

Consumer Socialization in Families: How Parents Teach Children about Spending, Saving, and  
the Importance of Money

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ABSTRACT

The current study examines the consumer socialization practices of American parents, and provides an analysis of the various ways in which they socialize their children into a consumer role within the family. Drawing from literature on gendered patterns of consumerism, familial consumer socialization, and the culture of money, this study's aim is to describe how parents teach their children to enter a consumer role, how to spend, save, and budget money, and how to culturally value (or devalue) money and wealth. This study also explores whether children's gender or differences by socioeconomic status (SES) play a part in how parents socialize their children into a consumer role. Twenty five parents were interviewed and answered questions regarding the actual tools, methods, and strategies they employ in their children's socialization into a consumer role, such as whether parents shop with their children, set allowances, or assist children in opening savings and checking accounts. Additional questions assessed the meanings parents give to money and a consumer role, such as whether parents stress the importance or the vanity of wealth. This analysis contributes to existent knowledge about the nuanced ways in which parents socialize their children as competent consumers, and has implications for familial relationships and gender and class inequality in regards to family and consumer activities.

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## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

The institution of the family continues to receive much scholarly attention regarding how children are socialized into the larger society (Dotson 2005; Neeley 2005). How parents socialize their children into gender, political, ethnic, and kinship roles has produced both popular interest and scholarly investigation. The consumer socialization of children is an aspect of childhood that the family has largely been responsible for in the past, and continues to undertake as an important part of contemporary family life (Dotson 2005). This socialization process entails how parents socialize and train their children into becoming successful, independent consumers in the future. While some scholarly research has focused on this specific process of socialization within the family, the research literature has a scattered focus, with a particular lack of attention paid to the specific strategies that parents apply in teaching children how to shop, spend, and save money, and how these methods might differ by gender and socioeconomic status. Drawing from research on gendered patterns of consumerism, consumer socialization within the family, and the culture of money, the current study addresses gaps in the research literature that persist due to a lack of a sociological perspective. The research literature also lacks a clear and focused description of how parents apply particular cultural meanings or values to money within the family and how they impart these to their children. In other words, past research has ignored how parents reproduce the cultural significance of money and wealth within the family. Finally, past research has glossed over gender and SES differences in the consumer socialization strategies that are utilized within the family.

The overall goals of this study are twofold: to identify and detail the many different tools, methods, and techniques that parents use to teach their children about money, and to identify any

differences in their use based on social location, particularly that of gender and socioeconomic status (SES). First, there is a clear absence of a detailed, comprehensive list of common practices regarding the techniques that parents use in teaching their children about becoming consumers. Such a list is necessary to determine the methods parents currently use, which methods work well, and which do not. By having a full understanding and explanation of which methods parents are likely to use, it will be easier to see how parents approach consumer socialization with children, and whether children are learning from particular types of tools or methods over others. The second overall goal of this research is to address potential inequalities in consumer socialization that may appear based on gender and socioeconomic status differences in how parents teach their children about money. Potential gender and SES differences in the tools, methods, and strategies utilized by parents may perpetuate inequalities in how children learn to consume. For instance, parents who shop primarily with a child of a particular gender could potentially deprive their children of the opposite gender of valuable budgeting and saving skills that they might otherwise learn from an earlier age or at a faster rate. Similarly, any SES differences in the use of a particular technique (such as, perhaps, the increased use of bank accounts among more affluent families) may reduce the likelihood of children in working-class families being exposed to the specific skills and knowledge gleaned from learning about money through bank accounts, such as experience with interest and with handling account statements.

To further explore how parents socialize their children as new consumers, this exploratory study collected interview data from 25 parents to examine the socialization strategies parents use, and to determine if there are any significant differences based on gender or socioeconomic status. Additionally, this study examines how parents convey the meaning of money or wealth to their children in order to identify the ways in which the culture and

significance of money is instilled in children. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with Virginia residents who had at least one child between the ages of eleven and fifteen. Parents were asked to provide information regarding the ways they interact with one child in teaching and training them to become successful consumers. During the interviews, parents addressed the roles that shopping, saving, spending, investing, and the value of money and wealth have in the ways in which they socialize that child into a consumer role. By examining these responses alongside demographic information that the participants provided, it was possible to conduct a detailed examination of the ways in which parents socialize their children into a consumer role and how the social locations of gender and socioeconomic status influenced these methods. Despite the limitations posed by this relatively small study, the data presented in the findings of this research study nonetheless helps fill gaps in the research literature surrounding gender and consumer socialization, as well as for relationships and gender inequality within the family.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### *Introduction*

Families are units of consumerism, tasked with purchasing, spending, and the training of new consumers (Lee 1999). Yet, the research literature has concentrated more on the power and position of children as new consumers (Ironico 2012; Ekstrom et al. 1987; Calvert 2008; Chitakunye 2012) rather than the specific practices, methods, and strategies that parents use for consumer socialization (Cohen and Xiao 1992; Pugh 2009). This study is important and necessary in order to not only identify the specific patterns and methods of consumer socialization used in the family, but also to fill gaps in the research literature pertaining to potential gender and SES differences. Consumer socialization is an important and necessary function of the family, and has held both popular and scholarly interest as parents continue to be important influences in the consumer socialization of their children. However, the gaps in both popular interest and scholarly research require more exploration into the more specific processes of consumer socialization, as well as the implications for notions of gender, class, and culture that are involved in the consumer socialization process.

This study uses some terms that are important to define early, prior to further discussion. The literature surrounding family and consumer research poses the family as both a unit of consumerism and consumption, often using the two terms interchangeably (Geuens et al. 2003; Etzioni 2004; Pugh 2009). Whereas consumption is linked to the acquisition and use of goods to satisfy basic needs such as food, shelter, and clothing, consumerism is associated with the acquisition and use of these and other items once they are no longer acquired only to meet basic needs, but are instead used as a measure of comfort or social status (Etzioni 2004). While parents

do supply items for their children's survival needs and status desires, the current study uses the term "consumerism" when describing the practices that parents employ to socialize their children as consumers. The use of this term implies that parents are not only simply teaching their children how to purchase necessities needed for survival, but also are teaching them how to spend money in attempts to portray status level as well. Additionally, the current study uses the terms "methods," "tools," and "strategies" to describe the various behaviors parents use in training their children as consumers. These terms are synonymous, yet are used when most appropriate. For example, allowances are often referred to as a consumer socialization tool, while modeling by example is often referred to as a consumer socialization method or strategy. Finally, this study uses the terms "mother" and "parent" interchangeably, as gender of the parent was held constant to help make meaningful comparisons across the sample. As will be further discussed below in the last chapter, it is important to note that the interchangeable use of these two terms should not be interpreted as an attempt to overlook the gendered nature of parenting. Rather, this study acknowledges that parenting is gendered in nuanced ways and thus makes parenting a different experience for women when compared to men.

### *The Cultural Meaning and Value of Money*

Consumerism and the consumer role of individuals have cultural importance within the family. The way parents and families value and define the importance of money, wealth, and consumerism can have significant impacts on the way parents socialize their children into a consumer role. Money has developed as an important form of capital that can hold significant cultural value for parents that can then be transferred on to their children. However, the cultural valuation of money is not the same for everyone, and can even vary within families. Alexander

(2007) points out that what is valued is based in a society's culture. Additionally, many scholars suggest that not all dollars are valued equally by our society (Zelizer 1989; Nyman and Reinikainen 2013). For instance, monies gained from a lawsuit are valued less than monies accrued through paid work, but still retain more value when compared to monies gained through criminal means. This example demonstrates the notion of the social construction of money, and it elucidates how the cultural valuation and interpretation of money can vary by social location or group membership.

This notion that social location or group membership determines how money is conceptualized and used is demonstrative of the importance of money to sociology in terms of social power. Money helps perpetuate social status hierarchies, whereby group members behave differently and are treated differently based upon social status (Ivanic et al. 2011). Money not only enables purchasing power, but also enables influence and the power to control decision making among both individuals and groups (Baker and Jimerson 1992). In this way, money affects society through its impact and use across the major social institutions, such as education, religion, and the family. Zelizer (1989) describes one instance of such power dynamics on gender within the family, noting that women's earnings are treated differently, whereby men's earnings were treated more seriously and women's earnings were seen as supplemental or more trivial. Such power differentials are applied socially, with some groups having more power over others through the unequal access to money (Jacobs and Slaus 2012). In this way, money intersects every other social category by identifying those with more money as those who have more power.

One important part of consumer socialization is imparting the cultural symbols and meanings of aesthetic style and taste to the next generation (Bourdieu 1984; Pugh 2009). In other

words, certain consumer practices are often associated with the aesthetic style and taste appropriate for individuals in a particular social class. Citing Bourdieu, Lareau (2011) states that the often complex nature of social life results in the use of various subtle skills in the transmission of class privilege. Therefore, it is possible that mechanisms or skills involved in the consumer socialization of children might also play a role in not only reinforcing class privilege and class norms, but also in demonstrating perpetuated class inequalities through the different socialization mechanisms used across social class. The so-called “lower classes” are often associated with consumer practices that lack restraint and “good taste,” such as unseemly, vulgar, and excessive consumer practices (Buckingham 2011: 39). Meanwhile, the upper classes are often associated with being defenders of “high culture.” Bourdieu (1984) argues that the association of each class with particular activities and consumer items signifies that class’ taste and aesthetic culture. As symbols of taste, consumer goods help further distinguish people into cultural classes. Such distinctions by social class portray how consumerism is tied to values of aesthetics, taste, self-indulgence, excess, and moral judgments, including ideas of self-involved personal gain and narcissism.

Nuances in the cultural valuation of money and consumerism are most evident when examining differences by socioeconomic status. This is primarily seen through the display of specific cultural and aesthetic tastes in our consumerism in order to more clearly define our identity and social status (Buckingham 2011; Bourdieu 1984). Yet the issue is not so cut-and-dry that it can simply be assumed that more affluent families have better taste than working class families. Rather, further research is necessary to uncover the more nuanced ways in which money is valued across social class. For instance, some families might see money and wealth as overindulgent and excessive, while others view consumerism as a process of creating an

individual lifestyle and fashioning one's identity (Buckingham 2011: 60). Recent scholarship argues that the historical debate over whether consumerism is purely rational or hedonistic is misguided, suggesting instead that consumerism is simultaneously both instrumental and expressive as it is necessary but can still contribute to one's own identity creation (Rambo 1992; Buckingham 2011). For example, even in consuming a functional necessity such as food, the where, what, and how consumers eat and drink are part of their participation in and creation of a shared body of cultural values and meanings regarding consumerism (Buckingham 2011: 37). Regarding other socialization processes, past research notes that middle-class parents continue to be the most ardent in addressing the increasing challenges of modern parenting (Lareau 2011). Middle-class parents energetically approach the challenges in meeting their lofty aspirations despite their finite (and sometimes limited) resources in the socialization of their children. It may be possible that this is also seen through parents' strategies for the consumer socialization of their children, whereby middle-class parents have more effective, numerous, or specialized consumer socialization strategies.

Any class differences that exist within the consumer socialization process of children need to be identified in order to better ascertain the influence that group membership has on training children as consumers. There is a common misconception that America provides class equality for those willing to work hard, yet this masks the social reality that parents' social location helps shape children's life experiences and outcomes. Lareau (2011) also notes that class is more important than race in influencing what parents teach their children and the ways in which they conduct their teaching. Additionally, it is important to identify whether any class-related differences exist, and if so, determine if these differences have any impact in reproducing a class identity that could potentially hinder upward mobility of children with parents of lower

education (Willis 1981). This study seeks to identify whether consumer socialization is an additional experience of parenting that is stratified according to both gender and social class and how this might impact the valuation and cultural meaning of money within the family.

Past research has shown that parents impart the meaning of money to their children, but the details of this process are largely absent from current literature. Individual parents can place value and meaning on money that have implications for their children as consumers, as parents will likely pass on these beliefs and values to their children. Yet, the implications of the cultural meaning of money extend beyond the family and apply to larger society, as many people attempt to critique others and make moral assumptions based on consumer taste. Details regarding how parents assign cultural value and meaning to money for their children are largely absent from the research literature, and a clear lack of focus on the origins of such meaning and values are visibly absent. For instance, Gallo (2005) notes the importance of connecting values and morals (such as the importance of saving for the future or spending on those in need) to money. However, she does not go into detail on what values parents typically associate with money. Additionally, recent research omits where these potential values originate from for parents. Sato (2011) describes that for children, money acquires meaning through social situations mediated by the people surrounding them, particularly parents. However, Sato does not elaborate on how parents have come to acquire this meaning for themselves, other than to imply that they originated from their own parents in turn. By learning more about the origins of how parents value money and apply meaning to money, the ways in which they convey value and meaning to money for their own children may become more apparent.

## *Consumer Socialization*

While consumer socialization, as an area of study and research, has attracted a moderate amount of academic investigation, the focus has been broad. This has created gaps in existing knowledge, some of which this study addresses. Consumer socialization is classically defined as the process through which the younger generation garners knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to their functioning as consumers in the market place (Ward 1974). As a social institution, the family plays a vital role in such socialization processes of children as new consumers. Consumer interests and patterns are formed early in childhood, often influenced by the consumer decisions and practices of the family in general, and oftentimes the parents more specifically. Despite the importance of the influence of the media and peers in consumer socialization, parents' immediacy and familiarity to their children (especially younger children) makes parents a powerful influencing factor throughout a child's consumer socialization process (Lachance et al. 2000). While Harris (1998) and other group socialization theorists points out that parents' genetic and nurturing influence on socialization is limited to the context of the family, others argue that parents remain an important socializing agent to children as consumers, as much consumer activity is done within a family context, especially for younger children (Neeley 2005; Moschis and Moore 1982; Lachance et al. 2000). Past research notes that children frequently directly mirror their parents' own consumer ideas and behaviors, especially at young ages (Martens et al. 2004; Bourdieu 1999). Children's consumer behavior gradually becomes more autonomous with age (Buckingham 2011), though scholars continue to contest the level of young children's reliance upon parents' own strategies. It remains important to study consumer socialization processes in order to more fully understand family consumer behavior, such as intergenerational consistency and change – i.e., the differences in consumer behavior between

consecutive generations of a family. Additional exploration will also help elucidate the impact of social trends (such as trends in online shopping or trends for particular brand-name items) on the consumer patterns of young people, and of parental consumer behavior conducted on behalf of their children (Ward 1974; Schindler and Lala 2014).

In the research literature, many gaps remain regarding consumer socialization processes in the family. Despite a large body of past research that focuses on outside forces that influence children's consumer habits such as the media, advertising and marketing, and peer networks (Ward 1974; Haynes et al. 1993), key gaps in the literature exist for how familial relationships foster notions of ideal consumer behavior. For example, Haynes et al. (1993) show that both mothers and the marketing of particular products encourage children to make particular purchases (especially younger children). However, Haynes et al. limit their discussion of socialization techniques to clothes shopping, focusing primarily on preschool-aged girls. Of the research that has turned to the roles of the family and parents in training and socializing children as new consumers, many focus on parenting styles rather than actual methods or practices that parents use in consumer socialization (Bao et al. 2007; Carlson and Grossbart 1988). For instance, Bao et al. (2007) argue that parental style can affect the quality of children's socialization experiences, depending on whether the parents have a neglecting, authoritative, or authoritarian style of parenting. However, debate continues regarding the universal applicability of parental styles to predicting patterns of consumer socialization practices that parents use (Kerrane and Hogg 2013). Moschis (1985) describes the importance of communication in the family for socialization processes, without much emphasis on the specific methods of communication that could prove integral to consumer socialization practices (such as direct communication compared to modeled behavior). Several studies have also taken notice of the

importance of the parental figure for the consumer socialization process, especially that of mothers (Haynes et al. 1993; Sharma 2011). While Haynes et al. (1993) denote the importance of mothers in their children's consumer socialization experiences, they merely ask for these women to gauge their children's level of involvement as independent consumers. This depicts mothers as passive influences on their children's consumer socialization rather than as active participants who play a large role in this process. Overall, a limited understanding of the methods and practices that parents use as active members of their children's consumer socialization persists in this body of research.

Past research also points to an evident lack in the examination of consumer socialization from a sociological perspective. Much of past research has adopted a psychological (Sato 2011; Buckingham 2011) or child development perspective (Kerrane and Hogg 2013), relying on the personal preferences and cognitive attributes of individuals in examining consumer socialization strategies and patterns. This body of research places more emphasis on the decisions of children as consumers and deemphasizes the significance of the socialization and training processes in which children engage with their parents. Additionally, some research has come from the field of marketing, primarily focusing on new tactics and marketing strategies to appeal to the new autonomy and power of children as consumers in the upcoming generations (Ironico 2012; Guthrie 2005). Incorporating a sociological perspective of the consumer socialization processes of parents focuses attention on the specific methods and practices that parents employ, and allows for an examination of the role social location plays in helping shape these processes. For example, rather than focusing on notions of power or autonomy that a child may perceive as a new consumer, a sociological perspective can help identify whether there are key differences in

consumer socialization that may leave children of a particular gender or a particular social status deprived of lessons or skills that are available to other children.

Previous research on consumer socialization processes that has taken a sociological approach still leaves many opportunities to pursue further research in this area of interest, primarily by more fully investigating the influence of outside group membership on consumer socialization processes. For instance, research conducted on some of the methods that parents employ in the consumer socialization of their children describe shopping and allowances as some of the common tools that parents use (Pugh 2009; Haynes et al. 1993). Haynes et al. (1993) discuss how shopping is an important and purposeful part of consumer socialization, but in their brief analysis of shopping, they focus mainly on girls and women and largely exclude shopping among boys and men from the conversation. Pugh (2009) demonstrates how allowances are commonly employed by upper-class parents as a way to instill ideals of saving money amid staggered saving, as well as a way to buy things to “fit in” with one’s peers. While this finding is very revealing of the tools used by the upper social stratum, Pugh did not address allowances in middle-class and working-class families, implying that working- and middle-class families simply decline to distribute allowances, possibly due to a lack of financial means. Additionally, Pugh presents allowances primarily as a parenting tool or best practice used to control children’s negative behavior, rather than as a primary mechanism for consumer socialization.

Popular media has picked up interest in some of the gaps left by scholarly research, continuing discussion on which mechanisms and strategies work best for parents tasked with the consumer socialization of their children. In an op-ed article, business investor and philanthropist Warren Buffett (2013) argues that parents should start the consumer socialization and training process for children at very young ages, possibly as early as the preschool years. In her

Washington Post column, Michelle Singletary (2014) frequently addresses consumer socialization as well, where she provides strategies for parents and emphasizes the importance of initiating the process. Singletary and other columnists continue to debate about parents' best practices of consumer socialization. For instance, columnist John Lanza (2013) contests Singletary's (2014) stance on the use of allowances and tying them to household chores, and instead encourages the use of automatic allowance distribution. Lanza's (2013) argument is based on the notion that tying allowances to jobs or tasks may discourage certain social behaviors in the future, but his argument does not take into consideration social class, as his suggestions may not be feasible for working class families. This exemplifies the need for further scholarly research on practices and behaviors that parents incorporate into the consumer socialization of their children that focus on specific social patterns and demographic differences. Furthermore, these positions advocated by the popular media may influence the choices that parents make in the consumer socialization process.

### *Women and Girls as Consumers*

A third body of research that informs this study is that of female consumerism. The literature surrounding family and consumer science establishes a notion of feminized consumerism, whereby the consumer role is frequently associated with women. Women are the primary consumers within the family, using their knowledge and skills as consumers by influencing or making the majority of household purchases (Huddleston and Minahan 2001). In addition to making the majority of all food and restaurant purchases (Phipps and Burton 1998) and purchases of clothing items for their families, women also make 80% of health care purchases for their household (Quinlan 2003). Women also make the final decision in the

purchases of 94% of home furnishings, 92% of family vacations, 91% of homes, 51% of consumer electronics, and over 60% of new vehicle purchases (Silverstein and Sayre 2009). Such spending patterns have prompted a portrayal of women as frequent consumers who have a great deal of purchasing power and responsibility. As frequent and powerful consumers, women have considerable influence on marketers who strive to cater to women's consumer needs (Miller 1998; Quinlan 2003). In this way, women form an important group of consumers that consumer markets and corporations are trying to attract (Warner 2006). Many women now actively participate in the consumer role assigned to women and girls, taking much of the purchasing and shopping responsibilities as their own (Dholakia and Chiang 2003).

