"How do you even Define Success?":
Parents' Experiences of Raising Children Today

By

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ABSTRACT *The change in our perceptions of parenting only occurred over the last half of the 20th century. Intensive parenting and resilient parenting practices, which coincide with neoliberal social policy and the rise of the risk society, seem to have become the most widely accepted form of parenting. Based on in-depth semi-structured interviews, this qualitative study examines Canadian parents' experiences raising children in a contemporary society. Parents in this study did engage in some intensive parenting practices, regardless of their own beliefs, due to the effective form of popular child-rearing advice as means of social control via judgment and self-blame. Parents question the definition of what it means to raise a successful child and stress open communication as the only way to mitigate risk and to achieve successful development for their children. The social and cultural construction of risk means the very definition of risk often remains undefined in parenting literature. This study addresses this ambiguity by asking parents how they interpret and perceive risk. It aims to contribute to the literature on "risk society" by exploring the meaning of risk in a parenting context, and provides insights into how middle-class parents perceive their own beliefs and practices in relation to broader social and cultural expectations.*

ACKNOWLEGMENTS

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The notion of risk has become one of the key constructs in contemporary parenting styles in Western society (Giddens, 1999). The concept of a "risk society" emerges from the constant revision of science and technology in our post-modern era (Castel, 1991; Giddens, 1999; Hoffman, 20010; Lee, Macvarish & Bristow, 2010). Some experts suggest it has influenced the use of intensive parenting practices in popular media and literature as the only way to raise successful, "resilient" children in a world of subjectivity (Caputo, 2007; Hoffman, 2010; Knaak, 2010; Wall, 2010). Some policy models view resilience as a key component to success in today's risky society (Caputo, 2007; Hoffman, 2010; Knaak, 2010; Wall, 2010), which transfers the management of risk onto individuals and families and defines their failures as risk to social order (Hoffman, 2010; Romagnoli & Wall, 2012). Parenting types, such as the "helicopter parent," have emerged as a response to try to control and mitigate risk in a child's life (Hoffman, 2010; LeMoyne & Buchanan, 2011; Padilla- Walker & Nelson, 2012). Yet there seems to be an expanding resistance to and critique of intensive parenting practices and their effect on the autonomy and wellbeing of a child (Hoffman, 2010; Honoré, 2008; Lee, Macvarish & Bristow, 2010; Pimentel, 2012; Romagnoli & Wall, 2012; Ungar, 2007). The division between these views allows us to ask how parents raising children today view their own beliefs and practices in relation to broader societal and cultural expectations.

Much of the parenting literature remains vague on the actual definitions and implications of the risks they aim to mitigate through resilience parenting practices (Hoffman, 2010; Knaak, 2010). I aimed to address this gap in the literature by asking the parents in the study what they consider to be risks to their children, and how they attempt to mitigate those risks. In order to develop a theoretical risk perspective with respect to contemporary parenting culture, we need to explore the meaning of risk in different parenting contexts and examine what parents constitute

as a risk or benefit to their children in varying situations (Knaak, 2010). The age range of the children of the parents in this study allows for a wide range of perceived risks, dependent on the stage of the child's life. As this sample consisted of mostly middle-class to affluent, professional parents, the experiences of those interviewed are not generalizable to all middle-class Canadian parents and certainly do not reflect the experiences of less privileged parents. What this small, qualitative analysis does provide however, are important insights into how parents perceive their own parenting style in relation to broader social and cultural expectations. It also contributes to the evolution of how we understand "risk society" in relation to parenthood and family.

Thus, the research question for this thesis is: How do parents experience raising children in society today? And further, what do they perceive as risks to their child? These questions were explored through qualitative, in-depth interviews, which were then analyzed using grounded theory methods (Bryman & Teevan, 2005). To begin, this paper will review concepts and theories integral to understand contemporary parenting culture, including: neoliberal social policy; Foucault's (1977) theory of surveillance and social control; the sociology of a "risk society" by Anthony Giddens (1999) and Ulrich Beck (1992); intensive and resilience parenting pedagogy and parenting type. I will then draw upon these themes in the analysis section of this paper.

A Literature Review: Deconstructing Contemporary Parenting Culture

Neoliberal Social Policy and the Risk Society

Neoliberalism is based on the assumption that governments cannot contribute to the economy or social assistance (Simpson & Envy, 2015). It claims that the institutions that are best able to generate economic growth and social welfare are private companies, free markets and the individual. Neoliberal policy creates a government that is minimally invested yet remains highly

powerful. Neoliberalism considers welfare problems, such as poverty and unemployment, as consequences of an individual's behaviour and self-responsibility (Simpson & Envy, 2015).

In regards to parenting, this ideology implies that disadvantaged families are a result of the parents' actions, while concurrently denoting the parent as the solution to the problem. This "new politics of parenting" has increased the accountability a parent has for their child's success or failure in social mobility and into adulthood (Simpson & Envy, 2015; Wall, 2010). Neoliberalism simultaneously transfers the management of risk onto the individual or parent while deeming any failure of the parent as a risk to social order (Hoffman, 2010). Neoliberal social policy and intensive parenting coincide through the promotion of increased self-governance and responsibility in a risk society, which will be further explained below (LeMoyne & Buchanan, 2011; Romagnoli & Wall, 2012; Rutherford, 2011).

Neoliberal policies have been widely applied in the education system in Canada in areas such as budget cuts, quality performance tests, increased numbers of parent volunteers in schools and an increase in the number of private educational institutions (Caputo, 2007). Caputo's (2007) study shows how the spaces and understanding of motherhood and childhood have been transformed by the neoliberal ideology in private school settings. Mothers not only use extensive surveillance mechanisms to maintain control of their children's lives, they also use them to monitor the actions of other mothers in their social space (Caputo, 2007). This development reflects Foucault's theory of surveillance and social control (Caputo, 2007; Foucault, 1977; Sargiacomo, 2009).

Foucault argues that discipline in modern society lies not in external controls but disciplinary practices employed by social institutions (Foucault, 1977; Sargiacomo, 2009). Foucault asserts that disciplinary power normalizes judgment and constant observation, as

demonstrated in mothers' judgment of each other when one acts in a way that differs from contemporary societal norms (Caputo, 2007; Foucault, 1977; Sargiacomo, 2009). The result of this is self-discipline, which encompasses neoliberal ideology of maintaining maximum social power and control at the lowest cost (Foucault, 1977; Sargiacomo, 2009). The stress on competition in neoliberal ideology can be traced to the development of *eugenics,* which refers to the improvement of the human population through controlled breeding ("Eugenics"). It is a scientific strategy that arose in the early 20th century and that sparked the notion of the "risk society" (Castel, 1991).

