

A Qualitative Study Of The Money Goals Of College Students And Their Parents

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Parents and their children hold different ideas about financial planning and, specifically, goal-setting. The focus of the present study was to explore the perceived goals for money among a sample of 75 college students and 75 of their parents. The subjects identified several differing goals based on stage of life including savings methods, car and house purchases, vacations, credit card and loan repayments, and money as a means of happiness. An unexpected emphasis on savings was observed among college students whereas both parents and students de-emphasized debt reduction in their responses.

Key words: *College students, Financial goal-setting, Family life cycle, Future financial expectations*

Although the literature on family financial management is growing, few researchers have considered the role of individual factors such as personality, goals, and money philosophy in influencing what people do with their money (Walker & Garman, 1992). Despite its daily significance in the lives of individuals and families, money has not been a major research topic in the social sciences (Zelizer, 1989). Little is known about the symbolic significance of money or how to encourage positive conceptualizations about money to achieve economic goals. Many studies devoted to money retention and allocation issues focus on what people actually do with their money, rather than what motivates financial practices. However, financial attitudes have been found to play a greater role in financial management practices than does financial knowledge (Parotta & Johnson, 1998). A greater understanding of motivating factors could positively impact consumer education (Doyle, 1992).

Yamauchi and Templer (1982) constructed and validated the Money Attitudes Scale to measure psychological attitudes related to money. Four factors emerged for money motives including power and prestige, retention/time, anxiety, and distrust. These factors were correlated with other psychological measures to reveal consistency of traits across instruments. Furnham (1984) created a scale using three existing money-related scales (one of which was the Money Attitudes Scale). The factor structure was initially validated by Furnham including six factors. A series of subsequent analyses using the scale were undertaken by Bailey and other co-authors (Bailey & Gustafson, 1986; Bailey et al., 1994; Bailey & Lown, 1992) to re-validate the factor structure. Taken together, these studies of money attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors reveal that complex psychological factors impact individual conceptualizations of money and thereby may impact actual monetary expenditures.

Goal-setting is a fundamental first-step in budgeting and in constructing a total financial plan (Garman & Fogue, 1997; Rejda & McNamara, 1998). According to Garman and Fogue, values are "fundamental beliefs. . . that serve as the basis for goals and underlie all financial activity" (p. 137).

Goals, being informed by personal values, are based on needs and desires unique to the individual. Goals are measurable steps that serve as an impetus toward short- and long-term financial achievements. Consumers indicate that goal-setting is a desired skill (Clements, Johnson, Michelich & Olinsky, 1999; O'Neill, Bristow & Brennan, 1999). While financial planners and educators work to educate the public about the importance of financial goals, the question remains as to whether this information is successfully received and acted upon by consumers.

No literature could be located on the process of financial goal-setting from a consumer's perspective. Like money attitudes and beliefs, financial goals and the perceived purpose of money could serve as psychological motivators for later financial management behaviors. What goals do consumers hold for allocating their money and do these goals follow recommended financial planning practices? Do consumers differentiate between short- and long-term goals? What do consumers see as the purpose for their money?

The purpose of this study was to explore respondents' conceptualizations about the purpose of money in their lives and what goals they hold for allocating their money. Do respondents differentiate between short- and long-term monetary goals? Specifically, what short- and long-term goals do respondents have for allocating their money? What is the perceived purpose of money and is it connected to money goals? Do different generations of respondents conceptualize the purpose of money and short- and long-term goals in a similar fashion?

Published data about the guidance of personal financial goals and philosophies and their impact on family financial well-being could potentially benefit families. Several studies have identified family problems which can be precipitated by financial crisis including mental illness and relationship breakup (Ulrichson & Hira, 1985) and child abuse (Ney, Fung & Wickett, 1992). In times of a healthy national economy, individual financial well-being is presumed.

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However, individuals without sound financial motivations and practices may be precluded from this bounty.

Results of this study may guide future research regarding the catalysts to formation of money goals. Financial professionals may get a clearer understanding of how individuals categorize their money allocations and the saliency of recommended goals in achieving financial outcomes. This information may help couples to understand the different perspectives each brings to the practice of family financial management. This knowledge could be disseminated to influential groups including parents and educators who teach children about money concepts, financial counselors and planners who assist consumers in managing and investing their finances, and marriage and family therapists who counsel families about money problems.

