

Parenting in Tooele County: A Study of Nine Tooele Parents

Emil M. Therianos

Westminster College

Lightward Bound

Author Note

Emil M. Therianos, Student, Master of Arts in Community Leadership, Westminster College, Salt Lake City, Utah (2018-2020)

Emil M. Therianos, Lightward Bound, Tooele, Utah (2020-Present)

Donations from the following Tooele businesses helped support this research: Vorwaller Homestead and R.V. Park, Rosewood Dental, and the Tooele Wal-Mart.

All correspondence regarding this report may be addressed to the following e-mail address:
emil-01@lightwardbound.org

Published May 2022

ABSTRACT

PURPOSE: This study was conducted in Tooele County, Utah to begin to understand the nature of parenting in the county. It sought to discover the perceptions, attitudes, beliefs, etc. of nine parents in the county regarding children, raising children, and learning how to do it. The study also intended to consider how these attitudes and beliefs compare with findings in the research literature. Ultimately, the goal for Lightward Bound is to use this and future research to assist leaders to optimize parenting in the county.

LITERATURE REVIEW: The literature reviewed as part of this study strongly suggested that there are associations between parenting styles and various outcomes for children. Authoritative parenting has been linked to the lowest likelihood of internalizing problems, such as depression and anxiety, and externalizing problems, such as delinquency and substance abuse. This style of parenting involves being supportive and responsive to children, setting boundaries, monitoring children's activities while allowing an appropriate level of autonomy, and ensuring accountability, often through positive or appropriate negative consequences.

METHODS: This exploratory, qualitative research was conducted with parents who were currently raising children in Tooele County using two interviews and a focus group. A total of nine parents participated and shared their views. All conversations that were part of the study were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed to discover common themes among the parents' views.

FINDINGS: The study revealed five key findings. 1) The parents had positive views of children, took their role as parent seriously, and were concerned for the future of their children. 2) Each parent manifested an understanding of the authoritative parenting style and seemed to follow it for raising their children. 3) While the parents seemed to be broadly in agreement on following the authoritative parenting style, there was no consensus on what leads children to

develop “personal integrity,” meaning that they would tend to make acceptable choices without supervision by people in authority. 4) Each parent seemed to recognize limits or boundaries that a parent shouldn’t cross, particularly regarding the use of “discipline.” 5) There were mixed views on learning how to raise children. All parents seemed to draw on the experiences of other parents (their own or others they knew), but some sought out additional, more professional, parenting knowledge, while others expressed some mistrust about those sources.

DISCUSSION: Three of the five key findings have positive implications for the children of the parents who participated in this study. Positive views about children, limits on parental actions, and using the authoritative parenting style each are likely to contribute positively to the lives of these children. The finding about consensus on parenting style, but no consensus on what builds personal integrity and good values in children says more about the culture than the parents. There may not be any consistent societal message about how children grow up to be good people. The finding suggesting mistrust of parenting research and professional information suggests that science has not earned the respect of some parents in the area of parenting. If parents don’t adopt the best information from accurate parenting sources, they may be left only with what parents themselves can observe, which generally will reveal only the more immediate effects of parental actions, leaving long-term effects unknown. This could unknowingly lead to preventable negative outcomes for some children. It may therefore be imperative to educate all parents universally on the best parenting information and outcomes.

The county should take intentional steps to increase the amount of sound parenting information that is available to parents and encourage its utilization with their children. Ultimately, our goal should be to make knowledge and examples of good parenting pervasive throughout the community. A few additional recommendations are given.

The main limitations of this study were the small number of participants, the potential bias that may be present because half of the participants were drawn from a parenting class, and some questions that may have artificially increased focus of parents on the authoritative parenting style.

Additional qualitative and quantitative research will be essential to fully assess the nature of parenting in Tooele County. The data from such further research are necessary for the county to make the best choices for optimizing the county's parenting and outcomes for our children.

DEDICATION

The research that I conducted and this report of my findings are dedicated to the children of Tooele County and to those who care about them. Those children include many in whose classes I substituted over the years; some of those are adults now. The children of Tooele also include my grandchildren. My hope is to help ensure the brightest futures for all our children.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many thanks to those who helped make this study and report possible. The following are some whose support was most significant:

The parents who agreed to participate in this study; without them there could be no study.

Professors in the Westminster College School of Education and other staff who guided and aided in the development of this study.

Tooele County School District, which gave approval to access facilities and personnel for the study.

Jon Gossett of Life's Worth Living Foundation who diligently worked with me to help me meet requirements for my degree program.

The following local businesses that willingly contributed financially to the study:
Vorwaller Homestead & R.V. Park, Rosewood Dental, and the Tooele Wal-Mart.

Members of my family who gave various forms of support as I spent countless hours over many months reading, writing, researching and studying.

Many other unnamed and unseen people behind the scenes who kept services going, such as electricity and Internet access—to whom we all owe some gratitude.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TITLE PAGE	i
ABSTRACT.....	ii
DEDICATION.....	v
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	vi
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	vii
TABLE OF FIGURES.....	xiv
CHAPTER I: TOPIC AND PURPOSE	1
Identifying the Problem.....	1
Purpose of the Study	4
Root Causes.....	5
Significance.....	7
CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW	12
Parenting Dimensions and Styles.....	13
Internalizing Problems	15
Externalizing Problems	16
Aggression.....	16
Delinquency & Anti-social Behavior	17
Callous-Unemotional Traits	17
Other Externalizing Problems	17
Parenting Education Programs	18
Final Words.....	19
CHAPTER III: METHODS.....	22
Participants	24

Methods Employed	27
Gathering Data.....	27
Analysis	29
Ethical Concerns	30
Challenges	32
Validity and Credibility.....	32
CHAPTER IV: FINDINGS	37
Views About Children.....	37
Positive Views About Children – Evidence	38
Sally	38
John.....	38
David.....	38
Tom	38
Serenity	39
Nancy.....	39
Jerry.....	39
Nathaniel	39
Carma.....	40
Further Considerations.....	40
Serious About Role as Parent – Evidence	41
Sally	41
John.....	42
David.....	42
Tom	43
Serenity	44
Nancy.....	44
Jerry.....	45
Nathaniel	46
Carma.....	46

Further Considerations..... 47

Concerned for the Future of Their Children - Evidence..... 48

 Sally 48

 John..... 48

 David..... 49

 Tom..... 49

 Serenity 49

 Nancy 50

 Jerry..... 51

 Nathaniel..... 51

 Carma..... 52

 Further Considerations..... 52

Views on Parenting..... 53

 Authoritative Parenting..... 53

 Sally 56

 Relationship/supportiveness..... 56

 Example/modeling 56

 Setting boundaries, limits, expectations..... 57

 Autonomy..... 57

 Monitoring..... 58

 Negative consequences 58

 Positive consequences 59

 John..... 59

 Relationship/supportiveness..... 60

 Example/modeling 60

 Setting boundaries, limits, expectations..... 61

 Autonomy..... 61

 Monitoring..... 62

 Negative consequences 62

 Positive consequences 63

 David..... 63

Relationship/supportiveness.....	63
Example/modeling	64
Setting boundaries, limits, expectations.....	65
Autonomy.....	66
Monitoring.....	66
Negative consequences	67
Positive consequences	68
Tom	68
Relationship/supportiveness.....	68
Example/modeling	69
Setting boundaries, limits, expectations.....	70
Autonomy.....	70
Monitoring.....	71
Negative consequences	72
Positive consequences	72
Serenity	73
Relationship/supportiveness.....	73
Example/modeling	74
Setting boundaries, limits, expectations.....	75
Autonomy.....	75
Monitoring.....	76
Negative consequences	76
Positive consequences	77
Nancy	78
Relationship/supportiveness.....	79
Example/modeling	80
Setting boundaries, limits, expectations.....	81
Autonomy.....	81
Monitoring.....	82
Negative consequences	82
Positive consequences	83

Jerry.....	84
Relationship/supportiveness.....	84
Example/modeling	85
Setting boundaries, limits, expectations.....	85
Autonomy.....	86
Monitoring.....	86
Negative consequences	87
Positive consequences	87
Nathaniel	88
Relationship/supportiveness.....	88
Example/modeling	88
Setting boundaries, limits, expectations; autonomy; monitoring; negative consequences	89
Positive consequences	90
Carma.....	90
Relationship/supportiveness.....	91
Example/modeling	91
Setting boundaries, limits, expectations.....	92
Autonomy.....	92
Monitoring.....	93
Negative consequences	93
Positive consequences	94
Further Considerations.....	95
Developing Personal Integrity.....	97
Views in Common	97
Sally and John	98
David	99
Serenity.....	99
Nancy	100
Jerry.....	100
Carma	101

Tom and Nathaniel	101
Differing Views on Child Personal Integrity	101
Sally	102
John	102
David	103
Tom	104
Serenity	105
Nancy	106
Jerry	106
Carma	107
Further Considerations	107
Parental Boundaries	109
Sally	109
John	110
David	110
Tom	111
Serenity	111
Nancy	112
Jerry	112
Carma	113
Further Considerations	113
Learning to Parent	114
Sally	115
John	117
David	118
Tom	120
Serenity	122
Nancy	122
Jerry	123
Nathaniel	124
Carma	125

Further Considerations 126

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION..... 128

Implications..... 128

 Finding: Views on Children 128

 Finding: Authoritative Parenting..... 128

 Finding: Personal Integrity 128

 Finding: Parental Boundaries 130

 Finding: Learning to Parent..... 130

Recommendations 131

Study Limitations 133

Future Research..... 133

Personal Reflections..... 135

Lightward Bound..... 137

REFERENCES 138

APPENDIX A – RECRUITMENT MATERIALS 145

APPENDIX B – CONSENT FORM 146

APPENDIX C – ORIGINAL GUIDE FOR FOCUS GROUPS (Used for interviews)..... 148

APPENDIX D – REVISED GUIDE FOR FOCUS GROUPS (Used for focus group) 152

TABLE OF FIGURES

Figure 1 – Enhanced Authoritative Parenting Model54

CHAPTER I: TOPIC AND PURPOSE

How does it feel to be afraid to ask your parent questions about life? What does it feel like to be hit with a wooden spoon on your behind? How does it feel to hear your parent say, “You’ll never amount to much”? I know because I have experienced these in my childhood and youth. Additionally, as a substitute teacher, I sometimes heard children talking about their home lives. While often what they spoke about were ordinary things children go through, occasionally it seemed they were dealing with things they shouldn’t have to as children. I remember one girl, around 10 or 11 years old, telling me during recess, “I hate my life.” As we talked, it sounded like it was her home life that made her feel that way. In children’s homes, it is mainly the adults—parents and guardians—who set the tone of the home. As with my own parents, many raise their children based on what they learned from how their parents raised them. They may also hear occasional stories and make observations about other families and form opinions that lead them to either reject or accept new ideas they hear or they may hear things that confirm what they already believe. All too often, we parents use practices without truly knowing the long-term effects of our parenting efforts.

Identifying the Problem

Many studies have established links between particular parenting practices and various outcomes for children. For example, Fergusson and Lynskey (1997) identified a relationship where children who experienced more harsh punishment or abuse were at an elevated risk for suicide or involvement in violent crime (as either perpetrator or victim) and were more prone to alcohol dependence or abuse. Even more significantly, one meta-analysis (i.e. an analysis of the results of multiple studies) that reviewed the results of over 1,400 parenting studies found that higher levels of harsh control or psychological control (defined in Chapter II) by parents were

associated with higher levels of child problems, such as aggression, disruptiveness, defiance, hyperactivity, and impulsivity (Pinquart, 2017). Such results strongly suggest that the approach parents take in raising their children can have significant impacts on them.

Surely, most parents hope for the best outcomes for their children. My parents were no exception. Parents may feel they have knowledge on how to raise their children, but practices that parents employ with their children are often informed by sources such as: their own experiences of growing up, expectations learned from relatives or friends or other social networks, and from media sources (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2016; Akers, 2011). Generally, U.S. communities don't have all-encompassing systems ensuring that all parents have the best knowledge needed to raise their children for the most positive outcomes (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2016). Even if parents desire to learn more evidence-based parenting approaches, they may find a confusing and difficult path to navigate to find suitable information and support (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2016).

Modern science has been able to give us greater insights into child development and the effects of various parenting practices on children (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2016). It is, therefore, increasingly difficult to justify leaving parenting to chance, given the information that exists. It is also difficult to justify ignoring significant barriers that may challenge parents' ability to gain the information they need. Intentional efforts to optimize the overall well-being of children should be a priority.

As a resident of Tooele, Utah, and as a former substitute teacher in Tooele, I have an interest in the well-being of our community and the children who live here. The 2019 biannual Student Health and Risk Prevention Needs Assessment Survey (referred to as the SHARP

survey; Utah Department of Human Services, Division of Substance Abuse and Mental Health, 2019) for Tooele portrays a child well-being scenario that is not ideal. A number of indicators suggest that not all children in Tooele County are as well off in their social and emotional well-being as the general student population of Utah. For example, lifetime use of alcohol for Tooele youth in the survey was at 21.3% compared to their statewide peers at 16.7%. More concerning in the realm of substances was cocaine use by Tooele youth. While the overall number was low, over twice the percentage of Tooele youth, compared to the state percentage, had used cocaine in their lives and also within the past 30 days, as indicated within the survey (Utah Department of Human Services, Division of Substance Abuse and Mental Health, 2019). Substance use is a concern because, among other things, drug overdoses are the leading cause of injury deaths in Utah (Utah Department of Health, b). Some antisocial behaviors were also higher among Tooele's youth compared with the state. According to the SHARP survey (Utah Department of Human Services, Division of Substance Abuse and Mental Health, 2019), 8.1% of Tooele youth had been suspended from school within the past year, compared to 5.6% of youth statewide. Another antisocial behavior indicator was the percent of students who had attacked someone with the intent to seriously hurt them. The survey found that 6.2% of Tooele youth said they had done this, compared to 4.2% of the state's youth overall. In the realm of mental health indicators, Tooele youth had a higher percentage (25.0%) whose responses indicated a high need for mental health treatment, compared with state youth as a whole (19.3%). Twelve percent of Tooele youth respondents scored high for depressive symptoms, compared to 8.8% of the state's youth. It is evident that there is room for improvement of the well-being of youth in Tooele.

Perhaps most concerning in the SHARP survey results were the statistics on self-harm and suicide ideation. The survey found that 20.2% of Tooele's youth had intentionally engaged in

self-destructive behavior (e.g. cutting) within the past 12 months, compared to 15.4% of Utah youth. Tooele youth who had seriously considered suicide in the past year, were numbered at 20.4% of respondents, compared to 16.4% of all Utah youth who responded. This means that just over one out of every five Tooele students had seriously considered suicide. Those who had made a plan for suicide were 16.4% of Tooele youth and 12.3% of Utah youth. Again, this is about one out of every six students who had conceived a plan for suicide. And nearly one tenth of Tooele youth (9.5%) had attempted suicide at least once within the past year. The state had about one in 14 youth (6.9%) who had attempted (Utah Department of Human Services, Division of Substance Abuse and Mental Health, 2019). These are alarming statistics.

As a community it is important to identify approaches to improve the well-being of our children. There are many influences which may contribute to some of the statistics above. However, parents are in one of the best positions in children's lives to influence their well-being. It should be of great interest to ensure that parenting practices within the community are leading to optimal outcomes for children. However, county statistics in 2014 (latest data available from this source) show a substantiated child abuse rate of 9.1 per 1,000 population (Annie E. Casey Foundation). This is an indication that we have not achieved optimum parenting across all families. Studies concerning the parenting climate and practices in Tooele are non-existent. In order to determine strategies that might optimize the parenting that affects children's well-being, it is essential to learn more about the current state of parenting in Tooele.

Purpose of the Study

This study was intended as a beginning stage of assessing Tooele's parenting environment. Due to constraints of time and resources, this study was only a small beginning of the necessary larger-scale research that we would need to fully assess the parenting environment throughout

the county. This project was only intended to explore parenting among a small sample of parents to help determine what additional research would be useful in fully assessing the parenting climate in Tooele. The focus of this study was on aspects of parenting more likely to relate to the social and emotional well-being of children. The long-term purpose of this research was to guide additional research that could enable community leaders to make informed decisions about potential parenting programs and interventions in the community. Its long-term purpose was oriented toward community action and potential policy reform. The specific aim of this qualitative study was to seek an answer to the question: “What are the perceptions, attitudes, values, and beliefs about children, parenting, and parenting education among a sample of parents in Tooele County?”

Root Causes

This research study was ultimately intended as a small piece of a larger theme of ensuring the optimal well-being of children in Tooele County. Toward that goal, this study attempted to address a few issues that may be barriers to the well-being of our children. First, it is important to recognize that parents have an impact on the social and emotional well-being of their children. The child problems manifested in the statistics mentioned above from the SHARP survey have been shown to have relationships to various parenting practices. For example, one study identified links between child depression and parents using psychological aggression (threatening, demeaning, etc.) toward a child. The same study also found a similar link between depression and corporal punishment (Calhoun, Ridenour, & Fishbein, 2019). On the other hand, another study gave evidence that supportive behaviors of a parent toward a child, such as being accepting and being responsive to the child’s needs, are associated with lower rates of depression among children (Janssens, et al., 2015). While other factors can also contribute to child

problems, it is clear that parenting practices also have a place in ensuring the best outcomes for children.

Next, data do not exist that describe the parenting environment within the Tooele community. There have not been any studies that can provide an overview of the nature of parenting that takes place in Tooele. Therefore, it is difficult for community leaders to consider parenting factors when making decisions that affect children. For example, making decisions about the extent that parenting classes are needed in the community is difficult without such data.

Finally, Tooele has limited parenting support programs in place. When parents voluntarily seek more parenting knowledge or support, they are more likely to find it outside the community's resources. The county provides two free parenting education options: Guiding Good Choices (Hawkins & Catalano, 2002) and the Love and Logic series (Utah State University Extension, 2017b). The school district also provides several resources for parents, but they are generally aimed at helping children succeed in school (Tooele County School District, 2017). Other resources mainly help when interventions are necessary, such as the Division of Child and Family Services or the Children's Justice Center. It may therefore be challenging for parents to easily acquire the parenting information or support that they need, which is a barrier to optimal parenting. This may be one reason parents who might benefit from additional parenting knowledge or support don't seek it out (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2016).

This study was intended to begin the process of gathering data on the parenting that takes place in Tooele. Along with additional research, this can then provide a better perspective for policies concerning what the community provides for parents and can potentially inform parenting practices that will help optimize child well-being.

Significance

There is little published data on the nature of and attitudes toward parenting in Tooele County. As described previously, it is apparent that the county does have room for improvement in its parenting climate.

Currently, the city of Tooele runs a parent education program, Guiding Good Choices. The voluntary, no-cost program welcomes members of the whole county to participate, but the program's attendance rate was an estimated 20-40 parents per year (as of 2020), though the city even offers an incentive: a \$25 gift card for completing the program. Given that the county population is nearing 70,000 people, that attendance rate is far from sufficient to impact the parenting culture. Also, while the program teaches positive parenting strategies, its major focus is toward preventing youth substance abuse, along with other problem behaviors (Hawkins & Catalano, 2002); it therefore doesn't address other social challenges where parents might be able to make positive contributions to their children's well-being.

Another program, implemented within the county's school district, is Second Step. This program is more universally applied, covering all grades from Kindergarten through eighth. The program seems to have a particularly anti-bullying focus, but also teaches children strategies to calm themselves, get out of threatening situations, and other social-emotional development topics (Committee for Children, 2019). While this is a benefit for children and surely has positive long-term value for the community, it doesn't address parenting concerns.

Utah State University Extension offers free parenting programs using the Love and Logic series of curricula. These are offered throughout the state, including occasionally in Tooele. These courses focus on empowering parents with various skills to improve cooperation and avoid family conflict as well as strengthen relationships and increase parenting confidence (Utah

State University Extension, 2017a; Utah State University Extension, 2017b). Most of the courses are now offered online, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2021, there were no in-person Love and Logic classes taught in Tooele. The total number of online course participants throughout the state of Utah was 798 (Utah State University Extension Office, personal communication, May 3, 2022). Since that number is for all of Utah, only a small fraction would be Tooele residents, so the impact is relatively small despite the potential the program may have.

These programs are valuable for the well-being of children, but considering the county's population compared to low participation rates, their prospects for ensuring optimal parenting throughout the county are not high. Also, without information on the current condition of parenting in Tooele, leaders do not have the resources needed to properly evaluate it and propose adequate measures that could optimize parenting and the well-being of children.

Because the complex interactions between parenting, child characteristics, and child outcomes are not obvious and are not innately intuitive, it is essential to ensure that parents and potential parents are provided knowledge and understanding of practical information on parenting and children that is drawn from appropriate research. There may be a variety of approaches a community could use to ensure that this information gets into the hands (and minds) of parents. Parent education programs are one of these potential approaches. Our community currently has a couple of parent education programs, although their attendance is small in comparison to the population. Without assessing the state of parenting in Tooele, there is no way to know if the current programs are sufficient. Many questions loom unanswered. Will parents who truly need those programs seek them out on their own? Who are the parents who need the programs? Do parents generally believe they already know enough about raising children? Is it possible that most do know enough? Are there gaps in the community's parenting

knowledge that are significant and detrimental? These are just a few of the types of questions this research has begun to answer through a qualitative study of nine Tooele parents.

This study was a form of exploratory research intended to reveal possible opportunities or problem areas in parenting in the community where further research may be of value (Brown, Suter, & Churchill, 2010). While this small-scale, qualitative research cannot give generalizable answers about parenting throughout Tooele, it may be valuable to help determine what further research will be necessary to fully assess the state of parenting in the Tooele area. This exploratory research was intended to gain insights into whether parents in Tooele understand and value the best parenting practices and if that is what they seek. If they understand and seek these practices, it may be enough to continue things as they are. But as already mentioned, there is evidence that there is room for improvement within the community. To answer the question about Tooele's parenting, my research (and the research question) focused on three areas: children, parenting, and parenting education. This research sought insights in each of these areas. As part of this research, I sought answers to a number of questions. *On children:* How do parents view children? Do they view them from a deficit or asset perspective? Are they considered a joy or a burden? How much do they know about child development? *On parenting:* What do parents know about various parenting dimensions and the effects they have on children? Do parents take a hard, demanding stance or a more child-participative view of parenting? *On parenting education:* How do parents respond to science-based parenting information? How willing are they to participate in parenting education programs? Do they feel they currently have sufficient parenting information?

The answers to these types of questions can assist in making decisions that could include whether to focus on helping adults to value children more, provide more access to parenting

education programs, take on a parent education marketing campaign, teach parenting skills in high school, or consider other possibilities.

The findings of this research may be of interest to the school district's superintendent and principals and other educators. Local non-profit organizations that are concerned with children may also value this information. City and county leadership, as well as social work organizations and the Tooele Division of Child and Family Services may see value in it, as well. Ultimately, many of these community organizations could work together to use this and future research information to create collective impact within the community for the benefit of our children.

During the Westminster College portion of this research (see next paragraph), I received advisory support from the head of the Life's Worth Living Foundation, Jon Gossett. The organization is focused on prevention of youth suicide in the Tooele area. This research is of value to the organization because it may provide insights that help parents and community leaders to determine approaches to reduce risks of youth suicide.

In March of 2020, the global coronavirus pandemic terminated my work on this research, which was for my graduate thesis with Westminster College. I subsequently graduated and additional work on the thesis was no longer required. However, my interest in this work was more than for completing my degree. I also had intentions to start a non-profit organization after graduation. In December of 2020, I started the not-for-profit entity Lightward Bound. The mission of Lightward Bound is to bring more light into our culture. This research is a starting point for potentially bringing more light into the lives of Tooele's children. For this reason, I continued analyzing the data I had previously gathered and continued writing the report on the findings as part of Lightward Bound's work.

As suggested in this chapter, this research is intended to begin a process of identifying Tooele's current parenting climate with the ultimate goal of ensuring that children receive optimal parenting as they grow up. This effort may eventually have a significant community impact on the well-being of our children and subsequently on our community. The next chapter reviews the literature that demonstrates many effects of various parenting dimensions on children.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

The research literature that I reviewed demonstrated that various parenting practices yield differing outcomes with children that include both positive and negative outcomes. Additionally, the literature showed that parenting interventions, in the form of parenting education programs, can be used to intentionally alter the outcomes for children. This is the foundation that guided my research regarding current parental attitudes and outlooks in Tooele County, Utah. It is important to understand the effects of parental behaviors on children in order to build environments that optimize the well-being of children. Because beliefs, values, perceptions, and attitudes tend to influence how people behave (Robbins & Judge, 2012; Siegel & Welsh, 2014), my research sought to reveal those beliefs, values, perceptions, and attitudes, which may influence a sample of parents in Tooele. This research focused on the question: What are the perceptions, attitudes, values, and beliefs about children, parenting, and parenting education among a sample of parents in Tooele County? Assessing such perceptions and attitudes is a starting point of gathering data to make informed decisions about intentional changes to the parenting climate in Tooele County. As a result of this research, along with results from future related research, Lightward Bound will have data that will be used to encourage and help community leaders make decisions on whether to continue things as they are (i.e. accept the status quo), initiate moderate efforts to improve the parenting culture, or perhaps pursue more aggressive strategies. Up to this point, there are no data of this sort for our community.

The literature I reviewed mostly focused on relationships between parental actions and child outcomes. While some of the research addressed other areas, it also had a significant concern with the interactions between parent behavior and child outcomes. I also included a few

studies involving parenting programs, which also relates to parenting practices (i.e. establishing or altering them) and child outcomes and addresses part of the research question for this study.

This chapter will first define various parenting dimensions discovered in the literature, then will discuss those dimensions in terms of “internalizing problems” that children may manifest, followed by “externalizing problems.” The chapter will then discuss parenting programs that may improve parenting and child outcomes, then will conclude with some final words.

Parenting Dimensions and Styles

Within the parenting research literature, I discovered several terms that were used to describe various dimensions and styles of parenting behavior toward children. The terms defined here are derived from the literature and will be used within this report according to the definitions described below.

Psychological control describes the use of tactics intended to control a child’s behavior by using negative psychological means that include manipulating, inducing guilt, conditionally showing love or affection, displaying disappointment, shaming, and excessively pressuring the child to change behavior (Barber, 1996; Janssens, et al., 2015; Pinquart, 2017).

