RELATIONAL UNCERTAINTY, PARENT INTERFERENCE, AND CONVERSATIONS ABOUT THE STATE OF THE RELATIONSHIP AS PREDICTORS OF RELATIONAL TURBULENCE IN ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS

by

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ABSTRACT

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Master of Science, 2023, Texas Christian University

Dr. Paul Schrodt, Professor and Director of Graduate Studies

A prevalent yet under-researched experience romantic partners are likely to navigate is their parents' involvement in the relationship. This social process merits further attention because of its implications on young adults' ability to relate to their romantic partner. Using relational turbulence theory (Solomon et al., 2016), the present study investigated how parental involvement contributes to a chain of heightened subjective experiences within romantic relationships that can result in turbulence. Data was collected from a sample of 264 college students and was analyzed using Pearson's product-moment correlations and Hayes's (2018) PROCESS macro for SPSS. Results indicated that parent involvement was associated with the valence of young adult children's conversations with their romantic partner. Additionally, the indirect association between relational uncertainty and relational turbulence through communication valence depended upon parent interference and facilitation, which was further conditioned by whether the young adult child valued their parent's opinions about their romantic relationship.

Introduction

A common tension within parent-child relationships emerges when young adults have to navigate their parents' involvement in their romantic relationship. The role parents play when involving themselves in their young adult child's romantic relationship has a myriad of implications for the relationship, such as impacting relational commitment (Cox et al., 1997), relational uncertainty (Knobloch & Donovan-Kicken, 2006), or even the dissolution of the relationship (Felmlee et al., 1990). Because many parents act as primary sources of advice for children throughout their lifetime (Desmond et al., 2010), they may influence how their child will view and approach their own romantic relationship. This, in turn, suggests that many young adults must manage their parents' view of the relationship, whether that involves seeking guidance through their romantic experience (Kan et al., 2008), resisting unsolicited advice regarding the relationship (Carlson, 2014), or attempting to influence their parents' thinking about the relationship (Leslie et al., 1986).

Ways parents involve themselves can include instructional activities, such as advice-giving (Parke & Buriel, 1998) and consulting (Mounts, 2011), or commenting about the relationship via social comparisons and guilt-tripping (Apostolou, 2013). Parental involvement can also be positive or negative, where positive involvement is characterized by supportive behaviors that facilitate the romantic relationship and negative involvement is characterized by restrictive behaviors that impede the functioning and progression of the romantic relationship (Kan et al., 2008). Although disapproval from one's social network is likely to undermine relationship quality (Sinclair et al., 2014), it is less clear in what ways low support from social network members affects the relationship maintenance of romantic partners and/or discontinuation of the relationship. Thus, given equivocality surrounding the precise impact that

parent involvement has on the state of a young adult's romantic relationship, this social phenomenon requires further investigation, particularly as it may contribute to the young adult's desires to continue the relationship. More specifically, further research is needed to understand the potential associations that parent involvement has with the child's uncertainty about the state of their romantic relationship, their communication with their partner about the relationship, and the trajectory of the relationship itself.

Although uncertainty can occur at any point in the development of a relationship, experiences of relational uncertainty in romantic relationships are especially prominent during periods of transition (Solomon et al., 2010), such as moving from casual to serious dating. *Relational uncertainty* refers to the "degree of confidence people have in their perceptions of involvement within an interpersonal relationship" (Knobloch & Solomon, 2002b, p. 458). It tends to be heightened during the transition from casual to serious romantic involvement because partners are unable to rely on scripted norms when discussing the status of the relationship (Solomon & Knobloch, 2001). According to Knobloch and Solomon (2002b), episodic relational uncertainty should subside when partners achieve a high level of intimacy, yet the transition toward greater levels of intimacy may be altered or inhibited by parent involvement if the attitudinal posture of a parent regarding the relationship moves the young adult child from a place of certainty to uncertainty, calling into question assumptions about their involvement in the relationship (Solomon et al., 2010). This form of extradyadic influence may contribute to relational instability as romantic partners navigate new ways of behaving within, and talking about, the relationship (Solomon & Theiss, 2011). Therefore, perceptions of relational instability catalyzed or brought on by parent involvement may shape how a couple fairs during periods of

relational change, and subsequently impact the quality and durability of their relationship (Solomon & Theiss, 2010).

One theory that explains how this process may unfold is relational turbulence theory (RTT; Solomon et al., 2016). RTT posits that romantic partners become cognitively, emotionally, and communicatively reactive amidst a transition (Solomon & Knobloch, 2004), due primarily to experiences of relational uncertainty and partner interference. However, interference with and/or facilitation of the romantic relationship may emanate from other important members of the partners' peer and familial networks, including parents. Consequently, this theoretical framework may also provide valuable insight into how parent involvement (i.e., as interference or facilitation) alters uncertainty about the romantic relationship and communication about the state of the relationship, both of which may consequently associated with the stability of the relationship. Therefore, the current study sought to expand RTT's theoretical scope by investigating the extent to which parent involvement alters the unique and combined associations among relational uncertainty, romantic partners' communication about their relationship, and experiences of turbulence.

Theoretical Perspective

The overall aim of RTT is "to explain how people think, feel, and communicate when circumstances change within their relationship" (Knobloch et al., 2018, p. 255). More specifically, it explains how the presence of relational uncertainty and disruptions to goal-directed behaviors heighten cognitive and emotional reactions to partner behavior, further contributing to an intensity of experiences within the romantic relationship. Communication episodes between romantic partners characterized by heightened intensity or polarization coalesce to create a sense of fragility surrounding the relationship (Solomon et al., 2016). It is the

accumulation of these polarized events that leads partners to view their relationship as turbulent. Relational turbulence impedes partners' ability to "think positively and holistically about their relationship and negatively impacts conversational synchrony" (Brisini & Solomon, 2022, p. 2436), which in turn has consequences for relational functioning.

A central component of RTT that acts as an impetus to heightened communication and turbulence is the level of uncertainty experienced within the relationship. Relational uncertainty can occur when individuals perceive a shift from familiar to unfamiliar circumstances (Solomon et al., 2010). It oftentimes emerges during periods of flux (Goodboy et al., 2020), especially those underlying the development of romantic relationships (Knobloch et al., 2007). Although common within relationships, failing to move past uncertainty can be costly due to the relational distress it often induces (Umphrey & Sherblom, 2001), as well as the tendency for partners experiencing uncertainty to appraise irritations as more serious than they are (Solomon & Knobloch, 2004).

Relational uncertainty is an umbrella term that is comprised of three sources of ambiguity (Solomon et al., 2016): (a) *self uncertainty* occurs when a person has questions about their own involvement in the relationship; (b) *partner uncertainty* involves questions a person has about their partner's involvement in the relationship; and (c) *relationship uncertainty* involves questions about the status and future of the relationship itself. Whereas self and partner uncertainty are doubts that occur within individuals, relationship uncertainty more broadly involves questions surrounding how viable the dyad is as a unit, that is, it is inherently dyadic in nature (Berger & Bradac, 1982).

Tension within the relationship can extend from, or be exacerbated by, relational uncertainty via increased reactivity to communicative events. This is because relational

uncertainty corresponds with more extreme cognitive reactions that sensitize evaluations of event severity, importance, and valence (Knobloch & Solomon, 2002a), otherwise known as *biased cognitive appraisals* or distorted assessments of situations (Solomon et al., 2016). Biased appraisals are problematic in that they suppress positive, sentimental thoughts about the relationship that are relationally enhancing (Umphrey & Sherblom, 2001), as well as lessen the quality of communication between partners. Distorted appraisals of relationship circumstances and partner behavior impact communication quality by complicating message production and interpretation, since those uncertain of their relationship "lack a clear conceptual framework through which to make sense of events" (Solomon et al., 2016, p. 512). Therefore, by operating from an information deficit (Goodboy et al., 2020), accuracy in the reception and transmission of messages is diminished.

With uncertainty clouding interpretations of relational circumstances and interactions, communication becomes disrupted and diminishes in quality through changes in the valence and engagement of communication (Solomon et al., 2016). According to Solomon and colleagues (2016), *communication valence* is defined as the affective or emotional tenor of an interaction, whereas *communication engagement* refers to how involved and direct partners are in their interactions with one another. Negative emotions and cognitive bias heighten the level of difficulty partners have in communicating with one another due to a shift in the relational climate that induces a state of reactivity or heightened sensitivity (Knobloch et al., 2007 Solomon et al., 2010). More specifically, cognitive bias and enhanced emotions affect communication behavior by altering the valence of communication and how openly partners engage in communication in discussion of a relational event (Knobloch & Theiss, 2018). This change in communication behavior is important because communication valence and engagement are key to a stable

relational climate, given that they reciprocally influence appraisals and emotions that modify or reinforce the distortion of perceived circumstances and communication (Solomon et al., 2016).

Relational uncertainty, in particular, undermines clear and effective communication because doubts about one's involvement can result in pessimistic relational inferences from conversations (Knobloch & Solomon, 2005; Solomon, 2016). Because relational uncertainty brings into question norms for appropriate behavior, the mutuality of feelings, and the definition and future of the relationship (Knobloch & Solomon, 1999), it often induces communication-avoidant behaviors, such as dodging conversations about the relationship (Baxter & Wilmot, 1985), engaging in topic avoidance (Knobloch & Carpenter-Theune, 2004), and evading discussions of surprising relationship events (Knobloch & Solomon, 2002b). In other words, ambiguity about the relationship undermines conversations about the status and future of the relationship. According to RTT, this inhibits partners' conversational mobility to resolve doubts about the relationship that would increase intimacy (Theiss & Solomon, 2008) and enhance partners' perceptions that they can work through challenges together (Knobloch & Solomon, 2002b). In light of this, I advanced my first two hypotheses:

> H_1: Young adult children's relational uncertainty is negatively associated with conversational engagement with their romantic partner about the state of their relationship.
>
> H_2: Young adult children's relational uncertainty is negatively associated with positively valenced conversations with their romantic partner about the state of their relationship.

Parent Interference and Facilitation of the Romantic Relationship

Another factor that contributes to experiences of polarized communication occurs when enmeshed action sequences become uncoordinated (Solomon, 2016). According to Berscheid

(1983), behavior is organized into action sequences that are meant to be uninterrupted from initiation to completion, and the disturbance of these action sequences can be emotionally evocative (Solomon et al., 2016). Disruption of daily behaviors and goal-oriented tasks can occur in an interfering or facilitative capacity. Influence on action sequences that is *facilitative* occurs when an individual highly integrated into one's daily life, such as a romantic partner, enhances the achievement of goals and activities, whereas influence as *interference* prevents the accomplishment of goals and activities (Knobloch & Solomon, 2004).

Both forms of influence have important implications that influence the trajectory of the relationship, in that "interference corresponds with more negative evaluations of relationship circumstances" (Solomon & Theiss, 2011, p. 205), whereas facilitation can evoke positive emotions and enhance relational experiences that can quell turbulence (Quaack et al., 2022). Disrupted interdependence as interference, in addition to relational uncertainty, is foundational to a turbulent relationship (Solomon & Knobloch, 2004), since interference can amplify emotional reactions that, in accumulation, enhances the fragility of the relational infrastructure (Solomon & Knobloch, 2004; Solomon et al., 2016).

Although the scope of RTT focuses on romantic partners as a source of interference and facilitation, relational turmoil might not be singularly born out of pressures experienced between partners. Rather, varying levels of helpfulness or interference from socially important others can contribute to uncertainty as well (Knobloch & Donovan-Kicken, 2006). *Perceived network involvement*, or an individual's perception of behaviors that social network members (e.g., close friends and family) employ in relation to the romantic relationship (Knobloch & Donovan-Kicken, 2006), is a significant contributor to the health of a relationship, as it can be perceived as obstructive or facilitative (Felmlee et al., 1996). For example, an individual's social network can

contribute to the success of an established romantic relationship (Felmlee, 2001) or a relationship undergoing transition (Sprecher & Felmlee, 2000). Cox and colleagues (1997) found that couples who perceive that their networks want them to stay together are more committed to their relationship.

