

Associations between adolescents' perceptions of parental privacy invasion and the relationships with partner and parents

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Abstract

Following suggestions from prior research, this cross-sectional study examined whether the quality of adolescents' romantic relationships, the quality of parent-adolescent relationships, adolescents' disclosure to their parents about their romantic relationships, and the frequency of parent-adolescent conflicts are associated with adolescents' perceptions of privacy invasion. One hundred Dutch adolescents between the age of 15 and 20 years completed questionnaires about these topics. The data was examined with multiple regression analyses. This research showed that parental privacy invasion was associated with adolescents' decrease disclosure towards parents, more conflicts between adolescents and their parents, and a lesser quality of the parent-adolescent relationship.

Associations between adolescents' perceptions of parental privacy invasion and the relationships with partner and parents. Romantic relationships become more important during adolescence. There is a rising interest in the topic of privacy invasion in addition to romantic relationships, which are related topics in the impact on the development of adolescence (Collins, 2003; Shulman, Davila, & Shachar-Shapira, 2011). Although much research has been done on these topics separately, there is still a lack of research on whether an association exists between these two subjects. The central aim of this research is to examine possible associations between adolescents' perceptions of privacy invasion and their parent-adolescent-relationships. To achieve the central aim of this research, four more specific issues will be examined. The following possible associations will be examined: adolescents' perceptions of parental privacy invasion and the quality of adolescents' romantic relationship, the quality of parent-adolescent relationships, adolescents' disclosure to their parents about their romantic relationships, and parent-adolescent conflicts.

The way in which privacy is described in the literature varies (Margulis, 2003; Newell, 1995), thus it is difficult to give one general definition. However, one consistent theme was found: privacy is an individuals' desire to manage access to their personal information. Especially during adolescence, this theme becomes increasingly important (Hawk, Hale, Raaijmakers & Meeus, 2008). Communication Privacy Management theory (CPM) suggests that "adolescents have certain expectations about which information falls under their personal jurisdiction, and that adolescents claim the right to control its access" (Petronio, 2002; Petronio & Caughlin, 2006). Adolescents may choose to keep secrets from parents for different reasons. Gaining autonomy is one of these important reasons (Finkenauer, Engels, & Meeus, 2002). Fearing disapproval or punishment if parents should disagree can also be an important reason (Marshall, Tilton-Weaver, and Bosdet, 2005; Smetana, Villalobos, Tasopoucholos-Chan, Gettman, & Campione-Barr, 2009). The extent to which adolescents disclose certain information varies for different kinds of activities and whether they believe this needs parental intervention (Smetana, Metzger, Gettman & Campione-Barr, 2006).

In particular, parents may be unwilling to relinquish informational control as quickly as adolescents would like (Collins, Laursen, Mortensen, Luebker, & Ferreira, 1997; Smetana et al., 2006). CPM theory states that feelings of privacy invasion are likely to occur when two or more individuals disagree about the limits of the amount and kind of information that is being shared (Petronio, 2002; Petronio & Caughlin, 2006). The romantic relationship of adolescents is an example of a subject in which a disagreement about privacy management can occur. This is likely because children begin to interact more with peers from the opposite gender during adolescence and dating and romantic relationships become increasingly important (Connolly, Craig, Goldberg, & Pepler, 2004;

Berscheid, 1999; Collins, 2003; Collins, Welsh, & Furman, 2009; Crockett & Randall, 2006; Furman, 2002; Meijer & Allen, 2009; Overbeek, Stattin, Vermulst, Ha, & Engels, 2007; Seiffge-Krenke, 2003). Researchers have found that 56% of girls and 49% of boys are in a special romantic relationship at the age of 15, and in the post high school years most report having ongoing romantic relationships (Brown, 2004; Carver, Joyner, & Udry, 2003).

Although romantic relationships are integral to the lives of adolescents, research of Noller and Bagi (1985) demonstrate that they talk less to their parents about this subject than they talk about other aspects of their lives. When it comes to romantic relationships, adolescents prefer to share information with peers rather than with parents (Consedine, Sabag-Cohen, & Krivoshekova, 2007). Many parents view this absence of communication as undesirable, perceiving it as evidence of increasing distance or decreasing influence (Daddis & Randolph, 2010). Additionally, the longitudinal research of Li, Stanton and Feigelman (2000) showed that it is useful for parents to be informed of adolescent's whereabouts, because this reduces adolescents' risk behaviors. Contrary to adolescents' privacy needs, parents may still feel the need to stay informed about their children's activities (Hawk et al., 2008). From the perspective of CPM theory (Petronio, 2002; Petronio & Caughlin, 2006), it seems plausible that privacy invasion occurs between parents and adolescents when it comes to romantic relationships. This is supported by findings that adolescents perceive overly restrictive parenting as intrusive and psychologically controlling (Soenens, Vansteenkiste, Luyckx, & Goossens, 2006). Furthermore, research showed that negative parenting is associated with adolescents' perceiving an increased feeling of being controlled and a decrease in the quality of parental relationship (Tilton-Weaver, Kerr, Pakalniskeine, Tokic, Salihovic, & Stattin, 2010). When adolescents do not feel close to their parents, it is likely that this leads to increased secrecy and decreased disclosure. In summary, earlier research on the relationship between adolescents' perceptions of privacy invasion and disclosure about their romantic relationships shows a negative association. This research therefore aims to confirm this association (Hypothesis 1).

