

Children's Influence on Consumption-Related Decisions in Single-Mother Families: A Review and Research Agenda

Working Paper

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Executive Summary

Although social scientists have identified diverse behavioral patterns among children from dissimilarly structured families, marketing scholars have progressed little in relating family structure to consumption-related decisions. In particular, the roles played by members of single-mother families—which may include live-in grandparents, mother's unmarried partner, and step-father with or without step-sibling(s)—may affect children's influence on consumption-related decisions. For example, to offset a parental authority dynamic introduced by a new stepfather, the work-related constraints imposed on a breadwinning mother, or the imposition of adult-level household responsibilities on children, single-mother families may attend more to their children's product preferences.

Without a profile that includes socio-economic, behavioral, and psychological aspects, efficient and socially responsible marketing to single-mother households is compromised. Relative to dual-parent families, single-mother families tend to have fewer resources and less buying power, children who consume more materialistic and compulsively, and children who more strongly influence decision making for both own-use and family-use products. Timely research would ensure that these and other tendencies now differentiate single-mother from dual-parent families in ways that marketers should address. Hence, our threefold goal is (1) to consolidate and highlight gaps in existing theory applied to studying children's influence on consumption-related decision making in single-mother families, and (2) to propose a hybrid framework that

merges two theories conducive to such research, and (3) to identify promising research propositions for future research.

Keywords: single mother families, children, family decision-making, consumer socialization, social exchange theories

Introduction

Family is a locus of relationships, meanings, and values (Stacey 1990), and consumption-related decision making in the context of family life is a core consumer behavior process (Howard and Sheth 1969; Scanzoni and Szinovacz 1980). During the 1960s, consumer researchers began to study children's role in family consumption decisions (Flurry 2007; John 1999). Although most researchers now concur that family—regardless of structure—provides the best framework for understanding and predicting consumption-related behaviors in families (Ahuja, Capella, and Taylor 1998; Epp and Price 2008; Flurry 2007; Palan and Wilkes 1997; Thomson, Laing, and McKee 2007; Waite 2000), much evidence for this belief is dated, as most studies were conducted during the dual-parent-family-ubiquitous 1970s and 1980s (Flurry 2007). In 2009, only 69.3% of U.S. children were members of a dual-parent family, and more than half of U.S. children eventually will be members of an alternatively structured family (Amato and Keith 1991; Rindfleisch, Burroughs, and Denton 1997; U.S. Census 2010).

A *single parent* is “a parent who is not currently living with a spouse; in other words, a single

parent may be married but not living with a spouse, divorced, widowed, or never married....[I]f a second parent is present and not married to the first, then the child is identified as living with a single-parent" (U.S. Census 2010; Winkler 1993). Most research on single-parent families focuses on female-headed families because mothers typically rear children in cases of marital dissolutions, widowhood, or single-parenthood by choice. Single-mother families are the second most common family type in the U.S.; in 2009, one out of every four children lived in such families (U.S. Census 2010). Given social trends, this already substantial group is more likely to expand than contract (Bumpass and Raley 1995; Duncan and Rogers 1987; Edmondson 1992; Norton and Glick 1986), yet marketers know little about children's roles in such families' consumption decisions. (Note: Because researchers often compare and contrast family structures, here 'intra-family' refers to variations within single-mother and increasingly common extended families—with grandparents, a cohabiting unmarried partner, or step-parents (Bumpass and Lu 2000; Bumpass and Raley 1995; Kim and Lee 1997; Mulkey, Crain, and Harrington 1992; Swinyard and Sim 1987; Tinson, Nancarrow, and Brace 2008)—in western societies.)

Several theoretical frameworks—such as consumer socialization, the consumer decision-making model, resource exchange, and power theories—have grounded studies about children's influence on consumption decision making in families. Generally, research on young consumers has followed one of two perspectives: (1) the cognitive development of children as consumers, which assumes children are rational and participate in decision making for their own economic gain (John 1999), and (2) the socio-cultural, which recognizes children as interactive participants in consumption processes (Cram and Ng 1999; Flurry 2007). Although each perspective evolved independently, the nuclear Caucasian family remains the common focus of most U.S.-based research. Because this family structure is considered the norm, the increasingly prominent single-mother family often is

neglected. Researchers working from either perspective acknowledge the influence of family structure, yet continue to treat alternative structures piecemeal.

Knowledge about the influence of children in single-mother families on purchase decisions is characterized by two prominent gaps. First, most studies examine single members rather than multiple-member relational units (Epp and Price 2008; Qualls 1988; Thomson, Laing, and McKee 2007). As a result, the interpersonal decision-process dynamic in single-mother families—for example, a child assuming the role of an absent second parent—has been under-researched (Commuri and Gentry 2000; Epp and Price 2008). Research on goal pursuit through intra-family negotiations may not fully capture how children interact and socialize with other family members in decision processes (Qualls 1988; Thomson, Laing, and McKee 2007). Although family decision processes often require meshing the goals of one or more family members, some decisions—like those related to collective consumption experiences—are co-creational and reinforce family identity without triggering a conflict-resolution agenda (Epp and Price 2008, Thompson, Laing and McKee 2007). Second, outcome-oriented research on family and household decision processes, which has focused on understanding parents' beliefs about children's involvement in decision making and children's point-of-purchase influence (Ahuja and Stinson 1993; Ahuja and Walker 1994), is the predominant form of inquiry (Qualls 1988; Thomson, Laing, and McKee 2007). In contrast, the inter-relational dynamic of decision processes, especially in single-mother families, remains under-researched (Flurry 2007).

To close these research lacunae, we first synthesize the extant marketing literature and identify limitations in existing theoretical frameworks used to study family decision-making processes in single-mother families. Next, we offer a process-oriented alternative to the prevalent outcome-oriented frameworks, which may be better suited to exploring children's influence on decision-making processes in

single-mother families. Finally, we offer propositions for future research related to children's vested interest in purchases, children's shopping knowledge, parenting style, and gender-role orientation. Our focus on these four domains stems from their predominant coverage in the extant literature.

We organized our exposition as follows. First, we review studies on children's influence in single-mother family decision making and identify gaps in the extant literature. (Note: For parsimony, studies that examine cross-cultural differences or non-western countries were ignored.) Next, we suggest a process-oriented conceptual perspective for future research and discuss its components. Finally, we explore four popular research areas and present sets of questions meant to focus future research.

Gaps in Extant Research about Children's Influence on Decision Making in Single-Mother Families

A review of extant literature since the early 1980s reveals a steady, albeit minimal, interest in single mother families by consumer researchers. Of the roughly dozen published marketing studies since then, only four focused exclusively on single-mother families (see Table 1). Most studies explored the beliefs of parents in dual-parent families about their children's influence on purchases in specific product categories (Lee and Beatty 2002; Palan and Wilkes 1997). Despite various findings about children's roles in family decision-making, there is little information about consumption decisions in single-mother families (Flurry 2007; Qualls 1988).

-----Place Table 1 here-----

Socio-economic Implications of Children's Influence

Sociologists and public policy makers have long worried about the disadvantages of children reared in single-mother families (Bumpass and Lu 2000; Bumpass and Sweet 1989; Graffe and Lichter 1999; Hetherington, Stanley-Hagan, and

Anderson 1989; Wojtkiewicz 1992). Their research efforts often focused on the negative aspects of such families, such as emotional trauma induced by family disruption, reduced economic resources, work-home role conflicts, and ineffective time management. In single-mother families, the absence of a second parent may mean reduced economic resources, especially if the mother is un(der)employed (Maclanahan and Percheski 2008; Ram and Hou 2003; Seltzer 1994). Purchasing power typically is less for single-mother families than dual-parent families (Hernandez 1986; Ram and Hou 2003; Seltzer 1994).

