

How Do Jewish Parents of School-Age Children in Israel Experience Receiving Parental Advice?

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For the degree of PhD

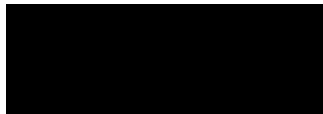
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I, Iris Berent, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

Signed:

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature of the author.

Word Count (exclusive of Appendices and References):

63,721

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Acknowledgments

Thanks are due first and foremost to my supervisors Prof. Katherine Twamley and Prof. Margaret O'Brien. Katherine's enthusiasm about this field of research, her kindness and precision were much appreciated as I struggled my way through eight years of research, while overcoming language difficulties. Margaret and Katherine's emotional support have helped me overcome moments of difficulties. I could not have wished for more dedicated advisors. Margaret generously took on the task of being my second supervisor, despite her very full schedule. Katherine and Margaret, I hope your efforts have paid off and you have not regretted your generosity. Both your patience and your thorough supervision have greatly improved this thesis.

Appreciation is also extended to Dr. Loren Erdreich. You are a wonderful scholar and a generous colleague. In addition, I am deeply grateful to the late Prof. Joseph Agassi for our deep discussions about the great philosophers who are relevant to my research. I would also like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to my patients, as well as the many parents and children who were at the forefront of my thoughts during the challenging process of conducting my research. The discussions I had with them played a pivotal role in enabling me to comprehensively evaluate the moral foundation of this thesis. I am also grateful to Michal Kirschner who stepped in to edit and proofread this thesis. Your invaluable input ensured that my thesis effectively conveyed its message. You acted as a catalyst for the final refinement of my thesis, making it more engaging and impactful. Needless to say, any errors therein are of my own making.

However, this thesis would not have come to pass without the generous participation of the 13 mothers and fathers who agreed to share their emotions and insights that fill these pages. Because of the need to ensure confidentiality I cannot thank them by name, but I send them my heartfelt thanks for inviting me into their homes and lives.

I am especially grateful to my supportive and loving family—my husband and our three children. I especially want to express my heartfelt appreciation of my husband Moshe for the unwavering support and dedication you've shown throughout my journey of completing this

thesis. Your role in discussing and listening to my dilemmas, as well as teaching, enlightening, and challenging me have been instrumental in my success. I couldn't have achieved this without you by my side. I am delighted to acknowledge the role that my amazing father played in supporting me. He always dreamt that at least one of his children would acquire the title of *Dr.* His ambition certainly had a significant impact on my career trajectory.

I would also like to extend my thanks to Rina Choen-Zuckerberg, who is the chairperson of the Israeli Council for Parents . She was especially helpful especially in the first stages of this thesis when I began to examine parental advice in Israel.

Thesis Abstract

This in-depth qualitative study casts a revealing light on the subjective experiences and perceptions of 13 middle-class educated Jewish Israeli parents, both mothers and fathers, with school-age children in the greater Tel Aviv area interviewed from 2015 to 2018, before the COVID pandemic and the current war in Israel following the attacks of October 7, 2023. Taking its lead from Bronfenbrenner's groundbreaking 1979 bio-ecological model, the research delves deeply into how social positioning and cultural influences shape parents' encounters with parental advice.

The richness of the data is derived from personal interviews with parents who have grappled with a variety of types of advice, either actively sought out or unsolicited. To ensure an understanding of the nuances involved, parents were categorised into three groups according to their attitudes towards parental advice: One group was labeled **Proactive in Seeking Parental Advice (Group A)**, that is, those parents actively seeking advice. Another group was labeled **Objecting to Receiving Parental Advice (Group B)**, which referred to those parents who resisted unsolicited advice. The third group was labeled **Ambivalent Towards Receiving Parental Advice (Group C)**, and referred to those parents expressing ambivalence towards advice.

What emerges from the thematic analysis of the interview data is a portrait of a society in which the cultural norms of intensive parenting are reinforced through an understanding of Jewish tradition, contemporary secular norms, and a socio-political climate of neoliberalism. Although Israel is a country in which parenthood is greatly revered, all parents voiced a response to the tenets of intensive parenting culture promoting risk management and evidence-based child-rearing practices. Yet, despite these societal pressures, the interviews reveal a shared experience of stress and a universal desire to retain some degree of autonomy in the face of advice. The majority of parents expressed hesitation, if not outright resistance, towards both professional and lay parental advice. Many parents shared that they view parenting as a deeply personal endeavor, with some going so far as to articulate that they had felt threatened by advice.

Thus, this study explores a unique cultural paradox: Israeli parents grappling with stress around parental advice within a society saturated with intensive parenting ideals and underpinned by values such as familism, religious values, autonomy, and individualism. These findings shed a light on the complex landscape of parental advice, allowing us to better understand, support, and empower parents as they navigate their unique parenting journeys.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Parental Advice in Israel

In Israel and other countries, parents are inundated with an almost endless stream of parental advice aimed at guiding individuals on how to become 'perfect' parents to raise the 'perfect' child (see, for example, Almog, 2004; Amit, 2006; Katzenelson & Gutman, 2021). This parental advice is dispensed through various institutional services, including health and social services, the educational system, psychological counselling services within the government's education department, the media, private counselling, and parenting books. Currently, over a hundred books offering parental advice in Hebrew, authored by psychologists, parenting guides, or mothers, line the shelves of Israeli bookstores. Some books provide advice on practical everyday issues like sleep, weaning, nutrition, and behavioral challenges, while others focus on building 'healthy relationships', and some address specific child psychopathologies such as ADHD and Autism.

Tomi Stukman, a journalist for a women's magazine, suggests that the ubiquitousness of parental advice is evident in the phenomenon of parental influencers, a trend that began around 2017. Women make up 90% of these influencers. Stukman points out that the societal expectations thrust upon parents by messages offering psychological advice are reflected in how these influencers write about their joyful moments, love, investment, and sacrifices for their children via platforms such as Tik Tok, Facebook, and Instagram (Stukman, 2023, February 9). In this article, Stukman poses the following question, "Are parental influencers, who offer free knowledge, the new media stars, making us worse mothers?" suggesting a backlash against parental advice at least in some quarters.

An additional example of the pervasiveness of parental advice in Israel is a current reality show called *The Great Parental Test*, which is based on an international docu-reality show. Relying on the idea that professionals are able to determine what is good parenting, self-proclaimed parenting experts rate the skills of parents on the show. The show presents eight different styles of parenting practices that parents have adopted, demonstrating the range of

approaches that parents can engage in, but also the failure of professionals to reach a consensus on what constitutes the best parenting practice. However, the show is not without its critics. Another journalist, who is also a parent, criticizes this show's demand to morally judge parents and finds it both unethical and unsettling (Salonim, 2023, May 3).

Indeed, many studies (e.g., Amit, 2006, Furedi, 2014) have found that parents have become increasingly paranoid and stressed about their parenting and child outcomes. Some Israeli psychologists argue that the sheer volume of advice disseminated across multiple platforms has led Israeli parents to feel confused and distrustful of their own intuition (Amit, 2006; Cohen, 2017; Oren & Katzav, 2021). On the other hand, the advice might be said to be a reaction to parents' anxieties and concerns, fulfilling a demand from parents who live in an increasingly individualized society in which everyday informal support for parents is lacking. The purpose of this socio-psychological study was to explore Jewish Israeli parents' subjective experiences with parental advice. Below I present my personal motivation for this study followed by the main approaches that have informed my own study as well as the gap in the literature regarding parents' experiences of parental advice.

My Professional and Personal Motivation for This Study

My motivation for this study arose during a period when, in my capacity as a psychologist and a representative of the Israeli Psychological Association, I was tasked with advocating for a national system of parental advising. This responsibility prompted some introspection, and I began to question whether such a system was truly in the best interests of parents, and just as importantly, beneficial for their children's well-being. This led me to embark on a sociocultural and psychological exploration, investigating the subjective experiences of parents receiving parental advice. This research, at the intersection of professional responsibility and personal curiosity, is intended to shed light on the intricate dynamics of parental advice within the unique Israeli context.

In 2015, when I first initiated this study to delve into the experiences of parents in receiving parental advice, I aimed to elucidate their needs for parental advice from their own unique perspectives. At that point, I found it challenging to articulate my own personal

criticisms —both as a mother and a therapist—regarding the prevailing culture of expert parental advice. I was a part of this culture and was concerned with optimising children's outcomes. In this culture, the exploration of parents' experiences in receiving expert parental advice was then primarily intended to discern how to reach parents most effectively so that they would participate in receiving suitable parental advice.

I recall a meeting that occurred in 2010 with a group of psychologists, of which I was the chairperson. This group, established to generate an appropriate professional statement for the Association of Parents in Israel, included two senior psychologists—Dr. Tamar Erez, a prominent figure in the Association for Young Children, and Dr. Miri Nahari, an educational and clinical psychologist. During our discussions, Miri probed into parents' feelings and needs, questioning what parents truly required for themselves. I found myself taken aback by this query. In seeking to understand what she meant by “for themselves”, I realized that my initial thoughts were rooted in the belief that parents would naturally feel fulfilled when we, as professionals, helped them attain the best outcomes for their children, which was the traditional approach to parental advice.

Fortunately, my professional repertoire included narrative theory by White (2007), which provided me with a conceptual lens to approach Miri's challenge at a cultural level. This theory, which became the cornerstone of my psychological practice, is a systemic theory informed by critical and feminist sociological and anthropological perspectives on human behaviour. A crucial aspect of White's narrative theory is its critique of essentialism. White argues that people's experiences can be deconstructed based on their individual contexts, which involves breaking these experiences down into their social and cultural components. This deconstructionist approach to human experience has led me to consider that parents are not just a means to achieve specific child outcomes. Instead, they are individuals with deep and complex experiences of their own.

Today, I understand that my hesitancy was also informed by my personal experiences as a mother of three children within a context of an intensive expert advice culture. Two major experiences come to mind when considering the intersection of this thesis with my personal

life. Firstly, as both a parent and a psychologist, I have consistently expressed a desire to make parental decisions based on my intuition, rather than applying psychological theories to my children. That is to say, I wanted my parental instincts to guide me, not my professional expertise. Secondly, our experiences in Britain after the birth of our second child highlighted the contrast of parental assistance systems. On the one hand, I found the robust system of advice offered in Britain to be beneficial. For instance, a breastfeeding nurse counselor contacted me after I left the hospital to ensure that I was managing well. However, on the other hand, I felt an undercurrent of expectations regarding attachment parenting at the hospital, leading to a sense of judgement when I opted for different approaches. An example of this occurred immediately after giving birth, when I requested that my baby be placed in the nursery between feedings to allow me to get some rest. This request was met with surprise by the nursing staff, indicating a potential discrepancy between my personal parenting choices and the prevailing expectations of the system, in which it was assumed that the best practice was for mothers of newborn infants was to have their baby in very close proximity at all times, even though the baby was safe and cared for in the nursery while the mother rested.

The Debates in the Literature

This thesis examines how Israeli parents subjectively experience receiving parental advice and addresses a gap in the literature dominated by two main approaches to studying. Briefly (see the literature review in Chapter 2 below for an in-depth discussion), one approach consists of theories that seek to translate scientifically gained knowledge about child development into parental practices. I will use the term *interventionists* to refer to representatives of this approach, who are mainly psychologists and scholars specializing in child development. They argue that parents who seek and then apply professional parental advice feel empowered, knowledgeable, and skillful. Some of these experts even advocate *licensed parenting* (LaFOLLETTE, 2010; Lam & Kwong, 2012). Their underlying objective appears to be focused around improving the uptake of parental advice among parents. Therefore, the focus in this body of research is often on the *barriers* to parents' take-up of advice. For example, some common barriers uncovered in this research are that parents may prefer the support of family members over professionals (Cornwell et al., 2022), and others 'resist' implementing new

scientific knowledge (Myers et al., 2020). The latter intervention study demonstrated that even scientifically corroborated advice not to smoke around their children was not implemented. Similarly, in their article “Parental advice: Given perhaps, but not received” (Krugman & Cumsty-Fowler, 2015) demonstrated that advice pertaining to the prevention of sudden infant death syndrome was not heeded by parents. In other cases, parents may feel that the advice offered does not suit their child or their specific life circumstances. Parents from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, in particular, may feel burdened, stressed, and criticized by advisors (Lareau, 2000). This especially applies to working mothers (Lavee & Benjamin, 2015). This research shows that parents may not agree with the need or the kind of advice that professionals are advocating. However, it is worth noting that even among parents who choose to participate in receiving PA, they tend to do so selectively, preferring specific advisors and focusing on particular issues. Randomized controlled trials (RCTs) have also revealed that many parents who acknowledge the need for advice do not actively engage with it, while others participate but struggle to apply the guidance given. These parents are considered obstructions to the fulfilment of appropriate advice interventions. Their perspectives and needs are not explicitly explored, except in relation to how such perspectives can be overcome in the aim of giving advice. The interventionist literature does not consider that there may be parents for whom parental advice is not wanted and might also not be necessary.

The other main approach to studying parental advice is represented by scholars from interdisciplinary fields such as sociology, anthropology, and psychology who study parenting from the perspective of parenting culture (Cucchiara & Steinbugler, 2021; Faircloth & Murray, 2015; Lee et al., 2014; Scheidecker et al., 2021). These *parenting culture* researchers criticise “intensive parenting”, arguing that the ubiquitous nature of advice in contemporary society serves to promote anxiety and guilt in parents, particularly for parents belonging to low SESs who are often unable to realise intensive parenting norms (such as by having a full-time mother at home). They argue that the last 20 years have been marked by intense pressures on parents to ensure the optimal development of the child. Indeed, according to parenting culture scholars (e.g., Bard, 2019; Faircloth, 2010, 2021; Faircloth & Murray, 2015; Lee et al 2014), parents have been the focus of interventions to the degree that other impacts on children’s lives (such as

poverty or school) pale into insignificance. Meanwhile, parents—and in particular mothers—are exhorted upon to totally dedicate themselves to their children, such that no sacrifice is considered too small, but any risk to the child is too great. They argue that such pressures on parents result in a high level of anxiety regarding their function as parents and their children's outcomes. According to parenting culture scholars, the need for advice and the culture of intensive parenting in Western societies has shaped parenting as a set of learned skills, influenced by current societal norms and values. Parenting culture scholars do not consider parents for whom parental advice may be wanted and helpful. Moreover, the the *subjective* experience of parents receiving parental advice remains an understudied area, necessitating further research in different cultural contexts (Lee et al 2014; Rosen & Faircloth, 2020; Twamley, et al., 2017; Twamley et al. 2023). The present study of parental advice in the Israeli context aims to address this gap.

Thus, these two approaches in the literature take opposing views of parental advice. On the one hand, for the interventionists, parental advice is necessary and is obviously a 'good' thing. For parenting culture studies scholars, however, parental advice is not necessarily positive, in that it can create anxiety and confusion among parents, in particular, by putting undue pressure on mothers to conform to exacting and often unrealizable standards. In this study, I attempt to traverse a middle ground, starting from the perspectives and subjective experiences of the parents, and to gather in-depth and nuanced accounts that can pick apart when and for whom parental advice may be experienced in different ways.

Theoretical Foundations

The present research is prompted by several interwoven theoretical foundations that serve as a multidimensional basis for investigation. First and foremost, the philosophical perspective of subjectivism (Heidegger, M., 2000; Bronfenbrenner, 1979) serves as one important pillar for the study, emphasizing the significance of individual subjectivity and personal perception in exploring the realities of human experience. The research centers around the unique, parents' subjective experience in their encounters with parental advice.

Building upon this foundation of subjectivism, the study also incorporates the principles of phenomenology (Biceaga, 2010). This philosophy encouraged me to explore lived experiences, and therefore to probe into how parents perceive, interpret, and navigate their interactions with parental advice. An example of the phenomenological approach is Uri Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, which examines the subjects' subjective experience. Bronfenbrenner's (2005) ecological systems theory recognizes that child development is influenced by the various environmental systems in which the child is involved, namely, their family, school, and the broader cultural context. Although his approach may also be considered 'interventionist', in that a central interest is the development of the child, ecological systems theory highlights how the quality of parenting can be affected by factors such as stress, social support, and socioeconomic status. I contend therefore that parenting is deeply interconnected with broader psychological processes and environmental factors. In my current study, I wished to contribute to an understanding of the parents' experience from the point of view of the parents' well-being, and not merely from a child-centered point of view, which is the main focus of the interventionist scholars cited above. This viewpoint is instrumental in framing the study, providing a lens through which to view parenting not merely as an isolated act, but as a dynamic process interwoven in larger societal and environmental contexts. It brings into perspective the multitude of external influences that shape parenting practices and perceptions.

In the present study, I also draw on and critically engage with neoliberal theory to underscore the prevailing cultural ethos of self-efficacy, independence, and self-responsibility, and to investigate its influence on parenting norms in general (e.g., Faircloth et al. (2013), Lavee (2018), and Schmidt et al. (2022)). In the last four decades, the Israeli economy and political ideology has been significantly affected by neoliberalism . As noted by Krampf (2018, p. 227)...“In the mid-1980's, the Israeli economy underwent a dramatic debt crisis and inflation, the response to which triggered a profound change in the country's economic regime. Israel's *neoliberal turn*, as it became known, led the government to abandon its policy of direct intervention in favor of deregulation, liberalization and privatization.” This meant that many publicly funded services for parents were ultimately privatized. Thus, as noted by Lavee (2018,

p. 93), “the neo-liberal ideology permeates the maternal discourse, and creates neo-liberal motherhood, in which hegemonic definitions of good motherhood intersect with the neo-liberal call to take personal responsibility and shape their perceptions of motherhood, as well as their decision-making processes.”

From a critical perspective, Schmidt et al. (2023) suggest that since the turn of the 21st century, educated, industrialized, rich, and democratic Western societies have been characterized by an increasing dedication to neoliberalism. Accordingly, the ideal citizen is constructed as an active, self-responsible, and self-optimizing subject, and worker. Corresponding with these neoliberal demands, mothering is framed by Schmidt et al. (2023) as a highly individualized performance. Though the extent of policy support for working mothers varies across countries, mothers are seen as individually responsible for their choices and the consequences of those choices. Despite increasing heterogeneity and incongruence in normative expectations towards mothers, the tensions resulting from intensified neoliberal demands have not been resolved on a societal level by governments. In a neoliberal context that is saturated with intensive parenting ideology, the social expectation of “good parenting” continues to be directed towards the parents themselves, especially mothers, and reinforces patriarchal structures of power and gender inequality in Western societies (Schmidt et al., 2023; Faircloth, 2014). Faircloth cites Wolf (2011), who links public interest in motherhood in the US to a broader argument around risk-consciousness and the emergence of a ‘neo-liberal’ culture. In this culture, dangers are defined as risks, and individuals bear increasing responsibility for managing these risks. Wolf (2011) uses the term *total motherhood* to describe the experience of modern mothers, who are expected to become experts in all aspects of child-rearing – ensuring that mealtimes, stories, and play are not only safe but also optimal for infant development. Wolf (2011) emphasizes the pressure on mothers to prioritize their children's needs, no matter the personal cost. This approach frames good mothering as a practice aimed at minimizing even the slightest or most poorly understood risks to their children's well-being, regardless of the potential cost to the mother. This effectively erases the distinction between children's needs and enhancements to their physical, intellectual, and emotional development. Mothers are held accountable for issues well beyond their control and are repeatedly

instructed to eliminate even minute, ineradicable potential threats to their children's well-being. (Wolf, 2011).

Specifically, the present study aims to unravel how neoliberal political and economic issues shape societal ideals of 'intensive mothering' and to assess their impact on parents across various socioeconomic strata. Special attention is paid to the distinct cultural nuances of parenting in Israel; that is, the interplay of religiosity, the prevailing advice culture, and socioeconomic class on parental behavior is examined through this theoretical prism. In addition, the principles of social constructivism infuse this research, spotlighting the role of socially constructed norms and standards, such as the paradigm of 'good mothering', in molding parental behavior and receptivity to advice. Collectively, these theoretical perspectives furnish a rich and multifaceted scaffold for interpreting the intricate dynamics of parenting and parental advice within the Israeli milieu. The synergy of these theories affords a comprehensive and nuanced understanding, illuminating the multifarious practices of parenting.

Another important concept related to neoliberalism is that of individualism. Western individualism can be defined as a social and cultural orientation that prioritizes the rights, interests, and autonomy of the individual over those of the group or society. It emphasizes personal freedom, self-expression, and the pursuit of individual goals and aspirations (Schwartz (2014). However, Smart (2007) critiqued the notion that the West is purely individualistic. She challenges the simplistic portrayal of Western societies as entirely individualistic and argues for a more nuanced understanding of social relations and identities. Similarly, Smart's critique is grounded in her feminist perspective, which emphasizes the interconnectedness of individuals and the significance of social relationships, particularly within the family and other intimate spheres. She contends that while individualism is indeed a dominant ideology in Western societies, it coexists with and is influenced by various forms of collectivism, communal values, and interdependence. Jamieson (1999) explores the concept of "connected lives," which challenges the notion of radical individualism by highlighting the ways in which people's lives are interconnected through relationships, networks, and social institutions. She emphasizes the significance of family ties, friendships, and other forms of social connection in shaping individuals' identities and experiences. This critique of Western societies as purely

individualistic (Jamieson, 1999; Smart, 2007) is also directly relevant to Israeli society as demonstrated in the section on Israel below.

Since the present study was inspired by Bronfenbrenner (1979), the following section presents the various components of his theory. Throughout this thesis, I will demonstrate the ways in which the theory was useful to me in understanding parenting and parental advice in Israel. As noted above, although Bronfenbrenner's main focus was on the child, I focused on the parents' subjective experience and well-being.

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory

Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory offers a comprehensive framework that allows for the exploration of how multiple layers of environmental contexts influence parents' experiences with receiving parental advice.

Microsystem. By examining the immediate environments in which parents interact—such as family, friends, and local parenting groups—it generates research questions and delves into how close relationships and daily interactions affect how parents perceive and utilize parental advice.

Mesosystem. Investigating how different microsystems, such as home and work environments, intersect in the context of receiving parental advice, and have generated research questions about how these interactions shape parents' attitudes towards advice. For instance, a supportive workplace might enhance a parent's ability to apply certain advice, while unsolicited advice might lead to objections.

Exosystem. The influence of indirect environments, like community services, media, and parental workplaces, can be significant. This layer allows the exploration of how policies, societal norms, and media representations in Israel impact parents' reception of advice.

Macrosystem. Cultural values, societal norms, and national policies specific to Israel profoundly influence parenting practices and expectations. Bronfenbrenner's theory enables an exploration of how these broader societal factors shape parents' openness to and trust in parental advice.

Chronosystem. Considering the dimension of time—such as historical changes and life transitions—allows study of how evolving societal norms and personal circumstances over time impact parents' experiences and attitudes toward advice.

Bronfenbrenner conceptualizes human beings as active participants in their development. This perspective is essential for my research as it underscores the idea that parents are not passive recipients of advice. Instead, they actively interpret, negotiate, and apply the advice they receive based on their personal beliefs, experiences, and contexts. Bronfenbrenner also suggests that to understand the development of a human being, it is not the objective reality that matters, but rather how people subjectively perceive and experience that reality. This aligns perfectly with my focus on parents' subjective experiences of receiving parental advice. By emphasizing subjective perception, Bronfenbrenner's theory supports an exploration of how individual parents understand, internalize, and react to the advice they receive, which is crucial for capturing the nuanced and personal nature of these experiences.

Bronfenbrenner's theory is especially relevant in the context of Israel, where diverse cultural, religious, and social dynamics play a crucial role in parenting practices. The theory's emphasis on contextual factors allows for a nuanced understanding of how Israeli parents experience and interpret parental advice, as well as how the local cultural and political context shapes parents' experiences.

The inclusion of the chronosystem highlights the importance of understanding how parents' experiences and attitudes towards advice change over time. This is particularly relevant in a dynamic and rapidly changing society like Israel, where historical events, economic changes, and shifting cultural norms may significantly impact parenting practices. For example, the notion of the chronosystem allows a consideration of how the influx of digital communication and social media have influenced the type and frequency of parental advice received by Israeli parents today. Moreover, transitions in the child's life, such as starting school or entering adolescence may affect parents' openness to advice and their perceptions of its usefulness.

In sum, Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory is crucial for my research as it provides a comprehensive, multilayered, and culturally sensitive framework for understanding the diverse and complex experiences of Israeli parents in receiving parental advice. This theoretical approach allows me to capture the full spectrum of environmental influences and their interactions, offering valuable insights into how parental advice is perceived, interpreted, and implemented within various contexts. Moreover, Bronfenbrenner's emphasis on individuals as active participants and the significance of subjective perception aligns seamlessly with my focus on understanding parents' subjective experiences, making it an ideal foundation for my study.

The Present Study

This study was conducted in Tel-Aviv, which is the largest metropolitan area in Israel. As the Israeli city most receptive to influences by Anglo-American countries, Tel-Aviv serves as the best representation of the transition that has occurred in Israeli society towards an Anglo-American lifestyle. According to the Israel Central Bureau of Statistics, metropolitan Tel Aviv has a population of 3,918,800 people. Notably, 95% of couples in Israel are married (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2020). Tel-Aviv, the financial hub of Israel, employs over a third of all the country's workers in business and finance. In recent years, Israel's welfare state has undergone a trend of spending cuts and a devolution of welfare provisions, transitioning from a national level to local entities, and from state-run operations to both non-profit and for-profit private providers. This shift towards privatization has resulted in the outsourcing of services across a variety of sectors. The reduction in state funding for human services due to budget cuts has led municipal authorities to assume a more significant role in different aspects of social provision. Tel-Aviv is at the forefront of these developments. The city's funding and administration of education, health, and human services is to a degree that surpasses any other major city in Israel (Ben-Arieh et al., 2007).

The primary objective of this study was to investigate the subjective experiences of Jewish Israeli parents in receiving parental advice (PA) and identify any commonalities among their diverse experiences. That is, the study sought to examine why some parents seek and

appreciate external advice while others may be less inclined to receive or rely on such advice. I recruited a sample of 13 parents (seven mothers and six fathers) to explore the research questions. I asked parents to tell me about their experiences in receiving parental advice for their children. I specifically selected parents who had at least one child aged 11 to 14 years, since I assumed that at this stage, parents had already had some experience receiving parental advice. In addition, my experience as a therapist suggests that this is a time—as their children enter adolescence—when parents tend to seek and receive parental advice. In my interviews of the parents, I asked them to describe what happened before and following receiving advice to allow me to learn their motivation and perceptions, why, where, and when they approached or decided not to approach professionals or non-professionals, such as family members, for advice. I also strove to learn the impact of the advice received or rejected on their parenting practices. In addition, in order to obtain information on whether the interviewees engaged in receiving advice in domains other than child rearing, I asked the parents to describe to what extent they generally tried to receive advice in areas in their lives. In so doing, I wished to compare the motivations to try to better understand what shaped parents' conceptions of parental advice. I also asked about the parents' experiences in different contexts and at different times in the past and in the present. In addition, I asked them about their intentions about whether or not to seek parental advice in the future. Finally, assuming that my profession as a psychologist might influence parents' responses to either emphasise their objection to or their enthusiasm about receiving parental advice, I made a special effort to allow the interviewees to express these feelings towards my profession. Moreover, I used my own feelings, as well as my experience as a psychologist, to guide me in these interviews. Mainly, it enabled me to be empathetic and attend to the implied ideas, meanings, and multilayered experiences, rather than merely attend to their explicit utterances.

This qualitative study is explorative in nature. In addition, the sample is a small, purposive self-selected sample. I assume that parents who agreed to participate might have had a special interest and motivation with regard to this topic. It is worth noting that it was very easy to find parents for this study. The parents' willingness to participate might itself be

indicative of the urge parents have to speak about issues pertaining to their parenting and their experiences in seeking and receiving parental advice.

Why Should We Study Parents' Subjective Experiences?

Exploring the subjective experiences of parents who receive parenting advice is of considerable significance for several reasons. Firstly, understanding parents' emotional reactions to both sought and unsought advice can provide deep insights into the nature of and what shapes parenting and parents' views of parenthood. A study of these subjective experiences could provide valuable insights into how guidance is received and emotionally processed, thus allowing support services to better align with parental needs and to assure that parents are not unduly distressed. Secondly, examining the influence of cultural, socio-economic, and individual differences on parents' reactions to advice offers a more nuanced understanding of diverse parenting experiences and requirements. Finally, investigating parents' subjective experiences could ultimately help promote parents' self-awareness and reflection, empowering them to discern between valuable and less helpful advice. This, in turn, could foster personal growth and learning within their parental roles. It is this latter area of literature to which this thesis will contribute. Specifically, until today, researchers who focused on parents' subjective experience have done this either from a perspective that assumes that parents need to receive professional advice in order to navigate their parenting practices (e.g., Borenstein, 2019), or from a critical viewpoint that assumes that today's parents are socially channeled to seek advice (e.g., Faircloth, 2014). The perspective that is currently lacking in the research investigating parents' subjective experience is one that assumes that some parents might indeed need parental advice during a crisis, while they can often manage on their own without professional guidance. There is a need for a study that integrates internal and external influences on parents' subjective experience. The current study attempts to do this.

The Case of Israel

Israel constitutes an interesting case study to examine parents' experiences in receiving parental advice. Jewish Israeli parents are of particular interest due to the unique societal backdrop against which they raise their children. On the one hand, contemporary Israeli society

is shaped by Western neoliberal norms which advocate middle-class parenting practices, placing a high emphasis on investing significantly in children's growth and development (Golden et al., 2018) .

With regard to the case of Israel, Lavee (2018) suggests that a discursive coalition based on neoliberal ideas and intensive parenting shapes low-income mothers' labor market participation. Under neoliberalism, mothers' responsibility to care for their children is tied with the children's future social inclusion – that is, to prepare their children for productive citizenship. Thus, in the Israeli context, where maternal rights and legitimacy have been traditionally embedded in women's reproductive role, the basis for legitimacy and good moral motherhood now intersects with intensive mothering and neoliberalism. The contemporary meaning of intensive mothering—that is, total devotion to one's children—is directed at their social inclusion and cultivation to ensure their future inclusion in a neoliberal society.

On the other hand, Israeli society maintains strong traditional and religious roots, particularly concerning the importance of the family. The prevailing ethos places the family unit and collective needs above individual desires, an attitude that may sometimes contrast with the more individualistic leanings of Western norms. For example, Peres and Brosch (1991) show that cultural norms and commitments play a more significant role in determining birthrates within families than that of income. Sagy et al. (2001) found that Jewish and Palestinian-Arab high school students demonstrated more collectivist attitudes rather than individual ones.

Additionally, there is an embedded admiration for parenting in Israel, which is rooted in Biblical teachings. This sanctification is compounded by historical and ideological pressures. The horrific memory of the Holocaust has generated a societal emphasis on having more children. In addition, Zionist ideology promotes strengthening of the Jewish population through procreation and by promoting the immigration of Jews—who are defined as such by the Law of Return legislated by the Israeli Knesset— from all over the world.

These complex factors create an intense parenting experience in Israel. It is likely that the interplay of Western norms of individualism and traditional collectivist values forms a uniquely Israeli parenting dynamic. As such, studying parental advice in this context can offer

rich insights into how these diverse factors shape parental experiences. Such dynamics may well apply to other countries.

Israel is often perceived as a religious and non-Western country. However, the proportion of people who identify as non-religious is similar to that in the UK and exceeds that in the United States. In 2020, 48% of the Jewish population in Israel identified as very religious or religious, whereas 51.4% claimed they were very religious or not at all religious, (Israel Central Bureau of Statistics, 2021). However, when compared to the Eurobarometer figures, in the UK, 50% identified as Christians, 37% as atheists, with the remainder holding other religious beliefs (Office for National Statistics (UK), 2022). According to an aggregate of all 2021 Gallup polling data (Jones, 2021), approximately three-quarters of Americans identified with a specific religious faith. These comparisons underscore the relevance of this study to other Euro-American countries, which also include religious or traditional elements. However, it is worth noting that although the figures pertaining to religious identity are similar to those of Western countries, in Israel, Judaism is also a national and ethnic identity. This means that various Jewish practices—such as customs associated with Jewish holidays such as Passover and Rosh Hashana—are also shared by non-religious people. In addition, Judaism plays a significant role in various state institutions, such as the Chief Rabbinate, which determines divorce proceedings and child custody (Berent, 2015).

As a society that is both neoliberal and traditional and which has a long history of Western influences, Israel is an interesting case to study why some parents may experience parental advice positively and others more negatively. Are there several parenting cultures in Israel or, as in other Western countries, in which intensive parenting is the hegemonic standard, do Israeli parents mainly respond to the long tradition of intensive parenting advice? What characterises parents who seek parental advice in contrast to parents who do not seek such advice? Few studies have attempted to examine or answer these questions with regard to parents in Israel. The present study investigated how Israeli parents feel about and experience parental advice.

Chapter 3 below delves further into the development of intensive parenting culture in Israel as well as Israel's main socio-political characteristics.

Research Questions

My selection of research questions is driven by a desire to delve deeper into the intricacies of parental advice-seeking behavior and subjective experiences. As noted above, two key perspectives dominate the discourse around parental advice, namely, that of interventionists, who expect parents to derive positivity from obtaining parental advice, and that of parenting culture scholars who emphasise the pervasive influence of socio-cultural factors on parents' experiences and the perceived necessity for guidance.

The tension between the interventionists' perspective and that of the parenting culture scholars led me to focus on the individuals at the core of the debate—the parents themselves. It became crucial to gain a comprehensive understanding of how parents interpret and articulate their unique experiences in the context of seeking advice. Drawing upon these insights, I formulated research questions aimed at deconstructing these experiences into their constitutive elements. These elements are broadly recognized as influential in determining parental behavior, and include internal psychological factors, as well as external socio-cultural influences (e.g., Bronfenbrenner, 1979)

Therefore, the primary objective of my research questions is to provide a framework for parents to express their experiences, feelings, and thoughts, which are often overshadowed by theoretical debates. By prioritizing the lived realities of parents, I aim to enhance our understanding of the complexities associated with advice-seeking behaviors, and perhaps bridge the gap between theoretical expectation and practical experience.

Specifically, the objective of this study was to gain insights into the experience of Jewish parents in metropolitan Tel-Aviv with regard to receiving parental advice and the diverse factors that influence their experiences.

The following research questions guided the investigation:

1. How have Jewish parents in Israel experienced parental advice? Do their experiences vary? If so, why and in what ways?
2. How do these experiences compare to their experiences of advice in other realms (such as food or style)?
3. How do parents' spousal relationships contribute to their perception of receiving parental advice?
4. How do parents' socio-demographic background, including gender, education, social class, parental status, and level of religiosity, influence their distinct experiences of receiving parental advice?
5. To what extent do the predominant socio-political values in Israel shape parents' encounters with parental advice?

Summary of Introduction

The purpose of this study was to understand how Jewish Israeli parents experience receiving parental advice, a topic that has not been deeply explored within the Israeli context. Israel is a society with an inherent duality, retaining strong traditional family norms and structures while also adhering to neoliberal economic policies and Western ideologies, creating a unique context for studying parental advice that might also be relevant to other countries. Many professionals deliver parental advice in a way that makes parents feel guilty or inadequate, which can cause stress and potentially deter them from seeking advice in the future. The societal expectation for parents to apply scientific parenting advice, along with the perception that parents are responsible for their children's outcomes and that their actions have significant consequences for their children, may contribute to parental guilt and anxiety. There is an ongoing debate regarding the volume and quality of advice needed by parents. Israel, often perceived as a religious, non-Western country, has a significant proportion of the population identifying as non-religious, similar to rates in the UK and higher than in the US, making it a case study that may well be relevant to Euro-American countries. The main aim of this research was to explore the Israeli case to better understand why some parents seek and use parental advice while others resist it, and to discover if there are multiple parenting cultures within Israel or if parents are predominantly influenced by the culture of intensive

parenting advice. The limitations of the study include a small, selected sample and a potential bias towards parents interested in the topic of the study. Ultimately, the research intends to contribute to an understanding of the reception of parental advice among Jewish Israeli parents by comparing the findings of the study to existing literature, providing a thematic analysis, and discussing the implications of these results.

What to Expect in This Thesis

The remainder of this thesis seeks to investigate the complex experiences of Jewish Israeli parents in Tel-Aviv as they navigate what appears to be an intensive culture of parental advice. Rather than presenting a unified response to this phenomenon, my findings reveal a spectrum of attitudes, with some parents showing resistance to the advice given, others enthusiastically seeking it, and still others falling somewhere in between. A common thread that emerges from this diversity is a trend toward feelings and behaviors that are often associated with stress. Additionally, this investigation aims to explore the possibility that parents actively strive to preserve their autonomy in relation to seeking or avoiding parental advice. By analyzing this pattern and variations among parents, the research will attempt to shed light on underlying social characteristics and parental interactions within their specific context. The inquiry will focus particularly on how mothers and fathers might intentionally shape decisions about whether or not, when, to whom, where, and why to seek parental advice, within a framework influenced by broader societal structures and expectations. The support for these insights will likely come from an examination of pertinent literature and an analysis of the distinct characteristics of Israeli culture. The subsequent presentation of the research methodology, a detailed thematic analysis, and the discussion will strive to contextualize these findings within the broader field of knowledge. Ultimately, the goal of this thesis is to contribute to a nuanced understanding of how Jewish Israeli parents experience receiving parental advice, recognizing the complexity and individuality inherent in this process.

After the introduction in this chapter, Chapter 2 presents a review of the literature, outlining different conceptualizations and theoretical debates about parenting and parental

advice on which my thematic analysis draws. I also present some relevant findings from studies conducted in the United Kingdom, the United States, and Israel, as well as in other cultures influenced by intensive parenting culture. In Chapter 3, I describe and explain how Israel's socio-political characteristics, sanctifying parenting together with neoliberal and democratic values in a traditional society, are interwoven with Western ideas of parental advice.

Chapter 4 presents various aspects of the methodology employed in this study. I describe and explain the theoretical approach of phenomenological ontology, which guided me in conducting the interviews, collecting the data, and conducting my thematic analysis. I then present a profile of the participants, their social characteristics, as well as specific characteristics to demonstrate the differences and similarities between the interviewees. I then describe the interview conditions as well as a pilot interview. Upon reviewing the various approaches considered for the data analysis, I define and named the superordinate and subordinate themes, which then served to explain how I reached the decision to divide the interviewees into three groups in the Findings chapters below: Group A, labeled *Proactive in Seeking Parental Advice*; Group B, labeled *Objecting to Receiving Parental Advice*; and Group C, labeled *Ambivalent Towards Receiving Parental Advice*.

Chapters 5,6, and 7 present the findings for each of the three groups cited above. In each of these chapters, I present five different patterns or subcategories found in the data characterizing each of the three groups of parents: (a) Parents' attitude to receiving PA; (b) seeking parental advice compared to seeking advice in other domains; (c) parents' confidence in their parenting skills; (d) parental autonomy; and (e) how parents experience parenting. For pattern (a), I elaborate on parents' different attitudes and behavioural habits considering whether or not, how much, why, and whom parents approached, did not approach or were ambivalent with regard to whether they should seek advice. For pattern (b), I outline the differences between seeking parental advice and seeking advice in other domains. For pattern (c), I outline the differences between parents' parental self-efficacy and parental confidence. Pattern (d) deals with parents' notions of autonomy with regard to making decisions as parents. Pattern (e) focuses on parents' of notions of 'good parent' versus 'bad parent' in the context of the intensive culture of parental advice. I elaborate how parents in each group describe their

parenting. These differences between Groups A, B, and C, together with the individual differences described in Chapter 4, enabled me to find a common pattern across groups and individuals.

Chapter 8 is the Discussion, in which I elucidate the broader implications of my findings concerning Jewish Israeli parents' experiences in receiving parental advice. The data reveal that their experiences are reflective of the culture of intensive parenting, which, within the Israeli context, are interwoven with traditional parenting practices rooted in Jewish tradition. A salient commonality across two of the three groups in the sample, for both mothers and fathers, is a general reluctance or avoidance in seeking parental advice. I analyze these findings in connection with other cultural values to which Israeli individuals commonly adhere. The discussion focuses on identifiable signs of stress apparent across all groups, with the notable exception of those characterized as ambivalent. This particular group exhibits comparatively less stress in relation to the reception of parental advice.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

The research field briefly outlined in Chapter 1 has seen substantial growth over the past two decades. Numerous studies have significantly enhanced our understanding of parents' experiences when they receive parental advice, shedding light on the complexity and multidimensional nature of their experiences. Despite these advancements, there is a need to consolidate this knowledge and pinpoint areas requiring further exploration.

