

To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Keith Lee Williams entitled “The Effects of Narrative Coherence & Mindfulness on Parenting Style & Child Behavior”. I have examined the final paper copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, with a major in Psychology.

Robert G. Wahler

---

, Major Professor

We have read this dissertation and  
recommend its acceptance:

Jenny Macfie

---

Kristina Gordon

---

Robert Kronick

---

Acceptance for the Council:

---

Carolyn R. Hodges  
Vice Provost and Dean of the  
Graduate School

THE EFFECTS OF NARRATIVE COHERENCE & MINDFULNESS ON  
PARENTING STYLE & CHILD BEHAVIOR

A Dissertation

Presented for the

Doctor of Philosophy

Degree

The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Keith Lee Williams

August 2010

Copyright © 2009 by Keith Lee Williams  
All rights reserved.

## **DEDICATION**

This dissertation is dedicated to Melanie, for all her support, and for being a great parent.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Many thanks to Bob Wahler for his support, years of experience, insightful input, and assistance while working on this project. My appreciation also goes out to Jenny Macfie, Kristina Gordon, and Robert Kronick; three great teachers who have impacted my educational career, thank you all for your time and support. Thank you also to Lowell Gaertner for his help with statistics, and to Katie Rowinski for her collaboration during data collection and analysis.

## **ABSTRACT**

Recent research in the area of narrative coherence and mindfulness suggest the strong impact they have on parenting style and child behavior. The current project examines the relationships between these variables in order to better understand the components of healthy parent child interaction, which may be used to inform future studies as well as interventions aimed at helping struggling parents. The population is composed of 40 mothers who were drawn from a university clinic setting. Measures utilized included: the Parenting Styles Questionnaire – Revised (PAQ-R); the Mindful Attention Awareness Scale (MAAS); and the Parental Authority Questionnaire – Revised (PAQ-R), which measured the degree to which parents endorse one of the following three parenting styles: authoritarian, authoritative, and permissive; and the Shortform Assessment for Children – Revised (SAC-R) which measures prosocial child behavior. Results demonstrated a significant negative correlation between increased narrative coherence and the less effective authoritarian parenting style. Mindfulness was found to be significantly positively correlated with the more effective authoritative parenting style, as well as showing a significant negative correlation with the less effective authoritarian parenting style. It was hypothesized that mindfulness would mediate the relationship between narrative coherence and parenting style, but results did not support this hypothesis. Results are discussed, exploring the ways in which mindfulness and coherence impact parenting style and child behavior.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

| Chapter                                                                                                              | Page      |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| <b>I. INTRODUCTION .....</b>                                                                                         | <b>1</b>  |
| <b>II PARENTING STYLE.....</b>                                                                                       | <b>3</b>  |
| Darling and Steinberg’s Refinement of Parenting Style .....                                                          | 7         |
| <b>III PARENTS’ ABILITIES TO TELL AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL NARRATIVES .....</b>                                              | <b>14</b> |
| Defining Narrative Coherence .....                                                                                   | 15        |
| Narrative Coherence and Parent Empathy .....                                                                         | 18        |
| Parents’ Ability’s to Detect Social Contingency Patters by<br>Constructing Coherent Autobiographical Narratives..... | 23        |
| Putting Contingencies into Context .....                                                                             | 25        |
| Narratives & Parenting .....                                                                                         | 27        |
| <b>IV MINDFUL PARENTING .....</b>                                                                                    | <b>32</b> |
| <b>V MINDFULNESS &amp; NARRATIVE COHERENCE .....</b>                                                                 | <b>40</b> |
| <b>VI METHODS.....</b>                                                                                               | <b>43</b> |
| Participants.....                                                                                                    | 43        |
| Mindfulness.....                                                                                                     | 43        |
| Parenting Style .....                                                                                                | 44        |
| Child Behavior .....                                                                                                 | 45        |
| Narrative Coherence .....                                                                                            | 45        |
| Procedure .....                                                                                                      | 45        |
| Hypothesis & Analysis .....                                                                                          | 47        |
| <b>VII RESULTS.....</b>                                                                                              | <b>49</b> |
| Demographics .....                                                                                                   | 49        |
| Reliability for Coherence Rating & Construct Validity .....                                                          | 49        |
| Descriptive Statistics.....                                                                                          | 50        |
| Correlational Analysis .....                                                                                         | 52        |
| Post Hoc Analysis .....                                                                                              | 53        |
| <b>VIII DISCUSSION .....</b>                                                                                         | <b>57</b> |
| Narrative Coherence .....                                                                                            | 57        |
| Mindfulness.....                                                                                                     | 61        |
| Parenting Style & Child Behavior .....                                                                               | 64        |
| Refining Our Understanding of Mindfulness & Narrative Coherence .....                                                | 64        |

|                                     |    |
|-------------------------------------|----|
| Limitations & Future Research ..... | 66 |
| <b>LIST OF REFERENCES</b> .....     | 68 |
| <b>APPENDICES</b> .....             | 77 |
| <b>VITA</b> .....                   | 80 |

## **Chapter I**

### **INTRODUCTION**

As parents struggle to manage the behavior of their children, they often find it difficult to disengage from ineffective parenting habits and to adopt improved ways of dealing with their children. Although research in recent years has resulted in many important insights about effective parenting, many questions remain regarding the characteristics that facilitate effective parenting styles.

Parent training interventions that are based on behavioral paradigms are among the most widely used, and have been shown to be relatively effective (Weisz, Weiss, Alicke, & Klotz, 1987; Barkley, 1997). These approaches offer numerous behavior modification techniques which are both easy to implement and often show rapid success. Whereas the rapid improvements caused by these interventions is promising, there is cause to believe that these improvements may not generalize across settings, that the improvements may be short lived, or that behavior modification may not work for some parents with personal problems or unusually challenging children (Wahler, & Fox, 1981; Sanders, James, 1983; Serketich, & Dumas, 1996).

The search for parenting techniques that will help struggling parents to better deal with their children leads us to consider what differences might distinguish more effective parenting styles from less effective parenting styles. Clinical experience and recent research suggests that the coherence of a parent's autobiographical narrative may be a powerful indicator of how responsive that parent is likely to be toward their children; with parents high in narrative coherence correlating with improved parenting skill (Schwartzman, & Wahler, 2006; Wahler & Castlebury, 2002). Additionally, recent

research with the construct of mindfulness has suggested its value as an intervention that leads to improvements across numerous psychological and behavioral domains (Kabat-Zinn, J., 1994; Singh et al. 2006a, 2006b, 2006c, 2007, 2009; Wahler, Singh, & Singh, 2009).

The purpose of this study is to explore the ways in which narrative coherence and mindfulness impact parenting style and child behavior. It is hoped that an improved understanding of these areas will lead to an enhanced understanding of how effective parents do what they do, as well as offering insights for helping parents who struggle to manage their children's behavior. Before discussing narrative coherence and mindfulness however, we first begin with a review of what parenting style is, along with the ways in which parenting style impacts parent child interactions.

## Chapter II

### PARENTING STYLES

While empirical research has suggested several models to explain parenting styles and techniques (Rollins, & Thomas, 1979), Diana Baumrind's (1989) conceptualization of parenting styles has been especially useful in previous research due to its high level of clarity and predictive ability. Through a series of longitudinal studies, Baumrind observed three predominant parenting styles, which include authoritarian, authoritative, and permissive parenting styles. Baumrind's research also describes several notable differences in child behavior based on the parenting style their caregiver employs (Baumrind, D. (1971, 1978, 1989,1991) Baumrind's conceptualization of parenting style, along with its impact on child behavior, is discussed in greater detail below.

Through her observation of parent-child interactions, Baumrind (1989) described the *authoritarian* parenting style which some parents used. Authoritarian parents tend to strictly enforce set codes of behavior in a rigid and often punitive manner. These parents are more likely to adopt a set standard of conduct, often based on a secular or theological source, and then these parents rigidly enforce these standards, even in situations where other standards may be more appropriate. These parents are also noted for the unidirectional nature of their communication with their children. Specifically, these parents tend to dictate their child's behavior without input from the child. As such, the authoritarian parent feels that children should accept the parents decisions at all times without any verbal give and take (Baumrind, 1978). These parents also place heavy emphasize on the importance of obedience, of traditional values, and respect for authority. Additionally, these parents are often observed to be (relative to others) "discontented,

withdrawn, and distrustful...detached and controlling and somewhat less warm than the other parents” (pp. 351, Baumrind, 1989). In general, Baumrind (1978, 1989) found that children of authoritarian parents had lower levels of independence, were more aimless than their peers, and that boys were more likely to be resistive and hostile when their parents exemplified this style of parenting. Children of authoritarian parents were also found to have reduced levels of social responsibility among some samples (Baumrind, 1971). The notable lack of independence and aimlessness of these children is most likely due to the way in which they depended on their parents to dictate their behaviors. It is also likely that the overall dependence these children have on their parents is due in part to their lack of involvement in deciding their behavior, as well as their lack of open communication with their parents in making decisions.

While authoritarian parents were highly controlling of their children’s behavior, Baumrind observed another group of parents who seemed to have almost no expectations of their children’s behavior, Baumrind (1989) described these parents as having a *permissive* parenting style. Permissive parents tend to give their children complete control over what they do, with the parents remaining warm and accepting of whatever their child ultimately does. These parents have relatively few expectations of their children, but instead they emphasized the importance of allowing the child to make their own decisions (Baumrind, 1971). These parents tend to view themselves as a resource the child can use if they wish, but in general they expect their children to take control of their actions. Although these parents may explain the importance of some rules, these parents avoid the use of overt power to gain control of the child’s behavior, and they rarely insist that the child obeys a set standard of behavior. In general, these parents tend to adopt a

*laze' fare* attitude toward child rearing, with the belief that the most important thing they can do as parents is to be warm and accepting as they allow their children room to make their own choices.

While the parents of these children may hope to engender independence and self confidence in their children, it appears that the lack of clear demands and expectations often has to opposite effect. Specifically, Baumrind (1971) observed the children of permissive parents to be relatively less achievement oriented, less independent, and that they were often more hostile (Baumrind, 1978). In one study, girls were found to be markedly less assertive when their parents used a permissive parenting style (Baumrind, 1989). These children were also found to be the “least self reliant, explorative, and self controlled” (Baumrind, 1989, p. 352). Unfortunately, the permissive parent’s presumable goals of self reliance and independence for their children seem to backfire as their children struggle to internalize self discipline and self regulation skills

Baumrind began to see two factors emerge as she observed parents; she observed that successful parenting appeared to be a balance of both *control* and *warmth* (Baumrind, 1971). Where the permissive parents were high in warmth, they were notably low in control. Conversely, the authoritarian parents were high in control, but low in warmth. Baumrind (1989) described a third parenting style that she saw as a healthy balance of control and warmth, which she called the *authoritative* parenting style.

The authoritative parent does have a clear standard of behavior that they expect from their children, but these parents are noted for the high level of verbal give and take they engage in with their children. In this way the parent endeavors to ensure that the child does not blindly obey the parent, but instead strives to help the child understand the

reasons for the having the rules. Authoritative parents strike a balance in helping their children to develop health autonomy and disciplined conformity when it is most appropriate. These parents are also noted for their overall flexibility in parenting styles. Specifically, these parents do not insist on a one way line of communication in which they dictate what the child should do (Baumrind, 1978, 1989) Instead, through verbal give and take, these parents are open to the child's perspective, and are willing to change their expectations when it is most appropriate. In other situations the parent may enforce the rules after a discussion with the child, even when the child disagrees. In this way, the child learns that he or she can challenge and confront the parents, but that the parent ultimately enforces the rules they feel to be best. Thus an authoritative parent may enforce rules without a consensus, but they do not view themselves as infallible.

Children from authoritative homes were consistently found to be more competent than their peers (Baumrind, 1989). Specifically, these children were more achievement oriented, independent, friendly, and cooperative (Baumrind, 1971, 1978, 1989). These children also tended to have higher levels of social responsibility (Baumrind, 1971). Authoritative parents seem to encourage the children to probe reality, and to engage with life in a more direct way as they question and interact with engaged caregivers (Baumrind, 1971).

Baumrind's description of authoritative parenting consists of several notable aspects which have been interpreted in different ways by theorists over the years. Darling and Steinberg (1993) for example highlighted the importance that Baumrind's theory placed on control, which was in essence the "parents' attempts to integrate the child into the family and society by demanding behavioral compliance" (p. 489). In this view, the

success of their parenting is due to the parents ability to successfully socialize the child to society's demands while at the same time respecting and showing love to they child. Lewis (1981) however, argues that the key ingredient in authoritative parenting is not control, but rather dialogue. Drawing from attributional research and theory, Lewis points out the negative relationship between external control and the internalization of standards. Specifically, attribution theory suggests that when a person is forced to engage in a behavior, they are more likely to attribute their behavior to external sources, and are therefore less likely to internalize those standards. Lewis argues that because of the negative relationship between external control and the internalization of standards, authoritative parenting must be achieving compliant behavior more through dialogue than through control. Lewis suggests that children are most likely to internalize social standards when they feel they have a choice and are part of the decision making process.

