To Feel Trusted: Correlates of adolescents beliefs that they are trusted by parents in two cultural contexts

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Trust in the context of parental monitoring and strategic disclosure

“Parental monitoring” is a key element of effective parenting and an important predictor of positive adolescent development.

Stattin & Kerr (2000): parental knowledge is primarily the product of adolescent disclosure rather than parent efforts to monitor.

Voluntary disclosure by adolescents results in greater parental trust, which facilitates more positive parent-adolescent relationships (Kerr, Stattin and Trost, 1999).
Predictors of Trust and Disclosure

Adolescent voluntary disclosure → Parental trust → Positive parent-adolescent relationship → Greater adolescent belief in parental legitimacy

Greater parent-adolescent agreement
What is Trust?

- reliability entailing the fulfilment of word or promise (Rotter, 1980)
- emotional trust entailing the reliance on others to refrain from causing emotional harm (Johnson-George & Swap, 1982; Rotenberg, 1986)
- honesty entailing telling the truth (Giffin, 1967).
What is trust in the context of adolescents’ belief that they are trusted by parents:

- **reliability entailing the fulfilment of word or promise** (Rotter, 1980)
  - They trust me to follow rules when they’re not around
  - They trust me to act the way they want when they’re not around

- **emotional trust entailing the reliance on others to refrain from causing emotional harm** (Johnson-George & Swap, 1982; Rotenberg, 1986)
  - They trust me to use good judgment
  - The trust me not do anything really dumb

- **honesty entailing telling the truth** (Giffin, 1967).
  - They trust me to tell them the truth
What predicts adolescents’ belief that they are trusted?

- Parents have granted behavioral autonomy
  - Relatively few rules
  - Low parental monitoring
- They are trustworthy
  - Agreement with parents’ standards
  - Obedience to parental rules
  - Voluntary disclosure of disagreement
  - Don’t lie
  - Parental knowledge
Method: Sample

- Chile and the United States differ in the emphasis placed on familialism, parental obedience, and parental control.
- Youth recruited from both public and private schools in major cities (Santiago and Miami):
  - Similar levels of urbanicity
  - Common Spanish heritage
  - 384 Chilean youths (13-19)
  - 204 US youths (15-20)
Method: Protocol

- Self-report surveys group administered in school settings
- Surveys were administered in Spanish (Santiago), and both Spanish and English (Miami), with Spanish instruments translated idiomatically for both contexts
Method: Measures

TRUST (rated 1-5)
How much does this parent TRUST YOU to . . .

- Use good judgment
- Not do anything really dumb
- Follow rules when they’re not around
- Act the way they want when they’re not around
- Tell them the truth
Method: Measures

Demographic information:
- Country
- Age (recoded 12-13, 14-15, 16-17, 17-18, 19-20)

Parental monitoring
- How much does your mother/father TRY TO KNOW
  - Who your friends are
  - Where you go at night
  - How you spend your money
  - What you do with your free time
  - Where you are most afternoons after school
  - How well you’re doing in school
Method: Measures

Strategic Disclosure Questionnaire

- Adolescents answered 9 questions about each of 20 issues
- Issues were chosen to reflect areas which past research and focus groups in each country suggest parents commonly try to control:
  - Examples:
    - How you dress
    - How well you do in school
    - How much time you spend on the telephone
    - Drinking
    - Where you go with your friends
Mean Score Across Items Calculated For . . .

- Rules: Are there rules about this issue? (Y/N)
- Knowledge: How much do your parents KNOW about this part of your life? (1-3)
- Agree: How much do you AGREE with your parents about this? (1-5)
- Obedience: How often do you OBEY your parents about this? (1-4)
- Lie: What do you do when you disagree?
  - Tell All/Avoid/Tell Part/Lie (count)
Descriptives: Chile and the US
Descriptives: Chile and the US

![Bar chart showing comparisons between Chile and the US in terms of Agree, Obey, Lie, and Know. The chart highlights higher values for Agree and Obey in Chile compared to the US.](chart_image)
What predicts adolescents’ belief that they are trusted?

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<th>Mothers</th>
<th>Fathers</th>
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<td>0.58</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>US</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
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<td>0.04**</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Agreement</strong></td>
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<td>0.10***</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Obedience</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Lying</strong></td>
<td>-0.75***</td>
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<td><strong>Rules</strong></td>
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<td>-0.03</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Monitor</strong></td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.16**</td>
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<td><strong>R</strong></td>
<td>.58</td>
<td>.54</td>
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Conclusions

In the context of the parent-adolescent relationship, feelings of being trusted reflect parental granting of responsible autonomy:

- They trust me to act in accordance to what I’ve been taught and not to hurt them by hurting myself.

Model suggests that feelings of being trusted are predicted by:

- Exhibiting responsible autonomy
- NOT predicted by parental behavior

Difference between trust reported by US and Chilean youth is mediated by youth behavior.
All good things go together

Past research (Cumsille, Darling, Peña-Alampay, 2002) had concluded that adolescents’ perception of parent authoritativeness predicts both adolescent agreement and adolescent disclosure.

These results build on those findings to suggest that agreement, disclosure (low lying and high parental knowledge), and obedience predict adolescents’ feeling that they are trusted.