

The background features a collage of images related to children and families. On the left, a man carries a child on his shoulders. In the center, a woman smiles. On the right, two young boys smile together. At the top right, a close-up of a girl's face is visible. A large, dark blue, curved shape frames the central text.

**Children and Family
Research Center**

Adoption Outcomes for Maltreated Infants: A Longitudinal Analysis

Ted Cross

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Maltreated Infants Are an Important Population to Track

- Report to CPS for infants can signal serious abuse or neglect
- Infants at greatest risk of entry into foster care (approximately 1% risk; Wulczyn, Hislop & Harden, 2002)
- Early disruptions in care could seriously affect attachment and well-being
- Infants tend to stay in foster care longer than other children (Wulczyn, Hislop & Harden, 2002)



Pew Commission on Children in Foster Care

“In fiscal year (FY) 2001, nearly 39,000 infants under the age of one entered foster care, where they may lack the stability that promotes attachment and early brain development.” (p. 9”



Adoption is an important outcome for many maltreated infants

- Many maltreated infants may need adoptive homes
- Adoption may be more likely for infants than for older children
- But we have little data on pathways to and long-term outcomes of adoption



Research Questions

- How frequently are infants involved in CPS investigations placed out of the home?
- How frequently are they adopted?
- How many placements do they have before being adopted?
- How long does adoption take?
- How well are maltreated infants who are adopted doing?



National Survey of Child and Adolescent Well-Being (NSCAW)

- Longitudinal national probability study of children involved with child welfare services (CWS)
- Interviews with children, caregivers, and teachers as well as caseworkers
- Data on CWS actions, service delivery, and child well-being and development
- Random samples:
 - 92 primary sampling units (counties) across the country
 - 5501 children involved in investigations



NSCAW Baseline Data Collection

- Baseline data collection took place in 1999-2000
- Data were collected approximately 4 months following the close of the maltreatment investigation

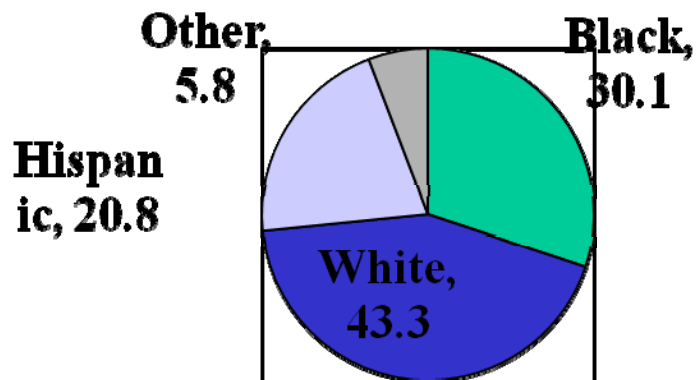
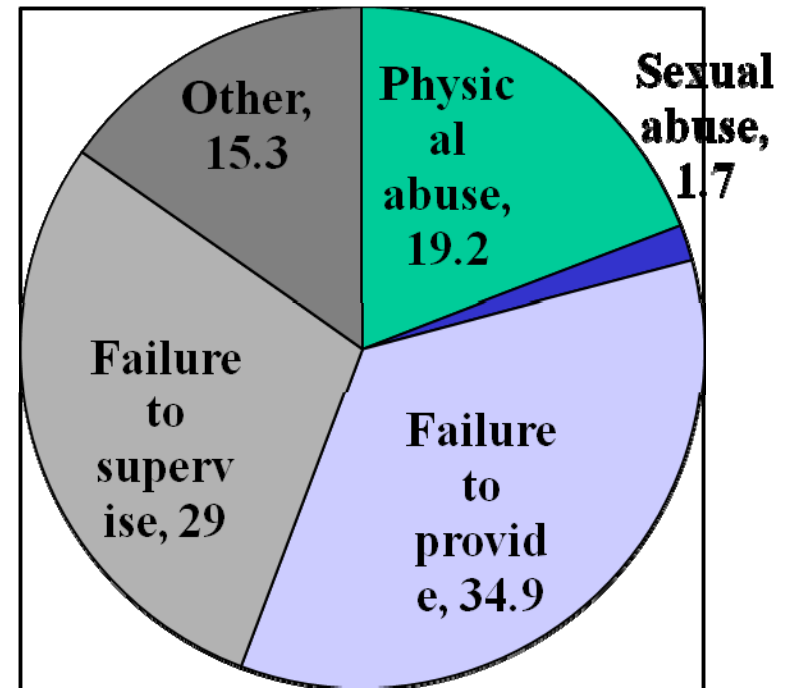
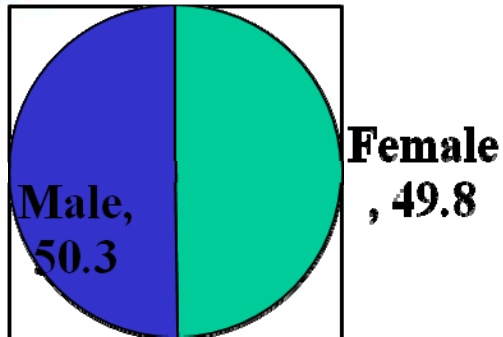


5 Year Follow-Up on Infants

- Wave 5 follow-up conducted from 9/05 to 7/06, approximately 5 years following close of investigation
- First component was data collection on 1,196 children age 0-1 at the time of sampling
- Only 12% are still open cases with CWS, but many have been affected by their involvement with CWS

