

Programming Parents: Care of *Supernanny*

Rebecca Mary Kambuta

A thesis submitted for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

at the University of Otago, Dunedin,

New Zealand

August 2015

“Where there is no mother there can be no child”

Jean Jacques Rousseau *Emile* (12)



Skyler Minyon (US *Supernanny* season two, episode one)

Abstract

In 2004 the problem of bad parenting came to the British public's attention in a string of reality TV programmes about unruly children, exemplified most prominently by *Supernanny*. Unlike first and second wave makeover programmes which transform the home and body, *Supernanny* focuses on the modification of deviant behaviour. However, the problem of how to tame tiny terrors in this third wave proved to be far more complicated than a quick re-paint or nip and tuck; this thesis interrogates why this is the case. Taking *Supernanny* as my starting point I argue that TV scholars have failed to address the distinctive and multifaceted nature of parenthood. To account for its complexities I develop the notion that parenthood can be defined as a 'space of care' in which 'care' produces a contested subject, dividing the role of parenthood irreconcilably between daily work ('caring for') and an affective bond ('caring about'). The fact that *Supernanny* emphasises the *work* of care, linking it with control, even as contemporary culture is undergoing an affective turn that links care with emotional relations, makes the programme a fascinating case study for television's role in the governance of parenthood in an Anglo-American context in the twenty-first century.

In Chapter One I contextualise my discussion of the parent in relation to key models for power, discipline and order and relevant literature on the changing nature of child/adult relations. I ask questions about what kind of subject the parent is, and establish a gap in knowledge as to how we understand the parent's role in relation to historical narratives of the emergence and disappearance of childhood and child/adult relations. For Foucault the family does not function as a disciplinary apparatus, instead

it operates as a “cell of sovereignty” with sovereign/family relations left rather ill-defined through, as he puts it, a particular “type of bond” (*Psychiatric* 80). Problems of imprecision persist when we turn to the modern invention of childhood, since the child comes into being both through the imposition of a certain kind of order (or control) and the attachment of “sentimental value” to the child (Zelizer [1985] 1994). Parenthood as a site of contestation, within which competing ideas of society, power, and education serve different agendas, has deep seated roots.

Having established a number of ways of understanding parenthood as a space of care, in Chapters Two and Three I situate *Supernanny*’s intervention in relation to the makeover sub-genre in particular and reality television in general. Makeovers teach a contemporary version of care of the self, associated with the consumption of goods and services. By examining three waves of makeover TV and conducting a close analysis of my chosen case study, I demonstrate how *Supernanny* transforms parents into “technicians of behaviour” (Foucault [1975] 1995). Jo Frost, the programme’s expert, must first discipline the parents so that they in turn can discipline their children. In Chapter Four I argue that in *Supernanny* the family is constructed as if it were one of the enclosed disciplinary institutions identified by Foucault: the programme encourages parents to regulate their child’s use of space (both inside and outside the home), time, activities, emotions and their acquisition of skills and knowledge. Through its focus on techniques, *Supernanny* instrumentalises care and provides a ‘tick list’ for both the show’s participants and audience at home to follow. I contend, however, that the bond between the parent and the child is too complex for such a quick fix: the emotional/sentimental tie between them means that parenting cannot be reduced to a series of techniques therefore control is represented as a form of (parental) care.

Ultimately I argue that *Supernanny* favours ‘care of’ or the controlling techniques of parenting, over ‘care about’ or parenthood. I contend that the programme’s promotion of specific childrearing practices could be seen as an attempt to return to a more ‘functional’ or less sentimental view of the child. If Frost’s techniques work together to produce “docile subjects” (Foucault [1975] 1995) then *Supernanny* functions as a disciplinary tool, modelling appropriate forms of behaviour and ‘care’ for both the show’s participants and viewers at home. My conclusion, which provides a brief overview of childrearing shows which appeared after *Supernanny* went to air, indicates that for the foreseeable future, television will continue to find new ways of ‘programming parents.’

Acknowledgements

Anyone who has written a thesis will know that it is a long and challenging process. I have been lucky to have many people who have encouraged me along the way. I would like to thank my supervisors, Associate Professor Catherine Fowler and Dr Davinia Thornley for their input and direction. Thank you both for helping me to pull my ideas together, for your close reading of my drafts and the many things you did to make the journey easier. Associate Professor Vijay Devadas, I am especially grateful for the kindness and support you offered me, especially over the past year. I also owe Dr Brett Nichols thanks for his advice during the final stages of this thesis and his much-needed help with Foucault's theories. I would like to thank my advisor Dr Deborah Jermyn for her involvement in this project. Your comments on an earlier draft helped me to find my focus. Dr Karen Renner, your comments on my journal article were invaluable and your friendly approach as an editor was greatly appreciated. Many thanks also to the anonymous reviewers of the journal article who offered helpful suggestions which have greatly improved this thesis. Dr Paola Voci, your support and friendship is much appreciated.

Thank you also to the academic staff in the MFCO Department, and particularly my fellow postgraduates who have shared the journey with me: Anne Begg, Maud Ceuterick, Alison Cumming, Christine Daviault, Jim Guan, Owain Gwynne, Teri Higgins, David Hoskins, Sally Milner, Donald Reid, Jane Ross, Katherine Miller-Skillander, Peter Stapleton, Ryan Tippet, Alex Thong, and Matthew Ward. To our brilliant administration staff, Maureen Lloyd, Paulette Milnes and Felicity Topp, thank

you for answering all of my queries. Thank you also to all of my MFCO students who have taken an interest in my work.

To my family (Mark, Sharyn, Carl, Joel, Heather, Jayden, Callum, Joshua, Charlotte, Isaac and Abby) thank you for your ongoing encouragement – it has been a *long* journey. To my husband Jacob I owe a special thank you for “holding the ladder.” Your support has made this possible. Dayle and Ian Wright, thank you for your timely messages. To my Zambian in-laws (Joy Mulyata and Diaman Ndala Kambuta), your courage to persevere in very difficult circumstances challenges and inspires me. Nasakwila chinji ha zangi yenu nyi kunga tayiza. Lynette Kambuta, we are so proud of you and know that you have an amazing future ahead of you.

There are too many friends to name individually, however several deserve special mention. Adel, Mary, Ani, Peter and Andrew Mekhail thank you for “adopting” me into your family and for the amazing hospitality you have shown me over my time in Dunedin. To my wonderful friends, Chris and Jessica Seifert (and my ‘adopted’ nephew and nieces, Oli, Edee and Maisie) and Carla Roy and Jono Eagle, I am so grateful for *everything* you have done! Marian Bassalious, Shweta, Rahul, Aryan and Ashreya Prasad, David Shearer, Sarah Tiong, the Mnyanyi family (Fidelis, Angel, Noreen, Nicole and Nimena) and the Galvin family (Brian, Trish, Katie and Tara), you have been an awesome ‘support team’ standing on the sidelines cheering me along. Rebecca Cameron, thank you for the movies, the laughs and the late night escapades. Zelle and Steve Haywood Terrence, Ali Haywood and Aidan West, Naomi and David Daniels, Cris and Camille Davitoria, Richard and Martha Mwaijumba, Makiwa and Masline Mapengo, Henry and Chiley Mbambo, Omid, Becky and Pearl Ahmadi, Mowafaq Amso, Matt Shanks, Bronwyn and Adam Humphries, Karen and Andy Cook, Farai

Chikudo-Madambi, Mike and Janessa Murray, Amy and Jake Maunder, Christine Sansotta, Hamish McCallum and our family at Nations thank you all for your generosity and support. Jacob and I are especially grateful to all of you for the care you showed us after the death of Jacob's father and for your help in getting him home. Fay Fergus, thank you for your enthusiasm and your many texts. Jo Weggery, Kirsten Cheyne, Donna Hoera, Lance and Joan Baird, Lucy Jones, and Ron and Jackie Burns, thank you all for your friendship and encouragement.

I am grateful for the financial support I received which allowed me to complete this PhD. Many thanks must go to the Scholarship Committee at Otago University for providing me with a PhD scholarship. During my candidature I was also fortunate to be awarded a Claude McCarthy Fellowship which allowed me to conduct archival research in London. I am indebted to the committee for this award. Thanks must also go to Kathleen Dickson at the British Film Institute for sourcing a large amount of television material and also to Steve Tollervey for cueing all my tapes and giving me my own viewing room, even if it was in a *basement!* I am also greatly indebted to the MFCO department, the Disability Centre, the Pacific Island Centre, the Maori Centre and the Marketing and Communications Centre for providing me with employment over my time at university. For all of those who have ever asked what my thesis is 'about' here it finally is!

Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to my mother-and-late-father-in-law, Joy Mulyata and Timothy Nakapamba Suwali, two truly inspirational parents who not only raised their own children, but over the years have taken in several others who have been orphaned. Ba Timothy, your love, dedication, and commitment to others live on in each of them.

Publications

Research conducted during my PhD candidacy contributed to the following publication:

Fowler, Catherine, and Rebecca Kambuta. "Extreme Human Makeovers: *Supernanny*, the Unruly Child and Adulthood in Crisis." *Literature Interpretation Theory* 22.3 (2011): 262 – 276.

The article has also been reprinted in:

Renner, Karen. (Ed) *The Evil Child in Literature, Film and Popular Culture*. London: Routledge, 2012. Print.

Contents

Abstract	iii
Acknowledgements	vi
Dedication	ix
Publications	x
List of Figures	xiv

Introduction	1
---------------------------	----------

Parenthood and Care	7
Contribution to Knowledge	9
Chapter Summation	26

Chapter One	32
--------------------------	-----------

Foucault and the Emergence of the Modern Subject	42
Foucault and the Family	46
Creating the Parent: Foucault, Postman and the “Knowledge Gap”	53
Early Parenting Models	54
Childhood and Parenthood in the Twenty-First Century	70
The Parent: Problems of Definition	76
Gender and Parenthood	77
The Child’s Gender, Temperament, and Age as Depicted in Parenting Manuals	83
Parenting Models: Authoritarian, Permissive, Authoritative and Neglectful	89
Developmental Psychology and the Instrumentalisation of Parenthood and Care	92
Parenting Techniques: The Rejection of the Emotional Bond	95

Chapter Two	101
--------------------------	------------

Chapter Overview	106
Parenting TV: Pre- <i>Supernanny</i>	109
Dollars for Deviance: The <i>Supernanny</i> Format	128
Contexts for Televising Transformation: The Makeover	133
Economic, Industrial and Technological Factors	137
The Makeover Format	140

Makeover Television and Care of the Self.....	148
<i>Supernanny</i> and the Third Wave of Makeover Programming	155
Conclusion	172

Chapter Three174

Discipline, Surveillance and Care	178
Discipline	183
Disciplinary Power.....	185
Hierarchical Observation	186
Normalising Judgement	187
The Examination	188
Houses of Horror: <i>Supernanny</i> 's Setting	190
Narratives of Disorder.....	193
"Submission as Salvation?"	199
Frost as "Dominannny".....	205
The Observation Period: <i>Supernanny</i> as "Superpanopticon"	209
The Verdict: The Family Meeting.....	214
You've Been Very, Very Naughty: Teaching Parents to Be Parents.....	226
Does Nanny Know Best?	229
Testing the Techniques: The Trial Run.....	236
The Unruly Adult: Reinforcement	238
The Big Reveal.....	241
Conclusion: Becoming (Better) Parents.....	246

Chapter Four250

<i>Supernanny</i> : Discipline as Punishment.....	253
Disciplinary Techniques: Creating the 'Good' Child	266
<i>Supernanny</i> and the Distribution of Individuals in Space.....	267
Waging War on Chaos	268
Out-of-Place: The Unruly Child and the Control of Space.....	270
Regulating the Child's Activities: Time, Behaviour and Emotions.....	275
The Family Schedule.....	276
Meal-Times and Food Wars.....	278

Sibling Rivalry: One-on-One Time.....	288
<i>Supernanny</i> and the Acquisition of Skills and Knowledge.....	290
<i>Supernanny</i> and the Composition of Forces	295
Conclusion.....	298
Implications of the Study	301
Future Considerations	303
Works Cited	307
Books and Articles	307
Filmography	336
Appendix A	345
Appendix B.....	359
Appendix C	378
Appendix D	380
Appendix E.....	384
Appendix F.....	390

List of Figures

- Figure 1** The house

Frame-grab from *Supernanny*

UK season one, episode six
- Figure 2** The house

Frame-grab from *Supernanny*

UK season one, episode two
- Figure 3** Frost

Frame-grab from *Supernanny*

US season two
- Figure 4** Frost

Frame-grab from *Supernanny*

US season two
- Figure 5** Suburbia

Frame-grab from *Halloween*

John Carpenter (1978)

Figure 6 Suburbia
Frame-grab from *Supernanny*
UK season two

Figure 7 Opening sequence
Frame-grab from *Supernanny*
UK season two

Figure 8 Opening sequence
Frame-grab from *Supernanny*
UK season two

Figure 9 Opening sequence
Frame-grab from *Supernanny*
UK season two

Figure 10 Opening sequence
Frame-grab from *Supernanny*
UK season two

Figure 11 Opening sequence
Frame-grab from *Supernanny*
UK season two

- Figure 12** Opening sequence
Frame-grab from *Supernanny*
UK season two
- Figure 13** Title shot
Frame-grab from *Supernanny*
US season one
- Figure 14** The von Trapp children
Frame-grab from *The Sound of Music*
Robert Wise (1965)
- Figure 15** Mary Poppins
Frame-grab from *Mary Poppins*
Robert Stevenson (1964)
- Figure 16** Maria
Frame-grab from *The Sound of Music*
Robert Wise (1965)
- Figure 17** Mrs. Wilberforce
Frame-grab from *The Lady Killers*
Alexandra MacKendrick (1955)

- Figure 18** Joanne and Michael Burnett
Frame-grab from *Supernanny*
US season one, episode nine
- Figure 19** Michael Burnett with Michael and Molly
Frame-grab from *Supernanny*
US season one, episode nine
- Figure 20** Deirdre Facente (parents in crisis)
Frame-grab from *Supernanny*
US season two, episode six
- Figure 21** Trae Facente (parents in crisis)
Frame-grab from *Supernanny*
US season two, episode six
- Figure 22** Frost as a modern-day Mary Poppins
Frame-grab from *Supernanny*
US season one
- Figure 23** Mary Poppins
Frame-grab from *Mary Poppins*
Robert Stevenson (1964)

- Figure 24** Margaret Thatcher
“Margaret Thatcher ‘changed the economy of the world’”
Image credit: www.telegraph.co.uk
- Figure 25** Frost (observation outfit)
Frame-grab from *Supernanny*
US season one, episode one
- Figure 26** Frost (post-observation)
Frame-grab from *Supernanny*
US season one, episode one
- Figure 27** Andrea and Jessie Jean
Frame-grab from *Supernanny*
US season one, episode one
- Figure 28** Joshua Collins
Frame-grab from *Supernanny*
UK season two, episode one
- Figure 29** Frost with Andrea and Andrew Weston
Frame-grab from *Supernanny*
US season one, episode five

Figure 30 Meghann Cooke with Jo Frost
Frame-grab from *Supernanny*
UK season two, episode three

Figure 31 Barbara Jean
Frame-grab from *Supernanny*
US season one, episode one

Figure 32 Wendy Agate (the “before”)
Frame-grab from *Supernanny*
UK season two, episode six

Figure 33 Wendy Agate (the “after”)
Frame-grab from *Supernanny*
UK season two, episode six

Figure 34 The Larmers
Frame-grab from *Supernanny*
US season two, episode three

Figure 35 Frost explains the rules
Frame-grab from *Supernanny*
US season one, episode five

- Figure 36** Andra Jean on the naughty step
Frame-grab from *Supernanny*
US season one, episode one
- Figure 37** Judy Larmer - the “bad” mother
Frame-grab from *Supernanny*
US season two, episode three
- Figure 38** Judy Larmer – the “good” mother
Frame-grab from *Supernanny*
US season two, episode three
- Figure 39** Sophie Steer’s bedroom (the “before”)
Frame-grab from *Supernanny*
UK season one, episode two
- Figure 40** Sophie Steer’s bedroom (the “after”)
Frame-grab from *Supernanny*
UK season one, episode two
- Figure 41** The circle technique
Frame-grab from *Supernanny*
US season two, episode one

Figure 42 The new household routine (Weston family)
Frame-grab from *Supernanny*
US season one, episode five

Introduction

Supernanny *and Care*

Be sure not to miss this rare opportunity with *God* herself and become the parent worth listening to.

Advertisement for *Supernanny* LIVE Australian Tour

The naughty step

1. A place where a child is made to stand as a punishment for bad behaviour.
2. See, “to be on the naughty step.”
3. To experience public disfavour, usually because of perceived wayward behaviour.

Collins English Dictionary

In July 2004 UK television channel C4 broadcast the first episode of a new reality series called *Supernanny*. The programme featured the Woods, a step-family from Grantham, and a British nanny whose job it was to tame the couple’s unruly toddler. Over the course of a sixty-minute episode, Jo Frost, the programme’s ‘expert,’ worked with parents Lucy and Steve to reduce two-year-old Charlie’s tantrums and transform the negative atmosphere in the household. While the programme’s production values

left much to be desired, the story struck a chord, both with the British audience (since the first episode attracted an astonishing 4.6 million viewers) and American television executives who, knowing a good format when they saw it, rushed off to produce their own version of the show.¹ Even though *Supernanny* had humble beginnings, the series went on to become a commercial success. It ran for seven consecutive seasons, with a total of 118 episodes produced between 2004 and 2010. *Supernanny* garnered international fame: The programme has been screened in 172 different countries, with thirteen buying rights to the format and a further five producing their own version of the show.² *Supernanny* has transformed the wider media landscape, with the programme providing the template for successive parenting shows and the inspiration for a variety of other media texts.³

As my opening quotes suggest, since that first episode *Supernanny* has been hugely influential both in the popular imagination and academic studies and this is one of the reasons for choosing the programme as my case study. Although the *Supernanny* live tour was postponed due to scheduling conflicts, there are many ‘paramedia’ examples across which the *Supernanny* dogma has spread.⁴ These include Frost’s seven highly-

¹ Later episodes of *Supernanny* attracted between six and seven million viewers which equates to 30% of the UK audience share. As Tracey Jensen argues, this is an astonishing figure considering the high number of UK channels available at the time (“Beyond”106)

² Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Croatia, Denmark, France, Germany, Israel, Poland, Romania, Russia, Spain and the Netherlands. <<http://www.ricochetsouth.co.uk.html/>>. (n.p.).

³ *Supernanny* served not only as the foundation for the television series *Nanny 911* (Fox 2005 – 2006), but also for a new magazine, *Real People* (“Wonder Nanny” Gitte Daniels spent a year travelling around Britain helping parents deal with their troublesome children and reporting back to the magazine’s readers). *Supernanny*’s influence extended to the cinema, with a wave of films about naughty children released soon after the initial broadcast (films included *Are We There Yet? Yours, Mine, and Ours*, *Nanny McPhee* and *The Nanny Diaries*), and the world of children’s literature (see Mark Sperring’s “naughty step” series).

successful parenting books which have been released since the programme's first broadcast, the official *Supernanny* website, the show's monthly publication, various fan-sites, and the countless television, magazine and newspaper interviews with the star of the show.⁵ Equally the inclusion of the term "naughty step" in the Collins Dictionary, and its application in everyday life illustrates how the series' take on parenting and parental responsibilities has resonated across western culture.⁶ As Decca Aitkenhead, a reporter for *The Guardian*, rightly observes, "the naughty step is probably now better known than any of the tenets of the most important child behavioural theory" (n.p.). *Supernanny's* meteoric success makes it an ideal case study through which to examine changing attitudes towards, and representations of parenthood and care in contemporary Anglo-American society.

Supernanny's influence upon the media landscape and parenting discourse has been significant. Equally, the programme has been discussed in a number of books and articles focusing on the correlation between television and issues of gender, class and the neoliberal project. This thesis builds upon gaps in this body of interest in *Supernanny* on the part of scholars in media and cultural studies. While it is certainly

⁴ The depiction of Frost as God implies that she is *the* authority on childrearing, and, as the second part of the slogan for the tour suggests ("become the parent worth listening to") once you have heard her word, you must continue to spread it.

⁵ I draw upon underground filmmaker Ken Jacob's concept of "paracinema" here. Jacob's concept is adopted by Jonathan Walley (2003) who describes paracinema as "an array of phenomenon that are considered cinematic but are not embodied in the materials of film as traditionally defined" (18). Here I use the term "paramedia" to refer to the broad range of texts in which *Supernanny* discourse or icons appear in.

⁶ For example, in the past few years, parodic references to politicians who deserve to be "put on the naughty step" have become commonplace. Frost's trademark discipline technique has also featured in a Macintosh advertisement (Jensen, "Beyond" 2009) which compares PC computers unfavourably to Macs. Likewise, the term "supernanny" has been employed in a variety of contexts; Caroline Flint, the UK Public Health Minister, has been described as "Parliament's Supernanny" due to her focus on discipline (Coates 2006). The term is also regularly employed in campaigns for both childrearing and dog-training services.

true that the programme offers a valuable resource for those interested in the issues above, with the benefit of a decade since *Supernanny* first aired, further contributions become visible. In the wake of the plethora of shows on teens that followed and continue on our television screens, I argue that what becomes evident are the particularities of the relationship between parents and preteens; in the *Supernanny*, episodes analysed the children range in age from four-months to twelve-years-old. The preteen years, and especially the preschool years, can be characterised as a time of almost total dependence; the child is reliant upon his or her parents for food, clothing and shelter. Due to their biological, intellectual and physical immaturity, preteen children are not expected to make any serious decisions nor are they held legally responsible for their actions. More specifically, it is in these early stages, when the child relies upon the parent in a variety of ways, that the concept of the parent becomes a site of contestation.

The prominence and influence of *Supernanny* in popular culture and scholarship means that the programme provides a hub around which debates circulate about parenthood and care in an Anglo-American context.⁷ Importantly, the concept of parenthood acquires additional meaning and is fully embraced in the period I examine. In this thesis I differentiate between ‘parenthood’ and ‘parenting’: while the first of these terms, ‘parenthood,’ describes a state or condition of being and implies an essentialist nature, the second, ‘parenting,’ refers more to the act of *doing*, or the skills that parents are expected to possess. Ultimately I contend that *Supernanny*’s focus on techniques means that the programme favours parenting at the expense of parenthood.

⁷ There are numerous intertextual references to *Supernanny* in the realm of popular culture. For example, the series has been parodied in two US adult-rated, animated programmes, *Drawn Together* and *South Park* (Vered and McConchie 2011) and a character nicknamed “supernanny” appears in an episode of the long-running children’s television series *Sesame Street* (NET 1969 – present).

Despite much interest in parenting and family studies from a diverse group of scholars there is a lack of detailed analysis of how parenthood is represented in contemporary Western media (Sunderland 2006). My thesis addresses this gap and covers a ten-year period articulated around the emergence of *Supernanny* in 2004 and stretching in to the present-day, so as to consider the ‘governance’ of parenthood and care in the twenty-first century. Such a study of parenthood on television becomes critical across this period, since the breakdown of traditional support networks (extended families and communities in general), means that television is positioned as playing an increasingly important role in educating parents (Assarsson and Aarsand 2011), hence the ‘good’ and ‘bad’ examples of parenting it provides receive more attention from both viewers and scholars.

Given the educational role that television assumes, the fact that programmes produce debate should not be surprising, however *Supernanny* has caused more of a ripple than the majority of such shows. Perhaps the most recognisable element of the programme is the way in which it links care with control, as parents are encouraged to regulate their children’s use of (domestic and public) space, time, activities, emotions and acquisition of skills and knowledge, by using a variety of techniques. Through this emphasis I argue that *Supernanny* instrumentalises care. Moreover only one aspect of ‘care’ is supported, what I call ‘care for’ or the work of childcare; as indicated above, *Supernanny* discards ‘care about’ or the emotional labour involved in raising children.

The discourse of parenting in Western society is influenced by a number of factors including “the changing nature of knowledge, structures of health care and changes in relationships” (Young 53). Parenting plays a crucial role in societies because it is one of the conduits by which culture is reproduced: “Children do not enter the world with any

specific sense of culture, they become members of a culture through interaction with their parents and significant others in their environment” (Cauce 227). Although parenting is the subject of numerous studies and government reports, it is, as I discuss below, a relatively recent invention.

The concept of the parent is comparatively new. In agricultural societies the act of raising children was called “childrearing” and was seen as a ‘natural’ process; it was believed that nature (or fate) would take its course (Furedi, *Paranoid* 92). Little was known about the child’s cognitive or physical development. Today the name given to the process of raising children is “parenting” (Furedi, *Paranoid* 92). This change in terminology is significant for it shifts the focus from the child to the parent and reflects the present-day belief that parents play a central role in determining the life chances of their offspring.⁸ As Frank Furedi observes, “Until recently, the term ‘to parent’ was used exclusively to refer to the act of begetting a child,” however, today it is used to “describe the behaviour of mothers and fathers” (*Paranoid* 185). According to Furedi, “fears about adult identity” are displaced onto “the world of children who [...] bear the brunt of our anxieties” (*Paranoid* 185). The child acts both as a mirror for adult concerns and also provides a reflection of a parent’s degree of competency. Parents construct their lives around, and identities partly through, their children and therefore are at the mercy of the public who judge them. Today, parenting is increasingly conceived of as something parents *do* rather than who they *are* (Jensen, “Beyond” 2009), a fact which will become evident in my analysis of *Supernanny*. The programme represents parenting as a set of skills rather than a state of being (parenthood).

⁸ Furedi (2001), Jensen (2009) and Ramaekers and Suissa (2012).

Parenthood and Care

Care is a defining feature of contemporary Western parenthood. Parenthood entails the care of dependent children, and is related not only to their physical and nutritional needs (food, clothing, shelter, protection), but increasingly also includes ensuring the child's educational success and emotional well-being; spending quality time with one's child, listening to their concerns and developing a loving bond with them.⁹ This shift towards caring about the child's education and emotional well-being is a relatively new development. As I discuss in Chapter One, prior to the sixteenth-century, children were treated as "miniature adults" (that is, differing only in terms of size) and were not afforded the same rights or protection as they are today (Tuchman 52). In the Middle Ages, children were seen as a valuable source of income and did not have the same "sentimental value" (Zelizer [1985] 1994). Therefore, care must be culturally and historically contextualised. In the twenty-first century, children are conceived of as the nation's most valuable resource, thus their education and socialisation is of paramount importance.

Care is a concept that often goes unquestioned because it is seen as having a common-sense meaning. However, I argue that care can be understood in a number of ways. As a noun, the word suggests worry, attention and guardianship: "a state of mind in which one is troubled; a cause of/object of concern; serious attention; protection or

⁹ Stephen Scales argues that care for one's child also includes intergenerational justice – taking an interest in the world that your child will grow up in and making responsible political decisions that will not negatively impact future generations (2002).

temporary keeping.”¹⁰ As a verb, the term implies interest or compassion for, partiality or affection, and responsibility: “to be concerned/solicitous; to have a preference for; to make a provision or look out for; to have an inclination, liking, fondness; to feel concerned about; to wish/desire.”¹¹ The term can also be used to suggest indifference; “I couldn’t care less,” to warn (“be alert or careful”), to say goodbye (“take care of yourself”), or to take care of someone or something (“to be responsible for”).¹² In respect of the parent/children relationship, care not only suggests guardianship, but also aid, attention, compassion, protection, management and maintenance.

The definition of care changes depending upon a multiplicity of factors. Care is intertwined with issues of gender, class and ethnicity: Are women more caring than men? Do boys require different forms of care than girls? Are white, middle-class forms of care privileged over lower-class notions? Care is also a central concern of the legal system: How is care defined and/or regulated in law? Do governments contribute to the gendering of childcare practices? How is care represented in state documents? Applications of care differ across each of these systems: the parent/child relationship, gender, class, ethnicity and the legal apparatus. These many different interpretations of care are addressed in the literature on parenthood and, as I demonstrate in Chapters Three and Four, are interpolated by *Supernanny* in a variety of ways. I argue that the programme ultimately promotes an authoritative form of care.

¹⁰ Oxford English Dictionary Online <www.oed.com>.

¹¹ Oxford English Dictionary Online <www.oed.com>.

¹² Oxford English Dictionary Online <www.oed.com>.

Contribution to Knowledge

In order to examine the construction of parenthood and care in *Supernanny*, it is first necessary to provide a brief survey of the work that has already been published on this subject. Such a survey will also help to introduce how parenting makeover programmes have been theorised in relation to television studies. The proliferation of instructional parenting makeover programmes on American and British television over the last ten years has been accompanied by a steady increase in the research on them, however, scholarship on the first two “waves” of makeover programming (the home and the body), still far outweigh what I describe elsewhere as the “third wave” (Fowler and Kambuta 2011).¹³ *Supernanny* (UK C4 and USA 2004 – 2011) one of the earliest and most popular instructional parenting makeover programmes, has been the subject of many of these “third wave” studies.¹⁴

Despite being a sub-genre that seeks to educate parents about ‘correct’ methods of childcare, scholars have yet to examine how parenthood is represented in instructional makeover shows. There are few detailed media analyses of Frost’s techniques nor are there any studies which examine the notion of (parental) care in relation to *Supernanny*.

I contend that the relative lack of interest in televised parenting programmes, the shortage of research on the representation of parenthood and the failure to examine the

¹³ Research on parenting programmes includes: Wilding (2005), Becker (2006), Brancato (2007), Green (2007 and 2012), Kuhn-Wilken (2007), Andrews and Carter (2008), McIlvenny (2008, 2009, 2011), Ouellette and Hay (2008), Lunt (2009); Ferguson (2009), Lury (2009), Jensen (2009, 2010, 2011), M. Rosenberg (2009), Gambles (2010), Feasey (2011, 2012), Fowler and Kambuta (2011), Vered and McConchie (2011), Tally (2011), L. Edwards (2013) and Perks and Gatchet (2013).

¹⁴ Scholars who examine *Supernanny* specifically include: Wilding (2005), Becker (2006), Brancato (2007), Green (2007 and 2012), Kuhn-Wilken (2007), Andrews and Carter (2008), Ouellette and Hay (2008), Ferguson (2009), Jensen (2009, 2010, 2011), M. Rosenberg (2009), Gambles (2010), Feasey (2011, 2012), Fowler and Kambuta (2011), Vered and McConchie (2011), Tally (2011) and L. Edwards (2013) and Perks and Gatchet (2013).

specific techniques promoted by these shows are significant given *Supernanny*'s impact upon the wider media landscape and concerns about contemporary childrearing practices. That *Supernanny* is often positioned as an instructional text is also of importance because it also clearly features elements of entertainment. I seek to address these omissions and to extend the scholarship on instructional parenting makeover shows.

Using a Foucauldian framework, I demonstrate the ways in which *Supernanny* attempts to police parental practices through the use of specific childrearing techniques (for example the “roaming technique,” the “stop and ask technique,” and the “involvement technique”). Ultimately I contend that *Supernanny* links care with control, thus ignoring ‘care about’ or emotional labour; the programme suggests that a ‘good’ parent is one who effects disciplinary techniques and controls their child’s use of (domestic and public) space, time, activities, and acquisition of skills and knowledge. In addition to Michel Foucault’s categories, I also consider the regulation of emotions because in *Supernanny* parents are expected not only to control the child’s behaviour, but also their feelings. Through a detailed examination of *Supernanny* and the discourses it has generated in Britain, I aim to illustrate the ways in which concepts and images of the parent change depending on the cultural, political, and economic climate of any given contemporary moment, as well as the institutional needs of the television industry.

As the majority of instructional parenting makeover programmes are produced in Britain and the United States, almost all of the research focuses on these two countries. In terms of methodology, many of the scholars who have analysed this sub-genre use textual analysis. There are also several authors who have examined how viewers

respond to such shows.¹⁵ Scholars draw upon a wide range of theoretical frameworks in order to understand these shows including feminism, psychoanalysis, social theory and cultural studies. Research on instructional parenting makeover shows has tended to coalesce around three main issues which I explain in detail below; the reproduction of traditional gender norms, the varying class positions these narratives offer and the cultural context which informs the emergence of these programmes. Most of the work falls into this last category, with scholars drawing upon Michel Foucault's theory of governmentality to explain television's role in reinforcing particular modes of conduct and neoliberal discourse so as to account for the merging of public service aims within entertainment formats.¹⁶

I bring together all of this scholarship to produce a detailed account of brand *Supernanny* which not only examines the construction of parenthood and care but also locates the programme within the larger context of makeover programming, a sub-genre which encourages, what Foucault calls in his third volume of *The History of Sexuality*, "care of the self" via the consumption of specific products and advice. In particular, I investigate the ways in which makeover shows blur the boundaries between care and control. I contend that with its focus on techniques, *Supernanny* promotes a specific form of care that aligns with neoliberal aims of self-sufficiency and individual responsibility. Although Frost 'cares about' the families she works with (she cries and laughs with them), ultimately her job is to teach the parents how to be self-reliant, hence

¹⁵ See Skeggs, Thurmin and Wood (2008), Ferguson (2009), Jensen (2009, 2010, 2011) and Gambles (2010).

¹⁶ Other less explored areas of scholarship include the representation of love in *Supernanny* (Wilding 2005), the repression of the child's subjectivity in *The House of Tiny Tearaways* (Lury 2009) and comparisons between parenting programmes and dog-training formats (Andrews and Carter 2008; Perks and Gatchet 2013). There is at least one ethnographic content study of *Supernanny*, which identifies nine key themes of the programme (Kuhn-Wilken 2007).

she must leave at the end of the programmes. Also, in keeping with neoliberal discourse, *Supernanny* remains on the surface of family life and decontextualizes families. Their problems are recast as individual failings rather than as a result of larger societal influences.

As instructional parenting makeover programmes typically feature women in primary roles, it is not surprising that a large proportion of the scholarship examines the representation of mothers and/or motherhood.¹⁷ For these scholars, parenting shows are damaging because they promote dominant gender roles and/or reinforce unrealistic ideals of intensive mothering. Drawing on feminist and cultural studies, Rebecca Feasey, for example, writes, “Programmes like this have the ability to examine or unmask gender relations but end up reinforcing patriarchal conclusions about women’s roles” (“Reality” 107). While I agree that these programmes endorse conservative principles, I move beyond this line of questioning so as to demonstrate the ways in which *Supernanny* can be used to interrogate the gendering of care in contemporary Western society more generally. As discussed above, patterns of care cannot be considered apart from legal policies which reinforce traditional gender roles.

I also expand this body of research by investigating gender relations in respect to the different types of care that mothers and fathers are expected to provide in *Supernanny*, as well as the varying degrees of resistance they display. In addition, I examine the gendering of makeover experts in Chapter Two. I argue that female experts are far more common in instructional parenting makeover programmes, a fact which is significant given that since the 1950s the majority of *recognised* childcare ‘experts’ (developmental psychologists, obstetricians, and pediatricians) have been male. As I

¹⁷ Brancato (2007), Kuhn-Wilken (2007), Rosenberg (2009), Feasey (2011, 2012), Tally (2008) and Green (2007 and 2012).

expand in Chapter Two, when men appear in first and second wave makeover shows, they are typically the experts.

Scholars also interrogate the issue of social class in instructional parenting makeover programmes, as it relates to the experts, participants and viewers.¹⁸ Drawing upon Pierre Bourdieu's work, Tracey Jensen, for example, examines the depiction of class in the British version of *Supernanny* ("Beyond" 2009). She argues that parenting is not a classless activity as it is typically represented in parenting programmes and government policies. Moreover, she contends that the audience's social status often determines their engagement with the show. Using focus groups, Jensen demonstrates how middle-to-upper-class viewers attempt to distance themselves from both Frost's advice (through ridiculing her speech, her size and her costuming) and the participants on the show ("Beyond" 2009).

As many scholars have noted, makeover programmes typically feature upper-class experts who discipline lower-class individuals.¹⁹ While most theorists acknowledge Frost's lower-class status, they do not address the impact of this inversion in any depth. I discuss the complexities of Frost's character in Chapters Two and Three. I contend that *Supernanny* is an anomaly in makeover programming, for it features an 'uneducated' lower-class expert who transforms a range of families (from stay-at-home single mothers to successful business owners), a move which indicates that *all* parents need help, regardless of their social status. I argue that *Supernanny* is less about class mobility, as most first and second wave makeovers are, and more about the wide-scale regulation of the family.

¹⁸ Skeggs, Thurmin and Wood (2008), Ferguson (2009) and Jensen (2009, 2010).

¹⁹ See for example Lewis (2008), G. Palmer (2008) and Jensen (2010).

Another key body of scholarship investigates how the techniques promoted by instructional parenting programmes align with theories of governmentality and neoliberal discourse.²⁰ Before examining specific works, it is first necessary to define what is meant by these terms as they are central to my analysis of *Supernanny*. Foucault, a French philosopher, invented the concept of governmentality. The term refers to changes in practices of governance that occurred in eighteenth-century Europe or what Foucault calls, “the rationalization of governmental practice in the exercise of political sovereignty” (*Birth 2*). He examines the ways in which the state manages its resources and citizens through a combination of “individualization techniques and of totalization procedures” (Foucault, “Subject” 332). For Foucault, governmentality not only refers to practices of the state but also raises a particular set of problems related to the self; that is, modes of conduct. Television scholars utilise Foucault’s theory of governmentality to explain how reality programming encourages viewers to become good citizens and consumers.

The second term, neoliberalism, refers to a specific model of political, economic and social practices which became popular in the 1970s. According to David Harvey neoliberalism is a “theory that proposes that human well-being can be best advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterised by strong private property rights, free markets and free trade” (2).²¹ Neoliberalism “entails government taking place at a distance through the

²⁰ Becker (2006), Lunt (2009), Ouellette and Hay (2008), Ferguson (2009), Jensen (2009, 2010), Gambles (2010) and Vered and McConchie (2011).

²¹ Some scholars have questioned the usefulness of the term neoliberalism, stating that it is often used as a ‘catch-all’ phrase to explain everything that happens in the social world (see Barnett 2003; Flew 2009; Flew and Cunningham 2010; Grossberg 2010). I do not have space to address these critiques here, however, I agree with Sean Phalen who argues that that the term should not be abandoned but that we must contextualise our discussions of neoliberalism and reject the image of a “fully formed neoliberalism

measures, techniques, procedures and discourses that shape subject populations” (G. Palmer, “Introduction” 1). In short, neoliberalism involves a more ‘hands-off’ government (although of course as Foucault notes, it must intervene when it discovers “irregularities” in the system) and favours a market economy, in which citizens are represented as consumers.²²

In Britain and the United States, the countries I focus on in this thesis, neoliberal policies were introduced under the Thatcher/Major and Regan/Bush governments (Raisborough 2011). This economic model promised to reduce structural inequalities, but instead has led to a deepening of them (G. Palmer, “Introduction” 2008). Neoliberalism is characterised by “huge wealth and income disparities, unaccountable corporate power and capitalist profiteering” (Phalen 3). Neoliberalism has become the dominant way of thinking: it has been “incorporated into the common-sense way many of us interpret, live in, and understand the world” (Harvey 3). Furthermore, as Harvey notes, “advocates of the neoliberal way now occupy positions of influence in education [...] in the media, in corporate boardrooms and financial institutions” (3). As I discuss in Chapter Two, we can see the influence of and commitment to neoliberal ideology in the television industry, one of the first to embrace market economics (G. Palmer, “Introduction” 2008), not only in terms of broadcasting policymaking and professional practices, but also in its approach to the production and content of media texts.

In neoliberalist societies the emphasis on economy means that all human activities are increasingly evaluated relative to the market. It is crucial to examine the concept of

simply imposing itself on the social world” (5). As I explain below, I limit my analysis to the Anglo-American context and examine neoliberal discourse in relation to my chosen text, *Supernanny*.

²² In neoliberalism the state is not completely absent. Instead, as Raisborough notes, neoliberalism “forges new relationships between the self, capitalism and the state” (14).

neoliberalism with regards to the issue of subjectivity; as Jayne Raisborough observes, “for many critical commentators the specific imaginings of the self as requiring transformation cannot be divorced from [this] prevailing social, political and economic rationality” (11). The neoliberal subject is presumed to be “self-aware, self-cultivating and self-sufficient,” which, in turn, releases the state from its obligation to care for them (Weber 51). In neoliberalist societies, subjects are expected “to fix themselves” or to “make themselves [...] fit within the system” (Rockler 247). Neoliberalist discourse helps, in part, to explain the emergence of the makeover sub-genre, the focus of this thesis. As I explain in Chapter Two, makeover programming seeks to create an ideal self, one which suits the requirements of the free market economy. The format draws upon neoliberal discourses of “responsibility, blame and danger” to ‘encourage’ change (Raisborough 9). Furthermore, as my analysis of *Supernanny* demonstrates, shame plays a central role in bringing subjects into line with neoliberal aims. In *Supernanny* we can see the inherent contradictions of neoliberalism: the programme’s focus on techniques indicates that freedom is the result of (self) control and regulation (N. Rose 1990).

Scholars critiquing neoliberalism evaluate television’s role in the regulation of citizens and the ways in which these programmes individualise larger social problems. Writing about *Nanny 911* (Fox 2004 - 2006) and US *Supernanny* (ABC 2005 - 2011) Ron Becker, for example, argues that:

By focusing solely on individual family’s dysfunction and renovation [...] these programs work to reinforce a neoliberal faith in the transformative power of personal growth and responsibility and obscure the wider social

forces and government policies that shape the fate of American families and individual citizens. (176)

For Becker, television is implicated in the production of disciplinary regimes which persuade audience members to transform their behaviour in order to comply with neoliberal goals. In Foucauldian terms, he contends that these shows attempt to produce “docile bodies,” or bodies which can be “subjected, used, transformed and improved” (*Discipline* 136). However, what Becker and other scholars in this category fail to provide in Foucauldian terms is a detailed analysis of the disciplinary techniques through which these subjects are produced. I extend the scholarship on *Supernanny*’s neoliberal agenda by providing a comprehensive account of the programme’s parenting techniques in Chapter Four.

Technology plays an integral role in the regulation of makeover participants and citizens more generally. In instructional parenting makeover shows, video technology is used to convince participants to change and also to encourage self-surveillance or the self-aware part of the neoliberal subject more generally. It is therefore not surprising that several scholars have examined the relationship between surveillance technologies and power in these types of shows.²³ Paul McIlvenny, for example, investigates the way in which video technologies are used to “translate and circulate conduct at the interface between technologies of power and technologies of the self” (“Video” 260). In his analysis of *Honey We’re Killing the Children* (BBC3 2005), he identifies four ways that video technology is used: “as a resource to know what is going on (live video replay), as

²³ See McIlvenny (2008, 2009, 2011), Ouellette and Hay (2008), Weber (2009) and Tally (2011).

a resource to act at a distance (intervene, instruct parents to act in a different way), as a resource to (re)interpret prior conduct (video prompted recall) and to generate a perspective shift (video prompted recall)” (“Video” 280). I expand McIlvenny’s work in Chapters Two and Three in my discussion of surveillance technologies in *Supernanny*. I also interrogate Brenda Weber’s suggestion that technology has a ‘helping’ function and examine it in relation to my larger theme of care. While I agree that technology, as it is used in *Supernanny*, enables parents to gain an ‘objective view’ of their parenting, I contend that it is ultimately used to coerce the participants into behaving in a particular manner. The practice of recording the parents’ interactions with their children reinforces the programme’s emphasis upon parenting (care of/care as labour), over parenthood (care about/care as emotional bond). As I note in Chapter Three, the featured parents regularly complain that Frost is only able to take a dispassionate view of the situation because, as a nanny, she does not share the same (sentimental) bond with their children.

Other scholars examine the issue of (domestic) space in relation to parenting programmes. McIlvenny, for example, investigates the use of the “time-out” technique in *The House of Tiny Tearaways* and, in particular, how it reinforces particular power structures within the home environment (2009). Using a combination of mediated discourse analysis and Foucauldian theory, he argues that “time-out” restores the parent’s authority because it enables them to regulate their child’s behaviour (2009). I extend McIlvenny’s work on (domestic) space in my analysis of *Supernanny*, arguing that the control of (domestic and public) space, time, activities, emotions and the acquisition of skills and knowledge are key factors in the parent/child relationship. I also investigate the ‘rules’ related to particular spaces: inside/outside and public/private.

I contend that the unruly child is one who is often in the ‘wrong’ place; in ‘adult’ spaces such as the office or in mum and dad’s bed.

The final body of scholarship considers the place of instructional parenting makeover programmes in relation to the television industry, what I call the institutional effects of *Supernanny* or its impact upon the wider media landscape.²⁴ Some of these scholars examine how parenting programmes fulfil public service ethics within a commercial context (Lunt 2009; Vered and McConchie 2011). In their analysis of *Supernanny* and its reception in the Australian context, Karen Orr Vered and John McConchie, for example, note that the series can be seen as “a form of public service, but one that resides in the institutional setting of globalized, commercial TV” (67). They use the term “third-way television” to signify this transition, a concept which they borrow from third-way politics to demonstrate the fluidity of binaries such as education/entertainment and public/private. I expand Vered and McConchie’s argument by investigating *Supernanny*’s public service claims. Importantly, I address a gap in the scholarship by locating *Supernanny* within a brief history of televised parenting programmes in the UK before positioning it within a new, “third wave” of makeover shows.

A larger aim of this thesis is to demonstrate the process by which *Supernanny* links care with control and as such, my work can be aligned with those strands of research that examine parenting programmes in relation to theories of discipline, neoliberalism and governmentality. I argue that in *Supernanny* through the regulation of the child’s use of (domestic and public) space, time, activities, emotions and acquisition of skills and knowledge, the family is constructed as if it were one of Foucault’s enclosed

²⁴ Lunt 2009; Vered and McConchie 2011; L Edwards 2012 and 2013.

disciplinary institutions. I assert that through its focus on techniques, *Supernanny* instrumentalises care and provides a ‘tick list’ for both the show’s participants and audience at home to follow. I contend, however, that unlike the prison system where the relationship between the guard and the prisoner is clear-cut, the bond between the parent and the child is far more complex. In fact, I argue that parenthood is a site of contestation. The emotional/sentimental tie between the child and parent means that parenthood cannot be reduced to a series of techniques (or ‘parenting’) and therefore control is ultimately represented as a form of (parental) care.

As I am interested in *Supernanny*’s representation of parenthood and care, I provide a detailed textual analysis of the series and the discourses surrounding it. Unlike some television scholars who mention *Supernanny* in passing (Brancato 2007; McIlvenny 2008, 2011), or analyse only one or two episodes,²⁵ I study two complete seasons in order to ascertain how the series developed, responded to criticism, and transitioned from the British to the American market.²⁶ I argue that it is only by analysing complete series that one can identify recurrent themes and visual images.²⁷ I provide detailed information about the episodes analysed in Chapter Two.

As *Supernanny* is a transatlantic phenomenon I investigate both UK and US episodes of the series, using material from seasons one and two from each country. I take my lead from Tania Lewis who notes that, “the rise of globally successful formats means [that] it is hard to talk about television cultures in national terms” (“Changing”

²⁵ Examples of scholars who only reference one or two episodes of *Supernanny* include, Becker (2006), Gambles (2010), Green (2007 and 2012), Feasey (2011, 2012) and Tally (2011).

²⁶ US seasons one and two are available on DVD. The UK episodes were purchased directly from the production company. Please note, episodes contained in these DVDs differ from those broadcast on television (see Appendices A and B for a list of episodes analysed).

²⁷ The similarities between the two cultures can be seen in the ‘special relationship’ between British Prime Minister Tony Blair and US President Bill Clinton.

7). I do not include interviews with *Supernanny*'s producers as the intentions and production context are not important for my analysis of the representation of parenthood. Additionally, although I draw upon audience feedback to help explain *Supernanny*'s high audience ratings, I am not particularly interested in why or how viewers watch these types of shows; as noted above, there has already been significant research conducted in this area. Equally, even though I point to significant UK parenting policies, I do not examine them in any depth as the primary goal is to investigate how parenthood is represented in *Supernanny*.²⁸

I am concerned with a particular stage of care, marked by dependence upon one's parents. To reiterate, *Supernanny* deals primarily with preteen children (twelve-years old and below), and as a result, I limit my analysis to this age group. In Britain, preteens are the focus of most policy interventions (Gambles 2010) due to the commonly-held belief that the early years determine a child's future. Owing to their biological, intellectual and physical immaturity, preteens often require more intensive forms of 'hands-on' care than older children. Furthermore, as discussed in the conclusion, there are notable differences in the shows about out-of-control youth, both in terms of the format and the attribution of blame: programmes about teenagers and young adults focus less on the parents and suggest that age brings more responsibility.

Finally, although I focus on 'factual' programming, it is important to acknowledge *Supernanny*'s debt to several early fictional films; *Mary Poppins* (Robert Stevens 1964) and *The Sound of Music* (Robert Wise 1965). These films provide some visual templates for the programme and also suggest the culturally embedded nature of the *Supernanny* figure. Frost draws from Julie Andrew's famous nanny yet also differs from

²⁸ For discussions of British social policy, see Ferguson (2009), Jensen (2009, 2010, 2011), and Gambles (2010).

her for while she arrives with her (figurative) bag of tricks, re-educates the family and then leaves, it is the distraught parents and not the children who summon her to them.

In order to provide a detailed and nuanced account of *Supernanny*, I bring together three distinct bodies of scholarship. First, I draw on Foucault's theories of power, discipline and control; second, I turn to research on childhood and parenthood and third, I borrow from contemporary studies of reality and makeover television. I contend that Frost's techniques must be understood in relation to Foucault's work on disciplinary society and techniques of the self. As Aitkenhead notes, *Supernanny* fetishises discipline (2006). In the opening credits of the show, Frost is shown wagging her finger at the camera saying, "you've been very, very naughty!" A "key theorist in the area of interactional dynamics and the micro-politics of discipline" (McIlvenny 2009), Foucault provides an apt framework both for an analysis of power and knowledge structures as indicated by the various kinds of relationships depicted in *Supernanny* (more specifically, the expert/parent and the parent/child bond).

As I explain in Chapter One, in Foucauldian terms discipline is understood not only as punishment but also as the skills and knowledge one must learn in order to succeed in life ([1975] 1995). In *Supernanny* we see both of these meanings at work. As mentioned above, Foucault argues that discipline creates "docile bodies" which can be used to benefit society (*Discipline* 136). In *Discipline and Punish* he identifies four ways in which the subject is disciplined. These are spatial division, the control of activities, the segmentation of training, and the coordination of all the elementary parts ([1975] 1995). In disciplinary societies, Foucault argues that power and control are maintained through hierarchical observation, normalising judgement and examination ([1975] 1995), techniques we see exercised in *Supernanny*.

I contend that *Supernanny* teaches parents the skills and knowledge that they require in order to succeed in the realm of parenting. Sadly this comes at the expense of the emotional labour of parenthood. Frost disciplines the parents who in turn must discipline their children. Hence discipline is used not only to produce the ‘good’ child but also the ‘good’ parent. The programme links care with control. Parents who refuse to punish their children or who use excessive force are depicted as ‘uncaring.’ In *Supernanny* we see the same emphasis upon the control of (domestic and public) space, time, activities, emotions and the acquisition of skills and knowledge in the home as we do in Foucault’s example of Bentham’s prison. Frost divides her ‘lessons’ for the parents into manageable tasks and determines when they have acquired the necessary ‘qualifications’ to act as parents. The parents, who at the start of the show are frequently reprimanded for being childish, are, at the end, granted the status of adults; in other words, the transformation from students to masters is complete. A second, less obvious goal of the programme, is to ensure that both parents and children become self-reliant and responsible citizens. However due to her role as disciplinarian, Frost effectively infantilises the featured parents. In the update we see the family working together for the greater good of all its members. This process recalls Foucault’s assertion in *Discipline and Punish* that all parts must cooperate in order to ensure the smooth and effective operation of the institution ([1975] 1995).

Foucauldian techniques of control are evident in *Supernanny*. The programme relies upon hierarchal observation to achieve its goal. Frost spends a significant amount of the broadcast observing the parents’ interactions with their children. Using video recordings she teaches the parents to examine their children’s behaviour from a ‘third-person’ or ‘expert’ perspective. In teaching correct parental techniques, *Supernanny*

promotes particular “norms” (Foucault, *Discipline* 178) against which all parents can be judged whatever their problems. Parents who fail to reach these “norms” face what Foucault calls “micro-penalties” (*Discipline* 178). As indicated above, Frost uses petty humiliation and shame in order to bring the parents into line. Finally, a central component of *Supernanny*’s narrative is the trial run or the examination (a key Foucauldian practice), where Frost leaves the parents for a couple of days to see if they can manage on their own.

Foucault’s work on self-mastery, as discussed in *Care of the Self*, not only adds another layer of meaning to my analysis, but also prepares us for the programme’s focus on the parents as the key to transforming the children. As I discuss in Chapter Two, in ancient Greece it was believed that one must first learn to regulate oneself before one can manage others. We can see a similar process at work in *Supernanny* where Frost concentrates, initially at least, on the *parents*’ behaviour. Foucault’s concept of government/governmentality (what he describes as “the conduct of conduct”) is important for this thesis because it refers to problems of control, both of the self and other (the child, the family and the household).²⁹

Neoliberal discourse enables me to explain the wider political, economic and social context of *Supernanny* as well as the reason for the visual and metaphorical isolation of the family. As in most first and second wave makeover shows, the parents’ problems are cast as individual failings; thus I contend that the programme’s promotion of self-sufficiency and personal responsibility cohere with neoliberal agendas. In *Supernanny* we see the operation of what is commonly called, “responsibilisation,” or the belief that individuals, rather than the state, are responsible for the outcome of their own lives (G.

²⁹ Foucault, “Subject” 1982.

Palmer 2008). I also demonstrate the ways in which specific childrearing practices (the “norms”) are enforced in *Supernanny* through the use of shame. As previously noted, although the government takes more of a ‘back-seat role,’ in neoliberal societies, it must intervene and correct the slightest deviations.

As a series about parent/child relations, it is also important to contextualise *Supernanny* within broader debates around parenting, thus I examine the shifts in Western discourses surrounding childhood, adulthood and parenthood. As I discuss in Chapter One, the parent emerges as a response to the changing value of children; from another member of the labour force to an object of sentimental value. Today the parent is a contested subject who is divided irreconcilably between the work of childcare and the emotional dimensions of this role.

Finally, I position *Supernanny* within the broader scholarship on makeover programming, a sub-genre of reality television, which foregrounds care of the self. This body of literature on the makeover helps to explain *Supernanny*’s influence and also provides the vocabulary needed to analyse the programme’s narrative structure. I investigate how the makeover promotes a contemporary version of care of the self through the consumption of specific advice and techniques. I investigate the programme’s use of video surveillance and demonstrate how it is used as a teaching tool to generate a figurative reveal. As noted, *Supernanny*’s focus on parents making ‘objective’ decisions means that the programme ultimately favours ‘care of’ (parenting) over ‘care about’ (parenthood). I ask whether the child can be seen as an extension of the parental self and if so, question whether caring for the child represents a form of self-care.

Chapter Summation

This thesis is divided into four chapters, each of which contributes to the central question of this thesis: *What can Supernanny tell us about the transformation of, and television's role in, the 'governance' of parenthood and care, in an Anglo-American context in the twenty-first century?* As noted above, my thesis seeks to investigate the close relationship between care and control in relation to the parent/child relationship, therefore each chapter deals with a different aspect of this issue. Ultimately I argue that television plays a central role in defining what constitutes 'good'/'bad' parenting and in the widespread regulation of the family.

I begin by contextualising my discussion of the parent in relation to key models for power, discipline and order and important literature on the changing nature of child/adult relations. Chapter One asks questions about what kind of subject the parent is, and establishes a gap in the knowledge as to how we understand the parent's role in relation to historical narratives of the emergence and disappearance of childhood and child/adult relationships. For Foucault, the family does not function as a disciplinary apparatus, instead it operates as a "cell of sovereignty" with sovereign/family relations left rather ill-defined through, as he puts it, a particular "type of bond" (*Psychiatric* 80). Problems of imprecision persist when we turn to the modern invention of childhood, since the child comes into being both through the imposition of a certain kind of order or control and the attachment of "sentimental value" to the child (Zelizer [1985] 1994). Hence Chapter One argues that the notion of parenthood as a site of contestation has deep-seated roots.

While scholars have turned to Foucault to explain makeover texts, I argue that those who use his work often do so in a superficial way. None of them provide detailed analyses of the specific techniques through which parenthood is constructed. Laurie Ouellette and James Hay, for example, argue that along with other “life intervention” programmes *Supernanny*, transforms participants (and viewers) through a variety of disciplinary techniques (6). However, there is very little examination of the techniques through which these changes occur. While Ouellette and Hay note the programme’s focus on rules and routines, they do not provide a comprehensive account of Frost’s techniques (2008). It is necessary to analyse *Supernanny*’s techniques in further detail as they provide us with vital information about how parenting is understood in contemporary culture. Furthermore, scholars fail to address the distinctive and complex nature of parenthood as an emotional attachment that is defined by care. As noted above, I argue that *Supernanny* reduces care to a series of techniques and attempts to simplify the complex relationship between the parent and the child.

Care of the self is a central theme of the makeover, thus in Chapter Two I examine the literature on makeover programming in order to position *Supernanny* within its generic context. There are very few detailed studies on the history of instructional parenting makeover television (going back to the 1970s); most of the academic literature deals with, what I call elsewhere, “the first two waves” (266) of the makeover, or the home and body shows. My work extends these studies by considering pre-reality television examples and examines in particular the notion of care, as it relates to what I call the “third wave” of the makeover (Fowler and Kambuta 265). I examine the use of surveillance in the makeover format and its association with shame and care in order to prepare for Chapter Three where I investigate *Supernanny*’s five part structure. Finally,

I provide detailed information about the episodes analysed and demonstrate the ways in which *Supernanny* frames the family, which is largely white, two-parented and heterosexual, in order to show how the programme favours a particular type of care. As noted above, in contrast to many of the scholars who mention *Supernanny* in passing or only analyse a couple of episodes, I offer a comprehensive analysis of two complete seasons of both the British and the American versions in order to highlight the consistency and development of themes across the series.

Having established my theoretical framework in the first two chapters (Foucault's theories of power, discipline and control, the inseparability of the discourses on parenthood/childhood and the scholarship on makeover programming), in Chapters Three and Four, I turn my attention to *Supernanny*, the programme which sparked this investigation. In *Supernanny* care of the (parental) self is linked to self-mastery. In Chapter Three I investigate *Supernanny's* narrative structure and explore the ways in which the programme transfers attention from the child to the parent. On the surface *Supernanny* appears to be about the unruly child, however a close analysis of the structure and the techniques reveals the true focus: the parents. This is a critical point, for as we will see, Frost must first transform the parents' bad behaviour if she is to bring peace to these troubled homes. *Supernanny's* dual focus (the parents and the children) differentiates it from many first and second wave examples which typically transform a single subject. The dual focus also helps to explain, in part, *Supernanny's* extension of the makeover's tripartite format: the programme features an expanded teaching period in order to deal with the inclusion of minors. In *Supernanny*, the material is edited to suggest that it is the parents and not the children who are to blame for the chaotic state of the family. The programme indicates that the children's bad behaviour (much like a

neglected garden or dishevelled house) reflects the parents' lack of care for themselves. By focusing on the parental behaviour, the show implies that the children will not change until their parents do; in short, parents must learn to take responsibility and not only master their emotions but also their use of (domestic and public) space, time, activities and acquisition of skills and knowledge.

The fact that it is parental behaviour that must change means that parenthood comes to be seen as an incremental process, much like childhood. Notably, although *Supernanny's* primary aim is to teach parents to act like adults, as I demonstrate in Chapter Three, due to her domineering personality, Frost actually infantilises them. I argue that the question of what kind of a subject the parents is, is complicated due to the special bond that exists between the parent and the child. As a subject, the parent is dependent upon the child for meaning and vice versa: To put it another way, the parent is defined by his/her relationship to the child. This interconnectedness presents a problem for the neoliberal agenda, which works on the individual.

There are two conflicting models of parenting/care of at work in *Supernanny*. While the parents featured on the show see their children as Dionysian devils, Frost insists that they are (Apollonian) angels. *Supernanny* rejects the idea that children are evil and instead promotes the view that with the right parenting techniques, children will behave appropriately. *Supernanny* suggests that the problems lie not with the children but with their parents who have failed to provide the necessary rules and boundaries to ensure good behaviour. In line with current British social policy, the programme maintains that educating adults is the key to resolving the children's bad behaviour. In short, the programme demands that parents take responsibility for their offspring.

Throughout the chapter I pinpoint key aspects of the narrative, dividing it up into five parts that illustrate how *Supernanny* extends and transforms the tripartite structure of first and second wave makeover texts. *Supernanny* inverts the traditional makeover structure with a lower-class ‘expert’ instructing largely middle-to-upper-class parents. I argue that the inclusion of middle-to-upper-class participants in *Supernanny* points to the wholesale regulation of the family. Frost, the show’s expert, plays a central role in the narrative, not only enabling viewers to interpret the text in the ‘right’ way, but also in teaching us ‘correct’ childrearing techniques.

I contend that the series’ emphasis on confession, hierarchal observation, self-mastery and an endless list of techniques and testing procedures marks *Supernanny* as a Foucauldian text par excellence. Frost acts like the prison guard in Foucault’s *Discipline and Punish* who has the knowledge of the subjects and therefore power over them. She sets the examinations and determines when the parents have ‘passed.’ Although some of the parents resist the identities offered to them, the editing suggests that they eventually acquiesce. *Supernanny* highlights the integral role of surveillance in the participants’ transformations and the programme links surveillance with a discourse of care. Frost justifies her intrusion into the private space of the home by suggesting that her presence (as well as that of the cameras) serves a ‘helping’ function (Weber 2009) because it enables the parents to change. In short, care becomes an opportunity for control.

Caring for children involves a certain degree of parental control. In Chapter Four I provide a detailed analysis of *Supernanny*’s techniques in order to show how parenthood is constructed through caring for the child. I ask two questions: firstly, how is the transformation from ‘bad’ parent to ‘good’ parent accomplished and secondly, how does *Supernanny* depict parental care? *Supernanny* provides parents with a

technique for virtually every ‘problem’ they experience, ranging from fussy eaters to children who refuse to stay in bed. *Supernanny* rejects “the talking cure” associated with the rise of emotional culture and instead offers solutions which are behaviour based. In short, I contend that the programme favours ‘care of,’ over ‘care about.’ Through a detailed analysis of Frost’s techniques, I ultimately conclude that in *Supernanny* a ‘good’ parent is represented as one who controls their child’s use of (domestic and public) space, time, activities, emotions and acquisition of skills and knowledge.

In the conclusion I summarise the key findings of this thesis and ultimately argue that by linking care with control, *Supernanny* favours ‘care of’ or the controlling techniques of parenting over ‘care about’ or parenthood. I outline the implications of my findings for (reality) television scholarship. I provide a brief summary of the programmes that came after *Supernanny* and discuss some of the key differences between the shows about preteen children and young adults. Hence I conclude by demonstrating how concepts of care and responsibility to match the age of the child/ren.

Chapter One

Defining the Parent: A Brief History of Parenthood

Children have always been with us. However, the manner of their recognition by adults and thus the form of their relationship with adults has altered from epoch to epoch. In this sense they cannot be treated as an invariant feature of the social landscape. Their location emerges from a set of social relations of control, operating through hierarchy and based on age.

Chris Jenks, *The Sociology of Childhood* (24)

There is no unitary notion of parenthood; instead there are varying ideas about what parenthood is. As Valerie Young argues, “In contemporary society diverse understandings, meanings and experiences of parenthood abound, dependent on perspective, be it professional, theoretical, cultural or personal” (53). Although parenthood is imagined in a number of ways, the parent is seen to have a definable role with specific responsibilities relating to the care of (dependent) children. In this chapter I ask what kind of subject is the parent? Moreover, what are the dominant discourses of parenting and how do they work as “instruments of normalization?” (McHoul and Grace 17). As noted in the Introduction, I am interested in how *Supernanny* constructs ‘the parent’ and seek to provide a detailed analysis of the childrearing techniques

advocated by the programme. I bring together key models for power, discipline and order and important literature on the changing nature of child/adult and child/parent relations so as to answer these questions. I contend that the parental subject is constructed within complex webs of power and knowledge and that the figure of the parent changes depending upon the socio-cultural context.

The Emergence of the Child

In contemporary society the fact that children are differentiated from adults is taken for granted. As Jenks suggests above, we should not forget that this has not always been the case. Jenks' phrase "social relations of control" is significant, since it seems to refer us to Foucauldian frameworks for understanding subjectivity. For Foucault, the subject "is *not* a pre-given identity which is seized upon by the exercise of power" (Sarup 69) but rather, is *produced by* specific mechanisms that reinforce particular hierarchies within society.³⁰ The mechanisms referred to here include a combination of discursive practices and techniques. What should be immediately evident from this description is the way in which the child/adult relationship is also intrinsically based upon a hierarchy.

In order for this hierarchy to emerge, children first had to be differentiated from adults. This process has been extensively covered in studies of the history of

³⁰ Foucault's work must be situated within a much larger history of debates about the construction of subjectivity. This is outside the scope of this project, but includes René Descartes' assertion that the subject is a rational, self-conscious being made famous in his statement, "I think, therefore I am"; Karl Marx's theory which favours class identity over other social determinants; Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan's psychoanalytic theories which suggest that the subject's behaviour is driven by unconscious desires; Louis Althusser's belief that ideology interpellates us as subjects; and postmodern claims which contend that the self is fragmented, unstable, contradictory and incomplete.

childhood.³¹ Accounting for the mechanisms that produce a hierarchy between children and adults is particularly important since in *Supernanny* family breakdown is conceptualised as the result of a lack of boundaries between the generations. We see adults who act childishly and refuse to take responsibility for their offspring and children who have far too much control. In *Supernanny*, both the parent and the child are constructed as ‘deviant’ subjects, who must be reformed so as to ensure the safety of society. In every episode, harmony is restored by returning adults and children to their ‘proper’ places.

Like care, the notion of childhood is historically specific. In other words, ideas about the child’s role and place within the family have changed over time. French historian Philippe Ariés, for example, argues that in the Middle Ages, ‘childhood’ was unheard of:

In medieval society the *idea* of childhood did not exist; this is not to suggest that children were neglected, forsaken, or despised. The idea of childhood is not to be confused with affection for children, it corresponds to an awareness of the particular nature which distinguishes the child from the adult, even the young adult. In medieval society this awareness was lacking. (128)³²

³¹ For histories of childhood see Ariés ([1960] 1973), Pinchbeck and Hewitt (1969 and 1973), Bremner (1970), Hunt (1970), DeMause (1974) and Heywood (2004).

³² Contrary to Ariés’ assertion that parents were affectionate towards their children, Lloyd DeMause (1974), Ivy Pinchbeck and Margaret Hewitt (1969 and 1973) all argue that the history of childhood is one of overwhelming abuse, neglect, abandonment and murder.

According to Ariés, medieval society did not see the child as being fundamentally different from the adult; it did not recognise the child's unique or special nature nor did it see childhood as a particularly important period of life. He contends that changing depictions of children in continental Europe reflected transformations in the conceptualisation of children and childhood.³³ First published in France in 1960, Ariés provides evidence from a variety of sources including art-works, literary texts, childrearing manuals, personal diaries and school enrolment figures.

Ariés' work is often credited with being the first historical account of childhood (Archard 19) and informs much of the research that has followed it. In fact, as I discuss below, American scholar Neil Postman references Ariés' study in his examination of the disappearance of childhood in the West. In short, he argues that the modern concept of childhood Ariés' describes, has, in the late-twentieth century, been destroyed by television. While Ariés research has been hugely influential in the field of childhood studies it should also be acknowledged that it has been subjected to heated debate. As Julia Grant observes, Ariés is "either a reference point or a whipping boy depending on one's stance" (5). His claim that the concept of childhood did not exist in medieval times is particularly controversial and has been challenged by several scholars who argue that his evidence is inadequate or atypical and/or that he fails to interpret it correctly.³⁴ After reviewing Ariés' work, Archard, like several others, concludes that medieval society did not lack the concept of childhood; rather what it lacked was *our* (modern) concept of childhood.³⁵ Although he disagrees with Ariés' central claim,

³³ As noted in the Introduction, I limit my study of parenthood to an Anglo-American context, however, it is impossible to discuss the history of parent/child relations without recourse to Ariés' *Centuries of Childhood*, which is considered to be a foundational text.

³⁴ For critiques of Ariés' work see Hendrick (1992) Archard (1993) and O'Brien (2003).

Archard does not completely reject Ariés' work. He concurs that "from the sixteenth-century onwards, a more elaborate, explicitly stated and abstract appreciation of what is involved in being a child" developed in Western society (21).³⁶ Archard also agrees with Ariés' assessment that the most distinctive characteristic of modern childhood is its separateness: "Ariés is at least right to observe that the most important feature of the way in which the modern age conceives of children is as meriting separation from the world of adults" (37). It is this process of separation that I examine here, to provide a foundation for Foucault's work which follows on the emergence of the modern subject.

In medieval times, the term 'child' referred to kinship (i.e. family membership) not age (Plumb 6) and there were only two life stages; infancy and adulthood. Children over the age of seven, the age at which children are said to have mastered language, were considered "miniature adults" (that is, differing from adults only in terms of their size) and were treated as such (Tuchman 52). In the Middle Ages "children were mixing with adults as soon as they were considered capable of doing without their mothers or nannies" (Ariés 411).³⁷ In his analysis of medieval society, Ariés notes a certain precocity; when compared with children from the twentieth-century, children from this earlier period appear and act much more like adults ([1960] 1973). Interestingly, for

³⁵ In contrast to this view, historian Hugh Cunningham argues that Ariés has been misinterpreted. He contends that a translation error has contributed, in part, to the confusion around Ariés' central thesis: "the word 'idea' was in fact a translation of the French 'sentiment,' which conveys a very different meaning" ("Histories" 1197). According to Cunningham, Ariés was not suggesting that childhood did not exist, but rather, that medieval views of children and childhood were fundamentally different from our own – that a more sentimental view of the child emerged from the seventeenth-century onwards ("Histories" 1998).

³⁶ As Archard argues, in contemporary Western culture "children neither work nor play alongside adults; they do not participate in the adult world of law and politics. Their world is innocent where the adult one is knowing; and so on. We now insist upon this sharp distinction between the behaviour demanded of children and that expected of adults; what is thought appropriate treatment of children is distinct from that of adults. There is a marked division of roles and responsibilities" (37).

³⁷ The Catholic Church designates seven as the "age of reason," or the age when a child is believed to know the difference between right and wrong.

later discussions about a crisis in parenthood, the inclusion of children into adult life in medieval times also had the reverse effect; it led to the infantilisation of the adult ([1960] 1973). Accordingly, in the medieval world, what we might think of as childish behaviour characterised all age groups, with both adults and children displaying a relative lack of self-control (Tuchman 52). In medieval times, childhood was not considered a separate or particularly special period of life. Further analysis of medieval society will demonstrate why this was the case.

The life of the medieval ‘child’ over the age of seven was very different to that of the child of today largely because of the lack of hierarchy among the generations. The medieval ‘child’s’ language, dress, and behaviour were indistinguishable from that of the ‘adult’ (Aries [1962] 1973). Children shared the same social space as adults, played the same games and participated in many of the same ceremonies, such as weddings and funerals; as historian J. H. Plumb tells us, “there was no separate world of childhood” (7).³⁸ We can see the impact of this at institutional levels as the law made no special allowances for the young. Children convicted of criminal offences were subject to the same punishment as their elders (May 1973). It was the nature of the crime and not the age of the perpetrator that determined the punishment (May 1973). What brought about the separation between the adult and child? Here I turn to Postman, as he provides one theory of why this separation occurred. As noted above, Postman utilises Ariés’ research in his examination of the “disappearance of childhood” in the West in the late-twentieth century.³⁹

³⁸ Dollhouses and other toys which are today associated with children, were originally made for adults’ amusement (Buckingham, *Material* 73).

³⁹ Like Aries, Postman’s work has been the subject of much critique. Jyotsna Kapur, for example, argues his claim that television has destroyed childhood is far too simplistic because it positions children as “cultural dupes” who passively accept whatever they watch on TV (123). While she agrees that the

In the Middle Ages children were privy to the same information as adults; there was no “information hierarchy” and hence no protection (Postman 77). Due to the nature of the medieval household (extended families and servants lived crammed together under one roof), it was hard, if not impossible, to keep secrets from the youngest members of the group (Mills 12). Therefore, the medieval ‘child’ had access to the same information as his/her parents (including knowledge of ‘taboo’ subjects such as birth, death, sex, illness, violence and money), information that would later be used to distinguish the adult from the child (Postman 49). Medieval society lacked the concept of shame, which developed much later, hence adults did not feel the need to censor their behaviour (Postman [1982] 1994). In the medieval world, children learnt by *doing*, rather than by *reading* (Eisenstein 1979). School was not regarded as *preparation* for the adult world but rather as *part* of life (for boys and men anyway), thus there was no such thing as elementary education.

