

“I’LL ALWAYS BE THAT AWKWARD ONE”: HOW MOTHERS AND
ADOLESCENTS JOINTLY CONSTRUCT ADOLESCENT SELVES
IN CONVERSATION

by

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A dissertation submitted to the faculty of
The University of Utah
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Psychology

University of Utah

May 2013

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The University of Utah Graduate School

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ABSTRACT

Identity issues are a major concern in adolescence. Self-views inform and shape identity. Self views are negotiated through conversation about life events with important others. In this study, I analyze mother-teen conversations about identity confirming and identity challenging events from 92 adolescents, age 11, 14-15, and 17-18 years. Results indicate that mothers and teens are constructing ability based, and increasingly with age, trait based self-conceptions. Mothers' contributions to children's self-concepts tend to be more positive than children's contributions in the context of talking about difficult events, and when negative statements are made, partners are likely to explore those statements with elaborative responses. Older children make more self-related statements than younger children, and mothers appear to adjust their responses to children's statements based on children's age, gender, and the type of event (identity challenging versus identity confirming) under discussion. Taken together, results suggest a picture of mothers as nuanced scaffolders of children's selves in ways that are responsive both to children's changing narrative abilities, and to contextual demands.

For Nan—
who still scaffolds me

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This research was funded by a grant from the Clayton Family Foundation, for which I am grateful. I would like to thank my family and extended family, who have encouraged me and given me the time to complete this project. Special thanks to my advisors, Cecilia Wainryb, and especially Monisha Pasupathi, whose patience, encouragement, and feedback are invaluable.

INTRODUCTION

- Daughter: It was the Potipher's wife thing – ... So it was just weird – having to, like, do that flirtatious kind of attitude, I learned that I'm not like that in any way, shape, or form. And I guess I kind of already knew that, but it just, kind of, made me even more – deep down there I'm not flirtatious.
- Mother: Not yet.
- Daughter: No, probably never.
- Mother: One day you will be.
- Daughter: No, I'll always be that awkward one – yeah.

The conversation above took place when I asked a 14-year-old girl to talk to her mother about an experience that confirmed something she already knew or thought about herself. She elected to talk about being cast in the seductive role of Potipher's wife in a theatrical production of *Joseph and the Technicolor Dream-Coat*, which cemented her conviction that she is not flirtatious. Although her mother gently challenges this self-view by opening up the possibility that flirtatiousness may be a future possibility, the daughter summarily dismisses this possibility, affirming her awkwardness as a permanent state.

This conversation illustrates adolescent self-construction as it unfolds in conversation between mother and child. In this paper, I examine conversations such as this, between mothers and adolescents of different ages, to understand how these conversations may contribute to adolescents' self-understanding. In examining these conversations, I investigate three overarching questions about the processes of constructing and refining self-views during adolescence. First, what types of selves are children constructing, and how do those vary by age? Second, how does mothers' scaffolding of children's self-construction vary by age and gender of the child? And third,

does talking about changes in the self require more discussion from mothers and children than talking about stability in the self?

Self and Identity in Adolescence

The focus of this investigation is on processes of negotiating self-views during adolescence. Self-views overlap with, and are an integral part of identity, which is a major developmental concern during adolescence. Identity construction involves committing to social roles and values (Erikson, 1969), and optimally includes an exploration of how one's abilities, preferences, and values align with those roles and values (Marcia, 1987). Having a clear sense of self—knowing one's own preferences, abilities, characteristics, traits, and values—gives one a solid foundation on which to build a soundly structured identity. In this way, self-views inform and are interwoven with identity. Getting a clear sense of one's self amid rapid developmental change that characterizes adolescence, however, is not an easy task.

Physical maturation signals both the child and those around him or her that social roles, relationships, and expectations are changing (Steinberg, 1987). Cognitive developments such as the ability to think abstractly and to reason deductively spur reconceptualization of self and of personality, as children deduce underlying personality traits in themselves and others from observations of behavior in diverse contexts (Erikson, 1969; Harter, 1999). Abstract thinking also means that children are able to think about possibilities, to imagine the ideal, and to critically analyze gaps between what is and what should be (Hill & Palmquist, 1978). This ability can be applied to political and social structures (Metzger & Smetana, 2010), as well as to interpersonal and familial

relationships, and to the self. An increase in perspective taking abilities means that children develop, in adolescence, the ability to coordinate multiple perspectives. They can imagine how their appearance and actions are perceived by a variety of others, and analyze how much each of those opinions matters to them (Gurucharri et al., 1982; Hill & Palmquist, 1978). New capacities allow for new roles and relationships. Social activism (Eisenberg & Morris, 2004), increased risk-taking (Steinberg, 2005; 2008), and interest in romantic relationships (Udry, 1990) are all normative developments arising from the social-cognitive changes of adolescence. Friends, family, and society in general recognize the increased capacities of adolescence, and imbue the transition from childhood to adulthood with increased obligations (e.g., education and career training, obtaining part-time employment, helping to provide for one's own wants and needs), rights (voting), and privileges (driving, extended curfew, dating, making educational choices) in multiple contexts. These social cognitive developments during adolescence mean that children begin to see themselves, the world, and their place in it, differently. It is little wonder that the construction of self-views and identity are paramount during this time.

However, a complex, nuanced, clear sense of self is not easily achieved. Research with adolescents of different ages suggests that during middle adolescence, as self-descriptions become more complex and detailed, children increasingly perceive the self as containing opposing attributes, and that these opposite aspects of the self are troubling, particularly for girls (Harter, 2006a). Additionally, during this phase of development, the opinions of others become increasingly important, prompting angst about conflicting messages from parents, friends, or other important individuals about what attributes are

valuable or important. Adolescents in this stage may notice that they behave and feel like different people from situation to situation, and wonder which self is authentic. It is not until late adolescence and into emerging adulthood that individuals develop the ability to use higher order abstractions to resolve conflicting aspects of the self across situations, and have internalized values and self-expectations so that the opinions of others become less troublesome (Harter, 2006a).

Other researchers have pointed out that the rapid changes that accompany adolescent development demand that children figure out how to maintain a sense of continuity in their self-views. Specifically, adolescents (and adults) need to be able to account for both stability and for change in the self over time. Chandler's work has linked cognitive development and age-related changes to the use of different strategies for explaining self continuity over time, showing that, as children's thinking becomes more complex, the simpler strategies they used in childhood, such as constancy of physical characteristics, must give way to more nuanced strategies of explaining the self as continuous in time. Specifically, as children come to realize that physical appearance (and later, even underlying traits and characteristics) may change over time, they are pushed to formulate increasingly complex explanations of how a person changes, yet remains the same person (Chandler et al., 2003).

While forming a clear, coherent, complex sense of self during the adolescent years appears to be fraught with frustration, developmentalists have warned that failure to do so can be problematic. Disturbingly, in clinical samples, teens at risk for suicide are less able to explain continuity in the self through time than teens who are not at risk, suggesting a correlation between incoherence in self views and suicidal tendencies

(Chandler et. al., 2003). Incoherent self-views may also impair identity development. Erikson theorized that individuals who fail to resolve the crisis of identity by forming a coherent view of the self are at risk for role confusion and stagnation (Erikson, 1969). Constructing a clear, consistent, coherent sense of one's self during adolescence, then, appears to be a struggle that is both normative and consequential.

Processes of Self and Identity Construction

Self-construction

How do children come to know who they are? How do they construct self-views and identity out of the raw materials of experience? Narrative models of self-development suggest that narrating the events of our lives is the process by which self-views are established and maintained (McAdams & Pals, 2007; Singer 2004). As we reflect on our daily experiences, key events are told to others, with whom we negotiate meaning and identity (McLean, Pasupathi, & Pals, 2007; Pasupathi, 2001). These models of self-development propose a bi-directional influence between the self and narrative. Specifically, personality, identity, and contextual factors will influence which events get storied, and how those stories are narrated. Those narrations, in turn, shape our self-views and inform our identities (McLean et al., 2007; Pasupathi, 2001; Pasupathi & Rich, 2005).

These models of self-development suggest that, as children discuss their daily experiences, key events may become the context for the proposal and negotiation of the self. For instance, in the opening example, the girl's love of theater and interest and past experience in dramatic productions lead to her role as Potiphar's wife. Her emotional

reaction to the role may help her select that experience as an important one; or at least one worth discussing. It is in the storying of that experience, in the narration of how she felt (“it was just weird – having to, like, do that flirtatious kind of attitude”) and what that means (“I learned that I’m not like that”) that her self-views are forming. It is also in the discussion of that experience with her mother that her self-views are challenged (“one day you might be,”), and shaped (“No. I’ll always be that awkward one”).

Identity construction

Likewise, identity theorists have proposed that the process of identity formation takes place in a social context and includes feedback from others (Erikson, 1969). James Marcia’s theory of identity status suggests that identity is multifaceted, and that a person works through identity issues one role or commitment at a time. A fully formed identity consists of a commitment to a specific social role or value after a process of exploration of alternative roles (Marcia, 1987).

This process of identity exploration takes place in a social context, and while larger institutions, such as schools and churches can provide information, feedback, and critical transitions (as when a person makes educational and career choices) that push a person toward exploration and commitment to an identity, it is in close relationships with parents and peers that the micro-level work of identity construction proceeds (Meeus, Oosterwegel, & Vollebergh, 2002). Both self-views and identity are constructed in a social context: just as conversation with important others about the events of one’s life shapes self-views, conversations with close others is key for the processes of identity construction. Empirical studies of adolescent identity formation that have examined both

processes and outcomes in Marcia's (1987) identity status approach have linked mother-child communication patterns to the process of identity exploration (Grotevant & Cooper 1985; Reiss & Youniss, 2004). Conversations with important others, then, are empirically linked to identity development. These conversations are also theoretically linked to identity development, because they are the place where self-views are negotiated, and an exploration of one's identity should be informed by self-views.

Conversations with close others are important contexts for the development of both identity and self-views, and this project focuses specifically on the processes of shaping self-views in these conversations. While self-views inform identity, this project does not focus on identity outcomes nor on processes of identity exploration proper. Instead, I focus on processes of forming and cementing self-views in conversation. I examine these processes first in terms of the negotiation of stability versus change in the self, and then in terms of the role of conversational partners in the negotiation of self-views.

Stability and Change in the Self

An interesting feature of the opening exchange is the negotiation between stability and change in the self. The mother suggests that flirtatiousness is something that may be acquired: a changeable aspect of the self. The girl rejects this possibility, affirming awkwardness as an enduring aspect of her self, which, to her, seems tied to the impossibility of becoming flirtatious. Theoretical and empirical work in the narrative field suggests that the self-concept is structured to account for both stability and change. Stories that illuminate and are important to the self tend to account for both continuity

and change in the self (McAdams et al., 2006). Likewise, people construct connections between themselves and events in terms of stability and change. Specifically, individuals discuss meaningful events in ways that show how the self is a certain way (stability), or that a change has occurred in the self, sometimes revealing a previously undiscovered aspect of the self (Pasupathi, Mansour & Brubaker, 2007).

While both change and stability are inherent in the self concept, changing self-views may be more difficult than cementing existing ones. Self-verification theory suggests that individuals are motivated to maintain existing self-views, even when adopting new ones would be advantageous (McNulty & Swann, 1994; Swann, 1997; 2012). Indeed, the girl in the opening example is unwilling to trade her stable self-view, even at the cost of eternal awkwardness. However, individuals do sometimes manage to alter their self-perceptions. Examination of narratives suggests that narrating change in self-views may require more effort than narrating stability (McLean & Fournier, 2008). Empirical work on the self-integration of negative events bears this out, as individuals who have supportive listeners to help them construct their narrative accounts are more likely to report having changed or grown from the negative experience (Weeks & Pasupathi, 2011). Based on this work, we would expect mothers and children to make more statements about children's selves, and to respond more elaboratively to such statements when they are discussing changes in the self of the child than when they are discussing stability.

However, developmental theory suggests a different pattern of results. Because adolescents are in the midst of self-construction, we may expect that they differ from adults in terms of the stability of their self-views. Theoretically, adults have a sort of core

accumulation of stable self views (constructed during adolescence) which are resistant to change, but which can be added to or revised via some effort (narrative processing). On the other hand, if adolescents are in the process of constructing their self-views, the “stable core” of adulthood should be in a greater state of flux, and flexibility. In other words, changes, additions, or challenges to the “stable” self-views in adolescence may not require as much effort as they do in adulthood. In the absence of firmly established and long-held self-views, everything may be up for grabs, and discussions of stable aspects of the self may command as much attention, discussion, and elaboration as do discussions of new, or changing aspects of the self. How contexts of change or stability affect mothers’ and children’s discussion of self-concept related concerns is an issue that has not been investigated, but which this project will undertake. Prior to outlining the details of this project, however, I discuss the importance of conversational partners in shaping self-perception.

The Importance of Listeners

Attentiveness

Empirical evidence suggests that, like the mother in the opening example, the audiences to whom we choose to narrate the events of our lives help shape our self-views. For instance, narrative work on listeners’ effect on speakers’ self-views suggests that not all audiences are the same; individuals speaking to attentive friends are more sure of their self-views post conversation than those who are saddled with inattentive friends. Interestingly, attentive listeners who challenge speakers’ self-views have a comparable effect as attentive listeners who are supportive of speakers’ self-views: in both cases,

speakers tend to maintain their self-views (Pasupathi & Rich, 2005). Like the girl in the opening example's response to her mother's challenge, emerging adults challenged by friends may cement, rather than abandon their self-views. What appears to be more important than whether listeners agree or disagree with one's point of view is the listener's attentiveness. Maternal attention, then, may be an important variable in mother-child conversations about children's selves. In natural settings, mothers (and other audiences) may be distracted and inattentive to children. In a laboratory setting, we expect listeners to be less distractable (except when specifically directed to attend to other things, as in the Pasupathi and Rich experiment). However, individual differences in maternal attentiveness, even in a laboratory setting, may impact the extent to which children engage in self-construction with their mothers.

Even when listening attentively to children, mothers vary on aspects of the conversation to which they choose to attend. While attentive mothers may sometimes respond to children's statements about themselves, mothers may also ignore those statements in favor of addressing other concerns, such as moral or prudential issues (Weeks & Pasupathi, 2009). For instance, when North-American mothers converse with children about children's transgressions, they must balance sometimes conflicting goals of emphasizing moral concerns in children's wrong-doing, and preserving children's self-esteem (Recchia et al., under review). Thus, even an attentive mother may ignore a child's statement about the self in the pursuit of a competing goal. Pilot data suggest that, despite the developmental press for self-related concerns, mothers and children are often drawn to other issues, such as prudential concerns ("how many kids were stuffed in that little car?"), morality concerns ("I think you probably hurt her feelings"), romantic

concerns (“no girl who acts like that is worth your time”), and family plans (“we’re going to the cabin again for new year’s eve”), to name a few. These kinds of responses, while communicating interest in the conversation and attentiveness, nevertheless turn the conversation away from issues more directly related to self-development. In contrast, responding to children’s self-statements may position mothers to shape children’s selves. Developmental work attests to the role mothers play in shaping children’s selves through conversation.

