

RUNNING HEAD: Family Contact in Adulthood

Relationship of Age, Sex, and Verbal Ability with Family Contact in Adulthood

Kristin E. Lala

Carnegie Mellon University

Grace I. L. Caskie and K. Warner Schaie

The Pennsylvania State University

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Abstract

Age, gender, and verbal ability were investigated as predictors of contact between adult family members. Parent-offspring contact was more frequent than siblings' contact, and older age was generally associated with less familial contact, except by telephone. Of sibling relationships, those involving at least one female were reported as having the most contact during adulthood. Father-son and mother-daughter relationships had more contact than opposite sex parent-offspring relationships. Although verbal ability was not a good predictor of overall contact, greater verbal skills tended to predict less telephone contact but more letter writing for both groups. Verbal ability predicted amount of contact via e-mail for parent-offspring pairs only.

What factors determine “how close” a family is? Are parent-offspring relationships more intimate than sibling relationships? Does closeness vary by age or whether the members of the relationship are the same sex? How does one’s verbal ability relate to familial closeness? The current research project attempted to understand what influences individuals’ perceptions of familial closeness. While no single factor can explain all of the differences in how much contact an individual has with various family members, it is likely that certain features of one’s environment and individual characteristics influence how family members relate to each other as adults.

Can perceived contact between family members be predicted by the age of the family member? Prior research suggests that age will be a significant predictor of how an individual relates to members of his or her family. While some studies have found that closeness between siblings increases with age (e.g., Connidis & Campbell, 1995), we expected to find that adults’ relationships with their adult offspring would be more intimate with increasing age while interaction between adult siblings would decrease with age. The rationale behind this idea is that older adults are more likely to have adult children of their own, and so may rely less upon members of their family of origin - such as their siblings - for support and contact. Because younger adults are less likely to be married or have grown children, and more likely to be establishing careers and independence from their parents, we expected reports of sibling contact to be higher for young adults than assessments made by older participants. For these reasons as well as others, we also believe that parent-offspring and sibling relationships will warrant separate treatment in these analyses.

Furthermore, it is probable that the sex of the family member making the report of family contact will be important in determining amount of family contact. We hypothesize that females will have more contact with their siblings or adult offspring than will males. However, we also think that the sex of the family member on whom the report is made may moderate this relationship. Specifically, we hypothesize that contact between sisters will be more frequent, thus perceived as closer, than interaction between brothers (Gold, 1996; Cicirelli, 1982; Goetting, 1986), but that both of these types will be closer than opposite-sex sibling pairs. In terms of parent-offspring relationships, we hypothesize that mothers will report more contact with their adult daughters than with their adult sons, but contact between father-daughter and father-son

pairs will not differ. Schaie, Plomin, Willis, Gruber-Baldini, and Dutta (1992) found that mother-daughter pairs reported significantly greater contact than father-son pairs.

If differences do exist in perceptions of familial closeness, it is important to explore possible reasons behind why individuals see relationships with their offspring and siblings as they do. Moving beyond demographics and the assumption that certain types of relationships are inherently more intimate than others within the same family unit, we also examined verbal fluency as a possible predictor of family contact and overall closeness in adulthood.

A review of the literature suggests relatively little attention has been paid to the potential impact of a person's word and language abilities on family bonding. However, past research has shown demographic differences in word fluency that may impact the relationship between an individual's word fluency and the amount of family contact that is reported. Ratliff et al. (1998) found that education was a strong predictor of an individual's word fluency. Women also tend to have higher word fluency than men (Schaie, 1996; Capitani, Laiacona, & Basso, 1998). Cross-sectional data reported by Schaie (1996) indicated that older adults have lower word fluency than younger adults, but that verbal ability factor scores are typically highest in midlife. Therefore, one goal of this research is to examine the relationship of word fluency to total family contact, while taking into account the potential influences of age, education, and gender.

The examination of the relationship of word fluency and total family contact can easily be extended to an analysis of specific modes of communication between family members (i.e., writing letters or e-mail and talking on the telephone). For these specific modes, we hypothesize that greater verbal ability will be related to increased contact by letter and e-mail, but not by telephone. While generational factors may explain some differences in the use of different modes of communication (e.g., older adults tend to be less interested in using the Internet than adolescents [Morrell, Mayhorn, & Bennett, 2000]), to what extent are such differences prevalent in modern families? We hypothesize that age will be negatively related to communication by e-mail for all family relationships studied, while the more traditional forms of communication (letter and telephone) will increase with age for parents reporting on adult offspring but decrease with age for adult siblings. As with total family contact, we again expect that females will show higher levels of communication via these specific modes of family contact.

