

NO PIRATES, NO PRINCESSES: RAISING CHILDREN WITH VALUES AND  
RESPONSIBILITY IN A CONSUMER CULTURE

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ABSTRACT

Since 75% of households have children living at home with at least one parent, families are fertile ground for interpersonal communication studies. Parents struggle with raising children with values and responsibility when the culture in the United States is saturated with media induced consumerism. Media are not the villain in the drama, and there are positive educational movies, television shows and songs; but the aggregate of negative popular cultural influences that contradict the teaching of the parents are. Parents have developed strategies to assuage cultural influences. Parents struggle with the influence of popular culture in the form of television, movies and music. This phenomenological study gathered narrative data from diverse mothers with children and uses thematic analysis to view parenting in terms of the struggles mother's feel and the strategies they use to raise children with values and responsibility. As ambiguous as the terms are, most middle class parents try to instill values in their children and impart a sense of responsibility. The mothers in the study say that one of the best ways to teach values is to model the values in daily life. The social cognitive theory is extended to include the modeling of values and responsibility by parents. Parenting creates our culture. Understanding the individual struggles and strategies assists communication researchers in explaining aspects of our culture.

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## Table of contents

Abstract.....	ii
Acknowledgements.....	iii
Chapter	
1. Introduction.....	1
2. Literature Review.....	3
a. Family communication.....	3
b. Social cognitive theory.....	9
c. Marketers versus parents.....	12
d. Advertising and children.....	16
e. Children learn values, responsibility and money... ..	21
f. New ideas in the battle.....	26
3. Method.....	30
a. Phenomenology.....	31
b. Method for this study.....	34
4. Results.....	36
a. Struggles.....	36
b. Strategies.....	43
5. Discussion.....	50
a. Thematic Analysis of Struggles.....	51
b. Thematic Analysis of Strategies.....	59
c. Social Cognitive Theory.....	65
6. Limitations and further research.....	68
7. References.....	69

Appendix

1. Interview one.....	81
2. Interview two.....	93
3. Interview three.....	119
4. Interview four.....	137
5. Interview five.....	154
6. Interview six.....	166
7. Interview seven.....	175
8. Interview eight.....	185

## Chapter 1: Introduction

A mother of five children shared her “October Surprise” on the first crisp, fall day. Each of her children wanted her to buy a costume which had been advertised on television. When she calculated the cost of the costumes at \$250, for one night of trolling for candy, she realized that it had to stop. She begged me for a way to tell her children, “No!” She wanted to communicate that just because it is advertised on TV, or your friends have something that you don’t have, the parent is not obligated to buy it.

This research project will detail a qualitative in-depth interview process about the struggles and strategies parents employ in the media saturated culture of the United States. The study looks at the literature in family communication related to raising children with values and responsibility in a media saturated consumer culture. Academic literature related to family communication is vast, but research on teaching values and responsibility is limited. For the purpose of this project and since parents often turn to popular non-fiction “self-help” type books, a portion of the literature review is of well researcher popular culture books. The project is important because 75% of households in the United States have children in the home (Department of Health and Human Services, n.d.).

Parents across the country want to raise their children with values and responsibility to build a just society. Yet parents say they feel crushed by the culture as evidenced by the vast number of books and article that are written to help parents. Tough economic times require different strategies for responsible parenting. The influence of advertising is overpowering as advertisers wage a multi-billion dollar war to win the hearts and minds of the youth of America. Parents try to communicate values and responsibility to their children and break through the advertising clutter. Our affluent, consumer culture is forcing values of

consumerism into children's lives. Parents' careful communication to their children about values, responsibility, and money provide a buffer to the overwhelming power of advertising.

The title of this project: "No pirates, no princess" developed out of the contention that the lessons parents are allowing the media to teach their children, unconsciously, about growing up as pirates and princesses are counterproductive. The pirates and princesses represented the nature of the seemingly innocuous purchases that parents make for their children that have unforeseen hidden meaning. Rather than being fun fantasy play, princesses must be beautiful, they are not interested in accomplishments or education, their only need is to be kissed/married/saved by an handsome prince. But our sons are not taught to play "Prince", they play Pirate. Pirates are despicable, violent outlaws whose lives of raping and pillaging are celebrated in kid literature and popular movies. The pirates and princesses are an allegory for all the negative popular culture influences that parents sort out for their children.

Published writings in this area range from academic journals assessing children's understanding of money, to self-help-culture books aimed at those choosing to simplify life to websites devoted to values and money education. Each section of the literature review contains inherent justification for the research study. A qualitative phenomenology has not been applied to family communication to this extent, and illuminates the struggles and strategies of parents.

## Literature Review

This literature review covers some of the pertinent academic writings in the area of family communication. The social cognitive theory of Bandura (2000) is summarized as a theoretical framework and was chosen at the end of the study, when the evidence suggested social cognitive theory was appropriate. The review covers the rise of consumer culture, marketing to babies, children, and teens, an investigation of how children become responsible users of money and finally, look at new ideas to free our families from the dependency created by advertising.

### *Family Communication*

The parent-child relationship is the primary intergenerational relationships (Segrin and Flora, 2005) and one of the most studied relationships in social sciences. This section will examine the vast literature on family dynamics, but is distilled to include research on family systems pertinent to teaching values and responsibility to young children and adolescents. Rogers (2006) claims that family communication research benefits from different theoretical approaches and the Bandura approach has not been applied to family communication as a behavioral modification model.

The family is defined through the relationship between parents and children. Families are social systems with rules and inter-related components (Bradshaw, 1988). Family has been a “central domain of study in the social sciences from the early institutional view of the family as a primary social unit to the more recent communication view of the family as a dynamic, socially constructed system of relationships” (Rogers, 2006, p. xv). The family is the primary social system that a child learns to interact with other people. Parents try to make sure children are secure and happy (Ginott, 2003) and they set the tone of the



home. Although alternative lifestyles abound in our culture, this study looks at the traditional home with parents and children, blended families and single parent homes.

A newer approach to family research is to view the family as a complete system. According to Bradshaw (1988), the principles of family system are wholeness and interconnected relationships. The systems approach looks beyond the dyad of parent and child to a societal view. Parenting is critical in the systems view and parenting styles are frequently examined. The study of parenting styles has a long history (MacCoby and Martin, 1983). Parents have different approaches to discipline and communication. Social scientists recognize the importance of studying the family, “parent child processes have been the subject of literally thousands of studies” (Segrin and Flora, 2005, p. 158).

Family dynamics have been examined in different axial planes. While parents seem to establish the communication environment in the home, the children play a role. At times the two are in conflict and act as opposing forces (Yerby, Buerkel-Rothfuss and Bochner, 1995). In the process of persuasion, children have been found to be active participants whose behavior both affects and influences parental responses (Wilson, Cameron and Whipple, 1997). Definitions of parenting styles by Baumrind (1971) showed three distinct types of parenting styles. The first style, authoritative parent, also defined as democratic, balances high nurturance with firm control. This style demonstrates age-appropriate demands, clear communication on requirements, reason and facts to argue for compliance, maintains firm control, has high standards, but is not coercive. There is an inherent give and take between parents and children. Parents are involved and affectionate with their children and “rely on positive sanctions to gain compliance, encourage child to express himself when the child disagrees, persist until child complies” (Baumrind, 1973, p. 40). This parenting style usually

results in children who exhibit high levels of vitality, self-reliance, approach tendency (both easy to approach by others and willingness to approach others) and self control.

The second style is permissive. This style demonstrated low levels of control and low levels of maturity demands on the children. It is combined with higher levels of nurturance, but parents don't enforce rules. The permissive parents use love withdrawal (ridicule) more often than other styles, moderate amounts of nurturance and little control. In this style, parents view themselves as resources and very often give in to complaining and whining (Baumrind, 1970). The behavior of children with the permissive parents shows low levels of peer affiliation, low vitality and low approach (Baumrind, 1996). These children have poor outcomes.

The third style is authoritarian. This style of parenting is highly demanding. The demands are not followed by reasoning; parents are usually unresponsive to needs of children. There are usually strict demands placed on children that are grounded in strict theological standards. These parents show low levels of affection and very little empathy and support (Baumrind, 1970). Parents who use this style rely on power-assertive forms of discipline and express less child approval. The children showed low self-reliance, low self-control and low approach tendencies (Baumrind, 1973). Without sanctioning one approach, Baumrind's research shows that the authoritative parenting style results in the best outcomes using the four behavioral dimensions of control, maturity, clarity of communication and nurturance (Baumrind, 1973). The style of parenting has strong and lasting impacts on the behavior of the children.

From a broader perspective, families use different types of communication patterns. Each family will develop a consistent and regular communication pattern (Fitzpatrick and Ritchie, 1994). This attempt at cognitive and behavioral consistency is based on Heider's

(1946, 1958) balance theory. Patterson (1982) organizes types using a conformity orientation and conversation orientation. There are four types of family communication patterns: consensual (high both conversation and conformity); pluralistic (high in conversation low in conformity); protective (low on conversation high on conformity); and laissez-faire (low in conversation and conformity). These patterns are dictated by the parents.

The patterns of communication within the family (Grolnick and Gurland, 2002; Segrin and Flora, 2005) specify three approaches to parent/child communication using the framework of warmth and control messages. The unidirectional approach is one that has the longest tradition, and balance is most important. This “isolates the one-way effects of parents on children” (Segrin and Flora, 2005, p.179). Balance between warmth and control means that effective control messages are well structured and reasonable that prompts the child to internalize proper behavior, and warmth messages are sincere. Controlling is unfavorable, but in control is favorable according to Grolnick and Guralnd (2002). Control is more likely to produce desired results when it is given with responsiveness and support (Baumrind, 1995). The bidirectional approach and systems approach “respond to the needs to study complexities in parent-child relationships” (Segrin and Flora, 2005, p. 180). The influence on communication goes both ways, “through processes or responsiveness, synchrony, and attachment” (Segrin and Flora, 2005, p. 180).The systems approach looks outside of the parent child patterns and extends to the whole family relationship and the society. This takes into consideration the “stresses from outside forces spill over to the parent-child relationship” (Segrin and Flora, 2005) and it is in this area where communication of values become important.

Teaching values and responsibility may be seen as an act of persuasion. Children will naturally want to meet parental expectations and avoid guilt (Segrin and Flora, 2005). Parents

are always seeking ways to teach responsibility (Ginott, 2003). In all interactions, compliance is the test of effectiveness (Wilson, Cameron and Whipple, 1997). Persuasion in the family follows the classic communication model, a source reasons with a target attempting to influence behavior or attitudes. Wilson and Morgan (2004) rather than looking at the effect, look at why members use certain strategies. These strategies are labeled as discipline styles. The three forms of discipline are: *power assertion* (parent attempts to alter perceived misbehavior by threat of physical force, control over material resources or punitive sanction), *love withdrawal* (nonphysical expression of anger, ignoring, isolating or threatening to leave) and *induction* (providing reasons why the child must behave differently, appeal to pride, desire to be grown up or concern for others (Hoffman, 1980). Oldershaw, Walters and Shaw (1986) view the maternal strategies for control as either positively oriented messages that involve reasoning and cooperation along with physical approval or power strategies involving threats and demands.

The foundation for social competency is developed from an early age in the family environment. The best approach is for parents to teach age appropriate skills so the children may perform the task themselves (Baumrind, 1971). Responsibility is attained by children through effort and experience (Ginott, 2003). The scaffolding approach, offering help only when needed, will serve both parents and children as the children get older since some parents “struggle to let the children go” (Segrin and Flora, 2006, p. 180). There is a difference between stepping in to help a child and taking over, which becomes destructive. *Scaffolding*, as the name suggests, is when a parent will step in when the child is having trouble, but the parent does not cross the line into *intrusiveness* (Baumrind, 1971). When the messages and strategies are intrusive and controlling they will not help the child be self-competent and “may even prompt the child to rebel” (Segrin and Flora, 2006, p. 179).

Research has shown that children are better off (more self confidence) with involved and supportive parents who give a certain amount of autonomy with structure (Roberts and Steinberg, 1999). Over controlling parents do not allow children to learn to monitor and regulate their own behavior (Baumrind, 1971). An over-intrusive parent will also impair the individuation process, the process by which a young person becomes separate from the parents (Barber and Harmon, 2002). Self esteem is related to specific scaffolding support and actual success and mastery rather than comments from a parent intended to make the child feel-good (Cutrona, 1996).

Children are more motivated to master skills if the parents talk about behavior rather than feelings. By “overemphasizing how a child feels to the exclusion of what the child does, children are prone to become less persistent, more bored, more depressed” (Baumrind, 1971, p. 162). Specific responsibilities based on age and maturity should be given to children (Ginott, 2003). The more age appropriate autonomy a parent gives a child, the more mastery the child attains. When a child internalizes coping behaviors, they have better mental health, confidence and competence (Roberts and Steinberg, 1999) that will give children a strong start to being productive adults.

Children develop more confidence with certain styles of behavior control by parents. Firm control that stresses self discipline without being punitive and autocratic is most effective (Peterson and Hann, 1999). When parents set expectations for children and the children internalize the standards eventually children can monitor themselves. Communication styles will naturally change as the child grows into adolescence (Collins, 1995; Laursen, Coy and Collins, 1998). A good approach is to make sure that children understand, according to Peterson and Hann (1999), why rules are necessary; why misbehavior is unacceptable; how behaviors affect others and how they can change-

including making amends for harm. This proactive style of conversation results in give and take that is successful, “Conversations that reveal the parents’ reasoning, standards, and behavioral interpretations allow the child to have a good sense for what is right and wrong behavior” (Baumrind, 1971, p. 168). Once this behavior is internalized by the child, the parent only needs to occasionally reinforce the behavior.

A conversational parenting style reveals a dialectic between autonomy and connectedness (Vangelisti, 2004). These ongoing tensions are “characterized by change, contradiction is a fundamental fact of relational life, communication is central to negotiating relational contradictions” (Sabourin, 2006, p. 53). The three elements are change, connection and contradiction (Sabourin, 2006). These opposing forces operate and constantly change the environment of the family (Yerby, Buerkel-Rothfuss and Bochner, 1995). This is similar to the view of Mikhail Bakhtin (1981) whose work informed Baxter and Montgomery (1996) and the relational dialectic theory. Bakhtin saw social life as fragmented and messy. Certain rituals of the family connect the family in “aesthetic moments” (Socha, 2006). The family is a complex ever changing landscape. Further study on how best to teach children values and responsibility is important to creating a more just society. Parents seeking to give children an opportunity to live a productive and responsible life (Cline and Fay, 2006) is one of the primary goals of parenting.

### *Social Cognitive Theory*

The Social Cognitive Theory is a learning theory posited by Albert Bandura (1988) that holds that individuals act using thought for specific goals. Individuals learn by watching others (modeling) and will expect certain outcomes based on those observations. SCT has been applied in many areas of social science from education to the workplace. Using the work of Albert Bandura (2001) to frame the teaching of values and responsibility in the

family gives structure to parents, especially mothers. Mothers have a more direct influence on children and research on mothers and children has dominated family research (Segrin and Flora, 2005). Originally proposed by Miller and Dollard (1941) as the social learning theory, observation is seen as the primary learning tool. Modeling and imitation is seen as resulting in a high level of learning if the behavior is reinforced (Miller and Dollard, 1941). Bandura (1988) expanded the theory to include symbolic communication and environmental factors.

Bandura (2001) developed the agentic approach, meaning that individuals have direct control over their lives through choice and behavior. The “capacity to exercise control over the nature and quality of one’s life is the essence of humanness” (Bandura, 2001, p. 1). There is direct personal agency, proxy (others) agency and collective (group) agency. Moral agency has two sides, inhibitive (refrain from action) and proactive (behave humanely). Individuals originate actions for specific, thought out purposes, people, “generate ideas, act on them, and predict occurrences from them” (p. 269). Individuals then judge from the results and change accordingly “Goals are set, outcomes are anticipated and courses of action are selected and detrimental outcomes are rejected” (p. 271). This self-reactiveness is a motivator. We have the “deliberate ability to make choices, and action plans, an ability to give shape to appropriate courses of action and to motivate and regulate execution” (Bandura, 2001, p. 8). This link from thought to action rejected the popular psychological theorists of his day.

Individuals, according to Bandura have a self-regulatory capability of motivation, affect and action. The effect operates “partly through internal standards and evaluative reactions to one’s own behavior” (Bandura, 2001, p. 267) and is an incentive for action when reinforced. Self reflectiveness means that people will judge if their predictions are correct.

The expected outcome of a situation is the motivation to behave in a certain way. Behavior is always intentional according to SCT.

Behaviors are learned through an advanced capacity for observation (Bandura, 2001). This vicarious observation allows learning of consequences and rewards. According to Bandura, “people act on their images of reality” (p. 271). There are direct, vicarious and self-produced incentive motivators. There are models of both thought and behavior. People are motivated by other’s success if they are similar to themselves. Learning is seen as an internal process and behavior is self-directed and not necessarily involved. Interpersonal models and media models affect individuals (Bandura, 1988). Identification with the observed gives the feeling of a connection. The individual is more likely to expect certain outcomes if they think they will have the same outcomes.

Humans are symbol creating and symbol interpreting. Cognitive factors determine which environmental events will be observed, the meaning of the events, the lasting effects, the emotional impact and how the information will be used later (Bandura, 2002, p. 267). On an individual basis large amounts of information are gained from “extensive modeling in the symbolic environment of mass media” (Bandura, 2001, p. 271). Effective modeling teaches societal rules and strategies in situations (Bandura, 1988). Since individuals learn by watching others, they are more likely to behave as the observed behave.

Belief in one’s self-efficacy is critical to a successful life, according to SCT. If an individual believes that life is ruled by chance or luck rather than skill, there is little motivation for action.

Efficacy beliefs influence whether people think self-enhancingly or self – debilitatingly, optimistically or pessimistically; what courses of action they choose to pursue; the goals they set for themselves and their commitment to them, how much



effort they put forth in given endeavors; the outcomes they expect their efforts to produce; how long they persevere in the face of obstacles; their resilience to adversity; how much stress and depression they experience in coping with taxing environmental demands and the accomplishments they realize. (Bandura, 2001, p. 270)

Efficacy beliefs play a central role in motivation and the types of activities and environments people select. Individuals will set goals for themselves and have certain expectations. When the expectations are met, that is a reward for the individual.

In relation to the family, modeling of behavior by the parents will result in that behavior observed by the children. This idea is consistent with Ginott (2003), “values cannot be taught directly, they are absorbed, and become part of the child only through identification with, and emulation of, persons who gain his or her love and respect” (p. 78). Parents not only set the tone of the home but must model the behaviors that they want their children to emulate.

#### *Marketers versus Parents*

This section discusses the rise of the consumer culture and marketing from babies to teens. It also covers family values and cultural issues the American family is up against along with steps to change the perception of money. The concept of a consumer culture cuts across theoretical disciplines including psychology, sociology, spirituality, philosophy and communication. Attempts to understand the motivation that drives individuals to purchase certain products are varied. Consumption is a more than a need for a certain product or service.

Consumption is a cultural phenomenon because individuals use the meaning of products to achieve a variety of social and psychological ends (McKracken, 1988). The

purchase of certain products has taken on a symbolic nature. The nature of symbolic consumption has changed from one of treating consumption as a language, to a means of nonverbal communication (Mayer, 1989). At the center of the advertising/consumer connection is the connection of the individual to the object purchased. In a philosophical sense, we are the total of the goods (objects) we purchase or acquire.

The object, and in the larger sense, goods, obtained and displayed in the consumer culture define individuals. All individuals are described in terms of their objects (Baudrillard, 1989), the object is central in self definition. There are advertising perspectives and post-modern perspectives on the object. The centrality of the object according to Baudrillard (1989) is that we no longer look at the object itself but move the object into the abstract.

The object is lifted from its' social context and has both a practical function and that of possession itself (Foss, Foss and Trapp). In the feudal past, the *use* of the object would have been most important, but now there is value in the possession of the object. The wrist watch is an example. If the watch is a Timex brand, available for \$15, the watch has practical use, but if it is a Rolex or a Patek Phillippe, at over \$10,000, then the watch has value to the owner by mere possession. Included in the purchase in Baudrillard's cycle of consumerism, is a whole system of symbolic representation. There is no connection between an object which is needed and the purchase to meet needs. Baudrillard coins the term *hypertelia* meaning the object is exaggerated to an extreme (Foss, Foss, and Trapp). He uses the metaphor of cancer in describing consumerism. The cancer of consumerism, according to Baudrillard has metastasized and is undisciplined.

To consume an object (objects are consumed before they are earned and anticipate the work they will represent) is more about consuming a meaning. Modern advertising suggests that a certain person or lifestyle invests in a particular good or service so the

meaning of the purchase or use is based more on the perceived meaning of the object defined by advertising. There is no longer a natural connection between use and possession. There is a disconnection between use and possession that is driven by advertising but complicit consumers willingly engage in the “process of delusion” (McKraken, 1988).

According to Baudrillard (2001) when humans interact with objects, they inevitably are consuming the functions of use and possession and, in both cases, believe themselves to be in charge of those objects and the values they embody. In fact, humans are also becoming objectified themselves, subject to the demands of objects on them. They are becoming “object of the objects unable to see the hidden structure they are purchasing with the object and to which they are acquiescing” (Foss, Foss and Trapp, p. 318). The object fulfills an important function in the expression process because they reflect a particular image back to their owner.

This concept of object having a demand on individuals is acute in 2009, when this study is completed. The stock market swings wildly and home mortgages dry up. Individuals describe feeling increasingly owned by objects that they claim to own. The family home is an expression and a representation of values. The recent mortgage melt-down resulted from the purchase of property inflated in value and purchased with no money down. Baudrillard in his prescience held that the utility of the object, in this example, living in the home, no longer exists; it is the desire to own the home that is important.

The owning of goods in a way defines a person. This distinction introduces “categories of person” and classifies meanings to become visible “under the sign of affluence” (Baudrillard, 2001, p. 16). In a consumer driven society, the notion of status becomes the criteria central to social standing. Advertising in particular takes advantage of this desire and develops tag lines such as: “You will be judged by your appearance”

(Baudrillard, 2001, p. 22). Objects then become signs of recognition and eliminate customs of caste and class.

Collection of goods serves to link a would-be owner with an imaginary future. This attempt for a counterfactual future bridges ideals and hopes (McKraken, 1981), but also serves the same function for objects already possessed. The unfortunate individual hoping for better things in the future is, by the power of advertising, prevented from achieving satisfaction (Mayer, 1989). The future will never come for those always in pursuit for something more, better, or different.

Baudrillard (1989) contends that advertising has taken over the moral accountability of society and replaced it with a “hedonistic morality of pure satisfaction, like a new state of nature” (p. 16). Freedom means projecting desires onto objects. Consumption is an arrangement of meaning (Baudrillard, 1989), and is a manipulation of signs. Simply telling individuals not to consume is impossible because the drive to consume is founded on an irrepressible lack. McLuhan (1964) goes so far as positing objects as extensions of ourselves. Advertising shows the product as part of a larger social purpose. McLuhan also claims that ads only serve to keep individuals “upset with the Joneses” (p. 226) and Baudrillard states that “we still want what others do not have” (Baudrillard, 1989, p. 14).

The purchasing of goods and services by the elite, the working class and the poor is further explored by the philosopher, Simmel. He formulated a trickle-down theory whereby mass society imitates the elite and the elite tries to avoid imitation by separating consumption style from that of the masses. Past generations had a more curatorial pattern of consumption which passed symbolic meaning down through generations. Modern consumers construct symbols new each generation (McKraken, 1988). People use the meaning of objects to achieve a variety of social and psychological ends.

Advertising attempts to instill the idea of a perfect world using emotional appeals and advertising that links products with types of people. There are societal benefits to socially conscious advertising. Pharmaceutical companies advertise life saving drugs and there are myriad other examples. To parents, ad campaigns strive to suggest a possible universe where buying products results in sex appeal or social esteem and goods not yet obtained connect the would-be owner to an idealized future (McKracken, 1989). This bridge to ideals and hopes, and the idea that goods are a storehouse of ideals, encourages irrational consumer behavior (Mayer, 1989). Both parents and children are under attack in this media saturated world.

#### *Advertising and children*

Market researchers are targeting our children in an unprecedented frenzy. Susan Linn (2007) in her groundbreaking book, *Consuming Kids* exposes the reach and the cutting edge techniques that marketers are using to get children to spend money for products. She is a Harvard instructor in Psychiatry and Director of Media at the Judge Baker Children's Center in Boston. The Baker center is a children's advocacy organization. She describes the "nag factor" which is every parent's *bete noire*. Using the nag factor, marketers are able to create needs in children which must be fulfilled by purchase of their products.

Advertising creates discontent with life and need for change in children. Commercials that used to be aimed toward parents are now directly aimed at children. Often these spots are demeaning to the parents and undermine parental authority in the home (Linn, 2007). The overstressed parent gives into the nagging child and the circle of discontent grows larger. Linn (2007) looks at the branding of babies, marketing in schools and points out market researchers have no guidelines to follow when attempting to find out the minds of young people. Food marketing is an especially sensitive area. On one hand,

marketers target increasingly obese children with fat, sugar and chemical laden foods. On the other hand, clothing companies show models that are exceedingly thin and young displaying provocative clothing for nine and ten year old girls.

Boys don't fare much better in the maelstrom of advertising. They are exposed to beer and cigarette ads and television shows from the World Wrestling Entertainment companies which promote violence. The Budweiser frogs are aimed straight at the child demographic. Video games are marketed directly to boys and young men in the cognitive stage when interpersonal relationships are starting to form. The images presented in these video games and the aggression that they produce doesn't assist boys in forming and strengthening relationships, rather it severely harms the boys' ability to form normal attachments (Linn, 2007).

Juliet Schor (2006) in *Born to Buy*, exposes the multibillion dollar advertising schemes by going undercover at a convention aimed at marketing to children. She paints a bleak picture of the commercialization of childhood with clear insights and frightening statistics. A Harvard researcher, Schor was in the Visiting Professor Exchange Program run by the Advertising Education foundation. Just as junk food and obesity go hand in hand, Schor claims that overexposure to popular culture causes young people to become anti-social, violent, depressed and suicidal. She critically examines all other research which claims a connection but not a correlation. Schor contends that pop culture "creates the discontent which results in changed personality" (p. 173). From the moment children are born, they are considered by marketers to be consumers.

The teen years accelerate the attempt by marketers to build brand loyalty (Quart, 2007). In *Branded*, Alissa Quart (2007) exposes the teen consultants who specialize in marketing to teens. This vulnerable stage of life that is marked by indecision and angst is

fertile ground for major marketing companies who want to set life long buying decisions in stone before the age of reasoning dawns. These crucial few years determine habits and the marketers want their brand to become habit. By creating discontent with the teen's changing body, they may set up lifelong purchases of diet pills and supplements. In addition, they are spreading discontent and body dysmorphia with an unattainable ideal. This creates demand for drastic measures like surgery. Cosmetic surgery from 2000 to 2001 has risen 21.8% resulting in almost 306,000 of the 7.4 million plastic surgeries performed in 2000 were on teens and children.

As the search for the perfect body continues, there is a corresponding increase in the marketing of dietary supplements. These are marketed to increase athletic performance. Quart (2007) says, "They trade family sized packages of branded food bought in bulk at discount stores for giant, branded adult-male-looking bodies and large vats of powered supplements" (p. 217). As the search for the perfect body advances, the search for the perfect school begins. These overstressed teens are taking early SAT's and hiring college counseling tutors, such as College Coach who charge \$550 per hour. Adolescents are instructed to write "Who Am I" essays to define their brand, as a teen, to an Ivy League brand. There is desperation in the young adult who is trying to conform to an ideal teen that is thin and popular. The discontent that teens feel is exactly what marketers want to sell into and which to create cradle to grave loyalty.

From the marketers' perspective, our children are up for grabs. Parents are facing more choices in the marketplace than ever before and are grappling with their own issues of consumption. According to moneyadvisor.com, parents are working harder and instead of saving for college, they are, out of guilt, spending more money on junk toys.

By taking initiative, parents, and especially mothers, are in a better position to teach values to children. In *The Paradox of Choice*, Barry Schwartz (2007) examines from an adult perspective how a culture of abundance actually reduces life satisfaction. Schwartz painstakingly defines the abundance culture where individuals are given too many choices in areas including: *When We Choose, How We Choose and Why We Suffer*. His contention is that in a society with the most freedom, we should also be the happiest, but we are not.

Rather than aiming at children, steps to increasing happiness are things adults must do. The first is to embrace certain voluntary constraints on our freedom of choice. The idea of liberty from constraint is viewed as the good life. Movies and television shows depict people who are un-wed as happier than those with family ties. Research by Schwartz (2007) has found the opposite is true. Meaning and satisfaction are only found in the ties that we choose to make. Clinical psychologists have determined year over year that married people are happier than singles.

Accepting what is “good-enough” rather than searching for the best will result in higher satisfaction. Schwartz (2007) breaks down the categories of people into “maximizers” and “satisficers.” He has developed questions and a grading scale for definition. The maximizer is almost never satisfied, wants to find the “best,” agonizes over decisions and has high levels of regret after a purchase. The satisficer will buy what is needed have more satisfaction and happiness after making choices.

Dissatisfaction in life is fueled by regret and counterfactual internal story telling according to Schwartz (2007). He defines counterfactual fantasies as those where we imagine our life if we had made different decisions. It is almost impossible to know if an Ivy League degree or taking that opportunity to play baseball would have made a difference in life. But



those who engage in this counterfactual fantasy world will find their life less satisfying than those who don't.

Our choices have certain consequences. By lowering the expectations about the results of our choices, we will be less likely to have regret. Self-blame and depression may be avoided if an individual knows they made the best choice given the circumstances. The choices that we do make, if they are nonreversible will result in higher satisfaction as well. Knowing an individual can't go back makes that person happier, even though the conclusion seems paradoxical.

Another area of our lives that individuals have more control than thought is envy. If less attention is paid to what other people are doing, Schwartz contends, we will be happier with our own lives. Since it is impossible to truly experience another's life, does anyone know if having that 10,000 square foot home on the beach in Malibu brings happiness? The colloquial quote about Marilyn Monroe may apply to the latest Hollywood tragedy of Heath Ledger, "If being young, beautiful, rich and talented meant happiness, Marilyn Monroe would still be alive."

Along with less attention on others, changing our attitude toward what we have will also increase satisfaction with life (Schwartz, 2007). Schwartz recommends practicing gratitude. Since this is not natural for humans, it takes practice. Every day, we should be taking the time to write down the things we are grateful for and the things that we don't have, will seem less important.

Another powerful tool to alleviate regret is to anticipate adaptation according to Schwartz (2007). All humans adapt to their circumstances. It is a healthy quality. It takes away the sting of a bad event, but it also makes the good things, lose their luster over time. That fantastic new car will go from a luxury to just comfortable in a remarkably short time.

That beautiful home becomes comfortable. Being aware that adaptation will occur, you can prepare for it. Those who are always seeking the new and exciting event, person or product will almost never be happy. Beginning with the parents understanding of human nature, consumption, and transferring that awareness to our children happens in various ways.

*Children learn about values responsibility and money*

There have been several studies of how children view responsibility and money. The literature suggests a strong correlation between what is taught in the home and children who indicate that they feel a moral responsibility. There are some values taught in school, but education begins in the home. Most of the value/moral teachings are based on religious belief. Linda and Richard Eyre (1993) outline a values course to implement in the home that is more secular and easily implemented. They separate values into two blurry categories (there is overlap) of “values of being” (p. 14) and “values of giving” (p. 14). Values of being are: honesty; courage; peaceability; self-reliance and potential; self-discipline and moderation; fidelity and chastity. The values of giving are: loyalty and dependability; respect; love; unselfishness and sensibility; kindness and friendliness; justice and mercy. A twelve month program with questions, lessons and games are included with each.

