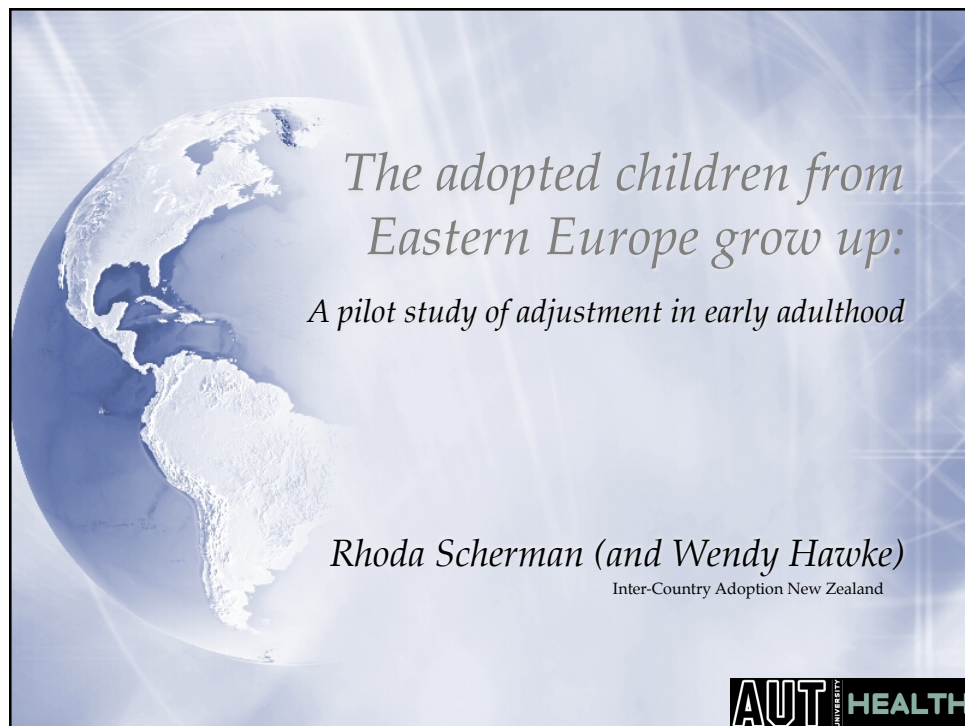


The adopted children from Eastern Europe grow up:

21 August 2011

A pilot study of adjustment in early adulthood



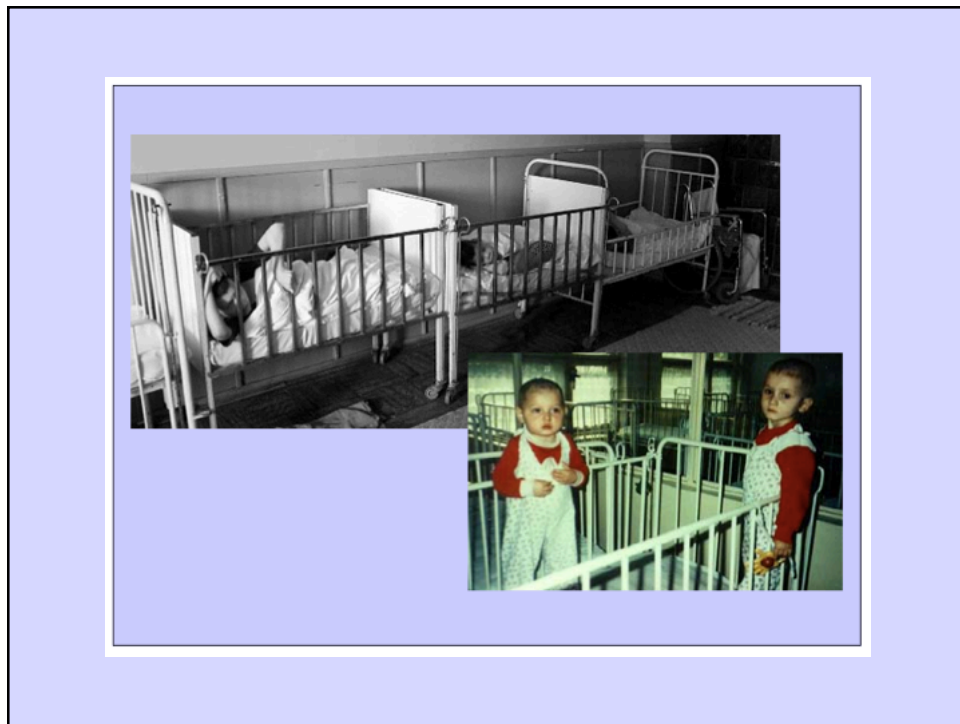
Dr. Rhoda Scherman, Department of Psychology
Auckland University of Technology