This literature review aims to delve into the extensive research related to parental advice, with particular attention to parents' subjective experiences of receiving such advice. The focus is specifically on contemporary parental advice.

This review will also examine why, in neoliberal democratic contexts, some parents are receptive to parental advice while others are resistant to seeking or receiving parental advice. The analysis will include a critical examination of the key findings, methodological approaches, and theoretical frameworks employed in the various studies. The aim is to provide a comprehensive overview of the current state of knowledge, identify gaps in the existing literature, and suggest directions for future research.

The first section presents the different conceptions of parenting, parenthood, and parental advice in the professional intervention literature and in the literature on parenting culture, both of which informed the research design and analysis of the current study. This approach to theory that combines the psychological and sociological approaches is inspired by Bronfenbrenner's (1979) bioecological model of researching human behaviour that incorporates both internal aspects and the environment in which behaviour occurs. As I will show here, these conceptions provide a theoretical framework that can be used to analyze and interpret parents' experiences. They offer categories and concepts that can help understand the data collected from parents. Parents' experiences in receiving advice do not exist in a vacuum. They are influenced by the larger societal, cultural, and professional discourses around parenting. By considering these conceptions, I was better equipped to provide a comprehensive

and nuanced understanding of parents' experiences. These conceptions offer important lenses through which to view and interpret the experiences of parents receiving advice. They provide the necessary background and theoretical tools to understand the data and draw insightful conclusions.

I will then review the empirical literature referring to the Anglo-American context, Israel, and other contexts affected by the intensive parental advice culture. I have concentrated on studies related to parents' experiences in receiving parental advice, parents' general attitudes to seeking parental advice, and parents' intentions regarding whether or not, when, and whom to approach for parental advice. Unlike most previous studies, I have also focused on reports of parents who objected to seeking parental advice or chose not to implement advice suggested to them.

In what follows, I distinguish between what I termed *intervention studies* and *parenting culture* studies in Chapter 1 of this thesis. As noted there, the former term refers to studies by researchers who are scientists or experts in clinical psychology, developmental psychology, sociology, and education who investigated the efficacy and specific outcomes of various types of intervention for parents. The latter term refers to studies by scholars associated with the Centre of Parenting Culture Studies in the School of Social Policy and Social Research at the University of Kent. The parenting culture scholars are mainly sociologists and anthropologists, though some parenting culture associates are from other academic or professional fields such as psychology and law. Unlike the intervention studies, their focus is on the broader culture within which parental advice is provided and on parents' experiences within this context.

This review aims to integrate both approaches into a systemic understanding of parents' different experiences of receiving parental advice—as suggested by Bronfenbrenner (1986)—and to show what is still lacking in research. I will begin by describing the conceptualizations of each of these two approaches, followed by their findings.

Conceptual Review

The following sections present the underlying assumptions with regard to parenting and parental advice of the professional intervention literature and of the parenting culture studies.

The Intervention Literature

Since the latter part of the 19th century, theories of child development stemming from Anglo-American and European traditions have constituted the foundation for prescribing scientific parenting practices. These practices have been significantly influenced by particular geopolitical changes, most notably the advent of the industrial era, which precipitated a series of profound societal transformations. The burgeoning of industry led to a reconfiguration of societal roles and norms, including those associated with parenting, subsequently catalyzing the emergence of an expansive industry dedicated to advice on childcare. A pivotal shift during this period was the transition from patriarchal structures to a reevaluation and redefinition of women's roles within domestic settings. As delineated by Ehrenreich and English (1979), this era saw the relegation of mothers to domestic duties, engendering a shift in the balance of familial power. The roles of women became demarcated by their domestic activities, thereby enabling experts who identified with specific parenting philosophies to exert influence over societal perceptions of optimal parenting practices, particularly in relation to the concept of *the good mother* (Winnicott, 1965). Ehrenreich and English (1979) further posit that mothers actively participated in this shift by asserting their newly defined status within the domestic sphere, an area where they could assert supremacy, analogous to the perceived roles of their husbands in the outside world. This was further compounded by the absence of previously defined roles for mothers outside the home. By acknowledging these historical and geopolitical contexts, it becomes possible to achieve a more nuanced comprehension of how contemporary notions of 'good parenting' have been sculpted by influences that extend beyond the mere scope of child-rearing.

Lee (2014) notes that the activities undertaken by 'child experts' during this historical period were facilitated by the evolving conceptualization of childhood. Although conceptions of childhood existed prior to the 19th century, this era was distinguished by the interconnectedness between urbanization, industrialization, transformations in social hierarchy, and the demarcation of domains of adults and those of children. This was exemplified through legislative measures such as restrictions on child labor and the implementation of compulsory education, which progressively emphasised childhood as a

unique phase necessitating specialized attention and care. By promulgating guidance on parenting methodologies and child-rearing strategies, child experts reinforced the ideology that children require a distinctive array of care practices, nurturing, and discipline, diverging from adult-to-adult interactions. This served to underscore the dichotomy between the realms of children and adults. Through scholarly research, literary publications, public discourse, and other means, child experts have played a pivotal role in molding societal perceptions of childhood. Their influence has engendered a collective societal recognition that children are not merely diminutive adults but rather possess individualized needs, rights, and experiences that warrant particular consideration and focus. The field of parental advice has evolved, yet it maintains a consistent underlying assumption that parents may benefit from receiving guidance in order to raise their children effectively.

Since the dawn of the twentieth century, theoretical frameworks such as Darwinism and Freudian psychology have engendered a doctrine that underscores ostensibly scientific and universal knowledge of child development. Darwinism introduced an evolutionary and biological lens, while Freud's psychoanalytic concepts emphasized universal stages and unconscious motivations. As the connections between science, psychology, and child-rearing evolved, it is instructive to note that the interwar era marked the ascendancy of a scientific model predicated on systematic and rational investigation of the underlying causes and processes of health and disease. These perspectives laid the groundwork for the belief that expertise about children could transcend cultural and contextual boundaries. Recent developments in expert parental advice have begun to acknowledge the significance of cultural, ethnic, and individual diversity in parenting practices, emphasizing the necessity to comprehend and honor varying cultural norms, traditions, and beliefs in child-rearing (Goodnow 2002). This trend is manifested in seminal works such as the *Handbook of Parenting* (Bornstein, 2002), now in its third edition, which encompasses extensive volumes detailing various dimensions of scientifically informed knowledge on child-rearing and parenting. As articulated by Goodnow (2002), this knowledge seeks to transform parental conceptions of children's needs, thereby shaping child outcomes.

Over time, interventions and parental advice originating from both expert and lay sources have permeated nearly all aspects of parental activity. For instance, Demick's (2002) broad definition in the third edition of the *Handbook of Parenting* categorizes parental advice as encompassing direction from experts, laypersons, or popular discourse. This definition elucidates the ubiquitous nature of advice within the parenting sphere, transcending specialized or professional realms to permeate various societal strata and reach parents through diverse channels. This multifaceted approach impacts the everyday decisions and behaviours of parents, informing and molding their parenting methodologies, with no facet of parenting remaining impervious to external guidance. The expansive reach of this definition illustrates how expert opinions may permeate popular discourse, intertwining with cultural and societal norms to contribute to a collective conception of what constitutes good parenting. Moreover, it provides insight into how commercial and media entities exploit expert counsel to sway parental choices and guide consumer behaviour. Demick's definition sketches a complex parenting landscape where expert advice is not sporadically referred to but is rather an omnipresent force, shaping virtually every dimension of the parenting experience. This alludes to potential dissonance and ambiguity that parents may encounter as they navigate this multifaceted terrain.

Proponents of the view that ongoing parental education is essential contend that in the intricate fabric of contemporary society, continuous learning for parents transcends mere benefits and has become a necessity. Such advocates argue that a comprehension of modern-day subjects, technological advancements, and societal transformations is vital for parents to furnish effective guidance and care for their offspring. This perspective tacitly challenges the competence of parents who remain uninformed about these shifts, accentuating the requirement for educational interventions aimed at preparing children to successfully traverse the challenges of the 21st century. This emphasis has given rise to an industry predicated on the notion that parents are in continual need of expert advice. However, as Bornstein (2002) has noted, the sphere of interventionist practice is not without contention. Debates persist among practitioners, including psychologists and child developmentalists, regarding the appropriate volume and regularity of such guidance. The underlying question centers on whether this

advice should be a routine necessity or dispensed only when particular needs arise. Additionally, as Bornstein (2002) argues, a parallel discourse exists among scholars concerning the innate abilities of parents to nurture their children versus the potential need for a sustained elevation of awareness and formalized instruction in child development guidance techniques.

Building on the notion of the essentiality of parental education and the ongoing debates pertaining to its scope and nature, it is instructive to delve into the historical trajectory of expert parental advice. Social historians such as Ann Hulbert (2004) and Ehrenreich and English (1978) have chronicled how, in its nascent stages, parental advice was predominantly pragmatic. Early recommendations, such as the advice to boil milk, directly contributed to a reduction in infant mortality rates. This success engendered a growing recognition among parents of the utility of expert counsel. Subsequent guidance extended to imparting essential maternal skills, like techniques for bathing infants. Yet, what originated as practical assistance soon evolved—influenced by significant social changes of the time—into an ideology. According to this ideology, good parenting became synonymous with the willingness to seek and adhere to expert advice.

This transformation became particularly salient in the post-World War II era, a time marked by social uncertainties and a prevailing scientific conviction that parents were instrumental in fostering healthy children and, by extension, a healthy society. In 1945, President Truman enlisted the expertise of Erik Erikson, Margaret Mead, and Benjamin Spock—three pioneers in the fields of psychiatry, anthropology, and pediatrics—to delineate what was requisite for parents to nurture well-adjusted personalities. However, this ambitious mission foundered, and the appointed experts ultimately requested to withdraw from it (Hulbert 2004, p. 193). This historical examination underscores the complex interplay between expert advice, practical parenting needs, societal changes, and ideological shifts, a nexus that continues to influence contemporary debates on parental guidance.

However, many psychologists have conceptualized mothering and motherhood as intrinsically rooted in biological instincts, even while acknowledging motherhood as a combination of psychological and physical processes (Barnard & Solchany, 2002; Benedek,

1959). The influence of physiological factors on mothering, detectable under optimal circumstances, has been explored through studies on human diversity and pathology (Corter & Fleming, 2002). Evolutionary perspectives further assert that parenting—the nurturing of offspring from conception to independence—is universal among mammals and has profound implications for survival, social structures, and relationships between the sexes (Bjorklund et al., 2000). Human children's extended period of immaturity and dependency necessitates an extraordinary commitment by parents, shaping human family dynamics, relationships, and even evolutionary biology. This understanding is supported by major theories of evolutionary psychology, particularly Trivers' (1972) parental investment theory, which accounts for the intensive investment by human parents, especially mothers, in their offspring. This investment includes both physical means for survival and social means for the development of competency within human communities. The theory also explains why females are more likely to invest heavily in their offspring than males, a pattern observed across various cultures and societies (Eibl-Eibesfeldt, 1989; Hetherington et al., 1999; Whiting & Whiting, 1975). However, social forces and cultural changes have introduced variations in these patterns, particularly in modern Western societies. Intuitive parenting, identified by Bard (2002), further summarizes this psychobiological preadaptedness, suggesting that parenting behaviours across primate species are neither reflexive nor rational but are inherently influenced by biological instincts. The consistent thread running through these observations and theories is the significant role of biology in shaping the fundamental nature of mothering and motherhood, highlighting an intrinsic connection that transcends sociocultural contexts. Other studies, especially by feminist scholars, such as Feroni (2009), argue that such arguments have created a myth around mothering that places many expectations and responsibilities on women and serves patriarchal institutions. That is, patriarchal institutions have used these myths to discriminate against women and prevent them from participating in positions of power.

Feroni (2009) cites the heightened significance attributed to the maternal figure in Israel, a prominence notable even before the inception of the Israeli nation-state. The prevalence of this theme in an extensive array of books, articles, and exhibitions underscores its considerable relevance in both public dialogue and societal perception. The conceptual

framework underpinning the State of Israel was devised as an amalgamation of historical legacies, epitomised by idioms such as *Mother Earth* [Hebrew: *ima adama*] and *national womb* [Hebrew: *rechem le'umi*], and the advent of a novel societal structure. Feroni (2009) draws attention to the obscured aspects of the myth surrounding motherhood, which cause unrealistic expectations and exert undue stress on women.

As described by Barnard and Solchany (2002), the turn of the twentieth century brought with it the beginning of a shift in how mothers were perceived. Around that time, Freud (1913) made the claim that there is no love like a mother's, stating that this relationship is the strongest of all, endures for a lifetime, and forms the root of one's future relationships. This claim has continued to gain what some view as scientific proof over the last century. Renegar and Cole (2023) write that in the United States, intensive mothering has become the prevailing cultural expectation for mothers. It is a *regime* or a set of culturally coded expectations for what good mothers should do, or aspire to be, with no acknowledgment of how variable access to cultural and economic resources may shape the possibilities of mothering, especially the possibilities of effective mothering. In other words, our scripts for mothering tend to be decontextualized from the lived experiences of adults who raise children, and those scripts impact our own expectations for parenting, as well as how others interpret the parenting that they witness. These traditional Western models of motherhood encompass several common themes that frequently surface in the intervention literature. Firstly, they emphasize the belief that women possess a natural *maternal instinct*, rendering them innately equipped and driven to care for their children. This viewpoint suggests that motherhood is not merely a societal role but rather an innate and instinctive function for women (e.g., Barnard & Solchany, 2002). Secondly, these models underscore the expectation of self-sacrifice within motherhood. Mothers are traditionally expected to prioritize their children's needs and desires over their own, a notion that extols a mother's enduring love, altruism, and selflessness. Thirdly, many traditional frameworks depict the mother as the primary caregiver, bearing responsibility for the majority of child-rearing tasks such as feeding, bathing, comforting, and educating the child. Moreover, these views often assign mothers the role of maintaining the home environment, encompassing chores like cleaning, cooking, and managing domestic life. Such studies are

usually based on psychoanalytic assumptions (Cohen, 2007; Manzo et al., 1999; Plotnic, 2007; Winnicott, 1965) and are deterministic in nature, based on the assumption that through the evolutionary mechanism (Trivers, 1972), parents' intensive investment—at least mothers' intensive investment—is supposed to fit the social expectations, unless the mother can be said to suffer from parental narcissistic injury (Manzo et al., 1999).

It is important to note that these traditional views of motherhood have been challenged and have expanded over time, recognizing that mothers can engage in a wider range of roles, that fathers can also fulfill these roles, and that family structures can take many forms. Additionally, perspectives like those of Blaffer Hrdy (2009) have highlighted the variability and adaptability of motherhood across different ecological and social contexts.

Consequently, the scholars and practitioners dispensing parental guidance frequently harbor conflicting perspectives. Predicated on Western cultural assumptions and theoretical constructs of motherhood, these experts often sustain elevated and occasionally unattainable expectations of mothers, on the presumption that they possess an intrinsic understanding of childcare. This generates a paradox wherein mothers are simultaneously presumed to be innately proficient and yet in constant need of enhancement. Such a dichotomy might manifest itself in the counsel proffered by authorities on parenting, potentially exacerbating the ambivalence many parents experience with regard to soliciting advice on child-rearing.

Throughout the course of history, advice for parents has seen a marked shift, alternating between a child-centric emphasis on emotional needs and a more authoritarian, parent-centered stress on discipline. During the initial half of the twentieth century, the prominence of child-centered counseling was evident, epitomized by *attachment theory* developed by John Bowlby (1951) and Mary Ainsworth et al. (1978). This paradigm accentuates the necessity of a fortified and secure emotional connection between parent and offspring, cultivated through consistent, sensitive responses to the child's needs. Secure attachments are posited to foster healthy social, emotional, and cognitive maturation.

Freud, Winnicott, and Ainsworth advocated for an upbringing devoid of traumas. Recommendations even extended to mothers undergoing psychotherapy to mend historical

wounds, thereby circumventing the projection of these onto their children. The periods after World War II, as well as the 1950s and the 1960s, saw the burgeoning of social democratic-liberal ideologies, facilitating the proliferation of natural and permissive pedagogical perspectives. The 18th-century thoughts of Jean-Jacques Rousseau are resonated here (Hulbert, 2004) characterizing childhood as an epoch of innocence and purity to be shielded from the vices of adulthood. Rousseau's assertion, "All children are born good," was heeded with gravity during the latter half of the twentieth century.

Pioneering educators and psychologists such as A.S Neill, Benjamin Spock, and Carl Rogers advocated a balance between strict upbringing and unrestricted, empathetic parental attention. The publication of *The Free Child* (Neill, 1953) and the establishment of the world's first open school, Summerhill, are reflective of these views. The second half of the twentieth century heralded an era where maternal love was to be uninhibited, contrasting with the reserved nature of mother's relationship with their children in earlier decades. This epoch witnessed the dissipation of hierarchical authority within the familial unit, with children's desires and opinions gaining unprecedented importance.

The concept of child-centeredness, resonant with contemporary psychological views on child development, acknowledges the autonomy of children, complete with unique emotions and desires. Behaviours exemplifying this approach include parental efforts to engage with children's interests or to involve them in decision-making processes, such as clothing choices (Smith, 2010). These ideas are foundational to theories such as attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969, 1979; Ainsworth et al., 1978) and parental investment theory (Trivers, 1972) and are rooted in evolutionary science and aetiology. Such conceptualizations have led to parent-centric advice, marked by terminology like *holding* and *containing* (Oren, 2011, 2020). Terms like *bonding* often carry moral undertones, implying parental obligations for the child's mental well-being (Lee et al., 2014).

To mitigate maternal self-expectations, Winnicott (1964) introduced the concept of the *good enough mother*. However, as noted by Wall and O'Brien (2017), recent decades have seen a broadening of these expectations to encompass fathers as well, bolstered by studies

highlighting comparable oxytocin and amygdala levels among primary caregiving fathers (Abraham et al., 2014; Maysless, 2006). Parents' exposure to expert advice has intensified through diverse mediums such as pamphlets (Wall, 2001), magazines (Quirke, 2006), medical consultations (Bornstein and Cote, 2004), home visits, books, online sources, television programmes (Jensen, 2013), and in various therapeutic settings, such as family therapy, child therapy, and parental guidance.

During the latter half of the twentieth century, a parenting approach termed *authoritative parenting* emerged (e.g., Omer, 2008), aiming to strike a balance between affection and control. This shift signalled a departure from more indulgent practices, as experts began to advise parents to reduce the extent to which they pampered their children. For instance, the field of behaviourism, exemplified by Skinner (1938) and Watson (1928), propounded restraint in physical affection, advising mothers to limit the time their children spent on their laps each day.

In recent times, a stringent parenting approach known as *tiger parenting* has gained attention and is characterized by an intense focus on academic excellence. This method involves substantial parental investment and meticulous oversight of children's activities, an approach delineated by Chua (2011). Within the context of Israel, Amit (2006) has expressed concern about the potential for parents to become overly punitive, reflective of broader shifts in attitudes toward child-rearing.

The debate surrounding the definition of so-called 'correct' parental practices continues to be contentious and unresolved. Professionals often place expectations on parents to not only seek advice but also to navigate the myriad of often contradictory recommendations to make appropriate decisions for their children (Lee, 2014). This has led to a complex environment in which parents must discern the best course of action for their individual circumstances, despite the lack of a clear consensus within the field of parenting expertise.

Nevertheless, certain criticisms have emerged, specifically from interventionists who have evaluated the efficacy of the various practices advocated for parents. Bronfenbrenner (2005), for instance, has accentuated the fact that a significant portion of knowledge within

developmental theories is extracted from contexts that are arguably unnatural, such as laboratory settings. This observation has inevitably led to questions regarding the transferability of such knowledge to authentic life contexts and accentuates the need to scrutinize the influences of culture on the observations and conclusions drawn by developmental psychologists (Bronfenbrenner 1979, 2005). Moreover, an overarching critique of these theoretical frameworks is their tendency to underscore children's development at the expense of acknowledging parents as evolving entities. Within this paradigm, parents are often depicted merely as conduits to 'correctly' transmit education to their children, without being considered individuals with unique trajectories of growth and development. Interest by practitioners in exploring parents' experiences and responses to parental advice has been sparked by a growing awareness that many parents express reservations about implementing recommendations from so-called experts. Specifically, practitioners often categorize parents' resistance to participation as *barriers*, under the assumption that under optimal conditions, both related to the parents and the context in which advice is provided, parents would willingly engage in receiving and implementing the dominant expert guidance. Some of these barriers are described in the empirical findings detailed further in this review. However, it is noteworthy that most interventionists (e.g., Goodnow, 2002) have been diligently attempting to tailor the advice given to render it more accessible and usable for parents, and to exhibit cultural sensitivity, thereby ensuring that professional guidance is adapted to resonate with the unique cultural backgrounds of both parents and children.

The complexities and contradictions in parenting advice have fostered a phenomenon within both professional and social discourse that centers around blaming parents for their children's developmental outcomes, a trend identified by Bristol (2014). Allan (2004), focusing on feminist scholars, highlighted how psychoanalysis, with its emphasis on the connections between adult issues and childhood maladaptive behaviours, has been perceived as inherently mother-blaming. This inclination towards attributing blame is not limited to theoretical frameworks but also resonates in cultural critiques. For example, Almog's criticism of modern Israeli parents reflects concerns over excessive indulgence, protectiveness, and a failure to encourage independence in children (Almog & Almog, 2015).

Bristow (2014) observes a paradox where parents are simultaneously blamed for their reluctance to participate in receiving parental advice and for a lack of self-confidence that makes them too eager to seek such guidance. These discordant expectations have even fuelled a thriving cultural industry of blaming parents in regions like the United Kingdom, with media-driven narratives influencing policy debates around family intervention (Jensen, 2018). As Furedi (2008a) articulates, societal messages frequently castigate parents both for an excessive concern for their children's well-being and for absorbing such hyper-alarmist views. The labelling of so-called *helicopter parents* and the criticism of raising *cotton-wool kids* have become fashionable (Lee et al., 2010), embodying what is referred to as the *double bind* of parenting culture (Bristow, 2014). Within this conundrum, parents find themselves trapped in a situation where they seemingly "can't do right for doing wrong." Additionally, some practitioners fault parents for their improper application of professional advice (e.g., Bjorklund & Pellegrini, 2000, 2002; Powel, 2019; Sagi & Dolev, 2001; Stattin et al., 2015), further illustrating the contradictory and often confusing guidance that characterizes much of the prevailing literature on parenting. This multifaceted issue underscores the intricate interplay between social expectations, professional advice, and the lived realities of parenting, demanding a nuanced understanding and approach to parental support and education.

Building on the complexities and contradictions delineated in the previous sections, another significant aspect of the culture of expert parental advice emerges through the antecedent-consequence paradigm, often referred to as deterministic parenting. This paradigm posits that specific child-rearing practices at a given time will have lasting effects on a child's future development (Harkness & Super, 2002; Leinaweaver, 2012; Wall, 2010).

The roots of deterministic parenting can be traced back to Freudian psychoanalytic theory. Sigmund Freud introduced concepts such as narcissism to illustrate how parents' love might be considered psychopathological, potentially damaging children's mental health even outside cases of overt abuse (Green, 2003). This Freudian legacy paradoxically portrays parents as both omnipotent, bearing almost sole responsibility for a child's development, and impotent, in need of guidance (Apple, 2006; Grant, 1998; Hulbert, 2004). The widespread uptake of parental guidance literature, exemplified by Dr. Spock's influential *Baby and Child Care* (1956),

further catalysed debates around parenting philosophies, such as strict versus permissive approaches (Hulbert, 2003).

During this period, the concept of parenting as a profession flourished, giving rise to a prescriptive culture that not only dictated parental behaviour but also sought to shape emotional responses (Lee, 2014). Underpinning this was a push towards parental professionalism, where parents were encouraged to change themselves for the betterment of their children (Benedek, 1959; Erikson, 1995; Sameroff 1975). The outcome of this movement was a narrowed definition of parenting, often reducing parents to vehicles for child development rather than recognizing them as complex subjects in their own right. Objections to participation in parental counselling were framed as barriers, and the culture of parental advice became intertwined with upper-middle-class identity (Hulbert, 2004; Weisemuller & Hilton, 2021).

In recent years, this deterministic approach to parenting has met with growing scholarly dissent regarding the necessity and scope of expert guidance. While some scholars advocate for extensive parental advice (Barnard & Solchany, 2002; Bornstein, 2002), others argue for a more restricted application of advice, limited to specific cases of need (Cohen, 2017). This ongoing debate reflects the enduring tensions and unresolved questions within the field of parenting advice and intervention studies. It underscores the imperative for a nuanced understanding that considers the diversity of parental experiences, avoids over-simplification, and recognizes the complex interplay of historical, cultural, psychological, and socio-economic factors that shape contemporary parenting practices. The exploration of these multifaceted dynamics contributes to a richer and more empathetic approach to supporting parents in their unique and challenging roles, moving beyond rigid prescriptions towards a more flexible and responsive model of guidance.

The Parenting Culture Literature

The parenting-culture literature—with its deconstructionist view of parenting—originated as a response to so-called scientific professionalized parenting. In 2010, Frank Furedi and Elli Lee established the Centre of Parenting Culture Studies (CPCS) at the University of Kent.

Scholars associated with parenting culture sought to show that the role and meaning of parenthood has changed to what has been termed *deterministic parenting*, and that *interventionists*—that is, experts such as analytical and developmental psychologists who have developed parental advice based on scientific research—have disregarded the fact that parenting involves a lot of practical experiences and personal decisions regarding child rearing practices (Faircloth et al. 2013; Furedi, 2013; Lee et al. 2014).

While delving into the topic of feeding babies, Lee (2014) and her colleagues developed the notion of *intensive parenting*, which was inspired by Hays's (1996) important book *The Cultural Contradictions of Motherhood*, in which she used the term *intensive mothering* (Hays, 1996, p. 19) to refer to working mothers. Hays noted that the new emerging ideology of child-centred mothering guided by experts is emotionally absorbing, labour intensive, and expensive. She noted that mothers' experiences are influenced by these impossible expectations, which Hays termed "maternal contradictions" (1996, p. 28). The mother is usually portrayed as self-sacrificing and not as a subject with her own needs and interests (Hays, 1996). Illustrating this child-centered ideology, Lareau (2003, cited in Faircloth, 2014, p. 31) used the term *concerted cultivation* to describe middle-class parents' investment in their children, for example, by incorporating organized activities into their child's life to foster the child's talents.

Deterministic Parenting. Lee et al. (2014) and Furedi (2002) thoroughly examined the influence of parental advice as a culture of *deterministic parenting*, and assert that parents experience paranoia and anxiety, which are the consequence of attempts at risk management in a risk-conscious culture (Fox et al., 2009; Wolf 2011). This is a reflection of the intensive parenting advice culture (Faircloth, 2013; Dow, 2013; Jensen, 2013; Raffaeta et al., 2015). Furedi (2002, p. 5) pointed out that "traditionally, good parenting has been associated with nurturing, stimulating, and socializing children. However, today it is associated with monitoring their activities." Neoliberal rationality emphasizes individual responsibility and surveillance (Edwards & Gillis, 2004; Shirani et al., 2012; Wall, 2010). Moreover, Faircloth et al. (2013) has demonstrated the intensification of parenting across cultures.

According to Lee (2014, p. 217), “[perhaps] the key tension or sociopolitical contradiction that has emerged from our work so far is the widening gulf that has come to exist between the imperatives and assumptions of parental determinism, and the everyday, lived experience of parents. This gulf is most obvious in the field of policymaking.” The modern term *parenting* points to the shift from kinship relationships between parents and their children to professional relationships and as a job, as it were. Instead, Furedi (2002) suggests that parenting may represent an integral feature of an informal family relationship.

Stress and Anxiety. The main focus of scholars of intensive parenting culture is on contemporary parents’ stress and anxiety. While for interventionists, guilty feelings, parental anxiety, and stress are expected evolutionary parental feelings that encourage parents to seek advice, according to Furedi (2002), it is the culture of professionalized parenting that creates a high level of stress and anxiety.

Furedi (2002) and others have conceptualized the effect of parental advice on parents in several ways. Firstly, according to Lee (2014), from the beginning of the 21st century, parents have been discouraged from relying on their own intuition and instincts. Lee asserts that experts use parental blaming for all parents, and not just for the poor, to create an atmosphere calling for support for parents. For example, she notes that parents are blamed for their children’s habits in using cell phones but are not provided with clear advice on how to deal with this. But since experts do not wish to overtly judge parents on their parental behaviours, they suggest supporting them. Experts usually tell parents that they are the only ones responsible for their children’s outcomes, and rarely communicate to them that they are doing just fine. Therefore, the proponents of parenting culture note that without clear advice, and without receiving support as ‘good enough’ parents, parents still feel that they are solely responsible for their child’s outcomes and might therefore feel powerless and stressed.

Secondly, there is an inherent conflict between parents and experts (Furedi, 2008). In the hierarchy that characterises the adviser-advisee relationship, the expert is presumed to have more knowledge. However, in the particular case of the parent-adviser relationship, this

relationship involves a direct conflict of authority with regard to who knows what is in the best interest of a specific child (Furedi, 2008).

Thirdly, Lee (2013) notes that advice that experts commonly give parents today is that they need to be more authoritative in their parenting practices. Many interventionists suggest that in order to achieve this, parents need more self-confidence and to believe in their role. However, in order to seek parental advice, parents need to feel uncertain and intensely unsettled. There are therefore inherent contradictions in the messages that parents receive (Lee, 2013).

In sum, a review of the literature from the perspectives of psychological-evolutionary approaches and that of parenting culture reveals that there are different conceptualizations of parenthood, parenting, and parental advice, which could lead to different conclusions regarding parents' subjective experience in receiving parental advice. An analysis of empirical findings by both approaches will reveal both different and shared conclusions.

I chose to divide the section on empirical findings below into two, namely, those studies reporting positive experiences and those reporting negative experiences. Positive studies are those that describe parents who reported feeling good following receiving parental advice regarding child-rearing issues, while negative studies are those that describe parents who reported bad experiences receiving parental advice and objected to engaging in it. Of course, lived experiences are most often more in the gray area, though usually with a tendency to either the positive or negative side.

Empirical Findings Reported in the Literature

This section includes empirical findings mostly from the United States, the United Kingdom, and Israel from the year 2000 onwards in different settings in which is provided, such as parental groups, parental guidance, parenting therapy, meetings with physicians, and lay experts such as family, friends, TV shows, internet, magazine, books, and various lectures for parents.

Intervention Studies: Parents' Positive Experiences of Parental Advice

This section describes the main themes pertaining to positive parents' feelings and perspectives as found by intervention studies.

Feeling Support and Parental Efficacy. Many intervention studies report that mothers who have received parental advice describe having acquired parental efficacy (Manor-Binyamini, 2012; Smith 2022; van der Asdonk et al., 2021; Whittaker & Cowley, 2011), confidence (Borenstein, 2002; Edwards et al., 2010), an increase in their knowledge about parenting (Chen et al., 2020; Ullmann, 2018), and less stress and guilt (Barlow et al., 2005). Mothers also reported feeling good about having changed their own personality (Breitenstein, 2013; Kidron & Landreth, 2010; Stattin, 2015). They were happy that they now understood their child better and could see the world from the child's point of view (Butcher et al., 2014; Regev et al., 2012), and felt empowered and more competent (Cohen, 2009). Some mothers felt that the intervention programme that they had participated in had not been long enough (Barlow et al., 2015). Some fathers felt more motivated to fulfil their role and were more open to listening to views that differed from their own (Baker et al., 2017; Gillies, 2008; O'Brien & Phillip, 2016; Whittaker & Cowley 2011) and achieving better relationships with their child (Dolan 2014). Yet many studies report that many incentives were required for parents to engage in receiving parental advice (e.g., Chacko et al., 2016).

However, some scholars have criticised the generalizability of intervention studies. Specifically, most studies are based on parents with young children, and often conflate 'parents' with mothers although mothers are the main participants in the interventions (Baker et al., 2017; O'Brien, 2005; Whittaker & Cowley, 2011). Some researchers (e.g., Fuller et al., 2015) note that empirical evidence obtained through questionnaires should be considered unreliable because of various kinds of biases. According to Bornstein and Putnick (2021), questions tend to focus on a particular construct, limiting the possible scope of experience. Gilmer et al. (2016) demonstrated that some intervention studies include only parents attending the final session, which might therefore involve a selection bias. In addition, data were frequently collected by the facilitators so that social desirability could also be a bias. Parent's satisfaction with the program was used as a measure of program efficacy with no other

measures of parent knowledge or behaviour change. Some studies lack information regarding parents' experience of their own parenting before the intervention (Andersson et al., 2019). Moreover, most studies examined short-term effects rather than long-term effects. (Breitenstein et al., 2013; Butcher et al., 2014; Sandler et al., 2011). Gilmer et al. (2016) points out that most researchers did not interview parents who had dropped out of interventions, so that the understanding that was obtained regarding parents' overall experience of interventions might be too narrow. In addition, Andersson et al. (2019) suggest that a 'positive' experience could also involve a social bias. They describe a 'successful' intervention in Australia which had been initiated and massively supported by the local community. This might have helped to achieve the positive experience. Thus, it is not the advice but rather the context in which it is given that accounts for the positive experience (Chosen, 2017; Goodnow, 2002;).

Accepting Advice only from Specific Advisers and Only for Specific Issues. Based on parents' answers, many studies concluded that a good experience should include a process of testing the fit between the adviser and the parent before a parent agrees to receive parental advice (Goodnow, 2002; Krugman, 2015; Shor, 2007). Shor (2007) compared the help-seeking behaviours of 100 Jewish Israelis who had immigrated from the former Soviet Union (FSU), 100 Jewish Israelis who had immigrated from Ethiopia, and 100 Jewish Israeli parents born in Israel. Members of each group noted that they might seek help from only specific professions. For example, some immigrant parents were only willing to accept advice from psychologists and teachers and were not willing to receive parental advice from psychiatrists or social workers. A comparison between immigrant parents and native-born Israeli parents also yielded differences with respect to the problems about which they were willing to seek help from professionals. While Israeli-born parents showed concern with emotional challenges, immigrants were mainly interested in their child's academic performance. According to Tully et al. (2017), for fathers, understanding what is required from them in the program and trust in the adviser's professionalism are the two most important factors in their decision to participate.

Accept the Concept of Seeking Parental Advice but Do Not Attend in Practice. Some parents reported a willingness to participate in receiving but in practice failed to enroll in parental-advice programmes (Gonzales, 2021; Murphy et al., 2012; Ohan 2015; Tully et al.,

2017). Some parents also pointed out the difficulty for parents who were not extroverts and felt pressurized to take part in discussions (Barlow et al., 2005). Koerting et al. (2013) found that even where parents have taken up the offer of a program, dropout rates are estimated at up to 40 %. There is thus a widely recognized gap between intention and actual participation.

Parents Participating but Not Implementing the Advice. The main concern repeated in intervention studies is that even if parents have received parental advice, they often do not implement the advice. In a review, Barlow et al. (2015) found that parents who participated and enjoyed the intervention also described the difficulty in implementing advice and noted that the group leaders had very clearly defined views about how to raise a child. Oryan and Ben-Asher (2019) reported that participants in an Adlerian group in Israel said they were happy with the intervention, but still did not want to apply the advice given.

A review of prominent intervention studies that have described parents' positive experiences in different contexts suggests concerns regarding the reliability and the generalizability of the findings. Furthermore, there is a gap between how interventionists conceptualize the ideal parent, who invests and sacrifices herself and who is expected to embrace advice received and, on the other hand, the efforts parental advisers need to invest in order to adjust their advice to the parent's culture and needs, thus ensuring that they would indeed implement this advice (Powell, 2019). In addition, a positive experience depends on whether a parent has chosen the framework that matches his/her worldview. Moreover, there is a gap between this idealized parent, and the parents who in principle have a positive attitude to the notion of parental advice but fail to participate in any parental-advice programmes, even if these are given for free. Other parents might enroll in such programmes but are highly selective regarding the specific adviser and might not easily accept his or her authority.

Following the above description of the themes pertaining to parents' feelings and perspectives, below I examine the factors that might shape their subjective positive experiences as found by intervention studies.

Parents' Beliefs. In order for parents to have a positive view of parental advice, it is essential for them to believe in the severity of the child's problem and their own responsibility

for the outcome. Such beliefs may often be a result of input that they receive from their surroundings within a culture that endorses parental advice (Alfonso & Little, 2019).

Various studies have shown that parents who believe that their children have “objective” problems (Boulter & Rickwood, 2013; Maniadaki et al., 2007), feel responsibility for their children, or feel guilty (Oren, 2012) tended to report a positive attitude to the concept of parental advice. In cases in which parents believe in the objective severity of the child’s problem and in their own responsibility, demographic variables are less significant (Alonso et al. 2019). Gonzales et al. (2021) confirmed that when parents feel less confident in their parental skills, they are more likely to intend to take part in a parenting program. Parents are unlikely to seek new explanations for a child’s health or behaviour as long as things are going reasonably well. They can live quite happily with theories that range from the benefits of strict routines to the benefits of chicken soup (Sameroff & Feil, 1985 cited by Goodnow, 2002).

Past Experience with Parental Advice, Trust, and Relationships. Parents were more likely to seek counselling if they had good memories of a past experience in receiving parental advice, initial trust in the parental counselor (Elran, 2018; Goodnow 2002), or if they transferred the quality of their interactions with their children or their partner to their relationship with the therapist (Goodnow 2002; Gonzalez et al., 2021). Stolk (2008) cited Heinicke et al. (1999, 2000), who reported that, in the UCLA Family Development Project intervention, mothers’ engagement in receiving parental advice was associated with a positive connection with the home visitor and the ability to trust him or her.

Timing. Research has shown that in the family life cycle, there are specific developmental periods during which parents are more open to seeking advice about child rearing, for example, when middle class or educated women become mothers or in the transitions through school grades (Cornwell et al., 2022; Goodnow, 2002). In addition, scholars suggest that the Internet enables more parents of different ages to seek information and advice (Dadić et al., 2021).

Socio-economic status (SES). Upper-class parents (specifically, those who have higher education) are consistently more likely to proactively seek and engage in parental advice than

groups from lower SESs (Bornstein, 2002; Gershy & Omer, 2017; Goodnow, 2002; McLoyd, et al., 2019; O'Brien, 2005; Patterson et al., 2016; Sun & Smith, 2017). The explanation usually given for this class difference is that receiving parental advice is a cultural phenomenon of specific norms that involve status, values, and capital. Cowley et al. (2018) note that due to their higher educational levels, middle- or upper-class parents have more of an ability to comprehend written information about the need for parental advice. As noted by Goodnow (2002), parents of higher SESs have knowledge of where to turn for advice, and share middle class norms with the professionals providing parental advice. However, parents seeking parental advice are not a homogeneous group. For example, middle-class fathers tend not to participate in parental advice, and parents from low SESs also seek advice regarding some practical matters (Elran et al., 2018).

Gender. Interventionists assume that mothers have a 'natural' tendency to seek advice and encourage mothers to participate. However, they often neglect to approach fathers (O'Brien, 2005; O'Brien & Twamley, 2017). In contrast, fathers' positive experience is often explained as being due to the influence of social expectations as opposed to mother's so-called 'natural' tendency (Cohen, 2012). However, the sociologist Broadhurst (2003) criticizes the assumption of within-group homogeneity. As noted by Bronfenbrenner (1979), social characteristics do not suffice to provide an understanding of a person's experience; it is essential to consider the interaction between the person in question and his/her environment.

In sum, intervention studies that focused on parents who reported that they seek and sometimes engage in receiving parental advice show that some parents do feel supported and self-improvement as parents upon receiving parental advice. Nevertheless, these studies also report the effort that interventionists need to invest in order to recruit some of these parents, especially parents of school-age children, the many conditions required for parents to engage in parental advice—such as trust, and practical concerns such as time, place, cost—and the fact that many parents ultimately do not seek parental advice. Findings also show various gaps, such as between parents' willingness to participate and the fact that many of them ultimately do not engage in receiving parental advice. Moreover, there is a lack of studies that focus on parents'

past experiences with interventions. It seems that the positive experiences reported by intervention studies have not yet been fully explored to provide explanations for what actually influences and shapes parents' experiences.

