

**Parental Knowledge Construction in Middle  
Childhood:  
A Thematic Analysis of Parents' Narratives**

**by**

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## ABSTRACT

### PARENTAL KNOWLEDGE CONSTRUCTION IN MIDDLE CHILDHOOD: A THEMATIC ANALYSIS OF PARENTS' NARRATIVES

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Over a span of several decades, researchers have documented an association between parental knowledge of children's out-of-sight experiences and child adjustment outcomes. However, the processes leading to parental knowledge construction are poorly understood at present. This study sought to explore parents' perspectives on how knowledge construction occurs. Eighteen mothers and fathers of children aged 8-13 years participated in semi-structured interviews and their responses were analyzed using thematic analysis. In my analysis, I conceptualized parental knowledge as a dynamic mental representation of children's out-of-sight experiences. I presented four themes that captured the ways parents described constructing knowledge about their children's whereabouts and out-of-sight activities: (a) parent-child knowledge co-construction, (b) knowledge construction through observation, (c) knowledge co-construction with others, and (d) projection of reality. The analysis presented provides a novel perspective on parental knowledge construction that I argue has been historically conceptualized by researchers as a linear process of information accumulation.

## Acknowledgements

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Parental knowledge is a construct that has increasingly captured the interest of social scientists over the past six decades. Researchers use the term parental knowledge to describe parents' awareness of children's whereabouts and out-of-sight activities. Parental knowledge began to be studied in the 1950s, when researchers noted that parents of youth displaying problem behaviours tended to have low levels of awareness about their children's out-of-sight activities (Crouter & Head, 2002). Researchers have become increasingly interested in the construct because they have continued to document associations between parents' levels of knowledge and children's problem behaviours, including delinquency (for a review see Hoeve et al., 2009) and substance use (e.g. Barnes, Hoffman, Welte, Farrell, & Dintcheff, 2006; Steinberg, Fletcher, & Darling, 1994; Tebes et al., 2011).

In early studies, researchers conceptualized the process of gaining knowledge as a parent-driven process whereby parents acquired information about their children through active tracking and surveillance efforts (Crouter & Head, 2002). As a result, parental knowledge was originally labelled "parental monitoring." Stattin and Kerr's (2000) seminal study challenged researchers' assumptions that knowledge-gaining occurred through parents' monitoring efforts. Stattin and Kerr questioned the construct validity of parental monitoring scales, noting that the monitoring scales previously used by researchers represented parental knowledge rather than parents' tracking or surveillance efforts. Monitoring scales included items such as, "How much do your parents REALLY know... Who your friends are? What you do in your free time?" (as cited in Stattin & Kerr, p. 1073). This study created a turning point in the literature by opening the door to a discussion about how the process of knowledge-gaining occurs.

Stattin and Kerr (2000) drew attention to the child's role in the knowledge-gaining process by considering children's agency to share information with parents. They proposed that

knowledge-gaining occurred through two possible routes: parental monitoring and voluntary child disclosure, and they sought to determine which route was the best predictor of knowledge. They conceptualized two dimensions of parental monitoring that they labelled “solicitation” and “parental control.” Solicitation refers to asking questions in order to gain information about children, and parental control refers to parents’ enforcement of rules requiring children to disclose where they will be and who they will be with when outside of the home. In this study, parents and children rated levels of parental knowledge, solicitation, parental control, and disclosure, and it was found that disclosure was most highly correlated to knowledge according to both children’s and parents’ reports. In a multiple regression analysis, child disclosure accounted for the largest amount of variance in knowledge.

Stattin and Kerr’s (2000) results provided support for a child-driven model of parental knowledge-gaining and generated researcher awareness about the importance of child disclosure. Since this publication, several other researchers have documented an association between child disclosure and parental knowledge (e.g. Eaton, Krueger, Johnson, McGue, & Iacono, 2009; Hamza & Willoughby, 2011; Keijsers, Branje, VanderValk, & Meeus, 2010; Soenens, Vansteenkiste, Luyckx, & Goossens, 2006; Vieno, Nation, Pastore, & Santinello, 2009). Kerr, Stattin and Burk (2010) found that child self-disclosure was a significant longitudinal predictor of parental knowledge over a one year span, while neither solicitation nor parental control significantly predicted knowledge of activities and whereabouts.

Despite empirical findings pointing to the importance of child disclosure of information, some researchers have argued against a purely child-driven model of knowledge-gaining. Researchers (e.g. Crouter, Bumpus, Davis, & McHale, 2005; Fletcher, Steinberg, & Williams-Wheeler, 2004; Soenens, et al., 2006) have suggested that parents play active roles in building a

relationship context that fosters parent-child communication leading to parental knowledge. For example, Crouter, MacDermid, McHale and Perry-Jenkins (1990) wrote:

Parents who are good monitors have made the effort to establish channels of communication with their child, and as a result of their relationships with the child, they are knowledgeable about the child's daily experiences. In order to be an effective monitor, however, parental interest is not enough: A child must be willing to share his or her experiences and activities with the parent. Seen in this light, parental monitoring is a relationship property (p. 656).

Researchers (e.g. Kerr et al., 2010; Soenens et al., 2006) have therefore concluded that it is important to continue investigating parents' roles in the knowledge-gaining process because parents may contribute to the knowledge-gaining process in ways that are currently not well understood.

The role of the parent-child relationship in knowledge-gaining has been investigated by several researchers who have measured relational constructs in relation to parents' levels of knowledge and children's levels of disclosure. For example, researchers have found positive associations between voluntary child self-disclosure and parental trust (Kerr, Stattin & Trost, 1999; Smetana, Metzger, Gettman, & Campione-Barr, 2006) as well as parental responsiveness (Smetana, 2008; Soenens et al., 2006). High levels of parental involvement were linked to stable parental knowledge through adolescence in another study (Pettit, Laird, Dodge, Bates, & Criss, 2001). In a longitudinal study, it was found that greater maternal warmth while children were in the sixth grade resulted in higher levels of self-disclosure when children were in the seventh grade, leading to higher levels of maternal knowledge when children were in the eighth grade

(Salafia, Gondoli, & Grundy, 2009). These findings suggest that the parent-child relationship may play an important role in the knowledge-gaining process, though they do not elucidate the underlying mechanisms that would explain how the relationship influences knowledge-gaining.

Researchers have largely focused on the parent-child dyad in studies of parental knowledge-gaining, though some have considered the possibility that significant others in the children's lives that may play a role in providing parents with information. Stattin and Kerr's (2000) parental solicitation scale includes one item that represents information received from others: "How often do you talk with your child's friends when they come over to your house?" Sources of parental knowledge in scales created by Waizenhofer, Buchanan, and Jackson-Newsom (2004) included receiving unsolicited information from others and asking others for information. Crouter and colleagues (2005) asked parents if they received information from their spouses or from teachers, neighbours, or the child's friends. In a qualitative study examining how parents learn about their children's friends' substance use behaviours, Bourdeau, Miller, Duke, and Ames (2011) found that parents relied on other parents for information, as well as the children's friends. Kerr and colleagues (2010) acknowledged that they have not considered the possibility of parents receiving information from significant others such as teachers or other parents in their scales, though they argued, "It is difficult to imagine that these additional targets of solicitation efforts, if added to the measure that exists, could change the results substantially, but this remains an open question" (p. 58). Thus, information exchange between parents and significant others in the children's lives has received some attention from researchers, though some have questioned the importance of this route to parental knowledge.

Researchers have largely conceptualized knowledge-gaining as a direct process of information acquisition occurring through parents' communication with others or through

parents' control over children's behaviours. In my opinion, there are two important implicit assumptions behind measures of parent-child communication (solicitation and disclosure) scales that should be questioned. The first assumption is that individuals provide parents with objective or truthful accounts of reality, either through parents' questioning efforts or through children's voluntary disclosure, and that parents retain an exact copy of the information they receive. The second assumption behind measures of parental control is that parents can enforce rules that will be followed by children in a straightforward and predictable manner.

Indirect routes to knowledge-gaining beyond information acquisition through communication have been identified in a few studies. Waizenhofer and colleagues (2004) considered that parents may make assumptions about children's out-of-sight experiences and incorporated this potential route to knowledge into their interviews. Specifically, the researchers asked participants if they knew about their children's out-of-sight activities through making assumptions based on the children's routines. Bourdeau and colleagues (2011) discussed two non-communication routes that parents in their study described as sources of knowledge about their children's friends and their friends' substance use: direct experience with friends and making assumptions about friends. Direct experience referred to interacting with the children's friends and observing their behaviours. Parents made assumptions about their children's friends for various reasons such as relying on general beliefs about the stage of adolescence and relying on their knowledge of the friends' parents.

Other researchers have considered the possibility that parents gain information about children through observations of the children's behaviours. Crouter and colleagues (2005), for example, considered "parental listening and observing" as a potential route to parental knowledge. Unfortunately, they operationalized parental observation in a scale item that

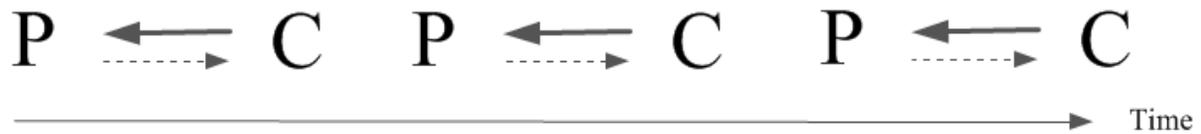
concurrently measures observation and child disclosure: “I can usually tell about this by observing and listening to my child.” Thus, it is not possible to draw any conclusions about parents’ use of observation as a source of knowledge based on their results. However, in an exploratory qualitative study (Stace & Roker, 2005), parents described observation of children’s behaviours as an important route to knowledge. The parents in this study discussed paying attention to children’s behaviours in order to track behavioural changes that might indicate changes in children’s psychological states. In the event that children experienced emotional disturbances, parents described providing their children with support. The researchers labelled this observation strategy “emotional monitoring.”

Although researchers have identified various potential sources of information that may be important in the knowledge-gaining process, the process of knowledge-gaining itself remains poorly understood at the present time. The literature on parental knowledge is dominated by quantitative studies in which researchers have measured predictor and outcome variables relating to knowledge and have quantified cross-sectional and longitudinal associations among the variables. This approach has resulted in an accumulation of empirical findings regarding suggestive associations between measured variables but that provide little information about the mechanisms underlying the variables.

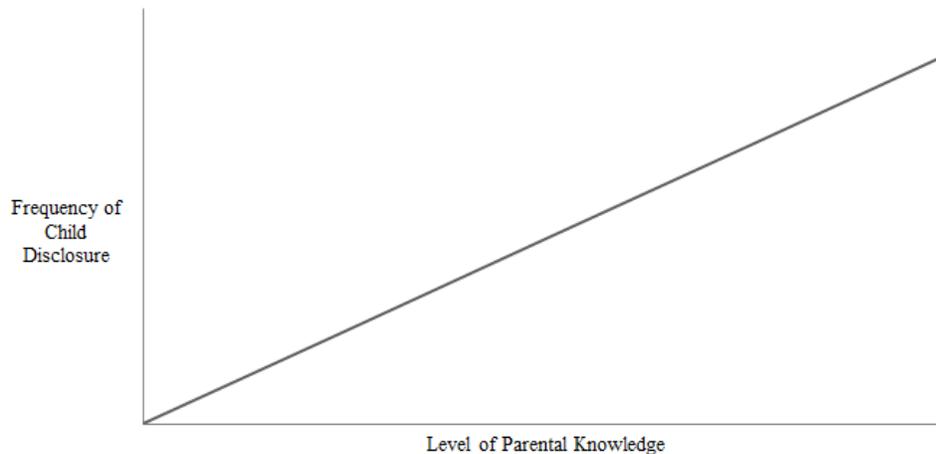
Consider, for example, the findings and conclusions of Stattin and Kerr’s (2000) influential study. The researchers conclude that “Parents get most of their information about their children’s activities from their children’s willing disclosure, rather than from their active surveillance and control efforts” (p.1077). This conclusion is based on associations between ratings of monitoring, disclosure, and knowledge. It is important to consider how these variables are operationalized in the study (see Appendix A for scale items), especially given that many

other researchers have used the scales in subsequent studies (e.g. Frijns, Keijsers, Branje & Meeus, 2009; Keijsers et al., 2010; Kerr et al., 2010). A sample child disclosure item is: “Does your child spontaneously tell you about his or her friends (which friends he or she hangs out with and how they think and feel about various things)?” A sample parental knowledge item is: “Do you know who your child hangs out with during his or her free time?” A parental solicitation item is: “How often do you ask your child about what happened during his or her free time?” Parents who endorsed higher levels of child disclosure also endorsed higher levels of knowledge, and the relationship was weaker between monitoring items and knowledge.

According to the findings and conclusions drawn from Stattin and Kerr’s (2000) study, parental knowledge-gaining might be understood conceptually as a series of discrete parent-child interactions mostly initiated by children (see Figure 1). Repeated child disclosure theoretically results in an accumulation of information about the child over time, such that the parents of children who disclose more often should endorse higher levels of knowledge on a questionnaire. For example, parents who endorse a higher rating on the item, “Does your child spontaneously tell you about his or her friends (which friends he or she hangs out with and how they think and feel about various things)?” should theoretically endorse a higher rating on the item, “Do you know who your child hangs out with during his or her free time?” According to this conceptualization, the relationship between child disclosure and parental knowledge is direct and linear (see Figure 2) and there is a one-to-one correspondence between the information parents receive and their subsequent knowledge about the child.



*Figure 1.* Conceptualization of knowledge-gaining interactions between parents (P) and children (C) occurring over time. This is an interpretation drawn from the conclusions of Stattin and Kerr's (2000) study. Left direction arrows symbolize child disclosure and right direction arrows symbolize parental monitoring efforts.

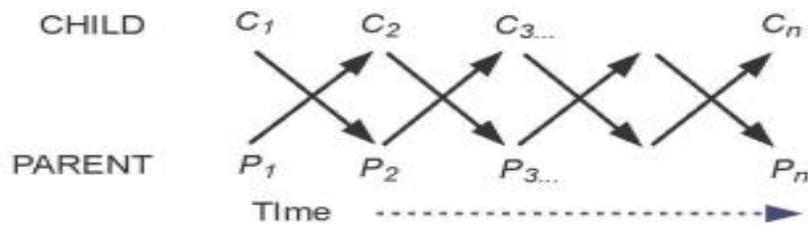


*Figure 2.* Theoretical relationship between child disclosure and parental knowledge based on an interpretation drawn from the conclusions of Stattin and Kerr's (2000) study.

I argue that the implicit conceptualization of parental knowledge-gaining in the literature is simplistic when considering contemporary parent-child relationship theories. Specifically, social relational theory (Kuczynski & De Mol, in press; Kuczynski & Parkin, 2007, 2009) will be used as a sensitizing theory that will guide the present study. Social relational theory positions both parents and children as agents who interact within the context of a long-term, close,

interdependent relationship context. The parent-child relationship is a cognitive representation that is continuously constructed by parent and child as they interact over time. Parent-child interactions cannot be separated from the cognitive construction of the relationship. Past parent-child interactions create expectancies for future interactions, and the enduring nature of the parent-child relationship means that parents and children come to interact as though they will interact in the future. From a cognitive and affective perspective, past parent-child interactions are cognitively reconstructed by parents and children (Lollis, 2003). That is, the “objective” events that occurred between parents and children are not as important as how the events were subjectively perceived, interpreted, and reconstructed. The reconstructed past has an influence on how parents and children interact in the present.

The transactional model of development (Sameroff, 1975a) is a building block of social relational theory that provides a foundation for conceptualizing change in the parent-child relationship. Sameroff proposed that children and their environments continually transform and respond to emerging characteristics of the other: “The child alters his (sic) environment and in turn is altered by the changed world he (sic) has created” (Sameroff, 1975b, p. 281). Kuczynski (2003) adapted the original transactional model in order to represent parent-child relationship dynamics (see Figure 3). Parents and children are engaged in continual transformation as they interact and respond to novel characteristics of the other over time. Kuczynski and De Mol (in press) use the term transaction rather than interaction in order to highlight the importance of cognitive constructions in parent-child interactions. The term interaction implies simple exchanges of behaviour, and transactions involve interpretation of actions of self and other in the context of a relationship history.



*Figure 3.* The transactional model of development adapted to represent parent-child relationship dynamics.

From a social relational perspective, the implicit conceptualization of parental knowledge-gaining in the literature is simplistic because parent-child interactions are understood as discrete exchanges of behaviour (monitoring and disclosure). This conceptualization does not take into account parents' and children's cognitions, including the expectancies for future parent-child transactions that have been built through cognitive reconstructions of a relationship past. The idea that information is accumulated in a linear process resulting in higher levels of knowledge is also contested from a social relational perspective, because information exchange involves cognitive processing by the agents participating in communication.

In all of the studies included in this review of the literature on knowledge-gaining, none of the researchers articulated their epistemological stances in their writing. Although researchers have failed to articulate their epistemological positions, it is clear that the literature on parental knowledge has been constructed from a positivist paradigm. Researchers appear to share the assumption that there is an objective reality that can be known about children's out-of-sight experiences, and that scales representing parental knowledge can capture a quantifiable measure of parents' understandings of their children's objective realities. Consider, for example, Stattin and Kerr's (2000) parental knowledge scale items, e.g. "Do you know what your child does

during his or her free time?” This item carries the implicit assumption that there is an objective reality about what the child does during his or her free time and that parents are able to report how much they know about that objective reality.

In a review of the literature, Crouter and Head (2002) called into question the implied objectivity of parental knowledge by pointing out that parental knowledge scale items measure parents’ perceived levels of knowledge rather than objective measures of their knowledge. The researchers noted that parents and children might not make accurate judgments about parents’ levels of knowledge. However, they argued that the objectivity of quantifications of parental knowledge can be improved by using a different measurement strategy. They asserted that objective measures of parents’ knowledge can be quantified by measuring discrepancy scores between children’s and parents’ reports of children’s out-of-sight activities, such that a better match between parents’ and children’s reports would represent higher levels of objective knowledge. They categorized studies based on the measurement approach researchers used to quantify knowledge: studies including parent- and child-reported levels of knowledge were said to measure “perceived knowledge” and studies measuring discrepancy scores in parents’ and children’s reports of children’s out-of-sight experiences were said to measure “actual knowledge.”

### **Positionality**

I adopt a relativist ontological stance that there is no objective truth that can be accessed through examination of a phenomenon (Hugly & Sayward, 1987). I also adopt the constructivist (Allen, 1994) assumption that an objective reality does not exist outside of the multiple, unique realities or mental representations that individuals construct. I therefore assume that the

phenomenon of parental knowledge-gaining can never be understood in its totality, and that multiple realities about knowledge-gaining exist. Realities about knowledge-gaining can only be accessed through individuals' representations of the phenomenon. Further, mental representations are dynamic and dependent on individuals' socio-historical contexts, thus, I assume that knowledge-gaining is an ever-changing phenomenon. I assume that the realities constructed by parents and children will differ from one another and are not assumed to reflect objective, truthful accounts of a reality that exists outside of their minds. An argument that follows from this perspective is that parents and children hold differing mental representations of children's experiences and one individual's mental representation will not hold more truth than that of the other.

I assume that I influenced the results of this study throughout the entirety of the research process. Because I was involved in creating the research questions, co-constructing responses with participants during the interviews, and analyzing the responses of participants, my influences on the results of this study cannot be removed. The analysis that I present in the results section of this study is only one interpretation of the data of many possible interpretations that could have been constructed and the themes I present did not reside in or emerge from the data.

### **Purpose of the Current Study**

Although parental knowledge has received attention from researchers over a span of six decades, the process of parental knowledge-gaining remains poorly understood. In light of continued researcher interest in the relationship between parental knowledge and problem behaviour in children, it is important to gain a deeper understanding of the knowledge-gaining

process. Research on parental knowledge has also informed the development of prevention and intervention program modules that target parental monitoring (e.g. Huey, Henggeler, Brondino, & Pickrel, 2000; Li, Stanton, Galbraith, Burns, Cottrell, & Pack, 2002; McCord, Tremblay, Vitaro, & Desmarais-Gervais, 1994). Thus, it is important to gain a better understanding of the knowledge-gaining process in order to inform intervention and prevention strategies.

The literature on parental knowledge is dominated by studies involving quantitative analyses that have provided some information about the potential sources of information on which parents rely in order to gain information about their children's whereabouts and out-of-sight activities. However, the mechanisms underlying knowledge-gaining have not received attention from researchers. The literature also lacks a conceptual framework that can accommodate transactional and social constructionist conceptions of knowledge-gaining. It is important for researchers to fill conceptual gaps in the literature in order for future empirical work to build on a conceptual foundation that will provide a richer explanation of the phenomenon in question.

The aim of the present study is to explore the process of parental knowledge-gaining, according to parents' perspectives, from a social constructionist stance. My major research question is: How do parents construct knowledge about their children's whereabouts and out-of-sight activities? I use the term "knowledge" as a label for the representations parents construct about their children's realities rather than as a term that reflects objective truths about parents' perceptions of children's realities. Thus, another phrasing of the major research question guiding this study is: How do parents construct their perceptions of reality about their children's daily out-of-sight experiences?

## **Method**

### **Participants**

Participants were recruited from eight cities in southwestern Ontario. The majority of the participants were recruited through word of mouth and a smaller subset was recruited through a child care centre via mail (see Appendix B for recruitment letter). This study was approved by the University of Guelph Research Ethics Board (see Appendix C for certificate of approval).

A total of 24 parents participated in this study. For the purpose of this thesis, I analyzed 17 interviews. The full sample will be included in a future publication. I interviewed one couple together at their request and the other 16 interviews were conducted one-on-one. Thus, my analysis includes data collected from 18 participants: 2 fathers and 16 mothers (see Table 1 for participant characteristics). The ages of the focal children discussed during the interviews ranged from 8-13 years. Nine of the focal children were male and eight were female.

Table 1

## Characteristics of participants

Characteristic	<i>n</i>	%
<b>Marital Status</b>		
Single	1	5.56
Married	14	77.78
Divorced	2	11.11
Separated	1	5.56
<b>Education Level</b>		
High school or equivalent	3	16.67
College	7	38.89
Bachelor's degree	7	38.89
Professional degree	1	5.56
<b>Employment Status</b>		
Unemployed	6	33.33
Employed (Outside of home)	9	50.00
Employed (Working from home)	3	16.67
<b>Household Income</b>		
\$30 000- \$39 999	1	5.56
\$40 000- \$49 999	1	5.56
\$50 000- \$74 999	0	0
\$75 000- \$99 999	2	11.11
\$100 000- \$150 000	1	5.56
Over \$150 000	10	55.56
Would rather not say	3	16.67
<b>Ethnicity</b>		
Black or African American	3	16.67
Hispanic or Latino	2	11.11
White or Caucasian	11	61.11
Other	2	11.11

**Procedure**

The majority of the interviews took place in parents' own homes. One interview took place on the university campus. Prior to beginning each interview, I provided the participant with a consent form (see Appendix D) and explained its contents. Upon receiving consent from the

participant, I engaged the participant in an interview following a semi-structured interview script (see Appendix E). Following the interview, each participant completed a demographic questionnaire (see Appendix F) and received a \$10 gift card for a coffee shop as compensation for their participation. Interviews ranged from approximately 30 minutes to 90 minutes in length. All interviews were audiotaped and transcribed verbatim.

### **Interview Script**

I developed an original interview script that aimed to explore how parents understood the process of parental knowledge-gaining. The script included questions about how parents knew about their children's networks, whereabouts, out-of-sight activities, and emotional states during the week preceding the interview. I asked parents what information they did and did not want to know, how they gained information, and why they wanted to know the information they sought out. It was my intention for interviews to be semi-structured, thus I used the script only as a guide. Depending on parents' responses, I sometimes asked questions in an order that differs from how they are presented in the script, or I followed up the lead provided by parents' responses with questions that do not appear on the script.

### **Data Analysis**

**Transcription of audio recordings.** The interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim. Transcripts included a description of the interview settings as well as notes on non-verbal behaviours such as laughter. A trained research assistant transcribed one interview, and I transcribed the other 16 interviews. In order to ensure accuracy of the transcripts, I reviewed the transcripts while listening to the audio recordings. I made general

notes about my impressions of the interviews and took note of patterns of meaning that captured my interest across the transcripts.

**Analysis of transcripts.** I conducted thematic analysis as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006), using the qualitative data analysis software program MAXQDA in order to facilitate the analytic process through systematic categorization of the data. According to Braun and Clarke, researchers conducting thematic analysis should begin by familiarizing themselves with the data. Because I had conducted all of the interviews and transcribed the majority of the audio recordings, I was familiar with the data prior to analysis. In order to further immerse myself in the data, I read through the transcripts prior to coding. I then generated initial codes using a ‘theory-driven’ approach, coding through the lens of my research questions, sensitizing theories, and my understanding of the relevant literature.

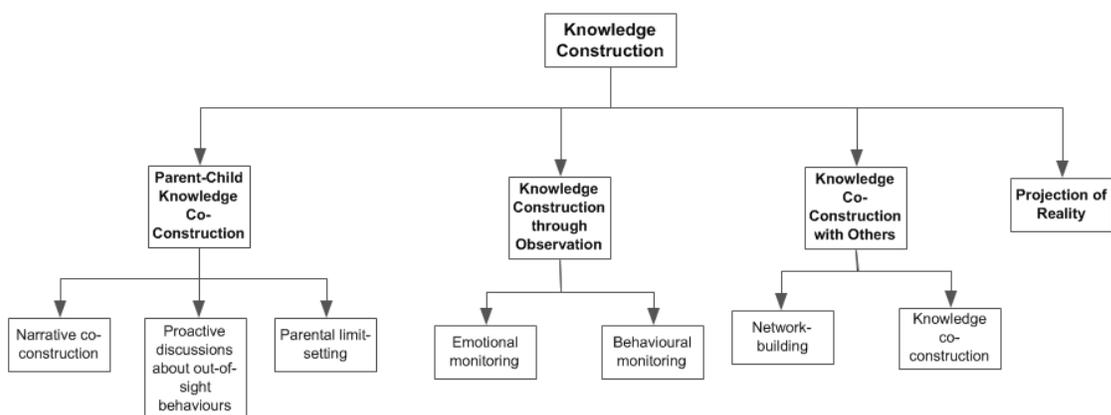
Sensitizing concepts that guided my interpretation of the data included premises derived from social relational theory (Kuczynski & Parkin, 2007), most notably bidirectional causality (transactional and dialectical models) in parent-child interaction, parents’ and children’s equal agency in the parent-child relationship, and the assumption that parent-child interactions occur within the context of a cognitive construction of the relationship. Another sensitizing concept that guided my analysis was the idea of *internal working models*, a construct that refers to individuals’ mental representations of self, others, and their environments. According to Bretherton and Munholland (1999), the term internal working models was first used by Bowlby to describe individuals’ mental representations of self and other in attachment relationships, although the concept is reflected in work that predates attachment theory (e.g. Craik, 1943; Freud, 1940). An assumption behind the conception of internal working models is that they allow individuals to make predictions about their environments. Bowlby proposed that internal

working models are built through social interaction. This idea is reflected in Mead's (1934) conception of the social self. Mead proposed that children come to understand themselves through the responses others make to their social actions.

Although sensitizing concepts informed my interpretations of the data, I remained alert to discrepancies between the data and theoretical explanations. During the coding phase of the analytic process, I was careful to retain inconsistencies and tensions across the data set. I organized my codes into themes using mind maps as visual aids. I refined my themes by reviewing the coded segments within them in order to assess if each theme captured a coherent pattern. I then reread the entire data set in order to assess if my thematic map fit with the data set as a whole.

## **Results**

I created four themes to describe the ways parents described constructing knowledge about their children's whereabouts and out-of-sight activities: (a) parent-child knowledge co-construction, (b) knowledge construction through observation, (c) knowledge co-construction with others, and (d) projection of reality (see Figure 4 for a visual representation of themes and sub-themes).



*Figure 4.* Visual representation of themes that capture different facets of knowledge construction according to the analysis presented in the current study. Themes are bolded and sub-themes are non-bolded.

According to parents' accounts, parental knowledge construction occurred through parents' interactions with and observations of the child and others. Two central assumptions in my analysis are that parents' internal working models influenced their interactions with and observations of others and that parents' internal working models also allowed them to create projections about their children's out-of-sight experiences. An argument that follows from these assumptions is that parents did not retain exact, objective, or truthful copies of information about their children that they acquired through interacting with others. Instead, I argue that parents cognitively reconstructed the information they received from various sources. Further, because parents described creating projections about their children's out-of-sight experiences, I argue that parents sometimes constructed knowledge about children's realities in the absence of receiving information from outside sources.

The analysis I present is a social constructionist interpretation of parental knowledge-gaining based on parents' accounts. I argue that parental "knowledge" is a dynamic mental

representation of the child's out-of-sight experiences. I use the label knowledge "construction" rather than "knowledge-gaining" in order to highlight my assumption that the process of building parental knowledge is dynamic, indeterminate, and non-mechanistic. In this perspective, knowledge construction is not a linear process of accumulating facts about objective truths about children's realities and, therefore, it follows that parental knowledge is not quantifiable.

In my analysis I include verbatim quotations selected from parents' narratives in order to support my interpretations of the data. The selected quotations do not always reflect ideas that were endorsed by the majority of participants because it was my goal to represent nuances and diverse perspectives reflected in the data. Thus, the analysis includes a mixture of common and unique ideas described by parents. My intention behind including unique ideas that do not fit with the majority of participants' experiences is to add conceptual depth to my analysis.

I do not provide coding frequencies because I adopt the stance that the importance of a theme is not dependent on quantifiable measures (Braun & Clarke, 2006). I consider the themes to be representative of parents' accounts because all of the parents discussed the four themes to varying extents. My criterion for creating a theme was based on conceptual rather than quantifiable reasons. That is, each theme is meant to capture a distinct facet of knowledge construction described by parents. Furthermore, a subtheme is meant to capture a distinct facet of the theme that subsumes it.

### **Parent-Child Knowledge Co-Construction**

*Parent-child knowledge co-construction* refers to parents' descriptions of acquiring information about their children's out-of-sight experiences through parent-child communication. The parents in this study described parent-child communication as a central route to knowledge

about their children's daily out-of-sight activities and whereabouts. When answering questions about how they knew about their children's out-of-sight experiences in the interviews, parents often discussed parent-child communication before talking about other means of acquiring information. Parent-child communication was discussed often throughout the interviews and parents sometimes made the extreme assertion that all of their knowledge was acquired through communicating with the child. *Parent-child knowledge co-construction* includes three subthemes that capture different types of parent-child communication: (a) narrative co-construction, (b) proactive discussions about out-of-sight behaviours, and (c) parental limit-setting.

**Narrative co-construction.** *Narrative co-construction* refers to a process whereby parents and children co-constructed a narrative about children's out-of-sight experiences. I use the label *co-construction* because the process involved a reciprocal exchange of information. Parents and children played active roles in interpreting and filtering information when communicating with one another. The information that a child shares with a parent about his or her experiences is based on a cognitive construction of those experiences and is a necessarily subjective version of that child's reality. Further, parents filter and interpret children's narratives and create cognitive constructions of the children's accounts of their experiences.

In their narratives, parents described the processes of parental solicitation (asking questions) and voluntary child disclosure as intertwined, dynamic, and context-dependent. Parents reported varying levels of parental solicitation and child disclosure both between parent-child dyads and within parent-child dyads. Parents who reported high levels of solicitation also described instances of voluntary child disclosure, and conversely, parents who reported high levels of voluntary child disclosure also discussed efforts they made to solicit information from children. Within parent-child dyads, parents reported that levels of solicitation and disclosure

varied with context such as time and place. In certain situational contexts, parents described increasing their solicitation efforts, and in other contexts they described higher levels of child disclosure.

Some parents reported high levels of solicitation on a regular basis because they reported that their children routinely would not voluntarily disclose information. When parents reported high levels of solicitation, they often described solicitation as a strategy that assisted children to build stories. Conceptually, in order to create appropriate questions, parents relied on their existing knowledge about children and they built upon the responses children provided during the interactions. One mother described how she assisted her daughter to construct a narrative about her day, building upon existing knowledge about her:

So you just ask them open-ended questions, “How was your day? How did the test go today? Did it go ok? Do you think you answered all of the questions correctly? Did you have any trouble anywhere?” So forth. So things like that. So, and then they will- “Did you see so and so today? Did you get to play with so and so?” That type of thing. So real open-ended questions and then they just fill in the blanks (I16, Mother of 11 year old female).

Most parents described increasing their solicitation efforts when they suspected that their children were experiencing an emotional disturbance, sometimes describing their questioning as ‘prying’ or ‘interrogating.’ Sometimes parents lessened their solicitation efforts if children were not responsive when experiencing emotional turmoil. A unique strategy parents reported when children appeared to be experiencing emotional difficulties was offering children suggestions or options to choose from to describe their experiences. These parents explained that they made

suggestions because children would not articulate the source of their emotional stress on their own. One father described how making suggestions for his daughter evoked reactions from her, allowing him to ask further questions in an attempt to construct a narrative. He adjusted his solicitation efforts based on his daughter's level of responsiveness to him, relying on this strategy less as his daughter became less responsive to it over time:

I just have to ask her. And if I get kind of the snarky response I'll wait an hour or two, and just say, "Are you sure everything's ok? Is there something going on? Something happen?" And sometimes I'll kind of go through the list. When she was younger, sometimes when she didn't want to tell me something I'd have to go through the list- is it school, is it friends. And then you're waiting for the reaction because the eyes would usually go up. Ok there it is! Now we can kind of- she'll go, "Oh I don't want to tell you, I don't want to tell you." So you have to kind of start eliminating things. But as I say, as she gets older, she doesn't tolerate that as much. Like I start to go through the list and she goes, "No, I'm fine." So, sometimes we don't know (I9, Father of 13 year old female).

Parents also expressed the importance of performing solicitation in a sensitive, non-intrusive way. Many parents reported allowing time to pass before asking children questions when they were nonresponsive during an emotional disturbance, describing this as allowing the children to 'cool off' or giving them 'space.' Some parents voiced that it was important for them to display interest in their children's activities through solicitation in order to facilitate child disclosure. One father expressed that he had learned to ask questions sensitively through experiences with his older son:

So I think that's the part where, you know, every once in while I'll say, "What are you looking at?" So I'll ask more sort of out of curiosity. Because I have found, especially with my son, I would get more out of him if I showed interest in what he was doing and he would reveal things. And I'm going to try to do the same thing with my daughter. As opposed to saying, "What web pages are you looking at?" (*Firm tone of voice*) You know, "What are you looking at? What kinds of things are you interested in?" (*Gentle tone of voice*) (I9, Father of 13 year old female).

Some parents believed that in certain contexts solicitation would feel less intrusive for their children. They sometimes used these contexts in order to engage their children in sensitive discussions. One mother expressed that her son was most responsive to solicitation when they were driving, because she believed that the context made solicitation feel less invasive for her son:

Because it's not a direct, you know, "Tell me how are you feeling, what are you doing," and I think for children and teenagers especially, or young teens, that can be very invasive. So if you're in the car, you're not looking at each other, it's sort of a neutral space, it's a quiet time between you and your child, you know, you're not on the computer, you're not doing dishes, you're not trying to get a meal together, and so yeah, it's a great time to interact, it's sort of a peaceful place to interact with each other. (I3, Mother of 13 year old male).

In terms of parents' perceptions of child disclosure, parents' responses suggested that they considered children as agents with the capacity to withhold information from them. Many parents expressed fear or discomfort when discussing children's capacities for information

management, though they acknowledged that it was impossible for children to disclose everything about their out-of-sight activities. One mother described the tension that many parents expressed between knowing that child disclosure was a necessarily imperfect or incomplete reflection of children's realities and the desire for a complete understanding of their realities:

It scares me! (Laughter) I don't like not knowing things. But it's a reality. I know that she's not going to tell me everything. It's scary, right? Because you don't know what it is that they're hiding, or not telling (I11, Mother of 10 year old female).

Parents sometimes commented on how much information they believed that their children were withholding from them, drawing inferences from internal working models of their children. Some parents made generalizing statements about the children's ages, stating that at younger ages children had less information to hide. One father expressed: "It's not like- he's 8 years old now. It's not like you know, he's got any sort of deep dark secret that's really going to be that earth-shattering or life-changing, so you know." (I17, Father of 8 year old male). Another mother drew a connection between her son's level of maturity relative to others and his level of information management:

Yeah, I don't know, I should mention and I haven't really mentioned this before, but *Child* in my opinion is a little bit immature, right? And so, in that, like I'm sure he's aware of girls and stuff like that but he's really like- he still sleeps with his stuffed animal. And he's about his friends and everything. So I don't know that there's any glaring things that he would try to keep to himself at this stage (I3, Mother of 13 year old male).

Parents provided rich accounts of within-child variability in disclosure and proposed contextual factors that they believed impacted disclosure. Parents reported that children's level of disclosure depended on such factors as the time of day, the setting, the child's mood, the topic, and the presence of others. Many parents reported that children would disclose more information to them if they were communicating one-on-one than if others were present. Many parents also reported that their children disclosed the most information about their out-of-sight activities when they spent time together as the children were going to sleep. Parents sometimes described routinely creating contexts that would facilitate child disclosure, and on some occasions they described child disclosure as an unanticipated outcome of their ritualized practices. One mother described the weekday routines she had developed with her children in order to encourage self-disclosure:

And then our other routine is I always pick them up from the bus, which I never used to do because he's 11, I mean he can walk home from the bus stop himself. But it is about 2 blocks and it's a great time- like they're ready to burst when they get off the bus and by the time they get home they've all closed up again so when I'm there waiting for them to get the bus, they get off the bus and right away all three of them are talking at the same time, "This happened to me, this happened to me," and, "Mommy, can I do this? Can I do that?" I have to you know, slow them down and take one, and "Okay *Child's* turn, what did you want to tell me? *Younger sister* what did you want to tell me?" And by the time we get home I've got, like a ton of information on their day, and then they have to come in, sit down and have their snack with me. So I try to make something really good that they look forward to so they want to sit and I get a little bit more information and then they're gone (I15, Mother of 11 year old male).

Parents also acknowledged that they actively interpreted and filtered information they received from their children. In other words, parents did not create cognitive representations of their children's narratives that exactly matched children's verbal accounts. As one mother described: "They're definitely- they're chatterboxes, they like to talk. So we just take it all in and we filter what you don't necessarily need, but you never ever stop it, so. (Laughter)" (I13, Mother of 9 year old female). Parents' descriptions of child disclosure suggested that their interpretations of children's narratives were influenced by the history of the parent-child relationship. When making evaluations about the truthfulness of children's stories, parents sometimes justified their conclusions based on prior knowledge about the child. In other words, internal working models of the children and the parent-child relationships appeared to influence parents' evaluations about the truthfulness of children's narratives. One mother explained that based on past interactions with her daughter, she sometimes questioned the truthfulness of her daughter's accounts of her experiences:

She's had many meltdowns in the kitchen while I'm making dinner, 'cause you know, "How was your day?" "Wah! So and so said-" and you know, it would be like, they kind of make it more drama. So it's hard to find out what's real and what isn't. So when they get like, dramatic, you're like, you don't know how much is actually expanded upon (I6, Mother of 8 year old female).

Another mother who restricted her son's computer use at home questioned the truthfulness of her son's narratives about his activities when he visited a friend's home:

"No mom we're going to do this, we usually get out the pogo stick, we go outside, we're going to go tobogganing, and do a little bit of that," and when he comes home he tells me

what they did, and it's usually all the whole context around screens, 'cause he knows I'm the screen Nazi, I don't want him spending more than an hour or two, so he makes an effort to make sure he tells me all the other things they did. Even if he bends the truth a little bit about how much time they were on, at least I know he's made an effort to do something else besides be on the computer (I15, Mother of 11 year old male).

Parents' narratives suggested that internal working models of their children were influenced by broader cultural discourses about gender and normative child development. For example, parents often predicted that children would communicate less with them in their teenage years. Parents' internal working models influenced their approaches to communicating with their children as well as their interpretations of children's narratives. One father explained why he minimized his son's accounts about his interpersonal conflicts with peers, interpreting his child's narratives through a lens of gendered cultural discourses:

F: I again am not the one to- to obsess over certain interpersonal conflicts within students- you know, amongst his peers, because I'm always like putting things into perspective. They're 8 years old. Ok, yes you know, you hear all the bullying stuff and all the con- you know, the Board of Education, the Ministry of Education, really trying to clamp down on bullying and you know. But they're still boys, they're still going to be a little rough and tough out in the yard, they're playing soccer, you know, pride's going to get hurt when a team loses, someone's going to gloat when they win, the person who scores the most goals is going to, you know, do the victory lap, and it's just human nature. That's what makes them little boys, like girls are going to, you know-

M: We're opposite.

F: Girls are going to fuss over, you know, who stole who's boyfriend, and they're going to- those things you can't change about who we are, as different, you know, as gendered males and females, so (I17, Father of 8 year old male).

Another mother explained that she strived to maintain regular communication with her son because she feared that her son would communicate less with her when he became a teenager:

I'm so afraid that he's going to slip away and become- because boys especially- they close down to their parents, is my understanding, and girls stay open, especially with their moms, they'll talk, where boys tend to just shut down. I don't want that to happen so I try really hard just to keep the communication- um continuing (I14, Mother of 12 year old male).

Parents described how internal working models of their own upbringing influenced their approaches to parent-child communication. Parents reflected upon their own experiences of being parented in childhood, making meaning of their experiences and discussing how their current approaches to communicating with children compared to their own experiences. Some parents recounted feeling constrained about communicating with their own parents in childhood and reflected upon their unmet desires to discuss various topics with their parents. These parents described adopting an "open" approach to communicating with their children, one that encouraged children to discuss any topic with them. Parents often felt that developing open communication with children would make them more knowledgeable about their children's out-of-sight activities. One mother expressed how her approach to communicating with her son differed from communication with her own mother in childhood:

I wasn't allowed to. I couldn't say, "Mom, this guy like me." No. "Is that what I'm sending you to school for?" She would say. But my kids can tell me that. And I appreciate that. I appreciate knowing, so you know. Some things, I said let them be open. 'Cause I wasn't able to do that. So I prefer if they do that. That way, I know that they're not hiding anything. How would my mother know that I'm not hiding anything because I couldn't tell her, right? So I was saying, well I wasn't a bad kid. I wasn't doing things. But if I was, she would never know! 'Cause I couldn't tell her. But my kids now, can tell me. So I'm happy about that. And I let them, you know. I said no I can't go back to the old school, I have to be open. 'Cause you never know (I10, Mother of 12 year old male).

**Proactive discussions about out-of-sight behaviours.** The subtheme *proactive discussions about out-of-sight behaviours* comprises parents' descriptions of discussions they engaged in with their children in order to prepare them for various future situations they might encounter when out of sight. Parents instructed their children about how to stay safe in dangerous situations or how to behave in a socially appropriate manner, and they engaged them in discussions about risk-taking behaviours such as substance use or risky sexual activities. Parents often reported that these conversations arose spontaneously rather than being planned and carried out by parents. Sometimes the discussions were prompted by news stories, school safety bulletins, movie scenes, or observations of strangers or relatives engaging in risky behaviours. Parents reported that proactive discussions were both child- and parent-initiated. Parents strived to impart knowledge that children would internalize and prepare them for the future. One mother expressed:

So then I'm the one doing her best as a mom, then I have to start those conversations to get the ideas in her head so when it comes out in the future, if you're in the situation, you should know how to handle it (I5, Mother of 13 year old female).

Internalization was not always conceptualized as a straightforward process whereby children passively accepted parents' messages. Parents acknowledged that children might reject their messages, particularly messages against substance use. Some parents explained that they were particularly sensitive about the way they approached discussions about substance use. These parents reported having open discussions with their children on these topics and refrained from explicitly forbidding their children to engage in these behaviours because they worried that the children would be more likely to engage in forbidden behaviours. Parents described the tension between wanting to satisfy children's curiosity about substance use and the desire to prevent their children from engaging in these behaviours. One mother feared that forbidding her daughter from 'experimenting' would cause her to do so:

When she gets older, she's probably the kind of kid who will do things and experiment with things, it's just her personality. So I'm going to have to be careful about that, but I'm also going to have to- I know if you- just from examples from my relatives, my aunts and my cousins, if you are constantly riding them about something they're more likely to go do it. They will do the opposite of what you want them to do (I7, Mother of 9 year old female).

Parents interpreted children's responses and reactions to discussions about risk-taking behaviours or dangerous encounters. A few parents reported testing their children's levels of comprehension in order to assess if they had understood their lessons. Some tested their children

with hypothetical scenarios and others had their children recite main messages. A few parents recounted their children's reactions to discussions about substance use, gauging their attitudes towards and their comprehension about the topics. One mother interpreted her son's comments about cigarette use as an indication that he had internalized the messages he had learned at school:

So he comes home telling me, "Do you know? Can you believe there's paint and this other chemical that's in it?" So if he sees people at the bus stop, he'll just, out of the blue, "I don't know why people do that. They're killing their body." So he knows that (I17, Mother of 8 year old male).

Parents' narratives suggested that their internal working models of children's environments influenced their reasons for engaging their children in discussions about potential future out-of-sight situations they might encounter. News stories sometimes contributed to parents' working models of the presence of dangers in children's environments. One mother who engaged her daughter in a discussion about sexual assault and respect for bodily boundaries articulated how news stories had shaped her belief that sexual assault was ubiquitous:

And it's more because of the fact that they're still so young and my biggest fear is that they're very naïve. They're very naïve to some, unfortunately, individuals out there that you know, you just don't know. And it's crazy because as you listen to the news, all you hear is sexual assault everywhere. Universities, like the campuses, on the buses during the day, it's like something that I can't say I'm over exaggerating, it's like every time I put on the news in the last 2 or 3 months, it was sexual assault all the time (I5, Mother of 13 year old female).

Another mother engaged her son in a discussion about substance use and distribution because she believed that these activities were occurring in her neighbourhood. She interpreted her son's reaction as an indication that he was not engaging in these behaviours:

For example, I just said to him, you know, I think it was couple weeks ago, um that I feel like this area is maybe not that safe, that you know, like I like your friends and everything but I hear and I see things happening, I see that there's um kids around and they're smoking weed for example. And he's like, "Mom, I know, I'm not stupid, I see them smoking weed by the school, and I see them dealing the weed, but I'm not stupid. I don't hang around- I don't talk to these people." But my concern is I don't want that happening in my neighbourhood, and I don't want him seeing that. But at least he's opening up to me and he's telling me that, it makes me feel that I know that he's seeing these things and I know that he has and I know that he's not doing it (I1, Mother of 13 year old male).

Parents sometimes reported intentionally choosing not to engage their children in proactive discussions. Some parents explained that they made this decision based on the children's ages. That is, parents sometimes did not feel that proactive discussions about certain topics were age-appropriate. Other parents expressed that they did not feel it was necessary to have proactive discussions with their children, often because they believed that children would learn about the topics at school. One father who did not believe it was necessary to lecture his son about cigarette use reflected upon how present-day dominant societal discourses and a general cultural climate towards cigarettes decrease the likelihood that children growing up in his son's generation would engage in cigarette use:

...like for television, you can see ads that talk about the harmful effects of cigarette smoke, and you can tell, I mean now he's growing up in an age where there's no smoking anywhere in public places pretty much. You know, we grew up, you go into a restaurant and people would be- do you want to sit in the smoking or the non-smoking. So we were exposed to it for a long period of time. He- it's a completely different paradigm for this generation, you know? They're not seeing- so for them it's like yeah, I mean smoking would be the craziest thing you could possibly think of doing because you can't do it anywhere 'cause this is my world, this is where we live, and plus look at all the negative effects (I17, Father of 8 year old male).

**Parental limit-setting.** I use the label *parental limit-setting* to refer to instances where parents discussed placing constraints on children's whereabouts and out-of-sight activities. I include examples where parents appeared to make decisions without children's input as well as activities that appeared to be co-regulated by parents and children.

Parents described various rules they had established with their children that placed constraints on their whereabouts and activities. Although rules are only abstractions existing in parents' and children's minds, parents often described rules as though they were tangible constraints on children's behaviours. One mother expressed: "She's not allowed to go to her friend's. She comes home after school. And no friends come here unless I'm here." (I13, Mother of 9 year old female). In other words, parents often made the assumption that children followed rules they had established, suggesting that they could also make predictions about children's behaviours due to the perceived constraints on the children. For example, in the quote above, this mother can assume or project a reality about her daughter's behaviours (i.e. that she will come home after school and not invite friends to their home) because the rules are in place and she

assumes that her daughter will follow them. Several parents described making choices about the homes their children could visit. Again, rules in this context were described as though they were tangible constraints on children's behaviours. One mother described restricting her daughter from visiting a home where she believed that a parent engaged in drug use:

So the reason *Child* doesn't go to her house is her dad smokes a lot of drugs in the house, and I know that, and her mom knows I know, so *Friend* usually will come here. As opposed to me- I don't think *Child's* ever played there. She's been to her birthday parties there, but she's never played, never had a sleepover, I would never allow it. I just know their lifestyle's very different, and I wouldn't have control as I would here. But any of her gymnastics friends, she goes to sleepovers there no problem. 'Cause I know the parents, right? It's a different relationship. I know what they're like, I know what they do every day, and where they work, and they know about me and how I raise her, I know how they raise their kids, so you know? Like we're on the same level. Same page if you will (I13, Mother of 9 year old female).

Parents sometimes discussed the limitations of their control over children's out-of-sight behaviours. These parents acknowledged children's agency in decision-making when they were away from them. In other words, these parents understood that children must make their own choices when parents are not in their immediate presence and are not able to directly influence their behaviours. When I asked one mother if she had set firm rules in place with her daughter about substance use, she replied:

Yes, about as strict and firm as any parent can be and any child will listen to, right?

'Cause did we listen to our parents? So it's that type of thing. I'm not under illusions, but

yeah I have said that and I've said no boyfriends in high school, you know, you're too young for boyfriends (I16, Mother of 11 year old female).

Another mother described preventive measures that she had taken to monitor her son's Internet activities. Although she felt that she had "control" over her son's online activities, she expressed that parental control software was not necessarily infallible:

I know all his passwords um, even things like on his iPod he can't- like I'm the only one that knows the password to download games and things so he has to still come to me to do that. Even if, at age 11, I know a lot of his friends can do whatever they want on their iPods so. I still have that sort of control um, we've set up the safety things on his browsers but you know, I'm sure there are still things that can come through so (I15, Mother of 11 year old male).

This mother explained that she would lessen her control over her son's Internet activities over time if he demonstrated responsibility:

I mean, there will come a day when, I don't know if it'll be a year or maybe two years, at some point I'm going to have to be able to trust him with his own password, so I think it'll- it's really just going to depend on what sort of behaviour I see from him and how responsible he is (I15, Mother of 11 year old male).