Women's increased involvement in the workforce has also influenced this association with women and consumerism and may have some effect on how mothers teach their children about money. Women's employment has changed their status as consumers and may possibly change their roles as agents of socialization for their children's consumption. Their status as consumers has primarily changed in that women's increased incomes through work provide them with more expendable income, which many women use to increase their own consumerism. For instance, an increase in women's income is associated with an increase in spending in several item categories, particularly food and children's clothing (Phipps and Burton 1998). Additionally, career women have different attitudes about shopping than their non-career counterparts, such as that they are more inclined to view shopping as a past-time or hobby as opposed to a necessary chore on a to-do list (Lavin 1993). As women's consumer habits have changed with their increase in the workforce, their use of particular items in teaching their children to use money may be affected as well. For instance, if women shop more due to working more, this could potentially influence mothers to shop more with their children as a means to teach them to

appropriately spend and save money.

While the research literature repeatedly makes note of women as powerful consumers, debate persists as to whether this link between women and a consumer role is associated with a positive connotation or a negative stereotype for women. Some scholars view the association positively due to the influence and additional benefits it provides for women. For example, women and girls have gained more power and autonomy in making household decisions (in relation to men) and have gained a powerful purchasing role that demonstrates strength and financial integrity (Kenney 2006; Scott 1976; Blumberg 1988). Kenney (2006) describes marketers and sales staffs' recognition of these positive attributes of the female consumer, noting that marketing campaigns and businesses are catering more to women's consumer demands and try diligently to be more accommodating and attractive to female consumers. For example, Lowes improved their model of customer service in order to attract women who reported that they were more likely to make purchases if they had helpful customer service to provide them with needed information and assistance (Kenney 2006). Additionally, female consumerism is connected to female freedom, power, and greater gender equity, especially within families (McRobbie 2008; Barletta 2003). Miller (1998) links shopping to individual autonomy, stating that women experience unregulated freedom to peruse and make selections as a relatively free expression of self-agency. Past research has also shown that women develop other important skills from being active consumers, including money management skills and improved problem solving through obtaining various resources, services, or goods (Quinlan 2003).

On the other side of the controversy, however, are those who are skeptical of the positive connotations associated with women as consumers, and instead argue that this association perpetuates negative stereotypes for women. For instance, Belisle (2011) notes that women and

girls as consumers are often viewed as careless spendthrifts who are irrational shoppers. This negative stereotype emerges frequently in the media, especially in popular films that portray women as irrational and impulsive consumers (Hentges 2006). Another stereotype that has been associated with women as consumers is the notion that women will hyper-consume or over-shop in attempts to demonstrate or symbolize their success and wealth to others (Wang and Griskevicius 2014). Negative views of women as consumers have been carried over from outdated Puritanical views that women's shopping and purchasing is trivial, whereby men made more important consumer decisions in the past (Buckingham 2011). Miller (1998) also argues that even if female consumerism is viewed positively, it could further burden women with the "sacrifice" of shopping, whereas women are disproportionately responsible for the labor of shopping, while the family still views shopping not as labor, but as acts of love and devotion (Miller 1998; DeVault 1991). It is clear that the association of women with a consumer role may have distinct ramifications or impacts for women, yet this debate and opposition on the connection between women and a consumer role largely remain unsettled in the literature.

This study focuses on whether any differences in boys' and girls' consumer socialization reflect the above mentioned notion that women and girls are the main consumers. If so, it is important to examine whether this connection reflects any of these positive connotations or negative stereotypes for women. As this notion of women as more important consumers continues to expand, women (and men) might further socialize daughters into this role as well, having important implications for familial relationships in the consumer socialization process. This could potentially encourage parents to employ different methods for consumer socialization among their children based on the child's gender (such as stressing shopping for girls rather than emphasizing saving or investing). This study seeks to identify any differences that may exist in

how parents teach their children about spending and saving money in keeping with stereotypes that women are the main consumers. As will be described in more detail below, the research literature surrounding women as having a propensity for shopping indicates that we may speculate that women may shop more with daughters and use things such as savings, investing, or credit accounts more frequently with sons. If any such differences are found by gender, they will need to be examined as to whether children of a particular gender miss out on particular training methods or tools when learning about money from their parents.

One such area that might potentially be quite different for sons compared to daughters is shopping. Shopping is an important consumer skill typically taught to children by parents (Huddleston and Minahan 2011). However, shopping has been associated more so with women and girls, with less research done on men and boys who shop. Even when men share in some grocery shopping responsibilities, many couples note how a husband might help with the shopping, but he is mainly only assisting and is not a “natural” shopper. In this way, many couples continue to view shopping as the wife’s “domain” and consider the wife as the primary purchaser and shopper (Miller 1998). If parents shop more with daughters, this could have negative implications for young boys, who may be lacking in skills picked up through shopping and discount or thrift shopping (Christiansen and Snepenger 2005). Most studies have focused on the shopping habits of mothers and daughters, leaving gaps concerning shopping among men and boys and questions regarding whether mothers are equally as likely to pass shopping skills on to their sons. Surely, most men learn how to shop at some point over the life course, but little is known about the process through which their training occurs. Further investigation is required to identify the ways in which boys’ and girls’ shopping experiences differ and to determine whether such differences are integral elements of the consumer socialization process within the family.

Additionally, if such gender differences do emerge, such an association between gender and consumerism should be assessed in order to identify any negative stereotypes or connotations for women and girls. For example, it is possible that parents could be excluding young girls from learning skills acquired through setting up savings or investment accounts if they are mostly trained just through shopping. Conversely, it is a possibility that parents might be denying boys decision-making and bargain-hunting lessons taught through shopping (Minahan and Huddleston 2013). Gender thus appears to be a potentially crucial variable that influences how parents socialize their children as consumers.

This study aims to help fill such gaps in literature surrounding women and girls as consumers. The influence of the child's gender as a variable has received varying degrees of attention in past consumer socialization research. Haynes et al. (1993) recognize gender as an agent of consumer socialization, yet they do not indicate how this influences parental processes of socialization or the methods that the parents employ. Instead, the authors indicate how gender is predictive of more individual consumer characteristics. For instance, girls tended to shop more, shop more for clothing, and more frequently purchase clothing that their mothers disapproved. Any differences found based on gender could have potentially long-term effects on children. For example, patterns of differential parental investment could potentially have negative ramifications on sibling relationships (Brody, Stoneman, and McCoy 1992) and could promote children's negative self-esteem (Daniels et al. 1985). Also, again, there is little research that discusses boys' shopping experiences with their parents. Further research is needed to investigate the impact that a child's gender has upon parents throughout the consumer socialization process and to determine if these effects carry over to the kinds of socialization methods employed.

## CHAPTER THREE

### RESEARCH PROBLEM AND QUESTIONS

The current research study will examine parents' strategies, methods, and practices used in the consumer socialization process with their children and will examine differences by gender and socioeconomic status. This study addresses four main research questions that are based upon the literature review above. These questions and the answers that emerges through the data have unique implications and contributions for the current literature base. This research successfully identified a comprehensive description of the tools and methods parents use to socialize their children as consumer and these compared these tools and methods across gender and socioeconomic status. A primary focus of this study was to address any differences found in methods used by gender or socioeconomic status, examining whether these differences exclude children of a particular gender or SES category from particular socialization methods that might improve their transition into being successful consumers.

*Research Question 1: What tools and methods do parents use in consumer socialization processes?*

Parents who participated in this study were asked to identify the specific tools and methods that they employ in the consumer socialization process with their children. Rather than thinking on their feet or guessing as they progress, I speculate that parents rely on particular tools and strategies that they employ when teaching their children about how to become successful consumers. Allowances, savings and investing accounts, strategies for shopping, and part-time employment are all specific methods that parents may consistently turn to when teaching their children about their role as a consumer. It is likely that parents will identify many of these

examples, among others not mentioned here, when discussing things they do with their children that could assist them in this process.

*Research Question 2: Do the tools or methods parents use vary by child's gender?*

A second research question that this study addresses is whether the specific tools and methods that parents use in socializing their children as consumers differ by the gender of a parent's child. As detailed above, shopping has become a key activity in consumer socialization. However, as it has increasingly been associated with femininity, it is likely that parents will more frequently report using and emphasizing shopping with female children. If a focus on shopping for girls becomes evident, I speculate that parents will report using economic investment tools such as credit cards and investment accounts more frequently with male children as opposed to shopping as it is more closely associated with femininity. If such differences are found in the methods or tools that parents use in the consumer socialization of their children, this could have broader implications for gender inequality and familial relations.

*Research Question 3: Do the tools or methods parents use vary by socioeconomic status?*

A third research question addressed by the current study is whether the methods that parents use in the consumer socialization of their children differ across socioeconomic status. Similar to Pugh's (2009) lack of discussion of particular tools (such as allowances) used by the working class, I speculate that working-class families may not have the means to incorporate specific methods into their socialization routines, such as savings and investing accounts and credit cards, and thus might use practices such as shopping more frequently to teach their children about the consumer role. Additionally, if parents with a lower level of education have to

encourage their children to enter the workforce early, this early induction into the work force could have broader implications for regenerating the working class by perpetuating the conditions in which they live and work (Willis, 1981). If such differences by SES are found, these findings could have implications for class inequality based on whether the strategies they use are more or less effective or appropriate than those used in middle and upper-class families.

*Research Question 4: What is the cultural valuation that parents place on money and consumerism?*

The last research question that this study engages is how parents value money and consumerism and how they pass this valuation on to their children. Related to this question is where parents' perceptions and own values of money originate from, such as from their childhood experiences, the media, or from friends or popular suggestion. The cultural valuation of money and consumerism is important to this study as it could potentially reveal subtle patterns in how parents choose to socialize their children as consumers. Potential differences by socioeconomic status may also become apparent for how parents place value on money as well.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### METHODS

#### *Data Collection*

In order to examine the various ways in which parents socialize their children into a consumer role, this study used original qualitative data collected for this specific project. Data collection and analysis in this study followed a semi-grounded framework that is exploratory in nature and that is likely to capture broader but detailed descriptions of the consumer socialization process that parents experience (Charmaz 2000). A qualitative analysis provided the opportunity to collect data and make connections across the many detailed descriptions and thoughts on topics of direct relevance and importance to this process (Denzin and Lincoln 2000), such as the cultural values placed on money and rationales for using particular methods of consumer socialization. The data was collected through semi-structured interviews with parents in or near three cities in the state of Virginia. Interviewing in these cities not only specifically demarcated geographic location, but also aided in recruiting a diverse sample that was more representative and generalizable compared to conducting interviews in a single location or setting. The use of semi-structured interviews entailed having some questions to guide each participant, but being flexible enough to allow the participants to elaborate on areas of their choosing or to bring up new items for discussion on their own. This allowed for unique and insightful responses to organically emerge for each participant, providing a broad base of data filled with detailed and thoughtful responses.

Each interview focused on the strategies and practices that parents use in socializing just one particular child into a consumer role, even for participants who had multiple children. To

randomize which child would be selected for the purposes of the interview, parents of multiple children were asked about the oldest child within the age range of eleven to fifteen years old. Interviewing parents about one particular child out of possible multiple children helped narrow discussion and avoided the need for parents to repeat the same information for all of their children. A small pilot study was first conducted with parents from the full range of socioeconomic status, measured by level of education, prior to interviews with the full sample of 25 participants. Participants were screened as necessary based on their geographic location, highest level of education, and the gender of their child. This was done in order ensure a diverse and more representative distribution of participants. Education was used to measure socioeconomic status due to its impact on current SES as well as future SES by influencing later income and occupation (Conger, Conger, and Martin 2010). In other words, researchers often note higher levels of education as one of the strongest predictors of higher status jobs and higher earned income in the future (Constantin 2013; Conger, Conger, and Martin 2010), as well as one of the most important factors in upward class mobility (Erikson and Goldthorpe 2002). While the impact of higher education on income is not necessarily immediate, it remains a strong predictor that those with higher levels of education will have improved occupational and income opportunities in the future compared to those with less education (Autor 2014). It is important to note that the highest level of education completed by each participant's husband was not included in the data collected, and that this could potentially alter the SES classification applied to some parents if that data were collected (especially among spouses who have much different levels of education completed). Screening participants for this study helped ensure that enough participants were in each gender and SES category in order to make meaningful comparisons. This sample of approximately 25 parents reporting on 25 children produced ample data to allow

for meaningful gender and SES comparisons to be drawn about the different ways in which parents socialize their children into a consumer role.

The interviews were conducted in person when possible, and were otherwise conducted via telephone when an in-person interview was not possible for some participants. In-person interviews were conducted at a location specified by the respondent, and included private spaces, such as a private home or office, as well as some public spaces such as a coffee shop or library. All interviews were audio recorded and then transcribed using simple word processing software. Data collection and storage were in compliance with the ethical and confidentiality requirements of the Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board (IRB).

This study adheres to all ethical protocol outlined by the Virginia Tech IRB. This study has successfully received IRB approval as of May 8, 2014 after submitting the appropriate materials for review (see Appendix F for a copy of the IRB approval letter). Study materials, including the interview questions, recruitment materials, and the form of consent, were all submitted to the IRB and received initial approval along with the project as a whole.

Abiding by IRB protocol, all recruitment and data collection methods have been fully disclosed with and approved by the Virginia Tech IRB. The IRB requires a signed letter of informed consent from each study participant, which was distributed, signed, and collected during the data collection process. The IRB also requires that all identifying information be kept on secure computer devices and in secure locations. This project successfully upheld all IRB requirements, and full security of project data and information was ensured by keeping all project materials on a password protected personal computer which was consistently stored in a locked office or private residence. Finally, the reporting of results will not identify any individual

and will not pose any threat or harm to any participant involved in this study as pseudonyms were used when disaggregated data is presented.

The Virginia Tech IRB approved an incentive valued at \$20 for each participant which I supplied through a small grant fund of \$500 awarded in 2014 through Virginia Tech's Graduate Student Assembly and Graduate School. All interview participants were offered a Target gift card valued at \$20 as a token of appreciation for their participation. This gift card was not offered as payment for completing the interview, as the participants were able to stop the interview without completing all of the questions and still receive the \$20 gift card. Rather, this gift card was given as a token of appreciation for partaking in this important study and using their time to provide novel and thoughtful information in a needed area of study. These incentives were distributed to 24 of the participants, while one participant politely declined to accept the incentive. In the event of a telephone interview, the incentive was mailed to the participant at an address of their specification. Any address information was kept separately from identifying interview information and did not interfere with the IRB specifications on anonymity of the participants.

### *Sample*

Interviews were held with 25 participants for this study. This number of participants was appropriate for the study in that it successfully provided a range of responses while still allowing for detailed accounts to be thoroughly examined. The participants comprised a convenience sample that later relied heavily on snowball sampling. Convenience sampling provided an appropriate sample for the current study as there were many eligibility restrictions for participation. To ensure that the sample was inclusive of racially and ethnically diverse groups,

participants were selected from multiple cities and surrounding areas in Virginia and the Washington, D.C. area. The Roanoke, Washington, D.C., and Charlottesville areas were the primary targeted locations where participants were recruited. While these were the targeted areas, no specific mileage restrictions were used for surrounding areas, and thus no interested individuals were denied participation based on location. While participants were asked to disclose their race and ethnicity at the beginning of the interview, this was primarily done to ensure a diverse sample and did not result in any major comparisons by race or ethnicity. While the effects of race may be important and interesting to processes of consumer socialization, such analyses were not included in this study as Lareau (2011) notes that social class plays a more important role than race in socialization processes of children. The recruitment of participants from a variety of racial and ethnic backgrounds and from areas across the state increased the diversity of participants in the sample, allowing for more generalizable data to emerge from the results of the interviews.

The final sample for this study was quite diverse by socioeconomic status, gender of the child discussed, and geographic location of the family, though the sample was not as diverse by race or ethnicity. Regarding socioeconomic status as measured by education, seven of the parents had a high school degree, ten had a Bachelor's degree, and eight of the parents had a professional degree. Of these parents, twelve discussed their sons and thirteen discussed their daughters. In terms of geographic location, eight of the parents lived in the Roanoke area, twelve lived in the Charlottesville area, and five of the participants lived in or around the Washington, D.C. area. All of the participants were white with the exception of two African American participants and one Asian participant. Several sample restrictions applied that limited which individuals were eligible for participation in the study, including criteria for parental status, age of child, and

residency of child. All 25 of these participants met each of these sample restrictions, which are listed below in detail.

*Currently married mothers.* The most important eligibility requirement for a participant in the current study was that they are currently a mother of one or more biological or adopted living child. Additionally, all parents who participated had to be currently married. Interviewing only women who are married made it possible to hold constant the sociodemographic variables of sex and marital status. This was done in order to prevent small numbers of participants from each demographic, which could create many empty “cells” of data and hinder meaningful comparisons. Holding these variables constant also helped focus comparisons on the primary variables of interest, gender and socioeconomic status. Parents comprised the sample of interviewed participants in order to ensure the most accurate and valid information possible was recorded. Interviewing children about their parents’ consumer socialization strategies and practices could potentially increase error in reporting, especially if there is any recall error in trying to remember past experiences. Additionally, children might not recognize some of their parents’ behavior as parenting or as socialization strategies. For instance, a child might not consider shopping as a learning or teaching experience about how to be a successful consumer. Parents of living children were also required in order to further minimize recall error. By excluding parents of deceased children, parents had only a minimal amount of recall involved in describing ongoing consumer socialization processes that occur within the family.

*Children aged eleven to fifteen.* In order to target parents who are currently active in the consumer socialization of their children, the second requirement was that participants needed to

be the parents of children between the ages of eleven to fifteen. This age restriction, again, helped ensure responses to interviews were as accurate as possible by minimizing recall error. Parents of children within this age range are more likely to be currently engaged in the consumer socialization of their children. Parents of younger children may not have yet begun this socialization process, and children over fifteen years of age may have completed their consumer socialization training (especially given their eligibility for employment). Much popular belief still focuses on starting this process with children after the toddler years. Wells Fargo (2014) demonstrates this through an advert advising parents how to train their children about money, suggesting that they should seriously begin the process after a child has entered kindergarten. However, consumer socialization of children less than eleven years old may be too sporadic or infrequent to get a reliable measure of the practices and methods that parents utilize.

*Reside with children for at least half of each month.* Eligible participants were parents who indicated that they reside with their children for at least 15 days of each month in any given year. This eligibility criterion excluded parents who are perhaps divorced and who do not have shared custody of their child(ren) or who have only visitation rights. By having this exclusionary restriction, individuals who have birthed a child but are relatively absent in their child's life not eligible to be interviewed. Consumer socialization is a timely activity that is actively engaged in repeatedly over a long period of time. Parents with limited access to their children will therefore most likely not have as many experiences for discussion regarding how they are actively training their children to be successful consumers in the future. However, this restriction did allow for parents with (relatively) shared custody to participate in the study, as it can only be assumed that such a parent shares this responsibility with the other parent or guardian. Additionally, residing

with one's child for at least half of one month provides more time for parents to repeatedly engage in consumer socialization practices with their child than if they only visit with their children on the weekends. While parents with shared custody were eligible to participate, this study's sample did not include any parents who reported having shared custody of their children.

### *Participant Recruitment*

To efficiently recruit an adequate sample size of participants who met the eligibility criteria, several different mediums were used for participant recruitment. First, in advance of the study, a recruitment message describing the study was distributed to all graduate students at Virginia Tech who subscribed to the graduate student listserv maintained by the Graduate School. This was an appropriate medium for recruitment as it targeted graduate students at Virginia Tech who reside in and near the Roanoke area. This medium has proven to be a widely-used recruitment tool in the Virginia Tech community, as the listserv frequently lists such study recruitment messages, and has become known as a popular source for learning about such studies. This recruitment message, or "blurb," briefly detailed the study's purpose, eligibility requirements, incentive information, and contact information for participation (see Appendix B for the full listserv recruitment message). This message appeared on the graduate student listserv once each week for three weeks in a row before being removed, and did not reappear thereafter. Unfortunately, this method did not result in the recruitment of any potential participants. I speculate that this method was unsuccessful perhaps due to the younger age of most graduate students' children, as the majority of graduate students who are parents are still not quite old enough to have children in the needed age range of eleven to fifteen.

Second, a recruitment message was posted as a status update on the social media website Facebook. This message was similar to the recruitment message distributed on the Virginia Tech graduate listserv (see Appendix C for the full Facebook study recruitment message). The primary exception between the two messages is that the Facebook blurb was able to reach potential participants in all three target areas, as opposed to the VT listserv message that only reached potential participants in the Blacksburg and Roanoke areas. The Facebook message was posted at the beginning of the study, around the same time as the listserv message was released on its second loop. Using Facebook as a study recruitment tool was also appealing for many reasons, one being that multiple posts can be made as needed if there is an initial lack of interest in participation. Additionally, this method was ideal because it was able to reach many different demographics of potential participants. A Facebook message can target individuals from certain area-specific networks, including the Roanoke, Charlottesville, and Washington, D.C. areas specific to this study. This is yet another difference between the Facebook message and the message sent via the student listserv, as the listserv recipients form a much more homogenous group of individuals who are mostly middle- and upper-class graduate students. Facebook proved to be a successful recruitment option, as enough initial interest in participation showed that a second post was not necessary. Being a popular form of social media, Facebook also allowed for more quick and direct communication with potential participants through the immediate forms of communication available so that interviews were scheduled quite quickly.