Behavioral control involves parental efforts to set clear expectations and rules for children and to monitor or supervise their activities (e.g. being aware of where children spend their time and whom they are with and tracking other behaviors; Barber, 1996; Janssens, et al., 2015; Pinquart, 2017). Behavioral control may also involve moderate, non-physical, non-psychological consequences for violating rules and expectations (Janssens, et al., 2015).

Parental support refers to affectionate behaviors toward children, such as being involved in their lives, presenting a warm attitude, being responsive to needs and wants, and being

emotionally available (Colón, Rodríguez, & Galliher, 2019; Janssens, et al., 2015; Pinquart, 2017).

Harsh control is a parental approach that incorporates corporal punishment and harsh verbal discipline methods, such as yelling and shouting (Knutson, DeGarmo, Koepl, & Reid, 2005; Pinquart, 2017).

Autonomy granting involves encouraging independence and providing opportunities for children to make their own choices and express their individuality (Colón, Rodríguez, & Galliher, 2019; Pinquart, 2017).

Corporal punishment involves physical actions taken against a child's body as a consequence for parent-defined wrongdoing. It may include hitting with an object, slapping, striking the face, pushing or shoving, etc. that remain below a level to cause serious physical injury or threat of life (Ferguson, 2013; Janssens, et al., 2015).

Child maltreatment refers to any combinations of the following: physical abuse, physical neglect, emotional abuse, emotional neglect, and sexual abuse (Calhoun, Ridenour, & Fishbein, 2019).

Authoritative parenting style combines parental support, behavioral control, and autonomy granting (Colón, Rodríguez, & Galliher, 2019; Karmaker, 2015; Pinquart, 2017).

Authoritarian parenting style is a combination of low parental support, low autonomy granting, and use of harsh control (Colón, Rodríguez, & Galliher, 2019; Karmaker, 2015; Pinquart, 2017).

Permissive parenting style involves parental support and autonomy granting, with little control (Colón, Rodríguez, & Galliher, 2019; Pinquart, 2017).

Neglectful parenting style involves low parental support and low control (Colón, Rodríguez, & Galliher, 2019; Pinquart, 2017).

Internalizing Problems

Influences from various sources may contribute to children developing various problems that affect them internally. These problems, called internalizing problems, may include depression, anxiety, or loneliness (Colón, Rodríguez, & Galliher, 2019; Janssens, et al., 2015). Some parenting practices have been linked with various degrees and combinations of these internalizing problems. The long-term goal of conducting this research is to optimize child well-being in Tooele County; minimizing these internalizing problems is an essential part of that. Understanding that parental behaviors have effects on children and understanding what those effects are provides the background for optimizing the parenting outcomes for children.

Positive parenting practices, such as behavioral control and autonomy granting, reduce the likelihood of children developing internalizing problems (Colón, Rodríguez, & Galliher, 2019). When parents use more parental support and less psychological control on their children, they may feel less loneliness as adolescents (Janssens, et al., 2015).

Depression rates among children have been found to increase when their parents use psychological control to control their children's behavior (Barber, 1996; Janssens, et al., 2015). When children experience maltreatment or a combination of corporal punishment and psychological control, they also have a greater chance of showing depressive symptoms (Calhoun, Ridenour, & Fishbein, 2019). On the other hand, when parents use behavioral control, children tend to have lower rates of depression (Barber, 1996). Parental support also tends to yield lower rates of depression among children (Janssens, et al., 2015). Negative parenting behaviors, such as child maltreatment, harsh or frequent punishment (including corporal

punishment), and psychological control each may increase the risk of child anxiety symptoms (Calhoun, Ridenour, & Fishbein, 2019; Fergusson & Lynskey, 1997).

Externalizing Problems

As with internalizing problems, child externalizing problems may have multiple contributing sources. Externalizing problems are manifested by the child externally and include delinquency, aggression, disruptiveness, defiance, hyperactivity, and impulsivity (Colón, Rodríguez, & Galliher, 2019; Janssens, et al., 2015; Pinquart, 2017). Understanding and reducing externalizing problems in children is another important aspect of optimizing parenting in Tooele County, which is the overall goal of this study. Externalizing problems not only affect the individual, but can contribute negatively to the community and therefore should be of interest on a broad community level. Below I discuss externalizing problems that have been linked with various parenting behaviors.

A number of parenting practices influence the potential for externalizing problems. Positive parenting practices, such as parental support, behavioral control, autonomy granting, and authoritative parenting, decrease the potential for these types of child problems. However, an increased potential for these externalizing problems exists for children who experience negative parenting practices such as: authoritarian, permissive, and neglectful parenting styles; psychological control; and harsh control (Colón, Rodríguez, & Galliher, 2019; Pinquart, 2017).

Aggression

Parental behaviors can influence the development of aggression in children. Harsh control and neglect each increases the likelihood of aggressive tendencies in children. But when parents use more behavioral control, they tend to use less harsh control and are less neglectful, thereby decreasing aggressive outcomes in their children (Knutson, DeGarmo, Koepl, & Reid, 2005).

Psychological control and harsh corporal punishment each tend to increase the likelihood of aggressive child behaviors. Parental support, though, reduces that likelihood (Janssens, et al., 2015). Authoritarian, overprotective, and indifferent parental attitudes also tend to contribute to child aggression (Türkoğlu, 2019).

Delinquency & Anti-social Behavior

Delinquent and anti-social behaviors are influenced by the family environment, which includes parental behaviors (Siegel & Welsh, 2014). Youth tend to be more prone to delinquency or anti-social behavior when they receive less parental support and less behavioral control from parents (Barber, 1996; Siegel & Welsh, 2014) or experience harsh control, frequent punishment, or abusive treatment (Calhoun, Ridenour, & Fishbein, 2019; Fergusson & Lynskey, 1997; Wartenweiler & Mansukhani, 2016; Siegel & Welsh, 2014).

Callous-Unemotional Traits

The term “callous-unemotional traits” (CU traits) describes negative interpersonal characteristics, such as deceiving and manipulating; it also describes emotional characteristics, such as lack of guilt and low emotional feeling (Siegel & Welsh, 2014; Waller, Gardner, & Hyde, 2013). These traits can lead to other problems, such as anti-social behavior (Siegel & Welsh, 2014). CU traits are more likely to develop in children or youth whose parents use harsh control, corporal punishment, psychological control, or inconsistent discipline. Parental support and positive reinforcement (i.e. rewarding good behavior) tend to reduce the chance of developing CU traits (Muratori, et al., 2016; Waller, Gardner, & Hyde, 2013).

Other Externalizing Problems

This section describes a few effects on child outcomes that have not been studied extensively, but have been found in some studies to be related to parenting choices. Children

exposed to abuse may be more prone to alcohol abuse or dependency as young adults (Fergusson & Lynskey, 1997). Additionally, children exposed to harsh or frequent corporal punishment or abuse may be more prone to attempt suicide or become victims of violence (Fergusson & Lynskey, 1997). The way children are motivated as they grow is affected by parenting practices. Specifically, children raised with an authoritative style of parenting tend to act more on internal values, while those raised with an authoritarian style tend to be motivated more by external pressures, such as threats of punishment (Karmaker, 2015). Some of the negative parenting choices (maltreatment, harsh control, corporal punishment, and psychological control) may even increase the potential development of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD; Calhoun, Ridenour, & Fishbein, 2019).

Internalizing and externalizing problems in children are areas of concern because they affect their behavior and may contribute to community problems. Also, Lightward Bound has the mission to bring light into people's lives, including children. These problems represent darkness that Lightward Bound seeks to eliminate. It is therefore important to understand how these problems may develop in order to create strategies to optimize child outcomes. This research aims to make a contribution to this understanding in the Tooele County area. It is intended to eventually foster improved and intentional decisions about parenting in Tooele County by parents and community leaders. This could include decisions about a variety of approaches, including more parenting education options.

Parenting Education Programs

The goal of this research was to learn about the parenting environment in Tooele County, Utah to identify areas of the parenting climate where improvements might be possible in order to

make efforts to optimize the well-being of Tooele’s children. With the increased understanding that the parenting research field has provided, it is possible to produce interventions and education programs to improve parenting results. Based on four studies that I reviewed involving parent education programs, it is evident that a well-designed parenting program can give parents new skills and greater insights about their children that can lead to improvements in the behavior and emotional well-being of their children and can increase self-confidence and self-efficacy of parents (Ashori, et al., 2019; Garcia, DeNard, Ohene, Morones, & Connaughton, 2018; Waller, Gardner, & Hyde, 2013; Wilson, et al., 2012). There is indeed “evidence that parent training interventions can modify the parenting practices that matter” (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2016, p. 66).

Final Words

Each parenting practice does not always yield particular child outcomes and parenting is not in a static state where parents always use a particular practice regardless of their children’s responses. The literature reviewed strongly suggested, however, that certain outcomes are more likely when specific practices are used. When parents regularly use positive, worth-affirming practices, such as setting reasonable expectations with children and monitoring their behavior, being involved with their children’s lives, being responsive to their stated and unstated needs, supporting their autonomy, showing warmth and affection, and using rewards or praise, their children are less likely to develop internalizing and externalizing problems. On the other hand, these problems are more likely to develop when parents routinely use negative practices, such as psychological control, corporal punishments, harsh control, unpredictable discipline, and maltreatment.

As evidenced by the various studies reviewed in this chapter, research concerned with parenting effects on children is ongoing around the world, with similar findings regardless of nation or culture. This indicates that many parenting-related problems affecting children may be universal, many parenting methods tend to be universal (although they may vary in degree and details), and the relationships between parenting and child outcomes are also somewhat universal.

A large body of research studies has focused on the relationships between parenting practices and child outcomes (for example, the Pinquart 2017 study considered the results of over 1400 parenting studies). Much information is available on the best parenting practices that lead to better outcomes for children. It is difficult, therefore, to justify a passive societal approach to parenting—leaving the parenting of our nation’s (or world’s) children to parental whims or ignorance—when we have so much valuable knowledge on parenting approaches. While it is true that many parents do use some of the best approaches with their children, it is also evident in the literature I reviewed that there are still parents who do not. I believe we need to be intentional about promoting the best parenting practices in ways that encourage all parents to seek them for the well-being of their children. This in turn will be better for communities. This was the ultimate reason for this study. I wanted to learn about the current state of parenting in our community, Tooele County, with the long-term goal of using this information, as a community, to make intentional choices about the parenting approaches used here.

Lightward Bound intends to use the findings of this study as a foundation for developing and carrying out additional research on parenting in Tooele that could help the community identify strategies to encourage the best parenting practices that lead to the best outcomes for our children. Over time, Lightward Bound intends to take lessons learned in our county and spread

them to wider networks of communities throughout our nation, which could eventually impact people around the globe.

CHAPTER III: METHODS

Numerous studies have established relationships between various parenting approaches and child outcomes. For example, Pinquart's (2017) meta-analysis of over 1400 studies on parenting characteristics and associated externalizing problems in children found that higher levels of harsh control or psychological control by parents were associated with higher levels of externalizing problems in their children, such as aggression, disruptiveness, defiance, hyperactivity, and impulsivity. Fergusson and Lynskey (1997) identified a relationship where children who experienced more harsh punishment or abuse were at an elevated risk for suicide or involvement in violent crime (as either perpetrator or victim) and were more prone to alcohol dependence or abuse.

I have been a resident of Tooele, Utah since 2005. Since that time, I have heard of various instances in Tooele of some of the behaviors described above that are harmful to individuals and the community. Some of the most concerning within the community have been suicides, substance abuse, and crimes against personal property. Utah's Indicator-Based Information System for Public Health (IBIS-PH) shows that Tooele County had a suicide rate of 23.6 per 100,000 inhabitants (Utah Department of Health, a). This number includes adults, but in 2018 suicide was the leading cause of death among Utah youth ages 10 to 17 (Utah Department of Health, c). Tooele's numbers are similar to those of Utah State, but both are higher than the national suicide rate of 13.6 per 100,000 (Utah Department of Health, a). This suggests that there is a need to reduce suicides in Tooele (as well as Utah). In Tooele 7.4% of youth used an illegal substance within a 30-day period. Smoking rates by Tooele youth in grades 8, 10, and 12 within a 30-day period were 2.9% of youth for cigarettes and 10.1% for e-cigarettes (Utah Department of Health, a). These substance abuse rates are similar to Utah's average. Though suicides and

substance abuse rates are similar to Utah's rates, they are all somewhat in the midrange of the health statistics reporting areas of Utah. In other words, Tooele is not among the lowest numbers in the reporting areas, but in the midrange. Each of these problems can have negative impacts on the health of our youth.

There are several potential contributors to these statistics, such as socioeconomic factors or peer influences. But, based on the research, it is also possible that parenting practices are a potential contributor as well. By assessing the parenting practices in Tooele and using that information to optimize parenting, it would be reasonable to expect that some negative child outcomes, which may include suicide or substance abuse, would decline.

With the goal in mind of optimizing parenting in the community and subsequently improving child outcomes, this qualitative study was intended to take a sample of parenting perspectives from within the community to assess the attitudes, values, and beliefs that may shape parenting in the community. The intent is for the findings of this study to pave the way for the community and its leaders to more fully assess the current parenting climate within the county and determine strategies that could optimize parenting. Originally, this study was intended to focus on a lower socioeconomic segment of Tooele's population for two reasons. First, physical abuse has been shown to occur more frequently in lower socioeconomic areas (Christmas, Wodarski, & Smokowski, 1996). This suggests that there may be a need to focus in these areas to improve child outcomes through parenting. Second, children in lower socioeconomic areas may also be negatively affected by poverty or other related challenges. As I attempted to find participants for the research, I found it difficult to specifically get my sample from that population in the time I had. I therefore found participants based on their accessibility and willingness to participate, rather than socioeconomic status. Three participants, however,

were from an area of Tooele that is generally of somewhat lower socioeconomic level. This research specifically aimed to address the question: What are the perceptions, attitudes, values, and beliefs about children, parenting, and parenting education among a sample of parents in Tooele County?

Participants

This study was intended to uncover various perspectives, attitudes, and beliefs that Tooele parents have, which likely contribute to how they approach the parenting of their children. The participants for this study were therefore parents in Tooele County; more specifically, they all were residents of Tooele City. I chose participants based on the following criteria: the parents must have lived in Tooele County for approximately the past five (or more) years, they needed to be under age 50, and they needed to be currently raising one or more child under 18. The residence time period was intended to ensure I am not including parents who were very new in the area who may be less representative of Tooele. The parental age limit was intended to focus the research on first generation perspectives, not older grandparents who may be raising grandchildren and may represent an earlier period of parenting practices. The requirement to be currently involved in raising at least one child under 18 was intended to get the perspective from current parents, representing the current parenting culture. This study did not consider family sizes or genetic heritage characteristics (i.e. race, ethnicity, etc.) for selection of participants. These characteristics did not seem relevant to assessing the current parenting culture in the area and would not yield much detail with the small sample size.

The original plan was more complex than what actually materialized. Instead of completing four focus groups as planned, I only completed one focus group and also two interviews in homes. These were all completed during the month of February 2020. Time pressures at that

time, along with the onset of Coronavirus concerns, led me to stop gathering data at that point and use what I already had for analysis.

A total of nine parents participated in the study. All participants were of Caucasian physical appearance. Six of the parents appeared to be in their thirties or forties and three appeared to be in their twenties. The numbers of children each parent was raising ranged from one to about four (one had six at home, but some may have been adults). The child ages ranged from toddler to teenager. All participants had been in the Tooele area for at least a few years, with some living in Tooele for a decade or more. Five parents were male and four were female. All, except one step-father, were biological parents of the children they were raising. Three fathers and two mothers participated in the study without another parent of the children (i.e. other parent did not take part in the study). Two mothers participated with a father or step-father of their children. The following is a brief description of each parent, using a pseudonym in place of each parent's name.

Sally was the biological mother of four children ranging in age from around two years to about nine years old. She appeared to be in her twenties. She had lived in Tooele for approximately 11 years at that time. I interviewed her in her home with her fiancé, John. The home was a doublewide manufactured home. Because I knew Sally's father, she was more willing to have me interview her and John.

John was the step-father of Sally's children. He had been in the Tooele area for around 25 years (likely his whole life). As a smoker, he made sure to only smoke outside, while I was there, but it seemed to be the norm for him even if I hadn't been there.

David was the single father of five older children. At least one or two of them were adults. He was perhaps in his forties. The children split their time between his home and their mother's

home. His home was a doublewide manufactured home. I had known David and his family for perhaps a decade before the interview, so he readily accepted my request for an interview.

Tom was one of the focus group participants. He appeared to be approximately in his early thirties. He and his wife were raising a few children. Tom attended the focus group alone.

Serenity was a focus group participant. She was a single mother of one young child. She manifested a positive and hopeful view of raising her daughter, though she had experienced some harsh parenting herself as a youth. She was perhaps in her twenties.

Nancy attended the focus group with her husband, Jerry. She had attended various parenting classes and seminars. She had also taught parenting classes within the county. She was perhaps in her late thirties or early forties. She and her husband were raising a few children, which they were also homeschooling.

Jerry, Nancy's husband, attended the focus group with her. His demeanor was somewhat reserved and quiet and his responses seemed to come after some careful thought. He was perhaps in his late thirties or early forties.

Nathaniel was another focus group participant. He was the only participant recruited through a flyer sent to an elementary school. He apparently responded because we had known each other for several years previously. He was probably in his early thirties. He and his wife were raising only one young daughter. He attended the focus group alone.

Carma attended the focus group at the invitation of Nancy. She tended to be somewhat outspoken. She was the mother of seven children, one or more of them being adults. She had been married to her husband (the father of the children) for about 20 years. She attended alone.

Methods Employed

Gathering Data

The original plan for gathering data from participants was to conduct a few focus groups. Instead, I conducted two interviews with three parents and one focus group with six. I first contacted the owner of a mobile home park in Tooele City and got permission to solicit participants for the research study. I also received a list of homes with children. I contacted each of those homes and gave the residents a flyer similar to the one shown in Appendix A. I expected that I might receive enough responses to have a couple of focus groups with at least five or six residents each from the mobile home park. Since I only got a positive response from two households in the park, I chose to do interviews in each home, rather than a focus group.

I also contacted Tooele County School District and receive approval from them to have access to district resources needed for the research. I then provided a digital flyer (similar to Appendix A) to the principal of one of the elementary schools to send out through the Peachjar online communication system to all the parents connected with that school. Again, I was expecting at least enough responses to fill a couple of focus groups, but only two people responded to the Peachjar notice. Only one of those ultimately participated in the focus group. The four participants that I gained through these two sources (the mobile home park and the school) were people that I also had a previous connection with, which seemed to be part of their motivation to participate.

I then contacted people who were teaching a parenting class in Tooele. I got permission to tell the parents attending the class about my research and ask for participants. Most of the participants for the focus group came through this contact. Because these participants were

attending or teaching a parenting class, I believe they are not highly representative of Tooele County's general parent population.

All interview and focus group participants were given a consent form, as shown in Appendix B, to read and sign. All participants read and signed their consent forms at the beginning of the interview or focus group. Each participant kept a copy of the form and I also kept one copy from each participant. Participants were informed that they may leave the focus group at any point if they chose not to continue. All participants continued for the whole interview or focus group, except for one participant who needed to leave early for childcare reasons. The interviews were conducted in the homes of the participating parents. The focus group was conducted in a building belonging to the school district.

This study was a qualitative study that gathered data from participants in two interviews and one focus group. A qualitative study is more open than surveys, which provide pre-selected answers to choose from. Qualitative research is used to build “an in-depth understanding of social phenomena within their natural setting. ... [It] relies on the direct experiences of human beings as meaning-making agents in their every day lives” (University of Texas Arlington). Qualitative methods may include focus groups and interviews (University of Texas Arlington). As the facilitator of the focus group and as the interviewer in the two homes, I asked participants to answer a series of open-ended questions or sentence completion questions. The focus of the questions and discussion was on perceptions, views, and beliefs about children, parenting, and parenting education. All conversation during the interviews and the focus group was recorded with a digital voice recorder. Appendix C shows the original guide for the focus groups. This guide contains the questions I used during the two interviews. After I completed the interviews, I revised the guide, which is shown in Appendix D; this is the one I used for the focus group.

By using focus groups, I was expecting to gather a broader range of perspectives from parents in Tooele during the time period of this study than if I used interviews (Johnson, 2017). Because of the difficulty in recruiting participants for the study and the deadlines I was expected to meet, I only completed one focus group. I also completed two interviews, because I still wanted to get the perspectives of the three parents that had agreed earlier to participate, while I didn't yet have enough participants for a focus group.

The two interviews were each approximately an hour long. The focus group ended up taking about two and a half hours, which was longer than expected. For the interviews, I took down some notes during the interview and wrote up field notes soon afterward, based on my memory and the notes. During the focus group, I had an assistant (one of my daughters) take notes while I was conducting it and asking questions. Afterward, I wrote up field notes on the focus group, based on my memory and the notes.

Each participant was offered and received a \$25 gift card for either Wal-Mart or Home Depot. Three local businesses provided two gift cards and funds to purchase additional cards and refreshments. Remaining money was donated to the local non-profit organization, Life's Worth Living Foundation.

Analysis

After each interview and after the focus group, I got the audio recording transcribed using an online service and then went through each transcript manually to correct a few errors introduced by the automated process. I created a spreadsheet for each interview and for the focus group. I put each statement from each transcription into the appropriate spreadsheet. I assigned a preliminary category to each statement. Afterward, I analyzed the preliminary categories of all the spreadsheets to arrive at a final list of 12 categories.

From each spreadsheet, I analyzed the categories and associated statements and wrote a summary of each participant's views, based on the data. All of the summary statements were then placed into another, single spreadsheet. Each statement was assigned one of the final categories.

Next, I analyzed the summary statements with their categories and created a list of preliminary assertions based on common themes among the various participating parents' summaries. Then I analyzed and sorted the preliminary assertions to find similar topics, finally arriving at five key assertions, which are discussed in Chapter IV: Findings.

Ethical Concerns

As part of my thesis work for my master's degree through Westminster College, I proposed this study in the last quarter of 2019. The Westminster College Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved this study on Nov 25, 2019. The IRB reviews research proposals specifically to determine if they are sound and ethical and are not likely to cause harm to human research subjects.

This study posed no physical threats beyond what participants would already experience in their daily lives. The psychological or emotional risks were minimal, being similar to what participants may experience when they get together in a group of people who may have differing viewpoints.

The privacy of each participant's personal identifying information was another concern (Given, 2016). I did not collect physical addresses for any participant and only collected minimal contact information. In order to protect participant identities, I used codes in place of names in all my processing of participants' information. For example, in each transcript of conversations, I

used an anonymous identifier to indicate which participant was speaking. That same identifier was also used in my analyses. The audio recordings of the interviews and focus group have no personal names attached, but are identified with codes. Any published material, such as this report, will use pseudonyms with no obvious connections to the actual names of participants.

The minimal personal information that I have retained (name, contact information, and consent forms) is kept in a private room in my home, which others do not use. When the need to retain this information clearly no longer exists, I will destroy and dispose of it responsibly so that it is not available to others. I will also dispose of audio recordings at that time. All focus group participants were asked not to disclose information about any other participant.

In discussions with parents about raising their children, there was some possibility that a participant could disclose issues of maltreatment that they were involved with. Because the well-being of participants is the primary ethical concern in the study (Given, 2016), I attempted to minimize that possibility by asking only questions on opinions, beliefs, and thoughts. I intentionally avoided asking about actions and activities of the participants. I also included a disclaimer in the consent form reminding them that they may incur legal risks if they reveal such information and that in such cases confidentiality is not guaranteed. I also included a reminder in the focus group guide about not sharing what they do, but only their opinions and thoughts.

I believe that the potential benefits of this study outweighed any potential risks because the risks were minimal and the benefits would be for a vulnerable group: children. The risks to the participants were not significant and, to my knowledge, no one experienced any detrimental effects from their participation in this study.

Challenges

The main challenge I encountered during this study was recruiting enough participants for several focus groups. My first attempt to recruit participants, which was at a mobile home park, yielded only three parents from two households. I chose to interview them in their homes, since there were not enough parents at that point to have an effective focus group. My attempt to recruit through a school district elementary school also yielded only two respondents. Only one of those actually participated, but I was able to include that participant in the focus group. The rest of the focus group participants came as a result of a third attempt to recruit parents at a Guiding Good Choices parenting class. Circumstantial challenges led me to stop gathering data after the two interviews and the focus group.

In a few cases, audio quality of the recordings made it more difficult to transcribe participants' words. For example, in one interview, dogs barking outside made it more difficult. In most cases, I was able to listen more intently and fill in missing words. With the focus group, I used two recorders in different locations that recorded the conversations. This was helpful in a few instances where I couldn't quite distinguish what was said in one recording, but I was able to identify it in the other.

Validity and Credibility

In gathering data, I spent time listening to the perspectives of nine parents. For the first interview I spent about an hour with a mother and father in their home. The second interview was also about an hour long, with a father in his home. While these interviews were an unplanned deviation from the original proposal (four focus groups were proposed), I used the same questions and believe I got a similar level of valuable insights that I was able to get from the focus group, but for a smaller number of participants. Six parents attended the focus group,

consisting of three fathers and three mothers. The focus group lasted about two and a half hours. Though it was somewhat long, participants seemed to have a positive response afterward. In the chapter on findings, I have provided extensive samples of the participants' statements that support the key assertions I arrived at. I have provided more than the typical amount of sample statements in order to show more definitely that the assertions are reasonable conclusions.

As I transcribed participants' words, I was careful to ensure the transcript was accurate. I can also say that during my analysis I was genuinely interested in what I would find in the data that I had gathered and not motivated to twist words or meanings to bring out any particular outcomes. I was and am interested in learning the truth.

I used two validity approaches to help ensure the results are reasonable and accurately reflect what is happening. First, I employed reflexivity (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 127), which is reflecting on my own biases and background that may affect the research and striving to minimize the effects of bias. The underlying belief is that we cannot truly eliminate all bias from our research, so it is important to reveal our potential biases and strive to minimize their effects. To that end, at various points during the coding and analysis process, I spent some time considering how my background and biases might have influenced the overall research process. The main areas where I believe my biases have influenced the research the most were in developing the questions that I asked and how I may have interpreted responses from the participants. In some cases, if I felt I understood what a participant said during the interview or focus group, I did not dig deeper to understand why they felt that way or what they meant.

