

Adult Attachment Interview Protocol: Outlines

Preface: We're doing an AAI. Today is (date), my name is (name of interviewer), and this is Interview (number or code).

I'm going to be interviewing you about your childhood experiences, and how those experiences may have affected your adult personality. We'll focus mainly on your childhood, but later we'll get on to your adolescence and then to what's going on right now. Many parents like this interview even though we ask very personal questions. You should feel free to say if there are questions that you're not comfortable answering. You should also let me know afterwards if you'd like to get help in talking through any of the issues raised during the interview. In the interview, part of what we're looking at is how parents' experiences when they were kids affect how they parent. Everything we ask about will be kept confidential. This interview usually takes about an hour.

Theme	Main Questions	Sub-questions	Notes
Early Family Situation	<p>1. <i>Could you start by filling me in on your family when you were little: where you lived, whether you moved around much, what your parents did for a living, brothers & sisters, that sort of thing? (verbatim)</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">** If raised by several persons ask: <i>Who would you say raised you?</i></p>	<p>a. <i>Did you see much of your grandparents when you were little?</i></p> <p>b. <i>Did you have brothers, sisters living in the house, or anybody besides your parents? Are they living nearby now or do they live elsewhere?</i></p>	This should take no longer than 5 minutes: Not used for coding
Relationship with Parents	<p>2. <i>I'd like you to try to describe your relationship with your parents as a young child...if you could start from as far back as you can remember?</i></p>		This should be relatively brief. Just sets the stage.
5 Adjectives-Mother	<p>3. <i>Now I'd like you to choose five adjectives or words that reflect your relationship with your mother starting from as far back as you can remember in early childhood—as early as you can go—but say, age 5 to 12. This may take a bit of time so go ahead and think for a minute..then I'll ask you why you chose them. I'll write each one of them down as you give them to me.</i></p>	<p><i>You said your relationship with her was _____. (or that she was ____). Can you think of a specific memory that fits with her being_____?</i></p> <p>If Response is general memory or redefinition: <i>Ask for memory, then specific memory Can you think of a particular time when she was _____?</i></p>	3-Time Rule to Get Specific Memories for this and for upset, separated, and rejected
5 Adjectives-Father	<p>4. SAME AS MOTHER</p>		
Closest Parent	<p>5. <i>Now I wonder if you could tell me to which parent did you feel the closest, and why? Why isn't there this feeling with</i></p>	<p>OK remark: <i>You've already discussed this a bit, but...</i></p>	

	<i>your other parent?</i>		
Upset as Child	<p>6. <i>When you were upset as a child, what would you do?</i></p> <p><i>When you were <u>upset emotionally</u> when you were little, what would you do?</i></p> <p><i>Can you remember what would happen when you were <u>hurt physically</u>... like maybe when you fell down skating or fell off your bike?</i></p> <p><i>Can you remember a time when you were <u>sick</u> as a child?</i></p>	<p>For each, (what is needed are specific memories)</p> <p>If the participant hasn't mentioned being held by parent in incidents, ask: <i>I was just wondering, do you remember being held by either of your parents at any of these times—I mean, when you were upset, or hurt, or ill?</i></p>	<p>With 1st question allow participant to interpret <i>upset</i>. Probe to understand what participant means.</p>
1st Separation from Parents	<p>7. <i>What is the first time you remember being separated from your parents?</i></p>	<p>a. <i>How did you respond? Do you remember how your parents responded? (Specific memories)</i></p> <p>b. <i>Are there any other separations that stand out in your mind?</i></p>	
Rejection by Parents	<p>8. <i>Did you ever feel rejected as a young child? Looking back on it now, you may realize it wasn't really rejection, but what I'm trying to ask about here is whether you remember ever having <u>felt</u> rejected in childhood?</i></p> <p>8a. <i>Were you ever frightened or worried as a child? How did your parents respond?</i></p>	<p>a. <i>How old were you when you first felt this way?</i></p> <p>b. <i>Why do you think your parent did those things—do you think she realized she was rejecting you?</i></p> <p>c. <i>If no examples are forthcoming, Probe: Did you ever feel pushed away or ignored</i></p>	