Among a variety of networks members, parents tend to have an especially salient interest in the status and trajectory of their young adult child's romantic relationship. Using stress and life course theories, Milkie et al. (2008) demonstrated that important relational events occurring over a child's life span influence parental well-being. For instance, the empty-nest transition can be a tumultuous time for parents as they navigate restoring intimacy, reintegrating joint activities, and stepping into new roles and routines (Nagy & Theiss, 2013). Transitionary periods of a child's life, especially when entering adulthood (Brisini & Solomon, 2020), can be an emotionally evocative and unsettling juncture for parents to have to embrace. Hence, the emergence of a romantic relationship is a major developmental change (Connolly & MacIsaac, 2009) that may evoke parental interest and heighten the degree to which young adults are susceptible to the perceived acceptance or rejection of their romantic relationship by their parents.

Oftentimes, network members are aware of their influence on the relationship and might attempt to influence it (Sprecher, 2011) by facilitating relationships they prefer (Knobloch & Donovan-Kicken, 2006) and praising the dissolution of relationships they dislike (Sprecher & Felmlee, 2000). Mikucki-Enyart and Caughlin (2018) found that, as a general rule, communication goals (i.e., instrumental, identity, or relational goals) shape communication behaviors (e.g., topic avoidance) and are related to the relational climate of a relationship, including relationship satisfaction. If this is true, then a negative or temporal view of their child's

relationship should drive parents' communication behaviors, such as expressing doubt about the future of the relationship, that may have a destabilizing effect on the romantic relationship. Therefore, because network member approval is associated with relationship quality, commitment, and satisfaction (Sprecher & Felmlee, 1992), and disapproval is associated with relational disintegration (Felmlee et al., 1990), doubts expressed by parents about the viability of their child's romantic partnership could undermine the romantic couple's certainty about, and commitment to, the relationship.

As it relates to RTT, interference between partners corresponds with "negative evaluations of relationship circumstances" (Solomon & Theiss, 2011, p. 205) due to cognitive bias creating misinformed interpretations of the partner's behavior (Solomon et al., 2016). In a similar manner, if a parent were to convey biases against the partner by expressing or insinuating disapproval of the romantic relationship, this could amplify biased perceptions of the partner that influences how they are treated by the young adult child. Of course, the valence and degree to which biased perceptions are amplified likely depends on whether the child values their parents' opinions in the first place. In verifying that relational uncertainty and interference are the basis for experiences of negative emotion when transitioning from casual to serious romantic involvement, Knobloch et al. (2007) recommended that "dispelling ambiguity and averting disruptions" could help curb volatility between partners (p. 108). However, if parent commentary is functioning as an external form of disruption, reducing uncertainty and remedying disruption becomes a much more challenging task.

In addition to immunizing uncertainty, interference can also affect how the young adult child talks about their relationship. Parent involvement has the potential to contribute to volatile communication within the relationship, such as amplifying negative emotions and reactions

(Solomon et al., 2016) and complicating communication between romantic partners (Solomon & Theiss, 2011). Romantic couples may be unable to engage in constructive conversation about the state of their relationship if their ability to interact with and relate to one another becomes interpersonally and emotionally compromised by unsupportive parental attitudes (Shulman et al., 2017). When partners experience barriers to their goals, this can prompt partners to engage in turbulence-inducing behavior, such as uncoordinated conversation (Knobloch & Schmelzer, 2008) and less affiliative messages (Knobloch, 2008). On the other hand, it is possible parental facilitation of the relationship can decrease relationship distress (Lee et al., 2010) and increase intimacy within dating relationships that lessens emotional reactivity (Knobloch & Solomon, 2001), since perceived approval of the relationship can strengthen relational stability between romantic partners (Felmlee, 2001) and thus enhance effective communication.

In light of this, one way to extend RTT is to consider other sources of interference and facilitation that may contribute to polarized conversations about the state of the romantic relationship and alter how relational uncertainty contributes to such conversations and ultimately, to turbulence. Hence, in the present study, assessing parent influence instead of romantic partner influence within the relational turbulence model (RTM) may provide a novel yet helpful advancement toward understanding whether the interference or facilitation of relational goals by a parent impacts episodic communication events and turbulence.

Partner influence within RTT's original conceptualization focuses on the disruption of daily goals and tasks. This approach necessitated measuring partner facilitation and interference in order to observe whether relational turbulence could be attributed to the partner's exertion of influence on day-to-day functioning. The premise of the present study permits a variable trade out where parent influence, not partner influence, is predicting relational turbulence with the

romantic partner, since the disruption catalyzing relational instability is whether and how well *relationship talk* (i.e., messages that explicitly reference the state and future of the relationship; Theiss & Nagy, 2013) is being engaged in by partners. In this way, it is the disruption or advancement of relational goals that is contributing to turbulence based off whether and how well romantic partners discuss the state and future of their relationship. Thus, in the present study, the disruptive force putting strain on the ease of relationship talk is theorized to originate outside the dyad (i.e., the romantic partnership).

Therefore, I reason that parent interference likely discourages conversational engagement and heightens a perceived negative tone between romantic partners when discussing the state of their romantic relationship. On the other hand, parent facilitation likely encourages greater engagement and conversations that are perceived as positive in tone. To test this line of reasoning, I advanced two additional hypotheses:

> H_3: Young adult children's reports of parent interference are negatively associated with conversational engagement (H_{3a}) and positively valenced conversations (H_{3b}) with their romantic partner about the state of their relationship.
>
> H_4: Young adult children's reports of parent facilitation are positively associated with conversational engagement (H_{4a}) and positively valenced conversations (H_{4b}) with their romantic partner about the state of their relationship.

Relational Turbulence as a Function of Relational Uncertainty and Polarized Communication

Consistent with the original premise of RTT, I reasoned that young adult children's relational uncertainty, perceptions of parent interference/facilitation, and polarized communication with one's romantic partner coalesce to produce perceptions of turbulence within

the romantic relationship. *Relational turbulence* is the global sense and evaluation that one's relationship is tumultuous, unsteady, fragile, and chaotic (Solomon et al., 2016). Solomon et al. (2010) described relational turbulence as being similar to turbulence experienced during an airplane flight, wherein a shift in pressure and wind speed catapults an aircraft that is running smoothly into a jolting movement that can range from minimal to extreme. Just as passengers on a flight are sensitive to the altitude changes during flight turbulence, partners have heightened senses and stronger reactions to cues in their environment when experiencing relational turbulence (McLaren et al., 2011). With repeated and accumulative exposure, turbulence can lead to "exhaustion within the relationship system" (Solomon et al., 2016, p. 518) and be detrimental to the fabric of the relationship by sparking doubt, causing disruptions, and exacerbating reactions to hurtful interactions (Solomon & Theiss, 2011).

Communication is central to the persistence or decline of turbulence, as encounters that are fueled by biased appraisals and strong emotions contribute to a sense of disarray within the relationship, whereas working through difficult experiences can result in relational resilience, intimacy, and a stronger foundation for future experiences (Solomon et al., 2016). Relational turbulence arises out of cumulative reactive episodes that form a global judgment of the relationship as turbulent (Solomon et al., 2016). With negative emotions and cognitive appraisals undergirding difficulties in communicating with one's partner (Knobloch et al. 2007), episodic encounters between partners that are low in engagement and negative in valence contribute to an overall view of the relationship as being tumultuous and in disarray (Solomon et al., 2016). In other words, RTT advances an explanatory model whereby relational uncertainty and partner interference (or in this study, parent interference) contribute to increasingly difficult conversations about the state of the romantic relationship (i.e., increasingly disengaged and

negatively valenced conversations), which in turn culminate in global perceptions that the romantic relationship is in a state of chaos, turbulence, and disarray.

Consistent with RTT, in the present study, communication is the mechanism through which relational uncertainty has an indirect association with relational turbulence. If relational uncertainty, enhanced by parent influence, predicts conversational engagement and the valence of conversation between partners, and these dual dimensions of conversation predict relational turbulence (Solomon et al., 2016), then whether and how partners discuss the state of their relationship that contributes to turbulence is predicated on how uncertain an individual is about their relationship based off how disrupted their relational goals are perceived to be. In other words, relational uncertainty should be indirectly associated with relational turbulence via the type of communication employed within the relationship. To test this line of reasoning, I advanced the next set of hypotheses:

> H_5: Conversational engagement with one's romantic partner about the state of the relationship is negatively associated with relational turbulence.
>
> H_6: Positively valenced conversations with one's romantic partner about the state of the relationship are negatively associated with relational turbulence.
>
> H_7: Communication engagement and valence in discussions of the state of the romantic relationship function as parallel mediators of relational uncertainty and relational turbulence in young adult children's romantic relationships.

Parent Influence Moderating the Indirect Association Between RU and RT via Communication

Finally, because of the substantial empirical support RTT has received, Goodboy et al. (2020) suggested that future research should "theoretically identify and test for moderators of the

indirect effect proposed by RTT (i.e., moderated mediation)," which can help "determine the boundary conditions of turbulence mechanisms due to one or more moderators" (pp. 237-238). Therefore, one way to extend RTT is to consider whether extradyadic sources of influence can alter the degree to which relational uncertainty indirectly affects relational turbulence through polarized conversations about the state of the romantic relationship. As noted earlier, social network involvement holds a myriad of implications for an individual's confidence in their relationship, their communication about the relationship, and their overall feeling of stability within their romantic partnership. This abundance of evidence suggests parent influence (i.e., facilitation or interference) is a potentially salient factor for why certain young adults' relationships operate more smoothly than others.

In terms of interference, the perception that the relationship has low support or approval could function in such a way as to exacerbate relational uncertainty, complicate message processing, and enhance the perception that the relationship is unstable. Preexisting uncertainty about the relationship that is amplified as a byproduct of a parent's intentional or inadvertent disruptive commentary would strengthen the tendency to avoid or attribute negative connotations to relationship talk. This would hinder communication about the relationship that is constructive and engaged. Knobloch and Carpenter-Theune's (2004) findings affirmed this line of reasoning, as they found that the number of topics avoided within a romantic relationship, including aspects of relationship talk, was positively associated with relational uncertainty. Parent interference would further influence the degree to which polarized communication predicts relational turbulence, as parent interference contributes to polarized communication episodes that increasingly exert stress on the relationship and magnify relational turbulence.

Similarly, parent facilitation also has the potential to influence the indirect relationship between relational uncertainty and turbulence vis-à-vis communication between partners. Parent facilitation of the romantic partnership might positively impact the indirect association by reducing feelings of uncertainty about the relationship that would diminish a heightened cognitive and emotional state. This would, in turn, reduce polarized communication and subsequently assuage experiences of turbulence.

Furthermore, the degree to which parent influence affects this process should be contingent on whether the opinion of the parent even matters. That is, the degree to which parent influence moderates the indirect association is likely to be conditioned by how much the child values what their parent thinks about their romantic relationship. If perceived approval and support from a parent is highly regarded, then parent interference and facilitation should moderate relational uncertainty and turbulence through polarized communication. If the opposite is true, neither form of influence is likely to have an effect on the association. This is because facilitative or disruptive tactics should lose their effectiveness if the young adult child does not prioritize or take into consideration the input and views of their parent. Consequently, to explore parent influence and whether the child values the parent's opinion about their romantic relationship as potential boundary conditions for RTT, I advanced a final set of hypotheses and the following hypothesized model (see Figure 1):

> H_8: Parent interference will moderate the direct and indirect association between RU and relational turbulence via (H_{8a}) communication engagement and (H_{8b}) communication valence about the state of the romantic relationship that is further conditioned by how much the young adult child values their parent's opinion about their romantic relationship.