Adolescents may share less information about their romantic relationships than parents would like. Parents can turn towards privacy-invasive tactics in response, which could have a negative influence on adolescents' romantic relationships. Adolescents could grow towards their disapproved partner (Kerr, Stattin, Biesecker, & Ferrer-Wreder, 2003) or even experience symptoms of depression (Smetana et al., 2009). Earlier research on this topic is inconsistent and often appears contradictory. Indeed, longitudinal, prospective and retrospective research showed a positive association between the parent-adolescent relationship and the quality of adolescent's romantic relationships (Dalton III, Frick-Horbury, & Kitzmann, 2006; Conger, Cui, Bryant, & Elder, 2000;

Dinero, Conger, Shaver, Widaman, & Larsen-Rife, 2008). In contrast, findings by Roisman, Booth-Laforce, Cauffman, and Spieker (2009) demonstrate a negative association between the parent-adolescent relationship and the quality of adolescent's romantic relationships; when adolescents experience more privacy invasion, the quality of the romantic relationship decreases. However, by revealing that the parent-adolescent relationship is specifically important for intimacy and the amount of connectedness or separateness in a romantic relationship, Scharf and Mayseless (2001) also showed a positive association. The association could depend on the amount of privacy invasion adolescents perceive. Madsen (2008) reveals that parental privacy invasion tactics differ for boys and girls. Parents are more likely to regulate the romantic activities of their daughters in comparison to their sons. This leads to the conclusion that the associations between privacy invasion and romantic relationships could differ between boys and girls. Even though prior research showed a negative association between perceptions of parental privacy invasion and the quality of adolescent's romantic relationships, more studies found positive associations on this subject. Therefore, a positive association between perceptions of parental privacy invasion and the quality of adolescents' romantic relationship is expected (Hypothesis 2A). Additionally, this association is expected to be stronger for girls in comparison to boys (Hypothesis 2B).

Furman and Shomaker (2008) found that adolescents' expectations about privacy differ between the romantic relationships and the parent-adolescent relationship. Adolescents have low expectations of negotiating with parents in comparison to negotiating with their romantic partner. They are also less willing to comply in the relationship with their parents (Furman & Shomaker, 2008). The quality of the parent-adolescent relationship plays an important role in this matter. A positive parent-adolescent relationship includes acceptance, trust and encouragement of autonomy. A healthy parent-adolescent relationship will lead to more social competence and more competent decision-making skills of the adolescent (Scharf & Mayseless, 2001; Shulman et al., 2011). In turn, these skills may contribute to a higher capacity in managing romantic relationships (Scharf & Mayseless, 2001). Researchers found that the presence of previous attachments with parents during infancy was a predictor of the quality of adolescents' romantic relationships (Avila, Cabral, & Matos, 2012). Parental attachment during infancy forms the basis for creating and developing adolescents' identity and romantic relationships. This development occurs when parents act in a supportive yet strict manner, while also stimulating an autonomous role (Furman & Winkles, 2010; Shulman et al., 2011). Adolescents transfer the expectations and schemas which they have in the relationship with their parents and internalize this to other close relationships. Adolescents hereby learn skills like communicating, conflict strategies, and emotion regulation (Scharf & Mayseless, 2008). To understand the effects of privacy

invasion on the quality of parent-adolescent relationships, it is therefore necessary to take adolescents' perceptions, expectations and feelings into account (Kakihara, Tilton-Weaver, Kerr, & Stattin, 2010).

Kan, McHale and Crouter (2008) suggest that the quality of the parent-adolescent relationships is important for parental involvement. Poor quality of the parent-adolescent relationship is associated with adolescents' perceptions of privacy invasion by parents in their romantic relationships (Kan et al., 2008). Adolescents tend to be more secretive when they experience higher feelings of parental privacy invasion. Based on this theory it seems plausible to hypothesize that there is a negative association between a high quality of parent-adolescent relationship and feelings of parental privacy invasion into adolescents' romantic relationships (Hypothesis 3).

