

A decorative graphic on the left side of the slide consisting of two overlapping parallelograms. The front one is blue and the back one is a light mint green. They are positioned diagonally, with the blue one partially covering the green one.

Communication Privacy Management Theory Application

By Logan Stefl



The Article

The article is about the conflict that arises between a parent and child as a result of shifting privacy boundaries when a child goes to college, and hypothesizes that certain relationships will result in higher psychosocial stress.

This study was conducted with 482 first-year students. Koerner and Fitzpatrick's Revised Family Communication Patterns instrument was used to observe family communication patterns. Ledbetter and Vik's measure was used to assess parental privacy invasions and children's privacy defenses. Finally, Dornbusch, Mont-Reynaud, Ritter, Chen, and Steinberg's 9-item subscale, Rosenberg's self-esteem measure, and the UCLA Loneliness Questionnaire were used to measure psychosocial distress.

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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Parent-Child Privacy Boundary Conflict Patterns During the First Year of College: Mediating Family Communication Patterns, Predicting Psychosocial Distress

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Drawing from communication privacy management theory and family communication patterns theory, this study investigated the extent to which parental privacy invasions and children's privacy defenses mediated the association between the family communication environment and psychosocial distress. This paper argues that invasions and defenses together form a conceptual space that forms four boundary conflict patterns: (a) combative (frequent invasions and defenses), (b) guarded (infrequent invasions, frequent defenses), (c) surrendered (frequent invasions, infrequent defenses), and (d) trusting (infrequent invasions and defenses). Data were collected from separate samples of first-year students, drawn at three phases from the same university. Results provided evidence of mediation and suggested that children in surrendered parent-child relationships were most likely to also report enhanced psychosocial distress, with such associations strengthening during the first year of college.

Keywords: Privacy, Family Communication Patterns, Boundary Management, Parent-Child Relationships, Well-being.

doi:10.1093/hcr/hqy018



The Article

The researchers utilized both Communication Privacy Management Theory and Family Communication Patterns Theory in their research. CPM makes the case that individuals believe they are the sole owners of their private information, and that they should have control over how this info is distributed. People create privacy rules to control the distribution of private info, and when these rules are violated, conflict occurs. This view of information flow is used throughout the study to conceptualize the data collected.

Additionally, Petronio and Child, who co-wrote the chapter on CPM in our textbook, are frequently cited within the article.

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Trusting Relationships

The article divides different types of parent-child relationships into four dimensions.

“Trusting relationships feature relatively infrequent invasions and defenses. Parents are not trying to breach privacy boundaries, and children do not exert much effort to defend them.”
(Ledbetter, 2019, p. 259)

	Parents Respectful	Parents Invasive
Child Open	Trusting	Surrendered
Child Defensive	Guarded	Combative



Guarded Relationships

“Guarded relationships feature relatively frequent defenses, but relatively infrequent invasions. In such relationships, children do not perceive that their parents are actively working to breach their boundaries, but they have at least some level of concern about the possibility of such an attempt. Their enactment of privacy boundaries establishes autonomy, but this is not an overt struggle as it is in combative relationships.” (Ledbetter, 2019, p. 259)

	Parents Respectful	Parents Invasive
Child Open	Trusting	Surrendered
Child Defensive	Guarded	Combative



Surrendered Relationships

“Surrendered relationships feature relatively frequent invasions but relatively infrequent defenses. In such relationships, parents do not respect or acknowledge their children’s privacy boundaries and freely violate them. Their children perceive these behaviors as invasions, but they do not actively resist, perhaps because they see such privacy breaches as the cost of desired parental help or because they think resistance would be futile.” (Ledbetter, 2019, p. 259)

	Parents Respectful	Parents Invasive
Child Open	Trusting	Surrendered
Child Defensive	Guarded	Combative



Combative Relationships

“Combative relationships feature relatively frequent invasions and defenses. In such relationships, children actively resist parents’ attempts to breach their privacy boundaries. Maintaining a separate identity is a constant struggle for such children.” (Ledbetter, 2019, p. 259)

	Parents Respectful	Parents Invasive
Child Open	Trusting	Surrendered
Child Defensive	Guarded	Combative

Example

In *An Extremely Goofy Movie*, Max and his father, Goofy, experience some relational tension due to changing boundaries once Max goes to college.





What do you think?

How would you describe Goofy and Max's relationship at this point?

	Parents Respectful	Parents Invasive
Child Open	Trusting	Surrendered
Child Defensive	Guarded	Combative



Study Findings

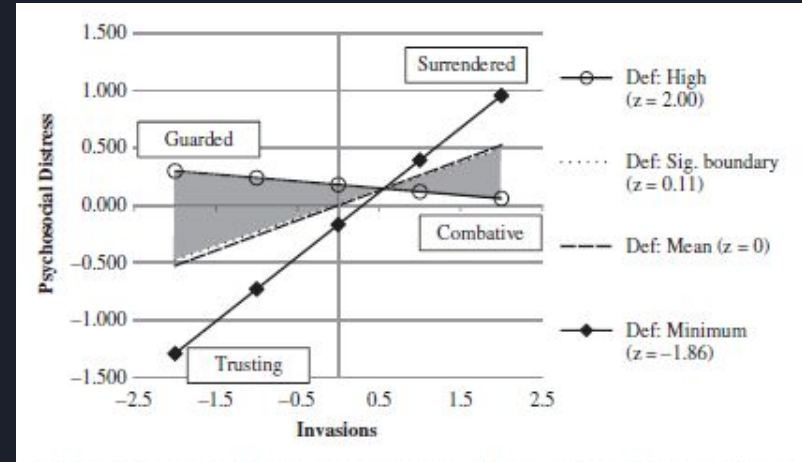
This study sought to find out whether or not there was a relationship between the different kinds of parent-child relationships and outcomes of psychosocial distress. Pair up with a partner/partners and discuss which relationships you would presume to be better or worse in terms of psychosocial outcomes for a person in their first year of college.

	Parents Respectful	Parents Invasive
Child Open	Trusting	Surrendered
Child Defensive	Guarded	Combative

Study Findings

Outcomes for psychosocial distress were the best in trusting relationships, combative and guarded relationships factored into the middle, while the worst outcomes came from surrendered relationships.

Is there anything here that surprises you?





Limitations

As with most research studies, this one is not without its faults:

- No control groups
- Homogeneity of participants
- Judgement of participants
- Relationship dimensions?

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Child Open	Trusting	Surrendered
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Work Cited

Ledbetter, A. M. (2019). Parent-child privacy boundary conflict patterns during the first year of college: Mediating family communication patterns, predicting psychosocial distress. *Human Communication Research*, 45(3), 255-285. 10.1093/hcr/hqy018