

3-1-2006

Maternal States of Mind, Reflective Function, Maternal Behavior, and the Mother-Infant Attachment Relationship

Greg Moran

University of Western Ontario, gmoran2@uwo.ca

Erinn Hawkins

University of Western Ontario, ehawkin2@uwo.ca

David R. Pederson

University of Western Ontario, pederson@uwo.ca

Follow this and additional works at: <https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/psychologypres>



Part of the [Developmental Psychology Commons](#)

Citation of this paper:

Moran, Greg; Hawkins, Erinn; and Pederson, David R., "Maternal States of Mind, Reflective Function, Maternal Behavior, and the Mother-Infant Attachment Relationship" (2006). *Psychology Presentations*. 2.

<https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/psychologypres/2>

Maternal States of Mind, Reflective Function, Maternal Behavior, and the Mother-Infant Attachment Relationship

Greg Moran, Erinn Hawkins, and
David R. Pederson

Department of Psychology
University of Western Ontario
UQTR - le 1 mars 2006



With more than a little assistance from...

- Sandi Bento, Research Coordinator
- Carey Anne DeOliveira (CPRI, London)
- Heidi Neufeld Bailey (U of Guelph)
- Jen Phillips
- Karin Gleeson
- Ann Krupka
- Ann Robson
- Erinn Hawkins
- Sheri Madigan
- Lindsey Forbes
- Elspeth Evans
- Acia Blank
- Anneli Sepa
- Deanne Pederson
- and others, including *countless London area mothers and their babies*

Generous funding from: Health Canada, SSHRC, and OMHF



Our Research Program - Overview

Attachment - The First Relationship

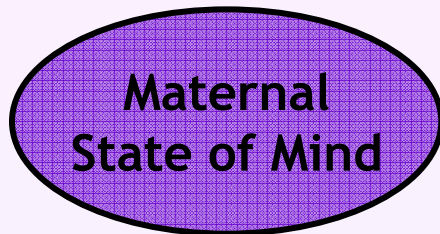
Its origins in the first year and in the mother's childhood experience



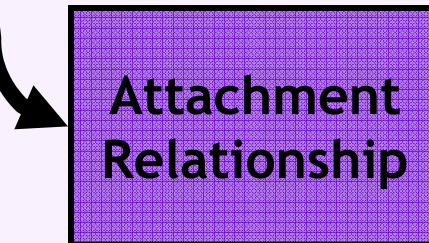
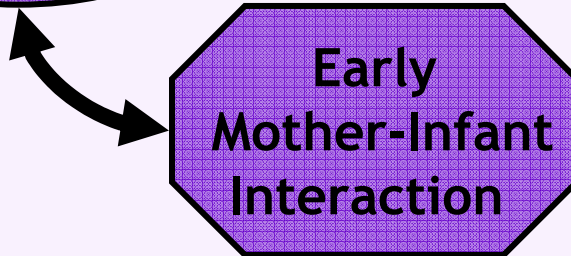
The First Relationship

