

AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

Monica A. Couvrette for the degree of Master of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies in Speech Communication, Speech Communication, and Political Science presented on September 23, 2019.

Title: Family Communication Patterns and Intention to Vote in 2020

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Colin Hesse

The primary goal of this study is to look at the influence of family communication patterns on behavior and beliefs, specifically in the context of electoral behavior. In order to effectively influence potential voters and increase the likelihood that they intend to vote in federal elections in the *long-term*, we must increase our understanding of the reasons people choose to vote to begin with. To this end, this study uses the combined measures and theoretical perspectives of The Theory of Planned Behavior (TOPB) and Family Communication Patterns Theory (FCPT) in an effort to provide deeper insight into the possible connection between family communication and intention to perform the behavior of voting. 201 undergraduate and graduate students participated in an online survey composed of components of the FCPT measure and the TPB measure, along with several demographic questions. The study found that when the FCPT variables were mediated by the TPB variables that a correlation could be made. However, when they were not mediated by TPB, no significant correlation existed. Implications of the results and directions for future research are explored.

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Family Communication Patterns and Intention to Vote in 2020

by
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I understand that my thesis will become part of the permanent collection of Oregon State University libraries. My signature below authorizes release of my thesis to any reader upon request.

Monica A. Couvrette, Author

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To my committee:

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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my grandfather, Dr. Morris Weitman. You instilled the importance of education in our family in a manner that has extended, and will extend, for generations. I know your heart is full as you watch your legacy continue to roll forth from the other side of the veil.

Introduction

In the United States, voting is not compulsory; this is an important feature of our particular democratic republic. However, in a system that does not require voting people often choose not to. This is clearly illustrated by election statistics both in the US and in other democratic countries (Engelen, 2007, p. 23). Domestically, in both the 2012 and 2016 general election, only 61% of the citizen voting-age population voted (Bureau, 2016). That number falls further when we look at midterm elections. In 2018, the voter turnout was 47%, in 2014 it was 36.7%, and in 2010 it was 41% (“A Boatload Of Ballots,” 2018). In fact, 2014 had the “lowest aggregate turnout rate the Census Bureau has recorded since it began collecting voting data in 1978” (McElwee, 2015) and 2016 and 2018 continued the trend of low voter turnout.

Upon reviewing statistics from years past it is apparent that these numbers can fluctuate dramatically and that a very large portion of eligible voters are refraining from participating (McElwee, 2015). By choosing to abstain from voting, citizens leave 100% of outcomes to between 35% and 60% of the population of eligible voters. Low voter turnout translates into a significant lack of representation of a large portion of the electorate in the United States. This is particularly significant as the underrepresented groups are largely low-income, people of color, and those who have been charged with felonies. These groups tend to have very different views than those wealthier and whiter groups who turn out in much larger numbers. In the United States, where it was intended that the majority would be favored in elections and the subsequent laws and judicial appointments, the inverse is unfortunately more common. These disparities illustrate clear issues with the electoral system and the glaring need for further investigation.

To this end, much research has gone into understanding why voting is important (Goldman, 1999; McElwee, 2015) and patterns of behavior related to civic engagement, or a lack thereof (Darmofal, 2010; Gerber, Gimpel, Green, & Shaw, 2011; Lindsay H. Hoffman & Young, 2011). Other research has attempted to explain why people vote the way that they vote, why they have chosen to side with a particular political party, or the impact of political parties on certain variables (Arfer & Jones, 2019; Beland & Unel, 2018; Bruchmann, Koopmann-Holm, & Scherer, 2018; Radean, 2019; Vraga, 2015). Commonly, concepts such as single-issues (ex: abortion, school prayer, environment), religion, and family influence have been the subject of such studies (Begley et al., 2008). However, there is a gap in this research: why do people vote in the first place? Thus far, the majority of the studies that addressed this particular question did so from purely a philosophical perspective (Goldman, 1999), often using a theory of economics called rational-choice (Goldman 201). This thesis seeks add to the body of scholarly work surrounding voting with a focus on providing information with a practical application rather than a theoretical analysis. This study intends to accomplish this by investigating whether or not a person's family communication patterns in their family of origin influences their *intention* to vote. This information has the potential to draw renewed attention to the importance of family communication in electoral socialization, and therefore provide insights for scholars, teachers, and policy makers in their efforts to get-out-the-vote ("GOTV What Is It?", 2019).

Not voting is a vote in and of itself, especially in major elections. This non-vote tends to support the persons or parties that are in power at that time (The Sanders Institute, 2018). Because of this, the role of influencers, from policy makers to scholars to individual citizens, in maintaining a balanced government cannot be overstated. Potential voters are bombarded with a wide variety of messages during each election season. Unfortunately, one of the messages that can pose an

enormous obstacle to voting is evident in the rational-choice model as presented by Goldman in his paper “Why Citizens Should Vote: A Causal Responsibility Approach”. He explains that “the probability of casting the deciding vote in large elections is tiny” (Goldman, 1999). It falls to those aforementioned influencers to motivate the citizenry in the face of pervasive apathy among eligible voters. An additional barrier is the often-contentious nature of politics. Many people would prefer to abstain from the intense conflict that is unfortunately inherent in political participation (Bode, Vraga, & Troller-Renfree, 2017; Gerber, Huber, Doherty, & Dowling, 2012). This is often compounded by the fact that a great deal of political participation results in failure or very delayed results, many of which are not as tangible as a potential voter might hope (Pavlova & Silbereisen, 2015). McDevitt and Chaffee summarize the struggle well when they write, “The creation of citizens remains neither simple nor automatic” (McDevitt & Chaffee, 2002b).

While a politically-minded individual might expect that exceptionally tight elections such as the 2000 race between George Bush Jr and Al Gore and the 2016 race between Donald Trump and Hilary Clinton would demonstrate that individual votes are vital, those same elections also underline the pivotal role of the Electoral College, which can discourage even those voters who are motivated and hope to enact change in the United States (Burden & Wichowsky, 2014; Cebula & Murphy, 1980; Weinhagen, 1981). This raises the question: how can potential voters be convinced that their vote matters and that it is in their best interest *long term*, we must understand why people choose to vote at all. To this end, not only can studying the communication patterns of families assist in learning about the most effective methods of encouraging voting, but this kind of teaching and influence has the potential to have a longer-lasting effect than methods like ad campaigns, which have been shown to be effective, but only in the very short-term (Gerber et al., 2011).

Study Objective

The primary goal of this study is to look at the influence of family communication patterns on behavior and beliefs, specifically in the context of electoral behavior. Research has consistently shown that families have a significant influence on the behaviors and beliefs of children (Afifi & Olson, 2005; Baiocchi-Wagner & Talley, 2013; Kennedy-Lightsey & Frisby, 2016; Ritchie & Fitzpatrick, 1990), and some have also shown that children have an influence on the behaviors and beliefs of their parents or caregivers (McDevitt & Chaffee, 2002b) (Saphir & Chaffee, 2002). While this concept is not a new one, this study seeks to better understand the extent to which family communication patterns can influence electoral participation.

A number of studies have found that families have a meaningful influence on voting behavior and civic engagement (McIntosh, Hart, & Youniss, 2007), primarily in the context of party affiliation and single-issues. McIntosh et al go on to explain that studies are increasingly showing the important role of political discussion in the home. McDevitt and Chaffee posit in their article entitled “The Family in a Sequence of Political Activation: Why Civic Interventions Can Succeed” that family-based political discussion is a “valuable resource for activation efforts” (McDevitt & Chaffee, 2002a). One comprehensive 2003 study conducted by Andolina et al. demonstrated that 38% of young people who were eligible to vote and whose families had frequent political discussions at home said that they always vote, while only 20% from families who did not participate in these discussions stated that they vote consistently. Similarly, but focused on other non-electoral civic engagement, they found that 35% of young adults with political discussion in the home volunteer on a regular basis, while only 13% do in families without such discussions (Andolina, Jenkins, Zukin, & Keeter, 2003).

One of the most commonly applied family theories that examines the influence that families can have on their dependents is Family Communication Patterns Theory (FCPT). FCPT has helped many researchers demonstrate a likely connection between the communication in a family of origin and the influence it has on dependents (Kennedy-Lightsey & Frisby, 2016; Park, Yun, Smith, & Morrison, 2010; Schrodtt, Witt, & Messersmith, 2008). This theory has been widely used because it has proved to be effective across a variety of fields (Alm, Olsen, & Honkanen, 2015; Asbury & Woszidlo, 2016; Bakir, Rose, & Shoham, 2006; Carlson, Grossbart, & Stuenkel, 1992; Clarke, 2008; Hanson & Olson, 2018; C. Kim, Lee, & Han, 2018; Kim, Lee, & Tomiuk, 2009; Park et al., 2010). A detailed overview of FCPT will be provided in the literature review found in the following chapter. In their 2006 article “Family Communication Patterns Theory: A Social Cognitive Approach” Koerner and Fitzpatrick explain that the four family types (consensual, pluralistic, protective, and laissez-faire) used to categorize the major ways that families communicate are not simply expedient boxes in which to put families. Instead they are based on a sound theoretical model “that explains how different strategies families use to create shared social reality result in differences in the communication behavior of families” (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2006). It is the creation of that shared social reality and the resulting political socialization (McLeod & Chaffee, 1972) that is at the crux of this theory and its utility in my study. As we increase our understanding of the effect that parents have on their children’s electoral behavior, we increase the opportunity to provide guidance to parents and caregivers if they are interested in raising their children or dependents to be politically and civically active.

In an effort to increase the validity and utility of my results, I have chosen to use not only the FCPT measure, but also the Theory of Planned Behavior. Like FCPT, this theory has been used across a wide array of fields with great success (Park et al., 2010; Rueter & Koerner, 2008; Yang

et al., 2013). This theory provides a framework for predicting a given intention and eventual behavior based on several influences such as social norms, an individual's attitude toward the behavior, and how much control they feel that they have over the particular behavior (Ajzen, 1991). A more extensive overview of this theory will be provided in the literature review. While TPB has been used successfully to connect social norms, individual attitude, and perceived behavioral control to a given intention, it does not "specify where individuals' beliefs, which form the basis of attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control, originate" (Pavlova & Silbereisen, 2015). This can be considered a weakness of TPB and further demonstrates the importance and validity of using FCPT and TPB in combination to achieve a more specific answer.

The hope is that this study will, using the combined measures and theoretical perspectives of TPB and FCPT, be able to provide deeper insight into the likely connection between family communication and intention to behave in a certain manner. Consequently, it is proposed that a stronger connection between family communication and intention can be demonstrated, and that the results can provide insight into effective ways that families influence desirable behaviors such as voting.

Scholarly Rationale

On its own FCPT can be used effectively to demonstrate a relationship between family communication types and a child's perception of the world and, to some extent, the child's behaviors (Jeanne M. Meadowcroft, 1986). However, by applying FCPT in conjunction with TPB, the explanatory power of both theories is expanded. While FCPT offers an opportunity to generally observe the way that communication patterns may impact a person as an adult, TPB allows for analysis of specific situations. TPB has been proven to be helpful in connecting a goal to a behavior. However, it does not address where the beliefs and behaviors originate. This is a

shortcoming if a researcher hopes to evaluate not only the likelihood of a goal translating into a behavior using criteria like attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control, but also encourage a specific intention or behavior based on the origination of those criteria. Paring TPB with FCPT could have an important synergistic effect, which has the potential to provide deeper insights than either theory could provide on its own. For example, FCPT might be used to explore the possibility that adults who discussed politics at home as children are more likely to be politically involved, and TPB could be used to explore the likelihood of a person's intention to vote translating into casting a vote. Separately these theories provide good information, but together they provide the opportunity to connect family communication patterns to an individual's intention to vote.

While TPB as a whole carves a path from the individual's perception of an action to their eventual behavior (Ajzen, 1991), this study has chosen to focus on a person's *intention* to behave in a certain way, rather than looking as far as their behavior, so as to provide more generalizable results instead of results only pertaining to a specific election. Stopping at intention also aids in providing results that will potentially be more relevant to the effort to increase future voter turnout. This study will use a combination of the FCPT measure and the TPB measure, combined with a series of demographic information questions, to survey a selection of emerging adults in undergraduate classes. Using the resulting survey, I will seek to establish a connection between the communication patterns of a family of origin to a student's intention to vote in the upcoming 2020 presidential election, hopefully providing another tool to help increase future voter turnout.

It appears that little to no research has been conducted that makes use of FCPT to study voting *intention*. There are many studies which address family communication and political socialization using FCPT, but they more often construct their own model or use the Citizen

Communication Mediation Model “which concludes that [...] political discussion channels the effects of demographics, ideology, and social structure on outcome orientations and participatory responses” (McLeod & Shah, 2009). McDevitt and Chaffee explain in their 2002 article entitled “The Family in a Sequence of Political Activation: Why Civic Interventions Can Succeed”, that much of the current research has a focus on general social environments that could serve to nurture citizenship, specifically in the context of news media, education, and campaigns. They go on to argue that there is a significant void in this research, specifically what they call “a curious lack of interest in the political communication that occurs within society’s more essential primary group – the family” (McDevitt & Chaffee, 2002a).

There is reason to expect that such a connection does exist. Some studies have shown, using FCPT, that political communication in the family influences children’s perception of, and participation in, politics (McDevitt & Chaffee, 2002a; McIntosh et al., 2007; Shulman & DeAndrea, 2014). In their study, Shulman and DeAndrea found that high conversation had more of an effect than high conformity when it came to political similarity between parents and children. Based on that finding, pluralistic and consensual dyads, both high in conversation, were the most politically similar. This finding was significant because it demonstrated that conversation about the topic was more influential in fostering political similarity between parents and children than the expectation of homogeneity in a more conformity heavy family (Shulman & DeAndrea, 2014).

In another study, McIntosh et al. found that parental political discussion impacted their children’s political knowledge positively but did not provide any insight on which different types of political discussion within the families had the largest positive impact. This study also had no focus whatsoever on intention to vote, but instead focused on four main outcomes: monitoring national news, political knowledge, public communication skills, and community services. One of

the most significant findings of this study was the impact of parental political knowledge. They found that while political discussion was vital, the depth of parental political knowledge made a fundamental difference in youth civic development (McIntosh et al., 2007).

