

Parent-Adolescent Relations

The line I hate most is when my parents say "If I hear that one more time." You are just trying to make a point, but they won't listen to you. It gets real annoying- especially when they keep repeating themselves while telling us not to! Lisa, age 15

I hate to hear my mom say, "Wake up!" It's the way she says it, in a real cheery voice, that annoys me. School could start a little later and it would make no difference. Ian, age 15

**Csikszentmihalyi & Larson,
1984 (text, p. 655)**

- Why my mother manipulates the conversation to get me to hate her.
- How ugly my mom's taste is.
- How incompetent my mom is.
- About my mom getting ice cream all over her.
- How f____ing stupid my mom is for making a big f____ing fuss.

Theory

Storm and stress (Freud, G. Stanley Hall)

or

Transformation (not disruption)?

Issues

- How much time adolescents spend with their parents and families?
- Is conflict between parents and adolescents normal (or normative)?
- What do parents and adolescents argue about?
- Does parent-adolescent conflict serve a developmental function?

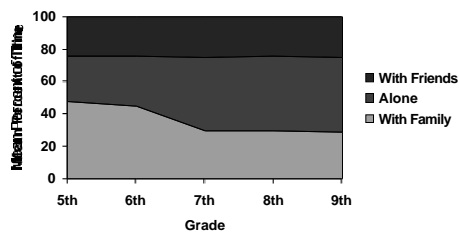
Experience Sampling Method
(Csikszentmihalyi & Larson)

- Electronic pagers
- “beeped” 7 x per day
- 1 week
- Chicagoans of European descent
- randomly selected sample (!)

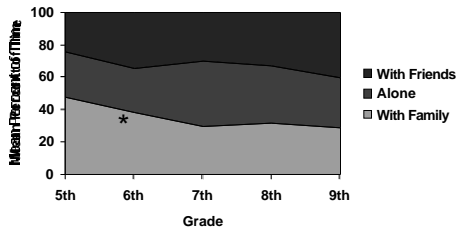
Reported:

- companionship
- location
- activity
- affect

Daily Companionship of Boys
(Larson & Richards, 1991)



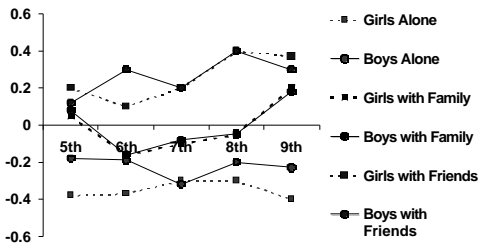
Daily Companionship of Girls (Larson & Richards, 1991)



Results

- Time spent with family declined
- Initially, steeper drop for girls than boys
- Drop reflects less time with family/sibs, not alone time w/mom or dad
- Replaced with time spent alone (esp. for boys)

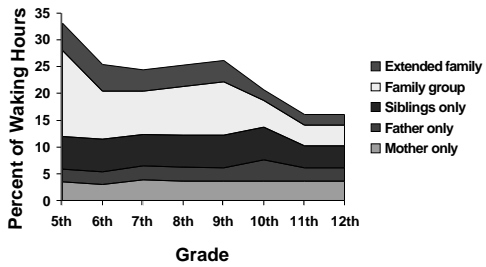
Average Affect by Companionship



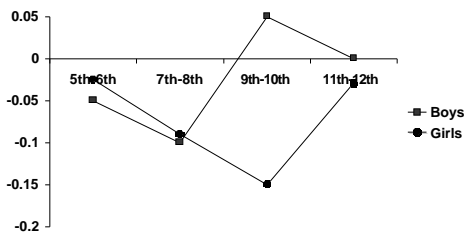
Results

- Children least happy with family between 6th - 8th grades
- In general, happiest when with friends
- Least happy when alone

Time Spent With Family Members
(Larson, et al. 1996)



Affect Reported with Family Members



% of ESM Reports in Different Activities with Family											
	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12			
Homework	3.1	1.4									.4
Eating	3.9										1.8
Personal Maintenance	3.5	2.1									1.7
Watching TV	9.9										3.4
Active leisure	5.4										.4

Note:
No differences
in
time spent
talking

Family Conflict

- Less than 10% of families endure severe difficulties
- However,
 - arguments between adolescents and parents occur at rate of 1 every 3 days

**Family Conflict
(Smetana, 1989)**

- Four grade levels
5-6, 7-8, 9-10, 11-12
- White, suburban sample
- Highly educated

Most children have told us that even when they generally get along well with their parents, there may be times when they don't get along or have conflicts or disagreements. These may be about major issues or decisions, or they may be about everyday responsibilities, like feeding pets or doing the chores. We are interested in all the issues that are really important and/or that seem to come up over and over again in your relationship with your parent. What kinds of conflicts or disagreements do you have with him/her?

Results

- Children reported more conflicts than parents (4 vs 3)
- Children reported 52% conflicts with both parents, 35% with mom, 14% with fathers
- Girls have more conflicts with mom than do boys (43% vs 26%)
- Conflicts with dad decrease (24%, 6%, 11%, 11%)

What do teens and parents argue about?
(Smetana, 1988)

- Social conventions
- Personal control

Social Conventions

- Social conventions
 - arbitrary and agreed upon behaviors/rules that coordinate interactions of individuals within a social system

Personal Issues

- Personal issues
 - have consequences only for individual, beyond societal regulation

Social Conventions

- Norms
- politeness
- responsibility
- affective bonds

Social Conventions

"I want her to share the load in the household. This is a team effort, and she knows she has two working parents."

Social Conventions

"I feel that he should be responsible for himself and being responsible means if you are in the room, you take the coat off and you hang it up. You shouldn't have it on the floor. That's not being responsible because we don't have any maids."

Personal Issues

- Autonomy
- identity exploration
- little effect on others
- own preferences
- personal comfort
- practical needs

- chores
- calling parents by first name
- watching cartoons on TV
- using the car
- smoking cigarettes
- lying to parents
- eating junk food
- not cleaning one's room
- driving with friends who are new drivers
- hitting siblings

Family Conflict and Personal Control

- With age, teens see more issues as "personal"; parents see more as "social conventions"
- Greatest change-5th to 6th and 7th to 8th grades
- Don't argue when agree on definition of issue as personal or SC

Conclusions

- Conflict between parents & teens relatively frequent
- NOT over important values per se.
- Affective intensity increases between early and middle adolescence

Conclusions

- With age, teens see issues increasingly as “personal”
- Parents see issues as matter of social convention
- Conflicts decline over adolescence...in part due to decline in amount of time spent with parents
- Cultural differences small-
 - issues
 - resolution

Smetana & Gaines, 1999

- 95 African-American adolescents 11-14 years
- middle- and upper-middle income
- 69% two parent households
- Teens and parents rate importance of issues & intensity of conflicts

Teen	Issue	Mom	Dad
1	help around house	2	1
2	clean room	1	2
3.5	telephone calls	14	5
3.5	how \$ spent	(15)	13.5
5	fight w/sibs	12.5	10
6	low grades	3	6
7	time for bed	6	9
8	lying	9	8
9	going places with parents	(24)	(30)
10	talking back	(11)	7
11	neatness/cleanliness	4.5	13.5
12	doing homework	4.5	3

Most frequent

Chores	21%
choice of activities	17%
interpersonal relations	17%
adolescent's room	13%
schoolwork	10%
bed time/curfew	9%
appearance	6%
money/spending	5%

Resolution of Conflict

Adolescent gives in to parent	60%
Parental punishment	10%
Parent gives in to adolescent	4%*
more likely with male adolescents	
more likely middle than upper-income	
compares to 30% rate - other samples	
