-0.05 (-0.21–0.11)
Former USSR	4.57 (-21.27–30.42)	6.24 (-20.15–32.63)	16.67 (-18.35–51.69)	8.14 (-22.90–39.18)	-0.12 (-0.43–0.19)	-0.19 (-0.48–0.10)
Asia (including Turkey)	11.62 (-8.87–32.11)	14.93 (-4.27–34.13)	35.44* (6.86–64.02)	36.34** (14.09–58.59)	0.00 (-0.25–0.25)	-0.03 (-0.28–0.22)
Other European	8.12 (-5.63–21.87)	17.34* (3.92–30.75)	24.72* (3.80–45.65)	36.33*** (16.31–56.34)	0.12 (-0.08–0.32)	0.21* (0.00–0.41)
Other non-European	8.93 (-17.75–35.60)	8.72 (-15.58–33.03)	34.10 (-2.33–70.54)	28.83 (-5.80–63.45)	0.13 (-0.19–0.45)	0.09 (-0.23–0.41)
<i>Sociodemographic characteristics</i>						
Age	–	-0.31 (-0.64–0.01)	–	-2.11*** (-2.54–1.68)	–	-0.00 (-0.01–0.00)
Sex (female)	–	13.72*** (9.63–17.82)	–	56.09*** (50.70–61.49)	–	0.12*** (0.07–0.18)
In education (reference: medium)	–	3.51 (-7.78–14.80)	–	7.58 (-8.20–23.36)	–	0.00 (-0.13–0.14)
Low education (reference: medium)	–	7.87** (2.91–12.83)	–	-1.06 (-7.35–5.23)	–	-0.01 (-0.08–0.05)
High education (reference: medium)	–	-12.96*** (-17.21–8.72)	–	-8.46** (-14.14–2.78)	–	0.04 (-0.02–0.10)

Table 4 (Continued)

	<i>Personal contacts/year ...</i>		<i>Nonphysical contacts/year ...</i>		<i>Emotional closeness ...</i>	
	without controls ^a	with controls	without controls ^a	with controls	without controls ^a	with controls
<i>Family-related characteristics</i>						
Respondent has partner	—	-12.50*** (-17.89–7.11)	—	-6.87 (-14.18–0.43)	—	0.00 (-0.07–0.08)
Respondent has child(ren)	—	5.92* (0.70–11.14)	—	8.17* (1.21–15.14)	—	-0.12*** (-0.19–0.05)
Respondent's number of siblings	—	-3.72*** (-5.47–1.97)	—	-11.09*** (-13.30–8.89)	—	-0.05*** (-0.07–0.02)
Respondent's parents live together	—	14.66*** (10.50–18.82)	—	2.24 (-3.36–7.83)	—	0.28*** (0.23–0.34)
Agreement with family norms	—	1.85*** (1.08–2.62)	—	3.68*** (2.65–4.72)	—	0.06*** (0.04–0.07)
Distance to mother's residence (minutes)	—	-0.19*** (-0.21–0.17)	—	-0.11*** (-0.13–0.08)	—	-0.00*** (-0.00–0.00)
<i>Constant</i>	70.53*** (68.25–72.80)	72.68*** (56.86–88.51)	143.03*** (140.10–145.95)	176.82*** (155.44–198.19)	3.88*** (3.85–3.91)	3.37*** (3.15–3.59)
<i>N</i>	13,097	13,097	12,892	12,892	13,120	13,120
<i>r</i> ²	0.00	0.13	0.00	0.14	0.00	0.06

German Family Demography Panel Study Wave 1 (data file version 4.1.0); own calculations

^a Cases with missing values for any of the control variables were excluded from the regression*** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$

Table 5 Ordinary least squares regression results for frequency of contacts (personal and nonphysical) with and emotional closeness to the adult child's biological father—native Germans and second-generation migrants (95% confidence intervals in parentheses)

	<i>Personal contacts/year ...</i>		<i>Nonphysical contacts/year ...</i>		<i>Emotional closeness ...</i>	
	without controls ^a	with controls	without controls ^a	with controls	without controls ^a	with controls
<i>Foreign-born father's region of birth</i>						
(reference: Germany)						
Eastern Europe	19.98 (-0.97–40.93)	20.02* (0.87–39.17)	4.01 (-15.33–23.34)	5.20 (-13.41–23.80)	-0.08 (-0.33–0.18)	-0.08 (-0.32–0.16)
Former USSR	-10.48 (-29.06–8.11)	-10.00 (-27.17–7.17)	-23.18 (-48.42–2.06)	-26.70* (-49.95–3.46)	-0.50** (-0.86–0.15)	-0.47** (-0.77–0.16)
Asia (including Turkey)	19.94 (-3.62–43.50)	22.91* (0.77–45.04)	22.74 (-0.51–45.99)	26.18* (5.31–47.06)	-0.16 (-0.45–0.13)	-0.12 (-0.39–0.14)
Other European	10.98 (-4.50–26.46)	12.13 (-1.19–25.45)	5.81 (-13.70–25.33)	8.67 (-9.92–27.26)	-0.01 (-0.25–0.22)	-0.00 (-0.22–0.22)
Other non-European	-15.44 (-32.25–1.37)	0.17 (-16.54–16.87)	-20.30 (-48.36–7.75)	-13.29 (-40.46–13.87)	-0.09 (-0.61–0.44)	0.04 (-0.38–0.47)
<i>Sociodemographic characteristics</i>						
Age	-	-0.05 (-0.39–0.29)	-	-0.90*** (-1.32–0.49)	-	0.00 (-0.00–0.01)
Sex (female)	-	3.12 (-1.17–7.41)	-	15.19*** (10.10–20.29)	-	0.06* (0.00–0.12)
In education (reference: medium)	-	6.54 (-6.79–19.86)	-	5.63 (-10.07–21.32)	-	-0.02 (-0.21–0.17)
Low education (reference: medium)	-	5.59* (0.37–10.81)	-	4.31 (-1.70–10.32)	-	0.06 (-0.02–0.13)
High education (reference: medium)	-	-17.39*** (-21.67–13.11)	-	-7.49** (-12.97–2.01)	-	0.07* (0.01–0.14)

