The Construct of Rules in Middle Childhood: How Rules are Negotiated and the Process of Leeway.

by

Jane Robson

A Thesis

presented to

The University of Guelph

In partial fulfilment of requirements

for the degree of

Master of Science

in

Family Relations and Applied Nutrition

Guelph, Ontario, Canada

© Jane Robson, September, 2012
ABSTRACT

THE CONSTRUCT OF RULES IN MIDDLE CHILDHOOD: HOW RULES ARE NEGOTIATED IN PARENT-CHILD INTERACTIONS AND THE PROCESS OF LEEWAY.

Jane Robson

University of Guelph, 2012

Advisor: Dr. Leon Kuczynski

This thesis is an investigation of rules which are historically conceptualized as static and unidirectional constructs strictly enforced by parents. This behavioural perspective is focused on parents as active agents and children immediately obey parental requests (Patterson, 1982). In contrast, a developmental perspective was used in this study in which rules are flexible and coconstructed by parents and children (Parkin & Kuczynski, 2012). Forty families participated in open-ended interviews; each family had one child between the ages of eight and thirteen. A thematic analysis was conducted and results suggested that rules were constructed by a bidirectional process in which parents and children were active agents. Parents most commonly perceived the rules to be flexible, coregulated and inherent - few parents described firm and explicit rules. Rules were developed by negotiation, based on the child's development and by accommodating external influences. Leeway was an inherent, expected component of parent-child interactions.
Acknowledgments

I would first like to thank my advisor Dr. Leon Kuczynski for his mentorship and support. Dr. Kuczynski’s patience, guidance and commitment were instrumental in ensuring I made the most of my Masters experience. His foundation of support was comforting during the challenging stages of my degree and I am truly thankful for all that he has done for me.

I would also like to thank my committee member Dr. Andrea Breen. Dr. Breen was readily available, providing valuable insight and feedback regarding my thesis. Her positive attitude and contributions were greatly appreciated.

Lastly I would like to thank my Mom, Dad, sister and partner, who supported me during this process. I was very thankful for their patience in my times of frustration. Their interest in my project kept me going and for that I am forever grateful.
Table of Contents

Introduction .............................................................................................................................. 1
    Behavioural Perspective ................................................................................................. 3
    Developmental Perspective ............................................................................................ 4
    Development in Middle Childhood ................................................................................ 5
    Parenting in Middle Childhood ...................................................................................... 7
    Leeway .............................................................................................................................. 9
    Social Domain Theory .................................................................................................. 11
    Social Relational Theory ............................................................................................... 12
Method .................................................................................................................................. 14
    Recruitment .................................................................................................................... 15
    Procedure ....................................................................................................................... 15
    Measures ........................................................................................................................ 16
    Data Analysis ................................................................................................................ 17
Results .................................................................................................................................. 19
Parents’ Implicit Conceptions of Rules ............................................................................ 20
    Flexible ............................................................................................................................ 21
    Coregulation .................................................................................................................... 25
    Inherent Rules ................................................................................................................ 28
    Firm and Explicit Rules ................................................................................................. 29
Parents’ Implicit Conceptions of the Development of Rules ........................................... 29
    Negotiated in Interaction ............................................................................................... 31
    Based on Child’s Development ..................................................................................... 32
    Accommodating External Influences ........................................................................... 33
Discussion ........................................................................................................................... 36
Parents’ Implicit Conceptions of Rules ............................................................................ 36
Parents’ Implicit Conceptions of the Development of Rules ........................................... 41
Leeway .................................................................................................................................. 44
Application of Results ....................................................................................................... 45
Study Limitations ............................................................................................................... 46
Future Directions ................................................................................................................ 47
Conclusion ............................................................................................................................ 48
Appendix A .......................................................................................................................... 55
Appendix B ................................................................................................................................. 56
Appendix C .................................................................................................................................. 58
Appendix D .................................................................................................................................. 60
Appendix E .................................................................................................................................. 62
List of Tables

Table 1. Parents’ Implicit Conceptions of Rules: Frequencies and Proportions........................21
Table 2. Parents’ Implicit Conceptions of Rule Development: Frequencies and Proportions.....30
Introduction

During middle childhood parents are assumed to use rules as a means to provide guidance to their children (Forehand & McMahon, 2003). Parents use a variety of strategies to teach and enforce compliance to rules, such as modelling behaviours, reasoning and parental monitoring (Hastings & Grusec, 1998; Kerr & Stattin, 2000; Reid, Patterson & Snyder, 2002). The parent’s strategy selection is dependent on parental beliefs regarding what will enable the child to function to their full capacity in a social world. For example, parents in different social groups may selectively enforce particular expectations that are prioritized based on the context (Maccoby, 1984). These complex decisions and selections are reflected in a process of socialization which Maccoby and Martin (1983) described as the ways in which child’s development and adult character is impacted in interactions.

Although historically rules were assumed to be an important aspect of parental control and guidance (Patterson, 1982) there is limited empirical research on rules as a phenomenon. Researchers continue to approach rules with a common sense understanding, focusing on parental demands, with little attention to formalizing this concept. For the purpose of this study rules were examined as a construct in order to empirically capture the reality of rules in parent-child interactions.

The construct of rules in middle childhood has typically been conceptualized from a unidirectional perspective. Conformity to the rules is described as the transmission of ideas, roles and values by the parent to the child (Kuczynski & Parkin, 2007). The parent was conceptualized as an active agent in interactions and the child was conceptualized as a passive recipient. This implies a direct influence of parent to child, in which the child immediately obeys a parental request. In a unidirectional approach the parent’s role is to develop, enforce and maintain rules.
The child’s role is to immediately, completely and without complaint abide by parental rules (Forehand & McMahon, 2003).

The behavioural approach to parent training is an example of a unidirectional perspective on rules. Compliance is defined in behavioural literature as the child without question, following a specific instruction within the designated time allotted by the parent (Schoen, 1983). In the behavioural approach to rules there is no consideration of situation specific negotiation strategies or how the parent-child relationship shapes interactions. Forehand and McMahon (2003) have suggested that compliance from the child should be immediate in parent-child interactions. In the case that the child does not respond to their parent with immediate compliance, this is considered aversive and deviant behaviour. This unidirectional, behavioural approach has been challenged by developmental research which emphasizes both the parent and the child as active contributors to socialization (Grusec, 1997).

Developmental psychologists have argued that parent-child interactions include the processes of constructing, issuing and responding to rules. These interactions are complex and flexible, with both the parent and the child contributing as active agents (Leonard, 1993; Parkin, 2009). In developmental research the child is acknowledged to have the capacity to actively make a decision to accept or reject particular rules suggested by the parent. This contrasts with behavioural models in which the rejection of a parental rule is considered deviant (Forehand & McMahon, 2003).

The purpose of this study was to explore the construct of rules from a developmental perspective. The data consisted of the narratives of parents with children in middle childhood. These narratives were analysed to comprehend parents’ perceptions of their own, and their child’s perceptions of the construct of rules. This study was informed by Goodnow’s (1997) conceptions of leeway and the application of these conceptions to the construct of rules.
Goodnow (1997) described leeway as the amount of flexibility in rules, the degree to which flexibility accompanies parents’ values, and the ways in which children comprehend that flexibility. The study was also informed by social relational theory (Kuczynski & Parkin, 2007) and social domain theory (Smetana, 1997). These theories were used as frameworks to consider the variations of flexibility within the construct of rules.

In the following literature review I have outlined parents’ existing conceptions of rules, flexibility in rules, rule development and negotiation as well as the process of creating leeway. The first section provides an overview of the behavioural and developmental perspectives on rules. Developmental changes in children and the resulting changes in parents and the parent-child relationship will be outlined in the second section. The third section consists of an overview of parenting in middle childhood, outlining various goals which impact parents compliance strategies. The process of leeway and different conceptualizations of leeway will be explored as sensitizing concepts for the study of rules. Lastly this study is informed by social domain theory (Smetana, 1997) and social relational theory (Kuczynski, Pitman & Mitchell, 2009). These theories provided frameworks for considering how context and parent-child relationships influenced rules.

**Behavioural Perspective**

Behavioural researchers conceptualize rules as a rigid command by parents and passive compliance from children; the child is to strictly abide by rules enforced by parents. The parent is advised to use techniques such as discipline and reinforcement to ensure their child carries out certain behaviours and avoids others (Forehand & McMahon, 2003).

There are various types of deterministic behavioural parenting frameworks that emphasize firm and explicit rules. For example, Baumrind’s classification of parenting styles revolves around different levels of firmness and control enforced by parents (Baumrind, 1989).
Most recently Baumrind (2012) argued that different forms of parental power assertion result in different effects on the child’s well-being. Baumrind suggested confrontive power as the most appropriate form of power assertion, which is operationally defined as the parent “confronts when child obeys, cannot be coerced by child, successfully exerts force or influence, enforces after initial noncompliance, exercises power unambivalently, uses negative sanctions freely, and discourages free stance” (Baumrind, 2012, p. 38). This definition highlights the parents as an active agent that enforces discipline with little consideration of the child’s influence.

Forehand and McMahon suggested “Standing rules” in behavioural parenting models to prohibit unwanted child behaviour or activities. A standing rule is described as a clear statement in which a parent states the unwanted behaviour, followed by the consequence for breaking the rule associated with that behaviour. A standing rule remains in effect permanently and consequences are implemented immediately (Forehand & McMahon, 2003). Standing rules must be implemented consistently for continued success in training the child.

The behavioural perspective adheres to a strict dichotomy of compliance and noncompliance and does not consider agentic responses by the child (Parkin & Kuczynski, 2012). If the child does not respond immediately, completely and without complaint to the parental rule this is deemed unsuccessful parenting or noncompliance.

**Developmental Perspective**

In contrast, several developmental researchers argue that the flexible nature of rules and the influence of the context of parent-child interactions. In contrast to the behavioural approach, developmental perspectives include ongoing transactions and contributions by both the parent and the child that affect how rules are understood and enforced.

Developmental researchers have suggested that rules are best considered as flexible expectations which are tailored based on the situation and the parent-child relationship (Grusec
& Goodnow, 1994; Grusec & Kuczynski, 1980; Maccoby, 1984). Although various researchers have examined rules, there is currently only one study which provided empirical evidence specifically focused on the nature of rules (Parkin & Kuczynski, 2012). The focus of this study was parent-adolescent interactions and the results suggested that adolescents perceived that parental expectations were flexible and coconstructed by parents and adolescents.