Related Literature

Current literature provides detailed information about consumers' spending and saving patterns, financial attitudes, and financial knowledge as it impacts financial management. No studies could be located that assess conceptualizations of money in terms of its purpose or goals for allocating money. Consumers do indicate a desire to learn financial goal-setting skills, yet the literature has not explored the level of existing skills in average consumers. Literature on the variable of age as it impacts family financial practices including short- and long-term savings, retirement savings, and debt management is reviewed here.

Savings

Savings becomes a salient goal for aging families who must prepare for their non-income producing years. Expectations for financial future may be perceived negatively due to expected decrease in income following retirement. Wakita (1997) compared the expectations for financial conditions 5 years in the future for household financial managers. Age, emerging as one of the significant variables, proved to be related to expectations for future financial conditions. As age increased, respondents expected that things would either stay the same or get worse, while younger respondents expected financial conditions to improve in the near future.

Short-term savings patterns as a function of age and other variables were explored in three studies (Chang, 1995; Devaney, 1995a; Hanna & Wang, 1995). Consistent findings across the studies revealed an increasing likelihood of holding emergency funds with advancing age. Chang (1994) observed an identical trend for increasing savings and age in a longitudinal comparison of subjects surveyed in 1983 and again in 1986.

Older women, aged 55 and older, showed an inconsistent trend related to possessing emergency funds and debt-to-income ratio (Hong & Swanson, 1994). Samples were compared based on available income for savings and actual savings rates. Despite lower levels of debt relative to income in the 1989 sample, these women were less likely to possess emergency funds compared to the 1977 sample. Neither

debt-to-income ratio nor age could predict the likelihood of holding emergency funds. Related findings were obtained in a study of net worth and net worth satisfaction among rural baby boomers aged 24 to 42. Coulson (1994) found that age was an insignificant predictor of actual net worth, but increasing age predicted increasing satisfaction with net worth.

Xiao and Noring (1994) studied the effects on perceived savings motives of various demographic variables including age. Age interacted with marital status and presence of children to present a complex profile of savings motives. Subjects likely to devote money toward savings were older or already retired. Younger subjects (under age 45) were more likely to save for purchases. Single parents at any age and older married subjects without children were more likely to save for emergencies.

Savings as preparation for retirement has been the focus of several studies considering the independent variable of age. Malroux and Xiao (1995) studied financial preparation for retirement, and Devaney (1995b) considered satisfaction with retirement preparation. Both studies used subjects in retirement and pre-retirement life stages. Increasing age resulted in greater retirement savings (Malroux & Xiao) whereas retirement savings satisfaction reflected a more complex pattern than could be explained by simple age differentials (Devaney, 1995b).

Savings as a goal for adolescents was considered in a study of 1483 students with a mean age of 17 (Prather, 1994). Savings goals, gender, and income level were predictive of amount of savings. Students preparing for future education were more likely to save than those with alternative plans. Females were more inclined to save, although they actually saved less than males due to lower wages. Working teens placed a greater value on savings and displayed greater actual savings behavior than their non-working counterparts.

Debt

Debt management is another pertinent topic in family financial research. Age is frequently studied with other demographic variables as potential influences on debt. Surveys of college student debt are becoming popular indicators of the early acquisition of unsecured debt. In a recent survey of mostly white college students, Joo and Grable (1999) found that 72% of students owned credit cards (on average three cards) with an average balance of \$1,700. In this study, few students knew their credit card's basic repayment agreements. Taylor and Overbey (1999) surveyed college students and non-students regarding expected income, student loans, and credit card debt. Current students indicated a higher expected level of income accompanied by less credit card debt than non-students. However, over half of all students had student loans compared to only 7% of the non-student population. The researchers proposed that students accumulate student loans with the expectation that they will make enough money post-graduation to pay them off.

Attitudes toward installment debt as a function of age and other variables were studied by Yieh (1996). Income proved insignificant as a correlate of attitudes, yet increasing age correlated with decreasing negative attitudes toward installment debt up to age 43, followed by a sharp increase in negative attitudes with advancing age. Liao (1994) and Rouse (1994) found a consistent pattern of debt acquisition relative to age. Middle-aged subjects were more likely to hold both installment, mortgage, and credit card debt compared to either younger or older subjects. Adjustable-rate mortgages versus fixed-rate mortgages were also more commonly chosen by middle-aged families compared to older or younger families (Kao, 1994). In contrast, couples holding excessive debt which placed them at risk of bankruptcy tended to be younger and more educated compared to other groups (Yieh & Widdows, 1995). These findings are consistent with Jover and Allen's (1994) study of credit card use among college students. Apparently, the seeds of debt acquisition are sown early. The level of knowledge and payment practices were similar among college-student debtors and older debtors, yet college students tended to accumulate credit card debt early in spite of little income.