Mothers as co-constructors of children’s narratives and selves

Beginning when we are very young, parents help scaffold our understanding of our selves. In studies of joint mother-child narration of shared experiences, maternal scaffolding style predicts not only preschooler’s autobiographical memory for the re-told event (Fivush & Nelson, 2004), but also the type of narrative style children adopt over time (Reese et al., 1993). This kind of joint reminiscing may also help young children begin to understand themselves as agents in time, linking their past experiences to their present selves (Fivush & Nelson 2006). Later, children build on this skill as they begin, in adolescence, to understand the personal past as influential in understanding and organizing personality traits and characteristics, linking past experience to current conceptions of the self (Habermas & Bluck, 2000; Habermas, & de Silveira, 2008; Habermas, Ehlert-Lerche, & de Silveira, 2009; Habermas, Negele, & Mayer, 2010; Negele & Habermas, 2010).

In early childhood, mothers who effectively scaffold talk about emotional events with their preschoolers have children with more clearly organized self-views (Bird &

Reese, 2006; Welsch-Ross, Fasig, & Farrar, 1999). Self-esteem in pre- and early adolescent children, which is related to self-views, is influenced by the ways in which families tell stories together; when parents acknowledge and integrate children's perspectives and contributions in constructing narratives of family events, children have better self-esteem (Bohanek et al., 2006). Taken together, these findings suggest not only that children's selves are being shaped as they jointly narrate the events of their lives with their mothers, but that the particular aspects of the self that are being shaped depend on the development of the child.

To recap, in very young children, autobiographical memory and language are developing, aided by mothers' narrative scaffolding (Fivush & Nelson, 2004). Shortly thereafter, the sense of self through time and emotional understanding comes to the fore of development, and is linked to features of mother-child conversation (Bird & Reese, 2006; Fivush & Nelson, 2006). Self-esteem, which tends to remain high during the preschool years, does not show up as a co-constructed narrative outcome until later childhood (Bohanek et al., 2006). It is reasonable to expect that during adolescence, when identity and self perception concerns come into play, children's narratives with their mothers will include constructions and negotiations of identity and of self.

Maternal scaffolding

One of the purposes of this project is to investigate how mothers scaffold conversations about the self during adolescence, and what features of the conversation, or of children themselves, affect that process. Scaffolding refers to teaching. Vygotsky's notion of zones of proximal development suggests that as individuals work to develop

new skills, there are, at any given point in time, tasks which they are competent to do unaided. There is also a range of tasks they cannot do alone, but at which they can be successful with the help of a more competent mentor; these tasks fall within the zone of proximal development. Learning takes place as competent others scaffold learners by giving them help within this zone of proximal development. Scaffolding allows learners to practice skills and to be successful at tasks they cannot complete alone. As learners practice these scaffolded tasks, they eventually become competent at performing the tasks without help. Good mentors respond by adjusting their efforts to allow learners to perform tasks at which they have become competent alone (Vygotsky, 1930-1935/1978). Thus, scaffolding is a process of teaching by providing, and then gradually removing support.

Self-development is an ongoing process. Although theorists sometimes speak of identity development as having a telos or an end-point (i.e., a fully formed identity), the shaping and refining of self-views is conceptualized as a process that continues throughout adulthood, as conversations with important others lead us to cement, discard, or adopt new self-views (see McLean et al., 2007). Because the refinement of self-views is an ongoing task that children will continue to engage with through their adulthood, mothers may be particularly wise to scaffold the process of exploring the self in conversation rather than focusing exclusively on getting a child to adopt a particular self-view.

Maternal scaffolding may take different forms. First, mothers may make unique contributions to the self that children are constructing, by making explicit statements about the self of the child (e.g., “you’re good at performing”). In this way, mothers can

both assert their view of the child, and model how statements about selves are made. Such statements from mothers may open space for children to accept, reject, ignore, or further investigate the mother's claim. This strategy, however, may be more desirable with children who are less skilled at identifying or talking about their own self-views. As children become increasingly able to articulate their ideas about themselves, maternal scaffolding may evolve. Mothers may focus on responding to statements made by children rather than making direct statements about the self of the child ("I agree! You do love to perform! What aspect of it do you enjoy most?").

Mothers' responses to children's self-statements

As mothers respond to children's statements about themselves, they may shape (or hope to shape) children's self-views. Mothers may confirm, challenge, or ask for more information about children's self-assertions. This kind of elaborative response and attention to children's self-statements can help children cement, refine, alter, or even abandon a specific self-view. Responding to children's self-statements is also key in encouraging the process of self-construction. Mothers' responses to children's self-statements may encourage children to more clearly articulate both their self-views, and how those self-views were shaped by the events under discussion.

However, there appear to be qualitative differences in mothers' responses to children. One consistent theme in studies of mother-child conversations is the extent to which mothers respond elaboratively to their children. Mothers who use an elaborative style provide additional information to young children's fledgling narratives, filling in gaps, asking about and discussing facts as well as feelings. In contrast, some mothers use

a more interrogative style, asking the same questions repeatedly to their young children, quizzing them about facts, social roles, or scripts (Fivush, 2007; Fivush & Nelson, 2004; 2006; Reese et al., 1993). When mothers respond elaboratively to children's statements, they convey interest in what the child is saying. Further, as they provide or ask for additional information, they create space to flesh out details and create connections between children's actions, emotions, and the actions and emotions of others. It is no wonder that an elaborative maternal style has been linked to children's more advanced self-development (Fivush, 2007; Fivush & Nelson, 2006; Reese & Newcombe, 2007; Wang, Leichtman & Davies, 2000).

To some extent, maternal scaffolding style may be culturally influenced (Leyva et al., 2008; Wang et al., 2000), with mothers from collectivist cultures less likely to take an elaborative style. Interestingly, there also appears to be a developmental component to mothers' tendency to elaborate with children. Longitudinal research with mothers and children collected joint-narratives at four different times, when children were 3, nearly 4, nearly 5, and nearly 6 years old. Findings suggest that over time, children of elaborative mothers are more likely to adopt an elaborative style themselves, and that as children become more elaborative, their mothers respond in kind, becoming even more elaborative. Importantly, though, all mothers become more elaborative as children age and grow more competent at telling coherent stories (Reese, Haden, & Fivush, 1993). This research suggests that variations in mother's tendency to respond elaboratively to their children may include individual differences, and be affected by children's age and narrative competence. Likewise, a study of mother-adolescent narratives around a variety of events found that interactions of age, gender, and the type of event under discussion

predicted significant differences in maternal response. The authors hypothesize that mothers adjust their scaffolding style based on children's development, ability to narrate, and the challenges presented by various events (McLean & Mansfield, 2012). In the current study, relationships between maternal response and children's age, gender, and features of the conversation will be investigated. Also, past research has pointed to features of the relationship between speakers and listeners that may affect processes of self-construction, and it is to these features of conversations and relationships that I now turn.

The Nature of the Mother-Child Relationship Matters

Statement valence

One variable that may influence mother's responsiveness to children is valence. American, middle-class mothers tend to be concerned with protecting and promoting children's self-esteem. Cross-cultural studies which compare mother-child conversations from collectivist versus individualistic cultures suggest that American mothers socialize individualism by promoting autonomy, and both affirming and focusing on the child's perspective (Miller et al., 1997; Mullen & Yi, 1995; Wang, Leichtman, & Davies, 2000). Studies comparing American lower and middle socio-economic class mother-child conversations likewise shows that middle class mothers are more protective and affirming of children's perspectives, even at the expense of accuracy, than are lower SES mothers (Wiley et al., 1998). Studies of children's wrong-doing also suggest that mothers may work particularly hard to preserve children's positive self-evaluations as they address children's misdeeds (Recchia et al., under review), and may spend more time

processing negative emotions with their young children than positive ones (Reese, Bird, & Tripp, 2007).

Assuming that mothers (and middle-class American culture generally) are successful in socializing children with positive self-esteem, I expect that most statements made by mothers and children about children's selves will be positive or neutral. However, when negative statements are made, mothers are likely to attend to those remarks, through some sort of elaborative response. In contrast, mothers may simply accept positive or neutral statements. I expect mothers to respond less elaboratively to positive or neutral remarks than to negative remarks.

Maternal control

Another aspect of mother-child conversation, which may influence the construction of children's self-views, is the degree to which children perceive mothers as controlling the conversation. As noted, mothers may choose to attend to some statements made by the child, and not to others. Mothers may choose to challenge children's self-assertions, to make statements about the self of the child, or take on the role of narrator or expert in these conversations. Hirst's work on joint family reminiscing has identified different roles that family members assume as they discuss shared memories. Narrators generally do most of the talking. Monitors may check the group for accuracy as the shared version of a past event emerges. Experts may have unique information or knowledge to contribute to the conversation (Hirst & Manier, 1996). In studies of group communication, narrators (those who do most of the talking) tend to have more power in shaping the narrative, and in shaping others' memories of the shared event (Brown,

Coman, & Hirst, 2009). While conversations between mothers and children should naturally involve give and take, differences in the extent to which children feel mothers are trying to control the conversation may impact the extent to which children are willing to engage in self co-construction with their mothers. For example, Marshall conducted a qualitative, longitudinal study of middle-school children and their mothers' exploration of possible future career selves, and found that most mothers and children worked together to explore or "try on" possibilities for children's future identities. However, in a few cases, mothers unsuccessfully attempted to impose an unwanted identity on a child (e.g., becoming a good student) during the course of the study by repeatedly discussing that identity in an initial conversation, and later by incentivizing behaviors designed to promote that identity (e.g., rewarding good grades). Children who were the targets of these unsuccessful attempts to mold identity were resistant to the unwanted self both in the initial conversation with their mothers, and over time, by thwarting her attempts to reward related behaviors. In conversation, these children refused to concede to or integrate the unwanted selves into their images of their future selves. In one case, the authors made particular mention of the vagueness and lack of clarity of a child's hoped for future identity, as though his efforts to ward off his mother's unwanted identity prevented him from articulating a clear identity of his own¹ (Marshall et al., 2008). Because these are case studies, the prevalence of this pattern is not clear, but its

¹ It may also be that the mother attempted to impose an identity on a child who refused to engage in identity exploration. No matter which way the causal arrow points, the case illustrates a potential connection between adolescent identity exploration and mother's willingness to engage in controlling conversational strategies.

emergence in a relatively small data set indicates that children's perception of maternal control is worth attending to in studies of mother-child communication.

Maternal warmth

Note that behaviors that may be perceived as controlling in a conversation are not the same as the construct of behavioral control that is often examined in studies of parenting practices. The degree to which mothers may attempt to control the direction or outcome of a conversation with their child may not be related to the extent to which mothers monitor their children's whereabouts and activities. On the other hand, these broader relationship variables may play a role in children's willingness to engage with mothers in self-exploration. Specifically, the extent to which children perceive mothers as warm and caring about them generally may influence children's willingness to engage with their mothers in conversation about their selves. Cross-cultural studies suggest that parental warmth is an important predictor of children's willingness to disclose information to parents, especially in the United States (Darling et al., 2009). However, a recent study of middle-class European-American adolescents engaged in a conflict task with their mothers showed that children's level of disclosure was not associated with maternal warmth (Rote et al., 2012). Thus, the conditions under which maternal warmth predicts children's disclosure, or more broadly, willingness to engage in self-relevant conversations, is not clear. Therefore, maternal warmth is included in this study, but no specific predictions about its potential effect on the variables of interest are made.

In summary, mothers play a critical role in shaping children's self-views, especially in conversation. Variables that might shape mother-child conversations about

children's selves include both distal variables such as relationship quality, and conversation specific variables, such as maternal attentiveness, valence, degree of elaborative responding, and tendency to control the conversation. Of course, the degree of scaffolding also implies that the child's qualities, such as age and gender, will influence what unfolds.

Child Variables

Age

Developmental gains in cognition and autonomy imply that with age, children should become increasingly able to verbalize their self-perceptions. Thus, I expect increases in the number of self-statements that children make across adolescence. Also, as narrative competence increases, mothers should adjust their scaffolding. Thus, I expect mothers to make fewer statements about their child's self as children develop.

I also expect differences in the types of selves children articulate as they grow. Developmental research suggests that children's conception of personhood changes over time. Specifically, the way children think about the self, and their concept of personality develops as children develop. Work on children's concept of the self (Damon & Hart, 1982; Harter, 2006b; Harter & Monsour, 1992) suggests that preschool aged children tend to see the self in terms of physical attributes (I have red hair), followed by self-descriptions that include specific abilities (I can run fast!). School aged children tend to describe themselves in comparison to others (I'm a good baseball player, but not the best), and late in elementary school, children begin to describe the self in terms of basic personality. However, these pre-teen personality conceptions consist of unrelated

preferences and habits that are relatively stable across contexts (I'm a friendly person, and I especially like dogs). Personality as a function of underlying traits shows up in self and other-descriptions in early to mid-adolescence. In this phase, the child begins to understand motivational and emotional states underlying behavior, and to coordinate similar constellations of behavior into underlying traits. This leads to a concept of a consistent personality, but it tends to be over-generalized in early to middle adolescence. It is not until late adolescence that the child can take conflicting parts of the personality in stride (Harter & Monsour, 1992). Late adolescence is also a time when moral and philosophical beliefs become integrated into self-descriptions (Damon & Hart, 1982; 1986; Habermas & de Silveira, 2008; Habermas et al, 2010; Harter, 2006a; Negele & Habermas, 2010. See also Habermas & Bluck, 2000).

This developmental work is mostly based on cross sectional or longitudinal studies, in which children are interviewed by researchers and asked for general self-descriptions, or are asked to describe themselves in different contexts (Damon & Hart, 1982; 1986; Harter, 2006a; Harter & Monsour, 1992). Habermas' work in the area also looks at self-statements in the context of narrative, but in structured interviews rather than in mother-child conversation (Habermas & Bluck, 2000; Habermas & de Silveira, 2008; Habermas et al., 2010; Negele & Habermas, 2010). What is not clear, but may be reasonably anticipated, is whether this same pattern emerges as children make spontaneous statements about themselves in conversation. If this is the case, statements about physical characteristics, enduring preferences, and abilities should be evident across adolescence, but statements having to do with underlying traits or characteristics would increase from late childhood/early adolescence to middle/late adolescence, and

statements about moral values or philosophical beliefs would emerge in later adolescence. It is also possible that descriptions of selves and others in psychological terms precede the ability to incorporate such descriptions in narratives. For instance, researchers note that use of theory-of-mind concepts to construct narratives of experiences lags behind the established developmental course of theory of mind understanding (Pasupathi & Wainryb, 2010). Thus, the ability to describe one's self in terms of underlying personality traits, or to articulate a set of personally held values may emerge in response to questions before it appears as explanations of behavior or motivation in narratives of events. In this case, traits would not appear in narrative until late adolescence, and value statements may not emerge until young adulthood.

