INTERGENERATIONAL TRANSMISSION OF VALUES
ON PARENTING AND EDUCATION

by

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for the degree of the Master of Arts in Developmental Psychology and Education
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Abstract

This project provides a detailed portrait of the intergenerational transmission of values on parenting and education. The parenting process is commonly observed between the parent and child, but it is also influenced by the parent’s relationship with his or her parents, and the individual’s surrounding environment, culture, and history. In order to understand the intricate nature of human relationships, I used a rare collection of archival data from the first Canadian Mental Hygiene (Canadian Mental Health Agency) movement in the 1920s. I studied one normative family through the archival data and conducted my own series of interviews with a member of this family. Using multiple methods, I analyzed three generations and coded the data by emergent themes. The results indicate that each generation fosters distinct parenting practices and highlight the complexity of human adaptation and relationships, and the need to study human development within a relational developmental systems framework.
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Chapter 1
Introduction

1 Introduction

Values are shaped by experience and embedded in context. Relationships play an essential role in shaping values which encompass ideas on perseverance, morality, well-being, fairness, education, and parenting. As people are exposed to and experience values through relationships with their parents, siblings, caregivers, educators, and peers, they begin to construct and adapt their values.

Values and beliefs are two distinct yet intertwined concepts. Beliefs are fairly consistent global perceptions about how the world functions. They are influenced by the larger societal and cultural context and are held by a community of people. For example, the belief that stealing is wrong is a widely held, stable assumption about what is good and bad. Beliefs remain fairly consistent throughout one’s life unless one experiences events that directly challenge them. Beliefs influence values which guide people’s actions according to what they feel is most important in that moment. They include ideas about perseverance, morality, well-being, fairness, education, and parenting and guide us in evaluating right from wrong. Values are manageable facets of beliefs that can be studied by focusing on people and their contexts. While beliefs are based on past experience and remain fairly consistent, values change. Values allow people to react to the current demands of the time and consciously modify or create new values to influence future outcomes.

There are two parts to studying the transmission of values: the individual and the context. Individuals as autonomous beings give emphasis to different values as people are shaped by unique personal experiences. Their experiences with family, mainly parents and caregivers, has
an important role in shaping values. From the moment children are born, they are exposed to their parent’s ways. This triggers a process of adaptation for both child and parent as they use their values to help navigate their daily experiences. A direct transmission from one generation to the next may not be appropriate because the younger generation will face different societal and cultural demands. Change in values may be necessary.

Examining the contexts in which people live allows for a deeper understanding of how values are shaped and adapted through time. As contexts and relationships change, people reconstuct their values to fit their new interpretations of the world. This sometimes unconscious process happens as people encounter new situations and attempt to problem-solve through the issue.

Some of the most important values that are prominent in a family system are ideas about parenting and education. This makes sense as parents are children’s primary caregiver and children spend a lot of their time at school. The experience of children as autonomous individuals, including their experience and knowledge of the world, and their context needs to be considered when studying the ways in which parents pass down values to their children.

1.1 Rationale

In 2012 I began a Master of Arts degree in Child Study and Education at the Dr. Eric Jackman Institute of Child Study, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto. The history of the Institute of Child Study and its foundational philosophy about working and being with children immediately captured my interest. I began to ground myself in the institute’s foundational philosophies of nurture and security theory and throughout my two years in the program as a teacher candidate, I spent time with many different children and teachers in a variety of classroom settings. It became obvious that all people, children, teachers,
parents, students, live in context with a history and it is history (among many other factors) that contribute to the development of individuals. This complex system can sometimes be difficult to manage, especially from a teacher’s perspective. I learned the importance of being able to adapt my style of communicating and teaching to the capacities of children in order to better connect with them. The MA program helped me develop these beliefs and led me to wonder about one of the most important relationships – the relationship between a parent and child.

I was raised in an intergenerational home. When I was born my grandma moved from Peru, where my parents were born and raised, to live with my parents in Canada for the purpose of caring for my brother and me. My grandma and I fostered a special relationship which still remains important to me to this day. Growing up in a multi-generational home allowed me to reflect about the influences of each generation on my development and how values are passed down over generations.

I was introduced to the Regal Road Study archival dataset in my first year of the MA program. This data contains details on Toronto children and families and their values on parenting and education. I became drawn to the amount of detail and artifacts in these files. Thorough an exploration of these files and my own experience with living in a multi-generational home, a passion for studying the intergenerational transmission of values on parenting and education emerged.

1.2 History of the Regal Road Study

Canada in the 1920s marked a time in which people were becoming interested in healthy childhood development. Issues concerning the mental health and well-being of children were put at the forefront of a public health movement towards identifying and better serving children with mental health issues. Before this time, in the late 1800’s, children were not considered
individuals. They were considered to be owned by their parents and their significance dependent on their role within the family (Sutherland, 1976).

The Canada National Committee for Mental Hygiene (now the Canadian Mental Health Association) was established during the public health movement in the early 1900s. One of the goals of this committee was to study the incidences of children who posed special problems, such as mental retardation or exceptional intelligence, in a Toronto school. Regal Road Public School was chosen for its representativeness of Toronto’s ethnic and socio-economic population. Dr. William Blatz and his research team were put in charge of the project which included weekly assessments with children, interviewing parents, and meeting with teachers. One of the goals was to study children longitudinally in order to identify the root of problems and the successful adaptation of children. The Regal Road study was carried out from 1920 to 1933. There was great commitment by the principal of the school and research team as artifacts continued to be collected long after the study concluded.

In the 1980s, Dr. Richard Volpe, as part of the Life-Span Adaptation Projects, conducted a follow-up study on approximately 200 of the families who originally participated in the Regal Road Study (Volpe, 1980). The original 1920s Regal Road study and the 1980s follow-up study helped conceptualize the life space model which gives a framework for studying people in context (Volpe, 2004). The life space model includes four elements: socio-cultural, interpersonal elements, the physical environment and internal states (see Figure 1). By incorporating each of the life span elements and studying individuals longitudinally, comprehensive conclusions can be drawn about the adaptation of individuals over time.
1.3 Relational Developmental Systems Theory

This study is situated within the relational developmental systems theory which views humans as dynamic, changing, spontaneously active, and relational beings. This process-relational world view has distinct ontological and epistemological beliefs: human development is plastic and ever-changing as it interacts with its environment; the individual and context influence each other; humans are embodied or embedded in their contexts; and change is constant (Overton, 2013).
Adaptation is an essential aspect of human development. It is the ability to problem-solve and change based on the context. This has been well studied in the field of epigenetics where qualitative changes emerge across the life span through the exchange between organisms and contexts. Across time, this creates adaptation in developmental processes within and across generations (Lerner, 1984). Gottlieb (1997) and Werner (1957) have termed this process “epigenetic (emergent) change”. Epigenetic change implies that the environment influences gene expression but that genes also influence the environment.

West-Eberhard (2003) maintains that environmental variables are essential to adaptive evolutionary change. In addition, Jablonka and Lamb (2005) report that understanding human evolution does not solely encompass the examination of genes but also includes epigenetics, behaviour, and culture. Examples are seen in animals as they transmit behavioural information across generations and within human culture as parents pass on the use of symbols and language. These forms of evolution (genes, epigenetics, behaviour, and culture) collaboratively interact and influence each other over time.

The influence of these forms is evident in relationships across the life span. The environment, including social conditions and even subjective perceptions of these social conditions can influence basic internal biological process and the expression of genes (Slavich and Cole, 2013). The incredible plasticity of individual genetic expression characterizes the relationship between humans and their contexts. This interaction creates qualitative change in the developmental process which can be seen within and across generations.

Epigenetic study has implications on a genetic level. I am using it as a framework to support the interaction between people and their context on a relational level. Relational developmental systems theory sees people embedded in their context. This holistic approach to development asserts that the whole defines the parts and the parts define the whole. Overton
(2013) gives an example of holism by breaking down a sentence. The combination of letters are parts of a word (the whole) which has meaning. When words form a sentence, words transform from being the whole, to parts of a sentence. The new whole now has new meaning. The combination of letters, words, and sentences become an organized system of parts that has significance. In order to discover how a system functions, as in the case of intergenerational transmission of values on parenting and education, an analysis of parts must be carried out in relation to the whole.

Overton (2013) lists three principles essential to recognizing and analyzing the whole. First, identity of opposites asserts that parts of the whole are “differentiated polarities” not exclusive contradictions. Instead of the causal Cartesian-Split Mechanistic worldview, relational developmental systems theory considers ideas in relation to each other rather than complete, separate opposites. For example, the mind and body, culture and biology, and nature and nurture are not expressed dichotomously but instead as part of a whole. The identity of opposites establishes a theoretical argument that biology, individuals, and culture function in relation to each other.

Second, opposites of identity recognize that there are multiple view points on the phenomenon being studied. For example, one could look at a phenomenon through multiple lens. When examining the transmission of parenting practices, one could exclusively take a biological or a cultural view. Although these are separate views, they are not competing. Instead, each perspective is identified as an alternative views both with equal potential to contribute to the study.

Finally, there needs to be synthesis of the whole. This can include biological, psychological, and social aspects of an individual in relation to their context. Greenberg and Partridge (2010), describe the biopsychosocial model of the organism stating that each part
interpenetrates, co-constructs, and/or co-evolves. It is an ever-interacting process as development is seen as an on-going changing process.

The direction of this process is always multi-directional and adaptive. Within life span development, it is assumed that no single age or developmental period is more important than the next (Thorton, 2003). Instead, development is seen an on-going changing process. Due to this assumption, as systems continually change, they become more complex. It is not simply an additive process where one part is being added to the whole. Instead it is a course of transformation and fusion of the relational experiences between the individual and context.

Using relational developmental systems theory, this project explores intergenerational beliefs about parenting values, how these beliefs are developed through each generation, and how they change over time in relation to contextual conditions.

1.4 Definitions: Development, Transmission, and Adaptation

Ford and Lerner (1992) define development by placing the organism and environment at the core. Development “consists of a series of functional transformations of the organism produced by the interaction of the current state of the person with their current context” (Griffiths and Tabery, 2013). This idea of development being an ongoing process of dynamic interaction in context encompassess the system of intergenerational transmission. Thus, I use “development” and “transmission” to describe the interplay of circumstances that contribute to the passing of values through generations and the elements that influence these values.

However, the interaction between people, contexts, and generations is adaptive. People do not merely accept and pass along all values taught by previous generations. They re-construct values, teasing out the parts that do not fit, incorporating parts that were absent, and creating new
values. I will use the term “adaptation” to describe this change and adjustment process that occurs.

