Revisiting the Family Tree: Historical and Future Consumer Behavior Research

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The family metaphor is in this paper used to describe the development of consumer behavior as a field of study and to illustrate how consumer behavior researchers act and interact, in the past and presently. We are born or married into a family, just as we as researchers are thrust or introduced into a family of researchers, by choosing a particular research orientation when starting Ph.D. studies or when working on joint research projects. Even though the importance of the family as an institution varies across cultures, it appears to play a major role in most of our lives. The legal system of heritage is based on the family notion and kinship and we are reminded and related to the past in terms of testaments and the heritage of family heirlooms. This is also the case in research families where new research is related to previous research. By studying family roots, we will better understand family history, just as the genealogy of consumer behavior will increase our understanding of its development and sources of inspiration. It will help us comprehend today's situation and who our family members are, but also make us reflect upon the future development of consumer behavior as a field of study. The purpose of this paper is to encourage the dynamic development of consumer behavior and to make the relations to our research "family" (or families) to a topic for discussion and reflection.

The Family Metaphor

The family metaphor is used to illustrate processes and aspects of academic life, primarily although not necessarily limited to research in consumer behavior. The definition of family and who we consider as our family members varies. The closeness of kin is defined as those researchers sharing a similar research orientation. Departments, institutes, research organizations, dissertation committees, and collegial networks are examples of research families. While some researchers belong to a family representing mainly one discipline, others have relations to one or several families representing different disciplines. Relations with other fields of research or over scientific borders are like having relations with or marrying into families of different ethnic origin. Family relations differ in terms of bonds, cohesiveness, and individual independence. Family interaction depends on resources, which apart from researchers' knowledge, experience, and creativity consists of time for research, assistants, money, and equipment such as computers, offices, libraries, etc.

A Review of Key Historical Familial Disciplinary Moments

It is possible to view the research family from the perspective of a family tree. Each period in the historical development represents a branch and each publication in the reference list has its own picture on the family tree. This paper builds on previous researchers' (Arndt 1986; Belk 1995) reflections on the history of consumer behavior as a field of study as well as additional literature reviews. Different decades in family history can be looked upon as generations of families including different research orientations or families of research that rise and fall in power over time, also representing new versus old perspectives and paradigm shifts. The field of consumer behavior research has, during the last twenty years, experienced its greatest schism and paradigm shift. New topics have been introduced, but more important is the shift in method and paradigm. This has stimulated a discussion about new ways of seeking knowledge. After a vigorous debate about where we are heading during the end of the 1980s and beginning of the 1990s, the discussion has lately been less heated. The two predominant paradigms, positivistic and interpretive consumer research exist side by side, each including a number of different approaches for conducting research.

The Family Metaphor and our Consumer Research Family

Each generation of researchers is influenced by the time during which they grew up. Researchers from the same generation are socialized to adhere to similar schools of thought even though socialization continues throughout life and research careers. Just as each generation adapts certain lifestyles and adheres to particular styles of fashion, so do consumer researchers of different generations adhere to certain research orientations. Our family genealogy shows different fields of study, which have been popular over time. Economics and later psychology had a major impact on the foundation of the marketing discipline. Both left significant imprints on our field of study. More recently, the influence of anthropology has been particularly noticeable. The newer postmodern fashion reminds us of the existing fragmentation. Consumer research is today conducted in a number of different disciplines representing different perspectives, theories, and methods. There has been an increase in the number of research journals publishing consumer research, as well as academic conferences dealing with consumer research.

For Generations to Come…

The paper ends with a discussion about the future, involving inquiries on how research is to be conducted, what will drive the research questions, for whom research will be conducted, etc. Different perceptions among family members are likely to contribute to make the family discussion dynamic and vivid. A family of pluralists is advocated for developing consumer behavior research also in the future. Furthermore, it is of interest to try to understand what keeps the research family (or families) together and to identify what makes the research family dysfunctional in order to prevent this from happening. A well-functioning research family can provide the joy of cohesiveness and at the same time provide opportunities for one to develop as an individual researcher.

KeyWords: Consumer Behavior Research, Family, Metaphor, Socialization, Paradigm.

Revisiting the Family Tree: Historical and Future Consumer Behavior Research

One of the problems facing the field of contemporary consumer behavior research is similar to how children, especially teenagers, going through an identity crisis might feel - they are not sure where they came from, why, and certainly not where they are going. They are unsure why parts of their family don't interact with the other, why they may not play with their positivist/interpretivist cousins, visit their skeptical cognitive uncle, or their suspiciously semiotic aunt. Their identity, as well as consumer behavior researchers' scholarly location, is believed to be affected by an understanding of family history. An awareness of the past will help them understand their family better - who their family members are, how relations of different strength and character have been formed over time, and what has kept the family together or separated. Historical knowledge will also be useful when thinking of future consumer behavior research.

While a comprehensive genealogy is beyond the scope of this paper, the family metaphor might help to describe key moments, developments, breaks, and reconciliations in the development of consumer behavior as a field of study and to illustrate how consumer behavior researchers act and interact (or not). Its contribution is to provide disciplinary geography and to make the dynamic development of consumer behavior and the relations to our research "family" (or families) to a topic for discussion and reflection. By studying the key moments in the genealogy of consumer behavior, we will better recognize sources of inspiration, sources of schism, and perhaps paths to meaningful reunion.

We are born or married into a family, just as we as researchers are thrust or introduced into a family of researchers, by choosing a particular research orientation when starting Ph.D. studies or when working on joint research projects. To be part of a family involves moments of happiness as well as moments of anxiety. The perception of whether something is good or bad and strategies for dealing with different situations differs among family members, just as it differs among researchers. I believe that family problems should be brought out into the open. Vigorous discussions around the family dinner table are favored over asking individual family members to be quiet or sending them for therapy. Some family members may find the tone of voice a bit offensive. The aim is, however, to be thought provoking, challenging, and to stimulate discussion of consumer research for the future.

This paper is organized as follows: First, the family metaphor is situated and applied to illustrate processes and aspects of academic life, primarily although not necessarily limited to research in consumer behavior. A review of key historical familial disciplinary moments is then offered building on previous researchers' (Arndt 1986; Belk 1995) reflections as well as additional literature reviews. Recent developments, new versus old perspectives, and paradigm shifts are of special interest for understanding today's situation. The family metaphor is then extended to the history of our consumer behavior research family. The last section deals with the family's future, involving inquiries on how research is to be conducted, what will drive the research questions, for whom research will be conducted, and how to keep the family together, etc. The answers are expressed in family terms and rhetoric and are likely to depend on the definition of our family and field of study.