Characteristics of Infants at Baseline

Most were reported because of neglect

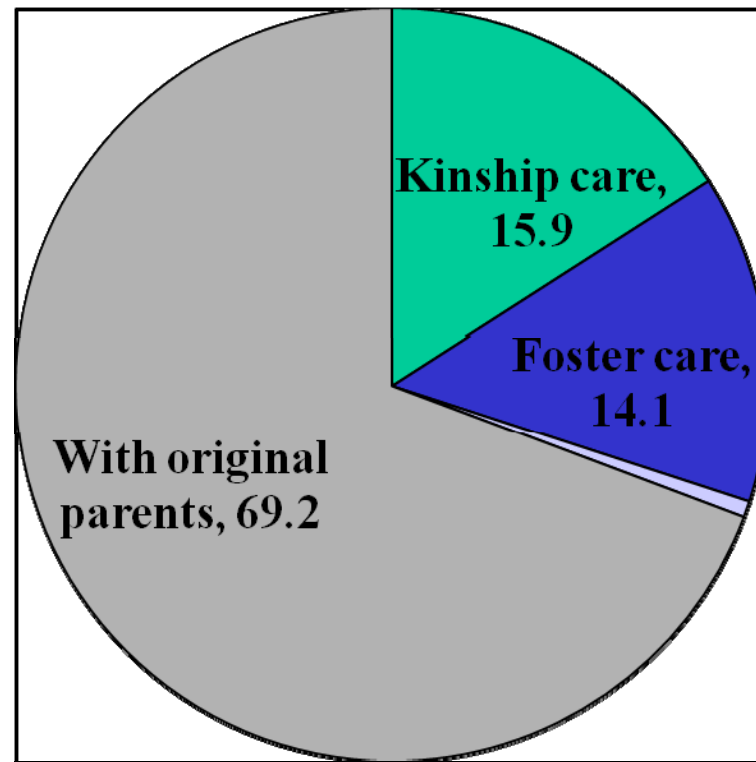


About half were children of color

Settings of Infants at Baseline

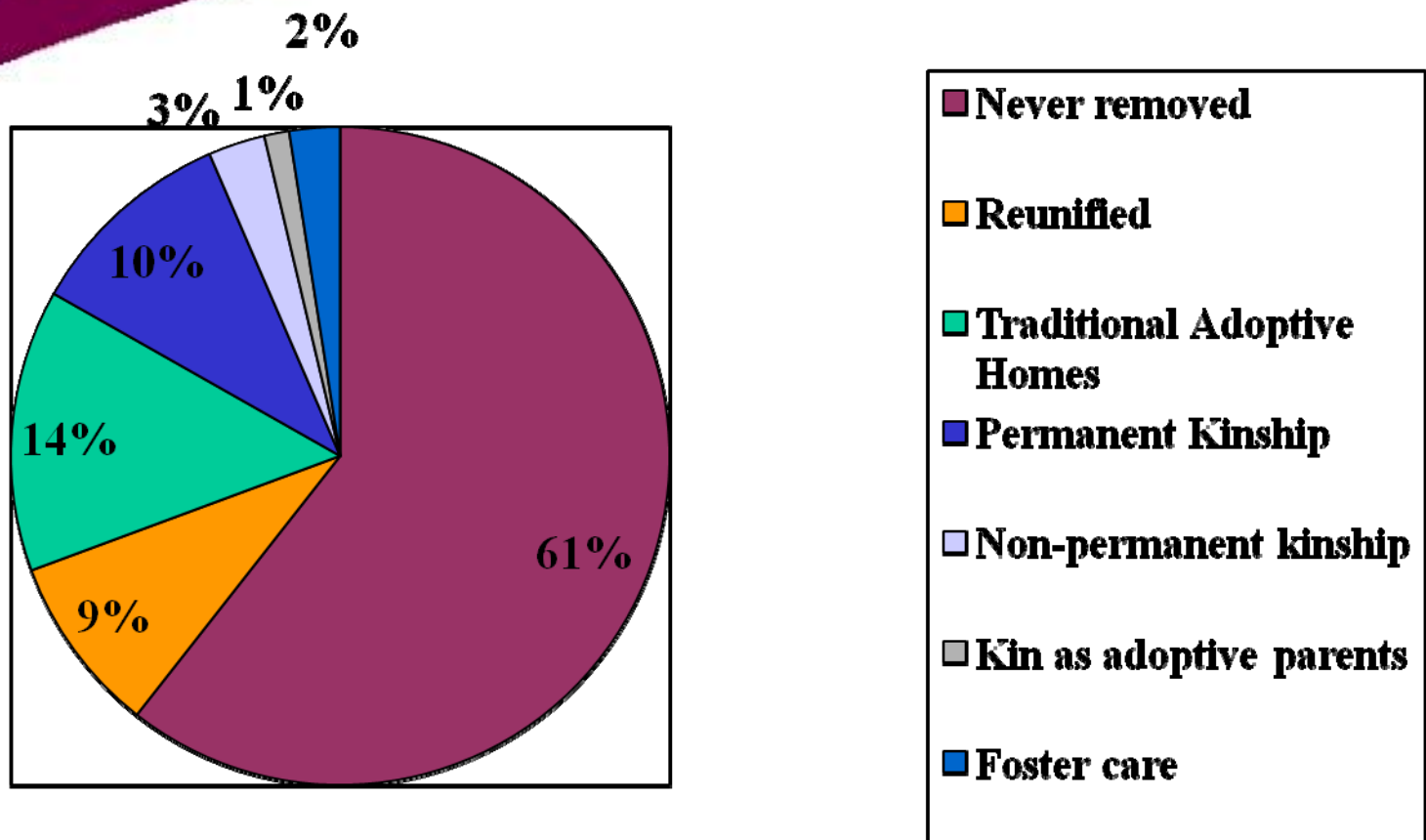


Over 30% were out of home soon after the close of the investigation