As Postman puts it, childhood emerges as a protected time and space. What he is less interested in, however, is how it is parents who ‘protect’ their children and therefore enable them to have a childhood. Before this could happen the idea of the perceived value of the child – to families and wider society – had to shift considerably, from the child as just another member of the workforce who is relatively undifferentiated in terms of the family, to the child as “economically worthless but emotionally priceless” (Zelizer 3).⁴⁰ According to Zelizer in medieval society, children did not have the same

boundaries between adults and children have become increasingly blurred in the twentieth-century, she argues that this is due to “capitalist expansion” and “new technologies,” which alter the “private/public divide on which the institutions of family and childhood rest” (Kapur 134).

⁴⁰ This sentimental view of the child was accompanied by the development of a children’s subculture which included special books, toys, birthday celebrations and nursery rhymes (Meyrowitz 262). Festivals such as Christmas and Easter became increasingly associated with the child.

kind of importance or “sentimental value” as they do today ([1985] 1994).⁴¹ The concept of the child’s sentimental value is crucial because it is the foundation for one half of the care binary that, I suggest, has come to define parenthood: care as an emotional bond. In medieval society the high mortality rate and the practice of apprenticeship often meant that parents were less emotionally attached to their children and saw them as a source of income.⁴² From the nineteenth century onwards, however, childhood was seen as increasingly incompatible with the world of commerce (Zelizer [1985] 1994; O’Connor 2008). It should be immediately evident that parenthood, as we understand it today, did not exist; instead reproduction served a purpose in so far as it ensured the transmission of property and the family name (Ariés [1960] 1973), an attitude which existed well into the nineteenth-century.

With the construction of the concept of childhood that developed gradually over the course of two hundred years (Postman 28) came the rise of the parent and parenting as a definable role and responsibility. The appearance of the child/parent binary cannot be attributed to a single factor; instead, it was the result of a number of cultural, historical, economic and social developments including romanticism, industrialisation, formal education, individualism, a growing middle-class,⁴³ decreasing mortality rates and the

⁴¹ Ariés anticipates Zelizer’s work on the rise of the child’s sentimental value. He argues that in the sixteenth- and-seventeenth-centuries parents became more affectionate with their children, a fact indicated by the rise of “coddling” (129).

⁴² The changing ‘value’ or status of the child is illustrated by the emergence of abduction cases where a ransom is demanded in exchange for the child’s safe return. Although kidnapping is not a new phenomenon - as Joann Conrad explains, children have been “stolen, abducted, forced into slavery [...] throughout history”- the belief that parents would pay huge amounts of money to have their child returned is (324).

⁴³ According to Pinchbeck and Hewitt, the growing economic stability of the middle-classes led to further developments in the concept of childhood. They argue that in the late seventeenth/early-eighteenth-century, the growing affluence of middle-class families led to a reorganisation of the home. Servants quarters were separated off from their employers, which allowed for “more intimate family relationships

creation of nation-states.⁴⁴ Postman argues that childhood, as we now know it, is less than four hundred years old (xii),⁴⁵ yet even he gives less attention to the creation of adulthood/parenthood.

Three key shifts combine to point to the emergence of the parent as a cultural construct: a transformation in the information structure of medieval society, individualism as a social phenomenon, and philosophical and social debates around who is responsible for a child's 'becoming.' The invention of the printing press by Johann Gutenberg in the fifteenth-century was an important development in the creation of childhood and thus parenthood (Postman [1982] 1994). While it would be a mistake to suggest that the printing press *created* childhood, it contributed to "a new and pervasive idea of selfhood" due to the "possibly of having one's words and work fixed forever" (Postman 21). As Postman explains, childhood "could not have happened without the idea that each individual is important in himself and that a human mind and life in some fundamental sense transcend community" (28). By extension, the figure of the parent would not have been required without these ideas also.

As Postman acknowledges, individualism as a social phenomenon does not sufficiently account for the creation of childhood (28) and for my purposes, parenthood. Instead what was needed was a transformation in the information structure of medieval society, a change that would create divisions between adults and children. The printing press created what Postman calls "the knowledge gap" (28). Medieval Europe was

and a degree of family self-consciousness" to develop (Pinchbeck and Hewitt 1: 306). Children were recipients of this newfound wealth and became "objects of conspicuous consumption" (Du Boulay 90).

⁴⁴ See for example Ariés ([1960] 1973), Pinchbeck and Hewitt (1960 and 1973), Postman ([1982] 1994) and Lee (2001).

⁴⁵ Even though Postman identifies the Renaissance as the period in which the concept of childhood originated, he argues that our understanding of the term is even more recent: "Indeed, if we use the word children in the fullest sense in which the average American understands it, childhood is not much more than one hundred and fifty years old" (xi).

transformed from a largely oral-based society into a literary one and with this new world came the need for a renewed kind of education. Postman explains this shift in the following manner:

What [...] happened, simply, was that Literate Man had been created.

And in his coming, he left behind the children. For in the medieval world neither the young nor the old could read, and their business was in the here and now, in the 'immediate and local' [...] That is why there had been no need for the idea of childhood, for everyone shared the same information environment and had the same social and intellectual world.

But as the printing press played out its hand it became obvious that a new kind of adulthood had been invented. From print onwards, adulthood had to be *earned*. It became a symbolic, not a biological achievement. From print onwards, the young would have to *become* adults, and they would have to do it by learning to read. (36)

In short, literacy can be seen as playing a crucial part in separating out the child and adult, since it highlights the fact that children can no longer merely learn by doing. Adulthood was no longer an automatic right conferred on individuals seven years and above, it now had to be *earned* through the attainment of particular skills, the most important of which were reading and writing. Hence the invention of the printing press

helped contributed to a conceptualisation of the child: children were no longer seen as “miniature adults” but instead were understood as “unformed adults” (Postman 41).⁴⁶

The new school system created a generational hierarchy in which the unknowing and ‘innocent’ child submitted to the knowledgeable adult (Postman [1982] 1994). In this model, the flow of information was conceived of as ‘one-way’: from adult to the child. From the nineteenth-century onwards the precocious child was viewed with increasing suspicion (Ariés 219). Precocity was believed to undermine the adult/child binary and thus was seen as a threat to adult power (Scott, Jackson and Backett-Millburn 1998). Literacy’s emphasis upon mastering skills and acquiring knowledge illustrate just how much it forms a key part of Foucault’s conception of disciplinary societies; equally, the education system is a key institution for the formation of modern subjects, hence it seems appropriate to bring Foucault in here.

Foucault and the Emergence of the Modern Subject

Disciplinary practices are crucial to this thesis because I argue that in *Supernanny* care is linked to control, not only in terms of the expert/parent relationship and the parent/child bond but also in wider society. As I demonstrate in Chapters Three and Four, the programme transforms unruly families using a range of ‘disciplinary techniques’ including confession, hierarchical observation, the implementation of a set

⁴⁶As several scholars have observed, childhood, like the cult of domesticity, was, originally a white, middle-class phenomenon due to the “demands on material provision, time, and emotion” (Jenks, *Childhood* 57). While middle-class families celebrated childhood, children of the poor continued to be exploited in factories and mines around the world (Pinchbeck and Hewitt 1969; Bremner 1970; Hopkins 1994).

of rules and a household routine, and a system of punishment and rewards. Significantly, Frost uses the term techniques to describe various tactics which she teaches parents in order to deal with specific childrearing issues. Like the prison guard Foucault discusses in *Discipline and Punish*, Frost seeks not only to regulate the subject's use of (domestic and public) space, time, activities, emotions, but also his/her acquisition of skills and knowledge. *Supernanny* also utilises surveillance and examination procedures designed to monitor the subject's progress. Furthermore, *Supernanny* promotes hierarchical power structures (not only between Frost and the parents, but also between the parents and the children) as a way to restore order to the chaotic homes featured in the show. Hence in *Supernanny* the home is represented as a site where Foucauldian disciplinary practices (still) operate.⁴⁷ Moreover, as indicated in the introduction the programme favours 'care of' (care as labour) over 'care about' (care as affection, which I have suggested derives from the child's 'sentimental value'), through its focus on techniques. Even in instances where there is a clear lack of emotional connection between the parents and their children, the solution offered is a technique.

Since *Supernanny* is a series which seeks to discipline the family, it seems wise to examine Foucault's work on this topic. He does not specifically deal with the figure of the parent, nor does he examine the family in a consolidated way, however his analyses

⁴⁷ Gilles Deleuze argues that in the twenty-first century disciplinary institutions are in crisis and that mechanisms of control are no longer confined to the prison or the school but today, are widespread. Despite changing mechanisms of control, I contend that disciplinary practices are at the heart of reality programming which, as a genre, seeks to regulate citizens' behaviour. However, in the present-day, disciplinary practices are less interested in "harnessing useful work," as was the goal of the factory, and more in containing "unmanageable" portions of society (Bauman and Lyon 55). *Supernanny* aims not to incapacitate the family, but to reform it, for the nation's benefit. Although *Supernanny* includes elements of control society (it uses a crisis narrative and promotes ongoing parental education), it promotes techniques that are more consistent with Foucauldian thought: The transformation occurs in an enclosed environment, surveillance is localised to the family home, and the programme is interested, not in groups, but rather, in individual subjects.

of the role of institutions and ‘official’ discourses such as psychology, psychiatry and criminology in the construction of subjectivity provide guiding models for my own work. Significantly, Foucault argues that discourses create the objects of which they speak. In keeping with Foucault’s claim, I contend that our concepts of the child and the parent are the result of specific bodies of knowledge.

Foucault charts the emergence of the modern subject in relation to the so-called ‘human sciences.’ In *Discipline and Punish* ([1975] 1995) he identifies two contrasting types of power - sovereign power and disciplinary power - and examines the ways in which each attempts to regulate the subject. His central argument traces the history of the present-day prison system in France. Using a genealogical approach, he identifies three broad historical periods: the ancien régime (pre-1750), the revolutionary phase (1750-1800s) and the restoration period (1800-1840s), each of which has its own distinctive mode of penalty that is socially, culturally, politically and economically determined. His particular interest is in the various techniques which function in disciplinary societies to produce the “docile body,” defined, in the Introduction, as a body which can be “subjected, used, transformed and improved” (*Discipline* 136).

Foucault’s theories have been the subject of much critical debate. Here I focus specifically on concerns about his concepts of subjectivity and power, which I use in my analysis of *Supernanny*. Some scholars argue that Foucault’s theories, as outlined in *Discipline and Punish*, are too deterministic and a common critique of Foucault’s work is that he does not account for the subject’s agency (McNay 1994; Sarup 1996). In short, the subject is seen as having little or no control over what happens to him/her (Sarup 1996). Directly related to this critique of the subject are questions about his theories of power. As Lois McNay argues, despite Foucault’s “reformulation of power

as a positive and heterogeneous force,” his focus on institutions such as the prison means that he ultimately reinforces “a negative view of power as a unidirectionally imposed monolithic force” (3). She believes that Foucault should have considered the perspectives of those who are subject to such power arrangements. *The History of Sexuality*, and in particular, the third volume, which I examine in Chapter Two, seeks to address these issues: *Care of the Self* explores the techniques by which individuals constitute *themselves*.

In *Supernanny*, Frost utilises many of the same Foucauldian practices described in *Discipline and Punish* to reform the family. In Foucauldian terms Frost is effectively depicted as a “technician of behaviour” or an “engineer of conduct” who not only holds the power of the gaze but also teaches participants the ‘correct’ way of parenting (*Discipline* 169). Furthermore, *Supernanny*’s extensive use of video surveillance means that parents and children learn to internalise the gaze, much as the prisoners do in Jeremy Bentham’s panopticon. In *Supernanny*, the family home resembles one of Foucault’s enclosed environments: not only is the house visually isolated from neighbouring properties, making it appear prison-like, but at the beginning of the show, parents are often hesitant to venture into public because they are scared that their children’s bad behaviour will lead them to be judged by their fellow citizens. Ultimately I argue that *Supernanny*’s makeover techniques operate as disciplinary tools, modeling appropriate forms of behaviour and care, both for the show’s participants and the viewers at home.

Foucault and the Family

Foucault spends very little time discussing ‘the family’ in his larger body of work and akin with critiques that he ignores intersubjective relations (McNay 1994) and fails to address how the “self is imbricated in wider cultural dynamics” (Sarup 90) we should not expect him to be interested in the intricate relations of family life with which *Supernanny* concerns itself.⁴⁸ Those points at which he does mention ‘the family’ tend to take the form of brief passages scattered across several of his works, rather than sustained analyses.⁴⁹ Hence as Robbie Duschinsky and Leon Antonio Rocha rightly observe, in Foucault’s research, ‘the family’ appears “like a spectre [...] an amorphous, somewhat shapeless thing that he consistently mentions, flirtatiously alludes to and fleetingly gestures towards” (1). This observation in itself is interesting since it provides evidence of how the production of the parent as modern subject would be far from straightforward. Equally, one reason for Foucault’s opacity could be the complex nature of sentimental value of which I wrote above. Foucault’s taciturn attitude can be contrasted to the contemporary period in which *Supernanny* emerges when everyone – educators, academics, governments, critics, everyday experts - seems to have something to say about families and how they can best be conceived for the success of society.

Today the term “nanny state” is commonly used by the media to criticise the

⁴⁸ In *Discipline and Punish* Foucault writes that one day he would like to show how “intra-familial relations essentially in the parent-children cell, have become ‘disciplined’” through its absorption of educational, military, medical, psychiatric, and psychological schemata (215), however, he fails to expand on this in any of his works.

⁴⁹ Foucault mentions the family in *Discipline and Punish*, *The History of Sexuality*, *Abnormal*, *Psychiatric Power* and *Le desordre des families*.

government's over-involvement in citizens' lives, a somewhat ironic claim given that neoliberal societies promote individual responsibility.

Throughout his brief engagement with the family we find that Foucault is relatively uninterested in differentiating roles beyond those of the person in charge and those who obey him. His family remains a group of individuals. As previously noted, the parent is defined by his/her relationship with his/her child/children. The interconnectedness of these two subject positions helps to explain both why it is hard to imagine the parent as an individual and also the contested nature of this role. For example, as stated in the second volume of *The History of Sexuality*, “‘the household’ is used as a model for controlling one’s desires [...] the relation of the self to self [is] privileged to the extent that the family [features] only as a site for the exercise of man’s relation to himself” (Bell 59). Despite the brevity of Foucault’s engagement with this topic, he offers several important insights about the family and its role within contemporary society. For Foucault, ‘the family’ (as with ‘care’) is a historical construction which reflects the needs and desires of the society in which it is produced. In *The Will to Knowledge*, the family is positioned as the mechanism through which sexuality can be governed, and is tasked with policing the boundary between ‘normal’ and ‘abnormal’ behaviour. Furthermore, Foucault identifies the different types of power that operate in the home and how these models are reproduced in wider society. As Duschinsky and Rocha conclude, “Foucault’s theory continues to be a powerful source of insights into the way in which the internal power-relations of the family interface and interleave with the politics of society more generally” (7). Therefore Foucault positions the family as an intensive and extensive unit, a bi-polarity that we will recognise in contemporary culture.

For Foucault, ‘the family’ is a site where we can see the workings of power. His observations can be used also to illustrate the centrality of the parental figure. Although Foucault is well known for his discussion of the rise of disciplinary techniques in the eighteenth-century, he does not consider the family to be a disciplinary apparatus like the prison, but rather a cell in which sovereign power operates (*Psychiatric* [2003] 2006).⁵⁰ Foucault contends though that the family plays an integral role in the functioning of disciplinary societies and that from the mid-nineteenth century onwards, the family underwent a process of internal disciplinarisation. The centrality of disciplinary techniques to the day-to-day functioning of the family is visible in *Supernanny*, where Frost uses a variety of disciplinary practices to mould the participants into model citizens.

As noted above, Foucault claims that the family is a cell in which sovereign power operates.⁵¹ For Foucault, sovereignty refers to a particular configuration of power, prevalent in “post-feudal and pre-industrial governments,” in which individuals must obey a central authority, such as the King (*Psychiatric* 27). As the leader of the nation, the King was required to uphold the common good. However, in return, he expected complete obedience from his subjects. Foucault asserts that a similar dynamic can be seen in the family. Reading Foucault alongside histories of the development of childhood that believe in the sentimental value of the child, we find that while childhood invents the parent as the person responsible with the benevolent task of ensuring the child ‘becomes’ the right kind of adult, Foucault’s account of the

⁵⁰ In *The Will to Knowledge*, Foucault argues that the operation of sovereign power can be seen most clearly in the ancient Roman “familia” (135).

⁵¹ In *Psychiatric Power*, Foucault rejects his earlier argument in *The History of Madness* (1972) where he suggested that psychiatric facilities were modelled upon the family, with the doctor acting as a ‘father-figure.’

king/parent is closer to authoritarian models of childrearing to be discussed later, with the value of the child being less sentimental and more ‘functional’ (i.e. the child as subject and/or worker).

Also of note is the implied patriarchal nature of the sovereign family. Whereas in histories of childhood both fathers and mothers acquire new roles, in Foucault’s account of the family, as outlined in *Psychiatric Power* and *The History of Sexuality*, gender difference is not explicitly discussed. As Chloë Taylor notes, “We do not find a sustained consideration of the role of the mother in the family in Foucault’s work” (214).⁵² In contrast to Foucault’s work, which deals primarily with male subjects (due perhaps to his focus on historical texts), the makeover format discussed in Chapter Two often features (passive) female participants who are transformed by (active) male experts (Aronsen 2004).⁵³ Class plays an equally important role in these programmes; as has been noted above, upper-class experts typically advise lower-class citizens.⁵⁴ The makeover promises upward mobility through adopting the (consumer) habits of the middle-and-upper-classes while appearing to be democratic.⁵⁵

⁵² Katherine Logan attempts to correct this oversight by producing a genealogy of the mother. She provides a re-reading of Foucault’s work on sexuality (in *Abnormal* and *The History of Sexuality*). She contends that “the mother was a “central figure [...] in the deployment of sexuality” (Logan 64). Logan notes that “some of those practices that we now take to be a part of being a ‘normal’ mother can be traced back to this deployment” (64).

⁵³ Foucault’s androcentrism has been discussed by a number of scholars. See for example, Simons (1996) and Feder (2007).

⁵⁴ Class division is a central theme in Foucault’s work. In *The Will to Knowledge*, he explains that the ruling classes were the first to adopt regulations on sexuality in order to maintain their power over the lower-classes ([1976] 1998). He argues that although prison was seen to be more equitable in the sense that it deprived all individuals of their liberty, members of the middle and upper-classes were able to employ lawyers who could prevent them from going to jail (*Discipline* [1974] 1995).

⁵⁵ As I have argued elsewhere, the belief that class mobility is possible through consumption is clearly problematic (Aronsen 2004). As Pierre Bourdieu argues, it is impossible to transcend ‘taste’ because everything we say and do is governed by our “habitus,” or our “embodied history internalized as second nature” (56). Furthermore, although the makeover is represented as democratic through its suggestion that *anyone* can transform their life, it ignores the fact that many do not have the economic means to purchase

Foucault provides three reasons why the family must be considered a sovereign system. Firstly, he argues for drawing parallels between the ways in which a King governs his subjects and parents regulate their children's behaviour. In short, he argues that in sovereign societies power is concentrated in a specific individual (the King or the father) and works in a manner best described as 'top-down.' In this model, only those in power are individualised. This stands in direct contrast to disciplinary power, which, due to its association with Jeremy Bentham's all-seeing panopticon, is considered "anonymous" and undifferentiated" (*Psychiatric* 80). In contrast to the ancien régime, in disciplinary societies, power is de-individualised (one prison warden can replace another) and those subject to surveillance are known. The King/parent's right to rule is seen as unquestionable since in the ancien régime the King's status was based on the belief that he was divinely chosen or was entitled to the position due to the law of succession. Likewise, in Western society, parents are considered to be the 'natural' guardians of their children. As Foucault notes, "in the family there is constant reference to a type of bond, of commitment, and of dependence established once and for all in the form of marriage or birth" (*Psychiatric* 80). Sovereign power is backwards looking: "it regularly reaffirms its authority through rituals that refer back to this original event of bloodshed or blood-right" (Taylor 204).⁵⁶ In contrast the disciplines are justified through their appeal to behavioural norms and desired outcomes. As Foucault explains, disciplinary power replaces "backwards-looking rituals with graduated exercises" which aim to produce an "optimal future state" (*Psychiatric* 47). These initial comparisons

the 'right' commodities (Deery 2006). In short, makeover television sells a lifestyle which not only economically benefits, but ultimately, reinforces middle-and-upper-class privilege.

⁵⁶ These rituals include birthdays and wedding anniversaries. As Foucault explains, "it is this reference to the earlier act [by marriage or by birth], the status conferred once and for all, which gives the family its solidarity" (*Psychiatric* 80).

between sovereign and disciplinary models begin to suggest how the parent is a contradictory figure from the beginning of his/her emergence.

If the parent's responsibilities to both the family and wider society make him/her a contradictory figure, then Foucault's description of how there exists a specific type of bond between the King/father and his subjects/children, one that emphasises both commitment and dependence (*Psychiatric* [2003] 2006), only amplifies this complexity. This double bond is significant for, as Foucault explains, mechanisms of supervision are grafted *onto* the family, whereas "permanent supervision is [...] constitutive of disciplinary systems" (Foucault, *Psychiatric* 80). What is more, he argues that while the family is defined by its heterotopic or multi-layered nature (both in terms of spaces and relationships), which is characteristic of sovereign systems, disciplinary mechanisms occur in enclosed environments and seek to simplify relationships through the use of specific techniques (Foucault, *Psychiatric* [2003] 2006).

Unlike disciplinary power and order, sovereign power and order cannot be simplified; it is worth remembering this point since it helps explain the complexities of the child/parent relationship. Although Foucault draws a distinction between the family and disciplinary institutions (schools, barracks, hospitals and prisons), he contends that the family is an "essential component of the disciplinary system" because it "permanently fix[es] individuals to these [...] apparatuses" (*Psychiatric* 80 - 82). As he explains,

What meaning would the obligation to work have if individuals were not first of all held within the family's system of sovereignty, within this system of commitments and obligations, which means that things like help to other

members of the family and the obligation to provide them with food are taken for granted? (*Psychiatric* 81)

According to Foucault, the family not only attaches individuals to disciplinary apparatuses, but also transfers them from one disciplinary institution to another (*Psychiatric* [2003] 2006).

As noted above, Foucault contends that from the mid-nineteenth century, disciplinary techniques are transposed *onto* the family. He argues that the family begins to function like disciplinary apparatuses (such as the school and the army), with parents acting more like teachers and drill sergeants (*Psychiatric* [2003] 2006). Meanwhile from the nineteenth-century onwards the family is increasingly called upon to identify and correct ‘abnormal’ behaviour; not surprisingly, it is the family who is blamed when the children reject the disciplinary system (*Psychiatric* [2003] 2006). Foucault argues that in contemporary society sovereign systems of power work in harmony with disciplinary practices.

Scholars have developed Foucault’s theories to explain recent changes in the family. Taylor, for example, notes that the contemporary family “does not justify its power *exclusively* through backward-looking rituals [sovereign power], but *also* through its ability to produce well-disciplined subjects” (205). She contends that in the twenty-first century families utilise disciplinary techniques to ensure the optimal development of their offspring. Furthermore, she notes that the father’s power has been “greatly diminished,” particularly in relation to his ability to punish his children (205). Instead of corporal punishment which is forbidden in many countries, he must now resort to “techniques such as isolation [...] ‘grounding,’ ‘time-out,’ the withdrawal of favours and

freedoms” which are more like “the punitive strategies of the prison [rather] than those of the Renaissance Kings” (Taylor 2005). The father’s diminishing power has coincided with the increasing individualisation of the mother as primarily caregiver (Taylor 2012) and is a direct result of the domestication of childhood, an argument I expand in the history below.⁵⁷ This interplay between sovereign and disciplinary power is evident in *Supernanny*, particularly in the application of Frost’s “naughty step technique.”

Creating the Parent: Foucault, Postman and the “Knowledge Gap”

The era of Foucault’s disciplinary system coincides with Postman’s account of the significance of the printing press, since both are concerned with “the knowledge gap” (Postman 28). It is here, then, that we can hunt for the parental figure, amongst these different perspectives upon the past four hundred years. If Postman shows us that adulthood had to be earned through the attainment of particular skills and knowledge, then Foucault’s notion of discipline accords, defined as “sets of skills and forms of knowledge that must be mastered in order to achieve success in particular fields” (Danaher, Schirato and Webb xix). In this model, the child is assumed to be innocent, and growing up is believed to involve instruction that leads to the acquisition of skills and knowledge. Likewise, the strict division of childhood and adulthood is established and the parent joins a number of other figures, extended family members, siblings, teachers, philosophers and the state, who are co-opted into ensuring the separation of the two until that time at which the child has succeeded in its rite of passage.

⁵⁷ Taylor also notes that the sovereign nature of the family is also being undermined through reproductive technologies which subvert the ‘blood lines’ upon which sovereign power is based (2012).

While the notion that the child was innocent became dominant in Western culture in the modern period, it is worth pointing out that a spectrum of conceptions of the child exists that ranges from innocence to downright evil. Once the figure of the parent emerges through the separation of the child and the adult, so his/her perceived role becomes contested, changing depending upon social perceptions of the child's place in society, and the centrality of new generations to national, political and economic objectives. Social perceptions have been influenced by everything from deep-seated philosophical notions of childhood, such as nature/nurture debates; adult anxieties, such as the rise of delinquents; and the evolution of the human sciences, including the emergence of child psychology which produces scientific models for parenting and cultural turns such as the emotional and therapeutic in the 1990s. Swings between hands-on and hands-off approaches to parenting can be witnessed across time, with differing justifications. At the same time, two shifts increase the burden upon the parent: first, there is the domestication of childhood, as children are removed from the streets and confined in the safety of their homes; second, the Western world becomes increasingly child-centred. These shifts increase the differentiation between gender roles in relation to both parenting and parenthood, since they effectively correlate the family with the home/domestic space. Accordingly 'care' also finds a new home.

Early Parenting Models

While Foucault charged the parent with the role of ensuring the child's smooth transition into the disciplinary society, in many other ways the parent's role and responsibilities were not clear cut, especially before the domestication of childhood.

Models of parenthood depend not only upon the age and gender of the child, but also on how the child is imagined. There are two contrasting images of the child which continue to hold sway in contemporary Western culture: the angelic, ‘innocent’ child, who is innately good and can do no wrong, and the devilish one, who, by contrast, is wicked and wreaks havoc wherever s/he goes. Jenks discusses these images in relation to Greek myth, using the figures of Dionysus and Apollo to explore the differences between them. According to Jenks, “the Dionysian image rests on the assumption of an initial evil or corruption within the child” (*Childhood* 62). In Jenks’ description, several key characteristics emerge. The child is born bad and must be socialised into behaving appropriately. The Dionysian child possesses a high-degree of agency and manipulates others for his/her own ends. Play and idleness are outlets for demonic expression and therefore should not be encouraged. Although it seems harsh, the Dionysian model of the child must be understood in terms of the socio-cultural context in which it emerged.

The Dionysian image of the child owes much to the Judaeo-Christian doctrine of original sin and was popular in the sixteenth-and-seventeenth-centuries when child mortality rates were extremely high. The fear of eternal damnation gave rise to a particularly harsh model of parenting: Socialisation was seen as a “form of combat where the headstrong and stubborn subject had to be ‘broken,’ but all for its own good” (Jenks, *Childhood* 63). The practice of swaddling children was directly related to this view, as parents believed their children to be weak, both in form and in mind (Jenks, *Childhood* 63). To discourage misbehaviour, parents took their children to public executions and frequently spoke about death (Mintz n.p.).

The second image discussed by Jenks is the exact opposite, in both definition and the associated model of parenting. Jenks describes the Apollonian child as “the heir to

sunshine and light” (*Childhood* 65). This view of the child rejects the doctrine of original sin and is associated with the work of French philosopher Jean Jacques Rousseau and Romantic novelists/poets.⁵⁸ In this model, the child reflects the glory of their creator, is closer to nature and morally superior. The Apollonian child possesses innate characteristics such as joy, imagination and reason which adults are encouraged to emulate. Unlike the previous image, the Apollonian child is “not curbed nor beaten into submission” but rather is “encouraged, enabled and facilitated” (Jenks, *Childhood* 65). In this model, the parent’s role is to draw out the child’s good qualities.

The two conflicting images of the child affected debates about how to raise them.⁵⁹ The Dionysian image advocated strict models of parenting and was concerned with “breaking the will of the child” (Jenks, *Childhood* 62). In contrast, the Apollonian view believed that children were fundamentally good and that their goodness only required coaxing out into the open (Jenks, *Childhood* 63). The predominance of the Apollonian view of childhood (the child as innocent) may be explained by the notion of sentimental value in the present-day. This change in attitude towards children, from worker to object of affection, led to transformations in the ‘family’ and initiated a new culture of care: “Expectations and responsibilities became more serious and enriched as parents evolved into guardians, custodians, protectors, nurturers, punishers, arbiters of taste and rectitude” (Postman 44). To be a parent meant to take responsibility for one’s offspring; to love, educate and discipline them.

⁵⁸ Like Locke, Rousseau believed that parents and teachers played a fundamental role in how the child turned out. An ‘evil’ or rude child was believed to be the result of an improper education. Locke’s major contribution to childhood studies was the idea that the children were important in and of themselves, and not for their future potential as adults (Coveney 42).

⁵⁹ Childrearing books which emerged in the sixteenth-century provided parents with a plethora of advice about their new duties.

The Apollonian image of the child is crucial for our child-centred contemporary culture, however the Dionysian view has not died out completely and is evident in particular models of parenting. Despite the mythic origins of these two images, we can still find them underpinning childrearing practices today. As I argue in Chapter Three, the parents' descriptions of their children share similarities with the Dionysian model; they frequently refer to their offspring as little "horrors" and "devils." One of Frost's goals is to transform the parents' negative view of their children and to recognise their own destructive behaviour.

John Locke offers a different view of childrearing than the ones discussed above.⁶⁰ Locke was one of many 'experts' who emerged in the seventeenth-century and who advocated clear roles and responsibilities for parents and children. Locke, who was neither married nor a parent, is like a prototypical Frost. In his hugely influential work, *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (1693), Locke argued that at birth the child's mind was a "tabula rasa" or blank slate, a view that contrasted sharply with many of his peers who believed that the child was born with innate characteristics (evil or otherwise).⁶¹ Locke played a significant role in debates about who exactly was responsible for the child's development, arguing that nurture was more important than nature.⁶²

⁶⁰ For Rousseau, education does not make the man, as Locke asserts, but rather, destroys him. According to Rousseau, the child enters the world as a perfect, innocent being, but is later corrupted by it: "everything is good as it leaves the hands of the Author of things; everything degenerates in the hands of man" (1). In *Emile* (1762) Rousseau advocates observational learning as opposed to book learning. Rousseau agrees with Locke that it is nurture rather than nature which determines the child's character. Although Rousseau's work was widely published his status as an expert has since been called into question – rumour has it that he consigned his five illegitimate children to a founding institute.

⁶¹ Locke did however believe that a child was born with a certain talents and gifts: "He therefore, that is about children should well study their natures and aptitudes and see, by often trials, what turn they easily take and what becomes of them, observe what their native stock is, how it may be improved and what it is fit for" (*Some Thoughts* section 66 page 159).

As the child became a figure of increasing interest and value, further discussion ensued regarding the child's character and how to ensure that s/he remained good. Central to Locke's argument was the idea that education was crucial to the formation of the man and closely related to his character: "I think I may say that of all the men we meet [...] nine parts of ten are what they are, good or evil, useful or not, by their education" (*Some Thoughts* section 1 page 114).⁶³ In Locke's model, parents and educators were responsible for what was written on the slate: according to Locke, a wild or unruly child was the result of a poor or improper 'education' (*Some Thoughts* section 1 page 114/section 34 page 138).⁶⁴ In short, the child was not born 'bad' but became so through a lack of 'proper' training.

The elementary school system could be said to somewhat address Locke's concerns, instructing children not only in reading and writing but also in matters of civility and virtue.⁶⁵ In school it was teachers and not parents who were accountable for preparing children for their place in society; the elementary schools' mandate was to provide productive workers and responsible citizens. Schools represent key disciplinary institutions involved in disciplining young minds, moreover, they come to represent

⁶² C. John Sommerville tells us that *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* was the most popular childrearing book of the day, with twenty-six editions published in England before 1800. Locke's work was also translated into several other languages including French, Italian, Dutch, German, Swedish and Spanish (Sommerville 121).

⁶³ Locke's theory of education only applied to middle or upper-class children. Although he refers specifically to boys throughout the text, he later suggested that his theory of education was also applicable to middle-class girls (Locke, *Educational* 344). In "An Essay on the Poor Law" (1697) Locke recommended establishing "working schools" for children of the poor, so that they could contribute towards their own upkeep (*Political* 190).

⁶⁴ In *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* Locke also recommended hiring a home-tutor, rather than attending school.

⁶⁵ According to Sommerville, the establishment of the elementary school system owes much to the Protestant reformation: "interest in children first began to grow noticeably with reformers' concerns for the spiritual welfare of children and for the future of their churches" (89). Martin Luther, for example, recognised the potential of schools to induct children into the Protestant way of life and in 1530 wrote a letter to all of the mayors of Germany asking them to support free elementary education (Sommerville 91).

ways of keeping children in their places, on the path to becoming good citizens. School not only led to an increasing differentiation between parents and children, but also helped to define the roles and responsibilities of each. In this new model the child's educational success became a primary goal (Pinchbeck and Hewitt 1969).

If children in school were 'in place' then it would swiftly follow that children on the streets were 'out of place,' so the home begins to represent a new way of keeping children 'in place' and, by extension, both the family and care acquire new homes. The domestication of children was directly related to the new view of the child: "as the eighteenth-and-nineteenth century image of the child shifted towards innocence, and its needs became increasingly articulated in terms of protection [...] then we witness the growth of movements and specific agencies to claim children back from the streets" (James, Jenks and Prout 48). Despite the apparent regulatory tactics implied by James, Jenkins and Prout's notion of "movements" and "agencies," it was actually the parent who was being governed, as laws, institutions and ideas coalesced around the urgent 'protection' of childhood innocence.

Protection of innocence took the form of increasingly circumscribing the child's use of (domestic and public) space and time as well as implicating parents as key figures of responsibility through legal changes. Between 1850 and 1914 children in the UK were systematically removed from public space (the streets and workplaces) and ushered into homes, schools and supervised activities (Cockburn, "Devil" 14).⁶⁶ From the mid-nineteenth-century onwards, the number of purpose-built spaces for children (schools, nurseries, playgrounds, and children's hospitals) multiplied rapidly (Grant 17),

⁶⁶ In Manchester, children who were found wandering unaccompanied on the streets after eight p.m. were likely to be questioned by police (Cockburn, "Devil" 14).

as did the number of ‘child experts.’⁶⁷ A similar process occurred with respect to the child’s use of time. Nineteenth-century reformers believed that idleness was a leading cause of crime and delinquency. A connection was drawn “between the presumed moral effects of unoccupied time for children and its broader social consequences” (Lassonde 4). It was believed that the unoccupied child would become “a soul-hardened adult” (Lassonde 4). As with space (both domestic and public space), parents were expected to control their child’s use of time to ensure the optimal development of their offspring.

As for implicating parents legally with the creation of the modern concept of childhood, adults acquired what we would now call ‘parental responsibilities.’ Not only were parents expected to play an active role in their child’s upbringing, ensuring both their intellectual and moral development, but also, such an arrangement led to an increased economic dependency between the child and his/her parents who were now required to pay for his/her upkeep and schooling (Pinchbeck and Hewitt 1: 43). As Jay Mechling asserts, the creation of childhood “required the parallel invention of motherhood and fatherhood” (n.p.). This is a crucial point, for as I argue in Chapter Three, parents featured in *Supernanny* are often unwilling to take responsibility for their offspring and instead behave like children.⁶⁸ With the adults acting like children, it is no surprise that the children regularly misbehave. Although parenthood is the most modern stage in the history of childhood, as I explain below, it is not until the rise of sentimental value, various psychological turns and the emergence of neoliberal discourse that parenthood as a state of being begins to be embraced.

⁶⁷ The emergence of the Victorian nursery was accompanied by the rise of specialist servants or nannies who would care for the children (Van Slyck n.p.).

⁶⁸ This new view of childhood affected women more than men; they were expected to stay at home and look after the children (Zelizer [1985] 1994; Cockburn 1998). Today it is primarily women who are blamed for their children’s socialisation problems (Buckingham, *Material* 163).

The issue of parental responsibility is critical, for as Bernard Stiegler argues, “responsibility is *the adult’s defining trait*; an adult who is irresponsible [...] loses both adult rights and duties” and is essentially a child (emphasis in original 3). *Supernanny* provides us with numerous examples of the childish or immature adult: we see parents who scream and swear at their children and yet expect them to discuss issues or disagreements calmly. The parents share similarities with the “adult-child” who was common in the Middle Ages. Postman defines the “adult-child” as “a grown-up whose intellectual and emotional capacities are unrealized and, in particular, not significantly different from those associated with children” (99). As I discuss in Chapter Three, *Supernanny* maintains that adults must behave like adults (or parents must be parents) so that children are free to be children. Adult responsibility is, first and foremost, “taking care of the young” (Stiegler 2). It is the adult’s job to ensure the child’s “successful transition to adulthood” (Stiegler 2). Not surprisingly, the state played an integral role in defining parents’ obligations to their children and defining the concept of care.

As the child’s value increased, more and more structures became interested in regulating responsibility for the child. From the seventeenth century onwards, a number of laws were passed which outlined parental duties. For example, in the UK parents who failed to provide the necessary care (food, shelter and clothing) could be sent to prison or publicly whipped (Pinchbeck and Hewitt 1969). Likewise, in 1624, the British government ruled that a mother could be prosecuted for the death of her newborn child unless she could prove she had prepared for the birth (see the Concealment Act). This act was designed to protect newborns from infanticide. Later, the introduction of Bastardy Laws in Britain (1732 and 1733) required mothers to name the father of their

illegitimate baby, so that he could be held responsible for the child's upkeep (Pinchbeck and Hewitt 1969). Like the previous one, this act spelled out parents' obligations and was designed to protect children from neglect.⁶⁹

Childrearing was deemed much too important, however, to be left solely to the parents. Beginning in the nineteenth-century, Western governments began to assume greater responsibility for the education, health and welfare of their children seen in a spate of legislation concerning the child.⁷⁰ These laws were designed to protect children from abuse or exploitation and provide for their physical needs (Pinchbeck and Hewitt 1969 and 1973; Bremner 1971). In the UK, the Elementary Education Act (1870 and revised in 1880) made school compulsory for all children,⁷¹ while the Provision of Meals Act (1906) provided free school lunches for children of the poor.⁷² Likewise, the Prevention of Cruelties Act (1904) was established to protect children from ill-treatment and gave the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty towards Children (NSPCC) the right to intervene where abuse was suspected. In 1885 Britain raised the age of

⁶⁹ This act was also designed to lessen the burden on local parishes who were struggling to feed and care for illegitimate children.

⁷⁰ In the UK these acts of legislation included The Factories Act/Health and Morals of Apprentices Act (1802); The Child Abduction Act (1814); The Poor Law Amendment Act (1834); The Juvenile Offenders Act (1847); The Youthful Offenders Act (1854); The Reformatory Schools Act (1854); The Industrial Schools Act (1857); The Guardianship of Infants Act (1886); The Elementary Education Act (1870/1880); The Criminal Amendment Act (1885); The Infant Life Protection Act (1872); The Prevention of Cruelty to Children's Act (1889/1904); Elementary Education Defective and Epileptic Child Act (1899); The Relief School Children Order (1905); Education Provision of Meals (1906); The Children's Act (1908). For information about early laws concerning children in United States see Bremner (Volumes I and II).

⁷¹ The Compulsory Education Acts were not universally embraced. There was much resistance from lower-class parents who saw the laws as an imposition on their way of life. For many lower-class families, "the child's ability to contribute to the family income was more important than school where the child was plied with useless facts" (L. Rose 190). Members of the middle-and-upper-classes also protested, claiming that education was wasted on the lower-classes and that it would only create smarter criminals (L. Rose 200).

⁷² Like the Compulsory Education Act, The Provision of Meals Act was hugely controversial. Despite evidence from several studies which found a direct link between malnutrition and underachievement, the bill faced stiff opposition. Many believed the bill would encourage parental irresponsibility (L. Rose 152).

consent from 13 to 16, a move that not only extended childhood but solidified the view that childhood was a period of sexual innocence. Sexuality is important, for as David Buckingham argues, it is one of the elements that divides childhood from adulthood (*Material* 127).

The idea that children should be spared from certain knowledge was also reflected in the judicial reforms of the nineteenth century. Both United States and Britain established separate juvenile courts, which were based on redemptive principles rather than restorative ones (Ainsworth 2009). For reformers, the problem of the juvenile delinquent was that he (the courts dealt primarily with boys) was too adult-like: He possessed characteristics typically associated with adults including “independence, self-reliance and an advanced knowledge of evil” (May 22). For Carpenter, the function of the reformatory was to restore these adult-like children to the “*true* position of childhood” (May 22), a position characterised by innocence and subservience. Although the causes of child criminality varied widely, most believed that parental neglect and a lack of appropriate care were largely to blame (May 1975; Sealander 2003). The problem of juvenile delinquency inevitably raised questions about responsibility and reignited the nature/nurture debate.

Thus far the regulation of children and governance of parents has erred on the side of the *work* of care rather than the emotional dimensions. As noted above, between 1870 and 1930 the child’s value underwent a radical change: in the West they were no longer seen as a financially productive member of the family but instead were considered to be an “economically worthless but emotionally priceless” individual (Zelizer 3). According to Zelizer, this process is evident in the rise of children’s life insurance, compensation for the wrongful death of a child and the adoption/sale of

children ([1985] 1994). The transformation of the child's value was not immediate nor was it equally applied; as Zelizer explains, in United States middle-class families embraced this new view of the child long before those in the lower-class were able or willing to. Reformers calling for child labour laws believed that protecting children from exploitation in factories and mines would allow parents to care for their children correctly: "True parental love could only exist if the child was defined exclusively as an object of sentiment and not as an agent of production" (Zelizer 72).

The increasing sentimentalisation of the child in the West was linked to the domestication of women more generally, although this process occurred much earlier in middle-class families than it did in lower-class ones (Zelizer [1985] 1994). In this new model, any 'work' or chores undertaken by the child in the home were considered necessary for their moral and intellectual development, regardless of whether they received any payment of sorts (Zelizer 58). Significantly, in *Supernanny* Frost attempts to include older children in simple tasks around the home (such as their putting clothes into the washing machine or helping with household chores) so as to limit tantrums and teach them vital life skills. In one episode Frost tells parents Denise and Paul Cooke that their three girls are old enough to take responsibility for cleaning out the rabbit hutch (UK season one, episode three).

The concept of sentimental value is crucial to my history of childhood and to my investigation of care because it points to the emergence of a new kind of relationship between parents and children, one characterised by an emotional bond. An understanding of the child's well-being as going beyond education and protection and involving creative, imaginative development begins to emerge with the playground movement in the United States. Today we accept the fact that it is no longer enough for

parents to provide food and shelter; they must also interact with their children on an emotional level. The massive decline in child mortality rates over the past few centuries has meant that other factors like play and ‘quality’ time have come to the fore. As Buckingham argues, play is “seen as a form of educational work that [is] essential to children’s cognitive, emotional and physical development” (*Material* 72). From the nineteenth-century onwards play was seen as a necessary part of the child’s intellectual, physical, and moral development, as was the belief that adults must instruct children in “appropriate” forms of play (Butler 2003; Sealander 2003).⁷³ This emphasis on play anticipates developments in the human sciences, in particular psychology, which attempts to understand the impact of nurture and the environment upon the child’s character.

The playground movement paralleled the establishment of the juvenile court system and, like the former, was based upon the notion that children were fundamentally different from adults. As with the prison reformations, the playground movement in United States established separate spaces for adults and children and delineated new roles for them both. Unlike in previous eras when children and adults played together, from the late nineteenth-century onwards, play became progressively associated with the young (Sealander 2003). Although many of the early playgrounds were privately funded, from the nineteenth century onwards, city councils began to contribute financially to the maintenance and upkeep of these grounds. The use of public funds for this purpose represented a fundamental shift in attitudes, as prior to 1880, “child’s play was not the concern of adults, much less of the government” (Sealander 297). The

⁷³ Play has a long and complicated history which I do not have room to address here. However it is important to note that over the past few centuries children’s play has been the subject of vigorous debate: while children’s play is often seen as something natural or intrinsic, “unregulated play” is often seen as dangerous, leading to adult intervention (Tincknell 95). In *Supernanny* Frost regularly promotes “structured play,” a form of play that is controlled by adults.

United States playground movement was seen as one way to prepare children (as opposed to unregulated ‘street games’) for their role as future citizens (Sealander 2003). Like the juvenile court system, the playground established separate spaces for children to grow and reinforced the boundaries between children and adults. Moreover, the emphasis upon play points to the development of the child and childhood as a protected time and space.

The increasing provision of state services for children in United States and Britain in the nineteenth-and early-twentieth centuries was a reflection of changing social attitudes towards children and points to their increasing value. At the heart of this new legislation was the belief that the child was not a miniature adult, but a different creature altogether: the child was an innocent, vulnerable being in need of (adult) protection and it was the government’s duty to intervene when necessary.⁷⁴ Unlike previous generations, later governments recognised that children were not only individuals in their own right, but future citizens, and as such, constituted the nation’s most valuable resource (Pinchbeck and Hewitt 2: 637). However, although the new childhood laws provided children with greater protection, they were not entirely benevolent. As Harry Hendricks observes:

Many of these acts were only indirectly, incidentally or partially concerned with bettering children’s lives. Of more immediate interest, very often were national political and economic objectives and the largely middle-class desire to protect society from those children who were seen as either moral or social threats. (2)

⁷⁴ Under the *loco parentis* statute the state could act on the child’s behalf.

Sealand, for example, argues that the playground movement was motivated by a desire to initiate growing numbers of immigrant children into the ‘American way of life’ (2003). In these laws we can see evidence of an ongoing battle between two world-views: the need to protect children (the child-centred approach) and the desire to ensure adult interests are upheld (the adult-centred approach).

With the rise of the child’s value came unprecedented forms of social control (N. Rose 121). A sick, hungry and uneducated populace represented a threat to national stability, thus childrearing became a matter of growing significance (Pinchbeck and Hewitt vol 1, page 3). In both United States and Britain various programmes were designed to ensure the health and safety of the nation’s young.⁷⁵ The belief that children needed nutritious food, fresh air and regular exercise in order to develop into strong, healthy citizens for example, led to the development of several government initiatives in United States including the clean milk scheme, mandatory immunisation programmes, compulsory school health checks, the introduction of summer camps and the inclusion of physical education into the national curriculum (Sealand 2003).⁷⁶ The emergence of child psychology in the second half of the nineteenth-century, discussed below, not only provided evidence of the child’s difference from the adult (Archard 1993) but crucially, the justification for further government involvement in children’s lives. This is an interesting point, for as I explain in Chapters Three and Four, the government is

⁷⁵ The notion that the political and economic stability of Britain depended upon its children was brought to the public’s attention in a report on the “wretched condition” of Boer War recruits who were described as physically and morally degenerate (Pearson 56).

⁷⁶ In contrast to previous generations where the undernourished child was the focus of government intervention, today it is the obese child who is more likely to come under scrutiny. In recent years there have been calls for social workers and government officials to remove obese children from their parents.

apparently absent from *Supernanny*: in this programme citizens are expected to be self-reliant.

This emphasis on the protection of children was at the heart of Swedish writer Ellen Key's 1909 declaration that the twentieth-century should be "The Century of the Child" (Dekker 133). Along with other "child-savers" she called for reform in the treatment and care of the nation's young. Sealander argues that United States (in particular) failed to achieve this goal, because "ideas central to attempts to improve childhood also enshrined contradictions in American culture" (356). As she explains:

Americans wanted privacy – and bureaucracies that exposed the usually private act of child abuse. They esteemed family stability, but married, divorced and remarried again. They said they loved the company of children, during decades marked by policies that separated people by age and sent youngsters out of the home to school, peer culture activities, and part-time jobs. (Sealander 356)

In short, children's rights were seen to impinge upon those of adults and thus were met with resistance from various groups. This tension between the rights of the child and the rights of the adult can be seen in discussions about *Supernanny*.

The child-centred movement reached new heights in Western society in the late 1980s. A 1989 United Nations conference, for instance, entitled "The Rights of the Child" established the "civic, political, economic, social and cultural rights of the child" (Dekker 133). This charter was significant, for as Nick Lee argues, it came *after* the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) which guaranteed basic legal rights and

freedoms for *all* human beings. According to Lee, this new charter reinforced the idea that children were fundamentally different from adults, dividing humans into “beings” and “becomings” (5).⁷⁷ As I explain in Chapter Two, the concept of ‘becoming’ is central to the makeover, where the subject is often understood in terms of their future potential or what they could become if they purchased specific products.

According to the UN charter, children are “entitled to special care and assistance” because of their “physical and mental immaturity” (1).⁷⁸ Under the UN charter the child not only has the right to life, but also the ability to choose their own caregivers (in the event that their parents are unable to look after them), along with access to free legal representation. Clearly, these laws represent a shift from an adult-centered model to a more child-centered one.

In the West capital punishment is forbidden for children under the age of eighteen. National governments are responsible for ensuring the health and safety of their young people: The charter stipulates that they must always act in the “best interests” of the child, a theme which re-appears and is interrogated throughout this thesis (1).⁷⁹ These rules and others were passed into international law in 1990.⁸⁰

⁷⁷ While adulthood is regarded as a “finished state,” childhood is depicted as a “preparatory phase” during which time they learn the rules of adult society (Cockburn, “Children” 113; Qvortrup 1994; Goldson 1997), hence the child is seen as being ‘incomplete’ with adulthood being the much desired state (Hoyle 1979; Jenks 1991; Goldson 1997; Cockburn 1998; Jenkins 1998; Smart, Wade and Neale 2001). The practice of depicting children as ‘human *becomings*’ is problematic because it suggests that children are not valued for who they are now, but for their future potential (Smart, Wade and Neale 2001).

⁷⁸ The UN charter is available online at <<http://www.ohchr.org/english/law/pdf.crc.pdf>>.

⁷⁹ The problem of implementing the rules laid out in this Treaty have been discussed by a number of individuals who argue that the policies are ambiguous and at times contradictory, frequently bringing the rights of the adult into conflict with those of the child (Coppock 1997; Corteen and Scraton 1997; Goldson 1997). As Goldson argues, adults are the ones who ultimately determine what is in the ‘best interests’ of the child undermining the child’s rights and blurring “the boundaries between care and control” (13). Sex education is one area where the child’s right to information clashes with notions of adult protection (Scraton and Corteen 98).

Childhood and Parenthood in the Twenty-First Century

Before moving on to consider the parent/child binary in the twenty-first century it is first necessary to summarise the argument thus far. I have argued that the gradual separation of the child from the adult over the past four hundred years has brought about the emergence of 'the parent,' a subject whose role and responsibilities change depending upon the socio-cultural context. Drawing upon Foucault's research on the modern subject and the history of childhood, I have noted that the parent becomes the point of liaison between the family (private) and the state (public). I have suggested that the introduction of protection laws in America and Britain in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, has resulted in increasing responsibilities for parents and that the concept of sentimental value has been central to these developments.

In the period in which *Supernanny* emerges Western society is undoubtedly child-centred and the burden on the parent is heavier than ever. Thanks to the sentimental value first attached to them in the late-nineteenth century, children are understood to be innocent, vulnerable beings in need of adult protection.⁸¹ Our current construction of childhood follows the pattern of division and segregation outlined above. Children are represented as asexual, apolitical and economically dependent (Hoyles, *Politics* 10).

⁸⁰ In 1995 the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child chastised Britain for its abuse of children's rights and the failure to implement certain articles of the Convention. In its report, the Committee expressed grave concerns about a series of repressive legislation aimed at delinquent children (including the Criminal Justice Act 1991 and 1993; The Education Act 1993, and The Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994), and disappointment at growing levels of "child poverty, homelessness and poor health in Britain" (Coppock 74). The report caused public outrage: the *Daily Mail* headlines screamed, "How Dare the UN Lecture Us!" (28 January 1995) and the British government denied all allegations: John Bowis, the then Under State Secretary of State of Health, declared that Britain's "track record is second to none" and that "there is little that needs to be changed or improved to comply with the Convention" (qtd. in Goldson 143).

⁸¹ See Jenks (1996), Goldson (1997), Jenkins (1998), Mills (2000), Walkerdine (2001), Kehily (2004), Tincknell (2005) and Murphy (2007).

Henry Jenkins takes issue with the construction of childhood as apolitical. He argues that, “this dominant concept of childhood innocence presumes children exist in a space beyond, or above, or outside the political; we imagine them to be concomitants whom we protect from the harsh realities of the adult world, yet in reality, almost every major political battle of the twentieth-century has been fought on the backs of our children”

(2). Similarly, Mary Jane Kehily argue that “the idea of childhood innocence in the West retains its strength as an adult ideal, something which *adults would like children to be*” (7). Kehily and Montgomery believe that children are “sexually aware” and that adults simply do not want to accept the truth (69). Children who do not display the appropriate characteristics (i.e. innocence, goodness, sexual naivety and dependency) are symbolically expelled from the category of childhood; a process that Jenks calls “conceptual eviction” (*Childhood* 128).⁸² As I explain below, it is the parent, and typically the mother, who is blamed when the child fails to perform his/her role ‘correctly.’

In the twenty-first century, the centrality and burden of the parental role can be measured by Nikolas Rose’s assertion that “childhood is the most intensively governed sector of personal existence” (121). Childhood is strictly policed, with government strategies designed to curb juvenile delinquency and other social problems, such as child obesity, youth drinking, and teen pregnancy. In both Britain and the United States there are stringent laws governing school attendance and child labour. The child is no longer seen as a source of family income but is now understood as an investment in the

⁸² Karen Corteen and Phil Scraton argue that the notion of childhood is inherently flawed: “No issue reveals the contradictions within the politics of childhood as starkly as that of sexuality, its definition and regulation. As ‘non-adults’ children are assumed to be asexual. While they are socialised into gender-appropriate roles from birth, a universal feature of patriarchal societies, they are expected to retain a sexual naivety. Yet the images which surround them, implicit and explicit, of hegemonic/dominant masculinity and emphasized/subordinate femininity are all pervasive and all persuasive. The daily experiences of children and young people are contextualized by constructions of masculinity and femininity which are both gendered and sexualized.” (76)

future, one that must be vigilantly guarded and expertly tended to yield a good result.⁸³

In the Western world parents spend significant amounts of time and money on their children's education and other pursuits. Families are expected to be 'child-centred' whereas in the past – as has been demonstrated here – children were largely invisible.⁸⁴ The child-centred nature of Western society signals an emphasis upon parenthood.

Control, regulation and reinforcing the boundaries between parents and children are particularly pronounced in contemporary culture.⁸⁵ Significantly, several of the key themes continue in this period. The concern with the controlling the child's use of public space is even more evident today. Crucially, the child's entry into 'public' space is a gradual process, with parents and other adults accompanying them until children are considered 'mature' enough to venture out alone (Jenks [1991] 2005; Valentine 2004). Space is not neutral but as Gill Valentine argues, plays "an active role in the constitution and reproduction of social identities" (8). Today, certain spaces are designated 'child-free' zones, while others welcome children ('child-friendly' spaces). Such designations divide parents from other adults; the existence of 'child-free' zones suggests that adults who are not parents do not want to share public space with children

⁸³ Zelizer ([1985] 1994), Hays (1996) and Stearns (2005).

⁸⁴ In 2010, the Centre for Nutrition Policy and Promotion (USDA) estimated that in United States, parents in a middle-income family would spend \$222,360 to raise a single child from birth to seventeen-years-of-age. For more information see < <http://www.cnpp.usda.gov>>. (n.p.).

⁸⁵ In Western society, changes to the communication environment, and, in particular, the rise of electronic media are seen by some as contributing to a weakening of the adult/child binary, or the notion of childhood innocence, due to the increasing availability of information. For several scholars the dominant conception of childhood (as set apart from the responsibilities of the adult world) is increasingly under attack (see Postman [1982] 1994; Meyrowitz 1985; S. Palmer 2006 and Stiegler 2010). As a result of this "crisis in childhood," or what could equally be described as a "crisis of parenthood," due to the interconnectedness of these two concepts, children are said to behave like, and adopt, adult vices. Not all scholars see the breakdown of the adult/child binary as negative. Michael Wyness, for example, argues that children "become less reliant on adults and are more able to take responsibility for their own affairs" (1).

or, adults who are parents, but without their children, do not want to share space with children at that time.

Fears about child delinquency echo softly in the assumption that children are not free to move around as they please, but rather are subject to spatial prohibitions. As James, Jenks and Prout rightly observe, “Physical, conceptual and moral boundaries circumscribe the extent of children’s wanderings. From the closed arenas of domestic space to the infinite horizons of cyberspace, boundaries forestall and contain the child’s movement” (38).⁸⁶ The restriction of the child’s movement in public space can be seen in a spate of laws in Britain including street curfews (Crime and Disorder Act 1998/2003), “bylaws which prevent young people playing football in the streets [...] truancy watch schemes [...] and the introduction of new powers for police and local authorities [which] enable them to impose fines on young people for anti-social or nuisance behaviour” (Valentine 2004. 95). As Johanna Wyn and Rob White argue, these practices could be seen as a form of “spatial apartheid” because they restrict the child’s access to ‘public’ space (139). These laws are said to ‘benefit’ or protect the child but as Wyn and White argue, could also be seen as evidence of adults’ desire to maintain control.

In contemporary Western society children either occupy “designated spaces” or are “conspicuous by their inappropriate or precocious invasion of adult territory” (Jenks, *Childhood* 73). In *Supernanny*, the unruly child is one who is in the ‘wrong’ place (in their parents’ bed or unsupervised in public) or is behaving inappropriately in the spaces that they inhabit. The control of spatial boundaries lies with parents and other adults who are believed (and expected) to operate in the child’s best interests: As Jenks asserts

⁸⁶ It is necessary to mention gender here as spatial boundaries often differ for boys and girls. As Valentine found, “boys are usually allowed to range further from home unsupervised and to spend more time in the outdoors than girls” (8).

“the boundaries are [...] policed by discipline and legitimized through ideologies of care, protection and privacy” (*Childhood* 75). This illustrates my general point that in contemporary Western culture care is inextricably linked to control.

The domestication of childhood increases the burden upon the parent on whom the child is dependent. Today, childhood is seen as a ‘private’ issue, with children frequently relegated to the domestic sphere. As was the case in the nineteenth-century, the streets are often represented as a hazardous place for children to be: “Children are simply ‘not safe’ on the streets and the danger is specified through the hyperbole of rapists, perverts, murderers and the mundanity of traffic” (Jenks, *Childhood* 88). These fears about ‘the outside world’ (outside the parent’s regulation, childhood and the home) have given rise to what Sonia Livingstone and Moira Bovill call, a “bedroom culture” (20).⁸⁷ Today in the West outdoor play has been “displaced by domestic entertainment [...] and supervised leisure activities” (Buckingham, *Material* 220).⁸⁸ In contrast to the danger of public space, the home is increasingly represented as a “safe haven” despite the fact that statistically children are more likely to be abused at home and/or by people known to them (Sibley 16).

Nowadays, parents are encouraged to be hyper-vigilant, making sure they always know where their children are, driving them to and from activities and providing them with cell-phones, as a necessary precaution (Valentine 2004). Children are more likely to experience the urban environment from the ‘safety’ of the car: “The car [...] functions as a protective capsule from which the child observes the world but does not experience

⁸⁷ The decline of public spaces in which children can play is also contributing to an increasing privatisation of play. As Valentine tells us, “space set aside for children in the city – parks and playgrounds – is being eroded by disinvestment in community facilities as a result of economic restructuring” (71). According to Valentine, independent outdoor play is vital for children to develop physically, mentally (spatial mapping) and socially (80).

⁸⁸ As Valentine discovered in her study of children’s space, “outdoor play is now home-centred” (101).

it directly through encounters with others” (Sibley 136). This “retreat of children from the street” means that increasingly, the ‘public’ sphere is seen as an “adult space” with children on the streets “out of place” (Valentine 80).⁸⁹ In sum, parents are required not only to ensure the safety of their child/children in (public) space but also to regulate their behaviour in the spaces they inhabit.

In contemporary Western culture, parents must control both their children’s use of (domestic and public) space and also their time, so as to ensure an optimal outcome. Equally, time is established as a further boundary between the child and the adult that keeps each in their place. Parents are expected to enforce a schedule, which establishes set times for daily activities, such as waking up or going to bed. Time is conceived of as a precious resource: “we can run short of it, budget it, or waste it” (James, Jenks and Prout 61).⁹⁰ Parents are encouraged to regulate the number of hours their children watch television or use the internet, two activities which are seen as being detrimental and/or wasteful (Wartella and Jennings 2000). Like many other aspects of the contemporary childhood experience, it is parents and other adults who decide what constitutes an ‘appropriate’ use of time.

As in previous centuries, this regulation of time extends to school, a key disciplinary apparatus, where the child’s day/week/year is structured according to a curriculum, based on ideas around what a child needs to know in order to function in the (adult) world (Jenks, *Childhood* 76). As James, Jenks and Prout suggest, school

⁸⁹ A recent study found that television is one of the few “public places in which the non-childrearing majority of the population may regularly get to see children” (Messenger Davies and Mosdell 22).

⁹⁰ The regulation of the child’s space and time is particularly pronounced in middle-class families. As Valentine found in her study, “children’s leisure time is increasingly understood as something that should be spent productively in various institutional activities rather than wasted on free play in public space, where there is also a risk that children might ‘get in’ with the wrong crowd who will undermine the parents’ educational and employment goals for their offspring” (71).

“provides a temporal passage from child to adult status” (41). Parents and other adults are expected to organise the child’s use of time according to developmental goals; parenting thus comes to be seen as a set of actions, rather a state of being. At school, time is divided into two categories: work and play time. This division of time is significant, for as Allison James argues, children quickly learn that “styles of play appropriate to the playground [are] not permissible within the structured ‘educational play’ of the classroom” (173). In short, in school children’s play only occurs when sanctioned by parents and other adults. To reiterate, parents are required to monitor their children’s physical, intellectual and emotional development.

The Parent: Problems of Definition

Before moving on to consider the problems of defining the parent, it is necessary to provide a brief summary of the points addressed thus far. I have argued that the parent is a contested subject, who is divided irreconcilably between the work of caring for the child, and the problem of the emotional bond. I have suggested that in the West our understanding of ‘the parent’ has changed over time in relation to social perceptions of the child and their perceived value in terms of national, political and economic objectives, philosophical concepts of childhood (the Apollonian model vs. the Dionysian view and the nature/nurture debate) and fears about delinquent children. Two final influences have impacted upon the emergence of the parent: the evolution of the human sciences, child psychology in particular, and cultural turns, which emphasise the role of emotion in daily life and through which we see the child’s sentimental value

amplified. I argue that in contemporary Western society the notion of regulation goes beyond parenting (doing) into parenthood (state of being), as parents are told how and when they can ‘care for’ or ‘care about’ their children. Although we now recognise ‘the parent’ as a subject responsible for the care of dependent children, problems of imprecision persists when it comes to understanding the relationship between the two definitions of care established above; ‘care of’ (care as labour) and ‘care about’ (care as affection). This imprecision is evident not only in debates about the parent’s gender and class, but also in disputes about parenting styles, developmental psychology, and the rise of emotional and therapeutic discourse.

Gender and Parenthood

The parent, like the child, is a subject marked by gender, class and race. Today, parenthood is often conflated with motherhood due to the domestication of childhood discussed above. In the literature on parenthood care is often seen as a gendered activity, despite the advancements of feminism. As Valentine observes, “Mothers still bear the burden of caring for and supervising their children on a daily basis” (100). This linking of parenthood with motherhood means that the figure of the parent is even more confused when it comes to gender. Prior to the birth of their children, many fathers in the West express a desire to be involved in the day-to-day care of their children; however, numerous studies have found that the majority of childcare still typically falls to the mother.⁹¹ This fact can be understood in relation to the construction of, or

⁹¹ See Young (1999), Minnotte, Pedersen, Mannon and Kiger (2010), and Höfner, Schadler and Richter (2011).

discourses around, motherhood which represents caring as a biological attribute: mothers can breastfeed while fathers cannot.⁹² In short, mothers are seen as ‘natural’ carers.

The linking of femininity with motherhood means that women are “reluctant to be seen to have failed” as this “would threaten their sense of self and their identity as a woman” (Choi, Henshaw, Barker and Tree 177). Research has found that mothers are forced to put on ‘public faces’ which “render invisible or silent” certain (negative) aspects of parenthood (Young 53). Today the “cultural representation of femininity [...] is that of a ‘superwoman’ able to cope with [...] many competing demands” (Choi, Henshaw, Barker and Tree 177). We see the impossibility of these demands in *Supernanny*. While many of the mothers appear depressed or on the verge of a breakdown, others confess that they have considered leaving their husbands and/or children. Frost recognises the mothers’ desperation even though most put on, what she calls in one episode, a “brave face” (US season two, episode five).⁹³

As indicated in Chapter One, Foucault saw the father as the head of the family; however, the domestication of childhood has meant that mothers are typically expected to assume the role of primary caregiver. As psychological ideas have taken hold it is mothers, and typically lower-class mothers, who are frequently criticised when children fail to thrive.⁹⁴ Throughout history blame for a wide range of ‘problems’ including homosexuality, welfare dependency, and crime (Ladd-Taylor and Umansky 1998) has fallen on their shoulders. For example, during the post-war period, “maternal

⁹² Some scholars suggest that parental rights should not be equated with biology and that parents should be licensed to do this job, just as they are with some occupations (LaFollette 1980; Scales 2002).

⁹³ As Frost tells us, “The first thing I noticed about Lorraine was this big smile that she has painted on her face, but it was fake and I could see right through it” (US season two, episode one).

⁹⁴ Sommerfeld (1989), Ladd-Taylor and Umansky (1998) and Gillies (2006).

deprivation' was cited as the primary determinant of psychopathology in children and young people – a convenient message to all those women 'surplus to requirements' in the employment market" (Coppock 150). In the West there is a commonly-held belief that "to be a remotely decent mother, a woman has to devote her entire physical, psychological, emotional and intellectual being, 24/7, to her children" an ideology which Susan Douglas and Meredith Michaels call, the "new momism" (4). Fathers, it seems, are not held to the same standards as their female counterparts. While mothers are blamed for their children's inadequacies, fathers are often 'let off the hook.' In Western society, this view of childrearing (as a mother's primary role), is supported institutionally. As a result of these responsibilities, the burden of parenthood and motherhood in particular has grown exponentially.

The belief that caring is an innately female characteristic is reflected on a wider societal level in which 'caring' professions such as social work, nursing, counselling and aged-care are depicted as 'feminised.' As noted above, the emergence of the child's sentimental value cannot be separated from woman's role in the home and the expectation that she will assume the position of primary caregiver. Numerous studies have found that mothers (and women in general) are required to perform more 'emotional' or 'warmth' work than fathers, or men, regardless of the hours they work.⁹⁵ Emotional work is seen as a form of domestic labour which is both time consuming and demanding. As sociologist David Morgan explains, emotional work "involves a multiplicity of skills designed to control or handle the emotions of others, to smooth tensions and strains between other family members as well as provide a refuge or a counterbalance to the tensions of the public sphere" (105). Not surprisingly, these

⁹⁵ See Park, Smith and Correll (2008) and Minnotte, Pedersen, Mannon and Kiger (2010).

beliefs about ‘male’ and ‘female’ roles within the home are frequently transferred into the workforce.

Whereas fathers are valued breadwinners, mothers who engage in paid employment, leaving the care of their children to others, are routinely chastised. As Jennie Bristow argues, in the West there is a common belief that working mothers “lack the appropriate kind of love for their children” (55). This division can be seen in the aptly-named “mummy wars,” which pit working mothers against those who stay at home. As Fiona Joy Green notes, this practice “ignores the diversity of mothers and their social contexts and divides mothers into two oppositional groups to be compared and judged” (“Real(ity)” 74). While male employment is applauded,

Women’s work is often dissociated from larger economic circumstances.

Working outside the home is typically represented as a personal and individual choice for women (rather than an economic need), and women’s work is most often framed as a selfish choice, one that puts her individualistic and materialistic desires above the well-being of her husband and children. (Matheson 45)

In contemporary Western culture, the appraisal of financial provision, as a form of care, still appears to be seen in highly gendered terms. We see a similar dynamic at work in *Supernanny* where employment (particularly that of the mothers) is presented as problematic. Paid employment is depicted as providing mental fulfilment rather than as an economic necessity. In several episodes Frost encourages parents to reduce their work hours; however, there is no discussion of how the family will cope with a

reduction in their income. As will become evident in my analysis, *Supernanny* plays upon middle-class guilt; Frost argues that money is not the solution to the family's problems, instead believing that parents must sacrifice their jobs for time with their children.

The gendered nature of parenting cannot simply be explained via biology or the discourse of motherhood. It must also be understood as a reflection of wider institutional and political constraints which reinforce gendered patterns of care. In 2014, UK women are entitled to a maximum of 39 weeks paid maternity leave (depending on their employment contract), while legally men can still only take one or two weeks following the birth of their child.⁹⁶ This particular piece of legislation bolsters the idea that women are 'natural' carers while a man's primary role is to support the family financially. In terms of encouraging fathers to be more involved in childcare, the promotion of breastfeeding and the division of maternity/paternity leave makes sexual equality even more of a challenge.

Even in countries which encourage a more egalitarian approach to childrearing, with increased provisions for paid paternal leave (Austria, for example, provides what are commonly referred to as "daddy quotas"), traditional gendered practices of childcare still remain (Höfner, Schadler and Richter 670).⁹⁷ The Western discourses of hegemonic masculinity mean that it is hard to challenge the dominant image of the father as 'breadwinner.' As Claudia Höfner, Cornelia Schadler and Rudolf Richter found in interviews with fathers, men struggled to reconcile their role as a dad with dominant representations of masculinity:

⁹⁶ "Paid Maternity Leave." <<https://www.govt.uk>> (n.p.).

⁹⁷ In the UK changes are underway to include fathers more in the childrearing process, such as increased paternity leave and attempts to make institutions more 'dad' friendly (Ferguson 2009).

Men who practice *involved* fatherhood are well aware of the fact that their behaviour and their convictions are neither representative of nor shared throughout society. If a man breaks with the ideals and claims of hegemonic masculinity and performs his gender role in a new way, it may cause him to feel insecure. (679)

The use of the term “involved” is noteworthy – without it, fatherhood becomes titular only.⁹⁸ Caring for children, as has been suggested above, is principally seen as the mother’s responsibility.

When it comes to the ‘care of’ and ‘care about’ divisions of care, the role of fathers in the West is complex. Sociological studies on fatherhood have found that dads tend to play more with their children, as this is seen to represent less of a threat to their masculinity than other tasks (Hawkins, Lovejoy, Holmes, Blanchard and Fawcett 2008). Play is an activity which, as we have seen above, is believed to be crucial for the child’s development. However this choice increases the burden on mothers who are left with the practical day-to-day ‘care’ of them. Changing nappies and bathing children are (still) seen as forms of feminised labour and thus are often avoided. Although Frost encourages fathers to engage more in the practical aspects of childcare to take the pressure off their wives, the job still overwhelmingly falls to the mothers. Ultimately I argue that *Supernanny* instrumentalises parenting and perpetuates an archaic version of gender. The use of the term “parenting” rather than mothering in contemporary social and government policies is an attempt to be gender neutral and include fathers more in

⁹⁸ Esther Dermott attempts to answer the question of what “involved” fathering actually means. After interviewing twenty-five fathers she concludes that the term suggests “openness of emotions, the expression of affection and the building of a close-relationship” (n.p.).

the childrearing process (and/or perhaps those who do not fit within the traditional model of ‘mother’ and ‘father’); however, as many have noted, this shift simply obscures the work that mothers do.