THE FAMILY METAPHOR

Metaphors are common among humans, even social scientists. "Metaphor is the backbone of social science writing. Like the spine, it bears weight, permits movement, is buried beneath the surface, and links parts together into a functional, coherent whole" (Richardson 1994, p.519). Metaphors are used to describe something in terms of something else. By comparison or analogy, metaphors allow us to make the implicit more explicit and understandable. By using a metaphor, it is possible to transfer meaning and structured knowledge from a familiar to a novel domain (Gregan-Paxton 1998). Metaphors can also develop the researcher's imagination and thus contribute to research (Goodwin 1996, p.31). Zaltman (1997, p.425) discusses how metaphors can be used as a research method as a means of finding hidden thoughts and feelings and stresses: "without metaphors we cannot imagine: they are the engines of imagination." It is important that a metaphor covers many different aspects of the particular phenomenon studied and that the metaphor is not contradictory in itself. Of course, a metaphor may be able to explain specific aspects of a phenomenon, but not all aspects (Goodwin 1996; Lakoff and Johnson 1980). Cultural values are coherent with metaphors (Lakoff and Johnson 1980) and should also be considered when choosing a metaphor.

The chosen metaphor, the family, covers many different aspects of the phenomenon to be described. The family metaphor has been used in earlier research by considering the work organization as family (Brown and McCartney 1996) and employees as family members (Trice and Beyer 1993). A related metaphor, the marital metaphor, has been used by Dwyer, Schurr and Oh (1987) to illustrate the evolvement of buyer-seller relationships. More importantly, the family metaphor is used everyday by humans the world over.

A Research Family

The definition of family and who we consider as our family members varies. Stacey (1990) describes the postmodern family not as residence, but of meaning and relationships. According to Stacey (1990), an individual belongs to a social network, part of which can be described as a family in terms of its meaning to the individual. The social network may include members from the formal and/or informal family. The formal family is the family where ties are formed by blood and legal relations while the informal family is constituted by the individual's feelings of belonging and emotional proximity to each other. Departments, institutes, research organizations, or dissertation committees are examples of more formal research families while colleagues who meet and discuss research on the internet (for example, the ACR listserve) may represent a more informal research family.

In the chosen metaphor, the closeness of kin is defined as those researchers sharing a similar research orientation. Depending on one's research interests and academic background, we may belong to one or more close-kin groups to which we have different degrees of common ancestry. Prior to the field's well publicized schism during the 1980s, close family was probably defined more institutionally or by ancestry to one's advisor. The dominance of the economic family used to be prevalent at family gatherings, while a pluralistic family is more common today. While some researchers belong to a family representing mainly one discipline (e.g. marketing), others have relations with one or several families representing different disciplines (anthropology, ethnology, psychology, sociology, etc.). In our research family (families), it may be possible to equate tribalism to epistemological camps, and to equate clans to differing theoretical interests. Moreover, families are continuously subject to change in that new family members are born, family members die, people marry, divorce, remarry, and form new families. Also, researchers do mature into new family roles throughout life and establish new research families.

The small family of researchers who originally studied consumers has been growing over time to include a large number of researchers representing varying research orientations. One of our first ancestors was Veblen (1994), still famous for his writings about conspicuous consumption. If we take the entire enterprise of studying consumer behavior as the full family, we have a large family indeed. It is acknowledged by some, but not by all family members, that some of the grand theorists of the late twentieth century were (and are) consumer researchers: Bourdieu (1989), Baudrillard (1998), Goffman (1990), and Giddens (1991) et al. Their works, available in just about any bookstore in the world, are key treatises on consumption in contemporary society. They are considered family members by some, although it would be an exaggeration to say that this is universally the case among consumer researchers.

Family Members

We need to recognize that there exist a variety of different family members with different traditions and orientations. Bagozzi (1992) discusses that there are two poles: scholarly consumer researchers and applied consumer researchers. The *scholarly consumer researchers* generate ideas by themselves, but also based on feedback and research from peers. The *applied consumer researchers* generate their ideas by business or governmental problems. However, the extent to which consumer researchers are expected to interact and help to solve societal problems by doing consulting for businesses and government is culturally determined.

According to Bagozzi (1992), the guiding watchwords for scholarly consumer researchers are discovery, surprise, serendipity, analysis, elegance, internal consistency, and grounded in theory. The guiding watchwords for the applied consumer researchers are, according to Bagozzi (1992), application, relevancy, utility to practitioners, usefulness, synthesis, external validity, parsimony, and grounded in experience. The differences are bound to result in conflict. Bagozzi (1992) goes as far as stating that applied consumer researchers have on average stronger social skills than the scholarly consumer researchers. He also notes that their lifestyles differ. The applied consumer researchers have on average a higher standard of living than the scholarly consumer researchers, which leads to conflict.

Also, Wind, Rao, and Green (1991) distinguish between different segments of consumer researchers. First, there are *academic consumer researchers* who consider consumer research as a separate discipline and who are less concerned with practice. Their primary focus is consumer theory. Second, there are *marketing scientists* who pursue prescriptive or normative modeling of marketing phenomena, including consumer behavior. Their primary focus is marketing theory and methods. Third, there are *behavioral theorists* who develop and test behavioral theories in their respective discipline (e.g., psychology, sociology etc). Their primary focus is theories of human behavior. Fourth, there are *behavioral science methodologists* (e.g., mathematical psychologists and mathematical sociologists) who develop methodologies for testing and validating theories. Their primary focus is methodologies. Fifth, there are *consumer research practitioners* who work on applied problems by using the results of consumer research. Wind et al. (1991) emphasize that an individual, depending on his/her research activity, can belong to one or several segments. Furthermore, it is here suggested that an open dialogue between different actors interested in understanding consumers, such as researchers, governments, consumer protection agencies, and business people is expected to benefit the field of study.

Forming Relations and Families

In the research romance we exchange ideas and expose our knowledge as ways to attract the other party. Showing the best sides, getting to know and respect each other are parts of the preliminary stages. Some researchers meet the old traditional way by being introduced to someone nice by a family member. Others meet researchers who share the same research interests at conferences or via Internet. The formality/informality of the meetings is likely to differ across cultures, for example, whether a researcher is addressed/introduced by his/her first or second name, with or without a title. Sometimes researchers get attracted to researchers having opposite views. As a result, the researchers may complement, learn from each other, or argue. Also, cultural values affect how family members form relations. Dating, cohabitation, or homosexual partnerships are accepted in some cultures, but not in others. The perception of how researchers form relations is also likely to differ. For example, to what extent is it acceptable to have a relation with someone in a non-traditional field of study? In order to avoid problems related to inbreeding, an American Ph.D. is usually not hired at the same university as the degree was received.