H_9: Parent facilitation will moderate the direct and indirect association between RU and turbulence via (H_{9a}) communication engagement and (H_{9b}) communication valence about the state of the romantic relationship that is further conditioned by how much the young adult child values their parent's opinion about their romantic relationship.

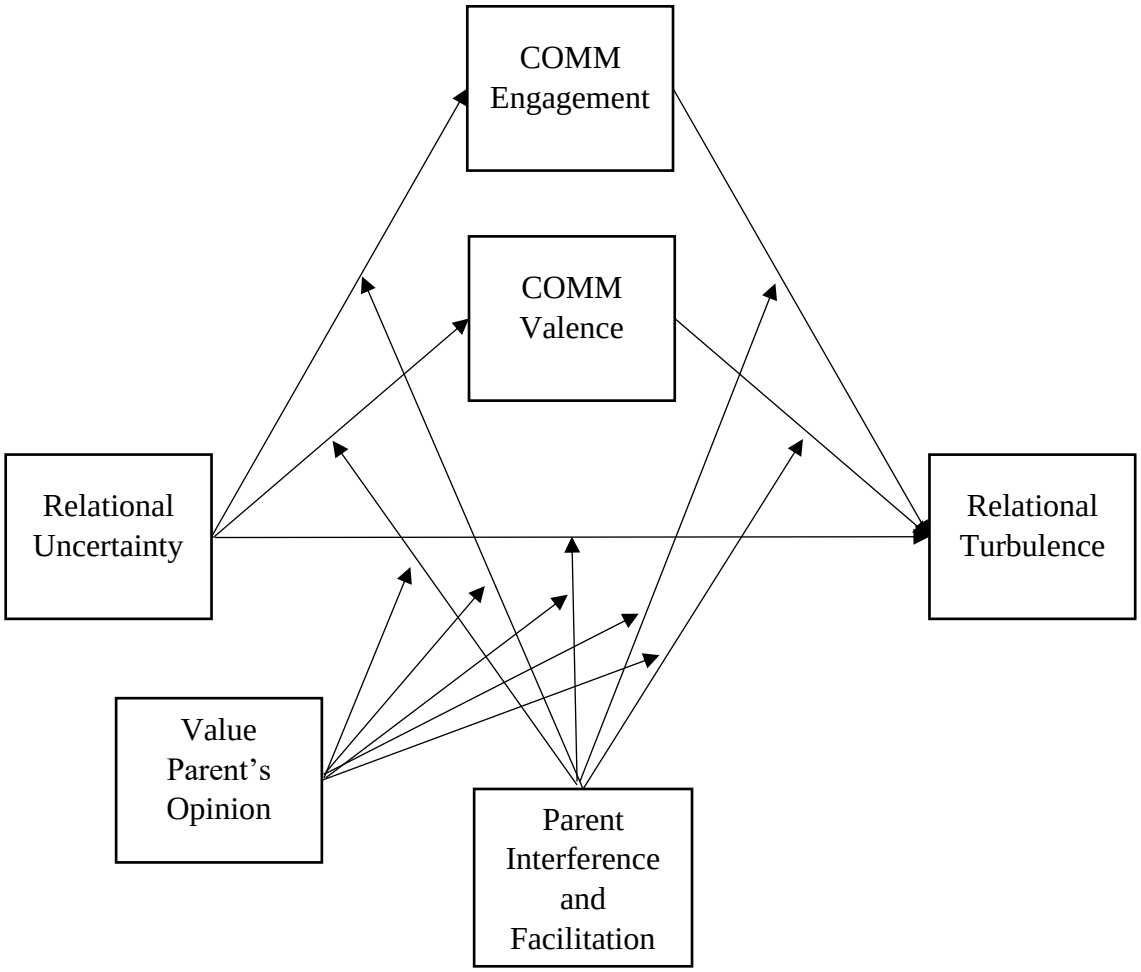

Figure 1. *Hypothesized Conditional Mediation Model of Relational Turbulence, Communication about the State of the Romantic Relationship, and Relational Turbulence*

Note. COMM = communication. Separate models were tested for parent interference and parent facilitation.

Method

Participants

The sample included 264 young adults who ranged in age from 18 to 24 (M = 19.2, SD = 1.1). Most participants identified as cisgender female (73.1%, n = 193), although 26.1% (n = 69) identified as cisgender male, 0.4% (n = 1) identified as female to transgender male, and 0.4% (n = 1) identified as nonbinary. Likewise, most participants identified as White (80.7%, n = 213), although 9.5% (n = 25) identified as Latinx/Hispanic, 4.5% (n = 12) identified as Asian/Asian-American, 3.0% (n = 8) identified as biracial, 1.5% (n = 4) identified as Black (1.5%), and the remaining 0.8% (n = 2) identified as "other." In terms of sexual orientation, the majority of participants identified as straight (94.3%), although 3.0% (n = 8) identified as bisexual, 1.1% (n = 3) identified as queer, and one participant each identified as pansexual (0.4%), gay (0.4%), or lesbian (0.4%).

When participants were asked to classify the status of their romantic relationship, the most common response was "in love" (n = 92, 34.8%), followed by "in love and have discussed marriage but have not made marriage plans" (n = 73, 27.7%), "emotional attachment but not in love" (n = 42, 15.9%), "in love and would like to marry but have never discussed marriage" (n = 21, 8.0%), "causal dating but little emotional attachment" (n = 14, 5.3%), "romantic potential" (n = 14, 5.3%), "some emotional attachment" (n = 5, 1.9%), and "frequent dating but little emotional attachment" (n = 3, 1.1%). Finally, most participants indicated that both parents were alive (98.1%, n = 259), were their primary caretakers (82.6%, n = 218), were married (85.2%, n = 225), and had met their romantic partner (85.2%, n = 225).

Procedure

Once IRB approval was obtained, participants were recruited from a private, southwestern university. Students enrolled in an introductory communication course were offered minimal extra credit (less than 2%) if they qualified to participate in the study. To qualify for participation, individuals had to be at least 18 years of age and be currently involved in a romantic relationship. If the participant agreed to volunteer for the study, they received a Qualtrics link that took them to an online survey. After providing informed consent, participants answered a close-ended questionnaire consisting of demographic items (e.g., age, sex, etc.) and the survey measures listed below (see Appendix). One of the demographic items asked participants which of their parents is alive today. For participants whose parents were alive, Qualtrics randomly assigned them to either a "mother condition" or a "father condition" that framed parent interference and facilitation according to the parent assigned. If only one parent was alive, participants completed the survey measures while referencing the living parent (n = 3 mothers; n = 2 fathers), and if participants indicated that neither parent is alive, the survey automatically ended. For those that continued on, the survey took approximately 15 to 20 minutes to complete.

Measures

Relational Uncertainty

Relational uncertainty was measured by combining Solomon and Brisini's (2017) measure of relational uncertainty with Knobloch and Solomon's (1999) original items. Items were rated on a 6-point Likert-type scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 6 = *strongly agree*) with each item having the stem "I sometimes wonder…". *Self uncertainty* was measured with six items (e.g., "I sometimes wonder how important my romantic relationship is to me"; ω = .92), *partner*

uncertainty was measured with five items (e.g., "I sometimes wonder whether my partner is committed to me"; ω = .94), and *relationship uncertainty* was measured with eight items (e.g., "I sometimes wonder whether me and my partner will stay together"; ω = .90). Composite scores for each subscale were averaged together to form one composite index of relational uncertainty.

Parent Interference

Parent interference was measured by adapting Knobloch and Solomon's (2004) measure of partner interference. The five items of the original scale were included with some of the language adapted to assess parent rather than partner interference (e.g., "[My parent] interferes with whether I achieve the goals I have for my romantic relationship"), and four additional items were created to further capture parental interference of relational goals within a young adult's romantic relationship (e.g., "[My parent] makes it harder to plan a future with my romantic partner"). Items were rated on a 6-point Likert-type scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 6 = *strongly agree*). The adapted measure produced excellent internal reliability (ω = .95).

Parent Facilitation

Parent facilitation was measured by adapting Knobloch and Solomon's (2004) measure of partner facilitation. Similar to parent interference, the five original items were adapted for parents (e.g., "[My parent] helps me in my efforts to spend time with my romantic partner"), with four additional items added to capture parental facilitation of a young adult's romantic relationship (e.g., "[My parent] encourages me to bring my romantic partner to family get-togethers"). Items were rated on a 6-point Likert-type scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 6 = *strongly agree*). The adapted measure of parent facilitation produced excellent internal reliability (ω = .96).

Communication Engagement

Communication engagement was measured using two separate measures. The first was Guerrero and Afifi's (1995) measure for avoided relationship talk. Instructions asked participants to indicate how much they avoided discussing certain topics with their romantic partner during the past week. The scale was comprised of three items: (1) the state of the relationship, (2) norms and expectations for the relationship, and (3) behaviors that put a strain on the relationship. Items were rated on a 6-point scale (1 = *never avoid discussing*, 6 = *always avoid discussing*). The second measure was Knobloch and Theiss's (2011) measure of enacted relationship talk. Items were preceded by the statement, "During the past week, we have actively avoided or actively discussed …", with participants rating their response to three items using a 6-point scale (1 = *actively avoided*, 6 = *actively discussed*): (1) "our view of this relationship," (2) "our feelings for each other," and (3) "the future of the relationship." The omega reliability was .89 for avoided relationship talk and .90 for enacted relationship talk. Scores for each measure were averaged together to form a composite score for communication engagement.

Communication Valence

To assess the valence of participants' conversations about the state of their romantic relationship, I adapted Goldsmith et al.'s (2000) measure. Directions instructed participants to reflect on a conversation they recently had with their romantic partner about how the state of their relationship is going. Participants responded using five 7-point semantic differential items that described how positive or negative the conversation was overall (i.e., *positive-negative, helpful-unhelpful, enjoyable-unenjoyable, pleasant-unpleasant,* and *worthwhile-worthless*). The measure produced good internal reliability ($\omega = .88$).

Relational Turbulence

Solomon and Brisini's (2017) measure of relational turbulence was used to assess participants' perceptions of turbulence in their romantic relationship. The opening prompt read, "At the present time, my romantic relationship is…", and was followed by four 6-point semantic differential items that described the current state of the romantic relationship (i.e., *turbulent-calm, chaotic-stable, tumultuous-running smoothly,* and *stressful-peaceful*). The scale was highly reliable (ω = .94).

Valuing Parent's Opinion

A scale was created to assess how much participants valued their parent's opinion of their romantic relationship. The opening prompt read, "My [mother's / father's] opinions about my romantic relationship are . . ." and was followed by five 7-point semantic differential items (i.e., *unimportant-important, not at all valuable-very valuable, not worth my time-worth my time, very useful-not at all useful, not at all insightful-very insightful*). This measure produced excellent internal reliability (ω = .94).

Data analysis

H_1 – H_6 were tested using Pearson's product-moment correlations. After conducting preliminary tests to identify potential control variables for the multivariate model displayed in Figure 1 (e.g., age, length of romantic relationship, relational status), H_7 – H_9 were tested via two moderated mediation models using Model 73 in Hayes's (2018) PROCESS (v. 4.2) macro for SPSS (v. 29). The first model used RU as the predictor variable (X), communication engagement (M1) and communication valence (M2) as parallel mediators, relational turbulence as the outcome variable (Y), parent interference as the first moderator (W), and valuing the parent's opinion as the second moderator (Z) while controlling for significant covariates. The second

model mirrored the first but substituted parent facilitation as the first moderator (W). Bootstrapping analyses were employed using 10,000 subsamples to obtain bias-corrected and accelerated confidence intervals for all indirect effects.