Methods

Data Collection Procedures and Sample

Data collection for this study was accomplished with a researcher-developed two-part questionnaire. The first section contained demographic information about age, gender, ethnic identity, and marital status. Part Two of the questionnaire contained three open-ended phrases for respondents to complete followed by a general response item seeking additional information. The verbatim questions are shown below:

1. The purpose of money is . . .
2. My short-term goals for using my money are . . .
3. In the long-term, I plan to use my money for . . .
4. Is there anything else you would like to add about your attitudes about money?

A pilot study was performed with a sample of 15 college students. These students were instructed to complete the instrument and evaluate each item for readability and clarity. Based on suggestions obtained from the pilot study, the questionnaire was modified. A purposive sample of college students was obtained from courses taught by the first author at a southeastern university. Students received optional course credit for completing the questionnaire and for obtaining their parent's participation. Each student received two copies of the questionnaire: one to be completed by the student and one to be completed by the student's own parent of choice.

Demographic characteristics of the sample are summarized in Table 1. The sample consisted of 150 respondents: 75 respondents were students and 75 were parents of the students. The gender of respondents included 23% males (11 students, 24 parents) and 77% females (64 students, 51 parents). White respondents comprised 69% of the sample (51 students, 52 parents), whereas 29% were African American (22 students, 22 parents), and 2% were classified

as "other" (2 Hispanic American students, and 1 Asian/White parent). Almost half of the sample (45%) was never married (68 students, 0 parents), 44% were currently married (6 students, 60 parents), and the remaining respondents were grouped together in an "other" category (10 divorced, 4 cohabiting, 1 widowed, and 1 separated).

Table 1
Demographic Characteristics of the Sample

Variables	Total (N=150)	%	Students (n=75)	Parents (n=75)
Gender				
Male	35	23	11	24
Female	115	77	64	51
Ethnic Identity				
White	103	69	51	52
African American	44	29	22	22
Other	3	2	2	1
Marital Status				
Never Married	68	45	68	0
Married	66	44	6	60
Other	16	11	1	15

Data Analysis

A qualitative method was used to guide the collection, analysis, and interpretation of data. A qualitative method is preferable to study how individuals conceptualize purposes and goals for their money without "suggesting" preferred or typical goals that individuals are expected to hold. Through open-ended questioning, individuals can incorporate all information they deem pertinent to explain their personal financial goals and to construct their own meanings of these financial terms (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). According to Taylor and Bogdan (1984), a qualitative method is appropriate to "develop concepts, insights, and understanding from patterns in the data rather than collecting data to assess preconceived models, hypotheses or theories" (p. 5). Thus, rather than hypotheses, specific research questions guided the collection and analysis of data. These questions included the following: 1) how do selected demographic variables influence money purpose and goals, and 2) how does a generalized purpose of money differ from specific short- and long-term goals and plans for personal money? For this study, the particular data collection instrument consisted of a solicited narrative in which respondents gave first-person accounts about the specified topic. According to Taylor and Bogdan, solicited narratives are preferred by some researchers to the interview method.

Analyzing data in qualitative research is a recursive process involving reading and re-reading the data, progressively identifying and coding major themes, and then further coding of sub-themes. The data collected for this study consisted of closed- and open-ended questions in a document solicited from respondents. Content analysis followed an open-coding procedure to compare and then categorize respondents' conceptualizations of short- and long-term goals and the purpose of money (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Some respondents wrote descriptions that required the researcher's judgment to parse out any and all categories of meaning. The researcher read responses with an open mind and without any preconceived categories. Respondents' answers to the open-ended questions were read twice in entirety. On the third reading, margin notations were made of tentative emergent themes (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984). These emergent themes were listed, and the data were re-read to discover how the remaining data fit with the emergent themes (Tesch, 1990). Next, a search was made for sub-themes consistent with major themes yet representing a subset or further refinement of each major theme. Sub-themes were coded and frequencies of themes and sub-themes were noted.

