

romanian orphan studies

Rutter's research

- Rutter et al (2001) studied 169 Romanian orphans adopted in Britain. Aim: to see what extent good care could make up for poor institution experiences.
- Method: physical, cognitive, emotional assessments taken at 4, 6, 11, 15 years. Control group of 52 British children adopted around the same time.
- Findings: when Romanian orphans first arrived in Britain, 1/2 showed delayed intellectual development + many were severely malnourished. Differential rates of recovery related with age (lower age = more recovery / higher age = less recovery).
- Mean IQ of those adopted before 6 months = 102. Between 6 months - 2 years = 86. Above 2 years = 77. These differences were still present when assessed at 16.
- Conclusion: Attachment differences were seen depending on before/after 6 months of adoption. After 6 months, they showed disinhibited attachment e.g. clinginess + lack of social boundaries. Those adopted before 6 months rarely showed DA.

effects of institutionalisation

- One effect of institutionalisation is disinhibited attachment (described in Zeanah's conclusion).
- Rutter has explained disinhibited attachment as an adaptation to living with many carers during the sensitive period for att. In poor quality institutions e.g. Romania, a child may have 50 carers, but doesn't spend enough time with anyone of them to form a secure att.
- In Rutter's study, most kids showed signs of intellectual disability, however, most was adopted before they were 6 months caught up with the control group by age 4. Damage to intellectual dev. as a result of institutionalisation can be recovered if the baby's younger than 6 months.

evaluation

- **Strength:** real world application. Studying Romanian orphans has increased our understanding of institutionalisation effects and has led to improvements in the way institutions care for children. Research has shown that care homes reduce the number of carers, and have 'key workers' for certain kids. This means children have a chance at dev. normal att. + reduced the chance of developing DA. This means the practical applications are useful in helping soc.
- **Strength:** there were many orphan studies before, but they included children who had experienced multiple traumas e.g. neglect, abuse, ~~bee~~ bereavement, before they were institutionalised. The many confounding variables made them difficult to study + analyse, however Romanian orphan studies, there weren't any confounding variables, meaning the findings have high internal validity.
- **Limitation:** the studies did show lasting effects of orphans' dev. into their teens, however, it is unsure whether these effects were ST or LT. Maybe children who had severe attachment difficulties may still 'catch up' as adults. Equally, children who were adopted early may have no issues now, but may experience problems as adults. This means LT effects aren't clear, which may also suggest that the research may be deterministic, as it believes the ST effects will turn LT, and cannot be changed.

Zeanah's research

- Zeanah et al (2005) studied att. in 95 kids aged 21-31 months, who had spent majority of their lives in institutional care (90% average).
- Control group of 50 kids who had never lived in an institution. Att. type was measured using the SS + carers were asked about any unusual behaviour e.g. clinginess / attention seeking behaviour.
- Findings: From the control group, 74% were securely attached + less than 20% were disorganised attachment. 19% of the experimental group were securely attached + 65% had disorganised att. 44% had disinhibited att.
- Conclusion: disinhibited attachment is a typical effect of spending time in an institution. Children with DA are equally friendly / socially affectionate to peers and strangers (unusual behav. as they don't display stranger anxiety).