

# **Relational Maintenance Behaviors and Communication Channel Use among Adult Siblings**

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The purpose of this study was to investigate whether adult siblings' use of relational maintenance behaviors and communication channels differ among the five adult sibling relationship types (i.e., intimate, congenial, loyal, apathetic, and hostile) identified by Gold (1989). Participants were 606 individuals whose ages ranged from 18 to 82 years. Results indicated that intimate siblings generally use relational maintenance behaviors at a higher rate and use several communication channels more frequently than congenial, loyal, or apathetic/hostile siblings. These findings suggest that when it comes to maintaining their sibling relationships, adults may consider the extent to which they experience emotional interdependence and psychological closeness with each other. Future research should consider examining whether sibling types and relational maintenance function as a result of attachment style (i.e., secure, dismissive, fearful, preoccupied).

Across the lifespan, siblings occupy a prominent position in each others' lives. It is not until adulthood, however, that sibling relationships adopt an egalitarian tone (Bedford & Avioli, 2001) and resemble a relationship comparable to a friendship (Cicirelli, 1994). As such, both friends (Guererro & Chavez, 2005; Johnson, 2001; Messman, Canary, & Hause, 2000) and siblings (Myers & Members of COM 200, 2001; Myers & Weber, 2004) engage in relational maintenance behaviors--which are conceptualized as the actions and activities in which individuals engage to sustain desired relational definitions (Canary & Stafford, 1994) for the specific purpose of maintaining their relationships. However, adult siblings have to make a stronger effort than friends do to maintain a supportive relationship (Voorpostel & Van der Lippe, 2007).

To date, a host of researchers (Eidsness & Myers, 2008; Goodboy, Myers, & Patterson, 2009; Johnson & Corti, 2008; Mikkelsen, 2006b,

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2007; Myers, Brann, & Rittenour, 2008; Myers & Members of COM 200, 2001; Myers & Weber, 2004; Olah & Cameron, 2008) have concluded collectively that not only do adult siblings use relational maintenance behaviors, but also that the use of these behaviors is linked positively with perceived sibling liking, solidarity, trust, commitment, relational satisfaction, and relational closeness, and is tied to their motives for communicating with their siblings. Furthermore, female siblings use relational maintenance behaviors at a higher rate than male siblings (Myers & Members of COM 200) and female-female sibling dyads generally use relational maintenance behaviors at a higher rate than male-male sibling dyads or cross-sex sibling dyads (Mikkelsen, 2006b; Myers & Members of COM 200).

What is missing from this collective body of research, however, is whether adult siblings' attempts to maintain their relationships are differentiated by the type of sibling relationship in which they are engaged. Although adult siblings report that their relationships are affectionately close (Bedford & Avioli, 1996; Milevsky, 2005), that they are committed to maintaining their relationships (Crispell, 1996; Tyler & Prentice, 2008), and that they are satisfied with their relationships (Bevan, Stetzenbach, Batson, & Bullo, 2006), siblings also engage in a host of antisocial, hurtful, and destructive behaviors with each other. These behaviors include conflict and rivalry; jealousy (e.g., not spending enough time together, being excluded from an experience or an activity); and verbal (e.g., calling each other names, hurling insults, conveying dislike), physical (e.g., hitting each other, threatening to hurt each other), and relational (e.g., sharing sibling secrets with each other, excluding each other, withholding support and acceptance) aggressiveness (Aune & Comstock, 2002; Bevan & Stetzenbach, 2007; Felson, 1983; Kahn, 1983; Martin, Anderson, & Rocca, 2005; Myers & Bryant, 2008; Myers & Goodboy, 2006). These contradictory feelings and behaviors permeate the sibling relationship and create a paradoxical nature in that siblings simultaneously express liking and loving for each other while at the same time behaving in an antagonistic manner toward each other (Mikkelsen, 2006a).

Not surprisingly, then, the adult sibling relationship can take different forms. Although several typologies of sibling relationships exist (Stewart, Verbrugge, & Beilfuss, 1998; Stewart et al., 2001), perhaps the most comprehensive typology developed to date has emerged from Gold's (1989) qualitative study of siblings in later life. Her typology, which is based on the psychological and social needs siblings fulfill for each other (i.e., psychological closeness and investment; the provision of instrumental support, emotional support, and acceptance/approval; amount of contact; and feelings of envy and resentment), has practical

application for sibling relationships across the lifespan. Based on her interviews with adult siblings who ranged in age from 67 to 89 years, Gold identified five types of sibling relationships: intimate, congenial, loyal, apathetic, and hostile. *Intimate sibling relationships* are characterized by a strong sense of emotional interdependence, psychological closeness, empathy, and mutuality. Intimate siblings consider each other to be “best friends” and their relationships are not constrained by either geographic distance or negative feelings and behaviors (e.g., jealousy, hurtful messages). *Congenial sibling relationships* are similar to intimate relationships, but the positive feelings siblings express toward each other are less intense in both their depth and their breadth and they consider each other to be “good” friends rather than “best friends.”

*Loyal sibling relationships* are characterized by a sense of family obligation rather than a sense of personal involvement. Although loyal siblings provide instrumental support in times of crisis and attend family events (e.g., weddings, holiday celebrations), they are less emotionally and physically involved in each other’s lives than intimate and collegial siblings and they do not remain in close contact with each other. *Apathetic sibling relationships* are marked by feelings of indifference toward the sibling, coupled with a lack of family obligation. Apathetic siblings are physically and psychologically distant with each other and fail to provide each other with emotional and instrumental support. *Hostile sibling relationships* are characterized by a strong sense of envy, resentment, and anger. Although hostile siblings believe their sibling relationships are beyond repair and they purposely avoid contacting each other, they remain psychologically invested in the relationship by spending time and energy reflecting on the reasons why they dislike or disapprove of their siblings.

Recently, Goodboy et al. (2009) found that in a study of elderly siblings (i.e., ages 65 to 90 years), those individuals who identified themselves as having intimate, congenial, or loyal sibling relationships differed in their use of relational maintenance behaviors with their siblings, with intimate siblings reporting an overall higher use of relational maintenance behaviors. This finding makes sense, given that once siblings enter adulthood, their involvement becomes voluntary and they “may have the final say in whether they maintain friendly and supportive contact with one another, keep a cool distance, or continue a raging battle” (Bedford & Volling, 2004, p. 90). As such, across the lifespan, it is likely that adult siblings’ use of relational maintenance behaviors will mirror the type of sibling relationship in which they participate. To examine this idea, we hypothesize that: Individuals who classify their sibling relationships as intimate will use relational

maintenance behaviors at a higher rate than individuals who classify their sibling relationships as congenial, loyal, apathetic, or hostile.

At the same time, the extent to which intimate, congenial, loyal, apathetic, and hostile siblings use communication channels to maintain their relationships is unknown. Using a variety of communication channels to maintain relationships is a standard practice among relational partners. For example, in a study of a sample of relational partners involved in a long distance relationship, Dainton and Aylor (2002) found that positive relationships exist between the face-to-face communication channel and the tasks relational maintenance behavior; the telephone communication channel and the openness, assurances, and networks relational maintenance behaviors; the Internet communication channel and the positivity and the networks relational maintenance behaviors; and the letter communication channel and the assurances relational maintenance behavior. Johnson, Haigh, Becker, Craig, and Wigley (2008) reported that college students use e-mail to maintain their relationships with family members and friends. Johnson and Corti (2008) reported that college students are most likely to use text messaging as a way to remain in contact with their siblings, followed by the telephone, instant messaging, e-mail, and regular mail (e.g., cards, letters). Because Mikkelsen (2004) found that adult siblings report using communication channels such as the telephone, personal visits, e-mail, instant messenger, letters, indirect third party communication, and shared activities to maintain their relationships, it is likely that adult siblings use a variety of communication channels to maintain their relationships. To explore the use of the communication channels used by adult siblings to maintain their relationships, the following research question is posed: To what extent do intimate, congenial, loyal, apathetic, and hostile adult siblings use communication channels to maintain their adult sibling relationships?

## METHOD

### Participants

Participants ( $N = 640$ ) were 259 men and 381 women whose ages ranged from 18 to 82 years ( $M = 37.43$  yrs.,  $SD = 16.40$ ). Of these participants, 284 (44%) were married currently, 331 (52%) had children (range = 1-9 children), and they lived, on average, 253 miles ( $SD = 704$ ) from their sibling. The participants reported on 312 male siblings and 326 female siblings (the sex of two siblings was not identified) whose ages ranged from 13 to 86 years ( $M = 37.23$  yrs.,  $SD = 16.49$ ). Of these siblings, 269 (42%) were married currently and 298 (47%) had children (range = 1-8 children). No other demographic data were gathered.

