



ADOLESCENTS' TEXT MESSAGING AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIOR

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1

OVERVIEW OF PRESENTATION

- Talk about the role of peer influence in youths' involvement in antisocial behavior
- Discuss some specific features of text messaging that may make it ideal for antisocial communication
 - Present findings from an observational study of the content of adolescents' text messages.
- Discuss steps parents and school administrators can take to reduce the possible negative influence of texting



PEER INFLUENCE ON ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIOR

- Frequency of interaction affects the strength of peer influence (Agnew, 1991; Barry & Wentzel, 2006)
- Peer Contagion Hypothesis (Dishion & Dodge, 2005)
 - Establish deviant group norms
 - Restrict interaction opportunities with normative peers
 - Provide instrumental support for antisocial behavior



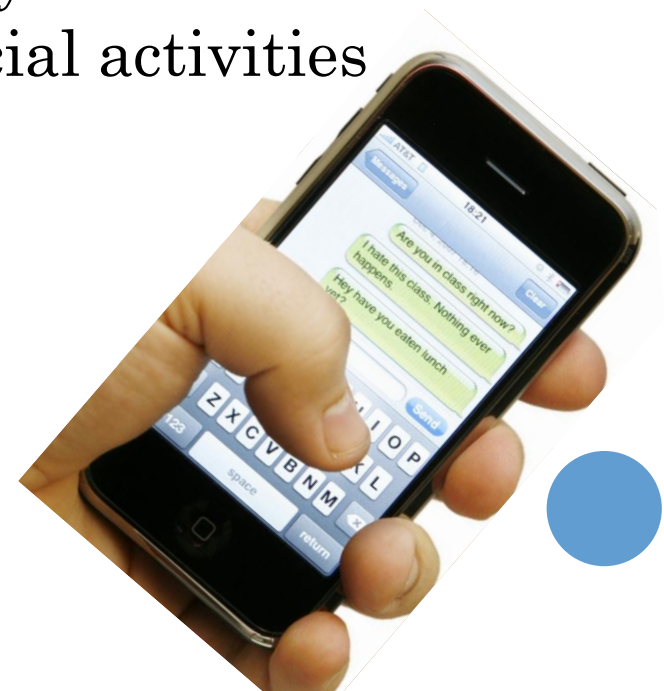
PEER INFLUENCE ON ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIOR

- Deviancy Training – when antisocial youth encourage and reinforce their peers' discussion of delinquency.
 - Antisocial dyads discuss more negative topics than normative youth (Dishion et al., 1995)
 - They are also more likely to reinforce their peers discussing delinquent topics (Piehler & Dishion, 2007)



Peer Influence on Antisocial Behavior

- Interpersonal communication about delinquent topics is a mechanism through antisocial behavior develops.
- Text Message communication may be an ideal forum for youth to discuss antisocial activities





TEXTING AND ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIOR

- Few studies have examined the role of text message communication and involvement in antisocial behaviors.
 - Ling, 2005a
 - Texting frequency predicted self-reported problems at school, truancy, and alcohol use
 - Underwood, Rosen, Beron & Ehrenreich, submitted for review
 - Youth following high social aggression, high physical aggression and high joint social and physical aggression trajectories sent and received more text messages.
- Studies have focused on **frequency** and relied on **self-reports** of electronic communication

THE BLACKBERRY PROJECT: AN OBSERVATIONAL STUDY

- No previous research had examined how the actual *content* of adolescents' text messaging relates to antisocial behavior
- 178 adolescents (89 girls) provided with BlackBerry devices
 - 66% Caucasian, 17.5% Hispanic, 8.5% African American, and 14% did not report/of mixed race.
 - Median income between \$26,000 – 75,000
- Also collected information participants' **parents** (152 mothers) and participants' **language arts teachers**