The concept of the "risk society" has become one of the key constructs in understanding contemporary social life through the work of Giddens (1999) and Beck (1992). A risk society is defined as:

> A society where we increasingly live on a high technological frontier which absolutely no one completely understands and which generates a diversity of possible futures (Giddens, 1999: 3).

Giddens and Beck discuss how risk and the anxieties that develop from it are initiated by the constant revision and counter-revision of claims to scientific knowledge (Giddens, 1999).

Increased technology has influenced two fundamental transformations in the past fifty years or so- *the end of nature* and *the end of tradition;* we are now more preoccupied with the results of our own actions than the affect that nature has on us. This also means that we no longer live in a world where life is ruled by fate, and as such, individual events are seen as individual responsibility— the basis of neoliberalism (Giddens, 1999; Simpson & Envy, 2015).

A world after nature and tradition lives by *manufactured risk.* Manufactured risks are new risk environments created by science and technology of which we have limited knowledge

(Giddens, 1999). According to Beck (1992), risks are manufactured because they are open to social definition and construction since they only exist once awareness of them has been established (as cited in Fox, 1999). The 'precautionary principle' proposes action should be taken to mitigate any manufactured risks, even in absence of strong scientific basis for such knowledge (Giddens, 1999). Contemporary parenting and motherhood ideology positions parents to have a moral and social responsibility as 'risk managers' (Knaak, 2010: 345). The precautionary principle is the conceptual foundation for the risk and resilience based parenting style (Hoffman, 2010).

Intensive and Resilience Parenting Pedagogy

It is commonly accepted that parents today raise their children in an environment full of risk, increasing a parent's responsibility far more than the demands placed on previous generations (Lee, Macyarish & Bristow, 2010; Rutherford, 2011). The 'resilient' child refers to a parent's encouragement of a child's successful adaption in the face of these risks through individual strengths (Masten, 2001). Most of the literature on resilience focuses on a set of protective factors that may promote positive outcomes, such as: capacities for emotional self-regulation and autonomy; motivation to be purposive in their environment; and positive views of self, despite the lack of research on strategies to implement resilience (Castel, 1991; Hoffman, 2010). In addition to the lack of research on resilience strategies, the very definitions of risk and resilience are often vague in much of the parenting research and literature (Hoffman, 2010) because the concept of risk is socially and ideologically mediated (Knaak, 2010). Therefore, risk is dependent on one's individual circumstances as well as the social institutions one interacts with. Today's parents' reportedly excessive regulation of their children may link to the protective factors and 'resilience parenting' techniques in popular literature (Hoffman, 2010), as well as the

prominent discourse of Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) (Wall, 2004). The gap in the literature on concrete risks will be addressed in the analysis section.

Efforts in parenting media to popularize resilience-type parenting in adverse circumstances are ironic because the advice is generally written for middle- to upper- class, educated parents. This sort of family is least likely to have to deal with risk factors identified in the literature (Hoffman, 2010; Wall, 2010). Resilience research is biased toward Western, mainstream populations, without the consideration that certain outcomes or definitions of 'healthy' family functioning vary largely by culture and class (Ungar, 2006). Cognitive anthropologists have speculated on the importance of *thematicity*— the repetition of the same idea in a variety of contexts — as a means to social order; this concept could account for a singular parent culture through the extensive resilience pedagogy and early brain development discourse in public and political debate (Harkness & Super, 2002; O'Connor & Joffe, 2013).

Parenting literature generalizes the idea of resilience to encompass any type of difficulty a child may face, which in turn assumes all children and families face the same stresses and trauma and deal with them in the same way (Hoffman, 2010). The gaps in the research for disadvantaged parents' perspectives on risk and resilience help foster the resilience pedagogy as a part of a strategy to make social and individual difference conform to a larger social order (Hoffman, 2010; Rutherford, 2011). The encouragement for poor families to adopt middle-class norms of success through resilience parenting techniques can create a false perception of the realities and constraints a poor family faces and their means to dealing with risks to survival (Yunes, 2007).

Preceding resilience literature was the popularization of psychology's "new brain research," or ECEC in child rearing literature (Wall, 2004). Not only does this research implicate

that a mother's worth is defined only in relation to her child (Caputo, 2007; Wall, 2004; Wall, 2010), but that she is solely responsible for the child's emotional and educational success. Wall (2004) summarizes this observation:

>Over the 1990s child rearing advice literature, media articles on parenting, and educational material given out to new parents' has increasingly focused on the importance of early, ample, and appropriate stimulation for shaping not only a child's personality but also their brain capacity and future intellectual potential (Wall, 2004: 42).

The implication "new brain research" has had in our understanding of children's needs and mothers' responsibilities are demonstrated through social scientific studies on motherhood and child rearing practices (Caputo, 2007; Romagnoli & Wall, 20012; Wall, 2010). Much like resilience parenting, intensive parenting literature has created an idealized image of parenthood that ignores the complexities of a family, and more specifically, a mother's life. As a result, instead of trying to understand an individual's circumstances, society ignores the circumstance and solely blames the individual (Caputo, 2007).

A study was conducted on the experiences of young, low-income mothers in education programs aimed at promoting intensive mothering ideology. The study discovered that participants actually resisted the advice of intensive mothering practices, thereby providing themselves with a more positive self-perception of their mothering capabilities (Romagnoli & Wall, 2012). Their findings were that regardless of societal pressures and stigmatization to adhere to intensive mothering practices, participants were confident enough in their ability to assess the parenting advice and use what they saw as useful to their lifestyles, resisting advice basely solely on middle-class ideals and advantages (Romagnoli & Wall, 2012). Instead of internalizing the middle-class definition of being a good mother, participants recognized their

success based on their personal situations, compared to middle-class women who reported feeling guilt, self-blame and outside judgment when they did not adhere to intensive mothering practices (Caputo, 2007; Romagnoli & Wall, 2012; Wall, 2010).

The risk management rationality of eugenics and the need to act directly on conditions liable to produce 'risk' can be compared with resilience and intensive parenting beliefs because the subject of intervention disappears and is reconstructed as a medley of preventative risk factors (Romagnoli & Wall, 2012; Castel, 1991). According to Castel (1991), one does not have to act deviant to be considered a risk or even at risk or under neoliberal policy; one just has to be apart of what is considered a high-risk group. Thus, if children are considered at risk, then parents, regardless of socioeconomic status, are one of the most influential risks; they require outside intervention (Romagnoli & Wall, 2012) and are in need expert guidance (Knaak, 2010). This constructed knowledge of risk has influenced the scope of politics to encompass topics not typical in its domain, such as parenting (Giddens, 1999). Through studying the popular literature, Hoffman (2010) suggests the conceptualization and internalization of resilience parenting, intensive parenting and a risk society respond to larger political, cultural and class-based visions of social order, much like that of eugenics (Castel, 1991; Hoffman, 2010; Romagnoli & Wall, 2012).