The following is my disclosure of my background, values, and beliefs that likely influenced my research in some way. I have a long history of valuing children, including 26 years of raising my own children and 12 years of substituting in Tooele County School District

(for five of those years I was doing both). I have a strong interest in their well-being and believe that teaching children properly and instilling good values in them is essential to their well-being and the well-being of the communities they belong to. My Christian religious views (as a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints) do influence me toward certain ideal ways of raising and treating children. My own experiences as a child with a strict disciplinarian father also influence these ideas as do my observations of my own children and parenting results. I am convinced that children will internalize good values when immersed in a culture that models those values around them. I also believe that punishments and harsh treatment are rarely, if ever, necessary; but rather, guidance, direction, and reminders are far better to help them to become good citizens. Punishments mainly have value to get immediate conformance from children and assert parental authority, while the instilling of long-term values can come from less painful approaches.

As I conducted my qualitative research with parents, I expected that I might find that some of the parents would demonstrate views in line with some of the negative parenting practices discussed in Chapter II. This is a presupposition with which I entered my research. I was not tied to that expectation, though, and found that the parents I studied did not seem to espouse the negative parenting ideas that I thought might surface. They all demonstrated beliefs and attitudes that were in line with positive parenting practices that the literature indicates are associated with good outcomes for children. Though I anticipated otherwise, I was glad to find a more positive parenting culture among the parents in this study. As a result of reviewing the research literature, I also realized that I was exposed as a child to some of the negative parenting behaviors contained in the literature. I can also see in myself some of the undesirable outcomes discussed in the literature, which I now understand may be related to my upbringing. This realization

helped fuel my interest in this research and likely led me to actively look for evidence of that type of parenting. I believe it probably influenced my choice of questions I asked participants.

While collecting data, during interviews and the focus group, I attempted to keep my mind open to listen to what participating parents had to say. I avoided attempting to insert my views into the process of gathering participant perspectives. I followed the questions in the focus group guide, which are based on elements I was looking for that I had previously identified mainly within the parenting research literature. Additionally, I asked further questions that directly related to answers that the participants gave. Whether I agreed with something a participant said or not, I acknowledged what they said, while attempting to avoid expressing my opinion. Sometimes I did express some agreement about something they said, but never expressed my disagreements.

In terms of philosophical perspectives on research, I align mostly with the post-positivist viewpoint. This perspective considers the social world to be observable and that there is a reality that they seek to uncover, but they also recognize that the researcher will have biases and weaknesses that make research results fallible. They therefore try to minimize the effects of such biases and weaknesses. I believe in following a methodological and systematic approach to evaluate facts relating to phenomena, including social phenomena. I believe that both quantitative and qualitative research methods are of value in discovering truth that can benefit society. I also realize that as a researcher, I have an influence on the participants in the research process, which can influence research findings.

To help ensure the accuracy of my interpretations of participants' statements, I attempted to use the validity approach of member checking (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 127). Member checking involves getting feedback from the original participants regarding research information

that is based on their original words, to ensure what I am using is in line with their actual views.

After I completed my preliminary analysis and produced summaries of each parent's views based on my interpretation of their statements, I sent a copy of each parent's summary to each of them for their review. Of nine parents, only three responded. Each of those three said their summary was accurate. In one of those cases, the individual requested a small correction, which I made. So only one third of the participants confirmed the interpretations I used to develop my findings.

CHAPTER IV: FINDINGS

Lightward Bound's mission involves bringing light into the lives of Americans. This study was a beginning of learning about the light entering into the lives of children in Tooele County by the efforts of their parents. This metaphor of light represents things that can bring joy into the lives of people, things that give them hope, help them feel at peace, inspire their advancement and achievement, and things that help build unity within communities.

My analysis of the qualitative research data that I gathered from the nine parents who participated in this study has led me to five key findings that give some insight into parenting among these parents, and perhaps about a broader portion of Tooele's parenting community. My research questions had three main areas of focus: parents' views about children, their views on parenting, and their views about learning how to parent. One of the findings falls under "views about children," three fall under "views on parenting," and one falls under "learning to parent."

Views About Children

As I talked with the parents who participated in this study and later analyzed their words, I learned that these parents have quite positive views about children. They take on the difficult task of raising children with a serious determination to give it their best efforts. These parents have hopes that their children will grow up with good moral values, be successful in their lives, and productively contribute to their communities. The parents view their parenting role as a means to help their children achieve these hopes.

Positive Views About Children – Evidence

At the beginning of my discussions with each of the parents (interviews and focus group), I asked parents questions to learn what they think about children. Every parent expressed positive sentiments about children.

Sally. Sally, the mother from the first interview, said very simply: “They’re a joy.” She further expressed admiration about how candid children can be: “I think truthful like they will just say things without thinking about it, you know, we’ll think about it. They don’t think about saying something to somebody.”

John. John, the step-father in the first interview, said that children are naturally “beautiful.” Though he is not the biological father of the children living with him and his partner (Sally), he indicated his acceptance of these children and his expectation that the younger children would see him as a dad: “I love children. All these children are hers; none of them are actually blood mine.” He further said, “But as these two [youngest ones] grow older they will know that I’m not actually theirs but I will raise them and they will know me as ‘Dad.’”

David. David, the father in the second interview shared his positive feelings about children, especially the younger ones: “Well, I do like children. I’ve got five of my own.” Later, he said, I enjoy being around children. ... I teach four year olds [in a church class] and I enjoy it. It’s, it’s a lot of fun because the answers they give are just not what you would ... expect. And they’re serious about it.

Tom. Tom, a focus group participant, expressed a symbiotic relationship with his children along with a view that they bring a significant degree of fulfillment:

I think children are great and super fun and they make things exciting. They make holidays magical. It’s exciting to experience the mundane with a child who’s experiencing stuff for

the first time. It seems very normal to us. So I think it's very fun, very fulfilling, a great learning experience. It is a lot of hard work. I do definitely agree [with Nancy]. ... we talk ... in our family as our family ... being a team ... I also think of my children as my team members and they're there to help me just as much as I'm there to help them.

Serenity. Serenity, one of the focus group participants, expressed her joyous view of children this way: “When I think of kids, I just honestly think kids are just really magic. Like they just absorb so much and can think in all these different ways...” She also spoke of “that little spark that all kids seem to have. It's like magic.”

Nancy. Nancy, a focus group participant, expressed both the joy and the struggle of raising children: “They're a lot of fun and they're worth it, but way more work than I ever anticipated.” Later, she commented that “they're my greatest blessings and they are my greatest teachers too.”

Jerry. Jerry, a focus group participant, expressed the motivation and inspiration he receives from his children:

I think children have a way of inspiring people, or me per se. Or just maybe it's just a reason, another big reason for pushing forward ... another reason for living. ... maybe a purpose in addition to, you know, what we already had.

Nathaniel. Nathaniel, another focus group participant, expressed his enjoyment in watching the process of growth in his daughter:

It's kind of fun to see kind of the world through my five-year-old's eyes—just the way that she's learning and growing and developing. It's really fun to see her work things out and figure, figure out how it is, and how all of it works.

Carma. Carma, one of the focus group participants, placed children at the top of her list of good things in her life: “Children are a blessing. That’s the thought that comes to my mind. . . . they’re probably my greatest joy.”

Further Considerations. The feelings expressed by the parents in this study suggest that they find some light in their lives because of their children. But their positive views may also be a source of light to the children as a result. Comments from each of the parents who participated in the research clearly show that these parents have a genuine sense of wonder and admiration for children. They see their children in hopeful and positive terms, not solely as difficult work.

Some research in social trends suggests that many adult women may see children as more desirable than did women in the past. For example, between 2008 and 2018, the percentage of women at the end of their child-bearing years who had at least one child increased from 82% to 85%. This increase was mainly seen among women with higher educational attainment (Barroso, 2021). This suggests that an increased number of women may have had an interest in having children. On the other hand, manifesting a somewhat mixed signal, the average number of children women had by the end of their child-bearing years has decreased since the mid-1970s, from approximately three children per woman to about two (Barroso, 2021). Nevertheless, the statistic that more than 80% of women have children suggests some positive views of children, while other factors, such as unintended pregnancies, are also likely contributors to the statistic.

Those who participated in this study were all parents with at least one child. Like the women considered in the 85% statistic, they found reasons to have children. The high percentage of women who ever had children suggests that the positive views about children of the parents I studied may be somewhat commonplace.

With the positive sentiments that each parent expressed, it would seem likely that they would take steps and put in effort for the well-being of their children. The data in this study did indeed demonstrate that they are serious about their parenting role.

Serious About Role as Parent – Evidence

One point of evidence of parental commitment to their children's well-being is the fact that of the six focus group participants, at least five of them had attended one or more parenting class; they wanted to learn more about parenting and sought it out. Many of the comments by parents also painted a view that they take their responsibility as parents seriously, as shown below.

Sally. For example, as we were discussing boundaries, Sally explained her view on setting boundaries with her children:

There's a lot of boundaries there inside the home 'cause a kid shouldn't have free will in the house just to do whatever they want. You know, just like them [indicating toddlers present in the room], they're contained that they don't have freewill throughout the house and the older two, they can't just randomly go in the fridge and pick out snacks. You know, they need to ask us first just to make sure that dinner is not being cooked and stuff because they like to do that. They like to try and get snacks in the middle of dinner, and so there's just certain boundaries. They can't just go and do anything.

Here, Sally explained her reasoning about why her children have boundaries and manifested that she has considered an important facet of her parenting and has taken actions that she feels are important to keep her children safe and help the home environment to function for the well-being of the family. She puts in the effort to manage this facet of raising her children. At some point during our interview, Sally looked at the time and then explained her action: "I was just seeing

what time it was and her crying and for her nap, debating if we should let 'em sleep 'cause they'll be going to bed in an hour and 45 minutes." Though not an intended part of the interview, Sally's natural action in the moment gave further evidence that she takes her role as parent seriously, considering her children and weighing the choices and how they might affect the children and the adults present.

John. It was apparent, throughout our interview, that John has thought about several aspects of raising the children he is responsible for. For example, when talking about different levels of maturity of children, he said,

I'm trying to talk her into being trusting, into her older kids, into doing chores. When I was a kid I was vacuuming and doing chores before I was able to walk to the bus stop by myself. So trust comes with age.

John manifested his thoughts on the children doing chores. He felt this was important and was therefore taking steps to convince his fiancé to trust the children enough to do chores. In our discussion about communicating with children, John again made a considered statement:

You can't just tell them, you gotta make sure, like ask them afterwards, "do you understand what I'm saying?" "Do you have any questions, you know, like what you did wrong?" To do this next time, to make sure they understand completely of this situation.

Here, John made it clear that he has thought enough about his role as parent to see that there is more to communicating with children than telling them what to do. Like his fiancé, Sally, John thoughtfully considers his responsibility to raise the children.

David. In my interview with David, while discussing boundaries, he expressed a serious tone in his views:

[You need to send] that message that this is what ... is expected, but you also have to have the rules and that set down, in place, and you can't, as a parent, you can't continually change them to suit your, to meet your needs. ... if they know they can't leave the yard, I mean, that's the first boundary, you know? And then the limits. Yeah. You, you buy a package of cookies or whatever—the limit is maybe you can only eat two or three. ... But I think we do, all of us need boundaries. All of us need limits.

Here, David made it clear that people need to have boundaries and limits that they live within and he views it as his responsibility to ensure his children understand that and learn to live within the boundaries he sets. He sees his personal convenience as subordinate to those expectations and boundaries.

Tom. During the focus group, Tom described a responsibility that he takes seriously for the benefit of his children:

I'm trying to, as a parent, give my children access to the answers to their questions and access to the resources they need to experiment and to learn and the access to give them the structure they need to stay safe while exploring and learning.

Tom implied here that he sees it as his responsibility to provide not only food, clothing, and shelter for his children, but also opportunities and resources to help them learn and grow to their potential. He implied a need for balance between keeping his children safe and giving them freedom to learn and grow. He also sees his example as an important part of raising his children. At one point he said, "I think the parents' attitude towards things is a big, a big influencer on how children perceive life and how, how they go about it." Tom gave the impression that he sees his attitude and example as a parent to be a significant factor in his children's outlook on life. His words suggest that he seriously considers many facets of raising his children.

Serenity. At one point, Serenity expressed concerns over her ability to raise her child: “I have all this anxiety when it comes to my kid 'cause I'm just so worried. I'm like, ‘What if I say the wrong thing or do the wrong thing or this thing happens.’” In other comments that Serenity made, it is clear that she has a solid understanding of various aspects of raising her child, but it’s not without concerns and some worry. Her words suggest that she takes her responsibility as a parent seriously.

Nancy. It became evident in my time of hearing Nancy’s comments during the focus group that she has spent much time learning about parenting from professional sources. It seemed clear to me that she takes parenting seriously. The following comment embodies this point well:

I actually do a lot of parenting classes and the word—both teach them and attend them—and so the word that came to mind honestly was conflicting. ... you go to this parenting class, they say, “do this;” you go to this parenting class says “do this.” Same thing with, you know, parenting books. You've got all sorts of different opinions and ideas. ... I believe that I can go to [God] and He has all the answers and He can lead me and guide me to what sources I need and what's best for my family. I often find when I go to classes, I pick and choose- “That will work for my family.” “That will not work for my kids.” ... So sometimes those parenting classes can be conflicting.

In this comment, Nancy revealed that she has been involved in parenting education at a significant level, both learning and teaching the topic. She also acknowledged that there are conflicting sources of parenting information that can create confusion for a parent. Being serious about her parenting role, she also turns to a higher power for guidance on which sources to follow and which specific content.

Jerry. As with other parents, Jerry made comments that provided evidence that he takes his role as parent seriously. In one comment, he acknowledged his own limitations, but also implied that he works to improve:

I don't think I'm a perfect parent, by any means. And so I've definitely got a lot to learn, you know, and, and tomorrow's a new day and all my kids are different tomorrow. They've never lived that day tomorrow, you know, and neither have I and we're all learning together and as long as, as long as I'm learning and approaching it with, with care and, and not just trying everything, but really, you know, considering and trying to pick the good and striving for bettering myself in parenting then, I think I can't go wrong.

This statement expressed clearly that Jerry knows that he has limitations in his parenting knowledge. But he also implied that he thoughtfully tries to improve on his parenting knowledge, wisely choosing the best of resources he is able to draw from. He takes on the responsibility to close the gaps in his understanding. Another statement showed his willingness to communicate with and listen to his children and evaluate the effects of his approach on them:

I find that oftentimes I have in my mind that they understand or know that something's wrong, but I find that, that if I have not had that clear communication with them and, and come up with maybe an agreed consequence, you know, prior then I can't feel right about a course correction or disciplining them. And surprisingly with that when I have that type of conversation with any of my kids, they are very susceptible and, and even appreciate coming up with a consequence to that wrong choice.

Here, Jerry spoke of times that he has communicated with his children about expectations and consequences and other times when he hasn't. He implied that he had observed and evaluated

those situations and had learned from them. He also revealed that he is conscientious about how he approaches his children. All these are indications of a parent who is serious about his role.

Nathaniel. Nathaniel explained how he and his wife enforce boundaries with his daughter: If throughout the day as we've set the expectation, hey, this is where, you know, how you need to act and what we need to do, if those things aren't met, then as a consequence we won't get ice cream. But if they are, the good consequence is, we get ice cream. So she, she understands the, the good and the bad.

Nathaniel's words indicate his and his wife's commitment to teaching their daughter through the use of boundaries. He describes a scenario that seems to be routine in their home. He talks of expectations they have held their daughter to and how they deal with the child in response to her behavior and whether she met the required standard. It is evident that they make efforts to practice what they believe about raising responsible children.

Carma. During the focus group, Carma manifested a serious attitude about parenting and seemed to have strong opinions on a few issues. She spoke from experience with raising her children, some of whom had already left home. It was apparent that she took parenting seriously. One comment she made regarding openness and honesty with children is a good example of the responsibility with which she raises her children:

Like you have to just be honest with your teenagers. ... With our oldest child, we—so with our last child, I had postpartum psychosis, which is a very serious, life-threatening condition and you can't, you can't hide that from your children. So we found the best solution is to, you know, with the oldest child, he knew everything that was going on, everything. And then with the next child, she knew a little bit less, then a little bit less, right down to the youngest because they, they pick up on every emotion.

In this statement, Carma expressed a parenting concept that she and her husband had learned over time about being candid with their children. She took the lesson seriously and applied it with her children regarding a medical condition that Carma was going through. At a later point, she explained another lesson that she had learned over time:

In disciplining, I have finally learned like, you don't discipline in anger; you discipline in love and you calmly explain to them: "You did this wrong. And now ... because you did that wrong, you're going to have this consequence." And doing that ... the message gets through because a child's brain will shut off as soon as you start yelling and screaming and they won't hear one word that you said and they will not understand.

In this statement, Carma acknowledged that it took her some time to learn that it is important to communicate with children in a calm way, not with anger or yelling, even when they've done something wrong. Implied here was that she has accepted this new approach and uses it with her younger children who are still at home. Changing one's approach when confronted with realities about parenting is evidence of taking it seriously.

Further Considerations. Research literature does not often focus specifically on how serious parents are about their role. Some statistical data, however, can imply their level of interest in their children's well-being. For example, Juliana Horowitz (2020) cited statistics about parents and the coronavirus pandemic. About 64% of parents were concerned about their children falling behind during school closures. As a result of these concerns, 69% of parents reported that they or another adult in the home were "providing additional instruction or resources to their children beyond what" the school was providing (Horowitz, 2020). A majority of parents put in extra efforts to ensure that their children had what they needed to succeed in their schooling. The parents within my study, similarly, indicated that they take their parenting

role seriously, considering and acting on what will best provide for their children. (The data from the parents in my study were gathered in February of 2020, before these school concerns were manifested, so these data do not indicate participants' actions regarding their children's education during the pandemic.)

Concerned for the Future of Their Children - Evidence

A variety of different questions yielded answers from participants that indicated their interest in and concern for their children's future and well-being. Comments below are samplings of the data that support this point.

Sally. Sally expressed some of her hopes for her children: "I didn't graduate high school or anything, so if they can graduate high school that's already a step better than what I did. ... If they can come out better than me, then I know I did my job." Sally expressed a simple hope that her children would advance beyond what she has been able to do and implied that she feels some personal responsibility for achieving that outcome.

John. While talking about various parenting options that parents might choose, John said at one point, "They always have to know that they're loved—no matter what." This statement suggests he is concerned about the emotional well-being of his children, wanting to ensure they feel supported and loved. At another point, while talking about parental expectations of children, he said, "I don't want any of my kids to feel like that's my expectation [referring to hypothetical pressure to play sports]. I don't want them to make me happy; I want them to be happy." In these statements, John expressed an interest in, not his own happiness and well-being, but that of his children. He wants them to feel loved and be happy. Another point John made was about their understanding about life: "I just want to make sure that my kids are gonna go out into the world

and know more than I knew when I left my parents' house. Because there's still stuff I don't know." John expressed his desire to give his children a better foundation for life on their own than what he had when he left his childhood home.

David. When discussing his hopes for his children, David said his goal is to "try to have them be a productive member of society." Providing an example of being a successful and productive member of society, he said, "One of my children is in the Marine reserves right now. ... you know, his younger siblings and those around him look up to him." David's comments here (along with a few others he made) are quite straightforward about his hopes that his children will become adults who contribute to society in positive ways (rather than being a burden or nuisance—implied by other comments). He also mentioned, similar to John's statement, that "a good parent loves their children, no matter what, what they do. They'll support them, no matter what they do." David expressed his concern for his children's emotional well-being, wanting to ensure they feel loved, even if they make mistakes or undesirable choices.

Tom. Tom expressed a desire to provide his children resources to enable them to learn and grow:

I'm trying to, as a parent, give my children access to the answers to their questions and access to the resources they need to experiment and to learn and the access to give them the structure they need to stay safe while exploring and learning.

Tom's statement indicates his hope that his children will be able to learn and grow in positive ways because he strives to provide access to resources that will enable their learning and growth, while keeping them safe.

Serenity. Serenity expressed hopes for mental and emotional well-being for her daughter:

I strive for her to be emotionally intelligent and to be really just mentally aware, like mental health, mentally aware. I feel like if people can have those stepping stones, that's what can branch off into other positive things in life, especially the emotional intelligence. If you aren't quick to anger and you know what really makes you tick, essentially it's gonna help you do the best that you can do.

Here, it is apparent that Serenity thoughtfully works to provide a good foundation for her daughter's well-being, focusing on how her daughter deals with emotional and mental challenges that arise. She seeks to give this foundation expecting that it will benefit her daughter in the present and future.

Nancy. Nancy spoke of *knowing right and wrong* and *being responsible* as important goals for her children:

I think it's important to teach our kids right from wrong and to be able to feel the difference. ... And so teaching my kids ... that it's OK to, to question. It's okay to wonder. It's okay to research and find out, but there are things that are right and there are things that are wrong and to be able to weigh the differences of those things on not only themselves because it's not just about them. ... And so to teach them to be able to distinguish between right and wrong and truth and error is really important to me.

At another point she said, "I want my kids to be responsible and learn to be responsible for themselves and their environment." In these statements, Nancy expressed strong feelings that there are things that are right and things that are wrong. She wants her children to know that as well and live by the knowledge of what's right. Nancy also wants them to consider other people, beyond themselves in making their choices and in taking on responsibilities. She expects that

choosing what's right will provide her children important assets that will help them become moral, productive people.

Jerry. Nancy's husband, Jerry, shared his hopes for his children's future, particularly in how they will eventually interact with people:

One of my biggest goals for my children is to help them experience life and ... all of its blessings and struggles and still come out loving people and not developing hate or disregard ... to help train them to find similarities and, and ways to include others.

Here, Jerry indicated that for him it is a priority to ensure his children become people who unite with others, rather than fostering division. He sees it as his responsibility to help his children develop that sense of unity.

Nathaniel. Nathaniel expressed hopes regarding emotional well-being in his daughter's future:

I think it's good to let kids learn to fail. They're not going to win at every single thing in life. ... I want [my daughter] to know how to overcome those failures so that she can go throughout life and then have that outlook that I'm going to try new things, I'm going to do these and it's okay to fail because I know that I can change and learn to do better.

In this statement, Nathaniel explained his reasoning that parents should help children learn how to approach failure with an optimistic outlook. He acknowledged that it would be unrealistic to expect that anyone (e.g. a child) could be successful at all things that they try. They need to understand that and learn to continue trying new ideas, despite experiences where they weren't successful. Nathaniel wants his daughter to develop the resilience to continue working and progressing, even when she meets failure or disappointments in her life.

Carma. Carma manifested her concern for the future of her children in a comment about four goals she has for her children:

I have four goals for our children to raise them. The first: I want them to love God. The second is: I want them to love their fellow man. The third one is: I want them to be a successful contributor of society. And the fourth one is: I tell them I want grandchildren.

In this comment, Carma stated some of her concerns for her children's future. She wants them to love God in order to receive the good that comes through faith. She wants her children to be people who care about the people around them. She also wants them to contribute to the good of society, not merely taking for themselves. And finally, she hopes that they will have children, providing another generation of her posterity.

Further Considerations. As mentioned in the previous section, 64% of parents were concerned about their children falling behind during the 2020 pandemic school closures (Horowitz, 2020). This indicates at least one facet of their children's future that they were concerned about. As with the parents participating in this study, many parents nationwide have concerns for the future of their children. This statistic for the general population indicates nearly two thirds of parents having concerns about their children's education—a very specific concern, while 100% of the parents in my study expressed various concerns for the future of their children. This larger percentage would be expected when comparing a single concern to multiple concerns.

Concern for the future of children may be somewhat pervasive throughout our culture. Many organizations have been created in the U.S. to focus on the needs, well-being, and futures of children. For example, Save the Children, an organization that has existed since the Great Depression, works with children in poverty to help them reach their full potential (Save the

Children). Share Our Strength is an organization, started in 1984, that works to end hunger and poverty; one of their programs, No Kid Hungry, is focused specifically on ending hunger for children in the U.S. (Share Our Strength). The U.S. Department of Health & Human Services lists about 50 U.S. organizations as their National Child Abuse Prevention Partner Organizations (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, c). The number of organizations working on issues affecting children speaks to both the existence of challenges for children and the interest of many adults to eliminate those challenges, shaping better futures for children. The parents who participated in my research are adults who similarly have an interest in their own children's futures. Lightward Bound also has concerns for children and their futures as adults and how their lives affect the culture that affects us all. Its mission is aimed at elevating the well-being of children and adults throughout our nation by infusing elements of "light."

Views on Parenting

Authoritative Parenting

Based on a number of responses from the participating parents on various parenting topics, I found that each parent is substantially guided by an enhanced version of the authoritative parenting model (please note that this is different from "authoritarian" parenting). The basic authoritative parenting model includes giving parental support, setting boundaries or expectations for behavior, giving appropriate consequences for behavior, and granting some degree of autonomy (Colón, Rodríguez, & Galliher, 2019; Karmaker, 2015; Pinquart, 2017).

In addition to what the basic authoritative parenting model includes, the parents I talked with also consider their own example and the example of others around their children as an important facet of their upbringing. This enhanced authoritative parenting model is shown in Figure 1 below.

