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).

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Birth Mothers</th>
<th>Birth Fathers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age (mean)</td>
<td>24.85</td>
<td>27.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Range</td>
<td>14-44; SD 6.03</td>
<td>15-59, SD 7.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education (mean)</td>
<td>High School</td>
<td>High School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income (median)</td>
<td>$&gt;15,000</td>
<td>$15-25,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race: Caucasian</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native American</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Lat</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multirace</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other/Unk</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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
- Pearson correlations were computed to assess associations between OC 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 OC 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.

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>β</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>Model R2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DV: BM Depression (T2)</td>
<td>-0.14</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>&lt;0.0001</td>
<td>.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DV: BF Depression (T2)</td>
<td>-0.10</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>&lt;0.0001</td>
<td>.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DV: BM General Life Satisfaction (T2)</td>
<td>-0.16</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>&lt;0.0001</td>
<td>.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DV: BF General Life Satisfaction (T2)</td>
<td>-0.19</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>&lt;0.0001</td>
<td>.19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

DV = Dependent Variable

1The George Washington University 2Oregon Social Learning Center 3The University of Pittsburgh 4Oregon Social Learning Center 5Yale Child Study Center 6The Pennsylvania State University
References & Early Growth & Development Study Information

References


For more information about the Early Growth & Development Study:

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

EGDS Publications (partial list)

In press


2012


2011


2010


2009


2008


2007


2003


2001