

FAMILY COMMUNICATION PATTERNS, PARENTAL MODELING, AND THE
INTERGENERATIONAL TRANSMISSION OF CONFIRMATION TO
ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS

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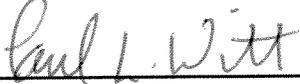
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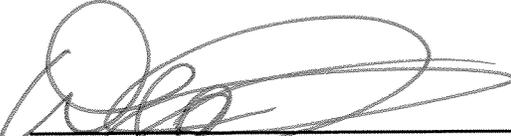
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Family Communication Patterns, Parental Modeling, and the
Intergenerational Transmission of Confirmation to
Romantic Relationships

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Using Koerner and Fitzpatrick's (2002a) family communication patterns (FCPs) theory and Bandura's (1973) social learning theory, this study explored FCPs (i.e., conversation and conformity orientations) and (inter)parental confirmation as predictors of young adults' confirmation (i.e., acceptance and challenge) in their romantic relationships. Participants included 181 young adults from intact families who completed online questionnaires concerning their perceptions of their family and romantic relationships, including family conversation and conformity, interparental confirmation, parental challenge and acceptance, and romantic partner challenge and acceptance. Results indicated that family conformity orientation was negatively associated with communicating acceptance to a romantic partner, while family conversation orientation was positively associated with both accepting and challenging one's romantic partner. A Hotelling's t-test and partial correlations for (inter)parental confirmation and enacted romantic partner confirmation revealed that young adults' parents may, in fact, serve as influential examples of how to validate and acknowledge a romantic partner's perspective during interpersonal conversations. Furthermore, the results offer evidence that sex differences may exist when considering which parent is more influential in modeling confirming behavior for sons and daughters. Among the more important implications of this study is the finding that

FCPs and (inter)parental confirmation were predictive of self-to-partner confirmation even after controlling for the reciprocity effect that may already exist within the romantic relationship.

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Family Communication Patterns, Parental Modeling, and the Intergenerational Transmission of
Confirmation to Romantic Relationships

Over the past several decades, scholars have devoted increased attention to the communication behaviors that enhance relational quality in romantic relationships, including relational maintenance behaviors (Fowler, Pearson, & Beck, 2010; Rabby, 2007), humor (Hall, 2013), expressions of commitment (Weigel, Brown, & O’Riordan, 2011) and nonverbal immediacy (Guerrero, 1997; Myers & Ferry, 2001), to name a few. One such behavior that is likely to enhance the quality of both dating and marital relationships is confirmation. Defined as “the degree to which messages validate another as unique, valuable, and worthy of respect” (Dailey, 2006, p. 436), confirmation is positively associated with a myriad of relational outcomes, as individuals have a primary need to be accepted and challenged by others in order to achieve a strong sense of global self-worth, mental health, and well-being (Buber, 1965; Ellis, 2002; Laing, 1961; Sieburg, 1975). Confirmation has been studied in a variety of relational contexts, including teacher-student (Ellis, 2000), healthcare (Dangott, Thornton, & Page, 1979), parent-child (Dailey, 2006), and romantic relationships (Dailey, Romo, & Thompson, 2011). Despite what scholars know about confirmation, however, questions remain regarding how individuals learn (dis)confirming behaviors and why they choose (or choose not to) enact these behaviors in their romantic relationships. Since confirmation is such a powerful behavior within interpersonal relationships, approaching these unanswered questions will enhance our theoretical understanding of why some romantic couples are more satisfied and closer than others.

The family of origin plays a prominent role during the developmental years of an individual’s childhood, and it continues to do so throughout adolescence and into adulthood. Due to this inherent influence, scholars have examined the effects of family communication patterns

(FCPs) on a myriad of behavioral, information processing, and psychosocial outcomes, including aggression, family conflict, cognitive complexity, political identity, physical health, and self-esteem, to name a few (Schrodt, Witt, & Messersmith, 2008). Likewise, scholars have examined social modeling in parent-child relationships (for a review, see Kunkel, Hummert, & Dennis, 2006), a process that may also account for the degree to which individuals enact certain behaviors within their romantic relationships. As Bandura (1973) posited, “human behavior is to a large extent socially transmitted, either deliberately or inadvertently, through the behavioral examples provided by influential models” (p. 68). Taken together, then, both FCP and social modeling theories suggest that the family of origin plays a meaningful role in how individuals learn to communicate in their interpersonal relationships outside of the family. Thus, it stands to reason that FCPs and parental modeling should be associated with the amount of confirming behavior people enact in their romantic relationships.

To investigate these issues, the primary purpose of this study was to compare the unique and combined contributions of FCPs and (inter)parental confirmation to young adults’ use of confirmation in their romantic relationships.

Theoretical Warrant

Family Communication Patterns Theory and Young Adult Children’s Confirmation

Family communication patterns (FCP) and their associations with familial and individual behaviors have been widely studied for several decades, as the family system serves as the primary socialization agent for children and influences behavior long after children have left home (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 1997). Within the family of origin, cognitive orientations (i.e., schemas) of how family members should interact emerge as a function of parent-child interaction and the desire to achieve a shared social reality which, in turn, shapes how individuals perceive

their social environment and communicate within and outside of the family (Fitzpatrick & Ritchie, 1994).

FCP theory was originally advanced by McLeod and Chaffee (1972, 1973) to describe how families develop and maintain relatively stable and predictable ways of communicating with one another. McLeod and Chaffee based their explanation of family communication on the cognitive theory of coorientation. *Coorientation* refers to “two or more persons focusing on and evaluating the same object in their social or material environment” (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002b, p. 52). When individuals are aware of their shared focus, then each person has two different cognitions: a personal evaluation of the object, and a perception of how others evaluate the object. These two cognitions determine the equivalence of the combined evaluations of the object (i.e., agreement); however, dyads and families do not necessarily always share the same perception of the objects in their social world, nor is agreement always necessary to create a shared social reality. For example, a son and his father may both be cooriented toward a sign that reads “free puppies.” The son sees this as an opportunity to adopt a pet, whereas the father sees the outcome of a free puppy as being a major financial undertaking. Although father and son may disagree about the opportunity that the sign presents, if they accurately perceive each other’s perspective on the sign, then the accuracy of their perceptions reflects a part of their shared social reality.

According to McLeod and Chaffee (1972, 1973), individuals can achieve a shared reality in two distinct, but interrelated ways. First, the process of *socio-orientation* emphasizes the relationships between family members. Families who are perceived as high in this orientation rely on other members’ evaluations to influence their own interpretations. In light of the example of the son and father, the son may be inclined to agree with his father’s point of view if he is

from a high socio-oriented family because of the importance of parental authority and hierarchy in family decision-making. Second, the process of *concept-orientation* focuses more on the actual topic being discussed and emphasizes different family members' viewpoints and ideas. Families who are perceived as high in this orientation will discuss varying viewpoints of the object and arrive at some point of agreement or compromise. From this perspective, the son and father might bring up the possibility of adopting a puppy in a family discussion and talk about the positives and negatives associated with this kind of undertaking. McLeod and Chaffee were specifically interested in examining how parents socialize their children to process information within mass media messages; however, scholars soon realized that these orientations that shape the social reality of a family extend into a variety of contexts outside of the family.

Families create social realities through their interactions with one another and therefore develop schemas of understanding that members use to produce and interpret messages (Fitzpatrick & Ritchie, 1994; Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002a). These family schemata are deeply engrained, cognitive structures that often influence the intergenerational transmission of communicative behaviors, such as social withdrawal, relational maintenance, and reticence from parents to their children (Fitzpatrick, Marshall, Leutwiler, & Kremer, 1996; Fowler et al., 2010; Kelly et al., 2002). Despite the value of McLeod and Chaffee's (1972, 1973) framework, however, Ritchie (1990, 1991) reconceptualized the two orientations to make them more closely align with the behavioral indicators of these schemas in family interactions. First, *conversation orientation* (i.e., concept-orientation) is "the degree to which families create a climate in which all family members are encouraged to participate in an unrestrained interaction about a wide array of topics" (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002a, p. 85). Families with a high conversation orientation engage in a lot of interaction and sharing of individual activities, thoughts, and

feelings with one another. Families low in conversation orientation, conversely, do not consider open and frequent exchanges of ideas, opinions, and beliefs to be of any value or to serve any function within the family.

Second, *conformity* orientation (i.e., socio-orientation) is “the degree to which family communication stresses a climate of homogeneity of attitudes, values and beliefs” (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002a, p. 85). Families high in this orientation value a hierarchical family structure and place family interests before those of individual family members. High-conformity families also create an environment where children are expected to obey parental authority. Children from these families often depend on their parents to define and interpret situations for them, which may consequently inhibit them from developing decision-making skills (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002a). Conversely, children from low conformity-oriented families are often free to develop their own opinions and views, which may help in personal growth in decision-making throughout their life. Families with a low conformity-orientation also consider relationships outside of the family to be equally as important as family relationships.

In addition to the unique associations that both orientations have with communication behaviors in families, conformity and conversation orientations are often dependent on one another and may interact to describe four family types (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 1996). First, *consensual* families are high in conversation and conformity, as their communication is characterized by a tension to maintain harmony, interdependence, and hierarchy within the family while also having an interest in open communication to explore new ideas. Young adult children from this type of family understand the importance of communicating with others, but will most likely adopt many of their parents’ values and beliefs on important issues. Second, *pluralistic* families are high in conversation and low in conformity, where communication

includes open, unconstrained discussions that involve all family members. Young adult children who come from this family of origin are more competent communicators, as they are better equipped to make their own decisions and to engage in appropriate and effective conversations due to familial openness and the sharing of individual thoughts and feelings with one another (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 1997). Third, *protective* families are low in conversation and high in conformity, as there is a heavy emphasis on obedience to parental authority and little concern for open communication. Due to there being little value placed on practicing communication skills within this type of family, young adult children may be less inclined to value interpersonal conversations. Finally, *laissez-faire* families are low in conversation and conformity, and they have very few and uninvolved interactions among family members. Because members from this type of family are emotionally divorced from one another and engage in very little interaction overall, the climate, in turn, may inhibit the development of important communication skills in these young adult children (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 1996; e.g., information processing, decision making, conflict management skills).

