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# Family Communication Patterns: Can They Impact Leadership Styles?

Suthida Prasitthipab

Western Kentucky University, [suthida.prasitthipab@wku.edu](mailto:suthida.prasitthipab@wku.edu)

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FAMILY COMMUNICATION PATTERNS:  
CAN THEY IMPACT LEADERSHIP STYLES?

A Thesis  
Presented to  
The Faculty of the Department of Communication  
Western Kentucky University  
Bowling Green, Kentucky

In Partial Fulfillment  
Of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts

By  
Suthida Prasitthipab

August, 2008

FAMILY COMMUNICATION PATTERNS:  
CAN THEY IMPACT LEADERSHIP STYLES?

Date Recommended 7-29-08

Dr. Blair Thompson  
Director of Thesis

Larry Caploway, Ph.D.

Debbie W. Parnum

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Suthida Prasitthipab

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Directed by: Blair Thompson (Chair), Garmon Cecile, and Larry Caillouet

Department of Communication

Western Kentucky University

A plethora of studies has worked on family communication and leadership separately. Little research has combined these two components although they both relate to personality characteristics and communication styles. Therefore, this thesis investigated correlations between leadership styles and family communication patterns during childhood. Two hypotheses were proposed representing the relationship between conformity orientation and task leadership, and between conversation orientation and relation leadership. Faculty, non-academic staff, and students in leadership positions from Western Kentucky University were samples of this study. They completed a questionnaire voluntarily. Family communication pattern scale and Leadership Behavior Descriptive Questionnaire were used in the survey. Pearson Product-Moment correlation (one-tail) was used to examine the two hypotheses. The first hypothesis was significantly supported. The results indicated a positive relationship between conversation orientation and relation leadership. Moreover, data showed that most respondents came from conversation-oriented families and used relation leadership styles.



## CHAPTER ONE

### RATIONALE FOR STUDY

Leaders engage in a variety of communication activities such as formulating and sharing a symbolic vision, developing an open environment for interaction, and establishing relational trust (Hackman & Johnson, 2004). Kouzes and Posner (2002) pointed out that communication processes serve as an important key in leadership success stating that “leadership is a relationship” (p. 20). Through effective communication, leaders will be able to develop strong relationships with their followers, gain trust, and credibility from their people (Kouzes & Posner, 2002). In concert with Kouzes and Posner, Hackman and Johnson (2004) stated that “one factor that contributes to variations in leader effectiveness is communication styles” (p. 36). Positive communication between leaders and followers contributes to the increase of leadership performance and ability. Therefore, leaders in the United States who show willingness to talk and listen to their subordinates tend to be perceived as more credible and attractive.

In spite of the importance of positive communication styles in the leadership processes, not all leaders take an interpersonal orientation (Northouse, 2004). Some leaders focus on tasks over relationships with their followers. Interacting with followers might not be appropriate or important in some constraint situations or some organizations. People carry out their leadership roles in different styles.

Moreover, interpersonal-oriented leaders might not appear as effective in some other cultures. This research presents the concepts of leadership and family communication in American society. Therefore, the researcher recognizes that the results from this study may not generalize to people from non-Western countries.

Researchers have investigated leadership through several approaches (Hackman & Johnson, 2004). Earliest leadership theories developed before 1959 placed emphasis on the traits approach, examining leaders' personal characteristics (Schriesheim & Bird, 1979). Researchers tended to believe that some specific traits were a source of leadership effectiveness. Some leadership researchers argued that not only personal traits but also other surrounding factors, such as situations, followers' characteristics, activities, and goals, play significant roles in leadership performance (Hackman & Johnson, 2004). Accordingly, later researchers focused on leaders' behaviors when interacting with their followers, examined leadership effectiveness in varied situations, and introduced the contingency approach. Currently, researchers pay attention to the transformational approach. Through this view, researchers believe that leaders can influence their followers, encouraging them to share visions and inspiring them to achieve the goals (Schriesheim & Bird, 1979).

In spite of the growing attention paid to the transformational approach in an innovative marketplace, Hackman and Johnson (2004) argued that some personal characteristics significantly increase leadership performance. For example, cognitive traits have a close link to leadership intelligence which indicates ways in which effective leaders solve problems and make decisions. Also, interpersonal traits appear to relate to leaders' communication competence. As mentioned in Hackman and Johnson (2004), "interpersonal factors range from skill-based behaviors, such as the ability to present an effective oral presentation or to manage conflict, to more individual-based factors, such as emotional stability and self-confidence" (p. 67). Clearly, cognitive potential and

effective communication (public or private) remain as desirable attributes for leadership success.

Rosenfeld and Plax (1975) stated that personal and social influences contribute to developing leadership styles. Since family social life during childhood has strong effects on one's personal traits (Barratt, 1995; Berger, 2002; Koesten & Anderson, 2004), it could also influence leadership styles. Hartman and Harris (2001) conducting a study about the role of parental influence in leadership summarized that "parents' styles...were related to student styles, suggesting that the students learned at least some aspects of leadership from their parent early in life" (p. 164). In concert with Hartman and Harris's study, Lyon (2006) also found a significant link between authoritative parental styles and task behaviors in her study. Therefore, leadership styles might associate with family communication patterns during childhood.

Family communication patterns develop uniquely over a relatively long period of time through sharing beliefs, norms, and history among family members (Baxter, Bylund, Imes, & Scheive, 2005; Fitzpatrick, 2004; Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002 a, b). Baxter et al. (2005) emphasized that "these shared visions provide social and cognitive working models for family members, providing them, for example, with normative guidelines for how to behave in the family" (p. 210). Therefore, the interactions in a family play a crucial role in people's lives.

Children from different family orientations tend to develop dissimilar personality characteristics (Huang, 1999); dissimilar communication styles (Avtgis, 1999; Barbato, Graham, & Perse, 2003; Dumlao & Botta, 2000; Elwood & Schrader, 1998; Hsu, 1998; Kelly, et al. 2002; Koesten, 2004; Zhang, 2007); and dissimilar social behaviors

(Fitzpatrick, Marshall, Leutwiler, & Krcmar, 1996). Moreover, family communication patterns also influence children's cognitive processes (Fitzpatrick & Vangelisti, 1995; Koesten & Anderson, 2004) which serve as attributes in improve leadership potential (Hackman & Johnson, 2004). In other words, these cognitive factors relate to leaders' intelligence, the abilities of solving problems and making decisions.

Clearly, family communication patterns have some links with leadership styles because these two variables closely relate to individual's personal development. As posited in Rosenfeld and Plax (1975), personality traits "best discriminate between autocratic and democratic leadership styles" (p. 203). Accordingly, this study is designed to investigate the relationship between leadership styles and family communication patterns.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Leadership styles and family communication patterns serve as the main points of focus in this study. Research of the two concepts suggests that they both relate to people's personality traits and communication styles. This section focuses on leadership theories, leadership styles, family communication, family communication patterns, and the impacts of family communication patterns on one's development.

#### Leadership Theories

Leadership theories have been introduced over the past century, and researchers have tried to identify leaders in various ways. The earliest theories, during the first decade of the twentieth century, could be divided into two major schools: situational leadership and personalistic leadership (Stogdill, 1975). These two dimensions contain several subgroups. Stogdill (1974) investigated prior leadership work throughout the century and identified six leadership theories: Personal-Situational theories, Interaction-Expectation theories, Great Man theories, Environmental theories, Humanistic theories, and Exchange theories. Similarly, the Journal of Managerial Psychology identified four leadership perspectives: the personality, behavioral, contextual and developmental perspectives (*Leadership*, 1997).

The recent trend of leadership studies put emphasis on the transformational process. Through this approach, researchers conceptualize two types of leaders, transactional leaders and transformational leaders (Bass 1981; Burns, 1978). Focusing on leader-follower exchange, transactional leaders motivate their followers by offering rewards or praise in return for tasks completed. Zorn and Violanti (1993) explain this

strategy that “it is an attempt to motivate by meeting immediate, salient needs” (p. 75). In contrast, transformational leaders try to “raise the followers’ consciousness by appealing to high ideals and moral values” (Zorn & Violanti, 1993, p. 75). Bass (1990) clearly describes transformational leadership as it “occurs when leaders broaden and elevate the interests of their employees, when they generate awareness and acceptance of the purposes and mission of the group, and when they stir their employees to look beyond their own self-interest for the good of the group” (p. 21). These characteristics of transformational leadership seem to fit in the current workplace in which leaders should encourage others, empowering employees to become creative, innovative, and passionate.

