How Can Parents Reduce or Remove the “Storm and Stress” of Adolescence?

by

Deborah Purcell

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APPROVED BY

Jennifer Campbell, PsyD, R. Psych., Capstone Advisor, Master of Counselling Faculty

Alicia Spidel, Ph.D., RCC., Faculty Second Reader, Master of Counselling Faculty

Division of Arts and Sciences

Abstract

Until the creation of adolescence one hundred years ago, this period of time was not characterised by opposition and disconnection. Today however, many parents with adolescents are struggling and statistics reinforce this experience. The research question is: how can parents reduce or remove the “storm and stress” of adolescence? There are differing views on the cause, but the overarching theme in the research is that “storm and stress” is caused by culture: horizontal rather than vertical passing of culture, technology, media, the billion-dollar youth culture that reinforce myths of “storm and stress,” and the lack of value that adolescents hold in Western culture. This Capstone will include a discussion of parenting styles that are detrimental as well as parenting styles that lead to confident adolescents and close adolescent-parent relationships. With the research demonstrating that “storm and stress” is not inevitable, an important piece of this Capstone looks at how parents and professionals can turn these negative stereotypes around, face these myths, and either reduce or remove the “storm and stress.” Ultimately, this Capstone outlines in detail a program for parents that will educate and support them in developing strong and close relationships with their adolescents in such ways that “storm and stress” can either be prevented, or if it already exists, reduced, or removed. This Capstone is general in nature and is meant to address a broad group of parents of Western adolescents.

Keywords: adolescent, Western culture, “Storm and Stress,” teenager, youth, adolescent-parent attachment, parenting styles, youth culture, peer-orientation, adolescent brain research, negative adolescent stereotypes

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Contents

"Nothing you become will disappoint me; I have no preconception that I'd like to see you be or do. I have no desire to forsee you, only to discover you. You cannot disappoint me" (Aldort, 2005, iii).

How Can Parents Reduce or Remove the "Storm and Stress" of Adolescence?

Chapter One

Throughout most of history, young people spent the majority of their time living with and learning from their families. Soon after puberty, young adults had babies and grew families (Epstein, 2007). In many countries today adolescents spend most of their time with their family and in some cultures adolescence is as short as one year (Schlegel & Barry III, 1991). Even 100-years ago in the North America, the time between childhood and adulthood was only a couple of years (Siegel, 2013). Now, the transition from child to adulthood is longer, with no clear end point (Epstein, 2010; Schlegel & Barry III, 1991; Siegel, 2013; Steinberg, 2001).

Until the creation of adolescence one hundred years ago, this period of time now known as adolescence was not characterised by opposition and disconnection (Epstein, 2010; Schlegel & Barry III, 1991; Steinberg, 2001). Today however, many parents with adolescents are struggling (Epstein, 2010; Pipher, 1994; Price, 2017; Schlegel & Barry III, 1991; Siegel, 2013). Life and family relationships seem okay during the elementary years, but for many parents once the child enters adolescence everything appears to change (Epstein, 2010; Moretti & Peled, 2004; Siegel, 2013). Many adolescents stop talking with their parents, they avoid their family while spending almost all of their time with friends, and they become confused, alone, crazed, disconnected, uncertain, isolated, lost, out of control, wild, frightened, and seeking- these are words used by a group of parents to describe their teens (Siegel, 2013). While society seems to have accepted these qualities as "normal" among adolescents, the point of this Capstone is that it

does not need to be (Epstein, 2010; Neufeld, 2013; Qu et al., 2020; Schlegel & Barry III, 1991; Siegel, 2013).

Moving from childhood to adulthood is a transitionary period. It is a border between childhood and adulthood and from a horticultural standpoint, the most growth, diversity, and richness exists at the borders (Pipher, 1994). In non-Western cultures and over a century ago in the West as well, this transition was supported (Epstein, 2010; Kett, 2003; Steinberg, 2001). Children lived, worked, and learned alongside their parents, and when children finally moved out (*if* they moved out- depending on the culture, many young adults would have their spouse move in with their family and they would raise their children multi-generationally), they often moved just down the street (Epstein, 2010; Schlegel & Barry III, 1991). Family and support was never far and thus, the transition was gentle (Schlegel & Barry III, 1991).

For today’s adolescents and parents, however, adolescence is unfamiliar, new, and scary (Siegel, 2013). Yet, despite this common experience, no universal programs to support parents in maintaining strong and close relationships with their children exist in the British Columbia as their children make this epic transition. I believe this is a problem. Many parents, unknowingly, move into adolescence with their children with little awareness, understanding, or information about what is about to happen, the magnitude of the change, and how to navigate it in a useful and healthy way.

In order to fully grasp the problem, chapter one of this Capstone will include a history of adolescence and the generally held idea that it is currently a time of “storm and stress.” It will look at statistics outlining exactly why this is a problem worth studying, a purpose statement including my research question as well as the intended audience of this Capstone, and a brief discussion regarding the theoretical and conceptual framework through which this Capstone is

written. It will briefly address the contribution this project will provide for the field of counselling which will include an outline for a six-to-eight-week group for parents including lesson plans and handouts. Lastly, a reflectivity and positionality statement that will locate my relationship with the research question, my social location, and my prior experience with and preconceived notions about the topic will be made, a definition of terms will be provided, and an outline of the Capstone project chapters will be included.

The History of Adolescence and “Storm and Stress”

In order to adequately address what the research says about adolescence and how parents can reduce or remove the “storm and stress,” it is necessary to look at the history (Steinberg, 2001; Steinberg & Lerner, 2004). “Storm and stress” is a term coined by G. Stanley Hall in 1904 to describe the defiance, opposition, mood disruption, and conflict that occurs during adolescence (Hall, 2012). It seems a western cultural truth that adolescence is a time of storm and stress, angst and rebellion, and yet, it is a recent idea (Epstein, 2010; Marsten, 2020; Siegel, 2013; Steinberg, 2001). At just over a century old, however, the concept of “adolescence is a historical anomaly” and therefore it does not need to be this way (Epstein, 2007, p. 16).

While young people have had their own social groups for hundreds of years, adolescence is a notion that did not develop until the late nineteenth and early twentieth century (Epstein, 2010; Kett, 2003; Steinberg & Lerner, 2004). How did the concept of adolescence develop and why? Below I will introduce a number of factors that influenced the development of adolescence in the west, including G. Stanley Hall, schooling, the Great Depression, access to automobiles, changing laws, and the development of a billion-dollar youth culture. I want to pre-empt this conversation with the caveat that it is easier to explain the development of adolescence and changes to it over time, than identify the causes (Kett, 2003).

G. Stanley Hall and his booked titled *Adolescence: its psychology and its relations to physiology, anthropology, sociology, sex, crime, religion and education Volume 1*, published in 1904, initiated the study of adolescence (Epstein, 2010; Steinberg, 2001; Steinberg & Lerner, 2004). He chose the term “Sturm und Drang” or “Storm and Stress” to describe these years and believed that between developing sexuality and conflict between the desire for pleasure and the desire to fit into civilization, storm and stress is inevitable (Hall, 2012). Hall’s was a “biologically based, deficit view of adolescence” that saw adolescents as beasts to be tamed (Steinberg & Lerner, 2004, p. 46). He argued to take off the pressure of adulthood by prolonging the innocence of childhood (Kett, 2003; Steinberg & Lerner, 2004). This flew in face of previous ideas about youth that they should grow up and become responsible as soon as they are able (Epstein, 2010; Kett, 2003; Steinberg & Lerner, 2004). In 1900, for example, it was normal for 10-15 year old’s to have full-time jobs and it was ability that determined who worked, not age (Epstein, 2007; Kett, 2003). Hall and his book and ideas circulated widely (Kett, 2003; Steinberg & Lerner, 2004).

Schooling is another factor that had a tremendous impact on the development of adolescence. In 1852 in the United States of America (USA), it was required that eight- to fourteen-year-olds attend school for three months per year unless they could demonstrate they had mastery of the skills being taught in school- school at that time was about competence (Epstein, 2007). Additionally, in 1900, high schools only enrolled a very small fraction of the population as most parents saw little value in it (Kett, 2003). Compulsory schooling boomed in the 1920’s when Andrew Carnegie and the Rockefeller Foundation got involved and put a lot of money behind it (Gatto, 2010). Thus, compared to today’s schooling in which there are attendance requirements of 10-months per year from ages five to sixteen, historically children

and adolescents spent very little time in school (British Columbia School Act, 2021). Mandatory schooling for an extended period of time separated children and adolescents from their families (as did automobiles, giving adolescents more freedom), placed children and adolescents in the arms of their peers, and additionally extended childhood artificially (Epstein, 2010). John Taylor Gatto, a retired teacher and homeschooling advocate argues that school, due to its removing adolescents from their families with the built in vertical passing of culture and instead placing them with peers and the horizontal passing of culture for the majority of their waking hours, sets adolescents up to be heavily influenced by the youth culture promoted through advertising and media (Gatto, 2010; Neufeld, 2013). More on this topic will be discussed in chapter two.

A lack of work opportunities for teens during the Great Depression helped to universalize attendance in high school and developing laws further solidified a separate classification of adolescence apart from childhood and adulthood (Epstein, 2007). As school completion ages were extended, so were labour laws for older youth and for more types of work for youth (Epstein, 2007). Where once no laws existed around drinking, smoking, driving, voting, juvenile court proceedings, and refusing or consenting to medical treatment, suddenly, new and increasingly restrictive laws were introduced and passed (Epstein, 2007). A look into why some of these laws are problematic will be addressed in chapter two.

One of the more recent and extensive factors to impact adolescence is that of a youth culture promoted by the media. Pre-World War II, advertisers set their eyes on families (Kett, 2003). Post-World War II however, people began to build epic careers around marketing for teens, creating them as consumers (Kett, 2003). Youth media and advertising is now a billion dollar business and along with peers, media and advertising have become the prime influencers of adolescents (Epstein, 2010).

Statistics Demonstrating the “Storm and Stress” in Adolescence

The “storm and stress” described as opposition, defiance, and mood disruption in adolescence can be seen in statistics and demonstrates the need to support parents in maintaining strong and close relationships with their adolescents. This section will address why parents of adolescents need support, while a discussion about exactly what adolescents need from their parents will be raised in chapter two. Ninety percent of smokers started before they were 18-years old (Swerhone, 2020). On the topic of alcohol, in Canada between 2016-2017, almost eighty percent of adolescents 15-years old and older drank alcohol and nearly 25% of grade 7-12 adolescents drank five or more drinks- high risk drinking- on one occasion (Drug Free Kids Canada, 2021). Alcohol use in male youth confirms their masculinity and hypermasculinity (Fugitt & Ham, 2018).

Sexual risk-taking, substance use, injury and violence are the leading causes of death among 10-24 year old’s (i.e. motor vehicle crashes: 30%; homicides: 15%, and suicide: 12%) (Balocchini et al., 2013). From another source, the three leading causes of death among American adolescents are, in order: homicide, accidents, and suicide (Epstein, 2010). Suicide is the number one killer for both youth & adult males (Rodger, 2017). And yet one more source, adolescence has a death rate three times higher than any other age group, due mostly to avoidable deaths: accidents, murder, drug use, and weapons (Siegel, 2013).

In Canada between 2000 and 2019, accidents and intentional self-harm were by far the two leading causes of death, every single year, between the ages of 15-24 (Statistics Canada, 2020). Adolescents are prescribed psychiatric medication more than all other prescription medication combined and in Canada, 75% of the issues adolescent’s face are related to mental health (Epstein, 2010; Graham Boeckh Foundation, 2019). Also in Canada, 24% of deaths for

15-24 year old’s is by suicide and “teens are admitted to hospital for suicide attempts more than any other age group” (Centre for Suicide Prevention, n.d.). More statistics on adolescent health specific to British Columbia can be found in the 2018 BC Adolescent Health Survey through the McCreary Centre Society (McCreary Centre Society, 2018, 2021).

Looking at some positive facts, adolescents who have strong relationships with their parents are less likely to engage in violence, early sexual activity, or experience drug and alcohol problems (Neufeld, 2013). Youth who are strongly connected with their parents have better social skills, more constructive coping skills, their transition to high school is easier, and they experience less conflict with their families and peers (Moretti & Peled, 2004; Neufeld, 2013). Female youth who are strongly connected to their parents experience lower rates of adolescent pregnancy and fewer mental health and weight related problems (Moretti & Peled, 2004). Statistics demonstrate there is no doubt parents could benefit from more support in maintaining strong and close relationships with their adolescents.

Purpose Statement and Research Question

The purpose of this Capstone is to outline why it is necessary to have parent education and support groups leading into and throughout the adolescent period and how, by doing so, the “storm and stress” can be reduced, and potentially, removed. Parents, mental health professionals, and educators would also benefit from reading this Capstone. The research question is as follows: how can parents reduce or remove the “storm and stress” of adolescence?

Theoretical Framework

The research and discussion in this Capstone will be viewed through a social constructionist and postmodern lens. Through this lens, realities are developed in relationship, through language and story (Freedman & Combs, 1996). There are no absolute truths.

Postmodernists are concerned with meaning, exceptions to the rule, and they believe that values, laws, customs, diet, and dress develop over time through social interaction (Freedman & Combs, 1996). As an example of what social constructionism and postmodernism look like on this topic, I will argue that adolescence is not an essential truth. It is a concept, created by a person, and supported by many people over time that has resulted in the development of laws, values, and dress through social interaction.

Contribution to the Field

For a variety of reasons, adolescence remains a time of “storm and stress” in Western culture. Unfortunately, little support exists for parents in British Columbia to educate them on how to reduce, and even remove, this “storm and stress.” While supports do exist for adolescents and parents once a problem exists (such as substance misuse, anxiety, and self-harm to name only a few issues of adolescence), there is nothing universal to be found in British Columbia for parents whose children are entering adolescence to prevent, reduce or remove “storm and stress.” The purpose of this Capstone is to look at what the research says about “storm and stress” in adolescence in chapter two and then in chapter three outline in detail a program for parents that will educate and support them in developing strong and close relationships with their adolescents in such ways that “storm and stress” can either be prevented, or if it already exists, reduced, or removed.

This research is useful in the field of counselling in British Columbia because many counsellors are exposed to the same mainstream “storm and stress” messages about adolescence. Without knowing the information in this Capstone, counsellors may believe adolescence is an inevitable time of “storm and stress.” Additionally, with chapter three clearly delineating a

program that can support parents in developing strong and close relationships with their adolescents, counsellors no longer need to bear the brunt of this “storm and stress” on their own.

Reflectivity and Positionality Statement

I come to this project as the daughter of a Narrative therapist. What this meant for me growing up is that my dad was one of very few adults who cared about what I had to say, who listened, and who respected my thoughts and ideas. I now have teenagers of my own. Just under a year ago, during a five-day Narrative Therapy course, I was introduced to “Wonderfulness Interviewing,” a concept developed by David Epston, Laurie Markam, and David Marsten (Marsten et al., 2016). Wonderfulness Interviewing is a way of beginning a counselling session with a child or youth and parent(s) that begins by asking the parent(s) about the wonderful qualities their child holds (Marsten et al., 2016). It has the effect of re-connecting the family with the positive qualities a child embodies that are often lost or forgotten due to the dominating problem and it also enables the family and therapist to use these qualities re-discovered during Wonderfulness Interviewing, to diminish the problem’s strength and power (Marsten et al., 2016).

As David Marsten presented on this topic, I found tears falling down my face. I realized during this course that I had lost my way as a parent. I was angry and resentful and saw my teens as emotional, hormonal, oppositional, defiant, and dramatic, all the common and mainstream words our group in the Narrative course brainstormed to describe teens (Marsten, 2020). How, where, when, and why did I get off track as a parent to my teens? I thought I knew better! Was I alone? As I began to explore this topic in the research and in my community, I realized I was not alone. Sadly, my experience is common, and it was this experience and exploration that led me

to ask: What does the research say about adolescence, and how can parents reduce or remove the “storm and stress?"

Regarding my social location, I am a white, outwardly presenting heterosexual woman (inwardly I like to break down those binaries), and mother. I am able-bodied, moderately spiritual, and middle-class. While recognizing my social locations, I also recognize that much of the research available comes from a dominant, Western perspective. More about the gaps in the research will be addressed later in the Capstone.

Definition of Terms

Adolescence: the period of time between childhood and adulthood, beginning at the onset of puberty and ending when an individual has taken on the responsibilities and roles of an adult (Neufeld, 2013).

Anthropology: the study of whole cultures, with interest in human behavior, cultures, and societies (Schlegel & Barry III, 1991).

Authoritarian Parenting: rules are arbitrary with no explanation (think about when parents say: “Because I told you so!”), demands are numerous, punishment is frequent, and adolescents are not considered or respected in being part of decisions. This type of parenting results in adults who are obedient, conformist, unhappy, often resentful, and sometimes successful adults (Sapolsky, 2017).

