

**Money, Family, Happiness: Financial Beliefs and Relational Satisfaction in Parent-
Young Adult Children Relationships**

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Keely Marie Algysa

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ABSTRACT

This study is framed through the lens of communication accommodation theory and examined the effects of accommodative and nonaccommodative communication on relational satisfaction and identity gaps when discussing finances in young-adult child (YAC)-parent relationships. The sample consisted of 276 young-adult college students who completed a self-report survey about how their parent communicates with them about finances. The cross-sectional survey results provided support for two forms of (non)accommodative communication as being significantly associated with relational satisfaction and identity gaps. Respecting divergent values was one type of accommodative communication that was positively associated with relational satisfaction and negatively associated with personal-relational identity gaps. The nonaccommodative behavior of emphasizing divergent values was negatively associated with relational satisfaction and positively associated with personal-relational and personal-enacted identity gaps. Findings suggest theoretical contributions to family, financial, and (non)accommodation communication research.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND GENERAL INFORMATION

Introduction

In 2022, 66% of adults reported that money is a significant source of stress, and 55% said stress about money and the economy was the reason for fights and tension with family (American Psychological Association, 2022). Since money impacts the daily life of everyone, one might assume that conversations about money would be prioritized in interpersonal relationships. However, in the U.S., people often do not feel comfortable talking about their money. According to a 2019 survey of 2,500 U.S. adults, 43% of respondents expressed feelings of stress, embarrassment, and confusion when discussing personal finances, and 20% reported never discussing personal finances with others (eMoney, 2019). People who struggle discussing money with others may be concerned with violating social expectations, privacy management, and anxiety about perceived self-worth.

There are several reasons why engaging in a discussion around money is difficult. Firstly, in the U.S., people view discussing personal finance as rude or unbecoming. Over the years, Americans have created a social norm that talking about personal finances is not always an acceptable topic of discussion (Backman, 1985). Money is instead a taboo topic, and openly discussing money is frequently viewed negatively for breaking a societal norm (Trachtman, 1999). Therefore, individuals may worry that talking about money may trigger negative reactions from their communication partner and result in unfavorable consequences. Another reason conversations about money can be difficult is

because many Americans view personal finances as just that, personal. People believe that their personal information should be secure and not shared with others. According to communication privacy management theory (Petronio, 2002), people own their personal information and create boundaries and rules to regulate whether they decide to disclose their information. One's personal finances is frequently knowledge that people are conflicted about sharing with others or keeping private (Romo, 2011).

Finally, research has explored the relationship between money and personal value. In studies looking at financial value and perceived self-worth, a person's financial value was frequently associated with their self-worth (Park et al, 2017). Essentially, it is common for people to judge their personal value in terms of materialistic measures such as the amount of money they have in the bank, their salaries, the cars they drive and then also believe that others will judge them similarly. Therefore, people avoid financial discussions to avoid embarrassing or uncomfortable situations (Romo, 2011). However, open financial discussions have a positive relationship with individual well-being (Dittmar et. al, 2014; Park et. al, 2017). Families in particular are a foundational group for social development when it comes to money. Parents are generally influential in shaping their child's socialization into the world (Bandura, 1989), and since financial literacy skills in the education system are limited, communication with parents about finances can positively or negatively affect a child's outlook on money.

It is clear that parents have a role to play in a child's perception of money (Grusec & Davidov, 2007); however, there is limited research studying conversations about financial beliefs between parents and children and the influence of those conversations on

familial relationships and one's self-identity. Communication accommodation theory has been used to investigate children's perceptions of communication with their parents and predict relationship characteristics such as satisfaction, closeness, and social identity (Speer et al., 2013). This study is concerned with how YAC's perception of a parent's communication accommodation behaviors surrounding finances is associated with their relational satisfaction and identity gaps. This report begins with an examination of the literature surrounding family financial communication, financial beliefs, communication accommodation theory, relational satisfaction, and identity gaps.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Family Financial Communication

Even though parents are often reluctant to discuss personal finances such as savings, income, and debt (Solheim et al., 2011), the conversations between a parent and child have tremendous influence on the child's future financial knowledge and behaviors especially as children emerge into adulthood (Dotson & Hyatt, 2000). Child and family studies scholars define early adulthood as the life phase immediately after adolescence, generally between the ages of 18-25, that is described as a time of transition or a period of drastic change (Whiteman et al., 2011). For many young-adult children (YAC), early adulthood marks an increase in independence from their parents and families. Life events, such as moving out of a family home and either going to college or joining the workforce, have traditionally been accompanied by increased financial responsibilities, and YAC can act upon the financial beliefs that they hold. However, with higher education becoming more expensive (National Center for Education Statistics, 2023) and increased unemployment rates among the young adult population (United States Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2023), today's YAC struggle more than past generations with achieving independence from their parents. It has become increasingly common for parents to remain financially intertwined with their YAC post-secondary school. Therefore, examining communication about financial beliefs during early adulthood of today's population will further expand knowledge about family

communication. There is interest from communication scholars in exploring family financial communication; however, the scope is limited to two major types of focus.

First, previous research has sought to understand how family financial communication is related to specific outcomes of a child. Since research on the effectiveness of formal financial education efforts has been inconclusive, Sherido and Deenanath (2016) explored the effectiveness of financial learning through communication between a parent and child. The study found that more frequent communication was positively related to higher financial literacy and healthy financial well-being. When exploring how financial communication between parents and emerging adults relates to a child's financial literacy, Lebanon et al. (2020) identified five processes that were categorized as either parent-initiated or child-initiated discussions.

