



BACKGROUND

- On average, dolphin moms raise their young for 2 to 4 years
- Calf bonds with mom are essential to survival as they provide comfort, security, and aid in development of social and foraging skills
- Dolphins use touch and vocalizations to share information

Goal – To better understand how dolphin moms use touch with their calves

What do we want to know?

1. What types of contact do moms use with their calves?
2. How do moms initiate contact with their calves?
3. Do dolphin moms have unique parenting styles?

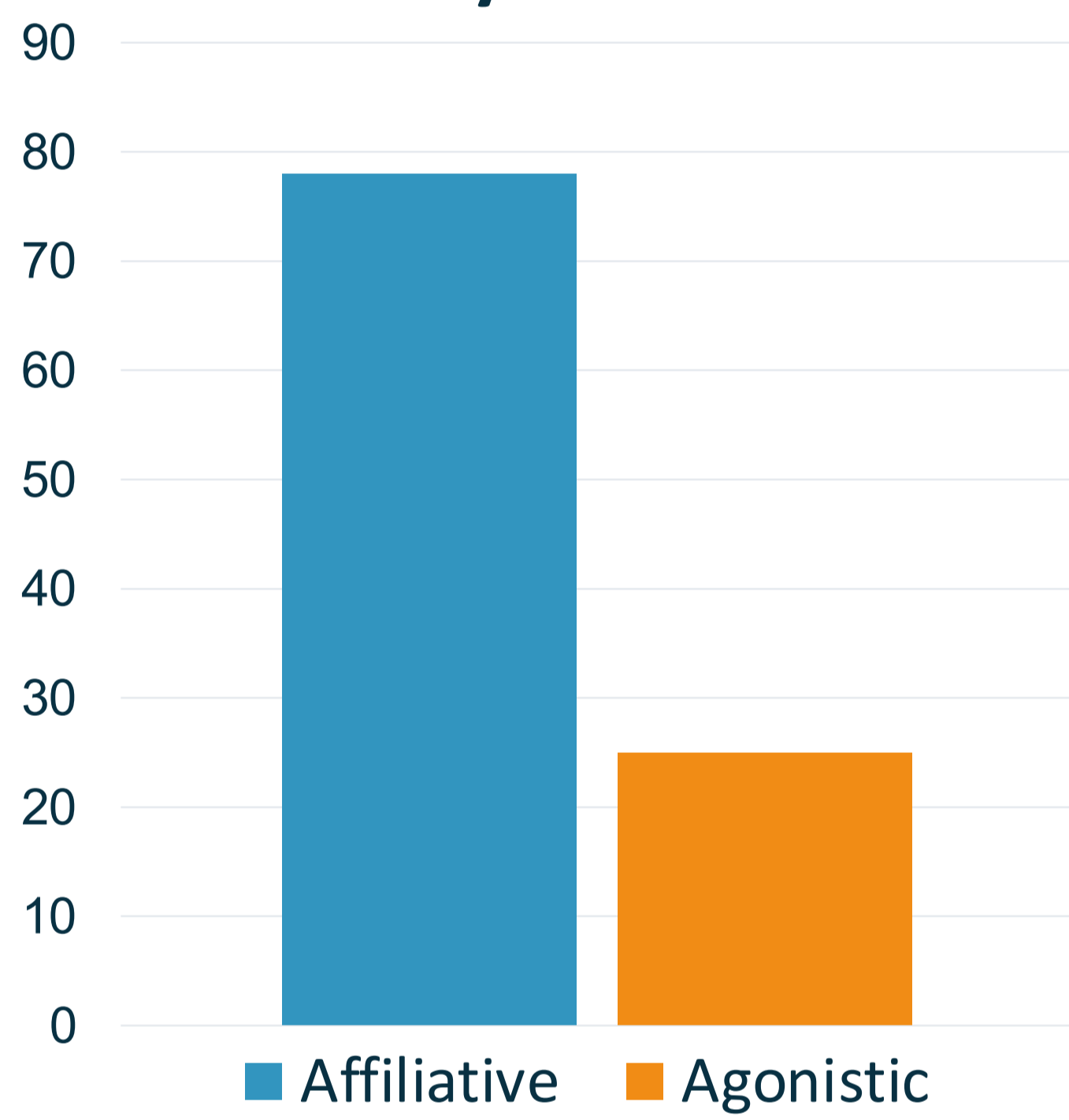
DATA COLLECTION

- **Who** – Adult female bottlenose dolphins (*Tursiops truncatus*)
- **When** – 2003-2024
Underwater observational video subset
- **Where** – The Roatan Institute for Marine Sciences
Anthony's Key Resort – Roatan, Honduras
- **How** – Video data were recorded using a mobile video/acoustic array