Other out-of-home, 0.7

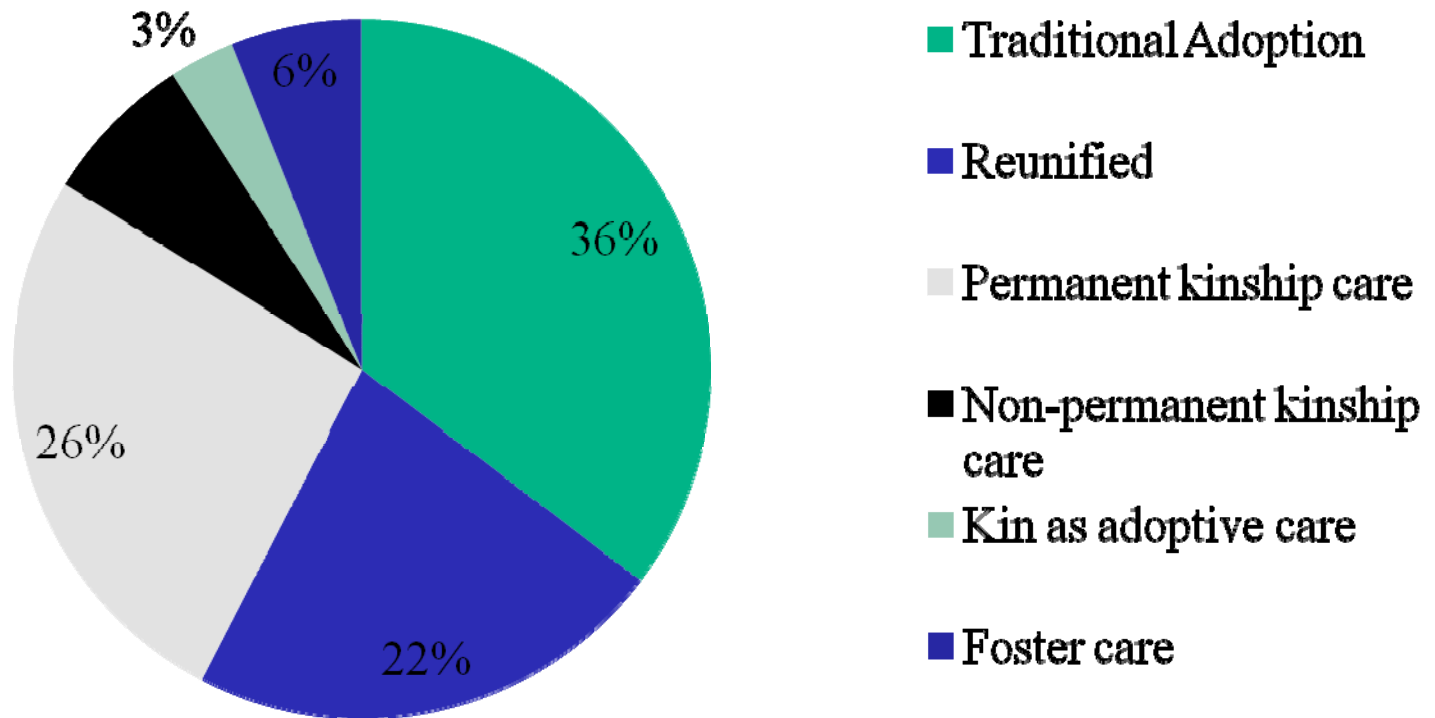
Settings for Infants At Five Year Follow-Up



Adoptive home was the second most common setting after five years



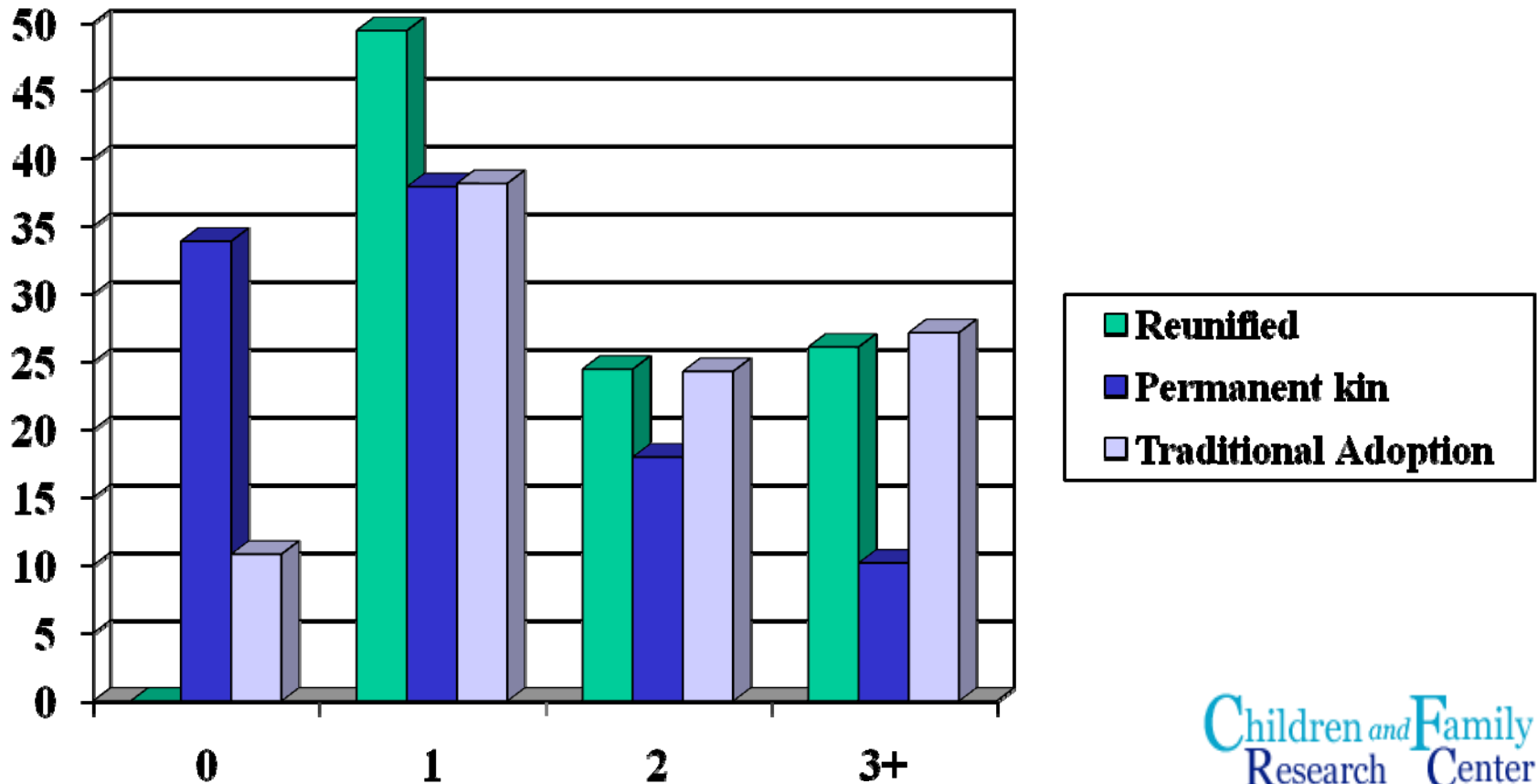
Settings as a proportion of out-of-home cases:



Adoption was fairly common among children who were removed

Number of settings

27.2% of maltreated infants who were later adopted lived in 3 or more settings





Time From Adoptive Placement to Finalization

- 66% of adopted children were in adoptive homes by their first birthday
- Median time from adoptive placement to finalization = 17 months
- 87% to 89% of adoptions finalized by 5 year follow-up

Most infants were in adoptive homes by age 1 but finalization could take time

Time	%
0-12 months	26%
13-24 months	34%
25-36 months	15%
Over 36 months	12%
Not yet finalized	13%



Research Question:

How well are adopted infants doing at a five year follow-up?

Four groups were compared



Setting at 5 Year Follow-Up	N
Children with Adoptive Parents (both unrelated and kin adoptive parents)	224
Children living with Biological Parents (both never placed and reunified)	494
Children in Permanent Kin Care and other permanent settings	159
Children in Foster Care and other out-of-home	44



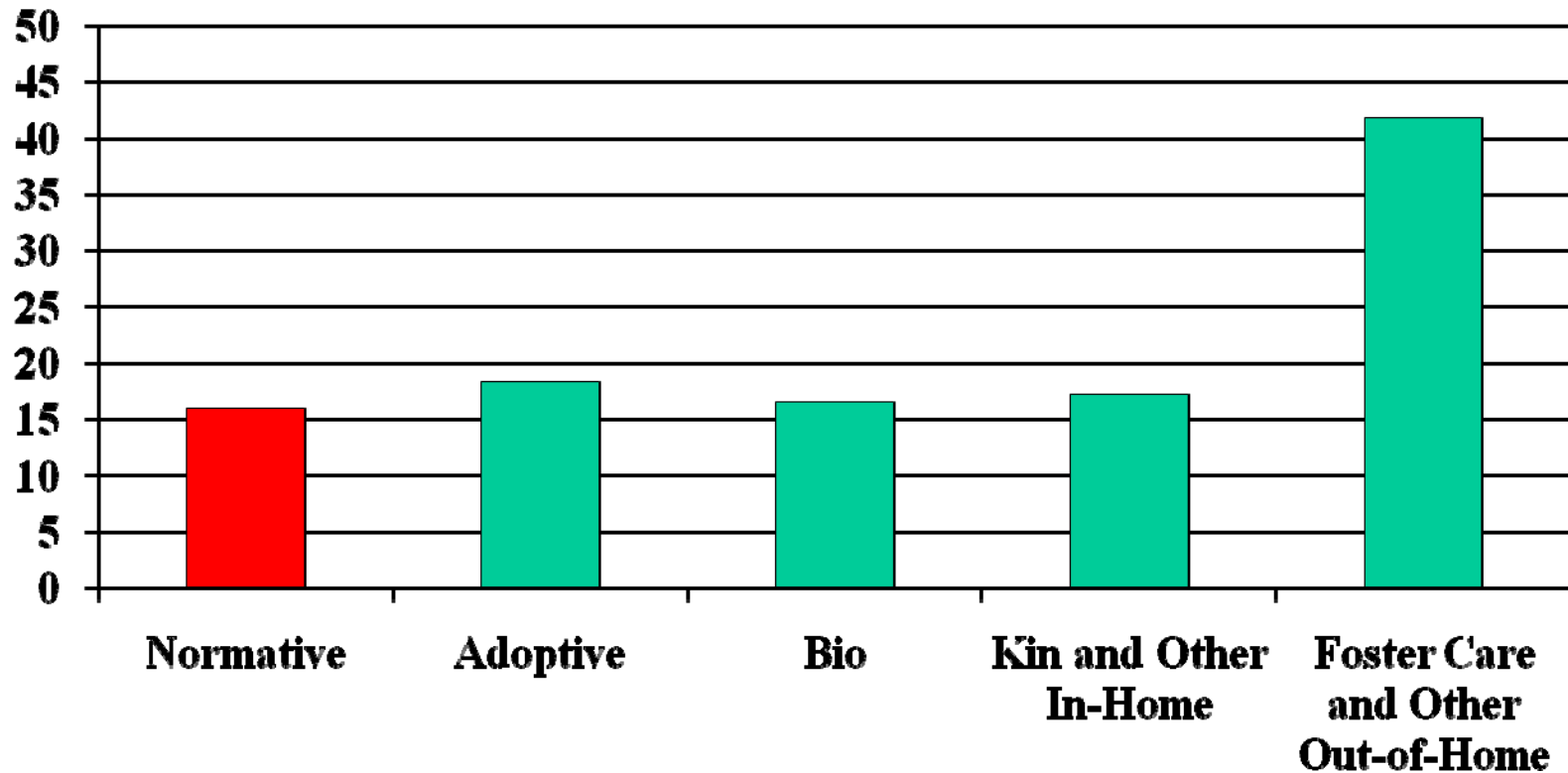
No Mental Health or Behavioral Differences