Three parent-initiated process included *sharing financial experiences* (e.g. telling children stories about positive and negative financial decisions and the lessons parents learned), *involving children in decisions* (e.g. hosting family budget meetings and incorporating input from children in budget allotments), and *parent-initiated, age-appropriate conversations* (e.g. parents discussing financial principles catered to the child's understanding capabilities and advancing the discussion topics as the child develops). Child-initiated discussions occurred in two processes identified as *children asking financial questions* (e.g. YAC asking their parent for guidance when reviewing a first job offer health and retirement benefits package) and *children-initiated, age-appropriate conversations* (e.g. teens working their first job and coming to their parent to talk about opening a checking account). Findings supported that the children were more

likely to initiate financial conversations by seeking answers to questions. It is of note, however, that in instances when parents initiated financial discussions, sharing financial experiences with emerging adult children was not as productive as involving the children in financial decision making and speaking in age-appropriate conversations in forming healthy financial outcomes (Lebanon et al., 2020). This may be explained by emerging adults feeling that they are being lectured at by their parents instead of collaboratively discussing financial topics. Additionally, in a topic-specific study looking at credit, parents were the primary source of information over fellow peers, school, and the media. The more information about appropriate use of credit cards provided by a parent, the lower the outstanding debt balances of the YAC (Pinto et al., 2005).

The second major focus of research examining family financial communication has been looking specifically at communication privacy management theory and using the specific context of financial discussions as taboo communication. Various studies have investigated the kinds of financial information parents revealed or concealed from children and motivation and rules that guided such family financial conversations. These studies reported that parents are more open about financial socialization topics like saving habits and mindful spending and less likely to discuss family finances like a parent's income (Romo, 2014; Romo & Vangelisti, 2014). However, parents' debt was shared more frequently when the parents viewed the benefit of sharing information about their debt with children in hopes of warning them about the risks of debt, as outweighing the risk of sharing (Romo, 2011). These focus areas of family financial communication provide insight into the personal aspects of financial communication within a family unit,

but research is lacking in exploring the interpersonal communication side of financial communication, specifically the relationship between communicating financial beliefs and relational satisfaction.

Financial Beliefs

In hundreds of countries around the world, money, in all its different forms and currencies, is how people can acquire essential needs such as food, water, shelter, healthcare, and additional goods and services. Financial experiences can vary but all heavily shape people's financial beliefs. Financial beliefs are the ideas, thoughts, or opinions that influence individuals' money behaviors. They serve as a frame of reference for people's attitudes toward money in their everyday life (Tang, 1992). Even though most people think of money in some capacity every day, little research has been conducted to understand how communication about money and an individual's financial beliefs impact people's well-being and relationships with others.

Most research surrounding financial beliefs has been in the context of romantic partnerships (Brooks et al., 2019; Robson & Peetz, 2020; Tinghög et al., 2021). However, humans are known to develop their financial beliefs at young ages through experiences with money and their families (Gundmunson & Danes, 2011; White et al., 2021). Observation is a highly effective learning method for financial socialization in families and has been an effective method for learning in general social systems (Brusec & Davidov, 2007). Therefore, it would add to our understanding of financial communication to explore the role financial beliefs play within different family dynamics.

Further, much of the established literature about beliefs within families is limited to contexts of political or religious beliefs (Colaner et al., 2014; Peacock & Pederson, 2022). Therefore, there is a lack of knowledge surrounding financial beliefs within family dynamics such as parent-adult child relationships. Even though family relationships have the potential to be the most long-lasting and enduring relationships in human lives, satisfaction of familial relationships is not guaranteed, especially in cases of divergent beliefs. Relational satisfaction is an outcome of relationships that individuals perceive as a venture rewarding to create and maintain over time (Murray et al., 2000).

Colaner et al. (2014) found a negative association between perceptions of religious difference and relationship satisfaction in YAC's relationships with their parents. However, Bernhold et al. (2022) found that differences in religious and political beliefs were not associated with relationship satisfaction when YAC were reporting on their relationships with a parent and a grandparent. Therefore, there is inconsistency among research observing the association between family members' beliefs and relationship satisfaction that this study aims to explore further and in the context of financial beliefs. This inconsistency suggests that *communication* between parents and YAC might help explain levels of YAC relationship satisfaction, rather than just examining the size of belief discrepancies in isolation from communication. In this regard, the current study tests YAC's perceptions of receiving accommodation and nonaccommodation from their parents as predictors of relationship satisfaction and identity gaps.

Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT)

Discussing financial values is a communicative management issue. Therefore, the present study is framed through the lens of communication accommodation theory (CAT; Giles et al., 1987). Rarely is communication strictly scripted in every aspect, so most interactions are tailored and uniquely occur depending on the given situation and audience. CAT seeks to explain the adjustments that individuals make to attune their communication behaviors to their communication partner (Elhami, 2020; Giles et al., 1987). CAT has developed since the 1970s and asserts that people alter their communication to accomplish communicative and social goals (Elhami, 2020). There are three main types of communication adjustments that speakers may enact: convergence, maintenance, and divergence (Dragojevic et al., 2016; Gallois et al., 2005).

