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**ATTACHMENT REPRESENTATIONS AND PARENTING:
THE ASSESSMENT OF COGNITIVE COMPLEXITY AND
EMOTIONAL SECURITY WITH THE ADULT
ATTACHMENT INTERVIEW**

**A thesis presented in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Education (Human Development)
at Massey University**

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the relationship between parent characteristics assessed before the birth of their baby and their Adult Attachment Interview (AAI: George, Kaplan & Main, 1985) classification to investigate the role of cognitive development as a key indicator of attachment classification. Data from the Washington University Sentence Completion Test (Loevinger, 1976), Reflective Functioning Scale (Fonagy, Steele, M., Steele, H., Moran & Higgitt, 1991) and Conceptual/Integrative Complexity (Baker-Brown et al., 1992) are examined in relation to adult attachment classification of Secure/Autonomous and the construct of Coherence of Transcript. Other self-report instruments are used to add further information to the examination of constructs underpinning the coding of the AAI. It was found that autonomy requires a necessary level of cognitive development but cognitive development is not sufficient for coherence or attachment representation as secure. Distinguishing between autonomy and security needs in new parents may assist community practitioners provide better focussed support for the parents themselves and for their children.

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