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Parents' Talk:
Multiple Schemas and Parenting Practice

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by

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The dissertation of Zoltan G. Sarda is approved, and it is acceptable in quality and form

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DEDICATION

For Abigail, Ben and Simon.

For inspiring passion, commitment and curiosity.

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Parents' Talk:
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by

Zoltan G. Sarda

University of California, San Diego, 2012

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The impetus for this study is derived from the researcher's experience as a teacher

and parent educator. In such contexts, parents frequently lament about the difficulties

they experience in developing and sustaining "best practices" in raising their children,

and the intransigent nature of existing habits. Much schematic cognition about issues

such as relationships involved in parenting resides beneath conscious awareness, and is

activated through automatic or habitual interpretations and behaviors. This study

examines the nature of a group of mothers' (N=14) schemas about parenting and the

effects of these schemas on parenting practice. Four research questions guide this work:

(1) what are the multiple parenting schemas that guide parenting practice? How are they

expressed (articulated and enacted)? (2) How does the expression of parenting schemas

vary across development in interactions with children at 6 years of age, as compared with

10 year-olds? (3) How do parents balance and reconcile multiple parenting schemas in

everyday parenting, and how is the balance of these schemas related to consistency in

parenting practice? (4) To what degree is it possible to use this study's methodology to

define and understand multiple schemas? To answer these questions, the subjects

participated in recording their responses to interactions with their children in solicited daily diaries and engaged in two interviews. Interview transcripts were coded for examples of schematic cognitions that included attributional style, efficacy cognitions, cultural models and conceptual metaphors. The data revealed detailed examples of schematic cognitions related to parenting. A key finding was a differing influence of schematic cognitions on emotion activation and cognitive distortions about parenting practice and child outcomes. Findings from this study inform parent education contexts, as well as development opportunities for teachers or other adults working with children and provide insight into how schematic interpretations are expressed both in language and parenting practice.

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Background

Parenting is a challenging task. It involves complex sets of interrelated skills, cognitions and behaviors all set against a backdrop of relationships with children that are constantly in flux and influenced by a host of factors: Developmental stages, environmental and situational contexts, gender, temperament and daily mood to name a few. Given these complicated factors, it isn't any wonder that a common refrain from parents who have participated in parenting classes I have conducted goes something along the lines of, "I come to these classes and get refreshed and re-inspired about how to parent my child, and then within a few weeks, I'm back to relying on the same old behaviors that don't work. It seems like it doesn't sink in and I have to hear it over and over again." A second common lament is "I get frustrated with my child and then I say and do things I swore I would never do, and they are the same things my parents used to say to me." One parent succinctly encapsulated this problem when he said, "I often wonder how my father got into my larynx."

In many ways, these phenomena are evidence of the enduring nature of the cognitive structures, or schemas that guide our perceptions, responses and behaviors. Formed during our earliest relationships, these *internal working models* (Bowlby, 1969) of relationships act as scripts, allowing us to anticipate and respond to events in relationships. While these schemas provide us with the ability to efficiently respond to a variety of situations, they are also somewhat inflexible as they carry with them sets of preconditioned responses and behaviors (James, Southam & Blackburn, 2004). This inflexible nature also affects the integration of new information as these conceptual

structures limit the interpretations of events and information processing (Beech, Parrett, Ward & Fisher, 2009; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980), a factor that may explain parents' need to hear things "over and over again" before, if they do in fact, sink in. For the purposes of this study, schemas will primarily be referred to as schemas, or parenting cognitions, which are schematic cognitive structures specifically related to the processes of parenting.

Interestingly enough, in terms of parenting education literature and training programs, very little focus has been devoted to helping parents understand the role of parenting cognitions, and how they influence responses to children's behaviors (Mah & Johnston, 2008; Morrison Dore, & Lee, 1999; Thomas, 1996). In terms of parent training programs that are directed at families who have been referred through social services or sought professional help due to abuse or neglect, or more extreme child behavior issues, training is primarily directed at developing sets of skills and behaviors in the hope of increasing parents' effectiveness (Morrison Dore, & Lee, 1999; Thomas, 1996). Some researchers have suggested that these training programs might incorporate helping parents understand the influences of their own parenting cognitions on the dynamics of relationships with their children as part of their educational approaches (Morrison Dore, & Lee, 1999; Potier, 2007; Thomas, 1996). These researchers specifically suggest that attention be given to the parenting cognitions of self-efficacy and attribution, as they may exert the greatest influence on ineffective parenting practices. Self-efficacy cognitions and attributions or attributional styles are forms of parenting cognitions that are more clearly defined in Chapter Two. Mah & Johnston (2008) suggest that these interventions may be most effective early on in the trajectory of particular families' dysfunction, while

Potier (2007) asserts that current parent training programs do not address issues of negative parental cognitions, indicating a need for more research to develop understandings of the origins of these cognitions and how they influence parent-child relationships.

In regard to parenting literature intended for audiences within a more normative range of child-rearing issues, with a few noteworthy exceptions (e. g. Kabat-Zinn & Kabat-Zinn, 1998; Siegel & Hartzell, 2003) there is a striking lack of information as to the role of parenting cognitions and their influence on parents' relationships with their children. Siegel and Hartzell (2003) address the issue directly, suggesting that parents engage in a process of reflection to understand the influences of their own childhood experiences on their emotional responses to their children. Kabat-Zinn and Kabat-Zinn (1998) lead parents through a process of becoming mindful of their emotions and responses in regard to parenting interactions. They suggest, for example, that parents reflect on how they might appear from their child's perspective, and to give themselves time for reflection, if at all possible, in the heat of conflict.

More common approaches in parenting literature focus on helping parents understand what is happening for the child in terms of development (e.g. Bates Ames, 1981), temperament (e.g. Kurcinka, 1998), or mode of behavior (e.g. Faber & Mazlish, 1999; Kvols & Riedler, 1997), and provide strategies and behaviors that parents can practice to address these issues. For example, one book, *Redirecting Children's Behavior* (Kvols & Riedler, 1997) suggests that children have a limited set of behavioral modes in which they engage in misguided attempts to have their needs met: Misguided power, undue attention, revenge, or assumed inadequacy. Acknowledging the reflexive nature of

parent-child dynamics, these authors state that knowing how to respond to a child requires that the parent understand what mode the child is in, and the key to that, they assert, is assessing the parent's emotional response. For example, if a child is in a mode seeking misguided power, the parent will feel angry or threatened.

Faber & Mazlish (1999) also suggest that children engage in modes of behavior: Their suggestions focus on the content and tone of parents' verbal responses to their children as key to helping children respond appropriately to expectations. Publications like these are very useful in helping parents understand cognitions their children may have and appropriate strategies for dealing with them. I would suggest, however, that the focus on child cognitions is only half the picture. Parents' cognitions play an equally fundamental role in parent-child relationship dynamics. During situations of conflict, threat, or ambiguity, more chronically accessible, unconscious schemas such as those formed in one's earliest experiences can assert undue influence on parents' responses and behaviors (James, 2003). In regard to parent education, situations that elicit uncomfortable emotional responses provide opportunities for reflection about the nature of these implicit perceptions and responses (Horowitz, 1991). Designing parent education opportunities that include strategies for parents to understand the nature of their cognitions may help them form new models of response.

Helping parents understand the influence of schemas on their parenting practices necessitates having an understanding of how cognitions are expressed by parents as they reflect about their parenting practices. The purpose of this study is to further that understanding. The research questions under consideration are:

1. What are the multiple parenting schemas that guide parenting practice? How are they expressed (articulated and enacted)?

2. How does the expression of parenting schemas vary across development in interactions with children at 6 years of age, as compared with 10 year-olds?

3. How do parents balance and reconcile multiple parenting schemas in everyday parenting, and how is the balance of these schemas related to consistency in parenting practice?

4. To what degree is it possible to use this study's methodology to define and understand multiple schemas?

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework that guides this study consists of three components: Ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; 1986), schema theory (Bugental & Johnston, 2000; Horowitz, 1991; James, Southam & Blackburn, 2004), and attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969). In addition, research related to child development, specifically in regard to the social and emotional developmental tasks that children at the ages of five to six years and nine to ten years are engaged in inform the study about the shifting nature of parent-child dynamics across middle childhood. Ecological systems theory provides the overarching conceptual framework, providing a systems perspective of child development. Ecological Systems theory will be covered in more detail in this introduction as it pertains to this study. Schema theory provides the specific points of analysis in terms of parent-child dynamics that influence development, while attachment theory provides a lens into specific parenting practices that are conducive to positive aspects of children's development. The tenets of schema theory and attachment theory

are described in detail in the literature review section and will be only briefly outlined here.

Ecological Systems Theory

Ecological systems theory situates a particular child's development in the context of an expanding array of environmental factors that have either direct influences on the child, or that influence the people and contexts with whom the child interacts (Bronfenbrenner 1979; 1986). The framework is conceptualized as a series of concentric circles, with the child's development at the center, and with increasingly indirect influences on the child in subsequent circles, with societal influences being in the outer circle. The focus of this study centers on the developmental influences of specific practices that parents engage in with their children. These parental practices are in turn influenced by the parents' schematic perceptions that developed through their own experiences and cultural contexts. Bronfenbrenner (1986) conceptualizes this type of dynamic interplay in person-process-context models of ecological systems. While a child may be removed from the factors that influence a parent's schematic perceptions in this model, the effects of those influences on the parent's attitudes and behaviors carry with them profound implications for the child's development.

The ecological systems model conceptualized in this study departs somewhat from the concentric circles model in that it contains two sets of processes that work in tandem. One part of the model focuses on the impact of specific parenting practices on the child's development. A second parallel part of the model focuses on an array of schematic cognitions that influence a parent's perceptions, attitudes and parenting behaviors. These parallel processes are situated within the context of individual

children's ages and social emotional development. This part of the model accounts for the shifting demands of the relationship on adults as children work to achieve particular developmental tasks (Erikson, 1968; Harkness, Super & Keefer, 1992). See Figure 1.
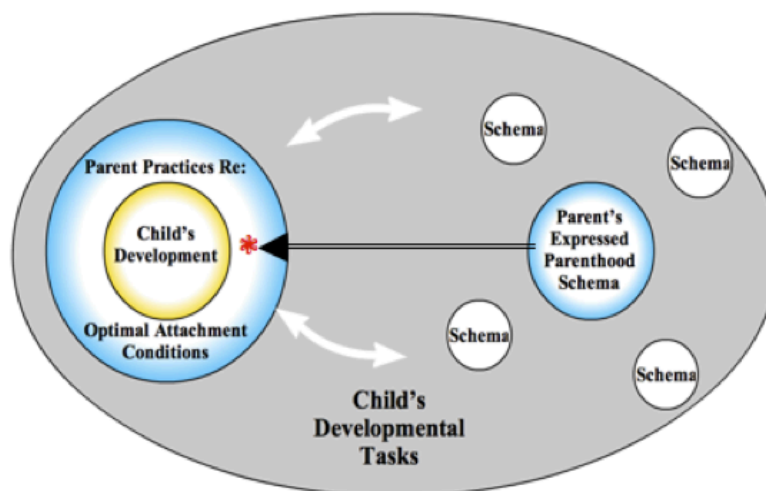
Figure 1. Theoretical Framework Model

Bronfenbrenner (1986) describes several types of ecological models of development: Mesosystem models, exosystem models and chronosystem models. Okagaki and Johnson Divecha (1993) describe a dichotomous typology of ecological models: influences external to the home, and those within the home such as parent and child characteristics. In Bronfenbrenner's (1986) typology mesosystem models focus on the interrelated influences on development of contexts other than the family; genetic influences, school, and peer groups for example. Exosystem models analyze the influences of the parents' lives away from the family in contexts such as work and social groups. Chronosystem models examine, among other factors, the effects of normative transitions (school entry for example) or non-normative transitions (death or illness, for example). The most complex forms of chronosystem models examine "the cumulative

effects of an entire sequence of developmental transition over an extended period of a person's life…" (p. 724).

Bronfenbrenner's review (1986) documents several studies characteristic of more complex chronosystem models. These include a study of changes in mothers' work situations, the effects on communication between the mother and child dyads, and the effects on the child's later social development and academic achievement. Other studies document the influences of a variety of risk factors such as poverty and instability over long periods of time. One examined differential outcomes in terms of resiliency among Hawaiian youths facing a variety of risk factors, while others have documented the effects of the Depression on children, and on subsequent generations. My study will have this type of chronosytem focus in terms of the parents' development. Parents' schemas in the form of working models, cultural models or attributions are the products of a lifetime of experiences and interactions. This study will not investigate the effects of particular contexts such as those described above. The assumption here is that, regardless of particular circumstances, everyone develops sets of relationship schemas that affect behaviors and attitudes with our children, and therefore influence our children's development in profound ways.

Schema Theory

Schema theory posits that much, if not all, of our experience is mediated through cognitive conceptual structures that act as components of memory (James, 2003), interpretive systems (D'Andrade, 1992), and as mechanisms for activating responses and behaviors to incoming stimuli (Reason, 1988). Schemas are conceptualized in a variety of ways across disciplines. In general, theorists agree that an important aspect of these

conceptual structures is that they are largely implicit processes that function outside our conscious awareness, yet exert profound influences on our expectations, emotional and physiological responses, and behaviors (Bugental & Johnston, 2000; Buzzanell & Burrell, 1997; James, 2003).

Schema activation occurs as a response to either environmental or internal stimuli. For the purposes of this study I am conceptualizing this process as a highly dynamic one in which particular schemata serve as catalysts for specific parenting behaviors. Within any given context, a range of potential schemas may be employed. In a sense, these multiple perceptions can be conceptualized as competing for employment and activation (James, 2003). For this construct it is important to note that specific schemas can be activated by either internal or external stress, threat, conflict, or ambiguity (Beech, et al, 2009; Quinn, 1992), and function as decision-making criteria in these contexts (Buzzanell & Burrell, 1997). Reason (1988) describes the process of cognitive performance as the selection and application of appropriate schemata at a given time.

For this study I will limit the theoretical perspectives to schemas as expressions of cultural models with directive force (D'Andrade, 1992; Harkness, Super & Keefer, 1992; Quinn 1987; 1992), conceptual metaphors (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980), and parenting cognitions (Bugental & Johnston, 2000). Parenting cognitions are expressed in a variety of forms including internal working models (Bowlby, 1969), self-efficacy cognitions (Johnston & Mash, 1989), and attributional style (Bugental, et al. 1993).

Attachment Theory

Attachment is "the propensity of human beings to make strong affectional bonds to particular others," the disruption of which can lead to "emotional distress, personality

disturbance, anger, anxiety, depression and emotional detachment" (Bowlby, 1977, p. 201). Bowlby conceived of attachment as a behavioral system that operates to keep the adult in close proximity to the child. The systems of behaviors infants engage in to maintain proximity to caregivers evolve in adulthood into behaviors that function as a parental care-giving system (Ainsworth, 1985). At some point in the first year, children form representational models of attachment figures as they develop the ability to conceptualize that people still exist outside their presence (Ainsworth, 1985). These representations become "internal working models" of relationships (Bowlby, 1982). Internal working models are organized belief systems that include expectations about relationships, perceptions, emotional responses and related behaviors (Collins & Read, 1994).

Bowlby (1988) defined three general categories of attachment that develop out of interactions with primary caregivers. Caregivers who are consistently sensitive, responsive and nurturing (Ainsworth, 1985) provide a foundation of security that allows for the development of positive models of the self and others. Inconsistent care giving results in insecure—ambivalent or anxious attachment patterns, while rejecting care giving results in insecure—avoidant attachment patterns (Horowitz, 1991; Platts, Tyson, and Mason, 2002; Wearden, et al., 2008).

Attachment theory plays a dual role in this study in the analysis of influences on children's development: First, as a *supraordinate schema* (Horowitz, 1991) that serves as a central organizing system for a host of relationship cognitions and behaviors including internal working models. Second, the relationship conditions under which secure attachment occurs (Siegel, 1999) have been demonstrated to have positive effects on

children's social, emotional and cognitive functioning (Baumrind, 1978; Schwartz, Dodge, Petit, & Bates, 1997; Coplan, Hastings, Lagace-Seguin, & Moulton, 2002). These relationship conditions include warmth and responsiveness (Ainsworth, 1985), collaborative communication, reflective dialogue, emotional dialogue (Siegel, 1999), and the co-construction of coherent autobiographical narratives (Farrar & Fasig, 1997; Siegel, 1999). These optimal parenting behaviors and relational affects will provide points of reference in this study for analyzing the degree to which parents' schemas impact the consistency with which they can intervene with their children in beneficial ways.

Developmental Tasks In Middle Childhood

Developmental differences between the beginning and end of middle childhood provide significant transition points in parenting practices and cognitions. Five and six year-olds are transitioning from early childhood, a stage in which the formation of attachment relationships, followed by the need to balance these relationships with a growing sense of independence have been the primary developmental tasks (Erikson, 1968; Forehand and Wierson, 1993). Nine and ten year-olds are beginning the transition from middle childhood to early adolescence, a period when they are reorienting their understanding of their relationships with adults and beginning the formation of individual identity (Eccles, 1999).

It is widely agreed in developmental research that at five to six years-old children begin to have the capacity to reason (Eccles, 1999). Between the ages of six and ten, children are also developing the capacity for self-reflection, self -concept, and the ability to understand the perspectives of others. These cognitive abilities are coupled at this age with increased freedom and responsibility and broadening social contexts. This results in

children's need to balance their personal social goals that are developing in collaboration with peers and the expectations of the adults in their lives (Eccles, 1999). Parents' primary task throughout this period of middle childhood is to continually adjust their practices to allow for the balance of connectedness and autonomy so vital for children's healthy development (Freitag, et al., 1996). These adjustments involve developing parenting practices for monitoring behavior "at a distance" (Collins & Madsen, 2003), which include a shift from adult regulation of behavior to "co-regulation" (Maccoby, 1984) of behaviors, which helps children develop the skills and behaviors for monitoring interactions in their expanding social contexts. These periods of adjustment may provide sufficient ambiguity and stress to create the conditions under which opportunities for reflection (Horowitz, 1991) will be effective in revealing the nature of multiple schematic processes that are occurring in parents' relationships with their children.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The literature on child development is broad and varied. In recent years the focus of these studies has become increasingly complex, as researchers have considered an expanding variety of factors that influence children's development. The factors under consideration have included an array of topics as diverse as socio-economic status, ethnicity, parent and child gender, parent and child temperament, social networks, community and neighborhood influences, and employment-related factors (e.g. Antonishak & Rappucci, 2008, Crockenberg, 1981, DeCaro & Worthman, 2007, Kent & Pepler, 2003, Rowe, Pan & Ayoub, 2005) In this review I will focus first on theories related to parenting cognitions or schemas in terms of defining and examining these cognitive structures, how they are conceptualized and studied in a variety of fields, and how they relate to an individual's experience. Embedded in the section on parenting cognitions is a review of the literature in the field of attachment, focusing primarily on two aspects: The parenting practices and behaviors that are key to the development of secure attachment, and the role of early attachment relationships in the development of working models of relationships. Interwoven into the review of schema theory and attachment theory is the idea of the implicit nature of these cognitions and the influence they exert on external behaviors such as parenting practices. Finally I will end with an overview of the literature regarding two components of this studies methodology: Daily diaries and the analysis of metaphors in interview discourse.

Theories on Parenting Schemas and Cognitions

Schemas Defined

Schema theory has its roots in a variety of social science disciplines, including cognitive science, anthropology, psychology, and human development. Each discipline defines and articulates schematic processes in ways that are particular to the discipline, but there are several conceptual understandings of schemas that are common. There are a variety of terms that are used to describe schemas: Person schemas or self schemas (Horowitz, 1991); personhood schemas (Quinn, 1992); cultural models (D'Andrade, 1992; 1995); frames (Lakoff & Johnson, 1987); conceptual metaphors (Buzzanell & Burrell, 1997; Lakoff & Johnson, 1987); early maladaptive schemas (Young, 1994); core beliefs (Beck, Freeman, 1990); internal working models (Bowlby, 1982); and parenting cognitions (Grusec, Hastings, & Mammone, 1994; Sigel, McGillicuddy-DeLisi, & Goodnow, 1992). A related topic of interest to this study is the study of parents attributions regarding their children' behaviors (Dix, 1991; 1993; Hastings & Grusec, 1998). In this context, attribution theory focuses on the implicit explanations or perceptions that parents construct to explain their children's behaviors. For the purposes of this review, the term schema will be used throughout, with the exception of discussions regarding parenting cognitions.

In general, schemas have been defined as interpretive systems or "conceptual structure(s), which makes possible the identification of objects and events" (D'Andrade, 1992, p.28). There is also consensus across disciplines that schemas are cognitive structures that are formed in childhood, but are elaborated, redefined and continuously formed throughout our lives (Beck, 1964; Daggett, O'Brien, Zanolli, & Peyton, 2000;

Hastings & Grusec, 1998; James, 2003; James, Southam, & Blackburn, 2004; Riso, et al, 2006). Schemas have been defined in the literature as the "building blocks of memory" (James, 2003), and are theorized as cognitive structures that provide us with the ability to process new experiences and knowledge and as a mechanism for retrieval of existing memories (Fiske & Linville, 1980).

The literature on schematic cognitions reveals a dual nature that explains our multiple responses to different inputs: Schemas are at once inherently stable, serving as core belief systems, and also highly variable within given contexts as they are not only developed individually but are jointly constructed in the moment (Bugental and Johnston, 2000). The stable and implicit nature of these processes serve both to reinforce the perceptions associated with the schemas and to limit interpretations of events (Beech, Parrett, Ward & Fischer, 2009). Lakoff (2004) describes this limiting effect as new information "bouncing off" frames that are too discrepant from what is being perceived in a given context.

Potier describe the duality of schemas being both inherently stable and jointly constructed through both early and current interpersonal relationships in regard to how they can influence mothers' relationships with their children:

> One could argue that mothers come to the task of parenting with a range of expectations about their children's behaviour, based on their own experiences of close relationships. If these experiences are positive, then one could expect mothers to have positive expectations of others' behaviour. However, research suggests that mothers of children with conduct problems are more likely to have been subject to maladaptive social learning experiences (Cornah et al., 2003; Dix, 1991; Krech and Johnston, 1992; Patterson et al, 1993). Safran has suggested that such negative early experiences, if not altered by current, more positive interpersonal experiences with, for example, romantic partners or friends, affect our interpersonal expectations or schemas regarding significant

others in our lives (Safran, 1990a, 1990b). According to interpersonal
schema theory, difficulties arise in functioning and relationships when our
mental maps, or interpersonal schemas, regarding how to maintain
closeness to important people cannot adapt to new and changing situations
and become restricted (Safran and Segal, 1990, p. 68) (p. 459).

Schema activation occurs as a response to either environmental or internal stimuli.

For the purposes of this study I am conceptualizing this process as a highly dynamic one

in which particular schemata serve as catalysts for specific parenting behaviors. Within

any given context, a range of potential schemas may be employed. In a sense, these

multiple perceptions can be conceptualized as competing for employment and activation

(James, 2003). For this construct it is important to note that specific schemas can be

activated by either internal or external stress, threat, conflict, or ambiguity (Beech, et al,

2009; Quinn, 1992), and function as decision-making criteria in these contexts (Buzzanell

& Burrell, 1997). Reason (1988) describes the process of cognitive performance as the

selection and application of appropriate schemata at a given time.

Theoretical approaches regarding how these processes affect perception and

influence behavior can be divided into four main categories (Bugental & Johnston, 2000):

Theoretical perspectives focusing on *descriptive cognitions* include internal working

models as implicit cognitive representations of relationships. Work in this area is focused

on the idea that these cognitive representations organize our expectations and guide

behavior.

Analytic cognitions are representations of causality, including attributional styles.

Research in this area focuses on the role of these processes to explain causality in our

experiences. This theoretical perspective is particularly useful for this study as it focuses

primarily on "chronically accessible" automatic processes. James (2004) describes this

process as the expression of "core beliefs," and asserts that the more readily accessible these beliefs are, the more core they are to how the person functions.

Theoretical constructs that view schemas as goals with motivational force (D'Andrade, 1992; Harkness, Super & Keefer, 1992; Hastings & Grusec, 1998; Quinn, 1992) fall under the category of evaluative-prescriptive cognitions (Bugental & Johnson, 2000). From this perspective schemas are viewed as the integration of cultural values as evaluative perceptions into one's sense of self, which then serve to motivate or prescribe behavior.

Finally, theorists that look at the correlations between family members' descriptive cognitions and their evaluative-prescriptive cognitions are concerned with efficacy cognitions.

How Schemas Are Conceptualized Across Disciplines

The disciplines of psychology, anthropology, cognitive linguistics, and human development conceptualize schema theory in different ways. While there are commonalities across disciplines, drawing from these differing conceptions provides useful points of analysis in understanding the multiple schemas parents have regarding their children. The models that describe how schemas are activated and how they influence behaviors from these multiple perspectives allows for a diverse understanding of the ways these complex cognitive processes influence parent-child relationships. This section will provide a general outline of the theoretical constructs particular to each discipline. Specific attention will be given to the different ways schemas are conceptualized, how the discipline defines the ways in which schemas are activated, and the ways schemas are theorized to influence behaviors.

Psychology: Core Beliefs, Person-Schemas, Self-Schemas

In literature from the domain of psychotherapy, James (2003) conceptualizes schemas as memories, or sub-units of information stored in long-term memory and activated by working memory, which splices schemas together allowing us to efficiently perform daily functions. The efficiency these processes afford is balanced by their somewhat inflexible influence on our functional and dysfunctional patterns of behavior (James, Southam and Blackburn, 2004).

These researchers define two different components of schemas: Core beliefs, and self-referent beliefs, "which are the verbal representations of the schemas" (James, et al. 2004, p. 371). The cognitive process they describe follows a predictable pattern: When a schema is activated, the core beliefs (i.e. helplessness or control) function as overarching themes. Although the thoughts that initiate the activation of the schemas may vary, the themes themselves are predictable, occurring across a range of situations and emotional responses. In regard to this investigation it is important to note that the core beliefs are often consciously accessible through reflection about thoughts, physical sensations and emotions, although the processing details are not.

Horowitz (1991) describes the relationships between self-schemas and person-schemas and how they develop. Person schemas are generalized understandings that allow us to identify and recognize individuals. Person schemas are developed through interpersonal experience and include such diverse aspects as an individual's physical traits, roles, and personality characteristics (i.e. "kind," or "generous"). Self-schemas are a specific sub-set of person-schemas and are represented in the mind as one's attributes, characteristics and behaviors within multiple relationship and event specific contexts.

Self-schemas begin developing at infancy and are initially formed in the dynamic interplay of the child's relationship to primary caregivers and his or her emerging sense of individuality, distinct from the mother. Self-schemas, as are all schemas, are organized into supraordinate categories, or schemas of schemas (Horowitz, 1991, Singer & Salovey, 1989). An example of a supraordinate schema is the formation of attachment (Bowlby, 1982), a process in which a child's multiple schemas of self and person are integrated. From this theoretical perspective, the development of a secure attachment relationship organizes schemas into a cohesive, flexible unit and is critical in the formation of a coherent, flexible identity of the self in relation to others.

Horowitz (1991) describes working models as internal representations of a given interpersonal situation. They integrate influences from the external situation with prior knowledge and internalized representations stored in enduring schemas. Enduring schemas, are "intrapsychically retained meaning structures." They are generalized forms of knowledge that are activated by internal motives and by the enduring schema's "goodness of fit" to the individual's perceptions about the external situation.

In regard to interpersonal relationships, Horowitz (1991) describes a highly dynamic interplay between these cognitive structures. Working models are partially influenced by enduring schemas. The influence of enduring schemas can skew how the reality of the external situation is represented in the working model. Of particular relevance to this study, the misperceptions about the relationship that exist in the working model can affect the outcomes of the interaction. Similar to Reason's (1984) description of schematic outputs, the effects the enduring schemas have on the relationship through their influence on working models are examples of invisible schemas becoming realized.

Situations that introduce an element of surprise, or an uncomfortable emotional response can function as motivations for reflection (Horowitz, 1991). These opportunities for reflection can then lead to the formation of new working models of possible responses to interactions. Through practiced application of these new models, new enduring schemas are developed. Horowitz asserts that people who have a wider variety of working models that they can access in flexible ways, such as people who have secure attachment formations, are more likely to apply these models to such reflective processes. Secure attachment, in effect, provides the conditions under which people are more likely to adapt and form new enduring schemas.

Schemas as Cultural Models and Goals

Approaching schema theory from a cognitive anthropology perspective D'Andrade (1992) further elaborates that schemas often function as goals with the potential to instigate action. He asserts that:

> …To understand people one needs to understand what leads them to act as they do, and to understand what leads them to act as they do one needs to know their goals, and to understand their goals one must understand their overall interpretive system…and to understand their interpretive system – their schemas – one must understand something about the hierarchical relationships among these schemas (p. 31).

The hierarchical relationship D'Andrade refers to is the arrangement of schemas into levels of specificity. Low-level schemas, in his example, are our impressions of objects and specific events. At the top of the hierarchy are our most general impressions about concepts such as love or work. In between lies middle level schemas about such concepts as marriage or a particular job. It is D'Andrade's contention that our top level,

most general schemas act as goals, a conceptual framework that provides a model for understanding the link between culture and individual action. In other words, culture motivates action through goal schemas. In terms of parenting then, the concept of parenthood acts as a motivation for particular behaviors or actions in the course of parenting a particular child.

In a landmark study on women's inner conflicts regarding their marriages, Quinn (1992) focused on the ways in which cultural schemas become goal schemas and the ways in which these goals become motivations for behaviors. She theorizes that cultural schemas become goals because they "supply us with our understandings of ourselves" (p. 91), through the integration of cultural models and individual experience. In her study, wives were asked to describe inner conflicts they had regarding their relationships with their husbands. Quinn theorized that talking about inner conflicts provides an opportunity to examine our multiple self-understandings. This point is key to the present study in that parenting is an endeavor that requires balancing the needs of our multiple selves, including multiple and at times conflicting parenting cognitions. Talking about internal conflicts parents have about interactions with their children may provide a similar opportunity for examining what their multiple schemas are.