Authoritative Parenting: expectations and rules are clear, explicable, and consistent. Adolescent input is considered and respected. This type of parenting results in adults who are well-adjusted, fulfilled, content, and mature (Sapolsky, 2017)

Permissive Parenting: demands and expectations are few, rules exist, may or may not be followed, and adolescents generally lead. This type of parenting results in adults who have a low tolerance for frustration and poor social skills and impulse control (Sapolsky, 2017).

Culture: how we think and act, passed on by nongenetic means (Sapolsky, 2017).

Hypermasculinity: a psychological term used to describe exaggerated actions to express stereotypically masculine behavior such as aggression, dominance, physical strength, and sexuality (Rodger, 2017).

Masculinity: actions, attributes, and roles associated with boys and men. From the book *Real Boys*, due to the constrictions of this social construction, masculinity is a mask worn by many boys and men in order to present themselves to the world as stoic, strong, and tough (Pollack, 1998).

Postmodernism: a theory that puts for the idea that essential truths do not exist. It asserts that values, laws, customs, diet, and dress develop over time through social interaction, shaped by the dominant groups (Freedman & Combs, 1996).

Social constructionism: looking at the ways in which people and groups create their realities through relationship. Social constructionism believes that reality is an ongoing development, continually and dynamically being reproduced and created (Madigan, 2019).

"Storm & Stress": a term coined by G. Stanley Hall in 1904 to describe the defiance, opposition, mood disruption, and conflict that occurs during adolescence (Hall, 2012).

Youth: according to the United Nations, a person between the ages of 15 and 24, who is between the stages of childhood dependence and adult independence (Nations, 2008).

Outline of Capstone Chapters

Chapter two of my Capstone will include a literature review addressing differing views of the cause of adolescent “storm and stress,” a brief look at developmental theory and the three phases of the study of adolescence, myths being reinforced by mainstream media as compared to research into adolescence, styles of parenting that are detrimental contrasted with styles of parenting that result in confident and well-adjusted adolescents, and ideas about how to reframe our views on this period of time, including how we talk about adolescents. Chapter two will also look at the gaps in the research and comment on aspects of adolescence not addressed in this project. Chapter three will remark on what the literature has found, as well as learnings and appreciations from the literature, my dream of a province-wide universal support group for parents of adolescents including an outline, limitations, constraints, questions, and concerns regarding a province-wide universal support group, and a practical plan and program for the support group. In the appendices there are a list of current supports that exist for parents of adolescents and a detailed program for how to better support parents in maintaining strong and close relationships with their children as they move into and through adolescence.

Chapter Two

“Your life will be unrecognizably different, depending on which culture the stork deposited you into” (Sapolsky, 2017, p. 273).

Before delving into the literature review on adolescence that characterizes chapter two of this Capstone, this chapter will first begin with a brief look at developmental theory and the history of the study of adolescence in order to understand where the theory and research into adolescence has come from, where it currently is, and where it is going. As the purpose of this Capstone is to provide support and outreach to all parents with adolescents who live within British Columbia, chapter two will remain broad, in order to appeal to a far-reaching crowd. In

conducting broad research on the topic of adolescence, a number of themes arose repeatedly among researchers and authors. These are the issues that will be discussed in chapter two and they are: differing views of the cause of adolescent “storm and stress,” myths reinforced by mainstream media as compared to research into adolescence, styles of parenting that are detrimental contrasted with styles of parenting that result in confident and well-adjusted adolescents, and ideas about how to reframe our views on adolescence. At the end of this chapter there will be a discussion about the gaps in the research as well as the limitations of this Capstone.

Developmental Theory and the Three Phases in the Study of Adolescence

According to Steinberg and Lerner, there are three phases in the study of adolescence (Steinberg & Lerner, 2004). The first phase began in 1904 upon the creation of the concept of adolescence and is marked by grand models of adolescence including but not limited to Sigmund Freud, Erik Erikson, Jean Piaget, and Lawrence Kohlberg (Steinberg & Lerner, 2004). Describing the first phase in the study of adolescence will be done briefly as it is useful to understand what is meant by grand models as they are still mentioned in current research, but is not necessary to understand them in detail for the purposes of this Capstone as grand models are no longer the lens through which adolescent research is viewed today. The second phase of the study of adolescence will be the bulk of chapter two and phase three will be the focus for chapter three.

There are many models and theories about development, a few of which will be summarized here. Sigmund Freud believed there were five stages of psychosexual development: oral (birth to one year old), anal (one to three years old), phallic (three to six years old), latency (six to 12 years old), and genital (12 years old and over) (Lumen Candela, n.d.). It is during these

five stages that the three aspects of personality, the id, ego, and superego are unified (Lumen Candela, n.d.). If improperly parented, people can be stuck in any of the five stages and the unification of personality does not occur (Lumen Candela, n.d.). Erik Erikson took Freud’s psychosexual theory and expanded upon it, creating eight stages of development (Lumen Candela, n.d.). Erickson believed that adolescence is a time of integrating personal identification, finding a stable identity that fits with social roles, and finding a niche in society (Wexler, 2006).

Piaget developed a four stage theory of cognitive development that included sensorimotor (birth to age two), preoperational (two to seven years old), concrete operational (seven to 11 years old), and formal operational stages (12+ years) (Sapolsky, 2017). The concrete operational stage leads into adolescence, during which time thinking becomes more logical and organized, but is still quite concrete (Sapolsky, 2017). It is during the formal operational stage that the ability to reason and think in abstract ways about philosophical, social, moral, ethical and political issues develops (Steinberg & Lerner, 2004). Early adolescents do not have abstract thought, most just starting to move towards formal operational thinking (Pipher, 1994).

Finally, Lawrence Kohlberg expanded on the work of Jean Piaget, stretching from the idea that cognitive development has stages, to the idea that moral development also has stages (Lumen Candela, n.d.). His stages of moral development include preconventional, conventional, and postconventional stages, with a couple levels within each stage (Lumen Candela, n.d.). The conventional and postconventional stages are applicable to adolescence, as conventional moral reasoning occurs by the age of 11-12 years old when people understand and accept social rules of right and wrong and begin to internalize these morals (Epstein, 2010). People may act immorally, but their reasoning capacities are in place as reasoning ability peaks in early-mid adolescence (Epstein, 2010). In the postconventional stage, people come to understand ethics and

make individual decisions based on their own principles, but only 10-15% of all people get this far (Epstein, 2010). What links the grand models is that they are descriptive, atheoretical, and they share an enormous gap between empirical research and theory (Steinberg & Lerner, 2004).

There are more theories than the grand models described above. The point of the above section is to explain and provide some examples of what Steinberg and Lerner argue is the first phase of the study of adolescence. The second phase of scientific research into adolescence, which began in the mid-1970’s and has lasted until now, is interested in diversity, developmental plasticity, how to apply the science to life, and is interested in understanding how the interaction of social factors, biology, culture, and history impact adolescent development (Steinberg & Lerner, 2004). While this Capstone is not meant to summarize or explain the second phase of the study of adolescence, the research presented in this Capstone arises from this second phase. The third phase is bringing the science into practice, which will be described in chapter three (Steinberg & Lerner, 2004).

Differing Views on the Cause of Adolescent “Storm and Stress”

Based on the literature found for this Capstone, there is agreement amongst researchers, academics, and clinicians that the issues of “storm and stress” are caused by varying aspects of Western culture. While different researchers have focused on specific topics of interest such as attachment, peers, psychological disorders, media and industry, what stands out in the literature, is the message that the collective issues of “storm and stress” are cultural. For example, Pipher argues that when behaviours arise spontaneously in large numbers, that is not personal pathology, it is cultural pathology (1994). Whitaker (2015) notes that the issues with adolescence is environmental, but we are treating adolescents as though there is something wrong with them. Schlegel and Barry III refer to Western-style adolescence as pathological and argue that the more

Westernized a country becomes, the more pathological their adolescents become (1991). Mead and Liedloff make similar arguments in *Coming of Age in Samoa* and *The Continuum Concept*, that it is Western culture that creates problems and pathology in adolescence (Liedloff, 1977; Mead, 2001). Epstein gives examples of countries that experienced no "storm and stress" before Westernization, but which now experience "storm and stress" as a result of Westernization, including Kenya, Morocco, Australia, Canada, and Cote d'Ivoire (2010). Some of the major causes of the "storm and stress" as discovered in the research and which will be discussed below, are the horizontal rather than vertical passing of culture, technology, media, and industry, and the lack of value adolescents hold in Western culture.

Horizontal Rather Than Vertical Passing of Culture

For most of history, tradition, rites of passage, and culture, were passed vertically, from grandparents and parents, to children (Bly, 1996; Epstein, 2010; Kett, 2003; Liedloff, 1977; Neufeld, 2013; Pipher, 1994; Sarno, 2016; Schlegel & Barry III, 1991). Young people learned how to work, play, eat, live, dress, talk, and more, from their elders. Problems and antisocial behavior arise when this ends; when elder wisdom is rejected and when children and adolescents no longer want to be like their parents (Bly, 1996; Epstein, 2010; Neufeld, 2013; Pipher, 1994). When adolescents want to be like each other, there are no longer any healthy role models and the continuum is gone (Bly, 1996; Epstein, 2010; Liedloff, 1977; Neufeld, 2013; Pipher, 1994).

When culture is passed vertically, young people learn from their parents from birth, model on their same-sex parents, and become productive members of their family and community as soon as they are able, often by the age of four (Epstein, 2010; Kett, 2003; Liedloff, 1977; Schlegel & Barry III, 1991). In cultures where culture is passed vertically, there is not the struggle for individuation that exists in the West, as adolescents in most societies rely

on families long after adolescence (Schlegel & Barry III, 1991). The Western break of adolescents from families is sudden and extreme (Schlegel & Barry III, 1991). The vertical passing of culture results in significantly less conflict, aggression, and violence and increased contentment, freewill, and productivity among adolescents, as well as close relationships between adolescents and their parents (Bly, 1996; Epstein, 2010; Liedloff, 1977).

When culture is passed horizontally, there is no longer a natural transition between childhood and adulthood (Kett, 2003). Instead of interacting mostly with adults, adolescents interact with each other, cutoff from adults, and are shielded and prevented from observing and participating in adult life, prevented from working, and from being productive (Epstein, 2010; Schlegel & Barry III, 1991). In Western culture, families have too little influence over their adolescents (Neufeld, 2013; Schlegel & Barry III, 1991). Due to isolation, infantilization and the artificial extension of childhood, as well as being overly influenced by peers, adolescents act poorly because their lives lack meaning (Epstein, 2010). Along with the increase of peer orientation, a culture that is passed horizontally instead of vertically, and a lack of meaning, comes an increase in suicide (Neufeld, 2013). More on this topic from a different angle, will be discussed when looking at the myth that adolescents no longer need their parents, as well as the section on parenting styles. Whatever angle this issue is looked at from, parents and family are an integral part of an emotionally and physically healthy adolescent (Epstein, 2010; Mead, 2001; Moretti & Peled, 2004; Neufeld, 2013; Pipher, 1994; Qu et al., 2020; Schlegel & Barry III, 1991; Steinberg, 2001).

Technology, Media, and Industry

A discussion of the impacts of technology, media, and the billion-dollar youth industry, which creates a youth culture, could form an entire literature review of its own. For the purposes

of this Capstone and literature review, technology, media and the youth industry will only be mentioned as one of the causes of the “storm and stress,” as it is noted repeatedly throughout the literature on adolescence, and therefore cannot be ignored (Bly, 1996; Epstein, 2010; Neufeld, 2013; Pipher, 1994; Price, 2017; Schlegel & Barry III, 1991; Steinberg, 2001). As mentioned above, problems with adolescence arise when culture begins to be passed horizontally instead of vertically. Technology, media, and the youth industry, like peers, pass culture along horizontally, contributing to all the issues mentioned above associated with the horizontal passing of culture (Bly, 1996; Epstein, 2010; Neufeld, 2013; Steinberg, 2001).

There are two main issues raised in discussions about adolescents, technology, media, and the youth industry. One is related to time adolescents spend with technology and the other is the messages that the youth industry pushes out. Regarding the amount of time adolescents spend with technology, researchers and educators now know too much time on devices is harmful (Bly, 1996; Neufeld, 2013; Orlowski, 2020; Pipher, 1994; Ruston, 2016). Why? Briefly, more time on screens means less time living. Western culture is raising children who are not growing up and is becoming a culture of “half-adults” (Bly, 1996; Louv, 2008). Another argument as to why technology is problematic comes from Gordon Neufeld. Neufeld (2013) demonstrates that digital connection allows adolescents to be together even when apart, which further reinforces the horizontal passing of culture between adolescents as well as the disconnection from parents and family, which interferes with what adolescents actually need.

Youth culture is a consumer, capitalist, adult created, billion-dollar industry that does not have adolescents’ best interests at heart, and yet it is one of the biggest influencers of their lives (Epstein, 2010; Orlowski, 2020; Pipher, 1994; Ruston, 2016; Schlegel & Barry III, 1991; Steinberg, 2001). It promotes achievement, competition, consumerism, and the idea that

adolescence is an inevitable time of “storm and stress,” which will be addressed further in the section on myths (Epstein, 2010; Neufeld, 2013; Price, 2017). Clothing, cosmetics, technology, activities, and pharmaceutical companies to name only a few, make billions of dollars from promoting the idea that adolescence is a time of “storm and stress” (Epstein, 2010; Steinberg, 2001; Valenstein, 2002; Whitaker, 2015).

The effect of the youth industry promoting adolescence as an inevitable time of “storm and stress” on parents, which was disproven by research decades ago, is confusion (Epstein, 2010; Siegel, 2013; Steinberg, 2001). Conflicting information and negative stereotypes abound (Qu et al., 2020; Steinberg, 2001). Parents want accurate information about how to keep their adolescents healthy and relationships strong, but many do not have access to the research (Steinberg, 2001). Books, the internet, television shows, the news, and movies portray adolescents as troublesome, puzzling, angry, and ungrateful (Steinberg, 2001). As Qu et al. (2020) point out, adolescents are living up to the expectations Western culture projects onto them. Their research will be discussed further in the section on how to reframe how we view adolescence. The youth industry is creating a self-fulfilling prophecy of adolescents who are sullen, angry, defiant, and moody, and is thus a part of the problem in creating adolescence as an inevitable time of “storm and stress” (Qu et al., 2020).

Adolescents are Not Valued

Adolescents’ lack of value in Western culture is another issue that leads to “storm and stress” (Alexander, 2008; Epstein, 2010; Kohn, 2006; Schlegel & Barry III, 1991; Siegel, 2013; Wexler, 2006). Emotions are contagious (Wexler, 2006). When adults project negative stereotypes onto adolescents as lazy, unfocussed, and out of control, adolescents fall to the expectations, for as Siegel notes, “what others believe about us can shape how we see ourselves”

(2013, p. 4). Adolescents have two times the restrictions as compared to soldiers and prisoners, and 10 times the restrictions of adults (Epstein, 2010). Negative beliefs about adolescents not only impact them, but the adults around them as well (Siegel, 2013). During one research study, when teachers were told students were not as smart, students received lower marks (Siegel, 2013). When the same students were described as highly intelligent, they received better marks (Siegel, 2013). Adolescents have little value, no incentive, and little authority in Western culture (Qu et al., 2020; Schlegel & Barry III, 1991; Siegel, 2013; Steinberg, 2001). This less-than view of adolescence is a burden for adults and adolescents alike, but it is a burden that occurs with oppression for adolescents and during a major transition in life which makes its impact even more difficult (Schlegel & Barry III, 1991).

Like all people, adolescents need connection, to feel valued, and to have meaning in their lives (Alexander, 2008; Epstein, 2010; Neufeld, 2013). When adolescents do not experience belonging, value, and psychosocial integration, it is painful and leads to a variety of problems (Alexander, 2008; Hari, 2019). There is a relationship between infantilization and degree of adolescent psychopathology (Epstein, 2010). If people feel competent and others place restrictions on them, restricted people become angry (Epstein, 2010). This is the situation we put adolescents in when we do not value them (Epstein, 2010; Moretti & Peled, 2004; Siegel, 2013; Steinberg, 2001). When adults allow adolescents the space to act like adults, adolescents act like adults (Epstein, 2010; Liedloff, 1977; Schlegel & Barry III, 1991). Turmoil can be reversed with responsibility (Epstein, 2010). In the next section on myths about adolescence that are circulating in Western culture, there will be further exploration into problematic ideas that support the existence of adolescent “storm and stress.” The above-mentioned sections of the horizontal rather than vertical passing of culture, technology, media, and industry, and the lack of value

adolescents hold in Western culture are problematic factors in the maintenance and upholding of “storm and stress” in adolescence, but they are not myths, which is why these sections are separate.