NZPsS Conference, Queenstown
August, 2011

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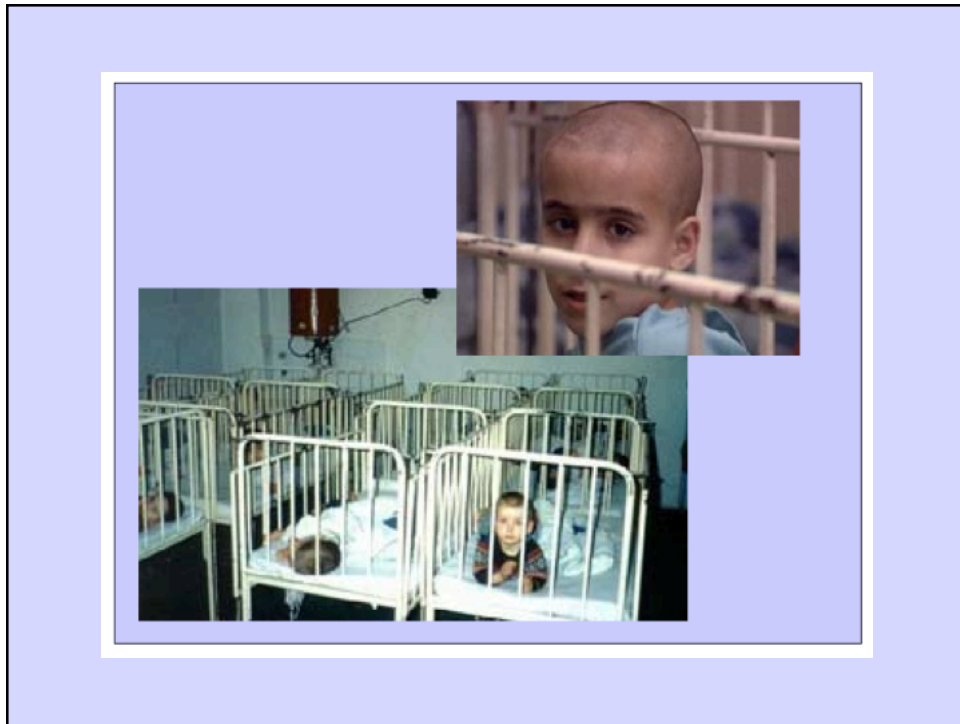
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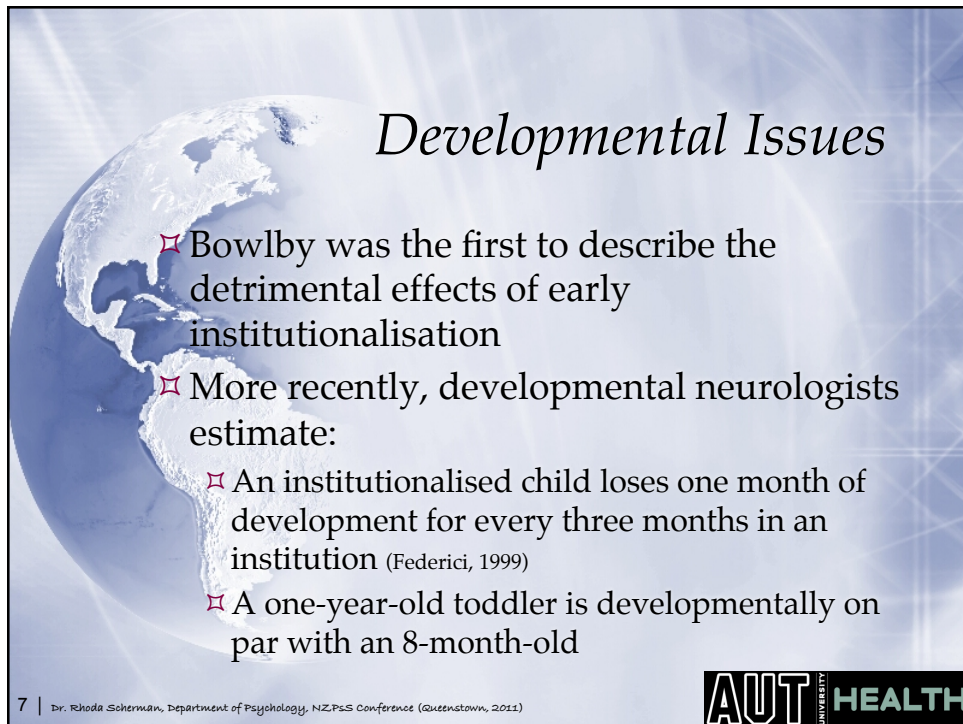


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Developmental Issues

- ❑ Bowlby was the first to describe the detrimental effects of early institutionalisation
- ❑ More recently, developmental neurologists estimate:
 - ❑ An institutionalised child loses one month of development for every three months in an institution (Federici, 1999)
 - ❑ A one-year-old toddler is developmentally on par with an 8-month-old

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On arrival = Medical concerns



- ❑ Infectious diseases, including hepatitis B, and tuberculosis
- ❑ Intestinal parasites and urinary tract infections
- ❑ Visual and hearing impairments; oral health concerns
- ❑ Skin diseases, scabies and lice
- ❑ Rickets, anaemia and hip dysplasia
- ❑ Birth defects, low birth weight, malnourishment

(e.g. Hostetter *et al.*, 1989; Jenista & Chapman, 1997; Johnson, 2000)

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Developmental Delays

- ✧ Some 1990 studies found as many as 85-90% of children were developmentally delayed
- ✧ Varying degrees of gross and fine motor delays, neurological problems, and decreased muscle tone
 - ✧ Many of which associated with malnutrition, and/or an environment that restricts movement and does not encourage the children to sit or reach
 - ✧ Tiered crèches
- ✧ They are smaller and shorter than their age-mates

(e.g. Hostetter *et al.*, 1989; Judge, 1999; Rutter *et al.*, 1998)