### ***Darling and Steinberg's Refinement of Parenting Style***

While Baumrind's research was able to offer substantial insight about what contributes to successful parenting, over time there were some inconsistencies in the research that raised questions. Specifically, while Baumrind (1972) found authoritarian parenting practices to be associated with negative and fearful responses among European-American children, it was found to be associated with assertiveness among African-American girls. Additionally, while authoritative parenting practices were consistently related to improved academic performance among European-American adolescents, it was found to be the least effective in fostering academic performance among Asian- and African-American adolescents (Dornbusch, Ritter, Leiderman, Roberts, & Fraleigh, 1987).

These questions led Darling and Steinberg (1993) to take a closer look at the factors responsible for improved parental effectiveness. They suggest that to effectively understand the dynamics of effective parenting, we need to consider three distinct aspects of their parenting. These three aspects include the parent's *goals* of socialization, the parenting *practices* they utilize in reaching those goals, and the parenting *style* or emotional climate in which the socialization occurs. Darling and Steinberg (1993) make several powerful arguments for why it makes sense to separate how a parent's overall style or attitude toward parenting is separate from the specific behavioral practices they employ. Further, they suggest that parenting style moderates the effectiveness of parenting practices by setting an emotional climate that alters how the child reacts to parenting practices. In this way, a child may respond with more or less openness to the parent's practices depending on the parenting style their parents use. What follows are additional explanations of how parenting goals, practices, and styles interact in their impact on child behavior.

Researchers have struggled to determine exactly which parenting practices are most likely to result in improved child socialization. After reviewing a broad range of research on the connection between specific parenting practices and child outcomes, Orlansky (1949) concluded that there was essentially no consistent relationship between the practices a parent uses and the child outcomes. It seemed obvious that effective parenting practices are important, but it also seemed that there must be something else that can explain why parenting practices were effective in some cases but not in others. One group offered the following insight,

It is possible for the child to take a great deal of rather crude

cuffing and spanking and still feel so fully the affection and warmth of the parents' concern that no harm results. And it is possible for parents to do the technically correct thing with so little apparent affection that even their kind and patient words leave the child cold as well as confused and resentful. (Greenberg and Others of the Staff of the Child Study Association of America, 1936, quoted by Symonds, 1939, p. 153)

As this quote suggests, the meaning of specific parenting practices may be substantially altered by the overall climate or context in which they occur. While important insights can be gained by understanding the specific or molecular aspects of parenting practices, it seems that the more general style a parent uses may offer the key to understanding why parenting practices bring about variable results (Darling, & Steinberg, 1993). Darling and Steinberg (1993) contend that while parenting practices are an important aspect of parenting, it is really a parent's style and overall goals that exert the strongest impact on child outcomes. A prime illustration of this point can be taken from a study in which researchers explored the impact that parent involvement had on their child's school performance. While the parents practices in helping their children were found to be relatively similar for two groups of parents, academic achievement was found to be much higher for adolescents who's parents used an authoritative parenting style (Steinberg, Lamborn, Dornbusch, & Darling, 1992). In this example, the parenting style or emotional climate seems to change the context in which their specific practices function. It may be for example that authoritative parents help their children in ways that

help their children to feel respected, nurtured, autonomous, and which encourages curiosity. In response, these children may be more open to parent involvement, and may also try to do their best to meet their parents expectations because they feel supported and nurtured. In contrast, less authoritative parents may focus more on controlling the child's behavior, they may convey less overall confidence in the child, and they may do relatively little to encourage the child's curiosity. In response, these children may resent the parents involvement instead of welcoming it, and over time they are less likely to internalize a desire for academic achievement. In this way both groups of parents may be using similar parenting practices of sitting down with the children and helping them with their homework, but the results are very different due to the overall style or approach the parents use.

To better understand the general attitudes and style a parent uses, one must look beyond the individual encounters a parent has with their children and instead step back to obtain a “molar” view of their approach (Wahler, & Castlebury, 2002). Schaefer (1965) suggested several molar parent attributes that were likely to alter the emotional impact of their parenting, including: autonomy granting, strictness, ignoring, expressions of affection, use of fear and control, and a perception of the child as a burden. Thus, by stepping back and observing the way in which parents function in these molar aspects, we can gain insights about how these attributes impact child outcomes. Darling and Steinberg (1993) go on to suggest that “parenting style”, which naturally develops out of the values and goals of the parent, conveys the attitudes the parent has towards the child. Further they suggest that these attitudes are often expressed to the child in ways such as tone of voice, body language, bursts of temper, or inattention.

If it is true that a parents style is the most important factor in achieving their socialization goals, then what are some of the ways in which this style exerts its influence? Darling and Steinberg (1993) suggest that the primary way in which parenting style influences child development is an indirect one. Specifically, they suggest that parenting style transforms the parents' ability to socialize their children by changing the effectiveness of their parenting practices in at least two ways. The first way parenting style moderates the effectiveness of their practices is by altering the nature of the parent child interaction, and therefore moderating the impact which specific practices have on child outcomes, and second "by influencing the child's personality, especially the child's openness to parental influence"(p.493). In this way Darling and Steinberg (1993) suggest that parenting style alters both the way in which they deliver parenting practices, as well as altering the child's openness to responding positively to those parenting practices.

An example of how parenting style transforms the effectiveness of parenting practices might come from the important and often difficult to discuss topic of sexuality. An authoritative parenting style that fosters give and take dialogue, mutual respect, and openness is likely to transform the meaning of their parenting practices (in this case talking to the child about sexuality) so that it is perceived as supportive and concerned. Additionally, this authoritative style is likely to alter the child's openness to communicate, helping them to feel more open to asking questions that seem relevant to them, as well as helping the child to feel safe from judgment. Conversely, a parent with a more authoritarian style may use very similar practices of sitting down and talking with his or her child, but the reception of those practices is likely to be perceived in a different way. The authoritarian parent may approach the topic of sexuality with an attitude that conveys

condescending judgment toward the child who feels threatened to make good choices or else. Additionally, authoritarian parents tend to view communication with their children as uni-directional, with little input from the child. Because of this lack of give and take dialogue, the likelihood that the child will ask personally relevant questions are reduced, leaving the child with unanswered questions. As this example illustrates, the practices a parent uses can take on a very different meaning in the context of an either nurturing or over-controlling emotional climate or parenting style. Additionally, the child's openness to parent involvement can also be dramatically altered depending on the overall style the parent uses.

Finally, Darling and Steinberg (1993) propose that differences in socialization goals may be the reason behind the inconsistent research findings on parenting styles. Different cultures often have different socialization goals, with eastern cultures for example focusing more on belonging to the collective culture, whereas western cultures tend to prize autonomy and independence more. With these different socialization goals in mind, parents may foster assertiveness, passivity, collectivity, or autonomy in their children, depending on the goals and values of that culture (Baumrind, 1971). This may help explain how a parent could demonstrate an authoritative parenting style, and at the same time have a child with low academic performance. It may be that for these parents, the socialization goals of work ethic are more important than academic ability, and that if you measured the child's work ethic you would see that the authoritative parenting style was successful in meeting the parents socialization goals of helping the child to be a hard worker. Thus we see the ways in which a parent's goals, style, and practices are distinct and at the same time altered by one another.

In conclusion, Darling and Steinberg (1993) present the convincing argument that parenting style is the context in which socialization occurs as apposed to the specific socialization practices used. Additionally, they argue that parenting style is also separate from the specific goals of socialization. Darling and Steinberg (1993) drive home their point by saying that “because parenting style is theoretically independent of specific socialization content, and because a style is displayed across a range of parent-child interactions, parenting style conveys to the child the parents attitude toward the child rather than toward the child’s behavior.”(p.493). This brings into focus the way in which two groups of parents could be using very similar parenting practices, and yet their children could experience those practices as either nurturing, supportive, and encouraging, or controlling, negative, and cold, all as a result of the parenting style their parents employ.

Darling and Steinberg (1993) point out however, that while parenting style is the driving force behind improved child outcomes, there is still very little that we know about why parents adopt these different parenting styles. Recent research suggests that insights concerning why parents adopt more or less effective parenting styles may be gained by looking at the way in which parents constructs autobiographical narratives of their past (Baerger, & McAdams, 1999; Schwartzman, & Wahler, 2006; Wahler & Castlebury, 2002; Wahler, Singh, & Singh, 2009).

### **Chapter III**

#### **PARENTS' ABILITIES TO TELL AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL NARRATIVES**

Throughout our lives we relate stories to others about our past, including stories about the distant and recent past. In addition to simply conveying what happened to us in these experiences, these autobiographical narratives are a way of organizing our experiences in the world and the role we play in our interactions with others (Baerger, & McAdams, 1999; McAdams, 2001). As such, it is suggested that the autobiographical narratives that parents relate about the past may indicate more than just what they did or what happened to them; these narratives may also indicate the parents' ability to view their experiences from multiple perspectives, and the degree to which they objectively consider past events.

Wahler, Singh, and Singh (2009) argue that as the coherence of a parent's autobiographical narratives increases, they are more able to view their experiences from multiple perspectives, including the child's perspective, thereby increasing their empathic attunement toward their children. Additionally, a parent's ability to coherently relate autobiographical narratives is likely to indicate that parent's capacity to detect complex social contingency patterns that aid them in responding more sensitively toward their children (Wahler & Castlebury, 2002; Wahler, Singh, & Singh, 2009). Thus, as parents tell their stories of the past, a careful listener would be able to gain a wealth of understanding about how these parents think about and organize their experiences, which in turn, may be a powerful indicator of their ability to respond sensitively toward their children.

Darling and Stienberg (1993) raised the important question of what leads parents to adopt different parenting styles. The following research suggests that a parent's ability to tell coherent autobiographical narratives of the past may be the factor that enables parents to approach their interactions with their children from a standpoint of empathy, objectivity, and emotional warmth. As will be discussed in greater detail below, Wahler and Castlebury (2002) suggest that parents who are able to tell their stories with a high level of narrative coherence begin to view their interactions with their children in a new light. Specifically, as the narrative accounts of parents become more organized and rich, they are more likely to consider their experiences from different perspectives, including the child's perspective. With these new perspectives, parents are then more likely to have increased empathy for their child, bidirectional communication, and several other aspects of authoritative parenting style.

Below, we begin by discussing a clear conceptualization of what narrative coherence is, including the ways it differs from related constructs. Next we will discuss two of the primary ways in which narrative coherence impacts parenting. First we will explore the connection between coherent narratives and a parent's ability to empathize with his or her children. Then we will discuss how the coherence of a parent's narrative allows them to detect complex social contingencies, which in turn enables the parent to respond more sensitively toward their children.

### ***Defining Narrative Coherence***

If we are to clearly understand the ways in which narrative coherence interacts with parenting style, we must first have a clear conceptualization of what it is and we must be able to reliably measure it. In this section we will discuss the development of a

narrative coherence measurement system, as well as discussing how this system differs from related concepts.

First off, a distinction should be made between the Adult Attachment Interview (AAI) (Main, & Goldwyn, 1993); Main, Kaplan, & Cassidy, 1985) conceptualization of coherence, and the more structural conceptualization of narrative coherence spoken of by Fivush, Hazzard, McDermott Sales, Sarfati, & Brown, (2003), Vygotsky, (1978), and Welsh-Ross, (1997). The AAI conceptualization of coherence is based on Grice's (1975) four maxims of coherent discourse, which include: quality ("Be truthful and have evidence for what you say"), quantity ("Be succinct, and yet complete"), relation ("Be relevant"), and manner ("Be clear and orderly")(Van IJzendoorn, 1995).The AAI especially focuses on an individual's ability to support judgments about past caregivers with specific and valid evidence, as well as their experiences with loss and trauma(Main, & Goldwyn, 1984). Additionally, the AAI focuses special attention on the individual's ability to describe past events without becoming disorganized in their discourse.

The more structural conceptualization of coherence that is utilized for this study draws from Grice's (1975) maxims as well, but it also draws from other aspects of narrative structure in hopes of gaining new insights about the relationship between narrative discourse and psychological functioning. The narrative coherence spoken of throughout this paper is based on the Wahler, Rowinski, & Williams, (2007) conceptualization of narrative coherence, which is discussed further below.

In addition to Grice's maxims, the coherence spoken of throughout this paper includes the narrator's ability to construct a narrative in the classic organized format of beginning, middle, and end; a format that Vygotsky (1978) discusses as indicating an

individual's ability to mentally organize events such that they are more coherent to both the narrator and the listener. Also, based on the work of Fivush, et.al (2003) , the current conceptualization of coherence includes the degree to which the narrator includes specific information about objects, people, internal thoughts, and emotion. Clinical experience also suggests the importance of exploring causal relationships (Wahler, et al.2007). Thus it seemed important to measure the degree to which an individual's narrative account demonstrated the narrator's ability to explore and consider what caused the events to happen the way they did in their story. Drawing from these different sources, the model of narrative coherence discussed throughout this text is then made up of the following six components: (1).central point (how well the narrator conveys the gist or reason for telling the story), (2). happenings (the level of detail the narrator uses when describing events), (3).organization (how well the narrator organizes the events around the central point so they are easy to follow), (4). orientation (the degree to which the narrator offers information about the context in which the events take place e.g. time and place), (5). internal states (the degree to which the narrator references the internal thoughts and feelings of themselves and others), and (6). causality (the degree to which the narrator considers the causal relationships among events in their narrative).

