

Outline and evaluate the Strange Situation Method.

The Strange Situation method was proposed by [Mary Ainsworth](#) as a way of measuring how infants respond to separations and reunions with their caregiver. It allows psychologists to identify different attachment styles seen in young children such as secure, insecure-avoidant, or insecure-resistant. This is measured using a standardised procedure in a structured observation in order to assess and measure the quality of attachment. The observation is carried out in an artificial setting designed to appear as a normal waiting room/ playroom. It has 8 pre-determined stages. In stage 1 the mother and child enter the playroom, and in stage 2 the child is encouraged to explore the room. In stage 3 a stranger enters and attempts to interact with the child, when in stage 4 the mother leaves, leaving the stranger in the room with the child. In stage 5 the mother re-enters the room and the stranger quietly leaves. In stage 6 the mother leaves the child alone in the room, when in stage 7 the stranger returns and attempts to comfort the child, before the final stage 8 when the mother returns. [Ainsworth](#) was measuring a number of variables during the procedure; separation anxiety (child's anxious response when the mother leaves the room), stranger anxiety (child's anxious response when the stranger enters the room), proximity-seeking/ safe base behaviour (child actively seeks closeness to the mother or tries to find comfort in where she was seated after leaving the room), and reunion behaviour (child's ability to seek solace and calm when reunited with its mother). [Ainsworth & Bell \(1970\)](#) used this method to assess a group of American children and found 70% to be securely attached. One strength of the Strange Situation method is it is considered to be reliable allowing for easy replication because of its standardised procedure. All participants go through the same 8-stage process. This method has been replicated, and many studies have found similar results to Ainsworth. In addition, [Bick et al \(2012\)](#) demonstrated high inter-rater reliability of the Strange Situation, with observers agreeing on infant attachment classifications 94% of the time. This high level of agreement confirms the procedure's consistency and objectivity in measuring attachment behaviours under controlled conditions. However, one weakness of the Strange Situation method is that as it is conducted under artificial conditions it lacks ecological validity as it may not represent the attachment types when observed in more naturalistic settings. The procedure has also been criticised for its internal validity with regard to how it measures the key variables, it could be that the children are displaying personality characteristics/ temperament not attachment types. Another weakness of the Strange Situation method is it raises ethical issues using children in the procedure and creating a situation which deliberately instigates anxiety. This causes psychological harm and mental stress for the young children in the procedure.