The last medium of pre-study recruitment consisted of a letter or email sent to 36 local churches across the target areas informing them of the study and requesting for assistance in recruiting eligible participants. Churches were appropriate institutions to contact in seeking out potential study participants due to the nature of this family-based research project. Churches also

appeared as a place for recruitment due to the likelihood that many attendees or congregation members are parents and meet the eligibility criteria for the current study. Churches seemed more likely to be willing to assist in recruitment than other institutions that involve parents and children, such as schools. Since churches are less frequently targeted by research studies, it was also speculated that churches would be willing to assist in study recruitment. Additionally, the high religiosity of African Americans and Hispanics (Yancey 2005) was thought to potentially aid in the recruitment of a more diverse sample through churches. The contents of the letter or email (depending on the availability of contact information) sent to a church was more similar to the content of the recruitment message sent via the Virginia Tech listserv, in that it was area-specific (see Appendix D for the full recruitment information that was sent to churches). Short memos describing the research project and its participant requirements were made to distribute to churches if they wished to have a study description to post or distribute themselves (see Appendix E for the flyer created for churches). This method proved relatively successful, as two churches assisted greatly in recruiting multiple participants.

Additionally, this study incorporated snowball sampling to continue to gather eligible participants throughout the remainder of the study. This method entailed a word-of-mouth recruitment system whereby study participants were encouraged to refer other potential participants from their own personal networks. This method was very useful for finding more participants who met the eligibility requirements since parents often know other parents from school or other children's activities.

### *Interview Content*

Interviews focused on the methods and practices that parents report using in training their children as future consumers (see Appendix A for a complete list of interview items). Sociodemographic questions were asked first in order to ascertain sociodemographic characteristics of the participants, such as gender, race, marital status, and socioeconomic status. The interview questions focusing on family consumerism then asked parents to recall specific types of practices or methods they use in teaching their child(ren) about how to become a successful consumer. While parents of multiple children were asked to only discuss one child in particular, the majority of these parents still discussed their other children while trying to mainly focus on the one child in question. In addition, parents were also asked to identify the origin of these practices, whether they come from the parents' own experiences as a child, from the media, or perhaps from popular books or conversation. Participants were also asked to respond to popular ideas about consumerism and the socialization process in order to prompt them into discussing their own methods and beliefs regarding consumer socialization. This was initiated by asking participants to respond to Warren Buffett's (2013) suggestion of the ideal age for beginning the training of one's child into a consumer role. As these interviews were be semi-structured, these primary interview questions acted mainly as guiding questions to prompt the participants to begin to reflect on their experiences with consumer socialization, and still allowed the participant flexibility in deciding which topics to focus on or elaborate more fully.

### *Coding and Data Analysis*

For this study, the original coding schema was created at the onset of the study, and went through one iteration of additional codes early on in the coding process. The initial coding

schema was comprised of codes for themes and methods or techniques of consumer socialization speculated to emerge during interviews based on the current literature. For instance, broad codes were initially developed for each tool or method expected to be used by parents for consumer socialization, including allowances, shopping, savings accounts, checking accounts, and informal work. Some of the major themes that had emerged during the interviewing and transcribing processes also received initial codes, including codes for being heavily influence about money by one's parents or by the media.

The second iteration of additional codes occurred early in the coding process. In addition to adding codes for some of the unanticipated methods and tools used for consumer socialization (e.g. cell phones and family expenses), additional codes incorporated subcategories into some of the original codes. For instance, the code used when checking accounts were mentioned was expanded to include a separate code for pre-paid debit accounts. Similarly, new thematic codes were added mainly as sub-codes to existing broad thematic codes. For example, the code for modeling behaviors was further expanded to differentiate between two new sub-codes: modeling by example, and modeling through discussion.

### *Technology and Transcribing*

To minimize distraction during the interviews, the only technology used was a small hand-held audio recorder to record the interview in its entirety. These devices are minimally invasive, and allowed the interview to be recorded verbatim, and left time and space to allow for any additional notes to be written by hand. All participants were asked to consent to audio recording prior to being recorded. This process was described in detail to the participants in the informed consent form that each participant received prior to completion of the interview (see

Appendix G for the full letter of informed consent). Following data collection, the interview audio files were transferred to the ExpressScribe transcribing software. Transcriptions were completed individually and did not rely on any outside transcribers. Pseudonyms were nevertheless applied to each transcription to ensure anonymity of the participants by omitting identifying information, as per the IRB protocol for ethics and confidentiality. After completely transcribing all interviews, the transcriptions were then transferred to the qualitative data software program MAXQDA where all transcriptions were systematically thematically coded. MAXQDA allows for quick coding with many tools that create visual aids from the qualitative data. This thematic coding process allowed the data to be clustered into meaningful and useful categories in order to efficiently identify important themes that emerged and to address the research questions posed above.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### RESULTS

The interview data collected reveal a myriad of methods, tools, and strategies employed by parents as they train their children about money and about becoming consumers. Many of the items included in the original interview list were discussed and expanded upon, unveiling additional items that parents use frequently in teaching their children about spending, saving, and the importance of money that were otherwise not included. Meanwhile, some of the original items were discovered to only be relevant to a small portion of participants. Patterns relating to gender and SES were evident in some of the methods and strategies that parents reported. Finally, the cultural creation of the meaning of money to families was revealed and solidified through several examples provided by parents.

#### *Consumer Socialization Tools, Methods, and Strategies Used by Parents*

Parents spoke at length about the many different ways in which they teach their children about money and consumerism. Many of the methods that parents described appear in the existent literature and were explicitly outlined in the initial interview questionnaire. However, as parents described their practices and methods, many of the participants supplied details about methods that have been previously underrepresented or absent altogether from the current literature. These are all detailed below, as well as those methods that parents use less frequently but were still found to have an overall impact on the consumer socialization of their children in teaching them how to spend, save, and value money.

*Allowances.* When asked about the use of allowances, the popular debate of which system of allowances to use was evident in the wide array of allowances used by parents. Most of the participants described any allowances they used as either a weekly or monthly stipend that they distribute to children. However, parents reported many variations of allowances and differences in their application, including some who did not use any kind of scheduled payment, but rather gave their children money more sporadically for good report cards or in times of need. Twelve participants reported using a weekly or monthly stipend, but even this group of parents were split on whether they gave their children the allowance automatically or based on some reward system. Five parents reported using an automated allowance system by which they gave the same amount of money to their children each week or month. One parent, a mother of two named Alice, automatically deposited the same amount each week to her child's prepaid debit card to be spent at her son's discretion. Another mother of two named Brooke (postgraduate, 13-year-old daughter) reported using a system of chores that were separate from the monthly allowance she provided to her children, yet still felt that her children were learning how to be responsible with money from her system by doing their own record keeping. Brooke made the following comment about the way she uses allowances:

It's automated, but they do chores. So we don't tie the chores to the allowance, but they do chores weekly. And at one point...when we were giving them cash and it always seemed to just be missing, then they would never have any money. But it is tied in...if they don't remember to go and put the money in the account, or put it on the computer, then they don't have that money for them to spend.

While many parents may have their children earn their allowance based on doing work or doing well in school, Brooke embodied the notion that children can still be held accountable for their own money even if it is not earned. This was demonstrated by having her children track their own allowances using the computer. Marie (postgraduate, 12-year-old daughter) complements this point of view when she expresses how automatic allowances may enable children to contribute to the family and manage their money. She expressed the sentiment of a popular author whose lecture she once attended:

And I think that's why we don't make her do work for her allowance...is that [the author] said "Yeah, kids should just have money and it should just be that they have money and then the things that they do should not be in order to get money, but they do these things in order to contribute as a member of the household." So that was her philosophy: that you contribute whether you're getting paid for it or not [laughter], when you're part of a family.

Marie points out that an automated allowance asserts that children have to meet parents' expectations regardless of whether or not they are paid for it, as opposed to children who may feel entitled to refrain from contributing to the family if they don't get any compensation.

Jan (bachelor's, 14-year-old daughter) amply supports this decision in her description of her own situation with allowances.

Yeah, and money for her to learn how to spend money and decide what to spend money on for herself. And to learn some budgeting and to be able to buy things or not be able to buy things. I also feel like she should be expected to help around the house but not be paid for that specifically.

According to Jan, not only does an automatic allowance help reinforce the notion that household help and participation is not always rewarded by being tied to a specific amount of money, but it also helps her daughter learn how to manage and budget money. Without being automated, some parents seemed to fear that children would either not have the opportunity to effectively budget money and plan their expenses, or that children would begin to think that every task they do should be associated with a monetary value.

On the other side of the parents who used allowances were those who used a reward system to give money to their children. Parents who provided their children allowance as a reward for a particular behavior typically distributed these allowances for completing household chores and daily tasks (such as completing homework or getting ready for school). Six parents required their children to perform chores or daily tasks in order to receive their allowance. Chores covered a wide range, including cleaning bedrooms or other rooms in the house and setting the table at mealtimes; daily tasks included things such as getting ready for school, completing homework, or even repeatedly staying out of trouble while at school.

Parents who endorsed a reward-based system of allowances often used it as a way to relinquish some of their power over the money and let their children spend it on whatever they chose. Robin (bachelor's, 12-year-old son), a stay-at-home mother of four stated:

We do have an earned allowance system. So there are daily responsibilities in order to earn an allowance. Then they can kind of use their allowance for whatever they deem is acceptable. Because we do not do the new shoes [laughter] and that sort of thing.

Robin's earned allowance allows for her children to budget for their own upcoming expenses, and she expects them to do so. However, she expects her children to do this within the constraints of the money they have earned, much like a job.

Similarly, Anna (postgraduate, 15-year-old son) teaches her son to budget his allowance in order to afford his own expenses.

We do give him an allowance weekly. We don't have a hard and fast way that he *has* to budget that allowance, but that allowance has to cover extra things that he's doing. We will pay for clothes that he needs, food that he needs, or school activities, like if he wants to go to a football game. We want him to do those kind of things. But outside of that, that's what he has to budget his allowance for. So if he wants to go to the movies this weekend, then he can't spend his allowance through the week. Or if he wants an extra sweatshirt that he doesn't need but he really likes, that has to be budgeted out of his allowance.

In this way, parents who base the allowance they give to their children on either work or other requirements still expect their children to be responsible with their money and to pay for their own expenses that do not pertain to needs or basic care. Heather (bachelor's, 14-year-old daughter), another mother of four, similarly assigned both more responsibility and more freedom with money once they started receiving allowances. Heather stated that "They understood once they started getting an allowance, that they were responsible for paying for a lot more. So that was their choice, because then they were free to spend it on what they wanted."

It is interesting that two seemingly polar methods of allowances are used with very similar rationales behind each one. Parents used both forms of allowance to teach children about

the importance of budgeting money, especially for things that children may want that parents find unnecessary or too expensive. The main difference is that, while parents like Jan tend to suggest that awarded allowances teach children that nothing should be done without pay, other parents like Anna believe that such allowances are effective in teaching responsibility and work ethic.

Since about half (thirteen) of the participants reported not using allowances, reasons for electing out of any form of allowances were particularly interesting. For the most part, parents who did not use any form of allowance would still reward their children with money following good grades on a good report card or for helping with other household tasks, such as washing the family car. Many of the parents simply found the process of keeping track of allowances to be too much work. This is exemplified by Valerie (postgraduate, 13-year-old-son) when she mentioned the record-keeping aspect of monitoring allowances.

Well the idea was at that time, the kids were supposed to have chores that they did and then earn the allowance at the end of the week. And it became a lot of nagging to get them to do their chores. And then we would forget to give them an allowance, and sometimes the kids would forget. And then we would never know how much they were owed. So I guess the record keeping part of it was – just for us, the way we roll – it didn't seem to work.

In addition to the hassles of recording allowances and making sure they were always appropriately distributed, other parents felt that *any* kind of allowance taught children not to do anything in the home for free. Kerri (postgraduate, 14-year-old-daughter), a mother of four who

had tried allowances before, explained that she thought allowances were teaching the wrong principles.

It just didn't ever come to the end result...so we were like "Well, that's not fitting." So we actually did away with the allowance thing, and we basically said, as our family evolved, "There are certain things that you do and you're not rewarded for. Mommy and Daddy do laundry because it's got to get done. Somebody needs to help clear the table because it's got to get done." ...So then we were like "Well, is it really hitting at the goal of what it's supposed to teach them?" Anyway, the point at the time was that I think we'd rather teach them about being a productive member of a team in a family than getting a couple of bucks. So that's why we nixed it.

Even some of the parents who did report using allowances shared Kerri's sentiment that perhaps allowances were encouraging children to think differently about money than what they had intended. This was demonstrated by Iris (postgraduate, 12-year-old son), a mother of three who questioned her own use of an allowance.

You know, the concept of chores for money...I have always been a little torn on which way to go. The system that I came up with is not great either – for my kids, the incentive part – I guess because my kids generally have everything they need. So they don't have a lot of need to go out and buy stuff. So they don't work too hard to earn that five dollars and fifty cents every week. And also the whole thing of money for chores...I was torn for a long time whether I want to even tie chores and allowance together. I did not want to give them allowance, for sure. That was something I definitely did not want to do – just give them the allowance for nothing. So I tried this method. So I don't know [laughter]!

In this case, Iris found that her children were not motivated to earn their allowance, yet she did not want to resort to an automated allowance, which she deemed as giving them an “allowance for nothing.” Iris’ uncertainty about the specifics of allowances appears to represent the general mixed feelings of parents regarding allowances in general, as the multitude of different variations of allowances and evident lack of allowances used by half the sample seem to indicate uncertainty in an ideal model.

*Financial accounts.* Many of the participants in this sample reported using various financial accounts to teach their children about how to spend and save money. When providing children with their own accounts, parents often used one of three accounts: savings accounts, checking accounts, and prepaid debit card accounts. Over half (fourteen) of the participants indicated that their children had savings accounts, and checking and prepaid debit card accounts were used by four participants each. Parents used these accounts to describe and teach various skills concerning spending and saving to their children, including basic money management, saving, and interest. The most basic way that parents seemed to use financial accounts to teach their children about consumerism was by teaching them how to save money and about the importance of doing so. Kerri (postgraduate, 14-year-old daughter) stated that the savings account she started for her daughter teaches her daughter how to make decisions when it comes to saving money.

She does have a savings account at the bank. So we do work to encourage her to put a portion of holiday...her birthday is in December, too. So she gets some money for Christmas, money for her birthday... “Okay, so how much of that are *you* going to put in

your savings account?" So she makes a decision and we go to the bank and she does that. But we let it be *her* decision.

Just as Kerri encouraged her daughter to save by putting holiday money into her bank account, another mother of two, Alice (bachelor's, 14-year-old son), described how she used a "matching" system with her son's savings account to encourage him to save.

We also have an incentive for him to save money. ...If he is willing to put...if either of them are willing to put money into their savings account, we will match it fifty cents on the dollar, almost like employees do for a retirement pay...

This strategy allows Alice not only to teach her children about the benefits of saving, but also about the process of saving for the future. A mother of seven named Grace (Bachelor's, 15-year-old daughter) stated that her daughter's account helped instill values of not only saving, but also money management, adding that "she has a savings book and sees and records to see how much she has in the balance."

While bank accounts are obviously intended to help individuals save money, some of the participants demonstrated how these same accounts can also be used to help instill in their children responsible ways of spending money. This was primarily achieved by the parents who set up prepaid debit card accounts for their children and then used them to teach their children how to budget their funds. One parent, Valerie (postgraduate, 13-year-old son), described how her children used a prepaid debit card to budget their money when traveling.

[T]hey did travel this summer for the first time themselves to California to visit my brother. So we gave them each a credit card for the trip, like a prepaid Visa card. So

during that trip, it was kind of like “Okay, this is what you have to spend, and this is what this is for.” That kind of stuff.

Similarly, Whitney (high school, 14-year-old son), a mother of two, commented that she taught her children that the money in the account was their money rather than their parents’.

...they both have one of those PayPal Mastercards. And we started that because my daughter went on spring break with another family, and we needed a way to get her money to be able to spend. So they’re used to spending money shopping that’s mostly their own money, if that makes sense. ...So that’s sort of how we’re teaching them.

These examples help demonstrate that both Valerie and Whitney used prepaid debit cards to not only set a limit on the amount that was available to their children to spend, but also to teach them about budgeting their own money.

In addition to teaching children simply how to spend and save money, parents often use the accounts they set up for their children to teach them about interest. Brie (bachelor’s, 13-year-old daughter), a mother of three, recalled using her daughter’s savings account to teach her about how interest is accrued.

I remember having a conversation with her: why was she putting that money in the bank. And that’s when I said “Okay, remember when you get your statement, and it’ll say ‘Plus two cents’...” and in the beginning, it was! It was just two pennies and four pennies a month. And now she’s thirteen, but she makes considerably more in interest than that, and she always looks at it. And she’ll say “I’m making this money because I’m allowing

the bank to use my money to make money.” She understands that that’s why it’s good to have a savings account!

This example was one of many in which parents used the accounts they had set up for their children as a way to teach them about the somewhat more complicated notion of interest.

Another mother, Iris (postgraduate, 12-year-old son), commented that the savings account she established for her son provided her with an opportunity to teach him about not only interest made on the account, but loan interest in general as well.

But he knows about interest, we’ve talked about interest, we’ve been talking about interest for a long time. So they know how interest works in terms of when you have savings. And he knows how interest works when you borrow money. So who will get the interest when you borrow money...the lender gets the money, and when he saves, *he* gets the money.

In this way, the savings account Iris started for her son allowed her to discuss different facets of money with her son, including the benefits of interest when keeping money in the bank.

In addition to using financial accounts established for their children as a means of teaching their children about spending and saving, parents also reported using their own financial accounts as a way to teach their children about money. Ten of the twenty five participants reported using their own financial accounts to talk to their children about spending and saving. These accounts ranged from their own savings account to retirement or college investment accounts. This group of parents included Selena (high school, 14-year-old son) who uniquely mentioned using her PayPal account to teach her son about money. She stated “I have my PayPal

account, my savings account, and a checking account. I show him what each is for and how you could use each one for different things.”

Other parents were more specific in how they used such accounts to teach their children about money. For instance, Lana (bachelor's, 14-year old daughter), a mother of two, explained how she uses their 529 college savings plan to talk to her daughter about saving for her education while avoiding debt.

We talk to them about “We’re saving money so that we can pay for your school so you don’t go into debt...you know, you come out of college debt-free.” So we have that conversation with them. And they know how we’ve saved. For example, we talk to them about “We’ve already paid for you guys’ college already” through I guess the 529 plan...and things along the line of “This is for in-state, so if you decide you want to go out of state, this is all that we’re going to pay, and so you’ll have to figure it out on your own. So you’re better off staying in state” kind of thing [laughter].

While Lana used her college savings account to talk to her children about saving for the future, other parents used their retirement accounts for the same purpose. Olivia (high school, 13-year-old-son), a mother of two, provided details about how she teaches her oldest son about both saving and investing by discussing her retirement account with him. In the example she provided, her son was watching her sort the paperwork for her retirement account.

And he’s like “Mom, what is that?” And I was like “This is our retirement.” So we talked about...I showed him a statement. I was trying to explain stocks to him, because a lot of mine is investments, so it’s “Okay, [Son].” He was like “Mom, I don’t understand. That one makes more money, so why isn’t everything in there?” So just trying to explain

“Well it made more money this quarter, but next quarter this one didn’t do as well. Could increase, depending.” So we just kind of...I’m not really sure he understood the whole concept of the stock market and investments and things like that, but those are the kinds of things we go over.

Despite Olivia’s uncertainty in the level of comprehension of the stock trade that her son demonstrated, she showed that parents’ accounts are used in multiple ways to teach children about spending and saving, including saving for the future and the basics of investing.

*Family expenses.* One method of teaching one’s children about how to learn about consumerism and money that was not widely discussed in the literature (and thus not included in the original interview questionnaire) is the discussion of family expenses. The use of this method arose organically and repeatedly in the conversations with the participants, though a specific question aimed at this topic was never written into the final interview questionnaire. Many of the parents described family expenses as a tool they use frequently to talk about spending, saving, and the importance of money with their children. The family expenses that parents discussed with children varied greatly, and included utility bills, car and mortgage loans, credit card bills and debt, family spending budgets, and extracurricular expenses that focused around the high costs of sports and athletic events and equipment. The parents who reported credit cards as the family expenses they discussed with their children often used their credit in order to talk about responsible spending and avoiding debt. Regarding talking to her children about family credit card expenses, Brooke (postgraduate, 13-year-old daughter) stated that “...we’ve talked to them consistently....we pay off our credit card every month. And we have said ‘This is the reason why we pay off our credit card. You can’t spend the money before you have it.’”