Parenting Culture Studies: Parents' Positive Experiences of Parental Advice

This section describes the main themes pertaining to parents' mainly positive feelings and perspectives as found by parenting culture studies. In contrast to the intervention studies, the studies associated with parenting culture present more nuanced aspects of parents' subjective experiences. These parents did embrace expert parental advice but also had some negative reactions as indicated by some of the headings below.

Feeling Marginalized. Data presented in parenting culture studies point to the prevalence of the phenomenon of parents who embrace Western ideology claiming that parenting constitutes a set of skills that parents often need to acquire by means of expert parental advice. Hays (1996) interviewed 38 mothers of children aged from 2 to 4 years. The mothers were from the San Diego area and came from different socioeconomic backgrounds. Hays found that regardless of their social class, all but two of the mothers interviewed had purchased at least one child-rearing manual and many had three or more such manuals. Working-class mothers embraced the ideology of parental advice, even if they could not afford professional intervention. Some studies cite mothers who said they felt judged for engaging in 'too much' parental advice and were marginalized since in many ways they were considered to have deviated from the norm. Faircloth (2010) describes mothers who adopted the ideology of the La Leche League in the United Kingdom. These mothers described a need to lie or joke about their long breastfeeding because of how others might judge it as bizarre behaviour. They felt both not normative, yet better than others who had not acquired the information they had. Referring to so-called helicopter parents, Bristol (2014, p. 202) notes that "... parents continue to behave in the knowledge that there is something wrong, 'insane', or 'mad'—about what they are doing."

Inner Conflicts. Some parents who had a positive view regarding parental advice reported feeling that professional advice sometimes conflicted with their indigenous parental

practices. For example, Jaysane-Darr (2013) describes some parents in a parental class consisting of South Sudanese refugees who were told to read books to their children, starting from infancy. These parents could not apply this advice because in their culture, mothering encouraged closeness and connection through the mother's body, instead of encouraging self-agency and individualism through reading. Other mothers reported conflicts between their inner voice and the advice given by a professional, whose expertise derived from the Western interventionist approach. According to Knaac (2006), some mothers reported feeling an emotional burden due to informational manipulation that they were exposed to in relation to breastfeeding. Duncan (2007) reports an inner conflict felt by teenage parents who wish not to abort an unplanned pregnancy. In a quantitative survey of 503 women in the United Kingdom, Lee and Furedi (2005) found that many of them acknowledged the strong support for the idea that women should try breastfeeding, but also considered not breastfeeding to be acceptable for them. Jensen (2013) reported some ambivalence among mothers who had watched the reality television show *Supernanny* in the United Kingdom but nevertheless rejected or criticized the parental advice given on the program. Herrero-Arias et al. (2020) describe the experience of immigrants in Norway who had been advised to take their child to an outdoor playground, which is a common parental practice in Norway. These parents who had adopted this parental advice reported feeling stress and frustration due to the moral pressure to accept this advice and the implication that they might not be considered good parents.

Stress and Anxiety. Findings pointing to mothers' stress and anxiety regardless of SES were reported in many parenting culture studies (e.g., Faircloth, 2010; Faircloth & Murray, 2015; Granja et al., 2015; Göknar, 2013; O'Dougherty, 2013). Hays cites mothers who described having to be "perfect" at home and at the office. Other researchers reported mothers self-policing their lifestyles (Budds, 2021), since they felt that others were looking over their shoulder (Ballif, 2020; Bristow, 2014; Furedi, 2002, 2014). In addition, O'Dougherty (2013) describes narratives of Brazilian mothers from different social classes who felt that they neglected their own needs. Layn (2013) quotes single mothers who had had similar experiences. Göknar (2013) describes her own stress related to being a mother within an IVF-pursuing culture. Middle-class mothers in Santiago de Chile, who had decided to stay home to

raise their children, reported feeling depressed, guilt and shame about longing for their old lives (Murray, 2013). For Bristow (2014), the new phenomenon of *overparenting* or *helicopter parenting* resembles stress and reflects parents' anxiety regarding health and risk-aversion. Lee and Faircloth, who independently studied the topic of feeding babies (for example, Faircloth, 2010, 2011, 2013; Lee, 2007a, 2007b, 2008, 2011; Lee & Bristow, 2009), realized that there were unique emotions similar to stress that were repeated in the mothers' accounts. Mothers reported feeling that the message that was communicated to them from the outside world was that parenting was complex. What mothers may consider simple practical decisions were very important and that a great deal was at stake in every decision they might make. Scholars associated with parenting culture attributed this stress to the culture of professional parenting.

Some parenting culture studies suggest that fathers also report stress. Scheibling (2020) addresses insecurities that fathers may feel about their capabilities as caregivers by recounting stories of personal failure, noting that being a father was not always easy, enjoyable, or personally fulfilling, although many fathers emphasized the enjoyment of their father-child relationship. Some studies report that fathers felt stress about their role as breadwinners (Dermott & Miller, 2015; Scheibling, 2020). In contrast, other studies have found that fathers embrace parental advice out of a need to assert their masculine autonomy and therefore feel less stress than mothers (Collier & Sheldon, 2008; Faircloth, 2014; Kaplan & Knoll, 2019; Perez-Vaisvidovsky, 2020; Wall & Arnold, 2007). Shirani et al. (2012) found that when mothers were enthusiastic in embracing parental advice, this added a burden and stress to fathers' experiences of receiving parental advice.

In sum, in contrast to intervention studies, parental culture studies emphasise the prevalence of the phenomenon of mainly mothers embracing expert parenting ideology but at the same time also experience stress and anxiety. Mothers reported that these feelings were a consequence of engagement in receiving parental advice.

In what follows, I examine the factors that might shape parents' subjective positive experiences as found by parenting-culture studies.

Gender. Similar to interventionists, parenting culture associates also relate the tendency of mothers to embrace parental advice to their understanding and expectations of gender roles. However, unlike interventionists, they assume that this role is socially constructed rather than evolutionary (Hays, 1996). While some recent research has shown how the new style of fatherhood mirrors the intensive mothering model to some extent, other research has shown that many fathers also continue to hold on to more traditional ideas about fathering (Dermott, 2014; Faircloth, 2014; Shirani et al., 2012). According to Hays (1996, p. 75), most mothers said they “seek confirmation” and “reassurance” by receiving expert advice, and that without such expert advice there was no way for them to know that they were doing the right thing. Referring to a television program, another mother said that...“it made me feel better. I guess I’m doing things right. But I need to hear it from somebody that I’m kind of following the right direction” (Hays, 1996, p, 75). In addition, mothers seek parental advice out of a desire for maternal perfectionism (Annette, 2010; Faircloth, 2009, 2010; Kestler-Peleg et al., 2015). Values of expectations around investment and caring shape unreasonable gender expectations that mothers invest a lot of time, energy, and money, for example, on extra-curricular activities and therapy sessions to improve their parenting skills (Hays, 1996). Several researchers have noted mothers’ stressful experience and anxiety, leading them to feel as if they are never good enough, and what is now frequently pathologised as depression among mothers (Lee, 2013, p. 245; O’Dougherty, 2013).

Social expectations regarding fathering shape fathers’ positive experience differently from the way mothers experience receiving parental advice. Lareau (2000) found that among upper-middle class families in the United States, mothers and fathers experienced involvement in school differently. Mothers did in fact criticise and challenge teachers, but they did so by overriding their own internal doubts and fears. Fathers did not appear to be plagued by such concerns. As a result, fathers were present and often took on a leadership role when parents confronted school staff about problems in their children’s schooling. In keeping with traditional gender role socialisation, in their interactions with female teachers and administrators, fathers appear to invoke the skills they have learned in the realms of assertiveness, leadership, and direct confrontation.

Neoliberalism. As Bondi (2005) notes, neoliberalism works by installing a concept of the human subject as an individualised, decision-making agent, embedding within this concept perceived external judgements of self that act as a form of self-governance (Fox et al., 2009; Erdreich & Golden, 2017). By examining examples of middle-class Israeli mothers that included native-born Jewish Israeli mothers, Russian immigrants, and Palestinian Israelis, Erdreich and Golden (2017) demonstrate that women spoke emotionally about their motherhood while describing it as a “managerial task.” Mothers belonging to low SESs described feelings of responsibility and accountability (Raffaetà et al., 2015). As suggested earlier by Hays (1996), this means that they look up to wealth and wish that their children would belong to privileged groups, implying a lack of confidence in their child rearing abilities.

In addition, upper-middle-class parents tend to approach parental advice as consumers (Faircloth et al., 2013; Lee et al., 2014). As noted by Faircloth et al., 2013, p14), “[the studies] also suggest that parents are important critics of state- and media-delivered parent pedagogy, simultaneously consuming yet critiquing representations of themselves, and other parents.” The risk-consciousness discourse also encourages consuming parental advice and is associated with the neoliberal worldview (Faircloth, 2014; Wolf 2011). Indeed, Faircloth (2010) demonstrates that intensive parenting culture is reflected in mothers' words—a language of professionalism, money, genetics, and scientific knowledge. Furedi (2002) and Faircloth (2011) show that participation in parental advice is perceived by some mothers as a career in itself. Participating in an endless number of groups and committees now associated with intensive parenting is in effect an unpaid career. For example, 64% of the women in Faircloth’s (2010) sample of mothers recruited in the La Leche League did not work outside of the home at the time of the interview.

Intensive parenting culture. Faircloth (2014) suggests that a particular parenting style widely considered ‘ideal’ has emerged in Euro-American contexts. Hays (1996) coins the term ‘intensive motherhood’ as discussed above. What parenting culture studies suggest is that the so-called ideal parenting style did not emerge spontaneously from parents themselves but is rather a product of cultural developments and the influence of intergenerational transmission, experts in developmental psychology, and government policies. Various studies do indeed

illustrate how 100 years of expert parental advice ideology, “an industry of experts bombards parents with helpful insights drawn from the science of child rearing... that claim to provide crucial knowledge for the now terrified mother and father” (Furedi, 2002, p. 2), seems to have been internalized in mothers’ accounts of choosing to embrace parental advice (Lee, 2007, 2011). There is a belief that a child’s needs come first, and that mothering should be child-centred. Finally, intensive parenting requires that a mother pay attention to what experts say about child development. But as she says, “the ideas are certainly not followed in practice in by every mother but are implicitly or explicitly understood as the proper approach to raising a child by the majority of mothers” (Hays, 1996, p. 9).

In sum, parenting culture studies that explored the experiences of parents who reported that they seek and sometimes are enthusiastic about the parental advice that they have received from experts demonstrate that these are most often middle- or upper-class mothers who have internalized and embraced the intensive parenting culture. In addition, while some mothers reported feeling better than others, they also reported feeling that they deviated from the norm, for example, with regard to breastfeeding. In the parenting culture studies, some mothers reported that their experience involved inner conflicts demonstrated by mothers’ reports of criticizing advice, rejecting some specific advice, or not actually using the advice given. Many mothers reported feeling stress and anxiety while embracing the ideology of parental advice, which required them to be perfect mothers. Mothers describe parenting as a job, and as risk management. They use professional concepts that refer to parenting as a kind of scientific expertise. Mothers’ experiences are explained by parenting culture scholars as both reflecting and as being shaped by the culture of intensive parenting, which is associated with the professionalization of expert parental advice. However, parenting culture studies do not explain why some mothers seek parental advice, while other mothers, who are from the same culture and from the same social groups, do not seek expert advice. In addition, the experience of parents receiving parental advice before the era of parental professionalism or in countries where this intensive parenting culture did not develop has not yet been studied.

I now turn to describe and analyze the findings of both intervention studies and parenting culture studies regarding parents who reported negative experiences in receiving parental advice.

Intervention Studies: Parents' Negative Experiences of Parental Advice

This section describes the main themes pertaining to parents' negative feelings and perspectives as found by intervention studies.

Rejecting Parental Advice. Many intervention studies demonstrate the prevalence of the phenomenon of mothers and fathers from different SESs who choose not to participate in receiving parental advice in a variety of contexts as demonstrated below. Pettersson et al. (2009) demonstrate this in an experimental study with parents of seven-to-nine-year-old children who were invited to participate in a program for parents of school-age children. They found that parents with a lower level of education were less likely to participate than those who were more educated. In addition, parents who did not see the need to receive information were also less likely to participate. Gershby and Omer (2017) found that more fathers than mothers objected to participating in a program for school-age children who had had been diagnosed with behavioural problems. Hall et al. (2020) show that mothers belonging to ethnic minorities refused to participate in a program for preventing postpartum depression. Ofonedu et al. (2017) found that among 123 African-American parents who initiated mental health treatment for their child, 29.3 % did not attend their child's first treatment session. Similarly, many parents were found not to take advantage of the services of child psychologists at school for their child's emotional challenges (Ohan et al., 2015). A systematic literature review by Chacko (2016) suggests that a significant amount of attrition occurs prior to enrollment in parental training, with at least 25 % of those identified as appropriate for parental training ultimately not enrolling in such programmes. Similarly, in various programmes, Koeting et al. (2013) found that 30–68 % of parents of children diagnosed with behavioural problems in the United Kingdom have been found to decline to take part in available programmes. They also report that only 4–18 % of parents who had expressed interest in programmes offered free of charge for parents were estimated to have actually enrolled in these programmes. Other

surveys demonstrate low engagement when a service is evaluated in a real-world setting, rather than as part of ideal circumstances (Olofsson et al., 2016; Spoth et al., 2001).

Preferring the Help of Family Over Professionals. Several studies show that some parents prefer to approach lay advice rather than experts. Eighty-six percent of a sample in the United Kingdom reported that they turn to family or friends for advice on child-rearing difficulties (Edwards & Gillis, 2004). Tapp et al (2018) report similar findings in a sample of 2,555 Australian parents.

The Advice Does Not Feel Right for the Specific Child and Parents. Some parents said that the suggestions that they received did not feel right to them and they objected to acting on this specific advice. Chouraqui et al. (2019) and Myers et al. (2020) reported responses from parents who felt that a physician's advice given concerning breast feeding was not right for their particular child. These parents noted that they preferred to rely on their own feelings or on advice from family members. This was repeated in Crane and Ball (2016). Even with regard to life-threatening cases such as of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS), some studies show that mothers did not implement the scientific advice, which was not to put the baby to sleep on its stomach. Some studies found that parents described experiencing guilt and a need to supply a justification when they objected to the advice given (Myers et al., 2020).

Burden, Stress, and Feeling Blamed. Many parents describe very negative experiences while engaging in receiving parental advice. For example, some parents from low SESs experienced very negative feelings in their exchanges with teachers, schools, and school administrations (Crozier et al., 2007). Parent-teacher meetings are particularly well-documented occasions for creating parental frustration, antipathy, and mutual fear (Power et al. 2000). Crozier (1999) conducted in-depth interviews of a sample of working-class parents on the experience of home-school relations and found that teachers were perceived to be condescending and distant. Milbourne (2002) reported that culturally excluded parents in the United Kingdom felt that teachers did not really care about them. However, these feelings do not only pertain to the context of schooling. Boag-Munroe and Evangelou (2012) reviewed 54 studies conducted in the United Kingdom, United States, Canada, and Australia in the early 21st

century. Parents who reported that they do not intend to engage in programmes such as Early Years said they felt stigmatized by these programmes and also threatened by the idea that professionals would have information about them. Parents also felt that advisers considered them to be incompetent (Goodnow, 2002; Henderson et al., 2016). Some parents reported feeling a burden and stress since they did not have the resources—that is, economic means, time, or means of transportation—to participate in parental-advice sessions (Broadhurst, 2003; Ohan, 2015). Across qualitative studies, Reardon et al. (2017) found that a feeling of not being listened to or being dismissed or blamed by professionals was frequently reported as a barrier to seeking and accessing help.

Parents' Perceptions of the Adviser and the Treatment. Reviews considering how parents experienced the quality of services and specific sectors of professionals—for example, teachers, and primary care physicians—reported that across diverse samples, parents demonstrate resistance to seeking and availing themselves of help (Cook et al., 2020; Reardon et al., 2017). With regard to problems of infant sleep, parents in the United Kingdom perceived health care practitioners as lacking knowledge or training and believed that advice would be limited in terms of the breadth of information or management options that would be offered (Cook et al., 2020). Moreover, parents would not participate in parental-advice programmes when they believed that the treatment would not be effective or relevant or if they feared that the treatment would have negative consequences (Friars and Mellor 2009). Similarly, Goodnow (2002) found that parents would not participate in parental-advice programmes when they perceived that these programmes would not fit their needs or if they viewed them as too demanding, that is, were more of a burden than help. Kazdin and Wassal (2000) found a correlation between not participating in parental-advice programmes and if parents felt that there were obstacles to participating and if they had had a negative experience in receiving parental advice. Thus, many parents conceive treatment as a source of possible stressors (Barlow et al., 2005a; Hoagwood, 2005; Periera & Barros, 2019).

In sum, intervention studies emphasise the prevalence of the phenomenon of parents who object to participating in parental-advice programmes. As shown above, their characteristics are varied. In addition, intervention studies usually use the terminology of

barriers to describe negative experiences, implying that once these are removed, parents would attend parental-advice programmes. However, the prevalence of this experience suggests that parents' negative experiences have not been fully explored.

Below I examine the factors that might shape parents' subjective negative experiences as found by intervention studies.

Parent's Psychopathology. Some researchers suggest that when parents have their own mental problems, such as postpartum depression, this might prevent them from receiving parental advice (Hall et al., 2020). Hogue et al. (1999) found that families experiencing stress, economic challenges, social isolation, and/or a chaotic family atmosphere have low rates of participation in preventive intervention programmes. Personal stress may explain why parents sometimes choose not to participate in receiving parental advice.

Perceived Barriers. Through an intervention for youth who were diagnosed with behavioural problems, Kazdin and Whitely (2006) demonstrate that no specific factor—like psychopathology, socioeconomic disadvantage, stress, or severity of child dysfunction—led to a negative attitude to parental advice. Instead, they note that how a parent perceives personal barriers to participation in treatment may affect the parent's tendency to engage in receiving parental advice. In addition, Kazdin et al. (2000) and others (Koerting et al., 2013; Patel et al., 2011; Whittaker & Cowley, 2012) found that social acceptability or social disapproval—that is, the lack of support by others— influenced parents not to attend.

Perceived technical barriers are described in intervention studies with the assumption that, if barriers such as time constraints (Petterson et al., 2009), lack of adequate childcare (Harris & Goodall, 2008), waiting time (Reardon et al 2017) would be removed, more parents would willingly participate. However, some interventionists accepted the view that practical barriers are part of a more complex context that includes various social and economic factors (Hornby, 2015; Goodnow 2002).

Low SES. Intervention studies repeatedly show that low SES is the best predictor of not initiating or dropping out of parental-advice programmes Chase & Peacock, 2017; Goodnow, 2002; Harris & Goodall, 2008; McGoron et al., 2018). This includes being poor (Smith et al.,

2022), disadvantaged (Furlong & McGilloway, 2015), working class, or a minority (Coll & Magnuson, 2000). Some studies have found a correlation between low SES, low level of education, and a low rate of participation in interventions (Haggerty et al., 2006; Whittaker & Cowley, 2012). Harris and Goodall (2007) and other researchers explain such correlations as resulting from cultural rather than simple practical barriers, that is, difficulty understanding and negotiating the school system. Schools are middle-class institutions with their own values. Schools accept involvement only on their own terms, which are non-negotiable. Nechyba et al. (1999) use the notion of the *culture of poverty* to claim that working-class families place less value on education than middle-class parents and hence are less disposed to participating in parental-advice programmes.

In contrast, some researchers have shown that SES status did have a minor effect on attrition, but other variables did not have a meaningful effect on parents' engagement in parental advice (Chacko et al., 2016). Various studies have found that in relation to parental advice, people with low SES are not a homogenous group (Baker et al., 2017; Dadić et al., 2021; Heinrichs et al., 2005; Vossoughi, & Rodela, 2020). For example, various studies have found that some middle-class parents born in the United States did not feel the need for intervention, while foreign-born Hispanic parents tended to be open to participating in parental-advice programmes. (Ablewhite et al., 2015; Patel et al., 2011; Thamrin et al 2021). In Israel, in a report on the relationship between families and the education system, which was written for the purpose of designing policies, Greenbaum and Fried (2011) noted that there was an atmosphere of mutual suspicion between parents and teachers regardless of the parents' SES. This was similar to findings in the United Kingdom (Hornby, 2015). Such results suggest that both positive and negative experiences are related to Western contexts that include ideals and social expectations related to intensive parenting rather than simply SES.

Cultural Differences. There is sometimes a gap between parents' views about child development, their definitions of maltreatment and of proper family relationships, their aspirations for their children, the methods of control or persuasion that they see as needed for child rearing, and, on the other hand, how expert-led ideology relates to and addresses these issues. Goodnow (2002) and Witztum and Buchbinder (2001) suggest that such a gap may cause

parents to object to so-called 'good advice' because they seem to have difficulty internalizing new information. As Goodnow and others have suggested, a gap between traditional or indigenous knowledge and new information presented by professionals may lead parents to feel that they have to defend their culture (Muir et al., 2019).

Coll and Magnuson (2000) found that parents' previous experiences with racism might have contributed to a certain amount of distrust towards mainstream professionals. Levy (1985, p. 639) argued that African Americans do not know how they will be received by Whites in new situations and that their "past experiences of humiliation and discrimination produce feelings of anxiety and resentment." Consequently, they learned to anticipate poor treatment and poor results from their interactions with White Americans.

Gender Positioning. Many intervention studies have found that fathers tend not to seek expert advice, object to participating in parental-advice programmes, or if recruited, drop out and regard content as not relevant to them. Researchers suggest that this may be related to gender-role expectations and perceptions of masculine autonomy (Broadhurst, 2003; Gershby & Omer, 2017). In a study conducted in Israel, fathers were initially skeptical or oppositional, which was manifested in disparaging views of psychologists and psychotherapy, often based on a view of therapy as "soft" and "full of words" (Gershby & Omer, 2017, p. 46). Some of the fathers said that psychologists weaken parents by supplying psychological justifications for the child's misbehaviour. The fathers' resistance also manifested itself in practical ways. For example, one father refused to pay for sessions, another father spoke on his cell phone during sessions, and yet another father refused to speak to the co-therapists supporting the therapy between the sessions. Gershby and Omer (2017) explain this by invoking the notion of masculine autonomy but also noted that the mothers did not "make place" for the fathers to be engaged in the intervention. Gershby and Omer (2017) and others suggest that high levels of spouse conflict, and the fact that fathers are not intensively involved in caring for their child leads to fathers not seeking parental advice or dropping out (Broadhurst, 2003).

Intervention studies focusing on new fathers who have adopted intensive parenting ideology but have nevertheless chosen not to engage with parental advice report some

differences between mothers and fathers' respective negative experiences (Cabrera et al., 2017; Tully et al., 2017). Tully et al. (2017, p. 7) note that father's beliefs about help-seeking are typically: "I don't feel like my child's behaviour is a problem" and "I don't feel like I need help with my parenting" and attribute such an experience to masculine autonomy. In the United Kingdom, the seven main barriers identified as preventing fathers from engaging in parenting programmes were cultural, institutional, professional, operational, content-related, resource-related factors, as well as policy considerations regarding how they were designed and delivered (Panter-Brick, 2014). While fathers' explanations are similar to those of mothers, O'Brien (2005) found that fathers' opposition to receiving parental advice is a result of both exclusion by practitioners and by the fathers themselves. Domine et al. (2011) show that in the context of the Canadian child welfare system, fathers felt that therapists always blame the parents for the child's problems. Other fathers expressed concerns that changing their response to the child's behaviour following treatment would destroy their relationship with the child or worsen the child's condition. Some of the fathers were aware of their child's problematic behaviour but stated that they did not experience the child's behaviour directly. The problem was often described as a problem between the mother and the child, or as a result of the mother's ineffective management.

In sum, intervention studies demonstrate that the phenomenon of parents who refuse to enroll in parental intervention programmes, drop out of such programmes, fail to implement advice they receive in such programmes, or reject the ideology communicated in such programmes is a very prevalent one. Interventionists nevertheless suggest that these parents have so-called *barriers* to participating. This implies that if such barriers were removed, these parents would participate and cooperate. However, in intervention studies that controlled such barriers, many parents still did not participate in parental-advice programmes. Studies show that parents' experiences are on a scale from parents who simply view advice as not suitable for them or their child to parents who experienced intensive negative feelings such as stress since they feel that they are being judged or blamed.

Parenting Culture Studies: Parents' Negative Experiences of Receiving Parental Advice

In contrast to interventionist studies, parenting culture studies have revealed more nuanced aspects of parents' negative experiences.

Feeling Guilty. Some mothers from different social classes said they felt guilty when they chose not to embrace dominant parental advice, for example, when they chose not to breastfeed their infants. Mothers in the United Kingdom described themselves as not doing their job as mothers, as a failure in relation to their decision not to breastfeed (Faircloth, 2010, 2013; Knaac, 2006; Lee, 2008; Lee & Bistrav, 2009; Lee & Furreddi, 2005). Lee reported that these findings were at a time when most mothers in the United Kingdom did not follow both government and professional recommendations to breastfeed in the first six months of an infant's life (Lee, 2008) and yet felt guilty. Furedi (2002) also notes that guilt and failure are typical feelings for working mothers in response to the ideology of attachment parenting promoted by intervention studies. Similarly, Wall's (2010) reported that mothers felt guilty when they decided not to schedule their children for extra-curricular activities, which meant that these mothers were not accepting the parental advice to invest in their children as much as possible.

Not Accepting Parental-Advice Ideology. Not all parents agree with parental advice that assumes that there is a small window of opportunity during which children can be influenced, and that the early years could be detrimental for the child's long-term well-being. The upper-middle class, and well-educated mothers interviewed by Wall (2010) expressed skepticism about the discourse of risk with its overriding emphasis on the preschool years for enhancing brain development. Mothers were also conscious of taking parts of the information and adapting it to their own parenting philosophies. Cucchiara (2013) describes the emergence of a movement of middle-class parents who send their children to a public school as part of a rejection of contemporary helicopter parenting. Faircloth (2013) reports French mothers objecting to what they term the *breastfeeding culture*. In *The Hip Mama Survival Guide*, Gore (1998) embraces the joys of uncertainty as she unfolds the chaos theory of mothering and criticizes the culture that places the mother on a scale of a hierarchy of excellence (Lee, 2014).

In addition, parenting culture studies demonstrate that even though fathers do not explicitly object to expert parenting ideology, their involvement in parenting tends to be less intensive and less stressful compared to mothers' experiences (Dermott, 2003, 2006, 2008; Doucet, 2018; Faircloth, 2014; Gillies, 2007, 2008; Miller, 2011; Owen, 2010, 2013; Shirani et al., 2012). In their study of British fathers in the transition to fatherhood, Shirani et al. (2012) describe the importance that they attributed to autonomous decision-making over following advice given by experts. They also note that despite increased involvement in childcare, men appear to be relatively insulated against the demands of interventionist ideology of parental advice. In addition, the fathers in their study expressed a rejection of hyper-materialism. One father's comments reflect an understanding of intensive parenting as a middle-class phenomenon (Fox 2009). This father describes his determination to go against this discourse of risk-aversion as he deemed it as ultimately costly for his child. These participants had limited time and economic resources to invest in their children as they were currently unemployed and were not coresidential fathers. Like other men in the sample, they rejected 'expert' information or internet advice sites and instead expressed confidence in their own approach as parents. One father said that he takes advice from his father and people close to him but not from the internet or from experts. Owen et al. (2010, p. 395-396) reported that fathers rejected advice regarding food. Specifically, they noted that ..." being a 'good' parent is to feed children appropriately: to provide the right amount of food in socially-accepted forms and contexts, and to safeguard against the risks associated with unsafe or unhealthy food." However, the fathers viewed their children as entitled to personal food preferences, drawing on notions of *individual choice, modern childhood, and democratised family life*. Dermott (2008) reported similar findings.

Senano (2013) noted that working-class mothers may actively resist expert advice contrasting it to indigenous advice, since the latter was more suited to their everyday challenges. Some mothers from the Dominican Republic but working in Madrid preferred the norms of their own social class, and their indigenous norms of parenting over those of White Western middle-class parents.

Feeling Angry and Blaming Advisers. Some mothers described feeling anger towards those providing parental advice. For example, in a sample of undocumented Hispanic parents in Durham in the United States, mothers blamed the school for their child's low achievements. These parents considered the school's expectations of parental involvement to be the sign of a weak school system (Berry, 2013). Fox et al. (2009, p. 553) reported that middle-class mothers in the United Kingdom rejected advice just because they found the so-called pregnancy "police" to be stressful for them. In *Mothers Know Best*, Nathanson and Camille (2008) advocate rejecting advice that might jeopardise the mother's well-being. They emphasise that middle- and upper-class mothers might feel there is no place for their personal voice within absolute truths and that others, namely, 'experts', know best how mothers should feel, and what they experience and should do. Hoffman (2013) interviewed well-educated mothers and found that they expressed anger at advisors, blaming them for advice that actually endangered their child; for example, the common advice offered by experts to place a child who had misbehaved in "time out." These mothers believed in other strategies, such as talking to the child.

Below I examine the factors that might shape parents' subjective negative experiences and attitudes towards parental advice as found by parenting culture studies.

Intensive Parenting Culture. Parenting culture associates suggest that some parents object to 'intensive parenting culture' simply because of the stress, pressure, and burden it creates. Fox et al (2009) suggest that contemporary mothers who object to diet and health recommendations during pregnancy do so as a response to policymakers and the social discourse that claims that pregnant women are not "docile bodies" "...within a surveillance society and reveal the ways in which such knowledge can also be used to resist and empower (at least to certain sections of the population who have the education or resources to do so)" (Fox, 2009, p. 560). Parenting culture studies show that mothers' guilt, anger, and stress reflect judgements of intensive parenting culture. For example, Lee (2007, 2014) interprets mothers' decision not to breastfeed their infants not as a practical matter, but rather as a response to moral pressure. Herrero-Arias et al. (2020) report parents' rejection of the perceived child-centred ethos, in which they are asked to protect children from multiple risks, and simultaneously to expose them to risk in order to develop children's resilience.

Moreover, intensive parenting culture, which includes receiving parental advice to perfect parenting skills, is the dominant approach in neoliberal societies and encourages personal responsibility and individualism (Faircloth, 2010, 2013; Lee, 2014, 2007). This may result in pressure on parents who do not embrace parental advice or feel judged and blamed and might therefore be angry and object to intensive parenting culture (Berry, 2013).

In addition, parenting culture studies show that some mothers' negative experiences are influenced by other norms that shape parents' decisions and practices. Based on studies conducted in France, Faircloth (2013) noted that French parents prefer more distant relations, maintaining separate beds and bedrooms for their infants, and engaging in less body contact, in part because they believe that separateness fosters independence in children. This might shape some mothers to object to the dominant child-centered practices. Herrero-Arias et al. (2020) demonstrated that the mothers in their sample preferred collectivistic child rearing practices. Scholars suggest that fathers are socially conditioned to reject receiving parental advice due to their desire for masculine autonomy (Dermott & Miller, 2015). Parental culture studies mostly focus on the gap between 'real people' and the morals of the 'intensive parenting culture' (Furedi 2002; Hulbert, 2004; Lee, 2014; Sedano, 2013). Scholars affiliated with parental culture studies suggest that there is not just one parenting culture and that there are different personal voices as well as practical issues, all which might influence parents to reject receiving parental advice or object to its ideology.

In sum, parenting culture studies that explored the experience of some middle- and upper-class parents who chose not to apply the most prevalent expert advice found that some middle-class mothers reported feeling guilty or as a failure since they had not applied the parental advice received. Some middle- and upper-class mothers said they were skeptical of the ideology of parental advice. In addition, some mothers felt angry at what they considered the 'social police' and many parents from low SESs expressed anger towards those professionals providing parental advice. In general, fathers were more selective in implementing parental advice and seemed to be less stressed than the mothers upon receiving specific parental advice. Parenting culture scholars explain these experiences as resulting from the pressure of intensive parenting ideology within a neoliberal society. Moreover, according to some

parenting culture studies, some parents who reject parental advice are from cultures that have other norms and parental practices that might contradict the ideology of parental advice.

Conclusion

Upon my review of the two dominant approaches to parental advice—intervention studies and parenting culture studies—I have concluded that parents’ experiences have not yet been fully explored. The intervention studies failed to take the culture of intensive parenting into account when describing the fact that parents either fail to engage in parental advice or have negative reactions to parental advice. On the other hand, while the parenting culture studies do point out the negative effects of the pressure of intensive parenting culture, they often fail to address the fact that some parents sometimes wish to receive parental advice nonetheless.

One substantial finding that I found in studies of both the above approaches, including in intervention studies undertaken in Israel, was that the negative experiences and objection to or rejection of parental advice are very prevalent but are also complex. Studies of both approaches show that parents’ negative experiences are on a scale between parents who simply view advice as not suitable for them or their child, with mainly fathers who are sceptic, and parents—mainly mothers and poor parents, although it must be noted that social groups are not homogenous—who experienced intensive negative feelings, which included feeling stress, the burden of expectations, and of being blamed or judged. Researchers are divided regarding the question of whether some aspects of parents’ negative experiences can be addressed, thus removing some barriers to parents’ participation in parental-advice programmes.

The gap in how parents’ negative experiences are portrayed and understood is due to differences in the researchers’ worldviews. Interventionists assume that parents basically want to invest in their children. Based on this assumption, they conduct research into what works or fails to engage parents. These intervention studies have not explored how the culture of professional parenting itself may have contributed to shaping parents’ experiences. In contrast, parenting culture are critical of interventionists’ assumptions regarding parenthood and

parents and view interventionists as a source of power and pressure. Yet they fail to consider how inner motivation to invest in children might also have shaped parents' experiences. Thus, a combined approach that investigates parents' experiences of receiving parental advice—both as a cultural phenomenon but also as a reflection of everyday parental practices—is required.

Studies in both of the above approaches also reported that some parents reported being helped, had acquired knowledge, and felt supported by the parental advice that they received. However, intervention studies demonstrate a gap in parents' reports of positive experiences, since they note that many parents accept the need for parental advice, have the social capital, and have no objective barriers. Nevertheless, intervention studies stress the considerable effort required to engage parents. Parenting culture scholars who suggest a portrait of mothers who have internalized the values and words of parental professionalism as well as the social norms included in expectations regarding motherhood and what constitutes family life do not supply sufficient explanations for why some mothers do embrace parental advice while others in the same social groups do not. These gaps suggest a need to further investigate parents' positive experiences.

I have undertaken the current study to more fully understand parents' subjective experiences in receiving parental advice.

Chapter 3: Socio-Political Characteristics and Parental Advice in Israel

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the intensive parenting culture in Israel and the relevant socio-political characteristics. Based on Israel's Declaration of Independence, which was ratified in 1948, Israel is defined as a Jewish and democratic State (and its non-Jewish citizens were guaranteed equal rights) and mainly originated out of the need to establish a safe haven for Jewish people who came from the Arab world and from Europe, especially following the Holocaust. The diverse migratory journeys of Israel's citizens are thought to have resulted in different parenting practices and traditions (Almog, 2016). In addition, all parenting practices were influenced by social transitions that occurred in Israel and which have moved towards neoliberal norms, according to which people are expected to take individual responsibility.

Moreover, in view of the centrality of Judaism in Israeli culture, some parenting practices derive from the biblical tradition that advocated authoritarian methods of child rearing, such as demonstrated by the proverb "spare the rod and spoil the child" (Proverbs, 13:24). This worldview contributed to shaping the autocratic-authoritarian parent, which is a model with a clear hierarchical family order. In this family model, the parents are at the top of the hierarchy. Traditionally, this was especially the father, who was responsible for educating and controlling the children. After the eighteenth century, Western psychological conceptions of children and childhood changed this traditional view of children, ultimately leading to the image of an innocent and helpless creature who needs love and forgiveness (Maoz & Niv, 2015) and of the Jewish mother at the center of family life (Gasztold, 2013).

As noted in the literature review above, intensive parenting culture was endorsed in Israel at a very early stage. *Mother and Child* was already published in Hebrew in 1933 (Meir & Revka) to guide mothers with regard to everyday practices of hygiene (Stoler-Lis, 2003). Psychological and child developmental guidance appeared at the same time as in the United States. For example, Dr Spock's famous book *Baby and Child Care* (Spock, 1958; Hebrew version: 1965), and Rudolf Dreikurs's *Children: The Challenge* (1964; Hebrew version: 1979) were both translated into Hebrew and published in Israel (Almog, 2004). Over the years, two

main approaches to parental guidance have become popular in Israel. One of these is the classical Freudian psychoanalytic model and its successors, mainly the proponents of attachment theory. This mainly includes the ideology of child-centred attachment parenting that encourages parents to change themselves in favour of their child's outcomes. One practical book for parents written in Hebrew is *Parents and Children and What Is Between Them* (Katzenelson, 2005).

The other prominent approach is the Adlerian model. The first Adlerian school for parents in Israel was established by Achi Yotam in 1963. Adlerian counselling is mainly based on democratic practices that include mutual cooperation and shared decision making (Oryan & Ben-Asher, 2018). Parents are encouraged to acquire the parental skills to facilitate "correct" behavior towards their children.

However, some psychologists felt that parents' authority was jeopardized by popular child-centred and democratic PA. They therefore emphasised more authoritative parental practices. An example is *Parents as Leaders* (Amit, 2006). In addition, parental advice given by either Israeli professionals or parents are today widely available on the internet, as well as on television shows and in popular magazines. In 2011, a survey conducted by the Israeli National Council for the Child reported that 45% parents in their sample said that parenting requires a license, 52% said they feel they need PA, and 77% defined themselves as democratic in their parenting style. While intensive parenting culture, which encourages parents to seek advice, is dominant in Israel, some scholars and data gathered suggest that in real life many parents do not seek PA. Interestingly, it is important to note that most Israeli scholars, psychologists, sociologists, or journalists are not familiar with intensive parenting culture studies. Very few scholars in Israel are associates of the Center of Parenting Culture Studies at the University of Kent in the United Kingdom. An example of scholars who do associates themselves with intensive parenting culture studies is Golden and Erdreich (2014).

However, some Israeli sociologists have studied the sociology of parenting in Israel but have not focused on parenting from the point of view of the intensive parenting culture. Stoler-Liss (2003) analyzed books published in Hebrew that provided parents with advice on raising

children. She described the ways in which the Zionist ethos was reflected in these books. Maoz & Niv (2015) reported the experience of parents in Israel who are influenced by the expectation reflected in social discourse that parents need to be happy in their role.

The idea of the centrality of the family has a long tradition in Judaism. Compared to other OECD countries, Israel today has the highest marriage rate, the lowest divorce rate, and the highest number of children per family. In 2022, the fertility rate is 2.9 children per woman in Israel, while in the other OECD countries, the fertility rate is 1.6 per woman. There are three main reasons for this phenomenon, namely, the traditional biblical commandment of 'be fruitful and multiply' (Genesis, 1:28), the Holocaust, which left Israelis with a sense of insecurity about the future of the nation, and the Zionist ethos, which considers a high birth rate to be a national asset that adds to the security of a small nation. This Zionist ethos is expressed by the idiom of the mother as the *national womb* (Almog, 2004). As some scholars have stated, parenting is an emotionally intense issue for the Israeli parent (Choen, 2007; Maoz & Niv, 2015).

Some Israeli studies point out some contradictions in role expectations both for mothers and fathers. Mor and Gai (1995) surveyed 3000 Israeli mothers. They found that 85% of the mothers considered being a wife and a mother to be their most important roles. However, from the beginning of the State, mothers were expected to help in building the country by working (Almog, 2014). The percentage of working women in Israel in 2019 was also the highest among the OECD countries. In 2019, 77% of the mothers were working, two thirds in full time job. Secular and college-educated Jewish mothers tend to return to work earlier after delivery than mothers who are less educated. In the last ten years, more children attend daycare between birth to age three (Taub Center for Social Policy Studies in Israel, 2022). Lavee (2016) suggests low-income mothers also work to foster their children's social inclusion in the middle class. Due to intensive parenting culture, the perception of the role of Israeli fathers has changed. They are now expected to be more involved and caring (Almog & Almog, 2016). Still, the Taub Center (2022) found that in recent years there were no differences in fathers' employment patterns before and during the first year after delivery.