In light of previous evidence regarding FCPs and communicative behaviors, one might suspect that the family communication environment in which individuals were raised may influence the extent to which they display confirming behavior in their romantic relationships. In fact, conversation-oriented families have fared well regarding positive outcomes of interpersonal behavior in several studies. In their meta-analytical review of the FCP literature, for example, Schrodt et al. (2008) concluded that young adult children from families high in conversation orientation are more competent and flexible communicators in a variety of contexts, including the degree to which they are sociable (Huang, 1999) and possess levels of emotional intelligence (Keaten & Kelly, 2008), as well as the degree to which they use self-disclosure

(Huang, 1999), relational maintenance behaviors, and other skillful behaviors to maintain their romantic relationships and friendships (Fowler et al., 2010; Koesten, 2004; Ledbetter, 2009).

On the other hand, most of the empirical evidence regarding conformity orientation speaks to the deleterious effects that such an orientation has on behavioral outcomes in interpersonal relationships. For example, Koerner and Cvancara (2002) found that conformity-oriented family members were more self-oriented than other-oriented during interpersonal conversations. This finding suggests that individuals who are more concerned about themselves may be less apt to use confirming behavior with their romantic partner, given that confirmation communicates a sincere and genuine interest in the other person's perspective. Likewise, Koerner and Fitzpatrick (2002c) examined the influence of FCPs on the conflict behaviors of young adult children in their romantic relationships and reported a positive correlation between engaging in mutually negative behaviors with a romantic partner and conformity orientation within the individual's family of origin. Finally, Huang (1999) found a positive correlation between conformity and self-monitoring, shyness, and low self-esteem, all of which may inhibit an individual from communicating with a romantic partner in confirming ways.

Confirmation Theory

Confirmation communicates a willingness to be interconnected with another individual (Cissna & Sieburg, 1981). Confirmation theorists have suggested that individuals have an underlying need to be verified by others in order to achieve personal and relational development (Dailey, 2006). In fact, confirming behavior is arguably the greatest single factor in facilitating healthy mental development and stability, as confirming messages help address individuals' needs to validate and legitimize their perspectives (Watzlawick, Beavin, & Jackson, 1967).

Although confirming behaviors show a positive regard for the other, disconfirming messages (a) communicate a sense of superiority, (b) inhibit the degree to which an individual feels valued as a person, and (c) may influence individuals to value themselves to a lesser degree (Dailey, 2006; Ellis, 2002). According to Sieburg (1985), confirming responses include recognizing, acknowledging, and endorsing the other individual, whereby an individual is treated as unique, valuable, and worthy of respect. Disconfirming behaviors, on the other hand, prompt indifferent, impervious, and disqualifying responses that negate an individual's feelings and ideas. Although scholars have measured the frequencies of these different responses in relationships (e.g., Garvin & Kennedy, 1986), it is more important to focus on how each response conveys a degree of confirmation within various relationships. For example, a father may recognize that his son is in the room by always maintaining eye contact with him, but he may belittle him with disqualifying responses that elicit a higher degree of disconfirmation within their relationship. Thus, confirmation can be conceptualized as occurring on a continuum whereby each response communicates a varying degree of (dis)confirmation.

Early confirmation theorists started to examine this behavior more than five decades ago, and they argued that confirmation is the most significant feature of human interaction, as without it, individuals cannot realize their true identity (Buber, 1957, 1965; Laing, 1961; Sieburg, 1975). Cissna and Sieburg (1981) further developed confirmation theory by emphasizing the importance of the individual feeling endorsed, acknowledged, and recognized. Although these scholars advanced our understanding of confirmation theory, Ellis (2002) identified a dearth of research that empirically tested the extent to which individuals feel (dis)confirmed by others based on the behaviors that had been previously identified. Therefore, Ellis developed and validated a behavior-oriented, 28-item instrument that measured the extent to which children feel confirmed

by their parents (the Parent Confirmation Behavior Indicator scale or PCBI). Since the creation of this instrument, scholars have been able to more accurately measure perceptions of confirmation in a variety of communication contexts, including confirmation, affection, and mental well-being in parent-child relationships (Schrodt, Ledbetter, & Ohrt, 2007), relational satisfaction in both divorced and intact families (Schrodt & Ledbetter, 2012), and discussions of weight management (Dailey, McCracken, & Romo, 2011).

Although confirmation is often considered synonymous with acceptance and positive regard, Buber (1965) argued that confirmation also entails pushing the other to achieve a greater potential (Dailey, 2010). In other words, relational partners can simultaneously accept and challenge one another to reach an enhanced understanding of themselves and their capability for success. In order to feel fully confirmed, it could be argued that acceptance must exist in the presence of challenge and vice versa. For example, a romantic partner who demonstrates positive regard by itself may enable positive self-evaluations of his/her romantic partner, but the nonexistence of challenge may inhibit personal growth. Using this line of reasoning, then, Dailey explicated two components of confirmation. First, *acceptance* is conceptualized as unconditional positive regard (e.g., warmth, genuine listening, or affection perceived during interactions). Second, *challenge* is conceptualized as behaviors that push or test the other's existing abilities and skills to succeed (e.g., asking questions, encouragement to maintain physical health, or channeling negative emotions into more positive actions). Based on these two components, Dailey found that children who experience greater confirmation from their parents learn that they are valued and respected and are also encouraged to explore and debate their viewpoints and emotions.

Confirmation has also been linked to adolescent openness with parents (Dailey, 2006), individual well-being (Reis, Sheldon, Gable, Roscoe, & Ryan, 2000; Sieburg, 1975), marital satisfaction (Gottman, 1994), intimacy in relationships (Reis, Clark, & Holmes, 2004), weight management (Dailey et al., 2011), and conceptions of self (Dailey, 2010). In fact, some scholars have argued that confirmation may be the greatest single factor ensuring mental development and stability (Watzlawick et al., 1967). This behavior allows and encourages a transactional continuum of competent communication between speakers so as to develop further understanding of themselves, as well as their relationships. Even though interpersonal communication scholars have devoted increased attention to confirmation within relationships, further research is warranted so as to extend our theoretical understanding of *why* some individuals confirm their romantic partners while others do not. In other words, although scholars know how important confirmation is to the mental and social development of young adult children, questions remain regarding how young adults learn (or fail to learn) to communicate in confirming ways with their romantic partners. Furthermore, identifying potential correlates of this influential behavior, such as the communication environment of an individual's family of origin, may allow scholars to understand why some romantic couples are more satisfied and closer than others.

Nearly two decades ago, Noller (1995) posited that "how persons interact in their interpersonal relationships depends to a large extent on how they have learned to communicate in their families of origin" (p. 76). Given that interpersonal and family communication scholars have devoted a great deal of attention to the association between FCPs and interpersonal relationships inside and outside of the family, this study will test the degree to which both orientations are predictive of young adults' confirmation in their romantic relationships. Due to

substantial evidence that families high in conversation orientation are more competent and flexible communicators (Schrodt et al., 2008), it could be argued that these individuals are more willing and able to demonstrate confirming behaviors within their romantic relationship.

Although the direct effects of conformity orientation on communicative skills are less clear, family communication scholars have reported a small to moderate inverse association between conversation and conformity orientations (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002b). If conversation orientations are positively associated with confirming behaviors and inversely associated with conformity orientations, then it stands to reason that conformity orientations may be inversely associated with romantic partners' confirming behaviors. Thus, the following hypotheses were advanced to test this line of reasoning:

H1: Family conversation orientation positively predicts the frequency with which young adult children communicate in confirming ways to their romantic partner.

H2: Family conformity orientation negatively predicts the frequency with which young adult children communicate in confirming ways to their romantic partner.

Moreover, scholars have indicated that family conversation and conformity orientations often interact with one another so that the effects of one orientation often depend on levels of the other orientation (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002b; Schrodt et al., 2008). As noted earlier, four types of families are created out of the interactions from these two orientations, and there are likely systematic differences in young adult children's reports of confirmation in their romantic relationship as a function of membership in one of the four family types. Thus, a third hypothesis was advanced:

H3: Family conversation and conformity orientations interact to predict young adult children's confirmation in their romantic relationships, such that conformity orientation will moderate the positive association between conversation orientation and self-to-partner acceptance and challenge.

Parental Modeling and Young Adult Children's Confirmation

A second, but equally important goal of this study was to explore the degree to which young adults' confirmation in their romantic relationships varied as a function of parental modeling. Indeed, young adult children may likely model the (dis)confirming behaviors of their parents as they observe interparental confirmation (i.e., how confirming their parents are to each other) and the degree to which their parents confirm them as children. Many social skills consist of learned behaviors and, based on previous research, the earliest context in which individuals learn these communication skills is within their family of origin (e.g., Burke, Woszidlo, & Segrin, 2013; Burleson, Delia, & Applegate, 1992; Burleson & Kunkel, 2002). In fact, there is a strong connection between communication that children observe in the family and children's social skills development (Burleson et al., 1992). Consequently, social learning theory (SLT) (Bandura, 1973, 1986) offers a practical framework for understanding how communicative behaviors are first learned in the family of origin. According to Bandura (1973), "human behavior is to a large extent socially transmitted, either deliberately or inadvertently, through the behavioral examples provided by influential models" (p. 68).

In families, SLT contends that children learn to communicate, in part, by watching their parents interact as they develop into young adults (Bandura, 1986). These communication behaviors are learned through four sub-processes of observational learning (Bandura, 1973). First, *attentional learning* occurs when the individual attends to the behavior of another. This process of attentional learning occurs regardless of whether or not the individual views the social model as a valued and authoritative individual. That being said, one might reason that a child will be more heavily influenced to pay attention to his/her parents' behavior (than say, a sibling's behavior) because of the parents' hierarchical role within the family. For example, a son may

observe his father asking his mother about her day at work and learn to model similar kinds of thoughtful behaviors because he considers his father a valued, authoritative figure. Second, the *retention process* occurs when the individual acquires and stores the observed behavior as an internal guide for imitative actions and mental rehearsal. In light of the previous example, the son may store his observations of the father's behavior as something that he should do when he is in a romantic relationship. In the *motor reproduction process*, the individual engages in the behavioral enactment of what he/she has learned. Continuing with this example, the son may have observed his father confirming his mother by demonstrating active listening, maintaining meaningful eye contact when they are engaged in conversation, and asking her opinions on important issues, and he may consequently combine these sets of behavior to form a model to pattern his behavior after. Finally, the *reinforcement and motivational processes* include the decision to engage in overt performance of the modeled behavior. A concept worth noting that influences, to an extent, whether or not individuals choose to imitate behaviors of others is that of *self-efficacy*, which is an individuals' confidence in their ability to effectively produce the observed behaviors (Bandura, 1986). If, for example, the son sees his father's confirming behavior toward his mother as a rewarding experience due to their relational satisfaction and believes that he can enact this same behavior in an effective and appropriate manner, then it stands to reason that he will consider this model as having a high-function value for him.