Results

Preliminary Analyses

Descriptive statistics, including means, standard deviations, and Pearson's product-moment correlations, are displayed in Table 1. Preliminary analyses, using correlations and independent samples *t*-tests, were conducted to identify potential control variables in tests of the multivariate models. Age was not associated with RU, but relational length was inversely associated with RU ($r = -.24$, $p < .001$). To test relational status, status was dummy-coded based on whether participants were in love with their romantic partner ($n = 186$) or not ($n = 78$) (0 = dating but not in love, 1 = in love) and entered into a series of *t*-tests. The results indicated that participants who were in love with their romantic partner reported (a) less RU ($M = 2.48$, $SD = 1.03$) than those who were not in love ($M = 3.20$, $SD = .81$), $t(182.73) = 6.10$, $p < .001$, $r = .36$; (b) more conversational engagement about the state of their relationship ($M = 4.87$, $SD = 1.05$) than those who were not in love ($M = 3.93$, $SD = 1.25$), $t(262) = -6.26$, $p < .001$, $r = .38$; (c) more positively valenced conversations about the state of their relationship ($M = 6.00$, $SD = 1.13$) than those who were not in love ($M = 5.38$, $SD = 1.44$), $t(118.81) = -3.36$, $p < .001$, $r = .23$; and (d) less relational turbulence ($M = 1.71$, $SD = 0.89$) than those who were not in love ($M = 2.21$, $SD = 1.12$), $t(120.15) = 3.53$, $p < .001$, $r = .24$. Consequently, relational length and relational status were entered as control variables in tests of the conditional mediation model.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics and Pearson's Product-moment Correlations for all Variables (*N* = 264)

Variable	*M*	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. RU	2.69	1.02	--							
2. CE	4.59	1.19	-.51**	--						
3. Valence	5.82	1.26	-.47**	.47**	--					
4. Parent INT	1.69	1.01	.17**	-.01	-.23**	--				
5. Parent FAC	3.88	1.46	-.17**	.11†	.20**	-.44**	--			
6. Parent OPN	5.63	1.45	-.15*	.04	.21**	-.51**	.67**	--		
7. Length	1.19	1.13	-.24**	.21**	.12*	-.02	.09	-.03	--	
8. Turbulence	1.86	.99	.46**	-.50**	-.76**	.21**	-.09	-.08	-.13*	--

Note. RU = relational uncertainty. CE = conversational engagement. INT = interference. FAC = facilitation. OPN = value parent's opinion.

$^{\dagger}p$ = .055. *p < .05. **p < .01.

Primary Analysis

H_1 predicted that young adults' RU would be negatively associated with conversational engagement with their romantic partner about the state of their relationship. The results indicated that RU is inversely associated with conversational engagement (r = -.51, p < .01), and thus, H_1 was supported.

H_2 predicted that young adults' RU would be negatively associated with having positively valenced conversations about the state of their romantic relationship. This hypothesis was also supported, as RU is negatively associated with having positively valence conversations about relational state (r = -.47, p < .01).

H_3 predicted that young adult children's reports of parent interference would be inversely associated with conversational engagement (H_{3a}) and having positively valenced conversations with their romantic partner (H_{3b}) about the state of their relationship. According to Table 1, parent interference is not associated with conversational engagement, but it is inversely associated with having positively valenced conversations with a romantic partner about the state of the romantic relationship (r = -.23, p < .01). Thus, H_{3a} was not supported but H_{3b} was supported.

H_4 predicted that young adult children's reports of parent facilitation would be positively associated with conversational engagement (H_{4a}) and positively valenced conversations (H_{4b}) with their romantic partner about the state of their relationship. The results indicated that parent facilitation is not significantly associated with conversational engagement (H_{4a} not supported, see Table 1), but it is positively associated young adults with having positively valenced conversations with their partner about the state of their romantic relationship (r = .20, p < .01). Thus, H_{4b} was supported.

H_5 predicted that conversational engagement with one's romantic partner about the state of the relationship would be inversely associated with relational turbulence. The results indicated that engagement is inversely associated with turbulence (r = -.50, p < .01), and thus, H_5 was supported.

H_6 predicted that positively valenced conversations with one's romantic partner about the state of the relationship would be inversely associated with relational turbulence. Again, in support of *H*6, the results indicated that positively valenced conversations about the state of the relationship are inversely associated with relational turbulence (r = -.76, p < .01).

Whereas H_7 predicted that communication engagement and valence in discussions of the state of the romantic relationship would function as parallel mediators of RU and relational turbulence in the romantic relationship, H_8 and H_9 predicted that parent interference and facilitation would moderate the direct and indirect associations between RU and turbulence vis-à-vis communication engagement and valence about the state of the romantic relationship, and that the conditional indirect associations would further depend upon how much the young adult child values their parent's opinion about their romantic relationship. To test all three predictions simultaneously, two conditional mediation models were obtained using Model 73 in PROCESS, including one for parent interference and one for parent facilitation.

Multivariate Model for Parent Interference

The first model, using parent interference as the first moderator (W) and relational length and status as covariates, produced a significant multiple correlation coefficient, R = .80, F(17, 244) = 25.25, p < .0001, accounting for 63.8% of the shared variance in relational turbulence. In the first stage of the model, RU (b = -.54, SE = .07, p < .001) and relational status (b = .53, SE = .16, p < .001) emerged as significant predictors of communication engagement about the state of the relationship, as did the two-way interaction effect of parental interference and valuing the

parent's opinion (b = -.11, SE = .04, p < .01). Likewise, RU (b = -.49, SE = .08, p < .0001) and parental interference (b = -.28, SE = .10, p < .01) emerged as significant predictors of communication valence, as did a similar two-way interaction effect of parental interference and valuing the parent's opinion (b = -.11, SE = .04, p < .01). Both two-way interaction effects were probed using one *SD* above and below the mean (Aiken & West, 1991). Figure 2 displays the contingent, transverse negative interaction of parent interference by valuing parent's opinion on communication engagement (see Holbert & Park, 2020). Parent interference inversely predicted young adults' communication engagement with their romantic partner about the state of the relationship when they highly valued their parent's opinion about their romantic relationship (b = -.21, SE = .10, p < .05), but it no longer predicted communication engagement when they valued their parent's opinion somewhat (b = -.05, SE = .09, p > .05) or not at all (b = .12, SE = .10, p > .05).

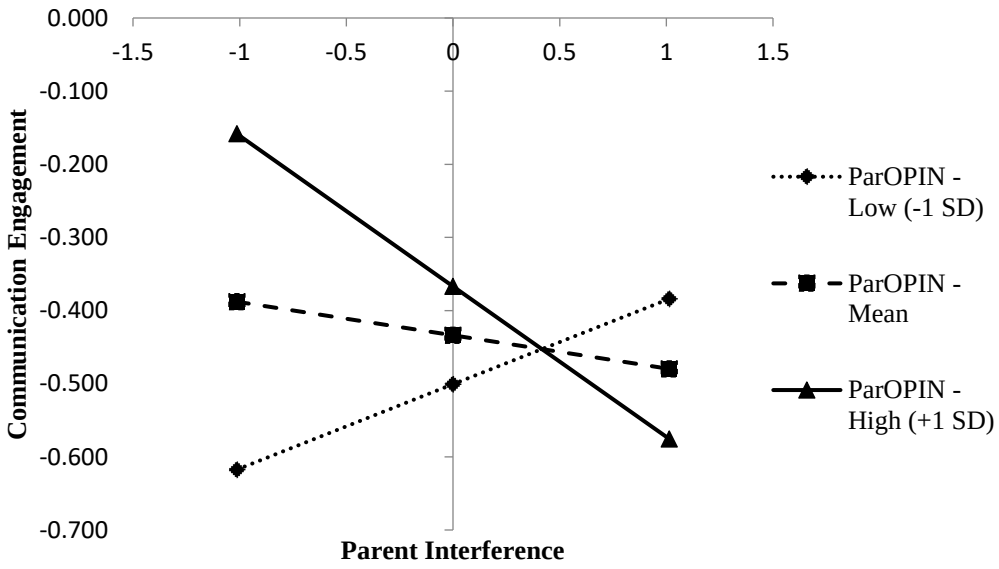

Figure 2. *Decomposition of the Parent Interference by Valuing Parent's Opinion Interaction Effect on Young Adult Children's Communication Engagement with their Romantic Partner*

Note. ParOPIN = valuing parent's opinion about the child's romantic relationship.

Figure 3 displays the contingent, convergent negative interaction of parent interference by valuing parent's opinion on communication valence. Parent interference inversely predicted the valence of young adults' conversations with their romantic partner about the state of the relationship when they highly valued their parent's opinion about their romantic relationship (b = -.44, SE = .12, p < .01) or valued their opinion somewhat (b = -.28, SE = .10, p < .01), but it no longer predicted communication valence when they did not value their parent's opinion about their relationship (b = -.13, SE = .12, p > .05).

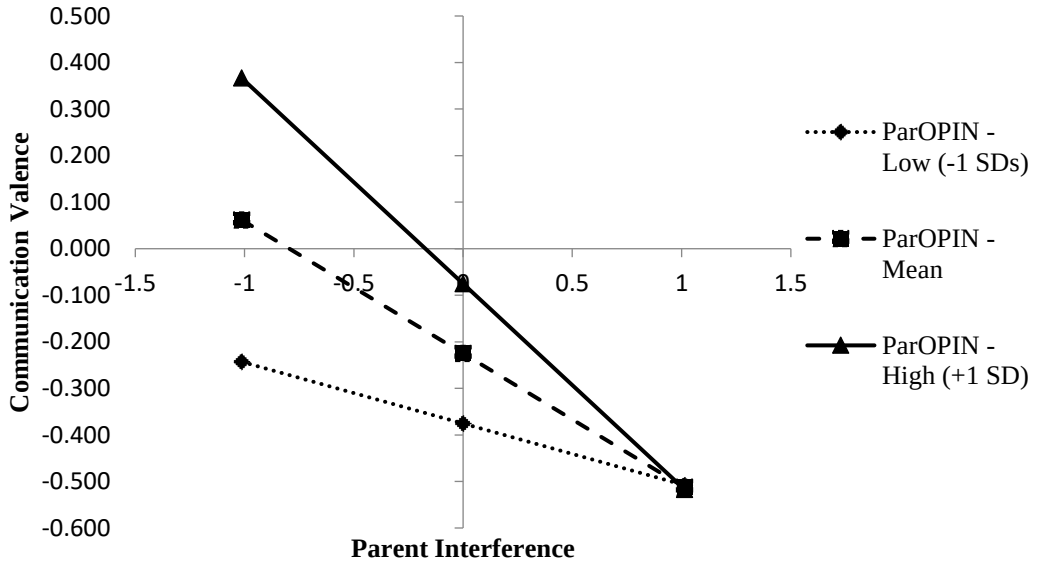

Figure 3. *Decomposition of the Parent Interference by Valuing the Parent's Opinion Interaction Effect on Communication Valence*

Note. ParOPIN = valuing the parent's opinion about the romantic relationship.

In the second stage of the model, communication engagement (b = -.12, SE = .05, p < .05), communication valence (b = -.50, SE = .04, p < .0001), parent interference (b = .13, SE = .06, p < .05), and valuing the parent's opinion (b = .08, SE = .03, p < .05) emerged as significant predictors of young adults' relational turbulence. None of the conditional direct effects of RU on turbulence were statistically significant. However, the indirect effects of RU on turbulence via communication engagement and valence were conditioned by parent interference across different levels of valuing the parent's opinion. As displayed in Table 2, the indirect effect via communication engagement was only significant at a low level of parent interference when the young adult child valued their parent's opinion somewhat, or at a moderate level of interference when the child did not value their parent's opinion. Conversely, the indirect effect via communication valence was statistically significant and tended to increase in magnitude within increasing degrees of parent interference as the child increasingly valued the parent's opinion, except at high levels of parent interference when the child highly valued their parent's opinion. Taken as a whole, the results of the parent interference model supported $H_7 - H_9$.

