NARRATING THE PAST, ENHANCING THE PRESENT:

THE EFFECTS OF GENEALOGICAL COMMUNICATION

ON FAMILY SATISFACTION

by

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ABSTRACT

This study explored the association between genealogical communication, family communication patterns, and family satisfaction. The theoretical framework was built using previous research on family kinkeepers, family communication patterns, and narrative theory. Data was collected from 319 individuals via online survey, in which they were asked about their family communication patterns, satisfaction with immediate and extended family, and their family's genealogical communication habits. Results revealed four genealogical communication behaviors: engagement, perspective, personal research, and dark side. Family communication patterns then predicted these genealogical communication behaviors, which in turn predicted family satisfaction. Genealogical communication behaviors also emerged as mediators between family communication patterns and family satisfaction. Overall, perspective emerged as the strongest predictor of family satisfaction. Additionally, this study yielded a new genealogical communication measure. The theoretical, methodical, and practical implications of the findings are discussed.

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INTRODUCTION

"In every conceivable manner, the family is link to our past, bridge to our future." (Curran, 1983, p. 199). This statement by Alex Haley, author of *Roots: The Saga of an American Family* (1976), stresses the importance of family and of knowing one's heritage as we navigate through life. Haley's book, along with two subsequent television miniseries, *Roots* (1977) and *Roots: The Next Generations* (1979), stimulated an increased interest in genealogical research that has since grown into a profitable industry worth 1.6 billion dollars in 2012 (Farnham, 2012). Websites such as Ancestry.com and GenealogyBank.com cater to those searching for their roots, as a new breed of television series, such as TLC's *Who Do You Think You Are?* and PBS's *Finding Your Roots* document celebrity searches for their ancestry.

In my own experience, genealogy is more than just a diversion; it is a meaningful activity through which I connect with family members, past and present, and come to a better understanding of how my family came to be in this place at this time. From a practical standpoint, I have found the process of conducting genealogical research to enhance both research and problem-solving abilities, while the act of documentation enhances organizational skills.

Furthermore, from the standpoint of family scholarship, genealogy is not just a hobby or an industry, but a communicative process by which people make sense of their past and communicate that sensemaking to future generations. Indeed, family researchers have established that family narratives passed from one generation to another are significant in the creation of shared family identity (Koenig Kellas, 2005; Lenz, 2011).

These narratives serve to teach family values and norms, and foster language development and interpersonal communication skills in children.

Although much research has been conducted on the benefits of shared family narratives and genealogical communication (e.g., Bishop, 2008; Koenig Kellas and Kranstuber Horstman, 2015), there is a paucity of research addressing the actual processes by which this information is shared. Indeed, in their research on communicated narrative sensemaking, Koenig Kellas and Kranstuber Horstman (2015) indicate a need for further research in this area. Therefore, the chief goal of this study is to (a) identify how genealogical information is communicated within the family, and (b) to examine the extent to which such communication is associated with family communication patterns and family satisfaction.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In order to determine how genealogical information is transmitted between family members, we must first determine who possesses this information. One type of person who has been identified as potentially possessing this knowledge is the family *kinkeeper*. According to Leach and Braithwaite (1996), a kinkeeper is the person who provides the greatest share of social support within a family, offering support during times of crisis, as well as regular relational maintenance. There are many different activities in which a kinkeeper may engage, including but not limited to: making visits and telephone calls, organizing family gatherings, and assembling a family genealogy. Although much kinkeeping work involves living family members, Leach and Braithwaite also found that

families with kinkeepers "were significantly more likely to have a family tree than those who did not" (p. 206).

The role of kinkeeper was first identified by Rosenthal (1985), who found that 52% of families studied reported having a kinkeeper, and that 72% of the individuals identified as kinkeepers were women. A decade later, the Leach and Braithwaite (1996) study resulted in similar findings, with 60% of families reporting having a kinkeeper, also identifying the majority as female. Additionally, Leach and Braithwaite determined that more than two-thirds of kinkeepers fell between the ages of 40 and 59.

These demographics are useful in developing a basic framework for understanding who may be the most likely to conduct genealogical research; however, Leach and Braithwaite called attention to the lack of research regarding the identification of family kinkeepers. Similarly, Yakel (2004) identified a dearth of research concerning genealogists and family historians—yet these groups "make up one of the largest constituencies of researchers in archives." It is important to note the distinction between genealogists/family historians (hereafter collectively referred to as *genealogists*), and kinkeepers: the term *genealogist* refers to individuals who conduct family history research, regardless of whether or not they serve a kinkeeping function. Likewise, individuals identifying as *kinkeepers* may or may not conduct genealogical research. With this distinction in mind, the first goal of this study is to identify the prevalence and demographics of family genealogists.

RQ1: What are the demographic characteristics (age, sex, family role, etc.) of the family genealogist?

As genealogical information is uncovered, researchers commonly desire to share the information with family members. Indeed, Bishop (2008) discovered that "[s]haring the information is often of utmost importance" (p. 400). Additionally, he found that many respondents realized the importance of documenting genealogical data and family stories, preserving them not only for present generations, but future ones as well. Regarding documentation, one respondent wrote, "I thought I would go crazy if I heard [my aunt's stories] one more time, until it occurred to me that unless I wrote them down, I would never remember them after she was gone" (Bishop, 2008, p. 401). Moreover, in many cases, shared family stories acted as the catalyst to initiate genealogical research (Bishop, 2008). Therefore, the process of sharing genealogical information and family stories is an important aspect of family communication.

Koenig Kellas (2005) asserted that family stories function as instruments for teaching family members how to interact with one another. Koenig Kellas and Kranstuber Horstman (2015) further claimed that "storytelling processes and their intricacies are central to understanding myriad other communication processes" (p. 13). To this end, Koenig Kellas and Trees (2006) studied family triads, asking them to jointly tell a story about a stressful family experience. This research yielded four dimensions of shared family storytelling: engagement, perspective-taking, turn-taking, and interpretation. As these behaviors characterize the storytelling process of a shared experience, and Koenig Kellas and Kranstuber Horstman (2015) identified "the significance of interactional storytelling processes in specific contexts that are particularly meaningful in the family" as an avenue for future research (p. 13), my second

goal is to determine what behaviors characterize the transmission of family histories and genealogies.

RQ2: What behaviors characterize genealogical communication?

In their discussion of family storytelling behaviors, Koenig Kellas and Kranstuber Horstman (2015) noted that these behaviors are patterned, as is family communication in general. Indeed, Koerner and Fitzpatrick (2002) stated that "[f]amily communication is characterized by clearly discernable patterns and forms" (p. 38). In their research, they identified two dimensions of family communication: conversation orientation and conformity orientation. Conversation orientation is defined as "the degree to which families create a climate in which all family members are encouraged to participate in unrestrained interactions about a wide array of topics" (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002, p. 39). Thus, families high in conversation orientation are open to discussion, imposing few restrictions on frequency or topic of conversation. The second dimension, conformity orientation, is defined as "the degree to which family communication stresses a climate of homogeneity of attitudes, values, and beliefs" (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, p. 39). Therefore, families high in this dimension are more collectivistic, demonstrating interdependence and obedience to the elders, whereas families who are low in conformity orientation tend to be more individualistic.