Fournier (1998) discusses different *relationship forms* related to brands such as arranged marriages, causal friends/buddies, marriages of convenience, committed partnerships, best friendships etc. Similar types of research relationships may also exist in research families. Relations with other fields of research or over scientific borders are like having relations with or marrying into families of different ethnic origin. New holiday traditions, different spices, expressions, etc., are introduced. Each family brings its own history, a history which will influence the way it functions and the way it interprets things. The same can be seen in research, resulting in new insights and broadened perspectives. Different backgrounds and viewpoints can also result in vivid discussions.

Academic Children

Doctoral students are just as children continually socialized to become members of their families by learning the established norms and values. The German term for advisor, “Doktorvater”, implies a family bond between the Ph.D. student and the supervisor. One difference between bringing up children and guiding Ph.D. students is that academic parents or advisors can choose which Ph.D. students to guide and that Ph.D. students often can choose their advisors. A provocative question is whether doctoral students with advisors in many different disciplines risk to be considered bastard children.

The outcome of the child rearing process is difficult to forecast both regarding children and Ph.D. students, particularly before they have reached a certain level of maturity. Different views on upbringing of children parallel the diversity of ideas regarding management of scientific offsprings. Examples of *parental style* are authoritarian, permissive, rigid controlling, authoritative, and neglecting (Carlson and Grossbart 1988). Parental or advisory style differs in research families and across cultures. Since advisory style is likely to affect the outcome, both the dissertation, the doctorate, but also his/her future Ph.D. students, it needs to be discussed more explicitly. For example, are children taught to see the strengths and potential in others' work (e.g., scientific papers reviewed) or are they mainly taught to focus on the weaknesses? Sibling rivalry exists also in academic families. Is it considered healthy competition and normal, or can it ultimately be destructive and lead to children despising each other?

Not only children learn during their upbringing from their parents. Parents learn also from their children who make them aware of new trends (Ekström 1995). It is sometimes referred to as reverse socialization (Ward 1974). Mueller (1958) found that the desire for innovation (becoming interested in a new product before it attains widespread acceptance) was higher among couples with children than among those with no children. Also academic children bring new ideas to their academic parents. A provocative speculation is that researchers without Ph.D. students may be more old-fashioned because they are less likely to study new phenomena. An exception to this speculation is Hirschman (2000), an innovative family member working at Rutgers University, where there is no doctoral program in marketing.

Another issue concerns communication after the children have grown up and left the nest. Do advisors and their former children keep in touch? Do children receive or want emotional support to become a full-fledged scholar in their post-doctoral life? Or do they feel or want to be abandoned by their parents to become independent scholars? In business life, mentors often help in training executives. To what extent does a similar system exist in the academic life in order to encourage and support someone who wants to be promoted to associate or ultimately full professorship?

Family Dynamics

A family as well as a research family can provide security and comfort, but can also be perceived as setting limits on a family member's own personal development. *Family relations* are of different strength and character and differ in terms of bonds, cohesiveness, and individual independence. The fact that family members often tend to look after each other is illustrated by another metaphor "blood is thicker than water". Family members interact and influence each other just as we as researchers do in our research family. Also, some family members (e.g. Baudrillard 1998; Bourdieu 1989) receive more admiration than others.

Families can be organized or structured in different ways. The *roles and tasks* differ for individual family members, but are also subject to change over time. In addition, these roles and tasks may differ in private or public. For example, a family member may be expected to dominate in public, but this may not be the case at home. A researcher may dominate in the international research community, but not necessarily in his/her own department or vice versa. Family life differs in that family members have different ways of conducting research, reviewing papers, ways of guiding their Ph.D. students, scheduling meetings, arranging seminars, and conferences.

Family traditions and rituals such as marriage, baptism, birthdays, etc. are celebrated and remembered in different ways in families just as academic events and rites of passages such as receipt of Ph.D., promotion to professor, publications, or external funding are celebrated and remembered in different ways in different academic families. Support of one's family of origin (degree granting institution) and formed family (the one for which we work and our collegial networks) is important on such occasions.

Family members keep in touch and *communicate*, for example by e-mail, newsletters, conferences, etc. Conferences can be compared to reunions between relatives, or family gatherings, even if Lodge (1984) prefers to compare them to tribe meetings or pilgrimage tours. Conferences are manifestations both of emerging issues and of connections to tradition. New and old contacts are made and maintained.

Family interaction also depends on *resources*, which apart from researchers' knowledge, experience, and creativity consists of time for research, assistants, money, and equipment such as computers, offices, libraries, etc. Foa and Foa (1974) discuss different types of resources such as love, money, and esteem, some of which may be more exchangeable than others. Resource theory states that resources will determine who dominates in family decisions (Blood and Wolfe 1960). A lack of resources may put restraints on family interaction. For example, a lack of time for research may result in a department lacking publication records and ultimately limited intellectual discussion and growth. Family life is also dependent on institutions like governments, day care centers, schools, etc. The same is true for the research community, which depends on universities, deans, funding institutions, academic networks and organizations, conferences, journals, etc.

Family members as well as researchers have different perceptions and opinions. *Conflicts* occur even if they are covert at times. Culture sets norms for what is acceptable or not. Is it acceptable for family members to quarrel in the street? Are family problems made visible to the environment or discussed only by the closest family members under seclusion? It has been claimed that conflict happens in joint decision making due to close interdependence of family members (Sprey 1969). Members of a research family are in similar ways dependent on each other, for example, by being part of a department or being involved in a research project. Family members use different strategies, for example problem solving, persuasion or bargaining, to reduce conflicts (e.g. Davis 1976). Overt conflict may sometimes help to clean the air or be necessary if standing up for a certain issue. Unresolved conflicts can be very destructive and create tension and separation among family members.

Barriers to Family Cohesiveness

While families sometimes experience cohesiveness, anxiety can also be felt with certain family members at certain times. Feldman (1979) discusses four reasons for a fear of marital intimacy: merger, exposure, attack, and abandonment. These can be applied to relations in research families as well. *Fear of merger* exists when a person is afraid of loosing personal boundaries and identity. It is related to low self-esteem or when one perceives the other person as powerful. A researcher can avoid engaging in interdisciplinary research, because of being afraid of losing identity in his/her own field of study. *Fear of exposure* is also related to individuals with low self-esteem, in that those individuals may be afraid of being perceived as inadequate. It can result in individuals avoiding self-disclosure. A researcher can avoid exposure in his/her academic career by only publishing in familiar journals or conferences. *Fear of attack* can happen when a person has a low sense of trust and can result in the person protecting him/herself by avoiding self-disclosure. A researcher who has experienced someone he/she trusted turning against him/her can feel a low sense of trust. It can result in the researcher choosing to work independently or to be more careful when working together with someone. *Fear of abandonment* may happen to someone who has experienced traumatic separations. By keeping distant, he/she can prevent such feelings. Also, a researcher who fears abandonment may choose the same strategies as a researcher who experiences a fear of attack. Another fear, which Feldman does not discuss, is *fear of betrayal*. For example, one may be afraid that someone will steal a research idea.