A mother named Denise (bachelor's, 12-year-old daughter) elaborated on discussing credit card expenses with her children. This not only helped explain the costs of certain elements of daily living, but also helped explain her expenses in a way that encourages paying off her bills, avoiding debt, and budgeting her money wisely.

[W]e put everything that we possibly can on that one card each month, and we pay the balance in full each month. I don't believe in having credit card debt, I don't believe in that kind of stuff. So that's my budget. I put it all on the card and pay it all off, so there are times when I will show her that credit card statement and say "Look at how much this is." And then we'll go down and I'll say "Okay, here's 'x' amount of dollars at Chick-fil-A, and here's this amount for GameStop" and "Look how much this hospital bill cost"...those kinds of things, to show her how much things cost, in order to be a functional person in the world.

In addition to using credit as an example of family expenses, parents also reported bringing up the subject of mortgage for similar purposes. Elise (bachelor's, 14-year-old daughter), a mother of two, provided a poignant example of her children being acutely aware of their family's expenses by learning about their mortgage situation. In this example, she talked about their recent downsize from a large house to a smaller but more affordable family home.

[T]hey're very aware of the financial burden that our home that we just moved from was putting on us as a family. So we *had* to move. And we didn't want to move, we loved the house. There was nothing wrong with the house, it was the financial problem that it was accruing upon us. And the kids could see that. So they know we're in a smaller house now, and now it's manageable. They know it's manageable as far as the mortgage is

concerned, because they've heard that term over and over again. I probably, at their age, never heard the word "mortgage" over and over again as they've heard it. But they've heard a lot of terms – financial terms – that I never heard of as a kid at their age. So I think they're a lot more aware of things at their age than I was at my age. Yeah, I'm trying to bring them – both of them, and definitely my oldest – into the fold of making them more street-smart...aware of finances.

This example clearly demonstrates how, as a parent, Elise is teaching her children about being "street-smart" or "aware of finances" by keeping them informed about their family expenses through discussing their mortgage.

A third way in which parents frequently mentioned discussing family expenses with their children was by bringing up the expenses associated with their children's participation in sports. In talking to her son about his travel soccer expenses, Robin (bachelor's, 12-year-old son) teaches her son about their expenses and responsibility by asking him to contribute.

[He] does play sports a lot, so I think that if there is kind of that work ethic in sports...and we require him...for different sports camps he's gone to... when he plays soccer – he plays the travel soccer – we require him to earn and pay for part of those registration fees. And he knows how much it costs and so we kind of expect work to come out of that.

By informing her son of the expenses related to his soccer registration, Robin places responsibility on him and requires him to help pay for some of his fees.

Teresa (high school, 14-year-old son), who also has her son contribute to his baseball-related expenses, elaborates on why she expects this and how it helps her son learn about money.

[H]e plays baseball as well. So he does help with paying for when he wants something for that. It's an expensive sport [laughter], so he will help out. I mean we enjoy watching him and love seeing him play, but if he wants a new bat, usually we'll say "Okay, we'll pay fifty percent and you need to pay fifty percent." You know, just because it *is* so expensive and he needs to work for that fifty percent we put in, and... we try to tell him that if it's something that you really want to play and it's something you really want to do, then you need to learn to put money towards that as well. That's just the way life is, it's not free.

In this case, Teresa demonstrates how she not only has her son learn to budget for his sports expenses, but explains that he now knows, from this discussion, that it is important to be able to afford your own extracurricular activities in the future.

*Cell phones.* A second tool that parents use to teach their children about money that was not readily evident from the existent literature is the use of mobile phones. However, this item became quickly recognized as an influential source of learning about money for children in the pilot study. Immediately following the pilot study, a question about cell phones was added into the interview questionnaire and, therefore, was posed to each participant in this study. A large majority (20) of the participants reported that their child had a cell phone, and fifteen of these parents reported that they use their child's phone to teach them about money in some way. Yet, all 20 parents whose child had a cell phone reported that they paid all of the monthly contract

and service fees for their children's cell phones. It was through paying for cell phone accessories, apps, and upgrades that parents used cell phones to teach children how to spend and save money. For instance, by providing him with a cell phone, Selena (high school, 14-year-old son) showed that her son now had an incentive for saving money.

Everybody else around his age has a smartphone, right? Him...he has one of those old almost near-Nokia phones! I'm like "This will teach you that you have to save to buy your own phone!" [Laughter] Yeah, so he's happy with even that...he's like "At least I *have* a phone now." And he's like "I'll save up for a better phone"...

Although Selena pays for her son's cell phone service, this example shows how she still uses his cell phone to teach her son important lessons about saving for the future.

Marie (postgraduate, 12-year-old daughter) also mentioned her daughter's cell phone as a tool she used to initiate conversations with her daughter about the costs of phone services and the differences in overseas telephone fees. When asked if she used her daughter's cell phone to teach her about money, Marie replied:

Yeah, and she knows that those cost money, of course. And she knows that her phone cost money and that the data that she uses cost money. And recently we went to Spain, so we had to talk about why calling costs money when you were there and how texting is a different kind of data than voice. So I guess that was sort of financial stuff.

Similar to both Selena and Marie, another mother, Connie (postgraduate, 13-year-old son), mentioned that her son so desperately wanted to add additional data that he offered to take on the extra fees associated with purchasing more data for his cell phone. When asked about her son's cell phone service plan, she stated:

He does know how much it costs. He had asked to help pay for it because he wanted to have more data per month than I was willing to pay for. But he wants more data and is willing to pay for it, but he doesn't have a way to pay for it because he won't do more yard work [laughter]! So I do talk to him about coming up with other ways to earn money...

Connie pointed out that while her son was enthused about paying for the extra cell phone data, he had to learn that he did not have the means to afford it, and needed to save additional funds in case he wanted to be able to afford something like that for his phone. In this way, saving and working for income were encouraged through conversations about his cell phone.

Elise (bachelor's, 14-year-old daughter) made a comment about her son's cell phone that put her opposite to Connie's situation, where she had to teach her son retroactively about the high costs of data plans for cell phones.

My son is the data-hog, and he's the eleven year old that's racking up the bill. And I had to turn off his phone for a while. So he's understanding a little bit more about the consequences of racking up the cell phone bill [laughter]. Because his was ridiculous, his was twice as much as [my daughter's]. And she just pretty much uses hers...she uses hers as texting, Face Time, and a phone. Whereas him...not using it for what the purpose of it is [laughter]. So she hears my conversation with him. I don't direct it towards her because I don't need to, she doesn't get out of line with it. But if she did, then she would hear about it.

In this situation, Elise points out that even though her son had already exceeded his data limit and accrued extra fees for his cell phone, she was still able to use this as a retroactive learning opportunity to teach him about overspending money.

*Informal work.* Another important tool that parents frequently reported using to teach their children about spending and saving money was the use of informal work. This included a variety of tasks done for other people for pay (e.g., babysitting, pet-sitting, yard work, housework) and other odd jobs (e.g., salvaging aluminum to trade in for extra money). Like other tools that parents use to teach their children about money, a basic way that parents use informal work to teach children about spending and saving money is through encouraging saving. Olivia (high school, 13-year-old son) describes how her son does yard work for her friends and has begun to save the money that he earns.

So when he does work with them, it might just be like four or five hours. And it's more of like if he cuts the grass or something like that, working with them. That's what he would get paid. So he saves his money. Usually he has something in particular that he is saving for.

Similarly, a mother of two named Fay (postgraduate, 12-year-old daughter) mentioned that her daughter was learning how to save and budget her money earned from informal work in order to buy Christmas presents.

[S]he gets paid six dollars an hour for a babysitting job, which in my book is pretty okay when the parents are there. You know, she's just like a support for the parents, because the kids are little. ...But she is very good about money management already, I can tell.

She saved up all her money to buy me a very expensive piece of jewelry for Christmas. So that was pretty cool because she had to do stuff. You know, she had to work and save money to be able to do that. And it was a pretty big deal.

In addition to simply teaching children about saving their earned income and basic money management, parents also use informal work to teach their children about more adult responsibilities and money management skills that may come in the future with formal employment. For instance, Robin (bachelor's, 12-year-old son) provided an example of how her son is learning about income and interacting with the people who pay him.

[T]his summer was the first time that our neighbor a couple doors up...they have a rental house and they were needing someone to mow the yard. They called and [my son] was like "Yeah! I'll do it!" [Laughter] So he had to mow it and it had to pass inspection by his parents and then he had to write up an invoice about what he did and how long it took him, to hand it to them in order to be paid.

Just as invoices and working for pay under supervision are more advanced money habits that could be expected with formal employment, Olivia (high school, 12-year-old son) brought up her son's yard work for friends to describe how this informal work has introduced him to wage negotiation. When asked about his yard work, in which he primarily lays mulch, Olivia commented:

He does get paid. He negotiated his pay rate with both of them. He wanted ten dollars an hour, which for a thirteen year old is a little high, so I think he landed on six dollars an hour when he does that.

As an important professional skill, wage negotiation is something that working adults are expected to do once in formal employment. However, Olivia's son's informal work was allowing him the opportunity to practice this early on with Olivia's friends, who were employing him.

One other parent also mentioned her daughter's informal work as a way to teach her about wage negotiation, but also took the opportunity to tie negotiating to responsible job-seeking and ensuring that one earns a fair wage from one's employers. Brie (bachelor's, 13-year-old daughter) recalled talking to her daughters about asking for a fair wage for their informal work when their employers would ask how much they charge for their services.

And I said "This is what it is: say it's babysitting, and you've taken the Red Cross class, and you know CPR, and you know how to do 'x', 'y', and 'z,' that's a skill. ... So you have to have a worth. Your time has to be worth something. ... When they [ask] "How much do you charge an hour?" you have to be able to answer and... you need to decide that before you go over there and feel comfortable, even if it's practicing with me what you charge...because otherwise you'll get taken advantage of. [My daughter] still does not like to do that. ...She just had a job where she had to go to the house *four* times a day! And they paid her four dollars a day! In my opinion, they took advantage of her, and that's a learning process too. ...And I said "Well, if that person thinks that's too much, then they need to find someone else who will do that for four dollars a day." And that's hard when you're thirteen! [Laughter] But it's a process, you know? Every time it happens you learn something else!

Although Brie admits that her daughter is still working on becoming better at negotiating a fair wage, Brie used her daughter's informal work to teach negotiating skills and how to apply

monetary value to additional skills applicable to the task at hand. In this way, parents clearly utilize informal work to teach children some of the more advanced or “adult” financial concepts involved with formal employment down the road.

*Formal (upcoming) employment.* This study intentionally sought to hold interviews with parents of children aged eleven to fifteen, as many children who are working in formal employment (ages 15+) may be less involved in consumer socialization processes led by their parents. This targeted age range resulted in interviews with only two parents whose children had formal employment: Teresa’s fourteen-year-old son who worked on a family friend’s farm, and Whitney’s fourteen year-old-son who worked as a soccer referee. While these parents were the only two who reported children with formal employment, just the prospect of formal employment in the near future played an important role among the strategies that parents used to teach their children about money. Twenty of the twenty-five participants indicated that their children will most likely be formally employed in the near future, as a teenager before they graduate from high school. Many of these parents had already discussed future employment with their children, emphasizing the importance of formal employment while in high school and pointing out the different values or skills that can be learned by working as a teenager. Such values and skills included a learned work ethic, knowledge about “real world” money, commitment, multitasking, and working for what you want. For instance, Anna (postgraduate, 15-year-old son) described how important she thought it was for her son to work in order to learn some of these values, such as a work ethic and learning to budget at minimum-wage pay. When asked why she is planning for her child to work in high school, she stated:

I think it teaches [a] work ethic. And I think it also allows kids to see a little bit more of the real world of money. I mean, yes [he] earns money for his allowance and all, but it

seems like it's kind of free money. So I think it gives them a better awareness of what does a paycheck really look like and what does minimum wage really look like, and how quickly can that disappear.

Not only did Anna see the prospect of working as a way to earn more money, she also plans to use it as a way to introduce her son to budgeting from a low income and how to maintain a strong work ethic. Ciara (high school, 13-year-old son) was another parent who shared this perspective, stating that working as a teenager "...teaches them how to be self-sufficient. And also...about learning about money, and eventually they'll be paying their own bills and stuff like that. So they won't be lazy, and be informed of kind of being an adult."

A mother of two named Natalie (high school, 15-year-old daughter) was another parent who mentioned that she planned to have her daughter work during high school in order to more fully appreciate the associated costs of the things she wants, and to learn to budget for her expenses out of her paycheck. When asked if she will have her daughter work in high school, Natalie answered:

I think so, because they need to know that things just don't show up, that you have to work for it. So I think during the summer is a good idea. Like I said, I still haven't decided whether we'll let her do it during school hours. But she's going to need her gas money, because she'll be getting her learner's soon...and stuff like that we're not just going to hand it over to her.

Following this comment, Natalie was asked if she thought children who do not work during high school and before leaving home are adequately prepared to handle more complicated consumer

and financial situations. She answered “No, I don’t. No, I think they’re going to...no I don’t. I just feel like they won’t know the value of a dollar, I guess I should say.” When asked the same question, a mother of four named Dianne (bachelor’s, 12-year-old daughter) responded similarly:

I think that having a job may possibly prepare you for adulthood, if having a job also...if you are then also responsible for taking care of some of your needs. If that money that you get at a job is only for fun money with no needs-based anything, I could see where it could develop a habit of “Oh, all the money that I have I can just blow on whatever!” You know what I mean? Verses a kid that didn’t have a job wouldn’t get the possibility of that negative portion of it. So I think it could go either way, again, depending on the situation...I think the best situation would be if there was a job, there would be some parameters in place as far as “You need to save this much. This much should be for needs, and this much for wants.” ...Training in that...would be the best case.

In this case, Dianne thought that perhaps her daughter might adopt patterns of increased spending as a result from finding formal employment as a teenager. However, Dianne also suggested that children may learn the most from their employment about money and finances, if they work with the notion of saving money always in mind.

### *Shopping as a Tool for Consumer Socialization in Families*

Parents frequently referred to shopping as a tool with many teaching potentials in socializing their children as consumers within the family. Twenty-one of the twenty-five participants reported shopping with their children and using it as a way to talk to them or teach them about spending and saving money. Of the parents who shopped frequently with their

children, 17 parents mentioned clothes shopping with their child and 14 mentioned grocery shopping frequently with their child. Interestingly, one parent noted that they shopped almost exclusively online with their child, and another parent commented that they rarely shopped except for when her child wanted to purchase books. As a tool for consumer socialization, shopping was used by parents relatively similarly to other aforementioned tools and methods in teaching the costs of items, how to budget, and how to save money. Unique to shopping, however, is that parents reportedly participated in three clearly distinct forms of shopping with their children: average shopping, discount or bargain shopping, and online shopping. This section describes shopping in general as a tool for consumer socialization, while findings pertaining to discount and online shopping follow in the subsections below.

At the most basic level, parents use shopping to teach children about the cost of items purchased for the family in day-to-day shopping. Clothes, food, hygiene products, gifts, and entertainment products are just some of the items that parents mentioned they want their children to know the price of while they are shopping in order to make more informed decisions. For instance, Olivia (high school, 13-year-old son) reported that she takes her son shopping for the sole purpose of explaining the real costs associated with items they need for the family. She stated, “He grocery shops with me and he hates it, but he has to come with me when we shop for his clothes. So he sees how expensive it is.” Robin (bachelor’s, 12-year-old son) also used shopping to teach her twelve-year-old son about basic costs, stating, “So he’s very conscious about what things cost, even things at the grocery store [laughter.]”

In addition to teaching their children about the general costs of needed or wanted household items, parents also reported using shopping as a way to show their children how to save money while purchasing things needed for the family. In particular, some parents used

shopping to teach their children how to budget and spend their own money wisely. Teresa (high school, 14-year-old son) described how her fourteen-year-old son was learning about spending his own money, while shopping at a store that sells remote controlled cars.

He went there and spent a hundred dollars. He used his bank card and Mama said “I didn’t even know he had a bank card!” ...She said “I was impressed!” [Laughter.] But he does, he pays for it himself, he knows it’s expensive and that that’s why he asks people for money for holidays, because he knows that’s something he really enjoys doing with his friend. His best friend – that he works with on the farm – he does the same thing. That’s a common interest they like, and they work on them together and that’s what they do! So he spends his money and pays for it by himself.

In this example, Teresa’s son not only learned about the basic costs of his hobby, but he learned that it is expensive and that in order to budget accordingly, he needs to prioritize his money and thus asks for cash towards that hobby when he receives gifts from others. Similar to Teresa’s example of using shopping to teach her child about prioritizing and budgeting his money, Selena (high school, 14-year-old son) reported doing the same thing with her son. She commented that “If we’re grocery shopping, it’s okay; I can spend the money on “What do you want? Are you wanting snacks, chips, etcetera?” For clothing, that’s his own thing, that’s with the money he saved up.” In this way, Selena used shopping not only to purchase things that her son needed, but also to differentiate between what he needed and what he wanted. While she covered the costs of his needs, such as food, she instructed him to purchase other items with money budgeted from what he had saved up.

Several other parents emphasized teaching their children about the difference between “needs” verses “wants” through shopping with them. Lana (bachelor’s, 14-year-old daughter) further exemplified this strategy when shopping with her daughter. Lana noted that she had taught her daughter to consider whether a particular item is a need or a want before purchasing it.

I’m not a big shopper and she likes to shop, but she’s very conscientious about “Do I really need it” or you know...not that she doesn’t buy things that she doesn’t [really] need, but she kind of takes into account what money she has on her. And she’s more than willing to pay it out of her money than to ask me for it.

The mother in the example above used shopping as a way to teach her daughter about consciously spending her own money, especially in cases where the mother thought something was not necessarily a needed item.

Most of the parents who used shopping to teach their children about consumerism used shopping as an avenue to show their children how to spend money wisely and appropriately. While many parents encouraged spending money wisely when shopping by being frugal or purchasing less, other parents emphasized putting quality over quantity in order to “shop smart.” This opinion was expressed by Denise (bachelor’s, 12-year-old daughter), who suggested that buying quality items may result in spending less money in the long run.

We don’t necessarily always buy the cheapest, but we try to get the most for our money, if you will. Sometimes it may be cheaper, but it’s not as good of a quality, so we will...I’ll say “We’re not going to get that one, it doesn’t look so sturdy. Let’s go with the next step up.”

Alice (bachelor's, 14-year-old son) shared in the belief that teaching children to look for quality verses quantity while shopping could help them learn how to spend wisely and save money over a span of time. She commented:

[I]t is nice to buy *quality* pieces instead of buying something and replacing it every year because you chose cheaply. So in the long run, it's much more financially sound to buy quality, not necessarily quantity or a name brand.

Interestingly, Alice did not associate brand name items with products of a higher quality, but rather thought that quality items were simply those that did not need quick replacement.

*Discount and bargain shopping: "Shopping smart."* The majority of the participants indicated that they frequently did discount or bargain shop as a way to help teach their children about money. Out of the 21 parents who indicated that they shopped with their children, 18 reported doing some form of discount shopping with their children. Different forms of discount or bargain shopping that parents brought up included looking for sales, shopping sales or clearance sections in stores, using coupons or store reward/point cards, and shopping second-hand, which included thrift, consignment, and yard sale shopping. Parents primarily used this variety of discount shopping as a way to teach children how to save money when shopping, but was also used by some parents to teach budgeting and other "smart shopping" skills to their children.

Simply put, most parents who bargain shopped did so for one particular reason: to encourage their children to save as much money as possible when they shop, especially when purchasing needed, recurrent items, such as clothes and groceries. This goal was highlighted very clearly by Selena (high school, 14-year-old son), who bluntly stated, "I don't know how to say this, but I emphasize on trying to tell him to be *cheap* [laughter]. Like 'If you could find

something that's for a dollar less, that's a dollar saved.'" Selena wanted her son to understand that any items bought for less was a way to save more money, and that this is best done by shopping "cheap."

Robin (bachelor's, 12-year-old son) also demonstrated how "cheap" shopping and bargain hunting helped her son learn to save and budget his money in order to buy cheaper designer shoes when at sale price.

So I happened to be out at a store and I saw some shoes that were like half price. So I texted him a picture, I texted my husband a picture to show him and he was like [whispers] "Yeah! Those are like this year's model still... Yeah, that's a great deal. Those are the shoes I really want!" And they were sixty dollars verses a hundred and fifty. And he was like "Okay, well I have this much money and then my allowance at the end of the month is this much, and can I owe you this much?" So he had it all figured out as to how we was going to pay for that...but in the confines of it not being just ridiculous.