This paper examined four main research questions. First, how do reports of family contact differ between parent-offspring and sibling-sibling relationships? Second, does the

amount of contact in these two types of relationships vary by age group or sex of the respondent? Will these effects be different when the two family members are of the same sex? Third, does verbal ability predict contact between family members? If so, are age and sex important in explaining this relationship? Finally, does the predictability of verbal ability, age, and sex differ when specific forms of communication (i.e., e-mail, letter writing, and telephone) are considered?

Method

Participants

The sample was comprised of 622 participants (258 males and 364 females) from the seventh wave of the Seattle Longitudinal Study (SLS; Schaie, 1996). The sample ranged in age from 29 to 93 years of age, with a mean age of 67.3 years ($SD = 12.6$). Average education of this sample was 15.1 years (range = 6-20 years, $SD = 2.80$). Participants in this sample reported on one to seven relationships with their adult offspring and/or siblings (719 adult offspring and 425 siblings) for a total of 1144 relationships. The family members were participants of a collateral study of the SLS. Four age groups were included: young adults (ages 29-44 years, $n = 65$), middle-aged adults (ages 45-64 years, $n = 318$), young-old adults (ages 65-74 years, $n = 365$), and old-old adults (ages 75-93, $n = 396$).

Measures

Family Contact Scale (FCS). The Family Contact Scale (Schaie, Plomin, Willis, Gruber-Baldini, & Dutta, 1992) consisted of an 8-item Likert-scale inventory designed to assess the amount of contact participants had with their family members of interest. Items asked about the number of years they had resided together and frequency of personal contact and contact via telephone, letter, e-mail, and other informants. Six of these items were summed to produce a numerical measure of total family contact. Participants were also asked if they currently lived with the family member about whom they were reporting.

Verbal Ability. Two measures of participants' verbal ability were used in this analysis. The first measure was the Word Fluency subtest of the Primary Mental Abilities test (PMA; Thurstone & Thurstone, 1949), in which participants recalled as many words as possible according to a lexical rule (e.g., words beginning with "s") during a five-minute period. The second measure was a verbal factor score comprised of PMA Word Fluency and three additional tests from the SLS cognitive battery: PMA Verbal Meaning, ETS Vocabulary, and ETS

Advanced Vocabulary. The Verbal Meaning subtest of the PMA was a four-choice, 50-item synonym test that participants had four minutes to complete. The ETS Vocabulary and Advanced Vocabulary tests (Ekstrom, French, Harman, & Derman, 1976) were both five-choice 36-item synonym tests.

Life Complexity Inventory. Demographic characteristics of age, sex, and education were obtained with the Life Complexity Inventory (LCI; Gribbin, Schaie, & Parham, 1980).

Results

Descriptive Statistics

Of the 1144 target family members reported on by current SLS participants, 277 were sons, 442 were daughters, 157 were brothers, and 268 were sisters. Participants reported on relatives of both the same sex (52.9%) and opposite sex (47.1%). Word fluency T-scores of participants ranged from 24 to 85 ($M = 50.9$, $SD = 10.4$), and verbal factor scores of participants ranged from 14 to 67 ($M = 52.1$, $SD = 7.6$).

Differences between Parent-Offspring and Sibling Relationships

We had hypothesized that parent-offspring and sibling relationships needed to be considered separately. A t-test showed that participants in our sample who reported on adult offspring were significantly older ($p < .001$) on average ($M = 72.37$ years) than those who reported on siblings ($M = 61.53$). Although the ages of the total sample ranged from 29 to 93, reports of contact with adult offspring were only made by participants in our sample who were age 48 or older, as younger participants were less likely to have adult offspring.

Several findings revealed additional reasons to consider the two subsamples separately. First, although the correlation between age and total family contact was not significant for the total sample ($r = -.04$, $p = .22$), it was significant when the two groups were examined separately: $r = -.18$ ($p < .001$) for parent-offspring contact and $r = -.21$ ($p < .001$) for sibling contact. Second, the relationship between the number of years the family members had lived together and the total amount of family contact also differed when examined for the total sample and the two subsamples. For the entire sample, these variables were significantly correlated ($r = .22$, $p < .001$); however, this relationship was only significant for parent-offspring relationships ($r = .12$, $p < .001$) and not for sibling relationships.