Several school curricula are available for teachers. If teachers choose to bring value discussions into the classroom, not part of standard accepted curriculum, several options are available. *The Values Book* (Shiller and Bryant, 1998) details lessons based on the values of: compassion and empathy; cooperation; courage; determination and commitment; fairness; helpfulness; honesty and integrity; humor; independence and self-reliance; loyalty; patience; pride; resourcefulness; respect; responsibility, and tolerance. There are sections of this book for adults which provokes questioning of how society may alter attitudes about values.

Economics education is a complex combination of school, family values learning, and assimilation. Historically, children were to help work the family farm or business, but the shift following the industrial age, into an age of information and affluence, shifted the burdens of the family to the parents and the childhood has become a fantasy of freedom. We think of modern society as an age of innocence for our children.

Recent studies by Luthar and Becker (2002) suggest that children who may be privileged are still pressured to conform to an unattainable ideal. Children are expected to perform well in school and sports but they get the idea that the parents value them for what they can do rather than who they are. In this world, accomplishment is all that matters. This attitude puts children at risk for maladjustment, depression and anxiety from the fear of failure.

Doctors are seeing increased levels of stress in children. An article in *Pediatrics* (2007) stated that there is a conflict in the children of affluent parents who attend church. The messages from church are found in Isaiah, Jeremiah and Christ who rail against greed, selfishness, self-centeredness and drive the point home by promising heaven only to the poor. Coles (2007) asks, "Why is it that a culture which has acknowledged the extraordinary subtlety of childhood perceptions, moods, and thoughts stopped short even at studying closely, never mind affirming, the possible impact upon children of matters or variables like class, position, political ideology or social background" (p. 87). These influences of class on children of an affluent society have not been studied. In the midst of the conflict, children want to be seen as responsible and do not shy away from responsibility.

Children view being part of a family as intrinsically making a contribution. They do not find a one-way responsibility from parents to children. The two values of honesty and fairness are reinforced with added responsibility. Contrary to popular culture which does not

want to place burdens on a child, harkening back to child labor camps of Dickens, children want to share responsibility. In Hansen's (1933) *Investigation of Children's use of money*, responsibility is a part of a child's identity. Children do not only draw morally from adult examples, they want to do responsible things. In most homes increased responsibility is an avenue to power and autonomy. Such and Walker (2004) concluded that responsibility is not considered a negative by children. There will always be a constant negotiation of the parent-child boundary. Children find responsibility moral (Such and Walker), but how responsibility and money interact has not been fully developed. The way in which children learn about responsibility and money are societal and most often education begins in the home.

Leadership has been examined extensively in business, but not as much in the home. Leadership in the home follows many of the same principles. Maxwell, (2001) discusses several key areas which apply to the parental role in training children about money and responsibility. Trust is the foundation of leadership. Without trust, the family flounders. People naturally follow someone who is stronger than they are. This is a good reason to beat your son in those races on occasion! The law of connection states that leaders touch a heart first (Maxwell, 2001). Children need to know that they are loved and accepted. Children who are welcome members of a household rather than the runners of the household are more secure. It is paradoxical but children test rules in order to re-assure themselves that someone older and wiser is in charge. Children do not think that they should be leader of the home. They intuitively know. A parent, attempting to be their children's "friend" rather than the parent, will make the child insecure and irresponsible.

Family communication is crucial to teaching about responsibility and money. There are several approaches advocated in academic literature and popular culture. Galvin and Brommel (in *Family Communication: Cohesion and Change* list four ways to approach improving

communication in the family: personal education, conscious negotiation with family members, creating family meetings, getting help from friends or members of a support network.

These four areas begin with a process of education of the parent and then convert to teaching children. The value of teaching money by giving an allowance has been controversial. Hansen (1933), and Marshall and Magruder (1960) found that there was no benefit to the child by the parents giving an allowance. Early use of an allowance did not produce any measurable educational progress in understanding money, until age eight. These early findings were confirmed in studies by Yeung and Liver (2002) and Berti and Bambi (1981). The concept of money was examined in a Piagetian model by Berti and Bambi and found knowledge of money in observations of early childhood play comes in 6 stages: no awareness; obligatory payment; not all types of money can buy things; sometimes money is sufficient; there is a strict correspondence between money and objects; correct use of change. Using this model, children above the age of eight years were able to understand the concept of money, but not before that age.

When children are not able to understand money and its use until eight, encouraging budgeting and teaching of investment principles is a waste of time. Money use is also a fertile area of conflict in the family. Many families use rules to make decisions easier. (Turner and West, 2002). Rules about money create structure to help families function and strongly articulated values also are a way to avoid conflict. The parents set the tone of the family conversation about money. If the parents did not get the information from their parents the spiral of ignorance continues to drag people down. Knowledge of basic home economics is a critical life skill, yet one that is lacking both in the educational system and in the American home.

In the Hansen (1933) study, the typical home did not provide either leadership in cultural issues, or give opportunities to learn significant lessons about money. Little opportunity is provided for experiencing borrowing or lending under parent supervision. In the older years there is more provision made for boys than for girls to learn investment principles. Boys are also provided earning opportunities in the form of jobs around the home or the neighborhood. Hansen found, only half of the children in the study were encouraged to budget. There is little opportunity for youth to assume responsibility in clothing or other purchases.

The interesting cross-cultural issue was that parents don't increase the responsibility of the children with their own income increase (Hansen, 1933). Without opportunities to learn about money, the children are confused about the relationships in the world which involves money. Knowledge and use of money is found to be given in homes with higher incomes and two working parents.

There is a gap in income and well being among children. Many studies of children in poverty and its physiological and psychological effects have been studied. Parent educational practices in a middle class or affluent home have been modified by Marshall and Magruder (1960) in several ways. They contend that children will have more knowledge of the use of money if their parents handle the family income wisely. They believe that parents give wide experiences of money to children. There may not be a perfect family, who educated their children in all important areas of life, but education about money is in some ways existential. The end result of education is a job to support a family.

*New Ideas in the battle*

Tough economic times require different tactics for sensible parenting. There is a wealth of resources for parents who want to instill values and responsibility in their children a few of the more popular programs are outlined in this section.

Share Save Spend (Dugan, 2006) has programs for adults and children to help people understand the relationship of money, values and habits. They offer several levels of Financial Sanity Packets. The most popular one, contains a Youth and Adult Participant Guide, Discussion Starter Fun Cards, Credit/Debit Card gift card Holders and a Heart2Heart Grandparents/Grandchild Journal. The program has four sessions from learning healthy financial habits, keeping spending logs, seeing advertising as harmful, defining what is really important and finally a complete money makeover.

The Youth version covers similar areas but seeks to raise awareness with a tracking sheet called, “You talking to me?” to keep track of commercials. The process begins by asking youth to figure out the marketing message and note if it contradicts their own personal values. The youth will further describe the techniques that marketer uses to persuade and what are thoughts and feelings while watching the ad. This is a tool for a parent to begin the education process to avoid overspending and over consumption.

Rebecca Hagelin (2007) in *Home Invasion* states that, “The only thing that stands between your kids and those who seek to exploit them for the sake of the almighty dollar is YOU” (p. 4). She names companies who are notorious for “hitting below the belt and grabbing for kids wallets” (p. 8). They are News Corp, Disney, Viacom, Universal and Time-Warner. These companies appeal to the lowest common denominator encouraging prostitution-like clothing for young girls, selfishness and discontentment. Her “Just say NO! and turn off the television!” attitude, motivates parents to teach children to not be

manipulated. Hagelin believes that informed children stand a better chance against marketers to “determine their own identities, their own tastes, as setting their own standards” (p. 54).

Taking action in both the family and in groups has an impact. Schor (2004) contends that one person can have a huge impact. In Alabama, Jim Metrock is on the verge of putting Channel One, a commercialized “educational” channel shown in schools out of business. Parents gathering together in groups for the purpose of protecting children from marketers are getting results. “By replacing our resignation with imagination, enlisting our children’s energies and vision” (p. 221) we will be on our way to a better society. Linn calls for the outright ban on children’s marketing. The frontal cortex which controls higher cognitive processes-including judgment- isn’t fully developed until sixteen (Linn, p. 218). She lists other countries that ban ads for toys and junk food.

Not a new idea, but one that will dramatically calm the household is to choose to turn off the television. This will eliminate a lot of the discontent. The American Academy of Pediatrics is dedicated to the health, safety and well-being of children and has advocated no television until age 2 (AAPC, 2001). There is a national network of parents who encourage people to turn off the television to promote healthier lives and communities. This is one of the most important decisions that parents make. Hagelin (2007) points out that the parent is not a “neutral force” in the home (p. 140). It is impossible to choose inaction. By choosing inaction, a parent is actually abdicating their responsibility in the home. Neutrality is considered by the children a force which will shape their morals, choices and personalities (Hagelin, 2007). The parent is the one who sets the tone of the home. The leader of the home may choose to reject the domination of the culture by the marketers. Education of the parent is the key.



*Affluenza* (DeGraf, Wann and Naylor, 2005) is a groundbreaking and clever book, describing the problems of our hyper-consumer culture in three clever parts: Symptoms; Causes; Treatment. It calls for downshifting expectations and attempting to find out what is important in your life. For children, the book recommends starting very young with a program produced by PBS called *Don't Buy It*. The show presents a dissecting process that children learn to see the inherent manipulation in the ads on television and in print. The web site helps families explore the effects of media in their lives, and stimulates family discussion on media. The comprehensive site has education for parents including talking points and activity suggestions which can help families understand differences between media entertainment and real-life values.

There are other resources available on the web such as the center for Media Literacy at [www.medialit.org](http://www.medialit.org) and the Media Awareness Network at [www.mediaawareness.ca](http://www.mediaawareness.ca). On the forefront is the Media Literacy Project which calls for critical thinking and activism. A popular site is [www.adbusters.org](http://www.adbusters.org). This site, which is commonly referred to as the “culture-jammer” has an on-line magazine and is aimed at corporations. One of the best sites for content for parents is [www.mediafamily.org](http://www.mediafamily.org), which is sponsored by Media Wise. The site offers awareness of violence, video games, addiction and internet safety. Another national organization of parents, educators and kids concerned about the quality of media and its impact is Common Sense Media. They want people to have a choice and a voice about the media they consume.

There are many media literacy programs being developed in middle and high schools to teach youth how to discover psychological techniques advertisers use. The most effective programs also produce PSA's to promote sustainable consumption. The Media Education Foundation ([www.mediaed.org](http://www.mediaed.org)) is devoted to media research and production of resources to

help teachers and parents to be able to analyze media messages and their impact. There are a lot of resources, if parents take the time to look. A little research goes a long way.

Leadership in the family is the first step to teaching and protecting children in an affluent culture which sees children as consumers. This leadership is a challenge for every parent. The dominant culture would have parents believe that their children will either not be affected, or that conforming to popular culture is fine, because everybody seems to be participating. This advertising terrorism can be stopped with the education of the parent on children's understanding of money, responsibility and use new ideas to free our children from the chronic dissatisfaction that is bred in a culture of consumption.

With education and communication, parenting can change the world, one child at a time. A generation of consumers may be transformed into a generation of givers. Missing from the vast literature is a look at the intimate level of communication between mothers and children. The struggles and strategies that mothers use in trying to teach values and responsibility in a consumer culture has not had a complete treatment in either academic literature or popular culture books. The current study examines the intimate relationship mother's have with children and their role is teaching values and responsibility.

### Chapter 3: Method

In order to understand the struggles parents, and specifically, mothers have, and the strategies mothers use, raising children and communicating values and responsibilities to their children, a phenomenological approach was chosen. Bringing up children in a media saturated culture in which advertisers spend \$78 billion (Schor, 2004) to advertise to youths, is a phenomenon. The best way to capture the essence of the experience is by treating it as a phenomenon with a thematic analysis seeking essential variants. Research will uncover the intimate details of modern life that will not be seen in a laboratory environment.

Academics have performed experiments, popular culture has provided many books to follow, but the essential experience of raising children from an individual perspective has not been done. This phenomenological study is a way to gain rich experiential data from those living the experience.

In order to prepare for the study, preliminary research included a quantitative project asking, in survey form, if mothers believe parents are the first line of defense against the culture. All of the mothers in the survey responded that they felt the culture was oppressive on the family and that they would like to better protect their children from the culture.

An additional study of the prevalence of pirate and princess characteristics on afternoon television was conducted (Treanor, 2009). The study examined the prevalence of pirate and princess qualities in characters on popular children's shows. Using cultivation theory and social cognitive theory as theoretical frameworks, if children envisioning significant representation of pirates and princesses on television, they will act out associated dramas. The children who grow up playing pirate and princess may not have a happily ever after, since their expectations of relationships will never match reality. Pirates are outlaws, violent and nomadic. Princesses are beautiful, have a wealthy father, are not interested in

accomplishment and are waiting to be kissed or saved by a prince to live happily ever after. Tracing the roots of incompatibility is the goal of this study investigating the media influence informing of expectations of others in a relationship. Coders found that television shows depict male characters with characteristics of pirates almost 60% of the time. Female characters are shown to have qualities of princesses 64% of the time. This study looks at the television shows airing between three P.M. and six P.M. weekdays on ABC family, Nickelodeon, Disney and local PBS affiliate to construct a month of programming. The coding uses Grimm's Fairy Tale children's archetypes of hero, helper, sage, orphan in addition to the pirate and princess for the main and secondary characters for every ten minute segment of each show.

The preliminary projects led the researcher to believe that the only way to understand the struggles and strategies that mothers use in raising children was a to treat the situation as a phenomenon. The phenomenological method will be discussed and the reason for its choice given followed by the design of the study.

### *Phenomenology*

Phenomenology is a qualitative research method used in communication, philosophy, psychology, literature, education and sociology. Martin Husserl (1889-1976) is known as the father of phenomenology. Some claim that the true source of the area of study are Kant and Hegel but Vandenberg (1977) names Husserl, a German mathematician with his PhD in calculus of variation, who sought to reduce the idea of reality to pure phenomena (Eagleton, 1983). The intention is made clear in the slogan, "Back to the things themselves!" (Groenwald, 2004, p. 4).

The seminal treatise on the phenomenological process is *Phenomenology and Psychological Research* by Giorgi (1985) that describes the process as, "the direct analysis of the

psychological meaning of naïve descriptions of personal experiences provided by individuals from all walks of life in situations that are easily recognizable as belonging to everyday life” (p. 4). He contends that although descriptions may seem “flimsy” they “actually pervade science” (p. 3). The method Giorgi (1985) outlines follows four steps: description; reduction; using insight to understand essential variants or essence; synthesis into statements that give the ability to see into the nature of a complex situation. Following the analysis is the discussion section of the report where, “meaning and value of the research for concrete personhood and culture are elaborated” (p. 213). Through the rigorous qualitative process, meaning is understood.

Giorgi (2006) stresses the importance of description of the phenomenon from the people involved. Research is concerned with understanding social phenomena from the individuals living through the event. Researchers invite individuals to describe their experiences and through the description, meaning is uncovered.

The phenomenon need not be a life altering experience. In the simplest form, it is an attempt to understand regular people living their daily lives. To a researcher, the lived experience of the individuals involved with the issue being researched (Kvale, 1996) is the best source of information.

Understanding of the lived experience of individuals is best accomplished in conversations of asking and telling. Humans are storytellers (Fisher, 1987) and communication is both historical and situational. Interviews are a way to gain a narrative view of a situation and capture the experience (Fisher, 1987). Real events are best captured through narration (Prince, 1982). Stories may be semi-structured through the interview process as part of a phenomenology method.

Since phenomenology is a relatively new area of research, there are different interpretations of how the method should be applied. Colaizzi (1978) advocates pulling out phrases in the analysis portion of the study. This may destroy the context in which they were used. He also uses intuition in analysis which he terms, “creative insight” (Colaizzi, 1978, p. 59) which in some ways may be taken by critics as guesswork. Hycner (1985), whose background is in psychology, inserts a therapeutic quality to the interview process. He attempts understanding of the individuals’ worldview, rather than focusing on the specific experience being studied.

Hycner also recommends listing of all assumptions by the researcher before beginning the study to avoid prejudice during analysis of the data. Giorgi (2006) is especially derisive of Hycner and Colaizzi’s choice of using judges as a final step in analysis. Bringing the analysis back to the subjects is not recommended because the participants are describing a circumstance of their life from a personal perspective, not an analysis of a phenomenon. There is a difference in the lived experience and the meaning of the experience (Giorgi, 2006). In addition, the final decisions should be in the hands of the researcher, not the subjects themselves.

The variation of phenomenology which will apply to this study is that of Moustakas who suggests that a researcher is “personally involved” (1990, p. 9). He recommends choosing to study something which is a “personal challenge” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 17) in which self-knowledge or a shift in worldview may result. His aim in research is not necessarily to find the essential variant (Creswell, 1998) but to get a total picture which stays true to the individual stories. Gunnar Karlsson (1993) pulls even further from the individuals by using the term “text” for analysis. The method used for this study follows the original design of Husserl with a few variations.

*Method for this study*

The nature of phenomenology eludes a strict and absolute method. Hycner (1999) has claimed that a method can't be forced upon it. This study derives a method from Moustakas and uses a framework outlined by Groenewald (2004) to serve the purpose of family communication. The study will analyze the experiences of eight individuals to find common themes in the struggles experienced and the strategies used to raise children with values in a consumer culture. The interviews will be semi-structured where individuals will be able to speak as long as they would like on the topic without being interrupted.

The convenient sample is drawn to reflect the diverse nature of the problem. Individuals are chosen by demographics, age, religion, and socio-economic status to create an interesting mix of people. While not seeing a representative sample of the US demographic, as would be the intention of a quantitative approach, an interesting assortment of women is not to give greater validity, but greater appeal.

This study will employ a validity check advocated by Colaizzi and Hycner for the transcripts, but the individuals will not have the final say on the analysis. Interview subjects were given an opportunity to review the transcripts and make any changes/editions. Relatively few individuals made changes.

The study structure is closest to the hermeneutic approach of Moustakas (1994). In this study, as the researcher, I am personally involved with the subject, as a mother of two young children and having worked in the advertising industry as an actress in numerous national television commercials. There is almost no way to completely *epoch* my experience and set it aside in the interview and the analysis. Bracketing, also known as *epoch* is the process whereby the researcher will set aside personal knowledge or opinions about the research subject. Moustakas (1994) holds that there is no way to completely bracket

experience. The researcher should be involved with the subject to breathe life and interest into the research area.

When discussing the process with potential interview subjects, they were given an overview of the project. They were told that the investigation concerns how parents teach values and responsibilities to their children in a media saturated consumer culture. The potential participants were asked if they wanted to discuss their struggles and strategies in these areas. Once agreement was reached, the participants were given the informed consent form approved by the Institutional Review Board in August, 2008, appendix IV.

The interviews were mostly done in the homes of the participants, in a few cases, where travel was prohibitive; the interviews were done over the phone. The intent of the study participants was to have diversity of viewpoints offered by different US experiences. Interviewees ranged in age from early 30's to almost 50 years old. Religious affiliation ran from atheist/agnostic through several Christian sects to Muslim. All participants had at least one child and as many as nine (including foster children). Regional demographics of individuals covered the South, Midwest, West and East coasts.

Following the interviews, complete transcriptions of the interviews were typed. Field notes from the interviews were paired with the transcripts. After listening again to the recordings and verifying that the transcripts were complete, subjects were asked to read them over and make any changes. Once all transcripts were gathered, work began on the themes. In an attempt to reach saturation of each category, phrases and concepts were pulled out of the stories (copied), but the transcripts remained intact. Once saturation of each category was achieved, an analysis of the themes began.



## Chapter 4: Results

In an attempt to realize the essential variant of the experience mothers have in raising children with values and responsibility in a consumer culture, the results of this phenomenology are explored using two categories: struggles and strategies. *Struggles* are defined by participants as something that is vaguely disquieting, uncomfortable, an incident that causes cognitive dissonance, resistance to an idea, incidents either psychological or physical that require great effort to overcome. The struggles that mothers shared in this study are often metaphorically phrased in battle terms, “we are at war with the culture” according to participant one. The primary description and the one term used by all eight participants was *unavoidable* when describing the oppressiveness of the culture on the family. Unavoidable is not used as a theme because the term was used as a descriptor by all participants and it was used in reference to the other themes. Analysis included intense reading and extracting of categories. Categories were further organized to minimize overlap. Seven categories emerged from analysis, axial coding, distillation and extraction. The *struggles* yielded seven major themes: *pressure, shelter, navigation, protection versus equipping, guilt, social needs of the children and responsibility.*

### *Struggles*

*Pressure* is used as both a noun and a verb. Pressure is viewed from two angles; both the mothers and the children. There is pressure on the mothers from the children, as well as “social” pressures on both the mothers and children. The pressure to take children to certain places begins at a young age. Participant four felt the pressure when her toddlers were invited to a birthday party at Chucky Cheese, a popular pizza and games restaurant, “I wanted them to see their friends, but I don’t want to go there, I don’t want to start going there, I don’t want them to ask me to go there, I’m just going to pass.” The pressure seems

to intensify as the child gets older. Participant three who has a teenage daughter “didn’t allow pressure in when she was little,” but now she feels much more pressure. Participant two describes graduation from middle school as an event celebrated with huge parties and large scale events, yet her daughter was getting a small dinner party, and she felt pressure to give her a big party.

The nature of the feeling is ubiquitous, participant five says, “it is every day, it is all the time.” Participant seven describes pressure, “there’s tons of pressure out there.” The feeling is translated from peer pressure to consumer pressure. Participant seven says, “whatever their friends are telling them, they filter it in their own way so that peer pressure is a consumer pressure.” She explained that her child’s friends would talk about the latest gadget and insist that it be bought. Participant four states, “I don’t think you can avoid it.” In some cases, it facilitates family moves. Participant two is planning to move from Los Angeles to Chicago hoping that the pressure will decrease in a smaller, less media driven city. Participant eight felt pressure to facilitate a move out of Las Vegas, “you couldn’t drive down the street without my son covering his eyes because of the billboards.” She describes it as, “keeping up with the Joneses culture.”

Pressure is also used to describe consumer pressure felt by the mothers to spend money on children, especially during Christmas season and birthdays. There is pressure from other mothers to buy and spend money on things and events that the mothers either don’t agree with or think is a waste of money. Participant one described the struggle to not deny the pressure on the children from “society or their peers”, rather, she tries to “counter it and make sure we have a very close relationship.” According to participant two, pressure comes more from her children than from other mothers in the Muslim community in which she lives, and other mothers “complain about the pressure they get from their kids.”

In addition to pressure on the child and the mother, it becomes a family issue. Participant two sees pressure “on the whole family.” Participant six describes a different kind of pressure concerning discipline. In her LDS community she says there is “pressure on parents to be authoritarian and for kids to do certain things.” This demanding to obey approach has not worked for her family, “it does not change their hearts.” The culture, it seemed to her, insisted on treating children a certain way and she did not want to “buy in.”

Mothers invariably seek some type of *shelter* both from the consumer culture and attempt to shelter their children from influences with which they do not agree. Participant six felt pressure when her oldest (now 12) was three and chose to homeschool her children. She made this choice to “actively keep bad influences away from her children.” Participant eight feels that sheltering her children will give her time to, “grow them as strong Christians so that when they get out and see something is not right, they will immediately identify it.” In her mind, exposure will not help. She used the analogy of a master counterfeit detector who spends all his training recognizing the characteristics of the real dollar, not the counterfeit, “whereas if they didn’t get the strong foundation they might not recognize something as being wrong and fall that way and get sucked in very quickly.”

In some cases, the process of sheltering is subtle. Participant one, as well as Participant five, refuse to let their young daughters play with “Bratz dolls, they are very sexually explicit, they wear a lot of makeup, they’re kind of Angelina Jolie, they wear mini skirts.” A “no inappropriate movie rule” applies in some families. Participant five whose six year old daughters’ friends had all watched the *Wizard of Oz* felt that, “It would be way too above her ability to process it.” Age appropriate is also the criteria for music. Participant one has girls ranging in age from 21 to four and certain songs appropriate for the 21 year old, but not for the four year old. Some families have solved this problem with personal iPods for

the children so they can monitor the music to which the children are listening. Other moms resist the personal sound gadget, participant four claims that her son is, “not responsible enough for a \$300 piece of equipment, I wish he was, but no.”

A term of directional helplessness emerged when describing the process of training children as *navigation* or a *maze* or even *labyrinthine*. Participant five describes, “It’s a maze, its labyrinthine, turn left, go straight, no, go right.” The confusing nature of a consumer culture manifests itself from media use to friends who have different values. Participant two says, “You make mistakes all the time trying to figure out how to navigate it.” Participant three describes her struggles as “flowing” and “fluid” through a maze of influences. At times, it is more confusing for the parents than the children, participant eight said, “My husband and I struggle with it more than the kids.” The navigation also involves changes of direction and family rules. Participant two says, “We’re navigating this as we go through it” but then, “tomorrow something will change, so it is hard to set up something that would work best.”

*Protection versus Equipment* is a dialectic which emerged for mothers of different aged children. The mothers wanted to balance protection in the younger years of the children’s life to equipping them to make good decisions later in life. Children will ultimately make their own decisions and if they have the strength of discernment, they may make better choices. Participant two wonders of any amount of protection is possible, “they’re eventually going to go out into the world and be exposed to this no matter how hard you try to protect them, it’s going to seep in.” Participant seven explains it, “you can’t protect children from culture, you can live it, all you can do is educated because in the end they will make their own decisions.”

Some mothers think of the culture in terms of a predator, “I just want to protect my children from the morals of the world”, said participant one. Mothers of young children try

to put a “hedge of protection” around the home. Participant eight says, “Part of it is protection. Mostly we just want be sure they are really grounded on biblical principles.”

The categories of protection and sheltering slightly overlap. The idea of sheltering does not have the dialectic of equipping, its counter is exposure, that few mothers are willing to do. It does not make sense to most of the mothers to expose children to inappropriate influences before they are ready.

The protection mentality shifts “from the mode of protecting and filtering to dealing with influences,” according to participant three. She continues, “I still want to protect her, I want to throw those blinders on her, I still try sometimes, flip that station, don’t look at that ad, turn that music off”, but the idea of equipping her child comes next, “I want her to turn it off because she finds it offensive later.” For participant two, equipping is primary, “you can’t protect them from everything, they’re going to go out into the world and make their own decisions, so I think instead of protecting them, you have to suit them up with right values so that when they go out they are not going be a buoy who, especially girls, you know they go out into the world and see what other girls have..and then want those things.” When the children want and ask for certain things, a mother may say “No”, but there are other advertising influences that can’t be avoided.

Even artifacts of the culture such as billboards, that can’t be avoided are an opportunity to teach, “Because I want to arm them in with their own opinion” for participant five, passivity is dangerous, “choose what nefarious thing you’re going to actually expose them to, so they can understand their role in objecting to it and that they do have the power of their own convictions.”

*Guilt* was a theme especially in homes with a single head of household. Participant two explains, “and I was motivated by guilt and making up for what I felt was not the best

possible way of raising a child, which in my mind was having two parents there” this feeling of guilt made her choose to, “spend more on him to make up for it.” She sees this trait in other mothers as a, “way that we love sometimes when we think that that’s what love is.” The irony is that of her four children, the one she spent the most money on because of guilt ended up being the “least attached to things.” Guilt motivated participant two to spend more money on things. Participant three who shared custody battled the influences from the non-custodial father, “But I had to clean up constantly what was happening to her when she was with her father, for instance, she came home one time and saw her father having sex with his girlfriend and she asked questions!” She felt guilty for not being able to protect her daughter because of the court ordered visitation.

Guilt is not limited to single families, participant five shares her struggle with other parents, “ninety percent of what I hear is a lot of guilt parents.” This “guilt parenting” keeps mothers from using a stern voice and demanding that the children obey. Participant five said, “that’s one of the struggles, I get stern and other parents (are permissive).” Guilt spending is a struggle. If there is no money available for an outing, participant eight tries not to feel guilt, but gratitude, “God never promises everything we want, he promises everything we need. And we have everything we need; we need to have grateful hearts for that.”

*Social* needs of the children are a struggle for mothers who want to keep their children safe from certain cultural influences. Part of socialization is talking about and playing games whose genesis is in the culture. Participant four told a story of wanting her children to see their friends, but she did not want to go the restaurant chosen for the party. Participant eight says, “We live in a materialistic world...and the children talk about it with each other.” But the problem for mothers with sheltering from the social events is, as participant four says, “I want them to feel like they know what is going on.” Participant four

was also concerned about the food she served to her boys' friends. She remembered how embarrassing her mother's healthy food made her feel when her friends came over to play. She says, "I want them to think it is okay to give them what they like when their friends come over." She did not want her own children to expect that kind of junk food to be stocked in the house.

*Responsibility* is two pronged: parent to child and child to the home. It is an issue especially when the children's friends seem to be raised in value-less homes. In some families, responsibility is the most important value, "responsibility is a big issue" says participant seven. She continues that is a lesson hard taught, "I make them responsible but it's just a ton of work, I get totally exhausted" especially when trying to keep track of clothing, "I go through huge lectures on stuff and they're always losing stuff, I'm waiting for one of them to come home naked one day, they can't seem to keep their clothes on." Responsibility for shoes comes up for participant two whose daughter (middle school) has 40 pairs, "I realize how ridiculous this all is."

Setting expectations for responsibility is hard, participant seven says, "I tend to be strict in terms of I want them to do the things that are generally expected of responsible individuals." This is healthy according to participant one, "they should be responsible because it is good to be responsible." Being responsible is a life goal for participant three who hopes her daughter is happy, but being responsible is more important. Participant four struggles with making the children responsible for their items, "I'm trying to teach them to be more responsible for their lunch bags, their jackets, I'm struggling with that."

Competence and responsibility are core values and life goals for participant seven, "I don't want a nice doctor. I want a good doctor, I don't want a nice cop, I want a good cop, I don't want a nice judge, I want a good judge, my pecking order is competency."

Responsibility is also caring for what one has, participant two shared a story about her grandmother who had smoked all her life who contracted lung cancer and was on a waiting list for a new lung, she commented, “why should we give her a new one, she never cared for the one she had!” The idea of caring for what one has, rather than destroying something and having it replaced is central.

Participant four uses allowance but struggles with how it is earned. In a broader sense, participant five said, “With responsibility comes a sense of civic belonging.” In a blended home, teaching responsibility to a step child who had never been given any, is especially trying, speaking of her newly acquired stepdaughter, participant three says, “she doesn’t take responsibility for herself, he (her biological father) takes responsibility for her.” Lack of responsibility is a ruination according to participant five.

### *Strategies*

Mothers express that they struggle with how to teach values and responsibility to children in a consumer culture. Today’s mother draws on past experience and sometimes “makes it up as she goes” says participant two. Mothers employ certain strategies to help. Seven major categories emerged from the process of thematic analysis. In the struggles section one adjective, *unavoidable*, was used most frequently, but in strategies, individuals had differing adjectives and descriptors. Given that mothers feel the same unavoidable societal pressure, the strategies the participants employ were not as consistent. Religious affiliation related more in strategies than struggles, since we all live in the same culture but interpret values and responsibility differently according to religious tradition. There is some overlap in categories because different mothers expressed strategies differently and rather than collapse categories, they are taken with the rhetorical weight given by the participant. The strategies



are: *define and model, vigilance, flexibility, physical presence, equip and arm (also filter and equip), and teach long term thinking.*

The two part, *define and model* values in your home has a self (meaning the mother) and a family connotation. According to participants, it is important for mothers to “know themselves” in terms of what they value and what they believe is important in order to teach those values to children. Part of defining personal values is understanding the internal dialogue that plays out in the mind relating to values and especially money. There is a philosophical conversation that participant six defined, “take some time to sit down and ponder what’s important to you and how you’re going to teach that to your children.” She continues that it is important to discuss this with your spouse so that the two parents provide a united front to the children, to be on the “same page with your spouse, talking with your spouse about your goals and priorities.” If both parents are in agreement then, “you’ll not be conflicting and instead be reinforcing each other and that’s a powerful thing too and it works well for marital harmony and that’s important for harmony in general.” Participant four agrees, “talk to your spouse, make sure that both of your values are being considered. Sometimes mom’s can just run the whole show.”