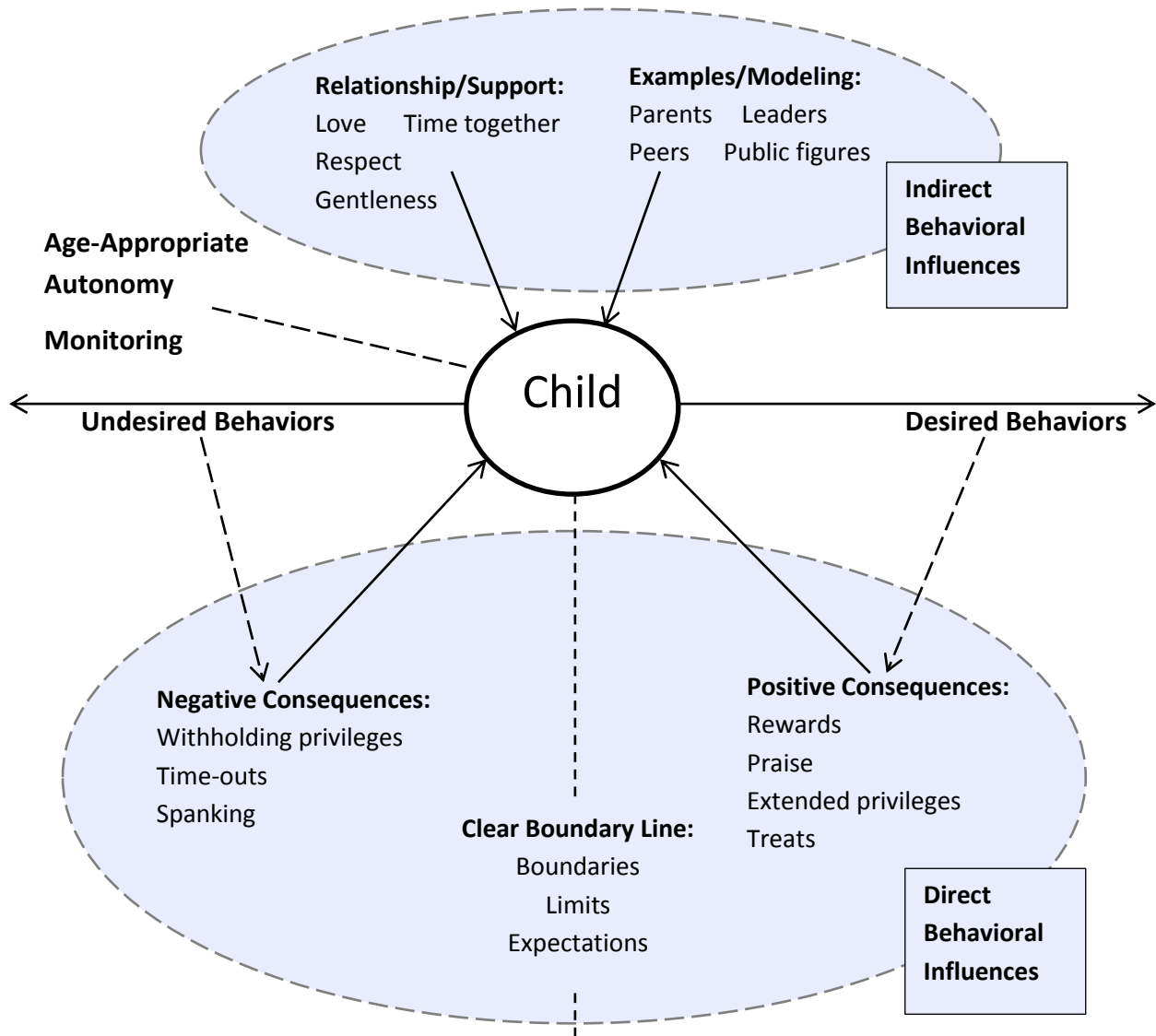


Figure 1
Enhanced Authoritative Parenting Model

The graphic model in Fig. 1 indicates the child as an oval near the center of the diagram. To the left and to the right of the child, arrows show the behaviors the child could choose, labeled as undesirable or desirable, according to the boundaries the parents have set. A vertical dashed line extends from the child, downward, indicating the boundaries, expectations, and limits that the parents set for the child. If the child chooses undesirable behaviors, a dashed arrow at left indicates that the parent may apply a negative consequence to the child. If the child chooses a desirable behavior, another dashed arrow (right side) indicates that the parent may apply a positive consequence to the child. These are shown in a shaded oval at the lower part of the diagram, with the label “Direct Behavioral Influences.” At the top of the diagram, a shaded oval shows indirect behavioral influences; these influences are labeled within the oval as “Relationship-Building” and “Examples/Modeling.” In this diagram, I chose the label “Relationship/Support” in place of “giving parental support” mentioned above in the basic authoritative parenting model; I felt it was a more fitting label for the types of parental behaviors included. Autonomy that allows the child to make age-appropriate choices for themselves and monitoring the child’s behavior are indicated with a sloped dashed line on the left side of the diagram.

All nine parents who participated in this study made comments that gave evidence that they follow the elements of the model in Fig. 1 to significant, but varying degrees. Their comments demonstrated, for the most part, a fluent knowledge of these elements, suggesting that they have heard of them, believe they are important, and that they have had sufficient practice applying them that they could speak about them thoughtfully and in some detail. Selected words from each parent follow, demonstrating their knowledge of and adherence to this model of parenting.

Sally. I interviewed Sally together with her fiancé, John. Sally's comments throughout our interview portrayed a parent who believes in the elements of authoritative parenting.

Relationship/supportiveness. Her comments suggested that she does see value in building a relationship with and supporting her children: "My older kids, I have normal conversations with them like they were another adult, I mean kid-friendly conversations, but I conversate with them like I was talking to another adult." This statement is evidence that Sally puts her children at a level equal with herself, rather than looking down on them. She will talk with them as intelligent people. When I asked what she and her fiancé believe can help their children be successful, as they hope, Sally said, "Knowing that we're there for them. They have to have that structure and support for them to become good people." Again, her words manifest someone who believes it is important to support her children and be there for them. The following comment that she made suggests an even greater level of support for a child: "I mean a good parent takes care of their kids' needs first over like their own and anybody else." Sally's words here indicate an interest in being selfless with her children, wanting to give them all that they need to grow, develop, and be successful.

Example/modeling. Sally's comments indicated an understanding of some of the effects that examples can have on children. For example, she said,

They learn from watching, so if they are given a good example ... if they didn't have the love and support and the family that they do and say they had bad parents or something that's gonna set a worse example for kids, showing them that there's no structure, there's no house, there's no foundation or nothing permanent, you know.

Here Sally compared the parenting that she and her fiancé practice with hypothetical parents who are bad examples for their children. She emphasized that the example of the parents will affect

the children in some way. She also gave examples of sources of examples that influence children: “Their parents, siblings, ... their grandparents. People that they see daily, their babysitter, the other kids too at daycare.” In this statement, Sally acknowledged that parents are not the only examples that influence children, but many others in their lives will also provide those examples.

Setting boundaries, limits, expectations. Sally’s comments also indicate a view that setting boundaries with children is important. An example follows:

There's a lot of boundaries there inside the home 'cause a kid shouldn't have free will in the house just to do whatever they want. You know, just like them [toddlers present in the room], they're contained that they don't have freewill throughout the house and the older two, they can't just randomly go in the fridge and pick out snacks. You know, they need to ask us first just to make sure that dinner is not being cooked and stuff because they like to do that. ... They can't just go and do anything.

In this comment, Sally made it clear that she doesn’t believe a child should be allowed to have free reign to do anything he/she wants. She believes children should have boundaries or limits and takes steps to set them and enforce them.

Autonomy. While, Sally did indicate that she believes in some level autonomy for children, she mainly spoke of what goes on in their minds. She said that their autonomy could include “their likes and dislikes. I think that's one big thing because nobody else can control what you like and what you dislike, that's all on them.” As with the previous statement, she also mentioned beliefs, a characteristic within the mind:

[Religious beliefs], abnormal things like you know, ghosts and you know, unicorns. Just random things. ... If you want to believe in unicorns then they can believe in unicorns, you know, that's their decision. That's them as a person to make those decisions.

In both of these statements, Sally indicated that children have control of things that go on in their minds. Their preferences and beliefs can't be controlled by others.

Monitoring. In Sally's comments, she alluded to monitoring a child's activities, being aware of where they are and what they are doing. For example, she said:

But it's not a matter of if you caught them or not. It's a matter of if you were able to help correct the issue. 'Cause you didn't point out that they lie every single time, it doesn't mean ... that they're going to stop. They may continue to lie. So you need to catch them doing something bad.

Here, Sally referred to catching children doing something wrong, which suggests that the parent would be observing or monitoring the child enough to catch them when they do something wrong. Immediately before this statement she gave an example of a child coloring on a wall and then lying, saying they didn't do it. She hinted here at the importance of monitoring children to catch them in their misbehaviors in order to correct them.

Negative consequences. Sally indicated that she believes in both positive and negative consequences for behaviors, depending on the child's actions.

Like with these two, if they were to hit each other then ... we would put them in their crib or something for their punishment, where they're separated from each other. Or I tell my older kids not to do something, not to get candy, and then they go and sneak candy, they're gonna be punished for it and so usually taking something away, grounding them to the room, or grounding them from being able to go outside and play.

In this statement, Sally gave a couple of examples of behaviors where she might choose to use a negative consequence. One was if her two toddlers were hitting each other. In this case, the consequence would be that they would each be placed in their crib where they would be separated from each other. The other example was with her older children sneaking candy, presumably when they knew they weren't supposed to. In that instance, the consequence might be taking away something of value, maybe a privilege; or perhaps she would ground them to their room or to stay inside the house. Additionally, she made it clear that the consequences she would give aren't a one-size-fits-all sort of thing: "It depends on the situation too, what they did. It's, the punishment is gonna depend on the severity of what they did. Like, the punishment is not gonna be the same for everything." Each punishment or negative consequence will depend on the nature of the undesired behavior of the child.

Positive consequences. As mentioned above, Sally indicated that she also believes in giving positive consequences for a child's good behaviors. For example, she said, "They don't get movies on week nights because of school, but when they've been good and stuff, then we'll let them have a movie on a week night. So they see that as like a reward." Here, Sally offered an example of something the children normally don't get that is sometimes used as a reward or positive consequence. Normally, they don't get to watch movies on week nights, but if they've been particularly good on a particular day, they may get to watch a movie. In another part of our conversation, she included some other possible rewards that could be given: money, treats, games, and toys.

John. Similar to his fiancée, Sally, John also demonstrated in his comments that he believes in the elements of the authoritative model of parenting.

Relationship/supportiveness. John made a few statements that expressed supportive characteristics. One involved communicating with children:

You can't just tell them; you gotta make sure, like ask them afterwards, "do you understand what I'm saying?" "Do you have any questions?" Like what they did wrong. ... to make sure they understand completely of this situation.

John made the point, here, that a parent shouldn't just tell children information, such as expectations or a reason they are being disciplined, but should also communicate a little deeper to ensure the child understood the information and to give the opportunity to ask further questions. Good communication is essential to relationships and being supportive. Another very important and related statement John made was that "they always have to know that they're loved—no matter what." He was saying that there should never be a time when children don't feel loved by their parents and even when they do something wrong, they still should feel that their parents love them.

Example/modeling. John's words give evidence that he believes that his example and those of others will influence children, for good or bad. For example, he pointed out how violence in their environment can influence children later on: "When a kid sees violence, further on in life they might think that's fine." He didn't leave much question about this. If a child sees it, he has a good chance of imitating it. In more general terms, he said this again: "I think since they pretty much absorb anything, at a young age, anybody or anything that comes in their life with a negative or positive impact, they're gonna suck it in." Again, he made the point that if children see something, there is a good chance they will in some way adopt it. At another point, he said that

you gotta lead by example. They're not going to know ... cigarettes are bad. They're not going to know drinking's bad. They're not going to know all this stuff until somebody says, "Hey, that's bad." So I'm gonna raise 'em to know...

In this statement, John expressed the need of a parent (or other responsible adult) to set an example for children and intentionally let them know what is wrong or right. There are a lot of behaviors that people do, but children won't know that something is wrong unless there is someone there who tells them.

Setting boundaries, limits, expectations. At least on some level, John expressed the idea that there should be boundaries or expectations that a parent sets for a child. A significant boundary that John repeated more than once was that a child should obey his/her parent after being told only once:

Whenever you have to tell them more than once. ... like the age of nine, maybe eight and up, if you got to tell them more than once, then I think time out or an explanation [would be the consequence]. If you had to tell them more than twice, then spanking or sentences. My parents made me scrub the walls with a toothbrush [as a "sentence"].

In that statement, John expressed a simple expectation for children: that they must respond to a parent's first request. If the parent has to repeat the request, the child would receive a negative consequence.

Autonomy. John only briefly commented on autonomy. He agreed with his fiancée that children should have control of their own beliefs. He also implied that children should have some control of their own comfort at home: "In your own house specifically, it's like your domain; it's the one place you should feel most comfortable."

Monitoring. John implied that parents should monitor children in order to correct their behaviors. For instance, he said,

I feel like if a child gets away with doing something wrong ... They're going to continue to do it wrong. And I feel like if you don't catch him the first time and the second time and the third time they do something wrong then they're going to continue to do it and think it's okay to do it, whether you tell them it's not.

In this statement, John suggested that it is important for parents to be aware of instances where the child is doing something wrong, so that the parent can correct the child's behavior and ensure that the child knows it's not right. This theme continued in another statement:

I don't feel like you have to catch every time they do it wrong. I feel like if you at least get them like one time, either lying or doing something bad or good, just one time would change what they do in the future because then they know whether it's good or bad, whether they should or shouldn't do it.

In this statement, John implied the need for monitoring when he said that it may only take one time of catching a child doing a particular thing wrong for them to change their behavior and do better. Along with that he also said it isn't necessary to catch every instance of a particular wrong behavior by the child.

Negative consequences. John's comments during our interview showed a strong belief in the use of negative consequences or "punishments." A good example of this is the following statement:

If I catch them in the act, the punishment's worse. If they come and tell me, like if they took something, the punishment is not gonna be as severe as if I find out. ... But I mean,

like, catch them in the act as in like they're taking money out of my wallet and I walk in the room, that's a—bam! Punishment, grounding, do the dishes for two months.

In this statement, John expressed his view about punishment as a consequence for bad behavior of a child. While he made it clear that he would use some form of punishment for undesired behaviors, he made a distinction between discovering their wrongdoing himself versus them coming to him and telling him. If they tell him before he finds out, they would receive a less severe punishment.

Positive consequences. During our interview, John gave some brief input regarding positive consequences. He contributed to the list of possible rewards that his fiancée mentioned, adding: games, T.V. time, and movies. As for desirable behaviors that might earn a reward, he said “when I don't have to ask them more than once.” Though he didn't add a lot to the discussion on positive consequences, he did agree with the concept of rewarding children for positive behaviors, such as not needing to be asked more than once to do something.

David. As with the parents just discussed, David also espouses the various elements of the authoritative parenting model as demonstrated in selected comments below.

Relationship/supportiveness. David made some points that show his interest in supporting his children and keeping a good relationship with them. One such statement was that “a good parent loves their children, no matter what ... they do; they'll support them, no matter what they do.” Here David speaks of supporting a child regardless of bad choices he or she might make. As a parent, he believes that even in those cases where children choose behaviors that are undesirable to the parent, he would still choose to support and love them. Another example is:

I think the biggest thing [about communicating with children] is don't talk down to them. They do understand that they may not be on your level, especially when they're younger, but if you continually talk down to them, they're always gonna think that they're not as good as you...

This comment suggests a feeling of respect toward children. This is an important aspect of a good, supporting relationship with children. Though David was focusing on how it may make a child feel, this statement also implies that he follows this principle of being respectful toward his children. Further evidence that he makes efforts to keep a good relationship with his children is shown by this statement: "I try to text my kids every day or every morning and whether it's have a good day ... [or] whatever..." David made this statement about communicating with his children at times when he might not be able to speak to them verbally.

Example/modeling. David's words give evidence that he believes that setting good examples is important for children. For example, he said that example plays a major role in it, whether good or bad. Let's say you have a rule or whatever in your house that there's no eating in the living room. Well if you're eating in the living room and saying, "well, I'm the adult, I can do this," what's that teaching your child? "Well, dad can do it. Why can't I?"

Here David expressed the idea that children watch a parent's behavior and often want to do what they see their parents do. He also implied that they might be sensitive to hypocrisy when a parent tells children they aren't allowed to do something the parent is doing. He continued with an example from his own family:

But when you set the example, when you have the rules, you need to follow them as well. And I'll, I'll give an example. Just in my personal life uh when my oldest kids were

younger, we used to set aside a half hour an evening reading. TV was turned off, everything was turned off. And we read whether it was a magazine, whether it was a comic book or a novel, whatever, that's you read. One time I was like, well, I want to check the score of the game. And my, one of my children says, no, we can't do that. You have to wait. Okay. He, he set the example for me at that moment. Okay. You know, this is the time we set aside, this is the expectation and that's what we did. ... so I had to wait 'till later to find out who won the game.

Here, David gave anecdotal evidence that he takes seriously how his example affects his children. He could have argued with his children that he is the parent so he can do what he wants, but he didn't. Instead, he listened to his children's observation that they were all supposed to be reading during the time that they had agreed on. He put away his phone and continued to read with the children.

Setting boundaries, limits, expectations. David also indicated that he sees value in boundaries and limits for children, as well as for adults:

When they're younger, if they know they can't leave the yard, I mean, that's the first boundary, you know? And then the limits. Yeah. You, you buy a package of cookies or whatever; the limit is maybe you can only eat two or three....But I think we do, all of us need boundaries. All of us need limits.

Here David gave examples of limits and boundaries, such as a child staying within a home's yard or only eating a specified number of cookies. But he didn't only give examples of boundaries, but expressed that boundaries are important for all of us. Additionally, he referred to a parent setting the boundaries or limits: "You can say kids are kids, let them play, let them whatever else. But you also have to set some expectations for them. Like, 'you need to brush your teeth

before bed.’ ‘You need to make your bed.’” In this statement, David referred to a phrase people sometimes use: “kids will be kids.” He then contrasted a lax attitude toward children with setting expectations, which he viewed as important and necessary.

Autonomy. David expressed the importance of autonomy for children:

I think they should be able to control different aspects [of their lives]. Like, I mean, when they're younger you can't always pick out their clothes for them. They need to learn how to ... pick out their clothes. ... that's one thing they can control. ... And if mom or dad's continually picking it out, you know, maybe they won't learn how to control another aspect of their life.

Here, David stated clearly that children should be allowed to control some aspects of their lives. He gave an example of letting younger children pick out their own clothes to wear. He also made the point that through autonomy, children can learn for themselves how to do things.

Monitoring. While David didn't specifically refer to monitoring a child's behavior, some comments did imply some level of monitoring. For example, when I asked him about how important it is to catch everything wrong a child does, he said:

I don't think it's that important because they do need to make mistakes and learn how to be able to correct it. Yeah, and I, I, you know, depending on how severe the thing is, you know, then yeah, you want to catch it. ... And I just think that if you catch every single thing wrong that they do, ... and especially if you're correcting it or showing them how to correct it, they may not learn on their own ... how to correct something. I don't want them to, I wouldn't want them to hide all their mistakes from me. But, you know ... maybe some ... you don't necessarily need to know, you know. Well maybe they skipped one class at school today. Do you need to know that? ... But if it's a continual thing, then yes.

Here David implied a moderate level of monitoring of a child's behavior. He didn't advocate an extreme level, but said that a parent doesn't need to know everything that a child does wrong. He also said that it is important for the parent to know about more serious issues, such as a child routinely skipping classes at school. This suggests the need to, at least occasionally, monitor the activities of the child.

Negative consequences. David's words demonstrated that he considers consequences to be an important part of raising children. He said that "[children] need to know when the parent says, no, that's not right, they can't just go do it. And if they do, there's consequences and, you know, for each ... action, there's a reaction whether good or bad." In this statement, David gave some reasoning why consequences are necessary. A child must know that the parent is the authority and will enforce the boundaries with the children. David made it clear, also, that negative consequences are important:

Each child is different. I mean, with one of my kids, I just had to raise my voice and that was good enough. Another one, you had to actually spank him and [with] another one that didn't even work because they would encourage you to do it more. But yeah, when they're, when they're younger, you need to, they need to know that that action wasn't, wasn't good what they did. So you discipline them.

Here, David made the point that any negative consequences need to be adjusted to each child, since they are different. He gave evidence of these differences from raising his own children. He emphasized that with younger children, a parent disciplines children to let them know when they've done something wrong. Of course, "discipline" was used here to refer specifically to negative consequences.

Positive consequences. David also spoke of positive consequences, although it seemed with a somewhat lesser emphasis than for the negative consequences. In one statement about positive consequences, David said,

I think there, again, depending on the age you might have monetary rewards, maybe a candy bar, you know, a treat of some sort. Just depending, I guess on ... whatever they've accomplished or that. But I think you also have to not have it be an expectation all the time, you know, or even depending on the child, one child may get straight A's all the time and you're not necessarily gonna reward them. The other child struggles to get Cs. Hey, they get straight Cs. You may reward them for that.

Here, David suggested a few types of rewards, which include money and edible treats, for something a child did well. He made sure to emphasize that rewards or positive consequences shouldn't be something a child expects all the time. He also expressed the view that rewards should partly depend on the capacity of the child; something good that requires more struggle merits a greater reward. At a different point in our interview, David emphasized the need to tell children when they've done well: "You know, just do the reinforcing of, okay, you did this, you did this good, you did this right." This implied a more verbal sort of positive consequence.

Tom. As with the previous parents, Tom's words manifested elements of the enhanced authoritative parenting model of Figure 1. Tom was one of the focus group participants.

Relationship/supportiveness. The following comment by Tom paints a picture of a family working together as a team: "And so ... [the children,] they are part of the team and they help with everything that we need to get done as a family. And so that's, that's really fun to have them be part of my team." Here Tom spoke of his family as a team that works together to accomplish

what they need to do. He seemed to suggest that the parents support the children and the children support the parents. Implied in the statement was that relationships can develop and grow stronger as the family members work together. The idea of supporting his children shows up more strongly in the following:

I'm trying to, as a parent, give my children access to the answers to their questions and access to the resources they need to experiment and to learn and the access to give them the structure they need to stay safe while exploring and learning.

While this statement hinted at autonomy, it was also a strong statement about parents supporting their children. Tom told here about providing basic support for his children's intellectual growth and their safety. Again, there was an implied relationship as he provides his children with information and resources. It is also implied that he takes time to understand his children enough to figure out what resources and support the children need.

Example/modeling. Clearly, Tom believes that examples that children see will influence them. For example he said:

I feel like a lot of times, example is more influential than like the instruction that you give and a child is a much more likely to see how you're doing it and follow that than to listen to the instructions of how to do it. And I think that's just kind of natural. I think even adults do that. We tend to see how people are doing things and follow that more than the, the instructions we're given.

Tom stated that the examples around children often have more influence on them than what they are told they should do. He went a little further, too, suggesting that all people tend to follow some examples that they see around them, whether adult or child.

Setting boundaries, limits, expectations. Tom related a story that has influenced his views on setting boundaries and limits for children:

So I had a buddy. And he, he really struggled growing up because he didn't really have expectations and boundaries. And it, it kind of made him feel insecure and he reacted poorly in a lot of situations because he didn't know how far he could go or where the boundaries were, what the rules were, what was OK and what was not.

The story of Tom's friend helped him see that it can be detrimental to a child to grow up with no one giving him boundaries and limits to guide his behavior. His friend made decisions that were not ideal, apparently because he didn't know where the boundary lines were. Tom continued on, giving his personal views on boundaries:

I don't think you need really a lot of really strict boundaries, but having some I think is important. ... And ... being given guidelines I think brings not only security but safety as well because you ... feel confident in knowing what is acceptable and what is not and what are the consequences when you don't, and what happens when you do. And I, I think it just allows someone to feel a little bit more safe with themselves and the situations around them.

Here, Tom said that it is important to set boundaries for children, but they don't need to be overly strict and there don't need to be too many. He believes that when children are given boundaries and limits, it helps them feel more confident in various situations and it helps keep them safer.

Autonomy. Tom also sees value in giving autonomy to children, as his comments make clear:

I think it's great to give ... [children] the opportunity to be in control of stuff. And I think it depends on their maturity level, which is usually affected also by their age level. ... But I think it, it, it allows them to become that great adult if they are learning how to be able to make their own decisions. And so I, I think that is important.

Tom made it clear that he believes that it's good for children to have control of some things in their lives. One reason is that it can help them to learn to make their own decisions, rather than always needing to be told what to do. He also made the point that the amount of autonomy or the things children have control of should depend on their maturity and age. Another comment that Tom made (also included in the relationship and support section above) demonstrates his interest in providing an environment that allows for some autonomy within bounds:

I'm trying to, as a parent, give my children access to the answers to their questions and access to the resources they need to experiment and to learn and the access to give them the structure they need to stay safe while exploring and learning.

In this statement, Tom said he wants to provide various resources and information that his children can then use to learn from. He believes this learning comes through some autonomy to explore and experiment with the various resources within the boundaries that have been set.

Monitoring. Only one statement that Tom made suggested a sense of monitoring a child's activities: "If a child gets away with doing something wrong, then they might not learn the lesson they needed to." This statement was a response to a sentence completion question that I asked; in the first part he repeated my words and only the last part are his own words. But the statement does show that he believes that it is important for a parent to observe their child enough to recognize when they do wrong things because otherwise there are things the child might not learn.

Negative consequences. During the focus group, Tom agreed with another parent's comment that

if the consequences aren't going to create a learning opportunity, then it's not necessarily going to help the situation, because the whole point of having a consequence or creating a punishment is to have the child learn from that scenario to move forward and make better choices ...

Tom agreed that negative consequences should be used only to create a learning situation for a child rather than be a reflex response to the child's behavior. He continued with his own thought: "As a parent you should be protecting your child and so if the punishment is harming the child ... it's crossing that line ..." In this statement and in agreeing with the other parent's comment, Tom indicated his acceptance that negative consequences may have a place in parenting. But he insisted that those consequences had boundaries and limits that a parent shouldn't cross.

Positive consequences. Tom spoke words that were more supportive of positive consequences, or rewards:

I mean, if you're rewarding them as in praising them, I think you can do that more frequently, right? If it's rewarding them is like giving them money or buying them a car, you know, less frequently. So like, I think there's, there's a broad spectrum of ways to reward your child there. And I think just as like, if we have consequences for negative behavior, it should be equally, if not more you reward them for positive behavior. And I like the, the natural consequences and the like, pointing out the positive natural consequences of your actions and, and how, you know, there's positive ones too. So like being, "Yay, you did a good job! Since you got good grades, now you can continue being on the sports team," you know, "that you wanna do and, you know, that's great."

Here, Tom pointed out that there are many types of rewards that a parent can use for their child's desirable behaviors and that different types of rewards should be used in different ways, depending on the nature of the rewards. He also compared positive and negative consequences, saying that positive consequences should be at least equal in frequency to the negative or even more frequent. Tom suggested that his favorite types are natural consequences and believes in pointing them out to children to help them recognize when their behavior naturally created a desirable consequence.