An example from Quinn's study illustrates the way these multiple self-understandings become motivations for behaviors. In a series of interviews one woman revealed several conflicting cultural schemas acting as goals that influenced her perceptions about and her actions in her marriage. These goals included shared responsibility in the relationship, her perception of "wifely duties" that signaled to family and friends that she was capable of maintaining a successful marriage, and her views

about failed marriage that were instilled in her through her observations of her mother's unhappy marriage. The interviews revealed that at times she would concede to her husband's demands, like ironing his shirts, in order to maintain the goal of presenting an image of success, and to quell her fear of failure.

From the cultural models as human motives perspective Harkness, Super and Keefer (1992) describe a model for understanding how cultural models develop 'directive force' in the process of becoming a parent. They argue that the demands exerted on people as they become parents and are involved in responding to their children's changing behaviors and needs spurs the development of "elaborated and specialized" (p. 164) cultural models. These models provide directive force in how parents perceive children's behavior and subsequently respond. The form these specialized schemas takes, they argue, is in the development of parental theories about child development. Two theories that were evident in interviews with Cambridge parents were 'stage,' and 'independence.'

The authors argue that the notions of stage and independence are culturally defined schemas that provide a framework for how to anticipate and respond to children's changing needs in culturally appropriate ways. Their study found that parents apply these theories inconsistently as explanations for behavior. They theorize that this is partly because they are highly generalized 'prototypical event sequences' that provide parents with a simplified framework for understanding their relationships with children. This process is similar to Horowitz' (1991) conception that schemas are activated through current perceptions and a need to map an interpretation onto the situations that includes a 'goodness of fit.'

Harkness, Super and Keefer (1992) further elaborate that the mechanism for the development of parental theories involves the integration of past experience through active reflection, the development of informal networks of family and friends that provide developmental information (See also Cohen, 1981), and by seeking out expert knowledge. A related study that illustrated the inherent cognitive stability of parenting cognitions and cultural models (Triana & Rodrigo, 1989, as cited in Goodnow & Collins, 1990) investigated the link between parents' preconceived beliefs about development and their understanding of expert advice. The researchers determined whether participants' beliefs about child development reflected a more environmental stance or child-centered view. They found that parents understood and agreed more with expert advice that supported their preconceived orientations.

In addition to providing a framework for understanding the ways in which parents' schemas may be expressed, and how they change as children age, the authors' (Harkness, Super & Keefer, 1992) provide a possible explanation for the prevalence of parents' concerns and awareness of repeating what they view as negative models from their own experiences of being parented. They argue that positive aspects of one's prior experience are unconsciously replicated in behaviors and traditions in ways that appear to be natural. Parenting practices that include negative emotional associations presumably occupy a more conscious position in one's perceptions.

Schemas as Conceptual Metaphors

From a cognitive linguistics, communications perspective, Lakoff and Johnson (1980) assert that our conceptual system defines our reality by structuring our

perceptions, relationships and everyday events. The conceptual system they conceive of is metaphorical in nature and processes information automatically and unconsciously. The development of conceptual metaphors occurs through participation in a specific culture and is encoded through language. Language plays an important dual role in that it structures our thoughts and through repeated linguistic experience reinforces existing concepts. Conceptual metaphors "function to create reality…offer a vocabulary for thoughts and feelings that may be difficult to articulate, and provide implicit philosophies of life and coping mechanisms for dealing with life events" (Burrell, Buzzanell, & McMillan, 1992, p. 122). Language is also an important analytical tool that allows identification of culturally specific metaphors. For example, in Western culture the concept *argument* is associated with the metaphor *argument is war* (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Linguistic evidence of this metaphor lies in expressions that have the themes of attacking and defending a position. The section of this Literature Review focusing on methodological approaches provides a more detailed description of conceptual metaphors and the methods researchers have used to analyze and define them.

Parenting Cognitions

The theoretical perspective that is most relevant to this study is the concept of parental or family cognitions (Bugental & Johnston, 2000; Bugental & Goodnow, 1998). Parental cognition theorists focus on the dynamics of cognitive processes at work within families as fundamental explanations for family behaviors and emotions. In a broad review of this theoretical framework, Bugental and Johnston (2000) distinguish between two forms of cognitions: Event-dependent and schematic, the former operating within our

awareness and activated by such events as the need to make a sandwich, or to engage in a family problem-solving situation, the latter relating to notions as comprehensive as one's identity in terms of concepts such as motherhood, or contributing to the implicit process of assigning attributions to explain behaviors or interactions.

Self-efficacy cognitions.

Research in the domain of parents' self-efficacy cognitions is based on the definition of self-efficacy as one's expectation for success in a given situation (Bandura, 1982). Parenting self-efficacy refers to parents' expectations of success in handling problems with their children (Johnston & Mash, 1989). Much of this research focuses on the parents' perceptions regarding whether the locus of control lies with the parent or with the child (Campis, Lyman, Prentice-Dunn, 1986; Raver & Leadbeater, 1999). Research findings overwhelmingly indicate a correlation between low self-efficacy and more authoritarian parenting styles, higher levels of frustration and dissatisfaction, as well as ineffective parenting practices (e.g. Bugental & Johnston, 2000; Coleman & Karraker, 2000; 1997; Johnston & Mash, 1989). Studies have indicated a range of child outcomes associated with parental self-efficacy, including intelligence, academic achievement, attachment security, social adjustment and adherence to behavioral expectations, and physical health (Coleman & Karraker, 1997).

Of particular interest to this study is the work that has been conducted in developing scales to measure parent self-efficacy (e.g. Coleman & Karraker 2000; Johnston & Mash, 1989; Kendall, 2005). The descriptors evident in these surveys have been developed through parent focus groups (Kendall, 2005) that have resulted in sample statements reflecting parent perceptions about relationship interactions (Johnston &

Mash, 1989). Examples of parental perception statements include: "I don't know why it is, but sometimes when I'm supposed to be in control, I feel more like the one being manipulated," and "Being a good mother/father is a reward in itself" (Johnston & Mash, 1989). While participants were not asked to answer surveys in this study, these descriptors of statements that are indicative of parents' sense of self-efficacy were invaluable in coding interview transcripts.

Attributional style.

An area of parenting cognitions research of particular relevance to this study is concerned with parents' attributional style and it's effects on behavior (Bugental, et al, 1993; Bugental & Johnston, 2000; Bugental, Johnston, New & Sylvester, 1998). Attributional style is a highly automatic, schematic interpretation system that integrates cognitions such as a parent's perception of power in the relationship and views regarding the locus of control as explanations for particular behaviors. Locus of control cognitions include the degree to which a parent views the cause of a child's behavior as internal to the child, or environmentally or contextually motivated (Bugental & Johnston, 2000). While much of the research in this area has focused on the correlations between attributional style and dysfunctional or authoritarian processes in families (Janssens, 1994; Miller, 1995; Mills, 1998), Bugental, Johnston, New and Sylvester (1998) assert that parent's explanations for interactions with their children "have important implications for their immediate emotional and behavioral responses" (p. 459). The authors further contend that the impact of these immediate responses have profound effects on the quality of relationships within the family.

In a study comparing components of attachment relationships such as parents' perceptions about their own childhoods, perceptions of relationship dynamics and behavioral expectations (Daggett, O'Brien, Zanolli, & Peyton, 2000) the researchers discovered associations between life histories and attribution style. This study suggests a strong relationship between how one was raised and the resulting attributions assigned as explanations for children's behavior, a mechanism that may explain the assertion of a particular schematic response to a conflict.

In addition to the influence of prior experience on attribution style, the question arises as to how these perceptions become activated in particular interactions and how they influence behavior. Hastings and Grusec (1998) investigated the links between parenting goals and attributional biases parents may have regarding their children's behavior. This study focused on two types of goals documented in parenting literature: Parent-centered goals, which are concerned with short-termed compliance and obedience; and child-centered goals, which they distinguished between socialization goals or empathic, responsive goals aimed at nurturing children's emotional needs and maintaining family relationships. The authors assert that parents engage in interactions with children with particular goals in mind. A significant factor that influences their perceptions about the achievement of their goals has to do with their attributional biases regarding the child's behavior. These biases are distinguished between *dispositional* attributions, or factors that are intrinsic to the child, and *situational* attributions, relating to environmental factors extrinsic to the child. This study confirmed previous research that indicated that parent-centered goals are more highly associated with dispositional biases and result in more authoritarian practices, while child-centered goals were

associated with situational biases and the accompanying behaviors were more responsive and exhibited a higher degree of reasoning.

The results of this study also indicated that parents did not respond in uniformly parent-centered or child-centered ways. Parents' goals and response styles in interactions with their children were influenced by factors such as situational context and parent gender. Situations that occurred in public were more highly associated with parent-centered goals and more authoritarian behaviors, while private interactions resulted in intervention practices that reflected more long-term, child-centered goals.

In a study investigating the relationship between child age and parent attributions and affective response to children's misbehavior (Dix, Ruble, Grusec, & Nixon, 1986) the authors assert that parenting cognitions that result in 'causal inferences' about children's behaviors carry implications for a parent's responses in terms of parenting practices and affect. The authors describe a model of an implicit assessment process that parents engage in as these assumptions are developed. Such assessments are based on three implicit questions: Did the child have knowledge of the effect of the behavior? Did the child have the ability to create those effects? Were there external motivators that influenced the behavior? If the parent's assessment is that the child intended the action, they will form inferences about the child's intrinsic disposition. The authors further contend that attributional inferences reflecting dispositional characteristics and intentionality on the child's part are associated with increased parent affect intensity and negativity.

The researchers asked parents to respond to a series of vignettes depicting the misbehavior of children at three different ages. They were asked to rate intentionality and

dispositional characteristics as explanations for the behaviors, followed by responses they might have to the behavior. While the study did not reveal correlations between disposition and age, there was a significant correlation between affect response and age reflecting greater degrees of intensity with increased age.

Attachment Theory: Working Models, Influences on Interactions and Outcomes For Children

Two aspects of attachment theory are key to this study: (1) The influence of the adult's attachment style on parenting practices and affect in interactions with their children; and (2) the degree to which parent practices reflect the optimal conditions for secure attachment to occur. Parents' responses to their children are in part influenced by their internal working models of relationships which act as scripts, providing a framework for anticipating the dynamics and outcomes of interactions (Bretherton, 1991; Cassidy, 2008). These schematic processes (Bugental & Johnson, 2000) influence emotional and affective responses in relationships and can affect the degree to which parents consistently respond to their children in beneficial ways.

The outcomes for children in relation to parenting behaviors and affects are twofold: Parents' attachment style has profound effects on the child's resultant attachment security and the development of positive internal working models (Belsky & Pasco-Fearon, 2008). In addition, the parenting behaviors and affects associated with the development of secure attachment (i.e. responsiveness) have been demonstrated to have positive effects on children's social, emotional and cognitive functioning (Baumrind, 1978; Schwartz, Dodge, Petit, & Bates, 1997; Coplan, Hastings, Lagace-Seguin, &

Moulton, 2002). This section will look first at the general principals of attachment theory and the influence of attachment style on adults' parenting styles, followed by a discussion of the optimal relationship conditions under which secure attachment occurs and findings regarding outcomes for children.

General Principles of Attachment Theory

Attachment is "the propensity of human beings to make strong affectional bonds to particular others," the disruption of which can lead to "emotional distress, personality disturbance, anger, anxiety, depression and emotional detachment" (Bowlby, 1977, p. 201). Bowlby conceived of attachment as a behavioral system that operates to keep the adult in close proximity to the child. The system of behaviors infants engage in to maintain proximity to caregivers evolve in adulthood into behaviors that function as a parental care-giving system (Ainsworth, 1985). Infant behaviors include signaling such as crying, but evolve into more "goal-directed" communication through the first year of life (Bowlby, 1977). At some point in the first year, children form representational models of attachment figures as they develop the ability to conceptualize that people still exist outside their presence (Ainsworth, 1985). These representations become "internal working models" of relationships (Bowlby, 1982). Internal working models are organized belief systems that include expectations about relationships, perceptions, emotional responses and related behaviors (Collins & Read, 1994).

Attachment Categories

Bowlby (1988) defined three general categories of attachment that develop out of interactions with primary caregivers. Caregivers who are consistently sensitive,

responsive and nurturing (Ainsworth, 1985) provide a foundation of security that allows

for the development of positive models of the self and others. Inconsistent care giving

results in insecure—ambivalent or anxious attachment patterns, while rejecting care

giving results in insecure—avoidant attachment patterns (Horowitz, 1991; Platts, Tyson,

and Mason, 2002; Wearden, et al., 2008).

In keeping with Bowlby's notion that attachment behaviors are biologically

driven attempts to maintain attachment relationships as the individual perceives them,

some researchers have defined these patterns of behavior as strategies for engagement

with others (Belsky, 1999; Main & Cassidy, 1991). An insecure-avoidant child works to

minimize dependence by minimizing expressions of neediness, while an ambivalent child

works to increase dependence through expressions of anxiety, clinginess and vigilant

attention seeking. These strategies are designed to maintain the child's proximity to the

adult as the form of proximity is represented in the child's working models. Another way

to understand this construct is that patterns of attachment become conceptual systems that

carry with them perceptions, expectations and related responses and behaviors that are

activated in response to threat (Collins, 1996).

Attachment System Activation

Mikulincer and Shaver (2008) describe a model of attachment system activation

in adults and the resulting affective behaviors that occur when presented with threatening

situations. In children, activation of the attachment system is a cognitive strategy to

maintain proximity to the adult attachment figure as represented in the child's working

models (Belsky, 1999; Main & Cassidy, 1991). Similarly, when an adult perceives a

threat, the affective response is an automatic attempt to maintain proximity to either actual or internalized attachment figures (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2008). The system that is activated includes perceptions in the form of internal-working models, emotional and physiological responses, and behaviors and affective states that are in keeping with the attachment style (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991; Wearden, et al., 2008). Adults who are relatively securely attached more often respond in ways that reflect a higher level of emotional regulation that is in keeping with a perception of confidence. More insecurely attached adults' responses vary between distancing behaviors (avoidant attachment) and heightened emotional affect (anxious attachment). This behavioral system has been conceptualized as the activation of scripts, which are generalized schemas containing characters, causal events and resolutions. Secure attachment acts as an organizing system that provides coherence, consolidation and immediate accessibility to these scripts (Waters & Waters, 2006). This conceptualization is an example of the attachment system acting as a supraordinate schema (Horowitz, 1981), organizing and activating scripts, images and physiological responses.

Adult Attachment Style

Attachment security patterns in childhood are thought to translate into attachment styles in adulthood regarding the self and others. Attachment patterns in children serve as prototypes for adults' internal working models (Waters & Waters, 2006). Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991) developed a framework for understanding attachment categories as they relate to an individual's perceptions about the self and others. While this framework is best conceptualized as a prototypical continuum (Wearden, et al. 2008), anxious

attachment is theorized as evolving into a negative sense of self in relation to others, while avoidant attachment is seen as a negative sense of others in relation to the self. People on the anxious end of the spectrum tend to be more emotionally expressive and committed in relationships, while people with avoidant attachment styles tend to limit emotional expression and express a preference for more independent and self-reliant relationship interactions (Platts, Tyson, & Mason, 2002).

While the assessment of parents' attachment styles is beyond the scope of this study, the methods used by various researchers to determine adult attachment styles may be informative in analyzing parents' perceptions about themselves in relation to others. Work in this area is distinct from research aimed at determining children's attachment patterns, which looks at specific behaviors (Platts, Tyson, & Mason, 2002). Adult attachment style research investigates, through the use of interviews and questionnaires, the nature of adults' cognitive representations and perceptions of attachment relationships. It is thought that these representations are generalized perceptions that integrate the frameworks of early internal working models and later experiences (Crowell, Treboux, & Waters, 1999).

Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991) devised a model of adult attachment style based around two dimensions: Participants' representational models of the self (positive or negative) on one dimension, and representations of their models of others (positive or negative) on the other. This model is represented in a four-cell array with one of four styles (secure, preoccupied, dismissing or fearful) in each cell. The authors conducted interviews with young adults, asking them to describe relationships they had with others, both friendly and romantic, and their feelings about the importance of relationships.

Interviews were then coded in relation to the correspondence between statements and

descriptors associated with each cell of the model. An example of this coding scheme is

the description of the fearful prototype, being "characterized by an avoidance of close

relationships because of a fear of rejection, a sense of personal insecurity, and a distrust

of others" (p. 228). While the focus of this study is not in determining parents'

attachment styles, this type of analytical construct may prove useful in defining

schematic representations in the form of internal working models that become evident in

interviews.

Parenting Behaviors That Promote Secure Attachment

Parenting behaviors that support the development of secure attachment include

providing models for nurturing behaviors, direct teaching about the maintenance of social

relationships, and providing rich social experiences (Berlin, Cassidy, & Appleyard, 2008;

Schore, 2005). Ainsworth (1985) documented that mothers' affectionate and physical

responsiveness to their infants' communications resulted in the children's secure

attachment patterns. In terms of children's compliance with parent demands, Ainsworth

further noticed that children whose mothers' were sensitively responsive were more

compliant than children whose mothers focused their interactions on training their

children to meet behavioral expectations.

In addition to the affective aspects of parent-child interactions such as warmth and

responsiveness, Siegel (1999) outlined five optimal parent-child interaction conditions

that have been associated with the development of secure attachment patterns:

collaborative communication, reflective dialogue, interactive repair, coherent

narrativization (also described as the co-construction of coherent autobiographical narratives (Farrar & Fasig, 1997)), and emotional dialogue. The central argument of this review is that parent schemas, working models and attachment styles influence affect and disposition in particular parent-child interactions. Analysis of the degree to which schematic influences impact the warmth and responsiveness present in the relationship, and the effects these schematic influences have on a parent's ability to engage in collaborative communication, reflective dialogue, etc. may be illustrative of possible outcomes for children. The following section reviews literature relating to these affective and interactive dimensions of parenting, their relationships to attachment patterns and to their impacts on general social, emotional and cognitive outcomes for children.

   Warmth and responsiveness.

   Associations between high levels of mother warmth and responsive, supportive behaviors have been associated with a variety of positive outcomes for children. Grolnick, Deci, and Ryan (1997) found associations between parent-child dyads that exhibited high levels of warmth and low levels of conflict and outcomes for children that included higher levels of motivation and internalization of positive behaviors. Mothers' warm and supportive behaviors have been linked to children's social adjustment, including higher levels of prosocial behaviors and problem solving (Domitrovich & Bierman, 2001). These researchers found that children's perspectives about the nature of their relationships with their mothers were more highly associated with positive social outcomes than were the mother's reports of their practices, evidence of the influence of internal working models on children's socialization.

Interactive repair, emotion and affect regulation.

Siegel and his colleagues approach the topic of attachment from a psychobiological perspective, a viewpoint that defines attachment as "the interactive regulation of states of biological synchronicity between and within organisms" (Schore, 2009). This biological synchronicity is a result of "dual regulatory processes of *affect synchronicity* that creates states of positive arousal and *interactive repair* that modulates states of negative arousal" (p. 193 [my emphasis]). Interactive repair occurs when the dyad experiences a disruption and engage in a process of 'reattunement," a process intricately linked with emotional and affect regulation. The importance of this view to the current study is that periods of conflict constitute disruptions to the attachment relationship. The ways in which parents and children reconnect after such events carry important implications for children's self-regulation.

Communication: Autobiographical narratives, reflective dialogue, emotional dialogue, and collaboration.

Researchers have explored discourse styles in interactions between children and adults in regard to attachment patterns. Some of this research has investigated links between the development of autobiographical memories, or narratives, attachment patterns, and parenting behaviors (e.g. Farrar & Fasig, 1997). Autobiographical narratives are seen as key in the development of a child's cognitive sense of self and others, and as such become key perceptions relative to the development internal working models (Howe & Courage, 1997). Studies have demonstrated a link between the level of collaboration and interaction in parent-child "memory-talk" and the development of coherent autobiographical narratives (Reese & Fivush, 1993).

Farrar & Fasig (1997) investigated the links between children's attachment status, the level of emotion talk, and the level of elaboration present in mother-child dyads. The results of this study indicated a link between attachment patterns in children and both the amount of emotional content and the level of elaboration mothers engaged in with their children. Mothers of more securely attached children explored emotional themes in memory-talk opportunities. The authors cite Bretherton's (1993) assertion that the content and manner of mother-child conversations provides evidence regarding the nature of their internal working models. The findings also revealed that insecurely attached mother-child dyads engaged in less elaborated discussion about negative emotions. They cite Cassidy's (1994) assertion that attachment relationship quality impacts the degree to which parents can provide children with strategies for emotion regulation in negative experiences. Less elaborated conversations about negative emotions may prove to be ineffective in helping children internalize these strategies.

Mulvaney, McCartney, Bub, & Marshall (2006) investigated the relationships between mother-child attachment quality and the effectiveness of the mother's ability to scaffold a task-completion activity. Links between effective scaffolding and increased reasoning, problem solving skills, and language and social skills have been clearly documented. The authors assert that, "the attachment relationship is a dyadic, mutually reciprocal behavioral system" (p. 301), that includes shared responsiveness and sensitivity. Part of this responsiveness is being mutually aware of communication cues, a key factor in effective scaffolding. The results of the study documented links between the mother and child's verbal intelligence and effective scaffolding. The researchers also found significant predictive associations between the quality of the relationships and

collaboration on the task. These findings also highlight the dyadic aspects of this sort of collaboration in that the relationship may foster in the child an increase in receptiveness and engagement.

While the assessment of parent-child attachment quality or parents' attachment style is beyond the scope of this study, understanding the processes involved in attachment relationships provides an important theoretical framework for identifying the expression of schemas in parent-child conflict. Researchers have consistently documented correlations between attachment quality and social, emotional and cognitive outcomes for children. Parents' internal working models, which are partly determined by their own attachment styles assert profound influence on parenting practice and affect and as such constitute an interesting point of reference for parents' schema driven responses to conflict.

The primary purpose of this study is to describe the multiple schemas that are expressed in parents' conversations about conflicts with their children. Anthropologists, psychologists, cognitive linguists and attachment theorists conceptualize schemas differently, and these diverse disciplinary interpretations provide multiple understandings of how these processes may be expressed in interviews. At times, they may be expressed as culture understandings acting as motivations for action, theories of development, or conceptual metaphors. They may present themselves as theories of attribution, describing environmental or dispositional contexts as explanations for interactions, or may be reflective of a parent's feelings of efficacy regarding interactions with their children. Employing these diverse conceptual perspectives in the analysis of parents' conversations about their children may provide a rich account of parent experience. -

Children's Developmental Tasks in Middle-Childhood

The children associated with this study are 5 and 6 year-olds, and 9 and 10 year-olds. These two age ranges represent two interesting points of development in middle childhood; five and six year-olds are transitioning from early childhood to middle childhood, a period of increased reasoning ability and the a time when children begin to have the capacity for metacognition (Eccles, 1999). Nine and ten year-olds are at the transition point into early adolescence, a period when they are reorienting their understanding of their relationships to adults and beginning the formation of individual identity (Eccles, 1999). Part of these shifts involves decreases in children's expression of attachment behaviors with their parents (Kerns, Tomich, & Kim, 2006), and the expansion of these behaviors to relationships with other adults and peers (Mayseless, 2005).

Most current developmental theorists ascribe to the *transactional* model of development, one that integrates the Piagetian view of development as internal to the child, and mechanistic models that viewed development as responses to environmental stimuli. This model views the child as an active agent in development "by being both producers and products of their environment" (Ollendick & Vasey, 1999, p. 457). The model is *systematic* and *successive* (p. 458). The systematic and successive aspects of these theories conceptualize development as moving through stages, each stage having particular developmental tasks that must be achieved. Successful task achievement leads not only to building blocks upon which further development depends, but on a sense of

"happiness" that is critical to a child's feelings of competence in approaching subsequent tasks (Seiffe-Krenke, & Gelhaar, 2008).

Forehand and Wierson (1993) succinctly describe the various cognitive, social and emotional developmental tasks children progress through between infancy and adolescence. These authors conceive of a series of transitions beginning in infancy with the formation of attachment relationships, followed by the transition to early childhood with the need to balance dependence on caregivers with the need for independence. Of particular relevance to this study is the transition from early childhood to middle childhood at the age of six or seven. A significant influence at this stage is the expansion of children's environment, which now includes relationships with teachers and increased peer interaction, as well as the demands of engaging in academic cognitive tasks. These new environmental influences require the transfer of self-regulation skills developed in the home to a variety of contexts. In keeping with the notion that attachment security is fundamental in orienting children's relationships with others, Forehand and Wierson (1993) also describe a key developmental task as the translation of attachment security to relationships with others. In terms of expression of behavior and emotion during this period, these authors state that 6 to 7 year-olds are becoming more capable of understanding rules and expectations, although too much conversation and elaboration can prove confusing.

The developmental tasks that are prevalent through middle childhood, age 7-11 are commonly defined as the development of positive peer relations, orientation towards academics, and adhering to behavioral expectations in both home and school (Forehand & Wierson, 1993; Masten, et al., 1995). A seminal figure in the developmental task

model of development, Erik Erickson (1968) conceived of this process as a successful resolution of specific tasks and accompanying conflicts. The children relevant to this study are ending a period in which they are resolving the conflict between *initiative and guilt*; the task for these children is the desire to be more independent and engage in adult-like behaviors. The guilt conflict arises when they overstep parental limits. For children of age seven to eleven, the conflict is between *initiative,* which is related to their developing "sense of industry" and competence in academic and social pursuits, and inferiority when they fail to succeed at these endeavors.

In terms of the children related to this study the developmental differences between ages five and ten provide significant transition points. It is widely agreed in developmental research that at five to six years-old children begin to have the capacity to reason (Eccles, 1999). Between the ages of five and ten, children are also developing the capacity for self-reflection, self -concept, and the ability to understand the perspectives of others. These cognitive abilities are coupled at this age with increased freedom and responsibility and broadening social contexts. This results in children's need to balance their personal social goals that are developing in collaboration with peers and the expectations of the adults in their lives (Eccles, 1999). Parents' primary task throughout this period of children's lives is to continually adjust their practices to allow for the balance of connectedness and autonomy so vital for children's healthy development (Freitag, et al., 1996)

Literature Related to Methodology

Two of the methodological approaches used in this study merit consideration in this literature review: The use of daily diaries as elicitation devices for subsequent

interviews, and the approaches researchers have used to identify metaphorical schemas in discourse.

Daily Diaries

Bolger, Davis and Rafaeli (2003) begin their comprehensive review of the use of diaries in social science research with the statement: "Diaries, self-report instruments used repeatedly to examine ongoing experiences, offer the opportunity to investigate social, psychological, and physiological processes, within everyday situations" (p. 580). They assert that the primary benefits of diary methods is the immediate recording of events in context, and that this method reduces the effects of retrospection, because events are recorded in close proximity to when they occur. An additional benefit to more immediate responses to diary prompts is that it reduces the likelihood that a participant's responses will be a composite response, or "aggregate" rendition of multiple events. In other words, responses are more *episodic* as opposed to *conceptual* responses one might expect from other self-report methods (Christensen, et al., 2003).

A point of departure from the current study is that the research cited in this review is primarily quantitative (e.g. Fuligni & Hardway, 2006; Jensen-Campbell & Graziano, 2000; Mendoza-Denton, et al., 2002; Telzer & Fuligni, 2009). Rather than engaging in analysis of the data collected in participants' diary entries, the information gathered for this study will be used as an elicitation device for the interviewees, to assist them in more accurate recall of events that happened in the recent past. That being said, three general types of data collection that can be achieved with diaries: Gathering reliable event-specific information, within person change over time, and causal analysis of within person changes (Bolger, Davis & Rafaeli, 2003). This study's focus is most clearly linked

to gathering event-specific information. An additional benefit to more immediate responses to diary prompts is that it reduces the likelihood that a participant's responses will be a composite response, or "aggregate" rendition of multiple events.

Zimmerman and Wieder (1977), in a study of people involved in counter-culture activities, described the benefits of a "diary/diary interview" methodology in which they asked participants to record events for a period of seven days followed by an extended interview based upon the contents of the diaries. Their concept was to place the participants in the role of being observer and informant:

> The rationale of the diary approach involves more fully exploiting the subject as both observer and informant. By requesting that subjects keep a chronologically organized diary or log of daily activities, we in effect asked for a record of their own performances as well as reporting the performances of others with whom they interacted. Completed diaries functioned for us in a way similar to the [observation] field notes turned in by our regular research assistants. Diarists thus served as adjunct ethnographers of their own circumstances (p. 484).

The "diary interview" Zimmerman and Wieder developed was an extended interview using questions developed from the diary entries which resulted, in their concept, "as an approximation to the method of participant observer" (p. 485). The diary interview, in this method "converts the diary—a source of data in its own right—into a question generating, and hence, data-generating device" (p. 489). While the diaries in the current study were not used to generate specific questions, placing the participants in the role of observer provided details of daily parenting interactions on which to base extended and detailed conversations about those topics.

Morrison (2012) asserts that a key benefit of diary-based methodologies is that they provide "longitudinal rather than snapshot views" (p. 69) and contends that the

longer term reflective processes provides the researcher with qualitatively different data than that obtained by more conventional interview methods:

> Unlike one-off methods, such as interviews, which provide momentary interactions in a specific time and place, solicited diaries have the potential to offer a more considered and nuanced insight into the embodied and emotional complexities of everyday life (p. 69).

Bolger, Davis and Rafaeli (2003) describe helpful factors to think about in regard to the frequency with which subjects complete diary entries. Many reviews of diary sampling methods and studies caution that the methodology can be time consuming for participants (e.g. Bolger, Davis & Rafaeli, 2003; Christensen, et al., 2003: Greenier, et al, 1999). A validity concern related to the time involved for participants is that they may fill out several diary entries at once when they are anticipating a meeting with the researchers (Greenier, et al. 1999). The use of online technologies (i.e. Google Docs) or direct, frequent contact with the researcher will alleviate this concern (Christensen, et al., 2003).

