

Two Interview based Measures AAI & AAP

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Adult Attachment Interview and psychoanalytic perspective

Buchheim A, Kächele H (2003) Adult Attachment Interview and psychoanalytic perspective: a single case study. *Psychoanalytic Inquiry* 23: 81-101

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secure (F)

- Adults with the classification secure (F) give open, coherent and consistent accounts of their childhood memories, regardless of whether they were positive or negative. They are able to integrate their various experiences into a unitary whole and to reflect upon their accounts during their interviews. These persons have free access to the topics asked about and show a feeling for balance.

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dismissing (Ds)

- Adults with the classification dismissing (Ds) give incoherent incomplete accounts of the experiences and often show gaps in memory. As a defense against the surfacing of painful memories, they minimize the importance of attachment.
- These people insist on normality and inner independence from others. Attachment figures are mostly presented positively without being able to give concrete examples for this. Possible negative influences are denied.

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Move to the Level of Representation

- The systematic description of childhood relationship experiences led to the construction of an attachment theory with a life-cycle perspective. Since early relationship experiences seem to influence adult relationships, there has been a growing interest in the attachment representations of adults.
- An essential step in this development was the so-called "move to the level of representation", which was taken by George, Kaplan and Main (1985).

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Adult Attachment Interview (AAI)

- The authors have developed a semistructured interview, the Adult Attachment Interview (AAI), designed to elicit thoughts, feelings and memories about early attachment experiences and to assess the individual's state of mind in respect to attachment: secure-autonomous, dismissing, preoccupied, and unresolved state of mind.
- The interviews, transcribed literally, are rated along different scales e. g.: loving relationship with mother and father, quality of recall, idealization and denigration of relationships and most importantly coherence of the narrative.

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preoccupied (E)

- Adults with the classification preoccupied (E) recount in an excessive, often non-objective, and angry way the conflicts experienced with their attachment figures.
- They appear enmeshed and give the impression that past experiences are currently occurring, and that they are unable to distance themselves from them.
- They describe conflict-stricken events and offer exaggerated pseudo-psychological analyses of them.
- Characteristic of preoccupied people is the oscillation between positive and negative evaluations, without being conscious of the inherent contradiction. In general, their language seems confused, unclear and vague.

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unresolved (Ud)

- Adults with the classification unresolved (Ud) show temporary lapses in the monitoring of reasoning or discourse during discussion of potentially traumatic events.
- Specifically, lapses in reasoning - for example, indications that a speaker believes that a deceased person is both dead and not dead - may indicate parallel, incompatible belief and memory systems regarding a traumatic event that have become dissociated.
- Lapses of monitoring of discourse, such as sudden change into colloquial speech, suggest the possibility of state-shifts.

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Borderline Personality Disorder

- Fonagy et al. (1998) found that 75% of persons with borderline personality disorder had an occupied state of mind, and that half of those fell in a rarely used subgroup, fearfully preoccupied (E3) with respect to traumatic events; 80% of borderline patients were classified as unresolved concerning abuse.
- Patrick & Hobson (1994) found that all women with borderline personality were classified as pre-occupied and 10 of 12 were classified as E3, which often co-occurs with unresolved status. In this study 75% of the borderline patients were classified as unresolved.

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A Case

I know how how would you describe the relationship to your parents, your mother and father, when you were a child?
P: ... how the long silence says a lot (laughs). I couldn't rely on them, I couldn't rely on them, never.
I: ... how?
P: I can't say, my mother needs to be cared for today, and other people have to coordinate with me all the time, the neighbors and the social institution, they have to check if it is right what she is saying or in the long, there are experiences with her. I would say aggressive caregiving. I was not able to be ill, and when I was ill, then, there was, I didn't like, that is why I am not able to drink these herbal teas up to now, just without sugar, something like that, but being ill was really a mess for me, but potatoes around my neck, but

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Main & Goldwyns (1996) criteria

- Loss:
 - † Indication of disbelief that the person is dead
 - † Indication of confusion between self and dead person
 - † Disorientation with respect to time and space
 - † Psychologically confused statements
 - † Extreme behavioral reaction to a loss

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Main & Goldwyns (1996) criteria

- Abuse:
 - † Unsuccessful denial of the occurrence or intensity of the abusive experience
 - † Feelings of being causal in the abuse and deserving it
 - † Disoriented speech

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aggressive caregiving

- I would say aggressive caregiving. I tried to be healthy again as fast as possible, today I can be more generous with myself in that case very slowly, being ill, but that lasted so many years, with my father I didn't have a good relationship either. I can't report something positive, very little, my mother always told me father that I did wrong, she did that probably also with my very young brother, she told my father, and when he came back in the evening, he hit me, something like that, it just happened yesterday, two weeks ago I got frightened, he always scared me when I was a child.*

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No security

I still suffer of that, it happens often today that I get frightened when somebody is in the same room though I know who is present. I don't have any feeling of security, and I always thought, some day we will have a break down and my father will be unemployed, he was popular in his job but as a child I always had that feeling that everything can fall apart very fast and I worked in early years, also in the holidays, and tried to earn some money. I always had the feeling there is no security, nothing to rely on.