The Child’s Gender, Temperament, and Age as Depicted in Parenting Manuals

As knowledge about the developmental process expands, so the demands made of parents become increasingly complex and gaps between the sexes are reinforced. There is a wealth of information which parents are expected to wade through in order to find the approach that best works for their child. Significantly, for my purposes, it is in such literature that an emotional turn becomes evident through which the sentimental value of the child is reinforced and extended, increasing the burden upon the parent. A central part of this present-day child-centred discourse is the suggestion that children are different and that only the parent (of course taking advice from the experts) will ‘truly’ know their children. Today parenting advice often considers the child’s gender, temperament and age. Contemporary childrearing manuals are often divided along gendered lines: guides for how raising strong, confident boys sit alongside manuals on how to care for girls. In other words, boys and girls are frequently depicted as having fundamentally different needs.⁹⁹ Even though many of these self-help books are often based upon pop psychology rather than sound sociological or scientific research as

⁹⁹ In their analysis of three popular childrearing books (*The Wonder Boys* 1997, *Real Boys* 1998, and *Raising Cain* 1999), Kristin Anderson, Jessica George and Jessica Nease found that there is an asymmetry to the demands made of mums and dads: “The authors hold mothers to higher expectations and to more elaborate requirements than they hold fathers” (219). They contend that childrearing books should be described as “mother-rearing tracts,” in order to reflect their true focus.

addressed above, the sales figures suggest that these texts play a significant role in influencing parental behaviour.

In *Raising Cain*, a popular parenting book, American child psychologists Dan Kindlon and Michael Thompson argue that in Western culture, boys are routinely taught to suppress their feelings and, as a result, are emotionally illiterate, which leads to a whole host of problems, including aggression and poor school achievement. They advise mothers to strengthen their emotional connection with their son through “simple expressions of care” which include “listening to him without judging or trying to solve his problems, making his favorite meal [...] chatting about a movie or a book, or surprising him with a gift that has special meaning for him” (133). Kindlon and Thompson do not provide a companion text for raising girls, however there are numerous examples on book shelves.

Many authors claim that girls, like boys, have ‘special’ needs that must be attended to. For instance, Meg Meeker, an American pediatrician, contends that “fathers, more than anyone else, set the course for [their] daughter’s life” (1). She asserts that a lack of affection from one’s father may lead to low self-esteem, depression, teen pregnancy or even suicide. Like Kindlon and Thompson, Meeker offers specific advice for how fathers should engage with their daughters. For instance, she tells fathers that they must act with authority and teach their daughters’ the differences between “proper and improper behaviour” (34). According to Meeker, daughters look to their fathers to guide and protect them. These examples in popular parenting literature not only suggest that the child’s gender is a determining factor in how parents interact and care for their children, but also that mothers and fathers have different roles to play. Significantly, as I argue in Chapter Three, Frost does not advise parents to treat their children differently

based upon their gender and/or their temperaments. She does however make minor changes to the naughty step technique for older children, which implies that parents must consider their child's age when deciding upon an appropriate form of punishment.

Contemporary parenting literature promotes a variety of childcare models, a point which is evident in my discussion of the differences between the Apollonian and Dionysian images of the child, and my examination of four key styles (the authoritarian, authoritative, permissive and neglectful) below. As my history of childhood demonstrates and my examination of contemporary childrearing literature reveals, popular psychology has further increased the burdens and responsibilities of parents. A further effect of the mantra that all children are different is the fact that, like gender, the child's temperament is seen as a critical factor in the parenting style that is recommended. The emphasis upon the child's nature not only mirrors the rising influence of psychology but suggests also that parents must be responsive to any changes in their child's behaviour, again pointing to the child-centeredness of contemporary Western culture.

A cursory glance at the childrearing literature reveals a staggering number of books about what might be described as the 'problem' child.¹⁰⁰ This category covers a range of children, including those adopted, those diagnosed with learning difficulties or mental health issues, and children who have undergone some form of trauma or who are developmentally advanced or 'gifted.' Despite differences in their subject matter, all of these books share the belief that certain types of children require specialised forms of care. Writing of what he calls, "the explosive child," Ross Greene argues that these children "require a different approach to discipline and limit-setting" due to their

¹⁰⁰ See for example Greene ([1998] 2010), Porter (1999) and Ziegler (2002).

inability to control their tempers (8). He contends that for these children, traditional models of parenting are counterproductive. In sum, parenting literature can be divided into two main categories: that which deals with the 'normal' child and the other, which provides advice on the 'problem' child.

The belief that all children are different as a result of their gender, class, temperament and age explains the multiplicity of childrearing models in contemporary society and the contested nature of the parental subject. Frost uses the same techniques in every episode, implying that children are fundamentally the same. Obviously we must consider the limitations of the television format and its ability to deal with complex subjects and relationships. Like gender and temperament, the child's age is significant in determining the level of help they require. While babies and infants obviously require particularly intensive forms of care (tending both to physiological needs and making decisions for them), teenagers are able to do a lot more for themselves and thus are deemed (more) responsible for their behaviour. Teens therefore require a different mode of parenting, or one that balances the work of care with advice, guidance and a recognition of the need for gradual independence. We can see the growth of advice upon the shift from dependence to independence clearly in contemporary parenting literature. Jim Burns writes, "One of the deepest cries of adolescence is freedom, and it's the parents' job to help their teen become a responsible adult" (19). He argues that a parent's role changes from "controlling to consulting" and "micromanaging to mentoring" (19). In the literature on teens, the parent is depicted as someone who does not intervene but rather, encourages wise choices. In contrast to advice on babies and toddlers, primarily focused on routine-setting, the literature on teenagers covers a much broader range of issues such as alcohol and drug abuse,

relationship problems and curfews. A parent's job, it seems, is not just to modify their parenting style to suit their child's stage of development but also to possess a bewildering range of skills. Although all of these issues are evident in the television programmes about teens, as noted earlier, I focus on the pre-adolescent child.

Parenting and Class

Parenting takes many different forms, yet the literature on childrearing frequently favours middle-class forms of care. This fact is concerning because it presumes that middle-class parents accept the child's "sentimental value" and will do everything correctly, whereas lower-class parents require ongoing state regulation. Here we can see echoes of Foucault's work on the history of sexuality, where the upper and middle-classes embraced techniques of the self in order to maintain their power over the lower-classes. In both media and social policy, lower-class parents are often demonised or depicted as 'uncaring.' This argument is clearly visible in the case of education where lower-class parents often experience discomfort in dealing with teachers: "professional discourses around education and child development are grounded in middle-class privilege while lower-class mothers face challenges that necessitate alternative values, practices and emotions" (Gillies 282).

Whereas the school system was once responsible for reinforcing the boundaries between the child and adult and bringing about the parent as subject, today, parental involvement in the child's education is seen as a key responsibility and an indicator of care. In Western society, lower-class parents are frequently criticised for failing to live

up to these standards: their inability to provide the optimal governing conditions for educational success (which include homework support and/or additional tutoring, and a proactive engagement with teachers to ensure the best outcome) means they are often represented as ‘uncaring.’ The parent is burdened with also ensuring the child’s intellectual development, but as I have argued, this process is complicated by class status. By featuring middle-class subjects, *Supernanny* implies that it is no longer just lower-class parents who need ‘expert’ advice, but that even middle-class parents are failing their children.

What the literature on children does not seem to recognise is that while children may be different, economic and other circumstances mean that so may parents. It is thus essential to acknowledge the different, but equally valuable, forms of care shown by lower-class mothers. Gillies found that lower-class mothers are deeply invested in their children’s well-being; buying their children gifts to compensate for the difficulties experienced in school, defending them against unfair accusations or pulling them out of the traditional school system in order to safeguard them from bullying or chronic low self-esteem. However we can surmise that none of these strategies will find their way into parenting literature. Gillies concludes that the government needs to recognise different forms of parenting: “Lower-class parents in our study cared deeply about their children and generated significant levels of emotional capital” (292). To speak of parenthood thus requires us to consider the multiple and varied forms of care undertaken by parents and not just those which are sanctioned by the dominant class. Although it is impossible to account for all of the different childrearing styles, psychologists believe that parents usually fall within one of the four styles discussed below.

Parenting Models: Authoritarian, Permissive, Authoritative and Neglectful

Not surprisingly, debates about how best to raise children have intensified over time. While previous generations have drawn upon Greek myth (the Apollonian and Dionysian models discussed above) and religious principles to explain and/or justify their parenting styles, contemporary experts frequently turn to science. Today, psychological studies of parenting suggest that there are four broad models of care, which vary in terms of the degree of warmth and firmness parents display towards their children (S. Palmer 2006). Warmth is defined as “the measure of love and support” parents provide for their children, while “firmness relates to the level of control [parents] exercise over their children’s lives” (S. Palmer 281). Diana Baumrind, an American clinical and developmental psychologist, identified three of these approaches in the 1960s in her longitudinal study of preschool-aged children, while Eleanor Maccoby and John Martin later added a fourth. They are: *authoritarian* (firm but no warmth), *indulgent* or *permissive* (too much love, no boundaries), *authoritative* (firm but loving), and *neglectful* (no warmth and no boundaries).¹⁰¹ It is worth examining these childrearing models in further detail for we will see evidence of each approach in *Supernanny*’s featured families. While some of the parents are permissive, others are far too strict.

The first model of care, authoritarian parenting, is seen as “old-fashioned” (S Palmer 285). This type of parent is firm and often appears ‘cold’ or distant. While this

¹⁰¹ Disappointingly, government documents tend to reproduce classed notions of parenting. For example, a British report, “Building Character” (Lexmond and Reaves 2009) concluded that lower-class parents tend to favour the authoritarian model while the middle-classes prefer the authoritative one, a claim that is clearly problematic.

style of parenting supposedly leads to well-behaved children, these children are believed to suffer from poor self-esteem (S. Palmer 2006). Once freed from their parents' strict control, these children will often become antisocial or destructive. These types of parents lay down the law but rarely consider their children's feelings. Indulgent or permissive parents want their children to see them as a 'friend,' which means that they typically give in to their every demand. As a result, these children have a high sense of entitlement and often find it hard to submit to authority figures. In contrast to authoritarian parents, neglectful parents fail to provide for their children's physical and emotional needs. These parents do not establish boundaries, meaning that their children do not know what they are (not) allowed to do (S. Palmer 2006). Finally, the authoritative parent offers their children time and attention. These parents establish rules and routines while also providing security, stability and safety (S. Palmer 2006). They "respond to their [children's] concerns and allow some (safe) choices (S. Palmer 281). Psychologists recognise that parents often fall into one or more of these categories. While models such as these obviously have their use, they are problematic because they assume that children simply respond to parenting styles.

Although childrearing literature often implies that parents are free to choose how to raise their children, certain childrearing styles are more valued than others. Today authoritative parenting is considered by Western developmental psychologists to be the most effective model because it balances warmth with firmness (Criss and Larzelere 2013). Significantly, for our history of child/adult relations this style also coheres with the emergence of the parent since it reinforces the boundaries between child and parent, keeping each in their place. For boys, it is associated with "friendly, co-operative behavior" whereas for girls, this parenting style is believed to encourage "purposive,

dominant, and achievement behavior” (Baumrind, “Rearing” 354). While these childrearing models provide a useful tool for practitioners working with parents, as with the notion of care, there are some limitations. Crucially, ‘warmth’ and ‘firmness’ are represented as self-evident terms which can be easily measured. I suggest however that, like ‘care,’ concepts such as ‘warmth’ and ‘firmness’ can be defined in a variety of ways.

Supernanny oscillates between promoting an authoritarian parenting style and an authoritative one. Raguragaran Ganeshasundaram and Nadine Henley claim that *Supernanny* is based upon the latter, which stresses “consistency, praise, routine and boundaries” (312). While Frost encourages parents to adopt these characteristics, I contend that the programme’s focus on techniques means that at times her methods appear quite controlling. Parents are taught to ‘step-out’ of the situation in order to act objectively and are often told to ignore the guilty feelings they experience when they say no, or discipline, their children. Furthermore, when it comes to punishment, children are not allowed to negotiate with their parents; instead, they are forcibly placed on the naughty step and must remain there until they have completed their allocated time and apologised for their bad behaviour. If they refuse to stay on the naughty step, the parents must continue to place them back there. Frost’s approach demonstrates a common contradiction in what Ouellette and Hay call “interventionist TV” (65). These programmes rely upon “authoritarian governing techniques in an effort to produce ‘self-sufficient subjects’” (Ouellette and Hay 65). As I discuss in Chapter Three, Frost lectures parents about their shortcomings, uses surveillance to monitor their every move, does not allow them to question the merits of her techniques, and punishes them for failing to use the techniques correctly.

Developmental Psychology and the Instrumentalisation of Parenthood and Care

In the Western world, parenting has become increasingly instrumentalised and professionalised, due in part to the increasing popularity of developmental psychology and neuropsychology as applied to daily life. As Stefan Ramaekers and Judith Suissa argue, it is almost impossible to discuss the parent/child relationship today without reverting to scientific language or expert discourse (2012). As a discipline, developmental psychology seeks to identify the optimal conditions for healthy growth and is frequently used in government documents to promote particular parenting styles.¹⁰² These documents suggest that child development does not just happen but instead needs to be actively managed. Parenting becomes a set of aims and outcomes rather than an intimate relationship: “childrearing is reduced to ‘doing things with one’s children,’ to interacting with them, to acquiring skills and techniques” (Ramaekers and Suissa 59). Likewise, love and play “come to be measured in terms of what they can contribute to a child’s development” (Ramaekers and Suissa 15). These statements highlight the irreconcilable and contested nature of parenthood and the tension between ‘care of’ and ‘care about.’ Many government documents draw a direct link between early parental action and the child’s development (Furedi 2001; Ramaekers and Suissa 2012). Care thus becomes a set of techniques (care as labour) designed to lead to the best possible outcomes rather than a complex relationship based upon love and affection (care about). We can see a similar tension at work in *Supernanny*.

This scientific model of parenting leads to a restricted definition of responsibility which, as I have argued above, is a key aspect of care. As Ramaekers and Suissa argue,

¹⁰² See Furedi (2001), Jensen (2009) and Ramaekers and Suissa (2012).

“What being a responsible parent means today [...] is increasingly narrowed down to a concern for one’s child’s proper development, to a focus on ensuring optimal developmental opportunities and to staying in control of one’s developmental process” (138). Due to the emphasis on outcomes, parenting today requires a greater financial investment than in previous eras, a fact which, as I have suggested above, depends upon the parents’ class status and ultimately leads to differing forms of care. It also demands an endless amount of time: “the recent invention of the concept of ‘quality time’ is based on the belief that children need a specific period of undivided attention from their parents” (Furedi, *Paranoid* 81). Here Furedi outlines the differences between two models of childrearing which I have discussed above; an older view which states that nature will take its course, versus the newer belief that parents must actively manage their child’s development.

This ‘scientific’ approach to parenting and care (an approach which, I have argued, reduces parenthood to a series of techniques) has a number of problems. The parent/child relationship is far more complex than is suggested by these accounts. As Jensen notes, parenting involves “messy, difficult and often contradictory relationship[s] [...] formed in conversation with gender, family, kinship, history and biography” (“What Kind” 172). Parenthood cannot be reduced to a list of skills, nor can the relationship between a parent and a child be “improved by the application of a technical formula” (Furedi, *Paranoid* xxv). A further problem with this approach is its suggestion that there is an objective end-point to parenting, when in fact the relationship is never-ending (Ramaekers and Suissa 2012). Moreover, we cannot make sense of parenting simply as a practice: “There is no separate area of one’s life as a parent which one can delineate and describe as ‘parenting,’ analogously to the practice of ‘teaching,’

for unlike teaching, it is difficult to see where parenting begins and ends” (Ramaekers and Suissa 45). *Supernanny* depicts parenting in a similar manner. Frost informs us that raising children is a “twenty-four-hour, seven-day-a-week job” and in one episode, tells the parents that no matter how tired or frustrated they are, they do not get to “clock out” (see US season two, episode six).

The role of the parenting expert in contemporary Western society is also problematic, as is the focus on parental determinism. The increasing number of childcare ‘experts’ suggests that parents are not capable of raising children on their own but need specialist knowledge and advice. As I expand below, this belief is a direct result of the increasing prominence of therapeutic discourse. Ramaekers and Suissa argue that we need to conceptualise the parent/child relationship from *within*, not from a ‘third-person’ perspective. The practice of assessing parenting from an outside perspective both damages the bond between the parent and the child and leads to parental insecurity. Similarly, the concentration on parental actions or what is widely called parental determinism, suggests that parents alone are responsible for how children develop. However, as Furedi notes, we must also consider social, cultural, economic and environmental factors which impact upon the child’s growth (*Paranoid* 2008). According to Furedi, school and peer groups play significant roles in the socialisation process (2001). To summarise, parental determinism assumes a direct causal relationship between parental action and outcomes and ignores the complexities of child development.

Parenting Techniques: The Rejection of the Emotional Bond

As noted above, in contemporary Western culture, parenting is often reduced to a set of skills. This focus on techniques and developmental outcomes means that parenting could be seen as an activity devoid of emotion. The rejection of the affective bond in current British government policies and in *Supernanny* is significant given the rise of “emotional culture,” a term which designates the increasing presence of emotion in public life (González 2012). Over the past fifty or so years, emotions have come to occupy a central role in Western society.¹⁰³ As Furedi argues, “the language of emotionalism” is widespread, pervading everything from “popular culture” to “schools and universities” (*Therapeutic* 1). As we will see in Chapters Two and Three, emotionality, both on the part of the participants and the audience (in the form of emotional investment), is central to reality television’s success (Bonsu, Darmody and Parmentier 2010). In emotional culture there exists an ongoing tension between the demand for “emotional authenticity” and the requirement that individuals manage their emotions (González 3). This desire for authenticity or the search for ‘truth’ about the self has a relatively short history and is, as E. Doyle McCarthy contends, commonly understood as a reaction to the rise of capitalism and the “imposition of instrumental reason in every facet of life” (243).¹⁰⁴ In contemporary culture, “the ready expression of emotion (properly moderated and directed) has become a yardstick for measuring healthy (read ‘successful’) performance of the achieving subject in both public and

¹⁰³ See Hochschild (1979), Illouz (1997) and González (2012).

¹⁰⁴ Eva Illouz argues against this view, stating that capitalism is deeply emotional and that processes of rationalisation and instrumentalisation have entered into the realm of interpersonal relationships (2007).

private life (Nunn and Biressi, “Trust” 54). Individuals who are unwilling to reveal their feelings in public are often seen as emotionally illiterate or in denial of their situation.

Emotional culture has been characterised in numerous ways, however, most scholars point to the central role of feelings in the construction of the self. As McCarthy notes, in contemporary culture [...] emotions speak to us about who we are, telling us the most vital things about ourselves” (241). Two prominent aspects of emotional culture include the “psychologization of experience and the therapeutization of the self” (González 8). The first of these, the psychologisation of experience, refers to the way in which behaviour is increasingly interpreted through the lens of psychology. Likewise, the therapeutisation of the self describes a view of subjectivity which positions the self as a never-ending project in which the discourse of therapy plays a foundational role. In emotional culture, morals are seen as private decisions rather than externally given (Askegaard and Kjeldgaard 2013). In short, in the contemporary world, the self is understood as an emotional self, filtering experiences through the framework of feelings. As I discuss in Chapter Four, in *Supernanny*, parents are encouraged to actively monitor their children’s feelings using techniques such as the “feelings chart” and thus are positioned as quasi child psychologists.

Emotional culture has often been celebrated for encouraging more ‘openness’ in public life, however some scholars see it as a negative development. González, for example, contends that the need to constantly confess has led to the erosion of the private sphere, in the sense that nothing is sacred anymore (2012). She also states that individuals only listen to others in the hope that the favour will be returned (2012). In a similar vein, historian Christopher Lasch asserts that Western culture has become thoroughly narcissistic, due to the individual’s need for constant validation (1979). It is

not my intention here to discuss the merits of emotional culture but rather, to provide a brief description against which we can measure *Supernanny*.

As should be clear from the above discussion, emotional culture is closely aligned with the rise of therapeutic discourse in Western society. In the scholarly literature the term “therapy culture” refers not to the clinical technique, but rather, points to the phenomenon where practices once confined to the therapist’s office now shape the public’s perception of current events (Furedi 2004). For scholars like Furedi, therapeutic techniques play a central role in the “management of subjectivity” (*Therapeutic* 22). There is no single factor which can account for the rise of the therapeutic ethos; the development of psychology, community fragmentation and the decline of social networks have all contributed to its popularity (Furedi, *Therapeutic* 2004). What is evident however, in all of the literature on therapeutic culture, is a desire to find the ‘truth’ of one’s self through an appeal to one’s feelings.

Like emotional culture, therapeutic culture has been defined in a number of ways. However, we can identify several consistent traits including the importance of confession, the blurring of public and private divisions, an emphasis on emotionalism and diminished responsibility, the distancing of the self from others and the central role of the expert (Furedi 2004). It is worth examining these characteristics in closer detail for we will see them displayed in *Supernanny*. In therapeutic culture, public disclosure of one’s weaknesses is seen as a crucial part of the healing process. Seeking help is represented as a sign of strength rather than failure. The expert plays a key role in therapeutic culture due to the belief that individuals are unable to “manage important aspects of their life without professional guidance” (Furedi, *Therapeutic* 98). Although therapeutic culture encourages dependence upon experts, individuals are encouraged to

professionalise their informal relationships in order to avoid abuse. Therapeutic culture regards relationships, like those between relatives, in a suspicious manner, as emotional problems are believed to stem from “family-based pathologies” (Furedi, *Therapeutic* 75). In *Supernanny*, many of the mothers’ comments sound like those made by domestic abuse victims (Ferguson 2009). Finally, in therapeutic culture, issues are understood not as the result of socio-economic factors, but rather, as individual failings. Although the individual is depicted as the source of the ‘problem,’ this person is believed to be ‘sick’ and therefore cannot be held fully responsible for their behaviour.

Supernanny displays some of the characteristics of both emotional and therapeutic culture including an emphasis on public disclosure, dependence upon the expert and the individualisation of problems. The programme also encourages emotional connections with the viewers via “confessionals and [...] documentary elements, which heighten the realness of the situation” (L. Edwards, *Triumph* 3). However, in this thesis, I argue that the programme is, in many respects, a counter-narrative. *Supernanny* does not promote what Sigmund Freud and Josef Breuer famously described as the “talking cure”; as Galit Ferguson notes, there is very little conversation in *Supernanny* (2009). Ferguson identifies three types of verbal communication in *Supernanny*. Firstly, there is “description” provided by the voice-over and the expert. What Ferguson calls “affective expression” includes the parents’ tearful explanations, the expert’s response to the parents’ success or failure to enact the techniques and the children’s tantrums. The final category covers the brief moments of talking, which are typically one-directional and “almost always in the language of the show” (Ferguson 253). Expanding Ferguson’s claim, I contend that *Supernanny* is far more interested in techniques. As noted above, even in situations where there is a lack of emotional connection between the parent and

the child, the solution offered is a technique. As I discuss in Chapter Four, Frost instructs parents how to bond with their children using the “thought box” and the “feelings chart.” Ultimately I assert that *Supernanny* favours ‘care of’ (care as labour) over ‘care about’ (care as affection) and parenting over parenthood.

Conclusion

This chapter has provided a brief history of the emergence of the parent from the Middle Ages to the present-day, showing how parents police the boundaries between the stages of the child and adult, thus contributing to the invention of childhood. Drawing upon Foucault’s scholarship on the family, his models of power and control and literature on childhood/adulthood, I have argued that the parent is a contested subject. I have examined Foucault’s notion of sovereign power and have shown how the parent/child relationship, like that between the King and his subjects, is characterised by a specific type of “bond” which evades easy definition (*Psychiatric* 80). With the rise of sentimental value, so parenthood becomes irreconcilably divided between the daily work of ‘caring for’ children and the emotional dimensions of raising children. The chapter has examined the rise of various institutions (the school, the law, the juvenile court system and the playground movement) which have sought to differentiate the child from the adult and argued that in comparison to the Middle Ages, where children above the age of seven were considered to be “miniature adults,” contemporary Western society is increasingly child-centred due to the rise of sentimental value, placing

additional burdens upon parents. I have argued that today parents are held responsible for regulating their children's use of (domestic and public) space, time, activities, emotions, and the acquisition of skills and knowledge, so as to ensure both their protection and optimum development. I have suggested that parents are encouraged to adopt specific techniques in order to achieve these aims, but that this comes at the expense of a more organic, emotional bond.

Having established a number of ways of understanding parenthood as a space of care, and shown how, historically, the parent has been a site of contestation, in the following chapter I add in television to my discussion and contextualise *Supernanny* within a brief history of parenting programming, an area which has received little scholarly attention. I situate *Supernanny's* intervention in relation to the makeover, a sub-genre which teaches audiences how to care for the self through the consumption of particular products and advice. I argue that makeover shows can be divided into three distinct waves, characterised by their object of transformation, the home, the body and behaviour. I locate *Supernanny* within the third wave and examine how it diverges from its predecessors.

Supernanny's inclusion in this latter wave of makeover programming is significant because while the first two waves focus largely on individuals, the third wave features multiple participants: its interest in transforming both parents *and* children complicates the notion of care of the self and, by extension, the neoliberal subject as a responsible individual. Moreover, the complexities of the parent/child relationship (which, as I have noted, oscillates between control and emotional attachment) complicates the whole notion of caring for the self, to the point that it could be considered a contradiction in terms. I address these issues and others in the following chapter.

Chapter Two

'Caring' for the Family? Supernanny as Instructional Parenting Makeover TV

Popular reality TV does more than entertain – it becomes a resource for inventing, managing, *caring for*, and protecting ourselves as citizens.

Laurie Ouellette and James Hay *Better Living through Reality TV* (emphasis added 4).

Reality television [is] a social force that *seeks to regulate*, rather than simply document, ordinary people's lives and interactions.

Misha Kavka *Reality TV* (emphasis added 113).

In the previous chapter I charted the emergence of the parent as a modern subject and argued that as a result of the domestication of childhood and the rise of sentimental value the burden upon parents has increased exponentially, also complicating their roles. I argued that parenthood is a site of contestation due to the tension between 'care of' and 'care about.' As noted in the Introduction, a study of *Supernanny* allows us to

ask questions about two elements: parenthood as a space of care and parenting as *doing* through a set of disciplinary practices. A key objective of my thesis is to provide a detailed analysis of the techniques through which *Supernanny* constructs the parental subject. However, before examining the programme's representation of parenthood and care, it is first necessary to situate *Supernanny* within the field of television studies, so as to demonstrate its intervention. In this chapter I argue that the series is a foundational text for TV scholars. As one of the original instructional parenting makeover programmes, *Supernanny* provided the template for the shows that followed (i.e. *Nanny 911*, *Driving Mum and Dad Mad*, *The House of Tiny Tearaways*). Even a casual viewer will notice that contemporary parenting programmes which focus on preteen children are fairly formulaic and I contend that *Supernanny* is the origin of this winning format. Further, examination of *Supernanny's* narrative structure in Chapter Three allows us to see how later shows both conform to, and depart from, this model.

Supernanny belongs to an ever-increasing body of programmes defined as “reality television” and more specifically, to the makeover sub-genre. This chapter considers *Supernanny's* relationship with what I call elsewhere, “first” and “second wave” makeover formats (Fowler and Kambuta 265). While the former category refers to shows which transform the home or garden, the latter covers programmes which concentrate on the body (Fowler and Kambuta 2011). Although *Supernanny* borrows many elements from first and second wave makeover texts, the third wave can be distinguished from its predecessors in several ways. First, due to its extended format (in *Supernanny* the narrative is divided into five parts instead of three in order to deal with the problem of transforming parents and children) and, second, its shortened reveal (which can be explained by the difficulty of representing inner transformation) and its

promotion of techniques as a form of caring for the self, as opposed to the consumption of material goods. Additionally, in *Supernanny* participants are not nominated by others for their untiring work in the community, as they often are in first and second wave makeover programmes, but are rather self-selected. While many first wave participants are sent on holiday so that their homes can be redecorated or rebuilt, and second wave subjects are put to sleep while the surgeons re-sculpt their bodies, in *Supernanny* parents remain in the home and are expected to play a more active role in the transformation process. Crucially, *Supernanny* inverts traditional class and gender hierarchies. In contrast to first and second wave makeover shows which typically feature (male) middle-class experts who transform lower-class subjects, *Supernanny* includes Frost, a lower-class female expert, who instructs middle-class families. Therefore although *Supernanny* borrows many elements from first and second wave makeovers, it differs from them in these respects.

I build upon and augment work on the makeover by inventing a “third wave” into which *Supernanny* fits (Fowler and Kambuta 265). I examine the evolution of care across these three waves and demonstrate that while the first two waves link care of the self to the consumption of particular goods and services, third wave makeovers privilege the acquisition of techniques. Third wave programming is crucial to my argument because it provides an opening for television to enter into debates about parenthood. It responds to the discourses identified in the previous chapter, including middle-class guilt and the increasingly child-centred nature of western culture. These discourses create interest in, and a market for, parenting advice on television.

Despite a wealth of scholarship on the makeover, few have engaged with third wave programmes, and more specifically, the depiction of parenthood and care in shows

centred upon families. In starting, it is necessary to investigate the competing institutional demands that the makeover fulfils in the television landscape because this explains the narrative structure and emphases of *Supernanny*. In this chapter I first seek to illustrate the ways in which the makeover sub-genre plays upon middle-class guilt relating to parents' limited time. Secondly, I aim to demonstrate the evolution of care across the three waves of makeover programming: as noted above, while first and second wave shows rely upon the consumption of material goods, *Supernanny* utilises disciplinary techniques to transform its subjects.

Contextualising *Supernanny* in relation to Western media forces us to address larger transformations not only in the television industry but also in social and familial structures over the past three decades. With regard to the former, the series develops amidst the deregulation of the industry in the UK and the US, the preference for cheap and easily reproducible formats, and the global spread of makeover programming. In relation to the latter, television's provision of parenting advice in contemporary society is, I argue, intimately linked to a perceived breakdown of traditional notions of community. It is also associated with the rise of individualism and neoliberal discourse. Whereas in the past parents often looked to extended family or neighbours for assistance, today they are just as likely to turn on television or surf the net.¹⁰⁵ Third

¹⁰⁵ Television is a key source of information for parents today. According to an Ipsos MORI poll conducted in the UK in 2006, 37% of parents turn to television for information about parenting, after family/friends (59%) and school/playgroups (40%). The study found that parenting programmes are extremely popular, especially with parents who have children under the age of sixteen (individuals with children older than this were not included in this group). Almost three-quarters of parents (72%) and 55% of all adults surveyed ("adults" includes individuals with children over the age of sixteen and those who do not have children) have watched at least one parenting programme (NFCI 3). Additionally, of the people who have watched at least one programme, 51% said these shows help adults to understand more about children's needs and feelings (NFPI 3), 45% said they provided good parenting tips, and a further 40% said the programmes provided information about alternative discipline methods (as opposed to smacking). For 47% of viewers, these programmes offer reassurance that other parents also have problems (providing a community of sorts), while 27% of viewers valued the opportunity to get help in the privacy of their own home (NFPI 5). As a result of watching these programmes, a further 8% sought additional help for their problems (NFPI 6).

wave makeover programmes and *Supernanny* in particular coincide with the emergence of a void created by a decline in outside support systems for families (Tally 2011). The programme reiterates the child's and the parent's dependence upon one another for meaning and upholds the parent as the person responsible for the child's care.

Makeovers teach a contemporary version of "care of the self," through the consumption of specific products and instructional advice or ways of 'doing.' While the ancient Greeks focused on the soul and engaged in practices of self-denial (Foucault, *Care* 1984), I argue that televised makeover texts are superficial and encourage consumerist impulses. I investigate how the makeover draws upon the discourse of 'care' to justify disciplinary techniques such as surveillance (using video) of the participants and their subsequent public shaming. I address Weber's claim that video surveillance operates as a form of 'care' in the makeover because it provides participants with an objective record of their behaviour and therefore facilitates change. I argue that in *Supernanny* 'care' becomes an opportunity for control. During the trial period, Frost records the participants and makes them watch the video replay in order to get them to see themselves as she does. In other words, *Supernanny* uses shaming practices in order to bring subjects into line. As discussed in Chapter One, the programme validates the use of these techniques through its appeal to discourses relating to middle-class guilt and the aspirational nature of Western culture.

Chapter Overview

Before analysing how the parent and parenting are represented in *Supernanny*, it is first necessary to contextualise the programme within the larger field of television, and more specifically, in relation to the makeover sub-genre. As noted above, *Supernanny* was not the first parenting programme to screen on British television, thus in section one I examine early shows, including *Play with a Purpose*, *Toycraft*, *Other People's Children*, *All about Babies*, and *All about Toddlers* before discussing two more recent examples, *Bad Behaviour* and *Little Angels*. It is essential to review these earlier programmes not only because there is very little academic research on them, but also because this history demonstrates a concerted effort on the part of broadcasters to educate parents in 'correct' childrearing techniques. What this overview also reveals is a shift away from magazine-style shows which targeted young 'uneducated' mothers, to more contemporary versions which draw upon the successful makeover format. In contrast to these earlier programmes, examples like *Supernanny* attempt to reach a much broader audience, as indicated by their inclusion of middle-class participants. It is in these contemporary examples that, I contend, the parent as a contestatory subject is fully evident.

In the second section I provide a concise summary of the makeover's origins so as to introduce the differences between the three waves and to illustrate shifts in the concept of 'care' in relation to the makeover sub-genre more generally. I cover the period from the emergence of prime-time makeover shows in the early 1990s to 2014. An analysis of *Supernanny's* generic context demonstrates that the programme's focus

on educating audiences is not unique but, rather, is common to reality television and Western society at large. While acknowledging *Supernanny's* debt to the reality television genre, I argue that what distinguishes the makeover is its emphasis upon techniques and the importance of these for everyday life. The transition I identify, from the endowment of goods to techniques is, in part, a response to the increasing numbers of middle-class makeover participants who, presumably, are less likely to require consumer goods than lower-class subjects.

Supernanny's emphasis on techniques, rather than the consumption of material goods, underlines my argument that parenting is about *doing* and crucially indicates that parents cannot 'buy' solutions to their problems. Although *Supernanny*-branded merchandise is available to purchase, the programme itself does not advertise this fact. More importantly, the naughty step is a *technique* that requires parents' active involvement. As I explain in Chapters Three and Four, when their child misbehaves parents must *physically* place them on the naughty step or designated space within the home, explain what they did that was wrong and provide them with time to reflect on their bad behaviour. *Supernanny's* focus on techniques supports my larger argument that Western culture has become increasingly child-centred and that the burden upon parents has increased exponentially; Frost insists that parents must spend *time*, not money, on their children.

Section three examines the relationship between the makeover's emphasis on techniques and its success with audience members and television producers, both in the UK and abroad. As noted in the introduction, in free-market economies private companies take control of industries once owned by the public and with them, the responsibility of providing goods and services for citizens. The same holds true for

makeover producers who frequently give candidates goods and services they cannot afford to buy. It is crucial to examine the factors behind the rise of reality/makeover television because it reveals that the genre is a response to cost-cutting measures in the industry and that the industry's concerns with the well-being of citizens is part of a larger strategy to ensure the ongoing viability of the television networks.

Section four identifies key characteristics of makeover programming. These features include the makeover's tripartite structure, the importance of the before and after images, the high sense of closure achieved through a happily-ever-after ending, the importance of the confession or "sob-story" (Watts 146) in underscoring the necessity of the makeover, the isolation of the participants during the makeover process, the concentration on individual solutions rather than societal change, and the central role of the expert. Pinpointing the makeover's central elements is essential for my analysis of *Supernanny* in Chapter Three because it enables me to demonstrate how the series develops aspects of first and second-wave programming.

Having established the key components of this body of programming, section five focuses more deeply upon the theme of 'care' in relation to the makeover. I summarise Foucault's notion of care of the self as discussed in his third volume of the *History of Sexuality* so as to illustrate how contemporary versions differ from earlier models. I investigate how care as a form of control is demonstrated in the makeover through two recurring tropes: those of surveillance and shaming. Finally, in section six I position *Supernanny* within the third wave of makeover programming. Ultimately I argue that while *Supernanny* shares many characteristics of first and second wave makeover shows, it subverts several of the more recognisable elements, particularly in regards to class, a fact which has important implications for present-day understandings of

parenthood. By focusing primarily on middle-class participants (as opposed to lower-class citizens), *Supernanny* suggests that *all* parents, regardless of their social class, need to be taught ‘correct’ forms of childrearing. The programme thus could be seen as a wide scale attempt to discipline all families.

The final section considers how ‘the family’ is defined in fairly narrow terms (in seasons one and two of *Supernanny* [both the UK and US versions]) as white, middle-class, heterosexual and ‘two-parented,’ a fact which contrasts with later series of the show where families are somewhat more diverse. A detailed outline of the episodes examined is provided, with statistical information about the featured families. It is necessary to discuss the types of families that appear on *Supernanny* because, as noted in the introduction, methods of ‘care’ vary depending upon factors like social class. Crucially, an examination of the featured families reveals the programme’s emphasis on a particular type of ‘care’ – the authoritative model which seeks to balance warmth with firmness.

Parenting TV: Pre-Supernanny

Before exploring how *Supernanny* fits within the makeover sub-genre, it is first necessary to examine the show’s predecessors to illustrate the programme’s importance for television scholars. On television, the ‘bad’ parent has become an increasingly popular figure for audience and a highly profitable figure for the networks. Producers, it seems, are not interested in programmes about ‘good’ parents or well-adjusted, ‘normal’ children, but instead capitalise on stories of families in crisis. *Supernanny* was one of

numerous instructional parenting makeover programmes, primarily from United States and Britain, which featured out-of-control children and the various ‘experts’ charged with transforming their wayward behaviour. Often described as “car-crash telly,” for their deliberate use of “controversial, disturbing and horrific material,”¹⁰⁶ these shows included *Little Angels* (UK BBC3 2004 - 2005), and *Nanny 911* (USA Fox 2004 – ?).¹⁰⁷ Since 2004, the number of programmes centred on this basic premise has continued to grow and today these shows dominate prime-time schedules, regularly attracting audiences in the UK and US in the tens of millions (NFPI 1).¹⁰⁸ In the UK these instructional parenting makeover shows appeared alongside a glut of similar programming (Lewis, *Smart* 2008) and reflected a renewed interest in governing the family from a variety of stakeholders.¹⁰⁹

Despite the recent explosion of parenting shows on television, *Supernanny* was not the first programme to deal with childrearing issues. Unlike the early parenting shows I discuss below, which achieved minimal success, *Supernanny*’s innovative format (combines education with entertainment) means that the programme has been broadcast globally and sparked unprecedented debate about parenting. The educational potential of television has been foregrounded since its inception; thus it is not surprising that, from the outset, TV broadcasters have used the medium to teach parents ‘correct’

¹⁰⁶ Collins Online Dictionary (n.p.).

¹⁰⁷ Television series end-date unknown.

¹⁰⁸ More recent examples of instructional parenting makeover shows include: *Blame the Parents* (UK BBC2 2005 - ?), *Driving Mum and Dad Mad* (UK ITV 1 2005 – 2006), *Honey We’re Killing the Children* (UK BBC3 2005 - ?), *The House of Tiny Tearaways* (UK BBC 2005 – ?), *American Supernanny* (USA Lifetime 2011); and *Extreme Parental Guidance* (UK C4 2010 - present). Several shows featuring wild teenagers/young adults have also been produced since 2004, however these differ from the ones about pre-teens. See Appendix C for a timeline of television shows about out-of-control children and teenagers. I discuss this later body of programmes in the conclusion.

¹⁰⁹ Other parenting-based shows include, *Who Rules the Roost* (BBC 2004 - ?), *Bank of Mum and Dad* (BBC2 2004), *Fat Families* (Sky1 2005 - ?) and *He’s Having a Baby* (BBC 2005).

childrearing practices (Biressi and Nunn 2008). The fact that such programmes exist, suggests that parenting skills are not instinctive but, rather, must be learnt (C. Jones 17). Like these earlier examples *Supernanny* seeks to educate parents using the televisual apparatus. The programme suggests that a ‘good’ parent is one who not only regulates their child’s use of (domestic and public) space, time, activities, and emotions but also their acquisition of skills and knowledge.

Despite the assumed importance of ‘parent education,’ these programmes have not always been welcomed. As C Jones found,

Research into audience preferences in adult education has often shown that the public, given the choice, would much prefer to have do-it-yourself programmes – how to build an extra room in the attic, install your own electric wiring, and so on. (20)

In Britain, perhaps keeping this research in mind, most early parenting shows were of the DIY variety (C. Jones 1980).¹¹⁰ For example, in *Toycraft* Mary Frances and Alison Brierly taught parents how to make inexpensive toys for their children. *Toycraft*’s presenters encouraged parents to use materials found within the home, an emphasis which distinguishes it from first and second wave makeover programmes which promote consumption. In keeping with the traditional gender roles discussed in Chapter One, *Toycraft*’s producers clearly believed that the ‘parents’ were stay-at-home mums

¹¹⁰ Television producers do not always give the audience what they want: As C. Jones writes, “I think we would be justified in setting those preferences aside and producing parenting programmes deliberately intended to help parents in the problems they encounter with their children – even though it is not an area which ‘the public’ seem to regard as highly important” (20).

who had time to make crafts with their children. In *Toycraft* and the programmes that followed, the domestic sphere is represented as ‘sovereign’ territory, where parents (and mothers in particular) are expected to prepare their children for entry into society and disciplinary apparatuses such as the school system. Although DIY parenting shows like *Toycraft* were popular, over time, the focus, format and subject matter of these programmes would change.¹¹¹

As the format of these shows developed so we can see echoes of the influences upon the emergence of the modern parent discussed in Chapter One. Early parenting programmes often attempted to teach parents about educational issues; thus they could be seen as building on the scientific turn examined in the previous chapter. The long-running series *Play with a Purpose* emphasised the importance of play (C. Jones 1980). Significantly this series suggested that having fun was no longer the primary goal of play, but rather, that it was an opportunity for parents to maximise their child’s intellectual growth. The programme’s focus recalls the work of psychologists addressed in Chapter One who stressed the importance of play and the incremental nature of child development. Viewers of *Play with a Purpose* were encouraged to buy Elizabeth’s Matterson’s book, which allowed them to follow-along with the programme (C. Jones 1980). *Play with a Purpose* could thus be seen as an early example of cross-media integration in the television industry, which, by the time *Supernanny* was broadcast, was a well-established and highly profitable practice. *Supernanny*’s paramedia status, discussed in the Introduction, demonstrates the series’ wider influence upon parenting models, television shows, books, and children’s literature.

¹¹¹ It is incredibly difficult to find information on early British parenting programmes, particularly regarding their dates of broadcast, thus some entries are incomplete.

The dream of using television to educate parents was realised with the production of several new childrearing programmes in the 1970s and 80s. These included *Being a Child* (London Weekend's 1977), *Parent's Day* (Granada 1977), *Home and School* (1977) and *The Special Child* (Yorkshire TV 1977). I examine three of these educational parenting series (*Other People's Children*, *All about Babies* and *All about Toddlers*) which screened on British daytime television (Biressi and Nunn 2008). These programmes were a response to a well-publicised survey which found that only 30% of preschool aged children attended some form of nursery. For experts, this figure was concerning because it meant that the child's development could not be easily monitored. These fears about the child's development taking place outside the watchful gaze of 'the experts,' suggests that even at this early stage, broadcasters saw television as an effective medium through which they could govern parents. Of note, for later discussions, is the fact that the makeover format was not yet common-place.

Already at this early stage, it is clear that notions of community were changing and it is within this context that television presents itself as a form of expertise. One of the first parenting programmes, *Other People's Children*, was aimed at child minders. Broadcasters attempted to connect the series with social organisations, including the Health Education Council and local authorities, which could provide help for struggling parents. These initiatives did not perform as well as hoped because, as a result of an already burdened public health system, these organisations were unable and/or unwilling to commit funding to helping affected viewers (C. Jones 1980). The attempt to link television programming with social institutions not only points to the government's role in regulating parental behaviour, but also highlights crucial differences in the contexts of these early shows and later ones. At this stage,

broadcasters saw themselves as having a limited role: they did not think it was television's role to provide parenting advice, hence they attempted to link viewers with social organisations. Twenty years later, makeover television, and *Supernanny* in particular, overturns this belief: *Supernanny* directly intervenes in families' lives. However, in keeping with the programme's neoliberal leanings, Frost ultimately encourages her 'charges' to be independent and self-sufficient.

Despite the network's good intentions, *Other People's Children* was not overly successful (C. Jones 1980). C. Jones does not provide us with any indications of why this particular programme failed; however, we could surmise that its focus on *caregivers* rather than parents, versus the context in which *Supernanny* appeared (as Richenda Gambles notes, the programme emerged during a period of intense political focus on the family), could have contributed to its demise. As noted in Chapter One, parents are believed to have a 'special' bond with their child/ren who, in turn, acquire sentimental value: the focus on child minders, rather than parents, means that in this show childrearing is depicted as a *job*. Although the series failed to attract a sustainable audience later programmes which focus specifically on the parent would prove more popular.

These earlier shows targeted lower-class parents, a fact which can be contrasted with *Supernanny* which features middle-class subjects, who struggle with feelings of guilt about the lack of time they have to spend with their children. Like *Other People's Children*, *All about Babies* (ATV Midlands 1977) and its companion series, *All about Toddlers* (ATV Midlands 1979), screened as half-hour episodes on daytime television. The timing of the broadcast suggests the programme, like *Toycraft* and *Other People's Children*, was targeted at stay-at-home mothers. Produced by ATV, *All about Babies*

featured thirteen episodes, each of which dealt with a specific issue; “preparation, shopping, when to call, role of the father, childbirth, jealousy, breastfeeding, crying, hospital routines, post-natal depression, the father’s role, child sickness, establishing relationships” (Coward, Down and Perry 2010). The follow-on series, *All about Toddlers*, focused on children between the ages of six-months and five-years. It was presented by Dr Hugh Jolly, a British pediatrician who starred in a number of films and television series about childcare issues, and Joan Shenton, a well-known radio and television reporter, presenter and producer.¹¹² This later series included ten episodes, which, like the earlier one, were each based around a particular problem; “the crying child, immunisation, coping, problems with behaviour, the sick child, the sick child in hospital, sources of help, growth and development, play, and working mothers” (Coward, Down and Perry 2010). Significantly, as can be seen by the titles of these programmes, both focus on the preteen child. As noted in Chapter One, in contemporary society research suggests that the early years play a defining role in the child’s future. These two shows attempted to teach young ‘uneducated’ mothers ‘correct’ parenting skills, a goal which proved harder than expected. As C. Jones notes, producers had to negotiate the contradictory parenting advice found in the books and magazines upon which they drew (1980).

In order to reach their target audience, *All about Babies* and *All about Toddlers* privileged entertainment over education in the hope that viewers would seek help if

¹¹² Dr. Hugh Jolly is best known for establishing the Child Development Centre at Charing Cross Hospital in the UK. In addition to *All about Toddlers*, Jolly appeared in several film and television series as a cast member, a presenter, and/or as a commentator. These include *Development: Is there Anything Wrong?* (BBC 1973), *The Bond of Breastfeeding* (Julia Ashton, 1978), *Katie’s First Year* (Nigel Evans 1979), *Child Development Centre: Charing Cross Hospital* (John Metcalfe, 1979), *Hugh Jolly on Baby Care* (Margaret Chambers, 1983) and *So You’re Going to Have a Baby* (no director given 1987). Some of Joan Shenton’s more well-known roles include acting as a presenter for television talk shows/magazine review shows such as *Good Afternoon Money* (Thames 1973 – 1977) and *Money Go Round* (Thames 1977 – 1982).

needed. As was the case with *Other People's Children*, audience members were encouraged to write in for pamphlets from the Health Education Council. In short, these programmes were endorsed by wider health organisations. *All about Babies* and *All about Toddlers* represented a radical departure from the formats of earlier shows, which had attempted to teach basic childrearing techniques through staged discussions led by midwives and female medical practitioners (C. Jones 1980). They “employed a range of relatively unconnected items in a fast-moving magazine approach – film stories not so much above the level of a soap-opera, parody adverts, light sketches and so on” (C. Jones 21). The decision to foreground entertainment over education was a conscious one, as broadcasters patronisingly believed that their target audience, ‘uneducated’ and/or lower-class mums, were unlikely to actively seek out information regarding childrearing from health facilities or public libraries (C. Jones 1980). As Jones notes:

It was an attempt to make genuine use of television's ability to engage and enthuse an unmotivated audience. It was a frank acknowledgement that if broadcasting was to make a contribution to this area of education, *stimulation of interest was more important than teaching*. (emphasis added 21)

These assumptions are worlds away from the child-centred context of today discussed in Chapter One, where parents appear eager to heed any childrearing advice. This strategy of privileging entertainment over education was successful with producers receiving an unprecedented amount of correspondence from the show's viewers.

Feedback indicated not only that there was a demand for televised parenting advice but also that the programme's unconventional approach had worked (C. Jones 1980).

All about Babies and *All about Toddlers* differ markedly from *Supernanny*. They reveal key differences in both the cultural and televisual climate and in the governance of parenthood and care. As noted above, *All about Babies* and *All about Toddlers* were publically-funded daytime television shows targeted at specific audience members: young, lower-class mums who were presumed to have little or no education in 'correct' (read middle-class) childrearing techniques. While these shows contained an educational element, they emphasised entertainment by using fast-paced, magazine-type formats in order to attract and maintain an audience. These programmes were not interested in transforming specific families but dealt with general childrearing issues using fictional stories. While *All about Babies* and *All about Toddlers* featured Dr. Jolly, a qualified pediatrician, his role was very different to that of the makeover 'expert,' as he advised fictional patients rather than real parents.

The attempt to connect viewers of these early programmes with family-based institutions which could provide additional help illustrates the government's investment in parenting at that time. These shows were essentially used to advertise agencies for families seeking childrearing advice and, unlike contemporary examples, did not see television as a 'nanny' who could solve the audience's problems. In at least one of these shows, *Play with a Purpose*, producers offered viewers the opportunity to purchase branded merchandise and thus could be seen as an example of cross-promotional marketing. Significantly, for my thesis, this programme associated play with learning. The practice of linking parental actions to developmental outcomes is, as has been

argued in Chapter One, evident in contemporary Western culture, and, for my purposes, in present-day makeover programming.

Two more recent shows are vital precursors to *Supernanny* and offer a response to parents' demands in the late 1990s for more parenting-related programming.¹¹³ The first of these, *Bad Behaviour*, produced by Lion TV, screened on UK's C4 in July 2003. The programme was part of the 'Cutting Edge' documentary series, and, in the first sixty-minute episode, featured ex-school teacher Warwick Dyer who worked with parents Fred and Diane Curtis to improve their pre-adolescent daughter's behaviour using a monetary system of punishments and rewards. Over four million viewers watched this episode; a rating which is consistent with other successful lifestyle programmes of the time (Deans n.p.). The programme won several awards including "Best Documentary" from both the Newport and the San Francisco Film Festivals. Although popular with viewers, the show did not amount to much: in total, only four episodes were broadcast. Despite its short run, *Bad Behaviour* revealed that there was a contemporary market for instructional parenting TV and in this respect, paved the way for *Supernanny*.

In *Bad Behaviour* we can identify some of the key elements of the contemporary instructional parenting makeover sub-genre. Using an episodic narrative, *Bad Behaviour* introduced 'real' families with 'real' problems to the small screen, as opposed to *All about Babies* and its companion series which re-enacted common childcare issues for the viewers at home. In *Bad Behaviour* all of the featured families have reached a crisis point in their lives: For example, Sally Webb tells the audience that she is considering putting her son Ben into the foster system because she cannot cope with his violent

¹¹³ A study conducted in Britain by The National Children's Bureau (NBC) in 1998 found that 82% of viewers wanted "more television programming on parenting and family issues" (Feasey 42).

outbursts (C4 2005). The transformations take place largely in the home and apart from a social worker who appears in one episode, the families are de-contextualised and depicted as alone in their struggles, an approach which is reproduced in *Supernanny*. *Bad Behaviour* uses an omniscient male narrator who provides continuity across the disparate sequences and the parents frequently confess their inadequacies in direct address to the camera. The programme foregrounds the expert's central role in the transformation process and presents the possibility of reformation through simple parenting techniques. Dyer is presented as a heroic figure, with the narrator telling us at the beginning of every episode that “*salvation* is at hand,” but significantly, he does not attain the same celebrity status as Frost. At the conclusion of *Bad Behaviour*, the families appear much happier and in two episodes the parents reveal that they have enrolled in study in order to improve their lives. Crucially, as I expand below, in *Bad Behaviour* the families are lower-class, not middle-class as with *Supernanny*.

In *Bad Behaviour* we can already see an emphasis on techniques developed by *Supernanny* rather than the affective dimensions of parenthood. Although parents frequently express their doubts about the viability of the techniques at the beginning of the episode, by the conclusion of the show, they, like those featured on *Supernanny*, have become keen converts. As I explain below, *Bad Behaviour* features a much longer transformation process than *Supernanny*; however, there is a sense that if parents were to use the techniques correctly and consistently that their problems could be solved in a relatively short amount of time. The techniques used to bring about change are simple. In each of the episodes, Dyer instructs the parents to reward their children with pocket money for good behaviour (up to £1 daily). After giving children a warning for bad behaviour, parents must deduct one penny for every misdemeanour (swearing, fighting

or refusing to do what they are told). For Dyer, the children must learn that bad behaviour has consequences. Like the Apollonian model of childrearing discussed in Chapter One, he believes that children are fundamentally good and that they misbehave because they want their parents' attention. Dyer's model of childrearing is clearly problematic, because money is equated with attention. *Bad Behaviour*, like *Supernanny* which I examine below, endorses an authoritative model of parenting, or one which balances 'warmth' with 'firmness.'

Bad Behaviour establishes one of the central tenets of the sub-genre; that is, that parents are the source of the problems. Dyer believes that parents set the example for their children to follow and therefore must learn to regulate their own behaviour. In one of the episodes, he instructs mum Annie Marie to record herself using a tape-player so that she can hear what she sounds like to her children, a disciplinary practice which leads to revelation and change (C4 2005). This emphasis on self-awareness echoes the neoliberal agenda discussed in the Introduction. Dyer also informs parents that they must take responsibility for their children and not expect others to do the work for them. For example, he tells Anne-Marie: "If you don't do it, no one else is going to" (C4 2005). By introducing a system of discipline and rewards *Bad Behaviour* is able to transform the family. Vitrally, the programme's focus on techniques means that parenting is depicted as an activity which parents must actively engage in.

Bad Behaviour represents a significant step in the evolution of instructional parenting makeover programming and although it shares many similarities with *Supernanny*, there are crucial differences between the two formats. *Bad Behaviour* focuses on 'extreme' families who have already come to the attention of doctors, psychiatrists and social workers. This show features lower-class families who live in

housing estates, who have problems with alcohol and/or drugs, and whose children have often been excluded from school due to their violent and/or disruptive behaviour.¹¹⁴ At least two of the featured children have stated disabilities (ADHD and obsessive compulsive disorder), a fact which may help to explain some of their behavioural problems and which differentiates *Bad Behaviour* from *Supernanny* (C4 2005).

In *Bad Behaviour* the family is referred by various agencies. In short, they do not submit a video application in order to appear on the show. This is a key difference, for as we will see, *Supernanny* does not involve social organisations but rather positions Frost as the solution to the family's problems (though in keeping with the neoliberal leanings of the programme, she teaches them the necessary skills before leaving them to manage on their own). Crucially, the fact that the parents on *Supernanny* request help, indicates that they are aware of both their own personal failings and also the demands of a child-centred culture. *Bad Behaviour* provides us with more information than *Supernanny* about the participants' histories and allows us to understand how they ended up in their present predicament. Annie Marie, for example, reveals that she suffered domestic abuse in all of her relationships, an admission which allows the audience to feel sympathy for her (C4 2005). *Bad Behaviour's* focus on lower-class families, and the programme's documentary style, which I expand upon below, may help to explain why it did not share *Supernanny's* success.

Bad Behaviour's narrative structure and particular emphases distinguish it from *Supernanny* which blends education with entertainment. *Bad Behaviour* uses a documentary style rather than a makeover format and notably does not provide onscreen

¹¹⁴ In New Zealand *Bad Behaviour* was rated "adults only" (AO) due to its controversial content (the programme includes violence and swearing), whereas almost all of the later shows, including *Supernanny*, have received "parental guidance" ratings (PG). Unfortunately I was unable to find the original ratings for this show in the UK.

instructions for the audience to follow.¹¹⁵ There is little effort to make *Bad Behaviour* entertaining; in other words, the material is presented in a ‘serious’ manner. Except for the opening sequence, there is a complete absence of non-diegetic music which reinforces the more sober tone. *Bad Behaviour* does not foreground the use of surveillance technologies as *Supernanny* does: Instead the parents provide a daily report to Dyer via telephone, which implies that the camera crew is only there for the audience’s benefit. In terms of the format, *Bad Behaviour* is not divided into neat sections as is *Supernanny* and, while the former utilises a loose before and after narrative structure, it could not be described as a makeover text. As indicated above, in *Bad Behaviour* the transformation process is open-ended while in *Supernanny* it is limited to four weeks; the length of time Dyer spends working with the families varies between seven weeks and nine-months. Perhaps, in keeping with the documentary-style of the programme, *Bad Behaviour* offers less resolution. While the featured families undergo significant changes during the course of the show, they appear to be more realistic about the outcomes than *Supernanny*’s participants, revealing that although life is much better there is still a lot of work to be done.

There are significant differences between *Bad Behaviour* and *Supernanny* with respect to the expert and their roles within the narrative. *Bad Behaviour* features a male expert, a rarity in instructional parenting makeover shows. Dyer is married with two children, while Frost is single and childless. Dyer’s status as a father and a university-

¹¹⁵ Like documentaries, makeover shows typically feature ‘ordinary’ people, as opposed to actors, and ‘realistic’ elements, such as location shooting, hand-held cameras, subjective camera work and ‘unscripted’ narratives. However, many scholars argue that the makeover is a form of light entertainment rather than factual drama. Dover and Hill, for example, argue that the makeover’s popularity, its liberal use of editing, its dependence upon presenters and the “spectacle of the reveal,” means that it has “moved away from its information-based roots towards an entertainment frame” (37). Likewise, Kavka contends that, “the documentary underpinnings of reality television [have been] increasingly diluted by the importation of competitive elements from the game show, personal confession from the talk show and narrative arcs from television drama” (*Reality* 110).

trained teacher relates to larger debates about who is 'qualified' to offer advice to parents. The fact that Dyer is also middle-class, as indicated by his love of classical music shown at the start of the episodes, gives him more authority. Class status is paramount; as noted in the introduction to this chapter, first and second wave makeover shows typically feature middle to upper-class individuals who instruct lower-class individuals. Crucially, in *Bad Behaviour* Dyer never meets the children, nor are they aware of his existence; he believes his presence will undermine parental authority. Instead, he spends a single day with the parent(s) while the children are at school, discussing their concerns. The audience is given very little insight into what occurs during this meeting and there is no teaching period, where Dyer models his techniques for the parents. After Dyer's departure, parents call a family meeting where they explain the new rules and the consequences for misbehaving. As noted earlier, the only contact parents have with Dyer after this meeting is a daily phone call.

Little Angels builds upon *Bad Behaviour*'s format and develops some of the sub-genre's central themes. Like *Bad Behaviour*, this later programme screened in Britain on prime-time television. While *Little Angels* is obviously entertaining, the show draws more upon *Bad Behaviour*'s documentary-style than *Supernanny*'s edutainment format. Like *Bad Behaviour*, *Little Angels* also uses a loose before and after narrative structure and does not include instructions for the parents at home to follow. Similarly, *Little Angels* relies upon an omniscient female narrator to guide viewers through the episode and there is very little music during the episodes. As was the case with earlier parenting programmes, *Little Angels* attempted to link concerned viewers with social agencies by providing them with a helpline to call if they need guidance, which suggests that even at this stage television producers are still wary of providing parenting advice.

In terms of its format, *Little Angels* shares many similarities with *Bad Behaviour*. Dr Tanya Byron, a clinical psychologist, oversees the family's makeover. Like Dyer, she believes that the parents are to blame and that their view of their children (as Dionysian devils) is faulty. As with *Bad Behaviour* the transformation largely takes place in the family home, mirroring the domestication of childhood discussed in Chapter One. Likewise, the featured families are divorced from their wider social networks (extended family and friends), a theme which is reiterated in *Supernanny*. In *Little Angels* trips outside the home are rare and are usually reserved for teaching parents a specific technique. Like *Bad Behaviour*, and *Supernanny* which follows, *Little Angels*, employs a crisis narrative. This fact is exemplified by the narrator's claim that parents Sam and Tim Nerrise are "at their wit's end" (C4 2004), and helps to explain the depiction of Byron as the family's saviour. Despite its similarities with *Bad Behaviour*, there is one major difference between the two shows. *Little Angel's* families are primarily middle-class and do not appear to have come to the attention of state agencies. In short, *Little Angels* represents the first attempt to address middle-class subjects.

Little Angel's title sequence reveals the programme's aim; to transform little devils into little angels. This goal is evident from the images that appear on screen. We see three cartoon devils, complete with red horns, who morph into angels (indicated by the halos over their heads). The thunder heard at the start of the sequence is replaced by the sun and is accompanied by child-like laughter. After a short preview of the children's worst behaviour, we are introduced to the family, with the camera zooming in on each member. Byron arrives with video footage of the family (they agree to be filmed during the summer holidays) which she plays for the parents so as to identify areas of concern. Parents are often embarrassed by what they see and cover their heads in shame. After

reviewing the footage, Byron teaches parents a variety of techniques to deal with the family's issues. As is the case with all makeover shows, there is a specific technique for each of the problems identified. Once she has provided the parents with the necessary tools, Byron leaves the family for a week to try the techniques on their own. In contrast to *Bad Behaviour*, Byron does not rely upon the parents to report their progress but monitors them using video surveillance. She returns to the family's home a week later to provide hands-on coaching in areas that need improvement. *Little Angels* concludes with an update, where parents explain the changes that have occurred in their family life.

Little Angels and *Supernanny* address similar issues; however, as with *Bad Behaviour*, there are notable differences in the programmes' effects, the experts' qualifications and the methods used to achieve transformation. There were four thirty-minute episodes of *Little Angels* broadcast prior to *Supernanny's* arrival on air. Although *Little Angels* ran for a total of four seasons in the UK, it did not have the same impact upon the television landscape and parenting practices as *Supernanny*. The show was not included in a major Ipsos MORI study about the influence of parenting shows, and none of the episodes were released on DVD. *Little Angel's* expert, Byron, is married with two children while, as noted previously, Frost is a childless nanny. Byron relies, initially at least, on a week's worth of video footage of the family's day-to-day life to ascertain where the problems lie. In contrast, Frost invades the home; she is present for the entire observation and teaching period. In *Little Angels* Byron makes parents watch footage of their behaviour at the beginning of the show (a practice which leads to an early reveal), rather than the end as Frost does. Byron instructs parents using an earpiece and a monitor so as not to undermine the parents' authority while Frost

works directly with them (even taking over when the parents fail to implement the techniques correctly). In *Little Angels*, Byron attempts, if somewhat superficially, to address the root causes of the child's misbehaviour, in contrast to *Supernanny* which remains on the surface.

Although Byron uses similar parenting techniques to Frost, there are subtle differences. For example, she does not agree with using what she calls "time-out" for every misdemeanour but, instead, employs it only as a last resort. Byron, like Frost, advocates giving children two warnings (one in a nice voice, one in a firm voice) before sending them to a 'boring' room in the house where they must stay until they have calmed down. If the child attempts to escape, Byron instructs parents to hold the door shut (Frost does not allow this): according to her, this practice is not abusive as the child is safe. She also advises parents to ignore their children if they are having a tantrum, as she believes that giving them attention reinforces this negative behaviour. Byron, like Frost, introduces a reward system to encourage good behaviour. As with *Bad Behaviour*, and *Supernanny* that follows, *Little Angels* promotes what can best be described as an authoritative parenting style, a model that balances 'love' with 'firmness.'

Bad Behaviour and *Little Angels* helped to lay the groundwork for *Supernanny* and to solidify central components of the instructional parenting makeover sub-genre. Both appeared on prime-time British television in the early 2000s and revealed that there was a contemporary audience for televised parenting advice. In these two shows we see the gradual introduction of middle-class subjects (who significantly have *requested* help, but believe that it is their children, not them, who are the problem), which differentiates these programmes from earlier ones which focused primarily on 'uneducated' and/or

lower-class parents. *Bad Behaviour* and *Little Angels* illustrate the experts' preference for the authoritative model discussed in Chapter One and suggest that the parents' primary role is to ensure their child's successful socialisation. These later programmes begin to take over the role of government agencies intervening more in parenting, but do not invade the home to the same degree as *Supernanny* does. When compared with the shows of the 1970s and 1980s, *Bad Behaviour* and *Little Angels* highlight key shifts in parenting programmes in a post-public service broadcasting climate, including a move towards commercially-funded content.

Bad Behaviour and *Little Angels* also introduce some of the key characteristics of this sub-genre. These elements include the participation of 'real' families with 'real problems' which explains the need for 'expert' intervention, the centrality of the heroic expert to the transformative process, the possibility of fixing the family through simple parenting techniques, the use of surveillance to aid the process, the individualisation of the family's issues, and the home as the site of metamorphosis, all of which are adopted by *Supernanny*. Most importantly, even though *Bad Behaviour* and *Little Angels* emerge during a period in which the child's sentimental value is taken as a given, they stress the importance of parental techniques ('care of') at the expense of the affective dimensions of parenthood ('care about'). Having provided a brief history of televised parenting advice I now turn my attention to *Supernanny*, to differentiate it from these earlier examples.

Dollars for Deviance: The Supernanny Format

Of all the instructional parenting makeover programmes broadcast in the twenty-first century, *Supernanny* has been the most popular with broadcasters and viewers alike. A 2006 Ipsos MORI poll found that *Supernanny* was the most watched parenting show in the UK: 42% of all adults surveyed had seen Frost at work, compared with several other programmes which scored between 4% and 25%.¹¹⁶ The first two seasons of *Supernanny* regularly attracted audiences in the tens of millions. Unlike many television shows which do not last beyond the first season, *Supernanny* defied all odds: even after four seasons, the programme still rated as one of ABC's most watched shows (Perks and Gatchet 811). *Supernanny* has won several prestigious awards including "The Best Reality Show" (The Royal Television Society, London 2005) and a Rose d'Or (Switzerland 2005). This mix of popularity and acclaim is unusual for a reality show as such programmes are often criticised for 'lowering' television standards due to their poor "production values, high emotions, cheap antics and questionable ethics" (Murray and Ouellette 2). It is no longer appropriate to talk about reality television in a negative manner because its focus on teaching audiences means that it "is reconfigured as a facilitator of the public good" and thus can claim real social effects (Kavka, *Reality* 134). Frost's repeated assertions to the press that she is "performing a public service" (Perry n.p.) could be seen as evidence of this.

Supernanny was created by Ricochet, a UK production company which makes a considerable amount of "factual entertainment" and mirrors the industry's move

¹¹⁶ The other shows were: *Brat Camp*, *House of Tiny Tearaways*, *Honey We're Killing the Children*, *Driving Mum and Dad Mad*, *Child of Our Time*, *Mum's on Strike*, *Who Rules the Roost*, *My Teenager's a Nightmare*, *Teenage Terror* to *Teenage Angel*.

towards cheap and easily reproducible formats which I expand upon below.¹¹⁷

According to the company's slogan, Ricochet prides itself on creating "TV that changes people's lives."¹¹⁸ In Foucauldian thought, 'the people' is an invented category produced by groups such as politicians so as to maintain control over them. In this context I suggest that the term "the people" refers both to the show's participants and to the viewers. In other words, Ricochet sees itself as having a positive effect on the candidates whose lives it transforms *and* the home audience. Frost echoes this view, telling one reporter:

The reason I'm doing this show is to use television in an *effective, positive* way so that parents understand they can improve their family life [...] I hope that people will watch it and think to themselves, '*well if that family can make those changes, so can I.*' (emphasis added Tally 25)

While *Other People's Children*, *All about Babies* and *All about Toddlers* struggled to influence parenting behaviour, Frost has achieved her aim.¹¹⁹ In 2003 she was named as one of six childrearing experts (Truby King, Dr Spock, Donald Winnicott, Penelope

¹¹⁷ Other popular factual entertainment and reality TV produced by Ricochet during this time include: *Risking it all* (C4 2004 – 2007), *How Not to Decorate* (C4 2004 – 2006) and *Who Rules the Roost* (BBC3 2004 – 2005).

¹¹⁸ <www.ricochet.co.uk>. (n.p.).

¹¹⁹ Large scale investigations support the claim that *Supernanny* has impacted the way that parents raise their children. An IPSOS Mori survey commissioned by the NFPI in 2006 found that the majority of viewers who watched *Supernanny* or other instructional parenting programmes did so in order to improve their parenting skills (1). The study, which conducted face-to-face interviews with 3,938 adults in the UK, found that these programmes influence parenting behaviour, with many viewers considering the programmes to be an effective educational tool: 83% of parents found at least one technique featured on these programmes helpful to them (NFPI 7).

Leach and Gina Ford) who have had the biggest impact upon parenting over the past 100 years (A. Campbell n.p.).

The differences between early British parenting shows and *Supernanny* highlight transformations in the television industry and society at large. In contrast to *All about Babies* and *All about Toddlers*, *Supernanny* first aired on a publically-owned, but commercially-run, television channel. The fact that the programme screened on C4 highlights the changing relationship between television and the State, with commercial imperatives increasingly replacing older public-service models (Burton 2000). This transition helps to explain the merging of education with entertainment in television content and the rise of reality/makeover formats which, as I discuss below, are not only frequently cheaper to produce but also provide a platform for the sale of commodities due to their focus on transformation. Unlike the earlier examples and akin with *Bad Behaviour* and *Little Angels*, this long-running series was not relegated to daytime television but was broadcast in a prime-time slot alongside popular fictional dramas. Furthermore, *Supernanny* attracted audience numbers in the millions, was globally successful, and took cross-promotional marketing strategies to a whole new level. As I argue, *Supernanny's* success can in part be attributed to its use of the makeover format and its combination of education and entertainment.

In contrast to the fictional shows of the 1970s and 80s, *Supernanny* features “‘real’ people in ‘real’ life situations” (G. Palmer 2004).¹²⁰ The programme’s producers

¹²⁰ Many critics argued that the featured families were extreme examples. Nancy Samalin, a parent educator in Manhattan told reporters, “I’ve been working with parents for twenty-five years and the families on these shows are definitely not typical” (Gilbert n.p.). *Supernanny's* depiction of the featured children was the subject of much debate, with accusations that the children were encouraged to misbehave for the cameras. After the programme aired, a member of C4’s founding board claimed that children were forced to cry in order to increase the show’s ratings (M. Rosenberg n.p.). Producer Paul Jackson rejected these claims stating that *Supernanny* did not “exaggerate or distort” the families’ problems” (M. Rosenberg n.p.). Significantly, a study revealed that female viewers were less likely to

promised to both reveal what family life was like behind closed doors and provide viewers with solutions to ‘real-life’ issues.¹²¹ Although *Supernanny* claims to disclose the truth about family life, as will become evident in Chapter Three, the programme is heavily edited and follows a similar trajectory from week to week. Moreover, it relies upon professional labour to produce what Anna Everett calls “desirable fictions” or stories of “plenitude, power and pleasure” (160). Everett is writing specifically about home makeover shows; however, her argument equally applies to *Supernanny*, as the latter implies that one can have the perfect family simply by consuming the ‘right’ advice.

Supernanny is a classic example of what is commonly described as “edutainment,” or “infotainment” (Chandler and Munday n.p.), a hybrid programme that blends education/information with entertainment. As Matthew Sanders and Ron Prinz note, parents are meant to “find the programme interesting and fun at the same time as they learn about [...] how to deal with their children’s health and development” (79). Unlike *Bad Behaviour* and *Little Angels*, *Supernanny* repeatedly stressed its educational value by including onscreen instructions for the audience at home to follow.¹²² Although *Supernanny* adopts a pedagogical position, entertainment remains a key priority for the show’s producers. As I illustrate in Chapter Three, *Supernanny* uses various delaying

believe that *Supernanny* sensationalised family life. Only 33% of women believed they were unrealistic, compared with 44% of men, a fact which is unsurprising considering that women often bear the brunt of childrearing (NFPI 4).

¹²¹ Children are often presumed to be innocent when it comes to appearing on television; however, as Jennie Bristow suggests, this may not always be the case: “We think that the programme shows us how children actually behave – it could simply be showing us how they behave when provoked into various artificial situations at the time of filming” (12).

¹²² Numerous viewers were unhappy with *Supernanny*’s educational label, stating that the show’s producers should have provided a helpline for parents struggling with the issues the show raised (Jensen, “Beyond” 2009).

strategies to keep viewers engaged until the end of the programme. This tension between *Supernanny*'s educational goals and the need to present material in an entertaining manner was a source of much debate; as I note in the conclusion many critics questioned the programme's educational claims. *Supernanny*'s focus on educating parents links it with the neoliberal agenda, which seeks not only to produce "good consumers," but "model citizens" as well (Ouellette and Hay 66). As indicated above, the 'good' citizen is one who both consumes responsibly and does everything possible to ensure they are not a burden on the state.