<p>Parents Threatening</p>	<p>9 <i>Were your parents ever threatening with you in any way—maybe for discipline, or even jokingly?</i></p> <p><i>Some people have said, for example, that their parents would threaten to leave them or send them away from home.</i></p> <p><i>Some people have memories of threats or of some kind of behavior that was abusive.</i> <i>Did anything like this ever happen to you, or in your family?</i></p>	<p><i>How old were you at the time</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. <i>Did it happen often?</i> ii. <i>Do you feel this experience affects you now as an adult?</i> iii. <i>Does it influence your approach to your own child?</i> <p>2. <i>Did you have any such experiences involving people outside your family?</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. <i>How old were you at the time</i> ii. <i>Did it happen often?</i> iii. <i>Do you feel this experience affects you now as an adult?</i> iv. <i>Does it influence your approach to your own child?</i> 	<p>Be clinically sensitive but try to ascertain specific details: e.g., <i>What did getting the belt mean? To code abuse, there must be marks, for example.</i></p> <p>In cases of sexual abuse(as opposed to battering), the interviewer, seldom needs to press for details (unless there is real ambiguity) & must follow participant's lead.</p>
<p>Effect of Overall Experience</p>	<p>10. <i>In general, how do you think your overall experiences with your parents have affected your adult personality?</i></p> <p><i>Are there any early experiences you feel were a setback in your development?</i></p>	<p>a. If none named, ask: <i>Is there <u>anything</u> about your early experiences that you think might have been a setback, or had a negative effect on the way you turned out?</i></p>	
<p>“Why?” Parents’ Behavior</p>	<p>11. <i>Why do you think your parents behaved as they did during your childhood?</i></p>		
<p>Other Close Adults</p>	<p>12. <i>Were there any other adults with whom you were close, like parents, as a child?</i></p>	<p>a. <i>Or any other adults who were especially important to you, even though they weren't parental?</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>At what age were you close?</i> 2. <i>Did they live with your family?</i> 3. <i>Did they have any caregiving responsibilities?</i> 	<p>Not Terribly Important.</p>
<p>Loss</p>	<p>13. <i>Did you ever experience the loss of a parent or other close loved one when you were a young child? Someone like a sibling or close family member?</i></p> <p>13a. <i>Did you lose other important persons during your childhood?</i></p>	<p>a. <i>Could you tell me about the circumstances, and how old you were at the time?</i></p> <p>b. <i>How did you respond at the time?</i></p> <p>c <i>Was this death sudden or was it expected?</i></p>	<p>Very Important. Probe for details of how they found out, circumstances, funeral.</p>

	13b. <i>Have you lost other close persons, in adult years?</i>	<p>d. <i>Can you recall your feelings at the time?</i></p> <p>e. <i>Have your feelings regarding this death changed much over time?</i></p> <p>f. <i>If not volunteered earlier, ask: Did you attend the funeral? What was this like for you?</i></p> <p>g. <i>If loss of a parent or sibling, ask: What would you say was the effect on your other parent & household, and how did this change over the years?</i></p> <p>h. <i>Would you say this loss had an effect on your adult personality?</i></p> <p>i. <i>How does it affect your approach to your own child?</i></p>	<p>Probe at max, 4-5 losses.</p> <p>W/ older adults, probe loss of parents, spouse, children, and “any other loss which you feel may have been especially important to you.”</p>
Other Trauma	14. <i>Other than any difficult experiences you’ve already described, have you had any other experiences that you would regard as potentially traumatic?</i>	a. <i>Clarify if necessary: I mean any experience that was overwhelmingly and immediately terrifying?</i>	
Changes in Relationship w/ Parents	15. <i>Now I’d like to ask you a few more questions about your relationship with your parents. Were there many changes in your relationship with your parents (or remaining parent) after childhood? We’ll get to the present in a few minutes, but right now I mean changes occurring roughly between your childhood and your adulthood?</i>		
Current Relationship w/ Parents	16. <i>Now, I’d like to ask you what your relationship with your parents (or remaining parent) is like for you now that you’re an adult? Here I’m asking about your current relationship.</i>	<p>a. <i>Do you have much contact with your parents at present?</i></p> <p>b. <i>What would you say the relationship with your parents is like currently?</i></p> <p>c. <i>Could you tell me about any (or any other) sources of dissatisfaction in your current relationship with your parents? Any special sources of satisfaction?</i></p>	

<p>Current Relationship w/ Child</p>	<p>17. <i>I'd like to move on now to a different sort of question—it's not about your relationship with your parents. Instead, it's about an aspect of your relationship with <u>specific child/all participant's children</u>. How do you respond, in terms of feelings, when you separate from your child/children?</i></p>	<p>a. <i>Do you ever feel worried about <u>child</u>?</i></p>	
<p>3 Wishes/ 20 Years for Child</p>	<p>18. <i>If you had three wishes for your child twenty years from now, what would they be? I'm thinking partly of the kind of future you would like to see for your child. I'll give you a minute or two to think about this one?</i></p>	<p>a. <i>For participants w/o children, ask: ^Now, I 'd like you to continue to imagine that you have a one-year-old for just another minute. This time, I'd like to ask, if you had three wishes for your child</i></p>	
<p>Things Learned from Childhood</p>	<p>19. <i>Is there any particular thing that you feel you learned above all else from your own childhood experiences? I'm thinking here of something you feel you might have gained from the kind of childhood you had.</i></p>		
<p>Future: Hope for Child</p>	<p>20. <i>We've been focusing a lot on the past in this interview, but I'd like to end up looking a ways off into the future. We've just talked about what you think you may have learned from your own childhood experiences. I'd like to end by asking you what would you hope your child (or your imagined child) might have learned from his/her experiences of being parented by you?</i></p>		