Family structure may also partly explain children's behavioral differences (Amato and Keith 1991; Hetherington, Stanley-Hagan, and Anderson, 1989; Wojtkiewicz 1992). For example, children living in step-families may have more emotional problems than children living with single parents (Amato and Keith 1991; Amato and Sobolewski 2001). Relative to divorced single-parent families and never-married single-parent families, co-habiting single-parent families spend meaningfully less on their children (DeLeire and Kalil 2005; Duncan and Rodgers 1987). Teenagers have more influence over the purchase of household and own-use products if they live in single-parent families rather than dual- or step-parent families (Mangelburg, Grewal, and Bristol 1999). Adolescents displayed more materialistic tendencies and consumed more compulsively if they lived in non-traditional rather than dual-parent families (Burroughs and Rindfleisch 1997; Rindfleisch, Burroughs, and Denton 1997). Relative to dual-parent families, single-parent families spend more on children's entertainment and apparel but less on children's education and books (Omori 2010).

In contrast, some research indicates that children from non-traditional families may not always be harmed by socioeconomic disadvantages (Amato 1993; Lang and Zagorsky 2000; Seltzer 1994). Shared taxing experiences may cause single mothers and their children to bond tightly (Coleman et al. 2001; Moriarty and Wagner 2004). Grandparents may play the role of second

nurturing adult in single-mother families (Eggebeen 2005; Lussier et al. 2002). The lower grades of high school students from one-parent families may be more attributable to within-family dynamics than economic disadvantages (Mulkey, Crain, and Harrington 1997).

Consumer Behavior Implications of Children's Influence

Echoing other social scientists, marketing scholars only recently have begun to focus on the relationship between single-mother intra-family structures and children's influence on family decision making (Flurry 2007; Tinson, Nancarrow, and Brace 2008). Previously, comparisons in family decision-making outcomes between inter-family structures have been the primary focus of most marketing studies. Several studies indicate that differences in food expenditures and choices (Ahuja and Walker 1994; Zick-McCullough and Smith 1996; Ziol-Guest, DeLeire, and Kalil 2006) and family leisure activities (Darley and Lim 1986) exist between traditional dual-parent families and single-mother families. For example, family-outing and leisure-activity decisions are more influenced by children in single-mother families than in dual-parent families (Darley and Lim 1986; Ziol-Guest, DeLeire, and Kalil 2006).

Some research has explored work-family role conflicts (Heslop et al. 2007; Thiagarajan et al. 2007) and time management issues (Zick-McCullough and Smith 1996) faced by single mothers; other research has examined how mothers help children cope with the divorce process and transition to a single-parent family dynamic (Bates and Gentry 1994). Because they often conduct more extensive information search and thus gain meaningful consumption knowledge, children from single-parent families may participate more effectively and have more influence than children from dual-parent families in making family-level consumption decisions (Foxman, Tansuhaj, and Ekstrom 1989; Kim and Lee 1997; Swinyard and Sim 1987).

Although Hamilton and Catteral (2006) did not

focus on single-mother families, 24 of the 30 impoverished families studied were single-mother families. Children from these families often influenced own-use product decisions by inflicting extreme persuasion tactics (like blackmail) on parents, who typically acceded to their children's wishes as expressions of love. Single-mothers were ashamed of their economic status, tried to shield their children from the social stigma associated with poverty, and often satisfied their children's purchase requests by cutting corners in areas such as food purchases (Hamilton 2009). Given the lack of knowledge about their decision processes, single-mother families warrant consumer researchers' attention (Flurry 2007; Thomson, Laing, and McKee 2007; Tinson, Nancarrow, and Brace 2008). In the next section, major theoretical frameworks applied by marketing scholars are highlighted. Although useful, limitations in these frameworks suggest a process-oriented perspective for studying children's influence on consumption decision making in single-mother families.

Limitations of Previously Applied Theoretical Frameworks

Many studies on children's roles in family decision making have been grounded in one or more of the social science theories summarized here. Some theories, such as social exchange theory (which includes power and resource exchange theory), were enthusiastically embraced by marketing scholars and applied to their studies on decision making by spouses. Subsequently, these theories were extended to children's roles in family decision making (Flurry 2007; Peyton, Pitts, and Kamery 2004). Marketing scholars have used other theories, such as role theory and reactance theory, to ground studies on the relationship between parental roles and reactions to children's influence in family decision making. Role theory, which defines work-family role conflict as "a form of inter-role conflict in which the role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect" (Greenhaus and Beutell 1985, p.77), may explain how a single mother's personal resources—such as time,

energy, and attention—are divided between work and family (Thiagarajan et al. 2007). Reactance theory, which refers to the motivational state caused by threats to personal freedom, can explain how children react to parental disapproval in product choices (Rummel et al. 2001). These theoretical underpinnings of the recent marketing literature (summarized in Table 2) are as follows.

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Consumer Socialization

Consumer socialization is a three-stage age-based developmental process (John 2008). In the perceptual stage (3-7 years), children exhibit a superficial familiarity with marketplace concepts like brand and retail store; in the analytical stage (7-11 years), children acquire knowledge about product categories and prices that they evaluate based on multiple product attributes and generalizations drawn from their consumption experiences; and in the reflective stage (11-16 years), children possess a more mature and complex knowledge of brands and prices that reflects their increasingly sophisticated cognitive and social skills (John 1999, 2008).

Consumer socialization theory has inspired research on intergenerational influence, which is the “within-family transmission of information, beliefs, and resources from one generation to next, a fundamental mechanism by which culture is sustained over time” (Moore, Wilkie, and Lutz 2002, p.1). It is the most common theoretical framework used in studies about children’s influence on consumption-related decisions in families. With its roots in socialization theory, it is “the processes by which young people acquire skills, knowledge, and attitudes to function as consumers and to develop consumer-related self-concepts” (Ward 1974, p.2). Studies in this vein have explored the role of parents’ instructions and supervision, gender orientation, education, occupation, and income, on their children’s consumer skill development, (Beatty and Talpade 1994; Foxman, Tanushaj, and Ekstrom 1988; Gregan-Paxton and John 1995). Indirect influences, such as children’s

observation and imitation of a parent’s consumption activities, also have been noted (Gregan-Paxton and John 1995).

Consumer socialization theory has prompted several useful findings. Parents in general and mothers in particular tend to co-shop and influence consumption learning of their daughters more than their sons (Moschis 1985; Moschis and Churchill 1978). In addition to parental approval, brand name associations and peer approval influence fashion-clothing-related purchase decisions of *tween* (9-12 years) girls (Grant and Stephen 2005). Contradictory to earlier findings (John 1999), children are aware of brands, which may exert a greater influence at an earlier age than parents realize (Dotson and Hyatt 2000; Harradine and Ross 2007). Yet, the ‘outcomes rather than processes’ focus of this framework ignores intra-family negotiations (John 1999). For example, contrary to the received wisdom that intergenerational influence is transmitted unidirectionally from parent to child, daughters predict their mother’s brand preferences more accurately than mothers predict their daughter’s preferences (Mandrik, Fern, and Bao 2005).

Consumer Decision-Making Model

The multi-stage consumer decision-making model is comprised of problem recognition, information search, alternative evaluation, final choice, and purchase decision (Davis 1976; Sheth 1974). The following vignette illustrates the viability of this model for family decision-making research.