Overall, Zorn and Violanti (1993) conceptualize three perspectives of leadership studies: behavioral and attitudinal leadership, situational leadership, and transformational leadership. Interestingly, modern researchers clearly point out that effective leaders not only possess intellectual capabilities or attractive traits, but they should also have strong interpersonal skills. They seem to focus on communication processes between leaders and followers.

Focusing on communication, Hackman and Johnson (1994) stated that “leadership competence is the product of communication competence. Leadership effectiveness is enhanced through the development of such communication skills as listening, critical and creative thinking, compliance gaining, encoding and decoding nonverbal messages, and public address” (p. 50). Communication remains as one key to empowering others to work effectively toward the group’s goal. Therefore, from Western perspectives, positive communication between leaders and followers enhances leadership performance.

Several variables, such as personal and social factors, can influence how one would lead. This study investigates one of those variables; whether family communication affects leadership. An important component of this study relates to leadership styles.

### Leadership Styles

Usually, leaders develop a specific pattern or style when interacting with their subordinates. Leadership style refers to “the patterns of behaviors, assumptions, attitudes, or traits exhibited by individuals in attempting to provide leadership” (Zorn & Violanti, 1993). Leadership styles vary depending on several variables such as leaders’ behaviors, leaders’ attitudes, leaders’ traits, and situations. Some leaders pay attention to work and may exert coercive and legitimate power over employees, while some others aim to establish good relationships with their followers and motivate them to share visions and opinions.

Researchers who attempt to understand leadership styles must consider many facets of leadership. A wide variety of leaders’ behaviors and attitudes exists in different contexts. Nonetheless, researchers have argued two major leadership style dimensions: *relation* orientation (also called *consideration*) and *task* orientation (also called *initiation of structure*). A team of researcher at Ohio State University initially identified these two dimensions (Stogdill & Coons, 1957). In Blake and Mouton (1964), these two orientations were designated as *concern for people* and *concern for production* respectively.

Throughout this study the researcher consistently uses relation and task. Task orientation refers to the extent “to which a leader is concerned with attaining the group

or organization's formal goals and completing the task at hand" (Zorn & Violanti, 1993, p. 71). Relation orientation refers to the extent "to which the leader acts in a friendly and supportive manner, shows concern for subordinates, and looks out for their welfare" (Zorn & Violanti, 1993, p. 71).

In addition to three leadership approaches (the behavioral and attitudinal approach, the situational approach, and the transformational approach), Zorn and Violanti (1993) explained that each approach derives different instruments to measure leadership. The behavioral and attitudinal leadership styles serves as the most appropriate approach for this current study because its purpose was to examine links between the two concepts, leadership styles and family communication patterns (FCP), which have been found to relate to individuals' behaviors and personality characteristics. Through the behavioral and attitudinal approach, the three instruments include LBDQ (Leadership Behavior Descriptive Questionnaire), Managerial Grid, and LPC (Least Preferred Coworker) (Zorn & Violanti, 1993).

Researchers at Ohio State University first introduced the LBDQ scale. Several versions of this scale have been used in leadership studies. Through LBDQ, leaders are classified based on the task dimension and the relation dimension. Four types of leaders are derived from LBDQ include high in relation and high in task, high in relation and low in task, low in relation and high in task, and low relation and low in task (Zorn & Violanti, 1993). Hackman and Johnson (1994) noted that effective leaders should display at least moderate levels of both the task orientation and relation orientation.

Managerial Grid was introduced by Blake and Mouton (1964). Similarly to LBDQ, Managerial Grid considers leaders' attitudes toward task and relational issues.



This instrument derives five leadership styles: impoverished leaders (low task and low relation), country club leaders (low task and high relation), authority-obedience leaders (high task and low relation), team leaders (high task and high relation), and middle-of-the-road leaders (moderate task and moderate relation). According to Blake and Mouton, team leaders are perceived as the most effective.

The last instrument, Least Preferred Coworker (LPC), is the scale generally used in Fiedler's contingency model of leadership. According to Zorn and Violanti (1993), "the Least Preferred Coworker (LPC) scale views leadership in terms of stable needs or motivations of leaders, with leaders exhibiting varying levels of needs for task or relational success" (p. 71). High LPC score represents leaders who focus on relation leadership. On the other hand, low LPC score refers to leaders who focus on task leadership.

Leadership style can also be conceptualized as three different groups: democratic leaders, autocratic leaders, and laissez-faire leaders. Democratic leaders get jobs done by using parliamentary procedures and majority decision making (Bass, 1981). These leaders believe that "two heads are better than one" (Hackman & Johnson, 2004). Democratic leaders display supportive and participative communication. They perform effective jobs and also encourage others to participate in creating goals.

Additionally, these leaders ask for other members' attitudes and appreciate others' opinions. Hackman and Johnson (2004) noted that "the democratic leader does not feel intimidated by the suggestions provided by followers but believes that the contributions of others improve the overall quality of decision making" (p. 38). Therefore, these leaders treat their subordinates with care and share rewards and punishments with them.

Therefore, people are more satisfied when working with democratic leaders. Moreover, these leaders also tend to have high influence over others (Hackman & Johnson, 2004; Northouse, 2004).

Autocratic leaders refer to those who tend to focus on tasks over employees' interests and needs (Bass, 1981). Hackman and Johnson (2004) stated that these leaders "believe that followers would not function effectively without direct supervision" (p. 38). Therefore, they strictly and closely supervise followers in order to produce effective work. They also determine rules, policies, and/or procedures (Hackman & Johnson, 2004; Bass, 1981).

Autocratic leaders are not necessarily perceived as negative. When leaders have necessary information to solve problems and run out of time, the autocratic style appears advantageous. Autocratic leaders may have high abilities and intelligence to organize works and reach goals quickly (Hollander, 1978). However, these leaders tend to use one-way communication with their followers and to criticize members' work. Also, they do not usually listen to others' ideas and lack interactive skills (Hackman & Johnson, 2004). In Western culture these leaders are perceived as less desirable.

Finally, leaders who reflect both low task orientation and low relation orientation represent laissez-faire leadership. These leaders tend to have low confidence in their abilities and to avoid confrontations with their people (Bass, 1981). Unlike autocratic leaders, directing and commanding, laissez-faire leaders would rather give freedom to their subordinates to get jobs done. Laissez-faire characteristics differ from the democratic style. To illustrate, laissez-faire leaders rarely participate with a group unless they need to answer questions from their members (Bass, 1981). Accordingly,

subordinates feel “less sense of accomplishment, less clearness of cognitive structure, and less sense of group unity” (Bass, 1981, p. 395). Because of superficial communication between leaders and followers, laissez-faire leaders are less satisfying to members than the other types of leaders.

Scholars have argued whether leadership is learned or inherited. Many of them believe that education and training can enhance leadership potential (Bennis, 2004). However, some personal factors, such as cognitive and interpersonal traits, remain significant (Hackman & Johnson, 2004). People greatly develop these traits and interactive styles during childhood within family communication environments (Avtgis, 1999; Barbato et al., 2003; Dumlao & Botta, 2000; Elwood & Schrader, 1998; Fitzpatrick & Vangelisti, 1995; Fitzpatrick et al., 1996; Hsu, 1998; Huang, 1999; Koesten, 2004; Koesten & Anderson, 2004; Kelly, et al. 2002; Zhang, 2007). More importantly, these personality characteristics carry through adulthood (Chaffee, McLeod, & Atkin, 1971; Huang, 1999; Saphir & Chaffee, 2002). Therefore, it is imperative to study how family communication patterns associate with leadership styles. The next section discusses family communication patterns and how they influence children’s personalities and communication styles.

#### Family and the Importance of Family Communication

Family scholars have defined the family in a variety of ways. Family structure traditionally refers to a group of members who are related by blood ties and “mutual bonds of love and obligation” (Berger, 2002, p. 3). Galvin and Brommel (1999) broadly defined family as “networks of people who share their lives over long periods of time bound by ties of marriage, blood, or commitment, legal or otherwise, who consider

themselves as family and who share a significant history and anticipated future of functioning in a family relationship” (p. 5). This definition is inclusive and consistent with Noller and Fitzpatrick’s view of family (1993).

Noller and Fitzpatrick (1993) focus on transactional processes in the family. The transactional definition of the family “...places a very strong emphasis on communication as the major vehicle through which ties of identity and loyalty are forged” (Noller & Fitzpatrick, 1993, p. 12). Family members consist of a group of intimates who have emotional ties and personally and structurally commit to one another. Importantly, family members interdependently interact and share feelings, thoughts, or behaviors (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2004; Noller & Fitzpatrick, 1993). As a result of such mutual interactions, the family can represent a system in which all parts need to be interrelated and interdependent to maintain balance (Galvin & Brommel, 1999; Stafford & Dainton, 1995; Yingling, 1995). If one part of the family changes, the rest is affected and has to adjust to reassert a sense of balance (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2004).

Leadership emerges as an interactive process (Hackman & Johnson, 2004). Leaders have power over subordinates, rewarding and punishing others, while followers have abilities to complete tasks. If these exchange processes are managed effectively, leader-follower interactions will stay balance. Leader-follower dynamics appear similar to the transactional family explained by Noller and Fitzpatrick (1993). Possibly, children whose parents over use authority may perceive the latter as a role model and become leaders who like to discipline their subordinates strictly.

Over the past two decades, modern American life has changed (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002 a; Noller & Fitzpatrick, 1993). Most women work outside the home;

the divorce rate has steadily increased since the middle of the twentieth century; and the number of single parent families and gay/lesbian families has grown (Afifi & Nussbaum, 2006; Galvin & Brommel, 1999). These phenomena may cause changes in family life. Parents may not spend substantial quality time with their children because of their burdens outside the household. Family members may not communicate as much as they should. The relationships among them may not remain strong. Accordingly, children might receive negative influences outside the family and develop undesirable personality traits and behaviors (Booth-Butterfield & Sidelinger, 1998; Dong, 2005; Fitzpatrick et al., 1999). Again, these negative traits and behaviors may affect leadership styles because children carry these personality characteristics and communication styles into adulthood. These personal factors could affect their leadership styles (Hackman, Ellis, Johnson, & Staley, 1999; Rosenfeld & Plax, 1975)

Effective communication remains as a critical variable for family members to succeed in facing extraordinary change. When parents-child communication and relationship is weak, negative environments at home can forge children's undesirable traits. Some researchers suggest that parents should aim to develop a strong and healthy family communication pattern because it plays a significant role in helping families achieve more flexibility and carry through changes in the modern American life (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002 a; Fitzpatrick, 2004).

#### Family Communication Patterns (FCP)

Family communication patterns (FCP) first proposed by McLeod and Chaffee (1972) represent the assumption that children's perceptions of reality and socialization reflect how parents communicate with their children (McLeod & Chaffee, 1972).

According to Ritchie and Fitzpatrick (1990), FCP are “a set of norms governing the tradeoff between informational and relational objectives of communication” (p. 524).

Researchers have studied these patterns over the last four decades and helped to enhance their validity and expand understanding of family communication. Baxter et al. (2005) clearly identified three generations of family communication pattern development.

In the first generation, McLeod and Chaffee (1972) conceptualized the two main FCP as socio orientation and concept orientation. Parent-child communication that reflects harmony among members and parental authority is characterized as socio-oriented. These children are expected to follow the family’s values and avoid arguing with parents. Therefore, they might become leaders who tend to focus on hierarchy and goals of a group, determine rules, and do not listen to subordinates’ ideas.

In concept orientation, family members focus on the topics of conversations. Discussion involves all speakers’ opinions, so children are allowed to debate a course of action with their parents (McLeod & Chaffee, 1972; Stone & Chaffee, 1970). Accordingly, children from these families tend to focus on the topic under discussion rather than on the speaker’s characteristics or social roles. These children tend to develop effectively interactive traits and become a relation-oriented leader who “refrains from imposing his or her frame of reference on the issues discussed” (Lyon, 2006, p. 2). Classifying family communication into two groups has helped scholars understand the environment within each family that leads to individuals’ social development (Dong, 2005; McLeod & Chaffee, 1972).

Almost two decades later, the second generation of FCP was revealed. Ritchie and Fitzpatrick (1990) argued that socio-oriented questions reflected the use of parental

authority to enforce children's conformity and obedience rather than family harmony, whereas concept-oriented questions reflected "parental supportiveness of children's autonomy and the mutual enjoyment of free and open communication in the family rather than intellectual or conceptual discourse" (Huang, 1999, p. 232). Ritchie and Fitzpatrick (1990) relabeled socio orientation as conformity orientation; and concept orientation as conversation orientation. Also, Ritchie (1991) revised the questions asked of family members.

According to Ritchie and Fitzpatrick (1990), conformity-oriented parents have high authority and exert power over their children. Therefore, this type of parent-child relationships reasonably guides children to become leaders who focus on tasks, often using authority to discipline their subordinates (Hackman & Johnson, 2004). In comparison, children from conversation-oriented families perceive that everyone in the family has equal power to speak up (Ritchie & Fitzpatrick, 1990). These children, therefore, may become relation-oriented leaders who establish positive communication styles, listening others' needs and interests (Hackman & Johnson, 2004).

Finally, the third generation of FCP is based on the concepts of the relational schema theory developed by Baldwin (1992). In family relationship schemas, family members' cognitive processes and behaviors directly and indirectly impact FCP (Fiske & Taylor, 1991; Fitzpatrick & Badzinski, 1994; Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002 a, 2002 b; Koesten & Anderson, 2004). Emphasizing the nature of symbolic processes and mutual influences, everyone within a family interdependently develops relationships and communication patterns over periods of time (Baldwin, 1992; Galvin & Brommel, 1999; Stafford & Dainton, 1995; Yingling, 1995). Therefore, each type of families creates its

own distinguishing characteristics such as beliefs, attitudes, and communication behaviors (Fitzpatrick, 2004; Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002 a, b; Fitzpatrick & Badzinski, 1994). This generation of FCP development contains the same two patterns as the other two generations which are discussed in the next section.

#### *Dimensions of Family Communication*

*Conformity-Orientation (Socio-Orientation):* According to Fitzpatrick (2004), parents from this type of family encourage their children to avoid conflict and to display conformity in conversations. Moreover, parents try to generate homogeneous beliefs and an interdependent climate, telling their children that argumentation is not the best way to solve problems. The younger members are expected to obey the parents or the older family members. Koerner and Fitzpatrick (2002 a, b) labeled the high conformity-oriented family as a traditional family structure (highly cohesive and hierarchical). Therefore, its members favor the family's interest before the individual's. They also try to manipulate their schedule to increase family time.

*Conversation-Orientation (Concept-Orientation):* In the concept-oriented family, parents discuss political and social issues with their children (McLeod & Chaffee, 1972; Chaffee, McLeod, & Wackman, 1973). Family members are independent and equally share their opinions. They spend most of the time discussing with one another to reach a decision. Children from these families are encouraged to communicate openly, exchange ideas, and enjoy sharing values. In Koerner and Fitzpatrick's perspectives (2002 a, b), the high conversation-oriented family is low in hierarchy and cohesion. Therefore, relationships outside the family are considered as important as the family relationships.



The actual family communication is affected by both conformity orientation and conversation orientation. Koerner and Fitzpatrick (2002 a) stated that “to predict the communication patterns of a family, it is not enough to know that this family is high in conformity orientation, because the exact effect this has on family communication depends on that family’s conversation orientation, and vice versa” (p. 86). Crossing both patterns, the researchers proposed four family types: pluralistic, consensual, protective, and laissez-faire (Chaffee et al., 1971; Chaffee et al., 1973).

### *Family Types*

*Pluralistic Families:* The pluralistic family is high on conversation orientation but low on conformity orientation. Parents are “committed to female equality and believe that personal preference rather than role proscriptions should determine an individual’s behavior” (Fitzpatrick, Marshall, Leutwiler, & Krcmar, 1996, p. 385). Parents from these families allow their children to express opinions freely; younger members can make their own decisions without worry as to whether or not it could affect relations with their parents or other older members. Therefore, pluralistic parents and children engage in positive and successful conflict (Fitzpatrick et al., 1996). Children’s decisions appear equal to parents’ or other adults’ (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002 a, b; McLeod & Chaffee, 1972).

*Protective Families:* The protective family is low on conversation orientation but high on conformity orientation. Parents from these families believe in male domination in society. Fathers usually engage in masculine traits (assertion, competence, and rationality). According to Fitzpatrick et al. (1996), “these parents expect boys to be less self-restrained and expect girls to be both self-restrained and socially adept” (p. 386).

Children should obey their parents and remain submissive. Because of the high authority of the parents, children from this type of family tend to get influenced and persuaded by others outside the family easily (Fitzpatrick, 2004).

*Consensual Families:* The consensual family is high on both conversation orientation and conformity orientation. Parents believe in traditional gender role ideologies (Fitzpatrick, 1988, cited in Fitzpatrick et al., 1996). To illustrate, men emerge in leadership roles in society, while women “define themselves in relation to the feminine traits of expression, warmth, and nurturance” (Fitzpatrick et al., 1996, p. 384). Most boys tend to exhibit low level of self-restraint. Therefore, these boys may develop uncooperative behaviors (Fitzpatrick et al., 1996). Overall, parents expect obedience from their children; however they also listen to their children’s opinions. Also, parents try to explain why children should follow the family’s rules and believe in the parents’ decisions (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002 a).