All these barriers have to be overcome if one is to develop family relations to their fullest. To work across disciplinary boundaries is challenging and requires that we allow the joy of discovery and curiosity and overcome the fears. The joy of family cohesiveness should be emphasized rather than anxiety about intimacy. Galvin and Brommel (1996, p. 142) write: "One of the challenges of life is to learn how to be yourself while you are in a relationship to another person". This is a challenge also for a researcher in his/her academic life.

A REVIEW OF KEY HISTORICAL FAMILIAL DISCIPLINARY MOMENTS

By studying the family roots, we will understand our history better. It is possible to view the research family from the perspective of *a family tree*. Each period in the historical development represents a branch and each publication in the reference list has its own picture on the family tree. Some branches have several sprouts while others have fewer, illustrating that the number of family members or researchers and publications differ over time. Branches and their sprouts need nurture to grow and flourish. By studying a family tree over time, it may be possible to identify the branches or research orientations which have continued to grow or stopped to grow or even die. It may also be possible to analyze why this has happened. In the English language, the no longer productive faculty is sometimes referred to as "dead wood".

When doing *genealogical research*, we have to think about which documentation to use: picture albums, photos of marriages and grandchildren placed on the piano, inherited possessions, etc. *Family memorabilia* from the academic life are dissertations, publications, workshops, conferences, positions, etc. Documentation is easily available in the research community as a field living on the merits of publication. Also, the system of references facilitates the process of tracing ideas and people.

The history of the consumer behavior research tree is described below. Family members (e.g., Arndt 1986; Belk 1995; Sherry 1991) have previously described our family history. Some different research orientations are according to Arndt (1986): the early empiricist phase, the motivation research phase, the formative phase, the utopian grand theories phase, and the information-processing phase. The description of family history 1930-1980 is based on his article, but also on Belk (1995) and additional literature reviews. The description of family history 1980 and beyond is based on Belk's (1995) review, as well as on additional literature reviews. The different decades can be looked upon as generations of families including different research orientations or families of research that rise and fall in power over time, also representing new versus old perspectives and paradigm shifts.

Family History 1930-1980

The *Early Empiricist Phase* dates back to the 1930s and the 1940s when the views of the consumer were based on classical economics theory. The consumer was regarded as "homo economicus", a person who has and uses full and perfect information when making decisions. Based on these assumptions, the consumer was expected to behave in a rational manner: to maximize utility and minimize cost. It is today recognized that information is not always free and available for everybody and feelings, situations, etc., affect a consumer's behavior.

The *Motivation Research Phase* in the 1950s was inspired by clinical psychology and the theories of Freud in attempting to understand the consumer's subconscious motives for purchasing. Dichter (1964) can be considered the father of this research period. Several methods were introduced such as in-depth interviews, focus groups, and projective techniques (e.g. Haire's 1950 study of Nescafé). Research results from this time period were criticized for subjective interpretations and non-representative samples. It was also questioned by, for example, Packard (1957) whether it was ethically acceptable to examine consumers' subconscious motives. It was during this time period when Levy (1959) wrote his classical article on goods having symbolic significance for people. Belk (1995) discusses that this was a main factor in the decline of motivation research. Another factor, apart from the above-mentioned criticism, is the experimentation and multivariate revolution of the 1960s (Belk 1995).

The *Formative Phase* in the first part of the 1960s was a time period when consumer behavior became more established as a separate research orientation in marketing. The research during this period was fairly focused as attempts were made to explain consumer purchase behavior by constructs such as perceived risk, cognitive dissonance, personality, social character, and social class. The specialization of research led to fragmentation and a lack of integration of constructs. Theories were borrowed from different disciplines without sufficiently applying them on consumer behavior and marketing. Experiments and laboratory research on consumers took place, with the studies being heavily influenced by psychology (Belk 1995). The consumer was perceived as information-processor (Belk 1995). The prevailing view for studying consumers appeared to be s-o-r (stimulus-organism-response) models, probably as a result of the strong influence from cognitive psychology at the time.

During the end of the 1960s in the *Utopian Grand Theories Phase*, several attempts were made to integrate the so far fragmented field of consumer research. Some examples of researchers who developed models and theories are Nicosia (1966), Engel, Kollat, and Blackwell (1968), Howard and Sheth (1969), and Hansen (1972). Their models and theories provided a comprehensive conceptual overview, but the problem was that they, due to their complexity, were impossible to apply and validate. During this phase, the formation of the Association for Consumer Research (ACR), which held its first conference 1969, was a step further towards the establishment of consumer behavior as a field of study in marketing. The association continues to serve an important role for maintaining and strengthening the network of consumer behavior researchers.

Theories on acquisition, processing, and storing of information were developed during the *Information Processing Phase* in the 1970s when Bettman's work (1979) had strong impact on the field. Examples of concepts from this period are cognitive complexity, memory organization and function, and encoding processes. Arndt's (1986) review of consumer research ends here. He was a member of our consumer research family who unfortunately passed away at a too early age.

During the 1970s, we witnessed an increased interest in research on attitudes (Fishbein and Ajzen 1975), involvement (Rothschild and Houston 1977), situation (Belk 1975), diffusion of innovations (Rogers 1976), and consumer satisfaction (Hunt 1977). It was also realized, to a higher degree than before, that many of our important purchasing decisions are in fact made in interaction with the family (Davis 1976). Studies on children as consumers, for example, the effect of television advertising on children (Moschis and Moore 1982; Roedder 1981) and studies on consumer socialization of children became more common (Moschis and Moore 1979; Ward 1974). The emergence of a contextual family is particularly noticeable, due to the impact research on situation and involvement had at the time.

