

ATHABASCA UNIVERSITY

CONSIDERING SHIFTS IN PARENTING AFTER THE 8-WEEK CIRCLE OF SECURITY©  
PARENTING PROGRAM

BY

LISA M. GRAY

A THESIS  
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES  
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE  
DEGREE OF MASTER OF COUNSELLING

FACULTY OF HEALTH DISCIPLINES  
GRADUATE CENTRE FOR APPLIED PSYCHOLOGY

ATHABASCA UNIVERSITY  
MARCH, 2018

© LISA M. GRAY

## Approval of Thesis

The undersigned certify that they have read the thesis entitled

CONSIDERING SHIFTS IN PARENTING AFTER THE 8-WEEK CIRCLE OF  
SECURITY©-PARENTING PROGRAM

Submitted by

**Lisa Gray**

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

**Master of Counselling**

The thesis examination committee certifies that the thesis  
and the oral examination is approved

**Co-Supervisor's:**

Dr. Gwen Rempel  
Athabasca University

Dr. Gina Wong  
Athabasca University

**Committee Member:**

Dr. Karen Cook  
Athabasca University

**External Examiner:**

Dr. Cheryl Kier  
Athabasca University

March 21, 2018

## **Dedication**

This work is dedicated to my husband, Andrew, who has been a constant source of support and encouragement and to our newborn son, Evan, who was a great source of motivation to completing this work.

## Acknowledgments

First to Dr. Gina Wong, thank you for introducing me to the world of Circle of Security© and inviting me to be a part of the Athabasca University Circle of Security© Research and Evaluation Team. I truly appreciated your constant encouragement, support and the sheer amount of energy and time you put into making this thesis work what it is today. I am so grateful for the amount of effort you put forth into my development as a researcher and author. You provided me with the confidence to move forward in my academic endeavours through your constant belief in me and I will always be grateful to you for that. Secondly, to Dr. Gwen Rempel, thank you for welcoming me with open arms and for making me feel like a part of the research family. I sincerely appreciated all of the long days and nights you put into reading and editing this work. You were a constant source of encouragement and always ready with kind words of support when I felt overwhelmed by the enormity of this project. You encouraged me to trust in myself and to find my voice as a researcher and author. I will never forget the amount of time, effort and sincere support you provided throughout this process. Lastly, I would like to say thank you to the Athabasca University Circle of Security© Research and Evaluation Team, for welcoming me into their research family. Being a part of this research team has truly been an amazing experience and I hope to continue to work with you all in the future. I would like to end by saying thank you to my thesis co-supervisors and thesis committee for being so extremely supportive of my goal to finish this thesis work before the birth of my son, Evan. This is a project we can all be proud of! As I move on to my next academic adventure, I know I will succeed, as I will be bringing with me all of the experiences I gained being a part of this research team and your meaningful words of support and encouragement when faced with any future challenges.

### **Abstract**

Evidence of the effectiveness of relationship-based parenting programs such as the 20-week Circle of Security© intervention is emerging in the scientific literature. Research regarding the 8-week Circle of Security© Parenting program is still in its infancy. The aims of this current thesis work were to 1) identify themes that emerged from parent's descriptions of shifts or no shifts in parenting after completion of the 8-week Circle of Security© Parenting program, and 2) to conduct interviews through the video teleconferencing software, Zoom Video Communications Inc., to document participant experiences and make recommendations on best practices. For the first research aim, seven themes and eight sub-themes emerged from 13 transcribed interviews. For the second aim, parents who participated in the Zoom Video Communications Inc. interviews described the video teleconferencing interviews as: (1) convenient, (2) personal, (3) option to choose the device to participate in the interview, and (4) time saving.

## Preface

While completing my thesis I was a member of the Athabasca University Circle of Security© Parenting Program Research Team. I conducted my thesis research with the guidance and support of the principal investigators (Rempel & Wong) and other research team members. The main aim of my thesis research was to generate a qualitative description of parents' shifts or no shifts in parenting after completion of the 8-week Circle of Security© Parenting program. A further aim was to make recommendations on best practices regarding the utilization of video conferencing software as a method of data generation in qualitative research. Internal AU funding was received through the Excellence in Research Scholarship and the Access to Research Tools Award, which allowed for the purchase of a Zoom Video Communications Inc. membership and the cost of hiring a professional transcriptionist to transcribe the recorded interviews for data analysis.

The two manuscripts that comprise my thesis write-up were collaborative efforts of several individuals and therefore have shared authorship. The first manuscript, *Examining Shifts in Parenting after Completion of the 8-Week Circle of Security© Parenting Program*, explores the common themes that emerged from 13 semi-structured interviews. G. Rempel conducted nine of the interviews utilized in this study and I conducted the four video teleconferencing interviews. I completed data analysis with the feedback from both G. Rempel and G. Wong. I wrote the original draft of this manuscript, which was revised with input from Rempel and Wong. The authorship for this first manuscript is Gray, Rempel and Wong, 2018.

The second manuscript, *The Use of Video Teleconferencing as a Method of Data Collection in Qualitative Research*, is a methodological paper. For this study, I completed four semi-structured interviews using the video teleconferencing program Zoom Video Communications Inc. For

these semi-structured interviews, I utilized the COS-P outcomes protocol interview guide, which was developed by the Athabasca University Circle of Security© Parenting Program Research Team and was also employed in the previous interviews conducted by G. Rempel. I added and changed some of the questions to better suit this current study. These new additions and edits were also reviewed and revised by Dr. Gwen Rempel and Dr. Gina Wong. Through conducting the interviews, I made recommendations for future research and drafted the first copy of this manuscript, which was again revised and reimaged by Rempel and Wong. The authorship for this second manuscript is Gray, Rempel and Wong, 2018.

## Key Concepts

**Circle of Security© Parenting (COS-P)-** is an 8-week relationship-based early intervention that is rooted in attachment theory. This parent reflective intervention is focused on increasing parents' relational capacities; increasing parents' reflective functioning, helping parents to learn how to recognize, honour and give a name to their child's emotions and increasing empathy towards their child (Cooper, Hoffman, & Powell, 2009).

**Attachment-** for the sake of this current paper refers to the parent-infant relationship that develops over the first year of the infant's life and influences the infant's behavioural and emotional development (Cassidy, 2008; Rieser-Danner & Slaughter, 2014; Schore, 2001).

**Attachment theory-** is comprised of the work of John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth (Ainsworth & Bowlby, 1991). Attachment theorists argue that infants require a dependable nurturing parent in order to mature into healthy adults (van Rosmalen, van der Horst, & van der Veer, 2016). If an infant does not have regular access to a nurturing parent, the child may display this lack of a secure parent through undesirable behaviours (van Rosmalen et al., 2016).

**Reflective functioning-** is a person's ability to recognize that behaviour and mental states are linked in important ways (Slade, 2005).

**Mental states-** is described as a person's feelings, needs, wishes, motivations, thoughts, and beliefs (Ordway, Sadler, Dixon, & Slade, 2014).

**Parent reflective functioning-** refers to the parent's ability to recognize his or her own mental states and their child(s)' mental states (Fonagy, Steele, Steele, Moran, & Higgitt, 1991).

**Shifts in parenting-** changes in the parent's perceptions of his or her child's needs, as perceived by the parent (e.g., moving from seeing the child's crying as a manipulative or attention-seeking behaviour to seeing crying as the child trying to alert their parent to a genuine need (Cooper et al., 2009).

**Circle of Security© circle diagram-** the circle diagram (Appendix A) is a tool used by the Circle of Security© Parenting program to provide parents with an easy to understand and easy to use illustration of how parents can identify and meet their child's emotional needs. In this diagram, parents are the secure base and provide a safe haven for their children. When children are on the top of the circle, they are out investigating their world, but still require their parent to watch, help, enjoy and delight in them. When children are coming in (the bottom of the circle) they require their parents to protect, comfort and delight in them and also organize their emotions (Powell, Cooper, Hoffman, & Marvin, 2014).



**Empathy-** empathy in the Circle of Security© Parentng program refers to parents experiencing an “empathic shift” (Cooper, Hoffman, Marvin, & Powell, 2000), whereas parents change their attention from the child’s behaviour to their parent-child relationship and their child’s emotional requirements.

**Being-with-** Being-with entails a parent providing responsive care to their child. Parents provide their child with meaningful interaction, security and comfort them when required by the child. For the child, they will be confident in the fact that they have a primary caregiver who is emotionally accessible (Powell et al., 2014).

**Organizing emotions-** this is when a parent helps their child to organize and make sense of his or her internal experience (Copper et al., 2000).

**Rupture-** according to the Circle of Security© Intervention, a rupture happens when the parent moves away from the circle and is not available to provide a secure base for their child (Powell et al., 2014).

**Repair-** this is when, after a rupture, the parent comes back to the circle and is now available to provide their child with a secure base. This is accomplished through the parents becoming emotionally stable themselves, and then assisting their child to organize their feelings. After the parent has reassured the child that he or she is able to be with their emotions again, the parent and child can enter into a meaningful conversation about the event that took place and how they can make it better in the future (Powell et al., 2014).

## Table of Content

Approval of Thesis.....	ii
Dedication.....	iii
Acknowledgments.....	iv
Abstract.....	v
Preface.....	vi
Key Concepts.....	viii
Table of Contents.....	x
List of Tables.....	xiv
List of Figures.....	xv
CHAPTER I - INTRODUCTION.....	1
Significance of the Study.....	3
Research Question and Aims.....	3
Implications.....	4
CHAPTER II - METHODOLOGY.....	6
Interpretive Framework.....	6
Methodological Approach and Rationale.....	7
Research Design.....	8
Sampling Protocol and Participant Recruitment.....	8
Sample Size.....	9
Data Generation.....	9
Data Analysis.....	10
Quality of Data.....	10
CHAPTER III - MANUSCRIPTS.....	12
Examining Shifts in Parenting After Completion of the 8-Week Circle of Security© Parenting Program.....	12
The Use of Video Teleconferencing as a Method of Data Collection in Qualitative Research.....	12

Manuscript 1: Examining Shifts in Parenting after Completion of the 8-Week Circle of Security© Parenting Program .....	13
Abstract.....	13
Attachment Research and Theory .....	14
Shifts in Parent’s Perceptions of Their Child’s Needs.....	17
Circle of Security© .....	18
Literature Review.....	19
Studies Conducted on Circle of Security©.....	20
Circle of Security© Intervention (COS-I) .....	20
Circle of Security© Parenting (COS-P).....	22
Methods.....	25
Participants .....	25
Data Generation .....	27
Data Analysis.....	27
Ethical Considerations .....	29
Results.....	30
Parent’s Greater Awareness.....	31
Empathy .....	32
Being-With.....	34
Identifying Needs.....	38
Repairing Ruptures .....	39
Organizing Emotions .....	41
Not Regularly Integrating Specific COS Concepts .....	42
Not Experiencing Child’s Behaviour Differently .....	43
Parent Reflective Functioning .....	44
Relationship With Child Over Parenting Strategy.....	48
Confidence in a Different Approach to Parenting .....	50
Parent Shift in Views on Child Behaviour .....	53
Increased Parent-Child Communication.....	56
Being a Good Enough Parent .....	57
Parent’s Increased Confidence and Understanding .....	59
Discussion.....	60
Limitations and Future Research .....	63

Limitations .....	63
Future Research .....	64
Conclusion .....	64
References.....	66
Manuscript 2: The Use of Video Conferencing as a Method of Data Collection in	
Qualitative Research .....	72
Abstract.....	72
The Use of Video Conferencing as a Method of Data Collection in Qualitative Research ....	73
Review of Literature .....	73
Current Study .....	76
What is Video Conferencing and What is Required?.....	76
Zoom Video Communications Inc.....	77
Features.....	77
Pricing.....	78
Security .....	79
Ethical Considerations .....	80
Considerations for Planning and Conducting the Interview .....	81
Recruitment and Absentees .....	81
Building Rapport .....	82
Conducting the Interview .....	82
Transcription.....	83
Experiences of Participants.....	84
Researcher Recommendations .....	86
Advantages and Disadvantages.....	90
Advantages .....	90
Disadvantages .....	91
Limitations and Future Research .....	92
Conclusion .....	93

References.....	94
CHAPTER IV. DISCUSSION AND FUTURE IMPLICATIONS .....	97
REFERENCES .....	99
APPENDIX A: The Circle of Security Diagram .....	101
APPENDIX B: Interview Guide.....	102
APPENDIX C: Athabasca University Research Ethics Approval.....	104
APPENDIX D: Participant Information Letter and Informed Consent Form .....	105
APPENDIX E: Counselling Resource List for Research Participants.....	109

**List of Tables**

Table 1 - Demographics of participants at start of COS-P .....26

**List of Figures**

Figure 1 - Themes and Sub-Themes .....31

## CHAPTER I - INTRODUCTION

Watching a parent and child sharing a special moment can be an amazing experience. One does not have to look far to observe the many thousands of interactions parents have with their children; these interactions are all around us. Observing these special parent-child moments at the mall or park, I often found myself questioning how some parents knew just what their child needed in that moment and offered them comfort or gave their child space. I have also observed challenging parent-child moments. When I saw a child in a public space experiencing a temper tantrum, I wondered what was going through the parent's mind in that moment. Were these parents embarrassed that their child was expressing him or herself in a way that some people would deem as undesirable? Were they trying to figure out how to stop or lessen the temper tantrum, or were they trying to figure what their child emotionally needed in that moment?

As a soon-to-be mother myself, I have thought about the do's and don'ts of pregnancy, the birthing process and the practical items my child will need to survive after birth. Less emphasis and thought has been placed on what the actual parent-child relationship will look like and what I will actually need to do to meet my child's needs, especially considering how to support him exploring his new world and being there to comfort him when their new world is scary or unkind. How will I manage or interrupt the times when my child is having a bad moment or day? I think these are the concerns of many new and even seasoned parents. Going back to the scenario of the child having a temper tantrum in public, I wondered how parents actually viewed and interpreted this scene. Did this parent view this behaviour as separate from their child, figuring that their child was having a bad or irrational moment? Or perhaps the parent felt that their child was being bad in an attempt to rebel or get his or her way? Would a parent



ever think they might have missed a cue from their child and that a genuine need of theirs was not being met?

While completing a Master's degree in counselling I completed an 8-month internship as a family therapist intern at the Calgary Family Therapy Centre in Calgary, Alberta. As a counselling intern, I worked with many different families and noticed that families, and even parents within the same family system, had various views and interpretations of their child expressing him or her self in undesirable ways. Parents often came to the counselling centre asking for help to manage or lessen these undesirable child behaviours. One of the first steps I would take with a new family was to co-construct a genogram, which is a tool therapists use to create a visual picture of many aspects of the family including, who is in the family system, living arrangements, and each member's medical and mental health background. At this particular counselling centre, the genogram was offered to depict the relational lines between family members, whether it was a strong line, thin line, distant line, or conflict line. These lines would help to give the family therapist an idea of the relationship between family members, as currently perceived by the family members. Although parents would enter counselling stating that their primary concern was their child's behaviour, often after completing the family genogram, the family would realize that it was actually the relationship they wanted to focus on in therapy.

At the same time as completing this internship, I was conducting research into the Circle of Security© Parenting (COS-P) Program. While conducting this research I noticed many overlaps from what I was hearing from families at the counselling centre and the main objectives of the COS-P program. I became interested in learning more about how parents perceived undesirable behaviour and if a relationship-based program, such as the COS-P program

facilitated or initiated shifts in parenting. For the purpose of my thesis research, shifts in parenting is defined as, changes in the parent's perceptions of his or her child's needs, as perceived by the parent (e.g., moving from seeing the child's crying as a manipulative or attention seeking behaviour to seeing crying as the child trying to alert their parent to a genuine development need (Cooper et al., 2009).

### **Significance of the Study**

When choosing a parenting program, parents are predominantly presented with two main schools of thought; those that focus primarily on parenting strategies to modify behaviour and those that focus on the parent-child relationship, in hopes that building a secure relationship will in-turn modify or lessen undesirable behaviours long-term. The COS-P program shifts the focus from the traditional behaviour management model to focusing on attachment and the parent-child relationship (Cooper, Hoffman, & Powell, 2009). Shifts are believed to happen by enhancing the parent's relational capacities through the COS-P. This current study did not evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention in terms of positive shifts in child behaviour, or moving from insecure attachment to secure attachment. Rather, through my thesis work I examined parents' descriptions of shifts or no shifts in parenting following participation in the relationship-based 8-week COS-P, to contribute to COS-P program development and evaluation. Parents' rich descriptions may provide the Circle of Security© originators and Circle of Security© Parenting facilitators with a deeper understanding of shifts in parenting.

### **Research Question and Aims**

My thesis research addressed the research question: What themes emerged from parents' descriptions of how their parenting did or did not shift after completing Circle of Security© Parenting Program?

The two research aims were to:

- 1) Identify common themes from parent's descriptions of how their parenting did or did not shift after completion of the COS-P program through analysis of semi-structured interviews.
- 2) Conduct four semi-structured qualitative interviews, through video conferencing technology, Zoom Video Communications Inc., with parents who have completed the COS-P program.

### **Implications**

This research is important to conduct because parenting affects everyone and it is a central topic in the counselling field. It is crucial that counsellors and other helping professionals learn more about shifts in parenting and how evidence-based interventions, such as the Circle of Security© Parenting program, may encourage positive shifts in parenting. Studying programs, such as COS-P, will have clinical implications, but numerous studies are needed to show how this program may or may not be an effective program for facilitating positive shifts in parenting.

Further, Using Zoom Video Communications Inc. as a means of generating qualitative interview data will add to the limited knowledge and literature currently available for researchers to consult when designing their own research study utilizing video conferencing software. Thus, in order to contribute to the counselling field and other health related fields my thesis work offers two articles for publication – a substantive article and a methodological article. The first manuscript focuses on describing the themes of shifts or no shifts in parenting, as described by 13 parents who have completed the COS-P program, and the second manuscript focuses on employing video conferencing software as a method of generating data in qualitative research. Proposed journals for publication include: *Qualitative Health Research, International*

*Journal of Qualitative Methods, Journal of Attachment Parenting, Attachment & Human Development, Canadian Counselling and Psychotherapy, and Journal of Family Psychology.*

## CHAPTER II - METHODOLOGY

The following chapter details the methodology used for this thesis work, specifically describing my interpretive framework, methodological approach, and rationale. It also specifies the research design, including; sampling protocol, participant recruitment, sample size, data collection, data analysis, and quality of data.

### **Interpretive Framework**

This research was completed through a social constructivist lens. In social constructivism, the main aim of research is to privilege the participant's view of the phenomena the researcher is studying (Creswell, 2013). Participants' description of shifts or no shifts in parenting is the central focus of this current study. I believe how parents interpret their child's needs or how they see themselves as a parent is socially and historically constructed. I kept my research question broad and employed open-ended questions, to allow participants the flexibility to construct the meaning of shifts in parenting. Working through a social constructivist lens meant recognizing how my own personal and professional experiences influenced my interpretive research (Creswell, 2013).

My therapeutic work with families and my experience with Circle of Security© influenced how I interpreted the data, and my work with families at the Calgary Family Therapy Centre shaped has shaped the way I view and interrupt interpersonal patterns between family members. While conducting the parent research interviews, I was mindful that my role during these research interviews was that of a researcher and not as a family therapist, although my questions and follow-up questions were still were influenced by my experiences as a family therapist. I was drawn to specific follow-up questions because of the natural curiosities I have developed as a counsellor in training.

While conducting the parent research interviews and while analyzing the data for themes, I was mindful of how being a Registered Circle of Security© Parent Facilitator has impacted the questions that I asked parents and how I interpreted the data. Analyzing the data, I noticed that I was becoming aware when the main goals of COS-P presented themselves in the transcribed interviews. I was mindful to ensure that I was paying equal attention to COS-P themes and non-COS-P themes that emerged from the data. I accomplished this through reading each of the transcribed interviews multiple times and by engaging in discussion with my thesis co-supervisors.

### **Methodological Approach and Rationale**

A qualitative descriptive research design was employed to guide each stage of the research process. Qualitative descriptive research is seen as being less theoretical in orientation as compared to other approaches, such as, phenomenology and grounded theory (Neergaard et al., 2009). Qualitative descriptive studies tend to be more naturalistic, where the researcher utilizes various methodological techniques to best match the phenomenon that he or she is studying (Sandelowski, 2000). A central objective of qualitative descriptive studies is for the researcher to gather a rich description from participants about an experience or process and for the researcher to share this data in language that is accessible for a wide audience (Sandelowski, 2000; Sullivan-Bolyai, Bova, & Harper, 2005). This approach guides each stage of research from forming the research question, sampling, data collection and analysis (Neergaard et al., 2009). Research questions in qualitative descriptive studies are meant to elicit participants' descriptions of a lived experience (Magilvy & Thomas, 2009). Qualitative descriptive studies typically have smaller sample sizes than other research designs and participants must meet certain criteria, such

as, having the lived experience being studied and being able and willing to share their stories with the researcher (Magilvy & Thomas, 2009).

Qualitative descriptive researchers typically have ideas of what the phenomenon is, but they do not assume to know a lived experience from the perception of the participants who have actually had the lived experience (Magilvy & Thomas, 2009). Researchers working from this approach usually gather their data from interviewing or observing their participants. The researcher can work from a semi-structured interview, but researchers will listen to the participants and ask appropriate follow up questions (Magilvy & Thomas, 2009). Data analysis in qualitative descriptive research can be a lengthy process as researchers review their recorded interviews, transcriptions, and field notes multiple times. Researchers may also seek clarification from participants after the interview. The qualitative descriptive researcher starts data analysis by first coding the data, grouping codes into categories, and then into themes (Magilvy & Thomas, 2009).

