

APA reference format for internet document: Waters, E. (1987). Attachment Q-set (Version 3). Retrieved (date) from <http://www.johnbowlby.com>.

## **Attachment Q-set (Version 3)**

### **Items and Explanations**

The Attachment Q-Set was developed for three reasons: (1) to provide an economical methodology for further examining relations between secure base behavior at home and Strange Situation classifications, (2) to better define (via a Q-set) the behavioral referents of the secure base concept, and (3) to stimulate interest in normative secure base behavior and individual differences in attachment security beyond infancy. As a first step toward further examining relations between secure base behavior at home and Strange Situation classifications, Vaughn & Waters (1991) replicated the association reported by Ainsworth et al. (1973). This illustrated a method that can be used to test the validity of Strange Situation classifications across age, across cultures, and in clinical populations. The current version of the Attachment Q Set is Version 3.0. It was written in 1987 and consists of 90 items.

Below is a complete list of the AQS items with descriptive information about the meaning and use of each item. The "Rationale" for each item is for training only. When the q-set items are reproduced on cards for use by observers, only the item content ("Item", "Middle", and "Low") need be included.

#### **1. Child readily shares with mother or lets her hold things if she asks to.**

##### **Low: Refuses.**

Rationale: Sharing is interesting because it is an aspect of smooth interaction and secure base behavior (insofar as it involves seeking information). From clear instances of sharing or refusing you can see whether the child expects the mother to be intrusive and/ or unresponsive (i.e., to keep the object and end the interaction). You can't make much out of the absence of sharing. Sharing includes both spontaneous offers to the mom and going along when mother is more the initiator of the sharing.

#### **2. When child returns to mother after playing, he is sometimes fussy for no clear reason.**

##### **Low: Child is happy or affectionate when he returns to mother between or after play times.**

Rationale: The smoothness of the child's transition from exploration to proximity and contact is a defining feature of a well functioning secure base relationship. In the Strange Situation fussing during the pre-separation episodes, incomplete approaches with fussing instead of reaching to be picked up, and inability to be comforted by contact are hallmarks of insecure attachment. This item is in the Q-set because the behavior is so important in the S/S. Such returns are not necessarily easy to anticipate and they are not very frequent in home settings. Stay alert or you will miss the key moments right at the end of the approach. It might be useful for observers to see this behavior in a few videotapes of the S/S.

**3. When he is upset or injured, child will accept comforting from adults other than mother.**

**Low: Mother is the only one he allows to comfort him.**

Rationale: Preference for one figure over others is a hallmark of attachment. However, this does not imply exclusivity or rejection of all others. Nor does it apply to all contexts. In Ainsworth's Baltimore home observations, the only behavior directed almost exclusively to the mother was "approach ending in reach or other effort to make contact". Count only approaches related to comforting. Disregard if the child approaches wanting something other than comfort. The behavior referred to in this item is probably most often a function of how upset s/he is; and this is more a function of the situation and of temperament than of attachment status. Secure base relevance is an empirical issue.

**4. Child is careful and gentle with toys and pets.**

Rationale: This is a "filler" item. It may be related to a impulsive / reflective cognitive style or to imitation of parental behavior with pets or care off infant siblings. No secure base connotation is intended. Nonetheless, it is important to score this item correctly. Infants classified anxious resistant in the Strange Situation tend, even in pre-separation episodes, to bang and sweep toys around rather than playing with them carefully. Both anxiety and immaturity might explain this behavior. Filler items make the Q-set sort more easily. They also make the focus on security less obvious. This may reduce social desirability responding when moms are observers.

**5. Child is more interested in people than in things.**

**Low: More interested in things than people.**

Rationale: This is a filler item. It may be related to a trait adult personality theorists term "person-thing orientation". No secure base connotation is intended. It may well be that secure attachment would be associated with a positive orientation toward people. But the observers' task is not to estimate attachment security from the behavior they observe; it is simply to describe what they see.

Do not let evidence of sociability influence scoring of secure base behavior. Filler items are necessary. If all the items in the Q-set were about using mom as a secure base, they would be hard to sort; some items would have to be placed low even though the child is quite secure. "Filler" items can also make the Q-set's focus on security less obvious. This may reduce social desirability responding when mothers serve as observers.

**6. When child is near mother and sees something he wants to play with, he fusses or tries to drag mother over to it.**

**Low: Goes to what he wants without fussing or dragging mother along.**

Rationale: Exploring away from mom is a key part of the secure base phenomenon. This item would therefore seem to describe the opposite of secure base behavior. Note, however, that the child is maintaining interest in the environment and finding mother's proximity comforting. This is very much the picture of the B4 infant in the Strange Situation. Perhaps it works for infants with a low threshold for fearfulness. Observers should not prejudge the meaning of this behavior. This behavior is not common. Most children are somewhat the opposite, so this item tends to fall a bit below the middle of most sorts.

**7. Child laughs and smiles easily with a lot of different people.****Low: Mother can get him to smile or laugh more easily than others.**

Rationale: This is a "filler" item. It may be related to sociability or low threshold for positive affect. No secure base connotation is intended. Nonetheless, it is important to score this item accurately. In addition to noting response to observers, ask mother about this behavior. "Filler" items make the Q-set sort more easily and the focus on security less obvious. This may reduce social desirability response when mothers serve as observers. In addition to serving as filler items, the temperament related items in the Q-set may be of some use for assessing discriminant validity.

**8. When child cries, he cries hard.****Low: Weeps, sobs, doesn't cry hard, or hard crying never lasts very long.**

Rationale: This is a "filler" item. If anything, it relates to the trait termed "response intensity" in Thomas & Chess' work or to a parameter of negative affect. activity level. No secure base connotation is intended. Nonetheless, it is important to score this item accurately. When scoring this behavior be careful to take context into account. Crying hard after falling is easy to score. Similar crying when mother is being intrusive or in a struggle of wills is more difficult; it is often appropriate to view the mom or the situation as contributing to the intensity of the cry. Moderate your scoring accordingly. Look for other instances of negative affect to confirm (or disconfirm) your interpretation.

**9. Child is lighthearted and playful most of the time.****Low: Child tends to be serious, sad, or annoyed a good deal of the time.**

Rationale: This item refers to a trait-like temperament characteristic, not an aspect of secure base behavior. The observer should simply describe the child. One can't reliably attribute positive affect to temperament in some instances and to secure attachment in others. Attachment theory expects positive affect to accompany both smooth interaction and secure base behavior in non-threatening contexts. Clearly, a child could be lighthearted and playful most of the time and yet show few signs of monitoring mom location or activities, engaging in affective sharing across a distance, returning to her spontaneously, or enjoying physical contact. The "Security" criterion sort ( See the Q-set Advisor Index) places more weight on secure base behaviors than on positive affect per se. But a child receives a higher security score if both secure base items and positive affect items receive high scores. This seems reasonable but if relations to the Strange Situation increased by placing this item closer to the middle of the "Security" criterion sort then it would make sense to revise the criterion sort.

**10. Child often cries or resists when mother takes him to bed for naps or at night.****Low: Does not cry or resist going to bed.**

Rationale: This is a "filler" item. No secure base connotation is intended. Unless the child is put to bed during the visit this item can only be scored from the mother's report. The item is rarely placed far from Pile 5. It will probably be dropped if the Q-set is revised. "Filler" items are necessary. If each item referred to secure base behavior, the Q-set would be hard to sort; some items would have to be placed low even though the child is quite secure. "Filler" items can also serve

other purposes. For example, they make the Q-set's focus on security less obvious. This may reduce social desirability responding when mothers serve as observers.

