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I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Greta Griffith Smith entitled "An Examination of the Construct Maternal Myth and its Relationship to Mothering Behavior." I have examined the final 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 Clinical Psychology.

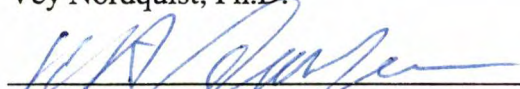


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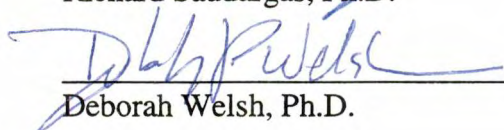
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AN EXAMINATION OF THE CONSTRUCT MATERNAL MYTH AND ITS
RELATIONSHIP TO MOTHERING BEHAVIOR

A Dissertation

Presented for the

Doctor of Philosophy

Degree

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Greta Griffith Smith

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated
in loving memory of my grandmother
Dr. Marguerite Steele Griffith
whose love of learning
and appreciation for the value of education
have provided a precious and lasting
family legacy

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Abstract

Following a review of the research on inconsistent mothering, attachment theory, social cognition, and narrative theory, *maternal myth* is proposed as an underlying, unifying construct through which to examine mothering behavior. A community sample of 27 mother-child dyads participated in a study designed to evaluate the construct maternal myth. It was hypothesized that certain characteristics of maternal myth, namely coherence, affect tone, and motivational theme, are interrelated and could be used to predict (1) mother responsiveness to child cues, (2) mother negativity in the mother-child interaction, (3) personality rigidity in mothers, and (4) mother satisfaction with mother-child interaction. A relationship was found between affect tone and communion in maternal myth, but no relationships were found among other maternal myth variables. The overall results of the study were inconclusive, as the maternal myth variables were not significantly related to any of the other measures. Limitations of the study which may have contributed to the dearth of findings are discussed, and recommendations for future investigations are made.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Purpose of Study

Parenting is a phenomenon which has fascinated psychologists for decades. In particular, researchers in both developmental and clinical arenas have relentlessly pursued both an adequate description of maladaptive parenting and an explanation for its occurrence.

Investigation of the former has generated a plethora of information, specifically with regard to mothering, as mothers and the mother-child relationship have been the overwhelming focus of studies examining parenting.

Typically, researchers have approached the task of examining maladaptive mothering by looking for mothering behaviors which are associated with negative developmental outcomes in children, especially problem child behavior such as noncompliance and aggression.

This approach has yielded substantial support for a link between mothering behavior and child problem behavior.

An abundance of studies utilizing observations of mother-child interactions have found aversive child behavior to be associated with a pattern of mothering behavior which is best described as maternal inconsistency (Gardner,

1989; Patterson, 1982; Wahler & Dumas, 1986). While inconsistency, as well as the hypothesized means by which it works to maintain problem child behavior, have been described differently by different researchers, the underlying idea is usually the same: inconsistent mothers' responses to child behaviors are not contingent upon these behaviors. In other words, these mothers are unpredictable.

As mentioned previously, researchers have also sought to understand and explain the occurrence of maladaptive mothering, and have done so with less success. Investigators have posited a variety of explanations for why some mothers are appropriately responsive to their children and others not. Some have looked for a causal agent within the child, suggesting that conduct disordered children evoke inconsistent or maladaptive mothering (Barkley, Karlsson, Pollard, & Murphy, 1985; Olweus, 1980), even from adults other than their own mothers (Anderson, Lytton, & Romney, 1986). Others have attempted to relate inconsistent mothering to environmental factors operating on the mother, particularly stress, social isolation, and aversive extra-familial contacts (Dumas, 1986; Panaccione &

Wahler, 1986; Sansbury & Wahler, 1992; Webster-Stratton & Hammond, 1988). Research has also linked maladaptive mothering and maternal depression (Brody & Forehand, 1986; Forehand, Lautenschlager, Faust, & Gaziano, 1986; Panaccione & Wahler, 1986; Rickard, Forehand, Wells, Greiest, & McMahon, 1981; Webster-Stratton & Hammond, 1988), suggesting that inconsistent mothering may be more directly a function of the mother herself, in particular, a function of her perception.

Thus, researchers have discovered that mothering behavior is complex and has multiple determinants associated with particular mother, child, and environmental characteristics. However, an adequate understanding of how these variables operate together that would account for the occurrence of poor mothering and predictively differentiate consistent, responsive mothers from inconsistent, unresponsive mothers has eluded researchers.

Psychologists representing a variety of theoretical perspectives have proposed that individuals carry around unique sets of beliefs about themselves and the social world which influence their perception of and interaction with others. These sets of beliefs have been referred to

as *internal working models*, *self- and other-schemas*, and *narratives or myths* by attachment, cognitive, and narrative theorists respectively. A review of the research suggests that there is a commonality among these concepts which supersedes their differences (Baldwin, 1992).

Perhaps it is this hypothesized internal unique set of beliefs, henceforth to be referred to as *maternal myth*, that serves as a guiding map for maternal behavior by taking into account past experience as well as present context, thereby encompassing the different characteristics which have been associated with maladaptive mothering. If so, then an examination of the various characteristics of maternal myth might serve to shed more light on the problem of poor mothering.

The present research project undertakes such an examination. Its purpose is to examine the concept of maternal myth as a unifying, overarching concept which predicts mothering behavior. Specifically, the goal of the study is to examine the relationship between the structure and content of maternal myth and the sensitivity of mothering behavior.

Literature Review

As noted previously, observations of dysfunctional or maladaptive mothering have repeatedly yielded similar results in the form of descriptors such as 'inconsistent' (Gardner, 1989), 'unpredictable' (Wahler, Williams, & Cerezo, 1990), 'insensitive' (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters & Wall, 1978), 'unresponsive', and 'asynchronous' (Isabella, Belsky, & von Eye, 1989) mothering. Although researchers have chosen different descriptors to characterize their observations, they are apparently observing the same phenomenon: mothers who respond inappropriately to behavioral cues from their children.

Patterson (1982) described the following behaviors in investigating poor mothering: the provision of positive consequences for problem child behavior, the punishment of positive behavior, a failure to monitor the child, and a failure to set and enforce rules. Patterson hypothesized that inconsistent mothers set up a *reinforcement trap*, which operates when a mother gives in to the child after a prolonged sequence of conflict. Giving in relieves the frustrated mother from the tension inherent in the conflict, but at the cost of reinforcing the child's negative behavior.

Wahler and Dumas (1986) refer to Patterson's argument as the *compliance hypothesis*, because Patterson argues that it is the mother's compliance which provides reinforcement for her and her child when it terminates a sequence of aversive exchanges. They observe the same phenomenon as Patterson, but offer a second explanation, the *predictability hypothesis*, suggesting instead that what reinforces the child's aversive behavior is maternal consistency in her response to such behavior. In other words, knowing that some mothers do not respond contingently to their children, i.e. are as likely to attend aversively to their child's positive behaviors as to his or her aversive behaviors, and assuming that this unpredictability is aversive, child behavior which makes maternal responses more predictable will be negatively reinforced. Wahler and Dumas found support for their predictability hypothesis, and further research by Wahler, Williams, and Cerezo (1990) suggests that the compliance and predictability hypotheses are both supported by observational data and possibly work in tandem to maintain aversive child behavior.

Gardner (1989) proposed a behavioral definition of inconsistency which involves behavioral sequences rather

than immediate reactions to individual behaviors. Gardner defined inconsistency as a mother's failure to follow through with her demands in sequences of mother-child conflict, and found a strong correlation between this definition of inconsistency and the overall amount of family conflict. Interestingly, the mothers in Gardner's study were significantly more likely to be inconsistent when the initial behavior of the sequence was a command from the mother than if the sequence were initiated by a child command.

Attachment Theory Perspective on

Maladaptive Mothering

Researchers have also connected inconsistent, maladaptive mothering to more general negative developmental outcomes in children. Research on attachment in infancy and childhood has drawn attention to the importance of mother responsiveness in fostering a secure attachment style. This finding evolved from studies utilizing a technique known as the Strange Situation (Ainsworth et al, 1978). The Strange Situation is a structured laboratory procedure in which infants are observed as they respond to two short separations from and subsequent reunions with an attachment figure,

usually the mother. Ainsworth and her colleagues identified three recognizable *attachment styles* in their original research using this procedure. In keeping with the behavior they observed, these three styles were termed *secure, insecure-avoidant, and insecure-ambivalent*. Secure infants showed visible signs of missing the mother upon departure, would physically seek-out the mother upon reunion, and then return to play. Insecure-avoidant infants showed no noticeable signs of upset at the mother's departure and actively ignored her upon reunion. Insecure-ambivalent infants became highly distressed at the mother's departure, but were not settled by her return. They would frequently alternate between displays of anger directed toward the mother and attempts to seek comfort from her, and generally failed to return to play. Later analysis of videotapes of the Strange Situation behavior of many infants considered previously unclassifiable led to the identification of a fourth group of infants termed *insecure-disorganized* (Main & Solomon, 1986). These infants exhibited a diverse array of disorganized behaviors upon reunion with the mother.

Strong relationships were also found between these patterns of attachment and maternal behaviors in the home. The differences in maternal behavior among the styles was described by Ainsworth et al in terms of maternal sensitivity. Sensitive mothers, as described by these researchers, read their infants' signals or communications and respond appropriately. For example, these mothers feed their infants when they are hungry, comfort them when they are distressed or fearful, refrain from intruding with physical contact when the infant is engrossed in exploration, etc. Infants identified as secure in Ainsworth et al's Strange Situation were most likely to have sensitive mothers. By contrast, the mothers of insecure-avoidant infants were more likely to be insensitive to their infants' signals and to reject their infants' attachment-seeking behavior. The mothers of insecure-ambivalent infants were also likely to be identified as insensitive as well as unpredictable in their responsiveness to their infants.

Insecure attachment classification in infancy has been associated with a number of negative developmental outcomes, including hostile and aggressive behavior in preschool (Lyons-Ruth, Alpern, & Repacholi, 1993),

antisocial behavior (Fagot & Kavanagh, 1990), and impaired social functioning at school (Cohn, 1990). Measures of anxious attachment have also been linked to adult psychopathology (West, Rose, & Sheldon, 1993). In light of these findings, the implications of attachment research for child clinical work have been discussed (Fish & Condon, 1994).

Bowlby (1969, p. 208), in his seminal work on attachment, noted the "vital role that [attachment behavior] plays in the life of man from the cradle to the grave." However, just as he also recognized the periods of infancy and early childhood as having critical importance as the formative years of attachment behavior, he and subsequent attachment researchers focused their efforts on the study of infants and young children. Comparatively little work has considered the role attachment plays in adolescence and adulthood. However, recent years have seen a considerable increase in research on adult attachment, and some of the findings are directly relevant to the question of how and why some mothers are more responsive to their children than others.

Adult Attachment and Mothering Behavior

Researchers who have begun to examine adult attachment have approached the task by extending what has been learned about attachment in infancy and applying it to adults. Much of the studies of adult attachment have focused on attachment as it applies to romantic relationships in adulthood, and some interesting findings have emerged. Hazan and Shaver (1987) were the first to examine infant attachment theory as a framework for understanding adult love relationships. Drawing upon the concept *internal working models* first suggested by Bowlby (1973) to describe individuals' internal representations of self, attachment figures, and the world, Hazan and Shaver sought to investigate continuity in attachment style. Bowlby used the term *internal working models* to describe a process by which early patterns of relating to primary caregivers become internalized and then come to govern relationships with others. The function of such models is to interpret and anticipate a partner's behavior in order to guide one's own behavior in relating to the partner. Proposing that the internal working models determined in part by experiences with attachment figures in childhood would guide adult romantic

relationships, Hazan and Shaver developed a lengthy self-report questionnaire to explore their hypothesis. A factor analysis of the results revealed three distinct patterns of responding which seemed to correspond with the three attachment styles identified in research with infants. In addition, the prevalence of these styles was similar to that found in studies with infants. Finally, Hazan and Shaver found that subjects endorsing the different styles differed in their reported attachment history, such that reports of childhood attachment experiences were related to adult attachment style. Several studies have replicated and extended Hazan and Shaver's findings (Collins & Read, 1990; Feeney & Noller, 1990).