### 1.5 The Transmission and Development Process

There are many theories that explore the parent-child transmission process of values. Children are constantly learning new things, and due to the close and frequent interaction with their parents, much of their learning is highly influenced by their parents. There are various learning models by which children absorb information including role-modeling and observational learning.

#### 1.5.1 Learning Models: Explicit and Implicit Ways of Learning

Role-modeling, as outlined by Simonton (1983), is a type of social learning that occurs when children try to emulate or model parent’s behaviour. He found that when children imitate their parent’s behaviours, it is more influential than genetics in the shaping children’s future parenting characteristics, especially in morality and leadership abilities.

Observational learning can include the following: when a parent interacts with another child; when a child draws on past experiences interacting with his or her parent; and parental coaching where a child interacts with another child while the parent coaches appropriate behaviour (Crittenden, 1984). Parental coaching has shown promising results. Anecdotal evidence, in a study comparing nonabusive and abusive parents, suggests that coaching is a powerful learning mechanism. Crittenden (1984) found that responsive, nonabusive parents coached their child to be responsive to their siblings, whereas abusive parent’s tough coaching resulted in children resisting or ignoring mothers’ orders.
A variety of learning models contribute to the development of a child and the internalization of parenting values. This explicit demonstration of learning (i.e. role-modelling and coaching) highlights the importance of the direct impact parents have on their children. However, Archer et al., (2012) use the term ‘family habitus’ as a basis for making sense of the many ways in which families (and their resources, identity, values, practices) influence children. ‘Family habitus’ provides a lens for situating and contextualizing children and parents within the family environment. Not all transmission processes are direct and conscious. Family habitus gives a frame in which to examine some of the implicit, unconscious contributors to the construction of values. I am extending the concept of family habitus to exploring the implicit ways in which people are embedded in routines and relationships and how this affects the transmission of values on parenting and education.

Transmission is a process of change. Family values develop constantly over one’s lifespan as members accommodate new information based on experiences. While family values are passed down from one generation to the next, they are never the original. Each generation makes its own mark, reconstructing the old beliefs into something that fits with them as individuals and who engage in negotiations with others within a context. Whether the development of parenting practices is explicit, like the various learning models proposed, or implicit, as Bourdieu (1990) suggests in his term of ‘habitus’, or a mix of both, the transmission of behaviour is highly influenced by relationships and context.

1.5.2 Relationship Between Parent and Child

The intergenerational effects of parents’ influence on children’s later socialization and attitudes has been well studied, especially concerning the role of attachment (Van Ijzendoorn, 1992; Tanka, Kitamura, Murakami, & Goto, 2009; Holden, & Zambarano, 1992). Ricks (1985) studied the intergenerational relationship between mothers and infants and found a correlation
between an infant’s avoidance level and the ratings of their mother’s rejection by her mother in childhood. The transmission of values has also been studied in different cultural contexts. Sabatier and Lennegran-Willems (2005), studied the transmission of family values and attachment in people from France. They examined the features that encompass family solidarity and how those aspects are carried to the next generation. Similarly, Schonpflug (2001) examined adolescents and fathers and the transmission of collectivistic or individualistic values within these dyads.

In terms of responsiveness, the general assumption of attachment theory is that parents’ experiences with their parents leads to an internal representation of that parent, which will then influence the degree of responsiveness parents show towards their own children (Bowlby, 1988; Main, Kaplan, & Cassidy, 1985). For example, parents who experienced a high degree of responsiveness in childhood should be more sensitive to their children’s needs, take their children’s perspective and feel prepared to deal with signs of anxiety in their children (Main et al., 1985). Parents who did not experience a responsive parent as a child may be less sensitive to their children’s needs. As Bowlby (1988) proposes, the undesirable internal representation of past attachment experiences can be changed through therapy or a secure partner relationship.

Parental involvement is certainly one of the most important aspects of the transmission of values. The literature on parental engagement has been well studied particularly through the exploration of the impact of different parenting styles on children. Diana Baumrind (1978) was one of the first to identify three different parenting styles: authoritative, authoritarian, or permissive. Authoritative parents are warm and responsive to their children’s needs. They provide affection and support; and encourage growth by communicating with their children. This was, and still is, believed to be the ideal parenting style to promote growth and well being in Western culture. On the other hand, authoritarian parents are strict and assert their power over
their children when they misbehave. This style of parenting leads children to have a low level of independence and social responsibility. Finally, permissive parents are relaxed about their expectations for their children. Children raised with this parenting style are often low in social and cognitive capabilities (Baumrind, 1978).

Some parents fall clearly into one of these categories of parenting styles. However, it is more likely that a parenting style is not definitive, meaning that each parent adapts to a slightly different style depending on the circumstance. It is also reasonable to assume that the styles of authoritative and authoritarian parenting are in reality presented in a blurred, complex fashion, and on a continuum rather than as distinct parenting styles. Darling and Steinberg (1993) present a more contextual model, arguing that parenting practices directly influence children’s development while parenting styles affect children’s development through relationship. In addition, the child’s willingness to be influenced by the parenting practices and style is considered. These three notions contribute to the child’s development but fail to account for the active role and effect children play in interacting with their parents.

Recent research has moved away from the unidirectional, top-bottom approach to parent-child relationships where children merely mechanically replicate what they were taught (Grusec, Goodnow, & Kuczynski, 2000). Instead, a relational developmental theoretical framework advocates for a bidirectional process and equal agency within the parent-child relationship. A bidirectional process attains that the parent influences the child and the child equally influences the parent (Parke, 2002). A study by Knafo & Galansky (2008) showed that parents’ values are influenced and change through their children and that children influence personal development in parents (De Mol & Buysse, 2008). This complex reciprocal system does not merely involve the reproduction of old values through generations but instead a creation of new meanings as the relationships and people involve change.
This perspective views parents and children as active participating agents in the relationship. Agency, as defined by Bandura (2006), is a multifaceted construct referring to the ability of a person to influence their own functioning and life circumstances. Within the application of parent-child relationships, both subjects are seen as autonomous with the capacity to influence each other, and interpret and construct meanings out of these relational experiences (Kuczynski, 2003). This is contrary to the historical perspective where the child was supposed to listen and do everything the parent told them to. Within the former perspective of parents and children as equal agents, parents cannot simply mold their children into something they do not want to be. Parents can encourage, advise, and model the desired values, but ultimately, it is up to the child to decide to integrate or reject these values into their life.

In connection with intergenerational transmission, current models have favoured the view of children as active agents in their construction of values and knowledge (Grusec & Goodnow, 1994; Kuczynski et al. 1997; Lawrence & Valsiner, 1993; Smetana, 2011). This view recognizes that as children receive messages, and observe reactions, they begin to interpret the information and construct meaning.

Viewing parents as agents also respects their constructive capacities and historical experiences with their own meaning making process as children and as parents. Parents then choose whether to promote the values they were exposed to as children, or reject them and create new values (De Mol, Lemmens, Verhofstadt, & Kuczynski, 2013). For both parents and children, this is a constant process of evaluation, questioning, and change.

1.6 Embedded in Context

Parents and children function in relation to each other but also embedded in a larger context, which has implications for influencing and shaping the development of values and
beliefs. Parents and children grow up in different eras containing distinct social, historical, and cultural experiences. Thus, it is not surprising that historical analysis argues that social values change from one generation to the next (Alwin, 1996). This also supports the theory that transmission is a complex process. In order to better understand this process, Schönpflug (2001) identified transmission belts, which are factors and/or conditions that enhance transmission. Two important transmission belts include relationships such as parenting style and social conditions such as social class.

As previously discussed, the parent-child relationship is most important when exploring the passing on of values. Parenting styles that promote positive emotional interactions with children create an accepting environment for children (Schönpflug, 2001). Also important is the relationship between the parenting couple. Consistency in attitudes about parenting practices also increases the likelihood of transmission (Cvalli-Sforza and Feldman, 1981).

The effects of social class on the parent-child relationship and the development of values is very influential. People from varying social classes are influenced by different factors and place importance on distinct values. Social class is determined by more than one’s educational level or occupation. It involves a complex interplay between a number of variables such as stability, change, and values that combine to define different societal levels (Kohn, 1963).

Low, working, middle, and upper class families come from different social backgrounds which support different kinds of parenting behaviour. Distinct experiences influence the way people from different social classes view the world, consequently affecting their values, beliefs, and behaviours. An exploration of the different behaviours of working and middle-class parents reveal that working-class parents are more likely to maintain traditional ways of parenting whereas middle-class parents are more likely to frequently change techniques more frequently based on current expert advice (Kohn, 1963). There has also been evidence that working-class
families are more conducive to retaining familiar values because of a greater attachment to their families (Kohn, 1963). This is not to say that all working and middle-class parents conform to these patterns, but these observations help explain the complex patterns of transmission.

1.7 Changing Values

This project explores how parenting values change over generations. In particular, I focus on the values on parenting and education because these values are powerful and significant in influencing the parent-child relationship. The archival data of the Regal Road Study, which I use in this current study, highlights the role of parenting and education in people’s lives. The combination of the importance of values on parenting and education and access to the Regal Road archival data makes this study unique and compelling. As you read through this thesis I encourage you to look at the genogram (family tree) created with the participant of this study (Appendix D). It will help contextualize the people within their family system. A detailed description of how to read the genogram can be found in the Methods section under Analysis.

I draw on the ontological and epistemological views of a relational developmental systems theory as a framework for explaining how parenting values are transmitted between generations. Given that humans are ever-changing and interacting with their environment, I propose that the development of parenting practices in this study will reflect the uniqueness of the participants and the various contexts in which they parented.
Chapter 2
Methodology

2 Qualitative Methods

This methodology was most appropriate because the intergenerational transmission of values is a deeply complex process encompassing several aspects. I used qualitative methods in order to study the intergenerational transmission of values on parenting and education. Previous studies have tried to understand the intergenerational transmission of parenting values through direct observation, questionnaires, and other quantitative methods which decontextualize values on parenting and the ways in which parents influence their children and making it difficult to find reliable continuity in the data (Holden and Zambarano, 1992; Holden and Edwards, 1989). By using a detailed narrative of an individual case, as done in this study, it is more helpful in determining if and how parents transfer values to their children and the circumstances that influence this transmission.

2.1 Key Case Participant

One participant was interviewed in this study. She is a 68-year-old woman, referred to by the pseudonym “Jaclyn”, and the child of a man who attended Regal Road School between 1925 and 1933. Jaclyn is also a parent of one child, Jack, and was therefore was able to comment on how she thought her relationship with her own parents subsequently influenced how she parented Jack. Records of Jaclyn’s father and grandparents were also analyzed to track parenting changes and/or similarities throughout the generations.