Maternal
Childhood Experience

Trauma



Organized and Disorganized Attachment Relationships



Future Relationships



Internal Working Model of Attachment



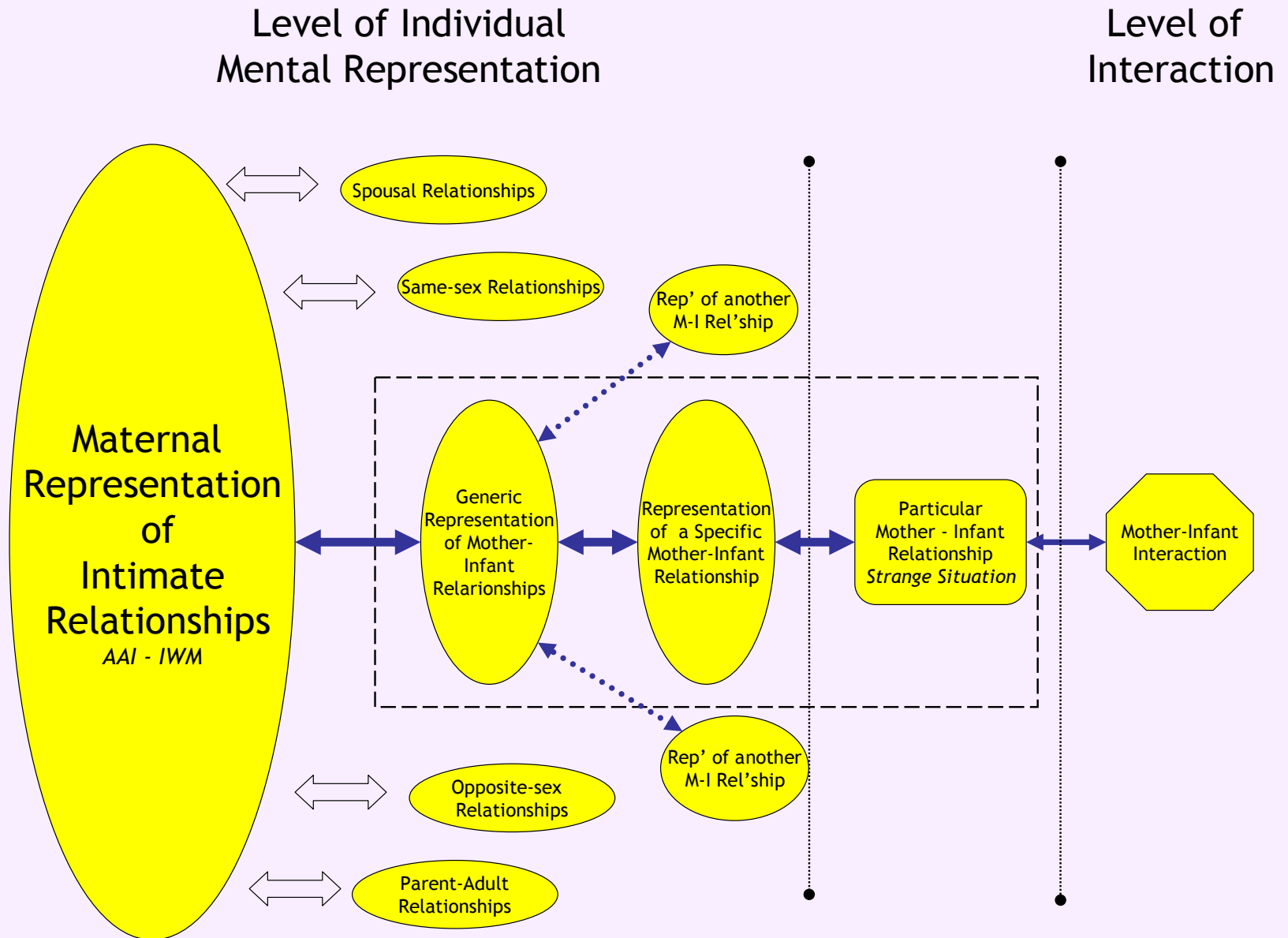
Maternal Representations and the Transmission of Attachment

- Elaborating on the place of representations in the broader picture
- Beyond the AAI-based Internal Working Model (IWM)
- Need for greater specificity - Representation of
 - different types of relationships
 - Different relationships of the same type