A review of the consumer behavior literature shows a continued interest in family decision making *during the 1980s*, recognizing children's influence in families (Belch, Belch and Ceresino 1985), but also a continued interest in children as consumers (Roedder John and Sujan 1990), consumer socialization of children (Carlson and Grossbart 1988; Moschis 1985), as well as children as socialization agents (Foxman, Tansuhaj, and Ekström 1989). During the 1980s, research on attitudes was still in focus (Shimp and Cavas 1984) as well as continued work on involvement (Bloch and Richins 1983), information processing (Celsi and Olson 1988), memory (Rothschild and Hyun 1990), brand and category perceptions (Sujan and Bettman 1989), diffusion of innovations (Gatignon and Robertson 1985; Arnould 1989), consumer satisfaction (Oliver and DeSarbo 1988), and decision making (Punj and Stewart 1983). Furthermore, the means-end chain (Gutman 1982), the elaboration likelihood model (Petty, Cacioppo, and Schumann 1983), consumer knowledge (Sujan 1985; Alba and Hutchinson 1987), and advertising effects (Jacoby and Hoyer 1989; Scott 1990) were popular research areas during the 1980s.

Recent Family History - 1980 to Present

The consumer behavior field has experienced its greatest schism and paradigm shift in the last twenty years. New topics have been introduced, but more important is the shift in method and paradigm. Some examples of new topics *during the 1980s* are consumption symbolism (Belk, Bahn, and Mayer 1982), hedonic as well as experiential consumption (Hirschman and Holbrook 1982; Holbrook and Hirschman 1982), mood (Gardner 1985), semiotics (Mick 1986), and impulse purchases (Rook 1987). The influence of anthropology was particularly noticeable, for example, gift-giving (Sherry 1983), rituals (Rook 1985), garbology (Cote, McCullough, and Reilly 1985), possessions and extended self (Belk 1988), flea markets (Belk, Sherry, and Wallendorf 1988; Sherry 1990), and collecting (Belk et al. 1988). One reason could be that anthropologists began to work in marketing departments at universities in the United States, for example, Eric Arnould, Janeen Costa, and John Sherry (Belk 1995). A continued attempt to understand contextual issues was witnessed; for example, the understanding of consumption as an expression of culture (McCracken 1988). These changes contributed to an increased acceptance of interpretive research and ethnographic studies. Also, "a consumer behavior odyssey" (Belk, Wallendorf, and Sherry 1991) inspired many researchers to use interpretive methods. The odyssey was a trip in a van from Los Angeles to Boston by two dozen consumer researchers during different periods in the summer of 1986. They studied consumers and consumption in different surroundings and were influenced by Lincoln and Guba´s (1985) method on naturalistic inquiry. This decade represents many different families of research, but the *anthropological interpretive family* was particularly prevalent. It has had a strong impact on the development of consumer behavior as a field of study since this decade. However, this family were initially seen by some family members as the enigmatic side of the family, bringing new traditions, theories and approaches to the family table.

The growth of interpretive approaches coincided with concern for more socially relevant issues in marketing (i.e. social marketing), for example research on homeless (Hill 1991; Hill and Stamey 1990). Research on consumption had previously mainly focused on the positive aspects of consumption. Arndt (1986) discusses the need for research regarding reasons for people having eating disorders, and using drugs and alcohol. Also, Hirschman (1991) encourages researchers to consider the dark side of consumer behavior, for example the fact that consumers are addicted to drugs, gambling, alcohol, and cigarettes. Examples of studies focusing on negative aspects of consumption are research on adolescent shoplifting (Cox, Cox, and Moschis 1990), compulsive buying (O'Guinn and Faber 1989), drug addiction (Hirschman 1992), binge eating (Faber et al. 1995), and lipophobia (Askegaard, Jensen, and Holt 1999). Another research orientation during the 1980s, but also continuing during the 1990s is the interest in cross-cultural and ethnic influence on consumer behavior (Arnould 1989; Costa and Bamossy 1995; Douglas and Craig 1997; Joy 2002; Mehta and Belk 1991; Peñaloza 1994; Venkatesh 1995).

The developments during the 1980s have to a large extent continued *during the 1990s and the beginning of the 2000s.* There has been a continued emphasis on managerial issues such as customer satisfaction (Fornell 1992; Fournier and Mick 1999), decision making (Bettman, Luce, and Payne 1998), brand building (Arnold 1992), brand loyalty (Dick and Basu 1994), brand equity (Keller 1993), brand personality (Aaker and Fournier 1995), consumer-brand relationships (Fournier 1998), brand communities (Muniz and O'Guinn 2001), and consumer culture and branding (Holt 2002). Other examples of research which have continued are research on self image and/or body image (Richins 1991; Thompson and Hirschman 1995), emotions (Richins 1997) and feelings in decision making (Pham 1998), cultural meaning (Thompson and Haytko 1997), lifestyle (Holt 1997; Thompson 1996), and possessions (Price, Arnould, and Folkman Curasi 2000; Miller 2001; Richins 1994). Research on family decision making is noticeable (Palan and Wilkes 1997) even though, as Commuri and Gentry (2000) point out, it appears to have declined during this decade. The influence of anthropology has continued with studies on river rafting experiences (Arnould and Price 1993), ethnographic studies regarding Harley-Davidson bikers (Schouten and McAlexander 1995), Star Trek fans (Kozinets 2001), consumption practices among baseball spectators (Holt 1995), the meaning of advertisements for social interactions among youths (Ritson and Elliott 1999), cultural meaning and memory at a stock show and rodeo (Peñaloza 2001), and a one-week-long antimarket event (Kozinets 2002). Gender differences have also been a subject for research (Costa 1994; Fischer and Arnold 1990; Meyers-Levy and Maheswaran 1991) as well as studies with a feminist perspective (Bristor and Fischer 1993; Hirschman 1993; Stern 1993). Consumer ambivalence (Otnes, Lowrey, and Shrum 1997), paradoxes of technological products and their influences on emotions and behavioral coping strategies (Mick and Fournier 1998), grief (Gentry and Goodwin 1995), environmental issues (Ölander and Thøgersen 1995), and visual consumption (Schroeder 2002) are some examples of other topics of study. A family name encompassing research during the 1990's and the beginning of the 2000s could be *the pluralistic research family*, since a plurality of theories and methods are more commonly represented in our field of study and multitude forms of analysis are involved.

Old Versus New Perspectives in our Family History

Belk (1995) is one of our family members who has contributed significantly to the development of consumer behavior as a field of study. In his description of our family history (Belk 1995), an important time period was during *the 1930s* when the American Marketing Association and the *Journal of Marketing* were established. For marketing academics, it indicated a formal, but not necessarily ideological separation from economics (Belk 1995). In other words, marketing is still influenced by its history in economics.