Interestingly, researchers have been successful in relating mother's attachment styles to their infants' or young children's attachment behavior by examining maternal narratives. George, Kaplan, & Main (1985) developed the Berkeley Adult Attachment Interview (AAI), a structured interview designed to assess an individual's early attachment experiences and evaluations of the effects of these experiences upon his or her current functioning. The AAI is scored according to criteria

related to the coherence of the narrative, and individuals who complete the interview are placed into one of the three primary attachment categories based on these criteria. Studies using the AAI have shown that a mothers' classification into one of these adult attachment categories strongly corresponds with her infant's response to the Ainsworth Strange Situation (Main, 1991). Mothers who speak coherently about their early attachment experiences are classified as **Secure/Autonomous** and generally have infants who are securely attached. Mothers of insecurely attached infants are relatively incoherent in their responses to interview questions, as indicated by difficulties such as an inability to focus on the interview questions, an inability to access early memories, a tendency to make logical and factual contradictions, and/or a tendency to use general descriptors and then provide contradictory autobiographical episodes in an attempt to illustrate these descriptors. These mothers are judged either **Dismissing** of attachment, and their infants are usually classified as avoidant, or **Preoccupied** with attachment, and their infants are usually classified as ambivalent. Furthermore, these results occur whether the interview is

conducted several months following the Strange Situation (Ainsworth & Eichberg, 1991), five years following the Strange Situation (Main, 1991), or even before the first child is born (Fonagy, Steele, & Steele, 1991). Van IJzendoorn (1995) has conducted a meta-analysis of studies utilizing the Adult Attachment Interview and has found support for its predictive validity.

The latest research on maternal attachment status has examined the link between maternal attachment representations and the infant-mother attachment relationship, and has found relationships between AAI classifications and mother responsiveness in observed mother-child interaction (Crandell, Fitzgerald, & Whipple, 1997; Pederson, Gleason, Moran, & Bento, 1998). These studies have found that mothers classified as autonomous by the AAI (i.e. mothers who produce coherent narratives about past relationship experiences) responded more sensitively to their children at home. In addition, Crandell et al (1997) found that secure mothers expressed more warmth and affection to their children, and their style of relating was less intrusive and more encouraging of child autonomy than that of insecure mothers. Pederson et al (1998) found that maternal sensitivity

accounted for seventeen percent of the relation between mothers' AAI classifications and their infants' Strange Situation classifications.

What does the AAI measure? Researchers argue that it provides an account of a mother's overall "state of mind with respect to attachment" (Main, 1991, p. 141), or, alternatively, it provides evidence regarding her *internal working model* of attachment. Let's examine more closely the assumptions regarding these *internal working models* and their properties, especially those which have hypothesized positive and negative consequences for maternal behavior.

Internal Working Models, RIGs, and Schemata

According to Main (1991), the AAI is approached using "not the individual's retrospective account as such, but rather *coherence, cohesiveness* and *plausibility* as the basic forms of analysis" (p. 139). Interview responses are, in this way, thought to provide information about a mother's *mental model* of attachment.

As previously mentioned, Bowlby (1973) selected the term *internal working model* to describe an individual's internal representation of himself or herself, his or her attachment figures, the world, and the relations among

them. These internal working models serve a guiding function by allowing individuals to act in new situations without rethinking each situation from the beginning. Internal working models provide a rough-and-ready sketch of the world which may be mentally manipulated when an individual is contemplating future action. The internal working model is conceived as an integral and necessary component of the attachment behavioral system. It should contain information regarding who the attachment figures are, where they are currently located, and how they are likely to respond to the individual. In this way, the internal working model contains *multiple representations* which reference not only direct experiences regarding the attachment figure, but also concepts of the self which are derived from these experiences.

When they are asked to talk about their attachment experiences, secure individuals tend to provide a consistent, well-organized account, focusing easily on interview questions, providing easily identified principles or rationales for their responses, rarely departing from usual or standard forms of discourse, and providing plausible answers, demonstrating what has been termed *coherence of mind* (see Main, 1991).

Contrastingly, when pressed to describe their attachment experiences, insecure individuals frequently present a jumble of contradictory thoughts, feelings, and intentions which can only loosely be described as a 'model'. To account for incoherence of thoughts about attachment in troubled individuals, Bowlby (1973) introduced the term *multiple models*. Bowlby's use of this term does not refer to the hierarchy of mental models made up of multiple representations and the embedding of some models within others, characteristics which invariably comprise normal mental life. Rather, he was concerned with models which are contradictory or incompatible in that more than one could not be true at the same time. Examples include contradictory ideas regarding attachment figures and the self, or regarding the existence, nature, and interpretation of attachment-related events. Multiple models might be evidenced in the AAI in the form of contradictions between general descriptors of relationships and actual autobiographical episodes offered. An example would be a subject describing her mother as warm, available, and selfless, and then going on to relate an incident in which the mother got drunk, became angry, and locked herself in her

room, leaving the subject and her siblings to fend for themselves.

As mentioned, the term "multiple models" does not refer to the complex structuring of diverse models in the normal adult mind. That an adult mind may contain models of diverse aspects of reality, that some models are contained within or contain others, and that context affects models, is taken for granted. In addition, hierarchies of models of increasing degrees of abstraction exist. This conceptualization bears much resemblance to Stern's (1985) description of Representations of Interactions that have been Generalized (RIGs).

Stern suggests that from infancy onward, episodes that involve interpersonal interactions of different types are abstracted, averaged and represented preverbally as RIGs. In other words, RIGs are generalized episodes of interactive experience that are mentally represented.

According to Stern, whenever an RIG of being with someone is activated, the infant encounters what he calls an 'evoked companion'. For example, suppose an infant has experienced several roughly similar episodes of a

type of interaction with another person. These episodes become generalized and encoded as an RIG. Remember, the RIG is a representation and not an activated memory. However, a retrieval cue, such as a particular affect associated with the RIG, can evoke from the RIG an activated memory which Stern calls an 'evoked companion'. The companion is evoked from the RIG not as the recall of an actual past happening but as an exemplar of such happenings. The evoked companion serves to evaluate the specific ongoing interactive experience such that the current experience is compared with the simultaneously occurring experience of the evoked companion. This comparison serves to determine what new contributions the current episode can make toward revising the RIG. In this fashion, RIGs are slowly updated by experience. However, Stern argues that the more past experience there is, the less relative impact for change any single specific episode will have.

The notion of RIGs and evoked companions is both similar to and different from the concept of internal working models in attachment theory. The RIG can be thought of as the basic building block out of which working models are made. An RIG is the representation of

a specific kind of interaction. A working model is an assembly of many types of interactions. Just as RIGs change as new experiences are included, working models change as new RIGs are included and others deleted and as their hierarchical structure is reorganized. In addition, RIGs concern many different expectations about many types of interactions, and are not solely attachment related.

Still, RIGs and working models are similar in some respects. First, they are prototypic representations that are not restricted to one past occurrence but instead represent an accumulation of experiences. Second, they serve a guiding function in the sense of creating expectations about present and future experiences.

The concepts of internal working models and RIGs resemble in many ways the concepts of 'schemata' which permeate cognitive psychology; in particular the concepts of self- other- and relationship-schemata which have received much attention in the area of social cognition. Much of the recent work in social cognition has focused on the concepts of 'self' and 'other' in isolation, neglecting the impact of internally represented

interpersonal information. In fact, some adult attachment researchers differentiate the concepts of schemata and internal working models on just such grounds (see West & Sheldon-Keller, 1994). These researchers describe how schemata convert perceptions into knowledge and then allow for decisions and actions based on that knowledge. Working models, they say, include knowledge but are mostly concerned with converting discrete interactions with others into relationships and enabling emotional responses based on relationships. Thus, schemata organize information; internal working models organize relationships. Internal working models, then, can be considered a special class of schema, namely a class of schema that encodes affective as well as cognitive information.

Baldwin (1992), however, takes another approach, staying within the realm of social cognition and proposing that research could profitably examine individuals' *relational schemas*. *Relational schemas* are defined as cognitive structures representing regularities in patterns of interpersonal relatedness. This definition is, of course, relatively similar to the concepts *internal working model* and *Representations of*

Interactions that have been Generalized (RIG) discussed previously.

According to Baldwin, the elements which comprise relational schemas are: an interpersonal script for an interaction pattern, a self-schema for how the self is experienced in that interpersonal situation, and a schema for the other person. These images of self and other and the script for the expected pattern of interaction are interdependent, meaning that they influence and affect one another, or are in part determined by one another. This is reminiscent of Bowlby's description of the multiple representations which make up an internal working model. Like attachment researchers, Baldwin is also interested in using the idea of relational schemas to explore how past social experiences affect current ones. Baldwin writes:

If one has learned over time that, for instance, expressing one's anger leads others to act fearful and avoidant, how will this expectation influence one's behavior and perception of others' reactions in subsequent situations? How might it shape one's sense of self? How might it gradually shape a new relationship, such as in a romantic or business

context, to re-create the interpersonal patterns learned in previous relationships? (p. 462)

Baldwin reviews social cognitive, symbolic interactionist, object relations, and interpersonal approaches to the notion of internalized representations, and describes the similarities among these. Drawing from these various theories, he goes on to propose his model of relational schemas as it has been described above.

Thus, psychologists representing a variety of theoretical perspectives, only a few of which have been mentioned here, have proposed that individuals carry around unique sets of beliefs about themselves and the social world which influence their perception of and interaction with others. In the theories examined thus far, these sets of beliefs have been referred to as *internal working models*, *Representations of Interactions which have been Generalized (RIGs)*, and *self- other- and relational schemas*.

Recently, some psychologists have begun to question the use of the term 'model' or to question the proposition that internal representations guide behavior in the way many have traditionally thought (see West & Sheldon-Keller, 1994). In other words, they have begun

to question to what extent internalized past experiences exist as a discrete model (or models) within an individual's mental world. Advances in neurophysiology have made prior assumptions about these models untenable. The concept of *internal working model* proposed by Bowlby (1969) presupposes a neurophysiology that is capable of creating and sustaining such an embedded, long-term structure. More recent theories have challenged this proposition, questioning our understanding of memory and of mental models. For example, Edelman (1987) proposes that the brain does not store memories but rather establishes potentials for rediscovering previous classifications in current situations. Edelman writes (p. 270), "Recategorical memory is dynamic, transformational, associative, and distributed--its procedures are *representative* of categorizations, but are not necessarily representations." Similarly, a review of the literature on memory for past events has suggested that the chronology of past events is not directly represented in memory, rather, the establishment of a chronological past depends on a process of active, repeated construction (Friedman, 1993).

What are the implications of these theories for the concept of internal working models? First, the notion that there is a stored model to be called upon to guide behavior and feelings when faced with new situations is called into question. Alternatively, stored models do not evoke affects and behaviors. Instead, the reverse happens. There is not a discrete model maintained in the memory, rather there exists a potential to recategorize past experiences in light of present experiences. Therefore, to the extent that there are such things as internal working models, these are constantly recreated and reconstructed as a synthesis of old categories and new experiences. These integrated models are not stored in memory; rather, they are a characteristic of the present. Because they do not exist as discrete entities but are continually reevaluated and revised in light of new experiences, these models exist only in the 'here-and-now'. They are not stored in memory in the way traditionally thought. Rather, their effects are incorporated into memory as potentials for further influencing the creative process in future experiences.

As neurophysiological research calls into question the conceptualization of mental models, it is necessary

for psychologists either to modify their use of the term 'model' or to consider alternative terminology to use in discussing the unique sets of beliefs individuals have about themselves and the social world which influence their perceptions and interactions. These sets of beliefs have been referred to as 'narratives' or 'myths' by some theorists and researchers, and their discussions of personal narrative and personal myth are, in many ways, more congruent with what we now know to be true about memory and the mind. It is to this concept of 'personal myth' which we now turn.

Narrative Theory

A number of researchers have theorized about the creation of the self through myth, emphasizing that identity development is a process of construction--that we do not discover ourselves but rather create ourselves through the stories we tell. Gergen and Gergen (1988), for example, have described the relationship between narrative and the concept of 'self'. In their theory, 'self' refers to narratives of the self which are constructed within social life. What in traditional theories have served as individual traits, mental

processes, or personal characteristics are instead viewed as elements of types of relationship.

Gergen and Gergen distinguish their concept of self-narrative from other concepts including script and schema by defining self-narratives as properties of social discourse--products of social interchange rather than possessions of the individual. Narratives, they argue, as social constructions, undergo continuous alteration as interaction progresses. Like internal working models and RIGs, narratives are typically used to establish expectations for future events. However, these authors do not consider that an individual consults an internal narrative for information in order to determine action. Rather, self-narratives are constructed by individuals in relationships and are employed in relationships to sustain, enhance, or impede various actions. In other words, narratives are useful in that they may guide or explain actions within relationships; however, their influence is not such that they determine action. They may indicate future actions but do not, in and of themselves, provide the basis for such action. Thus, in contrast to traditional conceptions of internal models, the emphasis is on how the self-narrative is continuously

reconstructed in the present, how it is maintained or revised in the interaction, rather than on how past experiences determine future behavior. In traditional conceptualizations, the emphasis lies on how internal models influence future behavior as opposed to how these models might be affected by new experiences.