Jaclyn comes from a normative family defined as a mother, father, and children living in the same home without the experience of any form of abuse, including physical, sexual, emotional, or neglect. Based on income, education, and occupation, the participant is from
middle socioeconomic status. She completed high school and then trained to be a nurse. She went on to work as a nurse and still works as a nurse part-time. Jaclyn has no formal diagnosis of mental illness; however, she self-reported feeling highly anxious and obsessive compulsive at times in her life.

2.2 Procedure

The Regal Road archival records were used to select Jaclyn. These records included families who were chosen to participate complete with family surnames. This data was kept with the original Regal Road study records conducted in the 1920s. For this current study, family names from the archival records were recorded and then chosen based on the likelihood of participation. For example, families with more than one child were chosen over families with only one child.

Contact with Jaclyn was attempted through a letter sent to two potential participants from the same family (Appendix A). As these people were willing participants in the 1980s follow-up study, I assumed there was an increased likelihood of participation in this current study. After accounting for possible surname changes, their last names were searched for in a City of Toronto phone book to locate their home addresses. Two letters were mailed to those who had only one address listed under the chosen surname. Approximately one week later, an email was received from Jaclyn and she verified that her father was a participant in the original 1920s study.

After initial contact, further information and consent forms were sent to Jaclyn by email (Appendix B). In collaboration with Jaclyn, an in-person meeting date at a local cafe was established as an opportunity for her to ask any questions and learn more about the study. During the initial meeting, she signed the consent and a second meeting date was established. This became one of three interview meetings which were all conducted at the Dr. Eric Jackman
Institute of Child Study at the University of Toronto. Each meeting was conducted one-on-one and was approximately one and a half hours in length. Each interview was recorded and transcribed verbatim. Questions from the interview were based on a modified version of the Beavers Systems Model as well as other open-ended questions (Beavers & Hampson, 2000). They focused on Jaclyn’s childhood and relationships with her parents (Appendix C). Meetings held approximately every other week to allow time for transcription of and reflection upon each interview before the next meeting.

2.3 Analysis

I studied the values on parenting and education transmitted throughout three generations. Data from the 1920s Regal Road Study archives was obtained. This included information on Jaclyn’s parents and grandparents.

Jaclyn’s grandparents were interviewed on their parenting beliefs in the 1920s by staff from the Regal Road School. In this study, they are referred to as Mr. M and Mrs. M (fictional names to protect their identity). Further, they are considered the first generation. Jaclyn’s father (referred to by the pseudonym “William”) was interviewed in the 1980s as part of Richard Volpe’s Life Span Adaptation Project. He was a student at Regal Road School from 1929 to 1933. He is considered the second generation. Jaclyn is considered the third generation. With the exception of the first meeting at the café, all interviews with Jaclyn were recorded using an iPhone and later transcribed onto a computer for further analysis.

Due to the diverse collection of data, multiple methods of data analysis were use. Archival data, interviews, as well as a genogram were utilized as a form of study. Using diverse methodologies is important because it allows for multiple perspectives on the same theme. This way, a more complete picture is presented allowing for more reliable conclusions to be drawn.
I chose to use an interview to gather information for two main reasons. First, the archival data includes interviews. The detail in these interviews was valuable when analyzing the values about parenting and education between generations. Second, families are very interconnected interactive units (McGoldrick et. al., 1999). When analyzing multiple generations, it was crucial that the participant have the freedom to speak in depth about what she felt was important. An interview method allowed the participant to thoroughly describe her experience in detail.

A genogram was also created in partnership with the participant (Appendix D). The genogram is typically used by clinicians to help identify patterns of dysfunctional behaviour between individual family members or between generations (McGoldrick, et. al., 1999). In this study, it is used to visually show family patterns and genetic bonds between the family members. It helps represent patterns of intergenerational family functioning and relationships.

The software Lucidchart was used to create the basic genogram. The image was then transferred to Microsoft Powerpoint. In Powerpoint, a variety of basic symbols were used to represent the family patterns and genetic bonds. Circles represent women and squares represent men. The biological descendants of Mr. and Mrs. M have been represented by the size of circle and square. Larger circles and squares indicate they are biological descendants or spouses of the family. Jaclyn is a large circle because she is William’s daughter and William is Mr. and Mrs. M’s son. However, Justine is a smaller circle because she is not biologically related to William or Mr. and Mrs. M. A cross inside the circle or square identifies that the person is deceased.

A straight solid horizontal line between two people indicates a marriage exemplified by Mr. and Mrs. M. This is the marriage line. Spouses are always to the right. Two smaller vertical lines through a horizontal line signifies a divorce. For example, the genogram shows that Raymond got divorced two times - first from Heather and then from Julie. If a person not
biologically related to the M family had another marriage, this is indicated by a raised horizontal line connecting the two people. As noted in the case of Raymond and Heather, after their divorce Heather remarried to Byron.

Biological children are represented by a straight solid vertical line, connected to the marriage line. Albert, William, Freddy, Lucy, and Raymond are the biological children of Mr. and Mrs. M. Typically the oldest biological child is the furthest to the left and the youngest child furthest to the right. However, in the case of William and Patti, Patti had a child, Justine, with her ex-husband Christopher, and then remarried to William. Although Justine is older than Jaclyn, she stays on the right side to indicate she is Patti and Christopher’s biological child. A dotted vertical line below indicates adoption. For example, Max and Linda have two adopted children Andrew and Kayla. These generic symbols are widely used among clinicians to help identify family patterns. All the names on the on the genogram are fictional to protect the identity of the participants.

This genogram allows for a clear visual representation of the relationships between generations. Participating in the creating of the genogram allowed Jaclyn to share and highlight her perspective on how the members in her family were related. This genogram along with the archival data helps show generational ideas about parenting and education.

The archival data and interview data for the three generations were separated into generation one, two and three. Sentences, paragraphs or phrases from the interviews were classified under the themes of values on parenting and values on education. As stated in the introduction, these values were chosen as they are important and meaningful in influencing the parent-child relationship. Using these themes, the generations were compared- generation one to generation two, and generation two to generation three to show the intergenerational transmission of practices.
This study shares multiple perspectives and sheds light on the generational life patterns of adaptation. It is assumed that people share what they feel is important and that this collection and analysis of interviews allows for a full perspective on the intergenerational transmission of values and practices. The social context of the era was also considered and mainstream ideas about parenting and education are outlined.
Chapter 3
Findings

3 Introduction

Three distinct philosophies of parenting and values on education arise through the experiences of the M family. Although each generation is highlighted by a particular parenting style it does not mean that the styles are mutually exclusive. The themes are used as a way of organizing and talking about each generation. Each philosophy is explored highlighting the contextual factors that contributed to their formation and the ways that values on parenting and education are transmitted and developed over generations.

3.1 Generation One: The Urgent Parent

3.1.1 History of the Urgent Parent

This story begins with Mr. and Mrs. M’s adult lives because their childhood history is unknown. By acknowledging that Mr. and Mrs. M had their own history containing influential relationships guiding how they responded to parenting, I recognize that everyone has a past that has, in some way, influenced their adaptation through life. Mr. and Mrs. M came from Boston, Massachusetts but moved to Toronto where they raised their four children. Mrs. M was educated as a teacher and studied piano. Her experience in these fields proved useful in raising her own children. In fact, Mrs. M met her husband through a mutual interest in education showing the importance of schooling as one of the core values in their relationship.

Mr. and Mrs. M were a working class family. After moving to Toronto, they encountered significant economic hardship mainly through job loss. Despite economic insecurity, Mr. and
Mrs. M persevered and took their roles in raising their children very seriously to secure a better education and future for them. Like many women in Canada in the 1920s, Mrs. M’s responsibility was to take care of the home and children. Her role in the lives of her children was incredibly active and went beyond a commitment to meet their basic needs. Her actions to improve the quality of life for her children were clearly deliberate.

Mrs. M was the primary caretaker of the children and adopted a strict parenting philosophy. This view was no different than that of many other parents in the 1920s. However, Mrs. M did not rely on corporal punishment to discipline her children. She was more focused on being strict with her children perhaps because she felt the urgent need to mobilize their growth and well-being so that they could live lives that were better than her own.

3.1.2 Urgency in Education

Mrs. M pushed improvement through her passion for education. She involved herself in many aspects of her children’s schooling and was in constant communication with the school. In specific interaction with Dr. Blatz about one of her children, Mrs. M shows a willingness to discuss issues about her children while also playing an active role in the decisions made. Below is a hand written note from January 28, 1930 in which Mrs. M shows her active contribution to affairs regarding her child’s eating habits.

My Dear Dr. Blatz,

I wish to express my appreciation to you for the helpful ideas I have received at your lectures at the University- and at Regal Road School.

Last night we were discussing the eating habits of my daughter. From now on I shall try ignoring her attitude at dinner - our noon meal and let her “eat it or leave it”. But
if she does “leave it” I shall make a point of remedying what I still feel would be a deficiency in her diet by giving her vegetables for supper that I know she does like.

I agree with you that she has been given too much attention. It would be hard to avoid that when urging her to eat what she doesn’t like. For that reason, I should prefer that you do not question her in any way in regard to her food preferences etc. If you are interested in hearing the outcome of my charge and tactics, I shall be glad to let you know from time to time. But for the present at least, I should much prefer that she not be made or rather placed under observation.

Sincerely yours,

Mrs. M (Blatz, 1933)

Through this letter to Dr. Blatz, it is clear Mrs. M was strict, yet cared greatly about her children. She was willing to take advice so long as it did not interfere with her own gut feeling and beliefs. Mrs. M was not shy about giving orders to the school staff as evident in her request to not have her child questioned or observed. This explicit form of communication only reinforces Mrs. M’s motivation to provide the best care and prepare her children for a better future.

Although Mr. and Mrs. M were keen and had a passion for education, not all of their children were natural scholars. In one instance, Mrs. M had to advocate for one of her children to not attend Technical School. According to the records, she stated that she and her husband felt, “the class of people attending the Technical School have low standards and were not nice” (Blatz, 1933). There were other instances showing Mrs. M’s active involvement in dictating the children’s lives, such as discouraging thumb sucking, enforcing firm guidelines about who the
children were and were not allowed to play with, and holding them accountable for doing their chores around the house.

Their status of a working class family may have influenced the way Mrs. M parented. Mrs. M’s advocacy for her children in school shows that she was willing to listen to expert advice but then make her own confident decision in what was best for her children. This behaviour showed a conscious effort to prepare their children to attain a higher quality of life.