METHOD – MICRO CODING

- Four days of SMS communication (in 2-day transcripts) were assigned to a team of 24 coders
- Coding system designed primarily to capture social aggression and prosocial communication.
 - Property Crimes - $\kappa = 1.0$
 - Physical Aggression - $\kappa = .72$
 - Rule-Breaking - $\kappa = .94$
 - Substance Use Codes - $\kappa = .90$

DISCUSSION OF ANTISOCIAL TOPICS VIA TEXTING

Descriptive Statistics of Antisocial and Non-Antisocial Utterances via SMS Over a 4 Day Period: Entire Sample

Type of Utterance	Number of participants ^a	M	SD	Min.	Max.
Non-Antisocial Utterances	172 (100%)	426 (98.38%)	401.2	3	2136
Antisocial Utterances (Collapsed)	102 (59.3%)	7 (1.62%)	21.9	0	253
Rule-Breaking	53 (30.81%)	1.8 (.42%)	4.6	0	36
Illicit Substances	48 (27.91%)	3.2 (.74%)	17.8	0	217
Physical Aggression	57 (33.14%)	1.7 (.39%)	5.1	0	40
Property Crimes	11 (6.4%)	0.2 (.05%)	1.2	0	11
Total Utterances	172 (100%)	433	409.6	3	2201

Note. Numbers outside parentheses indicate raw frequency of utterances, numbers inside parentheses indicate percentage of utterances

^a Number of participants who engaged in each type of utterance

RULE-BREAKING BEHAVIOR

Friday:

(08:21:43 AM) Katherine says to Juan (P):

I gotta math test today. Can we skip at ur crib?

(08:21:45 AM) Juan (P) says to Katherine:

no my big bros home today and he awake already. y cant we stay at ur house

(08:34:11 AM) Katherine says to Juan (P):

My moms not workin today. Could we stay at Louis's house?

RULE-BREAKING BEHAVIOR

Thursday:

(11:44:48 AM) Stephanie says to Roselyn (P):
what up

(11:44:50 AM) Roselyn (P) says to Stephanie:
Nthin {just} drivin ma lil sis to da store

(12:56:33 PM) Stephanie says to Roselyn (P):
girl when you get your license?

(12:56:36 PM) Roselyn (P) says to Stephanie:
I don't got ma license yet

(12:56:38 PM) Stephanie says to Roselyn (P):
Oh so you givin a ride with a bike?

(12:56:40 PM) Roselyn (P) says to Stephanie:
No ma mom car

(01:07:11 PM) Stephanie says to Roselyn (P):
Ok lol

PHYSICAL AGGRESSION

Tuesday:

(07:50:30 PM) Dave (P) says to Rachel:

Yeaa i saw u like {2} times today:):):) & haha sammy {got} beat upp by like 6 pakistan kids lol He like punched 1 of them cause they were talkin trash in their

(07:50:33 PM) Dave (P) says to Rachel:

language but then they all jumped himmm. That suckkss

Friday:

(11:12:18 PM) Raul (P) says to Sandy:

Mark {and} his lil bro jason haha fought roger n his cuzin. Haha u should uf seen Jason. dat nigga got crazy as hell

(11:12:56 PM) Sandy says to Raul (P):

For real. Who whooped lil roger? Ha i bet jason lol

(11:13:40 PM) Raul (P) says to Sandy:

Na Mark did. roger 2 big 4 jason

(11:17:34 PM) Sandy says to Raul (P):

Haha man lil roger funny. But i wanna see you n george box

SUBSTANCE USE

Tuesday:

(03:27:55 PM) Alicia (P) says to Charlie:

Gud imma need it {\$20 worth or marijuana}. I wanna smoke so badly I've neva been dis sober at school befo

Friday:

(11:32:03 AM) Mindy (P) says to Daisy:

Hey daisy {let's} skip 4th so we can {smoke marijuana}

(11:53:41 AM) Daisy says to Mindy (P):

That's a great idea!!! but I'm already in class

(11:53:44 PM) Mindy (P) says to Daisy:

ok letz skip 5th. were do we meet so I can give u sum?

