

The Core Values Model of Psychotherapy

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The Core Values Model stands unique in the field of psychotherapy because it considers the whole person in determining wellness. This approach differs from other modes of treatment that limit their attention by primarily focusing on one's thinking, behaviors, feelings, familial system, and spiritual belief framework, often to the exclusion of one's deeper core mechanisms of self. For the purposes of this writing, the expressive modes of treatment will be called "expression-focused therapies." Also for the purpose of this writing, the individuals will be referred to using the male gender (he him, his, etc.) to simplify the ideas being proposed. However, each concept applies to both male and female equally.

In the framework of psychological treatment, the emphasis of the expression-focused therapies can include: understanding the difficulty a client is experiencing in the context of his environment; helping the client recognize and change his faulty feelings, cognitions, behaviors or choices; and learning the potential constructive opportunities that may develop because of the problems at hand. Some modes of therapy attempt to allow the client to come to conclusions, while others are more instructional and proactive in their approaches. Nevertheless, the various therapeutic interventions tend to limit themselves to only components of how a person expresses himself where attempting to consider the person in his entirety would prove to be more comprehensive, and thus, more advantageous.

Biblical counseling often attempts to integrate objective truth into subjective experience with varying degrees of success. Dr. Larry Crabb outlines a model for Christian counseling based on integrating portions of psychology with the timeless truth of Scripture and the Biblical principles necessary to be a Christian counselor who targets the spiritual needs of people, as well as their emotional and psychological needs. He begins the book by defining the goals of biblical counseling, to "promote Christian maturity, to help people enter into a richer experience of worship and a more effective life of service."¹ He proposes that this is carried out with goals of "over and up." The goal of "over" is to help one move onto the pathway of obedience, and the goal of "up" is to help them conform to God's design by changing and renewing their way of living.² This process begins with justification, or understanding that one is acceptable to God, and ends with glorification, or the understanding that one will be made perfect in God.³ Therefore, salvation is three-phased; I am saved by justification; I am being saved by the process of sanctification; and I will be saved in glorification.

Crabb proposes the integration of psychology and spirituality through what he calls

¹ Larry Crabb. *Effective Biblical Counseling: A Model for Helping Caring Christians Become Capable Counselors* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing, 1977), 29.

² Ibid. 26-27.

³ Ibid. 25.

“spoiling the Egyptians.”⁴ He asserts that Christian counseling should neither fully integrate nor completely discount psychology. Rather, aspects of psychology should be incorporated into spiritual counseling in line with biblical principles and truth in order to create an end product that is not opposed to God’s principles. Through his careful examination of the personal needs of individuals, their motivations, their personality structures, how problems develop and how solutions can be implemented through change, Crabb develops a model that addresses emotional, behavioral and cognitive elements of mental and spiritual wellbeing through discipleship, the teaching of biblical truths, and encouragement for clients to incorporate the truth of God into their mental schemas in order to facilitate a lifestyle change towards full obedience to God’s will.

There are numerous strengths to Crabb’s approach and model of counseling. His integration of principles of psychology and Scripture is masterful. His matching of emotions that are identified in psychology as potentials for maladaptive mental health with Scripture examples of emotions gives a clear picture of how Scripture can be used to address such issues. In addition, his view of the interaction between the unconscious and conscious mind with the basic direction of the heart and meeting the self with Christ is a fascinating integration of how psychology views the conscious/unconscious impact on emotions and behavior with an understanding of the spiritual influences that are equally, if not more influential. The model of how personal needs (security and significance) interact with motivation, basic assumptions, goal-oriented behavior and obstacles gives a good grounding in how spiritual interventions are essential in dealing with the end-product problems.

The only weakness immediately apparent in Crabb’s approach appears to be his model’s structure of the first three stages. He purports that feelings should be identified before behavior, and behavior before thinking. This structure implies a limited direct process and ordering of events that may not always be true for every person in every situation. Schools of psychology argue this order extensively; do emotions precede cognitions, cognitions precede behavior, behaviors precede emotions, and so forth. There is no clear indication that one must occur before another. Cognitive theorists state that cognitions cause emotion and behavior, whereas behavioral theorists state that behavior creates cognitive schemas and emotion. The Core Values Model addresses this debate by dismissing the assertion that one element must precede another. Instead, it purports that there is a circular nature of the interconnections between these facets, with each one contributing to the other in a cycle generated by one’s core value system.