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11 y girl

14 y girl

17 y girl

(Johnson, 2010)

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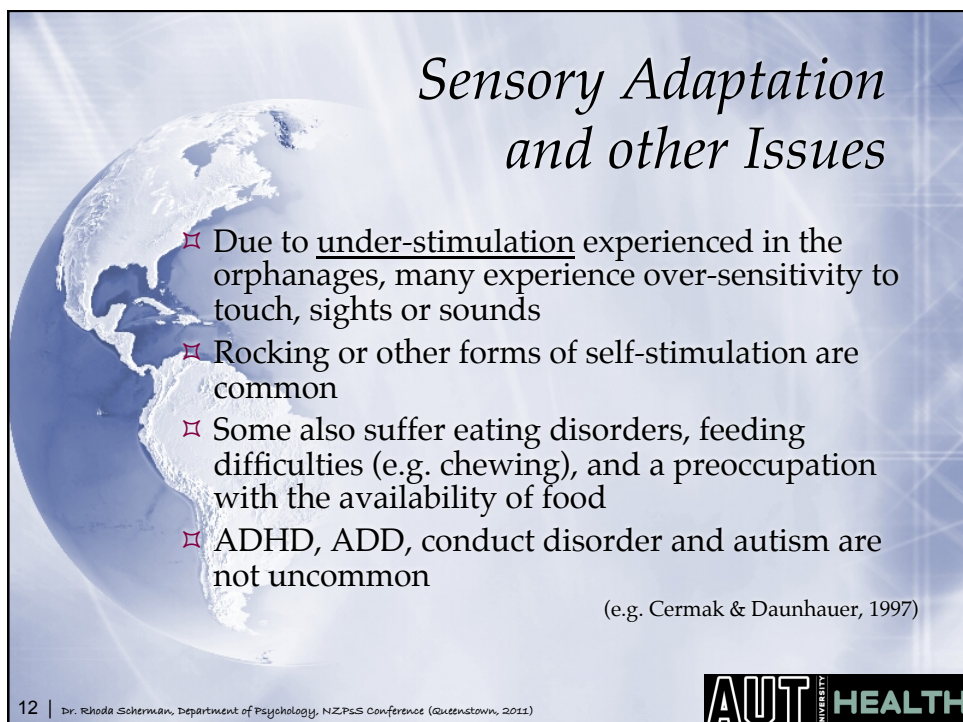
Social and Emotional Concerns

- ✧ temper tantrums
- ✧ anxiousness
- ✧ low attention span
- ✧ school avoidance
- ✧ clinging behaviour
- ✧ sleep disturbances
- ✧ bed wetting
- ✧ ambivalent parental attachment
- ✧ inappropriate friendly behaviour

(e.g. Hostetter *et al.*, 1989; Judge, 1999; Rutter *et al.*, 1998)

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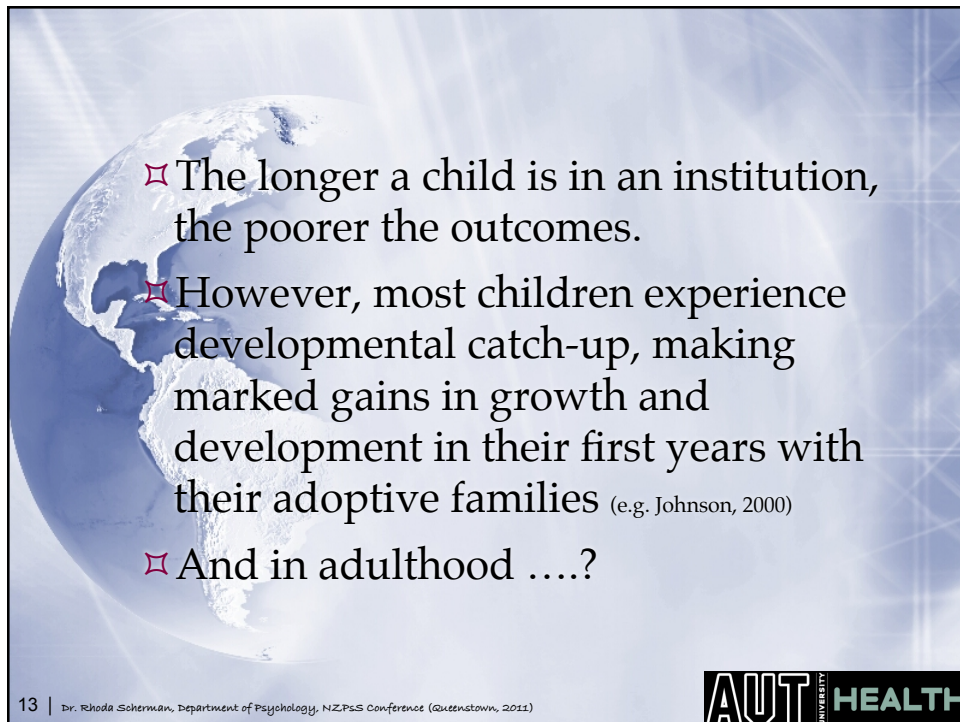
Sensory Adaptation and other Issues