If parents and adolescents disagree on the amount of information that should be shared about romantic relationships, conflicts can arise. Research showed that parent-adolescent conflicts occur frequently (Assadi, Smetana, Shahmansouri, & Mohammadi, 2011). Conflicts can have impact on the adjustment of adolescents (Adams & Laursen, 2001), and on their behavior in their romantic relationships (Cicognani & Zani, 2010; Collins, 2003). Furthermore, parent-adolescent conflicts promote the development of adolescents' identity and individuality (Cooper, 1988). These conflicts usually concern the autonomy and responsibility of adolescents in their relationship with their parents (Adams & Laursen, 2001). Even though parent-adolescent conflicts can be useful in the relationship, adolescents are less likely to disclose if they disagree with their parents' right to know about, or control certain issues (Cicognani & Zani, 2010; Darling, Cohan, Burns, & Thompson, 2008; Darling, Cumsille, Caldwell, & Dowdy, 2006). Parent-adolescent conflicts can be impacted by an adolescent's perception of privacy invasion (Hawk, Keijsers, Hale, & Meeus, 2009). Other research showed an association between the frequency of parent-adolescent conflicts and different expectations and perceptions of adolescents and parents. For example, adolescents expect to be financially independent at an earlier age than parents do (Renk, Roddenberry, Oliveros, Robert, Meehan, & Liljequist, 2006). When adolescents perceive that parents should have the authority to control issues such as romantic relationships, adolescents are more likely to disclose information (Smetana et al., 2006). Research has also shown that stronger feelings of privacy invasion predict more parent-adolescent conflicts later on (Hawk et al., 2009). Based on these findings it seems likely that there is a positive association between adolescents' perceptions of parental privacy invasion and parent-adolescent conflicts (Hypothesis 4).

Methods

Participants

The sample consisted of 100 Dutch adolescent students (53 boys, 47 girls). The mean age of the students was 17.2 years ($SD = 1.68$). The participants ranged in age from 15 to 20 years old (with 15 participants at 15 years, 28 at 16 years, 12 at 17 years, 9 at 18 years, 17 at 19 years, 10 at 20 years and 9 of unknown age). The participants came from five different schools with varying educational levels (16% VMBO, 43% HAVO, 8% VWO, 5% MBO and 28% HBO). The schools were located throughout central and southern Holland. Most participants (98%) were born in Holland with the remainder being born in Indonesia and one unknown country of birth. The majority of adolescents' parents were both born in Holland (93%), but in some cases one or both parents were born in Indonesia (3%), Turkey (2%) or elsewhere (2%). With regard to family situation, 78% of the participants lived with both of their parents, 16% lived with only their mother and 5% lived with only their father. From the participants, 52% were dating or in a romantic relationship, 49% were single. All of the participants who were single but included in the research had been in a romantic relationship in the past. The mean duration of participants' romantic relationships was 302 days, ranging from 10 days to 4,5 years ($SD = 332$).

One outlier was found in the analysis, which diverged more than two standard deviations from the mean outcome within the 'Adolescents' Romantic Relationship Quality' variable. This outlier was therefore excluded from the analyses. The other variables did not show any significant outliers.

Data collection procedure

The questionnaires were conducted at five schools with different educational levels in Utrecht, 's-Hertogenbosch, Harderwijk, Oisterwijk and Amersfoort, all of which had given permission. The participants, students from these schools, were informed about the research via a consent form. Participants under the age of eighteen were also given a parental consent form. One participant did not complete the questionnaires because parents refused participation. Two of the approached participants refused participation themselves. Verbal and written instructions were given before participants filled in the questionnaires. It took the participants ten to fifteen minutes to complete the questionnaires.

Measures

Parental privacy invasion. Seven items of the Level of Expressed Emotion [LEE], translated to Dutch, were used to measure parental privacy invasion (Cole & Kazarian, 1988, Hale et al., 2007). All questions were modified to ask explicitly about the romantic relationship. An example is; "My parents need to know where I am going to".

Questions were scored on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *not at all*, 5 = *a lot*). The Cronbach's reliability of the LEE scale showed a high reliability of .80.

Adolescents' disclosure. Nineteen items of the questionnaire which measures disclosure (Daddis & Randolph, 2010) were translated to Dutch and used to measure adolescents' disclosure towards their parents. All questions were modified to ask explicitly about the romantic relationship. An example is: "I tell my parents what kind of person my girlfriend/boyfriend is." Questions were scored on a 5-points Likert scale (1 = *never tell*, 5 = *always tell*) with a Cronbach's reliability of .92.

Quality of adolescents' romantic relationship. The Dutch translation of eight items of the Support Subscale of the Network of Relationships Inventory (Furman & Buhrmester, 1985) measured the quality of adolescents' romantic relationship. An example is: "Does your partner respect and admire you?". Questions were scored on the same 5-points Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*) with a Cronbach's reliability of .88.

Quality of parent-adolescent relationship. A Dutch translation of eight items of the Support Subscale of the Network of Relationships Inventory (Furman & Buhrmester, 1985) also measured the quality of parent-adolescent relationships. An example is; "Do your parents respect and admire you?" Questions were scored on a 5-points Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*) with a Cronbach's reliability of .88.

Conflicts. Ten items of the Dutch translation of Lauren's Interpersonal Conflict Questionnaire (Laursen, 1993) were used to measure the frequency and subjects of parent-adolescent conflicts. An example is; "To what extent did you have a conflict or disagreement about school/work with your parents in the last month?". Questions were scored on a 5-points Likert scale (1 = *never*, 5 = *a lot*), with a Cronbach's reliability of .83.

