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Whereabouts and Secrets: A Person- Centered Approach to Emerging Adults' Routine and Self-Disclosure to Parents

Laura M. Padilla-Walker
Brigham Young University, laura_walker@byu.edu

Daye Son

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Daye Son[1] and Laura M. Padilla-Walker[2]

Abstract

The current study examined heterogeneity in emerging adult children's routine and self-disclosure to parents using mixture modeling and explored predictors and outcomes associated with the patterns of disclosure. Participants consisted of 449 emerging adults (49% male, 68% European American, 65% college students, 33% single-parent families) who completed questionnaires every year across three waves (M_{age} at Time 1 = 18.4 years). Latent profile analyses suggested that large groups of emerging adults reported moderate levels of routine disclosure and low levels of self-disclosure to both mothers (79%) and fathers (36%), while other groups (20%) reported high levels of routine and self-disclosure to both parents. Profile membership was associated with predictors (parental autonomy granting, self-disclosure to friend, gender, family structure, college attendance) at Time 1 and outcomes (delinquency, depression, and prosocial behavior) at Time 3. Implications regarding the continued parent–child relationship and disclosure to parents in the third decade of life are discussed.

Keywords

child disclosure, self-disclosure, routine disclosure, parent–child relationship, emerging adulthood

Parent–child relationships continue to influence emerging adults' development as they navigate through instabilities and explore identities in the third decade of life (Arnett, 2000). A healthy balance between autonomy and intimacy in parent–child relationships is necessary (Kins, Beyers, Soenens, & Vansteenkiste, 2009), wherein emerging adult children benefit from continued parental support (Aquilino, 2006) while developing appropriate separation–individuation from their parents (Koepke & Denissen, 2012). Studying ways that children contribute to the maintenance of parent–child relationships may inform how emerging adults shape their own trajectories of floundering or flourishing. Examining child-driven efforts may also predict child outcomes more consistently than parent-driven initiatives because parental efforts to be involved in their children's lives may be perceived as a threat to autonomy (e.g., helicopter parenting; Padilla-Walker & Nelson, 2012).

Child disclosure (i.e., willingness to share information about various aspects of life; Kerr & Stattin, 2000) to parents is a strategy that children actively employ to both increase intimacy and establish privacy. Specifically, this study explored two conceptually distinct types of child disclosure (i.e., self-disclosure and routine disclosure). Self-disclosure is defined as voluntarily revealing private and intimate information about oneself, while routine disclosure is referred to as sharing information regarding daily activities and whereabouts

(Tilton-Weaver, Marshall, & Darling, 2014). Scant research has examined the use of self- and routine disclosure in emerging adulthood, and the few existing studies have applied a variable-centered approach. This study contributes to the current literature by employing a person-centered approach to identify characteristics and patterns of emerging adults' levels of self- and routine disclosure to mothers and fathers.

Self-Disclosure to Parents During Emerging Adulthood

Child self-disclosure may be a primary indicator of emerging adult children's efforts to maintain intimacy with their parents (Cozby, 1973). By being open to parents about their feelings and secrets, children allow parents to be involved in their personal lives. Throughout the disclosure process, parents may

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[1]T. Denny Sanford School of Social and Family Dynamics, Arizona State University, Tempe, AZ, USA
[2]School of Family Life, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT, USA

Corresponding Author:
Daye Son, T. Denny Sanford School of Social and Family Dynamics, Arizona State University, SS 114, Tempe, AZ 85281, USA.
Email: dson9@asu.edu

have opportunities to validate and provide emotional support based on the information shared by children. These positive exchanges of feelings and thoughts can aid in fulfilling emerging adult children's basic psychological need for relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 2008) and facilitate the maintenance of close parent–child relationships beyond adolescence. No research to date has examined profiles of child self-disclosure to parents during emerging adulthood. Given that parent–child relationships transform to be more symmetrical (Kins, Soenens, & Beyers, 2011) and children acquire more realistic views about their parents as people (Smollar & Youniss, 1989) during emerging adulthood, some children may feel more open to share their intimate feelings and thoughts with their parents due to reduced hierarchy in the parent–child relationship that discourages disclosure (Bakken & Brown, 2010). Many adult children in fact report communicating with parents frequently even after moving out of home (Schon, 2014).

On the other hand, some emerging adults may be less prone to share their deep thoughts and feelings with their parents since the process of "re-centering" (Tanner, 2006) during emerging adulthood is characterized by decreased dependence on authority figures such as parents. Emerging adult children may choose not to reveal private information in order to minimize direct parental influence on their personal lives. This would involve children's active management of information (Marshall, Tilton-Weaver, & Bosdet, 2005) to ensure that topics and depths of parent–child conversations are kept on a surface level. Instead of confiding in parents, emerging adults may turn to other significant individuals in their lives for intimate disclosure, such as best friends (Solís, Smetana, & Comer, 2015) or romantic partners (O. C. Robinson, Lopez, Ramos, & Nartova-Bochaver, 2013).

Routine Disclosure to Parents During Emerging Adulthood

Child routine disclosure, or sharing information about daily activities, whereabouts, and companions (Kerr & Stattin, 2000), is another type of disclosure that may inform about parent–child relationships during emerging adulthood. In contrast to self-disclosure that focuses on personal feelings, routine disclosure serves a monitoring purpose to inform parents about children's everyday behaviors (Racz & McMahon, 2011). Disclosure functions as a main source of parental knowledge about young adult children's whereabouts since direct control and supervision diminish across adolescence (Kerr, Stattin, & Burk, 2010). As children utilize different disclosure strategies (Cumsille, Darling, & Martínez, 2010) to manage information and privacy from parents (Marshall et al., 2005), routine disclosure is a key indicator of how much emerging adult children allow their parents to be involved in their daily lives.