Myths in Mainstream Media Versus What the Research Says

There are a number of myths in the mainstream media and culture about adolescence. The purpose of this section is to point them out and look at what the research says. As Epstein points out in *Teen 2.0,* parents are not necessarily aware of the programming they are receiving (2010). There are six myths that present repeatedly in the media and research and thus, they will be discussed here. The myths are: adolescence is easy, adolescents no longer need their parents, adolescents need to be under control and punished if they are not under control, adolescents are incompetent, hormones make adolescents lazy and crazy, and the negative actions of “storm and stress” seen in adolescence is inevitable.

Myth 1: Adolescence is Easy

Circulating widely is the idea that adolescence is a time of ease with little responsibility (Epstein, 2010; Kett, 2003; Miller, 2008; Swerhone, 2020). Removing responsibility and the pressure of adulthood was the point of Hall creating the concept of adolescence, after all (Hall, 2012; Kett, 2003). The idea that adolescence is easy and free of responsibility is disrespectful and a misuse of power (Miller, 2008). Development is happening on multiple levels throughout adolescence (Epstein, 2010; Neufeld, 2013; Pipher, 1994; Sapolsky, 2017; Siegel, 2015). While it does not all happen at the same time or in a linear fashion, all of these changes are happening, which makes adolescence a significant transition (Pipher, 1994; Price, 2017; Siegel, 2013).

Puberty, the hormonal and sexual changes that begin as early as nine to 10 years old and end when one assumes adult responsibilities, is one major transition that happens during

adolescence (Eliot, 2009; Pfeifer, 2019; Pipher, 1994; Sapolsky, 2017). More on hormones will be discussed in myth five. At the same time that sexual and hormonal changes are going on, adolescents are being pressured to please their peers or face social ridicule while at the same time being pressured to push their parents away (Pipher, 1994; Price, 2017). This pressure exists alongside the desire of adolescents not to disappoint their parents (Pipher, 1994; Price, 2017). It is a conflicting and confusing time.

Adolescence is a time of integrating internal structures, finding personal ideology, and finding a social world that fits with one’s internal ideas and structures (Wexler, 2006). Adolescents are trying out different clothes, different body language, and different friends to see what fits, and they are asking big questions: “Who am I? What do I believe in? What should I become, and do I have what it takes to get there” (Price, 2017, p. 20)? The vastness of these questions can be exhausting, which is why many adolescents take a lot of “down time” (Pipher, 1994). It is no different than adults needing to relax after a hard day (Pipher, 1994). There is pressure to get a job, find a partner, have kids, buy a house, and all this time, during all these changes and big questions, adolescents are also wrapping their heads around a youth culture that leads to pain and pathology (Pipher, 1994; Price, 2017). Due to online internet use and social media, adolescents now are growing up in a different world than their parents did; a world of continual access to the outside world, online harassment, and 24-hour availability of friends (Epstein, 2010; Neufeld, 2013; Pipher, 1994). During adolescence, development is happening on psychological, emotional, physical, spiritual, intellectual, and academic levels, demonstrating that this period of time is far from easy (Pipher, 1994; Sapolsky, 2017).

Myth 2: Adolescents No Longer Need Their Parents

There is a myth in Western culture that adolescents do not need their parents, that adolescents need to and should separate from their parents, and that parents no longer matter (Epstein, 2010; Neufeld, 2013; Pfeifer, 2019; Pipher, 1994). This myth is not true (Epstein, 2010; Moretti & Peled, 2004; Morris et al., 2017; Neufeld, 2013; Pfeifer, 2019; Pipher, 1994). The reality is that adolescents are developing more relationships outside of their family, but these relationships can and should not replace their parents (Pfeifer, 2019). As mentioned in the first myth, adolescents are under huge pressure to abandon their families in order to be accepted by their peers, which leads to tension and problems (Pipher, 1994).

Adolescents needs to feel they belong (Moretti & Peled, 2004; Morris et al., 2017; Neufeld, 2013; Sapolsky, 2017). The cultural pressure to push parents away at this age creates a vulnerability to peer pressure and peer orientation, which increases risk taking behaviour that looks like unsafe sex, substance use, crime, violence, poor health choices, and eating disorders (Neufeld, 2013; Sapolsky, 2017; Swerhone, 2020). Moretti and Peled (2004) argue that adolescents need to be securely attached to their parents. Neufeld in *Hold onto Your Kids* takes his argument one step further and says adolescents not only need to be attached to their parents, they can only be attached to their parents (Moretti & Peled, 2004; Neufeld, 2013). Neufeld (2013) demonstrates that people can only have one compass point, one attachment orientation, and that it needs to be their guardian.

Neufeld also points out that as people mature, they will resist all coercion, no matter the source (Neufeld, 2013). If adolescents are listening to peers and not parents, they are not maturing, and their orientation to their peers is problematic (Neufeld, 2013). The best protection an adolescent can have from everything detrimental to their physical, mental, and spiritual health, is a strong attachment with an adult (Neufeld, 2013).

Other research supports Neufeld’s stance. Adolescents may not communicate it often, but what their parents think of them matters (Swerhone, 2020). A healthy transition through adolescence is marked by emotional connectedness and a secure attachment with parents (Moretti & Peled, 2004). While they may not need the same amount of closeness to their parents that they experienced earlier in life, and they may go between wanting their parents when they are stressed and pushing them away when they are not, adolescents still need to know their parents are supportive (Moretti & Peled, 2004; Pipher, 1994). All human beings need inter-dependence and close relationships throughout their lives (Epstein, 2010). People are hard-wired for connection, relationship, and community (Epstein, 2010; Neufeld, 2013; Siegel, 2013). Shutting parents and adults out is not healthy or natural. (Siegel, 2013). Adolescents experience more positive affect when they are with their parents than when they are alone, parents support emotional self-regulation, and they help adolescents achieve self-understanding (DeSocio, 2005; Morris et al., 2017). Adolescents who feel seen and understood move into adulthood with more confidence, less conflict, and more ability to explore and individuate (Moretti & Peled, 2004).

The world may have changed, but the needs of adolescents have not (Moretti & Peled, 2004). Despite what messages exist in the media, parents play a key role in their adolescents’ development (Moretti & Peled, 2004). Adolescents need safety, a loving family, respect, and encouragement (Pipher, 1994). Therefore, while the role of parenting changes as their children move into adolescence, adults still need to be available to support and advise their adolescents (Savin-Williams, 1987). As children grow into adolescents and the roles of parenting change, adults need to trust wisdom of their adolescents (Savin-Williams, 1987).

Myth 3: Adolescents Need to Be Under Control and Punished When They Are Not

The idea that parents are meant to and should control and punish their adolescents if they “step out of line” is wide-spread and long-standing in Western culture (Aldort, 2005; Coloroso, 2010; Epstein, 2010; Kohn, 2005, 2006; Liedloff, 1977). Why do parents punish and control? First, many parents parent the way they were raised, and since many parents were raised in a controlling and punishing environment, many parent their children and adolescents in the same way (Aldort, 2005; Kohn, 2005; Liedloff, 1977). People learn rules and expressions in their families of origin, and the less awareness parents have about how they were parented and how they parent, the more likely they are to parent in the ways they were parented (Aldort, 2005; Kohn, 2005; Miller, 2008). If a person does not experience unconditional love as a child, or learn it intentionally as an adult, they will not know how to offer it (Kohn, 2005; Miller, 2008).

A second reason parents use punishment and control as a parenting method is because it is easy. It is faster than respect and relationship and it is very effective in the short-term (Kohn, 2005, 2006). Unfortunately, as will be discussed further in the section about parenting styles that are harmful and healthy, punishment and control are very damaging and detrimental over the long-term (Kohn, 2005).

A third reason many parents use punishment and control with their adolescents is because Western culture promotes it (Aldort, 2005; Coloroso, 2010; Epstein, 2010; Kohn, 2005, 2006; Liedloff, 1977). Western culture is not respectful of children or adolescents (Epstein, 2010; Kohn, 2005; Qu et al., 2020). New parents are told babies will be spoiled if they pick them up; parents are told not to indulge their children; neighbours, friends, movies, newspapers, and books praise control and pass negative judgement if parents let their adolescents make too many decisions too soon (Epstein, 2010; Kohn, 2005). The idea in Western culture that spoiling

children and adolescents is bad leads to parents being less supportive than our adolescents need (Kohn, 2005).

A fourth reason parents control their adolescents is out of fear. Parents want to keep their children safe and as adolescents move out into the world and go out with friends, get tattoos, learn to drive, go travelling, parents are scared (Wexler, 2006). Parents have an internal world that is set, their frontal cortexes are developed (see more in myth five below) and now their adolescents are changing and challenging their parents’ internal worlds (Wexler, 2006). Much more on this topic, including debunking the myth about needing to control and punish our adolescents and why this myth is problematic, will be discussed in the styles of parenting section below.

Myth 4: Adolescents are Incompetent

The Western belief that adolescents are incompetent is demonstrated in the statistic that adolescents have two times the restrictions as compared to soldiers and prisoners, and 10 times the restrictions of adults (Epstein, 2010). It is also seen in the restrictions and laws Western culture places on adolescents regarding school, work, and voting (Epstein, 2010). One does not need to look far to see this belief in action (Epstein, 2010; Pfeifer, 2019; Siegel, 2015; Swerhone, 2020). Unfortunately, this myth is not accurate (Epstein, 2010; Pfeifer, 2019; Siegel, 2015; Swerhone, 2020).

In fact, intelligence peaks at age 15 (Epstein, 2010). Age 15.5 is the highest mental age humans reach; people lose intelligence after that (Epstein, 2010). Memory peaks at age 13 and stays that way until at least the age of 40, as memory was not tested beyond the age of 40 in this research study (Epstein, 2010). During adolescence, adolescents gain executive organization, working memory, flexible rule use, frontal inhibitory regulation, social cognitive functioning,

and mentalization tasks such as understanding another perspective (Conrod & Nikolaou, 2016; Sapolsky, 2017). Adolescents can adapt to new cultures and to change faster and easier than adults because of their brain plasticity, as their brains are still forming and being shaped by the environment, while adults brains are much less capable of adjusting to their environment (Wexler, 2006).

A focus that Western culture takes to highlight the incompetence of adolescents is their high-levels of risk taking (Epstein, 2010; Pfeifer, 2019; Siegel, 2013; Swerhone, 2020). Adolescents actually have equal competence with judgement as adults, they are simply willing to take more risks (Epstein, 2010; Price, 2017; Siegel, 2013; Wexler, 2006). Judging which risks to take and which to say no to takes practice; adolescents need to practice risk taking to improve their ability to discern the risks and benefits of making any particular decision (Swerhone, 2020). Competence comes with a willingness to fail, to be unskilled, ignorant, and embarrassed (Price, 2017). Additionally, risk-taking actions are beneficial for our world by challenging the status quo and coming up with creative ideas adults may be too cautious to think of or enact (Epstein, 2010; Pfeifer, 2019; Siegel, 2013; Swerhone, 2020; Wexler, 2006). Parents like the comfort of routine and adolescents are creating a new world for themselves and challenging those routines (Siegel, 2013).

On the topic of adults and competence, many adults are not wholly competent, as demonstrated by rates of theft, obesity, addiction, rape, murder, drunk driving, wars, and any number of other decisions adults make that may be questionable (Schlegel & Barry III, 1991). Ability is a better predictor of competence than age (Epstein, 2010; Schlegel & Barry III, 1991). Adolescents are capable and have much to offer, but have no voice, little respect, and few rights (Epstein, 2007). Adolescents will only change if we do first (Price, 2017).

Myth 5: Hormones Make Adolescents Lazy and Crazy

A variety of media report that adolescents are lazy and immature because of their brains; they have an immature or underdeveloped prefrontal cortex, their systems for processing emotions are in overdrive, and that hormones make them crazy (Eliot, 2009; Epstein, 2010; Pfeifer, 2019; Sapolsky, 2017; Swerhone, 2020). Much of this is over simplified or untrue (Eliot, 2009; Epstein, 2010; Pfeifer, 2019; Sapolsky, 2017; Swerhone, 2020). As well, contrary to popular opinion, hormones do not cause adolescents to lose their minds; hormonal changes do not directly account for behavioural changes during adolescence (Eliot, 2009; Moretti & Peled, 2004; Sapolsky, 2017; Schlegel & Barry III, 1991; Swerhone, 2020). All adolescents go through puberty, but not all adolescents experience turmoil, and non-Western adolescents do not experience turmoil even close to the degree that Western adolescents do (Epstein, 2010; Sapolsky, 2017; Schlegel & Barry III, 1991).

As Sapolsky (2017) points out in *Behave*, a fascinating book on recent brain research, it is impossible to say that any behaviour is caused by a hormone or a gene or a trauma, etcetera. If we think categorically in terms of gene or trauma or hormone, we miss the big picture and the story is not complete (Sapolsky, 2017). Epstein makes a similar argument: “from a scientific perspective, it is wrong- utterly and completely wrong- to say that the brain causes behaviour (or thinking or feelings) based simply on a correlation between a brain state and that behaviour” (2010, p. 198). For example, the brain of angry people look different than the brains of calm people, but it is not their brains that cause their anger; it is genetics, experiences, etcetera (Epstein, 2010). There is a wealth of research demonstrating that the brain does not cause adolescent behaviour, but media keeps saying otherwise (Epstein, 2010).

There is also significant controversy over the frontal cortex and the part it plays in adolescent words and actions (Eliot, 2009; Epstein, 2010; Pfeifer, 2019; Sapolsky, 2017). There are many parts of the frontal cortex, such as the prefrontal cortex, insula, and anterior cingulate that have many nuanced roles (Sapolsky, 2017). Together, all these parts of the frontal cortex are responsible for executive function (organizing knowledge, initiating action), working memory, postponing gratification, impulse control, emotion regulation, and long-term planning (Sapolsky, 2017). The frontal cortex allows people to do the hard thing because it is the right thing to do, and as Sapolsky (2017) points out, is what differentiates the adolescent brain from the adult brain. It is also interesting to note that because “it is the last to mature, by definition the frontal cortex is the brain region least constrained by genes and most sculpted by experience,” meaning environment or “nurture” has a larger impact on the frontal cortex than genetics and “nature” (Sapolsky, 2017, p. 173).

There is no debate that research into the present day Western adolescent brain demonstrates their frontal and prefrontal cortexes are not fully developed until their mid-twenties and are not as developed as the frontal and prefrontal cortexes of adults (Eliot, 2009; Epstein, 2010; Sapolsky, 2017). The question Epstein asks in *Teen 2.0*, however, is: are late developing frontal and prefrontal cortexes in adolescents inevitable (Epstein, 2010)? Epstein argues that present day Western adolescent brains are a result of their culture and if present day Western adolescents were allowed more responsibility and autonomy, perhaps their frontal and prefrontal cortexes would mature faster and reach adulthood sooner (Epstein, 2010). As the previous Sapolsky quote and the following quote indicate, this is entirely possible: “A different world makes for a different worldview, which means a different brain” (Sapolsky, 2017, p. 153).

Myth 6: The Negative Actions We See in Adolescents are Inevitable

The idea exists in Western culture that adolescence is a time of immaturity; adolescents are delinquents, selfish, impulsive, destructive, self-destructive, impossible, and cannot be trusted (Epstein, 2010; Pfeifer, 2019; Sapolsky, 2017; Schlegel & Barry III, 1991; Siegel, 2015; Swerhone, 2020). Research presented on the above myths support the debunking of this current myth that adolescents’ negative actions are inevitable. As addressed in myth four, adolescents are clearly not incompetent and as addressed in myth five, hormones and brain changes do not make adolescents lazy or crazy. Otherwise, all adolescents worldwide would be lazy and crazy!

One problem is the circulating idea that adolescents drive parents crazy and make them wish they never had children, which makes adolescents feel incompetent and less than (Pipher, 1994). Research presented in the section on reframing how Western culture views adolescence will further demonstrate that not only do adolescents lower to the bar Western culture sets for them, but that when the bar is raised and adults believe in and respect adolescents, negative words and actions disappear (Epstein, 2010; Qu et al., 2020). Kohn (2005) points out that the idea that people will do as little as possible, that this is “human nature,” is not accurate. Kohn (2005) says “it’s hard to stop happy, satisfied people from trying to learn more about themselves and the world, or from trying to do a job of which they can feel proud” (p. 90). If a person is doing little in life, it is a sign that something is wrong (Kohn, 2005).

Adolescents have a need to be productive and independent, and adults do them a disservice when they do not allow this (Epstein, 2007). There are historical, multicultural, rehabilitative, military, young moms, and entrepreneurial examples that demonstrate adolescents are capable of handling responsibility, as much responsibility as adults (Epstein, 2010). Adults need to give them the chance (Epstein, 2010). Epstein even argues that education can be spread over lifetime (Epstein, 2010). If an adolescent wants to work instead of going to school, what is

the problem (Epstein, 2010)? It is the role and responsibility of parents and adults to demonstrate trust and belief in the competence of adolescents (Epstein, 2010; Kohn, 2005; Neufeld, 2013; Siegel, 2013).

