Just Whose Hand Rocks the Cradle?

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to understand the parent–child purchase request relationship, which encompasses the interactions that take place between parents and children during the purchase request process, from the perspective of fathers. Social norms, patterns of family formation and the role of fathers within the household are changing. The majority of research concerning the parent–child purchase request relationship is dated and neglects these changes, including shifts in family interactions, communications and decision making, and their impact on the parent–child purchase request relationship. Therefore, a new direction is needed to research what is occurring in the purchase request relationship between fathers and their children. This paper sets out to address the current gap in understanding fathers' purchase request experiences. In order to capture the experience of fathers, the use of an interpretivist approach, in conjunction with phenomenology as a methodology, has been employed. In addition, the departure from extant positivistic research to an interpretive approach proved very beneficial in uncovering fathers' experiences. The findings are presented through several emergent themes where fathers view themselves as the sensible authoritarian parent and view the parent–child purchase relationship as a naturally-occurring family relationship dynamic. These thematic findings position the parent–child purchase relationship, from the perspective of fathers, in a positive light, where an understanding of the purchase request relationship permeates this natural familial interaction.

Key Words: Pester power, parent–child purchase request relationship; fathers; co-shopping

INTRODUCTION

While much has been written about the parent–child purchase request relationship in general (see, for example, Falbo and Peplau, 1980; Isler et al., 1987; McNeal, 1992; Valkenburg and Cantor, 2001; Quinn, 2002; Nicholls and Cullen, 2004; McDermott et al., 2006; Powell et al., 2011; Lawlor and Prothero, 2011), few studies have focused on the

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parent–child purchase request relationship in its totality, with the majority completely excluding fathers and only a minority including even children. This study seeks to address this issue and concentrates on fathers' experiences of this relationship as understood and articulated by them.

Previous literature in this area has been dominated by a phenomenon known as 'pester power', a term used to describe children 'nagging' their parents into making unnecessary purchases. While some of the issues raised in pester power research are relevant to the parent–child purchase request relationship, the majority of the studies focus on pester power specifics, its influence and effects predominantly. This narrow focus of research has highlighted a gap in the knowledge and understanding of the parent–child purchase request relationship and, as such, acted as a springboard for the direction of this study. Upon examination of and reflection on the literature it became apparent that there were a number of issues relating to pester power research which did not adequately reflect the reality and nature of parent–child purchase request interactions. While these primarily positivistic studies have contributed to an understanding of the pester power phenomenon, they provide a third-person perspective (namely 'vested interest' groups (Martin, 1997), including industry, public interest, political, financial and academic interests) and, as such, consumers' experiences, particularly those of fathers, are not reflected (Schembri and Sandberg, 2002)).

In addition, previous research findings have been inconsistent and primarily position the parent–child purchase request relationship in a negative light, which has resulted in a contested debate about the nature of the findings and even the existence of the relationship itself. This in some part may be due to the exclusion of some of the main players of the purchase request process, particularly fathers. It therefore became evident that the paternal experience of the parent–child purchase request relationship warranted further investigation. In order to explore this area a number of issues needed to be addressed, including changes in modern families, familial communication patterns and parental influence in the purchase request process. Therefore, an emphasis in this study will be placed on family influence on the purchase request process, including the changing composition of families and familial and non-familial socialisation influences in family decision making. In addition, parent–child purchase request interactions, including family communications, will also be explored.

THE CHANGING FAMILY

Family dynamics are changing; therefore, it is pertinent to explore their effects on parent–child relationships in general, and purchase request relationships more specifically. Typical research to date concerning families in general focuses on the traditional family unit. Hill and Tisdall (1997: 66) state:

> Traditional patterns of family formation have given way to greater flexibility but less stability … the idea of family is to some degree a fluid one, with a mix of concepts at its core: direct biological relatedness, parental caring role, long-term co-habitation and permanent belonging.

Nevertheless, families in general are still an important element of socialisation (Pringle, 1980). Roedder-John (1999: 199) noted that 'another useful analysis is to look at the family unit at a more disaggregate level.' She further stressed that 'it is rare for consumer researchers to break down the family communications process into discrete units, such as father–son or mother–son' (Roedder-John, 1999: 199). It is possible that these individual relationships have as much, if not more, influence on consumer socialisation than general family characteristics.

These observations are useful when one considers the changing demographics of contemporary families. McNeal (1992), and more recently Valkenburg and Cantor (2001), identified trends and stated that an increased economic power and influence on family (purchasing) decisions by today's children can be explained by several socioeconomic changes in recent decades. Today's parents have larger incomes and higher educational attainments; they often postpone having children and have fewer of them, and more single-parent families and dual-working-parent families are evident (McNeal, 1992; Gunther and Furnham, 1998; Geuens et al., 2003; Ekstrom, 2004). The most recent (Irish) statistics, available from the Central Statistics Office (CSO) Statistical Yearbook (2010), support these trends, with the current average gross income approximately €716 per week, and 34 per cent of all 25- to 64-year-olds possessing a third-level education. The statistics also show that the predominant Irish household type still consists of couples with children, accounting for almost half of all families, although single-parent families now account for 17 per cent of all Irish families, with lone mothers accounting for the greatest percentage of single-parent families. Interestingly, co-habiting couples are now the fastest growing family unit within Ireland. Divorce has increased 70 per cent since 2002, which will lead to an increase of what is commonly known as 'second families'. Despite the increase in divorce rates, marriage is still popular in Ireland, with 4.6 per cent of the population marrying annually. The average number of children per household is currently 1.4, with the average age of first-time mothers approximately 31 years.

Moreover, these changing demographics result in parents having less contact time with their children; thus they delegate responsibilities to other members of the family, including children (Sabino, 2002). Overcompensation and indulgence is also frequently witnessed in these families, resulting in greater child influence in family decision-making (McNeal, 1992; Sabino, 2002; Geuens et al., 2003). Furthermore, 'the amount of communication is less in these families due to the lack of time spent together' (Geuens et al., 2003: 58). Sabino (2002: 12) further highlights:

> As a result of children having access to more information and their time-stressed parents needing help, wanting to raise empowered, happy children and gaining pleasure from their family interactions, it is logical that there is a profound increase in the influence children are having in the family decision-making process.

Parents are also aware of the impact of other information sources, such as peers and media on their children, and therefore may be more accepting of children's input into decision making.

In addition, the liberalisation of parent–child relationships in western societies may also explain changes in family purchasing decisions (Valkenburg and Cantor, 2001). Decades ago child-rearing models were characterised by authority, obedience and respect (Torrance, 1998). In contemporary families, understanding, equality and compromise between parents and children are considered pertinent; the parent–child relationship is therefore no longer regulated by authority and command but negotiation (Torrance, 1998). As a result, children have never been as emancipated, articulate and market savvy (Gunther and Furnham, 1998).