Moreover, historically, programs providing parental advice in Israel in the context of school, social welfare, and other parental interventions dictated how parents should behave towards their children. For example, Noy (2014) wrote the book *Whose Child Is This? The Relationship Between Parents and Schools*. She discusses the tension between parents and school staff (e.g., counsellors and teachers) and parents' wish to be heard. Parents were expected to follow instructions and advice given by teachers or social workers. Designers of parental policies in the government noted that this approach was essential since many parents were immigrants and needed to be educated on how to raise the 'new Jewish Zionist child'. Another example was of kibbutz parents, whose children lived in separate children's quarters apart from their babies. Gradually parents have demanded to be more involved. Various studies describe an atmosphere of mistrust and stress between parents and parental advice providers, with parents mainly claimed to be over involved (e.g., Shectman & Boshrian 2015). However, parental advice in Israel today is sporadic, is not governed by a national policy, and has mainly been privatized (Knesset Research and Information Center, 2014).

Israel combines a neoliberal system and norms, on the one hand, and some characteristics of a welfare state with subsidized medical care on the other hand (Taub Center for Social Policy Studies in Israel, 2020). In addition, collectivist values prominent in the public discourse have also resulted in a lack of clarity regarding who is responsible for the child's outcomes (Suzkerberg-Cohen, 2016). Information gathered by the Israeli Bureau of Statistics suggest that the middle class in Israel comprises a broad section of the population, while the proportion of families from low SES is smaller compared to other countries (Taub Center for Social Policy Studies, 2014). Thus, most Israeli parents can afford to receive parental advice. Yet, according to the Knesset Research Center (2014), many parents do not willingly seek parental advice since they are afraid to be considered "bad parents". Some Israeli scholars believe that Israeli parents are not child-centred enough and therefore do not seek parental advice (Sagi & Dolev, 2001). Sagi and Dolev (2001) suggest that the most prominent value in Israeli society—namely, being a *sabar*—might help to explain why many Jewish Israeli parents do not seek PA. The Hebrew word *sabar* refers to the native cactus plant that has spines or spikes on the outside while the fruit itself soft and sweet. The term is used as a metaphor for

Israelis and originally represented Israelis' revolutionism, pride, and even arrogance. Almog (1977) suggests that parents' rejection of authority and hierarchy is expressed by the idiom "Don't tell me what to do!" (Almog, 1997).

A specific community that needs to be considered among Israeli Jewish parents are ultra-Orthodox parents. Members of the ultra-Orthodox community—also known as *Haredi*—distinguish themselves by their external appearance and their tendency to insulate themselves from the effects of modernization by generally living in clearly-delineated neighbourhoods noted for their uncompromising adherence to the strictest versions of *Halacha*, that is, Jewish religious law (Bilu & Witztum, 1994). According to the Israel Central Bureau of Statistics (2016), 25% Jewish people defined themselves as traditional, 16% as religious and 14% as Ultra-Orthodox. Traditionally, ultra-Orthodox parents have addressed questions pertaining to child rearing to rabbinical authorities. However, medical care, as well as other everyday facilities, have has been the few the domains in which the ultra-Orthodox community remains dependent on practitioners outside of the community. Gemara et al. (2021) and others highlight the gaps between the ultra-Orthodox Jewish community and social workers and other professionals who have adopted Western views regarding parental advice but also note that these practitioners try to adjust to this community based on shared values such as love and care for the child. Studies conducted on what works to engage ultra-Orthodox parents in receiving parental advice have found that these parents seek parental advice out of a sense of religious mission to provide the best care for the child (Manor-Binyamini (2012). Gemara et al. (2021) interviewed ultra-Orthodox parents and found that the interviewees themselves repeatedly raised the concept of love as having an immunizing effect against risk. In a sense, this coincides with the child-centered approach of Western interventionist psychologists. Some scholars show that there has been a gradual change in the fathers' role withing ultra-Orthodox families since many Israeli ultra-Orthodox fathers are expected to study Torah full time, so that only the mothers work. Some scholars suggest that this has led to a circumstantial change in the attitude towards feminism as well as a change in the perception of traditional roles (Wagner, 2015).

In sum, on the one hand, professional parenting and intensive parenting ideology have been endorsed in Israel, which seemed to go hand in hand with the Zionist ethos to raise the new Jewish child who is perfect in both body and mind. There has also been a transition towards a democratic and neoliberal society in which individual responsibility is encouraged. Although most parents have the facilities to engage in receiving PA, intensive parenting culture seems to contradict some aspects Israeli society, especially collectivist ideology that demands sacrificing children (who belong to the nation and therefore are expected to go to the army, protect the nation in war, etc.) and traditional family perceptions, which view the parent as the top of the hierarchy, with the family in the center, rather than the child. In analyzing how Israeli parents experience receiving parental advice, it is necessary to consider the contradictions between individualistic and collectivistic trends in Israeli society.

Chapter 4. Methodology

Introduction

This study explores how Jewish Israeli parents of school-age children from the greater Tel Aviv area in Israel experience receiving parental advice in the context of intensive parenting culture. Parental advice is defined as any directions that parents receive related to aspects of raising their children, such as emotional, developmental, educational, and nutritional topics, as well as everyday challenges and practices. Parental advice may be professional or lay advice, and it may be given in formal or informal settings. The aim of this chapter is to provide an overview of the theoretical framework and chosen methodology for this research, which is by means of a qualitative in-depth interview, as well as to explain my decision-making processes related to the methodology of this study.

As discussed in the literature review, there are two main approaches in the literature that address the issue of parents' experiences in receiving PA. One approach is that of intervention studies, which are based on either quantitative or qualitative research methods, or both. These studies mostly focus on specific advice in a specific context, such as a specific parental group, or specific advice given. This limits the scope of interactions between parents and advisers to a narrow and controlled context. Qualitative methods here are most often short and are usually recorded and sometimes extended to semi-structured interviews. This study also gathered such data as how many parents participated and demographic characteristics (Lodder et al 2021). These studies mainly report evidence of some parents' positive experiences, although some intervention studies also report that many parents did not seek PA, dropped out of interventions, or reported negative experiences. Such parents were described as having internal or external barriers to enjoying PA. Thus, since these studies mostly use randomized controlled trials (RCT), they only reflect a narrow spectrum of parents' experiences. In order to obtain a wider view, the RCT methodology needs to be replaced with a more natural phenomenological approach employing in-depth interviews.

The other approach is that of parenting culture studies, which are based on qualitative methods that include long-term ethnographic fieldwork (Faircloth 2013), fieldwork focusing on

a specific context such as a perinatal unit (Ballif 2020), or a discourse analysis of written material such as newspapers (Budds 2021). This group of researchers' conception of parenting is mainly as a cultural phenomenon. Part of this culture is parents' engagement or experience of parental advice given to them in both formal and informal contexts. Parenting culture scholars deconstruct the power relationships, the social or professional discourse and reveal the less positive aspects of receiving parental advice as reported by parents who engage in it proactively and also by parents who are merely exposed to the culture of parental advice. These researchers have taken anthropological and sociological perspectives and are concerned with power and the construction of meaning and identities. From these theoretical perspectives, parental advice is understood as a social construct. These researchers (e.g., Faircloth et al., 2013; Lee et al., 2014) investigate how parental advice creates the conditions in which parents practice parenting. Parenthood, it is argued, is a consequence of the relationship between parents and parental culture and parental advice is considered part of parental culture. Research questions posed by parental culture associates (e.g, Lee et al., 2014) most often focus on the discourse and culture of parental advice and how these impact the understanding of parental roles, parental identity, and parental behaviour. However, this approach tends to underestimate the agency and involvement of the parents themselves, rather positing parents as victims of advice or control, with little attention to parents' own involvement in and subjective experience of parental advice. Thus, the methods which are used by parenting culture researchers are qualitative but what these scholars understand as subjective is actually cultural identity. Indeed, according to parenting culture scholars, parental practices are a reflection or a response to the intensive parenting culture that surrounds them. Parents' internal feelings are always a reflection of this culture, whether they embrace or reject this culture. Similarly, unlike the interventionists, parenting culture scholars do not attribute great significance to the parent's personal history.

The current study is inspired by Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model of researching human behaviour that incorporates both internal aspects and the environment in which behaviour occurs (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1986, 2005; Bronfenbrenner & Ceci, 1994). If Bronfenbrenner's model is applied to PA, then it is essential to consider the different settings in

which parents receive PA, their direct interactions with parental advice as well as their indirect experience of PA, such as through national policies or social norms, which include recommended practices—for example, those related to breast feeding—that influence parents’ practices. Bronfenbrenner asserts that psychological research is asymmetrical and emphasise the properties of the individual rather than those of the environment. He notes that the environment is only considered in general, both in theory and in terms of the data. “The existing concepts are limited to a few crude and undifferentiated categories that do little more than locate people in terms of their social address, the setting from which they come” (p. 17). Like parenting culture scholars, Bronfenbrenner views human nature as plural and pluralistic, “particularly in the ways in which the culture or subculture brought up its next generation. The process and product of making human beings human clearly varied by place and time” (Bronfenbrenner 1979 p. xiii). In contrast to interventionists, Bronfenbrenner’s understanding of the environment “as perceived rather than as it may exist in “objective” reality “(p. 4).

In contrast to anthropological research, Bronfenbrenner proposes that the understanding of human beings requires the examination of “multiperson systems of interaction not limited to a single setting and must take into account aspects of the environment beyond the immediate situation containing the subject. In the absence of such a broadened perspective, much of contemporary research can be characterized as the study of development-out-of-context” (p. 21). I have therefore chosen the context of analysis for this study to be parental advice in Israel. Like Bronfenbrenner, I suggest combining the theoretical conceptions of the naturalistic approach with the experimental approach. However, unlike Bronfenbrenner, who used a mixture of quantitative and qualitative research methods, in this study I only applied qualitative methods consisting of in-depth interviews and thematic analysis.

Methodological Orientation

Overview

This purpose of this study is to provide an understanding of how 13 parents of school-age children in the greater Tel Aviv area in Israel experience receiving parental advice—for

example, advice on education, discipline, feeding/nutrition, socialisation, and emotional issues—given to them either directly or indirectly. That is, the study explores the parents’ experience when they seek advice or receive unelicited advice. In order to illustrate the suitability of the qualitative in-depth interview approach with regard to this aim, it is important to present a clear argument of why a qualitative methodology is the most appropriate way to address my research questions, and to demonstrate the epistemological and ontological orientation of the research.

Introduction to Qualitative Research

Although qualitative research is a broad methodological approach that encompasses different research methods, researchers who turn to qualitative methods are mostly interested in how and why a person understands the world in a certain way (King et al., 2008). This is in contrast to quantitative research, which focuses on ‘how much’, ‘where’, and ‘when’. Since my research questions focus on ‘how’ parents understand and experience advice, qualitative research is most appropriate.

Furthermore, there are commonalities for this theoretical framework which I find most suitable for the current study, namely, flexible guidelines for data collection and data analysis, a commitment to remain close to the world being studied, and the development of integrated theoretical concepts grounded in data that show processes, relationships, and social world connectedness (Denzin, 2007). This will enable me to uncover parents’ personal perspectives on advice, and how their family and personal life has shaped their perspectives and experience.

Qualitative research also enables me to uncover areas not suitable for quantitative research. For example, while conducting a quantitative study would give me information, let’s say, of how many parents have participated in a specific context in which parental advice is provided, this would only yield a very narrow description of experience. When conducting qualitative research, the researcher is not looking for an objective truth; rather, what matters is how people experience, shape, and reshape their identity, while interacting reciprocally with their environment (Bronfenbrenner, 2005). The experience of parents would be better captured using a qualitative approach rather than a quantitative one. In such a research design,

the number of participants may often be relatively small, as the emphasis is on personal and ideographic experience as opposed to trying to test a preconceived hypothesis with a large sample (Smith, 2004). However, the qualitative approach also has various limitations. Although understanding refers to conclusions and knowledge, the qualitative approach is not intended to be statistically significant, but rather is used to learn something which could not be learned through a quantitative study. In addition, as a result of this inquiry, new questions may arise that could lead to further insights as well as questions to be investigated in future research.

Ontology and Epistemology

Similar to Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model of understanding human beings, this research accepts the broad assumptions of phenomenological ontology that reality exhibits itself through the structure of an everyday living situation and is inseparable from the actors as well as the context (Fuenmayor, 1991). In that sense, phenomenological ontology holds a realist viewpoint, meaning that there is such a thing as 'a parent', or 'adviser' although the interpretation of what constitutes a parent is subjective and context-dependent. The influences of nature and social forces are bidirectional; in this sense, this study does not naïvely state that there are no parental practices or parental roles. However, this study does not assume that objective advice exists; nor does it assume that there is one right definition of what constitutes 'good parenting'. Phenomenological ontology was developed at the end of the nineteenth century by philosophers Martin Heidegger and Maurice Merleau-Ponty. Heidegger explains phenomenology by examining the meaning of the term:

"The Greek expression φαυτόμευου, to which the term "phenomenon" goes back, is derived from the verb φαίεσθαι, which signifies "to show itself." Thus, φαυτόμευου means that which shows itself, the manifest. φαίεσθαι itself is a middle-voiced form which comes from φαίω – to bring to the light of day, to put in the light. Φαίω comes from the stem φα – like φῶζ, the light, that which is bright – in other words, that wherein something can become manifest, visible in itself. Thus we must keep in mind that the expression "phenomenon" signifies that which shows itself in itself, the manifest" (Heidegger, 1962, p. 51; in Fuenmayor, 1991, p. 2).

Thus, phenomenology has emerged over the last hundred years, and has been accompanied by other schools of thought that share several ideas with it, particularly the intention of understanding a reality where the observer cannot be torn away from the object of study. These approaches share the intention of studying our compromise with reality within the transcendental unity in which knowledge takes place (Fuenmayor, 1991). In this study, the research question that follows such an ontology would be: "What is the lived experience of receiving parental advice?" In a phenomenological sense, *experience* refers not just to a concrete situation, but can be a revived memory of advice that the parent encountered in the past.

With regard to the tension between researchers who believe that partial (or even full) foundations of knowledge might be established (positivism), and those who embrace a more thoroughgoing form of relativism, phenomenological epistemology represents an independent philosophical alternative (Biceaga, 2010).

Having chosen an appropriate methodology, the next step was to select the method of data collection best suited to this methodology. In the next section, I will show how in-depth interviews enable the phenomenology of parents' experience to reveal itself.

Data Collection Method

Prior to collecting the data, it is important to consider what the broader aims of the study are. For this particular project, the aim was to gather a rich description of how a sample of parents experienced receiving parental advice. This was mainly done based on Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model, focusing on how a parent feels, perceives, and interprets his or her microsystem, which Bronfenbrenner defined ... "as a pattern of activities, roles, and interpersonal relations experienced by the developing person in a given setting with particular physical and material characteristics" (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Definition 2, p 22) . In contrast to Bronfenbrenner, who preferred to collect data about the external system, such as the education system, I decided to collect the data directly from parents in order to understand their specific perspective and how their environment has shaped their perspectives. . However, with Bronfenbrenner's ecological system approach in mind, it was important for me to cover

both parents' experiences. That is, I aspired to see if there is a pattern between shared parents' experience of parental advice, as they are exposed to the same culture and influence each other's experience. The child's perspective is also important here since he or she are also part of this system. However, due to research limitations, it was not possible to include children in this study.

I conducted semi-structured in-depth interviews with mothers and fathers. In-depth interviews are characteristic to methodologies that are focused on the subjects from an interpretative point of view (Shkedi, 2011). In this way, I was able to elicit rich data on parents' views and experience. Below I outline the specific type of semi-structured in-depth interview that I considered the best choice for this study.

The In-depth Interview

Although it is very difficult to define what is meant by the concept of *depth* (Wengraf 2001, in Duncan 2011) I will discuss this here by drawing on the work of Wengraf. He distinguishes between two meanings of the notion of *depth*:

1. To get more detailed knowledge about the research questions.
2. To get a sense of how the apparently straightforward is actually more complicated, and of how 'surface appearances' may be quite misleading about 'depth realities'.

I embrace his second definition. In my interviews of parents, I sought to focus on trying to differentiate between what parents felt that they were expected to say, and what they would allow themselves to say in a more sincere, open-minded, and non-judgmental discussion. Wengraf suggests that an in-depth interview is required when a researcher attempts to describe a certain culture from the subjective experience of the individuals, and at the same time is interested in how the cultural experience shapes the identity of the individual. 'Depth' here means focusing on individuals' experiences and the interpretations that people ascribe to themselves about these experiences, events, and changes, and the developments that have occurred in their lives in relation to this culture.

In my study, I interpreted the concept of an in-depth interview as employing a wide lens, as opposed to a narrow one. In this sense, I accept the interpretation by Josselson et al. (2015) of 'depth', in the sense of getting the broadest picture. Thus, I strove to explore the complexities of the parents' experience, positioning myself in a not-knowing stance (White 2007) as much as possible to allow participants to share their experiences and interpretations that were not familiar to me, or did not conveniently fit into my worldview.

The Participants

The sampling criteria for my study were parents (single, in a relationship, or divorced) who had at least one child between the ages of 11-14 years. Within this age range, children are in transition from elementary school to junior high school, and from early childhood to adolescence. During this period, parents may encounter many issues pertaining to their children's development. At this stage, parents might therefore be more reflective on how to cope with these issues and might therefore contemplate seeking PA. One of my reasons for choosing this age group is that I assumed that these parents would already have had some direct or indirect encounters with PA, which may have occurred in different phases of their parenting. Over a period of several months (May 2018 to August 2018), I recruited 13 parents, both to allow some diversity in the parents' social characteristics and to reach a point at which I felt that I had obtained a variety of points of view and answers that fully explored the topic of parents' experience of receiving PA. The length of each interview ranged from 1.5 to 2.5 hours. Josselson et al. (2015) recommended one interview for qualitative research so that participants are still fully cooperative. She also notes that when more than one interview is conducted, some participants drop out.

As for different types of interviewees—for example, gender, SES, and level of religiosity—these were derived from my research questions. I sought to understand how gender, age, or other social characteristics might have shaped and influenced parents' different experiences. Participants were recruited according to the following criteria: gender (female/male); social class (lower-middle class/middle class/upper-middle class); level of religiosity (religious/secular); and type of parenting (couple/single parent). Participants were

asked to fill out a background questionnaire that included more information about their socio-economic level, educational level, and level of religiosity. Participants were also asked about the number of children in their family and the birth order of the child who was within the age range of 11 to 14 years. In addition, participants were also asked to rate the degree (from 0 to 10) to which they seek advice on issues related to parenting, advice in general, as well as advice on emotional and financial issues. All information was based on self-reporting.

In selecting participants, it was important for me to interview both parents of the same child or children, even if they were not living together. The reason for this is that within a family, each member is influenced by other family members (Minuchin 1974). It is possible that within couples, for example, the attitude of the mother towards advice would be influenced by the father's attitude. It is also very important for the aims of this study to have a substantial number of fathers among the participants, as it is usually mothers who are recruited to such studies and there are not enough fathers involved in this field of research (Cabrera et al. 2017).

As I did not focus on specific advice, or on a specific context for receiving advice, this was not a criterion for recruitment. With regard to different social characteristics, one pressure on this study is that Israeli society is a society of immigrants, and also a society in which minorities are divided into many different subgroups. These subgroups share some similarities but are also very different from each other. It was not possible to include all possible, or even dominant subgroups, not to mention that the parents themselves may represent mixed categories (for example, a parent may be half Mizrahi and half Ashkenazi; the former term refers to Jewish families who are originally from the Middle East and North Africa, while the latter term refers to Jewish families who originated in Europe).

The scope of this study is constrained by the fact that I am operating in a 'lone-scholar, no-budget' mode. I included only Jewish families headed by a heterosexual couple, divorced heterosexual parents, and one single heterosexual parent. I did not include Arab Israeli parents, because the Arab population, who make up 20% of the total Israeli population, face particular challenges and have cultural characteristics that are beyond the scope of this study. I also did not include single-sex-parent families for similar reasons. In addition, the scope of this project

was limited for practical reasons such as the availability of parents at the time of recruitment and since I myself live and work in the greater Tel Aviv Area, I sought participants in the same general area.

Ethical Considerations

This study deals with sensitive topics related to parenting and is based on semi-structured in-depth interviews. There are therefore questions and dilemmas that must be addressed before setting up and running such research (Allmark et al. 2009). Ethical considerations for this specific study will be addressed in this section.

One key ethical concern is gaining participants' informed consent as a prelude to beginning relationships with them. In this regard, I followed Padgett's (1998) guidance. Padgett (1998) presents the following basic elements of informed consent that are required for a study such as the current one:

1. A brief description of the study and its procedures as they involve participants
2. Full identification of the researcher's identity and of the supervising organisation
3. Assurance that participation is voluntary, and the respondent has the right to withdraw at any time without penalty.
4. Assurance of confidentiality
5. Explicit consent to use audiotapes of the interview during the study
6. Informing participants that one clear exception to the rule of confidentiality is the legal requirement of mandated reporting of child abuse and neglect.

The above information should be laid out in a written consent form and discussed before the initiation of any data collection.

A second crucial ethical concern is to guarantee confidentiality and anonymity to participants. Considerable measures have been taken to ensure that respondents' identities are never revealed or linked to the information they provide. Confidentially during data collection was secured by using code numbers rather than names as identification on all notes, interview

guides and tapes. Participants' names were covered with black pen on all case records collected. While travelling, raw data was kept with me at all times, and later kept in a small, locked cupboard at my home. I used my personal laptop and a hard drive as backup to store electronic data; both devices are protected by a password.

A third ethical issue concerns the politics of interviews and cultural sensitivity. As my research involves diverse subcultures and parenting contexts, some participants— such as marginalised and disadvantaged groups —may be vulnerable to feelings of inferiority. This required sensitivity on my part to make them feel comfortable. I avoided any judgmental comments referring to parental practices, allowing different perspectives to emerge regarding the issue of PA.

Another concern relates to the in-depth nature of the interviews, in which I intended to uncover details of the interviewee's experience that would be undisclosed in, say, a questionnaire. This may raise issues of boundaries. Participants may wish to have feedback from the interviewer, or couples may expect the interviewer to take sides between them. These issues of boundaries required more self-awareness and attention from my side. For example, I did not accept participants as patients; instead, I advised at the end of the research process where they could seek help. In addition, I did not intervene or make any personal reflections during the conversation, but instead just conveyed curiosity and interest and asked for clarification when needed.

Recruitment of Participants

In the process of recruiting participants, I was surprised by how highly motivated parents (including fathers) were to participate in the study. I had initially thought it would be a challenge to recruit participants because I believed that parents who had not had any prior interaction with me would be unlikely to be as motivated as they turned out to be. I wished to recruit both parents of the same child as participants, but this was not always possible for a variety of reasons. For example, in one case, the father volunteered to participate, but he said that although he had asked his wife to participate, she did not wish to participate in the

interview. In another case, a divorced mother was in conflict with her ex-husband, so I felt it was unethical to suggest that he participate.

Another challenge was the fact that parents in Israel work long hours. Moreover, parents of young children are especially busy. I had no incentives to offer for participation in the study, apart from parents' enjoyment in talking about their experiences. My hope was that Israeli parents would be interested in talking about family matters.

I expected that my profession as a psychologist might serve as an incentive for some parents to participate, while for others it might serve as a counterincentive. If a parent asked for advice during an interview, I would respond by saying that I could suggest an appropriate public clinic to assist with the specific problem. I discussed this issue further on my Ethics Form. In addition, parenting involves private issues, so I expected that some parents would probably be less enthusiastic to share their thoughts publicly.

Once the ethics board of University College of London had granted ethical approval, the recruitment process began. To recruit participants, I posted a notice about the study on a neighbourhood group's Facebook page, participants asked other parents if they were interested in being involved, and I informed my students of the study.

The recruitment notice described the field of research (that is, parenting and parental advice), and its potential interest for participants, as well as the requirements for the participants' involvement, and how to contact the interviewer. Those who expressed an interest were sent a participant information sheet (see Appendix D) as well as a consent form (see Appendix E). The forms provided more information about the research, its purpose, their potential role, and how their confidentiality would be protected. At the end, except for one person who couldn't meet face to face, all those who answered my call participated. No one dropped out.

General Profile of the Participants

All participants in this research were Jewish Israeli parents who lived in the metropolitan area of Tel-Aviv and had one or more children aged 11 to 14 years old at the time of the study. Some of the participants were parents of the same child. The age range of the parents was

between 35 and 47 years at the time of recruitment. All parents had become parents between the ages of 24 and 36. The sample included six fathers and seven mothers. Among them were three married couples, while two additional participants who were parents of the same child were divorced.

Jerusalem is the capital city of Israel, and Tel-Aviv is the financial centre and the second most populous city. The Tel-Aviv metropolitan area, within which this study took place, is the largest metropolitan area in the country, with 3.46 million inhabitants, or 42% of Israel's population. According to the Israeli Bureau of Statistics, in 2016, Tel-Aviv was rated eight out of ten in terms of its SES, compared to other cities.

Specific Characteristics of Each Participant

In order to determine the participants' social class, I combined elements of an emic and etic approach (Harris, 1976) —based on the participants' own descriptions—as well as information about their occupation and education to determine a working definition of the participants' social class. The sample of participants broadly came from a middle class background, in that they all had university education and earned around or above a middle income. However, to unpack to what extent class and/or material resources may have on parenting attitudes to and experiences of advice, I further differentiated participants into the three subgroups suggested by Ram (2007) in his analysis of Israeli society. Based on their descriptions of themselves, the three subgroups are *lower-middle class*, *middle-middle class*, and *upper-middle class*. For example, if they described themselves as struggling with finances, needing to work many hours to make ends meet, I categorized them as lower-middle class. This approach allowed for a more granular analysis of the varied experiences and perspectives within the middle class.

The basic information about each parent pertained to their social characteristics. The social characteristics under consideration include parents' gender, education level, socio-economic level, religiousness, number of children, and marital status (married/divorced/single). All information was supplied by the parents.

The education level was divided into three categories: high-school graduate (a total of 12 years of education), with a post-secondary diploma (14 years), or academic degree (15+ years). Religiousness was divided into three categories: secular, traditional, and religious. Socio-economic status was divided to three categories: Upper-middle class, middle class, and lower-middle class.

The parents' basic profile is summarised in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Parents' characteristics

Note: All participant names have been changed to protect their privacy.

Parent's name	Mother or father	Education	Socio-economic status	Religiousness	Number of children	Marital Status
Moshe Ram	Father	Academic degree (15+ years)	Middle-middle class	Traditional	3	Married
Michal Or	Mother	Post-secondary diploma (14 years)	Lower-middle class	Traditional	2	Divorce
Nina Bar	Mother	Post-secondary	Middle-middle class	Secular	1	Single

Parent's name	Mother or father	Education	Socio-economic status	Religiousness	Number of children	Marital Status
		diploma (14 years)				
Yoav Chen	Father	High school diploma (12 years)	Lower-middle class	Traditional	2	Married
Aviva Chen	Mother	Academic degree (15+ years)	Lower-middle class	Secular	2	Married
Navit Gold	Mother	Academic degree (15+ years)	Middle-middle class	Secular	3	Married
Chaim Lev	Father	High school diploma (12 years)	Middle-middle class	Secular	2	Divorced
Lora Knor (Lev)	Mother	Academic degree (15+ years)	Upper-middle class	Secular	2	Divorced

Parent's name	Mother or father	Education	Socio-economic status	Religiousness	Number of children	Marital Status
Lior Mazar	Father	High school diploma (12 years)	Lower-middle class	Religious	6	Married
Rachel Golan	Mother	Academic degree (15+ years)	Upper-middle class	Religious	6	Married
Yosef Golan	Father	Academic degree (15+ years)	Upper-middle class	Religious	6	Married
Shalom Segev	Father	Academic degree (15+ years)	Upper-middle class	Secular	3	Married
Dorit Segev	Mother	Academic degree (15+ years)	Upper-middle class	Secular	3	Married

Interview Conditions

The interviews were carried out in a different location for each participant. The participants were asked to choose their preferred date, time, and location for the interview. Four participants preferred for the interview take place in their home. Two mothers preferred

the interview to take place in the morning when no one else was home. Three participants, one couple and one father, preferred to have the interview in the evening at their homes. Two fathers preferred to have the interview outside their homes at a location convenient for them. They chose their workplace after work hours. One couple chose the mother's college as a place for the interview, and their baby was also there during the interview. Three mothers and one father were interviewed in my clinic. One preferred to do the interview after workhours, two in the morning, and one on the weekend (on Saturday). The choice of locations was mostly due to the need for a quiet area to conduct the interview where the tape-recording would not be negatively affected by other noise, and the geographical location was convenient for the participants.

Prior to the commencement of the interview, the participants were once again presented with the information sheet (Appendix D). The participants were invited to ask any questions they wished. They were then asked to sign the consent form and I confirmed and stated the steps that would be taken to ensure confidentiality. The interviews were audio-recorded. Interviews ranged from 1.5 hours to 2.5 hours in length. No time limit was set for the participants: Once they indicated to me that they had said as much as they wanted to, they were thanked, and the audio-recorder was switched off. Participants were then given a chance to speak about how they had found the experience and to ask any questions. For more personal issues that may have arisen, they were encouraged to discuss them with a suitable professional. They were thanked again for their generosity with their time and for their participation.

Pilot Interview

Although I had previous experience in interviewing as a therapist and in other research projects, I wanted to conduct a pilot study for this thesis. This pilot study included three interviews, and following each one of these interviews, conclusions were drawn. I had two reasons for why I wished to conduct a pilot study. Firstly, I wanted to practice my interviewing technique and to ensure that my opening statement was sufficient for participants to feel comfortable enough to begin and to speak openly and honestly about the subject of the study.

The second reason was more directly related to the subject of my study. I wanted to have a chance to reframe my interview questions if needed.

The pilot study involved three participants, one father and two mothers. They were chosen for inclusion in the pilot simply because they were the first ones to volunteer. Following the pilot study, I changed my opening sentence, added some questions to the interview, and prepared questions that would facilitate a more structured interview.

The opening statement in the pilot study was the following:

I am interested in parenting and in how people experience advice. I know that this is a private subject and I assure you your privacy will be respected. Please feel free to speak freely.

Throughout the interviews in the pilot study, I became aware that the very open-ended question that I had designed, which I had chosen so as not to influence the participants' focus, was a little too open-ended, and seemed to leave the participants uncertain as to what to focus on. The opening statement was then revised (see Appendix G) and invited participants to share the full picture of their experiences of parental advice without feeling that they needed to take a specific side of the discourse on PA. I felt that since I am a psychologist, I did not wish for them to feel any judgement on my part and that they necessarily had to present a positive view of PA. This allowed the discussion to be more honest.

I also concluded from the pilot interviews that the interview questions tended to lead the conversation to the cognitive level, focusing more on participants' thinking and conceptions and less on their feelings and emotions. I noticed that it was not enough to ask participants how they felt about following advice, and instead, the word 'experience' in Hebrew (*havaya*) was more suitable if I wished to elicit the participants' subjective point of view.

Method of Analysis: Approaches Considered

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)

Parental advice is not a cohesive label, recognised and utilised by a single school of researchers (Smith 1996). My understanding of the uniqueness of this method is that by using IPA, a researcher is able to explore the personal perceptions of research participants, while

acknowledging that the participant, as well as their own interpretation, are key to the account that is offered (Smith, 2004, 1996; Smith & Fieldsend, 2021). The approach focuses on the individual and emphasises individual experiences and perceptions as integral to reality. Interpretative advice therefore offers the researcher the potential to collect a rich description of the person-in-context, followed by an attempt at an interpretative account to make the information meaningful for others. Interpretative advice has been noted by some as a flexible approach. Although it places the phenomenological account at the centre of the research, it makes no theoretical assumptions about the interpretation of this account, and therefore allows discursive, cognitive, and affective elements to be recognised (Larkin, 2006).

When I first began designing this study, I viewed the interpretative phenomenological analysis as the appropriate method, since it is committed to giving voice to participants, and the interpretative requirement is to contextualise and make sense of their narratives and concerns from a psychological perspective. However, I later concluded that the proposed research questions did not seem entirely suitable for IPA. Specifically, they were concerned with social and structural influences, which are not typically the focus of IPA. Additionally, the research was intended to be a study of culture, which again requires an analytic strategy more expansive than IPA.

Grounded Theory

Grounded theory seeks to generate explanatory theories of basic social processes within the environments in which they take place. Although similar to interpretative advice in terms of how it focuses on the perspective of a group of individuals who have experienced a phenomenon, grounded theory is interested in building inductive theories through data analysis (Bryant, 2019) rather than understanding the lived experience of a phenomenon.

I considered grounded theory at an early stage in the development of the current study, with the potential aim of developing an understanding of how parents of school-age children experience and relate to parental advice in the Israeli context. However, it was eventually rejected because of the lack of idiographic focus, which meant that the researcher would have been less able to focus on individual accounts and to explore individual experiences of advice.

The Narrative Approach

The purpose of narrative research is to explore the life of a person or several people in relation to their experience on the topic being investigated. I considered the narrative approach since this approach would allow me to focus on the research question that interests me—that is, the identity formation of a parent in relation to parental advice. Eventually I decided not to adopt this approach as I did not wish to restrict my data to the way that a parent narrates her or his parenthood.

For this particular study, my interest lay in identifying of the full experience of parental advice that parents encounter throughout their parenting in different settings, regarding different child-rearing issues, including emotional, educational, and practical issues, whether the advice was given in formal settings or in informal settings by family members, spouses, or professionals. Following Braun and Clarke (2006), I believed that a process of thematic analysis would be likely to result in the desired outcome. In order for this study to reach the criteria of being a good example of thematic analysis, Braun and Clarke's (2006) 15-point checklist was followed (Appendix J).

Thematic Analysis

Phenomenological ontology and epistemology seek for the phenomenon to exhibit itself (Heidegger, 1962). This is more likely to happen in natural environments, such as in an in-depth interview, than in a laboratory. Thus, thematic analysis was chosen as an appropriate method to analyse the in-depth interviews, due to its flexible approach and accessibility for the novice researcher.

Thematic analysis is defined as the examination of themes that emerge from the data by comparing data and looking for commonalities, relationships, and differences. Thematic analysis is a procedure for dealing with themes and complements Bronfenbrenner's definition of experience, as described above. However, a researcher can apply a preformulated set of concepts to the analysis (Braun & Clarke 2006). Braun and Clarke (2006) describe how themes and patterns can be identified through an inductive (bottom-up) approach, a deductive (top-

down) approach, or both. This study approached this analysis from both perspectives, driven by my research questions during the coding process.

Moreover, a decision needs to be made with regard to the level at which the themes are to be identified. This could be at the semantic or explicit level, or at the latent or interpretative level (Boyatzis, 1998). The semantic approach identifies the themes within the explicit meanings of the data, looking very little beyond what the participant has said. This is in contrast to the latent level, which goes beyond the content of the data, exploring the underlying ideas and ideologies. For this particular study, the latent level of analysis of the identified themes was determined to be the most appropriate. My research questions were inspired by Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model, that is, the interaction between the person and his/her environment. I aimed to understand how parents experience parental advice from their subjective point of view and wanted my study to also be a study of a particular context and culture and of external influences. This required the interpretative level of analysis.

Thematic analysis offers robust strengths that are particularly suited to the complexities of my research questions, which were inspired by Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory. Firstly, it provides a systematic yet flexible approach to uncovering patterns or themes within qualitative data, enabling a nuanced exploration of both anticipated and unexpected findings (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Bronfenbrenner's theory posits that human development is influenced by interactions between individuals and their environments across different systems. Thematic analysis allowed for the examination of how parental advice-seeking behaviors are shaped within the microsystem of family interactions and influenced by the mesosystem of societal expectations, aligning with Bronfenbrenner's emphasis on the dynamic interplay between individuals and their contexts.

Moreover, thematic analysis accommodates the iterative nature of qualitative inquiry, facilitating continuous comparison and refinement of emerging themes throughout the analytic process (Nowell et al., 2017). This iterative approach was pivotal in integrating insights from Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory and other theoretical frameworks into the analysis. By enriching the interpretation of findings, thematic analysis facilitated a comprehensive

understanding of the intricate dynamics shaping parental practices within the Israeli cultural context.

Thematic analysis aligns with diverse philosophical orientations, making it adaptable to different epistemological stances within qualitative research. It can operate as an essentialist method, faithfully reporting on participants' experiences and realities within their immediate environments. Alternatively, it can adopt a constructionist perspective, exploring how societal discourses and cultural norms shape parental behaviors and beliefs. Moreover, thematic analysis can adopt a contextualist approach, bridging these perspectives by acknowledging both individual meaning-making and the broader socio-cultural influences on those meanings (Willig, 1999).

This methodological adaptability was crucial in this study, as it facilitated a nuanced exploration of how parental advice-seeking behaviors are constructed and influenced within the specific Israeli cultural context, reflecting Bronfenbrenner's concept of proximal processes where interactions between individuals and their immediate environments shape developmental outcomes. By focusing on the intersection between personal experiences and broader social contexts, thematic analysis illuminated the complex interplay between individual agency and societal norms, echoing Bronfenbrenner's emphasis on the bidirectional influences between individuals and their environments.

Stage 1: Transcription/Immersion. Initially, the interviews were transcribed verbatim in Hebrew to allow me to become immersed in the data. It was then necessary to translate the interviews into English in order to use ANOVA software for qualitative research and to use the data obtained for this project. This process allowed me to become even more immersed in the data, noting initial thoughts and identifying features of the data that appeared salient with respect to the research questions. Braun and Clarke (2006) noted that reading and repeated rereading of the data allows for immersion, while the reader actively searches for meaning and patterns in the data. Notes were taken in the initial reading stages, and I generated a summary for each parent case to facilitate the analysis.

Stage 2: Generating the Initial Codes. Once I was familiar with the data, segments of the transcripts were coded according to their relevance to the research questions (see Appendix K for the list of codes). A coded segment was marked for the most basic meaning of the raw data that could be assessed (Boyatzis, 1998). This phase was completed when I felt that I had exhausted the coding facilitated by the raw data. An example of some codes relating to the same participant is presented in Table 2 below:

Table 2. Example of coded data extracts from a case study: Yoav Chen

Data extract	Coded for
<p><i>I tell you that when I hear that on TV it does concern me, it touches me, because children grow up, and I am not there to see them. I feel bad. Not all fathers are like that. My friend is much more involved. When we went for a holiday, both families, Aviva said: look at him. How much time and effort does he invest in his children? Where are you compared to him?</i></p> <p><i>It is not accurate to say so, it depends who is the person that becomes a parent. There are parents who came from a specific background of crime and they do not really deserve to be parents. So it's not accurate, not fair to say that on all the parents, that they do not do their parenting right.</i></p> <p>IB: <i>So, it makes you angry to hear that.</i></p> <p><i>Yoav: Yes, I can be out of the home all day long, but when they need me, I am there. And it's not just economically, I am there when they need me. So to say that I am not a good parent because I am not at home because I am working, it's not fair at all. I am not working for myself. I am working for them, so they can have a shower, to have electricity. And now that she is not working, all the house is on one person. So it's</i></p>	<p>Contradictions – he has internalized the dominant professional culture of intensive parenting but does not apply this advice.</p>

Data extract	Coded for
<p><i>not fair to say that parents are not good because they are not there. Or that the child is a 'key child', this is not accurate.</i></p> <p>IB: <i>And what is good parenting?</i></p> <p>Yoav: <i>Investment.</i></p> <p>IB: <i>You say that you buy their ideas...</i></p> <p>Yoav: <i>But I do not apply them.</i></p>	
<p>Yoav: <i>I think that everyone has to do what feels right to him. In specific cases maybe there is a need to have advice, but then to think if it is good advice. But overall, I think that everyone should do what he thinks that he should do.</i></p>	Self-agency
<p>IB: <i>Have you used the advice which you got there?</i></p> <p>Yoav: <i>No. Nothing. There were some exercises but not more than that. Men are different from women.</i></p> <p>IB: <i>More technical you mean?</i></p> <p>Yoav: <i>Yes, all of us are of the same mould.</i></p>	Gender and experience of advice

Coding was carried out at the semantic level. That is, the themes were identified at the explicit level, taking the surface meanings of the data. However, coding did not simply present the data as is. Rather, I organised the data in a meaningful way, as derived from the research questions.