**11. Child often hugs or cuddles against mother, without her asking or inviting him to do so.**

**Low: Child doesn't hug or cuddle much, unless mother hugs him first or asks him to give her a hug.**

Rationale: This item refers to physical contact for its own sake during ordinary play or interaction. It does not refer to behavior when the child is upset. Data by Mary Blehar, Mary Ainsworth, and Mary Main suggest that enjoying physical contact is an antecedent and an aspect of good secure base behavior. The implication (well worth testing) is that a child who is averse to physical contact in non-stressful contexts is less likely than one who enjoys it to seek or be comforted by contact when upset. (See related item #44)

**12. Child quickly gets used to people or things that initially made him shy or frightened him.**

**Middle if never shy or afraid.**

**Low: Child is slow to get used to people or things.**

Rationale: This is a "filler" item. If anything, it may be related to a temperament trait termed "quick to warm up" or to some parameter of fearfulness. No secure base connotation is intended. Focus on overcoming fear or shyness with major help from mom. If mom is always right there and very active, all you can do is place this item in Pile 5. Items referring to the effectiveness of mom's presence and encouragement, include #7, #60, and #71.

In addition to noting response to observers, ask mother about this behavior. This is the only way to score the item if you don't observe relevant behavior during a visit. As indicated in the introduction, we do not ordinarily place items very far from the middle of a sort solely on the basis of maternal report.

In addition to serving as "fillers", the temperament related items in the Q-set may be of some use for assessing discriminant validity. Filler items are necessary. If all the items in the Q-set were about using mom as a secure base, they would be hard to sort; some items would have to be placed low even though the child is quite secure. "Filler" items can also serve other purposes. For example, they make the Q-set's focus on security less obvious. This may reduce social desirability response when mom's are the observers.

**13. When the child is upset by mother's leaving, he continues to cry or even gets angry after she is gone.**

**Middle if not upset by mom leaving.**

**Low: Cry stops right after mom leaves.**

Rationale: The concept of "angry" crying is difficult to quantify. Nonetheless, observers generally recognize it when they hear it. Scoring instructions for the Strange Situation refer to angry crying in association with separation behavior of A2 and C infants and resistant behavior of C's during reunion. Crying in response to separation is not commonly observed during home visits. Consequently this item usually falls near the middle of sorts. You may well see angry crying in

other contexts (e.g., mother won't let the child do or have something s/he wants). Do not score such behavior in relation to this item.

**14. When child finds something new to play with, he carries it to mother or shows it to her from across the room.**

**Low: Plays with the new object quietly or goes where he won't be interrupted.**

Rationale: This refers to behavior Alan Sroufe and others term "affective sharing". Secure infants are virtually the only ones who show this behavior in the Strange Situation, though the proportion who do so has not been tabulated. This item is included in the Q-set in order to fill out the complete set of secure base related behaviors. The more secure base behaviors we can include the more reliably we can distinguish secure from insecure infants. One disadvantage of the Q-sort method is that we will not be able to tell from Q-sort data what percent of children displayed this specific behavior. This is the price paid for its many advantages.

**15. Child is willing to talk to new people, show them toys, or show them what he can do, if mother asks him to.**

**Low: Mother's suggestion does not increase willingness to engage new people.**

Rationale: As Ainsworth demonstrated, infants are ordinarily more confident to explore if an attachment figure is present. As Joe Campos and others have demonstrated, children also pay attention to caregiver signals to evaluate the risk or safety of social and other situations. This item assesses behavior in these domains. This behavior is very sensitive to context. The item assumes that mom is nearby, her affect is positive and encouraging, and the child is at least somewhat interested in the person (even if a bit shy). Sometimes however, the mother is merely shouting orders across the room, or the child is being pushed too quickly.

Do not over score this item on the basis of such situations. Do not over score this item from situations in which the child is eager to share or show without the mother's suggestions; here mom's suggestions and encouragement are accompanying rather than motivating the child's behavior. Do not prejudge the secure base relevance of this behavior. It probably reflects more about sociability than security. Score the item carefully and let the relation to security be determined in the data analysis.

**16. Child prefers toys that are modeled after living things (e.g., dolls, stuffed animals).**

**Low: Prefers balls, blocks, pots and pans, etc.**

Rationale: This is a "filler" item. Despite it's content it is unlikely to be related to sociability. If anything it may relate to sex-role play references. No secure base connotation is intended. Nonetheless, it is important to score this item accurately.

"Filler" items are necessary. If all the items in the Q-set were about using mom as a secure base, they would be hard to sort; some items would have to be placed low even though the child is quite secure. "Filler" items can also serve other purposes. For example, they make the Q-set's focus on security less obvious. This may reduce social desirability responding when mothers serve as observers.

**17. Child quickly loses interest in new adults if they do anything that annoys him.**

Rationale: This is a "filler" item. The behavior may reflect something about (low) sociability or intensity of negative affect. No secure base connotation is intended. "Filler" items are necessary. If all the items in the Q-set were about using mom as a secure base, they would be hard to sort; some items would have to be placed low even though the child is quite secure. "Filler" items can also serve other purposes. For example, they make the Q-set's focus on security less obvious. This may reduce social desirability responding when mothers serve as observers.

**18. Child follows mother's suggestions readily, even when they are clearly suggestions rather than orders.****Low: Ignores or refuses unless ordered.**

Rationale: This behavior can be construed in a number of ways. It is probably best treated as a "filler" item. It probably tells more about mom's intuitive grasp of good behavior modification principles than about secure base behavior. But these are not unrelated; that Ainsworth described as "maternal sensitivity" is easily approved of by behavior therapists. The best way for us to learn more about this behavior is for observers to describe what they see and let the interpretations come out of the data analysis.

**19. When mother tells child to bring or give her something, he obeys.**

(Do not count refusals that are playful or part of a game unless they are clearly disobedient )

**Low: Mother has to take the object or raise her voice to get it away from him.**

Rationale: This behavior reflects both the mom's implicit understanding of behavior modification principles and the child's history of harmonious or interfering interaction with her. Studies by Keng Ling Lay have shown that non-interfering maternal behavior can put a child in a positive mood and that positive mood increases compliance. This behavior occurs in many contexts. Sometimes mother just needs a hand. Or she is asking for a toy the child is playing with; she may be joining in the play or showing the child something; she may plan to take something away. Don't over score refusals when the mother is clearly trying to stop the child from playing with something.

**20. Child ignores most bumps, falls, or startles.****Low: Cries after minor bumps, falls, or startles.**

Rationale: This is a "filler" item. If anything, the behavior may be related to a temperament trait such as high threshold for negative affect. No secure base connotation is intended. "Filler" items are necessary. If each of the Q-set items were about using mom as a secure base, the Q-set would be hard to sort; some items would have to be placed low even though the child is quite secure. "Filler" items can also serve other purposes. For example, they make the Q-set's focus on security less obvious. This may reduce social desirability responding when mothers serve as observers.

**21. Child keeps track of mother's location when he plays around the house.**

Calls to her now and then notices her go from room to room.  
Notices if she changes activities

**Middle if child isn't allowed or doesn't have room , to play away from mom.**

**Low: Doesn't keep track.**

Rationale: This is a key element of the secure base phenomenon. It can be difficult to observe in the home because the child is very familiar with mother's behavior and can tell from the slightest cue what she is doing or about to do. Do not mistake this for failure to keep track.

One indication of failure to keep track is that the child has gone so long without checking on mom that s/he has to call or look for her. You could conclude the same if the child went to a specific place and didn't find her as expected. But these obvious signs are uncommon at home. More often failure to keep track has to be inferred from the lack of overt monitoring or signaling and the depth of the child's interest in whatever s/he has been doing.

When an observer suspects that the child is not monitoring mothers location and activities, it is OK to ask the child "Where is your mom; what is she doing?" Do not over interpret the answer; the child has a fair chance of guessing correctly. Note the child's confidence in his/her answer. Do not over score this item on the basis of such questioning.

Note: It is OK, almost unavoidable, for observers to interact with the child. Be careful however not to be so entertaining that you distract the child from ordinary secure base behavior (such as keeping track) or child-mother interaction.