Furthermore, the Core Values Model demonstrates the interwoven nature of the components of man’s character, personality and expressions of self. One cannot separate the different traits of personhood when considering how he experiences tribulation, or how his hardships will be alleviated; each aspect of self is impacted by psychological difficulties, just as every characteristic of self reacts when physically exasperated.⁵ One method of therapeutic intervention that attempts to utilize this philosophy is called Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR), developed by Francine Shapiro in 1987. EMDR is an integrative, client-centered model that incorporates several therapeutic

⁴ Ibid. 47.

⁵ Appendix D.

modalities.⁶ It measures the degree to which an individual holds a negative self-belief to be true, and takes into account the somatic representations, emotions, memories and cognitions that one associates with his negative belief.

Dr. Shapiro's work has also demonstrated the powerful connection between the physiological and psychological aspects of self.⁷ Shapiro recognizes that bilateral stimulation, which may be similar in dynamics to Rapid Eye Movement, allows for accelerated information processing of dysfunctional behaviors, maladaptive personality characteristics, and negative patterns of thinking. These functions are the result of earlier experiences that have been stored in the brain as present-state dependent memories, which are one's subjective perceptions of a given event.⁸ This information is then stored in the way it was originally experienced and forms the foundation for the person's current schemas involving self-esteem, self-concept, self-efficacy, and relational dynamics.⁹

Shapiro also recognizes the interwoven nature of self and one's self-expressions. With a faulty foundation of subjective experiences, one sees the self as distorted from reality, which impacts every aspect of his personhood and how he subsequently expresses himself. Even though Shapiro ties several aspects of self into her formulation of healing, her terminology appears to focus on one's faulty negative beliefs rather than his faulty value system. Furthermore, EMDR does not automatically incorporate one's subjective experiences into the therapeutic process, because the focus of treatment is established by allowing the client to process on any level of self-expression that is most comfortable to him. Most often this centers on one's faulty negative beliefs, which are cognition based and usually situational in nature.¹⁰ One's feelings (both emotional and somatic) and memory recall do not necessarily include one's core values system.

EMDR further proposes that processing one of the many expressions associated with a traumatic event will engage the faulty information that is imprinted on one's neural pathway.¹¹ Numerous studies have demonstrated how interwoven all of the inner workings of oneself are, and how each tie in to one's memory and cognitive processing systems.¹² If the formidable issues being reprocessed are shown to connect memory, one's cognitive processes and his self-expressions, it is logical to deduce core values are linked in as well because memory and subjective experiences have demonstrated an inseparable relationship.¹³ Yet in spite of this, EMDR fails to recognize the standard of objective truth to which one must conform, so that the internal conflict between truth and one's faulty cognitions, values or perception can be alleviated. This is because many people live within a limited framework that does not include the spiritual resources of

⁶ Francine Shapiro, "EMDR: In the Eye of a Paradigm Shift" *Behavior Therapist* 17, (1995): 153-158.
⁷ Francine Shapiro, *EMDR: The Breakthrough Therapy* (New York, NY: Basic Books Publications, 1997), 10-11.
⁸ Francine Shapiro, *Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing: Basic Principles, Protocols, and Procedures* (New York, NY: Guilford Press, 1995).
⁹ Ibid.
¹⁰ Ibid.
¹¹ Ibid.
¹² Seth Robert Segall, "Mindfulness and Self-Development in Psychotherapy" *The Journal of Transpersonal Psychology* 37, no. 2 (2005): 143-163.
¹³ Ibid.

truth that God makes available to mankind in Jesus Christ. However, many other people stand on the periphery of Christianity and still do not realize the freedom and power available to them through the power of our risen Savior.

One of the major guiding assumptions in the Core Values Model is that negative experiences (trauma, hurt, loss, pain) and positive experiences (love, fun, happiness, spiritual enlightenment) are retained on a deeper level than the expression-focused modes of therapy fundamentally address; thus disunity and internal conflict between the one's internal self and how he expresses self. This notion has been discussed by other scholars, but never as exhaustively as this model serves to demonstrate.

Shapiro also recognizes this discord between self and one's expressions stating, "Most people come into therapy because they know something is wrong. There is an "I" that feels locked up and knows there is a better way. But over the years I have come to see clearly that this 'I' is intrinsically healthy."¹⁴ The "I," or self, does have a fundamental insight into injustice and mistreatment either toward oneself or toward others. The discrepancy lies in how faulty subjective experiences, which are in part stored as memories cerebrally, emotionally and somatically, create a contradictory foundation of negative self-beliefs. These negative self-beliefs conflict with one's inherent knowledge of right and wrong. In such cases, EMDR is used as a tool in combination with other therapeutic modalities to challenge one's flawed subjective experiences in light of reasoning, as opposed to objective truth. Other applications of EMDR focus on one's emotions, somatic representations, and visual imagery. Each of these initially targets an expression of self, which will ultimately connect into his psychic structure, or core values, where one's subjective experiences and memories reside on both conscious and unconscious levels.