Stage 3: Reviewing Codes. I began Stage 3 when all the data had been coded initially, and a long list of codes had been generated based on the entire dataset (see Appendix K). I adopted a combined bottom-up and top-down approach to reviewing the existing codes so I could decide if this list was good enough to organise the data in a meaningful way. I kept asking myself whether I now better understood what the interviewees were telling me about the topic of my research. Examples of new codes that emerged at this stage were those that came out as a result of peer discussions and deeper involvement in the data. This resulted in some new codes, for example 'Autonomous'. This initial theme was generated from immersing myself deeper into the raw data to learn that parents are juggling between self-reliance or self-governing and parental advice. There are social expectations for parents to be open to parental

advice, and their need for advice coexists with their own expectations resulting from external social expectations that parents rely on themselves. Another example is the emerging theme of ‘Individualism’, which means that parents conceive of each child and each parent as different, and that most parents believe that they are the ones who know what is in their child’s best interest. At the end of this stage, some codes were divided into subcategories, and other codes were dismissed.

Stage 4: Identifying Initial Themes. I adopted a combined bottom-up and top-down approach to sorting the initial codes into potential themes, whereby the codes were cut out, allowing me to move them around and review their grouping while considering how they may be combined to create overarching themes (see Appendix O). Eventually some initial codes were used to form main themes, while others were collected to form subthemes. An example of how codes were combined to form overarching themes is presented in Table 3 below:

Table 3. An example of two codes forming a theme

Code	Themes	Subthemes
A dialogue	A dialogic space- a dialogic space opens up for multiplicity and uncertainty. It consists of resonances between utterances. The adviser’s utterances are suggestions of advice. This requires parents to explore options. This is reflected in parents’ exploration and preferences of specific advice, which stems from their autonomy, that is, wishing to be heard.	The most popular source of advice
Preferences		The most unpopular source of advice
		Wish to be heard

These themes went through many changes, following discussions with my supervisors, as they were initially too descriptive. As noted by Braun and Clarke (2006), creating themes is a process of interpretation, creativity and thinking, rather than a procedure. Throughout the process I focused on the research questions at the core guiding the thematic analysis.

Reviewing Initial Themes

My review of potentially more interpretative themes began once themes had been devised and involved reading all the extracts for each node. A list of initial themes was extracted from that process and was sent to my supervisors. In response to their input, some themes were reorganised or renamed. For example, the theme of different emotions with regard to receiving advice was changed so its categories would not be considered as judgmental (good experience/bad experience). To achieve this, I renamed this theme to proactivity/reactivity regarding advice.

Defining and Naming Superordinate and Subordinate Themes

Defining and naming superordinate themes became possible only after an intensive analysis of all the data based on the research questions and resulted in a long list of codes, initial themes, and reviewed themes. Ultimately, the purpose of a thematic analysis is for the analysis to tell a convincing and well-organised story about the data and topic (Clarke and Brown 2006).

Table 4 below presents a list of the themes defined upon reviewing the initial themes.

Table 4. List of themes and subthemes

Theme	Subtheme	Further subdivision of themes
Different attitudes to receiving parental advice	Active participation	
	Emotionally intense feelings	
	Proactive in rejecting parental advice	
	Proactive in approaching parental advice	
	Reactive in approaching parental advice	
Gender	Mothers	Stress
	Fathers	Advice as an option
	Mothers and fathers	Advice as undermining
Past relationships	Distrustful childhood relationships	
	Trustful childhood relationships	
Parental attributes	Socio-economic status	

Theme	Subtheme	Further subdivision of themes		
	Educational level			
	Level of religiosity			
Parents' immediate interactions	Parent-parent (of the same child) relationships	Each parent taking an extreme position in contrast to the other parent		
		Achieving a dialogue		
	Parent-informal adviser relationship	Advice as criticism		
	Parent-formal adviser relationship	Preferences for characteristics	Facilitating a dialogue	
			Focus on parent's self	
Tools				
Professionalism				
Preferences where and to whom to turn	Different sources of advice			
Social and cultural values	Total parenting	Parenting as a burden		

Theme	Subtheme	Further subdivision of themes
		Ambivalent feelings regarding advice
	Autonomy	Advice conceived as dictating the correct approach to parenting
		Autonomy in seeking advice
		Advice is not an axiom
	Individualism	Parenting as a personal issue

Chapter 5. Introduction to and Summary of Findings

In this chapter and in Chapters 6 through 8, I present the patterns that I found in the data. Based on the patterns in the data, I divided the 13 participants into three groups, and each group is then categorized into five similar categories. The three main groups represent three dominant attitudes that parents reported regarding their experience receiving PA:

Group A: This group consists of parents who said they seek parental advice almost on regular basis. I have termed this group *Proactive in Seeking PA*, henceforth *the Proactive Group*.

Group B: This group consists of parents who reported deliberately did not seek parental advice and object to receiving parental advice. I have termed this group *Objecting to Receiving parental advice*, henceforth *the Objecting Group*.

Group C: This group consists of parents who were open to hearing parental advice but were also apprehensive. I have this termed is group *Ambivalent Towards Receiving Parental Advice*, henceforth *the Ambivalent Group*.

The participants allocated to each of the above three groups are briefly described. In the section describing each group, the data for is divided into five subcategories that represent the main themes that emerged. Although there is some overlap in the categories of each group, the content may differ. These subcategories ultimately allowed me to reveal the differences as well as the similarities between the groups. The five subcategories are the following:

1. Parents' attitude to receiving parental advice (how often they seek advice, where they turn to for advice, what led them to seek advice, etc.)
2. Seeking parental advice compared to seeking advice in other domains
3. Confidence in their parenting skills (whether or not they are confident in their parenting skills and what does their confidence depend on?)
4. Parental autonomy (does the parent make his/her own parenting decisions even though—they may not be consistent with social norms)
5. How Parents' experience parenting (for example, as a burden or as a enjoyable role)

As noted in the Methodology chapter above, I combined elements of an emic and etic approach—based on the participants' own descriptions—as well as information about their occupation and education to determining a working definition of the participants' social class. For example, based on Dorit and her husband's lifestyle (for example, they lived in a wealthy neighbourhood in Tel Aviv) and professional status (they were owners of a private legal practice), I determined that they belonged to the upper-middle class. Moreover, when I then asked whether there was a connection between their socioeconomic status and seeking parental advice, Dorit noted that..." [if] we didn't have the financial means to seek psychological counselling or to participate in these Adlerian programs, then, to a certain extent, the answer is "Yes". Your entire mode of living is completely different if you have financial well-being, and would be very different if you were experiencing a daily struggle." In other words, she connected their high standard of living to their practices in seeking parental advice. In the terms defined by Bourdieu (1984), she had economic capital, social capital, and cultural capital. That is, I determined her economic capital by her description of their financial status that

allowed them to seek parental advice; her social capital was that she knew where one seeks parental advice; her cultural capital was determined by the fact that she had absorbed the social expectations that parents be involved and seek parental advice when necessary. However, the three groups described above were mixed in terms of which part of the Israeli middle-class they belonged to.

The table below sums up the main findings. Chapters 6,7, and 8 present the findings for each of the three groups described above.

Table 5. Summary of findings

Topics	Group A: Proactive in Seeking PA	Group B: Objecting to Receiving PA	Group C: Ambivalent Towards Receiving PA
Names of group members Note: All names have been changed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dorit Segev • Laura Knorr • Lior Mazar • Navit Gold • Shoshana Golan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moshe Ram • Michal Orr • Nina Bar • Yoav Chen 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aviva Chen • Yosef Golan • Chaim Lev • Shalom Segev
Attitude and feelings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive • Enthusiastic about receiving parental advice but also with complex feelings • Feeling reassurance but also risk • A need to regulate their own voice and how much advice to seek • High standards for adviser • Need to really trust the advisor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intense negative feelings of being threatened by the advice given • Feeling controlled, blamed, judged, and manipulated • Object that someone can better understand child's needs better than the parent and the parent's circumstances • Do not universally rule out seeking parental advice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open to PA • Usually do not initiate seeking PA
Parental advice and advice in other domains	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek considerably more parental advice than 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek considerably take less parental advice than 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Usually open to to hearing advice

Topics	Group A: Proactive in Seeking PA	Group B: Objecting to Receiving PA	Group C: Ambivalent Towards Receiving PA
	<p>advice in other domains</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Due to role perception or... • Because they feel insecure about their abilities as parents 	<p>advice for other domains</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In other domains, are much more enthusiastic about learning from others 	<p>about many things</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No specific difference between their openness regarding parental advice and other domains
Self-efficacy and autonomy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased self-efficacy as a result of receiving PA • Described juggling between anxiety and confidence • Feel a lack of confidence in their parental practices, which is what led them to seek help • Feel that following receiving PA, they are more effective parents and better persons • View parental advice as part of an ongoing project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-efficacy based on love, sacrificing, and responsibility • Know that they make their own decisions based on their personal knowledge of their specific child and circumstances • Self-reliance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parental decisions influenced by several sources including patterns from home, professional advice, the partner's advice and the child and parent's context • Self-efficacy is based on being open to the environment, to hearing advice, and choosing which to accept.
General experience of parenting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents in this group tended to experience parental advice and parenting as a burden 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parenting as love and enjoyment. self-sacrifice, worry, being attentive to the child, feeling proud from being 	

Topics	Group A: Proactive in Seeking PA	Group B: Objecting to Receiving PA	Group C: Ambivalent Towards Receiving PA
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Included feelings of stress, high expectations, and a sense of “chasing their own tail” while trying to implement the advice received • Reported experiencing parenting as too demanding and sometimes involving anxiety 	<p>a parent, fulfillment and as an individual experience</p>	

Chapter 6. Findings for Group A: Proactive in Seeking Parental Advice

With regard to Group A, who were proactive in seeking parental advice, five out of 13 participants in this sample said that they specifically sought advice in the domain of parenting on a regular basis whenever a need arose. These participants were all very enthusiastic about seeking parental advice and were very invested in it in terms of time, energy, money, and emotional effort. This group consisted of four mothers (one ultra-Orthodox religious mother and three secular mothers) and one ultra-Orthodox father. The four mothers all worked full-time, had academic degrees, and classified themselves as middle class. The father in this group had a high school diploma, worked full-time, and considered himself lower-middle class. The four mothers reported that most of the parental advice that they had received in the past had been from private professionals. These parents described themselves as lacking in confidence regarding their parenting skills, compared to other issues in life. Parents in this group reported their belief that the 'right' advice (which they called "tools" or "skills", a set of rules etc.) would allow them to achieve the best outcomes for their child's development. They embraced and applied parental advice as a vehicle to improve not only their child's outcomes but also themselves. By applying the advice, they felt that they had become better parents and people.

Below I briefly introduce the five parents who I have allocated to this group.

Dorit Segev, was 47-years old woman. She was a lawyer and was very articulate. She was married to Shalom Segev, who also participated in this study. They described a good spousal relationship and noted they had three children (aged 14, 17, and 20). They first began to seek parental advice when their first-born child was three years old, and the second child was one year old. They regularly sought PA. The last time had been several months before the interview for this study. She noted that she had taken "millions" of hours of parental advice. She was very enthusiastic about parental advice and indicated that she wished to recommend Adlerian parental advice to all other parents.

Navit Gold was 45 years old, secular, married, and was the mother of three children (aged 13, 20, and 22). She worked in a psychiatric hospital as an art therapist. Her motivation for participating in this study was personal, as she was currently exploring different options for

a career at this point in her life, so she thought to explore this field as well. Her husband did not participate in the study, since, as she noted, they had traditional gender roles. She described herself as pro-parental advice, though she felt that they had taken too much PA. Throughout her years of parenting, she had approached family, friends, colleagues, and professionals for parental advice. She had sought professional advice for her second child, a boy, when he was approximately 16 years old for an extended period and sought professional parental advice regarding her third child when he was approximately 11 years old. Nevertheless, she expressed some profound criticism regarding parental advice.

Lora Knor is a 42-year-old secular mother, divorced from Chaim Lev. He also participated in this study. Together they have two children (aged 13 and 7). Lora, like Dorit, said that her motivation for participating in this study is communal, since she sees herself as usually helping others, and because parenting is a deeply emotional issue for her. Lora said that she believes that when it comes to parenting, she does need help. She referred to herself as 'a fan of advice'. She started seeking parental advice following her divorce with regard to her second child when he was approximately four years old. She considers herself as having average socio-economic status. She is a university graduate with a Master of Arts degree and has a full-time job in television.

Rachel Golan is a 38-year-old, religious (ultra-Orthodox), and educated woman. She is married to Yosef Golan, who also participated in this study, and they have six children. She works in the field of education as a kindergarten teacher and is very proactive in her attitude to parental advice. At the time of the interview, Rachel was a student in one of my courses, so when I asked who would like to participate, she volunteered. She emphasised that advice is something you take, rather than something you are given, and felt that parental advice was, as she put it, a "compass" for her to find her way to better child rearing. She had mainly sought out professional Adlerian advice, which was adapted to religious values, or other religious sources of advice, such as her community rabbi.

Lior Mazar is a 43-year-old religious (ultra-Orthodox) father, married, with six children. He said that he very much believes in parental advice, though he did not approach a lot of

professionals like the other parents here, but rather turned to his Rabbi and family members. He worked as a driver and considered himself as having below-average socio-economic status and did not have a university degree.

I will now describe the main patterns that emerged in the interviews of the *Proactive Group*.

1. Taking “Millions” of Hours of Parental Advice

Parents in this group described their experience of receiving parental advice in enthusiastic and almost religious terms. For example, Dorit described that what she received from the adviser was a clearly structured doctrine or theory. She used the Hebrew word *Mishna*, which has religious connotations and refers to liturgical Jewish literature, even though she is secular. Lora described herself as a “fan” of advice. She qualified this by saying that she would recommend that every parent receive PA, if possible, all the time. Lora also said: “advice is me”. Rachel said that the advice she received was like a “compass” for her. Lior described the advice that he had received from the school counselor as “calming”. All these descriptions are related to these parents’ specific experiences. However, it is difficult to determine whether their positive attitude had enabled this very positive experience, or this experience was a consequence of a specific encounter that had brought about their positive attitude to receiving PA.

The table below presents the various contexts in which the parents in the Proactive Group sought PA.

Table 6. Contexts of parental advice: The Proactive Group

Parent’s name	Age of children at the time of the interview (in years)	Number of contexts in which parental advice was sought	Source of advice
Navit Golan	22,20,13	10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal psychologist (for personal and family matters) • Mother-in-law (practical advice)

Parent's name	Age of children at the time of the interview (in years)	Number of contexts in which parental advice was sought	Source of advice
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Friends (emotional issues) • Colleagues at work (general child rearing issues) • Studied psychotherapy • Studies CBT • The child's teacher • A child psychologist for the middle child (received parental guidance by the psychologist) • An art therapist for the youngest child(received parental guidance by the art therapist) • A television program: Super Nanny
Dorit Segev	19,17,14	Approximately 88	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adlerian group parental guidance (during infancy for general behavioural issues) • Adlerian personal parental counseling in different periods (during infancy and childhood for emotional issues and also during adolescence) • Three different Adlerian courses • A child psychologist (received parental guidance by the psychologist) • Personal parental counseling • A workshop on family matters for parents • Friends (issues related to social development) • Another psychologist for emotional issues with the oldest daughter
Lora Knor	13,7	7 (not including internet forums)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal parental psychotherapy (guidance during process of divorce) • Child bibliotherapy (family sessions, 1.5 years after the divorce) • A popular book for parents called <i>efes ad chamesh [Zero to Five]</i> and various Internet forums

Parent's name	Age of children at the time of the interview (in years)	Number of contexts in which parental advice was sought	Source of advice
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speech therapist for the child (received parental guidance by the speech therapist) • Friends • Family members (mother, aunt, or sister on practical issues)
Rachel Golan	16,14,13,11,7,4 and a baby	9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family therapy • A course for ultra-Orthodox parents • Psychodiagnostics for one of the children • Various sessions of parental counseling in the ultra-Orthodox community • Counseling for the child to consider her developmental maturity to enter first grade • Bachelor of Arts degree in education (partly in order to receive parental advice there) • Counseling in the transition from elementary school to middle school • Child speech therapy (received parental advice on issues related to stuttering) • Counseling by the school counselor
Lior Mazar	13,12,10,6.6, 2,1	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Counseling by the school counselor • Psychodiagnostics • Newspaper columns for parents • Lessons for parents recorded (audio) by a rabbi • Educational pedagogy for children (received parental guidance there)

The parents in the Proactive Group sought parental advice on a regular basis in different periods of their parenting. The exception to this group was Navit, the therapist. She said that in hindsight, she should have sought and received more advice when she first became a parent.

However, she noted that she was now more confident and was critical of the intensive parenting culture. However, upon drawing a list of the number of times and the parents in this sample sought parental advice and the length of these experiences, it became obvious that the list was long and was probably not exhaustive. The five parents were allocated to this group since they had sought and participated in a great deal of professional and lay advice. For example, Dorit had participated in at least 10 different contexts of parental therapy and advice. As part of a group of mothers, she had participated in parental counseling at the Adler Institute, and then twice more on her own while her children were growing up. In addition, she took her third son to a psychologist for a period of one year when he was young, and then again when he was 10 years old. Throughout this therapy, the parents received parental guidance from the child's psychologist. At the beginning of elementary school, she also took him for one or two sessions with a psychologist, and went for a consultation herself, without him. She took her oldest daughter to several therapy sessions when she was 11 years old. Dorit's reasons for seeking parental advice or therapy, varied and included everyday parental practices such as sibling conflicts, setting boundaries, and social problems experienced by her children.

Navit was another example of a parent who often sought PA. Throughout her years of parenting, she had three main sources to which she turned for advice. She said that when her children were young, she had gotten a lot of help from her mother-in-law who also gave her 'too much' advice, as she put it, she would also seek advice from friends and colleagues. She found it important to explain that since she herself was a therapist working in a psychiatric hospital, she could easily approach other therapists for advice. She also approached professionals, including a psychologist for therapy for her second child, which lasted about a year. In addition, she had also taken her third child to an art therapist. The parents in this group reported that they sometimes sought parental advice even if the other parent disagreed or needed to be convinced to attend.

Lior was exceptional in this group since he did not always seek much professional PA. He said that he often listened to recordings of rabbis speaking about child-rearing issues. He also approached his children's teachers for advice and read columns in religious newspapers devoted to PA. The fact that he described himself as having low socio-economic status may

have influenced his decision not to seek professional advice; all the other parents in this group described themselves as having higher than average socio-economic status and thus were able to pay for private services.

Despite these parents' general enthusiasm and positive view of PA, some of their descriptions also seemed to indicate some ambivalence. Some of them cited the investment of time, effort, and money required to participate in PA. For example, Navit said that "...it's hard to admit, as it is a great investment". Dorit said: So, for a psychologist has to justify the high financial cost...". Parents also described other types of investment. For example, Dorit, Lora, and Navit described the effort required to implement the advice or to get their partner or child to participate, which sometimes involved conflicts with the partner or the child. In addition, Lora described the effort required to deal with her ex-husband regarding the advice, and the effort she needed to invest in thinking about the advice and overcoming personal resistance to the advice.

In spite of their confidence about the need to receive advice, another type of complex feelings was—as Rachel noted—a feeling of taking “a risk” when deciding not to follow the therapist’s advice given. As noted above, Navit was critical of the culture of intensive parental advice. As she put it, this culture emphasizes pathology, and the advice was either black or white, and took problems could easily be dealt with much too seriously. Lora described all the conditions that need to be met to seek PA—choosing the right adviser whom she could really trust, assuring that the adviser held a worldview similar to her own, and the confusion resulting from the multiple available options. Lior described how some specific advice given by the school counselor had an adverse effect on his already bad relationship with his wife.

The parents described their preferences regarding where to turn to for PA. The members of this group mainly preferred to turn to professionals rather than family members. The contexts in which they received PAY varied and included individual or family sessions, group sessions, and lectures. They also described that the motivation to turn to parental advice mostly originated outside the home and was usually related to the child’s functional difficulties

at school or various preschool frameworks. In this context, Dorit was exceptional since her reasons for seeking parental advice was the child's behaviour at home.

2. Seeking parental advice More Advice Than in Other Domains

Parents in this group reported that they clearly sought out advice regarding child rearing and parental issues more often than for other domains in life. As participants reported, they tended to feel particularly in need for advice for parenting. Navit said that she sought much more advice regarding parenting than in other areas of life: "I mainly look for advice about child rearing."

Interestingly, this finding is in spite of the fact that some parents in this group described themselves as independent people who usually advise other people. For example, unlike Dorit and Navit, Lora described herself as an independent person who usually advises other people, rather than being advised. In her case, this demonstrates even more strongly that in parenting she felt particularly lacking in confidence and in need of advice. Regarding general advice, she said: 'I am a very self-confident person, very much believe in my way, very assertive. I also make quick decisions. That; my character! My gut feeling is very strong. I know what I need to do. That is how it is in life in general.' She contrasted this with parenting: "This is not necessarily the case in parenting." This finding points to the participants' insecurity and stress about parenting in particular.

Rachel, like Lora, described herself as an independent person. She said: "With regard to other areas in life, as opposed to parenting, I have too much confidence, that is how I explain it. In general, I am a courageous person. I am not afraid of failing. It could be that I am wrong. I take it that this is the price I pay as "tuition". This courage opened up a lot of options for me in my life. Courage to fall and to then stand up." However, in parenting she felt "lost", as she put it. She explained: 'Where I feel really lost, then I turn to counselling... I take advice only when I feel lost. If I don't feel lost, I do not seek advice'. Thus, Rachel, a mother of six children, who is religious and feels independent, often seeks advice, specifically in relation to parenting, due to her feelings of 'being lost', her feelings of self-doubt, and her fear that she was making many mistakes with her son. As she said: "I started to go for counselling because I understood that

something was wrong, because I didn't really know what was happening with my child, and I could not guide him and be as attentive to him as I should be." What I found interesting in Rachel's account of seeking advice is that feeling a sense of parental efficacy and her sense of well-being were dependent on receiving parental advice.

3. Parental Self-Efficacy as a Result of Receiving parental advice

Regardless of whether these parents described themselves as independent and secure persons or as dependent and insecure persons, they described juggling between anxiety and confidence. The parents in this group described how prior to seeking parental advice, they had felt "*anxious*" or "*helpless*". They felt that they had made many mistakes in their parental practices, were worried they were '*not attentive*' enough to the child's feelings and needed guidance in their parenting. Lora described a game that she and the other mothers at work played in which they competed in who had made the greatest mistake as a mother that week. After she had sought out advice, she experienced a sense of reassurance that she was a good parent (by following the 'right' advice), but soon after, she experienced stress and anxiety because she was not sure whether the outcomes were indeed those which the adviser expected. For example, the adviser told her not to discuss matters such as death and mortality with her son, even if he asked about it, so he would calm down and be happier. But Lora could not tell if he was any happier or what exactly had helped. In any case, she could not assert herself vis-à-vis the adviser in identifying the most appropriate approach to dealing with the problem that she had presented.

The parents in this group describe feeling a lack of confidence in their parental practices, which is what led them to seek help. Dorit and her husband (Shalom, who was in the Ambivalent Group) said that during the first months of their parenting, the baby had colic and cried constantly. While her husband thought they could deal with it on their own, she told me: *'We were really anxious and helpless...me and my husband are alike, we consider ourselves total parents, so neither of us could calm the other one... During that time, I started to go to the Adlerian school for parents. She then describes, "just when you think that you are on solid ground something happens and I again don't have the tools to deal with the new challenges, so*

again I seek PA. Dorit said that she considered herself as being in a stressful restlessness that she sought to relieve. Later in the interview, Dorit said that she was preparing for *'the next earthquake that will announce that it was again time to get advice'*. Her husband reported that while he was challenged by the baby's crying, stating that *"it was not fun,"* he said that he did not feel helpless, explaining that at he preferred to rely on themselves, not even on their families. Dorit said that she felt that the adviser *'put things in place.'*

Thus, parental confidence for the parents in this group depends on seeking and receiving PA. The findings in this study suggest that a successful intervention leads to an increase in parental self-efficacy. In contrast, my findings point out that parents' overall confidence in their ability to address unexpected challenges related to child reading did not increase. Instead, based on a common definition of parental efficacy found in previous studies, which is parents' belief in their ability to effectively manage the varied tasks and situations of parenthood (e.g., Sanders & Woolley, 2005), parents' statements in this study do not match this definition. Lora, an educated middle-class mother, described her parental experience, which is typical for this group: *'The first word that comes to my mind is that parenting is worrying. I am very anxious in my parenting...You think that you do something right and you find out that it's wrong'.*

Moreover, if parents in this group described their experience of receiving parental advice as reassurance, receiving advice could sometimes be counterproductive with regard to reassurance, as it could be the cause of conflict in their marital relationships. For example, at a time when Lior's school-aged son was facing difficulties at school, Lior's wife thought that the child needed an authoritarian approach, while Lior thought that he was pushing him too hard. Lior reported that he had felt reassured by the school counsellor's comment *..." that such behaviour [was] legitimate for a child transferring from elementary school to junior high school.'* He noted that *..."[it]is advice to be embraced with two hands" Now I will know how to support him, to contain what he is going through'.* Thus, for Lior, this advice reassured him since it confirmed his point of view.

The parents embraced parental advice to improve not only the child's outcomes but also themselves, as a vehicle to changing their child. They eventually felt that they had become better parents and people. As Lora noted, receiving parental advice is an opportunity... "to confront things that are between me and myself. So, I also enjoy it and I feel that I am working on myself. Also, I feel that I have good results, that I am changing. Step by step." Similarly, it seems that Lora experienced parental advice as an 'opportunity' for (self) 'confrontation'. It seems to me that these two words summarise the contradiction in her experience. On the one hand, she feels autonomous, proud, and actively takes this opportunity permitted by her economic status. On the other hand, it is a 'confrontation' (*imut* in Hebrew; the word has a negative connotation in Hebrew) with herself, which might reflect her feeling of being under scrutiny and stress.

The members of this group reported trusting the advice received to the extent that they allowed professional advice to replace their intuition. At the same time, their desire for parental advice emerged from feelings of self-doubt and anxiety around their children's outcomes and their own parenting, and receiving advice appeared to make many of them more reliant on advice, rather than on their personal capacity as parents. As emerged from their interview, they felt that approaching parental advice was the active and appropriate parental practice when parents face a challenge with child rearing. However, they also stressed their need to adjust their approach and to either interpret some of the advice received in their own way or reject it, as an assertion of their autonomy.

Similarly, Dorit said that "[parenting enables you to put a mirror in front of yourself...And then, if you do not like what you see, you can work on it. I don't think that I could have been the mother I am or the woman or the person I am today if I didn't accept or approach or apply parental advice. I think that as a developing human being we improve in due time'. By 'improving', Dorit seems to have meant that it becomes part of being a parent, not in the simple sense of lifelong learning, but as something more essential and conscious: self-improvement as an "endless" project, as she and others put it. Dorit used the metaphor of a "muscle that you need to strengthen constantly." All the parents in this group referred to

'improving' rather than simply achieving better child outcomes. This indicates that they accept that the parent is a key factor in changing the child's outcomes.

Dorit continued: "Parenthood makes us better people, and through parenting we also improve in our interpersonal relationships, with our spouse, with our parents and siblings, with friends and our customers. It projects on who you are". Dorit cited certain qualities essential to the ideal mother: "She is not self-centred, a good person, a giver, flexible, and as a mother she has the ability to put herself second to her family.'

Lior emphasised the potential of parental advice to "*...pull a person out of his own blind spots by reflecting on the parent he is and in so doing becoming more efficient. Since Lior conceives of parental advice as "holding the power to heal and ease a parent's craziness. He notes that he is ..." subordinate to the counselor in school. She points out any difficulty with any of our children and suggests that we deal with it; I don't argue. I am subordinate in that; these are tools to help the child. It's a kind of self-deprecation, being modest and criticising myself for the sake of the children. This implies being a better parent, better understanding children's needs. This is a more profound change than just the right kind of parenting.*

Surprisingly, there are almost no studies that describe parents' subjective experience of parental advice as a self-improvement project. Some before-and-after parental interventions studies, however, describe parents feeling more efficient or more supported, and understanding the child better after accessing advice.

4. Autonomy Within the Relationship With the Advisor

In my analysis, I refer to the concept of *autonomy* in terms of the possibility of displaying unexpected behaviour, including the refusal to accept the advice offered. The autonomous agent can be entitled to perform such unexpected behaviour. In this respect, a complex relationship emerged between the parents' reliance on the parental adviser and their preservation of their autonomy. This conflict seems stressful for parents. Stress was manifested first by parents reporting a demand that the adviser have "*...a very 'high standard and moral and professional character.'*" The parents said that in order to apply what the adviser suggested, the adviser "*...must be very accurate in what [they] need,*" and that the adviser must be

“carefully selected.” Secondly, they noted that they preferred to seek parental advice in a personal context that provides a dialogic space. Thirdly, some parents reported a feeling of risk when they chose not to implement the advice. Overall, it might be suggested that a tension emerged between parents’ desire to seek PA, on the one hand, and on the other hand, their description of themselves as self-ruled.

Indeed, some parents in this group spontaneously brought up trust as an issue, and some did so directly in relation to the issue of autonomy. For example, Lora said that in order to give some proportion to her declaration of enthusiasm for receiving PA: *...“I need to trust the professional that I have approached to replace my intuition with the professional’s great skills and exceptional knowledge.”* Thus, the trust that Lora brought up indicates the tension between her sense of autonomy and being self-ruled and her decision to adopt the parental advice that she has been offered as her own intuition, as it were. She notes that the adviser must justify her trust: *“When I feel that I need help, I will find a very specific person to advise me. This has to be a person that I can trust.”*

The interview with Lora demonstrates the tension between wanting to trust the adviser but at the same time also wanting to preserve self-agency and autonomy. While she consciously decided to trust and apply the adviser’s advice over her own thoughts and intuition: *“And then I am blindly loyal. To my son’s art therapist, to my psychotherapist’.* Another example of the stress she experienced, as I see it, was in her story of how she felt when she decided to reject her own self-rule while also feeling that she needed to fight her own objections to the advice suggested: *“Once I trust someone, I can take almost everything he says. When I say “almost”, it is because it is very human and common that you at first feel some objection. But then, you realise that your objection is because he is right.”* My interpretation is that, since she feels “blind”, she delegates her agency, yet she describes herself as an agent, so she projects these feelings of stress by laying obstacles: *“First I need to know that the person that I talk to is qualified and knowledgeable according to very high standards”. In addition, ...“the discourse with her [the adviser] needs to be exactly what I need.”*

It seems reasonable to analyse the complex scenario in Lora's case by interpreting that Lora, who conceived of herself as an 'autonomous person', needed to decide if and how to accept the advice given by another agent in a given context. especially when she faced misunderstandings, disagreements, and conflicts with the adviser.

Another solution to this conflict, which emerged from her interview as well as from interviews of other members of this group is to maintain a high degree of interactivity and contextualisation by taking the initiative in seeking advice and of adjusting the kind of help desired, the level to which responsibility is delegated to the adviser, as well as the degree of their own autonomy. As Lora said: *"These are people [that is, the advisers that she approached] whom I really trust. Assuming that we really know each other, and that they are familiar with my personal story, and I count on them, and we have a dialogue, a dialogue on the same level, so I accept whatever they say"*.

If we characterise autonomy as behaving unexpectedly or unacceptably, then Rachel's case highlights how she experienced advice which she felt she was expected to accept when she actually preferred to rely on her own intuition. Rachel cited an example of advice she received from a religious Adlerian parental counsellor, who told her that if working children live with their parents, they should give the money they earn to their parents. This advice is a common view in ultra-Orthodox circles. However, Rachel did not agree with this. She thought that *"...children need to be trained in economics and personal responsibility."* She noted that the counsellor *"...based her advice on the Talmud, which I know that we can trust, so I have accepted this"* Nevertheless, she sometimes chose to follow her intuition rather than the counsellor's advice. *"But if something goes wrong"*, she said, *"...I can return to that advice."* although Rachel trusted the source of the advice, she also sought to preserve her autonomy, which points to the tension between trust and autonomy. Indeed, she used expressions such as *"calculated risks"* and *"possible damages"* in relation to following her *"intuition."*

To sum up, parents in this group, who trust and rely on advice, also struggle to preserve their autonomy. This influenced their experience of trust in parental advice, rendering it both intense and stressful.

5. Parental Advice and Parenting as a Burden

The parents in this group referred to parenting as a “burden”, as something that was “too heavy”. Many of them described their parenting as “total” (Hebrew: totalit), which means that their parenting is intensive. This could also point to a stressful experience of parenting. They often used the word “work” and noted that parenting was “a full-time job.” In addition, words like *worry* and *anxiety* (in Hebrew: *de’aga* and *harada*, respectively) occurred ten times in Dorit’s interview, compared to only once in Michal’s interview (a mother from the Objecting Group). The word *love* was mentioned only twice by Dorit (in the Proactive Group), while it was mentioned ten times by Michal (in the Objecting Group).

Dorit was aware of the connection between applying parental advice, total parenting, and her feeling that parenting was very demanding. She was also aware of some negative outcomes for her daughter because of her approach to parenting. However, Dorit was exceptional in this group since she also enjoyed this aspect of parenting. The following quotation shows that she was aware of being a total parent:

“The children were born rather close to each other. Two and a half years between them. And I am a total parent, and so is my husband: the wish to be available, to respond to all their needs. When they were young, we wished to help them avoid frustrations. Until we figured that out, we also needed to regulate that [total parenting], too. But I truly enjoyed when they had friends coming over to play with them. I enjoyed it, but it is also a lot of work, to think, organise, to operate the everyday things at home.”

In this quote, Dorit is talking about how she experiences parental advice as a demand that needs to be regulated and balanced. Below Dorit describes the relationship between applying parental advice and negative outcomes for her daughter and for herself.

“I behaved anxiously [Hebrew: beharada] and she felt it. Asking too many questions, giving her too much advice. I remember even that I could not sleep at night. My purpose, my intentions were to give her proportions, to show her alternatives for her behaviour towards her friends, . to open her up to other girls, so she would have good experiences. It did help her sometimes, but for me, the price was too high. Because I was preoccupied by that, I was chasing

my own tail, and I took it very hard, and I was anxious. I am sure that it affected her as well. It is not good for a child to see her parents so anxious.”

In contrast to Dorit, Navit clearly experienced the difference between the times before she sought professional advice, which were times of joy in her parenting, and so was the post-advice period, when she had stopped taking professional advice. In between, she recalled a period during which she started to seek out professional advice, which was when her first child (a daughter) was in her late adolescence, her second child (a boy) was about 16 years old, and her third child was about 11 years old. During this period, she described herself as “*trying to meet lots of social expectations*”, and that nothing that her children succeeded in doing relaxed her, and that she was not able to contain her worries. Part of my conversation with her demonstrates this:

Iris: Did you use professional advice when your children were young?

Navit: Not at all. Everything was OK. It was all in my mind. The anxiety. The first years [before taking advice] were joyful but I remember the difficulties as well. The dependencies, someone depending on me. The worries were about everything. But I could be helped much more. I did it through my studies, for example. But I didn't go for therapy in those years when they were young. I think it could have helped me. Very much.

Iris: Over the years did you seek advice? I mean from different professionals – teachers, guidance counselors, psychologists, social workers, or other professionals.

Navit: Nothing that was not within the norm. Amir [the second child] was an introvert...So I wanted him to go for therapy sessions. I took my third child an art therapist to learn social skills. Someone had recommended her...It didn't work well so we stopped it since it somehow fell apart. It was just before he entered middle school...I was really worried about their outcomes – that they wouldn't meet what was expected at their ages. I couldn't contain the worry. My friends used to say to me “everything will be OK.” They told me that again and again. They also said that he has a good model at home, so I should count on that and not be so worried.

The next quote, in which Navit spontaneously criticises the culture of parental advice, reveals that Navit attributed her feelings of being burdened and over-worried to the advice she had received. Since she criticised this culture, I asked her if she thought that the advice should have been different. Her response was that ...*"Yes, they should have presented a better integrative [less negative] point of view, which takes you to a more reasonable place and helps you to normalise issues. The advice that was given to me pathologised things. Advisers used phrases like "This is really a problem, and so on". Moreover, as a therapist herself, Navit seems to have given a lot of thought to her criticism of the culture of parental advice. She added: "In contrast, with my son, and also in my work as a therapist, I tend to normalise things. Life is not black or white; it's complicated. Something in the way I used to look at things in the past was in terms of "good versus bad". Black or white'.*

At the time of the interview, her third son was about 14 years old, and her second son was in the army. She no longer took professional advice. When she analysed her feelings around parenting and parental advice, she felt that she was all right: "Today I have feedback that my parenting is good. Today I think, well I am so pleased, so pleased. Today I have proof. Amir is doing meaningful service." She continued: *"Also now that I give advice, I say: Each age has its own beauty and its own difficulties. I really think that today I am in a calmer place in terms of parenting. I feel more at ease."*

Like Navit, Lora clearly linked the culture of parental advice (which was child-centred) and experiencing parenting as a burden. As she said, *"To raise a child, from my point of view, is really a burden. A burden because I don't let things run by me ... I feel that I deal with parenting and with the precision of parenting, and confronting what it is doing to me, to my intuitions. So, it is too much for me. It's enough for me, that's it."*

Lior also described that implementing advice was a job in itself, though it was not his intention to criticise taking parental advice. To him, implementing the parental advice received meant *"subordinating oneself to the adviser for the sake of children."* Lior said: "It is not a simple job.... *Every time a kindergarten teacher points out any difficulty with any of our children and recommends that we deal with it, I don't argue. I am disciplined; these are tools to help the*

child. It's a kind of self-deprecation, for the sake of the children. It is not a simple job, for six children to receive what they need ...From your experience as a professional, remember that a six-year-old girl needs to deal with three older brothers. One needs to understand the dynamics of that. To be aware of it."

To sum up this section, parents in this group tended to experience parental advice and parenting as a burden, which included feelings of stress, high expectations, and a sense of "chasing their own tail" while trying to implement the advice received. These parents reported experiencing parenting as too demanding, and sometimes involves anxiety.

Chapter 7. Findings for Group B: Objecting to Parental Advice

With regard to Group B, who objected to seeking parental advice, four out of the 13 participants said that when they encountered an emotional or behavioral challenge related to child rearing, they preferred to rely on themselves, rather than approach professionals. When they did receive parental advice (for example, from a child's teacher) they felt threatened. One parent said that her child had received physiotherapy and that when her child was a baby, she did seek practical advice (for example, regarding what food to prepare for a baby). As emerged from these four interviews, their general experience of receiving parental advice was that it was patronising. Two parents, one father and one mother, said that they felt blamed and judged. They explained that they ultimately preferred to rely on themselves rather than on others for parental decisions. They described their parenting as based on love, concern, attentiveness, and providing stability. Parents in this group objected to the idea that others, whether they were professionals or laypersons, could know better what was in their child's best interest better than they did. In this section, I will focus on examining these parents' experience of parental advice. I refer to this group's attitude toward parental advice as *Objecting to Receiving PA*.

Below I briefly introduce the parents allocated to this group:

Moshe is 44 years old and is married and the father of three children. He had a bachelor's degree in education (although he worked as a factory manager). He defined himself as both secular and traditional, and classified himself as belonging to the middle class. He was very enthusiastic about volunteering to participate in this project. Indeed, he was very emotional during the interview since he held specific beliefs regarding parenting which he was keen to share with me. He stated that he had never sought parental advice. However, in two contexts in which he was offered some advice, he was deeply disappointed. As a father, he was very involved in his children's lives and was active in the parents' association (in Hebrew, it is called *Irgun Horim*) in the school of one of his children.

Michal is 37 years old. She is traditional and religious and divorced and defines herself as middle-low SES. She is currently in a relationship with a father of four children. She herself

has two biological children of her own. She has worked as a bridal make-up artist for 16 years. All her life Michal saw herself as inspiring to be a mother. Regarding her position on seeking parental advice, she noted that she never sought PA. This was due to her decision to rely only on herself for parental issues. Still, here and there she had sought some advice, especially in times of a personal crisis related to her divorce. At the time, she consulted with a religious adviser. Since she ultimately got divorced, she found the experience very disappointing.