Despite the handful of studies that use FCPT as a basis from which to study political socialization, in 2009 McDevitt and Chaffee called for a renewed focus on family communication after what they characterized as years of focus on media, schools, and political campaigns. They posit that, “the family is avoided as a social entity, as if contemplation of its role in civic activation can be dismissed as the intellectual equivalent of changing diapers.” (McDevitt & Chaffee, 2002a). McLeod and Shah echo this call to some extent in their 2009 article, “Communication and Political Socialization: Challenges and Opportunities for Research”. They call for research that has a focus on communication in interpersonal exchanges because they feel that there are understudied connections between communication and political socialization (McLeod & Shah, 2009).

This study also has the potential to contribute to the growing number of studies taking a closer look at the FCPT conceptualization and operationalization of the conformity orientation (Hesse, Rauscher, Goodman, & Couvrette, 2017; Horstman et al., 2018). In their 2017 study, Hesse et al. argue that conformity is not fundamentally negative. They posit that, in fact, there can be a positive, or warm side, to conformity that manifests as family closeness rather than forced adherence to family rules and norms. For this reason, they have developed a new set of questions to be used in place of the original conformity measure, this time conformity is divided into “warm” and “cold” components. In the context of political socialization, this has the potential to significantly change the results.

An example of this can be found in a study conducted by Liebes and Ribak in 1992. This study used FCP to “examine its relationship to political participation, political outlook, and the

“reproduction” of parents’ political outlook in their children” (Liebes & Ribak, 1992) specifically, in Israel in regard to the Arab-Israeli conflict. They found that, while the conversation orientation significantly increased the likelihood of political outlook similarity, the conformity orientation undermined the extent to which that similarity was maintained in the long run. Had the study operationalized conformity differently, for example using the warm and cold perspective, there is reason to believe that the results may have been slightly different.

Similarly, in their 2014 study Shulman and DeAndrea found that families with a high conversation orientation had more of a bearing on political similarity than families with a high conformity orientation when it came to political similarity between parents and children. It also found that “pluralistic and consensual dyads are more politically similar than protective or laissez-faire dyads”. While they found that conversation was paramount, they also found that conformity did not contribute to political similarity between parents and children. This is a relatively surprising finding considering the logical connection one might make that a family high in conformity would likely produce children who thought similarly to the parents. They explained that this result was “problematic because the conformity scale was constructed to reflect the communication goal of promoting opinion homogeneity” and that because of this inability to predict similarity they had serious questions about the viability of the measure’s construct. The authors abandoned the quadrant approach normally used with FCPT and instead used the conversation and conformity scales separately, which in a way guts the depth of the utility of the scale. This differentiation is important, without it families that fall into the high conformity and high conversation category will not be adequately assessed (Shulman & DeAndrea, 2014).

Practical Rationale

There are a number of practical applications for studies such as this one, but unfortunately, these studies are few and far between. In the field of political science many studies have a focus on voter turnout, why individuals chose to vote the way that they did, and party affiliation (Burden & Wichowsky, 2014; Darmofal, 2010; Goldman, 1999). There are also studies that center on family influence on political socialization (McDevitt & Chaffee, 2002a; McIntosh et al., 2007). However, these studies tend to use concepts and theories predominantly from the fields of political science and psychology or more broad communication theories. While they can be applied to family communication, these theories do not have an explicit and exclusive focus on such communication (McDevitt & Chaffee, 2002a). Getting people to vote is at the heart of a great deal of research (Andolina et al., 2003; Burden, 2009; Darmofal, 2010; Engelen, 2007; Gerber et al., 2011; Goldman, 1999; H. Kim, 2018; McIntosh et al., 2007) but this study will use an interdisciplinary angle focusing on intention to vote on its own, and therefore has the potential to provide a different result.

There are two major concepts that are commonly used in voting research: voting behavior and political socialization. Voting behavior as a field of research does not focus on why an individual chooses to vote or not. Instead it has a focus on two main topics:

[The first is] understand[ing] the election outcome by understanding how and why the voters made up their minds. Another major concern in voting [behavior] research emphasizes changes in voting patterns over time, usually with an attempt to determine what the election results tell us about the direction in which American politics is moving. (“Voting Behavior,” 2019).

Likewise, the study of political socialization has a focus on “the patterns and processes by which individuals engage in political development and learning” (McLeod & Shah, 2009). While this area has the potential to look into a person’s view of to the value of voting and where it originated, its application is extremely broad in and of itself. This theory has been used to study family communication patterns, as mentioned above, but the results are more general without the addition of TPB to home in on specific intentions or behavior. For example, McDevitt and Chaffee explored family communication and political activation within families (McDevitt & Chaffee, 2002a), Shulman and DeAndrea explored levels of familial political similarity using FCPT, and McIntosh used a combination of the U.S. Department of Education’s National Household Education Survey and their own measures and found that youth-parent political discussion has a significant impact on various youth civic outcomes (McIntosh et al., 2007).

Based upon available research and calls for further research (McDevitt & Chaffee, 2002a) it seems apparent that this angle of connecting family communication patterns directly to voting intentions is very under-investigated. The more information that can be gathered on ways to increase the turnout of eligible voters, the more powerful campaigns to increase voter turnout can be (Gerber et al., 2011). As previously stated, it has already been shown that the communication patterns in a family can impact a child’s civic and electoral behavior in general (Meadowcroft, 1986; Liebes & Ribak, 1992; Shulman & DeAndrea, 2014). However, it is important to explore the next step: which communication patterns could be the most effective in encouraging the rising generation of potential voters to decide to vote.

The goal of this study is to provide practical, real-world insight for parents and organizations who are seeking to encourage electoral participation in young adults. When parents are provided information about the most effective way to communicate with their children, they

have an increased ability to create change in their households. Likewise, political organizations, schools, and candidates for public offices can fine-tune their messages for maximum effectiveness with more information like that provided by this study. They might choose to target parents in ads or pamphlets in order to encourage productive conversation in the home. In summary, the primary goal of this thesis is to provide practical and immediately useful information that could help to increase voter turnout in the future.

Preview of Thesis

Chapter Two of this thesis offers a detailed explanation of Family Communication Patterns Theory and the Theory of Planned behavior. Chapter Two also provides a review of current literature and a thorough exploration of voting behavior research. Chapter Three addresses the methods used in this study. The study consists of undergraduate and graduate students enrolled at Oregon State University in the spring of 2019. They were asked to complete an online survey of questions based on the scales developed by Koerner and Fitzpatrick (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 1997) and Icek Azjen (Ajzen, 2006), along with a series of demographic questions. The goal of this study is to explore a possible relationship between the communication patterns in a person's family of origin and their intention to vote in the 2020 general election. Once the data was collected, the hypotheses were tested and analyzed for significance, and these results are found in Chapter Four. Finally, Chapter Five will explore the findings and limitations of the study, followed by a proposal for future research.

Literature Review

This literature review will cover three sections. The first section will explore political science research in general, and more specifically political and electoral socialization, along with other factors that influence voting behavior in the United States. The second section will explain

the origins of Revised Family Communication Patterns Theory as explained by Richie and Fitzpatrick based on their goal of studying how personal realities are affected by family communication styles. It will then examine the dimensions of conversation and conformity orientation and the different family types that were studied. This section will explain the modifications made by Koerner and Fitzpatrick in Family Communications Pattern Theory (FCPT) to arrive at the measure that is now most widely used (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002b). Most recently, Hesse et al proposed a further modification of the measure for conformity orientation after arguing that the operationalized definition of conformity seemed inconsistent with the chosen questions on the measure (Hesse et al., 2017). The third section will explore the Theory of Planned Behavior and its origins in the Theory of Reasoned action. Finally, the literature review will conclude with hypotheses and research questions to guide the study in examining the effect of FCPT on political socialization and intention to vote.

Voting and Socialization

This portion of the literature review will divide voting and socialization research into several important components. First, it will focus on voting as a whole, including the current state of voting in the United States, the skewed representation of voters, the significance of not voting, and barriers to voting. Second, it will explore the concept of socialization, and a more extensive explanation of political and electoral socialization. Current research will be presented throughout, as well as important definitions.

Voting. Much research has gone into understanding why voting is important (Goldman, 1999; McElwee, 2015) and the patterns of behavior related to civic engagement, or a lack thereof (Darmofal, 2010; Gerber, Gimpel, Green, & Shaw, 2011; Hoffman & Young, 2011). Other research has attempted to explain why people vote the way that they do, why they have chosen to

side with a particular political party, or the impact of political parties on certain variables (Arfer & Jones, 2019; Beland & Unel, 2018; Bruchmann, Koopmann-Holm, & Scherer, 2018; Radean, 2019; Vraga, 2015). Commonly, concepts such as single issues (ex: abortion, school prayer, environment), religion, and family influence have been the subject of such studies (Begley et al., 2008). However, there is a gap in this research: why do people vote in the first place? Thus far, the majority of the studies that addressed this particular question did so from purely a philosophical perspective (Goldman, 1999), often using a perspective of economics called rational-choice (Goldman, 1999). The rational-choice model proposes that it is “rational for a citizen to vote if and only if the expected personal benefit of voting exceeds the expected cost”. For example, if a person does not feel that their vote will change anything, then the cost of things like missing work would far outweigh any possible benefit (Goldman, 1999). While this line of reasoning is certainly interesting, it does not begin to account for all the different potential reasons that a person may or may not vote.

In the United States voting is not compulsory, which is an important feature of our democratic republic. However, in a system that does not require voting people often choose to refrain from doing so. This is clearly illustrated by election statistics, both nationally, and internationally in other democratic countries (Engelen, 2007). Domestically, in both the 2012 and 2016 general elections, only 61% of the citizen voting-age population voted (Bureau, 2016). That number falls further when we look at midterm elections. In 2018 the voter turnout was 47%, in 2014 it was 36.7%, and in 2010 it was 41% (“A Boatload Of Ballots,” 2018). In fact, 2014 had the “lowest aggregate turnout rate the Census Bureau has recorded since it began collecting voting data in 1978” (McElwee, 2015).

While both the 2016 Presidential election and the 2018 midterm election set, or came close to setting, record voter turnout levels, it is apparent upon reviewing statistics from years past that these numbers can fluctuate dramatically and that a very large portion of eligible voters are refraining from participating (McElwee, 2015). By choosing to abstain from voting, citizens leave 100% of outcomes to between 35% and 60% of the population of eligible voters. In his 2015 article, McElwee indicates that low voter turnout translates into a significant lack of representation of a large portion of the electorate in the United States. This is particularly significant as the underrepresented groups are largely low-income, people of color, and those who have been charged with felonies. He goes on to quantify the magnitude of this lack of representation using the 2012 general election. During that election cycle, 26 million voters of color did not vote. In addition, of eligible voters with an income of \$50,000 or less, 47 million did not vote. These groups tend to have very different views than those wealthier and whiter groups who turn out in much larger numbers (McElwee, 2015). In the United States, where it was intended that the majority would be favored in elections and the subsequent laws and judicial appointments, the inverse is unfortunately more common. These disparities illustrate clear issues with the electoral system and the glaring need for further investigation.

Not voting is a vote in and of itself, especially in major elections. This non-vote tends to support the persons or parties that are in power at that time (The Sanders Institute, 2018). Because of this, the role of influencers, from policy makers, to scholars, to individual citizens, in assisting to maintain a balanced government cannot be overstated. Potential voters are bombarded with a wide variety of messages during each election season. Unfortunately, one of the messages that can provide an enormous obstacle to voting is evident in the rational-choice model as presented by Goldman in his paper “Why Citizens Should Vote: A Causal Responsibility Approach”. He

explains that that “the probability of casting the deciding vote in large elections is tiny” (Goldman, 1999). This and other equally discouraging messages can also be found in the form of targeted advertising. Ribeiro et al. explain that “...targeted advertising can also be abused by malicious advertisers to efficiently reach people susceptible to false stories, stoke grievances, and incite social conflict” (Ribeiro et al., 2019). This type of advertising has the potential to reinforce a variety of perspectives, and some of those perspectives may discourage voting.

A politically minded individual might expect that exceptionally tight elections such as the 2000 presidential race between George Bush Jr and Al Gore and the 2016 race between Donald Trump and Hilary Clinton would demonstrate that individual votes are vital. Unfortunately, those same elections, which were decided by the Electoral College rather than by the popular vote, underline the pivotal role of the Electoral College. This may discourage even those citizens who would otherwise be motivated to enact change in the United States through voting (Burden & Wichowsky, 2014; Cebula & Murphy, 1980; Weinhagen, 1981). This raises the question: how can one convince potential voters that their vote matters and that it is in their best interest to vote?

An individual’s perception of the value of their participation in the political process is known as political efficacy. Hoffman and Young define political efficacy as, “the belief in one’s own competency and the feeling that political and social change is possible. Political efficacy has been found to determine a myriad of political behaviors because it provides incentive to participate in politics.” (Hoffman & Young, 2011). Political efficacy is broken down into two parts, internal and external. Internal political efficacy refers to one’s belief that they are competent enough to understand and participate effectively in politics (Eckstein, Noack, & Gniewosz, 2013). External political efficacy is concerned with whether or not the government itself is competent enough to

be reactive and effective, or in other words, that political and social change is even possible (Hoffman & Young, 2011).

There are a variety of barriers to voting that can severely impact a citizen's sense of political efficacy, and many of such barriers fall predominantly on the shoulders of people of color, the poor, and the young. First, some United States citizens lack voting rights entirely. For example, those who are incarcerated, who are predominantly people of color, are unable to vote, and many of them are still unable to vote once they have been released. There are additional barriers to voting that impact even those citizens who do have the right to vote. Policies such as strict registration deadlines, identification requirements, racially motivated redistricting, and restrictions on early voting disproportionately impact the previously mentioned groups. These barriers can influence both a citizen's sense of internal and external political efficacy. If people believe that they cannot effectively participate in politics because of these obstacles, and that these obstacles have been put in place by the government, it follows that they would have very little sense of internal or external efficacy.

An additional barrier is the often-contentious nature of politics. Many people would prefer to abstain from the intense conflict that is unfortunately inherent in political participation (Bode, Vraga, & Troller-Renfree, 2017; Gerber, Huber, Doherty, & Dowling, 2012). This is often further compounded by the fact that a great deal of political participation results in failure or very delayed results, many of which are not as tangible as potential voters might hope (Pavlova & Silbereisen, 2015). McDevitt and Chaffee summarize the struggle well when they state, "the creation of citizens remains neither simple nor automatic" (McDevitt & Chaffee, 2002b).

