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Diametrically Opposite Cultivation: Narrative Exploration of Family Factors in the Formation of ENTP and ISFJ

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Abstract. This study uses the method of narrative interviews to compare the family experiences of six interviewees aged 18-22 (three interviewees as ENTP and three interviewees as ISFJ). This paper focuses on family processes such as parenting style, communication mode, decision-making boundary, and value transmission, and analyzes the correlation mechanism between these processes and the personality tendency in the interviewees' self-narration. The interview materials showed that ENTP interviewees described family interaction with low constraints, high support, and rational orientation, and mentioned a strong willingness to explore and a lack of self-discipline; ISFJ interviewees described the family environment where emotional support coexisted with traditional norms, and the tension between obedience, empathy, and independent needs. In view of the small sample size, the type of interviewees divided by Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), and the retrospective narrative adopted in the study, this study does not infer the causal effect of family factors on personality types, nor extrapolate the results to all ENTP or ISFJ individuals. The core value of this paper is not to build a causal interpretation system of personality formation, but to build an exploratory analysis framework for multiple comparisons.

Keywords: Narrative exploration, family factors, ENTP, ISFJ

1. Introduction

In the study of personality development, family environment has long been regarded as an important contextual factor. It involves emotional support, parenting styles, communication patterns, and daily interaction structures. Longitudinal research shows that the emotional warmth and care style experienced in childhood may not only be associated with openness, conscientiousness, and agreeableness in early adulthood, but also may further affect individuals' self-narration on topics such as exploratory behavior, rule adherence, and interpersonal sensitivity [1]. Adolescents' safe attachment to their parents may also predict the general personality characteristics in early adulthood [2]. In addition, although the statistical effect of parents' investment in academic participation, life structure and cultural stimulation may not be prominent, this investment may still exert a subtle effect on personality development through a long-term cumulative mechanism [3]. This evidence suggests that family influence is more likely to be a long-term, gradual, and two-way interactive process than a one-way process of parents shaping children's personality.

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MBTI type theory mainly describes the differences in individual information processing and decision-making preferences, which is often used in vocational and educational contexts, but its reliability, validity, and type interpretation have been controversial. Therefore, this paper does not regard Extraversion–Intuition–Thinking–Perceiving (ENTP) and Introversion–Sensing–Feeling–Judging (ISFJ) as fixed or essential personality categories, but as exploratory labels for organizing interviewees' self-narrative. Kim Su-yeon and Kim Myeongkwon found that adolescents with different MBTI preferences have different evaluations of the quality of parent-child relationships, which suggests that there may be a link between personality preferences and family interaction that is worth further investigation, but the link itself cannot prove that families cause specific personality types [4].

The relationship between family and personality is not unidirectional. Zhou et al.'s longitudinal research shows that there may be a two-way effect between parenting style and teenagers' extroversion and neuroticism: parents' behavior may affect the development of children, and the existing characteristics of children will also change parents' parenting response in turn [5]. The twin study of Hobbs et al. also suggests that the relationship between perceived parenting style and adult personality may contain a significant genetic mediating effect [6]. Based on this interactive perspective, this study aims to identify cross-case family interaction patterns from two groups of interview materials, and then explore the potential relationship between these patterns and personality narrative.

2. Research methods

This study conducted in-depth narrative interviews with six adults aged 18-22, including three interviewees from ENTP and three from ISFJ. The analysis focuses on the themes of family upbringing, communication methods, personal boundaries, major decisions, and value transmission, and compares the repeated patterns in the two groups of narratives. Due to the limited sample size and purposeful grouping, the research results are only used for exploratory theoretical discussion. The basic information of the interviewees is as follows.

Interviewee① is a high school graduate, and her MBTI type is ENTP. Her mother works in the community, and her father is a teacher. The interviewee described the frequent neighborhood exchanges in childhood communities and the lively living atmosphere in and around the family.

