2010

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DOES GENETIC VARIANCE IN DRINKING MOTIVES EXPLAIN THE GENETIC OVERLAP BETWEEN PERSONALITY AND ALCOHOL INVOLVEMENT?

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The present research was supported by NIH grants T32 AA13292, AA13987, and K05AA012342 to Kenneth J. Sher and P50 AA11998 to Andrew Heath

Background

- Genetic risk for alcohol dependence has been shown to overlap with genetic factors contributing to variation in dimensions of personality (Slutske et al., 2002).

- Internal drinking motives (i.e., coping and enhancement) have been posited as important mediators of the alcohol-personality relation (e.g., Cooper et al., 1995) and appear to be heritable (Agrawal et al., 2008; Prescott et al., 2004).

- However, it remains unclear the extent to which genetic variance in drinking motives: a) overlaps with genetic variance in theoretically related personality constructs b) account for the genetic covariance between personality and alcohol involvement

Current Study

- The current study sought to address two primary research questions
  1. Do genetic factors contributing to variation in personality also contribute to genetic variation in internal drinking motives?
  2. If so, does genetic variance in drinking motives explain the genetic overlap between personality and alcohol involvement?

Method

- Data drawn from Wave 4 of Missouri Adolescent Female Twin Study (MOAFTS; Heath et al., 2002)
  - 3,611 young adult same-sex female twins
  - Median age = 22, mean age = 21.7, SD = 2.8; range 18-29 years

- Measures
  - Quantitative measure of alcohol consumption (Agrawal et al., 2009).

- Personality:
  - Control: Multidimensional Personality Questionnaire (MPQ: Tellegen, 1982).

- Drinking motives:
  - Coping and enhancement scale from Drinking Motives Questionnaire (Cooper, 1994).

Analytic Procedure

- Using data from members of identical/monzygotic (MZ) and fraternal/dizygotic (DZ) twin pairs, we are able to partition individual differences in alcohol involvement, personality, and drinking motives into three sources: additive genetic (A), shared environmental (C) and unique environmental (E).

- The extent to which genetic variance in personality overlapped with genetic variance in drinking motives and alcohol involvement was estimated (i.e., genetic correlation).

- The genetic correlation between personality and alcohol involvement, adjusting for drinking motives, was then estimated.

- All analyses conducted in Mx Version 1.7.03

Results

- Significant genetic associations were found between coping motives and all personality constructs whereas enhancement motives showed significant genetic overlap with control only.

  - Coping motives demonstrated the largest genetic overlap with all personality and alcohol involvement measures and accounted for, respectively, over 99%, 60%, and 28% of the genetic covariance between neuroticism, agreeableness, and control with AUD symptoms.

- Though coping motives reduced the respective relation between agreeableness and control with the alcohol composite, the adjusted estimates were not significantly different from the unadjusted correlations.

- Enhancement motives did not significantly reduce the genetic correlations between alcohol involvement and personality.

Conclusions

- Findings suggest that genetic variation in coping motives to drink account for a substantial proportion of the genetic overlap between specific personality dimensions and AUD symptoms.

- Future research should further elucidate specific genetic factors that relate to these constructs.

References