(11:54:27 AM) Daisy says to Mindy (P):

I can't skip 5th period. I have a test

(11:54:30 AM) Mindy (P) says to (SMS):

ok go to da restroomz were we met last time. well just {smoke} quick

SUBSTANCE USE

Saturday:

(11:23:27 AM) Griffin (P) says to Michelle:

Lol i have bought 85 dollars worth in all my weed life. It lasted for a long time. Still lasting.

(11:23:29 AM) Michelle says to Griffin (P):

Dang son.

(11:23:31 AM) Griffin (P) says to Michelle:

I didnt buy it all at once! And i use a pipe which conserves weed. Its amazing shit what pipes can do.

(11:34:11 AM) Michelle says to Griffin (P):

Yeah dude I see that now

(11:34:14 AM) Griffin (P) says to Michelle:

Lol hey i always get my shit from my guy in {town}. He gets me lots for cheap, like \$20 for 5 grams.

(11:34:17 AM) Michelle says to Griffin (P):

Haha you've gotten the connections

(11:34:20 AM) Griffin (P) says to Michelle:

Yeah i only buy from Nick if i want that A-1 shit. That is the best shit ever.

(11:34:22 AM) Michelle says to Griffin (P):

Haha. Alright. I don't wanna get hooked.

(11:34:26 AM) Griffin (P) says to Michelle:

Lol dont! Its expensive. But yeah dont buy from Nick its too expensive and it would ruin other types of weed cause they wont get you as high as A-1.

SUBSTANCE USE

□ Saturday:

(03:32:45 PM) Lee (P) says to Trish:

Its cool. Man I really want a joint right now

(03:32:47 PM) Trish says to Lee (P):

haha.

(03:32:51 PM) Lee (P) says to Trish:

I think I should b the 1st person u get hi with

(03:32:52 PM) Trish says to Lee (P):

haha. Me too.

(03:32:55 PM) Lee (P) says to Trish:

Really?!? WHEN!!!!!!?????

(03:32:57 PM) Trish says to Lee (P):

I dont know.

(03:33:00 PM) Lee (P) says to Trish:

Next time I see u??? I won't fuck u up to bad. DUDE!!! We can watch

Friday {the movie}!!!!

(03:47:07 PM) Trish says to Lee (P):

Haha. Yes we should.

PROPERTY CRIMES

Sunday:

(07:20:47 PM) Nora (P) says to Josh:

So wut happenin

(08:46:12 PM EST) Josh says to Nora (P):

{Nothing,} jus fuckin {stole} a shit load of condoms from wal
mart. and u?

Friday:

(11:30:52 PM) Roger (P) says to Nina:

Yeah and during advisory ms smith gave me and Lee her car
keys to go get something and we got in her car and put it in drive
and hit a car and it left a Huge {dent} but she never noticed

(11:41:43 PM) Roger (P) says to Nina:

those were good times

(11:55:57 PM) Nina says to Roger (P):

Haha

RESULTS - DESCRIPTION

- Adolescents engage in antisocial and deviant conversations via SMS.
- Much of the antisocial communication displays the features of Deviancy Training:
 - Encourages involvement and reinforces this behavior as appropriate
 - Conveys instrumental knowledge on how one engages in these behaviors

METHOD - MEASURES

- Does this antisocial text messaging relate to subsequent involvement in antisocial behavior?
- Baseline Antisocial Behavior – Parent, Teacher, and Self-reports were collected in the spring/summer before 9th grade
 - Rule-breaking behavior subscale
 - “breaks rules”, “lies”, “cheats”, “sets fires”
 - Aggressive behavior subscale
 - “argues a lot”, “gets in fights”, “attacks people”
- Outcome ratings – Parent, Teacher, and Self-reports were collected again in the spring/summer before 10th grade