Considering both dimensions, Koerner and Fitzpatrick (2002) found that regardless of conformity orientation, children from families high in conversation orientation learn to value family dialogue; in contrast, children from families low in conversation orientation tend to find little value in family discussion. As family history is

often passed down via conversation with older family members, conversation orientation may play a role in predicting the both amount and quality of genealogical communication within a family. Furthermore, Koerner and Fitzpatrick also concluded that families higher in conformity orientation tend to exhibit lower levels of perspective-taking, one of the storytelling behaviors identified by Koenig Kellas and Trees (2006). Therefore, I expect that family communication patterns will predict the nature in which a family engages in genealogical communication.

H1: Family communication patterns will predict the nature of genealogical communication within a family.

Broader genealogical accounts can be combined to form a larger "metanarrative" or "metastory" (Berdayes & Berdayes, 1998, p. 113; Bishop, 2008, p. 396). According to Lenz (2011), it is through the narrative process that "past events become a 'past' or even 'history' that is invested with sense and meaning" (p. 320). She refers to transmitted memories as "emotional putty", a fundamental element in inter-generational relationships (p. 320). This stems from the tradition of the older generation passing on practical advice for living, along with family values and cultural norms. Additionally, Lenz calls the historical narrative "a kind of reference system from which you can read and reconstruct the structures of meaning and genealogies of meaning in their biographical trajectories and in reference to (history-) cultural influences" (p. 324). To this end, Bishop (2008) found that genealogical researchers believe it is particularly important to learn about those who preceded them, to understand the times in which they lived, why they did the things that they did, and to "craft a compelling, accurate story about their family" (p. 397).

Furthermore, it is through genealogy that meaning is assigned to historical facts that hold little significance on their own. Indeed, Saar (2002) called genealogy a "way of writing history" that "historicizes things that had no significant history before" (p. 232). Expanding on Saar's reflections, Bishop (2008) contended that "names and accounts discovered by researchers achieve historical value only when they are incorporated into a broader genealogical account" (p. 394). Genealogical narratives work to explain how individuals have been shaped by outside forces (Saar, 2002). As such, genealogy creates and shapes individual and familial identities (Bishop, 2008; Koenig Kellas, 2005; Lenz, 2011; Saar, 2002). For example, Lenz (2011) asserted that "references to the past, as a dimension of temporality, represent a crucial factor in the development of subjectivity as well as the formation of identities, i.e., both individual and collective self-assurance and self-understanding" (p. 319). Similarly, Koenig Kellas (2005) claimed that family identities are communicatively negotiated through storytelling, and that this, in fact, is "one of the central functions of stories" (p. 367).

Due to the salience of storytelling in the formation of family and individual identities, Koenig Kellas (2005) asserted that family storytelling is related to family well-being. Indeed, her research demonstrated that identifying as a storytelling family was a strong predictor of family satisfaction, and was, in fact, the strongest predictor of family functioning overall. As genealogical communication often takes the form of narrative and family storytelling, I expect that genealogical communication will, in turn, predict family satisfaction.

H2: Genealogical communication will predict family satisfaction.

In this study, (a) H1 predicts that family communication patterns will predict genealogical communication, and (b) H2 predicts that genealogical communication will predict family satisfaction. This positions genealogical communication between family communication and family satisfaction; consequently, genealogical communication may serve as one mechanism for why family communication patterns are associated with family satisfaction. Indeed, previous research has examined the extent to which communication behaviors mediate the association between FCP and well-being outcomes (Schrodt, Ledbetter, & Ohrt, 2007; Ledbetter & Beck, 2014). Thus, I expect genealogical communication behaviors to mediate the association between family communication patterns and family satisfaction.

H3: Genealogical communication behaviors will mediate the association between family communication patterns and family satisfaction.

METHODS

Participants

The sample consisted of 319 participants (72.4% female) recruited from undergraduate communication courses at a mid-size, private university in the southwestern United States, as well as from a survey link posted on the social networking site Facebook. University participants (n=273; 85.6%) received extra credit for their participation. All participants were over the age of 18 and reported a mean age of 21.8 (SD = 7.48), ranging from 18 to 69. The majority of participants identified as white (n = 269; 84.3%),

Procedure

Participants from undergraduate communication courses were provided the online survey link via course learning software and took the survey on their own time. Participants recruited from Facebook clicked on a link included in a wall post. All survey responses were anonymous, and were preceded by an informed consent document. Responses began with basic demographic information (e.g. age, sex, ethnicity), followed by measures concerning communication in the family-of-origin, and satisfaction with both immediate and extended families. Remaining measures addressed family genealogy, one of which focused on genealogical communication within the participant's family. If they indicated that they identified a family member as family historian, then they completed an additional section regarding demographic information for this individual (see Appendix A for a complete list of measures used).

Measures

Family Communication Patterns

The Revised Family Communication Patterns Questionnaire (RFCP) (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002) was used to measure communication patterns in the participants' families of origin. This questionnaire is comprised of 26 questions, of which 15 are designed to measure conversation orientation (e.g. "In our family we often talk about our feelings and emotions."), and 11 are designed to measure conformity orientation (e.g. "My parents sometimes become irritated with my views if they are different from theirs.") Responses were given utilizing a 7-point Likert-type scale, ranging from (1) *Strongly Disagree* to (7) *Strongly Agree*, with higher scores indicating greater orientation

in the given dimension. The reliability and validity of this measure have been substantiated through its use in many previous studies (e.g., Rueter & Koerner, 2008), and indeed both conversation and conformity orientation received acceptable internal reliability in this study ($\alpha_{conversation} = .91$, $\alpha_{conformity} = .76$).

Immediate and Extended Family Satisfaction

Using a revised version of the Marital Opinion Questionnaire (Huston, McHale, and Crouter, 1986) modified to assess satisfaction in family relationships (e.g., Schrodt & Afifi, 2007), participants first indicated satisfaction with immediate family, and then satisfaction with extended family, during the previous month. Responses were given utilizing a 7-point semantic differential scale. For each item, the respondent selected a point along a continuum between two contrasting words (e.g. Miserable/Enjoyable). A final item ("All things considered, how satisfied have you been with your relationship with your family the last month?") measured overall satisfaction using a 7-point Likert scale (1=Strongly Disagree, 7=Strongly Agree). This measure achieved acceptable internal reliability ($\alpha = .93$).