Socialization. One critical component of the creation of a citizen is socialization. Hess and Tourney define socialization as "the process whereby a junior or new member of a group or

institution is taught its values, attitudes, and other behavior” (Torney-Purta & Hess, 1967). Socialization is a life-long, naturally occurring process that is inevitable where human communication exists. While this process takes place spontaneously, it can also be intentionally directed. Though the study of socialization is incredibly broad, this section will center on *political* socialization.

Political socialization. Political socialization is one of the two major concepts that are commonly used in voting research. The other major concept is voting behavior. As a field of research, voting behavior centers on understanding election outcomes and voting patterns over an extended period of time, the latter of which is often in an effort to learn the direction politics in a given country is moving (“Voting Behavior,” 2019). In contrast to voting research, the study of political socialization has a focus on, “the patterns and processes by which individuals engage in political development and learning” (McLeod & Shah, 2009). While socialization takes place throughout one’s life, this thesis specifically focuses on the political socialization of children in relation to communication within their families, which some studies have shown influences children's perception of and participation in politics (McDevitt & Chaffee, 2002a; McIntosh et al., 2007; Shulman & DeAndrea, 2014).

McLeod and Shah echo this call to some extent in their 2009 article, “Communication and Political Socialization: Challenges and Opportunities for Research”. They call for research that has a focus on communication in interpersonal exchanges because they feel that there are understudied connections between communication and political socialization (McLeod & Shah, 2009). Echoing this perspective, Hoffman and Young posit that “researchers should pursue explorations of the causal antecedents of [political] efficacy, especially those arising from communicative processes” (Hoffman & Young, 2011). This and other research indicate that an

individual's political self-efficacy is derived at least in part from the way in which they were politically socialized, which is inextricably connected to family communication.

A number of studies have found that families have a meaningful influence on voting behavior and civic engagement, primarily in the context of party affiliation and single-issues (McIntosh et al., 2007). McIntosh et al go on to explain that studies are increasingly showing the important role that political discussion in the home possesses. McDevitt and Chaffee postulate in their article entitled "The Family in a Sequence of Political Activation: Why Civic Interventions Can Succeed" that family-based political discussion is a "valuable resource for activation efforts" (McDevitt & Chaffee, 2002a). One comprehensive study conducted by Andolina et al. demonstrated in 2003 that 38% of young people who are eligible to vote whose families had frequent political discussions at home said that they always vote, while only 20% from families who did not participate in these discussions stated that they vote consistently. Similarly, but focused on other no-electoral civic engagement, they found that 35% of young adults with political discussion at home volunteer on a regular basis, while only 13% do in families without such discussions (Andolina et al., 2003).

Only a handful of studies have focused on electoral socialization, which refers specifically to political socialization in the context of voting. Quintelier, in her 2015 article titled "Intergeneration transmission of political participation intention" justified her focus on participation intention by explaining that, while the intergenerational transmission of political attitudes has been studied a great deal, the transmission of political participation intention has been largely left unstudied. Based on her study, she concluded that political participation intention was higher in family environments where politics were perceived as salient (Quintelier, 2015). Another important study specific to electoral socialization and participation found that, despite the belief

that people as a whole do not vote when they are young but do once they age, voter turnout among young voters varies based on their environment. Turnout among young voters was higher when they were living at home than it was once they had moved out. The authors suggest that this is because voting is a social act, consequently if a young person's parents vote they will be more likely to mimic that behavior while they are at home, but once they have moved out, they are more likely to be influenced by the peers who may not choose to vote (Bhatti & Hansen, 2012). A 2016 study found that parental voting was a stronger predictor of their children's intention to vote than other mediating factors. This reinforces the notion that the educational attainment of the parents or children is relevant, but not a primary factor in electoral socialization (Gidengil, Wass, & Valaste, 2016).

As we increase our understanding of the effect that parents have on their children's electoral behavior, we can provide guidance to parents and caregivers if they are interested in raising their children or dependents to be politically and civically active. In order to effectively influence potential voters and increase the likelihood that they intend to vote, we must increase our understanding of the influences that inspire a citizen to vote in the first place. To this end, not only can studying the communication patterns of families teach us the most effective methods of encouraging voting, but this kind of teaching and influence has the potential to have a longer-lasting effect than methods like ad campaigns, which have been shown to be effective, but only in the very short-term (Gerber et al., 2011). The following sections of this literature review will first address FCPT, and the hypotheses on which this study was based and the research that inspired them will follow.

Family Communication Patterns Theory

This portion of the literature review will break down FCPT into the most important components. First, it will explore the background and creation of FCPT. Second, it will give a detailed explanation of important definitions. Third, it will examine the current research that has made use of FCPT. Finally, it will delve deeply into conformity orientation and the most recent proposed adjustments to the portion of the FCPT measure that addresses this variable.

FCPT is considered by some to be one of the fundamental theories in the field of Family Communication (Hesse et al., 2017; Horstman et al., 2018; Koerner & Schrodt, 2014). In 2014 Koerner and Schrodt described it as a theory that “applies to almost all family interactions”(Koerner & Schrodt, 2014). FCPT seeks to understand how families make sense of and develop shared social realities. In their 2006 paper, Koerner and Fitzpatrick explain that this model, “explains how different strategies families use to create shared social reality result in differences in the communication behavior of families” (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2006). This allows research based on this theory to avoid the common issue in social science research of being inadvertently focused on Western cultural norms (Koerner & Schrodt, 2014). FCPT has been used to successfully show that these different communication patterns within families can influence their behavior as adults (Hesse et al., 2017). Due to these factors, FCPT is a highly useful theory because it can be applied in a wide variety of situations and even disciplines (Hoffman, Glynn, Hoge, Sietman, & Thomson, 2007; Koerner & Schrodt, 2014).

FCPT, as it is known now, has evolved significantly over the last four decades. Its roots can be traced to McLeod and Chaffee’s 1972 paper entitled “The Construction of Social Reality” (McLeod & Chaffee, 1972). The authors were interested in how “families and children process external information, in particular information that comes in the form of mass media messages” (Koerner & Schrodt, 2014). They applied Newcomb’s theory of co-orientation, which explains

that family members orient themselves and their perception of reality to other family members by communicating about those perceptions together (Newcomb, 1953). McLeod and Chaffee devised two categories of ways that families come to share a social reality. One, called concept-orientation, focuses on how families come to a consensus regarding an object or attitude and how it is conceptualized through open discussion. The goal of the parents in this context is to help a child come to their own views about the world and to understand that theirs is not the only perspective. Parents might play devil's advocate in a conversation or invite visitors who could stimulate that type of conversation (McLeod & Chaffee, 1972). The other, socio-orientation, focuses on children coming to a consensus about an attitude or an object "by allowing one family member to define it for them." (Koerner & Schrodtt, 2014). Creating a culture of deference between elders and children is at the heart of this orientation. McLeod and Chaffee do not distinguish between deference for harmonious and positive reasons and deference for more authoritarian reasons (McLeod & Chaffee, 1972). Both of these orientations were based on "the assumption that family norms are shared among all family members" (Ritchie & Fitzpatrick, 1990). Prior to the development of FCP, this theory of co-orientation was used predominantly in the study of mass media and the way that families make sense of various types of messages (Fitzpatrick, 2004; Koerner & Schrodtt, 2014). The theory's relevance to the field of family communication, as a whole, was not fully realized until the early 90s when Ritchie and Fitzpatrick began to use the instrument in their research (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2006).

FCP rose out of an effort to allow for focused study of this creation of reality, instead of study only focused on media messages, and a desire to demonstrate the scales could be used to increase understanding in regard to family structure (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002b; Ritchie & Fitzpatrick, 1990). Koerner and Fitzpatrick modified the previous orientations, concept- and socio-

orientations, and replaced them with the orientations of conversation and conformity. These more recent iterations of the orientations will be defined in more detail in a later section. The revised orientations speak to their conclusion that when the family was approached as “a field of complex interactions among individuals whose perspectives are distinct but not independent” (Ritchie & Fitzpatrick, 1990) that results would be more informative, accurate, and generalizable. Building upon this concept, they structured a schema demonstrating how those orientations fit together in the larger theory and grouped them into four family types (see Figure 1). These changes created a theory that took into account any type of family of origin, and clearly established a pattern showing that family interaction is at the core of an individual's view of their family (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002b, 2006).

Orientations and family types. Orientations, in the context of FCPT, are “central beliefs that determine much of how families communicate” (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002b). Both conversation and conformity orientations are important because they interact with each other in unique ways and together influence family outcomes: one cannot be used to effectively study family communication without the other (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2006). This is because these two orientations are fundamentally interconnected in their functioning: conformity must be communicated, and the type of communication is determined by family structure and values.

Koerner and Fitzpatrick explain in their 2002 “Toward a Theory of Family Communication” that conversation orientation is defined as the extent to which members of a family are encouraged to speak openly and interact about topics. Families that are categorized as being high in conversation are comfortable with unrestrained and open communication, regardless of the topic. In these families, parents “see frequent communication with their children as the main means to educate and to socialize them”. The authors further explain that in families categorized

as low conversation share fewer interactions and fewer topics discussed. Input from the children is not sought, and private thoughts and feelings are not shared often. Parents in low conversation families tend to “believe that open and frequent exchange of ideas, options, and values are not necessary for the function of the family in general, and for the childrens’ education and socialization in particular” (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002b). Parents in these families expect compliance rather than teaching compliance through conversation.

Koerner and Fitzpatrick define conformity orientation as the “degree to which family communication stresses a climate of homogeneity of attitudes, values, and beliefs”. Families categorized as high conformity largely focus on “uniformity of beliefs and attitudes”. The authors also explain that peace through conflict avoidance and an emphasis on family interconnectivity are two other dominant attributes of high conformity families with a particular focus on respect for the decisions of family elders. Conversely, low conformity families have an individualistic focus, prioritizing the feelings and opinions of individual family members over family harmony (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002b). As stated previously, both the conversation and the conformity orientations are present in families, and their interactions create the four family types used in FCPT (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2006).

Koerner and Fitzpatrick combined these orientations, which led to the aforementioned four family types. *Consensual* families are defined as being high in both conversation and conformity. Family hierarchy is important, children are expected to defer to their elders in order to reduce conflict and to preserve the parents’ final say in decisions. However, consensual families also value open communication for the purpose of “exploring new ideas”(Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002b). Collective problem solving and conflict resolution are also considered important so that order can be maintained (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2006). *Pluralistic* families are defined as being high in

conversation and low in conformity. These families value “open and unconstrained conversation” between the entire family. Parents are open to their childrens’ opinions and encourage independent thought and decision making (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002b). *Protective* families are defined as being low in conversation and high in conformity. Family hierarchy is considered important, however, in contrast to consensual families. In protective families, the goal is strictly to maintain a top-down structure and children are expected to unequivocally defer to their elders. Open discussion is not encouraged and open conflict is uncommon because elders expect children to “behave according to the norms of their family as set for by the parents” (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2006). *Laissez-fair* families are defined as being low in both conversation and conformity. In these families, family members are relatively independent of each other. Interaction about decision making and conflict is not discouraged, but neither is it encouraged or valued as important to family life (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002b).

Family communication patterns and socialization. At the heart of FCPT is the concept that families are one of the primary agents of socialization. Through communication among family members, a shared social reality is constructed, and the impacts of that shared reality and the process by which it arises are echoed throughout the lives of those involved (McLeod & Chaffee, 1972). As we better understand the effect parents have on their childrens’ behavior (especially political behavior), we have the opportunity to provide guidance to parents and caregivers if they are interested in raising their children or dependents to be politically and civically active. FCPT has helped many researchers demonstrate a likely connection between the communication in a family of origin and the influence it has on dependents (Kennedy-Lightsey & Frisby, 2016; Park et al., 2010; Schrodtt et al., 2008), and some studies have also shown that children have an influence on the behaviors and beliefs of their parents or caregivers (McDevitt & Chaffee, 2002b) (Saphir

& Chaffee, 2002). This theory has been widely used because it has proved to be effective across a variety of fields (Alm et al., 2015; Asbury & Woszidlo, 2016; Bakir et al., 2006; Carlson et al., 1992; Clarke, 2008; Hanson & Olson, 2018; C. Kim et al., 2018, 2009; Park et al., 2010). In this section a review of current literature with a focus on FCPT and socialization as whole and on political socialization more specifically will be provided.

FCPT is commonly applied by researchers in two ways. First, it is used in studies of families with younger children to connect current FCPs to current behaviors. Second, studies focus on emerging adults in an effort to understand the lasting impact of the FCPs their family displayed as they grew up. Both uses emphasize socialization; however, one focuses on short-term outcomes and the other on long-term outcomes. One example of the former type of FCPT study is a 2008 article by Peter Clark. He explored the impact of FCPs on childrens' Christmas present requests. He studied parents with children ages three to eight years, and in this case the survey was administered exclusively to parents (Clarke, 2008). In contrast, Thorson et al. chose to study how FCPs from a participant's family of origin impacted their consumer outcomes as adults, and in this case only the emerging adults took the survey (Thorson & Horstman, 2017). Despite the fact that this current study has centered on the latter of the two common uses, both types are relevant as they illustrate the different types of impacts that FCPs have on families and children.

Bi vs. mono dimensional. In addition to the two most common applications of FCPT, studies tend to use FCPT in one of two ways. One method is the usage of both conversation and conformity orientations on their own; they are seen as separate entities. While the authors *may* nod to the different family types in their explanation of FCPT, they do not address the interaction between the two in their study structure or analysis of results. The other common method is to use the FCPT in its most recent complete form. In these studies, the interaction between both

orientations is often fundamental to the study design and the analysis. In their 2002 article Koerner and Fitzpatrick explain that both orientations consistently interact with each other. Therefore, to formulate an accurate analysis, it is necessary to understand the impact of both orientations. In fact, they refer to this method as being of “conceptual and empirical necessity” (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002a).

Despite the importance of understanding the interaction between conformity and conversation orientations and the resulting four family types underscored by Koerner and Fitzpatrick, many studies do not use them in the formulation of their hypotheses or their analysis. Some researchers go so far as to suggest that breaking down the two orientations into four interactive types results in a significant decrease in statistical power, and that the bi-dimensional approach is used predominantly in order to facilitate easy integration of results into the existing body of research (Kim et al., 2009). Unfortunately, this has resulted in a marked disconnect in FCP research which, in and of itself, may have the potential to harm the credibility of any results stemming from its use.

