

COMPARISON OF BRAIN ACTIVITIES ASSOCIATED WITH SELF-REPORT VERSUS CLINICIAN-RELATED ATTACHMENT MEASURES: RELATIONSHIP SCALE QUESTIONNAIRE VERSUS ADULT ATTACHMENT INTERVIEW

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Introduction: The Adult Attachment Interview (AAI) is considered the gold standard of attachment assessment, but is expensive and time consuming. The Relationship Scale Questionnaire (RSQ) is a self-report assessment of attachment, but measures different constructs.

Objectives: We investigated how each measure correlates with brain activity in attachment-related tasks: conscious valence and salience appraisal of mother's face.

Methods: 28 female subjects ages 18-30 were given the AAI and RSQ. Using fMRI subjects viewed pictures of their mother and were asked to rate how good the image made them feel (valence rating) and how related they felt (salience rating). Brain activity correlating with AAI and RSQ measures of attachment security and dismissingness was determined by linear regression.

Results: Salience processing and valence processing were associated with increased thalamo-striatal, posterior cingulate and visual cortex activity. Salience processing was associated with bilateral decrease in PFC activity. In salience processing AAI secure subjects had attenuated visual cortex response and increased lingual gyrus activity while RSQ secure subjects had decreased right temporal lobe activity and AAI dismissing subjects had enhanced left PFC deactivation while RSQ dismissing subjects had increased left temporal pole and visual cortex activity. In valence processing RSQ secure subjects demonstrated increased left insula activity and AAI dismissing subjects demonstrated bilateral increase in thalamic and posterior cingulate activation.

Conclusions: AAI and RSQ measures of attachment measure different constructs with divergent patterns of associated brain activity. AAI measures of attachment tap midline structures (pre-reflective/unconscious attachment processing), while RSQ measures tap lateral structures (cognitive/conscious attachment processing).