

# EARLY EXPERIENCE AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT: AN OVERVIEW OF FINDINGS FROM THREE DOMAINS

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# ATTACHMENT

# THE NATURE OF ATTACHMENT



# FACETS OF ATTACHMENT



## Attachment Bond

- Selective emotional tie of child to caregiver

## Attachment Behaviour

- Crying, calling, seeking, clinging

# ATTACHMENT PATTERNS

- Secure Attachment: seek proximity, communicate need for comfort, contact is effective
- Avoidant Attachment: avoids contact, minimizes expressions of need for contact
- Resistant Attachment: intense expression of distress, angry upon contact, contact not effective
- Disorganized Attachment: contradictory, fragmented, disoriented or fearful behaviour upon contact
- Disinhibited Attachment: extreme social disinhibition, lack of stranger caution, approach and receive comfort from strangers

# ATTACHMENT AND LATER OUTCOMES

- Three recent meta-analyses by our group aimed to summarize the overall evidence
- Meta-analysis 1: Children's Externalizing Problems
- Meta-analysis 2: Children's Internalizing Problems
- Meta-analysis 3: Children's Social Competence

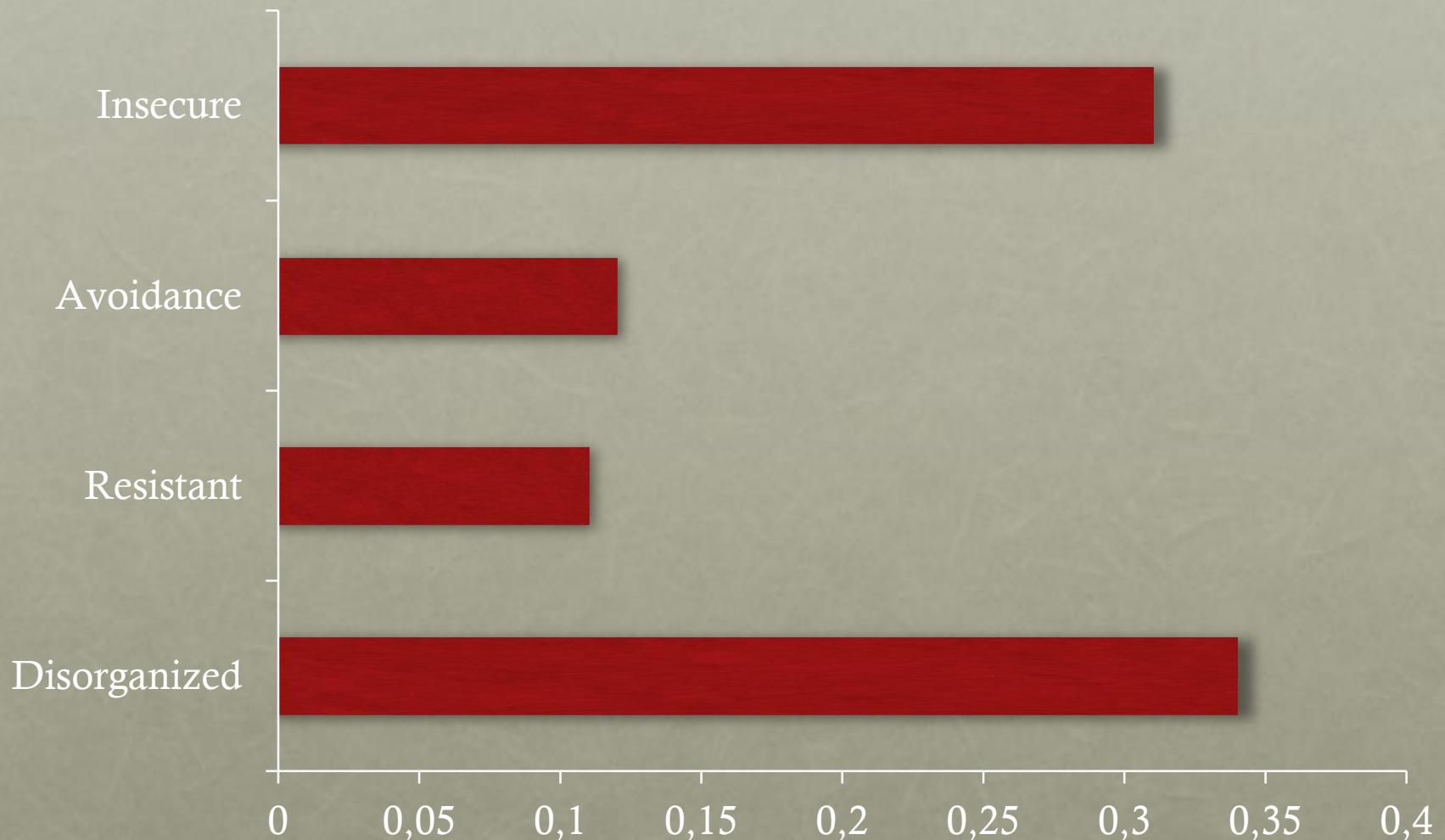
# ATTACHMENT AND EXTERNALIZING PROBLEMS

Fearon, R., Bakermans-Kranenburg, M. J., van IJzendoorn, M. H., Lapsley, A.-M., & Roisman, G. I. (2010). The significance of insecure attachment and disorganization in the development of children's externalizing behavior: A meta-analytic study. *Child Development, 81*(2), 435-456.