Parenting Type

This section will address the different models of parenting types that have been identified by social scientists— primarily psychologists— and will propose that an updated model may be beneficial to understanding contemporary parenting practices. Contemporary parenting practices and parenting types do not seem to fit classic frameworks, such as Baumrind's well-known authoritarian, authoritative, and permissive parent typologies (Baumrind, 1971).

Authoritarian refers to parents that enforce a strict standard of conduct to shape and control the behaviour and attitudes of the child through obedience and punishment (Baumrind, 1971). They are characterized by having high control and low support (Takeuchi & Takeuchi, 2008). *Authoritative* parents are characterized by having high control and high support (Takeuchi & Takeuchi, 2008). They recognize a child's autonomy and communicate with their children so they understand the rationalization behind set rules of conduct (Baurmind, 1971). *Permissive* refers to parents who avoid exercising their authoritative role and position themselves as a resource to the child; they are nonpunitive and accept the child's impulses (Baurmind, 1971). They are characterized by a combination of low control and high support (Takeuchi & Takeuchi, 2008).

Classic parenting type frameworks have been criticized for a lack of acknowledgement about the influence a child has on a parent's behaviour or disciplinary practices; it is not simply a top-down process (Takeuchi & Takeuchi, 2008). Parenting styles have predominantly been studied on the basis of the parent's personality and attitudes toward their children rather than the actual interactions and relationship between parent and child (Takeuchi & Takeuchi, 2008). Contemporary parenting types such as the "helicopter parent" or the "free-range parent" may also need to be considered in relation to the classic typologies.

"Helicopter" parenting refers to a parent's over-involvement or micro-management in a child's life; such parents intervene in their child's affairs, are in constant communication, personally invest in their child's goals, and remove obstacles their child encounters (LeMoyne & Buchanan, 2011; Padilla-Walker & Nelson, 2012). Although not an entirely new type of parenting, its prominence today and the limitations to a child's autonomy may demonstrate the workings of intensive and resilience parenting in a risk-filled society. "Free-range" parenting, in

contrast, has emerged out of resistance to contemporary intensive parenting practices and holds that children should be allowed greater responsibility and autonomy at a younger age (Pimentel, 2012). It is important to note that while these types of parents are pitted against each other in the media, they are really just different approaches to achieve the same goal— autonomous children with a strong sense of self and accomplishment (Rutherford, 2011).

In light of these issues and theoretical frameworks, this paper's research questions are: How do parents experience the challenges of being a parent today? And, how do parents perceive what is a risk to their child? To further develop these questions, parents were asked how they mitigated these challenges and risks. This research question was explored and answered through qualitative, semi-structured interviews. Using grounded theory methods, I aimed to unveil how societal pressures, such as the concept of living in a risk society under neoliberal social policy, may affect the way in which a parent raises their children.

Qualitative Methods: The Foundation for Family Studies

Qualitative methodologies are best suited to my research because they are beneficial to understanding the complexities of relationships, especially family relationships, which can be highly influenced and contested by outside, societal controls (Zvonkovic, et al., 2012). According to LaRossa and Wolf (1985), qualitative research "set the foundation" for family studies because it attains people's opinions and perspectives first-hand instead of relying on statistical data, while recognizing the influence of time and history on familial perspectives (as cited in Zvonkovic, et al., 2012). As my project is exploratory in nature, I used qualitative interviews in an attempt to understand the meaning behind each individual's experiences, as it is situated in a broader societal context (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

Seven mothers and one father were interviewed for this research study from January to April 2017. My research consisted of semi-structured, in-depth qualitative interviews in order to explore parents' experiences of raising children today. The interviews ranged from twenty-five minutes to an hour and fifteen minutes in length. Participants were from Toronto and Halifax, as access to parents in other locations was limited due to the time frame and investigating the influence of varying parental experiences was beyond the scope of this research. The sample for my research was parents (single or partnered) with at least one child twenty years old or younger. The age cut-off was chosen because I wanted to interview parents who have been immersed in contemporary parenting culture and whose perceptions and experiences of parenting have been directly influenced by today's society. The children of the participants ranged in age from three months old to twenty-one years old. All parents had between two and four children. The age range allowed for a wide variety of answers or perceptions in response to some of the questions depending on the stage of the child's life.

Recruitment was based on non-random, purposive sampling, as was required by the nature of my research. Through snowball sampling, I recruited participants by emailing contacts in my social network who are parents, and who may have been interested themselves or were able to pass along my contact and study information to other parents who met the criteria. I also posted recruitment flyers in online parenting groups, at the Halifax Public Library, and Family Centres in the HRM (see Appendix A). I was not contacted by anyone via paper flyers. Although recruitment targeted mothers and fathers, all but one of my participants were mothers.

I sought to recruit parents who self-identified as middle-class and financially secure because intensive parenting research tends to be directed toward middle-class, Western populations (Hoffman, 2010) and the resources and social capital needed to mitigate risks

determined in the literature reflect middle class values (Caputo, 2010; Hoffman, 2010) [1]. Most of the participants interviewed were highly educated, with professional jobs and were in two-parent families. Specifically, there were two single-parent participants. Most participants were from a white European background, while one had a Chinese background. I specify this differentiation because it was used to justify certain parenting tactics, which will be addressed in the analysis.

I conducted the interviews in a semi-structured qualitative format. Semi-structured interviews were useful as I was not restricted to the question ordering and I was able to probe into any unanticipated or exceptionally interesting answers (Berg & Lune, 2012). I organized my interview guide in a systematic way; initially, I asked the parents to tell me about their children's personalities and interests. This was to create a warm, comfortable space that invited open, honest responses. It also helped me gain a better picture of their individual circumstances as a parent. The interview questions covered themes such as parenting challenges and responsibilities, including: how to teach independence and emotional stability, societal pressure they may feel and how it may influence their parenting techniques and any perceived outside or future risks to their child and how they might mitigate them (See Appendix C). I did not ask parents explicitly about their own upbringings, but all participants alluded to how "things weren't what they used to be," and used their own childhood as a comparison to their children's. The study is qualitative and the population is small, therefore I am unable to make generalizations from my data analysis, but it does contribute new insights to the constant evolution of a risk society and parenting culture.

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[1] The original intention of asking parents to self-identify their socioeconomic class was to compare parents from varying classes, but it proved too difficult to recruit working class parents. The recruitment materials found in the appendices reflect the original research design.