Strategy of analysis

First, an ANOVA was conducted to test for gender and age differences in privacy invasion. Furthermore, multiple regressions were performed on the data in order to evaluate the four main hypotheses. The above analysis aimed to predict how much variance in the outcome variable was explained by the predictors. Firstly, all variables were standardized to z-scores, with the exception of the "gender" variable, a nominal variable which was coded as 0 (boys) and 1 (girls). The dependent variables were defined based on the hypotheses, as followed: Adolescents' Disclosure to Parents (Hypothesis 1), Adolescents' Romantic Relationship Quality (Hypothesis 2), Adolescent-Parent Relationship Quality (Hypothesis 3) and Parent-Adolescent Conflict Frequency (Hypothesis 4).

In a first step of the multiple regression analysis, the effect of gender and age was examined, subsequently privacy invasion was added in the analysis. Following this, the

two-way interaction effects between gender and age, gender and privacy invasion, and age and privacy invasion were added as the third step. The final step consisted of examining the three-way interaction between age, gender and privacy invasion. These steps were performed to analyze all the given hypotheses.

Results

Descriptive statistics

The means, standard deviations and correlations between adolescent's perceptions of parental privacy invasion and the dependent variables are presented in Table 1. The correlations ranged from $r = .07$ to $r = .51$, which shows weak to strong correlations. Privacy invasion was significantly negatively correlated with Adolescents' Disclosure to Parents ($r = -.23$), Adolescent-Parent Relationship Quality ($r = -.28$), and positively correlated with Parent-Adolescent Conflict Frequency ($r = .51$). Adolescents' Disclosure to Parents was significantly positively correlated with Adolescent-Parent Relationship Quality ($r = .36$), and negatively correlated to Parent-Adolescent Conflict Frequency ($r = -.25$). Adolescents' Romantic Relationship Quality was only significantly correlated positively to Adolescent-Parent Relationship Quality ($r = .26$). Adolescent-Parent Relationship Quality was significantly negatively correlated to Parent-Adolescent Conflict Frequency ($r = -.34$). The results of the ANOVA showed no significant difference between boys and girls in their scores on parental privacy invasion ($F(1,17) = .04, p = .85$).

Multiple regression

Adolescents' disclosure to parents. The first regression tested the prediction of a negative association between perceptions of parental privacy invasion and adolescents' disclosure towards their parents (H1). The results of the regression are presented in Table 2. In Step 1, gender and age and gender were tested in association with adolescents' disclosure to their parents. Step 1 was significant (Adjusted $R^2 = .19, F(2,79) = 10.19, p < .001$). The findings showed a significant positive association between age and adolescents' disclosure ($\beta = .22, p = .03$). Gender also showed a significant positive association with adolescents' disclosure ($\beta = .37, p < .001$). By splitting the data file, it showed that boys become more disclosed as they mature ($\beta = .55, p < .001$). Girls appear to become less disclosed as they mature, but these findings were not significant ($\beta = -.05, p < .78$). In Step 2 privacy invasion was added to the regression. This step was also significant ($\Delta R^2 = .04, F(1,78) = 3.82, p = .05$). Privacy invasion showed a significant negative association with adolescents' disclosure ($\beta = -.20, p = .05$). In Step 2, gender showed a significant positive association with adolescents' disclosure to their parents ($\beta = .38, p < .01$). After splitting the file for gender, the findings did not show any significance. Contrary to Step 1, age was not significantly

associated with adolescents' disclosure to their parents in Step 2 ($\beta = .19, p = .07$). In Step 3, two-way-interactions gender and age, gender and privacy invasion, and age and privacy invasion were added to the regression. This step was significant ($\Delta R^2 = .08, F(3,75) = 2.95, p = .04$). None of the added interactions were significantly associated with adolescents' disclosure to their parents (gender x age ($\beta = -.25, p = .09$), gender x privacy invasion ($\beta = .04, p = .80$), age x privacy invasion ($\beta = -.20, p = .07$)). However, because gender and age showed a trend worth exploring further, the interaction was plotted for boys and girls separately. The results for boys were not significant ($\beta = -.11, p = .42$). For girls, these results were not significant either ($\beta = -.36, p = .09$) and therefore, these findings shall not be discussed further. Additionally, age showed a significant positive association with adolescents' disclosure in Step 3 ($\beta = .38, p < .01$). Gender also showed a significant positive association ($\beta = .41, p < .01$). In contrast to Step 2, privacy invasion was not significantly associated with adolescents' disclosure ($\beta = -.14, p = .30$). In Step 4, the three-way-interaction between gender, age and privacy invasion was added. Step 4 was not significant ($\Delta R^2 = .01, F(1,74) = 1.31, p = .26$). The multiple regression analysis showed that a significant negative association between adolescents' disclosure to their parents and privacy invasion was found in Step 2, meaning that when adolescents perceived greater parental privacy, they disclosed less information to their parents. Therefore hypothesis 1 (H1) can be supported.

Quality of the romantic relationship. Two hypotheses were tested and analyzed with a multiple regression analysis. It was hypothesized that a positive association between perceptions of parental privacy invasion and the quality of the romantic relationship would be found (H2a). Additionally, this association would be stronger for girls in comparison to boys (H2b). The results of the multiple regression are presented in Table 3.