# META-ANALYSIS I

- Systematic literature search (PsychInfo, MEDLINE, WOS, SSCI, AHCI)
- Abstract review of 856 articles
- Full review of > 150 articles
- Extraction of effect sizes (converted to  $d$ )
- Coding of moderators (97% agreement)
- Maternal report of externalizing problems at earliest time in longitudinal study selected when available
- Subsample effect sizes extracted where possible
- 69 independent sample from 49 separate investigations ( $N = 5947$ )

# INSECURE COMPARISONS



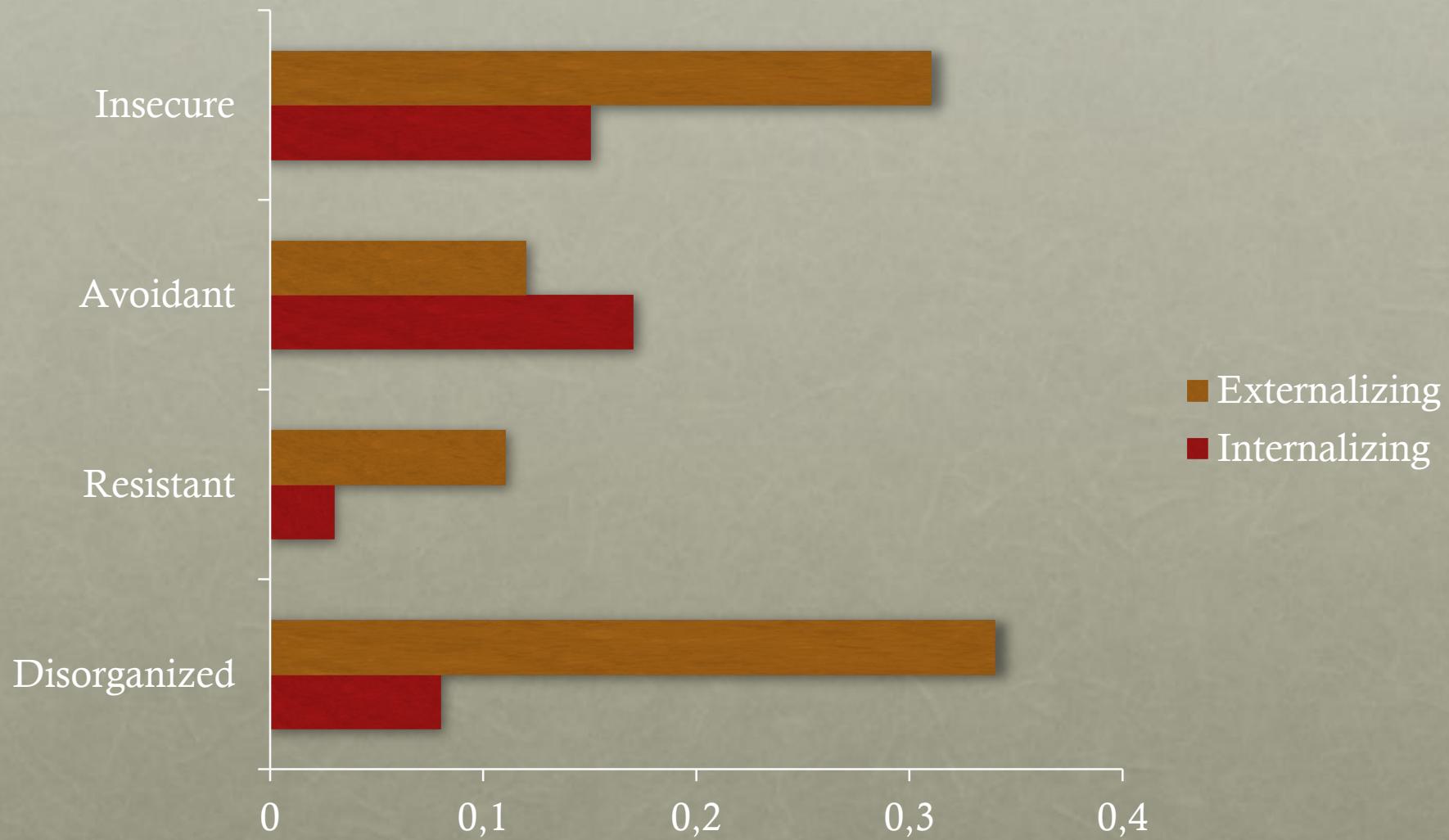
# SUMMARY

- Attachment insecurity *is* associated with externalizing behaviour problems
- Stronger effects emerge with time
- Insecurity and Disorganization key contrasts
- Stronger effects for boys

# META-ANALYSIS II

- Groh, A. M., Roisman, G. I., van IJzendoorn, M. H., Bakermans-Kranenburg, M. J., & Fearon, R. (2012). The significance of insecure and disorganized attachment for children's internalizing symptoms: A meta-analytic study. *Child Development*, 83(2), 591-610.
- Procedures as previous review
- N = 4612