A key point to consider for this study is in determining the duration of the diary response portion of the study and what daily intervals are participants asked to complete journal entries (Bolger, Davis & Rafaeli, 2003). The answers to these questions lie in how often one would expect conflict to occur between a parent and child. It is important to provide a span of time in which subjects are engaged in the diary portion of the study that is sufficient enough to gather adequate data. An additional concern is the interval of time between when the event occurs and the reflection is recorded to ensure minimal retrospection. Interval sampling designs that are considerations for this study are either *interval-contingent* or *event-contingent* recording. Event-contingent is when participant completes a diary entry whenever an episode occurs that fits the researcher's criteria.

This form would be interesting in terms of this study, as data would be gathered in the moment, increasing the likelihood of more raw emotional responses. However, given the nature of parenting, this approach would be too much to expect of parents.

Several articles (e.g. Bolger, Davis, & Rafaeli, 2003; Christensen, et al., 2003; Feldman-Barrett, & Barrett, 2001; van Eerde, Holman, & Totterdell, 2005) discuss technologies available for daily diary data collection. These technologies range from paper-pencil, to use of palm top computers and PDA's. The principal concerns stated by each of these authors are consistency and accuracy of response, and convenience for the participants. The recent developments in online resources such as Google Docs, coupled with a diverse array of choices, such as leaving phone messages or speaking directly with the researcher on a daily basis should alleviate both of these concerns.

Finally, a concern about the use of daily diaries as a research methodology concerns the phenomenon of *reactance* (Bolger, Davis & Rafaeli, 2003), the potential for the research study effecting a change in the participants as a result of their engagement in the study. Possible effects of continual completion of diary entries include an increased understanding of the concepts associated with the study and becoming habituated to the task, resulting in less thoughtful responses. One participant in a pilot for this study raised the very question of a change brought about by her participation in the study. She indicated that she noticed a change in her awareness of her responses to her children as a result of writing about them every night. Bolger, Davis, & Rafaeli (2003) indicate that several studies have indicated that these reactance effects are not substantial. In regard to this study, however, an interesting outcome in the data may be a finding that regular diary entries may provide the opportunities for parents to understand their internal responses to

their children, an outcome that may give direction to practices that would be helpful for parent education approaches.

Analysis of Metaphors in Interview Discourse

Metaphoric analysis of the linguistic choices made by interview participants provides the opportunity to understand the conceptual images, or schemas that influence their perceptions about the world, and specifically in regard to conflict between parents and children. Conceptual metaphors "function to create reality…offer a vocabulary for thoughts and feelings that may be difficult to articulate, and provide implicit philosophies of life and coping mechanisms for dealing with life events" (Burrell, Buzzanell, & McMillan, 1992, p. 122).

Several studies investigating relationship cognitions (Katriel & Philipsen, 1981; Owen, 1990; Quinn, 1987) defined a series of metaphors present in participants' discourse that have been defined as *root metaphors* (Baxter, 1992). These metaphors are not explicitly present in people's talk about relationships, but are inferred through a variety of thematic statements. Examples of relationship metaphors revealed in these studies include: *Relationship as a manufactured product*, in which statements refer to work or craftsmanship (Quinn, 1987); *relationship as a journey*, depicted by movement along a path or toward a destination (Owen, 1990; Quinn, 1987); *relationship as a bond*, referenced by connection (Quinn, 1987); *relationship as a machine* with mechanistic qualities (Katriel & Philipsen, 1981); relationship *as an investment* with benefits accruing as a result of time and effort (Katriel & Philipsen, 1981; Quinn, 1987); *relationship as container* (Owen, 1990); and *relationship as living organism*, with statements referring to the life, death, sustenance and growth of the relationship (Katriel & Philipsen, 1981).

In a study of family and workplace conflict (Buzzanell & Burrell, 1997) investigated the conceptual metaphors participants had in regard to conflict, and analyzed the language they used when talking about conflict. Their argument centered on the assumption that metaphorical schemas as 'figures of thought' are evidence of participants' orientation to conflict, while the figures of speech they use to talk about conflict are evidence of how people feel about and behave with regard to conflict. The study revealed three prevalent conflict metaphors: *Conflict is war*, which was articulated with expressions about winning and losing as well as personal cost; the metaphor *conflict as impotence* was expressed in terms of differential power relationships and statements about being victimized; the third conflict metaphor, *conflict as rational process* was expressed in terms of conflict as a positive, mutually beneficial process.

While the findings of this study were interesting in that the researchers found differences in type of metaphor and language use across relationship contexts, its importance to the current study is in the methodological approaches. Data collection was accomplished through the use of questionnaires in which participants were asked to describe examples of their best and worst conflict scenarios. They were also specifically asked to provide a simile or metaphor to describe what conflicts with particular people were like. To facilitate this task, they were given the example '*conflict with my family is like going ten rounds with Mike Tyson*' (p.121). This seems on the surface to be a leading example. However, in the context of an interview, a similar approach may yield some interesting statements at the end of the discussion.

A second important aspect of this study was in the methods used to code participants' discourse about conflict. The researchers were investigating whether

participants had an avoidant orientation toward conflict or possessed a positive sense of self-efficacy in regard to conflict situations. They coded participants' use of parts of speech (verbs, pronouns, nouns, adjectives, etc.). Variables included the degree to which participants used first person versus third person pronouns, (signaling association with or distancing from conflict), active or passive participation and the intensity of linguistic expression. Similar coding of interview data may reveal parents' orientations toward and the nature of their perceptions about conflicts with their children.

Quinn (2005) and Luttrell (2005) also describe analysis methodologies that provide compelling models for the current study. They describe the methods of discourse analysis they used in reconstructing spouses' schemas (Quinn), and the perceptions of women in an adult-education program about themselves vis-à-vis school (Luttrell). These researchers' approaches focus on multiple readings of transcripts combined with a priori thematic coding schemes and emergent coding themes.

Luttrell (2005) initially conducted three thematically organized readings of the transcripts. Her initial reading focused on "recurring images, words, phrases and metaphors…" (p. 250). In a second reading, Luttrell looked for the women's narratives about school experiences and grouped these narratives around problems the women had in school, a theme that had emerged in her multiple readings. The third reading focused on looking at patterns across the women's experiences.

Quinn (2005) focused on three features of discourse in her search for expressions of cultural models about marriage: Key words, metaphors, and reasoning. Reasoning became a dominant point of analysis as Quinn noted that Americans have a propensity to "contextualize, compare, reflect upon and analyze" (p.42) their experiences when talking

about meaningful topics. Her analysis of reasoning in discourse centered on an American cultural story that she herself understood about marriages: They are successful if they *last*, they are *beneficial*, and they require *effort*. Quinn found this story repeated in subjects' discourse about their marriages.

In terms of metaphorical analysis, Quinn notes that metaphors are common and frequent discourse features in language. Her task in terms of analyzing these metaphors was to determine categories, of which she defined eight: Lastingness, sharedness, mutual benefit, compatibility, difficulty, effortful, success or failure, and risk, all of which were used in language as rational support for the culturally-based schema of lasting, benefit and effort. In this detailed description of her methodological approach Quinn encourages researchers to follow these kinds of intuitions, particularly if the subjects being studied and the researchers have shared cultural backgrounds and experiences.

Summary

A review of the literature on schema theory reveals research into an array of schematic cognitions related to parenting. These include attributional style, conceptual metaphors, efficacy cognitions, and cultural models. These schemas have been described as being both stable and implicit, which are characteristics that may account for the intransigent nature of parenting habits described by parents that are the impetus for this study. Schemas have also been described in the literature as being activated, or revealed with more conscious awareness during moments of ambiguity and stress, which occur often in the daily routines of parenting.

The review of literature related to methodology indicates that engaging in the completion of daily diaries, followed by a loosely structured interview protocol may be

useful in facilitating the expression of schemas by the participants. Researchers have indicated that these methodologies have been effective in eliciting talk from participants about topics that are personal and emotional in nature, which are characteristics of the topic of parenting.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

Design Overview

While the vast majority of research into the role of parenting cognitions and children's development is conducted through quantitative studies, the current study provides a nuanced perspective attainable only through a qualitative approach. Quantitative studies in this field provide compelling evidence of the associations between such diverse factors as parent attribution style and children's socialization (Dix, 1993), parents' care-giving working models and children's attachment security (George & Solomon, 1996), and parents' life histories and quality of child-rearing environment (Dagget, Obrien, Zanolli, & Peyton, 2000). However, one thing missing from many of these studies is systematic analysis of the parents' talk. The form parenting cognitions take, how they are expressed, and how they affect behavior are highly varied and individualized. This qualitative study provides a rich account of these complex processes as they are expressed among a small group of mothers (N = 14) of elementary school aged children.

Positionality

The inspiration for this study comes from my somewhat privileged teaching position. I teach kindergarten at a public charter school that has a clearly defined philosophy that includes an intentional focus on children's social and emotional development as well as their academic development. In addition to teaching, my duties include coordinating the school's social and emotional component, working with teachers to incorporate strategies and deal with social issues in their classrooms. I also work with students in grades K through 6 to further their understanding of relationships with peers

and teachers. For the last seven years I have also conducted regular parenting classes, focusing on the tenets of the school's approach and how those practices apply to parenting contexts. The format of these classes has been centered on discussion, eliciting vignettes that illustrate parents' concerns and talking about strategies that may be helpful with their parenting. Over the years this contact with parents has enabled me to develop trusting relationships with many of the parents at the school. Parents often speak with me about difficult experiences with their children and the feelings they have that stem from these interactions

This trust is crucial not only to the effectiveness of the parenting classes I teach, but also to this study. The parents with whom I have contact often express feelings of shame or embarrassment regarding what they perceive as difficulties, failure or frustration in dealing with their children. Somehow there is a perception among some of them that they are "less than" if they are not naturally capable parents. Throughout the years, however, the discussions in these classes have become more and more candid and parents have shared many of their "imperfect" parenting experiences. The data collection methods used in this study included interviews and a period of time in which the parents complete daily diaries about their interactions with their children. Because the daily diaries and the subsequent interviews required parents to be open about an array of interactions with their children, some troubling, the comfort and trust that parents have previously established with me uniquely situates my position as a researcher and an active participant in the community.

There are some potential drawbacks to the study due to my position in the community. Because of the preexisting relationships, participants may be influenced to

tell me what they think I want to hear in order to, from their perspective, support my research goals. However, those concerns are outweighed by the history of frank discussions that have occurred over time. I believe the long-term relationships that I have developed with the participants in this study were partially responsible for the rich, frank descriptions of parenting processes that occurred with their children. At the same time, it was important to convey to the participants in my study that I wanted to learn from them. I stated that fact directly on several occasions during the interviews, a strategy that was effective in refocusing the participants on the expression of their thoughts. In the parenting class context, I have been the teacher. But in this context the parents possessed the knowledge and experience with their children that will help me learn what I genuinely wanted to know.

Participants

Participants consisted of two groups of mothers, one group having a child aged 6 (N = 7), and the other group having a child aged 10 (N = 7). With one exception, all the mothers had more than one child.

The school that the students attend is a public charter school in a large Southern California city with a student population of 340 children in grades Kindergarten through fifth grade. It is not a neighborhood school and children come from the entire county to attend the school. Admission to the school is through a blind lottery, although siblings of enrolled students have priority and do not have to enroll through the lottery. In addition, siblings from four middle schools and five high schools with which the school is associated through a charter management organization also have priority in the lottery.

The school's philosophy is based on an intentional integration of children's social and emotional development with academic development. Having a defined philosophy such as this means that many of the parents have a predisposition to seeking out this kind of educational approach for their children. However, because of the priority arrangement with the middle schools and high schools (which do not have a similar defined philosophy) there is a significant number of children whose parents have not chosen the school for that focus. For some, it is practical to have their children attend school in the same vicinity as their older siblings. For others, automatic matriculation into the upper schools (which have a similar competitive admissions lottery) is seen as a positive long-term educational arrangement for their children.

The school's population is predominantly middle and upper-middle class, and many parents have college and advanced degrees. However, particularly in the lower grades, the population is more diverse as the enrollment arrangement with the upper schools has recently helped the school achieve more diversity as younger students enroll.

Recruitment

There are four classrooms at the school with a total of 92 students from which participants were recruited. In the fall of 2009 I sent a letter to parents in the first and fifth grade classrooms describing the study, the parameters of participation, and inviting parents who were interested in participating to contact me (See Appendix). Twenty parents responded affirmatively, seven from the fifth grade group, and 13 from the first grade group. From the first grade responses, seven parents were selected at random. The demographics of the group fairly closely represented the population of the school in general. In terms of age, half the participants were in their 30's and half were in their

40's. One third (29%) were Latina, with the remainder being Anglo. One third (29%) had

completed high school, seven (50%) had completed four-year degrees, and three (21%)

had completed graduate degrees. Three (21%) were stay at home mothers, eight (57%)

worked in professional careers, and three (21%) worked in the service sector. In terms of

family structure, 12 (86%) were married, two (14%) were single, one (7%) had one child,

nine (64%) had 2 children, one (7%) had 3 children, and two (14%) had 4 children. All

the participants were interested in parent education and were consumers of parent

education literature and/or attended classes regularly.

Data Collection

The mothers were asked to participate in two interviews, one at the beginning of

the data collection period, and one final interview at the end. In between, they were asked

to complete a series of daily diary reflections about interactions with their children. The

diary entries were then used as artifacts to elicit discussion in the final interview. Data

consisted of demographic data, daily diary entries, digital recordings of interviews,

transcripts from interviews and field notes. Field notes included my reflections about the

interviews and were recorded immediately following interview sessions. Additional field

notes regarding my observations about the diary entries were included as well. Notes

about the content of the diary entries were used to prepare for my participation in the

final interview.

Interviews

The two conversation opportunities served multiple functions. Quinn (2005)

describes the benefits of multiple conversations in establishing participant-researcher

rapport. During the series of interviews she conducted in her study participants developed relationships with the researchers that provided opportunities for more open and natural discussions. In addition, having several conversations allowed me to compare statements made at different times. Not only did this provide information about how parents talk about their experiences at different times, it also allowed me to ask questions in the final interview about the multiple ways the mothers talked about a given topic.

Initial Interview

To start the diary phase, I met with each of the participants for approximately 30 minutes to describe the procedures, answer questions, and to collect preliminary demographic information. This meeting also served as an opportunity to establish familiarity and trust in the relationship. The level of familiarity of my preexisting relationships varied to some degree, and this interview provided the opportunity to build on those relationships and also establish the new context of researcher-participant.

Demographic information was collected through a structured interview focused on family relationships, home environment, and parent background (see Appendix). These data included information about the make-up of the household. In addition to questions about the children on whom the study focused, information was collected about the primary caregivers including occupation and education levels, as well as typical work schedules. Information about siblings, other adults living in the home, and adults with whom the child has frequent contact was also obtained. Mothers were asked to describe typical weekday and weekend schedules. Information about the mother's family of origin was also recorded. This last question was phrased fairly broadly ("What can you tell me

about your family of origin?), as I preferred to follow the mothers' lead in these preliminary conversations. In keeping with following the participants' lead, the final interview question was "Is there anything else you think I should know?" The first interviews were not recorded so as to build the comfort level with the participants. The presence of a digital recorder may have impeded this process.

Field Notes

Immediately after each interview I completed observational field notes. After the first interview, I recorded my memories of what was said in field note format, as these first interviews were not recorded. In addition to the demographic and household data described above, the field notes included themes in the talk, use of particular linguistic patterns or phrases, and details about the participants' affect and non-linguistic communication such as gestures. Schensul, Schensul & LeCompte (1999) advocate for field notes that describe behaviors and language quotes as opposed to the observer's interpretations of their meaning. These behaviors can then be interpreted in the context of additional data. LeCompte and Schensul (1999) describe this process as part of *in the field transcription*, creating a richly detailed account of the researcher's observations of what people do as well as what they say. In regard to this study, these variables included intensity of linguistic expression (Buzzanell & Burrell, 1997), and kinesthetic and paralinguistic clues (Agar & Hobbs, 1985; Quinn, 2005). In the current study, the mothers' language, affect and themes were repeated in the diaries and final interviews, providing evidence of the stability of their cognitions over time. Figure 2 is an example of an excerpt from one set of field notes that illustrates how language, linguistic expression and kinesthetic and paralinguistic clues were recorded.

Topic/Question	Notes	Thoughts/impressions/questions
Mother's Background	Described a "challenging childhood." Oldest of 4: 2 brothers, 1 sister. Described herself as "The Protector." Father was a heroin addict, left family when she was 14. Described herself as "cutting him out of my life." From that point on had nothing to do with him at all. Said he had "beat up my mother," sending her to the hospital. Described this as a turning point in her life.	The metaphor of "Protector" was repeated several times. Accompanying affect included rapid, strident intonation and arm gestures that included both muscle flexing and embracing. Turning point theme was strongly articulated throughout the interview, coupled with idea of individualism.
	Described her maternal grandmother, a woman who challenged family members to do their best. Stated that grandmother's style was scary and she knew she would be angry if she let her down, but was inspirational because she felt supported at the same time.	
	Description of school: Left hometown to attend college. Got her degree in 4 years. Spoke at some length about her mono-focus to get it done. To prove herself. To show people she could do it.	Spoke with vehemence about her determination to succeed. Descriptions were focused on individual determination driven by desire to prove self. Gritted teeth at times. Made throaty vocalizations ("Uuggghh.") and clenched fists.
	Post BA: Returned to hometown but didn't want to live "under my mother." Moved to small town 50 miles away. Became bartender/waitress. Described "Wild life." "I was just wild." Only details were that she drank too much. Repeated "I was wild" phrase 6-7 times.	Very animated when speaking of this part of her life.
	Met current husband during visit to hometown. Began dating, moved to current city to "start new life." Described husband as "nurturing," "calm," "a good role model."	In some ways, description of meeting husband was as if it was that it saved her. Not sure of the exact phrasing, but the metaphor of a new path/new road was evident.
	Described herself and husband as committed to learning everything they could about parenting—attributed this desire to focus on mistakes made in stepson's early life.	Metaphors of new paths and new starts were evident throughout the talk.

Figure 2. Excerpt From Field Notes About Mother's Background

Daily Diaries

The diary phase for each participant lasted for two weeks. The mothers were asked to answer four questions: The first question asked them to rate the general mood of the day on a 10-point Likert scale, 1 being "very difficult," and 10 being "very happy." The second question asked them to describe any unusual circumstances that may have occurred. The final two questions asked them to describe something that happened with their child that made them most happy that day, and an event that was the most difficult for them that day. The format of the diaries is included in the Appendix. The participants were given several options for recording their diary reflections. All the mothers chose option 1. Recording options included:

1. Using a Google Docs questionnaire. Participants who chose this format were sent daily email messages with a link to the form and reminding them to complete the reflection for that day.

2. Pencil and paper. Participants who chose this option would be given a folder with hard copies of the questionnaire form.

3. Phone message. Some participants may have chosen to talk about events. They would be provided the option of a phone message system to which they would call and record an audio message. These participants would be given a form to guide them through the conversation to assure that they covered the critical points. Participants who chose this option could request a daily reminder email or phone call.

4. Phone conversation. Some participants may have preferred a personal phone conversation. Participants who chose this option would have either called or been

called and would be interviewed following the protocol on the questionnaires.
These responses would be digitally recorded for transcription.

Two relevant points surfaced in the daily diaries pilot study: Remembering to complete the form on a daily basis, and confusion regarding wanting to be sure they were recording correctly. The daily reminder emails alleviated the first concern. As to the latter concern, I spoke with the parents in the first interview about the diaries and answered questions they had about the process. I also provided a reference sheet with specific instructions and goals listed and included this information in the reminder emails. I was also available throughout the two-week period by phone or email to provide ongoing feedback and/or clarification. Several mothers did ask clarifying questions via email, primarily asking if the information they were entering was the kind of data I was requesting.

A third concern regarding daily diary methods raised by Bolger and Rafaeli (2003) is that participants may not complete entries on a daily basis, and may instead complete several in preparation for an upcoming interview. The concern here is that there is a process of reactance that occurs as time passes between event and reflection. Reflections essentially become aggregates of a variety of memories as time passes. The daily reminders remedied some of this concern. Using Google Docs, messaging or phone conversations allowed me to see the extent to which the mothers recorded information daily as each entry was submitted with a date and time stamp into the Google Docs spreadsheet.

Before the final interviews, I reviewed the participants' entries, took notes about details of the entries as reminders for myself, and printed copies of the diary entries. Each

entry was printed on an individual sheet of paper in 14-point font so the participants could easily scan and review the content. At the start of the interviews, I spread the documents out on a table in no particular and asked the mothers to take a look at them and see if there were any entries that stood out for them.

Final Interview Protocol

Interviews for this study were patterned after Naomi Quinn's (2005) "so-called interview" method that she designed to elicit talk from interviewees about their marriages. Her intent was to replicate as closely as possible the natural social settings in which conversations about marriage and family occur. To that end, the majority of interviews in the current study (nine) were conducted at private tables in coffee houses, three were in the participants' homes, and the remaining two were conducted in a private office at the school that has a warm environment designed to facilitate conversations (table with chairs, couch, pleasant lighting).

Quinn's approach is to "cede control of the interviews to the interviewees" (p.41) by placing the researcher in the position of a good listener. The researchers did, however, follow a protocol that specified when to intervene in the participants' narratives:

> We asked our interviewees…to expand on their points, explain what they meant, spell out the implications of examples they gave, and give examples of generalizations they made. We also made note during the actual interview or listening to it before the next, of comments dropped, key terms or phrases used, and paralinguistic, kinetic, and other clues that there was more to tell; then…we brought the conversation back to these topics (p.41).

The four intervention protocols Quinn describes (expanding on points, explaining, spelling out implications, and giving examples of generalizations) are listed in the

Appendix. This document includes examples of actual researchers' statements as documented in partial transcripts of interviews (Quinn, 1992; 2005). From statements found in Quinn's transcripts I added a fifth category: Statements eliciting the interviewees' perceptions about other people's feelings and motivations.

In addition to these interventions, the interviews were composed of two specific questions:

- "Are there any diary entries that stand out to you that you would like to talk about?"

- "Can you complete this sentence: "Parenting is like _____.""

In addition to these direct questions, the vast majority of my utterances were primarily affirming single words followed by pauses ("Yeah," "Right…"), unfinished and/or slowly articulated statements or questions based on the intervention protocols detailed in the Appendix.

Data Management, Reduction, and Analysis

Daily diary entries, digital recordings and transcripts of interviews constitute the main data set for this study. Additional data included field notes from the first meeting, notes regarding content of the diary entries, and observations from the final interview. Development of a coherent plan was essential for data reduction and management of the various data sources and findings from the ongoing data analysis, part of what has been termed "tidying-up" the data (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999). This was key not only in facilitating analysis of findings and patterns across data sources for individual participants, but also in the analysis of patterns across participants (Luttrell, 2005).

Data Management and Reduction

Field notes were recorded and organized using multiple contact summary sheets (Miles & Huberman, 1994). These sheets were comprised of three-column tables: The first column described the interview questions or general topics, the second column included details and quotes from the interviews or diaries, while the third column described affective and paralinguistic information and my evolving interpretations of the data.

The participants used a Google Docs questionnaire form for the daily diaries that provided entries in a spreadsheet format. This spreadsheet organized participant responses by date and time, combining the responses of all the participants in one sheet. The entries were transferred to Excel spreadsheets for each of the participants, organized in the order in which they were received. This facilitated individual analysis of each of the participants' entries.

The final interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed in their entirety including notation of pauses, affect, expression and interjections. Where applicable, information from field notes about paralinguistic features of the conversation were cross-referenced and parenthetically included in the transcripts. I wanted to have a complete record of the mothers' conversation to start the analyses. Erickson (2004) describes the process of data analysis as "parsing," akin to dividing sentences into parts in grammar. The interview transcripts were equivalent to the "life stories" Linde (1993) described, and as such it was important that the narratives be presented in their entirety before the process of parsing began. In order to increase the readability of quotes from the mothers' talk, features of the talk such as pauses and interjections were eliminated from this text

except in cases in which they illustrate compelling features of the participants' thoughts or behaviors.

Initial Data Analysis

Once the data sources were organized into individual participant files, I began a series of readings through the transcripts, field notes and diaries. The initial review and analyses was focused on "getting to know" the participants from the data. Erickson (2004) advocates a "top-down" process of reading through transcripts to develop descriptive narratives of "the action" in the talk. This process is followed by analysis of the narratives guided by the question, "What are the different kinds of things going on in the… talk here, and especially, what are the biggest differences in kinds of talk?" (p. 490). The initial readings were focused on the kinds of themes and expressions of emotion evident in the data. I highlighted examples of statements or ideas that were repeated across the data sources in analysis notes, quotes I found notable and intensity of the mothers' expression and affect. The analysis notes were compiled in Excel spreadsheet form, with separate documents for each participant. The initial headings were "expressions of emotion," "notable vocabulary," "intensity of expression," and "descriptions of parenting practice/effects on parenting practice." In addition, a column designated "thoughts/questions/interpretations" was dedicated to my ongoing observations about the data.

These first steps were also influenced by Agar & Hobbs' (1983) method of dividing interviews into segments as points of analysis. They describe the process as:

> … A way of segmenting the interview such that the segments will
> correspond to a group member's intuitions about when the answer to the

query 'What is this about?' will change (p. 36).

As an example, the analysis of Mary's interview revealed three distinct segments that were expressed at various points throughout the transcript, each having corresponding themes in the diaries and field notes. One segment related to the theme of regret about her parenting practices with her adolescent son and the state of their relationship. This segment included talk about priorities of career, efficiency and organization that had been guiding influences during that part of her life. A second segment related to a theme of redemption and change, viewing the parenting of her younger son as a motivation for making broad changes in her approach to life. Her talk in this segment was focused on themes of relaxation, letting things go, and living in the moment. The third segment was focused on the influences of her own life history, including relationships with her parents and with former husbands. This segment contained talk about culture, personality and temperament, and issues of perfectionism and order. All of the mothers had similar sets of segments interwoven throughout the transcripts that proved useful in understanding their narratives of their life stories.

At this point, I found what was to be a significant aspect of this study: There was evidence of two distinctly different ways of experiencing parenting among this group of mothers. Upon subsequent analyses, the groups were defined as mothers who exhibited a historical orientation toward the process of parenting, and mothers who exhibited an in-the-moment orientation toward the process of parenting. This finding was based on evidence from the data sources, and at this point it was also based on my observations that the talk and affect of the two groups "felt" substantially different. At this point, with these broad observations in mind, the process turned to determining how the mothers'

talk related to the research questions about schematic cognitions and parenting practice.

Secondary Data Analysis: Identifying Schemas

The secondary steps in data analysis turned to an inductive process. This process involved refining coded data into three levels of pattern and abstraction. These levels, as described by LeCompte and Schensul (1999) are referred to as "items" (discrete units of information), "patterns" (items that are related), and "constituents" (groups of patterns that explain a phenomenon). Patterns and constituents were noted in the analysis spreadsheets under the column devoted to my thoughts and interpretations. Items were added to the analysis spreadsheets under the following a priori code headings derived from the literature: Conceptual metaphors (e.g. Burrell, Buzzanell, & McMillan, 1992; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Owen, 1990; Quinn, 1987; 2005), attribution (e.g. Bugental, et al, 1993; Bugental, Johnston, New & Sylvester, 1998; Dix, Ruble, Grusec, & Nixon, 1986; Hastings & Grusec, 1998), efficacy (e.g. Bandura, 1982; Coleman & Karraker, 2000; Johnston & Mash, 1989) and cultural models (e.g. Cohen, 1981; D'Andrade, 1992; Harkness, Super &Keefer, 1992; Quinn, 1992).

Metaphors.

Agar and Hobbs (1985) argue that the process of interviewing subjects with the goal of constructing an understanding of schemas is a cognitive approach, with a decidedly specific definition of "cognitive:"

> The schemata that we construct are cognitive in the sense that they are knowledge structures to enable understanding of the interview. It is unproductive to argue over whether they are resident in [the subject's] head or in ours… It is not necessary to claim that they are models of anyone's mind (p. 416).

While one purpose of this study is to explicitly define examples of how the participants' schemas are represented in their minds and how they are articulated, the concept of viewing them as structures for understanding the mothers' talk was particularly useful. With few exceptions, the transcripts did not reveal direct statements articulating metaphorical schemas.

At the most broad level, metaphorical schemas are expressions of thought or speech comparing one thing in terms of another (Lakoff & Johnson, 1988) but can be defined as *root metaphors* (Baxter, 1992). These metaphors are not explicitly present in people's talk about relationships, but are inferred through a variety of thematic statements. In order to facilitate finding metaphors in the data, I referenced descriptions of themes from the literature detailed in Table 1. Given the thematic nature in which these schemas are articulated, establishing connections in the data analysis spreadsheet column focusing on patterns and constituents (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999) across the data was of particular importance.

An example of the thematic quality of a root metaphor in one mother's talk (Detailed in Chapter 4) began with a statement about the extended breast-feeding period she had with her daughter. Evidence of the theme of connection, dependence and independence were repeatedly expressed in the interview and in the diary entries and were associated with expressions of joy and warmth, as well as frustration and anger. It became evident that the root metaphor, relationship as a bond, was defined by dichotomous perceptions about dependence and independence. The relationship as bond metaphor was associated thematically for this mother with a journey metaphor having to

do with thoughts of the past and future and the meaning and purpose of parenthood in terms of her sense of self.

