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The Commercialization of Motherhood and Mothering in the Context of Globalization

Anglo-American Perspectives

At its most fundamental level globalization refers to the vast structural changes that have occurred in the processes of production and distribution in the global economy affecting all social, cultural and political aspects of life. Consumer-centric marketing strategies and aggressive but sophisticated advertising have emerged as effective tools to maximize global capitalist profits, while creating a consumer culture where most practices and behaviors that are not by nature commercial, like the relationship between mothers and children, are increasingly becoming commercialized. Here I examine some of the consequences of commercialization upon motherhood and mothering through the cultural representations and pervasive injunctions to good mothering found in advertising targeting mothers and children, as well as through the ways in which mothers themselves often participate in and facilitate the commodification of their work of care. My aim is to show that the commercialization of motherhood and mothering has appropriated, exploited and depends for its success on the perpetuation of many of the deeply embedded cultural types of mothering, such as intensive mothering, as well as New Momism.

Globalization, Mothering and Consumption

The process of globalization, powered by information technologies, is changing every aspect of life, including the sphere of mothering. Although always a controversial term hotly debated since the 1990s, there is consensus that at its most fundamental level globalization refers to the vast structural changes that have occurred in the processes of production and distribution in the global economy (Cogburn). At a secondary level, globalization has affected all social, cultural and political aspects of life in all but the most disadvantaged communities (Nethersole). Globalization is often defined as an ideology and a process driven primarily by economically-motivated forces, advertising, technology, instantaneous communication and multinational corporations, through which the capitalist world-system aims to spread across the world (Lechner). Thus, among the significant consequences of capitalist globalization that began to emerge during the second half of the twentieth century is the penetration of mass media to all corners of the globe, promoting the culture ideology of consumerism (Sklair 4). Here I examine some of the consequences of the capitalist consumer culture and commercialization upon motherhood and mothering through the cultural representations and pervasive injunctions to good mothering found in advertising targeting mothers and children, as well as through the ways in which mothers themselves often participate in and facilitate the commodification of their work of care.

One of the most pervasive traits of globalization and the consumerist behavior it fosters is a creation of a consumer culture that extends the language of the market into spheres of life one considered immune from its influences, including mothering and childrearing. In other words, due to global policies, practices and behaviors that are not by nature commercial have become commercialized and defined in terms of commerce. Commercialization has become a worldview that due to its pervasiveness as a dominant cultural orientation influences not only actions and behaviors but also our emotions, including how we feel about ourselves as mothers and our children. This means that commercial and profit-driven policies are increasingly defining mothering and child-parent relationships in terms of their commodity value.

In the global world, the "world's most powerful instrument of governance is not a government, nor a single global corporation" (Korten), but a "global financial system" (Bhattacharya, par. 3), headed by the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Trade Organization (WTO), commodity exchanges, the G7, the U.S. Treasury, etc. In this sense, globalization can be understood as a process created by transnational practices (Sklair 84), encouraging increased consumption of goods and services, and based on "flows" of information, culture, financial, physical and human capital that "move along various global highways." These 'flows' often create many opportunities but also many "new forms of inequalities of access between people and their locations" (Bhattacharya, par. 3).

Based on the theory of the free market economy and the unfettered global exchange of goods and services, and propelled by the self-perpetuating desire for accumulating profit, globalization has also been equated with McDonald's-ism: the drive for profit that depends on producing and reproducing a desire for variety, and an anything-goes world of competing lifestyles, trends and tastes (Nethersole 642). Consumer-centric marketing strategies and aggressive but sophisticated advertising have emerged as effective tools for companies to augment their business performance and profit in the global competition (Rajagopal, pref.). As Leslie Sklair argues:

> The imperative of capitalist globalization implies that people have to be taught how to consume, in the special sense of creating and satisfying induced wants. Advertising, the main channel through which the culture-ideology of consumerism is transmitted, has always projected itself as an educational, or at very least an informational practice, and the same claims are made for the Internet. (166)

