



Dyadic Trait Fit (DTF) in Adoptive & Non-Adoptive Families

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Introduction

The Present Study

Building on previous research that provided preliminary support for the theoretical construct of dyadic trait fit (DTF; Koh, Davis, Walkner-Spaan, & Rueter, 2014), the present study tested the effect of dyadic trait fit (DTF) on a communicative family process with adoptive and non-adoptive families. Little is known about how *both* parent and child traits contribute to child outcomes in the general population. Moreover, examining the contribution of both parent and child traits within the context of a communicative family process that accounts for adoptive status (i.e., adoptive and non-adoptive families) is a novel approach; this study takes such an approach.

The present study answers two research questions: (1) Will parent alienation and adolescent aggression independently elicit a response in the other's communicative behavior as a partner effect? and, (2) What is the effect of dyadic trait fit on the overall family process?

Theoretical Frameworks

- Goodness of fit theory (Lerner, 1993; Thomas & Chess, 1977)
- Person-environment transactional theory (Caspi et al., 1987, 1988; Scarr & 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)

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 ($M_{age} = 45.56$, $SD = 4.23$), fathers ($M_{age} = 48.23$, $SD = 4.42$), elder ($M_{age} = 16.14$, $SD = 1.5$), and younger sibling ($M_{age} = 13.8$, $SD = 1.6$). In 384 (308) families, the elder (younger) sibling was adopted [International: $n = 253$ (208), 67% (65%) Asian]. In 231 (208) families, the elder (younger) sibling was the biological offspring of both parents. Two adoptive families were removed due to ineligibility resulting in a final sample of 615 families.

Measures

Personality Traits

- **Multidimensional Personality Questionnaire (MPQ;** Tellegen & Waller, 2008) – Mother and father self-reported Aggression and Alienation scales
- **Personality Booklet – Youth Abbreviated (PBYA;** Tellegen & Waller, 2008) – adolescent reported Aggression and Alienation scales
 - 4-point scale (1 = definitely false to 4 = definitely true) – high scores reflect high levels