PARENTAL INFLUENCE ON CONSUMER SOCIALISATION

The main influences involved in consumer socialisation include familial, such as parents and siblings, and non-familial, such as peers, mass media, shops and co-shopping (parents and children shopping together). The most pertinent influence in relation to this research is parental influence. Parents as socialisation agents directly affect children's consumer behaviours, including brand preference and loyalty, price sensitivity, and purchasing habits (Ward, 1974; Moschis, 1987; Childers and Rao, 1992; Hill and Tisdall, 1997; Neeley and Coffey, 2004; Cotte and Wood, 2004).

McNeal (1964) reported that as children mature they have an increased desire to assume independent purchasing activities, coupled with an increasing parental permissiveness with this behaviour. Children gradually take on responsibility and are simultaneously encouraged and cautioned by parents, whose dual aim is to develop their children's abilities while avoiding any harm (Independent Television Commission, 2002). This is often linked to the debate concerning so-called 'pester power' and, more specifically, child-targeted advertising, where parents aim to teach children to be responsible consumers while simultaneously trying to shield them from any potentially harmful commercial influences. However, Valkenburg and Cantor (2001) claim commercial messages in general, including those made in-store, have made children less dependent on parents in learning consumer values, and advertising aimed at children shortens the period where parents are the primary socialising force in their lives. Children today may have the spending power to utilise their consumer skills, but they still often lack the maturity to carefully analyse buying decisions (Valkenburg and Cantor, 2001). Thus, parents are still considered hugely important in the socialisation of children (Valkenburg and Cantor, 2001).

Moreover, regardless of family composition, parents adopt various socialisation styles which influence their children's social development. They serve as role models providing purposive training and opportunities to learn (Ward et al., 1977), but most socialisation occurs through 'subtle interpersonal processes' (Ward, 1974: 3). Hill and Tisdall (1997: 78) state that 'fortunately most parents, regardless of their parental styles, adopt approaches which combine rules, guidance, flexibility and negotiation.'

Neeley and Coffey (2004) examined parental socialisation styles, essentially those of mothers, on the basis of parents being 'permissive' or 'restrictive'. Both these styles have similar properties to those of Baumrind's (1991) indulgent and authoritarian socialisation styles. Restrictive mothers make decisions for their children, expect their children

to conform to pre-established rules, are less likely to allow their children to influence decisions and purchases, exhibit a higher level of control over their children, are more deliberate decision makers, more purposeful shoppers and less responsive to outside influences, to the point of 'resenting influences on themselves and their children' (Neeley and Coffey, 2004: 59). Thus, restrictive mothers are less responsive to their children's requests. They expect conformity, rigid standards of conduct and expect more mature behaviour from their children. Permissive mothers are more likely to allow and encourage children to make decisions and even to consider 'bad' decisions as learning opportunities; a permissive mother is also more likely to allow children 'equal power in decision-making on household purchases and will often submit to her child's requests' (Neeley and Coffey, 2004: 58). Permissive mothers are more responsive to outside influences, such as other people and media and brand images, are more indulgent of their children, allow more freedom in requests and are more responsive to their children's requests. 'They expect their kids to act as "kids" and to be more impulsive and immature' (Neeley and Coffey, 2004: 58).

It is therefore apparent that parents who adopt different parental styles and communications techniques affect children's socialisation as consumers and impact on the parent–child purchase request relationship in different ways. This study by Neeley and Coffey (2004) typifies the thrust of most of the research concerning parent–child purchase request relationships, focusing on the mother as parent; fathers' understanding, knowledge and experiences of the parent–child purchase request relationship are again notably absent.

Siblings, too, are important role models for each other and may act as a relevant peer group for comparison and modelling (Cotte and Wood, 2004). Attitudes and interests are also similar among siblings (Hoffman, 1991). Variables, such as the number of siblings or birth order, have been examined in relation to socialisation, but 'significant findings have yet to emerge' (Roedder-John, 1999: 206).

Non-familial influences on consumer socialisation are also reported. Singh and Ingham (2003) report that more than a third of respondents to their study believe advertising is the most important factor influencing children's purchase requests. Friends, too, are an ascribed influence across the broadest range of products (Moschis and Moore, 1979), with 37 percent of people believing children's friends are the most significant influencing factor and just 15 percent citing parents as the deciding factor (Singh and Ingham, 2003). Peers are a significant source of influence on children's consumer behaviour (Campbell, 1995; Piaget, 1970; Vygotsky, 1978; Moschis and Moore, 1979). Hill and Tisdall (1997: 5) note that 'peer relationships offer opportunities for children to acquire different kinds of knowledge compared with parents or teachers.' At a young age children begin to orient actions and motives towards peers and siblings rather than parents alone (Rogers, 1969; Ward, 1974; Moschis and Churchill, 1978). From this point on, the child's ongoing interactions with their peers, along with parents, shapes their emotional and social development (Kagan, 1969; Rogers, 1969).

Yet, television advertising is also still believed to act as a major influence on children's purchase requests. According to McQuail (2000), different agencies influence children's reasoning and perception. These alternate between parents, family and social groups on one side and a child's exposure to media on the other. Berman (1981: 13) states 'the

institutions of family, religion and education have grown noticeably weaker over each of the past three generations. In the absence of traditional authority, advertising has become a kind of social guide.' Hill and Tisdall (1997: 250) also note that 'young people's access to modern technology and media provides a means of socialising them that is increasingly out of the control of the three traditional socialising agents (parents, schools and community).' This may in part be due to the limited time families spend together. Parents often seek restrictions to such technology, through regulatory and physical means of censorship; however, they fail to recognise that modern technology cannot be controlled successfully in this way (Hill and Tisdall, 1997).

Furthermore, children today are marketed at from every angle, not just through traditional advertising methods, such as television advertisements. In-store influences include point-of-sale displays and attractive packaging, while banners and competitions on the internet, publications their parents read, product placement in movies, direct mail, magazines and product samples are also in abundance (McNeal, 1992; Pilgrim and Lawrence, 2001). Schools, as a socialisation influence, are gaining in importance and interest amongst researchers, but there is limited research exploring this area at present. However, marketers can reach large numbers of children as current consumers and influence them as future consumers through school relations programmes. It is clearly stated (Euromonitor, 2002) that advertising agencies now target previously exclusive 'childhood environments', such as schools. However, industry practitioners deny this. McNeal (1992: 58) identified that 'kid-targeted promotion could do more than just clinch a sale. Promotion could also be used for developing brand and seller identity among children and for building preferences and loyalty towards a firm and its products.' These programmes include the sponsorship of sports and information technology equipment, which is currently being experienced in Ireland. The retail giant Tesco, for example, runs 'Tesco Computers for Schools' and 'Tesco for Schools & Clubs' campaigns annually, as part of its corporate social responsibility. It can only be assumed that Tesco also benefits by having branded computers and other equipment sitting in the corners of classrooms. Marketing and advertising tactics have grown increasingly divergent over the last number of decades, as the above examples demonstrate.