Table 2

Conditional Indirect Effects in the Parent Interference Model

Indirect Path	Level of PI	Level of VPO	Effect	*SE*	95% CI (LLCI, ULCI)
RU → CE → TURB	Low	Low	.086	.064	(-.002, .251)
		Moderate	**.073**	**.036**	**(.008, .149)**
		High	.056	.038	(-.024, .127)
	Moderate	**Low**	**.065**	**.047**	**(.001, .186)**
		Moderate	.062	.046	(-.002, .174)
		High	.056	.069	(-.045, .223)
	High	Low	.035	.059	(-.045, .187)
		Moderate	.046	.109	(-.086, .340)
		High	.056	.194	(-.187, .571)
RU → CV → TURB	Low	**Low**	**.195**	**.075**	**(.037, .327)**
		Moderate	**.235**	**.048**	**(.142, .329)**
		High	**.274**	**.067**	**(.150, .408)**
	Moderate	**Low**	**.206**	**.062**	**(.074, .319)**
		Moderate	**.245**	**.051**	**(.142, .343)**
		High	**.281**	**.079**	**(.131, .439)**
	High	**Low**	**.222**	**.070**	**(.081, .353)**
		Moderate	**.258**	**.106**	**(.040, .456)**
		High	.291	.177	(-.058, .640)

Note. RU = relational uncertainty. CE = communication engagement. TURB = relational turbulence. PI = parent interference. VPO = valuing parent's opinion. Levels of PI are the minimum (-.688), the mean (0), and 1 *SD* above the mean (1.014), given that 1 *SD* below the mean is below the minimum observed in the data. Levels of VPO are 1 *SD* below the mean (-1.454), the mean (0), and 1 *SD* above the mean (1.381). Indirect effects, standard errors, and 95% confident intervals were estimated using 10,000 bootstrapped samples. Significant indirect effects are bolded.

Multivariate Model for Parent Facilitation

The second model, which mirrored the first model but substituted parent facilitation for interference as the first moderator (W), produced a significant and nearly identical multiple correlation coefficient, $R = .80$, $F(17, 244) = 25.16$, $p < .0001$, accounting for 63.7% of the shared variance in relational turbulence. Similar to the results for parent interference, in the first stage of the parent facilitation model, RU ($b = -.56$, $SE = .08$, $p < .001$) and relational status ($b = .53$, $SE = .16$, $p < .001$) emerged as significant predictors of communication engagement about the state of the relationship, as did the two-way interaction effect of parent facilitation and valuing the parent's opinion ($b = .08$, $SE = .03$, $p < .01$). However, in the facilitation model, it was RU ($b = -.53$, $SE = .09$, $p < .0001$) and valuing the parent's opinion ($b = .26$, $SE = .08$, $p < .01$) that emerged as significant predictors of communication valence. A similar two-way interaction effect of parent facilitation and valuing the parent's opinion also emerged as a significant predictor ($b = .11$, $SE = .03$, $p < .001$) of communication valence. Again, both two-way interaction effects were probed using one *SD* above and below the mean (Aiken & West, 1991). Figure 4 displays the contingent, transverse positive interaction of parent facilitation by valuing parent's opinion on communication engagement. Parent facilitation positively predicted young adults' communication engagement with their romantic partner about the state of the relationship when they highly valued their parent's opinion about their romantic relationship ($b = .16$, $SE = .07$, $p < .05$), but it no longer predicted communication engagement when they valued their parent's opinion somewhat ($b = .04$, $SE = .06$, $p > .05$) or not at all ($b = -.08$, $SE = .07$, $p > .05$).

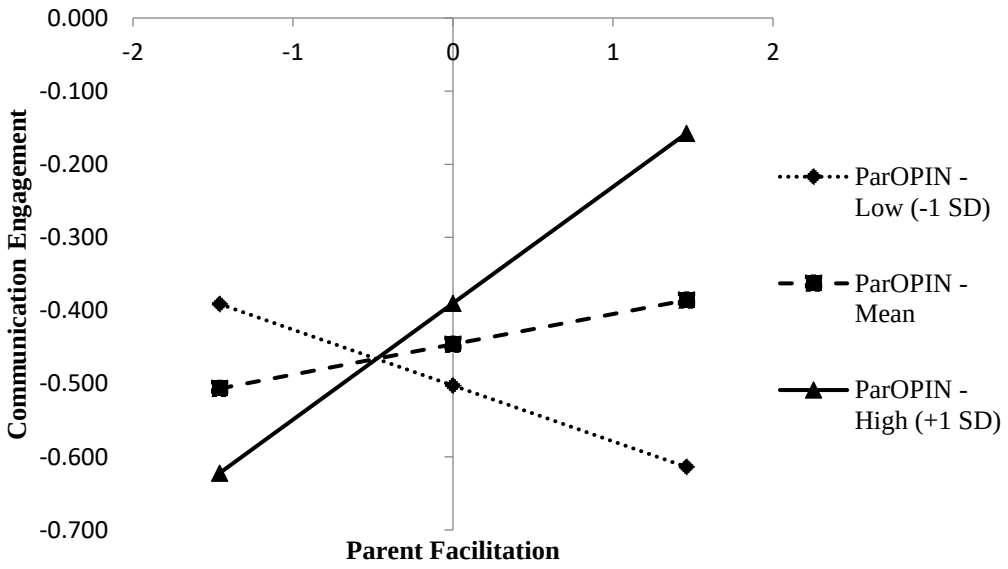

Figure 4. *Decomposition of the Parent Facilitation by Valuing Parent's Opinion Interact Effect on Communication Engagement with Romantic Partner about State of the Relationship*

Note. ParOPIN = valuing parent's opinion about the romantic relationship.

Figure 5 displays the cleaved divergent interaction of parent facilitation by valuing parent's opinion on communication valence. Parent facilitation positively predicted the valence of young adults' conversations with their romantic partner about the state of the relationship when they highly valued their parent's opinion about their romantic relationship (b = .16, SE = .08, p < .05), but it negatively predicted communication valence when they did not value their parent's opinion about their relationship (b = -.17, SE = .08, p < .05).

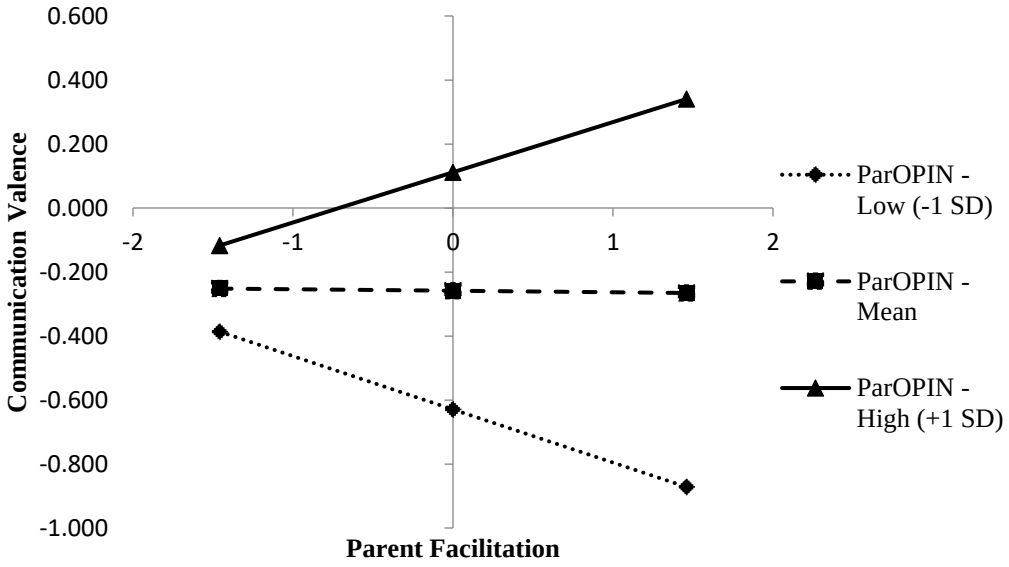

Figure 5. *Decomposition of the Parent Facilitation by Valuing Parent's Opinion on the Valence of Young Adults' Conversations with their Romantic Partner about Relational State*

Note. ParOPIN = valuing the parent's opinion about the romantic relationship.

In the second stage of the parent facilitation model, RU (b = .13, SE = .06, p < .05), communication engagement (b = -.15, SE = .05, p < .01), and communication valence (b = -.50, SE = .05, p < .0001) emerged as significant predictors of young adults' relational turbulence. Although RU had a direct effect on turbulence, none of the conditional direct effects were statistically significant. Likewise, the indirect effect of RU on turbulence via communication engagement was statistically significant (b = .086, SE = .048, 95% CI: .009, .193) but was not conditioned by parent facilitation and valuing the parent's opinion. However, the indirect effects of RU on turbulence via communication valence were conditioned by parent facilitation across different levels of valuing the parent's opinion. As displayed in Table 3, the indirect effect via communication valence was statistically significant and tended to increase in magnitude within increasing degrees of parent facilitation as the child increasingly valued the parent's opinion, except at high levels of parent facilitation when the child did not value their parent's opinion. Similar to the model for parent interference, the results of the parent facilitation model supported H_7, but provided only partial support for H_8 and H_9 given the conditioning of the indirect effects through communication valence but not through communication engagement.

Table 3

Conditional Indirect Effects in the Parent Facilitation Model

Indirect Path	Level of PF	Level of VPO	Effect	*SE*	95% CI (LLCI, ULCI)
RU → CE → TURB	Low	Low	.072	.047	(-.010, .174)
		Moderate	.106	.065	(-.003, .253)
		High	.145	.110	(-.037, .399)
	Moderate	Low	.096	.078	(-.008, .294)
		Moderate	**.086**	**.048**	**(.009, .193)**
		High	.070	.056	(-.028, .192)
	High	Low	.121	.146	(-.051, .508)
		Moderate	.068	.060	(-.023, .211)
		High	.011	.031	(-.054, .070)
RU → CV → TURB	Low	**Low**	**.245**	**.066**	**(.108, .365)**
		Moderate	**.276**	**.083**	**(.110, .437)**
		High	**.300**	**.129**	**(.063, .571)**
	Moderate	**Low**	**.219**	**.085**	**(.060, .389)**
		Moderate	**.267**	**.058**	**(.157, .381)**
		High	**.317**	**.074**	**(.186, .475)**
	High	Low	.180	.138	(-.062, .483)
		Moderate	**.230**	**.080**	**(.082, .394)**
		High	**.282**	**.086**	**(.117, .451)**

Note. RU = relational uncertainty. CE = communication engagement. TURB = relational turbulence. PF = parent facilitation. VPO = valuing parent's opinion. Levels of PF are 1 *SD* below the mean (-1.46), the mean (0), and 1 *SD* above the mean (1.46). Levels of VPO are 1 *SD* below the mean (-1.45), the mean (0), and the maximum (1.38), given that 1 *SD* above the mean is above the maximum observed in the data for VPO. Indirect effects, standard errors, and 95% confident intervals were estimated using 10,000 bootstrapped samples. Significant indirect effects are bolded.

Discussion

Although scholars have advanced relational turbulence theory (Solomon et al., 2016) in an effort to explain how romantic partners communicate during transitions, with a few notable exceptions (e.g., Knobloch & Donovan-Kicken, 2006), this body of work has focused primarily on relational uncertainty (RU), partner influence, and other factors that shape experiences of turbulence *within* romantic partnerships. Much less is known about *outside* sources of influence that may alter how romantic partners communicate about their relationship as they navigate greater or lesser degrees of turbulence. Hence, the primary goal of this study was to test the degree to which parent involvement alters the associations among young adult children's RU, their communication about the state of their relationship with their romantic partner, and their perceptions of relational turbulence. Overall, the results supported the theoretic logic advanced by RTT. Young adults who were experiencing RU were less likely to actively engage in conversations with their romantic partner about the state of their relationship and were more likely to perceive relationship-centered conversations as negative. Engaging less frequently in conversations about the state of the relationship and experiencing more negative emotions when such conversations do occur, in turn, predicted experiences of relational turbulence.