While research on routine disclosure in adolescence is well established, more investigation into emerging adulthood is warranted given the developmental change in the levels of routine disclosure beginning in late adolescence. Research has found that the trajectory of routine disclosure increases into late adolescence after a decline through early to middle

adolescence (Keijsers & Poulin, 2013). Another study found three different longitudinal trajectories of disclosure across early to late adolescence, and by age 18, all three groups had similarly moderate levels of routine disclosure (Padilla-Walker, Son, & Nelson, 2017). For example, a small group of adolescents who exhibited a trajectory of significantly low disclosure during middle adolescence reported an increase over time and had moderate scores of routine disclosure by the age 18. One possible explanation of this increase in routine disclosure during the transition to emerging adulthood is that activities that required parental monitoring during adolescence (e.g., smoking, drinking alcohol, staying out late) may be more normalized and no longer perceived as delinquent. Whereas adolescents might have not disclosed about these risky activities out of fear for negative parental reaction (Tilton-Weaver et al., 2010), emerging adult children may be less concerned about disclosing to parents as these activities are considered relatively normative during emerging adulthood.

Profiles of Self- and Routine Disclosure

While a recent article theoretically distinguished between self- and routine disclosure (Tilton-Weaver et al., 2014), it is still not fully understood how these two types of disclosure coincide since we are aware of only one study that included both self- and routine disclosure (Milaković, Glatz, & Pećnik, 2017). Investigation into how self- and routine disclosure operate simultaneously in individuals would help reveal emerging adults' various perceptions of the role of parents in their lives and different degrees to which children allow parental involvement during the third decade of life. To explore the possible combinations of self- and routine disclosure within emerging adult individuals, we used mixture modeling. By making the unit of focus individuals, a person-centered approach may complement the variable-centered approach by informing about heterogeneity among emerging adults. Indeed, given the possible varying levels of self- and routine disclosure as explained in the previous sections (Padilla-Walker et al., 2017; O. C. Robinson et al., 2013), we expected emerging adult children to show different patterns of disclosure to parents. Whereas the variable-centered approach focuses on the relations among variables and assumes the relations among variables to be uniform across the sample, the person-oriented approach is able to capture the variability within individuals' levels of disclosure and provides insights on characteristics of subsets of individuals with similar patterns of disclosure. Thus, this person-oriented method helps to provide future research nuanced information about parent–child communication during emerging adulthood by exploring multiple patterns of disclosure among emerging adults and by examining predictors and outcomes in emerging adulthood that may be differentially related to profiles of disclosure.

We hypothesized that there would be different patterns of disclosure to parents among emerging adults. A group of emerging adults with high levels of routine disclosure would likely show a pattern of reporting greater self-disclosure since sharing information about one's daily activities may lead to revealing

deep feelings and thoughts (Tilton-Weaver et al., 2014) based on the high positive correlation (>.70) between the two constructs (Milaković et al., 2017). However, given the qualitative differences (e.g., depth of information) between self- and routine disclosure and the prior findings that adolescents report varying levels of disclosure based on different domains (Smetana, Villalobos, Tasopoulos-Chan, Gettman, & Campione-Barr, 2009), we expected this pattern to vary within individuals in that some emerging adults would report lower levels of self-disclosure despite their frequent disclosure about daily activities.

Additionally, levels and patterns of child disclosure to parents were expected to differ across parent gender. Past research suggests that not only do children disclose to mothers more frequently and openly (Scabini, Marta, & Lanz, 2007) than to fathers as reported by children (Vieno, Nation, Pastore, & Santinello, 2009) and parents (Keijsers, Frijns, Branje, & Meeus, 2009) but that disclosure to mothers and fathers also has a differing impact on parent–child relationships and subsequent child behavior (Padilla-Walker & Son, 2018). The separation–individuation processes with fathers and mothers during emerging adulthood have been found to differ in that the father–child relationship evolves more gradually to be symmetrical, while mother–child relationship is already similar to friendship at the beginning of young adulthood (Buhl, 2008). The perceived symmetry in mother–child relationships may motivate emerging adult children to disclose more fully and regularly to mothers with expectations that disclosure be received with acceptance and support. On the contrary, the perceived hierarchy remaining in father–child relationships during emerging adulthood may discourage disclosure in order to avoid exertions of unwanted parental influence following disclosure. We thus expected emerging adults to report higher levels of both routine and self-disclosure to mothers than to fathers.

Predictors of Disclosure Profiles

In order to identify characteristics that would foster optimal patterns of disclosure in emerging adults, our second goal was to examine parent-driven, child-driven, and demographic factors as predictors of disclosure. Given the importance of autonomy during emerging adulthood, we examined whether parental autonomy support predicted different profiles of disclosure. While there have been hosts of positive outcomes regarding parental autonomy support during emerging adulthood (Padilla-Walker & Nelson, 2017), to our knowledge, only one cross-sectional study included parental behaviors as predictors to both routine and self-disclosure. Specifically, the study found parental support to be associated with higher levels of routine and self-disclosure among Croatian adolescents (Milakovic et al., 2017). Autonomy-supportive parenting can facilitate child disclosure, with research showing authoritative parenting (Almas, Grusec, & Tackett, 2011) to be linked with increased disclosure during adolescence. Since one of the primary reasons for nondisclosure is parental disapproval (Smetana et al., 2009), parenting that promotes autonomy may mitigate children's concerns about negative parental

reactions to their reports of whereabouts and feelings. Indeed, fostering an open, nonjudgmental environment through greater freedom in decision-making may encourage greater disclosure in emerging adult children (Kearney & Bussey, 2015). We thus expected greater parental autonomy support to be associated with greater disclosure.

Self-disclosure to best friends was also added as a predictor. Only self-disclosure and not routine disclosure to friends was chosen because the main function of routine disclosure as a monitoring tool seemed less relevant to the nature of friendship in emerging adulthood, which is characterized by voluntary and mutual connections and support (Barry, Madsen, Nelson, Carroll, & Badger, 2009). Beginning in adolescence and throughout emerging adulthood, children may rely on friendship to explore their identity (Collins & van Dulmen, 2006) and satisfy their basic needs such as relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2000). This developmental shift from the salience of parents to friends may be reflected on how much private information emerging adult children share with friends versus parents, with less disclosure to parents being explained by high levels of disclosure to other significant confidants (e.g., best friends; Solís et al., 2015), especially in regard to sharing intimate feelings.