- ✧ Due to under-stimulation experienced in the orphanages, many experience over-sensitivity to touch, sights or sounds
- ✧ Rocking or other forms of self-stimulation are common
- ✧ Some also suffer eating disorders, feeding difficulties (e.g. chewing), and a preoccupation with the availability of food
- ✧ ADHD, ADD, conduct disorder and autism are not uncommon

(e.g. Cermak & Daunhauer, 1997)

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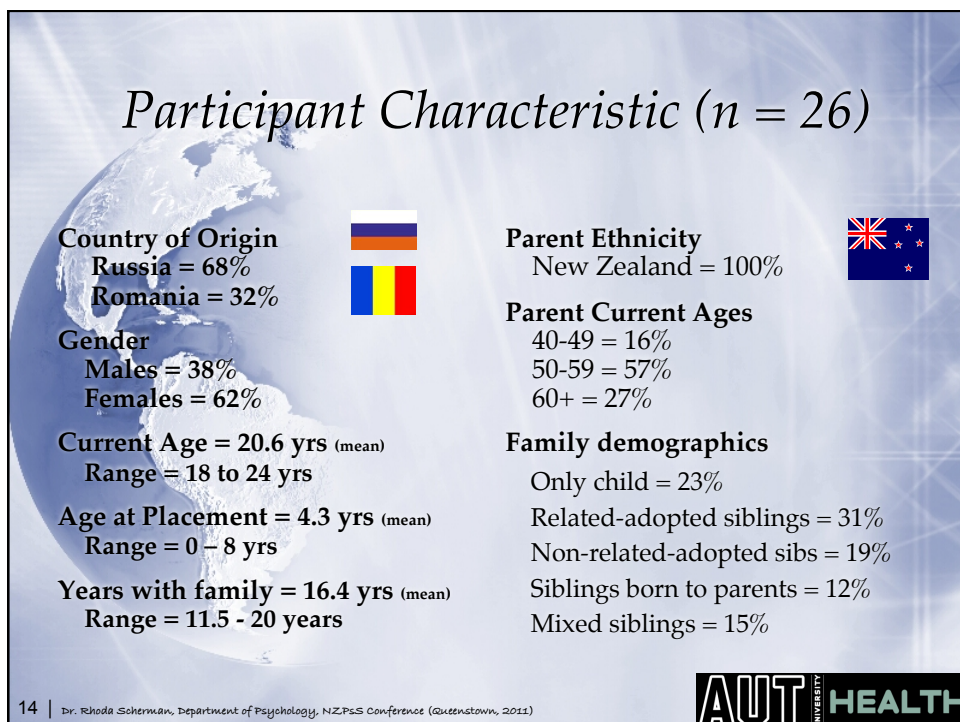
✧ The longer a child is in an institution, the poorer the outcomes.

✧ However, most children experience developmental catch-up, making marked gains in growth and development in their first years with their adoptive families (e.g. Johnson, 2000)



✧ And in adulthood?

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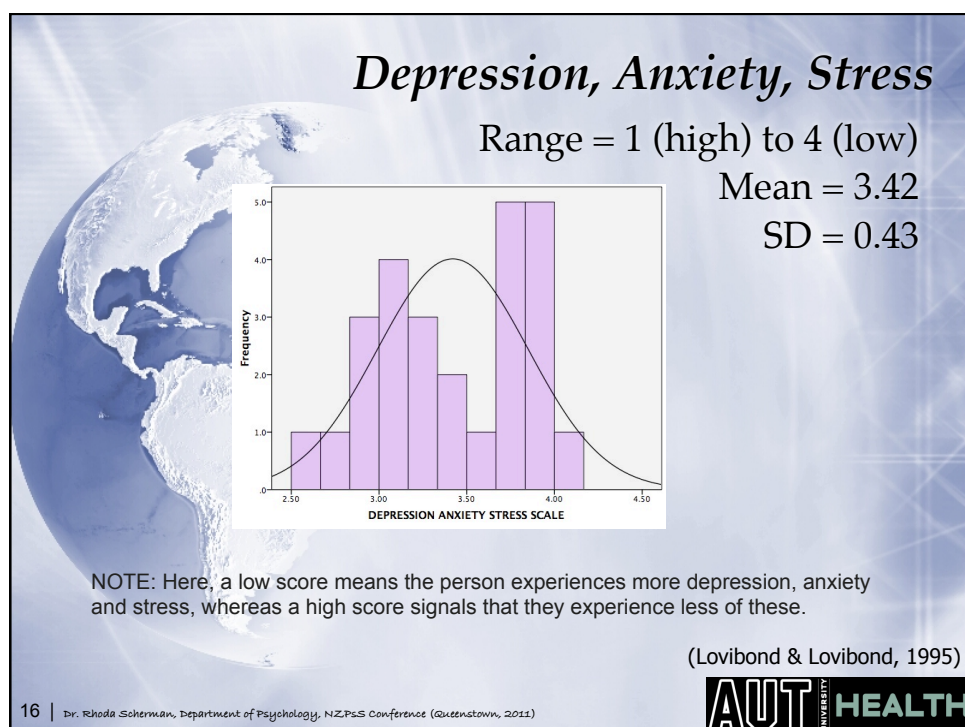
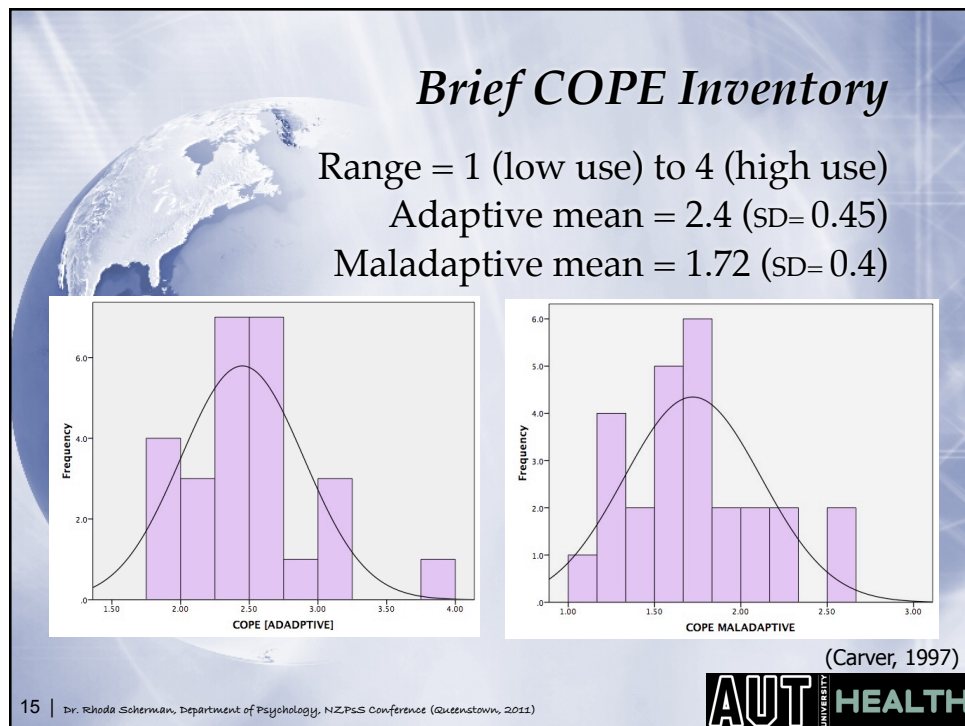