SHOPS AND CO-SHOPPING

Consumer experiences, such as shops and co-shopping, where parents and children shop together, deserve more exploration, considering their importance in consumer socialisation and the parent–child purchase request relationship. However, other factors, such as brand names, are far more salient and important to children (Roedder-John, 1999). Co-shopping is considered a primary method of socialisation, with children observing their parents' consumer behaviour and taking part in the purchase process (Blackwell et al., 2001). Children are exposed to the marketplace at a young age when they accompany their parents shopping, usually to the supermarket. They are exposed to a variety of stimuli and experiences, including aisles of products and shoppers examining labels and making decisions, thereby aiding the development of cognitive abilities, resulting in an understanding of

marketplace transactions (Roedder-John, 1999). Neeley and Coffey (2004: 57) claim that co-shopping is a passive activity rather than an active educational activity between parent and child 'because the parent and child are together when the activity takes place, rather than directly instructing the child in selection and purchase of an item'. Therefore, the child is an observer to the process of selecting, decision making and purchasing. Mothers may allow or encourage their children to offer opinions, but the child still primarily acts as an observer to the process (Neeley and Coffey, 2004). This raises the question: what occurs in the father–child shopping and purchase request experience?

Demographic and societal changes have led to an increase in co-shopping in recent decades. Firstly, working mothers take children shopping more often than non-working mothers and, secondly, it is coupled with the declining number of children per family (Carlson and Grossbart, 1988) implying that it is easier for parents to bring their children shopping. Balogh (2002) reports that a quarter of 'parents' in their thirties, which presumably includes fathers, take their children shopping with them, and more than half of the parents in this age group take their children shopping with them at least every other time they go, providing ample opportunities for children to influence their product choice. This may result in overindulgence and overcompensation of children, as parents try to address issues of guilt for the lack of time they spend with their children (Nash, 2012). However, Nicholls and Cullen (2004: 79) believe parents are accompanied by an 'unavoidable companion, rather than a pre-selected choice maker'. In other words, parents are not actively seeking their children's opinions when shopping, but must include them in the shopping process, as no other alternative is available.

Parental duties are now more equally shared amongst spouses, with more men engaging in shopping, and grocery shopping in particular (Nash, 2012). This practice is also likely to continue within Irish society, considering the growing number of men unemployed in Ireland, which is currently over 277,000, compared to almost 153,000 women (CSO, 2012). It is also believed that younger children make more in-store requests to their parents than their older counterparts, primarily because they accompany their parents shopping more regularly.

Isler et al. (1987) conducted a detailed examination of children's requests and parental responses and specifically examined the location of requests. Again, this study only included mothers. They found that younger children (3- to 4-year-olds) make the most requests in-store, which suggests mothers take younger children shopping with them more often. Older children (9- to 11-year-olds) accompany their parents less often; therefore, they are not as 'available' to make product requests as their younger counterparts, as only 20 per cent of mothers report older children making in-store requests. In relation to this, McNeal (1992) suggested that sophisticated 'pestering' is not only confined to stores but also occurs at home before the shopping trip begins. Isler et al.'s (1987) research also indicates more than one location (e.g. at home and then at the store) for product requests. In-situ requests, such as those in shops, therefore appear highly influential in children's requests.

Research concerning co-shopping unobtrusively observed mother–child pairs in supermarkets and reported that children make an average of fifteen purchase influence attempts

during a shopping trip; 64 per cent of the requests happen in front of the product being requested and children are successful in almost half the requests (Atkin, 1975a; Galst and White, 1976; McNeal, 1992). However, fifteen or so requests made on an average shopping visit is in fact a small number in comparison to the plethora of products for sale in an average supermarket (McNeal, 1999). McNeal (1999) further suggested that this highlights a growing sense that retailers and their marketing tactics have set up conflict situations between parents and children. Conversely, Nicholls and Cullen (2004) surveyed retailers and found that 25 per cent of retailers take positive steps to minimise 'pester power' in-store, including removing confectionery from checkouts and training staff to mediate children's demands; on the other hand, about 15 per cent of retailers actively exploit it.

Furthermore, in relation to requests granted and refused while co-shopping, Liebeck (1994: 41) reported that 'mothers who shop with their kids wind up spending thirty percent more than they originally intended and fathers spend seventy percent more.' This suggests children have a direct influence on in-store purchases. Moreover, it suggests that fathers are more receptive to these requests (Nash, 2012). This raises an interesting question: why have fathers been historically ignored in relation to purchase request research? With dual-income families, much of the traditional household chores, including shopping, are shared between couples. This suggests that if this phenomenon is to be explored from a contemporary consumer perspective, fathers, along with their changing domestic roles, must be included in the research.

FAMILY COMMUNICATIONS

Family communication patterns are also considered pivotal in child consumer socialisation, with the communication style adopted by parents playing a role in the subsequent purchase influence of children (Caruna and Vassallo, 2003). Interactions occur between both parties when parents and children communicate about purchases and consumption (Ward et al., 1977). Sabino (2002: 11) states that nine out of ten parents actively discuss child requests and purchases with their children. Geuens et al. (2003: 56) state that 'parents who satisfy children's requests encourage children … to ask for things more frequently, while according to Ward et al. (1977) parents who discuss children's requests encourage them to develop skills in selecting and interpreting product information. One can only surmise that this product information not only originates from television advertising, again the focus of much research, but also relates to product information acquired both at home and in-store. Furthermore, the method of communication between parent and child has a more significant impact on consumer socialisation than frequency or amount of interaction between parent and child (Moschis and Moore, 1979; Moschis et al., 1986; Moschis and Mitchell, 1986). 'Family communication patterns are instrumental in the amount of influence that children exercise on family decisions in the present, and the way children will behave as consumers in the future' (Geuens et al., 2003: 57).

Thompson (2003) researched family communication patterns and categorised them along formal and informal dimensions. He claims formal discussion is encouraged by one or both parents; children do not initiate formal discussions, but instigate informal

methods which are conversational and unplanned and may arise without prior intention (Thompson, 2003). According to Thompson (2003: 27), 'with informal communication there may not be a specific outcome in mind for discussion and communication may be fairly broad in nature.' He suggests children may be taught consumer skills through both informal and formal communication methods. Families who predominantly use informal communication cite this as one of the reasons for involving children in decision making (Thompson, 2003).