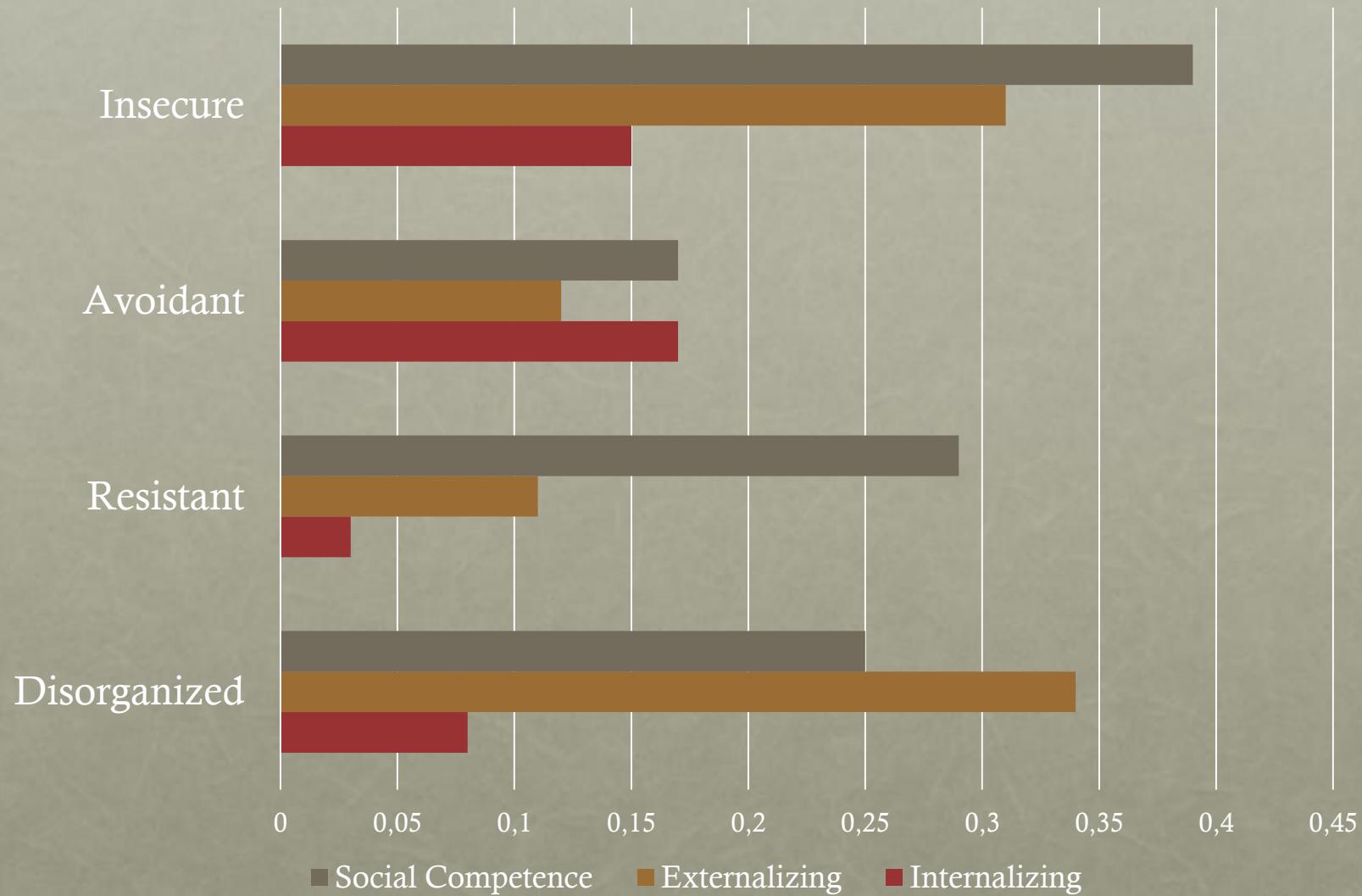
# INTERNALIZING VS. EXTERNALIZING



# META-ANALYSIS III

- Groh, A. M., Fearon, R. P., Bakermans-Kranenburg, M. J., Van IJzendoorn, M. H., Steele, R. D., & Roisman, G. I. (2014). The significance of attachment security for children's social competence with peers: a meta-analytic study. *Attachment & human development*, 16(2), 103-136.
- Overall N = 4414

# GROUP EFFECT SIZES



# CONCLUSIONS

- Effects of attachment vary by domain
- Stronger effects of externalizing problems and social competence than internalizing problems
- Broader effects (across more insecure sub-groups) for social competence
- Several moderators indicated (especially gender, age) needing more investigation