Findings

An unexpected finding was the similarity of themes and sub-themes written in response to the open-ended questions. Respondents did not conceptually differentiate between purpose for money in general and personal goals for their own money. After numerous readings of responses, it was clear that any academic distinctions between the concepts were not appropriate for the analysis. No consistent differentiation was observed between short- and long-term goals or between the purpose of money and the goals for money. Therefore, the reported themes and sub-themes are the combined result of responses to the four open-ended questions.

A total of seven major themes were identified: (a) necessities, (b) security, (c) luxuries, (d) savings, (e) debts, (f) charity, and (g) money philosophy. In addition, 16 sub-themes were included that clarified or further defined some of the major themes. Table 2 lists the frequencies of major themes and sub-themes for the sample. Surveying the absolute frequencies of theme and sub-themes in responses indicates the relative importance of these concepts for the total sample.

Necessities

The most frequently cited theme regarding purpose and goals for money was to provide for necessities. Some respondents used this specific term, while other terms interpreted as similar in meaning included needs, bills, survival, and essentials. More specificity was provided in listed items of necessity such as food, clothing, or shelter. A total of 125 responses fit the necessities theme. Responses were nearly equally split between parents (n=61) and students (n=64). Some sample responses included the following:

To be able to support yourself--to live. Money is needed to buy shelter, transportation, food, and clothing. Money is a necessity. (female student)

The purpose of money is to provide food, shelter, and clothing. (female student)

To provide necessities that will enable me, and those in my life, to survive in the world. (male student)

Table 2
Frequencies of Themes and Sub-themes of the Sample

Theme/Subtheme	Total sample (n=150)	Parents (n=75)		Students (n=75)	
		n	%	n	%
Necessities	125	61	81	64	85
Business	7	5	7	2	3
Car	43	10	13	33	44
House	53	17	23	36	48
Education	69	34	45	35	47
Security	106	53	71	53	71
Luxuries	41	17	23	24	32
Comfort	42	20	27	22	29
Enjoyment	56	22	29	34	45
Vacations	44	24	32	16	21
Savings	47	13	17	34	45
Retirement	71	49	65	22	29
Investments	29	14	19	15	20
Emergencies	9	5	7	4	5
Debts	16	10	13	6	8
Credit cards	10	2	1	8	11
Loans	10	0	0	10	13
Charity	14	8	11	6	8
Money Philosophy:					
Happiness	37	13	17	24	32
Control/power	35	17	23	18	24
Negative	14	6	8	8	11
Exchange	7	7	9	0	0

Several sub-themes were noted which fit with the necessities theme. Some respondents listed planned purchases or items they were currently paying for including education, car, house/mortgage, and business needs. Education may have been commonly cited due to the population from which the sample was drawn. A few parent respondents also stated goals to obtain education or advanced degrees for themselves. Business needs typically involved money to start a business or to keep a current business going. Student respondents cited goals to purchase a house or car after graduation, and some parents included

short- or long-term goals to purchase new cars, to finish paying off a home mortgage or to build a new home.

Security for Self and Family

The second most frequently cited theme (106 respondents) was the importance of money to provide security and stability for self and family. Some respondents even stated this was the sole purpose of money. Others indicated a desire to use money to raise a future family, to pay back parents for college expenses, or to assist aging parents. Responses were equally divided between parents and students (n=53 each). Typical responses included the following:

To provide security for my family and myself. (male parent)

Security for your family and to make sure that everyone around you that you love is safe. (female parent)

To provide my children with any and everything that is needed in the future. (female student)

Providing a future for my grandchildren. (female parent)

The fact that all my money goes to my children is very relevant. I'll be happy when the day comes that they'll use their money to take care of me (in my old-age). (female parent)

Luxuries

The third most commonly reported theme, coded as luxuries, consisted of items labeled as wants or comforts (41 respondents). These were not classified with the "security" theme because these items consisted of things not essential to survival but perceived as "extras" to make living more pleasant. Several respondents professed the need to "maintain a certain standard of living" or "lifestyle" to which they were accustomed or to meet their "materialistic" versus "basic" needs. This implied that although they could survive on less, they desired to maintain a higher standard of living. Students (n=24) more often than parents (n=17) associated money with luxury.

To support your family and buy material items you desire. (female student)

Continuing to live my accustomed standard of living while reducing my workload. (female parent)

Provide income for a lifestyle. (female parent)

To provide a standard of living for ourselves and family that is in keeping with the expectations instilled in us since childhood. (male parent)

Sub-themes related to luxuries included comfort, enjoyment, and vacations. Enjoyment and related terms such as "recreation," "fun," "entertainment," and "hobbies" were

stated by 56 respondents. A total of 44 respondents planned to use their money for travel, trips, or vacations. Students consistently reported more luxuries themes and sub-themes for 3 out of 4 categories. More parents than students listed "vacations" as a goal for future expenditures.

Savings

Savings and relevant sub-themes ranked fourth overall in frequency for the total sample. The sub-themes of retirement, investments, and emergencies were interpreted as a means of accumulating money and grouped with the savings theme. Many respondents simply listed "savings" without providing more explicit details about the type of savings. Nine respondents articulated the setting aside of funds for emergency purposes. For example, one respondent explained the importance of setting aside money for the unexpected:

I want to be secure so, if any surprise bills come up, I and possibly my family can adjust without too many problems. For example, a car wreck, and the insurance will not pay for the accident. (female student)

Many respondents listed only the term "savings" while others specified planned expenditures to be saved for such as "save for apartment," "save for a car," or "save to pay off debts." Slightly more parent respondents listed savings themes or sub-themes, however an interesting difference emerged between the parent and student groups. Many more student respondents used the term "savings" in their responses, while parents tended to use more specific terms such as "emergencies" and "retirement." Saving for retirement was the most frequently noted sub-theme among the responses (71 respondents). Over twice as many parents listed "retirement" compared to student respondents. Sample responses included the following:

To have enough saved so that once I reach retirement I can live to roughly the same status I currently live as well as extra to travel more. (female parent)

Securing my future necessities for when I have reached the age of retirement and will be unable to work. This will ensure I have the necessities I will need. (female student)

Continuing our standard of living through retirement and ultimately helping my daughter in her own retirement. (male parent)

My retirement years. In approximately 13 years when I can retire, I plan to have my home paid for and other bills paid so the difference between my salary and retirement pay will not keep me from retiring. My pension plan should help to continue the niceties. (female parent)

Investing money was incorporated as a sub-theme and listed by 14 parents and 15 students. In some cases, this was listed

as an additional goal to "savings." Few respondents indicated what types of investments they would make. The most commonly cited investment sources were stocks and bonds (n=6).

Debt

An unexpected finding was the scarcity of debt-related themes. Only 36 respondents (10 parents and 6 students) listed a goal of reducing or paying off debts. Mortgage debt and car loans were not included in this category because they constitute necessities. More parents listed "debt" as a purpose/goal for money, yet more students mentioned credit cards or student loans.

Charity

The least frequently cited theme was charitable allocation of money to help non-family members. Charity was sometimes listed as a money goal, as the purpose of money, or as part of a money philosophy. Only 8 parents and 6 students listed charitable uses in their responses. Some examples of this type of giving included:

Money is essential for living but I think people should not put more value on money than building character and helping others. God blesses us when we help others. (female parent)

To meet your needs and be a blessing to others. (female parent)

I would like to have more money so I could help people. I think money should be used to help abused, alcoholics, drug addicts, etc. (female parent)

Money Philosophies

A variety of responses were written to the fourth open-ended question: "Is there anything else you would like to add related to your attitudes about money?" Some respondents gave no answer to the question (n=57), others wrote brief phrases and, in some cases, lengthy paragraphs. For respondents who chose to answer, this question seemed to elicit a personal or guiding philosophy of money. A review of the literature revealed that existing scales and conceptualizations of the psychological orientation toward money did not suit the unique identification written in these responses (Bailey & Lown, 1992; Parotta & Johnson, 1998; Yamauchi and Templer, 1982; Zelizer, 1989). These philosophies were identified by the researcher as clustering into four unique philosophy categories: "money and happiness," "money and control/power," "money as a negative influence," and "money as a commodity of exchange." More students (n=50) than parents (n=43) wrote statements classified as money philosophies.