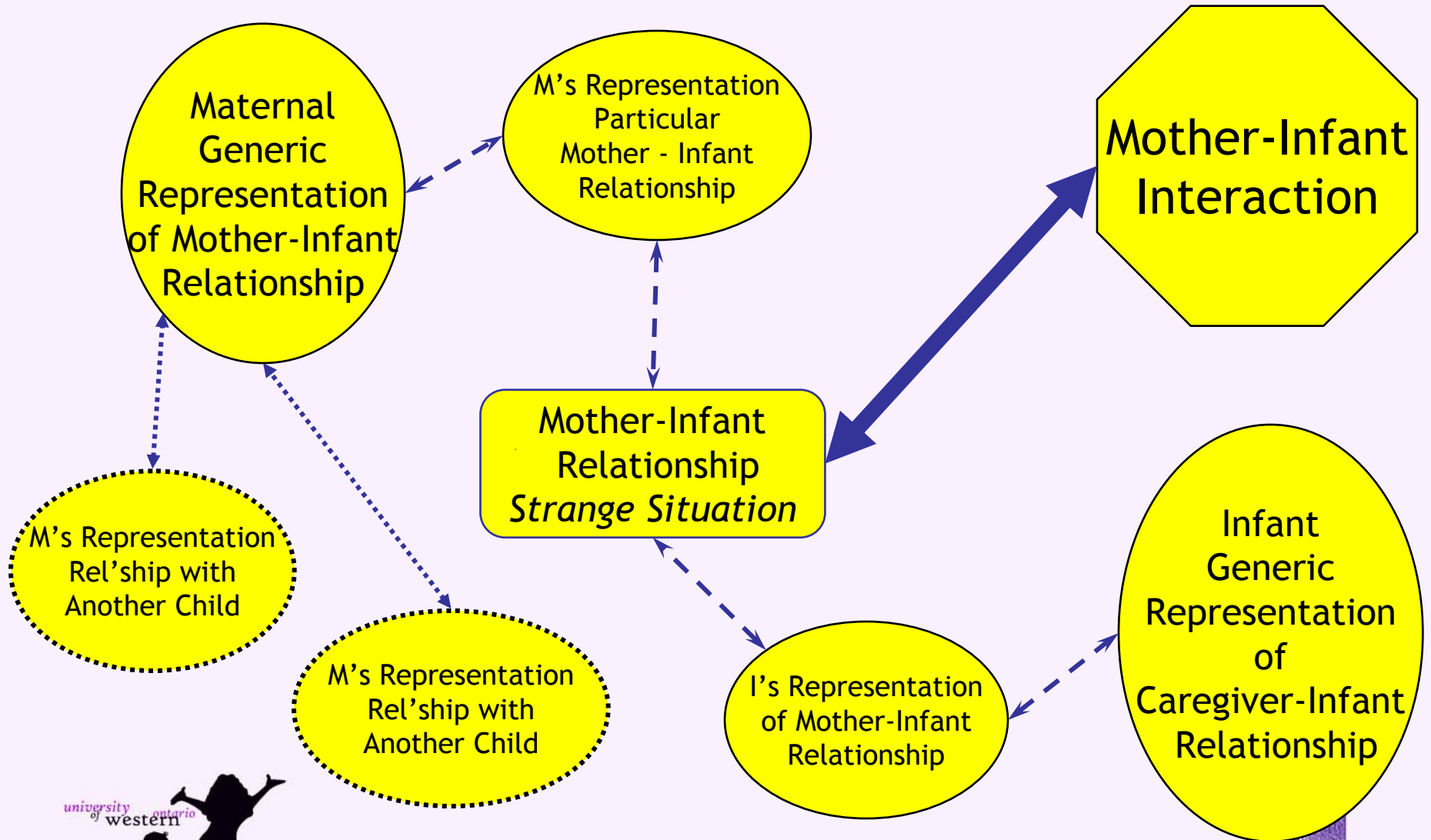


A Reconceptualization of the Developmental Path

View I



Maternal Representation



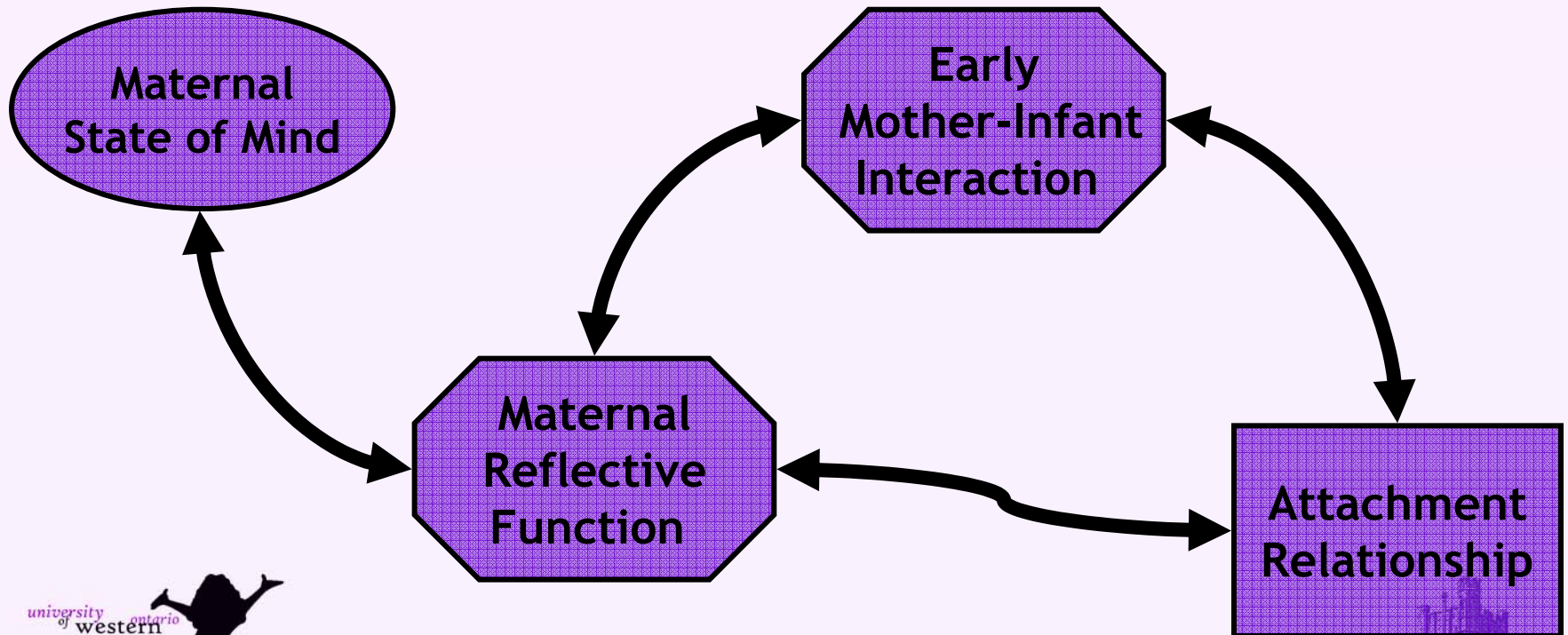
The Concept of Reflective Function

- Fonagy's introduction of the concept
 - Capacity to understand one's own and others actions in terms of mental states
 - Thus, allows for adaptive adjustment of interactive behaviour and, therefore,
 - Critical element in the process underlying the development of secure attachment relationships



Current Conceptualization of Role of Reflective Function in Transmission of Attachment

Reflective Function *mediates* impact of maternal state of mind and the attachment relationship



Research to Date on Reflective Function

- Basic Predictions
 - Reflective Function/Attachment Security
 - Fonagy et al, 1991:
 - Secure attachment associated with higher RF
 - Slade (2005)
 - Replicate FonagyRF/AAI
 - Reflective Function/AAI-State of Mind
 - Fonagy et al (1998)
 - Coherency and Autonomy associated with higher RF
 - Replicated by Slade et al (2005)



