“There’s always going to be uncertainty.”: Exploring undergraduate student parents’ sources of uncertainty and related management practices

Almost 25% of undergraduate students are also raising at least one child; this translates to approximately 4.8 million undergraduate student parents (USPs) living in the United States (Gault, Reichlin, Reynolds, & Froehner, 2014). Unfortunately, these USPs report both uncertainty-induced academic and parenting stress, that has been associated with adverse mental and physical health outcomes as well as early drop-out rates or delayed time to graduation (Gerrard & Roberts, 2006; Hudd et al., 2000; Scharp & Dorrance Hall, 2018). Considering USPs must simultaneously negotiate being both student and parent, it is possible that their combined/overlapping uncertainties create a particularly stressful experience that make them especially susceptible to attrition (Gerrard & Roberts, 2006; Springer, Parker, & Leviten-Reid, 2009). Indeed, government reports estimate that USP attrition rates are alarming compared to non-parent peers (see Schumacher, 2013; U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2013). Put simply, USPs are half as likely to graduate within six years compared to undergraduate students without a child.

Of the limited research conducted on USPs to date, the majority has focused on quantitative measures of stress (e.g., Scharp & Dorrance Hall, 2018), without attending to the underlying uncertainties that induce it. According to Brashers (2001), uncertainty occurs “when details of situations are ambiguous, complex, unpredictable, or probabilistic; when information is unavailable or inconsistent; and when people feel insecure about their own state of knowledge or the state of knowledge in general” (p. 478). Ignoring these underlying uncertainties are problematic considering uncertainty constitutes a powerful stressor (see Greco & Roger, 2003). Parental uncertainty is a leading cause of parental psychological distress (Stewart & Mishel,

2000). Uncertainty also significantly contributes to student stress (Beiter, et al., 2015). As it happens, a host of literature has linked uncertainty to physical and mental health issues (see Greco & Roger, 2003). Thus, understanding the sources of USP uncertainty and management practices could have significant implications for USP's ability to manage their stress and attain their degrees. Raisman (2013) goes as far to suggest that universities could improve retention rates by up to 84% if they paid more attention to students' uncertainties. Degree attainment is particularly important considering USPs who leave college tend to do so for low paying jobs: 57% having incomes well below the Federal Poverty Level (see Schumacher, 2013).

Because of the potentially instrumental role uncertainty plays in shaping the lives of USPs, we have four main goals in this study. Framed by uncertainty management theory (UMT; Brashers, 2001; Hogan & Brashers, 2009), the first goal is to illuminate the uncertainties USPs experience given their overlapping social identities. Second, we seek to identify the uncertainty management practices in which USPs engage. Next, we answer the call of Hogan and Brashers (2009) by examining whether there are any systematic relationships between emergent uncertainty management practices. Finally, we put our findings in conversation with existing literature to advance theory and inform those who seek to support USPs. With these goals in mind, we begin by discussing the complications of being both a student and a parent before presenting uncertainty management theory as a useful interpretive heuristic.

Transitioning to College and Parenthood

One of the major differences between college students without children and USPs is the multitude of transitions they must navigate. Researchers suggest that major transitions such as the transition to college (Scheinfeld & Worley, 2018) and the transition to parenthood are separately marked by persistent uncertainty (Solomon, Weber, & Steuber, 2010; Theiss, Estlein,

& Weber, 2012). Uncertainty is a common, albeit often uncomfortable experience that occurs when people do not have (enough) access to information or available information is ambiguous (Brashers, 2001). For students, this might include concerns that come from living away from parents, learning new information, or even having to make new friends. Uncertainty is also a common experience for new parents who have to negotiate the dynamic changes that come with raising a child. Even transitioning to adulthood can prompt emerging adults to question their identity and face uncertainty due to their changing roles (Nelson et al., 2007).

Sources of USP Uncertainty and the Importance of Management

For undergraduate students, a variety of stressors such as changing sleep habits, altered eating habits, and/or an increasing workload have been linked to negative outcomes such as increased depression, suicidal ideation, and low self-esteem (Pisarik, 2009; Ross, Neibling, & Heckert, 1999). Often underlying and related to these stressors are student uncertainties and concerns. As Berger and Bradac (1982) observe, almost anything can be the source of uncertainty. Findings from a recent study suggest that college students feel concerned about: (1) tests/homework, (2) time, (3) friends, (4) independence, (5) finances, and (6) their roommates (Dorrance Hall, Scharp, Sanders, & Beatty, 2019). When students feel intolerant of experiencing these uncertainties (i.e., being uncomfortable with ambiguous situations and information), research suggests that they report being more depressed than students who are able to accept their uncertainty (Dugas, Schwartz, & Francis, 2004). Thus, students who feel more confident about managing their uncertainties might not only be less intolerant of it but also suffer fewer associated mental health outcomes. Furthermore, research has long linked student uncertainty with attrition (Anderson, 1985). Sprandel (1985) contends that when students feel uncertain, they

often lack goals that contributes to their inability to succeed. Consequently, equipping students with tools to manage their concerns could be an important step to seeing them graduate.

The transition to parenthood is equally wrought with uncertainty-induced stressors, especially considering many people have not had any previous experience raising a child. Uncertainty-induced stress might begin even as early as conception for many new parents and persist throughout pregnancy into the postpartum stage and beyond (Parfitt & Ayers, 2014). As children develop, their needs change, introducing new uncertainties that require parents to adapt and learn as they go (Cole, Cole, & Lightfoot, 2005). Indeed, this ever-changing situation likely requires new parents to engage in a variety of behaviors to manage their uncertainty.

Furthermore, Parfitt and Ayers report that the stress of becoming a parent is linked to a variety of negative mental health outcomes including anxiety, depression, and even posttraumatic stress disorder. When asked explicitly about their concerns, new parents discussed feeling uncertain about: (1) achievement or failure, (2) taking on risk, (3) riding an “emotional roller coaster”, (4) needing to know what is normal, and (5) needing to perform well (Svensson, Barclay, & Cooke, 2006). Given the stress and uncertainty related to both transitions, it makes understanding the ways they interplay particularly important.

Overlapping Social Identities

Although the uncertainties about college and parenthood provide insight into these separate identities of student and parent, the overlapping experience might yield a different combination of uncertainties than those who identify with just one group (Grant & Hogg, 2012). Grant and Hogg contend that researchers too often focus on people who fit nicely into one group, failing to acknowledge the way social identities overlap. Specifically, this logic has been particularly fleshed out in Crenshaw’s (1993, 2011) work on intersectionality. Crenshaw argued

that it is inadequate to treat women of color in the same way as women or people of color in general. Thus, intersectionality draws attention to the interplay of having multiple salient identities (see Crenshaw, 1993, 2011). Even though there have been debates as to what counts as intersectionality, for the purposes of the present study, we defer to Crenshaw (2011) who suggests that intersectionality should be applied to multiple populations and intersections. In taking this broader use of the term and in the spirit of trying to understand the experience of overlapping identities, our interests diverge from identifying the institutionalized power structures that oppress certain populations to a more interpretive acknowledgement that it is not sufficient to see the concerns of USPs as additive. With this in mind, we use the phrase overlapping identities as a way to signal interdependence but also as means to distinguish our argument from those engaged in critical scholarship. Attending to overlapping identities is important, nonetheless, because it is likely that holding multiple identities simultaneously can proliferate already uncertain times and complicate how people respond. Given the complexity of USP's overlapping identities and the important role uncertainty plays in the success of USPs, we now to turn to a theory about uncertainty and its management.