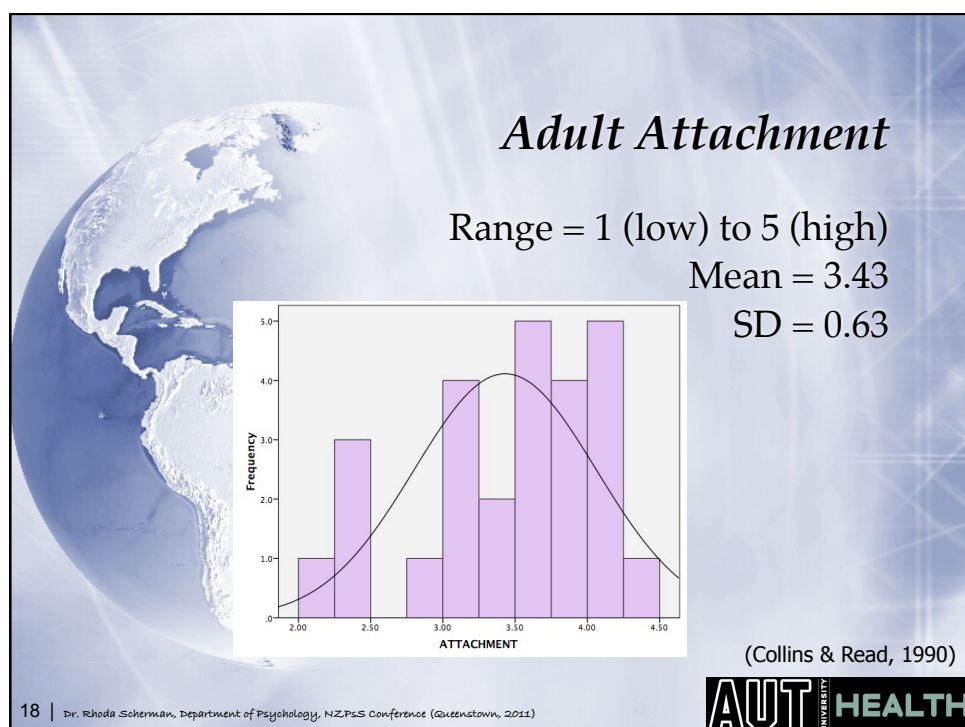
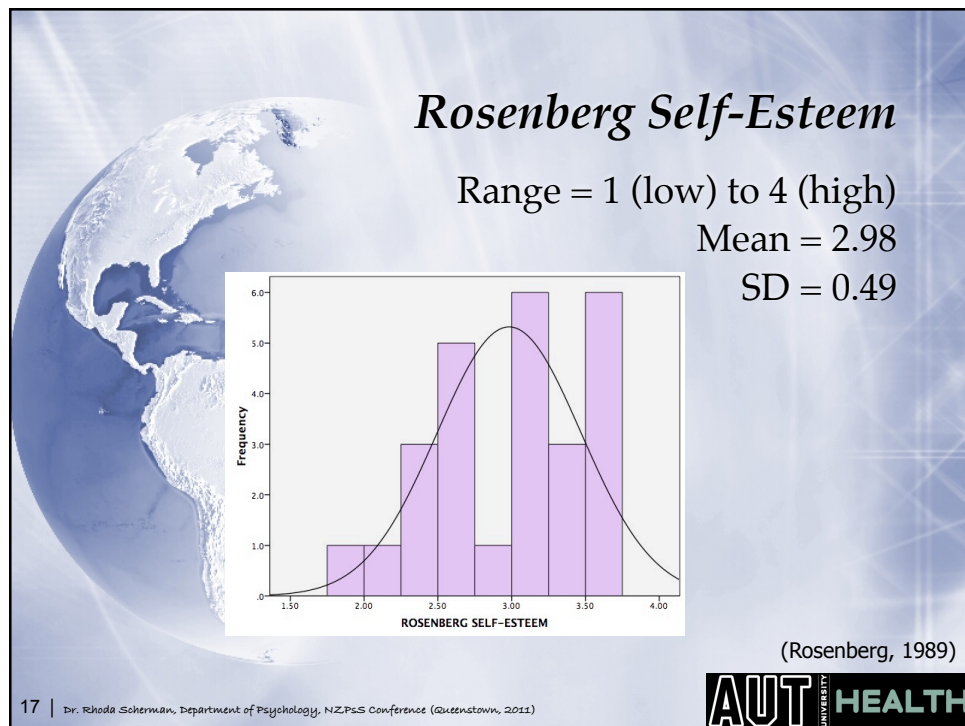
Participant Characteristic (n = 26)

