RELIGIOUS CONVERSATIONS AND SURFACE ACTING AS PREDICTORS OF

RELATIONAL UNCERTAINTY IN (DIS)CONFIRMING SIBLING RELATIONSHIPS

by

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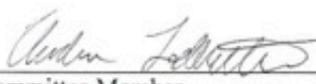
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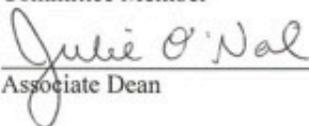
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Abstract

RELIGIOUS CONVERSATIONS AND SURFACE ACTING AS PREDICTORS OF

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This study examined the frequency and comfort by which siblings discuss religion, as well as the presence of surface acting in those religious conversations, as predictors of relational uncertainty in (dis)confirming sibling relationships. Participants included 218 young adults who completed an online survey assessing religious conversations with their siblings, as well as the general relational context of their sibling relationship. Data was analyzed using correlations and Hayes' PROCESS for SPSS. The results indicated that both frequency and comfort of religious conversations were inversely associated with RU. Whereas surface acting emerged as a moderator of the association between frequency and RU, frequency moderated the association between confirmation and RU. Among the more important implications of this research is highlighting that how family members talk about sensitive topics like religion is just as – if not more –important than the mere content of those conversations.

Key Terms: *siblings, religious communication, surface acting, confirmation, relational uncertainty*

Introduction

Researchers have devoted substantial efforts toward understanding transitions in romantic and familial relationships, as well as the role that relational uncertainty plays in how partners and family members communicate during times of transition. *Relational uncertainty* (RU) concerns questions that people have about participating in an interpersonal relationship (Knobloch & Satterlee, 2009); it consists of both individual and dyadic assessments of relational involvement that affect message production and message processing in personal relationships (Knobloch & Satterlee, 2009). In romantic relationships, specifically, Solomon et al. (2016) developed relational turbulence theory to explain how RU works together with partner interdependence to predict the thoughts, feelings, and communication messages associated with changing relational circumstances. Solomon and colleagues explained that those seasons wherein individuals have to restructure their way of relating to another lead to questions about the relationship. These transitions not only disrupt patterns of relational interdependence, but they also spark questions of involvement and lead to biased cognitive appraisals of conversations with others (Berger & Calabrese, 1975; Knobloch & Satterlee, 2009). Here, as the unknown is emphasized and once normalized ways of connecting are diminished, questions about relational status augment and RU oftentimes increases (Knobloch & Solomon, 1999; Knobloch et al., 2018).

Within the literature, one transition that is less commonly studied and understood is the transition that siblings go through when leaving home. This transitionary stage of life is oftentimes marked by an exploration of behaviors, opinions, and identities at the individual level, which gives way to (re)negotiations of norms and expectations at the relational level (Ponti & Smorti, 2019). Notwithstanding these changes, for most people, the sibling relationship is the longest lasting family relationship they will have (Cicirelli, 1995) and can serve as an important

source of social support when emerging adults leave home, grow into adulthood, and begin families of their own (Hamwey et al., 2019). Positive changes in communication patterns and practices made at this stage may help siblings forge bonds built upon mutual respect, even amidst the transition from involuntary to more voluntary relationships that may vary in involvement and closeness (Brockhage & Phillips, 2016; Myers & Goodboy, 2013; Myers & Odenweller, 2015). On the other hand, this transition may also set the stage for increased feelings of RU, particularly for siblings who hold different attitudes, beliefs, and values.

One topic that holds tremendous potential to either galvanize or divide family members is religion. Rooted in existential questions, matters of life and death, good and evil, and both the past and the future, attitudes and beliefs about religion often occupy a central place in the self-concept of many individuals. The things a person believes about the presence or absence of a higher power (or powers) shape their beliefs about morality, which in turn shapes their political, social, and relational attitudes (Colaner et al., 2014). Religious conversations, particularly in cases of divergence, may threaten the face of family members, present an additional obstacle to belonging, and even undermine their feelings of shared family and relational identity (Colaner et al., 2014; Soliz & Harwood, 2006).

Even in cases of opposition or apathy, religious identity is heavily influenced by one's family of origin (Colaner, 2008; Mullikin, 2006). Although social learning may take place inadvertently and through conscious parental choice, the religious orientations of children are seemingly inseparable from their familial environment (Hayes & Pittelkow, 1993). Consequently, communication scholars have studied the familial functions of religious similarity and difference in parent-child dyads (e.g., Colaner, 2008; Colaner et al., 2014; Morgan et al., 2020), as well as the challenges of communicating in interfaith romantic relationships (e.g.,

Hughes & Dickson, 2005; Martinez et al., 2016; McCurry et al., 2012; Myers, 2006; Reiter & Gee, 2008; Schramm et al., 2012). For instance, researchers have found higher marriage dissolution rates (Hughes & Dickson, 2005; Myers, 2006), social network and familial opposition (Heard Sahl & Batson, 2011), and relational turbulence surrounding family development for interfaith couples (Martinez et al., 2016). Whether individuals choose to discuss topics dealing with religion, faith, and spirituality may be associated with their perceptions of the relationship (McCurry et al., 2012). In fact, in cases of low intimacy and high RU, lower levels of communication efficacy are associated with greater discomfort with, and somewhat infrequent discussions of, religious topics for interfaith couples (McCurry et al., 2012).

Despite these challenges, other studies have highlighted effective communication between individuals of divergent faiths as key to attenuating these relational outcomes (Colaner et al., 2014; Kim & Swan, 2019). However, the bulk of previous research on religious similarities and differences in family relationships has focused almost exclusively on parent-child relationships, to the neglect of sibling relationships. Given the potential influence that perceptions of religious (dis)similarity may have as siblings transition to more voluntary relationships, examining how religious conversations between siblings are associated with RU is warranted. Thus, the primary goal of this study was to examine the degree to which the frequency and comfort with which siblings talk about religious topics is associated with RU in sibling relationships.

The second goal of this study involved consideration of an emotional behavior that may alter the degree to which discussions of religion are associated with RU in sibling relationships. Specifically, the degree to which talking about religion enhances (or mitigates) RU in adult sibling relationships may depend on how much energy and effort siblings feel they must exert

emotionally when talking about it – that is, how much emotion labor they enact in discussions of religion. *Emotion labor* (EL) is the act of regulating the experience and the expression of an emotion (Hochschild, 1983). When individuals perceive a discrepancy between the emotion(s) they feel and the emotion(s) they believe their conversational partner (e.g., a sibling) expects them to feel, they may work to hide the discrepancy by managing their emotions via surface acting (i.e., presenting an emotional façade). As the name suggests, EL is a particularly taxing and demanding behavior, one that creates stress and is negatively associated with mental well-being (Schrodt, 2020), self-esteem (Decker & Schrodt, 2022), and relational satisfaction (LaFreniere, 2022). The continual engagement in EL, specifically within identity-based conversations about religious topics, could moderate the connections between the frequency and comfort of these conversations and RU in adult sibling relationships. In other words, the degree to which the frequency and comfort of religious conversations predicts RU in sibling relationships may depend on how much EL siblings engage in when discussing religious/faith-based/spiritual topics.

Finally, the present study explored the degree to which the conditional effects of religious conversations on RU in sibling relationships further depend upon an important marker of relational quality in sibling relationships. Specifically, the conversational dynamics of discussing religious topics, enacting EL, and questioning whether one wants to continue their involvement with the sibling as a result of those conversations may vary as a function of sibling confirmation. *Confirmation* refers to messages that communicate validation, respect, and support for another (Dailey, 2006). The degree to which one experiences these things in conversations with their sibling may alter the degree to which EL and religious conversations predict RU in sibling relationships. That is, (dis)confirming sibling relationships may provide an important

boundary condition for the moderating effects of EL (specifically, surface acting) on discussions of religion and RU in adult sibling relationships. Consequently, the final purpose of the present study was to test the degree to which the moderating effect of surface acting on religious conversations and RU depends upon sibling confirmation.

Theoretical Perspective

Religious Communication and Family Relationships

Despite an upward trend of interfaith families in the United States (Pew Research Center, 2016), scholars have devoted relatively little attention to understanding how families communicate about religion. The studies that do exist have primarily focused on interfaith romantic couples, reporting higher levels of disagreement and proneness to divorce than same-faith couples (Lehrer & Chiswick, 1993; Reiter & Gee, 2008). Even though many of these studies have viewed religion largely as a cultural identity (e.g., Bystydzienski, 2011; Reiter & Gee, 2008), the degree to which romantic partners recognize their faith as a core aspect of their identity may also affect their relationship (Schramm et al., 2012). For instance, Hughes and Dickson (2005) found that interfaith couples with extrinsic religious orientations (i.e., viewing religion as a means to an end) are less satisfied with their marriages, are less likely to use constructive communication in conflict, and are more likely to enact destructive conflict patterns. Opposite associations were observed, however, for interfaith couples who maintained centralized, intrinsic, and strong commitments to their religions (Hughes & Dickson, 2005). In addition, Schramm and colleagues (2012) reported higher marital adjustment scores for same-faith couples than for those who either identify as irreligious or have divergent identifications (i.e., one partner identifies as religious, the other identifies as irreligious). Likewise, in dating relationships, McCurry et al. (2012) found that RU was inversely associated with the frequency

and comfort of discussing religious topics, although the associations depended upon partners' communication efficacy, level of intimacy, and perceived similarity in religious affiliation.

Other studies exploring communication processes associated with family and religion have focused primarily on parent-child relationships. For instance, Colaner's (2008) qualitative exploration of Evangelical families pointed to the transactional processes associated with religious formation. Rather than being a singular socialization process, families engaged in negotiations of expectations and faith as they cocreated and maintained a religious family culture (Colaner, 2008). Although Colaner's study focused exclusively on Evangelical families, the social construction of religious (or nonreligious) identity plays a role in the developmental processes of most families. The close tie between morality and religion is highlighted as families communicate principles concerning matters of decency, questions of right and wrong, and ethical standards. Here, in the primary place of socialization, families cocreate, even if inadvertently, their own religious identity that is then emphasized in certain contexts. Weddings, holiday celebrations, and parenting philosophies are all – whether consciously or unconsciously – connected to religious identity (Martinez et al., 2016). Furthermore, every day, habitual practices (e.g., mealtimes, conversational topics, media consumption, etc.) may be tied to families' religious beliefs, with the way family members communicate about religion having meaningful effects on both personal and relational wellbeing (Ting-Toomey & Martinez, 2020).

For interfaith families, one could argue that religious communication becomes even more salient, as conversational strategies may serve to buffer some of the difficulties associated with these relationships (Colaner et al., 2022). For example, accommodative communication from parents that respectfully acknowledges difference via supportive communication behaviors (Harwood, 2000) is positively associated with shared family identity and relational satisfaction,

even despite religious difference (Colaner et al., 2014). However, nonaccommodative communication that emphasizes divergent values and gives unwanted advice associated with differences in religious beliefs is negatively associated with relational satisfaction (Colaner et al, 2014). A more recent study also found nonaccommodative communication in interfaith families to be indirectly associated with relational solidarity by means of an identity gap pathway (Morgan et al., 2020). Put simply, communicative behaviors that highlight religious difference between parents and children negatively impact one's self concept and, therefore, decrease relational outcomes of trust, commonality, and liking (Morgan et al., 2020). Results like these both illuminate the connection between religion and identity and emphasize the imperative role of communication to the process of navigating identity differences within families (Colaner et al., 2014, 2022; Morgan et al., 2020; Schramm et al., 2012).