Another important time period was according to Belk (1995) during *the 1950s*, when consumer behavior began to be developed as an academic discipline in marketing departments in the United States. Furthermore, the founding of the Association for Consumer Research (ACR) in 1969, and the establishment of the *Journal of Consumer Research* in 1974 emphasize the emerging field of consumer behavior and symbolize according to Belk (1995) a disciplinary separation from marketing, similar to the earlier separation of marketing from economics. Consumer behavior is today interdisciplinary, influenced by macroeconomics (the nations aggregate spending), microeconomics (the household's spending), psychology (decision making), sociology (the social context), anthropology (the cultural meaning), ethnology (the folkloristic meaning), etc. The subtitle of the *Journal of Consumer Research* has from its start in 1974 been "An Interdisciplinary Quarterly". However, it is notable that consumer researchers in marketing/business departments still dominate publications both in the *Journal of Consumer Research* and in the *Advances in Consumer Research* (i.e. the proceedings published by the Association for Consumer Research, ACR).

Another major period in the development of consumer behavior as a field of study is according to Belk (1995) the beginning of *the 1980s* when new perspectives began to develop. The old and the new perspectives are illustrated in Table 1.

TABLE 1
Old versus New Perspectives in Consumer Behavior Research

Old Perspective	**New Perspective**
Positivist	Non-positivist
Experiments/Surveys	Ethnographies
Quantitative	Qualitative
A priori theory	Emergent theory
Economic/Psychological	Sociological/Anthropological
Micro/Managerial	Macro/Cultural
Focus on buying	Focus on consumption
Emphasis on cognitions	Emphasis on emotions
American	Multicultural

Source: Belk (1995)

Belk (1995) emphasizes that the number of researchers with a macro non-positivistic perspective has continued to grow during *the 1990s*. Examples of methodologies and perspectives used during *the 1980s and the 1990s* are critical theory (Murray and Ozanne 1991), historical analysis (Smith and Lux 1993), literary criticism (Stern 1989), phenomenology (Thompson, Locander, and Pollio 1989), hermeneutics (Arnold and Fischer 1994; Thompson, Pollio, and Locander 1994), psychoanalytic methods (Holbrook 1988), participant observation (Schouten and McAlexander 1995), in-depth interviews (Hirschman 1994), introspection (Gould 1991), and projective methods (Rook 1988). Also, postmodernism (Brown 1995; Firat and Venkatesh 1995) and poststructuralism (Holt 1997; Thompson and Hirschman 1995) became of interest to the field of consumer behavior during the 1990s and has continued (Thompson and Troester 2002). Furthermore, interdisciplinary conferences became more common during the 1980s, for example on topics such as history (Tan and Sheth 1985), esthetics (Hirschman and Holbrook 1981), and semoitics (Umiker-Sebeok 1987), and continued during the 1990s, for example on topics such as materialism (Rudmin and Richins 1992) and gender (Costa 1991). These were initiated and partly sponsored by the Association for Consumer Research (Belk 1995).

It is interesting to note that research is beginning to *approximate the consumer's reality* to a greater extent than previously. Contextual issues have since the 1980s more commonly been taken into consideration. Traditionally, research has focused on pre-purchase and purchase behavior, but over time more attention has been paid to consumption. This change is also noticeable in textbooks. In their first textbook, Engel et al. (1968, p.5), defined consumer behavior as: ”the acts of individuals directly involved in obtaining and using economic goods and services, including the decision processes that precede and determine these acts”. In a later edition, (Engel, Blackwell and Miniard 1995, p.4), the definition is broader: ”those actions directly involved in obtaining, consuming, and disposing of products and services, including the decision processes that precede and follow these actions”. Also, consumption is today viewed in a broader sense than earlier, for example, involving also desire (Belk et al. 1996).

Furthermore, consumption and production are according to the postmodern perspective not considered juxtapositions of opposites, but rather as something which occur interchangeably (Firat and Venkatesh 1995). The customer is viewed as a *co-producer* (Wikström 1996). Firat and Venkatesh (1995) argue that the consumer should be studied as an equal participant in the production (construction) of self. Elliott (1999, p.121) expresses that a postmodern perspective "requires a willingness to undertake research that does not assume any one answer to explaining consumer behavior, no one single solution, but approaches consumer culture expecting to find multiple meanings and a rich construction of reality and illusion beyond the merely rational." The emergence of research on consumer culture (Featherstone 1991; Lury 1996; Slater 1997) and material culture (Miller 1987; 1998) is also highly noticeable during the last two decades.

Paradigm Shifts in Consumer Behavior History

The paradigm shift in consumer behavior, which started during the 1980s, stimulated a discussion about new ways of seeking knowledge (Cote and Foxman 1987). Several researchers pointed to the benefits with a variety of ways of seeking knowledge (Hudson and Ozanne 1988; Lutz 1989; Ozanne and Hudson 1989) without taking an advocacy position. The paradigm shift did, however, not occur without opposition. Some researchers (Calder and Tybout 1987, 1989; Hunt 1989, 1991; Siegel 1988) expressed their concern, in particular regarding critical relativism or relativism/constructionism which was discussed by Anderson (1983, 1986, 1989) and Peter and Olson (1983, 1989). A debate regarding '*what consumer research is'* was also noticeable during this time (Calder and Tybout 1987; Holbrook 1987; Holbrook and O'Shaughnessy 1988; Kernan 1987). Future directions to where the field was heading were discussed by many scholars at the time. In his ACR presidential address, Lutz (1989, p.6) emphasized the importance of making paradigmatic assumptions explicit. He stresses *respect for different paradigms*: "By cultivating a more sophisticated pluralistic view of the research enterprise, we can actually learn more from each other". Also, Sherry (1991) proposes fostering of a paradigmatic pluralism and recommends an exploration of postmodern alternatives.

Hudson and Ozanne (1988) discuss four different ways of dealing with diversity: the supremacy, the synthesis, the dialectic, and the relativistic alternative. The *supremacy alternative* implies that researchers continue to try to persuade each other that one approach is better than the other, resulting in an evaluation that one approach is the best. The *synthesis alternative* implies to combine different worldviews by combining strengths and minimizing weaknesses. This can, however, only happen if the underlying assumptions are similar or ignored. The *dialectic alternative* does not seek to eliminate diversity, instead it "seeks diversity by counterposing aspects of the different world views in the hope of resolving conflict and developing a completely new mode of understanding through the debate generated by this juxtaposing" (Hudson and Ozanne 1988, p.519). If synthesis happens, it will follow conflicting debates and be "in a form of understanding that goes beyond the original formulations" (Hudson and Ozanne 1988, p.519). The *relativistic alternative* can be looked upon in two different ways, either as critical relativism (Anderson 1986) or as Feyerabend's (1975) anything goes epistemological anarchy (Hudson and Ozanne 1988). Critical relativism implies that "any research strategy may have something to offer, but the process and output must be evaluated based on the research program's own specified criteria" (Hudson and Ozanne 1988, p.519), i.e. positivist research evaluated by positivist standards and interpretive research evaluated by interpretive standards.