Parents described setting requirements for children to report their whereabouts and activities when outside of the home. This process was often described as co-regulated, that is, both parents and children played roles in checking in with one another. There was considerable variability between parent-child dyads in requirements for and frequency of reporting. Parents described the establishment of reporting arrangements as a process that occurred over time, with

children learning parents' requirements through trial and error. As one father recounted, he communicated with his daughter that she reported her whereabouts more often than he felt was necessary:

We live in a very- we live in a crescent, there's about 7 other girls in the neighbourhood that are all the same age and they just move from house to house like a pack. So, we might lose track of where they're at. And that was the point where I said she says, "I'm at this person's house, I'm at that person's house." I said, "Well they're right next door. We can- I mean, you don't have to tell us everything." (I9, Father of 13 year old female).

Another mother described a turning point in her relationship with her son when he learned his mother's requirements for reporting:

...like he told me that he was going to play basketball, and so when I called to just check up on him like, "What are you doing?" He was like, "Oh I'm playing basketball." I'm like, "You're still at the community centre?" He goes, "No I'm at someone's house." So I said, "But you didn't tell me you were switching. Like you need to tell me like, mom I'm here. Well where are you?" "Oh this person that I was walking by said I could use his net whenever I wanted to." And I'm like, "What!!" And he's like literally two seconds from our house so I was like, "Ok but that's fine, and just because someone says that you can play on their net doesn't mean that it's safe to do so. So you need to tell me before you're doing that and number 2 you don't even know the person so you don't-" and he was by himself too. So he wasn't even with his friends anymore so I was like in panic mode. I'm like oh my gosh! This could be a nightmare. So I said, "No, no more. You need to come home or you need to go back to be with your friends." So he came home and we just

talked all about the safety of that, like you can't just go up just because someone says, "Hey come here and play basketball 'cause my net's free!" No. So. That was like pretty much the only thing that he's ever done. And I think ever since then it's been like he knows now. Before I switch something now I'm going to call you and tell you (I4, Mother of 12 year old male).

Many parents in this sample reported that their children owned cell phones. Cell phones facilitated the process of co-regulated reporting by allowing parents and children to contact each other at any given point in the day, thus increasing parents' abilities to monitor children's whereabouts and out-of-sight activities. One mother explained how cell phones allowed her to adjust her level of monitoring as she felt necessary:

He has a cell phone so we keep in touch that way very frequently. Like usually on the hour, every couple of hours, if I know where he is and I know he's going to be there for a specific time I won't call every hour, but if he doesn't really have like a concrete plan, then I'll be calling him checking in and he needs to have like a plan about what he's doing before he leaves the house. Like he can't just say, "I'm going out." Like he needs to tell me where he's going, what he's doing, how long he'll be there. And I check in usually by phone (I4, Mother of 12 year old male).

This mother's quote also illustrates that co-regulated reporting was often described as dynamic. Although she was firm about her expectations for her son's reporting, her expectations for reporting shifted depending on her son's projected plans.

## **Knowledge Construction through Observation**

I use the label *knowledge construction through observation* to refer to parents' descriptions of constructing knowledge about children's out-of-sight activities through observations of their behaviours when in their presence. I created two subthemes in order to capture different routes to knowledge through observation: (a) emotional monitoring and (b) behavioural monitoring.

**Emotional monitoring.** The label *emotional monitoring* refers to a process described by parents whereby they monitored children's emotional states through observations of their behaviours. Parents reported knowing about children's internal states largely through nonverbal cues. Interestingly, parents often spontaneously responded from a second-person perspective, i.e. "You can tell," or, "You will know," when asked about how they were aware of their children's emotions. Parents' use of a second-person perspective suggests that they understood their children's emotional states as transparent, such that any given observer would be able to infer how the children were feeling. As one mother expressed: "You can tell. Her facial expressions give it away. You know when she's frustrated, you know when she's angry, and you sure as heck know when she's happy." (I13, Mother of 9 year old female).

Given that parents largely understood children's emotions as transparent, emotional monitoring was generally conceptualized as an unintentional and continuous process. Parents often described children's "normal" day-to-day behaviours and juxtaposed these behaviours with behaviours that would be indicators of negative emotional states. In other words, parents had an understanding of the children's habitual behaviours when they were in a happy or neutral state and they searched for deviations from the children's normal comportment. Parents expected

some degree short-term deviations from a 'normal' demeanor or mood-shifting. One mother explained that she would not be concerned with a short-term change in her daughter's behaviour, and that she would interpret longer-lasting indicators of a negative internal state as a sign that her daughter was experiencing a problem:

Because when you see a child that they have a regular way of the way that they portray themselves on a daily basis, if something goes off, then all of a sudden you're like, oh what's up with that? How come all of the sudden she's not doing that? Like did something happen? But for sure if it happened the second day- like you may let the first day- like you know, everyone has their bad day, you're not going to get on it, but if the second day was the same thing, then you know something has to be up (I5, Mother of 13 year old female).

Parents believed that negative moods could be an indicator that children were experiencing difficulties when out of sight. One mother connected her daughter's emotional state to her out-of-sight experiences:

But at the same time when I see that she's happy, and you know, she's jovial at night after she's eaten, and that kind of stuff, then I know whatever I don't know is not bad. Right? So if she was coming home and she was moody, had something to eat and still moody and still not telling me about something, then I would know what I don't know about what she's doing during the day bothers me (I19, Mother of 9 year old female).

All of the parents reported that if they sensed that their children were experiencing a negative emotional state, they would follow up by asking questions in order to try to understand why the child was feeling that way. Thus, observations of the children's behaviours served as a

bridge or an indirect route to parental knowledge about out-of-sight behaviours. Parents often expressed that children would not readily communicate with them when they were experiencing a negative emotional state, and in this context parent-child communication was largely described as parent-driven. One mother expressed that it was necessary for her to initiate communication with her son when he was upset:

Because if I don't then there's no communication between the two of us, because he won't bring it to me, in terms of emotions. Like other things, yes, he will bring to me. But if it's something that he's upset about or angry about he would never come to me on his own. I don't know if it's a boy thing or what, but he needs to know that you're there and you're probing the questions because he won't give it to you, so if I don't ever ask and I don't ever look at the way he's feeling, then I'll never know (I4, Mother of 12 year old male).

**Behavioural monitoring.** I use the label *behavioural monitoring* to describe instances when parents described monitoring children's activities through direct observation. This theme corresponds to traditional conceptualizations of parental monitoring in the literature. I include instances when parents discussed unintentionally observing children's activities as well as intentional monitoring efforts.

Some parents reported following their children to various locations when the children were outside of the home. These parents reported doing so in order to check on the children's whereabouts or to observe how the children interacted with peers in these contexts. One mother described that her need to monitor her son's whereabouts lessened over time because his reported whereabouts were consistently corroborated with her observations:

Yeah, like when I first started letting him go to the park with his friends on his own, I would go to the park and just either walk by or drive by, just to make sure that he is there and he's doing what he's supposed to be doing. And every time he's been where he is so. So now less and less. But sometimes if I think, mmm, like if the person he's hanging around with is new and I don't really know the person I'll think uhh let me just go drive by. It's all around like in our area so if I have to go and do an errand then I'll take that way instead where he's at. But yeah most of the time he is where he is and he's with who he says he was with (I4, Mother of 12 year old male).

One mother did not allow her child to play in the streets of her neighbourhood without supervising her son at all times. She expressed her belief that dangers were ubiquitous: "There's crazy people out there and it doesn't matter, really, what neighbourhood you live in. You could be in a really posh neighbourhood and strange things can happen." (I17, Mother of 8 year old male). Her husband did not believe that their son needed constant supervision. They discussed how working models of their own childhood experiences influenced their differing approaches to supervising their son:

F: But that's where you're going to get two different opinions as to what is appropriate for this age. See I think it's fine. I grew up on the street, you know, we lived in a cul-de-sac for the majority of my adolescence. And there was traffic flow, and as many cars on the road as there are now, and there is just always a comfort level with being outside and playing. Whereas she's not comfortable with him being outside and playing unless one of us are sitting out there watching.

M: Well times have changed. I was raised on a busy- um, road. Not a street. So we didn't really play on the street, 'cause it was *Road*. Very busy. And no I don't feel comfortable if he's outside and I'm inside and there's no adult watching (I17, Mother and father of 8 year old male).

Several parents reported knowing their children's whereabouts because they accompanied their children to and from various locations. Some parents reported driving their children to and from all of the places that they went to outside of the home because the distances between locations would be too large for the children to travel alone by foot or other means. One mother described how the locations of her daughters' friends' homes constrained her freedom to go to those places alone:

But as far as kids- there's no kids on this street her age. Yeah, we miss that. *Older sister* had that when she was growing up, she had a girlfriend, but *Child* does not. So she has friends come here or she goes to their house, and we coordinate it, but yeah there's always driving involved (I13, Mother of 9 year old female).

Some parents also described monitoring their children's Internet and phone activities. A few parents reported checking their children's web browser histories. One mother reported having full access to her daughter's cell phone and reading all of her text messages, originally doing so covertly and later doing so with her daughter's awareness:

So at the end of the day what I decided to do is that I told her the only way you're going to be able to do that is at any spur of the moment, any time of the day, I'm going to tell you to open up your phone, you need to open it up on the spot and I need to look through

everything. And she's fine. So that's the only way I can catch her (I5, Mother of 13 year old female).

### **Knowledge Co-Construction with Others**

Parents reported learning information about children through communication with significant others in the children's lives, such as peers, teachers, coaches, or parents of the children's friends. I label this theme *knowledge co-construction with others* because I conceptualize parents and others as co-actors who actively interpret and selectively exchange information. I created two subthemes: (a) network-building and (b) knowledge co-construction. Network-building was a process described by many participants, whereby parents created networks with other parents in their communities. Networks facilitated information exchange between parents. Communication with others gave parents an understanding of how children were behaving in different contexts when out of sight as well as information about the children's environments.

**Network-building.** Parents generally described network-building with other parents in their communities as an organic process that occurred over time. Parents' narratives suggested that the stability and scope of children's networks strongly influenced the process of network-building. This was illustrated in the accounts of those parents who enrolled their children in extracurricular activities, who reported that routinized contact with other parents through these activities facilitated networking. One mother expressed that she knew fewer of her older daughter's friends' parents in comparison to her younger daughter because her older daughter had developed broader networks over time:

Most of them are my friends to begin with. From a very early age in playgroups or gymnastics, you get to know people. You become friends and your kids seem to get along, so they play together. The older they get the less you know their friends' parents. I find that certainly with my high school age girl. Because I don't know most of her friends at school now. I know the ones that came from her school and a lot through soccer, hockey. I know all those that I'm involved with. But she's branching off and making friends all over. So I don't necessarily know the parents, but I went last night to pick her up from a friend's house and met the parents. It's still important (I7, Mother of 9 year old female).

Other parents reported having limited networks in their communities. One mother who recently moved to a new neighbourhood reported that she did not know any parents in her new community. Another mother expressed that the difference in age between her and her children's friends' parents was a barrier to building friendships with them:

I just find because I had my daughter when I was so young, that all the parents are a lot older than me. So we don't really have that much in common, it's just like, "Hi, how are you?" Here and there, and that's about it really. It's not like, acquaintance (I11, Mother of 10 year old female).

Another mother expressed that she did not have the time or energy for network-building:

"Because when I come from work I really don't go out of the house. I'm too tired. I just go to work, church and grocery store, come back. (Laughter) So I don't know many people." (I10, Mother of 12 year old male). Thus, parents differed greatly in the scope and stability of their networks.

Parents described appraising other parents in the process of network-building. Many parents stated that it was important to ‘know’ other parents, and getting to know other parents involved evaluating the parents’ perceived level of trustworthiness. Parents often described looking for sameness with others, stating that they would like to be on the ‘same page’ or ‘same wavelength’ as the parents who would supervise their children. One mother described how she observed other parents and their children in order to evaluate the parents:

Well I’m looking for, you know, the tolerance level of a parent, and how do they talk to their child, you know, do they bark orders or snap at their kid all the time or are they patient with them. That kind of thing. You’re also looking to see who’s there. Is it mom all the time? Or is it mom and dad? And just how the child seems around their parent, like are they tentative? Are they scared? Are they just, you know? Do they go up to their parents and are just comfortable? You know, is their body language comfortable with their parents? So then you know, ok, if that child is comfortable with their parent, then things should technically be good (I19, Mother of 9 year old female).

Parents appeared to vary in the level of supervision that they expected from other parents who supervised their children, and they sometimes described that they only felt comfortable allowing their children to be supervised by parents who shared similar views as them on monitoring and limit-setting. One mother recounted an experience that suddenly made her aware that a mother who supervised her daughter did not monitor at a level that met her standards. She reported that she did not allow this mother to supervise her daughter again as a result of this incident:

You know what, I'm very comfortable with the people that I let her go with. I remember when my oldest daughter was 10, and a neighbour down the street, that we knew but didn't really know well, her daughter wanted to invite *Older sister* to a *Team* game. It was the first time she had ever really gone anywhere. She was about 10, she didn't have a cell phone or anything so I gave her mine to take with her because I'm not sure- I mean I know the people, they're ok, but I don't know (*emphasis*) them. So I gave her the cell phone just in case, and you know, she didn't need it, but when she got home, come to find out the kids are running all around the arena, and they're going to get snacks on their own. We hadn't quite let her do anything like that yet. And at 10, she's fairly naïve, not stupid by any stretch, but rather naïve at the time. So I was kind of uncomfortable about that (I7, Mother of 9 year old female).