As previously stated, the conceptualization of coherence discussed in this study is intended to explore different aspects of narratives and how they relate to parent functioning. Specifically, the coherence discussed in this study is constructed to measure a parent's ability to organize and elaborate a wide range of personal experience, as opposed to the AAI, which focuses more on experiences with early caregivers as well as experiences of loss and trauma (Main, & Goldwyn, 1984). As will be discussed in greater

detail below, it is hypothesized that our Vygotskian model of coherence will reveal the way in which individuals tend to construct meaning of events across a wide range of topics and themes. In this way, samples of narrative coherence for this new conceptualization of coherence can include stories about the far or near past, as well as interactions between any number of family and non-family members.

### ***Narrative Coherence and Parent Empathy***

Darling and Stienberg (1993) describe the way in which effective parents approach their children within a context of emotional warmth, open communication, and empathy. If there is a correlation between parent autobiographical narratives and their ability to use authoritative parenting styles, what accounts for the connection? To answer this question we will consider an aspect of the authoritative parenting style that may have a larger impact than Baumrind (1989) realized; bi-directional communication.

As Baumrind (1989) mentioned, a notable aspect of effective parenting styles is the give and take dialogue that takes place between the child and caregiver. Consider for a moment a parent who rarely engages in give and take dialogue with their children. This parent's narrative accounts of past interactions can only include their own perspective of the event, and as such cannot appreciate the child's perspective, or any additional information the child has to offer concerning what happened or why it happened. As such, these parents are left with a narrow and incomplete account of their past events. This lack of give and take dialogue not only impairs the parent's ability to create an objective account of the events, it also leaves the child feeling misunderstood, controlled, and less connected to the parent. While authoritarian parents appear to be the most resistive toward give and take dialogue with their children, permissive parents are also relatively

less likely to engage their children in dialogue. While permissive parents may not be resistant to give and take dialogue with their children, they are less likely to see the value of exploring the child's experiences, and instead wait for the child to initiate dialogue.

In contrast, imagine a parent who appreciates the value of give and take dialogue with their child. By exploring the child's perception of past events, this parent is able to gain a powerful appreciation for the different perspectives their child has of events. Indeed, research has shown how elaborating past events through dialogue increases an individual's ability to consider events from the perspective of others (Welch-Ross, 1997). The appreciation for the child's perspective that these parents have, then allows them to approach their children in a climate of empathy and nurturance as they emotionally ally with the child's perspective. Research demonstrates the important role that parental empathy plays in protecting children from psychopathology as well as improving overall parent-child interactions (Psychogiou, Daley, Thompson, & Edmund, 2008). Indeed many parents may agree that one of the most rewarding aspects of being a parent is being able to view the world through the fresh and youthful eyes of their children. Give and take dialogue not only helps parents to approach their children in an atmosphere of nurturance and empathy, it also helps their children to feel more understood and eager to comply with their parents' expectations.

Some other notable aspects of the authoritarian parenting style include the parent's tendency to view their parenting as infallible, as well as the parent's rigid application of rules and expectations. It seems likely that give and take dialogue with their children also allows parents to avoid many of these problems. Specifically, as a parent begins to see the multiple ways in which events can be perceived, they may be

more likely to admit their mistakes as well as considering alternative ways of achieving their parenting goals. In this way, parents who can see the many ways events can be perceived may be able to see how a modified or more flexible approach is more appropriate than rigid and inflexible approaches.

Parents also miss out on a huge amount of valuable feedback when they neglect to engage their children in bi-directional communication. Parents may for example be oblivious to the confusion or sadness they sometimes cause the child because they don't take the time to talk with the child. Additionally, by failing to openly communicate with their children, these parents may be inadvertently teaching their children to view relationships as made up of dominant and submissive roles, instead of cooperative alliances in which individuals value the perspectives of others. Overall, it seems that parents who talk with their children about current and past events are able to integrate the child's perspectives in a way that gives these parents the ability to respond sensitively and appropriately toward their children instead of relying on rigid approaches.

In addition to enhancing the parent's empathic attunement toward the child, it seems likely that give and take dialogue would also increase both the parent's and the child's ability to create a more coherent narrative of their experiences. As parents discuss experiences with children, they articulate their own thoughts, feelings, and perspectives to their children, and they help the children to articulate their own thoughts, feelings, and perspectives as well. Not only do these discussions explore multiple perspectives of the event, they are also likely to include discussion about many other contextual factors that influenced or impacted the situation (e.g. time and place). These dialogues are also likely to explore the "why" of events, helping the parent and child to better appreciate causal

relationships among the events in their stories. In this way these discussions of past experiences help the parent and child in constructing a more rich, complete, and overall coherent account of past events.

It seems then, that the information that parents and children learn through give and take dialogue not only helps them to appreciate the other persons perspective, but it also helps them in creating a more coherent and objective account of their own experiences. Assuming that this is true, one would expect a parent's narrative coherence to co-vary with effective parenting styles. Additionally, as a result of these dialogues with their children, it seems likely that parents would carry with them an ability to appreciate the different ways in which events can be perceived into future situations, as such, they will be more likely to objectively approach interactions with their children in the future. Finally, parents with incoherent and disorganized accounts of the past are at a loss when they struggle to study what's going on between them and their children because their narratives about the past are so vague and incoherent. Thus, it seems likely that the degree of coherence in a parent's narrative might also be an effective indicator of that parent's ability to objectively study their parenting attitudes (Wahler, Singh, & Singh, 2009).

While parents' give and take dialogue may be at the heart of a parent's empathic attunement, as well as increasing the parent's narrative coherence, what makes some parents more likely than others to engage their children in dialogue? It is suggested that parents gained an appreciation for give and take dialogue from early socializing experiences with caregivers, and that these early socializing experiences also helped the parent to develop a coherent pattern for constructing meaning of their experiences.

Developmental researchers, guided by social construction theory, describe the powerful socialization impact that early parent child interactions have in determining how individuals are likely to view social interactions in later life (Berger, & Luckmann, 1966; Fivush, et al. 2003; Peterson, & McCabe, 1994; Vygotsky, 1978). Similarly, the way in which an individual thinks about why things happen, and the way in which they constructs stories about their interactions, is likely to be rooted in early social interactions with caregivers as well (Wahler, & Smith, 1999). Wahler and Smith (1999) argue that individuals who struggle to construct coherent narratives about the past probably missed out on early socialization lessons with caregivers, particularly those involving dialogue about experiences. In this way, a parent's willingness to engage his or her child in dialogue is likely to be largely determined by whether or not the parent was engaged in dialogue by his or her parents as a child. Parents who were not engaged by their caregivers as children are then less likely to see the value of talking with their children about experiences, and visa versa.

Wahler and Castebury (2002) suggest that "as children learn to narrate life experiences, the caregiver provides the requisite structure and content for the story that the child is yet unable to supply."(p.303) If this is the case, than the coherence of the growing child's narrative depends largely on the parents ability to help the child to enrich their stories through give and take dialogue. Skillful parents help their children in constructing narrative accounts of the past by using an "elaborative" style that encourages the child to provide detailed accounts of events including background and other orienting information. These parents preface questions with detailed prompts, as well as asking

follow up questions that encourage the child to further the conversation (Welsh-Ross, 1997).

The suggestion that parents gain their parenting skills from their own parents makes intuitive sense. What does this mean however for parents who, for whatever reason, were not taught the advantages of authoritative parenting from their own parents? If we can determine the specific pathways in which parents teach their children to adopt these global parenting styles, then we can help struggling parents who missed out on those lessons. It is suggested that a primary factor in teaching individuals to construct meaning of their past, as well as helping them to function better in current settings comes from give and take dialogue in which individuals explore the past together, resulting in a more coherent account of their experiences (Fivush, et al. 2003; Peterson, & McCabe, 1994; Vygotsky, 1978, Wahler, Singh, & Singh, 2009).

### ***Parents' Ability's to Detect Social Contingency Patters by Constructing Coherent Autobiographical Narratives***

In addition to helping parents to consider alternative perspectives, their narratives are also likely to impact their parenting style in a number of other important ways. Specifically, a parent's narrative about past events is likely to guide them in clearly understanding social interactions as well as the importance of context on those interactions. These concepts are discussed in greater detail below, starting first with a discussion about how narratives contribute to a parents understanding of social contingencies.

One of the ways in which parents' narrative is likely to indicate their general approach to parenting, is by the degree to which they objectively consider causal

relationships or contingencies. Tarabulsky, Tessier, and Kappas, (1996) describe contingencies as temporal relationships among events which allow an individual to predict what will happen next. Indeed, one of the most vital developmental tasks that children and adults face is to develop an understanding of the complex contingency patterns that will allow them to maximize positive outcomes and to minimize negative outcomes as they interact with their environment and other individuals. Another way of thinking about contingencies might be to think of them in terms of causality; A caused B etc. The degree to which a person is able to clearly assess these contingency patterns and causal relationships in their life, is likely to have a direct impact on their success in adapting to their ever changing environment.

Wahler & Castlebury (2002) suggest that by carefully listening to an autobiographical narrative, themes emerge that highlight the way in which the person thinks about causal relationships and contingencies. The way in which a person tells their stories about past events is therefore thought to be an indicator of the degree to which they are able to objectively consider contingencies during social interactions. If for example, a narrator offers a narrative that includes no reference to causal relationships among the events described, it is likely to indicate their relatively low ability to think about important causal factors. Conversely, a narrator who offers several possible causal possibilities for the events in their story demonstrates a relatively strong ability to explore casual possibilities within their experiences.

Wahler and Castlebury (2002) suggest that as people tell stories over time, they begin to develop a framework of social patterns that “helps the narrator to detect molar patterns in his or her social contingency experiences.”(p.305). As parents are better able

to stand back and see these contingency patterns, they will naturally begin to increase the attitudes and behaviors that bring about positive outcomes, as well as avoiding attitudes and behaviors that bring about negative consequences. In this way, parents with low narrative coherence are likely to tell experiences of past event that are vague, disorganized, and confusing. These narratives offer the narrator few resources in making sense of past experiences, and the narrator is likely to have a decreased ability to clearly perceive social contingencies. Conversely, parents with highly coherent narratives are likely to include a multitude of clear and rich information in their narratives, which helps them to more accurately detect social contingencies in the past and in present situations.

### ***Putting Contingencies into Context***

As previously mentioned, an individual who is able to objectively view the rewarding or punishing consequences of complex contingencies (Tarabulsky, et al. 1996) is likely to be much more successful in adapting to the myriad and complex interactions they enter into. Although predicting contingency outcomes can seem simple on the surface, a closer look reveals the way in which contingencies are strongly impacted and altered by countless contextual factors. In this way, contingency outcomes can often take on a completely opposite meaning depending on the context in which they take place.

An example of how contingencies may be altered in different contexts is illustrated in the following scenario. It might be that the father of a teen age daughter learns over time that a light, joking, or playful approach with his daughter results in the most positive interactions, as opposed to a more serious or harsh approach. In this way the father has learned a valuable social contingency that allows him to improve his overall interactions with his daughter. This social contingency may however be

powerfully impacted by different contextual factors. If the daughter arrives at home and makes it clear that she had a terrible day due to a relationship break up at school, the father's playful joking approach may instead be perceived as uncaring or inappropriate. Conversely, there may be situations in which the father needs to convey a relatively more serious attitude (e.g. when talking to the daughter about her failing grade in a class, in which a playful attitude may send a confusing message). In this way, skillful children and adults are more likely to appreciate how contextual factors interact with contingencies, thereby helping them to choose more appropriate behaviors and responses (Wahler, & Castlebury, 2002).

Wahler and Smith (1999) argue that individuals who fail to account for these important contextual variables most likely missed out on early childhood experiences in which parents engage children in a give and take dialogue. Skillful parents see the importance of helping their children to explore the ways in which contextual factors alter contingency patterns. As the children of these parents grow up to be parents themselves, they are likely to create more coherent accounts of their experiences, which then allows them to see how context impacts contingencies.

To tell coherent accounts of past events, parent's must be able to include more information about the who, what, where, and when of their experiences. By creating these more complete and coherent accounts of the past, parents are less likely to filter out or ignore important aspects of their story. Thus, by being able to tell coherent accounts of past events, parents are able integrate a wealth of valuable information into their stories, which in turn helps them to more objectively perceive these molar social contingency patterns, as well as the contextual factors that interact with them. Finally, with an

increased ability to detect these contingency patterns, parents are more likely to have increased responsiveness and sensitivity toward their children (Schwartzman, & Wahler, 2006).

### ***Narratives & Parenting***

Effective parents learn to carefully attend to situations with their children in a way that helps them to respond in a sensitive, appropriate and responsive way (Kochanska, 2002). It seems likely that parents with clear and coherent narratives of past events would have several advantages over parents with less coherent narratives. Specifically, with a narrative style that allows the parent to carefully attend to all aspects of their story, parents begin to view their interactions with their children in a new light, taking on different perspectives, including the child's. Additionally, a coherent narrative style allows the parent to more accurately and objectively begin to see the way in which social contingency patterns operate within their family system.

Earlier we discussed some of the strengths and drawbacks of short term behavioral based parent training interventions. As Darling and Steinberg (1993) suggest, one possible reason for the limited results of some behavioral interventions (Wahler, 2000; Sanders, James, 1983; Serketich, & Dumas, 1996) may stem from the way in which the specific practices of these parents are being adversely affected by their overall approach or parenting style. In this way, specific behavioral interventions may fail to work because they are applied within the context of an authoritarian parenting style, with an attitude of harshness, rigidity, and in such a way that leaves the child feeling cold and disconnected from the parent. Similarly, behavioral interventions may not work because they are applied within a context of permissive parenting style, in which the child and

parent don't have a clear way of organizing their interactions or of understanding each other. Additionally, the children of permissive parents have an overall difficulty in considering the consequences of their behavior, and as such have learned over time to do as they please with little restraint from the parent.

It seems likely that parents who demonstrate an ability to create coherent narratives on the other hand, are more likely to engage their children in an overall approach of openness, warmth, and sensitivity, similar to the authoritarian parenting style (Schwartzman, & Wahler, 2006). Parents with coherent narratives most likely gained their narrative style through countless dialogues with their parents, in which the parent encouraged the child to enrich their story, and to consider different perspectives (Vygotsky, 1978; Welsh-Ross, 1997). As these children grow up to become parents themselves, they carry the ability to create an elaborated and coherent narrative with them. As parents of their own children, these parents are able to integrate a multitude of organized and rich material into their overall narrative, allowing them to stand back and view their experiences from multiple perspectives. These parents are also able to appreciate how contextual variables alter the meaning of events.

Parents with an enriched and coherent account of their experiences are more likely to approach interactions with their children in an overall style of empathy, collaboration and openness. These parents are also more likely to have an appreciation for the importance of engaging their child in give and take dialogue, as their parents did with them. As parents engage their children in a give and take dialogue, not only does the parent's empathy and perspectives increase as they begin to see the child's point of view, but the child's perspective also begins to change. Specifically, as parents explore the

meaning of the child's experiences as well as the reason for the rules, children are more likely to feel understood and cared for, thus creating an atmosphere of mutual understanding and warmth. Additionally, through open discussion about socialization goals and rules, these children begin to more clearly see the need for the rules and their desire to comply with the rules increases. In response to their parent's warm and open approach, these children are also more likely to comply with the rules because they want to please the parents, as apposed to the children of more cold and controlling parents who may look for opportunities to polarize against parent demands. Finally, the coherence of these parent's narratives, which helps them to view their experiences from different perspectives, also allows them to appreciate that they are not infallible, and that there are many ways to approach events. As such, these parents are able to approach parenting with an overall style of openness and flexibility, choosing the best approach for the situation.

Other ways in which the coherence of a parent's narrative is likely to help them is in the way the parent's narratives help them to more clearly and objectively observe social contingency patterns. The coherence of these parent narratives increases the parents ability to pick up on complex contingencies while interacting with their children. These parents are then more able to see what triggers negative behavior and what results in positive parent child interaction. Additionally, parents with coherent narratives do not overlook the powerful impact that context has on these social contingencies. As such, these parents are more able to sensitively alter their approach when the context of the situation requires them to do so. Given the many advantages that narrative coherence provides parents, it seems that their chances of successfully implementing effective

parenting practices is likely to be greatly enhanced in relation to parents with less coherent narratives.

Most would agree that good parenting consists of more than just good parenting skills; things like concern for the child, empathy, tenderness, and a genuine desire to care for the child also seem to be important parts of parenting. Jay Belsky (1981) argues that a caregiver's warmth and sensitivity is one of the most influential dimensions of parenting that helps the child to develop the foundations of healthy psychological functioning. In this way, effective parenting consists of more than just management of the child's behavior, but of nurturance and genuine concern. Many parents want to be close to their child, but are unable to do so because they lack the skills that allow them to see and understand the obstacles that continually get in the way. If these parents were able to increase the coherence of their narrative, they would be more able to objectively and accurately perceive their interactions with their children, allowing them to more clearly see the contingency patterns that cause them problems as well as being more able to empathize with their children. It is hypothesized, that if these struggling parents were able to increase the coherence of their stories, they would be able to alter their approach to parenting in a way that allowed them to better demonstrate the parental warmth and sensitivity that Belsky (1981) and others refer to (e.g. Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall, 1978). While more research is needed in this area, Schwartzman and Wahler's (2006) research suggests that struggling parents can indeed become more sensitive and responsive toward their children through narrative restructuring interventions.

While the conceptual link between parenting style and narrative coherence makes sense, there is a great need for research that explores the interaction between these

variables. A recent study by Schwartzman & Wahler (2006) supports the link between narrative coherence and parenting. In their study, they explored the impact of interventions aimed at improving a parent's narrative coherence. They found that interventions aimed at improving the parent's narrative were indeed effective in improving a parent's narrative coherence when compared to a control group. Additionally, they discovered that the increased coherence of a parent's narratives caused them to be more overall responsive/sensitive toward their children (Schwartzman, & Wahler, 2006). One of the goals of the current study is to gain additional insights concerning the dynamics between a parent's narrative coherence and their parenting style.

## **Chapter IV**

### **MINDFUL PARENTING**

We will now shift our focus in exploring the attributes that allow for improved parenting by considering the degree to which parents react to their environment in either mindful and attentive ways versus more mindless and automatic ways. What follows is a brief review of recent research and theory concerning the construct of mindfulness, including the ways in which mindfulness impacts parenting.

Before discussing what mindfulness is, it will be helpful to consider its opposite, mindlessness or automaticity. Brown and Ryan (2003) describe four different aspects of mindlessness. First, an individual's attention can be taken away from the present moment. Examples of this might be worries about the past or the future, including rumination about problems. Second, an individual's attention can become divided among several tasks, thereby preventing them from effectively responding to any one of the tasks they are involved with. A third form of mindlessness stems from the compulsive and automatic behaviors an individual engages in without thinking. These automatic behaviors are similar to engrained habits which an individual may engage in without an awareness of their actions or intentions. The fourth form of mindlessness serves a defensive function that helps the individual to avoid unwanted thoughts and feelings by turning their attention away from the present moment (Brown, & Ryan, 2003). While there are things that humans must do in an automatic way in order to function efficiently in life, such as reading and walking, the mindlessness which Brown and Ryan talk about is focused on the degree to which all aspects of an individual's life may become dominated by ineffective habits and thoughtless reactions.

To break free from such mindless habits and reactions, an individual must become more mindful and open to their experiences. Mindfulness originally stems from Buddhist traditions where it has been used for centuries as a means of decreasing mental suffering (Gunaratana, 2002). Mindfulness is most often associated with various forms of meditation aimed at helping individuals to gain psychological insight concerning their thoughts, including the way they perceive the world around them, and helping them to be more in touch with the present moment. Jon Kabat-Zin (1982, 1990) was one of the first to introduce mindfulness into secular therapeutic settings when he developed his Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) techniques. Kabat-Zin defines mindfulness as „Paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally” (Kabat-Zinn, 1994, p. 4).

Bishop et al. (2004) describe another helpful operational definition of mindfulness. They suggest two predominant components make up mindfulness. In the first component, which focuses more on self-regulation, awareness is focused on the immediate experience an individual has. Thus, as the mind wanders, a mindful individual learns to gently bring their attention back to their ever changing present experiences. The second component of their definition focuses on a mindful person’s ability to approach their experiences with an attitude of curiosity and acceptance, regardless of the positive or negative nature of the experience. Additionally, Bishop et al (2004) view mindful individuals as being able to decrease emotional reactivity by learning to take on a “decentered” or more objective perspective of their experiences. This distanced and accepting perspective then allows the person to observe his or her emotional reactions in a way that allows them to return to baseline more quickly after experiencing emotional arousal.

By helping individuals to become more mindful of their experiences in the present moment, they learn to disengage from their former habits and mindlessness, and instead they begin to experience life from an increasingly open, objective, nonjudgmental, and curious perspective. With all the benefits that mindfulness has to offer, it makes sense that struggling parents would especially benefit from increased mindfulness as they raise their children. Parents who fail to respond to their children appropriately are commonly described as lacking “responsiveness” or “sensitivity” (Bakermans-Kranenburg, van-Ijzendoorn, & Juffer, 2003; Kochanska, 2002). With increased levels of mindfulness however, these parents may be better able to appropriately and sensitively respond to their children’s behavior in a way that both improves the child’s behavior and the parent child relationship in general. Specifically, as parents become more mindful of their experiences, they begin to more objectively view their interactions with their children, allowing them to gain powerful insights into what improves their relationship with their child as well as what causes problems. Thus, instead of automatically or habitually reacting to their environment, they are mindfully aware of what is going on, and are more in touch with their children and the situation.

In a series of recent studies, Singh et al. (2004, 2006b, 2007, 2009) conducted research exploring the effects of mindfulness training on parenting that offers helpful insights concerning the relationship between mindfulness and improved parenting. In one study Singh et al. (2006b) taught mindfulness to the mothers of autistic children over a 12- week course as well as assessing their child’s behavior before and after the mindfulness intervention. Results showed a significant decrease in their child’s aggression, non-compliance, and self injury following the parents mindfulness training.

Results also showed an increase in the mother's satisfaction with parenting skills and interactions with their children.

Singh et al. (2007) went on to replicate these findings by administering mindfulness training to four mothers who had children with developmental disabilities. In this study, mindfulness training led to a decrease in their child's aggressive behavior, as well as increasing their child's social skills. These more mindful parents also reported increased parental satisfaction and more social interactions with their children. Finally, the children of these mothers experienced increased positive interactions with their siblings as well as decreased negative interactions with their siblings.

In an additional follow up study, Singh et al. (2009) discovered a significant decrease in their children's noncompliance after their mothers received mindfulness training. It is important to note that the mindfulness trainings used in these studies was not specifically aimed at altering child behavior, instead, the mindfulness training offered focused on general mindfulness techniques that apply to any setting.

During follow up interviews with parents, Singh et al. (2007) describe how mothers felt about the mindfulness training they received. These mothers described the way in which mindfulness training "transformed" their lives (p. 763). Several of these mothers had participated in behavioral interventions specifically aimed at improving their child's behavior, with poor results. Singh describes the way these mothers felt as follows:

"They also noted that the specific child management techniques learned from previous training programs were narrow in scope, focused on treating maladaptive behaviors, and requiring them to be constantly vigilant about what was motivating their child's behaviors. They felt that because these techniques took considerable

effort to control their children's behavior, they only used them only when the behavior became intolerable. They also reported that because they were always thinking ahead about how they would handle their children's maladaptive behavior, they were cognitively exhausted by the end of the day. Indeed, one mother noted that being so focused on treating the child's maladaptive behaviors almost resulted in her missing out on the life she had with him. With mindfulness training however, she was able to realize the importance of being present in the experience of life itself. Although none of the mothers knew how or why the changes occurred, all four felt that their lives had been positively transformed because of the mindfulness training. Part of the transformation for mindful parents appears to be changes in the way they relate to all events in their environment, rather than the acquisition of a set of skills to specifically change their children's behaviors."(p.743

Singh et al (2006b, 2007) suggest four specific aspects of mindfulness that were instrumental in helping these struggling parents. First, the unconditional acceptance of oneself and others that is taught during mindfulness training helped these parents to create a context in which the mother was less focused on controlling the child's behavior, and more focused on compassion and understanding toward themselves and the child. In this way parents can go beyond behavior management, and instead feel more connected with the child and their needs.

A second aspect of mindfulness that helps parents comes from the way in which it help the mother to empty her mind of previous ideas and conceptions and instead to

approach each experience with a “beginner’s mind” (Suzuki, 1970). Ellen Langer (1993) describes mindfulness in this way: “It is an open, creative, problematic state of mind in which the individual might be led to finding differences among things thought similar and similarities among things thought different” (Langer, 1993, p. 44). Put another way, Langer (1993) described how this “problematic” state of mind leads individuals to problem solve or consider old information in new ways instead of automatically categorizing our experiences into overly general categories. Although organizing our experience into these general categories can help us to quickly organize our experiences, it often comes at a price. In this way mindfulness helps parents learn to approach each interaction with their child from an open and fresh perspective.

Third, as the parents were more able to mindfully focus on the present moment, they were able to avoid getting wrapped up in thoughts about the past or future, therefore allowing them to devote more of their awareness and attention to their experiences as they are happening to them (Singh, et al. 2007). Fourth, mindfulness encourages the individual the focus on one thing at a time instead of dividing their attention between several different tasks. By helping these parents to focus in the most important thing at the moment, they were able to attend to their children and their needs a more holistic and comprehensive way. The fifth aspect of mindfulness training that helped these parents in these studies (Singh, et al. 2006b, 2007) was the way in which the mothers mindful attention of the child in the present moment allowed the mother to spontaneously respond to the child without over-thinking and analyzing the situation. In this way mindfulness appeared to allow the mothers to create a connected, calm, and open context in which both parent and child felt understood and respected, and in which improved functioning

spontaneously occurred. In this way, mindfulness appears to create an ideal context or emotional climate that impacts these parents' interactions with their children.

A wealth of related research suggests other ways in which mindfulness may help parents. Mindfulness has been shown to decrease stress and to increase compassion for the self (Shapiro, Astin, Bishop, & Cordova, 2005), as well as being associated with reductions in anxiety as well as reducing overall negative affect (Shapiro, Brown, & Biegel, 2007). Additionally, mindfulness has been shown to promote brain activity that is associated with positive emotion (Davidson, Kabat-Zinn, Schumacher, Rosenkranz, Muller, Santorelli, et al. 2003).

Shapiro, Carlson, Astin, & Freedman, (2006) suggest that one of the key factors about mindfulness that allows individuals to change and heal is the way in which mindfulness helps individuals to *reperceive* their experiences. Reperceiving is described as the way in which individuals reevaluate their perceptions of their experiences. In this way reperceiving is similar to other cognitive concepts such as defusion, decentering, and distancing. As a person learns to reperceive their experiences, they are more able to observe their thoughts and feelings as temporary events that are not necessarily connected to the self, and that are not necessarily true. Shapiro et al. (2006) suggests that this reperceiving and more objective approach to our experiences allows us stand back and observe our emotions and reactions instead of getting so caught up in them. These more objective perceptions of our experiences are then more likely to help individuals in gaining clarity and insight about their problems, as well as improving their self regulation skills, and increasing the individuals overall cognitive and emotional flexibility.

Sears, S., & Kraus, S. (2009) discovered that increased exposure to mindfulness meditation resulted in a significant reduction in anxiety, negative affect, and an increase in hope among college students. Mindfulness has also been successfully utilized in treating clinical depression, borderline personality disorder, and anxiety disorders (Linehan, 1993, Hayes, Strosahl, & Wilson, 1999; Teasdale et al. 2000; Williams, Teasdale, Segal, & Soulsby, 2000).

Singh et al. (2007) described the way in which mindfulness training appeared to allow mothers to create an open and compassionate emotional climate in which their parenting interactions took place. This context is similar to the climate or context that Darling and Steinberg (1993) talk about as mediating parenting goals and practices. Thus, it appears that mindfulness helped the parents in the Singh et al. (2006b, 2007, 2009) studies to create a positive emotional climate or parenting style that changed the way they delivered their parenting practices, as well as changing the way their children responded to those practices. While the link between parenting style and mindfulness makes good sense, no previous research has explored this connection. The intention of the present study is to gather data which may increase our understanding of how mindfulness and parenting style are related.

## **Chapter V**

### **MINFULNESS AND NARRATIVE COHERENCE**

Thus far, this paper has described the characteristics of both mindfulness and narrative coherence. Narratives high in coherence are thought to consist of coherent descriptions of past events, which then gives parents an ability to objectively consider their experiences. If an individual is mindful, it is also thought that they will be able to attend to their experiences in a more impartial way, resulting in a clearer understanding of social contingencies and a more objective view of their experiences. In this way there is a great deal of overlap between the constructs of mindfulness and narrative coherence.

In order for individuals to give a clear and coherent narrative, they must attend to numerous aspects of their environment. They must for example be mindful and aware of their internal states such as emotions and thoughts if they are to integrate this information into their narrative accounts. Narratives high in coherence also contain a great deal of clear details about the events that take place. Individuals who are able to recount such clear details also demonstrate an ability to mindfully and objectively attend to numerous aspects of their environment.

In their work with depressed individuals, Williams, Teasdale, Segal, and Soulsby (2000) discovered the way in which Mindfulness Based Cognitive Training (MBCT) helped individuals to remember more specific memories when discussing past events, demonstrating the way in which mindfulness helps individuals to tell more complete and coherent stories. As this study suggests, the degree of mindfulness an individual has is likely to alter their narrative accounts of the past.

It is also thought that parents who are able to construct coherent narratives by mindfully attending to their environment are more likely to clearly see the impact that their reactions and behaviors have on their children. In this way, parents will be able to see which of their behaviors results in more positive interactions with their children, and which situations and behaviors are more likely to result in negative interactions with their children. Conversely, parents who recount incoherent and disorganized narratives of the past are likely to do so because they lack the ability to mindfully distance themselves and openly observe their experiences. Instead of mindfully attending to their myriad experiences, struggling parents tend to get swept away with emotions and have a hard time seeing the forest for the trees, or appreciating the context in which their interactions take place.

It seems then that increased narrative coherence may not only stem from early dialogues with caregivers, it may also be the result of increased mindfulness. We previously described the way in which give and take dialogue with early caregivers is one of the most likely ways in which parents learned to create more coherent accounts of their experiences. It is suggested that one of the reasons give and take dialogues are so effective in helping individuals to create more coherent narratives is because they help the individual to more mindfully attend to their experiences. In this way, mindfulness may be an important precursor of a parents narrative coherence, which in turn impacts the parents overall style or approach toward their children.

While mindfulness allows parents to more openly consider their experiences, the sheer awareness of events is not likely to be enough to improve their parenting. In order to utilize their experiences, parents must mentally organize their experiences into

coherent accounts of the past. For example, successful parents don't simply create an objective record of their experiences like a robot, they take their observations and think about them, they organize them into meaningful and coherent accounts of their experiences, and they develop an ability to utilize their mindful observations as a tool for successful adaptation.

It is hypothesized that narrative coherence functions as a mediator between mindfulness and parenting style. Thus, while increased mindfulness is hypothesized to covary with successful parenting styles, it is suggested that mindfulness brings about successful parenting by helping the parent to create a coherent narrative that the parent utilizes in helping them to organize their experiences and in responding more appropriately toward their child.

With the exception of the Williams et al. (2000) study, a review of the literature suggests that the link between narrative coherence and mindfulness has not been previously explored. By learning more about the relationships among mindfulness, narrative coherence, parenting style, and child behavior, researchers can gain powerful insights concerning what contributes to successful or struggling parenting styles, as well as informing effective interventions for struggling parents.

## Chapter VI

### METHODS

#### *Participants*

Forty-one mothers were recruited through the University of Tennessee Psychology Clinic. Participants represent a wide age range and include a range of other demographic factors which will be fully presented in the results. In order for mothers to participate in the study, they had to have brought their child to a clinic for a behavioral intervention. Most of the participants were currently bringing their child to the University of Tennessee clinic for either therapy or evaluation. Parents with children over the age of 18 were excluded from the study.

#### *Mindfulness*

The participant were asked to fill out the Mindful Attention Awareness Scale (MAAS) (Brown, & Ryan, 2003), a 15 question self report scale with a 6 point Likert scale. Sample questions from the MAAS include items such as: “I find myself doing things without paying attention”, and: “I forget a persons name almost as soon as I’ve been told it for the first time”. Lower scores on the MAAS scale represent an individual’s “mindlessness” or their increased likelihood of reacting to their environment in automatic and habit driven ways. Conversely, higher scores on the MAAS represent an individual’s ability to more mindfully and objectively interact with their environment. During the MAAS scale construction it was thought that practitioners of Zen mindfulness would represent a population of individuals high in mindfulness. When the MAAS was administered to these Zen mindfulness practitioners they did indeed show higher average MAAS scores than other norming populations. The MAAS scale was also found to be

positively correlated with self report measures of self awareness and overall wellbeing. Finally, the MAAS was found to be negatively correlated with measures of psychological distress (Brown, & Ryan, 2003).

### ***Parenting Style***

Parenting style was measured with The Parental Authority Questionnaire - Revised (PAQ-R) (Reitman, Rhode, Hupp, & Altobello, 2002). The PAQ-R is a 30-item self report measure designed to assess a parents primary style of parenting attitudes. The PAQ-R is a slight modification of the original Parental Authority Questionnaire (PAQ) created by Buri (1991). Buri's PAQ was originally designed to measure the subjective ratings of adolescents concerning their parent's parenting style. The PAQ is based on Baumrind's (1967, 1971) conceptualization of parenting styles, which include: authoritarian, authoritative, and permissive parenting styles. The PAQ-R questions were revised to be completed by parents themselves, as a subjective measure of their parenting style. For the PAQ-R, parents respond to a five point Likert scale to 30 items, indicating how much they agree with each statement. The PAQ-R reveals the degree to which parents endorse their use of the three parenting styles, including authoritarian, authoritative, and permissive parenting styles. Sample items of the PAQ-R include: "I seldom give my children expectations and guidelines for their behavior"(permissive), "My children know what I expect of them in the family, but they also feel free to discuss those expectations with me when they feel they are unreasonable"(authoritative), and " I do not allow my children to question any decision I have made"(authoritarian).

### ***Child Behavior***

Each parent also completed the Shortform Assessment for Children –Revised (SAC-R) (Glisson, Hemmelgarn, & Post, 2002). The SAC-R is a 48 item self reports questionnaire in which the parent rates their child’s behavior according to a three point Likert type scale. Parents rate their children to indicate how often the child demonstrates a range of negative behaviors. Sample items concerning the child include: “Doesn’t follow rules”, “fights a lot”, and “Has sudden mood swings”

### ***Narrative Coherence***

The narrative coherence of the mothers was measured by coding their narrative responses to the four questions described in greater detail below. The parent’s narratives will be coded by using the Narrative Coherence Coding Manual developed by Wahler, Williams, and Rowinski (2007). This narrative coding technique analyzes narratives along two dimensions, “clarity” and “richness”, to achieve an overall measure of narrative coherence. Clarity and richness are further broken down into sub-categories, with clarity being comprised of “main point”, “happenings”, and “organization”; and richness being comprised of “orientation”, “internal states”, and “causality”. Thus, narrative coherence can be broken down in to six sub-components to help us better understand how an individual constructs their narrative (see fig.1; all tables and figures are found in the appendix).

### ***Procedure***

Participants were screened via a phone call to ensure that they met the inclusion criteria for the study. An appointment was then set with the eligible mothers for them to come to the clinic and participate. Informed consent was obtained from the participants

and then the participant filled out a brief demographic questionnaire. Next it was explained to the participants that they would be asked 4 questions regarding their interactions with their child as well as their own parents, and that their responses would be audio recorded. The participants were instructed to keep their responses to about 5 minutes each. The participant was then asked the following four questions; 1. Why did you decide to bring your child to the clinic? 2. What is it like to live with your child? 3. What do you remember about life with your child when they were younger?, and 4. What do you remember about life with your parents when you were younger? During the recording of the parent's narratives, the interviewer refrained from commenting or questioning the mothers in order to ensure that the interviewer did not inadvertently help the mothers in constructing their narratives. The interviewers did however give various facial responses and other gestures to help make the interaction feel more natural and engaging. In the event that the participant gave an unusually short narrative response to a question (e.g. a one minute response), the interviewer would give a one time prompt by saying "can you tell me more".

The four questions were designed to be general enough that they would allow the mothers to demonstrate their unique narrative style without imposing too much structure. At the same time, the same four questions were administered to all of the participants in order to give enough uniformity between samples that comparisons could more easily be made between participants. Additionally, the responses to the four questions were considered to be distinct chapters that would indicate possible ways in which parent talks about different subject matter. This would allow us to determine if the narrator does well on some topics, but poorly on other, or if they have a uniform pattern of narrative

structure. Similarly, the first two questions allows us to understand how the narrator talks about the recent past, while the last two narratives demonstrates how well they talk about the more distant past.

Following the narrative audio recording, the patient filled out the PAQ-R, the MAAS, and the SAC-R. The participants were then given their choice of a \$40.00 gift certificates to either Wal-Mart, or Best Buy stores. Overall data collection for each mother took about an hour.

### ***Hypothesis & Analysis***

Each of the five research hypotheses were evaluated to determine whether or not they were supported by the data.

1. It was hypothesized that narrative coherence would be correlated with parenting style.

To test this hypothesis, correlational analysis were performed using the Pearson correlation regression. Specifically, the correlation between narrative coherence and parenting style was be calculated.

2. It was hypothesized that mindfulness would be correlated with parenting style.

To test this hypothesis, correlational analysis were performed using the Pearson correlation regression. Specifically, the correlation between mindfulness and parenting style was calculated.

3. It was hypothesized that parenting style would be correlated with improved child behavior.

To test this hypothesis, correlational analysis were performed using the Pearson correlation regression. Specifically, the correlation between parenting style and child behavior were calculated.

4. It was hypothesized that narrative coherence would play a mediating role between mindfulness and parenting style.

To test this hypothesis, mediational path analysis were performed using the Baron, & Kenny, (1986) approach for mediational analysis.

Descriptive statistics are also reported in describing the participant's responses for the Narrative Coherence Scale, the PAQ-R, the MAAS, and the SAC-R.

## Chapter VII

### RESULTS

#### *Demographics*

The sample consisted of 40 mothers who were currently bringing their children to the clinic, or who had brought their child to the clinic at an earlier date. The average age of the mothers was 38 years old, and ranged from 24 to 54 years old. All of the mothers were Caucasian except for one African American mother, and one Hispanic American mother. 50% of the mothers reported an annual household income ranging between \$20,000 and \$50,000; the remaining 50% of the sample reported household incomes in the following percentages: 19% <\$10,000; 19% >\$50,000; and 12% between \$10,000 and \$20,000. Of the forty participants, 25 of the mothers reported being married, with 13 divorced mothers, and 2 unmarried. Tests of main effects among the different demographic variables revealed no significant differences, as such, the demographic variables were collapsed for the analysis.

#### *Reliability for Coherence Rating, & Construct Validity*

Each mother was asked four questions about their interaction with their child or other past experiences. The answers to the four questions were treated as four separate narrative chapters. Three trained raters independently coded each of the four chapters for all of the mothers using the six narrative coherence subscales represented in figure 1. Thus, our trained coders would start with the mother's first response or chapter, and assign a score of 1-5 for each of the 6 subscales. The coder would repeat this procedure with the mothers remaining three narrative responses or chapters. The mother's four chapters were then coded independently by the other two trained coders.

Interrater reliability was calculated for the chapter ratings between the three trained raters. Specifically, intraclass correlation scores (ICC's) were tabulated to determine the degree to which the raters agreed on the mother's level of narrative coherence. Although some reliability statistics are tabulated with the understanding that minor difference among scores should still constitute relative agreement, the current reliability statistics were measured with the more stringent criteria, which required perfect agreement among the rater's scores. ICC's for the six coherence subscales are presented on Table 1., and indicate a robust level of agreement among the raters, with only the "organization" subscale falling short of the .6 to .7 range. With the exception of the organization subscale, these ICC scores suggest our rater's relatively accurate ability to agree on the level of coherence that different aspects of a mothers narrative should be assigned.

The internal consistency of the narrative coherence construct was measured to ensure that the four chapter responses from each mother were consistent in their level of coherence. Specifically, Cronbach 's alpha scores were tabulated, revealing relatively high levels of internal consistency ranging from .7 to .8, with complete results listed in Table 2.

### ***Descriptive Statistics***

Overall coherence for each mother was established by first averaging the subscale coherence scores for the three raters, thus each mother had an average rating for each of the six coherence subscales, for each of the four chapters or responses. All of the

averaged subscale responses to the four chapters were then added to arrive at an overall measure of narrative coherence, with higher scores indicating a more coherent narrative. For the current sample, the average level of narrative coherence was 68.19,  $SD = 10.98$ , with the lowest possible score being 24, and the highest possible score being 120.

The average score on the MAAS mindfulness scale for the current sample was 3.70. Brown and Ryan (2003) reported an average score of 4.29 for their sample of Zen mindfulness practitioners, and an average score of 3.77 for a college population. Thus the average MAAS score of our mothers was very comparable to the norming averages that Brown and Ryan (2003) found during scale construction. For the current sample, the scales internal consistency was high at .896 (Chronbach's Alpha).

The internal consistency for the Parenting Attitudes Questionnaire – Revised (PAQ-R) was good for two of the parenting styles, with an alpha of .713 for the authoritarian parenting style scale, and an alpha of .676 for the authoritative scale. Unfortunately the alpha was relatively low for the permissive parenting style scale at .509. The mean for each of the parenting styles were as follows: authoritative 42.52,  $SD = 3.68$ , authoritarian 29.22,  $SD = 5.62$ , and permissive 21.63,  $SD = 4.07$ . One way to interpret data from the PAQ is to assign each parent to one of the three parenting style categories based on which of the three parenting style items they endorsed the most. For our sample however, all but two of the mothers endorsed the authoritative parenting style the most. However, as the means for each of the three categories demonstrates, even though most of the mothers endorsed the authoritative category to a greater degree, all of the mothers endorsed the other two parenting styles to greater or lesser degrees as well, allowing for correlational analysis to be performed between the three parenting styles and

the predictor variables based on the degree to which each of the parents endorses each of the categories. Due to the relatively low reliability of the permissive parenting style scale, it is not surprising that it was not significantly related with any of the other variables.

The average score that mothers reported for child behavior on the SAC-R was 34.58, and internal consistency for this sample was high at .824 (Chronbach's Alpha).

### ***Correlational Analysis***

Correlational analysis for all of the variables described were computed, and are presented in Table 3. Narrative Coherence was found to be significantly correlated with parenting style. Specifically, narrative coherence was negatively correlated with authoritarian parenting style ( $r = -.335, p = .017$ ), suggesting that the more narrative coherence a parent has, the less likely they are to engage in less skillful or authoritarian parenting styles. Narrative coherence was not significantly correlated with authoritative ( $r = .025, p = .440$ ) or permissive parenting styles ( $r = .101, p = .267$ ).

Mindfulness was also significantly correlated with parenting styles, with a negative correlation between mindfulness and authoritarian parenting styles ( $r = -.376, p = .008$ ), and a positive correlation between mindfulness and authoritative parenting styles ( $r = .45, p = .002$ ). Mindfulness was not significantly related to the permissive parenting style ( $r = -.018, p = .914$ ). These results suggest that the more mindful a parent is, the less likely they are to engage in less skillful parenting styles, and the more likely they are to adopt more effective and healthy parenting styles.

Parenting style was also significantly correlated with child behavior, with authoritarian parenting styles being positively correlated with poor child behavior ( $r = .337, p = .017$ ), and authoritative parenting styles being negatively correlated with poor

child behavior ( $r = -.378, p = .008$ ). Mindfulness was not significantly related to the permissive parenting style ( $r = -.216, p = .181$ ). These results suggest that improved child behavior is associated with more skillful parenting styles, and less skillful parenting styles being associated with child behavior problems.

The Baron and Kenny (1986) approach to mediational path analysis was used to determine if mindfulness moderated the relationship between narrative coherence and parenting style. According to Baron and Kenny (1986), one of the vital criteria in testing for mediation is that there must be a significant correlation among the independent variables, which are mindfulness and narrative coherence for this study. While there were significant correlations between mindfulness and parenting style as well as between narrative coherence and parenting style, the relationship between mindfulness and narrative coherence was non-significant. As such, the hypothesized mediational relationship among narrative coherence, mindfulness, and parenting style did not appear to be consistent with the data for this study.

### ***Post-Hoc Analysis***

A series of post-hoc analysis were performed to further investigate the relationships among narrative coherence, mindfulness, parenting styles, and child behaviors. As with any post-hoc findings, these results should be interpreted with care, keeping in mind the increased amount of error that is introduced when looking for relationships other than those hypothesized. While the overall measure of narrative coherence showed a significant negative correlation with authoritarian parenting styles, a closer look at the narrative coherence subscales suggests that some of the subscales are more predictive of authoritarian parenting style than others. Specifically, the following

four aspects of a mother's narrative emerged as being the most predictive of authoritarian parenting style; central point ( $r = -.385, p = .007$ ), organization ( $r = -.357, p = .012$ ), internal states ( $r = -.265, p = .049$ ), and causality being the most predictive of the mothers parenting style ( $r = -.417, p = .004$ ). The aspect of a mothers narrative coherence that were not predictive of authoritarian parenting styles were the happenings of the mothers narrative ( $r = .006, p = .486$ ), and the time and place orientation of the narrative ( $r = -.076, p = .32$ ).

A factor analysis of the six subscales was done to determine if any of the significant variables were more highly correlated with authoritarian parenting styles when the other subscale correlations were controlled for. Factor analysis results revealed the causality subscale to be the only subscale with a significant relationship to authoritarian parenting style after controlling for the other variables ( $B = -4.484, p = .027$ ).

As previously mentioned on diagram 1., the six subscales of narrative coherence were grouped into two categories, aimed at measuring the narratives clarity and richness. Post hoc analysis indicate that clarity and richness were similarly correlated with authoritarian parenting styles, with the richness construct being only slightly more predictive ( $r = -.335, p = .017$ ) than the clarity construct ( $r = -.295, p = .032$ ). \*\*\*Results are presented in Table 4. do I keep this table?

The first two narrative questions the mother's responded to involved the near past, while the last two questions concerned the distant past. Post hoc analysis was performed in order to determine if parent narratives about the near versus far past are more predictive of parenting styles. Results indicate that parent narratives concerning the near

past are more highly correlated with authoritarian parenting ( $r = -.395$ ,  $p = .006$ ) than narratives about the distant past ( $r = -.236$ ,  $p = .071$ ).

The significant correlation between mindfulness and both parenting styles was analyzed to better understand the relationship among these variables. Because the constructs of authoritarian and authoritative parenting are in many ways opposites of each other, we wanted to see if both parenting styles were correlated with mindfulness in their own way. It could be for example that there is really only one parenting style that is significantly correlated with mindfulness, and the other parenting style is only significant because it is the opposite of that true variable. To test this, mindfulness was simultaneously regressed against both parenting styles. Results suggested that mindfulness was significantly related with both authoritarian parenting style ( $B = -.903$ ,  $p = .017$ ) and authoritative parenting style ( $B = 1.707$ ,  $p = .004$ ); suggesting that both parenting styles are correlated with mindfulness in their own unique way.

The significant relationships between mindfulness, both parenting styles, and child behavior also suggested a possible mediating relationship among these variables. The Baron and Kenny (1986) approach to mediation was used to test for possible mediation. Baron and Kenny (1986) state that in our case, there must be a significant relationship between the dependent variable of child behavior and both mindfulness and parenting style even after controlling for the other in order to proceed with mediational analysis. When child behavior was regressed against the three variables of authoritative parenting ( $B = -1.48$ ,  $p = .071$ ), authoritarian parenting ( $B = .86$ ,  $p = .097$ ), and mindfulness ( $B = -.14$ ,  $p = .511$ ), however, the significant correlation between mindfulness and child behavior appeared to wash out. Thus the mediational model does

not appear to be consistent with our data because of the nonsignificant relationship between mindfulness and child behavior when parenting style was controlled for.

Where both mindfulness and narrative coherence were correlated with authoritarian parenting style, a regression analysis was done to determine if one of these two factors hold more of the variance than the other in correlating with authoritarian parenting style. To test this, authoritarian parenting style was regressed against both mindfulness and narrative coherence. Results suggest that mindfulness and narrative coherence impact authoritarian parenting in their own unique ways, with mindfulness ( $B = -.157, p = .005$ ) being only slightly more significant than narrative coherence ( $B = -.196, p = .010$ ).

Finally, to test whether or not there were any interactions among the variables in this study, moderational analysis were done. Specifically, numerous interactions among the variables of parenting style, mindfulness, coherence, and child behavior were tested. Results for these moderational analysis yielded no significant interactions among the variables.

## Chapter VIII

### DISCUSSION

Overall, the results showed fair support for the proposed hypotheses due to the absence of the mediational interaction between mindfulness, narrative coherence, and parenting style. The results and implications for each hypothesis as well as the post hoc findings are discussed in greater detail below.

#### *Narrative Coherence*

Results supported the hypothesis that narrative coherence would be significantly correlated with parenting style. Specifically, the more coherent a parent is in talking about their experiences, the less likely they are to engage in the less skillful authoritarian parenting style. The authoritarian parenting style entails reliance on absolute and rigid conceptualizations of rules and expected behavior. It seems then that something about the increased coherence of a parent's narrative somehow allows them to avoid these absolute and rigid parenting styles, and instead allows these parents to adopt more open and flexible approaches. The roots of narrative coherence for the mothers in our sample most likely originated from interactions with their own parents in which they learned the value of elaborating their stories and considering things from alternative perspectives (Vygotsky, 1978; Welsh-Ross, 1997). As these parents interact with their children, they are therefore more able to consider the many ways in which events can be perceived as well as considering the numerous ways in which parental objectives can be achieved. With this increased flexibility, these parents are more able to respond more appropriately

toward their children, depending on what the situation calls for. In contrast, parents with incoherent narratives who lack the ability to view experiences from multiple vantage points are more likely to approach their parenting in rigid ways, even when the situation may call for a different approach.

Additionally, authoritarian parents tend to view their child's inappropriate behavior in very simplistic ways, with behaviors and consequences falling into over-general black and white categories. Thus, while many parenting situations may call for a more nuanced and sensitive response, these parents tend to enforce rules like blunt instruments when something more sensitive is called for. The authoritarian parent may for example think "they either broke the rule or they didn't, and if you did break the rule, they know the punishment". While consistency and clear expectations are vital, these parents are less likely to consider why the rule may have been broken, and whether or not the consequences should be altered accordingly. As a parent's narrative becomes more complex however, they begin to see the way in which numerous causal and contextual factors combine in determining any outcome (Wahler, & Castlebury, 2002). In this way a mother with a coherent narrative may see the way in which the child's behavior is caused by multiple contextual factors, such as a misunderstanding of the rules. When parents have the ability to produce a coherent awareness of such complexities, they appear to be better able to flexibly deal with the situation in a responsive and appropriate way.

In addition to approaching their parenting in a rigid and inflexible manner, authoritarian parents are also noted for their lack of give and take dialogue with their children (Baumrind, 1989). Instead, these parents tend to view themselves as infallible and tend to place little value on the child's input. If the genesis for coherent narratives

takes place in early interactions with caregivers (Wahler, & Castlebury, 2002; Waher, & Smith, 1999), then parents with coherent narratives are more likely to engage their children in give and take dialogues as their parents did with them. By engaging their children in these ways, the parent helps the child to feel understood, and the parent is better able to understand and empathize with the child's perspective. Additionally, it seems likely that parents with more coherent narratives are more able to see their mistakes as well as their successes. Parents who are able to clearly see and admit to their mistakes are then much more likely to learn from their mistakes than parents who view their parenting approach as infallible.