In the choices for the content and format of *Supernanny* we see a response to the metamorphosis from a welfare state, which 'cares' for its citizens, to a free-market economy where private enterprises dominate and the individual is expected to be self-sufficient. In this context, television is depicted as a "resource" which enables individuals to achieve this goal (Ouellette and Hay 4). *Supernanny*'s producers did not mobilise social institutions for viewers seeking additional help but, rather, encouraged them to apply for a place on the show, a move which mirrors the shift towards the privatisation of care; Frost is depicted as the solution to the family's problems. These points highlight the child-centeredness of Western society and suggest that 'bad' parenting is something to be ashamed of. Of all the differences identified, it is *Supernanny*'s focus on largely middle-class participants, as opposed to the 'uneducated' and/or lower-class audience members addressed by the shows from the 1970s, which is the most surprising, because it suggests that *all* parents, regardless of their social class, need educating in 'correct' childcare methods.

*Contexts for Televising Transformation: The Makeover*¹²³

As indicated in the Introduction, instructional parenting programmes like *Supernanny* share common elements which enable them to be categorised as makeover texts. It is necessary to situate the programme within the makeover sub-genre so as to demonstrate its significance for television scholars. More importantly, I explore the makeover in relation to Foucault's notion of care of the self (*Care* [1984] 1990) and chart how this goal is achieved in each of the three waves. I do not seek to provide an account of the ethical subject, as Foucault does, but rather, to highlight how this notion (care of the self) is taken up in makeover television. Like ancient Greek regimes, in *Supernanny* caring for the self entails caring for one's children. The programme also emphasises self-reflection which is a key aspect of this earlier model. Additionally, *Supernanny* encourages ongoing education, emphasises the labour involved in care of the self and the importance of self-mastery.

Makeover programming belongs to a broader cultural instruction to change. The term "makeover" refers both to programmes on television and to a larger cultural imperative which demands continual transformation (M. Jones 2006). The call to transform one's life is not unique to the twenty-first century but, as Foucault demonstrates in discussing ancient Greek culture, it has been taken up in a variety of ways throughout history (*Care* [1984] 1990). The fact that parenting has become the latest target of makeover programming, reinforces my overall argument that parenting is understood as a skill to be acquired rather than a sentimental bond.

¹²³ This title comes from my Master's thesis, "Televising Transformation: A Close Analysis of *Extreme Makeover* and *The Swan*" (2007). The work is listed under my maiden name (Aronsen).

In ancient Greece, the cultivation of one's soul, the ethical requirement to obtain self-knowledge and the desire to transform oneself into a work of art were considered to be the primary goals of existence (Foucault, [1984] 1990). In contrast, contemporary attempts to transform citizens appear 'soul-less': in this later model, one is 'educated' only in the "consumer arts" (G. Palmer, *Introduction* 1). Today transformation is achieved through consumption and makeovers typically focus on outward appearances as opposed to improving one's inner self.¹²⁴ The call to reinvent oneself raises philosophical questions about the extent to which individuals can change their lives. This issue is beyond the scale of my inquiry; however, it is necessary to consider the historical sources which inform this present-day imperative as it points to shifts in the relationship between self and improvement.

Despite its relatively recent appearance on TV, the makeover is not new.¹²⁵ The term "makeover" was first used in the October 1860 edition of the New York satirical magazine *Vanity Fair* in a segment titled "Adornment" which featured Ms Angelica Makeover, a fictional character, who was celebrated for her ability to transform her "coarse hair" into "waves of beauty" (Miller 146). The contemporary makeover narrative draws historically from a range of sources. These include classical myth (Ovid's *Metamorphoses*), religious stories of death and rebirth (the Christian Crucifix), fairytales (Charles Perrault's 1697 *Cinderella* and Hans Christian Anderson's 1843 *The Ugly Duckling*), nineteenth-century advice manuals, early advertisements (primarily for women's cosmetics which used before and after structures), plays (George Bernard

¹²⁴ Wheeler Winston Dixon argues makeover programmes are not interested in small fixes, but rather, in spectacular transformations and therefore can be said to promote *hyperconsumption* (2008). This emphasis on excess may explain what critics have referred to as the extreme nature of families featured on *Supernanny*.

¹²⁵ See Peiss (1998), Fraser (2003), Ford and Mitchell (2004), Heller (2006 and 2007), Bratich (2007), Lewis (2008), Weber (2009) and Jeffers McDonald (2010).

Shaw's 1916 *Pygmalion*), films,¹²⁶ novels (Winifred Watson's 1938 *Miss Pettigrew Lives for a Day*) and women's magazines.¹²⁷ Scholars have also observed links with the American myth of reinvention (Crawley 2006; Sender 2012). This diverse range of sources helps, in part, to explain the makeover's ongoing interests.

Television provides a perfect medium to showcase the makeover, due to its visuality and ability to document spectacular transformations (M. Cassidy 2006). In the UK and US early television precursors include 1950s British DIY and hobbyist shows, American "misery" programmes like *Glamour Girl* (NBC 1953 – 1954) and *Queen for a Day* (NBC 1956 – 1964), 1990's US transformation-themed talk shows, and a range of UK lifestyle fare.¹²⁸ Later makeover programmes have retained an educational dimension; however this is, as Charlotte Brunsdon notes, increasingly "subordinated to an instantaneous display of transformation" ("Lifestyling" 80). Furthermore, unlike early hobby shows, which encouraged viewers to use products they had at home, contemporary makeover programming promotes consumption and addresses its audience members as customers ("Lifestyling" 2004).

Most scholars agree that makeover programming appeared on British television in the mid-1990s. *Bad Behaviour*, *Little Angels* and *Supernanny* did not emerge until the early 2000s and were a response to the industry's need for continued innovation. According to Misha Kavka, the broadcast of *Changing Rooms* (BBC 1996 - 2004) on UK television in 1996 marked the official start of the hour-long, prime-time makeover. As with other successful formats, this home renovation series spawned a multitude of

¹²⁶ See for example, Méliès' 1901 short film, *La Chrysalide et le Papillon d'Or*, Cecil DeMille's 1921 *Forbidden Fruit*, Irving Rapping's 1942 *Now, Voyager* and Gary Marshall's 1990 *Pretty Woman*.

¹²⁷ For the first magazine makeover see the November 1936 edition of *Mademoiselle* (Peiss 1998).

¹²⁸ See Brunsdon (2004), M. Cassidy (2006), Watts (2006), Bratich (2007) and Dover and Hill (2007).

home makeover shows across the globe (Kavka, “Changing” 211). Even though it had been a staple of day-time talk shows, the full-length makeover format did not appear on US television until much later, with the arrival of *Extreme Makeover: Home Edition* in 2002 (Kavka 2006).¹²⁹ As indicated in the Introduction, I examine both the UK and US versions of *Supernanny*, as although the series originated in Britain, the phenomenon quickly spread across the Atlantic. Since their appearance on television in the late-nineties, we have witnessed an explosion of these types of shows, leading to what Rachel Moseley has described as a “makeover takeover” (2000).¹³⁰ Today makeover programmes regularly outperform popular scripted drama in terms of audience ratings (Heller 2007), and TV networks often dedicate entire channels to this format (Raisborough 5).¹³¹

I argue that makeover programming can be divided into “three waves” (Fowler and Kambuta 265) as, partly in order to survive in the new millennium, the makeover’s focus shifted from the home/garden to the human body. In the UK this transition was marked by the broadcast of the hugely popular, *What Not to Wear* (BBC1/BBC2 2001 – 2007), while in the US, this second wave was heralded by the arrival of two controversial cosmetic surgery shows, *Extreme Makeover* (ABC 2002 – 2007) and *The Swan* (Fox 2004). More recently, the makeover has turned its attention to the family

¹²⁹ It is crucial to note that both culture and the televisual environments in both the UK and US played significant roles in the types of programmes that were, and continue to be, made (Kavka 2006). In the former, experts tend to renovate homes and gardens. These programmes typically screen on free-to-air channels. In contrast, in the US, makeover programmes focus primarily on transforming the physical body and are broadcast on network television. These distinctions are noteworthy for they reveal “culturally specific notions of self and space, as well as place-based definitions of ‘property’” (Kavka, “Changing” 212). In United States property renovations shows are usually only broadcast on cable channels such as The Learning Channel (TLC) and Home and Garden Television (HGTV) (Kavka 2006).

¹³⁰ Brenda Weber’s research supports this claim; she identifies over 200 different makeover shows on US cable television alone, a number which has grown since the publication of her book in 2009.

¹³¹ While makeover shows may have supplanted drama to some extent, they still rely upon ‘dramatic’ elements, such as “conflict, emotion and stereotypes” in order to attract an audience (Taylor 489).

unit: shows which investigate familial relations are the latest spin-off in this ever-evolving format and constitute a “third wave” of makeover programming (Fowler and Kambuta 265).¹³² These three waves constitute an evolution of caring for the self: while the first two waves attempt to solve identity crises through the consumption of goods and services, the third wave is much more technique-focussed. *Supernanny* differs from first and second wave makeovers due to its extended format, its transformation of multiple participants, its shortened reveal, its focus on techniques as opposed to the consumption of goods, its emphasis upon middle-class subjects and the more active role they must play in the process and the inclusion of a lower-class female expert. Before discussing how *Supernanny* extends the format developed by the first two waves, it is necessary to consider the reasons behind the spread of these narratives, as scholarship suggests that makeover programming is part of a much larger strategy to ensure the continued survival of the television networks.

Economic, Industrial and Technological Factors

We cannot explain the explosion of makeover shows simply as a response to audience demand. We must also consider the various economic and industrial changes which have transformed the television industry. As many scholars have noted, the reality television genre, of which makeover programming is a part, emerged as the result of major restructuring within the television industry in the 1980s - 1990s, initiated

¹³² For a list of programmes included in this third wave see Appendix C.

by the introduction of a market economy.¹³³ Chad Raphael asserts that in the United States, reality TV was a “fiscal strategy,” born out of a variety of factors including union battles, the deregulation of the television industry, changes to the regulatory environment, competition from an ever-increasing number of cable channels and declining rates of advertising (121). In both the UK and US the increasing commercialisation of the broadcasting industry has meant a shift away from an educational public service approach to a more populist and market-orientated model (Lewis 2008 and 2009; Ouellette and Hay 2008).¹³⁴ Reality/makeover shows are more economical to produce than prime-time dramas because they do not generally feature big name stars. In addition, they also require minimal pre-production work and limited script work (Morris 2007). The practice of licensing television formats also helps to explain the makeover’s popularity, as it provides additional income for producers. As Kavka explains, “in format sales, [the] programme is stripped down to its [...] marketing template and sold to a foreign production company, which injects cultural specificity to give it local flavour” (*Reality* 111). The sale of television formats globally has increased in recent years as they provide production companies with a “tried-and-true formula” (Lewis, *Changing* 9). In sum, reality/makeover programmes must be understood as part of a larger struggle to produce cheaper formats in order to stay afloat in a highly-competitive industry.¹³⁵

¹³³ See Dovey (2000), Ouellette and Murray (2004), Raphael (2004) and Kavka (2012).

¹³⁴ Although the British broadcasting model differs from the American one (the UK has a long-standing tradition of public-service TV while the US has always operated on a commercial basis), it shares many of the same problems and has also been forced to adapt (Kavka 2012).

¹³⁵ Reality television’s proliferation cannot be separated from technological advances. Producers have greatly benefited from the development of lightweight cameras, digital technologies and new editing software, as well as the increasing availability of internet and cell-phones. Crucially, as Albert Moran notes, reality television relies upon “a technological infrastructure [which] facilitates and maintains the operation of [media] organizations” (21). These global communication networks are central to the sale

As indicated previously, television producers must continually balance competing demands, which involve providing quality entertainment while at the same time ensuring that programmes are commercially successful. Makeover formats are particularly appealing to producers because they provide an ideal platform for selling products to audiences who are wary of traditional forms of advertising.¹³⁶ In 2005, PQ Media estimated that in United States alone product placement in films and television shows was worth 4.25 billion dollars (Kiley n.p.). The practice of using television programmes to advertise products has not escaped critical attention. June Deery, for example, describes makeover programmes as “prime-time infomercials” due to their focus on consumable items (2004).¹³⁷ Sears, the main sponsor of *Extreme Makeover: Home Edition*, displays numerous purchasable household items (furniture, household appliances and haberdashery) during the sixty-minute broadcast which viewers can purchase. The programme insists that the consumption of particular household goods will enable self-actualisation.

Supernanny’s producers have successfully marketed their product. Spying an opportunity to cash in on the 1.7 trillion dollar parenting industry (P. Paul 10), *Supernanny*’s producers released US seasons one and two on DVD (as well as a third DVD titled *Supernanny: When Little Children Cause Big Headaches*) and developed a range of themed-merchandise (books, wall calendars and reward charts) that parents can purchase off the show’s website. It is estimated that since the programme first went to air, consumers have purchased in excess of five million pounds worth of *Supernanny*

and distribution of television formats. This convergence of ‘old’ (television) and ‘new’ (web) media is significant, for *Supernanny*’s interactive webpage played a key role the brand’s success.

¹³⁶ See Deery (2004), G. Palmer (2008), Sender (2012).

¹³⁷ The practice of product placement is not unique to makeover television; it occurs in fictional drama as well.

merchandise (Thompson n.p.), which has resulted in *Supernanny* becoming a “superbrand” (Roberts n.p.).¹³⁸ If boundaries ever existed between television programming and advertising, these have been blurred even further by the makeover text. In the following section I examine the diversity of makeover programming to establish a general list of characteristics against which we can measure the third wave nature of *Supernanny*.

The Makeover Format

Despite the diverse nature of televisual makeovers, these programmes share broad similarities, both in terms of their format and content. If we examine the first of these, the format, we can identify parallels in the way the narratives are structured. The makeover show is recognisable by its infamous before and after shots around which the narrative is based (Kavka, “Changing” 213). While the former is coded as ‘bad,’ the latter is depicted as ‘good’ (Kavka, *Reality* 126).¹³⁹ As Weber notes, “before bodies/subjects are [...] marked by desperation and anxiety” (58). When we analyse *Supernanny*’s format, the desperation of the parents – who willingly submit to Frost’s demands, is evident, emphasising how the child-centred nature of contemporary society pushes parents to improve themselves. Before bodies are guilty of “excessive ‘negative’ emotionalism” (Weber 58), a characteristic which is typically associated with children. In contrast, adults are typically defined as rational and self-controlled individuals, a

¹³⁸ ‘Care’ is thus not just about behaviour, but also includes the tools for instruction.

¹³⁹ Judging whether the “after” is really an improvement “constitutes an important part of the viewers’ [...] pleasure” (Kavka, “Changing” 213).

claim I weigh in my analysis of *Supernanny* in Chapter Three.¹⁴⁰ Crucially, in the makeover narrative change is always presented in a positive light (Weber 2009). Throughout the broadcast, the makeover format regularly returns to the ‘before’ in order to justify the present actions.

For makeover candidates, the before is characterised by humiliation. Angela McRobbie describes participants as “victims” due to the shame they suffer (2004). This humiliation, however, is forgotten at the reveal or the moment of revelation because “the end product of heightened happiness and self-esteem makes abjection [...] a means to an end” (Weber 76). At the reveal, the ‘new’ self is publically displayed and approved (Raisborough 51). The reveal not only highlights the expert’s proficiency but also implies that “the transformed subject has gained new access to a better self and a nicer life,” which in turn justifies the programme’s intrusion (Weber 30). Makeover subjects often feel empowered, and typically state, “I can do anything now!” Only certain emotions are allowed to be expressed at the after; “these include [...] a relentless cheerfulness and ‘positive attitude’” (Weber 88). This rejection of (negative) emotions is evident in *Supernanny*, which I expand upon in Chapters Three and Four.

Although the after is represented as a “solid and unproblematic moment of success” it is only temporary (Raisborough 142). The after becomes yet another before, so as to ensure the continuation of consumer culture and the politics of ‘self-cultivation’ that are part of the neoliberal subject. Rather than resolving issues of self, the makeover’s “endless process of transformation [means that it] foregrounds the shifting and insecure nature of material existence” (Lewis “Introduction” 4). As I expand in Chapter Three, in *Supernanny* there is a sense that parents must continually update their childrearing skills

¹⁴⁰ See for example, Jenks (1991), Goldson (1997) and Jenkins (1998),

to ensure the best outcome for their growing children. I argue that this need to constantly up-skill contributes to the anxiety that parents feel.

In terms of the basic format, the contemporary televisual makeover is typically divided into three main parts (the before, during, and after), a fact which distinguishes it from early magazine examples, which neglected to show the process of transformation (Fraser 2003). As I demonstrate in the following chapter, *Supernanny* extends the typical tripartite structure of the makeover by dividing the narrative into five parts. Deery summarises the format in the following manner; “the cataloguing and displaying of problems and inadequacies; the dramatic intervention and transformation by the experts; before and after revelations displaying the new product” (“Interior” 163). Although the time devoted to each of the makeover’s segments varies, most of the broadcast is devoted to the first two. It seems the journey of transformation is more important than the end result; as M. Jones contends, makeover culture favours the process of *becoming* over *being* (2008). The duration of the participant’s suffering is emphasised, with an elongated before segment which “communicates the extent of the problem and its seriousness to the audience” and justifies the intervention (Raisborough 126). The ‘during,’ as it has become known, is essential to the narrative because it highlights the *labour* of transformation (Weber 2009) and insists that the end result is the outcome of *hard work* rather than careful editing. As Joanne Morreale concludes, labour provides an assurance of authenticity (2009). Makeovers provide viewers with closure or a “happily-ever-after” ending where all of the problems identified at the start of the narrative are neatly resolved.

Makeover shows devote a significant amount of broadcast time to the transformation process, however there is often pressure to complete it within a very

short period, a fact which has not escaped attention. Makeover programmes have been heavily criticised for their ‘quick fix’ formula and surface engagement with problems (Maio 2005; Kohn 2012). As I illustrate below, in *Supernanny* problems are recast as individual failings with no mention of the wider social forces that impact upon families. In *Extreme Makeover: Home Edition*, the dream team has only seven days to build, decorate and furnish an entire house. The suspense as to whether they will complete the makeover adds to the drama of these programmes and also demonstrates the expert’s skill in handling competing demands and unexpected delays (Raisborough 2011). In contrast, Frost spends three to four weeks working with families, suggesting that behavioural changes take much longer to achieve.

Makeover programming often uses time compression techniques such as rapid editing and time-lapse photography to represent events that take hours or even days. In second-wave makeover shows, “surgery is often shown using fast-forward motion, condensing hours of surgery into a mere few minutes of broadcast time” (Aronsen, “Televising” 67). *Supernanny* uses similar techniques to reduce four weeks of filming into a fifty-minute broadcast. The use of time compression techniques in makeover programming is problematic because it emphasises the ‘magical’ nature of transformation and can be said to promote unrealistic ideas about the nature of such changes. Significantly, for my thesis, there are very different temporalities at the heart of the makeover and childhood: while the former promote sudden transformation, as we saw in Chapter One the latter is characterised by incremental growth. In short, the makeover format cannot adequately represent the long-term nature of child development.

In first and second wave programmes, the makeover is frequently portrayed as a reward for “deserving” individuals. Participants tend to be citizens who have given their time serving others or those who have suffered misfortune caused by circumstances outside of their control (Ouellette and Hay 2008; Raisborough 2011).¹⁴¹ Ouellette and Hay describe these individuals as “the deserving poor” because they do not depend upon the state for help (2008). They are “model citizens who are perfectly capable of self-governance if not for the ill-wind of disease, death or destruction” (Kavka, *Reality* 140). *Extreme Makeover*’s focus on ‘good Samaritans’ and ‘victims of tragedies’ reinforces the message that only those who make ‘right’ decisions merit help. The focus on emotional stories is also undoubtedly a marketing ploy designed to ensure high viewer numbers (Ouellette and Hay 2008). *Supernanny* differs from most first and second-wave makeover shows because its candidates are not chosen for their services to the community but, rather, because they present a potential future ‘danger’ to society.

Once we consider the stages of the television makeover, so disciplinary practices become evident. Participants are required to share intimate details of their lives in order to receive a makeover; hence the confession, or the “sob story” as it is often referred to (Watts 143), is a prerequisite to transformation. Subjects must first acknowledge their inadequacies to initiate the process. It is worth examining the confession further, for it is a central technique in the operation of biopower, a regulatory system which seeks to control the “mechanics of life” (Foucault, *Will* 139).¹⁴² According to Foucault, confession requires two parties (the confessor and the interlocutor) and reveals unequal power relationships; the interlocutor requires the confession and has the ability to

¹⁴¹ It is for this reason that makeover television is often described as “feel-good TV.”

¹⁴² While disciplinary power works on the soul, biopower operates on an unconscious level, and together with the former, seeks to subjugate bodies and control the population so as to ensure the continuation of the capitalist system (Will [1976] 1998).

“judge, punish, forgive, console and reconcile” (Will 61). As the confessor is unable to see the ‘truth’ about him or herself, the interlocutor must decode it for them. Confession is considered to have a transformational function due to its association with therapeutic discourse; in short, those who admit their fears, desires and/or inadequacies believe themselves to be ‘saved.’ In contemporary Western culture however, confession does not guarantee eternal life, but rather, ensures a better life in the present (McNay 121).

The confession plays a fundamental role in the makeover narrative. It not only underscores the need for a makeover but is also crucial in suturing viewers into the text. In makeover programming, the experts are positioned as interlocutors who have the power to demand the subject’s confession and to determine the ‘truth’ of the situation. As with the ancien régime, in the contemporary televisual makeover text confessions are compulsory; in *Supernanny*, as with first and second wave makeover, submission tapes are required as part of the application process. The participants’ confessions not only mark their submission to these experts, but also to the audience at home and ultimately justify the intensive surveillance they are subjected to. This practice of forcing makeover subjects to reveal personal information has not escaped critical attention, with scholars accusing networks of exploiting vulnerable individuals (M. Cassidy 2006; Watts 2006). Similar concerns appear in the debates about *Supernanny*.¹⁴³

The makeover process frequently occurs in almost total isolation from family and friends (Weber 105). It could be argued that, in their before state, participants are unfit to be ‘seen in public.’ In fact, in many cases, pre-makeover subjects admit that they shy away from public places due to how they look, or, in the case of *Supernanny*, because of

¹⁴³ Many argued that *Supernanny* was profiting from the misery of others: as one viewer wrote, “OK, parents do have difficulties, some big difficulties with their children. But bringing those difficulties into a MONEY making TV show is disgusting” (“avi01” n.p.).

their children's bad behaviour. In *The Swan* the women are sent away from their families and are not allowed to see themselves in a mirror until their transformation is complete. The isolation of the participants works to the producer's advantage; in the makeover scopic access to the subject is "carefully controlled in order to produce an entertaining and profitable spectacle" (Deery, "Interior" 170). In first and second wave makeover shows, family and friends' reactions to the subject's transformation are captured using close-ups. In contrast to these earlier formats, in *Supernanny* the "reveal" is less spectacular. Although extended family members occasionally comment upon the parents' and/or the children's transformations, there is no public 'unveiling,' perhaps due to the nature of the makeover. While it is easy to *see* home and body alterations, behavioural changes are much harder to present.

Makeover programmes transform *individuals*, not society. All three waves extract individuals from the wider socio-political context. It is only in first wave shows that the community is included in the makeover process, a fact which can be explained firstly by the need for additional labour and secondly, by the community's desire to help the 'deserving' subject(s). According to Deery, ignoring the socio-cultural factors not only "adds to the magic of the solution" but also, "reinforces the commercial ideology of individually buying one's happiness without questioning the social arrangements under which one lives" ("Interior" 168). The makeover has a "solution-based economy" (Weber 76) meaning that it only identifies problems it can solve within the given time-frame. The makeover is not concerned not with changing society but with the individual. As has been noted above, this is a format designed to sell both audiences to advertisers and products to consumers.

In *all* cases, the makeover occurs with the ‘help’ of various ‘experts,’ such as cosmetic surgeons, psychologists, personal trainers, dieticians, style advisors, hair-dressers, life-coaches and nannies. The inclusion of the expert is vital, for it is what distinguishes makeover programmes from observational documentaries (Jensen, “Beyond” 2009). The expert’s primary role is to instruct candidates in the ‘right kind’ of consumption and/or behaviour (G. Palmer 2008).¹⁴⁴ The experts are thus very harsh in their evaluation of participants. For example, in *Extreme Makeover: Body Edition*, the surgeons frequently use words such as “droopy,” “saggy,” “flabby” and “unfeminine” to describe the women’s bodies (Aronsen 2007). As G. Palmer notes, makeover narratives are driven by a ‘cruel to be kind’ type of logic (2008). While some first wave programmes use ‘do-it-yourself’ (DIY) techniques, many second wave makeover shows, particularly cosmetic surgery ones, rely upon highly “specialized and expensive [forms] of labor” (Kavka, “Changing” 220). Significantly, in these programmes, the surgeons are represented as god-like figures and the makeover is often depicted as an answer to prayer (Aronsen 2004). The expert foregrounds the makeover’s hierarchical power structures. The subject’s reliance upon the expert’s specialised knowledge means that s/he occupies a subordinate position in the narrative, an issue I expand upon in Chapter Three.

In makeover television the expert is a contradictory figure. Not only are they depicted as ‘god-like’ figures (Weber 2009), but they also are often applauded for their ‘ordinariness.’ As G. Palmer argues, in neoliberal economies the makeover expert will typically have gained their experience in the marketplace: “practical visible evidence of their efficacy in training dogs, hoodlums and unruly children [...] takes pride over any

¹⁴⁴ The makeover not only teaches subjects to buy the ‘right’ products and services but also to consume ‘responsibly.’ As scholars have noted, excessive consumption is depicted as equally problematic (Andrews and Carter 2008; Raisborough 2011).

paper qualifications” (“Introduction” 8). The question of what qualifies one to offer (parenting) advice is pertinent, as numerous viewers criticised Frost because she does not have a degree.¹⁴⁵

As should be obvious, there are several key elements of the makeover format which appear in all three waves. These components include the ‘before’ and ‘after’ images which both provide structure for the narrative and evidence of the participants’ transformations, the pressure of limited time to complete the makeover, which adds to the suspense and provides an indication of the expert’s skill at handling competing demands, the isolation of the participants until the final reveal, the makeover’s solution-based economy, its focus on the individual rather than society, and the central role of the expert who is simultaneously depicted as ordinary and extraordinary. Makeover programmes differ in their degree of adherence to this formula, a fact which is evident in their response to the problem of caring for the self.

Makeover Television and Care of the Self

Although care is a central theme of the makeover, it has been largely neglected in academic scholarship on television. A central goal of this chapter is to extend the discussion of care in Chapter One to demonstrate how it is represented across all three waves of makeover programming and to examine how care is tied to control. Ultimately

¹⁴⁵ In online forums Frost was discredited by numerous parents who argued she had no right telling parents how to raise their children as she does not have any of her own. One respondent wrote, “I’d love to watch her with three children of her own. I’m sorry but I think shed (sic) need somebodys (sic) advice (“Dainy1313” n.p.). It is interesting that many criticise Frost’s ability given that historically speaking, the majority of nannies were single and childless (Holden 2013). Like her fictional counterparts (Maria, Mary Poppins and Nanny McPhee), Frost is represented as being married to the job.

I argue that while in first and second wave makeover programmes redemption occurs through the consumption of commodities (Raisborough 2011), techniques of the self play a much larger role in third wave shows.

In the makeover, care operates thematically. According to Weber, makeovers “teach a way of being, a care of the self [...] that can be visually discerned and popularly celebrated” (29).¹⁴⁶ Here Weber draws upon Foucault’s *Care of the Self* ([1984] 1990). In the final text in a three volume study, Foucault provides a historical account of sexuality from ancient Greece to Hellenistic Rome. More specifically, he examines the techniques by which *individuals* have sought to govern themselves and demonstrates how subjects can resist the exercise of biopower, through what he terms “the arts of existence” (*Use* 10).

Foucault argues that in ancient Greece there were very few prohibitions concerning sex, particularly in relation to free men. However, over time he observes a new emphasis upon “sexual austerity” in the writing of philosophers, which takes the “form, not of a tightening of the code that define[s] prohibited acts, but of an intensification of the relation to oneself by which one constituted oneself as a subject of one’s acts” (Foucault, *Care* 41). He argues that changes in the discourses of sexuality are evident in the shift away from the love of boys to a new focus on the marriage relationship. Under

¹⁴⁶ Some scholars argue that as Western governments withdraw funding from public services, (makeover) television has taken on a more ‘caring’ role. As Ouellette and Hay observe, the makeover has adopted a social service function providing a range of services (such as housing and healthcare) no longer within the reach of many citizens (2008). However access to these services is through “audition only” and ultimately excludes many members of the public, due to strict participation rules. For example, individuals who rent their home cannot apply to be on *Extreme Makeover: Home Edition* (Weber 2009). This means that disadvantaged social groups such as solo parents and African Americans are unlikely to be chosen. Like Deery I argue that the ‘care,’ depicted here, is performed on camera and is ultimately about generating profit for those parties involved (2006). Moreover, most of the products and services are provided by “local businesses and corporate sponsors” meaning that ABC/Disney is “not out of pocket” (Ouellette and Hay 43). Although television networks present themselves as benevolent ‘caring’ institutions, the focus on particular types of candidates and stories means that ‘care’ is increasingly linked with, or motivated by, profit. In this instance, I argue that ‘care’ functions as another form of control.

this new scheme, the subject is “reconfigured as one who undertakes actions (or refrains from undertaking them) for the sake of the other” (Foucault, *Care* 114). In this model, care of the self, Foucault suggests, entails care for one’s wife (and perhaps even one’s children). This is a critical point, for as I explain below, in *Supernanny* children are represented as an extension of his/her parents.

Philosophers differed in the techniques they promoted. “Epimeleia,” or care of the self in the Greco-Roman periods typically involved looking after the body (through exercise and healthy eating), the measured satisfaction of biological needs (food and sex), and time for meditation/reading. As Foucault explains, “care of the self took the form of an attitude, a mode of behaviour” which “evolved into procedures, practices, and formulas that people reflected on, developed, perfected and taught” (*Care* 45); it was not empty time but rather, was filled with activities (*Care* 51). Education, or the study of philosophy, was considered a key aspect of caring for the self, an emphasis which can also be seen in the makeover, and *Supernanny* in particular, due to its focus on teaching subjects. Many of the early philosophers advocated regular self-examination – a process which essentially split the self into two opposing parts; a defendant and a judge. By way of explanation, Foucault informs us that Pythagoras used his morning meditation to prepare for the day while in the evening he reflected upon his actions so as to prevent similar problems in the future. We see this same emphasis on self-reflection in *Supernanny*.

In ancient Greek, care of the self required attention (Foucault [1984] 1990). Significantly, for my thesis, the Greek term epimeleia “implies [...] labour” (Foucault, *Care* 50), and suggests that one must *actively* work on the self. As has already been mentioned, the concept of *working on the self* is central to the makeover. *Supernanny*

reveals the labour that is involved in becoming a ‘good’ parent. Perhaps in an attempt to prove that the changes are not the result of clever editing, the programme dedicates more time to the teaching period, an argument I expand in the following chapter. In ancient Greece, care of the self is considered to be a life-long activity (Foucault [1984] 1990); in contrast, the makeover’s brevity suggests a quick-fix rather than ongoing improvement. In its original context, care of the self was not widely practised, but “concerned only the social groups [...] that were the bearers of culture and for whose members a *technē tou biou* could have a meaning and a reality” (*Care* 45). Care of the self was thus a privilege that only a few could participate in. In contrast, the makeover appeals to a much broader audience and implies that anyone, regardless of his/her class status can succeed, provided that s/he follow the expert’s advice.

For later philosophers care, of the self was not only seen as a privilege but also as a duty. Epictetus argued that care of the self ensured the subject’s “freedom while forcing [him] to take [himself] as the object of all [his] diligence” (*Care* 47). According to Foucault, a key principle of ancient Greek culture was that freedom was related to self-mastery. It was believed that in order to rule others effectively, one must first learn to rule oneself: “self-mastery had implied a close connection between the superiority one exercised over oneself, the authority one exercised in the household, and the power one exercised in the field of an agnostic society” (Foucault, *Care* 94). In short, the ancient Greeks believed that individuals could not govern others if they had not first learnt to control themselves. It is necessary to keep this point in mind, for as we shall see in *Supernanny*, Frost addresses the parents’ behaviour before tackling that of the children.

In the contemporary makeover text, the self is defined in broad terms. For Weber, it not only includes the physical body but extends also to the home, garden, car, career,

finances and children. In other words, a poorly-tended garden or run-down house is seen to reflect one's self. The message of 'care' is taken up in differing ways in the makeover format. In second wave shows, cosmetic procedures are frequently depicted as a form of 'care' which enable better 'self-expression' (Aronsen 2007). Similarly in series like *The Biggest Loser* the candidate's commitment to losing weight and learning correct nutritional habits are depicted as an investment in his/her future. Putting oneself first, the programme suggests, enables one to better care for those around them. By contrast, as will become apparent in my analysis of *Supernanny*, learning correct parental techniques and working on the children's bad behaviour (rather than 'taking a break' as the term is often used in relation to childrearing) is depicted as a form of self-care. Frost insists that if parents institute the various techniques (the routine, household rules and a system of rewards and punishments) less strife means consequently more time for the parents to relax. As I have indicated throughout, the makeover's focus on self-sufficiency serves neoliberalism, for it lessens the burden on others and ultimately releases the state from its obligation to 'care for' its citizens (Weber 2009).

Surveillance and 'Care'?

In makeover television the surveillance of participants is depicted as a form of 'care' on the part of the experts and the programme's producers, although as I have previously noted, there is a close relationship between care and control. Surveillance has historically been associated with the lower-classes who were believed to be incapable of governing themselves; however, with the growth of new technologies, the scope has

widened to include more individuals and now permeates the ‘private’ space of the home (G. Palmer 2006). Television programmes on surveillance mirror the spread of cameras in real life (Kavka 2012) and help to naturalise the practice (L. Edwards, *Triumph* 114). Surveillance is an integral component of the makeover sub-genre because it provides evidence of the subject’s need to change. It is for this reason that surveillance is depicted as a form of care,

Surveillance footage [...] serves a *caring* function, since the video images are meant to offer subjects visible evidence that will first shame and then shatter Before-ignorance thus leading to After-empowerment. (Weber 96)

In the makeover, subjects are forcibly confronted with their bad choices, a practice which ensures their complicity (Weber 2009). Weber coins the term “affective domination” to explain the ways in which experts “point out the [participant’s] flaws in a combined gesture of humiliation and care” (30), a process we see at work in *Supernanny*.

Makeover candidates not only experience the expert’s gaze, but also that of the audience. The focus on surveillance reminds both subject and viewers alike that “at all times, the body and its behaviour are seen and judged” (Weber 85). Makeover programmes thus teach individuals not only how to survey themselves but also how to assess others. Kavka’s term, the “social gaze,” describes the “collective act of looking at and judging one another” (*Reality* 130). The gaze, as theorised by Laura Mulvey, is no longer gendered but now applies to ordinary men and women (Sender 2012). The fact

that the gaze is no longer limited to women or particular kinds of subjects (i.e. criminals or the insane) highlights the spread of disciplinary practices and the need to ensure one's behaviour conforms to society's norms. The makeover's aim to convert negative social judgments into positive ones (Weber 2009) not only means that the emphasis is on individuals to change but also reminds us that surveillance is an inescapable feature of contemporary Western society. As we will see in *Supernanny* it is the possibility of being called a 'bad' parent which ultimately motivates the families to seek help.

In the makeover, surveillance is inextricably linked to shame.¹⁴⁷ Candidates are shown footage of their (shameful) behaviour in order to convince them to change. Shame is a response to failure and ensuing feelings of inadequacy (Mollon 2002). The term covers a multitude of emotions including: embarrassment, humiliation, modesty, shyness and conscience (G. Palmer 2006). Shame always involves a second party, whether real or imaginary; as Mollon notes, it is the sense of failure in the eyes of others which leads to feelings of shame (2002). In fact, as G. Palmer notes, shame cannot exist without a community or a set of shared beliefs (2006). Shame differs from guilt and requires a unique response. As Sender explains, "whereas guilt is the result of being caught transgressing a norm, shame requires a revision of one's self-concept, of the view of the self by the self" (83). In other words, guilt requires some form of restitution, while shame leads one to modify his/her behaviour. Unlike guilt, shame is a disciplinary tool which works to promote group values (G. Palmer 2006) and in the makeover is seen as 'productive,' because it enables candidates to change. In other words, shame is constructed as being in the subject's "best interests" (G. Palmer, "Introduction" 8).

¹⁴⁷ See G. Palmer (2006), Ferguson (2009), Weber (2009) and Kavka (2012).

In the makeover narrative, shame works to reinforce the neoliberal agenda. As G. Palmer explains, shame “responsibilizes people” or holds them accountable for their actions (2006). Additionally, shame focuses on individuals rather than communities, which supports my earlier point that the makeover is not interested in transforming society. Makeover programmes potentially shame not only participants but also audience members who might identify with the individuals featured on the show (Sender 89). In Chapter Three I examine the ways in *Supernanny* utilises shame in order to motivate parents to modify their behaviour.

Supernanny and the Third Wave of Makeover Programming

Supernanny fits within the larger makeover sub-genre and thus shares many characteristics of both first and second wave programming. In terms of the form, these include the submission of an application tape where parents explain their reasons for contacting Frost, the provision of a confessional camera that allows both Frost and the parents to talk directly to the audience, and a before and after narrative structure which provides evidence of the family’s transformation. Like its predecessors, *Supernanny* provides viewers with a happy ending and resolves all of the conflicts identified at the start of the show. Additionally, as I expand upon below, the programme focuses primarily on female subjects, relies upon surveillance and expert’s intervention to enable change, divorces the family from wider social factors and concentrates on surface issues.

As with most first and second wave makeovers, *Supernanny*, for the most part, is interested in transforming female subjects (the mothers).¹⁴⁸ In *Supernanny*, we see evidence of the increasing burden placed upon mothers due to the domestication of childhood and the father's diminishing power, discussed in Chapter One. Several of the mothers complain that their husbands do not understand how hard it is to be a stay-at-home parent.¹⁴⁹ For example, Denise Cooke says, "You know, from the moment I get up, just the logistics of three children, three breakfasts, three school uniforms, just getting three children out of the door, is quite stressful" (UK season one, episode three).¹⁵⁰ The mums on the show regularly express guilt about their shortcomings. In one episode, Deirdre Facente confesses to Frost that she feels like a 'bad' mum: "I believe I'm a failure. I believe that nothing I do is good enough" (US season two, episode six). Another mother, Carolyn Pundit, blames herself for an emergency caesarean, thinking that her son's bad behaviour is the result of his traumatic birth (UK season two, episode one).¹⁵¹ Four of the mothers reveal they feel pressure to be "supermoms."¹⁵² Although Frost is presented as a *supernanny*, she does not expect women to be *supermums*: as she asks Tammy Orm "who says you had to be

¹⁴⁸ The makeover sub-genre has historically been associated with women due to the format's focus on female participants (Weber found that men only constitute 10% of all makeover subjects), its interest in appearance and 'feminine' concerns, its connections with other 'women's genres,' its initial placement on daytime television and the high number of women who watch these types of programmes (Cassidy 2006; Watts 2006; Weber 2010; Raisborough 2011).

¹⁴⁹ See for example the Charles, Cooke and Pandit episodes.

¹⁵⁰ In *Supernanny*, dads are often genuinely surprised to see how badly their children behave because they have never really had to deal with it. In one episode of *Supernanny*, John Wischmeyer breaks down in tears (for the first time in ten-years) after disciplining his daughter Alaia: "She surprised me with her rage and her tantrum. I've never experienced that!" (UK season one, episode four).

¹⁵¹ We can understand Caroline's concerns in light of John Bowlby's theories of attachment and maternal deprivation. He was an American psychoanalyst who believed that separation from the mother caused long-term psychological damage.

¹⁵² See the Amaral, Keilen, Orm and Wischmeyer episodes.

superwoman?”(US season one, episode three). The women’s confessions reflect the impossible standards placed upon mothers in contemporary society. As it is most often the mothers who bear the burden we could say that in *Supernanny* the crisis of parenthood is really a crisis of motherhood.

Like first and second wave makeover shows, *Supernanny* utilises surveillance technology in order to monitor the participants’ behaviour and enable change. There are three levels of surveillance at work in *Supernanny*: mobile and wall-mounted cameras, Frost, and the home audience. Participants have cameras installed in their home and camera crews follow their every move.¹⁵³ Parents willingly submit to surveillance on the belief that their home life will dramatically improve. *Supernanny* justifies its use of surveillance use by linking it with “an ethic of care” (Ferguson 188). Throughout the programme Frost repeatedly states that she is there to “help” the parents, thereby excusing her ‘invasion’ of the family’s privacy (even though they invited Frost into their home). Frost is depicted as ‘caring about’ the families she works with. She provides parents with the techniques to restore peace to their homes (care as labour), but as her tears suggest, she also ‘cares about’ them on an emotional level.

As with first and second wave makeovers, *Supernanny* relies upon ‘expert’ intervention to achieve its aim of domestic harmony between parents and the children. Frost plays a central role in the parents’ transformation, functioning as a more personalised form of institutionalised parenting literature. Frost’s roles as an expert raises questions about the naturalness of parenthood (she has no children of her own)

¹⁵³ One family told reporters that the filming was intrusive. They were filmed for fourteen-hours-a-day, for ten days. During this time, no one could watch television due to licensing issues and the children’s friends were not allowed to come over (Knight n. p.).

and suggests that parenting is a skill which must be learnt: *Supernanny's* focus on childrearing techniques means that parenthood is replaced by parenting. Just as experts determine what constitutes 'good' taste in first and second wave makeover shows (Powell and Prasad 58), in *Supernanny*, Frost defines what constitutes 'good' *behaviour*. *Supernanny* is comparable to first and second wave makeover shows in that it promotes a form of lifestyle management: in contemporary Western society, family life, like one's home and physical appearance, becomes another aspect of the self to be analysed and improved with the help of experts.

Like first and second wave makeover shows, *Supernanny* is edited to present families in complete isolation from broader social networks (grandparents, aunts and uncles) neighbours, community and, even, society at large (see figures 1 and 2, appendix g). We rarely see any of the neighbours or extended family (with the exception of three UK episodes featuring single mothers, where grandparents help out). As I discuss in the following chapter, the home is often shot from a low angle, consequently neighbouring properties are often elided. In short, *Supernanny* provides no information about the larger context in which the family lives and suggests through the framing that "parents alone are responsible for raising their children" (Becker 185). Additionally, most of the filming occurs in the family home: In *Supernanny* parents go to work and children go to school, however, we almost never go along with them (Becker 2006; Ferguson 2009). Trips to the supermarket or shopping mall are rare and are generally only used in order to teach the parents a new technique. In *Supernanny*, transformation occurs within the four walls of the home, a process which mirrors the domestication of childhood discussed in Chapter One. Although Frost invades the

family home, once all of the family's problems have been solved, it becomes a private space again.

In *Supernanny*, parents are depicted as totally responsible for their child's development. Even though Frost acknowledges the lack of support for parents and increasing work demands in her interviews with the press, the show blatantly ignores these issues. Frost functions as the family's only support system, illustrated by the show's ending where the mothers cry at Frost's departure (Tally 14). Frost *must* leave however so that the family learns to govern itself.¹⁵⁴ Despite the fact childcare is obviously a big part of the problem, there is only one episode in which Frost encourages the family to hire outside help (US *Supernanny* season one, episode nine). In keeping with its neoliberal underpinnings, *Supernanny's* solution for the loss of extended familial networks and unmanageable workloads is to institute a routine and a set of household rules (Tally 20). Although Foucault argues that the family is a sovereign institution, he claims that from the mid-nineteenth-century, it underwent a process of internal disciplinarisation and thus can be seen as a microcosm of society. Parents apply for Frost's help because of their perceived failure to raise their children in the appropriate manner.

The solutions offered in *Supernanny* are simple; they are, in essence, behaviour modification techniques and do not address larger social, cultural, and economic factors which impact upon the family.¹⁵⁵ Significantly, Frost does not teach grandparents or

¹⁵⁴ See the Burnett episode (US season one, episode nine).

¹⁵⁵ As Becker argues, "American families face a long list of external problems (e.g. failing public schools, no access to health care, rising housing costs, environmental pollution, rising levels of debt) that demand complex changes involving not just personal responsibility but also community co-operation and government involvement" (185).

neighbours her techniques so as to lessen the burden on the parents.¹⁵⁶ Like British legislation which promotes two-parent families as the norm, *Supernanny* fails to consider variable structures of care. As with most first and second wave makeover programmes, *Supernanny* places the responsibility for one's life entirely upon the individual: "social anxieties and economic decisions are rendered entirely personal problems which can be resolved through individual endeavour" (Philips 127). Other factors such as financial pressure are not addressed. I argue that it is this emphasis on individual transformation that allows the unruly child to be seen as the result of a crisis of adulthood/parenthood, rather than a symptom of wider cultural malaise.

As well as ignoring the larger forces that impact upon the family, *Supernanny* does not address the parents' obvious emotional distress. Several of the parents report feeling depressed and/or tell Frost that they have considered running away. Frost does not encourage the parents to seek help from a counsellor or psychiatrist but instead instructs them to pick themselves up and carry on. As Kuhn-Wilken observes, "there are very few actual references to, or examples of, parents practicing self-care: the model of self-care is transmuted into working to get the family back on track" (69). Frost believes that parents set the mood of the household and that if they are depressed, the children will respond accordingly. *Supernanny* implies that a lack of boundaries between parents and children causes unhappiness, but that this problem can be cured with a few lessons in competent parenting.

Likewise, *Supernanny* fails to address the root causes of the children's bad behaviour. The programme's reluctance to deal with the origins of dysfunction is surprising, given the emotional and therapeutic turns outlined in Chapter One. Frost's

¹⁵⁶ In one episode Frost erects a fence between two neighbouring properties so that Debbie Senior cannot keep dumping her children on her elderly parents (UK season two, episode four).

techniques do not ‘correct’ psychological problems but rather work at the surface level of behaviour. In the UK episodes, four of the mothers are separated or divorced, yet Frost does not discuss how these events contribute to the children’s destructive behaviour.¹⁵⁷ Instead, *Supernanny* glosses over these issues, suggesting that unruliness is the result of ‘bad’ parenting: “the program’s emphasis on unruliness rather than psychological issues works to the program’s advantage, for unruliness suggests actions, deeds, and performance patterns, surface features that can be changed” (Fowler and Kambuta 266). *Supernanny* is not interested in debating *why* Dionysian devils are ‘unruly’ but instead in showing how they might be tamed and turned into Apollonian angels. The programme’s host lacks the formal knowledge (as I discuss below, Frost is a ‘self-appointed expert’) required to carry such a debate; more importantly, this would require an examination of larger social issues (such as divorce, broken homes, the welfare system, British social policy) and various institutions (the government, the school, and the juvenile court system) which extend well beyond the programme’s brief. A debate about wider social issues would also undermine the ‘magic’ of the makeover narrative (which, as noted above, relies on clear and achievable transformation), and dilute the entertainment value of the show.

In keeping with *Supernanny*’s focus on surface problems and easy fixes, the programme emphasises vertical relationships (the parent/child relationship) at the expense of horizontal ones, namely the relationships *between* parents and siblings (Ferguson 2009). This move reflects the “near exclusive dominance of vertical comprehension” in contemporary Western culture (Mitchell 1). In short, *Supernanny* implies that the resolution of parent/child conflicts will terminate all other conflicts

¹⁵⁷ See the Senior, Agate, Ball and Douglas episodes.

(Ferguson 2009). This argument is particularly apparent in the UK episodes where Frost rarely addresses the problems between parents. She does not provide any techniques for them to work through their issues. Moreover, sibling rivalry is resolved through mum and/or dad learning to use their time more effectively. This move is problematic because it minimises “the importance of peer rivalries” and simplifies “familial and social relationships” (Ferguson 262). *Supernanny* concentrates its energy on the parent and child relationship because this is seen as the way by which the family can be ‘fixed.’ Having identified the similarities between *Supernanny* and the first two waves of makeover programming, it is now necessary to discuss how the third wave diverges from its predecessors so as to clarify how the makeover also enters into debates about care.

Although *Supernanny* shares many characteristics with first and second wave makeovers, it differs from them in several key respects. While first and second wave makeover shows focus on physical transformation (of the home or self), *Supernanny* attempts to modify deviant behaviour. The programme’s focus on the relationship *between* parents and children, marks it as different from the first and second waves and highlights complexities of the third wave. As mentioned above, in *Supernanny* families are ‘self-selected’ (in other words, they are not nominated by others) and, unlike both versions of *Extreme Makeover: Home Edition* the makeover is *not* a reward for the candidate’s hard work in the community. As I expand in Chapter Three, parents beg for position on the show because they are aware of the child-centred nature of Western culture and their inability to meet the required standards. Additionally, in contrast to most first and second wave makeover shows where subjects are relatively passive and have little control over what happens to their homes and wardrobes, in *Supernanny*

parent are required to play an active role in the process; they remain in the family home and must enforce Frost's techniques.¹⁵⁸ In short, parents are not able to renege on their responsibilities or hand their 'problem' over to someone else.

While audiences can buy themed merchandise off the ABC website, *Supernanny* does not rely on the consumption of material goods as most first and second wave makeover shows do, but instead promotes a particular style of parenting/living, as indicated by its focus on techniques. As Margaret Tally observes, in "family transformation shows [...] the makeover is not so much a commodity transformation as an identity shift" (4). As I have noted elsewhere, because *Supernanny* deals with attitudes and behaviour rather than physical transformation, the changes which do occur are sometimes harder to detect (Fowler and Kambuta 264). The programme tackles the issue of internal transformation by using various symbols (overloaded washing lines and messy households) in an attempt to make them visible to the audience.¹⁵⁹ *Supernanny's* focus on techniques as a way to care for the self aligns it more with the ancient Greek model, which stressed self-improvement and reflection on one's behaviour. The programme's focus on techniques could be explained by the inclusion of middle-class participants who presumably are less likely to require consumer goods.

¹⁵⁸ Although makeover programmes fluctuate in terms of how much control subjects have over the transformation process, most are relatively passive. Deery notes the irony in the use of the word "participants," observing that candidates often have very little say ("Interior" 161). For example, in *Extreme Makeover: Home Edition* (ABC 2003 - 2012) the family is sent on a week-long holiday while their home is built. Likewise in *The Swan* (Fox 2004) experts decide what procedures their participants 'need.' As many scholars have noted, the cosmetic surgery patient exemplifies the passivity of the makeover recipient; they are anaesthetised for the duration of their operations.

¹⁵⁹ The focus on behaviour (rather than the inner world) in reality television reflects Western society at large. In 2007 the UK Department of Health opened 32 new Cognitive Behavioural clinics (CBTs) around the country at a cost of 170 million pounds (Ferguson 268). These clinics provide clients with behavioural strategies to cope with depression and anxiety-related issues instead of identifying the causes through talk-based counseling.

In contrast to most first and second wave makeover shows, *Supernanny* features a *female* expert who, transforms both female and male participants, even if the programme ultimately works to reinforce traditional gender stereotypes.¹⁶⁰ By allowing themselves to be transformed, male participants run the risk of being ‘feminised’ through their submission and, as a result, tend to be more resistant (Weber 2009). This is certainly true of *Supernanny*. Apart from style-makeover programmes where female experts are more common, instructional parenting shows are one of the few makeover formats to feature women in more active roles, a fact which relates perhaps to their traditional focus on family problems.

These variations in *Supernanny*’s form and content are interesting; however, the most significant point of difference relates to social class. Most first and second wave makeover shows typically feature lower or lower-class individuals guided by upper-class experts; however, participants on the US version of *Supernanny* appear relatively well-off. Most live in big, well-maintained houses and are often university educated (see Appendix D and E).¹⁶¹ A high percentage of the mothers are stay-at-home mums, a fact which is shown to be a lifestyle choice; several of the Dads are investment salesmen, so their wives presumably do not need to work. Frost, the show’s expert, is also interesting in this respect. Unlike her eighteenth-century ancestors, she is not a domestic servant, but rather the expert of the show, a label which is complicated by her lower-class status, poor grasp of the English language and lack of tertiary qualifications. US *Supernanny* thus represents an inversion of the typical makeover structure,

¹⁶⁰ As Weber observes, makeover programmes which feature male participants almost always use *male* experts (2009).

¹⁶¹ See *Extreme Makeover* (ABC 2002 – 2007); *Honey We’re Killing the Children* (BBC3 2005 – 2007); *How Clean is Your House* (UK C4 2003 – 2009); *Ten Years Younger* (UK C4 2004 –present); *The Swan* (Fox 2004); *What Not to Wear* (BBC2 2001 – 2007).

switching the constitution of experts and participants. This move is significant for it suggests that *all* parents (even middle-class ones) need training in ‘correct’ childrearing techniques.

Although Frost is depicted by the programme as a supernatural being, she also represents the rise of the “ordinary-expert” on television (Lewis, *Smart* 4).¹⁶² According to Tania Lewis, “ordinary-experts” are “comforting, *neighbourly* figures whom we often feel we ‘know’ on a first name basis” and whose their appeal can be found in the “everyday-ness of the knowledge and skills” they impart (Lewis, *Smart* 13).¹⁶³ As has been widely reported, Frost (or “Jojo” as she is affectionately known) has no formal qualifications in childcare. Instead, she relies on her twenty-years of experience working as a nanny to educate the families on the show.¹⁶⁴ As Frost explains in one of her childrearing books, “I’ve seen children through weaning and toilet training, teething, tantrums, and the first day at school” (Frost, *Supernanny* 11). She believes this “hands-on-experience” gives her an advantage over other types of ‘experts’ (such as paediatricians and doctors) whose experience of childrearing is perhaps more limited (Gambles 700).¹⁶⁵ Frost’s “positioning corresponds with something of a backlash from parents about the role of distant and detached experts” (Gambles 700).

¹⁶² Like Mary Poppins, Frost seems to come from somewhere in the skies. We know very little about her, except that she has extensive experience working with children.

¹⁶³ Frost is ‘ordinary’ in the sense that she gained her expertise working with families; however, her first full-time nannying job was for British TV producer John Lloyd, which marks her as extraordinary (Macaulay n.p.).

¹⁶⁴ There is only one episode where Frost enlists the help of an autism specialist, Dr Lynn Koegels.

¹⁶⁵ Frost is particularly scathing of the new American ‘Supernanny’ Deborah Tillman (an accountant turned kindergarten owner), arguing that she does not have the necessary experience working with children to advise others: “she has teachers who are the real ones who do the work. She sits behind a desk. Until you have dealt with the sick and the mess of children it is very hard to advise anyone else. I have been a nanny since I was fourteen. I’ve been in the trenches. What qualifies her to offer advice?”

Frost attempts to win parents over by aligning herself with them. She writes, “I’ve had no formal training to do what I do which puts me in much the same position as most parents, *without the intense emotional attachment*” (emphasis added, Frost, *Supernanny* 11). For Frost, the main difference between her and the parents is that she is “not meeting these challenges for the first time” (*Supernanny* 11). Frost’s comment implies that she is able to *see* the situation clearly because she does not have the same emotional attachment to the children as do their parents. However, Frost makes it abundantly clear that she is not “uncaring,” informing her readers that “nannies have feelings too” (*Supernanny* 11). In several episodes of *Supernanny* Frost is visibly upset by what she has witnessed. As will become apparent in Chapter Three, Frost is a complex and contradictory figure who both embodies care and attracts derision due to fears about dependence (figures 3 and 4, appendix g). She encourages parents to be objective in raising their children (read ‘unemotional’) and yet is quick to point out that she is not cold-hearted.

Frost’s discussion of her nannying experience highlights the tension between hands-on-knowledge and formal education. These concerns were also seen in the debates around the earlier parenting programmes examined above. The fact that many of *Supernanny*’s critics questioned Frost’s suitability for the role because of her lack of official qualifications indicates a classed attitude in which only certain types of knowledge are valued. Although the programme describes Frost as a nanny, this is somewhat of a misnomer.¹⁶⁶ As Holden explains, names for nannies indicated their

Although Tillman has a child of her own (who is grown up) and an MA degree in early childhood, she herself admits that her practical training is limited to the twenty-five hours of training stipulated for kindergarten licensees (Lawson n.p.).

¹⁶⁶ *Supernanny* has been credited with an increased demand for British nannies, both in the UK and overseas, with parents willing to pay vast sums of money for the right employee (Duffin n.p.; Ellyat n.p.).

class status and job requirements. The term ‘nanny’ was typically used to describe a lower-class servant who was employed to look after the children’s physical needs (Holden 2013). In contrast, upper-class women who educated the children were generally referred to as ‘governesses’ and were not required to do any domestic work (Holden 2013). While it is true that Frost comes from a lower-class background, in *Supernanny* her primary role is to educate the parents. She does not feed or dress the children and therefore would be more accurately described as a ‘parent educator.’

Frost is reportedly a multi-millionaire due to *Supernanny*’s meteoric success,¹⁶⁷ yet much has been made of her lower-class origins (her accent and mispronunciation of words have been ridiculed in the press) and the fact that she still lives with her widowed father.¹⁶⁸ The fact that these criticisms focus on Frost’s background, rather than her ability to do the job, again highlights a prejudice against lower-class individuals. The concern about Frost’s living situation implies that she has not ‘grown up’ (she still lives at home) or contradictorily, that she has taken over the ‘inappropriate’ role of ‘mothering’ her father (her mum died of breast cancer in her forties). It was these *very* qualities however which made her the ideal candidate for the role. As Amanda Murphy,

In 2007 Tinies, the UK’s largest childcare organisation, noted a 57% increase in employment for their nannies, which followed a 20% rise in 2006 (www.family.rapp.com). This desire for British nannies is surprising given that they are not, nor have they ever been, the dominant form of childcare. Furthermore, as Holden notes, the employment of nannies peaked during the Edwardian era (79). It is perhaps due to their association with royalty and aristocracy, that British nannies are today viewed as a status symbol.

¹⁶⁷ As a result of her role on *Supernanny* Frost has become an international celebrity. Roberts claims that Frost is now as famous in the US as X-Factor judge Simon Cowell (n.p.). Aside from her numerous guest appearances on talk shows around the world, Frost has had a problem page in *The Sun*, a UK tabloid newspaper, a parenting column in both the Australian *Women’s Weekly* and *Practical Parenting for Pregnancy* (UK) and has published seven hugely successful childrearing books. Frost has also signed several lucrative advertising deals with Kelloggs, Continental and Weight Watchers. Frost’s transformation from lowly nanny to media darling and parenting expert mirrors the makeovers undergone by the show’s participants.

¹⁶⁸ Despite public criticism about her frequent mispronunciation of words, Frost’s trademark sayings (“that’s very, very naughty” and that’s unaseptable”) have become common fodder.

the US producer of *Supernanny*, explains, Frost was “quite ballsy, quite street” and fitted their requirements for a nanny who was “edgy” (Smith 10).¹⁶⁹ Television producers must balance competing demands so as to ensure the programme is profitable. In short, Murphy believed that Frost had the personality and charisma necessary to ensure the show was not only educational but also entertaining, a fact which has been proven by Frost’s role in later television shows.¹⁷⁰

Supernanny has produced spin-offs in both the UK and the US. Since leaving the show, Frost has produced three additional television programmes.¹⁷¹ The first of these, *Extreme Parental Guidance* (UK C4 2010 - ?) deals with parents facing specific child-care issues (eating, sleeping and self-esteem issues), while the second, *Family SOS with Jo Frost* (US TLC 2013 – present), focuses on more serious problems that affect families including alcoholism, divorce and abuse, summed up in the show’s slogan: “she tackled toddlers as the Supernanny, now the kid gloves are off.” The third show, *Jo Frost Family Matters* (ITV 2014 - ?) utilises a talk-show format to address family issues. *Extreme Parental Guidance*, *Family SOS* and *Jo Frost Family Matters* have all been successful in their own right. However, they have failed to reach the same heights as *Supernanny*, which could be attributed either to the programme’s novel format and/or to audience fatigue with this particular sub-genre.

¹⁶⁹ Frost’s ease in front of the camera (a result of drama lessons when she was younger) undoubtedly helped her application (Macaulay n.p.).

¹⁷⁰ Not surprisingly, Frost attributes her success to her parents: “I had a secure, loving upbringing. I was blessed with parents who gave me self-belief and told me that the world was my oyster” (*Supernanny* 12).

¹⁷¹ According to news reports Frost left *Supernanny* after Ricochet refused to give her a pay rise (Churcher and Graham n.p.). A spin-off called *Supermanny* referencing its male lead, Mike Ruggles (a child-development expert with sixteen years’ experience) produced by Ricochet in 2008 failed miserably. Despite this unsuccessful attempt, Ricochet produced another series based on the *Supernanny* format called *America’s Supernanny* which was first broadcast in United States in 2011.

Framing the Family

Reality television is often credited with opening the public sphere, providing an opportunity for minority groups to be seen and heard (Ouellette and Murray 2004). This diversification does not apply to *Supernanny* as is evident when we consider the characteristics of those chosen to participate. While seasons one and two of both the UK and US versions of *Supernanny* provide us with a snapshot of parenting and the problems facing families today, the picture it offers is a very limited one. As previously noted, I examine only seasons ones and two of *Supernanny* (both the UK and US versions).¹⁷² I analyse twelve UK episodes, one of which is a revisit. Of the twenty parents featured on these episodes, four are solo mums while two are ‘blended’ families (families that have one step-parent or children from previous relationships). There are 34 children in total, with an even gender split. There are two sets of twins and none of the children featured have stated disabilities. The majority of families have three children, ranging in age from five-months to twelve years. Over a quarter of the parents are full-time caregivers, which is not surprising given the high percentage of stay-at-home mums (see Appendix D). Class divisions are much more noticeable in the UK episodes than in the US ones, with parents’ employment ranging from administrative positions to managerial roles (see Appendices D and E). Significantly, even though there are four solo mothers included in these seasons, as stated above, there is no discussion of family finances and how this might contribute to the children’s bad behaviour.

¹⁷² US seasons one and two are available on DVD. The UK episodes were purchased directly from the production company. Please note, episodes contained in these DVDs differ from those broadcast on television (see Appendices A and B for a list of episodes analysed).

There are a total of twenty-two episodes (two of which are family updates) on the US DVDs.¹⁷³ Frost visits a total of sixteen families. There are no single parents included in these episodes; all of the parents are married. Significantly, only one featured family is a blended family, a stark contrast to the reality of many contemporary American families.¹⁷⁴ Additionally, all but one of the families are Caucasian and appear to be middle-to-upper-class. Perhaps wanting to avoid accusations of racism, *Supernanny* focuses on 'white' families. In total, there are 47 children featured in the US version of *Supernanny*, with almost double the number of boys than girls (31 boys compared to 16 girls). Twins also feature regularly in the US episodes, with seven sets of twins. Only one child has a serious disability which could be seen as contributing to his 'bad' behaviour, though significantly the episode featuring Tristin Facente, a three-year-old boy who has autism, depicts him not as unruly but rather, misunderstood by his parents (US season 2, episode 6).¹⁷⁵ The majority of families featured on the US DVD's have three children, whose ages range from four-months to nine-years old, with the majority of children aged four. In most episodes, most parents do not give their age (see Appendix E), but for those who do, their ages range from twenty-six to fifty-one years of age, with the average age of parents featured on the show being thirty-four years-old.¹⁷⁶ Parents have varied occupations (see Appendix E), however there are six stay-at-home parents (three of these parents work from home while looking after the children).

¹⁷³ There are five UK episodes on the US DVDs which I have included in the UK statistics.

¹⁷⁴ Michael Burnett has one nine-year-old son from a previous marriage who stays during with him during weekend, but he is not featured on the show (US season one, episode nine). It is unclear in the Wischmeyer DVD (US season one, episode four) whether they are a blended family or not. Later seasons of *Supernanny* feature far more single parents and blended families.

¹⁷⁵ Frost does not even use the naughty step technique in this episode but rather concentrates on educating the parents on how to communicate with him.

Supernanny thus presents an outdated portrait of the family; one that is almost exclusively white, two-parented, heterosexual and middle-to-upper-class, a far cry from the present-day reality of many Western families (Becker 181). There are no solo dads, gay couples or teen parents in the episodes analysed (as Guy Redden notes, *Supernanny* was aired in United States at the time when several states were attempting to pass gay marriage laws) and almost all of the participants are “white” (with the exception of the Gorbea family who are Mexican and the Pandit family who are mixed-race).¹⁷⁷ It is not surprising that the show deals primarily with the nuclear family, as Green explains, “Reality TV programming is structured by the conventions and mode(s) of production that provide opportunities for participants to reproduce identities that are [...] consistent with the logic and rules sanctioned by show’s producer(s) and director(s)” (“Real(ity)” 70). Additionally, as G. Palmer notes, despite the fact that the nuclear family is in decline, it “predominates for reasons that have come to be connected to advertising and the quest for those with the right kind of disposable income” (“Introduction” 6). *Supernanny*’s focus on a particular ‘type’ of family and preferred model of care gives credence to the critics’ argument that the series is similar to fictional texts.

¹⁷⁶ The majority of parents featured in the US DVDs appear to be older (in the late 30s and 40s) with young children, perhaps mirroring the growing trend to delay pregnancy.

¹⁷⁷ Furthermore, by using a white British nanny *Supernanny* does “not even attempt to represent the realities of workers in the contemporary domestic care industry” who are overwhelmingly of African or Mexican descent (Brantaco 53).

Conclusion

In this chapter I have extended my discussion of parenthood as a site of contestation, due to the tension between the duties of ‘care of’ and ‘care about’, by introducing *Supernanny* and situating the series in the context of the larger field of television studies. The intervention that *Supernanny* makes into the televising of parenthood can only be appreciated by examining both the broad, largely neglected history of parenting programming on British television, and the widely discussed makeover sub-genre. The development of parenting on television evident in this history both adds to and strengthen many of the discourses discussed in Chapter One

As discussed, *Supernanny*’s inclusion in the makeover sub-genre can be seen in its use of the application tape, the provision of the confession camera, a before and after narrative, an expert who guides participants through the transformation process and its reliance upon various surveillance technologies to identify and correct aberrant behaviour. While it is necessary to acknowledge *Supernanny*’s debt to first and second wave makeover shows, I have argued that the programme extends and inverts some of the more recognisable elements of the sub-genre. Significant differences include the more active role taken by parents in the transformation process, the show’s aim (which focuses on providing practical help to struggling families, not on creating spectacular ‘star-like’ makeovers) and, most importantly, the choice of Frost whose gender and lower-class status distinguish her from most other makeover experts. I have argued that *Supernanny* breaks with first and second wave makeovers by using a lower-class expert to teach mostly middle-class families, a move which points to the wholesale regulation

of the family. I have also shown in *Supernanny* how care of the self is linked to the use of techniques rather than the consumption of goods and services, a fact I suggest could be related to the increasing numbers of middle-class participants in this show. Having emphasised the importance of the teaching of techniques to the third wave of makeover programming, it seems pertinent to explore this further. In order to do so in the next two chapters I shift from context to text as I discuss, first, the show's narrative structure, so as to demonstrate the ways in which the programme transfers the focus from the child to the adult and, second, in Chapter Four, the techniques of parenthood that helps us to discern what, according to *Supernanny*, it means to be a 'good' parent.

Chapter Three

Perfecting the Parent: Supernanny, the Unruly Child and Parenthood in Crisis

Before presuming to form a man you must first have become a man yourself: you must find in yourself the example which you are to propose for others.

Jean Jacques Rousseau, *Emile* (61).

Regardless of the family, all problems are rooted in incompetent parenting.

Ron Becker, “Help is on the Way” (184).

Mum to camera: “We asked Supernanny to come to our home and take *care of our children* and as it turns out, she’s *taking care of us*.”

Judy Larmer (US *Supernanny* season two, episode three).

As I established in the previous chapter, the relationship between adults and children, referenced by Rousseau, also inform understandings of the parent – as someone who polices the boundaries between childhood and adulthood and is responsible for keeping each in their place; therefore the child and the adult are defined in relation to one another. As Chapter One demonstrated, this interconnectedness makes the parent a particularly complex modern subject. Chapter Two examined the problem of the parent/child bond in respect to the makeover sub-genre and argued that *Supernanny* extends the tripartite structure of first and second wave programmes in order to deal with the transformation of multiple participants (parents and children). This chapter builds on the previous one by providing a close analysis of *Supernanny*'s narrative structure. Through examining *Supernanny*'s format we can see many of the themes I have addressed thus far.

My investigation of *Supernanny*'s narrative structure provides several vital insights. First, it reveals the transformational process from child to parent. This transition is significant, for it implies that the child's unruliness results from parental ineptitude and that educating parents is the key to resolving the family's problems. In short, *Supernanny* insists that the parents' makeover is a necessary precursor to the child's transformation. Second, my analysis demonstrates how Frost infantilises the parents and how discipline is enforced at two levels (the parent and the child). Third, it reveals the way in which the programme justifies its invasion of the family's privacy through over-emphasising their unruliness. Fourth, it illustrates how the anxiety Foucault addresses in *Discipline and Punish* manifests itself as a narrative of disorder and parenthood in crisis. Fifth, it highlights how *Supernanny* rejects the emotional bond of parenthood in favour of the controlling techniques of parenting. Sixth, it underlines my earlier points

about the competing demands of education and entertainment within the television industry. Seventh, it demonstrates *Supernanny*'s surface engagement with the family's problems and the programme's universal solutions.

Many of the themes raised in Chapter One re-emerge in the discussion of *Supernanny*'s structure. The nature/nurture debate is central to *Supernanny*, as are questions about adult/child roles. It is because *Supernanny* sees the unruly child as a product of nurturing rather than nature that Frost can insist that children are able to be transformed. Like Locke, Frost believes that children need rules and structure in order to flourish. She therefore sets clear guidelines regarding the child's use of (domestic and public) space, time, activities, the expression of emotions and the acquisition of skills and knowledge. The programme very effectively demonstrates that when "the categories of childhood and adulthood are confused [...] disaster ensues" (Holland 15). Frost works to reinforce the boundaries that have developed over time between adults and children, restoring each to their 'proper' place through the implementation of various techniques and a strict discipline system.

Akin with the increased burden upon the modern parent, *Supernanny* also draws attention to the issue of responsibility and provides a clear definition of a 'good' parent. *Supernanny* not only promotes parental determinism but also rejects the common belief that adulthood is the completion of learning. As noted in Chapter One, since the sixteenth-century children have been defined by their 'lack of knowledge,' with education providing the pathway to adulthood; however, the programme suggests that the same holds true for parents and that parenting is a skill, which can and *must* be learnt. Like nineteenth-century reformers, Frost insists that parents play a central role in their child's intellectual, physical and emotional development and should do whatever is

necessary in order to ensure their child's success. Although *Supernanny* represents a continuation, if not intensification, of the parenting ideals addressed in Chapter One, the programme rejects many of the dictates of emotional and therapeutic culture and therefore could be seen as a counter-narrative. It ultimately reduces parenthood to parenting or favours 'care of' (care as labour) at the expense of 'care about' (the emotional bond).

Supernanny's primary goal is to discipline the family. The programme is concerned with the production of a specific *kind* of subject (the 'good' parent), and thus offers viewers information about 'correct' childrearing techniques. While in the previous chapters I have referred to the notion of 'disciplining' and have discussed other Foucauldian issues, it is now necessary to engage more fully with Foucault's theories of power, control and discipline. Foucault helps us understand *Supernanny's* narrative structure and can be drawn from to explain how the *parent* comes to assume the role of "technician of behaviour" or "engineer of conduct" (Foucault, *Discipline* 169). In the remainder of the chapter I examine each of the five sections of the narrative individually in order to reveal how the programme shifts the focus from the children to the parents; the introduction of the family/identification of problems, the observation period, the teaching stage, the trial run and reinforcement. Frost's techniques are the focus of the following chapter.

Discipline, Surveillance and Care

Discipline and Punish traces the history of the present-day prison system in France. To briefly reiterate, Foucault identifies three broad historical periods (the ancien régime, the revolutionary phase, and the restoration period), each of which has its own distinctive mode of penalty. As his work focuses on theories of discipline, power and subjectivity it has inevitably found its way into television scholarship. Many theorists have argued that (reality) television plays a crucial role in disciplining contemporary subjects. Foucault contends that practices of punishment are contextually specific, and provide us with information about how power operates in society. Foucault's prison system research is pertinent to my analysis of *Supernanny* because it highlights the role of culture in normalising particular forms of punishment. Likewise, as I have argued in Chapter One, culture plays an equally important role in determining those parenting practices which are favoured over others. Moreover, I establish a connection between Foucault's research and the history of parenting models discussed in Chapter One, as both seek to answer how best to discipline subjects to ensure their successful integration into society.