Further comparisons between parent-offspring and sibling relationships showed that, on a scale from 1-5 (with 1 being “not close at all” and 5 being “very close”), reported closeness was

also significantly greater ($t = 13.16, p < .001$) with adult offspring ($M = 4.61$) than with siblings ($M = 3.95$). Finally, to determine whether differences between parent-offspring and sibling contact varied by age group, a 2 (relationship type) x 3 (age group) ANOVA was performed. No significant interaction between age group and relationship type (i.e., sibling or parent-offspring) was found. Across the three age groups, parent-offspring relationships ($M = 21.36$) had significantly higher contact than sibling relationships ($M = 18.36$).

Based on all of these findings and the age range restriction for parent-offspring reports, we concluded that parent-offspring and sibling relationships should be treated separately in further analyses.

Effects of Age Group, Sex, and Same/Opposite Sex Pair on Family Contact

A three-way ANOVA was performed to test the effects of the independent variables of age group, sex of the participant, and whether the pair was the same sex or opposite sex on the dependent measure of total family contact.

For parent-offspring relationships, significant main effects were found for age group ($p < .001$) and whether the family members were the same or opposite sex ($p < .05$), as shown in Table 1. Descriptive statistics for the two significant effects are presented in Table 2. Post-hoc comparisons showed that middle-aged parents (ages 45-64) had significantly more contact with their adult offspring ($p < .001$) than young-old parents (ages 65-74) and old-old parents (ages 75-93) had with their adult offspring, and young-old parents had significantly more contact with their adult offspring ($p < .05$) than old-old parents. Same-sex pairs had a small but significantly greater amount of family contact ($M = 21.49$) than opposite-sex pairs ($M = 20.74$). No significant differences were found between male and female SLS members in amount of contact with their adult offspring, and no interactions were significant.

As shown in Table 3, for sibling relationships, a significant main effect for age group was found ($p < .01$). As found with parent-offspring relationships, the general trend for siblings was that increasing age led to less contact. Post-hoc comparisons showed that young adults reported significantly more contact with their siblings than young-old ($p < .05$) and old-old ($p < .001$) adults did. Middle-aged adults also reported significantly more contact with their siblings than old-old adults did ($p < .05$). No other age group differences were significant. As expected, a significant interaction between the sex of the participant and whether the family member was the same or opposite sex was also found. Examination of the means showed that females had more

contact with same-sex siblings (i.e., sisters) than with opposite-sex siblings (i.e., brothers) while males had more contact with opposite-sex siblings (i.e., sisters) than with same-sex siblings (i.e., brothers). No other main effects or interactions were significant. Descriptive statistics for the significant age main effect and significant interaction of sex by same/opposite sex pair are presented in Table 4.

Relationship of Verbal Ability, Age, and Gender to Family Contact

More frequent parent-offspring contact was significantly correlated with both higher verbal factor scores ($r = .10, p < .01$) and higher word fluency scores ($r = .07, p < .05$). Neither measure of verbal ability was significantly correlated with amount of sibling-sibling contact ($p > .05$). Separate linear regressions were performed to examine whether word fluency or verbal factor scores were significant predictors of parent-offspring contact and sibling contact, controlling for age and sex of the SLS member. The results from these regressions are shown in Table 5 for parent-offspring pairs and in Table 6 for sibling pairs.

Verbal Factor Score. Verbal factor score was a significant predictor of parents' contact with their adult offspring ($\beta = .08, p < .05$). Age was also a significant predictor ($\beta = -.17, p < .001$), while sex of the parent was not. Parents who were younger and who had higher verbal factor scores tended to have more contact with their adult offspring. For sibling-sibling contact, age was the strongest predictor ($\beta = -.22, p < .001$), and sex was also a significant predictor ($\beta = .10, p < .05$). Like parent-offspring pairs, younger participants tended to communicate more frequently with their siblings than older ones. Contrary to the parent-offspring findings, verbal ability was not a significant predictor of siblings' contact.

Word Fluency. Because participants' word fluency scores were one component of the total verbal factor score, linear regressions were then conducted to see if word fluency itself, along with age and sex, predicted family contact. For parent-offspring contact, only age was a significant predictor in this regression (again, younger parents tended to have more contact their adult offspring: $\beta = -.18, p < .001$); sex and word fluency were not significant predictors of parent-offspring contact. As with the previous regressions performed using the verbal factor score for sibling pairs, both age ($\beta = -.23, p < .001$) and sex ($\beta = .10, p < .05$) significantly influenced siblings' contact; participants who were younger and females reported more contact with siblings. For sibling-sibling contact, word fluency, again, was not a significant predictor.