Notwithstanding levels of religious homophily, the literature suggests that communication about faith can have important outcomes for familial relationships. Nevertheless, despite a growing body of research linking religious belief to identity and family communication (Soliz & Colaner, 2018), questions remain as to how these phenomena interact within the context of sibling relationships. Virtually no studies have examined the ways in which siblings communicatively manage their religious identities. Such a shortage of empirical data is unfortunate as, for many people, a sibling relationship is not only the longest-lasting of all their familial relationships (Myers & Kennedy-Lightsey, 2015), but for some, an important source of social support (Cicirelli, 1995; Mikkelson, 2014; Whiteman et al., 2011). This gap in the literature presents an opportunity to understand how conversations dealing with taboo topics, such as religion (Baxter & Wilmot, 1985), influence the degree of involvement that siblings want to have, and strive to have, in their relationships with each other after leaving home. Although

differences of faith may divide what would have otherwise been close and supportive sibling relationships, whereas shared faith and beliefs might galvanize and strengthen adult sibling relationships, prior studies have suggested that *how* family members communicate about religion is of even greater importance than having the same religion (Colaner et al., 2014, 2022). Consequently, how often siblings talk about religion and the degree to which they feel comfortable doing so may reflect key moments in the social fabric of their relationship that lead to greater or lesser involvement in the relationship moving forward.

Relational Uncertainty in Sibling Relationships

Defined as "the degree of confidence people have in their perceptions of involvement within interpersonal relationships" (Knobloch & Solomon, 2002, p. 245), RU consists of self, partner, and relationship uncertainties (Knobloch & Solomon, 1999). Whereas *self uncertainty* consists of those questions an individual has about their own involvement in a relationship, *partner uncertainty* focuses on the questions an individual has about their partner's level of relational participation (Knobloch & Solomon, 1999; Solomon et al., 2016). The final source of RU, *relationship uncertainty*, is inherently dyadic and draws the focus away from specific individuals and toward questions regarding the current and future state of the relationship itself (Knobloch & Solomon, 1999; Solomon et al., 2016).

Although studied primarily in romantic relationships (e.g., Knobloch & Carpenter-Theune, 2004; Knobloch & Solomon, 2005; Knobloch et al., 2007; Knobloch et al., 2022; Schrodt, 2021), some scholarly attention has been paid to RU in sibling relationships (e.g., Bevan, 2004; Bevan et al., 2006; Schrodt & Phillips, 2016). In her investigation of the associations between jealousy and RU in close relationships, Bevan (2004) found that young adult siblings experience higher levels of partner and relationship uncertainty than dating

partners. Bevan pointed to the transitional state of young adult sibling relationships, namely, the change from involuntary to voluntary relationships as many young adults leave home, as a possible explanation for this rather surprising finding. Another study focused primarily on early adulthood sibling relationships and reported a positive relationship between RU and general topic avoidance (Bevan et al., 2006). Drawing from these studies, Schrodt and Phillips (2016) examined the indirect effects of family communication patterns on relational outcomes via self-disclosure and RU in sibling relationships. They found that family conversation orientation positively predicted sibling self-disclosure, which in turn negatively predicted RU but positively predicted relational satisfaction and closeness (Schrodt & Phillips, 2016). Results like these highlight the importance of free and open communication within families, particularly during times of transition.

As one of the longest lasting relationships an individual will have in their lifetime (Cicirelli, 1995), siblings typically encounter a variety of relational challenges that may lead to uncertainty. The entrance of one or more siblings into emerging adulthood introduces changes not only in the frequency of contact between siblings due to physical distance (Herrick, 2008), but also changes to the relationship itself as it becomes more voluntary (Bevan et al., 2006). As interdependence changes in both quality and degree, siblings may restructure their normative means of relating to each other. Transitions like these necessitate communication strategies (Hamwey et al., 2019), relational maintenance behaviors (Hall & McNallie, 2016; Mikkelson et al., 2011), and privacy negotiations (Brockhage & Phillips, 2016) if desired levels of relational closeness and satisfaction are to be maintained. Siblings may be less likely to use these proactive communicative approaches, however, when experiencing RU, especially when sensitive topics are involved. For instance, Knobloch (2007, 2010) identified three primary antecedents of RU in

romantic relationships: characteristics of individuals, qualities of relationships, and features of situations. Hence, when appropriated to sibling relationships, one might reason that the religious attitudes and beliefs of siblings, the relational transition from an involuntary association to a more voluntary relationship during emerging adulthood, and conversations related to a taboo topic (e.g., religion) may also serve as antecedents of RU in this familial relationship (cf. Knobloch & Satterlee, 2009). Taken together, these variables create a relational environment wherein individuals are less likely to discuss sensitive topics (Knobloch & Satterlee, 2009).

As a topic often deemed off-limits (Baxter & Wilmot, 1985), conversations about religion may lead to relational ambiguity. As individuals leave home and begin to craft their own beliefs, values, and lifestyles apart from their family of origin, changes in opinion, degree, and behaviors often occur. In addition, potential differences in religious beliefs that may have existed *prior to* one or both siblings moving away from home, but that were unexpressed, may now begin to surface as siblings are no longer bound by their parents' rules or by family norms for disagreement and conflict. This unique time presents an opportunity for siblings to not only decide for themselves what they believe about religion, faith, and spirituality, but also to talk about such things with other family members. These conversations may illuminate potential differences in belief that call into question ongoing desires to remain involved in different familial relationships. Individuals may feel anxious about discussing religion and thus talk about it less or even avoid the topic altogether in interactions with their sibling, opening the door to even more questions about the future of their sibling relationship (cf. Knobloch & Carpenter-Theune, 2004). Depending on religious (dis)similarity, the (in)frequency and (dis)comfort of faith-based conversations may be associated with RU. Drawing from the literature, one might reason that there is an inverse relationship between the comfort of discussing religious topics

with a sibling and RU (Bevan et al., 2006; Knobloch & Satterlee, 2009). It is unclear, however, what type of relationship exists between the frequency of such conversations and RU. Thus, to explore the associations between the frequency and comfort of discussing religious topics and siblings' perceptions of RU, I advanced the following research question and hypothesis:

RQ: What is the relationship between the frequency of religious conversations and relational uncertainty in sibling relationships?

H_1: The comfort siblings feel when discussing religious topics is inversely associated with relational uncertainty.

Although the association between frequency of discussing religion and RU is less clear, the more siblings discuss religious topics, the more likely they may be to view religious (dis)similarity as (un)common ground upon which they continue to build (or forgo) a future friendship as siblings. Whether the frequency of discussing different religious/faith-based/spiritual topics enhances or diminishes RU, then, may depend on how comfortable they feel discussing religion. To explore this line of reasoning, I advanced a second hypothesis:

H_2: The frequency and comfort of siblings' conversations about religious topics interact to predict relational uncertainty, such that frequency negatively predicts relational uncertainty when siblings are comfortable discussing religion but positively predicts relational uncertainty when they are uncomfortable.

As siblings adjust to life outside of their parents' home, the discursive struggles that take place as a result of both individual and relational changes (Halliwell, 2016) often lead to additional questions about the relationship and the individuals within it. Additionally, as this time marks the advent of a more voluntary sibling relationship (Bevan et al., 2006), changes during early adulthood set the stage for the ongoing evolution of the relationship (Brockhage &

Phillips, 2016). Knobloch and Satterlee (2009) even go so far as to say that "how individuals communicate under conditions of uncertainty may determine whether their relationships develop or dissolve" (p. 106). The potential discovery of religious incompatibility presents both challenges and opportunities for understanding *how* siblings communicate. In these conversations, potential face threats (Baxter & Wilmot, 1985), negative emotional and cognitive states (Knobloch & Satterlee, 2009), and questions of communication efficacy abound and may challenge desires on the parts of both siblings to continue investing in their relationship. Consequently, the degree to which the frequency and comfort of religious conversations predicts RU may further depend on how emotionally taxing and draining such conversations are – that is, on the degree of EL that siblings enact when having these conversations.

Emotion Labor and Surface Acting

Defined as "the management of feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display" (Hochschild, 1983, p. 7), EL refers to those instances when individuals seek to regulate the experience and expression of their own felt emotion(s) in order to conform to what they perceive to be the desired emotion(s) from either a social group or a conversational partner. EL represents a response to the dissonance people often sense between what they feel and what they think they *should* feel (Grandey, 2000). Individuals may engage in EL in one of two forms: surface acting and deep acting (Hochschild, 1983). When individuals attempt to cover the emotions they feel with those emotions they perceive to be required, they engage in *surface acting* (Hochschild, 1983). Hochschild looked to the dramaturgical view of acting outlined by Goffman (1959) to describe this type of behavior, which is akin to "putting on a mask" in order to display the desired emotion. Surface acting occurs when individuals hide their real emotions

so that they can express faux emotions that better abide by the (implicit or explicit) rules for conversational engagement (Schrodt & O'Mara, 2019).

Whereas surface acting is characterized by faking a certain emotional response, *deep acting* is the act of actually attempting to feel a required emotion (Hochschild, 1983). Here, individuals work to empathize and experience the emotions they feel are being asked of them (Schrodt & O'Mara, 2019). Given that siblings relationships represent horizontal ties within family systems (as opposed to vertical ties, such as parent-child relationships), deep acting is perhaps less likely to occur in sibling relationships given less formal power differences than those found in employer-employee relationships, the context in which EL was originally postulated (Hochschild, 1983). That is, in less hierarchical family relationships, individuals may feel less of an obligation to change their felt emotions to match the emotional expectations of their conversation partner. Furthermore, the identity-based content of a taboo topic like religion may result in surface acting when differences in belief exist, as opposed to the deep acting that is oftentimes associated with self-talk and perspective-taking (Diefendorff et al., 2005; Schrodt & O'Mara, 2019). According to Decker and Schrodt (2022), in cases of identity-divergent conversations between family members, deep acting could potentially be identity disconfirming for the individual engaging in it, and thus may be enacted far less frequently (if at all) than surface acting during sensitive or taboo conversations. Following this reasoning and the precedence of similar studies (e.g., Decker & Schrodt, 2022), this study focused exclusively on surface acting as the form of EL most relevant to the present inquiry.

As the name suggests, conversations that involve surface acting require more energy than those that do not, which may in turn give way to increased personal and relational stress (Schrodt & O'Mara, 2019). The presence of surface acting within families may be symptomatic

of other relational changes and challenges among family members. For example, Schrodt (2020) tested the associations between family communication patterns and young adult's mental well-being, positioning surface acting with parents as a mediator between the two. His work revealed the negative effects of surface acting on young adults' mental wellness. Specifically, he found high conformity orientation positively predicts young adults' surface acting with mothers, whereas conversation orientation negatively predicts surface acting and deep acting with both mothers and fathers (Schrodt, 2020). The indirect effects of EL, combined with positive associations with stress and mental health symptoms and inverse associations with self-esteem (Schrodt, 2020), set the stage for future scholarship to examine the impact of EL on familial relationships. For instance, LaFreniere and Kulkarni (2022) reported that demand/withdraw patterns directly and indirectly predict EL via relational satisfaction in parent-young adult relationships. This negative relationship with relational satisfaction was expanded further in LaFreniere's (2022) study of EL as a mediator between resilience and relational satisfaction, which posited that EL may serve as a type of relational load in young adults.

In conversations that deal with (divergent) social identities, the face-threatening component of surface acting is underscored as family members communicatively manage not only differences in opinions, behaviors, and emotional responses, but also intergroup differences relating to their very personhood (Soliz & Colaner, 2020). For example, Decker and Schrodt (2022) found not only that sexual minority children's surface acting with their parents is positively associated with their stress and mental health symptoms, but that it is also inversely associated with their self-esteem. In addition, surface acting emerged as a positive predictor of personal-enacted identity gaps with the sexual minorities' family (Decker & Schrodt, 2022).