Step 1, in which gender and age were examined in comparison to adolescents' romantic relationships, was not significant (Adjusted $R^2 = -.03, F(2,69) = 0.67, p = .94$). By adding 'Privacy Invasion' to the regression in Step 2, the results were still not significant ($\Delta R^2 = .03, F(1,68) = 2.27, p = .14$). Step 3, which added the two-way-interactions of gender and age, gender and privacy invasion, and age and privacy invasion, still did not show any significant change in explained variance ($\Delta R^2 = .00, F(3,65) = 0.01, p = 1.00$). Finally, Step 4, which included the three-way-interaction age, gender and privacy invasion, was significant ($\Delta R^2 = .08, F(1,64) = 5.74, p = .02$). A significant interaction effect of the three-way interaction between gender, age and privacy invasion was found in Step 4 ($\beta = -.46, p = .02$). None of the other variables were significant.

To examine gender within the three-way interaction effect, the multiple regression was repeated with a two-way-interaction between privacy invasion and age, plotted for boys

and girls, separately. The results for girls are shown in Figure 1. The effect was strong, but not significant, however it was worthy of further exploration ($\beta = -.41, p = .06$). As shown in Figure 1, when young girls perceived a high amount of privacy invasion, they reported their romantic relationship as better in comparison to young girls who perceived a low amount of privacy invasion. However, these results were in the reverse direction for older girls. For the high invasion group there was a negative link between age and relationship quality, whereas there was a positive link between age and quality in the low invasion group. The results for boys were not significant ($\beta = .24, p = .16$) and shall therefore not be discussed further.

These results only showed associations between perceiving parental privacy invasion and the quality of adolescents' romantic relationship for girls and depended on their age. Due to the lack of significance in the findings, both hypotheses were rejected. However, by revealing a strong trend within the two-way interaction effect for girls, the findings suggest that there is a positive association between the perceived privacy invasion and the quality of the romantic relationship for young girls. However, for older girls, this association seems to be reversed.

Quality of the parent-adolescent relationship. The third hypothesis was conducted and analyzed with a multiple regression. We predicted a negative association between adolescents' perceptions of parental privacy invasion and the quality of the parent-adolescent relationship (H3). The results of this multiple regression are presented in Table 4.

Step 1, in which gender and age were tested to find associations with the parent-adolescent relationship, was not significant (Adjusted $R^2 = .02, F(2,82) = 1.75, p = .18$). However, Step 2, adding privacy invasion to the regression, was significant ($\Delta R^2 = .06, F(1,81) = 5.78, p = .02$). The predictor privacy invasion showed a significant negative association with the parent-adolescent relationship ($\beta = -.26, p = .02$), which means that as adolescents perceived more privacy invasion, the quality of the relationship with their parents decreased. Age and gender in this step were both not significant ($\beta = .09, p = .43$ and $\beta = .12, p = .28$ respectively). In Step 3, two-way-interactions were added between age and gender, age and privacy invasion, and gender and privacy invasion. This model was not significant ($\Delta R^2 = .05, F(3,78) = 1.68, p = .18$). In the final step the three-way-interaction age, gender and privacy invasion was examined, which was also not significant ($\Delta R^2 = .00, F(1,77) = 0.34, p = .56$).

In all steps where privacy invasion was added, there was a significant negative association found with the quality of the parent-adolescent relationship. This showed that adolescents' perceptions of parental privacy invasion was negatively associated with the quality of the parent-adolescent relationship. The higher the parent-adolescent relationship quality, the less privacy invasion adolescents experienced. Therefore, the

hypothesis H3 was supported. In all steps, age and gender showed no significance. This means that no association was found between age and the quality of the parent-adolescent relationship, nor was there an association between gender and the quality of the parent-adolescent relationship. None of the interactions were associated with the quality of the parent-adolescent relationship.

Parent-adolescent conflicts. The last regression tested the hypothesis that a positive association would be found between adolescents' perceptions of parental privacy invasion into adolescents' romantic relationships and parent-adolescent conflicts (H4). The results of the multiple regression are presented in Table 5. In Step 1, gender and age were tested in association with parent-adolescent conflicts. Step 1 was significant (Adjusted $R^2 = .14$, $F(2, 84) = 7.95$, $p < .001$). The regression showed a significant negative association between adolescents' age and parent-adolescent conflicts ($\beta = -.40$, $p < .001$). Meaning that higher ages are associated with lower parent-adolescent conflicts. The association between gender and parent-adolescent conflicts was not significant ($\beta = -.01$, $p = .89$). In Step 2, privacy invasion was added to the regression. Step 2 was also significant ($\Delta R^2 = .23$, $F(1, 83) = 31.20$, $p < .001$). The added variable showed a significant positive association with parent-adolescent conflicts ($\beta = .49$, $p < .001$). In Step 2, there was also a significant negative association between adolescents' age and parent-adolescent conflicts ($\beta = -.31$, $p < .001$), which showed a lower β value than in Step 1. There was still no significant association between gender and parent-adolescent conflicts ($\beta = -.03$, $p = .71$). In Step 3 the two-way-interactions were added between gender and age, gender and privacy invasion, and age and privacy invasion. Step 3 was not significant ($\Delta R^2 = .00$, $F(3, 80) = 0.18$, $p = .91$). In the last step, Step 4, another interaction was added, namely gender and age and privacy invasion. Step 4 was also not significant ($\Delta R^2 = .00$, $F(1, 79) = 0.06$, $p = .80$).