Even though SLT has been used most often in research that examines the intergenerational transmission of familial aggression (e.g., Aloia & Solomon, 2013; Durtschi, Cui, Donnellan, Lorenz, & Conger, 2010; Weber & Patterson, 1997), scholars have recently begun to examine the intergenerational transmission of other communication behaviors, such as social skills in children (e.g., Burlison & Kunkel, 2002; Gardner & Cutrona, 2004). For

example, Taylor and Segrin (2010) tested the degree to which young adults' perceptions of parental gender roles and conflict styles were predictive of their own gender roles and conflict styles. They found that parental gender roles and conflicts styles were intergenerationally transmitted from both parents to their young adult children, and that these beliefs in young adult children, in turn, were predictive of their relational locus of control and psychological distress (i.e., depressive symptoms). Specifically, young adults who held traditional gender roles and practiced distributive conflict management styles (including threats and coercion) reported having a more external relational locus of control, whereas young adults who held egalitarian gender roles and practiced integrative conflict management styles reported a more internal relational locus of control (i.e., a form of self-efficacy). When their findings are interpreted in light of the present study, one might expect young adults who witness their parents being confirming with each other to, in turn, be confirming in their own romantic relationships. Thus, the following hypothesis was advanced to test this line of reasoning:

H4: Interparental confirmation is positively associated with the frequency with which young adult children communicate in confirming ways to their romantic partner.

Not only might children observe interparental (dis)confirmation within the family environment, but they may also experience greater or lesser degrees of (dis)confirmation in their own relationships with each parent. Given SLT and previous research on the intergenerational transmission of communication behaviors, one might reason that the amount of (dis)confirming behavior children experience from their parents may be associated with the degree to which they display these behaviors in their future romantic relationships. Despite this line of reasoning, however, there is increasing evidence that mothers and fathers may parent their sons and daughters differently based on gender roles, development, and identification (Bussey & Bandura, 1999). Horan, Houser, and Cowan (2007) found that mothers communicate significantly more

feminine messages to children, regardless of sex, whereas fathers communicated significantly more masculine messages to their sons. In other words, a father may communicate with his son in *less* confirming ways so as to appear more masculine, whereas he may communicate with his daughter in more confirming ways so as to encourage greater levels of closeness. In Ellis's (2002) empirical validation of the PCBI, she found that although sons' and daughters' perceptions of global self-worth were associated with both parents' confirmation behaviors, parental confirmation was differentially associated with other dimensions of both sons' and daughters' self-images. For example, fathers' confirming behavior was more strongly related to sons' perceptions of their own intellectual abilities than to daughters' perceptions of their intellectual abilities. Likewise, fathers' confirming behavior was more strongly associated with daughters' perceptions of their own appearance than was mothers' confirming behavior.

Despite potential differences in the unique and combined contributions that parental confirmation might make to the frequency with which young adults communicate in confirming ways to their romantic partners, researchers have yet to explore similarities and differences in cross-sex and same-sex parent-child interactions. Anecdotally, some individuals believe that insight about a romantic partner can be gleaned by observing how he or she interacts with the opposite-sex parent. Nevertheless, this speculation has not yet received empirical attention. Given no previous evidence to advance a hypothesis, the following research question explored how biological sex differences may influence the social modeling of confirmation in parent-child relationships:

RQ1: Is parental confirmation from the opposite-sex parent a stronger predictor of the frequency with which young adult children communicate in confirming ways to their romantic partner than parental confirmation from the same-sex parent?

Of course, the degree to which a young adult confirms his or her romantic partner may also vary as a function of reciprocity within the romantic relationship. In other forms of communication inquiry, including self-disclosure research, scholars have identified a norm of reciprocity (Jiang, Bazarova, & Hancock, 2013). Specifically, when an individual self-discloses information in a relationship, the other individual may feel obligated to self-disclose something of equal importance in return due to an imbalance of known information between the parties involved. Likewise, Rubin's (1975) theory of reciprocity supplements this norm. He posited that when people are uncertain about the appropriate response to a behavior, they use their partners' behaviors as a model from which to guide their response.

Although researchers have yet to examine the norm of reciprocity in the context of confirming behavior, this study will control for this possibility when exploring whether or not parents' confirmation is associated with young adult children's own confirmation in their romantic relationships. Thus, a second research question was advanced to explore this issue of reciprocity in confirming behavior:

RQ2: After controlling for their romantic partner's confirmation, is parental confirmation associated with the frequency with which young adult children communicate in confirming ways to their romantic partner?

The final purpose of this study was to consider both the unique and combined contributions of FCPs and parents' confirmation to young adults' use of confirmation in their romantic relationships. According to FCP theory, young adult children who come from families who are high in conversation and low in conformity (i.e., pluralistic families) will be better equipped to use prosocial behaviors (e.g., confirmation) to strengthen their romantic relationships. Indeed, Koerner and Fitzpatrick's (2002c) research linking FCPs to young adults' conflict behaviors in their romantic relationships supports this line of reasoning. Additionally, if

the intergenerational transmission of communication behaviors applies to the use of confirming behavior, then the frequency with which a young adult child communicates in confirming ways should be further enhanced when that child witnesses his or her parents communicating in confirming ways to each other. Taken together, one or both of these independent variables (i.e., FCP orientations and perceived confirmation within the family) should predict young adults' reports of confirmation in their romantic relationship above and beyond levels of confirmation that can be explained by the norm of reciprocity. Hence, a final hypothesis was advanced to test this line of reasoning:

H5: After controlling for their romantic partner's confirmation, a linear combination of family communication patterns (i.e., conversation and conformity orientations) and interparental confirmation will positively predict the frequency with which young adult children communicate in confirming ways to their romantic partner.

Method

Participants

Participants included 181 young adult children from intact families¹ with a mean age of 20.4 years ($SD = 3.94$). More than half of the participants were female ($n = 114$, 63%) and most were Caucasian ($n = 157$, 86.7%), although 5% ($n = 9$) were Hispanic, 4.4% ($n = 8$) were African American, 1.7% ($n = 3$) were Native American, .6% were Asian ($n = 1$), and 1.7% ($n = 3$) were classified as "Other." Most of the participants (67%) were in a serious romantic relationship (i.e., reported being in love and having discussed marriage), although 28% were in a casual romantic relationship (i.e., reported having an emotional attachment but not in love), and 4% were married or engaged to be married. Likewise, participants reported an average length of the relationship of 23.3 months ($SD = 41.10$). Finally, participants reported that their parents had been married an average of 25 years ($SD = 4.78$).

Procedures

Participation was solicited from young adult students at a southwestern private university. Upon securing human subjects approval, student volunteers who were at least 18 years of age and currently in a romantic relationship completed an online survey. At the instructors' discretion, students were awarded minimal course credit (less than 2%) for their participation in the research. The questionnaire took approximately 30-45 minutes to complete.

Measures

Family communication patterns. Young adult children's reports of FCPs were operationalized using the Revised Family Communication Patterns (RFCP) instrument (Fitzpatrick & Ritchie, 1994; Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002b). The RFCP is comprised of 26 statements asking participants to evaluate the extent to which their family communication patterns reflect *conversation orientation* (15 items; e.g., "I can tell my parents almost anything") and *conformity orientation* (11 items; e.g., "When I am home, I am expected to obey my parents' rules") (see Appendix). Participants reported their level of agreement with each statement using a 7-point Likert scale that ranged from (1) *Strongly disagree* to (7) *Strongly agree*, with higher scores representing higher conversation and conformity orientations. The validity and reliability of the RFCP is well-established through several decades of previous research (see Schrodt et al., 2008). In this study, the RFCP produced strong internal reliability for both conversation ($\alpha = .92$) and conformity ($\alpha = .82$) orientations.

Parental, interparental, and romantic partner confirmation. Parental, interparental, and romantic partner confirmation (i.e., acceptance and challenge) were measured using modified versions of the Parent Confirmation Behavior Indicator scale (PCBI; Ellis, 2002), as well as Dailey's (2008) Parental Challenge Questionnaire (PCQ). Ellis (2002) provided evidence

of strong internal reliability for the PCBI, with previous alpha coefficients of .95 for both mothers and fathers. The original PCBI scale consists of 28 items that test the extent to which respondents feel their parents confirmed them and communicated to them that they are valuable, unique human beings (e.g., “My mother gives me clear, direct responses to me during conversations”). To help reduce respondent fatigue, the original measure was modified. To assess interparental confirmation, participants reported on perceived mother-to-father confirmation and father-to-mother confirmation using an abridged, 16-item global version of the PCBI (e.g., “My father makes statements that communicate to my mother that she is a unique, valuable human being” and “My mother demonstrates that she is genuinely listening when my father is speaking about issues important to him.”). This modified version of the PCBI produced excellent internal reliability for perceptions of both mother-to-father confirmation ($\alpha = .93$) and father-to-mother confirmation ($\alpha = .93$).

To assess confirmation (i.e., acceptance and challenge) in parent-child and romantic relationships, participants reported on their mother’s and father’s confirmation, their romantic partner’s confirmation, and own confirmation toward their romantic partner using an abridged, 18-item version of the PCBI (e.g., for acceptance, “I give my romantic partner undivided attention when engaged in private conversations.”) and an abridged, 12-item version of the PCQ (e.g., for challenge, “My partner pushes me to think about other people’s perspectives”). Responses to each measure were solicited using a 7-point Likert scale that ranges from (1) *Strongly disagree* to (7) *Strongly agree*, with higher scores representing greater degrees of acceptance and challenge within the participants’ parent-child and romantic relationships.