3.1.3 Urgency in Recreation

Outside of education Mrs. M made sure her children were noticed for their accomplishments. Her children were featured in articles for a variety of extra curricular activities such as building an outstanding bird house, involvement in choir and acting. These newspaper clippings show that Mrs. M highly encouraged if not forced her children to be involved in many activities outside of school. In a time of economic insecurity for the family, the effort to organize extracurricular activities demonstrates Mrs. M’s urgency to influence her children’s future.

3.1.4 Self-Mobilization

Mrs. M’s seriousness about good parenting and the growth of her children went as far as leading by example. In her spare time, she learned and participated in many things. She was very active in the Regal Road School Association and in 1939 was elected president of the Regal Road Home and School Club. Given her drive to make sure her children were raised with a good educational background; it is not a surprise that Mrs. M learned anything that needed to be done through manual training.

Regal Road Public School was an exemplary progressive institute at the time. The well-being and mental health of children was highly prioritized. In fact, the architecture and design of the school reflected these values. Mrs. M whole-heartedly reflected the values of the school.
Mrs. M went beyond a strict parenting philosophy. Care was evident in her actions but there was also a sense of protecting her children from people who might stunt or impede them from reaching their full potential. They grew up in a community with lower standards for education and Mrs. M’s sheltering may have been very useful in propelling them to reach a quality of life that was greater than hers.

3.1.5 Father’s Role

Mr. M’s role was to financially provide for the family. When the M family first moved to Toronto, he owned a car dealership. The car dealership failed in 1927 and that is when their financial struggles began. Although the family received some financial aid, he did not accept aid unless absolutely necessary. In fact, the records state that at one point, Mr. M was offered money but refused to take it. Mr. M was incredibly resourceful in finding employment. He worked for a trucking company, opened a mechanical repair business, and finally worked permanently with the Toronto Transit Commission until he retired.

Given the distinct roles Mr. and Mrs. M played, it is not evident what type of parenting philosophy Mr. M held. It is likely he agreed with Mrs. M and allowed her to make most of the decisions regarding the children’s recreation and education. However, the records indicate that Mr. M also played an important role in the lives of his children.

His relationship with his sons was particularly active, especially with William - his second oldest son. William recalls, “Dad was away on his own business. He was home late in the evenings and so on weekends we would often go out to the country in the good weather…” (Blatz, 1933). This simple excerpt shows that although Mr. M did not have a lot of time, he still made an effort to connect with his children through different experiences. These interactions likely balanced Mrs. M’s very active and involved strict philosophy with Mr. M’s more laid-back demeanor.
Mr. M’s special bond with his son William is reflected as William recalls the different personalities in his family.

Oh yes, my sister Freddy and my older brother 15 months older than I they are both very strong-minded people had their own opinions and so on. My mother was also a very strong minded person. I guess my Dad and I were very much more alike in a sense. Looking back, I had never thought of it, more relaxed individuals who, you know, go along with people just for the sake of keeping harmony (Blatz, 1933).

There was clearly a personal bond that connected Mr. M and William. Both people had similar and relatable personalities which may have influenced and encouraged the transmission of certain values. The relationship between Mr. M and William carried forward to William’s daughter, Jaclyn. She describes,

He was a big heavyset fellow, he worked for the TTC, he was a mechanic. I think he probably retired in ‘53. For the first couple of years of my life he called me little fella because I was fair and I had no hair and he just presumed I was a boy I guess. And once I was a little bit older, he and I would go out and we would I guess we would walk over to the shops which weren’t too far away and people would say… ‘cause he was like 6’2” or something and we would be walking down the street holding his hand. So he was taken with me because I guess I was the golden hair child as we always said, and the true M (J. M., personal communication, November 6, 2014).

Mr. M had a special connection with his son William and with his granddaughter, Jaclyn. The warm details from this excerpt such as the nickname “little fella” and the description of actions such as “walking down the street holding his hand” shows Jaclyn remembers her grandfather fondly. The initial attachment Mr. M and William had fostered a natural connection when Jaclyn was born leading to a lineage of affection.
Jaclyn mentions that she, just like her father, was considered the “peace maker” in her family. She was trusted with being the calm person and to ease other people’s anger or frustrations.

If my father was upset and had, both my parents would be quick to anger … you know and he was living with his parents, and his wife. He was caught between a rock and a hard place. And he’d go out and start fixing the car, well then Jaclyn would be sent out to fix, to go out there and help him. So I would be the little helper and sort of go out and pass him tools or do stuff and we’d be together. And he would calm down and do what he had to do (J. M., personal communication, November 6, 2014).

The role Jaclyn played in calming her father down when there was a dispute is the same role her father played in his family. Both Jaclyn and William mention taking the role of a “peace maker” in the family connecting them in an exclusive way.

3.1.6 Balance of Parenting

The combination of Mrs. M’s strict and urgent parenting practices and values and Mr. M’s more laidback, peacekeeping attitude propelled their children’s growth in society. In examining Mr. and Mrs. M’s parenting, the parenting style of Mrs. M, the primary caregiver, reflected a strict style while Mr. M showed relaxed tendencies. An entirely laid-back style of parenting may have been detrimental to mobilizing the children’s growth. However, given the family’s social circumstance, a strict approach may have been necessary to ensure the children achieved a higher quality of life than their parents. The harsher components of a strict parenting practices may have been mitigated by Mr. M’s ability to build meaningful relationships with his children and provide traditional affection and support. This is not to say that because Mrs. M used an authoritarian parenting style that she did not love her children. She most certainly did but
the way she expressed her affection was different than Mr. M’s. It is the balance of both of these styles that promoted growth in their children.

The strict pressure and focus on education and participation in activities was helpful for the children’s future. All children pursued secondary school where they followed a variety of interests such as art, economics, philosophy, and engineering. To this extent, all the children exceeded their parents’ educational and financial standards.

3.2 Generation Two: The Explicit Parent

3.2.1 History of the Explicit Parent

William’s childhood was fairly well adjusted. His academic records from the late 1920s, and early 1930s show that he was a good average student, socially regulated with no reported misbehaviours. He easily made friends, while successfully navigating the challenges of life. After completing high school, William finished 2 years of Victoria College at the University of Toronto before joining the army. While overseas in Britain, he attended a Khaki College (a post-secondary educational institution created for people coming back from war) where he studied ethics, economics, and philosophy.

William felt he had had enough educational opportunities and maintained a broader view of what education encompassed. Some would think of education as only happening within a formal institution such as school or university but William thought that getting an education was also possible by just conversing with others and learning from their experiences. However, this broader view of education was not demonstrated in his parenting of Jaclyn. She remembers that he was very explicit about the importance of doing well in school.
3.2.2 Explicitness in Education

William was very involved in the lives of his two daughters, Jaclyn and Justine. He has memories of both daughters loving their family pet dog and fighting about who got to walk him, and going on picnics to see things. William spoke especially highly of Justine, his step daughter who he raised as his own child. Justine was highly involved in track and field and William spent a lot of time interested in her achievements.

Jaclyn, William’s biological daughter, seemed to have played a subtler role in William’s life in terms of highlighting achievements. This may be because Jaclyn was not a star student and didn’t excel particularly at anything. Jaclyn distinctly remembers her father being direct and blunt about the importance of education and marks. Jaclyn says,

I wouldn’t get to the homework. And that was distressing for my father in particular because he really would have liked to have seen me … because he didn’t get to university until sort of, I think right after the war. He talked about a Kaki University but it’s like it held him back. Anyways he would’ve liked that I went to university and I did well. And I was the one in grade 13 who got like 60s. I was not an Ontario scholar…. He would say, what’s wrong with getting 100%. Well of course I was never close to 100% in anything. I occasionally got some better marks but I never did well. So in that sense, I think that was a big thing.

[In reference to bringing home a test or report] You could see that they were visibly upset because they expected better. The standard joke was my sister was really good at athletics and they considered her not so smart and she ended up doing a secretarial school and competing and did a number of you know Olympics and pan American games and stuff like that. But I was supposed to be the little brainy thing wearing glasses and do really well. That was my role and I flubbed it totally for the
parents. I think my dad felt it more than my mom but I think Because she probably had to listen to him be upset. So that was very difficult thing I think for them to accept me as much as it was upset for me to be that way (J. M., personal communication, November 6, 2014).

William did not address particular academic expectations for his children in the records but it is clear by Jaclyn’s excerpt that she really felt the pressure to perform well. Jaclyn internalized the subtle remarks to do well academically. Statements such as, “what’s wrong with getting 100%” and the standard joke that Jaclyn’s sister was really good at athletics and Jaclyn was supposed to be the “brainy” one really affected Jaclyn’s confidence in school and life. Jaclyn really thought that not doing well academically distressed her father in particular because he did not have the opportunity to do well in school. In contrast, William’s remarks about education suggest that he did, in fact feel like he got a good education. This indicates that either William vocalized these concerns for a particular purpose such as showing the importance of optimizing on educational experiences while they are available or that potentially he did not feel his education was sufficient. It is more likely that the former statement is true because of the economic situation of William’s family.

### 3.2.3 Context: Living in the Family Home

William’s family was not financially independent. Although they would have preferred to live in their own home, they were obligated to live in the family home for a variety of financial and obligatory reasons. Jaclyn remembers the pressures her parents felt from staying in the family home.

I knew that it was awkward for my parents. I know my mom would have loved to have had [her own home]. We would go out for drives on Sunday after church and go
out. You know, they’d be driving around looking at all the houses which they never moved to a house. I think money was some of the issue and the other issue was my father felt he had to stay and help the family. And this, I think, was verbally said to him as well as implied from his father. And it goes back to the other generation of the brother that assumed debt from the parents and never married and paid it off and lived in the family home. So it was a strong family tradition of, you know, sort of assuming and doing. (J. M., personal communication, November 6, 2014).

William felt a strong sense of responsibility to the family. Jaclyn described that in German culture, the oldest son was supposed to stay and help the family. Although William was not the oldest son, he was obliged to stay and help his parents, financially and with keeping the house, because William’s older brother, Alfred, was not capable. The Sunday drives after church to look at houses they could never afford elicited feelings of mild frustration and longing for something they could not have. This would have been especially difficult for Patti, William’s wife, because she was living with her in-laws she was living with and Jaclyn expresses how it was difficult for her mother.

William’s responsibility to the family was not the only thing keeping him in the family home. It also appears that he was not financially stable enough to afford living on his own. Living in the family home may have been a sacrifice that William made in order to be able to afford other luxuries for his family. For example, Jaclyn always felt well provided for and supported. When she wanted to take piano or violin lessons they were always available. It turns out that living in the family home allowed his nucleus family to become closer.
3.2.4 Adaption from Urgent to Explicit Parenting

Parenting practices are bound to change from one generation to the next. Different social, historical, cultural, and contextual factors play a role in this change. In the case of the M family, parenting went from very active with an underlying sense of urgency to explicitly vocalizing expectations, especially when it came to academics. Doing well in school was even more important than doing well in other aspects of life. However, William and Patti did not parent with the same sense of urgency as Mr. and Mrs. M did. This is likely due to the relieved economic and societal pressures of society as well as an altered view of what is really important.