### Procedure

Participants were recruited for this study in one of two ways. Approximately 40% of the participants ( $n = 262$ ) were students enrolled in several introductory communication courses at a large Mid-Atlantic university; the remaining participants ( $n = 378$ ) were recruited by students enrolled in the same courses. Participants were instructed to identify the sibling whose birthday was closest to their birthday (Mikkelsen, 2006b) and to complete a series of instruments in reference to the identified sibling. The identification of a sibling was required to ensure that participants would complete all instruments in reference to the identified sibling.

After identifying a sibling, participants provided demographic data about themselves and their identified sibling and completed two measures. (Participants also completed several instruments not germane to this study.) They then were given representative descriptions of the five sibling types based on Gold's (1989) sibling typology [see Goodboy et al. (2009) for these descriptions] which were sequenced into one of three randomized orders to minimize systematic response bias. After reading the descriptions of the five sibling types, participants were instructed to indicate which sibling type best exemplified their relationship with the identified sibling. One hundred and seventy six participants identified their sibling relationship type as intimate, 269 identified their sibling relationship type as congenial, 132 identified their sibling relationship type as loyal, 22 participants identified their sibling relationship type as apathetic, and seven participants identified their sibling relationship type as hostile. Thirty-four ( $n = 34$ ) participants failed to identify their sibling relationship type and were excluded from subsequent data analysis, resulting in a sample of 606 participants.

### Instrumentation

The first measure was the *Relational Maintenance Behaviors Scale* (Stafford, Dainton, & Haas, 2000), a 31-item scale that asks respondents to indicate the frequency with which they use seven relational maintenance behaviors: assurances, openness, conflict management, tasks, positivity, advice, and networks. Responses were solicited using a seven-point scale ranging from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (7). In this study, Cronbach alpha coefficients ranged from .66 to .90 for the seven behaviors: assurances ( $M = 34.66$ ,  $SD = 9.08$ ,  $\alpha = .88$ ), openness ( $M = 29.36$ ,  $SD = 9.88$ ,  $\alpha = .90$ ), conflict management ( $M = 26.67$ ,  $SD = 5.27$ ,  $\alpha = .82$ ), tasks ( $M = 27.72$ ,  $SD = 5.14$ ,  $\alpha = .80$ ), positivity ( $M = 11.50$ ,  $SD = 2.07$ ,  $\alpha = .68$ ), advice ( $M = 11.16$ ,  $SD = 2.61$ ,  $\alpha = .75$ ), and networks ( $M = 9.80$ ,  $SD = 2.85$ ,  $\alpha = .66$ ).

The second measure was a *Measure of Communication Channel Use* developed for use in this study, which is an 8-item scale that asks respondents to indicate the frequency with which they use each of eight channels (i.e., face-to-face contact, telephone, e-mail, instant messenger, letters, cards, text messages, and third party communication) to communicate with their identified sibling.<sup>1</sup> Responses were solicited using a five-point scale ranging from *almost never* (1) to *almost daily* (5). A Cronbach reliability coefficient of .70 was obtained for the scale ( $M = 18.78$ ,  $SD = 5.57$ ).

### RESULTS

Due to the low number of participants who identified their sibling relationship as either apathetic or hostile and Scott's (1990) finding that only 5% of adult sibling relationships fall into either of these two categories, the two categories were combined into one category labeled as "apathetic/hostile." The hypothesis predicted that individuals who classify their sibling relationships as intimate would use relational maintenance behaviors at a higher rate than individuals who classify their sibling relationships as congenial, loyal, apathetic, or hostile.

TABLE 1 Mean Differences in Use of Relational Maintenance Behaviors by Sibling Type

Behaviors	Mean Score ( <i>SD</i> )					$\eta^2$
	Intimate	Congenial	Loyal	A/H	F	
Assurances	41.45(6.26)	35.23(6.48)	28.05(7.93)	18.10(7.53)	157.3	.44
Openness	36.64(8.15)	29.12(7.77)	22.83(8.70)	17.28(8.80)	96.63	.33
Con Mgt.	29.77(4.04)	26.88(4.00)	24.00(5.32)	18.00(6.24)	81.08	.29
Tasks	29.82(4.71)	27.92(4.21)	26.02(4.93)	20.72(7.42)	38.93	.16
Positivity	12.46(1.70)	11.49(1.81)	10.84(2.14)	8.76(2.46)	40.81	.17
Advice	12.63(1.74)	11.44(2.04)	9.58(2.60)	6.76(3.17)	92.40	.32
Networks	11.55(2.21)	10.19(2.06)	7.74(2.69)	5.03(2.54)	115.5	.37

Note. \*All  $F$  ratios are significant at  $p < .001$ . Means in each row are significantly different from each other. A/H = Apathy/Hostility; Con Mgt. = Conflict Management

The results of a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) revealed support for the hypothesis, Wilks's  $\lambda = .45$ ,  $F(21, 1712) = 26.14$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .23$  (see Table 1). Univariate effects were significant for assurances,  $F(3, 602) = 157.26$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .44$ ; openness,  $F(3, 602) = 96.63$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .33$ ; conflict management,  $F(3, 602) = 81.08$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .29$ ; tasks,  $F(3, 602) = 38.93$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .16$ ; positivity,  $F(3, 602) = 40.81$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .17$ ; advice,  $F(3, 602) = 92.40$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .32$ ; and networks,  $F(3, 602) = 115.50$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .37$ . An examination of the mean scores using a post-hoc Scheffé analysis revealed that individuals who classify their sibling relationships as intimate use all seven relational maintenance behaviors at a higher rate

than individuals who classify their sibling relationships as congenial, loyal, or apathetic/hostile. Moreover, individuals who classify their sibling relationships as congenial use all seven relational maintenance behaviors at a higher rate than individuals who classify their sibling relationships as both loyal and apathetic/hostile. Individuals who classify their sibling relationships as loyal use all seven relational maintenance behaviors at a higher rate than individuals who classify their sibling relationships as apathetic/hostile.

TABLE 2 Mean Differences in Communication Channel Use by Sibling Type

Channel	Mean Score ( <i>SD</i> )				<i>F</i>	$\eta^2$
	Intimate	Congenial	Loyal	A/H		
Face-to-face	3.57(1.23) <sub>ab</sub>	3.26(1.15) <sub>cd</sub>	2.36 (1.04) <sub>ac</sub>	2.03(.94) <sub>bd</sub>	38.6	.16
Telephone	4.25(.87) <sub>abc</sub>	3.77(.96) <sub>ade</sub>	2.81(1.08) <sub>bdf</sub>	2.07(1.00) <sub>cef</sub>	82.8 <sup>^</sup>	.29
E-mail	2.31(1.46) <sub>ab</sub>	2.11(1.34) <sub>c</sub>	1.73(1.09) <sub>a</sub>	1.38(.82) <sub>bc</sub>	7.8 <sup>^</sup>	.04
Inst. Mess.	2.12(1.52) <sub>a</sub>	1.88(1.36) <sub>b</sub>	1.40(.92) <sub>ab</sub>	1.45(1.02)	8.4 <sup>^</sup>	.04
Letters	1.24(.77)	1.26(.74)	1.14(.54)	1.07(.37)	1.5	.01
Cards	1.77(1.12) <sub>a</sub>	1.59(.95)	1.36(.77) <sub>a</sub>	1.24(.64)	5.8 <sup>^</sup>	.03
Text Mess.	2.61(1.66) <sub>ab</sub>	2.40(1.50) <sub>cd</sub>	1.64(1.11) <sub>ac</sub>	1.41 (.87) <sub>bd</sub>	15.7 <sup>^</sup>	.07
3rd Party	3.17 (1.46)	2.99 (1.38)	2.86 (1.23)	2.41 (1.09)	3.2 <sup>*</sup>	.02

Note. <sup>\*</sup>*p* <.05. <sup>^</sup>*p* <.001. Means in each row sharing subscripts are significantly different. A/H = Apathy/Hostile; Inst. Mess. = Instant Message