Both the bi-dimensional and mono-dimensional applications of FCP are used across fields, which indicates that either approach is not exclusive to certain lines of questioning (Alm et al., 2015; Asbury & Wozidlo, 2016; Carlson et al., 1992; Clarke, 2008; Fife, Leigh Nelson, & Messersmith, 2014; Hanson & Olson, 2018; Kim et al., 2009). For example, Rose et al. chose a bi-dimensional approach to study a child's influence on family purchasing (Rose, Boush, & Shoham, 2002), while Carlson et al. chose to apply a mono-dimensional approach to better understand FCP regarding consumption (Carlson et al., 1992). Both studies had a focus on children and their consumer socialization, however, their results are analyzed in two markedly different ways despite the use of the same theory and measure. In this same vein, studies by Ashbury &

Woszidlo and Odenweller & Harris were both concerned with the FCP of parents and their impact on a child's tolerance (Asbury & Woszidlo, 2016; Odenweller & Harris, 2018). The former focused on weight stigma and the latter on racial prejudice. Both studies found a positive correlation between families who were higher in conformity orientation and decreased tolerance and a positive correlation between high conversation orientation and increased tolerance. However, the study that used a bi-dimensional approach was able to break down the results to a greater extent, which allowed for a more detailed conclusion and showed that any amount of conformity decreased tolerance, even in consensual families. In contrast, the results of the study which used a mono-dimensional approach were less nuanced and could be construed as an overgeneralization of the impacts of conformity.

Behaviors and attitudes. Much of the research associated with FCPT focuses on behaviors and attitudes. While there is some overlap between these topics, most researchers treat them as distinct and separate. Attitudes and behaviors are addressed in several ways. In the 2008 study on children's Christmas gift requests mentioned previously (Clarke, 2008), Clarke investigated whether a parent's FCPs had an impact on a child's approach toward requesting specific Christmas gifts. He found that parents generally encourage exchanges (behavior) with children about Christmas gifts. However, they also tend to question their children about their desired gifts. In a 2018 study, Hanson & Olson applied FCPT in an effort to understand if there was a relationship between FCPs and the financial literacy of the children (Hanson & Olson, 2018). They found that children of parents who have a conformity-centered approach to communication were less knowledgeable than those from families where the parents took a more conversation-based approach. Finally, another example of a belief-centered study comes from Jones et al. (Jones, Bodie, & Koerner, 2017). They found that children in high conversation families were more likely

to use positive emotional regulation skills before they experienced a fully formed emotional response, and that children from high conformity families were more likely to suppress their emotions after they had formed fully, at which point they communicate unproductively.

Studies also often seek to connect FCPs and attitudes. One example is found in a 2014 paper by Fife et al. (Fife et al., 2014). They investigated if there was a connection between FCPs and children's attitudes about various aspects of religion. They found that both conformity and conversation orientations significantly impacted attitudes of children toward religion. A second study that addressed attitudes is a 2012 study authored by Baiocchi-Wagner & Talley (Baiocchi-Wagner & Talley, 2013). The researchers found that open and consistent communication (high conversation orientation) directly influenced health attitudes. This led them to the conclusion that families that are higher in conversation are more likely to produce young adults with healthy attitudes toward diet and other positive health outcomes. Finally, Asbury & Woszidlo sought to understand the relationship of FCPs and whether or not children would develop a negative attitude towards fatness, specifically if those children would develop a weight stigma (Asbury & Woszidlo, 2016). They found that families which were high in conversation were significantly less likely to foster anti-fat attitudes in their children, but families high in conformity were more likely to encourage weight stigma because those families emphasized assimilation and sameness.

Consensual families. Overall, as previously stated and as elaborated upon below, conformity orientation is commonly associated with negative outcomes (Jones et al., 2017). In their 2017 study, Jones et al. found that families that were high in conformity orientation tended to use less effective emotional regulation strategies than those who were high in conversation, regardless of whether they were high in both orientations. However, a number of studies have found that, in conjunction with FCPs that are high in conversation orientation, conformity can

actually have a positive effect (Alm et al., 2015). In essence, consensual FCPs are *sometimes* associated with positive outcomes, whereas protective families (low conversation/ high conformity) are *consistently* linked with negative outcomes. This distinction is commonly lost in studies that make use of the mono-dimensional model of FCPT. This is evident in a study by Fife et al. where researchers explained that their results seemed incomplete (Fife et al., 2014). They explored the possibility that FCPs could be associated with several different variables, such as religiosity and strength of religious faith. While they found that separately both conversation and conformity orientations had positive associations with increased religiosity, strength of faith, and all of the other variables, they explained that the interaction between the two was not a significant predictor of the same outcomes. This inconsistency in findings led them to suggest that future studies would do well to use the four family types to achieve a more accurate understanding.

Studies that view consensual families as positive tend to use a bi-dimensional approach (Alm et al., 2015; Bakir et al., 2006; Clarke, 2008; Fife et al., 2014; Rose et al., 2002; Samek & Rueter, 2011; Thorson & Horstman, 2017), while most (but not all) studies with a negative view of consensual families are mono-dimensional (Asbury & Wozidlo, 2016; Baiocchi-Wagner & Talley, 2013; Jones et al., 2017; Odenweller & Harris, 2018). For example, in a 2013 study by Baiocchi-Wagner & Talley, the researchers investigated if there was a relationship between FCPs and attitudes about health and diet. Their research took a mono-directional approach, and they found that conversation and conformity orientations had an inverse relationship. Due to their decision to treat conformity and conversation as completely separate components with no interaction, the results are potentially incomplete (Baiocchi-Wagner & Talley, 2013).

In contrast, Samek & Rueter authored a study with the desire to find associations between FCPs, sibling closeness, and adoptive status. In their view, families that most effectively create a

shared reality have the highest levels of closeness. Based on that assumption, they also believed that consensual families would have significantly reduced conflict and better family relationships. Because of this, they hypothesized that consensual families would show the highest levels of sibling closeness. Their results confirmed this hypothesis. They found that families who were high in both conformity and conversation orientations showed increased emotional and behavioral closeness. They also point out that previous research had established that a combination of warmth and authority is important in parenting. This was also confirmed in a study by Alm et al. where they explored FCPs surrounding feeding practices and their potential impact on children's food preferences. They found that parents who both set boundaries regarding food choices and consistently sought to guide children toward healthy choices, but also made a concerted effort to give children a certain amount of control over what they ate, had better outcomes. They emphasized the importance of the combination of guiding, not forcing, and open communication truly involving listening to children (Alm et al., 2015). It is these inconsistencies that inspired several researchers to delve deeper into conformity orientation and its conceptualization and operationalization.

Political socialization. A number of studies have found that families have a meaningful influence on voting behavior and civic engagement (McIntosh et al., 2007), primarily in the context of party affiliation and single-issues. McIntosh et al go on to explain that studies are increasingly showing the important role of political discussion in the home. McDevitt and Chaffee posit in their article entitled "The Family in a Sequence of Political Activation: Why Civic Interventions Can Succeed" that family-based political discussion is a "valuable resource for activation efforts" (McDevitt & Chaffee, 2002a). Studies have shown, using FCPT, that political communication in the family influences children's perception of, and participation in, politics (McDevitt & Chaffee,

2002a; McIntosh et al., 2007; Shulman & DeAndrea, 2014). In their study, Shulman and DeAndrea found that high conversation had more of an effect than high conformity when it came to political similarity between parents and children. Based on that finding, pluralistic and consensual dyads, both high in conversation, were the most politically similar. This finding was significant because it demonstrated that conversation about the topic was more influential in fostering political similarity between parents and children than the expectation of homogeneity in a more conformity heavy family.

In another study, McIntosh et al. found that parental political discussion impacted their children's political knowledge positively but did not provide any insight on which different types of political discussion within the families had the largest positive impact. This study also had no focus whatsoever on intention to vote, but instead focused on four main outcomes: monitoring national news, political knowledge, public communication skills, and community services (McIntosh et al., 2007). One of the most significant findings of this study was the impact of parental political knowledge. They found that while political discussion was vital, the depth of parental political knowledge made a fundamental difference in youth civic development.

Despite the handful of studies that use FCPT as a basis from which to study political socialization, in 2009 McDevitt and Chaffee called for a renewed focus on family communication after what they characterized as years of focus on media, schools, and political campaigns (McDevitt & Chaffee, 2002a). They posit that, "the family is avoided as a social entity, as if contemplation of its role in civic activation can be dismissed as the intellectual equivalent of changing diapers." (McDevitt & Chaffee, 2002a). McLeod and Shah echo this call to some extent in their 2009 article, "Communication and Political Socialization: Challenges and Opportunities for Research". They call for research that has a focus on communication in interpersonal exchanges

because they feel that there are understudied connections between communication and political socialization (McLeod & Shah, 2009). Overall, FCPT has demonstrated its usefulness time and time again. As researchers continue to fine-tune the theory and its application while simultaneously applying it to more fields and in conjunction with other theories, it will undoubtedly continue to change for the better.

Conformity orientation. These diverse studies demonstrate the flexibility of FCPT and the extent to which it is used. This increases the urgency of the calls of some communication scholars to address some issues in the operationalization of the conformity orientation. It is evident upon close inspection that the operationalizations of conformity vary among these studies, though most skew negative. In a 2014 study by Schulman and DeAndrea the authors describe parents in consensual families (high in conversation and conformity) as being predominantly focused on “preserving the existing hierarchy” and characterize the conversation within consensual families as being merely a vessel to encourage similarity (Shulman & DeAndrea, 2014). In contrast, in an article primarily focused on the conceptualization of both orientations, Koerner and Fitzpatrick described the consensual family as one who values the thoughts and feelings of the children, see the importance of explaining and discussing family decisions so that everyone can understand, but view a certain amount of conformity as necessary for family functioning and harmony (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002a). Both definitions say essentially the same thing. However, the differences between phrases like “pressure for children to conform” (Shulman & DeAndrea, 2014) versus “spending time and energy in explaining their decisions to their children in the hope that their children will understand the reasoning, beliefs, and values behind the parents’ decisions” are significant (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002a).

As explained previously, in the field of family communication, conformity orientation is characterized by family closeness, a top-down hierarchy, and an emphasis on shared attitudes and beliefs in order to maintain order and reduce conflict. In Koerner and Fitzpatrick's explanations of families who are high in conformity, they place emphasis on the expectation that all members will prioritize family time, family cohesiveness, and general top-down family structure (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002a). There is no inherent negativity in their conceptualization, rather both conversation and conformity orientations are described in a neutral fashion. However, the operationalization of conformity has taken on a notably negative connotation when FCPT has been applied in research after 2002. Hesse et al. explain that the majority of studies that use FCPT tend to make use of this construct as a negative familial element. They further go on to explain that conformity is commonly characterized as meaning only minimal to no family discussion, absolute parental authority, and conflict avoidance at all costs, elements that essentially amount to forcible behavior meant to control the dependents.

Using an operationalized definition that differs from the stated definition in the explanation of FCPT is a problem on its face; however, the implications are especially deep and important due to the wide and frequent application of this theory. Ostensibly, the purpose of any study is to get the most accurate possible results to further the given body of research. However, when purely negative aspects of conformity are the main focus of a study, the ability of that work to illustrate a complete picture is diminished (Hesse et al., 2017). Fitzpatrick argues in her 2006 chapter "Epilogue: The Future of Family Communication Theory and Research" that, "defining your terms in a meaningful way instantiates an entire set of other decisions and choices" (Fitzpatrick, 2006). Through repeated use of a negative operationalization of conformity, much research using FCPT has likely been skewed. Hesse et al posit that, in fact, there can be a positive, or warm side, to

conformity that manifests as family closeness rather than forced adherence to family rules and norms. In their 2014 article “The Influence of Family Communication Patterns on Religious Orientation Among College Students” Fife et al. stated that while many studies associate conformity with negative outcomes, in fact, the outcomes seem contingent in part on the specific values that are being taught to children and the method through which that is executed (Fife et al., 2014). This points to some inherent inconsistencies within that orientation that could likely be addressed through thoughtful reconceptualization.

For this reason, Hesse et al. have developed a new set of questions to be used in place of the original conformity measure. This time conformity is divided into “warm” and “cold” components. Hesse et al. elaborate further by explaining that “the current operationalization of conformity has fundamentally altered how the communication field has conceptualized both conformity itself and how the construct relates to other constructs of psychosocial health or communication behavior” (Hesse et al., 2017). A large majority of studies using FCPT have a focus on the process of socialization. It is a reasonable assumption that a skewed application of the conformity orientation has had a significant impact on the researchers’ ability to truly understand the impact of this orientation and credibly validate FCPT. In addition, it also impacts future studies and the choices that researchers make in the construction and analysis of results.

A prime example of this is in a 2018 study by Kelly G. Odenweller and Tina M. Harris entitled, “The Influence of Parents’ Family Communication Patterns on Adult Children’s Racial Prejudice and Tolerance”. This topic is exceptionally important, especially given the current political climate in the United States. However, the study is based on a very negative conceptualization and operationalization of the conformity orientation. Terms like “blind obedience” set a negative tone and this is compounded by very selective citations from a small

handful of studies that have used FCPT to explore socialization (Odenweller & Harris, 2018). This paper is relevant to both dominant parts of the argument for reconceptualization. First, their definition of conformity is extremely negative and replete with loaded terms. Secondly, and possibly most importantly, this paper is an example of the damage that skewed operationalization can cause. Because the other cited papers used a more negative operationalization, their results supported conformity as an inherently negative orientation and have steered other research in the same direction.

Another example of the current conceptualization of conformity causing issues can be found in a study conducted by Liebes and Ribak in 1992. This study used FCP to “examine its relationship to political participation, political outlook, and the “reproduction” of parents’ political outlook in their children” (Liebes & Ribak, 1992) specifically in Israel in regard to the Arab-Israeli conflict. They found that, while the conversation orientation significantly increased the likelihood of political outlook similarity, the conformity orientation undermined the extent to which that similarity was maintained in the long run. Had the study operationalized conformity differently, for example using the warm and cold perspective, there is reason to believe that the results may have been slightly different (Liebes & Ribak, 1992).