Serenity. Serenity was somewhat vocal on a few of the topics we discussed in the focus group. She expressed a very positive style of parenting that she uses with her three-year-old daughter. She needed to leave the focus group before we were done, but she still had made enough statements before she left to support her use of the authoritative model of parenting.

Relationship/supportiveness. Serenity spoke of various ways that she supports her daughter and maintains a relationship with her. For example, she spoke about how she supports her daughter's mental well-being:

With my kid, ... I strive for her to be emotionally intelligent and to be really just mentally aware, like mental health, mentally aware. I feel like if people can have those stepping stones, that's what can branch off into other positive things in life, especially the emotional intelligence.

In this statement, manifesting support of her daughter's long-term well-being, Serenity spoke of her efforts to help her daughter develop emotional intelligence and to be aware of her own mental well-being. She made it clear that she believes that these will help her daughter in

positive ways. In another statement, she talked about some things she does that can help build her relationship with her daughter:

With my kid, I just want to make sure that there's that communication and respect. ... But it's so cool to see a kid like when you just constantly push all this love and affection and just watch them just kind of like, like the sponge, just absorb all of it and they're just like ready to take all that in.

In this statement, Serenity indicated that communication with her daughter and treating her with respect are priorities in her parenting. She also implied that giving love and affection are priorities too. Additionally, she gave the impression that her child thrives on these parental actions.

Example/modeling. Serenity emphasized the influence that examples have on children, particularly the example of a parent.

I feel like examples, it's just one of the biggest parts of being a, a parent. Kids are sponges, they absorb everything and that includes what you say in your actions. Like there's little things that I don't even realize that I say all the time until my kid starts repeating it. She'll ask to do something, I'll just tell her, "go for it." I didn't realize how annoying that was until my child, every time I was like, "do you need this?" she'll say "go for it." ... Kids are just sponges. You got to be a good example.

Here, Serenity used the metaphor of a sponge to explain how children absorb many things they see and hear around them. She emphasized that it is important for parents to set a good example for children and gave an example from her own interactions with her child that demonstrated the point.

Setting boundaries, limits, expectations. Serenity spoke of boundaries and the need to have some balance when setting them:

I feel like if boundaries are done right, it creates a nice perimeter where a kid has still the option to like be a kid and explore. You know, you create too stiff a boundaries and then that kid's completely restrained, can't do what they want to do and explore and they just kind of, I think, I feel like kids just kind of get this stuck feeling, whereas you can have crazy wide boundaries and sometimes kids, you know, the kids need that bit of structure, otherwise they're going to just wander off because kids are always testing limits. Like that's just, it's literally hardwired in their brain. So if you, you have to make sure that boundary is just, it's healthy, it can't be really wide and really small, otherwise it's gonna just, you know, have issues.

Here Serenity acknowledged that children need some boundaries set by parents, but made the point that there is a middle ground for boundaries where they are not too wide open and not overly restrictive.

Autonomy. Serenity sees importance in granting some level of autonomy based on a child's age. The following statement she made demonstrates this:

I feel like a big thing has to do with age when it comes to what a kid controls in their life. I mean, you know, you can have a teenager decide, you know, when they need to wash their laundry and who can use the car when you would not let a five-year-old do that, you know? But you know, with my three-year-old, she gets control over certain chores, like she gets to fold washcloths and she helps sweep you know, and things like that. So I think it's just kind of putting the ball a little in the kid's court, it's just generally the best option.

In this statement, Serenity acknowledged value in giving some amount of autonomy and expressed her view that the amount of autonomy a parent gives a child should depend on his or her age. She also shared some ways that she lets her three-year-old daughter take on some autonomy in helping with chores. She continued, saying that giving some control or autonomy to the child is the best option.

Monitoring. Serenity's words suggested that she believes in some form of monitoring of a child's activities:

If a child gets away with doing something wrong, I feel like I need to either ... reevaluate where I was in the situation, because my kid's three or we see what we can do to make that a learning opportunity so my kid can understand why that wasn't okay.

Here, Serenity made the point that if her child got away with something wrong, she as a parent would need look at her own parenting and supervision of her child, since the child is only three years old. She also said that as a parent she would want to take what the child did wrong and find a way to make it into a learning opportunity to teach the child why the action wasn't a good choice.

Negative consequences. From Serenity's comments, it was evident that she believes that there are times to use negative consequences, but she doesn't believe that spanking should be one of the options. She also tends to prefer to help her daughter *solve* a behavior problem, rather than impose a consequence, as the following indicates:

In a lot of cases, if she does something that she knows she's not supposed to do, then it's up to her to figure out what can we do to resolve the situation. And we work together to problem-solve in most cases, like I've had her do typical kid stuff, like draw on the walls and so then we had to sit and scrub the walls.

In this comment, Serenity explained the nature of negative consequences she might use when her daughter does something she knows she should. She has her daughter help figure out how to fix whatever problem her behavior created. She gave an example of applying this process when her daughter colored on a wall. Her firm resolve against using spanking as a consequence is quite evident in this statement: “I firmly believe that spanking a three-year-old, especially, just is not necessary, you know, that's my opinion.” She further elaborated on her aversion to using physical discipline with her child:

I kind of feel like in the end if an adult pissed you off, would you spank an adult? You know, it's kind of having, in my opinion, having that respect for the child ... I don't want to lay my hands on you, just like, I don't want you to lay your hands on me. I want to teach you that when you're upset and you do something wrong ... it's supposed to be handled calmly and respectfully.

In this comment, Serenity compared a parent-child situation to how two adults should treat each other when one of them does something wrong or is upset. She made the point that we don't go spank an adult for something they did and we wouldn't want someone doing that to us when we mess up. She completed her thought by saying that she wants to teach her child that these situations should be handled with respect and with a calm demeanor.

Positive consequences. Serenity made comments that suggest she believes more in using positive consequences than negative. To her, praise is a great consequence for young children who've done a good thing or did something well. For example,

[For] kids under five, six years old, like virtually anything that they do that's somewhat positive, you just kind of reward it. Like kid took off the shirt, “you did it!” Kid put on a shirt, “you did it!” Like just constant reassurance and positivity. And I feel like once they

get older it's more of like tasks that they put more of that effort into. Like even if it's more of a minor task, like, "oh you, you cut a perfect circle; that took a lot of work."

Here, Serenity gave examples of verbal praise as a positive consequence for simple things a young child does right. For these young children, she said it should be frequent. With older children, she said they should receive those positive consequences for things that took a lot of effort or routine things that they did exceptionally well. She also believes in small physical objects or activities as rewards, which she uses with her daughter:

When it comes to good rewards ... there's two different things that I do in my house. We have our wish list. So I have a kid that wants to point out every single thing in the store and always wants different things. So I keep a notebook and write down anything that [she] might want and whenever, you know, she has something coming up or she's just been like extra good and I'm like, "Hey, maybe we should get a surprise today." Then we can go back to the list. ... And then the other thing is just really just I think praising or like finding ways to be creative. ... Like I have a big craft bin, it's just like stickers and paint and it's a mess. And like, that's generally like--a big reward in our house is like, just getting to go crazy with the craft bin versus only getting to, you do like a select activity.

Here, Serenity explained some of the types of rewards she uses with her daughter. One type of reward is to get something from the store that her daughter had previously shown an interest in, which Serenity keeps in a wish list notebook. She also has a craft bin that she will pull out as a reward and let her daughter have fun trying different craft things from the bin.

Nancy. Nancy, like other parents, made comments that support the authoritative parenting model, but for a couple of the elements, her comments only subtly support them. However, she

has attended and taught parenting classes that do include those elements, despite not making strong comments about them in our focus group.

Relationship/supportiveness. This is one element of authoritative parenting that Nancy didn't directly comment on. She did, however, make statements that did suggest concepts related to this, like support of physical needs, such as this statement:

I think another big effect for kids is, is just the basics. Do they have shelter, food, water, clothing? And also their parents' attitudes towards those things. If there's a lot of stress in the home about whether there's going to be those things in the home, then ... it trickles down to the kids and that really affects them.

Here, Nancy made the point that children will be affected by how well their basic needs (food, shelter, etc.) are met and the parents' stress over supplying those needs. During the focus group, Nancy made it clear that she has put in significant effort to learn about what it takes to be a good parent. The following shows that:

When you read that statement, it made me think of Dr. Siegel's work in brain development ... and doing foster care. You know, we went to a symposium where he talked about how the neuropathways in our brains are always growing and changing and adapting. And so with that, you know, not only biological, but environmental factors play a big role on our children's development. And he would always tell us as foster parents, "you need to stop saying you're not biological parents because you are changing neuropathways and kids' brains--that's biology."

In this statement, she gave evidence that she had enough interest in the well-being of children that she had attended a symposium that covered the topic. She also indicated that she was a foster

parent at some time, again suggesting an interest in children. Another statement that suggested a viewpoint and attitude of supporting children was this one:

If we don't compartmentalize kids, I think that then we get the adults that do things that no one ever has thought of. That's when we get people that land on the moon and fly in the sky and go to the depths of the sea because there was no limitation. And so they felt like they could do anything. There was no, "this is what you have to do at this age."

Here, Nancy expressed her vision of children not being overly controlled, with too many restrictions on what they can and can't do. That vision also included what may happen when these children grow up, accomplishing things beyond typical expectations. All these statements taken together suggest a person who believes in being supportive to her children and one who would spend time interacting with them, thus developing their relationship. In response to another parent's comment, she said, "I think she said it: 'Nurture their natural.'" This is significant because she was apparently drawn to the notion of nurturing children as well as the idea of accepting the child's nature and working with that. These also suggest support and relationship-building.

Example/modeling. Nancy made the following comment regarding how significant examples are for the upbringing of children:

I think anything they're exposed to, so that goes for media sources, TV, if they go to school exposure there, things they see at the grocery store. I mean, anything that they're, like [Serenity] said, they're sponges. So anything that they come in contact with really, they're using as an example and processing ... and trying to figure out where they fit with it. So really everything, literally everything in their life ... affects them.

Nancy's words here suggest that she believes strongly that the many things that surround children will influence them. Whether they see something in the media or at the store, or anywhere else, it will influence them in some way.

Setting boundaries, limits, expectations. Nancy expressed a somewhat subtle concept of setting boundaries or limits. For example, she spoke of natural consequences: "We find that natural occurring consequences, positive and negative are usually more effective. And then we don't have to ... remember them either 'cause they just are naturally going to happen." In this statement, Nancy implied that some of the boundaries that she would use with her children are already set by environment and circumstances; crossing those boundaries will have natural consequences that are not imposed by parents. She also expressed a sense of moral boundaries that she wants for her children:

I think it's important to teach our kids right from wrong and to be able to feel the difference. I think in our changing world we're trying to shift to this notion that there is no right and no wrong and I think we're seeing a lot of backlash for that. So call me old school or whatever, but I think that there are things that are right and wrong, contribute to society and don't contribute to society. ... And so to teach them to be able to distinguish between right and wrong and truth and error is really important to me.

Nancy emphasized the need to teach children what is right and what is wrong and contrasted this with cultural messages that suggest there are no definite right or wrong things. By teaching her children that there are things that are definitely right and others that are definitely wrong, she is setting boundaries for them to follow.

Autonomy. Several comments Nancy made suggest a sense of granting autonomy to her children. For example, she spoke of her children being responsible for themselves:

I want my kids to be responsible and learn to be responsible for themselves and their environment. ... [As they grow,] responsibilities should hopefully, naturally start to turn over to where they're in control, if you will, but responsible for their surroundings in their life.

Nancy said here that she wants to see her children become responsible for themselves, taking on more responsibility and autonomy as they grow. She expects them to take control of some things in their lives.

Monitoring. Some of Nancy's comments implied a need to monitor children's activities. For example, she said she would give "consequences for course correction of behavior, of right and wrong, things like that." Those course corrections, of course, imply a need to know what course the child is on or, in other words, monitoring. In response to my question about a child getting away with something wrong, she said that "they may become entitled. Like, you know, when people get away, we even see adults that get away with things they do wrong and they create a habitat of entitlement in their lives." Here, she made the connection that if a parent is not aware of something a child does wrong, the child may develop a sense of entitlement regarding that action. She implied that such entitlement would be undesirable. And of course the statement, as a whole, implied that it would be necessary to monitor children in order to avoid the resulting entitlement.

Negative consequences. In her comments about negative consequences, Nancy adamantly rejected the notion of "punishing" her children. She would rather give "course corrections" or consequences, as indicated in the following:

I would say maybe there's some consequences or some course correction, but I have no desire in my being to punish my kids. I want to teach my kids that there's consequences to life and things like that ... I don't think I would ever punish my children.

Nancy said she would not punish her children. Presumably, for Nancy, punishment meant intentionally imposing some sort of significant discomfort on a child in response to his or her actions. She would instead find ways to help them correct their direction, perhaps through some sort of consequence that relates to the action of concern.

Positive consequences. Like Serenity, Nancy seemed to emphasize the use of positive consequences more than the negative. The following statement demonstrates a belief in using positive consequences:

Just even acknowledgement, for your child is a reward, you know, looking into their eyes, telling them “good job.” Like those are things that are easy. Like those are things you're training their minds to look for those things. ... What we've noticed is when we can praise them for things that they are doing in line, it helps them bring them back to center even when they're out of control. If we can find something that they're doing right, something that they're doing good, you know, even if it's just, you know, “wow, you got dressed today.” ... And even your teenagers, like, “wow, you know, we didn't get the deodorant and on, but you've got pants and a shirt on, I'm like proud of you.” Like, you know, it's any sort of acknowledgement and, and praise ... And so any positive, I mean showered in those.

Nancy emphasized the value of positive consequences—in this case, speaking of acknowledging positive behaviors verbally. She said that from her own experience, she had found that children

can turn from bad behavior when they hear positive comments or praise from their parents. She suggested that children should be “showered” with such praise.

Jerry. During the focus group, Jerry was perhaps less vocal than some of the other participating parents. His wife was also present—and has taught parenting classes—so he may have deferred to her comments during the focus group. His comments did however at least imply that the authoritative parenting model guides his parenting efforts to some extent.

Relationship/supportiveness. Jerry made more comments that suggest he takes a supportive stance with his children than he made on any other element of the authoritative parenting model. When I asked what would make the ideal child, Jerry spoke of a child who “is not restrained in any way to become who they ultimately want to become. In other words, they are fully empowered and enabled to do whatever it takes to be who they need to be.” In this statement, Jerry implied that a parent would need to give support for a child to become “who they need to be.” He spoke of empowering and enabling the child in order to accomplish that goal. In another statement, Jerry was more explicit about his goal of supporting his children:

I would say one of my biggest goals for my children is to help them experience life and ... all of its blessings and struggles and still come out loving people and not developing hate or disregard or, or differences. But ... to help train them to find similarities and, and ways to include others.

Here Jerry spoke of supporting his children with a hope that they would grow up to be people who care about others and can work with them. In a sense, he spoke of supporting his children in a way that would lead them to support others. Jerry made other statements that also suggest the idea of supporting children and building a relationship with them.

Example/modeling. Jerry made no direct references to the importance of examples or behavior modeling. He did however hint at the importance of parental example in response to my question about things that affect how children look at life and how they behave. He said that the things that influence children are “mostly things that have to do with the parents' interaction. But not only ... quantity of time, but quality time directed towards ... sharing time with them, has a big effect.” In this statement, Jerry shared his view that when parents spend time with their children, it has an effect on how the children look at life and how they behave. He felt it wasn't only the amount of time together, but it is important that the time spent is “quality” time. In this statement, he also suggested that an important part of this influence comes from the interactions between parent and child. While this statement definitely does apply to the “building relationships” category, it does also imply some amount of being an example and modeling behavior.

Setting boundaries, limits, expectations. Jerry didn't directly address setting boundaries, but did imply it in a comment on consequences. The following was his response to a question specifically about consequences:

The word that comes to mind is maybe “disciplining” or anything like that, but “course correction”: I feel it is appropriate when it's previously agreed upon. ... I find that oftentimes I have in my mind that they understand or know that something's wrong, but I find that ... if I have not had that clear communication with them and, and come up with maybe an agreed consequence, you know, prior, then I can't feel right about a course correction or disciplining them.

In this statement, Jerry made it clear that he feels a need to communicate with his children about boundaries and the consequences for crossing those lines. Unless he has such a conversation beforehand with his children, he doesn't feel right about imposing consequences.

Autonomy. Autonomy was another area where Jerry's comments implied ideas more than explicitly stating them. For example, he said that children "will get away with some things, you know? And that's just the matter of the fact. But when that happens, we still love them, you know, maintain that loving authority in their lives." Here, Jerry acknowledged that children will have some degree of autonomy and may do things that the parent doesn't want them to do. He emphasized that despite a child's crossing boundary lines, parents should still love their children while also maintaining authority in their lives. In this statement, Jerry seemed to suggest a sort of natural autonomy that exists rather than autonomy that a parent intentionally grants. Another comment that Jerry made seemed less focused on this naturally occurring autonomy:

Kids will make decisions that we don't necessarily like sometimes, you know, and, and I think where a good parent comes in is again, another way of, of describing a ... parent that shows up is just still loving them and being accepting to them and not casting them away for a decision they made that you didn't like.

Again, Jerry made it clear that children will have some autonomy, some freedom to make their own choices. The statement excluded any idea of the parent imposing on or forcing a child to make the choice the parent expects. By the parent accepting and loving the child regardless of the child's choices, as Jerry said should be the case, it implies that the parent is granting enough autonomy that the child could indeed make a choice the parent doesn't agree with.

Monitoring. Jerry didn't make any strong statement about the importance of monitoring a child's activities. The closest that he came was an implied idea that a parent would be aware of

what a child is doing, which was in a comment I also placed in the autonomy section above. He said that children “will get away with some things, you know? And that's just the matter of the fact. But when that happens, we still love them, you know, maintain that loving authority in their lives.” While Jerry was speaking of children getting away with something wrong, he also implied that it was more of the exception rather than the norm. In other words, a parent may notice most of the things that the child is doing, while they will also miss some things. And even when a child gets away with something wrong, Jerry implied that the parent would eventually become aware of that and would need to still love the child.

Negative consequences. Jerry was more explicit on the use of consequences to correct behavior. In a statement already mentioned above, Jerry spoke of discipline or course corrections:

I feel [a course correction] is appropriate when it's previously agreed upon. ... I find ... that if I have not had that clear communication with them and, and come up with maybe an agreed consequence, you know, prior, then I can't feel right about a course correction or disciplining them. [The children] even appreciate coming up with a consequence to that wrong choice.

Here, Jerry's references to consequences and course corrections are about negative consequences as a response to wrong behavior of a child. He feels that those consequences should always be made clear before the behavior happens and before the consequences can be given. He has found that his children appreciate being involved in deciding what those consequences should be.

Positive consequences. Jerry made only one comment regarding positive consequences, specifically about praising children: “I heard somewhere that for every correction you should praise your child six to eight times-ish. But I like the sound of that.” Here, Jerry said that he likes

the idea of praising a child more frequently than giving correction. Praise is one of the simplest positive consequences, one which Jerry supports.

Nathaniel. Like Jerry, Nathaniel was also a little less vocal on some topics than some of the other focus group participants. In fact, several of the authoritative parenting elements discussed below depend solely on the same single statement that he made.

Relationship/supportiveness. Nathaniel was pretty clear on the importance of support and building a relationship with children in helping them grow and learn. For example, to accomplish the goals parents have for raising their children he said that “some of the things to help accomplish those goals is the time that you invest with them.” Nathaniel here emphasized the importance of spending time with children in order to help accomplish his goals for his children, which include becoming cooperative and able to accomplish their own goals. In another comment, about being a good parent, he said that

the kids there [in the juvenile justice system] that get into gangs and whatnot, they're looking for belonging. They're looking for someone to, to love them. And if you can love your child, to me that's, that's what a good parent is.

In this statement, Nathaniel described the importance of parents loving their children. Having had some experience, along with his wife, around youth in the juvenile justice system, he made the point that many of those youth are involved in delinquent activity because of a lack of such love in their lives. This love he spoke of suggests a relationship and being supportive.

Example/modeling. As with other parents in the focus group, Nathaniel expressed his view that children are influenced by the examples around them. On that subject he said,

I think example is a very important thing in raising your children because whether you're a good example or a bad example they're able to see something and they can mirror that. ... kids watch you and they understand and they copy you and they, they want to be like mom, they want to be like dad.

In this statement, Nathaniel made it clear that the example that parents set is a strong influence on their children. They will tend to mimic what they see and hear their parents do and say. He also discussed the influence of social media: "Social media I think is a big, big thing nowadays for kids, especially our teenagers and whatnot. They use that and it can completely change lives for the good or the bad." Here, Nathaniel made the point that many youth and children are involved in social media, which can provide examples that can have a significant influence on children, sometimes for good and other times for bad.

Setting boundaries, limits, expectations; autonomy; monitoring; negative consequences.

Several elements of the authoritative parenting model were either expressed or implied in one single statement that Nathaniel made:

We use consequences with, with our daughter. And we've explained there are good consequences and bad consequences. Monday nights we, we like to go to Macey's and get ice cream cones as a family. And so one of the, and that's a good consequence, but if throughout the day as we've set the expectation, "Hey, this is where, you know, how you need to act and what we need to do," if those things aren't met, then as a consequence we won't get ice cream. But if they are, the good consequence is we get ice cream. So she, she understands the, the good and the bad.

In this statement, Nathaniel made it clear that he and his wife set expectations with their daughter, in this case on Mondays. It was implied that she has some level of autonomy to choose

whether to meet the expectations or not. Depending on how she behaves each Monday, the parents will give either a positive consequence of getting ice cream or a negative consequence of losing the ice cream on that occasion. Monitoring was also implied, since the parents must do so in order to decide if their daughter met the expectations or not.

Positive consequences. Nathaniel made comments, in addition to the one above, that demonstrate that he believes in the use of positive consequences. For example:

One of the big rewards that we use with my four year old is daddy time. At night when we put her to bed we have a very specific routine where we have to sing three different songs and then I lay there in bed with her, cuddle with her for a moment, and just tell her a story. ... But she, she just loves that. But we use that as a reward.

In this statement, Nathaniel said that he and his wife use “daddy time” as a reward for their daughter. He said that she really loves getting that time with her dad, suggesting it truly is a reward to her. Another comment that showed the use of routine, intangible rewards was for

those things that you're not asking her to do something, but it's just she went and picked up her toys all on her own, and I'm like “Susie, awesome job!” [name changed] And I give her a high five and she just, she just loves when I give her a high five.

In this statement, Nathaniel gave an example of a simple reward of giving a high five that he uses with his daughter when she does good things on her own that please him. His example included verbal praise along with the high five.

Carma. During the focus group, Carma was one of the more vocal participants. She shared many insights from her own experiences in raising children. As with many of the other parents,

she made comments that suggest she believes significantly in the authoritative parenting model, though a couple of the elements did not show up explicitly in her comments.

Relationship/supportiveness. Carma made several comments that suggested that she tries to support her children and keep a good relationship with them. This short statement is a good example: “You raise the bar high and, and set your expectations, but, but you are, you're gentle with them as they're learning and growing and and just try to continue encouraging them.” In this statement, Carma spoke of setting expectations, but emphasized that despite the expectations, parents should be gentle with their children as they learn and grow, which includes making mistakes. She also made the point that parents should also be encouraging. In another comment, Carma expressed her feeling that she and her husband have loved and nurtured their children:

My children might have the mental health issues, but they were given a far better, stronger base than what I had as a child growing up. And so they are not going to have the problems from the nurture side of things because they have been loved and nurtured and cared for their whole lives.

Here, Carma was discussing genetic versus environmental effects on children. She acknowledged that her children have some mental health challenges, but felt that she had provided her children with a nurturing environment of love and caring. She clearly believes in supporting her children and maintaining good relationships with them.

Example/modeling. Carma mentioned that the things children see and hear will have effects on them. She gave an example of this from a time when her mother had said a couple of things that hurt her and have stuck with her for the rest of her life. She knows firsthand that what children see and hear can affect them throughout their lifetimes.

Setting boundaries, limits, expectations. Carma gave some examples, from raising her children, when she and her husband set boundaries or expectations with their children. In one scenario, her son had been repeatedly disrespectful to her. Her words were:

He was like 14 and my husband had to give him \$20 and take him to the, to the train station and say, “If you keep treating your mother this way, you are going to be out of her house. It's, you're going to treat your mother better or else you will have to take this 20 bucks— See ya. We're not going to have that kind of behavior in the house.”

In this comment, Carma implied that the parents felt the problem was serious enough that they needed to set an expectation in a dramatic way, suggesting that their son would have to leave the house and take a train to some other location if he didn't comply. In another comment, Carma repeated the words of one of their children that expressed the nature of Carma and her husband's parenting:

When my oldest left home, ... he said, “you know, you, you did, you set your boundaries and made those clear and then you basically left us alone to find her own way, like to, to make our mistakes and, you know, sweep us off when we made our mistakes saying, ‘well, I'll try again.’”

This statement is somewhat telling—additional evidence that Carma set boundaries with her children. since it was her son saying that she did, after years of growing up in her home. Her son's comments are clear that she set boundaries with her children.

Autonomy. That same statement also spoke of autonomy. In the statement, Carma's son not only said that she set boundaries, but also that she gave the children autonomy to make their own choices, without a parent always telling them what they should do. If they messed up, though, she was there to lend support and help.

Monitoring. The idea of monitoring was only implied in comments Carma made in relation to consequences. For example:

I've learned to punish when I know that they knew that what they were doing is wrong. Like, so the little ones that are just experimenting for fun and whatnot, that doesn't deserve a punishment. But my three and a half year old daughter did something earlier this week. ... she was mad at me and she, she had gum in her mouth and she put the gum on the piano bench and then she took her fingernails and put great big marks into the piano bench. And so, the two combined nearly ruined my piano bench. That was the first thing at three and a half that she has done purposefully because she was angry at me for putting her on the piano bench for hurting her brother. So once they're old enough to know that what, like to actually plan out and do it in defiance rather than curiosity, I think then you need to incorporate some sort of disciplinary action.