Gender

The work on children's self-conceptions does not imply gender differences in the types of selves that children construct (Harter & Monsour, 1992). Nor are there gender differences in terms of ego identity status (Kroger, 2002). However, children's gender may impact both children's narrative abilities and maternal response. When asked to narrate their personal experiences, 14- to 16-year-old girls tell longer, more coherent, elaborated stories (Fivush et al., 2012; Zaman & Fivush, 2011), use more emotional language to narrate experience, and use more self-reflective language than do adolescent boys (Bohanek & Fivush, 2010). Based on these results, we may expect teenage girls to make more self-relevant statements than teenage boys. However, studies of meaning making (which is necessary to translate the raw material of experience into self-relevant

information) show no differences in narratives produced by adolescent boys versus girls (Habermas & de Silveira, 2008; McLean & Breen, 2009).

Fivush's review of gender in narrative suggests that gender differences are evident when gender becomes salient, and that rather than viewing gender as a stable individual difference, it is helpful to look at contexts in which individuals enact gender. She further argues that although reminiscing about the past is an activity where gender often gets enacted (especially in Western culture), context effects, including such variables as whether fathers are present, or the types of experiences discussed, can affect the extent to which gender gets enacted in these conversations. This review suggests that while studies of narrative sometimes find gender differences and sometimes do not, when gender differences do appear, the direction of differences is consistent, in that girls tend to be more elaborative, and emotionally detailed than boys (Fivush & Zaman, in press). Thus, if gender differences are found in this study, we would expect girls to make more self-relevant statements than boys.

We may also see gender differences in the ways mothers respond to their children. Again, findings from studies of mother's responses to young children are mixed, with some studies finding mothers to be more elaborative with daughters (Reese & Fivush, 1993; Reese, Haden & Fivush, 1993; Reese & Newcombe 2007), and some studies finding no difference in maternal response based on child gender (Farrant & Reese, 2000; Haden, Ornstein, Rudek & Cameron, 2009; Kulkofsky, Wang & Koh, 2009; Laible, 2004; 2011; Laible & Song, 2006; Zaman & Fivush 2011). Based on results with preschool aged children, we might expect that if gender differences do appear, it will be in favor of mothers being more elaborative with daughters than with sons.

However, developmental factors actually reverse this prediction, suggesting that mothers may be more elaborative with sons than with daughters by the time children hit early adolescence. In a recent study of the ways that mothers scaffold teenagers' narratives about different kinds of events, McLean and Mansfield found that mothers tend to use more elaborative questioning with sons than with daughters in the context of important and sad events, and that mothers' negations or confirmations predicted more meaning making with daughters than with sons (McLean & Mansfield, 2012). McLean and Mansfield propose that, because of mother's tendency to respond more elaboratively and encourage narrative competence in young girls, by the time they reach adolescence, girls may be more adept at constructing self-relevant meaning than are boys, and that mothers may be working harder, via elaborative questioning, to scaffold sons than daughters, in an effort to "catch them up" (McLean & Mansfield, 2012). Based on this theory that the focus of maternal elaborative responsiveness flips from girls to boys during adolescence, we would expect to find mothers responding more elaboratively with sons across adolescence than with daughters.

The Current Study

In order to examine self-construction in adolescents' narratives with their mothers, I elicited conversations about events that both changed teens' self-conceptions, and those that confirmed their self-conceptions. I recruited both boys and girls of different ages to examine age and gender differences in these conversations. A pre-adolescent group of late elementary school children comprises my youngest participants, age 11. In order to capitalize on the emergence of differences in types of self-statements,

and on changes that may be associated with intra-psychic conflict, I also choose a middle-adolescent group (age 14-15), and a late adolescent group (age 17-18). This oldest group is comprised of high school juniors and seniors, and is the oldest age of teens I can recruit without encroaching on individuals who are post-high school. The post-high school transition may stratify individuals so that recruiting in a college environment produces a different sample than recruiting in public schools during the compulsory years. To avoid this complication, I limited the maximum age of participants to 18 years. Comparing mother-child narratives on dimensions such as the number and types of self-statements made by mothers and children is expected to produce age related changes over these three age groups. This cross-sectional, three (age) by two (gender) by two (stability vs. change) design allows me to address my three overarching research questions, to which I now return.

Question 1: What kind of selves are children constructing, and how does that vary by age? Because children's self-concepts and narrative skills develop over the adolescent years, (1) I expect children to make more self-statements as they get older. Based on the literature reviewed above concerning children's developing self-conceptions, (2) I expect that children will make statements about themselves that refer to their physical aspects, enduring preferences, abilities, traits, and values. (3) I also expect age differences in those types of statements, such that statements about traits will be less common in pre-teens than in middle to older adolescence, and that (4) statements about values will be more common in the oldest age group. Additionally, in terms of gender, because the focus of this study is on the types of selves children are constructing rather than on emotional content or level of detail, it is likely that gender differences will not emerge. If

gender does emerge, I expect it to be such that girls make more self-statements than do boys.

Question 2: How does mothers' scaffolding of children's self-construction vary by age and gender of the child? In general, I expect mothers to scaffold less as children's competence in constructing their self views rises. If there are gender differences, I expect them to be such that mothers scaffold girls less than they scaffold boys. As noted earlier, scaffolding can occur in two ways: both in terms of direct statements by the mother about the self of the child, and in terms of mother's tendency to elaborate on children's self statements. Therefore, (5) I expect mothers to make fewer direct statements as children's competence rises (as they age). In keeping with McLean and Mansfield's findings on maternal response, (6) I expect mothers to respond more elaboratively with children whose sense of narrative self is less developed; namely younger children, and (7) possibly boys.

Question 3: How do contexts of change and of stability affect self-construction? Findings from young adult samples suggest that changing self-views requires more elaboration and supportive listening than does the endorsement of previously held self-views (Weeks & Pasupathi, 2011). However, because adolescence is a time of identity formation, it may be that self-views are still so fluid that there is effectively no difference between endorsing a "stable" self-view, and endorsing a "new" one. When everything is new, the difference between stability and change may lose some of its effect. I will test both of these possibilities by (8) examining the number of statements mothers and children make in conversations about events that changed children's self views versus

those that were consistent with children's self-views. I will also examine (9) patterns of elaborative responding of mothers to children in conversations of change versus stability.

In order to test these hypotheses, I provided opportunities for teens to discuss self-relevant events with their mothers by asking them to talk about negative events, or more specifically, about events that had been challenging, difficult, or hard for them in some way. These kinds of challenging events are more difficult to connect to the self (Baumeister, Bratslavsky, Finkenauer, & Vohs, 2001; Greenwald, 1980; Pasupathi, Mansour & Brubaker, 2007), and may require more explanation or meaning construction than do positive events (Lyubomirsky, Sousa, & Dickerhoof, 2006; McLean & Pratt, 2006; Thorne, McLean & Lawrence, 2004). I asked teens to select four events to discuss with their mothers; two events that confirmed some knowledge about the self, and two that changed how the teen thinks about him/herself. This method is designed to generate narratives about both stability and change in self-views, allowing me to capture age and gender related changes in patterns of self-construction and response between mothers and children. I now turn to a more specific discussion of methods.

METHODS

Sample

A community sample of teenagers and their mothers participated. We recruited 11-year-olds ($N=30$, 50% female), 14- to 15-year-olds ($N=35$; 57% female), and 17- to 18-year-olds ($N=28$; 54% female) for the study. The sample was largely European-American (84%), which reflects demographics of the recruiting area. Mothers' ($N=92$) average age was 44 years, and mothers were also largely European-American (89%). With 82% of mothers reporting their annual family income, the median annual income for the sample was \$60,000, with 10% of the sample falling below \$40,000 annually, and 80% falling below \$100,000.

Procedure

Participants (children and their mothers) were seated in different rooms to complete demographic information, and ratings of relationship warmth. Teenagers were then asked to identify five experiences from their lives that changed (self-changing) or confirmed (self-confirming) how they think about themselves. Instructions were as follows:

“For the first experience, we are looking for an event that was somewhat negative. When I say negative, I mean something that was difficult or challenging or hard for you in some way. This does not necessarily mean that the entire experience was negative, or

that it made you think of yourself in a negative way. Also, this first event should be something that changed the way you think about yourself. Can you think of anything like that?”

Instructions for the following events were similar, but varied so that two negative, self-changing events were elicited, and two negative, self-confirming events were elicited. The last event elicited was a positive, self-changing event. This last event was included to induce pleasant memories prior to dismissing the participants, and is not coded or included in analyses.

Once participants had identified five events, they were reunited with their mothers to talk about those events on camera. We told mothers and children that children had selected five events from their life that had to do with how they thought about themselves, and asked them to talk about those events, in order, as they normally would.

After the discussion of the events, the researcher again separated children and mothers and asked them to fill out a questionnaire about their conversation, which collected their impressions of the conversations.

Following the completion of the post-conversation questionnaire, participants were thanked, asked to refer age appropriate friends to the study, paid for their time (\$15 for children, \$15 for mothers), and dismissed.

Measures

Maternal warmth

Maternal warmth was assessed with the 10-item acceptance subscale of the Child Report of Parent Behavior Inventory (CRPBI, Schludermann & Schludermann, 1970;

Shaeffer, 1965). The scale is widely used as a measure of parenting, and predicts adjustment, with excellent reliability and validity across time and culture (Barber et al., 2005; Schludermann & Schludermann, 1970, 1983). The scale asks children to rate, on a 6 point scale (1=does not describe her at all; 6=describes her very well) the extent to which each item describes their mother. The items include such statements as, “Is your mother a person who smiles at you very often,” and “Is your mother a person who enjoys doing things with you.” Scores can range from 10 to 60, with higher scores indicating more maternal warmth.

Coding

Recorded conversations between mothers and teens were transcribed, and statements about the self of the teen were identified, and coded on source (who said it: mother or teen), type of self-statement (physical aspect, enduring preference, ability, trait, or values), partner’s response to the statement (ignore, minimal response, or elaborate), and valence (negative, neutral/ambivalent, or positive)

In order to identify self-statements, coders searched each transcript for statements bearing on the identity or self of the teen. Initially, we cast a very broad net, including anything self-related. Note that we did not discriminate between statements made by the mother and those made by the teen. Any statement by either individual about the teen was flagged for potential inclusion. We then eliminated statements about emotional states that were situation specific, where neither the teen nor the mother connected those emotions to larger patterns, relationships, or other situations. For instance, statements such as “I was mad when Andrea ignored my text” were eliminated. Although statements like these

are self-relevant, they are also temporary emotional states, which may or may not indicate anything about the teen's enduring self-perceptions, and were therefore disregarded unless either the parent or the child connected them to a larger or more enduring pattern of responses.

Next, we looked at the patterns of conversation, to identify which self-statements were unique, and which were elaborations on a previous statement or theme. For instance, the conversational excerpt at the beginning of this manuscript contains several statements about the flirtatiousness of the child. Affirmations or challenges about a preceding statement were counted as responses to that statement, rather than as unique statements. The exception to this was when a new piece of information about the child was introduced; for instance, in the excerpt above, the teen's last statement, "I'll always be that awkward one..." contains new information about the self of the teen; although lack of flirtatiousness and awkwardness are related in the teen's mind, they represent two independent characteristics. One can easily imagine a person who is both flirtatious and awkward (e.g., the character of Michael Scott, from NBC's sitcom, *The Office*), or a person who is not flirtatious, and also not awkward (e.g., Princess Kate). Therefore the statement about being awkward was also coded as a unique self-statement. In another example, a mother and child discuss the teen's superior math scores on the SAT. The teen makes a statement about being good at math. The mother affirms that statement, and then goes on to say, "but you also have to acknowledge how hard you've worked at math, and in school generally these past few years. You've taken AP classes and studied really hard. It's not just that you're good at math; you're a hard worker, too." In this case, being good at math is coded separately from working hard in school, and the mother's response

contains elements of both an elaboration on the original theme, and an additional statement about the self of the child.

Note that we limited the search for “uniqueness” within specific conversations. If, for instance, the idea of a child being shy came up repeatedly, we counted the first instance as a unique self-statement, and subsequent statements by the child or the mother as responses to the first statement, until the pair changed topics, and began discussing another event. If shyness came up again in a subsequent event, it was counted, again, as a unique statement. Also of note: the length of the self-statements varied. Some self-statements took several sentences to verbalize. For instance, in the following conversation, the mother and daughter discuss the daughter’s date to the senior prom. The mother starts the theme by talking about what a good time the daughter had with the group she went with. It is not until the daughter elaborates on this idea later that we see the fully formed self-concept of the daughter as a person who can get along easily with virtual strangers:

- Mother: And that you had such a wonderful and fun time with the group of kids you went with...
 Several turns spent discussing the prom
- Daughter: yeah. That’s a good example too because I remember, like—like I had hardly knew [name of date]—um I’d only talked to him like, two or three times before so that’s why I was a little, like, weirded out when he asked me because I just didn’t think it’d be him. But um, it just kind of showed me that—yeah, like I—I’m okay with talking to people I don’t know that well. We got along fine...
- Mother: and you had a great time
- Daughter: it’s —it’s not hard to get along with people you don’t know: it’s not hard to, um, just, you know, talk to people you don’t know. A lot of people have that insecurity and have it their whole lives, but I’m just kind of glad I’m past that.

Other self-statements took less discussion to fully articulate. Sometimes, several self-statements would be encapsulated in a single sentence. For instance, in the following

example, a mother suggests two independent (albeit related) characteristics of her daughter (enjoying people and having compassion) as she makes a case for the girl to enter a career in a helping profession:

That's why I think that as you progress and go to college and stuff, I think you would do well in helping—in finding a career that was—where you work with other people because you enjoy being around other people, you have compassion, you hurt for other people, ...

Once all of the self-statements had been identified, a second coder independently selected self-statements on 20% of the transcripts. Selection of self-statements between coders reached acceptable reliability standards (80% match on 190 statements), using a broad match criteria, in which statements were matched on meaning, if not word-for-word. For instance, in the opening dialogue, the independently coded statements were said to match even if coder one selected “having to like, do that flirtatious kind of attitude, I learned that I'm not like that...” as the self statement, and coder two selected “deep down there I'm not flirtatious” as the self-statement.

Each self-statement was then coded for its source, the type of statement, the partner's response, and the statement valence. Two research assistants independently coded transcripts. At weekly meetings, both coders and I met to discuss and resolve discrepancies. This process of independent coding, followed by noting, discussing, and resolving discrepancies was repeated over the course of 2 months, until coders could independently code transcripts to acceptable levels of agreement. Once agreement reached acceptable levels, coders independently coded the remaining data, with occasional dual-coding of single transcripts to ensure coder reliability was still on track. Reliability statistics reported below were based on the last round of training codes, as

well as on the later, dual coded transcripts. Research assistants coded each statement for the following:

Source. We recorded whether the mother or the teenager made the statement. Recall that our use of the term “self-statement” refers to statements made about the self of the teen, no matter who made the statement. This coding was mostly straightforward. Note that in conversations such as the one about the prom, listed above, the daughter is the source of the self-statement, because she is the one who eventually articulates it. Coder agreement on this variable was high: Kappa = .971 ($t=12.01$, $p<.001$, $N=153$)

Type of self-statement. Each statement was categorized as one of five mutually exclusive categories. Those categories include statements having to do with physical characteristics (e.g., “You’ve gotten so tall lately”); statements about enduring preferences (“I’ve never liked reading”), statements about abilities (“I really do know how to drive”); statements about characteristics or traits (“You’re only shy around people you don’t know”); and statements about values, or world outlooks (“I’d rather lie than be mean like that”). Statements about physical abilities were coded as abilities, rather than as physical characteristics. For example, while “you know my hair is always a mess” was coded as a physical characteristic, “I’ve gotten good at snowboarding” was coded as an ability. Kappa for type of self statement = .828 ($t=16.064$, $p<.001$, $N=153$).