Foucault identifies the shift away from the use of spectacle and torture in pre-nineteenth century France, to the emergence of imprisonment as the dominant model of punishment.¹⁷⁸ As we will see, Frost touches upon both forms of discipline in *Supernanny*. In the eighteenth-century, torture as a public spectacle was designed to illustrate the King's sovereign power. To reiterate, Foucault sees the family not as a disciplinary apparatus (like prison or the school) but rather as a sovereign entity. In

¹⁷⁸ The transition from the public spectacle of torture to the imprisonment of criminals did not happen immediately; it was a drawn-out process and techniques of punishment often overlapped.

contrast to the earlier model, Foucault argues that the modern-day prison system punishes individuals by depriving them of their liberty. The body is no longer physically maimed but instead, is constrained through rules and regulations; torture is replaced with the timetable.¹⁷⁹

Corresponding to the changes identified by Foucault, we see a shift in the focus of discipline; from the body to the ‘soul.’¹⁸⁰ In the following summary I pay particular attention to the first and third periods of Foucault’s history, as there are significant variations in how power operates. Foucault identifies two contrasting types of power (sovereign power and disciplinary power) and examines the ways in which each attempts to regulate the subject. I argue that the parent is a contested subject, who both ‘cares for,’ and ‘cares about’ the child. As should also be evident, the parental subject is also torn between being an individual and meeting the demands of a contemporary Western culture, which is increasingly child-centred. As we delineate the differences between sovereign and disciplinary models of power, we see elements of both at work in *Supernanny*.

In the first period, public torture, what Foucault calls “supplice,” and execution were the ‘dominant’ methods of punishment ([1975] 1995).¹⁸¹ These practices were designed to maintain control over an unruly population.¹⁸² Prisons were not seen as places of reform, as they later would be, but as holding cells. In an age of monarchical rule, crime upset the ‘natural’ order and challenged the King’s authority; *public* torture

¹⁷⁹ As we have seen in Chapter One, the same processes are at work in the corporal punishment of children.

¹⁸⁰ Foucault argues that the soul is “born [...] out of methods of punishment, supervision and constraint” (*Discipline* 29).

¹⁸¹ Foucault notes that magistrates were often unwilling to impose the death sentence.

¹⁸² Foucault distinguishes between supplice and juridical punishment, with the second occurring during the trial or sentencing.

and/or execution was a means of reasserting the monarch's power. Criminal investigations were conducted without the subject's knowledge in order to avoid protest, with the accused frequently tortured during the juridical process in order to gain a confession. In this context, the confession doubled as evidence of the prisoner's guilt and ultimate validation of the process. If a prisoner refused to confess after being tortured, then release followed. Details of the confession were printed on public broadsheets as a warning to other citizens. As I expand below, the naughty step functions in a similar manner, reinforcing both the parents' power and acting as a deterrent for other family members.

Although it appears barbaric, Foucault contends that the terror régime must be understood in relation to its wider socio-economic context. In this period, there was no systematic policing of crime and there was little interest in identifying the causes of criminal activity. Terror was used as social control in monarchical France where it was believed that the King had the power to decide over matters of life and death. This brutal model of punishment, however, was short-lived. As the ancien régime came under attack, the rising middle-classes began to reconfigure punishment to suit their own agendas.

During the middle of the eighteenth-century, the terror régime was *gradually* replaced by what Foucault calls "generalized punishment" ([1975] 1995). The transitional revolutionary period saw elements of all three types of penalty visible in varying degrees, due to political instability and economic transformation (Foucault [1975] 1995). In this period, economic transformation was accompanied by protests against the brutality of the terror régime, with calls for more 'humane' punishments. The middle-classes played a central role in these appeals for leniency, with motives that

Foucault argues were not entirely altruistic; aside from resolving inconsistencies within the penal code, the middle-classes sought to limit the King's power. In short, the middle-classes used the growing displeasure around the scaffold for their own political ends.

Unlike the terror régime, which permanently disfigured the body, reestablished the King's sovereignty and treated punishment as a form of revenge, the aim of these new codes of law and order was to reform the mind and to act as a deterrent for others. Likewise, in *Supernanny*, the child who is consigned to the naughty step functions as a warning to their brothers and sisters. In contrast to the ancien régime, the power to punish was no longer limited to the King; instead this model, made society responsible for restoring the criminal's morality. It was believed that the criminal, in breaking the social contract, must repay the 'debt' to fellow citizens. In this model, punishment operates not as a spectacle but as an "obstacle-sign" visible to all (Foucault, *Discipline* 104). As with the previous model, it was the potential to identify with the criminal which ultimately led to punishment becoming 'invisible.'

The third model of penalty marks the transition from the public, physical punishment of the ancien régime to the private discipline of the 'soul' in the restorative period. As I expand in the following chapter, disciplinary power attempts to regulate the subject in relation to (domestic and public) space, time, activities and the acquisition of skills and knowledge in order to produce a "docile body" (Foucault, *Discipline* 136). In contrast to earlier models of penalty, disciplinary power neither marks the body nor employs it as a sign system; rather it coerces and shames individuals through a variety of techniques, which Foucault examines in relation to the modern-day prison system. This practice of shaming subjects is also evident in *Supernanny*. Although prisons

existed well before the nineteenth-century they were not considered the universal choice of punishment, due to their association with the abuse of royal power. However, within a few short years, prison came to be seen as the most equitable form of punishment because it deprived individuals of their liberty, the only attribute all had in common. Equally, in *Supernanny* every misdemeanour is punished using the naughty step, a technique which, like the prison system, isolates the child from its familiar and comfortable surroundings and confines the child for a specific period of time.

Capitalism was an necessary precursor to the rise of disciplinary power and, for Foucault, explains the ‘naturalness’ of imprisonment; the day-to-day functioning of the prison system, which follows a rigid timetable, mirrors the segmentation of labour and allows the prisoner to repay the debt of misdemeanour to society ([1975] 1995). In contrast to the ancien régime, where the ability to punish lay solely with the King (or his representatives), in the nineteenth-century, Foucault notes the development of an autonomous justice sector which concealed within it the state’s central role in punishing criminals. Unlike the ancien régime, where judges focused on the crime itself, under the new disciplinary régime, the criminal became an object to be *studied*. It is essential to explain Foucault’s concept of discipline, because it is a key component of *Supernanny*. As I demonstrate below, Frost disciplines the parents who in turn discipline their children. By extension, it is of course hoped that these children, once parents themselves, will continue these methods such that intervention will not be needed.

Discipline

For Foucault, discipline plays an integral role in the constitution of the subject. Correspondingly in *Supernanny*, discipline creates both the parent and the child. He writes, discipline “is the specific technique of power that regards individuals both as objects and as instruments of its exercise” (Foucault, *Discipline* 170). In other words, the subject does not, and cannot, exist outside of power relations: the subject is constituted through networks of power, and in turn, exercises power over others. This emphasis upon hierarchical structures is evident in the relationship between both Frost and the parents, and the parents and their children. In both cases, the individual who has the knowledge holds the power. Foucault contends that discipline is a process, in which the body is made submissive in order to increase its efficiency. For Foucault, discipline has two meanings. Firstly, it relates to the notion of punishment or coercion. Significantly, he argues that the ‘teacher’ must “endeavor to make rewards more frequent than penalties” because they are more productive than punishment (Demia qtd. in Foucault, *Discipline* 180). We see this same emphasis in *Supernanny* where Frost encourages parents to focus on the children’s good behaviour. The second meaning of discipline, as noted in Chapter One, refers to the “sets of skills and forms of knowledge” to be acquired to succeed (Danaher, Schirato and Webb xix). These two meanings are linked together through Foucault’s concept of “power-knowledge” which implies that knowledge is not innocent and is inseparable from power ([1975] 1995).¹⁸³ Of note for my thesis, is the fact that the control of knowledge is implicated in both the history of childhood and the emergence of the modern subject. According to Foucault, knowledge

¹⁸³ Foucault is referring here to “savoir” or officiated knowledge, rather than “connaître” or experiential knowledge.

of the subject (of their history and behaviour) permits their control; recording information about the subject enables them to be individualised and controlled.

Foucault argues that discipline involves spatial division, the regulation of activities, the division of training into discrete stages and the composition of forces, each of which can be seen in *Supernanny*. I contend that these disciplinary techniques play a fundamental role in the creation of the parent and the child as contemporary subjects. I do not discuss Foucault's techniques in this chapter, as this is the focus of the following one. For now, it is sufficient to say that disciplinary techniques focus on minute gestures (such as the individual movements of the body), activities which are seen to be of central importance. Foucault cites Jean-Baptiste de La Salle who writes, "How dangerous it is to neglect little things" (*Discipline* 140). As discussed below, we see this same emphasis on minor details in Frost's approach: parents only succeed when they use the techniques step-by-step and consistently. *Supernanny's* focus on the minutiae of daily life and the attribution of significance to what could be called trivial events contributes to the pathologisation of domestic life (Jensen, "Beyond" 2009) and the current trend towards "paranoid parenting," which holds parents responsible for every single action (Furedi 2001). Interestingly, while the minutiae of the household is highlighted at the beginning of the episode, it is swept aside at the end.

Disciplinary Power

In the disciplinary régime, power does not belong to the King but is a strategy connected to politics. This régime is not interested in the state's power but in microphysics: As indicated above, power works at the level of the soul, or more specifically, how subjects think and behave. Unlike Foucault's concept of bio-power, disciplinary power works at a conscious level and relies upon blind and immediate obedience, to preserve existing power structures (Foucault, *Discipline* 166). Equally, as my analysis of *Supernanny* below reveals, parents are expected to follow Frost's instructions without question or delay. In contrast to the ancien régime, where it was the wealthy who were individualised, in disciplinary societies it is the deviant. In *Supernanny*, it is not the 'deserving' who are transformed (as is the case in many first and second wave makeovers) but rather, those who present a risk to civil society. There are many forms of power (legal, administrative, economic, military), however what all share "is a reliance on certain techniques or methods of application" (McHoul and Grace 65). For Foucault, power does not completely dominate people's lives, nor is it entirely negative. He argues that although power produces categories of people and norms, it simultaneously creates its own opposition. Resistance, for Foucault, is constituted through the rejection of the identities that have been established for us. According to Foucault, in the disciplinary régime, power achieves its effects through three techniques - hierarchal observation, normalising judgement and examination. As these mechanisms play a central role in disciplining the family in *Supernanny* it is profitable to examine them in further detail.

Hierarchical Observation

In the disciplinary model, coercion occurs through observation; architecture is built to maximise surveillance. As Foucault writes, “the perfect disciplinary apparatus would make it possible for a single gaze to see everything constantly” (*Discipline* 173).

Foucault argues that Jeremy Bentham’s panopticon provides the perfect example.

Bentham, a British philosopher, developed a revolutionary prison design which featured a watchtower at the centre of the prison with cell blocks spread out in a circle around it.

The strength of this model was that prisoners would never know if they were being watched, thus they would learn to regulate their behaviour. Unlike the ancien régime, which relied on public displays of violence in order to maintain control over its subjects, disciplinary society uses surveillance in order to facilitate a state of docility. In this model, surveillance is one-way: “the subject of surveillance does not have the reciprocal power to ‘observe’ the observer” (McHoul and Grace 71). In short, s/he who is surveyed is disempowered. Drawing on Foucault’s work, Christian Fuchs argues that “surveillance is a negative concept” because it is “linked to information gathering for the purposes of domination, violence and coercion” (114). For Foucault, hierarchical observation enables the regulation of subjects and, for the capitalist system, the protection of profit.

In *Supernanny*, parents are subject to Frost’s and the audience’s gaze and thus are disempowered. Frost acts like a “*superpanopticon*” (Poster 93). With the help of video cameras she is able to monitor the family’s every move, even when she is not present. Frost uses surveillance in order to reveal the ‘truth’ about the parents’ behaviour and thus enable change. While the parents are subject to surveillance for the duration of the

programme, like the prisoners Foucault discusses in *Discipline and Punish*, it is hoped that they will eventually police themselves. *Supernanny* encourages parents to ‘see’ their responses through the eyes of the expert, to continually reflect upon their behaviour and revise it if necessary. Although *Supernanny* depicts surveillance as a form of ‘care,’ I argue that it is a technique used ultimately to bring the subjects into line with neoliberal and capitalist agendas.

Normalising Judgement

The operation of power depends not only on surveillance but also, as Foucault argues, on the creation of accepted “norms” against which subjects are measured ([1975] 1995). The disciplinary régime is not interested in criminal acts, but rather in cases of non-observance. Individuals are ranked in order of adherence to these norms, a practice which both enables the cataloguing of skills and determines who should be reprimanded. In disciplinary society, transgression of these norms result in periods of corrective training (McNay 1994). In the disciplinary model, punishment reduces the gap between deviancy and the norm. The system employs “micro-penalties” which often involve deprivation or petty humiliations in order to bring the subject into line (Foucault, *Discipline* 183). Fines, flogging and solitary confinement are supplemented with exercises that impose repetitive tasks upon the body. For Foucault, punishment does not provide compensation for wrongdoing, rather it solidifies the norm or standards of expected behaviour. In a disciplinary society anxiety is a constant

companion, due to uncertainty about fulfilling the norms. In the case of normalising judgments, power is associated with the individual, who possesses the knowledge.

We can see normalising judgement at work in *Supernanny*. The parents have failed to meet the required standards and are subjected to a period of corrective training. *Supernanny* uses tactics similar to the prison system to ensure parental complicity. While Frost does not use fines or flogging, she uses petty humiliations – parents are humiliated through watching their behaviour onscreen. Frost makes the parents practise her techniques multiple times so they become ‘second-nature.’ Likewise, she isolates misbehaving children by confining them to the naughty step. *Supernanny* also clearly highlights the reliance upon expert instruction as the parents publically beg for Frost’s help. The featured parents must learn to submit to Frost’s authority; she holds power over them due to her knowledge of ‘correct’ childrearing practices. Notably, the parents only succeed when they use Frost’s techniques correctly, suggesting that discipline produces the ‘good’ parent. Ironically *Supernanny* insists that the nanny, not the parents, knows what is best.

The Examination

Foucault’s third technique of disciplinary power, the examination, draws together both hierarchical observation and normalising judgement. According to Foucault, the examination is a highly ritualised technique which produces knowledge and a certain type of power. The examination makes the subject visible while at the same time revealing the exercise of power. For Foucault, the examination *produces* the individual:

the individual is both an effect and object of power, as well as the subject of documentation. Furthermore, the examination establishes unequal power relations: “it is only the subject of power who undergoes the trial: it is set by someone already possessing the skills or knowledge the other is seeking” (McHoul and Grace 71). For Foucault, the examination produces the norms against which the individual is measured. *Supernanny* adopts an examination process (the trial run) in order to gauge the parents’ progress. As I expand below, in every episode Frost leaves the parents for a week to measure their growing independence. As the expert, Frost has the power to determine whether the parents have passed the examination.

To briefly summarise, Foucault argues that disciplinary power works through hierarchical observation, normalising judgement and examination and that in the present-day such disciplinary techniques are crucial to the governance of institutions, such as prisons and schools. It is no coincidence that these same institutions also played a central role in bringing about the creation of childhood and regulating the child. As has been noted, schools structure their curriculums according to developmental aims and teach children knowledge incrementally. Likewise, prisons segregate delinquents from citizens in order to protect the latter. My examination of Foucault here adds to the discussion of the institutions addressed in Chapter One. Since the nineteenth-century, disciplinary practices have been absorbed by the sovereign family.

I draw upon Foucault’s theories of discipline and power to analyse *Supernanny*’s format and understand the positions of various individuals within the narrative (the expert, the parents and the children). Foucault splits sovereign power from disciplinary power. Sovereign power is concentrated in a specific individual (the King/father figure), works in a top-down manner, is backwards-looking, heterotopic (both in terms of space

and relationships) and is seen as ‘natural’ due to blood ties or conquest. In contrast, disciplinary power is anonymous and is justified through its appeal to behavioural norms. It occurs in enclosed spaces and tries to simplify relationships. *Supernanny* opens with us entering the private space of the home, a fact which highlights the central role of discipline in the narrative. By agreeing to be filmed and allowing us into their homes, the parents willingly submit to public humiliation. Thus I begin my discussion of *Supernanny*’s five-part structure by analysing the depiction of the home, which functions as a setting for ‘care’ in the age of the domestication of childhood. It is within this space that the pathologisation of domestic life becomes evident.

Houses of Horror: Supernanny’s Setting

As the threat comes from *within* the family in *Supernanny*, rather than from outside (Tally 14) the programme is similar to the maternal melodramas of the 1940s. Like Michael Curtiz’s *Mildred Pierce* (1945), which explores the conflict between a mother and her eldest daughter, *Supernanny* focuses on strained familial relations. In the latter, shots of the home’s exterior are shown multiple times and are often used to bookend each scene (Ferguson 214). In the UK version overloaded washing lines (Ferguson 214) and rubbish-strewn backyards symbolise the chaos within the home. In contrast, in the US episodes, the houses are immaculately presented, with sculptured gardens and newly mowed lawns, masking the trouble therein.

In *Supernanny*, almost all of the drama occurs within the home. Crucially the home is represented not as a place of refuge, but instead a site of imprisonment and/or horror. Here there are echoes of Foucault’s work on disciplinary society and the anxiety that

subjects feel as a result of trying to ensure their compliance to the norm. The home is described in an array of derogatory terms: in one episode the narrator refers to it as a “virtual bombsite,” and later as “a dumping ground” (US season one, episode two). In *Supernanny* the framing of the house exposes the façade of the perfect family and hints that all is not as it seems. The feeling of unease is mirrored by the filming of the family home. The frontages of the homes are typically shot using a wide angle lens which “gives an uncanny astigmatic impression and [...] a sense of unreality” (Ferguson 214).

The homes’ uncanniness is reflected in the wider setting, which appears both familiar and unfamiliar. As Ferguson notes, in the British version of *Supernanny* suburbia “takes on an unheimlich quality [...] the “streets are filmed with hand-held cameras and drowned in unnerving music and sound-effects while mothers chase their ‘wayward’ children along the side of [...] roads and around supermarkets” (214). While I agree with Ferguson’s assertion that the mise-en-scène in this particular episode, the Cooke family, bears similarities to that of cult horror films such as *Halloween* (John Carpenter 1978) and Wes Craven’s *A Nightmare on Elm Street* (Ferguson 215), her example is somewhat atypical (figures 5 and 6, appendix g).¹⁸⁴ In the episodes I examine, we rarely leave the confines of the family home with trips typically occurring only during the observation period to demonstrate the parents’ inability to control their children in public. Very occasionally, during the teaching period, Frost takes parents to the supermarket, park or shopping mall in order to demonstrate her “roaming technique.”

As indicated above, in *Supernanny* the makeover occurs primarily within the space of the home, implying that the ‘problem’ must be dealt with ‘in private,’ an irony given

¹⁸⁴ The fact that Chris Franke (the musical director William Friedkin wanted for his 1973 film *The Exorcist*) composed the musical score for forty-eight episodes of *Supernanny* reinforces this reading (Ferguson 2009).

that the programme is broadcast to millions of people around the world. The depiction of the family home in *Supernanny* recalls Foucault's work on the prison and mirrors the practice of removing delinquents from civil society. The visual isolation of the house (it is filmed apart from neighbouring properties) makes it appear prison-like and separated off from wider society. Parents support this view with their statements to the camera: For example, Cheryl McMillion remarks that she "feels like a prisoner in [her] own home." Things have got so bad for Cheryl that she regularly locks herself in the bedroom to avoid the chaos (US season two, episode two). *Supernanny's* depiction of the home (separated off from wider society) and Frost's attempts to regulate the child's movements within this space, support Foucault's claim that from the eighteenth-century onwards disciplinary practices infiltrated the sovereign family (*Psychiatric* [2003] 2006).

While at the beginning of *Supernanny* the home is represented as a place from which parents are desperate to escape, by the conclusion of the episode it appears warm and inviting as a result of Frost's intervention. During the update, the family is often shown outdoors – at the park, playground or the beach, implying that as a result of their transformation they are now 'fit' to be seen in public. The closing of the curtains with Frost's departure, which I expand upon below, signals that we no longer have access to the family home because our reason for doing so has passed.

Narratives of Disorder

Supernanny extends the tripartite structure of first and second wave makeover texts, with more time dedicated to educating the parents (Fowler and Kambuta 265). The programme's five-part structure emphasises the difficulties of dealing with parents as subjects and echoes my larger argument that the parent is a site of contestation. *Supernanny's* focus on the parent rather than the child could also be said to deflect criticism about the exploitation of minors, who, we can reasonably assume, are unable to give their consent or fully understand the implications of appearing on a reality programme.¹⁸⁵ In the UK the *Supernanny* DVDs received a PG rating (parental guidance recommended), however the show is clearly targeted at an adult audience and reflects the trend of using images of children for our own (adult) agendas (Buckingham 2000; Gittins 2004).¹⁸⁶ As previously noted, many critics believe that *Supernanny's* producers were not interested in 'helping' troubled families per se, but rather in manipulating them for commercial gain.

In contrast to first and second wave makeovers which are typically divided into three parts, I argue that *Supernanny* is divided into five, namely: the introduction of the family/identification of problems, the observation period, the teaching stage, the trial run and reinforcement. Each will be discussed in further detail.¹⁸⁷ In the US version the

¹⁸⁵ Dr Tanya Byron, a psychologist best known for role on *Little Angels* and *The House of Tiny Tearaways*, quit after becoming concerned about "the exploitation of children and families on these types of shows" (Clark n.p.).

¹⁸⁶ Decca Aitkenhead found that *Supernanny* was popular with both parents and children (2006).

¹⁸⁷ The narrative structure differs slightly in later seasons where Frost does not explain her techniques. Viewers also do not see the family's trial run directly but only through the DVD footage which Frost brings to show the parents. Instead viewers are given short "Supernanny tips" which range from how to deal with teething problems to advice on protecting one's children from common household dangers.

passing of time is indicated by the use of time-lapse images of the sky (i.e. clouds passing), while external crane shots of the house and a musical score are used to create transitions between sections. Some makeover conventions remain, for as with first and second wave texts, *Supernanny* features multiple recaps of the problems that need to be addressed. Likewise, repetition is used to stall the ending and create dramatic effect.

Supernanny's title sequence differs somewhat between the UK and US versions, however both present a similar message: no kid is too tough for Frost and her child-taming techniques.¹⁸⁸ The title sequence plays a crucial role in establishing audience expectations and in encouraging individuals to watch (Burton 75). In season two of the UK version, six computer-generated children are shown jumping all over the furniture while a tornado of books and toys fly around the room.¹⁸⁹ The opening sequence appears like a video game in which Frost and the audience are players (Ferguson 213). By positioning viewers in this way, the show implies that managing children is as easy as controlling an avatar. Equally, it could also be argued that viewers function as virtual panopticons, or unseen prison guards who ensure the participants' obedience through hierarchical observation. The tornado in the opening sequence is significant, for as Ferguson notes, it provides a visual reference to the ill-wind that brings Mary Poppins to the Banks' household in the film of the same name (213).¹⁹⁰ In addition, it suggests

¹⁸⁸ The US version of the show draws on the imagery of *The Sound of Music* with children positioned on either side of Frost. This shot parallels a scene in Wise's film where Captain Georg von Trapp (Christopher Plummer) summons his children (Liesel, Friedrich, Louisa, Kurt, Brigitta, Marta and Gretl) downstairs to meet the family's new governess.

¹⁸⁹ The main differences between the two versions of *Supernanny* relate to the opening sequences, the pace of the narrative, the inclusion of expository intertitles in the US DVD, and contrasting production values (the US version is slicker and has a much tighter causal structure). For further information see Vered and McConchie (2012), or Tally (2012).

¹⁹⁰ Based on the P.L Traver's books *Mary Poppins* tells the story of a mysterious nanny who transforms the Banks' family through music and magic.

that the nanny comes from nowhere and has no ideological agenda, a view which, as I demonstrate, is blatantly untrue.

The title sequence continues with Frost arriving amidst the chaos; she is clearly horrified by what she sees. Within a few short minutes, however, she has restored the room to its original order. She returns all of the books, toys, furniture and children to their ‘proper’ places just by pointing at them, a sequence which once again alludes to Poppins who uses magic and music to transform her charges (see figures 7 – 14, appendix g). In examining the opening scene, Ferguson notes the addition of a “digital halo [which] forms and flies off Supernanny’s head,” a symbol which arguably reinforces her status as a supernatural being. The series suggests that Frost is no *ordinary* nanny. This belief is reinforced by the show’s title, the visuals and the adjectives used to describe her. In an interview with Gilly Smith, Murphy revealed that the naming of the show was deliberate: “She was unusual. She was larger than life. She wasn’t your warm normal nanny or au pair, it was a *super-hero thing*” (10).¹⁹¹

The show’s title (*Supernanny*) reveals the programme’s emphasis: unlike the *House of Tiny Tearaways* or *Demons to Darlings* which reference naughty children, the focus here is on the expert and her ‘magical’ powers. According to Margaret Tally, Frost shares characteristics with other American superheroes “who can somehow cure ills with their personalities or sheer strength” (7). The depiction of Frost as a superhero or god-like figure is not unique to *Supernanny* but, as has been suggested in Chapter Two, is a common treatment for experts in the makeover narrative more generally. Vitally, the emphasis upon Frost’s expert status renews our focus on discipline, as Foucault defines it (as both punishment and the techniques by which the subject is governed).

¹⁹¹ Frost’s experience working with high profile families made her an obvious choice for the television series (Fletcher n.p.).

Frost's inclusion in the show also blurs the boundaries between the parent and the child, as she ultimately infantilises the parents.

Frost's characterisation draws upon a range of historical and fictional characters, most significantly, as has already been noted, Mary Poppins and Maria from *The Sound of Music* (figure 15 and 16, appendix g). In both of these films, the fathers' harsh, disciplinarian natures are identified as the cause of the family's problems. Frost is described as a "modern-day Mary Poppins" on the US DVD cover.¹⁹² This framing of Frost explains much of the programme's success: without the power of a social worker or government official she is less threatening. As Becker contends, "a prime-time series entitled 'Supersocialworker' or 'Child Protection Services' 911' would hardly seem possible on [...] American television underscoring how engrained suspicion about state involvement in the private family has become" (186).¹⁹³ Unlike government interventions which "carry resonances of failure, shame and stigma," in *Supernanny* parents "choose to receive professional expertise in order to remake themselves" (Jensen, "Beyond" 310).¹⁹⁴ The programme distances itself from forced interventions through a discourse of empowerment (Jensen 2009). In short, *Supernanny* 'works'

¹⁹² Dr. Stephen Juan, a human development specialist, describes Frost as the "devil version of Mary Poppins," stating that her techniques are damaging to children as they "do not allow for any freedom or creativity" (H. Edwards n.p.).

¹⁹³ Jensen disagrees with Becker's argument, stating that there are already a number of reality shows about government officials, including the police, airport workers, and hospital staff that are broadcast on television ("Beyond" 2009). While acknowledging that these types of programmes are commonplace, I argue that they are different from *Supernanny* because they do not often encroach upon the private space of the home.

¹⁹⁴ Even though Frost is not associated with any specific agencies, her presence in the home still brings disruptions. Like her filmic predecessor, she is a liminal figure who complicates the division between the public/private spheres. As a nanny, she moves between both worlds and in many respects, blurs the boundary between them: as with her fictional counterparts, "her employment in the home challenges the separation of the 'inside' world of domesticity and family from the 'outside' world of work and commerce" (McLeer 9). Likewise, Frost's presence in the home marks her as both family and not-family (McLeer 2003). As a shadow mother, Frost also runs the risk of undermining the parents' authority and/or evoking jealousy as a result of attracting the children's or the husband's affections.

because Frost is not aligned with any government agency, although various politicians have hijacked her for their cause.¹⁹⁵

Supernanny's title shot represents Frost as a marionette type figure "wearing a prim white collar and holding a formidable handbag" (Ferguson 213). She stands with one hand on her hip, emphasising her business-like and/or masculine side, next to the show's name. According to Ferguson, Frost appears like a "mixture of Mary Poppins and Mrs. Wilberforce of the *Lady Killers*" (213). While I agree with Ferguson's assertion that these two figures (Mary Poppins and Mrs. Wilberforce) represent a "romanticized purer England," I contend there are significant differences between the two. In Alexander MacKendrick's 1955 film, Mrs. Wilberforce is seen by the local police as a nuisance, while Frost's advice is, initially at least, welcomed (figure 17, appendix g).

Apart from introducing the programme's star, *Supernanny*'s opening sequence is significant because it suggests that there is "a place for everything," children included (Vered and McConchie 82).¹⁹⁶ As I expand in Chapter Four, the unruly child is one who does not know, or stay in, 'his' or 'her' place, both in terms of his/her position as a child and in relation to physical space. The unruly child is one who transgresses boundaries; s/he sleeps in their parents' beds, sits in their chairs and sneaks into their offices. If

¹⁹⁵ Several ministers interpreted the popularity of *Supernanny* as an indication of support for increased government assistance and legislation concerning the family. In 2006 Prime Minister Tony Blair announced the introduction of seventy-seven "super nannies" whose role it was to combat antisocial behaviour in various trouble-spots around the country. Just one year later, Beverley Hughes, then Children's Minister, launched a £30 million National Parenting Academy (NAPP) designed to "support the development and training of [...] those who offer support services to parents. Later that year, a Scottish educational committee recommended to Parliament that they establish "Supernanny Units" where young couples and single mothers could learn "basic parenting skills" (Nutt n.p.). The scheme, which was to be trialed in Dundee, would subject "families in difficulty [...] to round-the-clock supervision by trained social workers" (Nutt n.p.).

¹⁹⁶ From season two onwards, *Supernanny*'s US theme song is "Be Good Johnny" sung by Men at Work (*Business as Usual* 1982). Johnny, the subject of the song, sings about all the things his mother and father have told him (not) to do.

there are specific places for the child to inhabit, *Supernanny* insists that the same holds true for parents. In order to restore peace, *Supernanny* suggests that parents must regulate not only their child's use of (domestic and public) space, but also enforce the adult/child binary. Furthermore, the opening sequence implies that children need guidance (to be told what they can and cannot do) and that adults must take control of every situation. This is a crucial point, for one of my primary aims is to elucidate the relationship between care and control in respect to the parent/child bond.

Supernanny prescribes clear responsibilities for both adults and children. In one episode Heather Bixley is shown screaming hysterically at her seven-year-old son while trying to force a sausage into his mouth (UK season two, episode eight). In another, Wendy Agate cowers in a corner while her seven-year-old daughter Maryanne hurls abuse at her (UK season two, episode six). What is significant about these examples (and indeed all of the episodes examined) is the way in which the prescribed roles of adult and child seem to have been reversed, with neither behaving as they ought to keep the other in place. In the first example Heather has lost control of her emotions (we should not forget that self-control is seen as key to adulthood), while in the second, Wendy has given all of her power to her daughter. In *Supernanny*, the collapse of the adult/child hierarchy is presented in a negative light: For Frost, conflict is caused by a breakdown of parental authority and a reversal of adult/child roles.

At the beginning of the programme the narrator provides an overview of this week's episode, with the quick editing package providing the most provocative images from the show to titillate viewers.¹⁹⁷ The authoritative male voice-over, a long standing-feature of the documentary film, has become increasingly common in reality television

¹⁹⁷ Nick Frost, a well-known English actor, comedian and scriptwriter, narrates many of the episodes. His voice will be familiar to many British viewers.

programmes. In *Supernanny* the male narrator plays a crucial role, not only suturing gaps in the narrative, but also standing in for the many absent (both literally and figuratively) fathers (Ferguson 214). As I explain below, the narrator, in tandem with Frost, helps us to interpret the text in the ‘correct’ manner.

***“Submission as Salvation?”*¹⁹⁸**

After questioning whether Frost can resolve this situation (“But can Britain’s toughest nanny put an end to the anarchy or has she met her match?”), the episode begins.¹⁹⁹ As many critics noted, *Supernanny*’s narrative is fairly formulaic, with only slight variations in the problems dealt with from episode to episode. First, we are introduced to this week’s participants via a “submission reel,” with the camera in the UK episodes zooming in on each member of the family. The double entendre of the term “submission” is significant for, as Green argues, it not only marks the parent(s)’ first moment of surrender to Frost’s authority, but also foreshadows the use of video surveillance later in the narrative (“Supernanny” 100). *Supernanny* highlights the makeover’s contradictory nature by suggesting that empowerment happens through surrendering to another (Weber 2009). Although *Supernanny* utilises an episodic narrative (the family changes from week to week), it could be argued that the programme is open-ended due to the fact that there is a never-ending stream of desperate families (L. Edwards, *Triumph* 51).

¹⁹⁸ I borrow this phrase from Weber (2009)

¹⁹⁹ UK season two, episode one.

Second, in the US episodes, many of the parents provide viewers with additional information about where they met their husband/wife and how their lives have since changed. Here for the first time, we see discrepancies in how the discourse of parenthood is adopted by the various parties: what the parents say about their children (casting them as Dionysian devils) contrasts sharply with Frost's opinion of the situation (she maintains the view that they are Apollonian angels and it is the parents who are to blame for bad behaviour). From the off-set then, the programme clearly illustrates how different theories of parenthood are intertwined, accepted and/or rejected.

What is immediately apparent in the parents' comments about their lives (following the birth of their children), is a sense of loss, both in respect to their individual identities and also in their relationship with their partners. This feeling of loss points to the complex nature of parenthood. For example, Joanne Burnett, a school-teacher and mother of five, tells us that "life before twins was crazy and wild." We see old photos of Joanne and her husband Michael together on various holidays smiling and laughing (figure 18, appendix g). Joanne reveals that Michael and her "ate out every night [...] travelled [and] were never home." In contrast, the Burnett's submission tape shows them struggling to manage two sets of twins and an eight-year-old while both working full-time (figure 19, appendix g). As Joanne and Michael work opposite shifts, they are rarely seen together in the same frame. Joanne, who appears tired and stressed, explains that she "never expected life to be like this" while Michael jokes half-heartedly that he is "looking forward to college" (US season one, episode nine). Hence the opening scenes of *Supernanny* are edited to proffer parenthood as a burden.²⁰⁰ Alongside the

²⁰⁰ The notion of children as a burden is far more common today. As Bristow explains, "parenthood is now perceived as a burden that lasts from pre-conception to the grave – and having a family is now seen

editing, the narration reinforces these beliefs about the negative impact of children on their parents' lives. In the opening sequence the narrator states, "first comes love" (accompanied by a shot of a couple holding hands), "then comes marriage" which is followed by images of screaming and out-of-control children. We are therefore shown only the detrimental effects on parents' lives as the behaviour of children introduces economic, emotional and relational stress.

Analysis of *Supernanny's* opening sequence reveals how we are immediately confronted with a crisis of parenthood. The programme's depiction of parenting supports Foucault's claim that disciplinary society is characterised by anxiety, a fact which is reinforced by *Supernanny's* narrative of disorder. As indicated above, the parents have lost much of their sense of self and appear child-like due to their repeated requests for help. It is not surprising then that Frost, like Dyer from *Bad Behaviour*, is positioned as a salvatory figure. In the episodes analysed, all of the parents confess that they feel desperate because their children are out-of-control and they do not know what to do.²⁰¹ In her submission tape Denise Cooke, mother of three, tells viewers, "I'm at my wit's end. I've got nowhere to go. I [...] feel like I've failed" (UK season one, episode three). Likewise Deirdre Facente, a twenty-seven-year-old mother of three admits that she is just "trying to keep [her] head above water" since her three-year old son Tristin was diagnosed with autism (US season two, episode six). Deirdre is shown lying on her bed exhausted while her three young children vie for her attention (figures 20 and 21, appendix g). The parents' melodramatic pleas are a crucial part of

as a lifestyle that people opt into, rather than an expected part of life" (37). Changes in Western society, such as the increasing availability of contraception, abortion and the importance of tertiary qualifications mean that women are delaying pregnancy or choosing not to have children at all (Bristow 2009).

²⁰¹ It seems this desperation is shared by many parents. *Brat Camp*, a similar series about out-of-control teens, received 3,000 applications for their third season (see the *Girls Only Edition*).

Supernanny's format because they provide evidence that the makeover is "necessary" (Weber 87) and justify the invasion of privacy that Frost's visit entails. Moreover, these images and descriptions help to establish a clear before and after narrative. As we will become clear, *Supernanny* seeks to transform the parents' desperation and excessive negative emotionalism into joy.

As explained in Chapter One, the domestication of childhood increased the burden on mothers who were home-based, a fact which is obvious in *Supernanny*. Not surprisingly, as primary caregivers, it is the mothers who are the most dissatisfied with their lives.²⁰² Many of the women report feeling like "single mums" because they have little or no support. Carolyn Pandit, for instance, confesses, "I [...] tend to be the negative one because I'm the one dealing with it most of the time" (UK season two, episode two). While several of the fathers travel out of town for work, meaning that their wives must often raise the children alone, others simply leave the parenting to their wives.²⁰³ Bill Bailey openly admits that he would rather cook than deal with his children (US season one, episode six).²⁰⁴ However the programme's single mothers bear a double-burden, trying to be both mum and dad to their children. As Kelly Steer says, "I've got my hands full. [...] I've found it hard to be strong all the time" (UK season

²⁰² As well as shouldering most of the parental responsibility, in *Supernanny* women often also do more than their fair share of housework. At least two of the men featured on *Supernanny* believe that housework is for women. Robert Gorbea tells us that he does not do the dishes "because that's for girls, right?" (US season one, episode nine). Michael Burnett agrees, telling Frost "Joanne handles the traditional things that women do and I handle the traditional things that men do" (US season one, episode seven). In *Supernanny*, Frost encourages the men to help with domestic work in order to take some of the pressure off their wives.

²⁰³ For dads who travel out of town for work, see the Bixley, Jeans, Orm, and Wischmeyer episodes. For uninvolved dads see the Amaral, Bailey, Larmer, Minyon, Pandit and Ririe episodes.

²⁰⁴ While some of the dads are lazy, for most, the problem is that they do not know how to interact with their children (in other words, they have never been taught). In *Supernanny*, Frost spends a considerable amount of time with fathers, showing them how to care for, and interact with, their children.

one, episode two). Kelly is not alone in this dilemma: all of the solo mothers (featured only in the UK episodes) rely heavily on their own parents for help with childcare and domestic work. While Frost recognises the importance of extended family, she believes that parents must take responsibility for raising their own children. *Supernanny* implies that those who rely upon their parents (the children's grandparents) are essentially behaving like children.

Fix My Children: Identifying Problems

The crisis of parenthood is evident from the outset of the narrative, both in the parents' descriptions of their children's bad behaviour and the images provided. After providing information about their relationship, parents then identify specific problems they are having with their child(ren). Once again, over-emphasising the horror of their situation, the parents' voice-over is accompanied by shots of the offending behaviour. The language used by parents to describe their children's conduct is significant for two reasons; it bears some resemblance to Jenks' conceptualisation of the Dionysian child, and establishes the key narrative tension (that is, the two conflicting views of the child). The opening sequence of *Supernanny* promotes a Dionysian view of the child/childrearing. In their submission tapes, parents often describe their children as little "horrors" and "devils," children who have taken over their lives and disrupted their peace. Frost does not share the parents' view: She believes the children are in fact Apollonian angels. In the Jeans' episode, she informs us that "there is no such thing as a

‘bad’ child,” instead stating that the children’s behaviour is the result of ‘bad’ parenting (US season one, episode one).

The parents’ accounts of their children’s behaviour implies that they have little or no control over them and could be seen as a strategy to avoid blame. In the introductory sequence we hear ongoing references to war, a common characteristic of makeover texts. As Raisborough observes, battle terms are often used to show “the heroic effort involved in becoming a better person” (47). The home is frequently described as a “battle zone.” Parents see socialisation as a fight in which they are on the losing side. They believe their children’s behaviour to be unchangeable and that there is no resolution to it. For example, Wendy Agate describes her daughter Maryanne as “a *bomb* waiting to *explode*” (UK season two, episode six). Likewise, Tami Keilen informs us that dressing her four-year-old daughter Maile in the morning is “impossible” and that it often “takes up to two hours to win the *battle*” (US season two, episode seven). In another episode, dad Alex tells us that mealtime in the Bixley household “is like a *war*” and that he would “rather stick needles in [his] eyes” than endure another one (UK season two, episode eight). Such terminology over-emphasises the seriousness of the situation and the need for Frost’s immediate intervention. The narrator describes Frost’s assignment as a “rescue mission,” reinforcing *Supernanny*’s battle motif (US season one, episode three).

Frost functions as a “secular miracle worker” (Puterbaugh 69). At the end of the submission tape, the families beg Frost to save them.²⁰⁵ The situation, it seems, has become so desperate that the parents are willing to expose their faults on international

²⁰⁵ Not all of the families featured on *Supernanny* applied to be on the programme; at least two of the families were recruited by casting agents. Evelina Gorbea was asked to participate after a casting agent saw her two-year-old son Adam running away from her in a shopping mall. She told reporters that “before the show she had never considered seeking advice” for her son’s difficult behaviour (Gilbert n.p.). The Ririe family was also recruited at a local shopping mall (Knight n. p.).

television. As Jennie Bristow notes, “people invite *Supernanny* home because [...] the behaviour of [their] children and the quality of [their] parenting is seen to be so important that it trumps every other traditional family value” including “pride, confidence, [and] privacy” (12). Asking for help is seen as a sign of strength in therapeutic culture. The show’s narrator describes Frost as the family’s last hope: “With nowhere else to go, Alex and Heather have turned to Supernanny” (UK season two, episode eight). In the US series Frost confirms the need for intervention. After watching clips on a portable DVD player, she states, “this family *desperately* needs my help! I’m on my way!” (US season two, episode two). Frost’s car, a black English taxi, an icon which reinforces her Britishness, ‘speeds’ to the family’s home (the producers use rapid editing), reinforcing this sense of urgency.

Frost as “Dominannny”

Before discussing part two (the observation period) of the five-part structure of *Supernanny* it is worth pausing to further examine the characterisation of Frost as disciplinarian further. Roberts argues that Frost’s styling played a central role in the brand’s success: “It all comes back to that image; without the stern but sexy dominatrix, *Supernanny* could have been just another reality show” (n.p.). Frost’s costuming recalls the militaristic nature of disciplinary societies. On first view, she appears like a drill-sergeant. Frost arrives at the family’s home dressed in a skirt suit (black in the UK series and red or purple in the American version) and fifties-style high heels (figure 22 and 23, appendix g). Her outfit suggests a degree of nostalgia and could be seen as a

counter to the permissive style of parenting that was popular in the 1960s. Frost wears black eye-liner, red lipstick, dark-rimmed glasses and has her hair tied up in a matronly bun. Frost's costume was the result of careful deliberation. As Murphy explains, the team wanted to create a "new Mary Poppins," one who was "not necessarily warm" but "stern and edgy" in the hope that the show would have a greater impact (Smith 10). As Frost exits the car in the US version, she is framed using a low-angle camera, which makes her seem more imposing than she is.

Frost's "power-suit," as it has often been described in the press, is significant because it provides a visual reference to her fictional counterpart, Mary Poppins, and gives her an air of authority which she otherwise might not have.²⁰⁶ Like many others, Ferguson notes the dominatrix overtones of the suit, and argues that Frost is an example of a "phallic woman," who appears to be a mixture of Margaret Thatcher, Mary Poppins "and 'the father' whose presence would implicitly remove the need for hers" (Ferguson 219).²⁰⁷ I argue that in *Supernanny* the 'father,' as a symbolic figure, signifies authority, objectivity and rationality (figures 24 – 26, appendix g). Significantly, Frost only wears this costume during the observation period, after which time she mostly wears black pants and a red/purple shirt with her hair hanging loosely around her shoulders (Ferguson 2009). The dark-rimmed glasses are replaced by contact lenses. This outfit appears more 'motherly' and mirrors Frost's more comforting approach to the parents in the latter part of the show (Ferguson 2009). In other words, once the family submits to Frost's regime, her costume changes to signal not a new order but also new roles for the individual family members. According to Weber this shift is also evident in second

²⁰⁶ Jensen's focus groups were particularly uncomfortable with Frost's costume and suggested that she was masquerading as a 'professional' ("Beyond" 2009).

²⁰⁷ Frost attracted an audience of a 'different' type: Frost reported receiving many letters from men asking for her to "put them on the naughty step" (Das 2013).

wave makeovers, where midway through the narrative fashion experts are depicted “as caring friends with altruistic commitments to the subjects’ overall wellbeing” (102). Experts, it seems, must be stern in the initial stages of the makeover in order to convince the participants to change; however, unlike the prison guard Foucault discusses in *Discipline and Punish* who maintains an emotional distance from his/her charges, the nature of Frost’s role means that she cannot remain totally apart from the family. In all of the episodes analysed, she expresses genuine affection for the families she works with.

As with her filmic counterparts, Frost induces a mixture of fear and fondness. While she seems warm and inviting to some of the parents, to others she appears intimidating and stern. Jenn Ririe, for example, gushes: “Jo seems amazing” (US season one, episode eight). Frank Minyon on the other hand observes, “Jo’s presence felt very strong, kind of like a principal. I felt as if school was about to begin” (US season two, episode one). At least one of the featured fathers on *Supernanny* is attracted to Frost. Ed Lamer admits that when he met Frost he “instantly got butterflies and sweaty palms” and “didn’t know what to do” (US season two, episode three). As no parents in the episodes analysed have experience with real-life nannies they draw upon their knowledge of fictional examples (Holden 2013). We can see evidence of this in Stacie’s comment: “When I opened the door and met Jo, first I was shocked. I was kind of taken back because *she didn’t fit my conception of what a British nanny should look like*” (US series one, episode six). In contrast, Evelina Gorbea confesses that her first impression of Frost was “Mary Poppins on [her] front door-step” (US series one, episode seven). Apart from revealing the cultural beliefs around nannies, the parents’ assessments of

Frost are noteworthy because they provide insight into their expectations and an indication of how they will respond to her advice.

Returning to the narrative structure, and the opening first part, we see the way in which *Supernanny* draws from, and builds upon, the *Mary Poppins*'s template. As is the case with the film, upbeat music accompanies Frost's arrival at the family home, suggesting that a change is in the air. Once introductions have been made Frost instructs parents to "carry on as normal" ('normal' being their usual dysfunctional manner) so that she can observe the household dynamics and "take mental notes" about the issues that need addressing. *Supernanny*'s observation period, the second part of the narrative which I discuss below, shares striking similarities with Foucault's description of the prison where subjects are constantly monitored and their behaviour recorded. Prior to the observation period, many of the parents express relief that they are finally going to get the answers they need. In direct address to the camera Judy Larmer reveals, "When I first met Jo I was so excited I nearly cried. It was the light at the end of the tunnel – there's my hope. I can finally have my house and *children fixed*." Judy's choice of words is significant: she identifies her children as the problem to be remedied. As previously discussed, however, Frost's view is that it is *Judy's* attitude and behaviour (this is true of all the episodes analysed) which need to change most (US season two, episode three). *Supernanny* has a two-fold approach to discipline: Frost first disciplines the parents so that they can in turn discipline their children.

Before examining the observation period, I briefly summarise the key points of *Supernanny*'s introductory sequence so as to highlight its importance for the overall narrative. *Supernanny*'s opening scenes play a vital role; they position the show within its generic context, help to establish audience expectations, introduce central themes and

entice viewers to watch. *Supernanny* includes a title shot interspersed with tantalising footage from this week's episode. The opening sequence introduces key players: Frost and this week's desperate family. While the parents' melodramatic pleas justify the programme's invasion of their privacy, Frost's entry into the private space of the home marks the parents first moment of submission to the disciplinary process. *Supernanny's* opening sequence establishes a narrative of disorder, with the parents' providing a list of problems to be resolved within a fifty-minute episode. The introductory sequence segues neatly into the observation period, where Frost surveys the family's interactions.

***The Observation Period: Supernanny as “Superpanopticon”*²⁰⁸**

The second part of the five-part narrative, the observation period, plays a crucial role in establishing the family's problems and provides further justification of both Frost's and the camera's presence in the home. Additionally, the observation period reveals the minutiae of the family's day-to-day life, which distinguishes one family from another. As I explain below, although Frost regularly emphasises the small details of her disciplinary techniques, she uses the same strategies for every family; thus she does not respond to the uniqueness of individual situations. The observation period occurs immediately after Frost's arrival and typically lasts for one or two days. The visual record of the video tape stands in for Foucault's written documentation; the parents are represented as cases to be studied with Frost acting as our guide.

Disciplinary power “imposes upon those whom it surveys, a principle of compulsory visibility” and reveals the expertise of power (Foucault, *Discipline* 187). By employing

²⁰⁸ I borrow the term “superpanopticon” from Poster (93).

surveillance (Frost's observations, comments and reactions to the camera, as well as the DVD footage from the parents' trial run), *Supernanny* teaches the featured parents, as well as the viewing audience, how to employ a critical gaze and 'correctly' interpret the footage. The programme insists that parents (and home viewers) must 'step out' of the situation so that they can determine the necessary course of action; clarity is thus implied to result from emotional detachment. *Supernanny* indicates that parents have become *too* emotionally invested in their children with disastrous consequences for the family. In contrast to Bentham's panopticon, in *Supernanny* the gaze is not 'faceless'; the camera aligns us with Frost's point-of-view, thus reinforcing her centrality as a "superpanopticon" (Poster 93).

During the observation period, "superpanopticon" Frost witnesses a variety of troublesome activities including bedtimes, school-runs and supermarket visits. Trips outside the home seem to provoke the most anxiety in parents, who confess that they hate going out because of their children's bad behaviour in public. This admission is significant for families who, at the beginning of the programme, avoid the (social) gaze, will, at the end, welcome it. In short, the parents' initial comments serve to measure Frost's success and justify her invasion of the family home. Although Foucault highlights the centrality of the authority's gaze (by which he means any government 'official' – the prison guard, policeman, or teacher) in regulating the individual, he is less interested in the social (public) gaze ([1975] 1995). This omission is noteworthy because I argue that the social gaze, established by the observation period, plays a fundamental role in regulating parental behaviour.

In the UK version, the observation period constitutes a significant portion of the narrative – it uses seven to ten minutes of the total fifty-minute broadcast. The

prolonged before not only allows assessment of the family, in TV terms it also creates footage to fill air time and promote drama. Even though Frost has watched the family's submission tape prior to her arrival at the family's home, the observation period allows her to make an *independent* assessment of the situation (figures 27 and 28, appendix g). In the UK version, subtitles are used to ensure that we do not miss anything the children say and can understand the regional accents. The crisis narrative continues as during the observation period "the pace of editing increases to elevate the feeling of chaos" (Vered and McConchie 76). The sound-track reinforces this sense of confusion as circus-like music plays throughout the entire observation period. Likewise, the children's screams seem amplified (Vered and McConchie 76). In the UK episodes, the physical space of the home, which is often cramped, adds to the general feeling of disorder. As the observation period is filmed using hand-held cameras, the shots are often jerky and awkward, as operators attempt to follow the action. Zooms and close-ups are frequently used to catch the drama and reveal reactions. Shot/reverse shots, a creation of the editing suite, capture heated exchanges between the adults and the children and keep them visually separated in a way that 'two shots' or long takes would not. In *Supernanny* the images, camera movement, editing, music and audio-track all work together to create a sense of turmoil, or 'crisis mode' which continues through the observation period.

The shame parents feel is evident in their communication with Frost during the observation period. After chasing her daughter Maryanne down the street, a tearful Wendy Agate tells Frost, "I don't want to be here anymore. [...] It's not my idea of family life [...] I have had enough." For most of the conversation, Wendy avoids making eye contact with Frost, her dejected posture indicating her feelings of shame.

She does not explain what family life *should* be like, however it is clear that she is tired of the constant battles. Wendy does not understand why Maryanne behaves the way she does but remarks to Frost, “I would *never* have treated my Mum this way!”²⁰⁹ Wendy’s comments suggest a deterioration of respect in the younger generation (UK season two, episode six). Although the narrative of generational decline is common in contemporary childrearing debates, the belief that children from earlier periods were more respectful is not new; as Geoffrey Pearson notes, each generation looks back to a ‘golden era’ when children were supposedly well-behaved (1983).

Frost’s position as an observer is a strategic one. She not only uses this time to gather information about the family, but additionally, models what parents must learn to do. Frost is not portrayed as a detached clinical observer and in this respect cannot be considered a (inhuman) panopticon. At times, she finds it difficult not to intervene. As she confesses to Michael Burnett, who is struggling to dress two sets of twins under the age of four, it is very hard for her “not to give him a hand” (US season one, episode nine). In another episode Frost has to restrain herself when she witnesses Heather Bixley physically bullying her son (UK season two, episode eight). In the first example, Frost’s desire to help comes from seeing a genuine need. In contrast, in the second episode, she risks becoming complicit in the mistreatment of a child. In both instances Frost must resist the urge to step in so that viewers and later parents can *see* where the problems lie. Moreover, by standing back, Frost models the necessity of maintaining an objective point-of-view, or one that is unclouded by emotions. The ability to harness one’s feelings is crucial in later stages of the narrative, where Frost teaches parents how to discipline their children.

²⁰⁹ Wendy reveals during the conversation that the problems started four years ago (which incidentally is when her husband left), however this is never discussed (or if it is, it occurs off-screen).

The observation period underscores Frost's agenda, which is to place fault initially with the parents. There is irony at work in *Supernanny*, because even those parents who appear willing participants still require Frost's help. Some parents try to impress Frost by using techniques which they have seen on previous seasons of *Supernanny*, a fact which demonstrates awareness of the brand. Shaun Keilen, for example, attempts to discipline his daughter Maile using the "naughty bench technique." However, when Maile refuses to stay on the bench for her allotted time, Shaun retaliates by confiscating her favourite outfit, a move which ultimately elevates the tension. Frost is irritated by this stating, "That naughty bench I saw, that's *not* my technique!" The series is edited to suggest that the problem lies not with Frost's methods, but with the parents who use them incorrectly. Shaun's failed attempt to enforce discipline during the observation period could be seen as a strategy to convince Frost that he is a 'good' parent even while the programme suggests he, and all of the other parents, are not (Ferguson 29). It is clear from Frost's facial expressions and comments to the camera that, for her at least, Shaun is to blame (US season two, episode seven).

The observation period plays a critical role in *Supernanny*. It not only provides Frost with an opportunity to assess the situation and identify the family's problems, but more importantly, establishes her as the programme's 'expert.' But far from being a neutral observer, Frost comments directly to the camera as well as 'pulling faces'. As Vered and McConchie contend, Frost invites us to "pass judgement" on the family (74), a fact which is evident in the Weston episode. Frost is not impressed with Andrea's attempts to discipline her four-year-old son. Standing outside Andrew's bedroom Frost remarks, "He's been kissed and cuddled, at the same time he's meant to be on discipline. *No wonder [he's] behaving the way that he is!*" Frost stands to the fore of the

frame while Andrea and Andrew are visible in the background (US season one, episode five). Frost's displeasure is plain to see: her facial expressions, frantic hand gestures and whispered comments leave us in no doubt about how we should interpret the scene (figure 29, appendix g). Significantly, in moments such as these, Frost is often shown standing in corridors, on the stairwell or outside the house, reinforcing the surreptitious nature of her role. In *Supernanny*, the framing, commentary and editing align the audience with Frost's point-of-view. In all of the episodes examined, Frost blames the parents for their children's bad behaviour, thus setting the stage for a double makeover.

The Verdict: The Family Meeting

A key part of the observation period is the family meeting where Frost outlines her concerns. Significantly, the children are not privy to this meeting which, yet again, suggests that the parents are to blame and mirrors Frost's belief that children should not be included in 'adult' discussions. This meeting typically happens in the evening, in contrast to the teaching period which begins the following morning. By structuring the narrative in this way, *Supernanny* could be seen as foreshadowing the transformation from 'death' to 'life' or from ignorance to knowledge. Although the theme of death and rebirth is not as explicit as in cosmetic surgery narratives (Aronsen 2007), this reading is supported by a number of parents who state at the conclusion of *Supernanny* that they have gone from "just existing" to "living" or "enjoying life."²¹⁰

²¹⁰ See for example the Cooke, Jeans, Steer, Wischmeyer and Woods episodes.

The fact that both Frost and the parents are seated and largely unmoving during the family meeting contrasts with the frantic pace of the observation period. The UK meeting is notable for its almost complete silence: the absence of soundtrack music or other sounds (apart from the conversation between Frost and the parents) offers relief from the noise of the previous period. By way of contrast, in the US version non-diegetic music is used to create suspense and emphasise Frost's key points. The US version of the show differs from the UK one in that the family meeting is preceded by a recap of the previous day/s events (a montage of de-saturated images of the children misbehaving) to remind viewers of what has occurred and the reasons for Frost's intervention.

Even after the crisis of parenting narrative is established, there is no reprieve for the parents who must endure Frost's disciplinary strategies until the final minutes of the episode. Many of the parents are concerned about what Frost will say and how it will reflect on them. The fact that parents are able to express their feelings raises the possibility that we might identify with them, however this opportunity is short-lived. Like most of the mums, Colleen Christensen reveals to the camera that she is worried Frost will think she is "a *bad mother* and that [she] is not doing [her] job properly" (US season one, episode ten). Significantly, although the fathers appear anxious about what Frost is going to say, none are troubled about the possibility of being called a "bad dad." Chris Christensen's concern about the upcoming family meeting illustrates this point beautifully: he states, "I'm a little bit nervous because I don't know what to expect but excited at the same time" (US season one, episode ten). As discussed in Chapter One, in neoliberal society parents, and mothers in particular, are held responsible for how their children develop. It is the parents' responsibility to ensure that their child grows into a

healthy, self-aware citizen who contributes to the betterment of society. Parent comments suggest that childrearing is a delicate subject, and that it is easier for them to blame the children for their bad behaviour than acknowledge their own lack of parenting skills.

At the family meeting, Frost rattles off the list of concerns now familiar to regular viewers of *Supernanny*, which includes an absence of discipline within the household, no rules or routine, and differences in parenting styles. In line with first and second wave makeover shows, *Supernanny* uses a ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach (Kohn 8), which, not surprisingly is far less effective when behaviour is involved. Frost is not afraid to speak her mind; as she explains in one episode, she does not believe in “sugar-coating” the truth (US season one, episode six). For example, Frost tells the Bailey family, “The behaviour is *despicable*. [...] I would expect no child to throw toys at me, *that’s not acceptable*” (US season one, episode six). To another, she declares, “The aggression is [...] *absolutely disgusting*. They swear, they hit one another, they spit. It’s just *appalling*” (UK season two, episode one).

If Frost’s description of the children’s behaviour seems harsh, her assessment of the parents is no less so. Frost is particularly brutal in her observations about Heather Bixley, telling her, “You’re actually really scary.” In Frost’s eyes Heather is abusing her power as a parent (UK season two, episode six). Frost’s choice of words and tone of voice convey how she views the seriousness of the problem. Frost provides a perfect example of Weber’s concept of “affective domination” (30). She prefaces every critique with a compliment. For example, she tells the Orm family, “I would like to say to both of you that you couldn’t find a home as warm as the one I’ve walked into and without a doubt, the love and praise you give your boys is a really beautiful thing, but I’d like to

talk about the things I'm not happy with. Discipline needs to be a must" (US season one, episode three). Frost thus raises her concerns about the children's behaviour in a manner which is both caring and humiliating.

The family meeting reveals that emotion is a key part of this crisis of parenthood. Thus it comes as no surprise that during the course of the narrative, Frost teaches parents how to control their emotions. *Supernanny* employs shot/reverse shots and close-ups to highlight the parents' reactions to what Frost is saying and to draw the audience into the drama of the show. While mothers often burst into tears, dads watch in horror. In the Jeans' episode, close-ups are used to reveal Barbara and David's strained faces as they listen to Frost's concerns. Barbara, too emotional to talk, nods her head in agreement. David, sensing his wife's anguish, gently rubs her shoulders in support. A background drum-beat builds to a crescendo, intensifying the impact of the scene (US season one, episode one). In the Orm episode (as with most of the others), more time is spent on Tammy's tearstained face than her husband's, implying that *Supernanny* is more about making over mothers than fathers (US season one, episode three). The programme's focus on mothers, reinforces the larger theme of the gendered nature of parenting, where mothers are held responsible for their children's development. The fact that it is the mothers who most often break down and cry, suggests that the emotional excess is a maternal one (Ferguson 203).

In *Supernanny*, societal expectations regarding emotions dictate the participants' responses. Men who cry on television would be seen as violating the 'rules': "women are expected to fall apart" while men must "remain, stoic, certainly in front of (millions of) others" (Sender 126). As noted in Chapter Two, emotional displays are central to (reality) television and account for much of the pleasure associated with the text (Vered

and McConchie 75). Like most first and second wave shows, participants on *Supernanny* ‘pay’ for their makeovers, not with money, but through their suffering and embarrassment. While emotional displays are often seen as a guarantee of authenticity in reality TV (Jensen, “Beyond” 48), *Supernanny* implies that an inability to control one’s (negative) emotions is harmful and that excess in any form (emotion, noise or behaviour) must be promptly addressed, because it is associated with lower-class subjects (Ferguson 203).²¹¹ The imperative to control one’s feelings reveals a central tension in the makeover text. As I explain below, the reveal is a spectacular moment which showcases the subject’s transformation; in order for it to be successful, the reveal relies upon the spontaneous display of emotions. However, subjects must repress any negative feelings, as these will blight the makeover’s happy ending.

The family meeting helps to solidify the theme of parenthood in crisis. In every episode, Frost blames the parents for their children’s bad behaviour, stating that their unhappiness is the result of their poor parenting. For instance, she tells David and Barbara Jeans that their daughters misbehave because they have been allowed to do so: “the behaviour is not acceptable and the only people who are putting up with it are you two. You’re [...] tolerating it and then you’re wondering why your children are the way that they are” (US season one, episode one). During the family meeting many of the parents admit they want to be better parents, but reveal that they do not know how. As Carolyn Pandit remarks, “No one tells you how to be a mum” (UK season two, episode two). *Supernanny* promises to provide parents with a “how-to” guide for childrearing, albeit in visual form: as the narrator of the US episodes informs us, “children don’t come with an instruction manual.”

²¹¹ A key belief of neoliberalism is that subjects must regulate their emotions in order to be productive (Weber 2009).

As I discussed in Chapter One, the separation of childhood from adulthood played a central role in the construction of 'the parent,' as did the concept of responsibility. For Frost, the main problem in all of the homes she visits is that the parents have relinquished their power to the youngsters, a concern which she regularly raises during the family meeting. For example, Frost informs Steve and Lucy Woods that their two-and-a-half year old son controls the household: "This little boy is doing what he wants, when he wants and not being told anything [...] for how he's behaving." According to Frost, Steve and Lucy have lost sight of their proper roles: "*I don't see a Mum and I don't see a Dad. I see [...] one little chief and four Indians*" (UK season one, episode one). Likewise, Frost reprimands Sony and Carolyn for their lack of rules saying, "There's no 'we're the parents here,' there are certain things that need to happen in our family and the children need to respect that." Significantly, the Pandit children are described by the show's narrator as "miniature adults," a phrase we have encountered in the history of childhood, suggesting that they are on an equal footing with their parents (US seasons two, episodes two).

While Frost acknowledges the importance of encouraging children to be independent, she warns that too much independence "can lead a child to want too much control" (UK season two, episode one). Frost believes that in order to bring harmony into the home, parents must take back their power and stop letting their children have free rein. In other words, adults need to recognise that they are in control and act accordingly. As Kohn wryly observes, Frost has "no reservations about power, so long as the big people have it" (170). To reiterate, as discussed in Chapter One, Foucault argues that power operates through hierarchal observation, normalising judgement and examination, three techniques which *Supernanny* employs. Frost's role is to restore

children and parents to their ‘true’ positions. Children must learn to obey their parents but more importantly, parents must learn to take control.

As stated in Chapter One, responsibility is seen as the defining trait of adulthood. Frost insists that parents must learn to take responsibility for themselves and for their children, a point which she emphasises during the family meeting. All of the parents in *Supernanny* have reached the “age of majority,” however many still behave immaturely. Frost frequently tells parents to “grow up” and recognise their duties. For example, in one episode she tells Chris and Colleen Christensen: “You guys are the parents here and [...] *you act like teenagers*.” Frost acknowledges that parenting is tough (“I know it’s hard otherwise I wouldn’t be here”), but warns the Christensens, “I don’t wanna hear excuses” (US season one, episode ten). In another episode, Frost reprimands Deirdre Facente for having an “adult” conversation with her four-year-old daughter Marlana and for expecting her to look after her three-year-old autistic brother Tristin. According to Frost, Marlana is not mentally or physically equipped to deal with either of these situations (US season two, episode six). In yet another episode Frost tells Debbie Senior, a single mother of three, that she needs to discipline her daughters rather than running next door to her dad’s house whenever one of the girls misbehave: “Every time you call dad you undermine yourself and *become one of the children*” (UK season two, episode four). Frost insists that the children’s behaviour will improve when their parents stop behaving like children and learn to take responsibility.

In fact, in three of the four episodes featuring single mothers (incidentally all UK episodes), Frost stresses the importance of establishing independence. Kelly Steer, Debbie Senior and Michelle Ball all rely heavily on their elderly parent(s) for help with childcare and/or housework. While Frost recognises the help extended family members

can provide, she believes it is vital not to become overly reliant on them. As Frost explains to Debbie, “it’s wonderful that you have your family living right next door to you [...] but your mum and dad [are] not going to be around forever” (UK season two, episode four). In the Ball episode Frost suggests that Michelle’s dependence on her mum Iris is unhealthy and is having a detrimental effect on her relationship with her two sons: “when you’re not standing on *your own two feet*, it’s causing major problems and one of them is sibling rivalry” (UK season two, episode seven). In sum, Frost believes that parents must not shirk their responsibilities or expect others to do their job for them. *Supernanny* maintains that children will behave correctly when their parents do.

At the family meeting, Frost warns the parents about the consequences of ignoring her counsel. According to Frost, much of the behaviour she has witnessed is extreme and will lead to major trouble in later life. After having a brick thrown at her by ten-year-old Ben during the observation period, Frost tells Jason and Karen Collins, “You need to get a grip on this because you’re going to be dealing with something *far worse* in three years’ time.” Frost does not need to elaborate on what exactly she means, for the message is clear. For viewers familiar with reports of juvenile crime, Frost’s words serve as a warning against unchecked aggression. The Collins family is thus positioned as a model for wider society, with the parents assuming the role of authority figures. In short, Frost implies that if Jason and Karen ignore this problem their son could end up in prison (UK season two, episode one). Likewise, Frost informs Wendy Agate that if she does not make “drastic changes” to her family that “the government’s going to be knocking on [her] door and giving [her] fines,” a statement which references dramatic changes to UK policy and reflects the government’s desire to hold parents accountable for their children’s bad behaviour (UK season two, episode six).

Frost employs “scare tactics” which “function as rationales to bring the subjects into alignment” (Weber 69). *Supernanny* must be understood in relation to the discourse of risk, which, according to Deborah Lupton, “assumes that ‘something can be done’ to prevent misfortune” (205). The concept of risk holds individuals accountable and encourages them to regulate their behaviour (Lupton 1999). *Supernanny* implies that if families do not take immediate steps to resolve their problems, the children are headed for disaster.²¹² Echoing Foucault, Frost insists that parents have a duty to ensure their children’s successful transition into society. In this respect, the home is depicted as a place for teaching children the responsibilities of adulthood.

After outlining her concerns, Frost warns parents that it will take *hard work* to transform their family as they must undo years of ‘bad’ parenting. In this respect, *Supernanny* recalls ancient Greek practices of care, which involved extensive labour. Frost asks parents for a personal commitment from them: “I can’t do it for you, but I will work alongside you and be there for you” (UK season two, episode seven). The parents’ commitment is a vital moment in the narrative because it strengthens the drama of the programme. *Supernanny* implies that parenting is a role which requires dedication, persistence and training. The focus on parental actions mirrors changes in the concept of the parent (from a noun to a verb) as discussed in the Introduction.

Most parents agree with Frost’s assessment of their problems (as Jennifer Ririe says, “She pretty much hit the nail on the head”), yet despite their eventual agreement to Frost’s disciplining some respond negatively. Instances of resistance “introduce the possibility that the makeover might fail” (Weber 113). In *Supernanny* it is the dads who

²¹² The literalisation of these ‘threats’ are seen in the digitised future images of children in *Honey We’re Killing the Children* (UK BBC3 2005 - ?).

typically fight Frost, a fact which reflects Weber's assertion that submission is antithetical to the myth of the self-made man (2009). Bill Bailey in particular takes offence to Frost's approach. He rebukes her, saying, "We're looking for an answer to solve that problem, that's why we're doing this – to find out what that answer would be. Though right now, I can speak for my wife and myself, your tact is way off."²¹³ Bill's stance is that Frost does not practise what she preaches: in his eyes *she* is rude (US season one, episode six). Bill refuses to be infantilised and ironically accuses her of being disrespectful.

Like Bill, Lucy Woods also takes issue with Frost's approach. In direct address to the camera she reveals, "I think Jo is a bit over the top [...] we know what the problem is. [...] I don't think we really need our noses rubbed in it quite so often." Lucy feels unfairly represented, later explaining, "You see all this because you're a nanny. That's *your job* – to look after children." Lucy believes she is doing the best she can under the current circumstances. She has a full-time career, three young children and a house to maintain, with the result that she does not have time to reflect on her parenting strategies (UK season one, episode one).

While Lucy raises valid concerns about the pressures parents face, the narrative does not explore them in any depth. As Jensen argues, "the question 'what are the conditions in which you are parenting, right now' seems uninteresting or [...] not dramatic enough for [...] the makeover" ("What Kind" 179). Like first and second wave makeover texts, *Supernanny* ignores the material conditions under which participants live and instead suggests that individuals are responsible for their own lives (Biressi and Nunn 2008; G. Palmer 2008). In short, if you have badly-behaved children it is your

²¹³ Please note, I have used "..." in indented quotes to indicate direct speech, as recorded from the UK and US *Supernanny* DVDs.

fault. Lucy's doubts about the viability of the techniques are recast as resistance and as proof of her own psychological failings: "these lapses become evidence that Lucy is not committed at an ontological level to becoming the 'right kind' of parent" (Jensen "What Kind" 180). Frost implies that Lucy is 'making excuses' and that she is not willing to do what is necessary to change the situation; in short, she has a 'bad' attitude (UK season one, episode one).

In fact, in all of the episodes analysed, parents are positioned in one way or another as antagonists (Vered and McConchie 75). Over the course of the episode, Frost must prove to them that she is right and that her techniques work. The inclusion of this material in *Supernanny* serves to increase the drama of the show and reveals contradictory discourses of parenting at work in the programme. The first view of parenting (the child-centred approach) assumes that children have priority, while the second (the adult-centred model) believes that children must fit around their parent's lives. Despite the potential threats that these instances of resistance present, the teleological nature of the makeover ensures us that there will be a happy ending. As Weber states, moments of struggle "validate the accomplishment of seeing a transformation through to the end" (22).

In terms of the overall narrative, the time given to the family meeting is comparatively short (only two or three minutes of the total broadcast is dedicated to this section); however, its importance is not to be understated. The family meeting reinforces Frost's expert status through the use of point-of-view shots and her role in steering the conversation. Likewise, the parents' teary confessions mark their submission to Frost's authority (Vered and McConchie 75). The fact that the children are not present suggests that it is the parents who need to change. The use of close-ups

and zooms allow us to experience the raw emotions and identify with the featured parents, while the relative lack of movement and sound presents a stark contrast to the observation period which is characterised by noise and confusion. Finally, the parents' pre-meeting confessions provide us with insight into the anxieties surrounding childrearing, while instances of resistance build drama and suspense.

To briefly summarise, the observation period plays a vital role in *showing* us how the children and parents behave.²¹⁴ It provides Frost and viewers with a chance to observe the family dynamics and to identify issues that need addressing. From the outset, Frost is established as the expert; her comments, hand-gestures and facial expressions provide audience members with information about how to interpret the images they see. Jo's role (as expert and mediator) is significant, for it allows the series to produce a 'quick fix' that can easily be accomplished within the pre-set, one-hour format. The filming, editing, music, and audio track all work together to step up a feeling of crisis, which is reflected in the programme's key themes. In *Supernanny*, the video record of the family's dysfunctional behaviour enables the individualisation of deviant subjects and functions as a "means of control" (Foucault, *Discipline* 191). As with first and second wave shows, the observation period operates like a before image, with which we can compare the after; however, in *Supernanny* the reveal is much shorter, less spectacular and is not attended by family and friends, due to the programme's focus on behaviour.