Yoav had agreed to participate in this project since his wife (Aviva) had asked him to. She was allocated to the Ambivalent Group. She thought this might be an opportunity for him to discover some things about himself. Yoav was 44 years old. He is traditional/religious, lower-middle class, married, and the father of two children. He was self-employed and had a high school education. He said that he himself had never sought parental advice. If there was a problem, his wife sought advice. When his children were very young, he did agree once to participate in receiving parental advice for his wife's sake. However, Yoav is said that he was affected by the culture of PA, for example, when he heard some tips for parents on television. He said that he felt judged and blamed.

Nina was 49 years old. She was a single mother of one child. She defines herself as secular and of average SES. She said she had made a great effort to come since it was important for her to show everyone that a single mother could also be a good parent. She worked as a nanny for several toddlers at her own home. She said that just before she became a mother, she had been in therapy for a long time. She stopped going to therapy once she got pregnant. She did not believe that professionals, friends, or family members could advise her, and she refused to receive PA, which was suggested when she consulted a neurologist about her child's tics. Nevertheless, she believed that parents need to receive some guidance, and she herself advised other mothers on issues pertaining to child rearing.

Considering the parents' social status, all four had a lower level of education and SES than the parents in the Proactive Group. Based on their own self-definition, two of the parents were lower-middle class and two were middle class. However, their economic situation does not fully explain their objection to seeking advice, since three of them said that they did pursue

extracurricular activities and help for their children, which are often expensive. For example, Nina had taken her child to private physiotherapy for several years, and Yoav received private parental counseling. In addition, they all stated that they were able to participate in lectures for parents that were given for free in the school system. For example, Michal participated in a couple of lectures, and all of them had access to school counsellors for free.

I will now describe the main patterns that emerged in the interviews of the Objecting Group.

1. Taking 'Zero' Parental Advice

The four participants in this group were asked if they had ever sought parental advice (from professionals, family, or friends), at any time during their parenting. They were also asked to indicate on a scale from zero to ten how much parental advice they had sought. They answered these questions orally with intensely negative feelings. For example, Moshe said: *"I take zero parental advice! Who is she to advise me?"* Michal said: *"No, no way"*, adding *"very soon I reached the decision that only I can decide what to do with my child"*. Yoav, simply said: *"No, never"*. Nina said that no one could understand or determine what she or her child needed.

However, both Nina and Moshe gave advice to other parents. For example, Moshe volunteered to help parents within the school system. Nina explained that as she worked as a nanny for a group of toddlers, she often advised mothers, and that her friends would approach her for advice, especially for emotional issues related to child-rearing (for example, what to do when children do not listen and do not do what they are told). This indicates that they did not universally rule out seeking or receiving parental advice. Moshe also said that he remembered that in one assignment during his teacher-training studies, he had written: *This is a basic course and should be obligatory course for every father and mother."*

When I asked the parents in this group directly whether parenting could be taught, their answers revealed contradictions, indicating that while they accepted that parenting could be

taught in principle, it did not suit them, and they did not really believe or trust it. For example, Nina said: *“For sure [you can teach parenting]. But people may not listen. You receive advice from parents and friends. Advice kills lots of people. Because they give advice from their life, not yours. Advice from other people is bad.”* Nina also said that she believes that only parents know the circumstances of their lives and that of their children, no one else. However, all the groups insisted that parental advice needed to be given in such a context that the adviser or therapist can address the specific needs of each family. Parents in the Proactive Group and the Ambivalent Group said that it was important for them to choose the adviser and to ensure that they share the same worldview with the adviser.

The parents in this group described their objections to parental advice with intense emotions but also in contradictory terms. On the one hand, they stressed that they *“...[took] zero advice.”* On the other hand, they were the first to volunteer to participate in a study on parental advice, and to contribute their advice on good parenting. In addition, on the one hand, they did not take advice, while on the other hand, they willingly gave it to other parents. This indicates a conscious decision; in a sense, these parents were proactive in objecting to advice. Thus, their emphasis on taking zero advice seems to imply the internalization of intensive parenting culture on the one hand, together with negative and intensive emotions towards this culture, on the other hand.

2. Not Seeking Parental Advice, but Seeking Advice in Other Domains

I asked the participants if they had sought advice in other domains of life, such as for professional, emotional, or financial issues. In fact, they had sought advice in other domains. Regarding other domains of advice, they used more positive expressions like: *“I am always happy to learn from others.”* Michal said that if she needs advice, she approaches her father, but for parenting she doesn't need advice. Moshe and Yoav both used a biblical phrase from Psalms (119:99)—which literally means *“I have learnt from all my teachers.”*

(Hebrew: *‘Mikol melamdai hiskalti’*), to describe their positive attitude to advice regarding general matters. Nina sought emotional help when she needed it as an adult before she became a mother. Yoav sought advice for career issues. However, parents in this group

specifically had a negative attitude regarding PA, which suggests that parental advice evokes more feelings of rejection and intense emotions than other categories of advice.

3. Parental Self-Efficacy Based on Making Sacrifices and Taking Responsibility

For Nina, 'sacrifice' (Hebrew: *hakrava*), together with 'taking responsibility' (Hebrew: *lakachat achrayut*) constitutes her interpretation of the appropriate parental practices. For example, Nina said: *"I think that I do things right, despite all the obstacles ...I want people to see that single parenting is just a stigma, that doesn't apply to me. I willingly had my child, out of love. I have money, everything is fine. Relax. I have a child who knows that family is the most important thing"..."You can raise a child on your own if you are willing to make sacrifices, to take responsibility. I do not get help from anyone. But it is possible to raise a child on your own once you take the responsibility upon yourself."* She seems to be referring to a common view that a child needs both parents. It is understandable why she rejects parental advice and does not need help from anyone. For if she did need help or advice, this might mean that she could not or even should not raise a child on her own. For parents in the Proactive Group, being responsible was interpreted as the need to seek parental advice, while for parents in the Objecting Group, responsibility was interpreted as not seeking advice. This allowed them to preserve their sense of self-efficacy as parents.

In addition, parents in the Objecting Group saw a connection between what they regarded as making the correct parental decisions, self-reliance, and the idea of parenting as a personal role that parents have assumed. For example, when I asked Michal what being a parent meant to her, she said: *"Ah, what I can say about others is that they might need to learn to be parents. But usually it comes with time, you don't study it, sitting and writing down what a mother or a father should do. I think that a lot comes from patterns that you learn at home. I can see myself in my parents, and for sure, I made a lot of mistakes while I was getting divorced. I didn't want to, but I couldn't help it. I was shouting at my children. I think that when a child is born, whether you want to or not, you are there. You have become a parent. You've added another role to your name. You are a wife of... a mother...or aunt of"...* This statement indicates

that Michal, like others in this group, conceived of parenting as a personal role that you take on and carry out.

For Yoav, his parental self-efficacy mainly seems to be a result of intergenerational learning. Yoav said he believes that being a parent is not learnt academically, and that you cannot change a parent by giving advice. As he put it, *...[tell] me who your parents were, and I'll tell you what kind of a parent you are...Because that is what you absorb. I was sent to a religious school, so that is what I am. We are the product of our parents. My children will be the product of my wife and me.*" I pushed him further and asked: *"so when something goes wrong, how can we help? Can we advise parents?"* Yoav answered: *"How can you help? First of all, the question is if the parent wants to be helped. Even if he wants help, it is also very difficult. You can give him some tips and encouragement. It's impossible to change the person."* Thus, in addition to his view that his parenting is a result of intergenerational learning, Yoav does not believe in the ability of professional parental advice to teach parents how to be good parents.

In general, all four parents described believing that they were making the correct parental decisions, based on self-reliance, and objected to the social prescription that parenting should be taught by professionals. Their sense of self-efficacy depended on how they perceived themselves, their past, and their responsibility as parents.

4. Autonomy – Relying on Themselves

Parents in this group preferred to rely on themselves and make their own decisions and 'mistakes', rather than rely on advisers. The topic of autonomy was raised spontaneously by them. They wanted to make their own choices based on their own feelings and knowledge of the context (the child, themselves, and the possibilities available to them). For them, autonomy seemed to be the possibility to say something or act in a way that might be socially unacceptable. Parents in this group, like Nina, explained how *"only I could understand why I have decided these things."*

Michal noted that making her own decisions on parental matters was especially important for her, even when these decisions were not accepted by others, *"...just because I wanted this..."* *"...I think that when I became a mother, I took the position that I am the only*

one who will decide here." This could perhaps be said to reveal the dilemma that she has had to resolve for herself, between relying on professional advice and being self-reliant "*because that's what I want.*"

Michal clearly feels proud of being a parent. She says "*...I think it's the first thing that I have done in my life that is good!*" She explained that even when she had just become a mother, she made the autonomous decision to do what she had decided was the "*right*" thing, in spite of "*obstacles,*" which included not following professional advice and advice from family members. She cited the example of a decision that she had made despite contrary advice. After the birth of her oldest child, she was told by the doctor not to breastfeed (for medical reasons). Nevertheless, she insisted on breastfeeding. She also didn't follow her mother's advice to express milk. *'Just after my first delivery... It was around breastfeeding. I wanted to breastfeed, but I became very sick. My oldest daughter was three months old. I wasn't allowed to breastfeed. So I had to take milk that I had expressed using a pump and throw it away. And my mother tried to convince me to give up. She couldn't watch me suffer. My mother said: 'Never mind, you did your best.' But I wanted to'*. Michal did not think that expressing milk was the absolute right advice, but it was right for her. Michal said she experienced her mother's advice as "*too protective*" and "*not honouring*" her decision. In this example, Michal repeated the words 'I did it because I wanted to, relying on herself as an autonomous parent.

In another example, that shows that autonomy is an important value for Michal in her parenting, and how this relates to being "*independent,*" Michal explained her preference for parental self-reliance, even when it involved not taking advice from her father, whom she would trust and respect on any other matter. She said: "*I am independent—black and white, without any grey. Especially in parenting. When my father told me to get divorced [following her husband's infidelity], he said to me: 'I will not tell you what to do, but you should know that a crooked tree [the husband] cannot be straightened. I decided not to listen to my father's advice and tried to save my marriage'*". Although her husband ultimately left, Michal's autonomous decision to stay in her marriage in spite of advice to the contrary indicates, as in the other cases in this group, that this may be related to how she envisioned family life and parenthood, and that for the sake of the children, a family should be happy and should not fall apart. There

seems to be a contradiction between her acceptance of the ideas of intensive parenting and her rejection of specific advice that goes against her need to be independent especially with regard to parenting, such as her father's suggestion that she get divorced and the doctor's instructions to stop breastfeeding due to her medical condition.

In addition, parents in the Objecting Group, cited the value of individualism, as being of paramount importance to their parenting. For example, Nina said: *"How can the internet give me advice? It is another mother for another baby. How can I have advice from someone who is not me? It seems strange to me...friends can't help me. Every person comes is coming from a different position. It's like each one is talking in a different language"...* It could be suggested that Nina has internalized the social value of individualism. Her feeling was that when people advise her in relation to her child it's white noise to her, that is, an unpleasant sound that she prefers to ignore. That is, when people advise her, she feels attacked or that her individualism is endangered.

Moshe experiences parental advice as an order by an external authority, although he generally does seek advice on other issues. He explained how when he received parental advice that he didn't ask for, he thought that...*"and I asked – why, who said so? Who determines that? Let's try to get over that ourselves and if something happens, we will seek advice. I can always go back and ask for support, if needed"*. Moshe used a slang phrase in Hebrew that is interpreted as quite aggressive: *"Why? Who says?"* (Hebrew: *Lama, mi amar?*). His use of this phrase seems to indicate a feeling of being controlled, dictated to, and manipulated by people he does not trust.

Yoav associated the issue of autonomy with gender. He said that *..."men are different from women and are less likely to seek or be helped by advice"*. When we discussed the parental advice he had received when his first son was delayed in the developmental milestone of crawling, Yoav told me that he counted on himself while, as he said, *"parental advice is actually given to relax the mother, which I, as a man, didn't need."* He explained it as being due to the difference between mothers and fathers. He said: *'I think it helped my wife. She was more anxious. And it relaxed her a bit. It doesn't matter if it [the advice] works or not, the*

problem will be resolved anyway. I knew that it would be OK without the help – he would crawl by the time he went to school.” When I asked Yoav if he participated in the process of consultation, he confirmed that he did, but added: *“...I got nothing out of it. There were some exercises, but not more than that. Men are different from women.”* Perhaps he felt that that relying on advice might be considered as a weakness and could be attributed as anxiety on his part.

When parents in this group did receive parental advice that they had not asked for, they described the experience as a threat. However, this poses a causality dilemma, namely, was it this bad experience that caused them to object to receiving parental advice in general? Or did it merely confirm their a priori rejection of parental advice? Their descriptions mostly included experiences of insensitivity to their needs, feeling controlled, and impingements on their autonomy. In some cases, they even felt a threat to their parental self-efficacy and well-being. This emotion was accompanied by a strong preference to rely on themselves. Parents did not only object to accepting advice from professionals, but also from family and friends. Nevertheless, the parents also said that they sometimes felt a need for advice.

For example, Michal described how she felt disappointed and even endangered by her child’s school counsellor. She told me that she once approached the counsellor to ask for advice during her divorce. In recounting the story, Michal’s tone was aggressive and resentful. She said:

“I told her that I was going through a difficult time, and I cried and told her the story. And then I just [her voice gets assertive] asked her to take care of my daughters, to see if there was any change or deviation, not in their academic functioning, rather in emotional terms. The school counsellor said that sure, she would, and then she said that maybe I needed to go to see a psychologist, or a coach. So, I told her that no one in the world would control and manage me or tell me to take pills. No one would do it, only me.”

In this encounter between Michal and the school counsellor, a simple suggestion by the counsellor that Michal seek professional advice was experienced as an existential threat

to Michal's autonomy, evoking the possibility of medication (that had not been suggested by the counsellor), further damaging her well-being.

At another point in the interview, Michal's resentment regarding advice became clear, when she told me that: *"Since I have been in a relationship with my partner [in her current relationship after her divorce], I haven't read that book on happiness [a book giving parental advice by Rabbi Nachman of Breslov, a Hasidic leader]."* Based on Michal's interview, when she sought for advice in the book by Rabbi Nachman of Breslav and in view of the advice she received at that time by a Rabbi that she had consulted with, she was under the impression that if she would follow the advice in the book and that given by the rabbi, she would keep her husband and have a *"happy family."* When the outcomes were not as she expected, she seemed to blame this on the advice itself.

Moshe described that he felt *"...jeopardised by this parental advice"*, and he was *"glad"* that he had decided not to bring his eight-year-old son to therapy *"...because she would have damaged him [the child]."* The context was that this advice was given in the hospital when Moshe's wife had given birth to a stillborn child. Moshe and his wife already had two other children, who were four and eight years old at the time. At the same time, Moshe was mourning the death of his parents. While they were in the hospital, and before returning home to their children, Moshe and his wife had a session with the hospital psychologist.

Moshe said: *"Yes, they told me to come for a session. By the way, the hospital requires you to come to this session. Orders you to go to it. We went there, me and my wife. By the way, it also does not cost you anything. So, we went there, the adviser was a psychologist, and we had an hour."*

Moshe experienced receiving this advice as an order. What contributed to his decision to participate in this session was the fact that it did not cost anything, in addition to having been *"ordered"* by the hospital. It is not clear whether the fact that the decision to see the psychologist had not been made by him created such a bad experience.

Below is Moshe's description of the session with the hospital psychologist:

'We entered her room [at this point in the interview Moshe is crying]. I told the psychologist the whole sad background – the whole story of my currently being mourning the death of my parents, and all that. I was really in a state in which I could not contain myself anymore. When I finished speaking, all that she said was "wow... this is a very complicated story, the child will need at least ten sessions." And I was thinking to myself: now she will badger me about the grandfather and about the grandmother, what for? Really, they got over it, they moved on. Why can't she focus on the stillbirth?'

As Moshe described how the psychologist gave her advice, there was clearly a gap between what Moshe thought his son needed and the psychologist's approach. For example, he rejected her advice since she had misunderstood the focus of the problem. As Moshe saw it, the psychologist was interested in the children's reaction to the death of the grandparents, instead of focusing on the stillbirth. In his description, he used negative words, like *badger*. The problem appears to have not only been the gap between Moshe and the psychologist's opinions on the focus of the session, but also the absence of a dialogue between them. It is not uncommon for parents to have their own ideas about a problem. Moshe continued to describe his experience of this session:

"She was focused on herself. She hadn't even seen the child yet and already she knew what he needs! Ten meetings! And I asked her: how much does it cost? She said how much, and I took the calculator. So I thought to myself that all she wanted was to take money from me, and I don't want anyone to think that he can put his hands into my pockets. I need help, not that."

It is difficult to know from Moshe's description of the incident what really happened, and if his interpretation is correct. It seems that he may have confused the story. For instance, it seems unlikely that the same psychologist who worked at the hospital would be the one who would do the therapy for his child. Indeed, in the interview I asked him about this, and he confirmed that he had mixed up two separate incidents. Whatever the reason might be, the very negative subjective experience described by Moshe resulted in great disappointment and a loss of trust:

"I took it as order, that someone was trying to dictate to me what to do. It's like the professional advice that we had for my father, and which killed him eventually. It's all about trying to milk me for as much money as possible...I am happy that my child didn't go there because she would have damaged him even more."

It is interesting that Moshe associates his feeling of being dictated to with mistrust. For Moshe, the session with the psychologist not only led to the conclusion that she constituted a threat to his child, but also reminded him of advice about his father that he regarded as having been 'dictated', and which eventually led to his death. That was how threatened he felt. His experience indicates the feeling of a lack of autonomy and control.

When Nina's son was 11 and had social problems, Nina approached his teacher and school counsellor for advice. Nina described her fear of a direct threat to her autonomy: *'I make decisions which no one, including her [the adviser] and you and others can understand. It may be that my decisions sound unreasonable. Only I know why I did all this. And eventually these are in the child's best interest. Maybe it is hard to see it at the beginning.'*

Nina was fully aware that she resented and objected to professional advice. She said: *'I do not believe them'* and described how advisers *"read their advice from the book."* Nina also said that she experienced parental advice as parental blame when people criticised her for her parental decisions, which were different from what *"...every normal person would do."* She didn't need advice since *"...[the] circumstances are known. I don't have anything to do with it, so what do I need advice for?"*

'You know, people told me many times that I moved him from place to place too often. Also, they criticized me for separating him from my ex-boyfriend. How I moved from the city to the village, and again to the city and again to the village. Six apartments in six years. Think of that, different education systems. Each time different children, new children. Every normal person would have told me that it is not good. You see what I am saying: "every normal person". A child needs stability.'

Nina tries to justify and explain her unusual parental practices. She said that everything she did was for her son's sake, similar to Yoav, who said that he held down two jobs for the

sake of his children. Yoav told me about how when he heard advice on television that instructed parents to invest more time and energy in their children, he felt blamed. He said: *“It touches me, I am preoccupied by it, and I say to myself that I have to take them to the mall, to invest more, maybe to be there more...I also blame myself. I am not saying that I am not guilty.”* Then, however, he realised that although he agrees with the advice in principle, he does not apply it. As he phrased it: *to agree with advice is the macro, but there's also the micro.”*

“As Yoav explained: *“I don't have the time for that. I don't, like some parents, work from eight to five and then take them out to the mall. Because I know that at 7.00 [pm] I must go out again to work.* He added that this advice did not suit his financial situation (*...“financially the situation does not allow that”*), his personal situation (*‘at the weekends I am tired’*), or his marital disputes.

It appears that when Yoav is given advice, he feels threatened, controlled, and blamed. For example, when the same advice was given to him by his wife, Yoav clearly seemed to feel blamed: *‘My wife was trying to tell me to be more involved with the children. “Take him out alone, go out with him.”’* To describe this experience, he used words like: *“This advice sinks in”...“There is no appreciation.”* It seems that the blame game played an important role in the relations between Yoav and his wife. Yoav felt that his wife purposely evoked his feelings of self-blame, and his reaction to what he considered blame and a lack of appreciation on her part was ‘revenge’, or even less cooperation: *“If I was alone with them, there would be no problem. I would invest in them, give them whatever they want. But if she is in the picture, it changes...I want to take revenge against her.”* Yoav’s experience indicates that on the one hand, he had internalised the advice to spend more time with the children, but resented the way this was suggested. Yoav seems to have meant that he accepted the good intentions of the advice given and even its underlying assumptions. As he put it, *“[good] parenting is an investment.”* As I interpreted it, Yoav objected not to the advice itself, but rather to the expectations and blame that went with it. Yoav and the other three parents in this group seem to have internalised social expectations regarding ideal parenting but nevertheless rejected receiving parental advice and expressed stress and intense negative feelings.

5. Parental Advice and Parenting as Love and Enjoyment

Parents in the Objecting Group talked about their parenting using terms of *love* (Hebrew: *ahava*), *enjoyment* (Hebrew: *hana'a*, and *kef*), and *worry* (Hebrew: *de'aga*), and the parents in the Ambivalent-Towards-Receiving Group spoke about parenting mostly in terms of challenges rather than problems in parenting (Hebrew: *etgarim*) and with less stress and anxiety compared to the two other groups.

All four parents in this group described their parenting using words such as *love*, *self-sacrifice*, *worry*, *being attentive to the child*, and *enjoyment*. This contrasted with the parents in the Proactive Group, who emphasised their experiences of parenting as a burden, a duty, and something that was costly. The word *love* was repeated ten times in Michal's interview in relation to her experience of parenting, and in the interview with Yoav. In addition, Moshe used the word *enjoyment* twice in relation to his experience as a parent. In Nina's interview, the word *enjoyment* also appeared in relation to parenting.

When Michal told me about her experience of being a parent, she used words like *love*, *fun*, *taking care*, and *giving*. For example, when I asked her what parenting was in her view, she replied "*in one word, love.*" She then added: "*If I could have, I would have gotten married when I was 17. I was waiting to be a mother. I love it very much. I am not sorry that I became a mother when I was 24 years old. It is a lot of fun.*" She went on: "*First of all is the sound [of the word] 'mother'; in Hebrew, the word is Ima]. It is pure. I think it's the first thing that I did in my life that is good! I love to run the house. I love to be present here. If it is about cooking, cleaning, taking care, giving, I'm good.*" Being a parent defines her as a person. In addition, Michal and other parents in this group have embraced the sacred value that many Jewish Israeli parents attribute to parenting. When she faces parental challenges, she prefers "*to rely on love, giving them attention*". In everyday life, she described herself as being like "*glue*" (Hebrew: *Devek*, a slang term that describes helicopter parenting), checking up on her children all the time and worrying. She said:

'Even when I got divorced, I thought my family was ruined, but still, I would continue to give my children the love that they deserve. I think that the most important thing for children is

love. It is always easy to shout and get angry. You build a home, and you can easily destroy it by not being attentive to them. A child needs attention. When she goes out, I am constantly on the phone with her. Regarding my daughter, I am like glue. I constantly knock on her door and check up on her. I am very curious all the time to know everything about my children. I follow them all the time, everywhere.”

Michal thus saw love, attention and worry as basic conditions for parenting, coinciding with social ideas. However, this does not mean that she accepts the idea that parents need advice. Michal seems to have internalised the ideology of intensive parenting but is not willing to accept external advice.

Like Michal, Nina also emphasised a parental experience of enjoyment. She told me: *‘Listen, there were challenges. After the birth, I was at my parents’ place every day. I started going to the gym, [had] lots of friends. I was not alone for a moment. It was fun, I enjoyed it, it was at the right time. I didn’t have downs. I was not confused.’* While the Proactive-in-Seeking-parental advice group saw parental challenges as a burden, the Object-to-Receiving-parental advice group viewed parenting as enjoyment and challenges as sacrifice.

Moshe also emphasised enjoyment in parenting. He said: *‘I enjoy myself with them [his children] in the park. One of my children, the middle one [14 years old] is a basketball player and I watch him play. The little one is even more enjoyable. She is six years old’.* Moshe said that he had *“...learnt that the womb is the purest and most sacred place.”* All the parents in this group spontaneously emphasised purity, love, and enjoyment in parenting.

Chapter 8. Findings for Group C: Ambivalent Towards Receiving Parental Advice

With regard to Group C, who were ambivalent towards receiving parental advice, the parents in this group described their attitude to receiving parental advice as selective; that is, they were open to hearing advice, but said that they did not necessarily “*say Amen to every advice.*” This was in contrast to the Proactive Group, who also used words from the religious realm, but did so to indicate that they relished receiving parental advice. Four parents among the 13 interviewees used words such as *researcher* [that is, collecting data], *logic*, *rational*, *awareness*, and *do what I can* to illustrate their autonomous and balanced experience when encountering parental advice. They said that although they do not really believe in receiving PA, either professional or lay advice, they are nevertheless generally open to it, on condition that it is rational, professional, and not very different from their worldview. The practical aspect of their autonomy, that is, their involvement in child-rearing challenges, includes the option of seeking advice. They objected to the idea that parents are omnipotent in their influence over a child’s outcomes. Their language seems to express ambivalent feelings regarding PA. That is, experienced it mostly with apprehension. They mostly did not initiate seeking advice, and when they did seek it, they did not always accept it or apply the advice. The parents in this group have different levels of education and classified themselves in different SESs. Three of these parents were fathers who described themselves as having a good relationship with the other parent. Two of the fathers had academic degrees and one father and the mother had post-secondary diplomas. One of the fathers was religious who had grown up in the United States. The other three parents described themselves as secular. In contrast to the Proactive Group who were enthusiastic about receiving parental advice (especially professional advice), and also in contrast to the Objection Group who objected to parental advice altogether, parents in this group seemed to be less emotional in their attitude to receiving PA.

In contrast to the parents in the other two groups, parents in this group rejected the idea that there was such a thing as “correct” professional advice. Parents in the Ambivalent Group explained their own parental practices as resulting from patterns they had learned in their own childhood, or perhaps reactions against these very same patterns, their intuition, their values, as well as what they hear in their environment, which sometimes includes

professional advice. In addition, parents in this group rejected the idea that child outcomes ultimately depend on parental behaviour. As a whole, they did not endorse the self-change project propagated by intensive parenting culture.

Below I briefly introduce the five parents who I have allocated to this group.

Shalom has accepted his wife's request that he participate in this interview. He is 48 years old, and has three children aged 14, 17, and 19. He is secular and classified himself as upper-middle class. He is a lawyer and is married to Dorit, who also participated in this study. I allocated Dorit to the Proactive-in-Seeking-parental advice Group. Shalom described himself as very independent. He did not usually initiate seeking parental advice, but sometimes he went along with his wife's initiatives. *"I did not see receiving parental advice as a dramatic event: sometimes it was 'rubbish', and sometimes it was helpful."*

Yosef willingly accepted his wife's request that he participate in the study. He was 38 years old, ultra-Orthodox, the father of six children. He was a college-educated accountant, had immigrated to Israel from the United States, and classified himself as middle-class. Yosef was married to Rachel, who also participated in this study and was allocated to the Proactive-in-Seeking-parental advice Group. He described himself as a very rational person. He believed that *..."parents are not everything and can't make their children everything they want them to."* He also said that he *..."never takes any advice as an axiom."* However, he did sometimes seek parental advice.

Chaim is 47 years old, divorced, and classified himself as lower-middle class. He is the father of two boys aged seven and 13 years. Lora, his ex-wife, who also participated in this study, was allocated to the Proactive-in-Seeking-parental advice Group. He is a sports trainer. He said that he usually consults with his ex-wife about their children and knows that she would look for parental advice when necessary, though he thought that she sometimes overdid this.

Aviva was very enthusiastic about participating in the study and also asked for advice at the end of the interview. She was 45 years old, secular, had an academic degree, and classified herself as working-class. She was married to Yoav, who also participated in this study and was allocated to the Object-to-Receiving-parental advice Group. They had two children, a 13-year-

old boy and a seven-year-old girl. She was not working at the time of the interview. She used the word *researcher* (Hebrew: *chokeret*) to describe herself in relation to receiving parental advice. While she did seek parental advice, she did so sporadically, and had a several sources that she would sometimes approach for parental advice. She believed that ..."*parenting [was] 80% intuition and 20% advice*", and mainly relied on herself, rather than on parental advice.

I will now describe the main patterns that emerged in the interviews of Ambivalent Group.

1. Open to parental advice but Ambivalent

In response to my question regarding whether they sought parental advice, Shalom said: "*Usually not.*" but added that he might cooperate when it was necessary. "*My wife initiated going for advice, but in the relevant situations I knew why she was doing that, and I agreed that it was necessary.*" Similarly, Chaim answered: "*When we had a problem, Lora [his ex-wife who was allocated to the Proactive-in-Seeking-parental advice group] took care of it. So no [I did not usually participate].*" Parents in this group said that they were open to receiving PA, but at the same time they also questioned the value of PA, and its relevance to their child. When they did receive advice, they said that they did not bother to implement the advice received. As Shalom said that ..."*the adviser can say what to do. So what?*" The specific tone he used indicated that he did necessarily not accept the adviser's authority. The parents in this group said that they did not usually seek parental advice, but sometimes went along with it. Fathers in this group cooperated when their partner initiated seeking advice, and could see why the mothers felt the need for PA. In contrast, Aviva did cooperate with external suggestions that she seek advice (for example, after she had given birth, the medical team in the maternity ward suggested that she see the hospital psychologist) and sometimes initiated seeking PA. However, I allocated her to this group because she mostly preferred to rely on herself and her intuition but did not object receiving parental advice altogether. As she said: ..."*parenting is 80% intuition and 20% advice.*"

In their descriptions of their experiences with PA, parents used words such as *rational* in describing their attitude towards parenting and seeking advice. Some parents said they ..."*[acted] like a researcher*" and '*researching*' as the main characteristic of their attitude to

considering any advice they received. For example, Yosef told me how he was *'rational'*, while his wife, who was allocated to the Proactive Group, was *'irrational'* and would have accepted any advice, even *'spiritual advice.'* He described how she once approached an adviser who ...*"tried to push that advice and said that that will help the child, but sorry, I don't believe that. We paid for that advice, and we went there together, but I did not accept that. I am rational."* Like Yosef, all the parents in this group were open to receiving advice but were often critical of the advice that they received.

Aviva said that she had sought parental advice *in order ..."to know that I am going in the right direction. When it is crucial, I want to hear advice. I am always open to listening to my surroundings. The question is what I will use, what I will take from it"*... Thus, Aviva seems to be ambivalent towards receiving PA. On the one hand, she is cautious and selective. On the other hand, she looks for advice as a confirmation of her parenting skills. She also emphasized that she did not automatically accept parental advice in the following description: *"If you tell me that now is daytime, and it is actually daytime, I will not accept it immediately'*. She added:

"Of course, I listen to advice, and I choose which advice to take, what is appropriate, and apply it. But I think that one doesn't need too much advice. There is no need for any supernanny to come and teach me as if we are babies. In the end, I believe that it is about intuition. A mother's intuition, how much you understand your child and whether you know how to approach him. It is like acupuncture. If you touch the right place, you succeed. I listen to everyone, but I don't always listen. I don't agree with everything, I check it. I ask questions."

2. Taking Parental Advice Similar to Other Domains

Based on parents' reports and their self-positioning on a scale considering the extent to which they approach advice for different domains of advice, parents in this group sought advice for parenting and advice in other domains at the same level and intensity. This was particularly the case for the fathers in this group, while Aviva, the only mother in this group, described herself as being more active in seeking parental advice, compared to other domains in which one might seek advice. For example, in response to my question: *"How do you learn things in general? Are you a person who seeks advice or not?"*, Shalom said: *"I guess that I do take*

advice, as I talk to a lot of people, so eventually it affects you. But not consciously, rather it is unconscious. I look around, I talk to people. But I usually do not seek advice actively or on purpose.” Like Shalom, Chaim described himself as seeking advice, but also without a substantial difference between the domain of parental advice and other topics, such as career issues and finance. He said: *‘In general, I do seek advice. For example, nowadays when I start something new at work, I might ask someone a very specific question. I usually share my ideas and want feedback before I start a new project with people whom I trust or people who are relevant to the project. I don’t hesitate to ask for advice, for example, via WhatsApp.’* Chaim described his attitude to parental advice in similar terms: *“I ask what they think. In the end, I decide by myself. I do not always accept, sometimes looking back I can say that I should have listened more carefully.”*

Like Chaim, Shalom also described a moral stance regarding advice. For example, when I asked Shalom (who is a lawyer) *“[what] do you think of advice in general?”* Shalom said that advisers need to be humbler and more moral: *“My profession is to give advice, so I think that a professional needs to give advice and to stand behind it. There is advice given by friends, but, in principle, I think that we tend to give advice when we understand too little about the material in question. We need to keep our positions and thoughts to ourselves.”* He is critical of some parental advisers. The attitudes of parents in this group demonstrate a more balanced and less intensive approach of receiving parental advice than the other two groups. They described advice as a search and a flow of knowledge that eventually results in a solution to the problem.

3. Parental Confidence Based On Everyday Practices

Unlike the other two groups, parents in the Ambivalent Group did not bring up the issue of parental self-efficacy or confidence. The analysis of the data suggests that their attitude to parenting was mainly one that focused on the everyday practices of parenting. When I asked Chaim directly about his confidence as a parent, he said that *...“oddly, in parenting I have more confidence, so I seek less advice.”* Chaim said that since *...“parenting is based on love and natural feelings.”* Another example, Yosef views parenting as like any other practice that requires self-awareness. He said that *...“self-awareness is the important thing.”*

In response to his wife's anxiousness and enthusiasm to seeking PA, Shalom said:

'A book that I remember, I'm not sure who wrote it, is Children: The Challenge. Children are indeed a challenge. The person who wrote it knew what he was talking about. But challenge is something that we look for in life, so it is not a problem. Parenting is a matter of trial and error, and what you bring from home. And it works how it works. And when it doesn't work, so when my children grow up and earn their own money, they will go to a psychologist. I did it my way.'

The above quote seems to indicate that Shalom does not accept the deterministic ideology of the intensive parenting culture. He is open to receiving PA, but objects to viewing child rearing challenges as problems. Instead, he emphasises the practical side of parenting by describing parenting as a matter of "trial and error." His attitude seems to be ambivalent since he did quote from this popular book parental advice, while objecting to embrace the world view that book stands for. His attitude may be a reaction to his wife's enthusiasm and dependence on advice. For example, Shalom and his wife, Dorit (allocated to the Proactive Group) had a session with a psychologist. As Shalom explained, if he did agree to engage in seeking PA, this was a preferred context for him to receive advice, as opposed to the Adlerian parental counselor that they had consulted with in the past, which he had viewed as less professional. He described how the psychologist analysed the problem that they had presented regarding their third child and how the psychologist had helped them to focus more clearly on the problem. When I asked Shalom if he had gotten anything out of this session or this therapy with the psychologist, he said: *'I can only do what I can do'*. This suggests a difference between how his wife experienced the advice received from the same therapist as exhausting. She felt exhausted from trying to change her child and eventually decided to stop attending therapy sessions. Also, she concluded that her child did not fit any parental advice textbook. In contrast, her husband Shalom's experience of the therapy sessions was more balanced.

In addition, parents in this group, who were similar (though they experienced parental advice with less intensity) to parents in the Objecting Group sometimes experienced parental advice as "criticism." However, it is not clear whether the experience of criticism was a result of

a specific parent-adviser relationship, or something that was felt prior to encountering this specific adviser. For example, Chaim told me the story of advice he once received from his sister. He experienced it as criticism and rejected this advice. He told me about a visit to his sister and his nephews with his own children. During this visit, his younger child insulted his niece about her weight. One day after that visit, his sister sent him a text message on WhatsApp about how to teach your child to ...*"accept the differences between people."* Chaim told me:

"The truth is that I didn't follow her advice. I only took a quick look at it. Again, I don't have a problem with that. Let's say that I get advice that that I didn't ask for. At first, I prefer to just think about it. But in most cases, after one day...again, because I don't have anyone to consult with on a daily basis, so I am alone, so at first it sometimes annoys me. Then, when I think about the advice again, I understand it better and may even follow the advice."

Parents in this group spoke about their parental responsibility and role. Yosef, the ultra-Orthodox father, described how he had recently read a book by a religious parental counselor on how to talk to his adolescent boys on sexual matters: *"How do I deal with that with them, what is my role there? What should I tell them?"* In response to my question about what ideas or advice he had gotten from this book, he only cited the general idea that it was his responsibility as a father to deal with this issue. However, Yosef did not feel that he knew what he was doing and how to solve the problem, but from his point of view, that was all right. He attributed this to everyday experiences. It seems that rather than relying on any specific advice, Yosef focused mainly on his parental *"role"* and *"responsibility."* Yosef attributed this feeling of obligation to being a religious parent in a modern era. As he explained, ...*"we bought a book for religious people about that [talking to your children about sex]. For us, it is very different than for someone who is not religious. A religious boy is not familiar with all those sexual words, and I don't know how much he knows. But I think that it is my obligation as a parent to deal with it. My wife also sought advice from someone"* ... In the end, as Yosef told me, he rejected the advice itself since he thought that it did not suit his specific child's character. Yosef told me: *'What I took from that book is that we need to talk to the child. That he would not be able to deal with it by himself. If he does deal with it on his own, he might behave inappropriately. That*

is my realisation. I learnt that in the religious world, there are some rules about that, and that it is my obligation as a parent to teach the child these rules, otherwise the child might make terrible mistakes, even criminal mistakes, without being aware that he is doing that." Yosef's story shows that he was worried about making parental mistakes, and thereby endorsed the underlying assumptions of intensive parenting that the parents' behavior would influence the child's outcomes. At the same time, in contrast to the Proactive Group, he didn't conceive of his role in accordance with a specific set of guidelines. Yosef said that he did not take any advice as an "axiom." ..."*[when] I accept advice, I do not take it as an axiom. It will never be a kind of: "take it and do it"*". Rather, Yosef said he would choose what advice to adopt and what to reject, continuously "*searching*" for the solution. As he said, ..."*parental advice is endless.*" His attitude suggests that he has internalized the need, risk, and responsibility that comes with the culture of PA. However, when I asked him directly what he thought of parental advice, Yosef's answer suggested an ambivalence similar to that of the other members of this group. . He said: "*I think that search for advice and the answers you find are a process. I don't know exactly. You read one book and then another article, and you hear another person, there is a whole market of advice, of opinions. Actually, the process is the answer itself, much more than specific advice.*"

4. Autonomy as Interacting With Ambivalence Towards parental Advice

Compared to the other two groups, this group of parents seemed to feel less of a threat to their autonomy. The Ambivalent Group used words that showed that they had internalized the values related to the culture of intensive parenting but nevertheless experienced parental advice as an '*option*', but making sure that the ..."*advice was not very different from [their] worldview.*" They felt just some level of stress and concern about their autonomy in relation to parental advice. Their stress was manifested by their preference to rely on themselves, and their ambivalence about PA.

Shalom agreed to participate in seeking professional parental advice as initiated by his wife Dorit because he ..."*could understand the need for it.*" However, he noted that he ..."*did not get much out of it.*" He seemed to emphasise his autonomous character: ..."*The home [I*

grew up in], *my personality, experiences in life – these are the elements that are relevant to how I go about my parenting. If I can boil it down to one sentence, I would say that it is 50% character, and 50% what is around me.*” Shalom seemed to value his inner resources more than advice from external sources. Thus, while his wife Dorit, allocated to the Proactive Group, experienced parental advice in accordance with the values of intensive parenting, and accepted the need for professional advice, Shalom was willing to participate in seeking parental advice as long as ...” *the advice was not very different from [their] direction.*” He said that ...” *in the end, you take advice from someone you believe in. Also, from someone whose approach is not very different from the way that you think that it is wise to perform. These are nuances. If you believe that you need to go somewhere and you i believe that this place is in a certain direction, if you meet someone who tells you to go in the opposite direction, that will not work out. I think that, to begin with, you will direct yourself to the one who you believe will lead you to where you think you should go. If he does not, then, probably, at least me, I end it with “they are bullshitting me.”* For Shalom, as for the other parents in this group, it is imperative that the adviser share his worldview, that they have shared goals, and that the advisee can trust the adviser. However, at some level, he seems to reject PA.