Values are characteristics that define self and are essential in navigating life. Values can be accepted or rejected, consciously and unconsciously, based upon what one deems important. Some values are viewed as more significant than others, which create a subjective hierarchy of principles. Mack Goldsmith and Betty Hansen have characterized a person's values as a stronghold surrounded by a marsh, which is located within a hostile forest. The stronghold represents a person's strongly held core values. Surrounding this stronghold is a marsh of uncertain footing. The marsh represents values that are less strongly held. A hostile forest, representing rejected values, in turn surrounds the marsh. In times of crisis, one rarely changes his stronghold or forest values but crisis does attack the marsh values because they are less protected by defenses. Yet core values on the periphery of the stronghold are most vulnerable because they are near the marsh and thus may be eroded.¹⁵ This representation provides a good image for understanding the strongest principles, one's ethics and beliefs that are protected and secured in the epicenter of his stronghold; while the more tangible perceptions, opinions and attitudes are on the outer edge, thus most vulnerable to changes from cultural and social influences (situational beliefs).

¹⁴ Shapiro, *EMDR: The Breakthrough Therapy*, 10-11.

¹⁵ Everett L. Worthington Jr. *Hope-Focused Marriage Counseling* (Downer's Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1999), 60.

Martin Raymond's model addresses the concept of the unification of a person over time through the interaction between memory and consciousness. He asserts that individuals are composed of two parts: the man (biological existence), and the person (intelligent, self-aware existence). The emergence of the notion of "self" is the result of conscious intentional reasoning, reflexive self-awareness and inclination or deviation from pleasure or pain. The formation of "personal identity," however, requires the concept of memory. Without memory, or the ability to retain awareness, a sense of self cannot be formed.¹⁶ This understanding complements the Core Values Model in that it demonstrates how one's conscious awareness, subjective experiences and cognitive processes are crucial in the creation, defining and sustaining of self.

When using only the expression-focused approaches of therapy, one observes how the interaction between cognition, emotion, behavior and one's belief system unfolds. Yet, if limited to only the self-expressions, it is obvious that something foundational is missing. There is a void lying in the center of this entwined, enigmatic dynamic or loop. Because these different mediations only target one's expressions of self, logically self must fill the central space within the sphere of self-expressions. Again, reason mandates that the solutions or answers will not be found in one's faulty thinking, behaviors, feelings or beliefs because these are expressions. Instead, one must look to the source; why is the thinking, behaviors, feelings or beliefs faulty. This section within self contains numerous variables that play a critical part in determining how the cyclical dynamic will play out, and how one can change the faulty variables within his self-expression. The core of the dynamic is actually the epicenter around which all of the expressions of self must evolve, called the Core Values.¹⁷

All self-expression originates from within one's core. This value system is based in part on one's subjective perception of past experiences and they are interwoven into his framework of self. Therefore, treatment cannot be limited to remedying one's expressions alone. Therapeutic intervention needs to consider the whole person to define the problems at their source—the core—thus resolving the difficult issues at their source. Tying all of these modes of therapy together will substantiate this claim. In doing so, one will see how the aforementioned modes of expressive therapy will work together to create a sphere. An interactive enmeshed pattern will become increasingly more intelligible as each form of expression is shown to interweave and connect with the others.

Each of the approaches also spoke toward the center of the sphere, like a bicycle tire's rim, and connect to the central hub which is where the person's core values reside. This also contains the accumulation of one's subjective experiences and several other variables that work together to create one's self.¹⁸ These include: genetics (predispositions, personality type, biochemical factors, etc.), ethnicity, heritage, personal relationships (mother, father, siblings, extended family, friends, etc.), social interactions, cultural experiences (school, employment, media, entertainment, social and cultural

¹⁶ Raymond Martin, "Locke's Psychology of Personal Identity" *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 38, no. 1 (2000): 41-61.

¹⁷ Appendix A.