In previous research on parental challenge, Dailey’s (2008) PCQ demonstrated high reliability for both the total sample ($\alpha = .95$) and when assessed separately for mothers ($\alpha = .95$) and fathers

($\alpha = .96$). The original PCQ scale consists of 30 items that test the extent to which respondents feel that their parents pushed and stimulated them through interactions that tested, changed, or advanced their abilities. To help reduce respondent fatigue, the original measure was modified from 30 items to 12 items for each scale and reworded to assess parent-child, romantic partner-to-self, and self-to-romantic partner challenge. In this study, the modified measures of confirmation produced strong internal reliability estimates for mothers' ($\alpha = .94$) and fathers' ($\alpha = .94$) acceptance, partner-to-self acceptance ($\alpha = .93$), and self-to-partner acceptance ($\alpha = .91$), as well as for mothers' ($\alpha = .91$) and fathers' ($\alpha = .91$) challenge, partner-to-self challenge ($\alpha = .87$), and self-to-partner challenge ($\alpha = .87$).

Data Analysis

Hypotheses 1, 2, and 4 were tested using Pearson's product-moment correlations. RQ1 was addressed using Hotelling's t-test for correlated correlations, and RQ2 was addressed using partial correlations. H3 and H5 were tested using hierarchical regression analyses. For H3, conversation and conformity orientations were entered at step one as predictors of young adults' confirmation in their romantic relationship, followed by the interaction term at step two. For H5, perceptions of romantic partner confirmation were entered at step one, followed by the conditional effects of conversation orientation, conformity orientation, their interaction term, and interparental confirmation at step two, as predictors of young adults' confirmation in their romantic relationship.

Results

Descriptive statistics, including means, standard deviations, and Pearson's product-moment correlations, for all variables in this study are reported in Table 1.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics and Pearson Product-Moment Correlations for All Variables (N = 181)

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Conversation orientation	5.06	1.05	--							
2. Conformity orientation	3.96	1.02	-.35**	--						
3. F to M Confirmation	5.29	1.06	.50**	-.18*	--					
4. M to F Confirmation	5.32	1.06	.47**	-.24**	.68**	--				
5. S to P Acceptance	5.80	0.77	.31**	-.28**	.41**	.56**	--			
6. S to P Challenge	5.69	0.78	.42**	-.04	.30**	.42**	.54**	--		
7. P to S Acceptance	5.67	0.93	.20**	-.13	.29**	.37**	.68**	.47**	--	
8. P to S Challenge	5.43	0.81	.35**	-.06	.24**	.34**	.48**	.74**	.49**	--

Note. F = father. M = mother. S = self. P = partner.

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

H1 predicted that family conversation orientation would be positively associated with the frequency with which young adult children communicate in confirming ways to their romantic partner. This hypothesis was supported, as conversation orientation is positively associated with both self-to-partner acceptance ($r = .31, p < .001$) and self-to-partner challenge ($r = .42, p < .001$).

H2 predicted that family conformity orientation would be negatively associated with the frequency with which young adult children communicate in confirming ways to their romantic partner. The results indicate that conformity orientation is negatively associated with self-to-partner acceptance ($r = -.28, p < .001$), but not with self-to-partner challenge ($r = -.04, p = .56$). Thus, H2 was partially supported.

H3 predicted that family conversation and conformity orientations would interact to predict young adult children's confirmation in their romantic relationships, such that conformity orientation would moderate the positive association between conversation orientation and self-to-partner acceptance and challenge. The first hierarchical regression model, using family conversation and conformity orientations as predictor variables and self-to-partner acceptance as the criterion variable, produced a significant multiple correlation coefficient. At step one, the model accounted for 12.6% of the total variance in self-to-partner acceptance, $R = .36, F(2, 178) = 12.85, p < .001$, as both conversation orientation ($\beta = .24, t = 3.21, p < .01$) and conformity orientation ($\beta = -.19, t = -2.56, p < .05$) emerged as significant predictors in the model. At step two, an interaction effect of conversation and conformity orientations was statistically significant, $F\text{-change}(1, 177) = 4.39, p < .05, \Delta R^2 = .021$, bringing the total variance accounted for in the model to 14.7%. This interaction effect was decomposed using the procedures described by Aiken and West (1991) (see Figure 1).

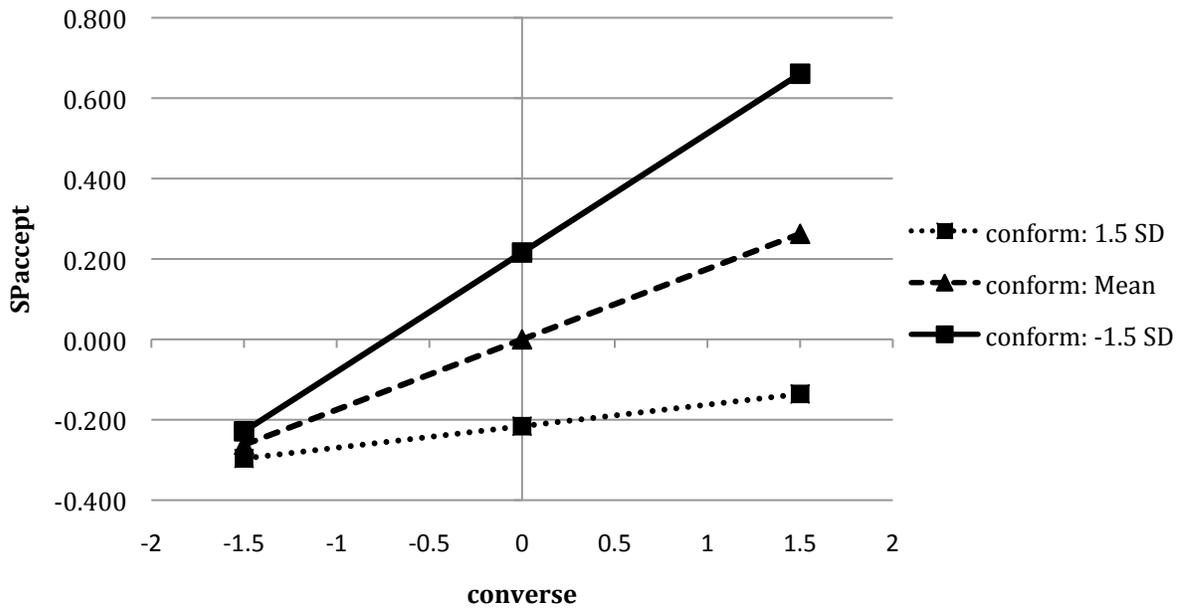


Figure 1. Interaction effect of family conversation orientation and conformity orientation as predictors of self-to-partner (SP) acceptance. SD = standard deviation.

Examination of the beta weights revealed that family conversation orientation ($\beta = .24, t = 3.24, p < .01$), conformity orientation ($\beta = -.19, t = -2.58, p < .05$), and the interaction effect ($\beta = -.15, t = -2.09, p < .05$) were significant predictors in the model. The results indicate that conformity orientation moderates the positive association between conversation orientation and self-to-partner acceptance, such that the association is statistically significant at low ($\beta = .39, z = 3.72, p < .01$) to moderate levels of conformity orientation ($\beta = .23, z = 3.24, p < .01$), but becomes statistically non-significant at high levels of conformity orientation ($\beta = .07, z = .67, p = .67$).

For the second regression model, using self-to-partner challenge as the criterion variable, a significant multiple correlation coefficient was also obtained. At step one, the model accounted for 18.6% of the total variance in self-to-partner challenge, $R = .43, F(2, 178) = 20.35, p < .001$, with conversation orientation ($\beta = .46, t = 6.35, p < .001$) emerging as the only significant predictor in the model. At step two, an interaction effect of conversation and conformity orientations was statistically significant, F -change $(1, 177) = 10.75, p < .01, \Delta R^2 = .047$, bringing the total variance accounted for in the model to 23.3%. An examination of the beta weights revealed that family conversation orientation ($\beta = .46, t = 6.52, p < .001$) and the interaction effect ($\beta = -.22, t = -3.28, p < .01$) were significant predictors in the model. A decomposition of the interaction effect revealed that conversation orientation positively predicted self-to-partner challenge at low ($\beta = .67, z = 6.88, p < .01$), moderate ($\beta = .44, z = 6.54, p < .01$), and high levels of conformity ($\beta = .20, z = 2.06, p < .05$), although the positive effect of conversation orientation on self-to-partner challenge became smaller in magnitude at higher levels of conformity (see Figure 2). Thus, when both models are taken together, H3 was supported.

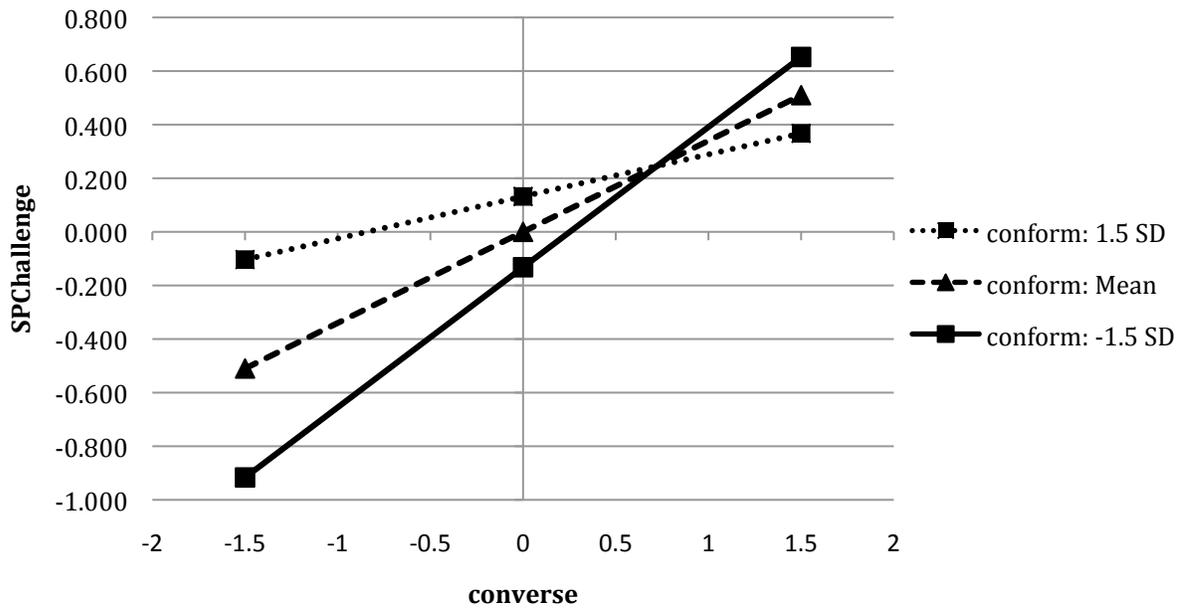


Figure 2. Interaction effect of family conversation orientation and conformity orientation as predictors of self-to-partner (SP) challenge. SD = standard deviation.