After a vigorous debate about where we are heading during the end of the 1980s and beginning of the 1990s, the discussion has lately been less heated. The two predominant paradigms, positivistic and interpretive consumer research exist side by side, each including a number of different approaches for conducting research.

THE FAMILY METAPHOR AND OUR CONSUMER RESEARCH FAMILY

The family metaphor can be extended to the history of our consumer behavior research family. Each phase in the historical development represents a branch in the family tree. Each generation of researchers is influenced by the time during which they grow up. Just as each generation adapts certain lifestyles and adheres to particular styles of fashion, so do consumer researchers of different generations adhere to *certain research orientations*. Our family history or genealogy shows different fields of study, which have been popular over time. More recently, the influence of anthropology has been particularly noticeable. The newer postmodern fashion reminds us of the existing fragmentation. Consumer research is today conducted in a number of different disciplines representing different perspectives, theories, and methods. There has been an increase in the number of research journals publishing consumer research, as well as academic conferences dealing with consumer research.

It seems as if the majority of research historically and also presently is published in journals or presented at conferences belonging to our "home discipline" of marketing. Publications in interdisciplinary journals/conferences seem, however, to have become more common over time. Multidisciplinarity is prevalent in our field of study and different research perspectives co-exist, but seldom simultaneously in research projects. *Triangulation* regarding method, theory, and researchers with different disciplinary backgrounds are still relatively uncommon. Even though triangulation across methods is used in ethnographic studies (Hill 1991), the use of multiple methods (Arnould and Price 1997; Mick and Fournier 1998; Wallendorf and Arnould 1988) appears to be more an exception than the rule in the majority of consumer research conducted.

It is noticeable that our family tree has received new members with different traditions and research orientations, as a result of having *relations with other families*. These have been and are relationships, which differ in strength and permanence. During the motivational research phase and the formative phase, it was in particular psychology, which heavily influenced and brought new ideas into our consumer behavior family. Our research family continued to have relations with new families during the 1980s and 1990s. The anthropological influence visible in many interpretive studies represents one such family. A provocative statement would be to consider the family of anthropology to be our family of procreation (the family created by marriage), although not our only one, and the family of economics as our family of orientation (the family one is born into). Even though influence from our economics family has been reduced over time, it is not negligible on our family even today. Wells (1993) writes that relatively new family members such as those with an anthropological focus provide not only new vitality and radical import, but that they also make us *revisit our roots*. He writes: "Realistic and naturalistic settings, attention to important choices, focus on the real behavior of real consumers, and willingness to experiment with unusual methods are squarely in line with the aspirations that brought ACR and JCR to life" (Wells 1993, p.494).

Our family history illustrates that the family tried to form itself into a structured family during the Utopian Grand Theories phase. As time has shown, it was not possible to form or maintain such a family. During that time, the belief in one grand theory, for example, Howard and Sheth's (1969), *The Theory of Buyer Behavior*, represented an ideal. It did not fully consider the existing diversity and the fact that it was infeasible to bring together the family members' different perspectives into one all-encompassing view. Thereafter, different family members went separate ways working on new and challenging streams of research.

The development of consumer research topics can also be illustrated in terms of a fashion, a classic, or a fad according to Kaiser's (1985) definitions. A *fashion* has a slow acceptance at first, after which it accelerates quickly and then tapers off. A *classic* has a long acceptance, in other words, it will remain for a long time. A *fad*, on the other hand, is quickly accepted, but short-lived. Also, often only a few people adopt a fad (Solomon, Bamossy, and Askegaard 1999). If applying this to the history of consumer behavior research, it is possible to notice that research on needs (Maslow 1954) was earlier in fashion, but today it is research on desire (Belk, Ger, and Askegaard 1996) which is in fashion. Research during the motivation research phase and the utopian grand theories phase can be described as fashion. Fashion sometimes comes back in style and this is illustrated by the fact that methods introduced during the motivation research phase are popular again, for example, focus groups (Ekström and Askegaard 2000). Furthermore, research on attitudes can be characterized as a classic, because it has been of interest to researchers for a number of years. There appears to be few fads in consumer behavior, but one example is garbology analysis (Cote et al. 1985). However, the focus on situation in the same study (Cote et al. 1985) represents a classic.

Family members may be less likely to *change fashion.* After being in the field for some time, researchers may feel convinced that their approach is superior and see no reason for change. Also, the time invested to learn certain theories and methods probably affects the fact that they are less likely to change. On the other hand, researchers who have reached a certain level of status and respect may feel more confident to change fashion or adopt a more personal style. Also, academic children (i.e. Ph.D. students) might bring new ideas. Furthermore, younger members in our family (i.e. relatively new Ph.D.s) may be more likely to change fashion or become attracted to other areas of study after finishing their dissertation. The view regarding this differs. While researchers in some cultures are encouraged to broaden their field of knowledge after their Ph.D., programmatic in-depth research is often also encouraged. The latter is particularly important if one wants to publish quickly. A provocative question is to ask if researchers can not merely afford to change fashion because of publication pressure.

Socialization refers to the process by which researchers become members of the research community. Researchers from the same generation have been socialized to adhere to similar schools of thought even though socialization continues throughout life and research careers. Just as consumption patterns are expected to vary for a family member in different stages of a *family life cycle*, there are different research orientations and activities which will vary in a researcher's family life cycle. It would be interesting to study the family life cycle for particular consumer researchers, in order to gain an understanding of how their research career developed over time. Previously, Hirschman (1985) described four family members, James Bettman, Russell Belk, Morris Holbrook, and Sidney Levy in terms of their scientific style of conducting research.

Families can also be organized or structured with different *representations of gender*. In our family of consumer researchers, there has historically been a predominance of male researchers. Even though changes are noticeable, there is still a need for more women as full professors, academic journal editors, etc. Furthermore, in a review of the 1980 and the 1990 volumes of the *Journal of Consumer Research*, Hirschman (1993) demonstrated the dominance of masculine ideology in consumer research. It needs to be challenged by complementary and oppositional ideologies such as feminine ideology.