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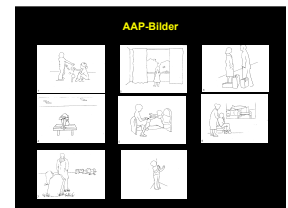
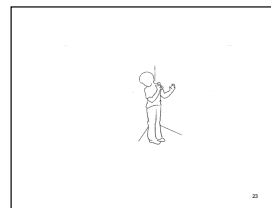
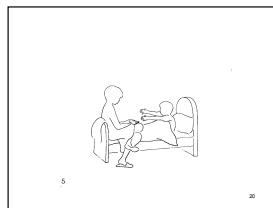
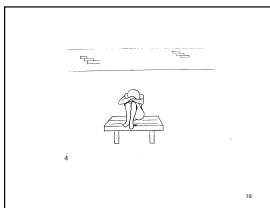
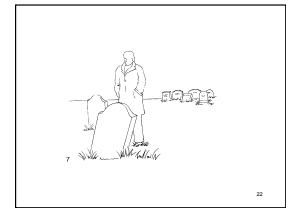
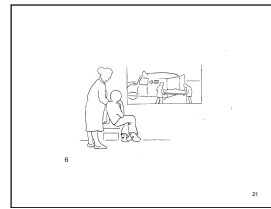
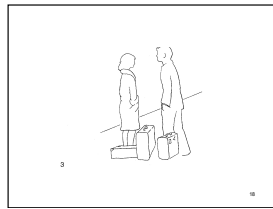
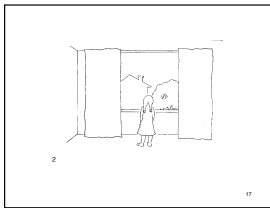
Adult Attachment Pictures

George C. West M (2001) The development and preliminary validation of a new measure of Adult Attachment: The Adult Attachment Projective. *Attach Hum Dev* 3: 30-61



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Defensive Processes

George & Solomon (1999) propose that a major difference between psychoanalysis and attachment theory falls in the description of the defensive processes themselves. Traditional psychoanalytic models provide a complex constellation of defenses to interpret a broad range of intrapsychic phenomenon, including fantasy, dream, wish, and impulse.

According to George and Solomon (1999) Bowlby's perspective conceives defensive exclusion in terms of two qualitatively distinct forms of information processing: **disavowal** (similar to repression) and **capacitive disconnection** (similar to splitting). These two defensive strategies provide the individual (infant and adult) with an organized form of excluding information from conscious awareness or separating affect from a situation or person eliciting it.

George and West (1999) conclude: "In order to understand the relationship between adult attachment and mental health risk we need to examine the attachment concepts of defense and segregated systems, the **mental processes that define disorganization**" (p. 295).

Suggesting that these representational structures have developed under conditions of attachment trauma (abuse, loss) the concept of segregated systems is fruitful to explain some forms of relationship-based psychopathology in adults.

They conclude that "in summary the attachment contribution to mental ill health is not the product of avoidance, but rather the product of **attachment disorganization** that results in repeated experiences of dysregulation and breakdowns of defense" (p. 296).

AAP-example "Resolved"

AAP picture: Child at Window

- In this picture a girl is dreaming away looking out of the window at houses and gardens vis-à-vis. What led up to this? Having moved into a new city the girl is examining her room for the first time. And the view she has got from there. **She feels extremely lonely and lost** and is looking whether there are children in the neighborhood where she lives, where the next playground is, where her school is, whether there is somebody outside with whom she could make friends and she really doesn't know yet what she is supposed to do here and to be doing there. She is standing there a little lonely and lost and without courage. But this will change once she has lived here for a while, her room will be completely furnished, she then will feel at ease and find many new friends.

- Segregated System Marker:** „she feels extremely lonely“, „lost“
- Internalized secure base:** „find some friends“, „make new friends“
- Capacity to act:** „is looking where the next playground is“

AAP-example "Unresolved"

AAP picture: Corner

- He is afraid:** I believe he is beaten, maybe by his own father: He moves towards the corner trying to save himself one step back after the other and so ended up **being cornered**, he's got no chance to get away from him. He is hiding his hands but that is only a rather empty **He actually knows that he cannot defend himself** he waits that it will stop, although he is without hope that it will stop. These moments always seem to be endless. And he actually comes nearer, the father. Maybe his once again.

- Segregated System Marker:** fear „is afraid“, helplessness: „being cornered“
- Unresolved:** no capacity to act, no comfort/help, no internalized secure base