Similarly, in their 2014 study Shulman and DeAndrea found that families with a high conversation orientation had more of an effect than high conformity when it came to political similarity between parents and children. It also found that “pluralistic and consensual dyads are more politically similar than protective or laissez-faire dyads”. While they found that conversation was paramount, they also found that conformity did not contribute to political similarity between parents and children. This is a relatively surprising finding considering the logical connection one might make that a family high in conformity would likely produce children who thought similarly

to the parents. They explained that this result was “problematic because the conformity scale was constructed to reflect the communication goal of promoting opinion homogeneity” and that because of this inability to predict similarity, they had serious questions about the viability of the measure’s construct. The authors abandoned the quadrant approach normally used with FCPT and instead used the conversation and conformity scales separately, which, in a way, guts the depth of the utility of the scale (Shulman & DeAndrea, 2014). This study will have the opportunity to offer more robust results by using the warm and cold conformity scales.

In order to form a more complete and accurate picture of conformity, Hesse et al. have proposed to divide conformity into two categories in an effort to explore options for a change to the current operationalization: warm conformity and cold conformity. Hesse et al explain “this move helps parse out the different ways in which family members in power attempt to influence the values and behaviors of other family members, thus making a distinction at the level of enactment” (Hesse et al., 2017). The authors do not propose that this is the only solution to improve the FCPT instrument; however, warm and cold conformity provide a route to better understand the importance and validity of questioning the current measure. Warm conformity is presented as the positive side of conformity. The authors further explain that warm conformity primarily centers around “the idea that parents can have set ideas of rules, disciplines, beliefs, and values without being a negative influence on the wellbeing of the child” (Hesse et al., 2017). Cold conformity is essentially the current negative conceptualization of the conformity orientation. In sum, this study has the opportunity to serve a dual purpose. One, to build upon the current research regarding FCPT and political socialization – specifically in the context of voting. Second, to add to the body of scholarship calling for, and offering an example of, a reconceptualization of the conformity orientation.

This section has covered the definition, history, and use of Family Communication Patterns Theory. While the theory and its accompanying instrument find their roots in the study of media and its influence on the people who consume it, it has developed into a more useful and generalizable tool for research, both within and without the field of family communication. The theory has been widely used, but more recently some researchers, including some who were instrumental in the development of FCPT, agree that the measure needs revision (Horstman et al., 2018), (Hesse et al., 2017). As previously stated, the goal of this study is to determine if the communication patterns within a family affect the likelihood of a person intending to vote the 2020 general election. In order to connect a person's family communication pattern to their voting behavior, this study will make use of the Theory of Planned Behavior. This theory and the way in which it will be applied will be thoroughly explored in the following section.

The Theory of Planned Behavior

This portion of the literature review will break down The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) into the most important components. First, it will explore the background and creation of TPB and its origins in The Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA). Simultaneously, it will give a detailed explanation of terms and important definitions. Finally, it will examine the current research that has made use of TBP, along with several recently proposed revisions and expansions.

Theory of reasoned action. The Theory of Reasoned Action originated in the field of psychology and was constructed by Fishbein and Ajzen in 1975. It rapidly became a highly respected theory through repeated demonstration of its predictive capabilities. Since then it has been widely applied across disciplines (Bohon, Cotter, Kravitz, Cello, & Fernandez y Garcia, 2016; Eckstein et al., 2013; Gastil & Xenos, 2010; Gauld, Lewis, & White, 2014; Harakeh, 2004; Marcinkowski & Metag, 2014; Petzold & Moog, 2018; Prat, Gras, Planes, González-Iglesias, &

Sullman, 2015; Su et al., 2015; Swaim, Maloni, Napshin, & Henley, 2014). However, it is still used most heavily in psychology research. Ajzen & Fishbein assert that humans usually act rationally by using available information to make judgements, evaluating the situation, and eventually making a decision about how to act (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975) (Warburton & Terry, 2000). They further explain that “the totality of a person’s beliefs serves as the information base that ultimately determines his attitudes, intentions, and behaviors” (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). TRA asserts that while a person may possess many beliefs, only two prove to be *salient* in determining a person’s intention, specifically how much someone is willing to do in order to act. (Ajzen, 1991). Those two primary salient beliefs that allow for the prediction of behavior each connect with a variable (also called a construct). The first belief is *behavioral*, which corresponds to the variable of *attitude* (Ajzen, 1991; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). The second belief is *normative*, which corresponds to the variable of *subjective norm* (Ajzen, 1991; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). A third belief, that of *control*, was added upon the development of TPB and will be addressed in more detail in the section below (Ajzen, 1991). These two variables, when considered together, provide a framework from which one can understand intention and, eventually predict behavior (See Figure 2).

Attitude is defined as a person’s positive or negative perspective in reference to performing the behavior of interest (Ajzen, 1988). According to Fishbein and Ajzen’s expectancy-value model of attitudes (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975), attitudes originate from the beliefs that a person has in regard to the object that is being judged (Ajzen, 1991). Ajzen goes on to explain that people form beliefs about a given object by connecting it with certain qualities, like other objects, features, or events (Ajzen, 1991). In the context of attitudes regarding a *behavior*, beliefs are connected to particular outcomes or consequences (Ajzen, 1991). Because the features that are linked to the

behavior have already been assessed to be positive or negative, they become heuristics by which a person can rapidly form an attitude. *Subjective norm* refers to person's perception of the attitudes of those around him/her. The approval or disapproval of friends, family members, and other socially important figures furnish social pressure to engage or not to engage in a given behavior (Ajzen & Fishbein, 2004). When a person believes that the people that they respect expect them to perform a behavior or are executing the behavior themselves, pressure is exerted on the person to also engage in that behavior. On the other hand, when the subjective norm is perceived to be unfavorable toward a behavior, there is pressure to abstain from the given behavior (Ajzen & Fishbein, 2004). TRA assumes that the perceived importance of attitude and/or subjective norm can vary based on the particular intention and individual that is being studied (Ajzen, 1988).

The theory of planned behavior. However, despite TRA's consistently proven predictive power, both Ajzen and other researchers (Sheppard, Hartwick, & Warshaw, 1988) became keenly aware of a lacuna in an otherwise effective model. TRA was developed to study behaviors that are under the volitional control of the individual involved; that is to say that a person can willfully choose to perform or not to perform a behavior (Ajzen, 1991). Ajzen describes the concept of volitional control by relating it to a continuum with acts that are completely within the control of the person on one end, and acts that are entirely beyond their control on the other (Ajzen, 2005). This leaves all behaviors that are regulated, at least in part, by conditions outside of the person's control beyond the purview of TRA (Sheppard et al., 1988). Ajzen offered the example of a smoker who intends to quit but still fails in the attempt (Ajzen, 2005). In order to extend the theory's range of application, Ajzen added a third variable: *perceived behavioral control*. With the addition of this construct, a second, separate theory was created: The Theory of Planned Behavior. Perceived

behavioral control corresponds with the third salient belief referred to in the above section: *control* (Ajzen, 1991)(See Figure 3).

Factors, ranging from personal deficits to outside influences or obstacles beyond a person's control, may have an effect on even the most routine activities (Ajzen, 2005). However, he explains that when a person considers the execution of a behavior to be within their control, the likelihood of that person intending to perform that behavior will increase. (Ajzen, 2005). When volitional control is high, however, this third variable becomes essentially insignificant. It is important to note that TPB does not directly address the *amount* of control that a person actually possesses in different situations. Instead, it has a focus on the effects of person's perception control over a behavior (Ajzen, 2005). Another important and unique feature of perceived behavioral control proposed by Ajzen and Fishbein is that it has a direct causal effect on intention, one that is not mediated by attitude or subjective norm (Ajzen & Fishbein, 2004). They elaborate by explaining that when perceived behavioral control is accurate and in line with reality that it can serve as a replacement for actual control and be used in a study to improve predictive power (Ajzen & Fishbein, 2004). This is demonstrated by a broken line on Figure 3.

Most recently, Fishbein and Ajzen found it necessary to further refine the concept of normative beliefs. They explain that there are two main sources of perceived normative pressure. Not only might a person be concerned with what others think about a behavior, but also whether they are participating in that behavior. Normative beliefs were broken into two groups, injunctive norms and descriptive norms. Injunctive norms refer to what had previously been called subjective norms, or an individual's perception of what others think about a behavior and what they expect that individual to do – or the social approval of the act (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010; Park & Smith, 2007). Descriptive norms relate to whether or not those others are or are not performing the

behavior themselves – or the popularity of a certain act (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010; Park & Smith, 2007). This distinction between types of normative pressure is used less frequently than the original TPB model, but some time has passed since these modifications were introduced, and that trend has begun to shift.

Sufficiency. Many researchers have made the choice to add additional variables to the TPB model in order to fine-tune their studies. Conner and Armitage go so far as to say that nearly every element of the theory has significant weaknesses and that the variables are insufficient as they stand (Armitage & Conner, 2001). Ajzen explains that one of the most common questions addressed has to do with increasing the level of predictive capacity of TPB by adding one or more predictors (Ajzen & Fishbein, 2004). Some investigators have focused on background factors, such as demographic or personality traits. These researchers posit that understanding where a belief came from will allow them to predict behavior more accurately (Cheung, Chan, & Wong, 1999; Smith & McSweeney, 2007). However, despite considerable attempts to prove this, Ajzen explains that these alterations have failed to lend any increased predictive power to TPB (Ajzen & Fishbein, 2004). Other researchers have advocated for the addition of one or more predictors to accompany the original three such as moral norm, anticipated regret, past behavior, knowledge, self-identity, civic pride, civic faith, and group norm (Akbari, Fozouni Ardekani, Pino, & Maleksaeidi, 2019; Armitage & Conner, 1999; Cheung et al., 1999; Cronan, Mullins, & Douglas, 2018; Dodd & Supa, 2015; Gastil & Xenos, 2010; Gauld et al., 2014; Kroshus, Baugh, Daneshvar, & Viswanath, 2014; Nemme & White, 2010; Smith & McSweeney, 2007; Yazdanpanah, Forouzani, Abdeshahi, & Jafari, 2015). One investigator went so far as to advocate for the replacement of a predictor entirely. He suggested that behavioral intentions should instead be replaced behavioral

expectations. He asserts that behavioral expectations would be more likely to consider possible barriers to the behavior being investigated (Sheppard et al., 1988).

It has been proposed by several authors that perceived behavioral control should be broken down to allow for a more nuanced perspective (Agarwal, 2014; Armitage & Conner, 1999, 2001; Ho, Lee, & Shahiraa Sahul Hameed, 2008; Myers & Goodwin, 2012) in order to enhance and strengthen the predictive value of the model. Myers and Goodwin state that perceived behavioral control is often divided into two parts: self-efficacy and perceived control. Self-efficacy is defined as the ease or difficulty of a behavior, while perceived control is defined as a person's belief that they have control over the behavior (Myers & Goodwin, 2012). Armitage and Conner made a similar distinction in their 1999 study of perceptions of control and low-fat diets (Armitage & Conner, 1999). Ho et al. explained that they viewed self-efficacy (Bandura, 1986) to be distinctly separate from perceived behavioral control as self-efficacy addresses the confidence a person has in regard to a certain task, while perceived behavioral control addresses control in a more general way (Ho et al., 2008). All three studies defined the terms in the same manner. However, despite consistent pressure to separate perceived behavioral control into two parts, Ajzen and Fishbein consistently treat self-efficacy as being completely interchangeable with perceived behavioral control (Ajzen & Fishbein, 2004). As previously stated, Ajzen explained that they explicitly left both TRA and TPB open to expansion. However, he has found that the proposed changes rarely, if ever, expand the predictive power of TPB in any meaningful way (Ajzen & Fishbein, 2004).

Risky behavior, consequences, and decision making. TPB has been used frequently in the study of decision making as a whole, but it has also been very successfully applied in decision making in the context of risky behavior and associated consequences. A very common finding among these studies is that attitude is the major predictor of behavior (Askelson et al., 2010; Bohon

et al., 2016; Cronan et al., 2018; Prat et al., 2015; Su et al., 2015). Askelson et al. investigated mothers' intention to vaccinate their daughters against HPV. They found that attitudes were the strongest predictors of intention to vaccinate, even more so than risk perceptions, experience with STIs, and beliefs about the vaccine encouraging sexual activity (Askelson et al., 2010). Cronan et al. studied the intentions of freshman business students to violate academic integrity. They found that attitude, along with other variables, were significant predictors of intention to violate academic integrity (Cronan et al., 2018). Prat et al. investigated intention to send and read text messages while driving. They found that both attitude and perceive behavioral control were very significant predictors. In essence, TPB is extremely fitting for this type of research, with one or more of the variables consistently demonstrating significant predictive power.

Political behavior. The Theory of Planned behavior has been used, though infrequently, in the study of political behavior (Eckstein et al., 2013; Gastil & Xenos, 2010; Marcinkowski & Metag, 2014; Pavlova & Silbereisen, 2015; Peña, Hernández Pérez, Khan, & Cano Gómez, 2018; Reichert, 2016). There is little in common between the of the handful of studies that have applied TPB in a political context. The only theme that appears to exist outside of an individual study is the concept of internal political efficacy (Eckstein et al., 2013; Gastil & Xenos, 2010; Reichert, 2016). In their study, Eckstein et al. adapted the three predictors of TPB to better fit their research. Attitude became attitudes toward political behaviors, subjective norm became important, others' attitudes toward political behavior, and perceived behavioral control became internal political efficacy beliefs. They define internal political efficacy as "the perceived competence to understand and to participate effectively in politics", and it was found to be a significant predictor of changes in behavior (Eckstein et al., 2013). Gastil and Xenos combined subjective norms and perceived behavioral control under the title of political efficacy. They went on to break that down into civic

pride and civic faith. Civic pride refers to the confidence that others take their civic responsibilities seriously, that they are not civically engaged strictly out of obligation, and that they are willing to be involved. Civic faith refers to the belief that others will also act with the same sense of civic responsibility (voting, participating in public life, etc.) as the person considering the behavior (Gastil & Xenos, 2010). In his 2016 article, Reichert defines political efficacy as the belief that a person can comprehend political facts and that a person feels competent to influence politics effectively. Based on the small number of studies that have made use of TPB to study political behavior, the validity of this study's application of this theory in the political research sphere is reinforced.