This may be a tall order to the single and blended families. Participant three shared that values discussions were radically different, “the rules at her father’s house were so inconsistent” that it was even harder. She continued, discussing life in a newly blended home, “we have to come to some kind of agreement on this because there would be no way the four of us could co-exist under the same house hold. “

*Modeling* is an important strategy to mothers. Participant four, referencing her own behavior said, “that speaks louder than telling your kids what to do.” She asks about the

family consumption and that children will see if there is a connection between words and deeds, “they can realize it’s a farce.”

*Modeling* includes resisting the cultural definition of a successful family. Success can not be measured by societal standards. According to participant two, “don’t get sucked into the whole machine of commercialism...don’t let it define you.” She explains that her father had an interesting perspective from his youth, she said, “he was living in this one bedroom apartment with his mother, his father died and his brother and his sister and they didn’t have a bathroom and they got a kiddie pool and they would take a bath in the kitchen.” When she commented to her father about how poor they must have been, he flatly denied it, “I wasn’t poor.” To her, it sounded like the family was poor, but to him, he did not view poverty in the same way. Participant eight had a different narrative about her father and considers her father’s false ideas of money and the trauma of his filing for bankruptcy to inform her personal definition of money and values.

Even with supportive family priorities, participant eight said, “It’s a constant battle with the flesh, but we have food to eat and a roof over our heads and that needs to be okay. We need to be okay.” Participant seven says that it is an, “internal battle” and that people have a, “personal relationship with money” that directs actions. Each activity may be analyzed and found with a good lesson, or a poor lesson, participant four says, “define what your values are and (then) think about what messages you want to send your kids, if you do things with your kids, think, is this the message I want to give my kids.”

Being *vigilant* is a strategy that many mothers describe. By being vigilant, the mothers mean that they want to be aware and ready to respond by teaching, or rejecting the stimulation coming from the culture. Participant six sees it as an active process, “we create a hedge of protection” that includes home, school (they choose to homeschool) church, and

community. Participant eight who also homeschools her children views the reduction of peer influence as a good strategy. For participant four, it comes natural, “I’m naturally vigilant, tempered vigilance.” Limiting exposure to television is a strategy under the vigilant category. Participant three says, “you limit your children’s exposure as much as you possibly can.” When her daughter was three, she told her daughter, “you are not going to be able to do things that other children are going to be allowed to do and basically, get used to it.” It is not as easy in some homes, participant two said, “I would love to throw the TV out and not have any video games at all.”

Being vigilant extends to shopping and making sure expectations are known in advance. Participant one says, “never give in.” She continues, “you see kids at a store and they are pleading and begging” and parents give in. That is a set up for failure. The response, according to participant one is to say, “look, if I bought you this toy, that means that I won’t be able to buy this, we will not be able to afford to put gas in the car” an impulsive toy purchase has consequences. Participant three says, “never let your guard down, never.” Participant eight says that not giving in, “stretches them and helps them realize that in life we have to work for things.”

The nature of raising children in a consumer culture with values requires a certain amount of *flexibility* and *fluidity*. Participant three says, “I’ve had to shift the focus of my parenting.” Decisions and rules may change from day to day. Participant four says, “we want our kids to feel like there’s flexibility” the rules can change with the times. When rules are cast in stone, according to participant three, there is trouble. She says, “it is so fluid, modifying, it’s very very fluid.” The descriptive of *fluidity* correlate to the idea of navigation in the struggles section. Mothers want to remain flexible as condition change.

*Physical* presence is an extremely important strategy to mothers. Participant seven mentioned that other mothers, who have taken time off work when the children are babies, and go back when they are adolescents prioritize the wrong part of life. She says, “early childhood development is about gross motor skills and potty training and making them feel secure,” but it is actually the later years that are critical for development of responsibility, “At this point (middle school and junior high) they have so many people talking to them and that’s mass media.” Participant six says, “But we also actively spend time with our children, reading together and talking about what’s important in life.”

The physical act of being with the children is critical. Participant five says that parenting, “requires a certain type of physical commitment.” She continues, “I really committed the time to raising them, and continued to, in their earlier years, so I’ve been there.” Participant five says, “You don’t become isolated from their lives.” According to participant two, the children need the parents’ time more than they anything else, “That’s the crime, it’s with stuff, not with sitting down, taking time and being with them.” Participant seven says “there is a personal time commitments”, that must be made. The more time equals better results according to participant six, “the more time you spend allows you to find sources of inspiration.” The mothers who cannot be with their children are pitied in a way, participant five says, “I feel really sorry for parents who aren’t around very much because there is so much screen availability and it’s just you know, the rules have to be enforced.”

A good choice of time with children is to pray with them according to participant one who prays five times a day with her children. Participant six agrees, “Praying together is very powerful.” Participant three even tells her daughter to pray about certain decisions, like wearing a bikini, “If you think God says its okay to wear a string bikini then go ahead and

wear a string bikini.” Prayer is extended to a complete philosophy from participant eight, “Raise your kids by the bible, not by society standards at all.”

Mothers attempt to *equip and arm* children to deal with the cultural influences in a positive way. *Equip and arm* has an overlap in the struggles category of protect versus equip. These terms are both a struggle for mothers and a strategy. Participant one tries to give her children choices and see the consequences for those choices. She says, “because if your constantly telling kids what to do and they’re constantly doing it, when they finally get out on their own, it’s like a shock.” Participant three says to be “relentless” instilling values when they are young, because when they get older they, “tune you out.”

Participant six tries to find a middle ground between being a “helicopter parent” and an “authoritarian parent.” She limits exposure to television and doesn’t allow commercial television and special privileges come after family “contributions” which are chores. She says, “teach certain values in the home and socialize with others who have the same values.”

Participant five has value lessons, “In a Socratic way.” She wants to teach independence and responsibility, especially with consumer goods, “walk into a toy store, or museum souvenir shop and they may not be getting anything.” Filtering influences includes having strict boundaries. Participant six says, “they feel safer when they have boundaries that are reasonable.” The issue of privacy comes into filtering, participant three doesn’t give her child privacy and participant five says, “they are not entitled to their privacy until they are eighteen.”

A strategy that mothers employ against the consumer culture is to teach long term thinking. Participant one says, “look at how long term what it means for the future” because, “kids are generally impulsive, they want things now.” Participant three always wants to look for teachable moments and take advantage of them, because they will be fewer and further

between as children get older. Participant two relates a great comment from a friend of hers, “you either give up what you want right now, you go for what you want in the long run, or you can give up right now for the long term.” Participant seven says, “My job is to keep them on the right track” and, “So my goal is to let them understand that they are responsible and in charge and ultimately, they get to choose how they want to live.”

Using phenomenology, this study has determined the essential variants of the lived experience of mothers on the front lines of the battle for the hearts and minds of children. The results bring the nature of the experience in sharp focus against the backdrop of a media saturated consumer culture. By sharing their own personal experience in an intimate format, the participants are elucidating the struggles and strategies and all hope that this study will be read by others whom they might help to parent for social justice by raising children with values and responsibility.

## Chapter 5: Discussion

The purpose of the study is to understand the struggles mothers have and strategies mothers use in raising children with values and responsibility in a media saturated consumer culture using a phenomenological approach. The academic literature on parenting focuses on relationships between parents and children and compliance behavior but not on mothers' struggles. To view struggles, the self-help aisle of the local bookstore is replete with narratives, but there is scant availability of documentation on the link between the struggles and strategies. The current research extends Bandura's social cognitive theory to apply it to the modeling of values and responsibility in the home environment.

Over three-quarters of the households in the United States have children living in the home under the care of a parent (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2007, Census data. Retrieved from <http://factfinder.census.gov>). Family communication studies are furthered by understanding, from a systems perspective, the importance of the pressure that the mother's feel in the culture. The environment affects the behavior and teaching style of parents. Our society is impacted by the sense of responsibility of each generation and the values held (Shiller and Bryant, 1998).

This discussion will focus on the individual themes extracted from the interviews with the eight participants chosen from different backgrounds (ethnic, religious, geographical), all living in the US, and link the existing literature with the phenomenological results. The coding of themes revealed the descriptions of struggles in the following categories; unavoidable: consumer culture can't be avoided; pressure- peer, children's peers, and consumer pressure; shelter; navigation: the negative aspects of the culture has many twists and turns that must be navigated; protection vs. equipping; guilt; responsibility: the ultimate goal of the mother is teaching responsibility and helping to mold a responsible

contributor to society. The descriptions of strategies include: definition of family values and modeling the values; be vigilant to put a “hedge” of protection around the home; flexibility: the needs of children vs. culture change daily and yearly; physically be present in children’s lives; equip and arm; and teach long term vs. short term thinking. Some of these categories have been seen in academic literature, others are new. The social cognitive theory of Bandura will be extended to the results of the interviews. Finally, weaknesses and areas for further study will be discussed.

The study is complex and acknowledges that definition of values and responsibility is ambiguous. The individual mothers involved in the phenomenology had vastly different ideas about both values and responsibility. The study is a focus on the communication struggles and strategies of the individuals that may resonate with other parents.

*Thematic analysis: struggles*

The major themes will be discussed and comments about the importance of the themes to the mothers. Struggles are the dissonance created by the ideal life and the life being lived. Mothers describe trying to raise children with values and responsibility, yet living in a culture pressing contradictory values was always *unavoidable*. Every mother used this adjective in describing the culture in which we live. The influences of culture are ubiquitous and, according to the mothers, some type of stance must be taken. The parent cannot be neutral. All the mothers shared the same concern about letting the culture define the family would be raising children to have poor values, poor self-control and poor judgment.

When participant one said “we are at war with the culture” the theme of war has resonated through the popular culture self help books such as *Home Invasion* (Hagelin, 2005). The metaphor of battle is consistent across the results of the phenomenology. Cultural invasion has prompted parents to make or plan geographical changes. Families feeling the



cultural seepage have either moved to smaller towns (Las Vegas, NV to Parowan, UT) or planned moves (Los Angeles, CA to Chicago, IL). Some mothers chose to homeschool their children to avoid the inevitable influence from school friends. Culture is diffused through those consuming media (Postman, 1985) and even children who watch no television are still influenced by its presence in others homes.

The *pressure* expressed by the mothers interviewed can, at times, be debilitating. A sense that the mother is alone in her ways of thinking lead some mom's to avoid setting up play dates with other children, and some to avoid certain children altogether. A few mothers said that they take a laissez-faire attitude when their children are at other's houses and they feel like they should allow certain forbidden foods at play dates. In many cases, the pressure comes from other mothers to go to movies, or let children play certain video games since "everybody else is doing it." Those interviewed have different perspectives, some mothers think there is social value in participating in pop culture, while others, especially those involved with the culture did not.

A cognitive dissonance is created for the wife of a Disney employee. Although the family lifestyle is dependent on Disney, a purveyor of popular culture, she still realized that she did not want her children exposed to some of the Disney marketing. Another mom had a similar perspective as a professional actress who understands the boundaries she must set for her children, as she believes; the children do not have the maturity to understand. The banter is something like, "Mommy makes her living on TV, but you can't watch." As part purveyors of culture, the mothers either involved in the entertainment business, or makers of popular culture themselves, walk a fine line.

The other aspect of pressure is on the children to conform by other children. This is acute in highly religious homes. The participants who are Muslim, Latter-Day-Saints, or

conservative Christian feel more pressure to keep the children in line with the moral teaching of their church. A mother who is “spiritual” rejects using religious teachings as an easy way to not take responsibility for the real lessons about self and culture that may be taught to the children. The families where religion is not as large a consideration speak in humanistic terms of making the world a better place and only buying what you need because it is more responsible. The result may be the same decisions in parenting, but the reasons are different. To the religious, decisions are made out of deference to a higher power, to the non-religious, decisions are made concerning the greater good of society. Luthar and Becker (2002) suggest that children are under pressure to conform to an unattainable ideal defined by culture, and the mothers interviewed felt that there is societal pressure on their children that is much greater than when they grew up. Advertising puts pressure on kids to buy the latest hot product and parents have to say “no”. Schor (2004) claims that overexposure to popular culture results in changed personality and some mothers in this study are concerned about the adverse effects.

Popular culture, advertising, young musicians are the environment in which children are living. The desire to *shelter* children from the ill effects of the culture reaches a crescendo for interviewees in adolescence, after that, the focus is on equipping children to make good decisions. From not buying certain toys for children to limiting media consumption, sheltering may be subtle. It may be as overt as physically covering the child’s eyes when driving past an offensive billboard or switching a radio station. Shelter is not a strategy, in this sense of the term, rather a struggle to maintain shelter around the home and family. The pressure of advertising may be eliminated in part by closing access to the television. Linn (2004) points out that sugar and fat laden kids food are advertised on the same television shows as super thin models and weight loss products. The goal of advertising is sell products

and advertisers know the power of TV media. The meaning transfer of a product in the tightly defined world of the advertisement (McKraken, 1990) to children makes the children want not only the object, but the world advertised, where smiling, happy families let children play. Part of a sheltering struggle includes how much to limit television. Participant two does not see television viewing as a problem, except around Christmas, when the “bombardment” of commercials is unrelenting.

The counterfeit analogy, used by participant eight, illuminates the purpose of the shelter struggle. The master counterfeit detector spends all his training recognizing the characteristics of the real dollar, not the counterfeit. In this way what is real is ingrained in the child but the struggle comes from outside influences, especially at an early age. Once the child is strong in the values of the family, when exposed to corrupting influences, the child will immediately recognize it as corrupting and reject it. Other mothers claim that the struggle of sheltering lies in the fact that it is impossible to completely shelter the children and use more of an inoculation approach. They advocate small doses of culture in teachable moments to form a stronger child. The inoculation approach allows more access to television, internet or radio, but the mother must be available to explain the messages.

Shelter not only involves rules about television, also music availability and access to the internet. One of the participants whose girls range in age from four to 21 attempts to shelter the younger, but allows certain music for the older. Personal iPods are a choice for moms. With an iPod, the mother can monitor the playlist and shelter the child from hearing music that she feels is inappropriate. Limiting access to the internet is also a sheltering struggle. Participant five whose son is 10, has friends with pages on *MySpace*. She says, “I can’t fathom allowing a child on *MySpace*.” The struggle of letting the child have a social life, yet shelter from unsuitable influences will also be explored in strategies.

*Navigation* through the culture and a feeling of directional helplessness is expressed by the mothers in this study. As participant one said, “they don’t come with an instruction manual” so the mother is left feeling confused. Participant two feels that mistakes are made by parents who don’t know how to navigate through the culture in regards to their children. Sometimes, as in the case of participant three, the struggle is between husband and wife. They struggle with feelings of envy and materialism and have to go to their religious traditions to realize that the family has all it really needs. A few of the mothers expressed a worldview that takes into considerations other countries and cultures. Compared to most third world countries, we have more than we would ever need.

New studies seem to be coming out that one thing or another is bad for children, this is confusing to participants who want to do the right thing, read about parenting and want to make good decisions. The debate rages about working mothers. Camps seem to spring up and do research to prove that a working mother is either detrimental to the children or good for the children. Participant seven feels that it is more damaging to the children of working mothers to be gone in the early teen “danger years” than in infancy or toddlerhood. Other mothers expressed concern about early day care being damaging. The *navigation* through a maze of cultural influences requires nimble changes of course in divorced/single family homes. The area of money and responsibility changes as new data comes out about the “proper” ways to teach children about money.

Almost every participant when asked about allowance and chore plans said that they changed and were changing. Very often a parent will come up with a plan that is simply not workable into the busy lives of growing families. The plans change, the new course is set and the fluidity of decisions continues. As participant two said, “We navigate, but then something will change.”

The dialectic of protection versus equipment was described by the mothers interviewed. Relational dialects theory of Baxter and Montgomery (1996) describes intimate relationships in terms of the inherent “push and pull” of conflicting desires (both/and, not either/or). The primary emotional dialectics are: autonomy and connection, openness and protection and novelty and predictability. Relational dialectics is based on the desire for unity. Mothers want to both protect, especially the younger children, and equip the older children to make good decisions later in life.

By building an innate sense of discernment, children will be able to tell right from wrong. Ginott (2003) claims that effort and experience will build a stronger more resilient individual. Mothers interviewed want their children to be equipped to make good decisions, but exposing them to certain influences when they are young defeats the purpose. Participant two does not believe that protection is possible. Participant seven tries to use every exposure as a learning opportunity. She says, “In the end, they will make their own decisions.”

The predator analogy is used by several mothers. When participant one says that she protects her children from the morals of the world, participant eight grounds her children in biblical principles, and participant three sees her purpose as a mom to teach her daughter about God and heaven, they are seeing the values of the culture in direct contradiction to their personal values. Participant six summed up the dialectic, “Eventually they’re going to go out on their own and have exposure to all this stuff. We don’t want them to go crazy then”. Thus the parental lessons to the children are, “What’s going to make us truly happy? Things or relationships?”

Protection as an early struggle, moves in the later years to equipping. The larger question is how best to equip the child to make good decisions. Parenting styles determine

effectiveness. Baumrind's (1973) parenting styles demonstrate the authoritative style (as opposed to the permissive or autocratic styles) as the most effective. Without defining their own style in academic terms, the majority of mothers interviewed applied an authoritative style. As participant three uses the scaffolding approach in relation to music, "I want her to turn it off because she finds it offensive." The buoy analogy used by participant two of the child being tossed by every influence is trenchant. She wants her child to be strong against the tides of the culture.

*Guilt* is a motivator in different ways for interviewees. The mother's who had been single for a portion of their parenting years felt guilty because they were not able to provide what they thought would have been the best thing for the children, a father, so many decisions were based on a sense of "lack." The children lacked a father, so the mother would try to provide things instead. The battle with non-custodial fathers also caused problems because the mother would not want the child to watch television, but the father had no TV rules.

*Guilt* is also a frequent discussion between working moms. Participant five says that "90% of what I hear is a lot of guilt parenting". In her case, she sees other parents are afraid to get stern with the children. They want to be the child's friend rather than a parent. A subsection of guilt concerning the lack of materialism in one's own family was expressed. Mothers' want to give their children what they did not have, thinking that their children would be happier, or better adjusted.

The *social* needs of the children are a struggle involved with protection and equipping. The children at school talk about certain movies or video games and the protective parents who have TV and movie rules are concerned that their child will become socially inept or an outcast. Participant four said, "I want them to know what is going on!"

Commercials and products are discussed among friends and participant eight said, “They talk about it with each other”. The struggle is how to retain your values but let the kids still have a social life.

*Responsibility* and how to teach it is a struggle for parents, but children naturally want to meet parental expectations and avoid guilt (Segrin and Flora, 2005). Responsibility is the key value as participant seven says that the goal of the mother is to raise a child who will be a responsible adult. Participant one says that being responsible because it is the right thing to be is not enough. Responsibility must be linked not only to a developing personal sense of right and wrong, but a societal view. Participant five linked home responsibilities to a sense of civic belonging. She thinks that opportunities for responsibility must be found. Ginott (2003) says that parents are always looking for teaching opportunities and that is exactly in line with what participant six says, “We try to find those opportunities, we try to create them.” To her, being in service to our fellow man is also serving God.

Since responsibility is attained through effort and experience (Ginott, 2003) interviewees expressed trying to give age appropriate jobs to children and increase the level of responsibility as the children get older. It is harder to delegate a job to a child (for the first time) that to do it ones’ self, but that is what the mother’s try to do. Cole (1977) claims that children want to contribute to the household. Mother’s agree, but it is at times difficult to enforce. Participant seven expressed her frustration with trying to make the children responsible for their own clothes.

The more children in the home, the more delegation is necessary. The participants, who had one child, described less of a struggle than the participants with five or more, in terms of the sheer volume of work to maintain the household. The working mothers

struggled more as well. Finding a way to honestly and fairly delegate (Such and Walker, 2004), responsibilities for the home is a struggle.

*Thematic Analysis: Strategies*

Mothers describe different strategies in their attempt to teach values and responsibility in our media saturated consumer culture. The results of the study list the seven major categories *define and model, vigilance, flexibility, physical presence, equip and arm (also filter and equip),* and *teach long term thinking.* This portion of the discussion will cover the categories and link the mother's strategies back to the literature, both academic and popular culture. The mother's in the study are following the recommendations of the research, sometimes unwittingly. Since all of the interviewees were impacted by and had struggles with the consumer culture, the strategies employed are often linked to their religious traditions.

*Defining* and *modeling* are multi dimensional. Before any active teaching may begin in the home, mothers agree that the family (usually the mother and father) must decide on a set of values. Parents realize the importance of questioning our own values (Shiller and Bryant, 1998). The philosophical questions of the meaning of life should be answered by the individual parents first. Participant four recommends that this be an active and ongoing conversation with the spouse. This should be done early according to participant six as life can "roll by before you know it." A united front of both parents is important so that the children do not see any loopholes. Participant two warns not to let the culture define the family, the family needs to initiate a definition. In single parent household, the discussion about a family mission statement may be a little easier, since there will be no dissent, but it is hard to find time. It is important to try to gain the perspective of the children. Participant one says that "We try to converse and get inside the girls' heads", in this way, she can glean how the children feel about everything from prayer to products.



Spirituality enters the values discussion in the home as participant six says, “Recognizing a higher force is a way you can convey your goals and values.” Participant three began each day with her daughter with a “devotional time” to give her God’s perspective. Participant eight sees the families Christianity setting priorities. It is in teaching values by definition and modeling that religious traditions informed action.

Values are ambiguous in our culture and each family brings ancestral and religious traditions to the discussion. A family is generally defined in practice (Cline and Fay, 2006). Analyzing each activity and asking about the message that activity gives to the children is part of the definition of personal values. Participant four says that she catches herself shopping for things she does not need and has to stop herself and ask “Do I need this?” Threats and demands may have short term results, but as participant six says, “It doesn’t change their hearts”. Cline and Fay (2006) contend, teaching values happens in two ways, “What our kids see and by what they experience in relating to us” (p.245). Modeling is critical to conveying values. Participant four believes that all the verbal teaching means nothing without living values, “They realize it’s a farce.” Participant four claims that actions speak louder than words.

New families and blended families are in many ways, a sum of the parts, each parent comes into the marriage with their own set of values passed from their parents. Mothers learn from their parents and form opinions based on what they already know from their family of origin. Participant two remembers learning from her father the meaning of the word poor. When he described to her using a “kiddie” pool in the kitchen to take a bath and living in a tiny apartment, she was shocked when he did not think they were poor. Participant eight is still negatively affected by her father’s bankruptcy and has chosen not to

live as he lives, with false ideas of money. Modeling will be discussed further in this discussion under social cognitive theory.

The second strategy that mothers use is *vigilance*, being aware of moral threats and using them as teaching opportunities. It is an active process, a state of awareness that should never be dulled. St. John-Taylor (2007) describes it as installing locks and an alarm system. The interviewees agree that cultural stimulation needs to be understood and accepted or rejected actively. Participant one calls for parents to never give in, because giving in is a set up for failure. Participant three told her daughter that she was not going to be able to do things that others do, at age three!

Limiting television use is a vigilance strategy. One participant wanted to throw the TV out the window. Her instincts are right, the documentation on TV use is overwhelming. Messages of television are taken by children as reality according the Cultivation Theory of Gerbner and Gross (1976). Children will “perceive the real world in ways that reflect the most stable and recurrent patterns of portrayals in the television world” (Potter, 1993, p. 9). Children and teen see the dramas on television as authentic as real life (Fisher, Hill, Grube, Gruber, 2004). Violence on television research is extensive (Signorelli 2005, Green 2006 and Ludwig 2004). The American Academy of Pediatrics recommended that physicians take a “media history” from their young patients (AAP, 1999) knowing that significant TV use leads to poor outcomes. Mothers interviewed all had some level of rules about the television in the home in an attempt to shelter children from cultural influences.

Vigilance includes preparing for innocuous trips to the grocery store. Linn (2002) refers to the nag factor, children nag until the parent give in, and mothers interviewed agree that giving in to whining is not a good strategy. Participant three warns to never let the guard down. Not giving in is actually a benefit to the children, according to participant eight who

believes in stretching them and helping them realize that “we have to work for things.” The inherent exchange of goods and services for money that adults accept as a natural part of society (Baudrillard, 2001) is not understood by children. Berti and Bambi (1981) found that children do not understand the concept of exchange before age eight (a Piagetian approach). Participant eight agrees that her five year old “doesn’t get it,” she would just give all her money away. The interviewees are in the category of parents from the Hansen (1933) study and Marshall and Magruder (1960) showing that homes with higher incomes and working parents gave their children more opportunities to work with and understand money. Above age eight, parents who make an effort to teach the basics of home economics are likely to be successful (Yeung and Liver, 2002). Setting expectations for the children is a good strategy according to participant five who lets her children know that they will not be getting a souvenir at a museum.

In the midst of every choice, studies show that *flexibility* in parenting (Bradshaw, 1988; Ginott, 2003) is a good strategy and individuals interviewed agree. Participant four wants to make sure the children know there is flexibility, so she is not seen as an extremist. Shifting focus for participant three means that what is important one day, may not be so important the next, and parents need to be flexible. The rules even change in participant four’s household so that the children can see that the parents are reasonable. The battle metaphor of, “change as conditions on the ground change” is a strategy. Participant three believes that fluidity will always yield better results than “casting in stone”, which leads to trouble. According to Cline and Fay (2006) certain control battles can not be won and the best offense is often flexibility.

Understanding and knowing one’s own children is possible only if the mother spends *time* with them. It is the physical act of being with the children. Participant two claims

that children need time with parents more than anything else. Participant seven describe the “personal time commitments that must be made”, without which all the other strategies will fail. The timing of the physical presence was different for each mother.

Participant seven holds that a substitute caregiver is fine when the children are babies and toddlers. When child development concerns “gross motor skills” it is not as important for a parent to be there, anyone will do. She thinks that the later years are the “danger zone” in terms of teaching responsibility. Brazelton and Greenspan (1999) contend that physical presence is critical to normal development and children who do not have parents’ time and attention may end up with permanent attachment disorders and cognitive and emotional deficits.

Interviewees hope that the sacrifice of time they have made for their children will pay off. Participant seven says that she re-arranged her life to be around them more. Religious traditions inform the time commitments for participant one who prays five times a day with her children. This time of coming together and praying can be very powerful according to participant six. The time spent with children seems to give parents a window into their soul. Conversations begin and you can find what inspires them says participant six. By spending time the children recognize that they are important to the parent and that gives them security.

The corollary to the struggle of protect versus equip is seen in *equip and arm* as a strategy. Parenting styles often determine how equip and arm will manifest. An authoritarian (Baumrind, 1973) parent will have high expectations of compliance such as participant one who gives her children choices and expectations. In this way, she allows the children to see that there are consequences for certain actions. Participant six also limits exposure and only allows privileges after contributions are complete.

Although none of the parents interviewed are permissive (Baumrind, 1973) the blended families had fathers who were permissive. Participant three believes that the parenting style of her new husband of his biological daughter has led to the biological daughter's "ruination." The step daughter is not able to make decisions or act like an adult. Participant three also had a problem with the non-custodial father of her daughter who would indulge the child on the weekends and then the mother would have to begin training and teaching afresh each week.

Participant eight describes her household of origin as two extremes, has chosen a style bordering on autocratic (Baumrind, 1973). Her rules are strict, following religious traditions and homeschooling. Participant eight claims that they will have such a strong foundation, that when they see that "something is not right, they immediately identify it" this way the hope is that they will not "get sucked in." She hopes that the children will spend their first year of college at home so if they "fall", the parents are close enough to pick them up.

Strategies of arming extend from planned exposure to television and music to conversations about religion for participant seven whose son was recruited by a Scientologist at a fair. She wanted to make sure the son understood that both the window seller and religious seller were doing the same thing. To participant seven the message was, "This is my stuff and I want you to buy it". The churches, "sell their own version of God." The idea of skipping Christmas occurred to participant two in order to simplify life, she settled for not taking the children to the mall. Participant five teaches her children that most of what they sell on television is "gaaaabage!" to make you unhealthy and unhappy.

At some point, children have to make their own decisions. Arming them with parental ideas of responsibility can go far in setting them on the right track. Cline and Fay

(2006) claim that “responsibility can’t be taught, it must be caught” (p. 34). Participant one offers opportunities to do chores and have more responsibility. A strategy enlisted gives a bit of a reward from a list when a chore is done works for participant six.

Parenting is a long term commitment. Results may not be achieved in the short term and teaching children to have a long term viewpoint is a strategy. A sign of maturity is the ability to delay gratification and participant one asks her daughters, “How are you going to college if you do this or if this happens, how are you going to buy a house?” Bandura (2001) claims that self-efficacy is gained through experience of success. The success in one endeavor may lead to success in another. Participant seven knows that her children will choose how they are going to live and her job is to keep them on the right track until they are ready.

### *Social Cognitive Theory*

Other than studies on maternal efficacy (Conrad, Gross, Fogg, and Ruchala, 1992) there is a dearth of literature linking parenting and the social cognitive theory of Bandura (1988). This study uses the combination of research on family communication and phenomenology to extend SCT to the teaching of values and responsibility by parents (especially mothers) to children in the home. The mothers were not asked specifically about the link between modeling behaviors and teaching values, rather, the link became apparent to the researcher after complete thematic analysis.

The SCT is a learning theory with many premises and applications in the psychological and social sciences. Important for this study is the concept of modeling. Bandura (2003) uses modeling in a spiritual context (Bandura, 2003; Silberman, 2003) and in some ways the teaching of values and responsibility is as personal as religion. SCT is used in explaining and predicting aggressiveness in children (Bandura, Ross and Ross, 1961; Joseph,

Kane and Tedeschi, 1997). The classic “bobo doll” study of Bandura, Ross and Ross (1961) demonstrated that children model unusual levels of aggressiveness after viewing an adult’s aggression toward the object. An individual will expect certain outcomes based on observations.

Humans advanced ability to learn through observation is a tenet of Bandura’s SCT. One of the major strategies that mothers employ is a “living the values” strategy. In this way, there is not preaching/teaching, there is living. Cline and Fay (2003) contend “if we want to pass our values, it must be in our actions” (p. 247). This is the approach of interviewees.

*Unwittingly, mothers are applying sophisticated theoretical concepts to the everyday act of parenting.*

Religious traditions informed the parenting style of more than half of the participants in this study. The power of modeling, according to Bandura (2003) shapes lives and the capacity to develop and practice spirituality. This foundation provides a buffer to stress and despondency and builds resilience to adversity (Bandura, 2003). The same process is involved in building self-efficacy in individual children. From an educational approach, we know that two premises of SCT, self-efficacy and self regulation affect students’ learning (Schunk and Zimmerman, 2007), this may be extended to the family system. A child who has a high level of self-efficacy and regulation will be less prone to giving up and have internal strength to pursue goals in the face of adversity.

The limiting television strategy expressed by many of the interviewees reduces influences from the media, and increases influence of the parents. People act on their own interpretations of reality (Bandura, 2001) distorted media versions of reality will prevail in the absence of a parent from which to model. Letting children be raised by TV carries a hefty price. Participant five (who worked as an actress on television) asks her children to actively judge what they see on TV, not to take it as reality.