Thompson (2003) also claimed that communication between parents and children may be two-way. Furthermore, he argued that whatever method of communication children use they are aware of their parents' interest in purchases and tailor their communication accordingly: 'They would discuss the purchase with the parent who had the most interest and whom they felt they would be able to influence' (Thompson, 2003: 32). This highlights the child's ability to engage in considered discussion with *both* parents and to tailor the discussion to the most appropriate parent in order to *influence* not *pester* them. None of his findings suggest any negative or conflictual relationship between parents and children in relation to purchase requests or decisions, as widely reported (Gunther and Furnham, 1998; Zoll, 2000; Bandyopadhyay et al., 2001).

However, according to Kilme-Dougan and Kopp (1999), parental styles and parent–child/family communication can result in conflict situations, not just in relation to consumption but also regarding everyday activities and interactions between parents and children. Conflict includes simple opposition, refusals and reasoned arguments (e.g. negotiation) which may be comprised of complex exchanges. Ultimately, the desired outcome is a negotiation between both parties resulting in a favourable outcome for both (Kilme-Dougan and Kopp, 1999). This suggests that all conflict patterns are the same, regardless of the stimulus.

To re-iterate, parents were identified as an important influence in developing the child consumer. This is an important area to focus on, considering changing social norms and changing patterns of family composition and communication, reflected in concerns about the parent–child purchase request relationship. However, fathers' experiences are not fully captured. Family formation is indeed changing, but it does not appear to affect the development of a child consumer. Moreover, changes in family communication and decision making appear to have become much less autocratic and more discursive with two-way communication and decision making now the norm for the majority of families. It could also be construed that contemporary parents recognise their children as important participants in all things 'family', thus recognising the contribution they make to family interactions and purchase decisions. By including children and encouraging them to vocalise their opinions in a more constructive manner, parents are aiding their development in all aspects of life, not just in relation to matters of purchase and consumption.

METHODOLOGY

This phenomenological study sets out to explore the nature of the parent–child purchase request relationship from the perspective of fathers, which necessitates a move away from

extant positivistic research, where their experiences are wholly neglected. Phenomenology seeks a first person's description of 'lived experience' (Thompson et al., 1989) and facilitates the identification of recurring experiential patterns as proposed by Ritson et al. (1996) and Ozanne and Hudson (1989). Moreover, interpretive research seeks respondents who have 'lived' experience of the focus of the study, who are willing to talk about their experience and who are diverse enough from one another to enhance possibilities of rich and unique stories of the particular experience (Polkinghorne, 1983; van Manen, 1997; Nash and Basini, 2012). Respondent recruitment is therefore planned and purposive (Goulding, 1999). In addition, Erlandson et al. (1993) reported that the principle concerning purposive sampling is to maximise discovery of heterogeneous patterns and not to generalise to the broad population; thus generalisability is not of fundamental importance to interpretivists. Therefore, no attempt was made to generate a representative sample, but all respondents matched the stipulated criteria, which included fathers from different counties in Ireland, with children aged between five and eleven, who have 'lived' experience of purchase requests. Purposive sampling was therefore employed to match respondents best suited to the research.

As mentioned, previous research in this area ignored social and familial changes, including the role adopted by fathers in contemporary families (Berey and Pollay, 1968; Ward and Wackman, 1972; Atkin, 1975b; Galst and White, 1976; Goldberg and Gorn, 1978; Isler et al., 1987; Furnham, 2000). This is acceptable to a point, considering the dated nature of these studies. However, contemporary changes dictated a fresh approach to the choice of parental respondents. Few researchers (for example, Goldberg and Gorn, 1978; and Palan and Wilkes, 1997) included fathers in similar research. Goldberg and Gorn (1978) concluded that fathers had very little influence in family decision making, particularly in parent–child purchase interactions, but that was more than 30 years ago when parenting was predominantly the domain of mothers. Palan and Wilkes (1997) employed a triad of adolescent–mother–father following the recommendation of Bell (1968) that parent–child relationships be examined bilaterally. Taking into account changes in society and families, it was deemed imperative that fathers *must* be included for the purpose of this study.

Contemporary parenting dictates a sharing of all parental duties; fathers are now more actively involved in their children's upbringing and communicate with their children more than previous generations. Therefore, fathers are an important and suitable source of data for this research. Indeed, it would be remiss not to 'tap into' their experiences of parent–child purchase request interactions if one is to examine this process from a consumer perspective. Powell et al. (2011) also considered the inclusion of both parents and children in the same study as an important facilitator of broadened analysis and deeper understanding of a topic. However, Powell et al. (2011) do not categorically state whether by using the term 'parents' they also include fathers.

FATHERS AND THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL INTERVIEW

Sample size is not stipulated in research of this nature. Ten subjects is typical, with three to ten employed by many researchers (McCracken, 1988; Mick and Buhl, 1992; Thompson,

1997; Thompson et al., 1990). In accordance with these guidelines, three fathers (with children aged between five and eleven) were included in the sample. They are diverse regarding certain characteristics, including educational attainments, income, occupations and whether or not they are in full-time employment. Furthermore, in an attempt to capture changing family demographics, two of the fathers included are currently engaged in their second families while one is also a stepfather (see Table 1).

Phenomenological interviews with each of the fathers were conducted over several weeks. All respondents were known to the researcher, and this planned and purposive selection of respondents facilitated open discussion and put respondents at ease, allowing them to feel more comfortable in expressing their experiences and stories of purchase interactions with children. Each interview lasted between 45 and 60 minutes. All respondents were approached personally and informed of the purpose of the interview and that it would be audio-taped; confidentiality was assured. No predetermined discussion was envisaged, the exception being some grand tour questions. All subsequent discussion arose as the interviews developed. Finally, all proceedings were verbally summarised and reiterated to respondents in order to clarify understanding of what transpired. Respondents were subsequently given the opportunity to make additional comments and, finally, they were thanked for their time. All names have been changed to guarantee anonymity.