In this statement, Carma distinguished between undesirable child behavior done out of curiosity versus out of willful defiance. Some level of monitoring would be essential for her to make that sort of distinctions about a child's behavior.

Negative consequences. Carma made comments that suggest that she has had a reasonable amount of experience with using negative consequences or "discipline" with her children. The following statement exemplifies this:

In disciplining, I have finally learned like, you don't discipline in anger, you discipline in love and you calmly explain to them "you did this wrong. And now ... because you did that wrong, you're going to have this consequence." And doing that it, it, the message gets through because a child's brain will shut off as soon as you start yelling and screaming and they won't hear one word that you said and they will not understand.

In this statement, Carma acknowledged that, while she has used discipline or consequences for some amount of time, she “finally learned” the approach she described here. Her approach now is to communicate clearly and calmly with the child about what he or she did wrong and what the consequence will be.

Positive consequences. Carma also uses positive consequences with her children, as expressed in the following scenario she shared:

My daughter played her final basketball game and, and she made five baskets, which is really exciting cause I'm not athletic at all. And so, and she's doing something that I was never able to do. And so like this lady that was keeping score suggested, “Why don't you go to the soda shop?” And so—we had never been—and so we went and got her a soda, like just random and it was ... her and I together alone, like it was alone time.

Here, Carma described a time when she rewarded her daughter for a successful sports activity. She prefers not to give rewards predictably, but when her children do something that feels really significant to her. She emphasized that more as she continued talking about her approach to rewards:

I will randomly—like if a child is doing their chores consistently and doesn't like complain—and like I will randomly give them money and say, “Hey, I really appreciate that you just did that without, you know, I only had to ask you and remind you one time to do it and you did it and I really appreciate that you're helping us.” Like, like so when they do some—but it's not like at a set interval, it's just random where they never know when it's coming because it's what feels natural. And so whenever my heart feels like, “Wow, you did just something amazing,” like then you tell them, “Wow! That was really awesome.”

In this comment, Carma explained that she likes to give rewards at times when her children don't necessarily expect them. She also revealed that sometimes the rewards may be money, but also may include verbal praise.

Further Considerations. Research has consistently shown the authoritative style of parenting to be associated with a higher probability of desirable outcomes for children than authoritarian or permissive styles (Bush & Peterson, 2013, pp. 287-288). These outcomes include “high levels of self-esteem, school performance, social skills, and fewer problems with antisocial behaviors and substance abuse” (Bush & Peterson, 2013, p. 288). Authoritative parenting is also beneficial for the healthy development of youth autonomy (Baumrind, 1991, as cited in Bi, et al., 2018). The parents who participated in this Tooele-based research generally follow this parenting style that has been shown to be most effective. One study analyzed data on over 9,000 U.S. adolescents of European descent (a subset of the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health) and found that 48.7% of those youth reported that they made decisions jointly with parents, which the study interpreted as authoritative parenting (Pong, Johnston, & Chen, 2010). This suggests that nearly one in two parents in this demographic may be guided by the authoritative parenting style or at least may follow some aspect of it. Tooele County is mostly made up of Caucasian individuals, who are likely similar to the demographic used in the study. In my study, the participating parents may be a somewhat unique group, since they all (not 48.7% like the other study) seemed guided by this style. Data gathered from the parents during the interviews and focus group did not reveal whether these parents were aware of the positive expected outcomes related to their chosen parenting approach.

In addition to the elements of the authoritative parenting style identified in research literature, most of the parents involved in this study expressed or implied a view that parental example is an important part of raising children. The early sociologist, George Herbert Mead, developed a model for how children develop their sense of self during their socialization. The model includes a *preparatory stage* in which children imitate what they see around them. As they grow, they move to the *play stage* in which they take on roles of people they have observed (Schaefer, 2011). The view that the participating parents share, that their and other people's examples are an important influence on their children, is in line with the process of socialization that Mead described.

The realm of religion provides a stark example showing that what parents do can often lead to similar activities in their children. Most teens, for example, identify religiously the same as their parents. Eighty percent of surveyed evangelical parents of teens have a teen who also identified as Evangelical in the same survey (Pew Research Center, 2020). Of parents who identified as unaffiliated, 86% of their teens also identified as unaffiliated. Even the lowest congruence between parent and teen, the Mainstream Protestant group, showed 55% of their teens identified the same as their Mainstream Protestant parents (Pew Research Center, 2020).

This strongly suggests that the example and other activities of the parent influenced the child's view of their own religious affiliation. Additionally, the same survey indicated that 48% of teens said they share all of the same religious beliefs as their parents and another 43% said they share some of the same beliefs (Pew Research Center, 2020). This again lends credence to the idea that what parents do in the presence of their children often has strong effects on what children choose to do.

I included this element of example as part of an “enhanced” authoritative parenting approach because it seemed to be supported by comments that each parent made during my research and seemed to be an important aspect of their overall parenting approach. Every parent in the study affirmed a view that what parents and other people do and say in the presence of children often has significant effects on them.

Developing Personal Integrity

Most of the parents in this research expressed desires for their children to become moral, respectful, or caring people. There was much agreement among all the parents on various factors that influence children’s behavior and they all follow a similar parenting approach to raise them, but there was no strong agreement among the participants on how children develop “personal integrity.” The term “personal integrity” comes from comments that Carma, one of the focus group participants, used to describe an attribute of a child when he or she generally behaves appropriately, doing things that are considered right, even while not being directly supervised or observed. I will use the term “personal integrity” for this characteristic.

Views in Common. I have already shown previously that each parent who participated in this research takes his or her parenting role seriously and is concerned for the future of his/her children. I have also shown that these parents generally value and adhere to the authoritative model of parenting (see model in Fig. 1 above). Most of the nine parents that I spoke with during this research also expressed desires for their children to become caring and respectful adults who choose right over wrong. There was some variety in how they expressed these hopes, but each

made it clear that they want their children to develop some of these moral attributes. Some evidence is offered below.

Sally and John. In one interaction I had with Sally and John, they expressed their hopes this way:

Emil (interviewer): Well, in your mind, what would be ideal in your mind for your children to be or to be like?

Sally: Smart, healthy

John: And happy

Sally: And happy

Emil: So that would be the ideal child.

Sally: Yeah

John: As long as they were smart, healthy, and happy

Sally: I mean not, not really smart where they have to be genius or anything, just I don't know, your average smart.

Emil: Typical, in other words? Typical intelligence?

Sally: Yeah.

Sally: There's got to be a normal smartness, right? An average, I guess.

John: The normal people [laughs]

Emil: There's, there's probably a middle range that most people fall into. Okay. And what sort of adult does this ideal child become?

John: Just successful in the path they choose.

Emil: Okay.

Sally: Yeah, becoming successful, you know, at least, you know, getting on graduating high school.

John: They have morals.

Sally: And yeah they know, they, they're respectful and they are responsible and can, you know, put priorities in order and just be successful.

In this interaction, John and Sally listed a few different hopes for their children. They first listed things that would benefit the children themselves. At the end, they also included in their list having moral values and being respectful toward others.

David. David also expressed his interest in seeing his children develop some moral attributes: "I think the biggest thing you expect is they should, they need to respect those around them and not just have it be about them." He expounded on this further in discussing his idea of what kind of adult the ideal child becomes:

I think one that is productive in society, is willing to help those around them, whether they know them or not, whether the same religious background or whatever else: "This person's in need. Let's help them" and, and not just lock themselves away in their house all day. But just being able to contribute as, as best as they can.

In both comments, David expressed an interest in his children caring about other people, rather than only themselves. He talked of helping people in need and contributing to the greater good. He specifically mentioned that it shouldn't matter what someone's background or belief is, but that they would help someone regardless of such differences.

Serenity. Serenity only briefly touched on this idea in a comment about consequences. Her comment, spoken as if to the child, was that "I want to teach you that when you're upset and you do something wrong ... it's supposed to be handled calmly and respectfully." Here she made the

point that she wants her child to be calm and respectful with others. Other, less direct comments that she made also confirmed that she values respect for others.

Nancy. Nancy emphatically expressed her interest in a moral foundation for her children: I think it's important to teach our kids right from wrong and to be able to feel the difference. I think in our changing world we're trying to shift to this notion that there is no right and no wrong and I think we're seeing a lot of backlash for that. So call me old school or whatever, but I think that there are things that are right and wrong, contribute to society and don't contribute to society. And so teaching my kids to—that it's OK to, to question. It's okay to wonder. It's okay to research and find out, but there are things that are right and there are things that are wrong. And to be able to weigh the differences of those things on not only themselves because [it's] not just about them. We're in a family unit, we're in a community unit, we're in a universe unit and everything affects everything. And so to teach them to be able to distinguish between right and wrong and truth and error is really important to me.

Here, Nancy expressed a strong view that there are moral absolutes, things that are right and things that are wrong. She also made it clear that teaching this to her children is important, while also acknowledging that they may have questions about moral issues. She wants them to seek answers, rather than disregard moral expectations. The major foundation that she expressed for these moral principles is that no one exists in isolation, but we are all part of larger communities of people who must work together for their mutual benefit.

Jerry. Nancy's husband, Jerry, also shared his desire for their children to learn to be caring individuals. He said:

I would say one of my biggest goals for my children is to help them experience life and ... all of its blessings and struggles and still come out loving people and not developing hate or disregard or, or differences. But ... to help train them to find similarities and, and ways to include others.

In this statement, Jerry made it clear that he wants his children to be individuals that love people, rather than find reasons to hate or be divided. He wants to teach them to find common ground with others and to be inclusive.

Carma. Carma spoke of similar interests in her children's moral values and attitudes as others above:

I have four goals for our children to raise them. The first: I want them to love God. The second is: I want them to love their fellow man. The third one is: I want them to be a successful contributor of society. And the fourth one is: I tell them I want grandchildren.

In this statement, Carma spelled out four goals she has for her children. Three of them are issues of moral significance relating to faith, other people, and the greater good. Those goals included honoring God, caring for other people, and contributing in positive ways to their community and beyond.

Tom and Nathaniel. While Tom and Nathaniel didn't specifically comment on similar hopes for their children, they expressed various feelings that, together, suggest they may also have similar interests or goals for their children, though not stated directly.

Differing Views on Child Personal Integrity. I have shown that the parents in this study share several goals, as well as their parenting approach. I have shown that they take their role seriously. I have shown that they have hopes for their children's future and they want their

children to develop moral values and personal integrity. I have also shown that each parent values elements of the authoritative model of parenting. However, despite these many facets of agreement among the participating parents in this study, there was only weak agreement among their views on how children develop personal integrity—the willingness to make moral or right choices on their own, without supervision or parental direction. Nearly all the parents made statements about what they believed will bring children to that point, but the views they expressed were not as consistent among the parents as their hopes for their children and their reliance on the authoritative parenting model. Examples of the parents' various views follow.

Sally. One comment that Sally made was that children “have to have that structure and support for them to become good people.” Another comment was that

a child's not necessarily always gonna know wrong from right, but by the time you're in adulthood, you should know better, be able to, you know, determine right from wrong and stuff versus when you're a child you don't know right from wrong.

Sally's comments focused mostly on children learning moral values as they mature. She also said that structure and support are necessary.

John. Sally's fiancé, John, agreed with her on maturing. After I had asked a question about children developing personal integrity, they both expressed the maturity idea as follows:

Sally: As they get older, that's where morals come in, where they know right from wrong. ...

John: I think that's more like when they're younger, the impact, like they see and then later on when like your parent's not around, maybe that them seeing that in a younger age, they know this is the right way to do it. So this is the way I should do it.

Emil: So are you saying that it kind of happens naturally that they get to that point?

John: Yeah.

Emil: Okay.

Sally: As they get older ... usually just kind of happens.

In addition to children maturing, John also talked about catching a child doing something wrong:

I don't feel like you have to catch every time they do it wrong. I feel like if you at least get them like one time, either lying or doing something bad or good, just one time would change what they do in the future because then they know whether it's good or bad, whether they should or shouldn't do it.

In his statements, John named three things he felt contributed to children developing personal integrity. He spoke of a natural maturing process, as was mentioned above. He also referred to example as a contributor in the maturing process. In addition, John identified some elements of the authoritative parenting model as contributors to developing personal integrity. Specifically, when he said a parent needs to catch the child doing something wrong, he implied the need to have some sort of boundary and to monitor the child to "catch them." These are elements of the authoritative parenting approach, elements which John seemed to consider important to help develop this personal integrity.

David. In his comments, David named a few different things related to children developing personal integrity. While discussing things that can affect how children behave, David said, I think sometimes even the discipline aspect goes into it. If you don't want to discipline your child, however you feel discipline should be, they may not find that there's anything wrong. Whatever they do ... it's going to be okay.

Here John identified the need for negative consequences and implied the need for boundaries as elements that help children learn what is acceptable. In a different comment, about raising the

ideal child, David said parents need to “teach them how to respect others.” Then he said that you teach these things

through your example. I think [you] try to show them how to how to find good role models, whether it's—and it doesn't have to be celebrities or politicians or whatever else. It can be the neighbor down the street. It could be the crossing guard, the school teacher, even a classmate, someone in their, in their social group that you can learn from them and have them be your hero, so to speak.

He spoke here of examples and role models as sources of the learning that can help children develop personal integrity. In another comment, specifically on developing personal integrity, he said that “parents, teachers, leaders” need “continually to reinforce it with them.” By reinforcing, he meant that a parent would “just do the reinforcing of, ‘okay, you did this, you did this good, you did this right.’” In these comments about reinforcing, John was describing positive consequences, specifically verbal acknowledgements of a child’s desirable behaviors. At another point, he spoke of a “moral compass,” which seems to naturally develop in a child by “day-to-day experience, day-to-day learning.” This seems to describe a similar concept to the idea, described by Sally and John, of children developing moral values as they mature.

In David’s comments discussed above, he named the following contributors to developing personal integrity: consequences, both positive and negative; boundaries (which his comments implied); teaching by example, which would include role models; and a natural maturing process over time as they learn by their own experiences. All of these, except for maturing, are elements of the authoritative parenting model that has previously been shown to guide David.

Tom. One comment that Tom made was that “if a child gets away with doing something wrong, then they might not learn the lesson they needed to.” His comment suggests that it may

be necessary to catch a child doing wrong things for him or her to learn acceptable behaviors.

This statement implies the need for boundaries and monitoring, both elements of the authoritative parenting model. In response to my question asking how children develop personal integrity, Tom's answer was:

I feel like understanding what they want and also understanding how their decisions affect other people around them are some big things. If they have a drive for a goal and they know what happens when they make different decisions and how it affects the people around them positively and negatively, I think that gives them tools to be able to achieve what they need out of life or what they want at least.

Here, Tom expressed a view that children will choose good behaviors when they understand how their decisions affect other people. He also included the idea of children knowing what they want as a part of his view.

Serenity. Serenity agreed with Tom on his statement (above) about children understanding how their actions affect others, saying, "I totally agree. Yeah, that's pretty much what I would say." She agreed with his whole statement that when children understand how their actions affect others and know what they want it will lead children to personal integrity that we had been discussing at that point in the focus group. A bit later, Serenity added another thought:

Positive reinforcement definitely can be helpful or even just reinforcement as a whole. And it kind of goes back to what [Nancy] was saying with knowing really the right from the wrong. And I think it's just kind of like leaving the responsibility to the kid, like that kid will gain that responsibility when they have more understanding of what is and isn't okay. And if you're reinforcing what is or isn't a good action, that's definitely gonna help.

In this statement, Serenity said that when children truly understand right and wrong then they can take responsibility for their own decisions or be given autonomy. Parents can then reinforce behaviors with positive or negative consequences, to help build personal integrity. Autonomy and consequences are elements of the authoritative parenting model, previously addressed.

Nancy. Nancy also spoke of children understanding the effects of their actions: “I think when they understand the positive and negative consequences of their actions fully, I mean, I think if they really truly have that, they know what's right and wrong. They see the benefit.” In this statement, Nancy expressed a somewhat expanded form of the view shared by Tom and Serenity, extending the idea to all consequences of children's actions, rather than only effects on other people. She suggested that if children can fully understand the consequences of their actions they will then know what is right and wrong and will understand the benefits of choosing the right things. In another discussion about what happens if children get away with doing something wrong, Nancy said that “they may become entitled. Like, you know, when people get away—we even see adults that get away with things they do wrong and they create a habitat of entitlement in their lives. So that could happen.” Here, Nancy expressed a view that children may develop a sense of entitlement if they get away with doing something wrong. This implies that it may be necessary to monitor children and catch them doing the wrong things in order for them to learn the right things.

Jerry. Jerry also commented on what may lead children to have personal integrity. He said: I think when we can, can help provide a contrast ... and we can ... help them analyze different decisions or different responses to situations and possible outcomes and ... both good and bad then they can really see ... the big picture of, of the effects of decisions that really is theirs to make.

In this comment, Jerry expressed his view that parents need to help children see contrasts between good and bad, right and wrong, so they can see the bigger picture of how their actions can lead to various outcomes.

Carma. Like nearly all the parents, Carma also added her view on what leads to personal integrity:

I think that that happens as they learn, as they believe in a higher power, whether they call that higher power God or [another name]. A lot of people use the term karma, like you know what, what good you do will come back to you in some other way. So reliance on a, recognition of a higher power, whatever that power may be, will help them to develop—“personal integrity” is the word that comes to my mind. And when they have that personal integrity, then it doesn't matter what anything or anyone is doing around them. They will make the right choices because they, that's what matters to them more than anything else is to make the right choices.

Carma's comment expressed her strong belief in the need for God as a source of guidance for her children in order to develop personal integrity. She acknowledged that other people may use other names for a higher power, but regardless of those differences, that higher power is necessary.

Further Considerations. While every parent, except one, commented on what can lead children to develop personal integrity—defined here as when children willingly make moral choices in the absence of supervision—their answers covered a range of different ideas with no real consensus on the subject. Together, parents brought up 13 different elements or concepts that they believed contribute to the development of personal integrity, but only one of those

elements had as many as four parents who made statements supporting it. This is just under half of the parents who mentioned that element. All the other elements had only three, two, or one parent who made statements supporting the idea. Even in the case of the two couples in the study, their answers didn't fully agree between father and mother. Several of the elements that parents said or implied were necessary to achieve personal integrity in children were also elements of the authoritative parenting model. Yet only about half of the parents actually named or implied any of those elements of authoritative parenting, which all the parents seem to follow.

If we consider levels of delinquency or anti-social behavior as one measure of children's personal integrity, then authoritative parenting is an approach that can increase the chances of children developing some aspects of personal integrity as it reduces the likelihood of delinquency and anti-social behavior. As discussed previously, the authoritative parenting approach has been shown to increase the likelihood of positive outcomes with children. Waller, Gardner, and Hyde (2013) conducted a review of a number of studies related to anti-social behavior. Some of the elements that are part of authoritative parenting were found in some of the studies to be associated with lower amounts of anti-social behavior (Waller, Gardner, & Hyde, 2013). On the other hand, harsh parenting, common among *authoritarian* parents, was shown to predict increased levels of anti-social behavior (Waller, Gardner, & Hyde, 2013). Barber (1996) found that more behavioral control (i.e. setting expectations and monitoring), an element of authoritative parenting, was associated with lower rates of delinquency.

While the parents in my study didn't seem to agree on what leads children to personal integrity, they all seemed guided by the authoritative style of parenting, which has been shown to reduce the likelihood of delinquency and anti-social behavior; this outcome (lower rates of socially undesirable behaviors) can be viewed as a form of personal integrity. Thus, these parents

may be unknowingly accomplishing their goal because by some means they were led to use authoritative parenting.

This is of significant interest to Lightward Bound, because a goal that the organization has for the Tooele area is to optimize parenting and child outcomes. If parents understand how significant the authoritative parenting style is for developing well-behaved children, they are more likely to adopt and diligently maintain this form of parenting.

Parental Boundaries

As was previously shown, the parents who participated in this research found some value in setting boundaries for their children to guide their behavior. These parents, however, didn't limit boundaries to their children only, but considered that there are also boundaries that apply to themselves as parents. They made it clear that there are limits beyond which a parent should not go in raising their children. Many of those limits related to giving consequences or discipline, but some parents described other limits or boundaries, as well.

Sally. The comments that Sally made on parental boundaries related to a few topics, including negative consequences, as well as limits for when children are grown and raising their own children. Regarding consequences, she described the boundary for spanking this way:

But like spanking with just your hand, like a light spanking, nothing that leaves marks or anything. That's the severe punishment, where if they did something really bad, but that's like catching them in the act, not waiting, you know, an hour and then spanking them.

Here, Sally said that for spanking her children, the boundary is that they should only be spanked with the hand and only lightly. She said it should never leave marks on the child. Her statement about when children are grown was that when parents "become grandparents, they need to let

[the kids'] parents be the parents to the kids and then be grandparents to the kids.” In this comment, Sally was saying that grandparents shouldn't interfere or meddle in the parenting of the children. She implied that grandparents have a different role than the parents of the children, which grandparents need to acknowledge.

John. Similar to Sally, John spoke of boundaries regarding spanking and regarding parents in the role of grandparent. On spanking he said: “I wouldn't leave a mark on one of my children. I wouldn't use a belt.” Later on, he reiterated the idea: “A belt should never be used on a child. A wooden spoon should never be used on a child.” John made it clear that he doesn't believe in using physical objects to spank a child. His comment also agreed with Sally's that spanking should not leave marks on the child. Regarding grandparents, John said “When it comes to grandparents and parenting, it's hard to parent because grandparents think it's a second chance.” He further said, “I feel like some grandparents overstep what they, what a grandparent is and that's why I believe in like the grandparent law in Utah [regarding adoption].” Here, John made it clear that he believes that parents should not impose in their children's parenting. They have their own place that is different from the parents'.

David. David's comments covered a few different areas where he believes there are boundaries for parents. Like the previous parents, he spoke of negative consequences and spanking. For example, he said:

I think sometimes a swat on the bottom is, is just as effective. Or even just there again, sit them down and just say, “Look, dad's disappointed in what you did.” And I don't think you need to continually beat your children or continually even just ignore them.

David made the point that a parent shouldn't be beating their children. He seemed to imply that routinely spanking them might fall under that. Then he added that a parent shouldn't ignore his

or her children either as a consequence. He also suggested that a better alternative to spanking would be to just talk to children and let them know when they did something they shouldn't have. At an earlier point in our interview, David said,

So you discipline them. Sometimes you have to, as a parent, take a step back and let yourself calm down and cool down, so you're not saying or doing anything that you're going to regret or may lead to other problems.

Here, he implied that a parent shouldn't lash out at his or her children in anger or act in an uncontrolled manner with them, but take time to gain composure before dealing with the child.

Tom. A comment that Tom made was specifically about limits on giving consequences. He expressed his view of the boundary this way:

I also feel like as a parent you should be protecting your child and so if the punishment is harming the child [then] you're no longer protecting them and now you're a harm to them, you've probably gone too far. So that would be counter to what you're supposed to be doing as parents.

Tom stated here that a parent should protect children and therefore should not be doing things that harm them, which would include violent actions. So to Tom, the boundary is anything that causes harm to a child; only things that do not harm the child are acceptable.

Serenity. It was clear from her comments that Serenity doesn't believe in using physical punishment as a consequence. For example, she said: "With my kid ... she's three and I firmly believe that spanking a three-year-old, especially, just is not necessary, you know, that's my opinion." She further commented saying,

If an adult pissed you off, would you spank an adult? You know, it's kind of having, in my opinion, having that respect for the child ... like "I wouldn't lay, I don't want to lay my hands on you, just like, I don't want you to lay your hands on me."

In these comments, Serenity stated clearly that she doesn't believe it is ever necessary to spank a three-year-old child. She also made a comparison with another adult, that we wouldn't go spank an adult because he or she did something we didn't like, suggesting that the same respect should be shown to a child, as well.

Nancy. Adding to another parent's comment, Nancy said that "if we're doing emotional damage, we've crossed the line, [or] we're doing physical damage or even spiritual damage, whatever, 'cause I mean then you've gone too far." Here she agreed with Tom's statement that parents should not be doing things that cause their children harm, specifying physical, emotional, and spiritual harm. She was also more specific about punishing children: "I wouldn't say that I would punish my kids. I would say maybe there's some consequences or some course correction, but I have no desire in my being to punish my kids." Nancy stated that she has no desire to punish her children. Presumably, she views punishment as something done to a child specifically to cause the child discomfort as a consequence for wrong actions. She distinguished punishment from consequences or "course corrections" that relate to what the child did wrong. Clearly, punishments, which would include spanking, are not within acceptable boundaries to her.

Jerry. Among the comments that Jerry made, this one seemed to most directly suggest a limit for parents:

Kids will make decisions that we don't necessarily like sometimes, you know, and, and I think where a good parent comes in is ... just still loving them and being accepting to them and not casting them away for a decision they made that you didn't like.

Jerry made it clear that one boundary for parents is that they should not reject their children for their wrong choices. They should continue to love and accept them.

Carma. In one of Carma's comments, she made distinctions between some physical consequences, while also giving a firm boundary:

I wish like that there was a clear line between swatting a child, spanking a child, and beating a child. And yet I feel like today they're all classified under one thing and my personal feeling like, I feel like a swat will get their attention to say, "Hey, you need to stop and reevaluate your behavior." I feel like a spanking can be used very, very sparingly as kind of like a last resort when nothing else works for that child. ... And I am talking very, very sparingly. But it would never ever be okay to beat a child. But I feel like as a society, we, we lump them all together and there is no distinction between those, those three levels of discipline. Well, the third is not a level of discipline. It's absolutely never okay.

In this statement, Carma distinguished between three levels of physical actions a parent might use: swatting, spanking, and beating. She firmly stated a boundary she believes in, which is that a parent should never beat a child and spanking should be rare.

Further Considerations. All the parents, except one, made one or more comments that suggested a boundary line that they believe parents shouldn't cross. The majority of parents included some boundary regarding physical actions of parents toward their children. Some parents also mentioned or implied other limits for parents in raising their children (not all were included above).