Uncertainty Management Theory

Originally, Brashers developed UMT to explain people's responses to feelings of uncertainty. Although he initially positioned UMT as a post-positive theory, scholars acknowledge that many of UMT's propositions align more closely with the interpretive paradigm (see Afifi & Matsunaga, 2008). Even Brashers and his colleagues argue that uncertainty is a social construction (see Brashers, Goldsmith, & Hsieh, 2002). It might not be surprising then, that Brashers has conducted UMT research in the interpretive paradigm (e.g., Bylund et al., 2012). This makes sense considering UMT ultimately works to describe the ways in which

people respond to uncertainty. In this vein, we outline the nine propositions of UMT using them as a heuristic instead of statements in need of testing (Hogan & Brashers, 2009).

The first asserts that uncertainty has cognitive and affective components. Specifically, uncertainty likely contributes to USP stress by increasing cognitive demands and inspiring intense emotion. The second and third components pertain to the idea that there are many sources of both uncertainty and information. Indeed, existing research has suggested that both students and parents were able to identify a myriad of things which prompted their uncertainty. Principle four states that the relationship between uncertainty and information is not straightforward. Indeed, uncertainty is appraised for its meaning (i.e., proposition five) and in response, people might seek to reduce, maintain, or increase their uncertainty (i.e., proposition six). In other words, USPs might perceive their uncertainty to be threatening or an opportunity which would likely trigger different responses. Principle seven describes the way gaining new information prompts the reappraisal of uncertainty. For USPs, this means that managing uncertainty in one area could encourage them to think about their uncertainty differently. Finally, the last two propositions posit that uncertainty management can be a social process and that uncertainty is not inherently good or bad. This leaves open the possibility that USPs could respond to their uncertainty in a myriad of ways. Taken together, these nine propositions serve as a frame for exploring emergent uncertainties and the management practices people employ and, in conjunction with the warrant that precedes it, leads us to our first research question.

RQ1: What sources of uncertainty do USPs identify?

Managing USP Uncertainties

To manage the uncertainties they experience, Brashers (2001) contends that people avidly engage in a number of communicative strategies. According to UMT, people might attempt to

reduce, maintain, or even try to increase their uncertainty (Hogan & Brashers, 2009). The theory also posits that people often manage their uncertainty by controlling the flow of information. For example, research suggests that both information seeking and information avoidance are popular strategies in contexts such as chronic illness (Brashers, 2001), adoption (Powell & Afifi, 2005), and post-divorce families (Afifi & Schrodtt, 2003). In addition to controlling information, Hogan and Brashers (2009) argue that emotionally supportive communication can also play an important role in the uncertainty management process. Indeed, they suggest that when information management approaches are insufficient, people turn to alternative strategies to reduce, increase, or maintain their uncertainty. Based on UMT, there are a variety of strategies USPs could employ in response to the myriad of uncertainties they might experience.

Using UMT as a heuristic, the principles reviewed above suggest that uncertainty management is a complex process. One reason that it is so complex pertains to principle seven: that new information fuels the reappraisal of uncertainty (Hogan & Brashers, 2009). For example, in their study about parent-child estrangement, Scharp and McLaren (2018) found that adult children did not want to reduce their parental love uncertainty because both answers to the question, “Does my parent love me?” were unsatisfactory; if their parents loved them, then they wanted to know why they treated them so poorly and if their parents did not love them, then they wanted to know whether they were inherently unlovable. As UMT suggests, reducing uncertainty in one domain can potentially proliferate it in others. In addition to recognizing this interplay at the conceptual level however, Hogan and Brashers (2009) call for additional research that attends to the, “importance of examining the relationship between categories and activities across categories”, specifically addressing the question, “Are there situations in which the categories of behavior are at odds with one another and interfere with uncertainty management efforts” (pp.

60-61). As such, it is not only important to recognize that reducing uncertainty can lead to the emergence of other uncertainties, but it is also important to determine whether there are any systematic (i.e., patterned) relationships between the uncertainty management practices. Thus, we pose our second research question:

RQ2(a): What practices do USPs engage in to manage their uncertainty and

RQ2(b) What, if any, systematic relationships exist between the emergent uncertainty management practices?

Method

Because we used UMT as a heuristic guide to pose our interpretive research questions, we allowed the theory and ontology to drive our methodological decisions. For example, UMT propositions two and three acknowledge that there are multiple sources of uncertainty and information. Thus, we invited participants to share a story and followed up with semi-structured questions that encouraged participants to discuss as many uncertainties and management strategies they desired. We then turned to qualitative processes (i.e., thematic analysis and constant comparison) that allowed for undirected responses to emerge from the data. In doing so, we met the goals of theory-driven interpretive family research (see Ganong & Coleman, 2014) as we sought to (1) provide an evocative account by identifying emergent uncertainties of USPs, (2) provide rich description of a process by exploring the management practices in which USPs engage, (3) examine the family within a context, and (4) provide a space for stories from family members' perspectives that often go untold.

Data Collection

With Institutional Review Board approval and as part of a larger project, we recruited 40 undergraduate student parents at a large university in the Mountain West. To participate,

individuals had to be, (1) between the ages of 18-30, (2) enrolled as an undergraduate student, and (3) be the parent of at least one child. Specifically, we recruited emerging adults to capture the experience of USPs who were going through a similar point in their lives. Participants were recruited through convenience sampling ($n = 16$; e.g., posters, social media announcements, and class announcements) and snowball recruiting ($n = 24$). Each participant received \$20 for participating in the study.

After completing a demographic questionnaire, USPs were asked to share their story as part of a narrative interview: the least structured type of interview (Langellier, 1989).

Specifically, participants were invited:

Today, I'm going to ask you to tell me the story of your experience being a student parent. I'm going to ask that you think of yourself as the author of a novel. There's no right way to tell your story but I am interested in hearing about it from the beginning and then step-by-step. Like any novelist, you can edit the chapters you have already written, either adding more or retelling certain sections, whenever and however you would like.

After telling their story, participants were asked additional semi-structured questions to gain further information about the uncertainties they experienced and how they responded to those uncertainties. To use UMT as an interpretive heuristic, we asked, "What, if any, uncertainties do you experience being a student parent?" and "Is there anything that helps you manage your uncertainty?" Asking these questions met the standards of good interpretive research in the sense that they allowed us to report the participants' sensemaking around their uncertainty instead of deferring to our a priori assessments of what counts and does not count as uncertainty and its management. Interviews were held in locations where USPs felt most comfortable including coffee shops, parks, library study rooms, and participants' homes ($n = 3$).

Interviews lasted 27 minutes on average and ranged from 12 minutes to 48 minutes. Each interview was recorded and then transcribed word for word by the second author and a team of trained research assistants, during which time all identifying information was removed and replaced by pseudonyms. This process resulted in 320 pages of single-spaced text.

Participant Demographics

Of the 40 USPs, 36 (90%) were married, two (5%) were divorced, one (2.5%) was single, and one (2.5%) was separated. When reporting about their partner, if they had one, 14 USPs also indicated their partner was a USP. On average, USPs were 24 years old ($SD = 2$ years; Range 20-30). The majority of participants were male ($n = 25$) and White ($n = 37$, 92.5%). Two participants were Black (5%), and one participant was Asian/Pacific Islander (2.5%). All participants had one ($n = 36$) or two ($n = 4$) children, and the majority were in the last two years of college (87%). Most participants discussed their newborn children (i.e., under the age of one) with two USPs reporting they had a child who was five (i.e., the oldest aged child). The majority of participants identified as having a major in the College of Humanities and Social Sciences ($n=11$), although seven belonged to Education and Human Services, another seven majored in the College of Science, five in Agriculture and Applied Sciences, five in the School of Business, three in the College of Engineering, one in the College of Arts, and another chose not to answer. In addition, most USPs reported their annual household income between \$10,000 and \$29,000 ($n=27$), with two below and seven above that range (and four who chose not to answer).

