

Baltimore, USA

Ainsworth *et al* (1978) observed infants in the strange situation and found that most of them (66%) were securely attached. Of the remaining infants 22% were insecure-avoidant and 12% were insecure-resistant.

Glasgow, Scotland

Schaffer and Emerson (1964) observed 60 infants in a longitudinal study spanning a year. Most infants had many attachments – to parents, grandparents, siblings, other relatives, friends etc. However, the infants maintained one *primary* object of attachment which was most often their mother. Schaffer and Emerson reported that there was little relationship between time spent together and attachment. This suggests that it is the *quality* of caregiving (e.g. sensitivity) rather than *quantity* which is important.

Germany

Grossmann and Grossmann (1991) found that German infants tended to be classified as insecurely rather than securely attached. This may be due to different childrearing practices. German culture requires keeping some interpersonal distance between parents and children, so infants do not engage in proximity-seeking behaviours in the strange situation and thus may *appear* to be insecurely attached.

Israel

Fox (1977) observed infants raised on Israeli kibbutzim in communal children's homes. Infants showed greater attachment to their mothers despite spending more time with the *metapelet* (community nurses), presumably because the mothers showed greater sensitivity.

Japan

Takahashi (1990) used the strange situation technique to study 60 middle-class Japanese infants and their mothers. They found similar rates of secure attachment as in Ainsworth's American sample but found no evidence of insecure-avoidant attachment and high rates of insecure-resistant attachment (32%). The Japanese infants were particularly distressed on being left alone. This cultural variation can be explained in terms of different childcare practices. In Japan infants rarely experience separation from their mothers and this would explain why they were more distressed in the strange situation than their American counterparts. This would make them *appear* to be insecurely attached.

Meta-analysis of 26 studies in 8 countries

Van Ijzendoorn and Kroonenberg (1988) performed a meta-analysis of 32 studies conducted in 8 different countries. Variations within countries/cultures were 1.5 times greater than between cultures. This suggests that cultural practices have little influence on attachment behaviour and supports the view that attachment is an innate and universal process.

Zaire

Tronick *et al.* (1992) conducted a cross-cultural study of an African tribe, the Efe, from Zaire whose infants are looked after and even breastfed by different women. Despite such different childrearing practices as compared to those in the West, the infants, at 6 months, still showed one primary attachment.

Kampala, Uganda

Ainsworth (1967) conducted a naturalistic observation of 26 infants and their mothers in villages around Kampala. She observed that the mothers who were more sensitive to their infants' needs had more securely-attached infants (they cried less and explored more).

What does it all mean?**There are cultural similarities**

Many of the studies support Bowlby's concept of monotropy – that infants form one primary attachment and this occurs as a consequence of sensitive responsiveness. In addition, secure attachment appears to be the most common type of attachment suggesting it is related to 'normal' healthy emotional and social development. Cultural similarities or 'universals' support the view that attachment processes are innate.

There are cultural differences

There were some variations across cultures, such as higher rates of insecure attachment in Germany and Japan. This suggests that cultural practices modify the attachment process.

However ...

What does this research *really* tell us? There are a number of issues to consider.



Culture bias – Rothbaum *et al.* (2000) have argued that attachment theory has a strong Western bias, reflecting the views of individualist societies who value autonomy and independence. In such societies secure attachment leads to independence. In contrast, collectivist societies such as Japan value interdependence, and secure attachment therefore will lead to dependence rather than independence. In other words, secure attachment promotes the kind of behaviour seen as desirable by a particular society.

In the strange situation, an infant who does not behave independently is often classed as insecurely attached. This ignores the cultural meaning of the behaviour. Dependent behaviour is normal in Japan but not in America and therefore the use of the strange situation technique may not be meaningful in other cultures such as Japan.

Culture and country – Within any country there are many cultures yet most research refers to countries such as Japan or America. Such research may lack validity because many different cultural practices have been placed together.

Prior and Glaser (2005) conclude that expressions of maternal sensitivity and manifestations of secure-base behaviour may vary across cultures but the core concepts are universal.