

Children adopted from Eastern Europe

Evolution of socio-emotional and behavioral symptoms

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PROBLEMATIC

Children of international adoption show more problematic behaviors than non-adopted children.

Meta-analysis, Juffer and IJzendoorn (2005):

- Adopted children have more socio-emotional problems than non-adopted children
- However, the effect is small and seems to show good adaptation of these children
- Children living with their adoptive family for over 12 years were observed to have fewer behaviour problems than children living with their adoptive family for less than 12 years
- These results may correspond to the concept of catch-up, widely reported in the literature to highlight the decline in physical and cognitive problems among adopted children

This catch-up may be similarly effective for socio-emotional problems. However, very few longitudinal studies have assessed the evolution of socio-emotional problems among adopted children.

OBJECTIVES

Our research aims at studying the behavioral symptoms of deprivation at the point of adoption as well as to follow their evolution in the post-adoptive period.

METHOD

Participants:

- 206 families of children adopted from Eastern Europe who participated in a large survey in 2003. Of these, 147 (71,3%) responded to the 2006 follow up questionnaire.
- Children's native countries: Russia (66), Belarus (35), Romania (35), other EE countries (11)
- Gender: 88 (60%) boys and 59 (40%) girls
- Mean age at adoption was 2.5 years (SD = 1.92)

Procedure:

- In 2006, questionnaires were sent to the parents asking them to evaluate retrospectively three time points: (T1) at the time of adoption (retrospective), (T2) at one year after adoption (retrospective), and (T4) at the study time point. Moreover, we used the 2003 survey responses as T3. Mean age at T1 was 2,5years, at T2 3,5years, at T3, 5years and at T4, 8years.

METHOD

Mesures:

- L'adaptation sociale des enfants nés à l'étranger et adoptés par des familles du Québec:

This a 33-items 5-points-scale questionnaire of behavioral signs warning adjustment disorders. Factor analysis revealed 6 factors: depression, autistic features, neuromotor behavior disorders, attachment problems, attention seekings, and institutional behaviors. The questionnaire was completed by the parents at times 1, 2 (retrospective) and 4.

- Child Behavior Checklist:

The French version of the CBCL was used; the pre-school version for children less than 6 years old and childhood / adolescence version for those aged 6 years and older. The 100 items (113 for version childhood / adolescence) assess behavior problems on a Likert scale (0-1-2). This questionnaire is completed by the parents at time 3.

RESULTS

Trajectory analysis

Categories	Number of groups	BIC	AIC	Form	Number (%) gr.1/p	Number (%) gr.2/p	Number (%) gr.3/p
Depression	3	-774.73	-765.76	Constant	106 (71.3)/.00*	30 (21.2)/.00*	11 (7.5)/.00*
Autistic features	3	-605.44	-596.47	Constant	81 (55.5)/.00*	52 (34.6)/.00*	14 (9.9)/.00*
Neuromotor behaviors	3	-718.03	-709.06	Constant	89 (59.6)/.00*	46 (32)/.00*	12 (8.4)/.00*
Attachment problem	3	-835.00	-826.03	Constant	43 (33.6)/.00*	95 (58.3)/.12	9 (8.1)/.00*
Attention seeking	3	-776.38	-767.41	Constant	73 (49.2)/.00*	54 (37.4)/.00*	20 (13.4)/.00*
Behaviors in institution	3	-793.81	-784.84	Constant	92 (62.5)/.00*	51 (34.3)/.00*	4 (3.2)/.00*