Family Interactions

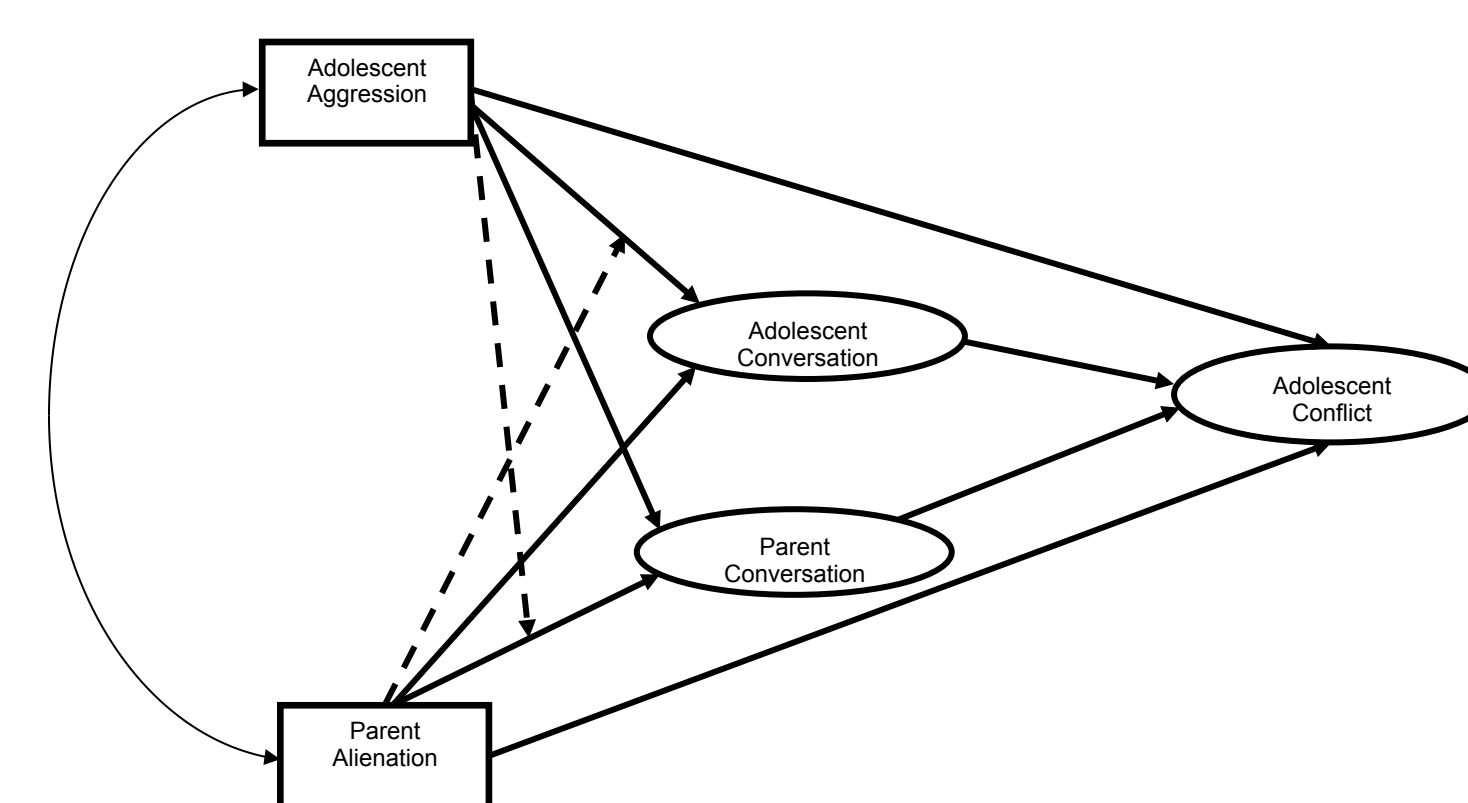
- Assessed using trained observers' global ratings of dyadic (e.g. adolescent to mother, father to adolescent, etc.) family interaction tasks from the Sibling Interaction and Behavior Rating Scales (SIBRS; adapted from the Iowa Family Interaction Rating Scales, Melby & Conger, 2001). All SIBRS are based on the following scale: 1 = not at all characteristic to 9 = mainly characteristic.

- **Communication (conceptualized as conversation-orientated behavior):** factor scores of the Warmth (ICCs: .37 to .72), Listening Responsiveness (ICCs: .34 to .63), and Communication (ICCs: .60 to .75) scales
- **Conflict:** observed scores of Hostility (ICCs: .71 to .73) and Angry/Coercion (ICCs: .65 to .67) scales

