

Individual Differences in Attachment: Ainsworth & Bell (1970)



This activity will help you to:

- Understand and recall how attachment may vary between individuals
- Describe the strange situation classification (SSC)
- Understand and recall APFCC for Ainsworth & Bell (1970)

Aims & Procedures

Given the amount of variation between children and the circumstances they grow up in, it does not seem likely that every child will develop attachments in exactly the same way. Mary Ainsworth devised an assessment technique called the strange situation classification (SSC) in order to investigate how attachments might vary between children. In the SSC, children are unobtrusively observed to see how they react when left alone in a strange environment, how they respond to strangers and how they react when their primary carer returns. Ainsworth & Bell (1971) assessed about 100 American infants and their primary carers in order to find out if there was a pattern in the way they responded.

Findings

Ainsworth & Bell found that, according to their reactions to the strange situation, the children could be classified into three broad categories. Briefly describe each one, and state the percentage of the sample it comprised.

Securely Attached

Anxious – Avoidant

Anxious – Resistant

Conclusions

Ainsworth & Bell suggested that behaviour in the SSC was determined by the behaviour of the primary carer. Briefly explain how this might be the case.