While a few of the parents stated that some amount of spanking was acceptable, they expressed it, not as a major part of parenting, but more as a last resort and even implied some mildness in their approach to spanking. Other parents didn't seem to believe spanking was even

necessary. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), a caregiver who uses spanking or other corporal punishments is a risk factor for child maltreatment (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, a). However, the controlled and subdued level the parents described regarding spanking, suggests that this risk factor is low among these parents. Additionally, the parents' choice to follow the authoritative parenting style contributes some protective factors against maltreatment. "Caregivers who create safe, positive relationships with children," "caregivers who practice nurturing parenting skills and provide emotional support," and "families where caregivers enforce household rules and engage in child monitoring" are each protective factors (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, a) that are also part of the authoritative parenting style that the parents subscribe to.

Prevention of maltreatment is of great interest for Lightward Bound, since maltreatment represents darkness in a child's life "that can have long-term impact on health, opportunity, and wellbeing" (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, b). Prevention of maltreatment is one of the facets of child well-being that this study was indirectly intended to help address by beginning a long-term process to increase factors that tend to improve outcomes for children.

Learning to Parent

Based on evidence in this study, it's not unusual for parents to model their own parenting on what they have seen their parents do and what other parents around them have done. They also tend to make observations on things to avoid, based on their opinions about what they believe other parents have done wrong. Observing and learning from other parents and from their own experiences and evaluating the outcomes may be an ongoing, lifelong process. It is also true

that some parents seek out additional parenting knowledge, while others feel they have a sufficient working knowledge of parenting approaches.

Most parents in this study demonstrated in their words that they gained at least some parenting knowledge from other parents around them, whether their own parents or other parents within their environment. Some of the parents sought out additional parenting information beyond their own natural learning, while others seemed resistant to such outside information. Below is a discussion of each parent's views.

Sally

I interviewed Sally with her fiancé, John. They seemed to have similar views on parenting. Sally stated that she believes that parents gain a foundation for their parenting approach from how they were raised by their parents. For example, she said that

your parents parenting you I think is what kind of sets things up too for the future. When you become a parent, it shows you how to do things or how not to do things. Not necessarily the right way, you know? Like if you were abused as a kid, other times you're more likely to do something like that when you're a parent, but that's not doing the right thing. That's just what you've learned.

In this comment, Sally showed that she believes that a significant part of how parents learn to raise children is by what they saw their parents do. Her comment suggests that she, herself, follows things she learned from her parents. She also made the point that what parents learned by this natural process may not always be the right way to raise children. In addition to observing their own parents, Sally said that parents will learn from their own feelings about their upbringing: "Like if you got spanked as a child and you didn't like it, you may grow up and be a parent and be like, 'I was spanked as a child. I hated it. I'm not doing it.'" Here, Sally gave an

example of being spanked as a child and then, later as a parent, choosing not to spank because of how the parent felt as a child who was spanked.

For Sally, the parenting information she has gained along her life path seems to be sufficient for her needs. She hasn't felt a need to seek out parenting information beyond what she has naturally learned and discerned. The evidence from our interview supports this. For example, she said she only knew of parents attending parenting classes by court orders:

I've only ever really known of people going to them [parenting classes] because it's court ordered. I've never known anyone willingly just, "Oh Hey, let me just go take this class."

It's always been court-appointed through divorces and custody cases and stuff like that.

Sally made it clear that, to her, deciding to attend a parenting class to learn more wasn't a normal thing for people to do. At one point, she acknowledged that she had never attended a parenting class and additionally said, on one hand, "I think it would help, just the person has to be told, you know, the right and wrong, if they're willing to accept that ...". On the other hand, though, she also said,

I really don't think parenting classes will necessarily change anything. A parenting class is more like somebody else telling you the right way and wrong way to parent. ... Taking a parenting class doesn't mean that, "Oh, I took a parenting class; I'm going to be the best parent." It's still what you do [that matters].

In the one statement, Sally said that parenting classes could help parents if they accept the things taught in the class. But in the next statement, she said she doesn't expect that a parenting class will make a lot of difference in how a parent raises children because it's not what they know, but rather what they do that makes a difference. Clearly, she hasn't seen enough value in attending a class to actually pursue it.

John

Comments from John made it clear that he learned some of his parenting from his parents and observations of other parents. For example, at one point in our interview he said, “My parents spanked me. I turned out alright. My aunt didn't spank her kid and I feel like I need to spank him.” In this statement, John compared parenting between his parents and his cousin’s parents, expressing his conclusion that what his parents did (spanked him) was an effective approach to parenting. This also implied that John has evaluated parenting approaches that his parents and other parents have used. John further explained that he made conscious choices to adopt various parenting ideas:

I've kind of taken a little bit of, like I said, I was raised two different ways, you know. My mom was nice and she waited for daddy to come home [and discipline], so I've kind of just taken parts of each one of how my parents raised me, kind of just made it my own.

In this comment, John hinted at some differences between his parents, which he expressed more fully during the interview. But he clearly stated here that he took parts of each parent’s approach to use as a parent. He further described additional parenting influences, saying that “you see parenting anywhere nowadays. I mean, it could be on a billboard. You could see a mom telling a child something. It can be a commercial or just an ad on your phone.” Additionally, he said that you don't just see your parents growing up. I mean, I seen my friend's parents were—his dad was a drunk. He always beat him. So you also see that, you know, that's not, that's not alright to do to a child.”

In these two statements, John implied that other examples of parenting likely have influenced his choices about how he raises his children.

Like Sally, John also seemed to feel that his understanding of parenting approaches was sufficient enough that he had no reason to seek outside, expert information on parenting. Like Sally, he saw parenting classes as something unnecessarily forced on some people: “Parenting classes are forced by the society we have today.” He also made it clear that he does not readily accept research on parenting as guidance for his own parenting: “If things came out saying, don't spank your kids, I'm still gunna spank my kids, because that's what made me, me.” At the same time, John also acknowledged that there is some possibility that he might consider some expert information:

You can't like definitely cross something out. ... if I'm not 100% on something that a scientist, a whole bunch of scientists came out and said ... and I didn't agree with it 100% ... I wouldn't change ... what I do; I'd just take some of these great ingredients out of this and add it to this.

In this statement, John acknowledged that there may be some useful information from expert or scientific sources, but he would pick and choose what to use, based on how much he agreed with it.

David

David didn't speak much of being influenced by his own upbringing. He spoke more strongly of other influences. For example, this was one interaction I had with him during our interview:

Emil (Interviewer): Okay. How do, how do parents learn to be good parents?

David: I think just over, over time.

Emil: So all parents, over time, learn to be good parents?

David: Maybe not all parents, maybe not...

Emil: What gets them there? How do some learn to be good parents?

David: Uh boy, I think experience, continual experiences. I think by learning from other people, but also by what works best for you may not work best for me or whatever. I think it's just I think you have some guidelines ... whether it's through religion, whether it's through so-called experts in, in the field of human studies or whatever else. But I think it's also a lot of, it's just kind of natural in us to, to want to nurture, to want to—not everybody has that. And maybe you can learn to do that.

David's comments here focused on parents learning from their own experience with their children, religious guidance, information from experts, and advice from other people. Though he didn't make any mention during the interview of his own upbringing as a source of examples for his parenting, in one of his comments, he referred back to something he heard from family members. While talking about raising children, he said that "it's kind of like my dad and my grandfather would say, 'You know, sometimes you gotta get hit upside the head with a two-by-four to, to figure out what's going on.' And that's not literally, but figuratively." This comment suggested that David does think back on some of his parents' parenting, as well as influences from other family members. He made this comment while speaking of consequences for children's actions and used the saying from his father and grandfather as support for the view he had expressed.

David seemed somewhat open to information beyond his own observations, though he apparently hadn't sought out classes on parenting. One interaction was:

Emil (Interviewer): If scientific research gave parenting information that was different from your parenting practices, ... would you consider changing how you parent?

David: Maybe a little bit. I guess it depends on how far off I was doing something, how bad my children were, were doing. But I'm kind of a firm believer in "if it's not broke, don't, don't fix it." But there again, you can always learn.

In this comment, David gave a qualified agreement that he might change his parenting based on scientific research. He didn't fully embrace the idea of changing his approach, but suggested that he would evaluate what he has been doing and how his children seem to be doing before changing anything. He emphasized his middle-ground stance by repeating a saying about when things are working, there's no need to fix them; then he commented on the opposite side, saying "you can always learn." He gave the sense that he doesn't blindly reject or accept what might come from expert sources, but would evaluate the information.

Tom

Tom spoke clearly of parents learning about raising children from their parents. He described his and his wife's parental learning from growing up:

I think most of the time we just learn it from our own families. And so I had great parents growing up and so I was able to learn a lot and have them model by example for me. My wife came from a very broken home, did not have good examples and really struggled the first while of our marriage and the first while of us having kids and being parents just to understand how it should work.

Here, Tom made it clear that he believes that parents learn much of their parenting knowledge from their own families. He gave examples of he and his wife's upbringing to contrast the good parental learning he gained from his parents against the difficulty with parenting his wife experienced because of poor parenting examples she was raised with. In addition to parental examples, Tom indicated that he gained parenting information from other people too:

So I had a buddy and he, he really struggled growing up because he didn't really have expectations and boundaries. And it, it kind of made him feel insecure and he reacted poorly in a lot of situations because he didn't know how far he could go or where the boundaries were, what the rules were, what was OK and what was not. I don't think you need really a lot of really strict boundaries, but having some I think is important.

In this comment, Tom spoke of a friend of his from which he gained some insight regarding setting boundaries and expectations with children. His current view on boundaries was partially solidified by the information about his friend.

In the following comment, Tom also indicated some openness to parenting information from experts, as well as from less professional sources:

I think that if there was studies done, I would trust it more than somebody on YouTube. ... I think in the end "does it make sense?" and that's what I care about more. I might actually go with the guy on YouTube if what he's saying makes sense for my kids and my family, even though the scientific research says differently. But if what he's saying feels right for my situation and my kids, then I would go with that. But I do think the scientific research does help give it some credibility, but I don't think it's an end all, be all.

In his comment, Tom implied that while he is open to parenting information beyond his own experiences, he would evaluate the information being given before choosing to follow it in his parenting. It would have to make sense to him in order for him to accept it. Tom has attended at least one parenting class, indicating he is open to seeking more information on parenting from experts.

Serenity

Serenity was impacted in significant ways by her parents' actions in raising her. In particular, she saw some negative things her parents did that gave her strong views that are opposed to her parents' actions. The following comment is very telling:

My dad spanked me. My dad tried to ground me, took the door off the hinges. He done took all the stuff out my room. But not once did my dad ever sit and ... talk to me, "what's going on?" ... No matter what I seem to do, I got punished. And that's why like with me, I know I probably am a little too much than most parents 'cause I'm extra crazy about it. But you know, I just, with my kid, I just want to make sure that there's that communication and respect and from my perspective too, she's three, and I firmly believe that spanking a three-year-old especially just is not necessary.

Serenity's comment emphasized how her father punished her routinely, but didn't communicate with her. She linked her father's poor parenting behavior to her own interest in making sure to keep respect and open communication with her daughter. She also made reference to her belief that a three-year-old does not need to be spanked, which is in opposition to her parents' use of punishments. She acknowledged that her parents' negative parenting behaviors drove her to be somewhat extreme on choosing more positive behaviors with her child.

Serenity didn't make comments that revealed her willingness to seek outside parenting information, but she did attend at least one parenting class, indicating that she is indeed willing to learn from sources beyond her own experiences.

Nancy

During the focus group discussion on positive consequences, Nancy briefly made a reference to the influence of parents on their children: "We all know the impact that our parents

have on us and the things that our kids remember and the things we remember from things that our parents said.” While this is not strong evidence of her parenting approach being influenced by her parents, she did acknowledge that what her parents did and said have impacted her in some ways, which presumably may include some aspects of her parenting. However, of all the parent participants in this study, Nancy had been most involved in parenting education programs. She has both attended them and taught them. Having this broader base of knowledge on parenting approaches may have overshadowed what she learned from incidental sources, such as her own upbringing, etc. Nancy also expressed reasonable openness to research information on parenting:

I'd consider, I'd consider it ... you know, obviously looking over source, looking over what the objective for the study was and things like that. But I think overall there's good intention with people that do research and want to find answers and solutions and things like that. So I'd consider it, I wouldn't say I'd take it as God-given, but I, I'd consider.

As with other parents in the study, Nancy made it clear that she would evaluate research before accepting it as guidance. But she also made it clear that she would consider using information from research studies, because in her mind they do have value and are generally the result of good intentions by researchers.

Jerry

Jerry's comments did not reveal information on how much parenting information he may have gained from his parents or other parents around him. He did, however, imply that he seeks additional knowledge about parenting concepts. The following comment is an example:

The more I realize that I don't have it all figured out, the more I have the desire to learn and continually try to become better and better and better and, and that might not ever end and

that's okay. But continually trying to find ways to improve and be better is how you be a good parent.

Here, Jerry made it clear that he doesn't think he knows everything about parenting, which motivates him to seek more knowledge and improve himself as a parent. He and his wife, Nancy, have attended more than one parenting class. Clearly, he is open to outside parenting information and has sought it out.

Nathaniel

In the following comment, Nathaniel indicated that he gained some insights about parenting from observations of youth in the Juvenile Justice System: "Being in the Juvenile Justice Service, it is time. It's people. The kids there that get into gangs and whatnot, they're looking for belonging. They're looking for someone to, to love them." In this comment, Nathaniel explained some important lessons he learned while he and his wife spent some time working with youth in the Juvenile Justice System. In this case, he learned from negative circumstances presumably related to inadequate parenting, coming to understand what the youth should have received from parents.

Nathaniel gave evidence that he and his wife have an interest in learning from expert or professional sources, as well. They have attended parenting courses, spending significant amounts of money for them. That point is very clear from this statement:

Parenting classes cost a lot of money, at least the ones my wife and I have gone to. I think parenting classes, I think they're important because it shows that you are willing, you're wanting to learn, you're wanting to become better.

In this statement, Nathaniel indicated that both he and his wife had attended some parenting classes, willingly paying significant costs for them. He implied that they had the desire to learn more about parenting from these classes.

Carma

Carma specifically stated that she tried to model her parenting after a foundational part of her mother's approach to parenting:

Our parents were asked often times, what did you do to raise four successful children? And my mother's answer was ...—and I try to follow the same pattern—"I just saw what their natural talents and curiosities and abilities were, and then I put the tools in front of them to grow and expand those natural abilities and talents. And then I was there behind them to encourage them along the path."

In this statement, Carma made it clear that she has tried to follow a particular parenting approach that she learned from her mother. This statement also showed that Carma sees value in the approach her mother used.

It was not clear if Carma had attended any parenting courses or sought out any sources outside her own experience and those of other parents. She was emphatic, though, that research on parenting was not a priority to guide how she raises her children. The following made her point clear:

I would read through [research] so that I could be well-informed. There, I think there would be a high likelihood that I would not change simply because of how I parent. ... I rely on God and I seek personal revelation for—because I believe in that—for what my children need individually.

In this comment, Carma said that she would likely not change her approach to parenting, despite any new research that recommended something different than what she had been doing. For her, the greatest source of parenting information is God, from whom she seeks guidance on raising her children.

Additional points that she made about research were: “I think there does have to be some research behind what is presented, but I just feel like a lot of times, like the experts have spent more time studying it than they've spent actually doing it” and “any research study can be twisted to, to fulfill what the person conducting the research study wants. You can't trust research studies alone anymore because there's too much corruption in the process.” These two comments made it clear that Carma would be reluctant to seek out and follow expert advice on parenting.

Further Considerations

As was pointed out, some of the parents in this study seemed resistant to the idea of seeking out parenting advice or information from expert or scientific sources. A study on social-emotional learning found that even parents whose professional work was in the field of social-emotional learning often did not use their professional knowledge in their parenting roles, but rather sought out advice from friends, spouses, or their mothers as their most common sources (Miller, Wanless, & Weissberg, 2018). This brings up the question of whether parents are resistant to using information from professional sources or if they often find it difficult to make the transformation from technical and professional information to practical, everyday parenting needs. Nevertheless, the parents I spoke with only referred to mistrust regarding scientific research or an inclination to do what makes sense to them, rather than difficulty translating research into practice. As with many of the parents participating in my study, even these

professionals working in a field that could inform their parenting often relied on input from other parents regarding questions they had.

Parents generally acquire parenting information and take on parenting attitudes from several sources such as: their own experiences while growing up; their learning from friends, family, and others; and the culture they are in (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2016, p. 48). Along with their social networks (family, friends, etc.), parents value their own experiences from raising their children as a source for parenting guidance (Bartlett, Guzman, & Ramos-Olazagasti, 2018). Parents also tend to use the Internet to learn more and may seek guidance from pediatricians (Bartlett, Guzman, & Ramos-Olazagasti, 2018). My findings are consistent with these statements. I found that the parents did seem to value their own experiences involving parenting and may turn to other resources that they find easy to access or that make sense to them. As for parental willingness to participate in parenting classes, one study found that among its approximately 300 respondents, “slightly uninterested” and “not at all interested” were the most common ratings regarding parenting programs presented in the study’s survey (Levant, 1987). The parents that participated in my focus group represent a biased sample in this regard because most were drawn from a parenting class. However, most of the parents who participated in my research who were not drawn from the parenting class seemed to line up with the responses in the abovementioned survey. For the most part, those not drawn from the parenting class seemed to have minimal interest in parenting classes. For Lightward Bound, these insights are valuable to guide strategy for bringing light into the lives of children, including through parenting.

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION

Implications

Finding: Views on Children

The finding about the parents' views about children provides a positive and hopeful view of the children's home environment and the likely outcomes for them. This finding suggests that the children in the homes of these parents are likely to have the support they need to do well in school and feel loved and valued. These likely outcomes are evidence of light in their lives. Even more, they may grow up to be adults with a sense of self-confidence that will enable them to find success as adults and they may contribute positively to their communities.

Finding: Authoritative Parenting

The finding that the parents who participated in the research all tend to follow the authoritative style of parenting is another hopeful finding of this research. The children in these families are on a course that has been shown statistically to correlate with lower levels of some negative outcomes for children. Compared to children raised with other parenting options, these children are likely to experience less anxiety or depression and to avoid delinquency and substance abuse. We must be keep in mind, however, that this study used a sample of only nine parents, which cannot be generalized to the whole county.

Finding: Personal Integrity

The finding that the parents are all guided by the authoritative parenting style along with the finding of little agreement among them on what leads to personal integrity suggest that within the culture there may be much promotion of authoritative parenting as a parenting approach, but there may be little discussion of how children develop personal integrity or moral values. But as briefly mentioned in Chapter IV (p. 108), the authoritative parenting style may

contribute to some characteristics that might be considered personal integrity. At least half of the parents had attended some sort of parenting class; presumably, authoritative parenting was generally taught in those classes, but perhaps little information was presented regarding the development of personal integrity or moral values. For example, I spent some time looking at the Guiding Good Choices curriculum, which does present elements of the authoritative parenting style, but it mainly focuses on child outcomes related to substance abuse. The course does not strongly present other benefits or outcomes of using authoritative parenting. This could, therefore, lead parents to believe this parenting approach is useful to help prevent substance abuse, but they may not realize it could also give their children a greater chance of developing personal integrity and yielding other beneficial outcomes. A result could then be that parents aren't as invested in the approach because not as much seems at stake.

As noted in the literature review, Karmaker (2015) found that the behavior of children raised with authoritative parenting was more likely than the behavior of those raised by authoritarian parents to be guided by internal values, a characteristic of personal integrity. Parents who do not understand this may tend to observe the more immediate effects of helping bring obedience and compliance from children, not realizing that by authoritative parenting, they may also have an opportunity to intentionally instill moral values and develop personal integrity, especially by the relevant boundaries and limits they set.

Extensive research may not have determined a definite answer on what helps children develop personal integrity or such research findings may not have been made widely available. The social research community has extensively studied various parenting dimensions. They have also studied associated outcomes for children. The outcomes identified during my literature review, however, were mostly limited to topics such as depression, anxiety, delinquency, and

substance abuse. The study of the development of personal integrity or a moral compass as an outcome did not receive any significant attention in relation to parenting.

Finding: Parental Boundaries

As with some previously mentioned findings, the finding that parents had boundaries they would not cross demonstrates a positive element in the lives of their children. The boundaries that parents spoke about suggest that maltreatment may be unlikely within their homes. Maltreatment is a social ill against which we commit many resources. The parents in this study may be a model for parents in our community. They are a small sample of the many parents who do a good job with their children. But there are still some who mistreat their children. Those who do so are parents whom we as a community need to reach to help them to follow in the footsteps of the more positive parents. This is a goal of Lightward Bound.

Finding: Learning to Parent

The finding on how parents learn to be parents has some important implications. Most parents gain some or all of their understanding from observations and experiences with their own parents and other parents. Some tend to avoid professional or expert advice on parenting because of a sense of mistrust in those sources. For those who avoid such outside information, there are some risks of adopting inadequate or harmful parenting ideas and practices. If the examples and information from other parents model harmful practices, these parents may follow the same patterns. Additionally, from their own experiences, they may only be aware of the more obvious effects of a parent's behaviors and the immediate outcomes with the children. For example, a harsh threat visibly stops a child from doing something a parent doesn't want the child to do. The effect is immediate and obvious. A parent making such an observation may not be aware of the long-term effects of repeating that sort of parenting approach over years. Some effects are not

observable in the moment, but may develop over time or after children are grown or may interact with other circumstances to give a result that cannot readily be distinguished. For those parents willing to study and learn from information based on sound research literature, they are more likely to have better tools and develop better skills to raise their children for better results.

It may, therefore, be important to ensure that everyone who raises children or has significant influence and stewardship over children receives such essential information for working with children.

Recommendations

This research was intended as a starting point of a broader, long-term goal of optimizing the parenting within Tooele County, Utah. The following recommendations are aimed at achieving that end goal.

Without positive parenting examples and without adequate information about positive practices, it is likely that parents will naturally tend to resort to the more negative, coercive approaches to parenting because such practices often bring more immediate and visible results that the parent may be seeking, while the negative outcomes are often not immediately discernible. Also, because positive parenting approaches take time for the full, desirable effects to manifest in their children, there is little immediate feedback that the approach is working, potentially giving justification to abandon the practice in favor of the quick-response negative approaches.

For this reason, lack of access to good parenting information can be a barrier to optimum parenting in the community. The County should, therefore, take intentional steps to continue to increase the availability and utilization of sound parenting and child development information for

all parents, regardless of economic means. It may be valuable to consider infusing such information into the school system so that all students may graduate with a sound foundation in what good parenting entails. As was previously discussed (in Ch. IV, p. 40), most women have children sometime in their lives, suggesting a nearly universal need for good parenting information. Schools are an excellent venue for presenting information broadly at an age when the recipients may be most receptive. Ultimately, our goal should be to make knowledge and examples of good parenting pervasive throughout the community.

In all places where authoritative parenting is taught, the instruction should also include information explaining the extensive research findings that show that this style of parenting has been associated with lower probabilities of anxiety, depression, substance abuse, and delinquency than other styles of parenting that have been studied. Other likely positive outcomes should also be explained. This information may increase a parent's determination to continue using the approach and may enhance their feelings of self-confidence about their parenting and the eventual outcomes for their children.

It should be a priority to highlight research about what leads children to develop good moral values and personal integrity as they move into adulthood. As research becomes available on the topic, it needs to be widely publicized and promoted so that parents and others working with children can have the greatest opportunities to contribute to the development of moral citizens who contribute in positive ways to their communities.

Though not a finding of this research, a few parents in the focus group expressed the feeling that a county parenting resource index would be a valuable asset to parents. Indeed, a simplified way to discover what child-supportive information and services are available would

be quite valuable to many parents. Often, the resources and opportunities can be difficult for parents to navigate.

Study Limitations

A significant limitation of this study was that it only included the views of nine parents in Tooele County. Along with the small sample size, the demographics of the nine parents are not likely to be representative of the parents throughout the county. Particularly, the participants were all from Tooele City and a large percentage of them had participated in parenting classes. The findings in this study are, therefore, not generalizable to the whole county nor to any population beyond that.

Another weakness of the study was that several questions specifically asked about various parenting elements that are part of the authoritative style of parenting. As a qualitative study, these elements should have been brought up by the participants without being stated first by the study. This study, therefore, may have evoked a stronger sense of parents adopting authoritative parenting than what the parents actually do in their daily lives with their children. Nevertheless, the parents did seem to speak about the authoritative elements as if they were natural to them and spoke as if from their experience.

Future Research

This study was a very small beginning of evaluating the parenting climate of Tooele County. I recommend further qualitative study of the parenting climate, with a much broader sample of parents throughout the county. I believe the study should also be sanctioned by the county with an objective of ensuring clemency and anonymity to parents whose answers to

questions might ordinarily lead to child services involvement and waiving reporting obligations for those conducting the research. This would be essential to gain a clearer picture of the parenting that actually takes place in our county, particularly among demographics that are most troublesome for children.

After gathering and analyzing those data, I would recommend another, broader study (developed based on findings in the qualitative study) to determine quantitative results for a statistically significant sample of the county's parents. The results of that quantitative study should then be used to develop a strategy to optimize the parenting within the county.

An additional research subject that may have value for developing the best parenting practices is the following: I would recommend further study of the importance of strong positive or negative consequences that parents use. I believe it would be valuable to discover if examples, verbal teaching, and discussion and advice about issues in the parenting of children may have similar positive effects, without the discomforts of some negative consequences and without unduly developing expectation or entitlement feelings in children because of too-frequent rewards.

It may also be useful to research the distinction between parenting behaviors where the outcomes tend to be clear and obvious to parents and those behaviors where outcomes are not so apparent until much later or have broad effects that are hard to pinpoint. This may be an important element to help parents understand that everything isn't as clear-cut as it may appear and provide guidance regarding the less observable effects of parental choices.

Personal Reflections

During the course of this research, while listening to parents and analyzing their words, I have been impressed that every parent in this study seemed serious about their parenting responsibilities and each seemed to have a parental foundation of love and concern for their children. I am thankful that parents like these are part of the parenting landscape in Tooele and in our nation. But we also know that some parents are not like these parents, as evidenced by maltreatment statistics. My hope is to work toward elevating the bottom tier of parenting so that even the least motivated or educated parent still strives to be this kind of caring, concerned parent. I also hope to find ways to support parents who are already doing a good job, such as helping them to recognize and understand what they are doing well.

The finding that these parents are guided by the authoritative parenting style is a credit to their parenting skills and an important asset for their children, since it has been shown to provide the best outcomes for children among the styles that have been studied.