The human desire to consume is not new in itself. Cultural and intellectual historians locate the emergence of the consumer society in Europe between the fourteenth and seventeenth centuries, when the "members of the bourgeoisie became interested in their relationship with the material world" (Belisle 4). Social historians, in contrast, see the late nineteenth century as the time when consumer culture formed, when all members of the aristocratic, bourgeois and working classes enter the marketplace as consumers, since prior to the nineteenth century only the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie were wealthy enough to consume goods (Ibid.; cf. Giles). At the same time, however, while it has been argued that, in Canada, for example, a broad consumer society did not exist until the middle of the nineteenth century, studies focusing on women and consumption in the post-war era point out that female consumers were cautious regarding household purchases and families continued to "make do" with existing goods in their homes well into the 1960s (Parr 28). What is new with the onset of globalization as it began to take shape in the early 1990s is the scale on which the pressure to consume and the packaging of desirable lifestyles is now taking place via aggressive marketing and mass-media driven strategies, as well as the fact that forms of conspicuous consumption are globally promoted as a desirable way of life for all social groups, not just the wealthy.

Mothering in a Consumer Culture

One of the reasons mothers themselves have come to participate in the consumer culture that seeks to commodify childrearing is that the commercialization of our care has appropriated, exploited and depends for its success on the perpetuation of many of the deeply embedded cultural types of mothering, such as intensive mothering and New Momism. Intensive mothering, a normative ideal of contemporary mothering, is based on the culturally dominant view that socially appropriate mothering involves "large financial and time expenditures on children" (Hays 97). New Momism can be seen as an extension of this ideology, and can be understood as "a set of ideals, norms and practices, most frequently and powerfully represented in the media, that seem on the surface to celebrate motherhood, but which in reality promulgate standards of perfection that are beyond your reach" (Douglas and Michaels 620). New Momism in particular promotes the idea that good mothering entails that mothers bring to childrearing a combination of selflessness and professionalism, bombarding anxiety-induced mothers with reassurances that they can produce bright, motivated, focused, fun-loving, confident, successful, cooperative contented children, just like the sparkling clean, obedient ones on the cover of parenting magazines. (cf. Douglas and Michaels 622). The extent to which many mothers comply with these expectations is revealed in recent market research studies showing that moms whose household income ranges between $38,000 and $64,000; "spend $18,510 on miscellaneous items for the average child from birth to age eighteen," which includes spending on entertainment reading material, VCRs, summer camps and lessons" (cit. Bailey 38). According to these studies, "the average child will cost $338,000 by the time they finish public college" (Bailey 39).

In today's commercialized society these two cultural ideologies that frame the discourse of "good" mothering reveal that mothering is "is positioned uneasily at the intersection of gendered cultural expectations and consumerism" (Bareiss, Woodbury and Durfee 85). While the degree to which mothers internalize socially accepted ideals may reveal some variances, mothering as a practice can be seen as resting on the three demands identified by Sara Rudick as constituting maternal work: to raise children aiming for their preservation, growth and social acceptance (17). All three of these demands, but especially social acceptance implies that mothers will shape their mothering practices in response to and often in accordance with dominant social discourses concerning their children's "proper" upbringing. In the context of global flows of goods and services, consumerism has become a one such dominant social discourse.

Scholars in consumer and media studies have pointed out as far back as the 1950s that advertising has not only economic consequences, but it also shapes our values. As David Potter says in his classic work, *People of Plenty:* ‘If the economic effect is to make the purchaser like what he buys, the social effect is, in a parallel but broader sense, to make the individual like that he gets" and among other things, to thus "reinforce existing attitudes" (188). The existing attitude in this case is related to the fact that, as Shari Thurer noted based on her practice as psychologist: "I cannot recall ever treating a mother who did not harbor shameful secrets about how her behavior and feelings damaged her children. Mothers do not take easy pride in their competence" (331). Advertising taps directly into this form motherly insecurity. Covers of parenting books and magazines daily question us, "Are you a sensitive mother?" "Is your child eating enough?" or, "Is your baby normal?" A growing number of ads promise parents brighter, more successful children with the purchase of a computer, an educational video game, or attendance of a for-profit learning and tutorial center. Editorials in parenting magazines urge parents, but mainly mothers who are the main target audience, to "[r]ead on to find out how [they] can develop the genius in [their] child, from her performance in school to how a trip to the store can be a chance to build vocabulary, math skills, and money smarts."[1] While many mothers do understand the persuasive intent of advertising they still may continue to wonder whether there is perhaps some truth in these injunctions and something more that they could be doing to help their children in an increasingly competitive world (Doyle Roche, 33). Whatever the mother's present efforts in this regard, the language of advertising makes them appear lacking or inadequate.