**22. Child acts like an affectionate parent toward dolls, pets, or infants.**

**Middle if child doesn't play with or have access to dolls, pets, or infants.**

**Low: Plays with them in other ways.**

Rationale: Like Item 4 (Careful and gentle with toys and pets) and Item 16 (Prefers toys modeled after living things), this item is included as a "filler" item. No secure base connotation is intended. This behavior probably reflects an interaction between imitation and temperament characteristics. The imitation may be of mother's behavior toward the child, of behavior she models for the child with toys, or of her behavior toward an infant sibling. Temperament traits could include activity level, impulsivity, and positive affect. There could also be a trait of responsiveness to contact comfort. . Observers should just describe what they see.

**23. When mother sits with other family members, or is affectionate with them, child tries to get mom's affection for himself.**

**Low: Lets her be affectionate with others. May join in but not in a jealous way.**

Rationale: Interfering or objecting when mom is with other family members suggests the child lacks confidence in her availability and responsiveness. Accepting or joining in suggests the child continues to be confident in her availability and responsiveness during her engagement with others. Other Q-set items refer to the child's confidence in mom's continuing availability and responsiveness when she is engaged in other types of activity (e.g., conversation with the

visitor or busy around the house. ) Revisiting the same issue in different contexts is a strategy built into the Q-set to raise the reliability of scores based on criterion sorts or aggregated subsets of items.

**24. When mother speaks firmly or raises her voice at him, child becomes upset, sorry, or ashamed about displeasing her.**

(Do not score high if child is simply upset by the raised voice or afraid of getting punished )

**Low: Child does not become upset in response to such behavior.**

Rationale: This behavior may be related to the internalization of parental values. It is included so we can see whether it is related to attachment security. (Do not prejudge the answer. ) In our experience such behavior is rare. Nonetheless, observers should be alert for of this type of behavior and try to score it carefully. This item will rarely be placed above the middle of a sort; it may be placed rather low however if you see clear instances of angry responses to mother speaking firmly.

**25. Child is easy for mother to lose track of when he is playing out of her sight.**

**Middle if never plays out of sight.**

**Low: Talks and calls when out of sight. Easy to find; easy to keep track of what child is doing.**

Rationale: For a secure base relationship to work well, both partners have to play an active role. Being easy to keep track of makes it easier for mom to do her part. The kinds of proximity, signaling, noisiness, and distance interactions that make a child easy to keep track of are not necessarily intentional. They simply accompany ordinary play and exploration. It is often noticed that in the Strange Situation many infants babble more actively when mother is out of the room. "Trackability" is the predictable outcome of this behavior. It probably is not an outcome that the baby "intends".

**26. Child cries when mother leaves him at home with babysitter, father, or grandparent.**

**Low: Doesn't cry with any of these.**

Rationale: The Q-set includes a number of items to assess crying in various contexts. These include crying when interfered with, when mom moves from room to room, in the midst of secure base transitions, and even when injured. The implicit hypothesis is that crying is not merely a unitary indicator of a temperament trait; instead the "meaning" of crying is viewed as depending on context. Ask the mother in a non-evaluative way about this behavior.

Do not prejudge the relation between this behavior and secure base behavior or overall security. Because the behavior is primarily assessed by mother report, the item is not often placed far from the middle of a sort.



**27. Child laughs when mother teases him.****Middle If mother never teases child during play or conversations.****Low: Annoyed when mother teases him.**

Rationale: This item was included in the Q-set with the idea that it would reflect the child's history of intrusive vs. non-intrusive interaction with the mother. It is interesting to see whether this is related to current secure base behavior. In our experience, this behavior is rarely seen in home observations of infant and child behavior with mothers. It is perhaps more common with older children and in father-child interaction. Our impression is that the rate is reduced by the presence of unfamiliar observers. This item is rarely placed far from the middle of a sort.

**28. Child enjoys relaxing in mother's lap.****Middle: If child never sits still.****Low: Prefers to relax on the floor or on furniture.**

Rationale: This is an aspect of secure base behavior. A child who enjoys close physical contact is expected to find such contact comforting if distressed. The child may be demanding or casual in establishing contact, or mother may be the one who initiates it. Focus on the child's behavior once contact is established. A relaxed posture, cuddling, patting mother, and long duration of contact are examples of relevant behavior.

Place this item low if in several instances the child refuses contact, seems uncomfortable, or breaks contact quickly. Obviously, a child can enjoy contact and yet resist if mother interrupts ongoing play because she wants some affection. This would not warrant low placement. In general, you can infer more from a single positive example of enjoying contact than from a single example of the child resisting or squirming to get down. Note: If the child is very active and doesn't sit still long enough for much physical contact, you can't score this item. Place it in Pile 5.

**29. At times, child attends so deeply to something that he doesn't seem to hear when people speak to him.****Low: Even when deeply Involved in play, child notices when people speak to him.**

Rationale: This is a "filler" item. The behavior may reflect something about the temperament trait "depth of attention". No secure base or sociability connotation is intended. "Filler" items are necessary. If all the items in the Q-set were about using mom as a secure base, they would be hard to sort; some items would have to be placed low even though the child is quite secure. "Filler" items can also serve other purposes. For example, they make the Q-set's focus on security less obvious. This may reduce social desirability responding when mothers serve as observers.

**30. Child easily becomes angry with toys.****Low: Child does not easily become angry with toys.**

Rationale: This is a "filler" item. The behavior could reflect something about (low) frustration

tolerance or low threshold for negative affect. No secure base connotation is intended. "Filler" items are necessary. If all the items in the Q-set were about using mom as a secure base, they would be hard to sort; some items would have to be placed low even though the child is quite secure. "Filler" items can also serve other purposes. For example, they make the Q-set's focus on security less obvious. This may reduce social desirability responding when mothers serve as observers.

**31. Child wants to be the center of mother's attention. If mom is busy or talking to someone, he interrupts.**

**Low: Doesn't notice or doesn't mind not being the center of mother's attention.**

Rationale: This behavior is interesting insofar as it reflects lack of confidence in mom's availability and responsiveness. Relevant behavior is likely to be colored by fussiness or annoyance. A child might also try to be the center of mom's attention if she has reinforced this behavior. In such cases the child may seem dependent, but the affective tone is positive; the child seems to expect that mother's attention is easily gained. In such cases, do not place the item very high (>7) in the sort. Place this item low if the child is satisfied being an onlooker or doing something on his/her own when mother attends to something or someone else. Such behavior is not a secure base problem. It reflects confidence that she is available and responsive if needed. Low placement doesn't imply insecurity. If the child is consistently indifferent to mom, place this item in Pile 5. There are other items to capture the kinds of indifference to mother that suggest a secure base problem. Examples are Item 21 (keeps track of mother's location), Item 36 (plays, returns to mom, goes off to play), and Item 59 (doesn't return to mom between activities).

**32. When mother says "No" or punishes him, child stops misbehaving (at least at that time). Doesn't have to be told twice.**

**Low: Child persists in misbehavior.**

Rationale: Although this behavior can be construed in a number of ways, it is best treated as if it were a "filler" item. It probably tells more about mom's intuitive grasp of behavior modification principles than about secure base behavior. But these are not unrelated; that Ainsworth described as "maternal sensitivity" is easily approved of by behavior therapists. The best way for us to learn more about this behavior is for observers to describe what they see and let the interpretations come out of the data analysis.

**33. Child sometimes signals mother (or gives the impression) that he wants to be put down, and then fusses or wants to be picked right back up.**

**Low: Always ready to go play by the time he signals mother to put him down.**

Rationale: In the Strange Situation, this behavior is a hallmark of the C (anxious resistant) pattern. It is included in the Q-set because we are interested in the extent to which it occurs outside the S/S and because it is such a clear failure of proximity and contact to serve their usual secure base function. Do not let your scoring be much influenced by mere tantrums or "power struggles", in which the child wants something and mother says "No" and neither will give in. Focus on situations in which the child wants proximity or contact and remains upset even though it is readily available or even achieved. (Note: Do not place this item high if mom is unresponsive or intrusive in a way that clearly causes the child's continuing upset.)

