

**‘Attachment and Abandonment:
A study of factors contributing to or hindering the
development of trust and functional family behaviour’**

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Abstract

This research examines the lives of individual children and adults of diverse ages and ethnicities, who suffer common and uncommon abandonment. The study employs a naturalistic “inquiry from the inside” approach and involves intensive participant observation on the part of the researcher. This allows a form of research to emerge that is longitudinal and dialogical. It includes the collection and analysis of the life histories of participants and allows for comparisons and shared experiences.

The depth of involvement of the researcher in the participants’ lives, together with analysis of their experiences, combine to form a unique methodological model, generating a deeper and more nuanced understanding than commonly available of how the abandoned person views their world, while moving toward relational connection. Analysis of the life histories, field notes, observations and interviews, in concert with ethnographic field data, yield a progressive pattern of trust and development of relationship.

In this process, the language, stages and steps of a non-clinical model of intervention emerges within the life experiences of the individual participants. The resulting paradigm applies most directly to individuals challenged by abandonment, and to their family structure, with the potential application for social agencies (governmental and non-governmental) and institutional models of care.

The research offers two contributions to the field of study addressing the lived experience of formerly abandoned children and their families including: (1) extended understanding of the phenomenon of attachment through a holistic and dynamic approach to the attachment process, involving life history and ethnographic examination and (2) a coherent model of intervention revealing the development from abandonment to relational connection. This includes responses of the participant to availability and empathy, and reveals a progression from survival through vulnerability and trust, to authenticity and relational connection.