An investigation of the attachment formation and organization of infants living in institutions

The present research attempts to contribute to the understanding of attachment development in institutionalized infants in Chile and the world. It will explore the development and formation of attachment behavior on infants living in three Chilean institutions. These institutions will present conditions of care that have been observed to promote a healthier development of attachment in institutionalized infants (e.g. small groups of care, low rotation on caregivers). The study will examine if children living in these Chilean institutions present significantly different ratios of attachment development and classifications than non-institutionalized Chilean and international infants. A pilot study was conducted in 2008 with the help from the Janey Rothenberg Summer Research Grant. Attachment was assessed using the Ainsworth’s Strange Situation procedure and the Attachment Formation Rating scale was applied. As hypothesized, Chilean institutional infants showed less security and more disorganization than the non-institutionalized Chilean infants of a middle SES community sample. Also concordant to our hypotheses, these Chilean infants living in an institution that showed high quality of care presented more security and less disorganization than what has been reported from other international institutions. A significantly higher percentage of the institutionalized Chilean infants studied (65%) fit into one of the standard attachment classifications (ABCD), compared to a sample of institutionalized Romanian infants (2%).