The convergence strategy is defined as the approach through which a communicator seeks to decrease differences with their communication partner in order to increase likeability and gain social approval (Elhami, 2020; Gallois et al., 2005). This type of strategy is perceived as supportive communication and shows the speaker's care and concern for their communication partner (Soliz, 2007). A central idea of CAT is that speakers wishing to create and maintain positive personal and social identities will adjust their communication styles to become more similar to those of their communication partner (Gallois et al., 2005). From the communication partner's (i.e., receiver's) perspective, accommodating communication behaviors exhibit support and respect and are associated with relationships that are more satisfying (Soliz, 2007; Soliz & Harwood, 2006).

It is common for people to learn how to communicate through interactions with their families (Burner, 1990), and family relationship quality is an important indicator of an individual's well-being and life satisfaction (Campbell et al., 1976). In the case of religious beliefs, Colaner et al. (2014) identified *identity-specific supportive communication* and *respect for divergent values* as two types of accommodative communication from the receiver's perspective. *Identity-specific supportive communication* refers to receiving support and acceptance for an individual's choice of social identity (Bernhold et al., 2022; Warner et al., 2020). Similar to the context of religious beliefs (Colaner et al., 2014), identity-specific supportive communication could be seen in conversations when a parent affirms their YAC's identity as an independent, financial decision maker regardless of differences in financial beliefs. This may involve the parent acknowledging the child's right to choose their own spending and saving habits, for example. The other accommodative behavior is *respect for divergent values*, which refers to the receiver perceiving that the speaker is adapting the speaker's communication to avoid offending or belittling the receiver about the receiver's beliefs (Bernhold et al., 2022; Colaner et al., 2014). It might also involve a speaker tolerating a receiver's beliefs, despite the speaker not holding those same beliefs (Colaner et al., 2014). Prior research in the realm of politics has supported respect for divergent values as the most influential accommodation behavior on shared family identity between family members communicating differences (Warner et al., 2020). Therefore, respect for divergent values may also be important for preserving positive feelings within adult parent-YAC relationships when disagreeing about finances. Both types of

accommodative communication can convey affection and trust in families discussing belief differences, and both types of accommodative communication in the realm of religion have been positively associated with relationship satisfaction (Colaner et al., 2014). Similar associations are expected to emerge in the case of financial beliefs:

H1: YAC's perceptions of their parents' accommodation about finances (i.e., financial-specific supportive communication and respect for divergent values) are positively associated with YAC's relationship satisfaction.

Conversely, maintenance and divergence strategies do not seek similarity but instead have the goal of distinction. The maintenance strategy describes instances when a speaker does not adjust to their partner and, regardless of the situation, they continue to use their own personal communication style (Gallois et al., 2005). A parent who persists in addressing their YAC as a childhood nickname even when requested to start using the YAC's legal name is an instance of the parent using their default ways of communication. The goal of divergence is to articulate a distinct difference between oneself and their partner (Gallois et al., 2005). Divergence can be seen when parents express their dislike in their YAC's choice of clothing and further explain reasons why the parent themselves would never make similar clothing choices. Both maintenance and divergence strategies are characterized by the speaker's failure to adjust to the needs of the communication partner and therefore act nonaccommodatingly (Soliz, 2007). Therefore, in instances when a parent uses nonaccommodation behaviors when talking about finances with a YAC, then it would be rational for the child to be alerted to the behavior and seek understanding. Whether the speaker intentionally or unintentionally

exhibits nonaccommodating behaviors, there is a high likelihood that their communication partner will perceive them negatively. In a study of parents' accommodative communication behaviors with their children about religion, Colaner et al. (2014) identified *inappropriate self-disclosure*, *emphasizing divergent values*, and *giving unwanted advice* as nonaccommodative behaviors that parents employed.

Parents who engage in *inappropriate self-disclosure* often provide expressive and unsolicited information to their YAC in a way that brings the YAC discomfort (Colaner et al., 2014). When it comes to discussing differences in religious beliefs, a parent's inability to accommodate the YAC's needs can result in decreased relational well-being (Colaner et al., 2014). Another prominent nonaccommodating behavior seen in parent-YAC relationships is *emphasizing divergent values*. Specifically, when discussing values that influence individuals' social identities, parents who stress divergent values through criticism about their YAC's beliefs may become a source of hurt and stress for the YAC (Mikkelsen & Hesse, 2009). Decreased relationship satisfaction may occur when parents negatively bring attention to their child's religious beliefs (Colaner et al., 2014; Mikkelsen & Hesse, 2009); therefore, the same outcomes may be possible in cases of divergent financial beliefs.

Morgan et al., (2019) explain the third type of nonaccommodating behavior, *giving unwanted advice*, as the act of sharing suggestions with individuals who did not request advice. As suggested by previous research, young children develop a perception that parents are credible and trustworthy sources for advice (Bullo & Schulz, 2022); however, during the transition from adolescence to adulthood, attitudes toward parental

advice are more varied. Factors such as relationship quality, gender, mood, and topic can impact whether the advice is welcomed from a parent. A study by Wang et al. (2020) on parent advice to adult children reported that strained relationships were a contributing factor to perceiving parental advice as unwanted. This relationship can be applicable to instances of financial beliefs in parent-YAC relationships as financial discussions can be a source of tension in any relationship. As these three perceived behaviors of nonaccommodative communication have been associated with negative outcomes in the context of political or religious beliefs, similar associations are proposed in the following prediction:

H2: YAC's perceptions of their parents' nonaccommodation about finances (i.e., inappropriate self-disclosures, emphasizing divergent values, and unwanted advice) are negatively associated with YAC's relational satisfaction.