Interviewee② is a university graduate, and her MBTI type is ENTP. Her parents are both employees of state-owned enterprises. The childhood family interaction includes not only core family members, but also grandparents, other close relatives, and familiar neighbors. The overall atmosphere is described as harmonious and active.

Interviewee③ is a university graduate, and her MBTI type is ENTP. Her parents are both employees of state-owned enterprises. The interviewee summarized the childhood family atmosphere as warm and happy, and emphasized the positive emotional experience when getting along with her parents.

Interviewee④ is a university graduate, and her MBTI type is ISFJ. Her mother is engaged in freelance or temporary work, her father is a factory worker, and her sister is a teacher. The interviewee described the family as an environment that can provide a sense of security, and illustrated the emotional support of the family by taking her parents' company in thunderstorm weather as an example.

Interviewee⑤ is a university graduate, and her MBTI type is ISFJ. Her mother is a primary school teacher, and her father is self-employed. Because her father often went out to work during her

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childhood, the interviewee mainly relied on her mother and said that their memory of early father-daughter interactions was relatively limited.

Interviewee ⑥ is a teacher about to be employed, and her MBTI type is ISFJ. Her mother currently works in the education administration department and has teaching experience. Her father is a civil servant. The interviewees believed that the family relationship was generally stable and there were few fierce disputes, but the family interaction atmosphere was not very active.

3. Analysis of family factors in the formation of ENTP personality

Based on the narratives of the three ENTP interviewees, three relatively consistent family characteristics were presented in their narratives of personality development.

3.1. Upbringing style: "free range" keynote and "backing"

All three ENTP interviewees described family discipline as relatively permissive or low in direct control: parents rarely set strict rules for work and rest, homework, and daily affairs, mainly through reminders and boundary constraints. Interviewee① summarized the role of parents as "backing", that is, providing financial and emotional support, but not excessively interfering with specific choices. This narrative has some similarities with the low intervention parenting summarized by Gao et al. Relevant studies suggest that low intervention may provide space for exploration, but it may also be accompanied by a lack of self-discipline [7]. As far as this research material is concerned, such a family interaction mode may explain the interviewees' tendency towards active trial-and-error exploration in academic, career, and life planning to a certain extent, but it cannot make a causal judgment based on it.

The core of this parenting model lies in the unity of "loosening" and "bottom line": parents do not fully control their children's choices, and are more inclined to provide necessary help as supportive backing when they face major difficulties. When interviewee② put forward such unrealistic ideas as "opening a coffee shop in Yunnan", parents would first "daydream with him" and then "study hard" to gently pull back to reality. This delicate balance of "recognizing ability first and then guiding pragmatism" significantly reduced children's anxiety about the uncertainty of the future, and instead stimulated a stronger desire for exploration and courage to trial and error.

3.2. Communication mode: rationality first, emotion implicit

The priority of problem solving and rational analysis in the interviewees' family communication has a dual effect: on the one hand, it reduces the risk of emotional escalation; on the other hand, it may also occupy the space for direct expression of emotions. In the face of college choice or family affairs, parents often discuss issues from the perspective of employment prospects, real gains and losses, and interpersonal relationships, and seldom deal with emotions first. Interviewee ② summarized it as "reason first after quarrel, and self-digestion of emotions". Sun et al. have shown that there may be a two-way link between parents' negative emotional expression and children's internalization [8]. Combined with the research materials, it can be cautiously speculated that less negative emotional expression and more problem analysis may be related to the interviewees' low subjective internal friction; This explanation still needs a larger sample test.

At the same time, the expression of love among family members is implicit. The family members rarely said "I love you", and the praise often falls on specific achievements, such as the interviewees' successful ear piercing, rather than on the personality level. This mode of "low emotional exposure

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and high functional support" fortified ENTP interviewees accustomed to using "letting things take their course" and "energy conservation" to digest interpersonal friction. This family value is structurally consistent or isomorphic with the interviewees' cognitive orientation that interpersonal relationships are complex but manageable social situations.