The coconstruction of rules is considered a bidirectional process, which highlights influence as flowing from parent to child and child to parent. Bidirectionality is a major assumption of many developmental perspectives. As stated by Kuczynski, Martin and Schell (1997) socialization within a bidirectional perspective is considered to be an ongoing process which involves dyadic transactions with parents and children, taking into consideration their surrounding environment. These transactions accentuate the importance of the child being considered as an active agent within socialization.

**Development in Middle Childhood**

Middle childhood is a distinctive period in childhood from 8-13 years in which numerous transitions and developmental changes occur. Maccoby (1984) suggested new issues emerge in middle childhood due to advances in the child’s cognitive capacity. These advances have resulting implications for the parent-child relationship and often lead to increased negotiation regarding chores, household tasks, personal entertainment and relationships with peers (Maccoby, 1984).

In middle childhood children are apt to demonstrate competencies and behaviours which differ from past periods in their lives (Collins, 1984). Children draw on knowledge and skills that previously were not accessible due to a lack of cognitive ability and experience. In middle childhood children begin to develop a self concept and are capable of viewing themselves from an outside perspective. The child’s ability to define themselves based on appearance, possessions
and activities is an ability that younger children typically lack (Maccoby 1984). The development of a self concept influences how the child views their participation in parent-child interactions, and their motivations for negotiating rules when responding to parental demands. Another example of a newly honed skill in middle childhood is the child’s ability to control impulsivity. This is demonstrated by a decrease in the frequency of the child’s angry outbursts and an increase in the child’s understanding and acceptance of delays (Maccoby, 1984). The development of these skills enables the child to use more complex strategies, such as reasoning, in parent-child interactions. The child’s ability to apply these skills is based on further intellectual developments and cognitive processes which are enhanced with age (Collins, 1984).

In middle childhood the child also develops the ability to manage social relationships, enabling a more active role with their peers. These increased abilities are partially due to the child being exposed to various social settings within middle childhood but also stem from skills learned in new interactions with peers and individuals other than family (Collins, 1984). Researchers suggested that until middle childhood, parents were primarily responsible for responding to children’s violations of rules (Nucci & Turiel, 1978). In middle childhood children develop the ability to recognize when another child is not following the rules. As children continue to participate in these social experiences their understanding of transgressions and appropriate social behaviours is enhanced (Smetana, 1997). Children gain the ability to apply these concepts more abstractly and symbolically in interactions with their parents.

Maccoby (1984), Collins’ (1984) and Smetana’s (1997) descriptions of development in middle childhood have implications for the construct of rules. As the child gains the ability to become more independent, intellectually and cognitively, they gain a better understanding of how parents implement rules and respond to children’s violations. This understanding allows the child to be more strategic in their negotiations with their parents. Children also learn from social
experiences with their peers, developing new social behaviours and cues that may differ from past behaviours learned from their parents.

**Parenting in Middle Childhood**

The effectiveness of parenting throughout middle childhood is based on the clarity with which parent’s express their expectations and reprimands (Collins, Madsen & Susman-Stillman, 2002; Grusec & Goodnow, 1994). There is a shift in children’s conceptions regarding authority and the basis for parents’ rights to exercise authority. This shift is described as the coordination of attributes or particular child characteristics with specific situational factors; authority becomes context dependant and negotiable by the child (Damon, 1977). The child becomes more independent in situations in which they were previously dependant on their parent.

In light of developmental changes in middle childhood both parents and children are assumed to be continuously adapting variations in control strategies. For example, Kuczynski and Hildebrandt (1997) reported that children often used more direct, assertive strategies with their own mothers than with unrelated adult women. It has also been suggested that children aged six to twelve were already strategically manipulating parental rules and expectations (Maccoby, 1984). These studies provided evidence to suggest that children have the capacity to influence parent-child interactions by using different control strategies.

The mutual influence in parent-child relationships has been described by Maccoby (1984) as coregulation. Coregulation was a term used by Maccoby (1984) to describe a cooperative process that is comprised of a shared responsibility between the parent and the child. Coregulation occurs as early as infancy but as children age their capacity to actively participate increases (Maccoby & Martin, 1983). In middle childhood there is a shift in the coregulated system as the child takes on a more active role in the parent-child dyad by exercising self-regulation (Maccoby, 1984).
Previous relationship patterns may influence coregulation and how individuals participate in this cooperative process. Parents and children accumulate a history of interactions in their relationship which leads to specific expectations regarding future interactions (Lollis & Kuczynski, 1997). Based on historical patterns in the relationship, parents and children may select or implement different negotiation strategies such as reasoning or persuasion.

**Parenting goals.** Socialization and negotiation within parent-child interactions can be considered goal-oriented processes. Parents and children may use specific strategies in different contexts in order to achieve specific goal oriented outcomes. Dix (1992) suggested that when responding to children parents’ choose from three sorts of goals: self-oriented goals which revolve around short term compliance, child-oriented goals which revolve around meeting the child’s needs and socialization goals which contribute to the child’s learning and favourable development.

Dix (1992) described self-oriented goal as goals promoted by parents in order to benefit themselves. These goals are used by parents for short term compliance and to provide relief in a parent’s everyday life. An example of a self-oriented goal is a parent putting their child to bed early so the parents can have time for themselves.

Child oriented goals are used to achieve the outcome the child wants and are also considered emphatic goals because one of the purposes of these goals is to comfort the child. Lastly Dix described socialization goals. These goals differ from child-oriented because they are not necessarily put into place to please the child. Socialization goals contribute to the child’s learning and or developmental expectations of the parent. An example is sharing or acting politely. Socialization goals are intended to fundamentally enhance the child’s long term capabilities.
Hastings and Grusec (1998) added relationship goals to this model as a fourth goal that may be activated, especially when a child does not comply. Relationship goals are evident when a parent is attempting to solve a problem equitably in order to ensure mutual happiness for themselves and the child. Relationship goals are also evident when a parent is trying to build close connections or promote love and trust within the parent-child relationship.

Kuczynski (1984) considered goals as determinants of a parent’s choice of discipline technique. Kuczynski suggested different compliance strategies were used depending on whether the parent was striving for short or long term compliance. Short term compliance was defined as immediate compliance with a request, without considering any long term implications aside from that interaction. Short term compliance was based on the situation and focused on the immediate anticipated outcome. Long term compliance was defined as compliance which persisted beyond the immediate situation or interaction between the parent and child, examples included ensuring safety or promoting moral values. This type of compliance was maintained when the parent was not present or in future interactions. Long term compliance encompassed more generalized forms of compliance in which the parent strived to have the child internalize long term rules (Kuczynski, 1984).

These different conceptions of goals are useful when considering how parents may respond with flexibility when implementing rules and responding to children’s noncompliance to rules and requests and rules; parents may implement compliance strategies differently based on the desired outcome or goal.

**Leeway**

Goodnow (1997) described leeway as the amount of flexibility in rules, the degree to which this flexibility accompanies parents’ values, and the ways in which children comprehend
that flexibility. The phenomenon of leeway is an underlying process in parent-child interactions and is argued by Goodnow appears to be an inherent component of rule negotiations.

Goodnow (1997) proposed three forms of leeway – leeway with regards to implicit time limits, the presence of leeway with regard to time and leeway based on parental values. Goodnow referred to Nucci (1995) who suggested children are often encouraged by parents to make their own decisions, yet these decisions are implicitly guided by their parents. Parents structured the decision for the child but occasionally no decision was made by the child within a period of time viewed as sufficient. Once this time had elapsed the child’s choices were made less open with parents proposing specific alternatives and promoting specific choices. Leeway was evident in the time frame provided by the parent, as they granted the child the opportunity to make a decision.

Goodnow (1997) also referred to, Erikson’s (1959) concept of moratoria. Erikson proposed individuals are allowed time to explore alternative values or to delay taking up expected positions. For example, a parent may allow for a longer time period if the child is in distress or during extenuating circumstances. In the context of rules, the parent is negotiating the time frame within which the rule is abided by, rather than negotiating the ultimate adoption of the rule.

Leeway can also be considered in regards to the degree to which a parent values particular skills in day-to-day life (D’Andrade, 1984). Societal norms define which skills are regarded as essential or trivial to parents and these labels vary based on contextual considerations such as socioeconomic status. As children grow older parents may come to expect agreement on the “big things” – on the perception of the child as respectful, for example – with differences about the “little things” - on the completion of household chores, for example - expected to count for far less. The child is more inclined to develop these essential skills and less inclined to
develop trivial skills. This notion is similar to acceptable ignorance, in which certain skills are treated as options rather than essential (Goodnow, 1996).

The term value stretch has been suggested by Rodman (1963) in the literature as the readjustment of values, which can be considered as a form of leeway (Goodnow, 1997). Rodman proposed that individuals are faced with various life experiences that cause them to gradually loosen their expectations. Rodman’s research on gangs suggested that individuals living in low-income may have an alternative set of values due to their socioeconomic status. Rodman suggested that middle class values may be difficult to sustain and can lead to frustration for individuals living in low income. Therefore in adjusting or stretching their values individuals living in low income may be in a “better position to adapt circumstances” (Rodman, 1963, p. 214). Individuals who were categorized as middle income moved more quickly to corrective action (their values stretch less) whereas individuals living in low income moved more slowly (their values stretch more). Goodnow (1997) applied this notion to families more generally, and suggested that parents begin with certain expectations of their child, and as time goes on parents values stretch as they come to realize their original expectations may have been overly ambitious. The adjustment of these values reflects granted flexibility or leeway.

**Social Domain Theory**

Social domain theory allows for the consideration of contextual influences on rules. Smetana (1997) suggested children and parents perceived behaviour differently depending on the following domains: morality, social conventions and two key components of the psychological domain which are personal and prudential. Smetana categorizes these different domains of social knowledge in order to characterize actions in the social world. This theory is guided by the Smetana’s argument that moral development processes entail the construction of social knowledge (Smetana, 1997).
The moral domain consists of personal welfare, justice, trust and the rights of an individual. Morality is based on how parents and or children comprehend their role in society and the assumptions behind how individuals ought to behave towards each other (Smetana, 1997). The social conventional domain pertains to the maintenance of proper social behaviours. Smetana (1997) suggested parents facilitate their child’s social interactions in order to ensure they occur without contention. Social conventions are hypothesized to be rules that are consensually, socially comprehended and pertain to a specific set of established social behaviours. Conventions are contextually relevant and contingent on the authority figure’s perception of rules (Smetana, 1999).