¹⁸ Appendix E.

norms), life experiences, and how the person perceives and retains (good memories and bad memories) those accumulated experiences. These variables work together symbiotically as the basis for developing both conscious and unconscious conclusions about life. All of these factors also work together to define, influence and reinforce who a person is and why he is the way he is—how he thinks, feels, acts and what he believes. Hence, the dynamic of expressive interaction encompasses the person's core value system; and it is within this value system that the faulty thinking, feelings, behaviors or beliefs are rooted.

On the simplest level, as one thinks, he acts upon his thoughts and reasoning. He will subsequently feel either positive or negative internal and environmental responses, which will either reinforce or conflict with his thinking, perception, values and behavior. Giuseppe Butera outlines a similar concept for Thomistic Grounding for Cognitive Therapy in which "emotions are caused by evaluative thoughts," leading to the assumption that, "emotional disorders are caused by incorrect thoughts, which can be modified through rational considerations."¹⁹ The interwoven nature of the Core Values Model identifies a broader and more comprehensive interaction in its opinion that not only can thoughts produce emotions, but both emotion and thought have the ability to produce belief and action, or any other combination of possible cause and effect. But as with Shapiro, Butera believes that modification can be achieved through rational considerations, falling short of recognizing objective truth as the essential and superior foundation to challenge one's faulty subjective experiences.

The core, or self, is conscious, subconscious and unconscious in regard to its levels of awareness. The term "core values" may appear synonymous with other terms, such as "core beliefs," but the word values more accurately define the complexity of one's inner workings including those variables that are genetic or physical. Values surpass the constraints of the word "belief" which, by definition, is limited to the variables that are observable, situational or interactive as in life philosophies, attitudes or viewpoints.

Core values are instilled early in an infant's development. It has long been recognized that infants begin to experience a sense of an emergent self from birth. Newborns are inherently designed to be aware of self from their first breath. There is no confusion between self and another in the beginning or at any point during infancy.²⁰ If an infant can comprehend self at birth, one can assume that this understanding developed before the child was born, ergo the unborn child has an awareness of self. David validates this point where he wrote:

For Thou didst form my inward parts; Thou didst weave me in my mother's womb. I will give thanks to Thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; wonderful are Thy works, and my soul knows it very well. My frame was not hidden from Thee, when I was made in secret, and skillfully wrought in the depths of the earth. Thine eyes have seen my unformed substance; and

¹⁹ Giuseppe Butera, "Thomas Aquinas and Cognitive Therapy: An Exploration of the Promise of Thomistic Psychology" *Philosophy, Psychiatry and Psychology* 17, no. 4 (2010): 347-367.

²⁰ Daniel N. Stern, *The Interpersonal World of the Infant* (New York, NY: Basic Books Publications, 1985), 8.

in Thy book they were all written, the days that were ordained for me. When as yet there was not one of them.²¹

An infant's sense of autonomy, or individuality, continues to develop at a rapid rate even though the baby still maintains a symbiotic connection to his mother. The periods between two and three months, nine and twelve months, and around fifteen to eighteen months are especially times of great change. Between these phases of rapid transformation are intervals of relative quiet, as the new integrations appear to consolidate. Stern notes that at each of these major shifts, infants create a powerful impression that major changes have occurred in their subjective experience of self and others.²² At about nine months, infants seem to sense they have an interior subjective life of their own and that others do to. Stern stated the infant is "devoted to the seeking and creating of intersubjective union with another, which becomes possible at this age. This process involves learning that one's subjective life—the contents of one's mind and the qualities of one's feelings—can be shared with another."²³

Stern articulately explains the phenomenon that plays out with great complexity from infancy throughout adulthood where one's subjective experience of social interactions seems to play out in all domains of relatedness (expressions of self) simultaneously. When focusing upon one area of experience to the partial exclusion of the others, all domains still continue, but as distinct experiences outside of awareness. He stated that, "much of what is meant by "socializing" is directed at focusing awareness on a single domain, usually the verbal, and declaring it to be the official version of what is being experienced, while denying the experiences going on in the other domains."²⁴ This construct is important as one considers the complexity of the human brain, perception, and the numerous levels that one processes information within the core self, and how he in turn expresses his values that are grounded in all of his internalized information. Some levels are conscious, and some are not, but nevertheless all are still functioning as domains that influence experience, recall from memory, and how the accumulation of subjective experience defines self.