3.3. Independence empowerment: selective intervention and independent decision-making space

Although parents hold some traditional concepts (such as advocating the stability of work within the system), they will eventually respect the major decisions of ENTP interviewees. The fierce differences between the interviewees and their parents over the college entrance examination volunteers were finally alleviated by the "no evaluation" compromise plan, and their parents chose to arrange vision surgery in advance rather than force them to attend the police school. This shows that the boundary of individual autonomy is often gradually clarified and expanded in the continuous parent-child negotiation and even conflict. Interviewee ②'s family decision-making is more obvious - the interviewee enjoys a high degree of autonomy in major matters involving himself; Within the jurisdiction of family public affairs, the mother actually assumes the main coordination and adjudication functions. If there is a conflict between the two sides, it will be resolved through the cycle of "cold war, reconnection and resumption", and the interactive boundary will always be maintained.

This interactive way of giving options on major issues while retaining family support provides practice space for interviewees to develop independent judgment. Wang et al.'s longitudinal study suggests that fathers' emotional warmth has a more stable protective association with adolescent mental health than control behavior [9]. The family model described by ENTP interviewees as "providing support but deciding by themselves" can be understood as the coexistence of emotional support and autonomy support, but it may also objectively weaken the structural training of children's long-term self-discipline ability. However, this study could not determine its independent effect on personality performance.

4. Analysis of family factors in the formation of ISFJ personality

By superimposing the narratives of the three ISFJ interviewees, their family narratives present a background that contrasts with that of the ENTP group.

4.1. Parenting style: emotional accommodation and traditional expectations

ISFJ families are generally regarded as "safe havens", and parents are highly sensitive to emotional comfort. Interviewee ④ recalled that parents would guard two frightened children on the thunderstorm night and give priority to appeasing them after making trouble; Interviewee ⑤'s parents would simultaneously give analytical comfort when the interviewee was depressed. This "empathy" based parenting model has cultivated the high empathy of ISFJ interviewees, but also buried the hidden danger of "paying too much attention to others' feelings". However, there is a significant "traditional discipline" color behind the warmth. ISFJ interviewees' parents have a strong attachment to "stability" - their career expectations are mostly directed to positions within the system, and their life planning follows the social clock of "what to do at what age". Therefore, stability and periodic tasks constitute the core reference framework for interviewees' self-selection.

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Gao et al.'s research on parenting types suggests that supportive interaction and strong normative requirements may exist at the same time [7]. Combined with this research material, the family narrative of ISFJ interviewees can be summarized as "emotional warmth coexists with authoritative norms": the interviewees can obtain emotional comfort, but still need to face clear expectations about stable occupation, marriage, childbirth time, and social role. This kind of compound mode may make individuals experience continuous tension between maintaining family harmony and pursuing individual autonomy.

4.2. Boundary ambiguity and suppression risk: the contradiction of interactive space

Unlike ENTP families' respect for the need to be alone, ISFJ families often become "too close" or even "intrusive" in relation to children's personal boundaries. Interviewee⑥ stated that the door of the room should not be locked, and parents can enter at any time; Interviewee⑤ mentioned that her father lacked companionship in her early years and intervened in the pace of life through "whole process companionship" after her return. More importantly, the impact of repressive parenting practices has not completely disappeared, but continues to be projected onto the self-evaluation model and avoidance behavior of some interviewees in the face of conflict. For example, the father of interviewee⑥ often maintained authority by belittling, which made him feel inferior in the early stage; Interviewees④ and ⑤ had a rebellious mentality of "being urged but delayed", reflecting the psychological contradiction between control and compliance. This upbringing context, which has both "emotional support" and "conceptual repression", actually prompted interviewees to develop a "high internal friction" self-protection mechanism. Consistent with the impact of repressive education, the interviewees formed a coping style of hiding their true feelings and avoiding direct conflicts, and relied on diary writing to vent or changes in outward appearance to adjust the internal tension caused by family conflicts.