When it comes to religious conversations that may already be more sensitive than other, less serious or influential conversations, engaging in surface acting may create added stress for family members. The general link between surface acting and stress that has been established through studies of parent-child dyads (e.g., Decker & Schrodt, 2022; Schrodt, 2020) should also be present in sibling dyads. For emerging adults whose sibling relationships have recently become more voluntary, this added pressure when discussing religious topics may diminish their desires to invest in the sibling relationship, as they may see less of a future for the formerly obligatory bond. It stands to reason, therefore, that the degree to which siblings engage in surface acting may serve to either mitigate or enhance the associations between frequency and comfort of religious conversations and RU. Thus, I proposed two additional hypotheses:

H_3: Individuals' surface acting when discussing religious topics with a sibling moderates the association between the frequency of discussing religion with a sibling and relational uncertainty in the sibling relationship.

H_4: Individuals' surface acting when discussing religious topics with a sibling moderates the association between the comfort of discussing religion with a sibling and relational uncertainty in the sibling relationship.

Sibling Confirmation as Relational Context

Finally, the frequency and comfort of religious conversations that siblings have as they move from less to more voluntary relationships, and the surface acting involved in those conversations, are likely to vary as a function of the relational context itself. More specifically, the degree to which siblings have established (dis)confirming relationships may serve to either diminish or enhance the moderating effects of surface acting on the associations between the frequency and comfort of religious conversations and RU. *Confirmation* refers to messages that

indicate people are "endorsed, recognized, and acknowledged as valuable, significant individuals" (Ellis, 2002, p. 321). As a vital component to identity development, confirmation consists of those interactions which aid individuals in both determining and forming the person they wish to be (Buber, 1957; Ellis, 2002). Because humans have a fundamental need to be validated, early confirmation scholars (e.g., Buber, 1965) argued that confirmation was crucial to personal development (Dailey, 2006). Following this reasoning, Dailey (2010) expanded earlier conceptualizations of confirmation to include both acceptance and challenge. Confirmation was first explored in parent-child relationships and has since been extended to sibling relationships (Dailey, 2010), further reinforcing the belief that families create more or less confirming environments in the lives of children. Hence, confirmation should be a key component of healthy sibling and other family relationships (Buber, 1957).

Communicating *acceptance* of a person apart from the things they say, do, or believe is a central tenet of confirmation theory. Dailey (2006) explained that confirming responses are those that "show a positive regard for the other" (p. 436). Rather than simply being praised for a job well done or ignoring a job poorly done, confirmation consists of those communicative messages that are person-centered regardless of behavior (Dailey, 2006). Another important element of confirmation is those behaviors that challenge an individual to attain their full potential (Dailey, 2008). *Challenge* is comprised of words and actions "that engage another in a competition or confrontation, call something into question, or test one's abilities in a demanding but stimulating manner" (Dailey, 2008, p. 644). Communicating challenge, in a sense, is communicating what is possible. Taken together, acceptance and challenge help give children not only confidence but also the space to use, and further cultivate, that confidence by exploring things outside their comfort zones. In fact, receiving both accepting and challenging messages from family members

is positively associated with the mental well-being and self-concept development of adolescents (Dailey, 2009, 2010). Within sibling relationships, these effects remain even after controlling for parental confirmation (Dailey, 2010). Sibling confirmation has also been shown to moderate the inverse association between differential parent treatment and relational satisfaction in sibling relationships (Phillips & Schrodt, 2015).

Because of its focus on the quality of communication and the extent to which messages make people feel validated (Dailey, 2006), confirmation becomes increasingly salient in cases of divergent identities. The relational assurances that come with confirming relationships may buffer the otherwise negative outcomes associated with disagreements and conflict (Schrodt & LaFreniere, 2022). In addition, confirmation may create a more secure communicative environment wherein the associations between emotionally taxing conversations about taboo topics and RU are altered. In other words, the degree to which surface acting alters the proposed association between sibling discussions of religion and their reports of RU may further depend upon the degree to which they have established a (dis)confirming relationship. In cases where siblings are confirming of each other more generally, surface acting may diminish the positive associations that uncomfortable discussions of religion have on feelings of RU. On the other hand, if siblings have established a relatively confirming relationship despite their perceived (dis)similarities in religious belief, then the degree to which surface acting alters the association between religious conversations and RU may be diminished. Following this line of reasoning, I advanced a final hypothesis and corresponding model (see Figure 1), which positioned confirmation as a potential moderator of the conditional associations between frequency and comfort of religious conversations and RU in sibling relationships:

H₅: The conditional effects of religious conversations (i.e., frequency and comfort) on siblings' relational uncertainty depends upon sibling confirmation, such that the moderating effect of surface acting is enhanced in disconfirming relationships, whereas the moderating effect of surface acting is reduced in confirming sibling relationships.

Figure 1

A Moderated Moderation Model of Religious Conversations and Relational Uncertainty in

(Dis)Confirming Sibling Relationships
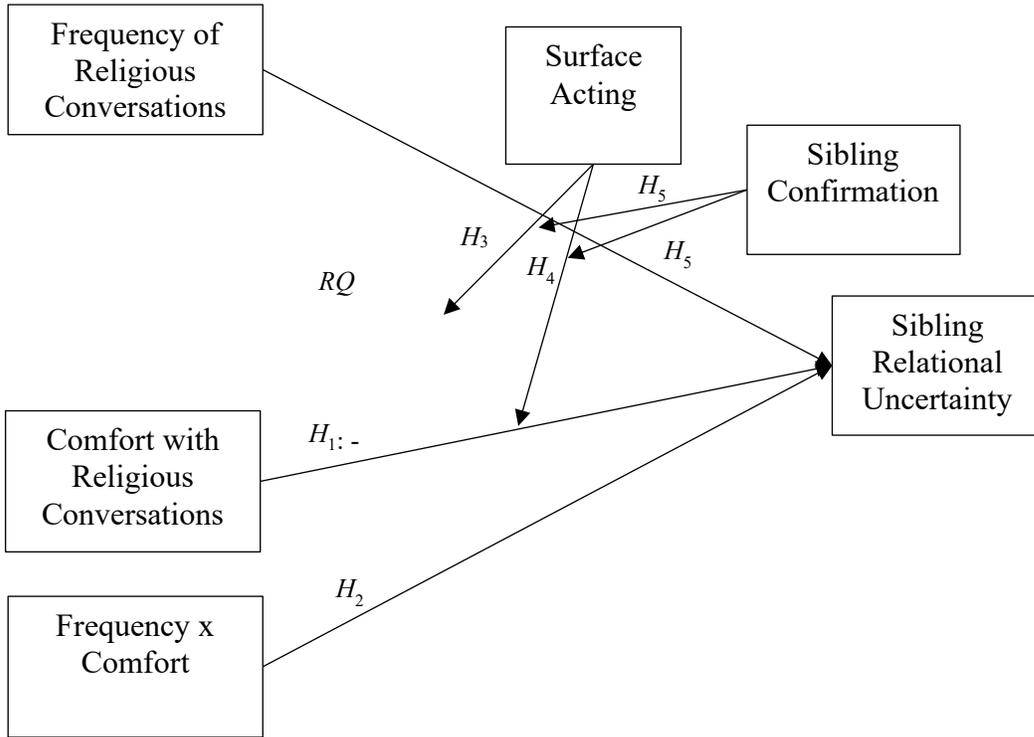
Method

Participants

The sample consisted of 218 young adult siblings, ranging in age from 18 to 29 ($M =$ 19.4, $SD = 2.1$), who reported on siblings that ranged in age from 12 to 34 ($M = 20.3$, $SD = 3.8$). All participants were instructed to select the sibling closest to them in age and complete all survey measures while thinking about this sibling. The vast majority of participants reported on a full biological sibling (91.7%, $n = 200$), with the remaining participants reporting on a half sibling (4.6%, $n = 10$), an adopted sibling (1.8%, $n = 4$), or a stepsibling (1.4%, $n = 3$; one did not indicate type of sibling relationship). Most of the participants identified as White (84.9%, $n = 185$), with the rest of the sample identifying as Latinx/Hispanic (7.8%, $n = 17$), multiethnic (3.7%, $n = 8$), Asian/Asian American (2.3%, $n = 5$), and African American/Black (1.4%, $n = 5$). More than two-thirds of the sample identified as cisgender female (70.2%, $n = 153$), with the remaining participants identifying as cisgender male (28.4%, $n = 62$), nonbinary (0.9%, $n = 2$), and female to male transgender (0.5%, $n = 1$). The gender of the siblings that participants reported on was split almost evenly between cisgender male (50.0%, $n = 109$) and cisgender female (48.6%, $n = 106$), with a small minority of nonbinary (0.9%, $n = 2$) and female to male transgender siblings (0.5%, $n = 1$). With regard to sexual orientation, most participants self-identified as straight (92.7%, $n = 202$), although 2.8% identified as bisexual ($n = 6$), 1.8% as queer ($n = 4$), 1.4% as lesbian ($n = 3$), and 1.4% as gay ($n = 3$). Likewise, most target siblings were described as straight (94.5%, $n = 206$), although 2.3% were described as bisexual ($n = 5$), 0.9% as queer ($n = 2$), 0.9% as lesbian ($n = 2$), 0.9% as pansexual (0.9%, $n = 2$), and 0.5% as gay ($n = 1$).

When asked about their religious affiliation, slightly more than half of the participants identified as Catholic (33.5%, $n = 73$) or as Non-Denominational Christian (21.15%, $n = 46$), with the remaining participants reporting a variety of other Christian denominations (e.g., Presbyterian, Baptist, Episcopal, Church of Christ; 33.9%, $n = 74$). There were four other world religions represented by one participant each for Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, and Hinduism, as well as 12 participants who identified as agnostic (5.5%) and four who identified as atheist (1.8%). Most participants reported that their sibling's religious affiliation was similar to their own (83.0%, $n = 181$).

Procedures

After obtaining human subjects approval, participants were recruited through online distribution on the researcher's social media pages and through an introductory communication course at a private university in the Southwest. Prior to completing the online survey, participants were directed to an informed consent page where they learned the purpose of the study, that their participation was voluntary, and where they verified that they met the inclusion criteria to participate in the study (i.e., participants needed to be at least 18 years old and have at least one sibling who was at least 12 years old). Upon providing consent, participants completed an anonymous online survey using Qualtrics (see Appendix). Student participants were awarded a minimal amount of extra credit for completing the survey (less than 2%). Survey measures were randomized in order to minimize order effects. The survey took approximately 20 minutes to complete.

Measures

Frequency and Comfort of Religious Conversations

Frequency and comfort of religious conversations were measured using McCurry and colleagues' (2012) scales. Participants were asked to indicate how frequently they talk about a list of 23 religious topics (e.g., God, religious texts, faith, prayer, personal spiritual health, etc.) with their sibling, as well as how comfortable they feel discussing the topics. For the frequency scale, responses were solicited using a five-point scale ranging from (1) *never* to (5) *very often*. For the comfort scale, responses were solicited using a five-point Likert-type scale that ranges from (1) *very uncomfortable* to (5) *very comfortable*. In previous research, McCurry et al. (2012) reported alpha reliabilities of .98 for both scales. In the present study, both the frequency measure (ω = .95) and the comfort measure (ω = .98) produced excellent internal reliability.

Relational Uncertainty

Siblings' RU was measured using an adapted version of Yoon and Theiss's (2022) RU scale. Whereas the measure was originally created to assess RU in romantic relationships, I adapted only those items pertaining to sibling relationships. Participants were asked to rate how certain they are about the degree of involvement in their sibling relationship on a six-point scale ranging from (1) *strongly disagree* to (6) *strongly agree*. Self uncertainty was measured with statements such as "I sometimes wonder how important the relationship is to me." Partner uncertainty contained items such as "I sometimes wonder how committed my sibling is to the relationship," and relationship uncertainty was measured with items such as "I sometimes wonder whether me and my sibling feel the same way about each other." Yoon and Theiss (2022) reported alpha reliabilities of .95 for all three scales. In the present study, the adapted measures produced excellent internal reliability for self uncertainty (ω = .91), partner uncertainty

(ω = .95), and sibling relationship uncertainty (ω = .91). Composite scores for the three subscales were averaged together to form a composite for sibling RU.

