

## ATTACHMENT: - TAKASHASHI CROSS CULTURAL STUDY

**Aim:** To consider whether it is appropriate to use the Strange Situation procedure with Japanese children. The key question is whether the Strange Situation is a valid procedure for cultures other than the original one, i.e. other than American, middle-class, white, home-reared infants and their mothers.

By making comparisons between the American and Japanese group, it may be possible to reveal the cultural assumptions on which the procedure is based.

### **Procedures:**

- ❑ The participants were 60 middle-class Japanese infants, aged 1 year, boys and girls, and their mothers. They were all raised at home
- ❑ The infants and mothers were observed in the Strange Situation

### **Findings:**

- ❑ 68% of the infants were classified as securely attached, almost identical to the original American sample
- ❑ There were no infants classified as avoidant-insecure
- ❑ 32% were classified as resistant-insecure
- ❑ When the observational data were examined in more detail, differences emerged. The Japanese infants were much more disturbed after being left alone. In fact, the "infant alone" step was stopped for 90% of the participants because the infants were so distressed. If the infants had not become so distressed, many more of them (possibly more than 80%) would have been classified as securely attached (the observation of distress led to an alternative classification).

### **Conclusions:**

- ❑ The findings suggest that there are cross-cultural variations in the way infants respond to separation and being left alone. This difference may be due to the fact that Japanese infants experience much less separation, for example they generally sleep with their parents until over 2 years of age, are carried around on their mothers' backs and bathe with parents. Japanese infants are almost never left alone. This means that, for the, the Strange Situation was more than mildly stressful, and thus the behaviours observed were reactions to extreme stress - not the original aim of the Strange Situation.
- ❑ The findings also highlight a second cross-cultural variation - the total lack of avoidant behaviour in this sample. This can also be explained in cultural terms. Japanese children are taught that such behaviour is impolite and they would be actively discouraged from displaying it.
- ❑ The final conclusion must be that the Strange Situation does not have the same meaning for the Japanese as it does for American participants and therefore is not a valid form of assessment for that culture.

### **Criticisms:**

- ❑ Research with children, especially with infants, needs to be especially careful in terms of potential psychological harm to participants, which is an important ethical issue.
- ❑ Takahashi's study was carried out on a limited sample of only middle-class, home-reared infants (as was the original study by Ainsworth & Bell). It may therefore not be reasonable to generalise these findings to all Japanese people, although the results do demonstrate that there are important cultural or subcultural differences in attachment.