In a consumer culture such as ours, acquiring and displaying products becomes a means of demonstrating not only one's success in terms of wealth and purchasing power, but also demonstrating, more subtly, one's lifestyle, and one's beliefs and values. Semioticians tell us that everything we do is read as "message" and that we are always sending these messages to other people, just as others are always sending these messages to us. The messages are sent by our body language and facial expressions but also increasingly by our purchasing decisions aimed at displaying our lifestyle, our clothes, cars, homes, (Asa Berger 24-25) and I argue, our children and how we define ourselves as mothers.

As consumers and mothers we are caught up in consuming things related to childrearing as a means of validating ourselves and our abilities to look after our children in a socially desirable way, as well as proving our worth as good mothers. Market research specialists are advising marketing executives to appeal to mothers as the "new super consumer." In the words of one such specialist, "we are here to say that the best way to mom's heart is through her children. Whether she has an infant, tween or teen, a mom today wants to be the best mom she can possibly be for that child and that means an awful lot of what she does, what she buys, and what she demands of her family is centered around her children" (Coffey ix). Because "the relation between mother and child may be the most genuine, natural, spontaneous and exquisite love there is" (Thurer 333), and because women are likely to "associate their own sense of self-worth with how they provided for and brought up their children" (Cohen 73), in a commercialized world propelled by manufacturing needs and desires that tap into our psyches, mothers make the perfect consumer. A mother's self-esteem becomes bound up in achieving her children's happiness and proving to herself and to those around her that she is a good mother, which in a consumer culture is achieved to a large degree through purchasing. Mothers themselves participate in this process. Consumer studies addressed to companies indicate that mothers today are not only powerful consumers who purchase products, but that they also influence the decision-making of their peers with the use of new digital media through, with which they "carry [the corporate] brand message into online communities, social networks, blogs and beyond" (Bailey 3).

In today's consumer culture, "childrearing has given expression to material longings (both of adults and their children)" as children become valves of their mothers' consumer desire. Recent research into children's habits of consumption reveal that another sign of our times is the multimillion dollar advertising industry aimed at children and youth, making them the direct targets of many, now increasingly deregulated, advertising campaigns. These campaigns manipulate children's emotions in order to convince them that they need a style of clothing or a brand of shampoo, and show that children are "key players in their families' spending habits" (Doyle Roche 31-2). Marketing professionals rely on the so-called "nag factor" as the way in which children influence their parents, and mothers in particular, to make certain purchasing decisions, or to unwittingly equate the purchase of an object with showing care for their children and their "needs." Additionally, mothers will spend money on their children to evoke the children's delight, which meets their self–validating needs, but also awakens in children a similar desire and rationalizes pleasure-seeking consumption (Cross 18-19). These realities point to the fact that children too, alongside their mothers, collude albeit unknowingly in the construction of motherhood and mothering as a consumerist practice.

This kind of consumer culture, fueled by the purpose of advertising to manufacture desire and to make us want things that we do not have as means of achieving greater personal validation and success, in subtle ways taps into the suspicion of mothers that "we are not cut out" for mothering and that that we cling to the romantic, idealized image of the perfect mother, "a chilling reminder of our own inadequacy" (Thurer 333). It also taps into whatever feelings of guilt many working mothers experience because they are not there with their children full-time, as a really good, self-sacrificial mother should be. Thus acquiring various products that promise to make us better mothers than we are, and to ensure that our children grow up more perfectly loved and cared for, seems to fulfill a deep psychological need and assuage our feelings of self-doubt.

Shopping and the Construction of the "Good" Mother

Modern mothers will buy things not despite, but because they are expensive. This makes sense partly because of the prevailing cultural myth that the well-being of our children depends almost entirely on their upbringing (the domain of the mother by default) and the kind of activities (and products that enable them) they are exposed to. At the same time, research estimates that about two thirds of everything that people buy is really unnecessary (Pooler, 2). Items such as the belly casting kit, which allows expectant mothers to make a cast of their pregnant bellies, or the "Awesome Gaming Chair," aimed at older children, which has "a pair of 2-way speakers, a powerful 4" subwoofer, and a molded hard shell bottom for multi-directional tilt" that would allow the child "to rock and roll with your music or game" and "hook up easily to any video game system, DVD or CD player, or any portable MP3 device" are just the more obvious examples of this trend.