Surface Acting

Surface acting during discussions of religious topics was measured using an adapted version of the surface acting subscale from Schrodt and O'Mara's (2019) Emotion Labor in Families (ELF) scale. Participants were asked to consider their general feelings when discussing matters of faith/religion/spirituality and respond using a seven-point frequency scale that ranged from (1) *never* to (7) *always*. the surface acting subscale consisted of 13 items (e.g., "When discussing religious/faith-based/spiritual topics, I put on a 'mask' in order to display the emotions I need around my sibling") that produced excellent internal reliability (ω = .97).

Sibling Confirmation

Sibling confirmation was measured using an adapted version of Dailey's (2010) parental confirmation scale (i.e., for sibling relationships). Participants were asked to recall their experiences with their sibling during their adolescent (ages 12-18) years and then choose the number that best describes their agreement. *Challenge* contained 15 items such as "My sibling asked me to explain the reasoning behind my decisions" and "My sibling encouraged me to explore different ideas"; *acceptance* consisted of 18 items such as "My sibling demonstrated that s/he was genuinely listening when I was speaking about issues important to me" and "My sibling made statements that communicated to me that I was a unique, valuable human being." All responses were recorded on a 7-point frequency scale ranging from (1) *never* to (7) *always*. Dailey (2010) reported alpha reliabilities ranging from .77-.82 for challenge and .91-.93 for acceptance. In this study, both sibling challenge (ω = .93) and sibling acceptance (ω = .92) produced excellent internal reliability.

Control Variables

To account for potential differences in RU based on other aspects of siblings' religious identities, I conducted preliminary analyses to identify potential control variables in the primary analyses.

Religious affiliation. Participants were asked to choose the religious affiliation or denomination that best describes them and their sibling using a 19-item list adapted from previous research (McCurry et al., 2012).

Perceived religious homophily. The degree to which participants perceive themselves as being similar to or different from their siblings on matters of faith/spirituality/religion was measured using an adapted version of McCroskey and colleagues' (1975) perceived homophily scale. Participants were asked to indicate the degree to which they are similar in religious beliefs using a seven-item, 7-point semantic differential scale (e.g., "similar-dissimilar, thinks like me-doesn't think like me, . . ."). The adapted homophily measure was internally reliable ($\omega = .87$).

Data Analysis

Preliminary analyses were conducted using SPSS to determine if there were significant associations between the two control variables (i.e., religious affiliation and perceived homophily in religious beliefs) and RU. Primary analyses consisted of two steps. First, H_1, H_2, and the *RQ* were tested using simple correlations (for the *RQ* and H_1) and Model 1 (for H_2) in Hayes's (2018) PROCESS macro (v. 3.2) for SPSS. After determining whether the findings for H_2 supported the inclusion (or exclusion) of the interaction of frequency and comfort in subsequent analyses, the second set of analyses tested the remaining predictions displayed in Figure 1 (i.e., $H_3 - H_5$) using Model 3 in PROCESS. Both sets of models controlled for any significant associations that emerged in the results of the preliminary analyses.

Results

Preliminary Analysis

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

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics and Pearson's Product-moment Correlations for all Variables (N=218)

Variable	*M*	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Frequency RC	2.37	0.80	—						
2. Comfort RC	3.97	0.79	.39**	—					
3. SA	1.88	1.13	-.03	-.35**	—				
4. Challenge	4.83	1.17	.31**	.32**	-.35**	—			
5. Acceptance	4.97	1.10	.23**	.33**	-.35**	.61**	—		
6. RU	2.19	1.27	-.14*	-.28**	.27**	-.40**	-.52**	—	
7. Homophily	4.79	1.40	.28**	.24**	-.26**	.43**	.47**	-.29**	—

Note. RC = religious conversations. SA = surface acting. RU = relational uncertainty.

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

Preliminary analyses were conducted to determine if control variables were needed in tests of $H_2 - H_5$. Participant age and sibling age were not associated with participants' reports of RU. However, perceived homophily in religious beliefs was (a) inversely associated with sibling RU and surface acting, (b) positively associated with frequency and comfort of discussing religious topics, and (c) positively associated with sibling acceptance and challenge (see Table 1). Likewise, a series of independent samples t-tests revealed significant differences in all six variables based on (dis)similarity in religious affiliation (see Table 2). Thus, (dis)similarity in religious affiliation and perceived homophily in religious beliefs were entered as control variables.

Table 2

Independent Samples T-tests for (Dis)similarity in Religious Affiliation between Siblings

Variable	Perceived Similarity	*M*	*SD*	*t*(216)	*p*	*r*
1. Frequency RC	Similar	2.44	.78	2.61	.010	.23
	Dissimilar	2.07	.81			
2. Comfort RC	Similar	4.05	.76	3.31	.001	.28
	Dissimilar	3.59	.84			
3. Surface acting[a]	Similar	1.78	1.04	-2.45	.016	.24
	Dissimilar	2.38	1.39			
4. Challenge	Similar	4.99	1.11	4.80	< .001	.40
	Dissimilar	4.02	1.15			
5. Acceptance	Similar	5.08	1.08	3.31	< .001	.29
	Dissimilar	4.43	1.04			
6. RU	Similar	2.08	1.22	-2.96	.003	.25
	Dissimilar	2.74	1.38			

Note. RC = religious conversations. RU = relational uncertainty. [a] Equal variances not assumed

for surface acting (*df* = 44.54).

Primary Analyses

In response to the RQ, the results indicated that the frequency with which participants discussed religious topics with their sibling was inversely associated with RU ($r = -.14$, $p < .05$).

H_1 predicted that the comfort siblings feel when discussing religious topics would be negatively associated with RU. The results indicated that comfort discussing religious topics is inversely associated with RU ($r = -.28$, $p < .001$), and thus, H_1 was supported.

H_2 predicted that the frequency and comfort of siblings' conversations about religious topics would interact to predict RU, such that frequency would negatively predict RU when siblings are comfortable discussing religion but would positively predict RU when they are uncomfortable. Using Model 1 in PROCESS and controlling for similarity in religious affiliation and perceived homophily in religious beliefs, the results produced a significant multiple correlation coefficient, $R = .37$, $F(5, 212) = 6.67$, $p < .001$, accounting for 13.6% of the variance in sibling RU. Only comfort with discussing religious topics ($b = -.37$, $p < .01$) and perceived homophily in religious beliefs ($b = -.19$, $p < .01$) emerged as significant predictors in the model. The two-way interaction of frequency x comfort was not statistically significant, and thus, H_2 was not supported. Thus, for the remaining hypotheses, the interaction term for frequency and comfort with discussing religious topics was excluded from further analyses.

Frequency of Religious Conversations and Sibling RU

To test $H_3 - H_5$, four multiple regression models were obtained using Model 3 in PROCESS. The first regression model, using frequency as the predictor variable (X), surface acting as the first moderator (W), challenge as the second moderator (Z), and comfort with discussing religion, perceived homophily in religious beliefs, and similarity in religious affiliation as covariates, produced a significant multiple correlation coefficient, $R = .52$, $F(10$,

207) = 7.50, $p < .001$, accounting for 26.6% of the shared variance in sibling RU. Although neither frequency nor surface acting emerged as statistically significant predictors in the model, there were significant effects for sibling challenge ($b = -.24$, $SE = .08$, $t = -3.02$, $p < .01$), the two-way interaction effect of frequency and surface acting ($b = .28$, $SE = .09$, $t = 3.07$, $p < .01$), and the two-way interaction effect of challenge and frequency ($b = .24$, $SE = .08$, $t = 3.09$, $p < .01$) on sibling RU. The three-way interaction of frequency x surface acting x challenge was not statistically significant. Both two-way interaction effects were probed using the procedures described by Aiken and West (1991) (including mean-centered product terms and the use of +/- 1.5 standard deviations from the mean). Figure 1 displays the decomposition of the first two-way interaction effect of frequency of discussing religious topics and surface acting on sibling RU, which according to Holbert and Park (2020), can be classified as a cleaved, transverse interaction effect. At low levels of surface acting, frequency of discussing religion inversely predicts sibling RU ($b = -.43$, $SE = .19$, $p < .05$), whereas at high levels of surface acting, frequency of discussing religion positively predicts sibling RU ($b = .50$, $SE = .19$, $p < .05$).
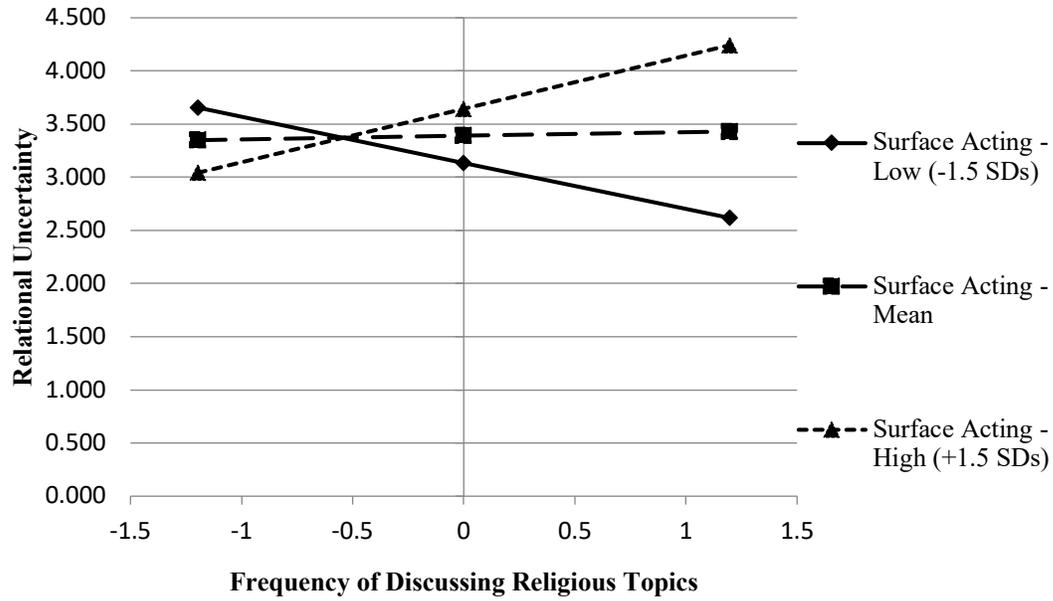
Figure 2. *Decomposition of the Two-way Interaction Effect of Frequency of Discussing Religious Topics and Surface Acting on Siblings' Relational Uncertainty*