Styles of Parenting with Adolescents that are Detrimental and Styles of Parenting that Lead to Confident and Content Adolescents

The purpose of the last section on myths is not only to discuss the myths about adolescence and how the research compares to the myths, but also to make it clear how confusing parenting in Western culture today is. Add conflicting and confusing information onto a transition like adolescence, during which time the child and parent relationship is changing, and it is no surprise many parents are struggling (Moretti & Peled, 2004).

The aim of this section is to outline parenting styles and methods that are detrimental to adolescents and their relationships with their parents as well as parenting styles that support content and confident adolescents. In the section on harmful and detrimental parenting styles, control, praise, criticism, punishment, conditional love, stereotyping, and assumptions will be discussed. The section on parenting styles that lead to confident and competent adolescents who experience strong and close relationships will discuss authoritative parenting, attachment, respect and consideration, autonomy and responsibility, unconditional love, availability, emotional attunement, empathy, and calm parenting, allowing failure, and the need for parents to reflect on their parenting. It is important for parents to know what leads to harm and what leads to health because unfortunately, good intentions do not mean good outcome (Kohn, 2005).

Before leading this discussion, as a parent myself, I want to make it clear that no parent is perfect, we all make mistakes and all parents shame and punish and praise and criticize our children at times. The following discussion is not meant to shame anyone. It is instead meant to

educate and provide an opportunity to challenge the ways in which Western culture and parenting may not be conducive to healthy adolescents or strong relationships with them; it is meant to provide an opportunity to reflect, to ask questions, to make change.

Styles of Parenting Adolescents that are Detrimental and Harmful

Control

Until children reach adolescence, parents have an illusion of control (Kohn, 2005; Price, 2017). Babies and children may not like what parents do, but parents can pick babies and children up and lock them in (Price, 2017). Parents lose this ability when children become adolescents (Price, 2017). Myth number three, the idea that adolescents need to be under control, addresses why parents use control as a method of parenting. This section looks at why control is detrimental to adolescents. When people feel controlled using means such as coercion, rewards, punishments, and conditional love, adolescents develop an unstable sense of self and identity; they feel the need to please, they look externally for how to act and feel, and they have issues with food, morality, interests, and skills, to name only a few (Epstein, 2010; Kohn, 2005). When parents control, there will be a greater chance of resistance, and parents’ psychological control, as well as permissiveness, expressed anger, and criticism are all associated with difficulties in emotion regulation in adolescents (Kohn, 2005; Morris et al., 2017). Controlling parents have more negative outcomes across all cultures in many different countries (Kohn, 2005).

Praise, Criticism, and Punishment

Praise, like punishment, is detrimental to adolescent development and the adolescent-parent relationship. Research has proven that punishment and rewards (like money for grades and verbal praise) can all have the same negative effect (Kindlon & Thompson, 2000; Kohn, 2005; Price, 2017). This is why: praise brings a person’s attention away from the activity the

person is focused on, and onto person giving praise (Kohn, 2005). Praise changes the aim, goal, and direction of a person (Kohn, 2005). When adolescents are praised, criticized or punished, they feel watched, judged, and evaluated (Miller, 2008; Price, 2017). Research demonstrates that when people are praised in one activity, they struggle with the next activity (Kohn, 2005). Intrinsic motivation goes down because the goal is now to receive more praise which means the individual will also take less risks because they do not want to risk losing praise (Kohn, 2005). As an alternative to praise, one way parents can acknowledge a generous act is by asking adolescents to notice the effect of their generosity on the other person (Kohn, 2005).

While some parents know punishment may not be ideal, many parents use it anyways, often when parents are tired or stressed (Aldort, 2005; Kindlon & Thompson, 2000; Kohn, 2006; Pipher, 1994). It is easy and it is effective in the short-term (Kohn, 2005). This is why it is detrimental: punishment works solely to achieve temporary compliance (Kohn, 2006). It does have the effect of changing immediate behaviour, but it does not change the values or motives of a person, and over the long-term it usually makes actions worse, preventing the development of ethics (Kohn, 2006). Punishment and rewards lead to acting for external reasons, acting only for reward; it is not intrinsic (Kohn, 2006). Punishment also models how to use power in harmful ways instead of cooperation and reasoning, which damages relationships between people, damaging the caring alliance between adolescent and parent (Kohn, 2006). Punishment makes people mad, loses effectiveness over time, and distracts from the important issue because it leads to resentment and feelings of unfairness, not discussion about what happened and how things can be done differently (Aldort, 2005; Coloroso, 2010; Kohn, 2006). Lastly, punishment creates a self-centered person because consequences are all about the adolescent, creating a preoccupation with self-interest (Aldort, 2005; Coloroso, 2010; Kohn, 2006).

Conditional Love

Conditional love is love met only under certain conditions, for example when we show love only after our adolescents have done their chores or come home on time or been respectful or gotten a good report card (Kohn, 2005). Conditional love could also look like emphasizing talent and intelligence as more valuable than other qualities which sends the message that those are all that matter (Price, 2017). Adolescents who feel loved conditionally by their parents have a higher chance of feeling rejected and are more likely to dislike and resent their parents (Kindlon & Thompson, 2000; Kohn, 2005; Pipher, 1994). Adolescents also like themselves less when they need to meet certain conditions for parent approval (Kohn, 2005). To be clear, giving praise when happy with words and actions and giving nothing when not happy with words and actions is conditional love (Kohn, 2005). Conditional love is expressing excitement and love under certain conditions (Kohn, 2005).

Stereotyping & Assuming

It may be obvious, but all adolescents are not alike. Therefore, it is incredibly important not to lump all adolescents into one category, especially given all the negative stereotypes and negative myths about adolescence that have been mentioned throughout this Capstone (Pontz, 2018). Usually when stereotypes are made about adolescents, they are used negatively (Pontz, 2018).

Additionally, when an adolescent makes a mistake repeatedly, it is important not to assume the cause is the same reason as previous mistakes (Cehak, 2021). For example, if an adolescent stays up too late on their cell phone one night it could be because they were not tired. The next night it could be because their friend was struggling (Cehak, 2021). When parents make assumptions, they are often negative and thus, it is important to notice when negative stereotypes

are leading to assumptions that may not be accurate and may cause harm (Cehak, 2021; Pipher, 1994; Pontz, 2018; Price, 2017).

As mentioned in the introduction to this section, no parents are perfect or get it right all the time (Aldort, 2005; Kohn, 2005). It is also not reasonable to expect zero conflict between parents and adolescents (Moretti & Peled, 2004). Conflict between adolescents and parents does not mean the relationship is necessarily troubled, but it is useful to know that conflict arises when parent and adolescent goals differ, and that negotiation and consultation between adolescents and parents increase as adolescent competence develops (Cehak, 2021; Moretti & Peled, 2004; Schlegel & Barry III, 1991). During the transition into and through adolescence, it is essential that parents are sensitive and attuned to their adolescents, even through disagreement and conflict, in order for adolescents to remain secure and attached in their relationships with their parents (Moretti & Peled, 2004; Neufeld, 2013).

Parenting Styles that Lead to Confident and Competent Adolescents Who Experience Strong and Close Relationships with Their Parents

It is interesting to note for the purpose of this Capstone that in the West, families with a high socioeconomic status tend to be authoritative or permissive, while families with a low socioeconomic status tend to be authoritarian (Sapolsky, 2017). As socioeconomic status decreases, corporeal punishment increases (Kohn, 2005). This section will look at authoritative parenting, attachment, respect and consideration, autonomy and responsibility, unconditional love, availability, emotional attunement, empathy, and calm, allowing failure, and the need for parents to reflect on their parenting.

Authoritative Parenting

Significant amounts of research demonstrate that authoritative parenting, which includes limit setting, warmth, consistency, and honouring of autonomy is the most effective way of parenting (Epstein, 2010; Moretti & Peled, 2004; O’Driscoll, 2021; Siegel, 2013; Steinberg, 2001). In authoritative homes, privilege comes with responsibility (Epstein, 2010; O’Driscoll, 2021). Adolescents raised in authoritative homes experience less anxiety and depression, they achieve better grades in school, they have higher self-esteem, more resilience and reliance, they are safer drivers, they experience and participate in less violence, bullying, drug use, and overall engage in less risk-taking behaviour (O’Driscoll, 2021; Pontz, 2018; Siegel, 2013; Steinberg, 2001).

One issue that parents face in authoritative parenting is that behaviours of those outside the family including friends, community, media, etcetera, can undermine or strengthen the impact parents have on adolescents (Steinberg, 2001). Unfortunately, this leads back to the cultural issues families in the West face with media, industry and peers dominating the passing of culture (Steinberg, 2001). Steinberg believes decision and policy makers need to address how forces outside family impact family dynamics and undermine authoritative parenting (Steinberg, 2001). In the meantime, adolescents having friends whose parents are also authoritative helps (Steinberg, 2001).

Attachment

People are hardwired for connection and adolescents need a close relationship with their parent(s) (Bandura & Walters, 1959; Epstein, 2010; Moretti & Peled, 2004; Morris et al., 2017; Neufeld, 2013; Schlegel & Barry III, 1991; Sealy, 2017; Siegel, 2013; Steinberg, 2001). Adolescents securely attached to their parents matter across all ethnicities, socioeconomic statuses, household compositions, and countries (Steinberg, 2001). No studies indicate otherwise

(Steinberg, 2001). A secure attachment looks like offering support while also allowing separation and it means that adolescents are seen, safe, soothed, and secure (Mate, 1999; Siegel, 2013). Cohesive and supportive families are associated with more effective emotion regulation, even in high-risk environments (Morris et al., 2017). Adolescents who are securely attached have better mental health and are more independent, assertive, and responsive to others (Kohn, 2005; Steinberg, 2001). In order to create a secure attachment, parents need to put their relationship with their adolescents above all else (Kohn, 2006; Neufeld, 2013; Pipher, 1994; Price, 2017; Sealy, 2017). Parents want their adolescents to go to them when they are confused, lonely, and in trouble, and in order to make this happen, adults needs to create safety and fondness (Aldort, 2005; Bandura & Walters, 1959; Kohn, 2006). If this connection gets broken or troubled, if an adolescent stiffens when their parent walks into the room, parents need to get the relationship back at any cost (Kohn, 2006; Neufeld, 2013; Pipher, 1994; Price, 2017). Adolescents need a north star and they need their north star to be their parents (Neufeld, 2013; Pipher, 1994). In the words of Gordon Neufeld, adolescents need “connection before direction” (Neufeld, 2013, p. 218).

Respect and Consideration

Ample research indicates that adolescents do better when their parents are respectful (Kohn, 2005; Pollack, 1998; Price, 2017). What does this mean? It means being honest, gentle, and kind; it means explaining decisions when using power over; it means listening and modeling respect; it means letting adolescents voice their concerns with equal consideration as parent concerns; it means considering the best possible intentions behind adolescents’ poor actions, letting go of rigidity, and reconsidering requests when parents have already said no; it means working with instead of doing to; it means allyship and advocacy when adolescents are not being

heard (Epstein, 2010; Kohn, 2005; Mate, 1999; O’Driscoll, 2021; Price, 2017; Siegel, 2013). It also means being open to teaching less and learning more, taking seriously the experiences, rights and needs of adolescents, and allowing them to have a say in what happens to them (Aldort, 2005; Kohn, 2006). As Kohn (2006) points out, adolescents will be respectful to and of adults when adults are respectful to and of them. When people are held up to care, trust, kindness, fairness, and responsibility, people act that way (Kohn, 2006).

Autonomy and Responsibility

If adults truly respect and consider adolescents, they will let them make decisions, which leads to autonomy and responsibility (Aldort, 2005; Epstein, 2010; Kohn, 2006; Siegel, 2013). When adolescents are given autonomy and responsibility, they rise up and are capable (Epstein, 2010). This is not freedom without responsibility, which is what many adolescents have now and is problematic (Epstein, 2010). What adolescents need is authority and autonomy, responsibility with freedom (Epstein, 2010). While many laws (mentioned in chapter one) restrict adolescents, parents can grant responsibility in their own homes with regards to privacy, mental health, medical, education, and entertainment decisions (Epstein, 2010). Epstein goes as far as to argue that he believes age based laws should be replaced with competency based laws, which means some adolescents would likely gain rights and some adults would likely lose rights (Epstein, 2010). Adolescents who have a voice in family decisions are more likely to discuss beliefs with parents, rely on them, and are less likely to get into trouble (Kohn, 2006). Additionally, people make good decisions through practice and adolescents who make more decisions have higher moral reasoning capabilities and are more outgoing, active, and spontaneous (Epstein, 2010; Kohn, 2006; Siegel, 2013).

Unconditional Love

This section on unconditional love is short, but important, and complements the section above on conditional love. Children need unconditional love and adolescents are no different (Aldort, 2005; Kohn, 2005; Price, 2017). They may not show it, but adolescents need unconditional love that is not contingent on performance (Aldort, 2005; Kohn, 2005; Price, 2017). They need a safe and warm space where they are loved unconditionally as adolescents who experience this kind of love are less defensive and feel safer (Kohn, 2005).

Availability

Adolescents need time with their parents (Aldort, 2005; Bly, 1996; Mate, 1999; Moretti & Peled, 2004; Morris et al., 2017; Neufeld, 2013; O’Driscoll, 2021; Siegel, 2013). The way they need it may look different, but they need it nonetheless (Aldort, 2005; Morris et al., 2017; O’Driscoll, 2021; Siegel, 2013). Raising adolescents requires time, patience, and attention; one-on-one time to be specific (O’Driscoll, 2021). Spending time with adolescents shows them they are important (Aldort, 2005). Research demonstrates that when the amount of time parents have for their adolescents goes down, parental control and harsh and punitive parenting increases (O’Driscoll, 2021). Another study shows that when adolescents face a negative situation, 50% still go to their parents for support, demonstrating that adolescents still reach out for and need emotional support from their parents (Morris et al., 2017). Siegel (2013) notes that the best conditions for adolescent growth is one with parental presence. When Lindsay Sealy (2017), a Vancouver educator, asks adolescents what they need most from their parents, 100% of their answers are “time.”

Emotional Attunement, Empathy, and Calm

All literature found on emotional attunement, empathy, and calm parenting indicates positive adolescent outcomes (Aldort, 2005; Kohn, 2005; Morris et al., 2017; Neufeld, 2013;

O’Driscoll, 2021; Sealy, 2017; Siegel, 2013). Emotional support in adolescence is associated with better emotion regulation in study after study: “research indicates that parents’ emotional support, positive affect, emotion coaching, and use of joint strategies are all associated with more effective emotion regulation” (Morris et al., 2017 p. 4). Allowing adolescents to feel all their emotions- not act on them, but feel them- is so important (Miller, 2008). Parents do not want adolescents to have to appear happy or strong or suppress emotions for the sake of others (Miller, 2008). They need to feel safe enough to express themselves authentically without fear of being abandoned (Miller, 2008).

When parents talk less and ask more, more empathy, emotional attunement and understanding can be found (O’Driscoll, 2021). Quite often parental assumptions are wrong and when parents are wrong and assumptions are made, emotional attunement is off and adolescents no longer feel seen, heard, and connected (Kohn, 2006; O’Driscoll, 2021). As Kohn (2006) points out, “how we feel about our kids isn’t as important as how they experience those feelings and how they regard the way we treat them” (p. 20). When adolescents’ emotional needs are met, they no longer need to be preoccupied with meeting their needs, and are now capable of meeting the needs of others (Kohn, 2006).

Literature describes the following adolescent needs: empathy, understanding, listening as healing, curiosity, attention, non-judgement, openness, calm, and acceptance (Aldort, 2005; Neufeld, 2013; Pipher, 1994; Price, 2017; Sealy, 2017). It is also essential to acknowledge positive intentions instead of failed impulses and actions (Neufeld, 2013; O’Driscoll, 2021). Ideally, parents want to create an environment where they are available and adolescents can and want to ask for help, and where adolescents enjoy spending time with their family (Bandura & Walters, 1959). Can you imagine what adolescence would look like if parents provided this?

Allowing Failure

This section on allowing failure is also short, but important, as it is mentioned multiple times in the literature (Aldort, 2005; Epstein, 2010; O’Driscoll, 2021; Price, 2017). As Epstein points out in his discussion on autonomy, authority, and responsibility, autonomy and authority do not exist without responsibility, and responsibility cannot occur without being allowed to fail (Epstein, 2010). The more adolescents are allowed to learn from their mistakes, the more they learn how differentiate good decisions from bad decisions (Price, 2017). When parents rescue less, talk less, control less, and remind less, the more adolescents can learn and grow (Epstein, 2010; O’Driscoll, 2021; Price, 2017).