RESULTS – RULE-BREAKING BEHAVIOR

Regression Analyses Predicting Parent, Teacher, and Self-Reports of 9th Grade Rule Breaking from Gender and Delinquent SMS Utterances

	Self Report			Teacher Report			Parent Report		
	<i>b</i>	SE	β	<i>b</i>	SE	β	<i>b</i>	SE	β
Gender	.09	.13	.05	.1	.1	.08	.08	.08	.05
Baseline Rule-Breaking ^a	.34**	.1	.27**	.23**	.09	.22**	.85**	.06	.72**
Total Utterances	.00*	.00	.17*	.00	.00	.07	-.00	.00	-.01
Antisocial Utterances	10.24**	3.0	.28**	10.7**	2.41	.37**	7.41**	1.66	.24**
<i>n</i>			138			134			142

^a Baseline Rule Breaking collected in 8th grade. Baseline and outcome ratings have corresponding reporters

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

RESULTS – AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOR

Regression Analyses Predicting Parent, Teacher, and Self-Reports of 9th Grade Aggressive Behavior from Gender and Delinquent SMS Utterances

	Self Report			Teacher Report			Parent Report		
	<i>b</i>	SE	β	<i>b</i>	SE	β	<i>b</i>	SE	β
Gender	.16	.15	.09	.21	.16	.1	.07	.1	.04
Baseline Aggressive Behavior ^a	.4	.33	.11	.35**	.09	.32**	.77**	.06	.73**
Total Utterances	.00	.00	.13	.1	.00	.1	.00	.00	.08
Antisocial Utterances	9.46**	3.44	.25**	9.44**	3.56	.22**	-.14	2.21	-.00
<i>n</i>	137			134			142		

^a Baseline Aggressive Behavior collected in 8th grade. Baseline and outcome ratings have corresponding reporters

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

DISCUSSION

- Adolescents use SMS communication as a forum for antisocial conversation.
- Antisocial talk via SMS significantly predicts later involvement in rule-breaking and aggressive behavior
 - With the exception of parent reports of Aggressive Behavior

SO WHAT CAN BE DONE ABOUT IT?

- ***Parental Monitoring*** is one of the strongest protective factors against involvement with deviant peers and engaging in antisocial behavior.
 - Monitor (mon-i-tor), verb: “to observe and check the progress or quality of something over a period of time; to keep under systematic review”

SO WHAT CAN BE DONE ABOUT IT?

- ***Parental Monitoring*** is one of the strongest protective factors against involvement with deviant peers and engaging in antisocial behavior.
 - Monitor (mon-i-tor), verb: “to **observe** and check the progress or quality of something over a period of time; **to keep under systematic review**”
- Evidence suggests parents have very little knowledge of their children’s texting behavior (as well as other digital communication forums)
 - Parents are the first (and arguable most important) line of defense against children’s problem behavior


SO WHAT CAN BE DONE ABOUT IT?

- The first step in parental monitoring is *having the ability* to monitor.
 - Knowing passwords
 - Having access to phones
 - Limiting access to phones/internet during the night



**10
PM**

**DO YOU
KNOW WHERE
YOUR CHILDREN
ARE?**

A cartoon illustration of Homer Simpson sitting at a small wooden table in a living room. He is wearing a white short-sleeved shirt and blue pants, and is eating a meal with a spoon. He has a frustrated or angry expression on his face. The room features a red sofa, a purple lamp, a green rotary phone, and a framed picture on the wall. A large speech bubble is positioned to the left of Homer, and a smaller one is to the right.

It's 10pm, do you know where your children are?

I told you last night, 'NO'!!

SO WHAT CAN BE DONE ABOUT IT?

- The first step in parental monitoring is *having the ability* to monitor.
 - Knowing passwords
 - Having access to phones
 - Limiting access to phones/internet during the night
- It's important to start this process early, and make necessary adjustments as children grow older.
 - Think of it as similar to “you have to leave the door open when your boy/girlfriend comes over”.
 - That rule works best if it begins when boy/girlfriends first **start** coming over, not when somebody's pregnant

SO WHAT CAN BE DONE ABOUT IT?