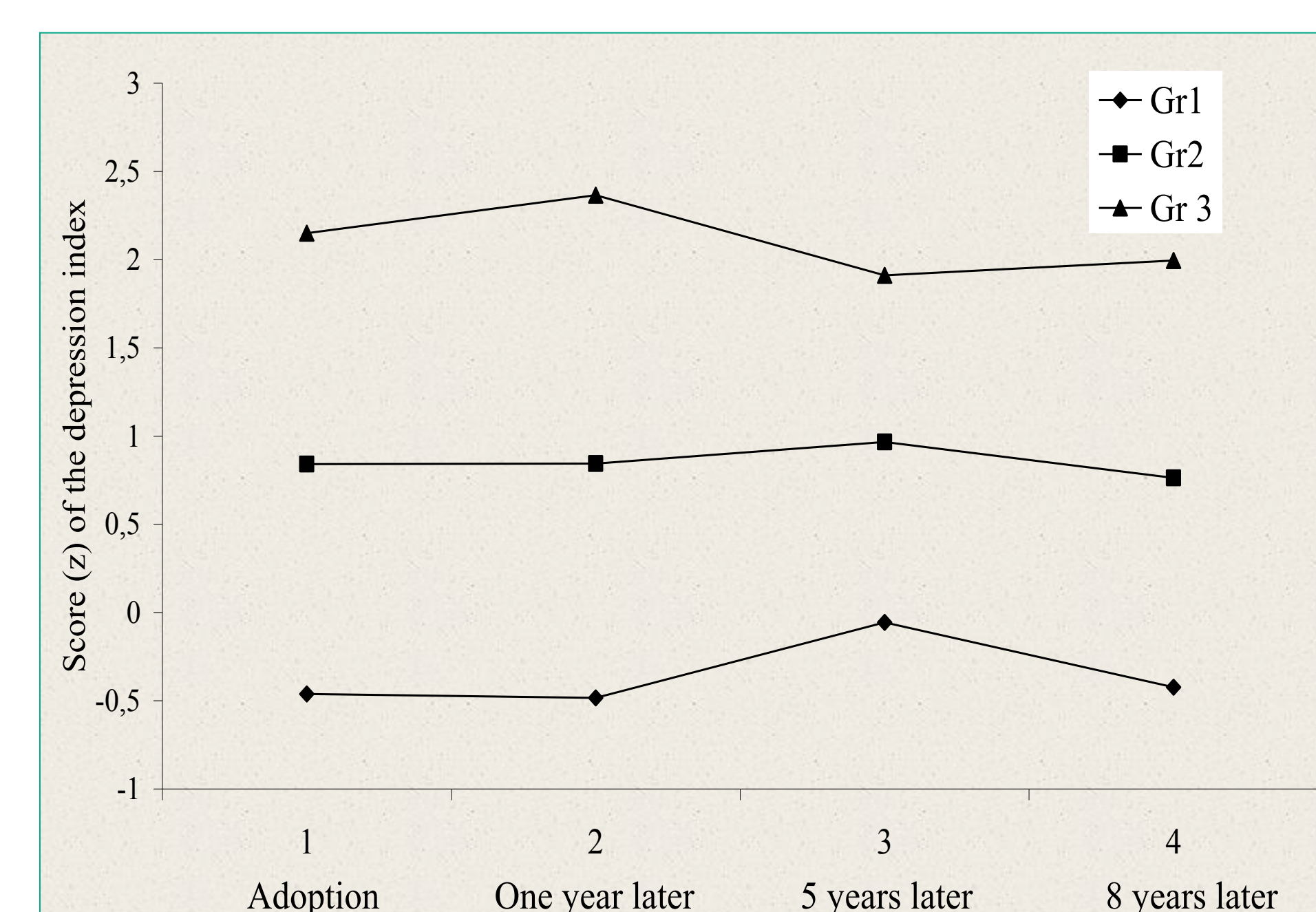


Figure 1. Trajectories of the depression index by time

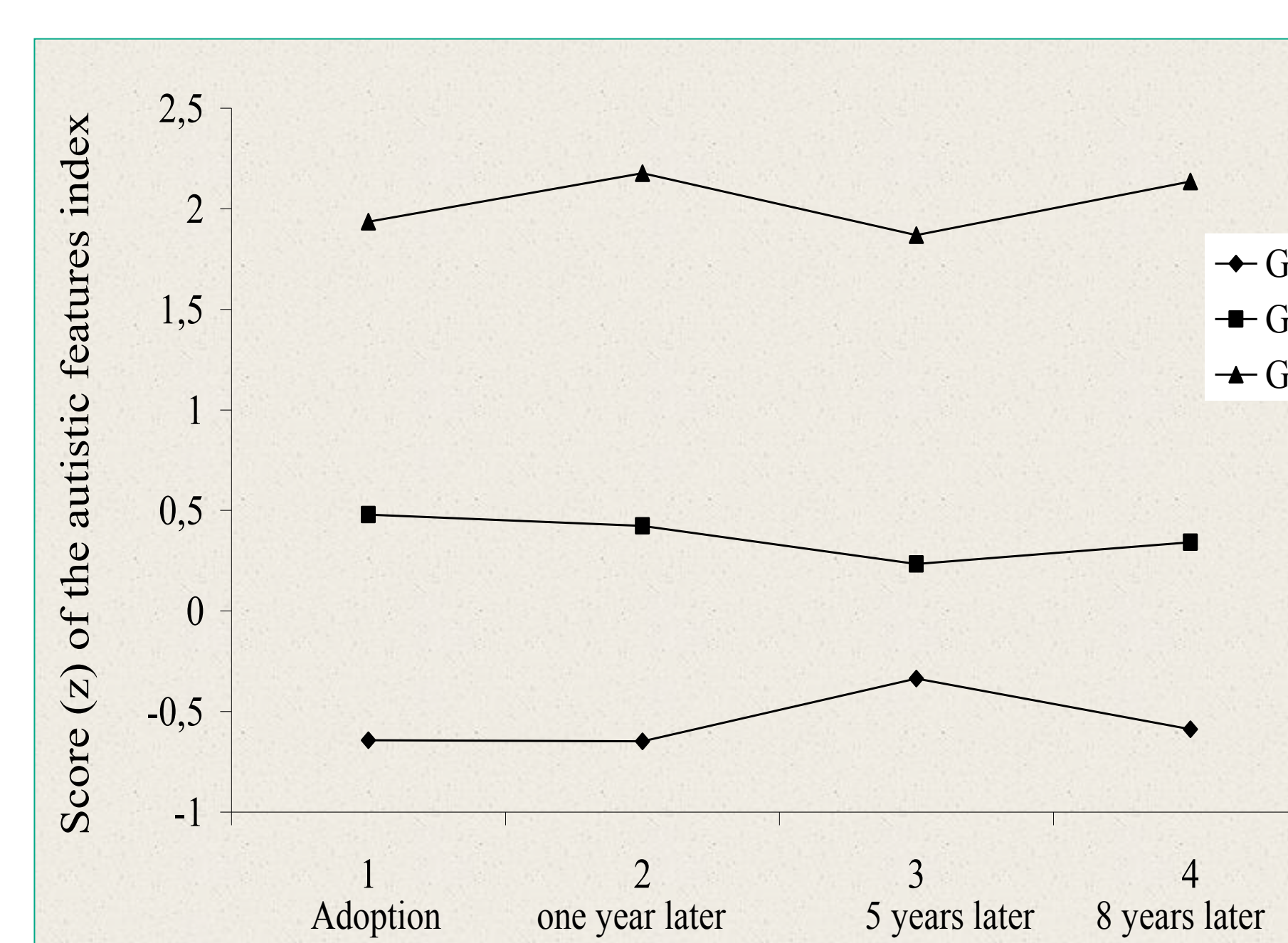


Figure 2. Trajectories of autistic features index by time

RESULTS