Modeling of behavior by the parents will hopefully result in that behavior acted upon by children. Ginott (2003), states that values are absorbed from respected others. Participant four states that children will see the “farce” if you drive a fancy car, yet claim that you don’t have enough money to give to a worthy cause. She is concerned for the time when her sons are teenagers and they “start calling their parents on it”. If aggressiveness will be manifested after modeling (Joseph, Kane, Nacci and Tedeschi, 1977), so may the actions that demonstrate values and responsibility. The SCT model is not the overwhelming guiding factor in this study; rather, it was arrived upon after completion of analysis.

The modeling of good values and responsible actions of children requires parents to take a closer look at the influences coming into the home. There are educational aspects to the culture (especially good quality television shows and movies) that are important to the growth and development of a young person, this study focuses more on the negative influences, but does not discount the positive nature of some media. The pirates and princesses may rule in popular culture, but each individual parent in every home across the USA makes the choice to either accept or reject popular cultural influences. Future society is determined by the little (and large) choices parents make every day.



### Limitations and further research

This qualitative study interviewed eight subjects. They were from similar socioeconomic backgrounds and all had concern for their children and ego involvement in parenting. To fully explore the communication aspects of parenting with a purpose, a longitudinal study of hundreds of families would be ideal. The study would include survey data, phenomenological data and a triangular look at the family system. Interviews should be conducted with the children of the current subjects. They are recommended both when the children become adults and when they have children of their own, as parents. Parents would be interviewed after the children grow up to see if the children actually lived the values the parents tried to teach. Fathers should be involved in all discussions and the types of school environment the children were enrolled should be considered. The ramifications for social justice in a project of this magnitude would be immense. Parenting creates our culture. Understanding the individual struggles and strategies would assist in defining our culture.

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Appendix

Transcript one: September 9, 2007, via conference call

I: HAVE K ON THE LINE WITH ME, THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR TALKING WITH ME.

K; YOUR WELCOME

I: AND BEFORE WE GET STARTED HERE, I'D JUST LIKE A LITTLE BACKGROUND ON YOU AND THE AGES OF YOUR CHILDREN.

K: OKAY, I AM A THIRTY FIVE YEAR OLD FEMALE I HAVE FOUR GIRLS, THE ELDEST CHILD IS 21, I HAVE A 18 YEAR OLD AND A SIX YEAR OLD AND A FOUR YEAR OLD.

I: WELL THAT IS QUITE A WONDERFUL RANGE ISN'T IT

K: (LAUGHS) YEAH YOU MIGHT CALL IT WONDERFUL

I: ALL GIRLS. TERRIFIC. AND YOU WERE RAISED IN WHAT PART OF THE COUNTRY?

K: THE MIDWEST DECATUR ILLINOIS

I: THOSE GOOD MIDWEST VALUES

K: YES DEFINITELY

I: OKAY AS YOU KNOW, YOU'VE READ THE DOCUMENTATION I'VE SENT YOU ON THIS PROJECT, WE'RE LOOKING AT HOW PARENTS TEACH VALUES AND RESPONSIBILITIES IN THIS CULTURE, SOMETIMES BELOVED PARENTS FEEL THEY ARE COMPLETELY OVERWHELMED BY THE CULTURE BECAUSE THERE'S SO MUCH MEDIA TRYING TO INFLUENCE THEIR LIVES AND MAKING THEIR CHILDREN DISCONTENT WITH THEIR LIVES AND TRYING TO SELL THEM SOMETHING THAT WILL MAKE THEM HAPPY. SO I JUST WANTED TO ASK YOU ABOUT YOUR STRUGGLES WITH RAISING YOUR FOUR GIRLS IN A CONSUMER CULTURE. HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE THE WAY YOU RAISE YOUR CHILDREN?

K: WELL I THINK THE WAY THAT I'D DESCRIBE WOULD BE, I STILL TRY TO I DON'T TRY TO DENY THE FACT THAT THEY HAVE THESE PRESSURES FROM SOCIETY OR THEIR PEERS I JUST TRY TO COUNTER IT AND I MAKE SURE WE HAVE A VERY CLOSE RELATIONSHIP, I ASK THEM QUESTIONS AND IF THEY DO NOT GIVE ME WHAT I THINK IS AN HONEST OR OPEN ANSWER, I JUST KEEP PRESSING, I MAKE SURE IT'S OPEN, I MAKE SURE THAT THEY CAN COME TALK TO ME OR BUTCH.

I: AND BUTCH IS YOUR HUSBAND

K: YES BUTCH IS MY HUSBAND.

I: OKAY SO WHAT I'M HEARING IS THAT YOU DON'T TRY TO COUNTER ACT ANYTHING, YOU DON'T TRY TO WORK AGAINST THE CULTURE, YOU TRY TO SORT OF WORK WITH THE CULTURE BUT LET THEM KNOW THAT YOU'RE ON THEIR SIDE.

K: EXACTLY, I LET THEM KNOW I'M ON THEIR SIDE BUT I ALSO GIVE THEM AN ALTERNATIVE WAY TO LOOK AT THINGS BECAUSE WHAT I FIND IS THAT, WHEN YOU KNOW, THINGS THAT THEY WATCH ON TELEVISION, THEY TRY TELL THEM THAT THIS IS YOUR ONLY OPTION AND THIS IS NOT THE WAY THINGS WILL BE AND YOU KNOW, I'M NOT GOING TO BE THERE WHEN THEY ARE FACED WITH THESE SITUATIONS AND THE DECISIONS THEY HAVE TO MAKE AND IF I CAN COUNTER THAT BEFORE THEY GET IN THESE SITUATIONS WITH AN ALTERNATIVE WAY, I THINK THAT WORKS BETTER.

I: OH OKAY.

K: THAT'S THE WAY I'D PREFER

I: OKAY, SO WHAT IS THE ALTERNATIVE WAY?

K: AN ALTERNATIVE WAY WOULD DEFINITELY BE TO LOOK AT HOW LONG TERM WHAT IT MEANS FOR THEIR FUTURE. DO I REALLY WANT THIS? OR DO I WANT TO BECOME LIKE A DRUG HEAD, OR DO I WANT TO BECOME PROMISCUOUS, WHATEVER THE SITUATION IS THAT I THINK WOULD HARM THEM MORRALLY, OR PHYSICALLY, I TRY TO GET THEM TO THINK OF THE LONG TERM BECAUSE A LOT OF KIDS EXPECIALLY THEY ARE GENERATIONALLY IMPULSIVE, THEY WANT THINGS NOW, THE DON'T NECESSARILY THINK ABOUT HOW IT WILL AFFECT THEM IN THE FUTURE.

I: SO YOU TRY TO GIVE THEM A LONG TERM VIEW OF THE FUTURE.

K: UH HUH, SO LIKE IF YOU DO THIS, HOW ARE YOU GOING TO GO TO COLLEGE IF YOU DO THIS? IF THIS HAPPENS TO YOU, HOW ARE YOU GOING TO ONE DAY BUY A HOUSE?



I: GREAT, GREAT, SO DO YOU FEEL LIKE YOU'VE BEEN IMPACTED BY THE CONSUMER CULTURE?

K: YES DEFINITELY THERE ARE CERTAIN SHOWS ON OR CHANNELS THAT I CAN'T WATCH BECAUSE THEIR SO BOMBARDED. THEIR FRIENDS WEAR FERG T-SHIRTS AND I HAVE TO LET THEM KNOW WE WILL NOT EVER PURCHASE THAT. ITS NOT SOMETHING THAT WE BELIEVE IN. BUT AS A PARENT, I DON'T FEEL SO MUCH PRESSURE FROM OTHER PARENTS TO BUY THOSE THINGS FOR MY KIDS, BUT I REALLY DO FEEL THE PRESSURE FROM MY CHILDREN, YOU KNOW THEY'LL COME TO ME AND SAY CAN I BUY THIS, OR I CAN'T HAVE BRAT, RIGHT MOM? NO, YOU CAN'T HAVE BRAT. AND THEN I EXPLAIN TO THEM WHY THEY CAN'T HAVE BRAT

I: BRATS ARE THE LITTLE DOLLS.

K: THEY ARE VERY SEXUALLY EXPLICIT, THEY WEAR A LOT OF MAKEUP, YOU KNOW THEY'RE KIND OF ANGELINA JOLLE, THEY WEAR MINI SKIRTS

I: AND THE PRESSURE YOU FEEL IS COMING FROM THE KIDS BECAUSE THEY'RE BEING EXPOSED TO IT AND THEN THEY ASK YOU FOR IT.

K: EXACTLY, EXACTLY. IT'S NOT FROM OTHER PARENTS.

I: OKAY, OH SO IT'S NOT AT ALL FROM OTHER PARENTS.

K: NO, NO, AND MAYBE IT'S BECAUSE I DON'T ALLOW IT. I DO HEAR OTHER PARENTS COMPLAIN ABOUT THE PRESSURE THEY GET FROM THEIR KIDS AND I EXPLAIN TO THEM HOW I HANDLE IT, BUT I NEVER, YOU KNOW, ALLOW THE PRESSURE TO IMPACT ON MY LIFE IN THAT WAY. BUT FROM THE KIDS, ACTUALLY I'M INVESTED IN THAT RELATIONSHIP SO I HAVE TO MAKE SURE I'M NOT JUST SAYING NO, OR I'M TRYING TO GET

THEM TO UNDERSTAND WHY BEING A CONSUMER FOR AN ITEM IS NOT ACCEPTABLE.

I: THAT'S GREAT. YOU'RE A GREAT RESOURCE BECAUSE YOU HAVE CHILDREN RANGING IN AGE FROM 21 TO 4. SO, YOU'VE REALLY GOT A LONG HISTORY DEALING WITH THIS ISSUE. DO YOU FEEL YOU NEED TO PROTECT YOUR CHILDREN FROM THE CULTURE THEN?

K: YES I DO ESPECIALLY WHEN DEALING WITH SEX. BUT I THINK THE MESSAGES THEY ARE GETTING ABOUT DRUGS IS PRETTY LOW LEVEL COMPARED WITH WHAT I BELIEVE, BUT I THINK THE MESSAGE IS THAT, YOU CAN STILL EXPERIMENT. I DON'T THINK A KID SHOULD EXPERIMENT SO, I REALLY DO FEEL AT TIMES THAT WE ARE AT WAR WITH THE CULTURE.

I: YOU FEEL WE'RE AT WAR WITH THE CULTURE.

K: UH HUH.

I: WOW.

K: 'CAUSE I THINK THAT BEYOND MORALS THERE'S A SPIRITUAL THING THAT KIDS HAVE TO FACE AS WELL.

I: IT'S A SPIRITUAL THING. SO WHAT RELIGION IS YOUR FAMILY.

K: MUSLUM.

I: SO YOU FEEL YOU ARE TRYING TO UPHOLD A SPIRITUAL AND MORAL LIFE IN A CULTURE THAT DOESN'T SUPPORT THOSE VALUES.

K: CORRECT.

I: OKAY. DID YOU WANT TO SAY ANYTHING MORE ABOUT THAT?

K: DEFINITELY, WELL YOU KNOW MOST WOMEN WORK A JOB AND AT THIS POINT IN TIME MY CHILDREN DON'T WORK A JOB AND THAT'S FINE, BUT AT SOME POINT, THEY MIGHT WANT TO WORK A JOB AND IT'S AS BIG AN ISSUE AS WHEN THEY GO TO SCHOOL. I'M INVOLVED IN A LARGE MUSLIM POPULATION SO JUST THE FACT THAT THEY ARE MUSLUM IS NOT SO FOREIGN FOR THEM. THEY DON'T FEEL SO OUTCAST. SO WHEN SOME OF THE OTHER KIDS ARE SAY, USING FOUL LANGUAGE, THEY ARE NOT TO JUDGE THEM SO THAT HELPS WITH THAT FIGHT. I REALLY DO BELIEVE THAT THE SPIRITISM AND MORALS ARE INTERWOVEN AND IT'S A STRUGGLE FOR KIDS TODAY.

I: ARE YOU ABLE TO RECALL A TIME WHEN YOU FELT PRESSURE TO CONFORM?

K: YES. WHEN WE WERE IN EVANSTAN.

I: EVANSTAN ILLINOIS.

K: YES. THIS WAS IN KINDERGARTEN LAST YEAR, RUDY WAS INVITED TO GO TO A SLUMBER PARTY AND IT WAS A "BRAT" THEME SLUMBER PARTY AND I JUST REFUSED TO LET HER GO AND YOU KNOW SHE WAS UPSET WITH ME. ONE OF THE THINGS I DON'T THINK LITTLE GIRLS SHOULD GO TO SLUMBER PARTIES ANYWAY BECAUSE I THINK THERE ARE A LOT OF PREDATORS IN THE WORLD AND I JUST WANT TO PROTECT MY CHILDREN FROM THE MORALS OF THE WORLD SO FROM THE MESSAGES THEY GET FROM OTHER GIRLS. IT'S THE STYLE OR THE WAY THAT GIRLS ARE IN OUR SCHOOL.

I: AND SO YOU ENDED UP NOT LETTING HER GO TO THAT PARTY.

K: NO I DID NOT. BUT WHAT I DID WAS SET UP A PLAY DATE WITH THE GIRL.

I: I SEE. GOOD. SO THOSE ARE THE QUESTIONS IN THE AREA OF STRUGGLES. IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE THAT YOU'D LIKE TO ADD TO THAT AREA?

K: NO NOT AT THIS TIME.

I: OKAY GREAT. NOW THE CATEGORY IS STRATEGIES. HOW DO YOU PROTECT YOUR CHILDREN FROM CULTURAL SEEPAGE, DO YOU HAVE RULES ABOUT TELEVISION, RULES ABOUT THE RADIO?

K: DEFINITELY. RIGHT NOW WITH THE OLDER GIRLS, ITS REALLY QUITE DIFFERENT WITH THE OLDER GIRLS I TALK TO, YOU'RE GOING TO WATCH BET WHICH IS BLACK ENTERTAINMENT TELEVISION AND MY OPINION IS THAT IT'S SOFT CORE PORN MOST OF THE TIME. A LOT OF THESE VIDEOS AND REALITY TELEVISION THEY'LL STIR THE POT OF MORALITY. BUT THEIR OLDER AND I CAN'T REALLY FORCE THEM TO DO SOMETHING I JUST SAY DO NOT WATCH THEM WHEN THE [LITTLE] GIRLS ARE AWAKE OR AROUND, YOU CANNOT WATCH WHEN THE [LITTLE] GIRLS ARE PRESENT. THE SAME GOES FOR RADIO. A LOT OF THE RADIO THEY USE FOUL BAD WORDS YOU KNOW THERE'S A LOT OF SEXUAL WORDS THE GIRLS LISTEN TO BUT AS FAR AS THE YOUNGER GIRLS, THEY DON'T LISTEN TO RADIO AT ALL. WE ACTUALLY HAVE AN IPOD WITH MUSIC ON IT THAT THEY LISTEN TO. THEY KNOW ALL THE SONGS BY NAME SO THEY CAN REQUEST SONGS THEY WANT TO LISTEN TO. FOR TELEVISION, THEY CAN'T WATCH TOO MUCH TELEVISION, WHAT THEY DO WATCH IS USUALLY KBX SPROUT, THE

MIDNIGHT SHOW, SESEME STREET. WHEN WE'RE WATCHING MOVIES THAT ADULTS CAN WATCH, YOU KNOW, ACTION, DRAMA, MAYBE THRILLERS, THE KIDS ARE NEVER AROUND. THEY'RE IN THEIR BEDS. WE TRY OUR VERY BEST TO PROTECT THEM IN OUR HOME. NOW WHEN THEY ARE AWAY WITH THEIR FRIENDS FOR INSTANCE, A PLAY DATE, ONE OF THEIR SISTERS IS AROUND WE WILL TELL THE PARENTS THAT THEY CAN'T WATCH SOME SHOWS, YOU KNOW WE TRY TO MANAGE IT THAT WAY, BUT NOT MICRO MANAGE, NOT BE CONTROLLING WITH OTHER PEOPLE. I HOPE THAT ANSWERED YOUR QUESTION.

I: YES ABSOLUTELY. SO WHAT I WAS HEARING WAS THAT YOU NOT ONLY HAVE THE JOB AS THE MOM BUT YOU ALSO HAVE TO INSTRUCT THE OLDER GIRLS, THE EIGHTEEN AND TWENTY ONE YEAR OLD NOT TO EXPOSE THE YOUNGER ONES TO CERTAIN THINGS.

K: THAT'S RIGHT. AND IF MY GIRLS HAVE BOYFRIENDS, I DO NOT WANT THE YOUNGER GIRLS KNOWING ANYTHING ABOUT THAT. THEY DO NOT NEED BOYFRIENDS.

I: BECAUSE THEY'RE NOT WHAT KIND OF BOYFRIENDS?

K: IF MY OLDER KIDS HAVE A BOYFRIEND, I DON'T WANT THE YOUNGER ONES IMAGINING THEY HAVE ONE BECAUSE THAT'S WHAT KIDS DO.

I: I THINK YOU'RE RIGHT, YES. SO IDEALLY, HOW WOULD YOU ARRANGE YOUR LIFE TO SUPPORT GOOD VALUES IN YOUR CHILDREN.

K: I GUESS I'LL GIVE YOU A TYPICAL DAY. WE PRAY FIVE TIMES A DAY AND LOTS OF TIMES THE KIDS DON'T WANT TO PRAY, YOU KNOW BECAUSE THEY'RE PLAYING OR DRAWING OR WHATEVER AND SO WE HAVE TO

REMINDE THEM WHY WE ARE PRAYING THAT ITS NOT JUST AS AN OBLIGATION OR CONSIDERED RESPECTFUL, BASICALLY IT'S A VALIDATION AND THEN WE HAVE READING TIME AND WE PICK CERTAIN BOOKS THAT SUPPORT THE VALUES WE HAVE AND WE ALSO TALK A LOT, WE ACTUALLY SIT DOWN WHEN WE'RE HAVING DINNER AWAY FROM THE TELEVISION AND WE TALK AND WE TRY TO CONVERSE AND GET INSIDE THE GIRLS HEAD BECAUSE IF THEY GET THE IDEA TO BE OPEN WITH US AND TO TALK WITH US, THEY'LL CONTINUE THAT AND THAT'S THE STRATAGY WE USE WITH THE OLDER GIRLS, AND IT WORKS UNTIL THEY GET REALLY OLD. ONE THING WE DID WITH THE OLDER GIRLS IS ESTABLISH THE FOUNDATION OF PRAYER, REGULAR PRAYER.

I: SO THEN IS THERE ACTUAL TEACHING OF MORALS IN YOUR HOUSEHOLD, OR IS IT MORE OF FOLLOWING THE TENANTS OF YOUR RELIGION AND THOSE ARE THE VALUES YOUR FAMILY HAS.

K: IT'S A MATTER OF MOSTLY I'D SAY FROM THE TEACHING OF OUR RELIGION. BUT THERE ARE ALSO REGULAR VALUES THAT WE INSTRUCT THE KIDS ON ESPECIALLY WITH LYING AND YOU KNOW, BEING CONSIDERATE OF EACH OTHER, CONSIDERATION IS REALLY BIG IN OUR HOME. WHEN ANOTHER PERSON IS TALKING, YOU DON'T TALK OVER THEM OR INTERRUPT THEM YOU LET THEM FINISH THE CONVERSATION. ESPECIALLY WITH RUDY BECAUSE SHE HAS SO MUCH GOING ON WITH WANTING TO DOMINATE THE CONVERSATION AND JUDY LOVES TO HEAR EVERYONE SPEAK AND RARELY GETS THE OPPORTUNITY TO SPEAK, SO.

I: OKAY SO, THEN, VALUES IS TAUGHT WITH YOUR RELIGION AND ITS AN OPEN CONVERSATION WITH YOUR RELIGION. WHAT ABOUT RESPONSIBILITY WITH THINGS LIKE CHORES AND OTHER THINGS, HOW DO YOU TEACH RESPONSIBILITY?

K: RESPONSIBILITY IS SOMETHING WE'RE DEFINITELY STRUGGLING WITH BECAUSE WE'VE DONE SO MUCH TO TAKE CARE OF THE KIDS AND THE KIDS DON'T REALLY KNOW HOW TO BE RESPONSIBLE AS OF YET. SINCE THEIR SIX AND FOUR WE'RE AT THAT TRANSITIONAL STAGE RIGHT NOW, BUT RUDY SHE EMPTIES THE DISHWASHER AND MAKES HER BED, PUTS HER CLOTHES AWAY THAT TYPE OF THING. JUDY SHE'S MORE RESISTANT OF IT, I MEAN THE OLDER GIRLS ARE USED TO IT, BUT WE TRY TO TEACH IT EVERY OPPORTUNITY. IF I SEE YOU KNOW, THEM TAKING THEIR CLOTHES OFF AT THE END OF THE DAY AND I SEE IT THROWN IN THE CORNER I ASK WHERE DOES THAT GO? YOU HAVE TO BE RESPONSIBLE FOR YOUR CLOTHING BECAUSE IF IT GETS LOST YOU WON'T BE ABLE TO WEAR IT, STUFF CAN HAPPEN, MILDEW CAN GROW ON IT, IT COULD BE DAMAGED.

I: DO YOU USE ALLOWANCE FOR YOUR CHILDREN

K: RARELY, ONLY WHEN IT'S A BIG CHORE.

I: OKAY SO ITS MORE LIKE PAYMENT FOR A CHORE.

K: I THINK THAT ALLOWANCE IS A WAY TO VALUE MONEY, NOT TO BE RESPONSIBLE. I THINK KIDS SHOULD BE RESPONSIBLE WITHOUT THE REWARD OF MONEY. I DON'T THINK YOU SHOULD REWARD THEM WITH MONEY. THEY SHOULD LEARN TO BE RESPONSIBLE JUST BECAUSE IT IS

GOOD TO BE RESPONSIBLE. IF IT'S A LOT OF WORK, THEN IT'S OKAY BECAUSE THAT ALLOWS THEM TO TIE THE WORK IN WITH THE MONEY AND THE VALUE OF THE MONEY.

I: SO YOU WANT THEM TO BE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE JOY OF BEING RESPONSIBLE RATHER THAN FOR THE EARNING OF MONEY.

K: CORRECT

I: IF YOU COULD GIVE ADVICE FOR OTHER PARENTS ABOUT RAISING CHILDREN WITH VALUES IN A CONSUMER CULTURE, WHAT IS IT?

K: TO NEVER GIVE IN, YOU KNOW WHEN YOU SEE PARENTS WITH KIDS AT A STORE AND THEIR PLEADING AND BEGGING I'D SAY, LOOK, IF I BOUGHT YOU THIS TOY, THAT MEANS THAT I WON'T BE ABLE TO BUY THIS, YOU KNOW IT MEANS WE WILL NOT BE ABLE TO AFFORD TO PUT GAS IN OUR CAR. I REALLY DO BELIEVE THAT IF PARENTS WOULD EXPLAIN THAT TO THEIR KIDS, TO INCREASE THEIR VALUE OF MONEY, YOU KNOW MONEY ISN'T LIKE MONOPOLY MONEY, IT'S REAL AND IF YOU SPLURGE, THERE ARE CONSEQUENCES FOR THAT.

I: CAN I ASK YOU A COUPLE OF QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR BACKGROUND

K: SURE

I: YOU WERE A SINGLE MOM FOR A WHILE

K: RIGHT, FOR EIGHT YEARS.

I: WHEN YOUR OLDER CHILDREN WERE HOW OLD?

K: IT ALL BEGAN WHEN MY OLDEST WAS FOUR, AND THEN WHEN I MARRIED BUTCH, BETWEEN THAT I WAS A SINGLE MOM. I GUESS I MARRIED BUTCH WHEN SHE WAS ELEVEN.



I: OKAY. SPELLING: SAMONIA, SHAMARRA, RUDY, JUDY

IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE THAT THINK WOULD BE HELPFUL TO OTHER MOMS?

K: WELL TO NOT TAKE THE ANGER OF YOUR CHILDREN PERSONALLY. AND TO NOT BE SO HARD ON THEM. AND TO NOT THINK OF YOURSELF AS A FAILURE WHEN THEY DO NOT DO WHAT YOU PLANNED OR HOPED. ONE WAY TO PREPARE YOURSELF FOR THAT AS YOU'RE GOING THROUGH THE DAY WITH THEM, GIVE THEM THE OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE DECISIONS FOR THEMSELVES. IF THEY MAKE THOSE DECISIONS, THEY MAY NOT DO EXACTLY WHAT YOU WANT THEM TO DO. BECAUSE IF YOU'RE CONSTANTLY TELLING KIDS WHAT TO DO AND THEY'RE CONSTANTLY DOING IT, WHEN THEY FINALLY GET ON THEIR OWN AND THEIR NOT DOING WHAT YOU WANT THEM TO DO, IT'S LIKE A SHOCK.

I: RIGHT, WHEN THEY HAVEN'T BEEN ALLOWED TO MAKE THEIR OWN DECISIONS ABOUT THINGS. AND YOU'VE BEEN MAKING ALL THEIR DECISIONS FOR THEM, WHAT YOU'RE SAYING IS TRY TO GIVE THEM AS MANY OPPORTUNITIES AS YOU CAN AND LET THEM SEE THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE DECISIONS.

K: EXACTLY, WHEN THEIR GROWING UP. BECAUSE IF YOU GIVE THEM THE OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE THOSE DECISIONS AND IT DOESN'T WORK OUT FOR THEM, THEY CAN SIT BACK AND SAY WELL MOM TOLD ME TO DO THIS OR SUGGESTED I DO THAT, IT'S A BETTER WAY TO BUILD A RELATIONSHIP WITH THE CHILDREN.

I: GOOD. ANYTHING ELSE?

K: GIVE YOUR KIDS A HUG EVEN WHEN YOU'RE MAD AT THEM.

ESPECIALLY WHEN THEY'RE TEENAGERS.

I: KIND OF HARD WITH THE TEENAGERS, HUH.

K: YEAH

Transcript two: 09/12/2008, interviewed in person in Studio City, CA

I: Okay, so we are here with Maureen Muldoon on Sept. 12<sup>th</sup> in her beautiful home in Studio City that she is abandoning. So, will you just talk a little about yourself, about your background, about your children, their ages, how long you've been married, those kind of things.

M: As a mother I got pregnant with Owen in 1991, he's seventeen now, so I got married after having him to my first husband and then our marriage dissolved and Owen was four at the time then I became a single parent for about two years and then I met my second husband Will and we started having children right away because we thought he was sterile and we had no idea that he wasn't and it was like boom I got pregnant right away with Billie, then I went on the pill and I got pregnant with Liam then I went on the diaphragm and I was already pregnant with Rosemary then Will got a vasectomy, so when you say it was accidental, it was completely accidental or miracles, whatever word you want to choose, so I have raised children in different comfort zones, so when you talk about raising a child as a single parent and consumerism it is interesting because I was in a very different place when he was younger than two, I was less aware, but also I know in fact that I raised him at Christmas time and I was motivated by guilt and making up for what I felt was not the best possible way of raising a child, which in my mind was having two parents there too, and so

having him endure that made me want to spend more on him to make up for it. And I see that in other parents and it's sad but it's the way that we love sometimes when we think that that's what love is.

I: So out of guilt you felt you needed to give your child more things.

M: Yeah and also it's funny because out of all of my children I don't know it's related or unrelated, he's the least attached to things. When I ask him 'what can I get you, what do you want?' he always says I don't want anything, I don't need anything. Where as my other kids are 'can I have that? Can I have that? Can I have that?'

I: So maybe guilt giving is a good strategy.

M: I know, I mean, but there were times that he wanted things really badly that he saw on TV. Like he once wanted this vest with thirteen different pockets and it was one of those things, he wanted that and he wanted this return boomerang and he'd talk about it forever and ever and I'd say to him 'you know they're trying to sell this to you and it may not do what you want it to do. And it's show up and, you know the boomerang didn't really work and it was so disappointing, you know what I mean? And vest worked and he wore that forever. Those were actually two things that he was obsessed on. And he really did want and another commercial, I remember Billie wanting something one time. Where there was this spoof on the TV about these two little girls who were playing with brick dolls and it was 'oh it's Mr. Brick.' And it was like a spoof on commercials and Billie was like 'oh I want one.' And I think they'd want anything if you make it look cool. Isn't that funny?

I: How old was she?

M: It was about five or six years ago so she was, four or five.

I: And she wanted the brick baby.

M: Yeah. She wanted the brick baby. She said 'I want that.' And I said 'are you looking at that?' Kinda funny, isn't it?

I: Very funny. So how is, what is the way you raise your children. How would you describe the way that you raise your children?

M: Well, very open and I've never had schedules for my children ever. Always fed on demand, put them to bed when they wanted to go to bed, so it was kind of like a child-led raising of them and I don't know, that worked for my lifestyle, because my lifestyle was always day to day because I never knew what was going to happen next and I never had schedules and so that's how I raised my kids. I don't know if it's good or bad, but that's how I raised them and it's worked for me. And as far as commercialism, at Christmas time I do buy them a lot of stuff, and I listened to this tape about simplifying your life and the lady suggested all of these things to simplify your life and one of them was to skip Christmas, commercially and I was listening to the tape with Billie and I was like, 'see Billie, that's an option, we could just skip Christmas.' And she was like Ahhh and

I: Her life would be over.

M: Oh my God and then she started laughing and it was impressive it was an impressive reaction to the idea of skipping Christmas. But you know, I don't feel like, you know we don't go the mall and we don't do any of that stuff and I think that's just like examples of things that I just don't do.

I: You don't go to the mall?

M: No. No.

I: How do you buy your, what do you?

M: I would never take my kids to the mall. My kids have been to the mall, maybe...

Rosemary has been to the mall about... four times, we just don't go to the mall. They'll go

the grocery store with me, and if I buy something, well like with Rosemary, I never buy her anything (laughs).

I: So you've gone to the absolute extreme.

M: Well, even with Owen, I never bought him any clothes. Boxes would just show up. He has all these older cousins and they would just send him boxes of clothes. With Rosemary, I have to show you this, this is just one of her baskets of shoes. She has about three of these. And I haven't bought any of them. And that's crazy, isn't it?

I: That is a huge box of shoes.

M: She has about forty pairs of shoes. And I know now that I'm packing and trying to get rid of all this stuff, I realize how ridiculous this all is and I haven't bought any of them.

I: Where does she get them?

M: This one girl, in Liam's class, she drops off clothes all the time and her mom is a dresser for TV so she's really into dressing her kids like an extension of herself, so that's one person and Delores, Rosemary's other friend drops off boxes as well and Delores I don't know what's up with the shoe thing, but maybe 80 percent of these shoes are from that one kid.

I: So somebody is buying shoes for that kid.

M: Yeah. Her aunt. Like when she shows up and I say, 'more shoes?' and she says oh don't even get me started, it's my sister dah dah dah. But even in accepting all that it sets up an idea for Rosemary, Rosemary will say to me, 'I love shopping in the garage.' And she thinks we shop and I throw this stuff together and it's going to be funny when she figures it all out. And I have them all labeled, next years clothes, next years clothes, and I have them all ready for her and I don't have to buy her anything.

I: Wow.

M: I know, I've been really lucky that way.

I: It's extraordinary.

M: And it's been like with every kid like that. Billie is just getting to the phase, because she had a friend Bridget who dropped off stuff I don't know that people just think, oh M's open to that because I totally am, or what, but.

I: It's not like you're a destitute family, I mean you're living in a house in Studio City with a pool and you've re-modeled it.

M: Maybe they know, I don't know, well a lot of our friends have one or two children, so that might be-

I: Oh, so they think, you have a lot of children.

M: So that might think, oh these have only been worn by one kid, so, I have no idea.

I: It's so interesting.

