

# Research into the effects of privation essay sample



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One case examining the effects of extreme privation is that carried out by Jamila Koluchova in Czechoslovakia. In 1960 identical twins were born but their mother died soon afterwards and they spent the next 11 months in an institution, when they were 11/2 their father remarried and they returned home. However their step mother did not like them and they were forced to live in a small closet without light or adequate food. They were rarely visited and were not allowed to socialise with the rest of the family. When they were 6 the authorities became aware of their existence.

The boys were found to be very small for their age and were suffering from vitamin deficiency; they were unable to talk and were terrified of things around them. The twins were removed from their family and placed in a children's home with children much younger than themselves. This provided a non-threatening environment in which they were well cared for. The boys started to learn to speak, gained weight and became interested in things around them. After some time in the institution they were fostered by 2 sisters who gave them quality care, love and stimulation.

Tests showed that at age 8 their IQ was below normal, but by 14 they showed normal IQ and by 20 they were above average intelligence, had completed apprenticeships and had established good relationships with adults and peers. This study suggests that the effect of severe privation can be overcome by careful nurturing. The twins were over 2 years of age when they began to receive quality care; therefore it seems there is no critical period to reverse the effects of privation. However it is important to take into account that the boys are twins so they weren't completely alone, so were able to form attachments with each other.

Furthermore the care the boys received from the sisters was above average this could have led to the rise in IQ. However the sisters also fostered another child, who although made great progress, did not completely recover from her privation and may have suffered brain damage from her early ill treatment. whereas the twins did seem to completely catch up with development which questions whether the effects of privation really can be overcome. Another study concerning the effects of privation is Curtiss (1977) who examined the case of ' Genie' a girl who was locked in a room before she was 2 years old.

Genie was chained to a potty during the day and tied up in a sleeping bag at night. No one spoke to her, her father would bring her food but did not speak only growl at her.. Genie was found when she was 13 years old, she was severely undernourished, weighing just 59 lbs, she was only 4ft 6 inches tall and made few sounds. She was not toilet trained and could not walk normally but only shuffle and sway. Genie seemed to have normal ability to perceive and normal spatial awareness, which suggests these abilities are genetic.

After being given quality care she did learn to control her bowels and walk more or less normally. However she did not learn normal language and although some of her social behaviour became appropriate it was not ' normal'. Genie needed special care and did not develop sufficiently to manage on her own, she received care attention and stimulation from the psychologists studying her who often took her into their own home, although even with this care Genie did not develop normally, therefore this opposes the view that early privation can be overcome by good care.

However Genie was 13 when she started to receive good quality care, whereas the Czech twins were 6, this difference in age could explain why Genie suffered long term effects and the Czech twins only short term. This evidence could be used to suggest an influence of the critical period to learn skills and abilities. However the twins that Koluchova studied were in an institutions for the first year of their lives so their abilities had been observed and were considered normal, whereas Genie had not been tested early in life so it is questionable to whether she had problems to begin with.

Both of these studies show what a dramatic effect extreme neglect can have on a child, such as speech difficulties if language wasn't learnt during the critical period, brain defects due to the lack of early stimulation leading to low IQ. Physical defects such as dwarfism because of malnutrition, and social problems with forming relationships and attachments. It provides some evidence that there is a critical period for learning things such as language but maybe less so for walking. However each case of privation is unique therefore it is difficult to generalise and compare the effects of privation.