

Foreword

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This is an extremely important and useful volume. As a clinically oriented reader, I was very pleased to find answers to three vital questions I always have when approaching a book concerning clinical applications of a research-based instrument. First and foremost, in my role as practitioner I hope to learn something that will enhance and expand my work. In this regard, the collection excels. In our modern world, with its great variety of therapeutic options and theoretic orientations, it is no small achievement to provide such a wide range of clinical considerations that are of interest to so many persons from so many different orientations. Whether one's interest is in infant development, family functioning, or psychodynamically oriented adult therapy; whether one works in a structured clinic or alone, these inspiring reports of creative uses of the Adult Attachment Interview (AAI) include ample background information on the implementation of the instrument, as well as illustrative case material.

Second, I am always curious about how well researched an instrument is, and what that research reveals about its clinical use. Again, I was very impressed to discover how much interesting and varied clinical research has been conducted using the AAI. Most of the centers represented in these chapters serve the dual function of collecting data and providing therapy, and include both in their discussions. For example, one of the many questions explored here is what intervention is best suited to a mother–infant pair when the mother is unresolved with respect to loss or trauma in her own history. A clinically experienced practitioner might have an intuitive response to this question. Here, there are also research findings.

And third, for readers, myself included, who are intrigued by theory, there is stimulating food for thought among these chapters in areas that include development across the lifespan, intrapsychic functioning, relationship

process, and the important dynamics of change. How these diverse topics are brought together under the umbrella of the AAI is quite thought provoking.

Another gratifying aspect is that in spite of the impressive breadth of the material covered, this book also presents a strong and unifying coherence. Much of the credit for this high level of coherence goes to editors Howard and Miriam Steele. In this book—as in “Howard’s journal,” *Attachment and Human Development*—one finds scientific reports from diverse and international sources that enrich us beyond our usual expectations. And in addition to seeking out a broad range of perspectives, the editors also attend to the need for integration among the given set of chapters. They have adhered to that tradition in excellent form. The chapters chosen for this book cover a broad spectrum of unique work that reveals well how the AAI can be used in various contexts. At the same time, a unifying tone of care and commitment evident across the chapters makes the book inspiring. The credit for putting this together goes to the Steeles, and we are grateful.

Often for clinically oriented scientists there is a strong pull toward both practice and research, and increasingly we are impressed with the daunting task of doing both. So, in the face of that reality, the editors have given us an additional gift by pulling together chapters from laboratories and clinics that remind us how high-quality research and clinical work can be carried out together.

My final observation is about the AAI itself. Reading this book was for me a stunning reminder of how truly rich this instrument is. Deeply embedded in the work of John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth, the AAI brings with it an impressive provenance. Nonetheless, the contributions made on its own merit are considerable. A major strength of the AAI (and the attachment field) is that it was developed within a normative developmental context, providing us at the outset an extensive body of research on the range of normal development. Then, in the next phase, its successful translation into the clinical realm has exhibited a powerful impact on research and practice within a relatively short time. It is no small contribution to make to the clinical field. But perhaps most important, the AAI and the attachment field in general remind us that we are a social species, that our humanness develops within a relational context, and, for the clinician, that psychological change proceeds best within that relational context.

This book provides discussion of (1) the use of the AAI in diagnosis, treatment, and evaluation of child adaptation and therapeutic outcome; (2) programmatic intervention techniques based on the AAI and attachment theory with a diverse range of populations, from adoptive and foster home placements to individual treatment of patients with borderline personality disorder; and (3) psychological and developmental considerations, such as mental representation and reflective functioning, the dynamics of dissociation as a response to trauma, and the intergenerational transmission of disturbance. Any one of these is an important contribution. It is remarkable to gain insights regarding each in the same volume.