The historical, existing, and future structures in our research family can be exemplified as different paradigms characterized in terms of epistemology, ontology and axiologies. The historical structure of our research family represents the *functionalist paradigm* (Burrell and Morgan 1979), with a reliance on objectivity and determinism, a highly pragmatic orientation, and a problem oriented approach. As mentioned above, our family roots in economics have left distinguishable marks, as the view of the consumer as an economic man is still noticeable within the family. The positivist perspective and worldview has over time been strongly represented in our family. The *interpretive paradigm* (Burrell and Morgan 1979), with a reliance on subjectivity and voluntarism, tries to understand the subjectively created social world within the frame of reference of the participant as opposed to the observer of action; it is also represented in our contemporary consumer behavior family. As discussed above, the paradigm shift which started during the 1980s was strongly influenced by the Consumer Behavior Odyssey (Belk 1991). Another paradigm represented in our contemporary family is the *radical humanism paradigm* (Burrell and Morgan 1979), which has much in common with the interpretive paradigm, but is an inversion of the assumptions defining the functionalist paradigm. It views society as anti-human, emphasizing the importance of overthrowing or transcending the limitations of existing social arrangements and thereby providing a critique of status quo. This paradigm is represented to a lesser degree in our family than the previous two paradigms. An example is critical theory (Murray and Ozanne 1991). The fourth paradigm discussed by Burrell and Morgan (1979) is the *radical structuralist paradigm*, which has many similarities with the functionalist paradigm, but focus on radical change through political and economic crises generated by fundamental conflicts. It is more difficult to identify in our family of consumer researchers. Since Burrell and Morgan (1979) wrote their book, perspectives such as *postmodernism* (Firat and Venkatesh 1995) and *poststructuralism* (Holt 1997; Thompson and Hirschman 1995) have appeared in our family of consumer researchers, as mentioned above.

Also, as discussed above, family members as well as researchers have different perceptions and opinions. Conversation is seldom lacking during family dinners. At times, the family discussion becomes more heated (Calder and Tybout 1987; Holbrook 1987; Holbrook and O'Shaughnessy 1988; Kernan 1987). The split between the two family lines, positivism and interpretativism, is a reality today. It is also reflected in that some journals are more positivistic oriented (e.g., *Journal of Marketing Research*), while some are more interpretive oriented (e.g., *Consumption, Markets, and Culture*). Attempts opposing such dichotomies have been made during the last years, also encouraging more interdisciplinary research (e.g., *Journal of Consumer Research*). When studying the number of research publications over time, it is noticeable that the *positivistic family line has dominated* over the interpretive family line. This appears to be the case also today, even though the number of interpretive articles published has increased during the last decades.

FOR GENERATIONS TO COME…

Just as grandparents look upon their grandchildren and wonder about their future endeavors, senior researchers may wonder what their academic children are going to do in the future. What will be their topics of study and their approaches? Who is going to be interested in their research? For whom do they conduct research? The answers are likely to differ depending on whether they aim to describe, predict, evaluate, or prescribe. Positivistic oriented children are likely to seek *causal explanation*, while interpretivist oriented children will focus on *understanding*. Also in the future, a family of pluralists is believed to lead to more stimulating and exciting family discussions. It requires open-minded family members who are humble and tolerant to diversity rather than favoring uniformity.

A Family of Pluralists

The fact that the positivist and the interpretive approaches exist side by side indicates a *separation into two family lines* representing family members with different perceptions of reality. Most family members seem to think that enough has been said about this separation and that it is important to go on with life and focus on research. However, there are always some family members who sing "we are family" during family reunions. They feel that the two family lines say too little about what is valuable and good about each other. We praise our children, but complain about our neighbors' kids. They argue for multifaceted pluralism as a way to enrich the development of consumer behavior as a field of study and refer to consumer researchers (Peter and Olson 1989; Sherry 1991) who previously have advocated pluralism. Even though the knowledge output of positivism and interpretivism are viewed as incommensurable (Anderson 1986; Ozanne and Hudson 1989), openness and diversity is advocated (Ozanne and Hudson 1989). It happens also that some family members sing "Bridge Over Troubled Water" (Ekström and Holmberg 1997), not so much at bigger family reunions, but in smaller meetings and in solitude, longing to see family members from the two family lines working together on joint research projects.

In retrospect, it appears to have been a happy separation. The two family lines meet at bigger family gatherings such as ACR. At such occasions, family members who use similar research approaches often gather together. Belk (1995) asked if interpretivist researchers will be welcome in the long run within the walls of business schools. Today, it does not look as if they will be thrown out. Instead, their importance and abilities to complement to other approaches used by the family have become acknowledged. Wilk (2001) thinks that both positivism and humanism have a great deal to offer consumer research and argues for a tolerant pluralism where many methods and philosophies have legitimacy and utility.

A rather provocative statement would be to say that *a lack of relations over scientific borders could result in scientific narrowness* or what some family members refer to as inbreeding. How can we develop the field for coming generations if we do not open up to families of different backgrounds, thereby adding perspectives that we presently lack? An intriguing issue is how to appreciate what can be gained from other disciplines. How can other discipline's perspectives, theories, and methods become more commonly accepted in our family's home journals? How likely are we to try to publish in other discipline's journals and will it get accepted there? How will our family members perceive it if we publish there? Will it have similar status to our own family's journals or is there a risk to be looked upon as the family's "black sheep"?

It is important to recognize that many consumer researchers publish and sit on editorial boards in journals outside of the field (Bagozzi 1992). Bagozzi (1992) discusses the importance of *institutionalizing variety in theories and methods*, which he thinks might require that editorial boards turn over more often and that the selection and retention mechanisms are examined continuously. Sheth (1992) refers to the clan paradox implying that a closed system suffers from inbreeding problems. He writes: "since gatekeepers of the discipline tend to be the editors, editorial boards, and program chairs of the academic conferences, it is possible to manage the clan paradox by eliminating interlocking editorial boards, by relying on ad hoc reviewers, and by non-clanish editors and program chairs" (Sheth 1992, p.351). These issues may require more discussion in our family in years to come.

Belk (1986) describes consumer research as the bastard child of marketing and an unknown father variously alleged to be economics, psychology, sociology, anthropology, home economics, or occasionally others as well. He visions a future when consumer behavior is a discipline in itself. He welcomes a multidisciplinary family of consumer researchers who as *a separate discipline* seeks a status outside current departmental boundaries. Also, Sherry (1991, p.568-569) discusses consumer research's struggle to become an independent discipline and states: "……consumer research has been both nurtured and stifled by its association with marketing. Marketers have provided the sub-discipline with roots, but not with wings." He suggests deeper investigation of marketing-based consumer behavior with alternative perspectives and methods, but also consumption research not merely related to marketing. Also, