

# Birth Parents & Openness with Adoptive Families: An Examination of Actual Contact & Satisfaction with Contact

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## INTRODUCTION

- Nationally, there is a trend towards greater openness & contact between Birth Parents (BPs) and Adoptive Parents (APs) in domestic adoption
- Greater openness has been shown as beneficial for adopted children (Grotevant & McRoy, 1998)
- The limited research with BPs regarding openness tends to show benefits in their post adoption adjustment (Ge et al., 2008; Henney et al., 2007)

### Objective

- Explore associations between adoption openness and birth parent adjustment over time

## METHODS

### Participants

- 554 Birth Mothers (BM) & 173 Birth Fathers (BF) in the Early Growth & Development Study
- BPs are part of a “yoked” unit, which includes the APs & child (561 total yokes)
- Completed a domestic infant adoption between 2003-2009
- Recruited from 33 adoption agencies in 47 states

### Birth Parent Demographics

	Birth Mothers	Birth Fathers
Age (mean)	24.85 Range 14-44; SD 6.03	27.01 Range 15-59, SD 7.96
Education (mean)	High School	High School
Income (median)	\$>15,000	\$15-25,000
Race:		
Caucasian	70%	70%
Af. American	13	12
Hispanic/Lat	7	9
Multirace	5	5
Other/Unk	5	4

### Procedures

- BPs were assessed at: 9 months (T1), 18 months (T2), & 4 yrs (T3) post placement
- Openness at T1 & T2:
  - Openness contact (OC)*: frequency of contact ranging from no contact to phone /email communication to regular visits
  - Openness satisfaction (OS)*: items assess how satisfied w/ level of openness, knowledge of APs
- Adjustment outcomes at T1, T2 & T3:
  - Depression* (Beck & Steer, 1993)
  - General Life Satisfaction (GLS)* (Crnic et al., 1983)

### Data Analysis

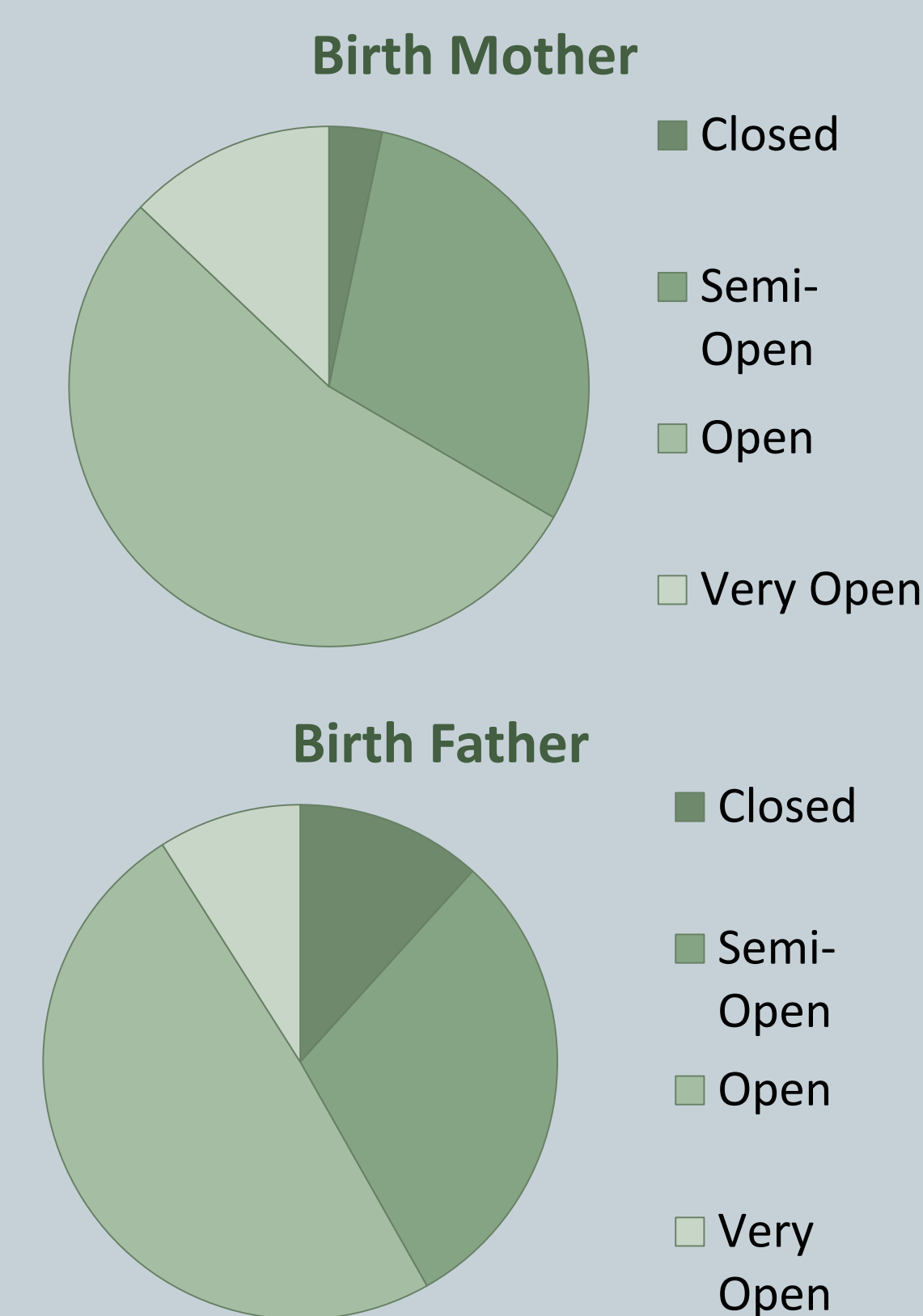
- Pearson correlations were computed to assess stability of constructs over time. OC & OS (T1 to T2) r's range from .72 to .78 and .69 to .79  
Depression & GLS (T1 to T3) r's range from .26 to .65 and .37 to .46
- Pearson correlations were computed to assess associations between OS and BM and BF adjustment (Depression, GLS)
  - Only OS was significantly associated w/ outcomes (r's range from .12 to .21)
- Multiple regression analyses examined relationships between OS and BM and BF outcomes

## RESULTS

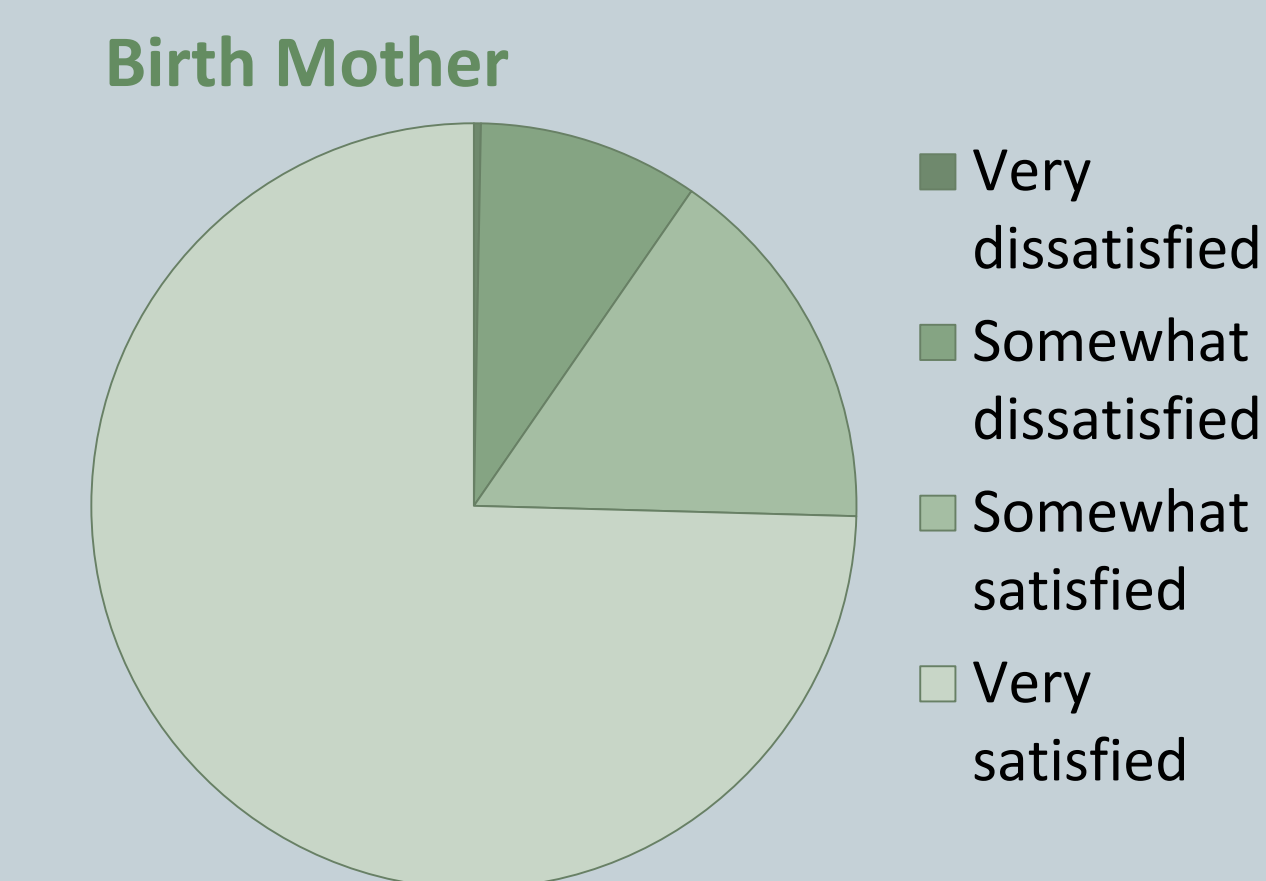
### Openness Contact\*

- Closed** - Little to no info about or contact w/APs
- Semi-Open** – Communicate via agency or some direct contact, but no in person contact
- Open** – Visit more than 1x a year, communicate semi-regularly
- Very open** – Visits and/or communication at least once a month

\* The original seven categories were combined to create those listed above. These charts represent the average contact in T1 & T2.



### Openness Satisfaction



- Depression:** Regression models indicate that OS predicts BM depression over time, while changes in OS partially explain changes in depression from T1 to T2. BF OS at T1 predicts changes in depression at T2.
- General Life Satisfaction (GLS):** BM OS independently predicts GLS at T2, even when controlling for T1 OS and T1 GLS.

### Regression of Depression & GLS on BP Openness Satisfaction

Variable	$\beta$	SE	p	Model R <sup>2</sup>
<b>DV: BM Depression (T2)</b>				
Depression (T1)	.59	.03	<.0001	.38
Openness satisfaction (T1)	.00	.18	ns	
Openness satisfaction (T2)	-.10	.17	.04	
<b>DV: BF Depression (T2)</b>				
Depression (T1)	.64	.06	<.0001	.43
Openness Satisfaction (T1)	-.13	.14	.03	
<b>DV: BM General Life Satisfaction (T2)</b>				
General Life Satisfaction (T1)	.45	.04		.23
Openness Satisfaction (T1)	-.02	.01	ns	
Openness Satisfaction (T2)	.16	.01	.004	
<b>DV: BF General Life Satisfaction (T2)</b>				
General Life Satisfaction (T1)	.39	.07	<.0001	.19
Openness satisfaction (T1)	.14	.01	.06	
DV = Dependent Variable				

## CONCLUSIONS

- Contact between APs & BPs is relatively open
- Depression, GLS, OC and OS all show stability over time
- Satisfaction with openness has a greater contribution to post adoption adjustment than actual amount of contact
- The effect of openness satisfaction predicting GLS tends to persist longer for BMs than for BFs

## References & Early Growth & Development Study Information

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### For more information about the Early Growth & Development Study:

Visit our website at <https://www.egdstudy.org>

### EGDS Publications (partial list)

#### In press

Laurent, H. K., Leve, L. D., Neiderhiser, J. M., Natsuaki, M. N., Shaw, D. S., Harold, G. T., & Reiss, D. (in press). Effects of birth and adoptive parent depressive symptoms on child HPA regulation: Independent and moderated influences. *Developmental Psychology*.

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