For those who are familiar with the more traditional understanding of mental models or schemas, these differences may prove difficult to understand or accept. The view that personal narrative is not an internal construct but instead is socially constructed and therefore a property of relationships requires one to re-evaluate how personal narrative influences an individual's future actions. To begin with, consider how one might conclude that narratives are shared--properties of relationships rather than owned by individuals--and the implications of such a conclusion. We tell stories about ourselves and our experiences to others in order to identify ourselves to them, to communicate something about ourselves. Perhaps we wish to illustrate a particular characteristic. What we wish to express or illustrate may vary depending upon our audience; therefore, we may vary the story. Even if we are talking

about the same incident, what we choose to tell about that incident and not to tell may vary. We may emphasize different aspects of the story. We may also alter the story based upon how our audience responds as we tell it. If we sense that we are not communicating what we intended, or, based on our audience's response, if we decide we wish to communicate something else or something in addition to what we originally intended, the story may be altered yet again. In this way, stories are always dependent upon context. A narrative, then, can be thought of as something created within an interaction rather than as something one individual communicates to another.

The implications of this approach are that one cannot think of personal narrative as an internal construct which provides the basis for future action. If narratives are always context-dependent and are continually created and re-created in social interactions, then they may still be thought of as serving a guiding function with regard to future action. However, one's actions and interactions may be thought of equally as serving a guiding function with regard to the construction and revision of the narrative. Therefore,

this approach makes the study of narratives a very complex, even daunting, task.

Researchers who have adopted the study of personal narratives are interested in various characteristics of narrative. In particular, narrative theorists have concerned themselves with the examination of narrative structure. Like other narrative theorists, Gergen and Gergen consider coherence to be an important structural component, saying that in developing a self-narrative, the individual attempts to establish coherent connections among life events. Ideally, they state, an individual's stories mirror reality such that the nature of events drives the nature of the story. However, they acknowledge that memory is more of a social than an individual process. Thus, myth-making is largely governed by conventions for narrative construction rather than by facts.

Gergen and Gergen, drawing from various theorists, outline the following components of a well-formed narrative: the establishment of a valued end point (the story should have a point or purpose), selection of events relevant to the goal state (events are selected that serve to make the goal more or less probable),

ordering of events (organization), establishing causal linkages (events preceding the goal are causally linked), and demarcation signs (signals indicate the different parts of the story, such as beginning and end).

Employing these rules of narrative structure allows one to generate a sense of coherence and direction in one's life.

Similar to the way in which attachment theorists identify multiple representations within internal working models, these authors address multiplicity in narrative, writing (p. 33), "Even though it is common practice to speak as if each individual possesses 'a life story,' in fact there would appear to be no one story to tell." Instead, people seem to be capable of adopting multiple perspectives and selecting events so as to justify the selected narrative. The variegated demands placed upon the individual by the social environment favors this multiplicity of narrative forms. Thus, people often engage in the construction of *nested narratives* or narratives embedded within narratives. Coherence is not sacrificed in this case. However, to the extent that one's actions are in conflict with self-narrative or that components of the self-narrative are in conflict with one

another, doubt is cast upon the validity of the self-narrative.

Other theorists have utilized some of the research outlined previously in constructing their theories without invoking the concept of mental models. McAdams (1993), for example incorporates attachment theory as well as Stern's (1985) work in describing the development of what he terms the *personal myth*. He defines *personal myth* in the following way (p. 12):

What is a personal myth? First and foremost it is a special kind of story that each of us naturally constructs to bring together the different parts of ourselves into a purposeful and convincing whole...A personal myth is an act of imagination that is a patterned integration of our remembered past, perceived present, and anticipated future.

McAdams believes that this creative process begins in infancy and continues throughout the lifespan. In his theory, identity development is not restricted to one particular developmental period but instead continues throughout life as individuals revise and re-tell their personal myths.

According to McAdams, we learn our first lessons about stories in infancy. Interactions with others in the first two years of life leave us with a set of unconscious and nonverbal attitudes about ourselves, others, and the world. These attitudes range from a sense of trust and optimism to a sense of mistrust and despair. He refers to Stern's work, which suggests that from earliest infancy a nonverbal pattern of organization, or meaning system, is being constructed between caregiver and infant, and to attachment theory, suggesting that experiences leading to a secure attachment style in infancy contribute to the formation of a sense of trust and an optimistic narrative tone underlying the construction of the personal myth. Thus, before we even know what a story is we have witnessed how humans interact, experienced our own intentions, tried to do things to impact our environment, and seen the results of our strivings.

In childhood we have our first actual experiences of storytelling. At about 36 months, the child develops the capacity to narrate life experiences, and the narrative self emerges (Stern, 1985). With the capacity to narrate, the child begins to interpret self experience in

terms of a story plot, with a dramatic line and having a beginning, middle, and end. At this time, imagery is particularly important as powerful and emotionally-laden images make stories memorable to preschool children. Older children also begin to incorporate themes, or recurrent patterns of human intention, into their stories, and as they do so, their own life motives begin to take form.

In adolescence, there is a shift from understanding the world in terms of what it is to understanding it as what it might be. At about the same time a person begins to address basic questions about what is 'right' and 'true' as well as to entertain alternative possibilities for the self. Thus, identity first emerges as a problem. At this time, ideology comes to function as a *setting* for identity, locating the personal myth within a particular ethical, religious, and epistemological context.

From adolescence onward, then, we face the task of creating an integrative life story through which we are able to understand who we are and how we fit into the world. As our views of ourselves and our world change over time, we revise the story.

McAdams outlines several criteria for evaluating personal myths, stating that they should develop in the direction of increasing coherence, openness (tolerance for ambiguity), credibility, differentiation (complexity), reconciliation (allowing for resolution among conflicting forces, and generative integration (integrating the mythmaker into society in a generative way).

Grotevant (1995) also describes a narrative approach to identity, in which coherence of the life story is viewed as the benchmark for evaluating how well meaning and a sense of integrity are maintained over time, aspects which, as Grotevant points out, are key elements of Erikson's development of a sense of identity. Again, according to Grotevant, construction of such a narrative is an ongoing task.

Grotevant also describes components of narrative structure. He defines structure as the organization that the content of the narrative assumes. Narrative structure, according to Grotevant, may vary along such dimensions as tightness (relevance of story links), complexity, and sequence (temporal sequence of events). Like the other theorists mentioned, Grotevant believes

that narratives function to provide a sense of continuity, unity, and purpose to life.

Maternal Myth and Child Development

The research reviewed thus far brings forth the question of how maternal myth might influence child development, and the answer could have significant implications for clinical work with mothers and children. As mentioned earlier, attachment researchers have suggested that parental responsiveness or lack thereof has implications for the formation of *internal working models* in the infant and young child. According to Bretherton (1990), secure parents have well-organized and reasonably consistent internal working models of their own attachment figures. Thus, these parents respond to their infants in appropriate ways, providing their infants with information that the infant can later use in relating to the parent because it has meaning, or is predictable. This leads to the formation of well-organized, reasonably consistent internal working models by the infant proceeding into childhood. Furthermore, such working models are easily updated with new information, because they are systematically organized.

In contrast, insecure parents, with their own ill-organized working models of attachment, are more likely to misinterpret their infant's signals and to respond inconsistently. In this way, they interfere with the infant's ability to begin constructing his or her own adequate internal working models of self, other, and interpersonal relationships. Bretherton's hypotheses resonate with the previously mentioned observations of Ainsworth et al (1978) regarding maternal sensitivity as it relates to infant attachment.

In an argument similar to Bretherton's, Main (1991) discusses the vulnerability of infants and young children to unfavorable interaction patterns with insecure attachment figures. Main writes that older children have an advantage over younger children in that they generally develop the capacity to understand the distinction between appearance and reality and to *dual-code* single entities and events. Younger children, on the other hand, generally lack such capacities. For example, they have no memory for the source of information, and are therefore more likely to develop multiple models in response to parental misconstructions, denials, and deceptions regarding events the child witnesses.

Therefore, a young child whose parent is prone to unpredictable and highly conflicting behavior is more vulnerable to developing multiple, incompatible models concerning that parent, and a confused or negative working model of the self. The children of anxious-ambivalent adults are particularly vulnerable. Main writes:

A child who has highly contradictory experiences with the same attachment figure will be more likely to develop and maintain an insecure-ambivalent attachment organization if she is too young to remember prior feelings in the face of new and different experiences. (p. 137)

Of course, the presupposition of internal working models is not necessary to explain how maternal myth could come to influence the child's developing self-myth. Examination of the ways in which caretakers facilitate the development of children's narratives also reveals how this process might be problematic for mothers with an incoherent maternal myth. As we have discovered, theorists have proposed that the construction of the personal myth begins in infancy and in childhood, where children first begin to learn about narratives and to

begin telling stories. Certain narrative practices involving a caretaker and child have been identified by researchers as relevant to the task of personal myth-making (Blum-Kulka & Snow, 1992; Miller, Potts, Fung, Hoogstra, & Mintz, 1990). These include: telling stories about the child in the child's presence, thereby affirming the child as someone whose experiences are tellable; taking up contributions from the child when the caregiver is telling a story and incorporating them into the story; encouraging the child to tell stories by responding to caretaker inquiries; giving floor space to narratives initiated by children; and intervening in children's storytelling such that the ensuing narrative becomes a jointly constructed product. Caregivers also help children develop an understanding of the conventions for narrative construction by demanding for the 'autonomy of the tale'--that the facts of the story be made clear and comprehensible to the audience--and by demanding 'fidelity'--that the story 'ring true' (Blum-Kulka & Snow, 1992).

These tasks could prove difficult for mothers with incoherent, ill-organized personal myths. Mothers who have problems constructing their own narratives are ill-

equipped to facilitate this process with their children, not to mention that these mothers, to the extent that they are insecure or preoccupied with respect to attachment status, might be less willing to engage socially with their children in the process of jointly constructing narratives of shared experiences.

When researchers have examined the stories of children of different attachment style classifications (see Solomon & George, 1991), they have found that each attachment group had a unique style of narration. Secure children told stories with a simple beginning, in which a potential problem develops. There is a climax, and then problem resolution with the help of nurturing adults. Avoidant and ambivalent children created coherent stories, but unlike the secure children, their stories lacked drama. There was little plot and no problem resolution. The disorganized children's stories were the least coherent, lacking in purpose, goal, and meaning. To the extent that previous studies have documented corresponding differences among the narratives of mothers of children in each of these attachment classifications, this research provides some evidence in support of a link between maternal myth and child myth.

Other investigators have discovered a connection between how mothers talk about past events with their children and the conversational styles their children develop. For example, mothers who produce complex, dense narratives with a lot of temporal and contextual information when talking about the past with their young children have children who provide similarly rich, complex accounts of the past a year later (Fivush, 1991). Mothers who frequently ask questions aimed at eliciting contextual information from their children have children who are more likely to spontaneously place their stories about the past in a spatial and/or temporal context a year later (Peterson & McCabe, 1994).

Researchers have identified two distinct narrative styles which parents have in talking about the past with their children. Some parents are more elaborative and some are more repetitive when describing events. Reese and Fivush (1993) found that an elaborative parental style was positively correlated with children's length of conversation, elaborations of memories, evaluations of experiences, and memory repetitions, while a repetitive style was associated with children's tendency not to participate in event discussions. Interestingly, these

researchers also found that parents of daughters were more likely to be elaborative than parents of sons.

Recent research has demonstrated that maternal styles of talking about the past are context-dependent, suggesting that mother-child dyads must be studied in multiple contexts in order to adequately characterize the relationship between maternal conversational styles and children's language and narrative development (Haden & Fivush, 1996). Clearly, further research is needed in order to satisfactorily delineate the link between maternal narrative, child development, and child narrative. However, the research presented thus far supports the study of maternal myth as a potentially rich source of information to further theorists' understanding of mothering behavior and of child development.

To summarize, we have now seen how inconsistent mothering can be deleterious and we have examined how the structure (coherence) of maternal narratives about past relationship experiences has been related to consistency or inconsistency in mothering behavior in the adult attachment literature. We have examined several theories referring to internal representations of past relationship experiences which have also been proposed to

affect individual's behavior in present or future relationships, and we have examined the shortcomings of these theories based on current research in neurophysiology and memory. We have reviewed the work of several narrative theorists who take an alternative approach--an approach which is compatible both with the research presented on mothering and maternal narratives and with the current neurophysiological research. We have also examined possible paths by which maternal myth may serve to influence child development and child myth. This review argues that the concept of maternal myth is a potentially useful concept for the continuing examination of mothering behavior and its related developmental outcomes in children. We now turn to discuss how maternal myth might successfully be used in the study of the mother-child relationship, and specifically to the examination of characteristics of maternal myth which might be profitably examined in the study of mothering behavior.