Table 5 (Continued)

<i>Family-related characteristics</i>	<i>Personal contacts/year ...</i>		<i>Nonphysical contacts/year ...</i>		<i>Emotional closeness ...</i>	
	without controls ^a	with controls	without controls ^a	with controls	without controls ^a	with controls
<i>Respondent has partner</i>	—	—	—	—	—	—
		-7.32* (-13.02—1.62)		-2.07 (-8.80—4.67)		0.07 (-0.01—0.16)
<i>Respondent has child(ren)</i>	—	2.61 (-2.92—8.14)	—	1.47 (-5.21—8.15)	—	-0.05 (-0.13—0.03)
<i>Respondent's number of siblings</i>	—	-2.86*** (-4.53—-1.18)	—	-6.52*** (-8.83—-4.21)	—	-0.05*** (-0.08—0.02)
<i>Respondent's parents live together</i>	—	37.03*** (32.68—41.37)	—	33.65*** (28.37—38.92)	—	0.80*** (0.73—0.88)
<i>Agreement with family norms</i>	—	2.23*** (1.45—3.00)	—	2.41*** (1.44—3.38)	—	0.05*** (0.03—0.06)
<i>Distance to father's residence (minutes)</i>	—	-0.13*** (-0.15—-0.11)	—	-0.06*** (-0.08—0.05)	—	-0.00*** (-0.00—0.00)
<i>Constant</i>	62.16*** (59.80—64.52)	35.59*** (20.13—51.04)	93.45*** (90.76—96.13)	85.78*** (66.49—105.07)	3.59*** (3.56—3.63)	2.47*** (2.23—2.72)
<i>N</i>	11,608	11,608	11,381	11,381	11,646	11,646
<i>r</i> ²	0.00	0.14	0.00	0.08	0.00	0.14

German Family Demography Panel Study Wave 1 (data file version 4.1.0); own calculations

^a Cases with missing values for any of the control variables were excluded from the regression****p* < 0.001, ***p* < 0.01, **p* < 0.05

Table 1 provides unweighted descriptive sample statistics by respondents' migration background. The largest group among first-generation migrants originated from the former USSR (~28%), whereas all "other non-European" regions contributed only ~12%. The composition of second-generation migrants differs substantially from first-generation migrants: The proportion of "other non-Europeans" remains low (~8–10%) but is now very similar to the percentage of respondents originating from the former USSR (~9–10%), whereas "other Europeans" (~32%) constitute the largest group among second-generation migrants (followed by Eastern Europeans: ~25–28%). Table 1 indicates a substantially lower number of personal contacts and a somewhat higher frequency of nonphysical contacts among first-generation migrants, but no differences by migration background in intergenerational emotional closeness. Importantly, first-generation migrants' distance to their parents' residence is, on average, about five times greater than that for natives.

3 Results

To begin with, Table 2 displays regression results for native Germans' and first-generation migrants' relationship to their mother. A model without control variables suggests that migrants, irrespective of their ethnic origin (assessed by their mother's region of birth), have fewer personal contacts with their mothers than natives do. Once controls are included in the model, this migrant–native gap tends to disappear or even reverse: Migrants of Asian or "other" non-European descent actually exhibit a higher frequency of personal contacts with mothers than their German counterparts do. Turning to nonphysical contacts shows more frequent contacts with mothers in all migrant groups, especially among those with Asian or other European or non-European origins. This clear pattern is suppressed if compositional differences between migrants and natives—especially with regard to intergenerational geographic proximity—are not accounted for. Such suppressor effects also appear to be present, if emotional closeness is considered. Compared with natives, closer emotional bonds are observed among Asian migrants and, particularly, those of "other" European or non-European descent in the model with controls. Looking at native Germans' and first-generation migrants' relationships with fathers (Table 3) reveals patterns of personal and nonphysical contacts that are fairly similar to those described above for mothers. However, there is no clear indication of a native–migrant gap in respondents' emotional closeness to fathers.