While parenting, Mr. and Mrs. M experienced war and economic depression which may have contributed to their urgent parenting values. It was necessary for them to actively mobilize growth in their children so that their children could live better lives than their own. And this is what happened. William then embraced some of his parent’s parenting practices but, due to changing social circumstances, he was not forced to mobilize growth in the same way.

The explicitness of William and Patti’s parenting stems from historical, social, and environmental contexts. William was raised with strict, firm parents who expected him to behave a certain way. This type of parenting gave William a reference point for how he would approach parenting his own children. The influence of his wife, Patti, is unknown but it is obvious that she too would have influenced how her children were raised. Jaclyn and Justine, the daughters of William and Patti, were pressured to do well in school but also encouraged to follow their passions. This is evident by the strong support William gave Justine for her interest in athletics and Jaclyn for her interest in music. Jaclyn recalls,

The piano was my choice. I don’t remember choosing it, but I remember playing and I can still sit down and because of that I was able to read music… I guess fairly new they were having violins and the teacher of the school and I started to play and I never
played violin well. But they got me involved … they were very supportive and bought me a violin. You know and I played violin through public school and high school, not well but I could sit in the back and play. So therefore I was involved in orchestras and then I did percussion in a band in high school. That was important to me and they, they were very supportive and therefore the school shows and the choirs and stuff that my sister and I were in and very supportive that way. So that was nice (J. M., personal communication, November 6, 2014).

The support William and Patti gave their children to explore the interests that were important to them shows the ability to follow the needs of the child in a relaxed way. It also speaks to their access to resources. When Jaclyn wanted to take up the violin, her parents had the economic capability to buy her one. This was not the case when Mr. and Mrs. M were parenting their children.

William was an explicit parent in part because of how he was raised. He saw the benefits of pushing a child to do well in school because he had been expected to do well and he was successful. Unlike Mr. and Mrs. M, the stable nature of society and availability of resources allowed him to be more relaxed and gentle when raising his children. William also raised his children in a home with many other family members. Needing to be explicit about his expectations may have been an essential way to avoid confusion and communicate what he needed to. The explicitness of William’s parenting stems from a spillover effect of how he was parented in combination with responding to the children and the social context of the time.

3.2.5 Effects of the Explicit Parent

William and Patti were clear and vocal about their expectations for their children’s academic achievement. The way they communicated these expectations appear to have had
detrimental effects on Jaclyn’s academic self-esteem. This carried through to adulthood as evidenced in our discussions about schooling. Several times during our meetings, she mentioned how she was not good with words therefore was not able to express herself clearly. This certainly contradicted my view, which was that she was very expressive and detailed about her experiences.

There was an implied expectation that because her sister did well in athletics, Jaclyn was supposed to do well in school. When this wasn’t achieved, Jaclyn felt tense, anxious, and negative about schooling. These feelings lasted and are still prevalent in her adult life.

When Jaclyn had her son Jack, William still showed how much he valued education and intellect. William was fond of his grandson and spent time with him. To no-one’s surprise, William was especially interested in noting Jack’s intellect,

He started school before he was 2 years old. It’s one of those nursery schools attached to the public school… and he loves it… he’ll phone and you pick up the phone and he’ll say hello is my daddy there? You know or whatever. He’s very intelligent. He’s been doing that for quite a part of the year (Blatz, 1933).

William made an effort to consider and judge his grandson’s intellectual capabilities. Even though Jack was only two years old, William still showed approval and excitement at having such a bright grandson. The labelling of such a young child as intelligent is all in good faith. However, with Jaclyn it resulted in anxiety towards school which is something she still struggles with today.

Perhaps the explicit labelling of a child as smart or intelligent was a way of encouraging children to meet this expectation. For William, I believe it represented a compromise between his own upbringing, where his mother was very active in mobilizing growth in a time of war and depression, and the new context of economic stability and industrial growth.
Jaclyn’s insecurity about her ability to do well in academic areas began in her childhood experiences of school and carried through to adulthood, but perhaps surprisingly did not stop her from achieving higher education. She went to a school for nursing at Victoria College at the University of Toronto and is still working in the field of nursing. The ability to push past years of negative experiences around schooling was supported by other contextual aspects such as healthy relationships with her family.

3.2.5.1 Importance of Family Life

Apart from the high academic expectations imposed by William and Patti, Jaclyn had good relationships with her mother, father, and step-sister, Justine. For the majority of Jaclyn’s childhood, she lived in the “family home” which included her grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. M, Uncle Albert, Aunt Freddy, and Aunt Lucy. Jaclyn’s nuclear family was tight-knit.

We were on the 3rd floor in the house, in 2 rooms and a hall room which when you tell that to most people now they would be horrified! ‘Cause I slept in the same bedroom as my parents for 8 years. They were over here and I was over here, not a great distance but it seemed pretty big as a child. And then my sister was in the corridor, and then we had a room that was like our living room (J. M., personal communication, November 6, 2014).

While living in a home with so many other family members, they still had space to call their own. Living in such close quarters, coupled with living in a home with multiple family members had the potential to cause increased stress and conflict. However, her nuclear family seemed to function quite well. When there was conflict, the family had a process of dealing with it.
I was always considered the peacemaker. If my father was upset… both my parents would be quick to anger you know ‘bloody blue, bloody this’ da da da da that’s was as far as they went there was nothing else said. But then they would calm down, it wouldn’t be carried out for days or anything. It would be a short time but I was always, if my dad had had a “whoooo” [referring to a fight with Patti] … he’d go out and start fixing the car. Well then Jaclyn would be sent out to fix, to go out there and help him. So I would be the little helper and sort of go out and pass him tools or do stuff and we’d be together. And he would calm down and do what he had to do (J. M., personal communication, November 6, 2014).

This routine of controlling an argument before it got out of hand fostered care and consideration for others as well as healthy ways to manage a difficult situation. They learned quickly to rely on each other and to function as a separate unit within the larger context of the family. Despite living in a home with other family members that could theoretically lend a hand when needed, Jaclyn’s family received very little help. Jaclyn remembers her mother telling her that, “when I was a newborn… my mother said she got no help at all from anybody. She was going up and down 2 flights, well 3 flights of stairs to sort of, because we were upstairs and she was washing diapers down in the basement” (J. M., personal communication, November 6, 2014). Families typically rely on grandparents for some help raising their children. One would think being in the family home would further facilitate this natural supportive role but it didn’t seem to. The lack of support helped bond Jaclyn’s nuclear family closer, thus facilitating good relationships between members.

The tightly knit bond that Jaclyn’s nucleus family possessed was important because they were living in a home with other family members who lacked skills of self-control and calmness.
It was interesting though because there used to be a lot of arguments between my grandparents and Albert. And there would be yelling and screaming type arguments. And I remember this as a child because I can remember sitting on the stairs the steep stairs that came upstairs to where we lived. Sitting on the stairs and being alternately fascinated but scared like scared because of the screaming and what was going on and the words and stuff like that and I found it really scary. But also in trying to figure it out. So that was something that made me feel really discombobulated (J. M., personal communication, November 6, 2014).

This vivid memory speaks to the impact that listening to these fights had on Jaclyn. As a self-identified anxious child, the calmness of Jaclyn’s nuclear family helped protect her from some of the chaos that was also happening in her home. Jaclyn was able to use the peaceful communication skills that she learned from her parents to help her into adulthood.

This calmness helped bond William and Jaclyn beyond a typical father-daughter relationship. They both mention that they saw themselves as the “peacekeepers” in the family. Perhaps because they had similar personalities and demeanors, they felt a natural connection and were drawn closer to each other.

3.3 Generation Three: The Collaborative Parent

3.3.1 History of the Collaborative Parent

Jaclyn married James in 1969 when she was 21 years old. After being married for some time (Jaclyn jokes about being on a 5-year plan, and then a 10-year plan), they had their first and only son, Jack. Family was a big part of Jaclyn’s and James’ lives and their parents were thrilled and excited to hear they were having a baby.
Jaclyn describes pregnancy as a breeze but parenting as more difficult. She had worked as a labor and delivery nurse for many years. Despite all the knowledge she had, she says that parenting was very different! Jaclyn remembers her maternity leave as one of the few times she had been off work and recalled thoroughly appreciating Jack’s company.

So I enjoyed my time and I enjoyed him. I went back to work full time shifts when he was 2. And he was an interesting baby as he didn’t walk until he was 13 months but that was fine. He was a month behind. But he was very, very studying his hands and spatially you could see that he was getting concepts amazingly [I interpreted this to say that Jack was attentive and perceptive]. ‘Cause he’d just sit in his little walker and stuff and do stuff. And he was good we’d had fun … But he was a good kid. He was just a delight to be with (J. M., personal communication, December 3, 2014).

This excerpt shows Jaclyn’s relaxed, patient, yet conscious parenting. Due to Jaclyn’s experience as a labor and delivery nurse, she knew the “milestones” children needed to reach and by when. However, she was nonchalant about Jack not walking until he was 13 months old and attuned to what he was learning by doing something as simple as looking at his hand. There were many enjoyable parenting experiences for Jaclyn but also some difficult ones. Certain events in life can make the already challenging task of parenting more difficult. One of these situations would be divorce.

3.3.1.1 Impact of Divorce

Shortly after Jack was born, Jaclyn and James separated. This created a disruption in the family where all members were forced to adapt. Jack was two and a half at the time, so he had had little say in what he wanted and needed. But as Jack grew up, Jaclyn often protected and
supported Jack’s right to make his own decisions. This ensured that Jack felt nurtured and resulted in a good relationship between them.

Shared custody of Jack was not always easy for Jaclyn. There were two types of challenges – the demands of raising a child on your own, and the constant negotiations and collaborations with the other parent. Jaclyn consistently exhibited evidence of collaboration in tackling both of these challenges. Jaclyn describes some of her difficulties with Jack,

He was strong. A strong character and strong minded and he could be a little helligan [or a brat, someone who causes trouble] and he could play me, well. And I used to consult with somebody who was a child care person to try and figure out. And I think I mentioned one other time I, at one point I had a lock on his door just a drop lock, not a … in the door. And occasionally when he was being a total PR I would lock the door and just leave him and you know he would throw a few couple things around and then settle it out because he’d had his tantrum, unlock it … But most of the time, he could be strong willed but it would be a flash and then he would get over it. I would get over it and it would be fine. So those were the awkward times (J. M., personal communication, December 3, 2014).

