

Project Summary

Ethics Project Number: (Approval 2017/044).

Supervisor: Dr Suzanne Dziurawiec

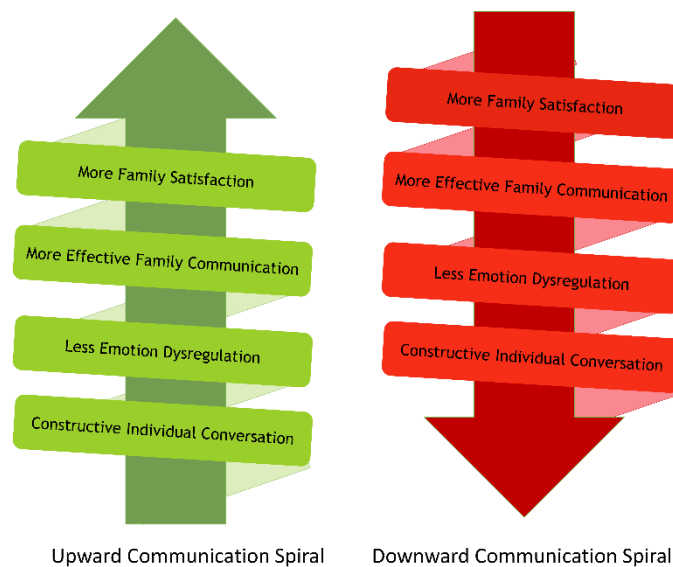
Researcher: Liz Dickson

Research Completed: October 2017

Context and Research Aims:

Communication is thought to have an important role in family climate/satisfaction, i.e., whether individuals assess their family positively or negatively and has consistently and repeatedly been associated with physical, mental and emotional wellbeing. To date, there has been a lack of theories accounting for the role of communication in families. The Family Communication Model was proposed to fill this gap, the model is a strengths based model of family functioning. The model sought to explain the role of communication in producing family satisfaction, suggesting constructive communication, coupled with emotion regulation and effective family communication would contribute to positive family climate.

Personal communication style was believed to contribute to levels of family satisfaction and either produce positive or negative spirals (see figures below).



Methodology:

Two hundred and six participants (18 – 72 years old) completed the online survey. Family relationships included: living with partner only (20%); parents living with children (41%: single-parents, 19%; partnered-parents, 22%); and living as an adult-child with parents (36%). The majority of participants identified themselves as female (83%), Australian (77%) and with English as their first language (83%).

Results:

Effective family communication was strongly correlated with family climate. The model predicted 60% of the variance in family climate. Effective family communication was found to be more influential for adult-children (children over 18 living at home). Constructive communication was related to more emotion regulation (less dysregulation), more effective family communication and better family climate. Traditional communication was related to higher dysregulation, less effective family communication and lower overall family climate ratings.

Implications:

Families wishing to improve family climate/communication might benefit from strengthening their constructive personal communication and effective family communication skills. These skills may have further benefits in supporting emotion wellbeing, constructive communication appears to support parents own emotion wellbeing. Results suggest constructive and effective family communication by parents and other family members continues to be important and beneficial into emerging adulthood.