

REVISED PDI-F

PARENT DEVELOPMENT INTERVIEW REVISED

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This interview is an adaptation of the Parent Development Interview (Aber, Slade, Berger, Bresgi, & Kaplan, 1985). This protocol may not be used or adapted without written permission from Arietta Slade, Ph.D., Clinical Professor, Yale Child Study Center, arietta.slade@yale.edu

PARENT DEVELOPMENT INTERVIEW – REVISED

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READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS CAREFULLY, AND REVIEW THEM FROM TIME TO TIME ONCE YOU’VE BEGUN ADMINISTERING THE INTERVIEW

Introduction to the PDI-F

This is full length revised version of the Parent Development Interview (Aber, Slade, Berger, Bresgi, & Kaplan, 1985). There were two versions of the original interview, one for use with parents of infants, the other for use with parents of toddlers. The original interview versions, as well as this revision, are aimed at assessing parental representations of the child and of the parent-child relationship. They are not meant to be used to assess attachment classification of the adult or of the child. We have used this interview to code parental reflective function; it can also be used to assess the quality of parental representations along a range of relevant developmental/clinical dimensions.

This revised version has been developed for several reasons. First, the original version was tied specifically to the infant and toddler stages of development; the current interview is less age-specific, and can be used with parents whose children range in age from infancy through early adolescence. It is important to note that if parental responses to specific age-related developmental tasks are required, then questions relevant to these domains will have to be added by individual researchers. Second, we have found in our 15-year experience with this interview that some of the questions are less useful than others in pulling for a range of responses and descriptions. Some were poorly worded, some were redundant, some rarely pulled for more than surface descriptions, etc. Therefore, this new version incorporates our experience of coding more than 500 interviews, and represents a more streamlined focused assessment of the relevant dimensions of parental representations. Finally, this revision reflects the need within our research group to create an interview that allows for the assessment of reflective functioning across a range of domains: in relation to the child, one’s own parents, and the self. Up until now, these dimensions were necessarily assessed using different interviews (the PDI, the Adult Attachment Interview, and the Object Relations Inventory, for instance), which – from a research standpoint – creates redundancy and an overabundance of data.

Thus, in order to redress these difficulties and to collect the data that we felt was critical to our research examination of reflective functioning, we have revised the interview in such a way that it allows us to assess not only parental representations of the child, but a parent’s capacity to reflect upon aspects of his childhood experience and his self development as well. To do this,

we have adopted four of the questions from the Adult Attachment Interview (George, Kaplan, & Main, 1996); these questions are those designated by Fonagy, Target, Steele, and Steele (1998) as demand questions, and are directly tied to the assessment of reflective functioning. One question from the Working Model of the Child Interview is also included (Zeanah, Benoit, Barton, Regan, & Hirschberg, 1994), because it too pulls specifically for reflective functioning. This interview cannot be used to assess the quality of adult attachment representations. The classification of adult attachment requires administration and scoring of the complete AAI according to the well-established guidelines and principles developed by Mary Main, Erik Hesse, and Ruth Goldwyn.

Instructions to Interviewers

These instructions refer to the use of the PDI-R in a research setting. Obviously, if the interview is to be given in a clinical setting, the procedures will be modified somewhat, although the basic instructions should remain unchanged.

A. Before Parent Arrives:

It is very important that the parent knows that the interview will be conducted without the child present, so that other arrangements are made for the child. When the parent arrives, make sure all the materials are ready and that the equipment works (seems obvious, but it is surprising how often data are lost to equipment failures!).

B. Introducing the Interview

Begin by endeavoring to put the parent at ease; the tone, from the outset, should be friendly and relaxed. Describe the basic features of the interview: It is 1 1/2 - 2 hours in length, it has 40 questions, covering a number of themes: parent's view of child and of their relationship with child their view of themselves as parents, their view of the emotional upheavals and joys inherent in parenting, their notion of the ways they have changed as a parent over the course of their child's life. You should also let them know that you will be asking them about some of their own childhood experiences as well.