Table 1. Metaphorical Schema Types and Descriptors

Metaphorical Schema Themes	Reference
General:	
• *One idea expressed in terms of another*	Lakoff & Johnson (1980)
Root Metaphors: Relationship	Baxter, (1992)
• *Relationship as a manufactured product*	
o Refer to work or craftsmanship	Quinn, (1987)
• *Relationship as a journey*	
o Depicted by movement along a path or toward a destination	Owen, (1990); Quinn, (1987)
o Purpose	
• *Relationship as a bond*	Quinn, (1987)
o Referenced by connection	
• *Relationship as a machine*	Katriel & Philipsen, (1981)
o Mechanistic qualities	
• *Relationship as container*	Owen, (1990)
o References to defining boundaries, embracing/enveloping	
• *Relationship as living organism*	Katriel & Philipsen, (1981)
o References to the life, death, sustenance and growth of the relationship	

Attribution, Cultural Models, Efficacy

While the process of finding metaphor schemas in the data involved identifying a variety of thematically linked statements, attribution schemas, cultural models and efficacy cognitions were more apparent in the discourse. In keeping with the metaphor coding process, I developed a similar series of a priori item codes (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999) from the literature including defining descriptors of what evidence of schemas might sound like in the talk (See Table 2). These findings were also entered in the individual analysis spreadsheets.

Table 2. Descriptors of efficacy, attribution and cultural model schemas

Schema	Reference
Parenting Efficacy:	
• *Statements indicating expectations of success in specific interactions*	Bandura, (1987)
• *Statements indicating agency: Descriptions of affirmative responses/actions*	Johnston & Mash, (1989)
Locus of control	Campis, Lyman, Prentice-Dunn, (1986)
• *Statements indicating perceptions of control with child or with parent*	Raver & Leadbeater, (1999)
Expressions indicating mother's sense of skill and/or knowledge	Johnston & Mash, (1989)
Domains	
• *Achievement*	
o Statements indicating facilitating child's learning/schoolwork	Coleman & Karraker, (2000)
• *Recreation*	
o Statements indicating ability to support children's activities and social relationships with peers/siblings	
• *Discipline*	
o Statements indicating provision of structure/expectations	
• *Nurturance*	
o Statements indicating ability to support children's emotional needs	
Attribution	
• *Locus of control*	Bugental & Johnson, (2000)
o Statements indicating behavior is *internal* to child	
o Statements indicating behavior is motivated by context or environment	
• *Dispositional*	
o Statements relating to children's internal attributes	Hastings and Grusec, (1998)
• *Causal inference*	
o Statements indicating perception of child's intentionality, ability, and knowledge	Dix, Ruble, Grusec, & Nixon, (1986)
Cultural Models	
• *Culturally defined expectations/evaluations of parenting*	Quinn, (1992)
o Statements indicating parental "motherly duties"	
o Statements indicating perceptions of parenting quality in relation to culturally defined criteria	Nixon, (2002)
• *Developmental theories as explanations*	Harkness, Super and Keefer (1992)
o Statements referring to changing developmental stages: i.e. development of independence	
o References to expert advice including literature	Triana & Rodrigo, (1989)

Case Studies

Upon completing the top-down, then bottom-up (Erickson, 2004; Sipe & Ghiso, 2004) stages of data analysis, I wrote case study narratives to describe more fully each of the mothers' stories. One issue with schema theory as an analytical construct of the study of human thought and behavior is that the analysis can lead to rigid and inflexible representations of cognitive and behavioral processes that are actually quite plastic, fluid and complex (D'Andrade, 1995; Quinn, 2011). Transforming the data from the initial stages of analysis, which were recorded in rigidly defined spreadsheet form, into individual narratives revealed the dynamic processes involved in these mothers' experiences of parenting that the research model intended to describe.

Case studies can be defined as phenomena within a bounded context (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The phenomenon in question here is the participants' experiences of mothering bounded by time and type of data sources. Due to time constraints, the study was designed to provide descriptions of the subjects' schematic cognitions and behaviors as they were represented in a two-week period through interviews and diary entries.

Merriam (1998) describes the features of the case study as particularistic, descriptive and heuristic. The particularistic feature of the case studies herein is to focus on the individual experiences of the subjects in order to describe their schematic and behavioral experiences of parenting. In writing the individual cases, my intent was to answer a paraphrase of Erickson's question (2004), "What is going on here," in order to describe the individual's experiences of parenting as well as the collective experience of parenting among this group, and to provide evidence as to the cognitive, emotional and

behavioral complexities of mothering in general. By way of example, the case study of "Linda," a pseudonym, is presented here in its entirety to illustrate the integration of data from the diaries, field notes and interviews to develop a narrative that facilitates answering the question of "what is going on" in Linda's experience of parenting.

Case Study: Linda.

Linda is a woman in her mid 40's with two children, Amy—aged 6 in first grade, and a son named Robert in middle school. She is a part-time elementary school teacher and a freelance writer. She has an organic, earthy appearance. Her home has a very lived-in feel, with very little adornment, a large playroom and homey feeling kitchen. There is no television in the home, and the playroom is filled with an assortment of Legos, puzzles and games. The family proudly showed me the extensive vegetable and flower garden in the backyard, and described a group of families who have formed an organization of sorts to support one another in their gardening endeavors.

Linda's diaries had a few prominent themes. One theme had to do with balancing work expectations and family time. Linda had several references in her diaries that described warm, quiet times of companionship with her children:

> Another very nice time was in the early evening, I was with both children in the living room, and we were all working on our own craft-y projects on the floor and on a table. We worked in companionable silence for a while, and then put on a Harry Potter book on tape we've been listening to, and all enjoyed our projects while we listened to the story. We weren't really talking or anything, but it was a nice warm feeling of being together, and occasionally one of us would help another one with cutting or things like that.

In the interview, Linda remarked directly about her positive feelings about moments of quiet:

The quiet times tend to be the happier times for me. We do more of the silly stuff but I think Cameron (husband) is more of the silly guy, the high energy… he does more of that and for me the more satisfying part is the quiet... talking about stuff.

These sorts of sentiments were balanced in the diaries with descriptions of the

pressures of daily life and the emotional aspects of trying to balance her personal

expectations and responsibilities with her children's needs:

Amy was very tired, and at the tail end of being sick. I was tired and at the front end of being grumpy. I had a lot planned for the day -- a once-a-month 3 hour writing critique group meeting at my house, groceries to get, house to get clean, gym, an article to finish by a deadline -- and I could see she was well enough to go to school but was just tired -- and maybe wanting some nice time watching a movie again…. I left the room. I was tired and grumpy. Then, standing in the kitchen debating what to do, I had a flash of major irritation, and I marched resentfully back into her room, "OK," I said, spite piercing my voice. "You can stay home if you still feel sick. But sick people have to stay in bed and they can't do anything fun." Of course she burst into tears, and I felt horrible.

Being nasty like that, and getting an awful reaction from the kids -- tears, generally -- is an awful wake up call for me. It's also like lancing a boil. The pus of irritability instantly drains out, I am able to step back a bit from my irritability and see things from her point of view. Awful, but often true.

Linda's diaries also had passages in which she described her responses to her

children's complaints about having to do things with her that are part of her work duties.

At one point she described an angry outburst she had when her son stated that she wasn't

fun anymore. The tone was countered in the next paragraph with her description of the

actual event:

I felt my steam rise suddenly and I snapped and said, "I am this close to getting really mad. I've had long day. I don't like being called names. I know you don't want to go to this, but I've done the best I can to do things you'll like when we have to do things you won't like. We ate cupcakes. We

went to the park. I have dinner waiting in the crock-pot at home. I've done the best I can." It was quite a blast of verbiage.

When we got there, however, it was not the dull, dry garden event the kids had imagined. It was a little magical. There was a beautifully lit garden with interesting art, films on either end of a green, digital fractal artwork on a screen, shoji lamps and floating candles in old fashioned fountains, sound art, and more.

Following this passage, Linda clearly stated the stresses involved with being a working mom:

When Robert began his tirade, I began some typical defenses. "It's a lovely afternoon and we got to play outside. Look on the bright side...maybe the glass is really half-full...-- descending into, "Robert has decided to be unhappy with the afternoon. He could decide to be happy to be outdoors in the open air, with our family, but he'd rather be miserable." Insulting, insulating myself from what felt like a wave of criticism -- that age old dilemma of trying to be a good mom and a good worker at the same time. I usually err on the side the mom, but this time I wanted to see this thing and thought it would be fun and interesting.

It is interesting to note the different tones that Linda used to describe her interactions with her children. She had a tendency to describe the positive times with very warm, and affectionate detail (the garden was "magical," "companionable silence."). The entries describing her responses to the more difficult times often had very harsh language associated with them ("blast of verbiage," "lancing a boil… the pus of irritability.")

The differing tones of these entries provide insight into a second theme that was evident in the interviews. Linda's talk often seemed to center around balancing two dichotomous aspects of her own life that cause some tension for her. On the one hand, she has a very "organic," relaxed approach to life and raising children. This can be seen in the style of her home, her attraction to gardening, and in the sentimental way she

expresses quiet times at home with the children. A more driven aspect of her life that centers on productivity and responsibility balances this worldview and approach to life. In the interview, Linda described her life prior to having children by talking about the perspective of old friends who had recently visited:

> And first of all I hung out with a lot of people with no kids and for 15 years and you know, and then we were one of the few of our friends that had kids and we were like and so these friends that came over they were they can't quite understand this…

Linda spoke directly about this tension between productivity and a more holistic view of parenting several times in the interview. Much of Linda's language in her discussion about the driven aspects of her life tended to be harsher in tone than in other parts of the interview and diaries, and her demeanor tended to be more agitated and energetic when talking about that part of her personality. At times she would speak about her perceptions about working with the children in her classroom as she also spoke about her own children. The following sequence was part of a longer discussion about her responses to and interactions with her students, her daughter and her son:

> … And then other kids I was just too harsh on them or too, you know, task oriented, and so you know I'm learning when to back off and some kids you need to push them cause... (Animated--energetic through this section speaking very rapidly)…

> I did no pushing with TC, and I do more with R (brother) maybe too much sometimes. So then I have to know when to back off but that's because I know them so well you know. I know that she will tell me to just back off (laughs), and so I do and I can, and she's right. And I have no problem with that and I think she, yeah. First of all it's much easier to back off with her than with him.... and maybe because he's the first. Maybe because he's the first I'm not sure, I mean I know what he's capable of and I…

> The things that are fun to do in life, you need to have some knowledge

under your belt and so, so its hard to know how much to push and but he does react to that, and I see, and so I have to be very careful... I'm happy that he doesn't have pressure in many ways because he's so much healthier you know but I also want him to learn all the things that he can learn so its just its tricky…

Yeah that they feel good about themselves, that they feel… that they connect with other people... that they feel that they are learning a lot and that they can do a variety of things. And feel good about the things that they can do. I mean I can say these things but then I also have that part that's driven and then goal oriented and then… its like.... you know...

This passage reveals a great deal of personal insight into Linda's relationship with both her students and her children. While she did not specifically describe behaviors that are associated with "that part that's driven and then goal oriented," Linda's words were accompanied by a shrug and slight grimace that indicated to me that she was not entirely happy with her responses to the tension.

Linda used two metaphors in the interview that revealed her awareness of the ways in which having children has helped her to balance her driven, productivity oriented instincts with her self-examined goal to lead a more gentle, quiet life. The first metaphor is that of a mirror that allowed her to see the effects of her "harsher" responses to her children:

It was like a flash of anger and then just that mirror of the kids' reaction… it kind of stops you in your tracks. Yeah. But that sort of anger that energy is just dissipated. But I don't even know if it was from the mirror, you know if it wasn't there… The reaction of like you just said something really nasty and then the face of the... "I'm sorry, sorry sorry." Like the other day he (son) said to me… I said something snappy and he said, "Oooh that was harsh" or something like that. And it was like--oh it was, and I so I need that… I don't know if the nastiness would just continue unchecked. I don't know if it would or not. And that's usually something that lets you see what you're doing.

Linda's awareness of the influence her children have on balancing her behavior was reflected in the metaphor she provide in response to my request to complete the sentence, "Parenting is like…"

> Parenting is like--Well the first thing that pops into my head, and I don't know why but its like a parachute... uhm I'm not sure why that came to my head but, yeah, I guess I feel like in a way its a thing that has sort of saved me in the sense of bringing me back to what I really value. You know like the kids being a mirror. I can't have like this self centered rage. I can't be quite as self-centered as I could be… And also its very freeing in a way because when else do you get to just hang out you know as adults we don't get to just hang out and just lay around and read to someone you know…

Linda's view that her children provide her the impetus to examine her life and to work toward her ideals is consistent with several other mothers' statements. Several referred in similar ways to the redemptive capacity of parenting. Linda spoke several times in the interview about the guilt she experiences when trying to balance both her multiple roles and her multiple schemas. Linda was much more specific than most in describing how the difficulty of balancing these factors has influenced her behaviors with her children. Having a mirror, and a saving parachute in the form of her children provide her with the ability to align her thoughts and behaviors more directly with her more consciously examined hopes and goals.

CHAPTER IV: ARTICULATION AND EXPRESSION OF PARENTING

SCHEMAS

Introduction

The interview discourse revealed richly detailed evidence of the presence of a

variety of parenting cognitions as well as more generalized interpretive schemas present

in the participants' thoughts. This chapter will focus on the two research questions that

are associated with findings that describe the range of schema expression and

articulation: (1), What are the multiple parenting schemas that guide parenting practice?

How are they expressed (articulated and enacted)? And (2), How does the expression of

parenting schemas vary across development in interactions with children at 6 years of

age, as compared with 10 year-olds?

The intent of these questions was to develop an understanding of what schemas

sound like in parents' talk as they describe relationships with their children. In some

respects, the transcript data is akin to a catalogue of utterances and behaviors indicating

the presence of particular schematic cognitive structures. In order to develop this

metaphorical "catalogue" of schema expression and articulation among these participants,

this chapter is primarily descriptive in nature, detailing specific quotes that indicate

expression of schemas, as well as the context in which the quotes were stated. The

context is illustrated by the inclusion of three case study in this chapter that are

descriptive of how the participants' statements, coded in the analysis as evidence of

schematic perceptions, were related to broader narratives of the participants' lives.

Subsequent chapters focus on the questions intended to analyze how the balance of

schemas influence parents and parenting practice. The names used in this document are pseudonyms, used to protect the participants' privacy and confidentiality.

Defining Characteristics of Schema Expression

The schemas that were revealed in the interviews divide the participants evenly into two main categories: Half the parents in the sample (N =7) spoke in ways that revealed an orientation to an historical context to parenting, while the other half (N =7) spoke about parenting in ways that were much more focused on the present context of given interactions. The mothers in the historical context orientated group expressed a high degree of focus on questions about their children's development and, or the long-term significance of their parenting practice. They articulated links between in-the-moment responses to interactions with children and sets of themes that influenced their perceptions of, and responses to their children's behaviors. These themes were expressly associated with the parents' own life histories and emotional states. Their discourse revealed an orientation toward long-term implications of parenting practice and included references to methods and theories described in parenting literature. Their reflective comments revealed a perception that individual events had determinate and monumental implications. In addition to expressions of emotional impact and the implications of parenting practice, the mothers in this group also articulated a lower sense of parent self-efficacy (Ardelt and Eccles, 2001; Bandura, et al. 1996; Gondoli and Silverberg, 1997) than was exhibited by the women in the group more focused on the present context.

In contrast, the mothers in the group that was more oriented to the present context were more apt to view difficult moments with their children as individual events and described responses to their children's behaviors that were fairly consistent: Their

statements of attribution for their children's behavior were predominantly contextual as opposed to dispositional (Hastings and Grusec, 1998; Bugental & Johnston, 2000) and they described behaviors and attitudes as natural or normal. Their reflective statements indicated a perception that they viewed individual events as one of many interconnected but not deterministic instances. The descriptions of their responses to their children's behavior indicated a positive sense of efficacy (Ardelt and Eccles, 2001; Bandura, et al. 1996; Gondoli and Silverberg, 1997), and were more likely to describe specific examples of parenting practice within their reflections about interactions, often describing their roles as teachers or guides.

Variations in Parenting Schemas By Development

One explanation for these differences in perception is derived from the question regarding differences in schema expression across children's age.. With the exception of Helen, who had an only child, the talk was focused on parenting in general as opposed to one particular child. The mothers' descriptions focused on dynamics between siblings and descriptions of interactions with all of their children as opposed to descriptions of isolated experiences with the child targeted for this study.

In addition to the age of the target children in the study, it appears that the sum total of parenting experience influenced on parents' cognitions about their children. The differences in perceptions between the two groups may be related to the target children's age and birth-order. Of seven children in the present context oriented group, five (71%) were 9 and 10 year-olds, while two (29%) were 6. In addition, five (71%) of the children in this group were the youngest of multiple siblings in their families. In contrast, five (71%) of the children in the more historical context oriented group were 6. Birth order

was more evenly distributed in this group, four (57%) were oldest or middle and three

(43%) were youngest. The sum of the ages of the target children and their older siblings

averages 20.6 years in the present context oriented group, as compared with 16.1 years in

the historical context oriented group. These findings suggest that the knowledge and

perspectives parents develop as their children age and as they care for multiple children

may provide a moderating effect in the way they process interactions. There did appear,

however, to be other factors in addition to children's age and sum total of parenting

experience that influenced the perceptions of the parents in the two groups. Adult

attachment style is one factor discussed in greater detail below that may play an

influential role in how these parents perceived relations with their children.

Diary Entries

One consideration regarding the two groups is the kinds of interactions the

participants described in their diary entries. There were no significant differences in the

kinds of interactions and behaviors recorded by the members of both groups. All the

participants described happy moments that were related primarily to fun or sentimental

times spent together, specific outings, and moments that their children exhibited positive

emotions such as pride in an accomplishment or acts of caring toward siblings or others.

The participants all recorded diary entries about difficult times. The largest category of

difficulties was related to sibling rivalry issues, followed by children's expressions of

anger, frustration or disappointment toward the parent. Other difficult issues included

conflicts over children not meeting expectations, homework, struggling with getting out

of the house on time, and moments when the child's safety was a concern. None of the

participants described particularly difficult or intransigent behaviors, focusing primarily on routine family conflicts and difficulties.

Group Characteristics

While the overarching characteristics of the two groups were related to their perspectives about issues such as past history, the significance of individual events, and implications for their children's futures, the expressions of schematic perceptions varied by group as well, and provided evidence about how a variety of schematic cognitions contribute to generalized perceptions about parenting. The data revealed five distinct categories of schema activation across the groups. The distinctions between the two groups across these categories will be the primary focus of the remainder of this chapter.

First, there was a difference in the participants' perceptions about family structure and their views about shared child-rearing responsibility. Six of the seven mothers in the historical context oriented group did not mention child rearing help, or described conflicts in parenting approach with spouses, while five of the seven mothers in the present context oriented group described parenting as a shared responsibility.

Second, none of the mothers in the present context oriented group ascribed long term implications to their children's behavior, while five of seven of the historical context oriented group talked about possible implications of current child behaviors and parental practices.

Third, there was a difference between the two groups regarding their attributional style (Bugental, et al, 1993; Bugental & Johnston, 2000; Bugental, Johnston, New & Sylvester, 1998), and parental efficacy cognitions (Bandura, 1982; Bugental & Johnston, 2000; Coleman & Karraker, 2000; 1997; Johnston & Mash, 1989). Five of the seven

mothers in the historical context orientation group ascribed dispositional attributions to their children's behaviors and their talk revealed a lower sense of parental efficacy, while all seven of the mothers in the present context oriented group described contextual attributions for their children's behaviors and expressed a positive sense of parental efficacy.

A fourth category was related to how the mothers viewed their roles. Six of seven parents in the present context oriented group described their roles as teacher, guide or coach, while one mother in the historical context oriented group described a similar role. Two mothers in this group described their rolls as "learner," indicating that parenting has a redemptive value in changing existing behaviors and personal traits.

The final category related to schematic themes described by the participants. Four of the seven mothers in the historical context oriented group described parenting in terms of dichotomous themes. For example, one mother spoke at times in terms of distinctions between the metaphors of home as sanctuary and peace versus the outside world as chaos and danger. These themes were significant in that they influenced their perceptions of their children's behaviors and activated emotions that they described as being difficult to deal with. The distinctions between these five categories of schematic cognitions will be described in greater detail in the remainder of this chapter.

Family Structure Perceptions

A significant difference between the groups is in whether or not the participants mentioned child-rearing support from spouses, family members or extended relationships. Six of the seven participants in the historical context oriented group either did not mention other help, or described differences in parenting approaches with their

spouses. One mother, whose husband is a stay at home dad, stated, "I do everything! I badger and remind and nag and you know… And good and bad." Another mother referred to the way her husband handled getting their son ready for school: "My husband, bless his heart, who is trying very hard to always be mindful is like, 'You need to get up now! We're running out of time!' You know, and wanted to come and like rip the blankets off of him.... so then he got even more upset." While not directly critiquing her husband's approach, the implication was that his method was ineffective.

In contrast, five of seven participants in the present context oriented group mentioned support from spouses or other family members, often describing parenting as a team or collaborative effort. One mother described the evening routine with her children this way: "My mom helps out a lot too. And then Steve's [husband] work is flexible so, which is nice that we are a team and that, in that sense." The perceptions about collaborative parenting articulated by these participants stand in contrast to the historical context oriented mothers' who's talk indicates that they harbor perceptions of being primarily responsible for their children's wellbeing.

Viewing Events As Individual Situations: Present Context Oriented Mothers

A defining characteristic of the discourse among the present context oriented participants is that none of them ascribed significant long-term meaning to their children's behaviors or to their parental responses, while 5 of the 7 parents in the historical context oriented group did. The present context oriented group tended to view events as individual situations and did not perseverate on possible outcomes for their children resulting from the incidents. One mother, Denise, directly commented about this

kind of perception, describing moments when she feels compelled to intervene in arguments between her ten year-old son, and his older sister: "This must be the way, like, a baseball umpire feels (laughs). I mean you just gotta call them as you see them and each one is an independent event and… You have to let go of it a little bit."

Another mother, Rita, was particularly emblematic of this characteristic. Rita often described herself in her diary entries as being unfazed by her children's behaviors, whether she saw them as happy or negative and on several occasions used the phrase, "Oh well!" to describe her response to them. In the final interview, Rita described an incident that illustrates the thinking behind her acceptance of her son's behaviors:

> It was pouring rain on Monday and he came home from school and all he wanted to do is stand out in the pouring rain. And it was hysterical, and I'm like, "Well, I guess there's no harm in that." And he came into the laundry room and he's drenched, sopping wet and he's shivering freezing. I'm like, "Ok let's strip you down. Let's strip you down." And he was, his underwear was wet. Everything was like he had jumped, it was so soaked and I'm like, "What were you doing?" He's like, "I was standing in the rain." Okay, yeah, well that's the answer! So we stripped him naked and made him get in a hot shower. But it was just the funniest thing. The look on his face was one of excitement and freezing all at the same time, which is good.

This quote indicates a clearly defined awareness that Ben's behaviors were a function of the contexts of age and curiosity. Rita also described an incident that had occurred at a tennis club. Her description indicated a duality between her awareness that the incident was an isolated case, and a fleeting discomforting perception that the behavior was indicative of a larger moral issue. Her older son was having a tennis lesson, and Ben was sitting with her in the bleachers. He suddenly threw a goldfish cracker through the fence, on to the tennis court. Rita described her immediate response as, "Why would you act like that? My god! This is not the kind of family we are, to be throwing

things, you know, you know throwing trash onto the tennis courts at the beach and tennis

club." Ben responded that he didn't know why he had thrown the cracker, except to say

that he had seen a hole in the fence and wanted to see if he could throw the cracker

through it. Rita indicated that upon immediate reflection she could understand that

impulse, and proceeded to describe an awareness of her thought processes in the moment:

> I can completely see where that would be a… you were going for hitting throwing a small object through a round hole and seeing if you could make it through the target… And I learned, I learned something, which is what you have to remember they do to you. They, they have the ability to teach you a lot… The immediate thought was..."Oh my god I'm so embarrassed, I can't believe you just..." Everybody stares at you and you know you're like, "Who saw that? Who saw that? What can we do about it?" And that was my first thought, and then, I, the other thoughts were, "Ok, it's a frickin' goldfish, it's not like you know you just did something just horrible. It's a goldfish on the, the tennis court. But I did say out loud, "Ben! You know…" So it was known that it wasn't something that I would have approved of. I didn't teach him how to do this. But I then, I sort of made my outward statement, and then I could talk to him. No, it was for my benefit to save face with anybody who might have seen this infraction.

Rita's awareness of her son's development and intellectual curiosity provided her

with the presence of mind she needed to remember that, although she was embarrassed,

the behavior was not overly problematic nor pervasive, and she was able to formulate an

appropriately measured response. The examples from Rita and Denise are characteristic

of the five parents in the present context oriented group who described behaviors in terms

of individual incidents and devoid of broader implications. There is a significant contrast

between the two groups in that none of the mothers in the historical context oriented

group reflected upon interactions with their children as isolated and understandable, or as

functions of context.

Attribution and Efficacy: Present Context Oriented Mothers

A predominant aspect of the present context oriented mothers' talk was that they tended to ascribe contextual attributions (Bugental & Johnston, 2000; Hastings and Grusec, 1998) to their children's behaviors. This tendency was closely linked with descriptions that indicated a positive sense of efficacy as to how to respond to their children's needs. These characteristics are illustrated here with excerpts of conversations with three participants: Helen, Barbara and Leah.

Helen, a mother of a ten year-old girl, described a conflict with her husband about how to manage her daughter's tendency to not follow through with her responsibilities. She attributed her daughter's lack of focus to "maybe a slight problem with ADD," and her instinct to support her in dealing with that issue:

> I think she has that problem so that's where I'm struggling with myself. Okay how do I help her with this focus? Because I think that is a little bit of an issue with her. So that's where I think I struggle. And Michael [husband] is sometimes expecting more from her and I try… I think I'm more sympathetic. I'm like, part of her, she's just not on her own doesn't really think about these things and is not trying to be a bad kid or not responsible, because she wants to be responsible.

Helen's ability to attribute the contextual explanation that her daughter's way of thinking is not based on temperament, but that she needs some assistance to process provides her with an insight as to how to approach the problem. She described how her sympathy for her daughter's behaviors results in a variety of interventions: She helps her clean her bathroom and bedroom, helps her complete her homework, and she makes snacks and lunches with her even though she knows her daughter is largely capable of doing it for herself. Helen good-naturedly revealed the source of her empathetic responses to her daughter's requests for help, noting that she has similar tendencies:

And then of course I'll try to help her and then I'm like... Okay I'll try to help her, and then I think of me sometimes. I was not a model student. If I could get someone to do it for me, I'm like, 'No I'll do it myself' (sarcasm). I'm like, okay, I'll let them do it, you know? To this day its like, all right, you want to take control? I'm not going to fight you.

Another mother, Barbara, similarly described how her temperament influences her interactions with her children. Barbara detailed a strong aversion to conflict, but she has developed strategies for resolving issues that she believes are effective. She noted that she often defers problem solving to her children, who she feels are more capable at times than she is. This strategy is based on her awareness of the limits of her abilities, an indication of positive self-efficacy. Barbara's apparent acceptance of her aversion to conflict may also be responsible for her understanding of the limits of her ability to resolve issues with her children.

Just as she indicated an intuitive understanding about when to defer problem solving to her children, she also described events in which she knows when to refer her children to their father for help. She spoke at length about a situation in which her son had seen a disturbing medical image of an eye on television. She said she tried to alleviate his fears by distracting him from the thoughts he was having, noting that "… he tends to perseverate on things and he just blows things out of proportion." Her description of the interaction is another example of her propensity to view her child's feelings as understandable, and to attribute the conflict between them to the context of being tired and an inability to understand one another in the moment:

He was getting angry with me. It was a little bit later, I don't know maybe after ten o'clock or something so I think I was kind of tired and he was tired and grumpy and he wasn't hearing what I wanted. I didn't know what he wanted me to say, and I tried, I tried different things, but it wasn't the right thing. And I was getting frustrated and he knew I was getting

frustrated and so he was getting mad too because he, he just, yeah, and I mean it was definitely something that was truly bothering him. It wasn't an attention… I know it wasn't. Sometimes I think he is just trying to get attention from me, and I don't think it really was that in this case. And then I did, yeah; it was my suggestion to go to Steve [husband], because sometimes, you know he can pick up on things that I don't necessarily pick up on.

Both Helen and Barbara described feelings of frustration they experience in responding to their children's needs while concurrently ascribing contextual attributions to their children's behaviors, and descriptions of proactive, efficacious and intentional responses. Similarly, another mother, Leah, recounted arguments with her daughter that can be frustrating to her as well. Her description provided insight into the way she attributes her daughter's behavior to the fact that her daughter wants her attention. She also revealed an understanding of the role of her own emotional state in how effective she can be at different times, and the strategies she has developed to respond more effectively:

She knows how to get my attention with her anger, and she, she's an interesting little gal, you know. She'll tell me she's angry and she'll say I hate you and say, oh what else does.... She just wants to argue, and when I'm in the right place I will listen to her and not argue back, but I will engage and argue right along with her so it's very hard and I, you know, I learned if I don't engage her she will, you know back down and she'll just repeat herself and repeat herself and I'll say you know I can agree with her, disagree, you know, agree to disagree and it's frustrating.

Helen, Barbara and Leah's accounts of these difficult moments with their children reveal the routine frustrations that are inherent to parenting. Helen responded to her daughter's difficulty with organizational tasks with empathy and routines to help her organize her time and space. Barbara described an awareness of her own difficulties with conflict while describing an understanding that her son was tired and could benefit from

his father's intervention in that moment. Leah also described frustrating moments with her daughter and articulated the knowledge that her daughter's outbursts were nothing more than attention-seeking behaviors, while simultaneously describing her responses to the behaviors that were based on past experience. The fact that they primarily attributed contextual factors to their children's behaviors such as need for attention and support, or frustration born out of fatigue provided them with perspectives that led to a sense of efficacy and to proactive responses.

