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Through Thick and Thin: People Think Family Will and Ought to Reconcile

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Abstract

In a preregistered experiment, adults living in the United States ($N = 700$) expected family (here, siblings) to be more likely to reconcile than friends after a conflict. To a greater extent, participants reported that siblings (vs. friends) have to reconcile and failing to do so would be less morally permissible. Further, participants expected love between siblings to be negatively affected to a lesser extent than love between friends who experienced the same conflict. We also explored potential generational differences, and found that Baby Boomers (people born in the years 1946–1964) reported that family members were significantly more obligated to reconcile than did Millennials (people born in the years 1981–1996). Our findings indicate that ties to family members are especially anticipated and obliged to persist through thick and thin.