²¹⁴ Bristow argues that what *Supernanny* reveals is not so much how children or adults behave, but rather "how they behave when provoked into various artificial situations" (12).

You've Been Very, Very Naughty: Teaching Parents to Be Parents

After outlining her concerns at the family meeting, Frost launches immediately into her teaching phase (the third part of the narrative), which lasts between four and five days. In terms of the overall narrative, the teaching phase is given the most broadcast time (between thirteen and seventeen minutes), due in part, to the complexities of transforming multiple subjects. Frost's primary goal is to teach parents the childrearing techniques they need to ensure a happy household. I do not discuss the parenting techniques in detail here as I address them in the following chapter; rather, I demonstrate how through the five-part structure the programme shifts the focus from disciplining children to disciplining their parents. As in ancient Greece, in *Supernanny* care of the self requires hard work. This is a stark contrast to first and second wave makeovers where experts frequently do the work of transforming the subject's home or body. The teaching period is divided into a series of tasks (or techniques) which the parents must master in order to pass the examination, a Foucauldian term which refers to the process whereby one is certified (in)competent. In *Supernanny* Frost has the information the parents need and is consequently represented as having power over them.

In the teaching period, Frost introduces a variety of disciplinary techniques to restore the order of the home, including a family routine, a set of household rules and a system of discipline and rewards. She teaches parents her now famous "naughty-step technique," designed to provide an alternative to smacking and a space for the child to reflect on their bad behaviour. Significantly, unlike early parenting programmes, there is no discussion about the different discipline methods that parents *could* use, as

Supernanny is only concerned with “getting results” (Ramaekers and Suissa 46). This lack of debate about the value of punishment signals the programme’s surface involvement as well as the demands of the ‘quick-fix’ makeover.

Once they have tried the “naughty step technique” for themselves, parents are given an opportunity to reflect upon their experience. Many of the parents report increased confidence. After putting Meghann in the reflection room for not listening to her, Denise Cooke exclaims, “I suddenly felt in control. What an amazing place to be. *I hadn’t ever been in control of my children.*” Denise’s comment suggests that when parents take charge they will be happier (UK season one, episode three). Another parent, Robert Gorbea tells viewers that he is “lost for words” after watching his wife discipline their two-and-a-half-year-old son Adam for the first time. According to Robert, the process can best be described as “a kid going through an exorcism,” a statement that refers to the length and intensity of Adam’s tantrum. Robert’s description of the event points to a Dionysian view of the child, for whom only an exorcism could bring about a change in his behaviour (US series one, episode seven).²¹⁵

In addition to the naughty step, in part three Frost introduces a variety of other tried and tested techniques designed to remedy common problems, which I expand upon in the following chapter. These including the “good eater technique,” the “involvement technique,” the “sleep-separation technique” and the “roaming technique” which viewers at home are encouraged to follow using the step-by-step instructions that appear

²¹⁵ The idea of demonic possession is evident in at least two of the other episodes analysed; the Cookes and the Agates. Ferguson draws parallels between the Cooke episode and William Friedkin’s film *The Exorcist* (1973). She notes the similarities between Meghann Cooke’s and Regan MacNeil’s age, masculine voices, use of sexualised language (“bitch”), their weak/absent fathers, the use of floating cameras and both families’ affiliation to the Catholic Church. The fact that the Cooke episode screened on Halloween (31 October 2006) and featured a musical score by Chris Franke, who was Friedkin’s first choice of composer for *The Exorcist* (221) suggests that the show’s producers wanted audience members to make these connections.

on screen.²¹⁶ *Supernanny* provides viewers with the opportunity to *see* the techniques in action rather than just read about them, as is the case with traditional childrearing literature (Jensen, “Beyond” 182). During the teaching period Frost is on hand to instruct parents in the correct application of the techniques.²¹⁷ Frost thus acts as an “ideal mother,” providing the model which parents must emulate.

Supernanny’s parenting techniques are not original. Frost informs readers in her first book that she did not invent the techniques but “observed parents and children to see what worked and what didn’t” (10). Frost mentions “trusting her instincts,” which is ironic given that in *Supernanny* she counsels parents to rely upon the techniques (*Supernanny* 10). Despite Frost’s assertion that her techniques are based on, in her words, “common-sense,” they are foreign to many of the featured parents (*Supernanny* 10). After being taught the “play-and-walk away” technique, Deirdre Facente exclaims, “I had no clue I was supposed to do that!” (US season two, episode six). The concept of “common-sense” is problematic, for as Ferguson notes, it plays a central role in the maintenance of power structures in society (36). The naturalisation of certain behaviours explains why particular models of parenting (like punishment) are accepted while others are not. In *Supernanny* the focus on educating parents could be seen as an attempt to offset any concerns about the exploitation of minors for entertainment purposes (Fowler and Kambuta 263).²¹⁸ These concerns are valid, as many of the featured children appear to be unwilling participants.²¹⁹

²¹⁶ As previously noted, these instructions appear only in earlier seasons of US *Supernanny*. However, viewers are able to obtain further advice by logging onto the show’s website which contains instructions for all of the featured techniques, as well as information about a variety of other child-related issues.

²¹⁷ By advising parents in front of their children, Frost runs the risk of undermining their authority (Ferguson 219).

Does Nanny Know Best?

In *Discipline and Punish* Foucault contends that power produces opposition and that individuals can reject the identities ascribed to them, although only to the degree that they are positioned as deviant subjects. If the observation period shows resistant parents then the teaching period, the third part of the narrative, provides many examples of resistant children. Although Frost believes children are fundamentally good, at the start of the episode most of them test her. The Keilen girls, for example, call Frost “a bad apple,” which, according to their mum, is a huge insult. During the teaching period Malia Keilen warns Frost, “I’m gonna chew you up and spit you out!” (US season two, episode seven). In another episode Ben Collins predicts that Frost’s “gonna fail.” He tries everything possible to thwart Frost’s plan, even going as far as making “nanny poison” (UK season two, episode one). Of all the children featured in series one and two Meghann Cooke is the most defiant. She physically attacks Frost, repeatedly calls her a

²¹⁸ Concerns about informed consent and the exploitation of children in *Supernanny* were raised by the UN at a conference in Geneva in 2008. The UN argued that the programme had contributed to the demonisation of children in Britain and called for tighter government regulations to ensure children’s rights are upheld (Bowcott n.p.). Although strict laws govern the hours and conditions under which child actors may work in both United States and Britain, there are no such laws regarding the participation of children in factual or reality programming, meaning they are vulnerable to exploitation (Messenger Davies and Mosdell 9). Most broadcasters follow the ITC or BBC Guidelines when using children in non-fiction programmes, however there are no mechanisms in place to check that these guidelines are being followed or that consent has been obtained (Messenger Davies and Mosdell 9). The issue of consent is particularly problematic in the case of pre-adolescent children who presumably are less able to consider the long-term consequences of their decision to participate (if in fact consent was obtained) in programmes such as *Brat Camp*, *Kid Nation* or *Supernanny*. In an interview for *The New York Times*, Nick Powell, the executive producer of *Supernanny* reassured reporter Susan Gilbert that a psychologist was present during the filming of the entire show and that families were required to undergo extensive screening to ensure they could handle the stress of appearing on television (Gilbert n.p.).

²¹⁹ As Messenger Davies and Mosdell argue, we cannot presume that adults act in the best interests of their child when it comes to participating in reality shows which often offer large prizes (*Nanny 911* provided families with tropical holidays and new vehicles for appearing on the programme). According to one newspaper article, families featured on *Supernanny* received \$5000 for their participation, plus compensation for any damage caused by the film crew. This fact was not widely publicised, nor was it alluded to on the programme, thus viewers were left with the impression that the only reward for appearing on *Supernanny* was a happier, quieter life (Knight n.p.).

“bitch,” and tears up the princess reward chart (figure 30, appendix g). Frost is not surprised by Meghann’s attitude, as she tells her mum Denise this is expected behaviour:

“We’re trying to lay boundaries and she sees I’ve come in and I’ve got household rules in your home and she’s like, ‘hold on a minute, I had free rein. I could do exactly as I wanted and when I wanted and now I’m angry.’” (US season two, episode four)

Frost’s comment indicate that while children should be given a certain degree of freedom, too much freedom is destructive.

While the children’s actions could be seen as evidence of an underlying evil, as in the case of the Dionysian child, in all of the episodes their efforts to get rid of Frost are depicted as comical rather than malicious. Throughout the teaching process, the children frequently resist the new regime. In one episode Adam Gorbea gets out of bed 27 times in one hour, leaving his mother exhausted (US season one, episode seven), while in another, nine-year-old Meghann Cooke spends a whole hour in the reflection room because she refuses to apologise to her dad (US season two, episode four). Frost demands that parents remain resilient, insistent and determined in their approach to their children who display these very same qualities.

In *Supernanny* there are numerous parents who do not possess the required characteristics and/or who reject Frost’s plans. The parents’ resistance can, in part, be explained by the programme’s inversion of the typical parent/nanny hierarchy: Frost, not the parents, ‘calls the shots.’ Although all of the parents admit they need help, many

question the effectiveness of Frost's techniques. Shaun Orm for example confesses, "I [...] did doubt Jo's ability and the knowledge she has of children." He does not believe Frost can get Blake to eat his dinner (US season one, episode three). Likewise, Fred Weston is skeptical stating, "For someone who has a lot of knowledge, she seems a little young!" These comments imply that the parents know their children better than Frost ever could by virtue of the age difference and because Frost has no children of her own.

In examples such as those above we are reminded of how in *Supernanny*, the parents are depicted as contested subjects who struggle to keep their emotions under control, particularly when Frost is forced to take charge. In other words, the standard of control that Frost insists upon is not easily achieved. After trying unsuccessfully to reprimand her three-year-old son Joseph, Joanne Burnett confesses that even though she trusted Frost, "it was difficult watching someone else discipline [her] son." She confesses that she "did not want to listen to Frost," because her son was crying, she just "wanted to pick [him] up" (US season one, episode two). Kelly Steer, a twenty-five-year-old single mother from Crawley, fights with Frost on several occasions. During the teaching period Kelly refuses to punish her daughter Sophie who has just hit her. Kelly storms away from Frost saying, "No I've had enough [...] its bloody wrong!" Later in the week she again refuses to put Sophie on the naughty circle (a circle-shaped mat), for scratching her grandma's neck. According to Frost, Kelly's refusal to correct her daughter is evidence of her inability to control her own emotions. *Supernanny* rejects elements of the emotional turn; Frost cautions parents about over-sentimentalising their children. Kelly's failure to discipline Sophie belies a lack of trust in the techniques. Parents must use the techniques correctly in order to get the promised results.

In the parents' resistance, we see the struggle between parenthood as an emotional bond with children and Frost's solution, a set of skills to control children (parenting). Predictably, Frost offers "no explanation about the philosophies that inform her techniques, their merit is only evident in their execution" (Vered and McConchie 77). This lack of explanation reflects *Supernanny's* denial of the wider social context in which families live and the privileging of 'surface' more generally. Frost's method represents a simplification of the parent/child relationship, a trend which, according to Ramaekers and Suissa, is common in contemporary parenting advice (xi). Just as the children must learn to submit to their parents' authority, parents must comply with Frost in order to succeed.

While some parents find it hard to let Frost intervene, others struggle with guilt about enforcing the new rules. As Ramaekers and Suissa argue, guilt is a key aspect of childrearing and relates to the fear of failing (30). In *Supernanny* many of the parents work full-time, meaning that they feel bad about not spending enough time with their children. Lucy Woods, for example, reveals that she feels terrible punishing two-year-old Charlie:

"He's gone from being able to do exactly what he wanted really, to [...] some quite strict guidelines [...] he probably doesn't understand what's going on. I do feel sorry for him. I feel like I'm being *mean*." (UK season one, episode one)

Like Kelly, Lucy's concerns about being cruel prevent her from using the techniques correctly. She allows her feelings to dictate her actions. Instead of 'doing what is right'

for Charlie, Lucy takes the easy way out. While Frost sympathises with Lucy, she does not agree with her approach. In her first book, she tells parents not to indulge their children's bad behaviour in order to assuage their guilt about working away from home (2005). Parents are instructed to put aside their own emotional needs and act in their child's best interest, even if that means making hard or unpopular decisions. Frost believes that a parent's role is to guide his/her children, not to be friends with them. In short, she favours the authoritative model of parenting over the permissive one and stresses the *work* of parenting over the affective dimensions of parenthood.

As part of the infantilisation of the parents, Frost models the behaviour she wants them to emulate, not only 'disciplining' the adults when necessary, but, like a 'good' parent, rewarding them with praise when they are successful at implementing her techniques. In one episode she congratulates Wendy Agate for getting her children into bed on time saying, "I'm so proud of you [...] you are a real inspiration." As Frost hugs Wendy, the camera zooms in, making the viewer feel as if they are also being hugged (Ferguson 2009). This is one of many hugs that Frost gives Wendy during the episode and suggests that she, like all of the parents on the show, is in need of some mothering (Ferguson 2009).²²⁰ Frost's hugs appear to have a restorative function, implying that parents' own upbringing may have been deficient in some respects. Predictably, the programme does not explore this issue in any depth.

Supernanny employs similar examination procedures to those described in *Discipline and Punish* in order to establish the parents' progress. After working with the families for a few days, Frost leaves them for a "trial period" which lasts up to a week, to see how the parents cope without her. As one episode's narrator tells us, "for the

²²⁰ Ferguson argues that the "children are almost an afterthought" in these congratulatory moments and that Frost functions as a love object (2009).

changes to really last, Wendy needs to use the techniques without Supernanny's help" (UK season two, episode six). Before she leaves however, Frost offers parents some last minute advice. She encourages Bryce and Jen Bullard to "remember the small details with the techniques," a comment which echoes Foucault's work on the prison where every activity was strictly monitored and no gesture was considered insignificant (US season one, episode two).

Once outside the family home, Frost provides viewers with an assessment of the situation. While acknowledging the changes that have taken place over the previous week, Frost is realistic, stating that the children will test their parents in her absence. After Frost's departure, many of the parents express anxiety over coping without her, thus showing us that change is already underway. Stacie Bailey, for example, admits that her "biggest fear is not having Jo" around. She tells us that she is "going to miss the guidance [Frost] gives [her]" (US season one, episode six). Jen Bullard echoes Stacie's concerns saying, "I'm worried that when she's gone I'm going to forget all of a sudden. I feel like I don't know how to *parent*" (US season one, episode two). Not surprisingly, it is primarily the mothers who express these concerns, suggesting that Frost functions as a surrogate husband. Like Mary Poppins, Frost is on a 'temporary assignment'; she will stay only until the "wind changes." Her role is to teach parents the necessary skills, not to do their job for them. Hence, part four's trial period I examined below, provides parents with a chance to test out the techniques and offers a glimpse of post-Frost life.

Before discussing the trial period, it is necessary to provide a brief summary of the teaching phase to reiterate its importance to the overall narrative structure. The third part of the narrative, the teaching period, accounts for the majority of the broadcast. I have argued that the elongated teaching segment can be attributed to the complexities of

transforming multiple participants and is designed to offset any concerns about the participation of minors. Frost uses this time to educate parents in ‘correct’ childrearing practices; she has the skills and knowledge they need and thus has power over the parents. Frost introduces a number of disciplinary techniques (including a family timetable, a set of rules and a system of punishment and rewards) to ensure that the household runs smoothly. Like Foucault, Frost reminds parents to “remember the small details” of the techniques and believes that if the techniques are not performed correctly that they will fail. As she does not teach the children the techniques, it is clear that it is the parents who are being disciplined.

The teaching period distinguishes *Supernanny* from first and second wave makeover programmes (where experts do most of the ‘work’ of transforming properties and bodies), as parents must stay in the home and implement the techniques. In this respect, *Supernanny* demonstrates that in the third wave at least, care of the self requires considerable effort. The teaching period also highlights the contested nature of the parental subject. Parents often struggle to perform the techniques correctly because of their emotional attachment to their children. Frost repeatedly tells parents to ‘step out’ of the situation so that they can make a rational decision. Parents are thus encouraged to take a “third person” approach to parenting (Ramaekers and Suissa 2012), to reject emotion and instinct in favour of learned techniques. The trial period which follows, provides parents with an opportunity to show that they have learned the necessary skills.

Testing the Techniques: The Trial Run

Even though Frost leaves the home during the trial run, she continues to observe the family's behaviour with cameras mounted in the home. Like the family meeting, the trial period provides a platform for Frost to demonstrate her expertise. For most families the trial period starts well, however as the week progresses, old habits return and things inevitably disintegrate. In one episode Kelly Steer disregards the toy confiscation rule; on day three she buys each of her children a toy as a reward for their good behaviour. Kelly justifies her actions saying, "[Callum and Sophie] have had a lot of changes. It must have been a shock for them to go from controlling what they want [...] to having to do what I say." In short, Kelly succumbs to her emotions rather than asserting control. Like the introductory section, the narrator plays a central role in helping viewers to interpret the parents' actions during the trial run. As the narrator explains, this seemingly innocent action has dire consequences: "By breaking Frost's rule of limiting toys she has undermined the confiscation system and when Sophie is next defiant, Kelly finds it hard to discipline her." The narrator's dialogue suggests that Kelly should stick to the plan and *not let her emotions get the better of her* (UK season one, episode two).

In *Supernanny*, the children's bad behaviour is linked both visually and orally (through the use of voice-over-narration) to a lapse of parental authority, even when events occur days apart (Jensen, "What Kind" 183). *Supernanny* promotes what Jensen calls "behavioural justice" or the idea that you get the children you deserve and imbues parenting with "an endless consequential power" that is hard to deny ("What Kind" 184). Parental actions are seen as having an inestimable impact on their child's

behaviour and development. The focus on the parents' behaviour allows for easy solutions. As with first and second-wave makeover shows, the "Supernanny" method does not encourage individuals to examine larger social problems such as a lack of affordable childcare or engage with questions about poverty.

Like the observation period, the trial period (or the "examination" as Foucault would have it), provides both Frost and the viewers with a chance to assess parents' progress. As parents struggle on their own, Frost monitors the situation from the comfort of her hotel room. This practice is an interesting twist on the "nanny cam" where parents spy on their employees (Vered and McConchie 76). In one episode, while watching Doug Douglas attempt to discipline his four-year-old son George, Frost angrily remarks, "Well that is the cool-down area out of the window. You lost it and your child lost it. This is crazy!" (UK season two, episode nine). In another episode, a horrified Frost watches on as three-year-old Declan Orm wanders down the road unsupervised: "Oh my gosh! Where is anybody to look after Declan? Nobody even knows he's outside!" (US season one, episode three). As in the observation period, Frost's comments enable us to interpret the images 'correctly.' Although we may empathise with the parents, the trial run encourages viewers to judge them. In part one, parents are given the opportunity to express their concerns which allows temporary identification with them. However, Frost's comments to camera ultimately encourage viewers to adopt her point-of-view. This sequence is meaningful for, as Vered and McConchie note, it demonstrates yet again that it is the parents and not the children who are being disciplined (76). In short, the trial run continues the shift of focus from the unruly child to the *unruly adult*.

The Unruly Adult: Reinforcement

After witnessing a variety of footage (both good and bad) of her time away from the family, Frost returns to assess the parents' progress. As the expert, she has the power to determine whether the parents have passed the 'examination.' Using material from the trial period, Frost shows parents where they are erring: in Foucauldian terms, the video surveillance is used to reveal the 'truth' of the situation. Parents are "encouraged to watch themselves literally onscreen," a shame-inducing practice (Ferguson 182). This process could be seen as a form of what Foucault calls, a "petty humiliation" designed to bring the subject into line (*Discipline* 178). Once again, the children are not privy to this evaluation, thus emphasising that it is the parents who must change. According to Frost the DVD footage plays a central part in the parent's transformation, as it allows them "to *see with their own eyes* the mistakes they have made" (US season one, episode four).²²¹ As with previous occasions, Frost does not leave it up to the parents to evaluate their own 'performances' but stops the footage at particular moments, so she can demonstrate where they have failed to use the techniques correctly (figure 31, appendix g).

Like Foucault's prison guard Frost holds the power of the gaze, while the parents are subjected to it. While reviewing the DVD footage Frost berates Kelly for her incorrect use of the discipline technique: "You went from A to C. You didn't follow through. Nothing was consistent" (UK season one, episode two). In another episode, Frost informs Karen that her failure to use an authoritative voice resulted in the situation escalating: "you should have said, 'you are not to swear at me – you know it's a house

²²¹ The US version utilises split screens so that viewers can see the parent's reactions to the footage.

rule.’ You should have lowered your tone completely, but you didn’t – you kept it at the same monotone” (UK season two, episode one). Frost emphasises the importance of “minor details,” and states that the techniques will not work if parents do not follow all of the steps (*Discipline* 1974). *Supernanny* insists that in order to have well-behaved children, parents must use the techniques correctly and consistently. Frost believes that parents must be resilient and determined in order to achieve the desired results.

The DVD footage offers a way of getting parents to see themselves as Frost does and to reflect on *their* (bad) behaviour, a practice which recalls Foucault’s work on the panopticon and the importance of self-surveillance in disciplinary society. In *Supernanny*, the footage leads to a change in the parents’ perspective and thus acts as a “figurative reveal” (Fowler and Kambuta 267). As with first and second wave makeovers, in *Supernanny* technology is constructed as having a ‘benevolent’ role because it allows the parents to take a dispassionate stance and to ultimately change. While watching the footage, many of the parents cover their heads in shame or embarrassment. A blushing Jenn Ririe tells the viewers that she was “really surprised at how many times [her and her husband] messed up, ‘cause [she] thought things were going much better” (US season one, episode eight). For Deirdre Facente the experience leads to deeper revelations: She tearfully confesses to Frost that she is “ashamed of [herself] for [...] putting blinders on [...] to [daughters’] good behaviour and just focusing on the bad” (US season two, episode six). Parents therefore become “spectators of their own situation” and are encouraged to take a “third person” or expert perspective of their parenting (Ramaekers and Suissa 31).

To briefly summarise, the DVD footage provides the tools for self-reflection and the impetus for change, while also demonstrating that Frost is still in control during the

trial run even though she is not physically present in the family home at this time. In *Supernanny* shame works to reinforce ‘shared’ community values and therefore must be seen as intimately connected to power. By highlighting the use of surveillance, *Supernanny* reminds participants and viewers alike that we cannot escape the social gaze and must learn to regulate our behaviour. Like first and second wave makeover shows, *Supernanny* “delays the moment of revelation in order to keep viewers engaged until the end of the programme” (Fowler and Kambuta 267). The deferral of the reveal is strategic, for although *Supernanny* aims to educate its viewers about correct parenting techniques, entertainment remains a key priority (Fowler and Kambuta 267). *Supernanny* has an extended teaching period, a feature distinguishing it from earlier parenting programmes discussed in the previous chapter and its position within the makeover sub-genre. *Supernanny*’s teaching period highlights the split between education and entertainment. The extended teaching period also compensates for the added complexity of changing behaviour rather than appearance.

After reviewing the footage and identifying areas of concern, Frost sets out to right the wrongs. The reinforcement period serves as a form of what Foucault calls “corrective training” ([1975] 1995). Over the course of a day or two, Frost works with the parents to reinforce the techniques they have learnt and introduce new ones where needed. For example, in the Bixley household she teaches them the “big chef technique” in order to help deal with the family’s dysfunctional eating habits (UK season two, episode eight). Similarly, in the Jeans family, Frost spends additional time with Barbara working on her tone of voice so that she sounds more assertive (US season one, episode one). Having seen where they went wrong, the parents are far more successful in implementing the techniques the second time around. As with the teaching period, Frost

showers the parents with praise. What we see here is a shift from “shaming authority to love-power” (Weber 98), a concept which describes the process whereby the experts no longer reprimand the subjects but congratulate them instead. In *Supernanny* the parents “succeed once they become disciplined” (Vered and McConchie 77). The linking of success with discipline suggests that only those who work hard will triumph. By extension, it implies that parenting is a job (rather than parenthood which is seen as a state of being) to be endured rather than enjoyed.

The Big Reveal

As noted in Chapter Two, the teleological nature of the makeover narrative demands a positive outcome. At the end of the reinforcement period, in part five, Frost leaves the family for the final time, but not before she has summarised the changes that have taken place. Her comments confirm the makeover’s success and serve to remind viewers of how far the family has come. Standing outside the Ball’s home, Frost remarks:

“I’m really proud of the family. I mean, just over three weeks ago, everyone was in tears, including myself, but now I feel like crying for the opposite reason. You know it’s priceless to see the changes – it’s overwhelming!”
(UK season two, episode seven)

Like Mary Poppins, Frost heads off to rescue the next desperate family, explaining, “My job here is done” (US season one, episode three). As previously noted, Frost cannot become indispensable – she must teach the parents the techniques and move on. At the beginning of the episode, Frost frequently tells parents to “grow up” or “stop behaving like children.” In contrast, at the end of the show, Frost can leave knowing that she has accomplished what she set out to do; to turn incompetent and immature adults into responsible and knowledgeable parents. In Foucauldian terms, the ‘student’ has become the ‘master.’ Frost’s departure usually occurs at night and viewers are typically left with a shot of the curtains being drawn, filmed from outside the house. The closing of the curtains symbolises that the parents can now sleep peacefully, knowing that all is well. More importantly, the action of curtains closing implies that as a result of the family’s transformation, viewers no longer have the right to invade their privacy. As we will see below, there are contradictory messages at work in *Supernanny*’s ending. While the parents are enthusiastic about going out in public, the curtains are shut to our prying eyes.

Like first and second wave makeover shows, *Supernanny* provides viewers with a happily-ever-after. In comparison to earlier segments of the programme, the reveal has a relatively short duration, a fact which, as discussed in Chapter Two, highlights the importance of the transformation *process*. Furthermore, the makeover family may not withstand the audience’s scrutiny. As mentioned in the previous chapter, in *Supernanny* the reveal is not staged, nor is it witnessed by family and friends; instead each episode concludes with a family update filmed between two to four weeks after the end of the programme, where parents and children tell viewers how much their lives have changed since Frost’s intervention. As if to counter any skepticism viewers might have about the

long-term viability of these changes, the update video reassures us that all of the featured parents have continued to use Frost's techniques. The family is frequently filmed in public space at the park or the beach, suggesting that the parents are no longer embarrassed to venture out in public. The use of long-takes and the calm music in the update video contrasts sharply with the short, sharp edits of the observation period and mirrors the family's newfound peace.

In the reveal, there are multiple layers of meaning in operation: the parents tell us about the changes in their children, and their transformation is shown to us accompanied by Frost's comments. The transformations in the children's behaviour are dramatic. As I discuss in the conclusion, whether these changes are 'genuine' or the result of careful editing has been the subject of much debate.²²² As it is impossible to evaluate these changes, I am only interested in how the parents' testimonies contrast with what they said in earlier parts of the narrative. Wendy Agate reveals that Maryanne's violent outbursts are a thing of the past: "Maryanne is a different child now [...] there's no more violence. She doesn't hit me, she doesn't punch me. She's a normal seven-year-old girl." In the final shots of the episode Maryanne appears calmer and more affectionate; we see her hugging and kissing her mum. Like Wendy, Robert

²²² After *Supernanny* went to air, at least three of the families claimed they were misrepresented. Steven Docherty and Kerry Hillhouse (UK season three, episode one) told the *Daily Record* that they were unhappy with the final cut which showed their "three boys kicking, punching, spitting and using foul language." Hillhouse told reporters that the footage was edited to make them look bad and she "regrets appearing on the programme" (Anon n.p.). Similarly, Kevin and Amanda Charles (UK season two, episode three) alleged that the programme's editors "manufactured complete sequences of events that never happened." According to Kevin, "it was like [the editors] had a storyboard and fitted our lives into it." While the Charles' accept that their children are troublesome, they said the show portrayed them as "monsters with hopeless parents" (Pyke n.p.). Finally, after their three-year-old son Joel burnt down the family home, Paul and Susan Young (US season two, episode nine) told reporters that their children's behaviour had "actually deteriorated [after appearing on *Supernanny* two years prior to this] because they had been encouraged to play up for the cameras." The Young's said it was misleading to show the boys doing the garden to prove that Frost's techniques had worked, because, "they have always been happy to do the garden, the issue is when we get them to do something they don't want to" (Levy n.p.).

Gorbea is shocked by the changes in his son's behaviour. He tells us, "It's amazing how mild-mannered Adam is compared to before Jo got here. He's a completely different kid!" Adam no longer clings to his mother's leg or screams to get his own way. The repetition of the word *different* in both of these statements points to the fact that the children have changed beyond recognition: in short, difference is equated with positive change. Wendy's description of Maryanne as a *normal* seven-year-old indicates that her behaviour is no longer extreme (UK season two, episode six). Likewise, Robert's use of the term "mild-mannered" implies that Frost has changed Adam's spirit (US season one, episode seven). In *Supernanny* the reveal perpetuates the myth of the 'perfect' child, as all of the challenges of parenting are magically erased. Additionally, *Supernanny's* ending suggests that the minutiae which pathologises domestic life has to be resisted if parents are to recognise the child's potential for the future. Hence the closing comments give credence to looking ahead, optimism and progression.

As a result of transformations in their children's behaviour the parents are no longer scared to venture out in public. Instead of hiding from the public gaze, the family now revel in it. Many of the families share how they are now able to do things they would not have considered before appearing on *Supernanny*. The Bradbury-Lamberts take a trip to the countryside (UK season two, episode five), while the Douglas' go on their first holiday together (UK season two, episode nine). As the children no longer take up all of their parents' time and energy, they are able to do something for themselves. For example, Kelly Steer tells us that since appearing on *Supernanny* she has been given extra help with childcare through the Home Start programme and, as a result, has decided to enroll in an Open University degree (UK season one, episode two). In another episode Michelle Ball is shown returning to her favourite pastime - Latin

dancing. She tells viewers that as a result of Frost's visit, she feels like she's "getting [her] *old* life back" or some of the freedom that she had before having children (UK season two, episode seven).²²³ In addition to highlighting the struggles that parents face in defining themselves, apart from their roles as mothers and fathers, these examples suggest that parents can and should have a life outside of the home. *Supernanny* thus concludes with the sense that parents have got back a bit of their selves, along with an acknowledgement that raising children is only one part of their lives; they are adults, partners and individuals as well as parents. As a result of Frost's teachings, it appears that the emotional bond between the parent and child has been weakened somewhat.

In *Supernanny* the most significant changes occur not in the children but in the parents. Since appearing on *Supernanny*, all of the parents report a greater enjoyment of life and a renewed outlook for the future. Shaun Keilen, for example, tells us that, "if one thing's changed the most, it's been Tami," his wife. She no longer spends several hours a day cleaning the house or dressing her children (US season two, episode seven). One woman even gives herself a makeover: Wendy Agate cuts her hair and buys new clothes to express her newfound confidence (figures 32 and 33, appendix g). As I have argued, the privileging of cosmetic changes is central to *Supernanny*. Wendy's physical makeover provides a visual symbol of her inner transformation, while her comments point to her acceptance of her role as a parent: "I'm *Mum* now and once I got hold of that I was planning on keeping it" (UK season two, episode six). Frost's techniques have a positive effect on both the children's behaviour and their parents' marriages. Ed Larmer, for example, tells us that Frost is "not just a nanny from the skies, she saved a marriage here" (US season two, episode three).

²²³ Michelle Ball's comment about getting her "old life back" presents an interesting point of comparison to first and second wave makeover shows where participants often discuss their desire to get rid of their old lives or selves (Aronsen 2007).

Parents who doubted Frost's abilities are, at the end of the episode, forced to concede she was right. Bill Bailey reluctantly confesses, "The first day I met Jo I thought she was full of shit. So it was really hard on me after that day because the things she was telling me were working. Now I've got to turn the shit towards me and say that I'm full of shit" (US season one, episode six). Bill's statement demonstrates that even Frost's harshest critics can become her biggest fans. Equally, it could be argued that Bill's comments reinforce Frost's dominatrix styling, due to his acquiescence to her demands. After thanking Frost, the episodes conclude with an image of the family standing outside their home, made over and happy (figure 34, appendix g). In the family update, the images and descriptions are meant to convince us that the techniques have been successful: in short, they provide viewers with an after with which to compare the before. *Supernanny's* ending insists that the crisis of parenthood has been averted and that the parents no longer feel anxious about their ability to cope.

Conclusion: Becoming (Better) Parents

This chapter has examined *Supernanny's* narrative structure so as to illustrate the way in which the programme transfers the focus from the children to the parents. This shift mirrors changes in the adult/child relationship discussed in Chapter One, and points to a contemporary crisis of parenthood. I have argued that *Supernanny* extends the tripartite structure of the traditional makeover, dividing it into five parts (the introduction, the observation period, the teaching period, the trial run, and reinforcement), in order to deal with the problem of transforming multiple participants and the inclusion of minors. The time dedicated to the five parts of the narrative

indicates the function and importance of each. Although we are given ample opportunities to see the children at their worst, most of the time is spent teaching parents how to behave, indicating that *Supernanny* is as much about disciplining the parents as it is about the children. Frost's role within the narrative is to change the parents' perspective: she must help the parents to see their children as she does (as Apollonian angels) and to recognise the role parents play in the family's problems. The audience is encouraged to identify with Frost through the use of point-of-view shots and asides to the camera. The visual monitoring of the parents is depicted as 'caring' because it enables them to 'see' their mistakes and ultimately correct them. *Supernanny's* extensive use of surveillance means that parents and children learn to internalise the gaze, like prisoners in Bentham's panopticon.

Supernanny is, fundamentally, a programme about unruly parents. As I have demonstrated, although the credit sequence of *Supernanny* professes to transform Dionysian devils into Apollonian angels, it is the transformation of 'bad' parents into 'good' parents across the five parts of the narrative which is the most pressing. At the start of *Supernanny* parents often complain that their children are wild and out-of-control; however, by the end of the episode many parents 'realise' that it is they who were the source of all the troubles. Andrea Weston's comments support this claim: As she explains to the camera "when Jo first came, my whole attention was focused on Andrew, but the real challenge was mother and father" (US season one, episode five). I have argued that what *Supernanny* represents is a "crisis of parenthood" brought about by the parents' failure to set rules and enforce discipline. The programme infers that this crisis can be resolved by restoring the adult/child hierarchy through using Frost's simple parenting techniques.

Supernanny represents parenting not as an innate characteristic, or a state of being, as the term parenthood suggests, but rather, as a skill which can and must be learnt. Tammy Orm, a mother of three of young boys, explains the impact of Frost's visit. In direct address to the camera she says,

"Jo has made a big difference [...] in how these children [...] turn into grown men. They're going to be raising their children and they're going to be better parents because of what Jo has taught us. It's a chain. Not only did she affect our lives but she can affect my children's lives." (US season one, episode three)

Tammy's comments bear a striking resemblance to Frost's earlier claims about why parents must intervene in their children's lives; to ensure that they become responsible citizens. She stresses the perceived importance of learning 'good' techniques and points to the fact that today's children are tomorrow's parents. *Supernanny* maintains that parents must do everything within their power to ensure their child's successful socialisation and, as noted in Chapter One, must continually 'update' their parenting skills in order to respond to their child's changing needs. Bill Bailey, one of the parents on the show, summarises this view stating, "I view myself as a better parent now, a better parent than I was yesterday. I only hope that in the future I'm a better parent than I am today" (US season one, episode six). In sum, *Supernanny* encourages perpetual self-improvement so as to ensure the after does not become another before.

To conclude my argument, in the next chapter I continue my close analysis of *Supernanny* by investigating the specific techniques Frost uses to discipline the child. I thereby demonstrate the way in which Frost favours 'care of' (care as labour) over 'care

about' (care as affection) and replaces the emotional bond of parenthood with the controlling practices of parenting. I argue that *Supernanny* attempts to resolve the contested nature of parenthood by reducing the parent/child bond to a series of techniques. An analysis of Frost's methods reveals that a 'good' parent is one who regulates their child's use of (domestic and public) space, time, activities, emotions and acquisition of skills and knowledge. Ultimately I contend that *Supernanny* offers a disciplinary regime or programme that can be deployed through the techniques Frost demonstrates. The show models appropriate forms of behaviour and 'care,' both for the show's participants and the viewers at home.

Chapter Four

Parenting Techniques: Discipline, Care and Control

“I love Supernanny’s techniques. I can’t imagine life without them.”

Jen Bullard (*Supernanny*, US season one, episode eleven)

Care is a central theme of instructional parenting makeover programmes. However, there is a lack of research on how parenthood and care are depicted in contemporary Western media. I contend that this gap in the scholarship can be explained, in part, by the common-sense nature of the concept. This thesis seeks to establish *Supernanny*’s role in the governance of parenthood in an Anglo-American context in the twenty-first century. Ultimately I argue that in *Supernanny* (parental) care is inextricably linked to control. In this final chapter I investigate the various ways in which control is construed; as self-control and regulation. I extend the close analysis of *Supernanny* by providing detailed examples of Frost’s techniques, which not only illustrate how the transformation from ‘bad’ parent to ‘good’ parent is accomplished, but also highlight the practices by which parents and children can become disciplined subjects. While Chapter Three examined the methods which Frost uses to discipline the parents, Chapter Four explores how the child is transformed.

My analysis of techniques in this chapter demonstrates how *Supernanny* favours the *work* of parenting over the emotional bond and thus reinforces the contested nature of parenthood. As discussed in Chapter One, the child's sentimental value poses a problem for parenting, as we assume that parents are torn between the need to control their offspring and the desire to 'care for' them. *Supernanny's* emphasis on care as control, its favouring of techniques over the emotional bond, its devaluing of the child's sentimental value, and rejection of the talking cure, means that the programme is even more of an anomaly. As previously noted, I concentrate specifically on pre-teen children as they are the focus of *Supernanny*. Moreover, as indicated in the Introduction, ideas about care are configured differently in regards to adolescents.

Supernanny ostensibly teaches parents 'correct' childrearing methods. As observed in Chapter One, 'care' is a complex concept. Definitions of care change depending upon the cultural context and the age, gender, class and race of the parent and/or the child. At its most basic level, care involves providing for children's physical and emotional needs, while also supporting their educational development. While parents of today are encouraged to adjust their childrearing skills to suit their child's specific needs, Frost provides universal solutions. I argue that *Supernanny* reduces the concept of care by linking it with control. As the third definition of the naughty step given in the Introduction of this thesis implies ("to experience public disfavor, usually because of perceived wayward behavior"), and as my previous chapter has indicated, this linkage has Foucauldian dimensions. *Supernanny's* emphasis on techniques, the frequent references to war terminology and Frost's costume, means that the home takes on the appearance of a highly militarised environment. In *Supernanny* a 'good' parent is one who regulates their child's use of (domestic and physical) space, time, activities, and

emotions. Equally, they also ensure an incremental acquisition of skills and knowledge. *Supernanny's* aim is to discipline the family so as to ensure the child's successful transition into society.

In *Supernanny* care is related to responsibility and in turn, to definitions of childhood and parenthood. As noted in Chapters One and Three, an irresponsible adult is essentially a child. In *Supernanny* Frost repeatedly reminds parents that they are responsible for raising their children, and that minors should not be expected to undertake tasks for which they are not equipped. *Supernanny* thus confirms Chapter One's conclusion, namely that in order for children to be children, parents must act like parents. *Supernanny* reduces the emotional bond between parents and children to a series of techniques. As previously observed, by isolating the family from society and the wider forces which impact upon it, *Supernanny* also implies that caring for children is the sole responsibility of parents, rather than a joint venture with the government. Although Frost is not aligned with any government agencies, through her comments to parents she indicates that if they do not take steps to resolve the issues at home, authorities such as the police and justice system may intervene. As such, *Supernanny* promotes ideologies consistent with neoliberalism. The programme's focus on educating parents indicates that care (as control) is not an innate characteristic but one which can and *should* be learnt.

Supernanny utilises a variety of disciplinary techniques to control the subject. As I expand below, in Foucault's model of discipline the subject is made docile through controlling his/her use of space, time, activities and his/her acquisition of skills and knowledge. In disciplinary society techniques include, the construction of tables which establish rhythms and differentiate subjects, the regulation of gestures and movement,

the inclusion of exercises which train the body, and the use of tactics which extract the maximum efficiency from all of the elementary parts. Likewise, in *Supernanny* Frost establishes a set of household rules and institutes a system of punishment and rewards. In keeping with Foucault's work on the distribution of individuals, she reinforces the boundaries within the home: she divides the home into separate spaces for eating, sleeping and playing. Frost sets firm boundaries regarding domestic space: children are not allowed to enter specific rooms without first gaining their parents' permission. In relation to time, she introduces a family routine which establishes non-negotiable meal-times and bed-times as well as a range of other activities that must occur during the day. Frost believes that a lack of structure and boredom are key causes of the children's misbehaviour, thus she includes an hour or two of 'constructive' playtime each day. Frost establishes clear boundaries regarding the parents' work hours and institutes regular one-on-one time so as to ensure the children's needs are met. Finally, by addressing situations where parents have unfair expectations of their children or others, where children are being 'babied,' *Supernanny* indicates that parenting involves regulating the child's acquisition of skills and knowledge in line with developmental goals. In *Supernanny* all of these techniques work together to produce a disciplined family.

Supernanny: Discipline as Punishment

The term "discipline" refers to both methods of punishment and the specific practices which ensure the subject's efficiency. Here I focus on the first meaning of the

concept; discipline as punishment. Frost defines control in a very specific way: She informs parents that they must discipline their children when they are too tired, ignore fears about being hated, provide a united front, and punish their children in an appropriate and agreed manner. Frost's techniques require resilience and determination. Most of the homes that Frost visits suffer from a lack of (effective) discipline. Many of the parents readily admit they have "given up" enforcing any form of punishment because they are too tired to do so.²²⁴ This lack of energy points to the increasing burdens placed upon parents as discussed in Chapter One. Like the credit sequence discussed in Chapter Three, we see ongoing references to war: parenthood is depicted as a battle to be endured, rather than a joyful experience. For example, Shaun and Tami Keilen admit that when it comes to their four children they have "waved the white flag." At the parents' meeting Tami reveals that she often gives in to her four-year-old daughter Maile "so that everybody else can have a better day," despite the fact that this strategy is clearly not working (US season two, episode seven). Likewise, Kelly Steer tells Frost during the observation period that she "can't be bothered" with discipline because the constant fighting between her two children, Sophie (five) and Callum (four), has worn her down. For Kelly, just making it through each day is hard enough: as she states, "I don't know how much attention they think I can give both of them. You know, there's other things I'm trying to do" (UK season one, episode two). These parents do not use any form of punishment because they believe it is too hard to implement.

While most parents blame their failure to discipline their children upon a lack of energy, for others the issue runs much deeper. Several parents admit that they do not

²²⁴ See the Amaral, Collin, Jeans, Keilen and Steer episodes.

punish their children because they are scared of them. In these episodes there are no boundaries between the parents and their children. Wendy Agate, for example, reveals that she is “frightened” of her daughter Maryanne, “because she can be so nasty!” (UK season two, episode six). Doug and Sandra Douglas also avoid punishing their twins, George and Nicole, for fear that it will result in temper tantrums that will last for hours. Instead, Doug and Sandra are continually shown pacifying their children, giving in to every demand (UK season two, episode nine). Here we see a classic reversal of the parent/child roles, with the children making unreasonable demands of their parents. As discussed in Chapter One, these children have a high sense of entitlement and struggle to submit to authority figures due to their parents’ permissive style of childrearing.

As well as a lack of energy and fear of repercussions, several of the parents are concerned that their children will hate them if they punish them.²²⁵ Like Wendy Agate and the Douglas’ these parents embrace a permissive style of parenting because they believe that it is more important to remain ‘friends’ with their children. In one episode Karen Collins tells Frost that she finds it hard to discipline her four children because she does “not like seeing them upset.” After further probing, Karen reveals that she is scared her children will not like her if she reprimands them. In short, Karen does not want to be seen as a dictator (UK seasons two, episode one). Regardless of their reasons, *Supernanny* suggests it is the parents’ failure to enforce discipline that has led to the present crisis. According to Frost, a ‘good’ parent is one who disciplines their child when necessary.

In homes where there is some form of discipline, parents often have disagreements about what methods to use. One parent is often forced to take on the role of

²²⁵ See the Collins, Minyon, Orm and Pandit episodes.

disciplinarian because the other parent refuses to punish their children.²²⁶ Amanda Charles, for example, believes that her husband Kevin is “too hard” on their four-year-old son Jacob, while he complains that she “appeases [Jacob] for an easier life.” The parents’ contrasting disciplinary styles mean that son Jacob inevitably ends up confused (UK season one, episode three). As I discuss later, Frost believes in order for discipline to be effective, parents must use the same technique and support one another by enforcing it.

In *Supernanny* those who discipline their children frequently use force.²²⁷ Jason Collins, father of four, admits that when his children misbehave he “smacks their hands or bums” (UK season two, episode one). In one episode we *see* Danielle Minyon smack her four-year-old daughter Skyler because she pulls her mother’s hair (US season two, episode one). As a discipline method, smacking appears largely ineffective: Cheryl McMillion reveals that “smacking does not faze” her boys. She regularly smacks her three young sons who then smack one another (US season one, episode two). This example demonstrates Locke’s claim that violence begets violence (section 37 page 140). Although these parents punish their children, it is represented as the ‘wrong’ type of discipline. Frost does not explicitly say so on *Supernanny*, however it is clear that she does not approve of corporal punishment.²²⁸ To her, smacking represents a loss of (adult) control and is an indication of ‘bad’ parenting. She believes that there are more appropriate ways to punish children.

²²⁶ See the Charles, Christensen, Collins, Cooke, McMillion, Orm and Ririe episodes.

²²⁷ See the Bailey, Bixley, Bradbury-Lambert, Christensen, Collin, Douglas, McMillion, Minyon, and Senior episodes.

²²⁸ In her first book, Frost writes, “I’m a nanny, smacking is not a form of discipline that nannies use, or should ever use” (*Supernanny* 87).

Punishment is represented as a necessary part of parenting. Frost therefore teaches parents how to punish their children correctly. Teaching is a key theme of this thesis; a claim which can be demonstrated by the centralised role of institutions in the history of childhood, the extended teaching period of third wave makeover programming and Frost's modeling of techniques. To reiterate, *Supernanny* promotes an authoritative method of care which is characterised as loving but *firm*. As discussed in Chapter One, it is widely believed that there are four main parenting styles which vary according to their degree of warmth and firmness; authoritarian (firm but no warmth), indulgent or permissive (too much love, no boundaries), neglectful (no warmth, no boundaries) and authoritative (loving but firm). According to Frost, love without discipline is destructive. As she tells Andrea and Fred Weston, "you need to balance love with discipline" (US season one, episode five). Frost believes that a parent who loves their child, but refuses to punish them, is setting them up for failure: children who grow up without discipline do not know how to control themselves. Parents should not feel bad implementing discipline because children need it; As Frost explains, children who are never punished are "often insecure, angry and unhappy" (*Supernanny* 62). In contrast to the parents, who see socialisation as a battle, Frost does not believe in breaking the will of the child. As she explains to Lucy Woods, "it was never about crushing Charlie's spirit [...] it was about giving [him] discipline and making him realise he doesn't rule the roost" (UK season two, episode ten). In *Supernanny* discipline transforms care into control and reveals to the children that the adults are in charge.

In order to re-establish the parent/child hierarchy and bring peace to the chaotic homes, Frost introduces a list of household rules and implements a strict new discipline system, practices which I have suggested are Foucauldian in nature (see figure 35,

appendix g).²²⁹ As noted in Chapter Three, Frost believes that the children's bad behaviour stems from their parents' failure to enforce a consistent set of rules. Rules are vital for creating harmony because as Frost explains to viewers, "children [...] need [...] to be told by their parents what they can get away with and what they can't" (US season two, episode two). Like *Discipline and Punish*, Frost hangs a copy of 'laws' of the house in a prominent place, such as the kitchen, so that they are available for all to see. Frost rules typically include treating others as you would like them to treat you (i.e. no yelling, swearing, name calling, hitting or kicking), showing respect for one's property, and rules relating to safety (i.e. wearing one's seatbelt while in the car, asking permission to leave the house, and holding a parent's hand while crossing the road). In *Supernanny* children must learn that actions have consequences; that if they break the rules they will be punished. In every episode Frost reminds parents that they are in charge, saying "don't ask, tell them."

In contrast to Bentham's prison system, where there were countless rules and every activity was strictly monitored (down to the last gesture), Frost tells parents to concentrate on "the big stuff" (Frost *Supernanny* 54). Additionally, she believes that rules must reflect what a child or children can "realistically achieve at a particular age" (Frost *Supernanny* 52). Most importantly, she insists that parents must be consistent in enforcing them; if parents keep changing the rules then children will be confused about what they are allowed to do. Frost stresses that these rules apply not only to the children but also to mum and dad, who must model the desired behaviour. Frost does not expect children to behave like "miniature adults;" instead she believes that children should be free to express their individuality, while at the same time respecting the boundaries set

²²⁹ For a list of techniques see Appendix F.

by their parents. According to Frost, rules are not designed to limit the child's freedom but rather to protect them. Like the families examined by Foucault, *Supernanny's* families operate as a microcosm of society, their role being to prepare their children for entry into a disciplined society.

In *Supernanny* all misbehaviour is punished in the same way; with time spent on the naughty step (figure 36, appendix g). As Foucault contends in *Discipline and Punish*, crime must have a penalty in order to make it unattractive. Frost therefore teaches parents her famous naughty step/chair/rug/circle/corner/room discipline technique (the tools vary from episode to episode), designed to curb the naughtiest behaviour and provide parents with an alternative to smacking.²³⁰ When the child misbehaves, parent(s) must “come down to [his/her] level” so as not to intimidate them and “give them a warning in a low-tone authoritative voice” (US season one, episode one). According to Frost, this provides the child with an opportunity to change his/her behaviour. If the child refuses to obey a second time, then after explaining what the child has done wrong, the parent(s) must *place* him/her on the designated naughty zone for one minute per year of age.²³¹ In order for discipline to be effective, Frost believes

²³⁰ As Frost's most well-known technique, it is not surprising that the naughty step was singled out for critique, with many claiming that the programming had made time-out into a shaming tactic. The National Family Parenting Institute (NFPI), an independent British charity for parents and children, released a statement in 2009 saying they did not endorse the naughty step, because they believed it was damaging to children's self-esteem (Grittiths and Elliot 2006). Deborah Tillman, Frost's American successor, also rejected Frost's techniques. In an interview with the press, Tillman stated that her aim was to educate parents in *positive* parenting: “In terms of discipline I use the calm down corner and not the naughty chair because we're not calling children names or talking about negative things.” Tillman's reference to the practice of labelling children (as ‘good’ or ‘bad’), points to a key Foucauldian belief; that is, discourse creates the objects of which it speaks. The Australian Centre for Community and Child Health (CCH) also questioned Frost's methods. After observing the behaviour of 733 toddlers, they concluded that children “subjected to Supernanny-style parenting end up behaving just as badly as other youngsters” (S. Cassidy n.p.).

²³¹ Frost does not believe in sending children to their bedrooms for time-out as it is confusing for the child. As she says, “One moment you're saying, ‘go to your room and play’ and the next minute, it's ‘go to your room’ and all of a sudden, the bedroom becomes a punishment area, so the child's getting mixed messages” (US season one, episode five). Frost solves this problem by establishing a separate discipline

that parents must not make “empty threats,” (US season two, episode nine) but follow through with punishment. The child can only leave the naughty step once they have completed their allotted time and apologised for their actions. If the child refuses to stay on the naughty step, the parent must continue to place him/her back on it, until they comply. To encourage good behaviour Frost recommends that children lose a point on their reward charts. If more than one child misbehaves, parents must separate them so as to avoid ‘rebellion.’

In keeping with Foucault’s definition, in *Supernanny* the naughty step not only constructs the idea of ‘crime,’ or in this case, misbehaviour, but also produces the ‘good’ child. The naughty step provides both the *physical place* and the *mental space* for children to reflect on their behaviour, while simultaneously giving the parent(s) time to calm down. As with Frost’s other techniques, which I discuss below, the naughty step discourages parents and children from having emotional outbursts. This supports my larger claim that *Supernanny* favours ‘care of’ over ‘care about.’ Self-reflection is a key aspect of the technique and thus shares similarities with the ancient Greek regime of self-care. For Frost, as was the case with the kings examined in *Discipline and Punish*, the naughty step is all about re-establishing the parent’s authority. As she tells Barbara Jean, your daughter “can learn that when you follow through with this naughty stool technique that it’s you she must listen to” (US season one, episode one). Frost believes that children respect their parents for enforcing discipline. Karen Collins reiterates this sentiment stating, “Joseph woke up this morning and said, “mummy I love you’ and that [...] felt nice after me trying to discipline him [...] it showed that they still love me and

area for children, usually in a spare bedroom or, for convenience, in the room parents are currently working or relaxing in. According to Frost, the discipline area needs to be as boring as possible, in order for the punishment to be effective.

don't hate you for being tough on them." Karen learns a valuable lesson: as she explains to the viewers, it is not wise to let your children do whatever they want because "you're not doing yourself or [them] any favours" (UK season two, episode one). In *Supernanny* the naughty step technique provides a space for both parents and children to reflect on their behaviour (and thus is a form of self-care), and restores the parent/child hierarchy.

We can see elements of both sovereign and disciplinary power in the enactment of the naughty step. Like the *ancien régime*, the child's misbehaviour upsets the 'natural' order between parents and children. It thus functions to re-establish the parents' sovereign power. In so far as the punishment is witnessed by Frost and the audience at home, it could be said to be 'public' rather than hidden. The child cannot leave the naughty step until they have completed their allocated time and have apologised to their parents.²³² The practice of obtaining an apology, which like the confession, is essentially obtained under duress, and the fact that the child must remain on the naughty step until they have apologised, ultimately suggests that parents hold all of the power.

Although the naughty step illustrates the exercise of sovereign power, we can also see aspects of disciplinary society in this model of punishment. In contrast to the *ancien régime*, in *Supernanny*, the child's body is not physically marked or beaten, but is isolated and constrained for a specific period of time so as to encourage self-reflection. The naughty step functions like an 'individual cell' in which the child is constrained. In disciplinary society, it is the certainty of being punished, rather than the horrifying spectacle of the *ancien régime*, which is believed to deter would-be criminals. Unlike the *ancien régime*, there is no attempt to match the punishment to the crime and the length of the penalty does not change depending upon the offence committed. Instead, it

²³² If they resist, the children are essentially denying the truth of the accusations; getting off the naughty step therefore can be seen as a form of refusal.

is determined by the child's age (a three-year-old will spend three minutes on the naughty step, whereas a ten-year-old will spend ten minutes). As a form of punishment, the naughty step is 'forward-looking' because parents seek to ensure the successful integration of the child into society.

In order to discipline their children correctly, parents must learn to manage their own emotions. As previously noted, *Supernanny* favours the controlling techniques of parenting over the emotional bond of parenthood. The programme's emphasis on regulating one's emotions aligns it with neoliberal discourse. Here control is understood as self-control. When children misbehave, which they frequently do, Frost counsels the parents to stay calm. She tells Denise Cooke, "If you lose it, then *you've got two children*. [...] One of you has to stay in control [...] and that is the adult" (UK season two, episode three). As explained earlier, self-control is a characteristic typically associated with adults. An adult who loses their temper is essentially a child. Parents must not only learn to regulate their emotions but also to communicate 'correctly.' A lack of effective communication between parents and children is presented as a significant issue in almost all of the episodes analysed.²³³ Frost believes parents teach their children how to communicate by the example they set. She criticises Melora Wischmeyer for her double-standards: "You're telling Jared that he's being disrespectful and that his tone is not good but *you're setting the example by the way you're talking to him*" (US season one, episode four). *Supernanny* suggests that learning to communicate 'properly' with one's children is a crucial step in becoming a 'good' parent. As we will see in *Supernanny*, "parents' voices are imbued with an almost supernatural ability to command, to direct and discipline" (Jensen, "What Kind" 186).

²³³ See the Agate, Bixley, Christensen, Collins, Cooke, Jeans, Keilen, McMillion, Minyon, Senior and Wischmeyer episodes.

Frost teaches parents how to communicate their disapproval without shouting. Shouting is 'bad' because it suggests "an inability to manage oneself" and serves only to elevate the tension (Jensen, "What Kind" 188). According to Frost, parents can communicate different messages to their children simply by altering their tone of voice. After watching Judy bark orders at her children all day, Frost sits her down for a firm talk. She tells Judy that when she gives her children a warning, "it's intimidating" and that if it was her being disciplined she would "be shaking": Judy's method of discipline involves picking her children up and yelling in their faces (figure 37, appendix g). In order to show Judy how she sounds to her children, Frost imitates her. Judy is shocked by what she hears, telling viewers, "I can't believe I yell at my children like that!" This example indicates that parents can be 'blind' to their own behaviour: Judy does not know what she sounds like until Frost shows her. Frost teaches Judy to communicate her displeasure by lowering the tone of her voice. As she explains, there are three different levels: an "everyday voice," the "voice of approval" which is slightly higher, and a "low-tone authoritative voice" which is used to reprimand children (figure 38, appendix g). By the end of the programme, Judy has learnt to control her temper and as a result, the relationship between her and her children has greatly improved (US season two, episode three). *Supernanny* suggests that parents can diffuse any situation by communicating in a calm and rational manner. Shouting is depicted as childish because it represents a lack of control.

While Frost works with Judy to reduce her yelling, in other episodes she teaches parents how to use their voice in an authoritative manner so as to maintain control.²³⁴ According to Jensen "speaking quietly betrays an inability to assert" oneself ("What

²³⁴ See the Collins, Jeans, and Steer episodes.

Kind” 188). In one episode Frost teaches Barbara how to be more assertive with her children by using a low-tone voice. Frost uses a mirror to show Barbara how she appears to her children, implying that non-verbal cues are just as important as the tone of voice she uses. Frost links Barbara’s “slouched shoulders and poor posture” to her “lack of domestic authority” (Jensen, “What Kind” 185). In *Supernanny* “parents’ body language, posture, manner [...] come to bear the burden of behavioural causality” (Jensen, “What Kind” 185). After working with Frost, Barbara reveals that “using [her] voice, tone and expression as a way to manage [her] children [...] gives [her] a bit more confidence” (US season one, episode one). *Supernanny* insists that confidence comes from using the right tone of voice and adopting the correct parental habitus.

While tone of voice is important, the words parents use are equally important. Frost does not agree with swearing or calling children names. In one episode, Wendy Agate ‘loses it’ and calls her daughter an “arsehole” after hours of conflict between the pair. Frost confronts Wendy at the family meeting, saying “Maryanne calls you a ‘bitch’ and you call her an ‘arsehole.’ It’s abuse. It’s got to stop right now because it’s disgusting.” Later in the week Maryanne reveals information about another disturbing incident that occurred between her mum and her. During a communication exercise she states,

“I don’t like my mum [...] she’s selfish and horrible [...] she just tells me off – putting her face straight up to me, looking into my eyes and saying, ‘I hate you!’”

When Frost asks whether such an event occurred, Wendy weakly replies, “only once.” Frost is not impressed with Wendy’s childish behaviour and tells her that it does not

matter how many times she said it, the effect is the same: “whether you said it once or you said it two times, it was enough to make her wonder ‘does mummy really hate me?’” While Frost does not agree with Maryanne’s naughty behaviour, she believes that as an adult Wendy should know better (UK season two, episode six). For Frost, words have power to build or destroy a child’s self-esteem. She believes that parents can transform their relationship with their children simply by changing the words they use.

In *Supernanny* praise is represented as a key part of discipline. In this case, control is figured as positive reinforcement. Frost’s emphasis upon praise shares similarities with Foucault’s claim that rewards should be more frequent than punishment. In every episode, Frost introduces various reward charts or schemes for the children. As the narrator explains, “children are more likely to behave well if they can see the results of their progress” (UK season two, episode seven). Significantly, these reward charts/systems are gendered, with flowerpots used for girls in one episode and firemen for boys in another (Jensen, “Beyond” 113). It seems Frost is less concerned with challenging gender stereotypes than transforming ‘bad’ children into ‘good’ ones. Frost’s focus on praise reiterates her belief that children are fundamentally good and recalls the Apollonian view of the child discussed in Chapter One.

In the previous sections I have examined Frost’s approach to punishment. To reiterate, Foucault argues that discipline has two meanings: discipline as punishment and discipline as the skills and techniques which subjects must master. In *Supernanny* discipline or punishment is represented as a crucial part of parenting and an effective way to teach children the difference between ‘good’ and ‘bad’ behaviour. Changes occur in the family dynamics when parents learn to communicate properly with their children. The programme suggests that if parents adopt the correct tone of voice and

posture then children will respond in the appropriate manner. Frost believes that children need to feel loved, valued and heard and that praise is an effective way of building a child's confidence. These episodes suggest that parents cannot expect their children to communicate properly if they do not do so themselves: in short, parents must model the appropriate behaviour. While some conflict is inevitable, Frost believes that parents can set a good example for their children, showing them that all problems can be solved in a calm and rational manner. The emphasis upon controlling emotions when disciplining children reinforces my larger argument that *Supernanny* favours parenting (techniques) over the affective bonds of parenthood.

Disciplinary Techniques: Creating the 'Good' Child

The second aspect of Foucauldian discipline stresses the techniques by which the subject becomes a docile body. My thesis fills a gap in the literature by providing detailed information on the disciplinary techniques employed by *Supernanny*. For Foucault these techniques include controlling the subject's use of (domestic and physical) space, time, activities and their acquisition of skills and knowledge. I add emotion to this list, because parents are encouraged not only to control the child's behaviour but also their emotional outbursts. While I divide *Supernanny's* techniques according to Foucault's categories, there is some overlap; in other words, at certain times, techniques simultaneously control the subject's use of space *and* time. I begin by

summarising Foucault's key points on the distribution of individuals in space, so as to map out how *Supernanny* draws from, and extends, these techniques.

Supernanny and the Distribution of Individuals in Space

In *Discipline and Punish* Foucault argues that discipline refers to the distribution of individuals in space so as to maintain control over them. In prison, subjects are not only removed from the wider community but are also separated from one another in individual cells. As noted in Chapter Three, in *Supernanny* the house is visually isolated from neighbouring properties making it appear prison-like. Foucault identifies four points in relation to spatial division. Firstly, he argues that space must be segmented. In other words, prisoners must be isolated from one another to prevent rebellion. Secondly, he contends that portioning, or the provision of an established place for each individual, makes the mass 'knowable.' Segregation also provides the prisoner with the space for reflection, necessary for the reformation of his/her character. The rule of functional sites refers to the practice of building institutions with particular purposes in mind. According to Foucault, the prison was designed to maximise the operation of power. Finally, prisoners should be ranked according to their age and crime. As Foucault explains, "in organizing 'cells,' 'places, and 'ranks,' the disciplines create complex spaces that are at once architectural, functional and hierarchical" (*Discipline* 148). The control of space not only guarantees "the obedience of individuals" but also "a better economy of time and gesture" (Foucault, *Discipline* 148). In the prison, the control of physical space works in conjunction with the regulation of activities.

Waging War on Chaos

In *Supernanny* the organisation of the domestic space is depicted as a key factor in creating disciplined children. While Frost demands order, she criticises three mothers who are obsessed with having perfectly clean houses, which means that their children and husbands miss out on their time and attention.²³⁵ Equally, Frost also believes that parents must allow their children to be creative and thus encourages regular sessions of ‘messy’ and unstructured play.²³⁶ This is in keeping with my history of childhood which emphasised the importance of play to children’s intellectual and emotional development. In several episodes, Frost insists that houses be clean and tidy before she begins working on specific issues. As she explains, untidiness makes it harder to find things, and also inhibits learning: “children can’t learn anything when they are surrounded by chaos” (Frost, *Supernanny* 153). For Frost, unruliness is linked to disorder more generally.

Of the episodes analysed, the Steer household is the messiest. It is described, and shown in great detail, as drowning “in a tidal wave of plastic.” While Kelly’s mum Trina tries to help out where she can, she “is fighting a losing battle.” During a tour of the house Frost is horrified by what she sees, as, presumably, is the viewer. While climbing through hordes of broken toys and washing spread across Sophie’s bedroom floor Frost exclaims, “It’s like Moses parting the Red Sea” (figure 39, appendix g). Before tackling the children’s bad behaviour, Frost decides they must first clean the

²³⁵ See the Larmer, Keilen and Orm episodes.

²³⁶ Like Locke and Rousseau, Frost believes that parents must allow children to “get mucky [and] have sticky fingers” (US season one, episode ten). Frost tackles this issue with Judy Larmer who admits that she does not “let her children outside that often because they ... get dirty and [she prefers] them to stay clean” (US season two, episode three).

house. As the narrator explains, “Jo believes that to enforce discipline, you need order.” Significantly, Kelly spends most of the time protesting that her house is fine, implying that *she* is the one who needs to learn the difference between ‘good’ and ‘bad.’²³⁷ When the children arrive home from school to find their bedrooms neat and tidy, they are ecstatic (figure 40, appendix g).²³⁸ The Steer household provides a visual metaphor for the transformation the family will undergo during the course of the episode (UK season one, episode two). *Supernanny* states that cleanliness is vital to maintaining order in the household: an unruly environment leads to unruly behaviour. Furthermore, the programme suggests that unruliness is a ‘surface’ disorder; like household mess, it can easily be cleaned up.

While the Steer family appear to be drowning in plastic, in the Keilen household there is an *overabundance* of clothing, which is equally problematic. In this episode, Frost works with Tami Keilen to reorganise her daughters’ bedrooms and in particular, their wardrobes. The family is often late for appointments because there are arguments over what clothes the children should wear. In order to streamline the morning routine, Frost introduces Tami to the “sort and separate technique.” This is a brave move, for as husband Shaun tell us, “no-one [...] messes with my wife’s closets or her children’s clothes.” Unfazed by Tami’s resistance, Frost instructs her to sort the children’s clothing into three piles; summer, winter plus one for any items that no longer fit. The girls have so many clothes that Frost and Tami are dwarfed by the huge pile heaped on the bed. Once they have separated the clothes, Frost instructs the girls to fold their piles

²³⁷ During the parents’ meeting Kelly confesses that she was “far from domesticated” growing up, suggesting that her poor parenting skills are the result of a deficient childhood.

²³⁸ In order to teach the children to respect their belongings, Frost introduces a toy confiscation system which means that the children will be restricted to ten toys each and will lose one every time they misbehave.

and put them into their own special drawers. This technique is significant because as Foucault argues, portioning makes the mass knowable. While Tami is initially skeptical, the girls' enthusiasm leads to a change of mind: "I like to see my children get really excited that they had their own drawers. It [...] makes me really happy." Like the prisoners in *Discipline and Punish*, each child is assigned a specific space in which to keep their belongings.

Out-of-Place: The Unruly Child and the Control of Space

As part of providing a clean and organised environment parents must learn to control their child's use of the domestic space.²³⁹ One of the techniques Frost teaches parents is the "stay-in-bed technique" which is designed to ensure everyone sleeps in their own beds. The names of Frost's techniques suggest that the problems identified are universal (every parent will encounter these same issues) and reinforce *Supernanny's* educational aims. In *Supernanny* there are designated spaces for eating, sleeping and playing. The unruly child is one who often behaves inappropriately in the space(s) s/he inhabits. In the Amaral episode for example, Frost teaches Ryan, Logan and Kade how to behave whilst in the family restaurant. When Frost first arrives, she observes that the boys treat the restaurant more like "an amusement park" than a place of work. We see the boys constantly running through the restaurant (much to the dismay of the customers

²³⁹ *Supernanny* indirectly references broader changes in society, with children disappearing from (or being driven out of) public spaces. Most of the American families featured in *Supernanny* have their own outdoor playgrounds indicating not only that many of them are wealthy enough to own such equipment, but highlighting the fact that parents today are less comfortable with allowing their children into public space than in previous generations (Valentine 60). In the UK episodes, children are even more likely to play inside as almost all of the children live in tiny apartments. On rare occasions, parents are seen taking children to the park or to a playground.

and their parents) and generally causing havoc (they play with knives in the kitchen, throw eggs at one another and put spoons down the kitchen plug-hole). In order to remedy these issues, Frost introduces a clear set of rules, establishes a naughty spot and marks restricted areas using yellow tape on the floor. In this episode play is restricted to the space *outside* the restaurant (US season two, episode five).

Just as there are inappropriate places for children to play, *Supernanny* maintains that there are inappropriate places for children to sleep. In one episode Frost discovers that six-year-old Jaydn Bailey rarely sleeps in her own bedroom, preferring instead to sleep in a fold-out mattress in the hallway. Frost is disgusted with the current sleeping arrangement saying, “I can’t believe she sleeps in the hallway, isn’t that where pets sleep?” According to Frost, the bed in the hallway is “being used as crutch for both the parents and Jaydn and it’s not necessary.” Frost instructs Bill and Stacie to get rid of the bed, believing it will force Jaydn to sleep in her own bed. While Jaydn does not react well to the information that her bed in the hallway is gone, that night she falls asleep in her own bedroom for the first time (US season one, episode six). In other episodes, the problem is that the children regularly sleep in their parents’ beds.²⁴⁰ Steve Woods candidly reveals to Frost that having two-year-old Charlie in the marital bed, “obviously affects [his and his wife’s] sex life”. As I discuss below, Frost teaches the Woods the “stay-in-bed technique” designed to keep Charlie in his own bed. This technique involves Steve and Lucy putting Charlie back into his bed as many times as necessary, to ensure that everyone gets an adequate amount of sleep (UK season one, episode one).

Frost also deals with the issue of personal space, both in relation to the parents and the children. Several of the parents struggle to cope with children who constantly cling

²⁴⁰ See the Charles, Gorbea, Steer, Wischmeyer and Woods’ episodes.

to them.²⁴¹ After spending a day observing the Gorbea family, Frost informs us “it would be hard to believe that Adam was separated at birth from his mother because he is attached to his mother’s hip 24/7.” Every time Adam cries or throws a tantrum, Evelina picks him up. Adam’s clinginess often means that the older children miss out on mum’s time and attention. Frost teaches Evelina the “off-the-hip technique,” designed to create space between her and Adam. She believes it is necessary for children to develop a sense of independence and not to use tantrums to get their own way. After asking the child what they want and giving them an alternative option (such as holding mummy’s hand while she does her work), parents must walk away. As Frost explains to Evelina during one of Adam’s tantrums, “you are [...] teaching him if he wants to talk to you and cuddle you that he has to stop screaming to do that.” Evelina struggles to implement the technique; as she confesses to the audience, “I can’t handle his face, it’s heartbreaking, like someone [...] got my heart, mashed it up and threw it out.” However, with repeated practice, she is able to use the technique without further problems and ensure that both she and her son are able to be independent (US season one, episode nine).

Just as children need to learn to respect their parents’ personal space, parents must offer the same to their children. In one episode, Frank and Danielle Minyon expect their two children “to hug and kiss on demand” and are embarrassed when they refuse to do so. In order to remedy this issue, Frost teaches Frank and Danielle about personal space, using a circle diagram to show them how the children feel (figure 41, appendix g). She explains to the parents: “Your children have their own space and their own area and regardless to whether they’re family or they’re friends they will have their own time in

²⁴¹ See the Burnett and Gorbea episodes.

which they feel comfortable to allow that person into their circle.” After working with the Minyons, Frank and Danielle promise to be more mindful of it: “it was definitely an eye-opener. I’m definitely gonna be more aware of the kid’s personal space. I’ll look at it in a different way than I did before.” Frost also works on socialisation with the children, using role-playing techniques to teach them about interacting with others. As a result, the children are much more relaxed the next time family members visit (US season two, episode one).

The examples above indicate that parents must regulate their children’s use of domestic space. *Supernanny* is also concerned with public space. As we saw in Chapter Three, in part one of the programme several of the featured mothers admit to feeling too scared to take their children out in public because they cannot control them.²⁴² Jenn Ririe, for example, confesses that she is petrified of venturing outside the house with her four children because her three-year-old son Blake often runs away which means that Jenn has to leave her other three children alone in order to chase after him. Jenn reveals, “Blake’s behaviour in the mall frustrates me to no end and I’m just constantly anxious, constantly stressed and scared.” However, as Frost asserts, “It’s [...] crucial that [parents] maintain control while out in public because there’s safety to be considered here.” Frost teaches Jenn the “roaming technique” designed to help her manage her children whilst in public. In this technique, the children are allowed to run ahead so long as they stop when asked. Here we see evidence of the close connection between freedom and control which, as discussed in the Introduction of this thesis, is crucial for successful governance. The child is offered ‘freedom’ in return for their compliance. If they fail to obey, then the child must hold onto the handle of the pram for

²⁴² See the Ririe and Senior episodes.

a minute per year of age (US season two, episode four). In other words, the child's freedom is dependent upon their observance of the rules. The "roaming technique" not only ensure the child's safety in public, but gives the parents a measure of control over their children.