Table 1: Summary of Paternal Respondents

Name	Age	Occupation	Marital Status	Children (Gender, Number and Ages)
John	42	Butcher	Married	Two daughters, aged 10 (biological) and 15 (stepdaughter), and one son, aged 9 (biological)
Pat	41	Working in the area of Information Technology	Married	One daughter aged 6 and one son aged 11 (both biological)
Luke	44	Retail Proprietor	Married	Daughter aged 15 (first marriage), twin daughters aged 5 (second family), and one son aged 8 (second family)

THE INTERPRETIVE PROCESS

The transcription process was rigorous to ensure that the data set captured the language, narratives and experiences as described by respondents and to remain true to the 'texts'. At all times the analysis remained faithful to the data set as transcribed and became 'the tool' from which interpretation began (Kvale, 1983). Verbatim descriptions of respondents' experiences were used precisely in this manner within this study to highlight any emergent themes (Thompson et al., 1990). Interpretive groups were also employed to clarify that an

appropriate interpretation was being advanced and to highlight any emergent themes which should be visible and understandable to other readers, but not necessarily the only possible interpretation (Thompson et al., 1990). In addition, they were also engaged to ensure that an appropriate interpretation was being advanced, and assisted the researcher in identifying the most salient aspects of the data set for interpretation. Thus, the focus was always to provide a 'best' interpretation of fathers' experiences, but it was acknowledged that other possible interpretations may also exist. This analytical process resulted in a number of themes which are evidenced and highlighted through the respondents' verbatim excerpts.

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Theme 1: It's Only Natural
While a number of themes emerged through interpretive analysis, the overriding thrust of fathers' purchase request experiences is that 'it is only natural'. The naturalness of this relationship, coupled with a familiarity of all aspects of the request process from initial requests through to a conclusion (purchase or refusal), permeates throughout. Contrary to previous studies, fathers in this study positioned purchase requests as a 'natural occurrence'. Moreover, they understand that it is typical child behaviour and are comfortable with it, as the following extract shows:

> **John:** 'They want what they want, if they can get it … But, sure, they're only kids; they all ask, but they don't always get it … Well, the first thing [they say] when they see it [is], "I'm getting that!" Naturally enough – they are only kids.'
>
> **Pat:** 'Well, they – everything that they see – tends to … draw their attention and make them want to come to us – myself or their mother – to discuss something usually leading towards getting what they saw … There's a lot of that definitely, a lot of that. She [his daughter] would say what it does of course, how it will benefit her and … she would basically say that she saw this and she saw that and she would like to have it. I actually think it's a good thing because it shows that she's clever and she knows what she wants and goes about it the right way kind of way.'

Moreover, fathers expect children to act as children and to be impulsive in their requests. They also consider the requests entertaining, suggesting a playfulness in purchase request relationships:

> **John:** '… you just have to sit back and laugh at some of the things they come out with.'

In addition, because fathers consider purchase requests a natural occurrence in their lives, it also emerged that they are acutely aware of imminent purchase requests:

John:	'I would be one step ahead of them … most of the time.'
Pat:	'Yeah, basically sometimes it [the request] was a hint, hint, hint thing.'

Likewise, an awareness of the types of products their children request also exists and typically includes child-oriented products, such as toys and sugary foods. Furthermore, fathers are aware of and knowledgeable about the influential factors of such purchase requests. They understand the roles peers, parents and the shopping experience, along with television advertising, play in the purchase request experience but, again, considered them a natural part of their lives. From the perspective of fathers, the role of peers in their children's purchase requests predominantly featured and was again understood to be a natural interaction in the lives of their children, as these fathers explained:

Pat:	'Well, especially the kids, as you know yourself, they do tend to get influenced by colleagues, as well – their friends – and that's a natural thing.'
Luke:	'Oh, I'd say probably friends and telly [are the most influential factors].'

Interestingly, fathers did not understand their role as influencer to be of great importance, instead believing that the shopping experience played a major role in their children's requests. Nash (2009) found that, contrary to fathers' beliefs, their children consider parents, both mothers *and* fathers, hugely influential in their purchase requests, simply because they trust them and acknowledge that purchases cannot be made without parental approval.

Theme 2: Purchase Request Deflection Strategies – The Justified Purchase
When purchase requests are made, fathers in this study have a catalogue of strategies to accept and deflect purchase requests, including direct refusals, engaging in a discussion with their child, stalling, distracting and bargaining. These strategies were all previously reported from mothers' experiences (see Isler et al., 1987; Gelperowic and Beharrell, 1994). Fathers' strategies for deflecting requests included:

John:	'Well "no" means "no" to my kids … I say "no" and that's it … Then again, you don't give in to everything. But … if I say "no" … I mean "no".'
Luke:	'I don't care; I just say "no" and that's it. It's "no".'
Pat:	'We have to try and explain first of all why we say "no", what the effect of it [is], whether it will be a good thing for them or not, and they accept; they normally accept what we say …'
Luke:	'[My children ask,] "Can we have one of these?" and I'd say, "No, sure we already have some at home."'

Fathers also provided numerous justifications for both purchases and refusals, predominantly including benefits, price and special occasions. Refusing undesirable purchase

requests, for whatever reason, involved fathers' understanding of responsible parenting, while stalling or distracting strategies were used to balance purchase requests which were granted or refused. The implementation of such strategies appears to absolve fathers' feelings of guilt in addition to not wanting to be too authoritative with their children. What the three fathers surveyed did not report was whether, following the application of these tactics, purchase requesting continued and, if so, whether they were likely to succumb to the repeated requests, although it was interpreted that they did not.

One of the most interesting justifications for purchases provided by one father in this study is termed the 'sibling cooperation request strategy'. It occurs when siblings cooperate with each other and engage in a 'pincer-like' approach to target parents for the requested item:

John:	'If they [his son and daughter] really want it or they thought they have some chance of getting it, they would work it out … Even the two of them together; I have noticed it. They would come at you from different angles.'
Interviewer:	'The two of them would come together?'
John:	'Oh, yeah.'
Interviewer:	'So, they work together; they can actually work in pairs?'
John:	'Oh they can … if it would be of joint benefit to the two of them, they would. Ian [his son] would say it to Mia [his daughter], or Mia would say it to Ian … it wouldn't be everything … something the two of them could get use out of.'
Interviewer:	'And do they stand a better chance of getting it?'
John:	'They do, yeah.'

This tactic appears to have a greater impact on the father, who in turn is more likely to consider the request if it benefits both his children. In this instance he considers the request more deeply; there may be more merit to it, as both children request the product. It also displays intelligence, possibly manipulation, on the part of children, as they understand that cooperating enhances the probability of obtaining the product. Either way, John understands the motives of his children, and it makes him consider the request in more detail. There is no annoyance or frustration in John's tone regarding this experience; furthermore, he appears to admire his children's intelligence in adopting this approach. Fathers recognise and understand these tactical games, as do their children. However, fathers view such tactics as a form of requesting, not pestering, contrary to other findings (Falbo and Peplau, 1980; Killgren and Moosa, 1999; Middleton et al., 1994).

Despite these tactical games, fathers have a number of stringent justifications to aid their purchase decision making, and they appear to take them quite seriously. A number of considerations are used to justify a purchase; these include price, needs versus wants, benefits and special occasions, similar to those reported by Isler et al. (1987). Yet, these

findings again refer solely to mothers. Interestingly, these same considerations can also be viewed as justifications for refusing purchase requests. On numerous occasions fathers referred to price and affordability as a key determinant in their purchases. Furthermore, the immediacy of the purchase is also linked to price: less expensive items tend to be purchased instantaneously:

Luke: 'Oh, yeah, but you have to keep it to budget … If I can afford it – no problem!'

It also emerged that extended discussions became more necessary between fathers and children as their purchase requests moved from inexpensive to expensive items. The fathers in this study believe that their children understand that expensive items cannot always be purchased immediately, which infers that children understand the value of money, or, at the very least, are taught it by their fathers. As such, fathers are happier acceding to requests and feel justified in purchasing when items are less expensive:

Pat: 'If it's pricey we have to weigh the benefits against the cons – what it does or doesn't do for the child. Again, the things that we would discuss – let's say quite lengthy – would be more important things, bigger things, more pricey things; these are the real things that we would bring to the discussion, but small things wouldn't really need that.'

John: 'It depends … the price, too, as well … If it's outrageous, yeah, you have to say "no".'

Likewise, if the items benefit their children and enhance their lives in some manner these are likely to be acceptable justifications for fathers to purchase:

Pat: 'Basically, firstly they would come to us, with the features and the benefits, and then, of course, we put that into perspective, you know – within reason – and then we see what we can do, and we kind of take [it] into consideration, and then I would … talk to them [his children] about it at a later date, after some consideration as such, a chat with Kate [his wife] for instance, and take it from there really … Yeah, she [his daughter] would say … how it will benefit her.'

Luke: 'Yeah, Sam [his son] hardly ever asks me to buy something, anything for him … Never – only when it's a magazine; he sometimes asks me to buy a magazine, and I do buy a magazine for him because I think it's nice … he's learning … I will spend money on that. Something like one of those magazines that brings out a DVD or a CD, you know what I mean – that you can learn with that. Even if it was a lot of money – a fiver or tenner – alright, I would buy it, no problem.'

Interestingly, when discussing justified purchases, fathers appear to promote an author-itarian stance and report that they purchase the items if the child *needs* the requested product, rather than just *wants* it. Their comments include:

> **Luke:** 'I never buy them anything … unless I think it's important for them. Okay, things like clothes or something important for them. Not any sweets or crisps … If they need it, it will be with them already; if they don't need it, there's no need to buy it.'

Birthdays and Christmases are also considered acceptable justifications for fathers to indulge or 'treat' their children; although unreported in the majority of other research it was quite prevalent in this study. However, price is still an issue; indulgences, too, are price dependent. Fathers, while acknowledging that special occasions are acceptable times to indulge their children, are also quick to point out that these are subject to limitations, predominantly price. This suggests that fathers wish to provide their children with as much as they can afford, while still maintaining control:

> **John:** 'It depends if there was a birthday or Christmas, or whatever occasion – they might have a good chance of getting it. Yeah, they might have a good chance of getting whatever they were looking for.'

Theme 3: The Request Refusal Experience

Refusals to purchase requested items also lead to a number of issues for both fathers and children, namely disagreement between the parties and disappointment for children. However, both issues are dealt with accordingly by fathers and are considered another natural part of the purchase request relationship, and treated accordingly. Any disagree-ments that occur are considered inconsequential to their relationship and, moreover, are of a relatively limited duration. Luke commented on the longevity of disputes that occurred between him and his children. He described how their relationship may deteriorate, temporarily, complementing experiences of other fathers, but he similarly understood it to be an insignificant issue and 'no big deal':

> **Luke:** 'Well, if I say "no", Sam [his son] gets a bit pissed off, but then afterwards I just play with him and … we get along well.'
> **Interviewer:** 'What would he do if he got pissed off?'
> **Luke:** 'Oh … he's got a face that's deadly … he shows his cross face.'
> **Interviewer:** 'That's it?'
> **Luke:** 'Then that's it … he doesn't go any further than that.'
> **Interviewer:** 'And what about the girls [twin daughters]?'
> **Luke:** 'Oh, they start whinging … I don't care if they whinge; then I start counting …'

Luke's experiences range from his son being angry or giving him dirty looks to his younger daughters 'whinging'. He commented that disputes with his son do not escalate past dirty looks and, effectively, they are forgotten about in a short period of time. His tone in relation to his daughters' behaviour is markedly different, almost indignant, as he discusses how his daughters 'whinge' but, as a disciplinarian, he exercises his authority to resolve the situation as quickly as possible. He remarks, 'I start counting,' referring to a disciplinary measure he uses to calm and control his children. In contrast, when tension exists between him and his older son, he resolves the situation through play, which means that refusals do not adversely affect their relationship. The limited duration of disagreements, their inconsequential nature and the naturalness of these occurrences between fathers and their children is a recurring theme throughout the narratives of the fathers surveyed and appears to be in complete opposition to other parent–child purchase relationship studies concerning mothers' experiences (McNeal, 1992; Middleton et al., 1994; Gunther and Furnham, 1998; Zoll, 2000; Bandyopadhyay et al., 2001; Quinn, 2002).

Request Refusal Resolution
Likewise, fathers also understand that purchase request refusals may lead to disappointment and, therefore, necessitate more communication with and explanations to their children:

> **John:** 'I'd explain that [the reason for the refusal] to them; you'd have to like – the child would be disappointed.'

However, this understanding of the child's disappointment is best illustrated by Pat's experience:

> **Interviewer:** 'Okay, so they'll be a bit disappointed … when you say "no" with an explanation that normally applies. But your daughter might come back a couple of times and ask – and be upset, perhaps, about it. Have you any examples where that has happened and how she's behaved?'
> **Pat:** 'She doesn't really kind of hold it against us; she doesn't stay angry for long … she doesn't really hold it against us.'
> **Interviewer:** 'Her disappointment wouldn't last too long? What would that moment entail?'
> **Pat:** '… disappointment really for her. She would go away, for instance … she would say "it's not fair" … that would be one of the first things. And she would go away to her room, for that moment, and come back later … but no major consequences. They're quite good in that sense, you know.'

Initially, it appears that Pat's daughter conforms to typical refusal behaviour: repeating requests, withdrawing from the situation, engendering parental guilt, getting upset and

so on. This could be interpreted as parent–child conflict. However, Pat's description of 'no major consequences' is paramount to his explanation. Yes, his daughter can be disappointed, and she can direct her disappointment at him, but it does not concern him. He does not view it as pestering or a major conflict situation between him and his child, and his daughter does not hold it against him. It is simply inconsequential. More to the point, these disagreements or disputes are understood to be 'normal' or natural child behaviour. In fact, Pat believes his children to be quite understanding when it comes to such situations.