Mental Health and Behavioral Measure	Result
Child total behavior problems (caregiver rating)	No significant differences between adoptive, biological, kin and foster care groups at 5 year follow-up
Child total behavior problems (teacher rating)	
Attention problems (teacher rating)	
Proactive aggression	
Reactive aggression	
Social competence (teacher rating)	
Social competence (parent ratings)	

Percentages of Children in Clinical Range

(>64) on CBCL

Behavior Problem Score by Setting





Cognitive and Learning Skills by Setting

- Children in adoptive homes did not differ significantly from children with biological parents on most measures
- Children in adoptive homes had significantly higher scores than children in kin and/or foster care on a number of measures
- Sample children were significantly below the norm on several measures



No Significant Difference from Children with Biological Caregivers on Most Cognitive and Learning Skills

Cognitive and Learning Skill	Result
Applied Problems	Adopted = Biological
Passage Comprehension	
Expressive Communication	
Calculation	
Comprehensive Intellectual Functioning	
Vocabulary	

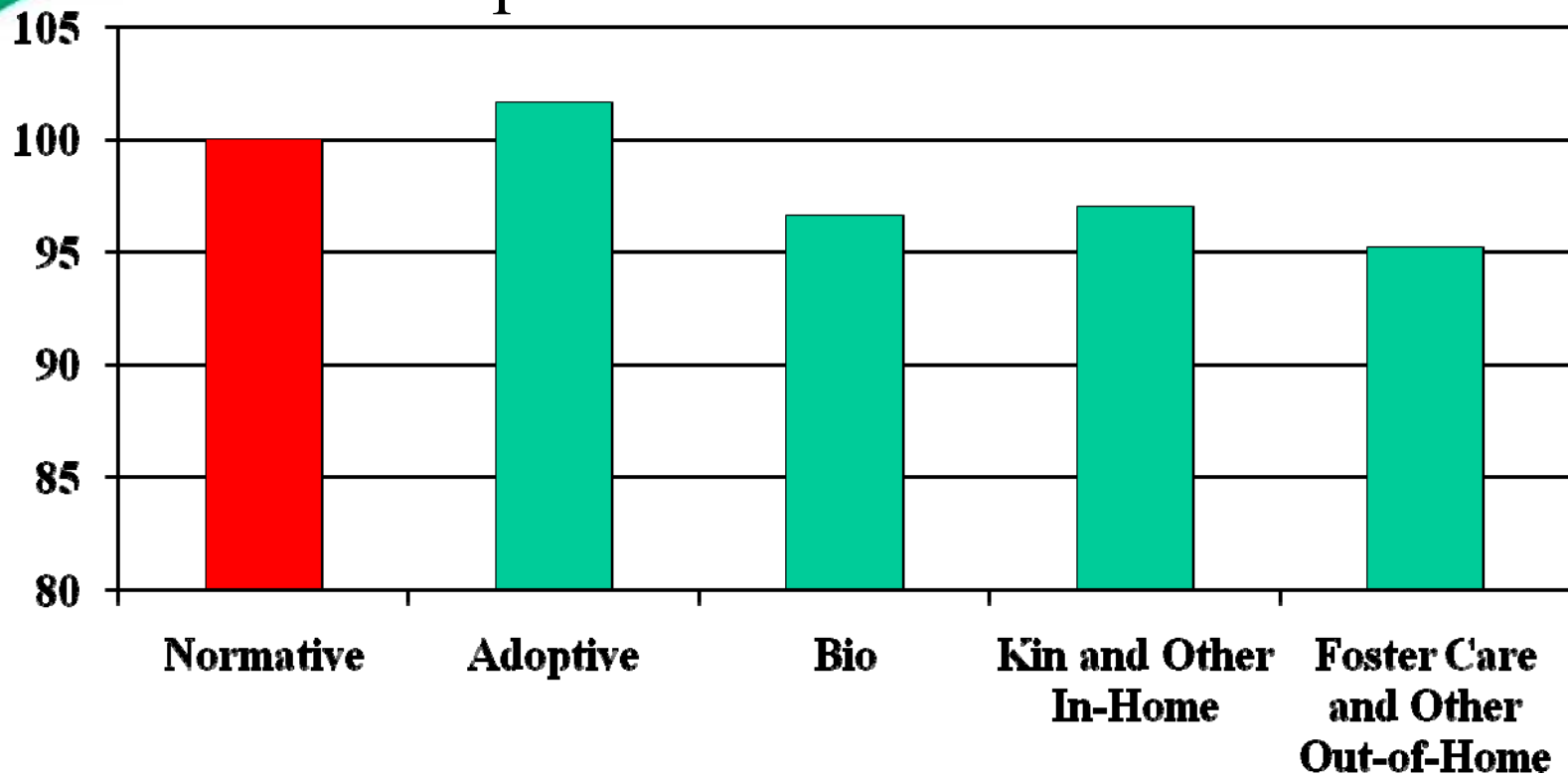


Adopted Children Scored Higher on Several Cognitive and Learning Measures

Cognitive and Learning Skill	Result
Letter-Word Identification	Adopted > Bio, Kin, Foster Care
Passage Comprehension	
Applied Problem Solving	Adopted > Kin, Foster Care
Calculation	
Vocabulary	Adopted > Kin
Comprehensive Intellectual Functioning	
Language Development Total Score	Adopted > Foster