Partner’s response. We coded the conversation partner’s response to the self-statement. Responses fell into three categories. We coded the response as ignored when the partner ignored the statement altogether, for example by changing the subject, or more often, by focusing on a different aspect of the conversation. Responses were coded as minimal when the partner minimally accepted or rejected the statement (e.g., “ok,”

“absolutely,” “whatever,” or “not really”). Responses were coded as an elaboration when partners took up the topic. This often took the form of asking for more information, or discussing why the statement was true or not true. Notice how the mother, concerned with her inability to remember the event, misses the daughter’s concern about her grade and her implied statement that she could be a better student in the discussion below:

- Daughter: [discussing a report on horses that was assigned in school]
 ...finally I just sat down and started learning it and then it started raining really hard and I went out and played in it and I was like, “[sigh] I have to finish this but I really wanna go out and play.” And so I did go out and play, and then um, I came back in, and then I had to go to bed ...
- Mother: Did dad do that book report for you?
- Daughter: He just did the pictures
- Mother: Oh, just cut the pictures. That’s right.
- Daughter: But, um,
- Mother: What was going on that night? I can’t remember, what was that?
- Daughter: I remember it had just started raining really hard
- Mother: What else was happening that night?
- Daughter: And um, I really wanted to go out and play in the rain. And then, so then we went to get the best grade out of it that I could.
- Mother: What grade did you have?
- Daughter: Like a C, or something. I could have gotten more.
- Mother: I didn’t know that, that’s how good I am, with that

In contrast, observe how another mother’s elaborative responses both provide and ask for additional information, as they discuss the son’s acuity and work ethic as a basketball player:

- Son: ...making the seventh grade basketball team at Bountiful when I went to Legacy...it made me feel more confident about how good I was at basketball because I was [mom’s phone rings]
- Mother: sorry
- Son: who is it?
- Mother: Sue. I will just try to turn it down. Sorry. Ok, go on: you were feeling more confident because you were going to another school and you made the team at the regular Junior High that had more competition?
- Son: But at least I would have got to play more. I would have been like the star there (at Legacy).
- Mother: so are you glad you did that or not?

- Son: ya, because then it wasn't like a given that I was going to make it in eighth grade...
- Mother: but you do feel like it was a given this year?
- Son: kind of because...
- Several turns
- Mother: because you worked pretty hard you mean. You were still working pretty hard to make it. It may not be a given, but I think you worked for it, too.
- Son: Ya. I got faster and stuff. I was one of the slowest in the 7th grade....

Later, this same pair discusses when the boy's grandmother broke her hip. Here, the mother gives what was coded as a minimal response to the boy's statement about his own physical strength in comparison to his Grandmother's:

- Son: When she was in the hospital and stuff and she looked all bad and it made me feel bad that I had a good body and strong and stuff and she was all like frail and weak and stuff and there was not much you could do for the first night in the emergency room when dad and I went down.
- Mother: ya
- Son: It was awful, but did we ever tell you that we went to see where she had broken her hip in that church?
- Mother: no
- Son: Ya. Me and dad went there... (ensuing discussion about dated church architecture and danger to old people).

Across these categories of partner's response, Kappa = .731 ($t=13.841$, $p<.001$, $N=153$).

Valence. Each statement was coded as positive, negative, or neutral (ambivalent). In order to determine valence, we used general cultural knowledge, and took cues from the conversation. For instance, "you've always been a pretty cheerful kid" was coded as positive, based on a general cultural assumption that cheerfulness is a positive quality. In some instances, where cultural guides were not as clear, mothers and teens provided cues to their views of the statement's valence. For instance, as one teen and his mother were discussing his lack of propensity to talk, he said, "I don't know. Most of the time I don't have anything to say. If I have something to say, I'll say it." The

mother's response, "so, you're kind of confidently shy. I like that," and her subsequent comment that people who say less are often listened to more intently when they do talk, suggest that they are framing his stoicism as a positive aspect. Thus, it is coded as positive. Occasionally, mothers and children appeared to disagree about the desirability of a self-statement (e.g., Mother: "being tall is wonderful!" Daughter: "but boys don't date tall girls"), or a child will suggest that a culturally desirable trait is actually negative ("I don't like being smart; my friends tease me about it"). These cases are coded as ambivalent. When no clear cultural guidelines or conversational cues were available, statements were coded as neutral ("you've always loved wearing makeup"). $Kappa = .743$ ($t=13,855$, $p<.001$, $N=153$). For an example of coding, see Table 1, which shows how we coded statements from a conversation between a mother and daughter, discussing the daughter's new job.

Postconversation ratings

We asked both mothers and children to rate, for the entire set of conversations, how typical or normal the conversations were for them. Responses could range from 1 to 7, with 1 anchored as "much more negative than usual," 4 anchored at "very typical," and 7 anchored at "much more positive than usual." We also asked both partners to rate how attentive, supportive, and controlling mothers were during the conversations. These ratings were done on a 1-5 point scale, with 1 reflecting "not at all attentive" (or supportive, or controlling), 2 anchored at "somewhat" attentive, supportive, or controlling, 3 = "moderately," 4 = "very," and 5 = "extremely" attentive, supportive, or controlling. These ratings were included to ensure that any age or gender-related findings

would not be confounded by how attentive mothers were, or how typical conversations tended to be. For instance, more atypical conversations among younger participants could produce the illusion of age-related changes that do not actually exist.

Table 1. Example of Coding

Self-Statement	Source	Type	Response	Valence
Getting a job. Um, it kind of made me realize like what I can do.	Child	Abilities	Elaborate	Positive
Like, even though I don't have a good memory,	Child	Traits	Ignore	Negative
like I can find other ways that I can help me remember – like post-its....	Child	Abilities	Ignore	Positive
And just like doing things that I don't – I don't like doing, like talking on the phone....	Child	Preferences	Ignore	Negative
.....now I have to do that all the time, so it's like good communication skills that I'm learning.	Child	Abilities	Elaborate	Positive
And I knew that when you got a job you would find out what you actually could do all by your little self -- cause you're smart and I knew you could do that	Mother	Trait	Ignore	Positive
That was one of the reasons we were pushing you for a job, is cause I want you to see what potential you have by pushing yourself, cause you kind of stay safe – in a safe place ^a	Mother	Traits	Ignore	Negative
I feel like I'm getting more confident in talking to people and everything	Child	Abilities	Elaborate	Positive

Note. Partner's responses were coded based on statements in the transcript, which are not included in this table. However, the transcript for the full discussion of this event is included in Appendix A.

^aWe coded the “staying safe” comment from the mother as negative. This was done because the mother goes on to talk about the virtues of taking risks.

RESULTS

Recall that the driving questions behind this investigation are:

- 1.) What types of selves are children constructing, and how does that vary by age?
- 2.) How does mothers' scaffolding of children's self-construction vary by age and gender of the child?
- 3.) How do contexts of change and of stability affect self-construction? Specifically, does talking about changes in the self require more discussion and elaboration from mothers and children than talking about stability in the self?

In order to investigate these questions, I performed a series of data analyses. Descriptive statistical analysis of my variables begins to address the first question, about the kinds of selves children are constructing. MANOVA techniques allow me to examine differences in the number and types of statements children and mothers make by age and gender of the child (questions 1 and 2), and to examine whether conversations about stability versus change have an effect on the number or type of statements made (question 3). HLM analyses allow me to further look at patterns of responses from mothers (question 2), and to investigate interactions of event type (stability vs. change events), age, and gender on maternal response (questions 2 and 3).

Prior to examining the results of these statistical tests, note that there are two units of analysis in play. First, children's age, gender, ratings of maternal warmth and post-conversation ratings of maternal behavior and conversation typicality are all collected at

the mother-child pair level. In contrast, each statement was coded for its type, source (mother vs. child), valence, and the response it evoked from the conversation partner (ignore, minimal response, or elaborate). Because MANOVA only allows for one unit of analysis, the number of statements made by mothers and by children, and the types of statements made were aggregated so that MANOVA could be performed with the mother-child pair as the unit of analysis. In contrast, HLM techniques allow me to utilize both the mother-child pairs and individual statements as units of analysis. Because data collected at the statement level did not have to be aggregated for use in HLM, I am able to examine not only differences between mother-child pairs (as with MANOVA), but also variance within those pairs.

Preliminary Analyses

Descriptive distributions

Distribution of the source variable (mother vs. child) showed that children made 69% of the self-statements. Partner's responses to self-statements were distributed fairly evenly, with 36.7% of the statements ignored, 37.1% minimally acknowledged, and 26.3% elaborated on. Roughly 35.5% of the self-statements made were negative, 11.4% were neutral or ambivalent, and 53.1% were coded as positive. The bulk of the self-statements made were coded as abilities (36.5%) or traits (44.5%). Table 2 shows the frequencies of each of the types of statements. A chi squared goodness of fit test confirmed that statements about physical characteristics, preferences, abilities, traits, and values were not evenly distributed ($\chi^2(4) = 574.11, p < .001$). Mothers and children are

talking about children's traits and abilities; emphasizing what children do and are, rather than how they appear, or what they value or like.

Cross-tabulations of frequency of types of statements across children's ages (Table 2) shows an increase in the number of trait and values statements between the youngest and older groups. Also, the oldest group is making fewer statements about physical characteristics than the younger and middle-adolescent groups.

Cardinal variables, including maternal warmth, children's postconversation ratings of conversation typicality, maternal support, maternal attentiveness, and tendency of mothers to control the conversation, as well as the number of self-statements made by each pair, the number of each type of self-statement made, and the number of statements made by mothers and by children were checked for skewedness and kurtosis. Descriptive statistics, including means for these variables are found in Table 3.

Recall that children's ratings of maternal warmth are measured by the warmth subscale of the CRPBI, with scores ranging from 10 to 60, and higher scores indicating more maternal warmth. For this sample, scores ranged from 27 to 60, with the mean at 52.8, standard deviation at 6.8. This indicates that the children in the study mostly viewed their mothers as warm and caring toward them. While children's ratings of maternal warmth varied across children, ANOVA on maternal warmth with age and gender as between subjects factors showed that neither age nor gender significantly predicted children's ratings of maternal warmth. This null finding is noteworthy, as it implies that children's perceptions of maternal warmth are generally stable across adolescence, at least in this middle-class European-American sample.

Scales measuring children's perception of maternal attentiveness and support during the conversation both ranged from 1 to 5, with 5 indicating more attention or support. As Table 3 indicates, none of the children rated their mothers below a 3 on either of these scales. Thus, for all pairs, children rate their mothers as at least moderately attentive and supportive, which is perhaps unsurprising, given that the conversations were video-taped in a laboratory, with few distractions. Means for both of these scales were high, suggesting that mothers were generally focused on and supportive of their children during the conversations.

Children also rated their conversations with mothers as very typical. Typicality was assessed on a 1-7 scale, with 1 anchored at "much more negative than usual," 4 anchored at "typical," and 7 anchored at "much more positive than usual." The mean for this rating was 4.4 ($SD=.86$), indicating that overall, the conversations were fairly typical, and perhaps a bit more positive than usual.

The mean score for children's rating of how controlling their mother had been was 2, on a 1-5 scale, with 1 indicating "not at all controlling," and 5 indicating "extremely controlling." Almost half (47.3%) of children rated their mothers as "not at all controlling" during the conversation. Thus, children generally rated mothers' tendency to control the conversation as low. However, the relatively larger standard deviation indicates more variability among children on this rating.

As for statements made about the self of the child, means indicate that mothers are making about 2.5 statements across the course of all four events, while children are making about 5.6 statements. The deviations here indicate wide variability in terms of the number of statements made across children and across mothers, suggesting that there may

be systematic variation by age and gender. A look at the average number of physical, preference, ability, trait, and value statements being made per pair reiterates the pattern of the frequency distribution of these statement types: mother-child pairs rarely talked about physical attributes, preferences, or values. More often, mothers and children discussed children's abilities and traits.

In summary, children make the majority of statements about themselves, and those statements are most often positive or neutral. Contextually, children are rating their mothers as warm, as well as supportive, attentive, and not very controlling in these conversations. Children are also reporting that these conversations were fairly typical, if slightly positive. Mother-child pairs are mostly talking about children's abilities and traits. And, explicit statements about the child's self are equally likely to be ignored, minimally acknowledged, or elaborated upon.

Correlations

Expecting overlap between children's ratings of the conversations and their relationship with their mothers, I computed correlations between children's post-conversation ratings of mother's supportiveness, attentiveness, and tendency to control the conversation, as well as ratings of the degree to which children felt the conversation was typical for their mothers and them. Correlations between these variables and children's ratings of maternal warmth are found in Table 4. Not surprisingly, teens' perception of maternal warmth, attentiveness and support were significantly, positively, moderately correlated with one another. Teens' ratings of conversation typicality were positively correlated with maternal attentiveness, and with maternal tendency to control.

To determine whether children's perceptions of the conversation varied with age or gender of children, I performed a series of analyses. First, I analyzed teens' ratings of conversation typicality separately, because this variable is theoretically distinct from ratings of maternal listening behaviors. ANOVA for teens' ratings of conversation typicality revealed no significant differences by age or gender of children.

Because teens' ratings of maternal attentiveness and support during the conversation were correlated, these variables were analyzed together with MANOVA. There was a significant effect of gender on maternal attentiveness ($F=8.17, p=.005$), with girls rating their mothers as more attentive than did boys ($M(\text{girls})=4.79, SE=.078$; $M(\text{boys})=4.46, SE=.085$). Support was not significantly predicted by age or gender.

For children's perceptions of mothers' tendency to control, ANOVA revealed a significant effect of both age and gender, and an interaction of the two ($F= 5.59, p=.005$; $F=15.40, p<.001$; $F= 4.05, p=.021$). Means tables show that, on average, boys rate their mothers as more controlling than do girls ($M(\text{boys}) = 2.55, SE=.173$; $M(\text{girls})=1.63, SE=.16$), and that younger children rate their mothers as more controlling than older children do ($M(11\text{-year-olds}) = 2.60, SE=.205$; $M(14\text{- to }15\text{-year-olds}) = 2.05, SE=.195$; $M(17\text{- to }18\text{-year-olds})=1.62, SE=.212$). The interaction suggests that 11-year-old boys rate their mothers as more controlling on average than do 11-year-old girls, or than older girls or boys. Estimated marginal means of ratings of maternal control by gender and age are shown in Table 5.

Next, I checked correlations between these variables (maternal warmth, conversational control, support, attentiveness, and conversation typicality) and the outcome variables (number and types of statements made, percentage of positive

statements and percentage of elaborative responses across all events). The only correlation that reached significance was the correlation between maternal support and the number of statements mothers make in stability events ($r=.217, p=.039$). No other correlations reached significance (see Table 6).