Describe the interview in a conversational tone. The aim here is to give them an idea of the kinds of questions they will be asked, doing so in a relaxed manner. Assure them there are no "right" or "wrong" answers — that you are interested in their thoughts and feelings about what parenting is like for them. Do not go overboard here. If they seem comfortable with the kind of introduction you are providing, do not feel you have to provide more information. Remind them they are free to refuse to answer any question (although we do not expect they will want to).

After you have introduced and described the interview, ask parents if they have any questions or concerns about the interview before you get started. Be sure to encourage parents to ask any questions they wish then or during the interview if something should occur to them. Truly pause and genuinely ask for and wait for questions from interviewee and listen for any concerns.

C. The Interview - General Comments

Begin by letting the parent know you will be asking a series of already prepared questions which have to be asked in a particular order. Let them know that you know that the nature of this format may mean that they get asked about something you will have already discussed, but that there are methodological reasons for following the same order with each parent, and you hope they will bear with any redundancies. By the same token, let them know the questions may sometimes seem irrelevant or foreign to them.

Let them know that because the interview is a long one, there may be times when you the interviewer will feel it necessary to speed them up. This kind of warning lets them know both that if you speed up it is not for lack of interest and lets them know in a subtle way that there are limits on how long their answers can be (i.e., not to go on and on for the first few questions when there will be 35 more).

Introduce new sections. When you tell the parent about the interview at the outset, you will be indicating that the interview has a number of sections. During the interview, introduce each section with comments like, “Now we’re going to shift gears,” or “Now we’re going to turn to the next section.” If you wish, you may describe in a word or two what the section is exploring, but it is probably best to stay with the general kinds of comments indicated above.

D. Administering the Interview

Ask questions as they are written, except in situations where the same probe is asked repeatedly, and you want to rephrase it slightly so that the interview sounds natural. On the questions that ask the parents to provide a memory or an example for an adjective (#A1 and #B1), you can rephrase the question so as to make sure they understand the meaning (i.e., you said your child was loving, can you think of a time that would illustrate that? Can you think of a time when she was loving?) You want to sound natural and conversational, but you do need to be consistent with the interview. So be careful when you reword that you don’t change the meaning, and try to do this as little as possible. Reliability (i.e., the comparability of interviews across interviewers) depends upon interviewers’ adopting similar styles of interviewing, and to their adherence to the questions and probes as written. It is fine to contextualize, or to use preambles appropriate to the parent (i.e., “I know we talked about this before, but...”). These kinds of remarks help the parent get to the question while leaving the questions themselves standardized. But also do avoid sounding like a robot reading the questions!

Standard probes must be asked. In other words, if it says “Probe if necessary” you need only probe if the question has not been answered, in which case you say something like, “Tell me more about it” or “How did your child feel”, etc. The areas to be probed are indicated on the interview itself. Any probe instructions that are not followed by the proviso “if necessary” must be asked.

Obviously, learn the child’s name right away. The interview should be conducted in a conversational tone; you should have the interview nearly memorized, so that you are not glued

to the materials and can maintain eye contact with the parent and insert comments, probes, etc., in an entirely natural manner. This is really important, because we are asking about difficult and complex issues and the parent should feel you are available and interested. This is essentially a semi-structured interview, and should be conducted in such a way as to make the parent maximally comfortable and responsive. These are difficult questions and touch upon powerful emotional issues; the more relaxed and unthreatened the parent feels, the more likely they are to be open and forthcoming.

It is very important to conduct the interview in such a way as not to interfere with the parent's particular style of responding. You need to let them know you hear them without saying too much or leading them on. For instance, some parents are very guarded and limited in their responses. It is critical not to push such individuals too much; this will make them angry and even less forthcoming. Also, if you try too hard to get them to open up, you are intervening in a way that will affect their natural patterns of responsiveness. Similarly, if a parent is vague and disorganized, it is very important to avoid the temptation to try to organize them. It is not your job to get them to make sense (which you won't be able to do anyway); it is your job to create a receptive atmosphere, so that they will communicate to you as fully as they are able. Just keep in mind that your job is to hear them as they are.

