Communicating Families

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Abstract

Motives for Sibling Communication Across the Lifespan

Craig Fowler

The sibling bond has the distinction of being the most enduring and egalitarian connection of all family relationships. Unfortunately, although siblings play an important role in one another’s lives, relatively little is known about the communication that characterizes sibling relationships. This study investigated whether the interpersonal communication motives of siblings vary as a function of age or gender. Survey data was provided by 299 respondents aged 18 to 34, 35 to 49, 50 to 64, and 65+. There were significant differences by both age and gender for several of the communication motives.

Family Ties: Communicating Identity Through Jointly Told Family Stories

Jody Koenig Kellas

Family stories work to construct family identity. Little research, however, has examined storytelling in families. This study examined storytelling content and process to assess the extent to which families jointly integrated or fragmented a shared sense of identity and how these discursive practices relate to family qualities. Results of a study involving 58 family triads indicate relationships between story theme (e.g., accomplishment vs. stress), person referencing practices (e.g., we-ness vs. separateness), and interactional storytelling behaviors (e.g., engagement, turn-taking). Moreover, story framing, perspective-taking, statements about selves-in-the-family, and identifying as a “storytelling family” emerged consistently as positive
Signature Assignment: Communicating Families

predictors of family satisfaction and functioning. The results offer a portrait of how families communicate identity and functioning in joint storytelling interactions and further position storytelling as a communication phenomenon worthy of consideration.
“The sibling bond has the distinction of being the most enduring and egalitarian connection of all family relationships” (1). Almost all families have at least one sibling throughout their lifetime. This bond is important in all families, if not the most important bond the family has to offer. At a young age I did not understand this. I have a sister, her name is Kayla. Growing up we did not get along the best and I feel as if I let years of precious bonding time go to waste. As I got older and eventually moved away and went to college, I began to realize all of the good times my best friend and I shared together. Until I moved away, I did not truly appreciate the bond we had together. She is the greatest friend anyone could ever ask for. We communicate on a regular basis and get to see each other often which is a key role in making our sibling bond as strong as it can be.

As said by Craig Fowler “Siblings provide mutual comfort and emotional support” (5). Siblings are allies for each other through parent child conflicts or parent to parent conflicts. When situations like these happen in family environments, there is nobody you want to share your feelings with, or just simply have a shoulder to cry on than your very own brother or sister. They are a crutch to your pain and sadness, and a ray of sunshine for your smiles and happiness. Once siblings learn to rely on each other through the thick and the thin, there is nothing that can tear them apart. The sibling bond grows stronger and stronger with age. The fighting, the exchange of words, and the discipline all goes down as you and your siblings get older. The bond that you create when you are young in my opinion is the strongest. If you can avoid making the same mistakes I did, and can create a love lasting bond with your siblings at a young age, you
will be closer, life will be more enjoyable, and you will have a best friend you can rely on and
tell anything and everything to. To me, the bond is priceless.

Stories are used in my family as a means to control how we think and learn about
different beliefs and situations in our culture. My mother and my father would tell me and my
sister stories off the top of their head. Most of the stories they told us were made up, but had life
lessons that they thought we should hear and could learn from. I feel that these story times were
used not only to shape us into young adults for the future, but to teach us life lessons and tell us
about our culture. Family stories are beneficial to all families as it will bring all members of the
family closer together. Most family stories often share a common theme. The content of family
stories reflects a family’s values, culture, and its collective meanings. “The themes or lessons
learned from the content in their family stories affect and reflect rules for behavior inside and
outside the family, such as how to deal with obstacles and persevere through times of
hardship” (7). Often family stories show the strengths and weaknesses of the family and the
culture they are in, this shows needs for improvement and where the family can do better as a
whole. Stories I learned as a child taught me core lessons and values, but I was too young to
understand why I was being taught these things. As I began to grow up and get older, I realized
what my family was teaching me and started to apply these life lessons into my own life. You do
not understand as a child, but when you get older you realize that your parents are trying their
best to shape you into the successful young adult that they want you to become. Ultimately they
only want the best for you. Who knew that through your family stories you would be taught core
values that would shape you future and ultimately impact who you are today as a human being.
Maybe we should listen to our family, they might actually know what they are talking about!
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Throughout both of these articles I noticed that they are mostly children and sibling based. One talks about sibling bonds and how to cherish and love your sibling throughout your lifetime. The other talks about family stories you have heard in your family as a child and how they teach values and shape who you are as an individual throughout your life. If children understood these concepts and were able to apply and shape their lives at a young age, it would ultimately make them more successful and create a better future for each and every one of them.
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Sources:
