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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Introduction
It is commonly believed that parents are instrumental in shaping, through the socialization process, their children’s values, attitudes and behaviors. Consumer research, for example, suggests that this intergenerational influence is found in the similarity between children’s marketplace beliefs and behaviors and those of their parents (Arndt 1971; Heckler, Childers and Arunachalam 1989; Moore and Berchmans 1996; Moore and Lutz 1988; Woodson, Childers and Winn 1976). However, the degree to which this intergenerational influence occurs, its scope and the conditions that affect it are not well known.

This study responds to a pressing need for empirical research in this area (e.g., John 1999; Moore, Wilkie, and Lutz 2002; Viswanathan, Childers, and Moore 2000) by exploring two main issues. The first issue is to identify the actual extent of intergenerational similarity between parent and young adult offspring, specifically mothers and college-age daughters. We address concerns raised elsewhere (e.g., Acok 1984; Viswanathan, Childers, and Moore 2000) about the use of inadequate measures in intergenerational research by employing measures that have been well validated in prior work. Moreover, evidence supplied by earlier studies regarding the extent of intergenerational similarity may be more speculative than originally thought, owing to an inappropriate standard of comparison by which intergenerational influence was judged. We attempt to overcome this limitation by using a more valid standard of comparison.

The second issue is enhancing our understanding of factors that may affect the intergenerational influence of preferences and consumption orientations. One factor suggested to be important in consumer socialization is family communication (e.g., Carlson, Walsh, Laczniak, and Grossbart 1994; Moschis 1985). Here we investigate the degree to which daughters’ prediction accuracy, an outcome measure of the effectiveness of parent-child communication (Chaffee and McLeod 1968; Moore and Lutz 1988; Moschis 1985, 1988), affects the similarity of preferences and consumption orientations among mothers and daughters. Additionally, addressing the “surprisingly small amount of research that exists on this topic” (John 1999, p. 206), in this study we examine differences in intergenerational similarity that may occur because of differential influence from peers arising from daughter’s tendency to conform.

Research Hypotheses

H1: The similarity between mothers and daughters is greater than the nominal effect for (a) brand preferences; (b) price-quality schema; (c) convenience orientation; (d) value consciousness; (e) prestige sensitivity; and (f) brand name-quality schema.

H2: Daughter’s prediction accuracy is positively related to mother/daughter similarity of (a) brand preferences; (b) price-quality schema; (c) convenience orientation; (d) value consciousness; (e) prestige sensitivity; and (f) brand name-quality schema.

H3: Compared to low-ATSCI daughters, high-ATSCI daughters will exhibit less similarity with mothers regarding (a) brand preferences; (b) price-quality schema; (c) convenience orientation; (d) value consciousness; (e) prestige sensitivity; and (f) brand name-quality schema.

Method
Data were obtained through 65 mother and young adult daughter dyads. Daughter’s prediction accuracy and ATSCI are independent variables in this study. The extent of intergenerational influence is the main dependent variable in this study. As in past research, it is operationalized as the mother/daughter agreement regarding brand preference and consumption values. However, stimulated by the real group vs. nominal group testing paradigm used in certain quantitative applications in focus group research (e.g., Fern 1982), in this study we use the nominal dyad as the basis of comparison. Specifically, we constructed nominal mother-daughter dyads by taking real dyads, randomizing the daughters, and then regrouping mothers with the randomized daughters; we repeated this process 250 times in order to obtain stable estimates of means for nominal dyads. In the nominal dyads, the level of agreement is regarded as the nominal effect from factors other than intergenerational transfer; we use this effect as a benchmark to test the extent of intergenerational influence.

Results
Paired t-tests and multiple regressions were conducted to test the research hypotheses. Results show that in all consumption domains tested, mother-daughter agreement in nominal dyads is significantly greater than zero, supporting our criticism of past research that has used simple agreement to indicate intergenerational transfer. Simple agreement appears to overstate the degree of congruence between mothers and daughters due to intergenerational transfer. Regarding the hypotheses, H1 (a), (b), (c), (d), and (f) are supported, while H1 (e) is not.

Further, it is found that more agreement exists between mothers and daughters for those daughters who know more about their mothers’ preferences and marketplace orientations. Results support H2 (a) through (f).

For H3, only (e) is supported and (a) receives marginal support (t=1.89, p=.06). It appears that children’s ATSCI may impact intergenerational transfer of brand preferences, but not consumption orientations. The one exception was prestige sensitivity, H3 (e). A possible reason is that brand choice behavior is more socially visible than beliefs and values and, therefore, may be more prone to influence from peers. Similarly, prestige sensitivity reflects a person’s usage of higher-priced brands to gain social status, thus it has more socially visible behavioral referent than the other consumption orientations.

Conclusions
This study adds to the growing body of research in consumer socialization and intergenerational influences. Like earlier work (e.g., Moore and Lutz 1988), we study transmission of consumer values and beliefs from parent to child; however, unlike this prior
work, we examine consumption-relevant constructs that have been well validated in past research, adding to the ability to generalize and make theoretical advancement. Our method of analysis offers several advancements over prior work. One of these advances is using the nominal dyad, created by the random pairing of mothers and daughters, as a baseline for comparison. Thus, we attempt to control for external influences (e.g., market share, local norms) on dependent measures typically examined in intergenerational research, such as brand preference or value agreement.

Intergenerational research is necessary to more fully understand the processes involved in consumer socialization. Future research should explore the domain differences of influence (e.g., product category differences) as well as influence strategies. Cross-cultural research in this area is also greatly needed.

References


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