By finding her son the designer shoes he really wanted but at a discounted price, Robin used discount shopping to help her son afford what he really wanted by saving money and then budgeting from his own funds for the discounted shoes.

Several mothers stated that these discount shopping techniques are so highly engrained into their shopping that their children only shop for sales or in the clearance sections of stores. Whitney (high school, 14-year-old son) summarized this process by describing shopping with her two children:

My kids are well-trained. They go right back to the sale racks because they know I'm not going to buy anything else in the store that's full-priced, unless they're going to contribute to it. Then that's fine, you know?

All of these bargain-hunting behaviors helped parents teach their children to shop by showcasing the ability to increase savings and decrease money squandered when shopping. Natalie (high school, 15-year-old daughter) eloquently summed all of up these kinds of bargain shopping behaviors that she referred to as "smart-shopping" techniques, stating "We smart-shop; we use coupons, we get deals whenever we can. So I guess I've discussed it more with her in the last year or so than I did before."

*Coupons.* While a majority (17) of the participants frequently mentioned coupons, parents appeared to use them as a tool for consumer socialization only minimally, as only ten of these parents reported using coupons with their children in teaching them about shopping. Many parents who did not use coupons when shopping, or chose not to use them with their children, reported doing so largely due to a lack of time and the effort required to seek, acquire, and maintain a coupon collection, not to mention to remember to take the coupons along when shopping. However, of the participants who did use coupons to shop with their children, these parents seemed to use coupons religiously, and greatly reinforced their use by their children when shopping. Brie (bachelor's, 13-year-old daughter) described how she has taught her daughter to use coupons and reward cards to find the best deals when traveling.

[S]he sees me use coupons and she uses coupons. And I join anything that I can join where you get points that you get rewards for. One thing that she really helps us with is if we go on a trip, and I usually sign up for every single one that was free. If it's Holiday

Inn or Marriott or...I have a card for every one. ...She has places that she would rather stay, the one that gives her chocolate chip cookies when you check in is her favorite! [Laughter.] So...she'll say, "Are we going to stay here? Are we going to stay there?" And she'll start watching the signs, and then she takes my wallet, she'll take out all the cards, and she'll figure out where we can get the best deal and where we'll get points for it, which is very helpful!

Similar to how shopping sales and clearance became engrained into their shopping experiences, coupons were used so heavily by a few participants and their children that they would not shop without coupons. Brooke (postgraduate, 13-year-old daughter) explained that the only way she buys clothes from certain stores for her child other than for holidays is if she uses a coupon.

[S]he loves the store Hollister. ...So if they send me a coupon, then sometimes we'll go and look...you know, that's the times when it's a good sale, so I might allow her to go and get something when it's not Christmas and not the end of the year and not [her] birthday. So then I'll use virtual coupons. I always go and search for virtual coupons to see if there's a free shipping code or discount code. And then we use Groupon.

While the coupons Brooke used frequently were virtual or online coupons, Connie similarly reported shopping at particular stores with her son only if she has a coupon in hand. She commented, "...[H]e might hear me talk about "Oh, I've got a coupon, so let's go to Dick's and buy new tennis shoes now because I've got a twenty-dollar-off coupon or something." While

couponing may not be as popular with the majority of the participants' children, those who used them with their parents seemed to be exposed to their use frequently and repeatedly.

*Second-hand shopping.* Another important way parents used discount shopping to teach children about spending and saving money was through second-hand shopping, such as at thrift or consignment stores and yard sales. Taking children shopping to these types of second-hand shopping locations gave parents the opportunity to teach them about saving money and curtailing the desire for expensive products in general. For instance, Grace (bachelor's, 15-year-old daughter) explained that she frequently shops at thrift and consignment stores with her children, and indicated that doing this regularly has instilled the value of thrift shopping in her children.

We're big thrift shoppers [laughter]. I like consignment stores, thrift stores...we do furniture shopping like that. ...In fact, they kind of roll their eyes because I'll say "Hey, you guys ready to go thrift shopping or flea-market looking?" And they're like "Oh here goes Mom again, looking for this or that." So they're very used to bargain hunting. And pretty much...that's kind of flowed into my older kids. They are pretty good about that.

Similarly, Kerri (postgraduate, 14-year-old daughter) demonstrates in the following example how her frequent thrift shopping has taught her daughter that cheaper is better, especially on items that are typically overpriced or expensive.

My husband and I have always been bargain people, so they're very used to shopping at Plato's Closet, Once Upon a Child...we're definitely thrift store...I've paid full price for things and I've also gotten things for cheap-cheap. So she knows. Because...she wanted a pair of Vans for the longest time. I was like "I'm not paying [that]." But we found a pair

for twenty bucks at Plato's Closet that were purple, and she was like "[Gasps]" and I'm like "Bargain. We'll get them." So she thought that was awesome. She knew if she asks Mommy for the cheap used ones [laughter]!

By thrift shopping and shopping for cheaper, second-hand items, these parents use shopping to teach their children the importance of saved money and the value of getting more expensive (and often times brand-name) purchases for less money.

*Online shopping.* Another form of shopping that parents appeared to use quite frequently in teaching their children about how to effectively shop and learn about spending and saving money is online shopping. Online shopping was also the last tool of consumer socialization that was omitted from the original interview questionnaire due to scarcely being mentioned in current consumer socialization and shopping research literature. After the first two participants brought up online shopping without being prompted, it was quickly integrated into the interview questionnaire, and the remaining participants were all asked if they and their children shopped online. If they answered "yes," they were then asked whether they assisted their children in online shopping. A majority (19) of the participants noted that their children do online shop; 15 of whom also stated that they assist their children when they shop online. Parents who shop online with their children use this tool to teach them how to save, bargain shop online, and as a way to do thorough research on desired items before purchasing them in-store.

Many parents who reported that they online shop with their children mentioned that this was primarily a method of teaching their children about saving money while shopping. When discussing shopping in general, Anna (postgraduate, 15-year-old son) brought this to the

forefront of the conversation by stating, “And we also teach him a lot – nowadays, especially – about online shopping, because we feel like you can get, especially with clothes, a lot more better deals if you kind of plan ahead.” Connie (postgraduate, 13-year-old son) also described shopping frequently online so that her son could learn how to comparison shop and bargain shop online.

[H]e likes to get online and look for stuff that he wants. And I have taught him about comparing prices, and so he’ll go to eBay or he’ll go to Amazon and he’ll put in the exact same product and try to learn about “Oh, I can get a better deal with this” or “If we buy it right now it’ll be this much, if we wait it could go up.” That kind of stuff.

In this instance, Connie describes how shopping online helps her son learn about saving money and comparing the prices of items from multiple sellers in looking for the best deal.

Dianne (bachelor’s, 12-year-old daughter) further emphasized the importance of repeated, frequent shopping online, and described how recurrent purchases could help save even more money when shopping. She described her frequent use of Amazon’s Subscribe & Save and how she uses it to teach her son about savings through shopping online regularly.

If you have a recurring subscription of an item, you save a percentage – like fifteen percent – versus if you just buy it the one time. So like paper towels or pantry-type things, stuff like that. Again, we’ve talked about that and said “See, I can get it here and it comes directly to my house and we don’t have to go out and get that.” So that’s why we choose to go that route.

Dianne demonstrated that she uses online shopping in this way to teach her son that regular shopping can lead to higher savings, and also notes the added perk of a delivery directly to their home.

In addition to shopping online with children to teach them about saving money, parents also used online shopping as a way to do thorough consumer research prior to buying particular items, even if they were planning on making the actual purchase in a store rather than through the internet. Kerri (postgraduate, 14-year-old daughter) coined this online research as “pre-work,” and described it with the following example:

What I would tell her is “Before we go to the mall and you get sucked into the ‘what you *have* to have,’ go online and look.” So she knows how to do searches. Just the basic Google shopping. ...I said “Save them and show me what you find and let’s look at what kind of prices you’re seeing out there. What’s realistic?” ...So that’s more of her making a proposal, you know? I’m not going to just go and buy. Because...if you go to the mall, it’s right there and it’s really hard to say “No,” or you’re evil [laughter]. So we do pre-work, you know [laughter]. So she knows how to search and she knows what Mommy will say more yes to...

Kerri explained that such pre-work online helps teach her daughter how to shop more effectively, not only by learning how to comparatively shop, but also in avoiding the temptations of stores and what they do to entice you into buying with what “you *have* to have.” Additionally, Kerri points out that this process involved her daughter making a proposal to her about what she wants to buy and the rationale behind it. In this way, Kerri also used online shopping to teach her child about

negotiation in purchases and how to convince her parent that what she was buying was the best deal available.

Robin (bachelor's, 12-year-old son) was another participant who mentioned that her son will shop online first (without purchasing anything) in order to price items and comparatively shop before buying something. She described a recent example where he was interested in buying a World Cup jersey and Beats headphones and she had him do some online shopping pre-work beforehand.

We try not to just let our kids have complete open web access, so he's like "Can I go look for that?" So he will go online and search for a lower price. Or...for his birthday last year, he really wanted a pair of Beats headphones. And so ...we discussed it and talked about it. Anyway, then he kind of tracked them on eBay for a while to see what kind of used ones that this model were selling for. Because he kind of knows roughly what we spend on a birthday present [laughter], so he knew that new ones were kind of out of the question, but could he find a used pair or a refurbished pair that he thought was still cool.

In this example, Robin used online shopping to help her son comparative shop and to acquire headphones for his birthday at a discounted price that he would not have received otherwise at full price.

While many parents could possibly leave their children to shop online for themselves, it is important to reiterate that the majority (15) of the 19 parents who reported online shopping with their children also indicated that they played a large role in helping their children shop online. Jan (bachelor's, 14-year-old daughter) described a basic process of assisting her daughter, whereby her daughter did the main shopping and then Jan made the final purchase.

She has found things online that she wanted to buy, like a case for her cello, and saved up until she had enough, but then I pay for it with my credit card and she'd pay me back. I think she's looked at stuff on Etsy that she wanted to buy. Or various other online places.

Despite letting her daughter do the majority of the searching and comparing prices, Jan's relatively hands-off approach still involved plenty of parental involvement, in that Jan saw the final purchase, paid for it, and then was later reimbursed by her daughter. This seemed to be a popular method among parents, as it allowed the children to do most of the shopping for themselves, but the parents still held the final say.

Brooke (postgraduate, 13-year-old daughter) reiterated this notion, noting a similar practice when shopping online with her daughter. She stated, "She'll pick the stuff out, but then I have to approve it and then I put the credit card in...the credit card number." In this way, final approval of the purchase was always held by the parents even though they let the children shop on their own (for the most part) to encourage learning the process of online shopping.

While many parents took this more basic approach to online shopping, others took a slightly more involved approach, encouraging their children to do even more tasks or take more responsibilities in online shopping. Anna (postgraduate, 15-year-old son) described how she is more involved with her son's online shopping in order to encourage looking for a good price and helping him reach a final decision.

Well when he actually purchases things, we're around. ...Let's say that we know there's a sale going on at a store and he needs a new pair of pants. We'll say "Hey, look for online clothes. Look at there and see if there's anything you like," and then we'll sort of

go through and decide what's a good price, what's the best deal, and then we're there when he actually makes the final decision to buy it.

Though his mother was present for the duration of his online shopping, Anna's son was still able to make the final decision of what to buy and was guided by his mother through this shopping experience.

Another example of a parent who was somewhat more involved in using online shopping as a tool to teach children about money was Teresa (high school, 14-year-old son), who encourages her son to follow up on online orders.

And one of the things I'm teaching him is...like he ordered something online for the first time, and something didn't happen the way it was supposed to. And I said "We need to call them." And I said "[Son], if you don't do that, it's how people make money off of you. You need to follow through with things because if you don't call and complain and say 'This didn't happen'...you deserve to get a refund, but if you don't complain and say 'Oh I'm not worried about it,' well that's what they expect people to do. So you need to learn and not be afraid to do those things."

In this case, Teresa was very involved in her son's online shopping experience. Not only was she aware of and involved in the original purchase, but she continued to follow up with the purchase order and used this situation to teach her son about self-reliance in ensuring that his shopping order was correctly filled by the seller.

### *Differences in the Tools, Methods, and Strategies Used by Parents by Child's Gender*

Following the interviews in which parents described the methods listed above, each tool or strategy that parents mentioned using for consumer socialization was closely examined to determine if there were any differences in their use depending on the gender of the children. While the expected gender differences in the use of individual tools or methods was not observed, a difference by gender was evident in the overall use of these methods for boys compared to girls. None of the specific tools were reported very differently by parents for one gender when compared to the other. For instance, among parents who mentioned shopping as a tool that they use to teach their children about money, 10 parents shopped with their sons and 11 shopped with their daughters. Similarly, bank accounts that parents used as a consumer socialization tool were reported for eight parents of sons and ten parents of daughters. No one tool or method used by parents for the purpose of consumer socialization appeared to have a significantly larger number of uses reported for either sons or daughters. However, the influences of gender organically emerged nonetheless throughout the interviews, though no interview questions were used to prompt the participants to discuss gender or potential gender differences at any point. These influences of the gender of the parent's child first emerged seemingly at random, yet patterns of discussion of gender soon became apparent, first about stereotyped gendered behavior in consumerism, followed by a pattern of exclusion due to some of these stereotypes.

Parents began to mention gender in their responses somewhat sporadically. However, it soon became apparent that in most cases where participants mentioned gender, parents were often referring to how their children were adhering to or breaking stereotyped gendered behaviors as consumers. For instance, some parents described typical gendered stereotypes of

children's behavior as consumers where daughters are supposed to be the "shoppers" and the gender that likes to shop, while boys are supposed to be disinterested in shopping. Several parents alluded to such stereotypes, including Whitney (high school, 14-year-old son), who described both of her children as fitting the prescribed gender stereotypes for consumerism. When describing shopping with her son, she explained "He's a typical boy, he doesn't really like to shop. Now [she] and I will shop together...my daughter and I." Natalie (high school, 15-year-old daughter) similarly placed emphasis on girls as stereotypically being the shoppers in the family, stating, "She is a teenage girl, so we go every once in a while and get new outfits and whatever..."

Parents also mentioned when their children were acting as a consumer in ways that did not adhere to typical gender stereotypes of consumerism. Alice (bachelor's, 14-year-old son) demonstrated this when she talked about her son shopping. She commented, "He likes to shop, he likes to shop! [Laughter.] You would think he was a teenage girl instead!" Elise (bachelor's, 14-year-old daughter) seemed particularly attune to the fact that her daughter did not showcase typical stereotyped gendered behavior as a consumer, and brought it up repeatedly. When describing her daughter's interest in shopping, Elise commented:

So really for her, she's not a shopper. I know she's different from many other girls that are big shoppers, but she's not a shopper. So she doesn't care about that as much right now.

Elise continued to bring this subject up, later stating that her daughter was not "girly," because she did not enjoy shopping. She stated, "Yeah, she's not a girly-girl that likes to go and hang out

at malls or anything like that. She'd rather be doing other things" and noted that this lack of enthusiasm for shopping made her daughter "[a] very different fourteen-year-old girl."

Somewhat disparately, Selena (high school, 14-year-old son) mentioned a fairly pronounced gender difference between her two children when it came to distributing allowances that was based on stereotyped gendered behavior involving housework. Gendered behaviors became evident when she described her chore system within her home:

The chores...[my son] doesn't need to do anything. His sister...she does a little bit. I make her do it. She's a girl, of course. The guy...you know. But she's fine. So she does a little bit around the house. She gets a little more money than him because she actually works.

While her daughter received more allowance than her brother, her son still received some allowance for completing no chores. However, Selena nonetheless expected her daughter to help around the house. Selena indicates that this is in fact due to their gendered roles and responsibilities within the home.

As the interviews progressed, it became apparent that a pattern was emerging that was in fact based around the gender of the child in question and seemingly reflected the notion that girls are the primary consumers. In examining all of the interviews collectively, some parents with sons commented about the level of responsibility or maturity of their son, and would then indicate that this was cause for not introducing certain tools or practicing various methods of consumer socialization with that child. Seven of the interviews revealed that parents with sons often feel that their son is immature or possibly too irresponsible as a consumer, especially among parents with both a son and a daughter who can compare their sons to their sisters. For

instance, when asked about her son's savings account, Alice (bachelor's, 14-year-old son) brought up her son's sister and compared the two, explaining that her daughter is the better saver.

I'd love for him to save more. We also have an incentive for him to save money. His sister – who I know...this is not about her but – she has the same offer, and she takes us up on it a lot more. If he is willing to put...if either of them are willing to put money into their savings account, we will match it fifty cents on the dollar...He finds more items to buy, though. He doesn't take advantage of that opportunity as much.

Even though Alice was not asked about her daughter or to compare her children in any way, she openly shared this information regarding how her son did not take advantage of his parents' saving strategies as frequently as his sister.

Heather (bachelor's, 14-year-old daughter) made a similar point about her son, and also compared him to his sister. She mentioned her son's lack of restraint when shopping and attributed it to being less "level-headed" than his sister.

[W]ith my son...I have to go "Are you sure you want that? It's going to cost you this, and if you buy it, you're not going to be able to do such and such." Because he will; he will spend it all. His Christmas money is almost gone. One trip to GameStop. Whereas I don't think [my daughter] has spent anything yet from Christmas. ...My fourteen-year-old [daughter] is much more level...I guess level-headed. Or she doesn't have that need to buy.

Comments such as these appeared to be relatively disconnected until parents began to couple this stereotyped association of sons and consumer irresponsibility or immaturity with

decreased opportunities for consumer socialization. In other words, parents who viewed their sons as financially irresponsible or immature with their money appeared to decline using some of the methods and tools described above when compared to their daughters who appeared more mature or reliable. Lana (bachelor's, 14-year-old daughter) provided a description of such a situation with her two children when asked if she planned to teach her daughter how to manage the savings and debit card accounts that had been opened for her.

[S]he's one of the ones – in comparison to the two [kids] – she'd be on top of it. And she'd manage it and handle it and do everything with it. ...So she saves her money from Christmas, birthdays, that kind of stuff that she gets. She's not a big spender, she's pretty good with her money. My son burns a hole in his pocket [laughter]. So if I said to her, "Let's sit down and I'm going to teach you how to go into your checking account and savings account," she would sit down and do that with me. He would be like "I don't care, I don't want to know." So that's why we got him his, whereas hers is...she's more responsible and I know she'll keep up with the card. He's already lost his once. But she'll keep up with the card.

While Lana mentioned possibly starting conversations with her daughter about how to manage her accounts due to her high level of responsibility, she did not mention the same option for her son. In this case, it is possible that Lana may delay or opt out all together from using her son's bank accounts as a way to teach him about spending and saving money due to his perceived lack of responsibility.

A mother of two named Pam (high school, 14-year-old son) was another participant who seemed to refrain from using multiple tools and methods to teach her son about money since she

saw him as irresponsible and lazy, especially in comparison to his sister. Even though Pam was asked to focus the interview on her fourteen-year-old son, she repeatedly spoke of her daughter and made comparisons between her daughter and her son. When asked if she used allowances or chores to teach her son about money, she simply replied “No, because he’s lazy.” She then went on to describe how she finds him too irresponsible to work as a high school student, and therefore will not be using formal employment to teach him about money management. When asked whether her son will work during high school, Pam replied, instead, about her daughter:

Well for my daughter, it’s working well. My son, I would say no. Only because she is disciplined. She knows the importance that work comes first...her schoolwork. Like schoolwork comes first before sports. My son thinks sports come before schoolwork. He’s thinking the opposite. And he thinks that things should be given to him versus actually working hard for it. They’re definitely different. Like she’s more responsible, he’s not. Like every three to six months, he’ll break his phone. He’s very careless. ...He’s not really responsible for fourteen.

Due to his demonstrated lack of responsibility in comparison to his sister, Pam may not give her son the opportunity to work during high school and use that experience as a way to learn about spending and saving money.

The examples above indicate that some parents may not choose to actively show or teach their sons how to spend or save money as consumers through various tools, if they do not appear responsible or mature enough. This same paradigm seemed to persist for parents even in just talking with their children about money or money management as well. Though Natalie (high school, 15-year-old daughter) was interviewed about her fifteen-year-old daughter, when reading

Warren Buffett's statement about talking about money with children at an early age, she disagreed and immediately brought up her six-year-old son.

I don't agree with preschool – my son is in first grade – especially with boys. Because boys, I think...my son, at six, is a lot more immature than [my daughter] was at six. But he could care less. It's going to go in one ear and out the other.

Natalie demonstrated that parents may need to delay talking with their young children about money management, “especially with boys.” She compared her son's level of maturity with that of her daughter at his age, and decided that he was not at an appropriate age to learn about money management. Whitney (high school, 14-year-old son) summed up this same sentiment when she described talking to her son about money compared to talking with her daughter, when she stated “I'd have to say that I could talk to my daughter – who's two years younger than [my son] – at the same level as [him] probably, because she's so mature. I could talk to them at the same time.” Based on this comparison, if Whitney is starting to talk to her daughter two years ahead of her son about the same ways of learning about money, then it may be possible that she could be missing out on potentially timely learning experiences in how to successfully spend and save money.

#### *Differences in the Tools, Methods, and Strategies Used by Parents by Socioeconomic Status*

As described above, the sample for this study included seven participants with a high school degree, ten with a bachelor's degree, and eight participants who had a professional degree. For the most part, few differences were found in the kinds of tools or methods used by parents to teach their children about money based on socioeconomic status. For instance, the

twelve parents who reported using allowances with their children were divided equally among the three education groups (four with a high school degree, four with a bachelor's degree, and four with a professional degree). Parents also used shopping relatively evenly across socioeconomic status categories, where six had a high school degree, eight had a college degree, and seven had a professional degree. However, though the differences by SES were slight, more parents indicated that they used their children's bank accounts to teach their children about money with each increase in education. Of these parents, three had a high school degree, seven had a Bachelor's degree, and eight had a professional degree. (The use of parents' own financial accounts to talk to children about money showed no real differences by SES, as they were used by four parents with a high school degree, two parents with a college degree, and four parents with a professional degree.) Similarly, parents used household expenses as a consumer socialization tool slightly less with each increase in education level. All seven parents with a high school degree used expenses to teach their children about money, compared to six parents with a bachelor's degree, and five parents with a professional degree.

Of the eighteen parents who indicated that they use their children's bank accounts to help teach them how to spend and save money, there was a mild yet nonetheless evident difference in the amount of parents who used this strategy with each increase in education. Three participants responded that they regularly contribute to their children's accounts to model good saving techniques, yet all of these parents had either a bachelor's degree or a professional degree. The opposite trend was evident for parents' use of family expenses to teach children about money: the use of this tool was similar at higher levels of education. Such trends reveal a modest pattern of use of consumer socialization techniques based on underlying socioeconomic status.

Similar to how patterns emerged in the data regarding differences in consumer socialization tools used by gender, some minor patterns also emerged in how parents used these tools differently based on socioeconomic status. One pattern that became evident was that some specific subsets of tools used for consumer socialization were restricted to particular SES categories. For example, rather than using formal savings accounts established through official banks, some participants reported using some type of informal savings to help teach their children to save. Such parents used piggybanks or savings jars to reinforce the value of saving rather than having their children deposit their money into the bank. Pam (high school, 14-year-old son) explained that she even encouraged her son to use a drawer in his room as a means of informal saving: “I try to tell him to keep his change, like his loose change, and just drop it into a drawer or you know... And then a couple of months just go see how much you have.” while the number of parents who used informal savings was small, it is still important to note these patterns in the event that they are also applicable to studies with larger samples. What was similar across all these methods of informal savings was that they were all used by parents in the lower two education groups (i.e., parents who had a high school degree or a bachelor’s degree). None of the parents with a professional degree mentioned using any form of informal savings to teach their children to save, but this is most likely due to the fact that every participant with a professional degree used a formal savings, checking, or debit account to teach their children about money.

While this pattern of informal savings emerged only among the lower two education groups, there was also a pattern that developed among only the upper two education groups. Parents who had either a bachelor’s degree or a professional degree were the only parents found to use more lavish means of teaching their children about money, most likely due to having more

resources to fund the expensive costs of such extravagant methods. The most common tool used by parents to teach children about money that was exclusive to these upper levels of education was traveling. Marie (postgraduate, 12-year-old daughter) detailed her family trip to Spain and articulated how this travel experience was an opportunity to teach her twelve-year-old daughter about money at multiple levels. When asked to describe any other methods of teaching her daughter about money that came to mind, she replied:

[T]he only other thing I can think of is Spain, and trying to convert euros to dollars and see how expensive or cheap things were. And when we were in Spain, I cut my foot, and I had to go to the emergency room. And we talked a lot about healthcare and how much healthcare costs. So she knows a little bit about that too.

Marie used her travel experiences to teach her daughter not only about foreign currency and international price differences, but also about the more complicated financial world of healthcare as well. Similarly, Grace (bachelor's, 15-year-old daughter) described how traveling was used in her family to teach her children to save money appropriately for their own travel expenses.

They have actually saved their money and about... I think all of my four top ones have all gone to... they have – they've all gone to Europe to see things. So that was something that because we didn't indulge them in things, they saved money, and that was one of their goals to do, was to go to Europe and tour Europe and so forth. I mean, they did it on their own dime, and they did it great.

In this way, Grace used her children's travel abroad to teach them to save and budget their own money. However, it is possible that if either Marie or Grace only had high school degrees, this

method of teaching their children about money would not be as readily available when compared to parents from a higher socioeconomic status category. Parents who have less discretionary income may report using travel and other more extravagant means of consumer socialization less often due to the higher associated costs (Halnon 2002; Pugh 2009). Though this trend is interesting and worth noting, the use of education as a measure of SES is but one component of the complex relationship between education, income, and SES and leaves the example above open to further speculation and future research.

### *The Cultural Valuation That Parents Attribute to Money and Consumerism*

The data collected for this study revealed many patterns in how parents create cultural significance and importance for money, wealth, and consumerism for their children. Parents described a plethora of cultural impacts on money and how these have helped them teach their own children to think about and use money. Parents described their own views of money, what has helped shape these views, and how they use their own conceptions of money and wealth to teach their children about how to value money and become successful consumers. Three main themes that emerged from the data were: 1) teaching children about the responsibility of money as paramount, 2) parents found their own parents as highly influential, which leads to the third theme that 3) parents see themselves as most influential in shaping their own children's attitudes about money today.

*Responsibility with money.* While it can be speculated that very few parents are likely to encourage poverty or to forsake money altogether, this research sought to further elucidate how parents teach their children to value money and what cultural importance parents place on money

and wealth. Interviewing parents revealed one dominant perspective among parents when it comes to teaching children about money: that being responsible with money is paramount. Though some parents stressed the need to accrue and save money more so than others, most of the participants placed clear emphasis on being responsible with money, no matter how much or how little one might have. Irrespective of trying to obtain great quantities of wealth, parents mainly want their children to be responsible with the money that they do have. Anna summed up this sentiment when discussing the value of wealth that she tries to teach her son. She commented, “We want him to be smart with his money, but at the same time it is certainly not our main focus in things that we teach him, if that makes sense.”

Parents stressed personal responsibility for all amounts of money, and they tried to instill this in their children. Connie (postgraduate, 13-year-old son) described how she encourages her children to think about money, to be cognizant of it, and to be responsible with its use.

I think [that] I think more about with whatever money you have, trying to be responsible. So whether you're a gazillionaire or someone who's barely getting by, just trying to be responsible with the money you have. And I think that's what we try to teach our kids. They'll see these wealthy people on TV and...I think it's sort of the just-in-time lesson. Like if we hear about an athlete who's mega-wealthy and then is bankrupt, we try to talk to them about that. You know, if we hear one of these horrible, tragic stories about somebody shooting their wife or their husband for money, then we might talk about that, about how money can do really weird things. But it doesn't mean money is bad, it just means you really have to think about how you think about money. Kind of be meta-cognitive about money.

In this way, Connie explains to her children that regardless of the amount of money someone has, they need to be responsible with that money. Similarly, some parents stressed that, while they don't want their children to struggle with money in the future, they don't need to strive for great wealth as long as they are responsible with their money. Denise (bachelor's, 12-year-old daughter) confirmed this when she was describing the kind of financial success she wants for her children, in which she emphasized hard work and living within one's means.

I want all of my kids, to be successful. I don't think that having a lot of money necessarily means that you're successful, but I want them to be able to work hard and be happy, and have their bills paid, and be able to have things. ...I want them to, if they can, put a little money aside because you don't know what's going to come at you in a surprise, and you can go into those reserves. ...But all of our bills are paid and we're comfortable, and I think that's kind of how I try to teach my kids. You know, you want to work hard, save your money so that you can have what you want out of life. You don't have to be rich. You don't have to be wealthy, but you should be comfortable. I don't want you to be struggling with two jobs and not being able to make ends meet.

Parents often held this notion of responsibility with money above the need for accruing massive wealth, and often coupled it with the notion of helping others in need. For instance, Iris (postgraduate, 12-year-old son) made a poignant comment about how sharing wealth is a part of being responsible with money.

We talk about sharing our wealth, being responsible to the needy and the poor and how...sometimes we will just randomly talk about...if we were infinitely wealthy or

whatever, that we have all the money in the world, we still wouldn't buy the most expensive things just because we can.

In this example, Iris uses a single conversation with her child to emphasize multiple important values associated with money: being responsible with one's money, supporting those in need, and saving money despite having a lot of wealth (in this case, hypothetically speaking). This opinion was shared by Olivia (high school, 13-year-old son), who mentioned speaking to her son about using money wisely for oneself and for others simultaneously, regardless of how much money someone has. She recalled:

I've been president of the PTA and on the PTA board since they have been in school. And I talk about... "Mom, why do you do that?" "I do it because I want to support the school. When you get older, you want to be able to donate your time. You don't have to get paid for everything. You can make such a difference and not get paid." ...And then we talk a lot about homeless shelters and donations to the food bank and things like that. ...So just about being responsible and giving. So you can have it all, but you should be able to give money away to people who are less fortunate than we are, for sure.

Olivia's quote summarizes the overall opinion that most parents reported: that any amount of money, small or large, is important and should be valued and handled responsibly. Olivia noted that she would not mind if her children did "have it all" in the future, but that responsibility with their money for themselves and for others was most important.

*Participants' own influences regarding money.* To identify how parents had developed such strong notions of financial responsibility, the participants were asked to identify any important factors that had influenced the way they think about and use money. This question was inserted into the interview questionnaire early during the instrument development in order to more fully understand how parents developed their thoughts and beliefs about money that they would later attempt to instill in their children through various tools of consumer socialization. Parents mentioned several sources of influence from which they had developed their own thoughts, beliefs, and practices towards money during the course of their lifetime. Such sources of influence included friends, the media, life experiences, and parents. When assessing the top influences for the participants, media stood at the periphery of the important things that influenced participants about money. Many of the parents who mentioned the media as an influence brought it up in terms of how it had influenced their shopping. Heather (bachelor's, 14-year-old daughter), for instance, noted how ads and reviews online have influenced her shopping habits.

I do a lot of shopping type stuff online. So when I'm doing that or researching for anything we buy...the reviews that people write, I tend to get very influenced by those. So if you're on Amazon and you're thinking of buying Christmas presents for the kids, I will read...I will definitely...if something has five stars and a thousand reviews, I would definitely aim for that more than I would that four-stars and ten reviews type thing. Those do tend to influence me a lot. And I also go in and I read – you know, if we're doing a major purchase – all the consumer reports and that type of stuff. So those have an influence on me.

Heather noted how both consumer comments and reviews on the internet helped influence her on what she should or should not buy.

Valerie (postgraduate, 13-year-old son) shared this experience of being swayed by the media in terms of being influenced in her shopping by things she saw online. This followed a brief discussion about how she was not easily swayed into making purchases based on things she sees on television.

But when I check my email, I get those things from anywhere that I've shopped, like Dick's or whatever. And they'll have a sale. Sometimes – not all times – I'll go [laughter] onto Dick's and...so I feel like sometimes that does work on me. It does make me buy something that maybe I wouldn't have already bought, especially if it's on sale...that's a trap I fall into sometimes.

Like Heather, Valerie is sometimes persuaded into making purchases based on ads online. It is interesting that while Valerie seemed to make a conscious effort at staving off the persuasion of media advertisements in the media, she admitted to being pulled into the shopping “trap” by internet advertisements. Regardless of the source of media, the media strongly influenced both women, and this led to altered shopping practices for each.

While some participants noted that the media influenced how they use and think about money, the next most important source of influence were personal experiences that had happened across the duration of their lives. Such personal experiences included things they learned from their first jobs, living on their own, and mistakes they had made with their own finances, teaching their children about finances, or even learning to manage budgets with their spouses. Natalie (high school, 15-year-old daughter) provided an example of how things she has learned

through her various different employers have helped shape how she views and uses money, especially when it comes to saving and managing money.

I work for a law firm and...we do family law and we do work for some wealthy people. And I guess seeing the different types of accounts they have, all this debating and stuff like that, I guess it's rubbed off on me a little bit. I mean, I don't have a whole lot of savings...just trying to save an IRA and stuff like that. But kind of just like being out working and growing up, I guess, I've learned how to manage money. I also worked for a bank...and we had financial seminars that taught us a lot. So I learned from that and just learning from my mistakes as well.

From this statement, it is clear that Natalie's own life experiences have played a big part in shaping how she uses and values money, specifically by saving more and trying to improve her own money management skills.

Pam (high school, 14-year-old son) offered a similar account of how her own experiences contributed to the ways in which she thinks about money, mainly through past shopping experiences and budgeting with her husband for family expenses. When asked about her influences, she replied:

I have gotten better. My husband is more disciplined than I am. He does better than I do. But I always try. I always pay my bills on time, now that I do. Even if I only have ten dollars left, I want my bills to be paid on time. My downfall is when I shop, I don't shop in my budget. Like if I say I'm going to spend \$100, it's usually \$250. I don't really look at my monthly thing until the end. So I think that's my problem. And then at the end of the month I'm like "Man, I should have paid more on *this* credit card, but I can't because

I went over, over here.” My husband is so opposite. He budgets very well. But different things that are unexpected, I really forget. You know, with three kids anything can come up. My son just broke his wrist. [Inaudible] emergencies...that’s something I was not aware, you know what I mean? So I didn’t budget for that extra hospital bill.

This example demonstrates how Pam has learned from her past experiences and is trying to improve, based on how her husband handles money as well as her past failures to save and budget appropriately. Both Pam and Natalie mentioned past mistakes they had made with money, and each demonstrated how they were trying to learn from these experiences to spend and save money more effectively in the future.

While many participants indicated that the media and past experiences had influenced their thoughts and beliefs about money, it became apparent that the participants reported their own parents as the most powerful influence in how they view and think about money. Out of the 25 participants, 21 indicated that their own parents were their biggest influence in learning how to think about and use money. Of these 21 participants, all of them mentioned their parents immediately when asked about consumer influences in their lives, and many of them brought up their parents in their interviews long before being prompted. Some participants just referred broadly to the overall impact that their parents had on how they think about and use money. When asked about what had influenced her, Jan (bachelor’s, 14-year-old daughter) mentioned how her parents taught her to be money conscious, commenting, “I think a lot from my parents and my upbringing...I think being careful and being frugal and living simply and not being wasteful.” Denise (bachelor’s, 12-year-old daughter) similarly brought up her parents and their general influence as an important impact in her life regarding money.

For me personally, I definitely learned from my parents. ...My parents taught me about spending, and I guess I've just learned that my dad worked hard, my mom worked hard, and they tried to provide for us as much as they could.

While Jan and Denise indicated the influence of their parents in a more general sense, others were more specific in how their parents influenced their behaviors with money. For example, Elise (bachelor's, 14-year-old daughter) described how her mother influenced her in getting over her obsession of name-brand items and in shopping instead for cheaper items at similar stores.

Yeah, I mean shopping with [my mother] when I was my daughter's age. She would take me around to T.J.Maxx and Marshalls back in the day...I wanted to go to like Hecht's or Woody's or whatever at the time and get brand name clothes, and my mom would refuse and go to T.J.Maxx and Marshalls. ...And I would have to get my clothes there, which they still had some brand-name stuff, but I was very obsessed with having brand-name clothes, whereas my daughter could care less. So that...I learned to get over, and now I'm shopping at those stores [laughter]. But now...I'm fine, I actually like those stores now.

While the cases above exemplify the participants being influenced by their own parents to follow similar positive behaviors regarding spending and saving, some participants mentioned being influenced by their parents' ill-use of money or struggle with money as well. Even in cases when the participants' parents had mismanaged money or simply struggled with a lack of money, many of the participants described how such experiences influenced them into making positive

financial decisions for themselves. This was clearly demonstrated by Fay (postgraduate, 12-year-old daughter), when she described where her thoughts and beliefs about money originated from.

Well, I'd say from my parents, for sure. But my parents were not very good at teaching me about money. They did a very poor job, in fact. We do...we try to do better than our parents did, and I think that's why my husband and I have tried to focus a little bit more in this area than at least my parents did. Because I pretty much knew nothing.

Fay clearly felt that her parents did not teach her about money well, and this influenced her to try to teach money management to her children at a higher level.

Selena (high school, 14-year-old-son), when asked where her thoughts and beliefs about money originated from, mentioned how she learned from her mother's money struggles to spend more wisely.

I actually get it from my mom. I've seen her struggle a lot. I've seen them live paycheck to paycheck trying to make the ends meet and all that. So that's where I get my respect for having...you know, spending money wisely. And I want to teach my kids that.

Despite her mother's struggle with a low income, this situation influenced Selena and encouraged her to spend money wisely and to teach her children to do the same.

These examples reflect the beliefs of the majority of the participants who were very strongly influenced by their parents and hope to teach their children about money in a way that was in some form encouraged through their experiences with their own parents. Brie (bachelor's, 13-year-old daughter) generally summed up this pattern when describing how she is taking what

she learned from her parents about allowances (or the lack thereof) to teach her children about spending and saving.

It never occurred to me to give her allowances, and my older two never got an allowance. And I think it's because – I thought about that with my oldest when we were making that decision – my husband didn't get an allowance when he was growing up, and I didn't get one when I was growing up. Neither did my sisters. And none of us [laughter] give our kids allowance, and never did. I guess it's what you grow up with.

Though Brie had considered giving her children allowances, she followed in her parents' footsteps and instead chose to teach them about money and work ethic without using any allowances.

Lana (bachelor's, 14-year-old daughter) similarly reported being aware of her parent's influence and following their advice when it comes to teaching her own children about living within one's means and avoiding debt.

[T]hose are things that...how I was raised and things that I've always said to my kids, like things my dad have said to me... "If you can't pay cash for a car, you don't buy it." So I've always lived under that notion, and I've always said that to them as well. "If you can't pay for it, don't get a loan. Then you don't need it. You need to find something else. Find a cheaper...or something else. Because that's not a debt that you want to carry."

Robin (bachelor's, 12-year-old son) further reinforced this sentiment by explaining how she has learned to talk to her children transparently and honestly about money, because her parents influenced her to do so throughout her childhood.

[T]here were many times growing up when things weren't financially very good. And I think my parents were transparent about that, as far as there wasn't a kind of show that everything's okay. ... And it wasn't in a way that scared me, it was just in a way of "This is reality and this is what it takes and this is what it costs." And so I think that's probably how I've tried to be with my kids, is that it's not a secret and we don't try to pretend, and we don't try to make things seem better *or* seem worse than they really are. That money is a part of life and there might be times when you get to do something way fun and exciting, and there might be times when we can't buy...whatever.

Again, the examples above portray how many of the participants referred to the strong influence that their parents had in how they came to think about and use money, particularly regarding behaviors they could carry on with their own children. Teresa (high school, 14-year-old son), while heavily influenced by her father's money decisions when she was a child, was influenced by this to act differently with her own children when it came to spending money on expensive extracurricular activities.

I do spend more money than sometimes I probably should. But it's usually always on my kids that I spend my money, and I think it's because of my childhood. It's not that Mom did not want to spend things on me or allow me to do things, it was more my dad did *not* want me to. He would not allow Mom to spend money on me. So like activities...I wanted to *always* play the piano. He said "No." If I wanted to be in an activity or extracurricular activity, "No." I wasn't allowed. ...I wasn't allowed to do those things because it cost money. And he didn't want to spend the money. So I never got to do the things I wanted to do when I was a kid, and I think that that has influenced me in that I

don't deny my kids the opportunity...if they want to do it, they get to do it. ...So yeah, I do probably overspend on my kids sometimes, but I think it's because I feel like I'm making up for what I didn't have, I guess.

This is a poignant example of how even participants who did not agree with their parents' use of tools or methods in learning about money were still heavily influenced by them nonetheless in the ways they teach their own children about money. Teresa's is yet another of the many examples that portray how the majority of the participants were all strongly influenced by their own parents in how they came to think about and use money as adults.

*Parents as the dominant influence for their children.* A final pattern that emerged concerning how value and importance is placed on money and consumer behaviors for children is that the majority of the parents interviewed saw themselves as the predominant influence as to how their children learn to think about and use money. As most of the participants viewed their own parents as the most powerful influence in how *they* think about and use money (as described above), it seems natural that as parents they consider themselves to be the driving influence in their own children's lives when it comes to learning about money. Out of the 25 participants, 21 reported their influence as a parent as dominant over other sources of influence to their children, particularly the media and peer groups. In general, most parents were confident that their role as a parent carried a great deal of influence in broadly teaching their children about spending, saving, and the importance of money. Kerri (postgraduate, 14-year-old daughter) articulated this notion clearly, stating that it is her responsibility as a parent to be the main source of influence regarding money for her children.