ADULT ATTACHMENT INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

- Interview about your childhood experiences, how affected your adult personality
 - Focus mainly on your childhood, later adolescence, then what's going on now
 - Interview often takes about 1 hour, could be 45 min. to 1 1/2 hour.
- 1) early family situation, "where you lived, whether you moved around much, what your parents did for a living, brothers and sisters, that sort of thing" (Mary uses these very words) (raised by several persons: who would you say raised you?)
 - see much of grandparents when little?
 - brothers, sisters living in the house, or anybody besides your parents? Where living now?
 - 2) Describe your relationship with your parents as a young child (age 5 to 12)
 - 3) 5 adjectives – reflect/describe relationship w/mother (early as remember, age 5-12 ok) --any specific memories or incidents of (use word or phrase of participant)? memory that would illustrate? Ask 3 times if she doesn't come up with specific memory
 - 4) 5 adjectives – reflect/describe relationship w/dad (early, age 5-12 ok) --any specific memories or incidents of (use word or phrase of participant)? memory that would illustrate?
 - 5) To which parent did you feel the closest & why? Why not w/other parent?
 - 6) When upset as a child, what would you do?
 - Upset emotionally, what do? Specific time/incident?
 - Physically hurt? Specific time/incident?
 - Ill? Remember what would happen?
 - Remember being held by either of your parents (when upset, hurt, ill)?
 - 7) First time remember being separated from parents?
 - How did you respond? How parents responded?
 - Other separations stand out in mind? (ok older-school or overnight) not terribly important
 - 8) As young child, ever feel rejected (pushed away or ignored) by parents?
 - How old when first felt this way? What did you do?
 - 8a. Were you ever frightened or worried as a child?
 - How old, how parents respond?
 - 9) Parents ever threatening with you in any way – discipline, or jokingly? Very important
 - e.g. threaten to leave or send away, or "silent treatment" -- some have memories of threats, abuse – you, your family? -what exactly happened, describe -How old at time?
 - such experiences, other people outside family? (same probes) -How often/frequently? -Do you feel affects you now, as adult? -Influence you w/own child?
 - 10) In general, how overall experiences w/parents have affected your adult personality?
 - Any early experiences you feel were a setback in your development?
 - If 1-2 setbacks – other aspects of early exper, held development back, neg effect?
 - If none, anything about early exper. held development back, negative effect?
 - 11) Why think parents behaved as they did during childhood?
 - 12) Other adults w/whom close, like parents, as a child? Or other adults espec. important to you? not terribly important
 - Age close? Lived w/family? Caregiving responsibilities? (Significance/nature of rel'ship)
 - 13) Experience loss of parent or other close loved one when young? (e.g. sibling, close family member)? Very important, probe
 - Circumstances, how old at time?
 - How did you respond at the time?
 - Death sudden or expected?
 - How recall feeling at time?
 - Feelings changed over time?
 - Attend funeral? What like for you?
 - If parent, sibling - effect on (other family members)? How change over years?
 - How loss effects your adult personality?
 - How affect your approach to own child?
 - 13a) Did you lose any other important persons during your childhood? (same queries)
 - 13b) Lost anyone close to in adult years? (same queries)
 - 14) Other than difficulties described, other experiences – regard as traumatic (overwhelmingly, immediately terrifying)?
 - 15) More-relationship w/parents -- Were there many changes in relationship with parent (or remaining parent) between childhood and adulthood?
 - 16) Rel'ship w/parent(s) now as an adult (current rel'ship)?
 - much contact?
 - sources of dissatisfaction in current rel'ship w/parents(s)?
 - sources of satisfaction?
 - 17) Different sort of questions, not about rel'ship with parents, instead about aspect of current rel'ship w/ (specific child in research or all children together)
 - How respond now, feelings, when separate from your child/children?
 - Do you ever feel worried about (child)?
 - 18) If 3 wishes for child 20 years from now, what? (kind of future like for child)
 - 19) Any particular thing feel learned –above all-- from own childhood experiences? Something gained from childhood?
 - 20) Look to future; end by asking what you would hope your child (or children) might have learned from his/her experiences being parented by you?

ADULT ATTACHMENT INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

1. Fill me in
2. Relationship
3. Adjectives – mom
4. Adjectives – dad
5. Closer to?
6. Upset
7. Separated
8. Rejected
9. Threat
10. Affected adult personality
11. Why parents
12. Other adults
13. Loss in childhood
14. Loss in adulthood
15. Changes in relationship
16. Current relationship
17. Separation from child
18. Wishes for child
19. Thing you learned
20. Child learned