Research to Date - RF as Mediator

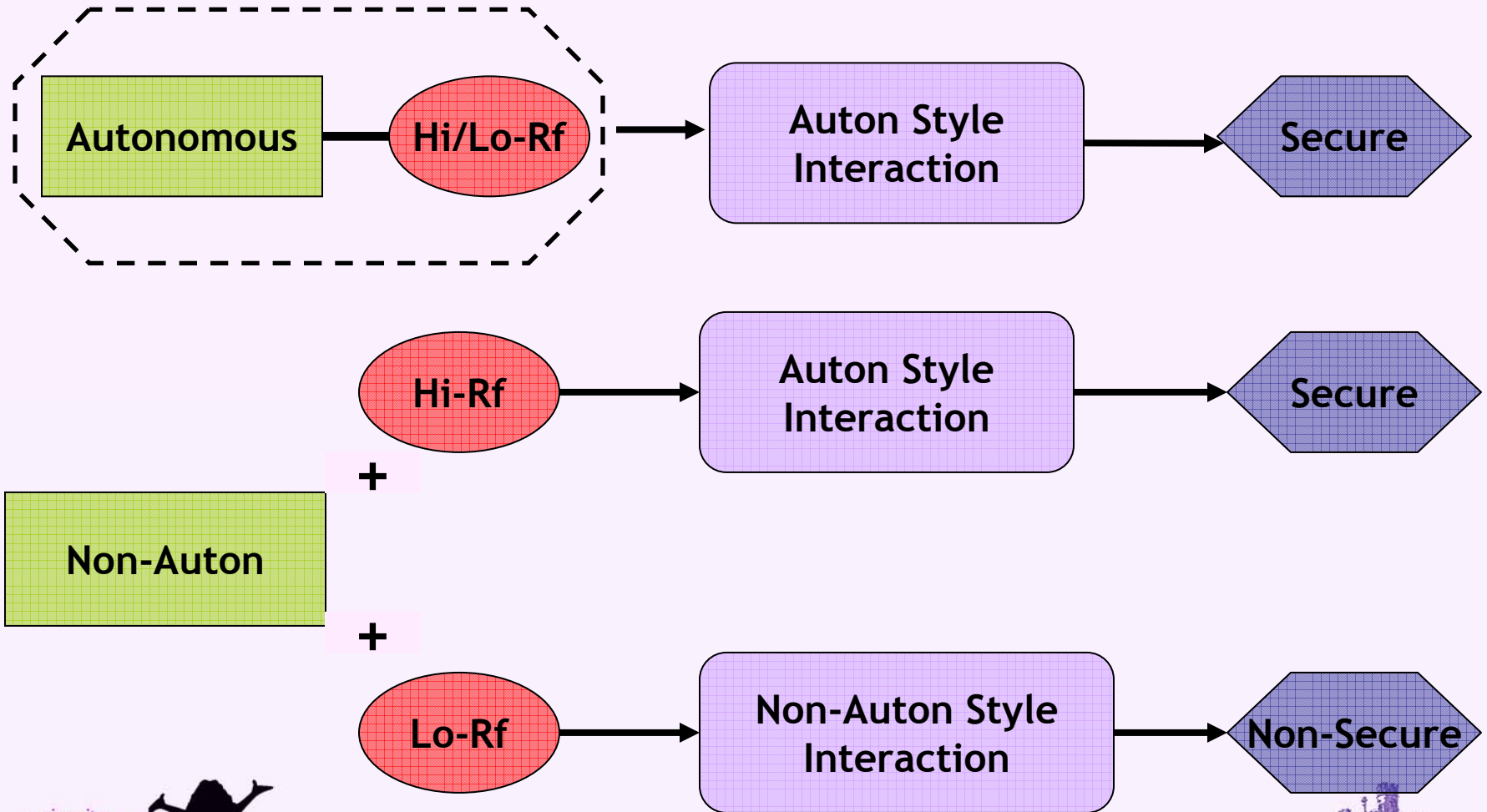
- Slade et al. (2005)
 - Statistical evidence of Reflective Function as mediator between AAI-IWM and Attachment Security is inconclusive
- But even if established, begs question of link between RF and quality of interactive behaviour - Maternal Sensitivity
 - Grienberger et al. (2005)
 - Problems
 - AMBIANCE and Security...??!!