# POSTNATAL DEPRESSION

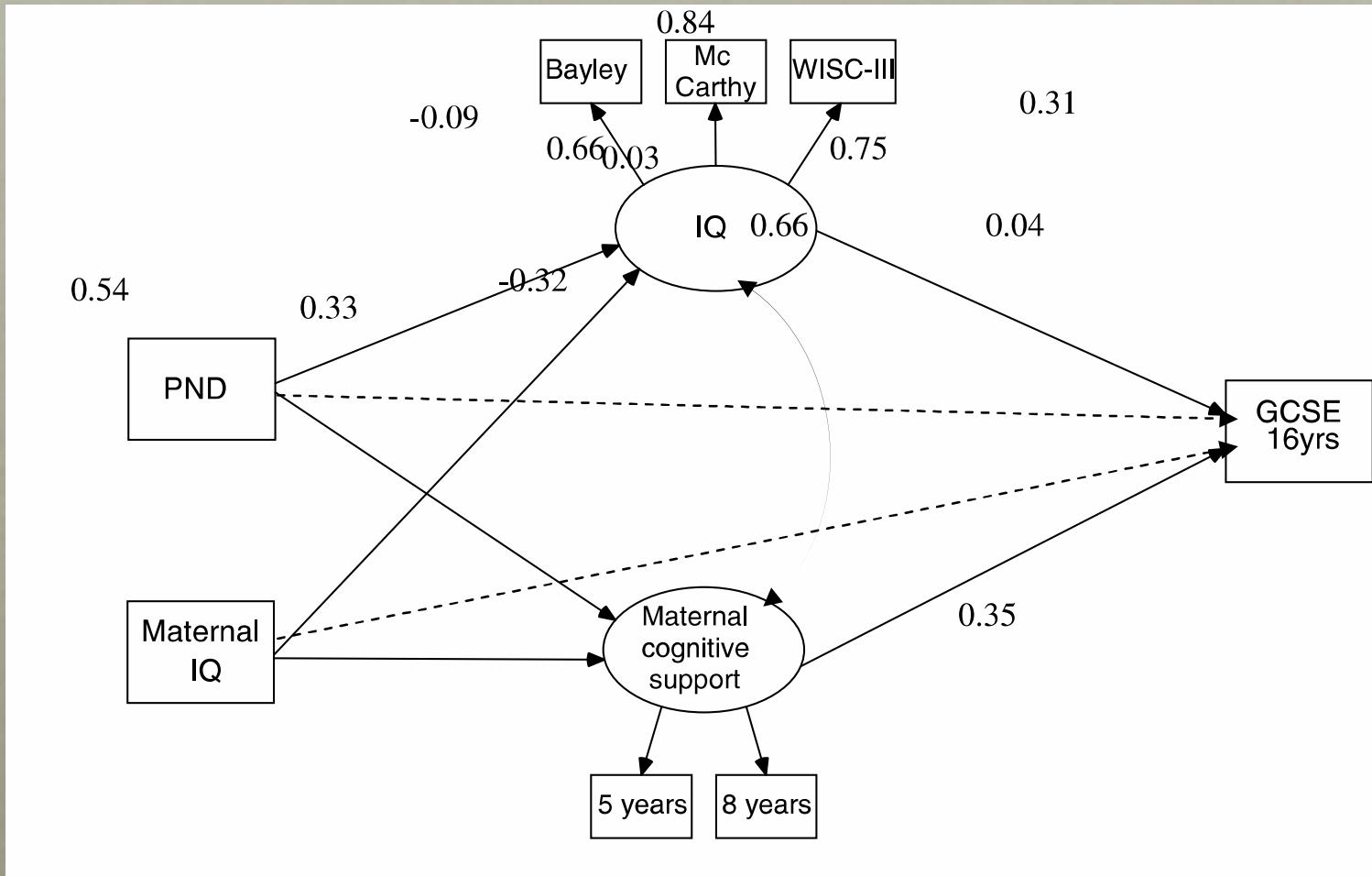
# INTERGENERATIONAL TRANSMISSION OF DEPRESSION

- Consistent reports of offspring of parents with depression being at substantially increased risk for depression themselves
- Little prospective longitudinal data concerning development of disorder through childhood, especially that including direct assessment of the child and the mother-child relationship

# DEPRESSION AND INFANT-PARENT INTERACTION

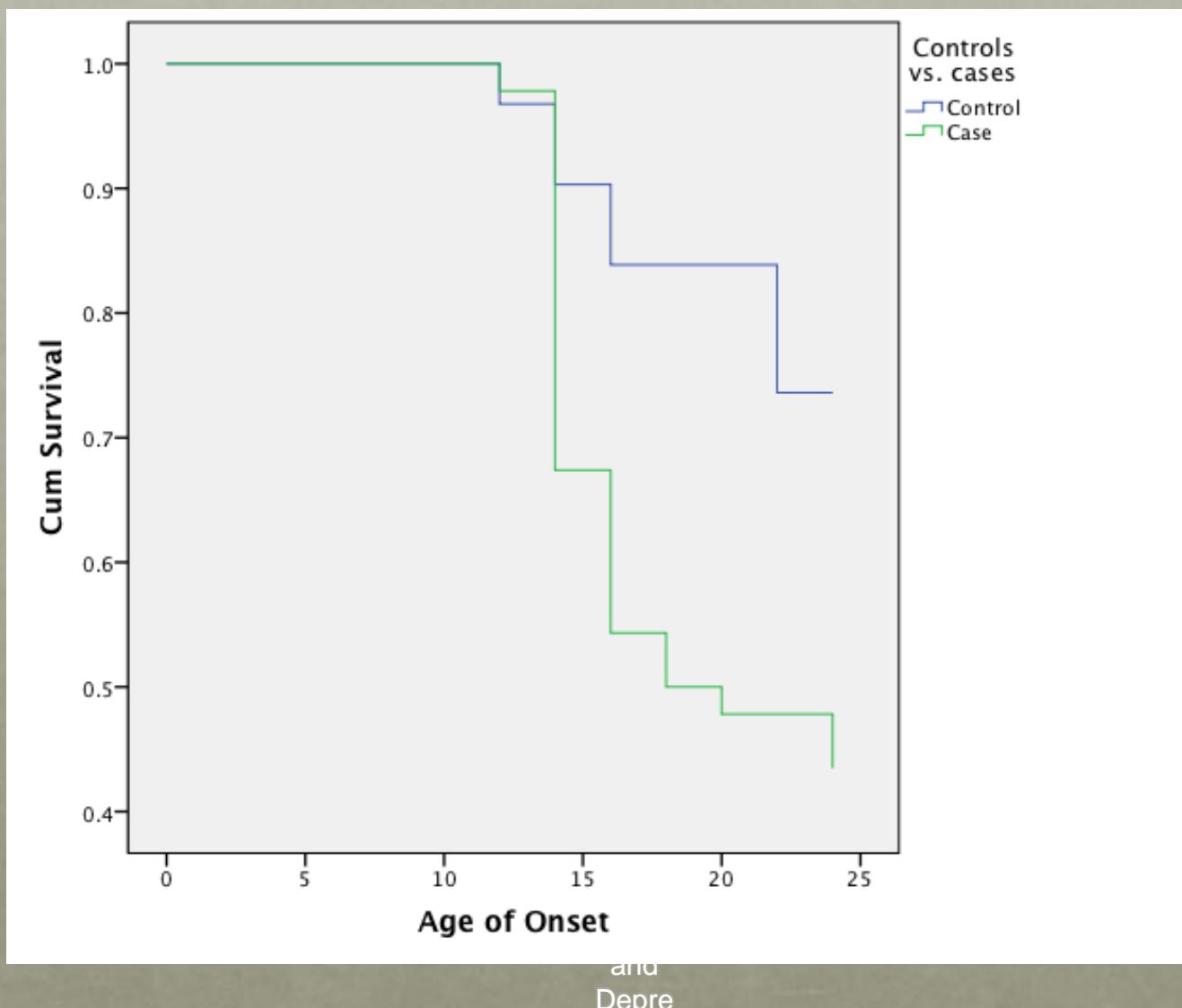
- Consistent evidence of
  - reduced behavioural responsiveness and sensitivity to infant cues in postnatal depression (e.g., Murray et al., 1996)
  - Less physical touching of the infant and less affection (e.g., Ferber et al., 2008)
  - Lower rates of insecure attachment, though not disorganization
  - Less responsive speech, less motherese

