Daily Variations in African American, Latino, and European American Teens’ Disclosure with Parents and Best Friends

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Recent Interest in Adolescent Disclosure and Secrecy with Parents

- Stemming from recent research on parental monitoring
- Insight that assessments of monitoring have focused on *parental knowledge*, not active tracking and surveillance (Crouter & Head, 2002; Kerr & Stattin, 2000)
- Knowledge can be obtained in different ways
- Voluntary child disclosure (but not parental solicitation or behavioral control) ➔ less juvenile delinquency (Kerr & Stattin, 2000)
Parental Knowledge Through Child Disclosure

- Shifts focus from *parenting practices* ⇒ *adolescents’ active management of information*
  - Teens have choices about what to disclose or conceal
  - Teens may keep some things private to assert autonomy

- Need to specify issues that are disclosed/kept secret and conditions under which disclosure and secrecy occur
Theoretical Framework for Studying Adolescent Disclosure and Secrecy

- **Social Domain Theory** *(Turiel, 1983, 1998)*
  - Distinct domains of social knowledge
  - Moral, conventional, personal

- Previous research on legitimacy of parental authority *(Smetana, 1988, 1989, 2000; Smetana & Asquith, 1994)*
## Transformations of Parental Authority

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEGITIMATELY SUBJECT TO PARENTAL AUTHORITY</th>
<th>CONTESTED (Zone of conflict)</th>
<th>UNDER PERSONAL JURISDICTION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>MORAL AND CONVENTIONAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>PRUDENTIAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>MULTIFACETED</strong> (Domain Overlaps)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acts that affect others’ welfare, rights (moral); Arbitrary, agreed on norms &amp; standards (conventions)</td>
<td>Pertains to comfort, health, safety, harm to self</td>
<td>Acts at the boundary, redefined as personal through negotiation &amp; conflict -- and non-disclosure?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Previous Research on Disclosure and Secrecy (Smetana, Metzger, Gettman, & Campione-Barr, 2006)

- Teens and parents believed that teens are more obligated to disclose:
  - Prudential > moral + conventional, multifaceted > personal
- Actual disclosure:
  - Schoolwork > personal > multifaceted, peer
- Secrecy and disclosure: $r(274) = -0.46^{***}$
- Teens disclosed more to mothers than fathers
- Girls disclosed more than boys, especially about personal issues
### Resons for Not Disclosing to Parents

(Smetana, Villalobos, Tasopoulous, Gettman, & Campione-Barr, 2006)

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<td>PRUDENTIAL</td>
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<td>PERSONAL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May keep secret to stay out of trouble, avoid parental disapproval, or because they don’t harm anyone</td>
<td>Not disclosed because they are personal matters, because teen may get in trouble, or because parents wouldn’t understand or listen</td>
<td>Acts are private matters &amp; therefore not disclosed</td>
</tr>
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Unanswered Questions

- Most research has focused on European American (European) youth
  - There has been little attention to culture/ethnicity
- Research has compared disclosure to mothers and fathers
  - How does disclosure to parents compare with best friends?
- Disclosure has focused on mean levels of disclosure
  - How much do teens disclose/keep secrets in everyday life?
Study Aims

- To examine daily disclosure in poor, ethnic minority and majority youth
  - African American, Latino, and European American youth
- To examine disclosure according to domain/type of issue
- To examine how disclosure varies according to target
  - Mothers, fathers, and best friends
- To use web-based daily diary methods to examine daily variations in disclosure, secrecy, and parental solicitation
Sample

- 109 9th & 10th graders ($M = 15.18$ years, $SD = .93$)
  - 51 males and 58 females
  - Lower SES (school = 85% free or reduced lunches)
  - 40% in 2-parent biological families, 39% single-parent, mother-head households, 9% step-parent families

- 41 Latinos (22 males, 19 females)
  - 75% Puerto Rican, 56% born in US, 73% bilingual

- 43 African Americans (15 males, 28 females)

- 16 European Americans (9 males, 7 females)

- 9 “other” (3 Asian males, 2 multi- or biracial males, 4 multi- or biracial females)

- 21 students recruited but dropped
Initial (In-School) Questionnaires

- Demographic information
- Family Obligations/Interdependence
  - (5 items - Fuligni et al., 1999)
  - 6 items from Phinney et al., 2005)
- Positive Support and Conflict
  - Network of Relationships Inventory (Furman & Buhrmester, 1985)
- Problem Behavior
  - 11 items from Mason et al.
Daily Diaries - Procedures

- E-mail link sent every day for 14 days to students’ e-mail accounts
- Those without e-mail (but with internet at home) were given an account for 14 days
- Those with no internet at home completed surveys at school
- Students who did not complete their nightly survey were called
Web-Based Daily Diaries

- Adolescents rated on 5-point scales*: Disclosure: “How much they told or disclosed today without mother/father/best friend asking”
- Secrecy: “How much they concealed or kept secret today from mother/father/best friend”
- Parental Solicitation: “How much mother/father/friend asked or tried to find out about today”
- Relationship Quality: 5 items assessing positive and negative relationships with mother/father/friend today

* For each item, they also could indicate: “I didn’t do this/feel this today”
Stimulus Items

- **Bad Behavior (Prudential mostly)**:
  - Anything I did that might be risky or unsafe
  - Anything I did that my parents might not approve of
  - If I stayed up too late, stayed out late at night, or came home late