**34. When child is upset about mother leaving him, he sits right where he is and cries. Doesn't go after her.**

**Middle: If never upset by her leaving**

**Low: Actively goes after her if he is upset or crying.**

Rationale: Effective signaling, proximity seeking, and contact maintaining behavior are defining features of a well functioning secure base relationship. In the Strange Situation incomplete approaches with fussing instead of reaching to be picked up and inability to be comforted by contact are hallmarks of insecure attachment. This item was included in the Q-set because the behavior is so important in the S/S. This behavior is not common in home observations. It might be useful for observers to see such behavior in videotapes of a few Strange Situations.

**35. Child is independent with mother. Prefers to play on his own; leaves mother easily when he wants to play.**

**Middle allowed or not enough room to play**

**Low: Prefers playing with or near mother**

Rationale: This item refers to the traits of independence and dependency. Both theoretically and empirically these are unrelated to security, especially after about 24 months. While a child is content and alert to mother's location and activities, independence doesn't imply insecurity. Similarly, as long as a child is content and constructively occupied, preferring to play with or near mother does not imply a lack of confidence in her availability or responsiveness. If the child prefers to play close to mom, place this item low in the sort, regardless of whether the child is fussy or content. There are other Q-set items that will capture the security implications of positive or negative mood.

**36. Child clearly shows a pattern of using mother as a base from which to explore.**

**Moves out to play; Returns or plays near her; moves out to play again, etc.**

**Low: Always away unless retrieved, or always stays near.**

Rationale: In Vol. 1 of Attachment and Loss Bowlby argued that play - contact - play cycles reflect the operation of an attachment control system. Accordingly, secure base cycles can be considered a criterion for the existence of an attachment. This item assesses the presence not the quality of the secure base pattern. This behavior is a bit easier to see in unfamiliar settings than in the home.

Observers should keep in mind that in familiar settings the play - contact - play cycle is more likely to occur over 30 minutes than over the 2-3 min. one sees in the Strange Situation. Note, however, that a quick play - contact - play cycle does not in and of itself justify a high score. The issue is how characteristic is the behavior, not how frequent or how fast.

Not all returns to mother are equal. A return for the sake of contact, interaction, or affective sharing is a secure base return. Returns for help or to get food, permission to do something, etc. are less clearly relevant to the secure base phenomenon. Ask your self whether this is a secure base return or is the child merely using mother as a banker or tool chest.

Keep in mind that play punctuated by interaction over a distance is equivalent to play - contact - play cycles with full approaches. One of the problems in trying to observe this behavior is that mothers frequently call the child to them or stay nearby or check on the child periodically. These activities "short circuit" the child's play - contact - play cycles.

The size and configuration of the home can also be a factor in whether secure base cycles are seen. In light of these complexities, this item should not be placed far below the middle of a sort solely because play - contact - play cycles were not seen. Low placement should be based on evidence that the child typically does something other than secure base behavior. As the item states these can include clear lack of interest in mother's activities or location, or staying close and never venturing away from her.

**37. Child is very active. Always moving around. Prefers active games to quiet ones.**

**Low: Child's activity level is low. Prefers quiet activities.**

Rationale: This item refers to the temperament trait "activity level". It is simply a "filler item". It is not even a variable that raises an issue of discriminant validity. No secure base connotation is intended. "Filler" items are necessary. If all the items in the Q-set were about using mom as a secure base, they would be hard to sort; some items would have to be placed low even though the child is quite secure. "Filler" items can also serve other purposes. For example, they make the Q-set's focus on security less obvious. This may reduce social desirability responding when mothers serve as observers.

**38. Child is demanding and impatient with mother. Fusses and persists unless she does what he wants right away.**

**Low: Child waits a reasonable time if mother doesn't respond immediately.**

Rationale: A key postulate of Bowlby and Ainsworth's attachment theory is that maternal sensitivity is a critical factor in attachment development. Sensitivity includes a low threshold for detecting infant signals, cooperation (vs. interference) with the infant's ongoing behavior, physical and psychological availability, and acceptance of the infant's needs and demands. This item is included on the theory that it reflects a history of maternal interference. Although hypothesized to be related to secure base behavior, this is an empirical issue. Observers should not prejudge this relationship.

**39. Child is often serious and businesslike when playing away from mother or alone with his toys.**

**Low: Often silly or laughing when playing away from mother or alone with his toys.**

Rationale: This is a "filler item". It refers to behavior that probably combines attention, activity level, and affect parameters. No secure base connotation is intended. "Filler" items are necessary. If all the items in the Q-set were about using mom as a secure base, they would be hard to sort; some items would have to be placed low even though the child is quite secure. "Filler" items can also serve other purposes. For example, they make the Q-set's focus on security less obvious. This may reduce social desirability responding when mothers serve as observers.

**40. Child examines new objects or toys in great detail. Tries to use them in different ways or to take them apart.**

**Low: First look at new objects or toys is usually brief. (May return to them later however. )**

Rationale: This is a "filler item". It refers to behavior that probably combines attention, activity level, and cognitive style. No secure base connotation is intended. This item was included to help address the issue of social desirability response in maternal Q-sorts. We are still working on the best way to do this.

**41. When mother says to follow her, child does so.**

(Do not count refusals or delays that are playful or part of a game unless they clearly become disobedient. )

**Low: Child ignores or refuses.**

Rationale: This is a "filler item". It probably says more about mother's intuitive understanding of good behavior modification principles than with any trait of the child. No secure base connotation is intended. The relations among maternal behavior, secure base behavior, security, and compliance are complex and interesting. It is unlikely that they can be dealt with within a single instrument. Observers should simply observe this behavior carefully and describe what they see, without imposing much interpretation on the behavior. This item may have some value in addressing the issue of desirability response in maternal sorts, but this is not yet worked out.

**42. Child recognizes when mother is upset. Becomes quiet or upset himself. Tries to comfort her. Asks what is wrong, etc.**

**Low: Doesn't recognize; continues play; behaves toward her as if she were OK.**

Rationale: Mary Main and others have suggested that empathy is a correlate of secure attachment. Observers should not prejudge the relation between empathy and security. They should just describe what they see and not let the presence or absence of empathic behavior influence how other items are scored. The data will tell whether empathy and security are related. Note: As a practical matter, this behavior is very rare. Following Carolyn ZahnWaxler and Mark Cummings, one could perhaps have mother pretend to be upset 2-3 times in the course of several visits.

**43. Child stays closer to mother or returns to her more often than the simple task of keeping track of her requires.**

**Low: Doesn't keep close track of mother's location or behavior.**

Rationale: This is included in the Q-set on the theory that such behavior reflects the child's confidence in the mom's availability and responsiveness. A secure child is comfortable moving away from mom and keeping track of her location and activities over a distance and through periodic approaches and contact. It is worth noting that in the Strange Situation infants classified B4 behave very much as described in this item. They are comfortable and play very well as long as they can stay near mother or on her lap. They are neither angry nor ambivalent like group C infants. In a word they seem merely dependent. Observers should not prejudge the relation of this behavior to other secure base behaviors.

**44. Child asks for and enjoys having mother hold, hug, and cuddle him.**

**Low: Not especially eager for this. Tolerates it but doesn't seek it; or wiggles to be put down.**

Rationale: Initiating and enjoying physical contact suggests that the child could be comforted by contact if distressed. As with Item 11 (hugs or cuddles without mother asking), this is an aspect of the secure base phenomenon. If you don't see any contact place this item in Pile 5. Don't assume the child doesn't like contact just because there wasn't any.

Note: This item refers to situations in which the child initiates contact for contact's sake. Item 11 (hugs or cuddles without mother asking) refers to behavior that is largely incidental to ongoing activities (e.g., resting arm on mom while she shows how to do something or leaning against mom while she reads). In a brief home visit you might see enough behavior to score this item or Item 11, but perhaps not both. Either way, the child's security score increases if he/she enjoys or is comfortable with close contact. See also Item 53 and others related to contact and comforting when distressed.

**45. Child enjoys dancing or singing along with music.**

**Low: Neither likes nor dislikes music.**

Rationale: This is a "filler item". It was also included to help address the issue of social desirability response in maternal Q-sorts. "Filler" items are necessary. If all Q-set items were about using mom as a secure base, they would be hard to sort; some items would have to be placed low even though the child is quite secure. "Filler" items can also serve other purposes. For example, they make the Q-set's focus on security less obvious. This may reduce social desirability responding when mothers serve as observers.

**46. Child walks and runs around without bumping, dropping, or stumbling.**

**Low: Bumps, drops, or stumbles happen throughout the day (even if no injuries result).**

Rationale: This is a "filler" item. It is important to place even "filler" items accurately. Don't make it difficult by trying to see some deep attachment relevance where there isn't any. Score this item in relation to the child's age. It is rarely placed above 7 or below Pile 3. If every Q-set item were about secure base behavior, the cards would be hard to sort; some items would have to be placed low even though the child is quite secure. "Filler" items can also serve other purposes. For example, they might help make the Q-set's focus on security less obvious and thus reduce social desirability set when mothers serve as your observers.

**47. Child will accept and enjoy loud sounds or being bounced around in play, if mother smiles and shows that it is supposed to be fun.**

**Low: Child gets upset, even if mother indicates the sound or activity is safe or fun.**

Rationale: In his book *A Secure Base*, Bowlby suggested that an attachment figure must be one who is viewed as "stronger and wiser" than one's self. This however is not enough; the person must also be someone who is trusted. This item is intended to assess the child's trust or confidence in mother's support and reassurance. Observers should keep in mind that this behavior

reflects an interaction of the child's interaction history with the attachment figure and a wide range of temperamental and situational factors that influence how worried or afraid the child is.

**48. Child readily lets new adults hold or share things he has, if they ask to.**

**Low: Child does not readily share with new adults when asked.**

Rationale: A number of items in the Q-set assess positive responses or positive expectations in relation to the mother. This item is included to assess the specificity of such behavior. Do not place much weight on refusals or protests if the mother is being very intrusive. Keep in mind also that the mother's request need not be explicitly stated; it often involves little more than approaching or reaching for the child's plaything.

**49. Runs to mother with a shy smile when new people visit the home.**

**Middle: If child doesn't run to mother at all when visitors arrive.**

**Low: Even if he eventually warms up to visitors, child initially runs to mother with a fret or a cry.**

Rationale: The issue here is whether the child's response to the stranger is predominantly negative or combines wariness and interest ( a response Bob Marvin termed this "coyness"). Neither high nor low placement necessarily suggests a secure base problem. Whether the more negative response has stronger correlates in the temperament or secure base domains is an empirical question. Observers should not prejudge the answer. This item is very different from item (#34) which says "When child is upset s/he sits where s/he is and cries rather than going to mother". The present item assesses fearfulness, #34 assesses the child's ability to use the mother as a secure base.

**50. Child's initial reaction when people visit the home is to ignore or avoid them, even if he eventually warms up to them.**

**Low: Initial reaction s to approach and interact.**

Rationale: This behavior probably says more about temperament and the child's learning history than about confidence in mom's availability or responsiveness. This item refers to the child's initial reaction. Look for relevant behavior from the moment mother or child answers the door. A common response is "coyness", e.g., looking at the visitor with a shy smile or from behind mom's skirt). If you see this mixture of initial wariness and positive interest, place the item only moderately low. Note: Bronson & Pankey (1977) showed that initial wariness of and persistent caution or fear are separate variables.

**51. Child enjoys climbing all over visitors when he plays with them.**

**Middle if he won't play with visitors.**

**Low: Doesn't seek close contact with visitors when he plays with them.**

Rationale: This is a "filler" item. If anything, it is related to activity level. There may also be trait-like differences in positive response to physical contact in general, unrelated to caretaking

experience. No secure base connotation is intended. Nonetheless, it is important to score this item accurately. The item may have some secure base relevance if the child is positively forward in initiating physical contact and directs little or no social referencing toward mother initially or during the contact. This would be unusual but reasonable if there are other indications pointing to the same conclusion.

Filler items are necessary. If all the items in the Q-set were about using mom as a secure base, they would be hard to sort; some items would have to be placed low even though the child is quite secure. "Filler" items can also serve other purposes. For example, they make the Q-set's focus on security less obvious. This may reduce social desirability responding when mothers serve as observers.

**52. Child has trouble handling small objects or putting small things together.**

**Low: Very skillful with small objects, pencils, etc.**

Rationale: This is a "filler" item related to motor development. In addition to its role as a filler item, it might play a role in evaluating discriminant validity vis a vis maturational delay. With mothers as observers it could be useful in examining social desirability responding. Filler items are necessary. If all the items in the Q-set were about using mom as a secure base, they would be hard to sort; some items would have to be placed low even though the child is quite secure. "Filler" items can also serve other purposes. For example, they make the Q-set's focus on security less obvious. This may reduce social desirability responding when mothers serve as observers.

**53. Child puts his arms around mother or puts his hand on her shoulder when she picks him up.**

**Low: Accepts being picked up but doesn't especially help or hold on.**

Rationale: This is of interest as an aspect of secure base behavior. Specifically, this relaxed posture suggests that the child is not concerned about mother being intrusive or controlling during contact, terminating contact while the child still desires it, or being unresponsive to contact maintaining behaviors. It may also indicate that, if distressed, the child could be comforted by contact with mother. (Including this item in the Q-set lets us treat this interpretation as an empirical question. ) See Item 88 for comment on Bowlby's interpretation of physical contact as a consummatory response.

**54. Child acts like he expects mother to interfere with his activities when she is simply trying to help him with something.**

**Low: Accepts mother's help readily, unless she is in fact interfering.**

Rationale: This suggests a history of maternal interference and also reveals difficulty using the mother as a source of information during play and exploration. Relevant behaviors are whining, angry slapping or banging a plaything, or turning away. This is a specific case of behavior referred to more generally in Item 79 (Readily becomes angry at mother). Interaction among Q-set: I items complement one another and increase the sensitivity of a Q-sort description.

If you see several instances of anger when mother offers help, or anger when she offers help and in other contexts as well, both Items 54 and 79 are placed high. This markedly reduces security



scores based on the security criterion sort. If you see anger only when mother offers help, only Item 54 is placed high. If you see only "low level" signs of anger, you can at least place Item 79 somewhat above the middle of the sort. But because it is not placed as high as Item 54 in the criterion sort it can't, on its own, have much effect on the security score.

**55. Child copies a number of behaviors or way of doing things from watching mother's behavior.**

**Low: Doesn't noticeably copy mother's behavior.**

Rationale: It would be interesting to see whether there is a relation between security and the imitative behavior that was once used as an index of closeness or "identification". However, this is a primarily a "filler" item. Such items are necessary. They make a Q-set sort more easily. They can also serve other purposes. For example, they make the Q-set's focus on security less obvious. This may reduce social desirability responding when mothers serve as observers. In our experience, the behavior described in this item is not very often observed. It is usually placed in Pile 5. It would probably be dropped in any revision of the Q-set.

**56. Child becomes shy or loses interest when an activity looks like it might be difficult.**

**Low: Thinks he can do difficult tasks.**

Rationale: This is a "filler" item. If anything, it reflects (negatively) competence motivation or a persistence-related temperament trait. No secure base connotation is intended. "Filler" items are necessary. They make a Q-set sort more easily. They can also serve other purposes. For example, they make the Q-set's focus on security less obvious. This may reduce social desirability responding when mothers serve as observers. Along with other exploration related items, this item might play a useful role in a competence motivation criterion sort.

**57. Child is fearless.**

**Low: Child is cautious or fearful.**

Rationale: This is a "filler" item. It may reflect a trait-like disposition toward positive or negative affectivity. Filler items are necessary. If all the items in the Q-set were about using mom as a secure base, they would be hard to sort; some items would have to be placed low even though the child is quite secure. "Filler" items can also serve other purposes. For example, they make the Q-set's focus on security less obvious. This may reduce social desirability responding when mothers serve as observers.