# COGNITIVE OUTCOMES



# OFFSPRING DEPRESSION

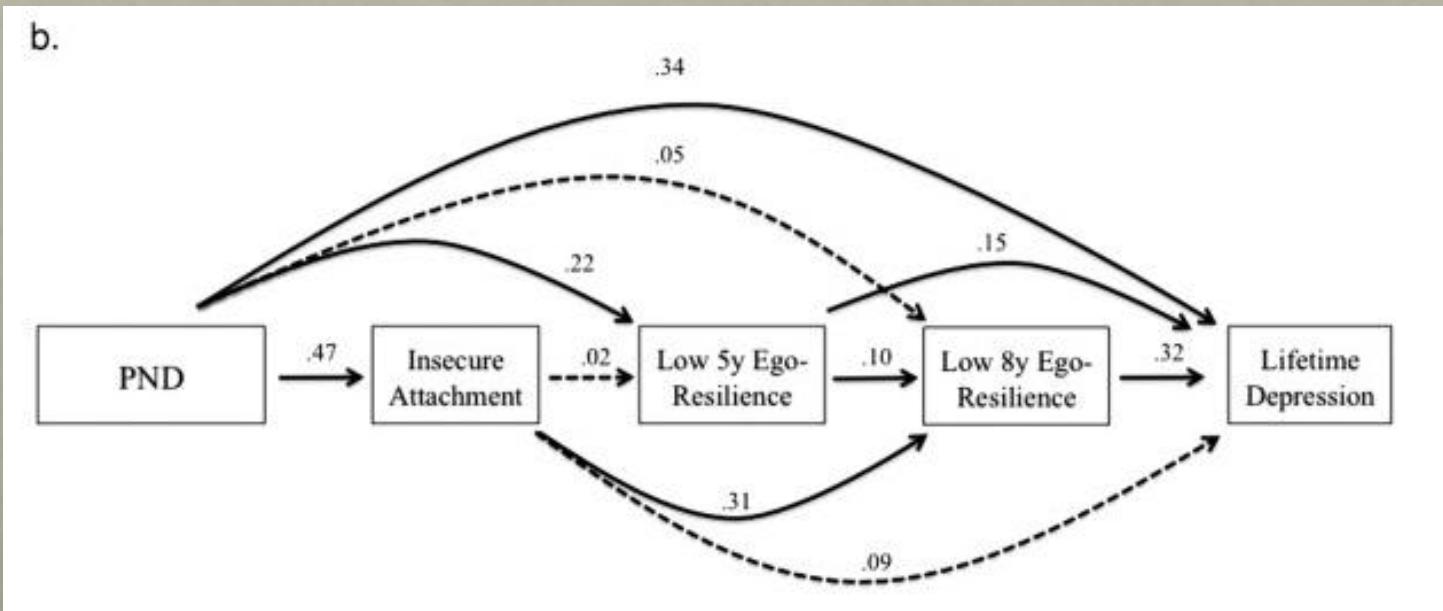
# RATES OF DEPRESSIVE DISORDER INTO ADULTHOOD



# Ego resiliency at 5 and 9 years

- The Snap card game (*Murray et al., 2001*)
- Child at home with friend
- Competitive card game
- Rigged by experimenter to provide losing and winning deals (both children win at end!)
- Rate child's distress and anxiety in the face of the mild threat of loss vs. capacity to remain equable/positive

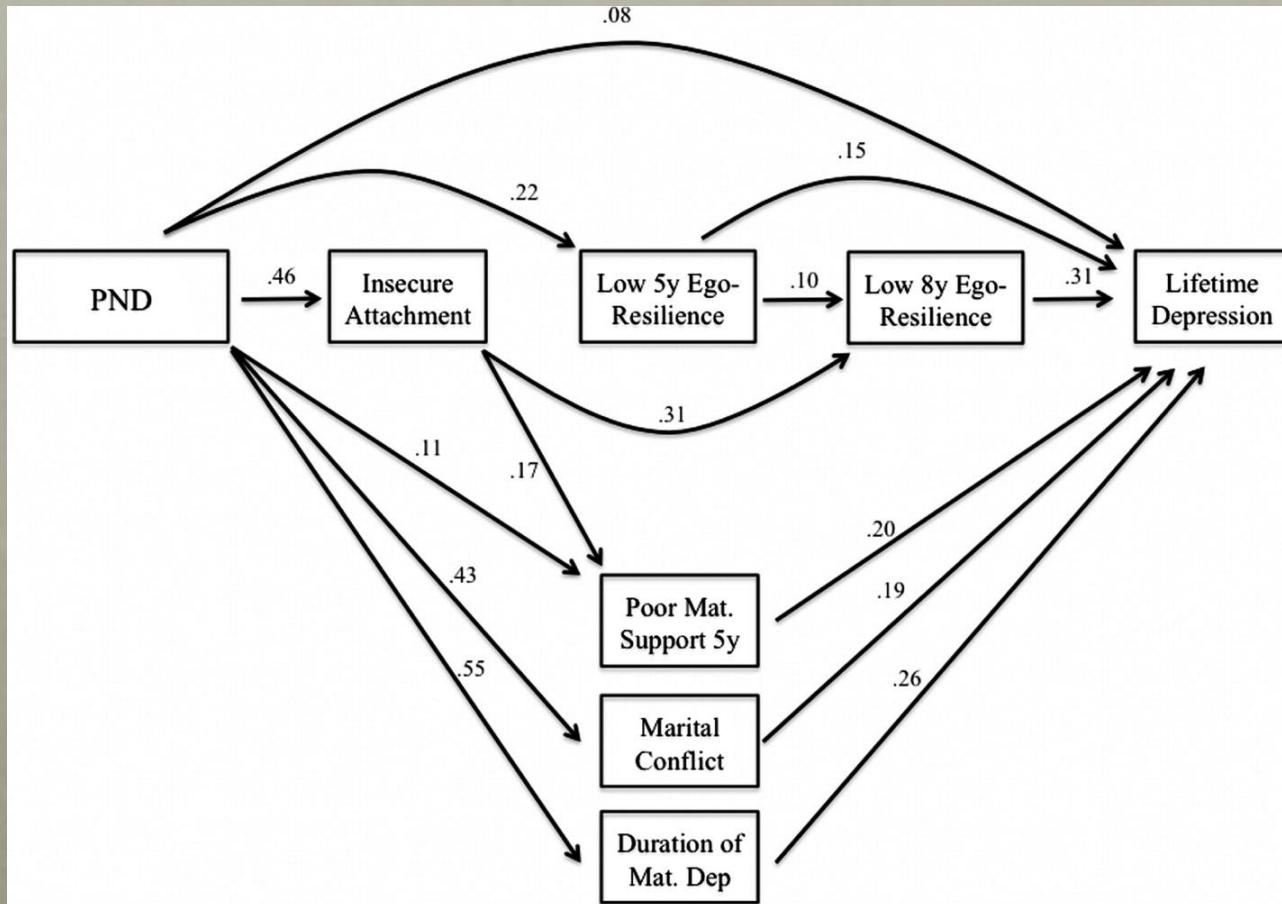
# Path Analysis: PND, infant attachment, 5 and 9 yr resiliency