Money and Happiness Money and happiness were discussed as part of a philosophy by 37 respondents (13 parents and 24 students). However, views on how money related to happiness varied. Some respondents repeated the well-known phrase that "money cannot buy happiness." Others repeated this phrase but added a disclaimer that

money does help to make life better. A few respondents admitted that they wanted more money because they expected money to make them happier. Examples of responses included the following:

Money does not ensure complete happiness in life. Some of the best times in my life were when I was flat broke. (female student)

I don't think money can provide you with happiness, a lot of people think that just because someone has a lot of money they are happy and trouble-free. But I think you need love and family to be truly happy in life, and maybe a lot of money. (female student)

Although I would like to say that money isn't important, I know and feel that money does entitle you to a more fulfilling and joyous life. (female student)

The world goes around because of money. People are much happier when they don't have to worry about where the next dollar is coming from. (female student)

I grew up in a very well-off environment. I hate to admit it, but money does help me to be happy. I am used to a certain lifestyle and I do not wish to lose it. I do understand that I will have to work very hard to achieve this level of security and wealth, but I am willing to do this. (female student)

Money and Control/Power Another money philosophy proposed by 35 respondents centered around money as a source of control or power over things or people. Several respondents expressed feeling powerless over money or perceiving it as slipping through their fingers. Twelve respondents explained that where money is concerned, "there is never enough." Money also was seen as a source of power to make things happen or to control one's destiny. Others offered advice for controlling and managing money to maximize its utility. This theme was cited about equally by parents and students. Sample responses included the following:

My future well being, for example, learning how to be responsible and work hard for things that I can call my own. I don't want to have to be dependent on someone. Right now I don't really act responsible when it comes to making and spending money. I do pay for some things, but I rely strongly on other people for support. I consider myself to be spoiled and hope that one day things will change so that I will be a successful wealthy business woman. (female student)

I am very careless w/money . . . I love to spend money & I hate saving. As soon as I get money I spend it. When my mom writes me letters sometimes she sends me \$20. I don't say, "Oh good I need this money b/c I'm broke I should go put it in

the bank." I say, "oh good now I have money to go out this weekend." (female student)

I feel that money gives you power but you have to know how to manage that power because if misused it could be the downfall in your life. (female student)

Many people use money as power. Also, many people miss great opportunities because they have no money. People who have less money are more strong to me because they make ways to survive and love is one of those ways. (female student)

I always feel like it's a rat race where money's concerned. I probably have a problem with money management because every time I have extra money it mysteriously [sic] disappears. One day I want to reach the financial point where I won't feel like I have to look under couch cushions for money! (female student)

Money comes and goes. You can never have too much but you always seem to have too little. (female parent)

Money talks. B.S. walks (female parent)

Money as a Negative Influence Fewer respondents overall described the danger associated with money as a negative or corrupting influence. Other associated negative terms included "evil," "greed" and "temptation." Although some respondents espoused the negative influences associated with money, others claimed that despite this widely held view, they felt money could be a positive factor. Sample responses included the following:

I believe the greed and want for money is self-perpetuating in that the more you get, the more you desire. (female student)

Money is temptation . . . I realize that money is needed so people can price items and sell products because things can't be just given away without someone losing alot. But, Americans, and probably all other people misuse money. Money contributes to greed and evil, especially for people who don't use money in the right way. I like money, but I don't worship it. Some people do. (female student)

Money sucks because it makes people greedy and it is very stressful if you lack it. (female student)

Some people say that money is evil but it is not evil it is a necessity needed in this world to survive. (female student)

Money as a Commodity for Exchange Although very few responses fit this money philosophy category, it was nevertheless clearly conceptually different from the other money philosophies. Responses indicated the basic value of money to serve a particular function in society without

emotional or psychological overtones as indicative of the other three philosophies. A total of 7 parents expressed a philosophy related to money's utilitarian role in human society: to serve as a means to exchange goods and services and to compensate people for paid work. No student respondents espoused this philosophy. Following are sample responses:

To provide a standard for bartering or trading items or services needed to conduct an orderly society. (male parent)

To compensate one for the work he has done. This in turn has got to be paid to others for the work or services they do for me. (male parent)

Discussion

The frequencies of themes were quite similar for the two generations although key differences emerged in the specification of sub-themes. Several prominent themes emerged from the analysis of written responses, with necessities being the most commonly shared among the sample. The importance accorded to necessities indicates a close connection in the minds of respondents between money and its utility in providing food, clothing, shelter, and basic survival. Modern society requires money in most transactions particularly to obtain the basic necessities of life. The sub-themes of car, house, and education also were prominent in responses, with students focusing on car and house purchases in the future. The importance of education to this sample is logical given the college population from which it was drawn. Anticipation of car and house purchases is typical of traditional college students with future plans for independent living.