Lastly are the psychological domains of personal and prudential issues. The psychological domain pertains more broadly to an understanding of identity, personality and self. Personal issues are defined as relevant to the individual. These issues include personal choices and preferences, for example privacy, selection of friends, activities, or the state of one’s body (Nucci, 1996). Personal issues form parameters and boundaries between an individual and the social world, allowing an individual to gain a sense of autonomy or independence. These boundaries can be negotiated or manipulated within families (Smetana, 1999). Prudential issues pertain to the regulation of acts that may impact individuals physical well being. These issues have immediate conceivable negative consequences to the self (Smetana, 1997).

These domains provide the context for conceptualizing how rules may differ based on the parent’s perceptions of social knowledge. This theory provides a method of considering parent-child interactions, by focusing on what types of acts generate parental responses and how parental actions are flexible based on those acts (Smetana, 1997).

**Social Relational Theory**
Social relational theory provides insight into the importance of the context of the parent-child relationship and how this influences the construct of rules. Based on previous expectancies and past successes/failures with rules parents are able to tailor rules specifically to the needs of their child. This theory encompasses a bidirectional framework which emphasizes the dynamics of parent-child interactions and socialization (Kuczynski & Parkin, 2007). These dynamics can be considered fundamentally different from other relationships due to the intimacy, intensity, long history and anticipated future associated with such close relationships (Hinde, 1979; Laursen & Collins, 1994). Kuczynski, Pitman and Mitchell (2009) suggested that social relational theory allows researchers to consider parents and children as equal agents with inherent capacities for initiating action, interpreting their environments, and resisting threats to autonomy.

Social relational theory allows for the consideration and interpretation of processes in the parent-child relationship, rather than deeming flexibility in parent-child interactions as deviant. Negotiation can be considered an accepted part of parent-child interactions which balances issues of autonomy and control between the two parties (Eisenberg, 1992; Kuczynski, 2003). Social relational theory highlights the importance of parent-child relationships, and that processes related to the rules need to be considered based on the context of the relationship.

The aforementioned research is instrumental in comprehending the processes of rule generation and leeway within middle childhood. The social domain and social relational theories, the contrast between behavioural and developmental perspectives on the nature of rules, and processes involved with child development provided me with a “general sense of reference and guidance in approaching empirical instances,” (Blumer, 1954, p.7). The most critical component of social domain theory and social relational theory is the overarching focus on flexibility, which
emerges in different contextual and relational considerations. The different considerations of flexibility suggest a complexity in the nature of rules that is lacking in linear behavioural models.

In the proposed study I explored the construct of rules from the perspective of parents, examining parental conceptions of the role of rules in the socialization of children. Leeway was a sensitizing concept for this study. This study was loosely guided by the following research questions:

1) What are parents’ implicit conceptions of rules?

In the literature review two perspectives were presented regarding the nature of rules, the behavioural perspective which focuses on rigid and firm parenting and developmental perspectives which focus on flexibility, relational and contextual factors. This study explored parental conceptions of rules to determine which perspective applied to the ways parents conceived rules within parent-child interactions.

2) How do rules develop within parent-child interactions?

As indicated within the literature review there are numerous new issues that emerge during middle childhood that have implications for how parents adapt their rules and expectations and therefore numerous changes occurring within the parent-child relationship. The goal was to examine the process of rule development in parent-child interactions, and capture the impact of developmental changes on rules.

**Method**

The data were collected as part of the Socialization in Middle childhood (SIMC) study, Dr. Leon Kuczynski, principal investigator. The purpose of the larger study was to explore socialization in parent-child relationships which included the nature of rules, children’s resistance, parental practices, parental knowledge and parent-child intimacy from both a parent
and child’s perspective. There were 40 English speaking families who participated in this study, who were all living in a small southern Ontario city. These families consisted of at least one parent and child between the ages of eight and thirteen. All fathers participating in the study were employed full time, and the mother’s were predominantly employed. The majority of these parents (98%) had completed college or university.

There were a total of 40 children, 22 of these individuals were females and 19 were males. The breakdown of age and sex is as follows: 21 children aged 8 to 11 (12 females and 9 males), and 20 children aged 12 to 13 (10 females and 10 males).

**Recruitment**

There were 24 families recruited from a database of families who had been contacted based on birth announcements in a small southern city in Ontario, eight families recruited from local elementary schools, five families were acquaintances of the research team, two families were referred by another participant, and one family responded to an advertisement for the study.

**Procedure**

In the SIMC study as a whole each family participated in seven types of interviews; five were semi-structured interviews (i.e. family interview, family game, beginning child interview, child ending interview, parent ending interview) and carried out by the researchers either in the family home or at a designated laboratory at the University of Guelph. The other two interviews were completed individually by the participants (parent daily reporting, child daily reporting) in their homes. All participants received the same interview questions regarding parents’ and children’s experiences of family life in relation to rules, resistance, conflict, parental knowledge and parent-child intimacy.

Each family underwent training to prepare them for the daily reporting. The training took approximately 15-20 minutes and the researcher discussed and explained each of the areas of
questions. Examples were provided for each area of questions. Parents were free to ask questions and seek clarification when necessary.

In this study on the construct of rules I used the data collected from the larger SIMC study. Specifically, data from the parent ending interview and the parent daily report were used. I focused entirely on the parents’ perceptions of themselves, their perceptions of their children and reasoning about their interactions with children. Rules, resistance and conflict were the topic areas that were used in this analysis.

**Measures**

**Parenting ending interview.** The parent ending interview was developed to obtain in-depth information about the socialization challenges that parents face. This interview was semi-structured and probed four general areas: 1) rules and expectations, 2) resistance to requests and disagreements, 3) experience of closeness, and 4) behaviour away from home, at school, or with peers. Two broad questions were asked in relation to each of the four areas: how things have changed since the child was younger, and what are the current concerns and struggles associated with parenting during middle childhood. Additional questions were asked to probe parents’ thinking about their parenting and the importance of the parent-child relationship. The first two areas (rules and expectations, and resistance to requests and disagreements) provided a follow-up on the aspects of family life which were discussed and tracked. The questions on experiences of closeness were included to provide information on how parents manage the more personal component of the relationship. Questions about behaviour away from home elicited parents’ thoughts on managing children’s developing autonomy and independence.

**Parent daily recordings (PDR).** Parents completed recordings consecutively for five days. Each day parents answered the same questions about 1) out of home instructions (given to child before they leave the house), 2) reminders of standing rules (responsibilities and rules to
follow), 3), knowledge of child (thoughts, feelings, activities), 4) enjoyable interactions, 5) disagreements (differences of opinions), 6) cooperation with parental requests, 7) non-cooperation with parental requests, and 8) reflection on the day (what was tough, and what was great). Each section of the PDR consisted of sub-questions, probes, and potential examples.

**Data Analysis**

A qualitative methodology was used in this study to enable description, identification and comprehension of the construct of rules. The qualitative software program MAXQDA was used to assist in the analysis of data and to memo emerging ideas and decisions throughout the coding process. The data was analyzed by identifying themes and subthemes from the parents’ narratives.

**Thematic Analysis**

Thematic analysis was the method used in this study to interpret the different aspects of the data. Braun and Clarke’s (2006) thematic analysis framework was followed. I first became familiar with the data by repeated readings, actively searching for preliminary meanings and patterns. Once familiar with the data I systematically generated initial codes based on the most basic elements assessed to be meaningful to the construct of rules. These initial codes helped organize the data into meaningful groups.

The initial codes allowed for the classification of more specific ideas which comprised themes and subthemes. These themes were reviewed and refined to ensure there were clear and identifiable dimensions between them. I considered the individual themes in relation to the data set, but also in relation to the accurate representation of the construct. The goal was to ensure that the individual themes represented the construct as a whole, representing both a theoretical and analytical approach. Certain themes were collapsed or discarded based on the clarity of their meaning. For example, two of the original themes were “doesn’t have many rules” and “rules
were developed on an as needed basis”. When reviewing these themes it was evident that they were representing variations of similar ideas and did not cohere to the data meaningfully. Consequently these ideas were collapsed into one theme, refining this particular code into a theme that was a better fit in the broader analysis of the narratives.

Each theme and subtheme was specifically defined. These definitions captured the essence and scope of the themes. Lastly these themes were organized into two larger categories. These categories were helpful in the organization of ideas, and the presentation/write-up of these concepts.

An interpretive induction framework was used to suggest themes and subthemes in parents’ narratives. Interpretive induction allowed me to consider two kinds of meaning: the meanings that were held and communicated by the participants and the meanings that I brought to these themes as I attempted to understand, explain and interpret the participants’ realities. I was aware of the tension between scientific and everyday language, and attempted to be transparent about my interpretations (Daly, 2007). In this framework the data was analyzed with sensitivity to existing concepts, ideas and theories but I was also open to the themes that emerged (Kuczynski & Daly, 2003). The important sensitizing concepts in this study were the behavioural notion of standing rules, Goodnow’s concept of leeway, bidirectionality and contextual and relational considerations. These ideas were sensitizing concepts but did not solely determine the themes as I was alert to ideas that were not reflected in the literature.

**Mind maps.** A mind mapping program called Inspiration was used as a visual aid in the thematic analysis. As the coding system progressed the themes were added to the mind map as a supplementary tool for analysis. The visual representation of the themes allowed for further exploration of the construct, and precision in the definitions and research questions. The mind
Maps were also useful for reflexive purposes, allowing for visual tracking of the development of themes.

**Group input.** The input of my advisor, committee and colleagues were guiding features in this analysis. I met with my advisor regularly and the purpose of these meetings was to discuss themes, definitions, literature and the construct of rules more generally. These discussions helped guide the analysis as feedback was given, and I was reoriented and grounded in the analysis. Colleagues were helpful in suggesting potential literature and identifying points of confusion for individuals who were not immersed in the data.

**Memos.** I systematically created recorded memos throughout the thematic analysis. These were a daily log of principal decisions as well as theoretical memos and comments on each analyzed segment of the narrative.

**Results**

The thematic analysis yielded two core themes: (a) parents’ implicit conceptions of rules, and (b) parents’ implicit conceptions of the development of rules. The theme *parents’ implicit conceptions of rules* was used to capture the nature of rules from a parent’s perspective. This theme included descriptions of the essence of rules, contextual influences on rules and the role of the parent and child in maintaining rules. The theme *parents’ implicit conceptions of the development of rules* was described as the underlying processes that occurred as parents implemented rules. This theme included four different subthemes – flexible, coregulated, implicit and firm and explicit. This section captured the parents’ perception of the child’s contributions to the creation of rules and how they were enforced.