### **Research Design**

**Sampling protocol and participant recruitment.** Working within a qualitative descriptive framework, purposeful sampling was employed. The sample only included parents who had completed the 8-week COS-P program, as they were best able to provide the descriptions required for this study (Sandelowski, 2000). To ensure program fidelity, only parents who completed the program under Dr. Gina Wong as their facilitator were recruited to participate in the current study. Dr. Gina Wong facilitated COS-P with 4 women in 2015 Spring, and with 4 women and 2 men in 2016 Spring. Two of these women and two of these men attended the group as a couple. All of these parents were recruited for interviews immediately

following the 8-week program and again for a Zoom Video Communications Inc. interview one or two years post their COS-P participation.

**Sample size.** Nine parents were interviewed by G. Rempel, immediately following their COS-P participation; all four women from the 2015 group and three women and two men from the 2016 group. Eight of these interviews were conducted in person and one was conducted by telephone. Four of these nine parents participated in a second interview by video teleconferencing through Zoom Video Communications Inc.; for one of them it was one year after their COS-P and for three, it was two years since their COS-P program. In all there were 13 interviews with nine parents for data analysis. Regarding response rate, 9 out of the 10 COS-P program attendees participated in a post-program interview and four out of the six parents invited to participate in the Zoom Video Communications Inc. interview went through the process of scheduling and completing interviews. Interviews ranged from 23 minutes to 2-hours in length. No compensation was given to participants for participating in these interviews.

**Data generation.** Data generation consisted of 13 semi-structured individual interviews, guided by the COS-P outcomes protocol interview, which was developed by the Athabasca University Circle of Security© Parenting Program Research Team (Appendix B). The COS-P outcomes protocol interview is based on the post-group evaluation, which is used by the COS originators. This interview focuses on gathering parents' descriptions of perceived changes in themselves and how they parent. Interviews were digitally recorded and then transcribed by a professional transcriptionist. The interviewer reviewed transcripts to ensure accuracy. These interviews were 23 minutes to just over an hour long in length.

The four video teleconferencing interviews ranged from 1.5 to 2 hours in length. Differences in interview length may be attributed to the individual interviewer conducting the



interview, amount of follow-up questions asked by the interviewer and the length of participant's answers. There is currently a small body of literature exploring the use of video-conferencing software, as a means of generating data (e.g. Deakin & Wakefield, 2013; Sedgwick & Spiers, 2009; Rowe, Rosenheck, Stern, & Bellamy, 2014), however, there is currently no literature on specifically employing Zoom Video Communications Inc. Utilizing Zoom Video Communications Inc. for this current study helped to keep the research costs reasonably low as there was no travel time for the researcher.

**Data analysis.** Working from a qualitative descriptive framework, Miles and Huberman's (1994) six analytic strategies to guide data analysis were employed. Transcribed interviews were entered into NVivo, where the data was managed and coded. The interview data were examined carefully. Each interview was read in its entirety multiple times and then read line-by-line to code phrases and paragraphs. After all interviews were coded, I reflected on the codes and looked for emerging patterns in the data. From these patterns, there were similarities and differences in the data to highlight for additional reflection and examination. I then identified common themes across the data and interviews and wrote descriptions of each theme with supporting quotes from the participants, using direct quotes. These themes were presented at several data analysis meetings with my co-supervisors. Through this collaborative process final themes were determined and developed. Throughout the process a methodological journal was kept detailing insights and decisions on the collected data.

**Quality of data.** To ensure quality of data, the strategies recommended by Noble and Smith (2016) were utilized. Truth-value was ensured by reflecting on and stating personal biases that may have influenced the results and by representing participants' descriptions by staying close to the data, and to their actual words. Debriefing with co-authors also helped to uphold

truth-value. The semi-structured interviews were recorded and viewed by a co-author of this paper, whose personal biases were also discussed and reflected upon by the authors of this paper. The recordings and transcripts were reviewed several times to re-check the data. Verbatim extracts were also utilized to represent participants' perspectives and to allow readers to make their own decisions on whether the final themes were representative of the data.

Keeping a clear and detailed methodological journal documenting the decision-making process and collaborative team meetings helped to maintain consistency. Neutrality was upheld by accounting for truth-value, consistency, and applicability, and by acknowledging that the results are influenced by philosophical positions, values and personal and professional experiences. Personal beliefs, values and experiences influenced which themes were highlighted and how they were interpreted. Throughout the data analysis process, emerging themes were discussed with the co-authors to confirm they were in alignment with the data. Reflecting and commenting on whether or not the findings could be expected with other populations addressed applicability.

### CHAPTER III - MANUSCRIPTS

This chapter details an outline for each of the two manuscripts offered in this thesis and describes a cohesive rationale for this current work. Both manuscripts are included in this chapter.

#### **Examining Shifts in Parenting after Completion of the 8-Week Circle of Security©**

**Parenting Program** (Gray, Rempel, & Wong, 2018).

Much of the research conducted on the relationship-based Circle of Security© program has been focused on the original 20-week intervention. There is a gradually growing body of research on the condensed 8-week Circle of Security© Parenting program. The aim of this current thesis work is to expand on the available literature, by exploring if parents experience shifts in parenting after completing the 8-week version of the program, as described by the parents themselves. To gather parents' descriptions of shifts or no shifts in parenting, 13 semi-structured interviews were conducted, eight in-person interviews, one telephone interview and four follow-up interviews employing the video teleconferencing program, Zoom Video Communications Inc. All interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed for data analysis. Using Miles and Huberman's (1994) six analytic strategies to guide data analysis, seven themes and eight sub-themes were identified.

#### **The Use of Video Teleconferencing as a Method of Data Collection in Qualitative Research**

(Gray, Rempel, & Wong, 2018).

While planning this thesis project, "Examining Shifts in Parenting after Completion of the 8-Week Circle of Security© Parenting Program", the co-authors decided to employ video teleconferencing software to conduct four parent research interviews. Video teleconferencing was chosen as the method of data generation since the interviewer resided in a different city than

the participants in this study. Due to time and funding constraints it was not feasible for the interviewer to travel to conduct these interviews. The principal investigator consulted the available literature to guide her work and realized that there was only a small amount of literature to consult and that there was no literature on her chosen video conferencing program, Zoom Video Communications Inc. The principal investigator decided to add to the current literature by writing a manuscript detailing participant experiences and outlining recommendations on best practices for future researchers.

**Manuscript 1: Examining Shifts in Parenting after Completion of the 8-Week Circle of Security© Parenting Program**

Abstract

The Circle of Security© Parenting (COS-P) program is a relationship-based intervention that is rooted in attachment theory (Cooper, Hoffman, & Powell, 2009). This parent intervention is focused on increasing parents' relational capacities; increasing parents' reflective functioning, helping parents to learn how to recognize, honour, and give a name to their child's emotions, and increasing empathy towards their child (Cooper et al., 2009). From a relationship-based perspective, enhancing these capacities through the COS-P, parents may notice positive shifts in their parenting. Such shifts, it is hoped, increase a sense of security in the parent-child relationship. The purpose of this qualitative descriptive study was to analyze parents' descriptions of shifts or no shifts in their parenting following participation in the 8-week COS-P. Through data analysis seven themes and eight sub themes emerged; (1) Parent's Greater Awareness, with the sub-themes of: (i) Empathy, (ii) Being-With, (iii) Identifying Needs, (iv) Repairing Ruptures, (v) Organizing Emotions, (vi) Not Regularly Integrating Specific COS Concepts, and (vii) Not Experiencing Child's Behaviour Differently; (2) Parent Reflective

Functioning; (3) Relationship With Child Over Parenting Strategy; (4) Different Approach to Parenting; (5) Parent's Shift in Views on Child Behaviour; (6) Increased Parent-Child Communication; and (7) Being A Good Enough Parent, with the sub-theme of: (i) Parent's Increased Confidence and Understanding. A key influence of these shifts in parenting appeared to predominately come from parents gaining Greater Awareness through COS-P. Highlighting parents' descriptions of shifts or no shifts in parenting may help with program development and evaluation for Circle of Security© and other relationship-based interventions.

Keywords: *Circle of Security©, parenting attachment, qualitative interviews*

### **Examining Shifts in Parenting after Completion of the 8-Week Circle of Security© Parenting Program**

The Circle of Security© Parenting (COS-P) program is a relationship-based intervention that is focused on increasing parents' relational capacity, increasing parents' reflective functioning, helping parents to learn how to recognize, honour, and give a name to their child's emotions, and increase empathy towards their child (Cooper, Hoffman, & Powell, 2009). From a relationship-based perspective, enhancing these capacities through COS-P, parents may notice positive shifts in their parenting. Such shifts, it is hoped, increase a sense of security for both the parent and child in their parent-child relationship.

#### **Attachment Research and Theory**

Circle of Security© Parenting (COS-P) is based on 60 years of attachment research and theory (Cooper et al., 2009). Developmental scientist and psychologist Kirby Deater-Deckard has argued that parents and children should not be seen as two separate entities but as a reciprocal relationship that is actively created by both participants (Deater-Deckard & O'Connor, 2000). Attachment refers to the parent-infant relationship that grows over the first year of the

infant's life; which impacts the infant's behavioural and emotional development (Cassidy, 2008; Rieser-Danner & Slaughter, 2014; Schore, 2001). Psychologist and neuropsychology researcher, Allan Schore, argued that humans are born with the need for relationships and the attachment in these relationships can impact a child's social and emotional development (2001). Schore emphasizes that the primary parent is continuously regulating his or her infant by shifting the infant's emotional states, on a non-conscious level, and that an infant's interaction with his or her parent in early life has a substantial influence on the infant's later coping capacity (2001).

Attachment theorists maintain that infants need at least one ongoing nurturing relationship with an empathic parent to become a well-adjusted individual (van Rosmalen, van der Horst, & van der Veer, 2016). If the child's parent is not available or does not respond to the child's needs, the child may display this lack of their needs being met through behaviour that the parent perceives as undesirable, for example, crying or emotional outbursts (van Rosmalen et al., 2016). The quality of attachment in the parent-child relationship affects other relationships as well (Karen, 1994; Maccoby, 1992; Schore, 2001; Thompson, 2008). That is, secure children are more likely to have long-term friendships, work collaboratively with friends, and have more enjoyable friendships (Cooper et al., 2009).

John Bowlby is considered to be the originator of attachment theory; Mary Ainsworth further developed his work (van Rosmalen et al., 2016). In 1950, while advising for the World Health Organization on mental health concerns facing homeless children, Bowlby (1951) concluded that access to a constant caring and intimate parent was vital for an infant's mental health. Bowlby developed the term attachment behaviour to describe any behaviour displayed from the infant or child that resulted in getting closer or sustaining proximity to an individual that the child deems as a person who is able to better cope with the outside world than they

currently are (Bowlby, 1988). A child develops a sense of security when they have a consistent parent who they know they can continuously go to when they need to be comforted or encouraged (Bowlby, 1988). Bowlby (1988) argued that a key concept of parenting was the idea of providing children with a secure base from which they could explore the world, knowing that they can come back to this secure base when the outside world becomes too emotionally overwhelming. The parent's role is to welcome his or her child back into the secure base and for the parent to identify and fulfill the needs of the child coming back into the secure base.

Mary Ainsworth contributed to attachment theory by providing empirical support through her Uganda and Baltimore research studies, which identified security patterns (Bretherton, 1992). In Ainsworth's Uganda study, she recruited 26 families who had babies that were still breast feeding, ranging in age from 1-24 months. She observed these families bi-weekly, for 2-hours each visit, over a 9-month period of time. Ainsworth was curious about observing signals and behaviours from children that encouraged closer proximity to their parent(s). Her work yielded interesting results regarding observed dissimilarities in the quality of interactions between the mother and her infant. Ainsworth categorized mothers who provided detailed and in the moment information about their child's signals, as highly sensitive, when compared to mothers who were not able to describe their child's signals. Through this work Ainsworth identified three attachment behaviours in infants: Securely attached (i.e., showed little distress and were able to explore with their mother present), insecurely attached (i.e., distressed infants who were not easily consoled by parent and rarely explored their environment), and not-yet attached (i.e., did not display different behaviour towards their parent). Ainsworth concluded that mothers who were considered to have high maternal sensitivity, tended to have more secure infants (Bretherton, 1992).

In the subsequent Baltimore study Ainsworth enrolled 26 families before their babies were born and conducted 18 visits with each family during the baby's first year of life. Ainsworth observed noticeable differences between how mothers responded to their infants and the reaction of their infants in response to the mothers' reactions. Ainsworth found that maternal sensitivity was associated with the quality of the parent-infant relationship (Bretherton, 1992). Ainsworth's studies made several notable contributions including: the secure base concept, maternal sensitivity, children's exploratory behaviour, and the Strange Situation Procedure (Bretherton, 1992; van Rosmalen et al., 2016). Attachment related concepts based on Bowlby and Ainsworth's work have been applied by contemporary researchers, theorists, and research-oriented clinicians.

### **Shifts in Parents' Perceptions of Their Child's Needs**

Shifts in parenting can be described as changes in the parents' perceptions of their child's needs or as in shifts in parent representation. For example, prior to the parent participating in COS-P, parents often described their child's crying as a manipulative or attention seeking behaviour; a shift occurs if after participating in the COS-P program the parent describes his or her child's crying as a way to alert their parent to a genuine developmental need (Cooper et al., 2009).

Huber, McMahon and Sweller (2015) investigated the efficacy of the 20-week Circle of Security© Intervention with 83 parent-child pairs, who were referred to their local mental health service agency due to the child displaying emotional and/or behavioural challenges and concerns regarding the relationship between parent and child (Huber et al., 2015). The objective of their study was to investigate if parents would show an increase in parent reflective functioning, a



positive increase regarding how the parents viewed themselves and their child, increased parent-child attachment, and decreased disorganized attachment (Huber et al., 2015).

Huber et al. (2015) found an increase in parent reflective functioning, a more positive parent view of the parent-child relationship, and more secure attachment. A decrease in disorganized attachment was also found. Huber and colleagues also discovered that parents did have an increase in positive representations and that parents' descriptions matched the goals targeted by the COS intervention. These researchers developed a coding scale to measure parent representations. Eight scales were used to measure two affect dimensions, hostility and joy, which were coded from parents' descriptions describing feelings for their child and/or the child-parent relationship. Six dimensions reflected parents' perceptions of themselves as the child's primary parent, which concentrated on qualities targeted by COS (Huber et al., 2015). Huber et al. concluded that there is a need for more studies specifically looking at changes in parent representations after participation in an attachment-based intervention, which provides support for this current study. Huber and colleagues evaluated the 20-week Circle of Security© Intervention and not the 8-week Circle of Security© Parenting program. No published studies to date examine shifts in parenting after completing COS-P.

### **Circle of Security©**

Circle of Security© is a relationship-based parent reflective intervention, which encourages parents to acquire or strengthen the practice of reflecting on their parenting (Cooper et al, 2009). Circle of Security© is offered in several different formats including COS-I a 20-week clinical model, which is offered in either a group or individual format, and COS-P, an 8-week parent reflection model, which utilizes a facilitator manual and DVD. The 8-week DVD model can also be delivered in a group setting or individually (Cooper et al., 2009). In order to

facilitate COS-P, the individual must first become a Registered Circle of Security© Parent Facilitator, which entails four days of training. COS-P aims to increase parents' relational capacities by increasing parents' ability to recognize where their child is on the Circle of Security© circle, which is a graphic created to visually show parents their child's needs (Powell, Cooper, Hoffman, & Marvin, 2014), how to meet their child's current needs, how to help their child to regulate his or her emotions, and how to respond to their child in an empathic way (Cooper et al., 2009).

The Circle of Security© circle diagram (Appendix A) is designed to help parents to understand that children need their parents to be a “secure base” and a “safe haven” by keeping their “hands” on the circle. From a “secure base” children go out “on top of the circle” and explore their world. While children are out exploring on the top of the circle parents are there to watch over their children, delight in their child's exploration; enjoy exploring with them, and help them when needed. The bottom of the circle represents parents welcoming the child back to a safe haven by recognizing their child's need for protection or comfort, delight, or help to organize their feelings. Circle of Security© can be described in “25 words or less”: “Always: be BIGGER, STRONGER, WISER, and KIND. Whenever possible: follow your child's need. Whenever necessary: take charge” (Powell et al., 2014, p. 33).

### **Literature Review**

The objective of the literature review is to examine studies conducted on the original 20-week Circle of Security© Intervention (COS-I) and the 8-week Circle of Security© Parenting (COS-P) program. To locate studies conducted on COS-I and COS-P, several Athabasca University databases were utilized, including: SocINDEX, CINAHL Plus, MEDLINE, and PsycINFO. Several theses and dissertations were also included, which were also accessed from

the Athabasca Library, including: OAlster, PQDT Open, and ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. Key terms used to conduct the search included, “*parent reflection interventions*”, “*Circle of Security*©”, “*shifts in parenting*”, and “*attachment theory*”. Inclusion criteria for research studies included: peer-reviewed journal articles, non-published journal articles, theses, and dissertations published between 1999 and 2016 and articles pertaining to parents who had completed COS-I or COS-P. Exclusion criteria included: journals published before 2000, articles pertaining to parents who had not completed COS-I or COS-P, non-English resources, and any materials not focused on COS-I or COS-P. Gaps in the research and recommendations for future research will be discussed in the conclusion section of this literature review.

### **Studies Conducted on Circle of Security©**

**Circle of Security© Intervention (COS-I).** Several studies have been conducted to examine the 20-week COS, the two most notable are: (1) a study by the originators of Circle of Security©, Hoffman, Marvin, Cooper, and Powell (2006); and (2) an academic researcher with whom Hoffman, Cooper, and Powell collaborate, Jude Cassidy and colleagues (2010). Hoffman et al.’s study evaluated the 20-week program with 65 parents and their child through the Early Head Start program, which runs in the United States. These researchers applied pre-and post-intervention measurements of child attachment. The pre-intervention measurement included a 90-minute laboratory session and the Strange Situation procedure (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall, 1978). This served to assess the child’s attachment security prior to the intervention. Post-intervention another 90-minute laboratory session was conducted to assess the child’s attachment security. Significant results were found with children moving from disorganized attachment to organized attachment. Hoffman and colleagues’ study could have been strengthened with the use of a randomized control group design. More studies are needed to support COS-I effectiveness.

Cassidy and colleagues' (2010) study focused on 22 incarcerated mothers who had babies while in prison and were able to keep their babies with them. The Circle of Security Perinatal Protocol© (COS-PP), which is based on the 20-week Circle of Security-Intervention© (COS-I), was utilized in this study. The COS-PP focuses on promoting maternal sensitivity and increasing secure attachment in infants. These mothers participated in the program from their last trimester until the child reached one-year of age. Mothers participated in 6-month long therapeutic intervention groups. COS-PP was delivered twice a week within these groups while mothers were in their third trimester. From birth until 12 months, mothers met with their group twice a week for a 90-minute session. Therapists who were trained and supervised by the program originators led these groups. Secure attachment in infants was measured pre and post-intervention using the Strange Situation Procedure (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall, 1978), the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development's mother-infant interaction scale (Owen, 1992) to measure maternal sensitivity during a play session, the Experiences in Close Relationships scale (ECR; Brennan, Clark, & Shaver, 1998), the Parental Acceptance-Rejection Questionnaire (PARQ; Rohner, 2001), Beck Depression Inventory-IA (BDI-IA; Beck, Rush, Shaw, & Emery, 1979; Beck & Steer, 1993), Dissociative Experiences Scale (DES; Carlson & Putnam, 1993), Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES; Rosenberg, 1979), Social Support Questionnaire (SSQ; Sarason, Levine, Basham, & Sarason, 1983), and the Traumatic Antecedents Questionnaire (TAQ; Herman, Perry, & van der Kolk, 1989). This study also yielded significant results, as 70% of the mothers who completed this program had infants who scored as secure in comparison to 20% whose infants scored as insecure-disorganized. Using a control group could have strengthened this study.

It should be noted that the originators of the Circle of Security Intervention© conducted the first study and the second study also included one of the originators. For the Circle of Security© Intervention to gain more support and acceptance it is recommended that more independent research be conducted. Both of these studies could have also benefited from a qualitative component that would have deepened the researchers' understanding of parents' perceptions. Although there is some evidence for the effectiveness of the 20-week Circle of Security© Intervention, evidence for the more scalable 8-week Circle of Security© Parenting is needed.

**Circle of Security© Parenting (COS-P).** There is currently limited research on the 8-week COS-P; much of this research consists of dissertations (e.g., Rostad, 2009) and single case studies (e.g., Pazzagli, Laghezza, Manaresi, Mazzeschi, & Powell, 2014). Rostad (2009) completed a dissertation aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of the COS-P program using a quasi-randomized crossover design. She specifically considered whether there were reported improvements in the parent-child relationship, shifts in parents' responses to their child's emotional manifestations, and increases in parent reflective functioning after participating in this program compared to parents that had not yet taken the COS-P program. Rostad's study consisted of 37 participants, who were recruited through local community agencies including the Head Start program. Measurements included the Parental Acceptance and Rejection Questionnaire, the Experiences in Close Relationships-Revised Questionnaire, the Parent-Child Relationship Inventory, the Coping with Children's Negative Emotions Scale, the Parental Reflective Functioning Questionnaire, the Patient Health Questionnaire-8, and the Barriers to Treatment Participation Scale (Rostad, 2009).

Rostad (2009) found few differences between groups of parents who had taken COS-P and groups who had not yet taken COS-P; her study did not provide statistically significant support for the effectiveness of the COS-P program. She suggested that more studies on the 8-week version needed to be conducted to establish if this shorter version is as effective as the original 20-week version and if some of the sections removed needed to be reinstated to see significant improvements in the parent-child relationship. Rostad's study may have been hindered by attrition rates, as 52% of parents dropped out of the study.