Problems with Current Model

- What is determinant of maternal behaviour - IWM or RF?
- Are IWM and RF invariantly linked?
- IWM and RF are distinct concepts!
 - Qualitative vs quantitative influences...
- A re-conceptualization of the place of Reflective Function in the transmission of attachment - back to basics

Reformulated Model: RF as Moderator



The Current Study

- 60 mothers and infants
 - community sample avg M age - 31 yrs
 - I age - 13 mos at SSP and home visit; AAI within following 6 mos
- Strange Situation (12-14 mos)
- Mat Beh Q-Sort in home (12-14 mos)
- Adult Attachment Interview (12-18 mos)



Interactive Behaviour Domains

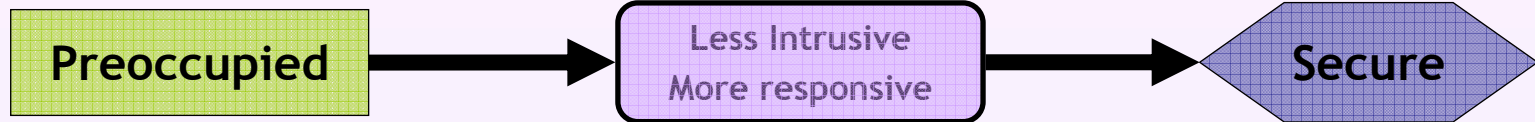
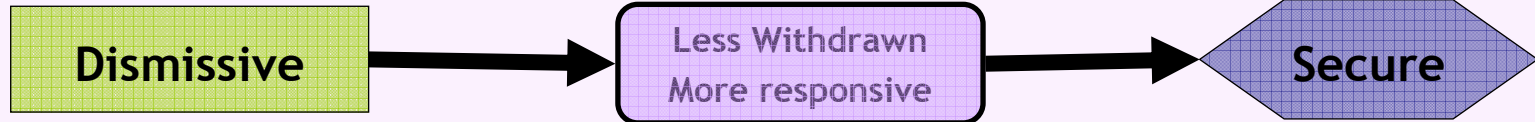
- Conceptually related to specific state of mind
- Scales based on rational selection of MBQS items
 - Autonomous → Responsive (Secure)
 - Dismissive → Withdrawn (Avoidant)
 - Preoccupied → Intrusive (Ambivalent)
- Viewed as IWM-driven pattern of interaction

Specific Predictions

RF Independent



High RF: Dyadic Shaping



Low RF: IWM Driven



Results of the Current Study

- Basic Inter-correlations
 - RF and Autonomy or coherency
 - Failure to replicate
 - RF and Attachment security or rel'ship quality
 - Failure to replicate
 - Why???