The research question inquired about the extent to which intimate, congenial, loyal, apathetic, and hostile adult siblings use communication channels to maintain their adult sibling relationships. The results of a MANOVA revealed a significant model, Wilks’s  $\lambda = .65$ ,  $F(24, 1726) = 11.00$ ,  $p <.001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .13$  (see Table 2). Univariate effects were significant for face-to-face contact,  $F(3, 602) = 38.62$ ,  $p <.001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .16$ ; telephone,  $F(3, 602) = 82.75$ ,  $p <.001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .29$ ; e-mail,  $F(3, 602) = 7.78$ ,  $p <.001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .04$ ; instant messenger,  $F(3, 602) = 8.42$ ,  $p <.001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .04$ ; cards,  $F(3, 602) = 5.82$ ,  $p <.001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .03$ ; text messages,  $F(2, 602) = 15.74$ ,  $p <.001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .07$ ; and third party communication,  $F(3, 602) = 3.18$ ,  $p <.05$ ,  $\eta^2 = .02$ ; but not for letters,  $F(3, 602) = 1.52$ ,  $p = .21$ ,  $\eta^2 = .01$ . An examination of the mean scores using Scheffé post-hoc analysis indicates that adult siblings who are involved in an intimate sibling relationship, a congenial sibling relationship, a loyal sibling relationship, or an apathetic/hostile sibling relationship differ in their use of the face-to-face, telephone, e-mail, Instant messenger, cards, and text message communication channels. More specifically, adult siblings who are involved in an intimate sibling relationship (a) use face-to-face contact, e-mail, and text messages more frequently than adults who are involved in either a loyal or an apathetic/hostile sibling relationship; (b) use the

telephone more frequently than adults who are involved in a congenial, loyal, or apathetic/hostile sibling relationship; and (c) use instant messenger more frequently than adults who are involved in a loyal sibling relationship. Adults who are involved in a congenial sibling relationship (a) use face-to face contact, the telephone, and text messages more frequently than adult siblings who are involved in either a loyal or an apathetic/hostile sibling relationship; (b) use e-mail more frequently than adults who are involved in an apathetic/hostile sibling relationship; and (c) use instant messenger more frequently than adults who are involved in a loyal sibling relationship. Moreover, the use of the letters and third party communication channels, despite the significant *F* value obtained for the third party channel, does not differ among intimate, congenial, loyal, or apathetic/hostile sibling relationships.

### DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to investigate whether adult siblings' use of relational maintenance behaviors and use of communication channels differ among the five adult sibling relationship types identified by Gold (1989). Collectively, the findings indicate that intimate siblings use relational maintenance behaviors at a higher rate and use several communication channels more frequently than congenial, loyal, or apathetic/hostile siblings. These findings not only suggest that adult sibling relationships can be differentiated in terms of how siblings communicate with each other, but also support Gold's assertion that adult sibling relationships emerge in different forms and offer validation of her typology, at least indirectly, for use across adult sibling relationships, regardless of sibling age.

When interpreting these findings, it is important to consider that based on how the data were analyzed, causal directions between the variables cannot be established. Moreover, because the participants in this study were solicited using a convenience sample, it is not possible to generalize these results to all adult sibling relationships. Nonetheless, two conclusions can be drawn about the findings obtained in this study. The first conclusion is that adult siblings who classify their sibling relationships as intimate report using relational maintenance behaviors at a higher rate than adult siblings who classify their sibling relationships as congenial, loyal, or apathetic/hostile. This finding implies that when it comes to maintaining their relationships, adult siblings may consider the extent to which they experience emotional interdependence and psychological closeness with each other (i.e., consider their sibling relationship to be intimate). For these siblings, engaging in relational maintenance behaviors may be one way in which they provide each other with emotional support, affirmation, and instrumental support (Boland,

2007; Depner & Ingersoll-Dayton, 1988; Van Volkom, 2006), all of which are essential to functional intimate sibling relationships. Similarly, Myers et al. (2008) reported that perceived psychological closeness is a consistent predictor of whether adults (ages 26-54 years) engage in relational maintenance behaviors with their siblings. Thus, psychological closeness may be the more salient reason why adult siblings engage in behaviors intended to maintain their relationships. This notion is not to suggest that adult siblings who are not psychologically close will fail to engage in relational maintenance attempts; as Connidis (2005) established, adult sibling ties act as a potential source of support and responsibility throughout the lifespan. Rather, adult siblings who are involved in an intimate sibling relationship simply may be more interested in or more motivated to maintain their sibling relationships than adult siblings who label their relationships as congenial, loyal, or apathetic/hostile.