Characteristics of Myth: Structure and Content

In the narrative theories mentioned thus far, it is the structure of the narrative or myth which has been given the most attention. In fact, in research using the

AAI, researchers have argued that the content of the narrative produced by a mother does not seem to be important as long as that mother is coherent in describing, discussing, and evaluating the effects of her experiences (Main, 1991). Clearly the coherence of a mother's narrative tells researchers something useful about that mother and how she interacts with her child. As previously mentioned, a meta-analysis of studies using the AAI found support for its predictive validity (van IJzendoorn, 1995). However, it was also noted in this analysis that the security of attachment as measured by the AAI only accounts for about twelve percent of the variance in maternal responsiveness in observed mother-child interactions, leaving the overwhelming majority of the variance in maternal responsiveness unaccounted for. Still, the content of maternal narratives has not been closely studied. Could it be that examining and measuring qualities of narrative content would add to the predictive validity of the narratives?

To begin with, let us examine how, hypothetically, maternal myth affects maternal behavior. Let us say that a myth is defined as a set of beliefs about the social world which both reflects and influences one's

perceptions of and interactions with others. As we have seen, researchers have posited that this set of beliefs reflects a sort of composite of one's previous experiences. It influences an individual's perception of others and his or her responses to others by representing his or her expectations within the current relationship. If a mother produces a relatively incoherent myth, then her expectations about relationships are either unclear or change quickly and unpredictably, possibly based on internal rather than external cues. It makes sense, then, that her behavior in interacting with her child is more likely to be insensitive or unresponsive to her child's behavior. It also makes sense that the content of the mother's myth will influence her behavior in response to her child, as the content, too, reflects important information about her expectations within that relationship. What sorts of qualities of the content of maternal myth might reflect expectancies which could influence mothering behavior?

Elements of Content: Affect Tone

Consider the research on maternal depression. When mothers are asked to rate the severity of their child's acting out behavior, depressed mothers' ratings are best

predicted by their affective attitudes toward their children while normal mothers' ratings are best predicted by the children's actual behavior (Kochanska, 1990). Depressed mothers perceive their children as being more disturbed than normal mothers and are likely to respond by issuing vague or interrupted instructions to which their children cannot comply (Forehand et al, 1986). Thus, the depressed mother's affective attitude toward her child seems to both cloud her vision of her child and to affect how she responds to her child's behavior. This is supported by research which links maternal depression with poor monitoring of and responsiveness to child cues (Dumas, Gibson, & Albin, 1989; Rutter, 1990).

Other researchers have also reported that affective negativity in mothers contributes to less synchronous mother-child interactions (Isabella & Belsky, 1991; Spieker & Booth, 1988). These researchers have found that in comparable situations, some mothers dwell on marital and caregiving tensions, thereby exacerbating them, while others minimize these tensions. Spieker & Booth (1988) adopted the term *Negative Affectivity* to describe this difference. *Negative Affectivity* (NA) refers to a perceptual style in which an individual tends

to dwell on negative aspects of him or herself and his or her environment. NA focuses on conscious, subjective experience rather than objective situational factors, thereby emphasizing how people feel about themselves and the world rather than actual circumstances. NA individuals tend to feel negative most of the time and across situations, even in the absence of overt stressors. Spieker and Booth suggest that NA interferes with a mother's capacity to parent effectively because she tends to exacerbate difficulties in her life. NA mothers, rather than experiencing satisfaction with what they have, tend to overlook the positive and create problems where they don't exist.

Conversely, in recent years, a plethora of writings have praised the "power of positive thinking" for healing illness and triumphing over adversity. Scientific research has supported the claim that optimism has positive effects on health and on coping with illness (Scheier, Magovern, Abbott, Matthews, Owens, Lefebvre, & Carver, 1989; Taylor, 1989). Apparently, a hopeful attitude and faith in the future support positive actions and strategies for coping during difficult times. Thus,

support for the benefits of optimism has been demonstrated.

Commensurate with these findings, affect tone has been identified as an important characteristic of personal narratives by the narrative theorists mentioned before. In fact, McAdams (1993) theorizes that the affect tone of an individual's personal myth begins to develop in infancy in the context of the infant-caregiver relationship. Secure attachment relationships in infancy foster the development of trust and hope--a sense of optimism for the future in a primarily benevolent world. They strengthen an unconscious belief that the world is predictable and good, and that when people try to do things, they generally succeed. In an adult narrative, a hopeful or optimistic tone suggests that the world is relatively predictable and that human beings are capable of attaining their goals over time. A relatively hopeless, pessimistic tone suggests that human beings do not get what they wish for, and that the world is capricious and unpredictable. These expectations likely serve a guiding function in terms of influencing one's perception of the environment and one's responses within it.

Some social cognitions theorists also note the importance of affective factors and emphasize the implications of these factors for interpersonal behavior (see Baldwin, 1992, for a review). These theorists generally stress a connection between affect and motivational goals. For example, they emphasize that affective responses typically ensue from an evaluation of the likely outcome of motivational strivings. The significance of motivational strivings within personal narratives is considered next.

Elements of Content: Motivational Theme

Expectations about the self and others are reflected in the motivational theme of an individual's narrative. Psychologists who study personal myths describe motivational themes which begin to emerge in children's storytelling as early as age six (McAdams, 1993). A significant number of psychologists have described these motivational themes in terms of two general, competing tendencies: (1) the striving for independence, autonomy, and power, and (2) the striving for interdependence, love, and intimacy. This motivational duality is probably best described by Bakan (1966), who distinguishes between 'agency' and 'communion'. Agency

refers to an individual's striving to separate from others, to master then environment, and to assert, protect, and expand the self. Communion refers to an individual's striving to lose his or her own individuality by joining others, participating in something larger than the self, and relating to others in warm, close, and intimate ways.

McAdams (1993) has taken up the study of agency and communion, stating that they are "the two superordinate content themes in narrative," (p.87). He suggests that as adults mature, a dynamic tension between these two themes is reflected in the personal myths of those who achieve the most favorable developmental outcomes. He writes (p. 232), "The most generative adults draw creatively upon both the agentic desire for symbolic immortality and the communal need to be needed."

In a review of the research on the relationship of agency and communion to well-being, Hegelson (1994) found that both agency and communion are required for optimal well being, and that when one exists in the absence of the other, negative health outcomes occur. Hegelson defines unmitigated agency as a focus on the self to the exclusion of others, and unmitigated communion as a focus

on others to the exclusion of the self. She notes that unmitigated agency has been linked to increased Type A behavior, poor health care, and behavioral problems, and unmitigated communion has been linked to psychological distress.

Evidence that motivational themes of agency and communion might play an important role in parenting practices can be found in Baumrind's (1967) widely known and highly influential research. Baumrind identified three patterns of child behavior and corresponding child care practices. She described the first group of children as both independent and socialized, both self-assertive and affiliative. According to Baumrind, the parents of these children, "balanced high nurturance with high control," (p.80). In other words, these parents demonstrated both communion and agency in interacting with their children. In contrast, the second group of parents exerted firm control and used power freely, but offered little support or affection. They were less nurturant and less involved with their children, and their children were consequently less affiliative toward their peers, less content, less secure, and more likely to demonstrate hostility under stress. These parents

seemed to stress agency to the exclusion of communion, and this was associated with adverse child behaviors and characteristics. The third group of parents exerted little or no control over their children's behavior. They were comparatively warm in relating to their children and were described as 'babying' their children more than parents in the other two groups. In other words, these parents leaned toward sacrificing agency for communion in their relationships with their children. Their children were described as lacking in both self-reliance and self-control in comparison to the other groups.

While traditional models of development have emphasized separation and individuation as the goal of successful development, more recent models have considered the development of communion and connectedness throughout phases of development to be equally important strivings. Stern (1985) noted that the period from roughly nine to eighteen months considered by many developmentalists to be primarily devoted to the tasks of independence and autonomy, is equally devoted to the seeking and creating of 'intersubjective union' with the mother. He reaches a more general conclusion in which he

questions the notion of phases of development entirely, suggesting instead that clinical issues which have previously been relegated to specific phases of infancy are more accurately seen as issues for the lifespan, operating at basically the same levels in all points of development.

Other researchers have proposed models of development which, rather than focusing primarily on the goal of increasing autonomy to the exclusion of communion as a developmental goal, identify instead tasks of development within each domain for each phase of life (Hassan & Bar-Yam, 1987). These researchers have proposed stages of communion development along the conceptual lines of Erikson's (1968) theory.

The work of these researchers and theoreticians suggests that the motivational theme or themes of a mother's myth could prove useful in predicting her responsiveness as a parent. Specifically, it suggests that a balance between strivings for agency and communion in her narrative would be optimal, and that a maternal myth with an extreme imbalance in motivational theme would affect and/or reflect a mother's diminished ability

to appropriately interpret and respond to her child's behavior.

In sum, then, it is suggested that, in addition to coherence, two content-related qualities of maternal myth--namely affect tone and motivational theme--will prove useful in predicting maternal responsiveness. It is expected that both negative affect tone and an extreme imbalance in the themes of communion and agency in a mother's narrative will reflect a rigidity in her expectations about her child and her relationship with her child which will, in turn, hinder her ability to parent responsively and appropriately.

In addition, it is likely that the characteristics of narratives outlined thus far are not completely independent of one another. Depression has been found to be associated with a lack of a sense of agency in the world (Seligman, 1975). Thus, it is possible that the affect tone of a maternal myth can be predicted by the balance between the themes of agency and communion in the myth. It is likely that other characteristics of narrative are interrelated as well.

Maternal Myth, Rigidity, and Relationship Satisfaction

Maternal myth is thought to serve both as a lens through which a mother interprets her child's behavior and a model which serves to guide her response to that behavior. The more flexible a mother's myth is, the more likely it is to be able to integrate and incorporate new information from new experiences with her child.

Again, depressed mothers provide an example. Research on depression suggests that the myths of depressed mothers are likely to be characterized by a lack of a sense of control over events attributed to internal, stable, and global rather than specific causes (Seligman, 1975). In other words, the depressed mother is likely to view the world in a negative light that is unchanging, pervasive, and outside of her control. This very simplistic and rigid view of events does not take into account life's complexities.

The simplistic and rigid nature of the depressed mother's maternal myth may also be characteristic of maladaptive maternal myths in general. It seems reasonable to expect that a mother whose view of the world and of her child is rigid, inflexible, and less able to integrate new experiences will be less adept at

interpreting and responding appropriately to her child's cues. In fact, some theorists have long stressed that a mother's responsiveness to her child reflects the extent to which her understanding of her child's needs and responses to her child are "complex, differentiated, and flexible" (Klein, 1990, p. 108) as opposed to simple, undifferentiated, and rigid. Thus, it seems likely that the characteristics of the structure and content of maternal myth previously mentioned (coherence, affect tone, and motivational theme) are related to the degree of maternal rigidity or flexibility in thinking and behavior.

Recently, research has found mother responsiveness in mother-child interaction to be a significant predictor of mother satisfaction with the interaction (Wahler & Meginnis, 1997). In fact, when compared to other indices of mother behavior during the interaction, such as general praise and mirroring, responsiveness was found to be the most salient predictor of mother satisfaction. While the exact nature of the relationship between these two variables remains unclear (i.e., whether mother responsiveness leads to mother satisfaction or vice versa, or whether some other variable influences both),

it seems reasonable to consider how the concept of maternal myth might provide a framework for understanding the connection.

Because maternal myth is thought both to reflect and influence mothers' perceptions of their children's behavior, it is also likely that qualities of maternal myth can be linked to mothers' perceptions of and satisfaction with the mother-child relationship. If maternal myth serves as a 'lens' through which a mother interprets her child's behavior and evaluates her experience of mother-child interaction, then it makes sense to expect that the structure and content of maternal myth should be related to the ways in which mothers respond to their children's behaviors as well as how they experience mother-child interaction.

Summary

The previous review has examined the phenomenon of maladaptive mothering behavior, specifically defined as inconsistently responding to child cues, and proposed a unifying concept which might help make sense of how and why some mothers are appropriately responsive to their children and others are not. A review of the research examining the negative developmental outcomes associated

with inconsistent mothering behavior, and of the research on adult attachment linking characteristics of maternal narratives with both inconsistent mothering behavior and negative developmental outcomes, was presented. Reviews of the central tenets of attachment theory, social cognitions theory, and narrative theory, and of their central concepts, such as *internal working model*, *relational schema*, and *personal myth*, informed the selection of the concept *maternal myth* as an underlying, unifying concept through which to examine mothering behavior. In sum, maternal myth was defined as a mother's beliefs about herself, her child, and the mother-child relationship which both reflects and influences her perception of and interactions with her child. A mother's maternal myth represents her expectations within her relationship with her child at a given point in time, and it influences how she interprets and responds to her child's behavior. Qualities of myth, relating to both structure and content, were described, and were hypothesized to be useful in predicting maternal responsiveness. In addition, the potential for intergenerational transmission of myth, a possibility

which further argues for the potential usefulness of the investigation of maternal myth, was explored.