Because maternal warmth and conversation typicality do not appear to be related to child age, child gender, or to the outcomes of interest, they are dropped from further analysis. Because children's ratings of maternal attentiveness and tendency to control the conversation are related to child age, they are retained as control variables in the main analyses. Likewise, because children's ratings of maternal support are related to the number of statements mothers make in stability events, maternal support is retained in analyses of number of maternal statements.

Main Analyses: How Many and What Types of Statements Are Mothers and Children Making in Stability and Change Events?

Number of statements made

In order to examine the effect of age and gender of children on the number of statements made by mothers and by children, I performed MANOVA, controlling for maternal attentiveness, control, and support, with type of event (stability versus change) as a within subjects factor. Main effects suggest that there is a trend for source (mother vs. child) (Wilks' Lambda $F=3.669, p=.059$; partial eta squared = .043), an effect of source by age (Wilks' Lambda $F = 3.287, p=.042$, partial eta squared = .075), and a three

way interaction of event type by source by maternal control (Wilks' Lambda $F = 4.666$, $p = .034$, partial eta squared = .054).

Estimated Marginal Means tables of the source by age interaction suggest that across age groups, children make more statements about themselves than mothers make about children, but the number of statements children are making increases with age, while the number of statements mothers make stays relatively stable (see Table 7). Pairwise comparisons show no significant differences in the number of statements mothers make about their children as children grow older. There is, however, a significant increase in the number of statements children make about themselves between the ages of 11 and 17-18 (Mean Difference = -1.50, $p = .003$). There is also a trend that does not quite reach significance in the increase in children's self-statements between ages 14-15 and ages 17-18 (Mean Difference = -.85, $p = .066$).

It may be that increases in the number of children's self-statements with age reflect increases in sheer volume of conversation rather than increases in propensity or ability to talk about the self. In order to investigate this, I ran ANOVA on the number of words per transcript by children's age and gender. Results were non-significant, indicating that the length of the conversation was not statistically related to children's age or gender, so that increases in frequency of children's self-statements with age does not appear to be due to any tendency for older children to simply talk more.

In order to understand the three-way interaction of event type by source by maternal control, I split maternal control into two categories to create a bivariate version of control. Because 47.3% of children rated their mothers as not at all controlling, and the rest rated their mothers as at least somewhat controlling or greater, I recoded control into

two categories; not controlling and controlling. I then re-ran the MANOVA, entering this bivariate version of maternal tendency to control the conversation as a factor. An Estimated Marginal Means table (Table 8) for the three-way interaction is included. Pairwise comparisons show that children who rated their mothers as at least somewhat controlling average more self-statements in stability events than in change events (Mean difference stability – change = .841, $SE=.421$, $p=.049$).

Type of statements made

In order to investigate the types of statements made about children by children and their mothers, I performed MANOVA on the number of each type of self statement (physical characteristics, enduring preferences, abilities, traits, and values) by age and gender, with event type (stability versus change events) as a within subjects factor, controlling for children's ratings of maternal attentiveness and tendency to control the conversation. Results indicate a significant, main effect for age (Wilks' Lambda $F = 2.027$, $p=.034$, partial eta squared = .115). Between subjects effects suggest that the age effect is being driven by age differences in the number of trait statements made ($F=5.71$, $p=.005$, partial eta squared = .122). I also performed this MANOVA with proportions of types of statements made rather than frequencies. This did not change the results; the main effect of age remained (Wilks' Lambda $F = 2.001$, $p=.050$, partial eta squared = .092), driven by the proportion of trait statements ($F=6.768$, $p=.002$; partial eta sq = .142).

Means tables suggest that traits are discussed with increasing frequency as children age, and pairwise comparisons confirm significant differences in the number of

trait statements made between 11-year-olds and 14- to 15-year-olds (Mean Difference = -1.08, $p=.005$), and between 11-year-olds and 17- to 18-year-olds (Mean Difference = -1.21, $p=.003$).

Hierarchical Linear Modeling

To this point, I have used analytic strategies that focus on the mother-child pair as the unit of analysis. However, hierarchical linear modeling (HLM) techniques allow me to nest data collected at the statement level (source, statement type, valence, and partner's response) within mother-child pairs. HLM allows me to examine maternal scaffolding by analyzing how characteristics of each statement (type of self-statement, valence, type of event in which the statement occurs) shape the response to that statement, and whether those patterns of responses differ across children's age and gender.

Maternal response

Because I am particularly interested in mothers' responses to children, I split the data file so that I could analyze mother's responses separately. I include the analysis of maternal response, rather than the analysis of both partners' response in the main body of this manuscript because of my interest in mothers' scaffolding behaviors. Also, recall that children make the majority of self-statements in these conversations. The relatively low level of maternal statements implies a relatively low level of responses by children to mothers. I selected only those statements made by children (and therefore responded to by mothers) for this analysis. I also ran this analysis on the whole file, with both mothers'

responses to children, and children's responses to mothers, included. Those results are very similar to the results explained here, and are included in Appendix B.

At the statement level, I include valence (positive, negative, or neutral), and the type of event (stability or change). I also wanted to investigate whether the type of statement made (about physical aspects, preferences, abilities, traits, or values) influenced mothers' tendency to respond more or less elaboratively. However, the inclusion of this nominal variable requires re-coding into five separate variables, consuming more degrees of freedom than my data allows, based on an average of 5.6 statements and responses per pair. Because the frequency of physical characteristics, preferences, and value statements is low, and because trait statements were the only type of statement that had been shown to vary with age in the previous analysis, I recoded statement type into trait vs non-trait statements, and included this variable in the analysis.

Note that maternal response was coded as an ordinal variable, with ignore, minimal response, and elaborate as categories on an increasingly responsive continuum. Here, I show maternal response analyzed as if it were a cardinal, continuous variable. While it is possible to use an ordinal variable as an outcome in HLM, the log linear transformations required make interpreting the resulting equation much more difficult. Therefore, I ran each model twice; once with response entered as a cardinal variable, and once as an ordinal variable. Because the results did not differ, I report the cardinal results here, for ease of interpretation.

I first examined relations among level 1 predictors, and allowed error terms to vary, in order to observe significant variations between pairs in the relationships between statement valence, event type, statement type, and maternal response. Where significant

(non-zero) variance occurred on any of the level 1 predictors, I entered level 2 predictors to test whether child age or gender were associated with differences in those level 1 relationships.

With all of the level 1 predictors entered in the model, only trait significantly predicted mothers' responses to children ($b=-0.139$, $p=.027$). The negative coefficient for trait indicates that mothers are more likely to respond elaboratively when children are not talking about traits (i.e., when they are talking about abilities, values, physical attributes, or preferences). Neither valence nor event type was significant in the model ($b=-0.060$, $p=.121$ and $b= 0.054$, $p=.466$ respectively).

Estimation of the variance components suggests that there is variance left to explain only on event type. Therefore, based on my hypotheses and the results of the preliminary analyses, I added age, gender, an age by gender interaction term, attention, and control to the level 2 model predicting the event type coefficient. Putting these variables in as level two predictors effectively tests whether there is an interaction between any of those predictors and event type.

In this final model, trait slips below significance as a predictor of mothers' response ($b=-.0125$, $p=.054$), but when this model is run with response entered as an ordinal variable, trait retains its significance in predicting response ($p=.045$: output for the ordinal model is available in Appendix C).

The age by gender by event type interaction is also a significant predictor of mothers' response ($p=.025$). In order to understand the nature and direction of this interaction, I produced predictive graphs, shown in Figure 1. These graphs show the mean predicted value of partner's response for different ages, genders, and event types.

As the graphs indicate,² mothers are responding evenly to girls and boys irrespective of age across stability events. However, in change events, mothers tend to respond more elaboratively to boys than to girls, and more elaboratively to younger children than to older children. With boys, mothers are also responding more elaboratively in change events than in stability events.

Valence

In order to investigate what variables may be related to the valence (positive, negative, or neutral) of the statements children and mothers make about children's selves, I performed HLM with valence as an outcome. Again, I performed each analysis twice; once with valence analyzed as an ordinal variable, and once as a cardinal variable. I report the results of the cardinal analyses for ease of interpretation, noting any differences between the ordinal and cardinal results.

In this model, I entered source, event type, partner's response, and trait as predictors. Only source and response were significant ($p < .001$, $p = .048$, respectively). Although the cardinal model shows that there is variance left to explain on event type, the ordinal version shows no variance left to explain in the model. Indeed, adding further components at level two yielded no further significant results.

² These graphs were constructed by producing the predicted values of partner's response based on differing values of all of the variables in the HLM equation, listed above (i.e., valence, event type, trait, age x event type, gender x event type, age x gender x event type, control x event type, and attention x event type). The mean response for each age, gender, and event type category was then plotted.

The beta weights suggest that statements tend to be more positive when they come from mothers, rather than children ($b=-0.474, p<.001$), and that more elaborative responses correspond to more negative statements ($b=-.087, p=.048$).

Table 2. Type of Self Statement by Age: Cross Tabulations

Age	Physical characteristics	Enduring preferences	Abilities	Traits	Values	Other	Total
11	11 (5.4%)	22 (10.9%)	94 (46.5%)	68 (33.7%)	7 (3.5%)	0	202
14-15	13 (4.1%)	26 (8.3%)	100 (31.7%)	156 (49.5%)	20 (6.3%)	0	315
17-18	4 (1.5%)	24 (9.1%)	91 (34.6%)	123 (35.4%)	17 (6.5%)	4 (1.5%)	263
Total	28 (3.6%)	72 (9.2%)	285 (36.5%)	347 (44.5%)	44 (5.6%)	4 (.5%)	780

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics

Variable	N	Min	Max	Mean	S.D.	Skew	S.E.	Kurtosis	S.E.
Conversation typicality	90	2.00	7.00	4.4222	.86086	.679	.254	1.207	.503
Maternal attentiveness	91	3.00	5.00	4.6484	.56517	-1.367	.253	.941	.500
Maternal support	92	3.00	5.00	4.6087	.53363	-.892	.251	-.330	.498
Maternal control	92	1.00	5.00	2.0761	1.29440	.975	.251	-.214	.498
Maternal warmth	93	27.00	60.00	52.7634	6.78297	-1.541	.250	2.811	.495
Total number of statements	93	.00	29.00	8.1505	4.91658	1.422	.250	3.159	.495
No. of physical statements	93	.00	3.00	.2796	.71270	2.847	.250	7.682	.495
No. of preference statements	93	.00	7.00	.7742	1.15278	2.327	.250	8.457	.495
No. of ability statements	93	.00	11.00	2.9677	2.06656	1.147	.250	2.337	.495
No. of trait statements	93	.00	12.00	3.6129	2.90813	.814	.250	-.046	.495
No. of value statements	93	.00	4.00	.4731	.77448	1.957	.250	4.587	.495
No. of statements from mom	93	.00	15.00	2.5269	2.86884	2.175	.250	6.642	.495
No. of statements from child	93	.00	23.00	5.6237	3.57197	1.578	.250	5.083	.495

Table 4. Correlations

Variable	Conversation typicality	Maternal attentiveness	Maternal support	Maternal control
Maternal warmth	.054	.300**	.509**	-.047
Conversation typicality	-	.209*	.127	.212*
Maternal attentiveness		-	.490**	-.165
Maternal support			-	-.036

*p<.05 **p<.01

Table 5. Estimated Marginal Means of Perceptions of Maternal Control by Child Gender and Age

Gender	Age	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
				Lower bound	Upper bound
Boys	11 yrs	3.533	.289	2.958	4.109
	14-15 yrs	2.357	.300	1.762	2.953
	17-18 yrs	1.769	.311	1.151	2.387
Girls	11 yrs	1.667	.289	1.091	2.242
	14-15 yrs	1.750	.251	1.252	2.248
	17-18 yrs	1.467	.289	.891	2.042

Table 6. Correlations of Children's Ratings of Maternal Behaviors with Outcome Variables

Statements	Maternal warmth	Conversation typicality	Maternal attentiveness	Maternal support	Maternal control
Physical	.084	.127	.122	.149	.095
Preference	.040	-.153	.147	-.050	.143
Ability	.144	-.039	.022	.106	.103
Trait	-.020	.036	-.012	.009	-.030
Value	-.018	.105	-.056	.101	-.047
Percent positive	.080	.033	-.051	.203	-.112
Mom Stability	.180	.072	.000	.217*	.035
Change	.036	-.085	.167	.141	.173
Child Stability	-.003	-.001	.042	-.042	.064
Change	-.016	-.016	-.059	-.087	-.068

* $p < .05$

Table 7. Estimated Marginal Means of the Number of Statements Made by Mothers and Children

Source	Age	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
				Lower bound	Upper bound
Mother	11 yrs	2.400	.528	1.350	3.450
	14-15 yr	2.892	.494	1.910	3.873
	17-18 yr	2.300	.548	1.211	3.389
Child	11 yr	4.333	.629	3.084	5.583
	14-15 yr	5.458	.588	4.290	6.627
	17-18 yr	7.118	.652	5.821	8.414

Table 8. Estimated Marginal Means of Number of Statements Made (Bivariate Maternal Control by Source by Event Type)

Controlling	Source	Event Type	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower bound	Upper bound
Not controlling	Mother	Stability	1.173 ^a	.428	.320	2.026
		Change	.872 ^a	.297	.282	1.463
	Child	Stability	2.574 ^a	.570	1.438	3.710
		Change	2.802 ^a	.366	2.073	3.531
Controlling	Mother	Stability	1.460 ^a	.314	.836	2.085
		Change	1.419 ^a	.217	.987	1.851
	Child	Stability	3.612^a	.418	2.780	4.444
		Change	2.771^a	.268	2.238	3.305

^aCovariates appearing in the model are evaluated at the following values: Maternal Attentiveness = 4.6444 Maternal Support = 4.6000.

