Individual Personality Traits and Communicative Behavior in Adoptive and Non-Adoptive Families

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Introduction

The most consistent finding in studies examining family communication is that adoptive family communication is characterized as less warm and more conflictual compared with non-adoptive families (Lansford et al., 2001; Rosnati & Marta, 1997; Rueter, et al. 2009). However, research examining this difference is limited.

Two factors that may influence family communication: personality traits and varying levels of genetic relatedness (e.g. adopted vs. non-adopted).

Theoretical Frameworks

- Person-environment transactional theory (Caspi et al., 1987, 1998; Scarf & McCartney, 1983)
- Family Communications Patterns Theory (FCPT; Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002a, 2000b, 2004, 2006)
- Actor-partner interdependence model (APIM; Kenny & Cook, 1999; Kenny et al., 2006; Kenny & Ledermann, 2010).

The Present Study

The goal of the present study is to understand how parent and adolescent individual personality traits and adoption status independently contribute to individual’s communicative behavior (directed toward other family members) in adoptive compared to non-adoptive families.

Participants

Data for this study were from the Sibling Interaction and Behavior Study (SIBS; McGue et al., 2007). Participating families at intake (N = 617) had at least one parent and two adolescent siblings (M = 14.9 years, SD = 1.9). The present study used data from the mothers (M = 45.56, SD = 4.23), fathers (M = 48.23, SD = 4.42), elder (M = 16.14, SD = 1.5), and younger sibling (M = 13.8, SD = 1.6). In 384 (308) families, the elder (younger) sibling was adopted (International: n = 253 (203), 67% (65%) Asian). In 231 (208) families, the elder (younger) sibling was the biological offspring of both parents. Two adoptive families were removed from the sample due to illegitimacy resulting in a final sample of 615 families.