H4 predicted that interparental confirmation would be positively associated with the frequency with which young adult children communicate in confirming ways to their romantic partner. The results indicate that father-to-mother confirmation is positively associated with both self-to-partner acceptance ($r = .41, p < .001$) and self-to-partner challenge ($r = .30, p < .001$). Likewise, mother-to-father confirmation is positively associated with self-to-partner acceptance ($r = .56, p < .001$) and self-to-partner challenge ($r = .42, p < .001$). Thus, H4 was supported.

RQ1 asked if parental confirmation from the opposite-sex parent is a stronger predictor of the frequency with which young adult children communicate in confirming ways to their romantic partner. To test whether or not there were significant differences in reports of parental and interparental confirmation among male and female participants, a series of Hotelling's t -tests for correlated correlations was conducted, comparing each set of correlations for sons ($n = 67$) and daughters ($n = 114$) separately.

For sons, mother-to-self acceptance ($r = .72, p < .001$) was a stronger predictor of self-to-partner acceptance than father-to-self acceptance ($r = .53, p < .001$), $t(64) = 2.34, p < .05$. Similarly, mother-to-self challenge ($r = .60, p < .001$) was a stronger predictor of self-to-partner challenge than the degree to which fathers challenged their sons ($r = .35, p < .01$), $t(64) = 2.70, p < .01$. For sons' reports of interparental confirmation, however, no significant difference emerged in the magnitude of the associations among mother-to-father confirmation ($r = .55, p < .001$), father-to-mother confirmation ($r = .44, p < .001$), and self-to-partner acceptance, $t(64) = 1.57, p > .05$; likewise, no significant difference emerged in the associations among mother-to-father confirmation ($r = .49, p < .001$), father-to-mother confirmation ($r = .37, p < .001$), and self-to-partner challenge, $t(64) = 1.63, p > .05$.

For daughters, Hotelling's t -tests revealed no significant difference in the associations between mother-to-self acceptance ($r = .47, p < .001$) and father-to-self acceptance ($r = .57, p < .001$) and self-to-partner acceptance, $t(111) = 1.19, p > .05$. Additionally, there was no significant difference in the magnitude of the associations between mother-to-self challenge ($r = .43, p < .001$) and father-to-self challenge ($r = .38, p < .001$) and self-to-partner challenge, $t(111) = .55, p > .05$. For daughters' reports of interparental confirmation, however, perceptions of mother-to-father confirmation emerged as a stronger predictor ($r = .57, p < .001$) of self-to-partner acceptance than did perceptions of father-to-mother confirmation ($r = .41, p < .001$), $t(111) = 2.39, p < .05$. On the other hand, no significant difference emerged in the associations between mother-to-father confirmation ($r = .36, p < .001$), father-to-mother confirmation ($r = .26, p < .001$), and self-to-partner challenge, $t(111) = 1.31, p > .05$. Taken together, the results indicate that sons' perceptions of their mother's confirmation behavior (i.e., acceptance and challenge) is a stronger predictor of the frequency with which they display confirming behavior to their romantic partner than did perceptions of their father's confirming behavior. For daughters, however, only perceptions of mother-to-father confirmation emerged as a stronger predictor of the frequency with which they communicate acceptance of their romantic partner than did perceptions of father-to-mother confirmation.

RQ2 asked if interparental confirmation is associated with the frequency with which young adult children communicate in confirming ways to their romantic partner after controlling for their romantic partner's confirmation. To address this question, partial correlations were calculated between participants' reports of their own confirming behaviors (i.e., acceptance and challenge) and their perceptions of interparental confirmation, controlling for their perceptions of their romantic partner's confirming behaviors (i.e., acceptance and challenge). The results

indicate that after controlling for their romantic partner's acceptance and challenge behaviors, perceptions of mother-to-father confirmation ($r = .42, p < .001$) and father-to-mother confirmation ($r = .28, p < .001$) are positively associated with self-to-partner acceptance. Additionally, perceptions of mother-to-father confirmation ($r = .22, p < .01$) and father-to-mother confirmation ($r = .16, p < .05$) are positively associated with self-to-partner challenge. Thus, the results provide modest evidence to suggest that interparental confirmation is predictive of young adults' tendencies to confirm their romantic partners beyond the reciprocity of confirmation that may already exist within the romantic relationship.

H5 predicted that, after controlling for their romantic partner's confirmation, a linear combination of FCPs (i.e., conversation and conformity orientations) and interparental confirmation will positively predict the frequency with which young adult children communicate in confirming ways to their romantic partner. Using hierarchical regression, two separate models were obtained, entering partner-to-self confirmation (i.e., acceptance and challenge) at step one followed by family conversation and conformity orientations, father-to-mother confirmation, and mother-to-father confirmation at step two, as predictors of self-to-partner acceptance and challenge.

The first model, using self-to-partner acceptance as the criterion variable, produced a multiple correlation coefficient that was significant, $R = .76, F(6, 174) = 40.67, p < .001$, accounting for 58.4% of the total variance in self-to-partner acceptance. After controlling for partner-to-self acceptance ($\beta = .54, t = 9.89, p < .001$), family conformity orientation ($\beta = -.13, t = -2.46, p < .05$) and mother-to-father confirmation ($\beta = .32, t = 4.53, p < .001$) emerged as significant predictors in the model. The second model, using self-to-partner challenge as the criterion variable, also produced a multiple correlation coefficient that was statistically

significant, $R = .77$, $F(6, 174) = 44.20$, $p < .001$, accounting for 60.4% of the total variance in self-to-partner challenge. After controlling for partner-to-self challenge ($\beta = .64$, $t = 11.46$, $p < .001$), family conversation orientation ($\beta = .14$, $t = 2.28$, $p < .05$) and mother-to-father confirmation ($\beta = .15$, $t = 2.16$, $p < .05$) emerged as significant predictors in the model. Consequently, the results of both regression models support H5.

Discussion

The primary goal of this study was to compare the unique and combined contributions of family communication patterns (FCPs) and (inter)parental confirmation to young adults' use of confirmation in their romantic relationships. Overall, the results supported the theoretical line of reasoning advanced in this study. Not only were FCPs predictive of confirmation in romantic relationships, but the degree to which young adult children observed confirming behavior within (and between) their parents' relationship was also associated with the degree to which young adults communicated in confirming ways with their romantic partner. In fact, after controlling for the norm of reciprocity in partner confirmation (i.e., perceptions of partner challenge and acceptance), FCPs and (inter)parental confirmation emerged as significant predictors of confirmation enacted in participants' romantic relationships. Consequently, the results of this study extend FCP and confirmation theories by providing at least three implications worth noting.

FCPs and Confirmation in Romantic Relationships

The first set of implications revolve around the conditional and interaction effects of conversation and conformity orientations on the frequency with which young adult children express confirmation (i.e., challenge and acceptance) to their romantic partner. When families, and particularly parents, promote meaningful family interactions where activities, thoughts, and

feelings are shared among family members, young adult children are more likely to communicate acceptance of their romantic partner and to challenge their partner to grow as an individual (H1). One explanation for this result may be gleaned from Keaten and Kelly's (2008) research, as these scholars found a positive relationship between conversation orientation and emotional intelligence. Evidently, family communication environments that encourage children to weigh the opinions and perspectives of other family members are associated with an ability to recognize, understand, and manage emotions. Conversations with parents about emotions, when coupled with a relational schema that orients children to engage in open conversations about a wide variety of topics, are likely to encourage the use of confirming behaviors in relationships both in and outside of the family. Indeed, both acceptance and challenge require a high level of competence so as to understand, acknowledge, and validate the other person's perspective, so it comes as no surprise that individuals from high conversation orientated families may be more likely to enact confirming behaviors in their romantic relationships.

In terms of conformity orientation, however, the results offered only partial support for a negative association with enacted confirmation in one's romantic relationship. While a small, but meaningful inverse association emerged between conformity orientation and self-to-partner acceptance, the association between conformity and self-to-partner challenge was not statistically significant (partial support for H2). One possible explanation for this lack of support can be found in Dailey's (2010) conceptualization of challenge, as challenge involves an individual pushing or testing the other person's abilities and skills. Challenging a romantic partner could possibly be face threatening, so individuals from high-conformity families may seek to avoid the potential conflict induced by this behavior. In fact, a family conformity orientation includes elements of both structural traditionalism and conflict avoidance (Fitzpatrick & Ritchie, 1994;

Schrodt, 2005). This suggests, in turn, that while part of a family conformity orientation includes a desire to maintain agreement within a romantic relationship, such a family orientation may also encourage conflict avoidance given the perceived face threat of challenging a romantic partner to grow as an individual. In terms of communicating acceptance, however, Koerner and Cvacara (2002) offer an explanation for the negative association between conformity orientation and self-to-partner acceptance. They found that conformity-oriented family members were more self-oriented than other-oriented during interpersonal conversations, so this may inhibit individuals from making statements that communicate unconditional positive regard toward their partner.

In addition to the conditional effects of both family communication orientations, the results also revealed the presence of an interaction effect for FCPs, such that conformity orientation moderated the positive associations between conversation orientation and self-to-partner acceptance and challenge (H3). A closer inspection of Figures 1 and 2 reveals different patterns of moderation for self-to-partner acceptance and challenge. Specifically, young adult children from families high in conversation but low in conformity (i.e., pluralistic families) report higher levels of self-to-partner acceptance than those from families high in conversation and high in conformity (i.e., consensual families). This suggests that although a conversation orientation helps cultivate the kinds of information-processing skills (e.g., perspective-taking) and behavioral skills (e.g., perception-checking and decision-making) associated with confirming behavior in other relationships, the benefits of such an orientation depend on the amount of pressure parents exert to create a uniformity of attitudes, beliefs, and values among family members. Indeed, parents who encourage open conversations with their children while simultaneously expecting them to adopt their own viewpoints may be less likely to confirm their

children (see Table 1), which in turn may undermine the degree to which their children confirm their own romantic partners as adults.

