

## ATTACHMENT:

## GOLDFARB'S LONGITUDINAL STUDY

**Aim:** To investigate the effects of early and late adoption on children

**Procedure:**

- ❑ This was a longitudinal study of 30 children.
- ❑ There were two groups of 15 orphans who were matched for sex, age and social class of parents.
- ❑ Almost all of the early adoption group had been fostered out from an orphanage by the time they were 9 months old and had since grown up in a normal family environment.
- ❑ The late adoption group of children had all spent at least the first three years in the same orphanage as the early adoption group before being fostered.
- ❑ Goldfarb visited each of the thirty children on four occasions: when the children were 3, 6, 8 and then 12 years old. On each occasion he measured their intelligence, language skills and level of social maturity. He also investigated their ability to form relationships.

**Findings:**

- ❑ In each case the children in the early adoption group performed better than those from the late-adopted group.

**Conclusions:**

- ❑ Those children who had been looked after by a mother in a "normal" family environment from a very young age developed more normal language, cognitive, emotional and social skills because they were able to form an attachment bond within the critical period of 1-3 years.

**Points for discussion:**

- ❑ The study does not take account of other possible explanations for why the early-adopted group were more socially, emotionally and intellectually mature. Goldfarb assumed that the early adopted group would have made effective attachments and that the late adopted group would not. Yet we know that much older children than 3 year olds can make successful attachments.
- ❑ Second, the early adopted children may have been brighter to begin with, which could explain why they were chosen by their adoptive parents.
- ❑ The orphanage from where the children came was understaffed where the children were isolated in cubicles for the first 9 months to stop the spread of infections. Children had little human contact at all in the orphanage with very little opportunity to play as the nurses had very little time to spend with the children.
- ❑ The conditions in the orphanage rather than mere separation from their mother might very well have affected the late adoption group's development. In other words, privation rather than deprivation might be the influential variable.