The β values in the association between adolescents' perceptions of parental privacy invasion and parent-adolescent conflicts were positive. This shows that higher levels of perceived privacy invasion were associated with higher levels of parent-adolescent conflicts, supporting Hypothesis 4. The results also showed a negative association between adolescents' age and parent-adolescent conflicts, suggesting that the higher the age of the adolescents, the less conflicts adolescents had with their parents.

Discussion

This study examined associations between perceived parental privacy invasion and romantic relationships of adolescents (aged 15-20 years). Research by Noller and Bagi (1985) demonstrated that adolescents are more likely to hide important information concerning romantic relationships from parents, who in their turn place greater emphasis

on staying informed about their children's activities. This could be associated with adolescents' feelings of privacy invasion. This study aimed to collect more information about the associations between perceiving parental privacy invasion and adolescents' romantic relationships. We therefore focused on the links between perceptions of invasion and disclosure to parents, the quality of romantic relationships, the quality of the adolescent-parent relationship, and the frequency of adolescent-parent conflicts. Although much research has been done on these topics separately, there is still a lack of research on whether there are associations between these subjects and perceptions of parental privacy invasion. We predicted negative associations between perceiving parental privacy invasion and the quality of parent-adolescent relationship, as well with disclosure towards parents. Positive associations were predicted between perceiving parental privacy invasion and the quality of the romantic relationship, and between perceiving parental privacy invasion and the frequency of adolescent-parent conflicts.

By using a multiple regression, we aimed to examine whether a significant negative association existed between adolescents' disclosure to their parents and perceptions of parental privacy invasion (H1). This hypothesis was based on findings of earlier research which stated that adolescents perceive overly restrictive parenting as intrusive and psychologically controlling (Soenens et al, 2006). These feelings of being controlled have a negative association with the parent-adolescent relationship. Other research (Tilton-Weaver et al., 2010) showed that if adolescents do not feel connected to their parents, it is likely that this will lead to decreased disclosure. This is consistent with the findings in our research; the hypothesis was supported in our findings.

Additionally, we examined whether there was a positive association between perceiving parental privacy invasion and the quality of the romantic relationships (H2a) with a stronger association for girls (H2b). However, the findings of this regression showed no significance, leading to a rejection of both hypotheses. Even though the results did not show significant associations, a strong trend within the two-way interaction effect for girls was found. These findings suggested a positive association between perceived privacy invasion and the quality of the romantic relationship for young girls. However, among older girls this association seemed to be reversed. Previous research (Kerr et al., 2003) revealed that when parents invade adolescents' privacy by demanding information on romantic activities, the adolescent could interpret this as disapproving and consequently turn towards the romantic partner, leading to a higher quality relationship. Although no conclusions can be drawn due to the lack of significance found in our research, our findings concerning young girls seem to point toward a similar trend as is seen in the aforementioned research. Because there were no significant findings for boys, significant gender differences were not found in the current study. Therefore, further research should examine gender differences more closely. A possible

explanation for the lack of significance could be found in the sample. The last questionnaire, focusing on the quality of the romantic relationship, was not completed by 18% of the respondents. Respondents who did not complete this questionnaire were currently not in a relationship even though they previously were. Respondents who were currently in a relationship did fill in the questionnaire completely. Therefore, the missing answers could explain why these findings lacked significance.

Subsequently, we focused on the association between adolescents' perceptions of parental privacy invasion and the quality of the parent-adolescent relationship. A negative association between a high quality of the parent-adolescent relationship and feelings of parental privacy invasion in romantic relationships was predicted (H3). Hawk and colleagues (2008) previously showed that the quality of parent-adolescent relationships decreased when adolescents feel overtly controlled and therefore as if their privacy has been invaded. The findings in the current study were in line with this research, and supported the third hypothesis. In the current study, gender and age did not show any significance, nor any interaction effects. This is partly in line with previous research (Kerr & Stattin, 2000; Stattin & Kerr, 2000), which did not find gender differences concerning parental monitoring, which can be seen as a mild form of privacy invasion. Surprisingly, age is often neglected within this line of research. In the current study, age lacked significance and therefore did not seem to be associated with perceiving privacy invasion. While gaining autonomy is an important developmental task during adolescence (Youniss & Smollar, 1985), it is reasonable that higher perceptions of privacy invasion would be found as the adolescents mature. Further research could examine the role of age within this process.