Reflective Parenting

Parents reflecting on their parenting is an essential part of effective parenting (Aldort, 2005; Kohn, 2005; Miller, 2008; Morris et al., 2017; O’Driscoll, 2021; Price, 2017). While reflective parenting is not necessarily a style of parenting, it is a necessary process in order to parent in a mindful and relationship oriented way (Aldort, 2005; Kohn, 2005; Miller, 2008; Morris et al., 2017; O’Driscoll, 2021; Price, 2017). When parents are unaware of how they were raised and how they are raising their children and adolescents, there is the potential to carry harm from the past into present parenting (Miller, 2008). Miller argues that if parents could unlearn destructive patterns they learned from their childhoods, preventing them from passing these patterns onto their children, it would be significant for child, family, community, and our world (Miller, 2008). When parents are vulnerable, authentic, take responsibility and model emotional intelligence, not only is connection valued above control, but through modeling, parents are teaching their adolescents language for emotions, and to recognize, problem solve, comfort, and

regulate their own emotions better (Aldort, 2005; Kohn, 2005; Morris et al., 2017; O’Driscoll, 2021).

Reframing How We View Adolescence

In a culture in which adolescents are seen as incompetent, crazy, hormonal, disconnected, lost, out of control, and irrational, reframing how we view this period of time is imperative (Marsten, 2020; Pfeifer, 2019; Siegel, 2013; Swerhone, 2020). This section of the Capstone will look at “Contact Theory” and ideas about “Us versus Them” as outlined by Sapolsky (2017) in *Behave* as a way of lessening negative stereotypes. Second, it will discuss a specific research study outlining the effects of countering negative stereotypes about youth. Finally, it will address a type of therapy used to break down negative stereotypes and reconnect with the adolescent in front of us. With an entire group of people who bring a fresh perspective to old problems and who hold the key to our success as a species, it would benefit the entire Western culture to view adolescence through a more positive lens (Swerhone, 2020).

Contact Theory and “Us versus Them”

Contact theory is the idea that if you bring together individuals or group of people who are opposed to each other, whether it is countries at war or parents fighting with adolescents and everything in between, it is possible to lessen the misunderstanding, hatred and otherwise ill-will towards each other (Sapolsky, 2017). When people hold an “us/them” dichotomy, people see “them” as inhuman (Sapolsky, 2017). When people spend time together, especially structured in ways to build relationship, tension and prejudice are reduced, and increased understanding and empathy can be made, reducing the distance between “Us” and “Them” (Sapolsky, 2017). Especially if, during interactions and time spent together there is a shared goal, connection can be made (Sapolsky, 2017). Taking another’s perspective as well as emphasizing similarities and

making the implicit explicit by recognizing and discussing unconscious biases’ can further reduce the “Us/Them” dichotomy and bring people closer together (Sapolsky, 2017). Contact Theory in the context of “storm and stress” and negative stereotypes about youth are meant to humanize and acknowledge adolescents, instead of seeing them as “other” or “them” (Sapolsky, 2017). Whether in therapy, in a parenting group, with friends or even in a journal, finding ways to spend time with, take the perspective of adolescents, and recognize the unconscious biases adults hold about adolescents would likely be beneficial for parents and their relationships with adolescents.

Countering Negative Stereotypes About Adolescents

Qu et al. (2020), did a study to find out if counter-stereotyping the negative stereotypes about adolescents could change adolescent behaviour. The short answer is yes. The paper will not be discussed in detail here, but if interested in the topic of this Capstone, it is well worth reading. The authors state that “negative ideas about adolescence are widely held by laypeople,” such that adolescents are seen as rebellious and irresponsible (Qu et al., 2020, p. 197). They also argue that the more adolescents believe they are seen as irresponsible, the more at risk they are for experiencing “storm and stress” and they note research that adolescents also hold these negative views about themselves (Qu et al., 2020). If adolescents believe these negative stereotypes about themselves, this will shape their expectations and standards for themselves (Qu et al., 2020). For example, if adolescents see it as “normal” to skip school, this sets the stage for problematic actions (Qu et al., 2020).

The counter-stereotyping intervention in the study included reframing adolescents as responsible (Qu et al., 2020). This was done through discrediting the irresponsible adolescent stereotype in the media, which was reportedly not hard to do, as adolescents, like all people, have

a desire for respect (Qu et al., 2020). After reframing adolescents as responsible, researchers asked the adolescents to think of examples of adolescents acting responsibly (Qu et al., 2020). In the group in which adolescents were framed as responsible, for three days after the testing was done, academic engagement and performance were higher and risk-taking was reduced (Qu et al., 2020). The counter-stereotyping intervention was seen as a success and the authors argue that their research “provides promising groundwork for supporting youth in flourishing during adolescence” (Qu et al., 2020, p. 209). Given everything discussed in the Capstone above, it seems entirely possible that if negative stereotypes about adolescents can be reframed, it is possible adolescents can flourish and “storm and stress” can be removed (Qu et al., 2020).

Wonderfulness Interviewing

Another way negative stereotypes about adolescents can be dismantled is through “Wonderfulness Interviewing” in the therapy room. This concept was mentioned in chapter one and I will offer some further detail here. Problems lead families to create single-storied views of their experience and problem stories lead family members to view each other negatively (Epston & Marsten, 2010). Over time, problems make people feel like they are bad and leads to blame, guilt, and shame (Epston & Marsten, 2010). Negative, single storied representations of adolescents lead parents to feel disdain, so the idea in Wonderfulness Interviewing is to thicken the thin description of adolescents (Epston & Marsten, 2010).

This can be done in the therapy room with therapists conducting a Wonderfulness Interview with the parents in the presence of the adolescent, but it can also be expanded outside the room by emailing, interviewing, calling or writing others who know the adolescent to share their wonderful stories about the adolescent, developing multi-storied wonderfulness qualities (Epston & Marsten, 2010). With the wonderful qualities of the adolescent developing an

alternate storyline, the problem can be externalized and the parent(s) and adolescent can face off against the problem together (Epston, 2016). Once the problem has a name and has been externalized, the therapist, parent(s) and adolescent can look at how the problem impacts each of them, their relationship, their identity, and life in general (Epston, 2016). Through Wonderfulness Interviewing, parents re-member their adolescent- they put them back together as a whole person with wonderful qualities instead of a person who is deficit and less than (Epston & Marsten, 2010).

There is evidence that reframing how people view adolescence can turn adolescent actions around and above are some practical ways of doing so (Marsten, 2020; Qu et al., 2020; Steinberg, 2001). The media upholds harmful stereotypes about adolescence and it is up to parents and adults who interact with adolescents to resist the hype and seek the truth (Epstein, 2010). Adolescents can be viewed as confused, alone, crazed, disconnected, uncertain, isolated, lost, out of control, wild, frightened, and seeking, or adolescence can be viewed as a period of courage, innovation, potential, creativity, and offering society a new way of doing things, of challenging the status quo (Siegel, 2013). It is during adolescence that human beings become capable of shaping the future of humanity (Savin-Williams, 1987).

Gaps in the Research and Limitations of this Capstone

This Capstone looks at the broad group of Western adolescents. Within that research scope, there are a few note-worthy gaps. The gap that stood out the loudest was the lack of adolescent voice in adolescent research (Epstein, 2010). Given the research that adolescents are incredibly intelligent, this gap is disappointing, yet not surprising (Epstein, 2010). Perhaps with awareness and the reframing of adolescence discussed above, academia will start to see more research and papers on adolescence by adolescents or at least in consultation with adolescents.

Another gap that Steinberg points out is that the research on adolescence and what is needed to reduce and remove “storm and stress” already exists (2001). The gap is not in the research, but in bringing the research from academia into policy and community (Steinberg, 2001). This issue will be the focus of chapter three.

At the beginning of this project, I did a general search on adolescence and found little research on non-Western and non-white adolescents. As expected, the research seems to dominate around dominant locations of identity. As well, while I did not research anything specific around religion, poverty, neurodiversity or disability and how these locations uniquely impact adolescence, these topics did not show up in the general research. While, as mentioned, I did not search specifically for these topics, the lack of information on these topics in the general search indicates some potential bias. Even if the research exists, the fact that a general search on adolescence does not raise these topics is concerning.

Specific topics do show up in the general research that I had to leave out due to space. These are the impacts of adolescence on girls, boys, LGBTQ folk, interpersonal violence and household conflict, divorce, as well as how mother blame impacts both mothers and their adolescents, and toxic masculinity and how that impacts fathers and their relationships with their adolescents. I touch briefly on the adolescent brain, parenting through adolescence, and the impact of media on adolescence in this Capstone as it is impossible to discuss adolescent “storm and stress” without including these topics, however discussion on these specific topics is limited, as that is not the purpose of this Capstone.

Summary of Findings

The research question is as follows: how can parents reduce or remove the “storm and stress” of adolescence? There are differing views on the cause, but the overarching theme in the

research is that “storm and stress” is caused by culture: horizontal rather than vertical passing of culture, technology, media and the billion-dollar youth culture, and the lack of value that adolescents hold in our culture. Part of the problem is that media and industry promote myths about adolescence that have been debunked by research, but are continuing to be promoted to support industry. These myths include the idea that adolescence is a time of ease with little responsibility, that adolescents no longer need their parents and can and should push them away, that adolescents need to be under parental control and punished when not, that adolescents are incompetent, that hormones are responsible for the “crazy” actions adolescents do, and that adolescence is inevitably a negative period.

A big part of the literature centres on how to parent adolescents and what adolescents need from their parents. Given all of the myths and confusion in the media, parents need to know that control, praise, criticism, punishment, conditional love, stereotyping and making assumptions are detrimental and damage the parent-adolescent bond. It is equally important for parents to know that authoritative parenting, which means limit setting, warmth, consistency, honouring of autonomy, and attachment, respect, consideration, allowing for autonomy, responsibility, unconditional love, availability, emotional attunement, empathy, calm, allowing failure, and reflecting on their own parenting is effective and leads to close and strong relationships with their adolescents.

With the research demonstrating that “storm and stress” is not inevitable, an especially important piece of this Capstone is exactly how parents and professionals can turn these negative stereotypes around, face these myths, and end the “storm and stress,” which is addressed in the section on reframing how Western culture views adolescence. Using Contact Theory and spending time with adolescents, taking their perspective and consciously challenging

unconscious biases, increasing connections can be made. Qu et al.’s research proves that countering negative stereotypes works and Wonderfulness Interviewing is another wonderful way to challenge negative stereotypes and begin to re-member the wonderful qualities adolescents hold.

This Capstone is general in nature. It is meant to address a broad group of parents of Western adolescents, which in doing so, leaves out specific populations within this general category, which is a limitation of the Capstone. A major limitation in the research is the lack of adolescent voice in adolescent research. Another major limitation, is that while the research exists to disprove theories of “storm and stress,” the information is not being passed to parents and community, and thus, “storm and stress” still exists.

Chapter 3

The research question is as follows: how can parents reduce or remove the “storm and stress” of adolescence? Is “storm and stress” inevitable? If not, what can professionals, policy makers, and community members do to support parents in reducing or removing the “storm and stress?” Chapter three looks at the findings from the literature, the learnings and appreciations from the literature review, my dream to provide a province-wide universal outreach program for parents as their children enter adolescence including an outline for what this program might look like, and limitations, constraints, questions, and concerns regarding this program. Lastly, chapter three discusses a practical plan that can be put into action immediately as a result of the information gathered for this Capstone, a six-week 90-minute per week group for parents of adolescents.

Throughout this Capstone I have referred to the many supports that exists for adolescents and their parents in British Columbia. These resources are laid out in Appendix A. In Appendix

B there is a full outline for a six-week parents of adolescents group so that anyone who is reading this Capstone could take this plan and create a group based on the research.

Findings from the Literature Review

Research into this topic found that despite focussing on different aspects of the “storm and stress” in adolescence, most researchers argue that the problem is cultural. Parents and adolescents are not to blame for adolescent “storm and stress” and there are a number of factors contributing to the problem. From the billion-dollar youth culture that promotes inaccurate “storm and stress” myths about adolescence, to peer-orientation where adolescents, due to a number of factors, spend more time and are more connected with their peers than parents, to the confusion parents experience on how to parent adolescents due to conflicting messages received from media and the community, to the overall negative view Western culture holds about adolescents, “storm and stress” is supported in a variety of ways. The literature finds hope that “storm and stress” is not inevitable, however, and researchers offer suggestions for how to put an end to adolescent “storm and stress,” which will be the focus of this chapter.

Learnings and Appreciations from the Literature Review

Having been an adolescent and now raising adolescents in Western culture, the idea that “storm and stress” exists, and is a cultural, not individual problem, is no surprise. Digging deep into the research of “storm and stress” in adolescence however, has been incredibly useful and informative by clarifying misunderstandings, putting it all together, and having a direction to go. I did not undoubtedly know before this project, for example, that “storm and stress” is not inevitable; now I do. While I am aware that too much time on devices is detrimental and that adolescents still need their parents, I now have more of an idea about what enacting less peer and device time and more time with parents could actually look like. I was also not aware that

research disproved “storm and stress” years ago, but industry and media have kept it alive (Epstein, 2010; Steinberg, 2001). It had not occurred to me how much industry and media benefit from adolescence being a time of “storm and stress.”

I had little idea about what adolescence looked like before it was defined as a concept in 1904 and little idea what the adolescent period looks like in non-Western cultures. Knowing that “storm and stress” is basically non-existent in most non-Western cultures or completely non-existent, gives me hope. It offers a model for where to go. Since much has changed since 1904, Western culture cannot go back, but a number of researchers offer ideas for how to move forward.

One activity I participated in while researching for this Capstone was a pilot project group for parents of adolescents based out of Seattle. Fortunately due to the COVID-19 pandemic I was able to participate from a distance, as the program was led on Zoom (O’Driscoll, 2021). The group offered education, questions for reflection, and group discussion (O’Driscoll, 2021). Providing accurate information to parents, while allowing them to ask questions and talk through how to enact the research and new information in their lives demonstrated to be incredibly useful and supportive (O’Driscoll, 2021). The weekly group also created a space where parents of adolescents did not feel isolated and alone in their experiences and inspired excellent ideas for the program I want to create for this Capstone (O’Driscoll, 2021).

My Dream - A Province Wide Universal Support Group for Parents of Adolescents

My dream for this Capstone is to create a province-wide universal outreach program for parents as their children enter adolescence and one more time when their children are in mid-adolescence. In British Columbia, when a baby is born, that baby is assigned to a nurse (Healthy Families BC, 2012). The nurse reaches out to contact the new mother and family and offers

pamphlets, information, and reviews all of the supports that exist for new mothers (Healthy Families BC, 2012). I want this for parents leading into adolescence, with an offer to attend a support group.

In looking into what supports exist for parents of adolescents in British Columbia, there is a surprising amount of support. Existing supports in British Columbia are listed in Appendix A. As a parent to three adolescents, it is disappointing to be surprised by supports I had no idea existed. In looking into the supports that currently exist in British Columbia, many require a referral, a confirmed diagnosis, or at the very least, a parent needs to reach out for support. In order for any of these to occur, a problem needs to exist. I want to create support for parents of adolescents before there is any need to reach out.

Clearly, as this Capstone outlines, parenting adolescents in the Western culture is challenging and statistics confirm this. Parents of children entering adolescence in Western culture truly are entering a confusing and potentially dangerous time. I believe that if universal outreach existed in British Columbia, some of the “storm and stress” could be reduced.

This dream is not mine alone. Laurence Steinberg, who is cited in this Capstone, is an American professor who has written hundreds of articles (almost 500) and 17 books on the topic of adolescence (Steinberg, 2021). The following quote is long, but points to exactly what I am arguing for:

> Parents state that they want information on how to keep their teenagers healthy, but they often do not have access to the best and most scientifically grounded advice. Much of the information that parents receive about raising teenagers is conflicting and confusing. Misinformation and erroneous stereotypes about adolescence fill bookstores, flood the Internet, and dominate portrayals of teenagers and their parents in the news, on television,

> and in film. If we are to increase the capacity of parents and other caregivers to improve adolescent health, we must start by providing these adults with accurate and user-friendly information. Parents need to know what healthy adolescence is, how to assess whether their children are on healthy trajectories, how to facilitate their adolescents’ healthy development, and how to get help when problems arise… It is not sufficient to just tell parents that they matter, however. It is also important to identify a small number of basic messages about the parenting of adolescents on which there is widespread agreement among researchers, examine the unintentional and erroneous messages about adolescence that are communicated through the mass media, and perform systematic research on how best to disseminate this information to parents of teenagers… The next step should be the development of a systematic, large-scale, multifaceted, and ongoing public health campaign to educate parents about adolescence that draws on the collective resources and expertise of health care professionals, scientists, governmental agencies, community organizations, schools, religious institutions, and the mass media. (Steinberg, 2001 p. 16)

If the research in this Capstone is not compelling enough, please take it from this expert on adolescence. Other researchers also argue explicitly for regular government funded parenting support (Crittenden, 2010; Moretti & Peled, 2004). I am not alone in this quest; this support is needed.

General Outline of the Province Wide Universal Support Group for Parents of Adolescents

The general outline of my dream would look like a therapist (I would argue for a therapist to do this outreach because of their training) reaching out to all parents of children entering adolescence in British Columbia. This could not be a public school-based program because parents would get missed due to the number of families home-schooling and sending their

children to independent schools, and the idea of this dream is that every parent of a child entering adolescence receives this outreach (BCTF, 2021; DataBC, 2021; MacPherson, 2021). In the first communication, the therapist would outline very briefly their role and set up a time to talk at a later agreed upon date- this first communication could be via email or phone. The second communication would be set up via phone, video, or an in-person meeting and would contain more detail about the therapist’s role and the program, including why the program exists (this part is necessary because otherwise, why would a parent who has no current issues with their child want to give up their time when there is no problem?), the variety of supports that exist (likely sent in an attachment or link via email), and the groups that are offered.

The group is optional and the parent(s) could choose to attend soon after the second communication or wait until a group is desired. Given the vast amount of development and changes that occur during adolescence, I argue it would be useful to offer two groups, one to parents of adolescents ages 11-15 and another for parents of adolescents ages 15-20. I think it would also be incredibly useful for this program to work with the McCreary Centre Society which administers a province wide, public school-based survey to students between grades seven to 12 to assess emerging issues, health trends, and protective and risk factors for healthy development (McCreary Centre Society, 2018, 2021). Together, with the results of the BC Adolescent Health Survey, the province wide universal support group for parents of adolescents could develop its program based on the most recent data gathered.

Limitations, Constraints, Questions, and Concerns

The biggest systemic, structural, and institutional constraint on my dream is funding. A significant amount of advocacy would need to be done in order to create province-wide outreach and support groups for parents of children entering adolescence and parents of adolescents. A

concern with this specific program is raised in the first two chapters of the Capstone, and that is the negative stereotypes about adolescents. Could I convince anyone that this group is worth fighting for? I would hope that the statistics and research presented in this Capstone would be convincing.

Practical Plan for the Purposes of this Capstone

In the meantime, I have developed a 6-week, 90-minute per week support group plan for parents of adolescents that could be used on its own in a private practice format or as part of the ideal universal support group for parents of all adolescents in British Columbia. The group lesson plan is in Appendix B. As noted above and as demonstrated in Appendix A, many supports exist for parents of adolescents, however, they are all reactive. There needs to be a problem in order to access the existing supports. The group outlined here is meant for parents of young adolescents before they experience any “storm and stress” at all. It is a group meant to be broad and applicable to all parents in British Columbia, understanding that different communities will need different specializations, such as groups for parents of girls, boys, LGBTQ folk, neurodiverse or disabled adolescents, different ethnic or racialized groups, groups for parents who are separated or divorced, etcetera, some of which already exist.

The topics of the group sessions are based on the information gathered in the literature review. Each group session includes a significant amount educational information for the therapist to review and choose what to provide to the group depending on the group’s interest and make up, including exercises for reflection, group questions for discussion, and questions for individual consideration. The topic for the first week includes an introduction to the history of adolescence and statistics on adolescence outlining why there is a need for the group. The topic for the second week includes education and discussion around the history of the study of

adolescence as well as technology and media. The topic for the third week looks at adolescent development and the myths that adolescence is easy and that hormones make our adolescents lazy and crazy. In the fourth week, the information and conversation focuses on the horizontal versus vertical passing of culture as well as how much adolescents really need their parents. Week five is all about myths around parenting styles and what the research actually says. Finally, in week six, the education and conversation centres on the lack of value adolescents hold in Western culture and how adolescence can be reframed.

Conclusion

Research and statistics confirm that “storm and stress” is a reality for many adolescents and their families within Western culture today. Fortunately, the literature also confirms that “storm and stress” is not inevitable and it indicates a number of factors contributing to the “storm and stress.” Research and authors know that there is a problem, they know what contributes to the problem, and thus there are ideas for how to end the problem. The next step then in ending the “storm and stress” of adolescence, is action. Chapter three provides actionable steps to end “storm and stress,” at least in British Columbia, which is a first step. It is my hope in writing this Capstone, with the research and actionable steps provided, that the importance of this message will be picked up by funders who can turn this project into a reality.

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Appendix A

Parenting and Mental Health Resources on Adolescence for British Columbia

Anxiety Canada: a Canada-wide anxiety resource that has support specifically for youth, https://www.anxietycanada.com/learn-about-anxiety/anxiety-in-youth/

British Columbia Association for Clinical Counsellors: a resource and website to help people find registered clinical counsellors, https://bc-counsellors.org/

British Columbia Children’s Hospital Kelty Mental Health Resource Centre: helping families across British Columbia navigate the mental health system, listen and offer peer support, and connecting adolescents and families to resources and tools, they work with adolescents who experience a wide range of diagnoses such as eating disorders, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, anxiety, autism, depression, bipolar, borderline personality disorder, psychosis, schizophrenia, suicide, substance use, and more, https://keltymentalhealth.ca/

Confident Parents, Thriving Kids: A family-focused, telephone-based coaching service for parents and caregivers, effective in reducing mild to moderate anxiety or behavioural challenges and promoting healthy child development in children ages 3 – 12, https://cmha.bc.ca/programs-and-services/

Connect Parent Group: Connect is a 10-week program to support parents and caregivers of pre-teens and teens with behavioural and emotional problems, http://connectattachmentprograms.org/

Counselling BC: offering counselling, psychological services, art therapy, and psychotherapy, https://counsellingbc.com/

Cybertip: Canada’s tipline to report the online sexual exploitation of children, https://www.cybertip.ca/app/en/

Family Resource Programs of British Columbia: a non-profit membership organization dedicated to promoting and supporting community-based Family Resource Programs (FRPs), https://frpbc.ca/

Family Smart: For parents supporting teens with mental health issues, https://familysmart.ca/

Foundry: Foundry is a province-wide network of integrated health and social service centres for young people ages 12-24. Foundry centres provide a one-stop-shop for young people to access mental health care, substance use services, primary care, social services and youth and family peer supports, https://foundrybc.ca/

Maples Adolescent Treatment Centre: The Maples is an accredited facility that offers specialized programs and services to address the needs of young people (12 to 17 years old) who have a lot of mental health concerns or troubling behaviour, https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/health/managing-your-health/mental-health-substance-use/child-teen-mental-health/maples-adolescent-treatment-centre

McCreary Centre Society: McCreary Centre Society is a non-government not-for-profit committed to improving the health of BC youth through research, evaluation and community-based projects. Our vision is that all youth are supported to be healthy and connected.

Ministry of Children and Family Development’s Child and Youth Mental Health: provide a range of mental health assessment and treatment options for children and youth (0-18 years of age) and their families at no cost. Our clinics are staffed by mental health clinicians, psychologists, and psychiatrists. Our mental health services are voluntary and are designed to support children and youth who experience significant difficulties related to their thoughts, feelings and behaviours, https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/health/managing-your-health/mental-health-substance-use/child-teen-mental-health

Need Help Now: helps teens stop the spread of sexual pictures or videos and provides support along the way, https://www.needhelpnow.ca/app/en/

Parent Support Services Society of BC: a non-profit, volunteer-based society and registered charity founded in 1974. The mandate is preventing child abuse and promoting healthy parent-child relationships by supporting parenting, families, and communities. This is achieved by providing support and information to parents, https://www.parentsupportbc.ca/parenting-education/

Safe Online: a website and program offering information, presentations, and webinars on internet safety, managing parenting control, implications of technology on children and adolescents for parents, educators, and professionals, https://www.safeonline.ca/programs/parent-webinars/

Youth in BC: a program of the Crisis Centre that connects youth with support, information, and resources, https://youthinbc.com/

YWCA Metro Vancouver: offers Youth Education, a support for grade seven students and entering high school, as well as information for parents discussing topics such as media messages, healthy living and friendship, and identity discussions, https://ywcavan.org/programs/youth-education

Appendix B

Six-Week Group Lesson Plan for Parents of Adolescents

Each group is 90-minutes long and will begin with sharing each member’s “highs” and “lows” from the previous week. There will also be a short survey at the end of each group to collect data on what was useful and what was not.

Week One:

Facilitator Introduction, Expectations for the Group, Outline of Six-Weeks Together, History of the Study of Adolescence, Statistics

1. Introduce facilitator, and outline group norms and the plan for the 6-weeks. Group norms include:
    a. Mutual respect: trusting that each member is doing the best they can as a parent and withholding judgement as best as possible
    b. Participating in group conversation is optional, based on feelings of safety and comfort, and one can always opt out
    c. Confidentiality: we can share the learning, but not the story and not any identifying information
    d. Out of respect for the speaker, leave camera on in online formats as much as possible and as well, avoid side conversations during group conversations
    e. Please prioritize these meetings as much as you can within your life, as attendance supports group cohesion and community
2. Group introductions including name, ages of adolescent(s), what you’re looking to get out of the group, and highs and lows.
3. History of adolescence

a. “Storm and stress” is a term coined by G. Stanley Hall in 1904 to describe the defiance, opposition, mood disruption, and conflict that occurs during adolescence (Hall, 2012). At just over a century old, however, the concept of “adolescence is a historical anomaly” and therefore it does not need to be this way (Epstein, 2007, p. 16). While young people have had their own social groups for hundreds of years, adolescence is a notion that did not develop until the late nineteenth and early twentieth century (Epstein, 2010; Kett, 2003; Steinberg & Lerner, 2004). A number of factors that influenced the development of adolescence in the west, including G. Stanley Hall, schooling, the Great Depression, access to automobiles, changing laws, and the development of a billion-dollar youth culture.

b. Hall believed that between developing sexuality and conflict between the desire for pleasure and the desire to fit into civilization, storm and stress is inevitable (Hall, 2012). Hall’s was a “biologically based, deficit view of adolescence” that saw adolescents as beasts to be tamed (Steinberg & Lerner, 2004, p. 46). He argued to take off the pressure of adulthood by prolonging the innocence of childhood (Kett, 2003; Steinberg & Lerner, 2004). This flew in face of previous ideas about youth that they should grow up and become responsible as soon as they are able (Epstein, 2010; Kett, 2003; Steinberg & Lerner, 2004). In 1900, for example, it was normal for 10-15 year old’s to have full-time jobs and it was ability that determined who worked, not age (Epstein, 2007; Kett, 2003). Hall’s ideas clearly circulated widely (Kett, 2003; Steinberg & Lerner, 2004).

c. Schooling is another factor that had a tremendous impact on the development of adolescence. In 1852 in the United States of America (USA), it was required that eight to 14-year-olds attend school for three months per year unless they could demonstrate they had mastery of the skills being taught in school- school at that time was about competence (Epstein, 2007). Additionally, in 1900, high schools only enrolled a very small fraction of the population as most parents saw little value in it (Kett, 2003). Compulsory schooling boomed in the 1920’s when Andrew Carnegie and the Rockefeller Foundation got involved and put a lot of money behind it (Gatto, 2010).

d. A lack of work opportunities for teens during the Great Depression helped to universalize attendance in high school and developing laws further solidified a separate classification of adolescence apart from child and adulthood (Epstein, 2007). As school completion ages were extended, so were labour laws for older youth and for more types of work for youth (Epstein, 2007). Where once no laws existed around drinking, smoking, driving, voting, juvenile court proceedings, and refusing or consenting to medical treatment, suddenly, new and increasingly restrictive laws were introduced and passed (Epstein, 2007).

e. One of the more recent and extensive factors to impact adolescence is that of a youth culture promoted by the media. Pre-World War II, advertisers set their eyes on families (Kett, 2003). Post-World War II however, people began to build epic careers around marketing for teens, creating them as consumers (Kett, 2003). Youth media and advertising is now a billion dollar business and along with

peers, media and advertising have become the prime influencers of adolescents (Epstein, 2010).

4. Statistics
    a. Adolescence has a death rate three times higher than any other age group, due mostly to avoidable deaths: accidents, murder, drug use, and weapons (Siegel, 2013). In Canada between 2000 and 2019, accidents and intentional self-harm were by far the two leading causes of death, every single year, between the ages of 15-24 (Statistics Canada, 2020). 75% of the issues adolescent’s face are related to mental health in Canada and adolescents are prescribed psychiatric medication more than all other prescription medication combined (Epstein, 2010; Graham Boeckh Foundation, 2019). Also in Canada, 24% of deaths for 15-24 year old’s is by suicide and “teens are admitted to hospital for suicide attempts more than any other age group” (Centre for Suicide Prevention, n.d.).
5. Group question: List six ways you show love for your teen. What have you demonstrated in the last day? Week? What on this list does your teen appreciate? Are there other ways your teen might like to be shown love and appreciation? What has gotten in the way of you showing this love (O’Driscoll, 2021)?
6. Questions? Reflections? Survey.

Week Two:

History of the Study of Adolescence, Technology and Media

1. Highs and Lows
2. Group question: how do you define adolescence? Teenager? Youth?
3. Define the above terms.

a. **Adolescence:** the period of time between childhood and adulthood, beginning at the onset of puberty and ending when an individual has taken on the responsibilities and roles of an adult (Neufeld, 2013).
b. **Youth:** according to the United Nations, a person between the ages of 15 and 24, who is between the stages of childhood dependence and adult independence (Nations, 2008).
c. **Teenager**: a person on and between the ages of 13-19 (Cambridge Dictionary, 2021)

4. Review the 3 phases of adolescence
    a. Phase one: the first phase began in 1904 upon the creation of the concept of adolescence and is marked by grand models of adolescence including but not limited to Sigmund Freud, Erik Erikson, Jean Piaget, and Lawrence Kohlberg (Steinberg & Lerner, 2004). If people know any of these theories, the therapist can ask them to provide information, otherwise simply provide a general idea.
    b. Phase two: the second phase of scientific research into adolescence, which began in the mid-1970’s and has lasted until now, is interested in diversity, developmental plasticity, how to apply the science to life, and is interested in understanding how the interaction of social factors, biology, culture and history impact adolescent development (Steinberg & Lerner, 2004). The information provided in this group comes from research in this second phase.
    c. Phase three: the third phase is bringing the science into practice, which is what this group is doing (Steinberg & Lerner, 2004)!

5. Group question: how much time does your adolescent spend on devices? Is that more or less than you would like or is just about the right amount? Why?
6. Technology and media
    a. There are two main issues raised in discussions about adolescents, technology, media, and the youth industry. One is related to time adolescents spend with technology and the other is the messages that the youth industry pushes out. Regarding the amount of time adolescents spend with technology, much research and many educators now know too much time on devices and with technology is harmful (Bly, 1996; Neufeld, 2013; Orlowski, 2020; Pipher, 1994; Ruston, 2016). Why? Briefly, more time on screens means less time living, which means Western culture is raising children who are not growing up and is becoming a culture of “half-adults” (Bly, 1996; Louv, 2008). Another argument as to why technology is problematic comes from Gordon Neufeld. Neufeld demonstrates that digital connection allows adolescents to be together even when apart, which further reinforces the horizontal passing of culture between adolescents as well as the disconnection from parents and family, which interferes with what adolescents actually need (Neufeld, 2013).
7. Question for reflection: if you could make any wish come true in your relationship with your teen, what would your relationship look like? Then ask: what needs to change in our actions and words in order to make that happen (O’Driscoll, 2021)?
8. Questions? Reflections? Survey.

Week Three:

Adolescent Development and the Myths that: 1 Adolescence is Easy and 2. Hormones Make Adolescents Lazy and Crazy

1. Highs and Lows
2. Group question: what are your perceptions about how easy or hard adolescence is and how much responsibility adolescents have?
3. Myth that Adolescence is Easy
    a. Circulating widely is the idea that adolescence is a time of ease with little responsibility (Epstein, 2010; Kett, 2003; Miller, 2008; Swerhone, 2020). Removing responsibility and taking the pressure of adulthood off of this age group was the point of Hall creating the concept of adolescence, after all (Hall, 2012; Kett, 2003). The idea that adolescence is easy and free of responsibility is disrespectful and a misuse of power (Miller, 2008). Development is happening on multiple levels throughout adolescence (Epstein, 2010; Neufeld, 2013; Pipher, 1994; Sapolsky, 2017; Siegel, 2015). While it does not all happen at the same time or in a linear fashion, all of these changes are happening, which makes adolescence a significant transition (Pipher, 1994; Price, 2017; Siegel, 2013).
    b. Puberty, the hormonal and sexual changes that begin as early as nine to 10 years old and end when one assumes adult responsibilities is one major transition that happens during adolescence (Eliot, 2009; Pfeifer, 2019; Pipher, 1994; Sapolsky, 2017)
    c. At the same time that sexual and hormonal changes are going on, adolescents are being pressured to please their peers while at the same time being pressured to push their parents away (Pipher, 1994; Price, 2017). This pressure exists

alongside the desire of adolescents not to disappoint their parents (Pipher, 1994; Price, 2017). It is a conflicting and confusing time.

   d. Adolescence is a time of integrating internal structures, finding personal ideology, and finding a social world that fits with one’s internal ideas and structures (Wexler, 2006). Adolescents are trying out different clothes, different body language, and different friends to see what fits, and they are asking big questions: “Who am I? What do I believe in? What should I become, and do I have what it takes to get there” (Price, 2017, p. 20)? The vastness of these questions can be exhausting, which is why many adolescents take a lot of “down time” (Pipher, 1994). It is no different than adults needing to relax after a hard day (Pipher, 1994). There is pressure to get a job, find a partner, have kids, buy a house, and all this time, during all these changes and big questions, adolescents are also wrapping their heads around a youth culture that leads to pain and pathology (Pipher, 1994; Price, 2017). Due to online internet use and social media, adolescents now are growing up in a different world than their parents did; a world of continual access to the outside world, online harassment, and 24-hour availability of friends (Epstein, 2010; Neufeld, 2013; Pipher, 1994).