Through the difficult times, Jaclyn continued to make careful, thoughtful decisions in regards to parenting her child and fostering good relationships. As a single parent she took precautions in consulting with a child care specialist to help her get through Jack’s tantrums. She was sensitive and knew putting a lock on the door was no longer acceptable but her honesty demonstrates her genuine character and awareness of her child’s well-being.

Divorce puts a strain on the whole family. Jaclyn showed time and time again that maintaining a good relationship with her son and his father was important in creating a healthy environment. Jaclyn and Jack’s father, James, were diligent about splitting the costs for Jack.
Jaclyn paid James when Jack was with him and visa versa. When Jack was a young child he lived with Jaclyn throughout the week and visited his father on alternate weekends. Jaclyn protected Jack from conflicts between herself and James.

There were days when I would come back to the cottage and I tend to be tardy on many occasions. Things would happen. And he [Jack] came back and we were late and his dad said, “Well don’t bring him now bring him in the morning. It’s too late now”. So I would, on a Monday morning, drive to Oakville and take him back to school and then go and do my work. So bare the punishment of being a bad mother but it wasn’t the bad mother of allowing Jack to get away with things. ... And I would try and cover him, [by saying] “You know your dad’s being a super PR [prick] but you know we have more time together! Isn’t this great”? You know play it that way ‘cause I didn’t want him hurt (J. M., personal communication, December 3, 2014).

Jaclyn did not want Jack to take the blame for his dad’s frustration about Jack’s lateness. Instead Jaclyn showed her excitement at having the opportunity to spend more time with him. As time went on, a new challenge arose as Jaclyn met her second husband Connor. He had two children from a previous marriage and so Jaclyn’s family grew.

3.3.1.2 A Blended Family

A family sometimes encounters changes to their structure. For example, when two people divorce, a new family may form. This is now a blended family which encompasses biologically related members as well as other non-biologically related individuals. Occasionally it is difficult to navigate the complexities of a blended family as a child now has two sets of families rather than just one. Parents and children often learn to operate in ways that are respectful, patient, and
show appreciation for all members of the family. This requires prioritization of what is most important and potentially involves making sacrifices to maintain healthy relationships.

Jaclyn’s collaborative philosophy is sustained right through the challenges of divorce and the establishment of a blended family. When Jaclyn re-married to Connor, he already had two children from a previous marriage. James, Jaclyn’s first husband, was also re-married to Barbra and they had two more children. Jack went from being an only child to having many siblings and new relationships.

Yeah, there’s 5 years between the two of them - 5 years between Brad and Nigel and 2 years between Brad and Jack. So they were, they got along splendidly so even though the brothers fought, the three of them were great. And Jack could be with Nigel who would be more intellectual, more… you know doing things and scientific stuff. They would be on that level. And Brad and Jack, the silly things who giggled all the time. Giggle, giggle, red faced, hysterical, funniness. And we got them together at the cottage because it made it easier. Because it was the boy’s grandparent’s cottage but they’d only been there, I guess two summers, for part of the summer when Jonathan started coming. So it wasn’t a territorial thing of coming to the house (J. M., personal communication, December 3, 2014).

The beginning of a blended family allowed Jack to form new relationships with his step-brothers. Jaclyn made sure this was done in a way that would make all children feel safe by paying special attention to the location of their gathering and also appreciating the unique rapport Jack had with each of his step-brothers. Jaclyn’s facilitation of the relationship between Jack and his step-brothers shows careful concern and respect for their boundaries.

This consideration for boundaries also required negotiation by Jaclyn when James did not want Jack to stay over at the cottage on his own.
Connor’s boys had a month [at the cottage]. I didn’t get a month but we got at least a week but James wouldn’t let me leave him there. He had to be with me or with him. He couldn’t be with his step father. He was pulling the command control and I jumped to it. Which was silly in a way. But Jack got along well with the boys and I think well with Connor. I don’t remember anything…. Connor was very, step-back [or laid back]. And I just remember they had a marvelous time at the cottage (J. M., personal communication, December 3, 2014).

Jaclyn describes James “pulling the command control” meaning that he was enforcing that Jack was not to be left alone with Connor. Although Jaclyn implies she was submissive by agreeing to this request, I believe that she was trying to maintain good relationships with everyone involved. Accommodating others’ requests is necessary and an important part of maintaining relationships. Those who are able to be more flexible in accommodating day-to-day requests are able to put core values at the forefront of their decisions. Jaclyn was one of these people who in this way consistently demonstrated her commitment to being a collaborative parent.

Jack lived primarily with his mother but frequently spent time with his father. When Jack was 9 years old, he told his mom that he wanted to go live primarily with his father. This is what Jaclyn recalls,

He had the daycare, went to school, then when he was 9.5 he decided he wanted to live with his dad. I didn’t realize he was thinking he’d try it for a year. Somehow that I don’t remember but he’s brought that up to me in the past. [How did you react when he told you that? And how did you feel?] I understood why he wanted to because he had a sister a half sister, who was about 2, Ellie and there was another baby on the way, who turned out to be Neil. So there were kids there and I was already involved with my
husband now, Connor and his 2 sons and we saw them on the weekend (J. M., personal communication, December 3, 2014).

Many parents would feel angry, confused, jealous, and hurt but Jaclyn was understanding. Even as she recalled Jack’s decision, there was no hint of resentment that he had wanted to go and live at his father’s house nor was there a power struggle to keep Jack somewhere he did not want to be. It is likely that Jaclyn’s ability to let go of Jack and allow him to make his own decision helped maintain their healthy relationship.

Jaclyn and Connor showed sensitivity to the needs of their step-children. Jack maintained a good relationship with his father, as did Connor’s children Nigel and Brad did with their mother. Neither Jaclyn nor Connor tried to replace other biological parent and this was key in ensuring the children respected them. Jaclyn remembers making a conscious decision about this.

I was always the adult friend. I did not try to be mother, because they had a mother who lived very close. They would even, the weekends they would come to us.

They slept over, maybe Brad slept over a couple times I don’t know whether Nigel did but they would usually go home after because they could just walk. And so, and I wasn’t about to try and be their mother because they had a very involved and caring mother.

There was no way I was going to go that route (J. M., personal communication, December 3, 2014).

There is respect and appreciation when Jaclyn talks about her step-children’s mother, Katie. The consideration that Jaclyn gives to Katie is reflective of Jaclyn’s value of family and the importance of positive communication with even more distant members of the family unit.

The children in this blended family were also well respected. There was a recognition and understanding from Jaclyn and Connor that the children in their blended family might need varying supports to adapt to this new situation. For the most part, Jaclyn describes the boys as
getting along very well. If anything, the two biological brothers would fight most! Jaclyn and Connor played an essential part in ensuring that all the children had a voice.

Nigel being 5 years older, I can remember one time when Connor and I went out, and Nigel must have been 13, 14, but we still got a babysitter because we didn’t think it was fair to Nigel, in a different house. He was over and we were going out, I guess on a Saturday. So we had, anyways a young woman and Nigel was enamored because it was an older girl he could be around (laughter) (J. M., personal communication, December 3, 2014).

Although Nigel was old enough to babysit Jack, Jaclyn and Connor were mindful about not putting him in an awkward situation. Being in a familiar, but different house than his own might have made Nigel feel uncomfortable. Also, putting children in charge of other children can be especially difficult in a blended family situation. Jaclyn and Connor made the responsible decision to hire a babysitter to avoid a power dynamic and to continue to foster nurturing relationships between the boys.

A blended family brings many challenges but also the opportunity to foster a familial relationship with people who are not biological relatives. This can be a delicate process as people develop and define their roles within the family system. However, if done thoughtfully, children can feel well supported and all family members can benefit from forming close family-like relationships.

### 3.3.2 Education

Jaclyn was collaborative in all aspects of Jack’s life including his education. Previous generations showed a strict or explicit parenting style but Jaclyn, consistent with her own educational history, demonstrated a focus on relationships. When Jaclyn was a child, her parent’s
explicit directives to do well in school highly affected Jaclyn’s self-esteem and her attitude towards school. Her memories of being anxious and not being able to complete her homework influenced her to the point that she abandoned any strict, explicit parenting that had occurred in previous generations and consciously adopted a supportive role.

James had a very different experience with education, resulting in different beliefs about parenting and education. Jaclyn describes James’ background,

And James was denied education because he came over as a child speaking Sicilian. So he got put into technical stuff, I’m giving you the history. Technical stuff and learned to build aquariums when he wanted to be in doing an academic course but he was always steered, you know, can you sing? Because Italians sing, he couldn’t. He did do gymnastics and he did fantastically. I didn’t know him at that time. And he eventually got over to academics into grade 13 and I think he did fairly well. I know the stresses that were placed on him as the son of an immigrant family.

So he got in and got in the back door through, doing childcare in Arrowtown. Regional Centre. [He] did a course there and then started to work in a clinic teaching doctors and people doing their PhD and stuff and then got into teaching kids at Centennial etc. etc. So he had that sorta thing. So I think he might have had a different way of approaching Jack (J. M., personal communication, December 3, 2014).

James’ experiences as an immigrant to a new country shows the barriers a newcomer can face. James persevered through all obstacles to reach a satisfying career. These experiences of being denied an education influenced his parenting practices and attitude about what Jack should accomplish. In the last line of the excerpt, Jaclyn suggests that Jaclyn James may have had an alternate and perhaps more explicit way of showing Jack the importance of education. Jaclyn goes on to describe this. “He [James] might have pressured Jack a bit more and I think because
of the expectation was there because he knew he was bright. And so he might have been encouraging him more. But Jack was always a good student and seemed happy” (J. M., personal communication, December 3, 2014).

### 3.3.3 Adaption from Explicit to Collaborative Parenting

Jaclyn’s arrival to a collaborative parent results from an accumulation of her experiences, both as a child and within the societal environment of the time she parented Jack. As described previously, Jaclyn had a very anxious experience in school and the pressure from her parents did not help. Her nervousness got in the way of her learning and she internalized this feeling to a point where she wanted to make sure Jack did not experience these same feelings. Jaclyn abandoned all aspects of the strict and explicit parenting.

The previous generations were characterized by an urgent parent in generation one and an explicit parent in generation two. As mentioned in the introduction, these styles are not mutually exclusive. Both of these generations exhibited some form of care and genuine interest in a relationship with their children. Thus, Jaclyn’s parenting style is not completely unique. In constructing and interpreting her experiences with her grandparents and parents, Jaclyn incorporated what she felt was important into her parenting approach.