For the second two-way interaction effect (see Figure 2), sibling challenge and frequency of discussing religious topics produced a contingent, transverse negative effect on sibling RU, as sibling challenge inversely predicted sibling RU for siblings who never discuss religion ($b = -.54$, $SE = .12$, $p < .01$) or sometimes discuss religion ($b = -.24$, $SE = .08$, $p < .01$), but no longer predicted sibling RU for siblings who frequently discuss religion ($b = .05$, $SE = .12$, $p > .05$).
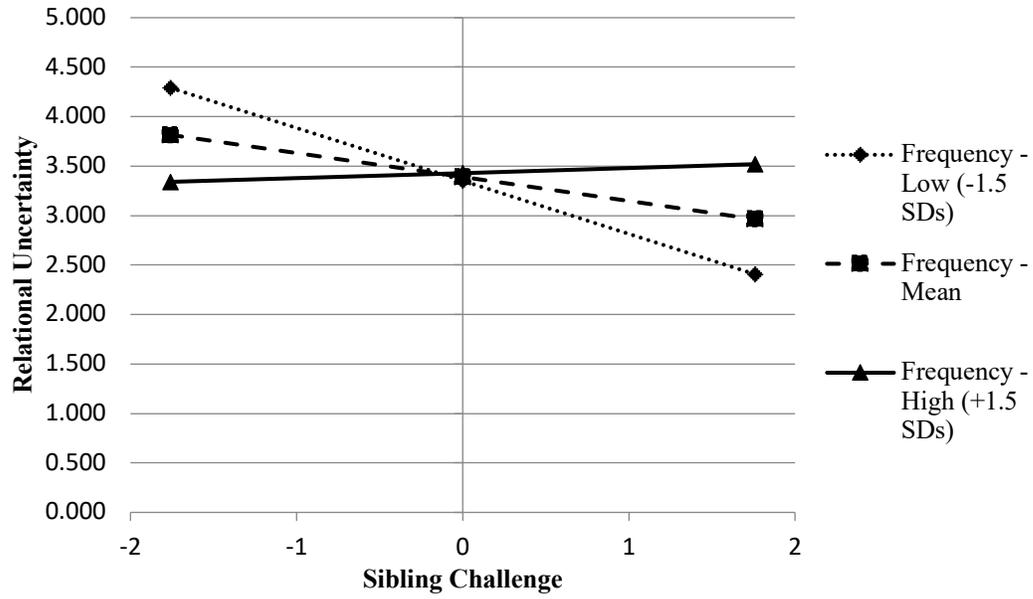
Figure 3. *Decomposition of the Two-Way Interaction Effect of Sibling Challenge and Frequency of Discussing Religious Topics on Siblings' Relational Uncertainty*

The second regression model, which replaced sibling challenge with sibling acceptance as the second moderator (Z), produced similar results. The multiple correlation coefficient was significant, $R = .58$, $F(10, 207) = 10.65$, $p < .001$, with the model accounting for 34.0% of the shared variance in sibling RU. Again, neither frequency nor surface acting were significant predictors in the model, although sibling acceptance ($b = -.49$, $SE = .08$, $t = -6.16$, $p < .001$), the two-way interaction effect of frequency and surface acting ($b = .29$, $SE = .10$, $t = 2.76$, $p < .01$), and the two-way interaction effect of frequency and sibling acceptance ($b = .21$, $SE = .09$, $t = 2.35$, $p < .05$) emerged as significant predictors. Again, the three-way interaction was not statistically significant. The cleaved, transverse interaction effect of frequency and surface acting on sibling RU remained (see Figure 3), with frequency inversely predicting sibling RU at low levels of surface acting ($b = -.50$, $SE = .21$, $p < .05$) but positively predicting sibling RU at high levels of surface acting ($b = .46$, $SE = .21$, $p < .05$).
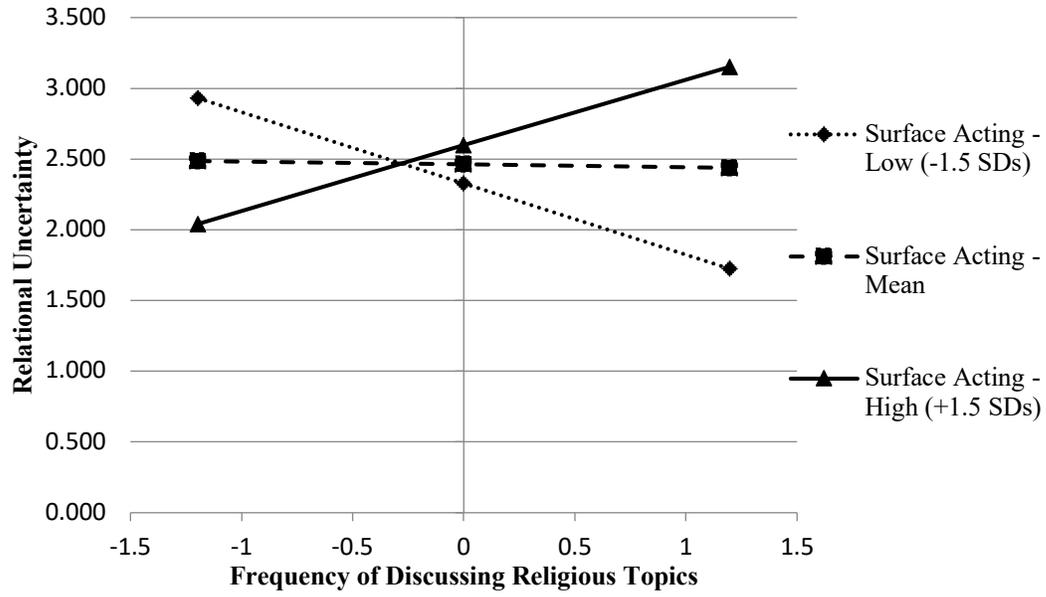
Figure 4. *Decomposition of the Two-way Interaction Effect of Frequency of Discussing Religious Topics and Surface Acting on Siblings' Relational Uncertainty in the Sibling Acceptance Model*

Likewise, there was a contingent, convergent negative interaction of sibling acceptance and frequency of discussing religious topics (see Figure 5), as sibling acceptance inversely predicts sibling RU when siblings are uncomfortable discussing religious topics ($b = -.74$, $SE = .13$, $p < .01$) or somewhat comfortable ($b = -.49$, $SE = .08$, $p < .01$), but it no longer predicts sibling RU when siblings are very comfortable discussing religion ($b = -.25$, $SE = .13$, $p > .05$).
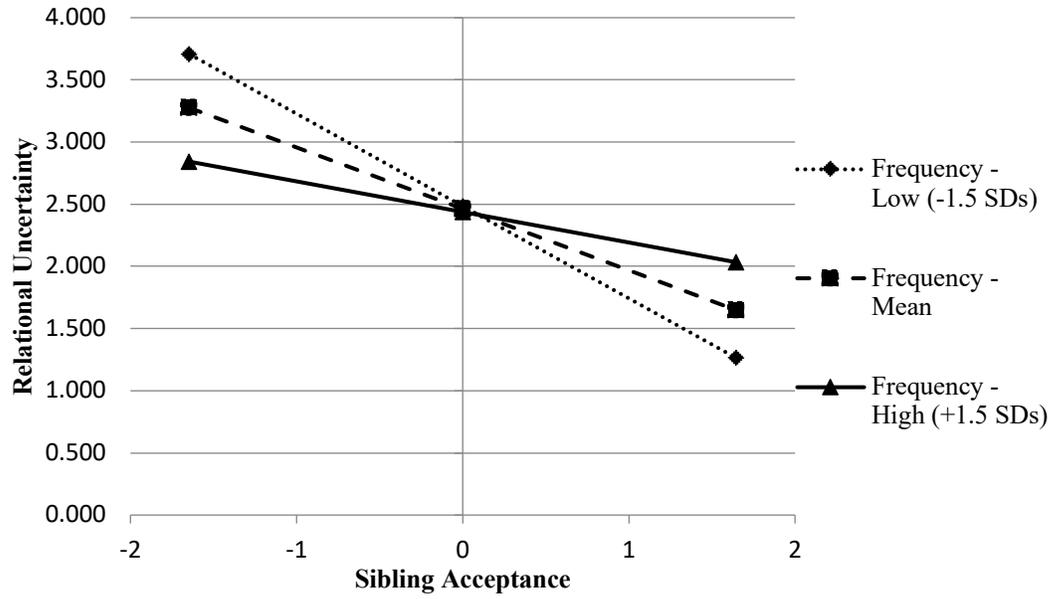
Figure 5. *Decomposition of the Two-way Interaction Effect of Sibling Acceptance and Frequency of Discussing Religious Topics on Siblings Relational Uncertainty*

Comfort with Discussing Religious Topics and Sibling RU

The third regression model, using comfort as the predictor variable (X), surface acting as the first moderator (W), challenge as the second moderator (Z), and frequency discussing religion, perceived homophily in religious beliefs, and similarity in religious affiliation as covariates, produced a significant multiple correlation coefficient, $R = .49$, $F(10, 207) = 6.44$, $p < .001$, accounting for 23.7% of the shared variance in sibling RU. Although comfort with discussing religious topics approached statistical significance ($b = -.23$, $SE = .12$, $t = -1.92$, $p = .056$), only sibling challenge ($b = -.29$, $SE = .08$, $t = -3.50$, $p < .001$) and the two-way interaction of comfort and sibling challenge ($b = .19$, $SE = .09$, $t = 2.13$, $p < .05$) emerged as significant predictors in the model. Figure 5 displays the decomposition of this contingent, convergent negative interaction effect. Sibling challenge inversely predicts sibling RU when siblings are uncomfortable discussing religious topics ($b = -.53$, $SE = .14$, $p < .01$) or somewhat comfortable ($b = -.29$, $SE = .08$, $p < .01$), but it no longer predicts sibling RU when siblings are very comfortable discussing religion ($b = -.06$, $SE = .14$, $p > .05$). Again, consistent with both models for frequency of discussing religious topics, the three-way interaction of comfort x surface acting x challenge was not statistically significant.
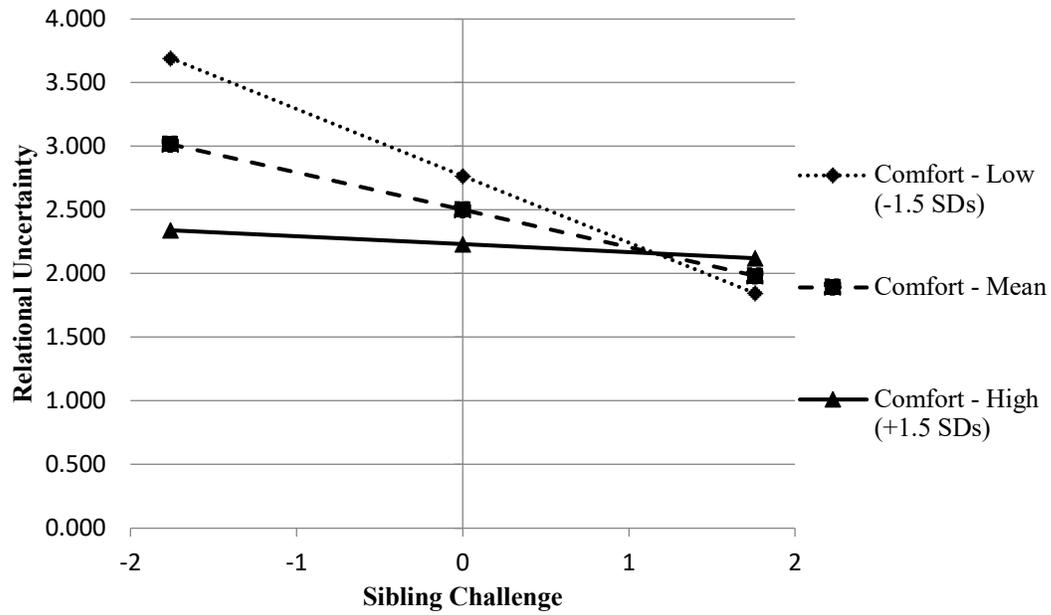
Figure 6. *Decomposition of the Two-way Interaction Effect of Sibling Challenge and Comfort with Discussing Religious Topics on Siblings' Relational Uncertainty*

The final regression model, which replaced sibling challenge with sibling acceptance as the second moderator (Z), produced a significant multiple correlation coefficient, $R = .55$, $F(10, 207) = 8.96$, $p < .001$, accounting for 30.2% of the shared variance in sibling RU. Contrary to the first three models, only sibling acceptance emerged as a statistically significant predictor in the model ($b = -.54$, $SE = .08$, $p < .001$).

Taken as a whole, the results from the four regression models provided support for H_3 but failed to support H_4 and H_5.