[O]ur job is to give them a foundation and an exposure. Like let them know what *we* do as a family. Give them knowledge of other resources, but ultimately I really want it to be her decision. ...And so I want to give her as many tools as possible. I think about that with money, religion, moral values. Let them know what we value and why. Why we approach money a certain way, why we budget the way we do. ...So give them as many tools and hope...that they use that, encourage them to use them. Reinforce it and celebrate it when they do what you believe to be in a smart way.

Marie's (postgraduate, 12-year-old daughter) opinion is similar to that of Kerri's, yet she specifically mentioned that she holds the most influence when it comes to teaching her daughter about income and spending.

I think maybe she looks to me for how to deal with money. I make the most money in our family, so I think she associates me with income and then what to do with money and how to get along.

Like Kerri, Marie is confident that her influence impacts her child and leads to positive spending and saving behaviors now that will continue on into the future.

Jan (bachelor's, 14-year-old daughter) lends further support to the pattern of parents as the dominant influence for children in learning about spending, saving, and the importance of money when she describes shopping with her daughter.

I guess we're going to have our influence by there's a limited amount of money available at once. But yeah...I don't think that she would bring with her a huge amount of money

and spend all at once. And I think if there's something big that she wanted to buy that she would talk to us about it. ...I think there's that level of trust.

Though Jan's finite budget was a factor in influencing her daughter about what amount of money to spend, she notes that this is reinforced by the trust in their relationship in that her daughter will consult with her first before making large purchases.

This general, broad notion that parents hold the most influence in determining how their children think about, use, and value money also holds when parents were asked about other influences their child may be exposed to, such as the media and peer groups. When asked if they saw themselves in conflict with the media over influencing their children about money, most parents reported that their role as a parent retained the most influence, even if some conflict with the media did exist. Some parents, such as Brie (bachelor's, 13-year-old daughter), mentioned not having to compete at all with the media in influencing how her daughter views money.

She rarely, rarely watches TV, and doesn't listen to the radio much...she listens to music a lot. So I don't think she gets much from the media. I think she listens to me and she would be able to tell you...answer all the questions that I just answered...she knows all those stories, and she lived through most of it. And she would say the same things.

Brie stated that the media influenced her daughter less than herself as a parent, due in part to the fact that she rarely used various forms of the media. Instead, Brie's daughter was portrayed as a child who listened to her mother's stories rather than looking for information through media outlets.

Iris (postgraduate, 12-year-old son) mentioned that she believed the media has some influence for her children and how they think about money, but she did not see herself in competition with the media as the primary source of influence over her child. When asked about the media's influence on her children, she replied:

I did think it *slightly* influenced, but the thing is: they have me as their mom and they have years of being critical about commercials. So they'll often see a toy and it's advertised as being super cool, and they can see right through it. "Oh, they just *make* it look like it's fun, but it's not fun!" [Laughter.] So in general, they're pretty good about not being influenced by things that they see on TV that they would want to go out and buy. Maybe around Christmas time we'll ask them...if something comes on TV, like... "What do you think of this toy?" and they'll usually be pretty right-on about what would be good to play with or to have than not.

While Iris did see a slight influence from the media on her children, she was confident that she had taught her children well enough to be critical of the media that her influence affected her children's judgments and decision making when shopping for toys.

Not only did parents repeatedly report themselves as the most powerful source of influence for their children when compared to media, but they also reported themselves as more influential than their children's peer groups as well. Natalie (high school, 15-year-old daughter) describes this notion well by describing how her influence trumps that of her daughter's peer groups. When asked about her influence verses that of her daughter's peer groups, she replied:

I actually talk to her about that because she has friends that pretty much get what they want no matter what. [My daughter] pretty much earns what she gets – I mean, not

everything, sometimes I'll surprise her – but she does not have the three hundred dollar boots and stuff like that. We talk about stuff like that and she doesn't even ask for that kind of stuff. There are things that kids have that she gets, but she knows the price and she knows that it's big time if she gets it. Also, I think seeing that and then seeing how I manage money...I think I'm rubbing off on her more than them. You know, she comes home and she says "Hannah has three Coach purses! Who needs that?" So that's the kind of idea.

Natalie admits that her daughter's peer groups have things that her daughter does not. However, Natalie sees her influence as a parent as stronger than that of her daughter's peer groups, and talks with her daughter about earning the things that she receives from her parents.

Like Natalie, Valerie (postgraduate, 13-year-old son) mentioned that peers influence her son about money, yet she nevertheless sees herself as having a lot of influence on him concerning money. When asked if she saw herself competing with her son's peer groups for influence about money, she commented:

...I feel like I have a lot of influence on him in terms of he will ask me if he can buy something. ...[He] is influenced by peer groups in terms of if somebody has something cool like a speaker ...the Beats Pill speaker or whatever...it's like \$200 speakers. So he wanted that for Christmas because his friends have it. So yeah, I think peers influence in that. The big thing for the kids – as you've heard, probably, from all these other interviews – is the phone, the iPhone. And our son is not really putting the pressure on us for that, I think he's still happy with his iPod now. ...But right now I would say that I don't feel like he feels a lot of pressure from his peers to buy things. Although, he is

getting more into fashion and stuff like that, with the skateboarding. So I guess there is some pressure there.

This example shows that Valerie acknowledges the threat of pressure or influence about money (particularly about buying expensive name-brand items) from her son's peer groups. However, she believes that she remains the primary influence, and that he generally remains happy with what he has and does not put pressure on his parents to spend more on brand-name items for him.

*Modeling by example.* Parents, as the dominant source of influence about money for their children, are able to retain some of that influence by the powerful impact that “modeling by example” has for many children. Many parents indicated that some of their influence came merely from leading by example and not actually using a particular consumer socialization tool with their children in teaching them about money. This notion of modeling behavior often did not involve the parents actually doing anything with their child, but rather using money on their own in the presence of their child and teaching their child just through their everyday actions. Fay (postgraduate, 12-year-old daughter) explained this process well when she described the influence she had over her children's spending and saving by just modeling good behaviors in front of her children.

And we're living kind of by the give, save, spend plan too, and so we talk about that regularly. And the kids know that it's important to give, and I think they see that in our behavior. I think kids model. They model their parents' behavior, for sure. So I hope we're modeling that well, anyway.

In this way, Fay provides examples of consumer behaviors she wants her children to learn from her. She acknowledged her influence over them despite not actually participating in any particular behavior *with* her children.

Similarly, Jan (bachelor's, 14-year-old daughter) described her influence as modeling by example rather than talking to her children frequently about money. She stated:

Well, we don't talk about it...we're also more frugal sort of people...our lifestyle. And I think she wants to be saving money and not spend all of her money. So I think somehow she's aware of it...maybe more by example than by discussion.

This example shows that Jan's influence on her daughter's saving and spending habits have led her daughter to be more frugal because she is cognizant of her mother's examples.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **DISCUSSION**

As stated above, this study's goal is to describe how parents teach their children to enter a consumer role, how to spend, save, and budget money, and how to culturally value (or devalue) money and wealth. Additionally, this study also explores whether gender or differences by socioeconomic status play a role in how parents socialize their children into a consumer role. These goals are important not only in answering the research questions posed by this study, but also in addressing gaps in current literature and debate in popular commentary surrounding how parents train their children as consumers. The ability to examine the various techniques and methods that parents employ in the consumer socialization of their children is important in order to understand what processes parents engage in with their children, and to begin to understand which of these appear to work effectively and which of these methods do not.

In addition to initially compiling a list of common practices that parents use in the consumer socialization of their children, examining how parents employ these tools and methods differently based on gender of their children and their own socioeconomic status adds a sociological analysis on how consumer socialization processes may differ between families and create and perpetuate gender and SES inequalities. This study applies social location to the analysis of the methods and strategies parents use in training their children as consumers, and examines whether there are any particular methods or tools that a child is exposed to more or less based on social location. Any discrepancies by gender or SES in methods parents used were examined as they may point at patterns of inequality within or between families. For instance, any differences by socioeconomic status in methods used were examined to determine if, as Pugh (2009) implied, children in the upper social stratum were the only children taught about the

consumer role with certain methods such as allowances. Similarly, differences by gender of the child were examined to denote any patterns that could exist in teaching one gender of child about a consumer role differently from the other. Finally, the data also described the ways in which parents create a culture of money for their children, and how parents have learned this process as well.

The first research question posed by this study is “What tools and methods do parents use in consumer socialization processes?” At the onset of this study, the research literature surrounding consumer socialization and the various tools and methods involved in this process were already fairly robust with multiple methods of teaching children about money. Bank accounts, shopping, and informal work were some of the major methods of consumer socialization that were already discussed widely throughout the literature (Pugh 2009; Haynes et al. 1993). These were included in the interview questionnaire from the start, and were indeed reportedly used by many of the participants. Most parents reported using shopping, financial accounts, and both informal and upcoming formal employment to teach their children about money. These tools and methods were popular and used frequently by parents. Additional research could investigate the popularity of these options to determine if it is effectiveness, or perhaps ease of use, that encourages their widespread use by parents. For example, parents may shop often with their children because it is a practical and effective way to teach them first-hand about money; or they may shop with their child frequently out of necessity, because groceries are needed and the child is always with the parent. Such a differentiation might lead to more insight on which of these methods are most effective.

Methods and tools that appeared in the literature, but were reportedly somewhat less utilized than expected, included allowances and coupons. About half (twelve) of the parents

interviewed reported using allowances, although the method of allowances used varied widely including both automatic and reward-based allowances. For reward-based allowance systems, the requirements and intervals of allowance payout also varied. While not all parents reported using allowances, many of the parents generally expressed strong opinions and rationales for why they did or did not use allowances with their children.

Among all of the tools mentioned previously in the literature, parents used coupons the least in teaching their children about money. Many parents in this study reported that they simply did not want to take the effort or time required in using coupons or teaching their children about coupons. It is therefore unsurprising that less than half of the participants indicated that their children use coupons. As both allowances and coupons entail substantial work by parents, these methods of consumer socialization might possibly be substituted with easier, more efficient methods that are just beginning to be used.

While the above methods are widely discussed in the current literature and were thus expected to be mentioned by parents, several tools or strategies used by parents in the consumer socialization process that became evident through the interviews were largely absent from current literature on consumer socialization methods. Being a relatively novel and evolving technology, cell phones were largely absent from literature on consumer socialization. However, in a report published by the Pew Research Center, Lenhart (2009) notes that cell phone use among adolescents and teenagers has been increasing. It is, therefore, unsurprising that more parents are using cell phones as a way to teach their children about money. Parents also reported using their own expenses and online shopping to teach children about money, both of which were also relatively absent from the research literature. While children may possibly still be increasing their utilization of online shopping (much like cell phones), it is interesting that none

of these three methods of consumer socialization have been included in previous research. The fact that several important methods of consumer socialization have not received adequate attention in past research exemplifies the need to continue research in this area. The use of both cell phones and online shopping could mean that more new tools and methods of consumer socialization will develop in the future, especially with changes and development made with technology. One could speculate from the data that parents may replace less popular tools of consumer socialization in the future as new technologies are developed and the way people shop, spend, and save changes. As mentioned above, the sometimes arduous tasks of couponing and establishing and monitoring allowances can take a lot of time and effort. Perhaps such tools will be replaced in the future by ones (such as online shopping) that are quicker and easier for both parents and children.

Regarding the second research question this study addresses – whether or not the tools or methods parents use vary by the child’s gender – the data collected indicate that gender does play some part in the use of consumer socialization tools and methods used by parents. While the expected trend was not found, a specific pattern based on gender of the child was clearly evident. It was speculated that particular methods might be used more frequently for one gender of child compared to the other. Based on the literature review, it was posed that perhaps parents would use shopping more frequently with girls. Such a distinct use of one method or tool over the other was not evident in the data. Instead, a pattern emerged where parents with sons were choosing to refrain from using different tools or strategies with them because of the parents’ opinion that their sons were not responsible or mature enough to be able to efficiently learn from the experience. These parents tended to compare their sons to girls in general or, if they had one, their own daughters. These comparisons often revealed how parents regarded boys as more lazy,

immature, irresponsible, and/or less “level-headed” when compared to daughters. Rather than parents deciding not to introduce one certain method in particular to their sons, these parents opted out of using many different methods. Some parents noted their refusal to use online shopping, allowances, or formal employment to teach their sons about money. While parents were seemingly frustrated with their sons for their perceived laziness or irresponsibility, it should be noted that many of these parents still tried to socialize their sons as consumers. Rather than giving up altogether, some of these parents began to utilize different tools when they realized tools such as formal employment and credit cards would not work for their son. Online shopping was the tool these parents reported using with their sons most when they felt they needed to opt out of other tools for them. By becoming more involved in shopping online with their sons, these women were able to maintain some control of their sons’ shopping and help socialize them as consumers from shopping within the home. This allowed the parents to retain some control but leave the majority of the decision making to their son.

Such influences of gender on how consumer socialization tools and methods are used could potentially have some ramifications on family life and consumer activity in the future. For instance, this gendered pattern lends support to the notion that women are empowered as consumers by being “responsible” or capable consumers compared to men. If mothers continue to train their daughters more as consumers and with a greater variety of methods and strategies that teach different skills, boys and men may become viewed as secondary consumers. This could potentially impart even more purchasing power and authority to women as they continue to be viewed as more responsible and competent consumers. Moreover, the results from this study do not point at any negative stereotypes as associated with the consumer role for girls compared to boys. For instance, while some might argue that this trend only really indicate women's

competency at another type of household labor (i.e., shopping), the data demonstrate that girls are perceived as more responsible not with shopping alone, but also with saving money, budgeting, and formal employment as a teenager. This trend also has positive implications for girls as consumers in the future economic market beyond shopping, as they may be better prepared at making informed decisions in financial markets such as banking and the stock market because of their increased consumer experiences in the home as a child.

More research will be needed to address the negative connotations of this notion of parents socializing girls more into a consumer role compared to boys. For instance, this trend could potentially develop more negative stereotypes for women as consumers if it promotes excessive purchasing. Additionally, in instances where shopping is viewed as domestic labor or as a necessary chore (Lavin 1993), placing more consumer responsibility on women can be seen as increasing the imbalance of domestic work that women take on (DeVault, 1991; Miller 1998).

These gender-based findings also hold broader implications for boys and girls outside of the family regarding social hierarchies. If parents are socializing girls as primary consumers, they, as women, may gain more power through their prowess in responsible consumerism. Such shifts in consumer and economic power for women could potentially shift the power balance and change the power dynamic in status hierarchies of other consumer markets (i.e. trade and employment markets) if girls continue to be trained as powerful, responsible consumers. While these findings could have long-term implications for consumer socialization, it is important to note that these are based largely on speculation. As noted above, the lack of research that provides direct measures of longitudinal data of the long-term effects of differences in consumer socialization allows only more speculation rather than data-driven conclusions. For example, Moschis (1982) showed that parents do play an important role in decreasing the consumer

influence of the media seen on television, but the study was not longitudinal and thus does not demonstrate actual long-term findings. Additional research with longitudinal studies of consumer socialization could help further clarify the long-term effects of consumer socialization.

Despite these important implications that the findings could potentially have for future consumer behavior, it is also important not to overlook the more immediate implications of the gender differences found in this study. This gendered pattern of consumer socialization holds short-term implications for children's consumer socialization that may be ongoing during the socialization process. For example, parents who provide their daughters with more opportunities to prove their competency as consumers may be initiating a cycle in which girls are given more opportunities for success and for positive reinforcement, while boys are given fewer opportunities and thus receive fewer chances to excel and for positive feedback. As will be described below in more detail, such a cycle may also lower expectations for sons, thereby leaving daughters responsible for more of the domestic work that is involved with the consumer role, particularly the labor of shopping. Additionally, even if this gendered pattern of consumer socialization does not have long-lasting effects for male consumers in the future, boys who are not exposed to the same variety of methods and tools may face more challenges as consumers currently as a teenager. While parents may give credit cards to girls and teach them how to balance these effectively and responsibly, boys may have to rely solely on cash for their purchases. This could potentially be problematic if boys do not have access to sufficient sources of cash (such as by lack of employment), and may therefore be excluded from any purchases that could help train them as a consumer. This could also potentially prevent the purchases of necessary items, with boys having to simply go without or rely more heavily on parents to supply such items.

This finding regarding the gender of parents' children also helps add to the continued discussion and debate regarding whether women's consumer status has a negative or positive connotation. For instance, the fact that girls are being seen by parents as more responsible and more capable as a consumer could support McRobbie (2008) and Barletta's (2003) argument that consumer roles provide additional power and autonomy to women. In the current study, the association of girls as capable consumers clearly allowed daughters to have more experience with different tools in learning how to effectively spend and save money, and allowed them more power and autonomy as consumers at home. On the other hand, it could be argued that this notion of the female consumer supports Miller (1998) and DeVault (1991) in that women are set up for more burden through this increased responsibility. As Selena demonstrated, she expected her daughter to do more household chores compared to her older brother. While Selena compensated her daughter with a higher allowance compared to her son, Selena disproportionately assigned more household labor to her daughter because of her gender. If this trend continues, it is likely that her daughter will continue to be burdened with more responsibilities due to Selena's perception of her as a competent consumer when compared to her son.

The third research question raised by this study is "Do the tools or methods parents use vary by socioeconomic status?" SES was indicated by the highest level of education completed by the mother. Several small patterns emerged from the data, such as that parents were more likely to establish and use bank accounts for their children as a means of teaching them about money with each increase in education level. This trend is not surprising, as it is likely that parents with lower education levels may not have the funds necessary to open and/or maintain financial accounts for their children. It can be expected that parents at higher education levels

would have more expendable income to dedicate towards such accounts. On the other hand, parents were less likely to discuss family expenses, such as bills, mortgage payments, or credit card debt, with their children as a means of teaching them about money with each increase in education level. This trend is also not surprising, as it can be speculated that parents with higher education will have higher incomes and may thus worry about household expenses less. For instance, bills may be less pressing to parents with higher education, and therefore may be discussed less among the parents. This would greatly limit the opportunities to use an expense such as bills to talk to children about money. The main implication for both of these trends is that socioeconomic status may place limitations on what children are learning about consumerism based on what tools their parents use to teach them. For instance, children in working-class families may be exposed less to concepts of interest and learning how to balance financial accounts compared to children from more affluent families. Conversely, as many of the parents who used household expenses talked to their children about bills and credit management, children from more affluent families may have less experience in managing utility bills and credit accounts when they become adults, compared to children from working-class families who may have had more training at home from their parents.

While it was speculated that perhaps there are particular methods or tools that parents will or will not use based on socioeconomic status, the data instead revealed small patterns where certain items were restricted to particular SES categories. For instance, various forms of informal savings (such as piggybanks or savings jars) were used exclusively by parents with only a high school degree or a bachelor's degree. More expensive methods, such as teaching children about saving and budgeting through travel expenses, were used exclusively by parents with either a professional degree or a bachelor's degree. Again, these findings are unsurprising, as parents in

working-class families may not have enough money to open formal financial accounts or to travel frequently. These trends have important implications for future consumer behaviors of children who are exposed to these particular methods of consumer training. For instance, since informal savings are quite different from saving money in formal financial accounts, children from working-class families who are more exposed to forms of informal savings may be less prepared to use formal financial accounts later on in adulthood. They may have a poorer understanding of concepts such as interest and overdrafts, and it may be possible that they understand less about bank loans. At the same time, children from working-class families may also miss out on picking up some of the more advanced skills gained through travel, such as learning about currency exchange, and in the case of Marie's daughter, learning about health care. In this case, the data clearly supports Lareau's (2011) argument in the importance of social class in determining how children are socialized as consumers and also lends support to Willis' (1981) notion of the reproduction of class distinctions.

Finally, the last goal of this research was to explore how parents culturally assign importance to money, spending, and saving for their children. This was addressed by the fourth research question posed by the study, "What is the cultural valuation that parents place on money and consumerism?" Overall, the most important lesson that parents tried to convey to their children was not whether money was something to either be spent right away or hoarded for the future, but rather that money is something that needs to be handled with responsibility. Above all else, parents wanted their children to manage their money wisely and appropriately so that they were adequately prepared to be financially stable in the future. Most parents generally reported encouraging their children to save their money, but even some parents encouraged their children to spend their own money on things that they really wanted, as long as it was done in a

responsible way that was not impulsive or wasteful. The main implication for this trend is that taste in goods or even the actual items or services purchased may actually be stressed less in consumer socialization processes within families than originally thought. However, some parents' descriptions of teaching their children how to save and spend indirectly denote taste and style as relatively important in their children's consumer socialization process. For instance, Elise noted that when talking to her children about downsizing from their larger home to a smaller house, she found it important to clarify with her children that they were still a middle-class family and were not, in fact, on the brink of destitution. These examples were in the minority, as parents seemed generally less concerned with what was being bought or how much money was being accrued by their children, and placed more emphasis instead on spending money in a responsible way.

