

The School-aged Assessment of Attachment

The School Age Assessment of Attachment (SAA, Crittenden, 1997-2005, Crittenden & Landini, 1999) is a semi-structured interview which is administered to school age children between the ages of 6 and 13 years. The interview is taped recorded, then transcribed and coded using the DMM model of attachment and adaptation method. Most interviews take 30-45 minutes to administer.

The SAA uses seven story cards depicting increasing levels of danger about which the child is asked first to tell a made up (fantasy) story and then to talk about a similar event in their own life. Once s/he has told a story (fantasy or real), the interviewer explores the child's understanding of his or her feelings, motives, and understanding of the perspectives of others, particularly attachment figures. Finally, the child is asked to rate each situation in terms of its perceived danger on a scale of one to ten. It is assumed that the fantasy child is a self-substitute, but this assumption may be confirmed for specific child respondents when they use first person pronouns (I, me, my, we, us, ours) in the made up stories.

This is a new procedure and, therefore, there are only published empirical studies to date (Crittenden, Kozłowska, & Landini, 2010; Kwako, Noll, Putnam, & Trickett, 2010). There are also articles using the SAA in case studies (Crittenden & Kulbotton, 2007; Kozłowska & Williams, 2010).

The SAA is a non-invasive, child-friendly procedure that can be conducted in any quiet area such as the child's home, school or an office. It usually takes around 30 – 40 minutes to complete and 1 to 2 hours to code by trained coders. The coding manual is less precise than other manuals and the classifications are not as reliable as in assessments for older and younger children.

The SAA yields the following information:

- a. The child's self protective strategy and the information processing that underlies it.
- b. The application of the strategy to relationships and problems in the child's life.
- c. The experiences and relationships which present as sources of both protection and stress and elicit the self protective behaviour.
- d. A pattern of information processing.
- e. Unresolved loss or trauma that could derail the child's attachment relationships in ways that are disruptive to the child and his/her carers.

References

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