Additionally, three demographic factors (gender, family structure, college attendance) were assessed as predictors. Gender differences in the profiles of disclosure were expected to emerge, as previous research has shown that girls report higher levels of disclosure to parents than do boys during emerging adulthood (Jiang, Yang, & Wang, 2017). Regarding family structure, single-parent homes were compared to two-parent homes. Studies have found that both parents (Padilla-Walker, Harper, & Bean, 2011) and children (Bumpus & Rodgers, 2009) in single-parent households report lower levels of child routine disclosure than those in two-parent families, which may in part be due to single parents spending less time with children due to greater work hours. Despite the challenges related to the family structure (e.g., parental conflict; Hutchinson, Afifi, & Krause, 2007), many single-parent families are resilient (Larson, Dworkin, & Gillman, 2001) and report similar levels of family cohesion compared to two-parent families (Hornberger, Zabriskie, & Freeman, 2010). We further explored how college or university students may collectively show similar patterns than other emerging adults who are not enrolled in college (i.e., the forgotten half; Rosenbaum, 2001) by including college attendance as a predictor. As attending college often involves receiving financial assistance from parents (Johnson, 2013), we hypothesized that emerging adults who are attending college would disclose more to their parents because receiving material support from parents may lead emerging adults to feel that their parents have more legitimate authority to be involved in their lives and therefore feel greater obligations to disclose.

Outcomes of Disclosure Profiles

The current study also considered outcomes that may help identify emerging adults with similar characteristics and levels of disclosure who might be at risk of "floundering." Studies

have indicated routine disclosure to be negatively linked with problem behaviors (e.g., risk behaviors; Urry, Nelson, & Padilla-Walker, 2011) and self-disclosure to be positively associated with better parent–child relationships (e.g., relationship satisfaction; Jiang et al., 2017) during emerging adulthood. To extend the findings on the influence of intimate and routine disclosure on child development, the third goal of the study was to examine how profiles of disclosure were related to behavioral (delinquency and prosocial behavior toward family) and emotional (depression) outcomes in emerging adulthood. Through child disclosure, parents become aware of specific needs of their children and can provide resources tailored to those needs. Such parental help may include emotional support to promote emotional health (e.g., reduced depression) as well as appropriate levels of monitoring and guidance to encourage adaptive behaviors (e.g., prosocial behavior and delinquency).

In addition to eliciting parental emotional support, self-disclosure may lead to lower levels of depression because sharing personal feelings and thoughts facilitates expression of an emerging adult's unique self. Engaging in acts that involve authenticity enhances positive emotional development. For example, authenticity to parents (e.g., openly sharing deepest thoughts and feelings) has been associated with higher positive mental health and well-being in adult children (O. C. Robinson et al., 2013). In terms of child behavioral outcomes, increased parental knowledge of child's whereabouts and secrets through disclosure may present more opportunities for parent–child conversations and parental socialization that are directed at promoting prosocial behavior and discouraging delinquent behaviors. That is, given the information provided by their children, parents may facilitate discussions that focus on the child's optimal development. Further, increased intimacy through self-disclosure (Greene, Derlega, & Mathews, 2006) may motivate children to engage in prosocial behavior toward family as a way to maintain the positivity in the parent–child relationship.

Method

Participants and Procedure

The data were taken from Waves 8–10 of the Flourishing Families Project, a longitudinal study of adolescent development. Participants consisted of 449 emerging adults, 49% male, 65% college students, 33% single-parent families, M (range) age = 18.4 (16–21) years at Wave 8, 19.3 (17–22) years at Wave 9, 20.3 (18–23) years at Wave 10, SD age = 1.04, from the United States. In terms of living situation, 77% at Wave 8, 60% at Wave 9, and 43% at Wave 10 indicated living with parents while the rest lived in dorms or apartments by themselves, with roommates, or with romantic partners. Regarding ethnicity, 68% of families were European American, 11% were African American, and 23% were multiethnic or other ethnicities. Of the single-parent families, 92% of the children were living with their mothers and 8% lived with their fathers, and they reported about both

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Participants at Time 1.

Variables	n	%
Age		
16	3	0.7
17	91	20.3
18	174	38.8
19	106	23.6
20	67	15.0
21	8	1.8
Gender		
Female	230	51.2
Male	219	48.8
Ethnicity		
European American	298	67.7
African American	47	10.7
Multiethnic	90	20.5
Other	5	1.1
Living situation		
Living with parents	345	76.8
Living in dorms or apartments	104	23.2
College status		
Attending college or vocational training program	227	65.3
Not attending college	147	34.7
Family structure		
Single-parent family	146	32.5
Two-parent family	303	67.5

Note. N = 449.

parents whenever possible ($n = 441$ for mothers, $n = 383$ for fathers). Frequencies for demographic characteristics of the sample at Wave 8 are shown in Table 1. Emerging adults participated every year starting in 2007, and longitudinal retention was 89% from Wave 1 to Wave 10. However, data for the current study were taken only from Waves 8–10 because that is when young people were making the transition to adulthood. The retention rate across the three waves was 97%. Regarding the demographic and study variables, there were no differences between those who stayed in the project and those who did not.

Institutional review board approval was obtained from the sponsoring university. At Wave 1, families were randomly selected from targeted census tracts that mirrored the socioeconomic and racial stratification of local school districts from a large northwestern city in the United States. Based on whether they had a child between the ages of 11 and 14 years in the home, families were contacted directly and asked to participate. Of the 692 eligible families contacted, 422 (61%) responded and agreed to participate in the project. In an attempt to capture the socioeconomic and ethnic diversity of the local area, 77 (15%) additional families were recruited into the study through referrals and fliers. Data collection began in May each year by administering questionnaires in the family home for the first five waves of the study, but methodology was shifted to online questionnaires for Wave 6 through 10. Waves 8, 9, and 10 will hereafter be referred to as Time 1, 2, and 3, respectively.

Measures

Demographic variables. Demographic variables included gender (0 = *female*, 1 = *male*), family structure (0 = *two-parent families*, 1 = *single-parent families*), and college attendance (0 = *not attending college or vocational training program*, 1 = *attending college or vocational training program*) at Time 1.

Parental autonomy granting. Emerging adults responded to 5 items from the Parenting Styles and Dimensions Questionnaire (C. C. Robinson, Mandleco, Olsen, & Hart, 2001) assessing parental autonomy granting (e.g., "My parent takes my desires into account before asking me to do something") at Time 1. Responses were given on a scale ranging from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*always*), with higher scores indicating greater parental autonomy granting. Cronbach's αs for this scale were .88 for child report of mothers and .92 for fathers.