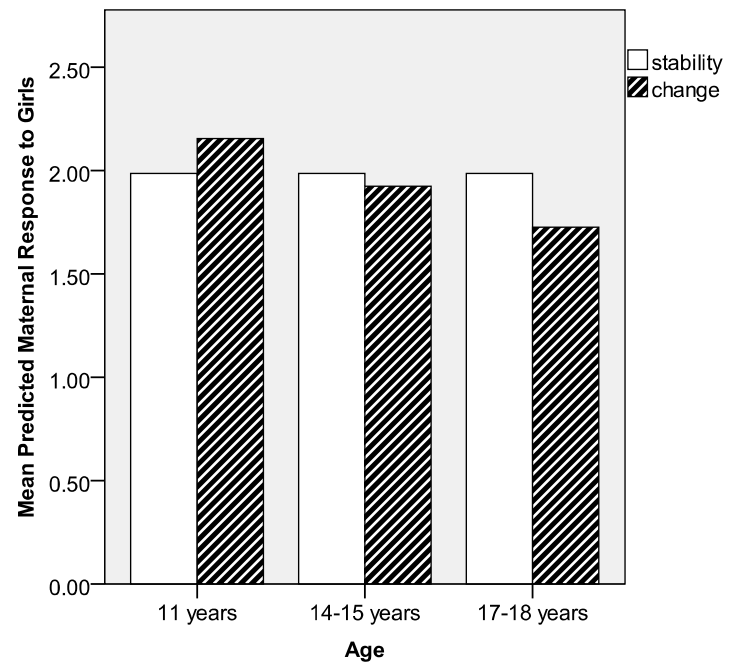
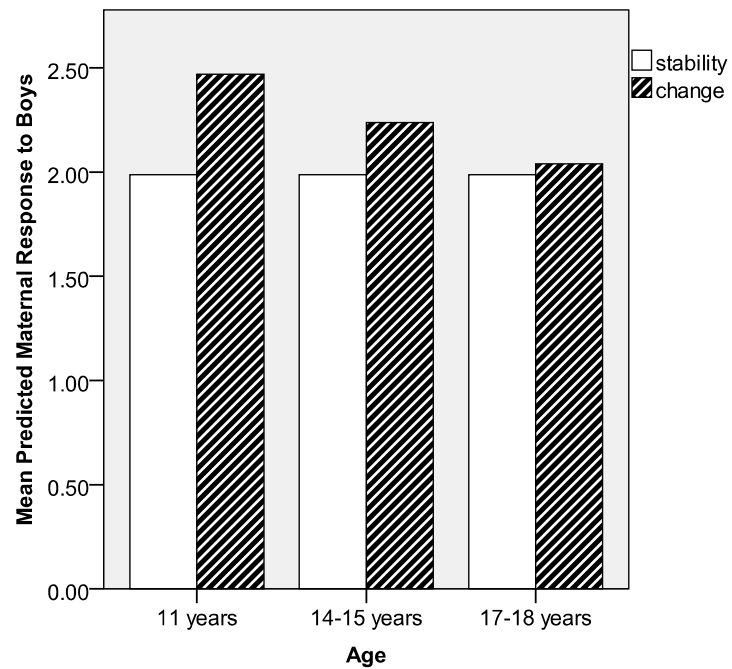


Figure 1. Predictive Graph of Mother's Response to Boys and Girls by Age and Event Type

DISCUSSION

For each of the major questions, results from hypothesis testing are summarized, followed by a discussion of major findings.

Question 1: Types of Selves

My first question is: What types of selves are children constructing, and how does that vary by age? The associated hypotheses are that (1) I expect to find increases in the number of self-statements made by children across ages, (2) I expect to find statements about physical aspects, enduring preferences, abilities, traits, and values across adolescence, (3) I expect the number of statements about traits to rise in the middle and older age groups, and (4) I expect to find more statements about values in the oldest age group. The data support hypotheses one, two, and three, but not four.

Unsurprisingly, and consistent with developmental expectations, children make more self-related statements as they move through adolescence. Seventeen- and 18-year-olds averaged one and a half more self-statements across conversations than 11-year-olds. Because length of conversation was unrelated to age, this statistically significant increase in self-statements suggests that children have more to say about themselves, proportionally, as they age. Adolescence really is a time for self-development; children have more to say about themselves toward the end of the teen years than in the beginning.

What types of statements are mothers and children making about children's selves?

Abilities and traits. When talking about the self of the child, mothers and children do talk about physical aspects, enduring preferences, and values, but the majority of their statements revolve around the child's traits and abilities. Adolescence is a time of intense physical growth, wherein children gain height, weight, and muscle mass. Primary and secondary sex characteristics develop, as do both white and grey matter in the brain (Steinberg, 2005; Susman & Dorn, 2009). While these changes affect how children look, they also have a dramatic impact on what children are physically and cognitively able to do. Interestingly, these conversations with mothers about children's selves emphasize children's abilities and traits rather than their changing physical characteristics, but mothers may not be the ideal audience with which to discuss the physical. The development of secondary sex characteristics, while developmentally important, is likely to be more salient to issues of peer interaction and physical attraction, and less directly related to self-issues in the context of parent-child relationships. Mothers are supposed to love you no matter what you look like. An overemphasis by mothers on physical characteristics as central to children's selves seems shallow, at best. Also, physical characteristics and changes may be directly related to, but less interesting than changes in abilities. For instance, an increase in height may spur newfound abilities on the basketball court. In this case, mothers and children may find it more interesting to discuss rebounding abilities that resulted from the height increase than to discuss the growth spurt itself. One reason abilities may be more interesting topics of conversation

than physical characteristics is that changes in physical characteristics are largely biologically driven, and mostly outside of the child's control. Abilities, on the other hand, may be developed. Thus, it may be more fruitful to discuss rebounding abilities, which although fueled by the growth spurt, can be improved through effort in a way that the growth spurt cannot.

Like physical characteristics, statements about children's enduring preferences appeared much less often in these mother-child conversations than did statements about abilities and traits. Enduring preferences are by definition enduring, and given the long history and intimate knowledge characteristic of mother-child relationships, may fall within the realm of the relatively unchanging and mutually understood.

On the other hand, children's abilities are developing rapidly during adolescence, as are their discoveries of traits. The twin emphasis on abilities and traits likely reflects the fact that these two areas are precisely the areas that are changing and developing during adolescence. While the nature of human development is likely to prompt an emphasis on adolescent abilities and traits in mother-child conversations universally, the culture of the American school system may add to the emphasis on abilities. The American school structure provides opportunities for a variety of extra-curricular athletic, dramatic, musical, and intellectual opportunities. Parents and children talk about children's abilities because those abilities are changing, and being developed, and because the purpose of school and extra-curricular activities, which commandeer much of children's time during adolescence, is precisely to develop and hone those abilities.

Mothers are also likely audiences for discussions of teens' abilities, as they have a vested interest in children's success. It may be fruitful to compare the frequency of ability

statements in peer conversations about children's selves. Peer relationships may contain elements of competition, which could affect the ways teens emphasize or down-play their abilities in order to promote achievement or friendship goals.

Increases in traits. In addition to the prevalence of ability and trait statements, another finding of significance is that children and mothers talk significantly more about children's traits as children grow. Between the ages of 11 and 14, there is a statistically significant increase in the number of trait statements, and trait statements continue to increase among 18-year-olds. This is consistent with age-related changes in children's self concept, and gives additional credence to the notion that children's understanding of underlying traits as integral pieces of personality blooms in early adolescence.

Changes in cognitive development, and in children's self-views, help explain the focus on, and increasing attention to traits. As noted previously, cognitive shifts that occur during preadolescence allow children to reason abstractly and deductively (see Hill & Palmquist, 1978). These shifts explain changes in self-views in early adolescence, when children begin to view their own behavior, and that of others, as driven by underlying personality traits (Harter, 1999). In adolescence, children are re-organizing self-views. This is an exciting time during which understanding of one's own traits increases, which should also lead to better self-understanding as children begin to see their own behaviors as falling into discernible, predictable patterns. Perhaps it is not surprising then, that overall, 44% of the self related statements mothers and children make about children revolve around children's traits, and that the number of statements children and mothers are making about traits nearly doubles from pre- to late adolescence.

Values. What may be more surprising is the relative lack of discussion about children's values. Roughly 6% of statements about children's selves involved discussion of values. Furthermore, the discussion of values did not appear to increase with children's age. While the lack of age-related changes may be an issue of statistical power, the lack of statements about values generally is curious. One explanation, consistent with Pasupathi and Wainryb's (2010) findings, is the idea of developmental lag. Specifically, while interview and questionnaire data have established the age-related trajectory of the emergence of different types of self-statements across adolescence (i.e., physical aspects, enduring preferences, and abilities evident throughout adolescence, traits emerging in early adolescence, and values emerging in late adolescence) (Damon & Hart, 1982; 1986; Harter 2006a; Harter & Monsour, 1992), it may be that children's abilities to actually use these more complex notions of self in conversational contexts lags behind questionnaire and interview response items. In this case, we would not expect values to emerge as self-descriptors in conversation until early adulthood. However, the emergence of traits as self-descriptors in conversation during early adolescence is consistent with questionnaire and interview data, and does not support the developmental lag hypothesis. Extending this type of study to an emerging adult sample could answer the question of whether talk about values emerges later in these kinds of conversations, or not at all.

Another explanation for the lack of emergence of values as self-descriptors in this data set may have to do with audience, conflict management, and shared understanding. In comparing parent and peer influence, researchers suggest that children tend to be more similar to their parents than to their friends in terms of morals and values (Collins & Steinberg, 2006). It may be that mothers and teens are not discussing values in this

sample because, in effect, values lay in the realm of shared understanding. Given the task of discussing events that changed or confirmed the teen's self image, it makes sense (at least in western, individualistic cultures) for parents and children to focus on what makes children unique or different, rather than to focus on shared, mutually understood values.

Even when teens' value system differs from parents, they may choose not to discuss those differences with parents. Developmental work on conflict between teens and parents indicates that children generally respect parental authority when issues clearly fall into the moral realm (Smetana, 1988). While values encompass a broader spectrum than just morality, teens may avoid negotiating a value system distinct from their parents' with their parents, so as to avoid conflict in a context in which the balance of power is not in their favor. This may be especially true in laboratory settings, where both teens and mothers may prefer to avoid conflict on camera. In contrast, the relatively equal power balance between peers may mean that peers, rather than parents, are an audience with whom the discussion of values is more productive, and salient to self-definition.

Finally, the lack of self-statements about values may have to do with the study design. Specifically, the prompt for children to select events that "changed how (or: confirmed something) you thought about yourself" was designed to elicit self-views. While Harter's work (1992) suggests that values do not emerge in the realm of self-views until late adolescence, younger teens may be able to discuss their personally held values and beliefs in self-relevant ways if specifically prompted to do so. Importantly, the lack of self-statements about values in this work should not be interpreted as teens' inability to articulate a value system. Also note that the coding scheme was designed to pick up only

statements about values that mothers or children directly connect to the child. In this data set, mothers and children occasionally did speak of values in general, third person terms (“people shouldn’t be so mean”), but these statements were not coded as self-statements.

Question 2: How Do Mothers Talk With Their Children?

My second question is: How does mothers’ scaffolding of children’s self-construction vary by age and gender of the child? The resulting hypotheses are: (5) I expect the number of self related statements made by mothers (about their child) to decrease with the age of the child, (6) I expect mothers to respond more elaboratively to younger children than to older children, and (7) I expect mothers to respond more elaboratively to boys’ statements than to girls’. The data do not support hypothesis 5, and support for hypotheses 6 and 7 is conditional.

Mothers do not make fewer statements about the self of the child as children age. This was surprising, as I expected maternal scaffolding behavior to manifest itself in terms of more statements from mothers with younger children, followed by a reduction in the number of statements mothers make as children become increasingly able to articulate their own ideas. While it is true that children made more statements with age, it is not true that mothers cut back the number of statements they make with older children. Mothers are not only quite constant across both age and gender in the number of statements they make, but the number of statements they are making is relatively low. Overall, mothers averaged less than half of the number of statements that children averaged ($M(\text{mothers}) = 2.5$; $M(\text{children}) = 5.6$).

In examining mother's statements about their children, it is worth noting that, although they may make relatively few statements relative to their children's contribution, mothers' statements are more likely than children's statements to be positively valenced. This finding supports the view of middle-class American mothers as invested in preserving children's self-esteem (Miller et al., 1997; Mullen & Yi, 1995; Recchia et al., under review; Wang, Leichtman, & Davies, 2000; Wiley et al., 1998). Also recall that all of the events under discussion are negative events, elected by children. Mothers may be particularly motivated to keep a positive focus given that children are bringing hard or difficult events to the table. Discussions that center on positive events may be less threatening to children's self esteem, and require less positive spinning from mothers.

Interestingly, partners also tend to respond to each other more elaboratively when self-statements are negative. This suggests that negative statements about children's selves need discussing. Negative statements about children's selves may call for elaborative responses in a way that positive statements do not, as mothers and children attempt to contextualize or mitigate those negative evaluations.

How do mothers respond to children's statements about themselves?

I was unable to find differences in maternal patterns of elaboration on children's self-statements based only on children's age or gender. However, contextual factors apart from, and in interaction with age and gender do influence maternal response.

Analysis of maternal response indicates that event type (whether pairs are discussing change or stability), interacts with children's age and gender to influence

mothers' scaffolding behavior. Specifically, in the context of discussing changing self-views, mothers are more likely to respond elaboratively to boys as compared to girls, and to younger adolescents as compared to older adolescents. This is consistent with other studies of maternal scaffolding behavior of adolescent narrative. McLean and Mansfield (2012) observed mothers and children discussing happy, sad, and important events, and found that mothers' scaffolding varied by age and gender of the adolescent and by event type. Specifically, they found mothers tended to use elaborative questioning with boys rather than girls in the context of important or sad events, which parallels the findings here. They propose that mothers' elaborative questioning is a response to boys' less developed sense of narrative identity; that in essence, mothers are working harder with boys to help them create and develop their identity. If we interpret maternal elaboration as mothers' efforts to help children narrate their own self-views, the pattern of maternal response in change events with boys and girls presented here suggests that, in change events, which may be more challenging to self-integrate, mothers perceive older children as less in need of help, and boys as developmentally behind girls in terms of the ability to narrate the self. Indeed, mothers' level of elaborative response to older adolescent boys is similar to responses to mid-adolescent girls, and mid-adolescent boys garner the same level of responsiveness as preadolescent girls. This pattern supports McLean and Mansfield's contention that mothers work harder with boys and younger girls, who may be less skillful at narrating identity (2012). However, this pattern is not apparent in stability events, where mothers' responses to boys and girls are similar across age and gender. I return to this comparison of maternal response in stability versus change events below.

One other piece of data that affects mothers' responses to their children is worth noting. HLM analysis shows that mothers respond more elaboratively when children's statements are not about traits. Recall that non trait statements can be about children's physical attributes, enduring preferences, abilities, or values, but that proportionally, non trait statements are almost twice as likely to be about abilities than about anything else.

It would be interesting to see whether this lack of elaboration surrounding traits is a cross-cultural phenomenon. The fundamental attribution error, or the tendency to view others' behaviors as due to internal causes (such as personality traits), is particularly prevalent in individualistic cultures, such as the United States, but may be less so in collectivist cultures, where adults and older adolescents are much more likely to take situational factors into account when explaining behavior (Miller, 1984). It may be that Americans are so steeped in traits as explanations of behavior that traits have become the immutable and definitive part of personality. In this case, a trait statement, once offered, may provoke no further explanation or discussion.

In contrast, statements about ability, which are the major components of the "non-trait" statements made, may invite more elaboration. As noted previously, rapid physical and cognitive changes give rise to changes in abilities during adolescence; what children can do is changing, and that may pull for discussion. In contrast to traits, which are conceptually enduring aspects of the self, abilities shift. What an individual is capable of may change with time, with development, with situational factors, or with conscious effort. Abilities not only change, but may afford the promise of personal control or choice in a way that traits do not. Individuals may think of traits as enduring, and relatively unalterable aspects of the self. Abilities, on the other hand, not only change, but may be

developed or improved with effort. In contrast to traits, this aspect of choice may invite discussion about abilities, and the dynamic possibilities they afford.

Question 3: Contexts of Change and Stability

My third question is: How do contexts of change and of stability affect self-construction? Specifically, does talking about change in the self require more discussion and elaboration from mothers and children than talking about stability in the self? In regards to this question, I specifically wanted to test (8) whether mothers and children make more statements about the self of the child in change events rather than in stability events, and (9) whether mothers provide more elaborative responses in the context of change events than in the context of stability events. With regards to item eight, the data do not show more statements in change rather than stability events, but, for item nine, mothers do respond more elaboratively in change events under some circumstances.