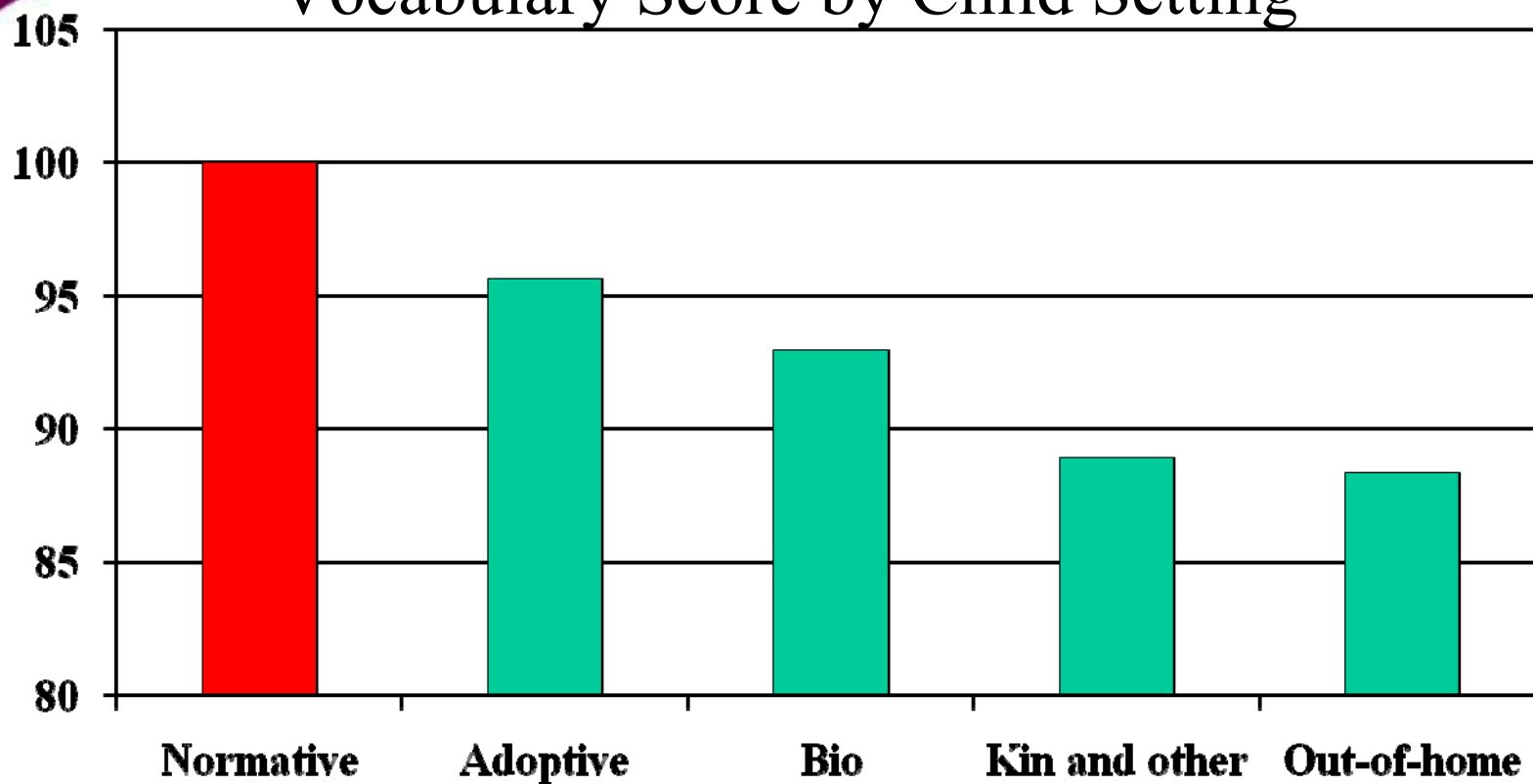
Comparison of 5 Year Means

Woodcock Johnson Passage Comprehension Scale



Comparison of 5 Year Means

Kaufman Brief Intelligence Test – Vocabulary Score by Child Setting



Preschool Language Scale Results Over Time

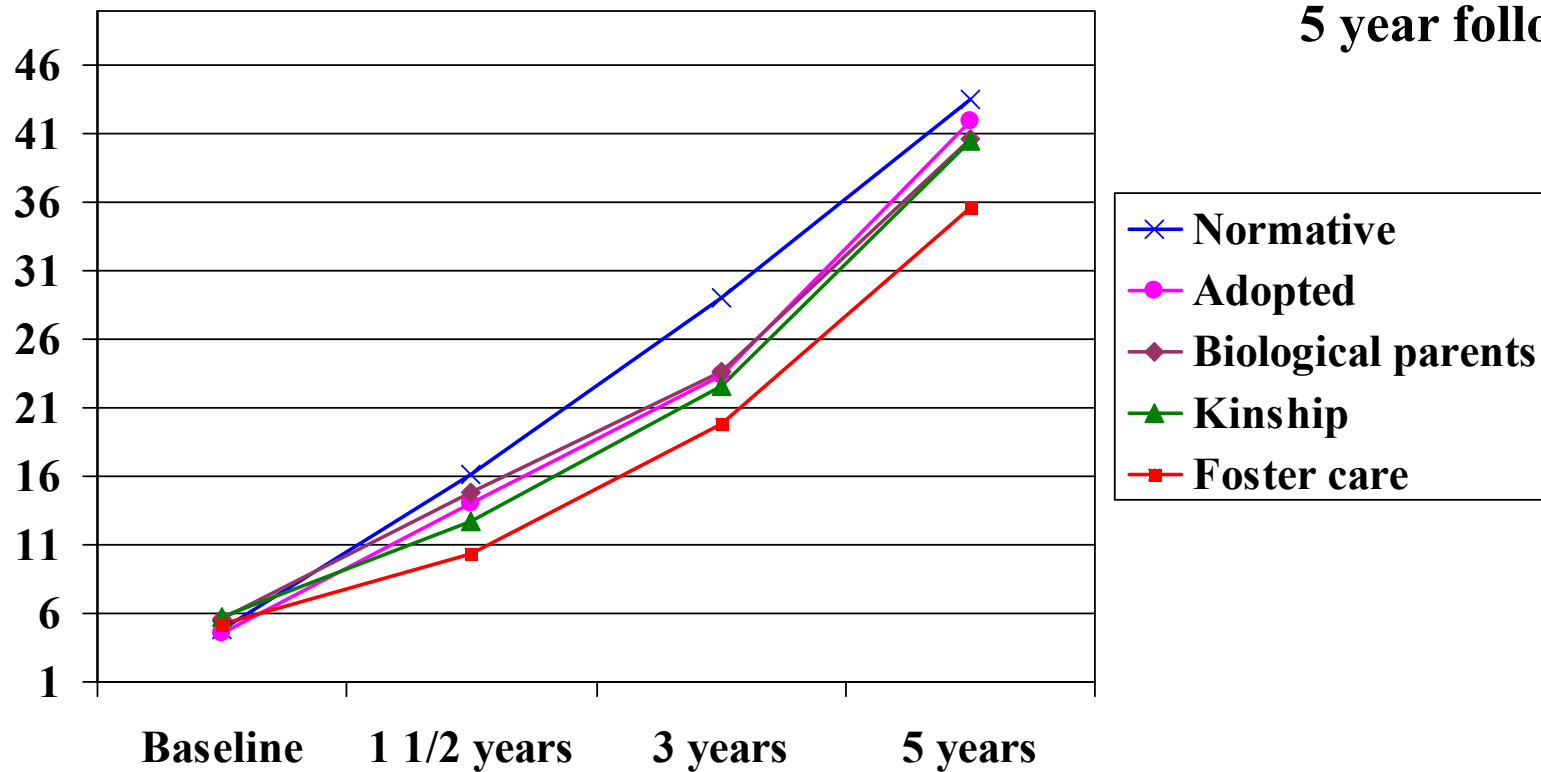


- Only NSCAW measure that is used across four waves for infant sample
- Adopted children tended to have significantly *lower* language scores at baseline than other groups but *higher rate of growth* than other groups
- “Catching up” or regression to the mean?



Mean Raw Score on the *Expressive Communication Score* Over Time

Setting at the
5 year follow-up





Growth Curve Analysis Results

Expressive Communication Scale

	Intercept (Baseline Mean)	Slope (Change Between Waves)
Biological parents	5.6 (0.4)	11.9 (0.4)
Adoptive parents	2.8 (0.4)	14.3 (0.3)
Kinship caregivers	3.7 (0.5)	12.7(0.6)
Foster caregivers & other out-of-home	4.1(0.8)	12.2 (0.7)

Note. Intercept: Adopt, Kinship < Bio. Slope: Adopt > Kin, Foster