Parents in this group objected to the underlying assumption of intensive parenting, namely, that parents are omnipotent and that child outcomes are totally dependent on parents. Moreover, parents in this group described an autonomous view of themselves and their children, using phrases such as ...” *I do what I can do*”, and, in relation to the adviser, ‘*so what if she said, and I can only try,*” and Shalom said and as Yosef said, ...” *the search for a solution is itself the most important thing.*” Yosef also said that ...” *[so], we look at our children from the outside and we wish to help them, and still, we can’t always help.*”

Some parents used the term *self-awareness* to describe how he encountered PA. For example, when I asked Yosef, a father of six children, whether he had received any bad advice, he responded: *“This cannot happen to us today. We are much more aware today.”* Yosef seems to be describing a development in his relationship to receiving PA. That is, following some bad experiences, he is now able to sometimes use advice, and sometimes to reject advice, and not to be controlled by it. For example, Yosef described how he had been more effective in dealing

with his children after receiving PA. ...*“Let’s say that his brother, who is seven years old now, he is also difficult, but now we know how to respond to him in a logical way, not emotionally. So for us, this was a game-changer, our realisation, following the advice we got, that he can be molded like clay. That once I changed my attitude towards him, everything changed. This realisation that enables you to understand life in a different way.”*

Unlike the parents in the Proactive Group, members of the Ambivalent Group consider parental advice from a more practical point of view. For example, for Yosef child-rearing challenges were a matter of *trial and error* and were part of the practice of everyday life. He also called the process of receiving parental advice as moving from ...*“the macro to the micro context”...“At the beginning these are professionals, the classics. Then, self-learning. Because the core professionals have good answers, but not when you get into the details. To understand that a child is aggressive because of some suffering that he has experienced, that it somehow has to do with the family. But once you go further than that, you discover that each parent is different and each child is different, and that there is no one answer. It is only by trial and error that you can discover what works. But this trial and error includes searching, reaching out to other sources of advice. On the internet, on social networks.”*

Since Yosef was religious, he attributed his acceptance of the need for advice to his religiosity. *“I allow myself to accept advice because the basic concept is that we do not know, we are not at the centre.”* His approach also has to do with his acceptance of the limitations of what can be achieved.

Aviva was secular and was married to Yoav, who was allocated to the Objecting Group. She described the same autonomous stance as the other members of the Ambivalent Group. She told me the story of advice she received from a school counsellor. She had approached the counsellor concerning her 13-year-old son. She told me: *“A classmate [of my son’s] was cursing my son and he got into trouble with that kid. I wanted to strengthen him so he would not take everything that someone tells him so seriously.”* Aviva described her experience of the advice she received: *“The counsellor gave me some tools...I used just some of them, not all. The school counsellor advised me to practice cursing at home [so that he would know how to respond to*

incidents like the one in question]. *But I thought ... “[what], am I going to talk to him like that?”*. Aviva emphasized that she felt free to accept part of the advice and to reject other parts of it. This is very different from how Rachel, a mother in the Proactive Group, experienced a feeling of “*risk*” when rejecting advice that she did not agree with. This suggests different concepts of the self and of advice. Aviva seems to have accepted that others could sometimes give advice, but she objected to the idea that these advisers, whether they were professionals or not, have the ultimate answer to the problem at hand. In contrast to the Objecting Group, she also did not conceive of herself as having the ultimate say. Nevertheless, Aviva, suggested the metaphor of “*acupuncture*” to describe that as a parent you want to “touch” the child in the ‘right’ places. This implies that there is such a thing as the “right” advice, which is consistent with the assumptions of the intensive parenting culture according to which what parents do has a direct effect on child outcomes.

5. Parenting as Everyday Tasks

As noted above, parents in this group had ambivalent feelings regarding parental advice: While they were aware of the social expectations to be involved and take advice, they objected to the idea that the ‘right’ advice existed. Their experience of parenting was more practical; to them, parenting meant using their intuition; specific practices are generated by how ...“*life rolls on*” and by learning through “*trial and error*”, based on their life experiences. In other words, to quote Michel de Certeau (1984), they experienced parenting as “*everyday life practices.*” Michel de Certeau used this phrase to describe the ways in which individuals, through their unconscious everyday life behaviours, individualise mass culture, altering things in order to make them their own.

For these parents, parenting is mainly “*based on personality*”, because there is no ‘right’ practice (as they all said, “*the search itself*”, “*trial and error*” and dealing with the challenge is what is important, parenting is an everyday practice. Indeed, unlike the parents in the Proactive Group, parents in this group discriminated between a parent’s emotional characteristics, which cannot be changed, and practical issues, which can to some extent be dealt with.

For example, when Chaim faced his younger son's refusal to go to school, Chaim said... *"So, there was some work to be done with him"*. Chaim used the word 'work' (Hebrew: *avoda*), which reflects the way Chaim understood this parental practice. That is, Chaim was not anxious, but rather practical. He told me: *"On the one hand, he [his child] needed to understand that this was an unchangeable fact. That even if he had trouble, we would not change his school. I understood him, I sympathised with him."* However, while Chaim sympathised with his child, he also accepted his parental responsibility to deal with his son's problem. Chaim experienced it as an everyday life experience: *"I told him that when I start a new job, I have to get used to it...I knew that because of his character, he would get along. Also, his mother and I talked a lot with each other. She almost considered giving up. But we strengthened each other."* Chaim's approach to this parental challenge reveals the difference between his ambivalence regarding PA, and how his ex-wife, who believed in the right professional advice, experienced parenting. When I asked Chaim directly what parenting meant to him, he said: *"I do not feel that I am mature, strong, or knowledgeable, you know, to give them a way that is for sure the right way... I do try to set boundaries, to give them a model, somehow...it also continues to roll because life goes on, life doesn't stop. So it happens by itself... Today I am much more relaxed with kids."* In addition, Chaim, said that ...*"there is no such thing – bad parenting, unless it is maliciously evil. There were times when I asked myself, especially if I shouted at them, so I asked myself if I hadn't made a mistake. And I say to myself that that is what I can give. I give what I have. I don't have another way to do it. And at that moment I am there, and that is what I can do. I can try to fix it another time, when a there is a similar situation. So, bad parenting is that, without providing security, and without love."* Chaim, like the other fathers in this group, does not take parental advice too seriously or as a profession. Chaim and others in this group carry out their parenting by means of love and everyday life practices.

In the same spirit of experiencing parenting as everyday practice, when I asked Shalom what fatherhood or parenthood meant to him, he said ...*"80% work, 20% enjoyment, but the 20% overshadows all the work."* Part of experiencing parenting as a practice of everyday life includes the strategy that fathers in this group use of interacting with advice through the mothers, as I pointed out in the previous section.

Aviva is exceptional in this group, since she is the only mother in the group. Her balanced attitude towards parental advice could not be attributed to reliance on her spouse. As a mother, she experiences parenting as ...*"the product of working on myself for years"..."So if you ask how you succeed to be such a mother, the challenge is first of all with myself. And it is an everyday challenge. That's why I tell you that it is a lot of intuition. I could easily become like my mother. There is a saying that children who were beaten will beat their children. So I am exactly the opposite of my mother."* Aviva approaches different sources of parental advice, without necessarily relying on them, is a tactic of practical experience of parenting as an everyday life experience: *"I have a sleep counsellor [a neighbor], she is an Adlerian parental counsellor. She has been going through what I am going through, but she has the tools to deal with that. Renana, what should I do? Renana, what I should do? Renana, in such a situation, what do you do? I call my mother for advice, my sisters. That is more for unloading. I have a pediatrician at the health clinic. I got friendly with her, so I can call her personally. I have these anchors. So when I need to, I can approach them"...."I am sure that I make mistakes. I learn them [her children], they learn me, we learn our boundaries and limits. We learn where to let go, where to respect. We learn each other."*

Parents in this group are not like the Proactive Group, who emphasised the burden of parenting. Nor are they like the Objecting Group, who stressed the enjoyment of parenting. Although parents in this group objected to parental advice, and consequently parents in this group either left it to the other parent (most often the mother) to seek advice, or repeatedly 'shopped' for different advice. In the end, they explained that they mostly relied on the search itself, on themselves, and on their intuition. Thus, after all, it can be said that these parents are also affected by the stress of parental culture, by their need to defend it and avoid it.

Chapter 9. Discussion

This thesis has examined the subjective experiences of a selected sample of 13 middle-class Jewish Israeli parents (comprising heterosexual mothers and fathers) of school-aged children from the metropolitan area of Tel-Aviv in receiving parental advice. Six of the interviewees were married couples raising their children. In addition, two of the interviewees were a couple who had gotten divorced. In any case, all husbands and wives were interviewed separately. The fact that some of the interviewees were actually couples also allowed me to examine the effect of the relational context in their experience of receiving parental advice.

Whether sought or unsolicited, I have defined the notion of parental advice as encompassing guidance on emotional, educational, and developmental aspects of child-rearing. Importantly, the diverse reactions of these parents were not in response to an intervention offering a particular piece of advice. Rather, the purpose of these interviews was to explore socio-psychological aspects of parents' subjective experiences in receiving parental advice. The interviewees' reactions were to various suggestions offered within a context marked by an intensive parenting culture, as detailed in the preceding chapters. The interviews of these parents were analyzed according to the methodological principles of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke (2006).

Based on the interviewees' responses to my questions I divided the participants into three distinct groups according to their attitudes, emotions, behaviors, and how they conceive of parental advice. In this chapter, I will delve deeper into why certain parents were allocated to these three groups and what these categorizations can reveal about the broader trends of the reception of parental advice in Israel.

This section begins with a recapitulation of the main findings.

Group A: Proactive in Seeking Parental Advice

Group A predominantly consists of mothers but also features one father. This group is characterized by its members' proactive and enthusiastic pursuit of a variety of sources of parental advice. Intriguingly, while the group is primarily made up of secular, educated, middle-class mothers, it also includes an educated Ultra-orthodox mother and an Ultra-orthodox father

with basic education. Given the group's mostly female composition, one might infer that the propensity to seek advice is shaped, in part, by gender roles. Yet, the inclusion of a father challenges this notion, suggesting evolving contemporary parental expectations. Below I consider how motherhood and fatherhood are experienced and how this relates to their experience in seeking and receiving parental advice.

Many parents within this cohort likened their engagement with expert advice to religious experiences, invoking terms like *Mishna*—with its religious connotations—and *compass* or expressing profound *blind loyalty* to the guidance they received. Navit, an art therapist within this group, is noteworthy for her criticism of professionals who are quick to pathologize parents' regular challenges with their children. Members of Group A frequently sought advice during defining moments in their parenting journey: during divorces, periods of family tension, pivotal developmental stages of their children, or when teachers indicated a need for external support. Their preferred sources of advice were professionals whose approach was mainly that of scientific parenting as a set of skills to be acquired. They would select these professionals after conducting painstaking research into the available options. For them, parenting was approached almost academically, with some treating these advice sessions as formal learning opportunities, even going so far as to take notes. They viewed advisors as essential navigational tools in their parenting endeavors. Thus, their proactive approach to seeking advice can be seen as not just a byproduct of an intensive parenting culture but also as a manifestation of societal values that prioritize family and parental responsibility over individual aspirations.

Group B: Objecting to Receiving Parental Advice

Comprising an equal mix of mothers and fathers, Group B stands out due to its members' aversion to actively seeking parental advice. They commonly found themselves inundated with unsolicited counsel. Both the solicited and unsolicited advice they did encounter often provoked feelings of threat, either to themselves or their child. The balanced gender representation in this group suggests that reactions to parental advice transcend considerations of gender. It is likely influenced by a constellation of factors, such as educational

background and deep-rooted parenting traditions. While some members of this group conceded that there was some merit in learning from others in other domains—such as finance, career decisions, and cooking—they displayed a pronounced aversion to parental advice. Paradoxically, some of them were inclined to offer advice to other parents, despite their own reservations about receiving such advice. The majority of this group can be characterized as traditional parents, with Nina, given her secular orientation, being a notable outlier. Compared to the other groups, they were less educated than the other groups, but were not poor and could in principle afford to pay for various services. It is noteworthy that their inherent trust in others was not drastically different from that of parents in the other groups. These parents perceived of parenting as an organic, intuitive process. They placed immense weight on their pivotal role in shaping their child's future. As such, they reflected deeply on their parenting decisions, consistently tuning into their child's needs. Challenging the widespread perception that external advice is impartial and universally relevant, they contested the notion that experts have the authority to define "good parenting" for them. Instead, they told me ~~that~~ they relied on their innate understanding, love, and unique familial circumstances. When in doubt, their primary compass was their personal intuition and keen insights about their own child. Their parenting ethos was anchored in responsibility, unwavering love, selflessness, dedication, and meticulous attention to their child's needs.

Group C: Ambivalent Towards Receiving Parental Advice

Group C predominantly features fathers, with a single mother making up its ranks. The prevailing attitude towards parental advice in this group was marked by ambivalence. Members of this group were not fervently in favor of advice, nor were they entirely opposed to it. They remained receptive to guidance yet did not treat it as an integral component of their parenting strategy. As noted in the Methodology chapter, the number of interviewees in this study was 13, and consisted of seven mothers and six fathers. Therefore, the preponderance of fathers in this group may mean that such a measured, yet non-aggressive, approach towards parental advice may have been influenced by societal role expectations.

Unlike the proactive seekers of professional advice in Group A, members of Group C tended to gravitate towards traditional familial wisdom, innate intuition, and foundational personal values. Occasionally, they expressed openness to external advice. They largely sidestepped the stringent dictates of intensive parenting culture, viewing parenting more as a fluid, adaptive practice anchored in love and instincts. The ethos of personal responsibility resonated deeply with this group's parenting philosophy. Their parenting journey was navigated by combining inherent emotional intuition and the flexibility essential for handling everyday parental challenges. Although they articulated a general receptiveness towards parental advice, active pursuit, or keen involvement in seeking such counsel was limited. This embodies their ambivalent stance on both the acquisition and application of parental advice.

While the above classifications provide a structured overview, it is essential to note that they do not constitute rigid boundaries. The lines separating the groups are often blurred, suggesting more of a continuum than clear-cut divisions. For example, Navit, a mother in Group A, said she did not accept the over-pathologising by experts, and had not sought expert advice as a young mother. In contrast, when Michal—a mother in Group B—felt that she needed help, she approached a *Rebbetzin*, the wife of a rabbi, who helped mothers with advice for family problems. The fact that the categories are blurred may suggest that, in real life, these categories do not capture the nuance and depth of parents' experiences. This highlights the subjective nature of experiences and the influence of cultural and individual differences.

When drawing parallels between the pursuit of parental advice and advice in other domains, such as finance, food, or career decisions, a compelling dichotomy unfolded as discussed in the following section.

Advice-seeking in Other Domains

A distinct pattern crystallized when contrasting advice-seeking tendencies across various spheres. Notably, parents fervently embracing parental advice often exhibited reticence when it came to advice in other arenas. Conversely, parents deliberately eschewing parental guidance appeared to be more amenable to counsel in different domains. For instance, Group A participants manifested a strong affinity for parental advice, contrasting this with a propensity

for self-reliance in spheres like finance or broader life concerns. While they leaned on parenting insights, they underscored their independence in other segments of life. In stark contrast, Group B parents firmly resisted both expert and lay parenting advice, even as they appeared to be more open to advice in other domains. Group C participants, meanwhile, showcased a consistent pattern, approaching guidance—to parenting or other realms—with a balanced blend of openness, discernment, and pragmatism. Few scholarly endeavors have aimed to juxtapose parental advice-seeking behaviors with those in other spheres, such as finance, or career development. Almog and Almog (2016) spearheaded a study analyzing the kinds of online applications that parents wished to have on their smartphones. In contrast to other types of advice, they noted that most parents in their study cited a desire for an application providing knowledge on parenting. Their findings highlighted the emotional weight associated with parental advice. Jewish Israeli parents carve their parenting pathways within a societal fabric that places familialism on a pedestal (e.g., see Lieblich, 2007; Nevon, 2017). As expounded in Chapter 3, “Israel’s sociopolitical characteristics and parental advice in Israel”, Israeli societal dynamics foster robust expectations—primarily for women but also extending to men—to enter matrimonial alliances, procreate, and assiduously rear their progeny.

My research offers a sociopsychological perspective, highlighting the complex, emotion-laden, and multifaceted challenges parents grapple with amidst the contours of intensive parenting. Although this line of research has already been suggested by Israeli psychologists and sociologists (e.g., Amit, 2006; Feroni, 2009; Gershky & Omer, 2017; Oryan & Ben-Asher, 2019;), there is a need for much more in-depth research to portray parents’ subjective experience. The aim of this study was to understand how Jewish parents in Israel experience receiving parental advice, and what factors influenced these experiences.

Factors Influencing Parents’ Experiences

The main factors that affected the participants’ experience as found in this study are presented below.

Spousal Relationships

Few studies have explored how spousal relationships play a pivotal role in how advice is received and processed. In the current study, spousal dynamics markedly influenced attitudes and practices related to parental advice. Examination of the three married couples, coupled with one divorced co-parenting duo, showcased the profound interplay between gender roles, the tenor of the marital relationship, and the experience of receiving advice. Two of the couples interviewed, as well as an individual mother (whose spouse did not participate in the study), portrayed their marital dynamics as supportive, stable, and harmonious. In these setups, fathers predominantly leant on their wives to actively seek and evaluate optimal advisory channels to tackle child-related challenges. The mothers interviewed in this study typically adopted a proactive, eager approach to securing advice, while their male counterparts exhibited a more measured, autonomous stance. Illustrating this dynamic, Yosef recounted how he initially resisted a particular adviser that his wife had consulted, deeming her too esoteric and unprofessional, which led to disagreements between them. However, when she engaged with a family therapist, Yosef actively participated in sessions and the subsequent implementation of the advice. Previous studies (e.g., Fischer et al., 2023; McBride et al., 2005) have noted that mothers often assume mediating roles, galvanising fathers to partake in interventions. This "gatekeeping" role assigned to mothers has been subjected to critical scrutiny, where, at times, mothers are accused of monopolising the realm of child-rearing and marginalising fathers (Gershby & Omer, 2017). In stark contrast, the divorced couple (Lora Knor (Lev) and Chaim Lev, along with a solo participating father (Moshe Ram, whose spouse did not participate in the study), hinted that contentious relationships might propel each parent towards more divergent, entrenched positions on advice-seeking.

Recent academic explorations have viewed familial and intimate partnership dynamics through a relational lens (Philip & O'Brien, 2017; Twamley et al., 2021). Mason (2004, p. 177) and have posited that relational practices might vacillate, ranging from *warm* to *conflictual*, or even veer into *oppressive*. Within this context, critical questions loom: Does the predominant cultural milieu amplify the stressors that couples grapple with when steering through parental advice? Or are the inherent relational dynamics between spouses the main linchpin for making

decisions on seeking parental advice? As noted in the descriptions of the three groups of parents above, this study demonstrates an interplay between the intensive parenting culture dominant in Israel with the concomitant stress that it produces for parents and, on the other hand, the dynamics of the spousal relationship. As demonstrated in the Findings chapters (Chapters 6—8), the couples who described a good spousal relationship also described conducting extensive dialogues regarding the children and whether or not to seek parental advice and about any specific parental advice that they had received (for example, (e.g., Dorit and Shalom Segev; and Rachel and Yosef Golan). In general, they tended to often seek parental advice. Dorit noted that being a good parent meant seeking parental advice, which aligns with the ideology of intensive parenting culture. On the other hand, Dorit Segev also noted that the expectation that good parents seek parental advice sometimes also caused tension between them, despite their generally good spousal relationship. At some point, Dorit decided to stop her pressure on this issue in order to maintain their good relationship.

The Complex Interplay Between Motherhood and Parental Advice

The findings of my study demonstrate a complex interplay between the female participants' identity as mothers and their varying attitudes to seeking and/or receiving parental advice or objecting to seeking and/or implementing parental advice. Of the seven mothers who participated in my study, four of them intensely sought advice, while two other mothers intensely objected to receiving parental advice, and one mother described ambivalence towards parental advice, sometimes seeking parental advice, but mostly did not. These findings differ from the conclusions of many Western studies, namely, that mothers generally tend to participate in receiving parental advice (Hays, 1996 ; Faircloth & Gurtin, 2017, Lee 2014) but is in line with many interventionist studies in Israel, the United States, and the United Kingdom that show that many mothers drop out of intervention programmes and that it is often very difficult to recruit mothers to participate in intervention programmes (Matalon & Turliuc, 2023). However, in the interviews, in response to my question about whether their motherhood determined their approach to parental advice, all seven mothers said that being a mother was all-encompassing, determining their behaviours and parental practices. They described the very intense thought and energy they invested in their mothering. Those mothers

who were enthusiastic about seeking parental advice in effect adhered to social expectations. The mothers who resisted seeking parental advice expressed similarly intense feelings.

One common finding in the literature (e.g., Hays, 1996; Gershy & Omer, 2017; Lee et al., 2014) is mothers' increased tendency—compared to that of fathers—to seek parental advice. In the present study, the mothers emphasised the emotional depths navigated during the process of receiving parental advice. The influence of the social positioning of being a mother also finds resonance in studies conducted by Israeli scholars such as Lieblich (2007) and Kestler-Peleg et al. (2015), who emphasise the stressful social expectations manifested in the emotional experience of Jewish mothers in Israel. For example, in their study of Jewish Israeli mothers' experiences pertaining to breastfeeding, Kestler-Peleg et al. (2015) found that social expectations of mothers to breastfeed are experienced as a source of stress that might lead mothers to make undesirable decisions merely to meet these expectations. In contrast, based on evolutionary research, which I discussed in Chapter 2, interventionists (e.g., Rosenblatt, 2002) argue that mothers are prewired by specific hormones to invest and care for their biological children. Rosenblatt and interventionist scholars (e.g., Bornstein, 2002) note that ecological and social actors also play an important role in how a hormonal predisposition ultimately manifests itself in parental behaviours. In this context, the term *ecological* refers to such aspects of the parents' environment, such as the availability of intervention programs, interactions between advisers and parents, and the government or municipality's parental policies. In contrast, parenting culture scholars (e.g., Lee et al., 2014) argue that in the 21st century, such evolutionary explanations are responsible for the creation of the modern term of *mothering*, which refers to the skill set to be acquired by parents, as opposed to *motherhood*, which is the biological term. Parenting culture scholars suggest that interventionists use this conceptualisation of motherhood and its hormonal basis to create stressful expectations for mothers to adhere to intensive mothering culture.

As noted above, the findings of the present study demonstrate that not all mothers seek parental advice. However, the intensity of mothering remains impactful regardless of whether advice is actively sought or deliberately resisted. It is noteworthy that, except for one father, only mothers—including those who objected to seeking parental advice—initiated participating

in this study about parental advice. Interventionists might argue that the fact that many mothers do not seek advice is due to the failure of researchers to translate scientific knowledge into practical parenting advice that would effectively meet the needs of parents and that future scientific research could perhaps amend this. However, as posited by O'Brien (2005), it might also be the case that interventionists predominantly approach mothers, perhaps expecting limited participation by fathers. My own view is more closely aligned with that of parenting culture scholars, who note that interventionists present the so-called scientific knowledge of what they consider proper or good parenting to parents who might not always need or desire such advice (Scheidecker et al., 2021). Other than in cases of extreme parental malfunction, mothers need to be freed from social pressure to allow them to decide whether or not to seek parental advice and what kind of advice they desire (Kestler-Berger et al., 2015).

However, it is imperative to note that the proactivity of the mothers in Group A is exhibited by only half the female participants in the study. The remaining female participants, scattered across Groups B and C did not uniformly advocate for advice-seeking. Some viewed parental advice as overbearing or even potentially harmful. Their intense negative experience seems to be related to their understanding of their maternal role. Nina, a single mother, elucidates this by recounting her experiences while grappling with her son's social challenges:

"I asked him, 'Do you want me to intervene?' He told me no. So, I didn't intervene. Then, I spoke with his teacher and said to her, 'Just keep an eye out.' Later, during the summer break, I wanted this not to continue into the next year. I had a conversation with his teacher and told her that I didn't want this issue to carry on. The teacher suggested, 'Give it the summer break; maybe he will calm down on his own.' It's tough. The systems here aren't always supportive. With the frequent change of teachers, I feel the need to be my son's stable presence. I am the mother; I am the home. It's not always beneficial for me to seek external advice when it often feels disconnected from my reality."

In an environment like that of Israel, where intensive parenting is the norm and the archetype of a *good mother* often mirrors Nina's description — as a steadfast anchor, intervening when necessary, yet discerning in seeking advice — many mothers navigate with

their own sense of appropriate responses , valuing personal insights over generic guidelines. The societal expectations of mothers are undeniably distinct from and often more intense than those targeting fathers. Women grapple with the challenge of being continuously present, sometimes echoing the *helicopter* approach to parenting. In fact, Michal, who was opposed to parental advice by professionals, actually described herself as a “helicopter mother”. Nina's participation in this study highlights the myriad ways mothers confront and negotiate these societal pressures. In conclusion, while motherhood undoubtedly sways a mother's disposition towards seeking advice, it is the intricate interplay of self-perception and societal norms that have paramount significance. These elements significantly influence the emotional terrain mothers tread concerning parental advice, be it in seeking or resisting it. Building upon the earlier discussion on mothers, it is essential to broaden the lens and encompass the paternal perspective in the parental advice-seeking narrative. The layered dynamics of gender roles play a pivotal role in shaping parents' reactions and engagement with advice.

Hays (1996) described mothering in this era as a kind of labour in response to expectations that mothers be fully child-centred. Mothers who object to seeking professional or lay parental advice could thereby be trying to prove their good mothering. As O’Dougherty (2013) suggests, they are proving their mothering through taking the whole responsibility and relying solely on themselves. This is how they fulfil the social expectation to be total mothers. However, regarding Israeli parents, Sagi and Dolev (2001), for example, tend to see mothers who do not seek parental advice as not good enough, since they are apparently not child-centred. In contrast, other scholars, such as Lavee (2018), explain the behavior of mothers of low SES, who seem not to live up to child-centred ideology since they are less involved in their children’s education and tend not to participate in programs for parents, as nevertheless affected by intensive parenting culture. Due to their dire economic situation, these mothers have often opted to work long hours to ensure their children’s future. They are therefore child-centred but cannot participate in many activities such as programs for parents and meetings with teachers.

Fatherhood in the Context of Parental Advice

When one delves into the arena of fatherhood, particularly in the context of parental advice, a sharp contrast compared to the intensive emotional experiences of mothers can be discerned. Rooted in traditional masculine autonomy, fathers' engagement with the advice-seeking process often differs from that of mothers (Faircloth, 2014). While society may laud the virtue of seeking professional advice as emblematic of good parenting, fathers in this study exhibited a spectrum of varied reactions.

In the present study, some fathers resisted or challenged this established norm, while others acquiesced, albeit without the profound emotional undertones that mothers often experience. In a qualitative study of a UK sample, Owen et al. (2010) examined fathers' involvement in practices related to food, such as food shopping and the preparation of food. The authors describe how fathers conceptualise risk and risk management in contrasting English neighbourhoods. Fathers' accounts were found to reflect gendered patterns, although these seemed to be in the process of changing. The authors note that these more traditional patterns intersected with contemporary ideals of the father's increased involvement and allowing their children choice yet ensuring a balanced diet and the furthering their emotional development; that is, while all fathers described themselves as contributing to some aspects of 'foodwork', a minority took the main responsibility or an equal share of the related tasks. Owen et al. (2010, p. 405) noted that in her sample, there were ..." few traces of the anxieties and the moralizing pressures to adhere to health advice that have been discussed in relation to maternal identities and food."

The in-depth interviews conducted in my study revealed similar patterns. The fathers interviewed expressed an awareness of the expectations and ideology of deterministic parenting—namely, that their current practices with their children might affect child outcomes—and of the ideology advocating receiving parental advice and yet seemed to express resistance to this ideology. They expressed a desire to be involved fathers and did the best they could to ensure their child's future development and yet they did not express the same levels of anxiety and reaction to moral expectations found in some of the studies of mothers cited by Owen et al. (2010). Aligned with most intervention studies (e.g., Gershby & Omer, 2017), my

findings suggest less prominent evolving gendered patterns in fatherhood. While some fathers described themselves as more involved in raising their children than their fathers had been, most of the fathers interviewed were not proactive in seeking parental advice and did not usually participate in programs offering parental advice. The fathers in my sample described their attitude to parental advice as more balanced than that of the mothers. They described child rearing more as “everyday practices” and noted that “life rolls on”, rather than that it is based on objective professional truths, as some mothers viewed the need to seek parental advice. While Yosef, one of the fathers, noted that good parental advice could be a “game changer”, he also described being “rational” in evaluating which advice to adhere to.

This variance does not only underscore the differing societal pressures on each gender but also highlights the lack of acute guilt fathers experience when they do not strictly adhere to established parenting norms. This observed gender divergence extends beyond the individual and permeates the spousal dynamics, as touched upon earlier. The gender roles visible within the sample of this study resonate with broader societal norms in which predefined roles and expectations are firmly entrenched. This is all the more pronounced in the Israeli context, a society at the crossroads of tradition and modernity. Notably, Israel's high percentage of working mothers, which is among the highest among the OECD countries, adds another layer of complexity to this discussion. It is a poignant reminder that while mothers are increasingly present in the workforce, societal expectations pertaining to their primary role as mothers remain disproportionately weighty. This is reminiscent of the cultural contradictions of motherhood pointed out by Hay (1996). She suggests that as more women have entered the labour markets, the task of child rearing remains primarily that of mothers.

While many studies of masculinity describe autonomy as associated with hegemonic masculine ideals such as independence, atomization, and self-sufficiency (e.g., Kaya et al., 2018), recent work on masculine autonomy, such as Elliott et al. (2022), which is based on feminist theorization of masculinity, adds the notion that men's' autonomy includes the consideration of relationships and caring to our understanding of masculine autonomy. In the interviews of the fathers in the group categorized as ambivalent towards receiving parental

advice, the fathers noted that they were responding to their wives' needs and thus could be said to invoke relational considerations with regard to seeking parental advice.

In sum, as mothers grapple with the societal pressures of epitomizing the "perfect parent" via active advice-seeking, fathers traverse this domain with a different lens, anchored in this national context by traditional masculine autonomy and yet in consideration of their spousal relationships. This distinct approach further underscores the intricate weave of gender roles, societal impositions, and the landscape of parental advice in the vibrant tapestry of Israeli society.

Macro Influences: Israel in Transition

Israel is currently at an interesting crossroad, its society undergoing a continuous transition between deep-rooted traditionalism and emergent modernity. The very fabric of Jewish Israeli culture, with its foundation in Judaism, ensures that modernity and religiosity often intertwine in intricate ways. As my participants' experiences underscore, this interplay profoundly colours their perceptions and actions in receiving parental advice. The breadth of religiosity in the participant group—from secular to ultra-Orthodox—offers a telling reflection of this complex dynamic. It is intriguing to note the patterns observed in this study. For instance, traditionalism was clearly linked with resistance to external advice. Meanwhile, the extremes of the religiosity spectrum—ultra-Orthodox and secular parents—displayed a more diverse range of stances, including both proactive advice-seeking and ambivalence.

Delving deeper, one wonders how traditional or religious values overlap with the globally dominant ideas of intensive parenting. The Torah and Halacha—which consists of Jewish Scripture, other sacred literature, and tradition—while offering spiritual and moral guidance, do not provide explicit directives on child-rearing. The emphasis is more on ensuring that children respect their parents, grow up with moral grounding, and continue the Jewish faith. Though some writers view the guidance offered in the Torah as favoring an authoritarian parenting style, a close examination paints a more nuanced picture. Scholars such as Baumgarten (2007) and Fairman (2019) illustrate how love, investment in education, and nurturing are fundamental to Jewish parenting traditions. This understanding aligns with the

idea that parenting, which is traditionally the realm of women, is grounded in love and natural intuition. Feminism, over time, has recalibrated the dynamics, emphasizing spousal equality, if not always in practice, at least ideologically. Given the historical shifts in Jewish Israeli parenting styles, which have been influenced by global events and internal societal transformations, it is evident that contemporary Israeli parents are at a unique juncture. They are influenced both by global parenting paradigms and traditional Jewish views of mothering and parenting. However, these influences manifest themselves in a variety of ways. For instance, religious parents might integrate scientific advice with the teachings of the Torah, traditional parents might internalize its values but not its rules, and secular parents might revere scientific advice as a new form of scripture, as it were. Spector (2019)'s insightful religious perspective sheds light on the Jewish procreation ethos, which emphasises that humans are created in God's image; not procreating is seen as diminishing the Divine. This view, coupled with tragedies like the Holocaust, intensifies the collective drive to have children. Such procreation serves not just individual family units but the broader collective of the nation.

Some of the parents interviewed in this study, such as those in group B—who objected to receiving parental advice—said that they rely on their intrinsic beliefs and experiences to validate their parenting choices. Their self-efficacy does not hinge on external advice but is deeply rooted in their personal convictions and perhaps in their past experiences. This self-assuredness might be bolstered by their foundational beliefs, derived from cultural or religious traditions, personal experiences, or even from the feedback loops within their immediate social circles. Such parents tend to uphold the values of independence and individualism, a reflection of both Western and Israeli societal norms. Their confidence in their abilities acts as a buffer against the barrage of external suggestions and interventions, creating an equilibrium where their internal compass directs their parenting decisions. Yet some parents might oscillate between these groups based on specific situations, the age of their children, or even personal life changes. The role of external advice in shaping a parent's self-efficacy, therefore, is both complex and multifaceted.

As shown in the literature, in Israel, religiosity is an inherent and unique aspect of the culture (see Introduction chapter) within which people define themselves on a continuum

between secular and ultra-Orthodox. In the findings of this study, some patterns emerged that suggest that families belonging to a higher social status and who also have strong ties to religious institutions or communities may prioritize expert advice that aligns with their religious beliefs. Higher religiosity tends to correlate with proactive seeking and following of advice (Group A), especially for middle-class mothers. One such example was Rachel, who was an educated ultra-Orthodox mother. She sought parental advice from Adlerian groups adapted to the needs of the ultra-Orthodox population. She strove to seek and implement parental advice received from a religious professional since this allowed her to feel that she could trust the source of advice. She was also influenced by her self-perception as a mother, according to which it was her role to take the responsibility of giving her children the basis for the most optimal outcomes.. However, she felt that in deciding not to adhere to a specific piece of advice given by this religious source (as described in the Findings chapter for Group A), she was in effect 'risking' her children's well-being. As the Jewish faith and religious tradition are an important part of the culture in Israel that prescribe norms and morals of parental behaviours, influencing and shaping participants' self-identity, a consideration of parents' feelings and religious habits helps understand some of their parental choices.

Middle-class mothers with varying degrees of religious observance might navigate social expectations to seek parental advice based on a blend of secular educational norms and religious values. Their decisions may reflect a balance between professional advice and religious teachings. For example, as discussed in Chapter 6 (Object to Seek Parental Advice Group), Michal, who defined herself as traditional-religious, noted that she conceived of motherhood as 'pure' and believed it was her destiny and natural for her. Immediately after giving birth, she decided that she was the only one who should make decisions for her child. This echoes a blend of intensive parenting culture and religious faith regarding the role and purpose of Jewish women. When she decided to breastfeed despite her mothers' recommendation not to nurse her baby, she was actually following the culture she had absorbed. However, interpreting this along with her personality, despite also being surrounded by middle-class expectations, she decided that she preferred to rely on herself rather than on external advice (whether from her

mother or the doctor). This provided her with a sense of competence and the feeling that she was doing the right thing for her child.

Another example is Moshe, who also decided mostly not to seek parental advice, although he did not rule it out altogether. Like Michal, he described himself as traditional and conceived of fatherhood as 'pure'. He used words reminiscent of biblical religious values of childbirth and expressed his absolute responsibility for his children. He described himself as a traditional person, very devoted to family values. His preference to rely only on his own decisions reflects the mutual sharing of values between religious beliefs and intensive parenting ideology. However, he purposefully rejected expert parental advice (see Chapter 6 for further details). His rejection of parental advice was also influenced by his belief in an interwoven set of values and ideologies—both religious Jewish and psychological-scientific knowledge—which made him feel absolute responsibility for his children and therefore not to rely on or trust other people for advice regarding his children. This was in contrast to other domains, in which he described himself as a person who does seek professional advice.

Autonomy and Self-efficacy in the Context of Israeli Parental Advice

The complexities of parenting are intertwined with the broader socio-cultural milieu. Within the Israeli context, the push and pull between the modern ethos of equality and the traditional structures of patriarchal authority underscore the tensions around parental autonomy, especially when navigating the waters of pervasive parental advice.

Parents from Group A (proactive in seeking parental advice) and Group B (objecting to parental advice) expressed unease pertaining to their autonomy in the context of receiving parental advice. This underscores the weight of the culture of intensive advice on Israeli parents, regardless of whether or not they proactively seek parental advice. The exception to this narrative is Group C (ambivalent towards receiving parental advice), suggesting a varied experience based on the unique characteristics and orientations of this group. The participants spontaneously expressed concerns about autonomy. In my study, both the "proactive" and the "objecting" groups expressed concerns pertaining to autonomy, albeit from different vantage points.

Group A presented a rich tapestry of how parental advice and autonomy intersect. Their proactive engagement with sources of advice indicated an assertive quest for knowledge. Yet, as seen in the experiences of Dorit and Navit, underlying tensions revealed the struggles for maintaining autonomy amidst external pressures and expectations. The need to trust the parental advisor whom they were considering as a potential consultant or the adviser that they actually consulted was a recurring theme raised by the mothers; they emphasised its centrality in preserving a sense of control and agency. The narratives of Group B (those who objected to receiving advice) underscored a tangible sense that their autonomy was threatened. In their worldview, societal norms, fueled by dominant expert advice paradigms, seemed to be judgmental. They viewed expert advice as moralising with regard to the so-called best practice, or “reading from the book” [of expert advice], which represent ideal child rearing conditions, namely of two parents with lots of time and energy and who have a perfect spousal relationship. This perception highlighted a discord between Israel's cultural emphasis on individual agency in familial decisions and the broader global parenting narrative, which sometimes positions parents as dependent on expert knowledge (Borenstein, 2019).

The relative detachment of Group C (three fathers and one mother, who were ambivalent towards receiving parental advice) from these concerns warrants attention. Their predominant male composition might offer a clue, given the differential societal expectations from fathers compared to expectations from mothers. However, the fact that the sole mother in this group also aligned with this perspective highlights the complexities of gender dynamics in the discourse on autonomy.

Self-determination theory by Ryan and Deci (2000) could provide valuable insights. According to this theory, individuals inherently seek agency and autonomy for their well-being. However, critics argue that this theory may have a pronounced Western bias, potentially overlooking the nuances of duty-based orientations in non-Western contexts (e.g., Faircloth, et al., 2013). Israel's unique positioning at the crossroads of collectivist-traditional and individualist-democratic ideologies provides an intriguing backdrop. The parents in Group A, who were proactive in seeking parental advice, felt that seeking parental advice was part of their self-determination. Group B, who objected to receiving parental advice, self-identified as

traditional in terms of their level of religiosity, which may have intensified their resistance to global intensive parenting ideologies. On the other hand, Group C, who were ambivalent towards seeking and receiving parental advice, navigated this realm with an emphasis on masculine autonomy and individual agency to determine whether, when, and to what extent to seek advice.

When analyzing the participants' responses through the lens of self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1978, among others), it is clear that self-efficacy is not merely about possessing knowledge or skills but is closely tied to the parents' perceptions of their effectiveness and the value they associate with external inputs. The parents of Group A—namely, those who were proactive in seeking parental advice—seem to derive their sense of competence and validation from professional advice, seeing it as an essential toolkit facilitating their parenting journey. Their reliance on expert advice might stem from their worldview, which places a premium on scientific, research-backed interventions. In my view, such a stance may have also been influenced by their educational backgrounds, socio-economic status, or their broader social networks, where professional advice is highly esteemed. That is, I agree with cultural psychologists, such as Goodnow (2002), who notes that there is no objective advice and that it is not the advice that matters, but rather how parents perceive it. This resonates with Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory of development, namely, that to understand development we must examine it from the developing person's point of view, in this case, the parents' perspective.

Conversely, Group B parents—who objected to receiving parental advice—with their intrinsic confidence, underscored the point that parental self-efficacy is not only a product of external validation but can also be a deeply ingrained belief system. Their self-efficacy is a testament to the strength and resilience of parents who, despite societal shifts and the burgeoning pressure of expert advice, stay true to their beliefs and instincts. Their narratives emphasize the plurality of the Israeli parenting experience and underscore that a one-size-fits-all model cannot be said to apply to them. The individual journeys, underpinned by self-efficacy, offer rich insights into the myriad ways in which parents navigate the complexities of child-rearing in contemporary Israeli society.

