

ONLINE APPENDIX 4: PATTERNS OF AFFECTIVE INCONGRUENCE IN INTERVIEWS

To aid the study team in recognizing filters and leakage in coding clinical life history interviews using the procedure described in chapter 4, I included in training material from the Adult Attachment Interview (AAI) coding manual (George et al., 1984, 1985, 1996). The AAI examines the adult’s recollected experiences of attachment to childhood caregivers, and its coding procedure classifies the “internal working model” of attachment, namely, the participant’s psychological representation of self and other and their relationship (Bowlby, 1969, 1973, 1980; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007). The AAI coding manual helpfully distinguishes between two types of incongruence between conscious statements made by participants and their unconscious displays of affect in interviews. This book’s clinical life history interviews explore territory much broader than attachment relationships, but similar principles apply to understanding filters and leakage.

I summarize in Table OA4.1 the AAI coding manual’s descriptions of these two types of incongruence, one of distancing and denial and the other of preoccupation, and how they contrast with congruence. Davin Martin’s pat story and monochromic palette of affect are suggestive of the first pattern. Another participant’s preoccupation with the financial circumstances in his life—both positive and negative—and its crowding out of discussion of other visibly important experiences is suggestive of the second pattern. Brighter participants in the study tended to illustrate the pattern of congruence. The research in the book found that the AAI types of incongruence are neither pure nor mutually exclusive. Sometimes multiple patterns are present in a single life history. Nonetheless, the relevance of these patterns to understanding clinical life history interviews helped sensitize coders to the concepts of filters and leakage, and how they might appear.

TABLE OA4.1. Indicators of Discrepancy between Rater and Participant Assessment of Participant Experience

Note: There are two typologies of discrepancy: (1) distancing and denial and (2) preoccupation. In both typologies person seems to be unaware of, or not to acknowledge, the full impact of negative feelings and experiences. There is one typology of congruence. Person seems to be aware of, and to acknowledge, the impact of negative feelings and experiences.

| Typology | |
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| Distancing, denial, disconnection, avoidance | Congruence |
| Goal of affect regulation: negative affect is held at bay. | Goal of affect regulation: negative affect is metabolized, contained, and not avoided. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statements don't reflect examples or episodes recounted in experience. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Semantic and episodic statements and accounts are congruent. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Canned, rehearsed language, psychobabble. Matter-of-fact discussion or glossing over. Lack of emotional investment or involvement in discussion. Flatness of affect. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fresh speech, ability to think in the moment, dynamic engagement with material being discussed. Speech is clear, lacks jargon, and seems connected to person's experience. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Black-and-white representations of experiences and others and self. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to perceive imperfections, limitations, three-dimensional quality to experience and others and self. Like a novel: good character development. Contextualized and nuanced representations. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Absence of memory. Lack of total memory of experiences in an important area. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Able to recall emotionally salient memories that elaborate on important experiences. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of specific memories in experiences in an area. | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoidance. Much more comfortable and elaborate on other topics. Seems to steer the conversation away from the topic at hand. Apparent lack of discussion in an area. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Able to discuss areas that are to some degree uncomfortable. Pain or discomfort doesn't truncate conversation in an area. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General distortion away from negative experiences. Extreme form: negative experiences are not discussed or seem to be avoided entirely. Or outright denial of negatives. More subtle form: downplaying the significance of negative experience or playing up the positives (idealizing, overstating, or being falsely upbeat). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledges the negatives and able to metabolize them within discussion of experiences of both positive and negative aspects of experience. Nothing is brittle or abrupt or feels false about handling of negatives. |

Table OA4.1 (continued)

| Typology | |
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| Preoccupation, emotional overload, distortion | Congruence (continued) |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perseverates or preoccupied with a topic. Intrudes on discussion of other areas or other aspects of experience. Feels overwhelmed emotionally or there is spillover from an experience. • Statements don't reflect examples or episodes recounted in experience. Preoccupation with certain aspects of experience not incorporated in general assessments. • Black-and-white representations of experiences and others and self. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Able to discuss negatives without being hooked on an area or aspect of experience, precluding openness to exploring other areas or feeling other feelings. • Semantic and episodic statements and accounts are congruent. • Ability to perceive imperfections, limitations, three-dimensional quality to experience and others and self. Like a novel: good character development and complex apprehension of reality. Contextualized and nuanced representations. |