As the above theme illustrates, fathers regularly engage in discussion with their children about purchase requests. This helps to limit any damage that may occur in their relationships. Their experiences are reflective of a 'cruel to be kind' mindset. Fathers believe request refusals are made for good reasons, predominantly that it is beneficial to their children, but they also want their children to understand the reason for the refusal; thus they engage in explanations and discussions with their children, complementing studies by Moschis and Moore (1979), Moschis et al. (1986), Moschis and Mitchell (1986), Torrance (1998) and Sabino (2002).

Theme 4: Fathers' Co-Shopping Experiences
Fathers also have experiences of purchase requests in shops while co-shopping with their children. Again, the natural and playful element of these interactions is evident in the following extract and demonstrates fathers' acute awareness of in-situ purchase requests and resultant behaviour:

Interviewer: 'Do you ever go shopping?'
John: 'Yes, food shopping.'
Interviewer: 'Would you bring the kids with you?'
John: 'Not unless I had to [laughs]. Ah no, they are not too bad.'
Interviewer: 'And tell me, what about … if you are in a supermarket with them; would they ever make requests in a supermarket for something?'
John: 'Oh, God, yeah! All the time! You'd be taking more stuff out of the trolley than putting into it. They would be going on, "Oh I want this" … when you have your back turned something else has gone in [to the trolley], but you take that out, and when you'd be doing that, something else will be gone back into the trolley.'
Interviewer: 'So, in the supermarket, they don't even bother asking?'
John: 'Yes, some of the time … The odd time you get a request, and you get to say "no", so it doesn't leave the shelf.'

Here, John provides a good illustration of a typical purchase request interaction between him and his children. He initially jokes that if he could avoid taking his children with him on a shopping expedition, he would, similar to Nicholls and Cullen's (2004) 'unavoidable companion', because he understands what is likely to occur if they accompany him.

However, unlike Nicholls and Cullen's (2004) study (which again focuses on mothers), fathers in this study do not view co-shopping as an exasperating situation, but positions it in a more positive and playful light. Despite John's awareness and understanding of how the shopping trip may unfold, he still views it as a minor issue, and he is comfortable with the idea of his children accompanying him to the supermarket. He also understands that it is natural for children to place items in the shopping trolley, without an actual purchase request or permission being granted; after all, children observe their parents doing this from a young age, similarly reported by Rust (1993) and Wilson and Wood (2004). Likewise, purchase requests can also be made. This also reflects children's understanding that some items require parental permission, and these purchases must be facilitated by parents.

Theme 5: The Sensible Authoritarian Parent
Fathers are also very vocal in their assessment of themselves as the 'sensible' authoritarian parent, considering themselves less likely to concede to their children's purchase requests than their wives. In all instances fathers believe they are more logical in their ability to assess and either grant or refuse a purchase request. They further believe that their wives are far more likely to 'give in' to their children's demands, contrary to Liebeck's (1994) findings:

> **Pat:**   'I think Kate [his wife] would give in easier than me. She is softer than me with the kids … more often than not, especially on smaller things; she tends to … overwrite and skip past a decision with her because I find, when I think about something, and I think that it doesn't really matter or it's not going to make an impact on the child, either good or bad … and it's not something that's pricey either, I practically leave it to her. Because, at the end of the day, she is probably the person more likely to make the purchase anyway, and I'm sure she gets a thrill from that.'

Pat uses the word 'softer' to describe his wife, portraying himself as the authoritarian. This is interesting considering he is involved in some decisions, but not all of them. However, if mothers are the main target for requests, as is frequently reported by Bailey (2002), then it is only logical that they accede to requests more frequently. Pat also acknowledges that his wife facilitates most of the purchases. This is supported by research which also includes children, where they, too, state that their mothers are the main request target and are more likely to facilitate such requests (Nash, 2009). Pat appears happy to concede such decisions to his wife, giving her authority, as he believes she is in a better position and prefers to facilitate requests.

Similarly, on the request front at least, fathers believe that they are the more 'sensible' parent, as they would not surrender to children's requests, or effectively waste money, on some of the items that their wives purchase:

Luke:	'She buys the toys for Christmas; I would never spend so much money – all the junk! You know, there are more important things.'
Interviewer:	'So your wife would end up buying most of the requests?'
Luke:	'I think so, because I don't.'

Closely linked to the 'sensible' parent stance adopted by fathers is the issue of the authoritarian parent. Throughout the interviews, the fathers surveyed regularly narrated their authoritative position by saying 'no' to their children for certain purchase requests. This comes from their understanding that they cannot or should not yield to all purchase requests, thereby reinforcing their power and authority in these situations. A direct refusal is the first action by fathers to ward off superfluous requests and, most succinctly, portrays what they consider to be an authoritative approach, as the following example shows:

John:	'It's a good stern "No!"… Not everything was got there and then.'

John reveals that 'not everything was got there and then', advocating that it is acceptable to 'give in' at times, but not always. In addition, he understands that there are occasions when refusals must be applied: his children simply cannot have everything they want when they want it. He understands that refusing requests and exercising authority ultimately benefits his children and reinforces his understanding of responsible parenting. These strategies do not involve making deals but consist of unilateral, authoritative declarations by fathers. This study reveals that purchase request refusals, while appearing harsh, are understood – either consciously or subconsciously – by fathers to be beneficial to their children and, as such, they address fathers' desires to nurture and protect.

In contrast to the authoritarian father is the indulgent father. In order to provide a balance between purchase requests and refusals, fathers also initiate some purchases for their children in the form of indulgences. Moreover, these indulgences are categorised as rewards by fathers but, interestingly, are initiated by fathers themselves not the children:

Pat:	'Because sometimes we want to kind of reward the child with something – you know, take home something. You know, they're good kids … and we are pretty much aware of that, and we feel that we are quite lucky with them and don't have any trouble; they don't give [us] any hassle of any kind at all and … we are happy with that and, as I said, from time to time, a nice little something won't do any harm.'

More significantly, rewarding or indulging his children is acceptable to Pat and is not considered detrimental to his children. It is 'okay' to reward them occasionally; it does not make him a 'bad' parent. In addition, he views this situation as a direct result of his first-rate parenting skills: his children are well-behaved; therefore, rewards are justified. Thus, in an attempt to introduce a balance to proceedings, fathers are not always authoritarian; they occasionally indulge, reward and treat their children with either requested

or unrequested items. However, when the discussion turned to such matters, the fathers surveyed appeared somewhat reticent to discuss this fact. They also sought to justify this indulgent aspect of their parenting behaviour by means of rewards, special occasions, price and benefits in order to reconcile their understanding of responsible parenting.

