ABSTRACT

DISSERTATION: Family communication patterns and children’s self-efficacy

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Family communication patterns influence the development of self-efficacy in children; learning how specific communication patterns impact various forms of self-efficacy may be helpful to inform interventions targeting self-efficacy. The current study is based in Family Communication Patterns Theory (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002a) and analyzes multiple efficacy beliefs using Bandura’s (1997) conceptualization of self-efficacy. Six research questions are presented: three address the impact of specific forms of family communication (conversation and conformity orientation) on particular efficacy beliefs (i.e. self-regulatory, social, and emotional self-efficacy). The remaining questions target the possible moderating relationship between parental psychological control, family communication, and efficacy-beliefs. Participants included 140 undergraduate students (84% female) from a university in the Midwest United States. Results indicate conversation orientation in family of origin is related to higher levels of each type of self-efficacy as an adult (self-regulatory: $\beta = .419, p < .001$; social: $\beta = .393, p < .001$; emotional: $\beta = .386, p < .001$). Conformity orientation in family of origin is related to lower levels of emotional self-efficacy ($\beta = -.188, p = .050$). Psychological control was not correlated with any type of self-efficacy studied beyond variance accounted for by family communication patterns and did not moderate the effect of family communication on self-
efficacy. Findings add to theoretical models of family communication and the implications for self-efficacy into early adulthood.