The role of money as a means of providing security for self and family was important to this sample. This suggests that, in addition to meeting basic needs, money can convey a feeling of safety in an insecure world. The same number of students and parents indicated a security theme in their responses. Many respondents described filial connections and a sense of commitment to securing family financial needs. The emphasis on providing security suggests concern for protecting the family's economic future. The presence of other themes, such as savings, in addition to security suggested one way respondents may seek to secure the financial needs of family. One explanation for generational similarities may be attributed to parents shaping, educating, and modeling money-related skills and attitudes. Perhaps cultural or societal influences and standards that cut across generational lines may have equally impacted the formation of money purposes and goals for parents and their children.

The security theme was accompanied by savings-related themes, perhaps because savings is perceived as one avenue to obtain economic security. The popularity of savings motives has been confirmed in research by Wilson (1987) and Xiao and Noring (1994). The savings purposes and goals specified by the sample followed patterns predicted by other research. For example, savings for retirement was listed by approximately half of the respondents, most of

whom were parents. Malroux and Xiao (1995) found that, as retirement approached, aging subjects became more concerned with retirement savings. However, the frequency of the emergency sub-theme was lower than expected based on other research. One explanation may be that emergency savings was implied in the more general and more commonly cited "savings" term. In some responses, investments was listed in addition to other savings suggesting that investing is viewed as a separate activity to occur after savings. Respondents may see investing not only as a riskier activity than savings, but an activity bearing greater potential growth and capitalization than can be obtained from savings accounts (Richardson & Kilty, 1989).

Respondents seem to be aware of the importance of savings in overall money management practices. Financial educators should focus efforts on helping individuals exiting college and beginning careers to formulate and follow through on savings goals, particularly those for retirement. Individuals may benefit from education on various savings methods, including their risks and potential returns. Individuals may have goals of saving money which go unfulfilled. Further research needs to determine if savings goals lead to savings behaviors and what factors may mediate this association. Money's utility in meeting needs was contrasted with its ability to provide for wants or luxuries. Some responses were ordered suggesting that money should be applied first to meet needs and then to luxuries, indicating that needs are a higher priority purpose or goal. Unlike its occasional association with filth and corruption (Doyle, 1992), money was associated with pleasure and comfort in the responses of 30% of the sample. The specificity of luxury sub-themes suggests that people are in touch with money's ability to provide pleasure, and they expect to use it as such. Little published research has explored the associations between money and fun, enjoyment, or comfort. Further explorations of the relative importance of luxuries in a budget or financial plan are warranted.

Debt-related themes and sub-themes were less prevalent in the responses of the sample. Of particular note was the dearth of responses listing credit cards and other installment debts. This finding contrasts with one study (Lin & DeVaney, 1996) in which only 35% of the middle-aged couples carried no consumer loan or credit card debt. In another study of credit card use among college students (Jover and Allen, 1994), 69% of subjects had credit cards in their names and over 75% of those with credit carried balances. As a money goal, going into debt may be less desirable than paying for purchases up front. Debts may not be conceptualized as a purpose of money but an unfortunate necessity due to changing financial circumstances. The expressed desire to get out of debt indicates knowledge that debts are costly endeavors. Respondents seem to understand the importance of reducing debt and may benefit from instruction in the best methods to efficiently eliminate debt or to avoid incurring future debt. As with savings, goals to reduce debt may not be realized (Taylor & Overbey, 1999).

The intended donation of money to charity emerged in a small minority of responses from the sample. Although

charity was the least common theme for the sample, several respondents wrote passionately about their plans for assisting people beyond the family circle. These respondents revealed a desire to use money to make life easier for others who are less fortunate. A religious influence was evident in some responses, suggesting that religious beliefs may encourage goals for charitable giving.

The fourth open-ended question elicited responses describing a money philosophy. Four distinct philosophies emerged including money and happiness, money and control/power, money as a negative influence, and money as a source of exchange. The two most common philosophies, money and happiness and money and control/power, were tinged with both positive and negative overtones. Students more often than parents equated money with happiness. Some parents, drawing on more extensive experiences with money, often disputed that money will bring more happiness. Another possible explanation of the generational difference is that individuals who have had good or successful experiences with money hold more positive attitudes toward money. Those without money may console themselves that money is really not important in life.