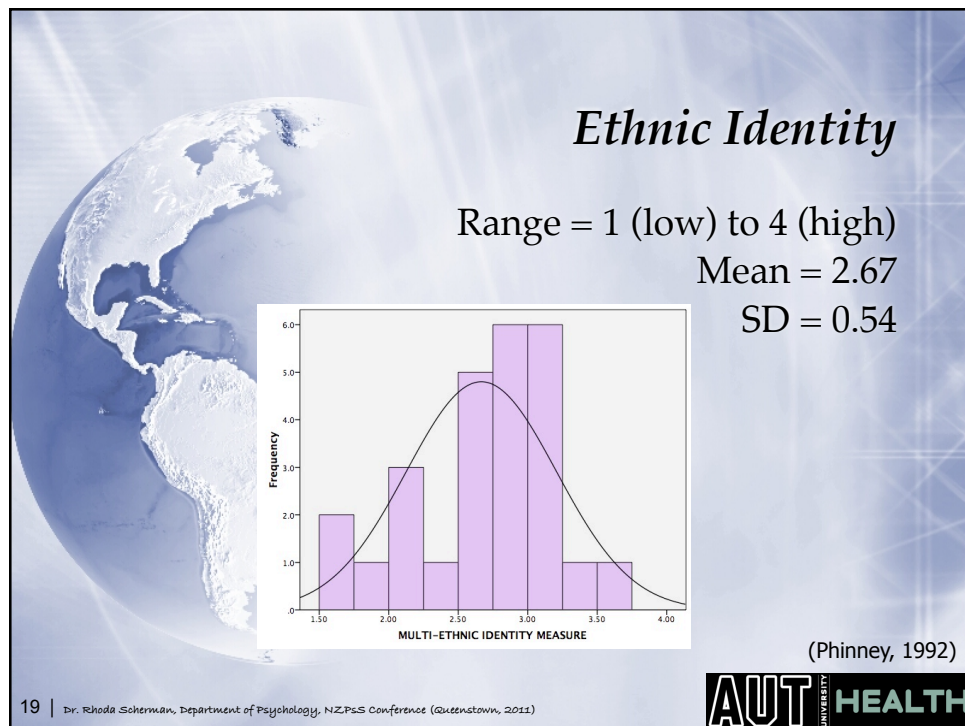
Country of Origin Russia = 68% Romania = 32%		Parent Ethnicity New Zealand = 100%	
Gender Males = 38% Females = 62%		Parent Current Ages 40-49 = 16% 50-59 = 57% 60+ = 27%	
Current Age = 20.6 yrs (mean) Range = 18 to 24 yrs		Family demographics Only child = 23% Related-adopted siblings = 31% Non-related-adopted sibs = 19% Siblings born to parents = 12% Mixed siblings = 15%	
Age at Placement = 4.3 yrs (mean) Range = 0 – 8 yrs			
Years with family = 16.4 yrs (mean) Range = 11.5 - 20 years			

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Inferential analyses of measures

		Spearman Correlations					
		ATTACH	MEIM	ROSENBERG	DASS	COPE_MAL	COPE_AD
ATTACH	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	-.131	.525	.592	-.235	.203
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.524	.006	.001	.247	.320
	N	26	26	26	26	26	26
MEIM	Correlation Coefficient		1.000	.045	-.139	-.156	-.010
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.	.827	.497	.446	.961
	N		26	26	26	26	26
ROSENBERG	Correlation Coefficient			1.000	.624	-.379	.203
	Sig. (2-tailed)			.	.001	.056	.320
	N			26	26	26	26
DASS	Correlation Coefficient				1.000	-.627	.027
	Sig. (2-tailed)				.	.001	.896
	N				26	26	26
COPE_MAL	Correlation Coefficient					1.000	.152
	Sig. (2-tailed)					.	.460
	N					26	26
COPE_AD	Correlation Coefficient						1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)						.
	N						26

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Interpretation of scales and relationships

- ✧ The group rated their coping strategies as more adaptive than maladaptive.
- ✧ The maladaptive scores were negatively correlated with the DASS: if the adoptees had high DASS scores (low in depression, anxiety and stress) they had low maladaptive coping styles.
- ✧ No correlation was found between the two coping scores: to be high in adaptive coping does not mean one will be low in maladaptive coping and vice versa.