Identity Gaps

Beliefs are fundamental to how people interpret the world around them and are central to an individual's identity (Perloff, 2017). Communication theory of identity (Hecht, 1993) proposes that people create perceptions of self from four interrelated frames of identity: personal, relational, enacted, and communal. Since beliefs are highly resistant to change, instances when beliefs conflict can result in identity gaps (Perloff, 2017). The study of identity gaps has added interesting knowledge to the study of interpersonal relationships such as personal-enacted identity gaps that were negatively associated with communication satisfaction and relationship satisfaction (Kam & Hecht, 2009). Similar to Morgan et al.'s (2020) research regarding religious belief differences,

this thesis will focus on personal-relational and personal-enacted identity gaps as they relate to communication accommodation behaviors while discussing financial beliefs in parent-YAC relationships.

Personal-relational identity gaps occur when an individual's self-concept and the identities ascribed to them by others do not align (Hecht, 2014). For example, a YAC may align strongly with the belief that money is evil and corrupting but perceive that their parents view them and their financial belief as immature or unrealistic since the parent's belief is that money is the key to freedom and gives power necessary to survive in the world. *Personal-enacted identity gaps* occur when people behave in a manner that contradicts their self-concept (Hecht, 2014). In parent-YAC relationships with differing financial beliefs, this gap may be exemplified when a YAC believes that acquiring money represents an achievement to be proud of and spend but would act oppositely in the presence of their parent. Instead, they would act contradictory to their personal belief and express that money was meant primarily for saving as much as possible to attune to their parent's financial belief.

Both types of identity gaps can promote individuals to experience feelings of uncertainty and discomfort with conflicting identities and behaviors, and as the gap increases so do the negative emotions. Concern for and respect of others is central to accommodative communication as the goal is to alleviate distinction between both parties (Schrodt & Decker, 2023). Given that the objective of accommodation behaviors is to reduce friction and discomfort for others (Bernhold et al., 2022), the following prediction is offered:

H3: YAC's perceptions of their parent's accommodation about finances (i.e., financial-specific supportive communication and respect for divergent values) are negatively associated with YAC's a) personal-relational identity gap and b) personal-enacted identity gap.

Nonaccommodative communication about religion has been positively associated with personal-relational and personal-enacted identity gaps (Morgan et al., 2020). Since nonaccommodating communication is intended to increase distinction and dissimilarities between people (Schrodt & Decker, 2023), these behaviors are more likely to amplify gaps in identities:

H4: YAC's perceptions of their parent's nonaccommodation about finances (i.e., inappropriate self-disclosures, emphasizing divergent values, and unwanted advice) are positively associated with YAC's a) personal-relational identity gap and b) personal-enacted identity gap.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODS

Study Participants

To qualify for the study, participants were required to (a) be 18 years or older at the time they complete the survey and (b) have at least one currently living parent. The age range defining young adult participants for this study was determined by utilizing the U.S. federal age of consent (18) as the minimum age. The sample consisted of 276 undergraduate students at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. There were more female ($n = 176$, 63.8%) than male ($n = 99$, 35.9%) participants in the study, and the average age is 19.46 years old ($SD = 2.15$). Most participants identified as European American (56.8%). The remaining study participants were African American (4.0%), Asian American (4.7%), Latina/o American (4.0%), Multi-Ethnic (3.6%), Native American (1.1%), or Another Ethnicity (25.0%). More study participants reported on their relationship with their mother ($n = 162$, 58.7%) than their father ($n = 112$, 40.6%).

Procedures

Participants were recruited through the SONA system that is administered by the School of Communication Studies at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. Undergraduate students accessed the survey and earned credit towards their research requirement in exchange for their participation. The system credited students based on the estimated time required to complete the survey; therefore, each participant earned one credit.

After agreeing to an informed consent statement, participants completed an online questionnaire. The survey was created using the Qualtrics survey platform. The survey was divided into five sections to measure the core variables related to the research study. The final survey was estimated to take less than 30 minutes to complete. Before beginning the survey, participants were directed to report on one parent. In the instructions section, the survey outlined that participants should answer the questions about the relationship they have with the parent or parental figure with whom they discuss money the most frequently.

Measurements

The survey included demographic questions pertaining to the participant's age, gender, and ethnicity, as well as questions to identify which parent or parental figure they described and their level of financial dependence on their parent. One qualitative question asked participants to describe with examples a conversation with their parent or parental figure about money, followed by a question about whether the participant deemed the provided example as inappropriate or appropriate communication. Several established measures were adapted to fit the context of the study, specifically financial communication within familial relationships. To create consistency across the survey and decrease confusion for participants, measures were completed on 7-point Likert-type scales (1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*), unless indicated otherwise. For each measure, higher scores represent higher levels of a construct. In appendix, Table 1 illustrates the measured, continuous variables' bivariate correlations.

Perceived Socioeconomic Status

To determine the YAC's perceived socioeconomic status of their family, the MacArthur Scale of Subjective Social Status (Adler et al., 2000) was utilized. The scale includes a graphic of a 10-ring ladder and asks respondents to place their family on the ladder peg that best represents where their family fits in society based on their perceived notion of socioeconomic status. Perceived socioeconomic status ($M = 6.60$, $SD = 1.51$) was used as a control variable in the substantive analyses.