Overall, the model that emerged suggested that rules were flexible, parents conceived that both parents and children implemented a variety of strategies based on the context of the
interaction. There was also a strong relational influence, parents and children modified rules based on historical interactions and invested outcomes.

Each of the following sections will include descriptions of themes and subthemes which were developed based on my interpretation of the data. Direct quotations were included to provide support for themes and subthemes. These quotations were selected based on what was most commonly described by participants. These themes were displayed in two tables which summarize the frequencies, proportions of coded segments and proportions of families for each section.

Parents’ Implicit Conceptions of Rules

The proposed model of parents’ implicit conceptions of rules suggested that rules were a multifaceted construct. There were four different ways rules were described by parents within these narratives: flexible, coregulated, inherent, and firm and explicit. Parents frequently described the important role the child played in the coconstruction of rules. This was particularly evident in the three subthemes of flexible, coregulated and inherent. These subthemes comprised 86% of codes regarding parents’ implicit conceptions of rules. The prevalence of these codes suggested that parents perceived the child to have the capacity to initiate and change rules. It was evident that parents did not conceptualize the child’s response to rules as the dichotomy of compliance and non compliance; rather there were distinct differences in parents expectations based on the context of the interaction.

These themes and subthemes are reported in Figure 1.
Figure 1. Parents’ Implicit Conceptions of Rules

Table 1 provides an overview of the subthemes.

Table 1

*Parents’ Implicit Conceptions of Rules: Frequencies and Proportions*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequencies of Coded Segments</th>
<th>Proportion of Coded Segments</th>
<th>Number of Parents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Flexible</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>29 (73%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coregulated</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>26 (65%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inherent</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>20 (50%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Firm and Explicit</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>11 (28%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Flexible.** Flexibility in rules was the most common experience from the perspective of the parent (73%). Flexibility was evident when parents described variations in their expectations based on a variety of contextual factors. Flexibility was described by parents as a strategy both
the parent and the child used to influence rules. The following parent explained that rules were flexible “life is not about black and white. There are grey areas and that is what you know, you have to be flexible. You have to be” (F32, Mother of 10 year old male). This mother suggested life did not allow for the consistent enforcement of rules; instead she used flexibility to make day-to-day decisions regarding the rules. Parents also described consciously having granted flexibility to the child as a learning strategy and an opportunity for growth. This provided the necessary dynamics for the child to actively partake in the interaction. An example of this is as follows:

That is part of growing up, you have to sort of give them that and as I said you are going to make mistakes but hopefully you will learn from them and that’s the portion that we are hopeful that we feel that our kids have the tools to deal with these types of things, not all of them because they are not at an age to have all the tools but they have age appropriate tools to deal with problems and they do come to us and that feels good (F25, Mother of 11 year old male).

There were three specific ways parents described flexibility – the adjustment of rules based on emotional state, the adjustment of rules based on the situation and the adjustment of rules based on a time frame.

Parents described the child’s emotional state as influential on rules. Many parents stated when the child was emotionally unsettled the parent allowed more flexibility because the child was distraught. It was evident parents changed their expectations in these sorts of interactions. For example, one mother explained:

I also try to take into consideration not only what his day has been or will be but also the day or two prior and the day or two after. More so the day or two after, how active or how tired is he (F22, Mother of 13 year old male).
The parents’ perception of the child’s emotional functioning impacted how much flexibility the parent granted, and parents made exceptions if the child was “tired”, “discouraged” or “busy”. The parents typically granted flexibility for rules regarding homework, dishes and chores.

Parents also described their own emotional state as impacting whether they would grant flexibility in maintaining rules. Parents described themselves as being more likely to be flexible if they were “tired”, had a “long day” or did not want “conflict”. Parents also used flexibility as a tool to avoid reprimanding or discussing rules with their children.

There were various situational factors that influenced the amount of flexibility considered when enforcing rules. Parents took into account the individuals present during the interaction as well as the physical local of the interaction. Parents were more likely to grant more flexibility in front of grandparents than in front of other siblings. This may be because parents did not want to have a disagreement in the presence of grandparents, but wanted to maintain rules in the presence of a sibling. Parents perceived that their children were aware of these influences on rules and would often take advantage of the physical location of the interaction. For example, one mother described that she allowed more flexibility when the children were in the presence of their grandparents and that the children took advantage of this allowance: “It is difficult to fault the boys when they act out. My mom has the final say in matters when we are there and the boys like that she can trump my decisions... they like being spoiled there!” (F2, Mother of 10 year old male).

Parents also described being more flexible regarding rules at events such as a birthday party, being at the pool or at a friend’s home. In these particular situations flexibility was granted as an avoidance strategy so parents did not have to confront the child or reprimand the child in front of others. For example, one mother described having refrained from reprimanding her children in front of their grandparents, “I guess tough because we were at my parents’ house and
just not wanting that arguing and stuff to happen at other people’s houses” (F28, Mother of 11 year old female).

Flexibility was also evident *based on a time frame*, with parents and children setting out a certain amount of time for the other individual to comply with the request. It was evident that the parent and the child used the time frame provided for interpretation, consideration, rejection and or acceptance of the suggested rule.

Parents explained that the child would have a certain amount of time to follow through with a rule and this varied from minutes to hours. If the child successfully followed through with the rule during the expected time frame, parents perceived the interaction as a successful and positive experience. It appeared as though parents provided a time frame as an opportunity to allow the child to exert agency in selecting when they would choose to complete the task.

Parents described children’s use of time frames as a delaying tactic. Children consistently requested “one more minute”, or stated they would accomplish the task at another time, for example “after this show”. Parents perceived the child’s use of time frames as negative and used terms such as “avoider”, “ignored the request” or “delayer”. These words had a negative connotation and parents perceived the child’s attempt to create flexibility as a non-cooperative event.

An underlying theme of this section was the apparent uneasiness in which parents described their flexible approach to rules both with regards to their lackadaisical approach to enforcing rules and also to not having many rules to report in the first place. Parents seemed to be aware they had departed from norms about how rules should be. They thought they had to justify when they did not abide by social norms of implementing rigid and firm rules. The parent’s justification emerged in three different forms: parents normalized their choices, apologized for having non-traditional rules, and expressed discomfort in non-verbal ways. For
example, one mother stated “Well it almost gets embarrassing, because we don’t….well no just that we don’t, you know, we probably don’t ask a whole lot of our kids” (F20, Mother of 13 year old male). Another mother stated, “She was trying to you know shirk her responsibilities which I am sure I did too when I was at that age” (F15, Mother of 11 year old female). This mother validated her daughter’s behavior and by making comparisons with her own behavior this mother implied there was a normal, developmental component to the child’s misbehavior.

In addition, parents displayed non-verbal expressions of discomfort, such as laughter and sighs when they described a lack of rules. These non-verbal expressions suggested that parent’s were uneasy with the idea that they were not conforming to social norms that rules should be firm and explicit.

Coregulation. Coregulation was the second most common conception of rules described by parents, making up 29% of codes in this theme. Coregulation is a term used by Maccoby (1984) to describe a cooperative process which is comprised of a shared responsibility between the parent and the child. As children reach middle childhood there is a shift in the coregulated system with the parent taking on a more supervisory role as the child exercises self-regulation (Maccoby, 1984). In this study, coregulation was evident as parents acknowledged the child’s agency and ability to influence rules. Coregulation was apparent specifically in three forms; guided options, rules developed on an as needed basis and prompted self-regulation.

Coregulation was evident when parents guided the child’s options. As suggested by Nucci (1995), parents casually provided choices for the child by proposing and promoting choices and alternatives. This allowed for the child to make the decision within the parents’ parameters. One parent explained this strategy as, “providing choices for the child so they feel like they’re making decisions in their life” (F40, Mother of 9 year old female). Although the parent was placing parameters on the child’s agency and choices, the child was still given the
opportunity to act as an agent in the interaction. The final decision was made bilaterally with both individuals cooperatively and agentically making contributions.

Parents reported that they did not have many rules and *developed rules on an as need basis*. Parents were perplexed by the notion that they did not have many or any rules, stating they were “surprised” or they had “not realized this” or “now that I think about..”. Parents also stated although there were not many rules, they thought their family still functioned very well. For example, a mother said, “I think we realized that we don’t have as many rules as we thought we did….But I also think that for us it seems to be working because we think our kids are great. We really do” (F18, Mother of 13 year old female). This was a coregulated process because parents took the lead from the child’s behavior that there was no need for rules.

Parents that did not have many rules suggested that if the situation arose, rules would be created on an as needed basis. Parents stressed the importance of assessing rules on an individual level depending on the context and the individuals involved in the interaction. In these descriptions it was evident that parents considered rules to be dynamic. Having inflexible rules was too constrained and did not allow for situational considerations. This was described by one parent as follows:

I never really considered the rules as being very important {Laughter}. So I never really thought oh that’s a lot of rules, I shouldn’t really tell her all these rules. And even now, um I guess we still continue on. When we see the need for a rule to come up we set it up (F18, Mother of 11 year old female).

Parents *prompted children’s self-regulation* by providing reminders to follow through with rules. Parents reminded children on a daily basis of rules such as “brushing teeth”, “cleaning room”, and “washing up”. Parents described their “confusion”, “disappointment” or “frustration” which appeared due to the incessant burden of these repetitive reminders. This was
a coregulated interaction as the child was eventually described as self-regulating in the areas that the parent had provided reminders.

There were numerous relational factors that influenced coregulation, including the context of the relationship, previous expectancies of the relationship and previous successes or failures of rules.

Coregulation was described as an ongoing process based on the context of the relationship. For example, one mother explained different forms of coregulation based on each child:

A and my oldest son, are both, they’re both leaders…they’re both very much rule keepers, so they are within the box kind of thing… Once they get the boundaries, then they stay within that box, there’s not going outside of it whereas the other two are more carefree…and go with the flow and they flop outside of the box and in So, the way we handle them is different as well (F29, Mother of 9 year old male).

Parents also described the importance of previous expectancies formed in the history of the relationship. For example, one mother stated that her family continuously accommodated her daughter due to previous interactions and her daughter’s predicted emotional resistance to certain rules, “She has always been the one that didn’t like something and I always knew if there was something she did like I would try to accommodate that because she put up more of a fuss” (F27, Mother of 11 year old female). Parents made comments such as “used to”, “we know now”, “I learned” or “she knows” to describe previous encounters with their child which have shaped current interactions.