I recorded interviews using an audio-recording device and conducted them in person or on the phone. I used grounded theory approach to code the data; in addition to the themes set out in the literature review (risk society, parenting culture and parenting type), I formed new codes based on themes and patterns that emerged from the data (Bryman & Teevan, 2005). I sought out additional literature after new concepts emerged from the data that were not included in the initial review of the literature.

The risks associated with my research were minimal. Consent forms were provided and all participants were aware of the confidentiality and anonymity of their information. Although parents may have felt slight discomfort as a result of talking about a controversial topic, no participant made verbal or nonverbal cues that they were uncomfortable at any time throughout the interview (Berg & Lune, 2012); this is not to say strong feelings did not arise about certain parenting experiences. I mitigated risk by creating a safe space for participants to discuss their opinions without feeling judged and I made it clear they were able to skip questions or withdraw from the interview at any time.

Research Findings and Analysis: Culture of Pressure

Popular Parenting Practices: Internalization and Resistance

In addition to addressing intensive parenting discourse, I will also address judgment and social surveillance as they are highly intertwined with parenting culture. Participants of this study not only demonstrate tensions between each other's views on popular parenting practices, they also reveal tensions within their own beliefs and practices, which is a key feature of the human experience (Goffman, 1989). These tensions were discovered through examples that participants gave to further explain responses other than those which explicitly answered how

they thought intensive parenting discourse affected their parenting style. An analysis of participants' internalization and resistance to popular parenting practices provides interesting insights into how parents perceive their own actions and beliefs in relation to broader societal parenting norms.

The Pressure to Conform. Intensive Western parenting discourse positions the mother only in relation to the child, rather than also as a subject in her own right (Caputo, 2007). Intensive parenting dictates that the mother to prioritize her children over everything at the expense of her own needs and desires; yet, she is also expected to work and be successful. As Helen said, the societal pressure is to "get the parenting equation right... being a woman and a parent, it is about being able to do it all. I was lower on the societal spectrum to parents that worked with kids." Teresa, whose children are 20 and 16, firmly attends to this, stating that her children are her priority, and she will change her entire schedule to make sure she is available to them when she knows they will be around. Although she has three university degrees and was very accomplished in her previous profession, she feels nothing she has done is as important as being a mother.

Nevertheless, the majority of participants actively contest this. Laura's sentiment on motherhood precisely represents the other participants' beliefs, stating:

> I think there is a real trend of people martyring themselves to being parents and it being their sole raison-d'ê·tre. And I am not into that, I actually kind of reject it; it creates problems. I take it extremely seriously and spend a lot of thought, time and effort into my kids, but it is not to the exclusion of everything else. My marriage is as important to me; my physical and mental wellbeing is as important to me, which isn't necessarily how people parent now.

Laura feels intensive parenting philosophy is very "vogue" amongst her peers, specifically referring to her socioeconomic bracket. And while she does participate in some practices that are characteristic of intensive parenting, such as music lessons for her two year old (which she attributes to her daughter's exceptionally advanced verbal skills), in addition to openly recognizing the judgment of women by women for having objectives other than raising children, she does not feel her parenting style has been influenced by popular practices or her peers. Even though all participants identified the pressure within parenthood to cater to their children, the majority of the parents in this study did not feel it affected the way in which they parent. With few exceptions, the parents acknowledged the pressure to conform, and that it can be overwhelming at times, but that good parenting is about following your gut and doing what you feel comfortable and confident with. As Penelope pointed out, "at the end of the day, that is the only thing you can really maintain or enforce."

Teresa attributes her intensive parenting style to her Chinese background, and feels that Western parenting practices are much too soft. She feels that all her friends' children who have been raised based on popular Western parenting advice are total disasters and she "has to stop herself from rolling her eyes when she even hears the phrase ["parenting advice"]." As new immigrants, her parents raised her in a much more anxious, competitive way compared to their Canadian peers, which is what she feels is responsible for the stress she has put on her kids' intelligence as means of a competitive edge. Since they were little she has "held their feet to the fire." Teresa provides us an example of a commonly heard critique by women that practice intensive parenting. When she compares her parenting style and children's success to her peer group, she feels bad for children who are struggling and getting rejected from schools because, "I can tell... I feel like if I had that kid, that same child, they would get accepted [to university]."

Judgment of women by women, as Laura mentioned and is demonstrated by Teresa, is a prevalent theme in parenting culture (Wall, 2010).

Nonetheless, the majority of parents in this study who strongly believe judgment or societal pressure have not influenced their parenting practices gave examples of times in which they either felt guilt in not adhering to intensive parenting practices or succumbed to the pressure of them. James, a participant who encompasses a parenting style much closer to that of the "free-range" parent, illustrates this well. While he sometimes compares his practices with those in the book "Free-Range Kids" by Lenore Skenazy (2010), where he will read a part of it and think, "oh, I don't know if I could do that [parenting tactic]" or "I don't know if Brad (his five and a half year old son) is old enough for that," he realizes he only feels these reservations because, "we don't see anyone else or other kids doing it [...] because their parents would never let them do that." While he overtly resists intensive parenting practices, he admits, "even if you aren't like it yourself, you end up having to do certain things. It is everywhere, all the time."

When he leaves Brad alone at his Boy Scouts program, because he feels it is important for his independence, James says he looks like "the bad parent" because the rest of the fathers stay. While James is amongst those who insist the pressure to conform has not affected his parenting choices, he later gives examples in which he and his wife have had to conform in some way to intensive parenting practices when they were amongst their peer group or in public. This pressure that James addresses reflects a feeling that participants who have older children largely identified with, but only reflecting on when their children were of a younger age. They felt that kids were over-programmed and over-stimulated, yet they still put their kids in many extracurricular programs as a way of "keeping up with the Joneses," as Diana put it. And Helen reflects:

When you are a younger parent and are just figuring it all out, it's like, what even is

parenting? So you are putting your kids in the programs you think will be the most

beneficial to their success, because everybody else was... but then it is like, how do you

even define success?

As James' kids are quite young (Brad being the oldest of three), he is going through much of

what Helen and Diana felt at that stage of childhood and parenthood. For Diana, whose children

are 13 and 15, claims that she just does not care anymore. Other parents will question her

practices, such as making her children take public transport to school and friends' houses

everyday, but she feels passionately that her children should discover their own independence.

Additionally, parents felt they could draw on previous experience and gained confidence from

that rather than external advice.

The heightened awareness of societal pressure on parents of young children could be

attributed to the stress on early brain and cognitive development in intensive parenting literature.

The parents' stances in this study reflect similar studies (Caputo, 2007; Wall, 1010) in which the

participants felt they had to enroll their children in educational extracurricular programs and

tutors at a very young age, not for the purpose of advancement, but in order to simply keep up.