This section has covered the definition, history, and use of The Theory of Planned Behavior. As previously stated, the goal of this study is to determine if the communication patterns within a family affect the likelihood of a person voting the 2020 general election. This theory provides a framework which allows one to predict a given intention and eventual behavior based on several influences such as social norms, an individual's attitude toward the behavior, and how much control they feel that they have over the particular behavior (Ajzen, 1991). While TPB has been used successfully to connect social norms, individual attitude, and perceived behavioral control to a given intention it does not "specify where individuals' beliefs, which form the basis of attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control, originate" (Pavlova & Silbereisen, 2015). Rather than propose actual changes to TPB, this study will use it *in conjunction* with FCPT to allow for a separate assessment of the origination of attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control while also directly studying an emerging adult's intention to vote in the 2020 general election. Issues of the importance of voting, barriers to voting, general societal attitudes

towards voting, political efficacy, and political or electoral socialization will be addressed in the following section.

Synthesis

Each of the theories and concepts presented in this literature review are distinct in their own right, but they also share important commonalities. A thread of family and peer influence on behavior is woven through all three of them. The first describes the process of socialization in the specific context of the family, the second has a focus on family communication and influence on behavior. And finally, the third has a focus on the influence of attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control on behavior. There has been little research that specifically focuses on an individual's intention to vote; however, by using these three theories and concepts, a number of inferences can be made.

It has been established that family communication patterns have an impact on an individual throughout their lives, both as children and as adults. Through communication among family members, a shared social reality is constructed, and the impacts of that shared reality and the process by which it arises are echoed throughout the lives of those involved (McLeod & Chaffee, 1972). Different types of family communication patterns have markedly different impacts. In a 2018 study, Hanson & Olson applied FCPT in an effort to understand if there was a relationship between FCPs and the financial literacy of the children (Hanson & Olson, 2018). They found that children of parents who have a conformity-centered approach to communication were less knowledgeable than those from families where the parents took a more conversation-based approach. In a study, authored by Baiocchi-Wagner & Talley (Baiocchi-Wagner & Talley, 2013), the researchers found that open and consistent communication (high conversation orientation) directly influenced health attitudes. This led them to the conclusion that families that are higher in

conversation are more likely to produce young adults with healthy attitudes toward diet and other positive health outcomes. These are just a few examples which demonstrate that different types of communication within families has a far-reaching effect.

A number of studies have found that families have a meaningful influence on political behavior. McIntosh et al. explain that studies are increasingly showing the important role that political discussion in the home possesses (McIntosh et al., 2007). McDevitt and Chaffee postulate in their article entitled “The Family in a Sequence of Political Activation: Why Civic Interventions Can Succeed” that family-based political discussion is a “valuable resource for activation efforts” (McDevitt & Chaffee, 2002a). One comprehensive study conducted by Andolina et al. demonstrated in 2003 that 38% of young people who are eligible to vote and whose families had frequent political discussions at home said that they always vote, while only 20% from families who did not participate in these discussions stated that they vote consistently. Similarly, but focused on other no-electoral civic engagement, they found that 35% of young adults with political discussion at home volunteer on a regular basis, while only 13% do in families without such discussions (Andolina et al., 2003).

As explained previously, this study uses FCPT, which breaks down family communication in to two distinct parts, or orientations. The first is conversation orientation. Koerner and Fitzpatrick explain in their 2002 “Toward a Theory of Family Communication” that conversation orientation is defined as the extent to which members of a family are encouraged to speak openly and interact about topics. Families that are categorized as being high in conversation are comfortable with unrestrained and open communication, regardless of the topic. In these families, parents “see frequent communication with their children as the main means to educate and to socialize them”. The authors further explain that families categorized as low conversation share

fewer interactions and fewer topics discussed. Input from the children is not sought, and private thoughts and feelings are not shared often. Parents in low conversation families tend to “believe that open and frequent exchange of ideas, options, and values are not necessary for the function of the family in general, and for the children’s education and socialization in particular” (A. F. Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002b). Parents in these families expect compliance rather than teaching compliance through conversation.

Based on current and past research it seems reasonable to expect that the more a family talks about politics, the more they have the potential to influence their children’s perspectives. This leads to the first hypothesis which addresses the relationship between conversation and the three TPB variables. Parents’ attitude (A) regarding voting will be evident through conversation. It follows that if a family is high in conversation, their children will be aware of, and possibly mirror, those attitudes. Similarly, if parents present voting as the family norm (B) children will likely assume that their parents would expect them to vote. Finally, if parents feel that they are able to vote (C) and that they have an impact on politics when they vote (C), their children will be more likely to see voting as something that they have the ability to do, and that it has a meaningful impact.

H1: Conversation orientation will positively relate to:

- A. Attitudes
- B. Subjective Norms
- C. Perceived Behavioral Control

The second orientation is conformity. Conformity orientation is characterized by family closeness, a top-down hierarchy, and an emphasis on shared attitudes and beliefs in order to maintain order and reduce conflict. In Koerner and Fitzpatrick’s explanations of families who are

high in conformity, they place emphasis on the expectation that all members will prioritize family time, family cohesiveness, and general top-down family structure (F. A. Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002a). This study has used a reconceptualized model of conformity which separates it into warm and cold aspects of conformity (Hesse et al., 2017).

This leads to the next three hypotheses which address the relationship between both cold and warm conformity and the three TPB variables. If parents exhibit cold conformity, specifically regarding the expectation to vote, there is a potential that the children will form a negative attitude (H2.A) regarding voting. Similarly, if parents exhibit cold conformity, children may feel that they do not have any choice but to vote (H2.B). Conversely, if parents exhibit cold conformity, it seems likely that children would be very aware of the household norms (H3). If parents exhibit warm conformity it seems likely that children will reflect a positive attitude (H4.A). If parents exhibit cold conformity, children would likely have a good understand of the norms and expectations within their homes (H4.B). Finally, in families characterized by the use of warm conformity, children would likely see voting as something they were able to choose to do (H4.C), instead of something that was required of them.

H2: Cold conformity will negatively relate to:

- A. Attitudes
- B. Perceived Behavioral Control

H3: Cold conformity will positively relate to Subjective Norms

H4: Warm conformity will positively relate to:

- A. Attitudes
- B. Subjective Norms
- C. Perceived Behavioral Control

In order to specifically study potential direct correlations between FCPs and the intention to seek information about voting, and intention to vote, a final set of six hypotheses was developed. Ajzen proposed that intention is formed based on three variables. He asserts that while a person may possess many beliefs, only three prove to be *salient* in determining a person's intention, specifically how much someone is willing to do in order to act. (Ajzen, 1991). Those three beliefs are attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. Hypotheses 5-7 address potential direct correlations between these three basic beliefs and intention to seek information about voting (A) and intention to vote (B).

H5: Attitude will positively relate to:

- A. Intention to seek information about voting
- B. Intention to vote

H6: Subjective Norms will positively relate to:

- A. Intention to seek information about voting
- B. Intention to vote

H7: Perceived Behavioral Control will positively relate to:

- A. Intention to seek information about voting
- B. Intention to vote

FCPT proposes that families have communication patterns, and that those patterns can be understood by the study of two communication orientations: conversation and conformity. The authors theorized that those patterns influence family members in both a short- and long-term way. Conversation represents the level to which discussion is encouraged between family members. Conformity is characterized by the extent to which children are expected to obey a top-down

structure with no argument (cold conformity) or with questions combined with the assumption that they will ultimately obey (warm conformity).

It seems reasonable to expect that, in a household where communication is open and frequent, children would be more aware of politics and therefore be more inclined to participate than if there was very little conversation. Similarly, in families where the expectation of obedience is combined with conversation, it seems likely that children might be more inclined to participate both because they are aware of voting and its significance while also feeling a sense of duty to participate. Conversely, it seems reasonable to expect that communication patterns with the expectation of exact obedience and no argument may not facilitate the development of a citizen who feels like they can or should vote. This could be in part because children may be less aware of the process because their parents feel that it is unnecessary to explain voting to children because voting is something reserved for adults. Similarly, this potential lack participation could be because civic participation was demanded of them, which deterred future participation once it became optional. Hypotheses 8-10 allow the study to address possible direct correlations between the FCPT variables and intention to seek information about voting (A) and intention to vote (B).

H8: Conversation will positively relate to:

- A. Intention to seek information about voting
- B. Intention to vote

H9: Warm conformity will positively relate to:

- A. Intention to seek information about voting
- B. Intention to vote

H10: Cold conformity will negatively relate to:

- A. Intention to seek information about voting

B. Intention to vote

TPB states that a person's beliefs influence whether or not they intend to perform a behavior. FCPT states that a person's FCPs can influence what they think or feel, or how they behave. This study seeks to not only determine if the FCPs of an individual's family of origin impacts their intention to vote, but also if the fundamental beliefs presented in TPB mediate the relationship between the two. In theory, these two sets of variables could converge to direct or cause a person to want to learn about and/or intend to participate in voting. The nature of this potential relationship will be explored using the research question.

RQ: Will Attitude, Subjective Norms, and Perceived Behavioral Control mediate the relationship between family communication patterns and the intention to vote?

FIGURE 4

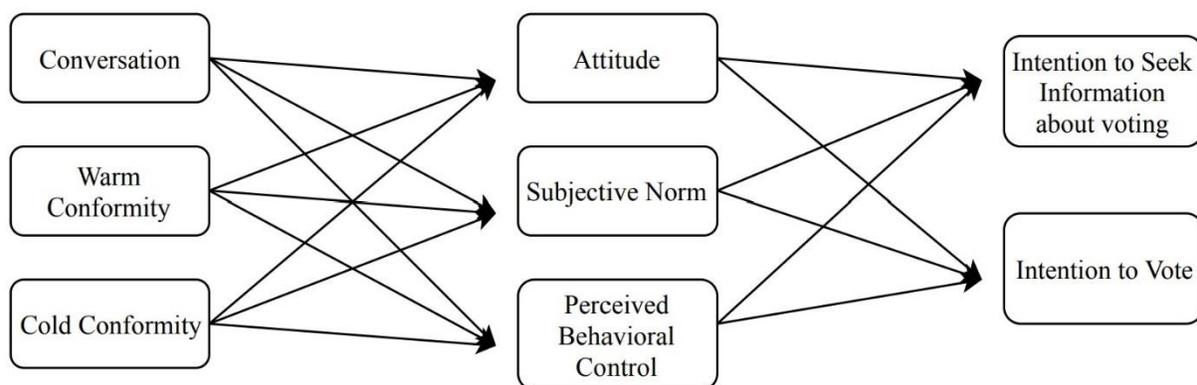


Figure 4: Research Question Model

Methods

Participants

The participants were undergraduate and graduate students who attended Oregon State University. Of the 201 participants, 98 were female, 100 were male, and 3 preferred not to answer. The ages of the participants ranged from 18-52 years old with a mean of 20.46 ($SD = 3.12$). 169

participants identified as single, 28 identify as being married or in a long-term relationship, 2 were divorced, and 1 was widowed. 48.8% of participants reported that they voted in the 2018 midterm election, and 32.3% said that they voted in the general 2016 election. 55.2% reported that they were a member of a political party. 88.1% of participants reported that they knew whether or not their parents voted. When asked to rate, using a 7-point Likert-type scale, how important politics were to them the mean was 5.49 ($SD = 1.28$).

Procedures

Instructors directed students to a link for this study. All students voluntarily participated in the survey and some instructors offered them extra credit for their participation. Those students who did not want to take the survey were subsequently offered the option of an alternative extra credit assignment. Participants were provided a link to an online survey, so they were able to take the survey outside of the classroom on the device of their choice. Once the survey results were collected, the data were analyzed.

Measures

Participants were asked to answer questions. The internal reliability estimate, means, standard deviations and intercorrelations for the study are found in Table 1.

FCPT Variables: 13 items addressed *conversation orientation* adapted from the FCPT scale using questions such as “In our family we often talk about our feelings and emotions”. 11 questions addressed *cold conformity* using questions such as “My parents feel that it is important to be the boss”. These items were based on the conformity section of the FCPT scale. 13 questions addressed *warm conformity* as conceptualized in the new conformity scale developed by Hesse et al. using questions like “My relationship with my family is close” (Hesse et al., 2017).

TPB variables: 19 items addressed each of the four constructs in TPB: attitude, subjective norm, perceived behavioral control, and intention to perform the behavior. This study adapted questions from the TPB questionnaire (Ajzen, 2013). A participant's *attitude toward the behavior* was examined using 5 questions, and all were responses to one premise: "For me voting would be...". Participants were asked to rate their feelings regarding that premise using ranges such as "Extremely positive – Extremely negative". A participant's perception of other people's opinions regarding voting, in this case specifically their family, or their perception of the *subjective norm*, was measured using 7 questions. These questions, using a Likert-type scale, were statements such as "Most people in my family think that I should vote." *Perceived Behavioral Control*, or a participant's belief that they were capable of voting, was assessed using 4 questions, such as "For me, voting is possible." *Intention to perform the behavior* was assessed using 2 questions, "How likely is it that you will try to get more information about voting?" and "How likely is it that you will vote in the future?". The intention to perform a behavior was assessed as two single-item measures, this included intention to seek information and intention to vote.

Results

Hypotheses

H1. The first hypothesis predicted that Conversation would relate positively to:

- A. Attitude. A correlation was run (as seen in Table 1) and found that these results were significant ($r = .19, p = .001$). A was supported.
- B. Subjective Norms. A correlation was run (as seen in Table 1) and found that these results were significant ($r = .24, p = .001$). B was supported.
- C. Perceived Behavioral Control. A correlation was run (as seen in Table 1) and found that these results were significant ($r = .05, p = .53$). C was not supported.

H1 was partially supported

H2. The second hypothesis predicted Cold Conformity would relate negatively to:

- A. Attitude. A correlation was run (as seen in Table 1) and found that these results were significant ($r = -.11, p = .14$). A was not supported.
- B. Perceived Behavioral Control. A correlation was run (as seen in Table 1) and found that these results were significant ($r = -.04, p = .60$). B was not supported.

H2 was not supported.

H3: The third hypothesis predicted that Cold Conformity would relate positively to Subjective Norms. A correlation was run (as seen in Table 1) and found that these results were significant ($r = -.13, p = .07$). H3 was not supported.

H4. The fourth hypothesis predicted that Warm Conformity would relate positively to:

- A. Attitude. A correlation was run (as seen in Table 1) and found that these results were significant ($r = .10, p = .15$). A was not supported.
- B. Subjective Norms. A correlation was run (as seen in Table 1) and found that these results were significant ($r = .28, p = <.001$). B was supported.
- C. Perceived Behavioral Control. A correlation was run (as seen in Table 1) and found that these results were significant ($r = .15, p = .04$). C was supported.