Attribution and Efficacy: Historical Context Oriented Mothers

In contrast to the present context oriented group's tendency to ascribe contextual attributions to their children's behaviors, four of the seven parents exhibiting an historical context orientation tended to link their responses to their children's behaviors with attributions that were more dispositional in nature (Bugental, et al, 1993; Bugental & Johnston, 2000; Bugental, Johnston, New & Sylvester, 1998). These dispositional attributions led them to question long-term outcomes for their children, and limited the sense of efficacy they experienced during individual events. The conversations with two participants, Lisa and Kathryn, were emblematic of the tendency to attribute dispositional factors to children's behaviors, or having confusion over attributions of their children's intent. These dispositional attributions and confusions were often coupled with expressions indicating a uncertain sense of efficacy.

One mother, Lisa, who is a teacher, spoke about the differences in her responses as an elementary school teacher, a role in which she feels skilled and decisive, and her role as mother in which she feels more fraught with indecision and worries about outcomes for her children. Lisa pointed to one of her diary entries as an example of an

issue that was confusing to her. She and her husband had purchased some toys to be used

as rewards for her son's growing success with potty training. She saw her daughter, Sara

take one, and then described what happened when she asked her to put it back:

> I said, 'Can you hand it to me?' So she handed it to me and you know, I
> turned around and she went on the other side of the table and just grabbed
> another one from the bag, and so I was like, "Wow that was pretty bold of
> you." I couldn't believe she did that.

When Lisa confronted Sara about her behavior, her daughter said that she had

taken the item because her brother was going to grab it himself and she was preventing

him from doing that. Lisa stated what she really believed had occurred in that moment,

describing the behavior as impulsive, a contextual attribution:

> I think she really just grabbed it because she really wanted it at that time,
> but when she saw my reaction to her taking it after I had told her not to...
> And this is what I think; she just kind of got scared.

This comment reveals a contextual attribution to Sara's behavior; she was scared.

Lisa then detailed the in the moment thought processes that followed regarding the

different intentions to which she attributed Sara's behavior: Her attributions of intent

vacillated between the thought that her daughter was lying to her to cover her actions, or

that she had misinterpreted Sara's actions and that her protestations of actual innocence

were valid:

> I'm thinking, ok is she lying to cover up what she did? Or she obviously
> feels bad about it, but she shouldn't have done it in the first place. So I
> was struggling with two things: Ok she's doing it when I told her not to,
> and then possibly lying about it. But like I said I felt I would feel horrible
> if she was telling the truth and I didn't believe her.

In this example, Lisa's inability to ascribe what she felt was an accurate

attribution created a situation in which she felt uncertain about her abilities to manage the

event. She remarked that these feelings stood in stark contrast to the feelings of efficacy

she experiences in her classroom. She described the influence of dual emotions that were

at play in the moment: Guilt for not believing her daughter and the ramifications that

might follow due to her interpretations of the event, and fear that her daughter might

develop the idea that she can be dishonest in order to avoid consequences for her actions:

> I really want her to be honest, you know, it's really ok to tell the truth. So
> if she ever gets in trouble for any reason, or if she makes a mistake and
> does something wrong, I don't want her to think, 'Well nobody believes
> me anyway so I'm just going to make up something that will help my side
> of the story…' I want her to tell the truth. Now, and I don't know if that
> makes any sense at all. On the other hand, I could, you know, I could've
> gone the other way thinking, 'What if she was lying?' And then she
> thinks, 'Ooh I got away with that one, you know, so I don't know, I was in
> a quandary. So I went with believing her, she's six. I thought, I'm not
> going to accuse my daughter of lying.

Lisa's indecision about how to explain her daughter's behavior coupled with her

feelings of guilt and worry about outcomes for her daughter's future if her attribution of

intent was incorrect led her to not respond in a proactive way to her daughter's behavior.

Sara's action was, from an outside perspective, a common six year-old impulsive

response to wanting an object. Lisa's uncertainty about the accuracy of her thoughts

combined with her feelings of guilt magnified the ramifications of her behavior to a point

that made it difficult to have a proactive response.

Another parent, Kathryn, facetiously described the thoughts of catastrophic

outcomes that can accompany frustrating incidents with children in her description of an

event in which her son pulled his brother's pants up from behind while they were

roughhousing: "But there was a couple days in a row where I, you know, everyone takes

it personally. I must be a terrible parent. You know, he's gonna be an axe murderer, his

true personality is coming out." She then described her feelings of anger that contributed

to indecision about how to respond:

> …I was mad and I said, "Well you know, you know, you ruined his day so what can we, you know, make your day bad?" And then I thought, "Well that's not really going to work." And so I said to him, you know, "What should I do? What should we do now?"

Kathryn went on to describe a more pervasive thought process that underpins her

perception that her sons' behaviors are born out of "meanness," and her concerns about

the long-term ramifications of having a mean disposition:

> I don't like meanness. I just, I think you could hurt people unintentionally. But when you intentionally hurt someone then that's, I think it shows something wrong with you, that you're not, you know, something like, it's that whole cutting someone down to make yourself feel better or whatever. And that's, so maybe they have a problem that they're, you know, feeling bad about themselves or something but, you know, then I think meanness just builds. Ok, you know, you're mean. So what's going to happen next? You're going to feel defensive and then you're going to make a bunch of things in your mind about how you were justified because that's the only way you're going to make yourself feel better. And then you're going to go on a path of... (Stammering) not, you know, some clean happy path. A mean, you know, perpetuating mean retaliation, one-upping, eye for an eye path.

Kathryn's perceptions about the ramifications of having a "mean" disposition, and

the dispositional theory of attribution (Bugental & Johnston, 2000;) she ascribed to her

son's behavior engendered an angry response in her that influenced the way she

responded to him. This event was similar to Lisa's description in that both behaviors

were probably impulsive in nature. Lisa and Kathryn's concerns about long-term moral

ramifications of their children's behaviors, and the impact of their parental responses

ascribed their children's behaviors with more meaning than was, perhaps, merited and

infused them with greater sense of uncertainty about possible interventions.

Perceptions About Roles: Present Context Oriented Mothers

In addition to a tendency to ascribe contextual attributions to their children's behaviors, the present context oriented mothers' discourse revealed how these women defined their roles in raising their children. Five of the seven mothers made specific references to being a teacher, a guide or a role model for their children. One additional participant stated that she perceived difficult interactions as life lessons that will provide positive outcomes for her children in their adult lives. The remaining mother in this group's only reference to role was that of peacekeeper between the other members of her family. In contrast, 1 of the 7 mothers in the historical context oriented group specifically referenced a role in a similar way, describing her role as a manager.

Leah is the mother in the present context oriented group who spoke about life lessons to be learned from difficult interactions, described her views this way:

> I want to help them be the best that they can be and then that, you know, their selfishness isn't going to get them far, and the feeling that we're a team unit and that we need to work together and that being competitive but it doesn't always sink in (laughs) half the time that we're working it through. But I do know that it is a learning process and its' a good thing to have to, you know, deal with the, the bumps along the road for the, the mild conflicts that we do have.

Other mothers spoke more directly about the role of teaching and modeling. Denise spoke about wanting to teach her children the tools required to be successful in society and the workplace and provided a description of how she views her role with her children, as a facilitator of increasing independence:

> You know, you want your kids ultimately to become independent, and that takes... I've also heard this metaphor or this description of being a mother which is right after they're born they're just always moving away from you, you know. They're just always moving further and you have, and it's a continuous letting go, and letting go, and letting go, and it's hard. I

remember thinking when I was pregnant I don't ever want you to be born. Nobody's ever going to take care of you like I'm going to take care of you. This is the safest place to be, you know?

While articulating the emotional aspects of raising independent children, Denise's comment also reveals an objective pragmatism about her role; being able to shift the nature of her connection with her children in order to facilitate their independence.

Rita recalled an incident in which her six year-old son had opened the car door while she was driving. The dominant theme in Rita's conversation about the event was her view of her teaching role as a "job:"

> Like all these things go through your head really quickly and I definitely scared him. And then I realized, ok I don't want to scare you. I need to step back. But I'm not going to stop scaring you cause you need to feel this. You need to know that this is important. And because he was terrified I almost took a little advantage of that fear because that's something you'll remember. It's the emotion will be remembered, maybe not the physical action or why you should or should not do it, but I realized with that terror in his face this is not a bad time to teach you that this is important. That and I also said I'm going to manually lock all the car doors myself, and that's a good lesson for me.

Rita also described the ambivalence she felt about wanting to both comfort her son and wanting to make sure he learned the lesson she intended:

> I guess it was one of those, it's like I wanted to just hug him and say it's ok, it's ok don't worry, don't worry. But no, it's not okay and yes you should worry because that's your safety. I have to, my job in life is to keep you safe and if I just make it all go away and it's all okay it could happen again and it could be worse next time. It was one of those like, this was an easy lesson learned for both of us and I wanted it to be a lesson learned. So yeah, I can't take away all of the badness, and that's the unfortunate reality of your job.

Rita concluded her thoughts about her "job" with a more global account of her perspective:

I was talking to somebody yesterday about you know our job in this life is to, you know, my job is to make them socially responsible for, to go out into the world. I have to, I have this small amount of time to prepare them to live in the world that we are in and… This is the world and the society in which we live and I have to make you able to live within this society, in whatever role that you choose to do so. But that's your job as a parent, to get them there.

A distinguishing characteristic of these mothers' perceptions about their roles is that they were clearly defined and articulated in their descriptions of parenting. All parents have goals and aspirations for their children. The women in this group seem to have incorporated the idea of their roles as teachers and guides into their day to day parenting, and into their reflections about their practice with their children.

Perceptions About Roles: Historical Context Oriented Mothers

In contrast to the six women in the present context oriented group who described their roles as teacher or guide, only two of the women in the historical context oriented group explicitly referenced parental roles at all. One, Kathryn, stated she saw her role as a "manager," while the other, Claudia described her role as "guardian" or "protector."

Kathryn responded to the request to complete the sentence, "Parenting is like…" by comparing her parenting goals to her professional life:

Managing. That's my current thought is, like, managing employees is like parenting. A lot of similarities, find the strengths, you've got. You're guiding them, you set the expectations, you evaluate them, you give them feedback. Yeah that's my work, yeah. I still like… actually doctoring's kind of like it too. They're all three kind of developing people, you know too. With the goal of parenting and managing is to have people be more and more independent, more and more self directed, more and more coming to you with what they want to do and their goals and their successes and their failures, and less of you discovering them.

Kathryn's statement was in keeping with the long-term teaching and learning goals expressed by six of the mothers in the present context oriented group. In contrast,

Claudia's descriptions of her role as "protector" lacked the long-term outcome

perspectives that were integral components of the discourse of the parents with defined

teacher/model roles. The following set of excerpts from Claudia's interview describing

ongoing sibling rivalry issues between her children illustrates the short-term nature of the

goals she has for her protector role. Her goals are also closely linked to easing the anxiety

she felt in the situations she described:

> But at the same time, I just have this real sense of urgency to like always
> make sure that they're sound, their mind, and you know everything is, is,
> is fine, and I try to be patient and I try to be caring and all those things. I
> guess that I do wish I had, and so maybe I panic a little when like... the
> peace of the home is ruptured. Not ruptured, well not even ruptured, just
> kind of jiggled up a little.

This statement was focused on assuring that her children feel comfortable and

anxiety free at all times. It differs from Rita and Denise's statements in the previous

section in that they acknowledge emotional discomfort for themselves and their children,

while understanding that there is a larger purpose. Rita and Denise described the positive

outcomes of tolerating the discomfort. Claudia's description reveals an urgency to assure

that her children will not feel discomfort. Claudia went on to describe an internal

dialogue and motivation that accompanies her impulse to protect her children's emotions:

> Honestly, I think a lot of my challenge as a parent is what I went through
> as a kid and as an adolescent because my childhood was so difficult. I
> really think that I try to overcompensate a lot, I think to myself in the back
> of my head that 'I know what the underbelly of the world looks like,' and I
> want to not shelter my kids because I think that their life is very real. I'm
> not living in a false reality where they think life is Disneyland by any
> means but when we get into a situation where there is a lot of emotion
> with Alfredo (husband) and with children, I think there's something in the
> back of my mind that is telling me that I have to love them and nurture
> them because that's something I was lacking my whole life. But then I
> don't know if it's society or a blueprint that I've made for myself, there's
> like the little two voices you know, and one is telling me to do this and the

other one's saying (emphatically) 'BUT THAT"S NOT HEALTHY' you know?

This statement reveals the root of Claudia's vision of herself of her role as protector; her own troubled childhood. Claudia continued with a description of the way her husband deals with the children at times, and the emotional responses that are engendered in her. She described his actions as verbal outbursts such as saying, "shut up!" when he is frustrated with sibling rivalry issues. She also articulated her perception of the exclusiveness of the position, indicating that part of her role is to protect her children from their father as well as the outside world:

> I don't know. Maybe its like that whole thing that I want to just nurture them and love them and I feel like I have to protect them or its very, its just so, I think, complicated. Somehow it's exclusive. I don't know. He's, he's by far the best dad I've ever seen. And I'm, you know, like in a long time and I don't know why I would have any kind of negative emotion, you know, but I think it all just goes back to my wiring.

This comment was immediately followed by a description of what she meant by "wiring." Her intuition in these situations was related to her past memories of fear and instability as a child:

> Stable, that's it, that's it right there. I want them to be stable. I don't want them to ever feel afraid. And so then when my husband yells 'shut up' I think that makes them afraid, you know, and it's not like he does that all the time. No, but the other day, I think it was, it was a lot of (makes fighting noises) and I just see him and he was trying really hard and then it wasn't working but then that jolts me. It makes me inside go, 'Oh no,' and I want to… I think its all my past.

Claudia's description of her responses to conflicts between her children and with her husband exhibits a close link between her immediate goals to nurture and protect them, and strong connections to her own previous life. The context of this discussion was in regard to ongoing squabbles about possessions and privacy between her children. Her

desire to protect them in the short term from the difficulties and instability she experienced in her past contributed to a sense of confusion and indecision about how to best approach situations with them.

Although Claudia was one of the two mothers in the historical context oriented group that articulated specific roles, her perceptions about her role as protector were focused on maintaining her children's emotional comfort, and soothing her own anxiety. These views stand in contrast to those of Denise, Leah and Rita, parents in the present context oriented group, who articulated a view that feelings of discomfort are inevitable, and that they can be used to teach and guide their children important life lessons.

Parental Role As Learner: Historical Context Oriented Mothers

Two parents in the historical context oriented group did not explicitly articulate roles as parents, but instead focused on goals they have for their own personal development. These personal goals were described in the immediate context of being better parents, but the long-term outcomes of their views appeared to be associated with what they want to learn from their parenting that contributes to their own personal development. One mother spoke about a desire to shift her temperament, while the other spoke about intentional steps she has taken to be more present and aware.

A dominant theme in one mother's conversation, Linda, related to the way she reflected about her own temperament, and the way raising children has provided her with a lens to see the ways in which she wants to change. Linda's talk often centered around balancing two dichotomous aspects of her own life that cause some tension for her. On the one hand, she has a very "organic," relaxed approach to life and raising children. This can be seen in the style of her home, her attraction to gardening, and in the sentimental

way she expressed quiet times at home with the children. However, Linda also articulated a more "driven" and "self-centered" aspect of her temperament that centers on productivity and responsibility. In the interview, Linda described her life prior to having children by talking about the perspective of old friends who had recently visited:

> And first of all I hung out with a lot of people with no kids and for 15 years and you know, and then we were one of the few of our friends that had kids and we were like… and so these friends that came over they were this old group of friends and their lives are you know pretty driven and they can't quite understand this.

Linda then spoke directly about the dichotomy between her goal to lead a more relaxed life and her more driven tendencies when describing a garden project that had gone awry:

> It's a garden. And so it's very pleasant, but then there's this other side of it, which is my own stuff, which is like "Produce! It's a garden and it has to produce!" (Animated laughing)

Linda's intent in describing these dual perceptions about gardening was to illustrate similar tensions she has about day to day activities with her children and her ability to balance ongoing responsibilities with a desire to be relaxed, less driven, and accommodating to her children's need for unstructured time. In her diary entries Linda described the pressures of daily life and the emotional aspects of trying to balance her personal expectations and responsibilities with her children's needs. In the following entry, she described an interaction in which she had an angry response to her daughter Amy's reluctance to go to school:

> Amy was very tired, and at the tail end of being sick. I was tired and at the front end of being grumpy. I had a lot planned for the day -- a once-a-month 3 hour writing critique group meeting at my house, groceries to get, house to get clean, gym, an article to finish by a deadline -- and I could see

she was well enough to go to school but was just tired -- and maybe wanting some nice time watching a movie again…. I left the room. I was tired and grumpy. Then, standing in the kitchen debating what to do, I had a flash of major irritation, and I marched resentfully back into her room, "OK," I said, spite piercing my voice. "You can stay home if you still feel sick. But sick people have to stay in bed and they can't do anything fun." Of course she burst into tears, and I felt horrible.

Being nasty like that, and getting an awful reaction from the kids -- tears, generally -- is an awful wake up call for me. It's also like lancing a boil. The pus of irritability instantly drains out, I am able to step back a bit from my irritability and see things from her point of view. Awful, but often true.

The "wake up call" Linda described was a prompt to remember to balance her hectic life with an awareness of her children's needs and perspectives. Linda's diaries also included passages in which she described her responses to her children's complaints about her work responsibilities. At one point she described an angry outburst she had when her son stated that she "wasn't fun anymore," because she needed them to accompany her to an exhibition organized at her place of work:

I felt my steam rise suddenly and I snapped and said, "I am this close to getting really mad. I've had a long day. I don't like being called names. I know you don't want to go to this, but I've done the best I can to do things you'll like when we have to do things you won't like. We ate cupcakes. We went to the park. I have dinner waiting in the crock-pot at home. I've done the best I can." It was quite a blast of verbiage.

Following this passage, Linda clearly described the stress she experiences with being a working mom, and the attributions she ascribed to her son's behaviors as a result:

When Robert (son) began his tirade, I began some typical defenses. "It's a lovely afternoon and we got to play outside. Look on the bright side...maybe the glass is really half-full...-- descending into, "Robert has decided to be unhappy with the afternoon. He could decide to be happy to be outdoors in the open air, with our family, but he'd rather be miserable." Insulting, insulating myself from what felt like a wave of criticism -- that age old dilemma of trying to be a good mom and a good worker at the

same time. I usually err on the side the mom, but this time I wanted to see this thing and thought it would be fun and interesting.

It is interesting to note the different tones that Linda used to describe her interactions with her children. She had a tendency to describe the positive times with very warm, and affectionate detail (the garden was "magical," she sat with her daughter in "companionable silence."). The entries describing her responses to the more difficult times often had very harsh language associated with them ("blast of verbiage," "lancing a boil… the pus of irritability."). The differing tone of these dichotomous metaphors may be an indication of similarly dichotomous perceptions Linda has about her life, one to which she aspires, and one with which she struggles.

Later in the interview when asked to finish the sentence, "Parenting is like…" Linda provided a metaphor that had embedded in it the idea of parenting as a reflective opportunity to keep herself focused on her values:

> Parenting is like…Well the first thing that pops into my head, and I don't know why, but it's like a parachute. I'm not sure why that came to my head but, yeah, I guess I feel like in a way its a thing that has sort of saved me in the sense of bringing me back to what I really value. You know like the kids being a mirror. I can't have like this self centered rage. I can't be quite as self-centered as I could be. And also its very freeing in a way because when else do you get to just hang out you know as adults we don't get to just hang out and just lay around and read to someone you know.

This quote illustrates that Linda experiences an aspect of parenting as a personal redemptive process. The metaphor of a parachute reveals a view of parenting as restraining her from engaging in aspects of her temperament that she wants to shift and providing her with opportunities to fulfill goals she has set for herself. A similar theme of parenting as redemptive process was evident in the interview with Mary, a woman who

sees her current parenting role as an opportunity to change aspects of her own life in order to achieve positive outcomes for her six year-old son.

Case Study: Mary

The case study narrative of Mary is presented in its entirety in order to illustrate the evolution of her thoughts throughout the hour-long interview and to demonstrate the purpose of these narratives in the analysis of the data. Mary is one of the two participants whose perceptions about parenting were related to goals for personal growth and change. The case study demonstrates how that perception was articulated throughout the data collection process. The rationale for the development of these case study narratives was to provide context for understanding how individual statements that reveal schematic perceptions were related to the larger contexts of the participants' lives.

Schemas function in part as personal narratives composed of schematic processes that include memories (James, 2003), working models of relationship (Horowitz, 1991) and core beliefs (James, et al. 2004) among others. The case study narratives provide insight into the complex workings of these processes by integrating what the participants said about their thoughts, feelings, actions, perceptions about their past lives and hopes for their children into a "story" that is intended to represent how the participants think about their lives. This case study reveals the range of topics Mary articulated in the interview, and is illustrative of the complex ways in which all the participants' schemas were articulated and expressed through the extended interview process.

Mary is a single mother in her mid-forties with two sons, 6 year-old Philip, and 17 year-old Sean. She is a stay-at-home mother, having retired from a full-time career when

Philip was born. Mary's discourse style is thoughtful and reflective, frequently describing the thoughts that would occur to her in the moment as she talked about particular events with her sons. An example of this tendency was her description of being hurried and tense as Sean drove the family to school one morning soon after getting his driving permit:

> We're finally in the car and then Sean is driving and that adds…(laughs) and I'm thinking, 'Enjoy this, and, you know, just remember that the funny parts like the way he drives with he has his arms like this,' [Mimics Sean's arm position]. And so I thought, 'Enjoy that picture because it's pretty funny.'

The dominant theme in Mary's conversations focused on regret about her parenting and her lifestyle when her older son was young. She spoke about concerns she had about choices Sean makes in life, and some regret about not having a closer relationship with him. Most of her conversation focused on making intentional choices to do things differently as Philip grows up. Her hopes for what these changes might provide were as much for herself as for her sons, although the primary impetus appears to be for her sons' welfare.

Mary spoke of wanting to develop a more grounded lifestyle, and was very candid about her past marriages:

> I think oh man, you know what? My kids, I mean they need a flow chart with my… Not with relationships but with marriages because I guess I marry people that have their own… And I have so many step kids, and so they have half siblings everywhere. And to the point where (laughs) one year Sean asked at Thanksgiving when I has first married… Philip's dad, he had a daughter, Ann, from a relationship when he was in his 20s. She's 24 now and Sean said, 'And how do you know Glen again?' And she said, 'He's my father,' and I thought, 'Oh gosh.'

This comment was followed by a description of her hopes for the future, and the steps she is taking to reach those goals:

> The more I read about it now the more I would have liked to have, maybe it's too late now, but more of a life like all of my friends that they're all, you know, like… married and they have, they're like I guess you would say a typical family. Not normal because you know who knows what that is? So with Philip that's why I've been reading a lot. In fact I just picked up that book that is… Because I don't, I know it's a little bit late to get to where I have a more grounded life. On the other hand, it's better late than never. So and that's why I've been putting more emphasis on really enjoying my kids.

Mary's perceptions about the factors that will result in a more grounded lifestyle were related to eliminating her tendency to rush to meet deadlines and being efficient, and to spend more time establishing family traditions. She spoke about her mother's influence as a possible reason for why these values, traditions and beliefs have not been important to her before:

> So anyway I spend a lot of time dragging my, or I feel like pulling my kids into that sort of hurry, hurry, we'd better get there, we can never be late. And I had never… I was never late in 27 years and so (laughs) you can tell I was good at that. But it's not enjoyable to me anymore; because I start I don't enjoy any moment with them where I wasn't… I am trying to with Philip and make it… Some things were never important to me, or I guess I never thought of them because I didn't grow up that way. But for instance traditions and things like that they, they seem more interesting to me now... My mother was a teacher but she seemed, she took care of everything like the business and then she worked and then she took care of the kids and she just… I don't think she's the type. I might I think we're a lot alike in that way where she just doesn't do… That she's really loving and fun and relaxed, but she just didn't do those things. So I'm trying to… I thought I really might start having a tradition, maybe starting this year and, (laughs) you know; give Sean a tradition before he leaves.

At this point in the conversation, Mary began to speak about how she had 'programmed" herself to be efficient and timely. She noted two factors that influenced her shift toward having a more grounded life: She was no longer working full-time, and,

as a result, did not have to be organized and driven in the way she needed to be while working. She also noted that several years earlier she had stopped wanting to travel as much with her husband. Her account of the epiphany she experienced reveals a set of schemas about organization and efficiency that had been a dominant mode of thinking for her:

> I finally just had a wake up call, kind of, where I'm really good at getting things done and I can really program myself. I'm really… I'm really good at follow through where I can, not programmed… What is it called when you, you're just self-disciplined? But I can be that kind of German sort of automated to where I don't really, I'm not really there. I'm just going through the motions and getting to the next step and then I have everything so stinking organized (laughs) and then I've experienced none of it, so…

She spoke at length about the experience of "going through the motions" in her marriage to Philip's father and added that it was like "waiting for real life to start." Part of the shift in her thinking had to do with the realization that her life with her children was passing her by:

> I don't know what I thought it was going to be, but something… It's really sort of hard to explain. So, and now I know there is no, this isn't a dress rehearsal and I know that all of a sudden Sean is not wanting to, of course, spend that much time… even though we're close. He doesn't want to… he's going to be moving out, he's gone and then I can't have family traditions, and I can't have dinners together, and it would be too late. So now Philip's 6 and I wanted to do it differently. Yeah… I do believe that you, when you keep on doing the same thing over and over, unless you get a clue (laughs) things are going to turn out the same way. What do you know?

Mary then spoke about a recent soccer party she arranged for Philip's birthday, describing first the ways she had arranged events in the past, using the metaphor of a detached CEO:

And so it was the same with the kids because I just was like the CEO but none of the... I didn't really appreciate the... And things that I did like birthday parties... I would do them but I wouldn't necessarily enjoy them. I would think, 'Ugh, great,' because I'm thinking about how to get together some of those… a great goody bag (laughs) and, ok 30 of them. And then like, I'd exhaust myself in the preparation and then finally it, I would just get it over with.

Mary countered the thoughts and feelings she had preparing for those events with the way she experienced the recent party. Her account is striking in that she describes an awareness of the thought process that she engaged in to balance the impulsive feelings and thoughts associated with her older habits with her newer, learned way of approaching the event:

I had a soccer party on Sunday and I mean, things were being broken all over because you have, you know, 30 kids and some of them are smaller because they're the siblings. And balls were going over into the yard, and toys were being… and I thought, 'Really, I'm not going to have any more children.' So, so the neighbors last week they said, 'We found some of your balls.' I said, 'Oh, I forgot all about them,' instead of thinking, 'Oh gosh, you know, our, our new soccer ball is over there, and, and, oh that toy… it hadn't even been opened yet. One of the kids found it in the closet.' And I really had a nice time so... Yeah, and even with all the loud and chaos, it was it was really fun.

Mary continued to reflect about the contrast between "letting things go," and her affinity for order. She paused for a moment and began speaking about an iconic memory having to do with her father, who had died the previous year, his work gloves, and her desire for order:

I would've been thinking about… I would have had a good time [at earlier parties], but you know, not so much. I would have been thinking about how to get those toys back, or if they lost these parts and, you know, things that were… That would take away from the good time. And it's like uhm... It's like my father. He, I would buy him… He would use these work gloves. He was from Oklahoma… He was a teacher but he wasn't a very good one and he taught junior high and he nearly went crazy (laughs). So

he just, he built property, rental property. And then, sort of, my mom went to work. My dad stayed home and, but he would work outside and he would wear these gloves with holes in them. And so I would buy him new gloves. And there they were. He died and there were all those… I thought, 'Where, I wonder why he's wearing them year after year.' I would buy him new gloves and leather gloves and he'd put them away because he didn't want to ruin them. So, you know, I think that maybe I got a little bit of that, you know, that... Like getting toys for the kids but I don't really want them to use them, like ruin them, take the chance of breaking them. 'That big robot thing looks really cool. Don't bring it down. Oh no, you can't touch that.' Yeah and I noticed actually one of the kids at the soccer party took that big, this big robot sort of thing and he has that outside and I'm thinking (lowers voice), 'That shouldn't be outside.' And I thought, 'Eh! I don't really care.'

Mary ended the conversation by telling me that she had been spending a lot of time thinking about how these "habits" become ingrained in people. She provided a very succinct, and mostly accurate description of how schemas are formed and how they are enacted in our daily lives:

I was just talking to someone about that. I hope this isn't taking up your tape time because this is about how certain things stay with you. It's when someone has said something to you and it's programmed in there it is a little bit like a ticker tape. Like my first husband… We were in New York City where we used to live part time, and he said, 'you know, fur doesn't keep you that warm. Wool is every bit as warm as fur.' And ever since then, that was probably 25 years ago, every time I was looking for sweaters for someone and I'd see wool, and there it goes, tick, tick, tick, wool is every bit as warm. And I thought, 'Whoa, how many times am I going to think that?' But I guess I will always think that… Yeah, there were a lot of things from [my father] that were, that are stuck that make the rotation. It's the same with things now that I've been, that I've been paying attention to more along the lines of what it's really like to be WITH (emphatically) your kids.

Mary's clarity about the differences in her old behaviors and impulses, and her newer, more conscious awareness of the differences between how she has behaved in the past and her goals for the future is an example of a feature of the ways which schemas are expressed. Many schemas are largely subconscious and are enacted in behaviors like

seeking control, as Mary experienced. Moments of stress, uncertainty or ambiguity act to increase our conscious awareness of these ways of perceiving and experiencing life (James, 2003). Mary is in the midst of multiple transitions in her life that may provide the mechanism for her awareness to develop: She recently divorced, she is no longer working in a demanding job, her older son will soon be leaving the home, she has a younger son for whom she has new goals and hopes. She is currently very aware of the multiple ways of experiencing life that are in her mind. The metaphor she provided when I asked her to finish the sentence, "Parenting is like…' reveals multiple schemas related to control and order, juxtaposed with thoughts related to allowing herself to experience life more fully:

> It's like, opening yourself up for, for the ride because it's out of your control basically, and so whatever grief, you know, there's going to be, there's going to be huge grief, there's going to be huge joy. It's going to be this big ball of, like an emotional blender most of the time, but it's going to be all mixed in with the good and the bad. And as much as you can tweak it to be good the better, and that part is sort of in your control.