**58. Child largely ignores adults who visit the home Finds his own activities more interesting.**

**Low: Finds visitors quite interesting, even if he is a bit shy at first.**

Rationale: This is a "filler" item intended to assess trait-like sociability. No secure base connotation is intended. If this item were in fact significantly with the overall security score, experts would want to place it higher in any future security criterion sort. It would not follow that observers should use the item differently. It is never appropriate for observers to make a global appraisal and then derive item placements from this. Their job is to describe the child's behavior. There is no reason for the observer even to know what constructs will be scored from the sort.

**59. When child finishes with an activity or toy, he generally finds something else to do without returning to mother between activities.**

**Low: When finished with an activity or toy, he returns to mother for play, affection or help finding more to do.**

Rationale: An attachment figure supports exploration and learning by providing a source of information, help and stimulation. Ross Parke calls this "provisioning". This item focuses on how actively the child uses the mother as a base from which to explore. Both mother and child play active roles in the secure base relationship. Mother monitors the child's activity, offering contact, reassurance, help, and interaction and pointing out interesting things to do or examine. The child's role is to monitor her location and activities, and actively turn to her when such "provisions" are needed.

It is important to distinguish between relationships in which the mother is very active and takes all the initiative in provisioning and those in which the child takes an active role as well. A common mistake is to place the item low merely because there are lots of provisioning interactions. Place the item low if the child is actively using the mother as a resource. If mom is so active that the child has little opportunity to initiate secure base bids, you can't score the item. Place it in Pile 5. To score this item correctly the observer must know to look for the behavior, be alert to situations in which it might occur, keep track of multiple instances.

**60. If mother reassures him by saying "It's OK" or "It won't hurt you", child will approach or play with things that initially made him cautious or afraid.**

**Middle if never cautious or afraid.**

**Low: Child does not accept mother's assurances.**

Rationale: In his book, *A Secure Base*, Bowlby suggested that an attachment figure must be one who is viewed as "stronger and wiser" than one's self. This however is not enough; the person must also be someone who is trusted. This item is intended to assess the child's trust or confidence in mother's support and reassurance. Observers should keep in mind that this behavior reflects an interaction of the child's interaction history with the attachment figure and a wide range of temperamental and situational factors that influence how worried or afraid the child is.

**61. Plays roughly with mother. Bumps, scratches, or bites during active play.  
(Does not necessarily mean to hurt mom)**

**Middle if play is never very active**

**Low: Plays active games without injuring mother.**

Rationale: This item was included in the Q-set to help cope with the problem of social desirability bias in maternal sorts. However, some attachment theorists would interpret such behavior as a sign of underlying relationship problems. Others would view it in terms of temperament. Do not prejudge the secure base relevance of this behavior. Do not let it influence placement of other items. Observers rarely see relevant behavior during a visit. This is not the kind of behavior that can be assessed very well by questioning the mother. This item is rarely placed far from the middle of a sort.

**62. When child is in a happy mood, he is likely to stay that way all day.****Low : Happy moods are very changeable.**

Rationale: This item refers to a temperament trait that could be construed as either high threshold for negative affect or tendency toward positive affect. No secure base connotation is intended. This item was included primarily to help examine the relation between security and positive affect. Studies have consistently shown that security is associated with positive affect. One aspect of this is that maternal sensitivity is related to harmonious interaction. Another aspect involves the possibility that positive affectivity could be an alternative interpretation of security.

**63. Even before trying things himself, child tries to get someone to help him.****Low: Confident. Tries things himself before seeking help.**

Rationale: This is a "filler item". It refers to independence or competence related behavior. No secure base connotation is intended. "Filler" items are necessary. If all the items in the Q-set were about using mom as a secure base, they would be hard to sort; some items would have to be placed low even though the child is quite secure. "Filler" items can also serve other purposes. For example, they make the Q-set's focus on security less obvious. This may reduce social desirability responding when mothers serve as observers.

**64. Child enjoys climbing all over mother when they play.****Low: Doesn't especially want a lot of close contact when they play.**

Rationale: This item focuses on indications that the child enjoys close physical contact. A child who enjoys close physical contact is assumed likely to find such contact comforting when distressed. A very active child may not show much cuddling or resting on mother's lap. But it may be clear from rough-and-tumble play that the child enjoys close physical contact. Not all contact play indicates such enjoyment. Looks for hugs or leaning on the mother at the end of a chase; clambering on the mother in a teasing or playful way when she is sitting; or running toward mother and grasping her legs/ burying face in her skirt. Also count long bouts of contact play as evidence that the child enjoys physical contact per se. If there are no bouts of active play, place the item in Pile 5. Place it lower if there is plenty of active play and only incidental contact.

**65. Child is easily upset when mother makes him change from one activity to another.**

(Even if the new activity is something child often enjoys. )

**Low: Readily changes activities when mother suggest new ones.**

Rationale: This is a "filler item". The behavior this item describes probably reflects an interaction between temperament traits and a history of intrusive maternal behavior. Still, no secure base connotation is intended. "Filler" items are necessary. If all the items in the Q-set were about using mom as a secure base, they would be hard to sort; some items would have to be placed low even though the child is quite secure. "Filler" items can also serve other purposes. For example, they make the Q-set's focus on security less obvious. This may reduce social desirability responding when mothers serve as observers.

**66. Child easily grows fond of adults who visit his home and are friendly to him.****Low: Doesn't grow fond of new people very easily.**

Rationale: Some attachment theorists have hypothesized that attachment security is associated with a range of positive emotional responses ranging from empathy to emotional openness. In order to evaluate this hypothesis, the Q-set includes a number of relevant items. Observers should avoid prejudging the relation of such behavior to secure base behavior and attachment security. It is very important not to reduce attachment theory to the hypothesis that "All good things go together". Relations between attachment and various aspects of emotion and positive affectivity should be viewed as empirical issues.

**67. When the family has visitors, child wants them to pay a lot of attention to him.****Low: Does not particularly seek attention from visitors.**

Rationale: This item is included in the Q-set to assess sociability, not secure base behavior. Place it low in the sort if child is preoccupied with his/her own activities or is indifferent to the observer. Place it in Pile 5 if the child is preoccupied with mom or wary of the observer throughout the visit. Observers should respond if the child seeks interaction, but not monopolize the child's time. After age 3, many children are distracted by a very engaging observer. This is not related to attachment security and cuts down on opportunities to observe secure base related behavior.

Note: It is easy to overlook "scorable" behavior until you are very familiar with the Q-set items and have used them in the field. Lapsing into play for play's sake is often a sign that an inexperienced observer is missing a lot and therefore finding the visits boring.

**68. On the average, child is a more active type person than mother.****Low: On the average, child is less active type person than mother.**

Rationale: This is a "filler item". No secure base connotation is intended. "Filler" items are necessary. If all the items in the Q-set were about using mom as a secure base, they would be hard to sort; some items would have to be placed low even though the child is quite secure. "Filler" items can also serve other purposes. For example, they make the Q-set's focus on security less obvious. This may reduce social desirability responding when mothers serve as observers.

**69. Rarely asks mother for help. Middle if child is too young to ask.****Low: Often asks mother for help.**

Rationale: This item is included in the Q-set to assess a problem in secure base behavior, not as a measure of independence. Using mother as a source of information is an aspect of secure base behavior. Asking for her help suggests confidence in her availability and responsiveness. A child who expects mom to ignore or be intrusive rarely asks or approaches her for help. Place the item low in the sort if the child seems comfortable asking mother for help. Don't place it low if the child is merely clingy and dependent.

- 70. Child quickly greets his mother with a big smile when she enters the room. (Shows her a toy, gestures, or says "Hi, Mommy").**

**Low: Doesn't greet mother unless she greets him first.**

Rationale: Some attachment theorists have hypothesized that attachment security is associated with a range of positive emotional responses ranging from empathy to emotional openness. In order to evaluate this hypothesis, the Q-set includes a number of relevant items. Observers should avoid prejudging the relation of such behavior to secure base behavior and attachment security. It is very important not to reduce attachment theory to the hypothesis that "All good things go together". Relations between attachment and various aspects of emotion and positive affectivity should be viewed as empirical issues.