Financial Belief Similarity

By adapting Morgan et al.'s (2020) measure of religious belief similarity, participants' perceived financial belief similarity with their elected parent was assessed. Financial belief similarity ($M = 5.39$, $SD = 1.16$, $\alpha = .89$) was used as a control variable in the substantive analyses. There were five items for this measure, including statements such as: "I really identify with my parent's financial beliefs" and "My financial beliefs are not at all like my parent's beliefs" (reverse-coded).

Perceived Identity Gaps

Jung and Hecht's (2004) two measures were adapted to determine two types of perceived identity gaps YAC participants may experience with their parents: a 12-item measure about personal-relational identity gaps (e.g., "I feel that my parent sees me as I see myself" [reverse-coded]; $M = 3.04$, $SD = .96$, $\alpha = .86$) and an 11-item measure about personal-enacted identity gaps (e.g., "When I communicate with my parent, they get to know the 'real me'" [reverse-coded]; $M = 2.72$, $SD = 1.22$, $\alpha = .94$).

Relational Satisfaction

Relational satisfaction ($M = 5.91$, $SD = 1.12$, $\alpha = .96$) was assessed with a modified version of the Marital Opinion Questionnaire (Huston et al., 1986) to fit the parent-YAC relationship. Participants were provided with 10 sets of adjectives and then asked to indicate on a seven-point scale which adjective better describes the relationship they have with their parents. Example pairs of adjectives provided include *boring* or *interesting* and *discouraging* or *hopeful*.

(Non)Accommodative Communication

Through previous research exploring communication about religious beliefs, a measure for assessing accommodation and nonaccommodation in a parent-child relationship (Colaner et al., 2014) was modified to reflect financial communication between YAC and their parents. Items assessed two accommodating behaviors (four *financial-specific supportive communication* items [e.g., “My parent listens to my thoughts about money even if they don’t agree with me”; $M = 5.39$, $SD = 1.16$, $\alpha = .79$] and four *respecting divergent values* items [e.g., “My parent is tolerant of my financial beliefs when we disagree”; $M = 5.47$, $SD = 1.10$, $\alpha = .89$]), as well as three nonaccommodating behaviors (four *inappropriate self-disclosure* items [e.g., “I wish my parent would not talk with me about money as much as they do”; $M = 2.77$, $SD = 1.60$, $\alpha = .93$], three *emphasizing divergent values* items [e.g., “I feel as though my parent tries to convince me that my beliefs about money are wrong”; $M = 2.42$, $SD = 1.26$, $\alpha = .82$], and four *giving unwanted advice* items [e.g., “My parent tells me what I should and shouldn’t

do based on their views on money”; $M = 5.39$, $SD = 1.13$, $\alpha = .66$]) that participants perceived their elected parent to be exhibiting when discussing financial beliefs.

Analytic Procedures

To test the hypotheses, three hierarchical multiple regressions were run. The first step of each regression included the covariates: the participant’s sex (0 = male, 1 = female), the participant’s age, the participant’s ethnicity (0 = not European American, 1 = European American), the parent’s sex (0 = male, 1 = female), the participant’s perception of their family’s socioeconomic status, and the participant’s perception of how similar their financial beliefs are to their parent’s beliefs. The second step of each regression included the five accommodation and nonaccommodation variables: financial-specific supportive communication, respect for divergent financial values, inappropriate financial self-disclosure, emphasizing divergent financial values, and unwanted financial advice. The outcome variable in the first regression was relational satisfaction. The outcome variable in the second regression was personal-relational identity gaps. The outcome variable in the third regression was personal-enacted identity gaps.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

Relational Satisfaction Model

Step one (F Change [6, 246] = 9.87, $p < .001$, R^2 change = .19) and step two (F Change [5, 241] = 17.67, $p < .001$, R^2 change = .22) of the first regression both explained a significant amount of unique variance in relational satisfaction. Table 2 reports the regression coefficients for step two of this model.

H1 predicted that YAC's perceptions of their parent's accommodation about finances would be positively associated with YAC's relationship satisfaction. As shown in Table 2, H1 received partial support: YAC's perceptions of receiving financial-specific supportive communication were not associated with relationship satisfaction. However, YAC's perceptions of receiving respect for divergent financial values were positively associated with relationship satisfaction.

H2 predicted that YAC's perceptions of their parent's nonaccommodation about finances would be negatively associated with YAC's relationship satisfaction. As shown in Table 2, H2 received partial support: YAC's perceptions of receiving inappropriate financial self-disclosures and unwanted financial advice were not associated with relationship satisfaction. However, YAC's perceptions of their parent's emphasis on divergent financial values were negatively associated with YAC's relationship satisfaction.

Personal-Relational Identity Gaps Model

Step one (F Change [6, 244] = 7.81, $p < .001$, R^2 change = .16) and step two (F Change [5, 239] = 19.40, $p < .001$, R^2 change = .24) of the second regression both explained a significant amount of unique variance in personal-relational identity gaps. Table 3 reports the regression coefficients for step two of this model.

H3a predicted that YAC's perceptions of their parent's accommodation about finances would be negatively associated with YAC's personal-relational identity gaps. As shown in Table 3, H3a received partial support: YAC's perceptions of receiving financial-specific supportive communication were not associated with personal-relational identity gaps. However, YAC's perceptions of receiving respect for divergent financial values were negatively associated with personal-relational identity gaps.