Yu et al. proposed that the relationship between family function and self-concept clarity may be mediated by the idea of balanced time and depression [10]. This study provides a possible mechanism for understanding the "internal friction" described by interviewees: when family norms and personal wishes conflict for a long time, it may be more difficult for individuals to form a stable and clear self-awareness. However, this study does not directly measure these variables, so only explanatory assumptions can be put forward here.

4.3. Value transmission: the supremacy of harmony and the delayed establishment of a "sense of self"

The core values transmitted by the families to ISFJ interviewees tend to be "let go of stubbornness", "achieve others" and "conform to the times". Interviewees④ mentioned that the family creed was "let go of minor difficulties", while interviewees ⑤ emphasized, "let nature take its course". However, this value orientation faced significant challenges in intergenerational conflicts in the fields of marriage choice, career planning and future living arrangements - when the interviewee⑥ faced the "disguised blind date" event directly, she chose to refuse with a cold face and formed a "refuting personality" to protect personal boundaries, which shows that although the traditional values transmitted by parents were successfully internalized in the early stage, when there was a violent collision with the interviewee's self-awakening, this conflict gradually turned into a process for the interviewee to strive for personal boundaries and independence. Her view of marriage and love of "no love, no marriage" and the spatial alienation scheme of "moving away from family after

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planning work" are just compensatory strategies after the break between family expectations and personal will.

Based on the findings of Yu et al., it can be further speculated that the contradiction between surface compliance and internal independence demands of some ISFJ interviewees may be related to the lack of clarity of self-concept [10]. It should be emphasized that the existing interview materials are not enough to judge whether the family expectation directly caused this result; A more reasonable explanation is that family norms, individual existing characteristics, and subsequent life experience are involved in this process.

5. Structural comparison of two personality development mechanisms

Based on the above summary, the family factors of ENTP and ISFJ form several sets of opposing dimensions.

5.1. Power and decision boundary: decentralization vs centralization

The decision-making model in ENTP family narratives presents the characteristics of "flexible decentralization". In the family narratives of ENTP type, parents are more often described as advice providers than major decision makers, and tend to wait for the factual results to conclude conflict (such as "let it be"); The decision-making of ISFJ family often has the nature of "predetermined track" - even if it is gentle persuasion, the final destination still points to stable occupation and age-appropriate marriage and childbearing. The former seemed to encourage the interviewees that "personal choice is worth defending", while the latter left the interviewees in a long-term ambivalence of "how should I balance family expectations and inner will".

This difference in decision-making power can be understood through the two-way interaction model of Zhou et al. [5]. In the ENTP family narrative, children's continuous expression of independent choice may prompt parents to gradually adjust their control mode; In the ISFJ family narrative, the more obedient behavior of children may also maintain the original decision-making practice of parents. It should be clarified that this does not imply that children should be responsible for the control of parents, but is intended to point out that the long-term interaction between parents and children may maintain and strengthen the existing family decision-making practice. The explanation emphasizes the mutual shaping between parents and children, rather than attributing the differences to parents.

5.2. Emotional processing mode: instrumental rationality vs emotional priority

When facing setbacks, ENTP interviewees' parents prefer to make a detailed analysis of the pros and cons, consequences, and practical feasibility of different choices. Emotional regulation is regarded as the children's personal responsibility; ISFJ interviewees often get emotional comfort at first after causing trouble, but they still have to bear the repeated review of their parents' reasoning style at the ideological level afterwards. This difference may be understood as: the former tends to be an extroverted problem-solving strategy when dealing with external pressure, while the latter tends to be an introverted emotional processing method. The two orientations form a meaningful correspondence - ENTP is used to "solve outward", and ISFJ tends to "absorb inward".