Self-disclosure to parents and best friends. Emerging adults' self-disclosure to mother, father, and a best friend was assessed at Time 2 using the Intimate Disclosure subscale from the Social Provisions Questionnaire (3 items; Carbery & Buhrmester, 1998). Emerging adults answered questions on a scale ranging from 1 (*little or none*) to 5 (*the most*), with higher scores reflecting greater levels of intimate self-disclosure to that person (α = .89 for mothers, α = .91 for fathers, α = .93 for best friends). Sample questions included "How much do you share secrets and private feelings with this person?" and "How much do you talk to this person about things that you don't want others to know?"

Routine disclosure to parents. Young adults reported their levels of disclosure about daily activities separately for mothers and fathers at Time 2 using 5 items adapted from Kerr and Stattin (2000). Responses ranged from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*always*), with higher scores indicating greater routine disclosure (e.g., "I tell my parent about what I do with my free time," "I tell my parent about what I do at night and on weekends"). Cronbach's αs for this scale were .88 for mothers and .91 for fathers.

Delinquency. Nine questions were asked to assess young adult children's delinquent behavior at Time 3 (Barber, Stolz, Olsen, & Maughn, 2005). Responses ranged from 0 (*not true*) to 2 (*often true*), with higher scores representing higher levels of delinquency. Sample items included "I lie or cheat" and "I use alcohol or drugs" (α = .76).

Depression. Emerging adults reported on their own depression at Time 3 using the 20-item Center for Epidemiological Studies Depression Scale for Children (CES-D; Weissman, Orvaschel, & Padian, 1980). As data for this study come from later waves of a longitudinal project, the CES-D for children as opposed to the adult version was measured to be consistent with previous waves. Participants rated the degree to which they have experienced each item in the past week on a scale from 1 (*not at all*) to 4 (*a lot*). Higher scores indicate greater depressive symptoms. A sample item included "I felt down and unhappy" (α = .92).

Prosocial behavior toward family. Prosocial behavior toward family was assessed at Time 3 using a modified version of the Kindness and Generosity subscale of the Values in Action Inventory of Strengths (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). The original measure was designed to assess behaviors toward strangers, and the current study used 5 of these original items to assess emerging adults' prosocial behavior toward family members (α = .91; e.g., "I really enjoy doing small favors for my family") on a scale ranging from 1 (*not like me at all*) to 5 (*very much like me*). Higher scores were indicative of more prosocial behavior toward family.

Data Analyses Procedures

Latent profile analysis (LPA) was performed using Mplus (Version 7.4; Muthén & Muthén, 2016) to identify groups of emerging adults based on their routine and self-disclosure to parents. All analyses were conducted using two separate models, one for the child reports of mothers and one for fathers. To determine the number of classes, we examined fit indices beginning with one class and adding classes incrementally. Both statistical and conceptual standards were taken into consideration when making decisions about the best class solution. The following statistical indices were used to evaluate the class solution. The Akaike information criterion (AIC), the Bayesian information criterion (BIC), and the sample size–adjusted Bayesian information criterion (SSABIC) were interpreted such that the lowest values indicated the best fit, with the SSABIC adjusting for sample size penalty (Sclove, 1987). The Vuong–Lo–Mendell–Rubin (VLMR) test and the Lo–Mendell–Rubin (LMR) adjusted likelihood ratio test provided comparisons between models with significance (*p* value) of model fit with one additional class (Lo, Mendell, & Rubin, 2001). We also examined entropy values to evaluate the quality of classification, with values closer to 1 indicating better classification of cases (Ramaswamy, DeSarbo, Reibstein, & Robinson, 1993).

Following the LPA, we used the three-step approach (Lanza, Tan, & Bray, 2013) to perform multinomial logistic regressions to examine the predictors of class membership (gender, family structure, self-disclosure to best friends, college attendance, and parental autonomy granting). We then examined the differences in class means on outcome variables (delinquency, depression, prosocial behavior) using the BCH auxiliary procedure. The BCH method is preferred over the three-step method (e.g., DU3STEP) when examining continuous distal outcomes because BCH prevents class changes, to which the original three-step approach is susceptible (Asparouhov & Muthén, 2014).

Missing data were considered to be minimal (i.e., less than 5%; Schafer, 1999) as the general missingness of the study was 2%. That is, 2% of the participants had incomplete data on all study variables. The specific level of missingness for each time point was 0.5% for Time 1, 1.4% for Time 2, and 0% for Time

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics and Correlations of all Continuous Study Variables.

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Routine disclosure	—	.47***	.45***	.05	−.12*	−.22***	.32***
2. Self-disclosure	.43***	—	.25***	.17*	−.19***	−.14**	.25***
3. Autonomy granting	.30***	.30***	—	.04	−.08	−.13*	.23***
4. Self-disclosure BF	.15**	.23***	.05	—	.05	.05	.10*
5. Delinquency	−.10	−.15**	−.02	.05	—	.21***	−.17***
6. Depression	−.10	−.10*	−.20***	.05	.21***	—	−.18***
7. Prosocial behavior	.38***	.33***	.36***	.10*	−.17***	−.18***	—
M	3.66\3.29	2.37\1.87	3.47\3.29	3.62	.40	1.81	4.34
SD	0.80\0.94	1.04\0.92	0.89\1.02	1.14	.28	.57	.68
Range	1–5	1–5	1–5	1–5	0–2	1–4	1–5

Note. All correlations below the diagonal are for reports of disclosure to mother and mother's parenting, and above the diagonal are for disclosure to father and father's parenting. Means and standard deviations before the slash indicate reports of disclosure to mother and mother's parenting and after the slash are for disclosure to father and father's parenting. BF = best friend.
*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.

3. Missing data at the item level were considered to be missing completely at random (MCAR) based on the nonsignificant result of the Little's test. Missing data patterns were further examined, and we found that 7% of the participants reported on disclosure to only mother and not father because they were from single-parent families. However, testing of the covariate-dependent missingness using family structure as a covariate produced nonsignificant χ^2 distance, thus MCAR was also assumed at the parent level, and the maximum likelihood feature was applied during the entire LPA procedure.