# Intervening Family Processes

- Maternal sensitivity at 5 years
- Maternal emotional support at 9 years
- Marital Conflict
- Chronicity of maternal depression

# INTEGRATING THE FINDINGS



See Murray et al., 2011

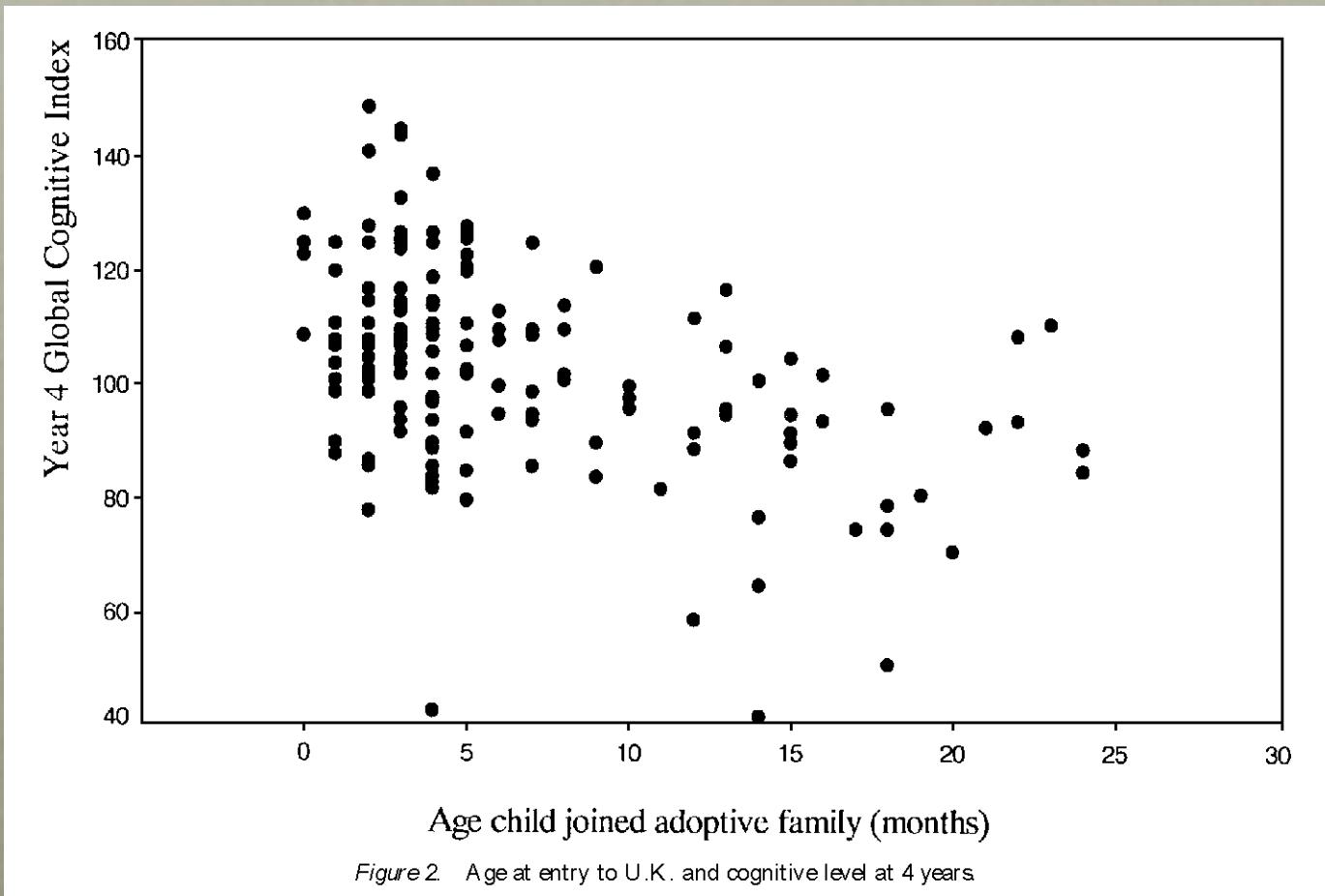
# Treatment Implications

- The findings emphasise the importance of
  - Screening for postnatal depression
  - Interventions to prevent the development of insecure attachment
  - Continuing monitoring of vulnerable mothers, to alleviate subsequent depression and to support parental relationships

# INSTITUTIONAL CARE



# DEVELOPMENTAL CATCH-UP



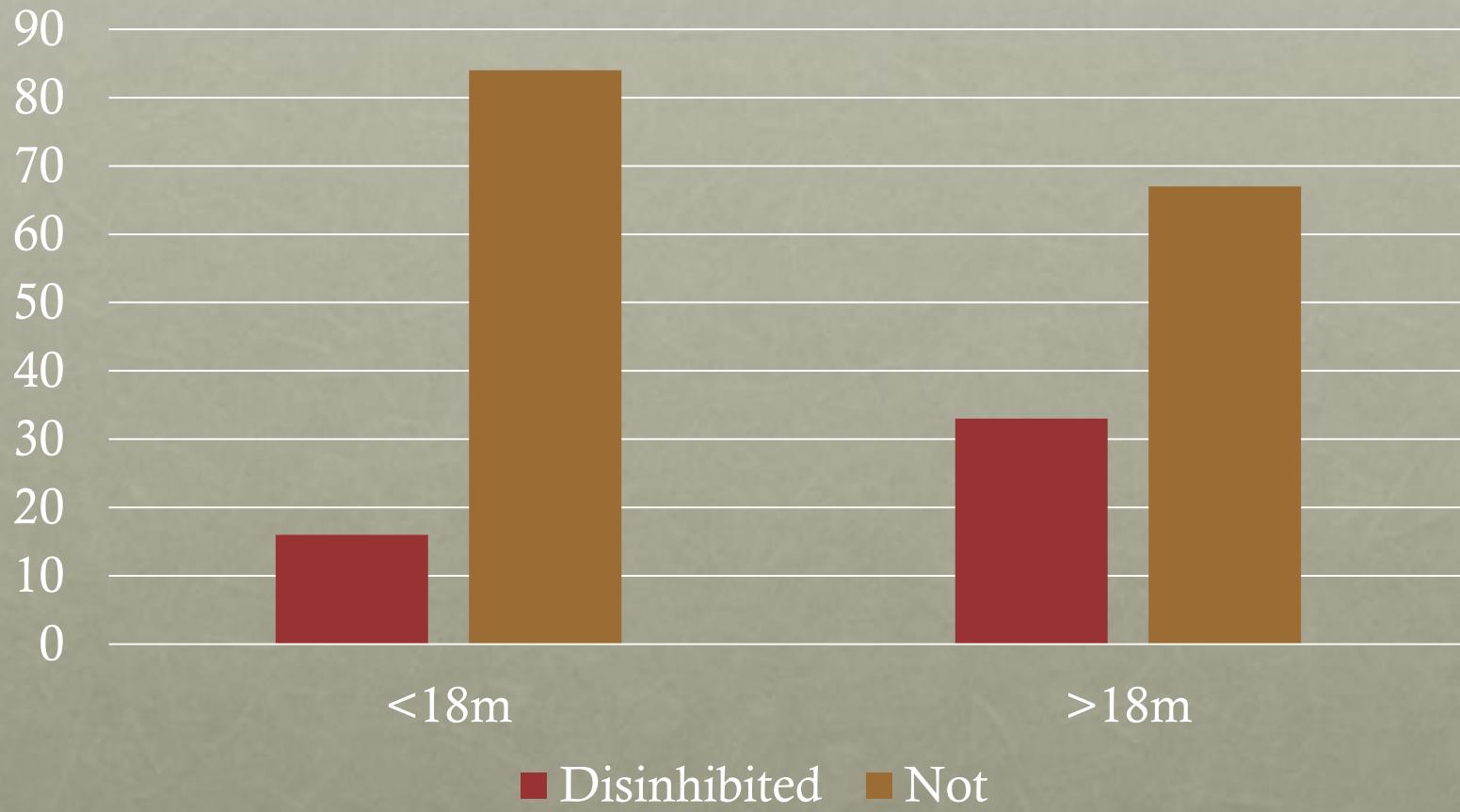
# DEPRIVATION-SPECIFIC PROBLEMS

- Disinhibited attachment/approach
- Quasi-autism
- Cognitive impairment
- ADHD-symptomatology