Coregulation was described as dependant on previous successes and failures with certain rules. For example, one mother described how the rules were put in place for her daughter when she was home alone, “if she’s showing responsibility and able to handle the task then we’ll build
on the task or let her handle it by herself then” (F34, Mother of 12 year old female). This demonstrated how the parent and the child cooperatively developed a rule based on a previously successful rule.

**Inherent Rules.** Inherent rules was the third most prominent way parents conceptualized the nature of rules (22%). Inherent rules were defined as rules that had an ongoing existence in the family but simply were not discussed. The following was an example of an inherent rule:

I guess the rule is there but you know I wouldn’t necessarily know that they didn’t realize it I guess unless they disobeyed it one time and then you go ohhh you know {don’t you know?}. So it’s been yeah – you haven’t mentioned that in years but it’s cause it hasn’t come up or something (F23, Mother of 13 year old female).

Inherent rules were categorized as either trivial or essential rules based on the perception of the parent. Although trivial and essential rules were both described as becoming inherent over time it was evident that they became inherent for different reasons. Trivial rules (for example, brushing one’s teeth, or cleaning the dishes) were enforced routinely on a daily basis, with reminders typically accompanying these rules. For example, one parent stated, “I say the same things everyday…. Did you do your homework?” (F30, Mother of 11 year old male). If these rules became inherent it was due to the routine nature and constant reminders associated with them.

Essential rules that were inherent were presumed by parents to be internalized by the child as they were pragmatically presented by parents as essential to the family system, emphasizing not causing any harm to others as an overall priority. For example, one parent said, “I consider a rule like to show respect for one another. So I don’t know, don’t hit me, don’t hit your sister that sort of thing. But that, we haven’t talked about that since say we’re five years
old” (F27, Mother of 11 year old female). These sorts of essential rules appeared to be internalized due to mutual belief systems of the family.

**Firm and Explicit Rules.** Firm and explicit rules was the least prominent way parents described the nature of rules, with only 14% of the codes in this section being categorized as firm and explicit. These rules were described behaviourally; explicitly defined, firmly enforced and parents expected immediate compliance from the child (Forehand & McMahon, 2003). Parents described *firm and explicit rules* as pertaining to the safety of the child.

*Firm and explicit rules* were described as non-negotiable, and as being in the best interest of the child. Parents gave examples of firm and explicit rules such as “curfew”, “calling when they are going to be late”, “wearing a bike helmet” and “no fighting, hitting”. Parents were clear that there were repercussions for breaking these rules and there was no mention of the child’s input.

In summary, the analysis of parents’ implicit conceptions of rules differed from behavioural conceptions of standing rules which required the child to comply immediately, completely and without complaint. A small portion of the participants mentioned firm and explicit rules. Rules were predominantly described as flexible with variations as to how flexibility emerged in parent-child interactions. These findings corresponded with a bidirectional perspective; parents and children were perceived as actively participating by rejecting, accepting or negotiating rules. It was evident in parents’ descriptions that the relational context was influential on rules, with past dyadic interactions and inherent traits of each individual being taken into consideration.

**Parents’ Implicit Conceptions of the Development of Rules**

The unidirectional approach to rule development assumes that the parent asserts a clear rule and the child immediately and passively complies (Forehand & McMahon, 2003). Parents
described a very different approach to rule development in this study, and flexibility was a key component in how rules were implemented. Parents’ commonly described rule implementation strategies that accommodated the specific individual involved in the interaction as well as the circumstances surrounding the interaction. Parents perceived children to be engaged in inherent dyadic processes, using negotiation to influence rule development. Based on the perception of parents these processes were captured in three themes: *negotiated in interaction, based on the child’s development* and *accommodating external influences*. The themes and subthemes are displayed in Figure 2.

![Figure 2](image)

**Figure 2.** Parents’ Implicit Conceptions of the Development of Rules

Table 2 provides an overview of the subthemes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parents’ Implicit Conceptions of the Development of Rules: Frequencies and Proportions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Frequencies of Coded Segments</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negotiated in Interaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Based on Child’s Development</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Accommodating External Influences

| Total | 195 | 100% |

*Negotiated in Interaction.* The most common experience described in these narratives was that rules were being developed by negotiation. Almost half of parents (46%) reported that they negotiated the content of rules with their children. Negotiation was evident in these narratives as a form of cooperation which the children and parents used to come to a mutually agreeable final outcome. Negotiation was described by parents as a strategy that was implemented on a case-by-case basis by both parents and children depending on the specific rule or situation. There were three variations of negotiation: *persuasion, child refusals* and *negotiation as a family.* Negotiations were *child driven* on a regular basis and 50% of parents stated the child had actively persuaded them in relation to rule development. As described by one mother, “There have been a couple of instances where we have reversed a decision and it is based on his ability to convince us” (F10, Mother of 12 year old male). The child persuaded the parents by consistently demonstrating behaviour that led to modifications of the original rule that was developed.

Parents reported that both they and their children used *persuasion* as a technique for negotiating rules, however parents reported their children used persuasion more often (13/40 children) than they did themselves (2/40 parents). Examples of persuasion included manipulation, convincing and wearing down parents. The following parents provided examples of how the child used persuasion as a strategy, “She will manipulate the situation so that benefits her and never us” (F15, Mother of 11 year old female), “They convinced me, even though they had been bad” (F26, Mother of 10 year old female) and “To resolve the situation I more or less
let her win” (F41, Mother of 9 year old female). Rather than persuasion it was evident parents were more apt to give in to the child.

Parents also described that their child refused to allow the development of certain mundane rules, such as housework or chores. Many parents described these interactions as a “simple refusal” where the child said no and walked away, or ignored the parent when the parent attempted to develop a new rule.

Another strategy used for developing rules was negotiating as a family. Parents described that together, the entire family made adjustments to previously unsuccessful rules. For example, one mother stated:

We had a family meeting this afternoon where I sat down with all the children and we went over the chore list and made any adjustments that anybody needed to make as to which chores they wanted to do and which days they wanted to do the chores working around their schedules (F14, Mother of 13 year old female).

Each family member was given the opportunity to participate in discussing and establishing modified rules.

**Based on Child’s Development.** A rule being established based on the child’s development was the second most prominent theme, with 33% of parents who stated they took into consideration the child’s cognitive, physical and emotional capabilities. Parents were focused on specific qualitative changes in children’s individual capabilities rather than broader developmental prescriptions.

Parents used reminders, rewards and praise as strategies that maintained rules which had been developed. The theme of rules being established based on the child’s development was captured by two categories: parents’ adjusting expectations and parent granting independence.
The adjustment of expectations refers to parents’ adjusting to the child’s increased ability to make a decision to accept or reject rules. Parents stated when the child was younger there was less resistance to rules and the child was more likely to comply with rules developed by the parent. One mother stated, “She does say to me, oh I don’t like that. Well as before, as a younger child, she wouldn’t have done that. She wouldn’t have used her common, like her own knowledge of things to” (F27, Mother of 11 year old female). As the child aged they gained the skills to contribute to rule development and parents anticipated more self-regulated behaviour.

Parents also described developing rules based on whether the child succeeded or failed to successfully abide by the original rule. A mother explained, “He sort of just completely looked stressed and kind of decomposed right…so but we would just have to, we would just have to pull back on some of those expectations” (F31, Mother of 11 year old male). This mother described how her son was unable to manage one of the rules in place, and therefore she adjusted her expectations accordingly in order to develop a rule which enabled her child to succeed.

It was evident in the narratives that parents also granted independence, which influenced rule development. Parents explained that as the child developed, and demonstrated “trust”, “responsibility” or “independence” rules became less explicitly stated and more lax. One parent stated, “The rules are a bit more lax now because – but the responsibility is more” (F14, Mother of 13 year old female). The parent granted the child independence as the child took on a more active and responsible role. This allowed for the child to develop rules independent of their parent’s input based on the foundations provided by previous rules in the family. The only exception was rules pertaining to safety, parents continued to rigidly enforce these particular rules without input from the child.

**Accommodating External Influences.** This theme was referred to by 21% of parents and was the third most prominent way parents talked about how rules developed. External influences
were described by parents as factors outside the immediate family that they perceived as having impacted rules. Two variations were evident: *reacting to outside influences* on rule development and *reacting to generational influences* on rule development.

Parents explained that peers and less frequently, other families, were influential on rule development. Parents reacted to the child’s peers as negative influences for maintaining rules outside of the family home by using the child’s peers as examples for learning, capitalizing on their child’s misbehaviours. Children’s misbehaviours with peers were used as opportunities to reflect on how their child should behave in the future. For example, one parent stated:

I try to speak about those who – kids whom – I wouldn’t say maybe those kid whom I don’t like but the behaviour that I don’t like… And trying to point out those behaviours and say that for example, that is unacceptable in my house (F32, Mother of 10 year old male).

Parents also described other families as influential on rule development. Parents gauged their own strategies based on “similar” families. For example, one mother stated, “I think a lot of it is too, is looking to see what other families are doing and what they expect of their kids at a certain age and then you just kind of go along with the flow” (F29, Mother of 9 year old male). Another mother stated, “It’s a little bit from other parents, seeing what their kids are doing” (F11, Mother of 13 year old male). These mothers looked to other families to determine what was considered the norm in regards to how to develop and enforce rules.

*Generational influences* also impacted rule development. Parents stated that their reactions to external influences were based on socialization in their childhood. Some parents viewed their own parents as role models who provided a useful framework for them to follow. Other parents attempted to modify their own parents’ rules and stated their parents made them
feel “abandoned”, “lonely” or “scared”. Parents suggested they did not want their child to feel this way and made modifications to their parents’ rules. For example one mother stated:

   When I grew up I had absolutely not a rule to live by, and I thought I was just the luckiest kid in the world. But as I grew up I realized I felt abandoned in life too. And I thought, well there’s got to be a middle ground here, you know. So I just knew that I needed to make sure my kids were always safe and they understood why these rules are in place, as well as giving them some freedom to make mistakes and their own decision (F40, Mother of 9 year old female).

Either way it was evident within the parents’ descriptions that they considered their parents’ rule implementation strategies when developing rules with their own children.