An important aspect of the consumer's relationship to products is that shopping is increasingly becoming a form of self-expression. The things that mothers buy for their children become a reflection not only of their mothering style, but also of how they want others to see them as mothers. Owning a particular kind of infant stroller, for example, manufactured in Italy by Peg Perego, "an Italian company with a global vision" as their moto says, buys not only the actual stroller, but also the image of the smiling trendy mom with a happy and cheerful infant on a clean European train, with the stroller folded away next to them, and described as "[t]he compact, easy–folding stroller that's a breeze to take along wherever baby goes!" This is an image of the attractive lifestyle of the mobile, hip and travel-comfortable mother. Thus the stroller also buys mothers the potential that owning it projects the image that mothering three children, one of whom is a laughing infant in the stroller, can be an enjoyable, fun-filled and carefree adventure that may just include say, climbing the Alps in summer and flying kites, as another Peg Perego advertisement implies.

Most importantly, what it says about me as the owner of such a stroller is that I am happy and competent in my role as mother, and completely in control in the most desirable kind of way, able to provide superior comfort and care to my child or children. Owning a Peg Pergo stroller thus helps me self-actualize and self-define as a mother in a subtle but important way. The products we buy for our children or for our work of care as mothers are thus not just products, but images of ourselves; they help construct a persona of the kind of mother we see as ideal and we would like to be seen as embodying. Thus, in making purchasing decisions when it comes to our children, we often participate in the capitalist consumer culture that commodifies the mothers' work of care.

In addition to the self-actualization that is part of our relationship to consumption as mothers, an important aspect of shopping is a form of competition. This competition takes place on a number of levels and in a variety of ways. Sometimes it is linked to the desire to assert oneself as a good mother in a status symbol way—owning the most expensive childrearing equipment, having children who are always spotlessly clean and sporting the latest fashions by prominent designer labels, attending the best schools in the area, as well as developing various expensive tastes through their after school activities, such as horse-back riding and skiing. This form of conspicuous consumption demonstrates not only that mothers are very accomplished and competent, but also that they belong to particular class of people that consider these kinds of products and behaviors desirable and even necessary.

Wealthy mothers demonstrate their power, superior competence as mothers and place in society by the results of their shopping. They also demonstrate the direction and place in society where they would like to see their children fitting into, and how they differ from those mothers and children who are not of the same group. The subtle psychology behind these displays is the assumption that mothering based on conspicuous forms of consumption is inherently better or superior to other forms of mothering not based on the same model. The presumption to superiority rests on the idea that the children of affluent mothers are by default better provided for, and raised in ways that will result in their naturally feeling confident, superior, and entitled to the lifestyle they were raised in. Perhaps even more revealing is the fact theorized by some scholars of consumption, that children themselves can be used as objects of display conferring the desired social status. For example, Thorstein Veblen argues that "the incidence of lower birth rate among the privileged classes stems from their need to use children as statements of their class status. The conspicuous consumption and the consequent increased expense required in the reputable maintenance of a child is very considerable and acts as a powerful deterrent to having many children" (133).

Consumption, Classism and Forms of Social Belonging

It is clear that this kind of consumption is also linked to a sense of belonging to a particular class or social group. Sociologists tell us that one of the most important human needs is to feel a sense of belonging to one or more groups in life (Pooler 110). Membership in a group is often defined through the purchasing of goods and services, as in the case of the example I just gave. Buying certain things and owning certain things ultimately leads to the achievement of a feeling of membership in a given social group. Shopping in these cases is a means to an end (Pooler 111), in complex ways linked to the mothers' desire to have her children meet the demand of social acceptability in the way that is important to their social group.

The examples of commercialized motherhood discussed thus far pertain primarily to lower and upper middle class mothers, that is, mothers from social groups with a sufficient amount of disposable income that allows them to make purchasing decisions based on factors other than need. It is important to recognize that consumption practices do embody class relations in the same way that class relations are formed by the forces of production (Giles 17). For working class and poor mothers consumption is equally linked to their view of themselves as good mothers able to take good care of their children, and has been so since the post-war era, when the commodification of the home and the view of woman/wife/mothers as a consumer were being established. Then and now, low income mothers view children "as the repositories of hope, for whom safe places—homes with particular characteristics" are needed and that would represent the realization of their material and maternal aspirations and bolster their feelings of self-wroth and dignity (Giles 27).