Unfortunately the permissive parenting scale was found to be a somewhat unreliable measure for our data set, with a relatively low alpha of .509. Considering the low reliability of the permissive scale it is not surprising that it was not significantly correlated with any of the other measures. It is unusual that the permissive scale would have such low reliability when previous research results have found it to be a relatively reliable measure. It seems likely that the poor reliability of the permissive scale for our data set is due to some form of unknown sampling error.

Post hoc analysis also revealed some interesting findings concerning the specific aspects of a mother's narrative that were the most highly correlated with parenting style. Specifically, the relationship between narrative coherence and parenting style was found to be more significant when the mothers in our sample were talking about the recent past, as opposed to the distant past. This finding suggests that narrative accounts of more recent happenings may be more predictive of current parent styles than more distant happenings. This finding was surprising because it was originally thought that a parents

narrative style would be the same no matter when the events they are describing took place. Additionally, as mentioned earlier, the overall construct of narrative coherence is made up of six subscales, and those six subscales are divided into what we called the narratives clarity and richness (see diagram 1). The clarity and richness constructs showed very similar correlations with authoritarian parenting styles, suggesting that both a narrative's clarity as well as its richness contribute in predicting parent style in their own unique way.

Out of the six subscales of narrative coherence, the following narrative aspects were the most significant in predicting parenting style; central point, organization, internal states, and causation. A factor analysis of the coherence subscales revealed that causation was the only significant factor in predicting decreased authoritarian parenting style when the other subscales were controlled for. The powerful relationship between improved parenting and the ability to consider causal relationships makes sense. Less skillful parents are more likely to react to poor child behavior by focusing on consequences aimed at changing the child's behavior, without spending time considering what caused the behavior. More skillful parents on the other hand spend more time considering what caused the behavior in the first place. These parents then begin to see the way in which their child's behavior is caused by several factors, and they are able to gain an appreciation for the complex ways in which contingencies and contextual factors combine to cause different outcomes. Thus, as a parent increases in their ability to explore these often complex causal relationships, their overall level of insight and responsive parenting increases.

The two factors of narrative coherence that were not as significant in correlating narrative coherence with parenting style were the happenings of the narrative, and the time and place orientation of the narrative, suggesting that these aspects of a narrative impact parenting style relatively less than the other four aspects of narrative coherence.

While there was a slight positive correlation between increased coherence and the more positive authoritative parenting style, it was not the significant relationship we had hoped to see. There are several possible explanations for why the hypothesized relationship between these two variables was not significant. It may be that the relationship does exist, but that our current data were insufficient to detect the relationship, either because of sample size or because of sampling error. It may also be that the hypothesized relationship was not found due to the inability of the coherence measure to effectively tap into the specific skills that authoritative parents have.

### ***Mindfulness***

Results strongly supported the hypothesis that mindfulness would be correlated with improved parenting styles. As predicted, mindfulness showed a significant negative correlation with the less effective authoritarian parenting style, as well as a significant positive correlation with the more effective authoritative parenting style (both with  $p$  values  $<.00$ ). Baumrind (1989) describes improved parenting as a function of having a healthy balance between control and warmth when interacting with the child. In light of the current findings it seems likely that something about mindfulness allows parents to better strike that balance. In order to appropriately respond to children's needs in a sensitive way, parents need to be prepared to adjust this warmth and control given the specific needs of the situation, with some situations requiring more warmth or control

than others. (Wahler & Dumas, 1989) As Holden (1988) discovered with his research, even the most responsive parents struggle to respond appropriately during stressful situations. It seems likely that by being more grounded in the present moment during these stressful situations, parents would be more able to offset the confusion and frustration of stressful events, which would then increase their ability to objectively balance the warmth and control most appropriate for the situation.

As Langer (1993) points out, one of the important effects of mindfulness is that it allows a person to refrain from jumping to automatic judgments and decisions, and instead allows the person to more objectively look at what's going on. When less mindful individuals are confronted with poor child behavior, they are more likely to automatically judge and categorize the child's behavior instead of viewing the interaction from a more open and objective way. These parents are too quick to judge and to react to their experiences, thereby missing out on valuable contextual information as they rush to enforce a strict set of expectations.

Self aware parents know how difficult it can be to deal with their own emotions of frustration and anger during stressful parenting situations, in addition to controlling their child's behavior. Another way in which mindfulness is likely to improve parenting is by allowing parents to improve their emotional regulation so their emotions don't negatively impact their parenting skills and judgment as much (Hayes, & Feldman, 2004) . Gunaratana (2002) describes the way in which mindful individuals are able to more quickly recognize when they are experiencing emotional reactions within themselves. As parents learn to objectively observe their emotions in this way, they are then less likely to become swept away by their emotions, and are more able to realize the way in which

those emotions might distort their view of the situation as well as their reactions to the situation. Similarly, as mindful parents are better able to be aware of and to regulate their emotions, they are also better able to model those skills for their children, as well as directly helping their children to better deal with their emotions.

As previously mentioned, it seems likely that mindful parents are more able to view their interactions with their child in objective and flexible ways, thereby allowing them to more sensitively and appropriately respond during parent child interactions. Thus some punishments may be more severe than others, but the punishment and approach they use will tend to better fit the situation. Additionally, instead of punishment, there may be situations in which the child may simply need an explanation about the need for the rules in order for the behavior to change. In each case, if the parent is mindful and sensitive in their approach, the child is more likely to feel that the parent's demands are justified, which in turn increases the likelihood that the child will offer behavioral compliance.

Another challenge to helping parents is helping them to not only see their parenting problems more clearly, but also going the next step to breaking many strongly engrained habits. In this regard, mindful individuals have an advantage because they are better able to take on a more objective observational stance thereby allowing them to more quickly identify their ineffective parenting habits and to change them in the moment (Hanh, 1976). Parents who are less mindful of moment to moment interactions on the other hand, are more likely to become swept away with the situation, reacting with automatic parenting habits.

As the parents in the Singh et al. (2007) study reported, mindfulness seems to help parents to improve their parenting not by carefully managing the consequences of each child behavior, but instead by helping parents to be “present in the experience of life itself” (p.743). By objectively and openly approaching interactions with their children, these more mindful mothers were able to disengage from old parenting patterns, and were able to openly approach their children in a way that helped them to feel more connected with their child, and which helped them to respond more appropriately toward their child’s needs.

### ***Parenting Style and Child behavior***

Results also supported the hypothesis that parenting style would be correlated with child behavior. The findings of this study support the existing body of research that describes the link between Baumrind’s (1971, 1978, 1989) three parenting styles and child behavior. Specifically, our results showed that authoritarian parenting styles were correlated with a decrease in prosocial child behavior as reported by the mothers in our sample. Accordingly, our results also showed that authoritative parenting styles were correlated with improved child behavior. Our data differed from Baumrind’s (1989) findings in that there was no significant correlation between the permissive parenting style and child behavior. The relatively low alpha for the permissive parenting scale could be the reason no significant correlation was found.

### ***Refining our Understanding of Mindfulness and Narrative Coherence***

It was hypothesized that narrative coherence would mediate the relationship between mindfulness and parenting style. Specifically, it was thought that parent narratives that were highly coherent would be one of the most powerful activating factors

behind the connection between a parent's mindfulness and their parenting style. Narrative coherence was hypothesized to be somewhat of a cognitive byproduct or extension of mindfulness which allowed an individual to cognitively organize and make use of their mindful experiences, but this hypothesis was not supported by the data. While there were strong correlations between mindfulness and parenting style, as well as between narrative coherence and parenting style, the relationship between mindfulness and narrative coherence was not supported. As such, the mediation hypothesis proposed earlier was not supported by this data. Instead, the results suggest that mindfulness and coherence impact parenting style in significant but different ways. As previously mentioned, the mothers narratives that were more highly correlated with parenting style were the narratives about recent events relative to more distant events. This along with the significant correlation between mindful parents, who are more grounded in the here and now, and improved parenting suggests that the best predictors of parenting style may be parent conceptualizations that are based on more recent events.

While the mindful aspect of being in the moment, and the more cognitive aspect of narrative coherence were thought to be related, the current data suggests that they may be more different than originally thought. Specifically, the construct of mindfulness is based on an individual's approach to living in the present moment, which doesn't necessarily rely on cognitive organization or thought. Instead mindfulness is focused on the degree to which a person is *being* in the present moment. The narrative coherence construct on the other hand is more focused on an individual's cognitive organization and recreation of past events as they tell their stories. In this way it appears that mindfulness may tap more into the way a mother interacts with her experiences from moment to

moment, whereas narrative coherence taps more into how the mother cognitively organizes their experiences.

### ***Limitations & Future Research***

There were several limitations to the current study that are useful to discuss as future studies are planned. Specifically there may have been significant correlations that the current data failed to detect due to the modest sample size. Future research would benefit from increased sample sizes. Additionally, our population of clinic referred mothers was somewhat narrow, and future studies would benefit from testing the variables of mindfulness, narrative coherence, and parenting in other settings and with different populations.

It has been suggested that one of the aspects of narrative coherence that leads to improved parenting is the parent's willingness to engage the child in a give and take dialogue about their experiences. Several other lines of research discuss the advantages of parent child dialogue (Lewis, 1981), and future studies specifically focused on exploring the interaction of narrative coherence and parent child dialogue would offer helpful insights.

Overall, the data suggests a strong relationship between mindfulness and parenting styles. These findings suggest the great potential utility of using mindfulness in interventions with struggling parents. There is limited research on the relationship between mindfulness and parenting, and the significant relationship between these variables warrants further investigation. A notable limitation to the current study is that no causal relationships could be explored due to the correlational nature of the data.

Currently there are several mindfulness based interventions aimed at helping individuals to improve their level of mindfulness. Experimental administration of these mindfulness techniques similar to the research of Singh et al. (2006b, 2007) would help us to have a clearer understanding of what it is about mindfulness that enables parents to improve their parenting. Shapiro et al. (2006), for example, suggests several specific aspects of mindfulness that can be individually tested and explored.

Additionally, the relationship between narrative coherence and parenting could be further explored through the experimental administration of interventions aimed at improving the coherence of parents narratives (Schwartzman, & Wahler, 2006; Williams, 2008).

## **LIST OF REFERENCES**

## LIST OF REFERENCES

- Ainsworth, M. D., Blehar, M. C., Waters, E., & Wall, S. (1978). *Patterns of attachment: a psychological study of the strange situation*. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Baerger, D. R., & McAdams, D. P. (1999). Life story coherence and its relation to psychological well being. *Narrative inquiry*, 9 (1), 69-96.
- Bakermans-Kranenburg, M. J., van-Ijzendoorn, M. H., & Juffer, F. (2003). Less is more: Meta-analyses of sensitivity and attachment interventions in early childhood. *Psychological Bulletin*, 129(2), 195-215.
- Baron, R. M. & Kenny, D. A. (1986). The moderator-mediator variable distinction in social psychological research: Conceptual, strategic, and statistical considerations. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 51(6), 1173-1182.
- Barkley, R. A. (1997). *Defiant children. A clinician's manual for assessment and parent training* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). New York: Guilford.
- Baumrind, D. (1971). Current patterns of parental authority. *Developmental Psychology Monographs*, 4 (2, Pt. 2).
- Baumrind, D. (1972). An exploratory study of socialization effects on Black children: Some Black-White comparisons. *Child Development*, 43, 261-267.
- Baumrind, D. (1978). Parental disciplinary patterns and social competencies in children. *Youth and Society*, 9, 239-275.
- Baumrind, D. (1989). Rearing competent children. In W. Damon (Ed.), *Child development today and tomorrow* (pp. 349-378). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Baumrind, D. (1991). The influence of parenting style on adolescent competence and substance use. *Journal of Early Adolescence*, 11(1), 56-95.