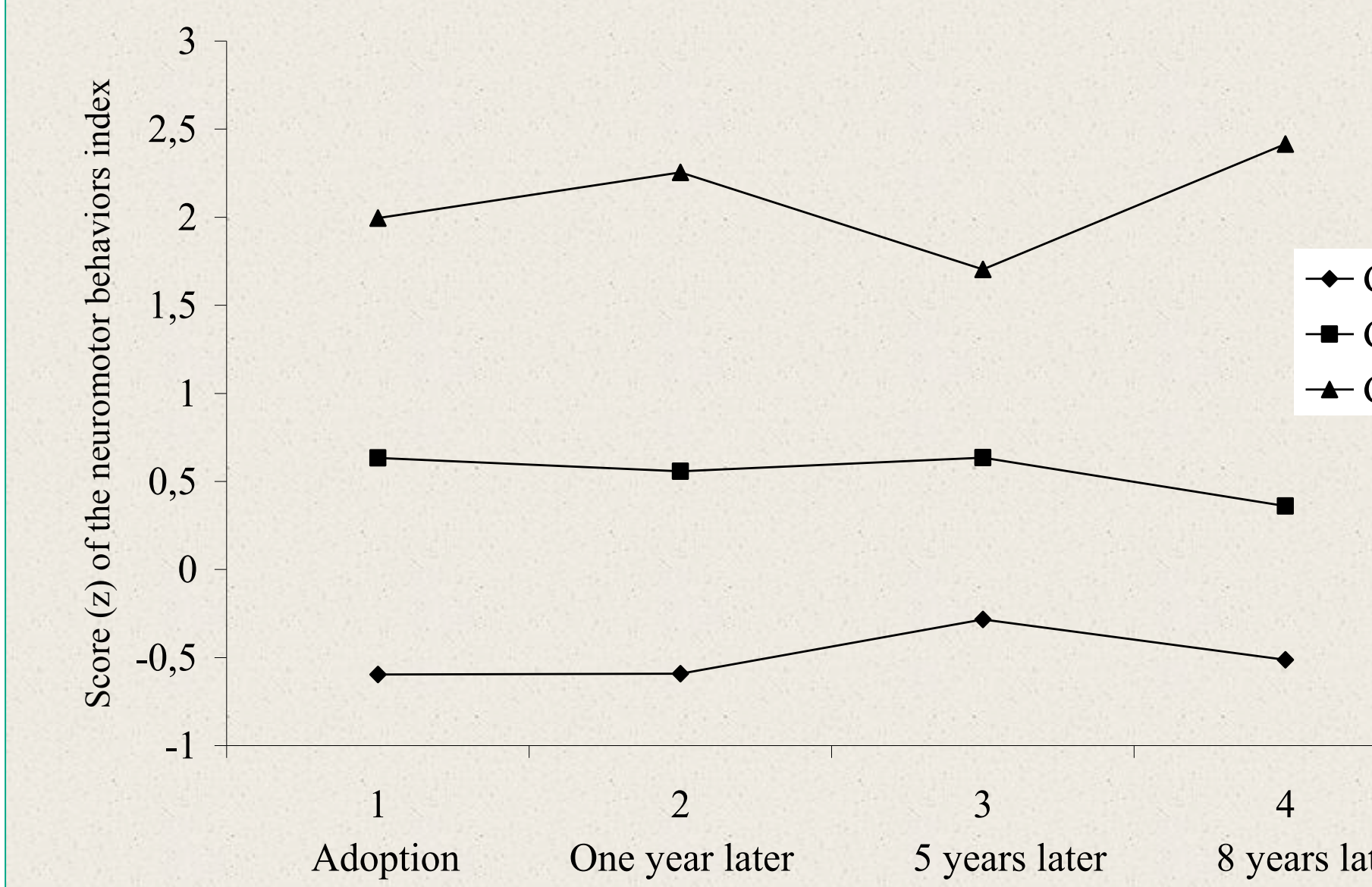


Figure 3. Trajectories of the neuromotor behaviors index by time

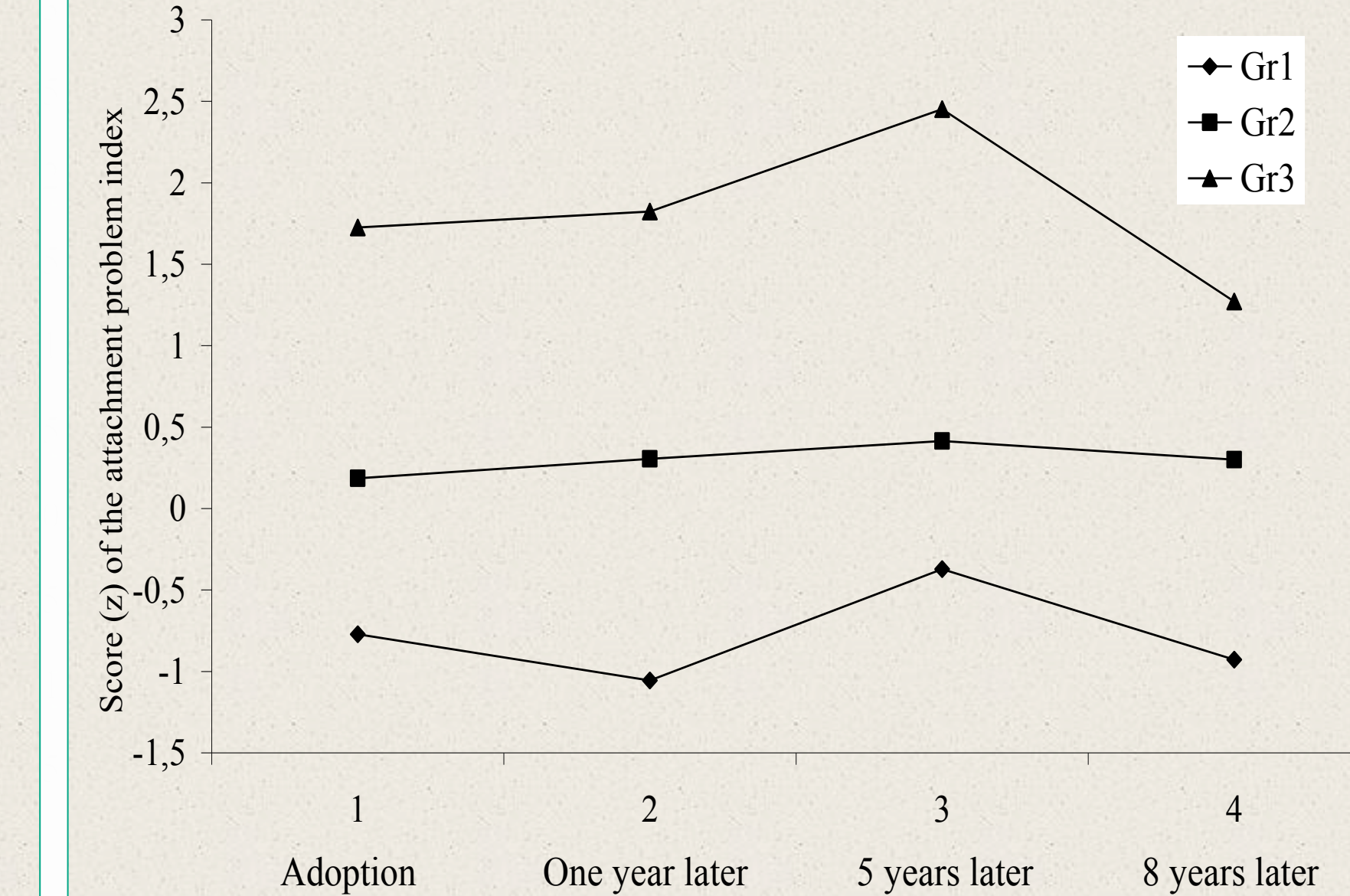


Figure 4. Trajectories of the attachment problem index by time