**Knowledge co-construction.** I refer to parents' communication with others as *knowledge co-construction* in order to position the communicating individuals as actively involved in interpreting and selectively disclosing information. Parents constructed knowledge about their children and the children's environments through gathering and interpreting information received from others.

Parents often recounted positive feedback that they had received from teachers and parents of the children's friends. Parents' narratives suggested that through feedback from others they developed internal working models about children's out-of-sight behaviours in various contexts. One mother described knowing that her daughter was well-behaved in other people's homes because she had received positive feedback about her daughter from multiple sources:

She will not listen, but all in all she's a good kid, and I know when she leaves this house, because I've heard from many many people. She's very good when she goes to people's houses. They say she's wonderful, she's a saint, she can come over any time (I7, Mother of 9 year old female).

Parents sometimes questioned the truthfulness or accuracy of the information they received from others. One mother noted that parents may selectively disclose information about children they are supervising; therefore feedback from other parents may be untruthful or incomplete:

But I mean if he's with somebody- if he's over at a friend's house, I'll ask or they'll tell me, like when you pick them up, usually they'll be like, you know, *Child* did this. Just to let you know. But a lot of the times parents won't tell you anything like that. Like friends won't tell you anything like that. Unless it's something serious or more- bigger, like it's a bigger issue, then- little things like that, you don't really- like everyone just kind of lets it go, right? Like you mention it to the kid, like, "Make sure you don't do that again." And then it's just kind of like, forgotten, so. It's hard. It's hard that way (I2, Mother of 8 year old male).

This mother also interpreted information she had received from school authorities when they informed her about her son's transgressions. She made inferences about the intentionality behind his behaviour based on internal working models of herself and her son:

He gets in a little bit of trouble at school, like I got a note that went home that I didn't get until yesterday saying that he was outside in the schoolyard poking people (Laughter) and they wanted me to tell him to stop. I had gotten these messages before about him like

touching people, but I think it's because I'm a really touchy feely person, and he's kind of picked that up from me, so I like to tickle and I like to like fool around and stuff, but he just hasn't got the concept of you're not supposed to do that to people you don't know.

(Laughter) He's just having fun and when he gets a reaction out of them when he's doing it he thinks that it's great and so he'll keep going. I think he's just looking for the reaction (I2, Mother of 8 year old male).

Parents described communicating with multiple sources in order to corroborate information and construct a 'truthful' account of children's realities. Parents sometimes reported contacting the adults who would be supervising their children when they were at other parents' homes in order to ascertain the children's whereabouts. As one mother expressed:

And then I always call the mother of the house that he's going to make sure that he's going where he say he's going. Not that I don't trust him, but just for me to make sure it is what's happening (I10, Mother of 12 year old male).

Another mother described communicating with multiple sources when her son told her that he played alone during recess at school. She came to the conclusion that her son's account was untruthful when she received contradictory information from others:

So we um, contacted his teachers, asked if that were true, because as a teacher you know that sometimes that might be part of the recess but it might not be the whole recess. The lunch recess is about 40 minutes long so that would be a long time to be sitting there doing nothing. The other recesses are I think at his school 10 and 15, and she informed us that no that's not exactly quite true, that he does seem to play with others. Then we had some teacher friends that are supply teachers, so we kind of asked her to look in on him,

and she said the same thing, that you know, he's playing with kids (I14, Mother of 12 year old male).

Parents also reported various institutionalized communication practices that made them aware of their children's activities at school, such as agendas, websites, and parent-teacher interviews. Some parents described routinely checking children's agendas or school websites in order to gain information. These channels of communication allowed parents to learn information about their children's schooling proactively. One mother reported checking her son's school's website daily in order to assist her son to keep track of his schooling: "Both of their teachers have websites and they put on what they've done during the day and what's expected for tomorrow, so I can check it. 'Ok, so you've got homework for tomorrow, do you have this?'" (I18, Mother of 11 year old male). Another mother expressed that her daughter's teachers did not routinely provide parents with enough information about the children's schooling; therefore she felt it was necessary for parents to initiate information exchange with teachers:

That's how- you've got to be- as a parent you have to be proactive, on top of it. Teachers are too busy! 'Cause you'll get the regular, generic, nothing. Even on the websites, they don't change them very often but they'll talk about what they're working on this term, duh duh duh duh, but you kind of have to be on top of what they're doing, or not. Because it'll just show up on their marks, and you'll be like oh, why didn't I know that she was struggling in math? You really have to be on top of it with the teachers (I6, Mother of 8 year old female).

## Projection of Reality

I use the label *projection of reality* to describe instances in parents' narratives when they made assumptions or predictions about children's out-of-sight activities and whereabouts. Parents made assumptions about the children's out-of-sight behaviours on a daily basis. During the interviews, when I asked parents about how they knew about their children's whereabouts, they often replied that they knew where their children were at all times. As one mother expressed: "Um, I always know... I definitely know where he is. Yup! No doubt about that." (I15, Mother of 11 year old male). All of the parents in this sample, however, spent several hours away from their children every day. I inferred that parents were necessarily making projections about children's whereabouts when children were out of sight. Unless parents received contradictory evidence, they provisionally accepted their projections as real.

All of the focal children in this study attended school outside of the home. Schools routinized children's daily lives and constrained their possibilities for out-of-sight behaviour. Institutionalized practices endorsed by schools in Ontario include documentation of children's presence at school and communication with parents in the event of absence, engagement in learning activities for the duration of the school day, and constant supervision by an adult. These constraints decrease the possibilities for children's whereabouts and out-of-sight activities on a daily basis. However, institutionalized practices in children's schools largely went unspoken throughout the interviews, reflecting that parents took these constraints for granted. Although they largely did not articulate their assumptions about routinized constraints that school attendance placed on their children, all of the parents expressed confidence that their children routinely attended school. One mother expressed that she was certain that her son attended school because school authorities placed limits on the children's whereabouts: "They're not

allowed to leave the property. And that's not my rule, that's the principal's rule. And he better not or else I'm sure I would hear about it!" (I11, Mother of 11 year old male).

Parents often recited the locations where children would be when out of sight on a typical weekday based on their routinized, structured schedules. One mother recounted her understanding of her daughter's whereabouts on weekdays in the following way:

So I know, you know, from 7 o'clock in the morning until 8, she's at daycare. Then a bus comes, they get a ride, she's at school, they're playing for a little bit, then at school all day, and then they go back on the bus right after school, back to daycare, and then *Partner* or I will pick them up at 5:30, so I know exactly where she is (I6, Mother of 8 year old female).

The assertiveness in this mother's words, "I know exactly where she is," highlights the certainty she felt about her projections of reality. This level of certainty about projections of children's whereabouts was echoed by many of the parents.

Parents also made predictions about their children's activities when children were under the supervision of other adults. Based on working models of the children and the adults, parents made assumptions about the level of supervision children experienced in others' homes and the types of activities the children might be engaging in. One mother who limited her son's computer access at home explained that she believed that her son experienced varying levels of supervision in different homes, and she predicted that her son played on the computer with his friends when computer access was not limited by supervising adults:

At least with two of the houses, the third...so two other houses where he doesn't go very often I'm not so confident with but um, he's just went to a friend's house last night um,

where they have three boys, my two boys went over at the same time and I know they played on their computers for most of the time and they were probably not- I know their parents don't really watch what's going on (I15, Mother of 11 year old male).

Another mother described her predictions about her son's experiences when under the supervision of a parent who she characterized as similar to herself:

It's almost like the- I hate to say this, it's an Italian thing. That it's kind of like, I don't know, we were born and raised or we're just born with it, we kind of know- figure out- we all kind of raise our children kind of the same way. Like even if I'm stuck and she says, "Oh, is it ok if *Child* eats dinner here?" You know, some people are like, "What are you making? I don't think my kid's going to eat it." Oh I know mine will be fine.

Because I know what she feeds her kids, I feed mine. And it's not anything foreign, or *Child* is not going to be like, "I didn't eat, Mom." No, he's fine. And he's very comfortable, "*Parent* can I get a drink? Do you mind if I have this or that?" And she'll give him a snack, like just very very comfortable, honestly it's like as if she's me (I17, Mother of 8 year old male).

Parents' projections of reality also influenced their knowledge-gaining behaviours. Stability in children's whereabouts and activities increased the predictability of children's activities. Children's attendance at school structured and routinized their daily activities, allowing parents to ask appropriate questions based on their knowledge of what the children would be doing and who they would be with. When parents felt certain about their projections, they sometimes reported not asking the children questions. One mother explained that she asked her youngest son questions about who he was spending time with at school, due to the instability

in his peer networks. She did not ask her older son the same questions because she predicted that he was spending time with the child who she understood to be his closest friend:

So I don't ask so much anymore. Like I do *Younger brother*, but *Child*, he's had his best buddy since senior kindergarten and they're on the same hockey team so I know who he's with (I18, Mother of 11 year old male).

Parents sometimes expressed that their assumptions about their children's out-of-sight activities were contingent upon the absence of disconfirming evidence that would challenge their assumptions. These parents explained that they were alert for any 'red flags' that might change their current understanding of the children's out-of-sight activities. One mother expressed that although she did not believe that her son engaged in substance use, she looked out for indicators that might suggest otherwise:

So yeah, I just feel I need to keep my antennas alert for those things, 'cause if they start to happen- and you know, I was interested in talking about and doing those things in grade 9, so I just need to know if that's where that's going, so that I can be aware, and you know, try to create a space where he can come and talk to us about it. 'Cause that's something that kids try, but it can go wrong really quickly, so that's what I'm sort of keeping my eyes open for (I3, Mother of 13 year old male).

Another mother expressed that her current understanding of her son's Internet activities was challenged by information she heard during an educational presentation she watched:

I just heard a stat yesterday from I guess it was one of those Ted Talks, on um, it was called 'Make Love not Porn' and it said 11- that the average age of children that watch porn is 11 years old. So, that shocked me, and I'm thinking maybe I'm just naive and

maybe I don't know what's going on when he goes to his friends' houses. Maybe there's a friend that's curious, and they start searching, I don't know (I15, Mother of 11 year old male).

### Discussion

This study provides a novel perspective on parental knowledge-gaining, a construct sometimes referred to as *parental monitoring* in the literature. I conceptualize parental knowledge as a dynamic mental representation of children's out-of-sight experiences and therefore used the label *knowledge construction* instead of knowledge-gaining or monitoring. In my analysis, I highlighted how parents reported constructing mental representations, or *internal working models*, of children's out-of-sight behaviours. Parents' internal working models of their children, the children's environments, and the parent-child relationship, appeared to influence parents' future interactions with others by influencing how parents interpreted and acquired information. Internal working models also appeared to allow parents to create projections about children's out-of-sight experiences occurring in the present or a hypothetical future.

In the literature, parental knowledge is conceptualized as a static variable that reflects an objective reality about children's out-of-sight activities. Parents are assumed to acquire information from various sources, resulting in higher or lower levels of objective knowledge about children in comparison to other parents. A recent debate in the literature (see Stattin & Kerr, 2000) revolves around whether parental knowledge is mostly acquired through parents' monitoring efforts or child disclosure of information. In this line of thinking, parents are conceptualized as passive recipients of information because the researchers do not consider parents' cognitive processing of acquired information.

The current study replicated findings of previous studies with regard to the sources of information parents rely on in order to acquire information about children's out-of-sight activities and whereabouts. Parental solicitation and child disclosure are routes to parental knowledge that many researchers have incorporated into their scales and interview guides (e.g. Keijsers et al., 2010; Kerr et al., 2010; Waizenhofer et al., 2004). Researchers have treated solicitation and disclosure as distinct aspects of parent-child communication by quantifying them separately and calculating associations with knowledge in order to determine which route is more important for knowledge-gaining than the other.

In the current study, parents described solicitation and disclosure as though they were intertwined aspects of parent-child communication. A novel finding in the current study that is not reflected in the literature is that parents described solicitation as a process of assisting children in building a narrative about their out-of-sight experiences. Solicitation and disclosure are represented in scale items as though conversations are one-sided: e.g. Does your child like to tell you about what he or she did and where he or she went during the evening? (Child disclosure item), How often do you ask your child to sit and tell you what happened at school on a regular day? (Parental solicitation item; Stattin & Kerr, 2000). The idea that parents and children are co-agents in the process of parent-child communication and the transactional nature of parent-child communication is not reflected in solicitation and disclosure scale items.

Parents' accounts suggested that levels of solicitation and disclosure varied both across and within parent-child dyads. This finding adds to the literature because solicitation and disclosure scale items measure levels of these constructs in a general sense, e.g. Does your child like to tell you about what he or she did and where he or she went during the evening? (Stattin & Kerr, 2000). This study suggests that there is great variability in the level of disclosure and

solicitation within parent-child dyads depending on the context of conversation, and that it may not be appropriate to quantify these constructs in a general manner. Parents attributed varying levels of solicitation and disclosure to situational contextual factors such as the time or place of conversation, or whether or not other individuals were present at the time of conversation. In other words, solicitation and disclosure questionnaire items are acontextual and force parents to think abstractly about parent-child communication. Parents' responses to these items may not apply across all situations. For example, in response to the question: Does your child like to tell you about what he or she did and where he or she went during the evening, a parent might think, "It depends." A child might like to disclose information under certain conditions, for example during car rides or when the parent-child dyad is alone during a bedtime ritual, and not others, for example when siblings are present.

Another novel finding presented in the current study is that parents described their beliefs about how variations in solicitation could foster or inhibit disclosure of information from their children. For example, parents described asking questions in a gentle tone or phrasing questions as though they stemmed from genuine interest rather than in a manner that sounded as though they were seeking out information. This finding suggests that these parents understood their children to be agents who are able to manage or withhold information from them, and that they were mindful about approaching solicitation in a way that would not inhibit disclosure.

Variations in how solicitation is performed by parents are an important aspect of parent-child communication that would not be possible to capture in questionnaire items. I argue that quantifying the frequency of solicitation is not alone sufficient to understand what might cause solicitation to be more or less successful in eliciting disclosure from children. The different qualities of solicitation that may cause children to be more or less responsive to parental

questioning, e.g. tone, frequency, phrasing, are also likely to vary in their successfulness between children and across situations.

An interesting finding in the current study is that parents acknowledged children's capacity to withhold or manage information about their out-of-sight experiences and made inferences about how much information their children were likely withholding. Parents appeared to draw from internal working models of their children when arriving at conclusions about how much information they believed their children were not disclosing with them. For example, parents drew inferences about children's non-disclosure based on their ages and perceived levels of maturity. This means that when parents are responding about levels of child disclosure on a questionnaire, they are not necessarily making evaluations about how much information children disclose based on their perceptions of the frequency of children's disclosure. A parent might instead make an inference such as, "My child is young, therefore she does not hide much information," or, "My child is not mature enough to hide information."

An important assumption in the analysis presented is that parents did not retain exact copies of the narratives children shared with them about their out-of-sight experiences. Parents reported making evaluations about the truthfulness of children's accounts based on internal working models of the children. Parents also appeared to make interpretations about the children's narratives through the lens of internal working models. These results provide novel insight into the processes of solicitation and disclosure because they highlight that there will not be a one-to-one correspondence between information disclosed by children and parents' subsequent "knowledge." Parents' knowledge about children's out-of-sight experiences is a mental representation that is built by parents through cognitive processing of the information that they receive.

The idea that parents engage children in proactive discussions about future out-of-sight situations is another addition to the parental knowledge literature. Holden (1985) was the first to write about and classify proactive parenting behaviours. He noted that much of the parenting literature focused on reactive parenting behaviours and he argued that researchers should consider the importance of proactive parenting behaviours in their work. In later research, a construct known as *prearming* (Bugental & Goodnow, 1998; Padilla-Walker, 2006) was introduced into the literature. Prearming refers to parents' provision of information that allows children to combat messages that conflict with parents' values. However, this construct has not yet been discussed in relation to parental knowledge or monitoring. In the present study, parents' accounts suggested that proactive discussions did not involve a unilateral transmission of information from parent to child, rather that parent-child conversations about out-of-sight situations allowed parents to construct internal working models about children's probable out-of-sight behaviours in the situations under discussion. Some parents described how they interpreted children's responses to proactive discussions as evidence that they were not engaging in risky behaviours. This finding illustrates that parental knowledge is not necessarily constructed through accumulating information about the child through a simple process of questioning and answering.

Parental limit-setting, otherwise known as *parental control* (e.g. Stattin & Kerr, 2000) has received attention in the parental knowledge literature because researchers have considered the possibility that parents can set rules that constrain children's out-of-sight freedoms. In the present study, however, parents noted that their control efforts were not necessarily infallible and accepted that there is considerable uncertainty in the child's response as discussed in Kuczynski and De Mol's (in press) transactional conception of "relational influence." By extension, I argue

that parents' perceived levels of knowledge about their children's out-of-sight activities will be influenced by not only whether or not rules are in place, but also their perceptions of children's rule abidance. If parents believe that their children will abide by the rules that are set in place, they can make projections about the children's out-of-sight behaviours with high levels of certainty. Parents' projections about children's out-of-sight activities will be less certain if parents are unsure that children will abide by rules. In this interpretation of the relationship between parental limit-setting and parental knowledge, parental knowledge is not contingent upon whether or not children follow rules in actuality. In contrast, the implicit assumption in the literature is that parents set rules that children follow, thus increasing parents' levels of knowledge.

Researchers have also considered the possibility that parents may set rules requiring children to report to them when out of sight in order to keep track of their whereabouts. In Stattin and Kerr's (2000) parental control scale, the researchers represent reporting as a completely parent-driven process, e.g. "Do you *demand* that you know where your child is in the evenings, who he or she is going to be with, and what he or she is going to do?" (Emphasis added). Kerns, Aspelmeier, Gentzler, and Grabill (2001) considered the child's role in reporting by creating the 12-item "Check-in scale" that asks questions such as whether the child "contacts the parent right away if plans change" or if the child "understands that plans for the day may need to be negotiated with the parent." The parents in the current study described reporting and checking in as a co-regulated process that was neither solely parent- or child-driven. Some parents described that reporting was negotiated over time through a trial and error process whereby parents and children reached an optimal level of reporting.

The idea that parents engage in *emotional monitoring* was first proposed by Stace and Roker (2005), who noted that parents monitor children's psychological well-being in addition to their whereabouts and activities. Stace and Roker (2005) described emotional monitoring as an ongoing process whereby parents paid attention to changes in children's behaviour and responded by "helping their children to get through whatever was happening" (p. 55). In the present study, parents also described emotional monitoring as an ongoing process that was largely described as unintentional. I add in my analysis that parents relied on internal working models of the children in order to determine what would constitute a shift in the child's normal demeanor. Parents described engaging in solicitation in attempt to discover the source of the child's emotional disturbance. Some parents reported that they approached solicitation in the context of an emotional disturbance in a more sensitive manner, sometimes allowing time to pass before asking questions. Other parents described "prying" or "interrogating" when children experienced negative emotionality.

The idea of emotional monitoring is an important addition to the parental knowledge literature because children's out-of-sight experiences will impact their emotional states, and if a parent is able to read a child's emotions they may be better able to understand that child's experiences. A child will experience many events on a daily basis and the significance of these events according to the child's perspective of reality is not only based on cognitions surrounding the events, but also the emotions tied to the events. By extension, I argue that parental knowledge about the child's experiences that includes an understanding of the child's emotionality constitutes a deeper or richer level of parental knowledge. Furthermore, when emotional monitoring leads to parent-child communication, a parent is able to gain a deeper understanding of the child's experience through talking with the child.

The theme *behavioural monitoring* presented in the current study corresponds to traditional conceptualizations of monitoring activities represented in the literature, such as surveillance, direct supervision, and monitoring of the child's Internet and phone activities. In the current study, several parents reported chauffeuring their children to and from the locations they visited out of perceived obligation. This point highlights the importance of considering how the parent and child's ecology influences parental knowledge. For example, in a neighbourhood context where many children play on the streets without supervision, parents may not know a child's whereabouts at all times. In contrast, if a child's networks are widespread and the parent regularly chauffeurs the child to and from various locations, that parent may have a higher level of perceived knowledge.

In the present study, parents reported relying on networks in the broader community in order to learn information about their children. A novel finding is that many participants reported intentionally building networks in their communities and appraising other parents in the process of doing so. By appraising other parents, parents appeared to build internal working models that influenced their decisions about whether or not to allow the other parents to supervise their children. Parents could also create projections about the children's experiences when under the supervision of others based on the internal working models they had built.

Parents appeared to revise internal working models of their children and the children's environments based on information they received from others and sometimes parents relied on multiple sources of information in order to construct "truthful" accounts of the children's realities. Parents' narratives also appeared to suggest that they were not passive recipients of information from others, but that they actively interpreted the information they received. These ideas are not reflected in the parental knowledge literature. Although researchers have

considered the possibility that parents may rely on communication with significant others in the children's lives in order to learn information about their children's out-of-sight experiences (e.g. Bourdeau et al., 2011; Crouter et al., 2005; Waizenhofer et al., 2004), researchers have treated parents as passive recipients of the information they receive from others.

Parents in the current study also described projections they made about their children's out-of-sight experiences. Based on internal working models of the children and their environments, parents made assumptions about the children's whereabouts and activities. The idea that parents make assumptions about children's out-of-sight realities is reflected in the literature (e.g. Bourdeau et al., 2011; Waizenhofer et al., 2004). Parents in the current study appeared to provisionally accept their projections as truthful unless they received contradictory evidence. This is a novel perspective on knowledge construction because it suggests that knowledge construction is not a straightforward process of information accumulation. Rather than accumulating "facts" about a child's daily out-of-sight experiences, a parent may instead have a basic understanding of the child's activities that they will accept as truthful unless evidence suggests otherwise.

## **Implications**

Researchers should consider the influence of parents' internal working models in the knowledge construction process. It is important for researchers to consider the implications of parent-child transactions occurring in the context of cognitive representations about self, others, and the world. The results of this study suggest that parents do not simply accumulate a series of facts onto a blank slate of knowledge about children on a daily basis. Instead, it appears that any new information that parents receive about children's out-of-sight experiences adds to an

existing understanding of the child and the child's world. The results of this study also suggest that parents' internal working models may influence parents' interpretation of the information they receive from various sources and their strategies for gaining information about their children.

### **Limitations**

The analysis in the current study is limited by the homogeneity of the sample. Most of the participants self-identified as white and reported relatively high income and education levels. The majority of participants were mothers, and all of the participants lived in urban centres in Southwestern Ontario. The similarities across participants' demographic characteristics may have limited the diversity of parents' accounts and, as a result, conceivably limited the depth of my analysis. For example, many of the parents in this sample reported that their children were involved in extracurricular activities, and this may be related to parents' relatively high income levels. Extracurricular activities routinized the children's schedules outside of school, limiting the children's engagement in unstructured leisure activity.

Another limitation of the current study is that all of the interviews included in the analysis were conducted over a 3 month time span from January to March. During this time, all of the participants' children were attending school. Also, because it was winter, parents expressed that children generally had less free leisure time outdoors in comparison to summer months due to weather conditions. These factors limited children's unstructured out-of-sight experiences, and likely influenced the conceptual depth of the analysis presented.

## **Future Directions**

Future research on parental knowledge construction might look beyond examining the sources of information parents rely on when constructing cognitive representations of their children's out-of-sight experiences and instead examine how parents cognitively process information they receive from various sources. Researchers might explore the factors that cause parents to accept or reject information they acquire about their children. A central assumption in the present study was that parents construct internal working models about the children and their environments and that internal working models impact parents' interpretation of information and allow parents to create projections about children's out-of-sight experiences. Future research might aim to explore factors that influence the certainty of parents' projections about their children's out-of-sight realities.

## **Conclusion**

The analysis presented in the current study provides a novel perspective on parental knowledge, a construct sometimes referred to as *parental monitoring* in the literature. An implicit assumption in the parental knowledge literature is that parents become knowledgeable about their children's out-of-sight activities and whereabouts through a linear process of information accumulation. The analysis presented suggests that parental knowledge is a dynamic mental representation of children's out-of-sight experiences that becomes constructed through parents' observations of and communication with others. I argued that parents cognitively restructured information received from various sources rather than retaining exact copies of information they acquired. I also asserted that parents created projections about their children's out-of-sight experiences and that parents' projections sometimes became their understanding of

reality. In other words, *parental knowledge* was sometimes an assumption about reality that parents accepted to be true. By adopting a social constructionist stance, I articulated my assumption that parents' cognitive representations or *internal working models* of their children's out-of-sight experiences do not reflect an objective reality and, further, that objective levels of parental knowledge are not possible to quantify.

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## Appendix A

### Parental Knowledge Scales used by Stattin and Kerr (2000)

#### Parental “monitoring”

- 1) Do you know what your child does during his or her free time?
- 2) Do you know who your child hangs out with during his or her free time?
- 3) Do you usually know what type of homework your child has?
- 4) Do you know what your child spends his or her money on?
- 5) Do you usually know when your child has an exam or paper due at school?
- 6) Do you know how your child does in different subjects at school?
- 7) Do you know where your child goes when he or she is out with friends at night?
- 8) Do you normally know where your child goes and what he or she does after school?
- 9) In the last month, have you ever had no idea of where your child was at night?

#### Child disclosure

- 1) Does your child spontaneously tell you about his or her friends (which friends he or she hangs out with and how they think and feel about various things)?
- 2) How often does your child usually want to tell you about school (how each subject is going; his or her relationships with teachers)?
- 3) Does your child keep a lot of secrets from you about what he or she does during his or her free time?
- 4) Does your child hide a lot from you about what he or she does during nights and weekends?
- 5) Does your child like to tell you about what he or she did and where he or she went during the evening?