After recognizing an imminent need to eat (problem recognition stage), the events leading a family to patronize Restaurant X (purchase decision) can be traced. Children’s influence on their parents can be explored with queries about common food preference (information search), acceptable restaurant options within reasonable commuting distance (alternative evaluation), consensus building, and the decision to dine at Restaurant X (final choice and

purchase decision).

Researchers have applied this model to studies on outcomes for specific stages in family decision-making (Corfman and Lehmann 1987; Gotze, Prantz, and Uhrovská 2009; Qualls 1988). For example, single-mother's beliefs about their children's influence at certain decision stages differed by children's age and mother's education (Ahuja and Stinson 1993). Children in single-mother families may be more involved in the information search stage and more likely to prefer shopping online than children from dual-parent families (Tinson, Nancarrow, and Brace 2008).

Researchers also have applied this model to studies on other moderating factors, such as number of family members, number of children, age of parent(s), and household income. Although it yielded verifiable hypotheses, this model's personal goal-oriented focus and limited demographic scope allow few insights into decision processes, especially in single-mother families. For instance, marketing researchers do not know why product decisions may be more influenced by teenagers in single-mother families than in step-families (Mangelburg, Grewal, and Bristol 1999).

Social Exchange Theory (Power Theory and Resource Exchange Theory)

Social exchange theory is a major interdisciplinary paradigm in the social sciences (Cropanzano and Mitchell 2005; Lawler and Thye 1999). The common factor that binds all social exchanges is social interaction or exchange resulting in obligations (Emerson 1976). The basic tenets of self-interest and interdependency in social exchange include the role of individual power (Power Theory) often asserted through one's resources (Resource Theory) (Cropanzano and Mitchell 2005). Consumer researchers have adapted and applied both power and resource exchange theories to studies on husband-wife decision-making processes (Peyton, Pitts, and Kamery 2004). The next two sections outline the application of power and resource exchange theories to marketing studies on consumption-

related decision making in families.

Power Theory

Power theory alludes to conflicts in relationships and the power wielded by group members to achieve their preferred goal (French and Raven 1959). Power is "the ability of an individual within a social relationship to carry out his or her will, even in the face of resistance by others" (McDonald 1980, p.842). Power suggests a clash of strength and weakness such that the more powerful person can exercise control and dominate the decision process (Dunbar 2004; French and Raven 1959; McDonald 1980). In an interdependent relationship, such as between parents and children, the former's power often determines choice of influence strategy, ability to manage conflict, and ability to influence decision outcomes (Williams and Burns 2000). Perceived parental power is parents' believed ability to influence children to do or believe something (Bao, Fem, and Sheng 2007; Flurry and Burns 2005).

Power theory has been applied to research on family decision-making (Williams and Burns 2000). For example, children who perceive greater parental power typically tend to use bilateral (i.e., persuasive) strategies to influence family decisions (Bao, Fem, and Sheng 2007). Conceptual power models of children's influence in family decision making include family decision history, children's purchase preference intensity, and active (demonstrative) and passive (perceived by parents) power bases (Flurry and Burns 2005; Williams and Burns 2000). Marketing researchers generally assume consumers are rational; hence, non-rational factors in decision making, such as emotions or norms, are ignored. Nonetheless, the power component in *pester power*—children's point-of-purchase nagging of parents, who comply and purchase problematic goods to avoid embarrassment (McDermott, O'Sullivan, Stead, and Hastings 2006)—would be difficult to interpret without considering norm violation (Williams and Burns 2000). Generally, parents are more powerful than their children; hence, parents' *because I say so* could be an

intractable dictum to trounce. Yet, if the need to exert control over another disappears for relationships without conflict (Dunbar 2004), then, power theory may not pertain to decision-making processes when parents and children are in accord. For instance, impoverished single mothers may purchase unhealthy foods as acts of love or to abate feelings of guilt towards their children (Hamilton and Catteral 2006; Hamilton 2009). Also, power theory may not pertain to families with young children (i.e., families with members of vastly disparate power) (John 1999). Thus, power theory may not fully explain the role played by children in decision-making processes within single-mother families.

Resource Exchange Theory

Under resource exchange theory, “resources are anything one partner may make available to the other partner, helping the latter satisfy his/her needs or attain his/her goals” (Blood and Wolfe 1960, p.12). Differences in socio-economic resources—such as occupation, education, and income—induce people to negotiate their own goals when making group decisions (Blood and Wolfe 1960; Dunbar 2004). Resource exchange theory and marketing share an exchange foundation. The stages—resource context, resource exchange, and resource outcome (Lawler and Thye 1999)—that organize how individual’s resources are manifest in collective social exchanges are similar to how consumer decision-making processes are initiated and concluded. Consumer researchers have considered the exchange of socioeconomic resources—such as love, personal services, goods, money, information, and status—in their studies on children’s influence in family decision processes (Carey, Shaw, and Shiu 2008; Flurry 2007; Park, Tanushaj, and Kolbe 1991). Yet, a major limitation of social exchange theories is the purely economic nature of the exchange process, in which people attempt rationally to achieve their goals by maximizing their rewards while minimizing their costs (Cropanzano and Mitchell 2005, Lawler and Thye 1999).

A Process-oriented Approach

Although helpful, these aforementioned theories cannot fully explain the dissimilar consumption-related decision-making influences of children in traditional dual-parent versus single-mother families (Bao, Fem, and Sheng 2007; Flurry and Burns 2005; Flurry 2007; Tinson and Nancarrow 2005). In addition, related marketing studies grounded in power and resource theories typically focus on parents’ beliefs about outcomes rather than children’s influences on decision-making processes. As decision-making studies based on one spouse’s perspective cannot fully capture the other spouse’s perspective (Davis 1976), studies limited to parents’ outcome-oriented perspectives cannot fully capture their children’s influences. “It seems likely that measures of decision outcome tap a very different aspect of decision making than do measures of decision process” (Davis 1976, p.250). Thus, a shift from outcome orientation to process orientation may reveal previously unrecognized co-created family goals and decision processes in single-mother families (DeVault 2003; Epp and Price 2008).

Normative Resource Exchange Theory

To pursue a process-oriented approach, we suggest that researchers embrace normative resource exchange theory, which would encourage them to consider relationships among family members within single-mother intra-family structures that may not conform to prevalent dual-parent family norms (Epp and Price 2008; Tinson, Nancarrow, and Brace 2008). This theory, in addition to the classic social exchange concept of each person’s use of personal resources (such as money, knowledge, expertise, and love) to attain a common consumption goal favorable to that person (Blood and Wolfe 1960), also accounts for the normative influences in collective social interactions (Crosbie-Burnett et al. 2005, Lawler and Thye 1999). It offers a more in-depth perspective for studying children’s consumption-related influence because clearly defined decision-making norms for directing familial interactions (i.e., social exchange dynamics) in

traditional dual-parent families may not pertain to single-mother intra-family structures (which may include cohabiting partners, step-parents with step-siblings, and live-in grandparents) (Bianchi and Casper 2005; Crosbie-Burnett and Giles-Sims 1991; Giles-Sims and Crosbie-Burnett 1989).

Introducing norms into studies of exchange processes enables researchers to consider how common sets of socio-cultural rules may influence each person's consumption behaviors. Although social scientists have yet to develop a consensus about the conceptualization of norms, these two definitions, developed a half-century apart, best address single-mother intra-family structures that typically lack the traditional dual-parent family's societal expectations of behavior (Epp and Price 2008; Flurry 2007; Tinson, Nancarrow and Brace 2008).

- A "rule or a standard that governs our conduct in the social situations in which we participate. It is a societal expectation. It is a standard to which we are expected to conform whether we actually do so or not" (Bierstedt 1963, p.222);
- A "voluntary behavior that is prevalent within a reference group" (Interis 2011, p.1).