H4 was partially supported.

H5. The fifth hypothesis predicted that Attitude would relate positively to:

- A. Intention to seek information about voting. A correlation was run (as seen in Table 1) and found that these results were significant ($r = .46, p = <.001$). A was supported.
- B. Intention to vote. A correlation was run (as seen in Table 1) and found that these results were significant ($r = .45, p = <.001$). B was supported.

H5 was supported.

H6: The sixth hypothesis predicted that Subjective Norms would relate positively to:

- A. Intention to seek information about voting. A correlation was run (as seen in Table 1) and found that these results were significant ($r = .40, p = <.001$). A was supported.
- B. Intention to vote. A correlation was run (as seen in Table 1) and found that these results were significant ($r = .44, p = <.001$) B was supported.

H6 was supported.

H7: The seventh hypothesis predicted that Perceived Behavioral Control would relate positively to:

- A. Intention to seek information about voting. A correlation was run (as seen in Table 1) and found that these results were significant ($r = .36, p = <.001$). A was supported.
- B. Intention to vote. A correlation was run (as seen in Table 1) and found that these results were significant ($r = .64, p = <.001$). B was supported.

H7 was supported.

H8: The eighth hypothesis predicted that Conversation would positively relate to:

- A. Intention to seek information about voting. A correlation was run (as seen in Table 1) and found that these results were not significant ($r = .13, p = .06$). A was not supported.
- B. Intention to vote. A correlation was run (as seen in Table 1) and found that these results were not significant ($r = .02, p = .78$). B was not supported.

H8 was not supported.

H9: The ninth hypothesis predicted that Warm Conformity would positively relate to:

- A. Intention to seek information about voting. A correlation was run (as seen in Table 1) and found that these results were not significant ($r = .06, p = .40$). A was not supported.

B. Intention to vote. A correlation was run (as seen in Table 1) and found that these results were not significant ($r = .10, p = .16$). B was not supported.

H9 was not supported.

H10: The tenth hypothesis predicted that Cold conformity would negatively relate to:

A. Intention to seek information about voting. A correlation was run (as seen in Table 1) and found that these results were significant ($r = -.19, p = .009$). A was supported.

B. Intention to vote. A correlation was run (as seen in Table 1) and found that these results were significant ($r = -.08, p = .26$). B was not supported.

H10 was partially supported.

RQ: The research question asked if attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control would mediate the relationship between family communication patterns and the intention to vote. A total of three regression models were run using (Hayes, 2013) PROCESS macro for SPSS to test this research question using three mediators (attitude, subjective norm, perceived behavioral control) on the outcome measure (intention to vote). Bootstrapping analyses with 5000 samples and 95% bias corrected confidence intervals were conducted to assess indirect effects.

Conversation. The direct effect between conversation and the intention to vote was inverse and non-significant, ($\beta = .10, t = .77, p = .08$). However, the indirect effect between conversation and the intention to vote was inverse and significant, ($\beta = -.11$)¹. Thus, it appears that the TPB variables mediate the relationship between Conversation and the intention to vote.

Cold Conformity. The direct effect between cold conformity and the intention to vote was non-significant, ($\beta = -.02, t = -.34, p = .73$). The indirect effect was also non-significant, ($\beta = .10$). Thus, it appears that the TPB variables do not mediate the relationship between Cold Conformity and the intention to vote.

Warm Conformity. The direct effect between warm conformity and the intention to vote was not significant. ($\beta = .08, t = 1.03, p = .30$). However, the indirect effect was inverse and significant, ($\beta = -.14$). Thus, it appears that the TPB variables mediate the relationship between warm conformity and intention to vote.

Discussion

The primary focus of this study was to determine if there was a correlation between an individual's family communication patterns in their family of origin and their intention to vote in the general election in 2020. This was executed by using propositions from both FCPT and TPB. The following sections will both summarize the results of this study, as well as explore the practical and theoretical implications and possible directions for future research.

Research Summary

In this section, I will overview the findings of the current study, splitting the discussion into the correlations between the variables of the two theories, the correlations between both theories and the intention to vote, and the research question.

Correlations between FCPT and TPB. The first main section of the results (H1-H4) explored the possible correlations of the FCPT variables and the TPB variables. H1 predicted that conversation orientation would relate positively to the three TPB variables. H1 was partially supported, with positive correlations between conversation and both attitudes and expectations. However, there was no relationship between conversation and control. While attitudes and expectations are oriented toward what the parents are doing and thinking, control speaks to how the child feels. A possible explanation of this finding could be that, while children may be aware of their parents' attitudes and norms, that may not have any significant relationship to how a child sees themselves and their capabilities.

H2-4 predicted that there would be a relationship between warm and cold conformity with each of the TPB variables. H2 predicted that cold conformity would be negatively related to attitudes and control. H2 was not supported in either case. H3 predicted a positive relationship between cold conformity and norms, and was also not supported. H4 predicted positive relationships between warm conformity and all three TPB variables. H4 was partially supported; a potential correlation between warm conformity and attitude was not found. The results of H2 and H3 potentially, in conjunction with the results from H4, imply that cold conformity has little relationship with the foundational beliefs on which a child's intention is built, whereas warm conformity might have that relationship with both a child's understanding of their family's norms and a child's belief that they have control over performing a particular behavior. There are some nuances to FCPT that may also have had an impact on these results.

As previously stated in this thesis, FCPT has been in a state of flux in recent years. Specifically, conformity orientation has been reevaluated by several researchers. Historically, conformity has been viewed as single faceted, but based on its varying operationalization across studies and increasing research that demonstrates that it is more complex, it seems apparent that there is room for change. The idea of breaking conformity into two pieces is a relatively new idea, and while it has been tested several times and found to be a reliable change to the FCPT measure, more change is necessary and inevitable. In analyzing the results from H2-H4, some of the implications of diving into different facets of conformity may have been brought to the surface. It is difficult to assess how a child may perceive cold conformity. Some children may react by focusing on how to appease their elders in order to keep the peace, some may react defiantly, and others may react in other unforeseen ways. Following this line of reasoning there could be several reasons why H2-H4 were not supported to the extent that was anticipated. If a child is chiefly concerned with

appealing the expectations of their elders, they may not be likely to form an attitude about much of anything. Likewise, those children may not think about the level to which they feel like they have control because they are focused on the outcome of being obedient and not causing problems. Similarly, H3 found that children from homes high in cold conformity did not have an increased awareness of household norms; this could be explained by the same idea, that children would be focusing solely on procedure. For example, a child from a home high in cold conformity may be told “In our family, we do not hit”, whereas in a child from a home high in warm conformity might be told “In our family, we do not treat people unkindly.” The first child might focus on the mechanics – do not hit, while the second child will understand that the family norm is to be kind. This line of reasoning fits with the partially supported nature of H4 which found that children from families high in warm conformity are both more aware of family norms and feel that they have control over their behavior. These results could assist with the efforts to develop future studies in an effort to fine-tune FCPT.

FCPT, TPB, and Intention. In order to specifically study potential direct correlations between FCPs and TPB and the intention to seek information about voting and intention to vote, a final set of six hypotheses was developed. The first three hypotheses focused on the three TPB variables. H5, H6, and H7 were all supported, meaning that attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control had a positive relationship on an individual’s intention to seek information about voting and their intention to vote. This is consistent with Ajzen’s assertion that those three beliefs predict a person’s intention (Ajzen, 1991). H8-H10 explored the potential for positive correlations between FCPs and both types of intention. All but one hypothesis (the negative relationship between cold conformity and seeking out information) were not supported, which indicates that there is little to no correlation between those variables and types of intention. While

these results were clearly not anticipated, they do have the potential to make sense. It could be that in families that are high in conversation and families high in warm conformity, children do not feel a need to seek information as they already have access to it at home. Similarly, in a family high in cold conformity, a child may not feel comfortable seeking out information beyond what was presented to them at home by their elders, leading to the support of that hypothesis. The lack of support for all of the other portions of H8-H10 could indicate that, regardless of how much parents try and teach children about civic engagement, that it still comes down to whether or not the child is interested in politics. As the voting age is 18, it could be that a large portion of political socialization takes place after a child has left home or has at least begun to spend a substantial amount of their time away from their families.

Research Question. This study sought to determine not only if the FCPs of an individual's family of origin impact their intention to vote, but also if the fundamental beliefs presented in TPB mediate the relationship between the two. In theory, these two sets of variables could converge to direct or cause a person to want to know more about and/or intend to participate in voting. The nature of this potential relationship was explored using the research question. The research question was partially supported, with the conversation and warm conformity FCP variables successfully mediated by the TPB variables. Cold conformity showed neither a direct or indirect relationship with intention to vote. While the other two variables did show an indirect relationship to intention to vote, these relationships were both negative.

These results seem counterintuitive. This research question was born from a hunch that more conversation could potentially translate into more political participation. As presented in the literature review, a significant amount of research has shown that FCPs impact children throughout their lives, and others have demonstrated that children are politically socialized, at least in part, by

their parents. Cold conformity had neither a direct nor indirect relationship to intention to vote. This was not the anticipated result. The expectation was that families higher in cold conformity would produce children who were less likely to vote. Not only was that not the case, but based solely on this study, it would seem that cold conformity has no impact whatsoever. It could be that children from those families tend toward extremes along a spectrum of self-efficacy development. Some may have experienced a stunted development as they simply followed the path established by others and as such their own ideas and identity are forthcoming. On the other extreme, children made to comply may have embraced the reality or rejected it entirely. These children may have had an accelerated, or even pseudo development of self-efficacy that was highly reactionary. Any development that truly suited the child may have come early and will stay, and any formulative, reactionary developments may require extended periods of time to change. On either end of the development spectrum, the effect of cold conformity may not exist because it either slowed development and directs the child toward a neutral state or it polarizes the child and directs the individual to a heightened awareness of what they may have ultimately become at some future point. Another potential cause for these results is that none, or very few, of the participants came from families high in cold conformity, which could impact the statistical significance of the results.

These conversation and warm conformity results are made further counterintuitive based on some of the demographic questions posed in the survey. The study found that 48.8% of the participants voted in the last election, and when asked how important politics was to them on a 7-point Likert-type scale the average score was 5.49. Based on those results alone, one might assume that those taking the survey were generally politically active. This raises the question: why would families high in conversation or warm conformity, in a population that both find politics important and voted higher than the national average in the 2018 mid-term election, produce children who

were less likely to intend to vote? The respondents of this study had an average age of 20.46. The information that was gathered, even if honestly reported by participants who clearly understood the questions, may have reflected a developing self-concept. This age bracket falls into a time of significant transition. Many views held by emerging adults shift significantly over time. Taking this into consideration, it follows that they may simultaneously hold dissonant views, that with time would sort themselves out. It could be that if the age of the participants was slightly older that the results of this study would have been different, and potentially more informative.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

On its own, FCPT can be used effectively to demonstrate a relation between family communication types and a child's perception of the world and, to some extent, the child's behaviors (Meadowcroft, 1986). However, by applying FCPT in conjunction with TPB, there is the potential that the explanatory power of both theories could be expanded. While FCPT offers an opportunity to generally observe the way that communication patterns may impact a person as an adult, TPB allows for analysis of specific situations. On their own, the FCPT variables did not affect the intention to vote, however when those variables were mediated by the TPB variables correlations emerged. This study confirmed the potential for a powerful kind of synergy between these two theories. As the research question was supported, it strongly suggests that future use of these theories in combination could prove to be highly useful.

There is reason to expect that a connection between FCPs and political participation does exist, even though a number of the hypotheses in this study were not supported. Some studies have shown, using FCPT, that political communication in the family influences children's perception of, and participation in, politics (McDevitt & Chaffee, 2002a; McIntosh et al., 2007; Shulman & DeAndrea, 2014). In their study, Shulman and DeAndrea found that high conversation had more

of an effect than high conformity when it came to political similarity between parents and children. Based on that finding, pluralistic and consensual dyads, both high in conversation, were the most politically similar. This finding was significant because it demonstrated that conversation about the topic was more influential in fostering political similarity between parents and children than the expectation of homogeneity in a more conformity heavy family (Shulman & DeAndrea, 2014). Because this and other studies demonstrated a strong correlation between FCPs and political perspectives of the children, it is important to replicate studies such as this one in an effort to better understand these connections.

The goal of this study was to provide practical, real-world insight for parents and organizations seeking to encourage electoral participation in young adults. If parents are provided information about the most effective way to communicate with their children, they could have an increased ability to effect change in their households. Likewise, political organizations, schools, and candidates for public offices can have more information with which to fine-tune their messages for maximum effectiveness. They might choose to target parents in ads or pamphlets in order to encourage productive conversation in the home. In sum, this thesis sought to provide practical and immediately useful information in an effort to increase voter turnout in the future. Based on the results, there is not sufficient data to provide any tangible direction to parents and organizations. However, this study has successfully provided more information that can guide researchers as they seek to construct effective studies on this subject.

Limitations and Future Research

While there are several limitations of this study, one of the most important is the lack of longitudinal information. Ajzen explains that predicting intention (and the subsequent behavior) can be less accurate the farther away the study is from the eventual behavior. Because this survey

was administered a year before the primary elections, and over a year before the general election, the results could change if it were administered closer to those events (Ajzen, 1988). This study was not intended to explore the translation of intention into behavior. However, it would be interesting to explore whether causal relationships would exist between family communication and actual voting behavior. Future studies should assess that question as well. Another potential limitation is that this study did not determine the nature of the political conversation in the home. It could be that these results could be interpreted differently if more information were given about whether the conversation was positive or negative. As in many studies, self-reporting can obviously have an impact on findings. However, in many cases, including this one, this weakness is less significant when the participant's perspective is the desired data. More information about the participants could also provide valuable data. Information such as student type (field, year, etc.) along with socioeconomic status would allow for more connections to be made when analyzing results.

The findings of this study, while not what was anticipated, clearly illustrate the efficacy of using FCPT and TPB together. Because of this, this study can serve as a vital jumping off point for future studies. With the addition of different types of data collection, more robust results could be achieved. Collection methods such as interviews, or having both the student along with the family of origin would allow for a deeper and more nuanced understanding. The need for family-centered political socialization is as present as ever. Children are socialized through a wider variety of sources than at any other point in our recorded history. This raises the question of whether or not studying the family as a means of political socialization will be important in the future. As socialization outside of the home continues to increase, the need to understand the modern functioning and continuing evolution, of family-centered socialization is relevant and necessary.