- Adoption status: 1 = adopted, 2 = not adopted
- Sex: 1 = male, 2 = female

Conceptual Model

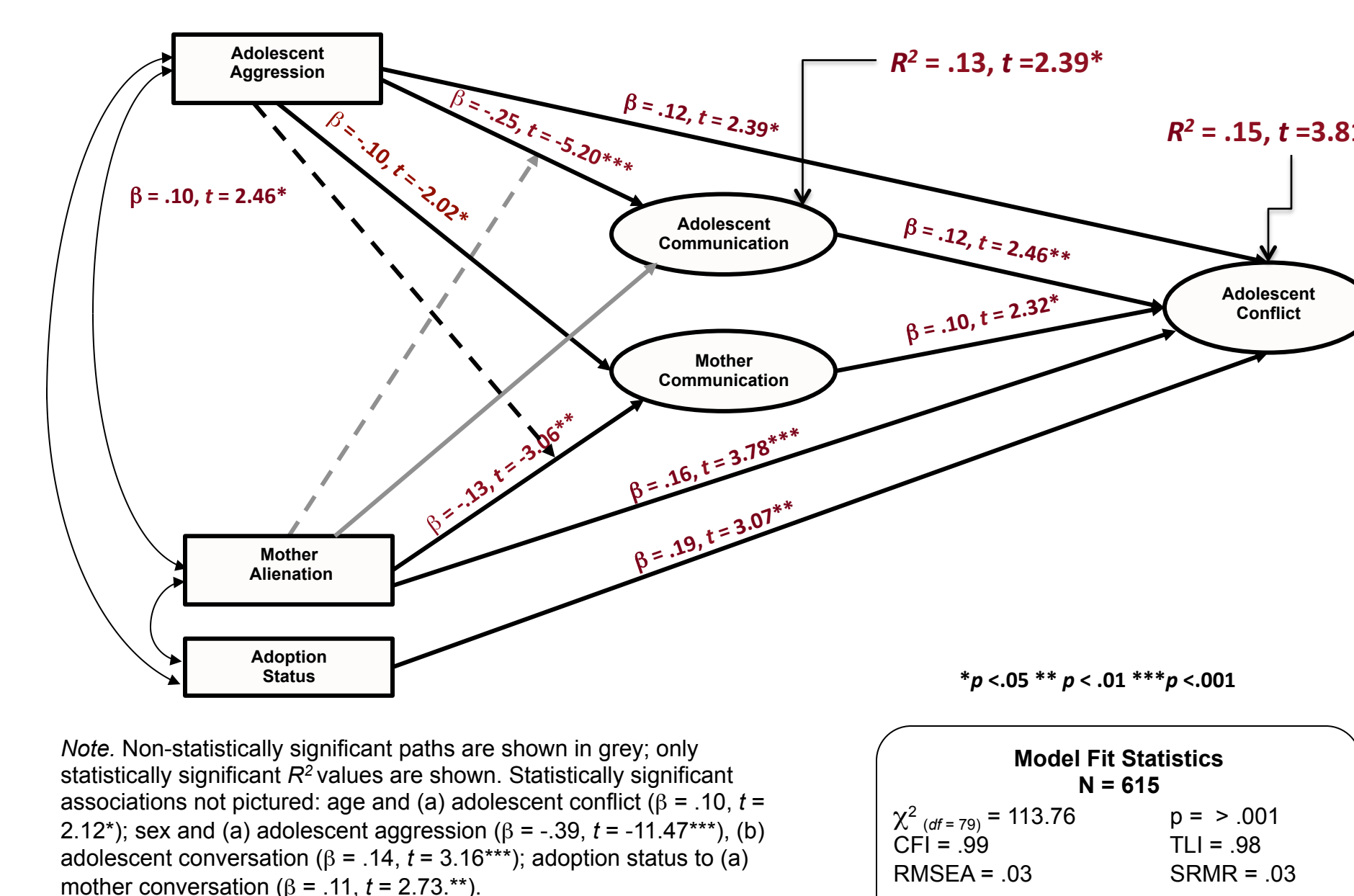
Figure 1. Proposed Conceptual Model



Note. The dotted lines illustrate moderating effects. Not pictured: adoption status.