Supernanny addresses the issue of safety in relation to public space. The street is represented as a dangerous place for young children when unaccompanied by their parents, illustrated through the use of a shaky camera and menacing music. Four of the episodes feature children who regularly escape from the family home.²⁴³ Tammy Orm, for example, reveals that two of her boys, Caden (six) and Declan (three) often leave the house without telling her where they are going, to which Frost replies, "that's bloody crazy!" During observation period, Declan goes missing. Frost and Tammy are shown frantically searching for him, with Frost admitting, "I thought I was gonna have a heart-attack because we couldn't find him". After running around the neighbourhood for several minutes, they find him outside with a pair of scissors picking flowers. In order to keep children safe, Frost institutes the "stop and ask technique"; Frost puts a lock and a big red stop sign on the front door so that children remember to ask their parents' permission before leaving the house. The "stop and ask technique," along with many of the other techniques, highlights the way in which Frost establishes the parent as the child's 'conscience'; the child must think about or ask their parents before engaging in particular activities. In this way, the parent/child relationship resembles the guard/prisoner one. Moreover, the parents' role as the child's 'conscience,' recalls the process by which subjects become less reliant on external authority figures to enforce the norms and learn to police themselves. At the end of the episode, the Orm children

²⁴³ See the Agate, Facente, Orm, and Ririe episodes.

are shown playing hockey on the street with their parents suggesting that the street is a safe place for the child so long as they are accompanied by adults (US season one, episode three). To summarise, *Supernanny* maintains that parents must control their child's use of space, both within the home and in public. They must teach their children how to behave appropriately in the spaces they inhabit and also respect other people's personal space.

Regulating the Child's Activities: Time, Behaviour and Emotions

In *Discipline and Punish* Foucault contends that the disciplinary régime seeks not only to control domestic and public space, but also to govern the subject's activities, in order to make his/her body more efficient. We can see similar techniques at work in *Supernanny*. Before examining Frost's specific methods, it is worthwhile returning briefly to Foucault's work to remind ourselves of his key arguments. He contends that the subject's activities are regulated using five techniques: the disciplinary regime establishes a timetable; it breaks gestures and movements into successive steps; it correlates body and gesture; it defines the relationship between body and objects and works on the principle of exhaustive use. The first of these, the timetable, is related to an economy of time; it "establishes rhythms, imposes particular occupations [and] regulates cycles of repetition" (Foucault, *Discipline* 149). In order to ensure efficiency, each action or movement is broken down into precise steps. As Foucault notes, "time penetrates the body and with it all the meticulous controls of power" (*Discipline* 152). The correlation of body and gesture ensures the "correct use of time" and that "nothing will remain idle or useless" (Foucault, *Discipline* 152). For Foucault, a disciplined body

is a “pre-requisite of an efficient gesture” (*Discipline* 152). The articulation of bodies and objects defines the “relations that the body must have with the object [...] it manipulates” (Foucault, *Discipline* 153) and again, ensures the most efficient use of time. The principle of exhaustive use seeks to extract from time, “ever more available moments and, from each moment, ever more useful forces” (Foucault, *Discipline* 154). In other words, one must use the time one has more efficiently; no movement or gesture should be wasted. In sum, the control of activities attempts to regulate the subject so as to maximise the use of time. In *Supernanny*, as in Foucault’s model, the family timetable plays a central role in disciplining the child.

The Family Schedule

Just as parents are required to regulate their child’s use of domestic, public and personal space, they must also control their use of time. In most homes there is no household schedule prior to Frost’s visit. She thus typically begins the teaching period by establishing a family routine which according to her is “desperately lacking” in all of the homes she visits. *Supernanny*’s emphasis on the routine reflects the contemporary concern with the ‘proper’ use of time and the management of one’s life, discussed in Chapter One. Frost typically breaks the day into quarter or half- an-hour increments beginning from seven or eight in the morning until eight-thirty at night, after which time mum and dad are free to do what they want. There is a fixed time for everything, including eating, sleeping and playing (figure 42, appendix g). *Supernanny* suggests that a routine is vital for a harmonious household because it reduces the mayhem of everyday life. As she tells readers, “a routine actually allows you more time for fun

because it removes much of the stress you get when you are trying to manage limited time” (Frost, *Supernanny* 48). Importantly, a routine also helps parents to meet their children’s “physical needs at the right time” and thus avoid problems associated with a lack of food or sleep (Frost, *Supernanny* 46). As Frost explains, parents often misinterpret children’s tiredness or hunger as misbehaviour. In *Supernanny* the routine provides an overview of what happens at each stage of the day and outlines clear meal-times and bed-times so as to limit confusion about what activity occurs when.

Most families on *Supernanny* welcome the routine because it provides them with a detailed plan of what they should be doing throughout the day. As Colleen Christensen says, “when Jo brought in the parent schedule I felt a sense of relief” (US season one, episode ten). However, others are less enthusiastic. Shaun Orm, for example exclaims, “oh boy, back in the military!” (US season one, episode three). His comment suggests that rigid timetables should be confined to the workplace. Frost does not expect military precision, but believes that the routine has to be flexible enough to cope with emergencies. Frost promotes a child-centred approach. This can be seen in her comments to parents Michael and Joanne Burnett about their current arrangements:

“The routine is Michael’s routine. You have a schedule that works for you so that you can pick up the phone and deal with work [...] but you’re not using your time effectively because when you are at home, you watch over [the children] rather than interact with them. [...] The children sleep so many hours during the day, but for what? It’s convenience!”

Frost believes in keeping work and home life separate and therefore is not impressed with the Burnetts. Michael put his work before his children's well-being and is consequently seen as selfish. According to Frost, Michael is failing to provide his children with opportunities to grow and develop. Frost insists that parents organise their work around their children's schedule, even cutting down their hours if necessary, and thus promotes a child-centered approach (US season one, episode nine).

The new household routine takes discipline to master, however Frost believes that it is a necessary step in the creation of a happier, more peaceful household. In the case of young children, Frost informs parents that they must provide a running commentary of what is happening at each stage of the day so that children are prepared and know what is expected of them. According to Frost, children under the age of five have little sense of time and must constantly be reminded of what is coming up next (Frost, *Supernanny* 50). According to Frost problems occur when parents try to rush children from one activity to the next (*Supernanny* 50).²⁴⁴ The household routine enables parents not only to regulate their own use of time but also their children's.

Meal-Times and Food Wars

Mealtimes are one of the key rituals of family life. Frost links poor behaviour to poor nutrition and erratic eating habits. Frost's concern about the children's diet means that *Supernanny's* intervention goes beyond the surface (behaviour) and deals with the body. In the US series, several of the families allow their children to eat *whenever* they

²⁴⁴ Frost instructs Karen Collins to organise the children's school uniforms, lunches and breakfast the night before to ensure the morning runs smoothly (UK season one, episode one).

want and *whatever* they want which leads to hyperactive behaviour and problems at meal-times.²⁴⁵ In the Ririe family, for example, the children are shown helping themselves to snacks throughout the day, and as a result, they often refuse to eat their meals. After witnessing a typical day in the Ririe household, during which the children make multiple trips to the pantry, Frost explains that it is not surprising that Jenn is having trouble at dinnertime. Frost's problem is not that the children are having snacks but with the type and quantity of food they are eating. She endorses the view that "junk food" (food with high salt, sugar and fat content) fuels children's bad behaviour.²⁴⁶

As with all of the other issues that Frost identifies, she institutes a technique. She throws out the snacks she considers "trash" and puts the remaining items into a "snack box," which is kept out of the children's reach. Frost includes the children in this process, using it as an opportunity to educate them on healthy eating. She introduces "structured snack times." The child is allowed to eat snacks, but, as with the "roaming technique" only when the adult gives them permission. Each child chooses four items for their individual snack jars which they are allowed to eat at designated times of the day. She tells Scott and Jen that children "do engage in activities [so] they do need a snack to keep them going, [however] what it won't do [...] is mess up meal times so that [the] children are not going to wanna eat dinner" (US season one, episode eight). According to Frost, it is essential to have regular meal times because "low blood sugar leads to mood swings and unnecessary tiredness" (Frost, *Supernanny* 46). By making changes to the children's diet and timing of family meals, parents are able to reduce hyperactivity caused by a spike in blood sugar levels.

²⁴⁵ See the Jeans, Orm, Ririe and Weston episodes.

²⁴⁶ Many critics argued that Frost had no right reprimanding parents about poor eating habits given her own struggle with obesity. As one viewer wrote, "I think it is slightly ironic that she is lecturing parents about obesity. Pot? Kettle?" ("CHOOGIRL" n.p.).

Frost believes that parents must maintain control over mealtimes. Three episodes of *Supernanny* feature children who refuse to eat their meals, for one reason or another.²⁴⁷ Frost does not tolerate “fussy eaters” but believes children must eat what their parents prepare for them (US season one, episode five). For Frost, fussy eating is all about control. In the Bixley episode seven-year-old Brandon refuses to eat any food that is not fried; he vomits at the sight of fruit. According to his mum Heather, Brandon developed a severe food phobia after contracting gastric flu as a baby. In order to change the family’s negative attitude towards food, Frost suggests several changes. First, she throws away the family’s deep-fryer and institutes a new and healthier menu, a much-needed change from Heather’s usual frozen dinners. Second, she includes the boys in the weekly grocery shop using the “involvement technique,” where the boys are given items to find on their individual shopping lists. Here we see the same kind of limited ‘freedom’ characteristic of neoliberal societies at work. Frost also introduces a new plan, which involves Alex and Heather preparing two possible menus for the boys to vote on. Once the boys have chosen that night’s menu, the food is prepared from scratch and the boys are given a sticker for every bite of food they try, a technique known as “the good eater technique.” While Brandon is reluctant to eat the first meal prepared for him, later in the week he eats his first fish bite and drinks a glass of orange juice. As the week progresses, Brandon becomes more adventurous and tries a variety of other foods. In order to ensure continued success, Frost introduces the “little chef technique” designed to get the boys involved with the preparation of food. In the final minutes of the episode, the Bixleys are shown eating at a restaurant, “something they never thought they’d be able to do.” By changing their negative attitude towards food, Alex and

²⁴⁷ See the Bixley, Orm, Ririe and Weston episodes.

Heather are able to make a positive impression on Brandon (UK season one, episode eight).

In *Supernanny*, poor diet and bad timing of meals contributes to hyperactive behaviour. In order to avoid problems with bad behaviour, Frost advises setting clear meal-times and limiting the number of snacks children eat. For Frost, meal-times are the perfect opportunity to build close relationships, thus she encourages families to sit at the table together and turn the television off.²⁴⁸ According to Frost, parents are not only responsible for ensuring that their children eat well-balanced meals but also for educating them about healthy food choices, which will inevitably impact upon them as adults. In the episodes examined Frost provides clear strategies for dealing with “fussy eaters,” such as including them in the grocery shopping, meal preparation and rewarding them for trying new food. In the following section I examine the issue of sleep and how a lack of sleep contributes to unruly behaviour.

Bed-Time Battles

Like diet, regular and uninterrupted sleep is critical for children’s development. In *Supernanny* a lack of sleep is seen to contribute to cranky, irritable behaviour, from both children and parents. Frost believes that proper sleep is crucial to maintaining a well-functioning household, thus she advocates regular bedtimes as well as putting children in their own beds (not their parents). In *Supernanny*, the most common sleep

²⁴⁸ The family meal, in which all members of the family sit down and eat together, is a relatively recent phenomenon, originating in the mid-nineteenth-century (Buckingham, *Material* 115). The family meal is considered important because “eating together has come to represent a number of core values, including cohesion and community. [...] A reduction in time spent eating together as a family is often associated with a breakdown of the family unit and with it a move away from ‘core’ values” (The Social Issues Research Centre, DSCF, Appendix G, page 46).

problem Frost deals with are children who refuse to stay in bed.²⁴⁹ According to Frost, most sleep problems are caused by overstimulation: in other words, children struggle to sleep because they are not given a chance to wind-down. In the Weston episode, we see dad play-fighting with his two young sons, Andrew (four) and Sean (eleven-months) five minutes before they are due to go to bed. In order to resolve this issue, Frost institutes a calming bedtime routine which involves giving children a bath and reading them a story (US season one, episode five).²⁵⁰ Under Frost's new rules parents must not get into bed with their children but allow them to fall asleep by themselves.²⁵¹ Like all of the tools featured in *Supernanny*, "the stay-in-bed technique" requires parents to remain calm and not give into their children's demands. In the case of children who wet the bed, Frost teaches parents the "sleep through the night technique," which involves limiting the amount of fluid the children drink before bed and getting them up for the toilet before the parents go to bed. In the Pandit episode Frost uses a magic stick to scare away the monsters that live under Jasmine's bed so that she will not be afraid of using the toilet at night-time. *Supernanny* suggests that by resolving bedtime dramas, parents will not only have more time to spend with their spouses, but will be able to function more efficiently themselves.

I have provided a detailed account of several of Frost's techniques, so as to demonstrate the ways in which she regulates the child's use of domestic, public and personal space and time; namely the "naughty step technique," the "sort and separate

²⁴⁹ See the Agate, Bailey, Bradbury-Lambert, Bullard, Gorbea, Pandit, Senior, Weston, Wischmeyer and Woods episodes.

²⁵⁰ She advises parents to remove televisions from their children's bedrooms as they are a distraction.

²⁵¹ For babies, Frost teaches parents the "controlled crying technique," which involves distinguishing between different cries (distress vs. comfort) and responding appropriately. Frost believes that infants must learn to self-soothe.

technique,” the “off-the-hip technique,” the “circle technique,” the “socialisation technique,” the “roaming technique,” the “stop and ask technique,” the “structured snack time,” the “involvement technique,” the “good eater technique,” the “little chef technique,” the “stay in bed technique” and the “sleep through the night technique.” Before discussing the remainder of the techniques, it is worth pausing to examine the similarities between these strategies and the various assumptions behind Frost’s methods. Although each of the techniques addressed above deal with a different problem, they all ultimately work to re-establish the parent’s authority and define what constitutes ‘appropriate’ behaviour. Punishment plays a central role in reinforcing the parent’s power and solidifying what Foucault calls the “norm.” Frost’s techniques are designed to ensure the child’s successful socialisation into disciplinary society. My analysis of these techniques reveals that care is intimately linked to control, as parents use the techniques to regulate their child’s use of (domestic, public and personal) space and time. However, as should be evident from the previous chapter and the above examples, parents often struggle to implement the techniques correctly because they feel bad doing so, a fact which highlights the contested nature of the parental subject.

The Work/Life Balance: Giving Children Time

Western culture is child-centred. As a result, parents today are expected to prioritise their children's needs over their own, a fact which can be seen in the sacrifices parents make, from paying for private tutors to ensure their children succeed academically, to putting money aside for their futures. In *Supernanny*, parental neglect contributes to unruly behaviour. Many of the featured families experience what is commonly described as "time famine" (Buckingham, *Material* 148). Although parents in *Supernanny* provide the necessities of life (food, clothing and shelter), this is often at the expense of what they need the most; their time and attention. Here we see a particularly middle-class dilemma. *Supernanny* differs from early British parenting programmes and most first and second wave makeover shows because it features middle-class families, as opposed to lower-class participants, and provides techniques as solutions to their problems, rather than consumer goods.

In many of the families, work comes before the children. Three of the American families own businesses and put a lot of effort into making them successful (Amaral; Bullard; Burnett).²⁵² The Amarals, for example, own the Dry Dock Grill, a family restaurant, where Dad Mike works "six and a half-days out of seven" as head chef. His wife Lorraine also works at the restaurant which means that their three young children spend a lot of time there. Lorraine and Mike are so busy that childcare often falls to their staff members. Mike confesses that "a lot of the times [they] don't know where the

²⁵² The struggle to create a healthy work/life balance appears to be less of an issue in the UK episodes where only one family owns their own business.

boys are in the restaurant” and that as a result of his hectic schedule he rarely spends any quality time with them. During the observation period Lorraine tearfully admits to Frost that she feels “overwhelmed being a mother and [...] a restaurant owner” due to her hectic schedule. At the family meeting Frost informs the Amarals that “there needs to be a reality check.” While Frost applauds them for their hard work, she believes the children do not get enough time with their parents:

“You guys are so focused on what you’re doing when you’re at work [which] means that you cannot give what is necessary for the children. And that makes it very unfair because they do have their needs.” (US season two, episode five)

Frost believes the Amarals have neglected their responsibilities as parents and are too focused on their priorities (read, not child-centered). According to her, the boys not only need food and shelter but also need to feel cared for: “They need your time. They need your love. They need those moments.” Although Frost emphasises the importance of love (which points to the child’s sentimental value and is related to ‘care about’ or the emotional bond that exists between parents and children), the solutions she offers are technique-based and imply that love is a set of actions. She informs the Amarals that they should invest the same amount of time and energy into their children as they do into their business.

In order to achieve more balance in their lives and ensure they enjoy the time they have with their children, Frost substantially reduces the Amaral’s work hours: She

reduces mum's work time by half (from four evenings to two) and stipulates that dad must take an additional day off each week). As I expand below, there is no dialogue about how the parents will manage as a result of their reduced income or the impact of the extra demands she places upon them. Furthermore, she introduces an hour of outside play-time with dad every day while the children are at the restaurant. Frost is adamant that "If dad ... give[s] a little time to have fun with the boys they [will be] less likely to cause trouble in the restaurant." She believes that by scheduling fun activities the boys are less likely to get bored and misbehave. Play is not only a crucial part of child development but is also thought to strengthen the parent/child bond.²⁵³ Frost advises Mike to use this time to teach the boys to play fairly ("play by the rules technique") and also to share ("the shared play technique").

In *Supernanny*, there is no discussion of work as an economic necessity or of the consequences of reducing the parents' hours. Work is seen to provide mental fulfillment rather than a financial pay-off. In short, time at work is seen as time away from the family. Like first and second wave makeover shows, *Supernanny* stays on the surface and ignores the deeper issues. In *Supernanny*, paid employment, like the outside world, is largely invisible (except in cases where parents work from home). As Ferguson notes, "any 'work' that takes place in the programmes is therapeutic or domestic work within the family itself, and is removed from the financial economy and, implicitly only related to the nation's economy of well-being" (64).

In addition to instituting an hour of play with dad, Frost also establishes a regular homework time for mum and Ryan. Frost tells Lorraine to establish a quiet study area

²⁵³ In several episodes, Frost expresses concern that parents have forgotten how to have fun with their children (see the Agate, Amaral, Facente, Larmer, McMillion and Senior episodes). *Supernanny* mirrors research conducted by Dr Tanya Byron in 2010 which found that 21% of all parents do not know how to play with their children or struggle to engage with them on a creative level (Hill n. p).

and set the two younger boys up with activities so that she can help Ryan with his homework. When the environment becomes noisy she asks Lorraine to find an alternative space for Ryan to work in. As with her other techniques, the success of the “homework technique” relies upon parents praising their children as they complete their tasks. Like Stiegler, Frost believes that parents are responsible for ensuring their children succeed academically. At the end of the episode, Lorraine reveals that the process has helped her to realise “that [her] time with the children is precious,” while Michael tells us that from now on his “family comes first” (US season two, episode five). *Supernanny* implies that increased parental investment will result in fewer behavioural problems.

In numerous episodes Frost identifies the parents’ hectic work schedules as contributing to their children’s bad behaviour. Frost believes that parenting is the most important *job* that adults will ever have and thus encourages them to invest an equal amount of time and energy into their children. Using colour-coded routines which clearly outline work and family times, Frost seeks to create a healthier work/life balance.²⁵⁴ In several episodes she advises parents to reduce their work hours in order to free up time to spend with the children. In *Supernanny* Frost encourages parents to enjoy their children. The rise of sentimental value and the introduction of tighter labour laws, discussed in Chapter One, has meant that in the present-day children are valued for who they are, rather than what they can contribute to the family’s finances. Although she acknowledges that parenting is hard work, she believes it should also be fun: “It’s meant to be a wonderful experience” (UK season two, episode ten). While many of the

²⁵⁴ Three of the parents featured in *Supernanny* work from home but are largely unsuccessful in completing their projects because their children regularly misbehave (see the Bullard, Burnett, and Wischmeyer episodes). Like other families on the programme, Frost institutes a new routine which establishes clear work boundaries.

parents struggle to implement the changes to their work schedules all eventually realise they are for the best.

Sibling Rivalry: One-on-One Time

As the above examples illustrate, individual attention is deemed fundamental for ensuring children's optimal development, a belief which is clearly evident in the history of childhood discussed in Chapter One. Frost increases the burden upon parents further by insisting that parents not only regulate their child's use of (domestic and public) space and time, but that they divide their attention between their children so as to prevent sibling rivalry. In a number of episodes older children report feeling left out because their younger brother or sister gets more attention than them – usually because they misbehave.²⁵⁵ For example, ten-year-old Marie Agate tells us that when her sister Maryanne wants attention, “she gets it by having a paddy.” Maryanne frequently misbehaves, meaning that the older girls (Amie and Marie) miss out on mum's time. The lack of quality time with mum means that nine-year-old Amie feels like she's “not cared about.” The distance between the older girls and their mum is figured in the depiction of them; at the start of the episode Amie and Marie are rarely shown in the same frame as their mother. In order to address Amie and Marie's growing feelings of resentment, Frost institutes daily one-on-one time (sometimes called “the mummy and me technique”) with mum for each of the girls. Marie is pleased with the change revealing “To me it doesn't feel like Maryanne's hogging [mum] anymore.” More importantly, regular one-on-one time with Mum improves Marie's relationship with her

²⁵⁵ See the Agate, Cooke, Gorbea, Minyon, Senior, Wischmeyer and Woods episodes.

younger sister. She reveals that she no longer sees Maryanne as “an enemy” but that she has “become more of a sister” (UK season two, episode six).

In *Supernanny* problems occur when one child receives more attention than the other(s). Frost stipulates that parents must ensure that they divide their time equally between their offspring. Quality time is essential for building a strong bond between parents and children and for ensuring that each child’s needs are met. *Supernanny* implies that by spending regular one-on-one time parents are able to prevent sibling rivalry, which in turn promotes a happier household.

Communicating Emotions

In *Supernanny* parents are expected to provide emotional support for their children. Frost introduces a variety of techniques designed to facilitate communication between parents and children including the “thought box,” “the hear me, see me technique,” and “the feelings chart”²⁵⁶ Despite their differing names, each of these techniques is designed to allow the children to express their feelings. She uses this last technique in the Minyon family. From the beginning of the episode, it is clear Frank does not have a close relationship with his seven-year-old son (Frank junior). He openly admits to Frost, “We don’t really interact [...] as a father and son should.” Frank junior is frequently shown playing computer games by himself or being bossed around by his dad. In order to strengthen the relationship between Frank and his son, Frost introduces the “feeling chart” which Frank (junior) can use to indicate how he is feeling, using happy and sad

²⁵⁶ See the Agate, Cooke, Minyon, and Wischmeyer episodes.

faces. Frost tells us that, “if mum and dad can visually get an idea of what’s going on in Frank’s head and how he’s feeling they can do something to change that.” Frost’s statement implies that parents must adopt the role of a child psychologist, another responsibility placed upon them, as discussed in Chapter One. At the end of the tape, Frank senior tells us that the process has been a great success: “I learned Frank needs positive attention [and] I need to have patience.” Frank modifies the way he responds to his son and as a result experiences a greater closeness with him (US season two, episode one). Significantly, as argued in Chapter Three, it is a change in the parent’s behaviour that brings harmony into the home. The feelings chart and other similar techniques allows children to communicate effectively with their parents and to resolve any conflicts before they escalate. Frost believes that parents must not only provide for their child’s physical needs but must also support them emotionally. In short, a ‘good’ parent is one who is aware of their child’s feelings.

Supernanny and *the Acquisition of Skills and Knowledge*

As observed in Chapter Three, Frost’s primary goal is to turn immature adults into competent parents. Disciplinary power requires that students become masters and in turn, pass on their knowledge.²⁵⁷ In disciplinary societies, subjects are taught skills and knowledge in levels of increasing difficulty and must sit regular examinations in order to assess their competency. In Foucauldian thought, the organisation of geneses builds

²⁵⁷ This obligation to share what one has learnt, not only with one’s children but also with one’s peers, is evident in the poster for the *Supernanny Live Tour* discussed in the introduction (“become the parent worth listening to”).

upon the control of activities. It seeks to govern the individual's existence and order his/her acquisition of skills and knowledge. The organisation of geneses refers both to the development of the individual and the progress of society as a whole. Under the disciplinary régime, duration must be divided into segments, each of which must conclude at a specific time. The tasks or "exercises" as Foucault calls them, must be mapped out according to an analytical plan and must become progressively harder ([1975] 1995). At the completion of these tasks, the subject must undergo an examination which not only proves that s/he has gained the required knowledge, but also guarantees that each subject has learnt the same skills. Frost divides her teaching period into various 'tasks' and uses an examination process to assess the parents' progress. According to Foucault, the 'seriation' of activities allows for "the possibility of detailed control and regular invention in each moment of time" (Foucault, *Discipline* 160). Discipline requires that individuals become more efficient so that the whole institution functions more effectively.

In *Supernanny* parents, are expected to teach their children what they need in order to succeed in life. Childhood is an incremental process and according to Frost requires parental involvement. In *Supernanny* Frost encourages parents to monitor their child's development, which is clearly another form of control. She believes that parents must adjust their [...] skills to suit the [child's] stage of development" (Frost, *Supernanny* 16). This emphasis upon monitoring the child's development is another reminder of the knowledge gap that characterises the parent/child relationship. In several episodes of *Supernanny*, Frost thinks that parents have unrealistic or unfair expectations of their children.²⁵⁸ As Frost explains, "One of the most common mistakes that parents make is

²⁵⁸ See the Facente, Larmer and Minyon episodes.

to expect levels of understanding [or behaviour] that are well beyond what they are capable of” (Frost, *Supernanny* 16). In other words, it is the parents’ expectations and not the children’s behaviour that is the problem. As Frost observes, childhood is all about growing up and learning from one’s mistakes. These parents do not see childrearing as a process but rather expect their children to behave like “miniature adults.”

There are competing demands at work in Frost’s techniques, particularly in relation to the acquisition of skills and knowledge. On one hand, her techniques imply that children require their own kinds of space, time/attention and activities, while on the other hand, as I explain below, Frost insists that parents must gradually prepare their children for the responsibilities of the adult world, so as to ensure an optimal (future) outcome. In short, Frost claims that parents cannot expect children to understand things that are beyond their comprehension and/or act like adults, but equally that caregivers must not treat their children like babies.

Frost addresses the issue of unfair expectations in the Larmer episode. Despite having moved from Texas to Florida to be closer to their grandparents, the four Larmer children (John, Justin, Jessie and Joey) are not allowed to visit because, as grandma puts it, “they get their sticky hands into everything.” After visiting grandma Sharon’s house and seeing the children’s behaviour for herself Frost remarks:

“I understand that grandma gets really angry with the children touching everything but they’ve got nothing else to play or occupy themselves with. *They’re children after all!* I mean, where are their toys?” (US season two, episode three)

Frost does not believe the children are being naughty; they are simply looking for something to play with. In order to solve this problem Frost advises mum to take a bucket full of toys around to grandma's house each time they visit. This episode suggests that it is grandma, and not the children, who is to blame. In this episode and others, Frost encourages parents to check that their expectations are realistic and that they are not putting undue pressure on their children. Throughout the series, Frost provides information about what is 'normal' at each stage of development so that parents can adjust their parenting skills to suit their child's abilities.

In other episodes Frost works with parents to address areas where children are being "babied" or not allowed to "grow up."²⁵⁹ Examples include three-year-old Chase Christensen who still drinks out of a baby's bottle (US season one, episode ten), seven-year old Frank Minyon who refuses to dress himself (US season two, episode one) and three-year old Ryan Ball who has not been potty trained (UK season two, episode seven). In all of these episodes the parents have given up doing what is 'right' for their children because they believe it is too hard. For instance, Frost tells the Woods family that they treat two-year old Charlie like a baby and that he should be able to do more for himself. Frost feels that Lucy and Steve are setting Charlie up for failure by not teaching him how to look after himself. Lucy initially disagrees with Frost's assessment telling her, "I've met hundreds of two-and-a-half-year olds that are absolutely no different to him at all;" however, she later reveals that she and her husband have decided not to have any more children and perhaps that is why she "babies" him. Lucy is depicted as selfish because she is using Charlie to fill her own emotional needs.

²⁵⁹ See the Bailey, Ball, Burnett, Charles, Christensen, Gorbea, Minyon and Wood episodes.

Supernanny maintains that a parent must teach their children the skills and knowledge they need in order to succeed in life. According to Frost, training children how to dress themselves allows them to “feel a sense of “pride.” Charlie responds positively to Frost’s “big boy technique,” which involves teaching him how to dress himself. On teaching day he puts his clothes on by himself. Unlike other mornings he does not cause a fuss or take hours to get ready. The programme suggests that Charlie’s frustration was the result of not being allowed to do things for himself. Lucy learns a valuable lesson. She realises that she must put her own needs aside and do what is right for Charlie (UK season one, episode one). In contemporary Western culture, parents are expected to act like child psychologists and to understand them completely. Ironically, while parents are required to anticipate and meet the specific needs of their child, Frost provides them with universal solutions. To summarise, parents must be actively involved in their child’s development. According to *Supernanny* a ‘good’ parent challenges his/her children to be the best they can be, while a ‘bad’ one uses them to fulfill his/her own emotional needs.

Supernanny and the Composition of Forces

In *Supernanny* one of Frost's primary aims is to discipline the entire family, so as to ensure the effectiveness of the regime. To briefly reiterate, in *Discipline and Punish* the composition of forces refers to the way in which the subject is part of a larger 'machine' whose goal it is to increase productivity. According to Foucault, the individual body can be seen as an "element that can be placed, moved or articulated on others" (*Discipline* 164). As a result of its focus on regulating the child's use of (domestic and public) space, time, activities, emotions, and the acquisition of skills and knowledge, in *Supernanny*, the whole family becomes more 'efficient.' However, this efficiency comes at a cost; as I have argued throughout, it destroys the close emotional bond that exists between parents and their children. By employing disciplinary techniques, *Supernanny* suggests that the family can ensure the child's successful transition from the home to the school (another key disciplinary apparatus), and ultimately the workforce.

Conclusion

Supernanny provides us with a clear picture of what it means to be a 'good' parent in Western society in the twenty-first century. *Supernanny* links care with control, and through its techniques demonstrates how parents must regulate their child's use of (domestic and public) space, time, activities, emotion and acquisition of skills and knowledge. More specifically, as I have demonstrated, a 'good' parent is one who

establishes an appropriate set of rules, who both punishes and praises their children when necessary, and has a routine in place which not only outlines clear meal-times and bed-times but includes fun activities so that the children will not get bored and misbehave. In addition to providing a safe and tidy environment in which children can flourish, the ‘good’ parent also monitors their use of (domestic and public) space and time. A ‘good’ parent not only responds to their child’s physical needs, but also supports them academically and emotionally. Such parents communicate with their children in a non-threatening manner and do everything possible to build their child’s self-esteem. ‘Good’ parents put the children before their careers, establish regular one-on-one time with each of their children, adjust their expectations to match their child’s stage of development and ensure that they teach them the necessary life skills and knowledge in order to succeed.

Frost’s techniques ultimately work together to produce a ‘disciplined’ family, making *Supernanny* a Foucauldian text par excellence. Frost’s disciplinary techniques function to restore the parents’ power and to put the children in their ‘place.’ The techniques are forward-looking, as they seek to produce an optimal future state. Frost’s promotion of specific childrearing techniques not only highlights the increasing burden upon parents (and mothers in particular), in contemporary culture, but also demonstrates *Supernanny*’s focus on the labour of parenting rather than the emotional bond of parenthood.

My analysis of *Supernanny* provides an original contribution to the current television scholarship. I extend the previous work on *Supernanny* by providing a detailed examination of Frost’s specific disciplinary techniques, both in relation to the parents and the child. While I am not the first scholar to investigate *Supernanny* using a

Foucauldian framework, others have failed to address the specific nature of parenthood as an emotional bond: I address this oversight by outlining the differences between care of and care about, and more specifically, highlight the ways in which *Supernanny* rejects the emotional bond in favour of the techniques of parenthood. I provide a brief history of British parenting programming, which has not been included in previous studies, before locating the show within the larger context of instructional makeover television. In the concluding chapter I summarise the findings of my thesis, discuss the implications of my work and provide suggestions for future avenues of research.

Conclusion

‘Parenting’ isn’t something you can learn from a manual, or a set of step-by-step instructions, it is a human relationship between unique personalities, an organic natural process, which should be left a-bloody-lone by the media and the likes of Jo effing Frost.

“Greensleaves” (online forum)

In this thesis, I have examined representations of the ‘bad’ parent, as depicted in the popular British reality series, *Supernanny*. In the introduction, I proposed that ‘care’ is a concept which is often seen as having a common-sense meaning; however, I have argued that it is essential to interrogate how ‘care’ is defined, as the concept reveals much about the society in which it is produced and changes depending upon a variety of factors, including age, class, gender and ethnicity. In particular, I have suggested that care is a defining feature of modern-day parenthood and that it operates on two distinct levels; what I deem ‘care of’ refers to the labour involved in raising children, while ‘care about’ describes the emotional bond between parents and children. Together, these two notions create the parent as a contestatory figure who is irreconcilably divided between the daily work of caring for their children and the emotional dimensions of raising children.

Findings

In the first chapter I situated the figure of the parent within Foucauldian theories of power, discipline and order and relevant literature on the origins of the adult/child binary. I argued that the parent is a contested subject who emerged as a result of the child's changing value, from productive worker to an object of affection, and that from the sixteen-century onwards a variety of institutions developed in the West to keep adults and children in their 'correct' places. I demonstrated how, over time, the child's world has become increasingly circumscribed in terms of their use of (domestic and public) space, time and activities and that this process has ultimately increased the burden on parents. I have argued that although Western societies have seen the rise of emotional and therapeutic cultures in the last two decades, these have coincided with the emergence of instrumental models of parenting, which ignore the emotional aspects of parenting.

In Chapter Two I positioned *Supernanny* within makeover television, a sub-genre concerned with care of the self, so as to demonstrate its intervention and highlight its importance for television studies. I compared several of *Supernanny's* early predecessors with two more recent examples, *Bad Behaviour* and *Little Angels*, and argued that there have been significant changes in parenting television over the past three decades. I have suggested that *Supernanny's* hybrid format, which merges educational content with entertainment, must be understood in relation to the larger transformations in the television industry, and in particular, the rise of free-market economics. I have demonstrated that while *Supernanny* adopts elements of first and

second wave programming, it inverts the traditional makeover format by switching the roles of the expert and the participants, a fact which highlights the privatisation of the television industry and the wholesale regulation of the family in neoliberal societies. More specifically, in contrast to first and second wave shows, which promote the consumption of material goods, I have shown how *Supernanny* urges parents to adopt specific techniques in order to ‘care for’ themselves.

In Chapter Three I analysed the narrative structure of *Supernanny* using a Foucauldian framework, demonstrating how the programme focus shifts from child to parent. I have argued that although the children’s bad behaviour provides the justification for Frost’s intervention, it is the parents who most need to change. I have argued that Frost operates as a “technician of behaviour” or “engineer of conduct” who ‘disciplines’ the parents (she both punishes them and teaches them the necessary skills and techniques) so that they, in turn, can discipline their children. I have observed that Frost infantilises the parents, due to her positioning as the expert and/or ideal mother. I have suggested that the crisis of parenthood, as depicted in *Supernanny*, is the result of a breakdown of ‘proper’ boundaries between parents and children, one that can be resolved by restoring each to their ‘rightful’ places through the implementation of specific childrearing techniques. Moreover, I have asserted that *Supernanny*’s focus on disciplining the parents is part of a broader neoliberal project which emphasises personal responsibility rather than state obligations.

In Chapter Four I provided a detailed analysis of Frost’s childrearing techniques which have been largely neglected by other television scholars. Drawing on Foucault’s disciplinary practices, I have argued that a ‘good’ parent is presented as one who controls their child’s use of (domestic and public) space, time, activities, emotions and

acquisition of skills and knowledge. Ultimately, I have proposed that *Supernanny* favours ‘care of’ (care as labour) over ‘care about’ (care as affection) or parenting over parenthood, due to its focus on techniques. I have argued that *Supernanny* links care with control, and highlighted the close connection between freedom and regulation that is characteristic of neoliberal societies. I have suggested that this privileging of techniques is at odds with contemporary culture’s emphasis on emotions and thus could be seen as an attempt to return to more functional (and less sentimental) view of the child. So what can *Supernanny* tell us about the transformation of, and television’s role, in the ‘governance’ of parenthood and care in the twenty-first century?

Implications of the Study

Supernanny functions as a disciplinary tool, modeling ‘appropriate’ forms of behaviour and care, not only for the programme’s participants, but more importantly, for the viewers at home. The programme plays a central role in defining what constitutes ‘good’ and ‘bad’ parenting for television audiences who are presumed to view life simplistically. Moreover, *Supernanny* naturalises particular childrearing techniques, at the expense of others. An analysis of these techniques reveal much about the values of the culture in question. *Supernanny* promotes a form of ‘convenience parenting.’ Frost’s focus on the regulation of time, in particular, only makes sense in capitalist societies. This fact did not escape the attention of audience members; as one viewer observed, “parenting-by-schedules and gimmicks have struck a chord with the general populace because people don’t have time to fit their lives around children. Rather, children are expected to behave in a way that is convenient to their parents’

timetables” (“Blueshoes” n.p.).²⁶⁰ Along similar lines, another respondent argued that *Supernanny* could be seen as a form of social engineering:

Parenting is being reduced to a set of protocols which are universally applicable, so that any child can be parented by any adult/group of adults/a robot if necessary. ... The result is a climate in which both parents are equally productive as economic units, without the messy complications engendered by individual family life and its intrusion on paid employment. (“Greensleaves” n.p.).

Greensleaves’ claim that children could be ‘parented’ by anyone, robots included, echoes Foucault’s work on disciplinary society where he argues that one prison guard can be replaced by another. Although her view is extreme, I agree that *Supernanny* instrumentalises care and suggest that the bond between the parent and the child is not reducible to a series of techniques. Moreover, the relationship between the parent and the child is far more complex than that of prisoner and guard: the sentimental tie between them means that control is ultimately represented as a form of (parental) care. The complicated nature of human relationships, the limitations of the makeover text, the need to provide ‘quick-fix’ solutions to everyday problems and the requirement to create commercially successful formats, means that *Supernanny* cannot resolve the conflict between ‘care of’ and ‘care about,’ nor the contested nature of parenthood.

²⁶⁰ Blueshoes’ claim illustrates my earlier observation that *Supernanny* highlights the tension between the child’s rights and the parents.’

Future Considerations

This thesis makes several arguments that could be pursued in future academic studies. As noted in Chapter Three, *Supernanny* is only one of many instructional parenting makeover shows broadcast since 2004, including *Little Angels*, *Nanny 911*, *Blame the Parents*, *Driving Mum and Dad Mad*, *Honey We're Killing the Children*, *The House of Tiny Tearaways*, *American Supernanny*, and *Extreme Parental Guidance*. Future research could analyse these other examples to determine how the figure of the 'parent' is represented in them. *Supernanny* is also a series which deals with pre-adolescent children however, as I mentioned in Chapter Three, there is a significant body of programmes featuring teens and young adults. This group includes *Jamie's Kitchen* (UK C4 2002 – 2003), *American Princess* (USA WE 2005 – 2007), *Brat Camp* (UK C4 and USA ABC 2005 - ?), *Ladette to Lady* (UK ITV1 2005 – 2010), *Teen Angels* (UK BBC3 2005), *My Teen's a Nightmare* (UK ITV2 2005), *From ASBO Teen to Beauty Queen* (UK C5 2006), *Redemption Hill* (NZ Channel 2 2006), *The Teen Tamer* (UK C5 2006), *Fat Teens Can't Hunt* (UK BBC3 2007), *From Gs to Gents* (US MTV 2008 – 2009) and *The World's Strictest Parents* (UK BBC3 2008 – present). Like *Supernanny*, these shows have been hugely popular: during their original run, both *Brat Camp* and *The World's Strictest Parents* attracted audiences in the millions. Since then, their formats have been licensed for use around the world. Future research could profitably examine how the figure of the teenage child (twelve and above), who needs independence as well as care, challenges my model of the parent.

My preliminary research suggests that this second set of programmes is more diverse than the first, both in form and content. For example, unlike the shows featuring

pre-teens, these programmes are largely serial in format (i.e. they follow the teens/young adults' progress over a number of weeks or months, as opposed to a single episode). In most of the series listed above, the teens are taken out of their home environment in order to rehabilitate them: In the original series of *Brat Camp*, for example, six British teens are sent to Redcliffe Ascent, a wilderness treatment programme based in Utah, while in the *World's Strictest Parents* troublesome teens are sent to third-world countries in order to experience life in a different family and culture. Instead of a nanny, most shows feature a psychologist who works with the teens, suggesting that professional help is needed. As a whole, these programmes appear less sympathetic to the teens: little or no time is spent examining the homes that these teens come from, suggesting that they are responsible for their own behaviour. An examination of this second group of shows would not only provide further information about the breadth of this third wave of makeover programming but could also help establish whether there are any significant differences in the representation of preteens and teens/young adults in reality television.

In *Supernanny* the children's gender is largely ignored. Frost treats boys and girls in exactly the same way. Even though the programme features more boys than girls, the girls are just as naughty as the boys.²⁶¹ Although not a concern in *Supernanny*, gender is more of an issue in programmes about wayward teens and thus could provide an interesting avenue for future research. *American Princess*, *Ladette to Lady*, *Brat Camp: Girls Only Edition* and *From G's to Gents* all underscore gender through their choice of participants: the first three feature girls/young women, while the last one focuses solely on young men. *Ladette to Lady*, in particular, raises interesting questions about gender

²⁶¹ See Appendices D and E.

and what is considered to be ‘bad’ behaviour. The original series follows five “ladettes” (women, aged between eighteen and twenty-four, who behave like “lads” by swearing, drinking excessively and having multiple sexual partners) as they complete a five-week course at a traditional British finishing school. The women are instructed in etiquette, elocution, cookery and needlework by a formidable team of British ladies. At the end of each week, one woman is expelled from the house while the others have the chance to compete for the title of “the most improved” and a £200, 000 sports-car (which contestants are unaware of until the end of show). While the women frequently flout house rules or sneer at the weekly challenges, by the end of the term, most express a heartfelt desire to change. Ultimately the show suggests that the key to transforming the women’s bad behaviour is to restore their lost femininity through old-fashioned or more ‘traditional’ pursuits. *Ladette to Lady* promotes traditional gender roles and implies that a woman diminishes herself when she behaves like a man. Future research could examine the link between gender and the representation of bad behaviour.

This thesis contributes not only to discussion(s) about televisual transformation, but as well to larger debates about parenthood and care. Like the prisoner in *Discipline and Punish*, I have suggested that the parent is a figure who bears the burdens of certain pressures, tensions and contradictions of family life. In 2011, two new parenting shows were broadcast which suggest that ‘good’ parenting begins even before the birth of the child: *Misbehaving Mums to Be* (BBC3 2011), a reality series which pairs pregnant women who smoke, drink, under/over eat with a midwife who attempts to get them to transform their destructive behaviour, and *Fast Food Baby* (BBC3 2011), which examines the effects of poor diet on developing babies. The premise that parenting techniques should begin even before the child is born suggests an increase in the

burdens placed upon parents, mothers especially. Even though *Supernanny* first aired over ten-years ago, these two programmes demonstrate that parenting remains a contentious issue. It also indicates that television will continue to find new ways to 'programme parents' after *Supernanny*.

Works Cited

- NB: I have formatted the thesis and works cited using MLA referencing style as outlined in Joseph Gibaldi's *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers* (7th edition).
- Films and television programmes are listed separately so as to avoid confusion.

Books and Articles

Ainsworth, Janet. "Re-Imagining Childhood and Re-Constructing the Legal Order: The Case for Abolishing the Juvenile Court." *North Carolina Law Review* 69 (1991): 1083 – 1133. *HeinOnline*. Web. 2 Jan. 2009.

Aitkenhead, Decca. "You've been Very, Very Naughty!" *The Guardian*. 22 Jul. 2006. *ProQuest*. Web. 2 July. 2014.

Anderson, Kristin, Jessica George and Jessica Nease. "Requirements, Risks and Responsibilities: Mothering and Fathering in Books about Raising Boys." *Analyses of Social Issues and Public Policy* 2.1 (2002): 205 – 221. *EBSCO*. Web. 23 Oct. 2012.

Andrews, Maggie and Fan Carter, "'Who Let the Dogs Out?': Pets, Parenting and the Ethics of Lifestyle Programming." *Exposing Lifestyle Television: The Big Reveal*. Ed. Gareth Palmer. Surrey: Ashgate, 2008. Print.

Anon. "British *Supernanny* Family Blame Depiction for Community Backlash." *Reality World*. 26 Aug. 2006. Web. 7 Mar. 2012.

Anon. "Convention on the Rights of the Child." n.d. Web. 22 Feb. 2012.

- Anon. "Supernanny Jo Frost: I want to be a Supermummy." *The Sunday Mirror*. 7 May 2009. *Factiva*. Web. 29 Sept. 2009.
- Archard, David. *Children: Rights and Childhood*. London: Routledge, 1993. Print.
- Ariés, Philippe. *Centuries of Childhood*. Trans. Robert Baldick. 1962. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973. Print.
- Aronsen, Rebecca. *From Squashed Cabbage Leaf to Queen of Sheba: Narratives of Extreme Transformation and Consumption in the Construction of Feminine Subjectivity*. Hons Diss, U of Otago, NZ: U. of Otago, 2004. Print.
- . "Televising Transformation: A Close Analysis of *Extreme Makeover* and *The Swan*." MA Thesis. U of Otago, 2007. Print.
- Ashton, James. "Time Warner Buys *Supernannny* Maker." *Sunday Times*. 2nd ed. 20 Jun. 2010. *ProQuest*. Web. 2 Jul. 2014.
- Askegaard, Soren and Kjeldgaard, Dannie. "The Global Self." *The Routledge Companion to Identity and Consumption*. Eds. Ayalia Rivo and Russell Belkin. London: Routledge, 2012.
- Assarsson, Liselott, and Pål Aarsand. "'How to Be Good': Media Representations of Parenting." *Studies in the Education of Adults* 43.1 (2011): 78 – 92. *IngentaConnect*. Web. 8 Mar. 2012.
- "avi01." "Oh Plzzzzz! Come On!" *Supernanny Fan Reviews*. 5 May 2011. Web. 17 Aug. 2014.
- Barnett, Clive. *Culture and Democracy: Media, Space and Representations*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh Press, 2003. Print.

- Bauman, Zygmunt and David Lyon. *Liquid Surveillance: A Conversation*. Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2013. Print.
- Baumrind, Diana. "Rearing Competent Children." *Child Development Today and Tomorrow*. Ed. William Damon. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1989. Print.
- Becker, Ron. "'Help is on the Way!' *Supernanny*, *Nanny 911*, and the Neoliberal Politics of the Family." *The Great American Makeover: Television, History, Nation*. Ed. Dana Heller. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006. Print.
- Bell, Vikki. "Foucault's Familial Scenes: Kangaroos, Crystals, Continence and Oracles." *Foucault, the Family and Politics*. Eds. Robbie Duschinsky and Leon Antonio Rocha. UK: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012. Print.
- Biressi, Anita, and Heather Nunn. "Bad Citizens: The Class Politics of Lifestyle Television." *Exposing Lifestyle Television: The Big Reveal*. Ed. Gareth Palmer. Surrey: Ashgate, 2008. Print.
- Bonsu, Samuel, Aron Darmody and Marie-Agnés Parmentier. "Arrested Emotions in Reality Television." *Consumption, Markets and Culture* 13.1 (2010): 91 – 107. *Taylor and Francis*. Web. 2 July 2014.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. London: Routledge, 1984. Print.
- Bowcott, Owen. "*Supernanny* Banished to the Naughty Step by Report on Children's Rights." *Guardian*. 3 Oct. 2008. Web. 2 Feb. 2012.
- Brancato, Jim. "Domesticating Politics: The Representation of Wives and Mothers in Reality Television." *Film and History: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Film and Television Studies* 37.2 (2007): 49 – 56. *Project Muse*. Web. 24 Aug. 2012.

- Bratich, Jack. "Programming Reality: Control Societies, New Subjects and the Powers of Transformation." *Makeover Television: Realities Remodelled*. Ed. Dana Heller. New York: Tauris, 2007. Print.
- Bremner, Robert, ed. *Children and Youth in America: A Documentary History: 1866 – 1932*. Vol. 2. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard UP, 1971. Print.
- , ed. *Children and Youth in United States: A Documentary History: 1600 – 1865*. Vol. 1. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard UP, 1970. Print.
- Bristow, Jennie. *Standing Up to Supernanny*. Exeter, UK: Societas, 2009. Print.
- Brunsdon, Charlotte. "Lifestyling Britain: The 8 – 9 Slot on British Television." *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 6.1 (2003): 5 – 23. SAGE. Web. 7 July 2007.
- Buckingham, David. *After the Death of Childhood: Growing Up in the Age of Electronic Media*. Maiden, MA: Polity, 2000. Print.
- . *The Material Child: Growing Up in Consumer Culture*. Cambridge: Polity, 2011. Print.
- Burns, Jim. *Teenology: The Art of Raising Great Parents*. Minnesota: Bethany House, 2010. Print.
- Burton, Graeme. *Talking Television: An Introduction to the Study of Television*. London: Arnold, 2000. Print.
- Campbell, Alex. "Six Parenting Gurus Who Have Changed Parenting." *BBC News*. 3 May 2013. Web. 25 Nov. 2014.
- Campbell, Kim. "Does *Supernanny* Know Best?" *The Christian Science Monitor*. 2 Mar. 2005. *Academic Search Premier*. Web. 15 Nov. 2007.

- Cassidy, Marsha. "The Cinderella Makeover: *Glamour Girl*, Television Misery Shows, and 1950's Femininity." *The Great American Makeover: Television, History and Nation*. Ed. Dana Heller. New York: Palgrave, 2006. Print.
- Cassidy, Sarah. "Official: Parenting the *Supernanny* Way Does Not Improve Behaviour." *Independent* [London]. 2 Feb. 2008. *Highbeam*. Web. 1 Feb. 2012.
- Cauce, Ana Mari. "Parenting, Culture and Context: Reflections on Excavating Culture." *Applied Developmental Science* 12. 4 (2008): 227 – 229. *Taylor and Francis*. Web. 23 Oct. 2012.
- Chandler, Daniel and Rod Munday. "Edutainment." *A Dictionary of Media and Communications*. Oxford Reference: Oxford UP, 2011. Print.
- Choi, P, C. Henshaw, S Baker and J Tree. "Supermum, Superwife, Supereverything: Performing Femininity in the Transition to Motherhood." *Journal of Reproductive and Infant Psychology* 23.2 (2005): 167 – 180. *Taylor and Francis*. Web. 23 Oct. 2012.
- "CHOOGIRL." "Supernanny OMG!!!" *Mumsnet*, 9 Mar. 2010. Web. 17 Aug. 2014.
- Churcher, Sharon, and Caroline Graham. "Why 'Supernanny' Wants to Put TV Bosses on the Naughty-Step." *Daily Mail*. 26 Nov. 2011. Web. 20 Mar. 2012.
- Clark, Laura. "TV Parenting Guru Quits in Protest at 'Car-Crash Telly' Childcare Programmes." *Mail Online*. 29 Aug. 2007. Web. 16 Nov. 2011.
- Coates, Sam. "Caroline Flint: Parliament's Supernanny." *Times*. 12 Oct. 2006. *Academic OneFile*. Web. 2 July 2014.

- Cockburn, Tom. "Children and Citizenship in Britain: A Case for a Socially Interdependent Model of Citizenship." *Childhood* 5: 1 (1998): 99 – 117. SAGE. Web. 19 Apr. 2011.
- . "The Devil in the City: Working Class Children in Manchester 1860 – 1914." BSA Conference, University of Leicester. 11 Apr. 1995. Conference Presentation.
- Conrad, Joann. "Lost Innocent and Sacrificial Delegate: The JonBenét Ramsey Murder." *Childhood* 6 (1999): 313 - 51. SAGE. Web. 14 May 2008.
- Coppock, Vicki. "'Families' in 'Crisis.'" *'Childhood' in 'Crisis'*. Ed. Phil Scraton. UK: UCL, 1997. Print.
- Corteen, Karen, and Phil Scraton. "Prolonging 'Childhood,' Manufacturing 'Innocence' and Regulating Sexuality." *'Childhood' in 'Crisis'?* Ed. Phil Scraton. London: UCL, 1997. Print.
- Coveney, Peter. *The Image of Childhood*. London: Peregrine, 1957. Print.
- Coward, Simon, Down, Richard and Christopher Perry. Eds. *British Independent Television Drama Guide, 1955 – 2010*. Dudley: Kaleidoscope, 2010. Print.
- Crawley, Melissa. "Making Over the New Adam." *The Great American Makeover: Television, History, Nation*. Ed. Dana Heller. New York: Palgrave, 2006. Print.
- Criss, Michael, and Robert Larzelere. "Introduction." *Authoritative Parenting: Synthesizing Nurturance and Discipline for Optimal Child Development*. Eds. Robert Larzelere, Amanda Sheffield Morris and Amanda Herrist. Washington: American Psychological Association, 2013. Print.
- Cunningham, Hugh. "Histories of Childhood." *The American Historical Review* 103.4 (1998): 1195 – 1208. JSTOR. Web. 10 Oct. 2011.

- Danaher, Geoff, Tony Schirato and Jenn Webb. *Understanding Foucault*. Great Britain: Allen and Unwin, 2000. Print.
- Das, Linda. "Why Supernanny is Considering Adoption." *The Mail Online*. 1 Mar. 2013. Web. 22 Nov. 2013.
- Deans, Jason. "'Bad Behaviour' Gives C4 the Edge." *The Guardian*. 23 Mar. 2003. Web. 22 Nov. 2013.
- Deery, June. "Interior Design: Commodifying Self and Place in *Extreme Makeover*, *Extreme Makeover: Home Edition* and *The Swan*." *The Great American Makeover: Television, History, Nation*. Ed. Dana Heller. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006. Print.
- . "Trading Faces: The Makeover Show as Prime Time 'Infomercial.'" *Feminist Media Studies* 4.2 (2004): 212 – 4. *Taylor and Francis*. Web. 20 Feb. 2005.
- Dermott, Esther. "'The Intimate Father': Deepening Parental Involvement." *Sociological Research Online* 8.4 (2003): n. pag. Web. 1 Jun. 2015.
- Dekker, Jeroen. "The Century of the Child Revisited." *The International Journal of Children's Rights* (2000): 133 – 50. *Academic Search Complete*. Web. 5 May 2009.
- Deleuze, Gilles. "Postscript on Societies of Control." *October* 59 (1992): 3 – 7. *JSTOR*. Web. 23 Oct. 2012.
- DeMause, Lloyd, ed. *The History of Childhood: The Untold Story of Child Abuse*. New York: Psychohistory, 1974. Print.
- Douglas, Susan, and Meredith Michaels. *The Mommy Myth: The Idealization of Motherhood and How it Has Undermined All Women*. New York: Free Press, 2004. Print.

- Dover, Caroline and Annette Hill. "Mapping Genres: Broadcaster and Audience Perceptions of Makeover Television." *Makeover Television*. Ed Dana Heller. New York: Tauris, 2007. Print.
- Dovey, Jon. *Freakshow: First Person Media and Factual Television*. London: Pluto, 2000. Print.
- Doyle McCarthy, E. "Emotional Performance as Dramas of Authenticity." *Authenticity in Culture*. Eds. Phillip Vannini and Patrick Williams. England: Ashgate, 2009. Print.
- DuBois, F.R.H. *An Age of Ambition: English Society in the Late Middle Ages*. New York: Viking, 1970. Print.
- Duschinsky, Robbie and Leon Antonio Rocha. "Introduction: The Problem of the Family." *Foucault, the Family and Politics*. Eds. Robbie Duschinsky and Leon Antonio Rocha. UK: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012. Print.
- Edwards, Hannah. "Jo Frost as Devil Mary Poppins." *The Spring Morning Herald*. 24 Apr. 2005. Web. 20 October 2012.
- Edwards, Leigh. "Supernanny: British Nanny Invasion." *Pop Matters*. 28 Mar. 2005. Web. 23 Oct. 2012.
- . *The Triumph of Reality TV: The Revolution in American Television*. Santa Barbara, California: Praeger, 2013.
- Eisenstein, Elizabeth. *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change: Communications and Cultural Transformations in Early-Modern Europe*. Vol. 1. London: Cambridge UP, 1979. Print.
- Ellyat, Holly. "The Great British Nanny Export Defies Recession." *CNBC*. 15 Feb. 2013. Web. 13 Dec. 2014.

- Everett, Anna. "Trading Private and Public Spaces at HGTV and TLC: On New Genre Formation in Transformation TV." *Journal of Visual Culture* 3:2 (2004): 157 – 81. SAGE. Web. 13 Oct. 2014.
- Feasey, Rebecca. *From Happy Homemaker to Desperate Housewives: Motherhood and Popular Television*. London: Anthem, 2012. Print.
- . "Mothers on the Naughty Step: *Supernanny* and Reality Parenting Television." *FlowTV* 15. 3 (2011): n. pag. Web. 16 Nov. 2012.
- Feder, Ellen. *Family Bonds: Geneologies of Race and Gender*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2007. Print.
- . "The Dangerous Individual's Mother: Biopolitics, the family and the Production of Race." *Hypatia* 22.2 (2007): 60 – 78. EBSCO. Web. 12 Jul. 2014.
- Ferguson, Galit. "Watching Families: Parenting, Reality Television and Popular Culture." Diss. U. East London, 2009. Print.
- Flew, Terry. "The Cultural Economy Moment?" *Cultural Science* 2.1 (2009). n. pag. SAGE. Web. 12 Jan. 2015.
- Flew, Terry and Stuart Cunningham. "Creative Industries after a Decade of Debate." *The Information Society* 26.2 (2010): 113 – 123. Taylor and Francis. Web. 12 Jan. 2015.
- Ford, Elizabeth and Deborah Mitchell. *The Makeover in Movies: Before and After in Hollywood Films, 1941 – 2002*. Jefferson: MacFarland, 2004. Print.
- Foucault, Michel. *Abnormal: Lectures at the College de France, 1974 – 1975*. Trans. Graham Burchell. New York: Picador, 2003.
- . *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of The Prison*. 1975. Trans. Alan Sheridan. New York: Vintage, 1995. Print.

- . *History of Madness*. Oxon, UK: Routledge, 2006.
- . *Les Desordres des Families: Lettres de Cachet*. Des Archives de la Bastille. Paris: Julliard, 1982.
- . *Psychiatric Power: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1973 – 1974*. 2003. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2006.
- . *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978 – 1979*. Houndsmill, Eng: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008. Print.
- . *The Care of the Self: History of Sexuality*. 1984. Trans. Robert Hurley. London: Penguin, 1990. Print.
- . *The Use of Pleasure. The History of Sexuality*. 1985. Trans. Robert Hurley. New York: Vintage Books, 1990. Print.
- . “The Subject and Power.” *The Essential Foucault: Selections from Essential Works of Foucault, 1954 – 1984*. Eds. Paul Rabinow and Nikolas Rose. New York: New Press, 2003. Print.
- . *Will to Knowledge: The History of Sexuality*. 1976. London: Penguin, 1998. Print.
- Fowler, Catherine, and Rebecca Kambuta. “Extreme Human Makeovers: *Supernanny*, the Unruly Child and Adulthood in Crisis.” *Literature Interpretation Theory* 22.3 (2011): 262 – 276. *Taylor and Francis*. Web. 6 Oct. 2011.
- Fraser, Kathryn. “Now I Am Ready to Tell How Bodies are Changed into Different Bodies...Ovid, *The Metamorphoses*.” *Makeover Television: Realities Remodelled*. Ed Dana Heller. New York: Tauris, 2007. Print.
- . “The Makeover and Other Consumerist Narratives.” Diss. Canada: McGill University, 2003. Print.

Frost, Jo. *Confident Toddler Care: The Ultimate Guide to the Toddler Years*. London: Orion, 2011. Print.

---. *How to Get the Best from your Children*. New York: Hyperion, 2005. Print.

---. *Jo Frost's Toddler Rules: Your Five Step guide to Shaping Proper Behavior*. US: Random, 2014. Print.

---. *Supernanny: What Every Parent Wants to Know*. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 2006. Print.

Fuchs, Christian. "How Can Surveillance Be Defined." *Matrizes* 5.1 (2011). 109 – 133.

Furedi, Frank. *Paranoid Parenting: Why Ignoring the Experts May be the Best Thing for your Child*. Chicago: Chicago Review, 2002. Print.

---. *Therapeutic Culture: Cultivating Vulnerability in an Uncertain Age*. London: Routledge, 2004. Print.

Gambles, Richenda. "Supernanny, Parenting and a Pedagogical State." *Citizen Studies* 14.6 (2010): 697 – 709. *Taylor and Francis*. Web. 25 Oct. 2011.

Ganeshasundaram, Raguragaran and Nadine Henley. "Reality Television (*Supernanny*): A Social Marketing 'Place' Strategy," *Journal of Consumer Marketing* 26.5 (2009): 311 – 319. *Emerald*. Web. 6 Aug. 2011.

Gilbert, Susan. "These Televised Nannies May Be Just a Bit Too Super." *New York Times*. 2 Aug. 2005. Web. 1 Mar. 2012.

Gillies, Val. "Working Class Mothers and School Life: Exploring the Role of Emotional Capital." *Gender and Education* 18.3 (2006): 281 – 293. *Taylor and Francis*. Web. 23 Oct. 2012.

- Gittins, Dana. "The Historical Construction of Childhood." *An Introduction to Childhood Studies*. Ed. Mary Jane Kehily. Maidenhead, UK: Open UP, 2004. Print.
- Goldson, Barry. "'Childhood': An Introduction to Historical and Theoretical Analyses." *'Childhood' in 'Crisis'*. Ed. Phil Scraton. UK: UCL Press, 1997. Print.
- González, Ana Marta. "Introduction: Emotional Culture and the Role of Emotions in Cultural Analysis." *The Emotions and Cultural Analysis*. Ed. Ana Marta González. Surrey: Ashgate, 2012. Print.
- Gordon, Byron. "Jo Frost Interview: The Day Supernanny Came to Tea." *The Telegraph*. 13 Sep. 2014. Web. 18 Dec. 2014.
- Grant, Julia. "Children vs. Childhood: Writing Children into Historical Record, or Reflections on Paula Fass' *Encyclopedia of Children and Childhood in History and Society*." *History of Education Quarterly* 45. 3 (2005): 468 – 490. JSTOR. Web. 5 May 2011.
- Green, Fiona Joy. "Real(ity) TV: Practices of Surveillance: Evaluating Mothers in *Supernanny* and *Crash Test Mommy*." *Mediating Moms: Mothers in Popular Culture*. Ed. Elizabeth Podnieks. Montreal: McGill-Queens UP, 2012. Print.
- . "Supernanny: Disciplining Mothers through a Narrative of Domesticity." *Storytelling: A Critical Journal of Popular Narrative* 6.2 (2007): 99 – 107. *Literature Online*. Web. 24 August 2012.
- Greene, Ross. *The Explosive Child: A New Approach for Understanding Parenting Easily Frustrated, Chronically Inflexible Children*. New York: HarperCollins, 2010. Print.

- "Greensleaves." "Supernanny Gets a Kicking in *The Guardian* Today." *Mumsnet*. 23 Jul. 2006. Web. 7 Aug. 2014.
- Griffith, Sian and John Elliot. "TV Supernanny Has Wrist Slapped." *Sunday Times*. 15 Oct. 2006. *ProQuest*. Web. 2 July 2014.
- Grossberg, Lawrence. *Cultural Studies in the Future Tense*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010. Print.
- Harvey, David. *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2007. Print.
- Hawkins, Alan, Kimberley Lovejoy, Erin Holmes, Victoria Blanchard, and Elizabeth Fawcett, "Increasing Father's Involvement in Child Care with a Couple-Focused Intervention during the Transition to Parenthood." *Family Relations* 57 (2008): 49 – 59. *ProQuest*. Web. 23 Oct. 2012.
- Heller, Dana, ed. *Makeover Television: Realities Remodelled*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2007. Print.
- . ed. *The Great American Makeover: Television, History, Nation*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006. Print.
- Hendrick, Harry. "Children and Childhood." *Refresh* 15 (1992): 1 – 4. Print.
- . "Constructions and Reconstructions of British Childhood: An Interpretative Survey, 1800- Present." *Constructing and Reconstructing Childhood*. Eds. Allison James and Allan Prout. New York: Falmer, 1997. Print.
- Heywood, Colin. *A History of Childhood: Children and Childhood in the West from Medieval Times to Modern Times*. Polity: Cambridge, 2004. Print.
- Hill, Amelia "Parents are Forgetting How to Play With their Children, Study Shows." *The Guardian*. 26 Aug. 2010. Web. 25 Mar. 2012.

- Hochschild, Arlie. "Emotion Work, Feeling Rules and Social Structure." *The American Journal of Sociology* 85.3 (1979): 551 – 557. Print.
- Höfner, Claudia, Cornelia Schadler, and Rudolf Richter, "When Men Become Fathers: Men's Identity at the Transition to Parenthood." *Journal of Comparative Family Studies* 42.5 (2011): 669 – 689. JSTOR. Web. 23 Oct. 2012.
- Holden, Katherine. *Nanny Knows Best: The History of the British Nanny*. Gloucestershire: The History Press, 2013. Print.
- Holland, Patricia. *Picturing Childhood: The Myth of the Child in Popular Imagery*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2004. Print.
- Hopkins, Eric. *Childhood Transformed: Lower-Class Children in Nineteenth-Century England*. Manchester: Manchester UP, 1994. Print.
- Hoyles, Martin, ed. *Changing Childhood*. London: Pathfinder, 1979. Print.
- . *The Politics of Childhood*. London: Journeyman, 1989. Print.
- Hunt, David. *Parents and Children in History: The Psychology of Family Life in Early Modern France*. New York: Basic, 1970. Print.
- Illouz, Eva. *Cold Intimacies: The Making of Emotional Capitalism*. Cambridge: Polity, 2007. Print.
- Inkpen, Mick. *We are wearing out the Naughty Step*. London: Hodder, 2007.
- James, Allison, Chris Jenks, and Alan Prout. *Theorizing Childhood*. New York: Teachers College Press, 1998. Print.
- Jeffers McDonald, Tamar. *Hollywood Catwalk: Exploring Costume and Transformation in American Film*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2010. Print.
- Jenkins, Henry. "Introduction: Innocence and Other Modern Myths." *The Children's Culture Reader*. New York: New York UP, 1998. Print.

- Jenks, Chris. *Childhood*. 2nd ed. London: Routledge, 2005. Print.
- , ed. *The Sociology of Childhood: Essential Readings*. London: Batsford, 1982. Print.
- Jensen, Tracey. "Beyond the Naughty Step: The Intersection of Class and Gender in Contemporary Parenting Culture." Doctoral Diss. The Open U, 2009. Print.
- . "'Watching with my Hands over my Eyes': Shame and Irritation in Ambivalent Encounters with 'Bad Mothers.'" *Radical Psychology* 9.2 (2011): n. pag. Web. 24 Aug. 2012.
- . "'What Kind of Mum are you at the Moment?' *Supernanny* and the Psychologising of Classed Embodiment." *Subjectivity* 3. 2 (2010) 170 – 192. *ProQuest*. Web. 20 Sept. 2010.
- Jones, Christopher. "Parent Programmes." *The Association for the International Year of the Child*. Ed. Rick Rogers. London: The Association, 1980. Print.
- Jones, Meredith. "Makeover Culture: Landscapes of Cosmetic Surgery." Doctoral Dissertation. Sydney: Centre for Cultural Research, 2006. Print.
- Kapur, Jyotsna. "Out of Control: Television and the Transformation of Childhood in Late Capitalism." *Children Media Culture*. Ed. Marsha Kinder. Durham: Duke UP, 1993. Print.
- Kavka, Misha. "Changing Properties: The Makeover Show Crosses the Atlantic." *The Great American Makeover: Television, History, Nation*. Ed. Dana Heller. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006. Print.
- . *Reality TV*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2012.
- Kehily, Mary Jane and Heather Montgomery. "Innocence and Experience: A Historical Approach to Childhood and Sexuality." *An Introduction to Childhood Studies*. Ed. Mary Jane Kehily. Maidenhead, UK: Open UP, 2004. Print.

- Kehily, Mary Jane. "Understanding Childhood: An Introduction to Some Key Themes and Issues." *An Introduction to Childhood Studies*. Ed. Mary Jane Kehily. Maidenhead, UK: Open UP, 2004. Print.
- Kiley, David. "Extreme Makeover: A Product Placement Dream." *Business Week*. 7 Apr. 2005. Web. 10 Jan. 2014.
- Kindlon, Dan and Michael Thompson. *Raising Cain: Protecting the Emotional Life of Boys*. New York: Ballantine, 1999. Print.
- Knight, Michelle. "Newbury Park Family to Appear on Reality TV Show." *Thousand Oak Acorn*. 17 Mar. 2005. Web. 2 Mar. 2012.
- Kohn, Alfie. "Supernanny State." *The Nation*. 23 May 2005. Web. 16 Aug. 2012.
- Kuhn-Wilken, Elizabeth. "Supernanny's Solutions for Families: An Ethnographic Content Analysis of Parenting Messages on Reality TV." MA Thesis. Colorado: Colorado State U, 2007. Print.
- Ladd-Taylor, Molly and Lauri Umansky. *'Bad' Mothers: The Politics of Blame in Twentieth-Century United States*. New York: New York UP, 1998. Print.
- LaFollette, Hugh. "Licensing Parents." *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 9.2 (1980): 182 – 197. *JSTOR*. Web. 10 Mar. 2012.
- Lasch, Christopher. *The Culture of Narcissism: American Life in an Age of Diminishing Expectations*. New York: Norton, 1979. Print.
- Lassonde, Stephen. "Age and Development." *Encyclopedia of Children and Childhood in History and Society*. n.d. Web. 5 Feb 2011.
- Lawson, Catherine. "'Supernanny' Jo Frost on her TV Replacement: I Am Not at All Happy." *Huff Post TV*. 28 Nov. 2011. Web. 20 Mar. 2012.

- Lee, Nick. *Childhood and Society: Growing Up in an Age of Uncertainty*. Buckingham: Open UP, 2001. Print.
- Lenoir, Remi and Robbie Duschinsky. "Foucault and the Family: Deepening the Account of History of Sexuality, Volume 1." *Foucault, the Family and Politics*. Eds. Robbie Duschinsky and Leon Antonio Rocha. UK: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012. Print.
- Levy, Andrew. "Supernanny Children Set Fire to Own House after Visit from TV Expert." *Mail Online*. 2 Oct. 2007. Web. 5 Mar. 2012.
- Lewis, Tania. "Changing Rooms, Biggest Losers and Backyard Blitzes: A History of Makeover Television in the United Kingdom, United States and Australia." *TV Transformations: Revealing the Makeover Show*. Ed Tania Lewis. London: Routledge, 2009. Print.
- . *Smart Living: Lifestyle Media and Popular Expertise*. New York: Peter Lang, 2008. Print.
- Lexmond, Jen and Richard Reaves. *Building Character*. London: Demos, 2009. Print.
- Locke, John. "An Essay on the Poor Law." *Locke: Political Essays*. Ed. Mark Goldie. 2nd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1999. Print.
- . "Some Thoughts Concerning Education." *The Educational Writings of John Locke: A Critical Edition with Introduction and Notes*. Ed. James L Axtell. London: Cambridge UP, 1968. Print.
- . *Locke: Political Essays*. Ed. Mark Goldie. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1997. Print.
- Logan, Katherine. "Foucault, the Modern Mother and Maternal Power: Notes Towards a Genealogy of the Mother." *Foucault, the Family and Politics*. Eds. Robbie Duschinsky and Leon Antonio Rocha. UK: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012. Print.