A single case study by Pazzagli, Laghezza, Manaresi, Mazzeschi, and Powell (2014) concentrated on a 43-year-old father who was involved in a custody dispute over his 5-year-old daughter. The purpose of this study was to explore changes in the father's working model, parenting behaviours, and parenting alliance, after the application of COS-P. Pazzagli et al. employed several measurements pre- and post intervention, including the Adult Attachment Projective Picture System (AAP; George and West, 2001), the Parenting Stress Index-Short Form (PSI-SF; Abidin, 1995), the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ; Goodman, 1997), and the Parental Alliance Measure (PAM; Konold & Abidin, 2001). The father in this single case study described feeling "more competent as a parent in the management of his daughter's needs and his interaction with her" (Pazzagli et al., 2014, p. 7). This father reported a decrease in difficulties around the daughter's behaviours, meeting her needs, and the parent-child relationship, but he also reported an increased awareness of his daughter's strengths. This finding suggests that the father shifted his perception in the areas targeted by COS-P. It should also be noted that one of the authors of this study is one of the originators of Circle of Security©, which again supports a need for more independent studies to be conducted. This single case study did provide support for the effectiveness of this intervention and could be helpful for health

professionals considering using Circle of Security© with individual clients; however, further studies are needed to provide further support.

Cassidy and colleagues (2011) designed a randomized controlled trial of COS-P, with 220 mothers of irritable infants from families currently experiencing economic stress. Participants were recruited from 14 hospitals. Prior to the study mother-child dyads were visited in their home twice in the first month of birth. Mothers were asked for demographic details and asked to complete an adult attachment self-report measure. At 12 months mother-child dyads were invited into a laboratory setting where they participated in the Strange Situation. During this period from 1 month to 12 months, dyads either received three intervention or control in-home visits, with intervention dyads receiving an additional fourth brief home visit. This study found that COS-P did significantly decrease the probability of insecure attachment with the majority of at-risk mother-infant participants. This study's strength was its randomized control design and a larger sample size. A limitation of this study was its generalizability, as only mothers with high to moderate irritable infants were included in this study.

Horton and Murray (2015) conducted a study on the effectiveness of Circle of Security© Parenting with 15 mothers who were in a residential substance-abuse treatment program at the time of the study. The aim of their study was to establish if participating in manualized relationship-based program, in a group setting, would have an impact on mothers who were receiving residential treatment for substance abuse issues. Circle of Security© Parenting was delivered in nine weekly group sessions. The Emotion Regulation Questionnaire, the Parent Attribution Test, and the Parenting Scale were completed pre-and post-intervention. Researchers found that attendance and improvements in each measurement were correlated. Mothers who attended sessions regularly scored better on all three measures. This finding has implications

regarding how many sessions parents need to attend for the intervention to be effective.

Including a control group to see if changes were from COS-P or the treatment program could have strengthened this study.

Since there is still a limited number of studies on the 8-week COS-P, especially randomized control design studies, independent studies, and studies with not-at-risk populations, more studies are required to evaluate the effectiveness of COS-P. If COS-P could be shown as an effective intervention then it may be able to serve a wider audience, as this condensed version is more cost effective and requires parents to commit to 8-weeks instead of 20-weeks. This current thesis work aimed to add to the available literature on COS-P by highlighting parents' descriptions of shifts or no shifts in parenting after completion of the 8-week COS-P, which will provide a better understanding of whether shifts in parenting actually occur after participating in the COS-P program, and if so, what these parenting shifts are.

## **Methods**

### **Participants**

Purposeful sampling was employed targeting parents who had participated in the 8-week COS-P program, under G. Wong as their program facilitator, to ensure program fidelity.

Purposeful sampling was chosen, as only parents who had participated in the COS-P program would be able to provide descriptions required for this study. Maximum variation sampling was also used, as all participants who stated that they would be willing to be contacted to participate in a research study were contacted for this current study. Participants who were contacted consisted of various ages, sexes, ethnic-racial backgrounds and socioeconomic statuses (Sandelowski, 2000).



**Table 1.** Demographics of participants at start of COS-P

<b>Participants (n=7)</b>	<b>Number</b>
<b>Age</b>	
20-25	1
26-31	0
32-37	3
38-43	3
<b>Gender</b>	
Female	6
Male	1
<b>Ethnicity</b>	
Canadian	2
European	1
East Indian	2
Asian	2
<b>Education</b>	
Certificate	2
College/University degree	2
Graduate/Professional education	2
Other	1
<b>Employment</b>	
Working full-time	3
Working part-time	1
Maternity leave	2
Other	1
<b>Marital Status</b>	
Married	4
Common-law	2
Divorced	1
<b>Number of Children</b>	
One Child	3
Two Children	4

\*Two of the nine participants did not provide demographic information and were therefore excluded from the above table.

## **Data Generation**

Data was collected at three points in time by two different interviewers of the Athabasca University Circle of Security© Parenting Program Research and Evaluation Team (GR and LG). The first set of four interviews was conducted in 2015 after a May/June COS-P group; the second set of five interviews was in 2016 after a May/June COS-P group. Eight of the nine interviews were in-person; there was one telephone interview. These nine interviews conducted by GR were recorded and transcribed. Four parents agreed to be interviewed again, in 2017, with the second interviewer, LG, as part of a thesis project employing the video teleconferencing program, Zoom Video Communications Inc. All interviews were semi-structured individual interviews that utilized the COS-P outcomes protocol interview, which was created by the Athabasca University Circle of Security© Parenting Program Research and Evaluation Team (Appendix B). This interview was developed based on the post-group evaluation, created and used by the originators of Circle of Security© International. The focus of these interviews was to gather parents' descriptions of how their parenting may or may not have shifted since completing COS-P. Individual interview lengths varied between 23 minutes to 2 hours. This variation in length of interview time may be due to differences between individual interviewers, the amount of follow up questions asked, amount of time participants had available to participate in the interview, and length of answers by participants.

## **Data Analysis**

Miles and Huberman's (1994) six analytic strategies were used to guide data analysis. All interviews were recorded and then transcribed by a professional transcriptionist. NVivo was used for data management and to aid in the data analysis process. First the research interviews were read in their entirety for the principal investigator to get a sense of the data generated from the

research interviews. Both the principal investigator and G. Rempel reviewed transcribed research interviews to ensure consensus for final themes. The data generated from the research interviews were then coded. Highlighting and naming any quotes from the transcribed interviews that concerned shifts or no shifts in parenting accomplished this coding process. While coding, a methodological journal was kept to record researcher perceptions on the data and the decision-making process. The principal investigator continued by exploring the data for common patterns, themes and phrases. Searching for similarities and differences and highlighting them for further reflection and analysis followed this. Progressively, themes were agreed upon that represented the data generated from the research interviews. The principal investigator compiled themes in a PowerPoint presentation, detailing the theme heading and direct quotes to support the proposed theme, which was presented at a weekly data analysis meeting with the thesis co-supervisors. After several rounds of feedback, certain themes were removed, added, or modified. For example, the sub-themes were originally stand-alone themes, but after several discussions it was decided that the sub-themes under Greater Awareness overlapped with the theme of Greater Awareness, and Greater Awareness was necessary for those sub-themes to occur. Therefore, it was decided that sub-themes would be added under Greater Awareness instead of having overlapping stand-alone themes.

Originally the principal investigator did not believe that two of the sub-themes, “not regularly integrating specific COS concepts” and “not experiencing child’s behaviour differently”, were significant enough to be acknowledged as sub-themes themes. After further discussion with the thesis co-supervisors of this paper, it was decided that they were strong enough sub-themes that specifically helped to address the no shifts portion of the research question. Discussing these two sub-themes provided balance to the themes presented and was

also necessary to help answer the research question of this thesis work, which is exploring shifts or no shifts in parenting after participating in the 8-week COS-P program. Lastly, final themes were compared to what is currently available in the literature.

### **Ethical Considerations**

There were several ethical considerations to take into account before embarking on this current research study. Ethics approval was granted by Athabasca University (Appendix C). Since this current study recruited participants who had previously participated in past research studies with the co-authors of this paper, it was ensured that only parents who provided consent to be contacted for further research were contacted. During this initial contact, parents were asked to grant permission to have the principal investigator of this thesis work to contact them via email or text message. Potential participants who provided consent were emailed a participant information letter and consent form (Appendix D).

To help ensure privacy and confidentiality, participants' names were removed from transcribed interviews and pseudonyms were given before the data analysis process. Since one of the co-authors of this current thesis work was the COS-P facilitator for these participants, the facilitator was not involved in the recruiting or interviewing process. The facilitator did not have access to the recorded research interviews or the transcribed research interviews. The facilitator only had access to the data once personal information was removed and pseudonyms were given.

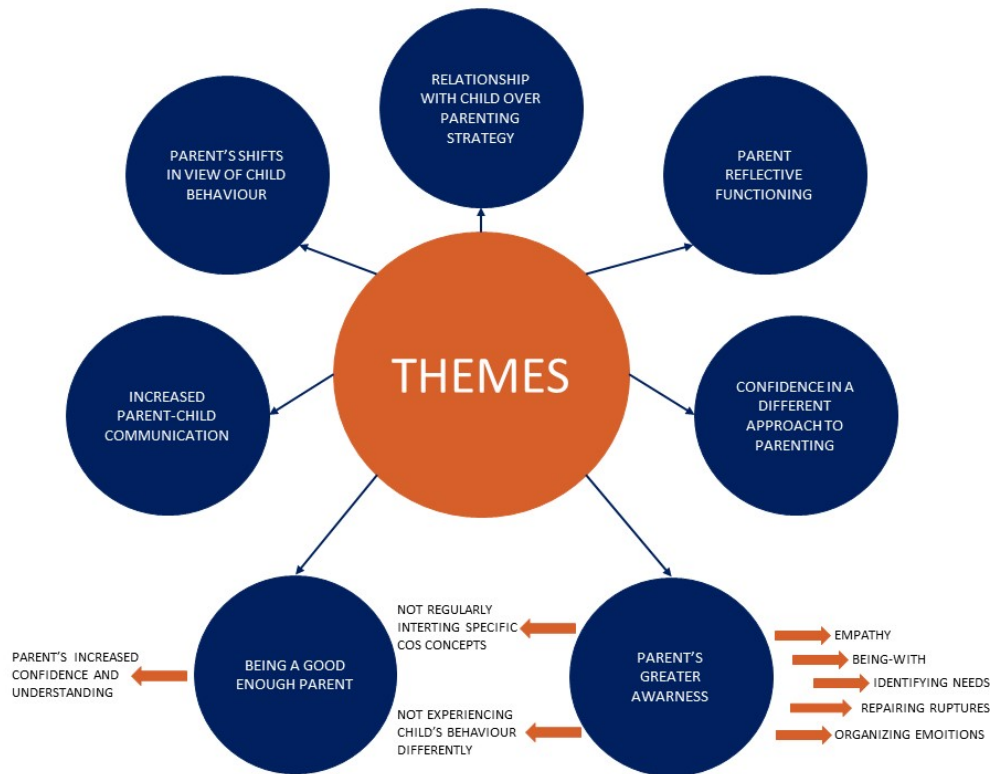
All research members and professional transcriptionists were required to sign a confidentiality pledge before being granted access to participant information or research interviews. The recorded interviews were uploaded and stored on a secure website hosted through the University of Alberta, which requires a password to access. The virtual interviews were conducted in a private residence and interviews were recorded to a password protected

personal laptop. The research interview itself also required a password to enter the virtual research interview.

The COS-P outcomes protocol interview guide (Appendix B) consisted of questions regarding a sensitive nature. Parents were asked questions about their parenting, challenges that they may have been or are still experiencing in their parenting, the relationship they have with their children, and the self-reflective dialogue that encouraged them to experience a shift in parenting. Because of the sensitive nature of this interview, all participants were provided with a one-page list of counselling resources in their area (Appendix E), in case they wished to further discuss feelings that presented themselves during the research interview.

### **Results**

Overall, thirteen interviews were transcribed and analyzed for themes. Parents' descriptions of how their parenting did or did not shift after completing the 8-week Circle of Security© Parenting program resulted in seven themes and eight sub-themes. One theme encompassed seven sub-themes and one other sub-theme was subsumed within another theme. Figure 1 summarizes these seven themes and eight sub-themes that emerged from the data.

**Figure 1.** Themes and Sub-Themes

### Parent's Greater Awareness

Gaining greater awareness as a parent was a common theme found throughout all the research interviews. However, parents differed in the areas in which they gained greater awareness. For example, some parents realized the need to be empathic towards their child. Other parents described the importance of Being-with their child. Furthermore, greater awareness for parents meant learning how to identify their child's emotional needs and ways in which to meet these needs. Since relationship ruptures are inevitable, parents gained appreciation for the important task of repairing these relationship ruptures. Additionally, parents were alerted to the notion of helping their child to organize their emotions. For some parents they described gaining a Greater Awareness overall, but not regularly utilizing specific COS-P tools daily and although they are managing difficult parenting situations differently they do not necessarily view

their child's behaviour differently. As a result, the sub-themes of Empathy, Being-With, Identifying Needs, Repairing Ruptures, Organizing Emotions, Not Regularly Integrating Specific COS Concepts and Not Experiencing Child's Behaviour Differently emerged from the data, and are presented in the following sections.

**Empathy.** Empathy is one characteristic identified by COS program developers as being vital to parents' shift from centring on their child's behaviour and instead concentrating on the parent-child relationship and their child's emotional needs. Empathy in the COS-P program refers to parents experiencing an "empathic shift" towards the above-mentioned changes in parents' primary focus (Cooper, Hoffman, Marvin, & Powell, 2000, "Treatment Assumptions," para. 22), whereas parents changed their attention from the child's behaviour to their parent-child relationship and their child's emotional requirements. This study underscores the goal of experiencing an empathic shift. For example, Ethan explained how an empathic shift happened for him. He disclosed that he was able to be more empathic by managing his own emotions in order to be there to meet his child's current emotional need:

So if he's doing something that seems irrational, say, "Okay, that's maybe not what he's actually upset about. There's something else underlying that," and to help work through [it] with [him] to bring that out. So instead of getting angry at him or frustrated, it's more what can I do to help him (Ethan, F2F, L 30-33).

Ethan expressed being able to shift the focus away from his son's behaviour and focused instead on what his son needed in the moment, and how he could help him meet those needs. He explained how having a greater awareness helped him realize his child is still young and may not have the tools yet to express himself clearly, or even know what emotions he is feeling or why. Ethan's account demonstrated how an empathic shift opens the space for seeing life from his son's vantage point, and how it helps him through difficult parenting situations:

It's just a new awareness of how to interact and ensure that what he's trying to express and not able to clearly express at the time because he's young and he's not overly sure of his emotions, that now I can look at it from his point of view and try and work through it with him and help him get to a point where he's no longer frustrated or upset. When he's hurt himself or when he's upset, I try not to rush him through it any more. I try and...be there with him and help him work his way through it. That's about the main one that I just try and make it easier for him (Ethan, F2F, L 20-24, L 135-137).

Empathy involves moving parent's central attention to the relationship and to the child (Cooper et al., 2000), which Ethan displayed in this description. Ethan takes the time to enter into his child's experience, which indirectly attends to their father-son relationship and helps the son to work through challenging emotions that he may not have understood or been able to process on his own.

Similar to Ethan, Isabella described coming to realize that her child is still a young child and will require compassion and assistance from her:

It was opening my eyes to him more and trying to put myself in his position a little bit more, and to remember that I'm an adult and he is not, and so he feels things a lot differently. And also, too, that a lot of things that he's feeling, he's feeling for the first time. And I felt those feelings and I don't remember them, and it's stuff that I've learned how to adapt to. So for me, it's being more aware of him and what it is that he needs from himself and what he needs from us (Isabella, F2F, L 6-11).

Isabella's realization that her child was not developmentally able to process emotions at the same rate and depth as her, helped her to view the situation more from his point of view, and be more empathic and attentive to what he needed in the moment.

Emma also echoed how an empathic shift helped her to put herself into her child's position and make an effort to see things from her daughter's point of view. This aided her in lessening her frustrations and having more realistic expectations for her child. Emma stated:

It's easier for you [as a parent] too, I think, when you cannot be just, like, "Why are people like that?" and be frustrated. It's easy to get frustrated about your expectations of things, so if instead you put yourself in some people's shoes [child's], you can then maybe lower your expectations or make them realistic (Emma, F2F, L 118-122).



Through Emma's Greater Awareness regarding Empathy, she was able to change the focus on why her child was behaving a certain way, and instead pay attention to the child's experience, through self-regulating her own frustration and expectations.

Likewise, Madura repeated this position of Greater Awareness of becoming an Empathic parent by characterizing a similar realization that Ethan identified. Ethan described, that with this empathic shift, he was able to switch focus from his son's undesirable behaviour to his emotional needs. Madura recounted a scene of coming home after a busy day at work to one of her two children who was upset because the sibling got to open the door to greet her. Madura detailed how instead of discounting her child's feelings, she inquired how not being able to be the one to open the door made the child feel, and they negotiated a solution that acknowledged and met her needs. Madura recounted:

When I walked in the door they were in tears because they both wanted to open the door; and one opened the door and she's like, she didn't give me a turn, and I think, yeah, even just that moment where I'm like, "oh, what's wrong"? And she's like, "I didn't get my turn" and I was like: "Oh well... you know, that's too bad," and I'm like, "Well maybe what can we do next time, you know"? And she was like, "well", and then I got the other daughter there and I was like "well next time can one unlock and one open or something", and then they were looking at each other and negotiating and they're like, "yeah, that would be OK", and then we moved on from it (Madura, Zoom, L 447-454).

This situation could have turned out differently and the child who did not get to open the door could have left this event feeling unheard and devalued. However, Madura attended to her child's need by listening to her concern and being Empathic (making an empathic shift) that honoured her feelings.

**Being-with.** With an increased awareness, through the COS-P program, of how important being able to be with your child's emotions is, many parents became more mindful to the idea of Being-With their child. The COS-P concept of Being-With your child entails a parent delivering

responsive care and providing meaningful interactions, which promotes security and comfort for the child. Powell, Cooper, Hoffman, and Marvin (2014) emphasized that a child will feel confident in the fact that he or she have a primary parent who is emotionally accessible to be present with their emotions. Being-With also means normalizing the child's emotional experiences, creating the feeling that your child's emotional needs are acceptable and natural. It should be noted that in the COS-P program, parents are not expected to be perfect nor are they expected to meet every single one of their child's emotional needs (Powell et al., 2014).

Being-With was a theme that strongly resonated with parents. For Madura, Being-With was a COS-P concept that genuinely made sense to her and one that she reported still using two years after completing the program:

I feel that out of everything that I did the one thing that really stuck with me is like being with your child and their emotions, so that piece I think really stuck with me through the years, through the last two years I guess (Madura, Zoom, L 36-38).

Similarly, Victoria explained how this new attention to being-with her child has led her to being more responsive to meeting her son's emotional needs. Victoria stated:

Also being—not dismissing when he needs attention, when he comes to me and needs to be picked up. Not dismissing that as, like, “Oh, I’ve got things to do,” “Oh, I’m so tired,” “Oh, you always want to be picked up.” Understanding that he’s doing that because he needs it now and the timing of it is important (Victoria, F2F, L 80-84).

Victoria's description illustrates how she is being with her son, but this quote also demonstrates that she was able to reflect on his experience, has gained a greater awareness to take a different approach when responding to his request for his current emotional needs to be fulfilled, helped him to organize his emotions, and she experienced an empathic shift towards his experience by recognizing the importance of the timing for her son.

Like Victoria, Lee recounted a story where instead of getting annoyed with her daughter, she empathically took the time to Be-With her daughter and provided comfort and reassurance:

Well, when [my one daughter] was acting out, yes, maybe she has hormonal changes—they just got their period...so I'm trying to say, "Well, maybe she's hormonal and crazy from that, and she's uncomfortable, so she's a little bit cranky because of that." I comforted her and I said, "What can I do? Is there something I can do to make you feel better?" or "I know you're uncomfortable right now; I had the same pains when I was a kid, and a hot water bottle helped me." (Lee, F2F, L 115-121).

Lee went on to say that Being-With was her most important learning from the COS-P program and that she has used this idea to create a better relationship with her children:

For me, that was the biggest learning lesson I had. Honestly, my dad says it all the time: "You have to be with them." And maybe I didn't understand it the way he meant it, or maybe he doesn't mean it the same way that I've learned it. But I feel like I understand it better so that I can use it in creating a better relationship.

Emma agreed with Madura's sentiment, stating how the COS-P concept of Being-With was a meaningful notion to her as well, as it was easy to implement, and when she did apply it she noticed the impact it had on her parent-child relationship with her child. Emma stated:

The "being with," I can see it's the easiest thing—it was a huge thing that I found that when I applied it, it was noticeable (Emma, F2F, L 55-56).

She continued by describing how her mindfulness towards being-with helped her to manage a challenging situation before her in-person interview. Emma explained:

Just before you got here, he was mad...he just runs around now and he ran himself off onto his head; it's like he stopped his walking with one side of his body, so he fell over, more surprised than hurt. Before the Circle of Security, I would have gone and right away tried to distract him and be, like, "It's okay. Look at this," or "Look at that"; that definitely would have been my go-to, would have been how do I not make it better, per se, but just make him forget it. Circle of Security, it taught me that in "being-with" and organizing his emotions—like, the bottom of the Circle—that that is—I mean, it's the answer, really; instead of—if we didn't avoid our emotions and our own issues, if we confronted them and dealt with them, it's such a—than just sort of avoid it, you know, procrastinate things—I mean, an adult, a child, there's difference, but it's obvious, the difference, but it has and that it can hold. So I notice with him, it's like night and day (Emma, F2F, L 58-70).

In Emma's description, she depicted how she was able to take the time to be with her son and his emotions, which enabled her to meet her son's emotional needs and allowed them to mutually

move on from the situation. This may have turned out differently if instead she tried to rush through her response, or dismissed the event because she had a researcher coming over. Emma further detailed what this process actually looked like for her and her son:

“I know that you fell and I bet it hurts”...kind of acknowledging and running through what happened—basically repeating what happened, because then I think it kind of goes full circle, then he’s, like—I think it’s more shock when anything happens: you know, it’s “What happened?” I think it’s a question we ask ourselves a lot in situations, and for him, too, and so I’m just re-narrating what I saw him experience, and then it’s able to be resolved (Emma, F2F, L 72-77).

This example described how she is being-with her son, organizing his emotions, using a different approach, increasing their communication, and how she is practicing utilizing reflection and empathy in these types of situations. She helped her son make sense of what happened, reflected on what he might be thinking, based on what she or someone else may be thinking in this type of situation, and showed an empathic shift by trying to see this event from his perspective. This allowed her to respond to her son’s emotional needs.

Emma explained why the COS-P concept of being-with made sense to her, just not in her parent-child relationship, but in other relationships as well:

When we went over it in class, immediately, I was, like, that’s exactly what happens when someone’s trying to make you feel better and you just want to be miserable. Or when you’re venting with someone, they vent—and you have a friend that can vent with you—then it’s just like, oh, the relief you feel that you literally got it off your back. Again, that’s the Circle of Relationships right there, is that flow. And when you flow with people—and that’s, I think, when people are going to be with you, that that’s when you have a real relationship (Emma, F2F, L 86-92).

Emma’s explanation emphasizes that it can be upsetting or frustrating when having an emotional need that is being misunderstood, because someone is not putting the focus on what you personally need from them in that moment. She further commented how this can be solved by the concept of Being-With, as when a parent is truly being-with, they are less likely to miss or misunderstand emotional cues from their child.

Yusuf also found the COS-P concept of being-with a particularly powerful idea, and explained the impact it had on his thinking as a parent, and the current and future effect it may have on his daughter. Yusuf stated:

My own self reflectance of being with her and getting down to her level and seeing what she sees and seeing how she sees the world and what she sees as important and relating to her is probably even hugely more influence on her as she grows than I probably even realize myself, even now. And just that whole bottom of the Circle and being there for her is probably the most I've taken from the Circle of Security philosophies (Yusuf, F2F, L 164-169).

Yusuf's narrative depicts his ability to move past his own discomfort to meet his daughter where she currently is and stays with her emotions. A part of being able to know when your child needs parental assistance is being able to identify their needs, which is explored in the subsequent sub-theme.

**Identifying needs.** Circle of Security© is designed to provide parents with a roadmap to help them identify what their child's needs are, and how parents may be able to meet those needs (Cooper et al., 2000). One mother in an in-person interview, explained how she gained a stronger appreciation for how being able to identify her son's needs impacted their relationship. Isabella explained:

So that's when I stop what I'm doing. Just to be there for him—to be there for him, and for him to know that—I don't know, it's strange, because I always felt that he was more...comfortable with himself by being off and playing and taking his toys to his room or coming out or doing whatever, and I might be here, or I might be in my office. But now he's more—he's closer to me. Now it's a lot different than when you were here the last time. He's out there and he's doing his thing, and I've got him what he needs, and I know he's going to be content in there. He called me at the beginning because he wanted his cereal; I got him his cereal. He wanted juice; I got him his juice. I asked him, "Are you good? Are you okay?" "Yeah, I'm good, I'm good. Go talk. I'm good" (Isabella, F2F, L 186-200).

Isabella decided that her current task could be put on hold while she ensured her son's needs were being met, which gave her son the confidence and security he needed to carry on his own

task. This in-turn allowed his mother to go back to what she was originally doing, while strengthening their relationship and attachment.

Similar to Isabella, Victoria described how she felt that the COS-P program did provide her with a roadmap to help identify her child's needs. Victoria stated:

At the time he was pretty young and the main thing that I could implement...was the idea of letting him go out on the circle and then being welcoming to coming back in and that really was super helpful for me in decoding the behaviour he was showing me (Victoria, Z, L 78-81).

Victoria's description above relates to what the COS-P program refers to as an observational skill, where parents develop the skill to observe where their child is on the Circle of Security© circle, whether it's going out to explore or coming in for comfort, by reading the cues provided by their child (Cooper et al., 2000). Victoria further described how having the circle to help her identify her child's needs, has allowed her to take a less stressful approach to parenting, as she now feels that she can anticipate what her child may need and meet his needs in a calmer manner:

Yeah I felt like that was a bit like a roadmap in a way, so I could kind of read well OK so he's doing this, this is where he is on the circle, I know how to anticipate the next steps so that I could be ready without being panicky or pushy. Like I know that he wants to go adventure, he wants to go out and being relaxed about him going out but then also being available for him to come back in (Victoria, Z, L 89-93).

Although in this scenario Victoria describes being able to better predict her child's needs and react in a responsive manner, parents are not perfect and will have slip-ups where they miss or misunderstand cues from their child. When these slip-ups happen, parents have the responsibility to acknowledge and repair these relationship ruptures.

**Repairing ruptures.** As mentioned in preceding sections, parents are not expected to be perfect parents, therefore ruptures in the relationship will occur. A rupture happens when a parent temporarily is not able to meet their child's emotional needs. A rupture can be thought of

as a rift in the relationship, for example, a rupture may happen when a child is extremely upset, displaying anger or frustration, and the parent is not able to help be-with, or help organize their child's emotions, because they themselves are feeling aggravated, incapable, or scared. In this moment, they may see their child's cues for emotional assistance as irrational, annoying, or unreasonable. This may cause the parent to be unavailable to the child, causing the child to feel unsupported by the parent, and consequently a rupture in the relationship occurs (Powell et al., 2014).

When a rupture does happen, all is not lost; a parent can use the COS-P concept to repair this rupture. A parent can attempt to repair this rupture by recognizing and admitting that a rupture has occurred, and acknowledging what impact this rupture may have had on the child, and the feelings associated with the child not feeling supported in their parent-child relationship (Powell et al., 2014). Madura described how her new appreciation of the importance of repairing ruptures has changed how she handles ruptures with her children:

I think what might have impacted more is like when you rupture and repair, so I think maybe that's kind of been something that stuck with too is just that repair. I think in my parenting, or with my parents, there wasn't a whole lot of repair, like we're parents we can do what we wanna tell you and then you move on, but I think I've been a little bit more cognizant of like OK you know what, I'm sorry this happened, let's talk about it a little bit and not just brushing it off and let's forget about it. So, I think that's probably made my relationship with the kids better. I think COS has helped me realize just don't forgo that step; you just really gotta do it whenever it happens. And I think it's really been helpful, I can see it in their faces sometimes where you're just like you know what I'm sorry that happened, mom shouldn't have done that and it's OK, we just have a moment and it's nice (Madura, Z, L 93-99, L 236-240).

From Madura's description, the COS-P program provided her with the opportunity to reflect on how, not only she was handling relationship ruptures, but also how her parents managed these ruptures in their own parent-child relationship. This reflection alerted her to the importance of not skipping the repair step, and taking the time to take responsibility for her own responses, and

to acknowledge and privilege her children's feelings. This seems to have been a meaningful change to her children. Taking this time to honour her children's feelings, may led to them feeling more confident in the future that their emotional needs will be meet, or at least if there is a rupture, that their mother is committed to repairing that rupture (Powell et al., 2014). This may also model to her children how to handle repairing ruptures in their own relationships outside of the immediate family.

**Organizing emotions.** One of the aims of the COS-P program is that parents learn how to, or strengthen their ability to, identify, honour, and provide language to their child's emotions through emotional regulation (Cooper et al., 2000). This concept of emotional regulation seemed to resonate with many of the participants, as parents described their realization that their child may not be able to identify and organize his or her own emotions, and this is something that parents needed to help their children with. Lee described her new realization:

They're not even aware of why they're having these feelings; so, I've realized it's my job to help them realize that (Lee, F2F, L 62-63).

Lee utilized a different approach to how she responded to her children's emotional needs, by using her new greater awareness and empathy to build a foundation, where she could support her children in organizing their emotional experience.

Ethan echoed this sentiment, by explaining how his new awareness helped him to realize that young children may not be aware of the feelings they are experiencing, and by helping them through this process, the parent is able to lessen the child's distress:

It's just a new awareness of how to interact and ensure that what he's trying to express and not able to clearly express at the time because he's young and he's not overly sure of his emotions, that now I can look at it from his point of view and try and work through it with him and help him get to a point where he's no longer frustrated or upset (Ethan, F2F, L 20-24).



As with Ethan, the concept of organizing a child's emotions strongly resonated with Katara. For Katara, learning how to organize her child's emotions was one of her most meaningful takeaways from the COS-P program. Katara detailed:

The biggest thing was helping organizing her feelings. As soon as you can, "I think you're feeling this", then she feels validated, she feels equal...we have a better understanding, she has a better understanding (Katara, F2F, L

Katara described how in helping to organize her child's emotions, they both gained a better understanding, and it helped her child to feel heard and valued, and helped her gain more approaches and ideas, when handling challenging parenting situations, than she had before.

**Not regularly integrating specific COS concepts.** Shifts in parenting, as identified by parents in these research interviews, occurred differently in parents in this sample by the degree to which they have taken up the COS-P concepts, the way they have internalized the COS-P concepts, and how the COS-P concepts manifests in their day-to-day life with their children. For example, one mother explained how she does not particularly think of the COS-P circle on a daily basis while she is parenting:

I kind of remember but don't think about it [COS circle], as much throughout day to day parenting is the top of the circle and the bottom of the circle, like I don't really think about those per se when I'm interacting with the kids. Sometimes if I'm struggling and I'm just trying to figure out where they're at I will think about that, but kinda not more on the day-to-day, like the being with the emotions really stuck with me, you know the hands and the secure base, that whole piece really stuck with me, but I don't really think per se about where they are at the top or the bottom [of the COS circle]. I do when I'm struggling but not linked throughout all my parenting (Madura, Z, L 42-50).

Madura's description provided an example of how, for her, some of the COS-P concepts resonated more than others. She utilizes the COS circle when she requires that little bit of extra help during tough parenting situations. Although Madura does not describe using the COS- circle on a daily basis, a shift has occurred in her interactions with her children, as she does state utilizing the COS-P circle as a parenting tool during challenging parent situations. In this quote,

Madura also explained how other pieces from the COS-P program resonated more with her, such as, Being-With. It could be argued that in order to Be-With your child, a parent would first need to be able to identify where his or her child was on the COS-P circle to match their current emotional need, whether they are consciously aware of doing so or not. Therefore, parents in this sample may be utilizing COS-P concepts in their day-to-day parenting without realizing it or calling it by the COS-P name.

**Not experiencing child's behaviour differently.** Shifts in parenting were experienced differently by parents. For one parent the concepts presented in COS-P appeared to have resonated with him, however, he shared not experiencing a greater shift in terms of how he still experiences his daughter's behaviour. For example, this parent does not describe experiencing a shift from understanding his child's undesirable behaviour as alerting him to an emotional need, but instead he still attributes this undesirable behaviour to his child's temperament. Yusuf explained:

The temper tantrums and the sticky brain type stuff, less time—I mean, frequency and stuff, probably still having lots of those issues and lots of—but I think that's just her type of a personality, and she's not going to all of a sudden switch and be, I'll say, easy-going, but she does see lots of—she sees lots of kind of—she blows up problems maybe more so than would need to be. So, if something's not sitting right or—I wouldn't say she's OCD, but there's almost that layer of if something doesn't go the way she had thought it would in her mind, she will get into that (Yusuf, F2F, L 292-298).

In this explanation, the father is demonstrating a Greater Awareness and Reflective Functioning by reflecting on his daughter's experiences with temper tantrums, however, he is still attributing temper tantrums as a part of her temperament, instead of her communicating her needs through her emotions.

The above two themes best represented parents' descriptions of no shifts in parenting, however, their quotes illustrated that they both indeed experienced shifts in parenting. Again,

parents experienced shifts in parenting differently and some parents were more aware of their shifts in parenting than others. When discussing shifts in parenting, shifts may happen gradually and may take time to manifest into day-to-day parenting and for parents to truly internalize these shifts in meaningful ways.

### **Parent Reflective Functioning**

Developers of COS-P hope to increase a parent's ability to reflect on his or her own personal experiences, and his or her child's experiences by taking a step back and reflecting, and entering into self-reflective dialogue (Cooper et al., 2000). Victoria described that prior to starting the COS-P program, she was already practicing self-awareness, and reflected on what she contributed to the relationship or situation. She stated that this helped her to be more open to the idea of "looking at yourself", and this helped her to get the most that she could out of the program:

I really identified with the material and just the concept of Circle of Security, the ideas that they were presenting in the program really resonated and also, I personally I'd done, with all the work I've done on myself and self-awareness, I was already kinda almost predisposed to be open to these concepts of looking at yourself, like well what are you bringing to the equation, which was really helpful too in getting a benefit out of the program.

Victoria's practice with reflective functioning has helped her to be able to pinpoint how she herself contributes to undesirable interactions. Victoria stated:

I reflect enough to see that when I'm the problem—like, when I'm a piece of what's going on already—so that's why I think I struggled in trying to figure out—I've got to have some shark music—for sure, I do—but where is it and what does it look like? Then understanding that that piece that shark music comes out for me when I get under a lot of stress and when everything kind of compresses (Victoria, F2F, L 109-114).

Although practicing reflective functioning was something that Victoria was already using, for many parents the idea of reflecting on their own experiences and the experiences of their

children may be entirely new to them (Cooper et al., 2000). Lee's new understanding of stepping back and looking at the situation, and her own and her children's experiences, has affected the way she handles tough parenting situations. Lee explained:

So now I go in and I'm, like, "What's happening here? What are you feeling like? Are you mad at me, are you sad, are you frustrated?" I try to help identify, for both me and for her, what's happening and what kind of feelings are happening and where it's coming from. A lot of times, it's been a surprise where the feelings are really coming from (Lee, F2F, L 393-397).

Lee's quote shows her reflecting on the current situation from both of their points of views, trying to identify for herself and for her child what feelings are showing up here. This shift in parenting displays a greater awareness in identifying what her child requires after an argument and she now empathically stays with her child's emotions trying to organize these emotions with her daughter. Lee further described her reflective process and new understanding of how to manage her own emotions in order to be-with her child:

I just feel like I just have a better direction myself of where to take it when I'm feeling frustrated or I'm feeling like I'm, "Uhhh," if I'm getting a little too annoyed or anxious or angry. I don't really get angry, I just get really, really annoyed. So, I'm, just, like, "Okay, am I being with? What can I do to turn this around? What can I do to support them and create that loving base; that secure base that they feel they can come to me?" 'Cause that is so important to me, more than anything at this age. It's a little bit scary at this time when they can go out and really shut you out (Lee, F2F, L 50-56).

From Lee's description, she is trying to reflect on her children's experiences, which has had positive effects, by increasing communication, and using a more relationship-based approach, by helping to understand and organize her child's emotions. Lee expanded her reflective thinking to address how the family typically handled secondary emotions, such as anger, and the effect it had on their relationship. Lee explained:

I just think it was eye opening in terms of what I'm not good at because my parents didn't help me with. So, one thing that I really want to create more talks about with the girls is talking about shame. I never, ever—not that I had a lot of shame, but we never talked about it; like, "What is that feeling? I don't know. And if I had some, whom would I talk

to about it? I don't know." So that was interesting when we started talking about that. Anger—anger was another one. We didn't really—again, the way they'd deal with anger is mad, mad, angry, yell a little bit, and then go away, and then it fizzles out, and then we're normal again. So that's what I was kind of already doing, probably with my relationship with...the kids. And you realize that that is not healthy; like, we're not getting better, we're not building a relationship, we're kind of fracturing it a little bit every time (Lee, F2F, L 423-435).

Lee used her reflective dialogue to reflect on areas where she may require some extra help, because she was not well practiced herself in these areas. She expressed that her reflective dialogue gave her the desire to increase communication with her children in hopes of building a stronger relationship with them.

Similar to Lee, Yusuf, used his reflective dialogue to contemplate how his parenting choices, such as, how his words and even the way he presents them, may have unintended impacts on his daughter and their relationship. Yusuf stated:

When you were a child. And not necessarily what your parent—it could be just anybody in real life, in the real world, say something to you, and that message stuck. And it could be really nothing, but to you, it stuck. So, it really makes you think of the words you choose and that you speak to your kids. And even at a very young age, our daughter remembers things. I mean, I don't know if she'll remember them 10 years or 15 or 20 years from now—I don't know—but she may; she definitely remembers things a week later, how you say it, what you say. So, you're very conscious now—we were before, but even more so, it's even more so that how you interact and the word—even down to demeanour and tone, because that all does translate (Yusuf, F2F, L 109-118).

Here he is becoming aware of his daughter's mental state when he interacts with her in a certain way or chooses particular words. Yusuf has entered into a self-dialogue, reflecting on his daughter's inner experience when these tough parenting situations happen. Yusuf further explained:

I think the bottom of the Circle is more of the self-reflection part of it, to be able to know that it's—not that I was hard on her before—I'd be, like, "Stop crying"—I'd just say that—but more knowing the words I'm using and the techniques, and that bottom of the Circle thing, sometimes when she's acting out, she really needs me to be closer to her than to be that dictator type punishment (Yusuf, F2F, L 157-161).

Entering into this reflective dialogue has helped Yusuf to have a greater awareness of his daughter's experience and emotional needs. Here he is choosing also to focus on his relationship with his daughter over adhering to certain parenting techniques, by using a different approach that puts the emphases back onto the parent-child relationship.

Like Yusuf, Isabella also recounted a scenario where she remained calm during a potentially challenging parenting situation and instead reflected on her child's emotional needs.

Isabella stated:

So, for me, a lot of it was very simple, but it was being very mindful, to say, "Okay, he's crying. Don't get upset because he's broken something and now he's upset. What is it that he actually needs, and what is it that you haven't given him today?" (Isabella, F2F, L 11-14).

In this scenario, Isabella contained her own feelings, being aware of her current mental state, and also reflected on her son's mental state, knowing that there was an emotional need that required to be met. Reflecting functioning is an ability that Isabella has been practicing during times of crises and in general when contemplating her son's emotional needs overall. Isabella further explained:

Because I don't feel like he's high on the Circle on either side—like, he's always this or he's always this; I just feel that he needs that balance all the time. As I looked at the Circle, I thought that's what it is for me, it's a balance and keeping him there. So, filling his cup, making sure his cup is filled, and how can I do that throughout the day (Isabella, F2F, L 14-18).

This description illustrates Isabella's ability to reflect on where her son is on the circle and what this means for him, meeting his emotional needs, and their parent-child relationship. This also shows that Isabella has gained a great awareness of her son's emotional cues and needs, and has gained empathy for her son when he is experiencing difficult situations.

### **Relationship with Child Over Parenting Strategy**

Reviewing the transcribed interviews, I noticed that several of the parents decided to participate in the COS-P program, because they were hoping to learn parenting strategies to help modify their child's behaviour. Although COS-P does aim to provide a roadmap for parents, the emphasis is not on strategies to modify behaviour. Instead COS-P focuses on the parent-child relationship, which in turn may lead to shifts in the child's behaviour, and the parents' perceptions of their child's behaviour (Cooper et al., 2000). Parents commented on how after participating in the program, they shifted their focus from searching for parenting strategies to modify their child's behaviour, to refocusing their attention to the quality of their parent-child relationship. Madura explained how the COS-P program helped her to come to this Greater Awareness:

I found it really helped me realize, and Circle of Security really highlights the importance of the relationship with your child versus what strategy you're using (Madura, F2F, L 2-4).

Madura expanded this sentiment by commenting on how before the program, she questioned, as a parent, what specific strategies she should be using, and what was the right way to handle parenting challenges. Madura stated:

I think sometimes as a parent, you're sometimes thinking, "Should I be using timeouts and this?" It really was focused on the relationship's the important part, so it put me at ease a little bit that way (Madura, F2F, L 4-6).

The idea of placing the importance on the parent-child relationship, instead of employing specific strategies, seemed to have provided Madura with some comfort. This may take some pressure off of parents, that there is no specific strategy that they have to use; rather it is attending to our individual parent-child relationship, and doing what fits well within that unique

relationship. Madura explained how this concept provided her with a roadmap to help her determine if she was on the relationship track, not the behaviour track:

If we have a good relationship and we're working on this piece, that's paramount, and everything else, we'll deal with it. But if the relationship piece is there, that's the most important part; if I'm fostering that, then I'm doing my job and the rest of it's okay; let's trial and error – we'll figure it out (Madura, F2F, L 9-12).

Madura further highlighted how this shift towards the relationship over strategy felt more natural for her than searching the available literature for which parenting strategy would work in which situation:

It just felt more natural to do the COS, the time ins or let them go and, you know, the rupture and repair, all that stuff felt more natural to me than some of the parenting strategies that you read about and people say you should be using (Madura, Z, L 420-422).

Katara came to the realization that focusing on finding “the right” parenting strategy was stressful, and at times confusing. She explained how parents should instead trust their own instincts and proceed with what feels natural for the unique relationship they have with their child:

I was reading all these books, and sometimes, that can almost be more confusing, because then you're trying this and then, “oh, well, that didn't work instantly, so I'll try this, and then I'll try” – and that's just confusing for the children and for you, because you're, like, “What's the right things to do?” Well, is there a right thing to do, or is it what – are you comfortable and what do you feel will give you the best relationship with your child in the long run (Katara, F2F, L 41-46).

Katara questioned if there was just one right approach or just one right thing to do. She explained how trying strategy after strategy could cause distress for a child. Going forward she choose to attend to their relationship over strategy, which made sense for them as a parent-child unit.

Lee described how the COS-P concept of “being with” helped her to put the relationship first, and how this recognition facilitated positive changes in the parent-child relationship. Lee stated:



But to really, how to “be with” your child, that kind of skill is going to change your relationship a hundred percent (Lee, F2F, L 411-412).

Parents like Lee, have illustrated how shifting the emphasis from strategy to relationship has directly or indirectly impacted their parent-child relationship for the better. Putting the relationship first is one different approach parents are employing after completing the COS-P program. In the following section, parents recount the various new methods they have implemented.

### **Confidence in a Different Approach to Parenting**

Parents described how after COS-P, they used a different approach to handle day-to-day parenting, including parenting challenges. Victoria provided an overarching idea of how taking a different approach may lead to a different outcome. Victoria stated:

So, taking a different path, creating a different foundation will probably create a different result, too (Victoria, F2F, L 13-14).

Madura illustrated Victoria’s sentiment by describing how before the program she utilized the popular tool of “time out”, although time out did not seem to be a good fit for her or her children, and after COS-P she has the confidence to try a different approach. Madura described:

I think before the program I was trying to use time out. That was something that I used, and everyone says, yeah, give ‘em a time out and there’s all these guidelines about what you should do and how long it should last, and they never really worked, it never felt good doing it. I never felt like it worked and then with COS I felt like it’s OK that I don’t use them. There was other things out there, there was different strategies that you could use and so I think that’s something I stopped using and had some confidence around not using it anymore because of Circle of Security whereas before, it just never worked really well for my girls and I never felt good doing it and now I cannot use them and it’s OK ‘cause I have some confidence behind that (Madura, Z, L 392-401).

COS-P has given Madura the reassurance that there are different strategies out there, besides trying to punish behaviour, and Madura described how, for her, she found this through the COS-P concept of “time in” (Cooper et al., 2000). Madura explained:

Yeah with the more time in and just tryin' to figure out what's really happening and, yeah I think it's been OK to not have it [time out] like with the time ins, I think I've replaced it [time out] with that (Madura, Z, L 404-406).

Madura also realized how this different approach had affected her directly as a parent:

I think it just feels better, whereas time outs never felt good to me as a parent. I never felt good doing it, but this just feels better and so that's been better for me as a parent and my stress levels, my guilt around parenting, this just feels better (Madura, Z, L 408-411).

Not only has Madura gained confidence employing different approaches that fit better with her parenting philosophy, she also conceptualizes her approach to challenging parenting situations in a different way. Madura further explained:

Also, when we talked about the fire alarm analogy, I think about that often and I'm like, OK, what should I deal with right now, and I think that's probably caused a bit of a shift too, to just make sure I'm tryin' to deal with the right piece at any given time, 'cause I think those are kinda tough things that have just been there and have become engrained so that's helped (Madura, F2F, L 346-350).

This fire alarm analogy presented in the COS-P program gave Madura a new way to view and understand where she needed to focus her attention, which allowed her to be a more responsive parent to her children's needs.

Similar to Madura, Lee realized, through COS-P, that there were different approaches that she could try, that may fit better with what she was trying to accomplish as a parent:

At the same time, I feel like through Circle [of Security], that I realized that's my job, and I don't have to deal with a hard line or a heavy fist—not that I feel like I was, but I just didn't know how to do it without being—I just wanted to have that more connection and easier connection, and it does help. It's just that simple “be-with,” it's just that simple switch (Lee, F2F, L 104-108).

Lee further narrated how she handled temper tantrums differently after completing the COS-P program. Before COS-P, Lee expressed that she would have the tendency to give her children space after an undesirable parent-child interaction, and comfort herself that her children will be fine with some time and space. Lee explained:

When they're having a little temper tantrum or they're upset with me, then I would just leave them. So, they would go up to their bedroom or they would not talk to me, or something like that. It doesn't happen very often, but when it did happen, I just didn't know what to do, so I just left them—left them alone, and [said] “Oh, they'll be fine in an hour or tomorrow or whatever” (Lee, F2F, L 386-390).

However, after participating in the COS-P program, Lee recounted a different story:

So now I go in [to her child's room] and I'm, like, “What's happening here? What are you feeling like? Are you mad at me, are you sad, are you frustrated?” I try to help identify, for both me and for her, what's happening and what kind of feelings are happening and where it's coming from. A lot of times, it's been a surprise where the feelings are really coming from (Lee, F2F, L 393-397).

With Greater Awareness, Lee has shifted her approach to Being-With her children, helping them organize their emotions, and providing them with a secure and comforting environment, in which they are able to explore their emotions.

Katara also described how her Greater Awareness, gained through the COS-P program, helped her to recognize that her child is unique and, as a responsive parent, she may be required to spend more time meeting her daughter's emotional needs. Katara stated:

We're learning how to understand our child better. So, she might need that emotional cup filled a lot more often than other kids. Even just something as simple as you just have to accept that. She's not an adult, whereas I think sometimes before this, we were kind of, like, “Why doesn't she get it? We've explained it,” or “I've played with her for 10 minutes or an hour.” Well, maybe that just wasn't enough for her today. She has an emotional cup that's very, very large, and she also has a power cup that's very large (Katara, F2F, L 57-66).

This realization, through the use of Reflective Functioning and Greater Awareness, has led Katara to approach her child's request to have her needs met in a different, more empathic way, instead of getting frustrated with her child. She is putting herself into her daughter's experience and realizing that she still has a genuine need to keep having her needs met, even if it seems like her needs should have been met by her previous attempts. This may lead to her child feeling

secure in their parent-child relationship, and that her parents will stay with her emotional needs as long as necessary.

Similar to Katara, Yusuf described also using a different approach. He described how his greater awareness of recognizing that his tendency to respond in a certain way will not work with his daughter, and that in these situations, trying a different approach, or asking another parent or adult to take over can be more beneficial. Yusuf explained:

I would say when there are those temper tantrums, they're shorter, they're not as prolonged. Sometimes I had a tendency to fight fire with fire, almost, maybe, and knowing that using different techniques, so maybe going—and if one way doesn't work, switching things up or trading out somebody else coming in, my wife coming in and trying. So being able to just be able to try different things (Yusuf, F2F, L 92-96).

Through reflecting on his daughter's responses, Yusuf has been able to identify what approaches do not work well for her and has shifted his approach, becoming more aligned with his daughter. In Yusuf's description above, he depicts how he is trying a different approach when his daughter is experiencing a temper tantrum. In the COS-P program it is also hoped that employing a different approach will be accompanied by the parent viewing the child's behaviour in a different way as well. This concept will be discussed further in the following section.

### **Parent Shift in Views on Child Behaviour**

While one parent above described not experiencing a shift in terms of how he still experiences his daughter's temper tantrums, several parents did describe experiencing a shift in the way they view their child's behaviour after participating in the COS-P program. Several parents in this study sought out the COS-P program because they were experiencing behavioural challenges with one or more of their children. Before the program some parents interpreted this "challenging" behaviour as their child acting out, or associated it with their child's personality, however, after the program some parents had a realization that this behaviour was their child's

attempt to cue their parent to an emotional need. One mother, Isabella, described how she had a shift in perception after completing COS-P. Isabella stated:

And I didn't realize, too—one of the things I didn't realize is that it's not that he's needy, it's just that he needs me (Isabella, F2F, L 203-204).

With this shift, she was able to move from seeing her son as needy to her son having an authentic emotional need of his primary parent. This shift may have lessened the chance of either of them attributing being needy to him as a person, which may have been a label he could have internalized later in life. Seeing a child as needy may have stopped the parent from truly being able to be-with their child in an understanding, empathic, and authentic way.

Similar to Isabella, Victoria detailed how her son's behaviour has not been largely impacted; however, the way she experiences his behaviour has changed:

I feel like he's not doing much different, other than his own kind of pathway, his changes. But I feel like how I see what he's doing is very different. I understand—I can identify now where he is on the Circle, and that helps me respond to him in a better way and in a different way, I guess, and to be more accurate and timely with my responses. Because it's hard to understand sometimes when he needs—you know, he's not—I mean, he communicates, but it's not necessarily clear. There's a lot of interpretation that goes on constantly, and that's, I think, where a lot of the doubt comes in. Like, I don't know if this is a hundred percent what he needs or what he wants right now, but I'm going to take my best guess at it, based on all this criteria. So, I feel like I have a bit of a decoding manual to what he needs now (Victoria, F2F, L 86-96).

In Victoria's recount above, seeing her son's behaviour differently has allowed her to provide more responsive care to her son. Lee also shared how her shift in how she experiences her child's behaviour has allowed her to feel more united at a parent-child unit. Lee stated:

I think a lot of it is about empathizing and being with your child, so that you're not just looking at the behaviours or the negative interaction but then you're looking at more of the being with. And so when you're able to be there instead of being reactive then of course you sort of feel more connected (Lee, Z, L 106-110).

In this narrative, Lee emphasised not focusing on the actual behaviour but instead on her child's emotional needs through Being-With. She did not attribute the negative interaction or

undesirable behaviour as her son being bad, but instead as him displaying that there is an emotional need there that needs to be met. For some parents, shifting their views on their child's behaviour and instead Being-With, also lends to other shifts such as an increase of communication between the parent and their child. This shift will be explored in the following section.

### **Increased Parent-Child Communication**

There is a large amount of communication that happens between a parent and his or her child, whether it is verbal communication or communication through behaviour (Powell et al., 2014). Communication was a theme mentioned in several of the research interviews. Ethan reflected how there was not a lot of communication in his family growing up and this is something that he wanted to enhance in his own relationship with his child:

Well, there wasn't a whole lot of communication through the family, so it just kind of probably got passed on to me, so trying to be more open and communicate a little bit more with him and explain to him what's going on (Ethan, F2F, L 54-56).

From Ethan's description, increased communication may be a tool for verbalizing behavioural cues and organizing emotions. With Yusuf, he described that for him increased communication can aid in repairing ruptures. Yusuf explained:

But if you have a very strong relationship and a strong base and foundation, then even if you've said those things at some point, they can be worked out. In my daughter's mind or her personality, she'll be able to come and say, "I've been thinking about this for a while," or "You said this this way," or—and we can work that out instead of her keeping that in there and then having—acting out in different ways because of some underlying thing. If you have that strong relationship and always talking or always being able to communicate or to bond, then those other things that might happen, those heat-of-the-moment things or having a bad day and this happens, then all that can be worked out (Yusuf, F2F, L 208-217).

Yusuf's description highlights how choosing relationship over strategy, learning to be-with your child's emotions, and looking beyond the observable behaviour to the emotional need that

behaviour is trying to cue the parent to, may increase communication in the parent-child relationship (Powell, et al., 2014). Yusuf's willingness to communicate about how his daughter is feeling, may help to lessen undesirable behavioural communication, because if the daughter's behaviour represents missed cues, their increased communication may lessen the behaviour from happening, as the daughter has communicated her emotional need and the father is there to listen and attempt to meet her needs (Powell et al., 2014).

Isabella also described using increased communication to manage undesirable behavioural communication. Isabella stated:

It's just having that constant communication with him and reaffirming him that, yes, what his daddy's schedule is." Again, for me and for him, it was having—again, I go back to that communication—having—talking to him. Talking to him helped him and it helped me, because he's not getting as anxious as he was before, he's not getting as upset as he was before. So, for me, that just helped me, and again, in turn, it helped him (Isabella, F2F, L 156-169).

Isabella was able to identify that not knowing his father's work schedule was possibly a source of anxiety for her son and met this need by increasing communication and repeating when his father would be home. This increased communication has lessened the amount of undesirable behavioural communication between them. Although Isabella was able to figure out how to meet her son's emotional needs in this situation, it should be noted that it is not possible for parents to always meet their child's needs and the COS-P program does not expect parents to be perfect parents. Parents commented how they found the concept of only having to be "good enough" parent (Powell et al., 2014, p. 189), which is utilized in the COS-P program, and not a perfect parent reassuring, lessened guilt, and helped them to relax in their parenting. This will be discussed further in the subsequent theme.

### **Being a Good Enough Parent**

With all the advice bombarding parents, it can be overwhelming for parents to reflect on what fits well for them, and what they wish themselves to be. This may lead them to question if he or she is a good parent, if their parenting methods are harming their child, or if they are doing things the “right” way. When Isabella first started the COS-P program she was struck with these fears and questions, she wondered if she failed her child. Isabella stated:

For me, as I watched the videos and I read some of this and I listened to the discussions from other people, I thought, “Oh, you’ve failed him in a lot of ways.” Now’s your chance to remember how you felt, to try to not do it again, to know that obviously you’re not perfect, but to get these things back in and to not stay down at this low point, but to say, “Okay, these are things that I can easily bring in,” and keep bringing them in and keep bringing them in (Isabella, F2F, L 32-38).

Through this Greater Awareness, of not having to be a perfect parent, Isabella was able to reassure herself, as a good parent. This allowed her to move forward focusing on how she would incorporate new realizations from the COS-P program, and the understanding that she does not need to be a perfect parent. This seems to have given her reflection a more positive outlook, and motivation to try a different approach that may fit better with the type of parent that she wants to be. This reassuring feeling was similar to other parents, who described how taking the pressure off of having to be a perfect parent helped to decrease their stress levels as a parent. Madura explained:

I think it might have decreased my stress levels, like I think one thing that, I believe it was like they say good enough parent 30% of the time, I felt like that was like whew, I can do that, it took the stress off of being like perfect all the time (Madura, Z, L 60-62).

The idea of not having to be a perfect parent has reassured Madura that parenting and meeting your child’s needs can be obtainable, and it does not have to cause the parent an overwhelming sense of distress. Similar to Madura, Emma also shared her new appreciation against striving for



parenting perfection, as the COS-P concept of being a good enough parent, helped reassure her that parenting was achievable. Emma described:

And in our group, we joked about the roughly 30 percent. So It was reassuring to—I know that you don't have to be perfect all the time, and not in a way to be, like, it's that low, but in a way, like, I guess if that's what this course is saying that it is good enough, then that kind of—like, you can surpass it, but it's, like, a comfort bar that doesn't sound too low when you think about the grandeur of parenting, all the responsibility and tasks that it entails. It was just reassuring, for sure. I think if you overachieve and then when you don't meet that expectation, sometimes people will work harder, but a lot more people, I think, will give up. So, by knowing where that bar kind of is...it's comforting. Not like I'm going to aim for it; it's just that's where it is, and you can fluctuate (Emma, F2F, L 16-29).

Emma's description illustrates that parenting will have its high and low points, because no parent can be the perfect parent. Giving yourself that gift of not striving for perfection can create more space for self-compassion as a parent, and having the positive motivation, instead of fear of failure, to work towards understanding and meeting their child's needs.

Another parent, Victoria described her distress of trying to be the perfect parent, and trying to figure out how to meet more than her child's daily basic needs, without feeling guilty that she was not being a good enough mother. Victoria explained:

When I was trying to figure out in the beginning how to be a parent, how to do more than just provide the basic needs of food, all the most basic needs, it was like well now what? How do I provide him with a good life and what kind of things am I supposed to provide ... and it's stressful to think, for me it was stressful because...I wanna do everything I can and sometimes that is at all cost to myself and so that would create a lot of guilt. If I was taking a step back for myself because I needed self-care or I just needed to take a break 'cause I was exhausted, I would feel guilty that I wasn't being the mother I needed to be for him (Victoria, Z, L 68-76).

Victoria expressed how the COS-P concept of being a good enough parent was one that strongly resonated with her, because trying to be a perfect parent all of the time was not beneficial for herself or her child:

I really liked the concept of "being enough," because I felt challenged by what is enough for parenting. I think that gave me a really digestible guideline to go, "Okay, 30 percent

of the time, I'm being enough." I don't have to be that parent that's there, engaged 100 percent of the time, "cause it's not going to be beneficial, and everybody's going to be drained," I suppose. I feel like it has strengthened it [parent-child relationship], because I feel more relaxed. I feel like I don't need to be like the one video where the lady is trying to engage the baby all the time, forcing the baby into engaging constantly. At times, I felt like that, I felt like I wasn't parenting unless I was engaging him. So now I know that that isn't necessarily good; it's not even really an appropriate way to go about parenting. So that takes a load off. Yeah, I guess that whole concept again; it speaks to me quite a bit (Victoria, F2F, 24-28, 69-75).

Victoria's changed perception led her to the appreciation that taking care of her self and setting more realistic parenting expectations did not make her a bad or neglectful parent. Instead, setting more realistic parenting expectations could have positive effects on her and her parenting.

Meeting her self-care needs would put her in a better position to be able to meet her son's needs. Such as with Victoria, with parents' new realization that they did not have to be perfect parents, it seemed that several parents experienced an increase in their confidence and understanding as a parent.

**Parent's Increased Confidence and Understanding.** With the COS-P concept of being a good enough parent, parents were able to reflect on their parenting through a less critical lens and set more realistic parenting goals for themselves. Victoria explained how through COS-P she was able to reflect on the fact that she did not have to put all of her energy into stimulating her child and this helped to reduce some of her parenting stress. Victoria stated:

I think it reduced my stress levels because in watching the videos one of the things that I remember was the videos of them working with infants, like really little ones, littler than mine at the time even and going OK, watching for cues, watching to see when the baby is focused on you, when they need time away from you and that was probably one of the bigger revelations. In that part of it was your baby doesn't need to be stimulated 24, 7, so take a break. So from a stress level, I felt like my stress was reduced because I felt by taking a step back, like putting a little bit less energy and stimulation into this life, it reduced my stress for sure and not feeling guilty about that (Victoria, Z, 54-65).

Victoria's realization that she could step back helped to reduce her stress and feelings of guilt.

Victoria gained the confidence and understanding that taking a break does not make her a neglectful mother.

Similarly to Victoria, Madura found confidence and understanding through COS-P to practice parenting that felt more natural to her and her children. Madura explained:

I'm just thinking about little things that you kind of just naturally wanna do as a parent, you wonder if you're spoiling them or is having sleepovers in your bed with them spoiling them? And you're just like, no, it's not, it's just a mom wanting to be close to her kid and that's OK. So, I think that's kind of, things like that. It's like you can't spoil them with love, you can't spoil them with certain things. You can spoil them with material things obviously but just some of those things that sometimes, you know, giving them too much attention or things that grandparents say and you're like, you're not. And that's what I mean ... it's really natural with Circle of Security, so it's just kind of when your child needs a snuggle, snuggle them, that's OK. It's things like that that you just felt like this is very natural and nice and I'm not doing the wrong thing and it kinda helped me feel confident with all that (Madura, Z, L 373-384).

Madura has put more trust into her own parenting philosophies and values and is honouring her own parenting voice. Madura expanded on how her increased confidence and understanding has shown up in other areas of her parenting as well. Madura stated:

I just feel more confident in my parenting too, that knowing that is something that happens it's OK, we can repair it, we can move on, it's not the end of the world, I'm not a terrible parent, 'cause every parent has that guilt and those moments where you're just...parent fail, right? (Madura, Z, 274-278).

Madura has used her increased confidence and understanding to reassure herself that when relationship ruptures do happen, that she is confident enough in her own parenting abilities to know that they are capable repairing the rupture.

### **Discussion**

The aim of this current thesis work was to identify common themes from parents' descriptions of how their parenting did or did not shift after participating in the 8-week COS-P program. Through data analysis, it was discovered that many of the COS-P program concepts

resonated with the parents in this current research study, such as, empathy, being-with, emotional regulation, observational skills and reflective functioning (Cooper et al., 2000). Reviewing the transcribed research interviews, all of the parents were still using concepts from the COS-P program, one-to-two years later, whether they were cognizant of it or not, or were able to identify the specific term that matched the skill or concept they were using with their child(ren). The most significant finding here was that the four parents who were interviewed through Zoom Video Communications Inc., one to two years after participating in the COS-P program, were still able to speak to the COS-P concepts and how they are still utilizing many of the concepts in their day-to-day parenting. A single case study conducted by Pazzagli et al. (2014) also found that the father in their study experienced shifts in his parenting after completion of the COS-P program. Similar to this current study, the father in Pazzagli et al. (2014)'s study reported feeling more confident in his parenting, especially in regard to meeting his child's needs and improved interaction with his child.

While asking questions during the Zoom Video Communications Inc. interviews, sometimes the actual COS-P terms did not resonate with parents, but their examples were a very good match to the COS-P terms. Parents may not remember the definitions of the COS-P concepts, but, by their own descriptions, they were still using the COS-P concepts. This finding differed from a study conducted by Rostad (2009), who did not find a significant difference between groups of parents who did and did not participate in the COS-P program. Although this current study did not compare parents who participated in COS-P and who did not, all thirteen parents, in this sample, did describe shifts in parenting, which was supported through highlighting parents' direct quotes from transcribed research interviews. This difference in findings may be partly due to differences in participant attrition rates. Rostad's (2009) study had

a 52% attrition rate, whereas this current study had a zero percent attrition rate with participants who scheduled an interview.

Analogies used in the COS-P program, appeared to be a helpful way for parents to remember core concepts from the program. One mother described how a fire alarm analogy used in one of her COS-P classes continues to help her to remember to spend less time focusing on the child's behaviour and instead focus on the meaning behind the behaviour. Employing an analogy helps parents to visualize a new concept that may be foreign to them, connects new learning with concepts parents are already acquainted with, may help to crystalize new concepts, and may help the COS-P facilitator ensure that parents have understood the concept (Gargiulo, 2007).

Therefore, using analogies may be a good way for COS-P facilitators to help parents learn and solidify the COS-P concepts. Another mother commented how she still utilizes the handouts that were distributed in class on a regular basis. Thus, the COS-P practice of using take home material should be a continued practice for facilitators. Any key terms or concepts that the COS-P originators or facilitators wish to highlight should be distributed through a handout during the COS-P program.

During data analysis, it was noticed that many of the participants' quotes seemed to overlap into several different themes. For example, a parent describing his or her increased ability of being-with his or her child, may also highlight increased reflective functioning, increased parent-child communication, and confidence in a different parenting approach in the same quote. A shift in one area tended to encourage shifts in other areas as well. Parents' greater awareness was the most significant theme, with five sub-themes under its umbrella. Through all thirteen transcribed transcripts, parents described experiencing a greater awareness in terms of their parenting.

## **Limitations and Future Research**

### **Limitations**

There are several important limitations that need to be recognized. Although all participants were recruited from COS-P programs that were facilitated by the same facilitator to ensure program fidelity, this meant that parent descriptions were only from parents that participated in the program with one facilitator. Therefore, we cannot generalize that parents who took the program with a different facilitator would have similar experiences to the parents in this sample. In addition, although interview questions were presented in a way that allowed parents the space to answer yes or no, there was no specific question, which directly asked participants if they did not experience any shifts. This may have influenced the results received, and particularly the low number of responses that showcased No Shifts in parenting.

Another potential limitation is that the COS-P program facilitator utilized in this study is also a co-author of this paper. This may have influenced the participants to speak about the COS-P program in a more positive light, as they were informed that their facilitator was a part of the research process. This possible limitation was addressed by clearly explaining to the participants who would have access to their interviews and transcripts. The facilitator and co-author did not have access to the recorded interviews or transcripts. She was involved in the discussion of final themes once identifying factors had been removed from verbatim quotes.

Additionally, the participant sample for this study consisted of mostly mothers (n=7); all participants resided in urban areas, and had at least some post-secondary education. Therefore, we cannot generalize that the descriptions presented in this current study would be similar to the general population.

### **Future Research**

Future research may include recruiting participants from COS-P programs utilizing various program facilitators. Future studies may also expand on this current research by interviewing both parents from the same family, if applicable. The interviewer could also expand on the question utilized by this current study, specifically investigating No Shifts in a more direct manner.

After reviewing the participant demographics for this study, it was noted that all participants were the biological parents of their children. Future studies may include a more diverse sample by recruiting stepparents and other non-biological primary parents. Future research may also want to include a more diverse population in terms of sex, education, and location of residence. Recruiting a more diverse population may help future researchers to comment on the applicability of their findings to the larger population.

The purpose of this current study was to remain open to parents' descriptions of shifts or no shifts in parenting after completion of the 8-week COS-P program and identify common themes that emerged from the data. Future research could delve deeper into shifts in parenting by exploring with parents why or how they believe these shifts happened in a more detailed manner. This would help to provide a rich description of why and how parenting shifts occur after participating in the COS-P program.

### **Conclusion**

Keeping in mind the stated limitations, these findings shed some light on parents' experiences of shifts or no shifts after participating in the 8-week COS-P program. These findings offered a glimpse into parent-reported experiences, which provided support for parents experiencing positive shifts from participating in the COS-P program. From parents' descriptions, there

appears to be a shift in terms of how parents perceive their child's behaviour, how they respond to the child's behaviour, and the importance of repair when they experience relationship ruptures. A key influence of these shifts in parenting appeared to predominately come from parents gaining Greater Awareness through COS-P. More research is needed regarding how Greater Awareness and the sub-themes under it impact shifts in parenting. This will provide the COS-P originators and facilitators and other relationship-based parenting interventions with better insights into how shifts in parenting happen and how they can adapt their program to reflect these new learnings.



### References

- Abidin, R. (1995). *Parenting Stress Index: Professional Manual, (3rd ed)*. Odessa, FL: Psychological Assessment Resources.
- Ainsworth, M., Blehar, M., Waters, E., & Wall, S. (1978). *Patterns of attachment*. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Beck, A.T., Rush, A.J., Shaw, B.F., & Emery, G. (1979). *Cognitive therapy of depression*. New York: Guilford Press.
- Beck, A.T., & Steer, R.A. (1993). *Manual for the Beck Depression Inventory*. San Antonio: The Psychological Corporation.
- Bowlby, J. (1951). Maternal care and mental health. *World Health Organization Monograph* (Serial No. 2). Retrieved from [http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/40724/1/WHO\\_MONO\\_2\\_%28part1%29.pdf](http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/40724/1/WHO_MONO_2_%28part1%29.pdf)
- Bowlby J. 1988. *A secure base parent-child attachment and healthy human development*. Retrieved from <http://www.abebe.org.br/wp-content/uploads/John-Bowlby-A-Secure-Base-Parent-Child-Attachment-and-Healthy-Human-Development-1990.pdf>
- Brennan, K.A., Clark, C.L., & Shaver, P.R. (1998). Self-report measurement of adult romantic attachment: An integrative overview. In J.A. Simpson & W.S. Rholes (Eds.), *Attachment theory and close relationships* (pp. 46–76). New York: Guilford Press.
- Bretherton, I. (1992). The origins of Attachment Theory: John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth. *Developmental Psychology*, 28(5), 759-75.

- Carlson, E.B., & Putnam, F.W. (1993). An update on the Dissociative Experiences Scale. *Dissociation: Progress in the Dissociative Disorders*, 6, 16–27.
- Cassidy, J. (2008). The nature of the child's ties. In J. J. Cassidy, & P. R. Shaver (Eds.), *Handbook of attachment* (pp. 3-22). New York, NY: Guilford Press.
- Cassidy, J., Ziv, Y., Stupica, B., Sherman, L. J., Butler, H., Karfgin, A., . . . Powell, B. (2010). Enhancing attachment security in the infants of women in a jail-diversion program. *Attachment & Human Development*, 12(4), 333-353.  
doi:10.1080/14616730903416955
- Cassidy, J., Woodhouse, S., Sherman, L., Stupica, B., & Lejuez, C. (2011). Enhancing infant attachment security: An examination of treatment efficacy and differential susceptibility. *Development and Psychopathology*, 23(1), 131-148.
- Cooper, G., Hoffman, K., & Marvin, B., & Powell, B. (2000). *Circle of Security International: Early intervention program for parents and children*. Retrieved from <https://www.circleofsecurityinternational.com/>
- Cooper, G., Hoffman, K., & Powell, B. (2009). *Circle of Security COS-P© facilitator DVD manual*. (Unpublished manual). Circle of Security International, Spokane, WA.
- Deakin, H., & Wakefield, K. (2013). Skype interviewing: reflections of two PhD researchers. *Qualitative Research*, 14(5), 603–616.  
doi:10.1177/1468794113488126
- Deater-Deckard, K., & O'Connor, T. G. (2000). Parent-child mutuality in early childhood: Two behavioral genetic studies. *Developmental Psychology*, 36, 561-570. doi: 10.1037/0012-1649.36.5.561

- Gargiulo, T. (2007). Storytelling: Its role in experiential learning. In M. L. Silberman (Ed.), *The handbook of experiential learning* (pp. 202-223). San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons.
- George, C., and West, M. (2001). The development and preliminary validation of a new measure of adult attachment: the adult attachment projective. *Attachment & Human Development*, 3, 30–61. doi: 10.1080/14616730010024771
- Goodman, R. (1997). The strengths and difficulties questionnaire: a research note. *J. Child Psychology & Psychiatry*, 38, 581–586. doi: 10.1111/j.1469-7610.1997.tb01545.x
- Heppner, P. P. & Heppner, M. J. (2004). *Writing and publishing your thesis, dissertation, and research: A guide for students in the helping professions* (pp. 340-343). Retrieved from [http://charon.athabascau.ca/cnhsgrad/mhst719/Limitations\\_complete.pdf](http://charon.athabascau.ca/cnhsgrad/mhst719/Limitations_complete.pdf)
- Herman, J.L., Perry, J.C., & van der Kolk, B.A. (1989). Childhood trauma in borderline personality disorder. *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 146, 490–495.
- Hoffman, K. T., Marvin, R. S., Cooper, G., & Powell, B. (2006). Changing toddlers' and preschoolers' attachment classifications: the Circle of Security intervention. *Journal of Consulting & Clinical Psychology*, 74(6), 1017-1026.
- Horton, E., & Murray, C. (2015). A quantitative exploratory evaluation of the circle of security-parenting program with mothers in residential substance-abuse treatment. *Infant Mental Health Journal*, 36(3), 320-336. doi:10.1002/imhj.21514
- Huber, A., McMahon, C. A., & Sweller, N. (2015). Efficacy of the 20-week circle of security intervention: Changes in parent reflective functioning, representations,

- and child attachment in an Australian clinical sample. *Infant Mental Health Journal*, 36(6), 556-574. doi:10.1002/imhj.21540
- Karen, R. (1994). *Becoming attached: First relationships and how they shape our capacity to love*. Retrieved from <http://books.google.com/books>
- Konold, T. R., and Abidin, R. R. (2001). Parenting alliance: A multi- factor perspective. *Assessment* 8, 47–65. doi: 10.1177/1073191101008 00105
- Maccoby, E. E. (1992). The role of parents in the socialization of children: An historical overview. *Developmental Psychology*, 28(6), 1006-1017. doi:10.1037/0012-1649.28.6.1006
- Miles, M.B., & Huberman, A.M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook* (2nd Ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. Retrieved from <http://books.google.com/books>
- Noble, H., & Smith, J. (2015). Issues of validity and reliability in qualitative research. *Evidence-Based Nursing*, 18(2), 34-35. doi:10.1136/eb-2015-102054
- Owen, M.T. (1992). *The NICHD study of early child care mother–infant interaction scales*. Unpublished manuscript, Timberlawn Psychiatric Research Foundation, Dallas, TX.
- Pazzagli, C., Laghezza, L., Manaresi, F., Mazzeschi, C., & Powell, B. (2014). The circle of security parenting and parental conflict: A single case study. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 5, 1-5. doi:10.3389/fpsyg.2014.00887
- Powell, B., Cooper, G., Hoffman, K., & Marvin, B. (2014). *The circle of security intervention: Enhancing attachment in early parent-child relationships*. New York: The Guildford Press.

- Rieser-Danner, L. A., & Slaughter, V. (2014). *Attachment and bonding in infancy and childhood*. Salem Press Encyclopedia of Health. Retrieved from <http://0-search.ebscohost.com.aupac.lib.athabascau.ca/login.aspx?direct=true&db=ers&AN=93871783&site=eds-live>
- Rohner, R.P. (2001). *Handbook for the study of parental acceptance and rejection* (rev. ed.). Storrs, CT: Rohner Research.
- Rosenberg, M. (1979). *Conceiving the self*. New York: Basic Books.
- Rostad, W. (2009). *Examining the effectiveness of the circle of security parenting DVD program* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). The University of Montana, Missoula, MT.
- Rowe, M., Rosenheck, R., Stern, E., & Bellamy, C. (2014). Video conferencing technology in research on schizophrenia: A qualitative study of site research staff. *Psychiatry: Interpersonal and Biological Processes*, 77(1), 98–102. doi:10.1521/psyc.2014.77.1.98
- Sandelowski, M. (2000). Whatever happened to Qualitative Description? *Research in Nursing & Health*, 23(4), 334-340. doi: 10.1002/1098-240X(200008)23:4<334::AID-NUR9>3.0.CO;2-G
- Sarason, I.G., Levine, H.M., Basham, R.B., & Sarason, B.R. (1983). Assessing social support: The Social Support Questionnaire. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 44, 127–139.
- Schore, A. N. (2001). Effects of a secure attachment relationship on right brain development, affect regulation, and infant mental health. *Infant Mental Health Journal*, 22(1/2), 7-66.

- Sedgwick, M., & Spiers, J. (2009). The use of videoconferencing as a medium for the qualitative interview. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 8(1), 1-11. Retrieved from <http://0-search.ebscohost.com.aupac.lib.athabascau.ca/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a9h&AN=37808954&site=eds-live>
- Sullivan-Bolyai, S., Bova, C., & Harper, D. (2005). Developing and refining interventions in persons with health disparities: The use of Qualitative Description. *Nursing Outlook*, 53, 127-133. doi:10.1016/j.outlook.2005.03.005
- Thompson, R. A. (2008). Early attachment and later development. In J. Cassidy, & P. R. Shaver (Eds.), *Handbook of attachment*, (pp. 348-365). Retrieved from <http://books.google.com/books>
- van Rosmalen, L., van der Horst, F. P., & van der Veer, R. (2016). From secure dependency to attachment: Mary Ainsworth's integration of Blatz's security theory into Bowlby's attachment theory. *History of Psychology*, 19(1), 22-39. doi:10.1037/hop0000015

## **Manuscript 2: The Use of Video Teleconferencing as a Method of Data Collection in Qualitative Research**

### **Abstract**

As new communication platforms proliferate in our 21st century age of digital technology, the ways in which qualitative researchers generate their data is evolving. Whereas in-person interviews are still the mainstay of data generation in qualitative studies, video teleconferencing programs, such as Zoom Video Communications Inc., may provide qualitative researchers with a reasonably cost-effective and convenient alternative to in-person interviews. The uses and advantages of face-to-face interviewing are well documented (Opdenakker, 2006; Diccio-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006; Gill, Stewart, Treasure, & Chadwick, 2008); however, utilizing video teleconferencing as a method of data generation, specifically Zoom Video Communications Inc., has not been examined. We share experiences of utilizing Zoom Video Communications Inc. to conduct in-depth qualitative interviews with mothers participating in a study about parenting. Overall, participants reported positive experiences regarding the video teleconferencing interview. Participants appreciated the following about video teleconferencing: (1) Zoom Video Communications Inc. was a convenient and simple program to use, (2) enhanced personal interface in seeing the interviewer while discussing such a personal topic as parenting, (3) the freedom of being able to choose the device (i.e., phone, tablet, computer) to participate in the interview, and (4) time saver in not having to travel to participate in the research. They reported that video teleconferencing meant more time available for their family. Using video teleconferencing software, such as Zoom Video Communications Inc., could help researchers keep research costs low and enable them to gain access to larger and more diverse

participant populations. Advantages and disadvantages, as well as recommendations for best practices and future research, from researchers' perspectives, will also be discussed.

*Key words: Video teleconferencing interview, Qualitative interviewing, Zoom Video Communications Inc.*

### **The Use of Video Teleconferencing as a Method of Data Collection in Qualitative Research**

There is a considerable amount of literature about the use of face-to-face interviewing (Opdenakker, 2006; Diccico-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006; Gill, Stewart, Treasure, & Chadwick, 2008). In-person interviews are still known as the traditional form of generating data in qualitative studies (Creswell, 2013), however such as with the authors of this article, meeting participants in person may not always be feasible due to geographic location or budget constraints. With the invention and availability of new technology, new methods of generating data are possible. Video teleconferencing may provide researchers with a cost effective and convenient alternative. The purpose of this article is to describe participants' experiences taking part in a virtual research interview, and to highlight recommendations for best practices to assist researchers with future research studies utilizing video teleconferencing as a method of data generation.

#### **Review of Literature**

Researchers in the past have sought out alternative means to face-to-face interviews, starting with telephone interviews (King & Horrocks, 2010). There has been an increased utilization of online technologies in research, such as, emailing (Mason & Ide, 2014; James, 2015), instant messaging (Stieger & Göritz, 2006), and chat rooms (Shapka, Domene, Khan, & Yang, 2016). To determine the most appropriate method of data generation for a specific study, researchers may now consider the advantages and disadvantages of using video teleconferencing



software (Fielding, 2010; Nehls, Smith, & Schneider, 2014). As more and more Canadian households have Internet access the population base able to use this type of technology is growing. According to the 2012 Canadian Internet Use Survey, 83% of Canadian households have Internet access in their homes (Statistics Canada, 2013), and 85.6% of Canadian households have access to a mobile phone (Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission, 2016). Although these numbers are significant, there are still around 20 percent of Canadian households that do not have Internet access or a mobile phone in their home. According to the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (2016), these households are amongst the lowest earning income families in Canada.

In one study where participants were given a choice between video teleconferencing and a telephone interview, those who chose telephone, stated being disappointed that they could not “meet” their interviewer (Sedgwick & Spiers, 2009). Researchers from another study found that when given a choice between video teleconferencing and a telephone interview, participants preferred video teleconferencing (Mabragaña, Carballo-Diéguez, & Giguere, 2013). Participants in a study that used emailing stated that they would have preferred a faster means of communication (Mason & Ide, 2014). The researchers in this particular study recommended using a faster-paced avenue for data generation (Mason & Ide, 2014).

Video teleconferencing is typically used to save costs (Deakin & Wakefield, 2013; Sedgwick & Spiers, 2009), to gain access to a wider population (Deakin & Wakefield, 2013; Sedgwick & Spiers, 2009), and for practical concerns, such as, bad weather (Sedgwick & Spiers, 2009). Deakin and Wakefield (2013) found that participants in their study enjoyed having the option of participating online for the flexibility and convenience. Researchers who compared face-to-face versus virtual interviews did not find negative impacts in terms of quality of the

interview (Deakin & Wakefield, 2013; Cabaroglu, Basaran, & Roberts, 2010), and commented that some interviewees were more open during virtual interviews (Deakin & Wakefield, 2013; Mabragana et al., 2013). Mabragana et al. (2013) explained how participants in their study commented on how they actually preferred having their interviewer residing in a different city, as it lowered the chance that they might run into their interviewer while in public.

With any form of technology there are factors to take into consideration when assessing the appropriateness of the specific research tools being utilized. As a researcher needs to consider the actual physical space and audio and video recording device for in-person interviews, researchers utilizing video teleconferencing software need to reflect on their chosen platform and consider factors such as possible technical difficulties and if the appointed interviewer possesses the appropriate interview skills to conduct interviews through a virtual medium (Rowe, Rosenheck, Stern, & Bellamy, 2014). Before researchers attempt to conduct a qualitative study utilizing video teleconferencing software it is first recommended that they consult the current available literature. Researchers looking for best practices and literature on the advantages and disadvantages of each specific program, may have a difficult time locating this information, because several of the available studies solely focused on using the video teleconferencing program Skype (Nehls, Smith & Schneider, 2014; Deakin & Wakefield, 2013; Sullivan, 2012). Other programs such as, Zoom Video Communications Inc. have not, to date, been accounted for in the qualitative research field. Different programs need to be tested in the future, so researchers will be able to choose the program that best fits their particular study and will provide them with best practices and recommendations on their chosen platform. This methodological reflection concerns Zoom Video Communications Inc. only.

### **Current Study**

While designing the study “Considering Shifts in Parenting After the 8-week Circle of Security-Parenting© Program”, the authors considered their options for generating data. Due to the geographic location of the participants and limited research funding the authors agreed that conducting virtual interviews through the use of video teleconferencing software would be their best option. After testing both Adobe Connect and Zoom Video Communications Inc. during several thesis meetings, it was decided that Zoom Video Communications Inc. best suited the needs of this research study, because of the features offered by this software, which will be discussed in more detail in subsequent sections.

### **What is Video Teleconferencing and What is Required?**

Video teleconferencing software allows two or more people in different locations to communicate using audio and video imaging in real time (Gough & Rosenfeld, 2006). Different video teleconferencing software may have different requirements but generally the researcher will need access to the required software, high-speed Internet access and the required hardware. Some video teleconferencing software is free and will require both the researcher and participant to download a program, such as, Skype. Other software offers basic options at no cost with the option to upgrade for a monthly or annual fee and only require the researcher to download the program, such as with Zoom Video Communications Inc. Researchers and participants connect to the video teleconferencing interview using their computer, mobile telephone or tablet. Researchers and participants have the choice whether they would prefer to use wireless Internet or to hardwire their computer to the Internet for a more reliable connection. There is also an option of using hardware such as a headset with microphone for increased clarity and privacy during the interview.

### **Zoom Video Communications Inc.**

#### **Features**

Unlike other video teleconferencing programs, such as Skype and Adobe Connect, Zoom Video Communications Inc. does not require participants to have an account or download a program. The host, in this case the researcher, emails participants an invitation to their Zoom Video Communications Inc. meeting. The meeting invitation is created by Zoom Video Communications Inc. and can be edited by the researcher. The researcher can also add to this email by providing the participant with further details on the study or research interview or by adding attachments to the email as needed. Zoom Video Communications Inc. also offers screen-sharing abilities, which would allow the researcher or participant to share their screen with all members in attendance. This feature could be used by a researcher in several ways, such as sharing the information letter or consent form to help ensure participants have indeed seen these documents and do not require any further clarification, or by displaying an image or word document specific to the interview. The researcher may also set a password for their research meeting, so only individuals with the password may join the research interview.

Zoom Video Communications Inc. gives the option to record meetings to either the host's computer or to the Zoom Video Communications Inc.'s cloud storage. Having the option to save the recorded interviews to the private and secure researcher computer helps to further ensure participant confidentiality. Researchers also have several options of how they save and send their research interviews to their transcriptionist or other research members. Zoom Video Communications Inc. automatically saves the research interview into two files, an audio only file and a video and audio file. The researcher can choose whether he or she would prefer to send

their transcriptionist an audio and video file or only the audio file, which would further enhance participant privacy.

Another feature researchers may find advantageous is that the researcher can control who is being recorded when. For example, the researcher may choose to have whoever is currently speaking recorded on screen or they can also only record the participant or the interviewer. This may be an option for participants who are not comfortable having their face identified.

Additionally, participants can choose which device they would prefer to use for the research interview. Zoom Video Communications Inc. can be used on a desktop computer, laptop, tablet, or telephone, or mobile device. If participants are utilizing their mobile phone for the interview they can either connect through calling-in, selecting the link in the email sent to them by the researcher, or by downloading the Zoom Video Communications application to their phone and entering in the unique meeting number provided by the researcher. Overall, Zoom Video Communications Inc. offers several features that are convenient for both the participants and the researcher.

### **Pricing**

Zoom Video Communications Inc. offers several packages from basic personal meetings to large enterprise packages. For smaller research studies, under 100 participants, the basic personal meeting package or the pro meeting package would be appropriate. There is also an option to purchase a larger participant allotment by purchasing an additional add-on package to any plan. The basic meeting package is free and offers unlimited meetings, for one to one meetings there is no time limit and for group meetings there is a 40-minute time allowance. This basic package also comes with video conferencing features, web conferencing features, group collaboration features and security features.

The pro package, which was used for this study, is \$14.99 USD a month, per host, or a yearly membership can be purchased for \$149.90 USD, before sales tax, depending on the required length of time required by the researcher. The pro package offers all the features listed above in the basic personal meeting package, but also comes with unlimited meeting duration for all meetings up to 100 participants. This package also comes with additional features, such as more administrative controls and 1GB of cloud recording.

### **Security**

Zoom Video Communications Inc. offers the researcher several important security features. Available security features start before the meeting by allowing the researcher end-to-end encryption for their interview, setting up a login with a username and password, and setting a password for all parties trying to enter the interview. Researchers will also be able to decide whether they wish to send the interview invitation to the participant through email, Instant Messaging, or Short Message Service. Researchers can take this one step further by also only permitting participants from certain email addresses to join the research interview. This is another way to ensure that only intended parties are able to join the interview. Researchers can also set up the interview so that participants cannot join until the researcher joins the research meeting. During the research interview, researchers also have administrative controls at their disposal. They can turn the audio or video on or off, they can end a meeting, they can chat with one participant or address all participants, and they can control membership by expelling participants if need be (Zoom Video Communications Inc., 2016). This may be useful if conducting a focus group.

### **Ethical Considerations**

For this current study, participant information letters and consent forms were emailed to participants prior to conducting the interviews. Participants were given the option of printing out, signing, scanning and emailing back the consent form or providing verbal consent at the beginning of the interview. Three out of the four participants opted to provide verbal consent, which was recorded and saved in a separate digital file. Participants were also reminded before starting the interview that the study was completely voluntary and that they could pass on any question or end their participation at any point throughout the interview without consequence.

Since Zoom Video Communications Inc. gives the option of saving recorded meetings to either the host's computer or Zoom Video Communications Inc. cloud storage, the authors decided that it would be best, ethically speaking, to record the interviews to the interviewer's personal password protected laptop and then upload the recorded interviews to a secure university website for transcription. All research team members and hired professional transcriptionists were required to sign a confidentiality pledge before being granted access to the recorded interviews.

To help ensure participants' privacy during the actual interview the primary investigator conducted interviews in a private room, in a private residence where she and the participant could not be seen or overheard. This was a consideration the authors also mentioned in the participant information letter for participants to ensure that they also completed their interview from a private location as well to ensure their own privacy and confidentiality.

Zoom Video Communications Inc. also offers the option to set a password for the meeting. While setting up the interviews on the Zoom Video Communications Inc. website, the interviewer ensured to set a password for each individual meeting, which was provided to each

participant beforehand. Therefore, to join the scheduled Zoom Video Communications Inc. meeting a person would need to enter in the correct password before being able to gain access. This helps to ensure that uninvited individuals do not accidentally join a private meeting/research interview.

### **Considerations for Planning and Conducting the Interview**

#### **Recruitment and Absentees**

Two of the three authors were responsible for participant recruitment for this study. One of these two authors had previously corresponded with the potential participants for a previous research project evaluating the same parenting program the participants all attended. This author emailed and/or texted participants, depending on the available contact information, asking their permission to have the interviewer contact them regarding participating in follow-up interview by video teleconferencing. After receiving permission from six potential participants the interviewer sent out an initial email and/or text introducing her and the study. Participants were also sent a formal participant information letter and consent form.

Out of the six participants contacted, four participants scheduled and completed virtual interviews. A study on the use of Skype as a method of data collection, reported an issue with absentees (participants scheduling interviews and then not showing up for the scheduled interview) when conducting online interviews (Deakin & Wakefield (2014). The authors of this current study did not experience an issue with participant absentees. One participant had to reschedule her interview due to a work emergency, but overall every participant that actually scheduled an appointment did complete his or her interview.



### **Building Rapport**

Following the lead from past studies that have utilized video conferencing for conducting interviews (e.g., Deakin & Wakefield, 2014; Wilkerson, Iantaffi, Grey, Bockting, & Rosser, 2014), the interviewer communicated with each participant several times prior to conducting the actual interview. Several emails and/or texts were exchanged with each participant. These emails focused on rapport building as a priority by using informal language and having a friendly and informative tone. For example, non-technical language was used, and emails began with a few short pleasantries. The interviewer gave the participants the choice to communicate through email or text message, which one participant mentioned that she appreciated at the end of her interview.

During the interview, rapport building was also a priority. Before starting the actual interview component, the interviewer spent a few minutes checking in with the participant to see how their day was and exchanged some pleasantries. For example, this exchange was kept to a few minutes to respect the interviewees' time, however, it was important in terms of building rapport and creating a comfortable environment for participants to share their personal experiences and stories. Again, language was kept informal and the interviewer dressed in a less formal fashion to hopefully put participants at ease and to create the environment of a conversation instead of an interview or interrogation, which was noticed and commented on by participants. Participants noted that they felt at ease and felt that they were having more of a conversation than being asked a series of questions.

### **Conducting the Interview**

The interview was a semi-structured interview. The interview guide (Appendix B) consisted of 23 questions, with potential probes, regarding their experiences with the parenting

intervention and how the intervention may or may not have impacted their parenting. The remaining four questions related to their experiences participating in a virtual interview. The interviews themselves ranged from one to two hours in length.

Much preparation from the researcher went into the interviews prior to their starts. The interviewer printed the interview guide highlighting questions that were key to the current study, ensuring that these questions were indeed asked during the research interview. The interviewer had several visual cues to remind her self to record the interview; this included a note with the word record on it posted to her computer screen and on the first question of the interview guide. The researcher also printed the information letter and consent form to go through with participants at the beginning of each research interview.

The researcher ensured the room where the research was being virtually conducted was at a desirable temperature, the door was locked, the window was closed, all other electronic devices that utilized the internet were turned off or disconnected, and a glass of water and paper and pen were within arm's reach. Also, to help create a friendly and informal environment the researcher dressed informally by wearing jeans or leggings and a casual top. Researcher attire is a personal choice and some researchers may prefer a more formal attire to display a more professional appearance (Hai-Jew, 2015).

### **Transcription**

For this current study the authors, through a university research grant, were able to hire a professional transcriptionist. Interviews ranged from one hour to almost two hours in length. With Zoom Video Communications Inc., the audio and video files are saved separately, which enables the researcher to forward to the transcriptionist only the audio file to protect the identity of their participants. After recording the interviews, the files were uploaded to a secure university

website requiring a password to access the files. The transcriptionist was also required to sign a pledge of confidentiality. Participants were informed through the information letter and again verbally before the start of the interview that their interview would be recorded and sent to a professional transcriptionist for transcription. Once the transcriptions were completed the authors compared the transcriptions with the recorded interview to ensure accuracy. Any names mentioned during the interview were removed on the transcript. For example, if a mother mentioned her son's name in the interview the transcriptionist would remove the actual name and insert [son] in its place. There are no identifiable markers on the transcript itself.

### **Experiences of Participants**

Overall, participants stated having an enjoyable experience participating in the video teleconferencing interviews and all four participants stated that they would be willing to participate in another video teleconferencing interview in the future. This 100% positive reaction was higher than a study conducted by Mabragana et al. (2013), where 70% of participants gave their video teleconferencing research interview a favourable review. In this particular study, participants experienced a technical difficulty, which was not experienced by participants in the current study. This may be one factor for the difference in favourable responses. At the end of the interview participants were asked to answer four questions regarding their thoughts on participating in the online interview. When asked what they most liked about participating in the current video teleconferencing interview, participants responded that they enjoyed the simplicity of Zoom Video Communications Inc., all of the responsibility was on the interviewer and participants were only required to click on a link to be directed to the interview, the participant was instantly connected to the interview, the participant could see the interviewer, and he or she had an option of which device they wanted to use for the interview, whether it be their computer

or cell phone. Participants also commented that they appreciated how convenient participating in an online interview was in terms of not having to travel to a different physical location and because they did not have to travel it reduced the time needed to participate. One participant stated that she was not sure if she would have participated in this study if she were required to travel to a certain location because of the extended time away from their family. This particular participant further commented that they appreciated seeing the interviewer's face, especially when talking about a personal topic such as parenting, but they preferred this medium to a face-to-face meeting because they did not have to travel anywhere. Past research studies have also shown that participants commented how they appreciated being able to see their interviewer's face (Sedgwick & Spiers, 2009; Mabragana et al., 2013). They also stated that they preferred it instead of having the interview over the phone because they wanted to see the interviewer, which they stated made them feel more comfortable because they were able to see the interviewer's personality and gestures.

When asked what they least liked about participating in the video teleconferencing interview all participants stated that there was nothing that they did not like about participating in the interview. This question was followed up by another question asking what suggestions they may have for the research team on how to improve participants' experience in the future. Several suggestions were offered including, sending an interview agenda and interview guide to participants prior to the interview, sending participants a meeting invite so they could add the meeting easily to their electronic calendars and to keep the length of the interviews to around an hour. The length of the interview also seemed important to a study conducted by Rowe and Colleagues (2014), where participants commented on interviews lasting too long. The

researchers of this study suggested reading your research participant, assessing for fatigue (Rowe et al., 2014).

### **Researcher Recommendations**

After conducting and reviewing the interviews the authors have offered 14 recommendations for researchers wishing to complete online interviews in the future.

- (1) Unhook any other devices connected to the Internet that you will be using during your interview, including Wi-Fi on cellphones and tablets, and Internet based phones, such as, Magic Jack. While conducting a test run interview using Zoom Video Communications Inc. one of the researcher's house phones, which worked through using the same internet connection, rang and caused a short (less than 30 second) audio and video disturbance.
- (2) If possible hardwire your computer to the Internet instead of using a Wi-Fi connection. This will ensure a stronger and more stable Internet connection.
- (3) Ensure you have an appropriate background. Remember your participants will be able to see what is behind you. If you are conducting the interview in your own personal space you may want to remove some personal items, such as pictures. This recommendation was also suggested in a study conducted by Hai-Jew (2015).
- (4) Be prepared for possible distractions. Since participants will be choosing their own space for their interview there may be distractions, such as, family members, pets, door bells, or loud noises. Three out of the four participants chose to complete their interview from their personal residences and one chose to complete their interview in their car while waiting for an appointment. One of the participants who completed the interview from her private residence informed the interviewer at the beginning of the interview that she would be expecting a delivery and would have to pause the interview to answer the door. This same participant also informed

the interviewer that her child was upstairs taking a nap and may or may not wake up during the interview. It is advisable to prepare for these types of distractions by allotting more time than initially thought needed to conduct the interviews. For example, if the interview typically takes an hour, book an hour and a half for the interview. This recommendation confirmed Hai-Jew's (2015) study on conducting video conferencing interviews.

(5) The interviewer should be proficient in their chosen video teleconferencing platform. It is recommended that you already know how to use the program, have conducted several test runs prior to conducting interviews with participants, and know how to solve, or attempt to solve, typical technical difficulties that may occur before or during the interview. One participant in the current study, who called in on their cell phone, had trouble getting their video to work and ended up having to download the Zoom Video Communications Inc. application onto their cell phone to get the video working properly. There was also a small audio delay during this interview.

(6) Ensure you have enough storage space on your computer for recording interviews. The authors conducted several test runs prior to starting interviews with participants, however the test runs were not as long in length as the actual interviews. During the last few minutes of an almost two-hour interview, the interviewer received a warning from her computer stating that her computer was running out of storage space.

(7) Take steps to safeguard participant privacy and confidentiality. Conduct your research interviews in a private location where you will not be seen or overheard. The researcher can further safeguard privacy and confidentiality by recording and storing his or her research interview to their secure computer and not to a company's or their own cloud storage.

(8) Remember to record your interview. Write yourself a note and place it on the first question of your interview to ensure you remember to press record. Although Zoom Video Communications Inc. does offer the option to automatically record a meeting, the authors of this current study preferred to give the participant an option to sign into the meeting and remind him or her that the interview will be recorded before starting the recording. The possible issue with this is that the interviewer may forget to press record, so it is recommended that you have a visual reminder.

(9) Have a backup plan in case of technical difficulties or other unforeseen disturbances. The authors have been meeting weekly online for over a year testing several different video teleconferencing platforms and have experienced technical difficulties, such as, loss of Internet connection, freezing, or other audio and video disturbances. This is especially important in cases where the participant or interviewer is in a rural community or in a place with unreliable Internet connection. The authors arranged to call participants, using their provided contact number, in case of loss of Internet or poor connection to finish the interview. Hai-Jew (2015) also recommended for researchers to leave themselves additional time in case they encountered technical difficulties.

(10) Ensure that you and your participants are physically comfortable before starting the interview. Since both the interviewer and interviewee will be speaking for long periods of time it is recommended that the interviewer ensure that he or she has a beverage within arm's reach and that they invite their participants to get him or herself a beverage as well at the beginning of the interview. This will cut down on interruptions during the interview. Also ensure that you are in a comfortable environment. You will want to make sure that your environment is private, that you have a comfortable and quiet chair, and adjust the room temperature to a comfortable setting. Having a noisy or uncomfortable chair, being too hot or hearing noise from an open window can

be very distracting to both yourself and your participants. If you are recording at home or in an office setting it is also recommended that you put a note on your door letting others know not to disturb you. This recommendation was also echoed by Hai-Jew (2015).

(11) Ethical considerations. Although it is protocol to provide participants with an information letter and consent form prior to the actual interview, it is also recommended that you go over the consent form with the participant again at the beginning of the interview to ensure that he or she understood and do not have any questions. It is also recommended that you record participants' verbal consent and the participant's interview in two separate recordings for administration ease.

(12) Ensure your electronic invitation to the online interview is clear and easy to understand. With Zoom Video Communications Inc., once the interviewer sets up a meeting he or she is provided with a prepared meeting invitation that the interviewer can copy and paste into an email invitation to send to participants. Ensure that the link to your online interview is easy to locate in the email and that it is a live link that participants only need to click on in order to be directed to the online interview. You do not want this process to be complicated, especially if you have participants who are not technologically adept.

(13) Provide potential participants with clear and detailed information on participating in an online interview. Participants from the current study stated that they appreciated the detailed instructions the interviewer provided them prior to the interview. Participants knew what they needed to participate and what to expect.

(14) Pick a user-friendly program that is free and does not require participants to download any additional programs. Make sure you clearly inform participants in your study's information letter what type of device they will require to participate in your study, if the device needs to have audio and/or visual capabilities, or if any other programs or hardware is required.



Participants in a study that required participants to use a phone for the audio while participating in a video teleconferencing research interview, commented that they found the additional device cumbersome and would have preferred to speak directly into the computer (Mabragana et al., 2013).

### **Advantages and Disadvantages**

#### **Advantages**

The authors' larger study of examining shifts in parenting after completion of a relationship-based intervention was made possible because of the use of video teleconferencing software. The interviewer did not reside in the same city as the participants and did not have the funding in order to travel to the participants' places of residences either. Since neither interviewer or interviewee were required to travel to a certain location there was increased flexibility in terms of when and how long the interviews could be, again using the example of the client who completed the interview in her car while waiting for an appointment. Participants stated feeling more comfortable speaking about a sensitive topic like parenting in the comfort of their own home or a space of their choosing. One participant also mentioned the point that her husband works shift work so that if the interviewer wished to speak to both parents at the same time that this type of online interview would be convenient as they could both participate from their own chosen locations.

The interviewer also commented that it was convenient conducting interviews in her own workspace as she had all their necessary resources and tools at arm's reach and could easily complete administrative duties afterwards, such as uploading interviews to the secure server for transcription and documenting her thoughts in her methodological journal without having to leave her current space. There were reduced health and safety concerns, as the researcher did not

have to travel to a different location or enter into a participant's home. The interviewer commented that she felt that she was still able to observe participants' non-verbal communication and had a glimpse into the participant's life by seeing the location where he or she chose to complete the interview. Conducting these interviews was reasonably cost effective, as the interviewer only had to pay \$14.99 USD monthly while conducting interviews. There were no additional travel costs. This lower cost may be extremely beneficial to researchers who would like to access larger populations in various geographical areas or it may also enable graduate students with lower research budgets to conduct more interviews within their allotted funding.

Participants were also reminded that they may stop and exit the interview at any time, which may be less jarring for a participant if they wanted to stop an in-person interview by needing to leave a physical space. Unlike in-person interviews, participants can participate in their own convenient space, but unlike a telephone interview, they still get the opportunity to see their interviewer, which one participant commented was important when talking about such a personal topic such as parenting.

### **Disadvantages**

Depending on the program the researcher chooses there may be additional software or hardware requirements, which would increase research costs. Video conferencing software program fees do differ; where some programs are free others may come with a monthly or annual fee attached. Some programs require participants to download a program whereas other programs only require the interviewer to have the program.

The researcher may also have to contend with a variety of technical difficulties that could arise from setting up the interview, to conducting the interview, to uploading or using the interview recording. The interviewer will need to spend time to become proficient in the program

that he or she chooses, which may be time consuming. Participants may be hesitant to participate in an online interview, especially if they are uncomfortable using technology or do not have access to an appropriate device or private Internet connection. Since audio and visual capabilities plus access to the Internet were required to participate in this current study it may have limited the participants who ended up participating in the study.

Although video teleconferencing software allows the participant and interviewer to hear and see each other they are still not occupying the same physical space. This may lead to missed opportunities for the researcher in terms of seeing the participant's physical space or missing body language or emotional cues. Additionally, while it is convenient for the participant to be able to choose his or her own space he or she may chose a space with many distractions or lack of privacy, such as a coffee shop. Even a participant completing an interview in his or her own home may be distracted by family members, pets, outside noise, ringing telephones, or someone at their front door.

### **Limitations and Future Research**

It should be mentioned that all research interviews were conducted in an urban setting with access to High Speed Internet for both participants and the researcher. Future research may conduct a similar research study utilizing participants or a researcher residing in a rural community. Another limitation is that participants required access to the Internet and a device that could connect to the Internet to participate in this study. Participants were additionally given the choice of completing the interview using a telephone instead if they did not have access to the Internet. All participants who responded and completed the research interview did have access to a private device and High-Speed Internet access. Conducting a research study that requires access to a device capable of connecting to the Internet and having Internet access may

limit the researcher in terms of which participants may be able to participate in their research study. It should be noted that all four participants that participated in this current study stated that they would participate in another virtual research interview again in the future.

### **Conclusion**

Video teleconferencing software, such as Zoom Video Communications Inc., may help researchers keep research costs reasonably low and enable them to gain access to larger and more diverse participant populations. This could potentially lead to more studies and advances in the counselling field. Although there are many advantages, it is important for researchers to be aware of the disadvantages as well. Researchers should ensure that utilizing this method of data collection is appropriate for their specific study and sample.

### References

- Cabaroglu, N., Basaran, S., & Roberts, J. (2010). A comparison between the occurrence of pauses, repetitions and recasts under conditions of face-to-face and computer-mediated communication: A preliminary study. *Turkish Online Journal of Educational Technology*, 9(2), 14-23.
- Creswell, J.W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (3rd ed.). Los Angeles: Sage.
- Deakin, H., & Wakefield, K. (2013). Skype interviewing: Reflections of two PhD researchers. *Qualitative Research*, 14(5), 603–616.  
doi:10.1177/1468794113488126
- DiCicco-Bloom, B., & Crabtree, B. F. (2006). The qualitative research interview. *Medical Education*, 40(4), 314–321. doi:10.1111/j.1365-2929.2006.02418.x
- Fielding, N. (2010). Virtual fieldwork using access grid. *Field Methods*, 22(3), 195-216.  
doi:10.1177/1525822X10374277
- Gill, P., Stewart, K., Treasure, E., & Chadwick, B. (2008). Methods of data collection in qualitative research: interviews and focus groups. *British Dental Journal*, 204(6), 291–295. doi:10.1038/bdj.2008.192
- Gough, M., & Rosenfeld, J. (2006). *Video conferencing over IP. [electronic resource] : configure, secure, and troubleshoot*. Rockland, MA: Syngress.
- James, N. (2015). Using email interviews in qualitative educational research: creating space to think and time to talk. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 29(2), 150–163. doi:10.1080/09518398.2015.1017848
- King, N. & Horrocks, C. (2010). *Interviews in qualitative research*. London: Sage.

