

**Ainsworth's Strange Situation and Types of Attachment**

**A01 (Knowledge and Understanding)**

**A03 (Evaluation)**

**The Strange Situation (Ainsworth and Bell, 1970)**

A sample of American middle class infants and their mothers were used. The children were aged between 12 and 18 months old. The laboratory playroom consisted on a play area with toys and two comfortable chairs.

A **controlled observation** was carried out which measured:

There are 8 stages to this, each lasting 3 minutes long.

Stage	Situation	measure...
1	Child and carer placed in room	
2	Child free to explore	Proximity seeking and secure base behaviour
3	Stranger enters, greets caregiver, attempts to play with child	Stranger anxiety
4	Caregiver leaves child with stranger	Stranger anxiety and separation anxiety
5	Carer re-enters and stranger leaves	Reuniting response
6	Caregiver leaves child alone	Separation anxiety
7	The stranger re-enters	Stranger anxiety
8	Caregiver enters and comforts the child, stranger leaves.	Reuniting response

- Reliability**  
 P: One strength of the strange situation is that it is high in reliability.  
 E: This is because it has been repeated numerous times and gained consistent results in the USA, indicating test-retest reliability.  
 E: Furthermore, reliability would have been ensured through extensive training of researchers indicating inter-observer reliability. This would have guaranteed consistency between results.  
 L: This suggests that the strange situation controlled observation is an effective, reliable and credible tool that allows research to measure the attachment types in infants.
- Internal Validity**

Ecological Validity

**Types of Attachment (A01 only)**

1. **Type A – Insecure Avoidant**

2. **Type B – Secure**

3. **Type C – Insecure Resistant/Ambivalent**



@Psychswot



Psych Swot



PsychSwot.com



PsychSwot

**Learning Table 3: Animal Studies of Attachment**

**AO1**

**Lorenz (1935) Imprinting**

**Aim:** Lorenz was an ethologist (a scientist who studies animal behaviour) who set up a classic experiment to investigate the phenomenon of imprinting.

**Procedure:** Lorenz took a clutch of gosling eggs and divided them into two groups. One group were left with their natural mother while the other group were placed in an incubator. When the incubator eggs hatched the first living things they saw was Lorenz and they soon started following him around. To test the effect of imprinting, Lorenz marked to two groups to distinguish them and placed them altogether.

**Findings:**

**Conclusions:**

**AO3**

**Supporting Evidence for Imprinting**

One strength of Lorenz’s research into imprinting is that it has evidence to support its assumptions. For example, **Guilton** (1966) demonstrated that leghorn chickens exposed to yellow rubber gloves for feeding them during the first few weeks became imprinted on the gloves.

This is a strength because it supports the view that young animals are not born with a predisposition to imprint on a specific type of object but probably on any moving things that is present during the critical window of development.

As a consequence this strengthens the overall credibility of Lorenz’s research into imprinting.

**Generalisability to Humans**

**Harlow’s (1959) Research on Monkeys**

**Aim:** Harlow wanted to investigate whether feeding or comfort was important in the development of attachment.

**Procedure:** Harlow created two wire mothers each with a different head. One wire mother additionally was wrapped in soft cloth. 8 infant rhesus monkeys were studied for a period of 165 days. 4 of the monkeys were exposed to a milk bottle that was on the cloth wrapped mother and the other 4 monkeys were exposed to a milk bottle that was on the wire monkey. Measurements were taken on the amount of time each infant spent with the two different ‘mothers’. Observations were also made of the infants’ responses when frightened by a mechanical teddy bear.

**Findings:**

**Conclusions:**

**Ethical Issues**

**Practical Value**

One strength of the Harlow’s (1959) research into attachment is that there is a great deal of practical application from its findings.

For example, Howe (1998) reports that Harlow’s research has helped social workers understand risk factors in child neglect and abuse and so intervene to prevent it. In addition, it has influenced the care of captive monkeys, we now understand the importance of proper attachment figures for baby monkeys in zoos and also breeding programmes in the wild.

This is a strength because it demonstrates how Harlow’s research has influenced society.

As a consequence this increases the credibility of Harlow’s research into the importance of comfort in attachment.



--	--