H4a predicted that YAC's perceptions of their parent's nonaccommodation about finances would be positively associated with YAC's personal-relational identity gaps. As shown in Table 3, H4a received partial support: YAC's perceptions of receiving inappropriate financial self-disclosures and unwanted financial advice were not associated with personal-relational identity gaps. However, YAC's perceptions of receiving emphasis on divergent financial values were positively associated with personal-relational identity gaps.

Personal-Enacted Identity Gaps Model

Step one (F Change [6, 245] = 6.15, $p < .001$, R^2 change = .13) and step two (F Change [5, 240] = 12.68, $p < .001$, R^2 change = .18) of the third regression both

explained a significant amount of unique variance in personal-enacted identity gaps.

Table 4 reports the regression coefficients for step two of this model.

H3b predicted that YAC's perceptions of their parent's accommodation about finances would be negatively associated with YAC's personal-enacted identity gaps. As shown in Table 4, H3b received no support: YAC's perceptions of receiving financial-specific supportive communication and respect for divergent financial values were not associated with personal-enacted identity gaps.

H4b predicted that YAC's perceptions of their parent's nonaccommodation about finances would be positively associated with YAC's personal-enacted identity gaps. As shown in Table 4, H4b received partial support: YAC's perceptions of receiving inappropriate financial self-disclosures and unwanted financial advice were not associated with personal-enacted identity gaps. However, YAC's perceptions of receiving emphasis on divergent financial values were positively associated with personal-enacted identity gaps.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

Theoretical Contributions

Guided by CAT, this study examined how (non)accommodation behaviors when discussing financial beliefs are associated with relationship satisfaction, personal-relational identity gaps, and personal-enacted identity gaps in parent-YAC relationships. In several ways, this study's results are comparable to previous CAT research regarding topics other than financial beliefs such as religious or political beliefs (Colaner et al., 2014; Warner et al., 2021). (Non)accommodating behaviors about values were found to have significant relationships with the three outcomes in the current study. The accommodation behavior of respecting divergent values was positively associated with relationship satisfaction, while negatively associated with personal-relational identity gaps. Conversely, the nonaccommodation behavior of emphasizing divergent values was negatively associated with relationship satisfaction and positively associated with both identity gaps. An explanation for why the two (non)accommodation behaviors pertaining to communication of values were significantly associated with the outcomes may be due to the fact the current study explored a family relationship. CAT explores the idea of ingroups, and families are widely perceived as a natural example of a collective unit that presumably shares norms and values (Colaner et al., 2014). However, individuals within a family unit can have intergroup salience when they develop conflicting identities with other members of the family, making being viewed as an out-group within the family unit possible (Soliz & Rittenour, 2012).

When an individual receives behavior from family members to distinguish themselves from the group, they are more likely to experience negative feelings as an out-group member. Soliz et al.'s (2010) research examining group salience, relational satisfaction, and shared family identity between heterosexual and homosexual family members suggested that a common ingroup perception and relational satisfaction were contingent on minimizing perceptions of differences that would distinguish a family member as being part of an out-group within the family unit. Therefore, this study illustrates how a parent's choice on how to accommodate their YAC when discussing divergent values can predict the YAC's perceived relationship satisfaction. When values don't match, participants who receive respect when communicating divergent values may decrease their feelings of being different from the parent and therefore, lead to greater relationship satisfaction with the family member. Similarly, when emphasis is placed on divergent values, greater feelings of distinction and separation from the family ingroup may be more likely and lead to less relational satisfaction with that family member and a greater gap in their identity.

The results of the current study also provide insight into CAT research specifically examining underaccommodating and overaccommodating behaviors. Underaccommodation (inappropriate self-disclosure and emphasizing divergent values) is perceived when communication adjustment does not sufficiently meet a recipient's needs, while overaccommodation (giving unwanted advice) is communication that is perceived to have overadjusted and exceeded the needs of the recipient. In recent studies (Bernhold, 2024; Gasiorek & Giles, 2015), overaccommodation was reported as having less

detrimental implications for interactions and relationship quality than underaccommodation. In financial conversations between YAC and their parent, receiving unwanted advice was not significantly related to satisfaction or identity gaps. According to Gasiorek and Giles (2015), due to the general nature of overaccommodation as being viewed as too caring and concerned with the other person, the receivers might view instances of overaccommodation (receiving unwanted advice) more positively than instances when they perceive lack of caring through underaccommodation (inappropriate self-disclosure and emphasizing divergent values). Specifically in the case of financial conversations, YAC might be more lenient in their evaluations of their parent giving them unwanted advice about money if they perceive their parent's motives as well-intended and as an effort to help them manage money successfully. Therefore, this study further builds on other CAT research that overaccommodative interactions may be less negatively perceived by receivers than underaccommodative interactions.

There are several additional findings of this study that contribute to the larger body of CAT research on identity (non)accommodation. Looking first at the accommodating communication behaviors, previous research about communication of religious beliefs found that religious-specific supportive communication behaviors were positively associated with relationship satisfaction and shared family identity (Colaner et al., 2014), while this study found no significant relationship between financial-specific supportive communication and relationship satisfaction or perceived identity gaps. A possible explanation for this difference could be that participants of the current study did not report feeling their financial beliefs were very different from those of the parent they

reported on ($M = 5.39$ on the seven-point financial belief similarity scale). Therefore, instances of financial-specific communication may have fewer meaningful implications when the beliefs are similar than in the case of divergent religious beliefs. A second potential explanation for these differing results may be that the current study's participants did not think they were financially independent from their parent or parental figure. Therefore, if they are still dependent on their parent, it is likely that the YAC surveyed have low financial decision-making power and therefore, would again not have as many instances of financial-specific supportive communication with their parent.