Results

Descriptive Statistics and Measurement Invariance

Descriptive statistics and correlations for all continuous study variables are shown in Table 2. For the disclosure to mother model, parental autonomy granting and prosocial behavior were correlated with routine and self-disclosure in the expected direction. In addition, delinquency and depression were associated with self-disclosure to mother in the expected direction. Regarding disclosure to father, parental autonomy granting, delinquency, depression, and prosocial behavior were significantly related to both routine and self-disclosure in the expected direction.

Prior to conducting main analyses, measurement invariance of disclosure items for mothers and fathers was tested to verify the equivalence of measurement across parents. To account for the nonindependence of observations (children's responses about disclosure to both fathers and mothers), we followed the recommended procedure wherein residuals of the items as well as the factors were correlated across the mother–child and father–child models (Claxton, Deluca, & van Dulmen, 2015; Tagliabue & Lanz, 2014). Measurement invariance was assessed in the order of configural, metric, scalar, and strict invariance (Vandenberg & Lance, 2000), and the models were compared using cutoff points of ΔCFI < .01 and of ΔRMSEA < .015 (Chen, 2007). Configural invariance was established by uniformly specifying the parent models. When comparing a

freely estimated model with a model that constrained factor loadings to be equal across parent groups, metric invariance was achieved for both routine (ΔCFI = .001, ΔRMSEA = .004) and self-disclosure (ΔCFI = .000, ΔRMSEA = .000). However, imposing the equality constraint on the factor loadings and intercepts degraded the model fit. Further investigation revealed that means for self- and routine disclosure items were higher for child reports of mothers than of fathers. Thus, configural and metric invariances were established.

Latent Profile Membership

Disclosure to mothers. The latent profiles were identified based on routine and self-disclosure to mothers at Time 2. The model was identified, and a total of five classes were examined (see Table 3). There was clear improvement in model fit when moving from one to two classes. There was reduced model fit when moving from two classes to three and subsequently. The two-class solution was thus selected based on the relative amount of decrease in terms of the AIC, BIC, and SABIC values; the significance of LMR and VLMR tests; and parsimony. It is of note that the two-class solution fit the data best at Times 1 and 3 as well. The routine and self-disclosure levels of the two-class solution are shown in Figure 1. Emerging adults in the first class (79%) had average, moderate scores on routine disclosure (M = 3.60), and lower scores on self-disclosure (M = 1.96) to mothers. This group was labeled as the "routine disclosers." The second class (21%), which was labeled as the "frequent disclosers," consisted of emerging adult children who reported high levels (little more than one SD above the mean of the whole sample) of self-disclosure (M = 3.90) and higher-than-average scores of routine disclosure (M = 3.87) to mothers. We estimated difference in the means between classes by creating new parameters and testing them using the model constraint command. Mean levels of both routine and self-disclosure were significantly different between Classes 1 and 2 at p < .05.

Disclosure to fathers. The number of classes for disclosure to fathers was determined following the same steps. The model

Table 3. Relative Model Fit by Number of Latent Classes.

Classes	Class Percentage	AIC	BIC	SABIC	LMR	VLMR	Entropy
Mother							
1	100 ($n = 441$)	2,048.86	2,069.31	2,053.44	—	—	—
2	**79, 21**	**1,977.42**	**2,010.13**	**1,984.74**	**$p < .001$**	**$p < .001$**	**.82**
3	63, 23, 14	1,974.48	2,019.45	1,984.55	$p = .225$	$p = .209$	.71
4	38, 32, 24, 6	1,967.52	2,024.77	1,980.34	$p = .528$	$p = .515$	.76
5	35, 33, 15, 14, 3	1,963.18	2,032.70	1,978.75	$p = .288$	$p = .279$	.63
Father							
1	100 ($n = 383$)	1,781.75	1,801.49	1,785.63	—	—	—
2	85, 15	1,700.54	1,732.12	1,706.74	$p = .051$	$p = .045$	.86
3	73, 21, 6	1,666.82	1,710.25	1,675.35	$p < .001$	$p < .001$	.84
4	**44, 15, 5, 36**	**1,573.12**	**1,628.40**	**1,583.98**	**$p = .072$**	**$p = .064$**	**.94**
5	35, 32, 12, 16, 5	1,564.84	1,631.96	1,578.02	$p = .189$	$p = .172$	.82

Note. Information criteria values in bold represent the best fitting class. AIC = Akaike information criterion; BIC = Bayesian information criterion; LMR = Lo–Mendell–Rubin; VLMR = Vuong–Lo–Mendell–Rubin.
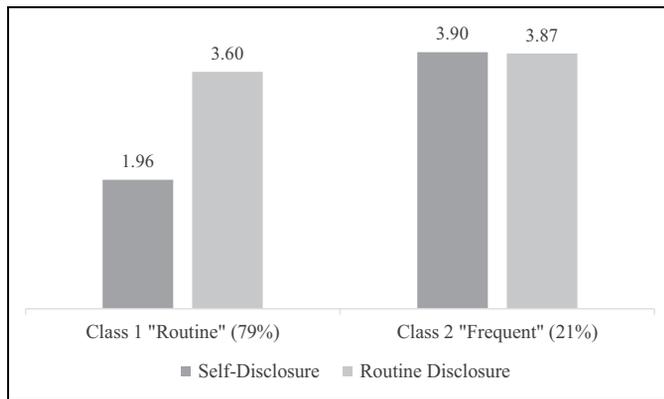
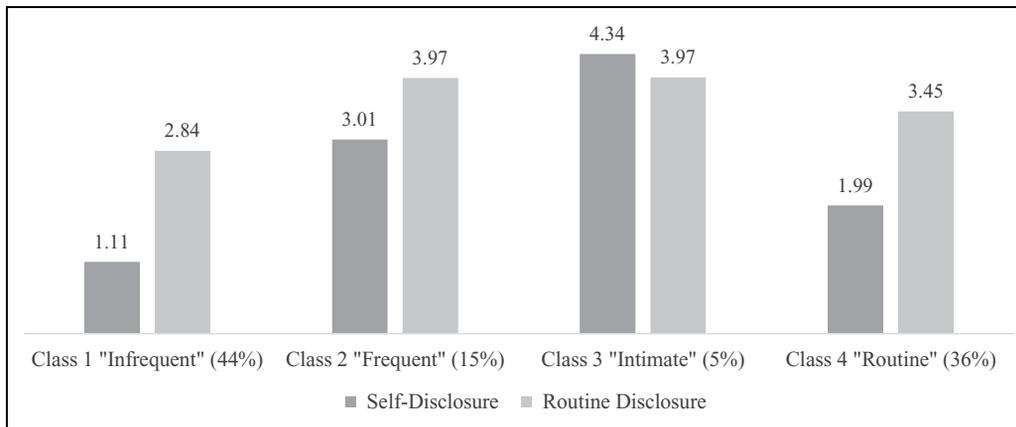**Figure 1.** Emerging adult children's profiles of disclosure to mothers.