Results of Current Study

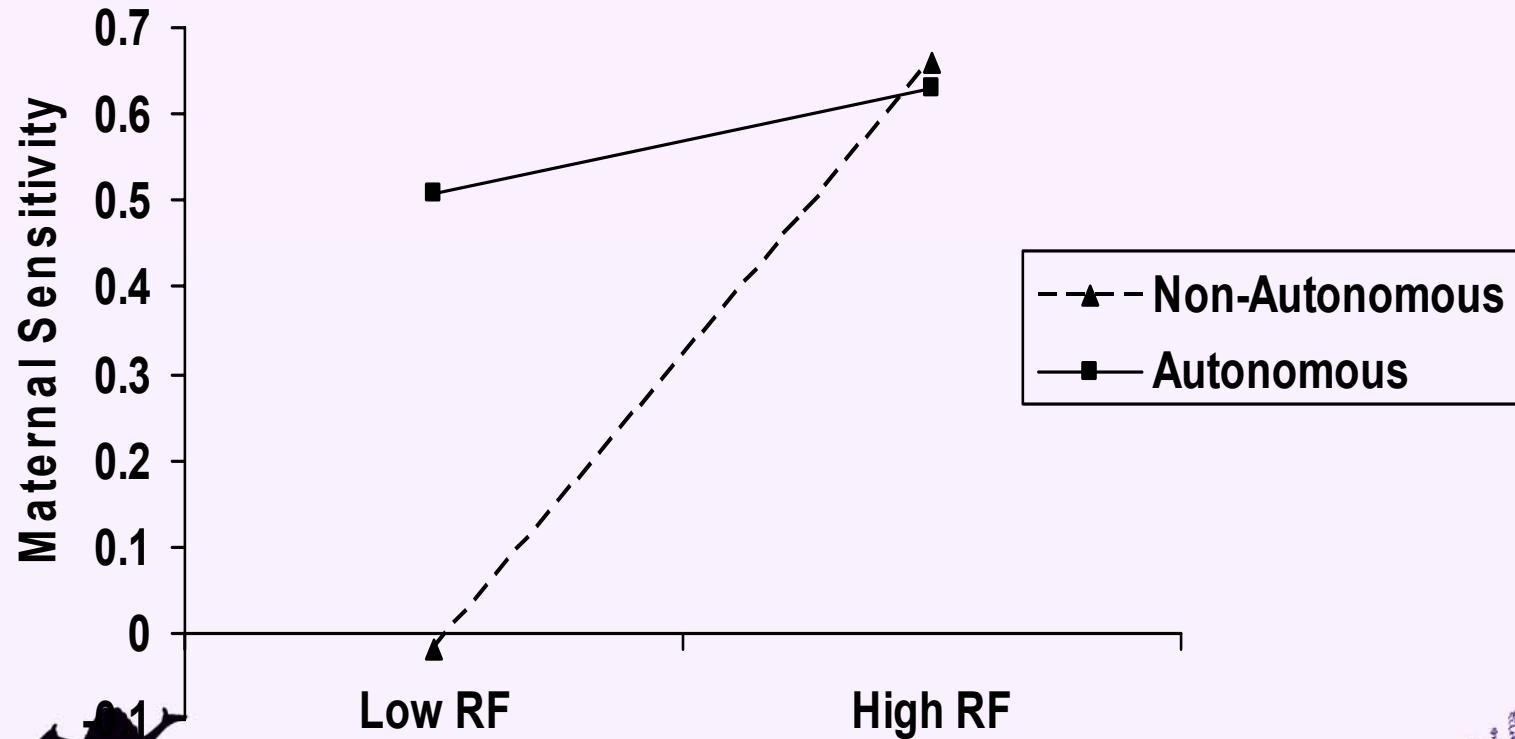
- Exploring the Moderator Model

Reflective Function and:

- 1. MBQS Sensitivity - Autonomous vs non-Autonomous
- 2. Quality of interactive behaviour (Behavioural Domains) by AAI categories and Reflective Function... and
- 3. Quality of the attachment relationship



Maternal Sensitivity and Reflective Function



Correlations Between Maternal Reflective Function and Maternal Behavioral Domains by Adult Attachment Interview Classification