Self verification, development, and supportive listening

Significant differences in the number of statements mothers or children make in stability events versus change events failed to appear. This finding is somewhat surprising in light of patterns of stability and change in adult samples, where elaboration by speakers generally correlates with changes in self-views. It may, however, be interpreted as consistent with the developmental contention that there are no differences between processes of confirming versus changing adolescents' self-views, because adolescents' self-views are just forming, and are inherently unstable. From this developmental perspective, we would not expect fewer self-statements in stability events,

because a stable core of self-views is still forming. Thus, stability and change events should evoke similarly high levels of self-statements. I refer to this theory as the developmental hypothesis, and it is supported by the finding of no significant difference in the number of self-statements children make in stability events versus change events.

Results show that there are differences in mothers' responses based on children's age and gender within the conversational contexts of stability and change. The pattern of decreasing maternal response with age is discussed above, and the ensuing discussion focuses on differences in mother's responses based on contexts of stability versus change. In stability events, mothers' responses tend to be consistent across age and gender. However, in events that prompted change in children's self-concepts, age and gender interact to influence mothers' responses. I discuss patterns in change events relative to the consistent benchmark of stability events.

With boys, mothers tend to elaborate more in change events than in stability events, and this elaboration decreases with age, so that at age 18, mothers' responses to boys in change events is similar to their responses in stability events. When girls and their mothers talk about changes in girls' selves, mothers' elaborative responses also tend to decrease with age (similar to the boys' pattern), but this decrease is such that mothers are responding more elaboratively in change than in stability events only for younger girls. By the time girls hit mid-adolescence, mothers are responding similarly to change and to stability events, and with older adolescent girls, mothers are responding less elaboratively in change than in stability events.

The differences in patterns of maternal response between stability and change events for boys is consistent with findings from adult samples which suggest that

changing one's self-views is more difficult, and requires more support from listeners, than does confirming one's previously held self-views (Weeks & Pasupathi, 2011).

In contrast, patterns of responses to girls are mixed, with mothers responding more elaboratively to younger girls and but less elaboratively to older girls in change events than in stability events. However, what these findings do point to is the changing nature of what it means to be a supportive listener to a person whose capacity to articulate his or her self-views is rapidly developing. Considering McLean & Mansfield's (2012) contention that mothers need to do less elaborative responding as children gain narrative ability, it may be that mothers back off from elaborating on older girls' statements in change events because the girls are already busy elaborating on their own experience. Perhaps, with older girls who are adept at constructing narrative accounts of selves, and in the context of change events, which pull for elaboration, supportive listening from mothers looks like minimal acknowledgement of girls' already highly elaborated statements. Here, what mothers may be doing is simply getting out of the way of daughters' oncoming narrative train. For instance, look at this exchange between an 18 year old girl and her mother, discussing her first experience being in a play:

- Daughter: Okay. Then the next one was um.. something that changed how I thought. And I kind of forgot about this. But um. You remember when I did that play in third grade? That Beauty and the Beast play?
- Mother: Uh huh.
- Daughter: And you were like um "Why do you..none of your friends are doing it. Why do you want to do it?" And I was like, "because... it will be fun."
- Mother: [chuckles.]
- Daughter: I just remember that it...or it changed how I thought of myself like because...I think before then...I don't think I have ever really been shy necessarily but I think that helped me kind of breakaway even more.
- Mother: I was shocked.
- Daughter: Haha. And like, I mean look at me now; I am nowhere near shy at all. And so I think that just changed like or whether I was going to be a shy like person or not. I think...I don't know, I think that was my first like...I am

going to go for it; I'm not shy; who cares if (inaudible); why not; I want to do it; it will be fun.

Mother: Yeah that was huge to me.

Daughter: Uh huh. I kind of remember that. I (inaudible). But the negative part about it was just like I was shy at first, you know, I didn't remember I didn't want to sing and there was these two girls and they were like you know kind of (inaudible) Berlin girls and they just sang and they were so great and so popular and so cool. Of course they sang really good and I was next and I was so nervous and they sang together of course because they are best friends, and I was next and I was like oh my gosh and I just sang the ABC's or something because they were saying that...like some other kids did it too. So I'm like, okay. And I remember I was so nervous and I like didn't want to be there but then by the end of the day I did.

Mother: I am so glad. That was huge for me that you did.

Notice that the daughter is not only articulating the memory, but how it helped shape her self-concept as someone who is not shy. The mother interjects only minimal responses—the focus on her own reactions to and memory of the event (“I was shocked”, “that was huge for me,”)—as the daughter explicates her analysis of the event, and what it means. The mother responds warmly and positively to her daughter, affirming the import of the event, but she does not feel the need to elaborate on, or to ask her daughter to further explain her self-statement (about not being shy).

In these kinds of exchanges, when children are able to articulate their own ideas about their selves, mothers' attentive listening may involve less elaborative responding, in favor of simply acknowledging children's own discoveries. It is worth noting here that while research with young children points to the effectiveness of mothers' elaborative responding (Bird & Reese 2006; Fivush & Nelson, 2004, 2006), in samples of young adult conversations with peers, it is responsive listening, not elaborative responding, that has been causally linked to changes in speaker's self-views (Weeks & Pasupathi, 2011). While an elaborative response certainly falls within the realm of responsive listening, responsive listening does not have to be elaborative. Responsive listening may include

eye contact, appropriate facial expressions and body language, or brief interjections (“oh, wow!” “really?” “uh-huh”) which communicate attention and interest to the speaker. As adolescents master the process of articulating their self-views, mothers may remove the scaffolding of elaborative responses and settle into these other forms of responsive listening.

Bids for autonomy

Another finding regarding differences in change versus stability events appear in the three way interaction between source, event type, and maternal control. Recall that when children rate their mothers as at least somewhat controlling, they produce more self-statements in the context of stability events ($M(\text{stability}) = 3.6$; $M(\text{change}) = 2.7$). This finding may be understood in terms of autonomy, and Hirst’s ideas about narrative roles. In families and in joint social recollections, individuals who take on a narrator role tend to have more power in terms of reifying their version of events. In family interactions, the narrator role is somewhat flexible, in that different family members may assume the role, and the assumption of this role may be contingent on whose story is being told (Hirst & Manier, 1996; Pasupathi, Alderman, & Shaw, 2007). Thus, narrators are often people who have expertise, or special knowledge of a subject. However, this is not always the case. In an experimental manipulation, Hirst and colleagues disentangled the narrator role from the expert role, giving a non-narrator specialized knowledge in a social interaction. Their findings suggest that even when narratorship does not align with expertise, it is the narrator’s version of events that tends to be reified, or remembered later by members of the group (Brown et al., 2009). Applied to mother-child interactions,

it may be that children's propensity to make more self-statements in stability events when they perceive their mothers as at least somewhat controlling has to do with claiming authorship of the self. This may be particularly important for autonomy seeking adolescence who are chaffing a bit under maternal control, and for whom expert status is not clearly defined. If I am supposed to know who I am, but I don't seem to know that quite as clearly as my mother, who has a longer temporal scope and more experience in viewing my behavior in terms of enduring personality traits, and if my mother seems a bit controlling to me, perhaps my reaction is to assert myself as narrator when discussing events that confirmed my self-views, ensuring that it is my voice, my version of events that gets "recorded" in conversation. This overt expression of autonomy, this need to ensure I take the narrator role by increasing the number of self-statements I make, may not show up in the context of discussing change events, where I feel less pressure to know myself. It may also not appear when my mother's behavior seems not at all controlling to me; when my autonomy, and the right to author my own self is not in question.

The Scaffolder's Dance

Taken together, these findings provide a preliminary sketch of how mothers scaffold self conversations across adolescence. First, to the extent that scaffolding involves removing external support as competence is gained, there is evidence that making direct statements about the self of the child is not a form of scaffolding the self. While these kinds of statements contribute to identity and are undoubtedly designed to shape children's self-views, mothers do not adjust the frequency of such statements as

children develop. This suggests that, rather than being a temporary structural aid in self-development, these statements are a static, permanent part of the landscape. Perhaps, in the context of intimate relationships between mothers and children, these kinds of contributions are part of being in a warm, supportive relationship, and have more to do with participating in a relationship and in a conversation than with scaffolding a process.

On the other hand, there is evidence that mothers do scaffold self-developmental processes by adjusting their responses to children's self-statements as children gain the ability to articulate their self-views. In these situations, mothers appear to adjust not only to children's development, but to contextual demands: elaborating more with less practiced narrators in conversations that challenge children's selves.

For their part, children appear to be sensitive to mothers' behaviors. Perhaps not coincidentally, younger children and boys—the very groups mothers are more elaborative with in discussions about self change—are more likely to rate their mothers as controlling in these conversations. Children who perceive mothers as controlling the conversation appear to respond by making more self-statements in discussions of events where their self-views were confirmed.

Finally, there is evidence that mothers are sensitive to adolescent's decreasing need for scaffolding. Mothers not only elaborate more with boys and younger children, but with older girls, they shift from elaborative to minimal responses. Rather than scaffold the process of self-construction by responding elaboratively to these young women, mothers appear to take the role of attentive listeners, which is more typical of the peer interactions of early adulthood (e.g., Pasupathi & Rich, 2005; Weeks & Pasupathi,

2011) than of mother-child interactions in early childhood (e.g., Fivush & Nelson, 2004; 2006).

Removing the scaffolding for older daughters—moving from elaborative responses to attentive listening—may imply that mothers are satisfied that daughters have mastered the process of self-construction in conversation. It does not imply that mothers are uninterested in shaping the selves that daughters are constructing. Recall that empirical work with young adult peers suggests that attentive listening is key in shaping self-views (Pasupathi & Rich, 2005; Weeks & Pasupathi, 2011). Through attentive listening, mothers may continue to affect the content of self views that their older adolescents adopt, but it appears that, in terms of scaffolding the processes of self-construction, when children are competent, mothers retire.

Here, it should be noted that despite the laboratory setting, the noticeable presence of recording equipment, and the written and verbal prompts to focus conversation on the self of the child, it is not clear how deliberate mothers are about this process of scaffolding and shaping children's selves. As noted earlier, in conversation with their offspring, mothers at times appear to have multiple, and competing goals (Reccia et al., under review), and individual differences in conscious awareness of those goals are also likely to exist. For some mothers, scaffolding the process and content of children's selves may be a deliberate, conscious effort. Others may be less cognizant of how their statements and responses scaffold and shape children's abilities to narrate self-views. The degree to which mothers are aware, deliberate, and goal oriented about scaffolding in these conversations may influence maternal behavior. However, even when they are not deliberately or consciously attending to children's selves, mothers are likely to transmit

desired self-views and the process of constructing those views in conversation.

Scaffolding is likely to occur despite distracting circumstances and individual differences in awareness or effort.

Limitations and Future Directions

Although mothers and teens discussed four different events that bore on children's self-views, mothers did not produce enough statements about the self of the child in the context of those events to allow sufficient power to analyze children's responses to mothers' statements. This was unexpected, and unfortunate. With mothers averaging fewer than three statements total, and just over one statement in both stability or both change events, there were not enough observations to support the hierarchical linear modeling techniques that would have allowed analysis of the variables involved.

Gender differences play a role in mothers' responses to children, but did not appear to influence the types of selves children and mothers are creating in this data set. However, this may be an artifact of the coding scheme and design decisions. Although the scheme selected for this project parallels Harter's typology of the kinds of selves that develop in childhood (Harter & Monsour, 1992), allowing me to examine the types of statements children and mothers make about children, the classification of type of self-statements is rather broad, and nuances within those categories are ignored. For instance, while statements about physicality were counted, I did not catalog differences in the types of statements about physical bodies, such as how one's body is changing, or whether one feels positively or negatively about the physical changes of maturation, which are often the source of gender discrepancies (Siegel et al., 1999). Also note that in this scheme,

physical abilities, such as athletic prowess, are coded as abilities rather than as physical statements. Because physical, intellectual, social, musical, and dramatic abilities are lumped together, gender differences in physicality, such as conceptions of strength or athletic abilities, would be less evident. In light of Fivush's analysis of gender as a process that gets enacted in different contexts, lack of gender differences in the data may also reflect a lack of contextual nuances that pull for gender enactment (e.g., prompting for emotional events or including fathers in the discussion). Therefore, the lack of gender differences in this data may reflect those coding and design decisions, and should not be interpreted as demonstrating that gender differences in adolescent self-views do not exist.

Another limitation of the study is the lack of diversity in the sample. Participants were overwhelmingly European-American and middle class. While the range of topics children selected (from making college plans and winning multiple scholarships to unplanned pregnancy, being repeatedly arrested, and drug addiction) suggests diversity in terms of experience and developmental trajectories, there may well be differences in the ways mothers and children construct children's selves that are linked with culture, and with socio-economic status. These results need testing in more diverse samples.

Follow up studies to this one include broadening it to a more diverse sample, and changing the audience. Fathers' narrative contributions and scaffolding of children's selves might be productively compared to mothers, across these same age groups. Given Fivush's notion that the presence of fathers promotes the enactment of gender in ways that the presence of mothers alone does not (Fivush & Zaman, in press), and father's unique contributions to adolescent children's well-being (see Eggebeen, 2008 for a review), it seems reasonable that fathers have unique contributions to make to children's

self-views, and that some of those contributions may play out in conversation with their adolescent and young adult children.

Like fathers, friends may be another important audience for adolescent self and identity concerns. Peers become increasingly important during adolescence, and, as conversation partners, offer complementary perspectives and avenues for the development of identity and autonomy (Weeks & Pasupathi, 2009). Peers may be the audience with which values get discussed and refined, especially in older adolescence and emerging adulthood. Peers may or may not be an audience with whom abilities are easily discussed. Peers' contributions to adolescent self development in terms of attentive listening or elaborative responding is also likely to look different from mothers' contributions, and may change with age. Looking at peer contributions to self-perceptions across adolescence and in emerging adult samples may continue to push our understanding of the intersection of narrative and selves.

In addition, refining the coding of interactions between mothers and children may be a productive exercise. While understanding mothers' and children's responses to each other as more or less elaborative is helpful, it may be more helpful to look at how partners respond to each other when the original statement is more versus less clearly articulated; and to examine nuances in elaborative responding. A more nuanced coding scheme may lead to a better understanding of what kinds of behaviors constitute responsive listening, and how responsive listening may be linked to outcomes such as clarity or stability of self-views.

To summarize, when mothers and children talk about children's self related experiences, they emphasize abilities and traits, but especially traits as children move

from pre-adolescence into the teen years. Although mothers' original contributions to these discussions tend to be fairly constant across adolescence, children increasingly talk about their selves, reflecting, perhaps, development of both interest and acuity in self-views. Mothers appear to be shaping both the content of children's self-views, and the process of constructing self-views through conversation about meaningful events. To that end, mothers scaffold the process of self-construction by adjusting their responses to children based on children's age, gender, and the types of events under discussion; providing more elaborative responses to children whose self-views are less well articulated, in circumstances that are likely to challenge self-views. Through attentive listening and occasionally interjecting their own observations, mothers shape children's self-views because, as one mother told her son, "...your feeling about your worth and your abilities, really impact how you're going to view yourself generally..."