Genealogist Demographics

In this section, participants were first asked if they were able to identify one or more individuals in their family who function as a genealogist or family historian. In order to maximize understanding of this concept, the following explanation was provided:

> Some families have one or more members who research family history. They might
> maintain a "family tree" specifying relationships among family members, collect family

pictures and memorabilia to share with others, or consider themselves to be involved in genealogical (i.e., family history) research.

Participants were asked to indicate whether they perform this function themselves, and whether another family member performs this function. If the participant indicated that another family member performs this function, they were directed to complete the six additional questions based on the family historian with whom they are most familiar. These questions included basic demographic information (age and sex), along with the relation of this family member to the respondent, and the frequency and means by which this family member shares their findings.

Genealogical Communication Measure

With no previously developed measure available to assess genealogical communication within the respondent's family, I developed a new measure based on my findings from literature as well as two focus groups. To begin this process, I examined the literature and formulated a list of open-ended questions related to genealogy and genealogical communication (e.g. "What do you like most about family stories?" and "How are your family stories told?" (see Appendix B for a complete list of questions).

I then solicited participants for two focus groups from undergraduate communication courses. The focus groups were conducted in a casual setting and consisted of 6 to 9 individuals, each of whom received extra credit of less than 2% for their participation. After obtaining consent forms, I addressed the questions to the group, allowing them to speak freely. With participant consent, I recorded these sessions and used the responses to guide development of the genealogical communication measure.

This measure consisted of 55 questions (e.g. "Our history and heritage is a frequent topic of conversation in our family." and "I consider myself to be knowledgeable about the history of my family."). Responses were given using a 7-point Likert-type scale, were 1=Strongly Disagree and 7=Strongly Agree. Factor analysis, including measures of reliability, will be discussed in the results section.

<div align="center">RESULTS</div>

Genealogist Demographics

The first research question (RQ1) asked about the demographic characteristics (age, sex, family role, etc.) of the family genealogist. Results revealed that 17.6% (n = 56)of respondents reported conducting their own genealogical activity, while 65.2% (n = 208) reported having a family member who performs this type of activity. Of these family members, 58.1% (n = 118) were identified as female, and 41.9% (n = 85) were male. The majority were identified as being over the age of 45, with the highest age bracket being 65-75 (27%, n = 55). Age brackets with similar percentages were 45-54 (17.6%, n = 36), 55-64 (24%, n = 49), and more than 75 years old (23%, n = 47). Age brackets less than 18 years old, 18-25, and 25-34 each accounted for 2% (n = 4), and 35-44 was slightly greater at 2.5% (n = 5).

Respondents were also asked about their relation to the genealogist. Of these, 20.1% (n = 41) identified this family member as a parent (mother 13.7%, n = 28; father 6.4%, n = 13), while 34.3% (n = 70) identified a grandparent (grandmother 23.5%, n = 48; grandfather 10.8%, n = 22). A large percentage (26%, n = 53) also identified an aunt

(14.2%, *n* = 29) or an uncle (11.8%, *n* = 24). The remaining percentage (45.6%, *n* = 40) were other relations (i.e. sister, daughter).

Respondents were then asked about the frequency with which this individual shares their findings, with 7 possible answers ranging from "Never" to "All the time." Only 1% (*n* = 2) of respondents reported a frequency of "Never," 2.9% (*n* = 6) reported "Rarely," and 4.9% (*n* = 10) reported "Seldom." Percentages of frequency were significantly higher in the categories of "Occasionally" (30.4%, *n* = 62), "Often" (25.5%, *n* = 52), "Very Often" (22.5%, *n* = 46), with 12.7% (*n* = 26) reporting a frequency of "All the time."

Finally, participants were asked to identify the means through which this individual shares their findings. A total of 9 options, including "Other", were provided, with the respondent being instructed to check all that apply. In order of frequency, from greatest to least, the results were: face-to-face (46.4%, *n* = 148), photo albums or scrapbooks (27.3%, *n* = 87), voice telephone calls (25.1%, *n* = 80), e-mail or instant messaging (23.8%, *n* = 76), printed materials (21.9%, *n* = 70), social media (14.1%, *n* = 45), text messaging (11.9%, *n* = 38), websites other than social media (5%, *n* = 16), and other (2.2%, *n* = 7). Responses given in the category of "other" largely involved handwritten documentation from a family member, such as that which might be found in a family Bible.

Genealogical Communication Behaviors

The second research question (RQ2) examined the behaviors that characterize genealogical communication. To determine this, I subjected the items from the

Genealogical Communication Measure to exploratory factor analysis with principal components extraction and promax (i.e., non-orthogonal) rotation. I excluded 7 items for validity, as they measured emotion rather than communication, resulting in an analysis of the 48 items intended to address communication. Then, using McCroskey and Young's (1979) .60/.40 criterion, I eliminated 8 cross-loading items and 12 weakly loading items. 5 additional items were deleted as they constituted two factors that did not appear to have theoretical coherency. This resulted in a final count of 23 items measuring 4 dimensions of genealogical communication.

The first factor, *engagement*, consisted of 7 items ($\alpha = .89$) and explained 28.2% of the variance in the item pool. These items assessed the frequency with which families discuss their family history, as well as the degree to which they engage with the topic (e.g., "When we are together, my family often talks about our family history."). The second factor, *perspective-taking*, contained 5 items ($\alpha = .77$) and explained an additional 10.3% of the variance. These items involved the ability of families to understand and accept the perspectives of other family members when sharing family stories (e.g., "When talking about our family history, my family makes an honest effort to understand the perspective of whoever is telling the story.").

The third factor, *the dark side*, consists of 7 items ($\alpha = .64$) and explained an additional 6.9% of the item variance. The items addressed both the existence of negative aspects of family history, as well as negative responses by family members to discussions of family history (e.g., "Some stories about my family's history are painful."). The fourth and final factor, *personal research*, contains 4 items ($\alpha = .68$) and explains an additional

5.9 percent of the item pool variance. These items assessed the participant's involvement in conducting their own genealogical research (e.g., "I have performed my own genealogy research using the internet.").

Family Communication Patterns and Genealogical Communication

The first hypothesis (H1) predicted that family communication patterns will predict the nature of genealogical communication within a family. This hypothesis was tested using a series of six different regression equations, as reported in table 1. In the first four regressions, the criterion variable was one of the four factors of genealogical communication, while Genealogical Communication Measure items 53 ("I would prefer to learn about my family history through electronic material [such as websites] than through printed material [such as books]."), and 54 ("My family uses many different communication channels to share about our family history and stories."), hereafter "digital preference" and "multiplexity" (respectively), served as the criterion variable in the final two regressions. These variables did not emerge as formal dimensions of the Genealogical Communication Measure, and thus are explored here tentatively, with an eye toward future research regarding the role of technology in genealogical communication. In all analyses, conversation orientation and conformity orientation served as the predictor variables in step one, with the interaction effect between conversation orientation and conformity orientation being added as a predictor in step two.