- Lunt, Peter. “*Little Angels: The Mediation of Parenting.*” *TV Transformations: Revealing the Makeover Show*. Ed. Tania Lewis. London: Routledge, 2009. Print.
- Lupton, Deborah. “Food, Risk, Subjectivity.” *Health Medicine and Society: Key Theories, Future Agendas*. Eds. Simon Williams, Jonathan Gabe and Michael Calnan. London: Routledge, 2000. Print.
- Lury, Karen. “‘For Crying Out Loud:’ The Repression of the Child’s Subjectivity in ‘The House of Tiny Tearaways.’” *Semiotica* 173: 1 (2009): 491 – 507. *EBSCO*. Web. Print.
- Macaulay, Sean. “Jo Frost: Interview.” *Telegraph*. 28 Jan. 2010. Web. 28 Jul. 2014.
- Maio, Kathi. “SupercalifragilisticNanny911.” *Fantasy and Science Fiction*. July 2006. Web. 3 Feb 2012.
- May, Margaret. “Innocence and Experience.” *Victorian Studies* 17.1 (1973): 7 – 29. *JSTOR*. Web. 14 Aug. 2011.
- McHoul, Alec, and Wendy Grace. *A Foucault Primer: Discourse, Power and the Subject*. Melbourne: Melbourne UP, 1993. Print.
- McIlvenny, Paul. “A Home Away From Home: Mediating Parentcraft and Domestic Space in a Reality TV Parenting Program.” *Home Cultures* 5.2. (2008): 141 – 166. *EBSCO*. Web. 10 Apr. 2014.
- . “Communicating a ‘Time-Out’ in Parent-Child Conflict: Embodied Interaction, Domestic Space and Discipline in Reality TV Parenting Programmes. *Journal of Pragmatics* 41.10 (2009): 2017 – 2032. *Elsevier*. Web. 10 Apr. 2014.

- . "Video Interventions in 'Everyday Life': Semiotics and Spatial Practices of Embedded Video as a Therapeutic Tool in Reality TV Parenting Programmes." *Social Semiotics* 21.2 (2011): 259 – 288. *Taylor and Francis*. Web. 10 Apr. 2014.
- McLeer, Anne. "Private Positions: The Cultural Work of Representations of the Nanny in American Popular Film and Television 1960s to 1990s." Diss. George Washington U, 2003. Print.
- McNay, Lois. *Foucault: A Critical Introduction*. New York: Continuum, 1994. Print.
- McRobbie, Angela. "Notes on *What Not to Wear* and Post-Feminist Symbolic Violence." *Sociological Review* 52.2 (2004): 99 – 104. *Wiley*. Web. 10 Mar. 2011.
- Mechling, Jay. "Child-Rearing Advice Literature." *Encyclopedia of Children and Childhood in History and Society*. n.d. Web. 28 Jan 2011.
- Meeker, Meg. *Strong Fathers, Strong Daughters: Ten Secrets Every Father Should Know*. Washington: Regency 2006. Print.
- Messenger Davies, Maire and Nick Mosdell. *Consenting Children: The Use of Children in Non-Fiction Television Programmes*. BSC, June 2001. Web. 1 Feb 2012.
- Meyrowitz, Joshua. *No Sense of Place: The Impact of Electronic Media on Social Behaviour*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1985. Print.
- Miller, Toby. "Metrosexuality; See the Bright Lights of Commodification Shine! Watch Yanqui Masculinity Makeover!" *The Great American Makeover: Television, History, Nation*. Ed. Dana Heller. New York: Palgrave, 2006. Print.

- Mills, Richard. "Perspectives of Childhood." *Childhood Studies: A Reader in Perspectives of Childhood*. Eds. Jean Mills and Richard Mills. London: Routledge, 2000. Print.
- Minnotte, Krista Lynn, Daphne Pedersen, Susan E Mannon, and Gary Kiger. "Tending to the Emotions of Children: Predicting Parental Performance of Emotion Work with Children." *Marriage and Family Review* 46.3 (2010): 224 – 241. *Taylor and Francis*. Web. 22 Oct. 2012.
- Mintz, Steven. "Parenting." *Encyclopedia of Children and Childhood in History and Society*. n.d. Web. 28 Jan 2011.
- Mitchell, Juliet. *Siblings: Sex and Violence*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2003. Print.
- Mollon, Phil. *Shame and Jealousy: The Hidden Turmoils*. London: Karnac, 2002. Print.
- Moran, Albert. "Makeover on the Move: Global Television and Programme Formats." *TV Transformations: Revealing the Makeover Show*. Ed Tania Lewis. London: Routledge, 2009. Print.
- Morgan, David. *Family Connections: An Introduction to Family Studies*. Cambridge: Polity, 1996. Print.
- Morreale, Joanne. "Faking It and the Transformation of Identity." *Makeover Television: Realities Remodelled*. Ed. Dana Heller. London: I.B. Tauris, 2007.
- Morris, Nigel. "'Old, New, Borrowed, Blue': Makeover Television in British Prime-Time." *Makeover Television: Realities Remodelled*. Ed. Dana Heller. London: I. B. Tauris, 2007.
- Moseley, Rachel. "Makeover Takeover on British Television." *Screen* 41. 3 (2000): 299– 314. Print.

- Murphy, Elizabeth. "Images of Childhood in Mother's Accounts of Contemporary Childrearing." *Childhood* 14.1 (2007): 105 – 127. *SAGE*. Web. 5 May 2009.
- Murray, Susan, and Laurie Ouellette. "Introduction." *Reality TV: Remaking Television Culture*. Eds. Susan Murray and Laurie Ouellette. New York: New York P, 2004. Print.
- National Family and Parenting Institute. "Happy Families." *Ipsos MORI*. NFPI, 2006. Web. 16 Jan. 2012.
- Nunn, Heather and Anita Biressi. "'A Trust Betrayed': Celebrity and the Work of Emotion." *Celebrity Studies* 1.1 (2010): 49 – 64. Print.
- Nutt, Kathleen. 'Bid to set up 'Supernanny' Units." *Sunday Times*. 23 Apr. 2006. 2nd ed. *ProQuest*. Web. 2 July 2014.
- O'Brien, Catherine. "The Nature of Childhood through History Revealed in Artworks?" *Childhood* 10 (2003): 362 - 78. *SAGE*. Web. 14 May 2008.
- O'Connor, Jane. *The Cultural Significance of the Star*. New York: Routledge, 2008. Print.
- Ouellette, Laurie, and James Hay. *Better Living through Reality TV: Television and Post-Welfare Citizenship*. Malden, MA: Blackwell 2008.
- Palmer, Gareth, ed. *Exposing Lifestyle Television: The Big Reveal*. Surrey, UK: Ashgate, 2008. Print.
- . "Extreme Makeover: Home Edition: An American Fairytale." *Makeover Television: Realities Remodelled*. Ed. Dana Heller. Tauris: New York, 2007. Print.
- . "Introduction – The Habit of Scrutiny." *Exposing Lifestyle Television: The Big Reveal*. Ed. Gareth Palmer. Surrey: Ashgate, 2008. Print.

- . "The New You: Class and Transformation in Lifestyle Television." *Understanding Reality Television*. Eds. Su Holmes and Deborah Jermyn. USA: Routledge, 2004. Print.
- Palmer, Sue. *Toxic Childhood: How the Modern World is Damaging Our Children and What We Can Do About It*. London: Orion, 2006. Print.
- Park, Bernadette, J Allegra Smith, Joshua Correll, "'Having It All' Or 'Doing It All?'" Perceived Trait Attributes and Behavioural Obligations as a Function of Workload, Parenthood and Gender." *European Journal of Social Psychology* 38 (2008): 1156–1164. Wiley. Web. 23 Oct. 2012.
- Paul, Pamela. *Parenting, Inc.* New York: Henry Holt, 2008. Print.
- Pearson, Geoffrey. *Hooligan: A History of Respectable Fears*. London: Macmillan, 1983. Print.
- Peiss, Kathy. *Hope in a Jar: The Making of American Beauty Culture*. New York: Metropolitan. Print.
- Perks, Lisa Glebatis and Amanda Davis Gatchet, "Equipment for Living in an Ordered Home: Disciplinary Homologies in *Supernanny* and the *Dog Whisperer*." *Journal of Popular Culture* 46.4 (2013): 811–830. Wiley. Web. 15 Feb. 2014.
- Perry, Shayla. "Supernanny Jo Frost is Hanging up Her Cape." *RTV Magazine*. 21 June 2010. Web. 23 Nov 2013.
- Phelan, Sean. *Neoliberalism, Media and the Political*. Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014. Print.

- Philips, Deborah. "What Not to Buy: Consumption and Anxiety in the Television Makeover." *Exposing Lifestyle Television: The Big Reveal*. Ed. Gareth Palmer. Surrey: Ashgate, 2008. Print.
- Pinchbeck, Ivy, and Margaret Hewitt. *Children in English Society: From the Eighteenth-Century to the Children Act of 1948*. Vol. 2. Toronto UP, 1973. Print.
- . *Children in English Society: From Tudor Times to the Eighteenth-Century*. Vol. 1. Toronto: Toronto UP, 1969. Print.
- Plumb, J. H. "The Great Change in Children." *Horizon* 13.1 (1971): 4 – 12. *JSTOR*. Web. 6 June 2008.
- Porter, Louise. *Gifted Young Children: A Guide for Teachers and Parents*. Australia: Allen and Unwin, 1999. Print.
- Poster, Mark. *The Mode of Information: Post-Structuralism and Social Context*. Chicago: UP of Chicago, 1990. Print.
- Postman, Neil. *The Disappearance of Childhood*. 2nd ed. New York: Vintage, 1992. Print.
- Powell, Helen, and Sylvie Prasad. "Life Swap: Celebrity Experts as Lifestyle Advisor." *Makeover Television: Realities Remodelled*. Ed. Dana Heller. London: I.B. Tauris, 2007. Print.
- Puterbaugh, Dolores. "Wanted: Secular Miracle Worker." *USA Today* 134. 2724 (2005): 68 – 70. *EBSCO*. Web. 15 Apr. 2008.
- Pyke, Nicholas. "Even the Queen and Blair Regret it so Why do We Fight to be the Stars of Reality TV?" *The Independent*. 1 Aug. 2004. Web. 7 Mar. 2012.

- Qvortrup, Jens, eds. *Studies in Modern Childhood: Society, Agency, Culture*. Houndsmill: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005. Print.
- Raisborough, Jayne. *Lifestyle Media and the Formation of the Self*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011. Print.
- Ramaekers, Stefan and Judith Suissa. *The Claims of Parenting: Reasons, Responsibility and Society*. London: Springer, 2012. Print.
- Raphael, Chad. "The Political Economic Origins of Reali-TV." *Reality TV: Remaking Television Culture*. Eds. Susan Murray and Laurie Ouellette. New York: New York UP, 2004. Print.
- Redden, Guy. "Makeover Morality and Consumer Culture." *Makeover Realities Remodelled*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2007. Print.
- Roberts, Alison. "From *Supernanny* to Superbrand." *London Evening Standard*. 11 Sep. 2007. Web. 11 Aug. 2014.
- Rockler, Naomi. "Be Your Own Windkeeper": *Friends*, Feminism and Rhetorical Strategies of Depoliticization." *Women's Studies in Communication* 29.2 (2006): 244 – 64. *ProQuest*. Web. 20 June 2013.
- Rose, Lionel. *The Erosion of Childhood: Child Oppression in Britain, 1860 – 1918*. London: Routledge, 1991. Print.
- Rose, Nikolas. *Governing the Soul: The Shaping of the Private Self*. London: Routledge, 1990. Print.
- Rosenberg, Buck Clifford. "Property and Home-Makeover Television: Risk, Thrift and Taste." *TV Transformations: Revealing the Makeover Show*. Ed Tania Lewis. London: Routledge, 2009. Print.

- Rosenberg, Meisha. "Just a Spoonful of Sugar." *Bitch: Feminist Response to Pop Culture* 44 (2009): 38 – 55. Web. 8 Mar. 2012.
- Rousseau, Jean Jacques. *Emile, or on Education*. Trans. Allan Bloom. New York: Basic, 1979. Print.
- Sanders, Matthew and Ron Prinz. "Using the Mass Media as a Population Level Strategy to Strengthen Parenting Skills." *Journal of Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology* 37.2 (2003): 609 – 621. *Taylor and Francis*. Web. 13 Mar. 2014.
- Sarup, Madan. *Identity, Culture and the Postmodern World*. 2nd edition. Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 1998. Print.
- Scales, Stephen. "Intergenerational Justice and Care in Parenting." *Social Theory and Practice*. 28.4 (2002): 667 – 677. *JSTOR*. Web. 23 Oct. 2012.
- Scott, Sue, Stevi Jackson, and Kathryn Backett-Millburn. "Swings and Roundabouts: Risk Anxiety and the Everyday Worlds of Children." *Sociology* 32.4 (1998): 665 - 89. *SAGE*. Web. 10 June 2012.
- Sealand, Judith. *The Failed Century of the Child: Governing America's Young in the Twentieth-Century*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003. Print.
- Sender, Katherine. *The Makeover: Reality TV, Reflective Audiences*. New York: New York UP, 2012.
- Sibley, David. "Families and Domestic Routines: Constructing the Boundaries of Childhood." *Mapping the Subject: Geographies of Cultural Transformation*. Eds. Steven Pile and Nigel Thrift. London: Routledge, 1995. Print.
- Simons, Jon. "Foucault's Mother." *Feminist Interpretations of Michel Foucault*. Ed. Susan Hekman. Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State Press, 1996. Print.

- Skeggs, Beverley. "The Making of Class and Gender through Visualizing Moral Subject Formation." *Sociology* 39.5 (2005): 965 – 982. *SAGE*. Web. 28 June 2014.
- Skeggs, Beverley, Nancy Thurmin and Helen Wood. "Oh my Goodness, I am Watching Reality TV: How Methods Make Class in Audience Research." *European Journal of Cultural Studies*. 11.1 (2008). 5 – 24. *SAGE*. Web. 28 June 2014.
- Smart, Carol, Bren Neale, and Amanda Wade. *The Changing Experience of Childhood: Families and Divorce*. Cambridge: Polity, 2001. Print.
- Smith, Gilly. "Barthes on Jamie: Myth and the TV Revolutionary." *Journal of Media Practice* 13.1 (2012): 3 - 17. *Taylor and Francis*. Web. 10 Nov. 2013.
- Sommerfeld, Denise. "The Origins of Mother Blaming: Historical Perspectives on Childhood and Motherhood." *Infant Mental Health* 10.1 (1989): 14 – 24. *Wiley*. Web. 23 Oct. 2012.
- Sommerville, C. John. *The Rise and Fall of Childhood*. California: Sage, 1982. Print.
- Sperring, Mark. *Big Bad Bill on the Naughty Step*. Devon, Eng.: Puffin, 2012. Print.
- . *Captain Buckleboots on the Naughty Step*. Devon, Eng.: Puffin, 2011. Print.
- . *Father Christmas on the Naughty Step*. Devon, Eng.: Puffin, 2012. Print.
- Stearns, Peter. *Childhood in World History*. London: Taylor, 2005. Print.
- Stiegler, Bernard. *Taking Care of Youth and of the Generations*. Trans. Stephen Barker. Stanford, California: Stanford UP, 2010. Print.
- Sunderland, Jane. "'Parenting' or 'Mothering'? The Case of Modern Childcare Magazines." *Discourse and Society* 17.4 (2006): 503 – 27. *SAGE*. Web. 13 Mar. 2014.

- Tally, Margaret. "It's Important to be a Parent Who Parents: *Supernanny*, Reality Television and the Crisis in the Postmodern Family." *Allacademic*. n.d. Web. 15 Nov. 2011.
- Taylor, Chlöe. "Foucault and Familial Power." *Hypatia* 27.1 (2012): 201 – 18. Wiley. Web. 3 Nov. 2014.
- Thompson, James. "Shed Media Falls to Time Warner for £100." *Independent*. 6 Aug. 2010. Web. 23 Oct 2012.
- Tincknell, Estella. *Mediating the Family: Gender, Culture and Representation*. New York: Hodden Arnold, 2005. Print.
- Tuchman, Barbara. *A Distant Mirror: The Calamitous Fourteenth-Century*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1978. Print.
- Valentine, Gill. *Public Space and the Culture of Childhood*. Aldershot, Hants: Ashgate, 2004. Print.
- Van Slyck, Abigail. "Children's Spaces." *Encyclopedia of Children and Childhood in History and Society*. n.d. Web. 5 Feb. 2011.
- Vered, Karen Orr and John McConchie. "The Politics of Third Way TV: *Supernanny* and the Commercialization of Public Service TV." *Camera Obscura* 26.2 (2011): 65 – 89. *Academic Search Complete*. Web. 16 Jan. 2012.
- Walkerdine, Valerie. "Safety and Danger: Childhood, Sexuality, and Space at the End of the Millennium." *Governing the Child in the New Millennium*. Eds. Kenneth Hultqvist and Gunilla Dahlberg. New York: Routledge, 2001. Print.
- Walley, Jonathan. "The Material of Film and the Idea of Cinema: Contrasting Practices in Sixties and Seventies Avant-Garde Film." *October* 103 (2003): 15 – 30. *EBSCO*. Web. 1 July 2014.

- Wartella, Ellen, and Nancy Jennings. "Children and Computers: New Technology, Old Concerns." *The Future of Children* 10.2 (2000): 31 – 43. *JSTOR*. Web. 30 May 2011.
- Watts, Amber. "Queen for a Day: Remaking Consumer Culture, One Woman at a Time." *The Great American Makeover: Television, History and Nation*. Ed. Dana Heller. New York: Palgrave, 2006. Print.
- Weber, Brenda. *Makeover TV: Selfhood, Citizenship, and Celebrity*. Durham: Duke UP, 2009. Print.
- Wheeler Dixon, Winston. "Hyperconsumption in Reality Television: The Transformation of the Self through Televisual Consumerism." *Quarterly Review of Film and Video* 25.1 (2007): 52 – 63. *Taylor and Francis*. Web. 21 Aug. 2012.
- Wilding, Raelene. "Shifting Patterns of Parental Love? *Supernanny* and the Search for Democratic Intimacy." TASA Conference. Tasmania: U of Tasmania, 2005. Conference Presentation.
- Wyn, Johanna and Rob White. *Rethinking Youth*. Australia: Allen and Unwin, 1997. Print.
- Wyness, Michael. *Contesting Childhood*. London: Falmer, 2000. Print.
- Young, Valerie. "Revealing Parenthoods: Some Observations on Theoretical, Lay and Professional Experiences of Parenting in Contemporary Society." *Critical Public Health* 9.1 (1999): 53 – 68. *Taylor and Francis*. Web. 23 Oct. 2012.
- Zelizer, Viviana. *Pricing the Priceless Child: The Changing Social Value of Children*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1994. Print.

Ziegler, Dave. *Raising Children who Refuse to be Raised: Parenting Skills and Therapy Interventions for the Most Difficult Children*. 2nd ed, Phoenix: Acacia, 2002.
Print.

Filmography

Please note: every effort has been made to provide details about early British television programmes and films about parenting; however, in some cases the entries are incomplete.

Are We There Yet? Dir. Brian Levant. Revolution, 2005. DVD.

Bond of Breastfeeding, The. Dir. Julia Ashton. Distrib. Unknown, 1978. Film.

Child Development Centre. Dir. John Metcalfe. Distrib. Unknown, 1979. Film.

Exorcist, The. Dir. William Friedkin. 1973. Film. Warner, 2010. DVD.

Halloween. Dir. John Carpenter. 1978. Film. Anchor Bay, 2001. DVD.

Hugh Jolly on Baby Care. Dir. Margaret Chambers. Distrib. Unknown. 1983. Film.

Katie's First Year. Dir. Nigel Evans. Distrib. Unknown, 1979. Film.

Lady Killers, The. Dir. Alexander MacKendrick. 1955. Film. Anchor Bay, 2002. DVD.

Mary Poppins. Dir. Robert Stevenson. 1964. Film. Buena Vista, 2004. DVD.

Mildred Pierce. Dir. Michael Curtiz. 1945. Film. Warner Bros. 2001. DVD.

Nanny Diaries, The. Dir. Robert Pulcini and Shari Springer Bergman. Weinstein, 2007. DVD.

Nanny McPhee. Dir. Kirk Jones. 2005. Film. Universal, 2006. DVD.

Nightmare on Elm Street, A. Dir. Wes Craven. 1984. Film. Home Entertainment. 1999. DVD.

So You're Going to Have a Baby. Dir. Unknown. Distrib. Unknown, 1987. Film.

Sound of Music, The. Dir. Robert Wise. 1965. Film. Twentieth-Century Fox, 2005.

DVD.

Yours, Ours, Mine. Dir. Raja Gosnell. 2005. Film. Sony, 2006. DVD.

Television Programmes/Series

All about Babies. UK. ATV Midlands, 1977. TV.

All about Toddlers. UK. ATV Midlands, 1979. TV.

American Princess. USA. WE, 2005. TV.

American Supernanny. USA. Lifetime. 2011 – 2013. TV

Being a Child. London. Weekends. 1977. TV.

Bank of Mum and Dad. UK. BBC2. 2004. TV.

Big Brother. Netherlands. Endemol. 1999 - present. TV.

Biggest Loser, The. USA. NBC 2004 – present. TV.

Blame the Parents. UK. BBC2. 2005 - ? TV.

Brat Camp. UK. C4. 2005 – 2007. TV.

Development: Is There Anything Wrong? UK. BBC. 1973. TV.

Drawn Together. US. Comedy Central, 2004 – 2007. TV.

Extreme Makeover: Body Edition. USA. ABC. 2002 – 2007. TV.

Extreme Makeover: Home Edition. USA. ABC 2003 – 2012. TV.

Extreme Makeover: Weight Loss Edition. USA. ABC 2011 – present. TV.

Family SOS with Jo Frost. USA. TLC 2013 – present. TV.

Fast Food Baby. UK. BBC3. 2011. TV.

Fat Families. USA. Sky1 2005 - ? TV.

Fat Teens Can't Hunt. UK. BBC3. 2007. TV.

From ASBO Teen to Beauty Queen. UK. C5. 2006. TV.

From Demons to Darlings. NZ. TV3. 2005 - ? TV.

Gok's Style Secrets. UK. C4. 2013 - present. TV.

He's Having a Baby. UK. BBC. 2005. TV.

Home and School. UK. Channel Unknown. 1977. TV.

Honey We're Killing the Children. UK. BBC 3 2005 - TV.

Jo Frost Family Matters. USA. ITV 2014 – present. TV.

Misbehaving Mums to Be. UK. BBC3. 2011. TV.

My Dysfunctional Family. USA. CMT. 2014 – present. TV.

My Teen's a Nightmare. UK. ITV2. 2005. TV.

Other People's Children. UK. Channel Unknown. Date Unknown. TV.

Parents Day. UK. Granada. 1977. TV.

Play with a Purpose. UK. Channel Unknown. 1965 - ? TV.

Redemption Hill. NZ. Channel 2. 2006. TV.

Special Child, The. UK. Yorkshire TV. 1977. TV.

South Park. US. Comedy Central, 1997 – present. TV.

Supernanny: When Little Children Cause Big Headaches. UK. C4. 2006. TV. 2010. DVD.

Survivor. USA. CBS. 2000 – present. TV.

Take Home Nanny. USA. TLC. 2008. TV.

Teen Angels. UK. BBC 3 2005. TV.

Teen Tamer, The. UK. C5. 2006. TV.

Teen Trouble. USA. Lifetime. 2012 – 2013. TV.

Three Day Nanny. UK. C4. 2013. TV.

Toycraft. UK. Channel Unknown. Date Unknown. TV.

The Swan. USA. Fox 2004. TV.

What Not to Wear. UK. BBC3 2003 – present. TV.

Who Rules the Roost? UK. BBC 2004. TV.

Programmes Analysed

Bad Behaviour

“Anne-Marie.” *Bad Behaviour*. UK. C4, 17/05/2005. TV.

“Hollish family.” *Bad Behaviour*. UK. C4, 10/05/2005. TV.

“Webb family.” *Bad Behaviour*. UK. C4, 03/05/2005. TV.

Brat Camp

“Episode 1.” *Brat Camp*. Season 1. UK. C4, 09/03/2004. TV.

“Episode 2.” *Brat Camp*. Season 1. UK. C4, 16/03/2004. TV.

“Episode 3.” *Brat Camp*. Season 1. UK. C4, 23/03/2004. TV.

“Episode 4.” *Brat Camp*. Season 1. UK. C4, 30/03/2004. TV.

“What Happened Next?” *Brat Camp*. Season 1. UK. C4, 08/03/2005. TV.

Brat Camp: Girls Only Edition. Season 3. UK. C4, 2006. TV.

Driving Mum and Dad Mad

“Episode 1.” *Driving Mum and Dad Mad*. Season 1. UK. ITV 1, 16/02/2005. TV.

“Episode 2.” *Driving Mum and Dad Mad*. Season 1. UK. ITV 1, 23/02/2005. TV.

“Episode 3.” *Driving Mum and Dad Mad*. Season 1. UK. ITV 1, 02/03/2005. TV.

“Episode 4.” *Driving Mum and Dad Mad*. Season 1. UK. ITV 1, 09/03/2005. TV.

“Episode 5.” *Driving Mum and Dad Mad*. Season 1. UK. ITV 1, 16/03/2005. TV.

“Episode 1.” *Driving Mum and Dad Mad*. Season 2. UK. ITV1, 17/07/2006. TV.

“Episode 2.” *Driving Mum and Dad Mad*. Season 2. UK. ITV1, 24/07/2006. TV.

“Episode 3.” *Driving Mum and Dad Mad*. Season 2. UK. ITV1, 31/07/2006. TV.

“Episode 4.” *Driving Mum and Dad Mad*. Season 2. UK. ITV1, 07/08/2006. TV.

“Episode 5.” *Driving Mum and Dad Mad*. Season 2. UK. ITV1, 14/08/2006. TV.

From Gs to Gents

From Gs to Gents. USA. Season 1. MTV, 2008. TV.

Jamie’s Kitchen

“Episode 1.” *Jamie’s Kitchen*. Season 1. UK. C4, 05/11/2002. TV.

“Episode 2.” *Jamie’s Kitchen*. Season 1. UK. C4, 12/11/2002. TV.

“Episode 3.” *Jamie’s Kitchen*. Season 1. UK. C4, 19/11/2002. TV.

“Episode 4.” *Jamie’s Kitchen*. Season 1. UK. C4, 03/12/2002. TV.

“Update Episode 1.” *Jamie’s Kitchen*. Season 1. UK. C4, 16/09/2003. TV.

“Update Episode 2.” *Jamie’s Kitchen*. Season 1. UK. C4, 23/09/2003. TV.

Jo Frost: Extreme Parental Guidance

“Kiran and Bronwyn.” *Jo Frost: Extreme Parental Guidance*. UK. C4, 09/02/2010. TV.

“Michael.” *Jo Frost: Extreme Parental Guidance*. UK. C4, 16/03/2010. TV.

Ladettes to Ladies

Ladettes to Ladies. Season 1. UK. ITV1, 2005. TV.

Little Angels

“Soilleux family.” *Little Angels*. Season 1. UK. BBC 3, 16/02/2004. TV.

“Barton family.” *Little Angels*. Season 1. UK. BBC 3, 09/02/2004. TV.

“Norris family.” *Little Angels*. Season 1. UK. BBC 3, 12/02/2004. TV.

“Christies family.” *Little Angels*. Season 1. UK. BBC 3, 10/02/2004. TV.

Nanny 911

“Amico family.” *Nanny 911*. Season 1. US. GT Media, 2008. DVD.

“Cubbison family.” *Nanny 911*. Season 1. US. GT Media, 2008. DVD.

“Dickson family.” *Nanny 911*. Season 1. US. GT Media, 2008. DVD.

“Dunleary family.” *Nanny 911*. Season 1. US. GT Media, 2008. DVD.

“Finck family.” *Nanny 911*. Season 1. US. GT Media, 2008. DVD.

“Johnson family.” *Nanny 911*. Season 1. US. GT Media, 2008. DVD.

“King family.” *Nanny 911*. Season 1. US. GT Media, 2008. DVD.

“Lawrence family.” *Nanny 911*. Season 1. US. GT Media, 2008. DVD.

“Lorimer family.” *Nanny 911*. Season 1. US. GT Media, 2008. DVD.

“McCray family.” *Nanny 911*. Season 1. US. GT Media, 2008. DVD.

“McKelvin family.” *Nanny 911*. Season 1. US. GT Media, 2008. DVD.

“McRobert family.” *Nanny 911*. Season 1. US. GT Media, 2008. DVD.

“Paul family.” *Nanny 911*. Season 1. US. GT Media, 2008. DVD.

“Priore family.” *Nanny 911*. Season 1. US. GT Media, 2008. DVD.

“Rock family.” *Nanny 911*. Season 1. US. GT Media, 2008. DVD.

“Silcock family.” *Nanny 911*. Season 1. US. GT Media, 2008. DVD.

“Sterneman family.” *Nanny 911*. Season 1. US. GT Media, 2008. DVD.

Supernanny

“Agate family” *Supernanny*. Season 2. UK. Ricochet, 2009. DVD.

“Amaral family.” *Supernanny*. Season 2. US. Roadshow, 2005. DVD.

“Bailey family.” *Supernanny*. Season 1. US. Ventura, 2005. DVD.

“Ball family.” *Supernanny*. Season 2. UK. Ricochet, 2009. DVD.

“Bixley family.” *Supernanny*. Season 2. UK. Ricochet, 2009. DVD.

“Bradbury-Lambert family.” *Supernanny*. Season 2. UK. Ricochet, 2009. DVD.

“Bullard family.” *Supernanny*. Season 1. US. Ventura, 2005. DVD.

“Burnett family.” *Supernanny*. Season 1. US. Ventura, 2005. DVD.

“Charles family.” *Supernanny*. Season 1. UK. Ricochet, 2009. DVD.

“Christiansen family.” *Supernanny*. Season 1. US. Ventura, 2005. DVD.

“Collin family.” *Supernanny*. Season 2. UK. Ricochet, 2009. DVD.

“Cooke family.” *Supernanny*. Season 2. UK. Ricochet, 2009. DVD.

“Docherty family.” *Supernanny*. UK. C4, 29/08/2004. TV.

“Douglas family.” *Supernanny*. Season 2. UK. Ricochet, 2009. DVD.

“Facente family.” *Supernanny*. Season 2. US. Roadshow, 2005. DVD.

“Gorbea family.” *Supernanny*. Season 1. US. Ventura, 2005. DVD.

“Gorbea revisit.” *Supernanny*. Season 1. US. Ventura, 2005. DVD.

“Hancock-Smith family” *Supernanny*. UK. C4, 24/09/08. TV.

“Hemingway-Clegg family.” *Supernanny*. UK. C4, 12/04/2005. TV.

“Jean family.” *Supernanny*. Season 1. US. Ventura, 2005. DVD

“Keilen family.” *Supernanny*. Season 2. US. Roadshow, 2005. DVD.

“Larmer family.” *Supernanny*. Season 2. US. Roadshow, 2005. DVD.

“McMillion family.” *Supernanny*. Season 2. US. Roadshow, 2005. DVD.

“Minyon family.” *Supernanny*. Season 2. US. Roadshow, 2005. DVD.

“Orm family.” *Supernanny*. Season 1. US. Ventura, 2005. DVD.

“Pandit family.” *Supernanny*. Season 2. UK. Ricochet, 2009. DVD.

“Ririe family.” *Supernanny*. Season 1. US. Ventura, 2005. DVD.

“Senior family.” *Supernanny*. Season 2. UK. Ricochet, 2009. DVD.

“Steer family.” *Supernanny*. Season 1. UK. Ricochet, 2009. DVD.

“Weston family.” *Supernanny*. Season 1. US. Ventura, 2005. DVD.

“Wischmeyer family.” *Supernanny*. Season 1. US. Ventura, 2005. DVD.

“Wood family.” *Supernanny*. Season 1. UK. Ricochet, 2009. DVD.

“Woods revisit.” *Supernanny*. Season 2. UK. Ricochet, 2009. DVD.

The House of Tiny Tearaways

“Episode 1.” *The House of Tiny Tearaways*. Season 1. UK. BBC 3, 01/05/2005. TV.

“Episode 2.” *The House of Tiny Tearaways*. Season 1. UK. BBC 3, 02/05/2005. TV.

“Episode 3.” *The House of Tiny Tearaways*. Season 1. UK. BBC 3, 03/05/2005. TV.

“Episode 4.” *The House of Tiny Tearaways*. Season 1. UK. BBC 3, 04/05/2005. TV.

“Episode 5.” *The House of Tiny Tearaways*. Season 1. UK. BBC 3, 05/05/2005. TV.

“Episode 6.” *The House of Tiny Tearaways*. Season 1. UK. BBC 3, 06/05/2005. TV.

“Episode 7.” *The House of Tiny Tearaways*. Season 1. UK. BBC 3, 07/05/2005. TV.

“Episode 8.” *The House of Tiny Tearaways*. Season 1. UK. BBC 3, 08/05/2005. TV.

The World's Strictest Parents

"Alabama." *The World's Strictest Parents*. Season 1. UK. BBC 3, 18/09/2008. TV.

"Ghana." *The World's Strictest Parents*. Season 1. UK. BBC 3, 02/10/2008. TV.

"India." *The World's Strictest Parents*. Season 1. UK. BBC 3, 09/10/2008. TV.

"Jamaica." *The World's Strictest Parents*. Season 1. UK. BBC 3, 25/09/2008. TV.

"South Africa." *The World's Strictest Parents*. Season 1. UK. BBC 3, 16/10/2008. TV.

"Update." *The World's Strictest Parents*. Season 1. UK. BBC 3, 23/10/2008. TV.

Appendix A

UK *Supernanny* Episode List

UK *Supernanny* tapes (seasons one and two) were obtained directly from the production company and unfortunately did not include information about when they were originally broadcast (repeated requests for this information were ignored). Television broadcast dates are given where known - dates were obtained from the official *Supernanny* website. Please note that three of the UK episodes from seasons one and two were withdrawn from international sale and thus were not analysed.

UK *Supernanny* Season One

- 1:** The Wood family (UK broadcast: 07/07/2004 on C4)
- 2:** The Steer family (UK broadcast: 14/07/2004 on C4)
- 3:** The Charles family (UK broadcast: 21/07/2004 on C4)

UK *Supernanny* Season Two

- 1.** The Collin family (UK broadcast: 05/04/2005 on C4)
- 2.** The Pandit family (UK broadcast: 19/04/2005 on C4)
- 3.** The Cooke family (UK broadcast: 2005/American broadcast: 02/10/2006 on ABC)
- 4.** The Senior family (UK broadcast: 2005)
- 5.** The Bradbury-Lambert family (UK broadcast: 2005)
- 6.** The Agate family (UK broadcast: 2005)

7. The Ball family (UK broadcast: 2005)
8. The Bixley family (UK broadcast: 17/10/2006 on C4)
9. The Douglas family (UK broadcast: 26/04/2005 on C4)
10. The Woods family Revisit (UK broadcast: 05/10/2005 on C4)

The British Film Institute provides the following information about UK

***Supernanny's* broadcast dates:**

- Season Two (4 x 1 hour episodes): 05/04/2005 – 26/04/2005 on C4
- Season Three (8 x 1 hour episodes): 17/8/2005 – 05/10/2005 on C4

Additional episodes analysed at the British Film Institute:

- The Hemingway-Clegg family (UK broadcast: 12/04/2005 on C4)
- The Hancock-Smith family (UK broadcast: 24/09/08 on C4)
- The Docherty family (UK broadcast: 29/08/2006 on C4)

UK *Supernanny* Episode Summaries

Season One

1. The Woods family (Grantham, UK)

Steve Woods (no age given, fireman)

Lucy Woods (no age given, works part-time at a local college)

Caitlin Woods (12)

Billy Woods (10)

Charlie Woods (2)

Two-year-old Charlie controls the Woods family with his violent temper. He eats what he wants, watches what he wants and sleeps in his parents' bed. As a result of his bad behaviour, his two older siblings Caitlin and Billy miss out on their parents' time and attention. Frost attempts to rein in Charlie's behaviour using the "naughty step technique." However, Frost knows that mum Lucy and dad Steve are a big part of the problem: they are frightened of Charlie's tantrums and as result, are too scared to discipline him. Frost teaches mum and dad how to take control of the situation, how to get Charlie to sleep in his own bed and also how to get him involved in tasks around the house. Frost also works on repairing the relationship between Caitlin and Lucy which is particularly strained. At the end of the programme, the house is much quieter and family life is greatly improved.

2. The Steer family (Crawley, UK)

Kelly Steer (25, stay-at-home mum)

Trina Steer (grandma)

Sophie Steer (5)

Callum Steer (4)

Kelly Steer, a twenty-five-year-old single mum from Crawley, is struggling to raise her two children, Sophie and Callum. Even though Kelly has help from her mum Trina, she still finds it hard to control her children. The children hit one another, rip the wallpaper and show no respect for their belongings. Kelly is tired and admits that she has given up disciplining her children. To bring an end to this bad behaviour, Frost institutes a strict two-point discipline system: the naughty spot and toy confiscation. Frost works with Kelly to clean the house which is overflowing with broken toys and also addresses Sophie's bedwetting. While Kelly initially doubts Frost's methods, by the end of the programme Kelly has gained confidence in her parenting abilities and the house is much cleaner and calmer. With help from the Home Start programme Kelly enrolls in the Open University.

3. The Charles family (Milton Keynes, UK)

Kevin Charles (no age given, IT consultant)

Amanda Charles (no age given, stay-at-home mum)

Jacob (4)

Max (15 months)

Isobel (15 months)

Since the birth of the twins Max and Isobel fifteen months ago, four-year-old Jacob's behaviour has deteriorated. He is jealous of the attention the twins receive and constantly hits them. Parents Amanda and Kevin disagree on parenting styles, causing

even more tension in the house: Kevin believes Amanda is too soft on Jacob, while Amanda feels Kevin does not understand how hard it is to be at home with the children all day. In this episode Frost works with Charles family to resolve their parenting differences and advises them on how to deal with Jacob's lying. She also teaches Kevin and Amanda the back-to-bed technique in order to improve bed-times as well as dealing with the parents' "babying" of their twins. By the end of the programme, Amanda realises that both parents need to discipline the children in order to have a successful and happy family.

1. The Collins family (Northampton, UK)

Jason Collins (no age given, bakery manager)

Karen Collins (no age given, stay-at-home mum)

Ben Collins (10)

Lauren Collins (9)

Joshua Collins (6)

Joseph Collins (4)

The Collins children are out-of-control, Ben, Lauren, Joshua and Joseph, swear, scream, kick and break everything in the house. Full-time mum Karen admits that has given up trying to discipline the children, while dad Jason resorts to smacking. The clash of parenting styles has driven a wedge between Karen and Jason, with Jason admitting that there is no love between him and his wife anymore. After spending a hair-raising day

observing the Collins family Frost institutes a strict new discipline system called the “naughty zone” which means that Karen can discipline multiple children at the same time. She also introduces toy confiscation as a further deterrent to bad behaviour. While Karen needs to ‘toughen up’ in respect to parenting, Jason needs to learn to praise his children more. Frost also encourages Karen to plan ahead so the daily rush to get to school each morning can be avoided. While the children initially resist all attempts at discipline, they do eventually change. At the conclusion of the programme, the transformation in the children’s behaviour leads to a renewed enjoyment of life for the Collins’ family.

2. The Pandit family (Stevenage, Hertfordshire UK)

Sonny Pandit (no age given, salesman)

Carolyn Pandit (no age given, stay-at-home mum)

Jamie Pandit (7)

Jasmine Pandit (6)

Jenna Pandit (5)

Tiny Pandit (3)

This episode features the first interracial couple in the UK *Supernanny* series. Frost visits the Pandit family whose four children have taken over the family home. Dad Sonny believes children should be independent from a young age, but the children have no respect for their mum Carolyn, who lacks confidence. After witnessing the children

cooking on the stove and cutting vegetables with sharp knives, Frost decides it is time to establish some strict rules and boundaries. She introduces a new family routine which outlines meal-times and bed-times which are sorely needed. Frost also teaches Sonny how to support his wife and works to repair the relationship between Carolyn and her youngest son Tiny. At the end of the programme, the children have learnt to listen to their parents and Carolyn has regained her sense of confidence.

3. The Cooke family (Bishop's Stratford, UK)

Paul Cooke (no age given, works full-time but job not specified)

Denise Cooke (no age given, stay-at-home mum)

Meghann Cooke (9)

Gabrielle Cooke (6)

Erin Cooke (4)

This week Frost returns to the UK for a “rescue mission.” Denise Cooke is at loggerheads with her nine-year-old daughter Meghann, whose fiery temper is causing massive problems in the family. Communication between the pair has broken down and conversations frequently dissolve into screaming matches. On her arrival, Denise confesses to Frost that she does not like spending time with her children because it is too stressful and she feels she has failed as a mother. Husband Paul is equally frustrated with the situation, believing that Denise is too soft on the children. Frost deals with the family's crisis by instituting a strict new discipline system, along with a reflection room

where the girls will be sent when they misbehave. Although Meghann violently rebels against Frost and the new discipline system, by the end of the programme she has calmed down considerably and seems almost like a different child. During the programme, Frost also works on improving the relationship between Denise and Meghann by introducing the thought-box and also by encouraging mum to spend regular one-on-one time with her eldest daughter.

4. The Senior family (Coventry, UK)

Debbie Senior (no age given, works two part-time jobs)

Granddad and Grandma (no ages given)

Bethany Senior (5)

Ruth Senior (3)

Hannah Senior (2)

In this episode, Frost visits the Senior family in Coventry. Debbie Senior separated from her husband two years ago. Since then she has struggled to maintain two part-time jobs as well as look after her three girls, Bethany, Ruth and Hannah. Bethany, the eldest, is the 'ring-leader' of the group, initiating much of the mischief, while Ruth is rude to her mother. Hannah, the youngest of the family, is beginning to copy the behaviour of her two older sisters. Instead of disciplining her children, Debbie leaves punishment to her father who lives next door. At the supermarket, the girls run away from their mum, while at dinner-time mum yells at her girls and calls them names. Bedtime is no better –

when the girls refuse to go to bed, mum loses control and screams at them. After witnessing all of this, Frost lays down the law. She begins by erecting a fence between Debbie's house and her parents, telling Debbie that she needs to take responsibility for her children. She also confronts Debbie about her lack of communication with girls, suggesting that she sets the tone in the household by the way she communicates with her children. Frost also addresses the girls' tendency to run off while in public by introducing the "roaming technique" and also teaches Debbie the "stay-in-bed technique" so that she is able to put the girls to bed calmly. Most of all though, Frost emphasizes the importance of having fun: She informs Debbie that she needs to play with her girls instead of always yelling at them.

5. The Bradbury-Lambert family (Swinton Wiltshire, UK)

Stuart Lambert (no age given, owner of kickboxing school)

Laura Bradbury (no age given, owner of kickboxing school)

Matthew (5)

Teagan Olivia (2 ½)

Diesel (5 months)

This week Frost visits the Bradbury-Lamberts, a step-family from Swindling, Wiltshire who have trouble with their five-year-old son Matthew. Even though Laura knows Matthew's behaviour is out-of-control, she refuses to allow Stuart to discipline him. Stuart and Laura own a kickboxing school and Matthew brings his aggression home

with him. Frost institutes the “cool down area” to deal with Matthew’s explosive temper and works with the family to create a new bedtime routine. At the conclusion of the show, Matthew has learnt to express himself without resorting to violence.

6. The Agate family (Little Hampton, UK)

Wendy Agate (no age given, stay-at-home mum)

Marie Agate (10)

Amie Agate (9)

Maryanne (7)

Seven-year-old Maryanne controls the Agate household with her violent temper. Single-mum Wendy cannot cope anymore: She is desperate and does not know how to deal with Maryanne’s constant escapes from the house. Maryanne’s older sisters, Marie and Amie are tired of Maryanne’s bad behaviour because they miss out on their mum’s attention. After observing the Agate family for a couple of days, Frost identifies several areas of concern, including a lack of discipline and boundaries, strained communication between Wendy and the girls, and problems at bedtime. First off, she establishes a reflection area where Maryanne (or the other girls) will be sent if they misbehave. Secondly, she introduces the “see me, hear me” technique to improve the communication between Wendy and her daughters. She also explains the importance of one-on-one time for each of the girls, so that Wendy is able to build strong relationships with her daughters and establishes a set bedtime routine to encourage more sleep. Frost

also encourages Wendy to trust her girls and allow them to play in the park across the road, as well as schedule regular family outings as a way to reward good behaviour. At the end of the programme Wendy undergoes a physical makeover to complement her new attitude. She tells viewers that Frost has armed her with some new techniques and that as a result she is a more confident parent.

7. The Ball family (South London, UK)

Michelle Ball (33, stay-at-home mum)

Iris Ball (grandmother)

Ryan Ball (3)

Kyle Ball (1)

Single mum Michelle Ball used to be confident and outgoing, but after her partner left her nine-months-ago she has struggled to cope with her eldest son's bad behaviour. Since Kyle's birth, three-year-old Ryan has been intensely jealous. He hits his younger brother, throws tantrums and still demands a pacifier. Instead of dealing with Ryan's bad behaviour, Michelle frequently hands Kyle over to his sixty-nine-year-old grandmother Iris, who has stepped in to help mum out. As a result, Michelle feels as though her mother has more of a bond with her youngest son than she does and admits to feeling disillusioned about her current situation. In order to deal with Ryan's bad behaviour Frost introduces a number of techniques including the "off-the-hip technique" (to deal with Ryan's clinginess), the "sleep-separation technique" (to allow

mum more time to herself), the “naughty circle discipline technique,” and the “big boy technique” (to get rid of Ryan’s dummies and to potty train him). Frost also emphasises the importance of taking responsibility for one’s own children: she tells Michelle that she must learn to parent her own children rather than relying on her mother. By end of the programme, Frost has succeeded in taming Ryan’s temper, thus Michelle has more time to spend with Kyle.

8. The Bixley family (Peterborough, UK)

Alex Bixley (no age given, long-haul air steward)

Heather Bixley (no age given, receptionist)

Brandon Bixley (7)

Zach Bixley (4)

Mealtimes in the Bixley household are horrific. Seven-year-old Brandon developed a food phobia after having gastric flu as a baby and will now only eat fried food. The constant battle to get Brandon to eat has led to conflict between his parents, Alex and Heather, who are now on the verge of divorce. After witnessing a disastrous family outing to the mall in which mum ends up yelling at her husband and son before bursting into tears, Frost decides things in the Bixley household need to change. She begins by teaching mum and dad how to make meal-times fun, with menu choices and reward placements, and later she introduces the “big chef technique” to get the children involved in the food preparation. She also works on the parental relationship using the

“3 in 30 technique,” where Heather and Alex learn to express themselves and work through their disagreements. At the end of the programme the family is shown enjoying a meal out at their local restaurant.

9. The Douglas family (Staines, UK)

Doug Douglas (48, works at Heathrow airport)

Sandra Douglas (50, works at Heathrow airport)

George Douglas (4 ½)

Nicole Douglas (4 ½)

After several years of trying to get pregnant, Doug and Sandra Douglas resigned themselves to a life without children. They were surprised therefore to discover that Sandra was pregnant with twins in her forties. Since the birth of George and Nicole however, life has been crazy. While George and Nicole are “model pupils” at school, home life is very difficult, with the twins frequently throwing tantrums to get their own way. Sandra’s relationship with Nicole is particularly strained, with Sandra admitting that she is desperate for her daughter’s love. Frost addresses these problems with a variety of techniques including the “cool-down area” and “the involvement technique.” While Doug and Sandra initially struggle to institute the techniques, by the end of the programme there has been significant changes in the Douglas household, with mum and dad learning to relax and enjoy time playing with their children.

10. The Woods revisit (Grantham, UK)

In this episode, Frost revisits the Woods family eighteen-months on to see whether “they have stuck to the rules.” Steve and Lucy reveal that Charlie’s behaviour has improved enormously since Frost visited and that they hardly ever have to use the “naughty step technique.” The Woods family have undergone some big changes since Frost first visited, with dad Steve now looking after Charlie during the day while mum works. Frost helps Steve with a couple of new techniques. She teaches Steve the “big boy technique” designed to help Charlie feed himself. She also shows him how to get the chores done while keeping Charlie occupied. Frost is also interested in the relationship between Lucy and her daughter Caitlin. Caitlin reveals to Frost that things are much better between the pair since she visited. Overall Frost is impressed with the Woods’ progress and sets them one last task, a meal out at a local restaurant. Charlie behaves beautifully and Frost declares the night a success.

Appendix B

US *Supernanny* Episode List

US *Supernanny* Season One

- 1: Jeans family
- 2: Bullard family
- 3: Orm family
- 4: Wischmeyer family
- 5: Weston family
- 6: Bailey family
- 7: Gorbea family
- 8: Ririe family
- 9: Burnett family
- 10: Christiansen family
- 11: Update Special – Gorbea family

US *Supernanny* Season Two

- 1: Minyon family (01/10/2006 on ABC)
- 2: McMillion family (19/04/2006 on ABC)
- 3: Larmer family (26/04/2005 on ABC)
- 4: Cooke family (Frost returns to UK; 02/10/2006 on ABC)
- 5: Amaral family (02/10/2006 on ABC)
- 6: Facente family (25/09/2006 on ABC)

- 7: Keilen family (18/08/2006 on ABC)
- 8: Steer family (UK series one)
- 9: Charles family (UK series one)
- 10: Woods family (UK series one)
- 11: Update special – Woods family (UK series two)

Please note: The episodes are listed in the order featured on the US *Supernanny* DVDs (seasons one and two) and may vary from the original order they were broadcast in.

According to the British Film Institute the US *Supernanny* Season One screened on ABC 17/1/2005 – 02/05/2005 and Season Two 23/9/2005 – 01/05/2006 also on ABC.

Some of the American episodes also screened on British television on C4 (Season One: 07/01/2006 – Season Two: 10/06/2007)

There are several episodes from these two seasons which are not included on the US DVDs and which I was unable to source:

- Webb family (ABC 12/4/2005)
- Carsley family (ABC 8/07/2006)
- Tsironis family (ABC 04/08/2006)
- Silva family (ABC 06/11/2006)
- Schwartz family (ABC 13/11/2006)
- Young family (ABC 13/11/2006)
- Harmony family (ABC 20/11/2006)
- Wujcik family (ABC 27/11/2006)
- Jackson family (ABC 27/11/2006)

- Newton family (ABC 04/12/2006)

USA Episode Summaries

US Season One

1. The Jeans family (USA)

David Jean (51, works full-time, job not specified)

Barbara Jean (43, stay-at-home mum)

Andra Jean (4 ½)

Jessie Jean (3)

Leah Jean (3)

This week Frost visits the Jean family. David is a salesman and often has to travel for days at a time, leaving mum Barbara at home with her three girls. Andra, the oldest, is very aggressive; she yells and hits her sisters. David and Barbara are concerned because Jessie has begun to copy her elder sister's bad behaviour. Leah, on the other hand, is very sensitive and cries all the time. Frost works with the family to create structure and routine in the household, which is shown to be sorely lacking. She teaches Barbara how to diffuse Andra's temper tantrums using the "naughty stool technique" and how to involve the girls in the weekly grocery shop so that they are less likely to misbehave.

Frost also works on Barbara's low-self-esteem, teaching her how to use her voice in an authoritative manner.

2. The Bullard family (USA)

Bryce Bullard (no age given, owns a plumbing business)

Jen Bullard (no age given, receptionist for family plumbing business)

Brycie Bullard (6)

Rylan Bullard (2)

Bryce and Jen Bullard own a plumbing business and are constantly working. While Bryce is responsible for the construction side of the business, Jen struggles to keep up with the paper work, look after her two sons and do the housework. As a result of his parents' demanding work schedule, Brycie frequently misbehaves leaving Jen frustrated and on the verge of tears. To top it off, Rylan, the Bullard's two-year-old son, rarely sleeps through the night, which leaves mum exhausted. In order to deal with some of these problems Frost develops a new work and family routine which limits the number of hours Jen works, leaving her more time to spend with the children. She also teaches Jen the "stay-in-bed technique" to help Rylan sleep. While dad Bryce initially struggles to accept the new family routine he eventually comes to realise that his family is more important than his job.

3. The Orm family (USA)

Shaun Orm (no age given, works full-time, job not specified)

Tammy Orm (no age given, stay-at-home mum)

Chandler (8)

Caden (6)

Declan (3)

The Orm family is out-of-control. Eight-year-old Chandler has no respect for his parents Shaun and Tammy, while six-year-old Caden refuses to eat what he is given at mealtime, instead indulging on lollies and chips throughout the day. Declan, the youngest member of the family is beginning to copy his brothers' bad behaviour and causes stress by regularly disappearing. Stay-at-home mum Tammy has no authority in the house and believes that her children will not love her if she disciplines them, while Shaun's work schedule means that he has very little time to spend with the children. Frost works with the family to remedy these issues using a variety of techniques (including the "naughty chair technique" and limiting the children's access to junk-food by using the "structured snack technique"). By the end of her time with the Orm family, Caden eats meals with the family and Declan no longer leaves the house without asking his parents' permission.

4. The Wischmeyer family (USA)

John Wischmeyer (no age given, telemarketer)

Melora Wischmeyer (no age given, telemarketer)

Jared (9)

Ashlyn (4)

Alaia (4)

Four-year-old twins Ashlyn and Alaia wreak havoc in the Wischmeyer family: they kick, scream and refuse to go to bed leaving mum Melora exhausted and teary. Nine-year-old Jared is frequently blamed for the trouble in the house and feels like his mum does not listen to him. Dad John travels for work four days a week so mum is left trying to manage all three children and hold down a full-time marketing job. From the beginning it is clear that Melora's job is the source of all the problems, so Frost's first suggestion is to cut down her work hours. With more time to spend with her children, Frost teaches Melora how to discipline Ashlyn and Alaia. Frost also encourages Melora to spend more time with Jared, using the "thought box technique" to open the lines of communication. By the end of Frost's visit, Melora has learnt how to have fun with her children and take control of her household.

5. The Weston family (USA)

Fred Weston (no age given, insurance broker)

Andrea Weston (no age given, school teacher)

Andrew (4)

Sean (11 months)

Since having children, Fred and Andrea Weston's life has been turned upside down. Both have good careers (Fred works in insurance and Andrea is a school teacher), however they do not know how to deal with their son. Four-year-old Andrew is very aggressive and has been suspended from several play-centers because of his bad behaviour. To add to his parents' misery, Andrew constantly refuses to eat his meals or stay in bed at night. Frost works with the family to reduce Andrew's bad behaviour by teaching them the "shared play technique" and the "naughty spot technique." In order to help the children sleep better Frost also moves Andrew into his own bedroom. During Frost's visit, Andrea realises that Andrew's behaviour is a reflection of her poor parenting and vows to work on improving herself.

6. The Bailey family (USA)

Bill Bailey (no age given, police officer)

Stacie Bailey (no age given, school teacher)

Jaydn Bailey (6)

Billy Bailey (2)

This week Frost visits the Bailey family, who need help dealing with their six-year-old daughter Jaydn and two-year-old son Billy. According to mum and dad, Jaydn has a nasty attitude and refuses to sleep in her own bed (preferring instead to sleep on a mattress in the hallway), while Billy is prone to violent temper tantrums. Dad Bill is a full-time police officer, thus most of the parenting falls to Stacie (who is herself a full-time teacher). She admits to feeling exhausted and discouraged. During the observation period, Bill confesses that he would rather cook or do the household chores than deal with his children. After a tense family meeting in which Bill challenges Frost's approach, the parents reluctantly accept Frost's help. In order to address some of the issues in the house, Frost institutes strict rules and teaches mum and dad how to use the "naughty step technique" to discipline their children. Within a few short days the children's behaviour begins to improve. At the end of Frost's visit, Stacie admits that her (and her husband's) poor parenting was the cause of the children's bad behaviour.

7. The Gorbea family (USA)

Robert Gorbea (no age given, service technician)

Evelina Gorbea (no age given, collection agent for phone company)

Demetrius Gorbea (9)

Meya Gorbea (7)

Adam (2 ½)

Two-and-a-half year old Adam rules the Gorbea house with his temper tantrums. He decides what everyone will watch on television and what time he will go to bed. As a result of Adam's bad behaviour, the two older children, Demetrius and Meya, miss out on mum's time and attention. Adam is not the only problem in this house. Although Evelina works a full-time job as a collection agent, her husband Robert does not believe in helping with the children or the housework. Instead he prefers to spend his free-time on the couch in front of the television. In order to remedy these problems Frost establishes a strict family routine, which includes chores for dad and time-off each weekend for mum. She teaches Evelina a number of techniques designed to end Adam's bad behaviour (including the "off-the-hip technique" in order to deal with Adam's clinginess and the "stay-in-bed technique"). By the end of the programme Adam's transformation is clear to see; he no longer controls the household, but obeys his parents. Robert also undergoes a transformation of sorts: he reveals that he enjoys spending time with his children and that helping around the house has improved his relationship with Evelina.

8. The Ririe family (USA)

Scott Ririe (no age given, investment sales)

Jenn Ririe (no age given, stay-at-home mum)

Selia Ririe (9)

Hallden Ririe (7)

Blake Ririe (3)

Broden Ririe (1)

In this episode, Frost visits the Ririe family. Although Blake is shown to be a problem child (he frequently leaves the house to meet his friend, runs away in public and refuses to eat his meals), it is clear that his parents' disagreement over how to raise their children contributes greatly. While Jenn is genuinely scared for her son's safety, Scott believes that Blake's behaviour is 'normal.' Likewise, while Jenn would like the family to sit down at the table for meals, dad is not worried if Blake does not eat. In order to address these issues, Frost introduces a number of techniques including the "naughty circle technique," the "roaming technique" and the "good-eater technique." Frost also puts locks on the doors so that Blake cannot leave the house without mum's permission and limits the number of snacks the children are allowed to eat each day. The most important issue Frost works on is the lack of communication between Jenn and Scott. Frost introduces Jenn and Scott to the "same page technique" designed to help them work through their disagreements about the children. By the end of the programme, Jenn and Scott realise they want the same things for their children, and, as they begin to work together the improvements in Blake's behaviour are noticeable.

8. The Burnett family (USA)

Michael Burnett (no age given, self-employed contractor)

Joanne Burnett (no age given, school teacher)

Zachary Burnett (8 – lives with his dad Michael for part of the week)

John Burnett (3)

Joseph Burnett (3)

Michael Burnett (16 months)

Molly Burnett (16 months)

Michael and Joanne Burnett have got their hands full with two sets of twins under the age of four and an eight-year-old. Michael, a self-employed contractor works from home and tries to look after their five children, while Joanne teaches at a local school. Michael would like to hire an au pair to help look after the children during the week, but his wife refuses saying, “They’re my children and it’s my responsibility to look after them.” When we first meet the family it is clear that the current arrangement is not working. Upon arriving at the Burnett house, Frost quickly realises that the children’s schedule (which includes a three-hour nap and several hours watching DVDs) is actually Michael’s schedule, designed to accommodate his work. In order to help the Burnett family address this imbalance Frost introduces a number of techniques including, the “off-the-hip technique,” the “involvement technique” (designed to get the older boys involved in activities around the house) and the “naughty spot.” After facing tough opposition, Frost manages to convince Joanne to hire some home help. She also encourages Joanne to think of the boys as individuals rather than twins (previously she liked to dress all the children in the same outfit). At the end of programme, Michael is shown playing with his children and recognising the importance of interacting with them, rather than simply ‘supervising’ them.

10. The Christensen family (USA)

Chris Christensen (no age given, insurance agent)

Colleen Christensen (no age given, stay-at-home mum)

Corey Christensen (7)

Chase Christensen (3)

This week Frost visits the Christensen family, who she describes as a “family of four children.” Dad Chris and mum Colleen refuse to take responsibility for their two boys Corey and Chase and constantly fight in front of them. As a result, eight-year-old Corey has developed a bad attitude and does not respect his parents. Three-year-old Chase is learning by his older brother’s example. After identifying key problems in the household (no discipline, constant arguing between the parents, no interaction between the parents and the children, the ‘babying’ of Chase), Frost sets out to restore peace. Frost begins by implementing a discipline system, with a cool down area where the boys will go when they misbehave. Frost also establishes a regular “mummy and me” time for the boys, so they are able to have fun with their mum. Finally, Frost works on the parental relationship, introducing the “communication zone technique” which allows Chris and Colleen to work through their parenting differences.

11. Family Update (USA)

In this episode Frost revisits the Gorbea family a few months on to see whether the changes in Adam's behaviour have lasted. Robert and Evelina are still impressed with Frost's techniques: Adam now goes to bed when asked and is less clingy. This episode also features video messages from other families featured in series one including, the Jeans family, the Wischmeyers, the Riries, the Bullards and the Orms. All of the families report dramatic changes to their home life. At the conclusion of the episode, Frost sends Robert and Evelina out for dinner to demonstrate that Adam can be left at home with a babysitter. Although Adam cries when Evelina reveals she is going out for the night, his tears are short-lived. Evelina and Robert return to find Adam asleep in his bed.

US Season Two

1. The Minyon family (USA)

Frank Minyon (29, works full-time, job not specified)

Danielle Minyon (26, stay-at-home mum)

Frank Minyon Junior (7)

Skyler Minyon (4)

This week Frost visits the Minyon family who are struggling to deal with four-year-old Skyler's temper tantrums. The family has a number of other issues which include problems getting both children out of bed and to school on time, poor communication between father and son and problems with the children's socialisation. Dad Frank rarely helps with the children. In order to resolve these problems, Frost teaches Frank and Danielle a number of techniques including the "rise and shine technique," "the feelings chart," and the "socialisation technique." Frost spends most of the time working on the relationship between Frank and his son, which is shown to be particularly strained. At the conclusion of the episode dad Frank reveals that his relationship with his son has greatly improved.

2. McMillion family (USA)

Jonathan McMillion (no age given, sergeant in Afghanistan)

Cheryl McMillion (no age given, stay-at-home mum)

Ryan McMillion (9)

Hunter McMillion (7)

The McMillion family is in crisis. While dad Jonathan is deployed in Afghanistan, mum Cheryl is left dealing with their three aggressive boys, Ryan, Hunter and Garrett. Cheryl frequently smacks her boys and when things get too much she locks herself in the bedroom to escape the chaos. Cheryl admits to Frost that she does not like spending time with her boys because they misbehave. After identifying the family's problems,

which include no clear rules, a lack of consistent discipline and no fun in the house, Frost sets to work transforming the McMillion family. She lays down a set of household rules and introduces a reward system. Cheryl needs to acknowledge the boys' good behaviour instead of always focusing on the bad. Frost also works on the relationship between Cheryl and her boys by encouraging regular play times. According to Frost, a family that no longer has fun together is in serious trouble. By the end of the episode, Cheryl has learnt to relax and have fun with her boys. There are significant changes in the boys' behaviour and Cheryl reveals that she is much happier.

3. The Larmer family (USA)

Ed Larmer (35, works full-time, job not specified)

Judy Larmer (37, stay-at-home mum)

John Larmer (4)

Justin Larmer (2 ½)

Jessie Larmer (2 ½)

Joey Larmer (11 months)

This week Frost visits the Larmers, a family of six. Judy Larmer, a stay-at-home mum, struggles to control her four tearaways while husband Ed works full-time. The children jump all over the furniture, peel the wallpaper off the walls and generally create havoc. The children's grandmother refuses to have them at her house because they touch everything. Judy rarely spends any time with her children, instead she is shown to be

obsessive with her housework. Frost arrives at the Larmer household and identifies a number of problems that need to be resolved. First on her list is a family routine which includes “productive play,” a technique designed to get mum interacting with her children in a more positive manner. Next Frost organizes a meeting between mum and grandma to resolve the tension between the pair. As a result of this meeting, grandma agrees to let her grandchildren visit. Another issue that Frost works on is Ed and Judy’s relationship. They are often shown arguing in front of the children, something which Frost abhors. Frost teaches Ed and Judy the “3 in 30 technique,” as a way to resolve their conflicts, in the hope that this will ultimately benefit their children. Finally Frost works with Judy on her tone of voice, so that she can address her children in a more appropriate manner. At the end of the episode Ed admits that Frost saved his marriage.

4. The Cooke family (see UK series one episode summaries)

5. The Amaral family (USA)

Mike Amaral (39, restaurant owner)

Lorraine Amaral (36, restaurant owner)

Ryan Amaral (9)

Logan Amaral (4)

Kade Amaral (2)

This week Frost meets a family struggling to maintain a healthy work/life balance. As owners of a busy restaurant, Mike and Lorraine Amaral spend much of their time away from home. As a result, Ryan, Logan, and Kade miss out on mum and dad's time and often misbehave in order to get their attention. What's more, Mike and Lorraine leave their children in the care of their employees. Frost addresses these issues by reducing Lorraine's work hours and encouraging Mike to spend more time playing with his boys. During the course of the show, Mike and Lorraine learn to take responsibility for their children (instead of 'dumping' them on their staff) and come to realise the importance of spending time with their sons.

6. The Facente family (USA)

Trae Facente (38, works full-time, job not specified)

Deidre Facente (27, stay-at-home mum)

Kayla Facente (4)

Marlana Facente (4)

Tristin Facente (3)

This episode features the only child with a disability in seasons one and two (both UK and US versions) of *Supernanny*. Frost works with Dr Koegels, an autism specialist, to help Trae and Deidre Facente come to terms with Tristin's diagnosis. As children with autism have trouble communicating, most of the time is spent teaching Trae and Deidre how to communicate with Tristin. Frost also works with Deidre to build her relationship

with four-year-old twins, Kayla and Marlana, who desperately want their mum's attention. At the end of the episode, Trae and Deidre have renewed hope for their future and are more accepting of their son's condition.

7. The Keilen family (USA)

Shaun Keilen (27, fireman/paramedic)

Tami Keilen (27, ice-cream parlour)

Haeley Keilen (6)

Maile Keilen (4)

Malia Keilen (4)

Leighton Keilen (1)

Tami Keilen likes everything to be perfect; her house must be spotless and her four children must "look like a million dollars." Frost is called to the Keilen household to address the children's bad behaviour but instead ends up transforming mum. While dad Shaun likes a clean house, he says his wife's obsessive cleaning means he does not get to spend any quality time with her. Tami's need to dress all three girls in the same outfit is also revealed to be a major issue in the household. Frost thus introduces the "A and B technique" to allow the girls to choose what they will wear and even schedules a surprise fashion show. Although Tami struggles to implement the techniques, by the

end of the episode she comes to realise that it is not what you wear, but who you are on the inside that matters the most.

Also featured on the US DVDs are four UK episodes (see above)

8: Steer family (UK series one)

9: Charles family (UK series one)

10: Woods family (UK series one)

11: Update special – Woods family (UK series two)

Appendix C

Timeline of Instructional Parenting Makeover Programmes

2002	<i>Jamie's Kitchen</i> (young adults)
2004	<i>Little Angels</i> (pre-teens) <i>Nanny 911</i> (pre-teens) <i>Supernanny</i> (pre-teens) <i>Bank of Mum and Dad</i> (young adults)
2005	<i>American Princess</i> (young adults) <i>Blame the Parents</i> (pre-teens/teens) <i>Bad Behaviour</i> (pre-teens/teens) <i>Brat Camp</i> (teens) <i>From Demons to Darlings</i> (pre-teens) <i>Driving Mum and Dad Mad</i> (pre-teens) <i>Honey We're Killing the Children</i> (pre-teens) <i>Ladette to Lady</i> (young adults) <i>My Teen's a Nightmare</i> (teens) <i>Teen Angels</i> (teens) <i>The House of Tiny Tearaways</i> (pre-teens)

2006 *From ASBO Teen to Beauty Queen* (teens)

Redemption Hill (teens/young adult)

The Teen Tamer (teens)

2007 *Fat Teens Can't Hunt* (teens)

2008 *From Gs to Gents* (young adults)

The World's Strictest Parents (teens)

The World's Worst Teens (teens)

2010 *Extreme Parental Guidance* (pre-teens)

2011 *American Supernanny* (pre-teens)

Misbehaving Mums to Be (before birth)

Fast Food Baby (pre-teens, documentary)

2013 *Three Day Nanny* (pre-teens)

2015 *Born Naughty* (pre-teens)

Appendix D

Statistics for UK *Supernanny* Seasons One and Two

Quick Facts

- 12 families*
- 20 parents (4 single mothers and two step/blended families)
- 34 children in total (17 boys and 17 girls)
- 2 sets of twins
- No children with disabilities

*Please note: Three episodes in UK seasons one and two were not available for international sale and are thus not included in these statistics.

Number of Children per Family in UK *Supernanny* One and Two

Number of Children per Family	Families with this Many Children
1 child	0
2	4
3	5
4	2
5	0

Quick Facts

- The majority of families have three children
- The average number of children per family = 2.83 children

Age of Children in UK *Supernanny* One and Two

Age of Child	Number of Children
Under one	1
1 year	3
2	3
3	3
4	6
5	4
6	3
7	3
8	0
9	3
10	3
11	0
12	1

Quick Facts

- The children range in age from five-months to twelve-years-old
- The majority of children featured on the show are four-years-old

- The average age of the children featured is 5.01 years old.

Parents' Ages in UK *Supernanny* One and Two

Parent's Age	Number of Parents
Unspecified	16
25	1
33	1
48	1
50	1

Quick Facts

- Most of the episodes did not specify the parents' ages
- Of those that were given, the ages ranged from twenty-five-years to fifty-years of age

Parents' Occupations in UK *Supernanny* One and Two

Occupation	Number of Parents
Unspecified (but working)	2
Stay-at-Home Parent	7
IT Consultant	1

Shift work at a college	1
Fireman	1
Air Hostess/Airport	3
Receptionist	1
Own Business (kickboxing school)	2
Sales	1
Food Industry (Bakery Manager)	1

Quick Facts:

- Over a quarter of the parents featured on *Supernanny* care for their children full-time (not surprisingly, the majority of the stay-at-home parents are solo mothers)
- All of the other parents are employed in some form of paid work

Appendix E

Statistics for US *Supernanny* Seasons One and Two

NB: These statistics do not include the UK episodes featured on the US DVDs

Quick Facts

- 16 families
- 32 parents (no single parents –one family = step-family)
- 47 children (31 boys, 16 girls)
- 7 sets of twins (1 family has two sets of twins)
- 1 family with a member who has a disability (autistic child)

Number of Children per Family in US *Supernanny* Series One and Two

Number of Children in Family	Number of Families
1	0
2	5
3	8
4	2
5	1

Quick Facts

- The majority of families have three children
- Average number of children per family = 2.93 children

Children's Ages in US *Supernanny* Series One and Two

Age of Children	Number of Children This Age
Under 1	3
1	4
2	6
3	9
4	10
5	0
6	4
7	5
8	2

9	5
10	0

NB: Only full years were included in this analysis, except in the case of children who were below the age of one (i.e. 4 ½ years old was reduced to four years old as most children’s ages in the series were given as complete numbers – see Close Analysis of the Series)

Quick Facts

- In US Series One and Two the children’s ages range from four-months to nine-years- old
- The majority of children were four-years-old
- The average age of children featured on this show were 4.4 years old

Parent’s Ages in US *Supernanny* Series One and Two

Parent’s Age	Number of Parents This Age
Unspecified	20
26 years old	1
27	3

28	0
29	1
30	0
31	0
32	0
33	0
34	0
35	1
36	1
37	1
38	1
39	1
40	0
41	0
42	0
43	1
44	0
45	0
46	0
47	0
48	0
49	0
50	0

51	1
----	---

Quick Facts

- The parents' ages range from 26 years old to 51 years old (of ages given)
- The average age of the parents on the programme is 34. 58 years old.
- The majority of parents are 27 years old
- The parents' median age is 37 ½ years old

Occupations of Parents Featured on US *Supernanny* Series One and Two

Occupations	Number of Parents
Unspecified but working	5
Stay-at-Home mum	6 (three of these parents work from home while looking after children)
Insurance Broker/Agent	2
Own Business (Plumbing/Restaurant)	4
Marketing/Telemarketing	2
Investment Sales	1
Phone Service Technician	1
Teacher	3
Army	1

Fireman Paramedic	1
Building Contractor	1
Police	1
Phone Collection Agency	1
Ice-cream Parlor	1

Appendix F

List of Techniques Featured in the Episodes Analysed

- Autism Communication Techniques
- The 3 in 30 Technique
- The A and B Technique
- The Actively Ignoring Your Child Technique
- The Big Boy Technique
- The Big Chef Technique
- The Bye Bye Technique
- The Chalk Circle Technique
- The Chill-Out Technique
- The Communication Technique
- The Communication Zone Technique
- The Confiscation Technique
- The Controlled Crying Technique
- The Good Eaters Technique
- The Hear me, See Me Technique
- The Homework Technique
- The Involvement Technique
- The Mummy and Me Technique
- The Naughty Step/The Naughty Room
- The Off-The Hip Technique
- The Play and Walk Away Technique
- The Play by the Rules Technique
- The Rise and Shine Technique
- The Roaming Technique
- The Same Page Technique
- The Shared Play Technique
- The Sleep through the Night Technique
- The Socialisation Technique
- The Sort and Separate Technique
- The Stay in Bed Technique/The Good Night Technique
- The Stop and Ask Technique
- The Structured Snack Time Technique