In terms of self-to-partner challenge, however, the results reveal a slightly different pattern of moderation. Although young adult children from high conversation-oriented families are still more likely to challenge their romantic partners than those from low conversation-oriented families, the pattern of this interaction effect reveals that young adult children from families low in conversation and high in conformity (i.e., protective families) may be more likely to raise children who challenge their romantic partner than those from families low in both conversation and conformity (i.e., laissez-faire families). One possible explanation for this pattern can be found in the desire of parents from protective families to create and maintain agreement and consistency in family members' attitudes, beliefs, and values. Whereas this pressure to conform to the parents' viewpoints often leads to undesirable outcomes in children (e.g., Hamon & Schrodtt, 2012; Schrodtt et al., 2008), it may nevertheless encourage individuals to challenge their romantic partners more so than individuals who grow up in a family with inconsistent (and often, non-existent) communication norms. Indeed, young adults from protective families may experience a desire to create similar levels of harmony and consistency in the beliefs, attitudes, and values they share with their romantic partner, which in turn may encourage some forms of challenging behavior in their romantic relationship (albeit, at lower levels than young adults from pluralistic and consensual families). Overall, then, the results for H3 provide further evidence in support of Dailey's (2008, 2010) contention that acceptance and challenge represent two distinct dimensions of confirmation in familial and romantic relationships.

(Inter)parental Confirmation and Social Modeling

The second set of implications revolves around young adult children's perceptions of (inter)parental confirmation and the degree to which their perceptions of such confirming behavior are associated with confirmation in their interactions with their own romantic partners. Specifically, the results of this study offer strong evidence in support of SLT, as young adults' parents may, in fact, serve as influential examples of how to validate and acknowledge a romantic partner's perspective during interpersonal conversations. Perceptions of mother-to-father confirmation and father-to-mother confirmation are positively associated with both dimensions of confirmation in young adults' romantic relationships (H4). One explanation for this set of results can be found in Burleson and Kunkel's (2002) work, as they found that parental comfort and support serves as a teaching tool for children on how to provide support to their peers. Their findings align with the tenets of SLT, namely, that children learn to communicate, to an extent, through sub-processes of observation by watching their parents interact (Bandura, 1986). In light of their results and SLT, then, it makes sense that children who observe their parents confirming each other are more likely to do so themselves in their own romantic relationships.

One of the most interesting findings from this study, however, was how sons and daughters differ regarding whom they may be more influenced by in their immediate family (RQ1). Specifically, sons' perceptions of their mother's confirming behavior (i.e., acceptance and challenge) in the *parent-child* relationship is a stronger predictor of the frequency with which they communicate in confirming ways to their romantic partner than are perceptions of their father's confirming behavior in the *parent-child* relationship. Not only does this finding extend our understanding of how confirming behavior is modeled in family relationships, but it

offers empirical insight into the anecdotal belief that understanding about a romantic partner can be gleaned by observing how he or she interacts with the opposite-sex parent. Specifically, it provides further evidence for why sons may be more influenced by their mother's and father's confirming behaviors in the parent-child relationship than daughters. For instance, Ellis (2002) found that mother's and father's confirming behavior was a significant predictor of sons' perceptions of their global self-worth, intellectual ability, creative ability, and appearance. Thus, it stands to reason that the way in which parents, and particularly mothers, confirm their sons is associated meaningfully with how sons view themselves and communicate with their romantic partners.

For daughters, however, only perceptions of mother-to-father confirmation emerged as a stronger predictor of the frequency with which they communicate acceptance of their romantic partner than did perceptions of father-to-mother confirmation. While sons may be more influenced by their mother's confirmation toward themselves, daughters may be more affected by watching their parents interact with one another. One possible explanation for this finding can be found in Tannen's (1990) genderlect theory, which posits that women use rapport communication as a relational tool to seek connection with others. In other words, daughters may value watching how their parents interact (and particularly, how mothers interact with fathers) through verbal and nonverbal (dis)confirmation to build their relationship and model their own relationships based on what they see. Indeed, previous research on FCPs and young adults' communication competence has revealed a pattern consistent with gender socialization research, highlighting the relational orientation into which many women are socialized (Schrodt et al., 2009). While sons often construct their personal identities primarily through instrumental communication by ways of individuation, daughters' self-concepts are often characterized by a

sense of relatedness that orients them toward interpersonal relationships. Additionally, when explaining the importance of mother confirmation to young adult children's family satisfaction in divorced families, Schrodts and Ledbetter (2012) argue that "most children (though not all) develop more intimate relationships with their mothers" (p. 158). When coupled with the results of the present study, then, these lines of research underscore the importance of mothers and their spousal relationships to the social modeling of healthy communication behaviors in their daughters' romantic relationships.

FCEs, Interparental Confirmation, and Young Adults' Romantic Relationships

The third, and perhaps most notable, implication that emerged from this study was that FCEs and interparental confirmation were predictive of self-to-partner confirmation even after controlling for the reciprocity of confirmation that may already exist within the romantic relationship. The results indicate that both mother-to-father confirmation and father-to-mother confirmation are positively associated with the degree to which young adults communicate in accepting and challenging ways to their romantic partner, above and beyond any tendencies they may have to reciprocate their partner's confirming behavior. More importantly, different family communication orientations emerge as significant predictors of accepting and challenging behavior in romantic relationships after controlling for reciprocity within the relationship. One explanation for the negative effect that conformity orientation has on an individual's tendency to communicate acceptance to his or her romantic partner can be found in Koerner and Cavanaugh's (2002) research, as they found that conformity-oriented family members are more self-oriented than other-oriented during interpersonal conversations. Since acceptance involves communicating positive regard for the other person, it may be that individuals who grow up in a

conformity-oriented family environment do not develop the relational schemas and information-processing skills necessary for expressing warmth or actively listening to their romantic partner.

Conversation orientation, on the other hand, emerged as a positive predictor of challenging one's romantic partner even after controlling for interparental confirmation and reciprocity. Families high in conversation orientation participate in open, unrestrained interactions on a wide variety of topics which may, at times, create disagreement within the family. Through these types of disagreements, family members may come to understand that challenging each other to grow as individuals is part of what constitutes healthy family relationships. By definition, challenge involves pushing a romantic partner to achieve greater potential (Buber, 1965), and thus, it makes sense that an individual who has a relational schema to engage in unrestrained conversations with family members may be more inclined to ask questions, encourage their romantic partner to grow as an individual, and to channel negative emotions into positive actions.

Finally, mother-to-father confirmation emerged as a significant predictor of both acceptance and challenge even after controlling for FCPs and reciprocity of confirmation between romantic partners. As noted earlier, mothers play a particularly important role in the lives of their children during early adolescence, as they are often expected to be more relationally confirming (Schrodt & Ledbetter, 2012). Likewise, SLT contends that individuals learn to communicate, in part, by watching their parents interact as they develop into young adults (Bandura, 1986). Given that children often develop a more intimate relationship with their mother, they may be more likely to pay closer attention to, and model, their mother's behavior when she interacts with the father. These findings are meaningful, given that they provide further evidence of social modeling within the family of origin as parents influence the ways in which

their children learn to use and understand confirming messages through observations of their parents' relationship.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

Theoretically, the results of this study further support Noller's (1995) argument that how individuals learn to communicate in their families of origin has an effect on how they interact within their romantic relationships. Specifically, they extend FCP theory by demonstrating that the relational schemas that are formed in marital and parent-child interactions may provide a "blueprint" of sorts for relationships beyond the family, and that it is through observation and interaction with family members that individuals learn how (or how not) to confirm their romantic partner. Furthermore, the results extend SLT by identifying the unique and combined sources of (inter)parental modeling associated with young adult children's confirming behavior with their romantic partner. Previous researchers have investigated social modeling processes by focusing on how children learn various communication behaviors from each individual parent. Contrary to this trend, the results reported here extend this literature by offering insight into the effects of *both* interparental confirmation and parent-child confirmation on young adult children's behaviors within their romantic relationships.

This study also adds to confirmation theory through its investigation of accepting and challenging behaviors in both family and romantic relationships. Given the importance of confirmation to an individual's well being, as well as to relational satisfaction, it is important to consider why individuals choose (or choose not) to confirm their romantic partner. Both relational schemas that emerge from family interaction and (inter)parental modeling were identified as theoretical mechanisms that contribute to young adult children's tendencies to enact confirmation in their romantic relationships. This study not only extends Dailey's (2006, 2008,

2010) work on confirmation in parent-child relationships to confirmation in romantic relationships, but it identifies different forms of confirmation (e.g., interparental confirmation) that may predict whether individuals will enact accepting and challenging behaviors in their own romantic relationships. While this study offers only preliminary explanations for why individuals enact such behavior in romantic relationships, it may prompt future researchers to explore the unique and combined effects of other variables that may affect the frequency with which individuals confirm their romantic partner outside of the norm of reciprocity.

Practically speaking, the results of this study highlight the importance of considering why individuals choose to behave the way that they do within their romantic relationships, and how confirmation, in turn, can lead to relational (dis)satisfaction. The popular press has often capitalized on reasons as to why romantic partners behave the way that they do, but these outlets often offer little, if any, empirical insight into their claims. The findings presented here illustrate that while individuals may be able to physically leave their family of origin when they enter into young adulthood, they may still enact certain communication behaviors in their adult relationships that they observed in their parents' marriage. Moreover, these results can offer guidance for understanding the importance of developing and sustaining a healthy family communication environment where children are encouraged to develop and express their own attitudes, beliefs, and opinions. This is not to say that children who come from low conversation-oriented families are destined for failure in their romantic relationships. Rather, the results of this study suggest that parents who model confirming behaviors in their marriage and who value communicating about a wide variety of topics with their children may be more likely to raise children who understand the importance of confirming their own romantic partners someday. At a minimum, the results of this study underscore the importance of parental role models, as

parents' behaviors toward their children and toward each other are likely to have a lasting impact on their children's understanding of what constitutes competent and healthy communication behavior in romantic relationships.

Limitations and Future Directions

Of course, the results of this study should be interpreted with caution given the inherent limitations of the research design. The most notable limitation to this study is that the data were collected from only one member of the romantic relationship. Participants were asked to indicate how frequently their romantic partner confirmed them in their relationships, but their answers largely reflect individual perceptions rather observed behaviors. Consequently, future researchers should consider using relational dyads as the unit of analysis and testing the degree to which mutual influence and partner effects alter the associations reported here. Surveying dyads would also give insight into the partner's family of origin and FCPs.