Data Analysis

We utilized Braun and Clarke's (2006) process of thematic analysis to analyze the data for RQ1 and RQ2a. This process includes (1) gaining familiarity with the data corpus through interviewing, transcribing, as well as reading and re-reading the data; (2) selecting codes or

general categories by identifying portions of the data that related to or answered the research questions; (3) combining initial themes into patterns; (4) refining themes to ensure they were representative of the data set; (5) naming themes; and (6) selecting evocative exemplars for each theme. For RQ2b, we engaged in a modified version of constant comparison (see Charmaz, 2014). The analytic technique of constant comparison is particularly useful in identifying relationships between categories as part of a theory-building process. Specifically, we conceptualized each management practice as its own category. We then constantly compared each category to check for conceptual difference. Next, we identified the relationships USPs were making between the categories. After multiple iterations, we finally labeled each of those emergent relationships as “uncertainty management trade-offs” (Charmaz, 2014). Through an iterative process of comparing themes to one another, the data suggested that Interview 5 for RQ1 and Interview 8 for RQ2ab were the points where no new categories emerged (i.e., theoretical sufficiency; see Dey, 1999).

Verification

We engaged in five verification procedures to ensure the accuracy of our analysis. These procedures included, (1) peer debriefing, (2) referential adequacy, (3) investigator triangulation, (4) exemplar identification, and (5) keeping an audit trail (see Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Referential adequacy was accomplished when the second and third authors split the data in half and coded the first 20 interviews looking for themes and then came together to discuss findings and finalize themes (peer debriefing). Once themes had been established, the second and third authors analyzed the last 20 interviews and compared the emergent themes to the first half. No new themes emerged, thus, we achieved referential adequacy. To accomplish investigator triangulation, the first author independently analyzed the data and then met with the second and

third authors to compare findings, solidify themes, and select evocative exemplars. Detailed notes, or an audit trail, were kept by each researcher throughout the processes.

Findings

Emergent Uncertainties (RQ1)

Thematic analysis yielded seven themes organized by three overarching suprathermes: (1) transition uncertainties, (2) exacerbated uncertainties, and (3) intersectional uncertainties.

Transition uncertainties. Transition uncertainties were those that appeared inherent to transitioning to a new role or stage of life. These uncertainties pertain not only to the transition period, but also to the new identities and responsibilities people had to negotiate as a result. Largely, these uncertainties manifested in relationship to USPs' ability to successfully fulfill the roles of student and parent. For example, *student uncertainty* referred to the concern USPs had about whether they would or could be good students. Nelson, who had a seven-month old shared, "I think every student does, so yeah I absolutely have uncertainties about being a student. Whether or not I'm smart enough, or whether or not I'm working hard enough, whether or not I'm studying hard enough." Throughout the data, this uncertainty appeared to capture the experience any person might make as they transition to college. Jenna, who had a child of five also expressed uncertainty about being a student, " You know I always worry about whether or not I'm good enough or I'm not smart enough and I always do well in school but it's just something that I always worry about." Indeed, the USPs in our sample alluded to the ubiquitous concern that they were not performing to their potential as both students and parents. As follows, *parent uncertainty* references the concerns USPs had about becoming parents. Hailee, a full-time student with a seven-month-old explained, "I think that a lot, everybody, has uncertainties about being a parent because it's a new thing and you don't really know what you're doing. You kind

of are learning as you go. So, I definitely have uncertainties.” Similarly, Ellen expressed uncertainty about being a parent to a five-year old, “As a parent, you don’t get grades. You have to, am I doing this right? Am I being a good mom? Am I being too controlling? Or am I being overbearing? Am I being, you know, a bad parent? There’s really no assurance or answer to that.” Consequently, student and parent uncertainty seemed to be accepted as part of these major life transitions, despite remaining a point of concern. Finally, USPs discussed the uncertainties they had about their future post-graduation (i.e., *post-graduation uncertainty*). In this regard, USPs described the future as being inherently uncertain. Fern relayed, “I kind of don’t know what I want to do after I get my degree. I wanted to do law school and become a lawyer, but I’m a lot more ambivalent about that now, and don’t know how I would use my degree if I did go for a juris doctorate, so there’s uncertainty in that.” Similar to the other uncertainties in this category, concerns about post-graduation plans might apply to anyone going through this transition. Vince, the father of a six-month old, also expressed uncertainty about life after graduation, “Graduating and life coming together, because there's still, like you can graduate and have a degree, but it doesn't necessarily mean you've got a job and a career path and everything's going to work out.” Thus, for USPs, transition uncertainties appeared to be concerns but ones they anticipated as an inherent part of growing older and progressing through life.

Exacerbated uncertainties. In addition to anticipated uncertainties, USPs also described ways in which being a student exacerbated parent-related uncertainties and how being a parent exacerbated student-related uncertainties. In other words, having overlapping identities created conditions where some uncertainties were additive. For example, *time management uncertainty* refers to the concern USPs had finding time to fulfill both roles of student and parent and the responsibilities of those roles. Recall Anna, a single-parent, who conveyed her frustration:

I think with like homework and stuff sometimes you feel guilty because you'd rather spend time with your child, but you know you have deadlines and homework to do that has to be done so you feel sad or guilty that you can't get it done, you know. And then like the opposite; you're spending time with your kids and you know you have homework to do, but you want to spend time with your kids because you never see them or talk to them or anything. So, it's like it goes either way, you know, either you neglect your kids for homework or you neglect your homework for kids.

As Anna so aptly described, spending time in one area creates doubts about how USPs might be spending their time in another. For Karen, finding time to do everything was made more challenging by the unpredictable needs of her nine-month old baby:

Finding time to do everything. You know, to be a wife, and a mom, and a student, and still keep a decently organized house, and cook meals that are semi-healthy. Just finding time to fit everything in, especially around her needs that are so inconsistent ... You know, babies don't run on a clock.

Thus, finding time to excel at both the roles of parent and student proved to be difficult as either one might require a person's undivided attention. The issue of finite resources also exacerbated uncertainty surrounding finances. Ethan explained some of his financial concerns after the birth of his baby, "Is there other financial aid that we are qualified for? Obviously, we are pretty skimp on spending a lot of money at times when we had to pay tuition and stuff like that ... it costs a lot of money to have our child." Thus, *financial uncertainty* illustrated not only general concerns about money (e.g., do we have enough?) but also the uncertainty about how to spend it. Barbara, the mother of a four-year-old explained:

Always in a financial bind. How am I going to pay for college, pay for daycare because daycare is so expensive too? And if I'm going to school full time, working full time isn't really an option to try and afford that. So it's kind of a toss up. Like, do I go to school part-time so I can afford part-time day care because I can't afford full-time daycare? Or do I try to go to school full-time and work part-time to try and afford daycare?

In this example, it is clear how financial uncertainty took a more circuitous route such that being a student restricted the ability of USPs to work which created more financial pressure when they were experiencing higher expenses with having a baby.

Intersectional uncertainties. The final supratHEME coalesced from uncertainties that only emerged because USPs were both students and parents. Put differently, unlike the uncertainties that were inherent parts of major transitions or that were made worse by competing roles, several uncertainties only exist because there is an interplay of roles. *Overlapping identity* and *network uncertainty* comprise this last set of intersectional uncertainties. Sometimes, USPs questioned their identity given their dual roles. Dane, the dad of a one and two-year-old, shared:

And it [being a parent] kind of almost interferes with that student side of the identity because I'm a parent first in my mind so it's harder to relate to somebody that's within that same identity group [student only group] because I'm at a different stage of life while simultaneously being at their stage of life. And then you know if I go to my neighbors and they see me as a dad and I tell them I'm still a student they're kind of like oh wow what's wrong with you why haven't you finish school yet after seven years?