When many working class and poor mothers recall the impoverished conditions in which they grew up, the focus is on poverty and the lack of power to buy things, rather than ill health and disease, which were equally prevalent in their domestic environments (cf. Giles 27). A society where the consumerist ideology dominates, and which presents shopping and the acquisition of various goods and services as part of the possibilities and entitlements of modern life in the global age, it is not surprising that when women speak of their aspirations for their children it is always in terms of material belongings and being able to invest in their children's future through private schools and savings accounts, while at the same time expressing dissatisfaction with their current financial situations. Their dreams for a "better future" for their children are articulated in the language of material commodities, and the desire to belong to and share in the promises of a consumerist society (Giles 28; cf. Casey 134). Similarly, children from households where money is tight "have a much stronger desire for money and possessions" (Nairn, Bottomley and Ormrod 205). This psychological dynamic reveals that the commercialization of mothering and consumer culture affects the feelings of self-value of mothers at the margins of society, threatening to cast them as "bad" mothers in their own eyes and the eyes of others if they cannot enable their children to take part fully in the dominant consumer-oriented way of life.

While feelings of guilt and anxiety over not being a good-enough mother, or not doing enough for one's children maybe common to mothers across various classes, in working class mothers these feelings may be compounded by the general anxiety that mothers feel about debt and financial security. Many working class mothers experience guilt and concern that due to their lack of financial resources they are not providing their children with the same life chances that they could if they had the money to do so. Many low-income mothers find different strategies to help define themselves as good mothers and their mothering as "good-enough" in a consumer culture, such as being very knowledgeable about where and when to shop for bargains, and actively negotiating their children's expectations as to what can and cannot be bought (Casey 134).

Membership in a group can be achieved by other means or activities that distinguish "good" from "bad" mothering, such as for example, mothering based on a particular set of beliefs. This kind of membership is still linked to particular forms of consumption and presentation and display of consumer goods. One example of this would be groups of mothers, usually but not exclusively stay at home moms, who actively define themselves and their ability to mother in relation not only to their being there for their children 24/7, but also in terms of their adherence to a regime of shopping of particular foods and products that have in recent years become labeled "green," "organic," "socially sustainable," "local" or "made from recycled materials." These moms self-actualize their belief in the nature of the good or ideal mothers through their often militant adherence to a particular consumption ideology that validates them and reflects them as socially conscious mothers whose mothering, in their eyes and in the eyes of their particular cultural group, is inherently superior to that of other mothers who may not embrace the same ideology. In terms of class, these mothers may belong either to the affluent or middle class, but they may also be low-income mothers with a developed social vision. Very often these mothers are not defining themselves in terms of class belonging, but rather in terms of their subscription to a particular set of beliefs. For many of these mothers, having little disposable income, in addition to their firm belief system, in fact constitutes a way to fight some aspects of the capitalist consumer culture.

Researchers have shown that because "gender is a pervasive lens though which individuals experience their social world, consumption activities are fundamentally gendered" (Bristor and Fischer 519). Women and by extension mothers seek to gain social status and power via not only the "careful presentation and display of consumer goods" (Bourdieu), but also seek respectability through the appropriate display of the bodies of their children, and other aspects related to their work of care as mothers (cf. Skeggs; Casey and Martens).

An example where these realities become very obvious are children's birthday parties whose organization, design and orchestration are increasingly becoming not only more elaborate but also more commercialized, assuming an enormous amount of work on the part of the mother, and generating a significant amount of social anxiety among mothers (Clarke 79). In a recent article on commerce and the culture of children's birthday parties, Allison Clarke demonstrates that the birthday party is an "opportunity to publicly display notions of 'good' or 'appropriate mothering', and the appeal to children to show graciousness in opening presents, and restraint in eating chocolate cake is as much directed toward other mothers as it is to the child itself" (83). Using excerpts from a broader ethnography of household consumption in North London, she shows that birthday parties are rarely organized as singular expressions of parental/child relations but rather evidence of the penetration of market forces into the non-economic worlds of children and motherly love as well as a testament to the ways in which mothering and consumption have become a mutually constitutive phenomenon (80).

She presents the case of Camilla, a full time mother of four young children, who in the summer of her three-year-old daughter's b-day party organized a gipsy party, and made a cake in the shape of a Romany caravan surrounded by fresh flowers. She made party gift bags from hand painted muslin, small donkeys and horses she bought while on holiday in a remote Italian village. These were filled with "lucky charm" sweets and novelties she had collected on many shopping trips for the 15 child guests to take away at the end of the party, along with a slice of b-day cake in monogrammed cake tins. Attending and organizing this kind of party also entailed the acquisition of new outfits.