Both definitions concur that norms are expected behaviors established by a reference group. On this view, norms serve as a 'necessary condition', whereas resources are considered a sufficient condition of power and exchange in family decision-making processes (McDonald 1980). For example, in husband-wife dyads—especially in western societies with evolving gender roles—norms are critical to exchange processes (Peyton, Pitts, and Kamery 2004; Rodman 1972).

In an exchange context, resources such as personal income and knowledge antecede power within socio-cultural normative context. The foundation of any social exchange theory includes people's self-interest and inter-dependence in collective group activities

(Crosbie-Burnett et al. 2005; Lawler and Thye 1999). Self-interest is manifest in the application of personal power, and inter-dependence alludes to exchange processes in which people use their respective resources to tilt the collective decision in their favor. Most marketing research assumes parenting styles based on dual-parent families. Similarly, applications of power and resource exchange theories in consumer behavior studies tend to assume a mother and father as primary actors and lesser-powerful children attempting to influence decision outcomes.

Normative influences such as parenting style can explain a single mother's decision-making power. For instance, children in single-parent families tend to exert greater power and are generally unwilling to share this power with new step-parents (Crosbie-Burnett et al. 2005). These children may possess resources, such as an ability to earn extra income or extensive product knowledge that may tilt the negotiation balance in their favor. Similarly, a step-parent who provides financial support may exert equal or greater control than a live-in partner or single-mother-alone on resource exchange and the decision-making processes. Given the likely relative levels of commitment, a step-parent's preferences are likely to be weighted more heavily than a live-in partner's preferences. For example, a son and his mother may agree to visit Disneyland for their annual vacation, yet the step-parent (and meaningfully older/younger step-siblings) may decide, and subsequently prevail, to a family tour of historical sites in Washington, DC.

A co-habiting partner is an adult in a romantic relationship with the single mother and living in the same household. This non-kin member may induce resource exchange contexts and outcomes that differ markedly from those in dual-parent families. For example, a child may exert less influence on a purchase paid partly or fully by a cohabiting partner. Alternatively, a child may exert more influence if the mother feels guilt about a live-in partner who is not the child's biological parent. Normative resource exchange theory accounts for the influence of norms missing from the more rational economic

exchange orientation of classic resource exchange theory (Lawler and Thye 1999). Augmenting normative resource exchange theory with the consumer decision-making model should provide a superior framework for explaining decision-making interactions between mother, child(ren), and other members of the family unit.

Suggested Conceptual Perspective

Consumer culture theorists have suggested a shift in the consumer decision-making model from households to families to account for various relational units in single-mother families (Epp and Price 2008; DeVault 2003). Researchers may adopt our proposed process-oriented approach, depicted in the Figure, for studying the influence of children in single-mother family structures on consumption-related decision processes. Our perspective aligns the context, process, and outcome phases of normative resource exchange theory proposed by sociologists studying families (Crosbie-Burnett et al. 2005; Lawler and Thye 1999; Strauss, 1978) with the classic consumer decision-making model adapted from sociology (Davis 1976; Sheth 1974).

Because consumption experiences may occur outside the household, a broader definition of family is needed (DeVault 2003; Epp and Price 2008). Our proposed approach considers *family* as “networks of people who share their lives over long periods of time bound by ties of marriage, blood or commitment, legal or otherwise, who consider themselves as family and who share a significant history and anticipated future of functioning in a family relationship” (Galvin and Brommel 2000, p.5). Understanding consumption-related decision processes in single-mother families means understanding social interactions between various relational units, such as child to mother, child to mother’s cohabiting partner, and child to grandparent(s) (Fellerman and Debevec 1993). Intra-family single-mother families with extended members—such as grandparents, a cohabiting partner, or step-parents—may experience decision-making processes that differ from processes in single-mother-alone families. For example, a live-in grandparent can supply

purchase-related expertise and judgment that otherwise might be asked of a child.

The decision-making dynamic may differ between single-mother with grandparent(s) families and other family structures. Even when the grandparent(s) contribute financially or emotionally, the single mother now plays the role of both child and parent. In this case, highly involved grandparents may usurp a young child’s influence over decision-making processes. Alternatively, the grandparent(s) may spoil a child, thus tilting decision making in a child’s favor and testing a single mother’s parental authority.

The lower left side of the Figure shows commonly studied examples of mediating normative variables determined by a family’s socio-cultural norms, such as gender role orientation, parental authority styles (patriarchal, egalitarian), children’s shopping knowledge, and vested interest (Crosbie-Burnett et al. 2005). For example, a single mother and a mother from a traditional dual-parent family are of similar age, employed in white collar jobs with high incomes and living in affluent neighborhoods. However, the family decision-making dynamics may be markedly different if the single mother adopts a laissez-faire parenting style and the dual-parent family abides a conservative, patriarchal approach, leaving the decision making to the father. (See subsequent discussion about parenting styles under Research Propositions.)

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The right side of the Figure shows the phases in normative resource exchange between family members that inform and shape decision-making processes. The overlapping of normative resource exchange and decision making stages brings to the forefront the intricate combination of various factors (individual resources and normative influences) that determine the final outcome in family decision making. The normative resource exchange context comprises the history between family members and their respective resource bases at the onset of a collective decision making process (Epp and

Price 2008; Crosbie-Burnett et al. 2005). For example, the family may experience the need for a new television set. The financial contribution of a step-parent in a single-mother family may affect the child's role in the decision making process. Such pre-existing factors may be overlooked by outcome-oriented research approaches.

For parsimony, the bottom right side of the Figure combines information search and exploring alternatives stages in the consumer decision-making model. After all, family members can search for information and compare products via basic internet searches or visits to ubiquitous stores like Wal-Mart. In these stages, normative resource exchange processes comprise the interactions between family members as they individually or jointly search for information and evaluate affordable alternatives. Researchers should consider normative influences on single-mother families, as they may deviate from dual-parent family norms. For example, how do the step-parent's (adulthood, money), child's (extensive product knowledge, kinship, love), and single-mother's (money, parental authority, parenting style, romantic and parental love) resources inform and influence the collective nature of information search and alternative evaluation stages in family decision making? To continue the television example, the single mother may impose a price ceiling—based on limited financial resources—before seeking product information. Although the child may suggest several alternatives based on extensive knowledge about televisions (shopping knowledge), she may try to persuade (vested interest) her mother to choose a personally preferred set. Most familial interactions occur during this decision-making stage and each family member attempts to use their respective resources to influence the outcome in their favor.

As shown in the upper right side of the Figure, the normative resource exchange outcome overlaps the final purchase decision of the family. For example, a single-mother may indulge her child and buy an expensive HDTV. Despite the mother's initial advantage (parental authority), the child may influence the final decision due to

normative factors such as parental love and kinship rights. Subsequently, the mother may disallow her child from participating extensively in the next major family purchase to assuage a step-parent whose preference was overruled in the HDTV purchase. More generally, the Figure shows that families can create history at any decision-making stage (Epp and Price 2008). With recurrent purchase decisions—such as where to dine, where to vacation, and what gifts to give on birthdays and other holidays—successive choices and related experiences may evolve into patterned collective consumption behaviors and the creation of little-understood alternate norms in single-mother family types.