The present study was undertaken in an attempt to examine the construct of maternal myth and its relationship to maternal behavior in the lives of non-clinic-referred mothers and their elementary school age children. Based on the preceding literature review, it was expected that the concept of maternal myth would prove useful as a unifying, overarching concept which predicts mothering behavior. As maternal myth was thought to be a unified concept, the characteristics of myth outlined thus far were expected to be related rather than completely independent of one another. Thus, one goal of the present study was to examine the relationships among coherence, affect tone, and motivational theme in maternal myth.

In addition, the coherence, affect tone, and motivational theme of maternal myth--as reflected in a mother's narrative about her role as a parent and her parenting experiences--were expected to predict the sensitivity of her mothering behavior. Specifically, it was expected that mothers whose personal narratives were more coherent, more neutral or positive in affect, and

more likely to portray a balance between the competing themes of agency and communion, would respond more sensitively to their children than those whose narratives were less coherent, more negative in affect, and dominated by themes of either agency or communion. In addition, it was predicted that mothers' degree of personality rigidity or flexibility would be related to the characteristics of maternal myth. Finally, it was expected that mothers' experiences of and levels of satisfaction with their interactions with their children would also be related to the maternal myth variables.

CHAPTER 2

METHODS

Subjects

This study was part of a larger research project conducted with 35 mother-child dyads recruited through local schools. Because the larger research project involved collecting data not only from children and their mothers, but also from the children's teachers, subject recruitment was contingent first upon a teacher's willingness to participate. Once a teacher had agreed to take part in the study, a mother-child dyad was recruited through her classroom. Selection was based on the child and parent's willingness to participate voluntarily in the study, as well as the teacher's willingness to participate along with that particular child. Subjects from second grade to fifth grade were eligible to participate, with only one mother-child dyad being selected from each classroom. Unfortunately, all measures were not completed for all subjects due to situational constraints. A total of 27 mother-child dyads completed all measures for use in the present study.

Demographic data for this sample are presented in Table 1.¹ As this table shows, the average age of child participants was eight ($SD = 1.83$), and the average grade placement was third ($M = 2.86$; $SD = 1.62$). In addition, 78% of the children were Caucasian, 11% were African American, 7% were of American Indian or Alaskan descent, and the remaining 4% belonged to other racial or ethnic groups. Both genders were evenly represented in the child sample (54% male; 46% female).

The average age of mothers in the study was 35 ($SD = 7.18$). Most mothers held college or graduate degrees (Bachelors: 44%; Masters 7%; Ph.D. 4%) and the rest had at least completed high school. The racial and ethnic composition of the mothers in the study mirrored that of the children in the study. For this sample, the average reported family income was approximately \$53,000 ($SD = \$36,286$).

Procedure

The data were collected in two sessions. In one session, graduate researchers conducted structured interviews in the home with the mother. In these interviews, mothers were asked to describe their

¹All tables may be found in Appendix B.

experiences of parenting, including positive and negative aspects. Mothers were also asked to identify the person(s) with whom they spent the most time on a day-to-day basis and to discuss their last activity with that person or those persons. In addition, mothers were instructed to describe an interesting event at home and to compare and contrast their families of creation with their families of origin (See Appendix A). Demographic information was also collected from the mothers during this session, and the mothers completed a brief questionnaire: the personality rigidity scale.

Because the researcher was interested in obtaining maternal narratives which represented the mothers' existing personal myths and were influenced as little as possible by the interviewers and the interview questions, a standard interview administration was developed. The interviewers were instructed not to prompt the mothers or to structure their answers. Instead, the interviewers asked each question exactly as written and followed each question only with the prompt, "Is there anything more you would like to add?" If mothers asked for clarification regarding a question, the interviewers were instructed simply to read the question again or to advise

the mothers, "However you would like to answer will be fine."

In the other session, trained undergraduate observers blind to research hypotheses observed the mother and child (as well as other family members who happened to be present) in the home for a period of one hour. As the researcher was interested in the usual interaction--both positive and negative--that occurs between mother and child in the home, home sessions were scheduled at times when mother and child were expected to be in the midst of activities considered part of the daily routine. Prior to the observation, family members were given an instructional set likely to promote interaction. They were told that the purpose of the session was to assess parent-child interaction as it might occur when observers were not present. Family members were asked to abide by the following rules: (1) remain within sight of the observer, (2) avoid having visitors, (3) avoid watching television, (4) avoid making phone calls and keep incoming calls very short, and (5) avoid talking to the observer. The trained observers coded the mother-child interaction according to a coding system described below, in order to provide measures of

mother responsiveness. Following the observed interaction, mothers completed the Dyadic Interaction Quality Scale (DIQS), a likert-type scale designed to assess mother attitudes and feelings regarding the interaction.

After all data were collected, trained undergraduate and graduate psychology students transcribed verbatim the audiotaped maternal interviews. The investigator, an advanced psychology graduate student, a bachelors level student, and trained undergraduate psychology students coded the interviews using the coding systems described below.

Measures

Maternal Myth

Coherence

Coherence of maternal myths was assessed using a set of personal narrative coding rules currently under development (Castlebury & Wahler, 1998). These coding rules have been designed to measure theme clarity and consistency in narratives as well as orderliness of presentation and relevance of presented information. Responses to each of the interview questions are treated as *story chapters*, and each chapter is coded

independently. The coherence of each chapter is rated based on (1) whether the listener clearly understands the point(s) being made by the narrator, (2) whether the material presented by the narrator is relevant to the question being asked, (3) whether the response follows a clear progression, (4) whether the response is free of tangential remarks, and (5) whether the parts of the response fit together to form a sensible whole. Because this is a new coding scheme, there are no previous measures of interrater reliability. In addition, internal consistency of the coding scheme was assessed for this study.

Interrater reliability and internal consistency

Interrater reliability for the coherence scale was assessed in the present study for 30% of the mother interviews by comparing the ratings for each interview response given independently by multiple coders: a doctoral psychology student involved in the scale development and several trained undergraduate students. Comparisons were made between pairs of coders yielding an acceptable Pearson r of .80. Internal consistency of the coherence scale was also assessed. Analysis produced an acceptable Alpha of .76.

Affect Tone

The Westen (1990) Social Cognition and Object Relations Scales (SCORS) is a macro-level coding system which was used to procure a measure of affect tone in maternal narratives. The coding system has four dimensions. For the purposes of this study, only one of the dimensions--affect tone--was of interest. The affect tone subscale of the SCORS assesses the extent to which interpersonal relations are viewed as benevolent and enriching and individuals are viewed as happy and successful in their endeavors. This dimension is assessed on a five-point scale, with higher numbers indicating more positive responses. The SCORS is typically used to score responses to the Thematic Apperception Test (TAT). In the present study, each of the mother's responses to the structured interview questions were scored along the dimension of affect tone.

Westen (1990) has obtained uncorrected interrater reliabilities ranging from .75 to .95 and corrected pairwise interrater reliabilities ranging from .88 to .95 in using his scales. Other studies have reported similar reliabilities (Stricker & Healy, 1990). With regard to validity, the Westen scales have been found to correlate

with social adjustment, clinician-rated interpersonal pathology, and relevant symptom scales on the Revised Symptoms Checklist-90 (Stricker & Healy, 1990).

Interrater reliability and internal consistency

In the present study, interrater reliability was assessed for 30% of the mother interviews by comparing the ratings for each interview response given independently by two trained coders: a doctoral psychology student and a bachelors level student. Percent exact agreement for the affect tone scale for each interview response was 83%. Also, a MANOVA testing the hypothesis that the difference scores (obtained from subtracting one rater's measure from the other's for each of the interview responses) were equal to zero was nonsignificant ($F(2,8) = 1.0, p = .525$). Thus, the variance between scores attributed to observers was nonsignificant. In addition, a summary score for affect tone for each transcript was computed by summing the affect tone scores for each interview response. An interrater reliability analysis for these total scores yielded a Pearson r of .89 ($p < .001$). Therefore, interrater reliability for the affect tone scale was deemed acceptable. Analysis also suggested that the

affect tone scale demonstrated good internal consistency, with Alpha = .79.

Themes of Agency and Communion

Themes of agency and communion were assessed using a coding system developed by McAdams (1992) and designed to detect themes of agency and communion in autobiographical episodes considered by the subject to be especially positive or meaningful with respect to his or her personal development. In this coding system, each response is coded for the presence or absence of eight different themes: four under the heading of agency and four under the heading of communion.

The four agentic themes are as follows: **Self mastery** refers to accounts in which the subject strives successfully to master, control, enlarge, or perfect the self. **Status/ Victory** refers to accounts in which the subject attains heightened status or recognition among his or her peers, for example, by receiving special recognition or winning a contest or competition. **Achievement/Responsibility** refers to accounts in which the subject reports substantial success in the achievement of tasks, jobs, goals, or in the assumption of important responsibilities. **Empowerment** refers to

accounts in which the subject is enhanced or empowered through his or her association with something larger than the self (i.e. through religious experience or association with a highly influential teacher).

The four communal themes are as follows:

Love/Friendship refers to an enhanced experience of love or friendship toward others, specifically toward peers or romantic partners. **Dialogue** refers to episodes in which the subject experiences a reciprocal, noninstrumental communication or dialogue with others. **Caring/Help** refers to the experience of caring for, nurturing, aiding, or supporting another. **Unity/Togetherness** refers to episodes in which the subject experiences a sense of oneness, harmony, unity, togetherness, or solidarity with a group of people or the larger community.

Interrater reliability for the agency and communion themes has been documented (McAdams, Hoffman, Mansfield, & Day, 1996). These authors reported category agreements ranging from 71% to 90%. However, reliability must be established each time the coding system is used.

The agency scores coded from autobiographical narratives have been found to correlate with self-report scales of dominance and achievement as well as measures

of achievement and power motivation in the Thematic Apperception Test (TAT). Likewise, the communion scores coded from autobiographical narratives have been found to correlate with intimacy motives in the TAT and with measures of affiliation and nurturance (McAdams et al, 1996).

Interrater reliability

In the present study, interrater reliability was assessed for 30% of the mother interviews by comparing the ratings for each interview response given independently by two trained coders: a doctoral psychology student and a bachelors level student. Percent exact agreement for the agency scale for each interview response was 95%. Also, a MANOVA testing the hypothesis that the difference scores (obtained from subtracting one rater's measure from the other's for each of the interview responses) were equal to zero was nonsignificant ($F(2,8) = 2.67, p = .130$). Thus, the variance between scores attributed to raters was nonsignificant. In addition, a summary score for agency for each transcript was computed by summing the agency scores for each interview response. An interrater

reliability analysis for these total scores yielded a Pearson r of .85 ($p < .01$).

For the communion subscale, percent exact agreement between raters was 87%. Again, analysis of the raters' difference scores was nonsignificant ($F(2,8) = .474$, $p = .775$). As with the agency scale, summary scores for communion were computed by summing the communion scores for each interview transcript. Pearson r for these summary scores was .84 ($p < .01$). Therefore, interrater reliability for the agency and communion measures was deemed acceptable.

Because the agency and communion scales were developed as highly conservative coding schemes, meaning that the most likely score for any particular narrative response on any of the eight agency/communion dimensions is zero (McAdams, 1992), there is no adequate way to assess the internal consistency of the scales. Therefore, internal consistency analyses are not reported for these scales.

Quality of Mother-Child Interaction

Standardized Observation Codes-Revised

Mother-child interactions were assessed using the Standardized Observation Codes-Revised (SOC-R; Cerezo,

1988). The SOC-R is a comprehensive coding system designed to provide a detailed picture of the interactions between a target child and other family members. The codes reflect both social and solitary child behaviors. Measures calculated from the codes provide information about the frequency of certain child and mother behaviors as well as sequences of behaviors. Codes are assigned to each behavior observed and are recorded in fifteen-second intervals. Therefore, it is possible to calculate summary scores which measure the occurrence of sequences of child and mother behaviors. For example, appropriate and inappropriate mother responses to child behaviors can be documented by examining occurrences of various maternal behavior codes following the various categories of child behavior. For the purposes of the current study, the SOC-R measures of mother responsiveness and mother negativity were of interest.

The **mother responsiveness index** was computed by dividing the number of occurrences of a mother's appropriate reactions to her child's positive, neutral, play, and antagonistic behaviors divided by the sum of her appropriate and inappropriate reactions. Initially,

the sets of child behaviors and mother responses were deemed appropriate or inappropriate based on a common valence rule developed and tested by Dumas and Wahler (1985) and by Wahler et al (1990). According to this formulation, child positive or neutral verbalizations, play, requests, and other behaviors should be followed by positive or neutral maternal actions. Child aversive or antagonistic behaviors should be followed by mothers' disapproval, including negative verbalizations or instructions. However, after analysis revealed that the set of behaviors including mother aversive reactions to child aversive behaviors did not contribute significantly to the mother responsiveness index, this set of behaviors was dropped from the computation.

The **mother negativity scale** is a measure of overall mother aversiveness. It is computed by summing all occurrences of mother negative behaviors, such as aversive statements (i.e. expressions of disapproval) or instructions given with negative affect tone. These negative behaviors may occur in response to any child behavior: positive, neutral, or aversive verbalizations, play, requests, or oppositionality.

Interrater reliability of the SOC-R has been documented (Cerezo, Keesler, Dunn, & Wahler 1986). However, reliability must be re-established each time the coding package is used. Previous studies (Sansbury & Wahler, 1992; Wahler and Dumas, 1986) have reported Pearson r 's for the individual and sequence codes ranging from .76 to .99. Maladaptive parenting as assessed by the SOC-R has been found to correlate with maternal self-reports taken concurrently (Sansbury & Wahler, 1992). In addition, Wahler et al (1990) found correlations between an index of maternal unresponsiveness, called mother inconsistency in their study, and child coercive behavior.

Interobserver reliability

In the present study, interobserver agreement was assessed by having observers dual code 20% of the home observations. Each of the measures of interest in this study--mother responsiveness and mother negativity--are total session scores. Therefore, interobserver reliability was calculated by comparing these total session scores between pairs of observers using intraclass correlation coefficients, yielding the following results: Mother Responsiveness = .98, Mother

Negativity = .86. As these coefficients show, observer agreement for these measures was well within the acceptable range.

Mother Evaluations of Quality of Interaction

Mothers' perceptions of the quality of the observed interaction were assessed using the Dyadic Interaction Quality Scale (DIQS; Wahler & Meginnis, 1997). The DIQS is comprised of 10 incomplete statements designed to elicit a respondent's evaluation of a given interaction in terms of the respondent's level of satisfaction with the interaction. In referencing the observed interaction in this study, the mother was asked to provide a rating for each statement on a 6-point scale ranging from 5 (very good) to 0 (not good at all). Statement rating scores were then summed to produce an overall satisfaction score.

Test-retest reliability and internal consistency were recently assessed for this relatively new scale. Wahler and Meginnis (1997) reported a Pearson r for mothers of .93. Thus, the mother's descriptions were dependable over time. They also found that mothers were consistent in describing their experiences. Internal consistency analyses of the 10 DIQS items yielded an

Alpha of .92 for the mothers. Mother satisfaction with mother-child interaction as assessed by the DIQS was found to be strongly correlated with mother responsiveness in the interaction, child compliance, and child satisfaction with the interaction.

Mother Rigidity

A measure of personality rigidity was included in the present study in order to assess mother rigidity in thinking and behavior. This rigidity scale consists of 39 true-false personality inventory items taken from the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI), the California Psychological Inventory (CPI) and items constructed especially for the scale by the University of California's Institute of Personality Assessment and Research (Rehfish, 1958a). The scale was designed to assess personality rigidity, defined as including the following characteristics: affective constriction and behavioral inhibition, conservatism, intolerance of disorder and ambiguity, obsessional and perseverative tendencies, social introversion, anxiety and guilt. It purports to measure the extent to which an individual's behavior is marked by cautious guardedness.

The reliability of the rigidity scale has been assessed by the split-half technique, and a corrected reliability of .72 has been reported (Rehfisch, 1958a). Attempts to validate the scale found that it differentiated between samples of rigid and flexible subjects as rated by staff assessors from an institute of personality assessment and research. In addition, it was found to correlate positively with measures of anxiety and social introversion and negatively with measures of dominance and flexibility (Rehfisch, 1958b).

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using univariate and multivariate techniques. First, Pearson correlation coefficients were computed between all variables in order to examine zero-order relationships.

Second, multiple regression analyses examined main effects of the maternal myth variables. Analyses were conducted to determine (1) the contribution of maternal myth variables (coherence, affect tone, and agency and communion themes) to the prediction of maternal sensitivity (2) the contribution of maternal myth variables to the prediction of maternal negativity; (3) the contribution of maternal myth variables to the

prediction of mother satisfaction with the observed mother-child interaction; and (4) the contribution of maternal myth variables to the prediction of mother personality rigidity.

Third, because more specific predictions were made with regard to the relationship between maternal myth variables and mother responsiveness--that increased responsiveness would be observed in mothers whose myths were high in coherence and in positive affect tone and balanced with regard to themes of agency and communion--the possibility of two-way interaction effects of the maternal myth variables with relation to maternal sensitivity was examined. A multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine the contribution of interaction effects among the maternal myth variables to the prediction of maternal sensitivity. For all analyses, significance levels were set at $p < .05$.

CHAPTER 3

RESULTS

Intercorrelations Among Measures

Intercorrelations among all measures were calculated and are presented in Table 2. A review of this table reveals that, contrary to expectations, only two correlations were significant. As would be expected, mother responsiveness in the observed interaction was significantly negatively correlated with mother negativity. Mother scores on the communion and affect tone measures showed a significant positive relationship. However, the expected correlations among the other maternal myth variables were not found. Neither were any of the maternal myth variables significantly correlated with any of the dependent measures in the present study: mother responsiveness, mother negativity, mother perception of the quality of the mother-child interaction, or mother rigidity.

Multiple Regression Analyses Without Interactions

The Prediction of Mothering Behavior

Multiple regression analyses were conducted to examine the role of maternal myth variables in predicting maternal sensitivity and maternal negativity. The

results of these analyses are summarized in Tables 3 and 4. As the tables indicate, neither regression model was significant (mother sensitivity: Adjusted R Square = -0.12, $F(4,21) = 0.32$, $p = .86$; mother negativity: Adjusted R Square = -0.17, $F(4,22) = 0.04$, $p = .99$). Therefore, none of the maternal myth variables was shown to be a significant predictor of either mother responsiveness or mother negativity in the present study.

The Prediction of Mother Satisfaction

A multiple regression analysis was also conducted to examine the role of maternal myth variables in predicting mothers' degree of satisfaction with mother-child interaction. The results of this analysis are presented in Table 5. Contrary to expectations, this regression model was not significant (Adjusted R Square = -0.12, $F(4,22) = .29$, $p = .88$). Thus, the maternal myth variables were not good predictors of mother satisfaction as assessed by the DIQS in the present study.

The Prediction of Mother Rigidity

Another multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine the role of maternal myth variables in predicting mother rigidity. The results of this analysis are displayed in Table 6. These results indicate that

the regression model was not significant (Adjusted R Square = -0.05, $F(4,22) = .67$, $p = .62$). Therefore, the maternal myth variables were not good predictors of mother rigidity in the present study.

Multiple Regression Analysis with Interactions

A final regression analysis was conducted in order to determine if interaction effects among the maternal myth variables might predict mother sensitivity in responding to child cues. First, Pearson correlation coefficients were computed to examine relationships between the interaction terms and the dependent variables. The correlation matrix is presented in Table 7. A review of this table reveals that none of the interaction terms were correlated with any of the dependent measures.

A second multiple regression analysis examining the prediction of maternal sensitivity was conducted including the maternal myth interaction terms in the model. The results of this analysis are presented in Table 8. A review of this table shows that the model was not significant (Adjusted R Square = -0.29, $F(10,15) = .44$, $p = .90$). Thus, the maternal myth variables

appeared to have neither main effects nor interaction effects which predict maternal sensitivity.

CHAPTER 4

DISCUSSION

The Prediction of Mothering Behavior

The primary goal of the present study was to examine certain characteristics of maternal myth--coherence, affect tone, and motivational theme--and, in particular, the usefulness of these characteristics in predicting mothering behavior. The results yielded no support for the hypothesis that maternal myth variables would predict the sensitivity of mothering behavior. No significant correlations were found between any of the maternal myth variables and the dependent variables used to measure mother sensitivity: mother responsiveness and mother negativity. Likewise, multiple regression models examining main effects of the maternal myth variables in predicting mother responsiveness and mother negativity, and a multiple regression model which also examined interaction effects between each pair of the maternal myth variables in predicting mother responsiveness, were all nonsignificant.

There are, of course, multiple reasons that the results were nonconfirmatory. One possibility is that no support was found for the primary hypothesis of the study

because no relationship exists between maternal myth and mothering behavior. However, before considering this possibility, it is necessary to examine more plausible explanations related to limitations of the study itself.

It is particularly surprising that the coherence of maternal myth was not related to mothering behavior in this study, as various researchers have found support for the predictive validity of the coherence of mothers' narratives in previous studies using the Adult Attachment Interview, or AAI (Ainsworth & Eichberg, 1991; Crandell et al, 1997; Fonagy et al, 1991; Main, 1991; Pederson et al, 1998; Van IJzendoorn, 1995). Comparisons of the present study with studies using the AAI suggest several possible reasons why the present study yielded conflicting results.

To begin with, the administration of the AAI differs significantly from the administration of the maternal interview used in this study. The AAI is made up of fifteen interview questions in comparison to the six questions asked in the present study. The AAI is less structured than the interview used in the present study, and is designed to probe for both general descriptions of relationships and specific supportive or contradicting

memories, as well as for evaluations of relationship experiences (George et al, 1985). Although the AAI has a standard administration with questions asked in a set order, it includes probes which, while standardized to ensure that comparisons among the interviews will be valid, also allow for the elaboration of the narratives beyond that of the present study (Main, 1991). Perhaps it is this difference in elaboration of the narratives which accounts, in part, for the inconclusive results of the present study and the ways in which these results conflict with research using the AAI.

In the present study, mother interviews often were brief and yielded simple, vague, and unelaborated narratives. For example, the following interview response is characteristic of approximately 30% of the mother interviews:

Interviewer: Can you give me an idea of what you do as a parent and a family member?

Mother: What I do? Uh, well I would hope that I provide a model for my kids to follow. Um, I hope that they look at me and learn how they're supposed to be in life.

Interviewer: Is there anything more you'd like to add?

Mother: No.

As this response demonstrates, many of the interview responses were rather ambiguous and lacked the detail which would provide a full, rich picture of maternal myth. Admittedly, this occurred by design, as the researcher expected that some mothers would be less able or willing to provide elaborated accounts with specific examples and details. It was hypothesized that this itself would be reflected in the maternal myth variables under question and, in turn, would be related to mothering behavior. Unfortunately, none of the coding schemes for maternal myth directly took into consideration length of the interview responses or elaboration of the narrative. For example, some transcripts were scored moderate to high in coherence and neutral in affect tone simply because there was not enough information in the narratives to suggest definitive scores. Perhaps if the mothers in this study had been prompted and encouraged to expand upon vague responses and to provide specific examples or details to support general evaluative statements, it may have been possible to code coherence, affect tone, and motivational theme more accurately.

Additional support for this possibility comes from a closer review of the prior research use of another of the coding schemes used in this study--the coding scheme for agency and communion. McAdams' study of personal myth and the characteristics of structure and content of myth has involved hundreds of *lengthy, in-depth* autobiographical interviews (McAdams et al, 1996). The agency and communion coding schemes that were developed through McAdams' work were validated with research examining autobiographical episodes in which participants were given an instructional set asking them to describe events *in detail* as well as to comment on the *meaning* of the events in relation to their personal identity development. In addition, scores on the communion scale have been found to correlate with length of autobiographical response (McAdams et al, 1996). This research further suggests that the successful study of myth requires a certain degree of detail and elaboration.

It bears mentioning, also, that the AAI is an interview measure which is concerned with past relationship experiences. It attempts to discern mothers' current state of mind with respect to early attachment relationships (Main, 1991). In contrast, the

present study was primarily concerned with mother descriptions of current relationships, especially the mother-child relationship, and with mothers' experiences of mothering. Only one interview question from the current study--"Compare your family now with your family when you were growing up. What are the similarities and differences?"--referenced early relationship experiences. Thus, the subject content of the two interviews is quite different. The AAI has been used to study mother responsiveness and the relationship between security of attachment in mothers and their children because it is thought to provide a picture of a mother's *mental representation* of attachment, a model of how a mother organizes information relevant to attachment issues and obtains or limits access to that information when attachment issues arise in her environment. Individual differences in maternal mental representations of attachment are thought to influence maternal responsiveness to child attachment signals and, therefore, to affect a child's socioemotional development, especially his or her development of secure attachment relationships.

