## Background

- **Contact** has been connected to intimacy and to openness in adoption (e.g. Berscheid, et al., 1989).
- **Two Categories** of contact in adoption have been identified (Cushman et al., 1997): 1-way contact and 2-way contact.
- A minority of adoptions maintain contact over time and increase contact in both categories (e.g. Crea & Barth, 2009).
- These changes may be due to **motivation** for contact (Gross, 1997) or changes in **roles and responsibilities** (Dunbar, et al., 2006).

### Current Study

**Combining contact with social role theory**

Different roles have different expected behaviors. Birth and adoptive mothers are typically the main contacts within the adoption kinship network until the adopted child reaches adolescence.

**Hypothesis**

We hypothesize 1- and 2-way contact factors will be found with variation in items loading on each factor across the network.

**Sample**

The Early Growth and Development Study (EGDS)

- A prospective longitudinal study in two cohorts (N=561 sets)
- Domestic, non-special needs, infant adoptions
- Analysis sample: N = 361 (Cohort I) adoption-linked network relationships

### Measures and assessment timing post-adoption placement:

- 8-item measures of contact frequency on a 5 point scale were administered to birth and adoptive parents.

### Results:

Factor analyses conducted separately by assessment wave gave six factors:

1. Single (all items loaded on a single factor)
2. Receive (items about receiving)
3. 1-way (consisting of receiving and giving items)
4. 2-way (phone and/or visits)
5. Sentimental (collection of items suggest sentimentality)
6. Intimacy (collection of items suggests intimacy)

### Interpretation & Discussion

1. The number and type of factors at each assessment generally match between birth and adoptive parents increasing the believability of the emergent factors.
2. Emergent factors **did not indicate** that adoptive fathers were less involved than adoptive mothers.
3. Emergent factors **did suggest** birth mothers are more intimate with the adoptive family than birth fathers.
4. Other analyses using this sample show:
   - Birth mothers have **more contact** with the adoptive family than birth fathers.
   - **Peak contact** in this sample comes at 22 months.
5. At 22 months our contact factors **stabilize**

### 6. Reasons for these coinciding events at 22 months:

- Role responsibilities in the adoption kinship network are unclear but contact helps clarify them.
- Contact peaks because the **adopted child** is walking, talking & showing independence by 22 months.
- This combination of child development and contact frequency helps birth and adoptive parents stabilize their expectations for their network relationships.

7. Practitioners can use this information to help network members anticipate upcoming events.

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