Having delved into the complex relationship between autonomy, self-efficacy, and parental advice, it is crucial to understand the varying prisms through which parents view their own parenting roles and practices. Their own perceptions of their self-efficacy and autonomy do not only shape their relationship with advice but also profoundly influence their day-to-day experiences and decisions as parents.

The Interplay of Parental Advice and Social Class

Integrating the discussions on gender and societal expectations of the previous sections, it is crucial to consider another pivotal determinant in the landscape of parental advice, namely, that of social class. This added dimension elucidates the complexities of seeking parental advice, where gender roles intersect with socio-economic factors. The nexus of motherhood and socio-economic status presents a nuanced tapestry of experiences, where the pressures of motherhood are further magnified or adjusted based on one's standing in the socio-economic hierarchy. Middle-class values, often dominant in various cultures come with firmly established benchmarks for child-rearing. For example, in Israel as well as in other countries, participation in extracurricular activities is not merely a matter of a child's holistic development; it serves as a measure of 'successful parenting' (Golden et al., 2018). Consequently, for a middle-class mother, the journey is multifaceted: She stands at the intersection of motherhood and class-specific parenting standards. In my study, the mothers who had academic degrees or those who aligned themselves with the upper echelons of the middle class tended to demonstrate a stronger inclination towards seeking expert guidance. Such a trend might originate from their trust in formalized knowledge, shaped by their academic trajectory, or could have been influenced by their social milieu that values expert opinion. While Hays (1996) posited that intensive parenting is not exclusively a prerogative of the middle class, its expressions certainly vary depending on one's socio-economic background. For the middle class, this might translate into an emphasis on organized activities and formalized learning. In contrast, families from other socio-economic strata might approach intensive parenting rooted in their distinct socio-cultural and economic realities. However, if seeking and adhering to parental advice is perceived as a hallmark of middle-class parenting, then any deviation from this, either by intent or circumstances, can bring about significant stress. This stress is not merely about parenting

challenges; it intertwines with the demands of meeting class-specific benchmarks. One's socio-economic position does not solely determine material resources; it significantly influences perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors (Golden et al., 2018). Therefore, this status can both enable and obstruct the pursuit of parental guidance. Yet, as echoed by some parents in the present study, economic considerations were not the decisive factor in their decision to seek or abstain from parental advice. For example, Yoav, who was in the group that objected to receiving parental advice, noted that they had sought parental advice even when they could not really afford it financially. In my study, the parents who viewed themselves as belonging to the middle class did tend to seek parental advice, but their social class was not the only determinant of their attitude towards seeking and receiving parental advice. Other research findings (e.g., Hinton et al, 2013) have suggested that even if parents are offered incentives (such as transportation or vouchers for shopping) to engage in interventions, such tactics sometimes backfire, proving counterproductive.

In sum, the matrix of social class paints a vivid backdrop against which parents navigate the terrains of advice and expectation. While every class brings its distinct set of pressures and benchmarks, it is evident that the desire for effective parenthood transcends these boundaries. As we delve deeper into the myriad influences shaping parental behaviors in Israel, understanding this socio-economic dimension becomes imperative, offering a richer, more nuanced perspective on the choices parents make in their quest for guidance.

Differences in Definitions and Reflections on Research Findings. In the methodology section, I described my categorization of participants based on a mixture of typical signifiers of class (education and occupation) with participants' emic description (Harris, 1976), and my own interpretation based on how they described their lifestyle and cultural capital. This contrasts with the existing literature, which often emphasizes a more objective and general economic description of class. For example, many sociological studies use income or occupational status as measures of class (e.g., Bourdieu, 1984; Hays, 1996), while my approach also considers personal perceptions.

These differences in definitions directly impact the interpretation of the results. While the existing literature might interpret class expectations as primarily influenced by income and employment, my research has identified more nuanced aspects by considering differences within the broad category of 'middle class'. The definition suggests viewing parents' decisions if and to what extent to seek, approach, and apply parental advice as also influenced by individual perceptions, level of religiosity, and the parents' general life experience in the past as well as their past experiences in receiving parental advice.

Example of How This Plays Out in the Data. Consider the case of Lior (Group A), who, according to the literature, is considered middle class but perceived himself as lower class and is a father. Despite this perception, Lior sought out parenting advice, demonstrating Hay's (1996) argument that the culture of intensive parenting, characteristic of the middle class, is dominant. On the other hand, Michal, who is also considered middle class according to the literature but self-identifies as lower class, completely resisted seeking parental advice from the outset. This was due to her traditional-religious worldview, which reflects the intensive parenting culture yet does not accept its practices. She decided to rely mostly on herself, her love, devotion, and sacrifice, which aligns with Jewish religious views for parents. Despite the fact that seeking and participating in receiving parental advice was part of her cultural capital, Michal (Group B) believed in 'love' and her own capabilities and opposed the idea that someone from outside could tell her how to raise her children.

Additionally, Aviva, a mother in the ambivalent group (Group C) who also described herself as lower-middle class, emphasized her independence and free spirit. She questioned everything that others told her about how to raise her children, further illustrating how individual perceptions and personal characteristics influence parenting decisions.

In conclusion, these findings support the notion that the culture of intensive parenting characteristic of the middle class is indeed dominant. However, the experience of this culture and the practices parents choose are individual and are related to their additional personal and social characteristics.

Parents' Various Perspectives on Parenting

The nuanced interplay of gender and social class with regard to parental advice reveals multifaceted influences on parents as they seek guidance for child-rearing. The present section delves deeper into each group's parenting perspective, illuminating the diverse experiences of parents within broader contexts. Notably, all groups measure good parenting against the ideals of intensive parenting.

The Scientific Parenting Perspective. Group A's stance aligned with *scientific parenting* from the critical vein of the parenting culture literature. These parents, who were mainly educated middle-class mothers, likened parenting to a professional role: meticulous, total, and marked by a heightened responsibility. For example, four of the mothers interviewed (Dorit, Lora, Navit, and Rachel) described taking “millions of advice” and used words such as “work”, “total responsibility.” For them, seeking advice was normal, much like seeking medical counsel—a tool to ensure that they were executing the role of parenting as required. Lior from Group A emphasized that this “right way” extends beyond basics like not hitting a child. Dorit noted that it is about bringing a child's potential to the forefront. However, societal pressures loomed large in their narratives. Lora, for instance, cited social pressure and deterministic advice according to which it was in the best interest of her first child to have another child as having influenced her decision to have a second child. Yet the noticeable disparity in the frequency of parents’ explicit mentions of the joy of parenting between Group A and Groups B and C raises important questions about the emotional experiences and well-being of parents who adhere to the principles of scientific parenting. While Group A parents, who align with the scientific parenting perspective, view parenting through a lens of meticulousness, professionalism, and heightened responsibility, their comparatively fewer expressions of joy in parenting suggest potential emotional repercussions of adhering to this approach. It is possible that the rigorous standards and expectations associated with scientific parenting, coupled with societal pressures mentioned in their narratives, may contribute to feelings of stress, anxiety, or even inadequacy among these parents. Moreover, the emphasis on achieving the ‘right way’ of parenting, as articulated by Chaim and Dorit, may create a sense of perpetual striving or

pressure to meet unattainable standards, which could overshadow the joys and spontaneity involved in parenting. This resonates with claims by Furedi (2002).

The Perspective of Parenting Based on Personal Self-reliance. The narratives of Group B aligned with ‘traditional’ or ‘natural parenting’. Members of Group B (objecting to receiving parental advice), such as Moshe with an education degree and Nina, a secular nanny who ran in-home childcare for several children, told me they relied more on personal intuition and love in parenting her own child. Their descriptions of parenting as rooted in love, enjoyment, care, and attention, seem to reflect traditional Jewish parenting practices that call for loving each child as a unique divine creation. In addition, this seems to have been amplified by Zionist ideology, which sought to create the “new Jew.” Yet they also described negative experiences when they received unsolicited parental advice. Nevertheless, despite their resistance to receiving parental advice, traces of the 'scientific parenting' ideology have seeped into their narratives; for example, Michal uses the term *helicopter parent* to describe her view of parenting.

Parenting as Everyday Practice. Group C, which consisted mostly of well-educated fathers, viewed parenting as a blend of daily practices, learning from their own and their parents’ experience, and adaptability. They do not adhere strictly to deterministic views on child outcomes, acknowledging children’s eventual autonomy. Yet, they sometimes find specific advice game-changing, merging past upbringing with current knowledge, parental values, and child-specific traits.

Understanding parental perspectives is vital to illuminating the intricate factors that guide parents as they navigate advice in the Israeli middle-class context. As noted in the introduction to this thesis, my research, which builds upon and diverges from existing theoretical frameworks, is rooted in a bioecological model inspired by Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) *The Ecology of Human Development*. Bronfenbrenner emphasized the need to study experiences and behaviors not just in controlled environments like laboratories but also in natural, real-world settings in which people lead their lives. This ecological approach contrasts with the rather binary perspective of some interventionists, a sentiment echoed in Krugman

and Compsty-Fowler's (2015) article titled "Parental advice: Given perhaps, but not received." Drawing from Bronfenbrenner (2005), the bioecological model underscores the individual's central role in development, with interactions occurring within a multitude of contexts over time. By employing this perspective, I sought to unveil the forces that shape parents' current perceptions and experiences with parental advice. However, there is a marked distinction between Bronfenbrenner and my objectives in the current study. While Bronfenbrenner's model is typically employed to form recommendations based on the understandings derived, my research is primarily exploratory. I have adopted a parenting-culture lens to critically analyze the external and internal forces that influence parents' experiences.

The findings of this study have yielded interesting patterns. Aligned with Bronfenbrenner's recommendation, behaviors and experiences should be understood as outcomes arising from the interplay between external and internal factors. In a context marked by intensive familialism and heightened parental advice, many mothers, who are influenced by these social pressures, were found to either intensely seek advice or staunchly resist it. Some fathers, who were less affected by these societal norms, and specific exceptions like Aviva, a self-described feminist, exhibited different patterns in seeking and receiving advice. These patterns underscore Goodnow's (2002) idea that receiving parental advice is inherently interactive. However, in contrast to the conventional interventionist viewpoint elucidated by Goodnow, my perspective shifts the focus to not merely tailoring advice to the parent's needs. It is equally, if not more, about discerning when such advice might either be unnecessary or even unwelcome. Discourses pertaining to professional advice and the deficit of parenting may have the contrary impact that interventionists pursue; that is, these discourses may result in more parents who are stressed and therefore reject parental advice, or parents whose mental health is affected due to the stress in response to parental advice.

This study delved beyond the mere inquiry into parental advice-seeking behaviors among mothers and fathers. It aimed to capture a nuanced and rich understanding of their experiences as active participants navigating intensive parenting norms that sanctify parenthood while simultaneously imposing expectations of intense child-centeredness. Unlike Bronfenbrenner's primary focus on what children need for optimal developmental outcomes,

this study shifted the lens towards exploring what parents need for their own well-being within the context of parenting. By adopting this altered perspective, the research revealed how parental well-being is intricately interwoven with contextual factors, ultimately influencing children's well-being, as Bronfenbrenner's theory extensively demonstrates. In the specific context of Jewish Israeli parents, the interplay of various factors highlighted in this study shapes and influences parental experiences. These findings provide critical insights that warrant further investigation in this field.

Furthermore, Bronfenbrenner's model facilitated the identification of patterns often overlooked in previous research. For instance, the study underscored the significant role of gender dynamics and spousal relationships in parental advice-seeking behaviors. Mothers typically exhibit higher engagement in seeking advice, while fathers' involvement often hinges on their relationship with the mother, thereby shaping parental decisions and experiences. This relational perspective offers unique insights into how parenting practices are negotiated within marital relationships, complementing and extending Bronfenbrenner's mesosystem concept of interactions between different microsystems.

In conclusion, this study does not only contribute to understanding the complexities of parenting in an intensive context but also underscores the relevance of ecological systems theory in unpacking these complexities. By contextualizing parental behaviors within broader environmental influences, including cultural and relational dynamics, this research enriches our understanding of parenting practices and their implications for familial well-being and child development.

Conclusions

This study highlights the profound influence of the intensive parenting ideology on Israeli middle-class Jewish parents' experiences, particularly with regard to seeking and implementing parental advice. It is evident that in navigating their roles as parents, Jewish Israeli parents are influenced by a mix of Western-intensive parenting ideologies, traditional Jewish and Zionist values, and personal experiences from their own upbringing. Their

interactions with parental advice are not solely driven by gender or social class but by an intricate amalgamation of these influences.

A shared experience among all three groups is the stress related to parenting and obtaining parental advice. All parents grapple with conflicting expectations: being an involved parent guided by Western ideals while also honoring Jewish traditions, such as having many children. The pressures of intensive parenting, combined with familial and religious values, make for an inherently stressful experience. Further compounding this stress is the societal expectation for mothers to work, in addition to traditional caregiving roles.

I began this thesis with a personal dilemma, facing my role as a psychologist and needing to establish a professional stance on the kind of parental policy Israeli parents require. While the majority of professionals in the Israeli Council for Parents advocate that parents receive advice, I realized that I lacked an informed answer to understand its true impact on parents.

After completing this comprehensive exploration, I now appreciate the intricate interplay of cultural, socio-economic, and personal factors that influence parental experiences in the Israeli context. It is clear that a one-size-fits-all approach is not viable. Rather than endorsing a single perspective on parental advice, it is imperative for professionals to be aware of the multifaceted realities faced by families. I hope this thesis serves as a clarion call to psychologists, counselors, and policymakers: While advice can be extended, its acceptance is deeply personal and rooted in individual beliefs, past experiences, and cultural nuances. We must approach parental counseling with both humility and an open mind, always aiming to support parents in their unique parenting journeys instead of prescribing a predetermined route.

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

The study, though rich in its insights, acknowledges several limitations. Primarily, the fact that a self-selected sample of 13 parents was interviewed, while suitable for a qualitative inquiry, may limit the wide-ranging applicability of the findings. Although these participants had

diverse backgrounds, this number of participants may not comprehensively represent the full range of parental attitudes towards receiving advice.

Geographically, the study was concentrated within the metropolitan area of Tel Aviv, a region known for its progressive embrace of modernity and scientific parenting perspectives. This specific locale, with its distinct cultural and social milieu, may not be representative of the broader Israeli landscape. Areas within Israel marked by a more traditional ethos could manifest more diverse attitudes and responses towards receiving parental advice. This geographical limitation underscores the potential variation in parental perspectives across different regions within Israel, cautioning against the unbridled generalization of the study's findings beyond the confines of metropolitan Tel Aviv.

Methodologically, the reliance on in-depth interviews, while robust in capturing personal experiences, may have inadvertently introduced my own biases. Participants' self-reporting could be influenced by the interview context, and their responses might be shaped by my professional background as a psychologist. This context could lead some parents to amplify their acceptance or rejection of parental advice, thus subtly skewing the data gathered. It could well be that other researchers would get other responses. Moreover, the interviewees in this study chose to participate in the study, so that their views may differ from data obtained by means of a different methodology, such as a large-scale survey.

Despite these limitations, the study holds pivotal value in shedding light on the intricate emotional and perceptual terrain navigated by parents in Tel Aviv when receiving parental advice. It underscores the crucial role of geographical, social, and cultural context in shaping parental responses, offering a substantive foundation for future research endeavors in various Israeli locales, both modern and traditional on many of the factors cited by this study as influencing parents' experiences in receiving parental advice.

Moreover, the study's exploration of emotional reactions to parental advice further compounds its complexity. Emotions, inherently subjective and multifaceted, pose challenges in their accurate representation and analysis. The study's interpretive framework, premised on the variability of the impact of advice, might channel the understanding of parental experiences

in a specific direction. An alternative, more interventionist analytic perspective could potentially yield divergent interpretations, highlighting the subjective nature of qualitative research findings.

Bauduin's (2022) insights into psychological stress provide a fresh perspective. Stress is often an outcome of perceived misalignment between individual capacities and environmental demands. The Jewish Israeli individual, balancing traditional and revolutionary Zionist ideologies, might find the assimilation of global intensive parenting paradigms particularly taxing. This possibility emphasises the need for comparative studies that delve deeper into parents' experiences in light of Ryan and Deci's (2000) self-determination theory in diverse cultural contexts.

The Contribution of This Study

This study fills a gap in both Israeli and Western studies by eliciting parents' subjective experiences, specifically on Israeli parents' different experiences in encountering parental advice in the context saturated with ideas of intensive parenting culture. The present study has illuminated the multifaceted experiences of middle-class Jewish Israeli parents in the metropolitan area of Tel-Aviv regarding their reception of parental advice. Another gap that this study fills is that the study of parents' experiences has mainly been undertaken either by scholars who strongly advocate that parents receive science-based parental advice, or by parenting culture scholars, who are critical of this approach since they claim that the culture of intensive parenting pushes parents into seeking and receiving parental advice. However, it is my view that the latter group of scholars do not sufficiently consider that some parents may well wish for advice or may simply reject some specific advice. Also, in contrast to the view of many interventionists, I believe that not all parents necessarily require advice by experts, while some parents may well benefit from such advice.

In contributing to the broader academic discourse, this study bridges a knowledge gap. By juxtaposing parental advice-seeking tendencies against those in other domains, it offers a nuanced understanding of Jewish Israeli parental mindsets. In a society that deeply values

familialism, this study highlights the emotional, identity-focused, and value-oriented challenges parents face in the midst of an intensive parenting culture.

Relevance and Implications

This qualitative study employed a robust in-depth interview methodology with a diverse group of 13 parents to delve into Jewish Israeli parents' multi-faceted experiences in receiving parental advice. The research uncovers a spectrum of reactions, from enthusiasm to ambivalence, and marked negativity, underscoring the often-intense emotional undercurrents parents navigate in this context. The study's findings contribute to a richer understanding of parental perspectives, highlighting the need for future research to further consider the emotional and cultural dimensions that shape parents' reception of both expert and lay advice. This research constitutes a pivotal step in broadening the discourse on parental advice, advocating for a more inclusive and empathetic approach that honors the diverse parents' lived experiences and emotional landscapes.

This research serves as a critical scaffold for further exploration within the field of parenting culture, emphasizing the significance of parents' emotional responses and their perspectives on receiving advice. The findings of this study augment our understanding of the microsystems and mesosystems within Bronfenbrenner's developmental ecological model, offering insight into the emotional dynamics that permeate parents' interactions with external advising entities. This study encourages further academic exploration into the myriad factors that impact parents' emotional landscapes and their navigation of advice, thereby enriching the scholarly dialogue in the field of parenting culture and ecological developmental models.

In conclusion, based on the findings of my study, there are some parents who practice their parenthood strictly by "the book", often replacing their intuitive parental practices with the advice received from professionals. On the other hand, many parents deliberately refrain from seeking and following professional parental advice. In both of these cases, in making decisions about seeking and implementing parental advice, parents are influenced by the prevailing pressures in their parenting environment. It is my view that it is imperative to alleviate the burdens, judgment, and expectations placed upon parents. However, this does not mean that

the guidance or science-based knowledge about child development provided by professionals is not valuable. When professionals—many of whom represent intensive parenting culture—encounter Israeli parents attempting to address challenges in raising their children, it is imperative that they keep in mind that all parents are affected by various intergenerational parental practices which may differ depending on their ethnicity or country of origin, as well as Jewish tradition and the intuitive dimension of parenthood. It is crucial that professionals be attentive to the possible gap between parents' other parenting cultures and their own intensive parenting culture in order to avoid unnecessary stress and allow parents to receive the help that they are asking for.

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Appendix A. Achieving a Systematic Review of the Literature

The sources drawn on for this review are broad. To explore what is already known and has been studied about the relationship between parenthood and parental advice, a comprehensive literature search was undertaken using the UCL Library Services, British Education Index, Education Resources Information Centre, PsychINFO, PubMed, and British Library EthOS between January 2016 and October 2017. To cover the variety of terms that might link to parental perspectives on parental advice, a range of keywords were used for the literature search. These were *parental advice* or *parent* (also *parent**) or *parent education* or *parent perception* or *parent voice* AND *intervention* or *programs* or *parental class*. The search was then expanded to include literature cited in identified papers. Diverse aspects of the relationship between parental advice and parental perception were covered by subsequent keywords, including *parental advice* and *history* or *RCT*. Succeeding searches used words of different methods of research: *survey* or *case study* or *qualitative* or *narrative*. A comprehensive search was then focused on notions that were assumed to be in conjunction with *parental perspective* and *parental advice: self-agency* or *parental identity* or *competence* or *self-efficacy* or *empowerment* or *parental values* or *collaboration*.

The reference list includes papers that were also searched for further relevant material. As this project was conducted in Israel, a subsearch included the term *Israel*. Part of the search also included Israeli databases in Hebrew: the Lewinsky College for Education Library and the Mofet Institute.

From December 2016, I also used the Scopus Database to find literature on in-depth qualitative studies. Additional words such as *parental experience*, *parental perspective*, *intentional understanding*, *values*, and *beliefs* were also applied.

Appendix B. Interview Questions

1. First part: General questions about advice
 - a. Tell me about yourself.
 - b. How do you relate to advice in general?
 - c. Are you a person who asks for advice?
2. Second part: General questions about parenting
 - a. Tell me about your family.
 - b. How do you experience parenting?
3. Third part: Questions about parental advice:
 - a. Have you ever sought advice? Where?
 - b. How did you feel when you encountered this advice?
 - c. Can you tell me why you sought advice?
 - d. Were you given advice without seeking it? Why do you think you were given this advice? How did you feel about it? Have you followed this advice?
 - e. Have you had a bad experience with advice? What made it a bad experience?
 - f. Have you had a good experience with advice? What made it a good experience?
 - g. Have you read advice books or anything else, like advice groups? If not, why not?
 - h. What do you know of yourself as a mother or father that causes you to ask or not ask for advice?
 - i. Can you remember one specific piece of advice that you can share with me? What preceded it, and what happened subsequently?

- j. Were your child/ren aware that you had asked for advice? What difference did it make for your child/ren, if any?
- k. Do you think that being a father, mother or single parent has affected how you have experienced advice?
- l. When have you felt bad as a parent?
- m. When have you felt good as a parent?
- n. How are you similar to or different from your parents?
- o. Do people come to you for advice?
- p. Did you have a different experience with your different children considering advice?
- q. What is good parenting to you?
- r. What is bad parenting to you?

Appendix C. Debriefing Information



Exploring people's experiences of advice

- I, Iris Berent, am now recruiting participants for my PhD project in psychology and social science.
- The subject of my research is people's experiences of advice.
- This project involves an interview that might take up to two hours.
- It will be conducted at a place of your choice.
- I believe that participating in this project would have the potential to be interesting for the participant, as well as being very helpful for me.
- If you think of a potential participant, please give this person the Research Project Information Sheet attached here.
- I appreciate your help in recruiting participants for this project.
- If you have further questions, please contact me by email or phone.

Email: [REDACTED]

Phone number: [REDACTED]

Best regards,

Iris Berent

Appendix D. Research Project Information Sheet



Do you need advice?

Research Project Information Sheet

Q. What is the purpose of this research?

A. To find out about people's views and experiences of receiving advice. Advice can be about anything, from technical matters to personal matters (e.g. financial, life, etc.). This study aims to help us understand the psychology of being helped, whether and if at all people are using advice. It will also explore how people decide if, when and in what manner to take advice.

Q. Why should you take part in this research?

A. In Israel today, some people feel that experts are offering too much advice, while other people feel that they wish for more advice from experts. For example, some people wish that the government would offer everybody advice about financial matters. In order to decide in this policy matters, this research can give you an opportunity to participate and contribute to this debate. This research will help me understand whether advice is good for people, and what their experiences are of the advice they receive.

Q. What does taking part involve?

A. If you choose to participate, you will be asked to take part in one interview. This interview includes three main parts, and it might take between an hour and a half to two hours.

Q. Will your participation be kept confidential?

A. Yes. No one will know about your participation, unless you tell them. Recordings of the interview will only be made available to the researcher. Transcriptions of the recordings will then be anonymised by using a false name and by removing or changing identifying features (such as your home location or your job details).

Q. Is anyone else taking part?

A. Yes, 30 people will be recruited to the study.

Q. What if you change your mind?

A. You may withdraw from the study at any time. Please note, you are also not obliged to answer any questions you do not wish to answer.

Q. Could there be problems for you if you take part?

A. I hope you will enjoy taking part in this project. For most people, talking about such issues will be rewarding, but for others it may create tension.

Q. Do you have to take part?

No. You decide if you want to take part. Even if you say 'yes', you can drop out at any time or say that

you don't want to answer some questions.

You can tell us that you will take part by signing and returning the consent form.

Q. What happens after the study?

A. I will analyse all the data collected over the course of this project and write my thesis for publication for various audiences, including a summary report which I will send you after the study has been completed, should you be interested. I will also complete a proposal for a larger study, based on the findings of this study.

Q. What happens next?

A. If you have decided that you would like to take part, please contact me at the email address or telephone number below. I will contact you soon to arrange a convenient time and venue for an interview, and you will have a chance to ask more questions about the study and decide if you would like to take part.

If you have decided that you would NOT like to take part, I would welcome your thoughts on why you do not wish to participate. Otherwise, there is no need to do anything further.

Thank you for taking the time to read this.

If you have any questions, please contact me, Iris Berent

email: [REDACTED]

phone: [REDACTED]

Appendix E. Consent Form

CONSENT FORM Version 1: 10 January 2017

PhD project ID number [REDACTED]

Exploring people's experiences of advice

Name of Researcher: Iris Berent

Please initial box

1. I confirm that I have read the information sheet dated..... (version.....) for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these questions answered satisfactorily.

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason.

3. I agree to take part in the above study.

1. I understand that the information I provide will be treated as confidential and that my anonymised words may be quoted in publications of research.

Name of Participant Date Signature

Name of Researcher Date Signature

Appendix F. Case Summary: Nina

Nina is a single mother who has one son. She is of average socio-economic status, has no university education, and is secular. She is against receiving parental advice. Nina is very autonomous and individualistic, yet she has very much internalised the idea of intensive parenting. She believes that parenthood is total: ‘...’when my child was born, Nina was dead’, to be ‘concrete’, and that everything that happens to the child is the full responsibility of the mother. At the beginning of her parenting, she was helped by her parents on technical issues, but soon she stopped availing herself of their assistance. She started to receive help for her son when he was around ten years old, when he began to have tics. She approached the department of neurology in a hospital. For the last three years, her son has been treated by a physiotherapist. Nina said explicitly that she does not take parental advice from this therapist. It is important for her to clarify to the physiotherapist that she should treat her son and not give her any parental advice. Nina did consult with a school counsellor. Her son was facing social problems, and bullying behaviour from some boys. However, Nina’s experience with this counsellor was a disaster. In her own family, her parents did seek advice, including family therapy and psychologists. She was adopted and has a brother who was also adopted. She said that she has learnt from that experience that advice does not help, just as it did not help her family. While Nina describes negative feelings towards receiving advice, there are also some contradictions in how she expresses her attitude to receiving advice. In her experience, no one can really advise her because no one is like her. One of the contradictions in her explanation, however, is that although she rejects advice, she herself *gives* advice. Another contradiction is that, although she is against advice, she believes that parents need parental advice. When she describes herself as ‘concrete’ as a mother, she said that concrete does not absorb anything, including any advice. If she felt that she did need advice, she would prefer an adviser who did not have too much ego, was humble, and who would be prepared to consult other advisers when this was required. She said that this adviser would need to be attentive and give feedback and practical advice. She explained that her preferred way to take advice is through the internet, but not through forums, so that she could choose what advice to take from many options, in a way that would not make her feel committed or flooded. She said that it is

important for her not to feel pressure to do what the adviser suggests, or to feel that she was disappointing or insulting the adviser if she did not follow the advice.

Appendix G. The New Opening Statement

Hi, thanks for your participation. We are here to discuss parenting and parents, how the advice that parents receive on child-rearing issues shapes parenthood, how advice is shaped by parenting, and so on. Shall we start with you giving a general introduction of yourself?

Hi, thanks for having me here and participating in this project.

This study started from a question that puzzled me as a mother and a psychologist. That is, how and whether we can advise parents, and how advice shapes parents. So this is a study on parental advice and on advice in general. I compare receiving advice about parental issues with receiving advice on other matters. Shall we start with you giving a general introduction of yourself?

Verbally explain the aims of the study and the purpose of the interview. Remind them that it will be tape-recorded. Remind them about confidentiality and the use of anonymous quotes from the interview in the thesis. Remind them that they have the right to withdraw at any time or stop the interview if they feel upset at any point. Do they have any questions before beginning the interview?

Appendix H: Braun and Clarke's (2006) 15-Point Checklist

Table 2 A 15-point checklist of criteria for good thematic analysis

Process	No.	Criteria
Transcription	1	The data have been transcribed to an appropriate level of detail, and the transcripts have been checked against the tapes for 'accuracy'.
Coding	2	Each data item has been given equal attention in the coding process.
	3	Themes have not been generated from a few vivid examples (an anecdotal approach), but instead the coding process has been thorough, inclusive and comprehensive.
Analysis	4	All relevant extracts for all each theme have been collated.
	5	Themes have been checked against each other and back to the original data set.
	6	Themes are internally coherent, consistent, and distinctive.
	7	Data have been analysed – interpreted, made sense of – rather than just paraphrased or described.
	8	Analysis and data match each other – the extracts illustrate the analytic claims.
Overall	9	Analysis tells a convincing and well-organized story about the data and topic.
	10	A good balance between analytic narrative and illustrative extracts is provided.
Written report	11	Enough time has been allocated to complete all phases of the analysis adequately, without rushing a phase or giving it a once-over-lightly.
	12	The assumptions about, and specific approach to, thematic analysis are clearly explicated.
	13	There is a good fit between what you claim you do, and what you show you have done – ie, described method and reported analysis are consistent.
	14	The language and concepts used in the report are consistent with the epistemological position of the analysis.
	15	The researcher is positioned as <i>active</i> in the research process; themes do not just 'emerge'.

Appendix I. List of Different Codes Generated Across the Dataset

Name	Sources	References
What was learnt from the parent's parent about advice	11	16
Socio-economic influences on experience of advice	9	11
Self-confidence in parenting	22	76
Self-agency - third voice	24	127
Preferences for the source of advice	18	59
Parent's history and personality as a centrifuge	26	160
Parenting as identity juggling (formation)	24	204
Parental status and advice	15	48
Parental advice is a must for parents	11	13
Parental advice as social collaboration	17	66
Typical Israeli statements	8	15
I don't need parental advice	12	26
Good parenting	14	31
Good experience of parental advice	22	78
General advice vs. parental advice	20	76
Gender influences on experience of advice	12	16
Experience of parental advice	25	154
Development of advice seeking	20	64
Development in parent-advice dynamic	22	92
Contradictions	20	132

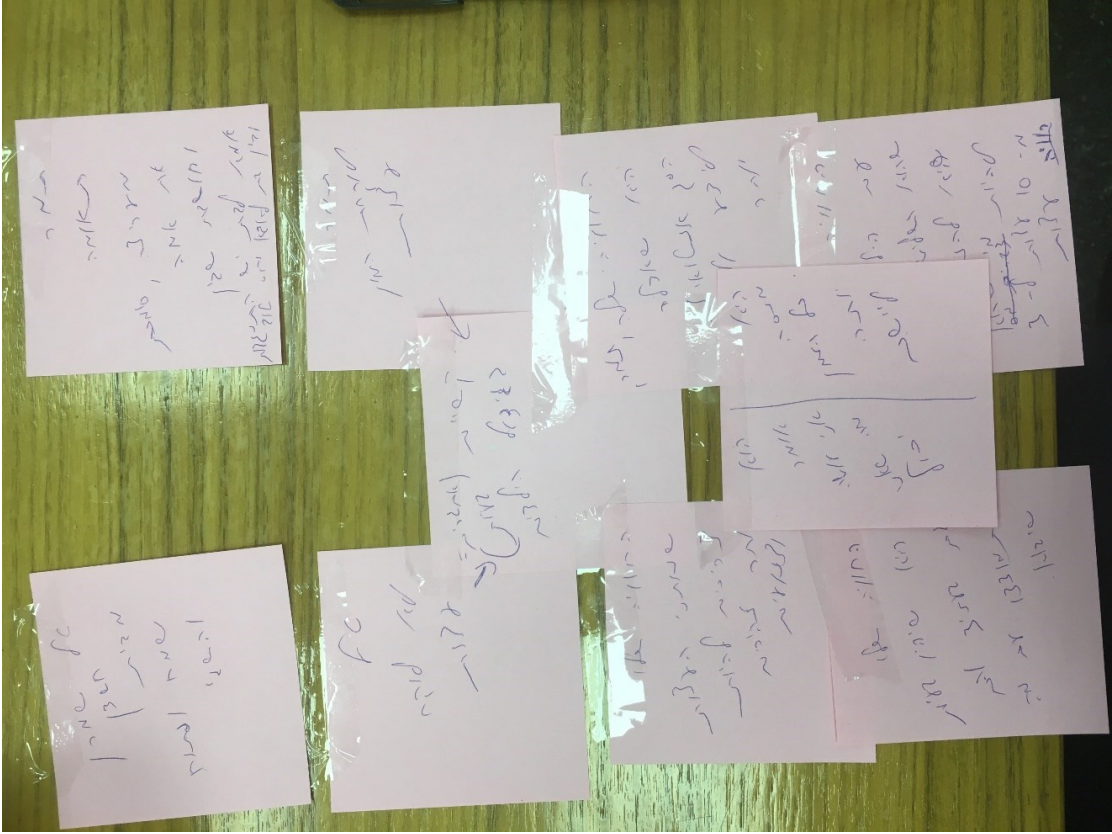
Child's experience of parental advice	5	7
Bad parenting	7	11
Bad experiences of parental advice	22	73
Ambivalence	16	43
Advice is everywhere	13	17
Advice as a dialogue	15	41
A definition of parenting	19	174

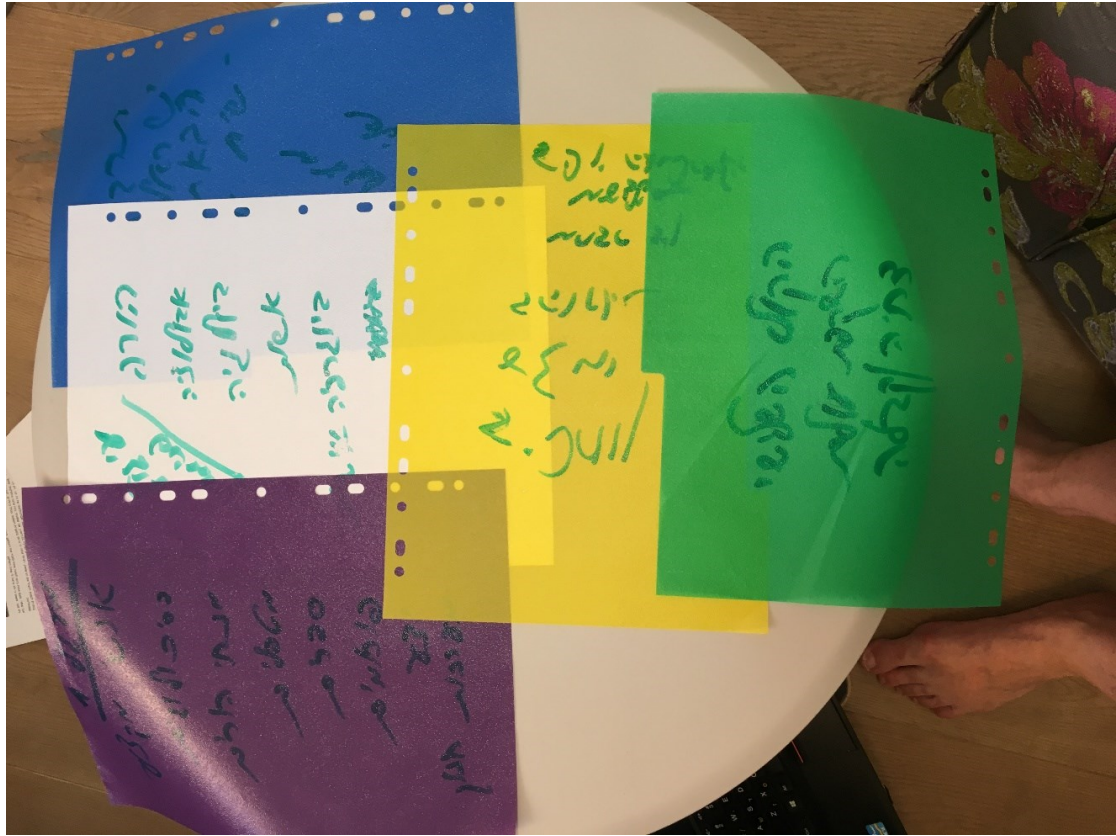
Appendix J. List of the Higher Hierarchy of Categories

A list of the higher hierarchy of categories that were generated from the list of codes:

- Proactivity/reactivity
- Intensive emotions
- Morality
- Autonomous
- Individualism
- Active participation

Appendix K. Image to Illustrate How Codes, Subcodes, and Themes Were Devised During Analysis (in Hebrew)





Appendix L. List of Very Initial Themes

Theme 1

Parents are aware that advice is everywhere

Theme 2

The experience of parental advice is unique and differentiated from other kinds of advice because it is highly emotionally charged (glory, ambivalent or rejection).

Theme 3

The dynamic between a parent and the advice (adviser/advice/culture of advice) is mediated by the parent's biography

Theme 4

Parents have an internal dialog with parental advice that influences parental self-expectations, parental practices and decisions, role perception, parental identity, and parental feelings

Themes 5

Parents 'experience of advice is mediated by a 'third voice': a parent does not just accept or reject advice, or interpreting advice, but a parent actively encounters advice, meaning that he/she is influenced by and influences advice

Theme 6

Parents 'subjective definition of advice

Theme 7

Gender has little to do with how a parent experiences advice

Theme 8

Parental experience of advice and religiousness

Theme 9

Parental context (single/divorced or couple) and parent's experience of advice

Theme 10

Parental experience of parental advice is influenced by spouse dynamics

Theme 11

Prominent gaps and contradictions within parents' experience of advice

Theme 12

Different developmental timelines of experiences of parental advice

Appendix M. List of Very Initial Themes Reviewed

Theme	Subtheme
Parents experience parental advice with emotional intensity	High motivation to participate in a study on 'parenting'
	Parenting as an emotionally intense issue
	Intensive emotions towards parental advice
	Parents experience advice as overwhelming
Different emotions on receiving advice	A bad experience with parental advice results in a devastation
	A good experience with parental advice is experienced as a defining moment
Autonomous	
Individualism	Each child and each parent is different
	Parents dialogue with advice, most often within themselves
Parents experience intensive parental culture as a norm	

Parents demonstrate contradictions	
A dialogical space	Parents avoid non-dialogical spaces for advice
	Parents welcome a dialogical space

Appendix O. List of Second Review of Very Initial Themes

Theme	Subtheme
Parents experience receiving parental advice	Negative emotions on receiving parental advice
	Positive emotions on receiving parental advice
	Neutral emotions on receiving parental advice
Parents' personal biographies shape how they experience parental advice	
Do parents' spousal relationship shape their experience of parental advice?	Taking extremes
	A dialogue
Parents' experience of parental advice and social and structural influences	Perceived pattern between gender and parents' experience of advice

Theme	Subtheme
	Perceived pattern between parents' socio-economic context and their experience of advice
Parents experience receiving parental advice	Negative emotions on receiving parental advice
	Positive emotions on receiving parental advice
	Neutral emotions on receiving parental advice
Parents' personal biographies shape how they experience parental advice	
Do parents' spousal relationship shape their experience of parental advice?	Taking extremes
	A dialogue
Parents' experience of parental advice and social and structural influences	Perceived pattern between gender and parents' experience of advice

Theme	Subtheme
	Perceived pattern between parents' socio-economic context and their experience of advice
	Perceived pattern between parents' educational level and their experience of advice
	Perceived pattern between parents' religiousness and their experience of parental advice
	No perceived pattern between family status and parents' experience of advice
Parenting as a central value	Emotional intensity around parenting
	Parents take and/or receive a lot of parental advice

Theme	Subtheme
	Parenting as a profession
Autonomy	Parental advice experienced as dictatorial and invasive
	Parental advice experienced as supportive
	Parental advice experienced as sometimes stressful and sometimes helpful
Individualism	
Parents actively participate in receiving advice	Morality
	Professionalism
	Professionalism, including having knowledge and consciousness