This demonstrates how popular parenting advice enforces the social order of a competitive

neoliberal society.

Parenting Advice. There was a high degree of consensus among participants in their

explicit decision to not read "expert" parenting advice; rather, they choose to turn to their social

group and kin for advice, whom they trust more. This is well illustrated in Laura's comment:

I think it's not just that they had kids before, because there are other people that had kids

before too, but it is more about having a shared approach to parenting and trusting their

judgment. There are so many different ways to parent, just because I am really good

friends with someone doesn't necessarily mean that we're aligned in how we parent.

This corresponds with Knaak's (2010) observation that parents' responses to risk management are

influenced by the extent to which they trust the source. A few parents in this study do, however,

turn to professional guidance, such as a counselor or a psychologist. The trust the parents have in

these experts' stems from the relationship the professionals have established with their children

and themselves. Therefore, it is not solely based on their professional credentials, but there is a

trust in their judgment similar to that of a close friend.

Interestingly, for Anna, her trust in a friend's judgment has her away from her typical

intensive parenting practices, and has resulted in her allowing her seven year old daughter more

opportunities for independence:

I never thought in my wildest dreams that she would do it [travel to her ski program

alone]. But a couple of friends are doing it, so that sparked... okay maybe a seven and a

half year old is capable of getting on a bus and being independent. If this other mother

feels her child is independent, then maybe Alex is independent also.

This demonstrates how other parents' decisions, contrary to the social control efforts of popular

parenting advice, may influence a parent to trust their child's ability to be self-sufficient at a

younger age. It is more important for a parent to trust the source of information or advice, rather

than have it based on what is popular in the media.

Some parents who stated they did not read much into "expert" advice stressed the

importance of getting young children educational tutors if they are not up to a certain level. They

did attribute this to parental intuition and being able to read the needs of their children, however

this still raises the question then of why they feel so strongly about the value of such early supplemental brain support. This leads us into the final sub-theme of popular parenting practices.

Intuition. Other predominant themes that arose when discussing parenting advice and judgment were intuition and common sense. Parents felt that they did not pay attention to popular parenting media or practices, but rather raised their children based on their own fundamental beliefs of what is most important. Every participant mentioned in some regard that consistency and routine are of utmost importance for childhood development, as Laura says, "consistency is key for the kids; they crave consistency. And it is just too confusing to use a bunch of different methods." Similarly, Helen's critique of modern day parenting advice is that it is always telling parents to raise their children in a new way. Rather, she feels raising children is mostly about common sense, and that parents need to choose something and stick with it. Contrarily, Diana stated, "I will try anything, I really will. I am extremely open-minded. I want to do anything I can to raise my kids the best way I can."

While Anna spoke of the importance of structure and rules in a child's life with considerable conviction, she spoke with similar intensity of her belief that parents must be fluid in their approach. Fluidity was a common theme amongst the parents. It came up in many instances of time management, for example, "you get into a pattern and routine and it works until something comes up that throws a wrench in it, and then you have to innovate," and additionally in regard to technological advancement and the rules parents (attempt to) make around it. Parents' decisions to adapt their rules in regard to technology use were largely based on their peer group and professional advice. Anna recognizes that:

I can't be so hardcore... after talking to other parents, we decided we had to adjust

because navigating screens and websites is part of learning, especially in their generation.

So you can have a rule, but it has to be flexible.

Diana, whose kids are at a later stage of adolescence than Anna's, feels she has lost control over her children's technology use and the information they have access to, because there is no way for her to regulate or prevent it. Although she is not comfortable with this, she has had multiple professionals try to convince her it is okay, because it is how kids connect these days— it is not fair to cut them off from their social groups. A psychiatrist who spoke to parents at their middle school said the worst thing that parents could do is take away or limit their child's phone use as punishment, because it makes them disadvantaged socially and they do not know how to cope. In line with other parents' views, Diana expressed doubt in this strategy and feels she might be doing the wrong thing, yet does it anyway because she feels out of step with her wider social group. It is interesting to note the parents' acceptance of the psychologist's suggestion even when it goes against their own beliefs. There may be a generational disconnect between baby boomers and teenagers now, which leads parents to feel uninformed about technology use and therefore accept information from the science community at face value. This introduces us to the discussion of the risks associated with a contemporary society.

The Risks of Risk

"The risks of risk" refers to situations that parents perceive as unsafe or hindering to their child, which stem from living in an environment full of danger. Some parents place higher influence on technology for surveillance and connection over decreased safety and increased risk; it is about the perception of priorities. The risks parents discussed were extremely diverse,

yet they all pertain to common perceptions of contemporary society. There are three major themes of what parents perceive as risks— relationships, connectedness, and privacy.

Relationships. All participants voiced concern about their children's relationships and socialization as they grow up, in a variety of contexts. Anna is concerned with the extensive stress placed on kids' intelligence at the cost of their social skills, saying, "you can be good at math, but if you can't hold a conversation or build a relationship, you just can't function effectively in society." Interestingly, Teresa perceives the biggest risk to her children as their ability to be a supportive marital partner, and to have a healthy functioning marriage, which to her, is the only thing she can't control or prepare them for.

Some participants mentioned the power of influence one person could have, which may jeopardize their kids' mentality and wellbeing. Similarly, some parents felt that figures of authority were much more of a concern today than when they were growing up. Whereas a police officer or a figure of authority was once thought of as a safe person, parents felt that their children have to be more cautious in whom they trust or approach for help. Anna has taught her young children to find a mother with a stroller, rather than a teacher or police officer, if they are ever lost. She stresses the term "caution" when she talks to them about trusting people, saying:

> So be cautious of dogs— until you know they are friendly, don't go up to them. But
>
> sadly I have had to teach them the same thing about people. I am not sure if that totally
>
> registers, because to them everyone is nice and safe, right. But I do mention that.

Parents stressed the importance of their children wisely choosing who to trust and what to share, as anyone could use that information against them. While the concept of trust directly relates to the relationships their children build, it was also highlighted in terms of the Internet and how

easy it is to share information. For this reason, relationship concerns reappear in the following subthemes of risk.

Karen, Pam, and Helen are more preoccupied with their sons' exceptionalities due to physical and mental disabilities. Thus, they fear that there is a growing distance from friends, as the social dynamics get more complex with age. While it can be argued that physical and mental disabilities do not constitute risks that stem from a technologically driven society, I chose to include these features in my analysis because of the information that is now available on disabilities as a result of advanced scientific knowledge. Diana feels that the number of kids diagnosed with special needs is on the rise because parents have so much more information about how their kid's brains work, and there is a lot more testing being done than in previous generations. For parents such as Karen and Pam (whose children are mid-to-high functioning on the spectrum of their disabilities), they have access to a lot more information than they may once have had in regards to their children's capabilities at their specific functioning level. Further, there is more information on how to support them and handle social situations. Karen gave the example that, "...he had a birthday party this weekend, so we read his autism book like, okay, what are the unwritten rules of birthday parties?" The ability to adequately address a concern such as this may not have been possible in the past.

Many parents voiced concerns about their children's social environment. While they felt that adolescent interpersonal relationships have always been a major concern for parents, participants did mention how social media has negatively influenced the socialization process; there are so many messages sent through social media that signal friendship, and conversely, exclusion. Diana is most concerned about the validation her kids feel from social media and, the power of a "like", or a comment. While the parents universally felt the biggest risk to their

children was their access to information and social media, they concurrently felt that limiting their kid's technology use would put them at a social disadvantage. Tensions about the use and the impact of technology were prominent throughout the interviews. This leads us into the second theme of risk.

Connectedness. Parents are unsure of how the amount of exposure to technology will impact their kids, and their generation as a whole, in the future. As much as professionals have reassured them of the benefits of technology, such as social interaction, they are quite apprehensive. Mostly because, as Pam says:

> With more research being done, they [experts] realize what was considered bad a minute ago, isn't actually as bad as they think... so how do we decipher these contradictions for our kids?

The parental instinct is to limit the use of devices and screen time, but parents commonly alluded to the fact that the world is changing, and they need to go with those changes to a certain extent. One of those changes is the use of devices for educational purposes. Anna feels it is important for her kids' generation to be able to navigate websites and devices because of their increasing use in jobs and educational systems. While there was a concern for the impact of exposure to technology, parents recognized that large amounts of exposure to devices is inevitable with their prominence in today's society. One parent even acknowledged their seven year old's ability to independently find prerecorded shows on the television, which amazed them. It is interesting to note how the ability to navigate programs, which was once a specialized taught skill, is now seemingly a natural ability for young kids.

Another worry parents had regarding connectedness was their children's ability to access all types of information; violence and pornography were repeatedly mentioned. Parents are

concerned as to how premature exposure to pornography will affect what their children (more specifically sons) believe to be a healthy sexual relationship. Diana's emphasis on this represents the concerns of the group, expressing:

> I think these teenage boys can see whatever they want, whenever they want, and I think that can affect their sexual relationships. I don't see that in my own child at this point, he is too young. But going forward I definitely will have conversations with him about what a normal sexual relationship should look like and that type of thing.

Parents are worried about their younger children's vulnerability and how easy it is to stumble into something on the Internet that they are not prepared for and that could "freak them out." Parents assume their older kids have seen really graphic images of violence and porn, because there is no way to control what information they access. Parents with older kids felt that if they try to manage Internet use, their children will just go to someone else's house to see it. They express doubt in their decision to not control their children's Wi-Fi access, but still do not attempt to regulate it in any way.

Conversely, parents mentioned the benefits of connectedness via technology. Diana's kids had cellphones at a very young age, and while this made it more difficult to monitor what they are doing, it allowed for them to be much more independent. Diana feels completely safe with them travelling the 45-minute subway ride to and from school alone everyday because getting in contact with them is just a click away. She feels that cellphones have major benefits for children's independence and exploration.

It is also interesting to note the tension between parents feeling that they need to be more flexible in their rules with devices, versus the importance of limiting exposure to them. Parents with younger kids emphasized the importance of regulating the time spent on devices, Internet

access and entertainment program choices. But they universally stress that a major concern for them is the ability to regulate exposure in the future. To quote Pam, "I think it just comes down to supervision at this point and then as they get older, to find a way to set boundaries that they can't really cross." But when asked what these boundaries entail, no one had been able to figure that out yet. For now, they are relying on the fact that they can simply trust them at this age.

Similarly, because her oldest is three, Laura worries about the impact technology will have on her kid's confidence, innocence and safety. Like Diana, this stems from the kids' ability to be constantly dialed in and connected to their friends and strangers alike, at all hours of the day. Laura's inability to address these worries stems from the diverse possibilities of the future, saying, "how we tackle that challenge will really depend on what things are like when we cross that bridge." Parents stressed that the information we have on the implications of technology today, is always subject to change.

Privacy. The third and final perceived risk is privacy. Pam feels that it is important to keep a level of privacy about yourself so that you can choose to let in those that you trust and feel safe with. Yet through her own recent Facebook use, she has experienced the lure to share more than she initially thought she would want to. She feels a person has to be emotionally and physically mature enough to deal with the ramifications of their information being on the Internet forever. Diana stresses this to her children, but says even at their ages of 13 and 15, they, "have no concept of that, it is too abstract." Teresa tells her daughter cautionary tales, such as when her friend's daughter was blackmailed with the "nudies" she had sent to a boy, to help her grasp some of these consequences.

Parents strongly expressed the importance of their children being in control of their own person. They felt that the most important independence is to manage their information and their body. As Pam says:

> No one has the right to know everything about you, for safety and all other sorts of reasons. You have to go slow [with the information you share] because things can come back to haunt you. It is a huge learning curve.

Parents expressed a concern for the changing dynamic of information considered public versus private. For most of the participants, this made privacy and safety a much greater concern than they felt it was for them growing up. Anna has hold her kids that no one should ever touch them and has taught them how to shower themselves from a young age to build autonomy. It is interesting to note that when overtly asked about the greatest risk to her children, Anna feels there is not much risk because of their family's sheltered lifestyle. She feels their community is safe and full of hard-working people who raise their children with similar values, yet later on states, "the greatest risk is adults, unfortunately we live in a really [ugly world], you know, like even trusting neighbours." This speaks to the tensions of risk and how parents decipher it, depending on the context.

As much as the parents vocalized concern for potential risks and safety of advanced technology, they also vocalized its benefits for learning and education. And for their concern regarding constant connectedness, with unlimited access to information, they concurrently felt to limit their kids' use was to put them at a social and educational disadvantage. Additionally, parents have demonstrated dissonance in their own perceptions of risk and society. These tensions speak to the qualities of a risk society.

Communication is Key

Regardless of the risk, or the child's age, parents felt the most valuable way to protect their children was through open communication. As Helen stressed, it is a process you build on their entire life; you can't all of a sudden expect to openly communicate with your teenage child. Diana, who expressed that there is no way to control or prevent the information her kids have access to, has made sure they know there is nothing they could tell her that would make her love them less. Parents universally stressed the importance of keeping an open dialogue with their children so that they would feel comfortable coming to them with any problem or disturbing information they come across on the Internet. While parents stressed the importance of privacy, they also hope their children would not keep private the things they needed help with.

Most parents felt that eating meals together was the most effective way to check in with their children. Anna does not believe in eating separately from her kids because, "it is not just a time to eat, but to talk," but says almost every parent she knows eats at a different time than their children. She considers this a form of "convenient parenting", which is when parents do not want to be bothered by their children, and therefore do what they consider to be the easiest option; for example, sitting their children in front of the television with plain pasta for dinner. Teresa knows other parents judge her because she does the 30-minute drive to her daughter's high school every day, but she cherishes this as a time when she can talk to her daughter about what is happening in her life.

Parents expressed the importance of communicating with teachers to check in on their children's emotional stability. For parents whose children struggle with verbalizing their emotions, an open line of communication with teachers is integral. With Helen's 18 year old son's disability, it can be especially hard because he can be emotionally 18, but other times he may be 7, or 10. Therefore talking to his teachers helps to understand what is going on if he

seems upset and is not communicating why. Teresa attends social school functions as a way of keeping tabs on her daughter's life, such as the quality of her teachers and the friends she hangs out with.

Communication was also the most prominent tool used to aid children through their journey to independence. Diana refuses to speak on behalf of her children when they have a conflict with friends or a figure of authority, however she supports them and will help them work through the situation:

> I could give her advice on what I thought she could do but in the end it is her life, and she is going to learn what works and what doesn't without me chirping in her ear. So sometimes you have to let them go into the world and make the wrong decision. But then I am there when she comes home to sort of embrace her and support her and say, okay, that didn't work, so what do you think will work next time?

Additionally, parents felt that discussing things with their children, such as news articles, was the best way to teach them about moral values and problem-solving skills. For Karen, it is about finding the teachable moment that will lead to open dialogue. For example, to teach her two adventurous sons about risk and safety, she took them outside where there was a squished black squirrel in the middle of the road. She explained, "...we went out and looked at it and was like, this squirrel... he did not look both ways before he crossed the road." It is about giving them strong memories to understand the importance of safety and taking care of themselves. For Diana, a teachable moment as a parent is about willing to be wrong, and to be able to say you are sorry to your child in order to teach them ownership of their actions. Communication was the most prominent answer to questions regarding the challenges of raising children, how to facilitate growth and learning, and mitigation of risk.

Conclusion: "It is a pain in the arse, but you gotta do it, right?"

Throughout my research, I intended to explore the questions, *how do parents experience raising children in society today? What do parents perceive as a risk to their child?* I found that all parents strongly recognized the intense pressure to conform to the popular parenting practices of their wider middle-class social group. These parenting practices stress the importance of raising a child to encompass the idealized definition of success, as it is defined in a neoliberal society.

Research participants recognized intensive parenting practices as the dominant parenting discourse, yet there was a high level of dissonance between participants who partook in these practices and those who overtly resisted them. Additionally, there were internal tensions in parents' beliefs and practices in relation to popular parenting advice. While parents felt that the societal expectation to be a helicopter parent did not affect their own parenting style, they provided examples where they felt they had to adhere to them in a public space or amongst their peers. This speaks to how popular parenting advice works as a form of social control through judgment of those who choose to parent in a different style. As Helen said:

> It is this competition of making sure your child makes the mark, whether it is what is best for them or not. Not saying I haven't struggled with some of that [conforming to societal ideals of a "good" parent] myself, I am not immune to it.

While contemporary parenting culture stresses the importance of parents martyring themselves to their children, many of the parents felt strongly that the best service they can

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provide for their children is to let them fail. As Pam said, the earlier they fail, the earlier they learn how to get up on their own two feet again. With that being said, it was equally important for them to know there is a safe, supportive environment to go home to when things don't go as planned. Some parents felt people were starting to challenge the societal definition of a "good" or "ideal" parent, because "we have started to see the repercussions of not letting kids fail enough," but others felt strongly that helicopter parenting was still the dominant parenting type.

While parents felt that there were constantly new parenting trends appearing in the media, they also emphasized that there are some aspects of parenting that have never changed. They said that much of parenting is about common sense, and being intuitive to your own moral compass, regardless of broader social and cultural expectations. While most parents did not believe that intensive parenting was the only way to raise successful, resilient children, most engaged with at least some of the popular advice. But regardless of a parent's beliefs or practices, or the judgment and self-blame they feel, at the end of the day, all they want is what is best for their kids, and for them to grow up as healthy, happy and functioning adults. To quote Laura, "it can a pain in the arse, but you gotta do it, right?"

To address the second research question, parents of this study perceived the greatest risks to their children to be their relationships, their connectedness and their privacy. The constant revision and counter-revision of scientific knowledge and technology have left parents feeling at a loss about what tangible mitigation techniques might be, regardless of contemporary parenting advice. Therefore, they solely relied on open communication to explain how a post on Instagram, or the deception of pornography could impact their children's future relationships or privacy. As society continues to evolve, parents' perceptions of risk are subject to change. I would like to

reiterate that our interpretations of risk are socially and culturally constructed. Understanding what people consider as risk is integral to understanding contemporary society.

In order to understand how living in a risk environment affects contemporary parenting culture, we need to explore the meaning of risk in different parenting contexts, and examine what parents constitute as a risk or benefit to their children in varying situations. As my study was a small sample of mostly middle-class to affluent, professional parents, the experiences of those interviewed are not generalizable to all middle-class Canadian parents, and certainly do not reflect the experiences of working-class families. My study does, however, contribute to research on middle-class, professional parents' perception of a risk environment. Further research is needed to include less privileged parents, in order to compare experiences from varying socioeconomic backgrounds. A study on how disadvantaged families interpret popular parenting advice and the concept of a risk society would be beneficial to understand how parenting culture responds to larger political, cultural and class-based visions of social order.

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Appendix A: Recruitment Flyer

Information on recruitment flyers will be as follows.

How do parents deal with the challenges of being a parent today?

Are you a parent with a child or children twenty years old or younger? Would you like to talk about the challenges of being a parent today, and how you deal with them? If so, I would love to hear from you!

Join a sociological study on parenting conducted by a Dalhousie honours student.

I am looking to recruit parents from all socioeconomic statuses to analyze the stresses that parents from varying backgrounds may face. A brief phone call will occur prior to the interview; simply to find out what socioeconomic status you identify with to ensure my study includes this range.

Participation involves a single interview that will last up to one hour.

Please contact Lisa Quigley for more information!

ls562372@dal.ca
(647)-505-0470

Appendix B: Phone Screening Questions and Recruitment

Questions will be asked after a brief introduction of the study and myself.