Discussion

Few family conversations are more challenging, and potentially more uncertainty-inducing, than when differences in social identity emerge between family members. Although scholars have examined such differences in vertical family relationships, such as grandparent-grandchild relationships (e.g., Soliz & Harwood, 2006) and parent-child relationships (e.g., Colaner et al., 2014; Decker & Schrodt, 2022), much less is known about identity-divergent conversations in horizontal family relationships, such as those that may occur between siblings who hold different religious beliefs and values. Consequently, the present study had three primary goals: (a) to examine the potential associations that exist between the frequency and comfort with which siblings discuss religious topics and their relational uncertainty (RU); (b) to explore the degree to which the associations depend on siblings' surface acting; and (c) to test whether the conditional associations among frequency and comfort of discussing religious topics and siblings' RU further depend upon an important indicator of relational quality, namely, sibling confirmation. In general, the results supported the theoretical line of reasoning advanced in this report, as both the frequency and comfort of discussing religious topics are inversely associated with sibling RU. Additionally, surface acting emerged as a moderator of frequency of

religious conversations and sibling RU, but not as a moderator of comfort of religious conversations and RU. Likewise, this moderating effect of surface acting on frequency did not depend on sibling confirmation (i.e., acceptance and challenge). Instead, both dimensions of confirmation inversely predicted sibling RU and varied as a function of how frequently siblings discussed religious topics, although the inverse association between sibling challenge and RU also varied as a function of how comfortable the sibling felt discussing religious topics. Consequently, the results extend previous research on religious communication (e.g., Colaner et al., 2014) and emotion labor (e.g., Schrodt, 2020) in familial relationships, as well as confirmation theory (e.g., Dailey, 2006, 2008), by providing at least three implications worth noting.

First, given inverse associations between the frequency and comfort of discussing religious topics and RU in sibling relationships, this study reveals an interesting line of conversation that may help ease questions of future involvement for siblings when they move away from home and transition to voluntary friendships. One possible explanation for these inverse associations could be that conversations involving the presence of a higher power, life and death, good and evil, purpose, and other religious topics are reflective of relational closeness and trust, indicators of relational quality that help bind siblings together and help them navigate the transition from involuntary to more voluntary relationships. The connection that comes from having thoughtful and meaningful conversations about religious beliefs and identity could also be associated with siblings' self-disclosure, more generally, which is inversely associated with sibling RU (Schrodt & Phillips 2016). Perhaps siblings who self-disclose with moderate to high frequency also engage in more frequent discussions of taboo topics, such as religion or politics, even if they perceive subtle differences in beliefs between them. Relatedly, siblings who are

comfortable discussing religion may be less likely to fear destructive conflict or relational decay as a result of these conversations. Comfortability in these cases may instead signal, at least to some extent, comfortability with the (divergent) religious identity of the sibling. Rather than avoiding a potentially face-threatening topic (and thus having more uncertainty about it), siblings who feel comfortable engaging in religious conversations may have fewer questions about the nature of their relationship than do those less comfortable discussing religion because they are less concerned with the implications of what they may discover, even when there is disagreement.

The second implication to come from the present inquiry involves the two-way interaction effect of frequency of discussing religious topics and surface acting on sibling RU. According to Holbert and Park (2020), this cleaved, transverse interaction effect may represent one of the greater theoretical contributions to come from this study, as it represents a moderating factor that completely reverses the association between frequency and sibling RU. When siblings are engaging in high levels of surface acting, discussing religious topics on a frequent basis is likely to increase RU, whereas when siblings are not engaging in surface acting during those discussions, such conversations are likely to decrease RU. One explanation for these opposing trends may stem from the stress and energy it takes to manage one's private emotions while publicly expressing emotions and sentiments that are contrary to how one actually feels. That is, the (in)sincerity involved with discussing religious beliefs and values with a sibling when beliefs and values are (mis)aligned may tax both siblings and lead to questions of future involvement and undermine (or enhance) desires to maintain the relationship in adulthood.

Specifically for religious conversations, the moderating effects of surface acting on the association between frequency and RU also highlights the identity components at play.

Depending on how sincerely siblings feel they are able to express their identity (as opposed to feelings of insincerity simply to "keep the peace"), some religious conversations may be more stressful than others. Those siblings that frequently discuss religious topics with low levels of surface acting may not feel compelled to alter their emotional expressions about each topic, but instead may sense some level of tolerance and acceptance from their sibling despite having potentially incompatible beliefs. In these cases, discussing a sensitive topic within a conversational environment of ease may lead to more confidence in their desires for, and perceptions of, future relational involvement. This supports the literature concerning RU in sibling relationships (e.g., Bevan et al., 2006; Schrodt & Phillips, 2016) by highlighting one context wherein free, open, and emotionally honest communication between family members can serve to decrease uncertainty, even in cases of divergence.

On the contrary, siblings who have high levels of surface acting in their discussions of religion are continually engaging in the masking of their true feelings. Previously established associations with identity management (e.g., Decker & Schrodt, 2022) warrant the idea that these siblings would tend to feel less freedom, ability, and space to express their genuine thoughts, feelings, and ideas. As such, they are more likely to question the relational involvement of their sibling, who is making them feel as if they need to alter their feelings, as well as their own involvement, as the sheer amount of additional energy these conversations are requiring may push them to the point of emotional exhaustion (Schrodt, 2020). Hence, these findings set the stage for future scholars to investigate stress as a potential explanatory mechanism that links surface acting in sibling conversations regarding sensitive topics to RU and other relational outcomes.

A third set of implications revolve around the significant interaction effects that emerged for sibling confirmation and frequency and comfort of discussing religious topics on sibling RU. Contrary to what was originally hypothesized (i.e., H_4 and H_5), sibling challenge and acceptance emerged as robust predictors of sibling RU that varied as a function of how frequently siblings talked about different religious topics, and in the case of sibling challenge, as a function of how comfortable they felt doing so. In other words, both dimensions of sibling confirmation may reduce feelings of RU, but only for those siblings who sometimes discuss religion or who choose not to discuss it at all. This may be due in part to the type of relational context that gives way to frequent discussions of religion. It could be that frequent discussions of religious topics between siblings occur only in confirming sibling relationships, such that the inclusion of high frequency negates the otherwise inverse effects of both challenge and acceptance on RU. However, for those siblings who spend very little time discussing important matters, such as religion, the potential influence of confirmation becomes even more important, especially as it pertains to their desires for future involvement in the relationship. Infrequent religious discussions could also be indicative of subtle incompatibilities in social identity that confirmation may be vital to assuage. Put simply, siblings with divergent social identities may "agree to disagree" while emphasizing their mutual acceptance of, and desire for, what is best for the other.

In a similar fashion, the significance of the two-way interaction effect of sibling challenge and comfort with discussing religious topics on siblings' RU is limited to low to moderate levels of comfortability. Siblings' ability to confirm one another by challenging them to grow as individuals becomes especially critical to questions of future involvement and desires for relational maintenance when they are uncomfortable discussing religion. Again, the importance of a confirming relational context is augmented all the more as siblings transition

away from their involuntary connection marked by proximity, and toward a voluntary friendship that is bound less so by social norms and familial obligations. For siblings whose conversations are perhaps more surface level and who may be less comfortable discussing matters of theology, morality, or philosophy, challenging one another to continue growing as individuals becomes even more critical to the experience of RU. Whether it be religiously dissimilar siblings urging each other to grow in tolerance or religiously similar siblings exhorting each other to grow in conviction, sibling challenge may be vital to RU when siblings are uncomfortable discussing religious topics, as it is one possible way they can continue to provide meaningful social support despite differences in religious belief.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

Theoretically, this study contributes to the existing literature by suggesting that *how* siblings discuss sensitive topics matters as much, if not more than, the content of those discussions. Particularly when it comes to the experience and expression of emotions in conversations regarding identity-centered topics such as religion, failing to evaluate not only the types of messages but also the manner in which they are conveyed is provides an incomplete picture of the interaction. Another theoretical implication to come from this study is the idea that sibling confirmation may function more as a primary contributor to sibling RU, instead of a boundary condition for religious conversations and RU. The findings suggest that sibling confirmation predicts sibling RU, but only under certain frequencies of discussing religion, and that surface acting moderates the associations between the frequency with which siblings discuss religion and their RU. Taken together, these results paint a nuanced and complex picture of how relational quality and emotional expression alter the combined associations among frequency and comfort of religions conversations and RU in sibling relationships.

Practically speaking, the results of this study provide beneficial knowledge for siblings attempting to navigate the liminal space between involuntary family members and voluntary friends. Perhaps the most important takeaway for these siblings – whether they be religiously similar or dissimilar – is to communicate validation, support, and respect to one another apart from any differences in belief. Those conversations that create space for a variety of emotions to be expressed and experienced also create space for identity acceptance. Siblings who find themselves in the transition to young adulthood should prioritize free and open conversations, even over those topics they might deem sensitive or taboo. In doing so, they may not only strengthen their relationship by engaging in meaningful conversation, but they may mitigate RU by clarifying their desires for future involvement and affirming their personal and relational identities. Nevertheless, for those siblings that do not frequently engage in these conversations, the presence of confirmation (challenge and acceptance) can still assuage their RU and enhance desires to maintain the relationship moving forward. Likewise, family counselors and therapists might find the results of this study helpful too. For siblings who are navigating either divergent identities or other circumstantial changes that might threaten their relationship, directing them to use confirming messages, no matter the topic of conversation, would enable siblings to be themselves and help navigate some of the inevitable difficulties associated with family relationships during times of transition.

Limitations and Future Directions

Although these are indeed notable implications, they should be considered in light of the study's limitations. First, the homogeneity of the sample limits the generalizability of the findings and precludes broader claims about religious conversations and sibling relationships in general. Specifically, the sample included primarily White, straight, religiously affiliated females

who were attending a private, southern university. Less than 10% of the participants identified with a non-Christian religion (e.g., Islamic, Hindu, Buddhism) or as agnostic or atheistic, and 83% of the sample reported a similar religious affiliation with their sibling. Although the findings of this study were generated while controlling for perceived similarity in religious affiliation and perceived homophily in religious beliefs, a replication study focused on interfaith sibling dyads could further expand the literature on divergent family identities and help enhance the generalizability of the present findings.

Additionally, because the data were collected cross-sectionally, no causal claims can be made. Future studies should employ longitudinal methods to enhance an understanding of how religious conversations and siblings RU change over time as siblings transition from adolescence to emerging adulthood to middle and late adulthood. Researchers could also gather dyadic data to expand the number of perspectives and test for actor and partner effects, as this self-reported data set was limited to only one sibling's perception of religious conversations and RU. Expanding the number of siblings involved in religious conversations and RU would further enable scholars to explore patterns of generalized and dyadic reciprocity, as well as systemic patterns of religious conversation that portend more or less involvement between siblings in adulthood.

Finally, the scope of this study was limited, to some degree, by the specific measures included within it. For instance, I explored religious conversations in general and thus did not account for the strength of participants' (or their sibling's) religious beliefs and convictions. Future research might examine whether the potency and centrality of one's religious belief bears any weight on the frequency and comfort with which they discuss religion in familial relationships. Relatedly, I did not include measures of communication efficacy or of relational

intimacy between siblings. Given McCurry et al.'s (2012) findings, namely that communication efficacy and relational intimacy may further alter the associations between religious conversations and RU in romantic relationships, researchers might extend the current study by considering siblings' communication efficacy and closeness as additional factors that may further contextualize the associations reported here.

These limitations notwithstanding, the results of this study contribute to an understanding of how the discussion of a sensitive topic such as religion influences sibling relationships. Future researchers should investigate whether the results of this study are unique to sibling relationships, or if other familial relationships would produce similar results. Scholars might also consider this context from a more identity-based lens, exploring how taboo conversations within families, especially when EL is involved, impact individuals' multilayered identities. Through continued investigations of social identity differences and similarities in sibling relationships, researchers can enhance both theoretical and pragmatic understandings of conversations that hold the power to galvanize or divide siblings along ideological lines.

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Appendix

Quartics Survey Instruments and Demographic Items

Informed Consent:

Instructions on selecting sibling:
Thank you for your participation in this survey. You will be asked to respond to several items related to your relationship with your sibling. If you have more than one sibling, please select the sibling closest to you in age.