4. Group question: what messages do you hear about the impact of hormones on adolescence?
5. Myth 2: Hormones make adolescents lazy and crazy!
   a. All sorts of media report that adolescents are lazy and immature because of their brains; they have an immature or underdeveloped prefrontal cortex, a broken brain; that their systems for processing emotions are in overdrive, and that

hormones make them crazy (Eliot, 2009; Epstein, 2010; Pfeifer, 2019; Sapolsky, 2017; Swerhone, 2020). Much of this is over simplified or untrue (Eliot, 2009; Epstein, 2010; Pfeifer, 2019; Sapolsky, 2017; Swerhone, 2020). As well, contrary to popular opinion, hormones do not cause adolescents to lose their minds; hormonal changes do not directly account for behavioural changes during adolescence. (Eliot, 2009; Moretti & Peled, 2004; Sapolsky, 2017; Schlegel & Barry III, 1991; Swerhone, 2020). All adolescents go through puberty, but not all adolescents experience turmoil and additionally, non-Western adolescents do not experience turmoil even close to the degree that Western adolescents do (Epstein, 2010; Sapolsky, 2017; Schlegel & Barry III, 1991).

b. As Sapolsky points out in *Behave*, it is impossible to say that any behaviour is caused by a hormone or a gene or a trauma, etcetera (2017). If we think categorically in terms of gene or trauma or hormone, we miss the big picture and the story is not complete (Sapolsky, 2017). Epstein makes a similar argument: “from a scientific perspective, it is wrong- utterly and completely wrong- to say that the brain causes behaviour (or thinking or feelings) based simply on a correlation between a brain state and that behaviour” (2010, p. 198). For example, the brain of angry people look different than the brains of calm people, but it is not their brains that cause their anger; it is genetics, experiences, etcetera (Epstein, 2010). There is a wealth of research demonstrating that the brain does not cause adolescent behaviour, but media keeps saying otherwise (Epstein, 2010).

c. There is also significant controversy over the prefrontal cortex in adolescence and the part it plays in adolescent words and actions (Eliot, 2009; Epstein, 2010; Pfeifer, 2019; Sapolsky, 2017). The prefrontal cortex is responsible for executive function (organizing knowledge, initiating action), working memory, postponing gratification, impulse control, emotion regulation, and long-term planning (Sapolsky, 2017). It allows people to do the hard thing because it is the right thing to do, and as Sapolsky points out, is what differentiates the adolescent brain from the adult brain (2017). It is also interesting to note that because “it is the last to mature, by definition the frontal cortex is the brain region least constrained by genes and most sculpted by experience,” meaning environment or “nurture” has a larger impact on the frontal cortex than genetics and “nature” (Sapolsky, 2017, p. 173).

d. There is no debate that research into the present day Western adolescent brain demonstrates their frontal and prefrontal cortexes are not fully developed until their mid-twenties and are not as developed as the frontal and prefrontal cortexes of adults (Eliot, 2009; Epstein, 2010; Sapolsky, 2017). The question Epstein asks in *Teen 2.0*, however, is: are late developing frontal and prefrontal cortexes in adolescents inevitable (Epstein, 2010)? Epstein argues that present day Western adolescent brains are a result of their culture and if present day Western adolescents were allowed more responsibility and autonomy, perhaps their frontal and prefrontal cortexes would mature faster and reach adulthood sooner (Epstein, 2010). As Sapolsky’s quote at the end of the last paragraph and the following

quote indicate, this is entirely possible: “A different world makes for a different worldview, which means a different brain” (Sapolsky, 2017, p. 153).

6. Activity: Make a list of things we were raised about what parents “should” and teenagers “should” do (O’Driscoll, 2021). Are any of these “should’s” getting in the way of our parenting goals (O’Driscoll, 2021)?
7. Questions? Reflections? Survey.

Week Four:

Horizontal versus Vertical Passing of Culture and How Much Do Adolescents Really Need Their Parents?

1. Highs and Lows
2. What life looked/looks like when culture was/is passed vertically
    a. For most of history, tradition, rites of passage, and culture, were passed vertically, from grandparents and parents, to children (Bly, 1996; Epstein, 2010; Kett, 2003; Liedloff, 1977; Neufeld, 2013; Pipher, 1994; Sarno, 2016; Schlegel & Barry III, 1991). Young people learned how to work, play, eat, live, dress, talk, and more, from their elders. Problems and antisocial behavior arise when this ends; when elder wisdom is rejected and when children and adolescents no longer want to be like their parents (Bly, 1996; Epstein, 2010; Neufeld, 2013; Pipher, 1994). When adolescents want to be like each other, there are no longer any healthy role models and the continuum is gone (Bly, 1996; Epstein, 2010; Liedloff, 1977; Neufeld, 2013; Pipher, 1994).
    b. When culture is passed vertically, young people learn from their parents from birth, model on their same-sex parents, and become productive members of their

family and community as soon as they are able, often by the age of four (Epstein, 2010; Kett, 2003; Liedloff, 1977; Schlegel & Barry III, 1991). In cultures where culture is passed vertically, there is not the struggle for individuation that exists in the West, as adolescents in most societies rely on families long after adolescence (Schlegel & Barry III, 1991). The Western break of adolescents from families is sudden and extreme (Schlegel & Barry III, 1991). The vertical passing of culture results in significantly less conflict, aggression, and violence and increased contentment, freewill, and productivity among adolescents, as well as close relationships between adolescents and their parents (Bly, 1996; Epstein, 2010; Liedloff, 1977).

3. When culture is passed horizontally
    a. When culture is passed horizontally, there is no longer a natural transition between childhood and adulthood (Kett, 2003). Instead of interacting mostly with adults, adolescents interact with each other, cutoff from adults, and are shielded and prevented from observing and participating in adult life, prevented from working, and from being productive (Epstein, 2010; Schlegel & Barry III, 1991). Families have too little influence (Neufeld, 2013; Schlegel & Barry III, 1991). Adolescents act poorly because their lives lack meaning (Epstein, 2010).
4. Group question: how much does your child need you right now? Has that changed since childhood? How? How much do you think your child will need you in the next five-years and what do you think that will look like?
5. Myth that adolescents do not need their parents

a. There is a myth in Western culture that adolescents do not need their parents, that adolescents need to and should separate from their parents, and that parents no longer matter (Epstein, 2010; Neufeld, 2013; Pfeifer, 2019; Pipher, 1994). This is not true (Epstein, 2010; Moretti & Peled, 2004; Morris et al., 2017; Neufeld, 2013; Pfeifer, 2019; Pipher, 1994). The reality is that adolescents are developing more relationships outside of their family, but these relationships can and should not replace their parents (Pfeifer, 2019). Adolescents are under huge pressure to abandon their families in order to be accepted by their peers, which leads to tension and problems (Pipher, 1994).
b. The cultural pressure to push parents away at this age creates a vulnerability to peer pressure and peer orientation, which increases risk taking behaviour that looks like unsafe sex, substance use, crime, violence, poor health choices, and eating disorders (Neufeld, 2013; Sapolsky, 2017; Swerhone, 2020). Adolescents need to be securely attached to their parents (Moretti & Peled, 2004). Neufeld in *Hold onto Your Kids* takes his argument one step further and says adolescents not only need to be attached to their parents, they can only be attached to their parents (Moretti & Peled, 2004; Neufeld, 2013). Neufeld demonstrates that people can only have one compass point, one attachment orientation, and that it needs to be the parents (Neufeld, 2013).
c. Neufeld also points out that as people mature, they will resist all coercion, no matter the source (Neufeld, 2013). If adolescents are listening to peers and not parents, they are not maturing, and their orientation to their peers is problematic (Neufeld, 2013). The best protection an adolescent can have from everything

detrimental to their physical, mental, and spiritual health, is a strong attachment with an adult (Neufeld, 2013).

d. Adolescents may not communicate it often, but what their parents think of them matters (Swerhone, 2020). A healthy transition through adolescence is marked by emotional connectedness and a secure attachment with parents (Moretti & Peled, 2004). While they may not need the same amount of closeness to their parents that they experienced earlier in life, and they may go between wanting their parents when they are stressed and pushing them away when they are not, adolescents still need to know their parents are supportive (Moretti & Peled, 2004; Pipher, 1994). All human beings need inter-dependence and close relationships throughout their lives (Epstein, 2010). People are hard-wired for connection, relationship, and community (Epstein, 2010; Neufeld, 2013; Siegel, 2013). Shutting parents and adults out is not healthy or natural. (Siegel, 2013). Adolescents experience more positive affect when they are with their parents than when they are alone, parents support emotional self-regulation, and they help adolescents achieve self-understanding (DeSocio, 2005; Morris et al., 2017). Adolescents who feel seen and understood move into adulthood with more confidence, less conflict, and more ability to explore and individuate (Moretti & Peled, 2004).

e. The world may have changed, but the needs of adolescents have not (Moretti & Peled, 2004). Despite what messages exist in the media, parents play a key role in their adolescents’ development (Moretti & Peled, 2004). Adolescents need safety, a loving family, respect, and encouragement (Pipher, 1994). Therefore, while the

role of parenting changes as their children move into adolescence, adults still need to be available to support and advise their adolescents (Savin-Williams, 1987). As children grow into adolescents and the roles of parenting change, adults need to trust wisdom of their adolescents (Savin-Williams, 1987).

6. Make a list of non-negotiable family rules (O’Driscoll, 2021).
7. Questions? Reflections? Survey.

Week Five:

Myths and Research on Parenting Styles

1. Highs and Lows
2. Do quiz on parenting styles: https://psychcentral.com/quizzes/parenting-style-quiz#1 (PsychCentral, 2021)
3. Detrimental Parenting Styles
    a. The idea that parents are meant to and should control and punish their adolescents if they “step out of line” is wide-spread and long-standing in Western culture (Aldort, 2005; Coloroso, 2010; Epstein, 2010; Kohn, 2005, 2006; Liedloff, 1977). Why do parents punish and control? First, many parents parent the way they were raised, and since many parents were raised in a controlling and punishing environment, many parent their children and adolescents the same way (Aldort, 2005; Kohn, 2005; Liedloff, 1977). People learn rules and expressions in their families of origin, and the less awareness parents have about how they were parented and how they parent, the more likely they are to parent in the ways they were parented (Aldort, 2005; Kohn, 2005; Miller, 2008).

b. A second reason parents use punishment and control as a parenting method is because it is easy. It is faster than respect and relationship and it is very effective in the short-term (Kohn, 2005, 2006). Unfortunately, punishment and control are very damaging and detrimental over the long-term (Kohn, 2005).

c. A third reason many parents use punishment and control with their adolescents is because Western culture promotes it (Aldort, 2005; Coloroso, 2010; Epstein, 2010; Kohn, 2005, 2006; Liedloff, 1977). Western culture is not respectful of children or adolescents (Epstein, 2010; Kohn, 2005; Qu et al., 2020). New parents are told babies will be spoiled if they pick them up; parents are told not to indulge their children; neighbours, friends, movies, newspapers, and books praise control and pass negative judgement if parents let their adolescents make too many decisions too soon (Epstein, 2010; Kohn, 2005). The idea in Western culture that spoiling children and adolescents is bad leads to parents being less supportive than our adolescents need (Kohn, 2005).

d. A fourth reason parents control their adolescents is out of fear. Parents want to keep their children safe and as adolescents move out into the world and go out with friends, get tattoos, learn to drive, go travelling, parents are scared (Wexler, 2006). Parents have an internal world that is set, their frontal cortexes are developed (see more in myth five below) and now their adolescents are changing and challenging their parents’ internal worlds (Wexler, 2006).

e. Control: Until children reach adolescence, parents have an illusion of control (Kohn, 2005; Price, 2017). Babies and children may not like what parents do, but parents can pick babies and children up and lock them in (Price, 2017). Parents

lose this ability when children become adolescents (Price, 2017). When people feel controlled using means such as coercion, rewards, punishments, and conditional love, adolescents develop an unstable sense of self and identity, they feel the need to please, they look externally for how to act and feel, and they have issues with food, morality, interests, and skills, to name only a few (Epstein, 2010; Kohn, 2005). When parents control, there will be a greater chance of resistance and control is also associated with difficulties in emotion regulation in adolescents (Kohn, 2005; Morris et al., 2017). Controlling parents have more negative outcomes across ALL cultures in many different countries (Kohn, 2005).

f. **Praise, Criticism, and Punishment:** Praise, like punishment, is detrimental. Research has proven that punishment and rewards (like money, grades, verbal praise) have negative effects (Kindlon & Thompson, 2000; Kohn, 2005; Price, 2017). This is why: praise brings a person’s attention away from the activity the person is focused on, and onto person giving praise (Kohn, 2005). Praise changes the aim, goal, and direction of a person (Kohn, 2005). When adolescents are praised, criticized or punished, they feel watched, judged, and evaluated (Miller, 2008; Price, 2017). Research demonstrates that when people are praised in one activity, they struggle with the next activity (Kohn, 2005). Intrinsic motivation goes down because the goal is now to receive more praise which means the individual will also take less risks because they do not want to risk losing praise (Kohn, 2005). As an alternative to praise, one way parents can acknowledge a generous act is by asking adolescents to notice the effect of their generosity on the other person (Kohn, 2005).

g. While some parents know punishment may not be ideal, many parents use it anyways, often when parents are tired or stressed (Aldort, 2005; Kindlon & Thompson, 2000; Kohn, 2006; Pipher, 1994). It is easy and it is effective in the short-term (Kohn, 2005). This is why it is detrimental: punishment works solely to achieve temporary compliance (Kohn, 2006). It does have the effect of changing immediate behaviour, but it does not change the values or motives of a person, and over the long-term it usually makes actions worse, preventing the development of ethics (Kohn, 2006). Punishment and rewards lead to acting for external reasons, acting only for reward; it is not intrinsic (Kohn, 2006). Punishment also models how to use power in harmful ways instead of cooperation and reasoning, which damages the caring alliance between adolescent and parent (Kohn, 2006). Punishment makes people mad, loses effectiveness over time, distracts from the important issue because it leads to resentment and feelings of unfairness, not discussion about what happened and how things can be done differently and lastly, punishment creates a self-centered person because consequences are all about the adolescent, creating a preoccupation with self-interest (Aldort, 2005; Coloroso, 2010; Kohn, 2006).

h. **Conditional Love:** Conditional love is love met only under certain conditions, for example when we show love only after our adolescents have done their chores or come home on time or been respectful or gotten a good report card (Kohn, 2005). Adolescents who feel loved conditionally by their parents have a higher chance of feeling rejected and are more likely to dislike and resent their parents (Kindlon & Thompson, 2000; Kohn, 2005; Pipher, 1994). Adolescents also like themselves

less when they need to meet certain conditions for parent approval (Kohn, 2005). To be clear, giving praise when happy with words and actions and giving nothing when not happy with words and actions is conditional love (Kohn, 2005). It is expressing excitement and love under certain conditions (Kohn, 2005).

i. **Stereotyping & Assuming:** It may be obvious, but all adolescents are not alike. Therefore, it is incredibly important not to lump all adolescents into one category, especially given all the negative stereotypes and negative myths about adolescence (Pontz, 2018). Usually when stereotypes are made, they are used negatively (Pontz, 2018).

j. Additionally, when an adolescent makes a mistake repeatedly, it is important not to assume the cause is the same reason as previous mistakes (Cehak, 2021). For example, if an adolescent stays up too late on their cell phone one night it could be because they were not tired. The next night it could be because their friend was struggling (Cehak, 2021). When parents make assumptions, they are often negative and thus, it is important to notice when negative stereotypes are leading to assumptions that may not be accurate and may cause harm (Cehak, 2021; Pipher, 1994; Pontz, 2018; Price, 2017).

k. No parents are perfect or get it right all the time (Aldort, 2005; Kohn, 2005). It is also not reasonable to expect zero conflict between parents and adolescents (Moretti & Peled, 2004). Conflict between adolescents and parents does not mean the relationship is necessarily troubled, but it is useful to know that conflict arises when parent and adolescent goals differ, and that negotiating and consultation between adolescents and parents increase as adolescent competence develops

(Cehak, 2021; Moretti & Peled, 2004; Schlegel & Barry III, 1991). During the transition into and through adolescence, it is essential that parents are sensitive and attuned to their adolescents, even through disagreement and conflict, in order for adolescents to remain secure and attached in their relationships with their parents (Moretti & Peled, 2004; Neufeld, 2013).

