

Major Purpose:

Studies repeatedly show that parent's knowledge, stemming from adolescent disclosure, of their adolescent's whereabouts, activities, and friends leads to less norm breaking and delinquency (Kerr & Stattin 2000). Importantly, when adolescents viewed their parents as having more parental authority legitimacy (PAL) to regulate an issue, they were more obligated to tell their parent (Smetana, Metzger, et al. 2006). Yet, few studies have explored the connection between parents' and adolescents' views of PAL and adolescent disclosure, particularly, over time. The proposed study examined these associations, while also investigating the roles of adolescent gender, sibling birth order, and the social cognitive domain of the issues adolescents disclosed about (Turiel, 2002).

Procedure:

The study's sample contained 145 predominantly White and middle-class families with at least two adolescents and one participating parent at Time 1. Youth participants ages ranged from 11 to 21 years, with younger siblings' ages ranging from 11–17 years ($M=13.67$, $SD=1.56$) and older siblings from 14–21 years ($M=16.46$, $SD=1.35$). Data from the present study utilized the Legitimacy of Parental Authority with Time 1 youth reports of PAL (Smetana, 2000; $\alpha=.86-.89$), and Time 4 youth reports of adolescent disclosure across 5 domains using the Obligations to Disclose measure (Campione-Barr et al., 2015; Smetana et al., 2006; $\alpha=.80-.91$, with exception of older siblings ratings of Conventional issues=.58).

Results:

Hierarchical regression was used to examine the moderating influence of adolescent gender and birth order on the association between perceptions of parental authority legitimacy and adolescent self-disclosure across five social cognitive domains over time. Results (see Table 1) indicate main effects were qualified by significant and marginally interactions between perceptions of parental authority legitimacy and gender. Simple slopes analyses suggests that when male adolescents believed it was acceptable for a parent to make a rule in the moral domain, they self-disclosed less moral information ($t=-4.30, p<.001$) and less conventional information ($t=-2.89, p<.001$) four years later. Simple slopes analyses also show that the interactions was not significant for females in the moral domain ($t=.13, p=.89$) and conventional domain ($t=-.24, p=.81$).

Conclusion:

Findings provide insight into parental authority legitimacy's influence and adolescent disclosure, since adolescent voluntary disclosure has been associated with reducing involvement in risky behavior through parental knowledge (Smetana, 2008). The findings are useful for the further development of adolescent disclosure research and parents who want to increase their knowledge of their adolescent's life.