M: But I do have friends who do shop like Billie used to have a friend who gave us all the clothes and the mom would shop for that kid like extensively and so she would have all these clothes, so what do you do with all those clothes when you grow out of them.

I: Take them to M's house.

M: Take them to M's house.

I: Do you feel you've been impacted by the consumer culture?

M: Yes you know, I do feel it, how do you not, I mean I work in the industry of selling stuff. Specifically two years ago I think there was a question on there do you feel you've been put in a corner and there was this camp Billie wanted to go to, it was really expensive, Camp Kanarek and all of her friends were going and we couldn't afford it, and I didn't want to tell her we couldn't afford it, I mean I don't have a a problem telling my kids we can't afford that, or I say to them, that wouldn't be a wise choice for us right now. So it's not like we

don't have the money, it's like that wouldn't be a smart place for us to put our money right now. But her, a my mother in law ended up saying she'd pay for it so she paid for it.

I: Wow.

M: Yeah, and it was about a thousand dollars and I remember thinking that's fine but what happens when the next two go, is she going to step up for them. But she ended up going and I did feel like its really the best thing.

I: She setting a precedent.

M: Yeah.

I: For your family

M: Right. But I could have said no. I could have said no, that's not going to work for us.

I: How long was the camp?

M: It was four weeks about two or three days a week. And it was one of these great old camps that had been there forever and there was horseback riding and archery and all these great things, you know, but like this year, none of my kids went to camp, we had a, we had a, I mean it's very much about the camps around her, you know? Like where are they going to camp and—

I: Really.

M: We had this exchange student come from Italy, she was here for three weeks and we just took her around to all these things in Los Angeles knowing that we're going to move so we got to see all the different things from her perspective and that was really cool and it was like, Camp Karen.

I: I want you to further discuss when you say, you could say 'we can't afford it right now, but you say that wouldn't be a wise choice for us? Do they ever come back and say, 'it's a wise choice for me.'"

M: No.

I: Talk about wise choice for us. How does that work in the way you teach your children.

M: Okay, you know so yeah, I don't ever want to say I'm broke, I don't have enough money because that's putting yourself in victim mode. I tell my clients and my kids that it is not that you're broke, it's that you're going to be a good steward with what you have. And this is what you have and you have to use it intelligently and not get sucked into things. So then the kids get to see, like Billy will get a budget for a birthday and it's this is what you have to spend on a party. You know, she's at the age where she can do that. And she'll know if I want the piñata and the cake, I'm not going to be able to have the Easter egg hunt and the jumper, you know what I mean? You know so its to let her know, this is your money, use it wisely.

I: You tell your clients not to be victims, what type of clients are these?

M: Oh I have people who come, basically its like life coaching, so it's the same thing, just helping to guide people and in a good direction.

I: So you're life coaching, so you're giving people advice about their life.

M: Right.

I: And that's one of the things you try to tell them. Don't be a victim. Don't state your poor, or whatever.

M: Right. Then it puts you in that frame of mind and you're responsible for where you are, right? You know I was reading this thing the other day that said a woman at twenty is living or thirty is living on the genetics of her parents, but at forty, fifty and sixty it's the genetics you deserve. And I was like, ah, heart! You know it was before I gave up the card so this is the body you deserve, this is the bank account you deserve because these are the choices you've made.



I: It's so interesting.

M: I know.

I: Do you feel a need to protect your children from the culture.

M: It's an interesting wording you know the word protection, you know. Uhm I think it's one of the reasons I don't take them to the mall. Because I think it's really susceptible to our feeling like distracted by all of this stuff because my God, we have so much more than we need. You know we're suffocating, especially knowing that we have to move, we are suffocating under all this stuff. And even when I don't know if you've experienced this, but doing the laundry, cleaning the house, it's just moving more stuff from one place to the next place, I mean I love that magazine Living Simply, I love that idea.

I: Real Simple.

M: Yeah.

I: I love that magazine.

M: And I'm not there, at all, but I know that there are so many things in my house that I don't use that I'd like to get rid of. You know I had all of my jewelry stolen recently, at an open house.

I: Oh.

M: Yeah, somebody came in and stole all of my good jewelry, my engagement ring, I had this gold necklace, I had my grandmother's charm bracelet and I was devastated for a few minutes but I didn't use that stuff. I never wore it.

I: It was almost liberating to have it stolen.

M: Yeah it was like one less thing I have to pack, I don't have to think about it, and hopefully, someone else is either using it for drugs and making themselves feel better or using it for something that they need. Obviously they're thinking, you know I remember in

my lifetime stealing because I thought that was my choice. You know like I have to do this because it's my only choice. And I don't have to do that today, you know. And that person stole things, that's the choice they have to make and I'm not there so I'm really happy to be on the other side of the haves and the have-nots. Because it's really just shit, crap it's just stuff. You know? I was thinking when I went to meditation that underneath all those little trinkets that were stolen from me was Will loves me. He gave me this ring because he loves me. I inherited this ring from my father because he loves me. None of that's been stolen. I think that's the feeling we have to give our children. What's the meaning behind all of this stuff.

I: What a revelation.

M: Yeah. Yeah, so it's like instead of thinking, oh it's been stolen from me, look at this lesson. It's a great lesson. And I get to tell my kids that and they were right there. I didn't hide it from them. I said somebody took my jewelry and I went through the moment of feeling violated and scared and all of those normal things and then I said okay let's just go into meditation and after that I got to see how it was kind of funny a little bit and I got to tell them that and they got nervous, and Rosemary was like they took our things, and I was like Rosemary, it's not important because of this, this and this. And then they were done with it. But they got to see that my lack of attachment to that, we got to see what's really valuable and what's really not that valuable.

I: Even your fine jewelry.

M: Yeah.

I: Not really that valuable.

M: It's really not. I still have this one.

I: What's that one?

M: This one, Will and I, its funny about this ring, we saw it a catalog and we ordered it from a catalog and the wrong one showed up. And we were like, oh, okay. So turns out, so like, whatever. But yeah, I think the commercialism and the stuff can steal your piece of mind. And that's what's really important to me, my peace of mind.

I: Your peace of mind. I've been reading about how objects become so abstracted that its not an object that we necessarily need, for example back in the feudal days, you would use your hands and that would create food for you to eat so there was a direct correlation between the work that you did and the food that you ate and the further we go in this consumer culture where we are trading our own abilities for money to buy the food we eat and to buy the objects, the objects are no longer the objects themselves but they're the secondary function is actually the possession of that object. So the object almost means nothing, it's the possession of it that means more than the object itself.

M: Right.

I: So what you're saying is strip all that away and the truth is that the object only represents something that you already have and if the object goes away, you still have what it represents. I just think it's a brilliant way to look at objects in our lives. You say you're suffocating under all your stuff, but your home doesn't look full of stuff, its tastefully appointed.

M: Yeah, but I still see we hold onto a lot of things, I mean I used to be more of a pack rat and I look back at old photos and I think, wow, look at all this crap. Ah, so I have gotten better, but even still I look at things and some I have because I think they are beautiful but we could even take all that away too. It's hard, I mean I think when I move out of this house I'm going to be letting go of a lot of stuff. Old videos, and old pictures, it's you

know, stuff. It's hard not to be attached to some of this, but, you know, it's progress, not perfection.

I: Did you make, progress, not perfection. Did you make a police report?

M: No. I didn't. I went to the police and I got the paperwork and I called up my insurance company and they said that I didn't have enough jewelry to make a claim for so I didn't file there and I didn't make a police report although I had it sitting in my purse for a while and today I thought about this necklace I had and I thought, I wonder if I saw someone wearing it, what I would do? Because it's very specific, I made the necklace out of this garnet necklace and then I put this heart on it. And it's interesting to think, what would I do.

I: An interesting sociological study, the person who's been stolen from and the person who's wearing it.

M: So I don't know. I'm still trying to figure out how to move forward with it because it just happened like a couple of weeks ago.

I: So that was a good life lesson for your children. Do you feel that you need to protect your children from the culture you live in?

M: Well, I think I could do an even better job of protecting them, but I think, you can't protect them from everything, they're going to go out into the world and make their own decisions, so I think instead of protecting them, you have to suit them up with right values so that when they go out their not going be a buoy who, especially girls, you know they go out into the world and see what other girls have. When Billie graduated from middle school, everybody got these big parties and these big gifts.

I: What grade?

M: Fifth grade. And she was like, what am I gonna do for middle school and I said you're going to get your certificate and graduate and I saw her sitting around the table and they

were like well I got this and I got that and I saw her not being able to contribute because we didn't do that, but there are other families that don't do that. And I know that I talk to my other friend who said, 'no we didn't do anything' and its hard because I go to a place of wanting to say, to sit down with the girls and say yeah, we didn't do anything because its not that important its just stuff, you know, but I can't raise other people's kids.

I: Let me give you a morality lesson. Other people can't raise other people's kids.

M: You can't . And I have to let her sit in that and feel uncomfortable or comfortable or whatever and know we're going to put our money where it's smart to put it. You know she wanted a record player for her graduation and she ended up getting it for her birthday, and she does like it.

I: A record player?

M: A record player, yeah. Old vinyl , she's got all these old records. And it sounds different. And they sit in there and listen to this record and its very cool. It's nice. It's interesting

I: Counter culture.

M: Yeah, well you think about the ipod is so individual and its your playlist and then you go back to, hey they made this record, they put it together, they wanted it to be seen this way, its like some old art that's being neglected, but I think its coming back. So anyway, it was part wanting to protect her, and whether or not I do protect her, I don't know. Now I wanted to protect her in that moment, I wanted to say don't worry Billie, we'll get you something but I didn't, I just let it be. And sometimes that's what you have to do. Because really its trying to save my feeling, feeling inadequate. Like one time I was walking down the street with her and she was wearing the most bizarre outfit and I thought, what are people going to think of me and I was like stop thinking about what people are going to think of

you, your daughter's expressing herself. You know its really hard lessons letting go of what other people think.

I: Because your children are a reflection of you.

M: Yeah.

I: Now what about television in your house, and movies and other, video games , the radio.

M: Yeah. They participate in all of those things and Will and I, I would love to throw the TV out and not have any video games at all. Liam doesn't play video games on the weekdays you know during school. He can play during the weekends. And Billie and none of my other kids play video games. He's the only one who actually plays. And he's really into it and right now he wants one and it's a forty dollar game. I actually, because I took Karen, the exchange student to CityWalk and he ended up going into a game store and he saw this game and was like Nooooo!..

I: it's like slow motion.

M: And he's like how much is it and he's talking to this lady and its like forty five dollars for this video game and he's like, you know we have a change bucket, and he took the change bucket and put it into his change counter and I was like, Liam, that's everyone's money, that's not just your money, that's the house's change money, and then he felt bad about it, because it was like, you can't steal the money from the house and put it in your piggy bank, and that was like a harsh word to use for a seven year old and he was like I don't want you think that I'm somebody that steals and he made a sigh, and he was like this money is for everyone and I was like, God, it's kind of sweet but um, I don't know, so you make mistakes all the time trying to figure out how to navigate it. But as far as TV and film, yeah, they watch TV and film and they are influenced by it, especially around Christmas time with all

the bombardment of commercials and all of those things. They'll just sit there and go, we need that, yeah.

I: They need it.

M: Yeah, we need that.

I: Not, we want it, but, we need it.

M: Yeah. In fact Rosemary saw this thing called, some kind of sand, it was like colorful sand and she really wanted it and she really wanted it and her birthday was coming up and someone asked me, what does she want and I said she wants this, and she got it on her birthday, and she was like, Ahhh! I wanted this for my birthday and BAM there it is! And I was like, oh jeeze, but it was, you know TV, you ask for it, she got it.

I: It appeared.

M: Yeah, so. Things didn't come that easily for me when I was a kid, I don't know how it was for you, but we were involved in making those things happen, things didn't just show up. And so college wasn't just given to you, we had to pay for it. Anything, we had to kind of pitch in for. So I try to make my kids to put in a third of whatever they want to try and make them appreciate it more.

I: Where were you raised?

M: In New Jersey. There were eight kids in my family. Yeah, and my dad worked two jobs. So I was raised with that perspective on money, you know, you worked really hard for it and there was never enough of it. So entering parenthood with that, and then having my own money, and saying you know what, there's enough of it and I'm going to spend it all on you right now as kind of making up for my own childhood with Owen, you know what I mean, aside from the guilt of being separated, we're gonna have what you want because who cares?

I: You're going to re-write your script.

M: Yeah and that might be the way some parents unconsciously parent because they are still nurturing their own child that didn't get heard. And it's with stuff. That's the crime, its with stuff, not with sitting down, taking time and being with them.

I: It's feeding them stuff instead of time.

M: Yeah, recently I went to this restaurant with this girl Karen called "You Wink" and this family restaurant with a computer in the middle of the table. So like you play Pictionary with the person across from you, but I'm like, we don't need this computer, we can have an interaction with each other.

I: It doesn't have to be mediated. It can be a real interaction, instead they are encouraging you to have this separate.

M: And you order all your food on the computer so you don't even interact with the waiter and I was like okay, this is an interesting little experiment, I was thinking, this is really interesting.

I: Does someone actually bring you your food?

M: Someone actually does bring your food. But if you want a fork, anything you want, you order it through the computer. More napkins. Yeah.

I: And you tip the computer.

M: No the waiter gets the tip. I know it's very odd. But she's from Italy so we went there...

I: Because it's a phenomenon.

M: Exactly. It was a whole, I'm sure you'll hear about the American Doll and the Build a Bear. We went into Build a Bear. Well we would never go into American Girl Doll, its insane, we boycott that place.

I: Why do you boycott American Girl Doll.



M: American Girl. I can't even begin to think there's anything right about spending 100 dollars on a toy when there's people in need.

I: So you feel there's a real correlation to what you'd spend on your children compared with other people who are possibly in need.

M: I don't want to send my kids out into the world thinking this is normal, to buy a pair of glasses for a doll, when some people don't have money for glasses. I don't think that's normal. When I go down to South Central with families living with five kids in a house the size of this, and they have so much love, and so much happiness, and I go that's what I want for my kids. I want what they have in this little box with nothing. I don't want have the box full of stuff or crap if it means nothing. You know if it means not having, not buying into that stuff, but I did take the girl from Italy to Build a Bear because she really wanted to go there, its funny when she came over here with her ideas of what America was. I was like oh we could go the Theatricum Botanicum, or we could go to the Getty, and she was like I want to go to Disneyland, I want to go to Build a Bear, I was like, so, we went to some of these places. So I have to take my kids to these places too. They didn't go to Build a Bear, but Billy did go, and Billy wanted to buy a pair of glasses for her bear. And I was like, first of all, you don't even play with bears. That's not who we are. We're not going to buy a pair of fake glasses for a bear. And I felt bad about it, a little bit, but I guess I don't feel that back.

I: So you're guilt has come full circle. Whereas before you were giving things out of guilt, and now you're feeling guilty about saying no. Isn't that interesting?

M: Yeah, that is interesting. Yeah. So she ended up spending one hundred and twenty dollars for a bear and for several outfits for the bear. I was like, oh, okay.

I: It's your money.

M: Yeah.

I: Okay, so are you able to recall a situation where you felt pressure to conform.

M: Yeah, that Camp Canary. And she ended up going.

I: Okay.

M: But I think that's uh, and like with the graduation, whether or not to buy her something and remembering that party and sitting at the table with all those girls, I can't even imagine the kind of pressure that goes on in schools with other kids talking like that. I mean because we do live in an affluent area and there are other kids who don't have as much as she has, so I think the pressure isn't just on me, it's on the whole family and I talk to Will about it and he's like yeah, I definitely feel that pressure so the question is to protect them from the pressure? Or do I feel it?

I: Where you felt the pressure.

M: Yeah, I think it's an every day ongoing kind of maintenance where you have to go, what's the smart decision. Even though I feel that pressure, what's the smart decision, you know I had a friend tell me you either give up what you want right now, you go for what you want in the long run, or you can give up right now for the long term. So like do we want to have financial security, or do we want to just keep on buying what we want now. I think that—

I: Do we want to delay our gratification.

M: Exactly, the road less traveled. That whole thing, staying focused on the bigger picture and not just the instant gratification.

I: Not feeling better right in this moment, but what's ultimately going to make us better, put us where we want to be as a family.

M: Right because that instant gratification will eventually lead to, you know, complete bankruptcy.

I: And a room full of stuff.

M: Right.

I: That you have to pack when you move.

M: Right and having more stuff is more responsibility. Like having all those shoes there means I have to have a space for all those shoes. And keep them all in the bag. If she had three pairs of shoes it would be less to think about. So having more stuff is you know, not a great thing either, even if you get it for free.

I: Even if you get it for free. That's a good point. So the two areas I wanted to have you illuminate a little bit are the areas of struggles and the areas of strategies and we've been sort of mixing it a little bit. But is there anything else you want to say about struggles about raising your children in a culture that seems obsessed with teaching consumerism.

M: Uhm, yeah, their uh, I just think it's an everyday sort of maintenance. You know, we're in this playgroup, and a couple of people in the playgroup are really wealthy, and a couple of people are just like us, you know, not wealthy.

I: Middle class.

M: Yeah.

I: But not poor.

M: This one couple has three houses and recently they had a van pull up in front of their house and they had won this, it was a van called Arcade on Wheels. And it wasn't Christmas, it wasn't a birthday party, it was just like a day that this van shows up, well not even a van, it was this huge moving truck and so my kids get exposed to that. Then I have this other friend who lives up the block and she's really bitter about it and she's like "Gosh, what do..." And I said, well, but they have that and they're really nice people. I mean they are really nice people.

I: They're really nice people despite their parent frivolous lifestyle.

M: Yeah, and you know the reason they have three houses is because they don't want their views blocked, that's lovely I guess, to be able to have that option. The people in front of them were going to renovate and you know what, they said, we don't want to deal with your renovation, we'll just buy your house. I was like, oh my God, what an option! But that's interesting to me, that's one thing, but then, my stepmother recently passed away, she had lung disease that she didn't know she had and she went into the hospital, went right into intensive care and died about ten days later and I was able to be with her and they gave her a tracheotomy and one of her lungs was gone, and they were going to give her a lung transplant I was kind of worried about that because she had smoked her whole life, and I thought in a third world country, you don't get a second lung. You just don't. And it's like when we start to buy things and not care for the things we already have, how responsible is that, you know? And that's about being a good steward, and that's what you have to teach your kids and that's why all of those shoes in that basket bother me because she doesn't care for them if there are a billion of them, if she had three she would care for them, and they wouldn't be all over the floor. And even though these people have three houses, and whether or not to judge them or not, but if you can care for all that stuff then God bless you, but I think we all have more stuff than we can care for. Does that answer your question? I don't think so.

I: Yes. Absolutely.

M: But I think that's the struggle. All of this stuff that we have if we really appreciate it fine, but if we don't then get rid of it because someone else will. And that's back to the jewelry, someone is appreciating that jewelry that I just stuck in a box, I never wore it. And its

interesting that maybe what you stop appreciating will leave you anyhow. She didn't appreciate her body, and it ended up not being there for her.

I: Right. She abused it.

M: Right. Yeah, that's just interesting to me that we can, and even the woman up the block who complained about the rich people, she had twins and she lost one of them and she said it was a real struggle for her to continue to hold onto to Katie's life and keep pumping her with chemo and all that because she wanted have it to look like this. And she had to finally say, you know what? If this was a third world country, if we didn't have the means to do this we couldn't do this and really it comes down to is, is this really the best thing for my child. You know, do I pull him through this, or I guess that's the best question, what's the best thing for you kid, do I suffocate them with all this stuff and not have them appreciate it? Or is it, or are you going to be responsible for your choices. I think it's a balancing act every single day.

I: So that's the struggles, in the area of strategies, do you feel you protect your children, you say we participate in the media, do you ever feel, I need to protect my kids from that billboard, or that magazine being sold on the street.

M: I would like to, but I can't. When you're driving around and you have these billboards in your face, especially in Los Angeles, I'm looking forward to moving to Chicago and I know they have less billboards, but they might have even more that I find offensive, you know what I mean. And my kids will ask questions about that. So I think protection was the word that bothered me because I don't think you can protect a child from everything, they're eventually going to go out into the world and be exposed to this no matter how hard you try to protect them, it's going to seep in. So the way you protect them is to make sure they know the true value of things and to be able to question, and to know that when they're

watching TV that the commercial's job is to sell them something. It's not necessarily a good product or a bad product, what they want to do is sell it to you.

I: They want to create despondency; they want to make your life seem incomplete in some way for not having their product or service.

M: Right. And then there was this other story I think I'll share with you about my son Owen smoked a cigarette the other day and he's seventeen. And he was with us, the family in the car and I said that smells like cigarettes and he was like, I had a cigarette, and I was like OooooooHHHH!!! I can't believe it, you know you're trying to protect your kids. And he was like you know mom everyone was smoking pot and doing everything and I didn't want... and I totally get that, I totally get being in a situation where everyone's doing stuff and you feel like if you're not, I'm not doing anything, you know like, I don't drink, so when I go to a party I eat lots of chocolate, like I can have fun too! So I understand that, you know what I mean. But the kids in the back were like you're going to die, Owen, you're going to die from that cigarette, don't you know? Because they were so upset, because they've heard all this consumerism, they've heard that if you smoke you'll die and it leads to being a drug addict. And I said, no it's not true he's going to die, I said he experienced this, he made this choice to do this, but he's you know probably not going to do it again, and we talked to him, like, did you like it and he said no it was gross and we, talked about it. I think you have to really talk about without buying into any of the fears that this is going to kill you or this is going to make you fantastic. You have to keep it grounded and say here's the real truth. And that's best you can give them. If you can give them the truth from your experience.

I: You're truth.

M: Yes. If I say to them I smoked and I didn't die, and I said to Owen lookit, they are interested in getting you as a client and you will be indebted to them for the rest of your life if you take up smoking.

I: The cigarette company wants you as a client.

M: Right. And they will own you for five bucks a day. And do you want to make that agreement with them, do you want to do that? That's your choice, but that's what it is. And if we handed that over to our kids instead of, it might kill you, it leads to being a good steward. I have this much money, do I want to spend it on that? No. I don't. I don't want to be indebted to somebody.

I: Every day.

M: Every day.

I: How long did you smoke?

M: I smoked from when I was thirteen to the time I was about thirty three or thirty four. Those were the times I would consider myself a smoker and after that I was a little bit more of an occasional smoker.

I: So you have a better perspective than someone who's never smoked.

M: Right.

I: So you said something about, which leads me to the next question. Is part of the reason you're moving to Chicago is to escape the consumerism here? Ideally how would you arrange your life to support good values in your children.

M: It's not really much of the reason, well its part, when I went there, everyone was so happy and I did buy into the image of Chicago, this earthy group of people, but you know, everything's everywhere, but I was intrigued by all of that and that the areas I looked at were very family orientated. I was walking in this little town La Grange and there were these too

little girls in bikinis and helmets and they were Rosemary's age into the main part of town and I was like what are you doing? That doesn't go on. Where's your parents, you know? All kids all over the place. And I was like wow, my kids don't have that freedom in Los Angeles.

I: You don't let them out of the yard.

M: Yeah. Basically two houses up and two houses down.

I: That's it.

M: Yeah. So the idea of freedom makes it more intriguing. What was the question.

I: Ideally how would you arrange your life to support good values in your children.

M: Well Ideally if I had my way I wouldn't have a TV. But other than that, that's just me trying to control the situation, you know. It's not like their not going to watch TV somewhere. But other than that not too much because it's a day to day thing.

I: It's a day to day communication because you're hands on with your kids.

M: And if I say ideally it'll look like this, then tomorrow something will change. I know that, so its hard to set up that this is something that would work the best. We're navigating this as we go through it. And every day we figure out the what's the best choice, and sometimes we make mistakes and sometimes we hit a home run and its just trying to do the best every day. Just not getting sucked into the whole machine of commercialism and see it for what it is and participate in it when you want to and not have to have that define you.

I: You see it as a machine.

M: Yeah, I have these friends up the block that have these beautiful cars, I don't even know, they're gorgeous and I know they're not buying them, they're leasing them, and I know they don't take as good care of them if they'd bought them. And so I just think that, I don't want to buy into putting up this fake front, because that's not really important to me and not



getting sucked into the idea. IF you have a car that was built in the last five years it's probably really comfortable with electric windows, you know what I mean? But we need more. We need more. Not getting sucked into that.

I: My son was riding in my friend's car the other day and he asked what is this little round thing on the door and he pointed to the thing that rolls down the window. Because he'd never seen one. To me, the cars were manual. He didn't know what it was. He thought it was the coolest thing in the world.

M: And it's cool that we're moving forward and inventing these new things and they're not necessarily better. Ellen Degeneris does this comedy bit about the universal signal for roll down your window and because we don't have them, what do you do? Press the air.

I: So, as a parent in the two areas of values and responsibilities, how do you teach values to your children.

M: For me it's a lot from my family. I think that's probably true for everyone. My dad is this amazing person who's never had anything. He told me once he was living in this one bedroom apartment with his mother, his father died and his brother and his sister and they didn't have a bathroom and they got a kiddie pool and their would take a bath in the kitchen. And I couldn't believe it. It was like, oh my God dad, you were poor. And he was like, no I wasn't we weren't poor. But my dad has always had this really interesting perspective on what was and was wasn't. He always had this bizarre twist of defining things and I think that helped me to really get to what the meat of it is. I don't know if it's faith based or bizarre parenting that I've come through but and I think part of it is my dad's sense of humor, I think that helps me to try and do the right thing, and get them to be on the right page and give them values but never get so caught up in the drama or the addiction of it.

I: Right. Do you have a faith.

M: Yes we go to church on Sunday and we're members of a church.

I: What kind of a church is it.

M: It's North Hollywood, it's a spiritual center, it's an all inclusive church it follows the teachings of Jesus and of Buda and all walks of life . It's a lot of it has to do with personal responsibility. Using all of those stories and of people who've gone before and in terms of Christian or Catholic, I think this church takes the focus off of the crucifixion and puts it on the resurrection. That's what it teaches.

I: What about responsibilities. Do your kids do chores, do they get an allowance.

M: They don't get an allowance, but they do chores. If they want to save up for something, then what would they spend their allowance on. We were at Chucky Cheese and I thought we're breeding these gamblers. They get all these tickets and the cash them in for prizes and I'm like this is like a little Vegas, so they don't have money, when they get money from friends or they get money from grandparents or they get something, they have to put in a third of it if they want to buy something. When you want to do that we'll make the purchase together. But as far as an allowance, I don't give them an allowance for cleaning my house. I do it because it's my house and I want to take care of it. And I think you know, we had a cleaning lady when we could afford her, and I thought the way I, it comes back to if you can't take care of it, you don't really need it. If I can't take care of this house, I have too much house. That's the truth.

I: Do you have a house in Chicago already?

M: No. We're going to sell this house and rent there.

I: You're going to rent there.

M: IF everybody took care of what they had, the would be less of a need to want more.

I: There would be less envy.

M: Yeah. Also if you look at it that way, my friend who has three houses, she has to take care of all of that. She's going to spend a chunk of her life managing these houses. Is that what I want? I don't want that.

I: So your seventeen year old has no income of his own.

M: He works for my ex husband. Spins records at his club. He's the kid who doesn't need anything and never wants anything. And he always has, it's hard with him because I share him with my ex-husband and they do things at his house that I don't do at my house.

I: Oh, like what.

M: He'll give him money. So he always has money on him. So, I can't raise other peoples kids. You can't get into other people's house and tell them how to raise their kids.

I: So that's a balancing act.

M: Yeah.

I: So if you could give advice to other parents about raising kids with values in a consumer culture, what would it be?

M: Don't get sucked in. Also, if you don't want to do that, that's a choice, you know some people really love going to the mall and shopping and all and having the next best thing and that brings them joy, then whatever. But if you really don't want to do that, then don't go to those places. If you're an alcoholic, don't hang out in bars.

I: You could, you just make your life more miserable.

M: I remember when I used to walk through the mall, if I ever went there, I would feel those distractions and I would say, 'the lord is my shepherd I shall not want. And it really helps you to know I don't need any of this, I have more than I need.

I: It's the possessing of it. It's the abstraction of the object.

M: Yeah. It's a really interesting study you're doing. I can't wait to read it.

I: I'll make you a copy.

Transcript 3: September, 2008, interviewed in person in Laguna Beach, CA

I: Okay, we are here on Sept. 13<sup>th</sup> with E.S.

E: Hello.

I: Thank you so much for taking the time today.

E: My pleasure.

I: Can you give us a little background on your life.

E: Well, I'm about to be 49 years old at the end of September, and I was brought up in a two parent family, my parents are getting ready to celebrate their 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. I'm the oldest of six kids, five girls and one boy and grew up in suburbs of Maryland and then went to elementary school, high school, I didn't attend college and I started working right away for a hospital in Maryland, I in roughly 1986 I made a temporary move up to New Jersey and lived there for approx. 2 and 1/2 years and then I met a wonderful person and the next thing I knew I found myself in California I left the East coast on my 30<sup>th</sup> birthday and drove across the country and landed in Irvine California where I've been ever since. I am now married but I have been single up to 11 months ago when I married a man I have known for approximately 17 years and in the meantime I had a daughter in 1994 in November of 1994 her name is Amy she is now 14 years old , she is in ninth grade, her first year of high school

and my child has been blessed and gifted with the ability to sing beautifully and she now attends the Orange County High School of the Arts in the music and theatre company. My step daughter J is 19 and she is my husband J's daughter. She is in her second year of college. She attends community college. She is a little unfocused as to what she wants to do so she's getting some of her courses out of the way and she lives with her mother but she will be living in the house with J.

I: So you were a single mom for...

E: twelve years. Ever since Amy was born.

I: So how would you describe the way that you raised your daughter.

E: First and foremost I would have to say with the idea and the objective that my number one purpose in her life is to teach her about God and to teach her about heaven and with that I've watched her very carefully, watched for her accountability whenever that might have been, I was very aware of that but I've talked to her about God ministered to her about God in heaven and her relationship with Christ ever since she was born. So that was the most important thing.

I: Do you think you've been impacted by the consumer culture?

E: Absolutely. There's no avoiding the consumer culture. You limit. You limit your children's exposure as much as you possible can which is easy when they are small. You have control over that when they're small but I remember when Amy was in second grade she asked me if we had any salad dressing without fat in it and wasn't fattening and you could have knocked me over with a feather because we never talked about that kind of thing. We talked about, we exercise for health, we didn't have sugar free ice cream in the house, we didn't have any of that artificial stuff in the house, but they're out there in the culture in school with other children whose mothers and older sisters diet dress a certain way, sing

certain songs, watch certain TV programs and I know for the longest time it really worked and I remember telling Amy when she was really little telling her 'you are not going to be able to do things that other children are going to be allowed to do and basically, get used to it.'

I: When, what age was she when you said that?

E: Oh my goodness, she was probably three years old when it first came up.

I: And then you constantly reinforced it.

E: Yeah, yeah, when the kids wanted to go watch something on television and I wouldn't let Amy watch it. It's just a constant kind of, and then something would come up about a group of kids going to the mall, well you know what honey, sorry, or watching a movie or TV show. You know they come up all the time. And so I really think one of the things I've thought about mostly is that how I've had to shift the focus of my parenting with Amy from the mode of protecting her and filtering for her what is allowed to come into her life, shift from that what she has to deal with coming into her life. And it's kind of like I realized when she was three years old and going and sitting in the corner for a time out, she didn't care. She could care less to go sit in a corner for three minutes. So I had to shift and adjust to find what it was that would impact her at that point, so it's constantly, it is so fluid, modifying, it's very very fluid and I think that people get themselves into huge trouble when they are absolutely cast in stone. I think you get yourself in huge trouble. There's that balance in there, I'm in that balance now of, okay is this garden variety teenage angst, or is this something else I need to pay attention to. Amy's father is diagnosed bi-polar disorder and so I've always been a little bit more sensitive to that, but you know I'm not her friend and if she's mad at me, then she's mad at me, you know?