Unsurprisingly, perhaps, prior to this b-day party, Camilla was well known among other mothers in her social circle as "super mom" due to her unflappable ability to deal with four excitable children and run a homely household. Her abilities were evoked by other mothers in opposition to their collectively experienced "failure" in manifesting a comparable reality. Mothers in Camilla's social circle openly confided their dread of having Camilla's children attend their parties and going home with "tacky" embarrassing gift bags not purchased in a rustic Italian village but at the local middle-end department store. The apparent anxiety here is obviously not related to the children, but the mothers themselves.

While many children today expect that their birthday parties will take place in some commercial venue, such as paint-gun play center or a field or a water-world theme park, usually at great expense, many mothers may instead chose to suggest simpler and less extravagant options such as football in the park followed by pizza and cake at home. Also, venues such as MacDonald's fast food chain offer a neutralized default to an individually organized event. In this context, the mother who is likely to garner admiration is the one who gets away with pulling the best party with minimal effort and expense, within the boundaries of the accepted aesthetic of her social group (92). At the same time, however, the increasing commercialization of b-day parties can be viewed as an overly prescriptive and inescapably oppressive form of solidarity that compromises those it excludes (80-81). This is especially true for low income mothers who negotiate the cultural expectations that a traditional or good children's birthday party requires extensive time and money as well as their own financial situation by using "financially-dependent planning strategies, actively managing their children's expectations and reframing their understanding of 'successful' children's birthday parties" (Bareiss, Woodbury and Durfee 95).[2]

This, despite whatever guilt they may feel over not being able to provide well for their children, allows mothers to retain a sense of being good mothers, or as good as they can be.

Empowered Mothering in a Consumer Culture

The aim of this discussion is not to convey a moral judgment as to whether consumption in relation to mothering is good or bad in itself, but rather to point to the intricate relationships among capitalist consumerist culture, the commercialization of mother work and mothers' own conceptions of good mothering. Becoming and being a mother is as much a social and cultural as well as a biological process, whereby commercial culture and consumerism have begun to transform daily domesticity into the generation of "specific types of meaning and social solidarities within mothering" (Clarke 86). The commercialization of motherhood and mother care is difficult to avoid altogether in a society where every aspects of life is increasingly being shaped by the laws of the market economy. However, to the extent that increasing commercialization of all areas of life, including motherhood and mothering marks the present social, cultural and economic realities, and is likely to do so in the foreseeable future, and to the extent that it is becoming a normative practice and a way of life, commercialized forms of mothering as a normative ideology can become limiting and oppressive as they threaten to overshadow or completely obscure alternative practices. Equally important is the fact that the commercialization of motherhood and mothering perpetuates social inequities and reinforces classism, as well as normative ideals of good vs. bad mothering. In that regard, any mothering practice that actively seeks to define itself outside or alongside expected cultural norms presents an empowered alternative with which to resist the dominant ideology.

Empowered mothering, sometimes also referred to as authentic, radical, feminist or gynocentric mothering, in theory and practice "recognizes that both mothers and children benefit when the mother lives her life and practices mothering from a position of agency, authority, authenticity and autonomy" (O'Reilly 12). From this perspective, mothering becomes a political practice through which mothers can effect social change by challenging aspects of any traditional or dominant cultural discourse that seeks to delimit or frame their work of care. Empowered mothering in the present context may mean finding innovative ways of avoiding the commercialization that seeks to define the relationship between mothers and their children, and that capitalizes and exploits the desire of mothers to nurture their children. Or, it may involve an active form of negotiation with the dominant global consumer culture whereby mothers can become reflective of the extent to which their actions and feeling about themselves as mothers are shaped by commercial forces, which in turn may result in their making more conscious, deliberate or resistant choices when it comes to purchasing as linked to the idea of "good" mothering or the "proper" upbringing of their children. Empowered mothering practices that challenge the capitalist consumer culture could also entail engaging children in critical thinking in relation to money, the aim of advertising, and purchasing decisions, as a way to bring to their attention the complex ways in which various forms of oppression and social inequalities work within a capitalist global economic system.

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[1] For this and other examples see <http://www.parenting.com/article/how-raise-gifted-children>.

[2] See Amazingmoms.com, a virtual community for mothers with a passion for throwing children's birthday parties, where thousands of ideas are posted for organizing a commercially driven birthday party.

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