A second limitation is the sole reliance on self-report data from a relatively homogenous sample of young adult children (i.e., predominantly white, undergraduate students). Finally, the cross-sectional research design and correlational nature of the data prevents statements of causality. Longitudinal research that investigates FCPs and their influence on romantic relationship quality over time is needed, as is future research that incorporates the perspectives of both the parents and the romantic dyads involved.

Nevertheless, this study provides preliminary evidence to suggest that the intergenerational transmission of confirmation through both the family communication environment and the (inter)parental relationship provides one plausible explanation (albeit, an incomplete one) for why individuals choose (or choose not) to communicate confirmation within their romantic relationships. This research complements Koerner and Fitzpatrick's (1997, 2002c)

work on conflict behaviors, as it may be the case that individuals' conflict behaviors are not only influenced by the communication schemas that emerge from FCPs, but also by observing how parents interact during relational conflict. Indeed, future researchers can extend their work and the results of this study by examining the link between sense-making behaviors that are learned in the family of origin and attributions that individuals make of their romantic partner's behaviors. Through these types of investigations, researchers can add to our understanding of family interactions and relational schemas that enhance our relationships outside of the family.

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Note

¹The original sample included 46 participants from divorced families, bringing the initial total to 227 participants. Given the theoretical focus of this study (i.e., parental modeling of confirmation) and an inadequate number of participants from divorced families to conduct appropriate statistical comparisons, these participants were excluded from the analysis.

Appendix

Family Communication Patterns, Parental Modeling, and Confirmation in Romantic Relationships Questionnaire

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Directions: In the following spaces, please circle or write the most appropriate response to each question. If there is a separate set of directions, please read those directions carefully and answer each question according to the directions for that section of the questionnaire.

1. What is your age? _____
2. What is your biological sex (please circle one)?
 - 1 Male
 - 2 Female
3. What is your ethnicity or race?

1 White	4 Native American
2 African American	5 Asian American
3 Hispanic American	6 Other (please specify): _____
4. How would you best classify your **current** romantic relationship?
 - 1 Romantic potential
 - 2 Casual dating but little emotional attachment
 - 3 Frequent dating but little emotional attachment
 - 4 Some emotional attachment
 - 5 Emotional attachment but not in love
 - 6 In love
 - 7 In love and would like to marry but have never discussed marriage
 - 8 In love and have discussed marriage but have not made marriage plans
 - 9 Engaged to be married
 - 10 Spouse
5. How long have you been dating your partner? _____ years _____ months
6. Are your biological (or adoptive) parents married (circle) YES NO
 - 6a. If your parents are still married, how long have they been married (in years)? _____
7. Are both of your biological (or adoptive) parents living (circle)? YES NO
8. Are your biological (or adoptive) parents divorced (circle)? YES NO
 - 8a. If you answered "yes" to question 6a, approximately how long has it been since your parents divorced? _____
 - 8b. If your parents are divorced, how long were they married before they divorced? _____
9. On average, how often do you talk with your MOTHER during a typical week? _____ hours _____ minutes
10. On average, how often do you talk with your FATHER during a typical week? _____ hours _____ minutes

Family Communication Patterns (RFCP Scale; Fitzpatrick & Ritchie, 1994)

Directions: With your **FAMILY OF ORIGIN** in mind, please circle the number that best represents your level of agreement using the following scale:

Strongly Disagree (SD) 1	Disagree 2	Somewhat Disagree 3	Neither Agree nor Disagree (N) 4	Somewhat Agree 5	Agree 6	Strongly Agree (SA) 7			
			SD		N		SA		
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. In our family we often talk about topics like politics and religion where some people disagree with others.			1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. When anything really important is involved, my parents expect me to obey without question.			1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. My parents often say something like "Every member of the family should have some say in family decisions."			1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. In our home, my parents usually have the last word.			1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. My parents often ask my opinion when the family is talking about something.			1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. My parents feel that it is important to be the boss.			1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. My parents encourage me to challenge their ideas and beliefs.			1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8. My parents sometimes become irritated with my views if the are different from their own.			1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9. My parents often say something like, "You should always look at both sides of an issue."			1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10. If my parents don't approve of it, they don't want to know about it.			1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11. I usually tell my parents what I am thinking about things.			1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12. I can tell my parents almost anything.			1	2	3	4	5	6	7
13. When I am at home, I am expected to obey my parents' rules.			1	2	3	4	5	6	7
14. In our family, we often talk about our feelings and emotions.			1	2	3	4	5	6	7
15. My parents often say things like, "You'll know better when you grow up."			1	2	3	4	5	6	7
16. My parents and I often have long, relaxed conversations about nothing in particular.			1	2	3	4	5	6	7
17. I really enjoy talking with my parents, even when we disagree.			1	2	3	4	5	6	7
18. My parents often say things like, "My ideas are right and you should not question them."			1	2	3	4	5	6	7
19. My parents encourage me to express my feelings.			1	2	3	4	5	6	7
20. My parents often say things like "A child should not argue with adults."			1	2	3	4	5	6	7
21. My parents tend to be very open about their emotions.			1	2	3	4	5	6	7
22. We often talk as a family about things we have done during the day,			1	2	3	4	5	6	7
23. My parents often say things like, "There are some things that just shouldn't be talked about."			1	2	3	4	5	6	7
24. In our family, we often talk about our plans and hopes for the future.			1	2	3	4	5	6	7
25. My parents often say things like, "You should give in on arguments rather than risk making people mad."			1	2	3	4	5	6	7
26. My parents like to hear my opinion, even when I don't agree.			1	2	3	4	5	6	7

ROMANTIC PARTNER-TO-SELF CONFIRMATION (Revised Parent Confirmation Behavior Indicator; Ellis, 2002)

Directions: With your **ROMANTIC PARTNER** in mind, please circle the number that best represents your level of agreement using the following scale:

Never	Seldom	Occasionally	Sometimes	Often	Very Often	Always
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

My romantic partner . . .

	Never		Sometimes		Always		
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Allows me to express negative feelings.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. Makes statements that communicate to me that I am a unique, valuable human being.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. Demonstrates that he/she is genuinely listening when I am speaking about issues important to me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. Belittles me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. Ascribes motives to my actions (e.g., “You’re only doing this because . . .”).	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. Makes statements that communicate my ideas don’t count (e.g., “Can’t you do anything right?” “Just shut up and keep out of this” or “What do you know about this anyway?”)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. Makes statements that communicate my feelings are valid and real (e.g., “I’m sorry that you’re so disappointed, angry, etc.”).	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8. Gives me undivided attention when engaged in private conversations.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9. Maintains meaningful eye contact with me when we are engaged in a conversation.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10. Asks how I feel about school, family issues, work, etc.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11. Interrupts me during conversations.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12. Gives clear, direct responses to me during conversations.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
13. Asks my opinion or solicits my viewpoint.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
14. Discounts or explains away my feelings.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
15. Engages in monologue (e.g., continues on and on with whatever he/she has to say, failing to acknowledge anything I have said or has tried to interject).	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
16. Gives impersonal responses (e.g., loaded with clichés or responses that do not truly respond to me).	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
17. Goes off on unrelated tangents during conversations with me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
18. Criticizes my feelings when I express them.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

MOTHER-TO-SELF CHALLENGE (Dailey, 2008)

Directions: Based on your experience with your **MOTHER**, circle the number that best describes your agreement with each statement.

	Strongly Disagree (SD)	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree (N)	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree (SA)
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. My mother helps me channel my negative emotions into more positive actions.	SD					N	SA
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. My mother discusses different perspectives with me regarding complex issues.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

3. My mother asks questions that make me think.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. My mother and I have playful arguments about ideas.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. My mother pushes me to think about other people's perspectives (e.g., put myself in their shoes).	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. My mother asks me to explain the reasoning behind my decisions.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. My mother ignores my perspective if it is different from hers.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8. My mother encourages me to explore different ideas.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9. My mother helps me understand and deal with my emotions.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10. My mother encourages me to maintain my physical health.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11. My mother makes me support or defend my opinions.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12. My mother makes me deal with the consequences of my decisions or behaviors.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

FATHER-TO-SELF CONFIRMATION (Revised Parent Confirmation Behavior Indicator; Ellis, 2002)

Directions: With your **FATHER** in mind, please circle the number that best represents your level of agreement using the following scale:

Never	Seldom	Occasionally	Sometimes	Often	Very Often	Always
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

<u>My father . . .</u>	Never		Sometimes		Always		
1. Attends the sports events, music events, or other activities in which I participate.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. Makes statements that communicate to me that I am a unique, valuable human being.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. Demonstrates that he is genuinely listening when I am speaking about issues important to me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. Belittles me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. Allows me to express negative feelings.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. Makes statements that communicate my ideas don't count (e.g., "Can't you do anything right?" "Just shut up and keep out of this" or "What do you know about this anyway?")	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. Makes statements that communicate my feelings are valid and real (e.g., "I'm sorry that you're so disappointed, angry, etc.>").	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8. Gives me undivided attention when engaged in private conversations.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9. Maintains meaningful eye contact with me when we are engaged in a conversation.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10. Ascribes motives to my actions (e.g., "You're only doing this because . . .").	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11. Gives appropriate facial responses such as smiling or nodding during conversations with me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12. Gives clear, direct responses to me during conversations.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
13. Asks my opinion or solicits my viewpoint.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
14. Discounts or explains away my feelings.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
15. Engages in monologue (e.g., continues on and on with whatever he or she has to say, failing to acknowledge anything I have said or tries to interject).	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
16. Interrupts me during conversations.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
17. Gives impersonal responses (e.g., loaded with clichés or responses that do not truly respond to me).	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

- | | | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 18. Criticizes my feelings when I express them. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 19. Ignores my attempts to express my feelings. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 20. Goes off on unrelated tangents during conversations with me. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

FATHER-TO-MOTHER CONFIRMATION (Revised Parent Confirmation Behavior Indicator; Ellis, 2002)

Directions: With your **FATHER’S** behavior towards your **MOTHER** in mind, please circle the number that best represents your level of agreement using the following scale:

- | | | | | | | |
|-------|--------|--------------|-----------|-------|------------|--------|
| Never | Seldom | Occasionally | Sometimes | Often | Very Often | Always |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

My father . . .

