Human Ingenuity Research Group: Parental Perceptions of Children’s Creative Behaviours
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BACKGROUND
The goal of Western’s human ingenuity project (Hansen, 2008) was to identify the characteristics of innovative people working in the trades, technical professions, and engineering. It aimed to identify the source(s) of innovative traits and better understand which experiences, inside and outside of the workplace, played a role in the development of inventive people.

This study extends earlier results (Dishke Hondzel & Hansen, 2012) which demonstrated that a child’s environment, which includes: community size, national culture, school type, and parents, influence how creativity is developed.

METHOD
Participants (n=24) were given the option of answering a series of questions over the phone, in-person, or completing a questionnaire with the same questions online. All participants were offered a $10 gift card for their responses.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION
Preliminary results show that parents have myriad ways of conceptualizing creativity in their children. Mothers in this study describe their evidence of creativity in three primary ways:

1. Scientific: building/construction (mostly Lego), inventing things
2. Artistic: drawing, painting, doing crafts
3. Musical talent or interest: singing, playing the piano, composing music

**Scenario A:** (Participant from a rural community)

He loves to build things. He likes to create things. He thinks of an idea – he sees something or he wishes that I didn’t have to do laundry as much so he’d like to invent a machine that could wash and dry the laundry and fold itself. And I told him, ‘go for it.’

Participants overwhelmingly stated that they expected children living in rural areas to be more likely to develop creative tendencies than children living in the city.

**Scenario B:** (Participant from an urban community)

I mean, a child living in the country is more creative in the sense that she might see things that we don’t see, things that, you know, the bugs flying by and this haze of dragonflies … and she might be seeing the wings moving, and because of her observations of that, she’s creating images in her mind …

Parents also indicated that they wished they were doing more to foster their children’s creativity, but reported that they were too busy, work was too demanding, or other factors interfered with their desire to interact more with their children.

**Scenario C:** (Participant from an urban community)

We are bad parents and we don’t play with them. We’re outside when they’re outside, and we’re usually doing yard work or whatever and we’re watching them. At home, though, we’re usually, unfortunately, a little too busy trying to keep up with the housework and everything.

Though participants came from different communities across Southern Ontario, and had children attending both public and private schools, responses were similar. Most parents saw creativity as a very important element of their child’s development, and wished to nurture its growth. Rural living was seen as idyllic, and a means to foster creativity through independence and reflection. Both rural and urban parents lamented the growing reliance on technology, and the fast pace of modern life, considering those to be barriers they faced in fostering their children’s creativity.

SURVEY QUESTIONS
Participants were asked to describe their child’s home and school life, their involvement with their children’s activities, and in what ways they saw their child being creative. Scalable questions asked parents to state how important creativity was to them, and whether they felt urban or rural lifestyles contributed to the development of creativity in children.

PARTICIPANT CHARACTERISTICS

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<th>Public School</th>
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The purpose of the current study was to learn more about parent’s perceptions of creativity, and how those perceptions relate to the ways parents choose to foster creativity in their children.

Our earlier research showed that children living in rural areas scored higher on a standardized measure of divergent thinking than a comparable group of children living in urban centres.