Dichotomous Themes: Historical Context Oriented Mothers

A characteristic exclusive to the historical context oriented group was found in the discourse of four of the seven women who revealed sets of themes that were dichotomous in nature. One parent, Gwendolyn, spoke in terms of dependence versus independence. Mary's (case study above) conversation revealed a tension between her desire for order and control versus her desire to raise her son in a more relaxed environment. Linda, who's comments were discussed in the "Parental Role As Learner" section spoke about the tension between her driven, productivity oriented temperament and a desire for a more organic, free form lifestyle. The fourth participant, Claudia described a tension

between maintaining her home as sanctuary and safety and guarding against dangerous, chaotic outside influences.

A compelling aspect to these dichotomous themes is that they appear to be a source of tension for these mothers in dealing with their children or in thinking about their roles as parents. Mary was acutely aware of intentional changes she was making in her approach to her parenting and with an ongoing need to regulate her inclination for order. Linda was similarly aware of, and distressed by her responses to her children that were influenced by her more driven tendencies. For Gwendolyn and Claudia, whose dichotomous themes are discussed in detail in this section, the duality of their perceptions influenced their interpretations of their children's behavior and affected their abilities to respond effectively to situations with their children, or in ways they would have preferred in the moment.

Gwendolyn spoke in very sentimental terms about the positive feelings she has when her daughter, Grace, demonstrates behaviors that indicate dependence in a way that a younger child might. She was also very candid about the type of bond she has with her children, describing a "family bed," and that she nursed Grace until she was three. These descriptions were accompanied by what appeared to be a longing for those earlier times. Gwendolyn said that recently Grace had been much more independent in the mornings and had expressed a desire for play dates after school, to which she said, "And I must confess that has been very hard for me." She ended this statement with a thoughtful silence, then said "Oh, well."

Gwendolyn's comments indicate the influence of Grace's developmental shifts on her conceptions of relationship, indicating perceptions related to issues of intimacy and

dependence and the meaning of her role as a mother. Her children's development in

regard to independence may provide sufficient ambiguity (James, 2003) to activate the

expression of a conflicting set of schemas about the nature of relationship.

At one point in the interview, Gwendolyn described a sentimental appreciation for

the kind of relationships she had with her children when they were younger:

> It's like your whole world is each other, which is a really special time as a
> parent. When they're, when they can talk and yet you're still their whole
> world you know. What is it like two, three, four [years of age]? Yeah it's
> just really before they're really starting to go into the world like that's a
> really neat time and it's like somebody said if only I, if only I were as half
> as wonderful as my 4 year old thinks I am and half as awful as my
> teenager thinks I am. Yeah right. So, so that's really neat and that you
> know I mean that's kind of narcissistic because then it's all about me
> feeling like I'm the center of the world, but it was really, it's really a nice
> feeling.

Gwendolyn's fond recollection about the nature of her relationships when her

children were younger was juxtaposed in this comment by a negative perception about

the upcoming period of her children's adolescence. These sentimental responses were

countered by expressions of frustration about Grace's tendency to behave in dependent

ways, particularly when Gwendolyn was preoccupied or in a hurry. In one diary entry,

she described the tension and her response in this way:

> Most difficult was this morning when she was dawdling and I was trying
> to get us out the door. Frustrated because she wants someone to dress her
> (even though she can dress herself) and she gets easily distracted and will
> completely forget she is supposed to be brushing her teeth or getting her
> shoes on. I was in a bad place anyway and was nasty with her---I finally
> apologized in the car and explained to her that my mood isn't because of
> her.

Gwendolyn spoke about this event in the interview, describing the immediate

response she had to her daughter's dependent behaviors:

But it was that it was always like right at the point where everybody's the most busy, the most tired, we've got homework with Michael, sometimes homework with her and it was just that feeling of, uck, you know like here we go again. Almost like she, you know, it seemed like, you know, I mean sort of unconsciously I think I was taking it like a personal attack. Like, like, you know, like she's really messing with me… Like they're really they know how to get to me and they're really doing it on purpose and which is sort of ridiculous. It's sort of ridiculous but I think that, but when I think about, you know, the age and the, sort of the innocence of it all and then I think, 'Why would I think that she was doing that every time?' I mean it was so clearly just, she's out of sorts at that hour of the day.

Gwendolyn's talk revealed a dichotomy between her perceptions about dependence and relationship that may have been triggered at this point in her life by the shifts in her daughter's development. Her discussion of her memories about her relationships with them when they were young and wholly dependent on her contrasted with the anger and frustration she stated as being precipitated by her daughter's lack of independence. This emotional response provoked an attribution of intentionality as explanation for her daughter's attention seeking behaviors. This was an attribution Gwendolyn acknowledged in retrospect that was not accurate, yet influenced her to respond to her child in a way she described as "nasty." Gwendolyn's admitted regret about her responses to her child was similar to the sentiments Linda described in terms of discomfort about her irritable responses to her children.

Claudia also described perceptions about her parenting in ways that revealed dichotomous themes. Claudia's themes centered on her role as "protector," defining her home as a sanctuary and safe haven in opposition to the dangerous, chaotic world outside. These dual perceptions caused her to fear that the sanctuary of her home would be disrupted when her children engaged in moments of sibling rivalry. Much of Claudia's conversation in the first interview focused on her youth. From her account, it was a

tumultuous existence; her father was a heroin addict and was abusive to her mother. Her father left the family when Claudia was 14. She stated that when her father left the home, she "cut him out of my life," and this event represented a "turning point" in her life. Claudia said that she was the oldest of four children and used the word "protector" to describe her role in her family of origin.

Claudia also used the word "protector" when talking about the birth of her son, describing an intense desire to protect him from the "danger" and "chaos" that she had endured in her childhood. She became very animated in describing her determination that her son grow up to be someone that treats people, especially women, well. She described becoming angry with her husband if she perceives that he is not being a good role model for her son. An example she gave was of her husband going out occasionally with friends and coming home late. She said that her husband "is right" when he says its okay for him to be with his friends occasionally, but that it "gets me…" She ended this sentence by clenching her fists and gritting her teeth. She also acknowledged that she values her husband's way of relating to the children, and referred to the internal conflict she experienced as, "just my thing," indicating that the issue is primarily due to her impulse to be independent in raising her children in a particular way.

Claudia's diary entries revealed expressions of anxiety and uncertainty about her children's tendency to engage in sibling rivalry. The behaviors she described appeared to be relatively mundane examples of squabbles between siblings, and included arguments over possessions and privacy and vying for their mother's attention. In two consecutive diary entries Claudia described her son's behaviors, and the confusion she experienced from them:

> Again this evening Jose and his younger sister, Julia, argued...about
> everything...mostly about Julia being in Jose's room. I know it's normal,
> but so frustrating to watch. The tattling makes me crazy. It is a
> competition to see whose side I will choose and I wish I could be left out
> of it. Jose was mean to his sister and called her a dork. He said that he was
> aware of how this could have made her feel but he did it anyway.

Her attribution of "meanness" revealed a dispositional bias, and her response was in keeping with research findings demonstrating an association between parents' attributional inferences of dispositional characteristics and intentionality on the child's part with increased parent affect intensity and negativity. (Dix, Ruble, Grusec, & Nixon, 1986) Her second entry described the effect her feelings of frustration exert on her perceptions of parental efficacy:

> When I hugged or held Jose's sister today, Jose would make sure to push
> her out of the way or try to call my attention elsewhere. I'm feeling lately
> like I'm pulled in two directions and it is frustrating and exhausting. I go to
> bed doubting myself, wondering if I gave enough attention to both
> children...wondering if I've done a good enough job as a parent.

In addition to these diary entries, in the final interview Claudia further revealed the influence her son's behavior has both on her emotional responses and on the limited sense of efficacy she has in addressing the issue. Her use of the words "mean," and "attack" are further examples of attributional inferences focused on disposition and intent regarding her son's behavior toward his sister. In this quote Claudia also stated that she takes her son's rivalry with his sister personally:

> You know when you're in it its so frustrating and I feel sad sometimes the
> way Jose treats his sister because he's a very empathetic boy who at school
> is so kind to his friends but sometimes he's so mean to his sister. And he's
> not the same person that I know with regard to Julia. So it hurts my
> feelings and I'm trying not to take it personally, but she's my baby too you
> know. I want to say I feel helpless and maybe I shouldn't as the parent, but
> I'm not sure how to handle the situation because I don't want to take sides
> and it hurts my feelings because I'm watching this little person in essence

attack my daughter. But he's my son too and I'm thinking am I doing something wrong as a parent? Is there something that I should be doing better to make him understand that she's a person too?

Claudia's use of terms such as "helpless," "attack" and "taking sides" is reflective of the terminology she used when describing her home life with her family of origin, indicating that her mother was a helpless victim to her father's violent behaviors. These perceptions appear also to be closely linked to her expressed desire that her son develops into a man who treats women well.

Claudia's subsequent statement further elaborated on the dichotomous themes of safety and sanctuary versus chaos and danger. In the following quote, she made explicit links between her schematic perceptions of the outside world, her chaotic past and her home as sanctuary. Claudia also articulated a view that even slight disagreements between her children will disrupt this delicate balance, and describes the effects these perceptions exert on her sense of efficacy and effectiveness as a parent:

> You know what is so strange too though to me is that my household is really peaceful. That's my sanctuary. When I get home I can leave the world behind and the vibration changes when I enter my front door. My children are a product of that and they're really cool kids. But even the slightest, I mean I never have crazy wild things going on with the little ones. But even the slightest thing really kind of makes me feel like, 'Am I doing a good enough job? Oh shoot, maybe I didn't give them the tool they needed and now they can't handle this.' Or, and I start to really like put it all on myself, like maybe that, maybe I'm thinking that the turmoil is starting to mess up the sanctuary or something. Yeah, I'm not really sure. I do just know that my life as a child and up until I was in my 20's was never really peaceful and I was always on the defensive and always you know protecting or avoiding. And so I really try hard to make sure that my kids have a real stable really calm home to come to and so maybe I never thought of that but maybe when the kids start to act up I'm worried that the whole vibration the house is changing and oh my gosh and my, that brings up emotions in me that I'm remembering or that I'm subconsciously you know feeling from back in the day when everything was just always chaos and (makes screeching sound), you know, and I don't know.

This statement is emblematic of the perceptions Claudia expressed throughout the two interviews and in her diaries. Her happy diary entries about her son centered on his empathic and caring behaviors and attributes, qualities that were also reflected in her descriptions of the home as a nurturing and peaceful environment, and in the goals that she had for him to become a man who treats others, especially women, well. The rivalry between Jose and his sister engendered feelings of inadequacy, indecision and helplessness and were spurred by an intuition that these disruptions would destroy her carefully crafted, safe sanctuary that is the antithesis of her former life.

<div align="center">**Two Case Studies**</div>

Two case studies are presented in full here in order to illustrate both the range of schematic perceptions articulated by the mothers' discourse, and to portray how these perceptions were revealed throughout the diary and interview process. The first case study, Judith, is representative of the historical context oriented group. Her talk reveals evidence of dichotomous themes regarding her comfort level with the differences between her current temperament, her feelings about her past, and her sons' temperaments. Much of her conversation focused on her past life history and her personal emotional responses to her sons' behaviors and her interactions with them. Judith also reveals anxiety and limited sense of efficacy in approaching her parenting. The limited sense of efficacy is based on her view of the long-term ramifications of her parenting practice as well as extended consequences resulting from her sons' behaviors.

The case study on Sandra reveals a present context oriented focus on her children's development. While she revealed some of the emotional difficulties she

experiences in interactions with her children, she had a propensity to attribute their

behaviors to contextual factors (Hastings and Grusec, 1998; Bugental & Johnston, 2000).

Sandra also framed events with her children in individual terms, each one with a set of

solutions. Her contextual attributions and her tendency to see events as individual

moments provided her with a sense of efficacy. Her descriptions of difficult interactions

were accompanied by affirmative courses of actions that she took in the moment,

indicating a positive sense of parental efficacy. Sandra also specifically articulated her

role as teacher and guide, helping her children through their "normal" and "natural"

developmental stages.

Case Study: Judith

Judith is a mother of four boys between the ages of two and eight. Her son Brian,

aged 6 is the child who is the subject of this study, although Judith's conversations were

equally inclusive of all her children. She has a measured, thoughtful way of speaking, and

she articulated a more acute awareness of, and discomfort with the interview process than

most of the other participants. At times she would refer to what she perceived the

interview structure to be with statements like, "Oh, I'm not supposed to ask you

questions, am I?" Judith also sought reassurance from me about her descriptions of her

thoughts and behaviors with her children, asking several times, "Don't most people do

that?" or "That's common, isn't it?" Judith also referred often to being sad; she referred

to her own sadness eight times in her diary entries, and six times in the interview. Her

references to sadness were often expressed in combination with feelings of guilt.

Two dominant themes were present in Judith's interviews, the first being a sense

of vulnerability in her personal relationships, and the second being her struggle with

having a different energy level and tolerance for noise and "chaos" than her boys. The vulnerability she described was framed as her personal relationships being fragile or tenuous. These thoughts included her boy's behavior as influences on her relationships because she worried about the impact of their rambunctiousness on her friendships. Judith also described having her feelings hurt at times by her boys, feelings that made it difficult for her to be proactive in resolving conflicts. In one of her diaries she described the feelings that their behavior engendered:

> I get a bit embarrassed when my boys say words or act in ways that are inappropriate. I guess I need to take a step back and realize that maybe they are doing it for a reason - they need something from me - and take that approach. Instead I cringe a bit and feel disappointed.

In the first interview with Judith, she stated that she had a difficult time trusting people and making friends. In the final interview, she referred to a diary account that described a rough pillow fight between Brian and a playmate that resulted in the girl being hurt. While reading the entry, Judith said, "Oh, that was hard." I asked her to describe what she was thinking about the event:

> Like, well just a lot of things. Like, obviously I was so worried for Mary, and so then I would think how I would feel if it were my own child and so it was a lot of the worry for Mary, but also that fear that my son had caused it, you know? And then Tracey has turned into being such an amazing friend. So then selfishly I was thinking, "Oh my gosh." And then my son, I'm like, whacks her daughter and then there goes the friendship. One of the rare wonderful friendship I've gotten in the last few years, and its just I couldn't lose that. So, just a lot of uh, yeah, but it all turned out okay.

These feelings of the tenuousness of relationships extended to her relationships with her sons as well. She spoke about a tendency she has to hold grudges when she is hurt or angry and provided an example of how this impacts her parenting. Judith spoke

about one of her diary entries in which she described a time that her younger son broke

something belonging to her older son:

> I think on certain things, you know, I get my feelings hurt and then I hold
> grudges. Even with my kids. I know I do. So I'm working on it, but yeah,
> I've, I've, I mean then it was good. Oh, I know, so he [Vincent] got really,
> so, when Aiden broke it he got super angry and then he said, "Maybe I
> should just move out." And. then it, there was this… [His grandfather] is
> just obsessed with Vincent, and actually both his [husband's] parents just
> think he's like, perfect and he's so much better than anybody else and any
> other grandchild of theirs… So Vincent said, "Maybe I should just move
> out," and I immediately I was like… And I just flipped and I was all... And
> I said that out of sadness and fear and, you know, whatever and I'm like...
> And I said, 'What? Do you want to move in with Baca?' And he's like, 'I
> don't know. Maybe I should, then Aiden won't break my things.' And then
> that's when I crumbled and… [Makes emphatic noise]

While Judith was not specific about exactly what she had said, she indicated that

she was not happy with how she had handled the situation. She stated that Vincent had

initiated a conversation with her soon after that repaired the conflict they had

experienced. She noted that he was very good with the skill of initiating "beautiful

conversations" that ultimately resolve issues, and that he has learned these skills at

school. I asked Judith if, given her tendency to hold grudges, is it as easy for her to

initiate conversations as it is for her son. She responded with a description of the

enduring qualities of old habits despite her attempts to be reflective about them:

> Well yeah, I mean, I think when I'm in the moment and I'm really sad
> about whatever it is… I don't think it takes me too long to get, to get
> reflective with it, you know. But it does take… Then, and then what I find
> in all parts of my life with them and with other things is that I tend to, like
> everybody I'm sure, just get back right in the same grooves and then even
> things I share with Tracey (friend), it's like even recently, she's even like
> there are things I keep coming back to and struggling with. And then, you
> know, just the other day she said you know about this one issue, she said,
> 'You just have to let it go.' And you know, I can't do it. And you know,
> it's true. And so I do… I think with them (children) too you know... I think
> it's just, I don't know... Doesn't everybody do that though a little bit?

Judith also spoke about her difficulty with the differences in temperament between her and her sons. She stated that she prefers a feeling of "peace, quiet, lovely, mellow times,' to their louder more chaotic ways of being. She spoke about how she has worked to accept her sons' noisy demeanors and she referred to a memory from a camping trip when she saw a bear and her cubs. She said the image of the bears provides her with a way to think about and manage her discomfort with the differences between her and her boys and to accept it as normal:

> When they get maybe wild and it, I think it was more difficult at the beginning when Roy was little because Vincent and Brian were still really wild and then, you know, I don't know, talking with people or reading or, just kind of accepting it. It was better. I've really started loving bears, and we would go camping and I'd see a lot of bears and it's like I got really.... I just love bears; grizzlies… You would see them, we went to Yellowstone once and we saw a mom with her three cubs and she was just like cruising along and they were all behind her just, like rolling on top of each other, like the kittens do it too, you know they just like roll. And I think as soon as I realized that that's all they're doing, they're just like little cubs and they have to do that. It kind of made it better, you know?

Judith spoke about a concern she has about Brian, who, despite his energetic disposition, keeps to himself a lot, especially at school. He had also stated to her that he didn't have any friends; a perception Judith said she knew was not true. She said, in a lighthearted manner that "I think I'm focusing on a little bit of worry with other things. I'm just trying to worry about everything." She elaborated about this worry, which was related to her feelings about her own solitude. She said that when she was younger she was more like the children in temperament, that she had been a cheerleader in college but had become quieter and more solitary when she moved to California because "I moved

out on my own, I didn't know anybody and it was hard to make friends." She described

conflicted feelings she has about Brian's habit of playing by himself:

> If I would describe myself in high school, I would describe a very social, outgoing person who likes to be involved and who likes to have people around, and if I would describe myself now it would be completely the opposite… And I don't think that's, like I don't think it's a negative thing. I think it's fine, and so interestingly when I look at my kids I think I just want them to have all these friends. And it shouldn't be like that because I know I'm happy and I'm fine with this part of my life, you know, being reflective and calm and quiet and I'm sure its fine for them too, I don't know, It's anyway… It's interesting.

Judith's demeanor when speaking about the shift in her social life belied some

regret that was counter to her affirmation of her current lifestyle. This uncertainty seems

to be part of her ongoing reflection and responses to her boys' behaviors: She is uncertain

about the permanence of relationships and this creates a greater impact when her sons'

behaviors seem rejecting. She is, also acutely aware of the possible influence their

behaviors might have on her social relationships. Judith's concern about outcomes for her

sons' futures is closely tied to questions about her own lifestyle. While professing to

prefer quiet solitude, her hope for her sons' futures is that they will have more robust

social live than she currently has.

Case Study: Sandra

Sandra is the mother of two children, Marta, aged 10, and Sergio, aged 12. One

noticeable aspect of the interviews with Sandra was that she exhibited a very lighthearted

demeanor about her relationship with her children. She laughed often while describing

interactions, often using different voices to imitate her daughter's part of the

conversation.

Sandra was apologetic at times for not having many difficult moments to report in the diaries. She asked me if I thought this was unusual, saying, "I have a question. Because I was, thinking about the positive and the negative moments of the… of the day. So you think it's too… is it kind of weird that we don't have difficult time?" This comment was of interest to me because in the interview Sandra did describe several events with her children that could be categorized as difficult: She spoke about her daughter's moodiness, instances of sibling rivalry between Sergio and Maria, and of an ongoing conflict of values she has with her daughter about spending money on material goods and her daughter's desire to be famous someday:

> I'm trying to you know tell her I don't think that's important because she's like, "I wanna be famous." And I'm like "Oh my god. What am I gonna do?" Because I'm gonna be famous and I'm gonna be a celebrity and I think it's normal but it's kind of, it sometimes it bothers me, because it's not coming from me you know it's like I don't know why she wants that for her life. I mean we don't, I don't see those kind of TV shows like all the celebrities, I don't take pictures with celebrities. I don't know she's like so on that. I don't know, and sometimes that bothers me a little bit.

Sandra's perception that she doesn't have many difficulties with her children is related to three dominant themes in her discourse: In her descriptions of her daughter's behaviors, Sandra consistently ascribed contextual attributions (Bugental, Johnston, New & Sylvester, 1998) to her children's behaviors. She also articulated a strong sense of efficacy (Johnston & Mash, 1989) about how to approach the situations, and she clearly stated that she saw her parenting role as a teacher and guide for her children.

One event Sandra described that exhibits all three of these themes was when

Marta felt criticized when her mother spoke to her about the length of her showers:

> We were talking about saving water because she has showers too long and then we were you know talking about just take the five minutes shower... we shower every day so we have to be more careful about how long is that shower… I just told her you need to learn that you need to you know just spend five minutes in the shower and she was like crying, and I was, "I'm just telling you I don't know why are you crying?" When I said that she stopped. I mean when I said, "I don't know why are you crying. I'm not yelling at you or saying something bad about you. I'm just trying to teach you. And she stopped crying and she knows that it's not necessary but she already is crying, so she has to calm down.

In this exchange, Sandra could clearly see that her daughter's emotional response was due to the fact that she felt criticized, and she immediately stated that she was merely trying to teach Marta, not criticize her. As she described the event, Sandra laughed several times, which indicated to me that she was not particularly flustered by her daughter's response. I asked her if the crying and emotional responses were common, to which Sandra responded:

> I think it's something… it's been about six months or maybe one year. I don't know it's not her I mean... I guess it's normal, I don't know… Nothing is different. I mean...we're not going through anything unusual. We're not moving. We're not, you know, we had a few changes, very big, you know in our lives. But lately we are happy, you know. Everybody's happy everybody's, yes, working, everybody's studying and, I don't know. Maybe it's just because she's changing. I mean hormones. Maybe she's growing and she's changing.

Sandra repeated this type of contextual attribution for her daughter's behavior five times in the interview. She described moments when her daughter behaved in demanding ways, but attributed it to the fact that she had friends visiting ("I notice when she has

friends over, maybe she gets a little bit more demanding like, 'We wanna do this or

we…'"). In describing a time when Marta complained that Sandra didn't show her

enough affection, she attributed Marta's interpretation of the events as an emotional

response to some sort of current need, and had an immediate and effective response to her

daughter's needs:

> I think she needs more from me now. Actually she was telling me, "You never kiss me." And I was like, "What?" We are like all you know like because our culture is more like touching and kissing and so for us its… I'm taking care of, you know, I'm taking care of that a little bit. I'm like okay she need more she needs more so I'm going to hug more, kiss more.

The following quote is another example of Sandra's attributional style, focusing

on issues of development and peer influence in an exchange she had with Marta about

clothing choices. Sandra's description of the event includes contextual attribution

inferences while concurrently articulating her view of her parental role as teaching and

setting limits were evident in a description of an exchange about her daughter's clothing

choices:

> Sometimes she is checking with me everything, and sometimes she is trying to push me because she wants to dress a little bit, I told you about that, a little bit more sexy or the hat and stuff that I believe that is not for her age. Not appropriate, and she said, 'Everybody believe that I look cute.' And I said, 'Okay yeah, you look cute, but I don't think it's for your age.' And sometimes she gets sad, I mean, or mad… I think it's normal, because I was trying to do the same thing when I was her age, so I understand. She doesn't know what is sexy. I mean, I know, she doesn't know. She just wants to be like you know the star on TV. I don't know. Because she doesn't know actually what is sexy wrong. I mean, I know that, but she doesn't know. It doesn't affect me too much. It's just, I'm just making her you know, the limits. And she's okay with that. I mean, I'm

just, 'I'm not going to buy that for you. I already told you and you know that I'm not going to buy that.' And she's okay. Then, 'When are you?' (imitating child) 'Okay, when you're 21.' I said something like that, something silly and she laughed.

One area in which Sandra voiced questions about her parenting approach was in the ways she wanted to influence her children's cultural world-view. She described not wanting to be overly dogmatic in forwarding the Argentinian values she holds as important, while at the same time wanting her children to internalize some of those cultural norms and expectations:

> She's always dreaming. And that's, I think that's nice because she's ten and it's the age. But sometimes I have to remind her that, that another… I mean in our country for example, the kids her age they don't think about an Ipod Touch. I don't want to tell her it's a bad world too. But you know what? It's not everything perfect like it is here or in your life or, we, when we're going to Argentina, we take clothes to people that doesn't have, we try to help the people over there and I want her to, you know, work with me on that kind of stuff… I want to teach her, not like (in deep voice), "You know what? Some people are suffering in the world." I don't want to do it like dramatic. But if you really need that… I always use the word 'need' or 'want,' because she doesn't, she's mixing everything up. And she said, 'I need the laptop.' 'No you don't need the laptop. You need food. You just want a laptop or an Ipod Touch or whatever.' And when I say that, she is not complaining, "'Oh yeah you're right, I don't need it. But I want it, Mom!' And I said okay yes, you want it but…

While expressing some question about to what degree she should directly influence her children's value systems, Sandra then reasserted her view that a prominent feature of her parenting role is that of a teacher and guide:

> I'm in the middle of the two cultures, and I don't want her to feel Argen… Well, I don't want to push her to my culture. But I just… I think I need to. That she needs to learn. And I think that there's an advantage. I mean it's. Because um...I enjoy the life here, but I don't forget you know that we have… maybe a values different. I don't know...culture.

Sandra summed up what she had described throughout the interview when I asked her to complete the sentence, "Parenting is like." She immediately stated that she saw it as "guiding, but with love." She compared this view of parenting to the interactions she had with her mother and how she has intentionally thought about changing her parenting, shifting her practice when she notices that her responses are not in keeping with what she values in her relationships with her children:

> My education was, you know like, 'You do that because mom said.' And you shut up and you do it because you have to respect the adults. And they have the truth, and you have to deal with that, you know, as a child. So I relearned how to, how to guide them because sometimes I found me telling them things that my mom was telling me. And I'm with my mom. I love my mom and my dad and everything. I'm not like suffering. I don't take pills, or I you know, I'm a very normal person. But sometimes I found me saying like (imitating her mom's voice), 'Because I say so!' or, 'Because I'm your mom…' Letting them talk, letting them feel and telling them that it's okay to feel in that way. Or yeah, they're persons. I mean they're, and they're teaching me. So I don't have to, you know, tell her or tell them like, because I'm their mom and that's final. We always talk about it. And it wasn't like that in my childhood.

Sandra's conversation provided evidence that three dominant schemas guide her practice. She has a strong predilection to ascribe contextual attributions (Bugental & Johnston, 2000; Hastings and Grusec, 1998) to her children's behaviors, which is coupled with a sense of positive efficacy about how to intervene. Sandra also clearly described that she perceives her role as supportive and loving teacher and guide. These schemas seem to work well together for Sandra. She didn't describe moments of feeling confused or frozen about how to work with her child, describing Marta's behavior as "normal." She described having an intuitive sense of how to respond. Her responses were described

as being both highly responsive to her child's emotional states and points of view, while at the same time redirecting her with the intent of helping her understand her feelings and behaviors in functional and appropriate ways.

Summary

The diary and interview data reveal richly detailed evidence of how schematic cognitions are expressed in the participants' thoughts about their children, and how they are articulated in conversations about interactions with their children. The primary finding is that the participants' exhibited evidence of clusters of schematic cognitions, perceptions and interpretations that divide them into two broad categories.

The present context oriented parents exhibited characteristics of thought and behavior that were similar to one another. They were more likely to ascribe contextual attribution inferences to their children's behaviors, which were linked to positive parent efficacy schemas. They were also more likely to express limited concern about the long-term negative ramifications of their parenting practice and, were less likely to express concern about long-term consequences of their children's behaviors. This characteristic is likely related to their propensity to ascribe contextual attributions to their children's behaviors as opposed to dispositional attribution inferences. These characteristics are also likely to influence, and be influenced by, the perceptions of parental role expressed by many of the mothers in this group. The explicit articulation of their roles as teachers or guides implies a view of growth, learning, and developmental shifts for their children, and is linked with efficacy cognitions that their parenting practice will effect positive change.

While the mothers in the historical context oriented group most certainly have positive growth and development goals for their children, they were not as strongly articulated in these particular conversations. The characteristics of this group included a higher propensity for ascribing dispositional attribution inferences to their children's behaviors and a concern about long-term negative ramifications of parenting practices. These perceptions were mostly expressed through a lower sense of parental efficacy, and were associated with expressions of indecision about how to respond to their children's needs and behaviors. The historical context oriented parents also were more likely to associate their own life histories with descriptions of interactions with their children. The narratives of their life histories were also linked to themes about relationships and worldview that were dichotomous in nature, resulting in a more acute awareness of troubling interactions with their children.

While the transcript data reveal differences in how these mothers perceive parenting and how they respond in interactions with their children, I am not intending to imply that one set of characteristics is superior to the other. It was evident that all the participants were devoted, warm and loving mothers who reflected a great deal on their parenting practices and their children's needs. From their accounts, it was clear that all their children were thriving and happy. It was also clear, however, that for the historical context oriented mothers, the longer-range perspectives that incorporated their own histories with acute concerns about their children's future well being, infused their daily interactions with a higher degree of emotional factors. The higher level of emotion activation appears, in this sample, to be not necessarily detrimental to their children's growth and development, but influences the mothers' ability to balance their perceptions

about interactions with their children and their parental efficacy. The following chapter is devoted to the question of balancing multiple parenting schemas and how that balance relates to parenting practice.