Additionally, Warner et al. (2021) found that adults' perceptions of receiving respect from a family member when discussing divergent political values were positively associated with their shared identity with that family member. However, the adults' perceptions of receiving political-specific supportive communication were not associated with shared family identity. Since respect of divergent values was the only significant accommodating behavior, the current study supports previous research claims that respect for divergent values may be the most influential accommodation behavior (Warner et al., 2021).

Regarding the nonaccommodating behaviors, only emphasis of divergent values was significant in predicting relationship satisfaction and identity gaps. When examining adults' receptions of nonaccommodation about politics, Warner et al. (2021) found that inappropriate self-disclosure was negatively associated with shared family identity but emphasizing divergent values was not. In the current study, results showed the opposite when discussing financial beliefs as emphasizing divergent values was the only

nonaccommodating behavior that was significantly related to relationship satisfaction and perceived identity gaps. These differing results indicate there may be a substantive difference between nonaccommodating communication about money and politics. A possible explanation for inappropriate self-disclosure not being significant in the current study about financial communication could be that the average study participants likely belonged to a family of above-average socioeconomic status, and therefore, the YAC may not have experienced very uncomfortable and unsolicited information from their parent about their family finances. On the other hand, very expressive communication from another person focusing on their strong political views could be deemed as inappropriate self-disclosure and may be seen more in average conversations about politics, therefore resulting in inappropriate political self-disclosure being a detrimental nonaccommodation behavior to shared family identity.

Limitations

The contributions of the current study must be considered alongside the limitations of the study. First, as this was a cross-sectional study, the direction of the relationships surmised by the theoretical hypotheses cannot be determined. Therefore, without collecting data in a longitudinal study, it cannot be confirmed whether communication about financial values predicts relationship satisfaction and identity gaps or vice versa. Future research could sample YAC and parents over a longer period of time to provide further understanding and insight into the relationship direction of financial communication and relationship satisfaction/identity gaps.

Additionally, the current study examined only undergraduate students attending the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. A limitation regarding the sample is that, as a consequence of the general population at the flagship university, the students surveyed may be more likely to come from families of higher socioeconomic status than the median Tennessee family. Therefore, their perceptions of finances and the familial conversations about money may be different than people in lower middle to lower class families. Also, future researchers might consider studying other types of relationships and relationships at different life stages. The majority of financial concerns that this study's sample may be concerned about include student loans and budget management. However, middle-aged spouses are another group that may face different financial obligations than the current study's participants, such as saving for retirement or management of bills such as a mortgage and insurances. It is therefore an open question if the current study's findings would replicate in follow-up studies on middle-aged spouses.

Another limitation of the current study is the accommodation communication behavior of giving unwanted advice had a reliability coefficient of .66 and therefore, was below desirable. This indicates that there was inconsistency in participants' responses to this measure and the results should be interpreted with caution. Future research should explore improving the measure to increase the reliability coefficient for giving unwanted advice, such as adding additional or removing items to the current 4-item measure or investigating whether the phraseology of the current items can be adjusted to be better applicable to types of beliefs.

Finally, the current study focused specifically on two accommodative and three nonaccommodative communication behaviors. The five (non)accommodative communication behaviors are frequently identified as the core behaviors in similar studies exploring CAT and relationship satisfaction (Colaner et al., 2014; Harwood, 2000; Morgan et al., 2020). However, as Colaner et al. (2014) noted, there could be other communication constructs relevant to parent-child relationships, and future research focused on identifying additional CAT behaviors would be beneficial for communication scholars to understand.

Future Research Directions

Building on the current study findings, future researchers could investigate potential two-way interactions between the communication variables and the parent's sex. Respecting divergent values and emphasizing divergent values were the two significant (non)accommodating behaviors for the outcome variables in the current study. Current participants only reported on one parent, but asking about experiences discussing finances with both parents could add more insight into the associations between financial communication and perceived relational satisfaction and identity gaps. Testing whether the associations between the communication variables and the three outcome variables are stronger when participants are reporting on a parent of one sex (e.g., the father) versus a parent of the other sex (e.g., the mother) could further add to our understanding of communication accommodation and parent-YAC relationship dynamics. Another two-way interaction that could be explored involves the communication variables and perceived socioeconomic status. Participants in the current study generally reported being

from upper-middle class backgrounds. Similar to the parent's sex, investigating whether the associations between financial (non)accommodation and the outcome variables are similar or different in magnitude depending on the socioeconomic status of participants' families would be another worthwhile endeavor.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSIONS

The current study focused on financial communication within parent-YAC relationships. Using the CAT framework, the associations between a YAC's perception of their parent's (non)accommodation behaviors when discussing finances and their relationship satisfaction and identity gaps were examined. Two (non)accommodation behaviors were significantly associated with the outcome variables investigated. When YAC perceived their parent as respecting their divergent values, they experienced high relationship satisfaction with that parent and low personal-relational identity gaps. Additionally, when YAC perceived their parent as emphasizing divergent values, they experienced low relationship satisfaction with that parent and high personal-relational and personal-enacted identity gaps. Therefore, this study suggests the (non)accommodating behaviors around values may be the most relevant during financial communication on one's relationship satisfaction and identity gaps. Examining accommodating communication specifically about money expands upon the context areas applicable to CAT research. Additionally, these results further build on established aspects of CAT including in-group/outgroup dynamics and over- and underaccommodation.