Please type the initials of the sibling who is closest to you in age below:

Age:
What is your age?

Sibling Age:
What is your sibling's age?

Sexual Orientation:
1. How would you describe your sexual orientation?
    a. Gay
    b. Lesbian
    c. Bisexual
    d. Pansexual
    e. Queer
    f. Fluid
    g. Asexual
    h. Straight
    i. Other (please specify):

Sibling Sexual Orientation
1. How would you describe your sibling's sexual orientation?
    a. Gay
    b. Lesbian
    c. Bisexual
    d. Pansexual
    e. Queer
    f. Fluid
    g. Asexual
    h. Straight
    i. Other (please specify):

Gender:
1. What is your gender?
    a. Male

       b. Female
       c. Male to Female Transgender
       d. Female to Male Transgender
       e. Nonbinary
       f. Other (please specify):

Sibling Gender:
1. What is your sibling's gender?
       a. Male
       b. Female
       c. Male to Female Transgender
       d. Female to Male Transgender
       e. Nonbinary
       f. Other (please specify):

Type of Sibling (full blood, half, step):
2. Which term best describes your sibling in relationship to you?
       a. full biological sibling
       b. half sibling
       c. step-sibling
       d. adopted sibling
       e. Other (please specify):

Ethnicity:
1. What is your ethnicity?
       a. Latino/Hispanic
       b. African American/Black
       c. White
       d. Native American
       e. Asian/Asian American
       f. Biracial (please specify):
       g. Multiethnic (please specify):
       h. Other (please specify):

Religious Orientation:
Directions: Listed below are a series of statements concerning your religious (or faith-based) beliefs. Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements using the following scale:

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

RELIGIOUS CONVERSATIONS

	Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree
1. I enjoy reading about my religion.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I go to church because it helps me to make friends.	1	2	3	4	5
3. It doesn't much matter what I believe so long as I am good.	1	2	3	4	5
4. It is important to me to spend time in private thought and prayer.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I have often had a strong sense of God's presence.	1	2	3	4	5
6. I pray mainly to gain relief and protection.	1	2	3	4	5
7. I try hard to live all my life according to my religious beliefs.	1	2	3	4	5
8. What religion offers me most is comfort in times of trouble and sorrow.	1	2	3	4	5
9. Prayer is for peace and happiness.	1	2	3	4	5
10. Although I am religious, I don't let it affect my daily life.	1	2	3	4	5
11. I go to church mostly to spend time with my friends.	1	2	3	4	5
12. My whole approach to life is based on my religion.	1	2	3	4	5
13. I go to church mainly because I enjoy seeing people I know there.	1	2	3	4	5
14. Although I believe in my religion, many other things are more important in life.	1	2	3	4	5

Religious Affiliation or Denomination:
Which of the following terms best describes *your* religious affiliation?

1	Disciples of Christ	11	Unitarian
2	Mormon	12	Jewish
3	Church of Christ	13	Sikh
4	Episcopal	14	Islamic
5	Presbyterian	15	Buddhist
6	Lutheran	16	Hindu
7	Baptist	17	Agnostic
8	Catholic	18	Atheistic
9	Methodist	19	Other (please specify):_____
10	Non-Denominational		

Which of the following terms best describes *your sibling's* religious affiliation?

1	Disciples of Christ	11	Unitarian
2	Mormon	12	Jewish
3	Church of Christ	13	Sikh
4	Episcopal	14	Islamic
5	Presbyterian	15	Buddhist
6	Lutheran	16	Hindu
7	Baptist	17	Agnostic
8	Catholic	18	Atheistic

9	Methodist	19 Other (please specify):_____
10	Non-Denominational	

Frequency of Religious Conversations:

Directions: We would like for you to think about how often you discuss the following topics with your sibling. Please indicate the degree of frequency for each of the following topics using the following scale:

Never	Occasionally	Sometimes	Often	Very Often
1	2	3	4	5

	Never	Occasionally	Sometimes	Often	Very Often
1. God	1	2	3	4	5
2. The meaning of life	1	2	3	4	5
3. Morals	1	2	3	4	5
4. Higher Powers	1	2	3	4	5
5. Fate (why things happen the way they do)	1	2	3	4	5
6. What happens after death	1	2	3	4	5
7. Good and evil	1	2	3	4	5
8. Spirituality	1	2	3	4	5
9. Right and wrong	1	2	3	4	5
10. Religion	1	2	3	4	5
11. Religious texts	1	2	3	4	5
12. Prayer	1	2	3	4	5
13. Meditation	1	2	3	4	5
14. Personal enlightenment	1	2	3	4	5
15. The supernatural	1	2	3	4	5
16. Religious icons	1	2	3	4	5
17. Personal spiritual health	1	2	3	4	5
18. Faith	1	2	3	4	5
19. Purpose	1	2	3	4	5
20. Meaning	1	2	3	4	5
21. Attending Worship services	1	2	3	4	5
22. Eternity (time)	1	2	3	4	5
23. Church/Synagogue/Temple	1	2	3	4	5

RELIGIOUS CONVERSATIONS

Comfort of Religious Conversations:
Directions: Next, we would like for you to think about how you would be discussing the following topics with your sibling. Please indicate the degree of comfort for each of the following topics using the following scale:

Very Uncomfortable	Uncomfortable	Neither comfortable nor uncomfortable	Comfortable	Very Comfortable
1	2	3	4	5

	Very Uncomfortable		Neither		Very Comfortable
1. God	1	2	3	4	5
2. The meaning of life	1	2	3	4	5
3. Morals	1	2	3	4	5
4. Higher Powers	1	2	3	4	5
5. Fate (why things happen the way they do)	1	2	3	4	5
6. What happens after death	1	2	3	4	5
7. Good and evil	1	2	3	4	5
8. Spirituality	1	2	3	4	5
9. Right and wrong	1	2	3	4	5
10. Religion	1	2	3	4	5
11. Religious texts	1	2	3	4	5
12. Prayer	1	2	3	4	5
13. Meditation	1	2	3	4	5
14. Personal enlightenment	1	2	3	4	5
15. The supernatural	1	2	3	4	5
16. Religious icons	1	2	3	4	5
17. Personal spiritual health	1	2	3	4	5
18. Faith	1	2	3	4	5
19. Purpose	1	2	3	4	5
20. Meaning	1	2	3	4	5
21. Attending Worship services	1	2	3	4	5
22. Eternity (time)	1	2	3	4	5
23. Church/Synagogue/Temple	1	2	3	4	5

Emotion Labor:

Directions: Next, we would like for you to think about conversations with your sibling. Please indicate the degree to which each statement is true for you using the following scale:

Never (N)	Seldom	Occasionally	Sometimes (S)	Often	Very Often	Always (A)
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Surface Acting

	Never			Sometimes		Always	
1. I resist expressing my true feelings when talking to my sibling about religion/faith/spirituality.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. When talking about religion/faith/spirituality, I pretend to have emotions that I don't really have around my sibling.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. I do a good job of hiding my true feelings in front of my sibling when discussing religion/faith/spirituality.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. In discussions of religion/faith/spirituality, I put on an act in order to talk to my sibling in an appropriate way.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. I fake a good mood when interacting with my sibling on matters of religion/faith/spirituality.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. I put on a "show" or "performance" when talking to my sibling about religion/faith/spirituality.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

7. When we talk about religion/faith/spirituality, I just pretend to have the emotions I need to display around my sibling.

    1   2   3   4   5   6   7

8. When discussing religious/faith-based/spiritual topics, I put on a "mask" in order to display the emotions I need around my sibling.

    1   2   3   4   5   6   7

9. In religious/faith-based/spiritual conversations with my sibling, I express feelings to my sibling that are different from what I feel inside.

    1   2   3   4   5   6   7

10. When talking with my sibling about religion/faith/spirituality, I fake the emotions I show.

    1   2   3   4   5   6   7

11. I hide my true feelings when talking to my sibling about religion/faith/spirituality.

    1   2   3   4   5   6   7

12. I have to cover up my true feelings when talking with my sibling about religion/faith/spirituality.

    1   2   3   4   5   6   7

13. I don't act like myself when talking to my sibling about religion/faith/spirituality.

    1   2   3   4   5   6   7

Deep Acting

1. To get along with my sibling when discussing religion/faith/spirituality, I talk myself into showing emotions that are different from what I feel.

    1   2   3   4   5   6   7

2. When talking with my sibling about religion/faith/spirituality, I try to create certain emotions in myself to present the emotions they desire.

    1   2   3   4   5   6   7

3. I talk myself out of feeling what I really feel when talking to my sibling about religion/faith/spirituality.

    1   2   3   4   5   6   7

4. In religious/faith-based/spiritual conversations with my sibling, if I think they would not approve of my real feelings, I try to change those feelings.　　1　2　3　4　5　6　7

5. I work on not caring much about my sibling's emotions when talking with them about religion/faith/spirituality.　　1　2　3　4　5　6　7

Sibling Confirmation:
Directions: Choose the number that best describes your agreement with each statement based on your experience with your sibling during your adolescent years (ages 12-18).

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Challenge

	SD			N			SA
1. My sibling encouraged me to explore different ideas.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. My sibling helped me channel my negative emotions into more positive actions.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. My sibling asked questions that made me think.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. My sibling pushed me to think about other people's perspectives (e.g., put myself in their shoes).	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. My sibling challenged me to discuss the issues rather than attack others when angry.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. My sibling asked me to explain the reasoning behind my decisions.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. My sibling encouraged me to try new things on my own.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8. My sibling helped me understand and deal with my emotions.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9. My sibling made me support or defend my opinions.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10. My sibling discussed different perspectives with me regarding complex issues.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11. My sibling exposed me to different experiences.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12. My sibling did not ask me about my opinions.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
13. My sibling ignored my perspective if it differed from hers/his.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
14. My sibling and I had playful arguments about ideas.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
15. My sibling discouraged me from showing my emotions.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Accept

Directions: In this next section, please choose the number that indicates how frequently your SIBLING engages in each of the following behaviors using the following response scale:

Never (N)	Seldom	Occasionally	Sometimes (S)	Often	Very Often	Always (A)
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

My *sibling . . .*	Never		Sometimes			Always	
1. Made statements that communicated to me that I was a unique, valuable human being.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. Demonstrated that s/he was genuinely listening when I was speaking about issues important to me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. Belittled me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. Engaged in negative name calling (labeling).	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. Made statements that communicated my ideas didn'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
6. Made statements that communicated my feelings were valid and real (e.g., made statements like, "I'm sorry that you're so disappointed, angry, etc.").	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. Gave me undivided attention when engaged in private conversations.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8. Maintained meaningful eye contact with me when we were engaged in a conversation.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9. Gave appropriate facial responses such as smiling or nodding during conversations with me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10. Gave clear, direct responses to me during conversations.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11. Asked my opinion or solicited my viewpoint.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12. Discounted or explained away my feelings.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
13. Criticized my feelings when I expressed them.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
14. Ignored my attempts to express my feelings.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
15. Gave ambiguous (unclear, vague) responses.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

16. Sent double messages (verbal and nonverbal messages that differed).	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
17. Interrupted me during conversations.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
18. Allowed me to express negative feelings.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Relational Uncertainty:

<u>Directions:</u> We would like you to rate how certain you are about the degree of involvement that you have in your sibling relationship at this time. Please note, we are not asking you to rate how much involvement there is in your sibling relationship, but rather how certain you are about whatever degree of involvement you perceive. It might help if you first consider how much of each form of involvement is present in your sibling relationship, and then evaluate how certain you are about that perception.

