

MCTFR *update*

minnesota center for twin and family research fall : winter : 2010



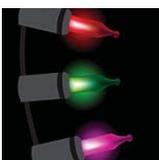
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RECENT FINDINGS FROM OUR SIBLING STUDY

By: Serena Eberlein, with contributions from Anu Sharma and Meg Keyes.

What is SIBS?

When people think of the MCTFR, the first thing that comes to their mind is twins. While a lot of our focus is on our twin families, our Sibling Interaction and Behavior Study (SIBS) also makes up a good chunk of our research and is equally important to accomplish our study's research goals. SIBS is a separate, longitudinal research study aimed at investigating the adjustment of adopted adolescents as well as learning more about the impact of the family environment.

What are we researching?

When our adoptive families first visited the MCTFR we received a lot of feedback requesting a greater emphasis on adoption and the effects of race and culture. Our participants' suggestions led us to one of our more recent findings regarding interracial adoptive families. We asked, "What difference does it make if you are adopted into a family where you are the only ethnic minority?"

What have we found?

To answer this question, we compared adolescent adoptees who are not the only ethnic minority in their families (that is, where they have at least one brother or sister who is also an ethnic minority) with those who are the only ethnic minority in their family. We looked at scales measuring attitude toward adoption, interest in birth families, ethnic identification,

and sense of self. We found only one significant difference -- children adopted into a family where they are not the only ethnic minority identify more with their ethnicity than those who are the only ethnic minority in the family. We also found that adolescents adopted into a family where their ethnicity differs from all other family members tended to have a more conflicted relationship with their parents than those who share ethnicity with at least one other sibling. However, because adolescents who are the only ethnic minority in their homes are frequently the only adoptee as well, interpreting this finding is difficult.

Why does this matter?

The thing about research is that in the process of finding the answers to our questions, we come up with even more questions. In fact, that's a marker for successful research, and it is exactly what happened when we asked about ethnicity and adoption. Adopted persons, parents, policymakers, and adoption professionals are very interested in these issues. For example, what advice should be given to an adoptive parent who asks if they should adopt a second child of the same ethnicity as the first? Would it help both children's adjustment? And what happens when an adoptee leaves their interracial home in early adulthood? How do they cope with issues of race and ethnicity? These are all topics we hope to

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Website Additions

Check out the new and updated sections of our website!



about us

This is a brand new section of our website, which includes:

- a **timeline** of important dates in twin and sibling research
- an archive of past **newsletters**
- **press & links** relating to the MCTFR

meet the staff

We have updated this section to include:

- **new staff** announcements!
- **contact** information for all of our staff members

mctfr.psych.umn.edu



meet the staff:
Family Recruiters



*Brrriiiiiinnngggg!
"Hello?"*

"Hi, this is the Minnesota Center for Twin and Family Research. We're wondering if you'd be interested in participating in another follow-up."

Over the years, you have undoubtedly received several phone calls that begin like this. The first contact you receive about follow-up participation comes from a member of our Recruitment committee. Recruiters are on the front lines of MCTFR research, working hard to encourage you to continue participating in this landmark developmental study.

Recruiting for this kind of longitudinal research is notoriously difficult. As you probably know, we contact most of our participants for follow-ups approximately every three to five years. With roughly 9,800 participants, contacting everyone in a timely manner presents a challenge. Add to this participants' busy schedules and changing lives, following up with every one of you might seem next to impossible. However, the MCTFR is well known for having excellent participation rates across the years: the participation rate is 90%, on average. That's truly an amazing contribution and it's all thanks to you!

Due to our success, researchers from other studies have wondered how we maintain such high participation rates. Part of our success comes from the committee's ability to adapt to the changing needs of the study. Originally, our interviewing staff recruited all of the families for the study. Over time, because the study continued to

grow, it became clear that the study needed a separate team to take on the recruiting responsibilities. For many years, the recruitment committee consisted of a Principal Recruiter and two or three full time Family Recruiters.

In 2007, the committee grew dramatically to accommodate the MCTFR's efforts to collect a confidential DNA sample from our 9,800 participants. Recruitment accomplished this project with the effort of nine full time staff members. When the project wrapped up earlier this year, the committee went back to three full time members.

Presently, the committee consists of Principal Recruiter, Genevieve Ryczek, and Family Recruiters Allie Savela and Sara Penney. They are overseen by Principal Investigator, Matt McGue, Ph.D. Genevieve has been with the MCTFR for over 8 years. She staffs the committee with recruiters that are personable, outgoing, organized, and persistent. Allie and Sara both view Recruitment as a rewarding challenge. They enjoy having a flexible schedule, which allows them to reach a wide variety of participants. The Recruitment committee appreciates working with an incredible assessment staff that is always willing to bend over backward to help out.

Thank you for getting to know a little bit about our committee. We look forward to talking to you about future follow-ups!

Sara Penney, Genevieve Ryczek, and Allie Savela all contributed to this article.

FUN FACTS

About six in ten Americans have a personal connection to adoption.

<http://www.adoptioninstitute.org>

The term used when one set of identical twins marries another set of identical twins is

Quarternary Marriage.

<http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cousin>



MCTFR Principal Investigator, William Iacono, was named Regents Professor in 2010 by the Board of Regents of the University of Minnesota. Regents Professorship is the highest level of achievement that a faculty member at the U of M can receive and there are a total of only 29 regents Professors among all faculty members at the University. Remarkably, the MCTFR is currently led by two Regents Professors, as Principal Investigator Matt McGue was also named a Regents Professor in 2007.

If you would like to read more about William Iacono's new title as a Regents Professor, you can do so at:

http://www1.umn.edu/news/features/2010/UR_CONTENT_248072.html

Article by: Kadie Johnson; Photograph by: Patrick O'Leary



SIBS RESEARCH

What can we learn from studying adoptive families?

**continued from cover story*

address as our study progresses. We are now in the midst of conducting our second follow up with our SIBS participants, and would like to thank all of those who participate in our research and continue to help us answer these important questions.

What can we get out of this?

Conducting worthwhile research begins with identifying the issues that raise questions (e.g., is there a difference?), and then we go on from there (Why do these issues arise? how do they affect us? and what can be done about it?). All findings, good or bad, big or small, bring the MCTFR closer to our eventual goals. While our main focus is on researching the genetic and environmental factors that contribute to a person's wellbeing and personality, our collective aim is to use those findings to contribute to improving people's lives.

Check out how our SIBS participants' lives have changed since our intake study!



Life Event Changes

**continued from SIBS story*

5% of our SIBS, as of their second follow-up, had at least one child and 5 of our SIBS adopted a child

13% attended a vocational training or trade school

24% moved in with a romantic partner

26% attended community college

71% attended a 4 year college or university

6% are married.

13% got engaged.

5% earned a professional or graduate degree.

4% served in the military



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