This model would suggest that it is a mother's personal myth with regard to attachment specifically rather than mothering in general which serves an important guiding function with respect to mother responsiveness in mother-child interaction. In that case, our measure of maternal myth in the present study may have been too broad to capture the elements of maternal myth most important for the prediction of mother responsiveness. Although one would expect that a mother's myth regarding attachment would be one piece of her overall myth with respect to mothering and would be reflected in this overall maternal myth, it is possible that the interview measure used in this study, because it did not probe specifically to assess mothers' attachment experiences, was not sensitive enough to obtain a full picture of this aspect of maternal myth.

Therefore, it is possible that the interview format of the present study did not yield sufficient narrative data or data rich enough to successfully examine the primary study hypothesis. Alternatively, it is possible that some of the coding schemes used to measure maternal myth in this study were not appropriate for use with the particular narrative transcripts produced by the

interview questions and format, and that different results would have been obtained with alternative coding schemes.

For example, the present study employed a different coding scheme for rating narrative coherence than the one used in research with the AAI. Although the scheme used to code the AAI is unpublished and therefore unavailable for direct comparison with the scheme used in the present study, what has been written about it reveals some discrepancies in the way coherence is measured in the two systems. Coherence in the coding of the AAI is measured according to four maxims (Main, 1991). The first maxim, the maxim of **quality**, refers to the importance of the narrator's being truthful and providing evidence for evaluative statements. The second maxim is the maxim of **quantity**, requiring that the interviewee be succinct yet complete. The third maxim, the maxim of **relation**, requires that the information provided in the interview response be relevant to the interview. The final maxim is the maxim of **manner**, which requires that the speaker be clear and orderly.

The coding scheme for coherence used in the present study did not take into account either of these first two

maxims. The quantity, or completeness, of the interview response was not considered in the coding of coherence, nor was the presence or absence of supporting evidence for mother's general or evaluative statements directly taken into account. Main and colleagues (Main, 1991) have found the maxims of quantity and quality to be significant in differentiating parents of securely and insecurely attached infants in their research.

Therefore, one potential reason support for the predictive validity of the coherence of maternal narrative was not found in this study is that efforts to measure coherence failed. In other words, it is possible that the present study simply demonstrated the inadequacy of the coding scheme which was used for rating coherence. Perhaps the coding system does not provide a valid measure of coherence and different results would have been obtained had a coherence measure with demonstrated validity and reliability been used.

In addition, the agency and communion coding system used in this study was designed to detect the salience of agency and communion themes in autobiographical episodes deemed to be especially meaningful to an individual with respect to his or her development as a person (McAdams,

1992). These episodes have been referred to as *peak experiences* or *turning points*. The application of the coding system to *peak experiences* and *turning points* resulted in the development of a rather conservative coding scheme in which coding rules call for very clear and explicit proof of a theme's existence before it can be coded. As a result of the conservative nature of the coding scheme, McAdams points out that it has a limited scope of application and that the suitability of the scheme for the analysis of autobiographical accounts other than accounts of peak experiences and turning points is unknown. McAdams reports that attempts to apply the coding scheme to the analysis of early memories, for example, were unsuccessful "because such accounts are typically too banal or vague to be scored for themes of agency and communion" (p.1).

The agency and communion scheme used in this study was selected because of its established use in the study of personal myth and the unavailability of a more appropriate or more applicable, yet comparable, coding system. However, because many of the mothers' responses to interview questions were vague or general and did not address specific events, perhaps this coding system was

too conservative to adequately measure themes of agency and communion in the mothers' narratives. Perhaps a coding system which would capture more general themes (as opposed to the description of specific events) reflecting a mothers' interest in or desire for achievement, responsibility, status, and self-mastery, or love, friendship, caring, and unity, would be more appropriate and helpful in the study of maternal myth. A coding system revised in this way might be more applicable to narratives similar to the ones obtained in the present study.

Likewise, the affect tone subscale of the Westen Social Cognition and Object Relations Scale may not have provided an adequate measure of affect tone of the mother interviews. The affect tone subscale was developed for use with the Thematic Apperception Test, a projective assessment tool in which individuals are shown various pictures and asked to tell stories about the pictures. Such stories, which are, according to the instructions, required to have a beginning, a middle, and an end, are likely to entail some sort of problem or conflict and its resolution, or lack thereof.

According to the coding manual, the affect tone coding scheme takes into account "representations of people and relationships" (Westen, 1985, p.24) and attempts to assess the expectations of individuals within relationships and in their lives in general. For example, an individual might tell a story in which caretakers are negligent, people are unempathic or even cruel, or some characters are victims of malicious intent. Such a response would seem to represent a characterization of the world as primarily malevolent and would receive a low score on the affect tone subscale. Conversely, a story in which characters are primarily successful in their endeavors and/or display positive feelings would seem to reflect a view of the world as basically fulfilling and enriching. Such a response would receive a high score on the affect tone subscale. Other stories might fall somewhere in the middle, representing relatively benign world views. Generally, not only the feelings ascribed to the characters in the story but also the story's outcome contribute to the overall affect tone of the story itself.

In comparison, affect tone in the transcripts of the mother interviews was often difficult to ascertain due to

the 'unstoried' nature of the interview responses. In the narratives used in the present study, mothers related their experiences of parenting and were asked to describe events at home and with family members, but these descriptions usually took the form of general statements (i.e. "We went to the movies," "We moved into a new house") rather than stories. Stories evoke images and feelings such that the affect tone of the story often resonates within the reader. By contrast, the descriptions provided by the mothers in this study often supplied fewer cues with regard to affect tone. Coders were left, in some instances, either to assume affective neutrality or to infer positive or negative tone with little supportive evidence. Therefore, in most cases, the affect tone subscale of the Westen could not be applied to the narrative transcripts in the same way it is used with the TAT.

The Westen scales have been successfully used to code interview transcripts in addition to TAT responses (Armstrong, 1996). However, in this instance the narratives under examination were more lengthy and elaborated than the narratives generated by the present study. A more suitable coding system for the type of

interview response under investigation in this study might delineate specific rules for deriving affect tone from the content of the narrative in the absence of adjectives which suggest positive or negative attributions. For example, under such a coding system, the rather bland examples cited above in which mothers described a trip to the movies and moving into a new house--descriptions which were coded as neutral under the Westen system--might be coded as positive in affect tone because they describe events which are generally enjoyable and/or exciting. A more fitting coding system such as this may have resulted in greater variation among the narratives with regard to affect tone.

Finally, the model examined in the present study may have lacked the complexity necessary to study mothering behavior satisfactorily. As noted at the beginning of this thesis, mothering is complex and multi-determined. Maternal myth was proposed to be a large and vital piece of the puzzle of mothering behavior, and the present study was designed in an attempt to examine this piece. However, it was noted that maternal myth, like mothering behavior, is likely to be a highly complex construct, and the study of maternal myth a difficult task. The design

of the present project may have provided an inadequate study of maternal myth if myths are, as narrative theorists speculate, not stored in memory but are characteristic of the present, are always context-dependent, and are continually created and recreated in social interactions. For example, perhaps multiple narrative samples would have been useful to secure a measure of enduring themes and qualities of maternal myth. Perhaps an informal family discussion of parenting would have provided a more valid picture of maternal myth than the formal interviews conducted by unfamiliar persons.

In addition, it bears mentioning that several variables have been shown by previous research to influence mother's reactions to their children significantly in home observations. These variables were not directly examined in the present study. Instead, it was expected that their effects would be measured indirectly, as they were hypothesized both to influence and be reflected in maternal myth.

Specifically, a large missing piece in the present study is the failure to examine child variables. Several researchers have found evidence for the powerful

influence of child behavior in parent-child interactions (Anderson et al, 1986; Barkley et al, 1985; Patterson, 1983). Olweus (1980) found that aggressive boys generated permissiveness for aggression in their mothers and proposed a mechanism by which this process occurs, suggesting that high child aversiveness changes the mother's adaptation level so that behavior which is unacceptable to most mothers seems normal. This research suggests that aversive child behavior strongly evokes poor parenting, especially permissive parenting in which negative behavior is overlooked. In fact, it has been suggested that child behavior is the most salient variable in the prediction of mother behavior (Lytton, 1990).

Possibly, maternal myth serves a guiding function with respect to mothering behavior when child behavior is more ambiguous, variable, or asynchronous. However, when child behavior is consistently very aversive, mothering behavior may be more reactive. In other words, mothers may fall into patterns of permissive or asynchronous responding when child aversiveness is high regardless of maternal myth. In these cases, maternal myth may lose its usefulness as a guiding construct, as very aversive

behavior evokes more immediate and/or impulsive responding less likely to be mediated by a mother's beliefs about mothering and more likely to be directed by situational demands.

Similarly, maternal myth may be less useful and less likely to serve a guiding function with regard to maternal behavior in cases where children are extremely responsive to their mothers' behavior. For example, when mother-child interaction is highly synchronous and the child is responding appropriately and consistently to the mother, or following her lead, responsiveness requires less effort and less sensitive attending on the mother's part. Thus, maternal myth variables may exert less influence on mothering behavior. The children involved in the present study were, on average, highly responsive to their mothers during the observed interaction. Therefore, maternal myth may have exerted less influence on mothering behavior than might be the case in other samples.

Additional child variables which might also influence mother-child interaction were not taken into account either. The concept of myth as defined in this dissertation and the narrative theory used, in part, to

derive this concept emphasize the co-creative process of myth in social interaction. In other words, this conceptualization takes into account the fact that in any interaction, two or more personal myths are involved and each comes to influence and be influenced by the other(s). However, in the present study, child myth was not examined. This was partly due to the difficulty of obtaining an adequate picture of child myth from interview data. Attempts to analyze preliminary interviews conducted with child participants failed, as the interviews proved to be too short and too sparse to yield meaningful data. For this reason, it is likely that an alternate method of measuring child myth is needed. Nevertheless, the failure to examine the contribution of child myth in the present study may have further decreased the likelihood of obtaining significant results. This argument is supported by research in which, contrary to expectations, parental personality characteristics were not found to play a more powerful role than child characteristics in the mother-child relationship (Belsky & Isabella, 1988).

Another variable which has been found to affect mothering but which was not examined in the present study

is socioeconomic disadvantage (Belsky, 1984; Sansbury & Wahler, 1992). It has been suggested that mothers who are most likely to fall into negative responsiveness to child behavior are those who face socioeconomic adversity (Sansbury & Wahler, 1992). Socioeconomic distress purportedly interferes with a mother's ability to attend appropriately to her child's behavior due to her preoccupation with sometimes overwhelming environmental stressors.

Although the average income of participants in the present study was more than \$50,000, suggesting that the sample was primarily middle-class with relatively few socioeconomic concerns, a significant number of participants (30%) subsisted on incomes of less than \$25,000. Thus, there was considerable variation in the sample with regard to socioeconomic variables. However, socioeconomic variables were not directly taken into account in the models predicting mother responsiveness and mother negativity. Perhaps a more complex analysis which included direct measures of the aforementioned variables would have yielded different results.

The Prediction of Rigidity and Mother Satisfaction with Mother-child Interaction

The results yielded no support for the hypotheses that maternal myth variables would predict personality rigidity in the mothers or mother satisfaction with mother-child interaction. Multiple regressions analyses examining these models were nonsignificant. The criticisms made in the previous discussion section regarding the measurement of maternal myth variables used in this study, the failure to include additional mother and child variables in the conceptual model, and the potential impact of these problems for the prediction of mothering behavior, also apply to the prediction of mother rigidity and mother satisfaction with mother-child interaction. In addition, however, it is necessary to examine some additional considerations specific to these analyses.

The personality rigidity scale used in the present study was constructed and validated using a sample very different from our sample of mothers. The subjects used in defining the scale were "adult males (university students and Air Force captains) who were, as a group, above the average in intelligence and education"

(Rehfishch, 1958b, p.374). Thus, the scale may not have been an efficacious measure of rigidity for our population of mothers. This might help explain why the expected relationship was not found.

With respect to the measure of maternal satisfaction, the present study yielded results which contrast with results previously obtained regarding the relationship between mother satisfaction and mother responsiveness in mother-child interaction. Wahler and Meginnis (1997) reported a relatively strong correlation ($r = .68$, $p < .001$) between mother satisfaction and mother responsiveness in their study examining the playroom behavior of 36 normal mother-child dyads. However, in the present study, mother satisfaction was not significantly related to mother responsiveness ($r = -.25$, ns). This discrepancy calls into question the reliability and validity of the DIQS, a relatively new measure. If the DIQS is not a valid or reliable measure of interaction satisfaction, it is understandable that a relationship between this measure and the maternal myth variables was not found.

The Relationships Among Maternal Myth Variables

It was predicted that the maternal myth measures of coherence, affect tone, and themes of agency and communion would be interrelated rather than completely independent of one another. However, only one significant correlation among these variables was found. Affect tone was found to be significantly positively related to themes of communion in the mother narratives.

