

MEASURING ATTACHMENT – AINSWORTH'S STRANGE SITUATION (1971/1978) – AO1

- Technique devised to systematically test the nature of attachment
- Aim was to see how infants aged 9-18 months behave under conditions of mild stress and novelty
- Research space was a novel environment a 9x9 foot space often marked into 16 squares to help with recording
- Based on 3 main behaviours:
 - **Separation Anxiety** – The extent to which a child shows distress when left from their caregiver – Indicates that the baby has formed an attachment to the person
 - **Stranger Anxiety** – The extent to which a child shows anxiety in the presence of strangers – Distress at strangers shows that the infants can recognise familiar people and feel anxious about those who are unfamiliar
 - **Reunion Behaviour** – What happens when the child and caregiver are reunited after separation – E.g. Does the child go immediately to the caregiver for comfort or do they ignore the caregiver

Procedure:

1. Consists of 8 episodes designed to highlight certain behaviours
2. Key feature of episodes is that the caregiver and stranger alternatively stay or leave the infant enabling observation of the infant's response to:
 - Separation from caregiver
 - Reunion with caregiver
 - Response to a stranger
 - The novel environment
3. Data collected by a group of observers using a video recorder or one-way mirror
4. Researchers recall what infant is doing every 15 seconds using behavioural categories:
 - i. Proximity and contact seeking behaviour
 - ii. Contact maintaining behaviour
 - iii. Proximity and interaction-avoiding behaviours
 - iv. Contact and interaction-resisting behaviours
 - v. Search behaviours
5. Each item coded for intensity on a scale of 1-7

Episode (3 min duration)	Behaviour Assessed
1. Parent/Infant play	
2. Parent sit/Infant play	Parent is a secure base
3. Stranger enters and talks to parent	Stranger Anxiety
4. Parent leaves/Infant plays and stranger offers comfort if needed	Separation Anxiety
5. Parent returns and greets infant offering comfort if needed and stranger leaves	Reunion Behaviour
6. Parent/Infant alone	Separation Anxiety
7. Stranger enters and offers comfort if needed	Stranger Anxiety
8. Parent returns and offers comfort if needed	Reunion Behaviour

Findings:

- Ainsworth observed 106 middle class infants in the strange situation and came up with 3 main attachment types
- Exploratory behaviours declined in all infants from episode 2 onwards and crying increased

Classification of Behaviour			
Type of Behaviour	Secure	Insecure Avoidant	Insecure Ambivalent (Resistant)
Willingness to Explore	High	High	Low
Stranger Anxiety	Moderate	Low	High
Separation Anxiety	Some	Indifferent	Very Distressed
Reunion Behaviour	Enthusiastic	Avoids Contact	Seeks Rejection
Caregiver's Behaviour	<u>Sensitive – 66%</u>	<u>May ignore infant</u>	<u>Ambivalent – 12%</u>

REVISION TIP:

Learning this entire table is essential for exam questions

Secure Attachment

- Harmonious and cooperative interactions with caregiver
- Unlikely to cry when the caregiver leaves the room and show moderate stranger anxiety
- Seeks bodily contact with caregiver when anxious
- Uses caregiver as a secure base for exploration and function independently
- 66% of infants

Insecure Avoidant

- Children who tend to avoid social interaction and intimacy with others
- Children show little response to separation and don't seek the proximity of their caregiver upon reunion
- Happy to explore with or without the presence of their caregiver
- Characterised by high levels of independence
- 22% of infants

Insecure Resistant

- Seeks and resists intimacy and social interaction
- Distressed around strangers and when separated from caregiver
- Seeks and rejects reunion
- 12% of infants

EVALUATION OF AINSWORTH'S STRANGE SITUATION – AO3**Other Types of Attachment**

- Main (Bowlby (1986) analysed over 200 strange situation videotapes and proposed a fourth type of attachment – secure-disorganised type D
 - Secure-disorganised is characterised by a lack of consistent patterns of social behaviour – Not really a consistent type of attachment
 - They show very strong attachment behaviour suddenly followed by avoidance or looking away from their caregiver. Seen in 15% of cases
- Van IJzendoorn Et. Al. (1999) further supported this with a meta-analysis of nearly 80 studies in the US and found:
 - 62% secure
 - 15% insecure avoidant
 - 9% insecure resistant
 - 15% insecure-disorganised

High Reliability

- Research has high inter-observer reliability
- Ainsworth Et. Al. (1978) – Found almost perfect agreement when rating exploratory behaviour - .94 concordance rates
- Observations can be accepted as being reliable
- Eight different episodes ensure a variety of measures for assessing the attachment relationship. Important as a single measure can give a false impression

Real-World Application

- Due to Ainsworth's findings in situations where disordered patterns of attachment develop between infant and caregiver intervention strategies can be developed
- Circle of Security Project teaches caregivers to better understand their infants' signs of distress and increase their understanding of what it feels like to be anxious
- Project decreased number of caregivers classified as disordered from 28% to 15% - Supports research by Ainsworth as this has been used to improve children's life

Low Ecological Validity

- Unrealistic as observation doesn't reflect everyday situation
- The name 'Strange Situation' suggests an unfamiliar environment – Infants attachment classification may reflect the strange situation rather than the actual attachment in a real environment
- Created in the USA – Original research based on American infants and therefore findings may be limited to USA or western world

Internal Validity

- Internal validity is concerned with is the research actually measuring what it intends to measure – Strange situation aims to measure the attachment type of a child
- Main and Weston (1981) – Children behaved differently depending on which parent they were with so classification of attachment type may be incorrect
- According to Bowlby infant would respond differently to someone who isn't the primary caregiver – Supports high internal validity in strange situation

Research Method

- Widely used and has generated a massive amount of research – Suggesting other psychologists think the method is valid and reliable
- Research has been described as the most powerful and useful procedure for the study of infant development
- Easily replicated under the same conditions as all are responding to the same novel situation – Useful to generate a massive number of results

CULTURAL VARIATIONS IN ATTACHMENT – AO1

Cultural Variations – Ways that different groups of people vary in terms of their social practices and the effect these practices have on the development of behaviour

- Culture refers to all rules, customs, morals and ways of interacting that bind together members of a society
- Individualism – Culture where personal interest and independence is valued
- E.g. China and USA
- Collectivist Culture – Culture values group needs and consensus
- E.g. Japan and Israel

Cultural Variations – van Ijzendoorn and Kroonenberg (1988)

Aim: To look at differences in attachment type between and within cultures

Procedure:

1. Conducted a meta-analysis of findings from 32 studies on attachment behaviour
2. Studies examined 2000 strange situation classifications in 8 different countries – USA, Japan, Sweden, GB, Netherlands, China, Israel and West Germany
3. Van Ijzendoorn and Kroonenberg were interested to see whether there would be evidence that inter-cultural differences between nations and intra-cultural differences within nations did exist