was identified, and the fit indices (BIC and SABIC) indicated that the four-class solution fit our data best (see Table 3). The LMR and VLMR tests were marginally significant. It is also of note that entropy was the highest for the four-class solution (.94). Notably, the four-class solution fit the data best at Times 1 and 3 as well. Figure 2 shows the average levels of routine and self-disclosure to fathers for each latent class. Class 1 represented 44% of the sample, which consisted of emerging adults who reported relatively low levels of both self ($M = 1.11$) and routine ($M = 2.83$) disclosure. We referred to this group as "infrequent disclosers." Emerging adults in Class 2 (15%) had high levels (little more than one *SD* above the mean of the whole sample) of self-disclosure ($M = 3.01$) and about a half *SD* above the mean for routine disclosure ($M = 3.96$). This group was labeled as the "frequent disclosers." The third class (5%) consisted of emerging adults who reported the highest levels of self-disclosure ($M = 4.34$), which was more than two *SD* above the mean, and high levels of routine disclosure ($M = 3.97$) to fathers, with the level of self-disclosure being higher than routine disclosure. We referred to this group as "intimate disclosers." Finally, Class 4 (36%) had average levels of routine ($M = 3.44$) and lower levels of self-disclosure ($M = 1.99$). This group was called "routine disclosers." Using the

same procedure to test for the mean differences in disclosure between classes, the results showed that the levels of routine disclosure did not differ significantly between Classes 2 and 3. All other mean levels of routine and self-disclosure were significantly different across classes.

Post hoc analyses were conducted to confirm the distinctiveness of disclosure profiles by parent genders. We performed a manual three-step estimation procedure to construct a father model that used the posterior class probabilities and most likely latent class membership of the mother model. This method forced the father model to have the same number of classes and class proportions as the mothers' optimal configurations (two-class solution), making the patterns of disclosure to fathers look exactly like those of disclosure to mothers. The same procedure was applied to examine a mother model using the latent class probabilities for most likely class membership of the optimal father model (four-class solution). Based on the fit indices and the χ^2 difference test for the Satorra–Bentler scaled χ^2 (Bryant & Satorra, 2012), having the separate father and mother models was significantly more advantageous than forcing the profiles of disclosure to match each other (mother model: SABIC diff = 1,069.55, $\chi^2_{\text{diff}}(2) = 325.56$, correction factor = 3.13, $p < .001$; father model: SABIC diff = 1,742.17, $\chi^2_{\text{diff}}(10) = 1,153.72$, correction factor = 1.52, $p < .001$).

Predictors and Outcomes of Profiles

Disclosure to mothers. Using the R3STEP approach, we examined whether gender, family structure, college attendance, self-disclosure to friend, and parental autonomy granting at Time 1 predicted class membership. Table 4 shows results from a logistic regression with Class 1 (routine disclosers) as the base category. Compared to "routine disclosers," "frequent disclosers" had fewer male members, more single-parent families, higher levels of parental autonomy granting at the initial time point, and higher levels of self-disclosure to best friends. College attendance was not a significant predictor. We then used the BCH method to evaluate the mean differences between

Figure 2. Emerging adult children's profiles of disclosure to fathers.

Table 4. Logistic Regression Parameters Class Membership for Disclosure to Parents.

Mother	1 Routine
2 (Frequent)	*B* (*SE*)
Male	−1.09 (.33)**
Single parent	0.67 (.31)*
Autonomy granting	0.81 (.25)**
Self-disclosure BF	0.51 (.24)**
College attendance	0.01 (.38)

Father	1 Infrequent	2 Frequent	3 Intimate
2 (Frequent)	*B* (*SE*)	*B* (*SE*)	*B* (*SE*)
Male	−0.06 (.33)		
Single parent	0.07 (.38)	—	—
Autonomy granting	0.55 (.20)**		
Self-disclosure BF	0.43 (.13)**		
College attendance	−0.04 (.34)		
3 (Intimate)			
Male	−0.45 (.51)	−0.40 (.57)	
Single parent	0.56 (.53)	0.48 (.59)	—
Autonomy granting	0.66 (.28)*	0.10 (.32)	
Self-disclosure BF	−0.01 (.11)	−0.44 (.14)**	
College attendance	0.15 (.28)	0.19 (.36)	
4 (Routine)			
Male	0.18 (.26)	0.23 (.34)	0.63 (.52)
Single parent	−0.63 (.35)	−0.70 (.43)	−1.19 (.55)*
Autonomy granting	0.58 (.14)***	0.02 (.20)	−0.08 (.77)
Self-disclosure BF	0.55 (.24)*	0.12 (.26)	0.56 (25)*
College attendance	−0.37 (.48)	−0.33 (.56)	−0.52 (.53)

Note. BF = best friend.
*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.

classes based on the outcomes (delinquency, depression, prosocial behavior toward family) at Time 3. Our results indicated that "frequent disclosers" had higher levels of prosocial behavior toward family than "routine disclosers" (see Table 5). There were no significant mean differences based on delinquency and depression.

Disclosure to fathers. The same procedure was carried out to examine predictors and outcomes of emerging adults' disclosure to fathers. Results of multinomial logistic regressions are shown in Table 4, with the base category being switched across regressions to make all pairwise comparisons. It is of note that Class 2 (frequent disclosers), Class 3 (intimate disclosers), and Class 4 (routine disclosers) all reported higher levels of parental autonomy granting than Class 1 (infrequent disclosers). Also, "routine disclosers" had fewer emerging adults from single-parent homes compared to "intimate disclosers." Regarding self-disclosure to best friend, "frequent disclosers" and "routine disclosers" had higher scores than "infrequent disclosers" and "intimate disclosers." College attendance did not significantly predict the patterns of disclosure to fathers. Next, mean differences of outcomes at Time 3 were examined using the BCH approach (see Table 5). Most notably, Class 1 (infrequent disclosers) had higher levels of delinquency than "frequent disclosers" and "intimate disclosers," higher levels of depression than "intimate disclosers" and "routine disclosers," and the lowest level of prosocial behavior toward family. Of additional note, "routine disclosers" had higher levels of delinquency and depression than "intimate disclosers" and lower prosocial behavior toward family than "frequent disclosers" and "intimate disclosers." Interestingly, "intimate disclosers" reported significantly lower levels of depression than all other groups.

Discussion

Research on self-disclosure and routine disclosure has mainly studied the two constructs separately without considering how both types of disclosure may operate simultaneously in individuals. In an attempt to integrate the two bodies of disclosure research, our purpose was to (a) examine emerging adult children's patterns of self- and routine disclosure to parents by employing a person-centered approach and (b) explore predictors and outcomes that are associated with the profiles of child disclosure. Results indicated that emerging adults report two distinct patterns in the levels of disclosure to mothers and four for fathers. Results also revealed associations between profile

Table 5. Test of Mean Differences Across Outcome Variables as a Function of Class.

Mother	Class 1 Routine	Class 2 Frequent	Overall χ^2		
Delinquency	0.41 (.02)	0.35 (.03)	2.50		
Depression	1.85 (.04)	1.69 (.10)	1.77		
Prosocial behavior	4.26 (.04)$_a$	4.68 (.07)$_b$	24.84***		

Father	Class 1 Infrequent	Class 2 Frequent	Class 3 Intimate	Class 4 Routine	Overall χ^2
Delinquency	0.45 (.03)$_a$	0.32 (.04)$_{b, c, d}$	0.25 (.04)$_{b, d}$	0.39 (.02)$_{a, c}$	21.27***
Depression	1.91 (.05)$_a$	1.76 (.08)$_{a, b}$	1.51 (.09)$_d$	1.76 (.06)$_{b, c}$	17.95***
Prosocial behavior	4.16 (.06)$_a$	4.63 (.08)$_b$	4.62 (.12)$_b$	4.35 (.06)$_c$	32.78***

Note. Means with differing subscripts are statistically different at $p < .05$.
*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

membership and both predictors (parental autonomy granting, self-disclosure to best friend, gender, family structure, college attendance) at Time 1 and outcomes (delinquency, depression, prosocial behavior) at Time 3.

Patterns of Disclosure to Mothers and Fathers

Large groups of emerging adults in the current study reported moderate levels of routine disclosure and low levels of self-disclosure to both mothers (79%) and fathers (36%). The varying levels of self- and routine disclosure in individuals suggest that self-disclosure and routine disclosure are conceptually distinct concepts with unique functions, at least for a large group of emerging adults. This finding seems to be in line with previous studies on routine disclosure, which found the frequency of routine disclosure to increase to moderate levels by age 18 after a decrease across adolescence (Keijsers & Poulin, 2013; Padilla-Walker et al., 2017). One possible explanation for frequent routine disclosure in this group is that activities that are considered delinquent in adolescence (e.g., drinking alcohol, staying out late, smoking) become legal and relatively normative in emerging adulthood. Emerging adults may thus be open to sharing information about their whereabouts and activities to their parents because they are not as worried about invoking negative parental reactions (Tilton-Weaver et al., 2010). However, emerging adults in this group reported relatively low levels of self-disclosure to parents. This finding that the majority of emerging adults are not as willing to share their intimate matters to their parents may demonstrate emerging adult children's efforts to increase autonomy and privacy by managing parental access to information (Marshall et al., 2005). Indeed, keeping personal feelings from parents may be seen as an active strategy to readjust the parent–child relationship boundaries (i.e., re-centering; Tanner, 2006). Infrequent self-disclosure may in part be due to children's perception of achieving adulthood since emerging adults identify "not being deeply tied to parents emotionally" as an important criterion for adulthood (Nelson & Barry, 2005). Whereas routine disclosure may be understood as mere *reporting* of what emerging adults do, self-disclosure may be interpreted as being more

vulnerable or not being emotionally independent. Emerging adults may also choose not to share their intimate thoughts with their parents in order to avoid receiving unwanted intervention from them (e.g., helicopter parenting).

Results also revealed a small group of emerging adults who reported high levels of routine *and* self-disclosure to both mothers (21%) and fathers (20%). The work on parent–child relationships during emerging adulthood can shed light on understanding this group of individuals. During emerging adulthood, children acquire more realistic views about their parents (Smollar & Youniss, 1989) and develop more symmetrical relationships (Wintre, Yaffe, & Crowley, 1995), which can encourage disclosure (Bakken & Brown, 2010). Children in this group may regard their parents as their friends and be willing to open up. Indeed, compared to those who only engaged in routine disclosure or those who disclosed infrequently, emerging adults in this group reported higher levels of initial parental autonomy granting, self-disclosure to best friends, and being from single-parent homes. These findings are consistent with previous research on the importance of positive parenting in promoting autonomy and disclosure during emerging adulthood (Almas et al., 2011; Kins et al., 2009). When parents provide an open environment wherein differing opinions are respected, then children are likely to feel safe to share their thoughts frequently. While previous research has shown that emerging adults reveal their secrets more to their friends (Solís et al., 2015) or to romantic partners (O. C. Robinson et al., 2013) during emerging adulthood, our finding suggests that such self-disclosure to those with close relationships may not necessarily prevent disclosure to parents. In fact, the positive association between self-disclosure to friends and parents indicates that emerging adults who are authentic to their friends may also transfer their open communication patterns to their relationships with parents.