The results of this study also extend RTT by identifying two boundary conditions that may alter how romantic partners communicate to manage their RU about the relationship. In terms of how parent involvement affects this process, for example, neither parent interference nor facilitation was associated with the young adult child's communication engagement about the state of their romantic relationship with their partner. On the other hand, parent involvement was associated with the valence of conversations between romantic partners, such that the type of parent involvement (i.e., interference and facilitation) predicted communication between partners that was more or less constructive. More importantly, parent interference and facilitation

conditioned the indirect association between RU and relational turbulence via communication valence, although this too depended on how much the young adult valued their parent's opinion about their romantic partnership. Consequently, the findings of this study illuminate tensions that exist at the intersection of parent-child relationships and romantic partnerships by offering three important implications worth noting.

Communication about the Romantic Relationship and Parent Involvement

The first set of implications involve the direct associations between parent involvement and a young adult child's RU and communication with their romantic partner about how the relationship is going. Whereas parent interference is positively associated with their child's RU and inversely associated with the valence or tone of their child's conversations with their romantic partner, parent facilitation is inversely associated with RU and positively associated with the tone of the child's conversations. Although the associations are small in magnitude, they are meaningful given that they tie an individual's assessments of RU and the tone of their conversations with their partner about relational state to what they perceive about their parent's evaluations of their romantic relationship. With parent interference comes the arousal of negative emotion as the parent hinders the growth and progression of the relationship. This, in turn, may undermine the child's confidence in the romantic relationship and discourage further pursuit of the partnership. This upsurge in stress and uncertainty regarding the relationship may not only hinder message production between partners but may enhance the likelihood that messages from one's partner will be processed negatively (Knobloch et al., 2007). Because of this, one might reason that conversations assessing the state and future of the relationship become an unpleasant topic of conversation due to the anxiety they elicit, an anxiety that is perhaps first brought to bear on the relationship by a parent's efforts to subvert the relationship.

To the contrary, parent facilitation may have an opposite effect on the valence or tone of conversations between romantic partners, such that conversations about the relationship are seen as more pleasant and worthwhile when the parent is thought of as supportive. Positive reactions from important others, such as parents and close friends, express "direct approval for the relationship" (Felmlee, 2001, p. 126) that can produce an optimistic outlook for the success of the relationship. Believing the relationship is embraced by parents should make relationship talk a welcomed activity given that talking about the future of the relationship is easier under conditions of certainty than uncertainty.

It is also worth noting that parent involvement is not significantly associated with how likely young adults are to engage their romantic partners in conversations about the relationship. Because social network involvement primarily influences more global evaluations of a romantic relationship, such as enhancing or diminishing RU (Knobloch & Donovan-Kicken, 2006), relational stability (Felmlee, 2001), and relational quality (Sprecher & Felmlee, 1992), it is somewhat unsurprising that involvement is more meaningfully associated with communication valence than communication engagement, given that the stress and tension that emerges from extradyadic involvement may influence a particular view of the relationship that spills over into the tone of conversation between romantic partners. Especially when young adults are wrestling with their own convictions about the relationship (i.e., RU), parent involvement complicating this sensemaking process is likely to produce anxiety and a state of negative affect that disrupts clearheaded, straightforward communication about the relationship, more so than how often relationship talks are engaged in.

Parent Influence, Valuing the Parent's Opinion, and Talking about the Relationship

The second set of implications involve the extent to which valuing the parent's opinion moderates the association between parent influence (i.e., interference and facilitation) and the

young adult's communication with their partner about the state of the relationship. That is, the extent to which communication about the romantic relationship is altered varies as a function of whether the young adult child values the input of the parent to begin with, although this pattern of moderation varied depending on whether the parent interfered with or facilitated the child's romantic relationship. In the case of parent interference, for example, young adult children who valued their parent's opinion about their romantic relationship were less likely to engage their partner in discussions of relational state and were more likely to experience negative conversations when they did discuss the state of the relationship, unlike young adults who did not value their parent's opinion about their relationship. Interference from a parent whose view of the relationship is important to the young adult child likely alters the young adult's attitude about the relationship, since people's thoughts about relationships are intertwined with their talk about relationships (Knobloch & Theiss, 2011; Solomon & Theiss, 2007). If the parent is indirectly imparting a negative view of the relationship via interference and the young adult child values the parent's input enough to let this pervade their own feelings about the relationship, it may influence their more general evaluation of the relationship and carry over into the discrete interactions of the young adult and their romantic partner about the relationship itself.

In addition, the more the young adult child values the parent's opinion, and the parent interferes in the relationship, the less likely the young adult is to engage in discussions about the relationship with their romantic partner. It is possible young adult children in this position desire to retain uncertainty about the relationship by avoiding conversations that are relationship focused. Knobloch and Theiss (2011) found relationship talk to be negatively associated with RU, indicating that romantic partners sometimes choose to maintain uncertainty by refraining from conversations that could enhance understanding of their relationship (e.g., relationship talk). Moreover, avoidance of a particular topic, such as relationship talk, may also stem from

generalized anxiety (Knobloch et al., 2013), which is nervousness and apprehension about the future (Behar et al., 2009). If a high desire for parent approval is met with perceived disapproval via interfering behaviors, avoiding discussion of the relationship is likely born out of anxiety about the status and longevity of the relationship, prompting a preference for uncertainty and less frequent conversation about the state of the relationship.

As for parent facilitation, young adults who have high regard for what their parent thinks are more likely to engage in conversations about the relationship with their romantic partner and to perceive that such conversations are positive in tone. In this study, parent facilitation included helping the young adult achieve goals for the romantic relationship and aiding their understanding of how to have a healthy relationship with their romantic partner. In light of this, highly facilitative parents likely encourage and instruct their young adult children in how to engage in relational maintenance behaviors. This may include the promotion of regularly checking in on the relationship, since relationship talk is an important element of understanding the nature of one's relationship (Knobloch & Theiss, 2011) and is able to improve relationship quality (Tan et al., 2011). Alternatively, young adults initiating relationship talks with their partner may be a result of having the confidence to navigate the relationship because of the guidance they receive from their parent. Either way, it makes sense that a notable increase in engagement can be accounted for at high levels of facilitation, considering a highly involved parent is more likely to be relied on for help and advice than a parent who is only somewhat involved or not involved at all.

Parent facilitation may also influence how productive relationship talk is between partners, as young adults who highly regard their parent's opinion tend to experience positively valenced conversations with their partner. Similar to the effect that parent interference has on valence, if the parent is imparting an overall impression that they approve of the relationship

through facilitative behaviors and remarks, this is likely going to encourage the young adult's belief that their relationship is supported, on the right track, and worth pursuing. This assurance may carry over into perceiving relationship talk as helpful and worthwhile.

However, the positive association that facilitation has on relationship talk becomes an inverse association when the young adult child does not care about or value the parent's opinion. Harboring disdain and disregard for what a parent thinks is often an indicator of low relational quality and/or a lack of respect between parent and child. Although parent facilitation conveys a desire to support the romantic partnership and be involved in the couple's life, the young adult child may feel annoyed, frustrated, or even resentful at the parent's attempts to insert themselves into their romantic relationship if they believe the parent's behavior is intrusive or unnecessary. Here, a fundamental shift in the meaning of facilitation occurs as the same parental behaviors that encourage positive relational talk between partners under conditions of valuing parental opinions become detrimental to relational talk when parental opinions no longer matter. Because individuals unreceptive to unsolicited advice tend to view others' advice-giving as restrictive of their autonomy (Paik, 2020), it is likely an adverse reaction to unwanted involvement and input, or perhaps the anticipation that continuing the relationship risks further parent involvement, that drives destructive patterns of communicating about the relationship between romantic partners.

Parent Influence Alters RU and RT vis-à-vis Communication

A final noteworthy contribution of this study involves the conditional indirect effects that young adults' RU has on their relational turbulence vis-à-vis their communication engagement and valence when discussing the state of their romantic relationship. Overall, parent influence moderated the indirect association between RU and relational turbulence primarily through communication valence. For interference, the indirect association between RU and relational turbulence via the tone of partners' conversations about relational state grows in magnitude, such

that the more the young adult child values the opinion of a parent who is interfering with the romantic relationship, the stronger the indirect association becomes. Likewise, a somewhat similar pattern of moderated moderation occurs across varying levels of parent facilitation, with two notable exceptions. When either parent interference and facilitation are high, then the indirect effect of RU on relational turbulence via communication valence ceases to be significant when the young adult highly values the parent's opinion (in the case of interference) or does not value it at all (in the case of facilitation).

One possible explanation for these patterns of moderation may lie in how relational turmoil emerges out of parent involvement, prompting episodic RU and generating a particular outcome expectancy and emotion that complicates communication between romantic partners. Knobloch (2005) explains that while RU is often conceptualized as a global perception of doubt about involvement, it can also arise from discrete episodes experienced within the relationship that, in turn, produce strong cognitive and emotional reactions that influence communicative responses. Perhaps unfavorable behaviors by an important other, such as a parent, impose doubts upon the child's romantic relationship that catalyze episodic RU. The emotional reactivity elicited by moments of episodic RU may activate more negative appraisals of relationship talk that further contribute to relational turbulence when parents interfere with their child's relationship. For instance, Knobloch (2005) found that appraisals, emotions, and intimacy uniquely predicted individuals' responses to episodic RU, and that specific appraisals (e.g., viewing an uncertainty-inducing event as an obstacle or problem) explained variance in the type of behaviors used to manage events that amplify RU (e.g., explaining one's feelings and calmly questioning the other person about their feelings). Hence, whether relational communication is viewed as constructive or destructive may, to some degree, be based upon how parent

involvement is appraised, such as whether the type of involvement is seen as either goal congruent or incongruent.

According to Lazarus's (1991) appraisal theory, people appraise (i.e., make assessments or judgments) their ongoing relationships in ways that shape their emotions. An incident that hinders personal goals and accomplishments often produces negatively valenced emotions from cognitively interpreting the situation as distressing. Conversely, circumstances that are compatible with desires elicit positive emotions. In succession to the primary appraisal, a secondary appraisal is made about an event that determines the discrete emotion produced. For example, hope is characterized by high problem-focused coping and optimistic future expectancy, whereas anxiety is a byproduct of low emotion-focused coping potential that is "characterized by pessimism or uncertainty about being able to adjust emotionally to a perceived threat" (Low et al., 2003, p. 379). If parent interference is appraised as unsupportive that sparks episodic RU, this may cause anxiety, introduce pessimistic thoughts about whether the relationship is viable, and create doubt about the young adult child's ability to navigate the parent's lack of support. On the other hand, parent facilitation appraised as acceptance of the relationship is likely to instill hope, as well as an optimistic outlook about the well-being and future of the relationship. If uncertainty makes relating more difficult (Knobloch & Solomon, 2005), then the negative appraisal and emotion concomitant with episodic RU brought on by parent involvement may complicate the ease of conversation between partners as they discuss the state of their romantic relationship.

Furthermore, if appraising parent interference as goal-incongruent catalyzes cognitive dissonance and negative affect about the relationship, this may then further explain why parent interference might impact young adult's uncertainty in a way that leads them to view relationship talk as unhelpful. The more a parent makes negative insinuations about the relationship through

interfering remarks and behavior, and the more this interference enhances episodic RU, the more RU and parent interference may combine to create a sense of chaos and fragility regarding the romantic relationship. At a minimum, ongoing negative sentiments from parents about the suitability of a romantic partner and/or the long-term viability of the relationship may erode the child's confidence in the relationship and lead them to become more cynical about the relationship.