I: Right. Exactly.

E: But I really don't care that much about pleasing her. If she'd happy on top of being responsible, being a contributing member of society, and having a relationship with God, if she'd happy on top of that, then I'm ecstatic, but it's really very fluid right now.

I: You said it shifted from when she was young from protecting her and filtering everything that came in, and now you're trying to equip her. So do you still feel a need to protect her from the culture in some way? Or do you feel your job is to equip her to make good choices in the culture.

E: Well I guess to answer that, part of it is I guess I still want to protect her, I want to throw those blinders on her, I want to do that. I still try sometimes. Flip that station, don't look at that ad, turn that music off, but the thing is it is long term. I can make her turn it off when we're in the car, but I want her to turn it off because she finds it offensive later. So it shifts from me dropping the hammer saying turn off the damn radio to saying okay let's listen to this and you tell me what you think he is saying, what is he saying about women in here, what does this tell you. And I don't always do that perfectly. Some of these things are so offensive they hit your sensibilities and you're like I can't believe I'm seeing this.

I: What kind of things.

E: Oh god, there was something on, once she was trying to convince me that radio Disney was okay to listen to and I have a problem with Disneyland anyway, you know these mega, you know if they just made a nice movie and they didn't sell shoelaces and frickin' thermoses and you know everything that'd be fine. And I always said my kids not a billboard. She never wore stuff with designer stuff on it. You know, my kid's not a billboard. She's not wearing it. So she's trying to convince me that radio Disney is okay and we're driving along, well first of all, I hear a diet commercial, a diet product on radio Disney and I'm like, are you kidding me? What is this? And then, so that was like in the afternoon when parents are

picking their kids up from school. Then we're driving home from church it was a Wednesday night and we're driving home and she's trying to convince me again and she puts it on and there's a song on about how your boyfriend is going to come to me now because he likes my bright red lips and my soft swivelly hips. Okay so this is on at 8:30 at night on radio Disney and I'm like are you kidding me? So that was a couple of years ago, but the songs on radio Disney, parents are being so deceived if they let their children listen to radio Disney with the exception of 9 to 10 in the morning when they play the little mermaid soundtrack.

I: You like the little mermaid?

E: Well not necessarily, I don't think any of Disney is okay. They hate mothers at Disney.

I: The mother is usually wiped out in the first five minutes.

E: Yeah, yeah, or they're gone. Like Mulan had a mother, right, but I never saw his mother. But along those lines the ipidy my of parenting in two households, the rules at her father's house were so inconsistent but so, she could eat whatever she wanted, for instance, she called me once and told me that she was eating Lucky Charms and sausage for breakfast once which is just, okay there are some things that are better that I don't know, okay, but then her father was such a despot that, he was so tyrannical that she was scared of him, so my job was just keeping an even keel, you know when coping with the emotional aspect of having to go back and forth. But I had to clean up constantly what was happening to her when she was with her father, for instance, she came home one time and saw her father having sex with his girlfriend and she asked a question like that.

I: What age?

E: She was probably close to 4 and she wanted to know why Lindsey was sitting on daddy's lap without any clothes on. And that's all I could figure, without any pajamas was what she



said. And I learned my lesson I just couldn't send her back and say, you know honey, you need to talk to your dad about that. Because he would just deny it, so then I had to do my best to explain things like that.

I: Did you have situations when your rules about what she could listen to, about what she could eat, obviously what she could eat completely thrown out, but what about what she could listen to, what she could watch, what she could get, did she get things from her father.

E: Absolutely.

I: Things that were not okay for you.

E: Yeah there were no rules regarding television, my kid saw Ransom, my kid saw Scream, and saw every Disney movie that there was. So there was absolutely no, my kid saw Halloween. So her father, it was almost as if he would go intentionally the complete opposite of what he knew I wanted. But on the other hand his philosophy was, you know, the sooner she knows what's real and what's not real, and trying to balance that, so it was really, really, I couldn't argue. There was no making a case with him. I could have presented my case, but you can't argue logic with someone who is illogical. You cannot use logic. So yeah, she saw a lot of stuff that I would have preferred she would have never seen. He would come home and hand me a designer edition Barbie and he would say, don't let her play with this. I was like, well then don't give it to me. Don't give me something she can't play with. The thing with Barbies is you can dress them up to be whatever you want. They are naked in the bathtub within five minutes of getting them. Their naked in the bathtub and the next day they have their hair cut. So you know, don't give me anything she can't play with. But she got, anything you can think of that's commercial, she got. She got Barney Stuff, Teletubbies. She was getting anything at all. You couldn't have found anything more opposite than what I wanted her to be.

I: Now did you ever feel pressure to conform to the consumer culture in any way, or did you feel you had to dig in your heels even more because he would go to the opposite extremes.

E: Oh yeah, you know, when she was younger, I didn't really care. I didn't feel the need to stick to my guns. My conviction was what my conviction was.

I: You were picking your battles.

E: Yeah, exactly. I would rather, my energy would go into being with her and giving her other things. But people would say this must be really confusing for her. My answer at that time and Amy was about four, was, you know, I think she's really clear. I think she's really clear. I know she's clear about what is expected of her. But as far as the culture stuff goes, I feel more pressure now than I did when she was little. It's like I didn't allow that pressure to come in. I mean that was the least of my problems, what my kid was wearing, what she was listening to. Now I feel more of the pressure in, I tell you, my kid loves to shop. And I hate it. I hate clothes shopping. She loves to shop. She will spend hours in her room putting outfits together and really she doesn't care about the label stuff, but it's there. It's there. She got a very special present, very special, it was a graduation present. Tiny little Dunny and Bork Cell Phone case, all right. But you know, I don't have a Coach bag. My kid's not carrying a coach bag. I'm not carrying a Louis Vuitton purse, my kid's not carrying one. It wouldn't happen anyway okay. We can afford things now that are different than it used to be.

I: Isn't it also interesting the different perspective of being able to say, we can't afford this right now. And now you're choosing not to afford it. You can afford it, but you have to tell her you are choosing not to afford it.

E: I want to go back. Sometimes I want to go back in that respect.

I: Really? Talk a little bit more about that.

E: Sometimes I want to go back in that respect. Well it's kind of you know, a coward's way out to not have that option. Not that our lives are complicated, but my response to things was just so much simpler. It just wasn't possible and—

I: It was dictated by your circumstances.

E: Absolutely, absolutely, there were times when it really did break my heart. I remember on Amy's first birthday I could not buy all the ingredients for her birthday cake on one trip. And I remember going shopping and thinking I do not have enough money to buy the eggs, the cake mix and the frosting on this trip, and I remember thinking, that's it, I'm going back to work. I can't do this. I can't do this. And then, you know, and to this day and I have to give God the glory, my life just did not work on paper. It did not work on paper and I had faithful friends and God just blessed my desire to be home with her. But I had those moments of wanting to go back to work and but now to get

I: You always worked, you just didn't go to an office every day.

E: You're right. I took her with me. I cleaned houses for seven years, I nannied, I did all of that so that she didn't have to go to day care. I can't imagine doing that now. Oh God, I just think there's no way. I remember my dear friend would give me things to do, like put labels on post cards and she would pay me for that and how much that helped for whatever that need was. I had such faithful friends that blessed me. But I kind of just the coward's way is to go back and not have to deal with the social aspect of it. I don't want to raise a little snotty assed label conscious member of society. Now J if you want to hear about that, is the complete opposite of Amy. Not only do they two look completely different, but J was raised, she's never heard the word no from anyone before me in her life and she still cries and stomps when she doesn't get her way.

I: And she's—

E: Yeah she's almost twenty. And so she's the one who had the five hundred dollar Coach wallets and anything she wanted and it was her mom and her grandparents who would buy these things for her. John is very very conservative. He does not understand why you would spend any more than \$6.99 for a t-shirt. He is a very humble man, a modest guy. His parents were great stewards of their money and John as proved to be the same way too, but she's really stuck in the whole label thing and she's the only granddaughter and she gets really indulged by her grandparents.

I: And what about the mother.

E: yeah the same thing too. M has turned out, I've known M, not as long as I've known John, M after her midlife crisis after she got the boobs and the affair and the studs all these things, she's been married about ten years now. She is in many respects a good mother. I see her try with J.

I: But you feel you have to reverse the effects of her earlier years and her sort of training.

E: You know, if J were living with us, or if J were younger, I would feel more, I would have to for both of our sanities we'd have to come to some kind of agreement on this because there would be no way the four of us could co-exist under the same house hold. Now and this isn't really my responsibility so I have to compartmentalize this, I feel so bad for her. I mean I feel really really bad for her.

I: She's been done a disservice by her parents not saying "no" to her.

E: She really has, she has absolutely has, and now, the only thing I say to John now is, J is his only family. His mom died, his sister was killed by a drunk driver, his dad is in an Alzheimer facility, J is it. Now, yes he has me and Amy. But it was just John and J. I mean, that's his daughter. I get it. Okay, on the other hand I will tell him how much longer are you going to stand in the way of her becoming a adult.

I: Because he doesn't give her enough responsibility.

E: No, she doesn't have any.

I: She doesn't take responsibility for herself. He takes responsibility for her.

E: The biggest thing is the manipulation, the second anyone says anything to her, she breaks into tears and that makes me, that scares me for her for her future. You can't function in this world by crying. Not everybody is going to do that. So to answer your question, I really don't feel responsible in that sense of doing this but a personal responsibility is that I won't buy into that. I tell her you need to stop that because I can't understand you when you're hysterical. Go ahead.

I: which is the same thing you would to say to your daughter except you said it when your daughter was two and J is twenty.

E: Absolutely. And in John's defense, he treats Amy the same way he treats J and I tell him, if you ever let Amy do that I will brain you after I'm dead and gone if you ever let her do that I will kill. Just know I will come back from the grave and haunt you, come back from Heaven and haunt you if you ever do that.

I: Give them too much leeway.

E: Yeah because Amy's already talking about going to school in Columbia, or going to school in New York because they've got these great music programs there. And I used to say that on her eighteenth birthday we were going to jump out of a plane together and she was going to be getting ready to go to school, preferably on the East Coast. And I'd start dating then if anyone would have me. And as much as I want to tell him, don't you dare, what are you thinking, you know? My gosh, my kid wants to go to college in New York because she loves to sing and she wants to go to Julliard and I'm going, I've don't something right, my kid wants to leave me.

I: Exactly. Okay so we've covered the questions as far as struggles with raising your children with values and responsibilities. Do you have anything else you want to say with that. It seems that in some ways your faith has determined some of the ways you're dealing with the cultural influences.

E: Absolutely.

I: Is there anything else you want to talk about with struggles.

E: Oh you know, it's you know, you struggle, things struggle, you do things all the time. Talk about being fluid, your kids are constantly changing I just think if you're too rigid you're going to be in trouble. That's just a recipe for disaster. You know we were talking about food, you've got to let them go a little bit. I've never been a parent that will follow my kid around to make sure she doesn't fail. Now she's older. If she doesn't get that report done in time, this is her bed time. She's had the report this long, its due tomorrow, you know what, I'm really sorry. She did it once. Where by virtue of turning that report in a day late she got a d on it. My kid has never gotten a d on anything in her life and she did it once and she knew I was serious and I said I've been to school, okay, I've done this Amy. This is for you. And I see her making mistakes all the time.

I: let her make mistakes.

E: If it's something new, we'll talk about it a little bit. But if it's something that she's done before, let her do it. I won't let her fall off the side of a mountain, but it's okay. I'm not afraid of her being hurt.

I: So no, let's talk about strategies. You've alluded to this in some of your comments. How do you deal with protecting your children from cultural seepage. You have certain rules in your home, but then there would be other rules in her father's home, so how did you deal with that.

E: You do what you can, you control what you can in your own environment. I left the door open, you know, Amy could talk to me about anything and I tried her whole life to answer her as honestly as possible for whatever age she was. Does the medicine taste plucky? Yeah the medicine tastes horrible. And I started building on that foundation from when she was very little.

I: Trust.

E: Trust. She when she became older, she figured I would tell her the truth about medicine being bad when she was really little, she would trust me on things as she got older, the bigger things that matter. You know I've told her Amy, pot probably won't kill you. It's illegal and it kills your brain cells, don't do it. You know. Because she asked me one time about the comparison between pot and crack or something. And I said, you know, this is it, but it's illegal so don't do it. I told J she couldn't drink champagne in our house. I thought she was going to lose it. But she's not 21. I have Amy to watch these things. So you control what you can in your immediate environment, you know, Amy doesn't watch Britney Spears, she doesn't listen to those kinds of things, that doesn't happen. She sees it otherwise and the doors open if she has any questions about it. I'll ask her, what did you think of the concert. Oh it was good, and I say, oh you sound a little hesitant and she'll say oh she was really gross when she was dancing and touching herself and you know, because her dad took her to a Britney Spears concert when she was nine. You know, at least too if she ends up going that way, somebody else exposed her to it. But yeah, you have to, there's no way, I remember when she read the word abortion on a billboard. Mama, what's abortion? So you know driving down the freeway you see the women hanging out their tops advertising the casino, so you do what you can and you volley, you volley, catch the balls and bounce them back.

You can never be prepared for what they ask you. She asked me once what the difference was between making love and sex.

I: What age?

E: She was probably in, oh she was in fifth grade. She was in fifth grade. And I thought teachable moment, God is here. All animals have sex, Amy, God created humans and created love to be between married humans, married committed humans, and she goes yeah, married committed, I get it mom. And then I'm thinking I have this teachable moment and I think she gets it and then she goes, what's humping, and I'm like What? And all I have to do is go Jeffrey. And Jeffrey was the youngest of seven boys and he was in her class and anything she ever heard that was gross, boy street talk came from Jeffrey and I said it's a gross name for sex, don't use it. That was the end of it.

I: Ideally how would you arrange your life to support good values.

E: I know you don't want for the ridiculous situation, but the ridiculous situation would be to have really high walls around my home and they would deliver food water and gas and we'd have bible verses pumped in all day long, but ideally I would arrange my life that and I even thought about it a little bit. I really would prefer that Amy would not have to be with her dad anymore. At this point he has so little influence over her, she's shut him out so much, but I just wish she wouldn't have that stress in her life. But the hierarchy would always be God first, family, School, community serving in that way. I don't really know how to answer that, I mean I would like to say never see a bad television. I can't stand the noise of television, you but that kind of falls under the category of if I could change the world so I probably didn't give a very good answer.



I: No it was a very good answer. Now do you teach values to your children, is that something that you teach. Do you have some kind of curriculum, do you rely on what your faith teaches, church or how?

E: Yes. When Amy was very little we did devotions every day. And we would do them in the morning and at night revisit what we did and think about what would happen the next day, and I just think that being in God's word is going to give you the values you seek and things come up all the time. I know that maybe a cop out sometimes, but my teaching days are getting dwindling down here. I don't think there's anything except with the dating which hasn't really come up yet. I mean we've hit on most everything. It does all filter down to, okay Amy where does this fall with what God would say. She asks me about wearing a two piece, you notice she has one on. I gave into that and I did it for a couple of reasons, you know she said Mom when I'm eighteen and I live on my own can I wear a string bikini. And I said, well, that's the stuff you take to God and pray. If you think God says it's okay to wear a string bikini then go ahead and wear a string bikini and she goes God would never say that, and I go, well that's true. And there's the rub, when you know what God would say about something, that's being obedient. We all know what God, people with a relationship with God know what he would say about something, and that's being obedient to God.

I: what type of church do you and your family attend.

E: Non denominational Christian Church.

I: So values are determined by your faith. What about the responsibility issue.

E: Are you talking about personal responsibility?

I: Personal responsibility. Family responsibilities, chores, the kind of things involved in being a member of the family.

E: Okay, well that's just it, she's a member of the family and there are things that come with that. She's supposed to keep her room clean, she's supposed to keep her bathroom tidy and picked up. I don't fuss about her room that much, she's a teenager. She keeps the door closed, I'm good. She's not supposed to eat and leave food and stuff back there. She knows she has a stack of water bottles. You know what, that's not going to hurt anything. So that's a definite part of responsibility.

I: Does she have privacy.

E: Absolutely. When she's getting dressed. Her room? That's not her room, it's my room. If there were a reason for me to be worried that there was anything going on with her, I would have no qualms about going in her room and now qualms about reading anything private. I'm still responsible for her and as that, that responsibility, no if I'm suspicious. And I'd do it with her standing in the doorway. I wouldn't do it behind her back. So she has privacy of her own room. I knock before I go in.

I: Does she have a television in her room?

E: No. Well she has a little one that you can watch a DVD on it or something. And that is very poorly hooked up.

I: Does she have an allowance.

E: Yes.

I: And how long have you been doing that?

E: For a number of years. Probably five years or so.

I: So eight or nine.

E: Nine or ten

I: Was that linked to chores?

E: NO never. Because she's supposed to do those things. She's not supposed to leave her dishes in the sink. She's not supposed to do those things. But she has so little, she is so busy now, especially now, her conservatory goes to five o'clock at night and so she's busy, that on the weekends and stuff, she has no problem with doing her laundry or our laundry. I think it's a little creepy for her to be washing John's underwear so John doesn't do any laundry, so once I was like fold this stuff and John's underwear was in there and she was like "Oh! I'm not touching that." I hadn't thought about that. It's a little bit creepy. So it's never been linked to that. And she has always had to tithe from her allowance and save from her allowance.

I: So she tithes from her allowance and she saves from her allowance and that is non-negotiable.

E: Yes.

I: And she has spending money.

E: And then at the end of the year above what she's supposed to have saved. She supposed to save \$70.00 a month.

I: Wow.

E: But there are things that are supposed to come out of that. That I would normally have paid. She tithes and ten percent savings and out of that she pays for her snacks at school she pays for her movies she pays if she wants to get lipstick and stuff. This was very fluid too as we banged out what it was she was going to pay for and be responsible for, and her entertainment. I wanted to give her the responsibility to allow, to decide if she would buy this, or go to the movies.

I: It started at about nine or ten.

E: Yeah, and it wasn't quite, we didn't have the savings thing hooked up. So now, anything over \$70.00 per year that she has in her bank, we'll match that. So it's an incentive for her to save and for her to be conscious. It has to be consistent. She can't just dump it in there at the end of the year. It has to be consistently done. Well that's not fair, when do you say when it should go in, because I'm the mama, that's why, that's the rule.

I: So if you could give advice, to other parents about raising kids with values in a consumer culture, what would it be.

E: Never let your guard down, because it's everywhere. Never let your guard down and, how can you say, define what your boundaries are, you personally, not as a parent, what are your boundaries for what you find acceptable and along with defining those, you have to be flexible as your child grows. I can say this is offensive to me. Let's say rock music is offensive to me. Period end of story. And then you have a kid growing up and likes the sound and likes to dance and what are you going to do. I think you personally have to define where your values are and then pass it on to your kid, beat it into them when they're young, because the time will come when they just tune you out. You have to do the groundwork because by the time they get into their ten twelve and that, it's not that it's too late, but your kid will resent you more and you have to lay the groundwork for it and that's when it's relentless. That's when you are relentless in instilling the value in your kids when their young.

I: Zero to ten.

E: Well before school. 0 to 6. You have so much control then you have to grab that. Every moment is a teachable moment at that age. Grab every opportunity. Laying and shoring up that foundation and then, it's not going to stop, but that's got to start. That's what I think. You gotta start then. And then you see the fruit later when you're kid gets older and you

realize they were listening. I remember she once looked up at me and said, but Mom everybody's doing it and I said I'm sorry honey I haven't seen it, I don't know what it's about, but you can come with me and the big people in the other room and she had tears in her eyes as she said, okay mom. Because I wouldn't let her go and watch this movie at this party we attended. And she ended up coming with me and was lighting the candles and having a great time but she listened. I'm hoping when she makes her choices, she'll remember those little things. And it will be in there . And she will make the choice.

I: So the answer to mom everybody's doing it was but you still can't because our family is different.

E: right.

I: Anything else you'd like to say?

E: Just pray for your kids. Just pray for yourself. You have to forgive yourself. It is a humbling beautiful experience to ask your child for forgiveness. Forgive yourself for the hundreds of times a day you blow it. You know you blow it all the time.

I: anything else.

E: I don't think so.

Transcript four: September, 2009, interviewed in person, Studio City, CA

I: Okay we have Caryn here. Can you tell us a little bit about your background and the age of your children.

K: My children are 10 and 8. Two boys. I have an education background and I teach parent education now.

I: And you were raised on the East Coast.

K: Yes. And in San Diego county.

I: And your husband is...

K: Tim Panec.

I: And you've been married for...

K: Fourteen years.

I: Great. So let's get started. How would you describe the way you raise your children.

K: I just thought of a good answer last night. It seems sort of haphazardly, uhm, throw it against the wall and see what sticks. We try non-violently. And so far successfully. We try to raise our kids with values. We want our kids to be good human beings.

I: A good human being.

K: That's our number one goal.

I: Okay.

K: As they say in Yiddish, a Menche.

I: A what?

K: A Menche.

I: So your faith dictates some of the way you raise your children?

K: Yes, and for my husband.

I: Because you're different faiths.

K: I have one. I'm Jewish. I just think the values of Judaism are what I want to impart to my kids and they are similar to what other faiths have, its what I want my kids to have, as far as treating other people. Treating the world. Being good citizens, being good family members.

I: Do you feel you've been impacted by the consumer culture?

K: Yes, absolutely. I don't think you can avoid it. You know I have a sort of anti-corporate mentality and yet I catch myself, you know, shopping for things I don't need, or flipping through the catalog and thinking, umm, Pottery Barn has some things I need. Even though we try to keep it at bay, yes, we're impacted.

I: Kind of being her in Los Angeles, you're at the center of it all.

K: Yeah, people fashionably dressed and driving fashionable cars.

I: Your husband works for Disney.

K: Yes.

I: So your trying to protect your kids and yet your husband works for a company that defines the culture in some ways.

K: Indeed and helps to create some of that culture and pays our bills. And so I think that one way our kids become impacted is they want to see what Dad is working on. So they get to see that stuff.

I: What is that?

K: He works on massively multi-player online games. Like Toon Town, a new Fairy game, the kids are interested in playing the games but they are interested because he works on them and uh, the negative one has been Pirates of the Caribbean that is really not appropriate for our kids and they still want to see what it's like. So we've had to sort of say, here's what it's like, you can play when you're older.

I: You can play when you're older, that's great. What are the things that you struggle with. When you live in this consumer culture you see the people who are dressed well, the cars they are driving, you fantasize about Pottery Barn, are you children impacted by it as well?

K: I don't think its that much. I don't think they're into that stuff. We don't watch TV. That kind of takes a whole lot of it out.

I: So you're chosen for your family not to watch TV

K: It's not that we don't watch any, but we watch very little. The Olympics. A couple of football games through the year. So I think that takes a lot of the consumerism out for the kids, because I think they advertise to the kids about what they want.

I: What about at school.

K: I don't think either one of them are impacted at school very much. They're just not that personality type.

I: So it's a personality type.

K: Right.

I: Because they're non-conformists.



K: Right. Yeah. They're not interested in conforming. They're not interested in non-conforming, they're just not, because of their personality, interested in conforming, or not aware.

I: Their personality was formed by the way that you parented them.

K: Maybe, a little bit, but I think its also who they are. They're boys too. But you're right, there are some things that they know their friends have and they'll want it.

I: Are they shoes, clothes, toys, video games.

K: Video games. You know their friends have Wii at home that they play at their friends house, and hand held video games and they really don't seem to want it.

I: They don't seem to want it.

K: No.

I: So you've done something right. So do you feel a need to protect your children from the culture?

K: I think I do. Which is why we really don't watch TV.

I: So you feel that you need to protect yourself from the culture so you say, no television, no certain things that you don't allow in your house.

K: Yes, but we don't make hard and fast rules about it. Also we want our kids to feel like there's flexibility. You are in this culture. And I may see and know it in particular, I tend to be extremist in my views and I try to temper that and I'm actually worried that I'm not letting them enough in it. Because I don't want them to be so outside, I want them to feel like they know what's going on in the world.

I: So you think your extremist.

K: I think in my personality, I have to work at tempering it. Is that the right word? Work at buffering.

I: So you think I have radical ideas about how to raise my children but I still have to live in the world.

K: Exactly. I just had Noah's boy scout troop over and I don't have a kid friendly snack here other than what my kids would think is a cool snack. I know there is popular culture, but I feel so out of it, I think I should probably get into it a little bit.

I: So what would be a snack that should be in your house.

K: Some kind of brand name chip. You know? I think that's what kids want. You know I serve fruit, or crackers or something, you know I think that I have to find out what the commercials are so I can figure out what kids would think is a decent snack. Because they kind of look shifty eyed at my snack.

I: So in that case you felt pressure to conform to culture.

K: And I think I remember feeling embarrassed by my mom's healthy food.

I: Oh so you mom had this... Talk more about that.

K: Well my mom in the 1970s was in a health food craze and we had extremely healthy food. Friends would come over for food and she'd make whole wheat spaghetti and I wanted to, I remember being embarrassed by some of it, so I want to give my kids the healthy food, but I want them to think its okay to give them what they like when their friends come over too.

I: Okay. What about when they go over to a friend's house.

K: They can eat whatever they want.

I: Whatever they want. And they can do whatever they want at their friend's house?

K: Have them do whatever they want is a whole other question.

I: Okay.

K: We kind of choose who they spend time with.

I: You pick your kids friends.

K: No. They choose their friends, but we can decide if they can go there for a playdate.

I: So you can encourage them.

K: Right. I invite the friends I'm not comfortable with, if I don't know another family well enough, I'll just invite them to our house. Or if I feel the family is maybe too busy to keep an eye on things, I'll just invite the friend over here more.

I: Oh, I see.

K: That's certainly come up.

I: Okay.

K: To friends we think are great, normally we'd be happy to have them over there. If I think there's too much going on and they're not being watched, then I want them to come here. I invite them over.

I: Now you're a parent educator, that means you teach parents how to parent. Do you hear from the people in your class, do you hear about these issues?

K: Absolutely. It comes up all the time. And we do a lesson about the media. Dealing with the media.

I: Talk about that.

K: We talk about how help your kids manage internet if that comes up even though they're younger than that age. Most of the parents have older kids and they ask me about these issues, and we talk about how to limit TV. Like how to make limits at your home, how to be the boss and how to make decisions, the appropriate movies for developmental ages, appropriate movies for developmental stages.

I: Depending on their age.

K: Depending on their age.

I: And the people who come to your class feel that they struggle with these issues as well.

K: Yes. Some struggle less. Some have said, I feel like I'm learning from TV, I feel it's a good thing, and I don't want to limit it. I generally find that that's ESL students, students that are learning English themselves, I think they think their kids are learning a lot from watching TV, like learning the language, and they probably are. So I talk about just keeping to, like PBS, or video tape them, watch them without commercials. We talk about the dangers about advertising to kids, not really dangers but the adverse effects.

I: So, what are those?

K: So, children don't, at young ages, don't really differentiate between biased information and unbiased information, so they can't tell the difference at age 4 between someone who's trying to sell you something and someone giving you information for your best interest. And they assume everyone's giving them information for their best interest because they're only experience is living at home. Where their parents are doing things in their best interest. And it takes much higher level thinking, where you can differentiate, and it takes talking to your kids. You have to watch some advertising with your kids and talk about it.

I: So you think that watching advertising with your kids and talking about it will help them to understand that it is biased.

K: At a later age.

I: How old?

K: I'd say it's a good time to have a conversation between five and eight.

I: Okay.

K: So from eight, they're going to start to understand. Prior to eight you need to start giving them some of your ideas, but I would still limit advertising. At least through age eight, and then I think it's okay to decide. We haven't gotten into it too much.

I: Into it too much?

K: We haven't watched much TV. And the issue is when you watch a lot. But during the Olympics for example there was a lot of advertising and it's a good time to say 'Oh McDonald's sure put a lot of money into the Olympics to get their name in there.

I: When you're paying for that burger or that happy meal, you're paying for this...

K: Right. It's interesting how their presenting their images with athletics, where that's not really what their goal is. Their goal is to sell you lots of meat.

I: So back to the meat thing in the area of food, for your family. You said that sometimes when friends came over when you were young, you were embarrassed by what your mother served and your thinking that your raising your children in a similar way but when friends come over, you want to be able to be more open.

K: Yeah. I let that get me into trouble too. I let them buy the mac & cheese boxes for a play date coming over, then the friend keeps asking for mac & cheese and I don't have any in the house. I'd have to make a special trip.

I: What do you kids think.

K: Well in the beginning its cool but their going to find out.

I: What do you feed your children?

K: I don't know, whatever we eat. Fruits, vegetables, little beef. They eat what we eat. Not without complaint.

I: If they're going to eat, they'll eat what you prepare for them. Are you able to recall a situation where you feel pressure to perform.

K: Well that would be a situation. I don't really give into pressure that easily. Our play group when they were younger liked to meet at Chucky Cheese and I was just having no part of it, but I did feel pressure I felt some pressure, not that they were giving me pressure, but I

wanted them to see their friends, but I don't want to go there. I don't want to start going there, I don't want them to ask me to go there, I'm just gonna pass.

I: What is it about Chucky Cheese?

K: IT's just noisy, unpleasant, bad food, video games, kind of, doesn't seem like a very enjoyable place. For me, or a good place for my kids.

I: What would be a good place for your kids?

K: Park. Bowling. Hike. Miniature golf. There are plenty of nice activities to do.

I: So the television hardly ever comes on in the house. What about movies?

K: Yeah, we rent. Or we take movies from NetFix. There is some negotiation. Like Noah has a PG 13 movie he wants to see, and we'll think about it, but don't expect much before 13. That's the 13 part of pg 13. But we'll think about it. They definitely want to watch movies. Actually Toby doesn't, Noah does.

I: Your younger son.

K: My older one is into movies, my younger one isn't at all.

I: What's he into?

K: Music. He's really into music. And he wanted an ipod. And it just doesn't happen. He doesn't really need one of these.

I: So at 8 he would be on the computer and downloading music.

K: He already does that. No he doesn't download. He's not allowed to download yet. But he uses, he has a music program on the computer and can access any of our music. He makes playlists. I don't want him plugged into himself. He's not responsible enough for a \$300 piece of equipment. I wish he was, but he's no.

I: So the two areas are the struggles raising your children, then there are strategies, the things that you do. So in the areas of struggles, anything else you want to share about your struggles?

K: No, well maybe. Well he was into Reggae music, nothing that was inappropriate, but then he wanted to find out about more Reggae music. So I had to do some searching and some of it is completely inappropriate, the messages conflict with our values. So at this point I'm just going to hold it off for him. But some of it was just mildly so, and I would talk to him about it.

I: In what way?

K: One of them had just a word that wasn't appropriate.

I: About drugs?

K: No. In fact it was very nice message to the song, but it had an inappropriate word.

I: Oh.

K: So we talked about well, sometimes people do what you are not going to and you know it's a decision people make that has an impact on people, and maybe the artist is using it to make an impact, but that's not an impact the child will make. No, we're not going to let him hear music about drugs or, no, sexual content, or things like that.

I: sound to me like you are extremely vigilant.

K: Maybe.

I: You don't think you're vigilant.

K: I think I'm naturally vigilant.

I: Naturally vigilant. Temper that vigilance.

K: I have to be reasonable. Maybe it's a chance to talk to them. Instead of just prohibiting things.

I: So anything else you want to talk about struggles.

K: I guess I have some concern that they're so far out of popular culture that there are areas they can't socialize about.

I: Oh.

K: And Noah is kind of shy. It might be helpful if he knew the shows and could chat with the other kids about them, but I think that's outweighed by messages in the shows.