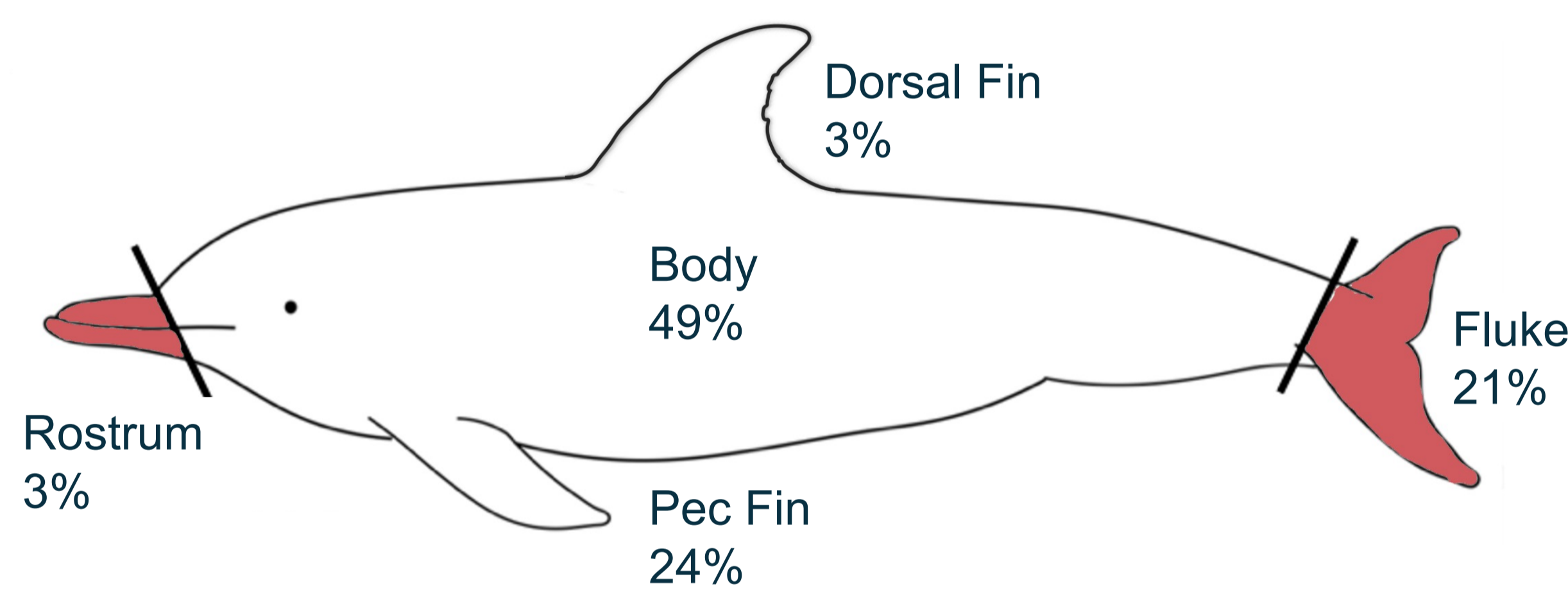


RESULTS – What did we find?

Type of Contact Initiated by Moms



Mom's body parts used to initiate touch



Affiliative contact

“soft” interactions – often used to strengthen social bonds, promote cooperation, & maintain relationships

