

MEDIATION IN THE FAMILY ROOM:
HOW PARENTS USE CORE FAMILY
VALUES TO MAKE CHOICES
ABOUT TELEVISION
WITH AMERICAN
TWEENS

by

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THESIS ABSTRACT

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Title: Mediation in the Family Room: How Parents Use Core Family Values to Make Choices About Television With American Tweens

Television mediation with children is a topic that has been important for parents, educators and scholars since television was introduced into the home. A majority of American families deal with this issue regularly. A significant number of studies in communications, psychology, education and medicine have researched how children and their families are affected. Patterns have been identified by researchers that quantify mediation into specific structures. Through focus groups with parents of tweens, this research investigates how family core values influence mediation in the home by discussing the way parents make choices about television in their daily lives and comparing those results to structures used by scholars. Results show that choices families make about television do not neatly fit into limited categories and are most influenced by a variety of factors including lifestyle choices, every day occurrences, and unavoidable circumstances. Values have a secondary influence.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

OVERVIEW

This thesis studies how individual core family values influence choices parents make about television in the home. It is an in-depth look at whether or not the programming and content that parents allow their children to watch actually reflect their values, principles, morals and behavior - the same ones that parents strive to teach their children. In this study, programming and content refer to visual presentations on film or video that are produced for an audience. This is a foundational study that evaluates the practice of mediation, as well as the structure and culture of television in the home, and how parents feel about its influence on their family.

This thesis is organized into nine chapters. Chapter one establishes an overview, importance and need for this type of study. Chapter two includes theory and concepts used to discuss mediation and values, broken down into three groupings applicable to this study; values, learning from television and mediation. Chapters three and four describe three related pretests conducted by the researcher and introduce the research questions around which the study is designed. Chapter five presents details of methods used for focus groups and data analysis. Chapter six describes results of focus groups including overarching themes and research question results. Chapter seven discusses the relationship of the results to the conceptual framework introduced in chapter two, introduces an emergent theory and explains limitations. Chapter eight summarizes the study. The final chapter addresses future research possibilities.

SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY

This is an ongoing and significant topic to study as the increasing discussion over methods of mediation grows. In this context, mediation refers to way that media is selected, restricted, discussed and controlled. There has been a strong debate over the moral influence that television content has on children since this medium first came into the home. As early as 1951, researchers talked to parents about the new medium of television. Speculation from findings was that television could cause addiction, vicarious habit forming, frustration tolerance, substitute satisfaction fantasy identification and interference with practice of real life skills (Maccoby). Findings in 2010 show that youth categorized as heavy media users (across age, gender, race, parent education and single vs. two-parent households) get lower grades, get into trouble a lot, are often sad or unhappy and frequently bored. Mediation has been found to counter the negative influence that television has on children, particularly if content is at odds with the parents' own values (Austin, 1993).

According to various studies, parents deal with the issue in different ways. Some parents, believing strongly that television has a negative impact on their children, have chosen to severely limit TV time and exert total control over any content their kids watch. Some parents also believe that television can be a largely positive force, if used in a certain way. Still others believe that television viewing likely has a negative influence, but still allow their children to watch for many hours a day. A recent study reports that children watch television 25 hours per week in the United States. That increases to 32 hours when additional modes of screen time are included (McDonough, 2009). Given the

widely varied strategies parents employ, the question remains: How do an individual family's core values influence how television is mediated in the home?

CHAPTER II

CONCEPTUAL MODELS APPLICABLE TO THIS STUDY

This research draws from a wide variety of theories drawn from various disciplines. Though these theories are interrelated, in the following discussion they are grouped into three categories: 1. Values: *Belief System Theory, Values Theory, Family Communication Patterns, Family Systems Theory*; 2. Learning from Television: *Cultivation Theory, Cognitive Theory, Social Learning Theory and Theory of Imitation, Media Dependency*; and 3. Mediation and Content: *Media Literacy, Content Analysis, and Media Effects*.

A broad multi-discipline overview of literature is included to demonstrate the wide range of theories and findings being studied and synthesized in this thesis. A specific theoretical framework for studying mediation and values directly with parents does not exist in the field of communications alone. The overview of theories and research inform the core concepts presented, and as a whole contribute to the possibility of this thesis producing a cohesive emergent theory.

VALUES

Core family values are difficult to define; they vary from parent to parent, family to family. As exemplified in the literature discussed here, values are discussed in a variety of ways including standards or criteria, motivational constructs, ranked beliefs, abstract goals, and guides that shape routines (Schwartz, 1992).

Belief System Theory

The Great American Values Test (Ball-Rokeach, Rokeach & Grube, 1984) was an experimental study that showed audiences a nightly program designed to influence and

change their values in a positive direction. Then a pro-social program was created to arouse specific feelings about values, and to influence viewers' values, attitudes and behaviors. At this point participants were tested again to measure if there was a change in values.

The study found that the audience's pro-environmental and pro-egalitarian behaviors were increased, and concluded that viewers *can* learn values from television content. The authors also asked whether they could have influenced the viewers' values, attitudes and behaviors if the objective had been the opposite: "An empirical answer to this question cannot be given at this time because no one, to our knowledge, has carried out such a project" (168). The authors use belief system theory to argue that viewers would be highly unlikely to have their beliefs changed in a negative direction, unless they were predisposed to feel that the change would be compatible with their current morality. Simply put, television can solidify existing values but not change morality.

According to belief system theory, people will only change in one direction: "the ultimate purpose of an individual's belief system is to maintain and enhance self-conceptions" (Quackenbush, 1989, 316). If this is the case, then it is important for parents to impart their own belief systems to their children, who are extensions of themselves. However, this theory would apply only if the parent is the most influential force in a child's life.

Values Theory

Shalom Schwartz offers a structure for studying basic human values. The values theory defines values as desirable, trans-situational goals, varying in importance, that serve as guiding principles in people's lives. In order to coordinate with others in the

pursuit of the goals that are important to them, groups and individuals represent these requirements cognitively (linguistically) as specific values about which they communicate” (Schwartz, 1992, 1).

A 2003 study about adolescents measured how accurate perceptions of their parents’ values were. Using Schwartz’s “Portrait Values Questionnaire” created from previous values research, this study found that consistency, agreement between parents, and warmth/responsiveness led to accurate perception of parental values. Value conflict among parents, word-deed inconsistency, autocratic mediation, indifference and love withdrawal led to a negative perception of parental values (Schwartz, 609). These findings would indicate that parents with such characteristics who use these techniques in their television mediation would be more successful in imparting values to their children, and that lifestyle choices can play a large part.

In 2008, a survey was conducted asking if values predict mediation behavior. One important observation in this study was the emphasis on television as a part of the “ecology of our interpersonal interactions. ‘Watching television’ is an activity that is suspended between all levels of our developmental environment” (Moudry, 3). The fact that television is an integral part of our culture is central to any conversation about television mediation in the home.

Family Communication Patterns

Moudry chose to measure mediation strategies using communication patterns. The “Family Communication Pattern” (FCP) was developed by McLeod and Chaffee (1972) and in a 1985 study, FCP is summarized:

The position adopted was that the child learns a communication style through repeated interactions with peers, teachers, and most especially, parents. The communication style, they maintained, defined a frame of reference for the child in dealing with the surrounding world. In other words, the structure of the interpersonal interactions children experience helps define their personalities and ultimately how they will perceive, react, and cope with life situations (Tims & Masland).

Using this system, Moudry's "study proposes that when content that is incongruent with the values that parents are hoping to teach children enters the home, parents will employ strategies to mediate negative consequences; whereas, when value congruent content is encountered, parents will employ strategies to improve positive consequences" (4).

Moudry uses the "three-dimensional construct" (5) mediation styles most commonly agreed upon by scholars. These are:

Active: Actively discussing program content with children

Co-viewing: Watching programs with children

Restrictive: Restricting a child's television viewing

Family Systems Theory

Based on the American Academy of Pediatrics' recommendations limiting television watching to two hours per day, a qualitative study was conducted in 2011 with parents and children to gauge reactions to this proposed restriction. Results indicate that limiting television watching would present specific challenges. Their results suggested that there are three primary challenges:

1. Limiting childrens' TV time will cause conflict in the home because of childrens' anger at parents' rules and increased bickering between siblings.
2. Replacing TV as an entertainer takes time away from parents and requires monetary and community resources that are not available.
3. TV is seen as a beneficial presence in the home, offering entertainment, free babysitting, and educational opportunities. (Evans, Jordan & Horner, 2011, 1223).

Authors of this study note that these challenges can be seen through the lens of the family systems theory: "multiple interrelated systems guide the routines, patterns, and interactions associated with family life" (1223). That is, family lifestyle is highly influential in mediation choices.

LEARNING FROM TELEVISION

What and how children learn through television has been debated and studied since TV became a feature of American households beginning in the 1950s. Some research says that it is the strongest source of storytelling in American society, causing heavy television watchers to believe that the world is worse than it really is. Other studies discuss behaviors, asking whether the strongest influence is people or media. Also suggested in this literature is that individuals rely on media to meet their needs, they become dependent upon it, and it holds a higher importance in their lives.

Cognitive Theory

In 2007, a study was conducted to see if children could learn values through television narratives. The results do not support the popular idea that television is to blame for a majority of negative behavior seen in young people. Rather, results indicate that context is the most important element, and "enculturation is not unidirectional." This

study says that “In itself, as a medium, television is neither good nor bad and the influence of its discourse will depend on how it is used” (Samaniego & Pascual, 2007, 5-8).

Social Learning Theory

In the previously mentioned 1951 article “Television: Its Impact on School Children,” scholars and parents were expressing similar concerns as today (Maccoby). What has changed, however, is the way in which television is viewed in society. Far from being accepted as a benign force, nearly all parents in focus groups for this thesis saw television as negative, and sometimes as a necessary evil. This early study is strikingly similar to studies done between 1980 and 2010 around mediation, rules, and media literacy.

Findings in this early study suggest similar speculation as Albert Bandura’s social learning theory, introduced in his 1961 Bobo doll experiment (Bandura, Ross & Ross, 1961). Bandura says that in addition to modeling behavior, children encode and imitate it. He conducted another study in 1963 using aggressive images in film:

The results of the present study provide strong evidence that exposure to filmed aggression heightens aggressive reactions in children. Subjects who viewed the aggressive human and cartoon models on film exhibited nearly twice as much aggression than did subjects in the control group who were not exposed to the aggressive film content (Bandura, Ross & Ross, 1963, 9).

Although “Bandura is one the most widely cited researchers in psychological and educational literatures...today” (Zimmerman & Schunk, 2003, 35,) it is important to note that his theory has also been criticized, and the results questioned by some scholars.

Critics of the 1963 research said “the study falls short in its failure to address several threats to internal validity that are glaring as one reads the study. These were: selection bias, history, maturation and ambiguous temporal sequence... Bandura and others have (over)generalized findings to explain aggression and violence among minorities and lower socioeconomic communities” (Hart & Kritsonis, 4).

It is trepidation about behaviors and their influence on children that has created such a concern about values and behavior seen on television. This in turn causes parents to seek advice and make judgments on shows they allow their children to watch.

Media Dependency Theory

Media dependency theory states that people can become dependent upon media to fulfill basic needs such as information, entertainment and social relationships. The more they become dependent on media, the more powerful and influential media becomes. This concept is alarming to parents who are trying to teach children individual family values.

As the social structure becomes more complex, people have less and less contact with the social system as a whole. In other words, they begin to be less aware of what is going on in their society beyond their own position in the structure. The mass media enter as not only economic systems engaged in deliberate attempts to persuade and entertain, but also as information systems vitally involved in maintenance, change, and conflict processes at the societal as well as the group and individual levels of social action (Ball-Rokech & DeFluer, 1976, 4-5).

Parents’ fear of media dependency for their children is pervasive. In 1976 when this theory was newly formed, modes of media included radio, television and film. The

monumental amount of content and accessibility options available to children today online and on demand could not have been predicted by early media scholars. According to participants in this study, parents see opportunity for dependency as overwhelming.

MEDIATION AND CONTENT

Literature on the issue of mediation and parental responsibility has largely been organized within specific structures (levels of guidance). In order to measure mediation, scholars have identified types of mediation by categories or structures. Structures vary slightly from study to study but fall into similar classifications such as: restrictive, evaluative and unfocused (Bybee, Robinson & Turrow, 1982), or active, restrictive and co-viewing (Nathanson, 2001). A large body of research also addresses the direct effect that content has on children.

Media Literacy

Amy Nathanson surveyed parents and children attempting to understand the reasons why parents mediate violent television and how their children interpret the mediation (2001). This study reveals that the way parents feel about television has a significant effect on their children's reactions. Assumptions that strong mediation, known as co-viewing, is the most helpful in influencing a child's attitude about television, are questioned in Nathanson's assessment. Nathanson says that if co-viewing parents have negative attitudes about television, their children will too. Co-viewing also acted as an endorsement to the children. Children whose parents restricted watching as opposed to co-viewing gave the message to their children that they disapproved. Nathanson says that motivation for types of mediation is difficult to conclude because it is multi-dimensional and measurement of the construct is still evolving.

A 1982 study looked specifically at the way in which mass media scholars guided television watching in their homes (Bybee, Robinson & Turrow, 1982). Mediation structures used in the study were:

Restrictive Guidance: Forbidding certain programs, restricting viewing, setting specific hours, specifying allowable programs, switching the channel on objectionable content.

Evaluative Guidance: Explaining the meaning of ads, discussing character motivations, point out good and bad things actors do, explaining that TV is not real.

Unfocused guidance: Watching television with child, encouraging specific programs, talking about show while viewing, discussing show about to be or just viewed (704).

Assessing parental guidance, perspectives and value judgments about content, they concluded that although media scholars were assumed to be more media literate than the general population, they were not necessarily more evaluative of the content their children were watching.

The study also concluded that “evaluative guidance,” the method with the most “purposive, critical and potentially most effective approach to guidance,” (702) was used least by parents, even among media scholars. Even the most informed parents look for shows that they can trust, without having to meticulously evaluate them.

The results from such studies are contrary to generally assumed beliefs about mediation – that co-viewing leads to stronger value-led mediation, or that parents who

have extensive knowledge of the media from a scholarly perspective would practice more evaluative mediation.

The Kaiser Family Foundation suggests that “Kids whose parents *don't* leave the TV on during meals or in the background when no one is watching, or *do* impose some type of media-related rules spend substantially less time with media than do children with more media-lenient parents” (Rideout, Foehr & Roberts, 2007, 4). Such labels and assertions from so called experts can leave parents feeling guilty, judged and embarrassed and contribute to the overall societal feeling that television is an unacceptable and damaging way for children to spend their free time, regardless of the parents’ reasons.

Content Analysis and Media Effects

In a study titled “Family Television Viewing: Implications for Family Life Education,” researchers refer to television as a social force (Christopher, Fabes & Wilson, 1989). The intention of the researchers is to help provide quality information, recognizing “the unique role families play in educating their members on how to interphase with other socializing agents” (210).

The study states that most past research separates the impact of television on children from the family context. However, there are a couple of exceptions. One purpose of the study was to observe families while they watched together. Results were that families interacted differently while watching television together (talk less, touch more, withdraw, etc.) compared to parents watching their children in free play. The second purpose of the study was to examine parent-child discussion of content. The results showed that parents were able to modify effects through discussion, either while watching or afterward (211-212). Important issues covered by this study include:

1. How family interaction and television viewing are interrelated.
2. How educational intervention efforts are aimed at modifying attitudes, behaviors and communication.

Though findings did not support a relation between television watching and family patterns, they did demonstrate that “television viewing is related to important qualities of family interaction” (213). Important issues were raised regarding how television is treated as a phenomenon in family life. As opposed to being seen as “unidimensional,” the study concluded that “variables of organizing children’s television viewing and believing that television viewing interferes with other activities are two salient dimensions along which families can be divided” (214).

Research on media effects has been largely about onscreen violence. Significant interest about whether or not children imitate aggressive behavior has produced a substantial number of studies. In 2006, a meta-analysis of accumulated tests on media violence and aggressive behavior was published (including research done between 1972 and 2004). In summarizing their findings, Bushman and Heusmann said:

...children need the most protection from repeated exposures to violence.

Infrequent exposure is not likely to produce lasting consequences, but parents particularly need to be urged to protect their children against the kinds of repeated exposures that heavy play with violent video games or immersion in violent TV programs is likely to produce. Parents also need to realize that the size of the long term effect that such exposure has on children will depend on the extent to which the child perceives the violence as realistic, justified, and rewarded as well as on the extent to which the child identifies with the

perpetrator...parents need to be as concerned about the beliefs and attitudes that are being conveyed in violent shows as they are about their child mimicking the behaviors shown. The changes in how the child perceives the world from viewing violence and the beliefs about aggression that the child acquires from viewing violence are likely to influence the child's behavior in the long term as much as the specific scripts for aggression that the child learns from viewing violence (351).

CHAPTER III

PRETESTS

QUALITATIVE INTERVIEWS

Three related class projects were conducted previous to this thesis that influenced and helped to focus and develop the research. The first was an exploratory qualitative project in which mothers were interviewed about their mediation choices and their relation to core family values. Results suggested that lifestyle had more influence than values on the guidance parents provided to their children regarding television choices. Emergent mediation themes from this project were: trusted brand, lifestyle, comparing parenting to others, using television as a break for parents, entertainment, influence, commercialism, behavior and values.