I: So you have to balance what you're willing for him to watch and sort of the social needs he has in his class or with his friends because they're going to talk about those things.

I: So he reads a lot.

K: Yes.

I: And he's into mysteries.

K: Yes. Very interested.

I: So if we want to switch over to the strategies, it sounds like you've already answered the question as to how you deal with cultural seepage, you try to create a hedge of protection around your household that you allow or don't allow certain things in your house. And yours is pretty hard and fast. There are certain things you're willing to do and others, you try to use it as a bargaining opportunity for the kids. Can you talk a little bit more about that?

K: I wouldn't say I'm hard and fast about it, I think that we consider what we bring into our house because it's our home we want it to be the way we want it to be, so we consider and occasionally we make mistakes and say, 'oh that was a mistake' we're not going to do this anymore. An example would be Pirates of the Caribbean. It was totally inappropriate. And you know we had to revise that and say you're talking about things that are not really appropriate, you're spending a lot of time thinking about killing zombies, whatever it is on there and that's not good, so we're going to hold it off.



I: So that happened after.

K: Sometimes after, but usually we think about things before they come in.

I: And then you went back and said, oh that was a mistake, you're spending too much time thinking about this.

K: Yes. You're spending too much time talking about this. Drawing about this. It's clearly becoming an

I: An obsession

K: Not an obsession, its just like the wrong kind of stuff. It's not what my nine year old needs to be thinking about.

I: Zombies!

K: Yeah.

I: I understand. So how do you arrange your life to support good values in your children.

K: The TV's isn't on. That's the biggest thing. And I think we spend more time with people who are in within the zone of our values, which I do more proactively, to do things with the family that we think are good for the family and that fills up your time. And it leaves less of a void to be filled by negative things.

I: Idle hands and idle minds.

K: Right.

I: That makes sense. So when you talk about teaching them values, is it actually like, do you have your own personal values curriculum you use,?

K: I don't think it's that organized.

I: Okay and your faith plays some role, but it doesn't dictate it.

K: Right. Now that he's taking religious education and he's starting to form his own version of Jewish values.

I: Oh.

K: Toby not so much.

I: So he's developing his own moral center.

K: Yeah, through what he's hearing at home and he reads the paper. We do read the paper. We talk about politics or the world, or news, but its different reading the newspaper, you read the whole article, and get the information and then we talk about it. It gives a different, different than hearing it on the news, less fear based, more information based.

I: So you believe television news is more fear based.

K: Yes. Television news.

I: They're scaring you into listening more.

K: Certainly local news. I can't actually watch it myself. I can't sit through it. It literally paralyzes me with fear.

I: Wow.

K: I realize I hear so many negative things I start living more anxiously. I think that's more my personality.

I: Well studies have shown that high television usage results in individuals feeling like their world is more violent because images on television are something like 900% more violent than what exists in real life.

K: You think you can't walk down the street.

I: Your world view shifts by the amount of consumption. How do you teach responsibility, do they have an allowance they earn?

K: They have an allowance. They have chores separate from the allowance although we are thinking of connecting it.

I: How does it work now?

K: They get \$2 a week. Both the kids. And they have chores separately. Although not a lot of chores, we should probably give them more.

I: Oh really, why what do they do now?

K: They take in and out the trash cans, pick up their room, help me set the table and have to bus their plates, its not really very much. In the summer, a few times a week they'd help me clean or do outdoor chores.

I: Like yardwork.

K: Like yardwork.

I: And that's separate from the allowance.

K: That's separate from allowance. And the interesting thing is I used to give them one dollar and then they kept asking me for ice cream that's sold after school and I'd say, okay once a week, and then they'd ask me for it the next day, and the next day and finally I said, okay, I'm doubling your allowance, buy ice cream when ever you want, or you can save all your money. They just save all their money. They bought it like three times last year.

I: So they decided after it came out of their own pockets that they didn't want it.

K: Right. Or not that often. Or not often enough to bring the money or whatever.

I: Do they still ask me for it.

K: Actually once this year Noah asked if he could borrow money and pay me back at home.

Actually I think you left two dollars over from last year, why don't you see if you have it. He did and he bought it.

I: Would you have let him borrow it?

K: Yes, I'd let him borrow it and pay me back at home. I don't let them get advances. It has to be money they've already earned. If its in their box, it's okay.

I: Do you have any rules about allowance?

K: No, no rules about it. They can make choices. I'm not necessarily taking them to the toy store all the time.

I: They don't have to tithe on their allowance.

K: No we do have a boklabox, which is like a charity box, no I leave that up to them. And it's collected at Sunday school. So they can choose to give at Sunday school and I told them I'd match whatever they decide to give on. But it's not something I've struggled about, whether it's a certain percentage of what they have to give, that's like tithing, right, I have to pay. But I think it's nice to be spending money at this point. I think for large amounts I put some in the bank and let them.

I: Oh, for gifts for friends?

K: No if they get gifts from grandparents. You know fifty dollars in cash. They can put some in the bank. And take three or four to spend. I don't have to enforce it. It's usually what they want to do. They have their interests. Toby is into collecting coins and he'll want to go to the coin store to get something for his collection. He's learned to look on line. He got a thirty dollar coin for one dollar, but how do you know they give you a good deal. You know them make it sound like it is. They threw a couple of old coins in there, but I showed him to check on line. Now he checks then goes to the coin store. He waits out front, I got money now let me in! It's not very often because it's a big chunk of money he has to save up.

I: Did he find out it was worth thirty dollars?

K: Yes, actually he got a deal.

I: How much was it worth?

K: Thirty two.

I: Then he got a deal.

K: Yeah, yeah.

I: Shrewd businessman. I love it. That's great. Okay, anything else about teaching values and responsibilities in your role as a mom.

K: I think they both are not very responsible about their items. I'm trying to teach them to be more responsible for their lunch bags, their jackets, I struggling with that. So at this point, I'm just saying go to the lost and found and find it. I don't go looking for them. I think we need it to happen less often.

I: So if you give advice to other parents, obviously you do give advice to others, that's one of your professional responsibilities, if you could give advice about raising children in a culture of consumer values what would it be?

K: To define what your values are. And think about what messages you want to send your kids. If you do things with your kids, think is this the message I want to give my kids.

Because I don't want to dictate what other people's values should be, they have their own faiths and their own family values, but its good to define what those are. And talk to your spouse, make sure that both of your values are being considered . Sometimes mom's can just run the whole show, or dad's can run the whole show with that.

I: So, define your values, and ask are your activities in line with what your values are.

K: And your consumption. Are you not teaching, you should be giving money, are you not giving money? Are you driving a fancy car and saying I don't have enough to give. That kind of thing. So you are modeling whatever values you believe in.

I: modeling the values.

K: I think that speaks louder than telling your kids what to do.

I: Really.

K: Yes. Otherwise they can realize it's a farce.

I: Wow, like lip service.

K: Yeah.

I: interesting.

K: So I guess the answer comes when my kids are teenagers will they think we're really full of it. Isn't that when kids start calling their parents on it? I think that's when they start calling their parents on it whether it's true or not. I don't know.

I: Right. Anything else?

K: No that's it.

I: Thank you very much.

Transcript five: September 2008, interviewed in person in Sherman Oaks, CA.

I: Okay, I'm with Melissa talking about our culture. Could you start with a little background on yourself.

M: I was born in Chicago and I'm going to be 50 in May. I had my children a little bit later in life. My son Issac is 9 and my daughter Lucy is six, and we live in Sherman Oaks CA.

You're pretty close to the whole pop culture thing here, sort of the epicenter, so I do have some experience with making choices for my children given what they're exposed to.

I: So you grew up in the Midwest and then spent some time on the East coast.

M: Yes. Lived for thirty years on the east coast, I have a master's degree from Yale. So there's been a lot of school and I'm pursuing another masters degree now.

I: So you spent a lot of time in New York.

M: I spent a lot of time in New York. My children were born in New York. Issac was there until he was three and with Lucy we left six months after she was born and the only thing she was exposed to was the noise of Flatbush Ave.

I: So how would you describe the way you raise your children.

M: Well I'm pretty hands on. I really committed the time to raising them and continued to be there in their earlier years, so I've been there to monitor what they're exposed to pretty much all

of the time. And I've had to make choices because sometimes it's a choice between dealing with their peers in terms of what their peers are talking about verses what I think regardless what their peers are talking about they can't have and be exposed and be exposed to.

I: Can't have, so you're talking about things.

M: Things or media, you know they can't, for example all of Lucy's six year old girlfriends are into the Bratz dolls and this Bratz stuff and the Nickelodeon and that stuff and she knows that she can't have those and she knows why. She knows I don't like their attitude and she knows I don't like the way they dress, I don't like how important their clothes are to them, I don't like anything about them and she can't have them and that's that. That's actually one of my biggest sticking points with that. You know, I had to give in on the Princess thing because that's something she does with her imagination anyway and she's limited by the scope of her own ideation so I'm not going to have issue with that but with regard to something that is forced on her by the media and a value system that's forced on her by the media, it's really beyond her scope of ideation. That's really how I feel about when I decide what their ready for in terms of the media. If something is out there that is beyond visually and auditoria beyond their scope of ideation, I think that it's dangerous because what happens is there's a gap between what they are capable of processing and what they're seeing and what happens is it creates a kind of anxiety and difficulty in understanding that I think is no healthy. For example, Issac is nine years old. I don't take im to see Batman. I'll let him read the Batman comic strips because that requires his imagination, or I'll allows him to read a Harry Potter story, well this was, he can see Harry Potter now and he's been reading Harry Potter for a couple years. And for a year or so at least he was not allowed to see it. But he could read it because he's in control of how he imagines it. Whereas the movie, its beyond his ability. There are things they create visually now, they



didn't used to create visually. So now he's being inundated by imagery and noise and volume, there's no way they'd imagine it at that age.

I: So there's a gap you determine if there's a gap in their understanding and if they're beyond that, then they can see it, but if they won't be able to understand it, you won't expose them to it.

M: Correct. And it doesn't matter how old they are chronologically. Lucy is six years old. There are a lot of kids who've been able to watch the wizard of oz from the time they were four. I'm sorry my daughter can't watch it yet. It would be way too much, too much above her ability to process it.

I: So do you feel you've been impacted by the consumer culture.

M: Yes, it's a maze, its labyrinthine, it's a maze it's like now turn left. Go straight, no go right. And I'll let them do a lot of things other parents won't, here's the thing, all of Issac's friends are allowed to go on my space. They're nine years old and this includes children who are very religious and homeshcolled. His friend Simon is allowed on myspace. I mean, what's the point of homeschooling if you're going to allow him on myspace. But I just can't fathom allowing a child at 9 years old on myspace.

I: What age would be all right for that?

M: I haven't gotten there yet. I don't know yet. I'll let you know when I get there. Because I don't know enough about parental control. I'm sorry, he can't go on myspace. And he can talk to me and ask me about it as much as he wants, but I'm sorry, he can't go on myspace. And all of his friends parents know when he's at their houses, he can't go on myspace.

I: So you said earlier you're at the epicenter of culture. So talk about living at the epicenter of consumer culture. As an actress, you've been in front of the camera representing certain

products and services. You probably had a certain understanding of this that others wouldn't.

M: Well, I've always been an actress that the meat and potatoes has been the commercial world, so there's always been certain commercial areas that I would not be a part of.

I: So there are certain areas you wouldn't be involved in.

M: First of all I've never gone up for any product for children. For some reason I haven't. But I think if I was there giving my kid some kind of fruit rollups, with blue stain that stains your tongue tatooeey color. I think I'd probably say no. Because I used to say no to anything below the waste except shoes, you know, no tampons, none of that stuff. I have a big no list, no bathing suits, I said no to Herpes once. I'm sorry I can't do the Herpes. It was never important enough for me to make the money that way. There were certain things I'd, cause I'm not going to do that. I mean I always had a certain set of values about that. But even when they see a commercial on television I think there's a certain thing you can tell your children as they get older I think it's important to tell them truly what it is that their seeing. What it actually is, and that commercials are mostly garbage, I mean they're there to...

I: To create discontent.

M: And to make you unhealthy. They know what, you know they'll be saying something about Apple Jacks and I'll hear "That's Gaaarbage" coming from the other room. I would never eat that. That's Gaarbage."

I: That's your children talking. Because they're heard you say it.

M: Yes because I'll see what they're watching and I'll be saying what it really is, and then I'll tell them because they're old enough to understand that now, they have a certain amount of distance, so I will tell them that now.

I: But it also creates a certain kind of cognitive dissidence in me because I would say mommy makes a living on television, and you can't watch it.

M: But I don't tell them they can't watch tv. I want to empower them, I want them to have an opinion, and I want to empower them with their own opinion, because if you don't, they won't have them, they won't have that experience. You know they have to be questioners. Always question, what are you really looking at there. You know they were watching a show that I haven't seen enough of and Lucy let it slip that it wasn't very appropriate, and Issac came running in and said shhh, don't say that to mom. So I said, Oh, so I have to see this, Issac is it tevo'd, I have to take a look at it. "Lucy! Why did you tell mom about it!" See why she's saying that.

I: What show is it?

M: I don't remember. It's tevo'd so I'll know it when I see it. Something like drama island, most of the time I restrict them to Boomerang which is all those old Hanna Barbara cartoons.

I: It was rated G when G meant G. So are you able to recall a situation when you felt pressure to conform.

M: Oh everyday. IT's all the time. It's all the time. You have to be on it. I feel really sorry for parents who aren't around very much because there is so much screen availability and its just you know, the rules have to be enforced. My children are not allowed to look at a screen until after 5:30 in the afternoon. They are not allowed to have more than one or two hours on the weekends. After dinner as much as you want to lay around and not do anything, I kick them outside. If you don't do that, they will find a screen. And you have to always stand between the magnet and the source, all the time. And what is it you're looking at on the screen, because is it going to fry your brain, or is this a little interactive, or are you a

passive observer, or are you engaging in something. You know you can't just sit there with your mouth hanging open like one of the people in Las Vegas staring at a slot machine. You just can't do that.

I: I remember a few years ago you told me that when they are watching the tv they had to be doing something else. Is that still—

M: No it's actually the opposite, while they're watching television, if its important to listen, important enough to watch, then you have to be an active participant. You can't just be on peripherally. Television is never on peripherally.

I: So we're looking at struggles, and we're looking at strategies, is there anything else that you use. You know I've heard a lot of strategies, I've heard the rules that you set. Is there anything else about the areas of struggle that you'd like to mention, struggles about raising your children in a consumer culture.

M: Well there's a few things. I think that a lot of parents treat their children as if they're very fragile. They're afraid to use a stern voice. They are afraid to say, come on, time to go. I hear a lot of. I think that ninety percent of parents I hear is a lot of guilt parents, now, come on, now what do you say? Now I asked you to give me the eraser. Negotiating where you're giving your child too much power. And I struggle when I have a kid here and they're going into my refrigerator and their grabbing stick after stick of gum or they'll take paint and pour it all over, and just waste, or they'll take the house apart and think its okay or they'll start playing in my bedroom, there are no boundaries, there's no. And when they parents come to get them, okay, its time to go, and the kid ignores them. And the parents give them the signal that that's okay to do that. Lily it's time to go. And Lily takes off down the street. And the mother goes, "That kid, she just doesn't listen to me." If my child took off down the street when I said, Lucy it's time to go, that is grounds for you don't get to see this

friend again for a long time. Guess what no play dates outside the house for that. I find that there's so much parenting like that, guilt parenting. It's hard for my not to get stern with other kids. And I do it anyway. That's one of the struggles. And then the stuff they play with that I don't want my kids to play with. Like toys that aren't appropriate, and the foods that their mother's will let them eat at 4:30 in the afternoon that my kids don't eat at 4:30 in the afternoon. I have a, I'm pretty strict. I think you have to be. They have chores too.

I: We have fruit in a bowl and they can eat that anytime.

M: Yeah.

I: But everything else is pretty much off limits.

M: Yeah.

I: So what are the chores your children have?

M: They make their beds, they do the garbage, they feed the dog, they set the table, they clear the table, they pull in the garbage bins from outside, Issac washed the car the other day. They helped rake the leaves. Lucy loves to clean those windows. Issac has dusted his room, they both do.

I: Do you have allowance.

M: I do but I often forget to give it to them. One of the things I think you need to teach your children early on is to teach your children to walk into a toy store, or museum souvenir shop and they may not be getting anything and that's okay. I can take my kids into a souvenir shop and they are find getting nothing. And they expect that. They don't expect to get something every time. Why should they? And now they earn stuff that they really want. When Issac lost a pretty expensive game because they're little, and although he has ADHD, and that's no excuse, he got it for his birthday, he had to earn the money if he wanted to buy it. I'm not going to just buy him another one. Because of his ADHD, he has to buy it.

That's the only way he's going to learn and have it be planted in there. Otherwise it's too easy for him to forget. It's so easy for him to forget.

I: What other issues as far as struggles. Is there anything else you want to say about that?

M: It's hard to be on it all the time. It's hard. Wouldn't it be nice if in the olden days we'd leave the house and at 5pm you'd hear your name called in for dinner. It requires a certain type of physical commitment that it didn't require before.

I: It requires an emotional commitment.

M: Yeah. You know you can't even let them cross the street anymore, without... You know Issac is old enough to walk the dog, but I can't let him walk the dog. He could get kidnapped. Remember when he ran away and he went to the corner with his blanket and chalk, and somebody told him to get into the car because, remember that happened? He was on the corner. I mean you just can't. You have to be there.

I: Yes. So now we'd like to go to strategies. How do you deal with protecting your children from cultural seepage. Things you don't want to come into the house, but they do. You have rules, rules about certain toys they can't play with.

M: Certain shows.

I: What about the radio.

M: Lucy listens to the Disney channel. We use the ipod in the car. If there's an inappropriate song, we just blip through it. I solved that problem.

I: So you try to create a hedge of protection around your house.

M: Yes.

I: Things that you feel are not appropriate.

M: And for the things that you cannot help, like the billboards, sometimes we talk about it, we talk about it and how it makes them feel and what we think about it. Because I want to

arm them in with their own opinion. Because the worst part of what is being, is there's a sense that it's okay to be passive, to be an observer, from the world. And that's the danger. That's the hardest part about it. And I think it's almost important to choose what nefarious thing you're going to actually expose them to, so they can understand their role in objecting to it. And that they do have the power of their own convictions.

I: So you feel in some ways you'd like to arm them with discernment.

M: Yes.

I: So the two areas of value and responsibility. You talked a little bit about chores. Is allowance tied to chores?

M: Yes.

I: What about values. How do you teach values to your children. Your values. Values that you feel they should carry through life.

M: I'm, a lot of that you have to be in the room for because it's situational. From situation to situation I think in a sort of Socratic way, for example, if someone gets hurt, or you're finished with your rubbish, a lot of it is making, I make them do. I don't do thing for them. I think part of what teaching independence is about is teaching them responsibility and with responsibility comes a sense of civic belonging and so when we walk into the school yard there's just trash everywhere. And I just start picking up trash and the kids start doing it because it's you schoolyard, you can't let your school yard look like this. Then a bunch of other kids start picking up trash, and it just becomes part of the way we operate or what specifically goes into the recycling bin, and I don't clear their table, they clear their table so that they have a sense of this goes into recycling, this does not, this can be re-used, turn off the light when you leave the room, I mean.

I: You have to invest in your environment.

M: Yeah, and also in with other people too, I was very proud of Issac yesterday because he said his friend Leore got in trouble for talking, and he said well, actually Leore was answering my question, and so after Leore got in trouble, Issac raised his hand and told the teacher it was his fault because he was the one who asked the question, which I thought was really great that he did that.

I: He's taking personal responsibility.

M: Yes. And when his friend Andrew's dog died, we would take care of him and the dog died. It was old. Issac saw him at a birthday party and he put his arm around Andrew and said "Andrew, I'm sorry for your loss." I mean, that's the kind of thing I don't know whether he was born with that and he's just that way, but I fortify that.

I: It's compassion. It's the compassion and empathy you want him to feel.

M: Yes. And Lucy got whacked the other day on the head because her friend was picking her up in the chair and dropped her accidentally, and as Lucy was howling in pain, and her friend Hanna was crying, Lucy cried Hanna it wasn't your fault it was an accident, don't worry, while she was crying, she was confronting her friend.

I: Which probably makes your heart soar.

M: That's what you want, you know, that ability the end of solitism, you kids are naturally solistic, and it's your job to see where the window is.

I: That they are not the center of the universe.

M: Yes. And if you do that, you arm them with all the other thing, arm them with an active participation in their world, so when, I mean, I 'm not going to be there forever and ever and say, no you can't this is inappropriate. How are you going to arm them with that sense of what's good for them and what's not good for them.

I: Would you say that faith determines some of that.



M: Indirectly.

I: And the faith that you are.

M: We're Jewish. But we're not very, we try. I think it's indirect. They go to Hebrew school, you know, we turn the TV off at dinner. We talk at the table, there are certain things that are about the investing in the family in humor and in study and doing well in school and all that stuff and compassion. When Lucy is new in first grade and she was crying 'I don't want to be in school, I want to be in kindergarten, can't I try Mr. Berel this year. I think I'll just walk into the school yard and just run away.'" Perfect opportunity, Issac come her. You're sister is very upset and she's worried that you're not going to pay any attention to her tomorrow at school, what are you going to do? And so, at the time he was very perfunctory. I said, cut it out. You have to give her more. The next day we took her to school, and he put his arm around her, walking into school. Good. It got in there.

I: You attempt to plant the seed of empathy and compassion and you hope that it takes.

M: And then you plant the seed of confidence. Joel did something this morning I wish I had done.

I: Joel is you husband of...

M: Almost eleven years. And the I want to go back to kindergarten, so Joel leaves Issac at his class and now it's Lucy's turn and he started walking her over to the kindergarten yard just to see if she'd notice, and they're walking and talking and suddenly she goes, wait a minute daddy, where are we going? He said, we're going to kindergarten. And she says I don't go to kindergarten, I'm a first grader! I loved it. Such a good move. And then they do this thing now, okay now, learn. And she goes, learn. But that still plants the seed in her.

I: So if you could give some advice to other parents struggling with these issues, what would it be.

M: Be there. Be there. Be specific. You can't just say, how was your day. The way we get into it at the dinner table is by saying, Okay, who got into trouble today? It's specific. It starts with this archaic system of colors that we all know like you're on green or yellow, all that stuff and last year Issac and the boys were just getting in trouble all the time. And he had such a hard year and he was in trouble all the time and we make light of it. The other thing about it is it's a great starting point, you know I was on green and this is what I did, and did Mrs. Ross read, and what did she read. Be specific. How did so and so do today. Did you see so and so on the playground, be specific. Know who their friends are and what's going on and the teacher's routine on, are they having trouble with the routine, do we need to rehearse the routine, what are they eating. What are they eating. Who brought what to lunch. Get specific with them. You have to be there. And don't be afraid use your stern voice with them. If you treat them like their fragile, they'll be fragile. And it's a huge disservice to them. They can hear, get in the car, now. It's not going to hurt them. That's what I would say.

I: Anything else?

M: And I also believe they are not entitled to their privacy. I really think they're not until they are eighteen years old. You can absolutely have the right to know exactly who their talking to, what they're doing and what's going on. Yes okay the doors closed, knock, but you get to go in. You don't become isolated from their lives. What else would I say. You can pick and choose their friends. You know what? You're not playing with him. I believe in the Socratic way of finding out. How does this person treat you on the playground. How do they make you feel at the end of play? What do you feel you have in common with them, in a questioning way. Lucy isn't allowed to play with one little girl because I can't stand her mother. I don't feel that she's safe with this mother. Literally safe. I don't like what she's

exposed to over at her house and Lucy knows it. And I say there's many more fish in the sea. I'm sorry, it's not about the girl, it's about the mom. You can absolutely do that. There's nothing wrong with it. And I think they feel safer when you do. And they start to be more discerning about it.

I: Anything else?

M: That's it.

Transcript six: October 2008, interviewed in person in Cedar City, UT

I: Can you describe for me the way that you raise your children?

J: Well, we try to raise them with traditional Christian values. We try not to be too authoritarian and I don't know if you've read Love and Logic but it talks about authoritarian parents and helicopter parents that hover, so we try to avoid that and we try to find a middle ground.

I: And you have 5 children.

J: Six.

I: And a dog and a very active house. And you home school partially?

J: We've home schooled up to this point. Nathan is going to Williamsburg for two hours a day so we still are pretty hands on there and Rachel and Issac are going to the charter school.

I: So, do you feel you've been impacted by the consumer culture?

J: Yes.

I: In what way?

J: Well, it's hard to totally shield yourself from that, kids want the things they see that are made to look very exciting and enticing and fun and it can be overwhelming when there is too much of it, so we've tried to limit it, so I don't think the impact has been so great, but

we can tell immediately when we're watching commercials or at the store and they see something they want and some times it lasts and some times it doesn't, so we try not to have it in the house too much. We don't watch shows that have commercials.

I: So you don't watch television with commercials.

J: We try not to, and if we do, we fast forward them. We tape them.

I: What about when they're at school. Do they come home wanting things?

J: Well, yes, pokeman, a little bit of that but at the charter school it isn't too bad because they have uniforms and they don't let them wear shirts with things on them and I think they try to not let them bring things to school so that's been limited too and I think that's one of the things I like about that school.

I: So you've been able, do you feel like you were sheltering them when they were home schooled?

J: Yes.

I: So was it active on your part.

J: It was active. I remember when Nathan went to a pre-school and they were into Pokeman and he would come home and talk about it and that made me think, it's only going to get stronger as they progress when they go to public school. That was one of the things that got me thinking about home school.

I: So you feel you needed to shelter and protect your kids from when your oldest was three. He's 12 now.

J: Yes.

I: So what ways to you see that you're protecting them.

J: Well, we're very careful what we let in the door as far as television, even movies, if they're too silly or commercial, we don't keep them. For birthdays and Christmas we'll get a couple

of things, but not too much. They've been on the computer looking at things and when they get off they want want want, so we try and limit that. It's the radio controlled fly toys. They like to get on line and look at them. Then they make this long list of what they want. So I try to discourage them from going on that website, so it has to be active with the television and the computer, and I don't take them to the store a lot here and there, if they have some money sometimes, and they're happier too because don't know what they're missing instead "I want this, I want this" all the time and not getting it.

I: Can you recall a situation when you felt pressure to conform?

J: To what? Consumerism?

I: Yes.

J: I think there's a lot of that with birthdays. You go to others kids birthdays and they're getting all this stuff and you go to the store and there's all this expensive stuff and you feel like we should probably get an expensive toy for a birthday. Sometimes we do, sometimes we don't.

I: You give books.

J: We like books.

I: Do you let them have as many books as they want?

J: Pretty much. But they don't shop for books much, I usually shop for books, but well, I take that back now that we're ordering Scholastic, they're always going through the catalogs and picking things out. Rachel has hundreds of dollars of stuff that she wants. So I just narrow it down to the things that I like too.

I: So getting back to what you said about traditional Christian values that you teach in your home. You sort of make a hedge of protection around your home with things inside your home.

J: Yes. But we also actively spend time with our children, reading together and talking about what's important in life. Eventually they're going to go out on their own and have exposure to all this stuff. We don't want them to go crazy then. We want them to feel like they have a grounding here and talk about what's important in life so we spend a lot of time talking about that. That we feel will prepare them more. There are exciting things when you go out, but we want to ground them in what's right and wrong and what's more important in living life. What's going to make us truly happy? Things or relationships.

I: So in your family you teach them that relationships are what are important and what you have or don't have aren't as important.

J: Yes. Our relationships and also our dedication to God and serving our fellow man and having a family.

I: Serving our fellow man, can you talk a little bit more about that?

J: Yes. We talk about that a lot when we read together and we believe that when we're in the service of our fellow man we are serving God. So we try to emulate that and we try to find ways to do service in our community and we also both Mike and I did a year and half of service to our church when we were in our late teens so we talk a lot about that and also take the kids to South America to do service projects. Mike's going to be taking Nathan again for some service in Guatemala. That's important. We think its important to see how things are in other parts of the world, how valuable doing that service is. So it's an active thing, we try to find those opportunities, we try to create them.

I: So it sounds to me that you're actively protecting but you're also teaching them what's right and what's important.

J: Right.

I: So your religion forms your values.

J: Yes. A lot of it.

I: Is it an active teaching of morals, or how does that look.

J: Some of it happens at church. We go to church every Sunday. But we try not to rely solely on that. We try to do a lot of the reading in our own home, try to discuss the teachings on the scriptures and having a weekly lesson on the value and also actively searching for books that are fun but also teach the weekly values.

I: So you have a weekly value?

J: We try to. Well, usually we have one evening a week that we spend together and have a weekly lesson. Ideally we'd like to set a value and have that but we're not always that organized.

I: How do teach responsibility to your kids.

J: Well, we talk about it, we talk about, with six kids it's hard for me to do everything and Mike, so it helps that there is a need for them to help out. Lots of times if there is no need, it's hard in some ways to teach it, but I found that It's easier when there are pressing needs to ask them for help with the smaller kids, or the house, there's only so much I can do.

Having that weekly talk with them, both parents, helps a lot because we can see how things are going and we can talk about it. You know if we're asking them during the week for help and they don't want to do it, sometimes there might be high emotions, I've found that that's not the most effective time to teach them. If I react in an angry way, that's not usually the best time to teach them. But if we have a separate time when we're all relaxed and happy and talking together and we can review the week and some of the hang-ups we've had, usually it's easier for the kids to admit they could be helping out more. So we keep doing that over and over and keep trying to be patient. I think our society expects parents to be authoritarian and for kids to do things, but we tried that approach and in the long term it

didn't work that well. It works in that moment, but it doesn't change their hearts so they want to keep doing that. One of the ways we feel pressure is that society expects that you demand your children to obey and why aren't you if you expect them to obey. But we've found in the long term if we want them to be more helpful and more responsible, we have to sit down when we don't have the high emotions and talk about it and talk about why we need their help

I: So, chores, how is that in your family, if it's not tied to allowance, how does it work. Do they have set chores every day?

J: Well we've tried to find the jobs that they are able to do and so there's just a few that they've worked into doing regularly. So we usually say that before watching TV or going to friends or having special privileges they need to do a few contributions before they do those things.

I: So they are called contributions.

J: Yes.

I: Do you have a board where you list these contributions?

J: Once in a while we map it out and have a chart and that lasts about a week, but we've kind of gotten into a groove where they know what kind of chores they like to do.

I: And they're daily.

J: Yes they're daily. What's worked well on and off when we were figuring it out, I would make a list of chores that needed to be done and they would mark off which ones they were willing to do. And then they were picking. And that works well when they are feeling they don't want to contribute, it feels then that they have a little choice in the matter.

I: I just want to go back to this idea of the culture and how it can seep into your house in ways that are unsuspecting. I heard you say you teach certain values in your home and you



social network is the church, then it almost seems like you've buffered against consumerism creeping into your home.

J: They'll still come home and say, other kids don't have to do this, or other kids have this, but I think for the major stuff, that's how it is. And that's a lot of what we found in the home school community as well is that we're social with other families that hold the same values we do. And it's been really good because they've found a lot of good friends that way that have had similar values.

I: So you are even reinforced in their friendships.

J: Yes.

I: And you've had pretty strict nutrition requirements around your house.

J: I used to be more controlling than I am. I still am to a certain extent. I don't buy white sugar and white flour and stuff, we find other ways to substitute, and that's why I like the charter school, they take their own food and a lot of our friends are similar that way too, but there are ways when they go to social events I try to let them make their own choices and they do and sometimes of their own accord they've decided that they're not going to do that anymore because it made them not feel good.

I: And you grow a lot of your own food and you have chickens, your sort of a self contained unit here.

J: We're learning to grow our own food. I don't know how much we really have.