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Interpretation of scales and relationships (cont.)

- ✧ Higher self-esteem was positively correlated with lower rates of depression, anxiety and stress: if the person had a high DASS score (low depression, anxiety and stress), s/he also had high self-esteem.
- ✧ Self-esteem was also positively correlated with the attachment scores: if a person had high rates of self-esteem, s/he also showed a high degree of attachment.


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Interpretation of scales and relationships (cont.)

- ✧ The ethnicity scores suggest that collectively the group identify themselves as Russian or Romanian to a moderate degree.
- ✧ The index not indicate whether or not participants identified with the NZ culture. (It was not measuring bicultural attitudes.)
- ✧ The ethnic identity index remained independent of the others: how a person ethnically identified himself/herself seems to have no influence on (nor was it influenced by) any of the other measures used.

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Adoptee's Relationships

- ✧ 72% Single
- ✧ 28% De Facto
- ✧ 0% Married / Divorced

Education

- ✧ 4% No High School Qualification (NZ 18%)
- ✧ 96% Basic High School Qualification (NZ 85%)
- ✧ 35% Final High School / UE (NZ 44%)
- ✧ 27% Currently Engaged In Tertiary Study (NZ 38%)
- ✧ 31% Completed Tertiary Cert / Dip
- ✧ 4% Completed Bachelor Degree or Above (NZ 21%)


Employment

- ✧ 58% Employed
- ✧ 23% Studying
- ✧ 19% Unemployed (NZ mean 17.2%)

NOTE: Values in (brackets) represents New Zealand norms on the same measures*. This data is provided as a point of comparison. However, not all measures had NZ values to compare with.

*Survey questions and comparison data obtained from the Ministry of Health, 2006/07 New Zealand Health Survey, Adult Questionnaire; Date of publication (Online): May 2008