Jaclyn also grew up and benefitted from the urgency and explicitness of the previous generational parenting styles. When Jack was born, Jaclyn was a third generation Torontonian. Jaclyn and James had their own house and were middle class citizens. This social context is significantly different than that of generation one (Mr. and Mrs. M) and generation two (William and Patti). Mr. and Mrs. M were immigrants to Canada, doing everything in their power to promote growth in the following generation. William and Patti lived in Mr. and Mrs. M’s home and raised their children there. Although they had made economic gains, they were still not able
to move out of the family home. However, by generation three (Jaclyn and James), they were living in their own house. This, along with Jaclyn’s past experience with school and her parents, helped to shape Jaclyn into a collaborative parent.

Jaclyn also grew up to be a nurse. This profession requires empathy, patience, and general care and kindness for people’s well-being. Given Jaclyn’s chosen profession, it is likely that her natural characteristics and personality lend more towards collaboration.

In each family, there are often two or more parents who act as important interpersonal influence. Each parent typically takes on distinct relationships and parenting styles with their children. For example, Jaclyn took on a very nurturing role with Jack, whereas James had a stricter approach. This shows that parents can have individual differences in their parenting values which may be valuable to the intergenerational transmission of values. When a child is exposed to a combination of distinct parenting styles it may raise the probability that the child connects with some aspects of their parents’ approaches and carries it forward to the next generation.

3.3.4 Effects of the Collaborative Parent

Jaclyn continues to have strong relationship with Jack and her descriptions show her understanding and appreciation of what he needs. Since high school, Jack has lived with depression and Jaclyn has balanced attentive care with giving him the space he needs. She gets together with Jack every couple of weeks and in between she tries to check in. She describes,

No often it’s hard to get a hold of him. He has the phone turned off and I think he should at work. I’ve learned to text and so he sometimes will respond to that. But when he goes into one of his blue funks he just goes underground and doesn’t respond and it
isn’t until I badger him, politely, that he’ll come up for air and we get together (J. M., personal communication, November 20, 2014).

Sometimes it is difficult to understand someone who is in a different mental state. Jaclyn is very gentle in her approach to caring for Jack which results in a good, trusting relationship. Vital to coping, these kinds of strong social connections are especially important for anyone living with mental health difficulties.

Jaclyn’s supportiveness may have been an essential ingredient in Jack’s finishing university.

So I just tried to be supportive and supportive of what he chose. With the music and he was not into team sports but into the running and his choices for University and stuff. University was a bad scene for him because he got depressed and wanted to leave even when he was doing his BA. He did the 4 year honours and did mathematics as well as computer science and did very well. He persevered and sorta went part time and I think, I guess he stretched it out to 5 years (J. M., personal communication, December 3, 2014).

Additional pressure, such as Jaclyn received when she was in school, may have put too much stress on Jack to finish his degree. Instead, he was well supported by Jaclyn and able to adapt and make appropriate choices for his situation.

The same characteristics that made Jaclyn a collaborative parent - care, patience, understanding, and positivity - are the same features that allow her to continue having good relationships with other members of her family. Jaclyn has maintained a relationship with her step sister, Justine who now lives in British Columbia. She says she talks to her on a weekly basis and makes trips every couple of years to see her and her family.
Jaclyn also highly values relationships with her step-children, Nigel and Brad and their families. Although she is not able to see them as often as she would like to, she expresses that this is a different time and that they have their own lives to live. She therefore never pressures them to feel as if they have to see her.

Now I’ve got the blended family of our 3 boys but the eldest boy we don’t see a lot of them. They’re just blocks away, but they’re busy. And you understand how busy people are and they’re busy with their daughter and doing things. I feel badly because in the summer we got quite close to our granddaughter, but we haven’t seen in weeks. You know just because it’s, we just sort of don’t do it. So there isn’t a lot of family get together at all now. We ended up, we didn’t even celebrate Thanksgiving together because Colin and I were at the cottage. The kids were going to the other parents, there’s always the other parents to consider who were here as well. Everyone is in the one spot…

So they’re into their own existence. And the middle boy, Brad and his wife Abby, she’s Italian. So every time you turn around there’s an event- a shower, a wedding, a this, a that, a godchild, which is you know good for them. They enjoy it. And Brad is good with it so it’s nice to see.

So you know they’ll come over for dinners. But often it’s like dinner is going to be at 5 o’clock, well we’ll be over at 4:30. And dinner has to be finished because Eden has to be home for bed. So there’s no, sort of a let’s bop over for a visit (J. M., personal communication, November 20, 2014).

Jaclyn’s ability to take perspective and understand the demands of life is essential to her wide range of successful relationships. This excerpt shows Jaclyn’s flexibility and patience in having to share the members of her family. She appreciates the relationship she has with each member while also recognizing that they too have other family members to see.
It is clear Jaclyn’s collaborative attitude are shown through Jaclyn’s parenting style with Jack and the relationships she maintains with other members of her family. The characteristics defining her as a collaborative parent extend to being a caring, loving, and patient person.
Chapter 4
Discussion

4 Summary Overview

Parenting values are adapted over time and strongly connected to the type of relationships fostered in context. Given that humans are ever-changing and always interacting with the environment, the way in which values are adapted is strongly correlated to the individual experience. These experiences include people, relationships, and historical, social, and cultural contexts. The determination of whether and how a value is transmitted is dependent on the way in which a parent expresses the value and also the way the individual interacts with it. A good experience often leads to transmission of the value, but a negative one may result in either an adaption or even a complete rejection of the value.

As stated in the introduction, beliefs are different from values are in that beliefs are fairly consistent global perceptions about how the world functions and values change based on current demands of the time. Beliefs are influenced by larger societal and cultural contexts where values are more particular to individual contexts such as families.

I explored one family over three generations to give insight into the complex way in which people reconstruct values to fit their lives. I used a combination of archival data gathered in the 1920s through the Regal Road study, and conducted interviews with one woman, the child of a family who participated in the Regal Road study. In analyzing the data, clear themes of the value of parenting and education emerged. Each generation was characterized a philosophy of parenting that developed in response to the context in which they lived.

Three distinct parenting attitudes were present. Generation One was characterized by the “Urgent Parent”. This was shown through Mr. and Mrs. M’s involvement and motivation to
mobilize growth in the children’s everyday lives. Mrs. M was the primary caregiver of the children and her efforts to ensure her children were noticed in society were clear. Mr. M financially and emotionally provided for his children. The combination of Mrs. M’s urgency and Mr. M’s more laid-back demeanor led to William, of the second generation, becoming an “Explicit Parent”. William and Patti incorporated some of Mrs. M’s strictness and Mr. M’s easygoing attitude into their parenting. William was explicit about his values on doing well in school but also actively supported his children’s interests by giving them some autonomy over their choice of hobbies. The element of choice and independence was not present in generation one but by generation 3, characterized by the “Collaborative Parent”, the autonomy of the child was fully respected. Jaclyn gave her son, Jack, the freedom to make decisions as a child and supported him through those choices.

By following the interactions and changing contexts of each generation, a great appreciation for the complexity of transmission and adaptation is gained. This family shows the plasticity of humans and their ability to adapt values over time and the importance of relationship and context when thinking about the transmission of values.

4.1 Context – Physical and Sociocultural Elements

Context encompasses both the physical environment and sociocultural elements. According to the life space model, the physical environment consists of housing, living and play space, and neighborhood composition; and sociocultural elements include socio-economic status, language, norms and values, and reference groups. Each component uniquely influences the transmission of values on parenting and education.

In many ways the children of each generation in the M family were influenced by their family habitus. This goes beyond conscious forms of being to also encompass practices and
routines embedded in everyday life and relationships. Each era experienced a change in available resources and a shift in parenting values and practices. Members of the M family were uniquely influenced by this change as evident by the transformation of values on parenting and education over time.

In generation one, their choice of parenting practices may have been influenced by their low socioeconomic status. Having just immigrated to Canada, Mr. and Mrs. M began to establish a new life for their family. They demanded and mobilized growth in their children by being involved in their schooling, seeking expert advice, and making sure their children were recognized. In addition to being immigrants, they parented in a time of war and economic depression, adding to their enthusiastic interest in having their children succeed.

Mr. and Mrs. M were also being influenced by the broader context of raising children in the 1920s. In Canada, the 1920s was a time where people were beginning to focus on the development of children. In particular, mental health was at the forefront of the public health movement. This was ever present in Mr. and Mrs. M’s lives as their children attended Regal Road Public School where research was being carried out on how to identify exceptional children. The presence of the research team may have further motivated the family to encourage their children to be successful.

As the context changed, so did their parenting practices. Generation Two showed more relaxed yet still strict parenting style. William’s family continued to struggle economically as evidenced by having to live in the “family home” with his parents and most of his siblings. However, it appears a cultural influence obligated William to take responsibility for the family home finances. Jaclyn, William’s daughter, explains that in German culture, the first born male is supposed to take a leadership role for their parents. In the M family, the first-born was not capable of doing this so William took on this role.
William and Patti parented in the 1950s when Canada was full of economic growth and promoted the development of the whole person. After WWII, various industries began developing quickly. The emphasis on survival diminished as people began living more comfortable lives. This has implications for the ways parents interacted with their children. As the sociocultural demands changed, so did the parent-child relationship. Parents no longer had to urgently worry about mobilizing growth in their children. Instead, they were more free to attend to children’s needs as autonomous humans. The combination of social, cultural, and historical change shifted William and Patti’s parenting towards a more child-centered focus.

Generation Three is characterized by a more stable context. Economically, Jaclyn and her family were able to live in their own home without any assistance. Jaclyn emphasizes relationships, making it evident that this was a significant contributor to her parenting decisions. Living in a multigenerational home may have implicitly taught Jaclyn the value of family and relationships. Jaclyn witnessed positive relationships between William and Mr. and Mrs. M and between William and his siblings. This physical structure may have influenced Jaclyn’s emphasis on maintaining good relationships.

The physical and sociocultural environment play a significant role in the transmission of values on parenting and education over generations. The life space model helps contextualize the family habitus by situating parents and children within their family environment. As evident by the M family, there are physical and sociocultural forces at play when influencing the transmission of values. By using family habitus as a frame, we are able to detect both the explicit and implicit aspects of transmission.

4.2 The Individual – Interpersonal and Internal States

The other two quadrants of the life space model include interpersonal (temperament and relationships) and internal states (health, self-esteem, quality of life, and a sense of well-being).
From the moment a child is born, they begin to influence the world around them. This influence is often seen in the relationships a child forms with their parents. As detailed in relational developmental systems theory, children have agency and impact on their own lives and the lives of people around them. The result of a bi-directional process where parents influence their children but children also affect their parents is a transformative process where values on parenting and education are adapted over generations.