- 71. If held in mother's arms, child stops crying and quickly recovers after being frightened or upset.**

**Low: Not easily comforted.**

Rationale: The secure base phenomenon operates in both ordinary and emergency situations. In emergencies exploratory behavior is preempted by proximity seeking and contact maintaining behavior. Bowlby described ventral-ventral contact as a prepotent distress reducing stimulus. In the Strange Situation, the paradoxical combination of contact seeking and inability to be comforted by contact is a hallmark of insecure resistant attachment. This item is intended to capture effective functioning of physical contact as a component of secure base behavior in emergencies.

This behavior is not ordinarily seen in home observations unless the child suffers some sort of injury. Situations in which the mother refuses to give the child something often elicit crying but are not the best contexts for assessing response to contact because the mother is both provocateur and comforter. Do not overlook the fact that temperament characteristics can influence ease of comforting. When a secure infant is difficult to comfort it tends to actively maintain contact and does not engage in angry or contact resisting behavior unless mom is intrusive or unresponsive.

- 72. If visitors laugh at or approve of something the child does, he repeats it again and again.**

**Low: Visitors' reactions don't influence child this way.**

Rationale: This item refers to the child's response to the observer. Within children this seems to be a rather consistent trait. Differences among children striking, ranging from eager engagement to indifference or active avoidance. No secure base connotation is intended.

- 73. Child has a cuddly toy or security blanket that he carries around, takes it to bed, or holds when upset.**

(Do not include bottle or pacifier if child is under two years old. )

**Low: Can take such things or leave them, or has none at all.**

Rationale: It has long been hypothesized that cuddly toys and "security blankets" are psychological equivalents or substitutes for an attachment figure. This is an interesting idea and this

item was included to take a look at the phenomenon in observational data. Observers should not prejudge the issue. You can often get useful information about this behavior by asking the child if he/she has a doll or animal they like to carry around or take with them when they go to bed. It is also useful to ask mothers for information about this behavior.

**74. When mother doesn't do what child wants right away, child behaves as if mom were not going to do it at all.**

**(Fusses, gets angry, walks off to other activities, etc. )**

**Low: Waits a reasonable time, as if he expects mother will shortly do what he asked.**

Rationale: A key postulate of Bowlby and Ainsworth's attachment theory is that maternal sensitivity is a critical factor in attachment development. Sensitivity includes a low threshold for detecting infant signals, cooperation (vs. interference) with the infant's ongoing behavior, physical and psychological availability, and acceptance of the infant's needs and demands. This item is included in the Q-set on the theory that it reflects a history of maternal interference. Although it is thought to be related to secure base behavior, this is an empirical issue. Observers should not prejudge this relationship.

**75. At home, child gets upset or cries when mother walks out of the room.  
(May or may not follow her. )**

**Low: Notices her leaving; may follow but doesn't get, upset.**

Rationale: A hallmark of secure attachment is confidence in the mom's availability and responsiveness. In a familiar setting most infants and children do not protest mother leaving the room unless her behavior is in some way out of the ordinary. Observers should watch closely for facial signs; these are sometimes subtle or fleeting. Do not over score separation responses that occur before the child is clearly comfortable with the observer's presence. Do not over score a single instance. That the behavior is clear or intense does not imply that it is typical. Ask the mother whether the child "reacts this way now and then".

**76. When given a choice, child would rather play with toys than with adults.**

**Low: Would rather play with adults than toys.**

Rationale: This is a "filler" item. It refers to a trait called "Person vs. Thing Orientation" which is studied in adult personality research. Although the item has nothing to do with attachment, it is important to score it accurately. "Filler" items are necessary. If all the items in the Q-set were about using mom as a secure base, they would be hard to sort; some items would have to be placed low even though the child is quite secure. "Filler" items can also serve other purposes. For example, they make the Q-set's focus on security less obvious. This may reduce social desirability responding when mothers serve as observers.

**77. When mother asks child to do something, he readily understands what she wants (May or may not obey. )**

**Middle if too young to understand**

**Low: Sometimes puzzled or slow to understand what mother wants.**

Rationale: This is a "filler" item. It is related to the child's cognitive abilities, not to any aspect of secure base behavior. Although the item has nothing to do with attachment, it is important to score it accurately. "Filler" items are necessary. If all the items in the Q-set were about using mom as a secure base, they would be hard to sort; some items would have to be placed low even though the child is quite secure. "Filler" items can also serve other purposes. For example, they make the Q-set's focus on security less obvious. This may reduce social desirability responding when mothers serve as observers.

**78. Child enjoys being hugged or held by people other than his parents and/or grandparents.**

**Low: No particular interest in such contact.**

Rationale: Although infants and children often initiate contact with visitors, they are less likely to accept or enjoy contact initiated by the visitor. Especially after age 1, indiscriminate fondness for physical contact with unfamiliar adults is unusual. It suggests diminished secure base orientation. Focus on contact initiated by the adult, especially in the first half of the visit, before there has been a lot of interaction with the child. It can be useful for the visitor to take the child's hand, ask the child to sit on his/ her lap, or pick the child up in an appropriate context.

Do not place the item low because the child rejects being picked up or hugged when upset. It is expected that the child would prefer mom in this situation. Note: Child may be especially cautious with male visitors. Do not place the item in Pile 8 or 9 unless mom reports that the child would be the same with a female.

**79. Child easily becomes angry at mother.**

**Low: Doesn't become angry at mother unless she is very intrusive or he is very tired.**

Rationale: This is an aspect of smooth interaction and confidence in mother's sensitivity, availability and responsiveness. Any child might become angry if mom is extremely unresponsive or intrusive. Don't place this item high if you find yourself saying "she asked for it". Look for situations in which the child becomes angry with little provocation. In order to correctly score this item, you need to have noticed the eliciting circumstances. Don't just watch; anticipate.

Clear instances of anger or annoyance are a better basis for scoring than the mere absence of anger. Do not place this item very low (< 3) unless the child is clearly patient and consistently pleasant during interaction with mom. Place it in Pile 5 if you don't have clear evidence. Some very pleasant children can surprise you.

**80. Child uses mother's facial expressions as good source of information when something looks risky or threatening.**

**Low: Makes up his own mind without checking mother's expressions first.**

Rationale: This behavior has been labeled "social referencing" by Campos & Stenberg (1981) labeled this behavior "social referencing". It is of interest here as an element of the secure base phenomenon. Include both looking to mom for information about an object or intended act and looking to her for information about her likely response (i.e., will she disapprove). Looking toward the mother can easily come under operant control if she is ever present and a bit intrusive. Look for instances in which there is no obvious cue or prompt from mom.

This is a situation in which you have to learn to anticipate. You won't remember a cue or prompt that preceded the social referencing unless you are alert to such things before the child looks to her.

### **81. Child cries as a way of getting mother to what he wants.**

**Low: Mainly cries because of genuine discomfort (tired, sad, afraid, etc. ).**

Rationale: Attachment theorists associate this behavior with insensitive care, limited communication skills and interrupted play and exploration. Focus on crying as the child's first or quickest way of communicating and on the extent to which the child's behavior is organized around crying to get what he/ she wants. It is doesn't matter that this may be the only behavior that could elicit a timely response from mother.

This behavior has been the subject of controversy. Operant theorists focus on the fact that contingent maternal response could increase rates of crying. Clearly, crying can come under a degree of operant control, esp. after age one.

Attachment theorists focus on the secure base implications of differential response to crying. They emphasize that it undermines both the growth of more fluent communication skills and confidence in mother's availability and responsiveness. In addition, frequent crying interferes with ongoing play and exploration. Insensitive care, limited communication skills, and disrupted play add up to a difficult secure base relationship.