Parents most commonly said they had few rules when growing up, for example, “But you know when I grew up, I don’t recall any rules” (F35, Mother of 10 year old female), “My mom never had, we never had, you know, these set rules that, you know, we were expected to do something on a certain day” (F41, Mother of 9 year old female), “When I grew up I had absolutely not a rule to live by” (F40, Mother of 9 year old female) and “You inherently emulate based on the way that you were raised with your parents...But I mean they never handed us a list” (F19, Mother of 13 year old male and 7 year old female).

Parents perceived that their own parents had few rules and this was used as rationale for their own choices regarding rules.

In summary, rule development was a multifaceted construct consisting of specific considerations based on the parent-child dyad. Parents negotiated with their child and made ongoing modifications to their rules for children, which suggested rules were flexible. Children were perceived to play an active role in the development of rules. The ongoing adaptations of the
rules were a fundamental component of families rules to the point that parents surmised the rules did not necessarily develop but rather were built within the family due to overarching values.

**Discussion**

This study contributed to an understanding of parental conceptions of rules and parental perceptions of the underlying processes. In contrast to behavioural models of standing rules as firm and unilaterally imposed by parents, this study suggested that rules were coconstructed through a bidirectional process in which the parent and the child were active agents. Parents appeared to be more active in the process, which may be due to the analysis being based solely on the parents’ narratives. In particular, leeway was apparent as an overarching construct embedded in parent-child interactions. This underlying theme emerged in various forms of flexibility throughout the narratives. The overall model that emerged implied that there was considerable flexibility in parents’ conceptions and implementations of rules.

**Parents’ Implicit Conceptions of Rules**

The literature regarding rules emphasizes a unidirectional behavioural model, focused on the agency of the parent with little recognition of the child’s agency in the way rules are conceptualized (Patterson, 1982). In contrast, in this study, parents perceived themselves and their children as active contributors to the process of constructing rules and regulating behaviour. Rules were rarely described as firm or explicit, and parents consistently tailored rules based on the child’s characteristics.

Flexibility and leeway were key strategies used by parents in the socialization process. It is important to acknowledge the ongoing presence of leeway throughout this study and that leeway could be understood at different levels of analysis. Parents described leeway as flexibility granted by the parent or taken by the child, which was based on numerous contextual factors. The findings suggest leeway is a normal and expected part of the socialization process.
The majority of parents described themselves as having a flexible parenting style and, stated they did not have many rules or that they developed rules on an as needed basis. Although parents seemed surprised by this insight but they were also clear that this flexible framework allowed their family to fully function. Parents focused on overarching values, such as respect, which allowed for the necessary versatility without explicitly stating the rules. Parents perceived that the degree of respect varied depending on the social setting.

This style of parenting, in which rules are not explicitly enforced, has been classified in previous literature as a neglectful or disengaged style (Forehand & McMahon, 2003) or as a permissive style (Baumrind, 1989). This conception of neglectful or disengaged parenting is contradicted by the present study which found that most parents did not have firm and explicit rules in their family. The lack of rules did not reflect neglectful styles but actively engaged parents who purposefully decided against enforcing explicit rules. For example, parents discussed providing independence to the child to play in the park, while actively monitoring to ensure no danger came to the child. The parent was not visibly engaged in the interaction but made it clear they would have become engaged if necessary. There is a need to differentiate between neglectful parents and active parents whose parenting practices differ from social norms. The intent is not to promote neglectful or permissive parenting, rather to ensure the correct classification of parents who differ in their parenting styles from the social norms of firm and explicit rules. The strict and unilateral framework of historical conceptualizations of rules may be inaccurately measuring parent-child interactions by classifying more flexible parenting styles as neglectful.

Maccoby and Martin (1983) suggested that Baumrind’s permissive style could be replaced by a distinction between indulgent and neglectful parenting. Indulgent parents are actively making a decision to indulge their child, whereas neglectful parents are neglecting to
take an active role in the interaction. The present study suggests that it would be beneficial to consider variations in the kinds of expectations well functioning parents have for children. For example, flexibility and leeway may have positive functions for the developing child or for the parent-child relationship. Parents described allowing the child to make decisions regarding rules to enhance their learning, or parents allowed leeway dependent on the emotional state of the dyad. Parents’ descriptions demonstrated that parents still perceived themselves as being in control and rather than disengaging they were selectively providing children opportunities for growth and learning.

One way of conceptualizing flexibility in parenting styles is to consider it as a form of parental responsiveness. Ainsworth and colleagues (1971) emphasized the importance of responsiveness in parent-child relations. The authors were particularly interested in the child’s reaction when separated from their mother, and if the child used their mother as a secure base. The findings stressed the importance of individual differences and considerations within the larger classification of behaviours (Ainsworth et al., 1971). Baumrind (1996) also suggested the responsiveness as an important concept, focusing on the extent to which parents are intentionally fostering their child’s ability to self-regulate and individuality. Another potential consideration is involvement or the degree of commitment in the parent’s role of fostering “optimal child development” (Maccoby & Martin, 1983, p. 48). These concepts allow for the consideration of parents who are invested and engaged but choose alternative parenting styles than the suggested norm. Parental flexibility is an important but neglected skill in the literature with typical frameworks focusing on broader classifications rather than distinguishing flexible variations.

Parents’ attitudes regarding rules varied, with most affording leeway and some maintaining rigidity. Parents had a flexible orientation toward regulations that involved chores, curfew and television. Parents tended to take a more firm and inflexible stance toward
expectations that included safety, respect and manners. There was also flexibility granted based on situational specificities such as if grandparents or siblings were present during the interaction or if the parents were at the park or in the home during the interaction.

These findings are consistent with previous findings that parental behaviour is situation-specific and dependent on the nature of the misdeed or expectation (Grusec & Kuczynski, 1980). There have been various explanations proposed regarding this construct. For example, Goodnow (1994) suggested that parents take a variety of stances toward children’s behaviors ranging from being tolerant to having bottom lines. Smetana (1997) focused on socially constructed domains that captured different parental strategies based on the context. Lastly Kuczynski (1984) proposed that various situations elicit short of long term socialization goals.

The bottom line is a non-negotiable border that both parents and children are aware of and are intrinsically motivated to abide by. This study found a corresponding concept in parents’ conception of rules as firm and explicit. Yet in examining these rules it quickly became apparent that the bottom line was a relative concept, with little consistency in how the term was used or in the repercussions for breaking a bottom line rule. The inability to determine the distinguishing factors of these particular rules suggested a more comprehensive framework is necessary for understanding these rules.

The social domain categories only partially captured how rules were described in parent’s narratives. In capturing the contextual differences in parents’ narratives of rules, many behaviours did not fit neatly into the way these domains have been conceptualized. Although broadly relevant, the domains did not capture the specificity of parents’ descriptions and therefore were not specifically applied in the results section. For example the domain of morality pertains to harm, which is these narratives was defined differently by parents based on the situation and relationship. On the rare occasion that parents explicitly and briefly stated a rule,
such as the child physically harming another child, it was simplistic to categorize these narratives. These specific situations were basic in their conceptualization with little consideration of influential, contextual processes. Yet it was evident when examining the specificity of parents’ descriptions that there were discrepancies in what domains best described the interaction. The perception of parents when narrating the event of a child physically harming another child differed if the child was a sibling, based on the values of the parent, and dependant on where the interaction took place.

It was uncommon for parents to explicitly state what they perceived as the rules; rather parents described processes including negotiation and persuasion. Parents’ narratives consisted of different forms of reasoning and justification methods. For example, there appeared to be a difference in parents’ perceptions of children’s behaviour in the family home as opposed to children’s behaviour in public. Parents described more flexibility based on particular situational factors, inconsistently minimizing certain behaviours based on the context and individuals present at the time of the interaction. The specific perception of the parent and how the parent narrated the event impacted which domain was most appropriate for classification purposes.

Therefore, rather than relying on the distinctiveness of domains it may be beneficial for future research to consider rules more dynamically, taking into consideration situation specific factors. The fluidity of short and long term goals allows for situational analysis, emphasizing the experiences of each dyad rather than generalizing outcomes. Kuczynski (1984) found that parents used different strategies for disciplinary techniques based on the situation. For example, parents were more likely to use reasoning for long term compliance goals, and power assertive techniques for short term compliance goals. Short and long term goals are less static and allow for the consideration of techniques such as reasoning, persuasion and negotiation. These factors are typically not represented in generalized domain models.
Goodnow (2005) also proposed some promising suggestions, stating that the key to understanding parent-child dynamics is conceptualizing why in certain situations a specific kind of compliance is expected rather than another. This general approach is holistic and situation specific. This suggestion allows for the consideration of multifunctional parenting styles as co-existing, and having influence on one another within the parent-child relationship (Maccoby, 2000).

The significance of the parent-child relationship was apparent in parents’ descriptions and rules were adapted to previous, current and future dyadic expectations. As proposed by social relational theory (Kuczynski & Parkin, 2007), the importance of previous expectancies and historical factors within the parent-child relationship played an important role in the nature of rules (Hinde, 1979; Laursen & Collins, 1994). Parents described making accommodations based on knowledge of their child’s habitual characteristics and responses, and the child was perceived to have done likewise.

Parents’ Implicit Conceptions of the Development of Rules

The model of rule development that emerged suggests that rules are coconstructed by the parent and the child. Parents used a value based framework, in which the rules were not explicitly developed but rather founded in encompassing family principles, such as respect. Rule development was also inherently comprised of leeway. Flexibility was evident based on the specific circumstances and individuals present during the interaction. Leeway was also demonstrated to be more or less prominent based on the parent-child relationship.

The findings of this study provided support for social relational theory, which states that parents and children are equal agents actively contributing to the development of rules (Kuczynski, Pitman & Mitchell, 2009). Rules should be understood as occurring within the context of close personal relationships and the parent-child relationship should be considered as
fundamentally different from other relationships (Kuczynski & Parkin, 2007). In this study the parent-child relationship was a central consideration for rule development. Parents described unique relational characteristics and considerations for developing rules. The dyadic nature of these interactions emphasized how parents and children were aware of one another’s interpretations of the rules.

The importance of the relational context was particularly evident in parents’ descriptions of coregulation. Coregulation was a dyadic process in which the parent and child coconstructed rules. Coregulated rules were evident as ongoing adjustments and accommodations occurred based on the parent-child relationship, as well as the family system in which the relationship was embedded. Parents considered the impact of rules on the parent-child relationship itself and how decisions may influence the relationship in the long term. Children were also described as having understood these implications with insight into what rules were more valued by their parents and what rules were flexible.