QUANTITATIVE CONTENT ANALYSIS

The second project was a quantitative content analysis of values comparing two television shows intended for similar tween audiences, one from television's "golden era" and one that was being shown in 2012. This study was conducted to investigate how programs that many parents remember as more innocent, statistically compare to shows that children want to watch now, which are assumed to have more negative content. A mixture of results were found. Specifically, shows that were produced and aired in earlier decades does not automatically guarantee innocent and moral content. Conversely, content created in the mid-2000s isn't all indecent. This might suggest that content needs to be analyzed and viewed with a critical eye for the specific values and

behaviors that individual families find most important, regardless of when a show was produced.

COLLABORATIVE QUALITATIVE ETHNOGRAPHY

The final exploratory project conducted was a collaborative, qualitative ethnography between the researcher and her children, then eight and ten. This project was intended to measure whether or not the researcher's own mediation techniques were effectively sending the intended message to her children by discussing the family's core values, then discussing values of shows chosen by the children and watched together. The children learned how to talk about values and think more critically about television content. The researcher learned that her children had a relatively good grasp of their values and were sometimes able to identify them on television as well as recognize values that were not in agreement with the family, but that more discussion was needed regarding certain subtle representations. Recognizing the limitations of a study developed and conducted within the confines of one family, the researcher acknowledged that results may differ with other children.

CHAPTER IV

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Review of existing literature has shown that researchers who study mediation have identified specific structures within which mediation takes place. Examples of structures that help scholars measure mediation include: *restrictive, evaluative and unfocused*, as well as *active, restrictive and co-viewing*. Family communication patterns and family systems theory have been used to look at family lifestyles as they relate to mediation. As seen in the literature, these structures can measure methods and effects of mediation practiced by parents. This thesis approaches the subject of values, mediation, the culture of television and “appropriate” content by asking parents directly and among their peers in a “real world” setting how their values influence choices they make about television in the home. The goal is to analyze parental television mediation beliefs and practices, and to find out if parent’s mediation techniques neatly fall into these categories and structures, when they are prompted to discuss their methods through the lens of their core family values.

Research questions for the study were:

RQ1: What role does television play in the home?

RQ2: How do an individual family’s core values influence how television is mediated in the home?

RQ3: How do parents categorize, evaluate and mediate content?

CHAPTER V

METHODS

Research questions were explored using two focus groups. Methods and materials were approved by the University of Oregon's Institutional Review Board (IRB) prior to beginning focus group recruitment. The first group consisted of eight participants and the second group consisted of ten. The goal was to gather responses and gain insight directly from parents in conversations regarding values, how they made mediation choices and what methods they used. The focus group method was chosen with the objective of gathering detailed and personal information, as opposed to quantitatively collecting data and placing families and methods in preconceived structures. As Wilkinson (2007) argues,

Focus groups avoid the artificiality of many methods because they draw on people's normal, everyday experiences of talking and arguing with families, friends and colleagues about events and issues in their everyday lives. It is exactly this ordinary social process that is tapped by focus group method...A focus group participant is not an individual acting in isolation. Rather, participants are members of a social group, all of whom interact with each other. In other words, the focus group is itself a social context (275-277).

STUDY DESIGN

The researcher's role during the focus groups was to guide, but not influence, the discussion. A demographic questionnaire, which also included general questions about the subject of television and values, was sent to the participants before the evening of the focus group (Appendix A). A list of focus group questions and prompts was used as a

guide for the researcher (Appendix B). Prior to conducting the focus groups, crucial questions from the list were highlighted and prioritized to make sure that RQ1, RQ2 and RQ3 were covered. Questions and prompts were designed to encourage honesty, spontaneity, and open discussion from a set of carefully predetermined topics. By design, the researcher did not introduce theories, concepts, or define any existing types of mediation for participants.

RECRUITMENT

The sample was drawn from the local population in Eugene, OR. Recruitment e-mails (Appendix C) were sent via the University of Oregon Families listserv, two Eugene elementary schools and one Eugene middle school. Recruitment was also conducted during PTA meetings at two additional Eugene elementary schools. The only requirement was that participants were parents with at least one child between the ages of six and twelve. By recruiting in various neighborhoods and including University of Oregon students, faculty and staff, an attempt was made to include a reasonable variety of educational levels, economic and racial diversity. According to the demographic data collected, the sample was more economically and educationally diverse than racially diverse. Parents who did not have televisions were invited to participate. However, all participants who came to the focus groups had some type of television or screen with which to watch television programming in their homes.

Although moderate diversity was sought, recruitment methods did not include potential participants who might bring extreme differences of opinion to the group. Focus groups need to be constructed to invite diversity within a homogenous sample, but too much diversity in such an intimate setting can discourage participants from feeling

free to express their true feelings about a subject, and it is possible that ideas could be censored if focus group participants feel such restrictions. Recruitment within a homogenous group was successful for these focus groups.

Childcare and snacks were provided to encourage attendance. Many of the participants brought their children and dropped them off in another room before entering the room where focus groups were to be held. Participants also received a gift card good for two admissions to a local movie theater.

FOCUS GROUPS

Group 1 was held on a Tuesday evening beginning at 6:30 pm in a room on the University of Oregon campus. The first group included eight participants; of these seven were mothers and one was a father who attended with his wife. Incomes ranged from “between \$20,000 and \$49,999” to “\$100,000 or more” per year. Seven participants identified as “White” and one as “Asian.” Six participants had a bachelor’s degrees and two participants had advanced degrees. The youngest parent was 31 and the oldest was 54. Six participants were married or in a committed relationship and two were single parents. One participant shared custody (three days per week) and the remaining seven spent seven days per week with their children. Of the eight, four parents were employed full-time, three part-time and one was unemployed.

Group 2 was held on a Wednesday evening beginning at 6:30 pm in a room on the University of Oregon campus. The second group included ten participants. Of the participants, six were mothers and four were fathers. Two of the fathers attended with their wives. Incomes ranged from “between \$20,000 and \$49,999” to “\$100,000 or more.” Nine participants identified as “white” (one of these parents noted on the form

that her son was “black or African-American”) and one identified as “white” and “American Indian/Alaskan Native.” Three participants had some college, a technical degree or an associate’s degree. Four participants had bachelor’s degree and three had advanced degrees. Ages ranged from 33 to 51. One participant was single and the remaining nine were married. All ten participants spent seven days per week with their children. Eight participants worked full-time, two worked part-time and one marked “homemaker” as his/her occupation.

At the beginning of the focus groups, the researcher introduced herself, identifying as a mother of a nine-year-old girl and an 11-year-old boy and a graduate student in media studies at the University of Oregon. A brief explanation of the thesis topic was given, mainly that it was about families, values and choices they make about television. After this, no personal information was revealed. The researcher did not participate in the conversations except to acknowledge answers given by participants, laugh when appropriate and ask questions. The objective of the researcher was to put the participants at ease by personally identifying with them, then subtly withdrawing from any personal involvement in the discussion.

Before beginning the discussions, consent forms (Appendix D) were reviewed and signed. Participants chose as a group to keep the forms they had brought with them during the discussion for reference. Participants were also informed that conversations would be recorded.

SCOPE OF CONVERSATION

For this study, television included programming on network and cable television (live and recorded), Netflix, YouTube, websites corresponding to channels (like PBS

Kids or Disney Channel), and other on-demand providers of television programming, as well as DVDs of television shows or films watched on a home screen. Screen time outside the home, spent playing video games, surfing the internet, and social media were not included in the discussion. Despite an increasing number of hours spent on alternate forms of media, television remains the most prevalent in the United States. According to the latest Nielson study (2009), viewers ages 6-11 get over 32 hours of screen time per week, 25 of which is television. The remainder is divided between DVD, DVR, VCR and game consoles (McDonough).

The age group studied in this thesis is commonly known as tweens, defined here as children between the ages of six and twelve. The focus on tweens was chosen largely because of the lack of specific programming targeted to them, particularly pro-social content. Preschool programming is dominated by positive messages, yet by the age of six or seven most children grow out of simple moral lessons and are developmentally ready for more complex content. Teen programming, which is the most available and popular choice by children once preschool programming has been outgrown, is often full of sexualization, bullying, stereotyping, deception, poor communication and disrespect for elders. With few constructive exceptions, many parents with tweens find teen programs unsuitable, leaving them to on their own in the struggle to find shows that they consider appropriate. As *Rideout* (2007) explains:

Parents feel like there's always something inappropriate 'slipped in.' As one said, 'Even the kids' show that you think would be okay can have some sex in it. Why? It really isn't needed. They might not *do* much but it is still insinuated.'

Another mom echoed her concerns: 'It does aggravate me that there always seems

to be some type of innuendo that just doesn't need to be there. They feel like they always have to put in that humor.' Another said, 'It is almost like they will start off kind of mild and they must not get high enough ratings or something and they will start getting dirtier and nastier.' One Southern California mother exclaimed, 'This whole idea of the pimp as the cool guy—how did *that* get started?' (5).

DATA ANALYSIS

Interpretation of data began by transcribing audio recordings of both focus groups. When a participant laughed or paused, it was included in the transcript. When the group had a reaction (laughter, mumbling response, murmur of agreement), this was also included in the transcript. Listening to and transcribing the discussions proved to be extremely helpful in formulating ideas and identifying initial emergent themes. When transcripts were completed, they were reviewed for major themes that were identified in the literature. An initial key was created with the themes of values, lifestyle, set-up, content, rules, and mediation style.

Transcripts were analyzed a second time. For other categories which included diversion, personality, and extrinsic motivators. During a third pass, larger emergent themes that encompassed the smaller categories were identified. These overarching categories were initially labeled Family Framework, Reason/Explanation and Action/Interpretation. The three overarching themes expanded into four and were re-named Family Framework, Action/Interpretation, Justification/Rationale and Mediation Styles.

A total of approximately 25 hours were spent transcribing audio tapes and analyzing 45 pages of transcripts. Recruitment, coordination and focus groups took place over a two-month period and included an additional 25 hours of work.

INFLUENCE OF PRETESTS

Methods were influenced in varying degrees by the three pretests conducted prior to development of this thesis. During the qualitative interview project, questions posed to interviewees about mediation and values were “feeling” oriented. For example: How do feelings about television work together or against the ideals that are held as core values for the family?

These types of questions encouraged the subjects to speak in terms of feelings about television as opposed to thinking about mediation in terms of their values. Due to the language used as well as the one-on-one interview method, participants’ responses were more intimate. As the interviews progressed, engagement in personal conversation produced more honest information. Unfortunately, this method resulted in the interviewer having more influence over the subject’s responses than intended. Consequently, focus group questions and prompts were framed in a more neutral way, (more open-ended and relating to values instead of feelings). Experience with interviews also helped to develop the desire and ability to personally stay out of conversations in the focus groups. The method of analysis for this pretest was also excellent practice for this study. Though word-for-word transcripts were not produced, emergent themes were identified from the interviews. Attempting this method on an earlier project helped to make the analysis of focus group transcripts more precise and intuitive.

The quantitative content analysis did not have any direct effect on the methods used here. However, the fact that results were mixed and open to interpretation by individuals made the researcher decide that the inclusion of television clips during focus groups would be unlikely to have a clarifying effect on the discussions.

The collaborative ethnography pretest helped to formulate precise and concentrated research questions as well as bringing to light the importance of children thinking critically. Without using that phrase, it was an issue that was important to cover in the focus groups. The ability to listen for parents' ideas about what their children understood, especially in terms of values and larger concepts, was included in focus group discussions because of this pretest.

CHAPTER VI

RESULTS

The results of the study are approached in two ways. Research questions are addressed, while simultaneously, themes that emerged from analysis of the transcripts are used as a way to organize quotes and commentary on what happened in the focus groups.

OVERARCHING THEMES

There are four overarching themes with multiple sub-categories identified during the analysis.

- *Family Framework:* set-up, values, lifestyle.
- *Action/Interpretation:* appropriate or inappropriate content/trusted channels, influence that television has over children, limitations and rules, and extrinsic motivators.
- *Justification/Rationale:* child's personality, diversion/babysitter.
- *Mediation Styles:* co-viewing and preview, general discussion of content, trust/self-monitor, consulting outside sources for advice, no kids allowed, TV is just entertainment.

RESEARCH QUESTION RESULTS

RQ1: What Role Does Television Play in the Home?

To begin the discussion for RQ1, each participant filled out a form before coming to the focus group. Three questions on the form were designed to collect information about the set-up of television in the home: How many TVs do you have in your home? In which rooms are the TVs located? How many additional screens do you have in your

home that are used to watch TV shows (tablets, computer, smart phones, etc.)? The prompts used for this discussion included: What is the set-up surrounding the TVs? Why are they in certain rooms/spaces? How many people can watch together? What is the seating situation?

The purpose of these questions was to establish a foundation for the conversation regarding the types of devices besides traditional television screens that families, more specifically children, use to watch television programming. Not only was it important for participants to think about all of their screens as part of their television mediation (if indeed these screens were used in that way), it was also important to investigate if and how the actual set-up of television affected the role that television played in the home and what effect it might have on mediation techniques.

When the discussions were analyzed and coded, *set-up* fell under the larger theme of “Family Framework”. It was revealed that there was no norm for the set-up of television viewing across participants. Television sets were most often in the living room (some covered up and only brought out for occasional viewing). Computers, laptops, tablets and Smart Phones were just as often used for programming. A single mom with a ten-year-old daughter described their set-up: “...the laptop and the tablet can move around with us; we have a small house and we just turn it on. And the monitor/TV screen is set in the living room under a cabinet ... it pretty much shut all the time.” A married mom with an eight and nine-year-old described their set-up:

We have two TVs that are hooked to cable, because we...value ESPN, I should put that on my value system. And then we have a laptop, my husband's iPhone, and my iPad from work...we do the Direct TV On Demand, the free stuff...very

comfortable locations for all of our televisions... bar television...then that has the flatscreen and then just an older big TV in our living room. And then everything else just kind-of goes around wherever we go. Usually in the common area. We try really hard to keep all technology always outside of our bedrooms. That's the rule I grew up with and I like it. Doggonit!

A single mom of an eight-year-old boy reveals their set-up, “We don't actually have TV as far as like being able to watch channels because I have this old TV that never got the box that lets you watch the new-style TV, but we go to the library a lot and he checks out his favorites.”

The variation of set-ups was as diverse as the lifestyles represented in the groups. Set-up was related to the number of parents in the household, comfort with and ability to afford technology, parents’ desire for their own content, and convenience. The way that parents actually used these set-ups to practice their mediation became a spontaneous discussion. Though not prompted by a specific question from the mediator, the participants directed the conversation toward how they use the set-up of televisions (and other screens used to watch television content) in their mediation methods while simultaneously working television into their specific lifestyles and attempting to instill values. Conversely, parents also made certain lifestyle choices to create limited opportunities for choice.

The next overarching theme found during analysis is called “Justification/Rationale.” This is being included under RQ1 because it most closely fits under the “role that television plays in the home.” As with most themes and sub-categories, this section could also structurally fit into other areas of this chapter.

The two sub-categories which were found to be most dominant in this emergent theme were *child's personality* and *diversion/babysitter*. These categories stand separate from the other themes because they are used by parents as reasons for certain choices they make about television. Many participants describe specific personality traits as explanations for television usage. Parents of a six-year-old boy explained the way they sometimes use television:

...he is a boy who needs a lot of attention from us and he lets us know it so we try to give it to him, so we'll tag team, one of us will pay attention to him and the other one gets to do some housework. But if we try to do housework when he wants attention it just causes a fight that lasts about an hour and so you know housework, nothing else gets done, so we've come up with tag team (wife nods and murmurs in agreement)...we can share that.

A mother of a twelve-year-old girl talked about how her child's desire to "be older" has influenced her mediation decisions: "I've found it's changed a lot...particularly with my daughter who's twelve and a half. And she's always really wanted to BE older... everything is about being more mature...so she wants to watch the same kinds of things that my partner and I watch."

Even more prevalent than working television around a child's personality was using television as a babysitter. In this case, it was lifestyle and time that dictate when and how much television a child watches. A single mom of an eight-year-old daughter said:

It's been hard as a single mom who works full-time, to come home and cook dinner and give her all the attention that I wish I could give her. So I found over

the years that TV programs...has been a babysitter or like a substitute, because we're both very social creatures but you can't be out and about all the time...when we're at home I have to do the laundry and this and that she can end up in front of the screen.

Using television as a babysitter was not only for single parents. A two parent family had the same issue:

We do use it as (laughs nervously) a babysitting tool... if I have to go cook dinner...My husband usually turns it on and starts working or whatever he's gonna be doing, letting the TV babysit a little bit so he can get something done.

Another working mom said, "... it's my babysitter as well, 'Like oh great! They're out of my hair for 20 minutes!' ”

RQ2: How Do an Individual Family's Core Values Influence How Television Is Mediated in the Home?

In order to address RQ2, the focus groups' discussion began with values. The forms that participants filled out also included a section on *core family values*. This prompted parents to think about the core values they considered important for their family. In both focus groups, participants began the discussion by going around the room and stating their children's ages and listing the values from their forms. There were a couple of parents who had a difficult time formulating their abstract values on such a form, which did not give them any options to choose from, nor did it describe the definition of "value". This was by design so that participants would be encouraged to come up with their own definitions instead of checking off boxes or being led to specific words or phrases.

The need to express (potentially) abstract concepts on a form led to a variety of ways in which parents approached the discussion. Most participants shared what they had written on the form. They listed single words, phrases, or talked about their own feelings on parenting and what they have learned from their children. This opening dialogue served to set the tone for the discussion. It also helped to put the participants at ease, since a majority of the stated values were similar.