Perception is both a biological and psychological process. It represents the final product in a chain of events beginning with a stimulus from the physical environment to the child who translates those external events into patterns of activity within his nervous system. Here the child processes the events as conscious experience and responds in turn cognitively, emotionally and behaviorally to his environment. One's conception, formation and experience of reality are exclusive to him because each situation rests upon his previously formed subjective experiences on both conscious and unconscious levels. Therefore, each person's perception of the world is unique to self.²⁵

Many values gleaned by the infant stem from interactions and experiences with parents or caregivers. These values orient the child's perception of himself, the

²¹ Ps 139:13-16.

²² Stern, *The interpersonal World of the Infant*, 9.

²³ Ibid. 10.

²⁴ Ibid. 31.

²⁵ Robert Sekuler & Randolph Blake, *Perception, Second Edition* (New York, NY: McGraw-Hill Publishing Company, 1990), 2.

environment in which he functions, and other people with whom he interacts. They are created by repetitive encoding of emotional experiences on the limbic area of the brain, also entitled the “emotional brain,” because this is the first area of biological development. The resulting internal schemas become the models and perceptions through which the child will view and understand the world for the rest of his life, even after the higher cortical regions develop and mature. Early attachments are the crux of these formations and are characterized as either secure or compromised attachments.²⁶ Orlans & Levy formulated the following regarding common child core beliefs about self, caregivers and the world based on these two categories:

Secure Attachment:

Self-- "I am good, wanted, worthwhile, competent, and lovable."

Caregivers-- "They are appropriately responsive to my needs, sensitive, dependable, caring, trustworthy."

Life-- "My world feels safe; life is worth living."

Compromised Attachment:

Self-- "I am bad, unwanted, worthless, helpless, and unlovable."

Caregivers-- "They are unresponsive to my needs, insensitive, hurtful, and untrustworthy."

Life-- "My world feels unsafe; life is painful and burdensome."²⁷

Early compromised attachment can lead to serious psychological and physical consequences for a child, in addition to skewed situational beliefs and subsequently faulty core values. On the biological level, a lack of early secure attachment causes high levels of stress hormones that negatively affect brain development. Compromised attachment can also result in later attachment disorders, disruptive or defiant behavioral disorders, personality disorders and mood disorders.²⁸

On the psychological level, Orlans & Levy have identified a phenomenon known as “affectionless psychopathy,” which can occur from disrupted or compromised attachment during the first three years of life. Affectionless psychopathy is characterized by “the inability to form meaningful emotional relationships, coupled with chronic anger, poor impulse control, and a lack of remorse.”²⁹ Such attachment disorders demonstrate the clear connection between the formulation of one’s core values and later emotional, physiological, psychological, and behavioral issues because of his faulty or deficit subjective experiences, henceforth his compromised identity and definition of self. The concepts are undoubtedly interconnected.

Here one can evidently see the cause and effect relationship play out between the emotional deficits and distresses of infancy and early childhood, which impacts a child’s ability to develop meaningful relational connections, congruent attitudes and conduct, healthy personality, and emotional stability. In such cases, therapeutic intervention must

²⁶Michael Orlans & Terry Levy, "Attachment Explained" *Evergreen Psychotherapy Center Attachment Treatment & Training Institute*, (2004)

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

consider the person's subjective understanding of his prior life experiences and how those situations impacted his definition of self, others and the world around him, in addition to how his incorrect perception affected his ability to successfully interrelate within his environment.

Again, to keep the focus of healing on self-expressions alone would seriously limit the effectiveness of treatment. The whole self, or personhood, must be considered to gain the fullest understanding of who he is, and therefore how to thoroughly define and resolve the issues in his life. In doing so, one also recognizes that it is from within a person's core value system that his issues stem because it is from the core that one expresses himself; therefore, the core must not only be considered, but must also be the area focused upon to bring about change.

Well-known child psychiatrist Stanley I. Greenspan also observed that it is universally acknowledged among mental health professionals that personality develops along multiple lines. Maturation in the overall "physical, neurological, cognitive, and intellectual realms, as well as the development of human relationships, coping strategies, and general styles of organizing and differentiating thoughts, wishes, and feelings—all these areas of development and more contribute to the ways a person organizes and creates his unique experience of life."³⁰ In his understanding, Greenspan recognizes the interwoven nature of self and one's expression of self. Especially in the early formative years of development, attachment, trust and dependency all begin their development at, or perhaps even before birth.³¹ If these specific areas are not correctly perceived and formed early on, they will potentially be clinical issues throughout life.³²

Another important consideration that stems from one's core values and impacts several components of his character and self-expressions—including one's awareness of personal responsibility, behavior (including self-control, patience), expectations, morals, ideals, consequences, et cetera—is termed by Henry Cloud et al. as "boundaries." Henry Cloud stated that character:

Refers to a person's ability and inability, his moral makeup, his functioning in relationships, and how he does tasks. What does he do in certain situations, and how does he do it? When he needs to perform, how will he meet those demands? Can he love? Can he be responsible? Can he have empathy for others? Can he develop his talents? Can he solve problems? Can he deal with failure? How does she reflect the image of God?³³

Character functions as a critical component within one's personality. Therefore character development, most importantly throughout childhood, will determine how one's personality will develop as well. Personality is the total complex of characteristics that distinguish an individual, which again adds to one's unique framework of core values.

³⁰ Stanley I. Greenspan, *The Clinical Interview of the Child* (Washington, D. C.: American Psychiatric Press Inc. 1991), 2.

³¹ *Ibid.* 12.

³² *Ibid.* 18.

³³ Henry Cloud & John Townsend, *Boundaries with Kids* (Grand Rapids MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1998), 15.

Character is more specifically formed by modeling and instruction in relationships. The patterns that were established early in life will serve as important constructs for how he will define himself and others, and how he should interact with his environment. Proverbs 22:6 states, “Train up a child in the way he should go, even when he is old he will not depart from it.” But what of those parents and caretakers who have poor character traits because of what their parents or caretakers instilled? They pass on their own limited boundary functioning, poor structure and compromised character to the next generation, who internalize those distorted values as true (faulty core values), even though they are often severely compromised.

Henry Cloud et al. continues by defining boundaries as:

A property line that defines a person; it defines where one-person ends and someone else begins. If we know where a person’s boundaries are, we know what we can expect this person to take control of: himself or herself. We can require responsibility in regard to feelings, behaviors, and attitudes.³⁴

Boundaries play a very important role in the interaction of giving and receiving, and the expectations that this interaction creates. One’s primary caretakers are responsible for bridging the outside world of resources needed to sustain life to the child. As the caretaker consistently instills how to receive and use his resources responsibly, the child gradually takes over the role of meeting his own needs.³⁵ How this process is defined and instilled is unique to every caretaker-child relationship. The parent or custodian cannot help but instill what he perceives to be true, based upon his own framework of core values, some of which are healthy while others are not. Most values lie somewhere in the middle to varying degrees of right and wrong depending on what is instilled, in addition to the structure of the child’s personality, temperament, genetics and biological complexion. If a parent gives without boundaries, children learn to feel entitled and become increasingly more self-centered and demanding.³⁶

Most young people use the words ‘want’ and ‘need’ synonymously because their convoluted understanding and definitions of such principles are established by the mispriority of their role models, most importantly mother and father. If the primary people in a child’s life believe a larger house is the same as shelter, a new car is necessary for transportation or that designer produce and garments are as important as the basics of food and clothing, these values will be unconsciously instilled into the child as well. Moreover, if materialistic values are so easily transferred to one’s child, one may assume the moral and integrity values are as well. The Apostle Paul challenges us to learn to be content, whatever the circumstances are.³⁷ The natural propensity of man is to want more immediately after he receives what he thought would satisfy his desire. He longs for extra or different resources to meet the unquenchable longing for more or better. During the

³⁴ Ibid. 18.

³⁵ Ibid. 21.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Phil 4:11

maturation process, most come to recognize that desires are insatiable. King Solomon discussed the futility of superficial possessions when he said:

And all that my eyes desired, I did not refuse them. I did not withhold my heart from any pleasure, for my heart was pleased because of all my labor and this was my reward for all my labor. Thus I considered all my activities which my hands had done and the labor which I had exerted and behold all was vanity and striving after the wind and there was no profit under the sun.³⁸

This concept applies to at least the physical, cognitive and emotional faculties, and its result is a skewed perspective, ungratefulness, and a chronic dissatisfaction with life. When the insatiable mantra of dissipation is continually reinforced in a child's life, it will eventually be ingrained and form into personality traits and thus distort his value system.

Compared to the rest of the world, Americans live on the eighth rung of the ten-rung ladder of life. Human nature tends to be inclined to look at the two rungs of prosperity above, and not consider the seven rungs of less-than that lies below. It is good to aspire, grow and pursue; this is a positive virtue instilled by God, but not at the expense of being discontent with our lives and our relationships. The struggle from our aspirations, growth and pursuits should instill a deeper sense of satisfaction in one's life and in his relational connections. When properly applied, these disciplined endeavors develop stronger and clearer standards, ergo character and values.