Differences in Specific Modes of Familial Communication

Because neither the verbal factor nor word fluency scores were good predictors of total familial contact for the relationships examined above, further analyses were conducted to see how verbal skills shaped specific modes of communication included within the total family contact score. Another item included in the total family contact score was the participant's appraisal of the closeness of the relationship. Appraisals of greater closeness were significantly correlated with greater telephone contact and greater e-mail contact for both parent-offspring pairs ($p < .001$) and sibling pairs ($p < .001$). Frequency of written correspondence was positively correlated with assessments of family closeness for sibling relationships ($p < .001$) but not for parent-offspring relationships.

Separate regressions for parent-offspring pairs and sibling pairs were then computed to determine the relationship of age, sex, and word fluency or the verbal factor score to the specific modes for familial communication of telephone contact, letter contact, and email contact. These results are shown in Table 5 for parent-offspring pairs and in Table 6 for sibling pairs.

Telephone Contact. The linear regressions for parent-offspring pairs revealed that both sex ($\beta = .17, p < .001$) and parental word fluency ($\beta = -.08, p < .05$) were significant predictors of the amount of telephone contact. The regression for sibling-to-sibling telephone communication found similar results; participants' sex ($\beta = .11, p < .05$) and word fluency scores ($\beta = -.13, p < .05$) predicted the amount of telephone contact, while age and the verbal factor score did not. For both groups, more contact by telephone was predicted for females and those who had lower word fluency scores.

Letter Contact. Although the linear regression revealed that letter writing between parents and their adult offspring was not significantly predicted by the parental level of word fluency, the parental verbal ability factor score did predict the amount of contact by letter ($p < .001$). The opposite pattern was observed for sibling relationships: word fluency was a significant predictor of letter writing ($p < .01$) while the verbal factor score was not a significant predictor. Participants' age was a significant predictor of frequency of contact by letter for both groups (i.e., older adults wrote more). Sex was a significant predictor for parent-offspring relationships (i.e., fathers tended to write more, $p < .05$), but not for sibling relationships.

E-mail Contact. Word fluency ($\beta = .12, p < .01$) and the verbal factor score ($\beta = .13, p < .001$) were predictive of how often parents e-mailed their adult offspring. Neither word fluency

nor the verbal factor score were significant predictors of e-mail contact between siblings. As expected, greater e-mail usage was predicted for younger individuals ($p < .001$) for both parent-offspring and sibling pairs. Sex was not a significant predictor of frequency of contact by e-mail.

Discussion

Four main research questions regarding familial contact were addressed in this paper. First, the findings supported our primary assumption that reports of family contact differ between parent-offspring and sibling-sibling relationships and would warrant separate treatment in these analyses. The number of years family members lived together was found to influence individuals' perceptions of closeness, but only between parent-offspring pairs. In this case, longer periods of cohabitation between parents and their adult offspring led to parents' reports of greater closeness. On the other hand, sibling relationships were seemingly unaffected by how many years brothers and sisters had lived together. Another significant finding was that parent-offspring pairs consistently reported higher contact than siblings did. In terms of our more specific analyses regarding the influence of age, sex, and verbal skills on family contact, differences were often present between analyses performed for the two groups, substantiating the idea that parent-offspring interactions differed from contact between siblings.

For sibling pairs, we found that the amount of contact participants reported generally decreased with age, as we had hypothesized. However, we also found that contact between parents and their adult offspring decreased with age, which was the opposite of what we expected. A simple pattern was observed for parent-offspring relationships: middle-aged adults had the highest levels of contact with their offspring, young-old adults were in the middle, and old-old adults reported the lowest levels of familial contact. For sibling relationships, the trend was not as simple. The youngest group of adults included in our sample, ages 29 to 44, interacted with their siblings more frequently than young-old and old-old adults, but not more than middle-aged adults. Middle-aged adults interacted with their siblings more frequently than old-old adults did, while young-old and old-old adults did not significantly differ in their reported levels of contact with siblings.

Our hypothesis that females would tend to have more contact with family members was partially supported. For parent-offspring pairs, sex of the participant was only significant in the regressions for telephone and letter contact. For sibling pairs, telephone contact was greater for females, but male-female differences were not found in other analyses. However, the possible

interaction between the sex of the participant and whether the family member was of the same or opposite sex was found for sibling pairs. Sibling relationships involving females (e.g., men reporting on sisters and women reporting on sisters) were closer than opposite-sex pairs (brother-sister) or same-sex pairs (brother-brother). In contrast, parent-offspring pairs of the same sex tended to have slightly more contact than opposite-sex pairs, regardless of whether the pair in question was mother-daughter or father-son.

The hypothesis that verbal ability would predict total family contact was found to be supported only for parent-offspring pairs. Parents' higher verbal factor scores and being a younger age were the best predictors of frequency of contact with one's adult offspring. Word fluency, one component of the verbal factor score, was not predictive of parent-offspring relationships or sibling contact. Sibling-sibling communication was not influenced by verbal factor scores, with age, and to a lesser degree, gender playing more significant roles in shaping sibling contact. The regression analyses for total family contact found age to be the strongest predictor of amount of contact for siblings. These findings suggested that perhaps one or more of the other three tests (vocabulary, advanced vocabulary, and verbal meaning tests) that made up the verbal ability factor score were more indicative of overall parent-offspring interaction than the word fluency test.

While verbal abilities were not the best predictors of overall family contact for parent-offspring and sibling-sibling groups, they were indicative of individuals' contact with family members via particular modes of communication. For both parent-offspring and sibling pairs, sex and participants' word fluency predicted how often the phone was used to contact family members, and no relationship of age and frequency of contact by telephone was found. Phone contact was greater for females and those with lower word fluency, despite the finding that females tended to have higher verbal ability than males.

While adults' word fluency scores predicted how often they wrote letters to their siblings (those with higher word fluency tended to write more), parent-offspring communication was only influenced by parents' verbal factor scores (parents with higher verbal factor scores exchanged more written correspondence with their offspring than those with lower scores), and not by parents' word fluency. For both sibling and parent-offspring pairs, older adults reported the most letter writing. Sex was a significant factor only for parent-offspring pairs, with fathers

tending to report more letter exchanges than mothers. Letter writing between siblings was unrelated to the sex of the sibling.

Finally, while higher word fluency and verbal factor scores resulted in more frequent e-mail usage by parents, these variables did not significantly predict e-mail between siblings. For both groups, age did affect e-mail use (older adults used e-mail less), while sex did not. Our additional hypothesis that e-mail usage would vary by age was substantiated for both groups within our study, but the strength of the relationship was different for parent-offspring and sibling pairs (older parents were less likely to use e-mail, but older siblings were even less likely to do so). Because most siblings are in approximately the same cohort while parents and their offspring are in different cohorts, it is likely that the relationship of age with e-mail is explained by these generational factors. Parents may be likely to learn to use e-mail as a way of maintaining correspondence with adult offspring who use it as a daily form of communication.

All in all, verbal abilities seemed to predict only the amount of contact for specific modes of communication between family members. While verbal and word fluency skills did not seem to affect a family's overall amount of contact, it may be that other factors, such as one's emotional tone rather than the complexity of the words used, for instance, strongly impact familial closeness. Our study suggested that the "criteria" for family closeness do, in fact, differ between parent-offspring pairs and sibling-sibling pairs. Parents' verbal skills and the number of years spent living with their adult offspring clearly shapes relationships with their offspring in later adulthood, but the same does not hold for sibling relationships. More so than verbal ability, age seems to be the greatest predictor of siblings' communication, particularly with regards to e-mail usage. This finding contradicts prior research that suggests siblings grow closer as they age (e.g., Connidis & Campbell, 1995), yet supports other research (such as sisterly bonds being the closest of all sibling relationships, e.g., Gold, 1996).

Given the differences in reports of contact between parent-offspring and sibling-sibling contact, it may be advantageous for researchers to consider these groups separately in the future. This same variability also reminds us that there is no single formula for ensuring close family relations in later life. While families cannot control some of the influential factors in closeness, such as the sex of their adult offspring or the aging process itself, this study suggested that the simplest acts – picking up the telephone, or composing an e-mail, or writing a letter - may ultimately determine family closeness.

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Table 1.

Effects of Age Group, Sex of Participant, and Same/Opposite Sex Pair on Total Family Contact for Parent-Offspring Relationships (N = 719)

| Source | df | MS | F |
|------------------------------|-----|--------|----------|
| Age group (A) | 2 | 190.09 | 15.75*** |
| Sex (S) | 1 | 0.80 | 0.07 |
| Same/Opposite Sex Pair (S/O) | 1 | 74.40 | 6.06* |
| A x S | 2 | 8.48 | 0.70 |
| A x S/O | 2 | 5.33 | 0.44 |
| S x S/O | 1 | 2.44 | 0.20 |
| A x S x S/O | 2 | 10.76 | 0.89 |
| Error | 707 | 12.07 | |

* $p < .05$. *** $p < .001$.

