

**SRCD 2011 Biennial Meeting, 31.03. – 02.04. 2011.,
Montreal, Canada**

(2-054) Student Poster Symposium

Adolescents' Disclosure to Parents: The Next Generation of Research

Palais des congrès 513 AB, Friday 10:20am - 12:00pm

Chair: Eva Pomerantz

Discussant: Lauree C. Tilton-Weaver

1. *Adolescent's Personality and Disclosure to Parents*

Ana Tokic, Ninoslava Pecnik

2. *Transactions between Children' Sense of Responsibility and Disclosure to Parents During Early Adolescence in the US and China*

Lili Qin, Eva Pomerantz

3. *Is Adolescent Self-Disclosure Always Beneficial? Differentiating Between Autonomous and Controlled Reasons for Self-Disclosure*

Dorien Wuyts, Bart Soenens, Maarten Vansteenkiste

4. *Does Context Matter? The Role of Parents' Autonomy Support in Children's Disclosure*

Cecilia Sin-Sze Cheung, Eva Pomerantz

5. *Parents and Teens' Evaluations of Information Management Strategies*

Wendy M. Rote, Judith G. Smetana

Symposium integrative statement:

Adolescents' Disclosure to Parents: The Next Generation of Research

A decade ago Stattin and Kerr (2000; Kerr & Stattin, 2000) made the case that children's spontaneous disclosure to their parents plays an important role in protecting children against adjustment problems as they progress through adolescence. The general picture that has emerged from the rapidly growing body of research on the topic is that children's disclosure to their parents is predictive of dampened behavioral as well as emotional problems among children, even when children's earlier adjustment is taken into account. Such findings have lead to a second generation of research focused on two critical questions: (1) What contributes to children's disclosure to their parents?, (2) What moderates the effects of children's disclosure on their adjustment? This symposium brings together five papers that take a step toward answering these questions. In doing so, they go beyond simply documenting the benefits of children's disclosure to their parents. Across four of the papers, there is a focus on attributes of children (e.g., their personality) or parents (e.g., their parenting) that may contribute to children's disclosure. Three of the papers explore attributes of children (e.g., their reasons for disclosing) or parents (e.g., their parenting) that may moderate the effects of children's disclosure on their adjustment. Representing the next generation of research on children's disclosure, the five papers move toward an elucidation of what leads children to disclose as well as when such disclosure may be beneficial and when it may be costly to children's adjustment.

Summary:
Adolescent's personality and disclosure to parents
Ana Tokić & Ninoslava Pećnik; University of Zagreb

Prior research links parents' knowledge about adolescent's daily activities to numerous dimensions of adolescent adjustment, including lower problem behavior and higher well-being. Parents' knowledge appears to originate mainly from adolescents' disclosure, which involves spontaneously revealing information to parents (Stattin & Kerr, 2000). Thus, a key issue is that of the determinants of youth self-disclosure to parents. Previous research has shown the importance of youth's gender and age, but research on the role of adolescents' personality in predicting their self-disclosure to parents is scarce.

The present study was designed to examine the relations between adolescents' personality and their disclosure to mothers and fathers. The Big Five dimensions (Costa & McCrae, 1992; Norman, 1963) were used as they are considered representative of much of the variation in human personality. However, dimensional approaches fail to take into account the configuration of the characteristics within a person; thus, we used a person-centered approach to identify the dominant clusters of adolescents' personality traits.

The sample consisted of 1074 adolescents (13 year-olds) from 50 schools in Croatia (probabilistic cluster sample), who provided their self-ratings on the Big Five dimensions: extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability and openness to experience – intellect (Scholte, van Aken & van Lieshout, 1997). Adolescents also reported on their disclosure to their mothers and fathers about their daily activities (Stattin & Kerr, 2000) as well as feelings and concerns (Kerr, Stattin & Trost, 1999).

The variable-centered approach resulted in small to moderate correlations between disclosure to mothers and fathers with adolescent's agreeableness, conscientiousness and openness ($r_s = .18 - .31$). However, zero to very small correlations were found between disclosure and the extraversion and emotional stability dimensions.

The person-centered approach revealed four clusters (see Figure 1). The first one is characterized by its very low scores on extraversion and emotional stability and below-average scores on the other dimensions ($n = 198$). The second one has pronounced scores on extraversion and emotional stability and above-average scores on the other dimensions ($n = 375$). The third one is characterized by below-average extraversion, average emotional stability and above-average agreeableness, conscientiousness and openness ($n = 238$). The fourth cluster is characterized by pronouncedly low scores on agreeableness and conscientiousness, slightly above-average scores on extraversion, average emotional stability and below-average openness ($n = 251$). These clusters correspond to *overcontrolled*, *resilient*, *confident* and *undercontrolled* personality prototypes, extracted in previous research on adults (Roth & Herzberg, 2007).