In order to create a framework for looking at values discussed in focus groups, five general groupings were taken from Schwartz (2012): standards or criteria, motivational construct, beliefs, abstract goals and guides that shape routines. The following values were identified by focus group participants:

Standards or criteria: non-violence, compassion, honesty, integrity, respect for others, modesty, fairness, generosity, love, standing up for what is right.

Motivational construct (model positive behavior): clear communication, paying attention to the feelings of others, gratitude, patience, fun, adventure, mindfulness, interconnectedness, treat others as you would like to be treated, no swearing, to serve your neighbors and community, acquire an education, value the fine arts, be active, work hard to be successful, be a good friend, be a leader and don't follow the crowd, enjoy laughter, live lightly on the planet, consume less, be thoughtful and helpful, be affectionate/give hugs, praise and cuddle freely, have good manners, respect others and boundaries, be creative, be your own person, cultivate determination and loyalty, always try your hardest, speak the truth, cooperate, share, listen, learn, question, be curious, be safe.

Beliefs: respect, work ethic, God and faith, family first, keep the Sabbath holy, no sex before marriage.

Abstract goals: understanding the child's behavior.

Guides that shape routines: working with the child's personality, spending time outdoors, travel, experiencing new things, attending church, saying 'I can't' isn't an option, non-violent problem solving, listen to all sides before judging, finding connection in everyday stuff.

As with any qualitative interpretation, these values do not fit neatly into the groupings above. There is much overlap. Because values (specific values for each participant as well as values as a topic) were introduced intentionally and well-established at the beginning of the evening, they continued to play an important role in the remainder of the discussion.

The discussion about values revealed that the crossover among the participants' values was considerable. Quickly, it became clear that values were bound to lifestyle and environment (though not exclusively) for every participant. Disclosures regarding how values were taught to children differed dependent upon personal circumstances. A mom of a six-year-old daughter said:

I do a lot in the car (big laugh in the room). Honestly? I mean who's not in the car all the time... it's just the two of us a lot of the time in the car and I think we're able to talk about just about anything... and I can ask questions and she can't get away (big laugh in the room)... she goes to church with me every Sunday and LOVES it... I've noticed the great way that I've been teaching her core values besides from just example is that she likes to have a job, a purpose, and if I can make that purpose something that reflects back on the core family values then ... she's learning something through *doing* something which is her way.

A mom with a two-parent family talked about a very different strategy which includes all family members:

...my religious structure helps to cultivate how we set the example for our kids...we always have Monday nights where we teach our kids a moral lesson, or talk about things that we want to share with them and give them...our own little family educational lesson, we also go to church every Sunday...We don't do outdoor activities... it's set aside as our family day, every other day we can have any other activities... but for us Sunday's like a good opportunity to be at home, share together our time at home... we come from a two-parent working home where during the week everything is just crazy and we don't get a lot of time to just sit and *be* with our children and so that's a time where we do a lot reading, a lot of just talking and planning our week ahead, and ... a lot of time that's where a lot of important conversations happen for us...those moments that we're actually not doing anything else.

The symbiotic relationship between values and lifestyle for parents who participated in the focus groups served as a solid starting point for looking at the relationship between values and mediation. Observations by the researcher regarding families and their core values were:

- 1) Values were comparatively consistent among participants in the focus groups regardless of lifestyle.
- 2) The way in which parents taught values to their children was dependent upon lifestyle, individual circumstances and environment.

Set-up, lifestyle and values fall into the emergent theme called “Family Framework” that came out of the analysis of transcripts. The next overarching theme of “Action/Interpretation” broke down into four smaller themes: *appropriateness of content/trusted brands, media effects, limitations/rules* and *extrinsic motivators*.

The emergent theme of “Action/Interpretation” encompassed a variety of sub-categories that did *not* appear to be most heavily influenced by lifestyle. The issue of whether content was appropriate or inappropriate (or more likely, somewhere on the continuum of appropriate content) appeared to be more influenced by family core values than other aspects of life. The focus group question used to investigate this issue in discussions was: What kinds of traits make a show “appropriate” or “inappropriate”?

This parent sought a trusted brand or channel and was not satisfied with any of the channels designed for children because they did not represent the values that she thought were important:

...they want to watch the stuff that's...sometimes it's just a little bit more, vulgar, in the sense of like what they say, like you know, farting humor...you know like there's more of THAT kind of stuff that goes on, so I try to find alternatives to those... I haven't really found one that...is a “go to” unless it's PBS, but my kids are kind-of moving away from that.

Some parents talked about appropriate content in terms of the values they have already taught their children, relying upon or allowing them to make their own choices:

They know appropriate language and I trust them, and I think that has been a learning experience for me as a parent as well, to say ‘I'm gonna trust your

judgment in an appropriate television show, and if there's any question, let me come and listen.' And most of the time it's really appropriate.

Another strategy employed by parents regarding content was to expose them to material the parents find to be inspirational and encouraging. Several parents talked about finding videos online that had some positive meaning in their lives. When they showed the video to their children, it provided reinforcement of their values:

(I use) the iPad occasionally YouTube videos that are inspiring that I think might help with something. Like my son plays the violin, for a while he just had absolutely no interest in practicing, it was like pulling teeth. And then I showed him this awesome YouTube video of this guy playing violin and it was so inspiring like afterward my son just picked up his violin and started playing again. So that's how I use TV.

The next sub-category within the "Action/Interpretation" theme was how parents felt about the influence that television had over their children. The prompt for this discussion was: How do you feel about the influence on children of television overall? However, the topic spontaneously emerged before this question was asked and continued long after another topic was introduced.

The term *influence* is used here as opposed to *media effects*. The more conceptual term was avoided by the researcher during focus groups. As with the discussion about values, it was a design of the research that structures and accepted academic descriptors be left out of the conversation in order to encourage more spontaneous and colloquial dialogue. During this discussion, most parents also mentioned sometimes using television as a diversion so that they could get rest or some type of work done, even

though they worried about the influence it might have. This is an example of the way that the lines are blurred regarding mediation, even within a single household and family.

Values played a part in the way that parents discussed the influence that television has over their children. Parents identified media influence over their children in many different ways. Examples included children comparing themselves to characters, body image, sexualization, lack of racial diversity, representations of privilege, teasing, bullying, commercialization and marketing of products, unrealistic family structures, and gender stereotypes. Overall, these types of issues were dealt with by parents using their individual value system as a guide. One concerned mother of a seven-year-old daughter talked about the images that are so popular on television:

At least once we have to have a discussion that no you're not fat, not you're not ugly, no you're curly hair's just fine... girls that she sees on TV really play into how she...examines herself, and even though you might have a great strong character ...there's a lot of 'how I look and how people look at me makes a huge difference in who I actually am' so that can be really hard to try to teach them that that doesn't mean anything about you, you don't need to look like the blue-eyed, blonde-haired girl, you're brown hair's curly and you have brown eyes and your skin's brown... so that kind-of stuff for her is like a huge deal...there's no place for someone to be different and to be the star, you know what I mean - or for people to like them because of their differences.

Another mom was worried about the representation of girls who have and do it all and how unrealistic that is as a role model for children,

... (there was) a really strong female lead and I really enjoyed it, BUT she was still in high school trying to be the Homecoming girl, trying to be the prettiest girl...not being very smart and she learned her lessons through the movie but EVEN the strong female leads, try to look pretty, try to attract the boy ...(in) "Tinkerbell" ... there's a lot of like little tiny skirts, and you know perfect Barbie bodies and stuff like that and so even when I try really hard to bring strong female role models into her media viewing...I'm thwarted every which way, and I'm dismayed at that... Even the animal shows like "My Little Pony" or...even the female dogs (are) sexualized... there's still this patriarchal society that's pushing the sexualization of women on top of that, which in one respect... stronger female leads are really important, but it also makes things even more hard to... reach for a young girl if not only is that girl beautiful but she's a warrior who can kick butt and that's even more alienating sometimes... I'm really worried about kids in our society growing up with these examples.

With the exception of the concern that parents have about their children picking up some “snarky” behavior, addressed later in the discussion of influence, the next sub-category under the larger theme of “Action/Interpretations” is *limitations and rules*, which materialized as a mixture of lifestyle and values. A lot of limitations and rules had to do with extrinsic motivators, which will be addressed in the next section. Most often, limitations revolved around time available to watch TV, parents’ work hours or work load, whether or not it is a school night or a weekend, or a particular child’s reaction to television. Some parents employed a strict schedule and some were more loose. This particular practice seemed to have a lot more to do with parenting styles (which is beyond

the limitations of this study) than values or lifestyle, but in some indefinable way was related to both. Wherever parents are on the continuum of limitations, the same goal was accomplished and some sort of structure was imposed. A mom with two children said, “We don't have like a strict like, you only get two hours of TV a week or anything...depending on what night of the week it is, I'll allow her so much screen time... my son who is five and a half, we kind-of do the same thing for him but we're not as structured with him”.

Another mother with three boys under the age of twelve said:

They all know the rules, no watching screens on a school night. It's default, when they know that that's understood they just kind-of go with it. They'll start pushing on Friday and Saturday.

A mother with a ten-year-old boy said:

As a family we can watch something but he limited to two hours of screen time for the weekend. And so that could be the computer, or his own cartoon that he loves to watch on Saturday or whatever, but two hours he can spend that how he wants.

The idea of using *extrinsic motivators* in relation to mediation is the remaining category within the theme of “Action/Interpretation.” The prompt used to introduce this subject was: Is television used as an incentive or reward/threat punishment or taken away as a consequence? If so, how?

Focus group discussions revealed that parents used motivators in three ways (sometimes at the same time). The first was to control the use of television by making it a privilege, reward or punishment. The second was as a tool to encourage cooperation

and negotiation. The third was to control necessary tasks such as chores and homework. Again, parents did not directly link these uses with their values. What parents *did* link was the way that they use motivators to make their daily lives easier.

The idea of using reward systems is a topic of debate among parents and educators. One side claims that rewards are detrimental to children. As Kohn (2001) notes: “The real problem isn’t that children expect to be praised for everything they do these days. It’s that *we’re* tempted to take shortcuts, to manipulate kids with rewards instead of explaining and helping them to develop needed skills and good values.” However, some educators and parents “in the trenches,” who negotiate their way through life, trying to keep a balance, often feel more like this: “As parents, it is important to teach children to develop good character traits and a strong work ethic. To do so, it is often necessary to provide a series of immediate reward goals that children can aim for to keep them motivated and focused (Whelan, 2013).”

One mom said that she threatened to take TV away if chores didn’t get done:

I don't usually use it as a reward because it's sort-of a given, but if my son is not cooperating and putting up a big fight about helping out with chores or whatever I'll say ‘Ok, if you don't want to do the chores you're not going to get to have movies this week’ or something like that. And so far he ALWAYS ALWAYS steps up at that point. Because he LOVES watching TV.

A dad of three ages 17, ten and seven said that he used TV as a way to encourage his children to work together, but didn’t see it as a punishment or reward:

I've used it as a way to get my kids to negotiate with each other, if they want to watch a little movie or something like that I would tell them they could watch it if

they cleaned up and if they could agree on what they were going to watch, and I would close the door to the family room and wait for them to come and give me their decision. If they didn't agree then I wouldn't let them, so, but it is never really used it as a punishment or a reward.

RQ3: How Do Parents Categorize, Evaluate and Mediate Content?

Mediation styles break down into seven sub categories: *co-viewing and previewing, discussion of content, self-monitoring, consulting outside sources for advice, no kids allowed, and TV is just entertainment*. As with previous themes, there is crossover within these categories as well as overlap with other themes.

One of the most popular types of mediation discussed was co-viewing, which was sometimes paired with previewing because parents either thought of them interchangeably or combined them by previewing an episode with a child then allowing subsequent episodes to be viewed without supervision. The technique of co-viewing here is used broadly. Parents in the focus groups thought of co-viewing in numerous ways: watching over a child's shoulder, sitting in the same room while they watched something but doing another task (like reading or laundry or working on the laptop), or watching a show purposefully together.

A mom of a five and a seven-year-old expressed what many parents observed, that the extent of co-viewing depended upon the type of screen they were using at the moment: "...so mediation-wise that's usually 'co'. Though when the screen gets smaller, that's a little harder [light laughter] to monitor, so that's why a lot of times I have to like, 'Let me see what's on the iPhone' because it's mobile"

Some parents explained that they co-viewed the first time a child watched a show, then either approved or disapproved based on that viewing. A mother with a seven-year-old son said, "...generally I have to watch the first show with him, and then I make a judgment. So I call that our 'experiment', our experiment with the show [light laugh in the room] and then 'cause he knows that I need to figure out whether it's OK." This turned out to be a common tactic among focus group parents: "...if they have a new show...if I don't know what a show's like, maybe it LOOKS like it's ok, but it really isn't, so I say we can start watching it, but if I hear anything or see anything that I don't like, then we have to change it. But they're willing to give it a gamble to 'maybe' be able to watch something new."

Others used the co-viewing method because they wanted to watch something and did not "feel like" changing the channel or wanted to watch a live sports show. In these cases, the children had the option of joining the parents in watching or not:

...sometimes I'll be watching an adult show and I don't feel like sharing
[laughing], I have limited TV time so...she has the option of trying to watch shows with us... or she can go upstairs and watch a video.

Some families reported making exception to mediation rules and restrictions when sports were involved. If a sports show was on and parents wanted to watch it in real time, it would "trump" any other rules about television. As one parent explained: "...usually on weekdays we don't watch anything but if there's a soccer match...that rule goes out the window. We even watch it while we're eating."

The method of previewing an entire show before allowing a child to watch, was rarely used – mostly due to the lack of time. Parents who used this method employed it

for content that had the potential of being too scary, violent or intimidating for the child as opposed what parents looked for during co-viewing which was often rude behavior or extreme sarcasm. Parents said that they did not want to risk their children seeing something that might be potentially traumatizing. Parents of a ten-year-old boy said:

...if we THINK it might scare him...sometimes we have gotten movies that we thought 'Oh, it'd be great' so, but then we had to review it first and we stayed up and watched it... it was in my mind more violent than I wanted my son to see, every 5 minutes something was happening. And so he's sensitive to like light and sound and things so when he gets too much commotion going on he gets like over-stimulated, so I was like there is a LOT going on here and we need to just wait until he's a little bit more able to handle all of that.

Another mom of a six-year-old boy described as 'sensitive' used trailers to "preview" content, "I'll watch the preview of movies, like the trailers and it pretty much tells me right away whether my son can handle it or not. Most of the new movies are just way over the top."

The next mediation method that emerged as a pattern in the focus groups was the *no kids allowed* approach. This was the strategy that parents used when they felt that the content was inappropriate but did not want to change the channel, stop watching TV or explain the content. Sometimes minimal explanation was included. Parents of five and seven-year-old boys said this:

(mom) I just try to keep them out...we're watching a show, an adult show, and they want to be in the room, I'll just say 'there's a mommy or daddy show on TV you guys can't watch it you need to go into your room and either put on a kid

movie or read a book or do something else'...(dad) if I'm in the room and they're watching something, and I don't think it's ok I'll tell them to leave the room. And usually I try to explain to my older boy he wants to know why... it's not ok, but the younger one he doesn't care.

One parent mentioned the lifestyle choices that she and her husband have made regarding watching television content that they deem inappropriate for their ten-year-old son:

...we were very strategic...because I think if (my husband) and I were just the two of us, maybe we'd watch more TV...we definitely wait for the adult shows until AFTER his bedtime, we consciously make decisions, so that way it DOES have little influence.

The most common method used in the group of parents who attended these focus groups was *discussion of content*. This was not a stand-alone practice but was used in conjunction with all of the other types of mediation. When talking about the way they discussed television with their children, parents nearly always referred to their values in some way. Before going in depth into how parents practiced discussion of content, it is noteworthy to acknowledge that there were two couples who mentioned discussion of content in a limited way compared to the rest of the participants. These parents only used discussion to briefly explain why they did not want their children to watch certain things, sometimes only going so far as to say 'it is inappropriate' with no further explanation.

One of the couples in this sub-group did not necessarily discuss content but context, "When it comes to television, we try to have a discussion about how it's not real, and how it's pretend, and how it's actors that are doing things, and then maybe we'll do a

little acting between us...I realized that we can't protect him from all of the things I don't want him to be exposed to, there's just no way to do it, but try to put it into context.”

The overwhelming majority of parents in the focus groups regularly discussed content and influence with their children. Their approach varied depending upon their circumstances and the types of relationships they had with their children, but the fact that they engaged in profound conversations about what their children were seeing on television was consistent. A mom of a ten-year-old girl was concerned about a show her daughter had seen at a friend’s house. She was also concerned with how her own negative feelings about the show might upset her daughter because her daughter was so excited to share it with her mom:

The content of it is about a really privileged person...I was just kind-of like ‘wow.’ So that was good conversation... I didn't want to disappoint her, so that was interesting because, it was the first time she was super excited to share this thing with me that she'd really *really* enjoyed, and I didn't want to be like ‘well that's a stupid show’ you know? (laughs and others laugh) but at the same time I had my own feelings about it... I had to go through my own process of being like ‘huh, why do you like that?’ and ‘what did you find funny about that? And what does it mean to you?’...without disappointing her, I really try to create a space where she's just free to share herself and free to share her thoughts with me without feeling like I'm just going to judge her, I don't want to tell her my values, I just want to be with her.

Societal paradigms that do not align with a family’s core values are also sometimes unsettling to parents. A mother with a twelve-year-old daughter said:

...it's a huge issue, the representation of women and girls in media affects us really strongly and it's really difficult to see because there aren't that many alternatives. And so I find that we have a lot of discussions about that, we've been doing it for a long time and it's really encouraging to see her starting to point that stuff out herself.

A mother with two boys was concerned about violence and examples of teasing:

... if I feel like they're getting a little too violent ...I said I would give them a chance, and it was more like "fighting fighting" and so I said let's give it a try, and we talked about the fact that it was fighting, and why, I know it's good and evil but you can't always tell, and we talked about why fighting can be difficult to understand, we talked a lot about that kind of thing. And all the shows with any kind of teasing at all we talk about why that's hurting somebody's feelings and things like that too, to kind-of get a little core of an understanding to why, to how this relates to real life. And why maybe people may not enjoy that even though it seems like on TV they do.

Parents also talked about opportunities that may come up through television to talk about life's lessons: "...if it seems like a complex situation we'll talk about how the people in the show got into that situation and why it ended in a death or something, and we try to give them a historical perspective, too."

A mother of a 12-year-old girl and seven-year-old boy based her need to discuss content upon her own experiences with television growing up:

I've definitely been doing that [discussing content], I think, right from the beginning. 'Cause I grew up in a house without television AT ALL, like very

very restrictive. I just from my own experience, I think that it's very important for the kids to be exposed to popular media because they're not going to be able to avoid it in their lives, because it is part of the culture...I've made a concerted effort to always be in communication with them about it, and get them thinking about representations.

Some parents in the focus groups took advantage of “teachable moments” – relating content to specific activities or personal family struggles. A very active family with children eight and nine used content seen on television to integrate what the children have learned from television into their own daily lives:

... everything to us was a teachable moment... 'when you're an adult you will have the coping mechanisms to deal with the, fantasy of it, but right now, let's learn, let's learn something productive that you can use on our hike, something that you can bring to the classroom, and those values that you have' ... there's so many things that we can learn from it, that we can apply.

A mother of a ten-year-old girl creatively designed her mediation technique around several factors: her daughter's dislike of shows designed for children, her own desire to watch something entertaining that *she* is interested in, her daughter's excitement over food and cooking, and the need to make dinner:

...(my daughter) decided at a very early age that she hated most kid's shows. So we take turns picking TV shows...The default for all of us is the Food Network, because my kid's a foodie (laughter in the room) She yells at the TV, she's a little Chef Ramsey. We watch cooking competition shows. And um she gets ideas and plans her own recipes and toward the end of them we're planning. There's a show

on Food Network "Chopped," you have to make a meal out of these random ingredients (laughing). So we'll talk about "Okay what would you do? Let's go to the kitchen. What would you make with this this and this?" So it's been really COOL.

Because this same mother allowed her daughter to watch mature programming, she used discussion about intense subject matter to help explain personal tragedy in their own lives:

...it opened up some really good discussion, because we've had some family members in our lives that were on drugs and we talked about the situation where people are doing this and why it's still wrong, and we have a lot of really good conversations that come out of this.

Among some focus group participants, the practice of allowing their children to *self-monitor* was prevalent, which emerged as the next sub-category under "Mediation Styles." These parents unquestionably tied the values they had been teaching their children to the trust they had in them to make the "right" decision regarding watching television, both in content and time spent. Many parents referred to their own learning experiences as they raised their children and discovered that they were able to rely on them to make informed choices about television. Other reasons for children self-monitoring came from outside sources such as exposure to programming outside the home that traumatized them or the fact that a child may not have the attention span to sit for long. In these cases, parents observed their children choosing to watch television or not, relieving the parents of having to intervene.

This dad referred to his child's ability to sit still, "...he also self-modulates. So after a while he's just too fidgety, so he'll get up and walk away from the TV." This mother's ten-year-old daughter had a distressing experience when she was allowed to watch something scary at a sleepover, which led her to develop her own method of self-monitoring:

...we had a really interesting experience that got her to kind-of self-monitor, (it) was that she went for a sleepover at somebody's house, the mom allowed them to watch "Buffy the Vampire Slayer" when she was eight, the TV show, and it threw (my daughter) into that nightmare sleep that kids get...she was having panic attacks... but as upset as I was about the whole experience and that it happened for her and that she really got traumatized by it, it also taught her an invaluable lesson, and she knows now, when something gets too scary she's like turn it off, walk away. She's also learned to like cope by being 'OK, that looks really fake, I can deal with that but let me see how fake it is, so she's really taught herself ...So we did a lot of talking about like how this happened and why it's happening and how your brain works and...strategies and mindfulness. So it was an interesting way for her to figure out how to self-monitor.

Other examples of self-monitoring have been previously mentioned in conjunction with additional themes and sub-categories (such as *appropriate and inappropriate content*), once again demonstrating that no methods are clearly defined.

The next sub-category, *consulting outside sources for advice* was present in discussions but not widespread. Although there was a question on the list of prompts for

participants regarding the use of reviews or ratings, the subject came up spontaneously when talking about how decisions were made concerning television in the home. When asked, none of the parents present said that they used the ability to block programming using the built-in rating system, commenting that they weren't very "accurate." The website CommonSenseMedia.org was mentioned and a few parents agreed that they used the site. Rather than taking any of the ratings or comments at face value, they had their own method of deciding whether a program might be the right choice for their family:

...we have to really read the details...we find that both the website and the parents, or even some of the children who submit reviews (light laughter) they're pretty specific about particular instances that happen in there and so then it's easier for us to evaluate 'ok this'll fly or this might scare him.'

Another resource mentioned was Netflix, which was a very common way to find shows for kids to watch. Parents used the reviews on the site to decide whether to allow it or not, using a similar method of reading a variety of comments to decide if something would work for their family:

...we use Netflix. Sometimes if I don't know what a show is about, I will read the comments on it, because a lot of times people will say 'well I tried this for my kids and here's why I didn't like it' and so a lot of the shows will have kind-of some information and then you can pinpoint WHAT might be a problem or if that wouldn't be a problem for you why it would be fine.

The final sub-category under the larger theme of mediation is more of a parental attitude than a method or technique. It is important to note, however, because it thought to be such a prevalent attitude in popular culture regarding the effect that media has on

audiences, particularly children (Rideout, 2007). In the focus groups conducted for this research, the idea that *TV is just entertainment* came up a couple of times. One parent dismissed any harm that television might have on children by referring to it as something that they like to watch solely *because* it is not every day life, giving credit to producers for addressing social problems:

I mean they want to be entertained, they're not going to watch something that is boring and doesn't connect to them so for me it's kind-of interesting, ...like what can a child really relate to and not relate to... things that are NEW to them, that they normally wouldn't see visually... I don't blame really anyone who's creating it...just an example of our society...The fact is that at least for kids it's the only area I see in TV where they probably do check themselves. They DO talk about bullying, whether they do it well or not, I sure didn't have TV like that.

Another parent also referred to children's programming as something that kids like because it is funny to them, and took her point a step further, expressing her feeling of helplessness to control what her kids watched:

...it's really hard to figure out how to have them make better choices when it comes to their media options... Nickelodeon or Disney Channel is, that's a kid channel to them so they think that's what it's ok to watch... ...a lot of them are more educational and they say "well we watch that at school" or something, like they don't, for them it's not entertainment ...whereas Disney Channel or Nickelodeon, Cartoon Network, Disney XD they have so many choices now that are specifically commercialized towards kids, that they do feel like that's for them.

CHAPTER VII

DISCUSSION

Values are extremely complex and difficult to define. They come in many forms and mean something different to every individual, family and culture. Approaching mediation through the lens of family core values produced discussions that were complicated in their multiple layers, yet simple to understand because of their use of ordinary life narratives. The theories discussed previously were often represented in the conversations about values and television.

THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL REINFORCEMENT

Belief system theory (Ball-Rokeach, Rokeach & Grube, 1984) argues that values can only be changed in a positive direction. Overall, parents in the focus groups discussed negative content more than positive content and believed that their children's values could be negatively influenced. Their desire was to avoid or counter-act messages that did not support their values. If potential changes in values and morality are at least partially defined by good and bad behavior, then participants unquestionably perceived that their children's values could be changed in a negative direction by exposure to television.

One parent noticed an attitude that her ten-year-old daughter picked up from television and corrected it:

...my kiddo definitely gets snarky sometimes so I have to (say) 'Now you remember when that happened on the show how the other person felt, don't pull it on me.' Just throw it back, I mean, sometimes she doesn't realize that she's doing it because it's something that she's seen.

Another parent with twin eight-year-olds said:

...even the shows that are like "safe shows" kind-of have teasing, like they're trying to "teach" something with the teasing but sometimes I kind-of, like if it's bleeding through in their behavior, then I tell them 'You can't watch either that show or watch TV for a little while' just to get that behavior back out.

During the focus groups, there were few specific examples of observed behaviors. More often discussed was the need to avoid negative behavior. One way this was achieved was by avoiding specific programs altogether: "...see we can't watch "Arthur" anymore, because there's so much teasing on that show that we had to cut that show out, because it was causing problems."

The most common tactic that parents in the focus groups used to ensure that their children would not pick up bad behavior from television was the discussion of the offensive content. A mother of a seven-year-old discussed complex concepts with her child:

I do talk to him a lot because I talk to him a lot about everything and I point out racism, I point out sexism, I point out themes...bullying, there's a lot of bullying and I point out to him how women's roles are a certain way and they always make girls like pink and how almost all the heroes are white and he's black, I try to teach him about history and the history of film and why hardly any black people are in film and he absorbs all of that, even though I have to give it to him in small doses.

What is striking about this style of mediation is that, contrary to what belief system theory says, these parents used negative values and behavior seen on television to

emphasize positive values and behavior. These parents believed that their intervention would both form and mold their children's values, as well as strengthen them.

Moudry's use of family systems theory (2008) concluded that parents use different styles based upon whether or not the values represented in the television content are congruent with their own. Her findings significantly correlated "positive active mediation" with value congruence and "co-viewing" with value incongruence, based upon the family communication patterns she assigned to each family. The study was useful because of the similar relationship between values and mediation being explored in this study, as well as her use of standard mediation categories to measure families.

This thesis research was conducted in part with the goal of determining qualitatively whether "every day life" scenarios would fit into widely accepted scholarly categories and communication patterns used by many researchers. Discussions among participants, whether prompted by the researcher or spontaneous, indicated that focus group participants did not consistently differentiate their mediation styles based upon the type of content (value congruent or incongruent). Moreover, parents who evaluated content (not consistent but still predominant) did not necessarily base their evaluation and resulting decisions upon whether content was congruent with values or not. Often mediation techniques would depend more upon their own history, their child's personality, outside obligations or the need for rest or "down time" for the child, the parent or both. This is not to say that most of the time parents did not care about content, which will be addressed further in the media effects section.

Although all participants claimed that content was important, parents who had shared values still made very different choices about what their children were allowed to

watch. One parent who let her ten-year-old child watch “Breaking Bad” – a show about a teacher with terminal cancer who manufactures and sells meth – does NOT claim to have significantly different values than a parent who severely limits her children’s viewing to content she deems to be “safe” for her children to watch: silent movies, documentaries and old musicals. Parents employed many more types of mediation than the three that Moudry used in her research, and they regularly combined techniques based upon the needs of the moment.

Parents in the focus groups did not generally agree with the cognitive theory assertion that the medium of television is neither good nor bad (Samaniego & Pascual, 2007). Most would agree that television content available to their children, in particular content aimed at children over the age of six, has more harmful content than beneficial. Throughout the group discussions, most parents said that positive messages were more difficult to find, so if they decided to let their children watch television at all, they ended up mediating the negative messages. In a couple of cases, parents believed this so strongly that they restricted television viewing to only a few hours per month.

There was one parent who had a more relaxed and permissive attitude about television. This parent did agree that television was neither good nor bad. During a conversation about how parents are portrayed on television he made this point:

So, first of all I look for TV... that's entertainment, and so for me...I always have to be mindful of the fact that a lot of the shows portray parents as being certain ways, 'cause that's how kids think. I mean they want to be entertained, they're not going to watch something that is boring and doesn't connect to them... it is a

child's sitcom, but they're not adults obviously...we watch a similar thing, so there's nothing damaging or harmful.

Overall, in this research parents found there to be more negative than positive content for the tween age group. Parents felt that preschool programming - which their kids were no longer interested in - was more pro-social, and shows that were more attractive to the tween age group contained more commercialism, violence, extreme sarcasm or rudeness, sexualization, gender stereotyping and unrealistic representations of race, women, economic diversity, and different types of families. Even though parents generally agreed on these points, they still often perceived negative problems differently than each other. A single mother said:

I think one of the themes that comes up a lot that I've noticed is that the kids in the movies and the kids in the TV shows are often without, the parents aren't in the scenes at all...whether the kids are orphans, or they're missing one parent, it's HUGE ...or there's some big problem and the kids have to solve it all on their own, and the parents are either not in the movie or scenery at all, or they're or they're so dense and stupid that it's up to the kids to solve the issues. And so I find that that's very disturbing. I find that there's hardly ANY shows or movies where there's a loving relationship, where the parent is actually WISE, and helping guide the child through their life or figure out their problems together...I think it leads to real disconnect and can lead to huge separation between the parents and the children and the children feeling alone in the world.

Another single mother responded to this assertion with her own observation, “Wow, it's so interesting to hear you talk [laughs] I see exactly the opposite. All I see are parents,

everyone has a mother and a father...it's the traditional family.” Regardless of how a parent interpreted messages, nearly all parents assigned content as either “good” or “bad” and mediated accordingly.

Cognitive theory claims that it is *context* and not *content* that plays the dominant role in the way that children learn values. This did hold true for parents in the focus groups. Because parents cannot control content, they put it in context as they utilize television to support and teach values. This was seen mostly in terms of the types of discussions that parents had with their children about television. These discussions ranged in approach from day to day, family to family and child to child, sometimes differing within a family from one sibling to the next. Parents intuitively knew from experience what their children could grasp or process, and guided them accordingly. Though content definitely had some impact, the context of a situation thoroughly dominated the way parents mediated.

Parents in the focus groups would also seem to agree with Bandura’s assertion in social learning theory that children model, encode and imitate information and behavior (1961). One parent talked about the effects she believed extreme violent content was having on her nephew:

...my nephew is allowed to watch all manner of horror shows, and Freddy vs. Jason, and for a long time he was starting to emulate them, pretending to cut people's heads off in play and WOW, (laughing) I think that that's just going a LITTLE too far. I'm pretty permissive but dang, like graphic murder and violence. I think that they definitely emulate some of the things that they're seeing.

Interestingly, anecdotes involving participants children exemplified relatively mild behaviors – mostly what parents referred to as rude or “snarky.” Parents were more concerned with what *might* happen if they allowed their children to watch content that they thought was counter to their core values. All participants expressed the desire for their children to be respectful and compassionate. Though parents did not specify where the fear came from - that their children would model extreme behaviors - the general understanding about television was that it was a detrimental force that needed to somehow be controlled. Parents came to the focus group assuming that the research in which they were participating intended to prove that television was harmful, even though the form they filled out and the discussion questions and prompts were designed not to lead participants in that direction. This suggests that the message parents hear on news shows, read in magazines or other popular media that “television is bad” is a powerful paradigm. This predisposes parents to mediate with that in mind, regardless of whether or not they have seen any direct proof in their own children.

The notion expressed in media dependency theory that people can become dependent upon media to fulfill basic needs is complex, combining media effects, uses and gratifications and audience relationship with a larger social system (Ball-Rokech & DeFleur, 1976). Though not introduced as a concept to parents during focus groups, the idea of children being dependent upon media for basic needs like information, entertainment and social relationships, was partially corroborated by these parents.

One application of this theory was parents’ use of television as a diversion, the basic need for a babysitter or a tool for relaxation (both for the parents as well as the children). Parents were concerned about using television in this way, yet often did not

feel that they had any choice, considering all of the obligations, responsibilities and burdens that parents navigate on a daily basis.

Some parents also mentioned that they tried to encourage (or in some cases, only allow) content that was somehow educational – such as food and nature shows. As previously mentioned, parents struggled with finding positive content, more often than not mediating negative information instead of relying on television to impart positive information.

Children may internalize or model social relationships seen on television. These can include relating to people on the shows, shared experiences with friends and spending family time watching together. One parent expressed her alarm at her seven-year-old son's apparent dependency on television for entertainment and a social system:

...after a certain amount of time, like maybe an hour or two, sometimes it's REALLY hard to pull him away from it and I've almost gotten the feeling that he's bonded more to the characters inside that box. He used to think they were real people, I mean there were really people in there, and I think that he starts identifying with them, and they become more real than me. And so for me to pull him away from that he gets, it's almost like pulling him away from a drug, and he can get VERY VERY upset.

Additionally, parents were concerned about what their children were being persuaded to buy. Though the discussion did not include the effects of commercials, parents were still alarmed at the products being sold through the programming itself:

...they're all trying to sell you something. Every single show. And like all the shows about dolls alike the Barbie movies the Monster High shows I mean it's SO

obvious they've introduced a new character, 'Oh I have to go out and buy that doll!' So I'm trying to illustrate the parallels (laughs) 'Do you really want that doll or is it because you saw it on the show?' And making her earn her allowance and pick and choose what she really really wants to buy and try and get her to think about why she wants to buy it but she's 10, she doesn't care.

One parent notes how his own experience of wanting to have a certain lifestyle based on television he watched as a child has influenced his mediation techniques as a parent:

...what I grew up with it wasn't as much merchandising, but I watched television pretty much unchecked all the time as a kid and so you know I definitely wanted the lifestyle that was on you know uh, "Silver Spoons" (laughter in room), I don't know if you remember that. You know I wanted that really badly and so I just wanted my kids to be able to kind of live in their own reality, and then be able to check that against what they were watching, and not have that be the reality and have them comparing what was on TV to what their life was life, you know have it be sort-of the opposite to that.

Just like the fear that their children will model what they have seen on television, parents were concerned about their children being dependent upon television for certain informational, entertainment and social relationship needs. However, juggling the duties of parenthood most often won over such apprehension.

Nathanson's findings that co-viewing encourages children to believe that parents endorse content was not the case with the parents in these focus group discussions (2001). Co-viewing was utilized as a technique in a wide variety of situations and had

different meanings depending upon the circumstance. Some examples included: enjoying television together as a family, parents watching over their children's shoulders to check content, walking in and out of the room to get a glimpse, "experimenting" by watching a new show together to see if it will be on the "approved" list for later, and reading a book in the same room while kids watch a show.

However, Nathanson's research only included children. From the perspective of parents in this study, co-viewing was a more engaged form of mediation than the method of restricting programming, which Nathanson found to be a more reliable measure of teaching children values. This was partially due to the fact that restrictions by focus group parents were sometimes (but not always) for reasons that had nothing to do with content, such as the need to get homework or chores done. When parents did restrict due to content, it was because of mild behavior they had witnessed in their children, anticipation of such behavior, concern that something was too upsetting or difficult to understand, or because the content perpetuated a stereotype or representation that was counter to the family core values. In focus groups, the most engaging and value-oriented form of mediation was the discussion of content, most commonly referred to by researchers as "active viewing".

Nathanson's study also revealed that the way parents felt about television had a significant effect on their children's reactions. Discussions among parents in focus groups exposed similar feelings. One parent discussed how her children felt about television in general in the context of her own experience and attitude,

...it holds no interest for me. I grew up without television. I didn't even own one until I was 27, and then it just sat off until I was 32. And then I started watching,

I would turn on TV and I didn't understand the appeal at all. And so it has no appeal for me now. So even though we have four TVs and we have a DVR, I'm not interested, so I don't watch TV I always go and read...They'd MISS it if we didn't have it, but it's not the end of the world.

According to the study of mass media scholars mediation techniques (Bybee, Robinson & Turrow, 1982), evaluative guidance was the least used method by parents. However, that was not the case for this study. What Bybee, *et. al.* referred to as evaluative (explaining meaning, discussing character motivation, pointing out good and bad things actors did, explaining that TV is not real) was the most popular form of mediation among parents in the focus groups. This finding is interesting and significant on multiple levels. Acknowledging the limitations of the sample, it is still remarkable how many parents use some form of discussion as their primary form of mediation. This finding is contrary to most previous findings in studies about mediation, especially quantitative studies. When studied qualitatively, conversations with parents about life, children, values, television and mediation suggest that parents overwhelmingly choose to allow their children to watch television, even if they think it might not be the most beneficial, and after viewing, have lengthy discussions about it.

Self-proclaimed experts like The Kaiser Foundation (2007) and the Parents Television Council (2007), who publish guidelines regarding limitations, make parents feel judged. Assuming that other parents believed these claims, some parents in the focus groups expected other parents to pass judgment on their choices:

Oh god, I'm like the worst parent here (big laugh in room)...So we take turns picking TV shows...she hates "My Little Pony" (laughing) because it's all about

friendship and she prefers the one where there's conflict and there's interesting things going on.

Another parent also compared himself to the group: “I'm feeling totally inadequate as a parent compared to all of you (big laugh from group). Because it feels to us like we're always in crisis mode.” Though parents in the groups did not express any overt judgment toward other participants, the possibility of feeling judged or making a mistake seemed to influence how parents deal with television mediation as they experience daily life. Aside from contributing to feelings of guilt or inadequacy, parents may refrain from seeking advice, sharing experiences with their peers or being truthful about their choices. In addition to the effect this has on mediation, it also contributes to the legitimacy of studies conducted on mediation because parents may not be truthful when assessing their own mediation.

Christopher, Fabes and Wilson (1989) refer to television as a social agent. If television is thought of as a ‘social agent,’ participants in the focus groups demonstrated that they played a dominant role in educating their children about television and how it fits into the world. The assertion that parents are able to modify effects thorough discussion was demonstrated with all parent participants. As mentioned previously, parents in the focus groups were most concerned with the possibility of what might happen to their children’s behavior as opposed to overt changes they have already seen. Though the types of conversations with children varied, participants agreed with the two by Christopher *et. al.*: 1) family interaction and television viewing are interrelated and 2) educational intervention is intended to modify media effects (or potential effects).

This observation is related to the particular population of parents who attended the focus groups, since nearly all of them used discussion as an intervention technique. However, regardless of whether parents used discussion to educate or not, lifestyle appeared to have an important influence when it comes to television viewing in the home. Whether it was present on a daily, weekly or monthly basis, *television was not an 'unidimensional' part of the home, but one that can have an influence or be an influence in multiple parts of a family's life.*

The overview of multi-discipline literature included in the literature review proved to be applicable in many instances. Many theories and concepts reviewed in this thesis were present in focus groups conversations. Specific theoretical framework with an application to daily family life was not found in research concerning mediation and values. Existing theories and conceptual models combined with emergent themes and research on mediation practices in this study have prompted an emergent theory.

EMERGENT THEORY

The emergent theory introduced as a result of this study highlights the struggles that families face every day. Identifying every day practices regarding television mediation was one of the specific goals of this study. Results showed that the unpredictability of events and practices of every day living affect all aspects of family life, including the way that they mediate television. This includes set-up, types of screens used, content choices, hours watched, consistency, and mediation styles.

This theory emerged during analysis of a study in communications, but is applicable in many situations and across disciplines when talking about lifestyle, values and choices people make.

The Lifestyle Continuum Mediation Theory

Prediction of mediation methods cannot be narrowly defined, nor can families or individuals be categorized quantitatively. Mediation methods, styles and choices are most heavily influenced by a lifestyle continuum defined by: everyday occurrences, lifestyle choices (activities, social structures, community and friendships, location), marital status, unavoidable circumstances and child's personality. Core family values are a significant but secondary influence on where a family falls on the lifestyle continuum on any given day.

LIMITATIONS

The principal limitation to this study was the population of the focus groups. Eugene is a relatively small town with a predominantly white population (85.5%). This population was reflected in the focus groups, with only one participant identifying as something other than "white" and one other identifying as "white" in addition to another race. This lack of racial diversity represents a narrow view of the national population and must be considered in the results. However, the homogeneity of the focus groups was not necessarily a negative influence, as it is also a control factor, allowing participants to feel more comfortable with their peers and more likely to be honest and free to share personal details with the group.

Educational diversity was slightly more mixed, although all participants had at least some college. The majority of participants had either a bachelor's or an advanced degree. Eugene is a college town and many participants were somehow associated with the university. This limitation should also be considered, especially with respect to lifestyle and values of participants. Economically, it is possible that, based on loose data

collected, some participants may have been close to the poverty line, whereas other participants were clearly well over. It is difficult to say for sure, but it would appear that economic differences did not have an influence on the intended homogeneity of this group.

It could be argued that another limitation arise was the anonymity of participants or the focus group method, which does not give each person an equal opportunity to answer each question. Limitations on qualitative research preclude researchers from making sweeping generalizations. In comparison, quantitative research, such as surveys and content analysis, can produce specific, statistically significant results. Qualitative research in communications can be utilized by building a body of specific examples and anecdotes to be analyzed and compared. This study came about as a result of the observation that mediation techniques tend to be quantified without context. Therefore, limitations resulting from the qualitative method used here, which documented personal anecdotes and every life narratives of mediation in the home are embraced, synthesized and taken as whole.

One qualification to note here is that parents self-reported anecdotes and situations in their homes. There is no way in this study to verify that these scenarios are true. However, the researcher has no reason to believe that parents would not be honest in their discussions with other participants.

CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSION

The goal of this thesis was to investigate how individual core family values influence choices that parents make about television in the home. The literature review synthesizes multiple types of studies and research from across disciplines in order to encompass theories and research that apply to this thesis. Because there was not any comprehensive theory that included all of the ideas presented, there was speculation that a new theory might emerge.

The subject of television mediation is significant for past, present and future examination. Since television came into the American home, it has been a debated topic among scholars, parents, popular media and educators. Families of the 1950's would barely recognize television today. Increasingly, traditional television sets in living rooms are not connected to "live" programming. Children rarely watch television shows in real time because of the seemingly endless options to watch on demand, stream shows online, own, rent, borrow DVDs, or record programming to be watched at a later time. Content can be accessed anywhere there is an internet connection via computers, tablets or Smart Phones, making it mobile and "at the ready."

The change in access and set-up of television has significantly affected the way that parents use, mediate and talk about it. Still, parents encounter many of the same moral and ethical concerns, obstacles and situations that have been mitigated for 60 years. Mediation that may counteract negative effects that television may have on children remains a significant area of study. With the addition of increased access, studying mediation and adding to existing research is especially timely. Not only does

examination of the current status of mediation serve to inform and add to the current body of research, it establishes a baseline of current conditions for future inquiry.

The existing body of research on mediation and values is consistent in the use of quantification to evaluate mediation techniques. Scholars generally use three categories to explain the types of mediation that parents practice: co-viewing (watching a show with a child), restrictive (setting limitations for a child), and active (discussing content). Sometimes these methods have slightly different names, but they generally mean the same thing. In order to place parents, families and children into these categories, researchers measure patterns.

Because the study of values and mediation exists across disciplines, patterns are analyzed different ways. These include family communication patterns, which define a frame of reference for a child, or systems patterns, the idea that systems guide family routines. Mediation and values have also been studied through the lens of theories that attempt to measure whether or not people are affected by, model or learn from television content. Less academic reports published by large organizations like The Kaiser Foundation and the Parents Television Council claim to have the best interest of children in mind. These reports gather data, report how many hours children are watching television, then proceed to make recommendations on how much children should actually be watching and the effects that it may have on their health and well-being (Rideout, 2007). These types of reports contribute to the dominant paradigm in popular culture and mainstream media that television is unequivocally bad for children, engendering guilt in parents, making them feel judged and incompetent.

Research questions were formulated to gather information from parents and

evaluate what they reported happening in their homes. Prompts and questions were used to highlight certain issues, ensuring that conversations incorporated the research questions. Participants were not told specifically what the research questions were nor were any of the researcher's own opinions shared during the focus group conversations. The resulting discussions were spontaneous and extremely fruitful with regard to the volume of information shared. Parents appeared to speak freely about their values, family dynamics, household rules and mediation techniques.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS SYNOPSES

RQ1: What role does television play in the home?

Parents use the set-up of televisions and other screens as part of their mediation strategies while simultaneously working television into their specific lifestyles and attempting to instill values. Parents also make certain lifestyle choices to create limited opportunities for choice.

RQ2: How do an individual family's core values influence how television is mediated in the home?

Content is often labeled appropriate or inappropriate based on family core values. Parents are worried that children MIGHT imitate behavior on television. Limitations are dictated by the needs of daily life rather than what is onscreen. Although parents deem most content as inappropriate, they allow their children to watch anyway. Parents use television as a motivator: reward, incentive, punishment or consequence. When used as a babysitter, no one claims that using television while they accomplish a task or rest is based on their values. It is a basic necessity.

RQ3: How do parents categorize, evaluate and mediate content?

Countless details modify or influence decisions parents make about mediation.

Identified categories are: co-viewing and preview, general discussion of content, trust/self-monitor, consulting outside sources for advice, no kids allowed, TV is just entertainment.

The primary conclusion from these discussions between parents was that television mediation in the home does not fall neatly into any one category. Qualitative analysis of the conversations revealed distinct patterns, but there was no parenting or communication style that correlated with any one style of mediation. The three styles of mediation most often mentioned in scholarly as well as popular studies and reports were unquestionably present. However, these styles were influenced by such a variety of factors that it was impossible to identify a relationship between individual participants and any one method. Instead, what was found to be the most influential was a combination of lifestyle, personal circumstance, environment, personality, parental desires, time availability, outside activities, marital and working status, and values.

The research questions were framed around the idea of significant family core values and how they might influence parental mediation choices in the home. Values were remarkably similar between all participants, yet mediation techniques varied. Overall, values did not seem to be the most influential factor in mediation choices, merely one of many.

INFLUENCE OF VALUES

When discussions were broken down into major themes, the influence of values over choices parents made fluctuated a great deal. When talking about whether content

was appropriate or inappropriate, parents relied substantially on their values to make decisions. Belief in how much influence television may have over their children did not necessarily stem directly from values, but came also from popular media, hearsay, childhood experiences and priorities. Values played a role when it came to limitations and rules. Values surrounding the importance of homework or chores held more weight in the ways that families structured their priorities, rather than values influencing content choices. In other words, limitations were typically dictated by the needs of daily life rather than what was onscreen. Parents also used television as a motivator. It could be a reward or incentive, or even a punishment or consequence. No one claimed that using television as a babysitter while they accomplished a task or got some much-needed rest was based on their values. It was based on a necessity.

CHILD'S PERSONALITY

An important noteworthy rationale that parents mentioned repeatedly was not highlighted in other literature cited in this review. Parents shaped their mediation styles and choices about television in the home largely on a child's personality. This phenomenon was present in every theme and sub-category analyzed. Parents often remarked that their values were also shaped by their individual children, that they had certain expectations but realized after they had a child that they had to adjust their values. When discussing set-up, participants often said that they had "the type of child" who wanted to be near them all the time, which would dictate the type of screen they watched or whether they simply joined their parents in watching more mature programming. Personality also influenced lifestyle. They talked about whether their children were social, loved the outdoors, preferred to be alone, or were sensitive or active, which in turn

would affect their every day routines and activities.

MEDIATION CHOICES

Mediation styles identified in this research *were* sometimes impacted by values, either directly or indirectly. Nevertheless, there were countless details that could modify or influence decisions parents made about mediation. Some parents trusted that their children would make good choices based upon values they had been taught. Others who had listed similar values felt the need to tightly control screen time as well as content. Parents who discussed content in detail with their children relied situationally on values, which could manifest either in communication style or what was said about the content being discussed.

Sometimes values had nothing to do with mediation choices. For example, parents who allowed their children to view content that was intended for more mature audiences often did so because of the need to rest or the desire to watch a certain program themselves. They would then rely on their values to talk about the content, mediating any negative effects they feared the offensive content might have had. Parents who allowed their children to watch teen shows containing disrespectful behavior used their values to talk about why that was not okay behavior to repeat, even though they allowed their children to watch a show with which they disagreed. Some parents sent their children out of the room or waited until their children were in bed to watch something that they preferred not to explain.

These are just a few of the examples from the focus groups. Even though parents used their values in a variety of ways to choose mediation techniques, families are all different. Thus, television mediation in the home is not easily categorized. This research

would suggest that studies that force families into generic mediation categories are problematic. It is not possible to categorize methods using the dominant structure (co-viewing, restrictive and active) because of continuous extenuating circumstances present in the life of a family.

CHAPTER IX

FUTURE RESEARCH

Research conducted for this thesis moves the study of mediation forward by beginning to explore the many ways that families talk about and practice mediation. Information, themes, observations, and categories from transcripts have yet to be exhausted. Additional issues identified in this material to be further explored in relation to mediation include: sexualization of children, representation and body image for girls, macho and “boys will be boys” stereotyping, girls who need to “be it all” (pretty, smart, strong, and successful), how children learn values and adopt their parents’ lifestyles, differences in the way younger siblings experience mediation compared to older siblings, peer pressure, addiction to television, parents’ extreme concern about dominant harmful themes in society, heavy marketing, and commercialization aimed at children.

Due to time constraints, analysis of transcripts with respect to nuances between participants was not addressed. Focus group phenomena such as dominators and outliers, reactionary comments, stuttering or laughing nervously over certain sensitive issues, meaningful glances between spouses, and body language were all observed. Close evaluation and interpretation of these events may contribute additional understanding to the discussion of values, television and mediation.

This thesis is intended to be the beginning of a larger body of research that will eventually include participatory investigation of values and television from the perspective of children and their parents within a family unit. Structures such as co-viewing, restrictive, and active mediation may be useful for quantitative researchers, but do not work as a practical tool for parents to assess and gauge what types of methods

work best for them, and whether it is effective and reflective of their own lifestyle and values. Conclusions from this study may help to understand how families mediate, and create a multi-step instrument that can eventually be used by parents to look at how home mediation methods are reflecting their values and lifestyle priorities.

This would be accomplished by following simple procedures looking at values, choices and feedback from their own children on what they understand. For example, parents would begin by recording values they are trying to teach their children. Then they would interview their children with age appropriate questions to find out what they understand the family core values to be. Next, a show would be co-viewed and values from the show are discussed. Parents can observe whether the children are critically thinking by discussing issues in the content, positive and negative, that have to do with their own values. After initial evaluation, parents and children would be able to adjust their mediation methods based upon what they find out from their children's participation and collaboration. Developing a functional and realistic tool to evaluate and improve mediation could prove to be significant on a personal, educational and scholarly level.

Research done in this thesis suggests that this type of tool would be received positively. Parents struggle daily to balance obligations and ensure that their children are able to understand family core values while navigating through their daily lives. The way families watch television may be changing, but complicated content is here to stay, and parents want what's best for their kids.