Results

Mother-Adolescent Final Step Model



Father-Adolescent Final Step Model

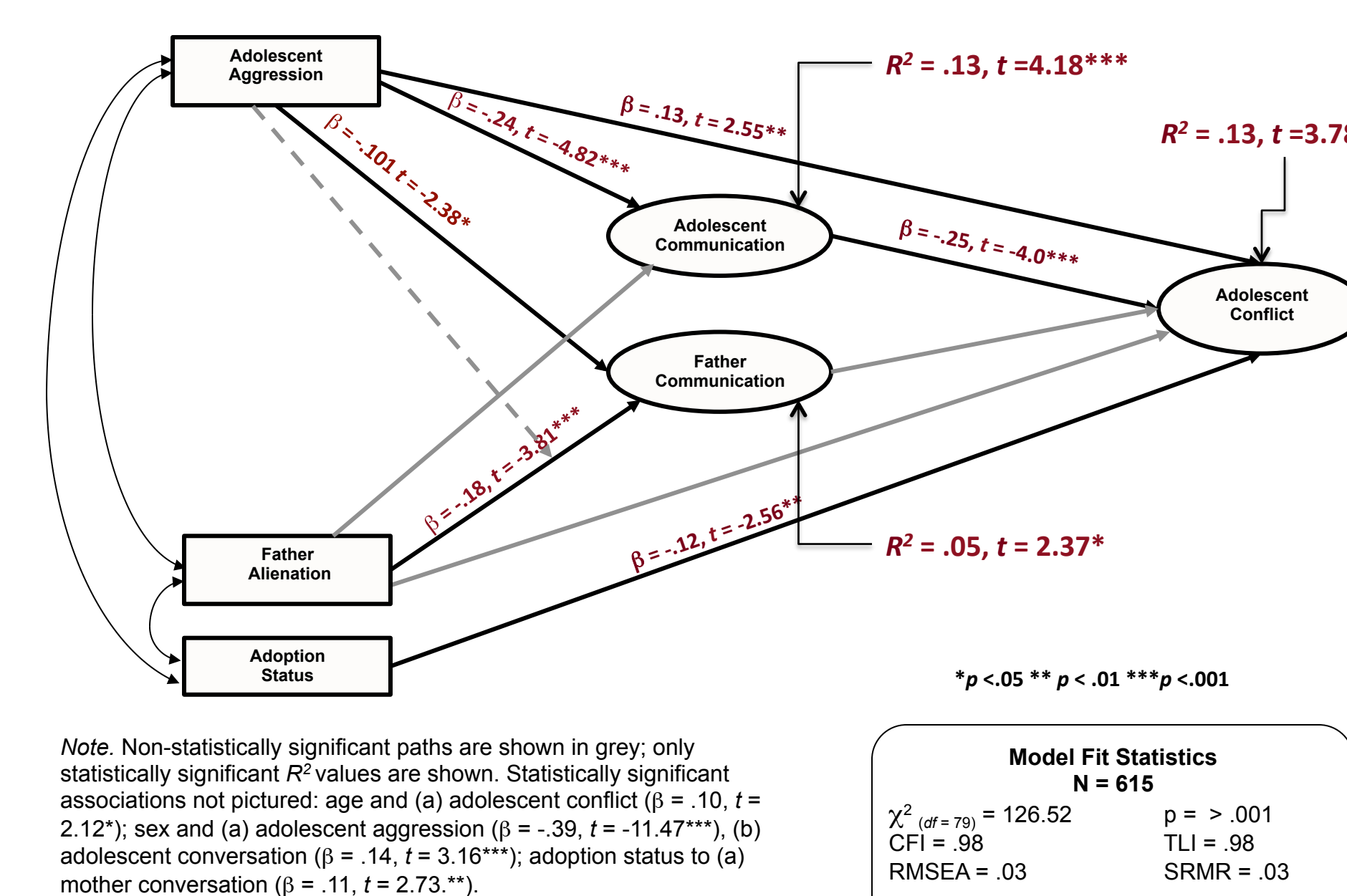
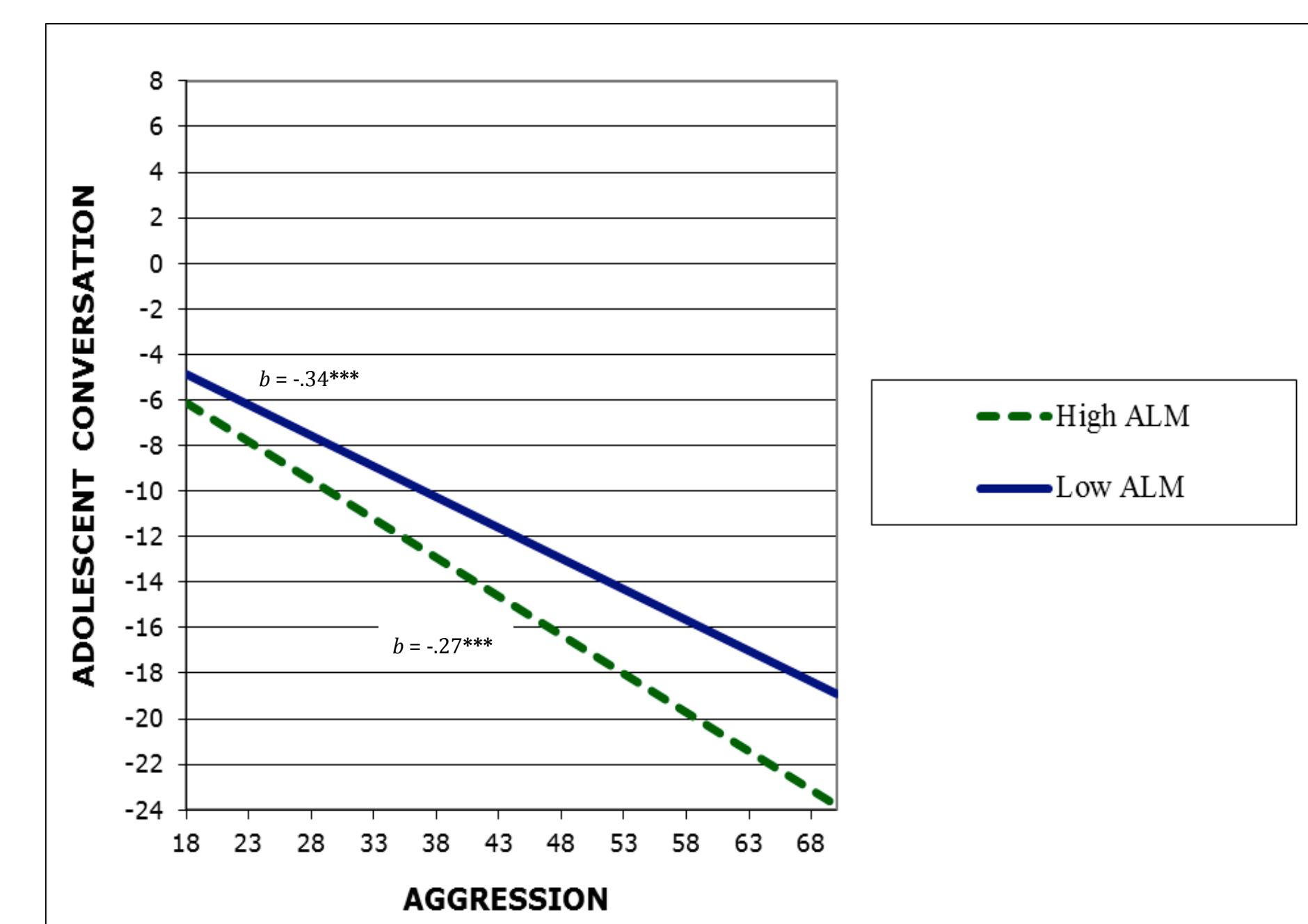