In all regressions, step one produced a significant correlation coefficient. Conversation orientation was a significant positive predictor of engagement ($\Delta R^2 = .10$,

$F(2, 316) = 17.27, p < .01$), perspective-taking ($\Delta R^2 = .24, F(2, 316) = 50.29, p < .01$),

personal research ($\Delta R^2 = .05, F(2, 316) = 7.86, p < .01$), and multiplexity ($\Delta R^2 = .16, F(2,$

$316) = 29.64, p < .01$), whereas conformity orientation was a significant positive

predictor of dark side ($\Delta R^2 = .08, F(2, 316) = 13.23, p < .01$) and digital preference (ΔR^2

$= .04, F(2, 316) = 5.97, p < .01$). Step two was not a significant predictor in any

regression analysis (i.e., conversation and conformity orientations did not interact to

predict any dimension of genealogical communication).

Table 1: Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Dimensions of Genealogical Communication

Predictors	Engagement B(β)	Perspective-Taking B(β)	Dark Side B(β)	Personal Research B(β)	Digital Preference B(β)	Multiplexity B(β)
Step 1	$\Delta R^2 = .10$**	$\Delta R^2 = .24$**	$\Delta R^2 = .08$**	$\Delta R^2 = .05$**	$\Delta R^2 = .04$**	$\Delta R^2 = .16$**
Conv. Orientation	0.49(.32)**	0.55(.47)**	0.06(.05)	0.32(.22)**	0.14(.07)	0.76(.40)**
Conf. Orientation	0.05(.04)	-0.07(-.06)	0.33(.29)**	0.15(.11)	0.36(.20)**	0.04(.02)
Step 2	$\Delta R^2 = .00$	$\Delta R^2 = .00$	$\Delta R^2 = .00$	$\Delta R^2 = .01$	$\Delta R^2 = .00$	$\Delta R^2 = .01$
Conv. Orientation	0.51(.34)**	0.56(.48)**	0.06(.05)	0.36(.25)**	0.18(.09)	0.84(.44)**
Conf. Orientation	0.05(.04)	-0.07(-.06)	0.33(.29)**	0.15(.11)	0.36(.20)**	0.04(.02)
Conv./Conf. Interaction	-0.09(-.07)	-0.03(-.03)	0.00(.00)	-0.13(-.10)	-0.10(-.06)	-0.20(-.12)

Genealogical Communication and Family Satisfaction

The second hypothesis (H2) predicted that genealogical communication would predict family satisfaction. To test this hypothesis, two different regression equations were performed, with immediate family satisfaction serving as the criterion variable in the first, and extended family satisfaction as the criterion variable in the second. Both regressions consisted of three steps. Conversation orientation and conformity orientation acted as control variables in step one, while the interaction effect between conversation orientation and conformity orientation was added in step two. Step three introduced the four factors of genealogical communication as additional control variables.

For immediate family satisfaction, step one produced a significant correlation coefficient, $\Delta R^2 = .50$, $F(2, 316) = 160.1$, $p < .01$. In this step, conversation orientation was a significant positive predictor of immediate family satisfaction, and conformity orientation was a significant negative predictor. Step two did not produce a significant correlation coefficient; however, step three did, $\Delta R^2 = .04$, $F(4, 311) = 5.87$, $p < .01$. In this step, both conversation orientation and perspective proved to be significant positive predictors of immediate family satisfaction, yet conformity orientation continued to be a significant negative predictor.

Likewise, with extended family satisfaction, step one produced a significant correlation coefficient, $\Delta R^2 = .10$, $F(2, 316) = 17.19$, $p < .01$, with conversation orientation being a significant positive predictor. Step two again did not produce a significant correlation coefficient, but step three did, $\Delta R^2 = .15$, $F(4, 311) = 15.54$, $p < .01$. In this step, engagement and perspective emerged as significant positive predictors of extended family satisfaction, but dark side emerged

as a significant negative predictor. Additionally, conversation orientation ceased to be a

significant predictor in the final step of the regression analysis.

Table 2: Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting
Family Satisfaction

Predictors	*Immediate Family Satisfaction B(β)*	*Extended Family Satisfaction B(β)*
Step 1	**ΔR² = .50****	**ΔR² = .10****
Conversation	0.68(.60)**	0.40(.30)**
Conformity	-0.28(-.26)*	-0.07(-.06)
Step 2	**ΔR² = .00**	**ΔR² = .00**
Conversation	0.66(.58)**	0.40(.30)**
Conformity	-0.28(-.26)**	-0.07(-.06)
Conv./Conf. Interaction	0.04(.04)	-0.01(-.01)
Step 3	**ΔR² = .04****	**ΔR² = .15****
Conversation	0.57(.50)**	0.17(.12)
Conformity	-0.24(-.22)**	0.00(.00)
Conv./Conf. Interaction	0.04(.04)	0.02(.01)
Engagement	0.01(.01)	0.23(.26)**
Perspective	0.20(.20)**	0.25(.22)**
Dark Side	-0.07(-.08)	-0.20(-.17)**
Personal Research	-0.04(-.05)	-0.04(-.04)

Genealogical Communication as Mediator of Family Communication Patterns and Satisfaction

The third hypothesis stated that genealogical communication would mediate the association between family communication and family satisfaction. To test this hypothesis, I utilized nonparametric bootstrapping, as this method accounts for the typically non-normal distribution of indirect effects (Hayes, 2013). Each indirect path between family communication patterns, genealogical communication, and family satisfaction was tested by utilizing a structural model in which (a) the two dimensions of family communication predicted (b) the nature of genealogical communication which, in turn, predicted (c) family satisfaction. All total effects were significant, with conversation orientation leading to increased immediate and extended family satisfaction, and conformity orientation leading to decreased satisfaction in both immediate and extended families.

Indirect effects revealed that conversation orientation leads to increased immediate as well as extended family satisfaction via perspective, and increased extended family satisfaction via engagement. In contrast, conversation orientation leads to decreased immediate family satisfaction via personal research. Other results showed that conformity orientation leads to decreased immediate family satisfaction and extended family satisfaction via perspective and dark side, but increased immediate family satisfaction via GENCOM 1.

