

How society shapes the beliefs of our children

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We live in a context and not a vacuum. Our culture and the society around us play a very dominant role in the values we choose. Sometimes this is planned, overt, and intentional. Sometimes it is unplanned, unseen and unintentional. Sometimes we choose to accept the values of others. Sometimes we choose to rebel against them. Either way they are influential. The nuclear family is the first part of society that shapes us. Our parents and siblings (good, bad, indifferent) play a major role in how we choose to live. The great poem Children Learn What They Live, by Dorothy Law Nolte expresses this truth very well. Here are just a couple of lines for example. If children live with criticism, they learn to condemn. If children live with hostility, they learn to fight..... If children live with honesty, they learn truthfulness. If children live with fairness, they learn justice. Perhaps the second most influential institution beyond the nuclear family is our educational system. We look up to our teachers and for the most part take what they say and the information in our text books as valid and valuable. However, there may come a time that we don't agree with what we are being taught. Yet even here our rebellion is in the context of society. Often we know more what we are against than what we are for. The presence or absence of faith and religion in our lives is another source within society that shapes our personal values. Sooner or later you will have contact with a wide variety of spiritual choices. Each exists in our culture and society. Each is a positive or negative influence towards our personal values. Let us not forget advertizing. " You deserve a break today. " This is a value statement if there ever was one. Who says you deserve a break? Do you agree or disagree with this value? Do you value faster and faster high tech communication? Is it important to be sexy? Do you value professional sports enough to invest in a

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big screen TV? Last, but not least, nor even finally there is societal politics. Do you value spending or saving? Do you like taxes or austerity? Do you have more kids so you can get more welfare? Do you give to charity so you can have a bigger write-off? These days many people think they are not accepting societal values. " I pick and choose what I want. " However, even such a view of choice is a current Post Modern societal value.