Figure 2. DTF Interaction



Note. Dyadic Trait Fit (adolescent aggression X mother alienation) interaction was only significant in the mother-adolescent model.

Discussion

- Overall, findings supported the personality-initiated communicative family process and the study's central hypothesis.
- Indeed, the dyadic trait fit (DTF) between adolescent aggression and parent alienation had an effect on a family interactive process that explained variance in adolescent conflict.
- Statistically significant mother alienation moderating effects lend further support to the notion that DTF played a role in the transactional family process and in influencing adolescent functioning.
- **DTF interaction:** Mother alienation moderated the magnitude of the relationship between adolescent aggression and adolescent Conversation (see Figure 2).
- Specifically, high levels of mother alienation had a dampening effect, or weakened, the strength of the relationship between adolescent aggression and adolescent Conversation (see Figure 2).

Adoption Status

- Contributed differently (beyond the proposed process) based on parent-adolescent subsystem.
- With respect to the overall family process...
 - a) Adolescent conversation was salient for non-adopted parent-adolescent dyads (such that higher levels of conversation were associated with non-adopted dyads)
 - b) Adolescent conflict was salient for adopted father-adolescent (but not mother-adolescent) dyads

Future Directions

- Present study was cross sectional; future investigations should establish direction of effects.
- Although Koh, Davis, Walkner-Spaan, & Rueter (2014) suggested preliminary support for DTF, this is the first study to demonstrate support vis-à-vis an adolescent aggression X mother alienation interaction effect.
- Future work should test DTF interaction effects between other contributing personality traits.