Another important finding was that negotiation was the most common strategy used by children and parents to develop rules. Both the parent and the children used different forms of bargaining, persuasion and justification to negotiate and influence the process of rules. These strategies were described as an ongoing part of developing rules and for the majority of interactions children appeared to be more apt at negotiation than parents. The negotiation strategies used by children in middle childhood, such as persuasion and simple refusal, were similar to strategies used in early childhood and adolescence found in previous studies (Kuczynski & Kochanska, 1990; Parkin & Kuczynski, 2012; Grusec & Goodnow, 1994). It was evident in parents’ descriptions that these strategies varied in sophistication based on the context. Children were more likely to use persuasion as a negotiation technique, suggesting that parents were more apt to giving in or giving up in negotiations.
In general, parents considered the child’s developmental capacity as an important consideration for the rules that they adopted and the way they enforced children’s compliance to those rule development. Parents were attuned to the capacity of each child rather than using broader prescriptions of children’s development. As children aged they were described as being more capable of utilizing their knowledge to influence rules. Parents expected and accommodated children’s input in relation rules as the child’s capacity increased. These transactions provided the social context for the discussion of developing rules. Parents granted independence if the child demonstrated they were reliable in successfully following through with rules that were previously developed (Baumrind, 1989). Parents allowed more flexibility in future rule development based on an earned trust.

The internalization of rules and how this in turn impacted rule development was another interesting finding. Generally, these findings are similar to those of Grolnick, Deci and Ryan (1997) that who suggested that internalization is a developmental process and children gradually integrated societal values as they developed. Parents perceived respect and safety as two of the main rules children internalized. The child was viewed as gradually gaining a knowledge base of rules, which allowed for the decrease, and in some cases extinction, of rule development. Parents responded to whether the child had internalized certain rules by using specific strategies. For example, parents used reminders as a strategy to ensure the internalization of specific value-based rules. As the child developed and internalized the rule, the parent reduced the number of reminders.

Parents described intergenerational transmissions as an important consideration for rule development. Parents’ purposeful transmissions of strategies from the previous generation were evident as parents adopted or dismissed strategies. Parents most commonly described their parents had rarely implemented rules. This pattern of rule development (or lack thereof) was
sustained by parents who reported that this was the most appropriate method of developing rules for their family. There was a parental commitment to these strategies with modifications made based on the specifics of the current parent-child relationship.

**Leeway**

A major contribution of this study was the conceptualization of leeway, which has previously been described theoretically by Goodnow but is now empirically supported. Leeway was evident as an underlying construct within rules and rule development. This phenomenon was built into parental conceptions of rules. Leeway was evident as a form of flexibility that parents and children used to provide exceptions to the typical expectations of rule abidance. As suggested by Goodnow (2005) parents encouraged their children to understand which areas of socialization allow for flexibility and which areas do not. Parents were willing be more flexible in certain situations and the children were able to identify how much flexibility was present in those situations (Goodnow, 1996). The adjustment of rules based on the situation was the most common form of leeway in this study, with parents identifying a variety of considerations for leeway. These considerations ranged from the emotional state of the dyad to the physical location of the interaction.

There was less leeway apparent in rules that pertained to the child’s safety and well being. These conceptualizations were parallel to D’Andrade’s (1984) who suggested families may highly value particular skills more than others and therefore there may be less negotiation or leeway evident in rules such as respect.

The conceptualization of leeway that emerged from this study was the notion that parents could grant flexibility or that children could take flexibility. Parents described granting flexibility to the child as a deliberate process of the parent allowing rule flexibility due to specific contextual factors such as the emotional state of the child. Parents also granted flexibility as a
learning opportunity for the child, to allow them to develop their own socialization skills. Parents described the child taking flexibility as a deliberate process of the child convincing or wearing down the parent in order to gain flexibility relevant to a particular rule. The process of granting flexibility was perceived positively by parents as they were accommodating the needs of the dyad. The process of the child taking flexibility was perceived negatively by parents as the child was perceived as taking advantage of the parent’s flexible parenting style. These two variations of leeway accentuate both parents and children as active agents in the nature of rules.

The category of flexibility based on a time frame is also of interest as it provides specific evidence that parents are attempting to grant the child with an opportunity to act agentically. Similarly to Nucci’s (1995) suggestion that parents guided children’s’ decisions, parents guided the child’s options by actively making suggestions as time elapsed. Consequently flexibility was evident relevant to the amount of time granted to the child to make a decision. It was evident that parents adjusted that time frame differently based on the specific situation. In certain situations when the rules were perceived as essential to the family, there was less leeway and less time for the child to make a decision. In other situations when the rules were perceived as trivial, there was more leeway and more time to make a decision (D’Andrade, 1984).

**Application of Results**

There is a common clinical prescription in the existing literature that rules are unilaterally delivered from parent to child, with no consideration of the child’s agency. The current thesis provides empirical evidence suggesting the construct of rules is much more complex than previously conceptualized. The present findings may contribute to more comprehensive and potentially successful education and support programs for families. Historically, parent programming has been based on the unidirectional model reinforcing solely the importance of parenting strategies with little consideration for the child’s influence. Forehand and McMahon
(2003) stressed the importance of “parent training” with the focus of these programs revolving around coercive chains that culminate from the conflictual behaviour of the child. As stated by Couch and Evans (2011), although these programs have assisted families, they have not kept abreast with recent developmental research which emphasizes the bidirectional and dynamic nature of parent-child interactions. Unilateral frameworks fail to capture the complexity of the parent-child relationship by excluding important considerations such as bidirectionality and dialectics (Couch & Evans, 2011). The results of this thesis provide support to Couch and Evans suggestion that the interactional nature of the parent-child relationship needs to be at the centre of parenting interventions. This focus could improve outcomes for parents and children by emphasising the importance of the reciprocal nature of the parent-child relationship.

The findings also underscored a need for a greater understanding in how rules are conceptualized. Parents’ descriptions within this thesis suggested families felt obligated to conform to the social norms of unilateral rules. This was evident in parents who justified who rules, and apologized for the lack of explicit rules within the family. It is important for parents to realize flexibility is a common and successful parenting style when applied appropriately with appropriate consideration of the child and the context.

**Study Limitations**

There are several limitations to this study. First, the participants recruited for this study were a homogenous sample with similar demographics. Although the homogeneity of the sample enabled conclusions regarding the construct of rules it also has implications for the generalizability of the conclusions. The families were well educated, non-clinical and were self-described as functioning normally. There was little diversity in the sample in relation to culture or socioeconomic status which could have had major implications for the findings.
Another limitation was the majority of parent participants were mothers and there were only two fathers participated in this study. It would have been valuable to have more input from fathers in order to increase the variability in gender composition of parent-child dyads. The increase in father participants could have enabled specific gender comparisons, analysing differences and similarities of how mothers and fathers conceptualized the construct of rules and how this impacted the family.

Lastly, the semi-structured qualitative interviews were a part of a broader, larger study completed and therefore specific questions relevant to leeway were not included. It would have been beneficial for future research to gather distinct information regarding leeway, incorporating leeway into the semi-structured interview format, thus encouraging parents to discuss leeway more readily.

**Future Directions**

Mothers commonly described the process of creating and enforcing rules to be bidirectional and flexible, as opposed to conceptualizing rules as firm and explicit. These conclusions were suggested based on the non-clinical sample that was explored within this qualitative study. Future research needs to examine clinical populations in order to investigate whether these findings are generalizable or whether there are discrepancies based on the population. Not only would replication of the current thesis be valuable, this framework could be applied for a wide range of research on clinical families, from high conflict families to families with children with behavioural problems. Conducting a similar study with a variety of populations would provide greater insight into the commonalities or differences among families. Also it appears as though leeway and the absence of firm and explicit rules is a successful parenting strategy for some families; other behavioural literature suggested it could be a source of problems (Patterson, 1982; Forehand & McMahon, 2003). A clinical population may help to
empirically comprehend why this framework is successful for some families and not for others. Another population that may contribute insight into rules are families living in low income. Rodman (1963) suggested that the values of individuals living in low income stretch more than the values of individuals living in middle income and approaching this from a bidirectional perspective may contribute different insights to the notion of value stretch.

Furthermore, this particular thesis focused solely on parents’ descriptions and narratives regarding their family and rules. Future research should include the child’s descriptions in order to provide a more holistic explanation of family dynamics. Parents described the child as an active agent within the family and it would be advantageous to gain an understanding of how the children perceived themselves within these interactions.

**Conclusion**

Based on this study, it is evident the construct of rules within parent-child interactions in middle childhood is opposite to the static, behavioural conceptualizations previously suggested in the literature. The framework of rules that emerged in this study revolves around flexibility and the situational specificity of rules. Leeway was an inherent component of parent-child interactions, evident as a latent variable in this study. The importance of the parent-child relationship and the potential benefits or constraints of this relationship provided insight into the significance of the context of socialization in relation to the construct of rules. These findings are beneficial for future research relevant to compliance and socialization in parent-child interactions. There are also major educational and clinical applications and a bidirectional approach should be explored further in regards to the framework for parenting programs.
References


determination theory perspective. In J. E. Grusec & L. Kuczynski (Eds.), *Parenting and children's internalization of values: A handbook of contemporary theory* (pp. 135-161). New York: Wiley.


Kuczynski, L., & Daly, K. (2003). Qualitative methods for inductive (theory-generating)


Hillsdale, Erlbaum.


*Journal of Special Education, 12*, 483-496.


Appendix A

RESEARCH ETHICS BOARD
Certification of Ethical Acceptability of Research Involving Human Participants

APPROVAL PERIOD: April 6, 2006 to June 30, 2009

REB NUMBER: 06FE028

TYPE OF REVIEW: Delegated Type 1

RESPONSIBLE FACULTY: LEON KUCZYNSKI

DEPARTMENT: Family Relations & Applied Nutrition

SPONSOR: SSHRC STANDARD RESEARCH GRANT

TITLE OF PROJECT: Socialization in Middle Childhood and Adolescence

The members of the University of Guelph Research Ethics Board have examined the protocol which describes the participation of the human subjects in the above-named research project and considers the procedures, as described by the applicant, to conform to the University’s ethical standards and the Tri-Council Policy Statement.

The REB requires that you adhere to the protocol as last reviewed and approved by the REB. The REB must approve any modifications before they can be implemented. If you wish to modify your research project, please complete the Change Request Form. If there is a change in your source of funding, or a previously unfunded project receives funding, you must report this as a change to the protocol.