In this example, Dane expressed the uncertainty he experiences because his identity as a parent “almost interferes” with his identity as a student. He also comments on the stigma many USPs alluded to throughout their interviews. Unlike some identities that coincide in more

complementary ways, for many USPs, both being a student and a parent were primary and important. Identifying with these two salient roles created a unique uncertainty of being a USP. Maggie, the mother of a three-month-old, also expressed this type of uncertainty, “I also feel like I’ve lost a little bit of my professional persona because I’m not using it. I do baby talk ...Like that was never part of my personality before. So, I do sometimes feel a little bit like what other people perceive has kind of shifted, or maybe what I think other people can perceive has shifted.” In this regard, USPs had to negotiate and renegotiate who they think they are. The last concern USPs identified pertained to their relationships with important others. For example, Frank, the father of a newborn, talked about the *network uncertainty* created with his parents:

I don’t know if I’d say that our relationship has been strained because of it, but um it’s been a little bit more difficult to manage time with uh extended family. Um and then just trying to explain that to parents, of kind of we want to build our own family now and we kind of want to do things, uh you know, not come home twice a month or that kind of thing because they live close enough that that’s possible.

In this example, Frank describes the tension he felt between behaving like he did as a child-free undergraduate student by visiting his parents regularly and “building his own family” by visiting his parents less frequently. This tension created uncertainty about how to proceed in his relationship with his parents as a USP. Ronnie a full-time student of a seven-month old expressed uncertainty about his relationship with friends:

Because as a college student you, you want to have fun and you want to be young and you want to be doing things that other college kids are doing. And so, I think that can strain the friend relationship to know that they are kind of low on the totem pole when it comes to social relationships.

Like other USPs, trying to fulfill the roles of both student and parent created unique uncertainties about his relationship. Overall, both overlapping identity and network uncertainty illustrate how uncertainty can not only be additive but completely new given the interplay of two salient roles.

Management Practices (RQ2)

For the first part of our second research question, thematic analysis yielded eight themes organized by the following suprathermes: (1) support seeking, (2) being productive, and (3) taking a break. USPs engaged in the first two suprathermes to reduce their uncertainties but did not discuss uncertainty escalation or maintenance. Indeed, overwhelmingly, USPs appraised their uncertainty as problematic, thus prompting their desire to reduce it. For example, Philip, father of two recounted:

There's a lot of uncertainties, and I guess they kind of keep coming, some of them go away, but there's always just more right behind it... I'll talk to myself, talk things out in my head, have a conversation with myself with "how am I dealing with this? What things can I try to do next to try to make this uncertainty a certainty?" ... I wouldn't trade it [being a USP], but I definitely would like a lot less uncertainty.

This example is largely representative of a group of people who were overwhelmed and wanted some relief from their worries. Thus, given the negative appraisal of their uncertainty, it is no surprise that they sought ways to reduce it. In response, a new category, however, emerged where USPs described taking a break from managing their concerns.

Support seeking. To reduce their uncertainties, USPs identified four types of support they sought from their social network and sometimes the government: (1) *tangible support*, (2) *informational support*, (3) *emotional support*, and (4) *social presence support*. Conceptually, social support includes verbal and nonverbal behaviors performed with the intention of providing

assistance to someone perceived as needing help (see MacGeorge, Feng, & Burleson, 2011).

Contrary to literature that suggests that emotional support (i.e., reminders of being loved and valued) is the most sought-after and beneficial type of support (see Pasch, Bradbury, & Davila, 1997), USPs not only discussed seeking tangible support (i.e., practical aid) most frequently, but also, more importantly, in the most evocative detail. For example, Harley explained:

We weren't super comfortable with taking advantage of government programs until now, such as WIC [the Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children], which provides basic dietary needs for mothers and children and so that has actually helped financially and food wise. Like I said, we come from families who are very independent, are very focused on providing for themselves. Things like that so we were very hesitant at first to take advantage of those programs but then we realized that if not us, then who? If the great country that we live in does provide these certain things to new families that are going through tough times, it can help them get on their feet. So, when we changed our outlook on that, we realized that it really is a blessing not a curse to have those programs ... Knowing that we don't have to spend so much money on groceries, we can still have a little bit of help from outside sources on providing food on the table.

Like many USPs explained, this mom of a one-year-old found tangible support often was the most helpful, whether it was in the form of government assistance, getting help with child care, or financial support. For full-time student and mother of an eight-month-old Fern, tangible support in the form of childcare was most helpful, "If I'm talking to immediate family members, I'll ask if they can take a turn caring for her, or if it's like a friend, I'll ask if they can babysit for me occasionally, so I can do something without her." In addition to tangible support and most closely aligned to UMT, USPs also relied on informational support from their network (i.e., the

receipt of facts, advice, opinions, and/or perspectives to help solve a problem) to reduce their uncertainty. This informational support often came in the form of advice from network members and other USPs as described by Ellen:

I ask probably for a lot of advice on behavior because we are going through a whiny stage right now where if something doesn't go the way she wants, she starts whining. And it's not really like a tantrum stage. But just advice on, you know, am I doing this right? What can I do to be a better mom while still taking care of all my other obligations that I have to do?

Even though people do not want advice in some contexts, USPs seemed to solicit and accept advice from a variety of sources (e.g., parents, peers, siblings, friends, coworkers, and other USPs) about a myriad of topics (e.g., managing time, parenting, and even managing uncertainty). Frank, for example, described how it was comforting to talk with other USPs about, "how to manage it [uncertainty]" and the stress of being a parent. For Wyatt, older siblings who had also been student parents provided support, "I'm the youngest so I've got a bunch of siblings that are married and have done the same thing. They have some good tips and advice." Overall, USPs generally discussed seeking support that concentrated on remedying their problems (i.e., action-facilitating support) as opposed to support that conveyed comfort (i.e., nurturant support).

Despite the focus on action, some USPs still sought emotional and social presence support (i.e., communicated support availability). For example, Jenna explained, "You know, I have a really supportive family and friends ... It's nice to have someone listen to me and to validate what it is that I'm feeling." Oliver, parent to a four-year-old, expressed a similar sentiment, "[My wife] is super good at helping me to feel comfortable with those uncertainties because as much as you'd like them to, the uncertainties don't go away, no matter how much you

try.” Like many other USPs, the validation of emotions and concerns was very comforting. Sometimes, however, what USPs valued most was knowing someone would be there if they needed them. Debbie, mother to a one and three-year-old, shared:

She’ll just say, you know, ‘You know you can call me if you need anything, right?’ Or just little things like that. It was more of a ‘I’m here for you.’ So, I really appreciate it when people ask how I’m doing or if I need any help, which is always nice. Then I don’t feel like I’m the one, ‘Hey help me, I’m sinking here!’

As this example illustrates, the offer of support was particularly appreciated even if the USP did not need anything at the time. Similarly, Jenna shared this about her friends, “I have a good group and I know that they’re there for me and I don’t worry about those relationships.” Thus, a variety of support types facilitated the reduction of uncertainty for USPs.

Being productive. In addition to seeking supportive communication, USPs reduced uncertainty by being productive. This meant they instead of being paralyzed by their uncertainty, they decided to take action, even though that action could take on many forms. Specifically, they focused on *formulating goals*, *making plans/scheduling*, and *pushing through their uncertainty*. For example, Greg, father of two, talked about the importance of setting goals, “Like you definitely need goals ... When you’re at work, work hard. When you’re at school, study ... That’s it” (Interview #15). Isaac, a full-time student, described it this way:

When I remember what I have going on in my life, it really calms me down, and helps me to remember what I’m working for... You have to provide, you have to study, and sometimes time isn’t always there to do everything that you want to do. Um, but I think it does help, just keeping your goal in mind.