Hi! This is Lisa Quigley calling in regards to your interest in my study on parenting. The research is for an honours thesis in Sociology. As mentioned on my flyer, I am looking to interview parents from all socioeconomic backgrounds to compare the challenges they face and how they deal with them. Do you mind if I ask you just one question regarding your socioeconomic status before we set up an interview? Great, thanks.

Question: Which socioeconomic class do you identify with? The general statuses are as follows: low-income or working class, middle class, and financially secure.

(Depending on their response) Great, thanks- I would love to set up a meeting time with you! It will only be an hour of your time and I will be asking you questions about the challenges you experience as a parent and how you deal with them. Is there a time next week most convenient for you? And is there a local spot that is easily accessible to you to hold the interview? For the interview, if you have a partner and you both wish to come and be interviewed together, that is great but it is not necessary for the interview! Only if it is convenient for the both of you, and you both want to participate.

OR

Thanks so much but it looks like I already have enough participants with your general social economic status. I really appreciate not just your time but also your interest in my study. Would it be okay if I hold onto your contact information for three weeks in case anything comes up, for instance if someone else drops out, and I may want to interview you? Great!/No problem! Thanks again for your time. Have a good day.

Appendix C: Interview Guide

Interviews with parent participants will be in-depth, semi-structured, and take about one hour of participants' time. Questions are as follows.

1. How many children do you have?
2. What schools do they go to?
3. What area do you live in in Halifax/ Toronto?
4. Are you a single parent?
5. I'd love to hear more about your children. Would you mind telling me a bit about each of them?
6. What do they like to do in their free time? Do they take part in any extracurricular activities?
7. How do you time manage your daily responsibilities for the children and yourself?
8. What do you find the most rewarding thing about being a parent?
9. What do you find the most challenging about being a parent?
10. How do you deal with a challenge such as that?
11. Where do you turn to to get parenting advice? What sources or types of advice do you dislike?
12. How do you deal with the different challenges of raising a child?
    - How do you check in on your child's emotional stability and provide positive emotional support?
    - How do you try to instill good moral values?
    - How do you teach them problem-solving and decision-making skills?
    - What do you find the most effective way in protecting them from outside risks? How do you determine what is or could be a risk?
    - How do you decide what media are suitable for your children and how do you monitor their exposure to media and consumption?
    - How do you teach/instill self-motivation and independence in practical tasks?
13. How do you feel our society today has impacted your parenting style or techniques?
14. What do you see other parents struggling with the most?
15. What do you feel is the greatest outside pressure on you as a parent?
16. What do you feel is the greatest outside risk to your child?
17. What is the most resourceful way to either embrace or divert these pressures/risks?
18. What do you feel is the most important part of your job in being a parent?
19. If you could give one tip, insight or piece of advice to a new parent, what would it be?

Now, if you don't mind I would like to ask just a few more brief, personal questions that I ask only to help me get a better picture of all my interviewees.

20. What is your highest level of education?
21. What is your occupation?

22. Are you the sole income-earner in your household?
23. (If they have a dual-income) What is your partners occupation?
24. (Depending on the occupation response) Is that full-time or part-time work?
25. Does your family receive any public assistance?

Appendix D: Consent Form

DALHOUSIE
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Faculty of Arts and
Social Sciences

CONSENT FORM

A Parent's Experience in Raising a Child Today

You are invited to take part in research being conducted by me, Lisa Quigley, an undergraduate student in Sociology, as part of my honours degree at Dalhousie University. The purpose of this research is to interview parents to explore their experiences of being a parent, the challenges they face in that role, and their ways of dealing with those challenges. I am seeking to interview parents of children 20 years old or younger, from a variety of socioeconomic backgrounds. I will write up the results of this research in a paper for my class, called the honours thesis.

As a participant in the research you will be asked to answer a number of interview questions about the challenges you face as a parent and what influences how you parent. The interview will commence only after a brief screening procedure is conducted to ensure I interview parents from a range of socioeconomic backgrounds. The interview should take about an hour and will be conducted in a quiet location of your choice. With your permission, the interview will be audio-recorded. If I quote any part of it in my honours thesis, I will use a pseudonym, not your real name, and I will remove from the quote any other details that could identify you.

Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary. You do not have to answer questions that you do not want to answer, and you are welcome to stop the interview at any time if you no longer want to participate. If you decide to stop participating after the interview is over, you can do so until March 1st. I will not be able to remove the information you provided after that date, because I will have completed my analysis, but the information will not be used in any other research.

Information that you provide to me will be kept private and will be anonymized, which means any identifying details such as your name will be removed from it. Only the honours class supervisor, Dr. Martha Radice, and I will have access to the unprocessed information you offer. I will describe and share general findings in a presentation to the Sociology and Social

Anthropology Department and in my honours thesis. Nothing that could identify you will be included in the presentation or the thesis. I will keep anonymized information so that I can learn more from it as I continue with my studies.

The risks associated with this study are minimal, but include potential discomfort associated with talking about what can be a controversial or emotional topic. You are welcome to skip questions, take a break, or stop the interview at any time with no consequences.

There will be no direct benefit to you in participating in this research and you will not receive compensation. The research, however, will contribute to new knowledge on the challenges of being a parent today. If you would like to see how your information is used, please feel free to contact me and I will send you a copy of my honours thesis after April 11th.

If you have questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact me or the honours class supervisor. My contact information is ls562372@dal.ca or (647) 505-0570. You can contact the honours class supervisor, Dr Martha Radice, at the Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology, Dalhousie University at (902) 494-6747, or email martha.radice@dal.ca.

If you have any ethical concerns about your participation *in* this research, you may contact Catherine Connors, Director, Research Ethics, Dalhousie University at (902) 494-1462, or email ethics@dal.ca.

Participant's consent:

I have read the above information and I agree to participate in this study.

☐   I agree that the researcher can audio-record the interview with me.

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Researcher's signature: _____

Date: _____

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Appendix E: REB Final Report

DALHOUSIE
UNIVERSITY
Research Services

April 03, 2017

Lisa Quigley
Arts & Social Sciences\Sociology & Anthropology
Dalhousie University

Dear Lisa,

REB #:   2016-4067
Project Title: Parents' Experiences of Raising Children Today

I am writing to acknowledge receipt of the final report for this research project. The research ethics file for this project is now closed. Dalhousie University stores this file for 5 years, after which all records associated with the file may be destroyed.

I would like to remind you of your continuing responsibility to ensure that you maintain any records and data associated with this research consistent with your approved research plan.

Sincerely,

Catherine Connors

Catherine Connors | **Director Research Ethics** | Dalhousie University | Room 231, 6299 South Street, PO Box 15000, Halifax, Nova Scotia B3H 4R2 | phone: 902.494.1462