Table 3: Summary of Model of Indirect and Total Effects—Genealogical Communication
Behaviors as Mediators

Path	$B_{[95\% CI]}$	SE
Indirect effects:		
1. Conversation→Engagement→Imm. Family Satis.	-0.01[-0.05:0.04]	0.02
2. Conversation→Perspective→Imm. Family Satis.	0.13[0.06:0.21]*	0.04
3. Conversation→Dark Side→Imm. Family Satis.	0.004[-0.02:0.03]	0.01
4. Conversation→Pers. Research→Imm. Family Satis.	-0.02[-0.05:-0.00]*	0.01
5. Conversation→GENCOM 1→Imm. Family Satis.	0.002[-0.01:0.02]	0.01
6. Conversation→GENCOM 2→Imm. Family Satis.	0.01[-0.03:0.06]	0.02
7. Conformity→Engagement→Imm. Family Satis.	0.001[-0.01:0.02]	0.01
8. Conformity→Perspective→Imm. Family Satis.	-0.08[-0.15:-0.01]*	0.04
9. Conformity→Dark Side→Imm. Family Satis.	-0.03[-0.08:-0.00]*	0.02
10. Conformity→Pers. Research→Imm. Family Satis.	-0.03[-0.02:0.00]	0.01
11. Conformity→GENCOM 1→Imm. Family Satis.	0.02[0.01:0.05]*	0.01
12. Conformity→GENCOM 2→Imm. Family Satis.	-0.01[-0.04:0.00]	0.01
13. Conversation→Engagement→Ext. Family Satis.	0.11[0.04:0.20]*	0.04
14. Conversation→Perspective→Ext. Family Satis.	0.14[0.04:0.25]*	0.05
15. Conversation→Dark Side→Ext. Family Satis.	0.01[-0.02:0.04]	0.02
16. Conversation→Pers. Research→Ext. Family Satis.	-0.01[-0.05:0.02]	0.02
17. Conversation→GENCOM 1→Ext. Family Satis.	-0.001[-0.02:0.00]	0.01
18. Conversation→GENCOM 2→Ext. Family Satis.	0.03[-0.04:0.09]	0.03
19. Conformity→Engagement→Ext. Family Satis.	-0.01[-0.06:0.02]	0.02
20. Conformity→Perspective→Ext. Family Satis.	-0.06[-0.13:-0.01]*	0.03
21. Conformity→Dark Side→Ext. Family Satis.	-0.06[-0.11:-0.03]*	0.02
22. Conformity→Pers. Research→Ext. Family Satis.	-0.003[-0.03:0.01]	0.01
23. Conformity→GENCOM 1→Ext. Family Satis.	-0.01[-0.04:0.02]	0.01
24. Conformity→GENCOM 2→Ext.. Family Satis.	-0.01[-0.04:0.00]	0.01
Total effects:		
25. Conversation→Immediate Family Satisfaction	0.12[0.06:0.21]*	0.04
26. Conformity→Immediate Family Satisfaction	-0.10[-0.18:-0.02]*	0.04
27. Conversation→Extended Family Satisfaction	0.26[0.16:0.37]*	0.05
28. Conformity→Extended Family Satisfaction	-0.15[-0.24:-0.06]*	0.05

DISCUSSION

The primary goal of this study was to examine the role of genealogical communication within the family, as well as the relationship between genealogical communication, family communication patterns, and family satisfaction. This study achieved these goals, as family communication patterns emerged as a significant predictor of genealogical communication behaviors, and genealogical communication behaviors significantly predicted family satisfaction. Furthermore, the results of this study provide further support for previous studies of family narratives (e.g., Koenig Kellas, 2005; Koenig Kellas & Trees, 2006). This discussion section will consider the theoretical and practical implications of these results.

RQ1 explored the number of families having an individual whom they identify as a family historian or genealogist, along with the this individual's demographic characteristics. The collection of such data was deemed important based upon previous research indicating a dearth of information regarding genealogists and family kinkeepers, despite their beneficial functions within the family (Leach & Braithwaite, 1996; Yakel, 2004).

As with both Rosenthal (1985) and Leach and Braitwaite (1996), the current study found that the majority of participants indicated having a family genealogist, and identified the majority of these as women; however, the percentages differed from those of previous studies. A slightly higher percentage of participants in the current study (65%) reported having a family genealogist than those reporting having a kinkeeper in the Rosenthal (52%) or Leach and Braithwaite (60%) studies. Conversely, the current study recorded a lower percentage of family genealogists identified as female (58%) than kinkeepers identified by the previous studies, with Rosenthal reporting 72% female and Leach and Braithwaite reporting 85%. These discrepancies may be

due to the nature of the studies and the differences in terminology used by the researchers. The current study directed participants to report on an individual who conducts family history or genealogy research, whereas the prior studies collected responses on an individual identified as a kinkeeper, who may serve many other functions. To develop a more complete picture of the family genealogist, additional research should be conducted using terminology similar to the current study.

This study also found some deviation from the ages reported by Leach and Braithwaite (1996). They reported that two-thirds of identified kinkeepers were between the ages of 40-59, whereas the current study found three-quarters of family genealogists to be over age 55. As with gender, this discrepancy may be caused by a difference in terminology; however, it may also be due to the time lapse between the two studies. Almost twenty years have passed since Leach and Braithwaite's findings, and the current study finds a majority age of genealogists almost twenty years greater than Leach and Braithwaite's kinkeepers. This may indicate that the generation who performed these duties in past decades has carried it forward. An avenue for future research, then, is discovering how the job of genealogy research is passed between generations. This idea was explored by Leach and Braithwaite in relation to kinkeepers, identifying continuing a previous kinkeeper's work as one outcome of kinkeeping.

Understanding the ages of family genealogists is beneficial because genealogical communication typically involves intergenerational communication, and, as genealogists age, the age gap widens between those holding the information and those hearing the information. As such, future research may examine genealogical communication in relation to communication accommodation theory (Giles et al., 1987). Soliz and Harwood (2006) suggest that over- and under-accommodation in intergenerational communication may indicate age salience in the

interaction. To combat this, discussion of family history may increase salience of shared family identity, which may then facilitate an appropriate accommodation response.

The second research question explored behaviors characterizing genealogical communication. Four behaviors emerged from this measure: engagement, perspective-taking, dark side, and personal research. The first two behaviors, engagement and perspective-taking, are consistent with two family storytelling behaviors identified by Koenig Kellas and Trees (2006), thus bolstering their previous research.

A third behavior, personal research, was not part of Koenig Kellas and Trees' findings, but does appear to have a connection to their turn-taking behavior. As previously mentioned, their method involved family triads relating a shared family experience in which each member had participated; therefore, each member was able to provide input, leading to turn-taking. In contrast, because genealogical communication often involves passing down stories from those who have the knowledge to those who do not, turn-taking would not be expected to occur between all participants in this setting. However, personal research may serve a turn-taking function, as the act of conducting research moves the individual from passive listener to active participant. Furthermore, knowledge gained from this research can provide knowledge with which to take a turn in future genealogical storytelling sessions by confirming, adding to, or correcting information provided by other participants.