The most common interviewer errors are to probe too much, or too little, either of which can make coding very difficult. Probing too much can arise for a variety of reasons, but the two most common are 1) getting enmeshed with a parent and trying to sort out a chaotic story, and 2) conducting a “clinical” interview, probing for unconscious material and the like. The first problem, enmeshment, is relatively easy to recognize because the interview goes on too long, and the interviewer finds him or herself drowning in details and continually trying to get things straight. At this point, less probing is more. The tendency of clinicians to turn the PDI into a true clinical interview also leads to too much probing. In clinical interviewing, we are working with the individual to get them to articulate diffuse, complex, and sometimes hidden meanings. We are not after “meaning” in that sense, on the PDI. Do not supply words for them, do not say things like “What I think you really mean to say is...”, do not summarize “when I think about all this together, I wonder whether...”. Keep your clinical voice silent; this does not mean you shouldn't listen clinically, but it does mean you keep that line of thinking to yourself. You are really just trying to hear the story the way they tell it. Probes are meant to clarify the story, not reveal its other layers.

Probing too little usually occurs when a subject is herself defended and resistant in some way, and subtly puts the interviewer off. In these circumstances, the interviewer often feels like she is being intrusive, bothering the subject, and that the kindest thing she can do is finish the interview fast. You certainly don't want to bug the subject any more than you have to, but if you find yourself rushing and uncomfortable, try to slow down and stick to the interview. If it is really difficult, probe selectively. In these cases, it is better to probe generally (“can you tell me more?”) than to probe feelings (“and how did that make you feel?”). Probing too little also occurs when the interviewer does not follow up simple, unelaborated answers. For instance, if a mother gives a sparse answer (which often happens when subjects are not especially comfortable with language and verbal communication), you can feel very free to ask them to tell you more, to invite them to flesh out the story. One sentence answers are very difficult, if not impossible, to

code. But some subjects really need permission and encouragement to express themselves in this context, in which case you want to do the things you do with any person who is hesitant – encourage them and convey your interest in questions and full non-verbal engagement. Do not hesitate, ever, to ask questions that answer questions you have about an actual life event; any unclarity you feel is going to be just as vexing to the person coding the interview. Remember to always try to read your subject and adjust yourself to their comfort level, to the extent that you get scorable and developed answers. Remember too that most parents start off slow, and that your encouragement at a slow beginning will reinforce their warming up to the task.

D. Debriefing the Parent After the Interview

After the interview is completed, again inquire if the parent has any questions about the interview or any other concerns that may have arisen during the course of the interview. Be sure to encourage the parent to raise even the slightest concern, and give them a way to reach you if they have any questions or feelings that they would like to discuss with you in the weeks after their meeting with you. This rarely happens, but sometimes parents do have very strong feelings during the course of the interview, and they should be given a way to process these feelings with you if need be.

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A. View of the Child.

Today we're going to be talking about you and your child. We'll begin by talking about your child and your relationship, and then a little about your own experience as a child. Let's just start off by your telling me a little bit about your family – who lives in your family? How many children do you have? What are their ages? (Here you want to know how many children, ages, including those living outside the home, parents, other adults living in home. If atypical rearing situation (foster care) history of foster placements, who have been primary caregivers, etc.; likewise, if there appears to be a history of divorce, or multiple moves, get some of the detail of that just to create a context for understanding the interview.)

1. I'd like to begin by getting a sense of the kind of person your child is... so, could you get us started by choosing 3 adjectives that describe your child. (Pause while they list adjectives.) Now let's go back over each adjective. Does an incident or memory come to mind with respect to _____? (Go through and get a specific memory for each adjective.)
2. OK, now let's return to your child...In an average week, what would you describe as his/her favorite things to do, his/her favorite times?
3. And the times or things he has most trouble with?
4. What do you like most about your child?
5. What do you like least about your child?