Affiliative body parts – *white*

Agonistic contact

Context dependent interactions that might be playful or aggressive

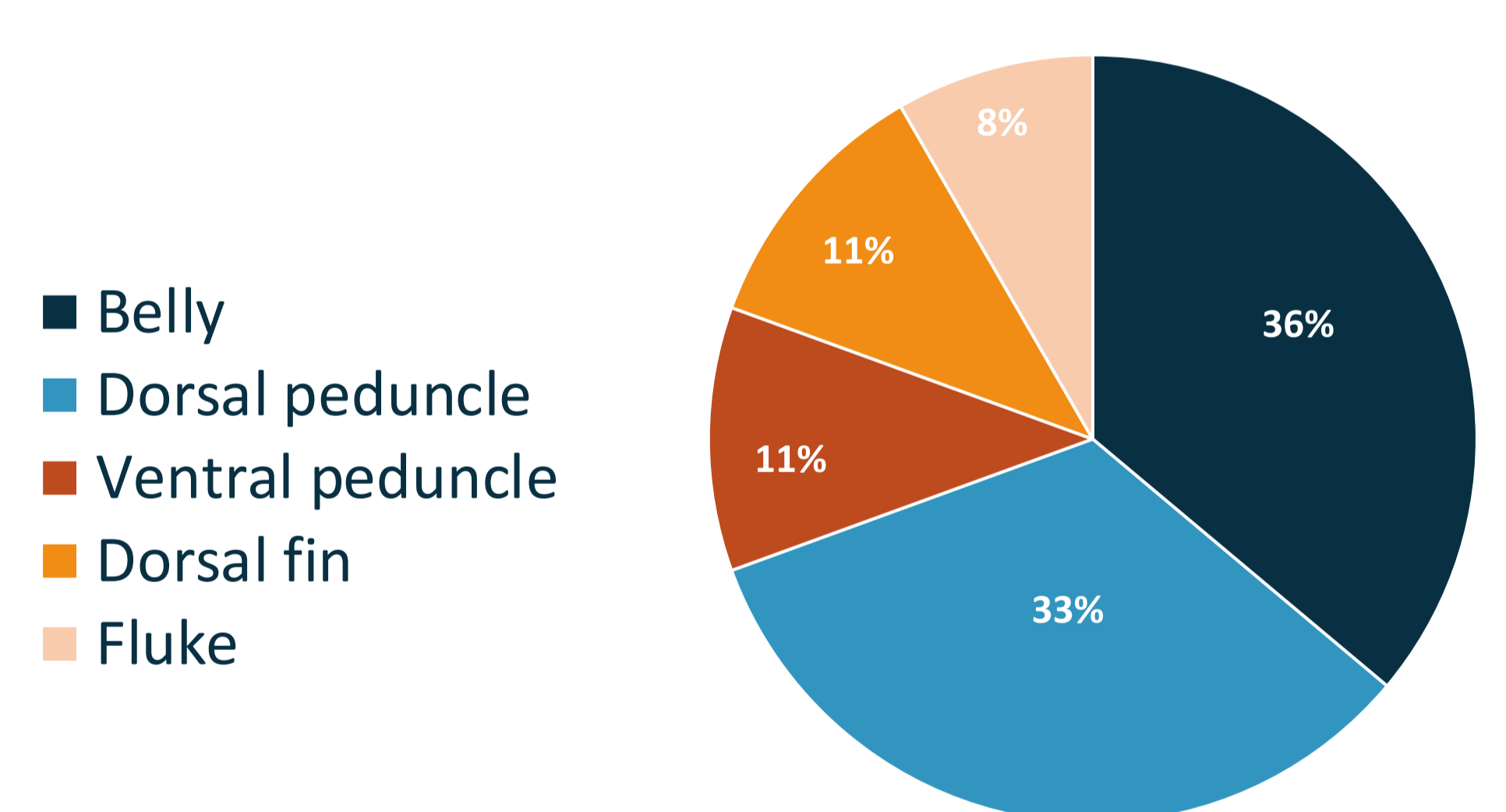
Agonistic body parts – *red*

Differences in Pec Fin Contact

	Number of dolphins	Mom-calf contacts	Probability of initiation
High contact group	5	261	38% chance
Low contact group	5	64	16% chance

Note: 43 of these contacts were from one mom-calf pair!

Percent for Each Calf Body Part Contacted by Mom



DISCUSSION

- Dolphin moms mainly used affiliative contact with their calves
- Moms initiated contacts mostly with their body, Pec Fin, and Fluke on their calf's belly and dorsal peduncle
- Different moms had different amounts of contact with their calves – i.e., different styles!

- Individual personality may play a role in different parenting styles
- Studying the use of different body parts to initiate contact can give us a better picture of how mothers interact with their calves
- Future research is needed to look at the roles of different types of contact to gain a better understanding of mother-calf relationships

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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