The final genealogical communication behavior, dark side, emerged in contrast to Koenig Kellas and Trees' (2006) identification of interpretation. However, there may be a link between these two in the work of Koenig Kellas and Kranstuber Horstman (2015). In their discussion of the retrospective storytelling tradition, which relates to the study of stories that families tell to

promote a sense of unity, the authors note that future research may be found in the dark side of family stories. They state, "Family members inherit unwanted stories from the family's past...and must work to make sense of those stories within their own personal myth" (Koenig Kellas & Kranstuber Horstman, 2015). Hence, the findings from the current study support the need for additional research into the dark side of family storytelling. Further use of the Genealogical Communication Measure is also necessary to determine if this behavior consistently emerges in subsequent factor analyses.

With these behaviors identified, the first hypothesis predicted that family communication patterns would predict genealogical communication behaviors within a family. This hypothesis was supported, as FCP indeed predicted all behaviors of genealogical communication, as well as digital preference and multiplexity. Conversation orientation emerged as a significant positive predictor of engagement, perspective, and personal research. This makes sense, given that engagement in a genealogical discussion would be difficult without conversing, and taking another's perspective generally requires being willing to listen to their perspective in a conversation. The positive association with multiplexity, which asked about a family's tendency to use different communication channels to share family history and stories, is also unsurprising because it would be logical that a family who is open to conversation would also be willing to use multiple channels to communicate.

Likewise, the positive association of personal research with conversation orientation is fitting. Conducting personal research is an extension of conversation, as the researcher is interacting with records and documentation left by family members, past and present. Since familes high in conversation orientation talk openly about many different topics, members of such a family should feel comfortable engaging with information discovered during the

genealogical research process. Conversely, families low in conversation orientation may feel that this type of information is to be avoided, much as they would avoid engaging in verbal conversation.

Doing personal research also ensures that there will be someone to take over the work of the aging genealogist. As previously mentioned, Leach and Braithwaite (1996) identified continuing previous kinkeeper's work as a beneficial outcome of kinkeeping; therefore, an avenue for future research would be to examine how and to whom the work of genealogical research is passed through families. The association between conversation orientation and personal research, then, may indicate that families higher in conversation orientation are more likely to have an individual or individuals ready to carry on genealogical research than families low in conversation orientation.

Conformity orientation also emerged as a predictor of genealogical communication, significantly and positively predicting dark side. The causation of this is unknown. Because families higher in conformity orientation expect family members to conform, they may perceive a greater range of behaviors—those outside of acceptable norms—as "dark" than do families lower in this orientation.

Conformity orientation also significantly and positively predicted digital preference. One explanation could be that families high in conformity orientation expect family members to tell only "approved" versions of family stories, and speak only about approved topics. Indeed, Lenz (2011) explored the concept of "remembrance environments," in which families highlight or conceal particular aspects of their family history in accordance to what is deemed "acceptable." She stated, "In some families an almost defiant counter-narrative is transmitted in deliberate

opposition to the canon of public memory" (Lenz, 2011, p. 321). Thus, family members attempting to conduct comprehensive research about the family may experience difficulties obtaining complete and accurate information within the family unit. Verbal information may be censored in order to conform, as well as any physical materials such as written family histories or scrapbooks. It is also feasible that external documentation in possession of the family could be hidden, altered, or destroyed. Therefore, in order to move beyond these barriers, it would be vital to locate records outside of the family utilizing the plethora of record depositories now available. Moreover, electronic sources such as the internet provide access to extended family members who may have additional information and may not follow the same conformity expectations.

Although conversation orientation and conformity orientation individually predicted genealogical communication behaviors, the regression showed no significant interaction effects between conversation orientation and conformity orientation. Thus, it stands to reason that a family high in both conversation orientation (leading to increased engagement, perspective, and personal research) and conformity orientation (leading to increased dark side) would experience an increase in all genealogical communication behaviors. Future research should explore the implications of these findings, particularly in what this may mean for increased dark side behavior associated with the increase in conformity orientation. Koerner and Fitzpatrick (2002) note that children from families high in conversation orientation exhibit greater resiliency than those from families low in conversation orientation. Thus, this may mediate the reaction to dark side behavior.

Lastly, H2 and H3 explored the well-being of families in association with genealogical communication. H2 predicted that genealogical communication would predict family satisfaction; this hypothesis was supported. When testing the effects of genealogical

communication on immediate and extended family satisfaction, perspective emerged as a significant positive predictor of both. This finding supports the research of Koenig Kellas (2005), which found that "perspective-taking emerged as the most important discursive practice in explaining family functioning and satisfaction" (p. 385). Certainly it would appear to be more satisfying for an individual to feel that their perspective is valued by their family, so this finding was consistent with expectations.

While perspective was the only genealogical communication behavior that significantly predicted immediate family satisfaction, extended family satisfaction was significantly associated with perspective (positive), engagement (positive), and dark side (negative). The association of engagement may be due to the fact that extended family is not always as well-known as immediate family. Extended families may not see each other often, and may live in geographically distant areas. Engaging in genealogical communication either about them or with them may provide greater familiarity, thus leading to increased satisfaction. This idea is supported by axiom 7 of uncertainty reduction theory (Berger & Calabrese, 1975), which claims that uncertainty produces decreases in liking, while reducing uncertainty increases liking. Thus, engagement in genealogical communication may reduce uncertainty about extended family, increasing liking, and leading to increased satisfaction.

An exception to this, however, may be if the information uncovered is negative. Dark side emerged as the lone significant negative genealogical communication behavior associated with family satisfaction, predicted only extended family satisfaction, and not immediate family satisfaction. One explanation for this may lie in the discovery of undesirable information during genealogical communication or research. Bishop (2008) found that researchers expressed a desire for accuracy, regardless of the nature of the information they uncovered. Many of his

respondents stated that they recognized the potential to uncover dark or painful information, while also acknowledging that their ancestors where human. Despite this acknowledgement, one such respondent discussed her feelings of non-forgiveness upon learning that her family had once owned slaves. This suggests, then, that the discovery of dark side subject matter in the history of one's extended family may lead to decreased extended family satisfaction.

H3 then predicted that genealogical communication would mediate the association between family communication patterns and family satisfaction. Indeed, the results confirmed this prediction. In total effects, conversation orientation was significantly and positively associated with both immediate and extended family satisfaction, while conformity orientation was significantly and negatively associated with both types of satisfaction. These were mediated by indirect effects, where perspective was once again significant, emerging as a positive mediator between conversation orientation and both types of family satisfaction. However, it emerged as a negative mediator between conformity orientation and family satisfaction. This is due to conformity orientation leading to less perspective-taking, which in turn decreases satisfaction.