At the problem identification/need recognition stage, family members may use familial history to influence an outcome in their favor. For example, a prior visit to restaurant may have produced a negative experience for a single-mother (who suffered food poisoning) but a positive experience for her child (who received a free dessert). When they decide to dine out the next week, the mother uses her parental authority to reject restaurant A and choose a pricier and inconveniently located restaurant B. Two weeks later, the combined effect of the single-mother's limited resources and the child's vested interest (in free dessert) yields a decision to revisit restaurant A. Clearly, a one-time outcome measure of the last visit to restaurant A, and ignoring familial history, would paint an incomplete picture. By treating family decision making as a cyclical rather than a sequential process, researchers may ascertain if normative variables (e.g., parenting styles, children's vested interest, gender-role orientation) in single-mother family structures deviate from established norms (in dual-parent families) and how these may mediate decision making where non-kin family members use their respective resources to produce collective decisions. This nonlinear approach considers *the iterations between stages* as new information and resources are acquired and applied to decision processes.

To summarize, the three phases of Normative Resource Exchange theory align with the

Consumer Decision Making Model as follows:

- The normative resource exchange *context phase*—which identifies the reason(s) for initiating exchange— informs and shapes the problem recognition stage in the consumer decision making model.
- The normative resource exchange *process phase*—in which family members use their respective resources to influence each other— shapes the information search and alternative evaluation stages of the decision making model.
- The normative resource exchange *outcome phase* aligns with the final decision and purchase stage of the model.

Our proposed perspective is meant to “sensitize and orient researchers to certain critical processes” (Turner 1986, p.11) in family decision-making. Because processes differ between single-mother versus dual-parent families, the perspective should spur inclusion of norms in studies of consumption-related decision-making processes within single-mother families. Like sensitizing theories that entice researchers to investigate relationships in novel ways (Baxter 2004), this perspective stresses the importance of children’s influence on these processes.

Research Propositions

Consumer researchers have focused on several aspects of children’s influence in family decision-making. For example, several studies showed that children have greater influence in purchasing own-use products than family-use products (Beatty and Talpade 1994; Flurry and Burns 2005; Foxman, Tanushaj, and Ekstrom 1988, 1989; Lee and Beatty 2002). Children who have a vested interest in the purchase of a product may assert greater influence in family decision making (Flurry and Burns 2005; Tinson and Nancarrow 2007), which in turn may be further enhanced if

they have extensive product related knowledge (Beatty and Talpade 1994). Parenting style, ranging from traditional/authoritarian to modern/egalitarian, as well as the related notion of gender-role orientation, are other prime areas of interest to consumer behavior researchers (Bao, Fem, and Sheng 2007; Lee and Beatty 2002; Tinson and Nancarrow 2005, 2007).

We identify propositions in four domains— children’s vested interest in purchases, children’s shopping knowledge, parenting style, and gender-role orientation—that deserve continued attention by marketing scholars. In prior studies, researchers have found differences in the consumption behaviors of single-parent versus dual-parent families. Perhaps comparable differences exist among the various single-mother family structures.

Children’s Vested Interest in Purchases

Preference intensity, a motivational construct conceptualized as “the extent to which a person desires to achieve a particular outcome or purchase” (Flurry 2005, p.595), may be the most significant predictor of a person’s relative influence in group decisions (Corfman and Lehmann 1987). Also theorized as *children’s vested interest in purchases*, consumer research supports this observation (Ahuja and Walker 1994; Beatty and Talpade 1994). Although children tend to assert greater influence in product categories that are most relevant to them (Beatty and Talpade 1994), children from single-mother families are believed to have greater influence than those from dual-parent families over both their own-use and family-related product purchases (Mangelburg, Grewal, and Bristol 1999). Relative to children in step-families and intact families, children in single-mother families are more involved in family-related-product purchases (Tinson, Nancarrow, and Brace 2008). Such findings suggest these research propositions:

- P1: Relative to children in dual-parent families, children in single-mother families have greater vested interest in all

four purchase decision stages (i.e., problem recognition, information search, alternative evaluation, and final purchase) for (a) own-use products, and (b) family-use products.

P2: Relative to children in single-mother-only or live-in grandparent(s) families, children in single-mother-families with either a live-in partner or step-parent and/or step-sibling(s) have less vested interest in all four purchase decision stages (i.e., problem recognition, information search, alternative evaluation, and final purchase) for (a) own-use products, and (b) family-use products.

Children's Shopping Knowledge

One fundamental tenet of consumer socialization asserts that parents are their children's most important socialization agents (John 1999). Other than parents, peer groups as well as popular culture contribute extensively to children's knowledge about products and services (Moschis 1985). In general, people with relatively more resources in a social unit have greater influence over unit-related decision processes; hence, buying decisions typically are more influenced by parents than their children (Foxman, Tanushaj, and Ekstrom 1989).

Nonetheless, if information is power, then hi-tech purchases may be more influenced by tech-savvy children than tech-oblivious parents (Belch, Krentler, and Willis-Flurry 2005). Under this reverse socialization, parents acquire consumer skills and knowledge from their children (Ekstrom 2007; Foxman, Tanushaj, and Ekstrom 1987). Relative to children in dual-parent families, children in single-parent families may be more inclined to shop with parents online during the information search stage (Tinson, Nancarrow and Brace 2008). This greater influence by children from single-mother families (Ahuja and Stinson 1993; Ahuja and Walker 1994; Darley and Lim 1986) suggests the following inter- and intra-family comparisons.

P3: Relative to children in dual-parent families, children in single-mother families (a) possess more shopping knowledge and expertise, (b) volunteer more shopping-related knowledge during the problem recognition, information search, and alternative evaluation stages, and (c) are more influential during the final purchase stage.

P4: Relative to children in single-mother-only or live-in grandparent(s) families, children in single-mother families with either a live-in partner or step-parent and/or step-sibling(s) (a) possess less shopping knowledge, (b) contribute less shopping knowledge during the problem recognition, information search, and alternative evaluation stages, and (c) are less influential during the final purchase stage.

Parenting Style

Parental authority and communication style affect children's influence in family decision-making (Mangelburg, Grewal, and Bristol 1999). To socialize their children, parents tend to rely on either socio-oriented or concept-oriented communications (Caruana and Vassallo 2003). Socio-oriented parents monitor and control their children's behavior in relation to expected societal norms. In contrast, concept-oriented parents allow their children to explore phenomena and develop independent views based on experiences and observations.

Parents tend to adopt one of four parenting styles: authoritarian, authoritative, permissive, and disengaged (Baumrind 1971, 1991; Maccoby and Martin 1983; Pelaez, Field, Pickens and Hart 2008). Authoritarian parents require total control; their strict rules for maintaining order are administered with little warmth or affection (Robinson, Mandelco, Olsen and Hart 1995). The authoritarian style typically entails rigid control, close supervision, and control by anxiety induction (Baumrind 1991; Robinson et al. 1995). In contrast, authoritative parents generally

establish rules and guidelines for children to follow, are more willing to listen to questions and understand their children's viewpoint, and are more forgiving and nurturing than authoritarian parents (Baumrind 1991; Maccoby and Martin 1983). Permissive parents make few rules and rarely implement them. When their children are incapable of informed decision-making, such parents suggest alternatives and are amenable to the outcome irrespective of behavioral concerns (Baumrind 1991; Maccoby and Martin 1983). Disengaged parents are uninvolved; they meet their children's needs but generally are detached from their children's life (Pelaez et al. 2008).

Children in single-parent, divorced families tend to have more influence in decision-making processes than children in never-married single-mother families (Flurry 2007). Due to guilt or the need to compensate for the missing second parent, single-mothers tend to adopt parenting styles based on personal preferences and family circumstances. In contrast, single-mothers with the support of intra-family structures (such as a step-parent or live-in partner) tend to mimic the egalitarian parenting styles found in some dual-parent families (Hertz 2006). Little is known about parenting styles of single-mothers. Do single-mother intra-family structures with one or more parent-equivalents adopt modern parenting styles that deviate from normative societal expectations? Such parenting style variations suggest the following propositions.

P5: Relative to dual-parent families, single-mother families adopt less authoritarian and more permissive parenting styles, which leads to greater involvement and influence of children in all four purchase decision stages.

P6: Relative to single-mother-alone or live-in grandparent(s) families, single-mother families with a step-parent or live-in partner adopt greater authoritarian and less permissive parenting styles, which leads to less involvement and influence of children in all four purchase decision stages.

Relevance of Gender-role Orientation

Gender-role orientation is "the extent to which children as well as adults displays gender stereotypic behavior or state a preference for a particular type of gender role" (Tinson and Nancarrow 2005, p.7). Extensive research on gender roles has been conducted on husband-wife dyads (Belch and Willis 2002; Godwin and Scanzoni 1989; Kaufman 2000). Gender-role orientation may or may not pertain to family consumption decision-making (Engel, Blackwell and Miniard 1990; Grusky, Bonacich, and Webster 1995; Kaufman 2000; Tinson and Nancarrow 2005). However, mother's employment status and familial sex-role orientation may affect how children influence family decision-making (Lee and Beatty 2002). Compared to children of unemployed single mothers, children of full-time employed single mothers tend to report higher self-esteem and emotional well-being (Duckett and Richards 1995).

Directness of negotiations may differ by gender; compared to boys, girls generally tend to use an indirect approach that requires cooperation and responsiveness by others (Cowan, Drinkard, and MacGavin 1984). Girls may gather information extensively and may be confident in both their product-related knowledge and their ability to persuade and gain permission—especially from their mothers—to buy products of their choice (Grant and Stephen 2005; Russell and Tyler 2002). Conversely, adolescent girls who participated in stereotypical 'girlie' activities, such as shopping for 'tea-party' clothes in 'Girl Heaven' stores (U.K.), resented conforming to such formulaic expectations (Russell and Tyler 2002). As adults, people who experienced a secure and fulfilling childhood in single-mother families did not associate their parents with common gender stereotypes (Gerson 2004).

Recent studies on gender-role orientation suggest that researchers look beyond normative stereotypes and recognize the importance of gender role in family structures (Tinson, Nancarrow and Brace 2008). For example,

children reared in 'gender fair' families tend to believe that boys and girls are opposites and unequal despite prevailing societal beliefs about gender equality (Risman 1998). Women who opt for motherhood by choice tend to oppose the normative prescription of traditional heterosexual family structure (Benjamin and Nilsen 2009; Hertz 2006). For example, in the absence of gender roles, biological mothers in black and lesbian step-families appropriate more power than non-biological mothers (Moore 2008). If stereotypical gender behavior is more common in dual-parent families than in single-mother families, and if such behavior is less common in single-mother families with a step-parent or live-in partner than in other-structured single-mother families, the following propositions are suggested.

P7: Relative to boys (girls) in dual-parent families, boys (girls) in single-mother families are more informed consumers and participate more in all four decision-making stages (i.e., adult-equivalent participation).

P8: Relative to boys (girls) from single-mother families with a step-parent or live-in partner, boys (girls) from other-structured single-mother families are more informed consumers and participate more in all four decision-making stages (i.e., adult-equivalent participation).

Discussion

Many factors affect single-mother families. Societal and marketplace pressures on never-married-single-mothers often induce negative work-family role strains (Boch 2000; Thiagarajan et al. 2007). Cohabitation and re-marriage create family structures in which children contend with a step-parent (often of different race or ethnicity) and step-sibling(s) (often of meaningfully different age(s)) (Bumpass and Lu 2000; Bumpass and Raley 1995; Bumpass, Raley, and Sweet 1995; Mulkey, Crain, and Harrington 1992). Children may be less involved in step-families than in dual-parent or single-mother-alone families because

step-parents often adopt a disengaged parenting style (Hetherington, Stanley-Hagan, and Anderson 1989; Kurdek and Fine 1993; Mangelburg, Grewal, and Bristol 1999)

Family structure affects children's influence and behaviors related to purchase decision-making. For example, the unmarried single women who delays motherhood for career development and a larger disposal income may allow her children greater influence over consumption decisions (Bock 2000). Single parents generally believe their adolescent children have greater influence over consumption choices (Mangelburg, Grewal, and Bristol 1999). To compensate for their parent's time-strapped life, children in single-parent families must often perform household-related duties and shop alone (Caruana and Vasallo 2003), thus playing adult-equivalent roles atypical in dual-parent families.

It is well established that (1) children influence family decision making for both own-use and family-use products, (2) influence mechanisms and dynamics differ markedly by family structure, and (3) single-mother families are proliferating in western societies. Nonetheless, marketing scholars often overlook decision-making processes in single-mother families. Each single-mother intra-family structures—such as live-in grandparent(s), unmarried partner, and step-father with or without step-sibling(s)—warrant closer scrutiny. For example, children's consumption patterns differ when a step-father and step-siblings are present.

During the last few decades, some marketing scholars have applied various social science theories to studies on children's influence in family decision-making. By shifting from the prevalent outcome-oriented perspective to a process-oriented perspective and accounting for possible deviations from prevalent norms, these scholars may better capture the resources, interactions, and norms of single-mother families that affect decision-making processes. The proposed conceptual perspective and related propositions are meant to facilitate that effort.

Marketers sensitive to the shift from dual-parent families should develop better tactics and strategies for attracting and retaining customers. For example, single-mother families tend to have fewer resources and less buying power than dual-parent families. Materialism and compulsive consumption behavior in children are more pervasive in single-parent than dual-parent families. Children in single-parent families tend to exert greater power and are generally unwilling to share this power with new step-parents (Crosbie-Burnett et al. 2005). To counter the often negative consumption-related tendencies of children in single-mother families, marketers need a deeper understanding of purchase decision making within such families.

Due to accelerating life demands, families have ever-less time to consider marketing-related communications. Nonetheless, marketers assume families are willing and able to shop at leisure will dedicate the resources needed to base purchase decisions on information gathered from traditional sources like ads. As the most time-constrained family structure, single-mother families are analogous to the 'canary in the coal mine'; their frantic pace likely is a harbinger for the lifestyles of other family types. Hence, marketers trying to anticipate the future dynamic of their customers' decision-making should acquire useful insights from single-mother families.

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TABLE 1
Marketing-related Articles on Children's Influence on Family Decision Making in Single-Parent Families (1980+-present)

Article	Theoretical Framework	Research Questions	Subjects	Data Collection Method	Main Statistical Method	Findings
Kourilsky and Murray (1981)*	Family decision making	Can teaching parents and children to apply economic reasoning in family decisions increase their satisfaction with the decision making process?	n=54 or 27 parent-child dyads; 10 were single-parents	Child-parent logs on family purchase decisions	t-tests	Before the instructional program, both parent and child in single-parent families reported higher satisfaction with family decision-making processes and superior economic reasoning compared to members of married dual-parent families.
Darley and Lim (1986)*	Family decision making	Do children in single-parent families exert greater influence in family leisure activity (e.g., movies, participant sports, family outing) decisions than children in traditional dual-parent families?	n=106; single-parents comprised one-third of sample	Self-report questionnaires	MANOVA, ANOVA	Relative to parents in dual-parent households, single parents believed their children had more influence over family leisure-activity decisions.
Ahuja and Stinson (1993)	Family decision making	For single-female-parent households, do (1) mother's age, education, sex-role orientation, employment status, and years as single parent, (2) household income and size, and (3) age and gender of oldest child, affect children's relative influence on grocery product decisions?	n=210; single moms from national consumer mail panel	Self-report questionnaires	Factor analysis (PCA), stepwise regression	Effect of child's age, mother's education, household size, mother's sex-role autonomy, and mother's income on child's influence on purchase decisions depends on product type (foods, household products, and snacks) and decision-making stage (initiation, information search, alternative evaluation, final).
Ahuja and Walker (1994)*	Family decision making	Do single- and dual-parent families spend differently on food bought at restaurants? Do their usage rates for restaurant- and store-bought	n=520; 210 single moms from national consumer mail panel	Self-report questionnaires	ANOVA	Type of restaurant used (fast food vs. full service) related to household income and mother's employment status rather than family type (single- vs. dual-parent). Income more related than family type to full

Article	Theoretical Framework	Research Questions	Subjects	Data Collection Method	Main Statistical Method	Findings
		foods differ?				service restaurant usage.
Tinson, Nancarrow and Brace (2008)*	Child influence in family decision making; Family life	How does the supposed simplicity of nuclear and single-parent families compare to the complexities of blended or step-parent families in information search, discussion, and final stages of a purchase decision?	n=524 U.K. mother-child pairs from a corporate postal access panel	Self-report questionnaires completed by mother and child	Descriptive statistics, test for proportions	(1) Relative to children in single-parent families, children in intact families search more for new things in shops and online. (2) Relative to children in blended and intact families, children in single-parent families had more pocket money, went on more shopping trips, watched more TV, and were more involved in own-use and family-use product purchase decisions. (3) Relative to adults in intact and single-parent families, adults in blended families are less inclined to involve children in purchases of family-use products. (4) Children and mothers' share similar beliefs about the former's influence on purchase decisions of child-use products. (5) Regardless of family structure, children more influential in purchase decisions of own-use than family-use products.
Mangelburg, Grewal and Bristol (1999)*	Consumer socialization	Do family type and authority relations—such as parental coalition formation and parent-child authority roles—affect children's perceived influence in family purchase decisions?	n=87 parents of high school students; 33 single-parent families; 13 step-families	Self-report questionnaire	ANOVA, ANCOVA, regression	Teenagers in single-parent families had greater influence in purchase decisions for household and own-use products when compared to dual-parent and stepfamilies.
Flurry (2007)*	Resource exchange theory; Consumer socialization	Relative to children in dual-parent families, do children in single-parent families have more influence over purchase decisions (e.g., toy)? Relative	Study 1: n=1211 moms of 4th and 5th grade	Self-report questionnaires	ANOVA	For toy purchase, child in divorced-single-parent families had most influence and child in single-parent-never-married families had least influence. For vacation purchase, child in single-parent-never-

Article	Theoretical Framework	Research Questions	Subjects	Data Collection Method	Main Statistical Method	Findings
		to children in divorced single-parent families, do children in never-married single-parent families have less influence over purchase decisions (e.g., vacation)?	children Study 2: n=252 moms of children age 9-11 years			married families had most input and child in dual-parent family had least input.
Thiagarajan, Chakravarty, Lueg, and Taylor (2007)	Role theory; Work-family role conflict	Does the work-family role-conflict of single parents relate positively to role strain from allocating time, energy, and other resources between work and family life?	n=535 single moms; 154 in main study, 381 in validation study	Self-report questionnaires	CFA, structural equation modeling	Single parents experience role strain due to role ambiguity but not role conflict between work and family life.
Heslop, Madill, Duxbury, Dowdles (2007)*	Work-family role conflicts	Do the situations of married and single mothers differ for food-related tasks?	n=481 moms with children less than 19 years old living at home; 91 single moms	Self-report questionnaires	Principle component analysis	Married mothers delegated food-related tasks to spouses but single mothers did not delegate significant tasks to other household members or older children.
Ziol-Guest, DeLeire and Kalil (2006)*	Differences in household expenditures	How does family structure (single- vs. dual-parent) affect food expenditure decisions? Do single-parent-headed families differ from dual-parent families in food expenditure decisions?	n=29,376 households from consumer mail panel (1990-2003); 4629 single-mom households	Panel data	Regression (OLS)	Family structure and parental employment status affect food and beverage expenditure patterns. Relative to married parents, families headed by a single parent allocate a smaller proportion of their food budget to vegetables and fruits.
Zick, McCullough, and Smith (1996)	Household demand for services	Do time-management-related attitudes about buying non-home prepared meals, child-care services, and housekeeping services differ	n=288 two-child families; 91 single-mom families	Self-report questionnaire; two-day time diary kept	Regression	Relative to dual-parent families (and controlling for socio-demographics such as income and age), single-female-headed families buy more prepared meals away from home, child-care services, and

Article	Theoretical Framework	Research Questions	Subjects	Data Collection Method	Main Statistical Method	Findings
		between single mothers and parents in dual-parent families?		by mother		housekeeping services.

Notes: For a detailed list of articles for all theoretical frameworks outlined in this table, please contact the lead author.

* denotes papers in which inquiry into single mother families is part of the study and not its entire focus

+ no marketing-related articles on children's influence on family decision making in single-parent families prior to 1981

TABLE 2
Theories Applied in Marketing-related Articles on Children's Influence in Family Decision Making (1999-present)

Theoretical Framework	Article	Description/Definition	Children's Influence
Consumer Socialization			
Consumer socialization	Mangelburg, Grewal, and Bristol (1999)	Processes by which young people acquire skills, knowledge, and attitudes to function as consumers and to develop consumer-related self-concepts. Family is a potent source for consumer learning.	Family type and family authority relations, such as parent coalitions and parent-child authority roles, affect children's perceived influence in family purchase decisions.
Consumer socialization	Dottson and Hyatt (2000)	Children are socialized in three ways: modeling (imitation of agent's behavior), reinforcement (either reward or punishment), and social interaction.	Children have stronger influence on family decisions at earlier age than previously thought; exposure to media and other socialization agents other than parents may create knowledge-base equivalent to parents.
Consumer socialization	Thomson and Laing (2003)	Children use the Internet to influence family purchase decisions for own-use items.	Children gather information from the Internet that they can use to persuade parents about purchases of generally non-objectionable own-use products. Trust issues exist for both funding source (child versus parent) and security of paying online.
Consumer socialization	Wilson and Wood (2004)	See Mangelburg, Grewal, and Bristol (1999)	Children influence their parent's decision making for some supermarket products.
Consumer socialization stages	Grant and Stephen (2005)	Age-related improvements in cognitive abilities contribute to development of consumer knowledge and decision making skills.	Brand-name associations, parental approval, and peer group approval influence tweenage girls' fashion-related purchases.
Consumer socialization	Harradine and Ross (2007)	Process by which children learn their in-group's values, knowledge, and social roles. Although consumer socialization is life-long process, much consumer behavior is learned during childhood.	Children may be more brand aware at an earlier age than their parents believe, which in turn may affect their influence on family purchase decisions.
Consumer socialization	Ekstrom (2007)	Parents also learn from children in the consumer socialization process.	Children in the process of acquiring new knowledge have transferred the same to their parents as a form of reverse socialization.

