



Individual Differences in Mothers and Children: Effects on Child Autobiographical Outcomes

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Introduction

- Highly elaborative mothers have been found to have children who recall significantly richer and accurate memories when compared to low elaborative mothers' children (Fivush, Habermas, Waters, & Zaman, 2011).
- Maternal depression is likely to be negatively related to child autobiographical memory outcomes (Sumner, Griffith, & Mineka, 2010).
- Child gender appears to result in memory recall differences, with girls outperforming boys (Gryzman, & Hudson, 2013).
- Child language ability seems to play a role in how children encode and express memories (Fivush, 2011).
- We examined the role of the previously mentioned variables on child autobiographical outcomes. The present study used maternal elaboration during a task, a somewhat unexplored area of research. Variables predictive ability on child autobiographical memory outcomes was also explored.
- We expected maternal elaboration, and language ability to be positively related to child memory outcomes. Girls were expected to perform significantly better. Maternal depression was expected to negatively correlate with child autobiographical outcomes.

Methods

Data comprised of during-event transcripts of a mother child interaction, and measures of maternal depression, child gender and language ability. Transcripts were coded similarly to criteria by Reese and Newcombe (2007). Composite scores were created for maternal elaboration and historic maternal depression.

Results

- Maternal elaboration positively correlated with child autobiographical outcomes; specifically, use of open-ended *wh-* questions correlated with all aspects of recall.
- Historic maternal depression was negatively correlated to maternal use of elaborations, suggesting they may also impact autobiographical outcomes.
- No significant in autobiographical outcomes were found as a result of child gender.
- Children's language ability appeared to be positively related to child specificity; in some cases it was also related to mothers' use of yes/no and *wh-* elaborations.

Correlations between Maternal Elaboration and Children's Autobiographical Memory

		Total autobiographical recall	Orientations	Evaluations	Cohesion	Specificity
Total maternal elaboration	Pearson's <i>r</i>	0.05	0.11	0.16*	0.14	0.22**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.559	0.162	0.045	0.083	0.007
	N	156	156	156	156	156
Open question elaborations	Pearson's <i>r</i>	0.1	0.17**	0.17*	0.18*	0.18*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.224	0.030	0.031	0.021	0.022
	N	156	156	156	156	156
Yes/no elaborations	Pearson's <i>r</i>	0.3	0.1	0.14	0.12	0.29***
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.014	0.220	0.12	0.151	0.000
	N	156	156	156	156	156
Statement elaborations	Pearson's <i>r</i>	0.12	0.03	0.06	0.07	0.03
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.880	0.681	0.280	0.409	0.698
	N	156	156	156	156	156

p* < 0.05 *p* < 0.01 ****p* < 0.001

- When considered together, variables did not significantly predict general autobiographical outcomes. However, they did significantly predict child autobiographical specificity, $F(9, 134) = 43.57, p = 0.001$.

Summary of Multiple Regression Analyses for Variables Predicting Autobiographical Outcomes

	Total Autobiographical Recall		Orientations		Evaluations		Cohesion		Specificity						
	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE					
Open ended question	0.19	-0.20	0.11	0.06	0.04	0.19	0.01	0.02	0.05	0.09	0.07	0.14	0.01	0.01	0.05
Yes/no elaborations	-0.02	0.10	-0.03	-0.01	0.02	-0.06	0.00	0.01	0.01	-0.01	0.03	-0.05	0.01	0.01	0.20
Statement elaborations	0.04	0.10	0.04	0.01	0.02	0.05	0.02	0.01	0.18	0.03	0.04	0.09	-0.00	0.01	-0.02
Historic depression	-0.01	0.47	-0.00	0.00	0.09	0.00	-0.02	0.04	-0.06	0.08	0.16	0.05	-7.93	0.03	0.00
Concurrent depression	0.24	0.41	0.07	0.10	0.08	0.13	0.04	0.04	0.13	-0.11	0.14	-0.08	0.04	0.03	0.14
Gender	-4.63	4.14	-0.10	-0.63	0.80	-0.07	-0.26	0.38	-0.06	-3.15	1.46	-0.19*	-0.02	0.27	-0.01
PLS standardized score	-0.11	0.13	-0.08	0.01	0.03	0.05	0.00	0.01	-0.00	0.07	0.05	0.15	0.02	0.01	0.16
BPVS standardized score	0.03	0.19	0.02	0.03	0.04	0.09	0.03	0.02	0.18	0.08	0.07	0.12	0.03	0.01	0.23*
Hollingshead SES	-0.05	0.17	-0.03	0.00	0.03	0.01	-0.02	0.02	-0.13	-0.04	0.06	-0.07	-0.01	0.01	0.01
Adjusted R ²	-0.03		0.00		0.01		0.04		0.14						
F	0.49		1.02		1.13		1.62		3.57						

**p* < 0.05

Discussion

- Maternal elaboration was related to children's autobiographical outcomes; this was found even when elaborations occurred during the event.
- Interestingly, other variables appeared to be theoretically linked to maternal elaboration, and thus may indirectly affect child outcomes.
- Maternal depression results in less use of maternal elaboration.
- Gender may affect maternal elaboration, despite us not finding this effect.
- Child language ability affects maternal elaboration, as interactions are bidirectional in nature.
- This suggests that how these variables interact together during an event is still unclear. Although similarities exist with the literature that focuses on elaboration during reminiscence, more attention and research focusing on during-event elaborations may help us understand how child autobiographical memory is shaped throughout development.

References

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