Other significant results followed suit: engagement was a positive mediator between conversation orientation and extended family satisfaction, and dark side negatively mediated the association between conformity orientation and both types of family satisfaction. One surprising finding emerged, as personal research significantly and negatively mediated the association between conversation orientation and immediate family satisfaction. One possible explanation may be a contrast effect in which positive discoveries of extended family members, past or present, seem so good that an individual's satisfaction with their immediate family decreases. It

is also worth noting that this effect is mild, and may not replicate in future research. Therefore, additional research is needed to determine if this is so.

Finally, the genealogical communication measure proved to be beneficial in identifying behaviors that characterize genealogical communication. The results of this inaugural use indicated opportunities for revision, such as modification of items loading on the dark side behavior, and modification or elimination of items excluded from the final factor analysis. Additional revisions may include items addressing family identity, based on Koenig Kellas' (2005) assertion that family identities are negotiated through storytelling. Above all, the measure should continue to be tested for validity and reliability.

The contributions of this study must be interpreted in light of the limitations associated with the nature and scope of the research design. First, the sample is not diverse. The majority of participants in this study were undergraduate communication students from a mid-sized private university in the southwest. A more diverse sample should be obtained to more greatly determine generalizability. Second, the data is cross-sectional. Family communication is certainly associated with genealogical communication, but it cannot be definitively said which one causes the other. Lastly, information was collected from only one member of the family, and this member was typically of the younger generation. Koerner and Fitzpatrick (2002) cite evidence that an individual's perception of family communication patterns can vary based on their family role, and thus, future research should collect information from multiple family members consisting of multiple generations. Research may also be conducted through interviews rather than surveys.

Nonetheless, the results of this study provide important insight into the value of genealogical communication within families. The genealogical communication behaviors discovered provide support for previous research (i.e., Koenig Kellas & Trees, 2006), and mediate the association between family communication and family satisfaction. This study also provided a new measure of genealogical communication which may be used in future research.

APPENDIX A: SURVEY MEASURES

Revised Family Communication Patterns Questionnaire (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002):

Directions: Now, we would like you to answer some questions about your **family-of-origin**—the family you grew up in. For each item, please indicate the number that best represents your level of agreement using the following scale:

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

	SD			N			SA
1. In our family we often talk about controversial topics where some persons disagree with others.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. When anything really important is involved, my parents expect me to obey without question.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. My parents often say something like "Every member of the family should have some say in family decisions."	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. In our home, my parents usually have the last word.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. My parents often ask my opinion when the family is talking about something.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. My parents feel that it is important to be the boss.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. My parents encourage me to challenge their ideas and beliefs.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8. My parents sometimes become irritated with my views if they are different from theirs.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9. My parents often say something like "You should always look at both sides of an issue."	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10. If my parents don't approve of it, they don't want to know about it.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11. I usually tell my parents what I am thinking about things.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

12. I can tell my parents almost anything.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
13. When I am at home, I am expected to obey my parents' rules.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
14. In our family we often talk about our feelings and emotions.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
15. My parents often say things like "You'll know better when you grow up."	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
16. My parents and I often have long, relaxed conversations about nothing in particular.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
17. I really enjoy talking with my parents, even when we disagree.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
18. My parents often say things like "My ideas are right and you should not question them."	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
19. My parents encourage me to express my feelings.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
20. My parents often say things like "A child should not argue with adults."	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
21. My parents tend to be very open about their emotions.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
22. We often talk as a family about things we have done during the day.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
23. My parents often say things like "There are some things that just shouldn't be talked about."	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
24. In our family, we often talk about our plans and hopes for the future.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
25. My parents often say things like "You should give in on arguments rather than risk making people mad."	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
26. My parents like to hear my opinion, even when I don't agree with them.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Instructions: We would like you to think about your relationship with your **IMMEDIATE FAMILY AS A WHOLE** over the last month. By "immediate family," we mean the family unit you're closest to—for example, your mother, father, and siblings. For each pair of words, please indicate the mark that most closely describes your feelings toward *your immediate family* over the past month.

Miserable	____ : ____ : ____ : ____ : ____ : ____ : ____	Enjoyable
Hopeful	____ : ____ : ____ : ____ : ____ : ____ : ____	Discouraging
Free	____ : ____ : ____ : ____ : ____ : ____ : ____	Tied Down
Empty	____ : ____ : ____ : ____ : ____ : ____ : ____	Full
Interesting	____ : ____ : ____ : ____ : ____ : ____ : ____	Boring
Rewarding	____ : ____ : ____ : ____ : ____ : ____ : ____	Disappointment
Doesn't give me much chance	____ : ____ : ____ : ____ : ____ : ____ : ____	Brings out the best in me
Lonely	____ : ____ : ____ : ____ : ____ : ____ : ____	Friendly
Hard	____ : ____ : ____ : ____ : ____ : ____ : ____	Easy
Worthwhile	____ : ____ : ____ : ____ : ____ : ____ : ____	Useless

1. All things considered, how satisfied have you been with your relationship with your **immediate family** the last month?

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

Instructions: We would like you to think about your relationship with your **EXTENDED FAMILY AS A WHOLE** over the last month. By "extended family," we mean those relatives outside your immediate family, such as grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins. For each pair of words, please indicate the mark that most closely describes your feelings toward *your extended family* over the past month.

Miserable	____ : ____ : ____ : ____ : ____ : ____ : ____	Enjoyable
Hopeful	____ : ____ : ____ : ____ : ____ : ____ : ____	Discouraging
Free	____ : ____ : ____ : ____ : ____ : ____ : ____	Tied Down
Empty	____ : ____ : ____ : ____ : ____ : ____ : ____	Full
Interesting	____ : ____ : ____ : ____ : ____ : ____ : ____	Boring
Rewarding	____ : ____ : ____ : ____ : ____ : ____ : ____	Disappointment
Doesn't give me much chance	____ : ____ : ____ : ____ : ____ : ____ : ____	Brings out the best in me
Lonely	____ : ____ : ____ : ____ : ____ : ____ : ____	Friendly
Hard	____ : ____ : ____ : ____ : ____ : ____ : ____	Easy
Worthwhile	____ : ____ : ____ : ____ : ____ : ____ : ____	Useless

2. All things considered, how satisfied have you been with your relationship with your **extended family** the last month?

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

Family Genealogist Questions

1. Some families have one or more members who research family history. They might maintain a "family tree" specifying relationships among family members, collect family pictures and memorabilia to share

with others, or consider themselves to be involved in genealogical (i.e., family history) research. By any chance, do you do this in your family?

    1   Yes
    2   No

2. As you think about your family, including your extended family, do you have at least one relative (other than yourself) who does something like this?

    1   Yes
    2   No

[If the participant answers "no," they will jump past the questions below about the family historian.]
For the following questions, please think of the family historian with whom you are most familiar.