- Belsky, J. (1981) Early human experience: A family perspective. *Developmental Psychology*, 17, 3-23
- Berger, P. L., Luckmann, T., (1966). *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*, Anchor Books: Garden City, NY.
- Bishop, S.R., Lau, M., Shapiro, S., Carlson, L., Anderson, N.D., Carmody, J., et al. (2004) Mindfulness: A proposed operational definition. *Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice*, 11, 230–241.
- Brown, K. W. & Ryan, R. M. (2003). The benefits of being present: Mindfulness and its role in psychological well-being. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 84(4), 822-848.
- Buri, J. (1991). Parental Authority Questionnaire. *Journal of Personality Assessment*, 57(1), 110-119.
- Darling, N., & Steinberg, L., (1993). Parenting style as context: An integrative model. *Psychological Bulletin*, 113(3), 487-496.
- Davidson, R.J., Kabat-Zinn, J., Schumacher, J., Rosenkranz, M., Muller, D., Santorelli, S., et al. (2003). Alterations in brain and immune function produced by mindfulness meditation. *Psychosomatic Medicine*, 65, 564–570.
- Dornbusch, S. M., Ritter, P. L., Leiderman, P. H., Roberts, D. E., & Fraleigh, M. J. (1987). The relation of parenting style to adolescent school performance. *Child Development*, 58, 1244-1257.
- Fivush, R., Hazzard, A., McDermott Sales, J., Sarfati, D., & Brown, T., (2003) Creating coherence out of chaos? Children's narratives of emotionally positive and negative events. *Applied Cognitive Psychology*, 17, 1-19

- Grice, H. P. (1975). Logic and conversation. In D. Davidson & G. Harman (Eds.), *The logic of grammar* (pp. 64-153). Encino, CA: Dickinson.
- Glisson, C., Hemmelgarn, A. L., & Post, J. A., (2002) The Shortform Assessment for Children: An Assessment and Outcome Measure for Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice. *Research on Social Work Practice, 12* (1), 82-106
- Gunaratana, B. H., (2002) *Mindfulness in plain english*. Wisdom Publications. Somerville, MA
- Hanh, T. N. (1976). *Miracle of mindfulness*. Boston: Beacon.
- Hayes, A. M., & Feldman, G. (2004) Clarifying the Construct of Mindfulness in the Context of Emotion Regulation and the Process of Change in Therapy *Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice, 11*, 255-262
- Holden, G. W. (1988). Adults' thinking about a child-rearing problem: Effects of experience, parental status, and gender. *Child Development, 59*(6), 1623-1632.
- Kabat-Zinn, J. (1982). An out-patient program in behavioral medicine for chronic pain patients based on the practice of mindfulness meditation: theoretical considerations and preliminary results. *General Hospital Psychiatry, 4*, 33–47.
- Kabat-Zinn, J. (1990). *Full catastrophe living: Using the wisdom of your body and mind to face stress, pain and illness*. New York: Delacorte.
- Kabat-Zinn, J. (1994). *Wherever you go there you are: Mindfulness meditation in everyday life*. New York: Hyperion.
- Kochanska, G. (2002). Mutually responsive orientation between mothers and their young children: A context for the early development of conscience. *Current Directions in Psychological Science, 11*(6), 191-195.

- Langer, E. J. (1993). A mindful education. *Educational Psychologist*, 28(1), 43-50.
- Lewis, C. C. (1981). The effects of parental firm control: A reinterpretation of findings. *Psychological Bulletin*, 90(3), 547-563.
- Main, M., & Goldwyn, R. (1993). *Adult Attachment Classification System*. Unpublished manuscript, University of California, Berkeley.
- Main, M., & Goldwyn, R. (1984). Predicting rejection of her infant from mother's representation of her own experience: implications for the abused-abusing intergenerational cycle. *Child Abuse and Neglect*, 8, 203-217.
- Main, M., Kaplan, N., & Cassidy, J. (1985). Security in infancy, childhood and adulthood: A move to the level of representation. *Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development*, 50( 1-2, Serial No. 209).
- McAdams, D. (2001). The psychology of life stories. *Review of General Psychology*, 5(2), 100-122.
- Orlansky, H. (1949). Infant care and personality. *Psychological Bulletin*, 46, 1-48.
- Peterson, C., & McCabe, A. (1994). A social interactionist account of developing decontextualized narrative skill. *Developmental Psychology*, 30, 937-948.
- Psychogiou, L., Daley, D., Thompson, M. J., Edmund, S-B., (2008) Parenting empathy: Associations with dimensions of parent and child psychopathology. *British Journal of Developmental Psychology*. 26 (2), 221-232
- Reitman, D., Rhode, P. C., Hupp, S. & Altobello, C. (2002). Development and validation of the parental authority questionnaire – revised. *Journal of Psychopathology and Behavioral Assessment*, 24(2), 119-127.

- Rollins, B.C., & Thomas, D.L. (1979). Parental Support, power, and control techniques in the socialization of children. In W.R. Burr, R. Hill, F.I. Nye, & I.L. Reiss (Eds), *Contemporary theories about the family. Research-based Theories* (Vol. I, pp.317-364). New York: Free Press.
- Sanders, M.R., James, J.E. (1983). The modification of parent behavior: A review of generalization and maintenance. *Behavior Modification*, 7(1), 3-27.
- Schaefer, E. S. (1965). Children's reports of parental behavior: An inventory. *Child Development*, 36, 413-424.
- Sears, S., & Kraus, S. (2009). I think therefore I Om: Cognitive distortions and coping style as mediators for the effects of mindfulness meditation on anxiety, positive and negative affect, and hope. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 65, 561–573.
- Schwartzman, M.P, Wahler, R.G, (2006) Enhancing the impact of parent training through narrative restructuring. *Child and Family Behavior Therapy*, 28(2) , 49-64.
- Serketich, W. J., & Dumas, J.E. (1996). The effectiveness of behavioral parent training to modify antisocial behavior in children: a meta- analysis. *Behavior Therapy*, 27, 171-186.
- Shapiro, S., Astin, J., Bishop, S., & Cordova, M. (2005). Mindfulness-based stress reduction for health care professionals: Results from a randomized trial. *International Journal of Stress Management*, 12, 164–176.
- Shapiro, S.L., Carlson, L.E., Astin, J.A., & Freedman, B. (2006). Mechanisms of mindfulness. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 62, 373–386.

- Shapiro, S.L., Brown, K.W., & Biegel, G.M. (2007). Teaching self-care to caregivers: Effects of mindfulness-based stress reduction on the mental health of therapists in training. *Training and Education in Professional Psychology, 1*, 105–115.
- Singh, N. N., Lancioni, G. E., Winton, A. S. W., Curtis, W. J., Wahler, R. G., Sabaawi, M., et al. (2006a). Mindful staff increase learning and reduce aggression in adults with developmental disabilities. *Research in Developmental Disabilities, 27*, 545-558.
- Singh, N. N., Lancioni, G. E., Winton, A. S. W., Fisher, B. C., Wahler, R. G., McAleavey, K., et al. (2006b). Mindful parenting decreases aggression, noncompliance, and self-injury in children with autism. *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders, 14*, 169-177.
- Singh, N. N., Lancioni, G. E., Winton, A. S. W., Wahler, R. G., Singh, J., & Sage, M. (2004). Mindful caregiving increases happiness among individuals with profound multiple disabilities. *Research in Developmental Disabilities, 25*, 207-218.
- Singh, N. N., Winton, A. S. W., Singh, J., McAleavey, K., Wahler, R. G., & Sabaawi, M. (2006c). Mindfulness-based caregiving and support. In J. K. Luiselli (Ed.), *Antecedent intervention: Recent developments in community focused behavior support* (pp. 269-290). Baltimore: Brookes.
- Singh, N. N., Lancioni, G. E., Winton, A. S. W., Singh, J., Curtis, W. J., Wahler, R. G., et al. (2007). Mindful parenting decreases aggression and increases social behavior in children with developmental disabilities. *Behavior Modification, 31*, 749–771.
- Singh, N. N., Lancioni, G. E., Winton, A. S. W., Singh, J., Singh, A. N., Adkins, A. D., Wahler, R. G., (2009) Training in Mindful Caregiving Transfers to Parent–Child

- Interactions. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 1062-1024
- Steinberg, L., Lamborn, S., Dornbusch, S., & Darling, N. (1992). Impact of parenting practices on adolescent achievement: Authoritative parenting, school involvement, and encouragement to succeed. *Child Development*, 63, 1266-1281.
- Suzuki, S. (1970). *Zen mind, beginner's mind*. New York: John Weatherhill.
- Tarabulsky, G. M., Tessier, R., & Kappas, A. (1996). Contingency detection and the contingent organization of behavior in interactions: implications for socioemotional development in infancy. *Psychological Bulletin*, 120, 25-41.
- Van IJzendoorn, M. (1995). Adult attachment representations, parental responsiveness, and infant attachment: A meta-analysis on the predictive validity of the Adult Attachment Interview. *Psychological Bulletin*, 117(3), 387-403.
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Wahler, R. G., & Castlebury, F. D. (2002). Personal narratives as maps of the social ecosystem. *Clinical Psychology Review*, 22(2), 297-314.
- Wahler, R. G., & Fox, J. J. (1981). Setting events in applied behavior analysis: Toward a conceptual and methodological expansion. *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis*, 14, 327-344.
- Wahler, R. G., Rowinski, K. S., & Williams, K. L. (2007). Rating the Personal Narratives of Parents. Unpublished Manuscript. The University of Tennessee, Knoxville.
- Wahler, R. G., Singh, J., & Singh, N. N. (2009) Parents' autobiographical narratives: Setting events for their contemplation of mindful changes. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 10, 1062-1024

- Wahler, R. G., & Smith, G. G. (1999). Effective parenting as the integration of lessons and dialogue. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 8, 135–149.
- Weisz, J.R., Weiss, B., Alicke, M.D., Klotz, M. L. (1987). Effectiveness of psychotherapy with children and adolescents: A meta-analysis for clinicians. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 55(4), 542-549.
- Welsh-Ross, M. K. (1997). Mother-child participation in conversation about the past: Relationships to preschoolers' theory of mind. *Developmental Psychology*, 33(4), 618-629.
- Williams, J. M., Teasdale, J. D., Segal, Z. V., & Soulsby, J. (2000). Mindfulness-based cognitive therapy reduces overgeneral autobiographical memory in formerly depressed patients. *Journal of Abnormal Psychology*, 109(1), 150-155.
- Williams, K. L., (2008). Exploring the efficacy of parent training within a narrative restructuring framework. (Unpublished Manuscript). The University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

## **APPENDIX**

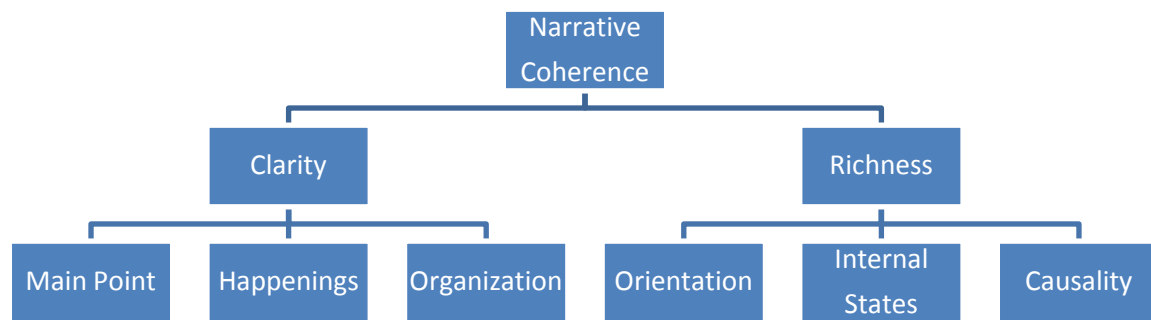


Figure 1.

Table 1.  
**Interrater Reliability Statistics  
 for Narrative Coherence Measures**

|                 | Intraclass Correlation Coefficients |
|-----------------|-------------------------------------|
| Central Point   | .63                                 |
| Happenings      | .77                                 |
| Organization    | .45                                 |
| Orientation     | .74                                 |
| Internal States | .71                                 |
| Causality       | .57                                 |

Table 2.  
**Internal Consistency for Narrative Coherence**

|                 | Chronbach's Alpha |
|-----------------|-------------------|
| Central Point   | .746              |
| Happenings      | .838              |
| Organization    | .706              |
| Orientation     | .756              |
| Internal States | .843              |
| Causality       | .790              |

Table 3.  
**Correlational Findings**

|                                       | Narrative<br>Coherence | Mindfulness<br>(MAAS) | Authoritative<br>Parenting<br>(PAQ-R) | Authoritarian<br>Parenting<br>(PAQ-R) | Child<br>Behavior<br>(SAC-R) |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Narrative<br>Coherence                | -                      |                       |                                       |                                       |                              |
| Mindfulness<br>(MAAS)                 | -.09                   | -                     |                                       |                                       |                              |
| Authoritative<br>Parenting<br>(PAQ-R) | .025                   | .450**                | -                                     |                                       |                              |
| Authoritarian<br>Parenting<br>(PAQ-R) | -.335**                | -.376**               | -.085                                 | -                                     |                              |
| Child<br>Behavior<br>(SAC-R)          | .086                   | -.353**               | -.378**                               | .337**                                | -                            |

\*\* =  $p < .01$ , two-tailed.

Narrative Coherence Scale = higher scores indicate increased coherence.

MAAS = Mindful Attention Awareness Scale; higher scores indicate greater mindfulness.

PAQ-R = Parental Authority Questionnaire - Revised; higher scores indicate the parents increased endorsement of that parenting style.

SAC-R = Shortform Assessment for Children – Revised; higher scores indicate bad child behavior.

## **VITA**

Keith Lee Williams was born in Twin Falls, ID on April 28<sup>th</sup>, 1976. He attended public schools in Buhl, ID, and graduated from Buhl High School in 1994. He attended The College of Southern Idaho where he obtained his Associates of Arts degree in 1998 in Liberal Arts. In 2000 he began attending Utah State University where he eventually graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Art, including a minor in Psychology in 2004. Interested in perusing a career as a clinical psychologist, he then began graduate studies at The University of Tennessee in Knoxville in the fall of 2005.

Keith is presently completing his training in the University of Tennessee Clinical Psychology Program. He will begin his internship at SUNY Upstate Medical University in Sryacuse, NY in the fall of 2009. He plans to graduate from the clinical program and receive his doctoral degree in the fall of 2010.