Theoretical Framework	Article	Description/Definition	Children's Influence
Family-communications typology for predicting children's consumer socialization	Caruana and Vassallo (2003)	Family communication patterns are either socio- or concept-oriented. Socio-oriented parents focus on monitoring and controlling children's behavior to produce obedience that leads to liking and acceptance by others. Concept-oriented parents encourage children to evaluation alternatives, thus encouraging children to develop their own views.	Parental style of communication may affect children's perceived influence on purchases.
Family communication patterns typology	Clarke (2008)	See Caruana and Vassallo (2003)	Although parents avoid committing to their children's Christmas gift requests, they tend not to limit requests and to explore their children's reasons for the requests.
Family communication patterns typology; Consumer decision making styles	Kim, Lee and Tomiuk (2009)	Family communication patterns may affect children's decision-making styles, which in turn may affect their influence on family purchase decisions.	Paternal communication orientation had little effect on children's consumption decision-making styles and family purchase influence. Mothers with concept-oriented communication positively affected children exhibiting a practical decision-making style, which in turn boosted family decision-making participation and influence. Mothers with socio-oriented communication negatively affected children, encouraging undesirable and impulsive decision making in the latter.
Intergenerational influence; Consumer socialization	Mandrik, Fern, and Bao (2005)	Parents influence their children's beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors.	Intergenerational influence on families' brand preferences and consumption orientations depends on parental communication efficacy and children's peer conformity.
Family Decision Making			
Family decision-making processes in consumer socialization	Gronhoj (2006)	Processes by which members affect each other's consumption-related behaviors.	Environmentally conscious consumption practices, which may be inconspicuous, may entail peaceful as well as frequent conflict-ridden influences between family members.
Family decision making; Inter-generational	Belch, Krentler, and Flurry	Influence in family decision making by technology savvy teenagers.	The more other family members perceive a teen to be an internet expert the greater relative influence may be enjoyed by the latter in family decision making.

Theoretical Framework	Article	Description/Definition	Children's Influence
influence	(2005) Hamilton and Catterall (2006)	Influence in family decision making by children from poor families	Children have considerable direct and indirect influence on family decision making as parents often struggled to reduce the visibility of family's poverty.
Family decision making; Consumer socialization	Hamilton (2009)	Ways in which family members avoid conflicts in family decision-making.	To cope with and manage poverty related to socio-economic disadvantage, families use decision-making strategies such as allocating responsibility, communicating about finances, and acceding to children's demands.
Conflict resolution models in family decision making	Lee and Collins (2000)	Inter-member differences in cognitive structure— which include different purchase motives/goals and evaluative beliefs—cause family conflicts that can be resolved by applying problem solving, persuasion, bargaining, and political strategies.	Children's gender may affect family decision-making strategies. Children may influence family decisions by forming critical coalitions.
Typology of family members' strategies in family decision making process	Thomson, Laing, and McKee (2007)	Family members apply several strategies—such as experience, role stereotype legitimacy, coalitions, emotional appeals, and bargaining—to family decision-making processes.	Children apply sophisticated, complex, and well-planned influence behaviors (e.g., assert knowledge, form sibling and parental coalitions) to family decision making.
Blended-family complexities create greater conflict in family decision making processes	Tinson, Nancarrow, and Brace (2008)	Children's involvement in family decision-making correlates with intra-family relationship complexity.	Children living with a single mother only report greater involvement and influence in family decision making, whereas children in blended households report less involvement.
Innovation decision making process	Gotze, Prange and Uhrovska (2009)	Children adopt various communication strategies to influence parents in the five-stage innovation decision-making process: knowledge, persuasion, decision, implementation, and confirmation.	The type of communication strategy children use to influence their parents' purchases affects children's influence in the initial stages of the innovation decision-making process.

Theoretical Framework	Article	Description/Definition	Children's Influence
Power Theory			
Social power theory	Williams and Burns (2000)	A person's power sources in social interactions include expertise, reward power, referent power, legitimate power, and coercion. People assess their resources and choose an influence strategy—either active/direct or passive/indirect—consistent with their social power source.	Social power theory can ground measurement scale for assessing children's direct influence attempts in family decision-making processes.
Social power theory	Flurry and Burns (2005)	See Williams and Burns (2000)	Children's active and passive bases of social power, preference intensity, and decision history may explain variations in their influence on purchase decisions.
Power relational theory; Consumer socialization	Bao, Fem, and Sheng (2007)	In an interdependent relationship with conflict, a person's power determines choice of influence strategy, ability to manage conflict, and ability to influence decision outcomes. Perceived parental power is parents' believed ability to influence children to do or believe something.	Parenting style indirectly affects children's influence on family decision-making. Children who perceive greater parental power tend to adopt bilateral strategies to influence family decision-making.
Resource Theory			
Resource theory; Consumer socialization	Flurry (2007)	Resources are anything one partner may make available to the other partner, helping the latter satisfy needs and/or attain goals. Resource exchange is people's ability to satisfy their physical and psychological needs via social interaction.	Changing family structures and product type may moderate children's influence on purchase decisions.
Resource theory; Social power theory; Consumer socialization; Pester power	Carey, Shaw, and Shiu (2008)	For resource theory, see Flurry (2006). Social power theory posits that family members assess their resources and choose to influence family decision-making processes with a strategy consistent with their source of social power.	Contrary to earlier reports, children less than three years old may influence their parents' grocery shopping decisions.

Theoretical Framework	Article	Description/Definition	Children's Influence
Gender-role Orientation			
Gender-role orientation of couples; Gender-role orientation in families	Tinson and Nancarrow (2005)	Degree to which people believe in traditional male/female roles or modern (egalitarian) male/female roles.	Gender-role orientation, shopping savviness, and other factors affect children's influence in high- and low-involvement purchases in families.
Family structure and gender-role orientation of children and parents affect family decision making	Tinson and Nancarrow (2007)	Parents and children can be categorized along a traditional to egalitarian continuum depending on their preference towards household tasks. The difference in such preferences affects children's influence in family decision making.	Tween children (between ages 10-13) involvement in various stages of family decision making may depend on family structure and the gender-role orientations of both parents and children. Liberal families may report greater involvement by children than authoritarian families.
Sex-role orientation; Social power theory; Role structures in family decision making	Lee and Beatty (2002)	Sex-role orientation of a family (i.e., traditional or modern) reflects cultural values of roles played by different family members, especially the wife/mother and husband/father. Person's power to decide stems from ability to fulfill his/her marriage partner's needs.	Family structure--assessed by sex-role orientation and mother's occupational status—may affect adolescents' and parents' influence on family purchase decisions.
Other Theories			
Role theory; Work-family role conflict	Thiagarajan et al. (2007)	Personal resources (time, energy, and attention) spent on the work role are unavailable for the family role and vice versa. Competing work and family demands cause role strain in single parents.	Work- and family-related role conflicts and role ambiguities relate positively to role strains experienced by single parents.
Reactance theory	Rummel et al. (2001)	Reactance refers to the motivational state caused by threats to personal freedom.	As children age, they exhibit stronger attitudes and reactance effects towards product choices that their parents perceive as negative.
Ecological model for understanding young consumer's eating behavior	Marquis (2004)	Children's eating behavior is a function of four levels of influence: individual, interpersonal, environmental, and societal.	The levels of influence may explain strategies used by 10-year-old children to influence parents' food purchases.

Theoretical Framework	Article	Description/Definition	Children's Influence
Purchase influence attempts; Purchase request behavior/ <i>pester power</i>	McDermott et al. (2006)	Children's unprecedented power as consumers (power) and their ability to influence others' purchases (pester).	Food advertising may exploit children's <i>pester power</i> to induce parents into buying less healthful foods associated with obesity.

Note: Only articles published in peer-reviewed scholarly journals are included. For an extensive review of pre-1999 marketing articles on consumer socialization of children, see John (1999). For a detailed list of articles for all theoretical frameworks outlined in this table, please contact the lead author.

FIGURE
Children's Influence in Single-Mother Family Decision Making – A Conceptual Perspective