Table 2.

Means and Standard Deviations for Total Family Contact by Age Group and Same/Opposite Sex Pair for Parent-Offspring Pairs (N = 719)

| Grouping | n | M | SD |
|---------------------------|-----|-------|------|
| Age Group of Parent | | | |
| Middle-aged (45-64 years) | 150 | 22.47 | 3.63 |
| Young-old (65-74 years) | 265 | 21.08 | 3.63 |
| Old-old (75-93 years) | 304 | 20.52 | 3.26 |
| Same/Opposite Sex Pair | | | |
| Same Sex | 338 | 21.49 | 3.62 |
| Opposite Sex | 381 | 20.74 | 3.45 |

Table 3.
Effects of Age Group, Sex of Participant, and Same/Opposite Sex Pair on Total Family Contact for Sibling Relationships (N = 425)

| Source | df | MS | F |
|------------------------------|-----|--------|--------|
| Age group (A) | 3 | 65.50 | 4.49** |
| Sex (S) | 1 | 16.88 | 1.16 |
| Same/Opposite Sex Pair (S/O) | 1 | 24.50 | 1.68 |
| A x S | 3 | 8.94 | 0.61 |
| A x S/O | 3 | 9.25 | 0.63 |
| S x S/O | 1 | 136.70 | 9.37** |
| A x S x S/O | 3 | 5.13 | 0.35 |
| Error | 409 | 14.58 | |

** $p < .01$.

Table 4.
Means and Standard Deviations for Total Family Contact by Age Group and for the Interaction of Sex and Same/Opposite Sex Pair for Sibling Pairs (N =425).

| Grouping | n | M | SD |
|------------------------------|-----|-------|------|
| Age Group | | | |
| Young (29-44 years) | 65 | 20.02 | 4.32 |
| Middle-aged (45-64 years) | 168 | 18.89 | 4.00 |
| Young-old (65-74 years) | 100 | 18.47 | 3.90 |
| Old-old (75-93 years) | 92 | 17.72 | 3.18 |
| Sex X Same/Opposite Sex Pair | | | |
| Female | | | |
| Same Sex (Sister) | 155 | 19.58 | 3.89 |
| Opposite Sex (Brother) | 88 | 17.92 | 3.96 |
| Male | | | |
| Same Sex (Brother) | 69 | 17.81 | 4.54 |
| Opposite Sex (Sister) | 113 | 18.68 | 3.25 |

Table 5.
Regression of Total Contact and Specific Modes of Family Contact on Age, Sex, and Verbal Ability for Parent-Offspring Relationships

| Predictor | Total Contact | | Telephone | | Letter | | Email | |
|---------------|---------------|---------|-----------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| | β | β | β | β | β | β | β | β |
| Word Fluency | .02 | --- | -.08* | --- | .06 | --- | .12** | --- |
| Verbal Factor | --- | .08* | --- | -.06 | --- | .13*** | --- | .13*** |
| Age | -.18*** | -.17*** | -.05 | -.04 | .08* | .08* | -.26*** | -.27*** |
| Sex | .00 | .01 | .17*** | .17*** | -.08* | -.08* | -.05 | -.03 |

Note. For each dependent variable, two regressions were computed. The first set of regression weights is from the regression analysis that used the word fluency score as the measure of verbal ability and the second is from the regression analysis that used the verbal factor score as the measure of verbal ability.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Table 6.
Regression of Total and Specific Modes of Family Contact on Age, Sex, and Verbal Ability for Sibling Relationships

| Predictor | Total Contact | | Telephone | | Letter | | Email | |
|---------------|---------------|---------|-----------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| | β | β | β | β | β | β | β | β |
| Word Fluency | -.04 | --- | -.13* | --- | .14** | --- | .07 | --- |
| Verbal Factor | --- | -.02 | --- | -.07 | --- | .08 | --- | .07 |
| Age | -.23*** | -.22*** | -.03 | .02 | .22*** | .17*** | -.43*** | -.45*** |
| Sex | .10* | .10* | .11* | .10* | -.03 | -.02 | -.01 | -.01 |

Note. For each dependent variable, two regressions were computed. The first set of regression weights is from the regression analysis that used the word fluency score as the measure of verbal ability and the second is from the regression analysis that used the verbal factor score as the measure of verbal ability.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.