CHAPTER V: BALANCING MULTIPLE SCHEMAS AND PARENTING PRACTICE

Introduction

Analysis of the interview transcript data and daily diary entries revealed that the historical context oriented parents in this study experienced parenting differently than did the parents in the present context oriented group. The differences in parenting perception between the two groups inform the third research question: How do parents balance and reconcile multiple parenting schemas in everyday parenting, and how is the balance of these schemas related to consistency in parenting practice?

The discussion in this chapter focuses on similarities and differences in how schematic cognitions were balanced among representatives of the two groups, specifically in the ways in which emotions were activated (Dix, 1991) among the participants, and in the relationships between schematic cognitions, emotion activation and perceptions of efficacy (Coleman & Karraker, 2003, 1997; Grusec, 1994). The discussion will also focus on the degree to which the expression of schemas and emotion activation appeared to influence tendencies toward cognitive distortion (Burns, 1980; Beck, 1979; Nixon, 2002) among some of the participants. This chapter includes reviews of the literature on emotion activation and cognitive distortion. This background is provided here as opposed to being discussed in the Literature Review as these findings were not anticipated at the outset of the study, but became evident in the data analysis phase. Finally, the discussion also references literature on adult attachment style.

From an ecological systems (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; 1986) perspective, the dynamic processes of schema expression, emotion activation, perceptions of parental

efficacy, and cognitive distortions have direct influences on the children's development. The participants' talk revealed a host of schematic cognitions that were activated and influenced by interactions with their children, resulting in particular parenting behaviors. The parenting behaviors resulting from this reflexive process influence the children's development. The analysis of the ecological influences on development described in this chapter is primarily inferential. At times the participants described specific examples of parenting practice and are discussed in this chapter as direct evidence of practice. In addition, the data reveals inferential evidence of the participants' specific emotional states and perceptions of efficacy. These examples are discussed in relation to findings from existing research in regard to possible ecological influences on children's development.

Expressions of Parental Satisfaction

While much of the research into parenting cognitions focuses on links between schemas and parenting quality (e.g. Coleman & Karraker, 1997; Daggett, O'Brien, Zanolli, K., & Peyton, 2000), parent satisfaction (e.g. Johnston & Mash, 1989; Bugental & Johnston, 2000), and child development outcomes (e.g. Belsky, Crnic and Woodworth, 1995), the primary intent of this study is to describe how parenting schemas were expressed in mothers' discourse about their parenting practice. The parameters of the study do not include specific measures to determine outcomes such as parental satisfaction or children's developmental outcomes. With that said, however, the talk revealed a very high level of satisfaction among all the participants regarding their roles as parents. All the mothers described a high degree of satisfaction with their relationships and indicated that they viewed parenting as particularly fulfilling. Several used the terms

like, "all encompassing," while others used phrases such as "it's the best thing ever" as they completed the sentence, "Parenting is like…"

The mothers' descriptions of their children's development also revealed positive outcomes. Only one parent commented on her child's academic development, stating that her six year-old daughter was struggling with learning to read but that she had confidence that it was a temporary developmental lag. Besides this single comment, the descriptions of the children's social, emotional and cognitive development were positive, and were often expressed as sources of pride and happiness for the participants.

Research Regarding Emotion Activation, Mood and Affect

The activation of emotions is a fundamental part of parenting. Dix (1991) described parenting as an emotional experience: "Raising children involves more joy, affection, anger, and worry than do most other endeavors" (p. 4). In describing the emotional component of parenting, Dix stated, "Even average parents report high levels of anger with their children, the need to engage in techniques to control their anger, and fear that they will at some time lose control and harm their children" (p. 5). He also affirmed that, in general, parents report 2 ½ times more positive than negative emotions regarding their children.

The relationship between schematic cognitions and the emotions they activate in parenting interactions is directly related to parenting practices that influence attachment. Secure attachment is facilitated through warm, responsive, collaborative relationships (Ainsworth, 1985; Baumrind, 1978; Bowlby, 1977; Coplan, Hastings, Lagace-Seguin, & Moulton, 2002; Schwartz, Dodge, Petit, & Bates, 1997; Siegel, 1999). Ainsworth, M. D.

S., Blehar, M. C, Waters, E, & Wall (1978) stated that parents are more likely to be nurturing, patient, responsive and engage in teaching and comforting behaviors with their children when the emotional state is positive. They also found associations between negative emotion and intrusive, insensitive parenting practice.

While much of the research into the relationships between affect and parenting practice is focused on clinical family and child dysfunction, or on issues such as parental depression, Reuger, Katz, Risser and Lovejoy (2011) conducted a meta-analysis of 63 studies investigating the associations between parental affect and practice among non-clinical subjects. The study defined affect as both momentary mood states, and stable affective qualities of personality traits. Positive affect was defined as joy, enthusiasm, excitement, and interest, while negative affect was defined as anger, irritability, hostility, and fear. Parenting practice was defined as supportive/engaged, "behavior that demonstrates the parent's acceptance of the child through affection, shared activities, emotional and instrumental support" (p. 4), or hostile/coercive parenting, "which expresses negative affect or indifference toward the child and may involve the use of coercion, threat, or physical punishment to influence the child's behavior" (p. 4). The findings affirmed Dix's (1991) hypothesis predicting an association between positive affect and supportive/engaged practice, and negative affect and hostile/coercive practices. In addition, parents whose affect was defined as low positive (lethargy and fatigue) were found to be less motivated to engage in active problem solving, or withdrew from engagement with their children.

Research investigating links between parents' transient moods, parenting practice

and child development indicates that daily moods can influence parents' memories of past interactions with children and affect tolerance for children's behaviors and parental attributions regarding behaviors (Belsky, Crnic and Woodworth, 1995). Negative moods have also been associated with decreases in positive statements directed toward children (Jouriles & O'Leary, 1991) and with higher levels of intrusive or controlling parenting practices (Pett, Vaughan-Cole, & Wampold, 1994). Positive emotional expression has been linked to children's social development, particularly in the areas of emotional regulation and social competence (Eisenberg et al. 1998), and in the development of specific skills such as assertiveness, empathy and effortful control (Green & Baker, 2011).

Research into daily hassles (mealtimes, bedtimes, getting dressed, sibling rivalry), maternal mood and parental cognitions (Campbell, 2002) reveals associations between stress-induced negative emotions and negative parenting cognitions such as worry, annoyance, or attributing children's behavior to intentional and oppositional motivations. Ohr, et al. (2010) speculate about the reflexive nature of parent-child interactions, mood, and parent cognitions, conceptualizing the process as a self-reinforcing feedback loop:

> Given that stressful parent– child interactions as addressed in this study were recurrent, we speculate that mood and recalled cognitions specific to daily routines form an affective and cognitive structure that includes not only a representation of the current interaction, but also the history of mood and cognitions regarding the stressor. Thus, mood and cognitions contribute to a cycle or loop where both serve as antecedents and consequences to daily stressful parent–child interactions.

The stressful parent situations alluded to here were about mealtime routines, the same sort of typical events referenced by the parents in the current study.

Emotion Activation, Mood And Affect In The Current Study

While the scope of this study is not focused on determining associations between parental affect and parenting practice beyond the emotions and practices the participants referenced directly, it can be inferred that some association between mood and practice exists within this sample. As stated earlier, all the participants described high levels of functioning among their children and positive views of family dynamics and relationships. In regard to emotion activation, this discussion will primarily focus on the mothers' explicit statements, and on general affective expressions evident in the transcripts.

All the participants described positive feelings such as joy, happiness and pride regarding their children's behaviors and accomplishments. Most of their positive comments were in reference to the "happy" events recorded in the diaries. They also provided examples that served as counterpoints to discussions about difficult behaviors. For example, in describing moments of conflict between siblings, many participants also described moments of sibling collaboration and mutual affection. However, counter to Dix's (1991) assertion that parents report positive emotions at more than twice the rate of negative feelings, the majority of the focus of this sample was on moments of uncertainty or difficulty. Perhaps this is due to the personal and extended nature of the interviews, and to the background context of parent education classes that existed prior to the study. Parents are more likely to talk about difficulties in that context in that they are seeking solutions to confusing or troubling moments.

Of the participants categorized as historical context oriented, five (71%) conveyed

expressions of negative emotion that were pervasive and potent in nature as compared to the parents in the present context oriented group. The emotions these parents expressed included frustration, guilt and worry, particularly regarding long-term outcomes for their children. The emotional expressions were often directly associated with evidence of schematic cognitions, indicating a link between schema and emotional response. The following sections will detail the differences between the historical context oriented mothers' expressions of emotion as compared to the expressions of emotion of the present context oriented group.

Worry

Two mothers, Judith and Marie, described their responses to social struggles their children experienced. These discussions were illustrative of differences between the two groups in the apparent pervasiveness of the emotions that were activated. Judith, a parent categorized as historical context oriented, described an event in which her son, Brian told her he didn't have friends at school. She indicated she knew this wasn't true because he had also spoken many times of children with whom he played. Judith described her response to this statement as, "I think I'm focusing on a little bit of worry with other things. I'm just trying to worry about everything." While acknowledging that her son's perception was inaccurate, Judith also equated his perception to similar previous incidents with her older son, although she indicated that he had since resolved those issues. Judith stated, "I feel like the same thing's happening to him and so I'm hoping that I can reflect back on that so that I don't worry about that and it will be okay." The tenuous tone of this statement ("and so I'm hoping"), as well as an accompanying

uncertain affect is interesting in that it did not indicate an affirmative ongoing response derived from her previous experience, or from her perception that her son's thinking was inaccurate. It appears that her expressed ongoing sense of worry influences her ability to integrate new ways of perceiving her sons' experiences based on past evidence.

Judith's description of this event was embedded in statements about her own past and current social life (See case study in Chapter IV), and her concern about her children's future social lives: "Well it's just that they'll end up lonely and sad and not having any friends and being unhappy and I don't know, those kinds of things." The focus throughout the interview on her own social experiences and on her thoughts about lifelong outcomes for her children lent an aspect of uncertainty to her resolution to remember her older son's experience. Judith also described an intransigent nature to her perceptions when she stated, "And then what I find in all parts of my life with them and with other things is that I tend to, like everybody I'm sure, just get back right in the same grooves." Judith's talk belied uncertainty and pervasive worry, emotions that stand in contrast to Marie's responses to her son's similar social experiences.

Marie described an event in which her son, Fernando was at home with her while his older brother, Esteban, was out with friends. She said that Esteban has many friends in the neighborhood and plays frequently with them while Fernando has fewer play opportunities and depends on his parents for company. She described the restless requests he made of her to play with him that day, despite the fact that she was busy preparing Christmas dinner with her mother:

It was just like my mom, and Fernando and I, and I was like, 'Why don't

you help us cook?' And he was like, 'I don't want to help you cook.' I'm like come on, pushing. He's like no, no, no. He wasn't into it. He was like, 'Come play with me,' you know? So I was trying to balance [laughs].

Marie followed this statement with a succinct and clear explanation of the root of her son's behaviors that contrasted with Judith's more vaguely articulated connection to her past experience with her older son. Marie's descriptions of her thoughts was absent the sense of worry about the situation that was more evident in Judith's description:

I think maybe he was kind of like lonely because Esteban wasn't there you know or he was like Esteban's with a friend and I'm here by myself you know what's up with that? I think maybe that or maybe that I was doing something with my mom you know and he's like what about me, you know? Don't you want to do stuff with me?

Marie then described how she customarily manages these kinds of situations with Fernando, conveying a sense of affirmative pragmatism in her actions, while at the same time revealing that these interactions evoke difficult emotions for her:

It's hard. Like sometimes, well most of the time I try to be pretty patient so I try to talk with him and say, 'Look right now I need to do this and once I finish we'll do whatever you want for a certain period.' But sometimes I'm like, 'Come on Fernando just, like play. Won't you just play or like watch TV, play a Wii game?' You know so then I usually say, 'Let's do something else.' I'm not trying to bribe him but I'm like, 'I'll let you do whatever you want. Just do it, you know like by yourself for like 15 minutes and I'll be back,' you know. Probably not the best but sometimes I just have to go there and I'm like come on, come on and usually he's like pretty good. It doesn't happen a lot but I do, then I get frustrated and I'm like ok, breathe [laughs].

These quotes provide significant counterpoints to Judith's response to her son's social troubles. The emotion of worry was activated for Judith because of her concerns about the extended impact of her son's immediate social issues; concerns she directly related to her personal experiences. While acknowledging frustration about the ongoing nature of these interactions, Marie did not ascribe any long-term meaning to her son's

immediate issue. Rather, she articulated a view that his feelings were understandable, and her response was an approach derived from her past experience ("…so then I usually say, 'Let's do something else.'"), a response that was described in more decisive terms than Judith's more tenuously stated description. The differences appear to be influenced, in part, by Judith's worry, which influenced her to generalize the immediate situations to broader contexts, while Marie's description focused on the immediate situation.

Worry Induced Cognitive Distortions.

An area of study that relates to the difference in tone between Judith and Marie's appraisal and response to their sons' social struggles is from the field of cognitive therapy, specifically, theories related to cognitive distortions (Beck, 1976). The cognitive distortions associated with this study's findings include overgeneralization or catastrophic thinking, personalization, and polarized thinking (Beck, 1976; Nixon & Singer, 2002; Robin & Foster, 2000). The vast majority of literature related to this field focuses on individuals with chronic depression or other dysfunctional cognitions and behaviors such as narcissism and child or spousal abuse. Among researchers focusing on cognitive distortions among normative subjects, Robin and Foster (2000) refer to degrees of cognitive distortions that exist in families with adolescent children and argue that the extent to which family members' distort cognitions about relationships and expectations can propel families toward dysfunctional conflict. Nixon and Singer's (2002) research reveals an association between feelings of maternal guilt with the cultural model myth of the perfect mother, an example of personalization.

While all the mothers in the current study appear to have functional relationships

with their children, viewing their talk through the lens of cognitive distortions is useful in understanding the levels of stress and the kinds of emotions described by the historical context oriented mothers in particular. In this sample, 71% of the historical context oriented mothers' talk belied one or more forms of cognitive distortion, while none of the present context oriented mothers made such statements.

Judith's talk, for example, exhibited elements of overgeneralization (Holon & Beck, 1979), a tendency to draw conclusions from one incident, generalize and apply the conclusion to unrelated incidents. Her stated worry that her son would end up lonely and unhappy due to his current social struggles seemed to preoccupy her thoughts, and was linked to her uncertain descriptions of her own social trajectory and habits. The long-term focus on the consequences she fears contains elements of catastrophic thinking, a component of overgeneralization (Nixon & Singer, 2002). The uncertain nature of much of Judith's talk, which lacked the efficacious tone exhibited by Marie, may be due in part to the inflated consequences she perceives as outcomes of her child's social struggles. This process is an example of the feedback loop described by Ohr et al. (2010) in that Judith's pre-existing social schemas provoke worry, influencing her sense of efficacy in dealing with the problem, which may reinforce the worry. While Marie's interaction with her son triggered frustration, the emotion was not accompanied by the sense of implication evident with Judith. Her response was focused on enacting strategies she had known to be successful in the past, one hallmark of a more efficacious cycle of parenting practice.

Other mothers in the historical context oriented group expressed worry combined

with elements of over-generalizing that led them to question their efficacy in ways similar to Judith. Lisa's response to her daughter's duplicitous behavior, described in Chapter 4, provoked concerns about her character and honesty in the future, leading her to respond in an uncertain way. Claudia's focus on her tumultuous upbringing and her concern that her son grow up to be a man who is kind to women, also described in Chapter 4, influenced her to equate sibling squabbles with disruptions of her sense of home as sanctuary, peace and protection. Claudia described her indecision about how to handle these situations saying, "So I think its anxiety that I'm feeling because I'm not sure what tool to pull from my shed, so to speak," a statement indicating a sense of uncertainty similar to Judith and Lisa's.

Kathryn vehemently linked her disdain for "meanness" with her children taunting one another, and described worrying that their habits may lead to antisocial behavior in the future. These thoughts provoked her to respond in a retaliatory way, while acknowledging the ineffectiveness of that approach. The dynamic she described is consistent with research findings indicating that parents who attribute children's misbehavior to internal, stable characteristics of the child, such as meanness, are more likely to respond negatively and harshly (Dix and Lochman, 1990; Dix and Reinhold, 1991).

These examples indicate that for these mothers, the degree to which the emotion of worry induced overly generalized thoughts influenced their sense of parental efficacy in the interactions they described. For Judith, Claudia and Lisa, their sense of efficacy resulted in uncertain parenting responses, while Marie's lack of long-term worry resulted

in a more affirmative and pragmatic approach. In terms of possible ecologically influenced effects on children's development, research findings indicate a correlation between low self-efficacy and more authoritarian parenting styles, higher levels of frustration and dissatisfaction, as well as ineffective parenting practices (Bugental & Johnston, 2000; Coleman & Karraker, 2000; 1997; Johnston & Mash, 1989). Studies have indicated a range of child outcomes associated with parental self-efficacy, including intelligence, academic achievement, attachment security, social adjustment and adherence to behavioral expectations, and physical health (Coleman & Karraker, 1997).

Guilt

Expressions of guilt were stated by five of seven (71%) of mothers in the historical context oriented group while none of the mothers in the present context oriented group described such feelings. Three of these parents' expressions of guilt were associated with cognitive distortions related to cultural model schemas (D'Andrade, 1992; Harkness, Super & Keefer, 1992; Quinn, 1987; 1992) about perfect parenting. One mother, Lisa, spoke about feelings of guilt associated with having limited time with her children due to professional demands. The fifth mother in this group, Mary, described feelings of guilt regarding her parenting practice with her older son and associated those feelings with personal goals to change her approach. Lisa and Mary did not describe these feelings in ways that negatively impacted their parenting. However, the three mothers whose expressions of guilt were associated with the "perfect parent" schema also described troubling impacts on them in terms of both response and sense of parental efficacy.

Nixon (2002) described a guilt activation mechanism among parents of children

with developmental disabilities that is informative of these three mothers' experience.

Citing Beck's (1979) research on cognitive distortions, Nixon asserts that one cause of

guilt in parenting is due to the cognitive distortion of personalization:

> The belief of many parents that they are 100% responsible for their child's
> development is a form of personalization, for the parents must take
> responsibility and blame themselves for any lack of development…
> Parenthood schemas often contain impossible goals that can set parents up
> for failure and self-blame. For example, the schema of "parenthood' can
> consist of an array of cognitive distortions such as parents should always
> be patient, kind, loving, nurturing and perfect (p. 332).

One parent, Gwendolyn, described this parenting schema directly as she spoke

about the stresses involved in parenting:

> And there is this sort of trend in all the parenting culture today which is,
> you know, if you jump through enough hoops and become the super
> parent everything's going to be fine. And so there's this enormous amount
> of pressure almost like you're not allowed to have a bad day kind of thing.
> And everybody else is going to have a bad day and you know that and so
> it's really, I think there's very little permission to do some sort of self
> awareness of you know today was just a crappy day with my kids because
> I'm having a really crappy day inside. And that's hard to see and hard to,
> you know and you feel guilty for even saying that.

Here Gwendolyn articulated how the "super parent" schema can exert influence

on emotional states and parenting practice. This statement was in the context of

describing how she had lost her temper when her daughter wanted her attention. Her

description of the event revealed a level of stress brought about by trying to balance her

own needs, feeling frustrated with her daughter, and having an immediate sense of regret

about her response. Similarly, Claudia described the influence of parenting expectation

and the stress her perceptions engender. As was typical of other parents in the historical

context oriented group, part of her description included references to her own childhood

experiences:

> At night when I go to bed I will go over the day in my head and say, 'did I read to them enough? We only read one chapter. Maybe I should have read two. I read the whole page; maybe I should have had Alfredo [son] read it instead. Did I hug them enough today?' And I just go down this list and I sometimes I'll be like, I can't sleep and I have to say, 'Claudia, you're here in the moment. Its time to rest the day is over. Tomorrow will come. Chill out.' But I hold my guilt or I carry this burden because I guess I don't want my kids to go through anything that I had to go through. But it's, I don't know, I want them to be really empathetic kids who are aware that there are things in the world going on that they can make a difference. And their hands are not tied and there are people that love them and it's and it's like all this stuff from my past that I really wish, I guess, that somebody would have said or done for me.

Claudia continued her discussion about feelings of guilt as she described her

responses to minor squabbles between her children. In this passage, she makes clear

connections between her understanding that her children's behavior is not something to

be overly concerned about, and the emotional responses she has to it based on her past.

Claudia had described a perception she harbors about her view of the outside world as a

dangerous and chaotic place beyond her control, as opposed to the safe sanctuary she has

attempted to create in her home. The guilt she described is due, in large measure, to the

influence of that schema on her emotional responses to her children's bickering:

> I don't want to say that things like this are causing, its like I don't want to say that my past is the issue here, but then, you know, that I think that its me. I think that my kids are fine. I think that my kids are really good people and that they're totally normal, and that it's all me… Its all the issues in my head that are causing me to feel all this, when they're bickering, when really, really I should just leave it alone… Yeah, that it's not a problem but I'm making it one. And so am, am I adding fuel to their fire? Am I making it worse for them? Oh my god and there's another thing and I'm feeling, I'm feeling, should I feel guilty about that? It's strange how much guilt I carry when I'm not even… I mean, what am I accusing myself of? What am I guilty of, you know? And maybe its not allowing

me to be the best parent I can be. Maybe it's inhibiting me, you know? So how do I let go of it? How do I not let this cause me anxiety?

Claudia's description included a link to her perception about what she views as optimal parenting. In questioning the influence of her emotional state on her ability to achieve what she views as effective parenting Claudia articulated a relationship between a perfect parenting schema and the influence of her longstanding perceptions about conflict. While Gwendolyn's descriptions of a personalized view of parenting were expressed in frustrated terms, Claudia's similar perceptions were expressed with feelings of inhibition and uncertainty.

Other participants' descriptions of guilt provoking moments were more specific to pragmatic issues of time and divided attention. Two parents, Lisa and Leah, described the guilt they feel about limited time in terms of goals that they have for the time they spend with their children. Lisa used the words "guilt," or "guilty" six times in her final interview, all in the context of describing choices she makes to accommodate both her parenting and professional roles. In this passage, she described the pressures associated with balancing all her responsibilities:

> I bring work home and I do really try, I try not to do anything until after they go to bed and I try to be very conscious of that so it's a very conscious thing because I could easily slip away and let them do something on their own, but I try to interact with them for the few hours that we are at home together so that I don't have that guilt. And I find that I actually enjoy being with my kids. It's just fun.

While Lisa described her desire to balance her professional and parenting roles as guilt provoking, Leah, a mother in the present context oriented group also described her thoughts about the limited time she has to spend with her daughter. Her description was tied to goals she has for the time she spends with her children:

…But the amount of time that she spends at school and the amount of time that I spend away is, I want it to be important… The time we are together to be loving and learning and fun.

A possible explanation for Leah's lack of guilt is that she described parenting as a shared endeavor, citing the time that her children spend with her mother and their father, stating, "My mom helps out a lot too so, and then Steve's [husband] work is flexible which is nice that we are a team." This perception of child rearing as a shared responsibility stands in contrast to Claudia and Gwendolyn's view that they are ultimately responsible.

Denise, a mother in the present context oriented group commented directly about the personalization phenomenon in parenting when she described her observation of other parents: "I can tell that some parents have a notion there's only one right way to do things… where if they don't do it the exact right way they've ruined their child or something." She followed this observation with an assertion regarding children's resilience, "They're kind of flexible, you know," indicating a perception that may contribute to a pragmatic and less worried approach to raising her children.

The combination of worry about long-term developmental outcomes and guilt about one's imperfect parenting appeared to activate stressful emotions in three of the mothers in the historical context oriented group. Within this sample, guilt activation and worry appear to strongly influence the mothers' agency, possibly limiting the effectiveness of their parental practice in terms of intervening with pragmatic solutions or the level of nurturing responsiveness they express in the interactions (Bugental & Johnston, 2000; Coleman & Karraker, 2000; 1997; Johnston & Mash, 1989).

Frustration and Anger

Expressions of frustration and anger were part of the participants' discourse. 86% of the entire sample described these feelings directly. One mother did not explicitly use those terms, but her descriptions of her interactions with her child indicated that she was frustrated at times. The mothers in the historical context oriented group used language that was markedly different than that of the present context oriented mothers. 71% of the historical context oriented mothers used verbs and adjectives such as "attack," "resentful," "irritated," "mean" and "nasty" in describing either their children's behaviors, or their own emotional responses to the behaviors. One stated her response to an event with her child as "I crumbled," while another, Linda, described in her diary the response she feels when she "erupts" with her children: "Being nasty like that, and getting an awful reaction from the kids -- tears, generally -- is an awful wake up call for me. It's also like lancing a boil. The pus of irritability instantly drains out." Linda's description of this event revealed that after erupting and seeing the effects of her anger on her children she responded with a more empathetic approach. The other mothers in the historical context oriented group who described feelings of anger indicated limited parental efficacy in their responses in ways that were similar to the worry influenced responses.

Of the present context oriented group, six (86%) used the words "frustrated," or "angry," while one stated that she thought her children's arguing was "going to drive me insane." This statement was accompanied by good-natured laughter and comments about the "ridiculous" nature of the arguments. One mother, Helen, described feeling "frustrated" with her daughter's inability to focus and be independent. She later stated

that much of her frustration derived not from her daughter's behaviors, but from the different ways she and her husband perceive and respond to those behaviors.

A striking aspect of the way in which the present context oriented mothers spoke about feeling frustrated was that 100% of them included descriptions of their responses; these being immediate, proactive and described as effective. Their responses involved redirecting children, as Marie did when her son wanted her attention, engaging in problem-solving strategies with their children, or talking with them to clarify misunderstandings of intent or to establish expectations. In examples detailed in Chapter IV, Rita specifically stated that she used her fright-engendered anger to make a point about safety with her son when he opened the door of their moving car, reiterating the importance of safety. She also described an in-the-moment reevaluation of her son's impulsive public behavior that caused her to feel embarrassed and angry. Her ability to reinterpret his intent minimized her anger and helped her temper her response.

The differences in tone and language about anger and frustration may be evidence of a differing degree of emotional impact the mothers of the two groups experience from parenting. I would argue that the more pervasive feelings of worry and guilt experienced by the historical context oriented mothers are driven by their heightened perceptions of the importance and impact of their children's behaviors and their roles as parents, and may activate stronger feelings of anger and frustration. While the emotions, cognitions and behaviors the historical context oriented mothers described are by no means dysfunctional, many are tipped by degree to those described in the literature as negative (Reuger, Katz, Risser and Lovejoy, 2011), and leading to negative social, emotional and academic outcomes for children (Dix, 1991; Green & Baker, 2011). The mothers in the

Schemas As Cultural Models And Goals With Directive Force

The way the members of the two groups experience the emotional impact of parenting is the key difference in how parenting cognitions are balanced between the two groups. For the historical context oriented mothers, parenting appears to exert more emotional stress than it does for the mothers in the present context oriented group. The stress they experience primarily affects their sense of parental efficacy, which in turn may influence additional activation of stressful emotions. In the current sample, the 71% of mothers in the historical context oriented group whose talk revealed evidence of cognitive distortions such as personalization or overgeneralization appear to be influenced partly by a particular cultural model of motherhood: The model of the dedicated and ultimately responsible mother. This cultural model, as Denise described it, implies grave implications for mistakes or failure: "…if they don't do it the exact right way they've ruined their child or something."

This appears to be an example of a directive force (D'Andrade, 1992) derived from the interplay of cultural models of motherhood, the mothers' past history and emotions that are activated by interactions with children. For example, Claudia's past experience influences her hopes for her role with her children ("…It's like all this stuff from my past that I really wish, I guess, that somebody would have said or done for me."). The model of the ultimately responsible mother takes form as the cognitive distortion of personalization, accompanied by feelings of anxiety and lack of efficacy ("So I think its anxiety that I'm feeling because I'm not sure what tool to pull from my shed, so to speak."). The interplay of these cognitions and emotions may also activate a

tendency toward catastrophic thinking, the fear that her children's rivalry will forever

disrupt the sanctuary of peace Claudia values. This process is indicative of the interaction

feedback loop Ohr, et al. (2010) described as affective and cognitive structures that

contain both the current interaction and the history of cognitions and mood about

disruptive incidents. For Claudia, the directive force of these cognitions results, to some

degree, in indecisive parenting behaviors.

In contrast, there was no evidence in the present context oriented mothers' talk

that they ascribe to the cultural model of the ultimately responsible mother. 71% spoke in

terms describing the model of a shared approach to child rearing. This group indicated

that they rely on spouses and other family members to share responsibilities and provide

parenting expertise with particular incidents. The model of parenting as shared

responsibility described by this group may contribute to a less intense emotional response

to situations, which may lead to more decisive and pragmatic parenting strategies. Six

(86%) of this group described responses to incidents with their children that included

problem solving, redirecting and clarifying. Five (83%) of these mothers described

relying on a spouse or other family member as resources to resolve issues with children.

A second set of cognitions that guided the present context oriented mothers'

thoughts was reflective of "elaborated and specialized" cultural models of child

development described by Harkness, Super & Keefer (1992) as responses to children's

changing behaviors and needs. Six (86%) of the present context oriented mothers

described their children's behaviors as "normal," influenced by development, or

understandable. References to sibling rivalry, cultural influences on clothing and attitude,

and children's feelings of loneliness or boredom were described as normal, while

descriptions of impulsivity and curiosity were described as understandable given specific contexts. In contrast, only two (29%) of the historical context oriented mothers described their responses to children's behaviors in developmental, "normal," or contextual terms.