#### Parental solicitation

- 1) How often do you talk with your child’s friends when they come over to your house?
- 2) How often do you ask your child about what happened during his or her free time?
- 3) During the past month, how often have you initiated a conversation with your child about his or her free time?
- 4) When did you last have extra time to sit down and listen to your child when he or she talks about what happened during his or her free time?

- 5) How often do you ask your child to sit and tell you what happened at school on a regular day?

#### Parental control

- 1) Does your child have to have your permission before he or she goes out during weeknights?
- 2) If your child goes out on a Saturday evening, does he or she have to inform you beforehand about who will be along as well as where he or she will be going?
- 3) If your child has been out past curfew, do you require that he or she explains why and tells who they were with?
- 4) Do you demand that you know where your child is in the evenings, who he or she is going to be with, and what he or she is going to do?
- 5) Does your child have to ask you before he or she can make plans with friends about what he or she will do on a Saturday night?
- 6) Do you require that your child tells you how he or she spends his or her money?

## Appendix B

### Recruitment Letter

Dear Parent,

We would like to let you know about an interesting study about parent-child relationships taking place at the University of Guelph. The researchers are currently seeking parent volunteers to participate in this study.

The study is being carried out by Izabella Wojciechowska, a graduate student in the department of Family Relations and Applied Nutrition at the University of Guelph. She is working under the supervision of Professor Leon Kuczynski, who has conducted several studies on parent-child relationships with the cooperation of the Child Care and Learning Centre in the past.

For details about this study, please see the enclosed brochure. If you are interested in participating, please contact Izabella using the information provided.

Sincerely,



Director

Researcher: Izabella Wojciechowska  
[REDACTED]

Advisor: Leon Kuczynski, Ph.D.  
[REDACTED]

January, 2013

Dear Parent,

I am a graduate student at the University of Guelph and I am looking for parent volunteers to participate in my study. Specifically, I am looking for mothers or fathers of children between **8-13 years of age**.

My study is about parents' knowledge of their children's daily lives. I would like to learn about the types of things that parents are interested in knowing and not knowing about their children, and their reasons for wanting to know about different things in their children's lives. I would also like to know what parents do on a day-to-day basis to learn various things about their children. Past participants of similar studies run by Dr. Leon Kuczynski have enjoyed the experience of participating in this type of research, and many parents considered participation to be a learning experience.

As a participant in this study, you would be interviewed once for approximately one hour. The interview would take place either at your home or at the university, depending on your preference. Everyone will receive a small thank you gift in appreciation for their time and appointments are available to suit your schedule. If you or your spouse/partner would be willing to participate in this research study, please email me at [iwojciec@uoguelph.ca](mailto:iwojciec@uoguelph.ca) or call me at [REDACTED] and leave a message.

It is only through the participation of families that we can answer important research questions about parent-child relationships. Please consider getting involved!

Thank you,

Izabella Wojciechowska  
Department of Family Relations and Applied Nutrition

## Appendix C

## Certificate of Research Ethics Approval

	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>RESEARCH ETHICS BOARD</b>  <b>Certification of Ethical Acceptability of Research          Involving Human Participants</b></p>
<p><b>APPROVAL PERIOD:</b>                    <b>September 19, 2012 to September 19, 2013</b></p> <p><b>REB NUMBER:</b>                        <b>12JL038</b></p> <p><b>TYPE OF REVIEW:</b>                    <b>Delegated Type 1</b></p> <p><b>RESPONSIBLE FACULTY:</b>            <b>LEON KUCZYNSKI</b></p> <p><b>DEPARTMENT:</b>                        <b>Family Relations &amp; Applied Nutrition</b></p> <p><b>SPONSOR:</b>                                <b>N/A</b></p> <p><b>TITLE OF PROJECT:</b>                 <b>Parents' Knowledge of Children's Everyday Lives</b></p>	
<p>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.</p>	
<p>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.</p>	
<p>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.</p>	
<p>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.</p>	
<p>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.</p>	
<p><b>Membership of the Research Ethics Board:</b> B. Beresford, <i>Ext.</i>; F. Caldwell, <i>Physician</i>; C. Carstairs, <i>COA</i>; S. Chuang, <i>FRAN (alt)</i>; K. Cooley, <i>Alt. Health Care</i>; J. Clark, <i>PoliSci (alt)</i>; J. Devlin, <i>OAC</i>; J. Dwyer, <i>FRAN</i>; M. Dwyer, <i>Legal</i>; D. Dyck, <i>CBS</i>; D. Emslie, <i>Physician (alt)</i>; B. Ferguson, <i>CME (alt)</i>; H. Gilmour, <i>Legal (alt)</i>; J. Goertz, <i>CME</i>; B. Gottlieb, <i>Psychology</i>; S. Henson, <i>OAC (alt)</i>; G. Holloway, <i>CBS</i>; L. Kuczynski, <i>Chair</i>; S. McEwen, <i>OVC (alt)</i>; J. Minogue, <i>EHS</i>; I. Newby-Clark, <i>Psychology (alt)</i>; A. Papadopoulos, <i>OVC</i>; B. Power, <i>Ext.</i>; V. Shalla, <i>SOAN (alt)</i>; J. Srbely, <i>CBS (alt)</i>; R. Stansfield, <i>SOAN</i>; K. Wendling, <i>Ethics</i>.</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">Approved: per Chair, Research Ethics Board</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Date: _____</p>

## Appendix D

### Consent Form

#### CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by Izabella Wojciechowska from the department of Family Relations and Applied Nutrition at the University of Guelph. The results of this study will contribute to Izabella Wojciechowska's thesis requirement for a Master of Science degree.

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact Izabella Wojciechowska: Investigator. Telephone: [REDACTED]. E-mail: [iwojciec@uoguelph.ca](mailto:iwojciec@uoguelph.ca) or Leon Kuczynski: Faculty Supervisor. Telephone: [REDACTED]. E-mail: [lkuczyns@uoguelph.ca](mailto:lkuczyns@uoguelph.ca).

#### PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The main purpose of this study is to gain an understanding of how parents learn various things about their children. It is also of interest to understand specifically the types of things that parents want to know about and do not want to know about their children. Last, this study will explore the reasons why parents seek to learn things about their children.

#### PROCEDURES

If you volunteer to participate in this study, we would ask you to do the following things:  
Agree to participate in a structured interview that will take approximately one hour of your time to complete. The interview will take place either at your home or at a designated laboratory at the University of Guelph. You do not have to answer all of the questions and you are free to withdraw yourself and your data at any time. The interview will be audiotaped and transcribed for the purpose of data analysis. You may leave your contact information with the researcher if

you wish to receive results of the study. If you wish to receive results, the researcher will send them to you upon completion of the study in approximately one year's time.

#### POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

There are no known risks associated with participating in this study.

#### POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO PARTICIPANTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

There are no known benefits to the participant for participating in this study.

#### PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION

As a thank-you for participating in this study, you will receive a \$10 gift card to Tim Horton's.

#### CONFIDENTIALITY

Every effort will be made to ensure confidentiality of any identifying information that is obtained in connection with this study. All names will be changed in the transcription of the audiotapes and in reporting or presenting the data so that participants' names will not be connected with their data. All audiotapes will be destroyed within 5 years of the completion of the study.

#### PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You can choose whether to be in this study or not. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You may exercise the option of removing your data from the study. You may also refuse to answer any questions and still remain in the study. The investigator may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise that warrant doing so. If you decide to withdraw from the study, you will be thanked and the investigator will answer any questions you might have.

## RIGHTS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study. This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the University of Guelph Research Ethics Board. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, contact:

Research Ethics Officer      Telephone: (519) 824-4120, ext. 56606

University of Guelph      E-mail: [sauld@uoguelph.ca](mailto:sauld@uoguelph.ca)

437 University Centre      Fax: (519) 821-5236

Guelph, ON N1G 2W1

## SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANT

I have read the information provided for the study “Parents’ Knowledge of Children’s Everyday Lives” as described herein. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

---

Name of Participant (please print)

---

Signature of Participant

---

Date

SIGNATURE OF WITNESS

---

Name of Witness (please print)

---

Signature of Witness

---

Date

If you are interested in receiving the results of this study, please print your mailing address or your email address on the lines below.

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## Appendix E

### Interview Script

As I mentioned earlier, I'm interviewing parents in order to try to gain a better understanding of how parents learn things about their children. During this interview we're going to talk specifically about your relationship with \_\_\_\_\_, and the questions that I'm going to ask will be about how you learn things about \_\_\_\_\_. The interview should take between 45 minutes and 1 hour and I will be tape- recording it so that it can be transcribed at a later time. If there are any questions that you do not feel comfortable answering, you do not have to answer them. Also, when you're answering questions, please don't feel as though any answer is too obvious or that you are elaborating too much on something. Do you have any questions before we start?

1. How well do you know \_\_\_\_\_ on a daily basis?

I am interested in knowing about two things in particular. The first is how you know about \_\_\_\_\_'s activities on a day-to-day basis. What I mean by that is how do you know where \_\_\_\_\_ is, what he (or she) is doing, and who he (or she) is with? The second thing I want to know about is how you know about how \_\_\_\_\_ feels on a day-to-day basis. So I'll ask you a series of questions about these two topics.

#### **Everyday Knowledge**

1. What types of things are you *most* interested in finding out about \_\_\_\_\_ on a regular basis? Day-to-day, what do you want to know about him (or her)?
  - a. Why are these things important for you to know?

#### **Activities- Behavioural Knowledge**

Now I want to talk about what \_\_\_\_\_ was up to outside of the home in the past week specifically.

2. How *well* did you know where \_\_\_\_\_ was in the past week?

a. How did you know where \_\_\_\_\_ was?

Probe: Does \_\_\_\_\_ go anywhere other than school when he (or she) is outside of the house?

3. In the past week, how *well* did you know what \_\_\_\_\_ was doing?

a. How did you know what \_\_\_\_\_ was doing?

b. In the past two weeks, has \_\_\_\_\_ done something that you disapprove of when he (or she) was outside of the house and you weren't around? If so, how did you find out about it? (If the parent can't think of something within the last two weeks, ask about the past 6 months.)

4. How *well* did you know who \_\_\_\_\_ was with?

a. How did you know who \_\_\_\_\_ was with?

b. How *well* do you know about \_\_\_\_\_'s relationships with the different people in his (or her) life (e.g. friends, teachers, coaches)?

c. How do you know about these relationships?

### **Emotions- Psychological Knowledge**

Now I want to talk about \_\_\_\_\_'s emotions.

5. In the past week (or past two weeks), how *well* did you know about how \_\_\_\_\_ was feeling emotionally?

a. How did you know what \_\_\_\_\_ was feeling?

b. What happens when you know that \_\_\_\_\_ is upset? What do you do?

### **Significant Child Self-Disclosure**

We've been talking about everyday things you know about \_\_\_\_\_. Now I want to talk about the more distant past- specifically the past year.

6. Can you think of a specific time within the past year that \_\_\_\_\_ shared something with you that you wouldn't have found out about unless he (or she) had come to you with that information?
  - a. Why do you think that he (or she) came to you with this information?

### **Non-Disclosure**

Up until now, we've been talking about your knowledge of \_\_\_\_\_'s feelings and activities. Now I want to talk about the things that he (or she) doesn't share with you, because we all have things that we keep to ourselves on a daily basis.

7. How do you feel about not knowing things about \_\_\_\_\_?
  - a. What types of things are you comfortable with not knowing about him (or her)?

That was my last question; is there anything you would like to ask me, or is there anything that you would like to add?

Thank you very much for your time.

**\*\*End of interview\*\***

## Appendix F

## Demographic Questionnaire

1. What is your gender?  
Male  
Female  
Other
2. What is your age?  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. How many children do you have?  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. How old is the child that we talked about for the purpose of this study?  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. What is the gender of the child that we talked about for the purpose of this study?  
Male  
Female  
Other
6. What is this child's position of birth among all of his or her siblings?  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. What is your current marital status?  
Single  
Married  
Divorced  
Separated  
Widowed  
Would rather not say
8. Which of the following categories best describes your employment status?  
Unemployed  
Employed (Outside of home)  
Employed (Working from home)

9. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

- High school or equivalent
- Vocational/ technical school
- College
- Bachelor's degree
- Master's degree
- Doctoral degree
- Professional degree
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

10. What is your current household income?

- Under \$10 000
- \$10 000- \$19 999
- \$20 000- \$29 999
- \$30 000- \$39 999
- \$40 000- \$49 999
- \$50 000- \$74 999
- \$75 000- \$99 999
- \$100 000- \$150 000
- Over \$150 000
- Would rather not say

11. How would you classify yourself?

- Arab
- Asian
- Black or African American
- Hispanic or Latino
- Indigenous or Aboriginal
- Multiracial
- Pacific Islander
- White or Caucasian
- Would rather not say
- Other \_\_\_\_\_