Another important component of cultural valuation that parents were seen to apply to money is that parents placed more emphasis on money that was earned through hard work and responsible saving, often being proud of and encouraging purchases made through lengthy periods of saving up. This lends support to the notion that particular monies hold different cultural value (Zelizer 1989; Nyman and Reinikainen 2013), in this case being that hard-earned and saved money is vastly more important to parents as a teaching tool about consumerism compared to money they simply give to their children for purchases. This is evident in that only five participants provided their children with automatic allowances that required no chores or other requirements. This also helps explain why informal and upcoming formal employment were such popular methods of consumer socialization used by parents. If this emphasis on the importance of hard-earned money continues, it is possible that parents may move away entirely

from using automatic allowances entirely, and may encourage children to enter the formal work force at earlier stages.

Parents exerted their influence over children by modeling good behavior and using the aforementioned tools, methods, and strategies to teach their children about spending, saving, and the importance of money. Parents viewed themselves as the most important influence for their children in how they use and think about money, seeing themselves as holding the most power to teach their children their own views and values about money. This feeling of dominant influence may have very well been established due to the participants feeling greatly influenced by their own parents when they were children. From this data, the current study joins past research that continues to stir debate with scholars who argue that parents are not the primary socialization agents of children (Harris, 2000). This seems particularly poignant when examining the participants' use of shopping with their children to teach them about money. Almost all of the parents who reported shopping with their children indicated that they shop frequently with their children online. The majority of these parents noted that they were usually present for online shopping, helping teach their children, guide the process, and in most cases, make the final purchase themselves on their own credit or debit card. In this way, parents are retaining more influence in shopping than in the past, as many children simply shop from their homes. This lends support to Lachance et al.'s (2000) argument that parents retain a great deal of influence because most consumer activity is performed within the context of the family. When shopping in this fashion, children are removed from situations where they may receive influence or pressure from peer groups or the media, and are subject to the constant supervision and influence of their parents instead.

Despite thoughtful methodological planning and preparation, the current study still has some limitations. Many of these limitations primarily exist due to the practicality in research methods and the scope of the research. One limitation is that the sample is not a nationally representative sample. Using such a sample for a qualitative, in-depth interview study is not feasible or practical given the budget and time constraints that this study must take into consideration. However, though this is one limitation, the sampling methods outlined above were appropriate in compiling accurate answers that are generalizable due to the demographically diverse sample sought for this study. While the sample size was also appropriate for this study, the small number of examples for many of the patterns that emerged makes it hard to make any definitive generalizations drawn from the current data. For example, while the pilot study included one participant with less than a high school education, the main study sample of 25 participants did not include any parents with less than a high school degree. Lacking participants in this education category limited the results and the discussion to parents who have at least completed their secondary education. This could potentially leave out important comparisons that could exist between the parents that comprise this sample and parents who have lower levels of completed education, especially since lower education is highly associated with lower socioeconomic status.

A second limitation regards the use of a parent as the participant. Rather than interviewing either parent about their child's consumer socialization, only currently married mothers of children aged eleven to fifteen were eligible to participate. This helped hold the gender and marital status of the parent constant in order to make more meaningful comparison across the sample. The use of only mothers as participants could potentially limit the findings, as one parent may not be aware of all of the methods used by the second parent. Any differences in

consumer socialization techniques between mothers and fathers is unknown when only interviewing mothers. Additionally, using only mothers may further promote or normalize the gendered nature of parenting, as the bulk of the responsibility of parenting and most aspects of childcare are often attributed to women (Ranson 2010). Rather than restricting participation to only mothers due to the close association between women and parenting, this study selected mothers as the participants to help ensure methodological soundness when making meaningful comparisons across the sample. While mothers were interviewed individually, they nonetheless were asked about and then discussed the socialization processes that their husbands engage in with their children. In this way, the current study recognized the impact of both parents in the consumer socialization process of their children. However, unless specifically mentioned by the participant, it was at times difficult to identify whether the socialization tools and processes mothers used were agreed upon by husbands, or whether there was any controversy or debate between the couple about how to socialize their children. Future research needs to explore whether the gender of parents influences these consumer socialization processes. For instance, the lack of fathers who reportedly shop with their children was made clear from the parents' interviews in this study. Only three participants reported that their husbands frequently shop with their children. More exploratory research on differences between shopping with mothers versus fathers could potentially elucidate whether shopping with one parent over the other teaches children differently about money or if both parents focus on emphasizing the same concepts and techniques when they shop.

Another concern with interviewing a parent (rather than their child) is that the parent's views of which methods are successful or not may differ from those of the child. However, given the need for accurate recall and a more comprehensive overview of the consumer socialization

process, parents remain the best choice as a unit of analysis. Interviewing a parent may also present some bias as parents who are more involved with the consumer socialization of their children are more likely to want to be involved in the current research study. Additionally, asking parents with multiple children to discuss only one particular child could potentially exclude information about their other children that could lead to within-home comparisons. Yet, limiting participants to discussing one child in particular helped narrow discussions, provided more detailed (rather than broad) information, and still allowed for broader comparisons across all of the families who participate in the project. As noted above, most parents did tend to bring up their other children regardless, which provided some insight on within-family comparisons.

Another limitation of the current study is that it is somewhat limited in scope. Other important aspects of children as consumers were excluded from the interview questionnaire for the purposes of brevity and a concentrated focus, and in order to get more detailed responses for the items that were discussed. For instance, a lot of popular curiosity persists as to how children act as consumers in balancing between the influences of their peers and their parents. Additionally, other scholarly research is still highly focused on further examining the role that children have as consumers themselves and the power and autonomy that they experience in that role (Ironico 2012; Pugh 2009). While these research questions are interesting, pertinent, and comprise a body of needed research, they go beyond the scope of this project, which is to examine the specific practices that parents engage in during the consumer socialization of their children and to identify gender and socioeconomic status differentiations that might exist. Though these research questions could not be given adequate attention in this study, they form a sound basis for valid research questions for future research. While it is impossible to design a research project without limitations, the limitations for this project do not greatly hinder the

meaningful contributions that this research makes to the current literature, and also point at important steps to take in future research.

Interviews with parents in the future could be coupled with other forms of field research, such as by participating in “shop-alongs” with willing parents. While this was attempted for this study, none of the participants expressed interest in participating in this form of research, as many of them either did not enjoy shopping, shopped sporadically, or shopped mainly online. However, this form of field research may help elucidate nuanced shopping behaviors that further indicate how parents teach children about money while shopping. For instance, some parents reported shopping with their children, but they indicated that they often sent them frequently to other parts of the store to fetch certain items. Shop-alongs would help elucidate if this is a common practice employed by parents, and whether it hinders consumer socialization done through shopping. This could be important for shopping as a method of consumer socialization, as it can be speculated that children who spend more time fetching items by themselves in a store are spending less time with their parents comparison shopping, comparing quality versus quantity, or learning how to use coupons in the store.

This study provided ample support of the notion that parents are highly involved in the socializing their children as new consumers. While future research is still required to more fully explore how parents teach their children to become consumers, the data gleaned from this study provides a detailed list of several popular tools, methods, and strategies that are used extensively by parents in teaching their children about money. Parents reported using allowances, financial accounts, family expenses, cell phones, shopping, informal work, and upcoming formal employment to teach train their children as consumers. Many patterns emerged in the use of these tools and methods when the social locations of the children’s gender and the parents’

socioeconomic status were taken into consideration. Parents reported using various methods of consumer socialization less often for boys due to a perceived laziness, carelessness, or lack of responsibility compared to girls. Regarding SES, parents used financial accounts more and used family expenses less to teach children about money with each increase in education. These patterns by gender and SES could have important ramifications for children based on their gender and the socioeconomic status of the parents, whereby boys and children from working-class families may be less exposed to valuable learning opportunities about money and consumerism. While future research is still required to more fully explore how parents teach their children to become consumers, the data garnered from this study provides a detailed list of several popular tools, methods, and strategies that are used extensively by parents in teaching their children about money, and describes several differences found in their use by gender and socioeconomic status. Further research should expand upon the findings and patterns pertaining to gender and SES that emerged in the data and should help to foster a greater understanding of how parents teach children about spending, saving, and the importance of money.

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## APPENDIX A: Interview Questions

### Sociodemographic questions:

1. What racial or ethnic group do you identify with?
2. In what year were you born?
3. What is the highest level of education you have completed?
  - a. Some high school but no high school degree
  - b. High school degree
  - c. Some college but no college degree
  - d. Bachelor's degree, or
  - e. Postgraduate degree
4. How many children do you have?
  - a. What is the age of your child(ren)?
  - b. What is the gender of your child(ren)?
5. Are you currently employed?

### Guiding Interview Questions:

1. Many parents try to teach their children to be consumers, such as by teaching them how to shop, spend, and save money. How do you teach your child about money?
  - a. Do you give your child an allowance?
    - i. Why do/don't you think it is a good idea to give your child an allowance?
    - ii. Do you give your child automatic allowances without having to do anything (such as chores or doing well in school)?
    - iii. How often do you give your child an allowance? (Weekly, bi-weekly, etc.)
    - iv. Do you give your child allowances for doing something like chores or helping out at home or for doing well in school?
    - v. Do you think there is one way of giving allowances that works better than another?
  - b. Now I would like to ask you about teaching your child about shopping:
    - i. Does your child shop with you?
    - ii. How important is it for parents to shop with their children?
    - iii. Do you have any examples of when you have discussed money or spending while shopping with your child?
    - iv. Is there any aspect of shopping that you emphasize with your child, (such as getting the most for your money or splurging for better quality)?
    - v. Do you and your child shop online? If so, how involved are you in this process with helping your child make purchases online?
  - c. Now I would like to ask you about using savings accounts to teach your child about money:

- i. Have you thought about setting up a savings account for your child?
    - ii. Have you thought about setting up a checking account for your child?
    - iii. Have you thought about setting up an investment account for your child?
    - iv. Does your child help manage these accounts?
    - v. If so, what does your child do to help manage each of the accounts?
    - vi. Have you taught your child how to open any of these accounts on their own?
  - d. What role do coupons and/or bargain hunting have in teaching your child to shop, spend, and save money?
    - i. How much emphasis do you place on finding deals or bargain prices when shopping?
  - e. What role will jobs and employment have in teaching your teenage child to shop, spend, and save money?
    - i. Is it important for children to work while in high school?
    - ii. Does your child do any informal work now, such as babysitting or yard work for neighbors?
    - iii. Do you expect that your child will have a job during high school while still living at home?
    - iv. Have you and your child talked about the possibility of employment in high school?
  - f. Does your child have a cell phone?
    - i. If so, do you use any cell phone-related expenses to teach your child about money?
  - g. What other things do you do to help teach your child about how to shop, spend, and save money?
- 2. What does your spouse do to teach your child about money?
  - a. What, if anything, does your spouse do differently from you when teaching your child about money?
- 3. Parents have many different ways in which they can teach a child to think about money and wealth. How do you describe money to your child?
  - a. How much emphasis do you place on saving money?
  - b. How much emphasis do you place on spending what money you have?
  - c. Some people believe that a person can have “too much money.”
    - i. Do you believe that a person can have too much money?
    - ii. Have you and your child ever discussed the notion that a person can have too much money?
- 4. Do you stress the importance and necessity of things outside of money and material wealth (such as giving to the needy or having a minimalist lifestyle)?
- 5. Where do your own thoughts and beliefs (about money and wealth and how to train your children about money and wealth) come from?
  - a. Has your own upbringing influenced your thoughts and ideas about money and how to train your child about money?

- i. Do you train your children about money different from how your parents trained you?
  - b. Has the media (such as film or TV) influenced your thoughts and ideas about money and how to train your child about money?
  - c. Has information from books, magazines, and newspapers influenced your thoughts and ideas about money and how to train your child about money?
  - d. Have your friends influenced your thoughts and ideas about money and how to train your child about money?
- 6. I would like to get your opinion on a recent statement Warren Buffett made. He said that “Parents need to start teaching kids about the importance of managing money at an early age. Sometimes parents wait until their kids are in their teens before they start talking about managing money when they could be starting when their kids are in preschool.”
  - a. When do you think parents should start training their children about money?
  - b. What are good ages for teaching children different things about money?

## **APPENDIX B: Recruiting Material, VT Listserv Message**

Participants are sought for a study on the consumer socialization methods that parents use:

“Participants are needed for a study on the ways in which parents socialize their child(ren) into a consumer role. Parents will discuss the ways in which they teach and train their children about spending and saving money, shopping, and the value of money. The study consists of a single interview that will take approximately one hour or less. To be eligible, participants must be a currently-married mother of a child aged 11-15 with whom they reside for at least half of each month. Participants will receive a \$20 gift card to thank them for their participation. If interested, please contact George Batten at [gpb2c@vt.edu](mailto:gpb2c@vt.edu) for further details.”

### **APPENDIX C: Recruiting Material, Facebook Message**

“I am seeking participants for my doctoral research study titled “Consumer Socialization in Families: How Parents Teach Children about Spending, Saving, and the Importance of Money.” I will be interviewing parents about the methods they use in teaching their children about money, asking questions about how they teach their children to shop, spend, save, and value money. Eligible participants must be a currently-married mother of at least one child between the ages of 11-15, with whom they reside for at least half of each month, and in the surrounding areas of Roanoke, Charlottesville, and Washington, D.C. Participants will receive a \$20 gift card as a token of appreciation for taking the time to participate in this important study. If you or someone you know is eligible and would like to participate, please contact me, George, at [gpb2c@vt.edu](mailto:gpb2c@vt.edu) or (434)-962-9177.”

## APPENDIX D: Recruiting Material, Letter to Churches

Dear ,

I am contacting you to request assistance in recruiting participants for my dissertation research in completion of the doctoral program in the department of Sociology at Virginia Tech. The title of my study is “Consumer Socialization in Families: How Parents Teach Children about Spending, Saving, and the Importance of Money.” My research focuses on family consumerism, and more specifically examines the ways in which parents teach their children about money. My study involves a one-time, hour-long interview where parents will discuss the ways in which they teach and train their children to shop, spend, save, and value money. Eligible participants will be the currently-married mother of at least one child aged 11-15 with whom they reside for at least half of each month. Each participant will receive a \$20 gift card as a token of appreciation.

As eligible participants will comprise somewhat of a select group, I am contacting you to request assistance in finding and contacting parents in the \_ area who are part of your congregation to see if they would like to participate. I am hoping to interview a total of 25 parents, and your help in finding parents to contact who meet the eligibility criteria would be greatly appreciated. I will be able to provide you with a copy of a short memo presenting my request and contact information that you can then simply forward to parents or post within your church.

The results of this study will be submitted for the completion of a doctoral degree at Virginia Tech, and may be submitted for publication in relevant academic journals. Confidentiality of all responses and participants in this research are guaranteed.

Thank you for taking this request for this important research study into consideration. I look forward to hearing from you about this study. If you have any questions, please contact me or my faculty adviser, Dr. Anastasia Vogt Yuan, using the contact information below:

Researcher:  
George Batten  
Virginia Tech, Doctoral Candidate  
(434)-962-9177  
gpb2c@vt.edu

Faculty Adviser:  
Dr. Anastasia Vogt Yuan  
Virginia Tech, Department of Sociology  
(540)-231-5641  
avy@vt.edu

Sincerely,

George Batten

Should you have any questions about the protection of human research participants regarding this study, you may contact Dr. David Moore, Chair of the Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects, telephone: (540) 231-4991; email: moored@vt.edu; address: Research Compliance Office, 1880 Pratt Drive, Suite 2006 (0497), Blacksburg, VA 24061.

## **APPENDIX E: Recruiting Material, Church Memo and Flier**

### Virginia Tech Research Study Seeks Parents as Participants

A study entitled “Consumer Socialization in Families: How Parents Teach Children about Spending, Saving, and the Importance of Money” is currently seeking parents to participate in a study about how parents teach their children about money. This study involves a one-time, hour-long interview where parents will discuss the ways in which they teach and train their children to shop, spend, save, and value money. Eligible participants will be a currently-married mother of at least one child aged 11-15 with whom they reside for at least half of each month. Participants will receive a \$20 gift card as a token of appreciation for taking the time to participate in this important study.

The results of this study will be submitted for the completion of a doctoral degree at Virginia Tech, and may be submitted for publication in relevant academic journals. Confidentiality of all responses and participants in this research project are guaranteed.

For more information, please contact George Batten at [gpb2c@vt.edu](mailto:gpb2c@vt.edu) or at (434)-962-9177.

## APPENDIX F: IRB Approval Form

### Office of Research Compliance

Institutional Review Board

North End Center, Suite 4120, Virginia Tech

300 Turner Street NW

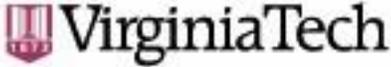
Blacksburg, Virginia

24061 540/231-4606

Fax 540/231-0959

email [irb@vt.edu](mailto:irb@vt.edu)

website <http://www.irb.vt.edu>



### MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** May 8, 2014  
**TO:** Anastasia Sue Vogt Yuan, George P Batten  
**FROM:** Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board (FWA00000572, expires April 25, 2018)  
**PROTOCOL TITLE:** Consumer Socialization Processes of Parents  
**IRB NUMBER:** 14-544

Effective May 8, 2014, the Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board (IRB) Chair, David M Moore, approved the New Application request for the above-mentioned research protocol.

This approval provides permission to begin the human subject activities outlined in the IRB-approved protocol and supporting documents.

Plans to deviate from the approved protocol and/or supporting documents must be submitted to the IRB as an amendment request and approved by the IRB prior to the implementation of any changes, regardless of how minor, except where necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the subjects. Report within 5 business days to the IRB any injuries or other unanticipated or adverse events involving risks or harms to human research subjects or others.

All investigators (listed above) are required to comply with the researcher requirements

outlined at: <http://www.irb.vt.edu/pages/responsibilities.htm>

(Please review responsibilities before the commencement of your research.)

### PROTOCOL INFORMATION:

Approved As: **Expedited, under 45 CFR 46.110 category(ies) 6,7**  
Protocol Approval Date: **May 8, 2014**  
Protocol Expiration Date: **May 7, 2015**  
Continuing Review Due Date\*: **April 23, 2015**



interviewer will travel to a location of your choice to conduct the interview, whether it is a private home or office, or a public space. All interviews will be audio recorded for the ease of transcribing the conversations. You will receive compensation following the interview.

### **III. Risks**

As a participant, you are not at any serious risk or threat by participating in this study. Minimal discomfort may arise if you are uncomfortable with discussing how you think about money. If a particular topic is uncomfortable for you to discuss, you have the right to decline answering a question. Confidentiality is guaranteed to ensure that you feel comfortable in discussing everything that you feel is interesting, important, and relevant to this study.

### **IV. Benefits**

There are no direct benefits to you as a participant in this study, apart from aiding in the compilation of data that will fill a gap in existent knowledge regarding consumer socialization processes in the family. No promise or guarantee of benefits has been made to encourage participation.

### **V. Extent of Anonymity and Confidentiality**

The only identifying information collected from you will be your signature on this consent form. This study does not need any information from you that will connect your answers with your name. A pseudonym will immediately be assigned so that your real name will not be connected to the answers you provide. While this study will not address offensive or illegal topics, confidentiality is completely guaranteed.

At no time will the researcher release identifiable results of the study to anyone other than individuals working on the project without your written consent. The Virginia Tech (VT) Institutional Review Board (IRB) may view this study's data for auditing purposes. The IRB is responsible for the oversight of the protection of human subjects involved in research.

### **VI. Compensation**

Following the interview, you will be compensated with a \$20 gift card. This is to thank you for your participation and for providing valuable information and insight from parents. If you have the need to stop the interview before completion, you will still receive full compensation.

### **VII. Freedom to Withdraw**

It is important for you to know that you are free to withdraw from this study at any time without penalty. You are free not to answer any questions that you choose or respond to what is being

asked of you without penalty. Should you withdraw or otherwise discontinue participation, you will receive full compensation for your participation.

### **VIII. Questions or Concerns**

Should you have any questions about this study, you may contact the researcher with the contact information included above.

Should you have any questions or concerns about the study's conduct or your rights as a research subject, or need to report a research-related injury or event, you may contact the VT IRB Chair, Dr. David M. Moore at [moored@vt.edu](mailto:moored@vt.edu) or (540) 231-4991.

### **IX. Participant's Consent**

I have read the Consent Form and conditions of this project. I have had all my questions answered. I hereby acknowledge the above and give my voluntary consent:

\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Participant's signature

\_\_\_\_\_

Participant's printed name