While in many ways these results raise more questions than they answer, they serve to further illustrate the need to fill the gap in research.

Conclusion

The goal of this study was to further the very limited body of research seeking to find possible connections between the family and political socialization. The fact that several of the hypotheses were not supported speaks to the importance of further exploration of this topic. There are clearly more questions to be asked, and through the use of these results, researchers can fine-tune their hypotheses and research questions to account for some of the potential limitations that can be present in this type of research. The utility of combining FCPT and TBP was clearly established and has the potential to serve to enhance future research across many fields. As the population of this country continues to grow, politics will continue to grow increasingly polarized, and it will be more important than ever to come to an understanding of how young people come to think what they think and do what they do if we hope to continue to function as a democratic republic.

1. Significance test was based on confidence intervals

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Figures

FIGURE 1

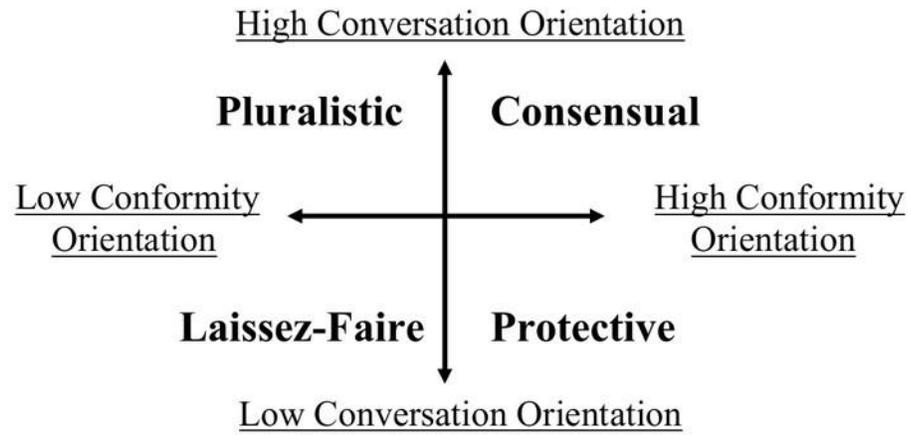


Figure 1: Family Communication Patterns Theory (A. F. Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2006)

FIGURE 2

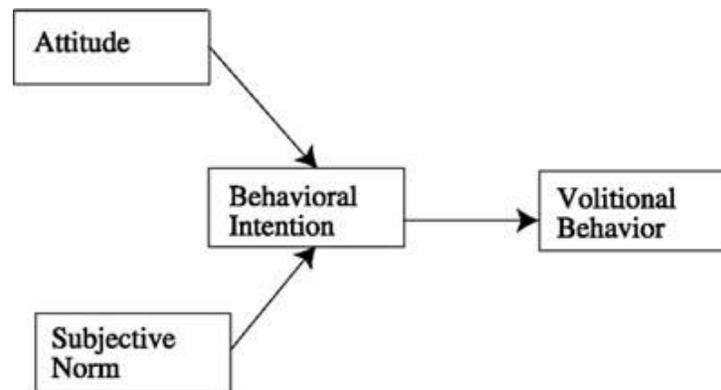


Figure 2: Theory of Reasoned Action (Ajzen & Madden, 1986)

FIGURE 3

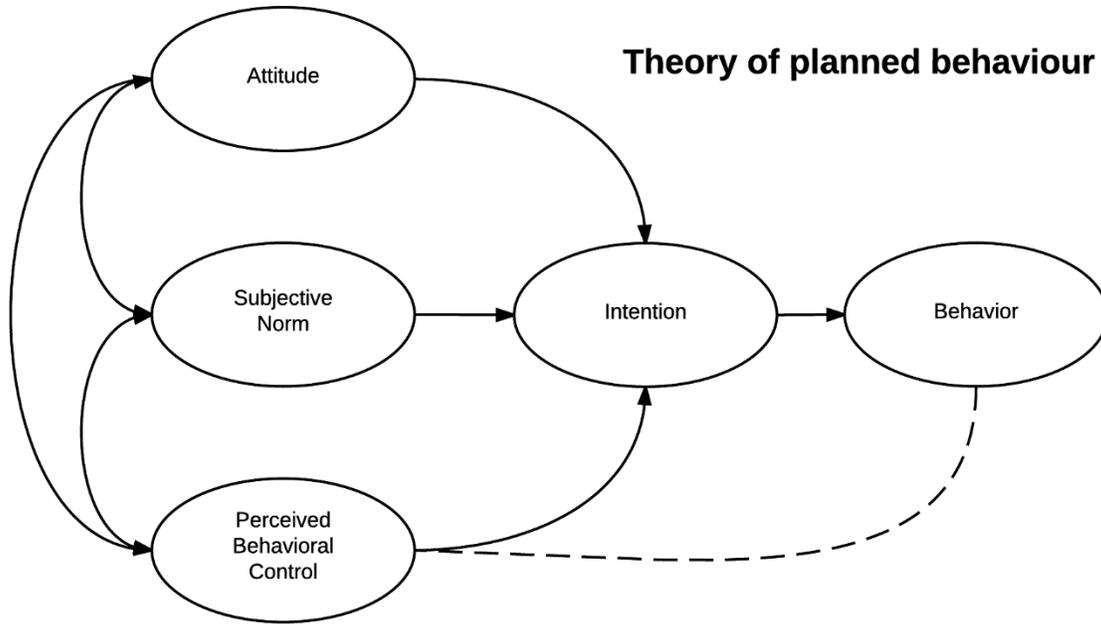


Figure 3: Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991)

FIGURE 4

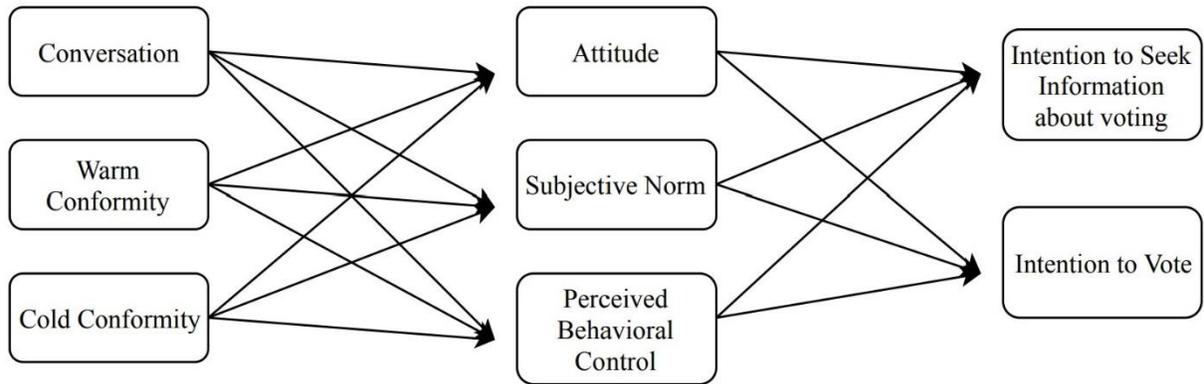


Figure 4: Research Question Model

Tables & Measures

Table 1

Intercorrelations, Internal Reliability Estimates, Means, and Standard Deviations for Variables (N = 200)

Variable	Alpha ¹	M/SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Conversation Orientation	.91	5.02/-1.11							
2. Conformity – Cold	.88	4.00/-1.09	-.48**						
3. Conformity – Warm	.82	5.40/.84	.35**	.20*					
4. Attitudes	.90	5.82/1.05	.19*	-.11	.10				
5. Subjective Norms	.86	5.63/1.00	.24**	-.04	.28**	.59**			
6. Perceived Behavioral Control	.89	6.28/1.01	.05**	-.13	.15*	.25**	.28**		
7. Information Seeking Intention	n/a	6.16/1.27	-.13	-.19*	.06	.46**	.40**	.36**	
8. Intention to Vote	n/a	6.33/1.25	.02	-.08	.10	.45**	.44**	.64**	.60**

Notes. ¹Internal reliability estimates are based on Cronbach's alpha. All variables were measured on a seven-point scale wherein higher values indicate a greater frequency or intensity of the variable. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .001$ (two-tailed)

Table 1: Alphas and Intercorrelations

Family Communication and Voting Intentions Survey

I. Family Measures

INSTRUCTIONS: In this scale, we are interested in knowing how you and your immediate family members AS A WHOLE communicate with one another. Answer the questions according to how much you agree with the statement. The responses range from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

	Strongly <i>Disagree</i>			Strongly <i>Agree</i>			
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. In our family, we often talk about topics like politics and religion where some persons disagree with others.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. My parents often said something like, "Every member of the family should have some say in family decisions."	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. My parents often asked my opinion when the family was talking about something.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. My parents encouraged me to challenge their ideas and beliefs.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. My parents often said something like, "You should always look at both sides of an issue."	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. I usually tell my parents what I am thinking about things.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. I can tell my parents about anything.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8. In our family we often talk about our feelings and emotions.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9. My parents and I often have lone, relaxed conversations about nothing in particular.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10. I really enjoy talking with my parents, even when we disagree.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11. My parents like to hear my opinions, even when they don't agree with me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12. My parents encourage me to express my feelings.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
13. My parents tend to be very open about their emotions.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
14. We often talk as a family about things we have done during the day.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
15. In our family, we often talk about our plans and hopes for the future.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
16. My parents often said something like, "You'll know better when you grow up."	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
17. My parents often say something like, "My ideas are right and you should not question them."	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
18. My parents often said something like, "A child should not argue with adults."	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

- | | | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 19. My parents often say something like, "There are some things that just shouldn't be talked about." | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 20. My parents often say something like, "You should give in on arguments rather than risk making people mad." | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 21. When anything really important is involved, my parents expected me to obey without question. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 22. In our home, parents usually have the last word. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 23. My parents feel that it is important to be the boss. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 24. My parents sometimes become irritated with my views if the views are different from theirs. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 25. If my parents don't approve of it, they don't want to know about it. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 26. When I am at home, I am expected to obey the parents' rules. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 27. My relationship with my family is close. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 28. When we are apart, I miss my family a great deal. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 29. My family and I disclose important personal things to each other. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 30. My family and I have a strong connection. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 31. My family and I want to spend time together. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 32. My family is a priority in my life. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 33. My family and I do a lot of things together. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 34. When I have free time I choose to spend it alone with my family. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 35. I think about my family a lot. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 36. My relationship with my family is important in my life. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 37. I consider my family when making important decisions. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 38. My family insisted on having regular family dinners together. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 39. My parents insisted family members respect one another. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 40. My parents encouraged family members to engage in fun activities such as movies or vacations together. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 41. Everyone was expected to honor the family rules set up by my parents. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 42. My parents expected family members to be honest with one another. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 43. My parents expected me to respect elders such as grandparents | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 44. My parents had strong expectations about my homework and academic success. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 45. In my home, the family followed traditions (such as praying before meals and household chores) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

46. I was expected to spend time with my family during evenings and weekends. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
47. My parents encouraged us to have strong emotional attachments to other family members. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
48. In my family, parents often set unrealistic rules that they expected us to follow. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
49. My parents were often upset if I didn't see eye to eye with them about certain topics (such as politics or religion) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
50. My parents did not allow children much privacy 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
51. My parents enforced strict rules about dating 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
52. My parents often felt they needed to make decisions for me 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
53. My parents discouraged me from forming close relationships outside the family. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
54. My parents did not trust that I could make my own decisions. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
55. My parents discouraged experimentation with new beliefs and values 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

II. Voting Beliefs

A. INSTRUCTIONS: In this scale, we are interested in knowing how you perceive voting in the 2020 presidential election. Circle the number that best corresponds with your opinion. The responses range from 1 (e.g. extremely negative) to 7 (e.g. extremely positive). Please read each question carefully.

For me voting would be...

Extremely Negative	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Extremely Positive
Extremely Harmful	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Extremely Beneficial

Extremely Undesirable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Extremely Desirable
Extremely Unpleasant	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Extremely Pleasant
Extremely Worthless	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Extremely Valuable

B. INSTRUCTIONS: In this scale, we are interested in knowing how you perceive other people's opinions of voting. Circle the number that best corresponds with your opinion. The responses range from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Please read each question carefully.

	Strongly <i>Disagree</i>							Strongly <i>Agree</i>
1. Most people in my family think that I should vote.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
2. It is expected of me by my family that I will vote.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
3. The family members whose opinions I value would want me to vote.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
4. Most people outside my family think that I should vote.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
5. It is expected of me by people outside my family that I will vote	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
6. The people in my life whose opinions I value outside the family would want me to vote.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
7. Many people like me plan on voting.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

C. INSTRUCTIONS: In this scale, we are interested in knowing how much you agree or disagree with the following statements. The responses range from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Please read each question carefully.

	Strongly <i>Disagree</i>							Strongly <i>Agree</i>
1. For me, voting is possible.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
2. If I wanted to vote, it would be easy.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
3. I have a lot of control over whether or not I vote.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
4. It is mostly up to me whether or not I vote.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

III. Voting Intentions

INSTRUCTIONS: For this section of the study, we first need you to answer the following question:

INTENTIONS SCALE: In this scale, we are interested in knowing your intentions to vote in the 2020 presidential election. Circle the number that best corresponds with your opinion. Please read each question carefully.

Very <i>Unlikely</i>	Very <i>Likely</i>
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- | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. How likely is it that you will try to get more information about voting? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 2. How likely is it that you will consider voting in the future? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 3. How likely is it that you will vote in the future? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

IV. About Yourself

Finally, we have some questions to ask you about yourself.

What is your age, in years? _____ What is your sex? (circle one) M F N/A

How would you describe your ethnic background? (check all that apply)

Black/African-American Native American Caucasian
 Asian/Pacific Islander Hispanic Other

What is your family's yearly income?

Less than \$25,000 \$25,000 to \$50,000 \$50,001 to \$75,000
 \$75,001 to \$100,000 More than \$100,000

Which of the following best describes your current marital status? (check one)

Single Divorced
 Married/long term relationship Widowed

Did you vote in the 2016 presidential election?

Yes No

Did you vote in the 2018 midterm election?

Yes No

Are you a member of a political party?

Yes No

Do you know if your parents vote?

Yes No

Do you know if your parents vote?

Yes No

How important are politics to you?

Not Very
 Important Important
 1 2 3 4 5 6 7