To further illustrate this point, Knobloch et al. (2007) contends that RU alters a married couple's ability to process messages, since the future of the relationship being brought into question is both disheartening and anxiety-provoking. In this way, partners are susceptible to interpreting messages more critically since the process of communicating becomes an altogether more stressful task. Knobloch and colleagues (2007) posit that "pessimism bias operates under conditions of relational uncertainty such that spouses will react negatively, zealously, and harshly when interpreting utterances" (p. 157). Although outside of a martial context, this same logic should apply where the elicitation of RU by a parent whose opinion is revered creates a pessimism bias about the relationship that causes a critical interpretation of messages exchanged with the romantic partner. Even at average to low levels of valuing the opinion and input of the parent, the parent casting doubt about the relationship elevates a critical processing of messages, demonstrating the strength of influence that interfering behaviors have on the relationship. Hence, being in a distressed cognitive and emotional state about the status and future of the relationship, the process of communicating with the partner becomes a stressful, unpleasant task as the longevity of the relationship is called into question.

Contrary to parent interference, parent facilitation is able to improve the relational climate between romantic partners through enhancing confidence in the relationship and thus improving communication productivity, given that the inherent act of facilitation implies

embracing and supporting the relationship in a manner that is likely to be reassuring to the young adult child. Social network members can enhance or undermine relationship quality, and it is "positive reactions from family and friends [that can] decrease uncertainty because they reinforce the notion that members of a couple are right for each other" (Sprecher & Felmlee, 2000, p. 326). As RU subsides with increased confidence in the current definition and future goals of the relationship (Knobloch & Solomon 2002a), this should lend to the young adult child an improved desire and clearer understanding of how to have relationship-focused conversations with their partner that facilitates relational functioning.

From the perspective of appraisal theory (Lazarus, 1991), the elicitation of hope coincides with an optimistic future expectancy. In other words, when young adults feel supported by their familial network, this may contribute to a positive affective state and cognitive mindset that views the relationship as accepted. Similar to interference, the parent's thoughts about the relationship that transfers over to the young adult's perspective likely induces evaluative judgments of the relationship that are in alignment with the parent's opinion. If facilitation is perceived as supportive in nature, then young adult children are more apt to judge their relationship as secure and on track. This, in turn, may put them at ease with talking about their relationship and encourage the belief that relationship talk is a worthwhile pursuit. Having enhanced efficacy to talk to one's partner about the relationship may reduce the tendency to perceive relational turbulence, and instead enhance perceptions that the relationship is stable.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

The primary theoretical contribution of this study is that it clarifies a form of familial involvement that is associated with whether, and to what extent, romantic partners experience relational turbulence. Parent influence acts as a boundary condition that alters conversations about the young adult child's romantic relationship and is predictive of relational turbulence.

More specifically, parent influence functions primarily to contextualize the indirect effect of young adult children's RU on their relational turbulence through the valence of their discussions of relational state. Additionally, the results reveal that when it comes to parent involvement, it is more so how interference or facilitation affects the way the relationship is perceived that contributes to unproductive communication, and consequently relational turbulence, than communication engagement. Furthermore, the extent to which involvement influences communication productivity between partners is further conditioned by how much the parent's opinion is valued.

Therefore, this study uniquely demonstrates how parent involvement may compel a particular view of, and therefore response to, the relationship that results in greater or lesser degrees of turbulence, challenging the assumption that relational turbulence is a phenomenon that can only be brought about within a relationally contained system (i.e., the dyad). This highlights how tensions between romantic partnerships and familial relationships can disrupt the natural functioning and progression of romantic relationships. It further provides evidence that additional boundary conditions (e.g., sibling relationships) may exist that have the potential to impact an individual's cognitive, affective, and communicative approach to their romantic relationship that consequently affects its trajectory.

The findings of the study also offer practical value to both parents and young adult children. It is a parent's responsibility to be mindful about how they communicate with their young adult child about their romantic relationship. When a young adult highly values what their parent thinks, this heightens their sensitivity to the parent's opinion of the relationship. Even overlooked behaviors like failing to invite the partner over or asking how the partner is doing might be construed as interfering or facilitative, and thus perceived as (un)supportive. Therefore, special attention should be paid to what is (or is not) being communicated that may alter young

adult children's impressions of how the relationship is going, and consequently affect how well they navigate their romantic relationship.

Beyond this, there are important, indirect implications for parents struggling in their relationship with their young adult children who might try to remedy their struggles or reestablish their bond by engaging in facilitative behaviors. Rather than aiding the romantic relationship, the findings of this study suggest that unwanted involvement may breed greater discord than harmony, thus inflicting unintended consequences for the quality of the parent-child relationship. In light of this, parents who may be tempted to use their child's (new) romantic partnership as an opportunity to reintegrate themselves into their child's life should refrain from becoming overinvolved. Instead, these parents may want to take a step back and give their child and the child's romantic partner the space and freedom to navigate their relationship without extradyadic disruption and confusion.

Additionally, the findings show the need for young adult children to safeguard against negativity bias from coloring their view of how well the relationship is going. If parent interference influences young adult children's views of their relationship and alters the productivity of their relationship talk, then it may be important for romantic partners to develop ways of preventing perceptual distortions from barring effective communication. This can entail being disclosive and forthright with the romantic partner about the extensiveness of interference they are experiencing. Or perhaps it involves perception-checking the actions of their parents and what they may (or may not) mean to the child and their romantic partner. Solomon et al. (2016) recommend that with the "use [of] communication to promote cognitive reappraisal, regulate negative emotions, mitigate relational uncertainty, and enhance interdependence, communication can break the cycle that culminates in relational turbulence" (p. 523). By bringing the romantic partner up to speed, this creates an opportunity for partners to dialogically reappraise parent

involvement for what it is—a form of extradyadic influence. This would not only help young adult children make sense of the involvement, but it would help prevent it from affecting the course of their relationship.

Limitations and Future Directions

Despite these theoretical and practical implications, the results of this study should be interpreted with caution given the inherent limitations of the research design and sample. First, the use of convenience sampling from a private university in the Southwest limits the generalizability of the findings to the experiences of White, college educated women in dating relationships. Although the analyses controlled for relational status and whether participants were in love, researchers might extend this research by examining similar relationship processes in more ethnically and culturally diverse families, as well as with in-law relationships. Second, because relational turbulence is theorized to result from an accumulation of polarized interactions, the use of a cross-sectional design is unable to capture this progression. The use of a longitudinal study design would provide more robust insight into whether and how parent involvement erodes or enhances partner communication over an extended period of time. A final constraint of the study may involve the use of individual reports of relational turbulence, rather than recruiting dyads (e.g., the couple) or even triads (e.g., the couple and parent). Measuring each of the variables from a variety of perspectives would not only corroborate the present findings but would provide additional insight into how and why parent involvement affects communication processes the way that it does.

In spite of these limitations, there are a few ways researchers can build upon the findings of this study. Future studies might explore how the engagement level and tone of communication between partners impacted by parent involvement varies according to the topic of conversation in question. Relationship talk is an important facet of relational development. However, because

it is an expected topic of conversation between partners, it might not capture how parent influence affects communication engagement when partners discuss other matters of concern, such as in-law involvement when partners are engaged and/or married.

Another worthwhile avenue could be to investigate how much parent facilitation or interference predicts relational turbulence with the parent. Instead of, or in conjunction with, the amount of turbulence experienced with the romantic partner, high levels of parental involvement may have a similar destabilizing effect on the parent-child relationship if parent involvement is viewed as impeding the young adult child's newfound autonomy and independence, or the romantic relationship has already matured to the point that involvement is perceived as inappropriate. Likewise, researchers might examine how the child's responses to their parent's involvement affects the parents' relationship, particularly when the child is moving in the direction of marriage and potentially bringing their partner into the family system for the foreseeable future.

All in all, this study provides important insight into ways parent involvement may alter a young adult child's level of uncertainty about their romantic relationship, their communication with their romantic partner, and their subsequent experiences of turbulence in the relationship. The findings offer evidence that the intersection between parent involvement and relational functioning is a promising topic for further interpersonal research. Continuing this line of work will provide a more complete understanding of how familial ties influence young adults' ability to navigate and maintain their romantic relationships.

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Appendix

(1) What is your gender?
   a. Male
   b. Female
   c. Male to Female Transgender
   d. Female to Male Transgender
   e. Nonbinary
   f. Other

(2) 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):

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

(4) Has your romantic partner met your parents?
   a. Yes
   b. No

(5) How long have you been in your romantic relationship with your partner? (____ years, _____ months)

(6) How would you best classify your ***current*** romantic relationship?
   a. Romantic potential
   b. Casual dating but little emotional attachment
   c. Frequent dating but little emotional attachment
   d. Some emotional attachment
   e. Emotional attachment but not in love
   f. In love
   g. In love and would like to marry but have never discussed marriage
   h. In love and have discussed marriage but have not made marriage plans
   i. Engaged to be married

j. Spouse

(7) Have you and your partner ever talked about your parents' thoughts and feelings about your romantic relationship?
   a. Yes
   b. No

(8) Who do you currently live with (or when you lived at home, who were your primary caretakers)?
   a. Mother (biological or adoptive)
   b. Father (biological or adoptive)
   c. Both mother and father
   d. Mother and stepfather
   e. Father and stepmother
   f. Mother and mother
   g. Father and father
   h. Other (please specify):

(9) Are both of your biological (or adoptive) parents living?
   a. Yes
   b. No

(10) Are your biological (or adoptive) parents divorced?
   a. Yes
   b. No

(11) If your parents are divorced, how long have they been divorced? ____ years _____ months

(12) Are your parents married?
   a. Yes
   b. No

(13) If your parents are married, how long have they been married? _____ years _____ months

(14) **Directions:** Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements while keeping your romantic relationship in mind.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Strongly disagree					Strongly agree

Self-uncertainty

a. I sometimes wonder whether I want my romantic relationship to work out in the long run
b. I sometimes wonder whether I want my romantic relationship to last
c. I sometimes wonder how much I like my romantic partner.
d. I sometimes wonder how important my romantic relationship is to me
e. I sometimes wonder how much I am romantically interested in my partner
f. I sometimes wonder whether I am ready to commit to my romantic partner

Partner uncertainty

g. I sometimes wonder whether my romantic partner is ready to commit to me
h. I sometimes wonder how committed my romantic partner is to the relationship
i. I sometimes wonder whether my romantic partner wants to be with me in the long run
j. I sometimes wonder how important the relationship is to my romantic partner
k. I sometimes wonder how much my romantic partner is attracted to me
l. I sometimes wonder whether my romantic partner wants the relationship to work out in the long run

Relationship uncertainty

m. I sometimes wonder whether my romantic relationship will work out in the long run
n. I sometimes wonder whether me and my partner feel the same way about each other
o. I sometimes wonder whether me and my partner will stay together
p. I sometimes wonder whether the relationship is a romantic one
q. I sometimes wonder what the boundaries for appropriate and/or inappropriate behavior are in the relationship
r. I sometimes wonder whether my partner likes me as much as I like them
s. I sometimes wonder whether it is a romantic or a platonic relationship
t. I sometimes wonder how I can or cannot behave around my partner

(15) Directions: For this set of statements, please think about your relationship with your [mother / father] and indicate the extent to which you agree with the following set of statements.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Strongly Disagree					Strongly Agree

My [mother / father]…

1. …interferes with the plans I make with my romantic partner.
2. …makes it harder for me to schedule quality time with my romantic partner.
3. … interferes with whether I achieve the goals I have for my romantic relationship.
4. … disrupts my efforts to maintain my romantic relationship.
5. … interferes with how much time I devote to my romantic partner.
6. … prevents me from making my romantic partner a main priority.

7. … makes it harder to see a future with my romantic partner.
8. … makes it harder to plan a future with my romantic partner.
9. … makes it harder for my romantic partner to feel like they belong in the family

(16) Directions: For this set of statements, please think about your relationship with your [mother / father] and indicate the extent to which you agree with the following set of statements.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Strongly Disagree					Strongly Agree

My [mother /father]….