Conversely, if one's parents withhold resources too stringently, children tend to give up and do not develop the confidence and hopefulness of reaching goals that have gratifying rewards.³⁹ This is not implying that those parents who choose to do without, or those who cannot financially afford superfluous possessions are instilling poor boundaries into their children. On the contrary, families who sacrifice their second income so that one parent, usually the mother, can be home with their children, tend to have more stable and flexible boundaries than the families who unnecessarily have two working parents.⁴⁰ Children understand when both parents have to work so that the family unit can survive. Children can understand their parent's values, and they recognize the mispriority of materialism as well, often perceiving that their parent's hold material possessions as more important than they are when the family unit can afford for one parent to be home during those impressionable childhood years. Interestingly, these children often grow up and continue this pattern with their own children.⁴¹

So then the issue is not in the parents' ability to provide, but rather in their unwillingness to provide. This criterion is measured especially on the emotional level. Miserly parenting negatively impacts the internal structure of one's child, especially in his capacity to be demonstrative and responsive. When parents hold back attention, affection,

³⁸ Eccl 2:10-11

³⁹ Cloud & Townsend, *Boundaries with Kids*, 21.

⁴⁰ Deniz Yucel, "Does it matter when parents work: The effects of shift hours on child's mental development" *American Sociological Association* (2008): 1-18.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

praise, positive affirmation and love, they leave a deficit within their child, which plays a powerful role in his understanding of whom he is (self, soul, who I am) and his inherent value. The failure of one's parents to imprint positive affirmations will often leave a negative imprint in its stead. This negative imprint, or faulty core value, often expresses itself as depression.⁴²

Concerning boundaries, both child and adult need to know where self ends and another person begins. The apparent affiliation is observable between early compromised attachment and poor character development within a child. Subsequently, the resulting poor boundaries can lead to serious psychological and physical consequences. On the psychological level, the child is susceptible to a misshapen core values system including a lack of cognizance regarding: his sense of personal responsibility; unrealistic expectations; compromised morals and ideals; a lack of insight into consequences; emotional instability and deficits; difficulty in his ability to develop and maintain meaningful relationships; incongruent attitudes and therefore conduct; and limited, compromised personality development. On the physiological level, as one's behavior is directly impacted by how he thinks and feels, to varying degrees he will have an inability to delay gratification (e.g. sexual promiscuity), impulsivity (e.g. stealing, fighting, etc.), isolation from others, and difficulty following through consistently with school and employment.⁴³

A child's subjective experiences, therefore, including the modeling and instruction by parental figures, caretakers and other important role models, have a profound impact upon his understanding and definition of self, and how his character develops both qualitatively and quantitatively. Who this child considers himself to be (core values) greatly influences how he perceives and thinks, both consciously and unconsciously, how he feels about himself and others, and the choices he will make initiating or responding to his environment. Again, one's core values determine so many factors and influences several components of self, and the ways he expresses himself.

Francis Ianni described his findings on the influences that shape American teenagers' behaviors, identities, and aspirations as they relate to peers, parents and society. He noted that teens who are confronted with many conflicting demands at home, school, peers, etc., do look to the adults in their life for guidance on major questions of values and future decisions that they face. Ianni found that in communities where parents, teachers and other adults take active responsibility, consistently articulating values and expectations, most teens would pass into adulthood successfully.⁴⁴

In contrast, the communities that struggle with poverty, conflict, and despair where important adult role models do not offer persuasive and consistent motivation and hope, or stable relational connections, many of the young people become discouraged, confused, cynical and angry. Even without appraising comparisons, universally, teens have an inherent understanding that they need guidance and affirmation.⁴⁵ Perhaps this lies within one's objective truth because the principle is an integral need. Those teens

⁴² Cloud & Townsend, *Boundaries with Kids*, 25.

⁴³ *Ibid.* 25.