- Parental monitoring is best when integrated into a larger conversation about digital safety and citizenship.
 - (These are lessons our kids need regardless of monitoring)
 - Lay out your expectations for what is appropriate digital communication
- Perhaps most importantly, monitoring requires finesse and *restraint*
 - Don't comment on their Facebook page
 - Don't weigh in on any little issue that comes up
 - “I was reading your texts last night, and you told Susie that you were late to third period!! How many times have I told you that you need to get to class on time...blah blah blah”
 - “You said ‘crappy’ in your Facebook status yesterday...we don't swear in this house!”
- What are *YOUR* goals for this monitoring?

SO WHAT CAN BE DONE ABOUT IT?

- These findings also suggest that giving students free access to their smartphones throughout the school day may have unintended consequences
 - Teachers' hands are often tied
 - Many schools have recently engaged in an “if you can't beat 'em, join 'em” approach.
 - Furthermore, parents' insistence on being able to communicate with their children throughout the school day has been some of the largest hurdles to administrators.

DO'S AND DON'TS FOR MONITORING ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION

○ Do...

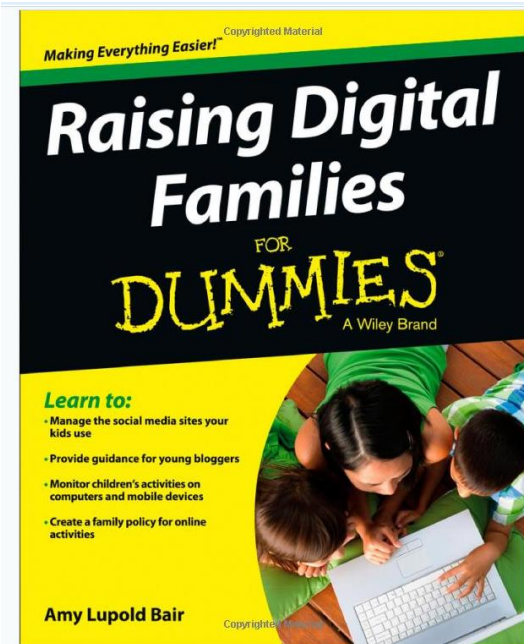
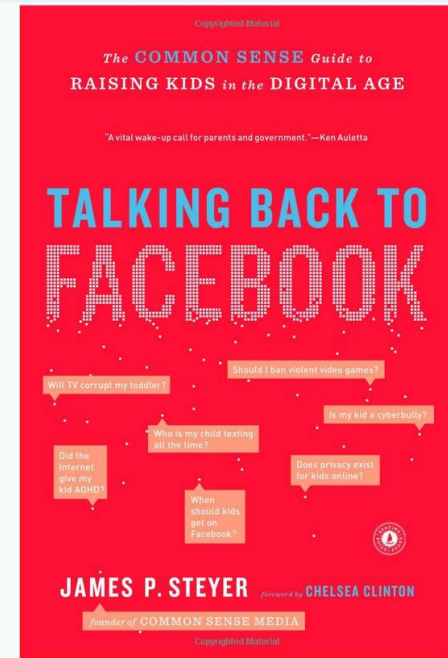
- ...broach the subject early, openly, broadly, and incrementally
- ...take your child's age, maturity, etc. into account
- ...let your individual child guide your monitoring efforts, but be very wary about giving up the *ability* to monitor
- ...use this as an opportunity to improve your relationship with your child

○ Don't...

- ...go home and make far-reaching and instant changes
- ...use you're monitoring abilities as a way to micro-manage your child
- ...confuse your efforts to monitor as an attempt to participate in your child's social interactions

SOME RESOURCES

- www.CommonSenseMedia.org
- *Talking Back to Facebook* by James P. Steyer
- *Raising Digital Families for Dummies* by Amy L. Bair



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