### **82. Child spends most of his play time with just a few favorite toys or activities.**

**Low: Explores and plays (briefly) with a number of different toys.**

Rationale: This is a "filler item". No secure base connotation is intended. Nonetheless, it is important to score this item accurately. This item is rarely placed  $> 7$  or  $< 3$ . If you place this item very high (or very low), you are saying that the child's behavior is very largely organized around the need or intention to play with only a few (or with many) toys. That is, the child would adjust other aspects of his behavior in order to maintain this preference. The child would stick with one activity at all costs (or seem driven from toy to toy to toy). Either would be unusual.

Filler items are necessary. If all the items in the Q-set were about the child's ability to use mom as a secure base, they would be hard to sort; some items would have to be placed low even though the child is quite secure. "Filler" items can also serve other purposes. For example, they make the Q-set's focus on security less obvious. This may reduce social desirability responding when mothers serve as observers.



**83. When child is bored, he goes to mother looking for something to do.****Low: Wanders around or just does nothing for a while, until something comes up.**

Rationale: This is an aspect of secure base behavior. An attachment figure supports exploration and learning by providing a source of information, help and stimulation. Ross Parke calls this "provisioning". This item focuses on how actively the child uses mom as a base from which to explore. Both mother and child play active roles in the secure base relationship. Mother monitors the child's activity, offering contact, reassurance, help, and interaction and pointing out interesting things to do or examine. The child's role is to monitor her location and activities, and actively turn to her when such "provisions" are needed.

It is important to distinguish between relationships in which the mother is very active and takes all the initiative in provisioning and those in which the child takes an active role as well. A common mistake is to place the item high merely because there are lots of provisioning interactions.

Place the item high only if the child is actively using the mother as a resource. Place it low if typically the child wanders aimlessly when finished playing with something or bored with some activity. (Don't count viewing TV as "aimless" behavior. Don't place the item very low because of one bout of wandering. Make sure this is typical. If mother is so active that the child has little opportunity to initiate secure base bids, you can't score the item. Place it in Pile 5.

**84. Child makes at least some effort to be clean and tidy around the house.****Low: Spills and smears things on himself and on floors all the time.**

Rationale: This is a "filler" item. It was included because it is very socially desirable. The item is placed <3 only if the child is a real mess (either clumsily or carelessly). Don't place the item >7 unless, throughout the visit, the child seems to have a low (or high) threshold for behavior related to keeping things clean and tidy. Either extreme is unusual. You will recognize relevant behavior if you see it.

For infants and very young children, place the item in Pile 5. Note: This is a good example of an item that is worded moderately but allows you to make a rather extreme statement about the child by placing it very high or very low. Moderate phrasing reduces desirability response set.

**85. Child is strongly attracted to new activities and new toys.****Low: New things do not attract him away from familiar toys or activities.**

Rationale: This is a "filler" item. If anything, it might be related to cognitive style. It is not intended to carry any secure base connotation at all. Nonetheless it is important to score it accurately. Focus on novel things the visitor brings (not necessarily toys) and on new activities he/she suggests. Do not focus on the child's response to the visitor per se or on participating with the stranger in familiar activities. These are aspects of sociability and tapped by other items.

It can be useful to suggest a novel activity in order to gauge the child's response. As mentioned in the section, About Sorting and Observing, it is also useful to plan some brief activities for mother and child. Unless they are activities in which mother and child often engage, this is a good chance to observe the child's interest in new activities. You might also ask mother about interest in new activities. If you don't have an opportunity to observe responses to new activities or toys, place the item in pile 5.

**86. Child tries to get mother to imitate him, or quickly notices and enjoys it when mom imitates him on her own.**

**Low: Doesn't show any particular interest in this such engagement.**

Rationale: This behavior that combines aspects of smooth interaction, affective sharing, and perhaps also social referencing. It refers only to behavior toward mother; not toward the visitor. Do not over score single instances. Look for several instances, long chains of repeating the imitated behavior, or instances in which the child's response is very clearly positive. Do not place the item low just because you don't see the child try to elicit imitation. Look for clear or repeated instances of the child being indifferent to mother imitating him. Because the behavior is rare, the item is most often placed in pile 5.

**87. If mother laughs at or approves of something the child has done, he repeats again and again.**

**Low: Child is not particularly influenced this way.**

Rationale: This behavior is reflects a trait-like low threshold for positive affect. Such a trait facilitates smooth interaction; that increases the chance that the child can put together a useful secure base relationship (if mother cooperates). It is also, in many instances, related to smooth interaction and affective sharing. It is fine for a temperament loaded item to add to the overall security score. Criterion sort scores are based on many items. Any item is most influential when it reinforces information from other items. If key secure base items are placed high, then this one can make a difference in the overall security score. It cannot produce a spuriously high security score on its own.

**88. When something upsets the child, he stays where he is and cries.**

**Low: Goes to mother when he cries. Doesn't wait for mom to come to him.**

Rationale: This behavior is analogous to "passive" behavior scored as resistance to contact in the Strange Situation. Both partners have active roles to play in a secure base relationship. Thus you should take note if all the responsibility is left to the adult partner. Give more weight to situations in which something has happened to the infant and less to tantrums when mother is unresponsive. This item is in the Q-set because it describes behavior that is sometimes observed. The observer should score the item from the behavior alone. Describe, don't diagnose.

Bowlby, of course, took a very strong position about what a human infant "ought" to do when distressed and what form secure base behavior should take. Unless the infant is restrained or disabled, distress without proximity seeking is inconsistent with Bowlby's idea of a properly working attachment control system. (Whether the problem is a flaw in the control system itself or some sort of affect-based interference with its smooth functioning is not specified.)

In Bowlby's view attachment behavior is controlled by a species specific behavior control system. When an infant is distressed this control system will be activated. Play and exploration are reduced. The infant orients toward and seeks proximity to the attachment figure. It makes a full approach and seeks ventral-ventral contact until comforted. Ventral-ventral contact is seen as a virtual consummatory response for terminating distress.

Learning theorists are understandably skeptical of the notion that any specific behavior "ought" to occur in a particular situation. But Bowlby's strong normative position has served attachment theory well. It is the only a priori basis for predicting that avoidance and resistance in the Strange Situation would be associated with insensitive care and attachment related problems beyond infancy.

**89. Child's facial expressions are strong and clear when he is playing with something.**

**Low: Facial expressions are not particularly clear or varied.**

Rationale: This item refers to facial expressions of positive affect and interest, not to fussing and cry faces. It is a "filler item". It is not intended to carry any secure base connotation at all. Nonetheless it is important to score it accurately.

"Filler" items are necessary. If all the items in the Q-set were about the child's ability to use mom as a secure base, they would be hard to sort; some items would have to be placed low even though the child is quite secure. "Filler" items can also serve other purposes. For example, they make the Q-set's focus on security less obvious. This may reduce social desirability responding when mothers serve as observers.

Note: It is easy to overlook "scorable" behavior until you are very familiar with the Q-set items and have used them in the field. Lapsing into play for play's sake is often a sign that an inexperienced observer is missing a lot and therefore finding the visits boring.

**90. If mother moves very far, child follows along and continues his play in the area she has moved to. (Doesn't have to be called or carried along; doesn't stop play or get upset.)**

**Middle if child isn't allowed or doesn't have room to move very far away.**

**Low: Child may or may not continue play but does not adjust location when mom moves.**

Rationale: This is of interest as an aspect of the child's active role in the secure base relationship. The child manages to coordinate play with active efforts to monitor and maintain access to mom. There is no negative connotation (e.g., clinginess or dependency) attached to this behavior. The child moves along without getting upset. This is competent secure base behavior in a child who (for trait or situational reasons) prefers to play in proximity to mom.

This behavior is most often seen in unfamiliar settings or if the child is wary of the visitor. If you see clear examples in the home, place the item appropriately. In a few cases we have placed the item high when a child whose play was not movable and the child protested mom beginning to move away. Although mother is moving off, she is willing to let the child continue playing where he is.

Do not give much weight to the absence of following or moving play if the observations are limited to in and around the home the child seems comfortable with the visitor.