In this regard, having goals helped USPs stay focused. This process of tackling uncertainty through making plans was even more illustratively described by Adam:

I guess talking out the uncertainties. Sitting down, Megan and I and accounting for them and really exploring different options. Ok if I have class at this time what's going to happen with her and we make a decision. And so, we figure out kind of like on an hour by hour, day by day, until how many weeks until the end of the semester we try and take out the uncertainties. We make certain of our uncertainties and we try and account for them as much as possible. Planning I'd say.

As with many USPs, reducing uncertainty was often a proactive and intentional endeavor. Ronnie recalled, "Being a husband and a wife, it's easy to get together at the start of a week you know and kind of write out what assignments are due this week, let's prioritize those." Indeed, both seeking support and taking action were ways they could focus on the aspects of their life they could control. Although some USPs found comfort in setting goals and making plans to reduce their uncertainty, we observed several occasions when USPs normalized their uncertainty and discussed just moving to push through it. In these cases, they described leaning into the uncertainties and pushing through them one day at a time. Quin, father to a six-month-old described how he managed his uncertainties:

Doing them. I know that's, that kind of sounds funny but for me I just always have to just keep pushing forward and kind of push through those uncertainties and those things that I'm not real familiar with. And after I do them once or twice I learn that okay, it's going to work out. So, just step by step just keep moving in the right direction and just knowing that everything will work out.

Thus, taking action was important for USPs despite how uncertainty they felt. Pushing through uncertainty, then, was about accepting it as the new normal. Philip, father of two, described pushing through uncertainty in this way:

I've grown used to uncertainty. I've gotten a lot more comfortable with so many of just, trying to keep a positive outlook on how things go. Taking it one day at a time and looking for positive things to come. I just tell myself it'll get better in a few hours or tomorrow will be better. And it's just kind of grinning and bearing it, just having that perspective that it's going to get better I guess is one way I think about it and so that's how I've dealt with uncertainty. Like I said, they just keep coming, and it's just taking them one day at a time, trying to move... keep moving forward and learn from the uncertainties that you have to face.

Thus, USPs discussed pushing through the uncertainty as a way to be productive and not let the uncertainty paralyze them into inaction. This theme was particularly interesting because it was the only one where USPs were not actively trying to reduce their uncertainty but described it as managing it nonetheless. Different from trying to maintain or increase their uncertainty, pushing through was about accepting uncertainty and not letting it stop them from moving forward.

Taking a break. Finally, USPs discussed how important it was to take a break. This uncertainty management practice was about regaining capacity when flooded with uncertainty. In this regard, taking a break was not about avoiding the uncertainties in life, but rather, about putting them aside for a finite amount of time to return to the management fresh. Dane explained, "Making time for myself if at all possible ... whether it's going and exercising for a while, playing sports, video games or whatever. If I can fit in even just an hour a week that makes a big difference." Although not a traditional uncertainty management practice like seeking support,

many USPs explained that a useful way to manage their uncertainty was taking a break from managing their uncertainty. Although these were short mental breaks, they helped USPs recharge. Debbie, a mother of two explained:

It's been really nice to have something that's outside of like homework and laundry you know - time outs. It's nice to have that something else. So, that's really helped me a lot this semester. To be able to step away from it for just a little while, and then I can come home after I'm done working for the day and we can start over.

This finding, in particular, was unique considering USPs were not trying to maintain their uncertainty like individuals who do not attend a follow-up doctor's appointment (see Hogan & Brashers, 2009). Instead, taking a break was a quick escape that helped USPs reset so they could go back to managing what they could.

The second part of our research question asked, "What, if any, systematic relationships exist between the emergent uncertainty management practices?" In the past, some researchers have discussed the ways particular uncertainties map onto particular management practices (e.g., Scharp & McLaren, 2018). Yet, for USPs, the sources of their uncertainty and the management practices they engaged did not coalesce into a clear pattern such that there were clear matches. In other words, any source of uncertainty might trigger any one of the management responses. Analysis revealed two systematic relationships between the management practices however, what we are labeling, "uncertainty management trade-offs." Conceptually, uncertainty management trade-offs occur when managing one source of uncertainty creates difficulties in managing a separate source of uncertainty. Indeed, one USP dad to a 10-month-old, Andrew, succinctly commented, "So, I feel like just like everything else in life, you trade one issue for

another right?” Ultimately, these trade-offs illustrate ways that reducing one source of uncertainty exerted influence on another in a systematic patterned way.

The student uncertainty – parent uncertainty trade-off. Given the stated importance of being both student and parent, it might come as no surprise that one of the hardest negotiations emerged between reducing questions about being a good student while being a good parent. USPs consistently commented that feeling competent in one role led to neglecting the other. Thus, decreased uncertainty in one area increased it in the other. Matthew described:

I’m spending maybe too much time with the baby and maybe not getting enough homework done or uh maybe it’s uh reverse of that, maybe it’s, I’m spending too much time on homework and I need to be with the baby.

As this example illustrates, not only did USPs struggle with balancing their roles but they also felt uncertain about which one they actually were fulfilling at any given time. Anna described:

I think with like homework and stuff sometimes you feel guilty because you’d rather spend time with your child, but you know you have deadlines and homework to do that has to be done so you feel sad or guilty that you can’t get it done, you know. And then like the opposite; you’re spending time with your kids and you know you have homework to do, but you want to spend time with your kids because you never see them or talk to them or anything. So, it’s like it goes either way, you know, either you neglect your kids for homework or you neglect your homework for kids.

For this particular uncertainty trade-off, USPs repeatedly conveyed that they were unsuccessful at striking a satisfying balance. Furthermore, the guilt they experienced fueled both their parent and student uncertainties. In some regards, the uncertainty about how to balance the uncertainties appeared to be just as problematic to the original concerns and the new concerns.

The time management uncertainty – Network uncertainty trade-off. Perhaps seemingly less intuitive, USPs also described another set of uncertainties that they had a hard time negotiating. Sometimes, creating the time to attend to an important task created uncertainties about whether they were taking advantage of their social network. Christie shared:

I feel like I was just like passing off my baby sometimes you know? Like I really need a sitter and my husband won't be home till like 9 or 10 from work or school and so I was like 'Hey, here's my baby!' you know what I mean? I didn't want to be like 'Here you go, this is for you!' So, it's kind of hard. You never know if they really want to watch her or if they are just being nice. So, it's hard to see which one it is.

In this example, we see Christie, like many USPs, question the tangible support others provided. As Debbie described previously, it was a relief if someone offered help instead of agreeing when asked. Partners also discussed how balancing their individual time created uncertainty about how their spouses were coping. Barbara shared:

When I come to my parents I'm like, "I have a test in two days. I really need tonight to study. Could Mike come over and spend the night or something?" It would sometimes put strain on that relationship because I'd have to ask for things like that a lot.

This account further illustrates the particular trade-off between time management and network uncertainties. Thus, in this example, reducing uncertainty about time management seemed to increase their network uncertainty. Ultimately, uncertainties where USPs frame their management as a trade-off were particularly difficult. Thus, not only is the management of uncertainties complex because of overlapping identities but also because USPs often discussed being unable to strike a satisfactory balance when negotiating their concerns.