Our findings also supported the hypothesis that perceiving parental privacy invasion would be positively associated with higher levels of parent-adolescent conflict (H4). Hawk and colleagues (2009) found that stronger feelings of perceiving privacy invasion predicted more parent-adolescent conflicts later on. Our findings complement this research by showing that the same association is found concerning romantic relationships of adolescents. A negative association was found between age and parent-adolescent conflicts, meaning that higher ages of adolescents were associated with lower levels of parent-adolescent conflicts. Concluding, there were associations between perceiving parental privacy invasion and parent-adolescent conflicts.

Strengths and limitations

The present study has many strengths. The questionnaires all had high reliability. The used sample gathered respondents from various schools and educational backgrounds and was equally distributed among gender. The data collection was done in a consistent and structured way, by instructing all the participants equally.

However, there are limitations to this study. Firstly, the questionnaires were not always understood by participants, which showed missing variables. Especially the Support Subscale of the Network of Relationships Inventory used for measuring the adolescents' romantic relationship quality was not completed in 18% of the questionnaires. This could be due to an unclear explanation about how to fill in the questionnaire when the respondent was not in a relationship during the data collection procedure. Secondly, parents were reported as a unit, thus there was no distinction between fathers and mothers. This can be a problem because adolescents' perceptions of privacy invasion as well as the quality of parent-adolescent relationships can differ between the father and mother. By looking at their influences separately, this limitation could be fixed. Finally, with one hundred respondents we had a fairly small sample size.

Conclusion

In conclusion, three out of the four hypotheses were supported, showing clear associations between parental privacy invasion and parents-adolescent relationships. This study found that the greater adolescents' perceptions of parental privacy, the less they disclosed to their parents. Furthermore, current research showed that adolescents' perceptions of parental privacy invasion were negatively associated with the quality of the parent-adolescent relationship, meaning that the higher the parent-adolescent relationship quality, the less privacy invasion adolescents experience. Finally, it was found that higher levels of adolescents' perceptions of parental privacy invasion were associated with higher levels of parent-adolescent conflicts. The results also found a negative association between adolescents' age and parent-adolescent conflicts. This means that the higher the age of the adolescents, the less conflicts adolescents have with their parents. In summary, parental privacy invasion was associated with a decrease of adolescents' disclosure towards parents, more conflicts between adolescents and their parents, and a lesser quality of the parent-adolescent relationship. With regard to adolescents and parents, it seems that the relationship thrives with more space in their "togetherness".

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Table 1

Descriptives and correlations.

	Descriptives				Correlations					
	M	SD	Min	Max	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Privacy Invasion	2,45	.71	1,00	4,25	1					
2. Disclosure	2,87	.80	1,21	4,79	-.23*	1				
3. Partner	3,94	.69	2,14	5,00	-.16	.07	1			
4. Parent	3,89	.61	2,14	5,00	-.28**	.36**	.26*	1		
5. Conflict	2,26	.76	1,00	4,40	.51**	-.25*	-.10	-.34**	1	
6. Age	17,18	1.68	15	20	-.18	.27*	.06	.19	-.40**	1

Note. * $p \leq .05$. ** $p \leq .01$, $n = 100$

Table 2

Hierarchical Regression on Adolescents' Disclosure to Parents

	Predictor	B	SE	β	Adjusted R ²	ΔR^2
Step 1	Gender	.75	.21	.37**	.19***	
	Age	.23	.10	.22		
Step 2	Gender	.77	.21	.38***	.21	.04*
	Age	.19	.10	.19		
	Privacy Invasion	-.20	.10	-.20*		
Step 3	Gender	.85	.20	.41***	.27	.08*
	Age	.39	.15	.38**		
	Privacy Invasion	-.14	.14	-.14		
	Gender x Age	-.37	.21	-.25		
	Gender x Privacy Invasion	.05	.21	.04		
	Age x Privacy Invasion	-.19	.11	-.20		
Step 4	Gender	.80	.20	.39	.27	.01
	Age	.41	.15	.41		
	Privacy Invasion	-.13	.14	-.13		
	Gender x Age	-.34	.21	-.23		
	Gender x Privacy Invasion	.13	.22	.08		
	Age x Privacy Invasion	-.09	.14	-.10		
	Gender x Age x Privacy Invasion	-.25	.21	-.18		

Note. * $p \leq .05$, ** $p \leq .01$, *** $p \leq .001$.

Table 3

Hierarchical Regression on Adolescents' Romantic Relationships.

	Predictor	B	SE	β	Adjusted R^2	ΔR^2
Step 1	Gender	.03	.24	.02	-.03	
	Age	.04	.12	.04		
Step 2	Gender	.04	.23	.02	-.01	.03
	Age	.00	.12	.00		
	Privacy Invasion	-.17	.11	-.18		
Step 3	Gender	.04	.24	.02	-.06	.00
	Age	-.01	.18	-.01		
	Privacy Invasion	-.17	.15	-.19		
	Gender x Age	.02	.25	.02		
	Gender x Privacy Invasion	.01	.25	.01		
	Age x Privacy Invasion	-.00	.12	-.00		
Step 4	Gender	-.06	.24	-.03	.02	.08*
	Age	.04	.17	.04		
	Privacy Invasion	-.14	.15	-.16		
	Gender x Age	.06	.25	.04		
	Gender x Privacy Invasion	.22	.26	.15		
	Age x Privacy Invasion	.22	.15	.25		
	Gender x Age x Privacy Invasion	-.57	.24	-.46*		

Note. * $p \leq .05$, ** $p \leq .01$, *** $p \leq .001$.

Table 4

Hierarchical Regression on the Quality of the Parent-Adolescent Relationship.

	Predictor	B	SE	β	Adjusted R^2	ΔR^2
Step 1	Gender	.23	.22	.14	.02	
	Age	.15	.11	.15		
Step 2	Gender	.23	.21	.12	.07	.06*
	Age	.09	.11	.09		
	Privacy Invasion	-.26	.11	-.26*		
Step 3	Gender	.27	.21	.14	.09	.05
	Age	.10	.15	.10		
	Privacy Invasion	-.40	.14	-.40		
	Gender x Age	-.06	.22	-.04		
	Gender x Privacy Invasion	.41	.23	.24		
	Age x Privacy Invasion	-.17	.12	-.16		
Step 4	Gender	.30	.22	.15	.09	.00
	Age	.09	.16	.09		
	Privacy Invasion	-.40	.14	-.41		
	Gender x Age	-.06	.22	-.04		
	Gender x Privacy Invasion	.38	.24	.23		
	Age x Privacy Invasion	-.22	.14	-.21		
	Gender x Age x Privacy Invasion	.14	.25	.08		

Note. * $p \leq .05$, ** $p \leq .01$, *** $p \leq .001$.

Table 5

Hierarchical Regression on Parent-Adolescent Conflicts.

	Predictor	B	SE	β	Adjusted R ²	ΔR^2
Step 1	Gender	-.03	.21	-.01	.14***	
	Age	-.41	.10	-.40***		
Step 2	Gender	-.07	.18	-.03	.37	.23***
	Age	-.32	.09	-.31**		
	Privacy Invasion	.48	.09	.49***		
Step 3	Gender	-.08	.18	-.04	.35	.00
	Age	-.32	.13	-.32		
	Privacy Invasion	.45	.12	.45		
	Gender x Age	-.01	.19	-.01		
	Gender x Privacy Invasion	.06	.20	.04		
	Age x Privacy Invasion	.05	.10	.05		
Step 4	Gender	-.07	.19	-.04	.34	.00
	Age	-.33	.14	-.32		
	Privacy Invasion	.44	.12	.45		
	Gender x Age	-.01	.19	-.01		
	Gender x Privacy Invasion	.04	.21	.03		
	Age x Privacy Invasion	.03	.13	.03		
	Gender x Age x Privacy Invasion	.05	.20	.04		

Note. * $p \leq .05$, ** $p \leq .01$, *** $p \leq .001$.

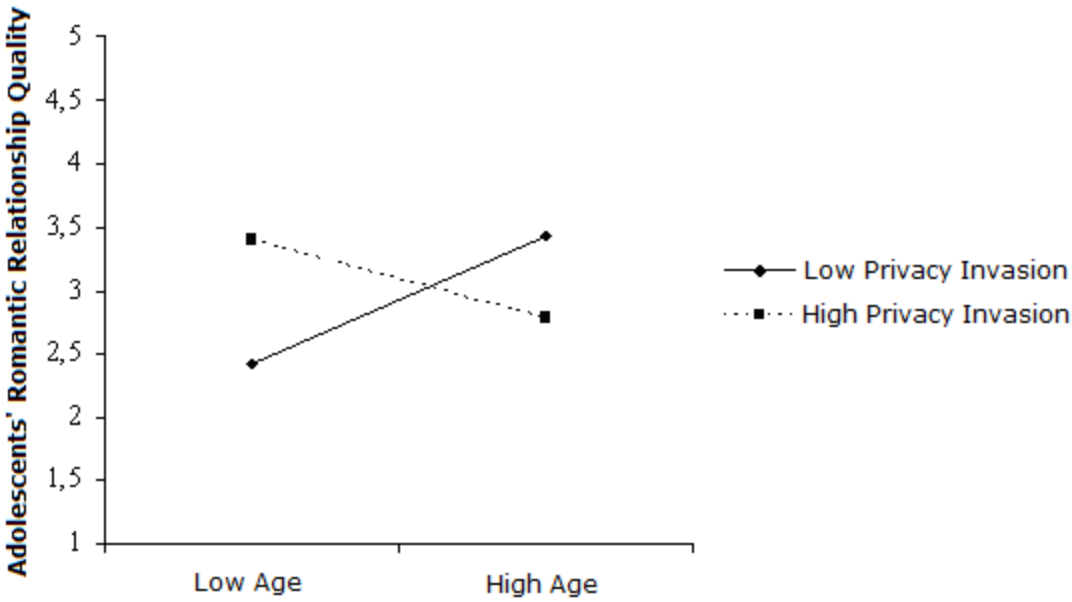


Figure 1. Two-way-interaction between.... on Adolescents' Romantic Relationship Quality for girls.