Adverse or unexpected events must be reported to the REB as soon as possible with an indication of how these events affect, in the view of the Responsible Faculty, the safety of the participants, and the continuation of the protocol.

If research participants are in the care of a health facility, at a school, or other institution or community organization, it is the responsibility of the Principal Investigator to ensure that the ethical guidelines and approvals of those facilities or institutions are obtained and filed with the REB prior to the initiation of any research protocols.

The Tri-council Policy Statement requires that ongoing research be monitored by, at a minimum, a final report and, if the approval period is longer than one year, annual reports. Continued approval is contingent on timely submission of reports.

Membership of the Research Ethics Board: F. Caldwell, Student Health Services; J. Dickey, HHNS; M. Dwyer, Legal Representative; M. Fairburn, Ethics and External; B. Ferguson, Economics; C. Harvey-Smith, N.D. and External; J. Minogue, EHS; L. Trick, Psychology; P. Salmon, SETS; J. Tindale, FRAN; T. Turner, Sociology & Anthropology.
Appendix B

COLLEGE OF SOCIAL AND APPLIED HUMAN SCIENCES
Department of Family Relations and Applied Nutrition

Consent to Participate in Research (Parents)
Title of Project: Socialization in Middle Childhood

You are being asked to participate in a research study conducted by Dr. Leon Kuczynski from the Department of Family Relations and Applied Nutrition. This research is funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council. If you have questions or concerns about the research please feel free to contact Leon Kuczynski at 824-4120, ext. 52421 or project coordinator Amy Oliphant at 824-4120, ext. 53861.

Purpose of the Study
The purpose of this study is to gain an understanding of some common occurrences in family life. Specifically we are interested in positive family interactions as well as the routine challenges of being a parent.

Procedures
If you volunteer to participate in this study we would ask you to do the following things. We would first ask you to participate in an initial interview and training session (60-90 minutes). The main part of the study is to complete a self-administered interview daily, for 5 consecutive days (10-15 minutes per day). Finally, there would be an interview as well as a questionnaire to complete (30-45 minutes) after the one week tracking period is over. Interviews will ask about some common occurrences in family life, including conflict and challenges, as well as pleasurable family times. The questionnaire will ask about your child's behaviour.

Although there are no direct benefits to being involved with the study, in our past research parents have reported enjoying the opportunity to reflect on the joys and challenges involved in being a parent. In addition, this research will contribute in depth knowledge to the parenting research literature about parents’ experiences. Your family will receive a small compensation of $50.00 in gift certificates (Chapters, Zehr’s, Galaxy Cinemas) in appreciation of your participation in the study. In addition, each of the children in your family will receive a small prize.

For parents and children, the interview involves speaking into a digital voice recorder. The recordings and transcripts will remain strictly confidential, except as required by law, and will be kept only until the results of the study are published. All identifying information will be kept in a locked cabinet. The only people who will have access to the recordings and transcripts are the researchers directly related to this project.

You can choose whether to be in this study or not. If you volunteer to be in the study you can refuse to answer any question or withdraw from the study at any time without consequences of
any kind. You may exercise the option of removing your data from the study. Published forms of the research will in no way identify individuals, but your responses may be used as verbatim quotation in the publication, if you consent.

This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the University of Guelph Research Ethics Board. If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant, contact:

Research Ethics Coordinator
EXT.
University of Guelph
437 University Centre
Guelph ON, N1G 2W1

Telephone: (519) 824-4120,
56606
E-mail: sauld@uoguelph.ca

I have read the above information and had all my questions answered. I agree to participate in the socialization in middle childhood study according to the stated procedures. I have been given a copy of this form.

______________________________________________
Name of participant

______________________________________________
Signature
Date

Witness

______________________________________________
Name of Witness

______________________________________________
Signature
Date

I would like to receive a summary of the findings of this study. Please send these findings to:

Mailing
Address:__________________________________________
Appendix C

COLLEGE OF SOCIAL AND APPLIED HUMAN SCIENCES
Department of Family Relations and Applied Nutrition

Consent to Participate in Research (Children)

Principal Investigator: Dr. Leon Kuczynski 824-4120 ext. 52421

The purpose of this study is to develop an understanding of what goes on between parents and children at various ages. I will be asked about the fun stuff I do with my parents as well as the times we disagree with each other. My participation in this study involves three components:

1. I will be asked to attend a short interview and training session to learn how to use my digital recorder and how to answer questions.

2. I will be asked to report daily for 5 days about things that sometimes happen between children and grown-ups. I will record answers into a digital recorder.

3. I will be asked to attend a final interview to talk about participating in the study and to complete a questionnaire.

I have been told I can choose whether or not I want to participate in the study. If I choose to take part, I know that I can decide not to answer any questions that I might not want to. Also, I can stop answering questions if I don’t want to take part in the study any more. I have been told that no one else besides the researchers will know what my answers were, except if the researchers were very worried that I was going to seriously hurt myself or someone else. This means that my mother and father will not hear my answers. I have been told that the researcher will be glad to answer any questions that I may wish to ask about the study.

I, ____________________________, have read the above statement and had all my questions answered. I agree to participate in this study according to the stated procedures.

_________________________________  __________________________
Signature  Date
Guelph Research Ethics Board. If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant, contact:

Research Ethics Coordinator  Telephone: (519) 824-4120,
EXT. University of Guelph 56606
437 University Centre E-mail: sauld@uoguelph.ca
Guelph, ON N1G 2W1

I have read and understand the above information and agree to participate in the socialization in middle childhood study according to the stated procedures. I have been given a copy of this form.

__________________________________________
Name of participant

__________________________________________  _______
Signature                                      Date

Witness

__________________________________________
Name of Witness

__________________________________________  _______
Signature                                      Date
Appendix D

End Interview for Parent

In this interview, we would like you to reflect on the last week that you were tracking your interactions with your child. As we stated in our initial interview with you, we think of parenting and parent-child relationships as more complex than is generally recognized. This interview is to get a more in depth look at some of the particular struggles of being parents to a child of this age.

First, could you tell us about your experience of being in this study this week?

Is there anything that surprised you or was unexpected?

How difficult was this to do?

Now I would like to review each of the areas that we were tracking. For each area we are interested in:

- your current concerns and struggles
- whether both parents have the same perception of what is going on
- whether you detect changes in your interactions in this area from a period when your child was younger. (Ask regarding 3 year developmental period prior to current age group as defined in this study (i.e. preschool period, young childhood (grades 1,2) middle elementary (grades 4-5)).

1) Rules and expectations.
   a) What are your current struggles in this area?
   b) Are your views the same or different? *(mother versus father)*
   c) Think back to the previous developmental period. Have you noticed any changes regarding your rules and expectations or your child’s reactions to them?

   Probe for out of sight behaviour, behaviour away from home, at school with peers.

   a) What are your current struggles in this area?
   b) Are your views the same or different? *(mother versus father)*
   c) Think back to the previous developmental period. Have you noticed any changes regarding Child’s behavior out of home

2) Resistance to requests.
   a) What are your current struggles in this area?
   b) Are your views the same or different? *(mother versus father)*
   c) Think back to the previous developmental period. Have you noticed any changes regarding Child’s resistance to your requests or your reactions to them?

3) Disagreements
a) What are your current struggles in this area?
b) Are your views the same or different? (mother versus father)
c) Think back to the previous developmental period. Have you noticed any changes regarding Child’s resistance to your requests or your reactions to them?

4) Experiences of closeness, enjoyment.
a) What are your current struggles in this area?
b) Are your views the same or different? (mother versus father)
c) Think back to the previous developmental period. Have you noticed any changes regarding Child’s resistance to your requests or your reactions to them?

5) General Concerns about parenting. What you think or worry about.
a) What are your current struggles in this area?
b) Are your views the same or different? (mother versus father)
c) Think back to the previous developmental period. Have you noticed any changes regarding what you find yourself thinking about or worrying about.

Thank you so much for your participation is this study. Do you have any other thoughts that you would like to share or questions you would like answered?
PDR

PARENT DAILY REPORT
WHAT IS TODAY’S REPORT DATE?
PDR #1: OUT-OF-HOME INSTRUCTIONS

What instructions did you give your child before he/she left the house today?

Examples:

- How to dress
- Things to do during the day
PDR #2: REMINDERS OF STANDING RULES

Please tell us about the reminders you gave your child today regarding responsibilities to carry out or long-standing rules to follow.

1. What was the reminder?
2. How did your child respond? (Behaviours, Attitudes, Emotions)
3. How was it resolved? (Did your child do what was asked? Did you follow up?)

Were there any other reminders today? Please tell us up to 3.
PDR #3:
KNOWLEDGE OF CHILD

1. How informed were you today about your child's thoughts, feelings or activities? (Choose 1)
   1= Not at All
   2= A Little
   3= Somewhat
   4= Fairly Well
   5= Very
2. How did you learn about your child’s thoughts, feelings or activities today?
PDR #4:
ENJOYABLE INTERACTIONS

1. Tell us the enjoyable interactions that happened today between you and your child. Examples:

- Enjoyable Conversation
- Acting Silly/Fooling Around
- Laughing Together
- Physical Closeness

or any other moment where you shared mutual enjoyment with your child.

2. Is there anything else you want to say about enjoyable or unenjoyable interactions with your child today?
PDR #5:

DISAGREEMENTS

Tell us about the disagreements you had with your child today (where you and your child had a difference of opinion).

1. What was it about?
2. What happened? (when/where it occurred, what you did, what your child did)
3. What happened next? (how was it resolved or not resolved?)
4. How did you feel afterwards?

Were there any other disagreements today? Please tell us up to 3.
PDR #6:

COOPERATION WITH PARENTAL REQUESTS

How often did your child cooperate with your requests today in exactly the way that you wished?

1= Not at All
2= A Little
3= Half of the Time
4= Most of the Time
5= Every Time
Occasions today when you asked your child to start or stop doing something and he/she did not do exactly what you wished.

Examples: cooperated in own way, delayed, had attitude, negotiated/offered compromises, ignored, demanded reasons/questioned your authority, politely refused, blatantly refused

1. How did it start?
2. Describe how your child responded to your request.
3. What happened next? (how did it end?)
4. How satisfied were you with your child's response?

Were there any other instances of non-cooperation today? Please tell us up to 3.

PDR #8:
1. What was tough about being a parent today?

2. What was great about being a parent today?