Discussion

We began this study with four primary goals: (1) identifying sources of uncertainty when identities overlap, (2) identifying management practices, (3) exploring emergent relationships between management practices, and (4) advancing theory and practice. The present study illuminates three supratemes that classified seven sources of USP uncertainty. Another three supratemes elucidated eight management practices. Across the corpus, two uncertainty management trade-offs emerged that characterize the relationship between student-parent uncertainties and time management-network uncertainties respectively. We now address the fourth goal of our study by discussing the theoretical and practical implications of our findings.

Theoretical Implications

Overall, our findings inform and advance a variety of literatures, but we begin our discussion by acknowledging the power of interpretive research. Based on research about relational transitions, we were open to the strong possibility that USPs would discuss relational uncertainty (Knobloch & Solomon, 1999). Yet, USPs in this study did not discuss having doubts about their personal commitment to their partners (i.e., self-uncertainty), the commitment of their partners (i.e., partner uncertainty), or the future of their relationship together (i.e., relationship uncertainty). We think this is particularly noteworthy considering the narrative interviews allowed for any uncertainty about their experience to emerge and we did not ask any semi-structured interview question that would suggest they focus on their overlapping identities. Thus, it is possible that when faced with dual role transitions, other uncertainties or even the uncertainty trade-offs, become more salient. Certainly, it is possible that USPs could report relational uncertainty if prompted by a survey, but USPs seemed more concerned with finite resources and whether they were personally doing a good job of fulfilling their roles. The absence of relational uncertainty, then, illustrates the power of interpretive research to illuminate

new foci and variables of interest that could be overlooked if researchers do not first privilege the voices and stories of their participants. In addition to this implication for using multiple methods broadly, our findings also spoke to advancing specific literatures and theoretical frameworks.

The importance of overlapping identities. As argued by Grant and Hogg (2012), scholars often overlook the way people must manage multiple identities as well as the interplay of those identities. The findings from this study illustrate that USP uncertainties are not merely the sum of student concerns and parent concerns. In addition to the uncertainties that seemed an inherent part of the transition, USPs talked about the uncertainties that became more salient because they were both student and parent. Perhaps even more interesting, they discussed some uncertainties that would not exist if they did not have to negotiate both roles. Ultimately, the emphasis on multiple roles corresponds to the logic of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 2011). Thus, if researchers want to increase their understanding about the causes and predictors of student attrition and stress, they should also attend to the ways that so many students are more than just students. We advocate that our findings are just the first step in highlighting the importance of acknowledging people's overlapping identities. Future research should continue to take an intersectional lens to exploring the unique uncertainties faced by students, for example, first-generation students, low-income students, and students of color, among others.

Uncertainty, finite resources, and support preferences. To date, there is a dearth of research focused on support-seeking compared to support provision and/or message evaluation (see MacGeorge et al., 2011) with some notable exceptions (e.g., Collins & Feeney, 2000; High & Scharp, 2015; Mortenson, 2009; Peterson, 2010). Findings from this study suggest that better understanding uncertainties might be a helpful guide to identifying what people might like to hear with regard to supportive communication. Concurrent with UMT, people often turned to

informational support in the form of advice. As such, when stress is prompted by uncertainty, advice could be more welcome/effective/useful. As evidenced by the findings, it is also possible that when people feel uncertain about their finite resources, they seek tangible support to increase their resources or to avoid depleting them. These findings stand counter to the research that suggests that when people experience difficulty, they often find the most solace in seeking out emotional support (see Pasch, Bradbury, & Davila, 1997). In the future, researchers should attend to the relationship between uncertainty and support seeking more closely, examining how the process of seeking support could be informed by reports of uncertainty.

Extensions of UMT. Despite alluding to its importance and calling for research that examines the relationships between uncertainty management practices (see Hogan & Brashers, 2009), the majority of interpretive UMT research, to date, largely stops at identifying the uncertainty sources and/or management practices (e.g., Dean, 2016; Scharp & McLaren, 2018). To answer their call, we not only identify management practices but also two uncertainty trade-offs that speaks to the interdependence among uncertainty management practices and principles. Specifically, USPs discussed the problem of juggling two salient identities and feeling uncertainty about whether they were fulfilling either of their roles well. They also described having difficulty navigating managing their time and relying too heavily on their network. These findings not only corroborate UMT's seventh proposition (i.e., new information prompts the reappraisal of uncertainty) but also illustrates the ways new uncertainties can cycle back to agitate the original uncertainty. Thus, our study reveals a patterned way that uncertainty management becomes chronic through uncertainty trade-offs.

In addition, one of the most robust theoretical advancements potentially pertains to UMT and the responses to uncertainty. Brashers, unsatisfied with uncertainty reduction theorizing,

developed UMT to account for the ways people might maintain or increase their uncertainty in addition to trying to reduce it (see Afifi & Matsunaga, 2008). For USPs in our sample, these additional strategies did not emerge. USPs did, however, discuss two new possibilities: normalizing the uncertainty and taking a break from uncertainty management. For some USPs, uncertainty became the new normal and as a response, USPs just took it one day at a time. Indeed, accepting uncertainty and pushing through it resonates with a strategy identified by Buzzanell (2010) in her communication theory of resilience. Specifically, Buzzanell describes foregrounding productive action and backgrounding negative feelings as the decisions people make to address their problems (in this case, their uncertainties). Researchers should attend closely to how USPs remain resilient in future studies. In addition to normalizing their uncertainty, USPs discussed the importance of “pressing pause” for a finite amount of time to reset so that they could return to managing their uncertainty with more capacity. Indeed, this mirrors research by Gottman (1994) who suggested that distressed couples should take a “time out” to allow their associated arousal to dissipate before re-engaging with their partner. This also corresponds to research that suggests taking a break is an effective calming strategy that makes it possible for people to distance themselves from difficulty long enough to gain a new perspective (West et al., 2001). Indeed, West and his colleagues argue when it comes to families, gaining some distance from our concerns offers room for reflective thinking and effective reframing of narratives surrounding struggle. Thus, similar to emotional flooding, our findings suggest the people might experience uncertainty flooding which could require a short-term solution. With this logic in mind, we argue that the strategy of taking a break could be a new response to uncertainty management that communication researchers have not yet considered. Now we turn to potential practical applications that could be enacted by a variety of support providers.

Potential Practical Applications

The findings from this study suggest that there can be a variety of practical applications for social network members, USPs themselves, and university administrators. Based on the types of support USPs sought and the concerns they had about burdening their network, those looking to provide comfort and aid might consider not only agreeing to requests for tangible help (e.g., child care), but also offering the help they are willing to provide before it is requested. Extending an offer to provide action-facilitating support could help alleviate the time management-network uncertainty trade-off. Reassurances that the USPs are not a burden might also go a long way to help reduce network uncertainty. For network members who might not have resources to share, they could consider offering social presence support. In other words, they could let USPs know that they were available in case they wanted to discuss their concerns and/or had their back. Thus, social network members can still be helpful even if they cannot help in tangible ways.

Support groups might also serve USPs well for a variety of reasons. Throughout the interviews, USPs discussed their desire for advice from other people familiar with their situation. They perceived other USPs as better able to empathize with the student, parent, and intersectional identity uncertainties unique to their situation. Because USPs share many of the same uncertainties, they might be uniquely positioned to help each other remain resilient. In addition to foregrounding action, Buzzanell (2010) argues that resilience is a communication process that often includes (1) crafting normalcy, (2) affirming identity anchors, (3) utilizing communication networks, and (4) reframing. Support group members could be in a unique position, given they would likely be in different stages, to help new USPs reframe and focus on the benefits of being a USP. Collectively, USPs might also construct a shared USP identity that could alleviate the myriad of identity-related uncertainties and stigma that emerged as concerns.