The second conclusion is that intimate and congenial siblings use several communication channels (i.e., face-to-face, telephone, e-mail, instant messenger, cards, and text messaging) more frequently than loyal or apathetic/hostile siblings. Considering that sibling communication becomes volitional in adult age (Goetting, 1986) and that differences in adult sibling warmth determine voluntary sibling contact (Stocker, Lanthier, & Furman, 1997), it is no surprise that adult siblings who possess a degree of psychological and emotional closeness (i.e., intimate, congenial) deliberately use communication channels at a higher rate to maintain contact. In fact, adult siblings sustain emotional support by frequently contacting one another through both mediated channels and face-to-face interactions (Voorpostel & Blieszner, 2008). Loyal and apathetic/hostile siblings who are not concerned with offering or receiving such support consequently, then, may rely less on these channels to initiate or sustain contact.

Interestingly, letters and third party communication channels did not differ by sibling type. A closer examination of these two communication channels reveals that both channels are considered to be impersonal and indirect. Accordingly, intimate and congenial siblings, who are concerned with maintaining a legitimate friendship based on mutual emotional and psychological dependence, may opt to use more interpersonal and conversational channels. Because intimate and congenial siblings are interested genuinely in each others' lives, letters and third party communication may be perceived as insufficient attempts to maintain a close relationship, in part because letters and third party communication do not allow for reciprocal communication from a sibling, but rather encourage one-sided and brief communication efforts. Consistent with this notion, Westerman, Van Der Heide, Klein, and

Walther (2008) revealed that friends and best friends (which are similar to congenial and intimate siblings) prefer to use face-to-face or telephone communication channels over letters and third party communication.

One limitation with our study rests with the low number of participants who identified their sibling relationships as either apathetic ( $n = 22$ ) or hostile ( $n = 7$ ), although it should be noted that this identification corroborates prior research which has established that the apathetic and the hostile sibling types often are the least common of the five sibling types (Gold, 1989; Scott, 1990). It is possible that some participants may be hesitant to classify their sibling relationships as either apathetic or hostile due to the negative image or connotation associated with these two sibling types, or, as Floyd and Morman (1998) stated, are leery of their responses being perceived as inappropriate, socially unattractive, or against the norm, particularly because siblings have been conditioned by their parents to value their sibling relationships (Medved, Brogan, McClanahan, Morris, & Shepherd, 2006).

Future research should consider sibling types and relational maintenance as a function of attachment style (i.e., secure, dismissive, fearful, preoccupied). Studied in both romantic relationships and friendships, not only do individuals with a secure attachment style use relational maintenance behaviors at a higher rate than individuals with other attachment styles (Yum & Li, 2007), but they utilize a larger repertoire of relational maintenance behaviors than individuals with insecure attachment styles (Guerrero & Bachman, 2006). These findings might be applicable to sibling relationships, in part because not all siblings perceive that they are treated similarly by their parents (Daniels & Plomin, 1985), in part because parental acceptance influences the extent to which siblings consider their relationships to be close (Seginer, 1988), and in part because adult sibling ties are dependent on parallel treatment by parents during childhood and adolescence (Connidis, 2007). Moreover, Milevsky (2004) found that perceived parental marital satisfaction is a positive predictor of sibling communication, closeness, and support, indicating that both the parental and spousal roles played by parents exert an influence on how siblings feel toward and treat each other.

In sum, the findings of this study suggest that it is the quality of the sibling relationship that influences not only how adult siblings maintain their relationships with each other, but also how they communicate with each other. Although siblings occupy a presence in each other's lives across the lifespan, whether this presence is deemed satisfying, rewarding, or beneficial may rest with whether they consider their relationships to be intimate, congenial, loyal, apathetic, or hostile; as

such, these considerations may explain further why adult sibling relationships are characterized by a paradoxical nature.

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*Note:* The eight items are: "I engage in face-to-face contact to communicate with my sibling," "I use the telephone or my cell phone to communicate with my sibling," "I use e-mail to communicate with my sibling," "I use Instant Messenger to communicate with my sibling," "I write letters as a way to communicate with my sibling," "I send cards as a way to communicate with my sibling," "I use text messaging as a way to communicate with my sibling," and "I keep track of my sibling through communicating with either a parent or another sibling."

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