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APPENDIX

Table 1

Bivariate Correlations

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Perceived Financial Similarity (1)	1										
Participant Age (2)	-.08	1									
Perceived Socioeconomic Status (3)	.36***	-.07	1								
Financial-Specific Supportive Communication (4)	.40***	.04	.23***	1							
Respecting Divergent Values (5)	.37***	.08	.19**	.81***	1						
Inappropriate Self-Disclosure (6)	-.35***	.09	-.28***	-.47***	-.35***	1					
Emphasizing Divergent Values (7)	-.41***	.11	-.18**	-.62***	-.59***	.66***	1				

Table 1 Continued

Unwanted Advice (8)	.15*	-.09	.14*	-.18**	-.18**	.12	.31***	1			
Personal-Relational Identity Gap (9)	-.38***	-.02	-.21***	-.51***	-.55***	.39***	.52***	.09	1		
Personal-Enacted Identity Gap (10)	-.32***	-.004	-.20**	-.48***	-.47***	.34***	.45***	.04	.78***	1	
Relationship Satisfaction (11)	.38***	-.01	.28***	.54***	.55***	-.37***	-.46***	-.01	-.62***	-.64***	1

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

Table 2

Regression Coefficients for Step Two the Relational Satisfaction Model

	<i>b</i>	<i>SE b</i>	β	<i>p</i>
Participant Sex (0 = <i>male</i> , 1 = <i>female</i>)	-0.13	0.12	-.06	.29
Participant Age	-0.002	0.05	-.002	.97
Participant Ethnicity (0 = <i>not European</i> <i>American</i> , 1 = <i>European</i> <i>American</i>)	-0.22	0.12	-.10	.06
Parent Sex (0 = <i>male</i>, 1 = <i>female</i>)	0.24	0.12	.11	.04
Perceived Socioeconomic Status of Family	0.12	0.04	.15	.01
Financial Similarity	0.09	0.06	.09	.12
Financial- Specific Supportive Communication	0.11	0.09	.12	.22
Respecting Divergent Values	0.29	0.09	.28	.002
Inappropriate Self-Disclosure	-0.03	0.05	-.04	.61
Emphasizing Divergent Values	-0.18	0.07	-.21	.02
Unwanted Advice	0.11	0.06	.10	.07

Note. Significant regression coefficients appear in bold font.

Table 3

Regression Coefficients for Step Two the Personal-Relational Identity Gaps Model

	<i>b</i>	<i>SE b</i>	β	<i>p</i>
Participant Sex (0 = <i>male</i> , 1 = <i>female</i>)	-0.10	0.11	-.05	.38
Participant Age	-0.03	0.04	-.04	.49
Participant Ethnicity (0 = <i>not European</i> <i>American</i> , 1 = <i>European</i> <i>American</i>)	0.19	0.10	.10	.07
Parent Sex (0 = <i>male</i> , 1 = <i>female</i>)	0.10	0.10	.05	.35
Perceived Socioeconomic Status of Family	-0.03	0.04	-.04	.46
Financial Similarity	-0.09	0.05	-.10	.10
Financial- Specific Supportive Communication	0.05	0.08	.06	.51
Respecting Divergent Values	-0.34	0.08	-.38	< .001
Inappropriate Self-Disclosure	0.07	0.04	.12	.09
Emphasizing Divergent Values	0.18	0.07	.23	.008
Unwanted Advice	-0.02	0.05	-.02	.72

Note. Significant regression coefficients appear in bold font.

Table 4

Regression Coefficients for Step Two of the Personal-Enacted Identity Gaps Model

	<i>b</i>	<i>SE b</i>	β	<i>p</i>
Participant Sex (0 = <i>male</i> , 1 = <i>female</i>)	-0.28	0.15	-.11	.05
Participant Age	-0.04	0.05	-.04	.44
Participant Ethnicity (0 = not European American, 1 = European American)	0.35	0.14	.14	.01
Parent Sex (0 = <i>male</i> , 1 = <i>female</i>)	0.01	0.14	.003	.95
Perceived Socioeconomic Status of Family	-0.07	0.05	-.08	.18
Financial Similarity	-0.07	0.07	-.06	.34
Financial- Specific Supportive Communication	-0.13	0.11	-.12	.24
Respecting Divergent Values	-0.19	0.11	-.17	.08
Inappropriate Self-Disclosure	0.04	0.06	.05	.51
Emphasizing Divergent Values	0.24	0.09	.25	.01
Unwanted Advice	-0.08	0.07	-.07	.24

Note. Significant regression coefficients appear in bold font.

VITA

Keely M. Algya was born in Plattsmouth, Nebraska. She completed her undergraduate degrees in Communication Studies and International Studies in 2020 from the University of Nebraska, Omaha. Upon graduation, she moved and started graduate school at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville in 2021. She graduated with her Master of Science in Communication and Information in May 2024. Keely is an Education and Programming Coordinator for a global nonprofit organization focused on empowering and educating women leaders around the world.