Finally, opportunities also exist for university administrators. Given their interest in retaining students, administrators might consider increasing the child care available at their institutions. Other tangible support could come from developing scholarships to support USPs specifically. Even if increases in resources are not viable options for USPs specifically, administrators might focus on increasing psychological services across the board. USPs experience a significant amount of uncertainty-related stress that they might prefer to discuss with a professional instead of discussing with their partners who they might perceive to be overwhelmed as evidenced by USP reports. Finally, universities might provide resources and information during any first-year experience courses students take. Acknowledging the prevalence of USPs and providing information about resources could help normalize the experience and reduce uncertainties in the present or future. Taken together, there are many possibilities to help USPs reduce some of their immediate uncertainties.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

As with all research, our findings should be interpreted in light of the study's limitations. One limitation pertains to the fact we did not collect some demographic information that could have been insightful such as whether the USPs attended college full-time and their generational status. This information could be useful in contextualizing the findings above. For example, is also possible that first generational USPs might not have access to as much information when managing their uncertainties. Another limitation is that we do not have a clear sense of USP-related uncertainty in families with multiple children or when both parents are also students. It is possible that parents with multiple children have to juggle additional uncertainties given that every child is unique and the stress of having multiple children could be additive. It is also possible that dual USP-family households shoulder even larger burdens than families where only

one parent is also a student. Another limitation is that each USP could have had varying access to resources such as financial aid, family/friends in close proximity, or other access to child care. In the future, researchers should interrogate the relationship between privilege and uncertainty. Finally, our sample was primarily White and male; a more diverse sample could be fruitful in understanding additional institutional barriers that could exacerbate uncertainties of already marginalized groups (e.g., people of color, women, etc.). Indeed, scholars might consider taking a traditional intersectional approach (see Crenshaw, 2011) to consider how USPs from marginalized groups face different sorts of uncertainties than White men. For example, it could be important to recognize the ways in which child rearing traditionally disproportionately falls into the category as women's work. This comparative research could help inform university policies that are likely neglecting the unique experiences of these marginalized groups of students. Even though our sample was primarily male, we argue, however, that our sample does give fathers a voice: a parenting perspective often silenced in favor of mothers.

Despite these limitations, we identify a number of exciting areas for future research. In light of the numerous theoretical implications of the present study, we encourage researchers to examine the ways, (1) uncertainty manifests in unique ways when identities overlap in a variety of contexts, (2) how uncertainty might be related in patterned ways to support-seeking, and (3) how taking a break can further inform the uncertainty management process. Specifically, Afifi and Morse (2009), in their theory of motivated information management (TMIM), argue that people have emotional reactions to uncertainty discrepancies. Although USPs discussed taking a break from managing their uncertainties, researchers should gain more clarity around whether people want to take a break from managing their uncertainty or managing their emotional responses to uncertainty. Understanding this nuance could be important for empirical theorizing.

In addition, and given the unique uncertainties that emerged because of the overlapping identities and the judgement USPs perceived from others (as illustrated in the findings), future researchers might consider framing a study using relational dialectics theory (Baxter, 2011). RDT is particularly useful in illuminating meaning when a situation is uncertain and ambivalent (Baxter). Through this lens, researchers could better understand how USPs resist their intersectional identity uncertainty and the external messages that they are too young to be parents or not serious about their schooling. Finally, researchers might turn to the student development literature to also better understand the experience of USPs. Specifically, transition theory examines events or non-events that result in changed relationships, routines, assumptions, and roles as students make the transition to college (Schlossberg, Waters, & Goodman, 1995). Looking at (un)anticipated transitions from the perspective of USPs could be theoretically interesting, because these roles might shape the USP's relationship with the transition as well as the setting in which the transition takes place.

In conclusion, USPs experience a myriad of uncertainties born out of their dual roles as students and parents. In response, they identified strategies that not only reduce their concerns but also create a space where they can reassess their uncertainty with new clarity. These management practices are particularly important given the difficult uncertainty trade-offs they have to negotiate. Based on our findings, we are encouraged that network members, university administrators, and even the USPs themselves have real opportunities to help manage USP-related uncertainties and trade-offs to allow for success as both students and parents.

References

- Afifi, T. D. & Schrod, P. (2003). Uncertainty and the avoidance of the state of one's family in stepfamilies, post-divorce single-parent families, and first-marriage families. *Human Communication Research*, 29, 516-532. doi:10.1111/j.1468-2958.2003.tb00854.
- Afifi, W., & Matsunaga, M. (2008). Uncertainty management theories. In D. O. Braithwaite & L. A. Baxter (Eds.), *Engaging theories in interpersonal communication: Multiple perspectives* (pp. 117-132). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Afifi, W. A., & Morse, C. R. Expanding the role of emotion in the theory of motivation information management. In T. D. Afifi & W. A. Afifi (Eds.), *Uncertainty, information management, and disclosure decisions: Theories and applications* (pp. 87-105). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Anderson, E. (1985). Forces influencing student persistence and achievement. In L. Noel, R. Levitz, D. Saluri, & Associates (Eds.), *Increasing student retention: Effective programs and practices for reducing the dropout rate* (pp. 45-61). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Baxter, L. A. (2011). *Voicing relationships*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage
- Beiter, R., Nash, R., McCrady, M., Rhoades, D., Linscomb, M., Clarahan, M., & Sammut, S. (2015). The prevalence and correlates of depression, anxiety, and stress in a sample of college students. *Journal of Affective Disorders*, 173, 90-96. doi:10.1016/j.jad.2014.10.054
- Berger, C. R., & Bradac, J. J. (1982). *Language and social knowledge: Uncertainty in interpersonal relationships*. London: Edward Arnold.
- Brashers, D. E. (2001). Communication and uncertainty management. *Journal of Communication*, 51, 477-497. doi:10.1111/j.1460-2466.2001.tb02892.x

- Brashers, D. E., Goldsmith, D. J., & Hsieh, E. (2002). Information seeking and avoiding in health contexts. *Human Communication Research*, 28, 258-271. doi:10.1111/j.1468-2958.2002.tb00807.x
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3, 77-101. doi:10.1191/1478088706qp063oa
- Buzzanell, P. M. (2010). Resilience: Talking, resisting, and imagining new normalcies into being. *Journal of Communication*, 60, 1-14. doi:10.1111/j.1460-2466.2009.01469.x
- Bylund, C. L., Fisher, C. L., Brashers, D., Edgeron, S., Glogowski, E. A., Boyar, S. R., Kemel, Y., Spencer, S., & Kissane, D. (2011). Sources of uncertainty about daughter' breast cancer risk that emerge during genetic counseling consultations. *Journal of Genetic Counseling*, 21, 292-304. doi:10.1007/s10897-011-9400-y
- Charmaz, K. (2014) *Constructing grounded theory* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Cole, M., Cole, S. R., & Lightfoot, C. (2005). *The development of children*. New York, NY: Macmillan.
- Collins, N. L., & Feeney, B. C. (2000). A safe haven: An attachment theory perspective on support seeking and caregiving in intimate relationships. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 78, 1053-1073. doi:10.1037/0022-3514.78.6.1053
- Corbin, J., & Strauss, A. (2008). *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Crenshaw, K. (2011). Postscript. In H. Lutz, M. T. Herrera Vivar, & L. Supik (Eds.), *Framing intersectionality: Debates on a multi-faceted concept in gender studies* (pp. 221- 233). Farnham, UK: Ashgate.
- Crenshaw, K. (1993). Demarginalizing the interaction of race and sex: A Black feminist critique