	1	2	3	4	5
6					

Strongly
disagree   Strongly agree

Self Uncertainty

Strongly Disagree   Strongly
Agree

1. I sometimes wonder whether I want the relationship to work out in the long run	1	2	3	4	5	6
2. I sometimes wonder whether I want the relationship to last	1	2	3	4	5	6
3. I sometimes wonder how much I like my sibling	1	2	3	4	5	6
4. I sometimes wonder how important the relationship is to me	1	2	3	4	5	6

Partner Uncertainty

5. I sometimes wonder how committed my sibling is to the relationship	1	2	3	4	5	6
6. I sometimes wonder how important the relationship is to my sibling	1	2	3	4	5	6
7. I sometimes wonder whether my sibling wants the relationship to work out in the long run.	1	2	3	4	5	6

Relationship Uncertainty

8. I sometimes wonder whether the relationship will work out in the long run	1	2	3	4	5	6

9. I sometimes wonder whether me and my sibling feel the same way about each other   1   2   3   4   5   6

10. I sometimes wonder whether my sibling likes me as much as I like them   1   2   3   4   5   6

11. I sometimes wonder how I can or cannot behave around my sibling   1   2   3   4   5   6

Perceived Homophily on matters of faith/spirituality/religion:
On the scale below, please indicate your feelings about how similar or different you feel about matters of faith/spirituality/religion in comparison to your sibling. Choose the number that best represents your feelings. Numbers "1" and "7" indicate a *very strong feeling*. Numbers "2" and "6" indicate a *strong feeling*. Numbers "3" and "5" indicate a *fairly weak feeling*. Number "4" indicates you are *undecided* or *don't know*. Please work quickly. There are no right or wrong answers.

Believes like me: 1   2   3   4   5   6   7   :Doesn't Believe like me

Doesn't think like me: 1   2   3   4   5   6   7   :Thinks like me

Behaves like me: 1   2   3   4   5   6   7   :Doesn't behave like me

Similar to me: 1   2   3   4   5   6   7   :Different from me

Unlike me: 1   2   3   4   5   6   7   :Like me

Views religion/faith/spirituality as I do: 1   2   3   4   5   6   7   :Views religion/faith/spirituality differently than I do

Religious background different from mine: 1   2   3   4   5   6   7   :Religious background similar to me

Relational Satisfaction:
<u>Directions:</u> We would like you to think about your relationship with your SIBLING over the last month. Please choose the number that most closely describes your feelings toward *your sibling* over the past month.

Miserable:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	: Enjoyable
Hopeful:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	: Discouraging
Free:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	: Tied Down
Empty:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	: Full
Interesting:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	: Boring
Rewarding:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	: Disappointing
Doesn't give me: much chance	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	: Brings out the best in me
Lonely:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	: Friendly
Hard:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	: Easy
Worthwhile:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	: Useless

All things considered, how satisfied have you been with your relationship with your sibling the last month?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Completely dissatisfied			Neutral			Completely satisfied

Relational Closeness:

Directions: We would like to know about how close you feel with your SIBLING. Choose the number that best indicates how close you feel: 1 = "Not at all", 4 = "Moderately" and 7 = "Very Much".

	Not at all		Moderately			Very much	
1. How openly do you talk with your sibling?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. How careful do you feel you have to be about what you say to your sibling?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. How comfortable do you feel admitting doubts and fears to your sibling?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. How interested is your sibling when you talk to each other?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. How often does your sibling express affection or liking for you?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. How well does your sibling know what you are really like?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. How close do you feel to your sibling?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8. How confident are you that your sibling would help you if you had a problem?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9. If you need money, how comfortable are you asking your sibling for it?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10. How interested is your sibling in the things you do?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Shared Family Identity:
Directions: Please indicate the degree to which you agree with each of the following statements regarding your relationships with your SIBLING using the scale below.
1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Somewhat Disagree, 4 = Neither Agree nor Disagree, 5 = Somewhat Agree, 6 = Agree, 7 = Strongly Agree

1. I am proud to be in the same family as my sibling. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
2. My shared family membership with my sibling is not that important to me. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
3. Above all else, I think of my sibling as a member of my family. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
4. My sibling is an important part of my family. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
5. I feel as if we are members of one family. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
6. I feel as if we are members of separate groups. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

FCPs:
Conversation Orientation

1. My parents often say something like "Every member of the family should have some say in family decisions."
2. My parents often ask my opinion when the family is talking about something.
3. My parents encourage me to challenge their ideas and beliefs.
4. My parents often say something like "You should always look at both sides of an issue."
5. I usually tell my parents what I am thinking about things.
6. I can tell my parents almost anything.
7. In our family we often talk about our feelings and emotions.
8. My parents and I often have long, relaxed conversations about nothing in particular.
9. I really enjoy talking with my parents, even when we disagree.
10. My parents like to hear my opinions, even when they don't agree with me.
11. My parents encourage me to express my feelings.
12. My parents tend to be very open about their emotions.
13. We often talk as a family about things we have done during the day.
14. In our family we often talk about our plans and hopes for the future.

Conformity Orientation

1. My parents expect us to respect our elders.
2. In our home, I am expected to speak respectfully to my parents.
3. My parents have clear expectations about how a child is supposed to behave.
4. When I am home, I am expected to obey my parents' rules.
5. My parents insist that I respect those who have been placed in positions of authority.
6. My parents emphasize certain attitudes that they want the children in our family to adopt.
7. In our home, my parents have the last word.
8. My parents expect me to trust their judgement on important matters.
9. I am expected to follow my parents; wishes.
10. My parents feel it is important to be the boss.
11. My parents become irritated with my views if they are different from their views.
12. My parents try to persuade me to views things the way they see them.
13. My parents say things like "You'll know better when you grow up."

14. My parents say thing like "You may not understand why we are doing this right now, but someday you will."
15. My parents say things like "My ideas are right and you should not question them."
16. In my family, family members are expected to hold similar values.
17. I am expected to adopt my parents' views.
18. My parents encourage me to adopt their values.
19. Our family has a particular way of seeing the world.
20. I feel pressure to adopt my parents' beliefs.
21. I am expected to challenge my parents' beliefs.
22. In our home, we are allowed to question my parents' authority.
23. My parents encourage open disagreement.
24. In our home, we are encouraged to question my parents' authority.

Stress:

Directions: The questions in this scale ask you about your feelings and thoughts during the last month. In each case, you will be asked to indicate *how often* you felt or thought a certain way. Although some of the questions are similar, there are differences between them and you should treat each one as a separate question. The best approach is to answer each question fairly quickly. That is, don't try to count up the number of times you felt a particular way, but rather indicate the alternative that seems like a reasonable estimate. For each question, choose from the following alternatives:

Never	Almost never	Sometimes	Fairly often	Very often
1	2	3	4	5

	Never				Very Often
1. In the last month, how often have you been upset because of something that happened unexpectedly?	1	2	3	4	5
2. In the last month, how often have you felt that you were unable to control the important things in your life?	1	2	3	4	5
3. In the last month, how often have you felt nervous and "stressed"?	1	2	3	4	5
4. In the last month, how often have you dealt successfully with irritating life hassles?	1	2	3	4	5
5. In the last month, how often have you felt that you were effectively coping with important changes that were occurring in your life?	1	2	3	4	5
6. In the last month, how often have you felt confident about your ability to handle your personal problems?	1	2	3	4	5
7. In the last month, how often have you felt that things were going your way?	1	2	3	4	5
8. In the last month, how often have you found that you could not cope with all the things that you had to do?	1	2	3	4	5
9. In the last month, how often have you been able to control irritations in your life?	1	2	3	4	5

10. In the last month, how often have you felt that you were on top of things?	1	2	3	4	5
11. In the last month, how often have you been angered because of things that happened that were outside of your control?	1	2	3	4	5
12. In the last month, how often have you found yourself thinking about things that you have to accomplish?	1	2	3	4	5
13. In the last month, how often have you been able to control the way you spend your time?	1	2	3	4	5
14. In the last month, how often you have felt difficulties were piling up so high that you could not overcome them?	1	2	3	4	5

Mental Health Symptoms:

Directions: Now, we would like to assess your health. Please think about your state of mind over the past two weeks and identify how often you have felt the following ways on a scale from 0 (never) to 3 (three or more times the past two weeks).

In the past two weeks, how often have you:

	Never	Once	Twice	Three or more times
1. Felt over-tired.	0	1	2	3
2. Felt nervous or worried.	0	1	2	3
3. Felt "low" or depressed.	0	1	2	3
4. Felt tense or irritable.	0	1	2	3
5. Had trouble sleeping.	0	1	2	3
6. Lost your appetite.	0	1	2	3
7. Felt apart or alone.	0	1	2	3
8. Felt like running away from everything.	0	1	2	3
9. Felt as if you were eating too much?	0	1	2	3

Sibling (non)accommodation:

(Non)Accommodative Behaviors (adapted from Colaner, Soliz, and Nelson 2014) 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).	Emphasizing Divergent Values 1. My sibling often brings up their views about religious/spiritual topics with me even though they know I don't agree with them. 2. I feel as though my sibling tries to convince me that my religious/spiritual views are wrong. 3. My sibling expresses disapproval over my religious/spiritual views.

4. My sibling singles me out for having different religious/spiritual beliefs.
5. My sibling argues with me about my religious/spiritual views.
6. My sibling makes me feel different due to my religious/spiritual views.

Giving Unwanted Advice

1. My sibling gives me unwanted advice about my religious/spiritual beliefs.
2. My sibling tells me what I should and shouldn't do based on their religious/spiritual beliefs.
3. My sibling uses their religious/spiritual principles to tell me what I am doing wrong in my life.
4. My sibling gives me unwanted advice about religious/spiritual practices.
5. My sibling suggests that I can change my religious/spiritual beliefs (or how I act on them).
6. My sibling tries to tell me how I practice my religion/faith/spirituality.
7. My sibling tries to control how I express, or act upon, my religion/faith/spirituality.

Sibling Accommodation:

Religious Specific Supportive Communication

1. My sibling lets me know that they support my right to choose my own religious beliefs.
2. My siblings help me think through my religious choices without pressuring me to conform to their beliefs.
3. *It is difficult to talk to my sibling) about my religious beliefs because they think my beliefs are wrong.*
4. My sibling listens to my thoughts about religion even if they don't agree with my beliefs.

Respecting Divergent Values

1. My sibling is respectful of my religious opinions in our conversations.
2. In our interactions, my sibling takes my religious views and opinions into account.
3. My sibling is generally respectful of my religious beliefs when we talk about our opinions.
4. My sibling is tolerant of my religious beliefs when we disagree.

Identity Gaps:

Identity Gaps (Jung and Hecht, 2004)	Personal-Enacted Identity Gap
	1. When I communicate with my sibling, they get to know the "real me."
	2. I feel that I can communicate with my sibling in a way that is

1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

consistent with who I really am.

3. I feel that I can be myself when communicating with my sibling.
4. I express myself in a certain way that is not the real me when communicating with my sibling.
5. I do not reveal important aspects of myself in communication with my sibling.
6. When communicating with my sibling, I often lose sense of who I am.
7. I do not express the real me when I think it is different from my sibling's expectations.
8. I sometimes mislead my sibling about who I really am.
9. There is a difference between the real me and the impression I give my sibling about me.
10. I speak truthfully to my sibling about myself.
11. I freely express the real me in communication with my sibling.

Personal-Relational Identity Gap
1. I feel that my sibling sees me as I see myself.
2. I am different from the way my sibling sees me.
3. I agree with how my sibling describes me.
4. I feel that my sibling has wrong images of me.
5. I feel that my sibling has correct information about me.
6. I feel that my sibling portrays me not based on information provided by myself but information from other sources.
7. I feel that my sibling stereotypes me.
8. I feel that my sibling does not realize that I have been changing and still portrays me based on past images.
9. I feel that my sibling knows who I used to be when they portray me.
10. When my sibling talks about me, I often wonder if they talk about me or someone else.
11. I feel that there is no difference between who I think I am and who my sibling thinks I am.
12. My sibling like the things about me that I like about myself.

VITA

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