1. What are this person's initials? _____

2. What is the sex of this person?
    1   Male
    2   Female

3. About how old is this person (in years)?
    1   Less than 18 years old   5   45-54 years old
    2   18-25 years old   6   55-64 years old
    3   25-34 years old   7   65-75 years old
    4   35-44 years old   8   More than 75 years old

4. Who is this person in relationship to you? This person is my…
    1   Mother
    2   Father
    3   Brother
    4   Sister
    5   Daughter
    6   Son
    7   Cousin
    8   Aunt
    9   Uncle
    10 Niece
    11 Nephew
    12 Grandmother
    13 Grandfather
    14 Other (please specify): _____

5. To what extent does this relative share his/her findings with other family members?
    1. Never   5. Often
    2. Rarely   6. Very often

3. Seldom   7. All the time
4. Occasionally

6. (question shown only if participant does not indicate "Never" for the previous question) How does this person share their findings? Check all that apply.

   ___ Face-to-face
   ___ Voice telephone calls
   ___ Text messaging
   ___ Photo albums and/or scrapbooks
   ___ Social media (e.g., Facebook or Twitter)
   ___ Websites other than social media (e.g., discussion boards or blogs)
   ___ E-mail or instant messaging
   ___ Printed material such as books
   ___ Other (please explain): _____

Directions: For each item, please indicate the number that best represents your level of agreement using the following scale:

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

	SD			N			SA
1. My family often shares stories about our family background.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. My family regularly shares stories about previous generations.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. When we are together, my family often talks about our family history.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. Our history and heritage is a frequent topic of conversation in our family.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. I consider myself to be knowledgeable about the history of my family.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. I know the background of one or both of my parents.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. I know the background of at least one of my grandparents.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8. I know the background of older family members who are still living.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9. I know the background of family members who are now deceased.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10. I know stories about my family history back to my grandparents' generation.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11. I know stories about my family history older than my grandparents' generation.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12. I know stories about the history of many different parts of my family.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
13. I enjoy listening to stories about my family history.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
14. I enjoy reading stories about my family history through print media such as books.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
15. I enjoy reading stories about my family history online.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
16. I enjoy looking through family photo albums or scrapbooks.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
17. I am interested in learning more about my family's history.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
18. I have performed my own genealogy research using the Internet.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
19. I have performed my own genealogy research using printed materials from a library or government archive.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
20. I often participate in family storytelling, such as by sharing, listening, and asking questions.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
21. When my family gets together and tells a story about our family history, everyone shows interest in the story being told.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
22. When we talk about our family history, some family members seem bored and uninterested.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
23. My family members care deeply about our family's heritage.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
24. My family is warm and involved when we talk about our family history.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
25. Some stories about my family's history are painful.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
26. Some stories about my family's history are embarrassing.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
27. Some stories about my family's history are shameful.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
28. Some stories about my family's history are difficult to discuss.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
29. My family avoids discussing difficult stories about our family history.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
30. People in my family get uncomfortable if someone brings up negative aspects of our family history.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
31. My family is willing to discuss parts of our family history that are negative or difficult.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
32. My family members collaborate when telling stories about our family's history.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
33. When my family gets together and tells a story about our family history, every person is involved in the telling of	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

the story.							
34. Conversations about our family history tend to be dominated by just one or two family members.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
35. We interrupt each other a lot when we tell stories about our family history.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
36. When we tell family stories, we distribute talk time equally among our family members.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
37. When my family engages in storytelling about our family history, I would describe the atmosphere as polite.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
38. When my family tells stories about our family history, we are courteous and respectful to each other.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
39. When my family tells stories about our family history, we are able to "put ourselves in each other's shoes" so we can understand where each person is coming from.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
40. When talking about our family history, my family makes an honest effort to understand the perspective of whoever is telling the story.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
41. When we share stories about our family history, we are successful at understanding each other's perspectives.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
42. I have heard different versions of our family history from different family members.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
43. When my family tells stories about our family history, the story usually has a definitive beginning, middle and end.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
44. When my family discusses our family history, we disagree about the details or circumstances of the stories.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
45. When my family shares about our family history, we usually agree on the details of the stories.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
46. Our family's stories about our family history don't really make sense when you think carefully about them.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
47. The stories we tell about our family history are coherent and understandable.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
48. I have heard a family story told by a deceased family member via electronic media/recording (audio or video).	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
49. I have read a family story written down by a deceased family member.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
50. My family has an audio or video record of one or more family stories.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
51. My family has a written record of one or more family stories.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
52. I believe that it is important to record family stories/history for future generations.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
53. I would prefer to learn about my family history through electronic material (such as websites) than through printed material (such as books).	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
54. My family uses many different communication channels to share about our family history and stories.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

55. I find it more challenging to talk about family history with older family members than with younger family members.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

APPENDIX B: FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

OPENING PROMPT: In this focus group, we're trying to learn how people communicate about their family history. We aren't looking to discuss stories about your immediate family, but instead we want to know how your family talks about previous generations. This information and stories might be about people that are still living, such as stories about your grandparents when they were kids. Or, it might be about generations in the past—stories about relatives who are now dead, information about your family heritage, and so forth. We'd love to hear your open, honest responses—there are no right or wrong answers. You are also free to discontinue your participation at any time, and you do not have to answer any question that might be uncomfortable for you.

1. How much do you know about the history of older family members who are still living?
2. How much do you know about family members who are now dead?
3. Do you have an interest in learning more about your family's history? Why or why not?
4. How often does your family share family stories about previous generations?
5. When does your family tell stories about the family history?
6. What do you like most about family stories? What do you like least?
7. When your family tells these stories, what things does your family emphasize?
8. When your family tells these stories, what topics, if any, does your family avoid talking about?
9. Many people have diverse extended family ties—for example, mom's side of the family, dad's side of the family, in-laws through marriage, stepfamily relationships, and so forth. Do you see differences in storytelling across different parts of your extended family?
10. Who in your family is most likely to tell family stories?
11. How are family stories told? Does one person do the telling, or do multiple people join in?
12. How do you react when you hear about your family history? Are you excited to join in the conversation, bored and want to end the conversation, or somewhere in between?
13. Are there ever times when two or more people have a different version of a story? Describe this.
14. Some researchers have suggested that family stories reveal a family's beliefs and values. Can you think of a story that reveals something about your family's beliefs and values? Describe this story.
15. Why do you think your family tells stories about the family history? If your family doesn't do this, why don't they?
16. Does anyone in your family keep a family tree, serving as "the family genealogist"? If yes, who does this? How, if at all, do they communicate their research to the rest of the family?
17. How would you prefer that they communicate their research to the rest of the family (face-to-face, written materials, online, etc.)?
18. Does your family have their own social media group or website? How does your family use this site? Who participates? Who doesn't participate? What do you like or dislike about the site?
19. How does your ancestry shape your understanding of who you are? Of who your family is?

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