Summary

- Over 30% of infants involved in child maltreatment investigations were out of home soon after the close of the investigation
- 15% of infants involved in child maltreatment investigations were adopted within five years; 36% of those who were out-of-home

Summary (cont.)

- 27.2% of maltreated infants who were later adopted lived in 3 or more settings
- 2/3 of adopted infants were in adoptive homes by age 1 but the median time to finalization was 17 months

Summary (cont.)

- At five-year follow-up, adopted children did not differ from other children in this population on mental health and behavior problems (except children in foster care)
- Children in permanent homes at five-year follow-up had same rate of emotional and behavioral problems as children in general
- At five-year follow-up, adopted children had higher scores on numerous cognitive and learning tests than children in kin care and foster care

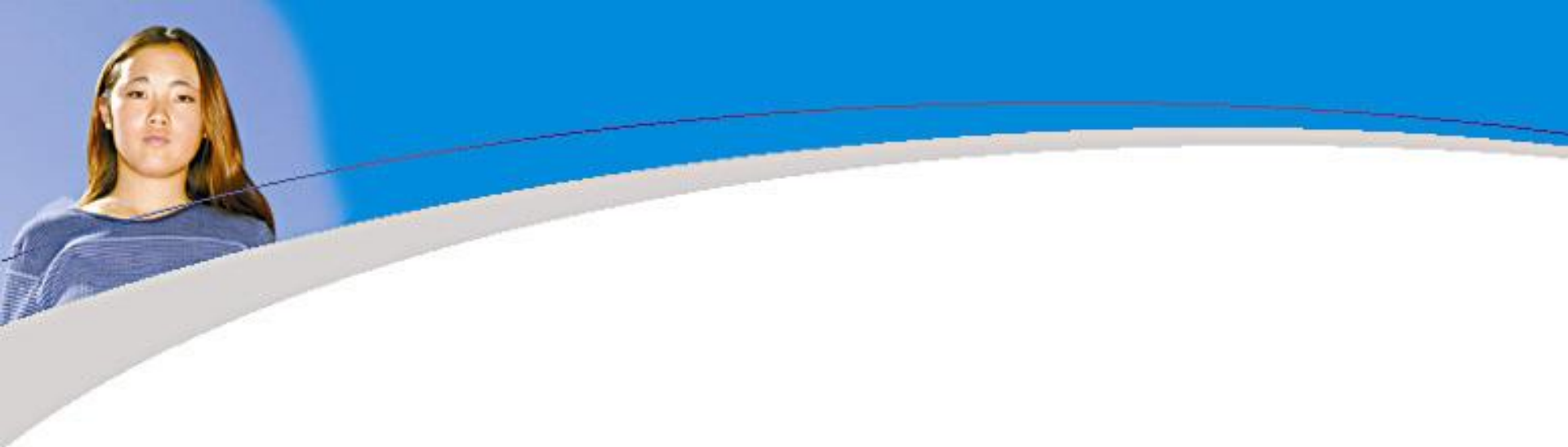
Summary (cont.)

- Children who were later adopted had lower language scores than other children at baseline, but experienced significantly greater growth and ended with equal or higher language scores



Conclusion

- Adoption is relatively frequent for infants in child maltreatment investigations
- Adoptive children and families face stresses along the way (multiple settings, time to finalization)
- Most adopted infants do well and show better cognitive and learning skills than children in kinship and foster care after five years
- Results could inform policy on foster care, kinship care and adoption



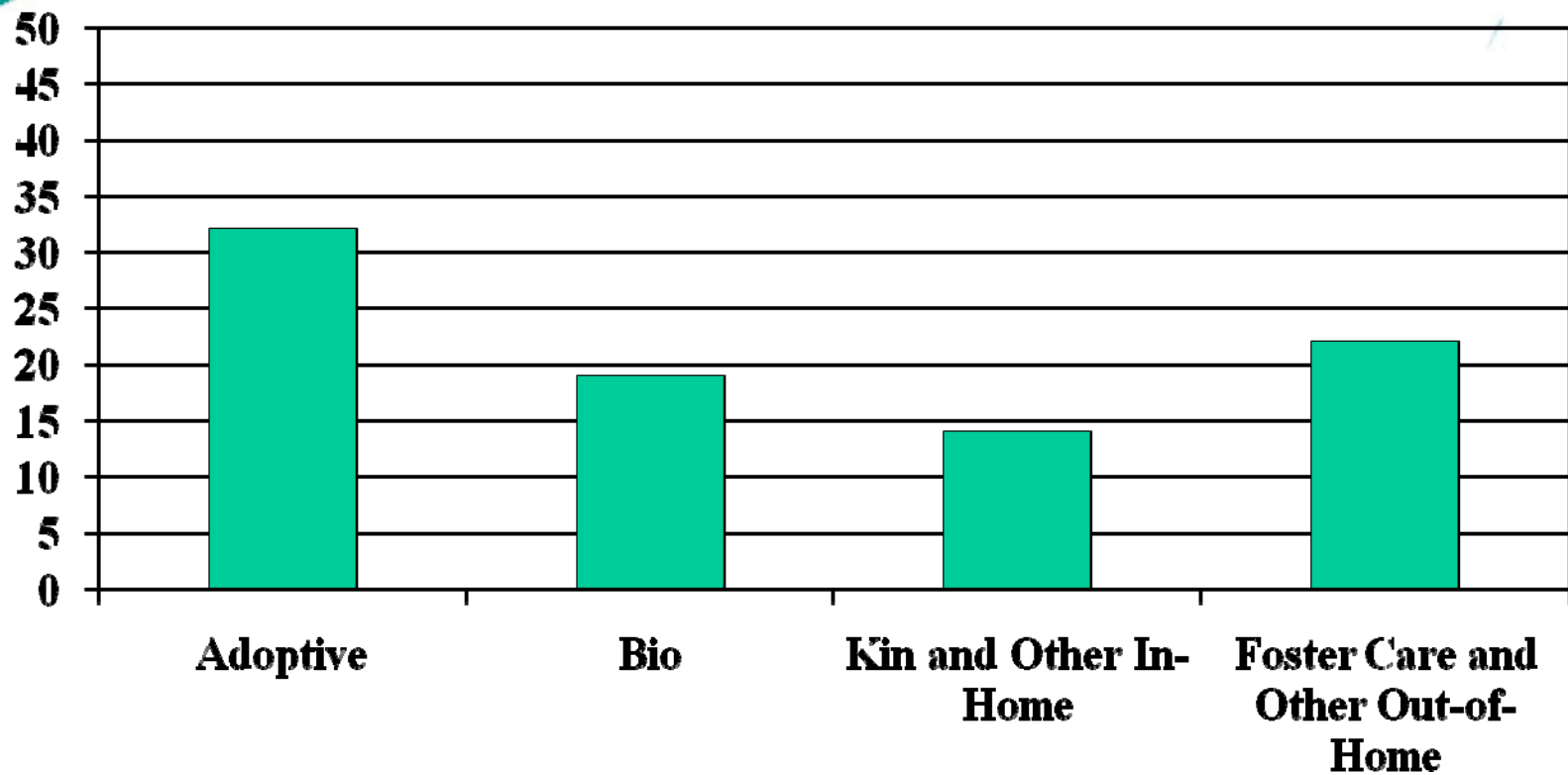
Appendix: Additional Results



Child Physical Health by Setting

- Caregivers in adoptive group and every other group rated over 90% of children as “good, very good or excellent health”
- Children in adoptive settings were significantly more likely to be identified by caregivers as having serious chronic health problems

Percentage of Children with a Serious Chronic Health Condition¹ by Setting



¹ Measured at 5 year follow-up



Possible Explanations

- Children with chronic health care needs may receive priority for adoptive placements
- Adoptive parents may identify health conditions more readily
- Differences in health care may lead to increased probability of identifying chronic conditions