- Mabragaña, M., Carballo-Diéguez, A., & Giguere, R. (2013). Young women's experience with using videoconferencing for the assessment of sexual behavior and microbicide use. *Telemedicine Journal and E-Health*, *19*(11), 866-871. doi:10.1089/tmj.2013.0008.
- Mason, D. M., & Ide, B. (2014). Adapting qualitative research strategies to technology savvy adolescents. *Nurse Researcher*, *21*(5), 40–45. doi:10.7748/nr.21.5.40.e1241
- Nehls, K., Smith, B. D., & Schneider, H. A. (2014). Video-conferencing interviews in qualitative research. In S. Hai-Jew (Ed.). *Enhancing qualitative and mixed methods research with technology*, 140–157. doi:10.4018/978-1-4666-6493-7.ch006
- Opendakker, R. (2006). Advantages and disadvantages of four interview techniques in qualitative research. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, *7*(4), 1. Retrieved from <http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/175>
- Rowe, M., Rosenheck, R., Stern, E., & Bellamy, C. (2014). Video conferencing technology in research on schizophrenia: A qualitative study of site research staff. *Psychiatry: Interpersonal and Biological Processes*, *77*(1), 98–102. doi:10.1521/psyc.2014.77.1.98
- Sedgwick, M., & Spiers, J. (2009). The use of videoconferencing as a medium for the qualitative interview. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, *8*(1), 1-11.
- Shapka, J. D., Domene, J. F., Khan, S., & Yang, L. M. (2016). Online versus in-person interviews with adolescents: An exploration of data equivalence. *Computers in Human Behavior*, *58*, 361–367. doi:10.1016/j.chb.2016.01.016

- Statistics Canada. (2013). *Canadian Internet use survey, 2012*. (Catalogue no. 11-001-X). Retrieved from <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/131126/dq131126d-eng.pdf>
- Stieger, S., & Göritz, A. S. (2006). Using instant messaging for internet-based interviews. *CyberPsychology & Behavior*, 9(5), 552–559. doi:10.1089/cpb.2006.9.552
- Sullivan, J. R. (2012). Skype: An appropriate method of data collection for qualitative interviews? *The Hilltop Review*, 6, 54–60. Retrieved from <http://scholarworks.wmich.edu/hilltopreview/vol6/iss1/10>
- Zoom Video Communications Inc. (2016). *Security guide*. Retrieved from <https://zoom.us/docs/doc/Zoom-Security-White-Paper.pdf>

#### CHAPTER IV - DISCUSSION AND FUTURE IMPLICATIONS

The first research aim of this present thesis work was to identify themes from parents' descriptions of how their parenting did or did not shift after participating in the 8-week COS-P program. This was accomplished through analysis of thirteen semi-structured transcribed research interviews. The second research aim was to conduct these research interviews by employing the video conferencing software, Zoom Video Communications Inc.

The first research aim was identified as an important research question to investigate as a means of helping parents and counselling professionals to learn more about shifts in parenting, as described by parents, after participating in a relationship-based parenting invention. Several of the parents in this sample reported seeking out a parenting invention to help with the challenges of parenting, especially managing their child's behaviours. The originators of COS-P suggest that lasting changes in the parent-child relationship result from increasing certain relationship capacities instead of learning behavioural management techniques (Cooper et al., 2000). The targeted relational capacities include: observational skills, parent reflective functioning, empathy, and the ability to be-with your child while helping him or her to organize and regulate their emotions (Cooper et al., 2000). This current thesis work has shown support for COS-P's treatment assumptions. Parents in this study did report experiencing shifts in parenting and, parents did describe, in the transcribed research interviews, all of the COS-P relational capacities targeted by the COS-P program. Further support was provided by the fact that four out of these thirteen research interviews were with parents who completed the program one to two years prior to participating in the current research study.

While answering the first research aim, it was discovered that the theme Greater Awareness was the most significant theme and overlapped with many, if not all, of the remaining



themes. This is an important finding as future research can conduct studies to specifically investigating Greater Awareness in COS-P and other relationship-based parenting inventions. This may help program developers have a deeper understanding of Greater Awareness and how they can incorporate Greater Awareness into their relationship-parenting invention to encourage long-term shifts in parenting.

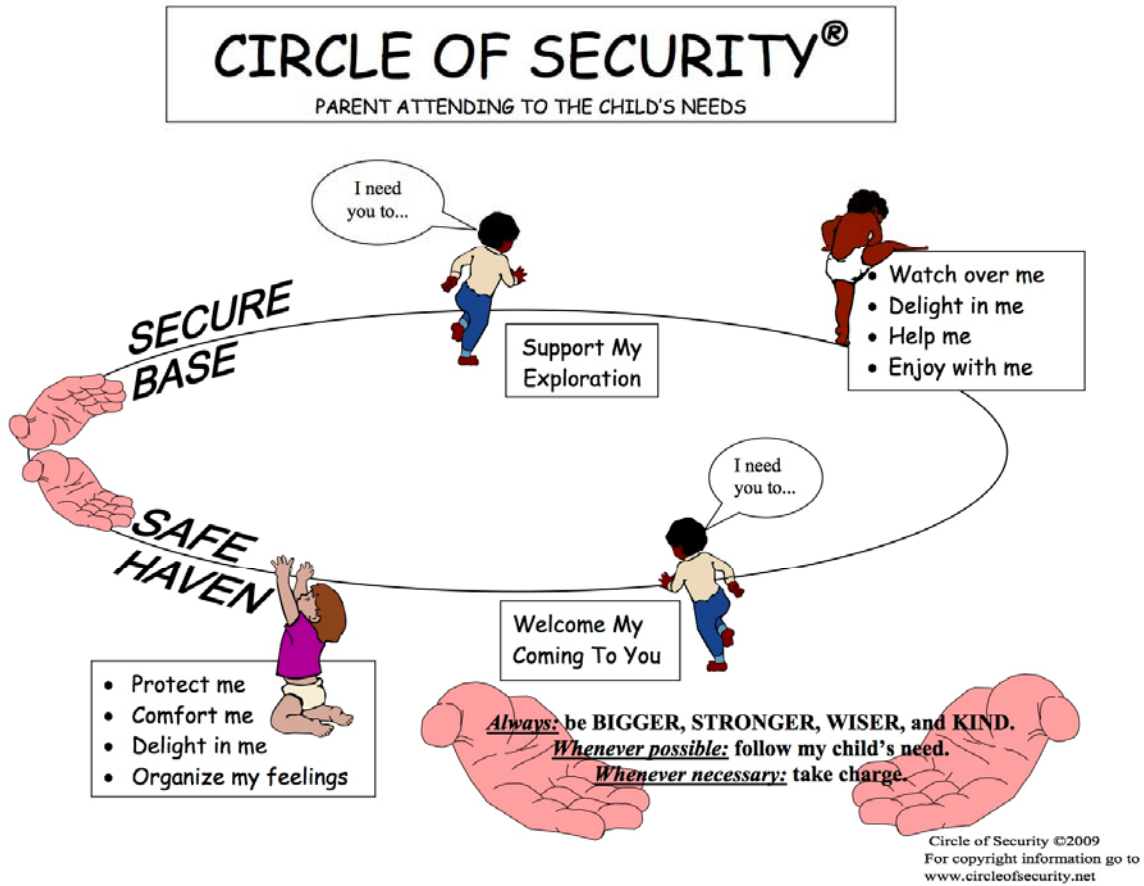
When reviewing the literature on conducting qualitative research interviews through employing video teleconferencing software, it was discovered that there was little research to help guide this current study, and there were no studies available that specifically commented on the use of Zoom Video Communications Inc. The aim of the second research questions was to conduct qualitative research interviews utilizing Zoom Video Communications Inc. to help fill this gap in the literature. The hope was to fill this gap in the literature by describing participant's experiences participating in a virtual interview using Zoom Video Communications Inc., and to offer research recommendations to help guide future research. This study supported the use of utilizing video teleconferencing software, specifically Zoom Video Communication Inc., as a method of data generation in qualitative research, as all four participants reported having a favourable experience and stated that they would participate in future research utilizing the same data generation method. This current study also offered 14 recommendations for best practices, which will help to guide future researchers hoping to utilize video teleconferencing software for qualitative research. It is important to investigate using new technologies in qualitative research to provide researchers with more options when deciding on the best method for data generation. Video teleconferencing software may allow for researchers to conduct larger amounts of studies, with larger and more diverse samples.

### References

- Cassidy, J., Ziv, Y., Stupica, B., Sherman, L. J., Butler, H., Karfgin, A., . . . Powell, B. (2010). Enhancing attachment security in the infants of women in a jail-diversion program. *Attachment & Human Development, 12*(4), 333-353. doi:10.1080/14616730903416955
- Cassidy, J., Woodhouse, S., Sherman, L., Stupica, B., & Lejuez, C. (2011). Enhancing infant attachment security: An examination of treatment efficacy and differential susceptibility. *Development and Psychopathology, 23*(1), 131-148.
- Creswell, J.W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (3rd ed.). Los Angeles: Sage.
- Cooper, G., Hoffman, K., & Marvin, B., & Powell, B. (2000). Circle of Security International: Early intervention program for parents and children. Retrieved from <https://www.circleofsecurityinternational.com/>
- Cooper, G., Hoffman, K., & Powell, B. (2009). Circle of Security COS-P© facilitator DVD manual. (Unpublished manual). Circle of Security International, Spokane, WA.
- Deakin, H., & Wakefield, K. (2013). Skype interviewing: Reflections of two PhD researchers. *Qualitative Research, 14*(5), 603–616. doi:10.1177/1468794113488126
- Hoffman, K. T., Marvin, R. S., Cooper, G., & Powell, B. (2006). Changing toddlers' and preschoolers' attachment classifications: the Circle of Security intervention. *Journal of Consulting & Clinical Psychology, 74*(6), 1017-1026.
- Magilvy, J. K., & Thomas, E. (2009). A first qualitative project: Qualitative descriptive design for novice researchers. *Journal for Specialists in Pediatric Nursing, 14*(4), 298–300. doi:10.1111/j.1744-6155.2009.00212.x

- Miles, M.B., & Huberman, A.M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook*. 2nd Edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. Retrieved from <http://books.google.com/books>
- Neergaard, M. A., Olesen, F., Andersen, R. S., & Sondergaard, J. (2009). Qualitative description – the poor cousin of health research? *BMC Medical Research Methodology*, 9(1). doi:10.1186/1471-2288-9-52
- Noble, H., & Smith, J. (2015). Issues of validity and reliability in qualitative research. *Evidence-Based Nursing*, 18(2), 34-35. doi:10.1136/eb-2015-102054
- Rowe, M., Rosenheck, R., Stern, E., & Bellamy, C. (2014). Video conferencing technology in research on schizophrenia: A qualitative study of site research staff. *Psychiatry: Interpersonal and Biological Processes*, 77(1), 98–102. doi:10.1521/psyc.2014.77.1.98
- Sandelowski, M. (2000). Whatever happened to qualitative description? *Research in Nursing & Health*, 23(4), 334-340. doi: 10.1002/1098-240X(200008)23:4<334::AID-NUR9>3.0.CO;2-G
- Sedgwick, M., & Spiers, J. (2009). The use of videoconferencing as a medium for the qualitative interview. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 8(1), 1-11. Retrieved from <http://0-search.ebscohost.com.aupac.lib.athabascau.ca/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a9h&AN=37808954&site=eds-live>
- Sullivan-Bolyai, S., Bova, C., & Harper, D. (2005). Developing and refining interventions in persons with health disparities: The use of Qualitative Description. *Nursing Outlook*, 53, 127-133. doi:10.1016/j.outlook.2005.03.005

Appendix A: The Circle of Security® Circle Diagram



**APPENDIX B: Interview Guide**

1. On a scale from 1 to 6, 1 being awful and 6 being excellent, how would you rate COS-P? Tell me about what influenced this score.
2. Tell me about how COS-P does or does not make sense to you.
3. Would you say that COS-P increased your stress level, made no change in your stress level, or reduced your stress level? Please tell me about that.
4. Tell me about how participating in COS-P has affected your relationship with your child(ren).
5. Were there any other relationships affected by your participation in COS-P?
6. How many children do you have? Which child did you have in mind when seeking out COS-P?
7. Do you view your child's behaviour differently? [Probe: Any examples?]
8. Do you recall what shark music is? Did you gain an understanding of your "shark music"? [Probe: Any examples?]
9. Do you recall the top of the circle and bottom of the circle? Are you now better able to identify your child's needs at the top and the bottom of the Circle? [Probe: Any examples?]
10. Are you now better able to identify when you step off the Circle? [Probe: Any examples?]
11. When you step off the Circle (rupture) with your child, do you now look for a way to repair your relationship? [Probe: Any examples?]
12. How do you repair, in times that you were able to?
13. Are you now able to step back and think about the Circle and Hands before you react to your child? [Probe: Any examples?]
14. Since completing Circle of Security Parenting, has your child's behaviour changed as a result? How has your child's behaviour changed? [Probe: Any examples?]
15. Since completing COS-P, has your own parenting behaviour and/or attitude changed as a result of the program? Has your parenting behaviour and/or attitude changed in general (not necessarily associated with the program).

16. Do you have any general or overall insights you can share about any shifts or changes either positive or negative that are a result of participating in COS-P?
17. What were the most difficult or challenging things about parenting [name of child] before you took COS-P? And what are currently the most difficult or challenging things about parenting now?
18. Did Circle of Security Parenting give you some new parenting abilities? [Probe: Any examples?]
19. Are there some things with your parenting you used to do that you stopped doing? [Probe: Any examples?]
20. Are there some things with your parenting that you started doing as a result of the program?
21. What are three words (adjectives) that describe your relationship with your child? [Probe: ask this for each child.]
22. Describe a time in the last week when you and your child really clicked.
23. Describe a time in the last week when you and your child really didn't click.
24. A secondary part of my research is evaluating the experience of conducting interviews using video conferencing software. The next set of 4 questions before the interview is over is about your experience using this way of communicating with me.
25. What did you like most, if anything, about participating in this video conferencing interview? Please consider aspects of the technology: audio, visual, ease of access, functionality, etc. in your response [Probe: anything else?]
26. What did you like least about participating in this video conferencing interview? [Probe: anything else?] (Same probes as above)
27. After this experience, could you see yourself participating in a video conferencing interview again in another capacity? Why or why not?
28. What suggestions do you have for us to improve our video conferencing interview for future research participants?



## APPENDIX C: Athabasca University Research Ethics Approval

### CERTIFICATION OF ETHICAL APPROVAL

The Athabasca University Research Ethics Board (AUREB) has reviewed and approved the research project noted below. The AUREB is constituted and operates in accordance with the current version of the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS) and Athabasca University Policy and Procedures.

**Ethics File No.:** 22503

**Principal Investigator:**

Mrs. Lisa Gray, Graduate Student  
Faculty of Health Disciplines\Graduate Centre for Applied Psychology

**Supervisor:**

Dr. Gina Wong (Supervisor)  
Dr. Gwendolyn Rempel (Co-Supervisor)

**Project Title:**

Considering Shifts in Parenting after the 8-week Circle of Security-Parenting Program

**Effective Date:** March 21, 2017

**Expiry Date:** March 20, 2018

**Restrictions:**

Any modification or amendment to the approved research must be submitted to the AUREB for approval.

Ethical approval is valid *for a period of one year*. An annual request for renewal must be submitted and approved by the above expiry date if a project is ongoing beyond one year.

A Project Completion (Final) Report must be submitted when the research is complete (*i.e. all participant contact and data collection is concluded, no follow-up with participants is anticipated and findings have been made available/provided to participants (if applicable)*) or the research is terminated.

**Approved by:**

**Date:** March 21, 2017

Simon Nuttgens, Chair  
Faculty of Health Disciplines, Departmental Ethics Review Committee

## APPENDIX D: Participant Information Letter and Informed Consent Form

**Study Title:** Considering Shifts in Parenting After the 8-Week Circle of Security-Parenting Program

**Principal Researcher:**

Lisa Gray, SSW, BA  
 Master of Counselling student  
 Athabasca University  
 1 University Drive  
 Athabasca, AB T9S 3A3  
 lisa.gray@gcap.ca  
 403-305-7793

**Supervisor:**

Dr. Gwen Rempel, PhD, RN  
 Associate Professor  
 Athabasca University  
 1 University Drive  
 Athabasca, AB T9S 3A3  
 grempel@athabascau.ca  
 1-855-833-5699

### INFORMATION LETTER

Because you have done the Circle of Security parenting program (COS-P), we are asking you to help us to understand if there have been any shifts in your parenting since then. I am doing this study for my Master of Counselling degree through Athabasca University.

For this study, I will interview parents using video teleconferencing software. I will ask questions to invite reflections on parenting after completing the COS-P. Both audio and visual will be recorded during the interview that lasts between 1-2 hours. Recorded interviews are typed out word-for-word. The interviews are then examined for common themes with other parents who complete the interview. Participation in this research activity is completely voluntary.

*Please take the time to consider whether or not you wish to participate.*

*Please ask questions if anything about this study seems unclear.*

**What is the purpose of this study?**

The purpose of this study is to see if COS-P helps parents. Not all people respond to programs in the same ways. We want to see how your experience influenced or will influence your parenting and any shifts or gains as a result of taking COS-P (positive or negative).

**What will happen if I take part in this study?**

You participate in an audio and visual recorded interview (60-120 minutes) about your parenting and COS-P. You are also asked about participating in a research interview using video teleconferencing software. I conduct interviews with each parent separately.

**What do I need to take part in this study?**

To participant in this study you will need access to a private computer that has Internet access and the use of a microphone and speakers. You will also need to ensure that this computer is in a



private room where you can speak privately and uninterrupted for about 1-2 hours. I will conduct our interview from a private room where I will not be interrupted or overheard.

**What if I change my mind about taking part in the study?**

If you change your mind about taking part in this study, you can STOP AT ANY TIME.

Participation is completely voluntary. You have the right to decline to answer any question or to end your participation at any point. You can ask to have any or all of your data removed from the study, as long as you let us know before we start to analyze the data.

**Are there any risks to taking part in this study?**

A possible risk is that you feel uncomfortable about what you share through the interview; you are recounting emotional experiences of a personal nature. I will provide you with a one-sheet list of counselling resources. Please keep in mind that in the interview, you may choose not to answer a question, and you may end the interview at any time.

**Are there benefits to taking part in this study?**

There will be no direct benefit to you from taking part in this study. We hope the information we gain from this study will be used to improve COS-P and make it more effective for all parents. There is potential benefit to you in reflecting on your experiences and sharing them with us and contributing to increasing knowledge and understanding.

**Will my information be kept confidential and private?**

We keep the interview data you provide confidential except when professional codes of ethics or the law require reporting; then your right to confidentiality and privacy cannot be upheld.

We remove your name and any identifying information from the video and audio files, and from the typed-out interviews; your interview is given a code number to keep your identity private. Any files with identifying information (e.g., your name and address so we can contact you) are kept in a separate location from your interviews. All electronic files are kept on password-protected computers. Any paper files are kept inside locked cabinets inside a locked office. Recorded and typed out interviews are only viewed by members of the research team who have signed a Confidentiality Pledge.

The final report may contain your actual words but nothing will identify you. We will not use your name in any presentations or publications. We keep the information you provide for at least seven years after we finish the study. We may look at the information you provided for this study again in the future to help answer other research questions about COS-P. If so, the ethics board will review the study to ensure we use the information ethically. We do not share data between parents.

**Will I have access to my interview data?**

A professional transcriptionist or myself will type out the recorded interviews. I can email you a copy of your transcribed interviews. If you would like to review a copy of your interview, please send me your request by email to Lisa Gray at [lisa.gray@gcap.ca](mailto:lisa.gray@gcap.ca) by August 31<sup>st</sup>, 2017.

If you wish to make any additional comments, clarifications, or to withdraw your interview, please do so by October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2017 by contacting Lisa Gray by email.

**Who can address concerns I have about this study?**

If you have any questions about this study or require further information, please contact Lisa Gray or Dr. Gwen Rempel using the contact information above.

This study has been reviewed by the Athabasca University Research Ethics Board. Should you have any comments or concerns regarding your treatment as a participant in this study, please contact the Office of Research Ethics at 1-800-788-9041, ext. 6718 or by e-mail to [rebsec@athabascau.ca](mailto:rebsec@athabascau.ca). Thank you for your assistance in this project.

*This study is funded in part by*

**Academic Research Fund****CONSENT**

I have read the **Information Letter** regarding this research study, and all of my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I will keep a copy of this letter for my records.

My signature below confirms that:

- I understand the expectations and requirements of my participation in the research;
- I understand the provisions around confidentiality and anonymity;
- I understand that my participation is voluntary, and that I am free to withdraw at any time with no negative consequences;
- I am aware that I may contact the researchers, Lisa Gray, Dr. Gwen Rempel, or the Office of Research Ethics if I have any questions, concerns or complaints about the research procedures.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

By initialling the statement(s) below,

\_\_\_\_\_ I am granting permission to have my video teleconference interview recorded, transcribed, and to have the data used for this study.

\_\_\_\_\_ I acknowledge that the researcher may use specific quotations of mine, without identifying me.

\_\_\_\_\_ I would like to receive a copy of the results of this research study by email.

E-mail address:

\_\_\_\_\_

If you are willing to have the researcher contact you at a later time by e-mail or telephone for a brief conversation to confirm that I have accurately understood your comments in the interview, please indicate so below. You will be contacted within 6 months after your interview and after you receive your typed-out interview.

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes, I would be willing to be contacted.

**APPENDIX E: Counselling Resource List for Research Participants****Distress Line - Canadian Mental Health Association, Edmonton Region**

Transition Place

300-10010 105 Street NW

Edmonton, AB T5J 1C4

Website: [http://edmonton.cmha.ca/programs\\_services/distress-line/#.WLWl12QrK2w](http://edmonton.cmha.ca/programs_services/distress-line/#.WLWl12QrK2w)

Greater Edmonton region, call **780-482-HELP (4357)**.

Rural Distress Line call **1-800-232-7288**.

**The Family Centre in Edmonton**

9912 106 St NW #20

Edmonton, AB T5K 1C5

Website: <http://www.the-family-centre.com/contact-us/>

Phone: **780 423 2831**.

**Walk-In Counselling Edmonton**

9562 82 Ave NW

Edmonton, AB T6C 0Z8

Website: <http://www.momentumcounselling.org/>

Phone: **780-757-0900**.

**Stettler Hospital & Care Centre**

5912 47 Avenue

Stettler, AB T0C 2L0

Website: <http://www.stettler.net/admin/contentx/default.cfm?PageId=8650>

Phone: **403-742-7400**.

**Vantage Community Services- Reed Deer**

4920 54 Street

Red Deer, AB T4N 2G8

Website: <http://www.vantagecommunityservices.ca/>

Phone: **(403) 340-8995**.

**Mental Health Help Line**

Website: <http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/info/service.aspx?id=6810>

Call 1-877-303-2642 (toll free within Alberta) for mental health advice.