There is a slight possibility that this significant correlation is the result of an artifact of the coding systems for affect tone and agency, simply reflecting an overlap in the two coding schemes. In other words, according to the affect tone coding scheme, positive affect tone is coded for narrative representations of positive interactions between individuals. Within the communion and agency coding scheme, communion was coded for narrative responses in which mothers portrayed positive experiences of friendship, intimacy, sharing, and nurturance. From these descriptions, it is easy to see how the two coding schemes might overlap. However, positive affect tone was also scored for descriptions of individuals being happy and successful in their endeavors--achieving mastery and attaining goals.

Therefore, it could also be said that the affect tone subscale overlaps with the agency coding scheme. As a result, the explanation that the significant correlation between affect tone and communion is artifactual is not sufficient.

Although this specific correlation between affect tone and communion was not expected, it is consistent with previous research. In a nationwide study of more than 1200 adults, high intimacy motivation in women was found to be associated with reports of greater happiness and gratification in their lives (McAdams & Bryant, 1987). Assessed via content analysis of narrative, intimacy was defined as a recurrent preference or readiness for experiences of warm, close, and communicative interaction with others, a definition similar to the one used for communion in the present study. Women high in intimacy motivation reported higher levels of overall happiness in their lives and more satisfaction in work, marriage, and parenting roles, compared to women low in intimacy motivation.

Another study found that intimacy motivation in men predicted marital and occupational satisfaction 17 years later (McAdams & Valliant, 1982). Subjects

assessed after graduating from college as having high intimacy motivation were more likely to report greater psychosocial adjustment at follow-up. This research suggests a connection between intimacy motivation and overall life satisfaction. Thus, it also supports a link between themes of communion and positive affect tone in personal narratives.

Other relationships among the maternal myth variables were not found. This may be due to the problems noted previously with the maternal interviews and the coding schemes used in the study. Alternatively, coherence of narrative, affect tone, and themes of agency may be independent, unrelated constructs.

Additional Methodological Considerations

Other methodological considerations may further explain the failure of the present study to support the hypotheses under investigation. First, the small sample size used in this study was less than desirable. The number of subjects was settled upon because time and research staff constraints made a larger subject pool unfeasible. However, power for detecting significant effects was sacrificed in this decision. It is possible that relationships between the independent and dependent

variables used in this study were not detected because the small sample size resulted in analyses which were not powerful enough to discover them. For example, if an effect size was expected comparable to the one found in meta-analysis of research using the AAI ($R\text{-square} = .12$), with power = .80 and alpha = .05, power analysis indicates that approximately 100 subjects should have been included in the study.

Second, the sample used in this study was relatively homogeneous. Subjects were not selected on the basis of any attributes other than their willingness to participate. Therefore, the representativeness of the sample may have been limited by a tendency of families with certain characteristics to choose either to participate or not to participate in the study. In other words, the amount of variance in the variables examined in the present study may have been low due to the self-selective nature of the subject pool. For example, there is no way to know whether, if any, or how many mothers of children with emotional or behavioral problems at home or at school were included in the study, a sample characteristic which likely would have affected the study's outcome.

Finally, the design of the study and the way the data were collected may have interfered with the outcome. The interviews which provided the maternal myth measures and the coded observations of mother-child interactions took place in separate sessions which occurred days or, in some instances, weeks apart. Thus, situational factors influencing the mother and/or child during one data collection session and not the other may have negatively impacted the results of the study. For example, during one visit, researchers may have caught the family on a particularly 'bad' or 'good' day which may have affected the mother interview responses or mother-child interaction for that particular day. If all measures had been collected during a single session, situational factors would have exerted the same influence on all measures, and researchers may have been more likely to find relationships between independent and dependent variables.

Implications for Future Research

Although no support was found for the hypotheses under investigation, the results of the present study by no means indicate that future investigation of the construct of maternal myth is not warranted. Instead,

this preliminary, exploratory research has laid groundwork for improved future study. As the previous discussion indicates, the outcome of the present study highlights the need for improved design and methodology in future research investigating maternal myth and related variables such as mothering behavior.

To begin with, in order to increase the power of future studies to detect significant relationships if they exist, a larger sample size should be recruited. In addition, a more heterogeneous and representative sample should be sought in order to increase the prospective variance within the measures of interest (i.e. the maternal myth and maternal behavior variables). For example, the inclusion of clinic-referred children and their mothers is suggested.

Second, in order to improve the assessment of maternal myth, future investigators should consider the merits of including a more in-depth interview which would encourage the production of more detailed, elaborated maternal myths. Such an interview would ensure that investigators obtain a richer and more complete picture of maternal myth or, that if mothers fail to provide such a picture, it is because of an inability to generate a

rich, detailed narrative rather than uncertainty about the interviewer's expectations.

Third, in order to refine the assessment of the characteristics of maternal myth used in the present study--coherence, affect tone, and themes of agency and communion--the use of different coding schemes or the development of new coding systems should be considered. A study examining multiple measures designed to assess the same narrative quality might help further evaluate the usefulness of the coding schemes used in the present study, particularly how applicable they are to the study of maternal myth as reflected in narrative transcripts generated by mother interviews. Furthermore, such a study might advance the development of more appropriate measures specifically designed for use with interview data. The examination of characteristics of myth other than the ones used in this study as potential significant predictors might also prove profitable.

Additionally, future studies attempting to link maternal myth and mothering behavior should examine maternal myth as one piece of a complex model. Investigators need to consider other variables in addition to qualities of maternal myth which might

contribute to the prediction of mother responsiveness. These include child behavior and child myth variables, as well as socioeconomic factors. As previously mentioned, attempts by this researcher to code narratives obtained from child interviews in hopes of assessing child myth proved fruitless. Therefore, alternative means of assessing child myth may be needed. Attachment researchers have successfully used puppet interviews, drawings, and questions about pictures designed to elicit attachment-related associations, such as pictures depicting parent-child separations, to study children's *mental models* of attachment (Fish & Condon, 1994; Main, 1991). Perhaps methods such as these could also be successfully used in the measure of child myth in general.

Overall, the present study failed to support the concept of maternal myth as a useful construct through which to examine responsiveness in mothering. Some might consider these results as evidence that no relationship in fact exists between maternal myth and mothering behavior. However, this prospect is both uninviting and unlikely, due to considerable theory and research, especially in the realm of attachment, which suggests the

contrary. In addition, decades of analysis of mothering in particular and parenting in general have proved, more than anything, that mothering is a complex process and the study of it is frequently perplexing. Consequently, the dearth of significant results in the present study should not be interpreted too quickly. Over time, further investigation of the construct of maternal myth and its relationship to mothering behavior will determine its merit.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Maternal Interview

1. Can you tell me about your role as a parent and as a family member? Is there anything more you would like to add?
2. What do you like most about being a parent? Is there anything more you would like to add?
3. What do you not like about being a parent? Is there anything more you would like to add?
4. Who takes up the biggest share of your time at home? Tell me about the last time you did something with this person. Is there anything more you would like to add?
5. Tell me about the most interesting thing you were involved in at home during the past month. Is there anything more you would like to add?
6. Compare and contrast your family now with your family when you were growing up. What are the differences and similarities? Is there anything more you would like to add?

APPENDIX B

Table 1

DEMOGRAPHICS

Variable	Mean	Std Dev	Min	Max
Mother's age	35.3	7.18	25	51
Mother's Education (years)	14.8	2.4	12	19
Income	52,657	36,286	5,500	125,000
Child's age	8.6	1.83	6	12
Child's grade	2.8	1.63	1	6

Table 2

CORRELATION MATRIX FOR ALL VARIABLES

	MRSPIDX	MNEG	DIQS	RIGIDITY	COH	AT	AG
Mother Responsiveness Index (MRSPIDX)							
Mother Negative Scale (MNEG)	-0.86**						
Dyadic Interaction Quality Scale (DIQS)	-0.25	0.13					
RIGIDITY	-0.15	0.05	-0.17				
Coherence (COH)	-0.12	-0.04	0.04	0.14			
Affect Tone (AT)	0.14	-0.06	-0.01	-0.15	0.16		
Agency (AG)	-0.13	0.05	-0.14	-0.12	-0.12	-0.19	
Communion (COM)	0.13	-0.01	-0.12	0.15	0.23	0.46*	-0.28

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

Table 3

MULTIPLE REGRESSION ANALYSIS PREDICTING MOTHER
RESPONSIVENESS FROM COHERENCE, AFFECT TONE, AGENCY AND
COMMUNION VARIABLES

Source	DF	SS	MS	F	p
Model	4	0.00770	0.00192	0.317	.86
Error	21	0.12747	0.00607		
Total	25	0.13517			
R-Square	0.0570				
Adj R-Square	-0.1227				

Note: DF = Degrees Freedom. SS = Sum of Squares. MS = Mean Square.

Table 4

MULTIPLE REGRESSION ANALYSIS PREDICTING MOTHER NEGATIVITY
FROM COHERENCE, AFFECT TONE, AGENCY AND COMMUNION
VARIABLES

Source	DF	SS	MS	F	p
Model	4	0.00014	0.00004	0.040	.99
Error	22	0.01925	0.00607		
Total	26	0.01939			
R-Square	0.0073				
Adj R-Square	-0.1732				

Note: DF = Degrees Freedom. SS = Sum of Squares. MS = Mean Square.

Table 5

MULTIPLE REGRESSION ANALYSIS PREDICTING MOTHER
SATISFACTION WITH MOTHER-CHILD INTERACTION FROM
COHERENCE, AFFECT TONE, AGENCY AND COMMUNION VARIABLES

Source	DF	SS	MS	F	p
Model	4	0.66379	0.16595	0.293	.88
Error	22	12.45572	0.56617		
Total	26	13.11951			
R-Square	0.0506				
Adj R-Square	-0.1220				

Note: DF = Degrees Freedom. SS = Sum of Squares. MS = Mean Square.

Table 6

MULTIPLE REGRESSION ANALYSIS PREDICTING MOTHER RIGIDITY
FROM COHERENCE, AFFECT TONE, AGENCY AND COMMUNION
VARIABLES

Source	DF	SS	MS	F	p
Model	4	68.71906	17.17976	0.668	.62
Error	22	565.94761	25.72489		
Total	26	634.66667			
R-Square	0.1083				
Adj R-Square	-0.0539				

Note: DF = Degrees Freedom. SS = Sum of Squares. MS = Mean Square.

Table 7

CORRELATION MATRIX FOR DEPENDENT VARIABLES AND INTERACTION TERMS

	MRSPIDX	MNEG	DIQS	RIGIDITY	AT X AG	AT X COM	AG X COM	AT X COH	AG X COH
Mother Responsiveness Index (MRSPIDX)									
Mother Negative Scale (MNEG)	-0.86**								
Dyadic Interaction Quality Scale (DIQS)	-0.25	0.13							
RIGIDITY	-0.15	0.05	-0.17						
Affect Tone X Agency (AT X AG)	-0.09	0.03	-0.11	-0.13					
Affect Tone X Communion (AT X COM)	0.09	0.01	-0.13	0.13	-0.19				
Agency X Communion (AG X COM)	0.08	-0.14	-0.05	0.18	0.66*	0.36			
Affect Tone X Coherence (AT X COH)	0.01	-0.07	0.02	-0.01	-0.09	0.56*	0.12		
Agency X Coherence (AG X COH)	-0.14	0.03	-0.14	-0.08	0.97*	-0.24	0.59 *	-0.07	
Communion X Coherence (COM X COH)	0.10	-0.01	-0.11	0.15	-0.23	0.98*	0.30	0.57*	-0.25

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

Table 8

MULTIPLE REGRESSION ANALYSIS WITH INTERACTIONS PREDICTING
MOTHER RESPONSIVENESS FROM COHERENCE, AFFECT TONE, AGENCY
AND COMMUNION VARIABLES AND THEIR INTERACTION TERMS

Source	DF	SS	MS	F	p
Model	10	0.03069	0.00307	0.441	0.90
Error	15	0.10447	0.00696		
Total	25	0.13517			
R-Square	0.2271				
Adj R-Square	-0.2882				

Note: DF = Degrees Freedom. SS = Sum of Squares. MS = Mean Square.

VITA

Greta Griffith Smith was born in Kingsport, Tennessee on August 31, 1971. She was raised primarily in Virginia, where she attended elementary school, high school, and college. She completed her undergraduate work at the College of William and Mary in May, 1993, receiving a Bachelor of Science degree in Psychology with a minor in Chemistry.

She entered the Clinical Psychology Graduate Program at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, the semester after graduating from college, in the Fall of 1993. In July of 1998, she completed a predoctoral internship in clinical psychology through Emory University Medical School at Grady Health System in Atlanta, Georgia. She completed the requirements for her doctoral degree in December, 1998.

She currently resides in Maryville, Tennessee, with her husband, Joey.