Additional analyses (see Table 1) indicated that adolescents in clusters 1 and 3 (resilient and confident) disclosed significantly more to their mothers and fathers about their daily activities as well as feelings and concerns compared to adolescents in clusters 2 and 4 (undercontrolled and overcontrolled). The configurations of dimensions within clusters provide an explanation for the unexpected zero correlations between disclosure and emotional stability and extraversion.

The results highlight the importance of taking into account the configuration of adolescents' personality characteristics when studying their disclosure to parents. Future research should examine how different adolescent personality types might require or provoke different parental approaches in facilitating their disclosure.

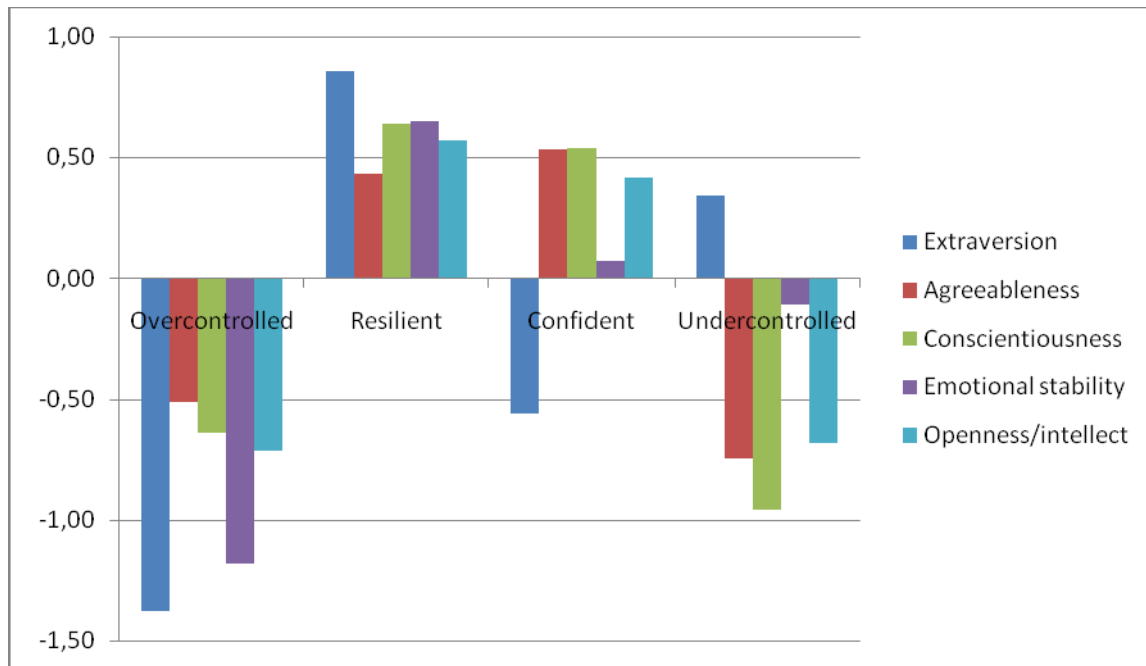


Figure 1. Personality prototypes characterized by their Bif-Five z-score pattern (four cluster solution)

Table 1. Means on the Big five dimensions and measures of disclosure to parents, as a function of the cluster membership (N=1074)

		Cluster 1 - overcontrolled	Cluster 2 - resilient	Cluster 3 - confident	Cluster 4 - undercontrolled	Total mean	SD
Big Five dimensions	Extraversion	2,94 * ²³⁴	4,75 * ¹³⁴	3,60 * ¹²⁴	4,34 * ¹²³	4,06	0,81
	Agreeableness	3,80 * ²³⁴	4,38 * ¹⁴	4,44 * ¹⁴	3,66 * ¹²³	4,12	0,62
	Conscientiousness	3,16 * ²³⁴	4,09 * ¹⁴	4,02 * ¹⁴	2,92 * ¹²³	3,62	0,73
	Emotional stability	2,85 * ²³⁴	4,11 * ¹³⁴	3,71 * ¹²	3,59 * ¹²	3,66	0,69
	Openness/intellect	3,56 * ²³	4,36 * ¹⁴	4,27 * ¹⁴	3,57 * ²³	4,00	0,63
Disclosure to mothers	daily activities	3,36 * ³	3,53 * ⁴	3,71 * ¹⁴	3,16 * ²³	3,45	1,03
	feelings and concerns	3,32 * ²³	3,64 * ¹⁴	3,70 * ¹⁴	3,08 * ²³	3,47	1,03
Disclosure to fathers	daily activities	2,83 * ²³	3,17 * ¹⁴	3,36 * ¹⁴	2,70 * ²³	3,03	1,02
	feelings and concerns	2,71 * ²³	3,20 * ¹⁴	3,27 * ¹⁴	2,64 * ²³	2,99	1,02

*The mean difference is significant on the 0,05 level for the clusters listed after asterisk (Scheffe test)

Note. The possible range of all scales was 1-5.