- | | Never | Sometimes | | | | Always | |
|--|-------|-----------|---|---|---|--------|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 1. Sends my mother double messages (verbal and nonverbal messages that differ). | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 2. Makes statements that communicate to my mother that she is a unique, valuable human being. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 3. Demonstrates that he is genuinely listening when my mother is speaking about issues important to her. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 4. Belittles my mother. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 5. Ignores my mother while in the same room. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 6. Makes statements that communicate my mother’s ideas don’t count (e.g., “Can’t you do anything right?” “Just shut up and keep out of this” or “What do you know about this anyway?”) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 7. Makes statements that communicate my mother’s feelings are valid and real (e.g., “I’m sorry that you’re so disappointed, angry, etc.”). | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 8. Goes off on unrelated tangents during conversations with my mother. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 9. Maintains meaningful eye contact with my mother when they are engaged in a conversation. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 10. Discounts or explains away my mother’s feelings. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 11. Gives appropriate facial responses such as smiling or nodding during conversations with my mother. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 12. Gives clear, direct responses to my mother during conversations. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 13. Asks my mother’s opinion or solicits her viewpoint. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 14. Interrupts my mother during conversations. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 15. Gives my mother ambiguous (unclear, vague) responses. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 16. Allows my mother to express negative feelings. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

MOTHER-TO-SELF CONFIRMATION (Revised Parent Confirmation Behavior Indicator; Ellis, 2002)

Directions: With your **MOTHER** in mind, please circle the number that best represents your level of agreement using the following scale:

- | | | | | | | |
|-------|--------|--------------|-----------|-------|------------|--------|
| Never | Seldom | Occasionally | Sometimes | Often | Very Often | Always |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

My mother . . .

- | | Never | Sometimes | | | | Always | |
|---|-------|-----------|---|---|---|--------|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 1. Makes statements that communicate my feelings are valid and real (e.g., “I’m sorry that you’re so disappointed, angry, etc.”). | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 2. Gives me undivided attention when engaged in private conversations. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 3. Demonstrates that she is genuinely listening when I am speaking | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

about issues important to me.

4. Gives appropriate facial responses such as smiling or nodding during conversations with me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. Gives impersonal responses (e.g., loaded with clichés or responses that do not truly respond to me).	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. Allows me to express negative feelings.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. Attends the sports events, music events, or other activities in which I participate.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8. Makes statements that communicate to me that I am a unique, valuable human being.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9. Maintains meaningful eye contact with me when we are engaged in a conversation.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10. Interrupts me during conversations.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11. Belittles me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12. Gives clear, direct responses to me during conversations.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
13. Goes off on unrelated tangents during conversations with me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
14. Discounts or explains away my feelings.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
15. Engages in monologue (e.g., continues on and on with whatever he or she has to say, failing to acknowledge anything I have said or tries to interject).	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
16. Ascribes motives to my actions (e.g., “You’re only doing this because . . .”).	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
17. Makes statements that communicate my ideas don’t count (e.g., “Can’t you do anything right?” “Just shut up and keep out of this” or “What do you know about this anyway?”)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
18. Criticizes my feelings when I express them.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
19. Ignores my attempts to express my feelings.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
20. Asks my opinion or solicits my viewpoint.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

MOTHER-TO-FATHER CONFIRMATION (Revised Parent Confirmation Behavior Indicator; Ellis, 2002)

Directions: With your **MOTHER’S** behavior towards your **FATHER** in mind, please circle the number that best represents your level of agreement using the following scale:

Never	Seldom	Occasionally	Sometimes	Often	Very Often	Always
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

My mother . . .

	Never	Sometimes				Always	
1. Demonstrates that she is genuinely listening when my father is speaking about issues important to him.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. Makes statements that communicate to my father that he is a unique, valuable human being.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. Goes off on unrelated tangents during conversations with my father.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. Belittles my father.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. Allows my father to express negative feelings.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. Sends my father double messages (verbal and nonverbal messages that differ).	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. Ignores my father while in the same room.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8. Interrupts my father during conversations.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9. Maintains meaningful eye contact with my father when they are engaged in a conversation.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10. Makes statements that communicate my father’s feelings are valid and real (e.g., “I’m sorry that you’re so disappointed, angry, etc.”).	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

11. Gives appropriate facial responses such as smiling or nodding during conversations with my father.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12. Gives clear, direct responses to my father during conversations.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
13. Asks my father's opinion or solicits his viewpoint.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
14. Discounts or explains away my father's feelings.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
15. Makes statements that communicate my father's ideas don't count (e.g., "Can't you do anything right?" "Just shut up and keep out of this" or "What do you know about this anyway?")	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
16. Gives my father ambiguous (unclear, vague) responses.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

SELF-TO-ROMANTIC PARTNER CONFIRMATION (Revised Parent Confirmation Behavior Indicator; Ellis, 2002)

Directions: Thinking about **YOUR** behavior toward your **ROMANTIC PARTNER**, please circle the number that best represents your level of agreement using the following scale:

Never	Seldom	Occasionally	Sometimes	Often	Very Often	Always
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

<u>I...</u>	Never		Sometimes		Always		
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Give my romantic partner undivided attention when engaged in private conversations.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. Ask my romantic partner's opinion or solicit his/her viewpoint.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. Demonstrate that I am genuinely listening when my romantic partner is speaking about issues important to him/her.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. Interrupt my romantic partner during conversations.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. Make statements that communicate my romantic partner's feelings are valid and real (e.g., "I'm sorry that you're so disappointed, angry, etc.").	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. Go off on unrelated tangents during conversations with my romantic partner.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. Discount or explain away my romantic partner's feelings.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8. Give clear, direct responses to my romantic partner during conversations.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9. Criticize my romantic partner's feelings when he/she expresses them.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10. Maintain meaningful eye contact with my romantic partner when we are engaged in a conversation.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11. Make statements that communicate to my romantic partner that he/she is a unique, valuable human being.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12. Allow my romantic partner to express negative feelings.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
13. Make statements that communicate my romantic partner's ideas don't count (e.g., "Can't you do anything right?" "Just shut up and keep out of this" or "What do you know about this anyway?")	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
14. Give my romantic partner impersonal responses (e.g., loaded with clichés or responses that do not truly respond to my romantic partner).	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
15. Engage in monologue (e.g., continue on and on with whatever I have to say, failing to acknowledge anything that my romantic partner has said or tries to interject).	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
16. Ascribe motives to my romantic partner's actions (e.g., "You're only doing this because . . .").	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
17. Ask how my romantic partner feels about school, family issues, work, etc.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
18. Belittle my romantic partner.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

ROMANTIC PARTNER-TO-SELF CHALLENGE (Dailey, 2008)

Directions: Based on your experience with your **ROMANTIC PARTNER**, circle the number that best describes your agreement with each statement.

Strongly Disagree (SD) 1	Disagree 2	Somewhat Disagree 3	Neither Agree nor Disagree (N) 4	Somewhat Agree 5	Agree 6	Strongly Agree (SA) 7	
				SD		N	SA
1. My partner makes me support or defend my opinions.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. My partner helps me channel my negative emotions into more positive actions.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. My partner ignores my perspective if it is different from hers/his.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. My partner pushes me to think about other people's perspectives (e.g., put myself in their shoes).	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. My partner encourages me to maintain my physical health.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. My partner asks me to explain the reasoning behind my decisions.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. My partner encourages me to explore different ideas.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8. My partner asks questions that make me think.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9. My partner helps me understand and deal with my emotions.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10. My partner and I have playful arguments about ideas.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11. My partner discusses different perspectives with me regarding complex issues.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12. My partner makes me deal with the consequences of my decisions or behaviors.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

SELF-TO-ROMANTIC PARTNER CHALLENGE (Dailey, 2010)

Directions: Based on your experience with your **ROMANTIC PARTNER**, circle the number that best describes your agreement with each statement.

Strongly Disagree (SD) 1	Disagree 2	Somewhat Disagree 3	Neither Agree nor Disagree (N) 4	Somewhat Agree 5	Agree 6	Strongly Agree (SA) 7	
				SD		N	SA
1. I encourage my romantic partner to explore different ideas.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. I discuss different perspectives with my romantic partner regarding complex issues.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. I ask questions that make my romantic partner think.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. I push my romantic partner to think about other people's perspectives (e.g., put themselves in their shoes).	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. I make my romantic partner deal with the consequences of his/her decisions or behaviors.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. I ask my romantic partner to explain the reasoning behind his/her decisions.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. I encourage my romantic partner to maintain his/her physical health.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8. I help my romantic partner channel his/her negative emotions	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

into more positive actions.

- 9. I ignore my romantic partner’s perspective if it is different from my own. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
- 10. I make my romantic partner support or defend his/her opinions. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
- 11. I help my romantic partner understand and deal with his/her emotions. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
- 12. My romantic partner and I have playful arguments about ideas. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

FATHER-TO-SELF CHALLENGE (Dailey, 2008)

Directions: Based on your experience with your **FATHER**, circle the number that best describes your agreement with each statement.

Strongly Disagree (SD) 1	Disagree 2	Somewhat Disagree 3	Neither Agree nor Disagree (N) 4	Somewhat Agree 5	Agree 6	Strongly Agree (SA) 7
				SD	N	SA
1. My father helps me channel my negative emotions into more positive actions.	1	2	3	4	5	6 7
2. My father discusses different perspectives with me regarding complex issues.	1	2	3	4	5	6 7
3. My father asks questions that make me think.	1	2	3	4	5	6 7
4. My father and I have playful arguments about ideas.	1	2	3	4	5	6 7
5. My father pushes me to think about other people's perspectives (e.g., put myself in their shoes).	1	2	3	4	5	6 7
6. My father asks me to explain the reasoning behind my decisions.	1	2	3	4	5	6 7
7. My father ignores my perspective if it is different from his.	1	2	3	4	5	6 7
8. My father encourages me to explore different ideas.	1	2	3	4	5	6 7
9. My father helps me understand and deal with my emotions.	1	2	3	4	5	6 7
10. My father encourages me to maintain my physical health.	1	2	3	4	5	6 7
11. My father makes me support or defend my opinions.	1	2	3	4	5	6 7
12. My father makes me deal with the consequences of my decisions or behaviors.	1	2	3	4	5	6 7