There are certain interactions that can help children welcome and accept a particular parenting values and others that may lead to a rejection of that value. As the parent-child relationship changes so do perspectives on what is important for the next generation and these are integrated into parenting practices.

The M family shows interesting patterns of acceptance and rejection of parenting practices based on their relationships. Mr. and Mrs. M’s “urgent” parenting style was rooted in values of mobilization for change. They valued education as a means to provide their children with economic opportunities. Mrs. M was in charge of the children and home and her parenting style was strict and authoritative. Although now this style may be seen as harsh, it worked well for William in terms of education and emotional stability. He did well in school and easily overcame challenges. He also had a strong relationship with his father who made an effort to be involved in his children’s lives. Mr. M’s primary role was to financially provide for the family but he also fulfilled an important emotional role for William. William recalls that they would go out and do things on the weekend and remembers being fairly similar in personality to his father. The connection to his father, in combination with thriving based on his mother’s authoritative style led William to adapt many of his parent’s parenting values.

William incorporated some of his parents’ strictness while also adopting a more child-centered approach to parenting. He set high educational expectations for Jaclyn, while continuing
to support her interests. William was a strong male role model for Jaclyn and provided emotional support. Despite Jaclyn’s anxiety towards education and the pressures from her father to succeed, their positive relationship allowed Jaclyn to excel in school and in life.

Jaclyn’s values shifted from the previous generation’s focus on strictness to values that centered around maintained relationships. In fact, Jaclyn chose a nursing career which requires high empathetic and relational skills. Given her strong relationship with her father and her experience living and navigating relationships in the family home, it is not surprising she chose a career in nursing.

These experiences supported her development as a collaborative parent. She followed her child, Jack’s, interests and allowed him to develop at his own speed. Despite Jack’s busy childhood, shuffling between households because his parents divorced early, Jaclyn always ensured that their relationship was preserved. As Jack became a teenager and young adult, Jaclyn was able to trust Jack to make his own decisions about where he wanted to live, where he wanted to go to school, and the relationships he wanted to form. The result of her collaborative approach is a strong and lasting relationship with Jack who is naturally more reserved and introverted.

The M family shows how important relationships are in transmitting parenting values. Each generation showed, positive or negative feelings about particular values. From Generation One to Generation Two, the the importance of education was highly promoted. This worked for William who seemed to simply adopt this value. However, when William tried to impose this value onto his daughter, Jaclyn, it was actively rejected. This is evidence of the bi-directionality of a relationship. Jaclyn was more sensitive to the process by which William tried to impose this value and ended up rejecting it and placing emphasis on relationships. A greater perceptiveness and responsiveness to Jaclyn’s unique way of interpreting the world around her may have increased the likelihood of transmission.
There is a value that was clearly emphasized over each generation. It is the importance placed on family. Each generation shows sacrifices were made in order to further their children’s lives. In Generation One, Mr. and Mrs. M show complete involvement in their children’s lives by going above and beyond in order to mobilize their growth. Mrs. M in particular was active in seeking advice from educational experts, attending meetings, writing to teachers, and contacting newspapers to ensure her children were noticed.

Generation Two, William and Patti, show a commitment to their family by staying in the “family home”, partly out of economic necessity but also out of duty. William and Patti showed their commitment to the value of family by living in the family home until Mr. and Mrs. M passed showing a great commitment and value of family.

Finally, in Generation Three, Jaclyn shows her ability to manage complex family relationships. She divorced when her son was two years old and navigated co-parenting while forming a new family. Jaclyn protected her relationships by being flexible, respectful, kind, and empathetic. She speaks positively about all of the people in her life and appreciates their experiences and points of view. These values have resulted in a good relationship with everyone in her life.

4.3 Individuals and Context Influence Transmission

The individual relationships and varying contexts affects the transmission of values over generations. Individual and context both contribute to the individual’s internal states and interpersonal relationships and the physical and sociocultural environment. This interaction is what creates interesting and dynamic responses to the transmission of values on parenting and education.

A clear example of the individual/context interaction is represented by the M family’s socioeconomic progress and the impact on the parent-child relationship throughout generations.
Different social backgrounds support distinct parenting practices (Kohn, 1963). This study shows how one family moves through different socioeconomic levels and as a result, how their parenting practices are accommodated through varying challenges and contexts experienced by the individuals. For example, generation one is working class and encompass values around mobilization for economic growth. Working-class parents are more likely to maintain traditional ways of parenting (Kohn, 1963). This is consistently shown in generation one as they aimed to propel their children forward by being highly involved and controlling the children’s recreational and schooling lives. This type of strictness continued to generation two. Although generation two was more economically established, they could not afford their own house and were still considered working class. Generation three is when we see a significant change in socioeconomic status and parenting values. According to Kohn (1963), middle-class parents are more likely to change techniques more frequently based on current expert advice. Jaclyn shows that she frequently sought out experts in the field of child development to guide her parenting. She is also aware that the advice she received when she was parenting, is different than the advice given to parents now.

Situating this research in the relational developmental systems theory urges others to think about parenting as a dynamic process where human development changes as it interacts and influences its environment. The adaptation of values cannot be studied without the consideration of the interaction.

### 4.4 Limitations

The archival data brings a richness and depth to this study that would otherwise not be possible. Decades of artifacts were collected and used to analyze the patterns of parenting throughout generations. Although the archives provide an abundance of significant findings, I encountered some limitations.
The original data was gathered as part of the Regal Road Study in the 1920s. The purpose of the Regal Road Study was to explore mental health in children and families and identify maladaptive behaviour. The school (Regal Road) was the central means of collecting the data. Archives from Generation One includes notes and observations from teachers and principals, report cards of students, letters from parents, newspaper articles, and photographs. Despite the vast amount of artifacts collected, parents were not asked direct questions about their parenting and educational values. Using the records, I had to infer Generation One’s values based on the information provided.

This was also true when analyzing the parenting values of Generation Two. In the 1980’s a study was conducted by the Life Span Adaptation Projects to follow-up on families who had originally participated in the original 1920s study. Here, they did directly interview and ask questions generally about their lives and well-being. Although some questions were asked about parenting, a focus on values would have yielded more direct information.

Due to the limitations in exploring archival data, I was not able to explore the relationship between parents. Participants tended to focus on their biological lineage and did not talk about the other parent. Both parents and the quality of their relationship has a significant impact on how children are raised. More comprehensive information about this family may have given insights into the impact of the relationship between mother and father.

An exploration of a second family for comparison to the M family would have allowed me to validate the similarities and identify differences. Despite the complex interaction between person and context, there are still patterns seen in human development. A comparison of two families would have been an engaging way to establish patterns of adaptation.
4.5 Next Steps

This work provides a comprehensive story of how one family’s values on education and parenting changes through time. Often single snapshot of a phenomenon is used to explain human behaviour. However, a long exposure shot allows people to see the complex change and adaptation processes of the human experience. This study has shown the challenges and development of parenting and educational values over time and the importance of relationship in the adaptation of values.

Human beings demonstrate plasticity and agency throughout life. An examination of the M family shows that having at least one caring relationship leads to growth and well-being. This has significant implications for the role parents play in a child’s life. From a relational developmental systems framework, there are many environmental demands that are at play in parenting. Reducing long-term stressful experiences for parents will allow them the time and space to develop healthy relationships.

Although humans are adaptive, not people change in a way that fosters well-being. For parents who maintain maladaptive parenting practices, workshops and resources can be put in place to ensure these practices change for the benefit of the parents and child. Program specific interventions must be created with a careful examination of the individual context including history and culture. This will allow for a more supported program.

The implications of this research extend beyond parents to other people who work with children. Children in Canada spend, at minimum, 7 hours a day in school meaning that teachers can play an essential role in children’s lives. They are in a position to develop meaningful relationships with students, which in turn can positively influences students’ growth. This needs to be a fundamental component of being a teacher. Much of the teaching profession is focused on
meeting curricular expectations in all subject areas. In addition to these expectations, a focus on relationships may yield positive effects on both children’s academics and overall well-being.

The fundamental beliefs in which this study was grounded provide a positive, every-changing, dynamic outlook on life. An examination of this intergenerational family sheds light on the intricate qualitative changes that emerge across the life span and the resilience and on-going adaptive capacity of individuals.
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Appendices

Appendix A: Letter to Participants

(printed on u of t letterhead)

(Date)

Hello (name),

I am a graduate of the MA Child Study and Education program at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto and my supervisor is Dr. Richard Volpe, a Professor in the Department of Applied Psychology and Human Development.

I am conducting a research study which involves interviewing students who attended Regal Road School or their offspring to gain a greater understanding of parenting practices and patterns of adaptation through time. I believe that you are one of the children of a student who went to Regal Road School and would truly appreciate the opportunity to talk to you about various things in your life such as your beliefs about child rearing, what you remember about how you were raised by your parents, and how family played a role in your life.

All information will be confidential, including any identifiable information such as names, addresses etc. Participation in this study is completely voluntary and therefore you will have the freedom to withdraw from the study at any point. When the project is completed the results will be shared with you if you’d like.

I am happy to answer any outstanding questions you may have and I will be calling you in the near future to discuss possible participation in this study. In the mean time, if you have any questions, comments or concerns please feel free to e-mail me at the address below. Thank you!

Sincerely,

Larisa Lam
Project Investigator
Department of Applied Psychology and Human Development, OISE/University of Toronto
larisa.lam@mail.utoronto.ca
Appendix B: Written Consent for Participation

Written Consent

“I acknowledge that the research procedures described in the form titled “Informed Letter” have been explained to me and that any questions that I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. As well, the potential harms and discomforts have been explained to me and I also understand the benefits of participating in the research study. I know that I may ask now, or in the future, any questions that I have about the study. I have been assured that no information will be released or printed that would disclose my identity without my permission unless required by law. I understand that I will receive a copy of this signed consent. I understand that participation is voluntary and I can withdraw at any time.”

I hereby consent to take part in this research.

Name_________________________ Signature_________________________

Date_________________________

The people who may be contacted about this research are:

Larisa Lam Richard Volpe
larisa.lam@mail.utoronto.ca richard.volpe@utoronto.ca

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant please contact:

The Office for Research Ethics
ethics.review@utoronto.ca
416-946-3273

“I agree that the information gathered in this study can be used for future data analysis as long as my personal information (i.e. name) is not used.”

Signature_________________________
Appendix C: Questions for Participants

1) What do you remember about your parents or grandparents and their beliefs about child rearing?

2) How does family play a role in your life?

3) How was conflict handled in your family?

4) How were feelings expressed in your family?

5) What are your parenting practices?
Appendix D: Genogram of the M Family