It also emerged during the course of this study, and appears unreported, that fathers' own childhood plays a role in their parenting skills and their subsequent parent–child purchase request relationships. In their responses to this study fathers describe and compare their own upbringing to their children's and society's views of child-rearing in general. The general thrust of their narratives is, 'If it was good enough for me, then it is good enough for them.' Recalling their own childhood, fathers address the issue of their parenting skills and compare their personal history (their rearing) with current standards and a socially shared understanding of what is considered to be a 'good parent' today, including communicating with your children, involving them in decisions, and so on. As a result of their upbringing, they understand themselves to be sensible, responsible and nurturing individuals and wish the same for their children. However, they also recognise that contemporary society is different in relation to the products and services children request, want and expect:

> **John:** 'They expect more … everything like mobile phones now, and this, that and the other; [things] we never had … Certainly, we had a car, but we cycled and walked; now they expect to be driven. They [his children] want more and more and more, but give less and less back, if you know what I mean … They love you and love you for this, that and the other but, yet, when you ask them to do something, there is a tantrum or there is a "no" straight away … [they] think they shouldn't have to do it: Mammy and Daddy are there to provide, wash, clean, dry.'
>
> **Interviewer:** 'Everything I want without having to give Mammy and Daddy anything back in return for it?'
>
> **John:** 'Yeah, to a certain degree.'
>
> **Interviewer:** 'You don't like that, obviously?'
>
> **John:** 'No, I don't. I wasn't reared up that way, and I don't think me [sic] own kids should be … Yeah, no matter how much money, they should be able to do something for themselves.'

The other fathers surveyed had a similar, but not so staunch, opinion regarding this issue:

> **Luke:** 'I was raised like this, and I don't think I'm bad; so, go on with it.'

Nonetheless, the sentiments are similar. John highlights that it is not just more products that children desire; he also makes reference to the fact that they expect more in general. This appears to antagonise him. He does not believe that his children should behave in this manner, but he views it as a reflection on society, thereby absolving himself of blame. John

made a previous reference to his children being influenced by peers; however, he does not state whether he feels that this is the main reason for his children's purchase requests or if it is a more general pattern of requesting occurring. Overall, fathers' understanding of their own childhood and how they view themselves as parents impacts on their relationships with their own children today.

DISCUSSION

Fathers' experiences of the purchase request relationship are similar in some areas to those of mothers, but they have not been captured until now because the majority of previous research concerning the parent–child purchase request relationship devoted little attention to their experiences. This study sought to address this occurrence, seeking fathers' understanding of the parent–child purchase request relationship as they live and experience it. This approach departs from similar research studies in two main areas: firstly, through the approach adopted – interpretivism rather than positivism; and, secondly, through the perspective sought – fathers instead of mothers as parental proxy. By adopting a father-centric approach, this research sought to uncover a new understanding of their purchase request process experience. The value of this approach resulted in a rich array of findings, some of which concurs with previous studies but, more importantly, also reveals new findings and experiences.

An acceptance of children's purchase requests dominates fathers' experiences, as they consider them typical, natural child behaviour. The fathers in this study explained that discussing purchase requests with their children rather than dictatorially refusing them dominates their experience and aids an understanding on both sides for the decisions made, limiting any potential damage to the relationship between father and child, consistent with McNeal (1992), Dahlberg (1996) and Torrance (1998). Moreover, engagements in these discussions are viewed by fathers as playing a pivotal role in the purchase request process and the education and socialisation of their children as consumers. This discursive aspect of a child's socialisation is widely reported in other studies (including Neeley and Coffey, 2004; and Geuens et al., 2003) where mothers' experiences are highlighted, and is also regularly referred to by the fathers in this study.

The issue of *who* has the power in relation to the parent–child purchase request relationship also surfaced. In this study, a balance of power emerged, and it moves between fathers and children in each individual purchase interaction. Fathers exercise their power in relation to purchases – a time to say 'no' and a time to say 'yes' – but they also relinquish power to their children for beneficial purchases, as similarly reported by Valkenburg and Cantor (2001). This study recognises this occurrence as an attempt to balance refusals and purchases and, thus, power.

Likewise, fathers balance purchases and refusals based on a set of principles and responsibilities which are important to them, including benefits and price, similar to Hite and Eck (1987). These refusals are enforced for the protection and well-being of their children, as consistent with Cross (2002), who found that parents wish to both protect and educate their children simultaneously, which is not always easy, although it appears to work well

in the lives of these respondents. Furthermore, purchase request refusals are balanced by rewards and indulgent purchases or 'treats', which are often initiated by fathers themselves. Equally, fathers know when to say 'no'; they are reluctant to be perceived as spoiling their children, so not all requests are facilitated, similar to the findings of Flurry and Burns (2005). However, instead of showing parents spoiling their children, Flurry and Burns' (2005) research insinuates parental susceptibility to manipulation by their children, suggesting that parents may lack certain disciplinary skills, or are viewed in this way by society; these findings are not evident in this study. Fathers view the parent–child purchase request process as a learning situation for their children, and believe it instils in their children the knowledge that they cannot always have everything they want when they want it. Moreover, this is how the fathers were raised, and they wish to raise their children in a similar manner.

CONCLUSIONS

The departure from the more positivistic research associated with the parent–child purchase request relationship proved very beneficial and was essential in uncovering the meanings fathers associate with the parent–child purchase request relationship. The inclusion of fathers in this research added a new breadth and dimension to an understanding of the parent–child purchase request relationship, some of which has not previously been captured in mother-centric studies. It seems extraordinary that so few studies have included fathers in similar research, considering their centrality to the experience. Findings strongly indicate that, thus far, there is an under-recognised role of the father in all commercially driven undertakings. This study highlights the fact that fathers have as much understanding of the parent–child purchase request relationship as mothers, albeit more positively positioned than previous research reports. This is coupled with an increased involvement in and acute awareness of the intricacies of the entire purchase request process but, again, is not reflected in either research or the commercial world. Essentially, fathers should be viewed as a valuable source of research opportunities, knowledge and understanding in this area in future.

Recommendations for Future Research

Transitions in families and parental roles mean that fathers' stories are still an untapped and valuable source of knowledge not adequately covered in research to date, and therefore require further investigation.

Shops, in-store displays and merchandising, and the shopping experience are cited in this study as a major influence in the lives of these fathers and the purchase request process. Previous studies also report these factors as an influence in children's purchase requests, although they have received little attention regarding the extent of this influence. Thus, shops and the co-shopping experience as an influence on consumer socialisation warrants further investigation.

Moreover, future research should adopt a triadic approach of father–mother–child respondents to capture the entire parent–child purchase request experience.

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