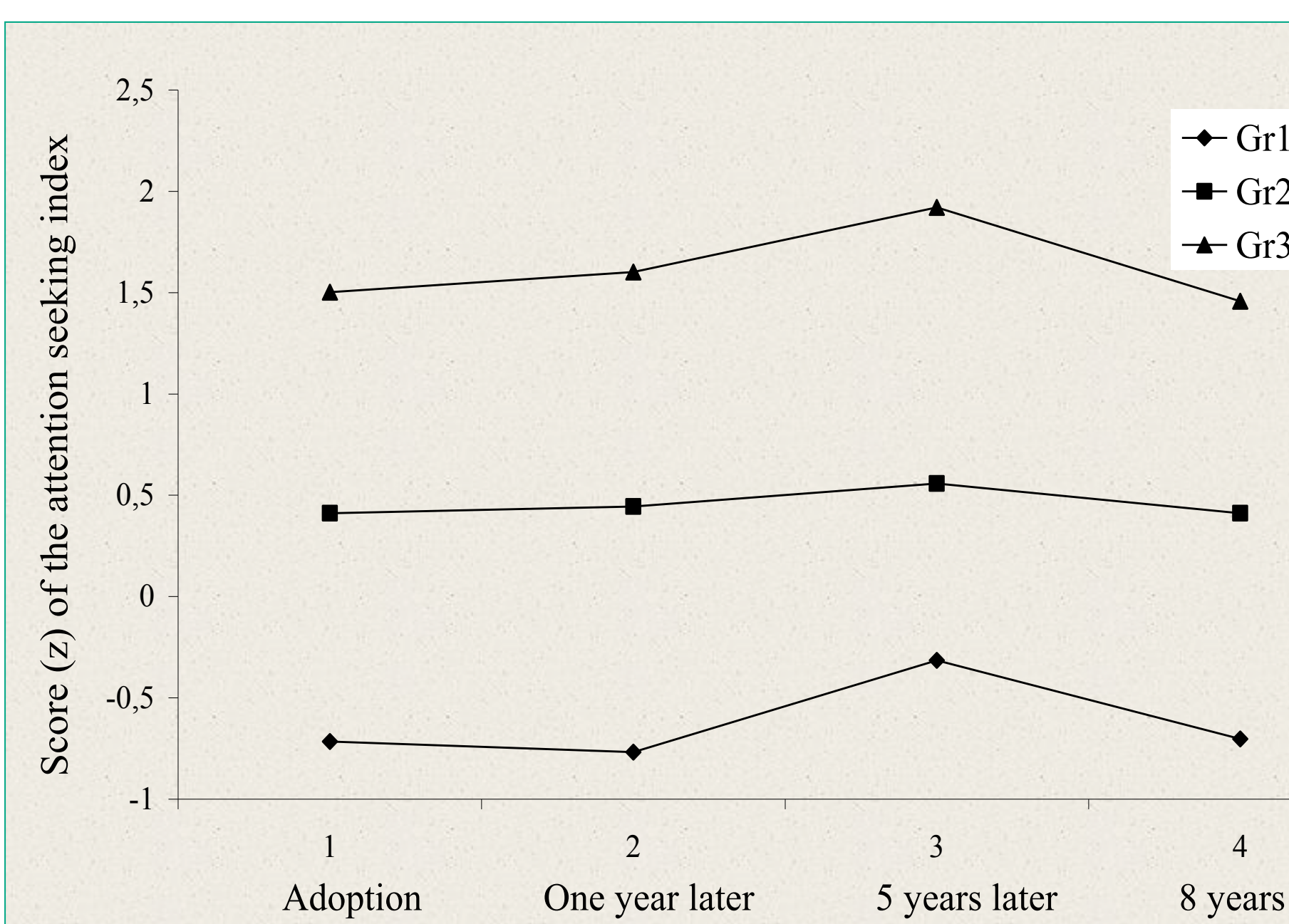


Figure 2. Trajectories of attention seeking index by time

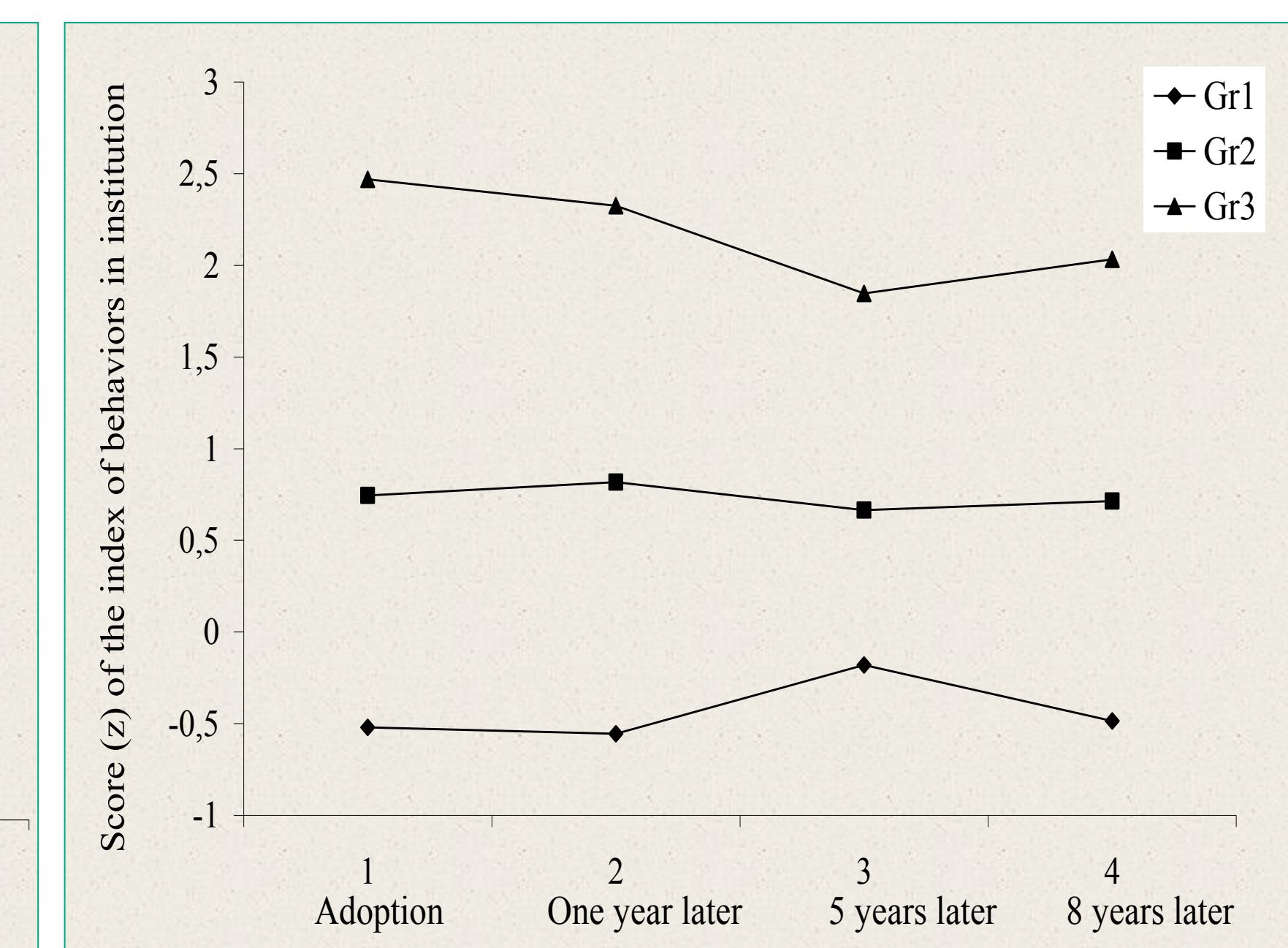


Figure 1. Trajectories of the index of behaviors in institution by time

DISCUSSION

• Socio-emotional status of children adopted from Eastern Europe remains stable over time. A small proportion maintains marginal behaviors.

• The main hypothesis is not confirmed: adoptive children (as a group) do not recover 8 years post adoption. They maintain orphanage like behaviors.

• The stability of socio-emotional problems may be partially explained by early experiences (of varied adversity) which could entail permanent effects.

• This study highlights that resources should primarily be offered to children with higher level of socio-emotional difficulties at arrival.

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