On the other hand, it stirred some feelings of empathy and sorrow to hear Serenity's description of how she was raised. At one point she said, "I was scared to death of my dad." I can relate to that feeling, though with my father it seems it wasn't nearly so extreme. As a society, we must agree that no child should be made to feel this sort of fear from the adults who are in their lives or routinely in authority over them. This is part of what motivates me to do this research and to continue further beyond this project. No child should be treated by adults in ways that routinely subject them to fear, physical or emotional hurts, etc.

We have set up laws and protective systems to help prevent such maltreatment of children. The motive is laudable, but I believe it doesn't address the core problem. As a society generally, we need to value and appreciate children. It seems obvious that mistreatment is not an indicator

of appreciation. We need to stir up this appreciation of children throughout American culture. We need to help people understand that much of the bad behavior that we observe among some groups of children is not evidence of bad kids, but more likely evidence of bad cultural influences thrust upon them. Every one of us reacts to negative things forced on us. Some react with anger, others react by withdrawing, and yet others will hold it in for a long time, seeming to be okay, until one day they lash out. Parents also need to understand that it's not the spanking, punishing, or rough conditioning that makes good people out of kids. Children will become decent, productive adults and citizens as we show them ourselves how to be that kind of person, as we give them numerous examples of that kind of person, as we talk to them about being that kind of person, and as we help them understand the difference between such a person and other alternatives that people have chosen.

Much information is available on the best parenting practices that lead to better outcomes for children. It is difficult, therefore, to justify a passive societal approach to parenting—leaving the parenting of our nation's (or world's) children to parental whims or ignorance—when we have so much valuable knowledge on parenting approaches.

If as a society we truly value children, I believe that we should provide good parenting examples and parenting education as a norm throughout the culture, not just when someone has gone too far and ends up in the child protective services system and not only in the somewhat rare case where a parent decides to spend unreasonable sums of money to learn how to improve their parenting through expensive programs created as part of a profit-making operation. We need to make good parenting principles common knowledge. We should commit resources to broad parenting education, such as through school systems and media campaigns, so that every

child grows up with knowledge of good parenting principles and appropriate child development expectations.

I believe, as well, that we need a new paradigm for the various child support and protective services throughout our country. Instead of being a threat to parents when they learn these service people are coming to their door, let's change the paradigm so that parents seek out assistance from child services to help them improve what happens to the children in their homes. We have the sociological and psychological understanding in our time to market parenting in a better way, where parents who might fear being the targets of child protective services investigations, would instead reach out to those services for help, knowing they will receive help, rather than threats of removing children from their homes. Consumer behavior and marketing experts routinely motivate people to seek out many products that are far less important than the well-being of children. We need to adopt this concept and commit the resources to really make such a shift in the culture.

Lightward Bound

As a project of Lightward Bound, this research answered initial questions about a few Tooele parents regarding their views on children, the process of raising children, and learning how to do it. Because Lightward Bound's mission involves bringing more light into people's lives, the organization will continue to pursue additional research on parenting and children in order to increase the light brought into the lives of children from birth to adulthood. This is an essential element of a cultural shift toward a more peaceful, united, and uplifting society for all.

REFERENCES

- Akers, A. (2011, February). Actual and preferred sources of knowledge about parenting and adolescent preventive health among parents of adolescents [Supplement, abstract]. *Journal of Adolescent Health, 48*(2), S90-S91. doi:10.1016/j.jadohealth.2010.11.189
- Annie E. Casey Foundation. (n.d.). *Substantiated Child Abuse Count in Utah*. Retrieved from Kids Count Data Center: <https://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/map/3214-substantiated-child-abuse-count?loc=46&loct=2#5/any/false/false/869/any/9822/Orange/>
- Ashori, M., Afrooz, G. A., Arjmandnia, A. A., Pourmohamadrez-Tajrishi, M., Ghobari-Bonab, B., & Jalil-Abkenar, S. S. (2019, July-August). Adaptation of positive parenting program training based on cultural values and evaluation of its effectiveness in psychological health and interaction of mother with slow paced children. *Journal of Research & Health, 9*(4), 284-293. doi:10.29252/jrh.9.4.284
- Barber, B. K. (1996). Parental psychological control: Revisiting a neglected construct. *Child Development, 67*, 3296-3319.
- Barroso, A. (2021, May 7). *With a potential 'baby bust' on the horizon, key facts about fertility in the U.S. before the pandemic*. Washington, D.C.: Pew Research Center. Retrieved Nov 30, 2021, from <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2021/05/07/with-a-potential-baby-bust-on-the-horizon-key-facts-about-fertility-in-the-u-s-before-the-pandemic/>
- Bartlett, J. D., Guzman, L., & Ramos-Olazagasti, M. A. (2018, July). *Parenting knowledge among first-time parents of young children: A research-to-practice brief*. Retrieved from Child Trends: <https://www.childtrends.org/publications/parenting-knowledge-among-first-time-parents-of-young-children-a-research-to-practice-brief>

- Bi, X., Yang, Y., Li, H., Wang, M., Zhang, W., & Deater-Deckard, K. (2018). Parenting styles and parent–adolescent relationships: The mediating roles of behavioral autonomy and parental authority. *Frontiers in Psychology, 9*(2187).
- Brown, T. J., Suter, T. A., & Churchill, G. A. (2010). *Basic marketing research: Customer insights and managerial action* (8th ed.). Stamford, CT: Cengage Learning.
- Bush, K. R., & Peterson, G. W. (2013). Parent–child relationships in diverse contexts. In G. W. Peterson, & K. R. Bush (Eds.), *Handbook of Marriage and the Family*. New York, NY: Springer. doi:10.1007/978-1-4614-3987-5_13
- Calhoun, B. H., Ridenour, T. A., & Fishbein, D. H. (2019). Associations between child maltreatment, harsh parenting, and sleep with adolescent mental health. *Journal of Child and Family Studies, 28*, 116-130. doi:10.1007/s10826-018-1261-7
- Christmas, A. L., Wodarski, J. S., & Smokowski, P. R. (1996). Risk factors for physical child abuse: A practice theoretical paradigm. *Family Therapy, 23*(3), 233-248.
- Colón, J. R., Rodríguez, M. M., & Galliher, R. V. (2019). Parenting styles and child outcomes in Puerto Rican families. *Revista Puertorriqueña de Psicología, 30*(1), 12-28.
- Committee for Children. (2019). *Second Step*. Retrieved from <https://www.secondstep.org/>
- Creswell, J. W., & Miller, D. L. (2000). Determining validity in qualitative inquiry. *Theory into Practice, Vol. 39*, 124-130.
- Ferguson, C. J. (2013). Spanking, corporal punishment and negative long-term outcomes: A meta-analytic review of longitudinal studies. *Clinical Psychology Review, 33*, 196-208. doi:10.1016/j.cpr.2012.11.002
- Fergusson, D. M., & Lynskey, M. T. (1997). Physical punishment/maltreatment during childhood and adjustment in young adulthood. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 21*(7), 617-630.

Garcia, A. R., DeNard, C., Ohene, S., Morones, S. M., & Connaughton, C. (2018). "I am more than my past": Parents' attitudes and perceptions of the Positive Parenting Program in child welfare. *Children and Youth Services Review, 88*, 286-297.

doi:10.1016/j.chilyouth.2018.03.023

Given, L. M. (2016). *100 questions (and answers) about qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE Publications.

Hawkins, J. D., & Catalano, R. F. (2002). *Guiding good choices: A program for parents of children ages 9-14*. South Deerfield, Massachusetts: Channing Bete Company.

Horowitz, J. M. (2020, April 15). *Lower-income parents most concerned about their children falling behind amid COVID-19 school closures*. Retrieved from

<https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/04/15/lower-income-parents-most-concerned-about-their-children-falling-behind-amid-covid-19-school-closures/>

Janssens, A., Goossens, L., Noortgate, W. V., Colpin, H., Verschueren, K., & Leeuwen, K. V. (2015). Parents' and adolescents' perspectives on parenting: Evaluating conceptual structure, measurement invariance, and criterion validity. *Assessment, 22*(4), 473-489.

doi:10.1177/1073191114550477

Johnson, L. R. (2017). *Community-based qualitative research: Approaches for education and the social sciences*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Karmaker, R. (2015, October-December). Does parenting style influence the internalization of moral values in children and adolescents? *Psychological Studies, 60*(4), 438-446.

doi:10.1007/s12646-015-0338-2

- Knutson, J. F., DeGarmo, D., Koepl, G., & Reid, J. B. (2005). Care neglect, supervisory neglect, and harsh parenting in the development of children's aggression: A replication and extension. *Child Maltreatment, 10*(2), 92-107. doi: 10.1177/1077559504273684
- Levant, R. F. (1987). The use of marketing techniques to facilitate acceptance of prevention programs: Case Example. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice, 18*(6), 640-642.
- Miller, J. S., Wanless, S. B., & Weissberg, R. P. (2018). Parenting for competence and parenting with competence: Essential connections between parenting and social and emotional learning. *School Community Journal, 28*(2), 9-28.
- Muratori, P., Lochman, J. E., Lai, E., Milone, A., Nocentini, A., Pisano, S., . . . Masi, G. (2016). Which dimension of parenting predicts the change of callous unemotional traits in children with disruptive behavior disorder? *Comprehensive Psychiatry, 69*, 202-210. doi:10.1016/j.comppsy.2016.06.002
- National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. (2016). *Parenting matters: Supporting parents of children ages 0-8*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. doi:10.17226/21868
- Pew Research Center. (2020, Sep 10). *U.S. teens take after their parents religiously, attend services together and enjoy family rituals*.
- Pinquart, M. (2017). Associations of parenting dimensions and styles with externalizing problems of children and adolescents: An updated meta-analysis. *Developmental Psychology, 53*(5), 873-932. doi:10.1037/dev0000295

- Pong, S.-I., Johnston, J., & Chen, V. (2010). Authoritarian parenting and Asian adolescent school performance: Insights from the US and Taiwan. *International Journal of Behavioral Development, 34*(1), 62-72. doi:10.1177/0165025409345073
- Robbins, S. P., & Judge, T. A. (2012). *Essentials of organizational behavior (11th ed.)*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Save the Children. (n.d.). *What we do: U.S. programs*. Retrieved January 18, 2022, from Save the Children: <https://www.savethechildren.org/us/what-we-do/us-programs>
- Schaefer, R. T. (2011). Socialization and the life course. In R. T. Schaefer, *Sociology: A brief introduction, 9th ed.* (pp. 78-103). New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Share Our Strength. (n.d.). *About*. Retrieved January 18, 2022, from Share Our Strength: <https://www.shareourstrength.org/about>
- Siegel, L. J., & Welsh, B. C. (2014). *Juvenile delinquency: The core (5th ed.)*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.
- Tooele County School District. (2017, November 10). *Parent Information Resource Center*. Retrieved from Tooele County School District: <https://www.tooeleschools.org/apps/news/article/782753>
- Türkoğlu, B. (2019, February). Preschool teachers' perspectives on aggressive behaviors in children: A qualitative study. *Journal of Education and Training Studies, 7*(2), 169-183. doi:10.11114/jets.v7i2.3889
- U.S. Department of Health & Human Services. (a). *Violence prevention: Child abuse and neglect risk and protective factors*. Retrieved Jan 10, 2022, from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/childabuseandneglect/riskprotectivefactors.html>

U.S. Department of Health & Human Services. (b). *Violence prevention: Preventing child abuse & neglect*. Retrieved Jan 10, 2022, from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:

<https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/childabuseandneglect/fastfact.html>

U.S. Department of Health & Human Services. (c). *National child abuse prevention partner organizations*. Retrieved January 18, 2022, from Child Welfare Information Gateway:

https://www.childwelfare.gov/organizations/?CWIGFunctionsaction=rols:main.dspList&rolType=Custom&RS_ID=21

University of Texas Arlington. (n.d.). *Quantitative and Qualitative Research*. Retrieved from

UTA Libraries: https://libguides.uta.edu/quantitative_and_qualitative_research

Utah Department of Health. (a). *Community snapshot for Tooele County local health district-All available indicators*. Retrieved December 9, 2019, from Public Health Indicator Based

Information System (IBIS) - Utah's Public Health Data Resource:

<https://ibis.health.utah.gov/ibisph-view/community/snapshot/report/AllIndicators/GeoLHD/8.html?PageName=&showNumberDenom=true>

Utah Department of Health. (b). *Health indicator report of drug overdose and poisoning*

incidents. Retrieved March 23, 2020, from Public Health Indicator Based Information

System (IBIS) - Utah's Public Health Data Resource: <https://ibis.health.utah.gov/ibisph-view/indicator/view/PoiDth.LHD.html>

Utah Department of Health. (c). *Health indicator report of suicide*. Retrieved from Public Health

Indicator Based Information System (IBIS) - Utah's Public Health Data Resource:

<https://ibis.health.utah.gov/ibisph-view/indicator/view/SuicDth.LHD.html>

Utah Department of Human Services, Division of Substance Abuse and Mental Health. (2019).

Student health and risk prevention needs assessment survey results for Tooele School District (grades 6-12 combined). Division of Substance Abuse and Mental Health.

Utah State University Extension. (2017a). *Fatherhood*. Retrieved from Healthy Relationships Utah: https://healthyrelationshipsutah.org/class_descriptions/fatherhood

Utah State University Extension. (2017b). *Parenting the Love and Logic Way*. Retrieved from Healthy Relationships Utah:

https://healthyrelationshipsutah.org/class_descriptions/parenting-skills-class-description

Waller, R., Gardner, F., & Hyde, L. W. (2013). What are the associations between parenting, callous–unemotional traits, and antisocial behavior in youth? A systematic review of evidence. *Clinical Psychology Review, 33*, 593-608.

doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.cpr.2013.03.001>

Wartenweiler, D., & Mansukhani, R. (2016). Participatory action research with Filipino street youth: Their voice and action against corporal punishment. *Child Abuse Review, 25*, 410-423. doi:10.1002/car.2421

Wilson, P., Rush, R., Hussey, S., Puckering, C., Sim, F., Allely, C. S., . . . Gillberg, C. (2012). How evidence-based is an ‘evidence-based parenting program’? A PRISMA systematic review and meta-analysis of Triple P. *BMC Medicine, 10*(130), 1-16.

APPENDIX A – RECRUITMENT MATERIALS

[Initial recruitment script, to be given to parents in specific residential regions of Tooele.]

Hi! My name is Emil Therianos. I've been a resident of Tooele for over 14 years. I have worked as a substitute teacher in Tooele County School District for 12 years and have seen some of the good and bad that affects children. I care about our community and I care about the children who grow up here.

I'm currently working on my master's degree. As part of my coursework, I am doing some community research. I am trying to learn about how parents in Tooele think about children and parenting—their attitudes, beliefs, perceptions, and values.

Parents! Would you be willing to help with my research? If you are currently raising one or more children and have been in Tooele for the past five years, all you need to do is spend 60 to 90 minutes talking about children and parenting in a focus group that I will be conducting. (Each focus group will have no more than eight parents participating and one or two people running it.)

How about a \$25 gift card? Would that give you more reason to participate?

I hope you will consider participating. It may help children in Tooele (even yours) in the long-run.

After I get enough people willing to participate, I will try to work out a date and time that works for everyone.

Send an e-mail with the information listed below to <email address>.

- Your name
- Your parenting role (mother, father, step-mother, step-father, etc.)
- A preferred way to contact you

You may also send a text or call xxx-xxx-xxxx

APPENDIX B – CONSENT FORM

Focus Group Informed Consent Form

The Research Project: Thank you for agreeing to participate in my research study. I am Emil Therianos, a resident of Tooele County since 2005. I am interested in the well-being of children in Tooele, so I am studying the perspectives of parents in the area to learn about their views on children and parenting. My hope is that this research may pave the way to improve the lives of Tooele children, by creating an environment where they can become happy and responsible adults.

Voluntary Participation: By reading and signing this form, you are consenting to participate in a focus group about children and parenting. The focus group may last approximately 60-90 minutes. There will be eight or fewer parents in the group, along with one or two people running the group. You may withdraw from the focus group at any time if you choose. You are free to choose to what degree you participate (i.e. answering questions or not, etc.). NOTE: If you decide to leave the focus group early, any comments you made previously will still be recorded and may be included in text materials. However, your name or other identifying information will not be associated with those materials.

Benefits and Risks: The potential benefits of this study and the focus group are mainly that Tooele City/County organizations and leaders may gain insights that they may use to improve the parenting climate in the county, which may lead to improvements for children and the community. It is unlikely that you will gain a direct personal benefit from participating in this focus group, other than perhaps satisfaction in sharing your perspective or hearing perspectives of others. You will also be given a \$25 gift card at the end of the focus group, if you participate for the full time (excluding short breaks).

There are no expected physical risks for you as a result of participating in this focus group. Emotional risks are similar to the routine risks of discussions with a group of people whom you may not agree with. That may include feeling embarrassed, upset, or unwilling to share thoughts. All discussion in this focus group involves opinions and perspectives only; there are no questions about parenting behavior. This is to avoid putting participants in a position where they might inadvertently admit behaviors that they don't want known. If a participant reveals illegal conduct they have participated in (such as child abuse), they may incur legal risks.

Confidentiality: I will record the focus group activity with a digital voice recorder. I may also take notes on paper and will transcribe the audio into a readable text form. I will only have a record that you participated in the focus group. What you say will be disconnected from your identity. I may share your comments with others as part of my final report, but I will not in any way connect your comments with your name or other personal identifying information. I will not put your name in places where it is not necessary and will keep this consent form and any other materials that may contain any of your personal identifying information in a secure place until the time that I destroy these materials. EXCEPTION: I cannot guarantee confidentiality if a focus group participant reveals participation in illegal conduct involving children.

You may ask questions at any time during the focus group, but please be respectful of the group. You may also contact the research supervisor for any concerns.

Facilitator: Emil Therianos
Phone: xxx-xxx-xxxx (voice & text)
Email: <email address>

Research Supervisor: Jamie Joanou
Phone: xxx-xxx-xxxx
Email: jjoanou@westminstercollege.edu

Institutional Review Board Representative: Sheryl Steadman
Email: ssteadman@westminstercollege.edu

Facilitator Signature:

By my signature below, I acknowledge that I have read and understood this consent form and agree to participate in this focus group. I understand that I may leave or take a break from the focus group at any time.

Participant Signature _____ Date _____

APPENDIX C – ORIGINAL GUIDE FOR FOCUS GROUPS (Used for interviews)

This guide provides a layout of topics to discuss with the focus group. You may rephrase questions to help participants better understand them, so long as the meaning and purpose remain the same. You may ask additional questions that relate to the questions in this guide, to further explore any aspect related to opinions and perspectives on children, parenting, and parenting education programs.

IMPORTANT: Always be aware of the group dynamics and interactions. Ensure that participants are feeling comfortable with their experience in the focus group. If contention or other negative feelings seem to be rising, pause and take steps to diffuse the situation.

Step-by-step instructions for focus group facilitator:

[Welcome participants to focus group about children and parenting]

[Introduce facilitator and any assistants]

I am working on my master's degree with Westminster College in Salt Lake. Part of that requires me to do some research with real people. I have lived in Tooele for over 14 years, so I wanted to do my research here and I want to do it to help children to do better in life and to help make our community better.

You have been invited to participate in this focus group, which is part of my research, because of where you live. It's not a rich area, but more of a working people's neighborhood. That's what I'm interested in.

Thank you for being willing to participate. We will be talking about children, raising them, parenting—that sort of stuff. Are there any questions about anything so far?

[Pass out consent forms to each participant, two copies each]

[Go through each section of form together as a group, giving time for them to read and sign]

Is everyone still okay to participate in this focus group? We are about ready to begin.

[Collect one signed copy of consent form from each participant; they should keep one too.]

[Have everyone take turns introducing themselves with the following information:]

First name

How long you have lived in neighborhood and Tooele

How many children you are currently raising

What other help you have for raising the children (spouse, relative, etc.)

[Start recording]

Thank you. Now let's start with some questions about children. Share what you think or feel—don't worry about whether others agree or not. I'm looking for what is really on your mind, not what someone thinks should be.

[Questions 1 – 31 are the meat of the focus group.]

[Display two or three pictures of children.]

1. Tell me what you all think about children (whatever you want to start off with)
2. Complete this sentence: Children are naturally _____.
3. What do you expect from children at different ages?
4. What are your feelings about children?
5. What are some of the things that can affect how children think and behave?
6. How much of their behavior is in-born and how much comes from the environment around them?
7. Describe the ideal child.
8. What sort of adult does this ideal child become?
9. Complete this sentence: To raise the ideal child, I would _____.

That question was our cue that we are moving on to your parenting thoughts. I want to know what you believe or think. As I mentioned in the consent form, I'm not looking for what you do as a parent, but just your thoughts, beliefs, and ideas about parenting and raising children.

10. As a parent, what is your goal? What are you trying to accomplish with your children?
11. What are some of the things that can help accomplish these goals?
12. What role does example play in raising children?
13. What are some sources of examples or behavior models that children follow?
14. How should parents communicate with their children?
15. How can parents improve communication with their children?
16. When should a parent punish a child?
17. What kinds of punishments are acceptable?
18. When should a parent reward a child?
19. In what ways could a parent reward their child?

20. Complete this sentence: A parent's expectations of a child _____.
21. What control should children have in their own lives? Does age matter?
22. How important is it to catch everything wrong that a child does?
23. Complete this sentence: If a child gets away with doing something wrong _____.
24. How do children learn to do the right things even when no one is watching?
25. Complete this sentence: A good parent _____.
26. How do parents learn to be good parents?
27. Complete this sentence: Parenting classes are _____.
28. What parenting programs are offered in Tooele?
29. Have you heard of Guiding Good Choices or the Love and Logic parenting series?
[If they haven't, inform participants that both are offered in Tooele.]
30. If scientific research gave parenting information that was different from your parenting practices, would you consider changing how you parent?
31. If you could have it, what new parenting information would you want?

[Ending Focus Group]

We are at the end of our time together. Thank you for participating.

Are there any questions I can answer?

Thank you again for your help. I am hoping my research can be a starting point for possibly making improvements for children and the community.

After I am finished with all of the research, I will make the research goals and results available through a link on the Tooele County 411 Facebook group page. That will be in May.

Make sure you get your gift card. We'll pass them out now.

[Pass out gift cards before participants leave.]

APPENDIX D – REVISED GUIDE FOR FOCUS GROUPS (Used for focus group)

This guide provides a layout of topics to discuss with the focus group. You may rephrase questions to help participants better understand them, so long as the meaning and purpose remain the same. You may ask additional questions that relate to the questions in this guide, to further explore any aspect related to opinions and perspectives on children, parenting, and parenting education programs.

IMPORTANT: Always be aware of the group dynamics and interactions. Ensure that participants are feeling comfortable with their experience in the focus group. If contention or other negative feelings seem to be rising, pause and take steps to diffuse the situation.

Step-by-step instructions for focus group facilitator:

[Welcome participants to focus group about children and parenting]

[Introduce facilitator and any assistants]

I am working on my master's degree with Westminster College in Salt Lake. Part of that requires me to do some research with real people. I have lived in Tooele for over 14 years, so I wanted to do my research here and I want to do it to help children to do better in life and to help make our community better.

Thank you for being willing to participate. We will be talking about children, raising them, parenting—that sort of stuff. Are there any questions about anything so far?

[Pass out consent forms to each participant, two copies each]

[Go through each section of form together as a group, giving time for them to read and sign]

Is everyone still okay to participate in this focus group? We are about ready to begin.

[Collect one signed copy of consent form from each participant; they should keep one too.]

[Have everyone take turns introducing themselves with the following information:]

First name

How long you have lived in neighborhood and Tooele

How many children you are currently raising

What other help you have for raising the children (spouse, relative, etc.)

[Start recording]

Thank you. Now let's start with some questions about children. Share what you think or feel—don't worry about whether others agree or not. I'm looking for what is really on your mind, not what someone else expects.

[Questions 1 – 31 are the meat of the focus group.]

[Display two or three pictures of children.]

1. Tell me what you all think about children (whatever you want to start off with)
2. Complete this sentence: Children are naturally _____.
3. What are some normal behaviors you might see from children at different ages?

4. How do you feel about your children?
5. What are some things that can affect how children look at life and how they behave?
6. Discuss this statement: A child's behavior develops from both their biological nature and the environment around them.
7. Describe the ideal child.
8. What sort of adult does this ideal child become?
9. Complete this sentence: To help a child become the ideal child, I would _____.

That question was our cue that we are moving on to your parenting thoughts. I want to know what you believe or think. As I mentioned in the consent form, I'm not looking for what you do as a parent, but just your thoughts, beliefs, and ideas about parenting and raising children.

10. As a parent, what is your goal? What are you trying to accomplish with your children?
11. What are some of the things that can help accomplish these goals?
12. What role does example play in raising children?
13. What are some sources of examples or behavior models that children follow?
14. What demeanor is best for parents to use when they communicate with their children?
15. What effects does the demeanor of parents have on children?
16. When should a parent punish a child?
17. What kinds of punishments are acceptable?
18. When should a parent reward a child?
19. What are some good rewards a parent could use with their child?
20. What effects do setting boundaries, limits, and expectations have on children?
21. What control should children have in their own lives? Does age matter?
22. How important is it to catch everything wrong that a child does?
23. Complete this sentence: If a child gets away with doing something wrong _____.
24. How do children learn to do the right things even when no one is watching?

25. Complete this sentence: A good parent _____.
26. How do parents learn to be good parents?
27. Complete this sentence: Parenting classes are _____.
28. What parenting programs are offered in Tooele?
29. Have you heard of Guiding Good Choices or the Love and Logic parenting series?
[If they haven't, inform participants that both are offered in Tooele.]
30. If scientific research gave parenting information that was different from your parenting practices, would you consider changing how you parent?
31. If you could have any new parenting information you wanted, what would it be?

[Ending Focus Group]

We are at the end of our time together. Thank you for participating.

Are there any questions I can answer?

Thank you again for your help. I am hoping my research can be a starting point for possibly making improvements for children and the community.

After I am finished with all of the research, I will make the research findings available through a link on the Tooele County 411 Facebook group page. That will be in May.

Make sure you get your gift card. We'll pass them out now.

[Pass out gift cards before participants leave.]