4. Fill in the Social Identity Wheel: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1w7yo6ljyS0pnvEO-BOrE7Aohmaa9n5Jf/view (University of Michigan, n.d.). Perhaps parents could do this with their adolescent this week?
5. Healthy Parenting Styles
    a. In the West, families with a high socioeconomic status tend to be authoritative or permissive, while families with a low socioeconomic status tend to be authoritarian (Sapolsky, 2017). As socioeconomic status decreases, corporeal punishment increases (Kohn, 2005). This section will look at authoritative parenting, attachment, respect and consideration, autonomy and responsibility, unconditional love, availability, emotional attunement, empathy, and calm, allowing failure, and the need for parents to reflect on their parenting.
    b. Authoritative Parenting: Significant amounts of research demonstrate that authoritative parenting, which includes limit setting, warmth, consistency, and honouring of autonomy is the most effective way of parenting (Epstein, 2010; Moretti & Peled, 2004; O’Driscoll, 2021; Siegel, 2013; Steinberg, 2001). In authoritative homes, privilege comes with responsibility (Epstein, 2010; O’Driscoll, 2021). Adolescents raised in authoritative homes experience less anxiety and depression, they achieve better grades in school, they have higher

self-esteem, more resilience and reliance, they are safer drivers, they experience and participate in less violence, bullying, drug use, and overall engage in less risk-taking behaviour (O’Driscoll, 2021; Pontz, 2018; Siegel, 2013; Steinberg, 2001).

c. One issue that parents face in authoritative parenting is that behaviours of those outside the family including friends, community, media, etcetera, can undermine or strengthen the impact parents have on adolescents (Steinberg, 2001). Unfortunately, this leads back to the cultural issues families in the West face with media, industry and peers dominating the passing of culture (Steinberg, 2001). In the meantime, adolescents having friends whose parents are also authoritative helps (Steinberg, 2001).

d. Attachment: People are hardwired for connection and adolescents need a close relationship with their parent(s) (Bandura & Walters, 1959; Epstein, 2010; Moretti & Peled, 2004; Morris et al., 2017; Neufeld, 2013; Schlegel & Barry III, 1991; Sealy, 2017; Siegel, 2013; Steinberg, 2001). Adolescents securely attached to their parents matter across all ethnicities, socioeconomic statuses, household compositions, and countries (Steinberg, 2001). No studies indicate otherwise (Steinberg, 2001). A secure attachment looks like offering support while also allowing separation and it means that adolescents are seen, safe, soothed, and secure (Mate, 1999; Siegel, 2013). Adolescents who are securely attached have better mental health and are more independent, assertive, and responsive to others (Kohn, 2005; Steinberg, 2001). Parents want their adolescents to go to them when they are confused, lonely, and in trouble, and in order to make this happen, adults needs to create safety and fondness (Aldort, 2005; Bandura & Walters, 1959;

Kohn, 2006). If this connection gets broken or troubled, if an adolescent stiffens when their parent walks into the room, parents need to get the relationship back at any cost (Kohn, 2006; Neufeld, 2013; Pipher, 1994; Price, 2017). Adolescents need a north star and they need their north star to be their parents (Neufeld, 2013; Pipher, 1994). In the words of Gordon Neufeld, adolescents need “connection before direction” (Neufeld, 2013, p. 218).

e. **Respect and Consideration:** Ample research indicates that adolescents do better when their parents are respectful (Kohn, 2005; Pollack, 1998; Price, 2017). What does this mean? It means being honest, gentle, and kind; it means explaining decisions when using power over; it means listening and modeling respect; it means letting adolescents voice their concerns with equal consideration as parent concerns; it means considering the best possible intentions behind adolescents’ poor actions, letting go of rigidity, and reconsidering requests when parents have already said no; it means working with instead of doing to; it means allyship and advocacy when adolescents are not being heard (Epstein, 2010; Kohn, 2005; Mate, 1999; O’Driscoll, 2021; Price, 2017; Siegel, 2013). It also means being open to teaching less and learning more, taking seriously the experiences, rights and needs of adolescents, and allowing them to have a say in what happens to them (Aldort, 2005; Kohn, 2006). As Kohn points out, adolescents will be respectful to and of adults when adults are respectful to and of them (Kohn, 2006). When people are held up to care, trust, kindness, fairness, and responsibility, people act that way (Kohn, 2006).

f. **Autonomy and Responsibility:** When adolescents are given autonomy and responsibility, they rise up and are capable (Epstein, 2010). This is not freedom without responsibility, which is what adolescents have now and is problematic (Epstein, 2010). What adolescents need is authority and autonomy, responsibility with freedom (Epstein, 2010). While many laws restrict adolescents, parents can grant responsibility in their own homes with regards to privacy, mental health, medical, education, and entertainment decisions (Epstein, 2010). Epstein goes as far as to argue that he believes age based laws should be replaced with competency based laws, which means some adolescents would likely gain rights and some adults would likely lose rights (Epstein, 2010). Adolescents who have a voice in family decisions are more likely to discuss beliefs with parents, rely on them, and are less likely to get into trouble (Kohn, 2006). Additionally, people make good decisions through practice and adolescents who make more decisions have higher moral reasoning capabilities and are more outgoing, active, and spontaneous (Epstein, 2010; Kohn, 2006; Siegel, 2013).

g. Unconditional Love: Children need unconditional love and adolescents are no different (Aldort, 2005; Kohn, 2005; Price, 2017). They may not show it, but adolescents need unconditional love that is not contingent on performance (Aldort, 2005; Kohn, 2005; Price, 2017). They need a safe and warm space where they are loved unconditionally as adolescents who experience this kind of love are less defensive and feel safer (Kohn, 2005).

h. Availability: Adolescents need our time (Aldort, 2005; Bly, 1996; Mate, 1999; Moretti & Peled, 2004; Morris et al., 2017; Neufeld, 2013; O’Driscoll, 2021;

Siegel, 2013). The way they need it may look different, but they need it nonetheless (Aldort, 2005; Morris et al., 2017; O’Driscoll, 2021; Siegel, 2013). Raising adolescents requires time, patience, and attention; one-on-one time to be specific (O’Driscoll, 2021). Spending time with adolescents also shows them they are important (Aldort, 2005). Research demonstrates that when the amount of time parents have for their adolescents goes down, parental control and harsh and punitive parenting increases (O’Driscoll, 2021). Another study shows that when adolescents face a negative situation, 50% still go to their parents for support, demonstrating that adolescents still reach out for and need emotional support from their parents (Morris et al., 2017). Siegel notes that the best conditions for adolescent growth is one with parental presence and when Lindsay Sealy, a Vancouver educator, asks adolescents what they need most from their parents, 100% of their answers are “time” (Sealy, 2017; Siegel, 2013).

i. **Emotional Attunement, Empathy, and Calm:** All literature found on emotional attunement, empathy, and calm parenting indicates positive adolescent outcomes (Aldort, 2005; Kohn, 2005; Morris et al., 2017; Neufeld, 2013; O’Driscoll, 2021; Sealy, 2017; Siegel, 2013). Emotional support in adolescence is associated with better emotion regulation in study after study (Morris et al., 2017 p. 4). When adolescents’ emotional needs are met, they no longer need to be preoccupied with meeting their needs, and are now capable of meeting the needs of others (Kohn, 2006).

j. Allowing adolescents to feel all their emotions- not act on them, but feel them- is so important (Miller, 2008). Parents do not want adolescents to have to appear

happy or strong or suppress emotions for the sake of others (Miller, 2008). They need to feel safe enough to express themselves authentically without fear of being abandoned (Miller, 2008).

k. Quite often parental assumptions are wrong and when parents are wrong and assumptions are made, emotional attunement is off and adolescents no longer feel seen, heard, and connected (Kohn, 2006; O’Driscoll, 2021). As Kohn points out, “how we feel about our kids isn’t as important as how they experience those feelings and how they regard the way we treat them” (2005, p. 20).

l. It is essential to acknowledge positive intentions instead of failed impulses and actions (Neufeld, 2013; O’Driscoll, 2021).

m. Ideally, parents want to create an environment where they are available and adolescents can and want to ask for help, where adolescents enjoy spending time with their family (Bandura & Walters, 1959). Can you imagine what adolescence would look like if parents provided this?

n. Allowing Failure: Autonomy and authority do not exist without responsibility, and responsibility cannot occur without being allowed to fail (Epstein, 2010). The more adolescents are allowed to learn from their mistakes, the more they learn how differentiate good decisions from bad decisions (Price, 2017). When parents rescue less, talk less, control less, and remind less, the more adolescents can learn and grow (Epstein, 2010; O’Driscoll, 2021; Price, 2017).

o. Reflective Parenting: Parents reflecting on their parenting is an essential part of effective parenting (Aldort, 2005; Kohn, 2005; Miller, 2008; Morris et al., 2017; O’Driscoll, 2021; Price, 2017). When parents are unaware of how they were

raised and how they are raising their children and adolescents, there is the potential to carry harm from the past into present parenting (Miller, 2008). When parents are vulnerable, authentic, take responsibility and model emotional intelligence, not only is connection valued above control, but through modeling, parents are teaching their adolescents language for emotions, and to recognize, problem solve, comfort, and regulate their own emotions better (Aldort, 2005; Kohn, 2005; Morris et al., 2017; O’Driscoll, 2021).

6. Question for reflection: What two changes with regards to your parenting are you going to make in the next 24-hours (O’Driscoll, 2021)?
7. Questions? Reflections? Survey.

Week Six:

Adolescents’ Lack of Value and Respect in Western Culture and How to Reframe Adolescence

1. Highs and Lows
2. Brainstorm and write on white board all the stereotypical words we can think of to describe adolescents
3. Group question: what were you like as an adolescent? How did you feel perceived by others? What could you have used more of as an adolescent?
4. Myth that Adolescents are Incompetent
    a. The Western belief that adolescents are incompetent is demonstrated in the statistic that adolescents have two times the restrictions as compared to soldiers and prisoners, and 10 times the restrictions of adults (Epstein, 2010). It is seen in

the restrictions and laws Western culture places on adolescents regarding school, work, voting, and more (Epstein, 2010).

b. **Brainstorm all the ways we restrict our adolescents!**

c. This belief is not accurate (Epstein, 2010; Pfeifer, 2019; Siegel, 2015; Swerhone, 2020). Intelligence peaks at age 15 (Epstein, 2010). Memory peaks at age 13 and stays that way until at least the age of 40 (Epstein, 2010). During adolescence, adolescents gain executive organization, working memory, flexible rule use, frontal inhibitory regulation, social cognitive functioning, and mentalization tasks such as understanding another perspective (Conrod & Nikolaou, 2016; Sapolsky, 2017). Adolescents can adapt to new cultures and to change faster and easier than adults because of their brain plasticity, as their brains are still forming and being shaped by the environment, while adults brains are much less capable of adjusting to their environment (Wexler, 2006).

d. A focus that Western culture takes to highlight the incompetence of adolescents is their high-levels of risk taking (Epstein, 2010; Pfeifer, 2019; Siegel, 2013; Swerhone, 2020). Adolescents actually have equal competence with judgement as adults, they are simply willing to take more risks (Epstein, 2010; Price, 2017; Siegel, 2013; Wexler, 2006). Judging which risks to take and which to say no to takes practice; adolescents need to practice risk taking to improve their ability to discern the risks and benefits of making any particular decision (Swerhone, 2020). Competence comes with a willingness to fail, to be unskilled, ignorant, and embarrassed (Price, 2017). Additionally, risk-taking actions are beneficial for our world by challenging the status quo and coming up with creative ideas adults may

be too cautious to think of or enact (Epstein, 2010; Pfeifer, 2019; Siegel, 2013; Swerhone, 2020; Wexler, 2006). Parents like the comfort of routine and adolescents are creating a new world for themselves and challenging those routines (Siegel, 2013).

e. On the topic of adults and competence, many adults are not wholly competent, as demonstrated by rates of theft, obesity, addiction, rape, murder, drunk driving, wars, and any number of other decisions adults make that may be questionable (Schlegel & Barry III, 1991). Ability is a better predictor of competence than age (Epstein, 2010; Schlegel & Barry III, 1991). Adolescents are capable and have much to offer, but have no voice, little respect, and few rights (Epstein, 2007). They will only change if we do first (Price, 2017).

5. Myth that adolescent “storm and stress” is inevitable
    a. The idea exists in Western culture that adolescence is a time of immaturity; adolescents are delinquents, selfish, impulsive, destructive, self-destructive, impossible, and cannot be trusted (Epstein, 2010; Pfeifer, 2019; Sapolsky, 2017; Schlegel & Barry III, 1991; Siegel, 2015; Swerhone, 2020). Research proves this is not true!
    b. The circulating idea that adolescents drive parents crazy and make them wish they never had children, makes adolescents feel incompetent and less than (Pipher, 1994). Adolescents lower to the bar Western culture sets for them, but that when the bar is raised and adults believe in and respect adolescents, negative words and actions disappear (Epstein, 2010; Qu et al., 2020). The idea that people will do as little as possible, that this is “human nature,” is not accurate. Kohn says “it’s hard

to stop happy, satisfied people from trying to learn more about themselves and the world, or from trying to do a job of which they can feel proud” (Kohn, 2005, p. 90). If person is doing little in life, it is a sign that something is wrong (Kohn, 2005).

c. Adolescents have a need to be productive and independent, and adults do them a disservice when they do not allow this (Epstein, 2007). There are historical, multicultural, rehabilitative, military, young moms, and entrepreneurial examples that demonstrate adolescents are capable of handling responsibility, as much responsibility as adults (Epstein, 2010). Adults need to give them the chance (Epstein, 2010). Epstein even argues that education can be spread over lifetime (Epstein, 2010). If an adolescent wants to work instead of going to school, what is the problem (Epstein, 2010)? It is the role and responsibility of parents and adults to demonstrate trust and belief in the competence of adolescents (Epstein, 2010; Kohn, 2005; Neufeld, 2013; Siegel, 2013)

6. Group question: are any of the negative stereotypes we’ve discussed in this group impacting your parenting?
7. Reframing this period of time
    a. Contact Theory: Contact theory is the idea that if you bring together individuals or group of people who are opposed to each other, whether it is countries at war or parents fighting with adolescents and everything in between, it is possible to lessen the misunderstanding, hatred and otherwise ill-will towards each other (Sapolsky, 2017). When people hold an “us/them” dichotomy, people see “them” as inhuman (Sapolsky, 2017). When people spend time together, especially

structured in ways to build relationship, tension and prejudice are reduced, and increased understanding and empathy can be made, reducing the distance between “Us” and “Them” (Sapolsky, 2017). Especially if, during interactions and time spent together there is a shared goal, connection can be made (Sapolsky, 2017). Taking another’s perspective as well as emphasizing similarities and making the implicit explicit by recognizing and discussing unconscious biases’ can further reduce the “Us/Them” dichotomy and bring people closer together (Sapolsky, 2017). Contact Theory in the context of “storm and stress” and negative stereotypes about youth are meant to humanize and acknowledge adolescents, instead of seeing them as “other” or “them” (Sapolsky, 2017). Whether in therapy, in a parenting group, with friends or even in a journal, finding ways to spend time with, take the perspective of adolescents, and recognize the unconscious biases adults hold about adolescents would likely be beneficial for parents and their relationships with adolescents.

b. Wonderfulness Interviewing: Problems lead families to create single-storied views of their experience and problem stories lead family members to view each other negatively (Epston & Marsten, 2010). Over time, problems make people feel like they are entirely bad and leads to blame, guilt, and shame (Epston & Marsten, 2010). Negative, single storied representations of adolescents lead parents to feel disdain, so the idea in Wonderfulness Interviewing is to thicken the thin description of adolescents (Epston & Marsten, 2010).

c. This can be done in the therapy room with therapists conducting a Wonderfulness Interview with the parents, but it can also be expanded outside the room by

emailing, interviewing, calling or writing others who know the adolescent to share their wonderful stories about the adolescent, developing multi-storied wonderfulness qualities (Epston & Marsten, 2010). Especially given the cultural influence of negative stereotypes about adolescents, the problem can be externalized and the parent(s) and adolescent can face off against the problem together (Epston, 2016)! Once the problem has a name and has been externalized, the therapist, parent(s), and adolescent can look at how the problem impacts each of them, their relationship, their identity, and life in general (Epston, 2016). Through Wonderfulness Interviewing, parents re-member their adolescent- they put them back together as a whole person with wonderful qualities instead of a person who is deficit and less than (Epston & Marsten, 2010).

8. Group question: what do you think your adolescent could use more of? What do you think your relationship could use more of?
9. Questions? Reflections? Survey.