Sun et al.'s research on parents' emotional expression and children's problem behavior shows that the family emotional environment may be related to the internalization or externalization of individuals [8]. However, this study focuses on problem behaviors and gender differences, and

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cannot directly support the differentiation of MBTI types caused by the family emotional environment. Therefore, in the comparison of the two groups of narratives, this study introduces emotional processing as a key analytical dimension to explore how interviewees perceive and respond to family conflict and interpersonal stress, without inferring its directional shaping effect on ENTP or ISFJ types.

5.3. Socialized guidance: open reality vs orderly tradition

Although the ENTP family retains utilitarian tendencies, such as evaluating peers based on academic performance in social interaction, it is more open as a whole, and sets a relatively loose boundary in their children's career exploration and aesthetic expression: it not only allows them to experience non-traditional occupations such as delivery, but also accepts more personalized aesthetic practices such as Hanfu and Lolita; ISFJ families are more conservative, especially interviewee⑥'s father's "know more people and be easy to handle" and interviewee⑤'s parents' "do what at what age", which strengthen the sense of oppression of the social clock. The former focuses on "possibility", and the latter emphasizes order, which directly corresponds to the cognitive difference between ENTP's pursuit of diversity and ISFJ's cherishing sense of order.

5.4. Psychological cost and adaptation result: strengthening relaxation vs catalytic internal friction

The combination of "low constraint + high support" given by ENTP families enables interviewees① to use the interpretation framework of "energy conservation" in the face of interpersonal gathering and dispersion to digest and adjust the emotional experience after interpersonal loss. At the same time, they admit that they have weaknesses in self-discipline and long-term adherence, such as interviewees② and ③ think they are "lazy" and "difficult to adhere to one thing". The combination of "high emotion + high expectation" of the ISFJ family has formed very high empathy. For example, interviewees④ can detect the emotions of others, but the cost is self-depression, lack of sense of belonging, and the long-standing "screwing up" state. For example, interviewees⑤ are still confused and eager to prove to their parents that "I am independent".

From the perspective of the long development process, the eight-year follow-up study by Neyer and Lehnart shows that the personality changes in early adulthood are closely related to real relationship experiences [11]. Warfel et al. also emphasized the common development of parents' and children's personality [12]. Therefore, the performance of the two groups of interviewees is more suitable to be understood as a dynamic result of the continuous effect of individual characteristics, family interaction, and subsequent relationship experience, rather than a fixed product of unilateral family shaping.

6. Conclusion

The interview materials show that family is neither the only determinant of personality nor an irrelevant background condition. It provides individuals with continuous socialization contexts through parenting styles, communication rules, decision-making boundaries, and value expectations. In this study, ENTP interviewees were more likely to describe autonomy, rationality, and open exploration, while ISFJ interviewees were more likely to describe stability, empathy, and normative compliance. It should be emphasized that these differences are only exploratory themes identified

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from the limited interview materials and should not be upgraded to a solidified family template corresponding to ENTP and ISFJ personality.

Both groups of interviewees received some support from family interaction, and also reported different adaptation costs: ENTP interviewees mentioned a strong willingness to explore but a lack of self-discipline for a long time, while ISFJ interviewees mentioned self-depression and internal conflict accompanied by a strong sense of empathy and stability. Therefore, children's characteristics will affect parents' response style, and family and personality should be regarded as a system of interactive development.

It is worth noting that there is no distinction between good and bad personality types. What they reflect is more the psychological and behavioral differences that individuals construct and adapt to in different family climates. If the family is compared to the soil, the planting of ENTP is "loosening the soil and watering, letting it grow to the light", while the planting of ISFJ is "pruning and shaping, and strictly controlling the temperature and humidity in the indoor greenhouse". In this metaphor, the former may be like free-growing vines, while the latter may be like carefully cultivated orchids; their differences reflect the interaction between individual tendencies and family environments, rather than an inevitable ecological result.

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