In terms of family structure, our findings highlight a case of successful adaption of single-parent families (Larson et al., 2001). While past research has found lower levels of routine disclosure for children of single-parent homes (Bumpus & Rodgers, 2009; Padilla-Walker et al., 2011) than children of

two-parent families, children from single-parent homes may frequently share secrets and deep feelings with the parent with whom they live because children may feel greater connectedness to that parent given the specific challenges related to single-parent homes (Hornberger et al., 2010). Future research should continue to examine positive ways that parents and children in single-parent households overcome challenges related to family structure. In regard to college attendance, emerging adults did not differ in their patterns of disclosure by academic status. How college students and other emerging adults may exhibit similar or differing patterns in parent–child relationships warrants further investigation. Similar to past research on outcomes of child disclosure, emerging adults who frequently disclosed to mothers and fathers about both daily activities and intimate feelings were generally most well-adjusted in terms of prosocial behavior, delinquency, and depression. These findings support the continued importance of close parent–child relationships on children's behavioral and emotional outcomes during emerging adulthood.

Notably, interesting differences were found in the patterns of disclosure to fathers compared to mothers. Greater variations in the patterns of disclosure to fathers as well as lower levels of both self- and routine disclosure to fathers were found. Four distinct patterns of disclosure to fathers were reported, and the largest profile also consisted of emerging adults (44%) who reported relatively low levels of both self- and routine disclosure to fathers. These differences in the profiles of disclosure by parent gender were expected given the past findings on the differences in the frequency and topics of communication in the mother–child versus father–child relationship (Scabini et al., 2007). One possible explanation is that mothers may act as a liaison between fathers and children. The difference based on the sex of the parents has been found in previous research showing greater maternal than paternal knowledge about children's activities (see Crouter & Head, 2002, for review), and that fathers acquire information about their children indirectly from their spouses more often than mothers (Waizenhofer, Buchanan, & Jackson-Newsom, 2004). The lack of self-disclosure to fathers and more variations in the patterns of disclosure may also be explained by the fact that the father–child relationship undergoes more gradual transformation to be symmetrical during young adulthood (Buhl, 2008).

Interestingly, the impact of disclosure to mothers differed compared to fathers in that those who had low levels of self-disclosure to mothers reported lower prosocial behavior toward family but not depression or delinquency, while low levels of self-disclosure to fathers were associated with higher delinquency, depression, and lower prosocial behavior 1 year later. Children who do not open up to their mothers about their innermost feelings are not necessarily at risk of maladjustment, but lack of disclosure to fathers seems more concerning as it was related to delinquency, depression, and prosocial behavior. Some research points to the differing impact that mother–child versus father–child relationships have on child outcomes during emerging adulthood, with positive father–child relationships but not mother–child relationships being linked to young adult children's earlier residential independence (Swartz, Kim, Uno, Mortimer, & O'Brien, 2011). One possible explanation for the greater negative impact of infrequent disclosure to fathers than mothers may be due to the differences in the topics of disclosure to mothers and fathers. Emerging adult children report communicating with mothers about emotional and relational issues while talking to fathers in seeking for advice (Carlson, 2014; Scabini et al., 2007). Infrequent disclosure to mothers may not be as detrimental because companionship that mothers provide in response to child self-disclosure could be supplemented by other close confidants (e.g., friends, romantic partners). Lack of disclosure to fathers may not be easily compensated by disclosure to others because these conversations may often include advice on navigating emerging adulthood that other peers could not provide. Thus, while the friend-like, symmetrical parent–child relationship may benefit emerging adults by fostering and intimacy, continuing the role of a parent as a guiding adult figure also seems to be important for emerging adults.

Given these interesting differences and in order to gain clearer understanding about these results, future research should continue to explore how and why parent–child relationships differ based on parent gender during emerging adulthood. Taken together, these findings provide meaningful insights into the significance of parent–child communication and relationships during emerging adulthood. Our findings highlight the importance of parental autonomy granting in emerging adulthood, which will facilitate greater disclosure about mundane and intimate aspects. It is important to maintain close and positive relationships with parents via disclosure during emerging adulthood because the findings suggest that young adults with low levels of disclosure may be at risk of delinquency, depression, and lack of helping behavior to family.

Limitations and Conclusions

Despite the significant contribution to the existing literature on child self- and routine disclosure, the present study had limitations that should be acknowledged. All study variables were self-reports from emerging adults, which might have had shared method variance. Especially since past studies on disclosure have found meaningful differences between parent report and child report, incorporating reports from parents in the future would help capture a more accurate depiction of child disclosure in emerging adulthood. Additionally, as the present study did not include other information management strategies such as secrecy, partial disclosure, and lying (Cumsille et al., 2010), future studies should explore how emerging adults may utilize these various disclosure tactics. This study also did not assess frequency of contact, which has been found to be positively linked to self-disclosure (e.g., Ledbetter et al., 2011). It would be important for future research to continue identifying various predictors that promote frequent self-disclosure to parents during emerging adulthood. Lastly, although the overall participant characteristics of the current study represented

emerging adulthood, the sample resulted in a small group (20%) of late adolescents at the initial time point who transitioned into emerging adulthood across three waves. It would be important for future research to employ a longitudinal design to study the developmental trajectories of disclosure in order to explore whether the patterns of disclosure are similar across late adolescence and throughout emerging adulthood.

Notwithstanding these limitations, the present study contributed to the existing literature on child disclosure and family relationships during emerging adulthood in several meaningful ways. This study was among the first to analyze the co-occurrence of self- and routine disclosure. Using a person-centered approach to studying disclosure, we identified a large group of emerging adults that mainly disclose about their daily activities but not intimate feelings to their parents and another sizable minority of emerging adults who share both types of disclosure frequently. These groups of children were further distinguished based on their shared characteristics, and the findings suggested that those who disclose frequently about both whereabouts and secrets report receiving positive parenting and are flourishing in emerging adulthood. These findings provide additional support for the notion that the parent–child relationship continues to be important during the transition to adulthood.

Author Contributions

Daye Son contributed to conception, design, analysis, and interpretation, drafted the manuscript, critically revised the manuscript, gave final approval, and agreed to be accountable for all aspects of work ensuring integrity and accuracy. Laura M. Padilla-Walker contributed to acquisition and interpretation, critically revised the manuscript, gave final approval, and agreed to be accountable for all aspects of work ensuring integrity and accuracy.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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Open Practices

Data and materials for this study have not been made publicly available. The design and analysis plans were not preregistered.

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Author Biographies

Daye Son is a graduate student in the T. Denny Sanford School of Social and Family Dynamics at Arizona State University.

Laura M. Padilla-Walker is a professor in the School of Family Life at Brigham Young University.