APPENDIX A

FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONNAIRE

Please answer the following questions. Complete the blanks or circle the answers that best describes your situation.

1. Today's Date: ___ ___/___ ___/___ ___ ___ mm dd yyyy

2. What is your age in years? _____

3. Gender you identify with:

- 1 Male
- 2 Female

4. Are you of Spanish/Hispanic/Latino origin?

- 1 No
- 2 Yes

5. What is your racial or ethnic background? **(Please check all that apply)**

- 1 White
- 2 Black or African-American
- 3 American Indian/Alaska Native
- 4 Asian
- 5 Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander

6. What is your current relationship status?

- 1 Never married
- 2 Married
- 3 Living with partner in committed relationship
- 4 Separated
- 5 Divorced
- 6 Widowed

7. How old is your child/are your children (circle all that apply) and what is their gender?

- 1 6 F M
- 2 7 F M
- 3 8 F M
- 4 9 F M
- 5 10 F M
- 6 11 F M
- 7 12 F M

8. Do you live with your child?

- 1 Full time 7 days a week
- 2 Shared custody at 3 or more days/week
- 3 Shared custody at less than 3 days a week
- 4 No Custody

9. What is the highest grade in school that you completed?

- 1 5th grade or less
- 2 6th grade
- 3 7th grade
- 4 8th grade
- 5 Some high school
- 6 High school grad/GED
- 7 Some college/Technical degree/AA
- 8 College degree (BA/BS)
- 9 Advanced degree (MA, PhD, MD)

10. What is your current occupational status?

- 1 Homemaker
- 5 On leave of absence
- 2 Unemployed
- 6 Full-time employed
- 3 Retired
- 7 Part-time employed
- 4 On disability
- 8 Full-time student only

11. What is your yearly family household income (from all sources):

- 1 Less than \$20,000
- 2 Between \$20,000 and \$49,999
- 3 Between \$50,000 and \$99,999
- 4 \$100,000 or more

12. How many TVs do you have in your home? _____

13. In which rooms are the TVs located?

13. How many additional screens do you have in your home that are used to watch TV shows? (tablets, computer, smart phones, etc. – please specify types)

14. Regarding TV shows for your children, do you seek opinions of other parents or online reviews? (Please list any sites or sources you use or have used)

15. Do you limit the amount of time/days of the week your children are allowed to watch?
YES NO

16. Please list as many of your family core values as you can think of:

17. Please list shows that your children are allowed to watch:

APPENDIX B

FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

- Please share what some of the values are that are important to you as a family?
- How do you teach these values to your children?
- What is the set-up surrounding the TVs? (Why are they in certain rooms/spaces? How many people can watch together? What is the seating situation?)
- Are there guidelines and/or rules about watching television? What are they?
- How do you enforce the rules?
- What are some of the situations/circumstances/reasons in which your children would watch TV?
- Is television used as an incentive or reward/threat punishment or taken away as a consequence? If so, how?
- Does television cause arguments in your home? If so, what kinds of arguments?
- What kinds of shows do your children watch? Why?
- How do you make decisions about the programs they watch?
- How do you handle it when your children want to watch something you don't want them to?
- Under what circumstances would you "give in" and let them watch something you have previously disapproved of?
- If you preview shows before your children see them, how do you go about this? Do you watch the entire thing or part? Do you scan?
- If you ever watch shows with your children, what kinds of shows do you watch?
- If you seek opinions of other parents or online sources, how do you go about this? Do you ever base a content decision solely on a review or recommendation?
- What do you know about the TV rating system? If so, do or would you use TV ratings to make decisions or block certain shows? Can you elaborate?

- Regarding the rules for television watching in the home, how do they differ for yourselves (parents) than for your children? How do your kids feel about that?
- Is there a channel or channels (like Disney, Nickelodeon, ABC Family, Discovery, PBS, etc.) that your kids are always allowed to watch, regardless of the individual show or film? Can you elaborate, especially regarding what would make it so? TRUSTED CHANNEL
- How do you feel about the influence on children of television overall?
- How do you feel about the creators of television? Do you think they have childrens' best interest at heart?
- What kinds of traits make a show "appropriate" or "inappropriate"?
- How do you uphold your values when it comes to television in your home? Is this something that you think about actively?

APPENDIX C

RECRUITMENT LETTER

Dear Parents,

I am a Master's student from the Media Studies department in the School of Journalism and Communication at the University of Oregon. I am writing to invite you to participate in my research study about families and TV in the home. Focus groups will be held one weekday evening in May (beginning at 6:00pm or 6:30pm) in Allen Hall on the University of Oregon campus. You are eligible to be in this study if you have at least one child between the ages of 6 and 12. You are receiving this e-mail because you are a parent at _____, and the (principal/administrator/teacher) has agreed to allow me to contact you. A flier with basic information is also attached to this e-mail.

If you decide to participate in this study, you will attend a single one-hour focus group where you will join a group of parents in discussing use of TV with your own family. Groups will also discuss family core values and how they relate to choices that parents make about TV. Children will not be asked to participate in focus groups or asked to fill our surveys or questionnaires in any way. Free childcare by a responsible adult will be available during scheduled focus groups in the same building (snacks provided). Focus group participants will each receive two free tickets to a movie theater in the Eugene/Springfield area. If couples participate, each person will still receive two tickets. I would like to audio record the conversations. This information will be used to interpret the discussions for my Master's thesis.

Remember this is completely voluntary. You can choose to be in the study or not. If you would like to participate or have any questions about the study, please e-mail or contact me at the e-mail/phone number below.

Thank you very much.

Sincerely,

Kris Wright
Master's Candidate, Media Studies
School of Journalism and Communication
University of Oregon
kwright@uoregon.edu
619-980-9552

IRB Protocol Number: 04062013.008

APPENDIX D

CONSENT FORM

University of Oregon Consent Form
University of Oregon School of Journalism
Informed Consent for Participation as a Subject in Television and Families
Investigator: Kristen Wright
Type of consent: Adult Consent Form
Introduction:
You are being asked to be in a research study of families and television. You were selected as a possible participant because you are parents of children in the target age-range and expressed interest in participating. We ask that you read this form and ask any questions that you may have before agreeing to be in the study.
Purpose of Study:
The purpose of this study is to learn about television choices (set-up and content) in different families. Specifically we want to understand values that are important to families and how they relate to choices they make about television.
Description of the Study Procedures:
If you agree to be in this study, we would ask you to do the following: Participate in a focus group and talk about the way television fits into your family life and /or children (s) lives.
Risks/Discomforts of Being in the Study:
There is no more than minimal risk associated with this study. There is a risk of discomfort in speaking of personal and family values in front of strangers. There is a risk of loss of confidentiality due to the format of a focus group. Participants should not discuss the information shared in the focus group outside of the research.
Benefits of Being in the Study:
The benefits of participation are to have a lively and enjoyable conversation about your children and family.
Payments:
You will receive the following reimbursement: Refreshments during the focus group and movie tickets as a thank you gift.
Costs:
There is no cost to you to participate in this research study.
Confidentiality:
The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report we may publish, we will not

include any information that will make it possible to identify a participant. Research records will be kept in a locked file with names not disclosed on the files.

All electronic information will be coded and secured using a password protected file. Only Kristen Wright will have access to the audio recordings being used, which will be destroyed three years after the initial study.

Access to the records will be limited to the researchers; however, please note that applicable regulatory agencies, and the Institutional Review Board and internal University of Oregon auditors may review the research records.

Voluntary Participation/Withdrawal:

Your participation is voluntary. If you choose not to participate, it will not affect your current or future relations with the University.

You are free to withdraw at any time, for whatever reason.

There is no penalty or loss of benefits for not taking part or for stopping your participation. This research session (focus group) will be audio recorded. Choosing not to be recorded is not an option because of the group nature of the discussion. If you are not comfortable with the session being audio recorded, it will not be possible for you to participate at this time. Please inform the researcher immediately if you will not be participating.

Contacts and Questions:

The researcher conducting this study is Kristen Wright. For questions or more information concerning this research you may contact her at 619-980-9552 or kwright@uoregon.edu.

If you believe you may have suffered a research related injury, contact Kristen Wright who will give you further instructions.

If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, you may contact: the [Research Compliance Services, University of Oregon at \(541-346-2510\) or \[ResearchCompliance@uoregon.edu\]\(mailto:ResearchCompliance@uoregon.edu\)](#).

Copy of Consent Form:

You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records and future reference.

Statement of Consent:

(Choose only one statement according to type of consent or assent form)

For Adult Consent Form or older child (12-17 years) combined Consent/Assent (Full form): I have read (or have had read to me) the contents of this consent form and have been encouraged to ask questions. I have received answers to my questions. I give my consent to participate in this study. I have received (or will receive) a copy of this form.

Signatures/Dates:

Study Participant (Print Name):

Participant or Legal Representative Signature :

Date:

APPENDIX E

PARENT QUOTES IN EMERGENT THEMES AND SUB-CATEGORIES

Family framework: Values, lifestyle, set up.

Action/interpretation: appropriate or inappropriate content/trusted channels or, influence that television has over children, limitations and rules, and extrinsic motivators.

Justification/Rationale: child's personality, diversion

Mediation Styles: co-viewing and preview, general discussion of content, trust/self-monitor, consulting outside sources for advice, no kids allowed, TV is just entertainment.

FAMILY FRAMEWORK

Values

Serve as standards or criteria: non-violence, compassion, honesty, integrity, respect others, modesty, fairness, generosity, love, stand up for what is right.

Motivational construct (model positive behavior): clear communication, paying attention to the feelings of others, gratitude, patience, fun, adventure, mindfulness, inter-connectedness, treat others as you would like to be treated, no swearing, serve your neighbors and community, get an education, value the fine arts, be active, work hard to be successful, be a good friend, be a leader and don't follow the crowd, laughter, live lightly on the planet, consume less, be thoughtful and helpful, be affectionate/give hugs, praise and cuddle freely, have good manners, respect others and boundaries, be creative, be your own person, determination, loyalty, always try your hardest, speak the truth, cooperate, share, listen, learn, question, be curious, be safe.

Beliefs (tied to emotion and ranked): importance of respect, work ethic, God and faith, family first, keep the Sabbath holy, no sex before marriage.

Abstract goals: understanding the child's behavior.

Guides that shape routines: working with the child's personality, spend time outdoors, travel, experience new things, attend church, saying "I can't" isn't an option, non-violent problem solving, listen to all sides before judging, find connection in everyday stuff.

Set-up

3A...the laptop and the tablet can move around with us, we have a small house and we just turn it on. So those just kind-of move around with us. And the monitor/TV screen is set in the living room under a cabinet that has a roll thing on it so it pretty much shut all the time... where the TV, the roll-top monitor is, that's pretty comfortable, it's like, it's kind-of in the living room and it's all just a nice big couch, and its pretty comfortable where we travel with the laptop and the tablet.

4A Ok, um we have four screens that we can watch like TV kind of things on. We don't have cable or anything, or a television. We have a computer that it is in like a loft over our living room, so it's in the main living space but kind-of out of the way a bit, and really my 8-year-old son is the only one who tends to use that much, and usually like with headphones, so he's very comfortable there. My 12-year-old daughter has an iPad and an iPod Touch which her dad gave her, which she watches shows on, and sometimes other people will use the iPad, and then I have a computer, but it's out in a separate building I have an art studio and there's like a big comfy couch out there and it's a bigger screen so when we watch movies together and like, we watch The Simpson's together, a lot, we'll just sit out there.

6A We have 3 TVs, but 2 of them are only like hooked up to a DVD player or, they're only used for those purposes, and then um we have one that's attached to cable and gets pretty much everything, but usually my husband has control of that so it's always ESPN. But we have, we have a tablet, a computer and then my daughter has her own iPod touch so she is able to watch things on that...the tablets come in handy because they want to be in the same room or near me, and so the comfort level just kind-of depends on where the parents are like my husband and I, if we're all in the living room if my husband's watching his sports show my kid'll come in and take my iPhone or the tablet and they'll turn on like Netflix and watch Johnny Test or something on there and, with there headphones on and listen to that.

7A We have 2 TVs that are hooked to cable, because we too value ESPN, I should put that on my value system. And then we have a laptop, my husband's iPhone, and my iPad from work...we do the direct TV On Demand, free, the free stuff...very comfortable locations for all of our televisions. I was talking to people who were here early, we have a bar. So we have a very comfortable bar television...then that has the flatscreen and then just an older big TV in our living room. And then everything else just kind-of goes around wherever we go. Usually in the common area. We try really hard to keep all technology always outside of our bedrooms, that's the rule I grew up with and I like it. Dog-on-it! So all technology is out of the bedrooms.

1B We don't actually have TV as far as like being able to watch channels because I have this old TV that never got the box that lets you watch the new-style TV, but we go to the library a lot and he checks out his favorites.

1A So we have three screens. One is a television that I think is older than most of the people in the room right now. It was born in 1981. And so it's antenna reception, and then we have two computers, which is our kitchen where we eat, and so the TV is in a

room that's upstairs, it's cozy and also doubles as my office. And it's where our second computer is.

8A Both my husband and I have iPhones, but they're like our toys so the kids don't really get to it. We have two computers and one iPad. One of the computers is in our bedroom, under our loft, and it's mostly my husband uses it for work, and um, the children sometimes use it to watch movies, the other computer is in the corner of the living room and it's usually off and it's usually covered by a little tapestry thing and it's just a really old computer that has a lot of information in it that we're too lazy to switch over so we decided to keep it there.

4B So we don't have cable, so that narrows the channels quite a bit. So like in the morning, the only thing that there is PBS Kids. And everything on PBS Kids is really kid-friendly, educational, so that's kind-of my, if they say "Can we watch TV?" they'd automatically turn it on, that's the only channel that has cartoons so it's fairly easy. They don't have to make a choice, it's just sit there and watch the news or PBS Kids.

10A Upstairs in her bedroom she has videos and DVDs that are all pretty kid friendly, I think the worst thing she has is "the Black Cauldron" that's not too intense. But um when we're downstairs we'll take turns um you get to pick a show I get to pick a show...sometimes I'll be watching an adult show and I don't feel like sharing...I have limited TV time so she's sat down to an episode of "Breaking Bad" with me.

7A My kids don't watch TV but they go to You Tube and watch videos and stuff. Like they do the Gangahn style (laughter) they each have their computer and there in this area between the family room and the kitchen, so I always see their screens. So they put it on, and then they practice. But I always know what they're looking at.

6A If I have to go cook dinner or run over a lot of times it is easier to know if he is in the living room keeping track...the tablets come in handy because they want to be in the same room or near me, so the comfort level just kind-of depends on where the parents, are like my husband and I, if we're all in the living room if my husband's watching his sports show my kid'll come in and take my iPhone or the tablet and they'll turn on like Netflix and watch Johnny Test or something on there and, with there headphones on and listen to that, um, I do always ask to see what's on there... I always am just kind-of looking over their shoulder, or, um, unplug the thing just so I can hear what's going on.

4A We have the laptop computer, and I noticed the changes in her age, like before she was 6, she's almost 7 now, she need, she needed, she's the kind of kid that needed to be next to me all the time in the house, like I couldn't leave her in another room, and just go do something, so she would wake up a lot earlier than I did on the weekends, but she wouldn't just like go in the living room and watch, so I pull out the laptop and put it on the bed with us and then she could watch her little Netflix shows like Scooby Doo or Little Ponies or whatever, and I could tell what she was watching, and kind-of monitor that piece, she didn't, she didn't know how to surf or anything on the web.

Lifestyle

7A...we don't have a lot of time to talk about it because...I work full-time, their father works full-time, so I spend about four hours with them a week, so the talk is actually really difficult and then there's sports and then they go this way and that way and so it's a lot more by example.

6A...my religious structure helps to cultivate how we kind-of set the example for our kids, we set aside Monday night for family night, we always have Monday nights where we teach our kids a moral lesson, or talk about things that you know we want to share with them and give them kind-of like our own little family educational lesson, we also go to church every Sunday and Sunday, church is what we do. We don't do outdoor activities...every other day we can have any other activities and stuff like that but for us Sunday's like a good opportunity to be at home, share together our time at home, because again we come from a two parent working home where during the week everything is just crazy and we don't get a lot of time to just sit and "be" with our children and so that's a time where we do a lot reading, a lot of just talking and planning our week ahead and a lot of time that's where a lot of important conversations happen for us, is a lot of those moments that we're actually not doing anything else. So I say that we try to schedule in some actual time where just nothing else is our focus.

4A I do a lot in the car. Honestly? I mean who's not in the car all the time and that is just sometimes because I have one child and her father doesn't live in the country and so she doesn't see him so it's just the two of us a lot of the time in the car and I think we're able to talk about just about anything in the car and I can ask questions and she can't get away. Um, so, you know, for that kind of time to talk about things, but um yeah she goes to church with me every Sunday and LOVES it.

3A I'm a single parent and it's just my daughter and I that live at home, and so I think that for me like I was looking at my values, I spend a lot of time with my daughter, playing with her and, and like the creativity and free expression is really important, and community is really important so, we just have a really good core group of friends and, and whether I'm at home, it's just her and I, she makes up a lot of games and I just play with her a lot.