- **Multifaceted (personal/prudential)**:
  - If my friends did something that they shouldn’t have/got in trouble
  - If I spent time with my boyfriend/girlfriend or a boy or girl that I like
  - If I watched an R-rated movie/TV show or listened to R-rated music
Stimulus Items (cont’d)

- **School**
  - Whether I did my homework or school assignments
  - How I did (my grades) on tests or schoolwork
  - Interactions with teachers/things my teachers said to me

- **Personal**
  - My true feelings
  - What I talked about with friends
  - A boy or girl I like or have a crush on
  - How I spent my free time
  - Who I spent time with
Correlations Among Disclosure, Secrecy, Problem Behavior, and Family Obligations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Discl Dad</th>
<th>Discl Friencl Mom</th>
<th>Conceal Dad</th>
<th>Conceal Friencl Mom</th>
<th>Family Oblig</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Disclose → Mom</strong></td>
<td>.94</td>
<td>.66</td>
<td>-.15</td>
<td>-.31</td>
<td>-.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Disclose → Dad</strong></td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>.71</td>
<td>-.27</td>
<td>-.32</td>
<td>-.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Disclose → Frnd</strong></td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>-.28</td>
<td>-.20</td>
<td>-.21</td>
<td>.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Conceal → Mom</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Conceal → Dad</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>.80</td>
</tr>
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</table>
• Domain X Ethnic Group Interaction:
  • Whites - domain differences ns (but small sample size!!)
  • African American: School > all else, Personal > Mixed, Bad behavior
  • Latino: Personal, School > Bad Behavior
  • Ethnic differences within domain - ns
- More disclosure to best friends than moms & dads
- For best friends, disclosure over personal > all else
Daily Disclosure in Different Domains and Relationships with Mothers

- Personal
- Bad Behavior
- Mixed
- School
- Relationship Quality

Ratings

DAY

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14
Disclosure to Mothers, Relationships with Mothers, and Mothers' Solicitation

![Graph showing ratings over days for Disclosure, Relationship Quality, and Solicitation.](image-url)
Hierarchical Linear Models Predicting Disclosure to Mothers

- 2-Level Models Predicting Disclosure → Moms
- Level 1: Weekend, Day, Daily Relationships, Daily Solicitation
- Level 2 - Ethnicity, Gender, Family Marital Status, Generation, Family Obligation
Hierarchical Linear Model

- Disclosure to Mother = γ00 + γ01 * Family Obligations + γ10 * Weekend + γ20 * Day + γ30 * Solicitation + γ31 * M Solicitation + γ40 * Relationship Quality + γ41 * M Relationship Quality

- **The random effect of weekend was set to zero as it was not significant.**
HLM Results: Teens’ Disclosure to Mothers (overall)

- **Family obligations**: Higher obligation = more disclosure
  - $\beta_{01} = .53; t(100) = 3.86, p < .001$

- **Weekends**: ns (except for school, where less disclosure on weekends)

- **Day**: Disclosure declined over 14 days (small effect)
  - $\beta_{20} = -.02; t(101) = -4.117, p < .001$

- **Relationship Quality**: Better daily relationships with mom = more disclosure
  - $\beta_{40} = .129; t(100) = 3.79, p < .001$

- **$M$ Relationships * Daily Relationships** (graph)
  - $\beta_{41} = -.087; t(100) = -1.706, p = .09$

- **$M$ Solicitation * Daily Solicitation** (graph)
  - $\beta_{31} = -0.20; t(100) = -4.53, p < .001$
• When teens had good relationships with mothers (relative to the rest of the sample), better daily relationships (relative to S’s mean) did not influence disclosure.

• For teens with poor relationships with mothers (relative to the sample), better daily relationships (relative to S’s mean) were associated with increases in disclosure.
• Among teens who reported high mean levels of maternal solicitation (relative to the sample mean), higher than average daily solicitation (for that teen) did not influence disclosure

• Among teens who reported low mean levels of maternal solicitation (relative to the sample mean), higher than average daily maternal solicitation was associated with increases in disclosure on that day
• Daily variations in relationship quality with mothers have more of an influence on adolescents’ daily disclosure to mothers about their bad behavior for adolescents who live in two-parent biological families than adolescents living in other families.

• Same effect for personal issues, $p < .09$ for overlapping issues.
Conclusions and Next Steps

- Overall, teens disclosed less to father than to mothers and more to best friends than parents.
- With parents, teens disclosed most about school and least about bad behavior.
- With best friends, teens disclosed most about personal issues, next about school.
- Daily variations in disclosure to parents in this sample of poor, mixed ethnicity youth were associated with the quality of their daily relationships and how much teens perceived that their parents solicit information.
Conclusions and Next Steps

- Few effects were found for ethnicity, but consistent effects were found for family obligation in the HLM analyses; a greater orientation to family obligation was associated with more disclosure.

- Effects for family marital status, generation, and gender X ethnicity were found in some domains but not others.

- The current analyses are preliminary - we are currently running 3-level hierarchical linear models to model the effects of domain.

- We are currently examining models of disclosure, secrecy, and relationships with fathers and best friends.
THANK YOU!

- We are grateful to the National Science Foundation for their support of this project
- We also thank Ron Rogge for his statistical help
- For further information about the Social Development and Family Processes Research Group, contact:

http://www.psych.rochester.edu/research/socialdev/