Other research (Bailey & Lown, 1992; Yamauchi & Templer, 1982) has explored the attitudes and beliefs that individuals hold regarding money, but the money philosophies presented here make a unique contribution to the existing literature. The money philosophies that emerged from this study are not wholly consistent with the established structures of existing money attitudes scales. For example, the Money Attitudes Scale and the Money Beliefs and Behaviors Scale use very different conceptual labels for each sub-scale which do not fit with the money philosophies identified in the present study. Money philosophies may be the impetus for forming more specific attitudes and beliefs which are then translated into money behaviors. Research efforts should explore the development of money philosophies and later experiences that may consolidate or dispute these philosophies and their impact on other personal financial variables (Parotta & Johnson, 1998).

The unique characteristics of a qualitative study provide for in-depth exploration of relevant attitudes, perceptions, and experiences of a select sample. A purposive sample of college students and their parents was selected for this study, and their views may be unique and non-representative. As a part of the qualitative method, general meanings and interpretations of the data were extracted by the researchers. In the absence of statistical analysis, significance cannot be determined, yet the rich, detailed data can inform future research and practice.

Conclusions and Implications

To expand and deepen the range of future research on this topic, other groups should be studied from both qualitative and quantitative perspectives. A wider sample of respondents not connected with college life should be sought. Adequate representation of groups by age and gender to permit generalizability of results should be a focus of future quantitative research.

Other potentially influential variables should be studied to determine their association with the formation of money purpose/goals. Key variables were selected for this study based on known research regarding the factors associated with the use of money. Other variables not included in this study which may prove relevant to monetary allocations include: educational influences, psychological money motivators, attitudes and beliefs about money, prior financial education, and financial training during childhood.

The design of this study prevented an examination of potential interaction effects of variables. Prior research suggests that combinations of variables may ultimately influence plans, attitudes, and behavior with money. Future research could target smaller groupings of variables to assess their individual and combined effects on perceived money purpose or goals.

Cross-sectional research is advantageous in providing cross-group comparisons on a number of variables of interest. It permits a unique look at how several groups are simultaneously impacted at a given point in time. However, cross-sectional research prohibits insight into how individuals grow and change over time. Employing a longitudinal design to study individuals' relationships with money over a long period of time could richly inform the study of money and families. It may reveal how individuals initially form conceptualizations about money based on environmental influences, how these conceptualizations change and adapt to varying income patterns and experiences with managing finances, and how events such as retirement ultimately guide short- and long-term decision-making from an individual and family perspective.

The current study examined the influences of selected variables on the money purpose/goals for a specific population. This implies a future orientation for planned money allocations. Other research has provided details about the actual allocations of money by households and individuals. Future research should study the possible connection between what people plan to do with their money and then what they actually do with it. For example, are money goals actually fulfilled? How do money goals serve to guide future spending? What events may serve to derail money goals and good intentions for future spending?

The detailed and poignant descriptions of money goals and purposes indicate that individuals hold specific ideas about the role of money in their current and future lives. Individuals are able to differentiate wants from needs, itemize choices, and plan for the future. One limitation of this study that must be noted is the use of one rater to identify and categorize responses into themes and sub-themes. The use of two or more raters may increase reliability of findings by entering further objectivity into the process of qualitative data analysis.

The findings of this study hold several practical implications for parents and for financial professionals. Parents can offer essential guidance to their children regarding financial control and management. Ideally, this

teaching should begin in early childhood by modeling of appropriate financial management activities followed by opportunities for children to manage their own allowances. Parents can teach their adult children to limit debt acquisition and credit card use while college students and until a sufficient income level is attained. Parents can further educate their children about the importance of life-long savings and of preparing for major purchases post-graduation.

Financial professionals including financial counselors, educators, and planners can utilize the study findings to assist individuals and families whom they serve as follows. Individuals may benefit from education about savings methods and their potential risks and returns. The clear differentiation in the current study between retirement goals for parents compared to their adult children indicates the need for further encouragement and education about the importance of preparing for retirement early, even in the absence of high income. Discussion of emergency savings was uncommon in the study, indicating that both parents and adult children may need further information about the importance of this type of savings. Students exiting college may benefit from information about budgeting and short- and long-term financial planning to meet goals such as housing purchases. Many students anticipate such major purchases as homes, cars, and new furnishings once a full-time income is finally achieved. However, hefty purchases may seriously inhibit accumulating adequate savings and planning for future family and later retirement. This study's findings clearly indicate a need for more financial education to help students nearing graduation to temper their desire for luxuries and to learn patience in achieving financial goals!

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