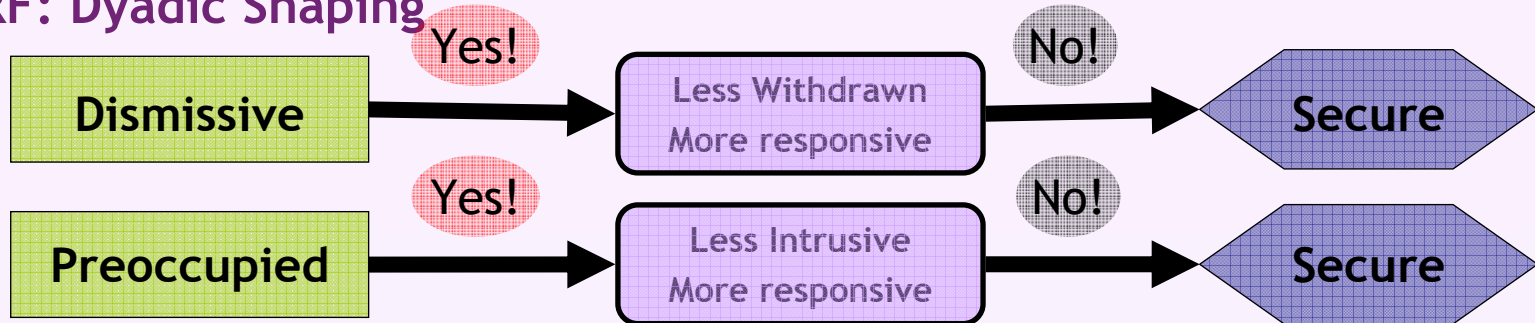
AAI Category	Maternal Behavioral Domains		
	Responsive	Withdrawn	Intrusive
Autonomous	.06	-.11	-.14
Dismissing	.49*	-.62**	-.19
Preoccupied	.72	-.73*	-.78*

Overview of Results - Moderation

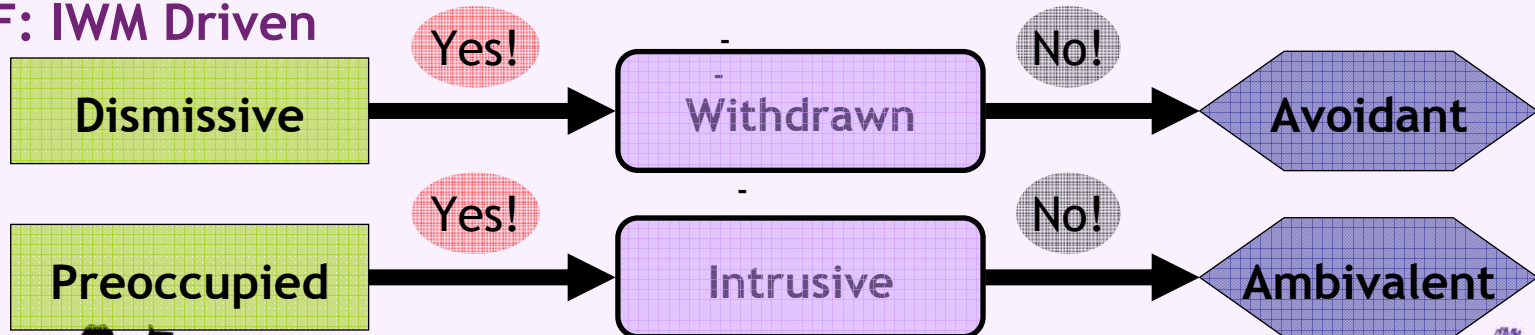
RF Independent



High RF: Dyadic Shaping



Low RF: IWM Driven



Summary

- Failure to replicate previous findings of simple associations between RF & AAI, and RF & Attach Security
 - Obviously, then, no evidence that RF is a mediator between IWM and Attach Sec
- BUT found strong evidence of RF as moderating impact on IWM as it affects maternal behaviour
 - Especially impressive given that interactive behaviour measured in the home with a totally different instrument

Discussion Points

- Failure to replicate
 - Sample variation - really only 2 other samples studied, or....
 - Coding confound - AAI-trained or sophisticated coders
 - Coding to implicit knowledge of AAI coherence and autonomy....
 - Unusually hi correlations (.73) and could substitute RF for AAI in any results....
- Strong evidence of a model in which RF moderates impact of IWM on maternal behaviour
 - Conceptually coherent and consistent with basic concept of RF and extant attachment theory

Supplementary Slides



Level of Representation

Figure 6