7A...we find connection in every day stuff: cooking, cleaning, commuting, bedtime. We have a really structured bedtime routine that makes life really easy because everybody knows the sequence of things and you know I trained them when they were young so you know my oldest is 11 turns 12 this summer and they're just all barely on it, and so part of the bedtime routine we have circle time, we light candles and just share a little bit about our day...and say something that you find interesting or something that you really want to share, so it doesn't have to be good or bad or anything it's just open, and because I have three boys that's really valuable because they're not like girls that talk a little bit they're you know more, you they're more doing rather than talking and so just giving that space.

7A...from sunup to sundown we're a pretty...it's organized chaos...get ready for the school bus, since we're both parents they stay at their care program until 5:30 when I pick them up.

ACTION/INTERPRETATION

Appropriate or inappropriate content/trusted channels

1A He watches PBS Kids TV and then sometimes wants to channel surf, sometimes he'll do that. We try to steer him away from news.

6A I have noticed that a lot of the cartoons...the 6-12 year-old age, it's a lotta the things I kinda raise my eyebrows up, like 'cause I don't really know what to do with it, 'cause it's not like inappropriate but it's not, also not necessarily age - appropriate either, you know there's kind of a gap, so 'cause my kids are no longer into the preschool shows or the younger Disney Channel, the stuff that's on before noon, they want to watch the stuff that's after noon and that sometimes is like, sometimes it's just a little bit more, vulgar, in the sense of like what they say, like you know, farting humor and vom...you know like there's more of THAT kind of stuff that goes on, so I try to find alternatives to those, but a lot of times my kids go to that 'cause it's funny. So, I don't know. So I try to I don't know limit, but it's really hard to figure out how to have them make better choices when it comes to their media options. Because to say it's Nickelodeon or Disney Channel is, that's a kid channel to them so they think that's what, it's ok to watch... I haven't really found one that I'm just like super like, everything on there I'm, it's "go to", unless it's PBS, but my kids are kind-of moving away from that...a lot of them are more educational and they say "well we watch that at school" or something, like they don't, for them it's not entertainment it's kind-of like "meh" whereas Disney Channel or Nickelodeon, Cartoon Network, um Disney XD they have so many choices now that are specifically commercialized towards kids, that they do feel like that's for them.

7A They know appropriate language and I trust them, and I think that has been a learning experience for me as a parent as well, to say "I'm gonna trust your your judgement, in an appropriate television show, and if there's any question, let me come and listen." And most of the time it's really appropriate.

8A (I use) the iPad occasionally YouTube videos that are inspiring that I think might help with something. Like my son plays the violin, for a while he just had absolutely no interest in practicing, it was like pulling teeth. And then I showed him this awesome YouTube video of this guy playing violin and it was so inspiring like afterward my son just picked up his violin and started playing again. So that's how I use TV.

1B I don't really want to desensitize him to that so I've been trying to only pick movies that I think are going to not create that reaction in him. So we've gone to a lot of like OLD school Disney movies. 'Cause it seems like most of the new stuff is just way too

intense, it's all about good and evil and there's somebody BAD and you have to KILL them and so we watch um more like "The Love Bug" series or "Dr. Doolittle" or even "Pollyanna" and he likes most of those movies.

10B She has the option of trying to watch shows with us like "the Walking Dead" or she can go upstairs and watch a video or if she thinks she can handle it and not have nightmares that's cool. Mostly it's just people fighting and sometimes there's zombies, so I don't think it's too bad.

6B It's just that there's always overly snarky attitudes towards adults, and so...but you know again, it is a child's sitcom, but they're not adults obviously, but we watch a similar thing, um so there's nothing damaging or harmful.

4B The violence doesn't really seem to bother me so much, and the kids watch I guess violent movies, but then they also watch, they watch like "Living Wild Alaska" or whatever where they'll shoot an animal, then they have to show they're going to eat the animal and so like that doesn't really affect my kids, they're not violence doesn't bother them, I just try to keep them out of like, we're watching a show, an adult show, and they want to be in the room, I'll just say "there's a mommy or daddy show on TV you guys can't watch it you need to go into your room and either put on a kid movie or read a book or do something else, but the...they've seen a lot of the Disney movies and we, you know watch them with them but the violence doesn't seem to like bother them, they're, you know fine with it I guess.

8A... I just ask them, "Is this appropriate for you?" And um you'd be surprised, they really know, and often times you know they'll just, my son will say "That was very inappropriate" or he'll go to a friend's house and he'll tell me about it and I'll say "Was that appropriate?" and he's like, "mmmm, there was some language, there was a little bit of violence, you know, definitely, kind-of on the edge for me but definitely inappropriate for my eight-year-old brother so when we have family movies where we all watch it, I usually ask them to decide. And say what's appropriate for the whole family? So that they have to negotiate you know, it has to be interesting, so what we end up, we don't have a brand, but what we end up going to, the go tos are nature documentaries, silent movies and old musicals.

3A I find that I break down when she's at somebody else's house, so like a lot of times, when she'll have a sleepover/playdate it's at a friend's house that I'm also friends with so it's like we're kind-of like a big family, it's almost like their aunt or their uncle. And so I'm over there and the kids will turn on, I guess this new show that she likes is "Charmed", and I've only watched like a couple minutes of it and when I'm watching it, it's not something that I ALLOW, like if it were in my house and she asked me to watch it I would say no, but she's at somebody else's house and there's like three girls there and they're all sitting there eating popcorn and watching this movie so I think that that's really a hard place for me to, to keep (clears throat) to keep my values strong, is when she's with her friends. And they're like, "oh we watch this all the time and we're in the middle of this drama and we need to find out what happened", but even when she tells me this

story it's , it's not something I'm really comfortable wit. So that's, I think that's the hardest part of it, when it has to do with friends.

6A My daughter watches a media thing that either I'm not familiar with or didn't think I would have, let her watch in my home, I'll just start asking her questions about the show and then I'll ask her how SHE feels about it and well what did you think about it, what did you like about it what did you didn't like about it, and I'll say well would you want to watch that again or what and usually she'll tell me like "now I actually thought..." you know when she actually starts thinking about it, and what she watched and the content of it and everything like that, usually she starts to realize, "oh, that didn't align with the values that I'm trying to develop in my own se..." you know, she is developing in her own self, which usually reflect on the core values that we have at home, and so then she'll like "you know I don't think I'll watch that again" and then I'll say "well what will you do if you go to your friends' house and they want to watch that again" and she's like "well maybe I'll suggest that we go do something else or watch another show" so trying to also give her the opportunity to think through it and have her think "does it match what I want for myself or not, and then have HER decide how she is then going to act in the future, if she gets in that situation , usually helps her not feel like I'm being judgmental of her choices but helps her realize that she can make other ones in the moment.

7A I kind-of made it known with my circle of friends that my kid doesn't watch everything your kid watches, I'm really sorry. Maybe someday, definitely someday, but not today...they still like me.

Influence that television has over children (media effects)

6A At least once we have to have a discussion that no you're not fat, not you're not ugly, no you're curly hair's just fine, media of the girls that she sees on TV really does play into how she self-examines herself, and even though you might have a great strong character and usually that that of a woman, or even a guy, there's a lot of "how I look and how people look at me" makes a huge difference in "who I actually am" so that can be really hard to try to teach them that that doesn't mean anything about you, you know you don't need to look like the blonde-eyed, blue-eyed, blonde-haired blue-eyed girl, you're brown hair's curly and you have brown eyes and your skin's brown, you know so that kind-of stuff for her is like a huge deal and a huge topic of conversation and I think it's REALLY influenced by the media that she is exposed to...Or just being exposed to people who actually look and appear like them and have normal lives, because it's fine to have the pretty girl or the good looking guy as the main characters and then the fat chubby one is the best friend or the, you know that doesn't say or is always funny like you know on one of the shows my daughters watch, the petite cute girl is the main character and she has love interests and the two best friends of the two main characters are the fat chubby funny girl and the really dorky goofy or stupid boy, I mean like do you really, there's no place for someone to be different and to be the star, you know what I mean like, or for people to like them because of our differences

3B It seems almost like every single show, even the shows that like "safe shows" kind-of have teasing, like they're trying to "teach" something with the teasing but sometimes I kind-of, like if it's bleeding through in their behavior, then I tell them you can't watch either that show or watch TV for a little while just to get that behavior back out... We watch "Phineas and Ferb" a lot because everybody's nice to each other on that shows. And there's one mean sister, and even she's kind-of nice. So we have certain shows that we'll kind-of fall back on if we start having teasing issues or things like that sometimes.

6B Sometimes you have to, you know approach them on like how do they respond to things... even some of the cartoons have gotten kind-of bad.

10B Every single show. And like all the shows about dolls alike the Barbie movies the Monster High shows I mean it's SO obvious they've introduced a new character - oh I have to go out and buy that doll. So I'm trying to illustrate the parallels (laughs) "do you really want that doll or is it because you saw it on the show?" And making her earn her allowance and pick and choose what she really really wants to buy and try and get her to think about why she wants to buy it but she's 10, she doesn't care. Um, I don't know insofar as how they're affected by shows I know this isn't my kid but my nephew is allowed to watch all manner of horror shows, and Freddy vs Jason, and for a long time he was starting to emulate them, pretending to cut people's heads off in play and WOW, (laughing) I think that that's just going a LITTLE too far, I'm pretty permissive but dang, like graphic murder and violence. I think that they definitely emulate some of the things that they're seeing. snark, my kiddo definitely gets snarky sometimes so I have to "Now you remember when that happened on the show how the other person felt - don't pull it on me." Just throw it back, I mean, sometimes she doesn't realize that she's doing it because it's something that she's seen.

7B When he was in preschool, they would watch Disney shows, you know they're SUPPOSED to ask the parents if it's ok to watch certain movies like if they're PG, and that didn't always happen, and so he would come talking about a movie and we're like "you saw WHAT?" you know, in preschool what? So they we'd have to talk about that and get up to speed if it was probably something we wouldn't have show him or, so I mean it's forced because it's related, because I see it as a vehicle I'm going to, I realize that TV's entertainment but there are also values that kind of subliminally get into um what...children's perception of the way the world should work, that I consciously feel like "ok, there's some things that I'm ok with, but there's some things.

9B I watched television pretty much unchecked all the time as a kid and so um you know I definitely wanted the lifestyle that was on you know uh, "Silver Spoons", I don't know if you remember that. You know I wanted that really badly and so I just wanted my kids to be able to kind of live in their own reality, and then be able to check that against what they were watching, and not have that be the reality and have them comparing what was on TV to what their life was, you know have it be sort-of the opposite to that.

5A ...so here is this AWESOME probably Disney movie, with a really strong female lead, um, and I really enjoyed it, BUT she was still in high school trying to be the Homecoming girl, trying to be the prettiest girl, trying to you know, not being very smart and she learned her lessons through the movie but it was like EVEN the strong female leads, try to look pretty, try to attract the boy, you know, I LOVE the "Airbender"... "The Last Airbender" because the female leads in there are super strong and they're not about having a boyfriend. Um, and they're not about learning how that isn't the answer either and so that was one that I could really get behind. But like "Pooka", she likes to watch "Pooka" which is a South Korean cartoon about little karate kids, and THAT girl's always chasing after a boy, and ... "Tinkerbell" and you know and there's a lot of like little tiny skirts and you know perfect Barbie bodies and stuff like that and so even when I try really hard to bring strong female role models into her media viewing... I'm thwarted every which way, and um I'm dismayed at that. And so, I don't really know how to handle it except for to look at it, help her critically examine it... to ask those questions... But I'm pretty much disgusted... just even the preschool stuff I think is even almost setting them up. Even the animal shows like "My Little Pony" or um what else does she watch that's animal, of she loves any dog movies... But even the dogs have, the female dogs have a sexualized... yeah, and the "aaaaaaah"... there's still this patriarchal society that's pushing the sexualization of women on top of that, which in one respect, I mean, you know having stronger female leads is really important, but it also makes things even more hard to, I don't know, to reach for a young girl if not only is that girl beautiful but she's a warrior who can kick butt and that's even more alienating sometimes. I don't know, I, I just hope that... it's changed really fast in the last 15 years and I hope it keeps changing and we figure some stuff out because I'm really worried about kids in our society growing up with these examples.

4A ...the representation of women and girls in media affects us really strongly and it's really difficult to see because there aren't that many alternatives.

7A the same thing happens with boys. the over-macho, that fighting is ok, hitting and striking versus talking things out. I think that there's a LOT of negative relationship-building for boys as well... yeah, that violence thing.

Limitations and rules

3A During the week, she's allowed to watch about 30 minutes to 40 minutes of something. It usually doesn't happen because we're usually busy doing other activities anyways. And then on the weekends... if she doesn't have a sleepover we're usually out and about doing things, and you know, we don't usually have any time to do media.

4A In terms of like limitations we're not super structured about it. I just finished school, uh, last summer and so while I was in school I was working and my partner was working all the time as well, we kind-of just like them watch a lot of stuff. But they're actually, they're really good at self-limiting so we haven't really felt the need to impose too much structure around the time that they spend.

6A We don't have like a strict like, you only get 2 hours of TV a week or anything...depending on what night of the week it is, you know I'll allow her so much screen time. Um, my son who is not quite 6, he's 5 and a half, you know we kind-of do the same thing for him but we're not as structured with him.

7A TV doesn't really get turned on during the weekday, and then because my son doesn't really like weekends because we have them do chores, because that's the only time we get to have them to do chores... I set a timer, because I'm not good at keeping track either... they have this structured, ok 20 minutes starting NOW, we don't watch particular shows that are only on at certain times, so we do the direct TV On Demand the free stuff.

8A They all know the rules, no watching screens on a school night. It's default, when they know that that's understood they just kind-of go with it. They'll start pushing on Friday and Saturday, you know, and often times at most we watch three movies a month. And at the minimum it's one movie a month. And they just spread the movie out weeks, so they really have a very minimal screen time ...I think for this age.

3B I guess we watch every day but we watch A show, a day...

8B Yeah, there is an exception that..there's only one show that we watch together that's like live, and that's "The Voice", sometimes we'll watch that together. "The Voice" it's the talent show, and so like that's 2 days a week right now for a couple of hours, we can watch it until it's time for bed, which is 9, so... It's limited. Maybe he watches one hour. And then we watch, he can watch something on Friday and Saturday is basically it.

7B As a family we can watch something but he limited to two hours of screen time for the weekend. And so that could be the computer, or his own cartoon that he loves to watch on Saturday or whatever, but two hours he can spend that how he wants. Generally he spends it on the computer playing games... To us that's separate from family time where we actually enjoy...sometimes he'll try and be like "...oh, want to watch this cartoon with me?" Like "Woody Woodpecker" or something. And we're like "No that's...if you want to watch that that's your...that's part of your screen time we don't want to watch any TV."

1B Well, Monday through Thursday we basically only are together like 2 hours in the evening and so no TV at all, and on the weekends like Friday night uh I kind-of lose track, to tell you the truth, because a lot of times he's wanting to watch TV and I've got stuff I've got to do, so it might be an hour or 2. And then on Saturday same thing, sometimes maybe even 3 hours. So I don't...I think I would LIKE to only tell him an hour but then I look over and "Oh god, 2 hours went by" and he's busily watching his whatever and I just got all the laundry done and everything else and...but I DON'T let him, I usually don't let him have mornings either. He wants to get up and start watching TV right away. And I just don't think that's a good way to start your day...and um so

Saturday or Sunday I don't let him watch...it's more towards the afternoon 'cause it's totally rainy and evenings usually it's like 2 or 3 hours probably, so.

2B I don't have any rules I guess but in the evening since I work until 5 we don't usually, I have to go pick them up and then home at 5:30 and then we're upstairs at 7 so they're only you downstairs for an hour and a half (laughs) so, I mean they DO they do watch TV but usually it's something on the DVR or they might play a video game on their 3DS or something but I have a rule, no video games, no iPad, nothing upstairs, so they're completely not electronic when they move upstairs to start to take baths and get ready for bed and stuff. But on the weekends I actually like having them wake up and watch TV, because I find that after an hour then they don't want any more and they're ready to do...spend the rest of the day doing other stuff. You know, let's go to the park. let's ride bikes, you know it becomes something that...it gets boring (laughing) , so it's kind-of interesting to hear you say that you don't like them to start the day that way. I had found that for me that's a good way for them to start the day because it holds no intrigue (laughs) and so it's easy to pull them out of the house and do other things, they don't feel like they're missing anything.

10B We don't do TV in the morning because she gets sucked in and she'll spend like half an hour putting a sock...weekends I like it when she sits and watches TV and doesn't want to go outside because when she's outside I I have to be vigilant (in our area?) and I have to kind of be outside or near a window to keep an eye on her so I like it when she wants to chill for an hour and let me wake up.

9B Our rules are kind-of flexible. But most of the time it has to do with my, if my wife and I FEEL like watching something, and want to show it to them...usually if they ask us and we, you know we know there's not time or something we'll tell them to find something else to do or put them outside...and usually on weekdays we don't watch anything but if there's a soccer match on and that rule goes out the window, we even watch it while we're eating.

Extrinsic motivators

5A If she hasn't done her homework yet then there's no way. I used TV and, or screen time as a privilege and something that she has to earn, so if she's having issues with some of her core values, then um you know Ill tell her you know you didn't earn the privilege to watch the show that you wanted to watch and I'm sorry but I'm sure tomorrow you'll have the chance to, to get to that point again. So for us, TV or screen time has been a parenting tool for me, because it's a reward for her, it's seen as a reward, um, it's been hard as a single mom to, who works full-time, to come home and cook dinner and give her all the attention that I wish I could give her.

7A TV is definitely a privilege too in our house, and he knows when he's lost the privilege, he's my strong-willed one who's not really very strong...so it's a reward system and um, they're really really good at asking permission for things, and so they know that if they get set number of chores done they get a privilege.