Qualitatively, the tenderness and concern that mothers feel toward their teenage children shines in this data set. Quantitatively, it appears that mothers are respectful of children's autonomy, adjusting their responses to children's developmental needs while giving children space to talk about themselves.

APPENDIX A

TRANSCRIPT OF CODED CONVERSATION

The following is the transcript from the conversation that is shown in the sample coding from Table 1:

Daughter: And then an event that was positive was getting a job. Um, it kind of made me realize like what I can do. Like, even though I don't have a good memory, like I can find other ways that I can help me remember – like post-its...

Mother: Uh-hum.

Daughter: ...writing a lot of post-its so I can remember what to do. And just like doing things that I don't – I don't doing, like talking on the phone...

Mother: Right.

Daughter: ...now I have to do that all the time, so it's like good communication skills that I'm learning. So I'm learning lots of new things and I think it's overall a good experience.

Mother: I knew it would be. I mean that you have lot of capabilities that you don't actually know that you have. And I knew that when you got a job you would find out what you actually could do all by your little self -- cause you're smart and I knew you could do that. That was one of the reasons

we were pushing you for a job, is cause I want you to see what potential you have by pushing yourself, cause you kind of stay safe – in a safe place – and everything’s good as long as it’s a safe place. But there’s a whole world out there that I really want you to figure out, and the only way you do it is jump in it, right?

Daughter: Yep.

Mother: So do you feel better about yourself now that you’ve got a job – like...

Daughter: Yeah.

Mother: ...maybe you have more skills or you’re learning new skills?

Daughter: I feel like I’m getting more confident...

Mother: Uh-huh, in your ability just to do stuff?

Daughter: ...in talking to other people and everything.

Mother: I think you are too. Good job! -- really good job. So...

Daughter: Yep, we’re all done.

Mother: Alright – yeah.

APPENDIX B

HLM ANALYSIS OF PARTNER'S RESPONSE

In order to understand how mothers and children respond to each other's statements about the self of the child, I entered source (mother or child), valence (positive, negative, or neutral), type of event (stability or change), and trait (trait vs. non-trait statements) at level one. I allowed error terms to vary in order to examine where additional predictors might improve the model. Again, partner's response was coded as an ordinal variable, but is presented here analyzed as a cardinal, continuous variable for ease of interpretation, because results from analysis as a cardinal variable did not differ from the results of the ordinal analysis.

With the level 1 predictors entered into the model, the intercept, source, and trait were significant predictors of partner response ($p=.000$, $.021$, $.027$ respectively), valence reached a trend level ($p=.051$), and event type was not significant. The level one coefficients indicate that partners are more likely to respond elaboratively when children speak (rather than mothers), and when the statement is not about traits. The trend indicates that negative statements are more likely to be responded to elaboratively than are neutral or positive statements. Notably, final estimation of the variance components suggests that there is no variance left to explain in terms of source, valence, or trait. On the other hand, there is variance remaining in the event-type portion of the model

($SD=.262$; $p=.018$). Therefore, I added level 2 variables (age, gender, age by gender, attention, and control) nested in event type. In this final model, level 1 variables maintained their significance, and at level 2, only the age by gender by event type interaction was significant ($p=.047$).

In order to understand this three-way interaction, I again turn to predictive graphs, as in Figure 2. These graphs indicate that in stability events, mothers' and children's responses to each other are unaffected by the age or gender of the child. However, in change events, mothers and boys are responding more elaboratively to each other than are mothers and girls. Also, mothers and younger children tend to elaborate more than mothers and older children in change events.

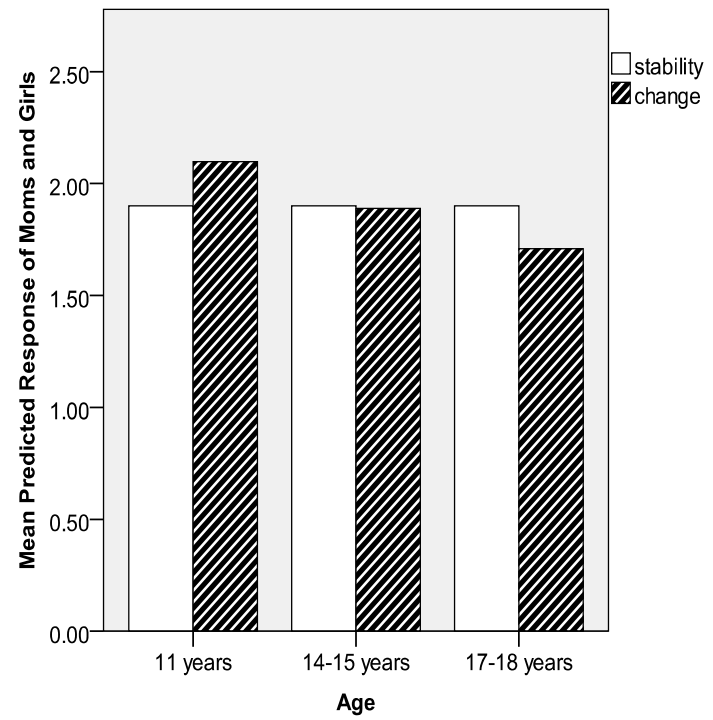
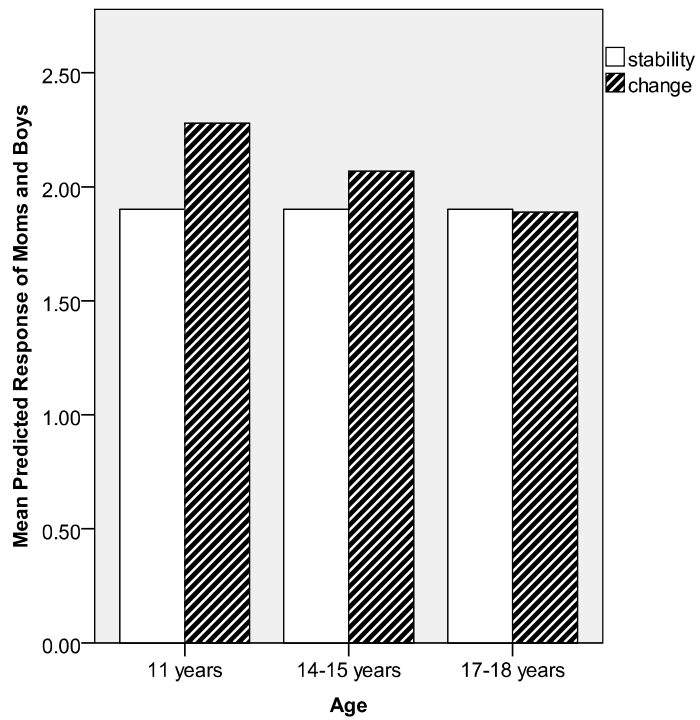


Figure 2. Predictive Values of Partners' Response: Mothers' and Children's Response to Each Other

APPENDIX C

HLM OUTPUT FOR ORDINAL MODEL OF MATERNAL RESPONSE

The maximum number of level-1 units = 518
The maximum number of level-2 units = 89
The maximum number of micro iterations = 14
Number of categories = 3
Method of estimation: restricted PQL
Maximum number of macro iterations = 100

Distribution at Level-1: Ordinal

Weighting Specification

	Weight	Variable	Weighting?	Name	Normalized?
Level 1	no				
Level 2	no				
Precision	no				

The outcome variable is RESPONSE

The model specified for the fixed effects was:

Level-1	Level-2
Coefficients	Predictors
INTRCPT1 slope, P0	INTRCPT2, B00
VALENCE slope, P1	INTRCPT2, B10
EVENTYPE slope, P2	INTRCPT2, B20
	TAGE, B21
	TGENDER, B22
	TLEATTEN, B23
	TLECONTR, B24
	AGEXGEND, B25
TRAIT slope, P3	INTRCPT2, B30
THOLD2,	d(2)

The model specified for the covariance components was:

Sigma squared (constant across level-2 units)

Tau dimensions

INTRCPT1

VALENCE slope

EVENTYPE slope

TRAIT slope

Summary of the model specified (in equation format)

Level-1 Model

$$\text{Prob}[R = 1|B] = P'(1) = P(1)$$

$$\text{Prob}[R \leq 2|B] = P'(2) = P(1) + P(2)$$

$$\text{Prob}[R \leq 3|B] = 1.0$$

where

$$P(1) = \text{Prob}[Y(1) = 1|B]$$

$$P(2) = \text{Prob}[Y(2) = 1|B]$$

$$\log[P'(1)/(1 - P'(1))] = B0 + B1*(VALENCE) + B2*(EVENTYPE) + B3*(TRAIT)$$

$$\log[P'(2)/(1 - P'(2))] = B0 + B1*(VALENCE) + B2*(EVENTYPE) + B3*(TRAIT) + d(2)$$

Level-2 Model

$$B0 = G00 + R0$$

$$B1 = G10 + R1$$

$$B2 = G20 + G21*(TAGE) + G22*(TGENDER) + G23*(TLEATTEN) + G24*(TLECONTR) + G25*(AGEXGEND) + R2$$

$$B3 = G30 + R3$$

RESULTS FOR ORDINAL ITERATION 1668

Tau

INTRCPT1,P0	0.16143	-0.11957	0.12814	0.02619
VALENCE,P1	-0.11957	0.09908	-0.07012	-0.02951
EVENTYPE,P2	0.12814	-0.07012	0.43603	-0.00970
TRAIT,P3	0.02619	-0.02951	-0.00970	0.01553

Tau (as correlations)

INTRCPT1,P0	1.000	-0.945	0.483	0.523
VALENCE,P1	-0.945	1.000	-0.337	-0.752
EVENTYPE,P2	0.483	-0.337	1.000	-0.118
TRAIT,P3	0.523	-0.752	-0.118	1.000

 Random level-1 coefficient Reliability estimate

INTRCPT1, P0	0.090
VALENCE, P1	0.108
EVENTYPE, P2	0.135
TRAIT, P3	0.006

Note: The reliability estimates reported above are based on only 42 of 89 units that had sufficient data for computation. Fixed effects and variance components are based on all the data.

The value of the likelihood function at iteration 2 = -9.866916E+002

The outcome variable is RESPONSE

Final estimation of fixed effects:

<u>Fixed Effect</u>	<u>Standard Coefficient</u>	<u>Error</u>	<u>T-ratio d.f.</u>	<u>Approx. P-value</u>
For INTRCPT1 slope, P0				
INTRCPT2, B00	-0.902487	0.151551	-5.955 88	0.000
For VALENCE slope, P1				
INTRCPT2, B10	0.126107	0.099843	1.263 88	0.210
For EVENTYPE slope, P2				
INTRCPT2, B20	-0.480682	2.047759	-0.235 83	0.815
TAGE, B21	0.164472	0.094043	1.749 83	0.084
TGENDER, B22	0.785120	0.611791	1.283 83	0.203
TLEATTEN, B23	-0.385947	0.312696	-1.234 83	0.221
TLECONTR, B24	0.041517	0.149717	0.277 83	0.782
AGEXGEND, B25	-0.818042	0.433233	-1.888 83	0.062
For TRAIT slope, P3				
INTRCPT2, B30	0.316059	0.178958	1.766 88	0.080
For THOLD2, d(2)	1.539423	0.102285	15.050 508	0.000

<u>Fixed Effect</u>	<u>Coefficient</u>	<u>Odds Ratio</u>	<u>Confidence Interval</u>
For INTRCPT1 slope, P0			
INTRCPT2, B00	-0.902487	0.405560	(0.300,0.548)
For VALENCE slope, P1			
INTRCPT2, B10	0.126107	1.134404	(0.931,1.383)
For EVENTYPE slope, P2			

	INTRCPT2, B20	-0.480682	0.618362	(0.011,36.066)
	TAGE, B21	0.164472	1.178771	(0.978,1.421)
	TGENDER, B22	0.785120	2.192670	(0.651,7.388)
	TLEATTEN, B23	-0.385947	0.679807	(0.365,1.265)
	TLECONTR, B24	0.041517	1.042391	(0.774,1.403)
	AGEXGEND, B25	-0.818042	0.441295	(0.187,1.043)
For	TRAIT slope, P3			
	INTRCPT2, B30	0.316059	1.371712	(0.962,1.956)
For	THOLD2,			
	d(2)	1.539423	4.661899	(3.815,5.697)

The outcome variable is RESPONSE

Final estimation of fixed effects
(with robust standard errors)

Fixed Effect	Coefficient	Standard Error	Approx. T-ratio	d.f.	P-value
For INTRCPT1 slope, P0					
INTRCPT2, B00	-0.902487	0.150256	-6.006	88	0.000
For VALENCE slope, P1					
INTRCPT2, B10	0.126107	0.095001	1.327	88	0.188
For EVENTYPE slope, P2					
INTRCPT2, B20	-0.480682	2.184068	-0.220	83	0.827
TAGE, B21	0.164472	0.099298	1.656	83	0.101
TGENDER, B22	0.785120	0.546563	1.436	83	0.155
TLEATTEN, B23	-0.385947	0.271408	-1.422	83	0.159
TLECONTR, B24	0.041517	0.115036	0.361	83	0.719
AGEXGEND, B25	-0.818042	0.365565	-2.238	83	0.028
For TRAIT slope, P3					
INTRCPT2, B30	0.316059	0.155990	2.026	88	0.045
For THOLD2,					
d(2)	1.539423	0.115604	13.316	508	0.000

Fixed Effect	Coefficient	Odds Ratio	Confidence Interval
For INTRCPT1 slope, P0			
INTRCPT2, B00	-0.902487	0.405560	(0.301,0.546)
For VALENCE slope, P1			
INTRCPT2, B10	0.126107	1.134404	(0.940,1.370)
For EVENTYPE slope, P2			
INTRCPT2, B20	-0.480682	0.618362	(0.008,47.276)
TAGE, B21	0.164472	1.178771	(0.968,1.436)

	TGENDER, B22	0.785120	2.192670	(0.741,6.491)
	TLEATTEN, B23	-0.385947	0.679807	(0.397,1.165)
	TLECONTR, B24	0.041517	1.042391	(0.830,1.310)
	AGEXGEND, B25	-0.818042	0.441295	(0.214,0.912)
For	TRAIT slope, P3			
	INTRCPT2, B30	0.316059	1.371712	(1.007,1.869)
For	THOLD2,			
	d(2)	1.539423	4.661899	(3.716,5.848)

Final estimation of variance components:

Random Effect	Standard Deviation	Variance Component	df	Chi-square	P-value
INTRCPT1, R0	0.40179	0.16143	41	50.27550	0.152
VALENCE slope, R1	0.31477	0.09908	41	55.36406	0.066
EVENTYPE slope R2	0.66033	0.43603	42	71.46756	0.003
TRAIT slope, R3	0.12464	0.01553	42	32.06084	>.500

Note: The chi-square statistics reported above are based on only 42 of 89 units that had sufficient data for computation. Fixed effects and variance components are based on all the data.

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