When comparing native Germans' and second-generation migrants' relationship to their mother (Table 4), those with "other European" origins stand out: They exhibit closer intergenerational ties across all three outcomes. Moreover, those of Asian descent were more likely to report more frequent nonphysical contacts. Finally, when turning to native Germans' and second-generation migrants' relationships with fathers (Table 5), there is indication of more frequent contacts among Asians (personal and nonphysical) as well as those with Eastern European origins (personal contacts only). Those with fathers born in the former USSR had fewer nonphysical contacts than natives, though. Importantly, and different from all other migrant groups, relationships to fathers from the former USSR are also characterized by

substantially lower emotional closeness. A similar tendency is observed in second-generation migrants with mothers from the former USSR, but the correlation is much weaker and does not meet conventional levels of statistical significance (Table 4).

Because previous research focused specifically on Turkish migrants, we ran *supplementary analyses* distinguishing between immigrants with Turkish and other Asian origins (~38% and ~62%, respectively, of the original category). This analysis revealed similar patterns of intergenerational relationship solidarities in both groups, compared to the German reference category (details not shown). Because the sizes of the Turkish and “other” Asian subsamples were, naturally, smaller than in the merged Asian-origin group of immigrants in our main analysis, not all initially observed differences to the German reference remained statistically significant in the supplementary analysis.

4 Discussion

Using data from the FReDA, the present study set out to update and extend previous research on native–migrant intergenerational solidarity differences in Germany, a country with one of the highest numbers and proportions of immigrants worldwide. Two main sets of findings emerged from our descriptive analysis:

(1) Irrespective of their ethnic origins, *first-generation migrants* consistently report more frequent nonphysical contacts to their parents than natives do, partly compensating their fewer opportunities for personal contacts (indicated by the uncontrolled model that does not account for differences in parent–child geographic proximity). However, first-generation migrants with Asian or other non-European origins also have more frequent personal contacts than natives do with both parents (probably reflecting a high proportion of children and parents who jointly immigrated to Germany). Moreover, first-generation immigrants of other European or non-European descent exhibit greater emotional closeness to their mothers.

Whereas these findings thus provide overall support for the solidarity hypothesis (corroborating previous research; e.g., Albertini et al. 2019; Baykara-Krumme et al. 2011), they also reflect the heterogeneity of migrants’ cultural backgrounds as well as differences in migration and integration experiences across immigrant groups, shaping intergenerational relationships. Also in line with previous studies, our analysis underlines the importance of accounting for compositional differences—regarding both general sociodemographic and family-related characteristics—between native and migrant populations to eliminate spurious correlations as well as suppressor effects.

(2) Some patterns observed among first-generation migrants appear to be “transmitted” to the *second generation*: For example, more frequent contacts with Asian-born fathers (personal and nonphysical) as well as with mothers of Asian or “other European” origins (nonphysical contacts only) were observed in both migrant generations. This finding emphasizes the importance of considering intergenerational transmission processes in the context of migration (e.g., Steinbach 2001) and in analyses of adult parent–child relationships (e.g., Hank et al. 2017) more generally.

However, whereas (first-generation) migrants from Eastern Europe or the former USSR tend to be overall more similar to German natives than other migrant groups, second-generation migrants with origins in the former USSR stand out, as their relationships to fathers are characterized by substantially fewer nonphysical contacts and lower emotional closeness (which, to some extent, also holds for mother–child relations). The vast majority of first-generation migrants from the former USSR are ethnic German repatriates who arrived in Germany from the late 1980s onward and are considered to be generally well integrated into German society (e.g., Friedrichs and Graf 2022; Steinbach 2001). These *Aussiedler* have been shown to be more likely than native Germans to express stronger expectations regarding the receipt of upward intergenerational support in particular (see Vogel 2012). Whereas our results provide no indication that this would translate into first-generation *Aussiedler*'s greater emotional closeness to their own parents (see also Baykara-Krumme et al. 2011), their expectations might not match anymore with potentially more “assimilated” norms of intergenerational support in the small but generally well-integrated group of second-generation migrants from the former USSR. This tension might then result in more frequent intergenerational conflicts (Baykara-Krumme et al. 2011) and fewer contacts as well as lower levels of emotional closeness, as we observed (see Kalmijn 2019 for a related study from the Netherlands).

Against the background of the heterogeneities between immigrant groups in Germany described here—along the lines of different regional/cultural origins and generations (first vs. second)—future research should continue to monitor differential developments in natives' and migrants' intergenerational relationship qualities. Will, for example, observed differences in contact frequency and emotional closeness translate to more tangible expressions of intergenerational solidarity, such as the provision of care (e.g., Schiefer and Nowicka 2025)? Moreover, even though FReDA covers the regional/cultural diversity of Germany's current immigrant population fairly well, it seems important to make sure that the sizeable number of recent refugees—especially from Syria and Ukraine—will appropriately be considered in future data collection efforts (e.g., Brücker et al. 2023) to allow more in-depth analyses of specific migrant groups.

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