⁴⁴ Francis A. J. Ianni, *The Search for Structure* (New York, NY: The Free Press, 1989), 229-230.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.* 230.

who do not receive the needed attention are much more prone to act out their anger and confusion in dysfunctional behaviors and choices such as delinquency, truancy, unemployment and unwed pregnancies.⁴⁶

The points made by Ianni are considerable in attempting to deliberate the variables that play into the formation of one's value system and personal identity, and how those internalized attributes of self are expressed in his thinking, feelings, behavioral choices and beliefs. Role modeling and proactive adult involvement and guidance are a critical component of how a young person formulates an understanding of self. One recent cultural phenomenon that undermines the primary relationship between child and role model can be observed on the modern teen-aged television shows. Many of these programs portray teens as self-governing and self-sustaining. Very often, when a parent or adult are a part of the script, they are portrayed as inept and idiotic, as the teen seemingly shines brilliantly with wisdom and the problem-solving skills necessary to resolve the crises at hand, despite the adult's incompetence. This continual, subtle falsehood has the ability to undermine a young person's value system as they unconsciously absorb these messages as reality.⁴⁷

Ianni continues by contemplating the question whether one discovers or actualizes an internal "true self" or, instead creates or constructs an identity from externally available alternative identities or identity elements. His findings were that both are true. The identity formation of adolescence is a process that involves both discovery and creation. He stated, "Just as biological endowment places limits on the adolescent identity, so the available roles presented to adolescents by the environment limit the possible identities they can construct."⁴⁸ This notion adds validity to the obvious. The more time children spend in front of the television (subjective experiences), the greater impact its viewpoints have on their identity formation, and therefore their values.⁴⁹

In this statement, Ianni limits the responsibility of young people who live in "less than ideal" living situations, perhaps lacking positive adult guidance, support and interaction. Although there is accuracy on some levels regarding the critical impact mentors and other influential adults have on the formation of core values in children and adolescents, many children raised in these deficient environments do develop healthy values, most probably because of positive interaction, encouragement and motivation from their role models. Nevertheless, a substantial portion does not, as Ianni implies, because of the lack of positive influences whom they value as important relationships.⁵⁰ The issue being addressed has little to do with poverty, and everything to do with relational connection and love, especially with his primary caretakers, principally during early childhood development.⁵¹

⁴⁶ Ibid. 230.

⁴⁷ Melle Starsen, "Cool to be Cruel: Mean-Spiritedness in Modern Children's Sitcoms" *Fielding Graduate University* (2011): 1-24.

⁴⁸ Ianni, *The Search for Structure*, 231-232

⁴⁹ Michael Morgan, Susan Leggett & James Shanahan, "Television and Family Values: Was Dan Quayle Right?" *Mass Communication & Society* 2 (1999): 47-64.

⁵⁰ Ianni, *The Search for Structure*, 231-232

⁵¹ Derren Hayes, "Lack of Adult Interaction?" *Community Care* 1746, (2008): 20.

Although Ianni's general principle is valid, that relational connection is critical for the healthy formation of one's values, there are many other variables to consider in defining self. One outstanding point that needs to be made clear is that other people cannot meet the fundamental need, nor be the solution regarding "the limited identities a person can construct." Having a relationship with God is the only influence that can fulfill this need. As with many of the other authors who failed to consider the profound influence of objective truth that works within one's life, his results are indeed limited to the biased subjective interpretations of what truth is, or rather what he would like it to be.

As the adolescent continues to mature into adulthood, most of the personality formation has been established. Even though this is valid, one's personality has the malleability to change throughout adulthood as faulty subjective experiences (maladjusted values) are challenged, primarily with objective truth. A plethora of variables play into this complex interaction of who one is and how many variables of self can be altered. But truth is not simply another option of how one can choose to view self, others and the world in which he must interact. Truth is the only reality of whom he authentically is. One never arrives at a complete understanding of truth and its transformational process on this side of eternity, but when he pursues it with intrinsic veracity, or *nuda veritas*, as his chosen option to base his life upon, he cannot be disappointed. Reality and truth are always a stronger foundation than the faulty framework of illusion.⁵²

The Apostle Paul also recognizes that people are a work in progress when he shared, "For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus."⁵³ God begins the process of transforming in truth when one trusts Him by faith.⁵⁴ Truth is Jesus Christ Himself.⁵⁵ Henceforth, God will also continue the process of (re) building peoples' lives from faulty and maladjusted subjective values they had built their lives upon to the solid foundation of Truth in Christ throughout their lives. Transformation is the process of being conformed into the image of Jesus Christ, and God will continue this work until Jesus comes back, or until the believer dies and goes to be with his Creator in heaven. Paul is actually confident of this fact, and those who are disciples of Jesus are too because God's Spirit confirms this truth to them.⁵⁶

⁵² Mt 7:24-27

⁵³ Phil 1:6

⁵⁴ Jn 5:24

⁵⁵ Jn 14:6

⁵⁶ Rom 8:11