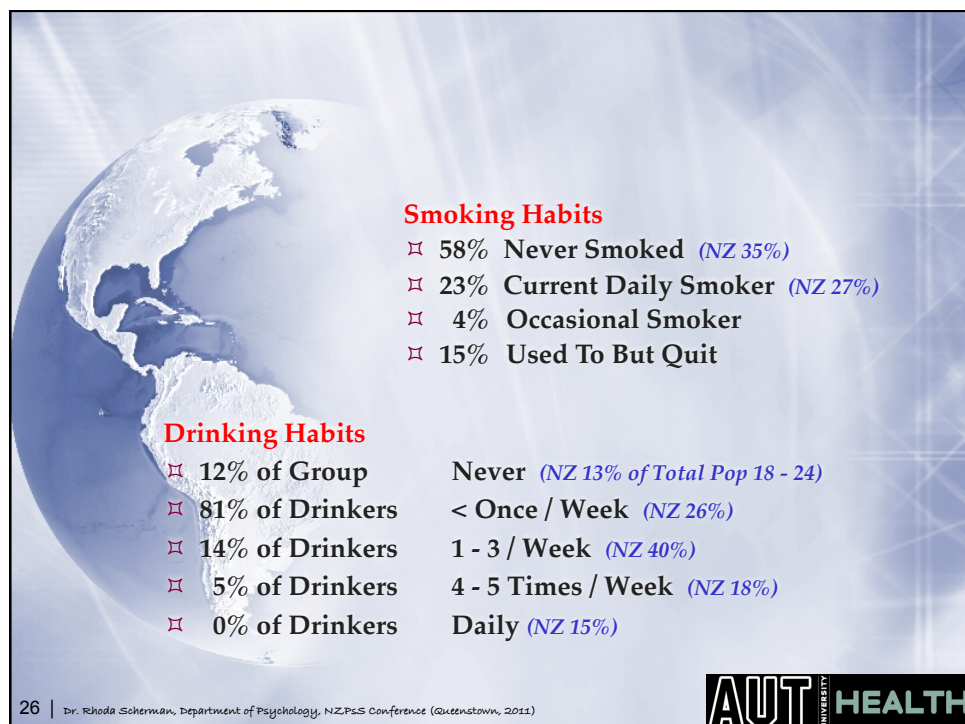
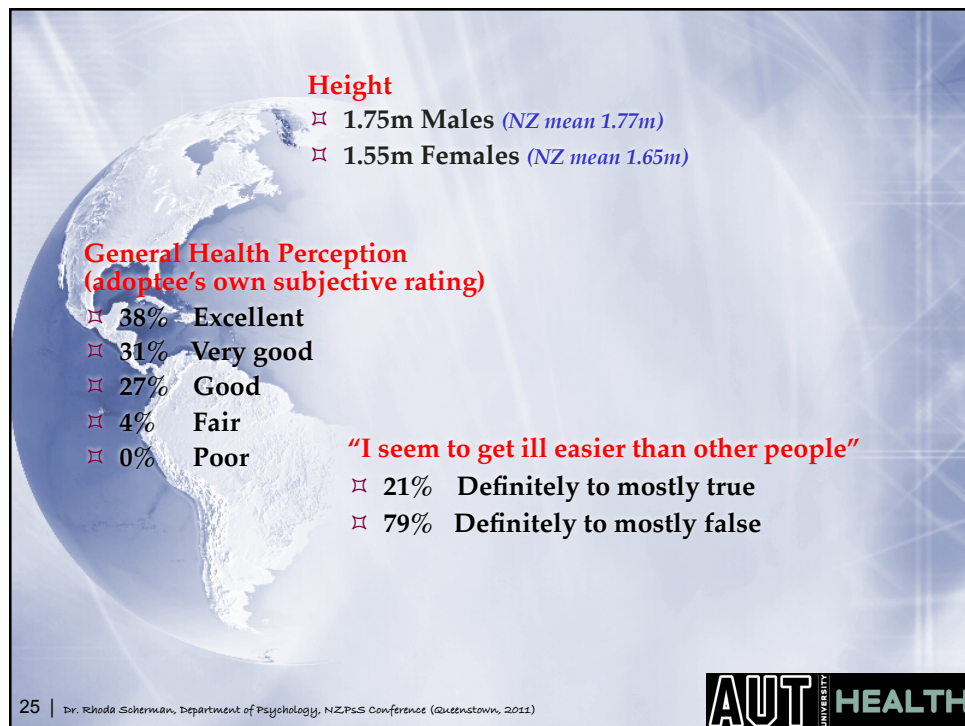
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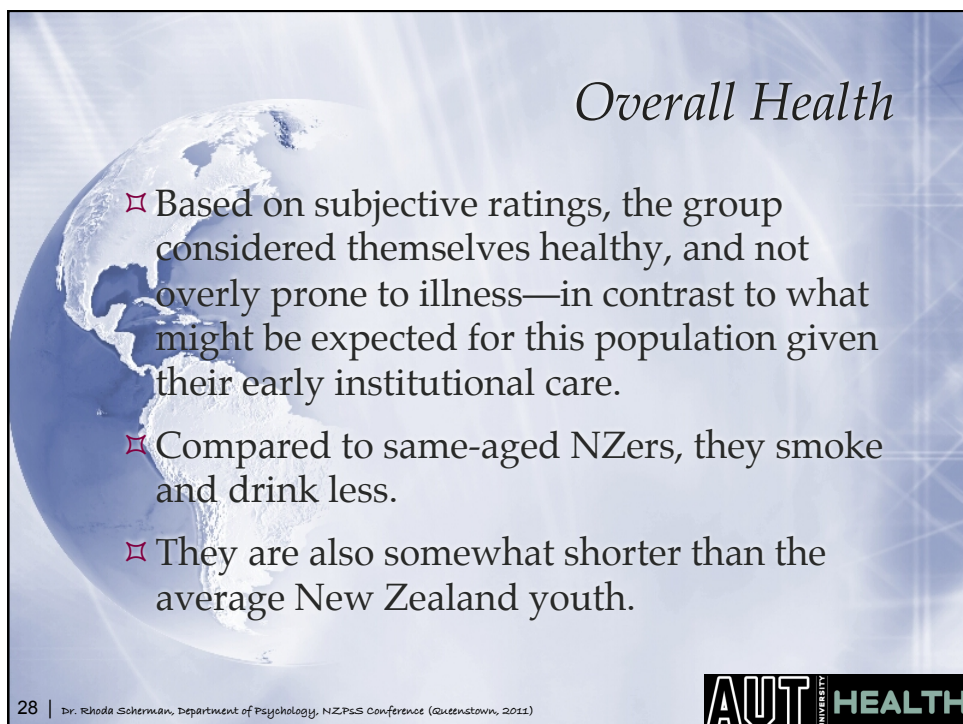


Preliminary Conclusions

- ✧ In light of research on the negative outcomes of early institutionalisation, the preliminary findings of this study are very positive, and bode well for our Russian and Romanian-born adoptees!

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Overall Health

- ✧ Based on subjective ratings, the group considered themselves healthy, and not overly prone to illness—in contrast to what might be expected for this population given their early institutional care.
- ✧ Compared to same-aged NZers, they smoke and drink less.
- ✧ They are also somewhat shorter than the average New Zealand youth.

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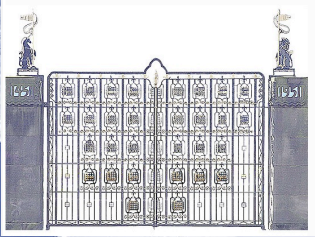
Moderate to high adjustment

- ✧ For all five standardised scales, participants scored above the median of the ranges possible, suggesting moderate to high adjustment.
- ✧ No differences were found between males and females nor between Russian and Romanian adoptions.
- ✧ When analysed together, several significant relationships (correlations) were found. However, the direction of the influence is not known.

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Limitations




- ✧ Gatekeeping
- ✧ Parental Fear of Pigmalian Effect
- ✧ Response bias

Future directions

- ✧ Larger sample
- ✧ Qualitative focus
- ✧ Experiential
- ✧ Resilience
- ✧ Other suggestions
 - ✧ ??

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Summary

- ✧ This study was the first of its kind.
- ✧ Despite limitations, the early data suggests these young adults have physical health, educational outcomes, relationships and lifestyles not too dissimilar to the norms within New Zealand.
- ✧ They also seem to be emotionally and psychologically healthy, and coping well with life's stresses.
- ✧ We will continue to collect data and run additional analyses to confirm these early findings. We are also seeking to add qualitative interviews to the design.

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