- of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory, and anti-racist politics. In D. Weisburg (Ed.), *Feminist legal theory: Foundations* (pp. 383-411). Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.
- Dean, M. (2016). "It's not *if* I get cancer, it's *when* I get cancer": BRCA-positive patients' (un)certain health experiences regarding hereditary breast and ovarian cancer risk. *Social Science & Medicine*, 163, 21-27. doi:10.1016/j.socscimed.2016.06.039
- Dey, I. (1999). *Grounding grounded theory*. London, UK: Academic Press.
- Dorrance Hall, E., Scharp, K. M., Sanders, M., & Beaty, L. (2019). The interaction of family communication patterns and the mediating effects of support and resilience on students' concerns about college. *Family Relations* doi:10.1111/fare.12386. Advanced online publication
- Dugas, M. J., Schwartz, A., & Francis, K. (2004). Brief report: Intolerance of uncertainty, worry, and depression. *Cognitive Therapy and Research*, 28, 835-842. doi:10.1007/s1068-004-0669-0
- Ganong, L., & Coleman, M. (2014). Qualitative research on family relationships. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 31, 451-459. doi:10.1177/0265407514520828
- Gault, B., Reichlin, L., Reynolds, E., & Froehner, M. (2014). 4.8 million college students are raising children. *Institute for Women's Policy Research Fact Sheet #C424*, 1-2.
- Gerrard, E., & Roberts, R. (2006). Student parents, hardship and debt: A qualitative study. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 30, 393-403. doi:10.1080/03098770600965409
- Grant, F., & Hogg, M. A. (2012). Self-uncertainty, social identity prominence, and group identification. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 48, 538-542.

doi:10.1016/j.jesp.2011.11.006

- Greco, V., & Roger, D. (2003). Uncertainty, stress, and health. *Personality and Individual Differences, 34*, 1057-1068. doi:10.1016/S0191-8869(02)00091-0
- Gottman, J. M. (1994). *Why marriages succeed or fail*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster.
- High, A. C., & Scharp, K. M. (2015). Examining family communication patterns and seeking social support: Direct and indirect effects through ability and motivation. *Human Communication Research, 41*, 459-621. doi:10.1111/hcre.12061
- Hogan, T. P., & Brashers, D. E. (2009). The theory of communication and uncertainty management: Implications from the wider realm of information behavior. In W. Afifi & T. Afifi (Eds.), *Handbook of uncertainty and information regulation* (pp. 45-66). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Hudd, S. S., Dumlao, J., Erdmann-Sager, D., Murray, D., Phan, E., Soukas, N., & Yokozuka, N. (2000). Stress at college: Effects on health habits, health status and self-esteem. *College Student Journal, 34*, 217-228.
- Knobloch, L. K., & Solomon, D. H. (1999). Measuring the sources and content of relational uncertainty. *Communication Studies, 50*, 261-278. doi:10.1080/10510979909388499
- Langellier, K. M. (1989). Personal narratives: Perspectives on theory and research. *Text and Performance Quarterly, 9*, 243-276. doi:10.1080/10462938909365938
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- MacGeorge, E. L., Feng, B., & Burleson, B. R. (2011). Supportive communication. In M. L. Knapp & J. A. Daly (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of interpersonal communication*, 4th ed. (pp. 317-354). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

- Mortenson, S. T. (2009). Interpersonal trust and social skill in seeking support among Chinese and Americans. *Communication Research*, 36, 32-53. doi:10.1177/00936502 08326460
- Nelson, L. J., Padilla-Walker, L. M., Carroll, J. S., Madsen, S. D., Barry, C. M., & Badger, S. (2007). "If you want me to treat you like an adult, start acting like one!" Comparing the criteria that emerging adults and their parents have for adulthood. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 21, 665-674. doi:10.1037/0893-3200.21.4.665
- Parfitt, Y., & Ayers, S. (2014). Transition to parenthood and mental health in first-time parents. *Infant Mental Health Journal*, 35, 263-273. doi:10.1002/imhj.21443
- Pasch, L. A., Bradbury, T. N., & Davila, J. (1997). Gender, negative affectivity, and observed social support behavior in marital interaction. *Personal Relationships*, 4, 361-378. doi:10.1111/j.1475-6811.1997.tb00151.
- Peterson, J. L. (2010). The challenges of seeking and receiving support for women living with HIV. *Health Communication*, 25, 470-479. doi:10.1080/10410236.2010.484878
- Pisarik, C. T. (2009). Motivational orientation and burnout among undergraduate college students. *College Student Journal*, 43, 1238-1252.
- Powell, K. A., & Afifi, T. D. (2005). Uncertainty management and adoptees' ambiguous loss of their birth parents. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 22, 129-151. doi:10.1177/0265407505049325
- Raisman, N. (2013). The cost of college attrition at four-year colleges and universities. Retrieved from http://www.educationalpolicy.org/pdf/1302_PolicyPerspectives.pdf
- Ross, S. E., Neibling, B. C., & Heckert, T. M. (1999). Sources of stress among college students. *College Student Journal*, 33, 312-317.

- Scharp, K. M., & Dorrance Hall, E. (2018). Examining the relationship between undergraduate student parent social support-seeking factors, stress, and somatic symptoms: A two model comparison of direct and indirect effects. *Health Communication, 34*, 54-64.
doi:10.1080/10410236.2017.1384427
- Scharp, K. M., & McLaren, R. M. (2018). Uncertainty issues and management in adult children's stories of their estrangement with their parents. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 35*, 811-830. doi:10.1177/0265407517699097
- Scheinfeld, E., & Worley, T. (2018). Understanding the parent-child relationship during the transition to college and emerging adulthood using the relational turbulence theory. *Communication Quarterly, 66*, 444-462. doi:10.1080/01463373.2018.1443954
- Schlossberg, N. K., Waters, E. B., & Goodman, J. (1995). *Counseling adults in transition* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Springer.
- Schumacher, R. (2013). Prepping colleges for parents. Strategies for supporting student parents in postsecondary education. Working Paper. *Institute for Women's Policy Research*
- Springer, K. W., Parker, B. K., & Leviten-Reid, C. (2009). Making space for graduate student parents: Practice and politics. *Journal of Family Issues, 30*, 435-457.
doi:10.1177/0192513X08329293
- Solomon, D. H., Weber, K. M., & Steuber, K. R. (2010). Turbulence in relationship transitions. In S. W. Smith & S. R. Wilson (Eds.), *New directions in interpersonal communication research* (pp. 115-134). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Sprandel, H. Z. (1985). Career planning and counseling. In L. Noel, R. Levitz, D. Saluri, & Associates (Eds.), *Increasing student retention: Effective programs and practices for reducing the dropout rate* (pp. 302-318). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

- Stewart, J. L., & Mishel, M. H. (2000). Uncertainty in childhood illness: A synthesis of the parent and child literature. *Scholarly Inquiry for Nursing Practice: An International Journal*, 14, 299-219.
- Svensson, J., Barclay, L., & Cooke, M. (2006). The concerns and interests of expectant and new parents: Assessing learning needs. *The Journal of Perinatal Education*, 15, 18-27.
doi:10.1624/105812406X151385
- Theiss, J. A., Estlein, R., & Weber, K. M. (2012). A longitudinal assessment of relationship characteristics that predict new parents' relationship satisfaction. *Personal Relationships*, 20, 216-235. doi:10.1111/j.1475-6811.2012.01406.x
- U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2013). *Digest of education statistics, 2012* (NCES 2014-015), Ch. 3. Retrieved from
http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d12/ch_3.asp
- West, J. D., Watts, R. E., Trepal, H. C., Wester, K. L., & Lewis, T. F. (2001). Opening space for client reflection: A postmodern consideration. *The Family Journal*, 9, 431-437.
doi:10.1177/1066480701094011