# DISINHIBITED ATTACHMENT (DSED)

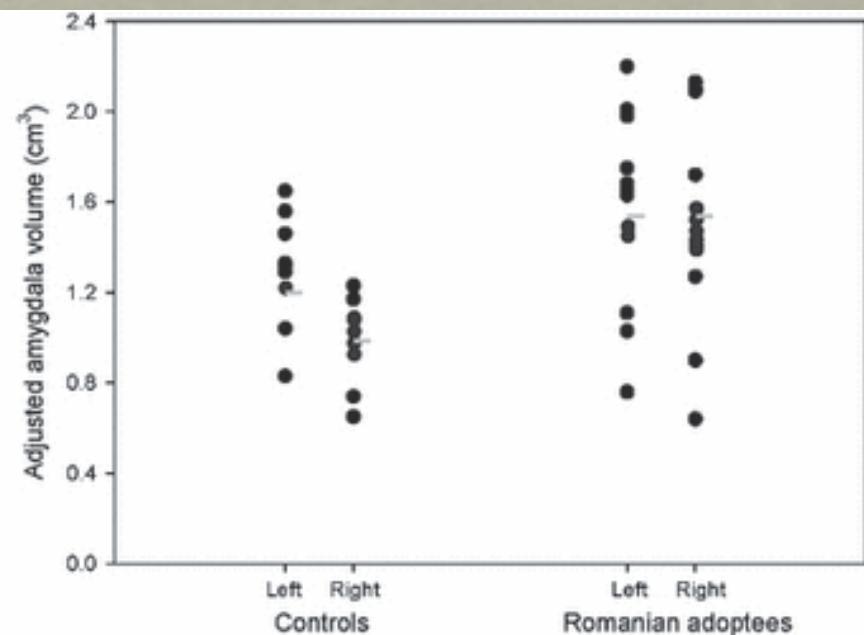
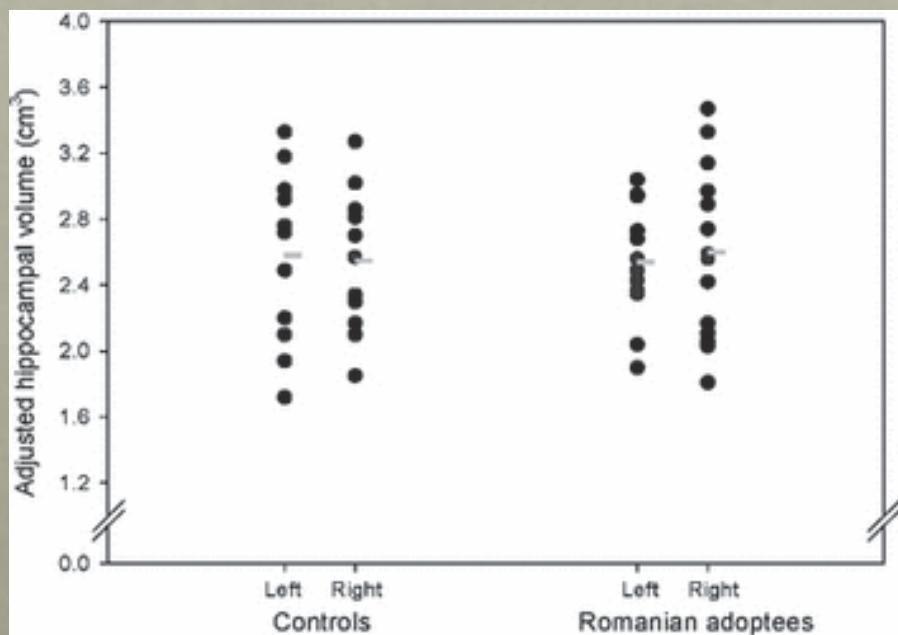
- Behavior in which a child actively approaches and interacts with unfamiliar adults and exhibits absent reticence in approaching and interacting with unfamiliar adults.
- Overly familiar verbal or physical behavior (that is not consistent with culturally sanctioned and with age-appropriate social boundaries).
- Diminished or absent checking back with adult caregiver after venturing away, even in unfamiliar settings.
- Willingness to go off with an unfamiliar adult with minimal or no hesitation.

# DSED AT 6 YEARS AND AGE OF PLACEMENT

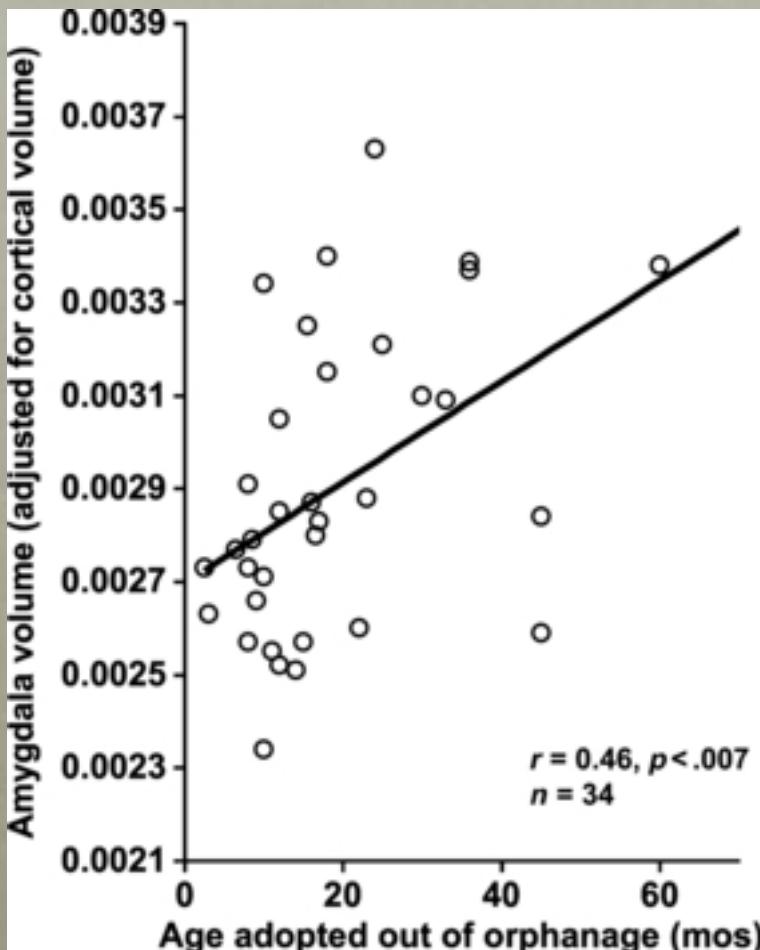


- By age 11 50% of those placed later than 6 months showed DSP, compared to 7% of the others
- DSP associated with early indicators of brain growth (head circumference) and neuropsychological function

# AMYGDALA, HIPPOCAMPAL AND CORPUS CALLOSUM SIZE FOLLOWING SEVERE EARLY INSTITUTIONAL DEPRIVATION: THE ENGLISH AND ROMANIAN ADOPTEES STUDY PILOT



# PROLONGED INSTITUTIONAL REARING IS ASSOCIATED WITH ATYPICALLY LARGE AMYGDALA VOLUME AND DIFFICULTIES IN EMOTION REGULATION



# CONCLUSION

- Profound neglect leads to dramatic impacts on children's health and development
- Catch-up is substantial, particularly for growth and cognitive ability
- Lasting problems with disinhibited attachment and quasi-autism
- Indication of developmentally-sensitive period
- Effects on structural and functional brain development