I: If you could give advice about raising children with values in a consumer culture, what would it be?

J: I would say take some time to sit down and ponder what's important to you and how you're going to teach that to your children. Spending that kind of time is really valuable to have a kind of vision and make a plan how you're going to accomplish that, because even if

you're kids are in public school and you're working and not spending too much time together, if you have a plan and some good resources you can make it a priority spending some time together, reading together, talking about what's important to you, otherwise life has a tendency to just roll by and before you know it they're half grown out of the house and their out of the house. You sit down and think about what books and ideas are important to you. Set a time in the morning or night, spend some time together, praying together is very powerful. I don't think it matters how you do it, I think recognizing a higher force is a way you can convey your goals and your values, the things that are important to you. My kids have come to me to ask for a song before bedtime and I started picking up our church hymn book and there are a lot of powerful messages in there and I think music is a powerful way to convey values to your children. That's a good thing for us to do together. To sing songs that have messages of kindness and searching for the things that are important to us why it's important to believe in God and what he's all about and what kind of a God he is and that just takes a couple of minutes each night and that comes naturally and it's really a powerful thing.

I: In the music room there are five guitars, a piano, several violins, trombone and violin. It's wonderful. Is there anything else you'd like to share with us about raising your children.

J: I think another important thing is being on the same page with your spouse, you know talking with your spouse about your goals and priorities and I think it's good to do that with your schedule for the week but also sharing your dreams for your family and trying to have some similar priorities and deciding on what approaches you'll take together so that you'll not be conflicting and instead be reinforcing each other and that's a powerful thing too. And it works well for marital harmony and that's important for harmony in general. So when you're kids see you getting along with your spouse and similar things coming out of

your mouths from them, it gives them a solid foundation they can stand on. And they need boundaries. I think they feel safer when they have boundaries that are reasonable and that has to be discussed between husband and wife. So they know that we disagree, but if we really need to talk it out, we'll do it in private but I think it's good for kids to see if there are disagreements that we can work them out. It's good to have time to talk together.

I: Anything else about training your kids to make good decisions about the culture.

J: I just think the more time you spend, I mentioned reading together. I think its important to find those sources that will inspire your children. It takes effort. I think everyone has some core books they can use. But there are so many good books out there. Classic stories are really valuable. We buy them in simple forms and also unabridged copies of the classics. I think the more you do that the more your children can step out and be leaders because they have that foundation and they're not afraid about what society would say to them. I think if they don't have that they are searching and are afraid they don't have enough courage to go against what society values. It's easier to go along with the values of the outside world if they don't have that solid grounding at home.

Transcript seven: October 2008, interviewed in person in Fairfax Virginia

I: I'd like to get a little sense of your background.

T: I'm a 1 47 year old white female, married, three children, twins who are 12 and a third child who is almost eleven. Before the mothering part, the parenting part of my life I was from the DC area originally, I've lived in many parts of the country and I ended up back in this area. In terms of my childhood it was very bumpy. Like a lot of people who have bumpy unpleasant childhoods you spend a lot of time running away from it until you realize you can't then you have to start dealing with it. I suppose I've done it well enough to care for the three children I have trying to let them know they have good lives without telling them how bad lives can be.

I: Just for the record we are sitting in her lovely home in Virginia, Fairfax Virginia. So how would you describe the way that you raise your children?

T: Well I, probably I generally have, I tend to be strict in terms of I want them to do the things that are generally expected of responsible individuals. That means homework, that means brush your teeth, yes in the morning and at night. All the sort of basic stuff. I at a certain point the education system sends home a lot of homework now. I think children should be able to do their own homework. I cannot invest three or four hours every night sitting with them dragging them through their homework. We help them with it. So that's a responsibility issue. If they want me to sit with them point through point, I won't sit with them. Only when their done will I help them with the stuff they haven't done.

I: They have five hours of homework?

T: If you want to sit and fight it all the way it'll be five hours. And that seems to be working. Having twins in the same is a real eye opener in terms of having different teachers and different learning styles of the children. So just getting back to how do you raise kids, responsibility is a big issue. I ask them to do more and more every day, helping around the house, their own laundry, acting responsible. And I'm not always very nice about it, if you say it about three or four thousand times, you know if you're doing it several times a day, three kids times three sixty five it adds up and you know they see me work very hard, they see their father work very hard, I guess my goal is tell them, go to school, get a good education, get into business, which is not what I heard, go to school get a job, there's nothing wrong with a job, but I want my kids to be self directed. So my goal is to keep them, let them understand that they are responsible and in charge and ultimately, they get to choose how they want to live. But they have to drive it.

I: Do you feel that you've been impacted by the, a consumer culture?

T: Sure. Fortunately we haven't been able to afford to get sucked into it. But I know that when I go to my friends McMansions with the you, know granite everything and I still have the same old rotten vinyl floor that I have when I moved in 12 years ago which was the first thing I was going to replace when I moved in so...

I: It works .

T: Yeah it works and eventually we just walk on it anyway as it turns out. So I know when I go to my friends homes and they have these nice comfortable, big airy homes and there's nothing wrong with it.

I: It's comfortable.

T: Yes it's comfortable and we're in a high end demographic here and million plus homes are common here with new cars and everyone has a home theatre here and we don't even

have a flat screen, so that kind of stuff. So I know that I feel that I want, stuff. But generally I don't tend to act on it, so I spend time arguing with myself and about it and debt and that kind of stuff. There's a lot of, that has, from a consumerism perspective it has had a huge impact on where the economy is, you know the, and the administration was frankly happy to allow this because they got sales and revenues from it, you know our counties got huge property tax revenues from it and everybody, it was fat city for everyone. I think the housing market was responsible for twenty percent of our GDP. And that was not, there is no P in that. I think of it as a phony, not real 1920s, you paper economy. Most of that was generated, my understanding that most of that was going to home depot and buying the stuff.

I: And you're a business owner. You understand this. Your husband works for...

T: He's probably been in IT related fields for 20 years. AOL. He's not in AOL Advertising, he's the most anti-advertising guy you'd ever want to meet. Every time I tell him how much I spend on advertising he just doesn't get it. It's a very odd juxtaposition, but that's where he is. So there's tons of pressure out there, I'll tell you today, every time I walk on that floor, I'd tell you how I'd like this house to look, but I don't act on it.

I: So you fell into this internal battle with your own self. How do you approach that with your children if it's such a battle for you.

T: The other thing is, you know there are a lot of people who talk about your personal relationship with money, you cannot be afraid of money. You cannot be afraid to spend it. You know you can't hoard it. You should always feel you can go about the business of making income because you can't wait for someone to give it to you because guess what, they are not handing it out. So you have to be willing to give and take money. You have to be willing to ask for it in sales. You have to be willing to say I want to sell this to you and be

able to say this is the value and get that and maybe a little bit more. So I want my kids to know that it's fine to have things and to want to pursue them, and there's nothing wrong with, I mean I spent a lot of time working in non-profits for the social value. I thought the business world was bad and the non profits were good, and that it certainly not always the case because there is a lot of waste in non profits so when I finally came to being a business owner of my own, I felt that why don't I just make lots of money, then write big fat non profit checks. That has a huge social value. Any time I employ someone, that's a huge social value. So I did a complete 180 on it. Why not make as much money as possible, I mean people malign Bill Gates, but there's nothing wrong with giving a couple thirty million to wipe out malaria. I wouldn't mind putting my name to that. And he's a pure business man with a technical background. I try to teach my kids that stuff. There's nothing wrong with making a lot of money. You don't have to eat anybody on the way there.

I: That's true. Do you feel like your children and impacted by the consumer culture?

T: Yes. Absolutely. They want everything.

I: And you tell them that's okay to want everything.

T: Yes. They just can't have everything. They can go for it. But their not getting everything out of me that's for sure. I don't shop designer stuff. We go to Target. I just migrated to Wall Mart because it makes sense. When I to put out money to buy clothes that they are going to bust through and lose and do whatever it is they have to do, I go through huge lectures on stuff and they're always losing stuff, I'm waiting for one of them to come home naked one day, they can't seem to keep their clothes on. Tucker came home from Gymnastics one day with one shoe and I was like, isn't that a little uncomfortable? You know so I say there's a consequence for that , so I make them responsible but it's just a ton of work, I get totally exhausted.

I: Do you feel a need to protect your children for culture.

T: I don't think you can protect children from culture. You can live it, we are 21<sup>st</sup> century like it or not. All you can do is educate because in the end they will make their own decisions. You're not going to be there at some point to say I don't want you to do that and they'll do it anyway. Because they have to in a very basic sense, our generation and the prior generation says you have to make your own mistakes. That really hasn't changed much.

I: Do they watch television?

T: Yeah. They do all that stuff. I mean they live in the world. My daughter Sammy is in love with one of the Jonas Brothers, I can't remember who. And I don't think she really likes them, but I think she enjoys the social aspect of going googoo gaa gaa over them. Because they're not very good as a group and in fact I can't stand to hear them. But I don't care. It's bubble gum. It's sweet. Why not. It's fun for them. My kids don't have cell phones. We're not at that point yet. But soon it will make sense for me to let them have cell phones.

I: you talk a lot about responsibility. Do you have some chore or allowance program?

T: No. Here's the contradiction. We have this magic bank account where they know the balance. They get, you know, when you ask Zack, my husband and when we talked about a weekly allowance he was like "a dollar" and I was like "dude, you got a dollar a hundred years ago." A dollar is not what we used to have. Let's talk about real purchasing power. Their enigmatic money, their allowance is supposed to be five dollars a week and they have to do what they are asked to do.

I: Is there a reduction for not doing what they're supposed to do?

T: It's in our magic balance sheet. On the refrigerator Tucker found a kids chore sheet that I've had for years and I used to track this. In the morning they had to do these things. It was



really more an organizational tool. In the morning you get up, you brush your teeth, you make your bed and you then positive attitudes. We had this rewards system, I'd give them colored links and whoever had the longest links at the end of the day had the reward. But they were stealing each others links. We live in chaos, I call them the Irish triplets because they are so close in age there is so much competition for everything I'm sure I've offended some group there, but there is a little bit of animal kingdom in this house because they are always competing for our attention all at once. They are virtually developmental stage so its always been crazy.

I: What was the deal at the end of the chain?

T: I think they, I don't even remember. It fell apart quickly. I can tell you that. I just wanted them to know, you know Zach and I work so much, we're home a lot but I'm in my office, he's in his office, Tucker goes to the gym six days a week, you know the time, at this point they have to get stuff on their own. They need to do things to survive, not because there's a piece of candy at the end. With two 12 year olds and one 11 year old, this is, it's not, it's doing what you need to do to move to the next thing. I tell Tyler, if you bring home straight As, I'll let you do whatever you want, I'll let you have sleepovers, you can, that's your key to the kingdom, but he won't do it. That's not my problem. It's his problem. You can sleepover three nights a week with straight As. And he's probably the smartest kid in terms of his ability, his academic ability, they're all really bright kids, but he doesn't want to do it. He's the only one who won't do it. He's the only one who doesn't have an after school spot or, he just wants to play video games all of the time. HE's really good at it. So yes, there's a lot of consumerism. It always comes back to responsibility.

I: So would you put values and responsibility in the same category.

T: Yes. And so much flows from that. But the other thing is, you know, I'll say all the time I don't want a nice doctor. I want a good doctor, I don't want a nice cop, I want a good cop, I don't want a nice judge, I want a good judge. So I care about competent. So for my kids I have to teach them to be nice to the other children, so I teach them that, but when I deal with anything transactional, I don't mean dollars, just working in the world, my pecking order is competency. We all have time to be nice because we're not cleaning up someone else's mess.

I: Do you have a religious tradition?

T: No. I was raised Catholic. I'm not practicing. The kids, I have many times thought about it, but I never go. I think it would be good in terms of an environment, but it's not part of our daily or weekly lives. We just don't do it. Although Sammy sometimes says I like to sing God songs. She calls them God songs. Because she likes to sing. No.

I: It sounds to me that responsibility is the core value in your home. It's not based on getting goodies or getting your money or anything like that, its more here's your family and you're part of it and you live here so you need to do this before you can do what you want to do.

T: That's a great way to put it.

I: Do they ever get money from you?

T: Yes. We kind of give them. I had a great idea what I wanted to do to address the "I lost my jacket" stuff instead of just going to buy another one, we have a huge consignment store, and so I thought let's go up there and they'd have an asthma attach in the absence of asthma because they don't want to do that, they want to get a new one. And that makes me crazy. Losing stuff. Of course they do have to have one for the winter, but jackets they take them off and its nothing for them to walk away from it. And I know I had one coat for three

years. So my idea was to get them a debit card. And I had the budget that I wrote and I think how much, it was generous something like seven hundred and fifty to one thousand dollars for a calendar year, but I didn't have a way to float the cash. I didn't want to put that much cash in three different accounts, but I was going to say when they lost something, sure here we go, here's your debit card and when they were out, they were out. I still think it was a good idea. I have it all worked out. I just didn't do it. We're so busy, when I need to go, I find out at six thirty in the morning that Tyler is down to two pairs of jeans because I didn't pencil it into my calendar so its not off the table, I just haven't done it. Okay, here's your debit card.

I: So if you had advice to give to other parents, what would it be?

T: I'm an advertiser, so, I don't know that I'd really give advice. Maybe we all do, but I probably seek advice more than I give. To answer your question, I don't know how much money we have to have to think that getting everything is all okay, like the cell phone, I don't think it would ever change because there's something a little creepy to me about just buying whatever you want. Even if you can afford it. So I'll go back to that, earn it and deserve it needs and responsibility based consumer behavior. I do educate my children all the time on advertising and they now say Mommy you should advertise here so they, as long as you understand marketing, if you're a consumer that understands you are being marketed to, and I tell them that politicians, all they are doing is marketing, don't ever think differently. All of these ads, they are marketing. My son Tyler, we were at a fair and he disappeared for thirty minutes and I wasn't worried, but he comes back and he's got literature from Scientologists and I was my eyes were rolling around in my head. Take me to where these guys are, we need to have a chit chat, and they were, I said, Tyler give them the stuff back. Do you realize you were talking to a minor child for thirty minutes and the one guy just looked at me

and said maam you just need to take better care of you children and I said first of all that's the wrong answer, and you're saying exactly, you are the people I have to watch out for. This is a minor child. You don't engage him for thirty minutes without a parent, I don't care who you are. So I had this big discussion with Tyler about it doesn't matter who they are, they can say they're a religion, but they're right next to the guy selling windows, and both of them are doing the same thing, this is my stuff and I want you to take it from me, I want you to buy it or take it from me.

I: Cash or mindshare.

T: Absolutely. I spent a lot of time helping them understand. That way they can be saavy without being suspicious. They are selling what they may or may not need. There are probably four or five churches there, selling their own version of God and how they view it. They didn't pull this kid into a thirty minute discussion. These people, I just had a huge issue with them. I complained to the organizers and they said yes we've had several complaints. We can't block them because it's first amendment. I think that if kids are taught marketing is everywhere and they understand, they'll be ahead of the game. That's my advice.

I: Anything else.

T: I kind of arranged my life to be around them more. When they were younger they were in more day care. I think people get that wrong, when the kids need more attention is now when they're being influenced by their peers and by a lot of media kids, I mean a lot of people can make a baby feel good, hold it, nurture it, they have to have a parental bond of course, but I think from a parental aspect, it's better to be more around them now during the danger zone because this is when they are influenced. So the next ten to twenty are the live transplant years for the parents.

I: Danger zone.

T: Ten to twenty, my job is to keep them on the right track. As young children, early childhood development is about gross motor skills and potty training and making them feel secure. At this point they have so many people talking to them and that's mass media. And whatever their friends are telling them, they filter it in their way so that peer pressure is a consumer pressure. So that's why I worked really hard. I mean I'm not gaining anything financially, I'm close, but there's a personal time commitment and the financial issues and I want to retire someday, but I didn't feel I could get it done working outside of the home so that's how I ended up here and it's had a lot of benefits for me. And the last thing I'll say is you have to be in my view, if you can't get to some degree of self-actualization, I don't think you can be a very effective parent. You need to get a personal reward. If you're not allowed to grow in yourself. I think there could be an issue.

I: A deficit?

T: In the parenting. I think that will be passed onto the kids in subtle ways. I have to be really careful. I'm not always successful, you do want your kids to know, I'm not your indentured servant. Look you can pick your socks up and you don't need me to tell you that. I'm cooking, you eat it. You want them to appreciate it. But you need to stop before you martyr yourself.

Transcript eight: November 4, 2008, interviewed in person, Cedar City, UT

I: Okay I'm here with T C. So, can you give me a little background on yourself?

T: Born and raised in Las Vegas Nevada, parents divorced when I was 5. So I came from two extremes. I had a mother who didn't have a lot of money and a father who didn't have a whole lot of money but acted like he did and that's why they divorced. My mom just wanted a simple life and my dad wanted a lot more so he left to go find that life, but it was a happy childhood and they had a decent relationship, so I had two extremes bounding around, so my mother remarried, they actually, my parents do not have to handle money, that's why Ed and I strive to be careful. They filed for bankruptcy twice, all growing up I did know, but they never let on how much they were struggling and they got into huge debt to try to not necessarily to keep up with the Jones' but to make sure that we had whatever clothes we needed, to go to movies, to go out to eat, and right before Caleb was born they filed bankruptcy for the first time which was a shock to me, I had no idea that they had done that badly.

I: What a surprise.

T: It was a surprise.

I: And you're living now in a small rural town in Utah.

T: Yes, in Parowan , Utah.

I: And you currently have, nine children living in your household.

T: No, seven children, there are nine people total in the house.

I: Family of nine.

T: Family of nine.

I: And the age range is...

T: The age range two years to fourteen years.

I: You've already said that you and your husband Ed try to be very organized with money, but how would you describe the way you raise your children.

T: You mean financially?

I: Overall.

T: We strive to raise them biblically. Obviously we're not perfect people and we stray from that, we make big blunders from time to time, but we strive to live by the bible, it's a very big book for us. So we try to raise them by the guidelines of the bible so we go from there. We try to teach respect for others, responsibility, obviously our goal is that they grow up to be Godly men and women following Christ in their lives as they grow up to become adults.

I: So then, does that inform your decisions about money.

T: I think it makes us more careful about money. It helps us set our priorities, obviously we are first ten percent goes to the Lord. We try to put money into savings but more often than not it comes out to pay the bills. We strive really hard to not live a lifestyle that's not keeping up with the Jones's, but that's hard to do. We don't have a lot of toys. We do have debt, but most of that has been from living in a money pit of a house. I think we try really hard to not live beyond our means, if we can't afford to go out to dinner or buy ski passes for the family, then we don't do it. We try to make careful choices with what we do buy, and even just I try to be careful with the grocery shopping. Frugal with clothes. We start at the second hand store and then work our way up, so I truly believe that it's biblical, that you're careful how you spend your money. I just don't think buying things for the sake of buying

them is biblical, you know going out and spending one hundred dollars for a pair of jeans when you can get a good pair of jeans for twenty five dollars.

I: How does that work with your kids. Do they ask for other things? Are they exposed to television where they see things advertised?

T: The only brief time they see any of that is Saturday morning during cartoons. During the week all they are allowed to watch is PBS and there are no commercials on PBS. But even when they see those commercials its very rare when they see something they want, mostly when they see things they want, they see them walking through a store, or they're at a friend's house and the friend has something. And when we're at a store and they ask 'mommy can I have that' they almost always know the answer is going to be no, because we just don't buy things like that. You know they get things on their birthdays and on Christmas because we aren't the type to buy things, unless maybe at the thrift store and they see something for two or three dollars. They seem to understand that we live on a budget. I don't let them think that we're going to be in the poor house any moment, but I think at how my parents were and never shared no we can't afford to do this so if we asked for it they would generally get it for us. They are going to know the reality, you know things cost money, and bills have to be paid and groceries cost money and we're trying to raise all these kids and no we can't just go out and buy something just because you want it. I you want something really big, you either are going to have to wait for Christmas or you're going to have to find a way to make the money to get that.

I: So do you give them certain responsibilities? First of all, they are at home. They are home schooled, so you have a sort of hedge of protection around them from the school.

T: I do. And I think that the fact that we live where we live helps too. In Vegas just being around the neighbors and their friends in church and everything else, it was always keeping



up with the Joneses. In Parowan there's not a lot of Jones's to keep up with and, yes, they are home with me, and that's made a difference. Like Caleb wants a cell phone and I ask him, why do you need a cell phone. You're home with me all day, when you're not with me your with people who have a cell phone, why do you need one. I don't need one, he said, but all my friends have one. So he and Kaile are at that age when they're being affected by what their friends have. So that's what we discuss, I know that your friends have a cell phone and their parents may have decided that they really needed a cell phone, but if you can tell why you really need one. Which he can't. He just sees that his friends have one. So he understands that he's probably not going to get a cell phone. It's not at the top of the priorities at this point. He'll get a skateboard before he gets a cell phone.

I: Do you have a family priority?

T: Nothing written down. It's more understood, things that are needful and beneficial to their growth, a skateboard, you have to understand Caleb is fearful of being hurt. He has no desire to go snow boarding or anything. So for him to want a skateboard is huge because he could get hurt on a skateboard. So you know what?

I: Here's a skateboard. Let it stretch his character.

T: Yes, whereas he's not the kind of kid who'd be up on the roof.

I: Right.

T: So we're definitely going to buy them things that will help them develop their character. Get them outside, get them active. For instance, Caleb has a playstation that he bought with his own birthday money, because never in a million years are mom or dad going to pay money to buy him one of those, we're just not going to do it, I don't like video games, I don't think they're necessary, I think they turn kids brains to mush, but if he was willing to save his birthday money that he got from grandparents, I couldn't really stop him from

buying it, although there are still regulations on it. He knows the rules, he's not supposed to play on it before school work is done, or without asking. If he breaks the rules, it gets taken away for a week or two. It's in my room more than in his.

I: I see. That makes sense. And what sort of responsibilities do they have, chores? Is there a list?

T: Yes, there is a list. We used to try and switch it around but it became too confusing for me, so now they have their basic chores that they do and there's some chores are weekly, we usually have a short school day on Friday so Friday's are when we have more, sweeping, scrubbing down the bathrooms, so they all have their weekly chores from that. And they have daily chores that they are supposed to do, before certain times of the day and if they are not done by certain times, then they lose certain privileges.

I: So the chores are tied to privileges, not to allowance.

T: No, we tried tying it to allowance and that didn't work really well. So they do get their allowance. They get one dollar per month per year of age. So Grace is seven and gets seven dollars each month. And then from that she is required to give ten percent of that in offering at church. Another ten percent goes into an envelope for their bank account. And the rest of it they are free to do with it as they want. Although we try to give them some guidance, you know, something is coming up so you may want to put a dollar aside.

I: What age do you start that allowance?

T: I think we started with Grace at around 5. Emily will feed the dog but has no concept of money so I see no point in her getting an allowance. She just does it. The whole reason we do allowance is to start to teach them responsibility with their money. If they flat out don't do their chores and removing the privileges isn't working, then we start tying it to the money part. But sometimes they aren't getting any money and then they're in the negative and then

all of a sudden you're not teaching them anything because if they're not getting it, they just don't care after awhile. Like Kaylie for instance, one of her friends birthday parties was to go shopping at the mall and she hadn't saved any of her money because Kaylie spends all of them money the second she gets it, and they can't use their savings account money for that and she asks "can I have twenty dollars" and I said "I'm not giving you twenty dollars." I said you're sister Grace just got some birthday money from grandpa. Maybe she'll loan you twenty dollars if you'll be faithful and pay her back. And Grace did, she'll always give all her money away to everyone. And so we decided that instead of having Kaylie give up all of her money for the next two or three months, we put her on a payment plan. When you get into debt, they don't take all of your paycheck. You pay x amount of dollars a month. I'm not going to charge you interest and you need to know that credit cards are going to charge you interest so, yeah, she has to pay four dollars from her allowance for five months.

I: Good lesson.

T: And that's the thing, all of a sudden, when she's only getting eleven dollars and you take away for savings and tithes and then the debt, there's not much left. And she can understand that maybe I should be saving my money rather than spending every single bit of it.

I: So it seems to me that when you were living in Vegas, did you feel like the influences, did you have more cultural influences there, more pressure to keep up.

T: Yes. I think so.

I: Was that part of what precipitated your move?

T: It was part of it. Part of it was just wanting to be out of everything that was Vegas. It was nasty and ugly and you couldn't drive down the street without my son covering his eyes because of the billboards or, you know, whatever. And knowing that we'd be able to get a

little bit bigger house and a back yard instead of ten feet and a block wall. But that was part of it, hoping that we wouldn't be keeping up with the joneses, culture.

I: The other piece was not just the billboards trying to sell them something, but.

T: Yes. Even now if you're driving through town there it's like, okay, look down.

I: So, it sounds like you arrange your life so that not only do they have fewer influences than others in your perception, but they follow your rules and only your rules . They don't have a lot of other influences from other people, music. What about music?

T: They only music we really listen to is Christian music. Kaleb has started to listen to some of the louder Christian music and I'm not really okay with it, but the lyrics are okay and so I just smile and I'm going to be okay with that.

I: It sounds to me like they are a little sheltered. Are you concerned with grooming them to make their own decisions in the world?

T: A little bit, but I still think they are safer where they are now, than being forced into situations that they are not ready for yet. I think if they were in public school they would be confronted with a lot. I think they would be making decisions that I wouldn't be aware of therefore I couldn't help them through it because I couldn't expect them to tell me every single thing. I also know that they go into other people's homes that don't necessarily have the same value systems that we do so they are exposed to other things, even at church, not all of the kids are exposed in the same way. So they are exposed to other things. Our hope is that they spend their first year of college here at SUU or one of the technical schools so that they are close enough to home that if they do fall, we are close enough to pick them up. If they go clear across the country, we'd have no clue. So we pray about that and talk about that about keeping them home and sheltered and growing them as strong Christians so that when they get out and they see something is not right they immediately identify it whereas if

they didn't get the strong foundation they might not recognize something as being wrong and fall that way and get sucked in very quickly.

I: It seems to me, if you could use a word to describe it, would it be, protection?

T: Part of it is protection. Mostly we just want be sure they are really grounded on biblical principals.

I: A strong foundation.

T: Yes. Kind of like when they train people to spot counterfeit money, they don't show them the fake money, they show them the real money so they have that memorized and in that way can spot the counterfeit. We want them so grounded in the bible and good strong principles so when they see something not right they can immediately identify it rather than spending their entire lives exposing them to everything else. Without good strong principles, how are they going to know.

I: And that could go for things that they buy as well.

T: Exactly.

I: Does it happen that your children do save up their money and they go to the store and they buy something you don't want them to buy?

T: No. They're always buying things I don't want them to buy. They don't actually save up their money. They just buy.

I: You don't stop them.

T: No I don't, except for instance my little Kaylie is a candy-holic and we have to start saying no more than two dollars can be spent on candy. You either save or spend it on a toy, but lets try to... So that's about the only limitation. And they're not allowed to buy, like there's some, Caleb is at that age that he wants to play certain games on the computer that we don't think are appropriate for anybody, and they're not horrendous, but still he knows he's not

allowed to spend his money on something like that. And he understands that. He may disagree but he knows he can't disagree with what we feel.

I: It sounds to me like you don't experience too much, what I would call cultural seepage into your house.

T: I don't think we do.

I: You've set up the boundaries.

T: Yes, I think Ed and I struggle with it more than the kids.

I: You do.

T: Well yes, you know, oh that's a nice car, I wish we could afford that house, or something and then going home to our house. It's a constant battle with the flesh, but we have food to eat and a roof over our heads and that needs to be okay. We need to be okay.

I: So these are conversations you have with your husband about your own struggles.

T: Yes. And we'll have them with our kids from time to time, sometimes they'll complain, why can't we go out. Well, because that's not in the budget. If we go out to eat, we can't pay that bill and we have to pay that bill before we can go out, so we do have to go through it with the kids. You know what? We have to be thankful for, etc. And we have to remind ourselves constantly about it. God never promises everything we want, he promises everything we need. And we have everything we need. We need to have grateful hearts for that. I mean you can just take a trip down to Mexico and you'll realize, you know what? We live in a mansion.

I: That puts it in perspective.

T: Yes. People in Africa without clean drinking water, like all right Lord, thank you for putting it back in perspective. Thank you for my house even if it isn't the most beautiful, or my car is old. My kids have not gone hungry, my kids have clothing, my kids have a roof

over their head, thank you. Thank you so much for that. It's a constant struggle. I mean we live in a materialistic world.

I: You feel the society is materialistic?

T: Oh yeah, not every society, but parts of every society. I think America is very materialistic.

I: What are some of the things you do, you said you're careful when you go the store to keep to a budget, do you keep a list?

T: Absolutely. I don't clip coupons so much, cause we don't get the paper, but I watch for sales and then I stick to a list. I make out our menu for two weeks at a time and I shop for that. I think that helps. If we didn't make a list and make the menus I think we'd spend way more than we would. Rather than pull out the debit card that helps you spend too much, I would pull out the cash because then you're way more than aware. Definitely when we pull out the cash to pay for things we are more careful with our money.

I: Ideally, how would you arrange your life so you could raise your children with morals and responsibilities in the midst of this materialistic society?

T: I think we're pretty much there, we're home schooling. I can't imaging doing much more than that. I have hopes and dreams of getting chickens so we can have eggs and every year I say we're going to do a garden and harvest our own food, and every year it's just too much work and we don't. We have some apple trees and I try to make the most of that, can make applesauce and all of that. So we're home schooling, that's a big part of it. We're very careful about what comes into our house. We limit the TV a lot and so other than that the only other steps I'd like to take are to make use of this land, what can we do with this land so we're a little more self sufficient.

I: What advice would you give other moms.

T: Just to not give your kids every single thing they ask for. I think that stretches them and helps them realize that life isn't always like that. And we have to work for things. And my kids I think do have a better concept because they know someone has to work for it. Dad has to work to be able to buy things. And to teach them that before they leave the house. Because my parents never did that, so we struggled for several years.

I: What's Ed's background.

T: He was raised by a single mom, who took advantage of the system big time. I mean she was a single mom with seven kids I'm sure she needed some help, but she did not need as much as she got from the government. Because of that he does not ever want to be in that position of wanting to take help from the government.

I: So his mother took help and he's rejecting that.

T: Yes, exactly.

I: Sometimes it goes the other way.

T: Yes, sometimes. I mean we certainly don't turn down our tax returns that we get. But he does not want to do any of that. Now if it came down to we couldn't feed the kids, then yes, we'd do it. But he certainly does not want to take advantage. We're trying to find that in between of so I don't think we're every going to be out of the situation about pinching corners and how are we going to get through this month but I've gotten better about it. Honestly I think I could find more security in money. I don't think I'd swing toward consumerism, but I'd love to see a big old savings account and I think my trust would be in that rather than trusting in the Lord. He's got us right where we're at. We're still paying the bills, we've got a house but there's not a lot extra so we know You're the one keeping it all going and keeping it afloat.

I: How long have you been married?



T: Eighteen years.

I: Anything else you'd like to share?

T: Raise your kids by the bible, not by society's standards at all.



APPROVAL PAGE

The undersigned, appointed by the dean of Humanities and Social Science, have examined the project titled

NO PIRATES, NO PRINCESSES: RAISING CHILDREN  
WITH VALUES AND RESPONSIBILITY IN A  
CONSUMER CULTURE

Presented by Ellen Treanor,

a candidate for the degree of Master of Art in Professional Communication,

and hereby certify that, in their opinion, it is worthy of acceptance.



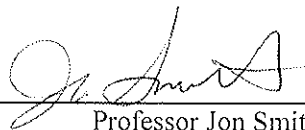
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Professor Kevin Stein



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Professor Jon Smith