

RESEARCHER PROFILE

An Interview with Ashley LeBaron-Black

Dr. Ashley LeBaron-Black is an Assistant Professor of Family Life at Brigham Young University (BYU) in Provo, Utah. She received her BS in Family Studies and MS in Marriage, Family, & Human Development from BYU and her Ph.D. in Family Studies & Human Development from the University of Arizona. Her research focus is family finance, including couple finance and financial socialization. Ashley has published 27 peer-reviewed articles and is on the editorial board for the Journal of Family and Economic Issues. She is Chair of the Family Financial Wellbeing focus group for the National Council on Family Relations (NCFR) and is Co-chair of the Finances topic network for the Society for the Study of Emerging Adulthood (SSEA).

Q. Define what you do professionally.

A. I have recently been hired as an Assistant Professor in the School of Family Life at Brigham Young University (BYU).

Q. What activities encompass your professional responsibilities?

A. I spend my professional time conducting family finance research (e.g., couple finance and financial socialization), teaching (e.g., Close Relationships and Family Theories), mentoring students, and serving in my field (e.g., Chair of the Family Financial Wellbeing focus group for the National Council on Family Relations [NCFR] and Co-chair of the Finances topic network for the Society for the Study of Emerging Adulthood [SSEA]).

Q. How long have you been engaged in your professional activity?

A. I began working as a teaching assistant and research assistant for Dr. Jeff Hill as an undergraduate student at BYU in 2014. I quickly fell in love with teaching about family life and conducting research about family finance.

Q. What led you to your professional calling?

A. I have always been fascinated by people and relationships. I began conducting “research” at a very young age. When I was five years old, I started polling my family members on their opinions and doing simple calculations with that “data.” For example, if my family needed to

decide where to go out to eat, my parents would say, “Alright, Ashley, do one of your polls,” and I would happily take out my notepad and pen, create a list of restaurant options, and then collect ordered preferences from each family member. From that data I would calculate the overall family preference, and that’s where we would go out to eat.

The rubber really hit the road when I was a sophomore at BYU and my mentor, Jeff Hill, asked me to lead his family finance research team. I had no previous research experience, but Jeff saw something in me and helped me gain the skills and experiences I needed to begin my academic career.

Q. Do you work alone or do you have a team?

A. I definitely do not work alone. I collaborate a lot with colleagues, especially other family finance scholars. I mentor students, and I’m mentored by more senior faculty.

Q. What theoretical framework guides your research?

A. I use various theoretical frameworks to guide my research papers. Some of my favorites include (a) family financial socialization theory, (b) the family adjustment and adaptation response (FAAR) model, and (c) feminism.

Q. What needs to happen so that 10 years from now we can say that financial therapy is a respected field of study?

A. I already have great respect for the field of financial therapy, and I try to include implications for clinicians such as financial therapists in my papers. I’m very excited about the future of financial therapy. Perhaps one way to expand the field would be for more universities to offer financial therapy graduate programs, or at least a financial therapy emphasis or certificate.

Q. What benefits can the Financial Therapy Association provide to others doing work that is similar to your professional activities?

A. The *Journal of Financial Therapy* is a very important outlet for publishing research relevant to financial therapy. Thank you to JFT for publishing some of my own work and some really excellent work from my colleagues. I believe the journal is beneficial not only to those of us who publish in it and those who read it, but also for the field at large. The stronger the journal becomes, the more respect the field will garner, and the more respect the field garners, the stronger the journal will become.

Q. If others are interested in finding out more about you personally and professionally, where can they obtain this information?

A. Here is my Google Scholar profile:

<https://scholar.google.com/citations?user=dTPJXPQAAAAJ&hl=en>

I can be reached at lebaronashley@gmail.com

Q. If you had unlimited resources, what would your dream financial therapy research project look like?

A. I would love to research the impact of financial therapy on couples' financial and relational outcomes.

Q. Could you give advice to practitioners' wanting to get involved in doing their own research or writing on financial therapy?

A. I am not a financial therapist myself, but I have found it helpful to talk to some of my financial therapist colleagues to try to understand the job and the current needs so that I can better connect my research to the field. For researchers wanting to publish in JFT, I would suggest including a section in the discussion specific to implications for financial therapists.