Connections To Research On Adult Attachment Style And Parenting

While the parameters of this study do not include an examination of the relationship between the participants' attachment style and parenting cognitions and behaviors, further research in this area is warranted. The descriptors of the two groups defined in this study, historical context oriented and present context oriented, are indicative of descriptors associated with both secure and insecure adult attachment styles (Main, Kaplan, & Cassidy, 1985). An examination of the extent to which adult attachment styles correlate to these participants' perceptions and behaviors could prove useful in determining the root causes of parents' schemas, emotion activation and parenting practice.

In relation to this study's findings, for example, prior research has found associations between secure adult attachment style and warmth, helpful support, and positive structure (e.g. Adam, Gunnar, & Tanaka, 2004; Cohn et al., 1992; Das Eiden, et al., 1995) in interactions with children. Other findings have demonstrated associations between preoccupied, dismissive or unresolved attachment styles and inconsistency in helpful parenting behaviors, confusion, anxiety, and angry/intrusive responses (e.g. Crowell & Feldman, 1988; Pianta, et al., 1996; Riggs & Jacobvitz, 2002). The differences in cognitions, emotion activation and behaviors between the historical context oriented group and the present context oriented group are similar to those described in the above referenced studies.

Summary

While all the participants in this sample appear to be highly functioning, loving and effective parents, their talk revealed significant differences in the ways in which they are able to balance schemas related to parenting and the subsequent influences on their parenting practice. For the mothers in the historical context oriented group, parenting appears to be a more stressful and anxiety-producing endeavor than it is for the mothers in the present context oriented group. Their responses to daily interactions appear to be intricately linked to associations with their past histories and with perceptions about the future ramifications of parenting practice and their children's behavior. A dominant schema that appears to influence these perceptions is the cultural model of the wholly responsible mother. These associations more readily activate emotions of worry and guilt than is the case for the present context oriented group. These emotions appear to negatively influence the participants' perceptions of parental efficacy, resulting in a limiting effect on their ability to consistently respond in interactions with their children in affirmative, pragmatic ways.

The present context oriented mothers appear to be less influenced by schemas associated with their pasts or perceptions about the ramifications of present events on their children's future. Two dominant schemas appear to moderate the activation of the emotions of worry or guilt for these mothers: First, they appear to more readily ascribe cultural models of development that include situating children's behaviors within normative or expected stages of development or situational contexts. These mothers also made reference to perceptions that their parenting roles are more expressly associated with teaching and guiding. These cognitions appeared to result in less anxious emotional

responses and the parenting behaviors they described were more affirmative and effectively pragmatic than those described by the historical context oriented parents.

The differing examples of schematic perceptions, emotion activation and parenting responses between the two groups are undoubtedly influenced by factors such as adult attachment and temperament in general, which suggests directions for future research. The differences between the two groups are also undoubtedly influenced by the number of combined years of parenting experience among the participants. The present context oriented group averaged 20.6 combined years of experience, while the historical context oriented group averaged 16.1 years. The additional four and a half average years of parenting experience among the historical context oriented group surely provided them with many more interactions, opportunities for reflection, and the development of a longer-term perspective about parenting practice and child development. This kind of experience, reflection and perspective revealed in the participants' talk are key factors in the processes of schema formation, elaboration, and redefinition that occur continuously throughout our lives.

CHAPTER VI: EFFECTIVENESS OF THE METHODOLOGY

The final research question focused on the effectiveness of the data collection methodology of this study in defining and understanding multiple schemas. The study's data collection was designed with two major goals in mind: To create participant-researcher rapport (Quinn, 2005) within a limited time period, and to provide opportunities for participants to reflect upon parenting interactions in order to stimulate further conversation during the final interviews.

To these ends, participants with whom I had preexisting professional, educational relationships were selected for the study. These relationships were situated in the context of parent education courses I lead in which parents are encouraged to freely discuss ongoing parenting issues. The participants engaged in an initial interview in which details of family background and structure were discussed, as well as instructions for completion of daily diaries. The participants completed a series of solicited daily diaries (Bolger, Davis & Rafaeli, 2003; Hawks, Houghton & Rowe, 2009) in which they recorded events with their children that made them happy and events that were difficult in a two-week period leading up to a final interview. The diaries served two purposes: To provide records of events that were documented in close proximity to when they occurred, thereby creating more episodic, as opposed to conceptual (Christensen, et al., 2003) accounts of events. The diary entries were then used as elicitation artifacts in the final interview to stimulate the creation of an "auto-ethnographic discourse" (Tobin, 1988). Tobin defines auto-ethnography as "the more direct presentation of insiders' narratives about themselves and their cultural institution. Auto-ethnography differs from ethnography as autobiography differs from biography" (p. 179).

The final interview was designed to emulate Quinn's (2005) "so-called interview," in which control of the interview is ceded to the interviewee by placing the interviewer in the position of being a good-listener, akin to what happens in more natural social gatherings. The interviews consisted of two structured questions or directives, the first being to ask them to look through copies of the diaries and comment on anything they noticed, and second, to complete the sentence, "Parenting is like…" Participants were also asked throughout the interview to expand on points, explain what they mean, spell out implications, and give examples of generalizations.

Participant Recruitment

Given the background and history of my relationship to the community, selection of the 14 participants was efficient and effective. Ninety-two requests for participants were sent to families in the school's first and fifth grades. Of those requests, 20 (22%) indicated they would like to participate in the study. Three additional mothers stated that they would consider participating if there were not sufficient interest. The participants described their reasons for wanting to be part of the study in enthusiastic terms: Five of the 14 (36%) made statements indicating that they would like to facilitate research regarding parenting, while two (14%) indicated interest in research in general. Three participants (21%) stated that they had benefitted from the school's parent education courses and wanted to participate for that reason.

Initial Interview

The initial interviews were effective in developing rapport with the participants in that the discussions primarily resembled social conversations, but were also focused on

specific questions about family background and structure. Positive rapport was evidenced by the participants' responses to the final question: "Is there anything else you think I should know?" Ten participants (72%) provided information that was deeply personal in nature. Five (36%) disclosed information that was troubling to them about their families of origin, including examples of family physical and emotional abuse, drug use and alcoholism, uncomfortable relationships with siblings, parents and peers. Four participants described tensions between themselves and their spouses, primarily regarding differing approaches to parenting. Two mothers disclosed other, highly personal information including breast-feeding habits and the history of personal drug and alcohol abuse.

The themes articulated in the initial interviews were evident in the final interviews as well, first steps in the articulation of the mothers' "life stories" (Linde, 1993, cited in Quinn, 2005), or narratives that are part of our schematic conceptions of ourselves. Quinn describes life stories as:

> ...One common kind… of narrative people tell in the course of their everyday lives. People do not ordinarily unburden themselves of their life stories all in one sitting; instead, they tell them snippets at a time. Linde's insight is that these stories express people's senses of themselves and are central to their ongoing efforts to create coherence out of their lives (p. 42).

The self-perceptions that began to be revealed in the first interview and that were more fully developed in the final interview included mother as protector, mother as manager, carefree and unflappable, parenting as motivation toward self-improvement, notions about dependence and independence, as well as the model of mothers who have exclusive responsibility for care-giving and developmental outcomes.

Daily Diaries

The participants' were mixed in the number of diary entries completed, averaging 10 entries of the intended 14. Three participants completed all 14 days of diary entries, while the minimum number of entries was 5. Explanations for not completing an entry included being too busy or tired in the evening, being on a family trip and not having access to diaries, simply forgetting, or thinking there was nothing to report. The length of the diary narratives was varied as well. One participant's particularly comprehensive series of entries averaged 431 words, while the minimal average word count per entry was 50. Of the four mothers with the highest average word count, two had experience with professional writing, one writes frequently as part of her profession, while the fourth stated that she wrote regularly in a journal. These findings pertaining to these participants indicate a connection between the comprehensiveness of the entries and comfort with the format.

The content of the entries consisted primarily of accounts of predictable family interactions. The average daily mood report was 8 out of a possible 10, indicating that the feelings in the homes were relatively positive during the reporting periods. Entries about happy events included reports of caring and responsible behaviors by the children, achievements in school or extra-curricular activities, positive relationships between siblings, and moments of intimacy between mother and child.

The events recorded about difficult moments of the day were also focused on predictable family issues akin to the "daily hassles" described by Campbell (2002). Foremost among the entries were accounts of sibling rivalry, followed by descriptions of

stressful moments about daily routines: Getting ready for school and completing homework. Other entries included accounts of children's social difficulties and vying for the mother's attention when she was busy or distracted. Twelve of the mothers' entries focused on recurring themes, indicating that the most difficult parts of their days had to do with repeated, and somewhat intransigent behaviors or interactions with their children.

A concern about the use of daily diaries as a research methodology raised by Bolger, Davis & Rafaeli (2003) concerns the phenomenon of *reactance*, the potential for the research study effecting a change in the participants as a result of engagement in the study. The researchers outlined possible effects of continual completion of diary entries including an increased understanding of the concepts associated with the study and becoming habituated to the task, resulting in less thoughtful responses. These effects did occur within this group. Half of the participants' latter entries were more minimal than they had been at the outset and included more frequent entries stating "nothing to report."

Four of the participants indicated that the process of completing the diary entries had influenced their thoughts and parenting behaviors. Gwendolyn stated directly in one diary entry that the process of writing had helped her understand the root of her daughter's ongoing behaviors and she had changed her approach to dealing with her:

> She was upset tonight when I said no to her TV request, she sort of fell apart and cried, but in part due to the reflections from these journals, I have been changing my approach to her evening upsets and it was very successful tonight. I focused my energy on her, didn't get mad, figured out what she needed (food + some one-on-one), and we ended up having a very nice time reading and talking. I feel a bit foolish that I haven't figured this out sooner.

In a similar vein, Rita stated that completing the diaries and submitting them electronically increased her awareness of the ways in which she was parenting her

children and stated that the process was like having a "personal trainer" that she was responsible to.

While reactance (Bolger, Davis & Rafaeli, 2003) did occur, any negative effects of this phenomenon were outweighed by benefits derived from the primary purpose of the diary phase: To provide artifacts that included the participants' thoughts and behaviors about specific events and interactions with children to stimulate discussion in the final interview. In Gwendolyn's case in particular, her articulation of the differences in her interactions with her child provided rich data that illustrated the nature of habitual, automatic behaviors and responses versus those derived through the process of reflection. These examples from the data provide support for the inclusion of solicited daily diary reflections in parent education contexts to increase awareness of patterns of behavior and thought, and as catalysts for further discussion.

Final Interview

The final interviews were effective in providing richly detailed, nuanced and comprehensive data about the mothers' perceptions, emotions and practices regarding parenting. The interviews were scheduled for one hour; one lasted 38 minutes, and one continued for 90 minutes, while the remainder were approximately 50 to 60 minutes. The interviews began with a perusal of the daily diary entries. Each entry had been printed on an individual sheet of paper and in relatively large font to facilitate quick review. The participants initiated the conversations based on an event from the diaries. Within a few minutes, with the exception of three participants, the conversations quickly departed from the events in the diaries and diverged into a variety of topics. Three mothers referred

frequently to the recorded events and commented on many of them more systematically than the majority.

Four mothers, including those who followed a more systematic approach with the diaries, questioned, in similar fashion to Quinn's (2005) experience, whether they were providing me with what I wanted to know. It appeared that they were a bit uncertain about the format and wanted reassurance that they were participating "correctly." This could be due, in part, to the differences between the first interviews, in which they were asked more direct, information-seeking questions, as compared to the structure of the final interviews in which I was more purposefully following their leads. In reference to my positionality as teacher and parent educator, five participants solicited my opinion or requested parenting advice in regard to what they were saying. I asked if we could continue that conversation at another time, which seemed to be a satisfactory response.

In the final interviews, the participants were exceptionally forthright and detailed as they discussed relationships with their children. I credit the structure of the interviews, resembling social conversational contexts, (Quinn, 2005) with establishing the environment in which the participants felt comfortable describing their lives with their children. Furthermore, firmly establishing my role as that of an attentive listener with minimal contributions to the discussions was also effective in eliciting the mothers' talk. In an emblematic 30 minutes of transcription, Claudia spoke 6517 words to my 521, a ratio of 12 to 1. The vast majority of my utterances were primarily affirming single words followed by pauses ("Yeah," "Right…"), or unfinished, slowly articulated statements or questions designed to encourage the interviewees to complete the thought and continue. It occurred to me that people seldom have the opportunity to speak with few interruptions

about topics of importance to them with another person who is wholeheartedly listening. Three of the participants indicated after the interview that it had been a satisfying experience for them, and two others thanked me for listening.

The majority of research into parenting cognitions relies on data collection methodologies such as multiple-choice questionnaires (e.g. Dagget, Obrien, Zanolli, & Peyton, 2000), structured interviews with predetermined sequences of questions (e.g. Grusec, Hastings, & Mammone, 1994), questionnaires containing a series of vignettes with Likert scale (e.g. Johnston, Hommersen & Seip, 2009) or multiple-choice (e.g. Potier 2007; Super & Harkness, 2003) responses. These methodologies provide invaluable data detailing, for example, the range of schematic influences on parents and the associations between cognitions and parenting practice.

This study's findings indicate that a primary benefit of the "so-called interview" (Quinn, 2005) in which the interviewee controls the direction of the interview is that the subjects appeared to be free to make associations themselves between a diverse array of influences on their parenting practice: Family history, mood, attributions, patterns of behavior, and situational contexts. For example, Mary realized in the interview that her father's unused gloves were a metaphor for her overly organized and orderly approach to parenting. This realization seemed to be an epiphany that came to her through the process of a detailed account of her thoughts, history and parenting practices. Claudia made several associations, both direct and indirect, linking her own childhood to the stress and indecision she felt in providing a safe and nurturing home for her children. Rita had a similar realization, linking her perception of herself as a teacher, with limited time to prepare her children for life with the angry response she had to her child opening the car

door. She realized the anger was engendered by fright, but that there was an element of intentionality in her response to him, wanting to use her own fright and anger to teach him an important life lesson.

Summary

The mothers in this study not only provided data through their talk. As the talk progressed they engaged in a process of making sense of what they were saying and learned about themselves and their parenting in the process. Examples of these processes can be seen in Claudia's ongoing reflection in her interview dialogue in which she questioned her efficacy as a parent while contemplating the influence of her previous life on her perceptions and behaviors:

> And I just go down this list and I sometimes I'll be like, I can't sleep and I have to say, 'Claudia, you're here in the moment. Its time to rest the day is over. Tomorrow will come. Chill out.' But I hold my guilt or I carry this burden because I guess I don't want my kids to go through anything that I had to go through.

Further examples were evident in Helen's discussion in which she described feelings of frustration with her daughter's lack of organization abilities, and then realized the true source of her frustration derived from tensions between her husband and her about differing expectations and ways to handle the issue. Gwendolyn's assertion that the diary process had influenced her to think more empathetically about her daughter's demands resulting in her trying a different, and more effective approach.

These processes provide an insight into the dynamic interplay between automatic, subconscious cognitions, schemas that are more consciously accessible, and the role of reflection in the continual process of adaptation and elaboration of our schematic perceptions. The structure of these data collection methods purposefully reflected the

parent education contexts in which my relationships with the participants were situated. This structure was useful in that the interviews were part of a continuing conversation that had been previously established, one in which dialogue, problem solving and reflection were key elements. The data collection method provides a useful model for future parent education contexts as well, including elements of journaling and reflective conversation in developing understandings of the connections between life histories, schematic perceptions, emotion activation and parenting practice.

CHAPTER VII: CONCLUSION

This study examined the nature of a group of mothers' (N=14) schemas about parenting and the effects of these schemas on parenting practice. Four research questions guided this work: (1) what are the multiple parenting schemas that guide parenting practice? How are they expressed (articulated and enacted)? (2) How does the expression of parenting schemas vary across development in interactions with children at 6 years of age, as compared with 10 year-olds? (3) How do parents balance and reconcile multiple parenting schemas in everyday parenting, and how is the balance of these schemas related to consistency in parenting practice? (4) To what degree is it possible to use this study's methodology to define and understand multiple schemas?

The data revealed detailed examples of schematic cognitions related to parenting that included attribution and efficacy, conceptual metaphors that were dichotomous in nature, and perceptions about cultural models. Analysis of the data divided the participants into two groups: Mothers who had an historical context orientation, describing associations between their own histories and concerns about the implications for their children's futures, and mothers who described a more present context orientation, who described interactions with their children in terms that were more focused on individual events. A key finding was a differing influence of schematic cognitions between the two groups on emotion activation and cognitive distortions about parenting practice and child outcomes.

The implications of this study provide benefits toward furthering effective practices in parent education settings, as well as developing reflective strategies for

teachers or other professionals working with children. In terms of research practices, the methodology may prove useful in further studies for gathering the kind of detailed and nuanced data the transcripts from these mothers' talk provided.

Limitations Of The Study

The limitations of this study are in relation to three main factors: My positionality in relation to the participants, the number of participants, and by the homogeneity of the participants in regard to gender, general perspectives about parent education, philosophy and practice.

My position as teacher and parent educator at the school the participants' children attend provided many positive benefits in recruiting volunteers for the study, and in utilizing pre-existing relationships that efficiently enhanced researcher/participant rapport. The familiar relationships also limited the findings in that the participants may have been eager to tell me what they presumed I wanted to hear. The findings indicated that this was indeed the case, as four of the participants asked directly if they were providing me with what I wanted to know. I redirected these questions by stating something to the effect of, "I'm interested in hearing your thoughts about the diary entries." This somewhat vague connection to the diaries was effective in facilitating the exploration of a wide range of topics as the conversations continued. Five of the participants also asked me specifically for parenting advice, mostly phrased in questions such as, "That's normal, right?" I responded to these solicitations with a request to discuss my thoughts at another time, which seemed satisfactory to the participants.

A second limitation to the study was the number of participants (N=14). The reason for limiting the study to a small size was due to the study's limited duration, and

the extensive nature of the interviews, transcription process and data analysis. A larger participant pool would surely provide data revealing a broader array of schema expression.

A third limitation is that the participants were all of the same gender, and professed affinity for a particular approach to parenting. As stated earlier, all the participants were consumers of parent education classes and parenting literature. They ascribed to the school's philosophy of social and emotional development, and persisted in enrolling their children there through a multi-step lottery process. Including fathers in the study would have provided different perspectives, as would including a more diverse and random sampling of a community.

Directions For Further Research

In order to be effective, information intended to guide reflection for parents and/or teachers requires a broad database of examples that illustrate how individuals experience schematic cognitions in daily life. The open-ended talk the mothers' in this study engaged in provided a glimpse into the ways in which they define and experience the complexities of parenting. In keeping with Quinn's (1987; 1992; 2005) research goal to develop a comprehensive understanding of the concept of marriage in American life through the analysis of extensive interviews, similar approaches may be useful in providing parents with information to inform parenting practice, and to inform teachers of the relationships between schematic cognitions and practice. This requires continued research that more fully illuminates participants' voices.

Further research into the normative range of cognitive distortions is also needed. While much of the research into cognitive distortions focuses on clinical issues, (e.g.

Beck, 1976; Beck & Freeman, 1990; Holon & Beck, 1979), much of the research into

parents' cognitive distortions is focused on families dealing with issues such as children's

developmental delays and more extreme forms of family conflict (e.g. Nixon, 2002;

Nixon & Singer, 2002; Robin & Foster, 2000) While by no means dysfunctional, many of

the mothers' in this study exhibited an array of cognitive distortions that influenced the

emotional responses to events with their children. These responses, in turn, seemed to

influence their sense of agency regarding parenting practice, and contributed to

heightened level of stress and emotion activation. Further definition of the normative

range of how cognitive distortions may occur may also contribute to increased reflective

capacity for participants in non-clinical, educational settings.

Implications For Parenting Resources And Practice

In terms of current practical schema theory applications, the majority comes from

the field of psychotherapy, an approach developed by Young (2003) for the clinical

treatment of disorders such as depression (Dozois, et. al, 2009; Heilemann, Pieters,

Kehoe & Yang, 2011), borderline personality (e.g. Kellogg & Young, 2006) and

substance abuse (e.g. Ball & Young, 2000). The focus of these approaches is on Early

Maladaptive Schemas, presumed to be highly stable cognitive structures (Riso, et. al,

2006) that contribute to the persistence of disorders. Few resources for parents focus on

the influence of schematic cognitions on parenting practice, with the exception of a small

number of proponents of mindful-parenting practices (e.g. Kabat-Zinn & Kabat-Zinn,

1998; Siegel & Hartzell, 2004) who also include schema-based meditative and reflective

approaches to understanding emotional influences on parenting practice.

Findings from studies such as this one could be useful in providing more extensive data about a range of common parenting cognitions that influence practice within normative parenting experience. Parenting is a process of continual adaptation, and schemas associated with it are in a constant process of adaptation and refinement (Harkness, Super & Keefer, 1992) spurred by experience and reflection. Providing a database of sorts for parents to access in non-therapeutic, educational settings that provides information about the types of cognitions associated with parenting may provide more effective opportunities for reflection.

For example, understanding that parents may have a particular attributional style and that the attributions they assign to their children's behavior are influenced by factors such as mood and belief systems stemming from background and experience may facilitate the reflective process. As Gwendolyn discovered, having the opportunity to notice patterns in her child's behavior, and patterns in her own emotional and behavioral response provided her with information that was useful in changing an entrenched pattern of interaction. Gwendolyn realized, to some degree, that the stressors in these particular interactions had to do both with her daughter's and her own perceptions about dependence and independence. Her solution to the problem was effective because her response, born of reflection in her diary entries, included behaviors that directly addressed those issues.

In addition, information about the kinds of emotions that are activated by schematic cognitions and the ways in which they may influence cognitive distortions such as personalization or overgeneralizations may provide opportunities for more rational interpretations of events as parents reflect upon interactions with their children.

Implications For Educational Policy And Practice

While not specifically related to parenting, similar schemas influence the relationships teachers have with students. Investigation into the links between this study's findings and teacher perceptions and practices may be of benefit in providing resources for teacher reflection and mentoring.

Teachers' practice and interpretations of children's behavior, learning and achievement are highly influenced by schematic cognitions. Mcleod (1995) advocates looking at classroom practices through the lens of achievement motivation and attribution. Citing research into attribution theory, McLeod states that one effect of attributional biases in classroom contexts is that teachers may assign undue credit to themselves for student behavior and achievement and may assign blame for student failure due to perceptions about factors such as socio-economic status or family structure. These tendencies may be rooted in a variety of cognitions having to do with schemas about concepts such as responsibility, fairness, authority, independence and collaboration among others. Reflective opportunities guided by information about the ways schematic cognitions influence practice may be beneficial in improving student achievement in general.

In studies investigating the links between teacher attribution and responses to children, researchers (e.g. Clark & Artilles, 2000; Graham, 1990) have demonstrated associations between teachers' causal attributions for student achievement and behavior and the activation of subsequent emotions. Clark and Artilles (2000) state:

> Once teachers ascribe an outcome to a cause, social emotions (anger and pity) follow, which are shaped by the properties of that cause. These teacher emotions result in such behaviors as providing evaluative feedback

(rewards or punishment), giving or withholding help, or offering praise or blame (p. 77).

Teacher behaviors can have profound effects on their students, particularly in regard to overall achievement and self-perception (Graham, 1990). Providing opportunities for teachers to reflect on and understand the influence of largely automatic and subconscious schematic cognitions, and the subsequent emotions and behaviors activated by those perceptions may be of benefit to the general field of education.

APPENDIX

Recruitment Letter To Potential Subjects

University of California, San Diego
Consent to Act as a Research Subject

Parents' Talk: Multiple Schemas and Parenting Practice

Dear Parents,

Zoltan Sarda is conducting a research study as part of his doctoral dissertation work to find out more about how parents make sense of interactions with their children. Mothers with children in first grade, and mothers with children in fifth grade are invited to participate in this study.

If you agree to participate, I am asking you to do four things:

1. First, I would like to meet with you for about 30 minutes to describe the procedures in the study and to learn some background information about your child's daily life.
2. I would like you to spend a period of two weeks keeping track of interactions with your children. To do this, you will have several choices: You can sign on to a secure web page and write your thoughts directly into a form; You can use paper and pencil to write your thoughts; You can call a secure phone message system and leave a verbal message; or we can talk on the phone each day. I will be asking participants to spend a little time each evening using one of these methods.
3. At the end of the first week, I would like to have a brief check-in conversation to find out how things are going. This can be in-person or over the phone, and should take about 15 minutes.
4. The final activity will be an interview that should last approximately one hour.

Participation is limited to six mothers from each of the two age groups. The selection process is random and does not reflect any judgments or opinions about individual parents or children.

Any information I collect about you or your children will be confidential. I will identify parents and children with an ID number and I will not share information about individual families with your child's teacher or anyone else. I will keep all information in a secure location to which I will have sole access. No information will be reported in any way that would identify you, your child, or the school.

I am doing this study to learn about what kinds of factors influence parents' interactions with their children and how parents understand and make sense of these influences.

You do not have to participate in this study. Participation is completely voluntary and will not affect what happens to you or your child at school. Participation will not put you or your child at risk. If you agree to participate in the study, you may withdraw yourself at any time without consequences of any kind. If you volunteer to participate, you may change your mind in the future. I hope that you will help me and I appreciate your consideration of this request.

If you have any questions or concerns about this study, please call me at 619-405-2739. I will be happy to give you more information. If you are willing to help, please check the "I agree" box below, sign this letter, and complete the contact information (so I know how to contact you if you are selected). Return these pages either directly to me or through the front office at the school. If you do not want to participate, please check the "I do not agree" box and return this form. A copy of this letter for you to keep is enclosed for your records.

If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, contact the UCSD Human Research Protections Program, La Jolla Village Professional Center, Suite A208, 8950 Villa La Jolla, La Jolla, CA 92037; (858) 455-5050.

Your help is important to me. Thank you very much.

Sincerely,

Zoltan Sarda

I have read a letter explaining the study. I understand the purpose and methods of this study and all my questions have been answered. I will keep a copy of this letter for my records.

I **agree** to participate in this study and to allow the researcher to contact me. I realize that I may choose to withdraw from this study at any time with no consequences.

 I **do not** agree to participate in this study.

I understand that all information collected will be kept confidential and that no names of individuals or programs will be used in reports.

_____
Name (Please Print)   Child's Name

_____
Signature   Date

Please complete all contact information so that I may contact you to schedule the meetings if you are selected to participate.

_____**am/pm**
(Area code) and Phone number Best time(s) to reach me at this number

Second phone number (work number, or number of a family member or friend)

_____   _____
(Area code) and Phone number   **Whose phone number is this?**
                                                    (work, friend, family member)

Initial Interview Questions

Target Child(ren)

Child 1:		Child 2:	
Age:	Sex:	Age:	Sex:

Primary Caregivers:

Name:	Name:	Name:	Name:
Relationship:	Relationship:	Relationship:	Relationship:
Occupation:	Occupation:	Occupation:	Occupation:
Work Schedule:	Work Schedule:	Work Schedule:	Work Schedule:
Education:	Education:	Education:	Education:

Other Children in Home:

Name:	Name:	Name:	Name:
Age:	Age:	Age:	Age:
Gender:	Gender:	Gender:	Gender:
Sibling: Y N	Sibling: Y N	Sibling: Y N	Sibling: Y N

Other Adults in Home:

Name:	Name:	Name:	Name:
Relationship:	Relationship:	Relationship:	Relationship:
Occupation:	Occupation:	Occupation:	Occupation:
Work Schedule:	Work Schedule:	Work Schedule:	Work Schedule:
Education:	Education:	Education:	Education:

Other Adults With Whom Children have *Regular* Contact

Name:	Name:	Name:	Name:
Relationship:	Relationship:	Relationship:	Relationship:
Frequency:	Frequency:	Frequency:	Frequency:

Please describe a typical weekday schedule:
Please describe a typical weekend schedule:
Mother's family of origin information:
Is there anything else you think it would be helpful for me to know?

Observations/Notes:

Neighborhood:
Home:
Household Atmosphere:
Mother's Personality/temperament:

Daily Diary Format

Daily Diary

At the end of the day, use this diary page to reflect on the interactions you had with your children. Feel free to focus on the interactions with one particular child if you choose, or to think about the interactions you had with more than one of your children.

*Required

Date *

What was the general mood of the day? *
Please rate what the general mood of the day was on a scale from 1 to 10, with one being a very difficult day, and ten being a very easy, happy day.

Very Difficult   ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○   Very Happy

        1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

Was there anything unusual about the day?
Describe anything that was unusual about today that may have accounted for the general mood. If nothing unusual happened, feel free to skip this question.

Tell me about the time with your child that made you the happiest today. *
Describe with as much detail as you can what happened. Try to include as many details as you need to help you remember what happened. If nothing significant happened today, please write "Nothing to Report."

Tell me about the time with your child that was the most difficult today. *
Describe with as much detail as you can what happened. Try to include as many details as you need to help you remember what happened. If nothing significant happened today, please write "Nothing to Report."

Examples of Interview Protocol Interventions
(Quinn, 1992; 2005)

Expand on points:
- "You were ironing and he had…"
- "How did that start? Ironing the clothes."

Explain what they meant:
- "So in general you…"
- "You wanted to live up to what?"
- "You were ironing and he had…"

Spell out implications of examples they gave:
- "But you say two things _____ and _____.
- "You do it, but you don't believe in it?"
- "So you made it for him. Why did you do that?"
- "And that's why it ended?"
- "Was that a surprise, I mean did you keep being surprised that…"

Give examples of generalizations:
- "Is that the main time when you feel like that?"
- "That he feels you essentially lack…?"
- "You want to be the kind of wife who…"

*Asking to explain perceptions about others' feelings/motivations:
- "Is that because he feels…"
- "Have you talked to him about that? I mean specifically?" (In response to a statement attributing intent to a husband's actions.)
- "Like you mean in general his sensitivities, or…?"

* Note; My heading category.

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