2B It's not special enough to be a reward and it's not interesting enough to feel like punishment if it's gone. So I think it holds no interest for me. I grew up without television. I didn't even own one until I was 27, and then it just sat off until I was 32. And then I started watching, then I would turn on TV and I didn't understand the appeal at all. And so it has no appeal for me now. So even though we have 4 TVs and we have a DVR it's like, for me I'm not interested, so I don't watch TV I always go and read. So my kids turn the TV off and read. So it's kind-of um, so I don't use it for a reward or punishment because it's just it's not fun enough to be a reward and not having it doesn't feel like punishment to them. So it's neither nor there, really. They'd MISS it if we didn't have it, but it's not the end of the world.

1B I don't usually use it as a reward because it's sort-of a given, but if my son is not cooperating and putting up a big fight about helping out with chores or whatever I'll say "Ok, if you don't want to do the chores you're not going to get to have movies this week" or something like that. And so far he ALWAYS ALWAYS steps up at that point. Because he LOVES watching TV.

2B We take it away if they won't cooperate. If they can't cooperate and they fight over a show then, then they don't get to watch TV that day. But it's only in reference TO the TV, so, it's kind-of like shutting down what's causing the problem.

9B I've used it as a way to get my kids to negotiate with each other, if they want to watch a, a little movie or something like that I would tell them they could watch it if they cleaned up and if they could agree on what they were going to watch, and I would close the door to the family room and wait for them to come and give me their decision. If they didn't agree then I wouldn't let them, so, but it is never really used it as a punishment or a reward.

10B ...we kind-of play a game while we're watching TV 'cause there are chores to be done but we've all just had a LONG day and we want to veg so we'll set a little kitchen timer every 10-15 minutes we all have to get up and do a chore, finish the chore, come back down watch a little bit more TV so if she's particularly fussy or extra tired or just doesn't want to then we'll let her choose the show we still got to do our chores but you get to choose the show that we're going to watch in between.

JUSTIFICATION/RATIONALE

Child's personality

1A I wanted my son to take up full-contact stamp collecting...but he's chosen, hockey we're a non-violent family, we don't have guns in our household, but every stick he picks up is a [ch ch ch ch ch ch ch] so working with that as, he works with it...understanding how he views the world, and come up with a solution based on what we're seeing coming out of him...where we do the same things every day tends to

decrease his anxiety and um, also decreases our anxiety, making sure he has free time and then there's, he is a boy who needs a lot of attention from us and he lets us know it so we try to give it to him, so we'll tag team, one of us will pay attention to him and the other one gets to do some housework. But if we try to do housework when he wants attention it just causes a fight that lasts about an hour and so you know housework, nothing else gets done, so we, we've come up with tag team (wife nods and murmurs in agreement)...we can share that... We found that on occasion the best way to get him to eat is when he would plant himself or we would plant him in front of the computer screen in our kitchen, and, um, he'll get distracted by it and he'll "robot eat".

8A I have three boys that's really valuable because they're not like girls that talk a little bit more (laughter from group), they're you know more, you they're more doing rather than talking and so just giving that space, my...son will pop up with something like "this person took this from me at school" that would, you know, normally not come out and then he will get all choked up about it and if I hadn't given that opportunity for him to say it'll just carry onto the next day so, um, that's been really helpful for our family.

4A I've found it's changed a lot as um, particularly with my daughter who's 12, 12 and a half. And she's, well she's always really wanted to, just you know, BE older... everything is about being more mature, and...so she like wants to watch the same kinds of things that my partner and I watch.

Diversion/babysitter

5A It's been hard as a single mom to, who works full-time, to come home and cook dinner and give her all the attention that I wish I could give her, and so I found over the years that TV programs, or watching screen time has been a babysitter or like a substitute, because we're both very social creatures but you can't be out and about all the time, and so when we're at home I have to do the laundry and this and that she can end up in front of the screen.

6A We do use it as (laughs nervously) a babysitting tool, in the sense of if I have to go cook dinner... My husband usually turns it on and starts working or whatever he's gonna be doing, letting the TV babysit a little bit so he can get something done.

7A ... it's my babysitter as well, "Like oh great! They're out of my hair for 20 minutes!"

4B Our kids are super busy they play you know 3 to 4 sports um, sometimes 2 to 3 sports at a time, so when we are home it's kind of, it's like their DOWN time, it's like relax and veg and mommy can get laundry and dinner and stuff done um but they're, most nights they're not home to watch TV so we don't, it's really more like a reward for US if they watch TV, or let us sleep in (laughter).

10B The only time we really let go of that rule is when she's sick. And she can watch as much TV as she wants because I want her to stay as still as possible... she wants to go

out and DO things and she wants to sew with me and she wants to cook with me (BIG sigh) (laughing) I kind-of wish she'd she's want to sit, (laughing) a little bit more.

7A We do watch a lot more TV when they're sick. So they told me the other day "we like when we're sick sometimes 'cause it means we get to watch TV as much as we want (big laugh in room)...or...if we went on like a really huge hike, and they're really tired, then I'll sometimes let them watch, 'cause otherwise they fight when they're playing and they're just too crabby, so I let them watch a show if they're really really tired.

MEDIATION STYLES

Co-viewing and preview

6A I do always ask to see what's on there because I know with, a lot of times they, you know 'cause my kids are a little bit more savvy than I wish they were and can find a lot of things, um, so I always am just kind-of looking over their shoulder, or, um, unplug the thing just so I can hear what's going on...I usually do a lot of co-viewing, I usually, I'm well aware of a lot of the shows and what they're about because I'll be in the room with the kids, if it's on our main screen I'll be sitting there with them. If I'm reading a book while they're on it I'll always, usually get distracted because I start listening in on what's being said and so, so that happens. But then there's a few show that my family as a whole like to watch together...my husband and kids like to watch watch like "The Voice" like the singing and talent shows, they like to watch those kinds of things together, so they'll all do that together, um, so mediation-wise that's usually "co". Though when they get the screen gets smaller, that's a little harder (light laughter) to monitor, so that's why I lot of times I have to like, "let me see what's on the iPhone" or "let me see..." um, because also there because it's mobile, so a lot of times if my son, kids also, and my son's a little bit sneakier, he'll like get up and like start walking out of the room and I'll always ask him like "what are you doing?" and, as long as he, he just says "oh I'm just heading here I'll be right back", then I know that he's not trying to sneak something past me. But if he usually is like gone for more than 5 minutes I'll go and find him and see if he's trying to watch something that's a little bit above his grade.

3A I guess I monitor with her because we watch some things together... she will take the tablet and then put on Netflix, and usually it's like "My Little Pony" ... at her dad's, and I think that they monitor too what she watches, and "Running Wild" and I don't even know what these are because I don't watch TV by myself... we watch "My Little House on the Prairie" and as far as like values go, I really like that show as far as certain of my values.

7B ...generally I have to watch the first show with him, and then I make a judgment. So I call that our "experiment", our experiment with the show (light laugh in the room) and then 'cause he knows that I need to figure out whether it's ok, generally I look for extreme sarcasm. Because he is 9 and a lot of the shows targeted for his age tend to have...they can have some mean-spirited things that I don't want him to pick up. I also look for violence, so kind-of basing on those two, I, that's what I judge it on.

2B ...um if they have a new show, we watch mostly Netflix, and so if I don't know what a show's like, maybe it LOOKS like it's ok, but it really isn't, so I say we can start watching it but if I hear anything or see anything that I don't like, then we have to change it. But they're willing to give it a gamble to 'maybe' be able to watch something new. But we look for rudeness, or disrespectful behavior.

9B ...we watch movies together and I think the only thing that we ever watch live is soccer.

7B...if we THINK it might scare him, because that's...sometimes we have gotten movies that we thought "Oh it'd be great" so but then we had to review it first and we stayed up and watched it and then... decided whether it was going to work.

6A I have to see it first. I always want to make sure that I have seen, 'cause especially if it has a rating to it, and it's over her age level. So I do put some limitations on her like, I mean so, if you read the book and you still want to watch the movie then I'll watch it if it's nothing is, I think if you handled the book and I think the movie and the book are pretty similar then Ill usually let her.

1B I'll watch the preview of movies, like the trailers and it pretty much tells me right away whether my son can handle it or not. Most of the new movies are just way over the top.

General discussion of content

3A The content of it is about like a really privileged person who, I don't know, anyways, but I was just kind-of like wow. So that was good conversation. So we just had a conversation about it, I was kind-of like "oh" you know and I didn't want to disappoint her, so that was interesting because, it was like the first time she was super excited to share this thing with me that she'd really really enjoyed, and I didn't want to be like "well that's a stupid show" you know? (laughs and others laugh) like, but at the same time I had my own feelings about it, so it was definitely like I had to go through my own process of being like "Huh, why do you like that?" and "what did you find funny about that? And what does it mean to you?" I had to kind-of go through my own process, without disappointing her, I really try to create a space where she's just free to share herself and free to share her thoughts with me without feeling like I'm just going to judge her, I don't want to tell her my values, I just want to be with her.

1A When it comes to television, we try to have a discussion about how it's not real, and how it's pretend, and how it's actors that are doing things, and then maybe we'll do a little acting between us. I walked in one day and he was watching professional wrestling, which happens to be a Saturday morning kids show, so explaining that yes they were fighting but they were pretending and then we did some pretend fighting between us, because I realized that we can't protect him from all of the things I don't want him to be exposed to, there's just no way to do it, but try to put it into context, and not...the more I push against it, the more he'll push back, and then often it's the thrill of doing something

that dad doesn't want me to do or mom doesn't want me to do, makes it more than it really is.

5A I don't really know how to handle it except for to look at it, help her critically examine it... to ask those questions. Like "when she treated her that way, you know, how do you think that made her friend feel?" And then also I use a lot in my house and it has to do with language too, is "we don't, we don't do that in our house, in our house we don't use that word". And I've been doing that since she was verbal, so she knows what that means and she reacts to it pretty well, like they might get away with it on the fake TV that she knows is actors, but it's not how we act in our house. But I'm pretty much disgusted...

4A ...especially for my daughter, BECAUSE there is, yeah I mean it's a huge issue, the representation of women and girls in media affects us really strongly and it's really difficult to see because there aren't that many alternatives. And so I find that we have a lot of discussions about that um and I've, we've been doing it for a long time and it's really encouraging to see her like starting to point that stuff out herself... it is encouraging to me to see that it is setting in and she is like thinking about those things on her own.

4A I've definitely been doing that, I think, right from the beginning. 'Cause I grew up in a house without television AT ALL, um, like very very restrictive. I just from my own experience, I think that it's very important for the kids to be exposed to popular media because they're not going to be able to avoid it in their lives, because it is part of the culture. And um, and I've made a concerted effort to always be in communication with them about it, and get them thinking about, representations.

10B It's violent, there isn't a whole lot of bloodshed, and um it opened up some really good discussion, because we've had some family members in our lives that were on drugs and we talked about the situation where people are doing this and why it's still wrong, and we have a lot of really good conversations that come out of this.

3B ...we do trials of things, and sometimes um things are not very, if I feel like they're getting a little too violent, um, my kids really like "Transformers" but almost all "Transformers" are too violent in my opinion...I said I would give them a chance, and it was more like "fighting fighting" and so I said let's give it a try, and we talked about the fact that it was fighting, and why, I know it's good and evil but you can't always tell, and we talked about why fighting can be difficult to understand, we talked a lot about that kind of thing. And all the shows with any kind of teasing at all we talk about why that's hurting somebody's feelings and things like that too, to kind-of get a little core of an understanding to why, to how this relates to real life. And why maybe people may not enjoy that even though it seems like on TV they do.

9B: ... there's some situations where they're questioning but a lot of times they, we're the ones who bring up the situation...if it seems like a complex situation we'll talk about how the people and the show got into that situation and why it ended in a death or something,

and we try to give them a historical perspective too...I think we're really careful though, I think a lot of the stuff that we let them watch we've already seen, and so we already know.

1B I watch a LOT of stuff with him, or at least I can hear it and um I do talk to him a lot because I talk to him a lot about everything and I've, I point out racism, I point out sexism, I point out themes like what you said about the meanness in "Arthur" and the bullying, there's a lot of bullying and um and I point out to him how women's roles are a certain way and they always make girls like pink and how almost all the heroes are white and he's a, he's black, and so I show, I tell him, I try to teach him about history and the history of film and why hardly any black people are in film and um he absorbs all of that, even though I have to give it to him in small doses. But I want him to feel empowered instead of always feeling like you know, it's only white people that do stuff and girls are only "hehehehe, I'm scared, save me" kind of princesses, because most of the themes with girls are pretty, pretty shallow.

7A ...everything to us was a teachable moment because it was, "what's inappropriate about this?" Yes when you're an adult you will have the coping mechanisms to deal with the, fantasy of it, but right now, let's learn something productive that you can use on our hike, something that you can bring to the classroom, and those values that you have um, so that's why we value FOOD, and we value, and the Discovery Channel is kind-of our go-to, it's not a fool-proof brand by any means, but there's so many things that we can learn from it, that we can apply.

10B ...(my daughter) decided at a very early age that she hated most kids shows. So we take turns picking TV shows...The default for all of us is the Food Network, because my kid's a foodie (laughter in the room) She um, yells at the TV, she's a little Chef Ramsey. We watch cooking competition shows. And um she gets ideas and plans her own recipes and toward the end of them we're planning there's a show on Food Network "Chopped" you have to make a meal out of these random ingredients (laughing). So we'll talk about "Okay what would you do? Let's go to the kitchen. What would you make with this this and this?" So it's been really COOL... she has the option of trying to watch shows with us like "the Walking Dead"we talk about the make-up that's involved. And we go on YouTube and we look at how the make-up is shown, if she feels a little bit scared, but. So at first she's just like "Oh wow that's really neat."

9B ...for a lot of the content that we watch at home, my wife sees something on YouTube she likes and wants to share then it could be anything, you know could be bicycling or could be science or something like that.

Trust/self-monitor

7A I think that has been a learning experience for me as a parent as well, to say "I'm gonna trust your your judgment, in an appropriate television show, and if there's any question, let me come and listen."

3A ...we had a really interesting experience that really got her to really kind-of self-monitor for herself, was that she went for a sleepover at somebody's house, and um, the mom allowed them to watch "Buffy the Vampire Slayer") when she was 8, the TV show and it threw (my daughter) into that, like that you know that like nightmare sleep, that kids get and it was probably 4 to 5 months that she was having panic attacks... so but as upset as I was about the whole experience and that it happened for her and that she really got traumatized by it and everything, it also taught her an invaluable lesson, and she knows now, when something gets too scary she's like turn it off, walk away, she's also learned to like cope by being like "Ok, that looks really fake, I can deal with that" but like let me see how fake it is, so she's really taught herself, you know...So we did a lot of talking about like how this happened and why it's happening and how your brain works and how you know, like strategies and mindfulness. So it was an interesting way for her to figure out how to self-monitor.

1A ...he also self-modulates. So after a while he's just too fidgety, so he'll get up and walk away from the TV.

Consulting outside sources for advice

7B Our son's pretty sensitive to scary things too and so we kind of have to look ahead because like: he loves pirates but on the other hand they scare him. So we have to really read the details...we find that both the website (CommonSenseMedia.org) and the parents, or even some of the children who submit reviews (light laughter) they're pretty specific about particular instances that happen in there and so then it's easier for us to evaluate "ok this'll fly or this might scare him."

2B ...we use Netflix. Sometimes if I don't know what a show is about um, I will read the comments on it, because a lot of times people will say "well I tried this for my kids and here's why I didn't like it" and so a lot of the shows will have kind-of some information and then you can pinpoint WHAT might be a problem or if that wouldn't be a problem for you why it would be fine.

No kids allowed

4B I just try to keep them out of like, we're watching a show, an adult show, and they want to be in the room, I'll just say "there's a mommy or daddy show on TV you guys can't watch it you need to go into your room and either put on a kid movie or read a book or do something else.

7B We definitely wait for the adult shows until AFTER his bedtime, we consciously make decisions, so that way it DOES have little influence.

5B ... if I'm in the room and they're watching something, and I don't think it's ok I'll tell them to leave the room. And usually I try to explain to my older boy he wants to know why, why can't watch it. I'll try to explain to him why, it's not ok, but the younger one he doesn't care, he's onto the next thing you know.

TV is just entertainment

6B I mean they want to be entertained, they're not going to watch something that is boring and doesn't connect to them so for me it's kind-of interesting, ...like what can a child really relate to and not relate to, that's I guess what I think is things that are NEW to them, that they normally wouldn't see visually... I don't blame really anyone who's creating it, it's...just an example of our society... The fact is that at least for kids it's the only area I see in TV where they probably do check themselves. They DO talk about bullying, whether they do it well or not, I sure didn't have TV like that.

6A So I try to I don't know limit, but it's really hard to figure out how to have them make better choices when it comes to their media options. Because to say it's Nickelodeon or Disney Channel is, that's a kid channel to them so they think that's what, it's ok to watch... I haven't really found one that I'm just like super like, everything on there I'm, it's "go to", unless it's PBS, but my kids are kind-of moving away from that... a lot of them are more educational and they say "well we watch that at school" or something, like they don't, for them it's not entertainment it's kind-of like "meh" whereas Disney Channel or Nickelodeon, Cartoon Network, um Disney XD they have so many choices now that are specifically commercialized towards kids, that they do feel like that's for them.

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