*Laissez-Faire Families:* The laissez-faire family is low on both conversation orientation and conformity orientation. Members in these families have low communication because both parents have little in common. For example, one parent may want to have an open discussion or initiate an open conflict, while the other party avoids it. As a result, children are “exposed to inconsistency in both gender role models and conflict resolution styles” (Fitzpatrick et al., 1996). The parents neither expect to hear their children’s opinions nor to guide their actions because the parents believe that all family members can make their own decisions. Due to the lack of interactions in the family, the children tend to get influenced by social groups outside the family (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002 a; McLeod & Chaffee, 1972).

Although researchers have reinvestigated the concept of family communication patterns (FCP) over time, each type's characteristics remain similar. Socio orientation or conformity orientation refers to the control that parents exert over the child's conformity in a family; and concept orientation or conversation orientation refers to the support given for children to express their opinions. Family communication is a great role of an individual's trait development and communication styles which can indicate leadership styles (Hackman et al., 1999; Rosenfeld & Plax, 1975). Therefore, before understanding how FCP can relate to leadership styles, one must explore to what extent FCP influence individuals' personality characteristics and traits.

#### *FCP and Children's Traits and Personality*

Such factors as social environments, genetic backgrounds, and peers can affect one's traits and personality; however, Huang (1999) emphasized that FCP play an essential role "in cultivating individuals' personality characteristics, which reflect the unique ways they think, feel, and behave" (p. 231). Additionally, FCP guide children to develop a "cognitive mapping of situation" outside the family that they carry through their adulthood (p. 331). Therefore, these characteristics can impact the ways in which people lead others even at later times in their lives.

Huang (1999) studied relationships between FCP and personality characteristics including self-monitoring, self-esteem, desirability of control, self-disclosure, shyness, and sociability. Huang's findings implicated that people from conformity-oriented families were likely to monitor their self-presentations, had low self-esteem, and exhibited shyness. While shyness may derive from biological effects, it can also result from parental treatment. Fitzpatrick et al. (1996) stated that "...although shyness may

serve as a powerful genetic contributor to children's social withdrawal..., manifestations of shyness can be greatly modified by family environment" (p. 383). Moreover, since children from conformity-oriented families are usually limited to discussing their personal interests, they tend to avoid argument. As a result, people from these families may develop non-interactive traits and become leaders who are unlikely to discuss problems with their members (Hackman & Johnson, 2004; Rosenfeld & Plax, 1975), exhibit shyness and fearfulness of developing conflicts and argument.

Conversely, participants from conversation-oriented families tended to self-disclose, to have high self-esteem, to take leadership roles, and to be more sociable (Huang, 1999) because they were likely to be "more concerned with expressing their own beliefs..." (p. 233) rather than to be concerned about what to say and act so as to impress others. Furthermore, the participants from conversation-oriented families reported feeling highly encouraged to speak up within the family where parents appreciate their children's opinions. Children had positive self-image and rated high degrees of sociability. Therefore, people from conversation-oriented families tend to become democratic leaders who are likely to perform interactive communication behaviors (Lyon, 2006).

#### *FCP and Children's Communication Styles*

Apart from personality characteristics, FCP are associated with communication styles. Booth-Butterfield and Sidelinger (1998) noted that "whether positive or negative, there can be little doubt that what occurs in early family communication molds children's communication patterns" (p. 295). Many studies found links between FCP and communication styles such as communication appreciation (Elwood & Schrader, 1998;

Hsu, 1998), communication competence (Koesten, 2004), and conflict styles (Dumlao & Botta, 2000; Zhang, 2007).

As mentioned in Huang's study (1999), low self-esteem links to "anxiety, depression, aggression, ineffectiveness, and social deviance" (p. 234). Therefore, children with high anxiety, mostly from conformity-oriented families, will report high levels of Communication Appreciation (CA). CA refers to the degree of one's anxiety in real or anticipated communication with others (Elwood & Schrader, 1998; Hsu, 1998). Elwood and Schrader's research (1998) found that participants from families high in conformity orientation displayed higher levels of CA than those from families high in conversation orientation. This is because conformity-oriented people tend toward anxiety and self-monitoring (Huang, 1999). As a result, they have more concerns about negative consequences from communicating or making argument with others.

Similar to Elwood and Schrader's study, Hsu (1998) examined the association between CA and family characteristics (including parental acceptance and rejection; family cohesion, expressiveness, and independence; family conflict; and FCP). The results of Hsu's study (1998) indicated that women's CA negatively related to parental acceptance, family cohesion, expressiveness, independence, and conversation orientation and positively linked to conformity orientation, whereas men's CA significantly associated with only FCP. Overall, Elwood and Schrader's study (1998) as well as Hsu's study (1998) reflect that people from conformity-oriented families tend to have high CA. Therefore, they appear to report high scores of the autocratic leadership style because high anxiety in communicating with others may make them avoid confronting and interacting with their subordinates.

Understandably, people who exhibit shyness and anxiety or possess high self-esteem are likely to have low communication skills. According to Koesten (2004), people from pluralistic families (conversation orientation) tended to have more competence in communicating with same-sex peers and romantic partners than did those from laissez-faire families (low in both conversation and conformity orientation) or protective families (conformity orientation). As mentioned by several leadership scholars (Bass, 1981; Yukl, 2006), autocratic leaders tend to criticize others' works, and are less likely to listen to talk with others (Bass, 1981; Lyon, 2006). These characteristics are clearly perceived as impersonal communication in the leadership process.

Several researchers found FCP related to conflicts, a process that certainly occurs in leader-follower relationships (Berger, 2002; Campbell, 1997; Hackman & Johnson, 2004; Yukl, 2006). Conflict is "an expressed struggle (Wilmot & Hocker, 2001, p. 41). Since individuals first develop relationships with their family members, they learn how conflicts work for the first time within the family (Dumlao & Botta, 2000). Moreover, Dumlao and Botta (2000) emphasized relational schemata that explain cognition development in close relationships and relate to how people interpret incoming information. Those informational and relational processes link to people's conflict management styles; therefore, they also relate to individuals' leadership styles.

Dumlao and Botta (2000) investigated the relationship between FCP and conflict behaviors that young adults use with their fathers. The researchers classified five conflict styles in their research, including avoiding, accommodating, confronting, compromising, and collaborating. The positive conflict styles assumed to maintain healthy family relationships are collaborating and accommodating (Dumlao & Botta, 2000). However,

because of differing father-child communication characteristics, young adults may react differently toward conflicts. According to Dumlao and Botta's findings, children from protective families (conformity orientation) tended to conform to parents' rules to maintain a harmonious environment in the family. Thus, these young adults generally avoided or accommodated, and did not collaborate with their fathers when facing conflicts.

In concert with Dumlao and Botta's research, Zhang (2007) also studied the relationship between FCP and children's conflict styles in China. Unlike the American, collectivistic Chinese culture has large power distance and is high context (Hofstede, 1980). Surveying Chinese young adults, Zhang found that conformity-oriented participants preferred to use the competing and the avoiding style of conflict with their parents. Possibly, these characteristics may be consistent with autocratic styles of leadership. To illustrate, while autocratic leaders can exert power and address others for their own preferences (Hackman & Johnson, 2004), they also avoid confronting others because they might lack unfamiliarity with argumentative climates. Furthermore, since they likely set their own goals and determine rules (Hackman & Johnson, 2004), they tend to expect others to follow those rules without questions and tend not to listen to others when having conflicts. As a result, people from conformity-oriented families should report high levels of autocratic styles of leadership communication.

In pluralistic families (conversation orientation) fathers encourage their children in expressing their own ideas. Seldom using accommodating and avoiding styles, the pluralistic participants also reported using conversations to collaborate rather than confront their fathers when they have conflicts. Zhang (2007) found that conversation-

oriented children reported using collaborating and compromising styles when they had conflicts with their parents. Understandably, these people can become democratic leaders who willingly discuss problems and collaborate with members when having conflicts (Hackman & Johnson, 2004).

FCP impact children in many respects as mentioned above. They contribute significantly to developing people's cognitions and behaviors. These processes guide them to develop communicative styles when interacting with their parents or other family members.

### Family Communication Patterns and Leadership Styles

Family communication patterns play a crucial role in people's lives because personality traits, communication styles, and social behaviors developed within family environments remain until people become adults (Chaffee et al., 1971; Huang, 1999; Saphir & Chaffee, 2002). Chaffee et al. (1971) illustrated that "the influence of family communication, as generalized to other situations, persists well into adulthood; it appears to become part of the developing individual's 'personality' that he carries outside the home" (331). More importantly, these personal variables can become influential factors in leadership processes (Hackman & Johnson, 2004; Rosenfeld & Plax, 1975).

Therefore, family communication patterns appear associated with leadership styles.

### Statement of Problems and Hypotheses

Little research defines the relationships between family communication and leadership styles. A few studies examined leadership styles and familial factors. For example, Lyon (2006) investigated the relationship of managers' perceptions of their leadership styles to parenting styles in their families of origin (i.e. their parents' parenting



styles). According to Lyon's findings (2006), one significant hypothesis concluded that managers with authoritative mothers (those who "provide firm and clear guidelines for their children's behavior, use reasoning, display flexibility and warmth, and avoid restricting their children") reported as democratic leaders (p. 6). Moreover, Hartman and Harris (2001) found that children perceived their parent leadership styles and suggested that "the students [in their study] learned at least some aspects of leadership from their parents early in life" (p. 164).

The current study was proposed in part to replicate Lyon's and Harman and Harris's studies to make certain that leadership styles relate to family experiences. However, the current study focused on family communication patterns (FCP) during childhood instead of parenting styles because it has appeared as a significant factor of people's social development and communicative traits (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002 a, b; Huang, 1999). In addition, this study intended to emphasize that communication is a critical process in the family and in individual's development, and that it can predict leadership styles (Hackman & Johnson, 2004; Rosenfeld & Plax, 1975).

Because of the effects of FCP that remain until adulthood (Chaffee et al., 1971; Saphir & Chaffee, 2002; Huang, 1999), this study investigated the link between leadership styles and FCP. Thus, the following research question was proposed:

RQ: What correlations exist between leadership styles and family communication patterns during childhood?

As discussed earlier, people from different families are likely to perform different behaviors and to have different traits. Children from conformity-oriented families are expected to follow the family's rules to maintain harmony in the family (Fitzpatrick,

2004). In order to have a quality time in family, these children are taught to favor the family's interest and time over individuals' interests and schedules. Hence, they, when becoming leaders who hold high authority, may want to set their own rules, procedures, and goals regardless of exchanging ideas with subordinates. Moreover, complying with older family members' authority during childhood, people from conformity-oriented families may expect their subordinates to display submissiveness and to accept the leaders' authority. Thus, these children are likely to become autocratic leaders in the future, focusing on tasks and paying no attention to relationships, as described in Rosenfeld and Plax (1975) that autocratic leaders "attempt to answer more questions, ask fewer questions, and are less concerned with encouraging participation" (p. 205). Accordingly, participants who report strong conformity orientation should have high a score of task leadership. The first hypothesis of the research is:

H<sub>1</sub>: Participants who report a high level of conformity orientation during childhood will have a high score of task leadership.

In comparison, people who score high in conversation orientation tend to communicate openly, exchange ideas, and enjoy sharing values in the family. Children in conversation-oriented families tend to be motivated to communicate by relation-oriented motives such as expressing affection, pleasure, and relaxation (Barbato, Graham, & Perse, 2003). Moreover, children can participate in making family decisions or sharing attitudes and ideas for family's rules. As mentioned in Lyon (2006), parents emerge as their children's role model. Therefore, in conversation-oriented families, parents show their children that low authority people can participate equally in a group's decision making to reach a group's goal. Because of these democratic characteristics in the

family, children are hypothesized to become democratic leaders who will reach a group's goal by listening to different views and opinions from their subordinates. Therefore, leaders from conversation-oriented families should have a high score of relation orientation; and the second hypothesis of the study is:

H<sub>2</sub>: Participants who report a high level of conversation orientation during childhood will have a high score of relation leadership.

Overall, FCP have emerged as a key to developing individuals' personal traits, thinking, and interactive behaviors (Chaffee et al., 1971; Dumlao & Botta, 2000; Elwood & Schrader, 1998; Fitzpatrick & Koerner, 2002 a, b; Hsu, 1998; Huang, 1999; Koesten, 2004; Saphir & Chaffee, 2002; Zhang, 2007). These characteristics can carry forward into the leadership process (Hackman & Johnson, 2004; Rosenfeld & Plax, 1975) because family experiences affect people throughout their lives. Several behaviors deriving from a particular FCP can generate a particular leadership style as hypothesized above.

## CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

According to the literature, family communication patterns and leadership styles are logically and reasonably linked. Quantitative methods were used in this study to investigate the relationships of those two variables. Since the research required descriptive information from participants relating to their childhood and leadership experiences, survey methods were an appropriate option to categorize the family communication patterns in which the participants grew up and to explore leadership behaviors. After conducting surveys, the researcher statistically examined data and information collected from the questionnaire by using SPSS.

### *Participants*

Through convenience sampling, the respondents were composed of 23 faculty (31.5 %), 10 staff (13.7 %), and 40 students (54.8 %) who play a leadership role at a large university. A total of 73 participants included 33 males (45.2%) and 40 females (54.8%), with a majority of Caucasians (86.3 %,  $n = 63$ ; 8.2% African American,  $n = 6$ ; 2.7% Native American,  $n = 2$ ; 1.4% Asian American/Asian/Pacific Islander,  $n = 1$ ; and 1.4% Bi-/Multiracial,  $n = 1$ ). Out of 73 respondents, 82.2 % came from families that have both parents ( $n = 60$ ), with 9.5 % ( $n = 7$ ) from single-parent families and 8.2 % ( $n = 6$ ) from step families. The descriptive data revealed that the participants ranged in age from 19 to 69 ( $M = 37.14$ ,  $SD = 17.129$ ).

### *Procedures*

Using convenience sampling, the participants were asked to voluntarily complete a questionnaire which includes three sections: Family Communication Pattern (FCP) scale, Leader Behavior Descriptive Questionnaire (LBDQ), and demographic information

such as year born, gender, ethnicity, highest degree/major earned, current position, and years in the position (see all three sections in appendix E, F, G respectively). To minimize order effects, the LBDQ scale was first presented, followed with the FCP scale, and finally the demographic questionnaire. Before distributing the survey, the proposal was submitted to the Human Subjects Review Board (HSRB) in order for the IRB completion. The acknowledgment letters and the questionnaire were sent via email. The researcher got respondents' email addresses from mail groups on the university webmail. Then, they completed the questionnaire through a web-based program in order to protect anonymity.

### *Instruments*

*Leadership Styles (LS):* The Leader Behavior Description Questionnaire (LBDQ) contains a relation dimension and a task dimension. LBDQ developed by Hemphill and Coons (1957) was used in this study to examine the participants' self-perception of their leadership styles. The participants were asked to choose the degree of (dis)agreement (a 5-point Likert-scale; 1= Very Rarely, 5= Very Often) toward 30 statements that applied to them.

All of the odd-numbered questions refer to task leadership and all of the even-numbered questions refer to relation leadership. Question 8, 20, and 22 are designed as reflected items (reverse scored). Task orientation is represented by items such as "I schedule the work to be done" and "I ask that group members follow standard rules and regulations." Relation orientation is represented by items such as "I back up the members in their action" and "I find time to listen to group members." According to Hackman et al.'s study (1999), this LBDQ is quite reliable. In their study, cronbach's

alpha for the relation dimension was .89 and for the task dimension was .80 (Hackman et al., 1999). All items are shown in Appendix E. Although there are many effective instruments to investigate leadership styles, the researcher chose LBDQ because this study aimed to understand leadership styles through the behavioural and attitudinal approach.

*Family Communication Patterns (FCP):* The scale for examining FCP was developed by Tim and Masland (1985), containing a concept/conversation dimension and a social/conformity dimension. Dong (2005) applied this scale to his study and found that reliable. The scale includes six items for concept (conversation) orientation (alpha = .80). This dimension is represented by items such as “Your parents often tell you that you should look at both sides of issue” and “Your parents often tell you that every family member has some say.” The other four items measure social (conformity) orientation (alpha = .79). This dimension is represented by items such as “Your parents often tell you that their ideas are right and you shouldn’t argue” and “Your parents often tell you that you will know better when you grow up.” Participants were asked to agree or disagree on a 5-point Likert scale (1= Very Rarely, 5= Very Often). All items are shown in Appendix F.

#### *Method of Data Analysis*

Descriptive analysis and Pearson Product-Moment correlations (one-tailed) were used in this study. Descriptive data show the average score, SD, and range of the four factors (conformity orientation, conversation orientation, task leadership, and relation leadership). To examine the two hypotheses, two correlations were conducted. Firstly,

conformity scores and task scores were assessed to test the first hypothesis. Secondly, conversation scores and relation scores were assessed to test the second hypothesis.

Previous studies have shown that conversation-oriented families cultivate higher degrees of social skills, problem-solving skills, and leadership ability than conformity-oriented families (Elwood & Schrader, 1998; Huang, 1999). Moreover, FCP has been linked with children's traits which persist into their adulthood. Therefore, both hypotheses should have been supported.

## CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

The information from the Easy Survey Package was imported into SPSS to create a system file. SPSS served as the main program analysing data in this study. The questionnaire derived information about leadership styles, family communication patterns, and descriptive data. The survey revealed some interesting results in answering the research question and testing the two hypotheses.

### *Results*

Table 1 reports descriptive data of four key variables (from the two scales, FCP and LBDQ). They include the conformity-oriented family, the conversation-oriented family, task leadership, and relation leadership. Each variable has an average score, *SD*, and range as shown in the table 1. According to these results, respondents more often came from conversation families than conformity families ( $M = 21.37$ ,  $SD = 4.474$ ), and most of them reported using relation leadership styles ( $M = 61.48$ ,  $SD = 5.199$ ). This reflected that most respondents from this study tended to value freedom and equality of everyone in participating and communicating with others within the family and at work.



Table 1: Descriptive Analysis of Key Variables

<b>Variables</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>Range</b>
Conformity Orientation	73	11.22	3.355	16
Conversation Orientation	73	21.37	4.474	23
Task Orientation	73	53.89	6.520	40
Relation Orientation	73	61.48	5.199	25

Note. Mean: An average score of each factor of the two scales (FCP and LBDQ)

in the sample of 73.

This study used Pearson Product-Moment correlations (one-tailed) to investigate the two hypotheses. The first hypothesis assumed a positive relationship between conformity orientation and task leadership. These two variables had no relationship. Conformity-oriented experiences did not affect these respondents' leadership styles in the way that had been hypothesized. Conversely, conformity orientation was linked negatively but non-significantly to task leadership ( $r = -.121$ ;  $p > .05$ , shown in table 2).

Table 2: Correlation Results: Conformity and Task Leadership

		FCPCONF	LSTASK
FCPCONF	Pearson Correlation	1	-.121
	Sig. (1-tailed)		.153
	N	73	73
LSTASK	Pearson Correlation	-.121	1
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.153	
	N	73	73

Note. FCPCONF: Conformity orientation

LSTASK: Task leadership

The second hypothesis assumed a positive relationship between conversation orientation and relation leadership. According to the SPSS correlation analysis, these two variables had a slightly positive relationship ( $r = .244$ ;  $p < .05$ , shown in table 3).

Conversation orientation was significantly associated with relation leadership. People from conversation families tended to become relation-oriented leaders.

Table 3: Correlation Results: Conversation and Relation

## Leadership

		FCPCONV	LSRELAT
FCPCONV	Pearson Correlation	1	.244*
	Sig. (1-tailed)		.019
	N	73	73
LSRELAT	Pearson Correlation	.244*	1
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.019	
	N	73	73

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (1-tailed).

Note. FCPCONV: Conversation orientation

LSRELAT: Relation leadership

In addition to conducting correlation analysis in the whole group of respondents, the researcher also examined correlations of the two variables (FCP and leadership styles) in five subgroups of the respondents. They included: 1.) The subgroup of respondents categorized according to age, 2.) The subgroup of respondents categorized according to status, 3.) The subgroup of respondents categorized according to gender, 4.) The subgroup of respondents categorized according to leadership courses taken, and 5.) The subgroup of respondents categorized according to years in leadership positions.

Classifying the data by age, respondents were divided into two groups, a 19-24 age-group and a 25-69 age-group. In the 19-24 age group the results showed no link

between the two variables. The correlation coefficient between conformity and task relationship ( $r_1$ ), and between conversation orientation and relation leadership ( $r_2$ ) were -.229 and .205 (with  $p_1 = .093$  and  $p_2 = .119$ ) respectively. In the 25-69 age-group, the result showed a significantly positive relationship between conversation orientation and relation leadership ( $r_2 = .283$ ,  $p_2 = .042$ ). However, in this subgroup conformity orientation was not significantly associated with task leadership as assumed in the hypothesis 1 ( $r_1 = .021$ ,  $p_1 = .450$ ).

Classifying the data by status, the study analyzed correlations between the two variables in three groups of respondents: faculty, non-academic staff, and students. A positive relationship between conversation orientation and relation leadership was strongly and significantly found in the non-academic staff as assumed in the hypothesis 2 ( $r_2 = .555$ ,  $p_2 = .048$ ). However, the hypothesis 1 was not significantly proved in this group ( $r_1 = -.062$ ,  $p_1 = .433$ ). Moreover, both hypotheses were denied in the subgroup of faculty leaders ( $r_1 = .065$ ,  $p_1 = .384$ ;  $r_2 = .213$ ,  $p_2 = .164$  respectively), and in the subgroup of student ( $r_1 = -.246$ ,  $p_1 = .063$ ;  $r_2 = .235$ ,  $p_2 = .072$  respectively).

Classifying the data by gender, a significant relationship between conversation orientation and relation leadership was found only in women ( $r_2 = .277$ ,  $p_2 = .042 < .05$ ). However, the hypothesis 1 was not significantly proved in female participants ( $r_1 = -.219$ ,  $p_1 = .087$ ). Both hypotheses were disproved in male participants ( $r_1 = .096$ ,  $p_1 = .297$ ;  $r_2 = .246$ ,  $p_2 = .084$ ).

The participants who have never taken leadership courses showed a significant relationship between conversation orientation and relation leadership ( $r = .338$ ,  $p = .037$ ). No significant relationship between the two variables was found in the group of those

who have taken one or more leadership courses ( $r_1 = -.085, p_1 = .291; r_2 = .180, p_2 = .122$ ).

Classifying the data by years that respondents have been in leadership positions, the researcher had three subgroups. The results did not support the two hypotheses in any of these subgroups: those who have been in the leadership positions for one year ( $r_1 = -.285, p_1 = .094; r_2 = .314, p_2 = .072$ ); those who have been in the leadership positions for two, three, and four years ( $r_1 = -.268, p_1 = .108; r_2 = .017, p_2 = .469$ ); and those who have been in the leadership positions for more than five years ( $r_1 = -.139, p_1 = .244; r_2 = .278, p_2 = .080$ ).

Table 4: Correlation Results: FCPCONF and LSTASK, and FCPCONV and LSRELAT  
in Subgroups

		FCPCONF and LSTASK		FCPCONV and LSRELAT	
		$r_1$	$p_1$	$r_2$	$p_2$
Leader age (years)	19-24	-.229	.093	.205	.119
	25-69	.021	.450	.283*	.042
Leader status	Faculty	.065	.384	.213	.164
	Non-Aca	-.062	.433	.555*	.048
	Student	-.246	.063	.235	.072
Leader gender	male	.096	.297	.246	.084
	female	-.219	.087	.277*	.042
Leadership courses taken	None	-.185	.168	.338*	.037
	$\geq 1$	-.085	.291	.180	.122
Years in leadership positions	1	-.285	.094	.314	.072
	2, 3, 4	-.268	.108	.017	.469
	$\geq 5$	.139	.244	.278	.080

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (1-tailed).

Note.  $r_1$  and  $r_2$ : Pearson correlation for hypothesis 1 and 2 respectively

$p_1$  and  $p_2$ : Sig. (one-tail) for hypothesis 1 and 2 respectively

FCPCONF: Conformity orientation

LSTASK: Task leadership

FCPCONV: Conversation orientation

LSRELAT: Relation leadership

Non-Aca: Non-academic leaders

Overall, findings suggested that conformity orientation and task leadership had no associations, while conversation orientation and relation leadership had a slightly link. Moreover, the second hypothesis was strongly supported in the subgroup of non-academic staff. In spite of a small size of sample ( $N = 10$ , 13.7 %), the correlation between conversation orientation and relation leadership was significantly positive in the non-academic staff.

## CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

The researcher used descriptive analysis to understand general characteristics of the samples and also used Pearson Product-Moment correlation analysis to investigate relationships of the two variables (family communication patterns and leadership styles). Leadership styles and capabilities could vary depending on a wide range of variables such as family and childhood experiences (Burns, 1978), education, age, cohort history, and leader predispositions and preferences (Hunt, 1991). The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between leadership styles and family communication patterns (FCP) during childhood. Two hypotheses were posited reflecting the associations between the two patterns of family communication and two orientations of leadership styles. This chapter contains conclusion, implications, limitations, and future research.

### *Conclusion*

Although these respondents work at the university, they serve different departments and have dissimilar status; they come from academic departments, non academic departments, and student organizations. Moreover, the range of age in this group of respondents appeared quite high (19-69). As a result, this study also examined the correlations between FCP and Leadership styles in subgroups of the respondents classified by gender, age, status, leadership course taken, and years in positions.

Each variable contains two factors. The first variable (FCP) consists of conformity orientation and conversation orientation. The second variable (leadership styles) consists of task leadership and relation leadership. Therefore, in each group of the respondents, the researcher conducted two correlations— examining links between



conformity orientation and task leadership, and links between conversation orientation and relation leadership. Overall, this research analyzed twelve correlations.

According to the results, descriptive analysis indicates that most respondents came from conversation-oriented families and that they tended to use relation leadership styles at work. Clearly, these findings reflect Hofstede's work (1980) about culture and human values. Hofstede (1980) conceptualized four cultural dimensions that affect human values—power distance, individualism, masculinity, and uncertainty avoidance. In concert with Hofstede's work (1980), a multicultural study of leadership (GLOBE) by House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman, and Gupta (2004) revealed that the United States subscribes to individualism, low-context communication, and low-power distance. Therefore, American people tend to have independent views of self. They prefer communicating with clear verbal messages rather than perceiving and translating messages from context (House et al. 2004).

This study was conducted in the United States; most respondents (86.3%) were Caucasian. Not surprisingly, the results reflect American communication styles. Most respondents generally value freedom and equality of everyone to participate in discussion within their families (conversation orientation). They also put emphasis on encouraging followers to express ideas and opinions in leadership process (relation leadership). The results also support prior findings from Shearman and Dumlao's study (2006). Shearman and Dumlao conducted research about FCP across cultures and found that American families reported a higher score of conversation orientation than did Japanese counterparts.

Examining the two hypotheses of the study, the results did not support the first hypothesis ( $H_1$ : Participants who report a high level of conformity orientation during childhood will have a high score of task leadership). Interestingly, in this study, leaders from conformity-oriented families that focus on parental authority and conformity of members' opinions were unlikely to indicate problems in sharing ideas or balancing power in work related groups. Although prior research has shown that children from these families tend to appear concerned about their self-presentations, to display low self-esteem, to report high levels of communication appreciation, and to exhibit shyness, these low social skills/traits seem not to have hindered them in establishing relationships with their subordinates. According to these results, family experiences do not always determine people's leadership styles although prior findings claimed that FCP appear to influence several aspects of social lives on individuals. Therefore, other factors such as education, peers, leadership training, and workplace environment could possibly remain more influential in developing of leadership styles.

The analysis did significantly support the second hypothesis ( $H_2$ : Participants who report a high level of conversation orientation during childhood will have a high score of relation leadership). People from families focusing on conversation over conformity would more likely become relation-oriented leaders. Parents from conversation-oriented families encourage their children to express ideas, listen to the latter's likes and dislikes, and do not feel intimidated when the latter argue with the former. Accordingly, the results clearly indicate that leaders from these families value equality of a group's participants in communicating and sharing ideas.

### *Implications and Directions for Future Research*

There are interesting implications of the correlation analysis. First, communication processes serve as an important contributor in leadership success, as noted in Hackman and Johnson (2004) and several other leadership studies in the United States. Conformity orientation did not link with task leadership as assumed in the first hypothesis. No matter in what family communication patterns people grew up, effective leaders in this study in American culture tend to learn to communicate effectively (public and private communication), focusing on relation orientation.

Most respondents from this study had high scores on the relation dimension. This may be due to several reasons. For example, American culture has a low power distance. (Hofstede, 1980). Therefore, American people tend to value equality and freedom of every participant in a group of communication. Moreover, leaders who use relation-oriented styles are perceived as effective and desirable (Hackman & Johnson, 2004). Respondents may have reported high scores on relation leadership because it is perceived as positive in this society. Specifically, this study used self-perceived leadership scale. As a result, social desirability effect may have become another reason that respondents in this study often reported relation leadership styles.

The second implication deriving from this study represents that later life experiences and American culture can have greater effects on leadership styles than those familial experiences in early life. In fact, leadership studies in the United States clearly claim that participative leaders, democratic leaders, and team leaders are perceived as effective (Blake & Mouton, 1964; Hackman & Johnson, 2004). Although family communication patterns (FCP) serve as the influential impacts on developing individuals'

personality characteristics (Fitzpatrick, 2004; Huang, 1999), FCP do not appear to strongly affect leadership processes. Social experiences after childhood including education, work environment, fields of work, peers, and colleagues may serve as the main contribution to shape one's leadership styles.

According to the results in this study, the effects of education appeared very significant in developing leadership styles. Most participants of this study have received high education (46.6 % having graduate degree) and have taken at least one leadership courses (60.3 %). Therefore, American education and leadership training might form a reason why most of these samples, though coming from conformity-oriented families, often reported relation leadership.

Interestingly, later research might examine effects of Western education and culture on communication styles and personality characteristics because these personal factors appear to relate to leadership styles. How would these students differ from Americans if they came from a different culture and value in a different leadership style? Would they be able to adjust to new environments? Would the background from their home countries become a greater effect than would American education? Several studies have called for attention on the preparation of international students for higher degree study in Western institutions, particularly in the United States (Davies, 2007; Lee, Bei, DeVaney, 2007; and Prue, 2004). Chapel and Wang (1998) stated that "compared to those from middle-class U.S. families, international students run a greater risk of altering, or even losing, their own cultural values and identities in order to ease cultural conflicts and to receive positive comments on their writing" (p. 114). These lines of research may

shed light on some hidden areas of cultural effects in international students' personal and leadership development.

The third implication appears to support Rosenfeld and Plax's statements (1975) in that both personal and social factors influence leadership styles. Although the first hypothesis was disproved, this study showed a slightly positive link between conversation orientation and relation leadership as assumed in the second hypothesis. Family communication patterns, claimed to determine personal characteristics (Fitzpatrick, 2004; Huang, 1999), remain related to leadership styles. People from conversation-oriented families believe in independence, have low levels of communication appreciation, self disclose, and show high self-esteem (Fitzpatrick, 2004; Fitzpatrick & Ritchie, 1994). When these people become leaders, not surprisingly, they still aim to ask for shared ideas, needs, and interests from their subordinates.

### *Limitations*

Although many studies have applied the family communication patterns (FCP) and LBDQ scale and found both reliable and valid, the results of the study relied solely on self-reports. Thus, participants may have interpreted questions differently. Also, social desirability effect could have happened. The participants may have answered questions and perceived the self and others with intentional or unintentional bias. Moreover, parts of the study relied on respondents' memories of childhood. Therefore, information from the FCP scale could have been confounded by intervening events. Additional perceptions from people around the participants such as other family members and coworkers are warranted.

Importantly, the sample of the study was very small and limited to one university. In this small group, self selection bias could have been a factor affecting the results. To illustrate, the number of autocratic leaders on the campus may have refused to participate in the study because they were asked to complete the questionnaire voluntarily. This might have resulted high scores of relation-oriented styles. Results may produce clearer and wider implications if later studies can expand the group sampled.

Overall, this finding reveals interesting implications, proving that several variables affect leadership styles. Although several family communication scholars have claimed that FCP appears a strong effect on individual's development, familial background in this study appear to have little effect on leadership styles of individuals. People from conformity-oriented families may possess introvert traits, may value conformity, or may have weak argumentative skills; however, they may become leaders who like interpersonally to communicate with their subordinates. Therefore, the findings show quite clearly that "leadership can be learned." People can develop their leadership styles.

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## Appendix A

## The Official Approval Letter from HSRB

WESTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY  
Human Subjects Review Board  
Office of Sponsored Programs  
301 Potter Hall  
270-745-4652; Fax 270-745-4211  
E-mail: Sean.Rubino@wku.edu

In future correspondence please refer to HS08-154, March 20, 2008

Suthida Prasitthipab  
c/o Dr. Blair Thompson  
Communication  
WKU

Dear Suthida:

Your revision to your research project, "Family Communication Patterns: Can They Impact Leadership Styles?" was reviewed by the HSRB and it has been determined that risks to subjects are: (1) minimized and reasonable; and that (2) research procedures are consistent with a sound research design and do not expose the subjects to unnecessary risk. Reviewers determined that: (1) benefits to subjects are considered along with the importance of the topic and that outcomes are reasonable; (2) selection of subjects is equitable; and (3) the purposes of the research and the research setting is amenable to subjects' welfare and producing desired outcomes; that indications of coercion or prejudice are absent, and that participation is clearly voluntary.

1. In addition, the IRB found that you need to orient participants as follows: (1) signed informed consent is not required as "clicking" on the indicated link will imply consent; (2) Provision is made for collecting, using and storing data in a manner that protects the safety and privacy of the subjects and the confidentiality of the data. (3) Appropriate safeguards are included to protect the rights and welfare of the subjects.

**This project is therefore approved at the Exempt Review Level**

2. Please note that the institution is not responsible for any actions regarding this protocol before approval. If you expand the project at a later date to use other instruments please re-apply. Copies of your request for human subjects review, your application, and this approval, are maintained in the Office of Sponsored Programs at the above address. Please report any changes to this approved protocol to this office.

Sincerely,

Sean Rubino, M.P.A.  
Compliance Manager  
Office of Sponsored Programs  
Western Kentucky University



## Appendix B

### Official Preamble Letter

Dear Participants,

You are being asked to participate in a research project conducted through Western Kentucky University. We appreciate the time spent in answering the questions because your views are important to us. The University requires that you consent to participate in this study.

This letter explains in detail the purpose of the project, the study procedures, and the potential benefits and possible risks of participation. Please read this explanation and feel free to discuss with the researcher any questions you may have.

1. **Nature and Purpose of the Project:** Leadership style and family communication patterns are important concepts in communication, psychology, sociology, management, and other fields, but there is very little research on the relationship between these two concepts. This thesis seeks to examine that relationship.
2. **Explanation of Procedures:** Faculty, staff, and students in leadership positions on campus are asked to participate. The questionnaire is composed of three sections. Please respond to the statements by choosing the number that most closely reflects you. Your response will be anonymous. No one, including myself, will be able to connect you to the responses in the questionnaire.
3. **Discomfort and Risks:** Please be assured that your participation is voluntary and you can decide to withdraw at anytime.
4. **Benefits:** The results of this study will help communication and leadership scholars better understand the role of family communication in leadership process.
5. **Confidentiality:** Information provided is completely anonymous and only group data will be reported. The survey software conceals the names of respondents.
6. **Refusal/Withdrawal:** Participation in this study is voluntary. Refusal to participate will have no effect on any future services you may be entitled to from the University. You are free to withdraw from the study at anytime without any penalty. It will take 6-8 minutes to complete the survey if you decide to do it.

If you have questions about this study, please feel free to contact Suthida Prasitthipab at (270) 303-2805 or Sean Rubino, the Human Protection Administrator of Western Kentucky at (270) 745-4652.

Please click on this link:

<http://www.wku.edu/phpESP/public/survey.php?name=FCPLeadership> to obtain access to the survey. Please understand that clicking would be taken as your consent to participate in the survey.

Sincerely,

## Appendix C

## Preamble Letter to Student Leaders

Hi everyone,

My name is Suthida Prasitthipab (May). I'm currently a last semester graduate student (Communication) and working on my thesis about family communication and leadership style. My thesis title is *Family Communication Patterns: Can They Impact Leadership Styles?* To complete my thesis and degree, I really need to collect data from students in leadership positions. As you are a leader in an organization at WKU, I would like to ask you to take about 6-8 minutes to complete the survey at this link

[http://www.wku.edu/phpESP/public/survey.php?name=FCPLeadership\\_copy1](http://www.wku.edu/phpESP/public/survey.php?name=FCPLeadership_copy1)

Information provided is completely anonymous and only group data will be reported. The survey software conceals the names of respondents. Moreover, please be assured that your participation is voluntary and you can decide to withdraw at anytime without penalty. Refusal to participate will have no effect on any future services you may be entitled to from the University.

If you have questions about this study, please feel free to contact Suthida Prasitthipab (May) at (270) 303-2805 or email: [suthida.prasitthipab@wku.edu](mailto:suthida.prasitthipab@wku.edu)

Thank you once again for helping me to graduate,

Suthida (May)

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Dear campus leaders,

I would like to encourage you to participate in Suthida's thesis focusing on

leadership styles and family communication patterns. Her thesis committee believes this is a very promising line of research. Thank you for being a part of this valuable research.

Dr. Blair Thompson (Communication Department)

## Appendix D

## Preamble Letter to Academic and Non-Academic Leaders

Colleagues:

My master's student, Suthida Prasitthipab, is collecting data for her thesis on Leadership Style and Family Communication. I believe her study will produce valuable data on this important topic. She is surveying all deans, directors, department heads and vice-presidents at WKU as well as student leaders from campus organizations. All responses are completely anonymous because Easy Survey records only the data, not the names of the respondents.

It will take you less than 10 minutes to complete the survey. Please try to take a few minutes to give your responses.

Sincerely,

Larry Caillouet, Ph.D.

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Dear campus leaders,

My name is Suthida Prasitthipab (May). I'm currently a last semester graduate student (Communication) and working on my thesis about family communication and leadership style. My thesis title is *Family Communication Patterns: Can They Impact Leadership Styles?* To complete my thesis and degree, I really need to collect data from all leaders on campus (faculty, staff, and students). As you are a leader in an organization at WKU, I would like to ask you to take about 6-8 minutes to complete the survey at this link:

[http://www.wku.edu/phpESP/public/survey.php?name=FCPLeadership\\_copy1](http://www.wku.edu/phpESP/public/survey.php?name=FCPLeadership_copy1)

Information provided is completely anonymous and only group data will be reported. Please be assured that the survey software conceals the names of respondents. Moreover, refusal to participate will have no effect on any future services you may be entitled to from the University.

If you have questions about this study, please feel free to contact Suthida Prasitthipab (May) at (270) 303-2805 or email: [suthida.prasitthipab@wku.edu](mailto:suthida.prasitthipab@wku.edu)

Thank you once again for helping me to graduate,

Suthida (May)

## Appendix E

## Self-Perceived Leadership Style

## Leaders Behavior Description Questionnaire (LBDQ)

Please respond to the below statements by circling the response that most closely engage your behavior at work:

Item	1 Very Rarely	2 Seldom	3 Fairly Often	4 Often	5 Very Often
1. I make my attitudes clear to the group. 2. I try out my new ideas with the group. 3. I rule with an iron hand. 4. I criticize poor work. 5. I speak in a manner not to be questioned. 6. I assign group members to particular tasks. 7. I schedule the work to be done. 8. I maintain definite standards of performance. 9. I emphasize the meeting of deadlines. 10. I encourage the use of uniform procedures. 11. I make sure that my part in the organization is understood by all group members. 12. I ask that group members follow standard rules and regulations. 13. I let group members know what is expected of them. 14. I see to it that group members are working up to capacity.					

<p>15. I see to it that the work of group members is coordinated.</p> <p>16. I do personal favors for group members.</p> <p>17. I do littler things to make it pleasant to be a member of the group.</p> <p>18. I am easy to understand.</p> <p>19. I find time to listen to group members.</p> <p>20. I keep to myself.</p> <p>21. I look out for the personal welfare of individual group member.</p> <p>22. I refuse to explain my actions</p> <p>23. I act without consulting the group.</p> <p>24. I back up the members in their actions.</p> <p>25. I treat all group members as my equals.</p> <p>26. I am willing to make changes.</p> <p>27. I am friendly and approachable.</p> <p>28. I make group members feel at ease when talking to them.</p> <p>29. I put suggestions made by the group into operation.</p> <p>30. I get group approval in important matters before going ahead.</p>					
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## Appendix F

## Family Communication Pattern

Please respond to the below statements by circling the response that most closely reflects your agreement with the statement below:

Item	1 Very Rarely	2 Seldom	3 Fairly Often	4 Often	5 Very Often
<p>Your parents often told you that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. You should look at both sides of issue.</li> <li>2. You should question other people's opinions.</li> <li>3. Getting your idea across is important.</li> <li>4. Every family member has some say.</li> <li>5. Kids know more about some things than adults.</li> <li>6. Your idea is important in family discussion.</li> <li>7. Parents' ideas are right and you shouldn't argue.</li> <li>8. You will know better when you grow up.</li> <li>9. You should not say things to make people angry.</li> <li>10. You should not argue with adults.</li> </ol>					

## Appendix G

## Demographic Questionnaire

The following questions are used only to group analyze into general categories. No attempt will be made to identify individuals.

1. Age\_\_\_\_\_
2.  Male  Female
3.  Faculty  Staff  Student
4. Ethnicity  Native American  Caucasian  
 African American  
 Asian American/Asian/Pacific Islander  
 Hispanic/Latino(a)  Bi-/Multiracial
5. Highest level of completed education  
 High school or GED or below  
 Some college/technical school  
 College graduate  
 Some graduate school  
 Graduate degree
6. Were you and your siblings raised together?  Yes  No  Had no siblings
7. Were you raised by  Single mother  
 Single father  
 Both father and mother  
 Others, please specify\_\_\_\_\_
8. Current job title  Department Head

- Director
- President of Student Organization
- Other, please specific \_\_\_\_\_

9. How long have you held this position? \_\_\_\_\_ years

10. Have you ever had any formal leadership training?

- Yes, How long did the training last? \_\_\_\_\_
- No