Friends and Family Interview

**Background:** The Friends and Family Interview (FFI) was first developed and tested by Miriam and Howard Steele in the context of the 11-year follow-up of the London Parent-Child Project (Steele & Steele, 2005). That work showed that reliable ratings of coherence in 11-year olds' narratives about themselves, their sibling(s), their parents, best friend and favorite teacher is linked backward in time to their attachment status as infants with mother, and father, and to parents’ Adult Attachment Interview responses. Thus, the construct and predictive validity of the FFI as a measure of attachment security was robustly demonstrated. Discriminant validity was demonstrated by way of showing that these links between the early attachment and the FFI still held, even after taking into account verbal IQ of children and their parents. The FFI is currently being used in diverse clinical settings and is deemed appropriate for children aged 8-16 years, for its ability to gain a window upon the inner world of the school-aged child, and young teen, including their emerging autobiographical competence.

**Description of measure:** The FFI begins by stating that the interviewer studies family relationships and the writings about family relationships confirm that our strongest feelings (of love and hate), or wishes to keep things as they are, and wishes to change things, arise in our closest relationships. For example, there are things about our relationships (to parents or siblings, best friends and perhaps teachers) that we want to protect and keep the same, and things we would like to see change. From this starting point, the FFI proceeds to inquire about what is best, and what is worst in one’s view of oneself, one’s relations with parents, parents’ relation with one another, siblings, best friend and teacher(s). In this way, young people are prompted to show the extent to which they can reflect on relationships ongoing among family and friends. Within the FFI, there is an important moment when children are asked ‘what do you do when you are upset?’ This question is borrowed directly from the Adult Attachment Interview, and children’s responses to this question are highly revealing as to whether or not they feel there is a safe haven and secure base in their lives. Interviews are audio-recorded and wherever possible also filmed, before being transcribed and studied along multiple dimensions.

**Training opportunities:** Two-day trainings in how to administer and how to code the FFI, with respect to a multi-dimensional set of reliable scales including coherence and reflective functioning, are offered at the Center for Attachment Research, New School for Social Research, New York City, and can be coordinated at other locations. In addition, tests of reliability of trained coders are offered based on sets of interviews distributed at the training events. Training involves studying six FFI transcripts over two days and learning how to apply the Coding Manual:


Queries about the interview and opportunities for training should be directed to Howard Steele or Miriam Steele:

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Published research papers relying on the FFI:


