

Contact and Knowledge in the Adoption Kinship Network: What Benefits Network Members Most

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Background

- The “right” amount and quality of openness may vary across networks (Grotevant, et al. 1994).
- Generally, greater openness has been associated with better psychological outcomes for network members (Ge, et al., 2008).
- Different aspects of openness have been shown to differentially affect members of the adoption kinship network (e.g. Cushman, et al., 1997; Dunbar et al., 2006).

Current Study

Aspects of Openness most related to Benefits?

Using multivariate techniques we examined multiple aspects of openness to estimate the relative influence they have on psychological outcomes.

Sample

The Early Growth and Development Study (EGDS)

- A prospective longitudinal study in two cohorts (N=561 sets)
- Domestic, non-special needs, infant adoptions

Analyses

Correlate and Regress different aspects of openness in adoption reported shortly after placement on psychological outcomes for network members 18 months post-placement.

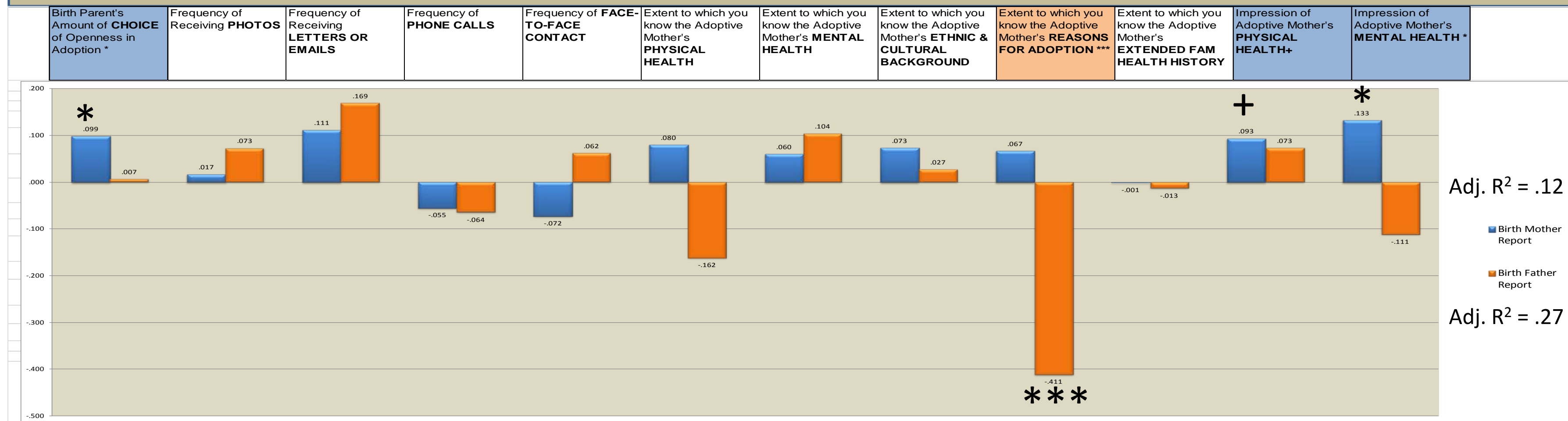
Measures :

- Beck Depression Inventory
- Beck Anxiety Inventory
- Satisfaction with the Adoption Process
- Adjustment to the Adoption Process
- Contact frequency scales
- Knowledge amount scales

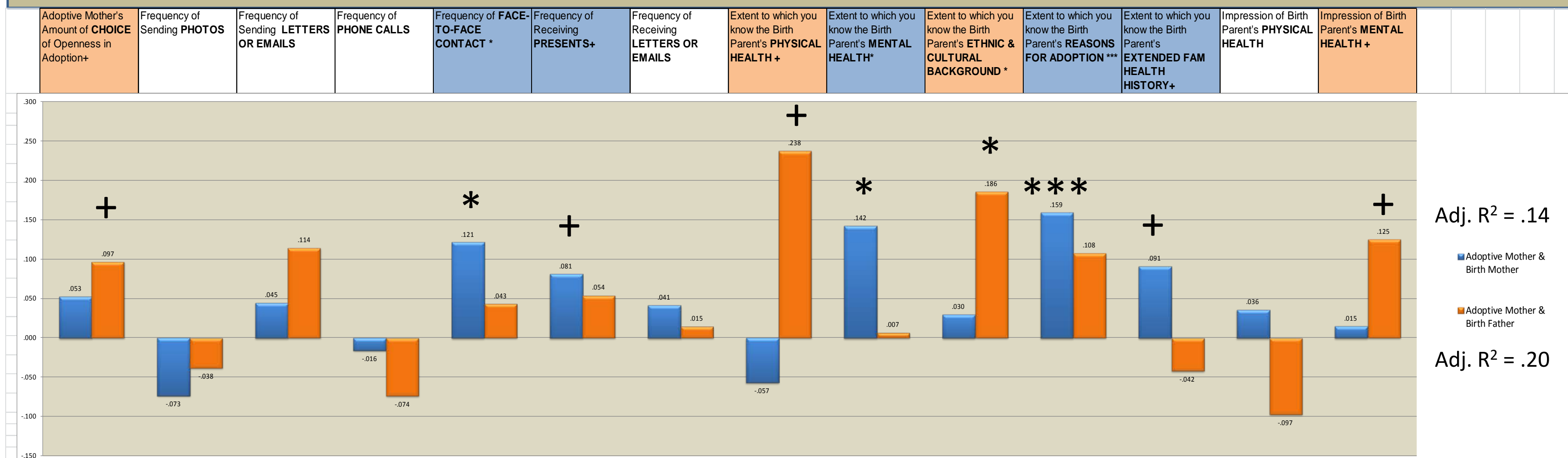
Results:

- For *all* respondents Contact and Knowledge were *significantly* correlated with **Satisfaction**. Regression analyses for each network role were run and are shown at the right in tables.
- Birth Mother & Father **Depression** was significantly and inversely correlated with report of *Amount of Choice in Openness* and *amount of information about the adoptive mother’s mental health*. Regression showed no significant associations.
- Birth Father Anxiety was significantly and negatively correlated with *Choice in Openness*.
- Adoptive Father **Depression** was significantly correlated with knowledge of Birth Mother and Father but regressions were not significant.
- Adoptive Mother **Anxiety** was higher with more phone contact & lower with more face-to-face contact with Birth Mother. Anxiety was higher with receipt of more frequent Birth Father letters/emails. Regression results were significant.

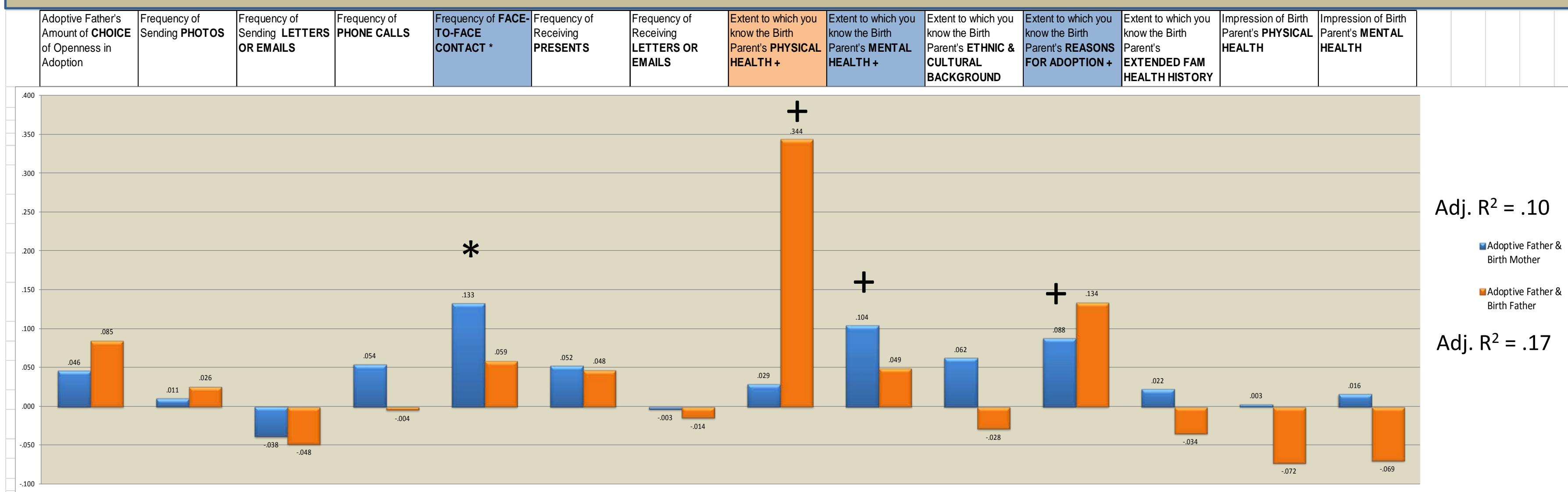
Birth Parent Reported Adoption Satisfaction & Openness: Regression Coefficients and their Significance



Adoptive Mother Reported Adoption Satisfaction & Openness: Regression Coefficients and their Significance



Adoptive Father Reported Adoption Satisfaction & Openness: Regression Coefficients and their Significance



Interpretation

- Openness in Adoption is an important part of being satisfied with the adoption experience.
- The relatively strong and significant negative association between satisfaction and knowing the reasons the Adoptive Mother is adopting may be indicative of a Birth Father's **sense of loss or shame** and a **sense of responsibility** to care for his child. As Adoptive Mothers are moving forward accomplishing important developmental tasks for adults, this knowledge may stir basic emotions and challenge the Birth Father's sense of self.
- As she abdicates her role as “nurturer” a Birth Mother will want control to **ensure** her child is being raised by a healthy parent hence the significant associations between satisfaction and control and satisfaction and impressions of Adoptive Mother mental and physical health.
- Adoptive Mothers and Fathers want to be **prepared** to help their child with any physical health issues by knowing about the birth parents' health histories.
- Adoptive Parents want to **connect** with the birth mother relinquishing her child to them to assure her of their intentions and be assured of her reasons for placing the child.
- Adoptive mothers feel more **secure** in their role as mother when they know more about the cultural heritage and mental state of the birth father and have control over contact with him.
 - These Interpretations need to be examined more closely through interviews with network members.

Acknowledgement

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