1. … helps me understand how to talk with my romantic partner.
2. … helps me in my efforts to spend time with my romantic partner.
3. … helps me to do the things I need to do to support my romantic partner.
4. … helps me in my efforts to make plans with my romantic partner.
5. … helps me to achieve the goals I have for my romantic relationship.
6. ….helps me understand how to have a healthy relationship with my romantic partner.
7. …encourages me to bring my romantic partner to family get-togethers.
8. …helps me prioritize my romantic partner.
9. … helps me know how to resolve conflict with my romantic partner.

(17) Directions: For this set of statements, please think about your relationship with your romantic partner and indicate the extent to which you agree with the following set of statements.

My romantic partner….

1	2	3	4	5	6
Strongly Disagree					Strongly Agree

a. … interferes with the plans I make
b. …. makes it harder for me to schedule my activities
c. … interferes with whether I achieve the everyday goals I set for myself (e.g., goals for exercise, diet, studying, entertainment)
d. … interferes with how much time I devote to my schoolwork
e. … disrupts my daily routine

(18) Directions: For this set of statements, please think about your relationship with your romantic partner and indicate the extent to which you agree with the following set of statements.

My romantic partner…

1 2 3 4 5 6
Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree

a. … helps me in my efforts to make plans.
b. … helps me to do the things I need to do each day.
c. … helps me to achieve the everyday goals I set for myself
d. … helps me in my efforts to spend time with my friends
e. … helps me to use my time well.

(19) Please indicate how much you avoided discussing the following topics with your **romantic partner** during the past week:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Never avoid discussing Always avoid discussing

a. The state of your relationship (i.e., how well your relationship is going)
b. Norms and expectations for your relationship
c. Behaviors that put a strain on your relationship

During the past week, we have actively avoided or actively discussed….

1 2 3 4 5 6
Actively avoided Actively discussed

d. Our view of this relationship
e. Our feelings for each other
f. The future of the relationship

(20) Please indicate how often you have had conversations with your **romantic partner** during the past month about the following topics:

1 2 3 4 5 6
Never Very often

a. Your [mother / father's] feelings about how your romantic relationship is going.
b. Your [mother /father's] expectations for the future of your romantic relationship.
c. Your [mother / father's] opinion on things that might challenge your romantic relationship.

During the past week, I have actively avoided or actively discussed ***with my romantic partner***….

1 2 3 4 5 6
Actively avoided Actively discussed

d. How my [mother / father] views our relationship.
e. What my [mother / father's] feelings are about the relationship.
f. Whether my [mother / father] sees a future for our relationship.

(21) Reflect on a conversation you recently had with your [mother / father] about how the state of your romantic relationship is going. To what extent was this conversation…

1	2	3	4
Negative			Positive
1	2	3	4
Unpleasant			Pleasant
1	2	3	4
Unenjoyable			Enjoyable
1	2	3	4
Unhelpful			Helpful
1	2	3	4
Worthless			Worthwhile

(22) **Directions:** Reflect on a conversation you recently had with your ***romantic partner*** about how the state of your relationship is going. To what extent was this conversation…

Negative	1	2	3	4	5	6	7 Positive
Unhelpful	1	2	3	4	5	6	7 Helpful
Unenjoyable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7 Enjoyable
Unpleasant	1	2	3	4	5	6	7 Pleasant
Worthless	1	2	3	4	5	6	7 Worthwhile

(23) **Directions:** Now reflect on a conversation you recently had with your ***romantic partner*** about your parent's thoughts and feelings about the relationship. To what extent was this conversation…

Negative	1	2	3	4	5	6	7 Positive
Unhelpful	1	2	3	4	5	6	7 Helpful
Unenjoyable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7 Enjoyable
Unpleasant	1	2	3	4	5	6	7 Pleasant
Worthless	1	2	3	4	5	6	7 Worthwhile

(24) **Directions:** Now reflect on a conversation you recently had with your [mother / father] about how the state of your relationship is going. To what extent was this conversation…

Negative	1	2	3	4	5	6	7 Positive

Unhelpful	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Helpful
Unenjoyable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Enjoyable
Unpleasant	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Pleasant
Worthless	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Worthwhile

(25) At the present time, my romantic relationship is . .

Chaotic	2	3	4	5	Stable
Calm	2	3	4	5	Turbulent
Tumultuous	2	3	4	5	Running Smoothly
Peaceful	2	3	4	5	Stressful

(26) At the present time, my relationship with my [mother / father] is . .

Chaotic	2	3	4	5	Stable
Calm	2	3	4	5	Turbulent
Tumultuous	2	3	4	5	Running Smoothly
Peaceful	2	3	4	5	Stressful

(27) **Directions**: Romantic partners often have varying degrees of closeness with one another. We are interested in your level of closeness with your romantic partner. Please read through all of the questions carefully.

Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 Very

a. How openly do you talk with your romantic partner?
b. How careful do you feel you have to be about what you say to your romantic partner?
c. How comfortable do you feel admitting doubts and fears to your romantic partner?
d. How interested is your romantic partner in talking to you when you want to talk?
e. How often does your romantic partner express affection or liking for you?
f. How well does your romantic partner know what you are really like?
g. How close do you feel to your romantic partner?
h. How confident are you that your romantic partner would help you if you had a problem?
i. If you needed money, how comfortable would you be asking your romantic partner for it?
j. How interested is your romantic partner in the things you do?

(28)

a. **Instructions:** We would like you to think about your relationship with your **romantic partner** over the last month. Please circle the number that most closely describes your feelings toward *your partner* over the past month.

Miserable: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 : Enjoyable

Discouraging : 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 :Hopeful

Tied Down : 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 : Free

Empty : 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 : Full

Boring : 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 : Interesting

Disappointing : 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 : Rewarding

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

b. All things considered, how satisfied have you been with your relationship with your ROMANTIC PARTNER the last month?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Completely Dissatisfied			Neutral			Completely Satisfied

(29) **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 questions fairly quickly. That is, don't try to count the number of times you felt a particular way, but rather indicate the alternative that seems like a reasonable estimate. For each questions, choose from the following alternatives.

Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Very Often
1	2	3	4	5

	N		S		VO
a. In the last month, how often have you been upset because of something that happened unexpectedly?	1	2	3	4	5
b. 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
c. In the last month, how often have you felt nervous and "stressed"	1	2	3	4	5
d. In the last month, how often have you dealt successfully with irritating life hassles?	1	2	3	4	5

e.	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
f.	In the last month, how often have you felt confident about your ability to handle your personal problems?	1	2	3	4	5
g.	In the last month, how often have you felt that things were going your way?	1	2	3	4	5
h.	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
i.	In the last month, how often have you been able to control irritations in your life?	1	2	3	4	5
j.	In the last month, how often have you felt that you were on top of things?	1	2	3	4	5
k.	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
l.	In the last month, how often have you found yourself thinking about things that you have to accomplish?	1	2	3	4	5
m.	In the last month, how often have you been able to control the way you spend your time?	1	2	3	4	5
n.	In the last month, how often have you felt difficulties were piling up so high that you could not overcome them?	1	2	3	4	5

(30) **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
o.	Felt over-tired.	0	1	2	3
p.	Felt nervous or worried.	0	1	2	3
q.	Felt “low” or depressed.	0	1	2	3
r.	Felt tense or irritable.	0	1	2	3
s.	Had trouble sleeping.	0	1	2	3
t.	Lost your appetite.	0	1	2	3
u.	Felt apart or alone.	0	1	2	3
v.	Felt like running away from everything.	0	1	2	3
w.	Felt as if you were eating too much?	0	1	2	3

(31) How frequently do you talk to your close friends about how your relationship is going?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Sometimes	Often	Very Often	All the time

(32) How frequently do you talk to your family about how your relationship is going?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Sometimes	Often	Very Often	All the time

(33) How comfortable are you talking about **your romantic relationship** to close friends?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Very uncomfortable	uncomfortable	somewhat uncomfortable		somewhat comfortable	comfortable	very comfortable

(34) How comfortable are you talking about your **romantic relationship** to your family?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Very uncomfortable	uncomfortable	somewhat uncomfortable		somewhat comfortable	comfortable	very comfortable

(35) How frequently do you talk to your close friends about your **parent's involvement** in your romantic relationship?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Sometimes	Often	Very Often	All the time

(36) How frequently do you talk to your close family about your **parent's involvement** in your romantic relationship?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Sometimes	Often	Very Often	All the time

(37) How comfortable are you in talking about your parent's involvement in your romantic relationship to close friends?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Very uncomfortable uncomfortable somewhat uncomfortable somewhat comfortable comfortable very comfortable

(38) How comfortable are you in talking about your parent's involvement in your romantic relationship to your family?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Very uncomfortable uncomfortable somewhat uncomfortable somewhat comfortable comfortable very comfortable

(39) Now we would like you to think about **how much you value your parent's opinions about your romantic relationship.** Please select the number within each set of adjectives that most closely describes how important your parent's opinions are concerning your romantic relationship.

My [mother's / father's] opinions about my romantic relationship are:

a. Unimportant : 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 : Important
b. Not at all valuable: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 : Very valuable
c. Not worth my time 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 : Worth my time
d. Very useful: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 : Not at all useful
e. Not at all insightful: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7: Very insightful

(40) Directions*:* For each item, please circle the number that best represents your level of agreement using the following scale:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree

a. In our family we often talk about topics like politics and religion where some persons disagree with others.
b. My parents expect us to respect our elders.
c. In our home, I am expected to speak respectfully to my parents.

d. My parents often say something like “Every member of the family should have some say in family decisions.”

e. My parents often ask my opinion when the family is talking about something.

f. My parents have clear expectations about how a child is supposed to behave.

g. When I am at home, I am expected to obey my parents’ rules.

h. My parents encourage me to challenge their ideas and beliefs.

i. My parents insist that I respect those who have been placed in positions of authority.

j. My parents emphasize certain attitudes that they want the children in our family to adopt.

k. My parents often say something like “You should always look at both sides of an issue.”

l. I usually tell my parents what I am thinking about things.

m. In our home, my parents have the last word.

n. My parents expect me to trust their judgment on important matters

o. I can tell my parents almost anything.

p. In our family we often talk about our feelings and emotions.

q. I am expected to follow my parents’ wishes.

r. My parents feel it is important to be the boss.

s. My parents become irritated with my views if they are different from their views.

t. My parents and I often have long, relaxed conversations about nothing in particular.

u. I really enjoy talking with my parents even when we disagree.

v. My parents try to persuade me to views things the way they see them.

w. My parents say things like “You’ll know better when you grow up.”

x. My parents like to hear my opinions even when they don’t agree with me.

y. My parents encourage me to express my feelings.

z. My parents say things like “You may not understand why we are doing this right now, but someday you will.”

aa. My parents say things like “My ideas are right and you should not question them.”

bb. In my family, family members are expected to hold similar values.

cc. I am expected to adopt my parents’ views.

dd. My parents tend to be very open about their emotions.

ee. My parents encourage me to adopt their values.

ff. Our family has a particular way of seeing the world.

gg. I feel pressure to adopt my parents' beliefs.

hh. I am expected to challenge my parents' beliefs.

ii. In our home, we are allowed to question my parents' authority.

jj. My parents encourage open disagreement.

kk. We often talk as a family about things we have done during the day.

ll. In our family we often talk about our plans and hopes for the future.

mm. In our home, we are encouraged to question my parents' authority.

Vita

Emily Stager was born April 23, 1998, in Torrance, California. She is the daughter of Vicki and Randall Stager. Beginning her first two years of college at El Camino College, she eventually matriculated at Biola University in 2018. During her time at Biola, she worked as a peer academic advisor, and she received her Bachelor of Arts in Communication Studies in 2020. After taking a course in advanced methods of communication research, a Biola professor and mentor encouraged her to apply to graduate school. Having applied to various master programs, she decided to enroll at Texas Christian University. During her two years at TCU, she has held a teaching assistantship position, where she has overseen and instructed eight sections of TCU's communication basic course. She will receive her Master of Science in Communication Studies in May 2023.