B. View of the Relationship

1. I'd like you to choose 3 adjectives that you feel reflect the relationship between you and (your child). (Pause while they list adjectives.) Now let's go back over each adjective. Does an incident or memory come to mind with respect to _____? (Go through and get a specific memory for each adjective.)
2. Describe a time in the last week when you and (your child) really "clicked". (Probe if necessary: Can you tell me more about the incident? How did you feel? How do you think (your child) felt?)
3. Now, describe a time in the last week when you and (your child) really weren't "clicking". (Probe if necessary: Can you tell me more about the incident? How did you feel? How do you think (your child) felt?)
4. How do you think your relationship with your child is affecting his/her development or personality?

C. Affective Experience of Parenting

1. Can you describe yourself as a parent?
2. What gives you the most joy in being a parent?
3. What gives you the most pain or difficulty in being a parent?
4. When you worry about (your child), what do you find yourself worrying most about?
5. How has having your child changed you?
6. Tell me about a time in the last week or two when you felt really angry as a parent.
(Probe, if necessary: Can you tell me a little bit more about the situation? How did you handle your angry feelings?)
- 6a. What kind of effect do these feelings have on your child?
7. Tell me about a time in the last week or two when you felt really guilty as a parent.
(Probe, if necessary: Can you tell me a little bit more about the situation? How did you handle your guilty feelings?)
- 7a. What kind of effect do these feelings have on your child?
8. Tell me about a time in the last week or two when you felt you really needed someone to take care of *you*. (Probe, if necessary: Can you tell me a little bit more about the situation? How did you handle your needy feelings?)
- 8a. What kind of effect do these feelings have on (your child?)
9. Tell me about a time in the last week or two when you felt frightened as a parent. (Probe, if necessary: Can you tell me a little bit more about the situation? How did you handle your needy feelings?)
- 9a. What kind of effect do these feelings have on (your child?)
10. When your child is upset, what does he/she do? How does that make you feel? What do you do?
11. Does (your child) ever feel rejected?

D. Parent's Family History

Now I'd like to ask you a few questions about your own parents, and about how your childhood experiences might have affected your feelings about parenting....

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1. I'd like you to choose 3 adjectives that describe your childhood relationship with your mother, from as early as you can remember. (Pause while they list adjectives.) Now let's go back over each adjective. Does an incident or memory come to mind with respect to ___?
2. Now can you choose 3 adjectives that describe your childhood relationship with your father? (Pause while they list adjectives.) Now let's go back over each adjective. Does an incident or memory come to mind with respect to _____?
3. Did you ever feel rejected or hurt (physically or emotionally) by your parents as a young child?
4. How do you think your experiences being parented affect your experience of being a parent now?
5. Why do you think your parents behaved as they did during your childhood?
6. How do you want to be like and unlike your mother as a parent?
7. How about your father?
8. How are you like and unlike your mother as a parent?
9. How about your father?

E Dependence/Independence

1. When does your child need attention from you? (Probe, if not spontaneously volunteered: How do you feel when this happens?)
2. Why do you think those are the things he/she needs help with?
3. When does he feel comfortable doing things on his own? (Probe if not spontaneously volunteered: How do you feel when this happens?)
4. What happens when he/she can't do things on his/her own? (Probe if not spontaneously volunteered: How do you feel when this happens?)

F. Separation/Loss

1. Now, I'd like you to think of a time you and your child weren't together, when you were separated. Can you describe it to me? (Probe: What kind of effect did it have on the child? What kind of effect did it have on you?) Note: If the parent describes something other than a recent (i.e. within one year) separation, repeat the question asking for a more recent.

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2. Has there ever been a time in your child's life when you felt as if you were losing him/her just a little bit? What did that feel like for you?
3. Is there anyone very important to you who (your child) doesn't know but who you wish he/she was close to?
4. Do you think there are experiences in your child's life that you feel have been a setback for him?

G. Looking Behind, Looking Ahead

1. Your child is _____ already, and you're an experienced parent (modify as appropriate). If you had the experience to do all over again, what would you change? What wouldn't you change?
2. How do you think about the relationship you and your child will have when your child is an adult?
3. Can you imagine yourself as a grandparent? What do you imagine? What would you hope for?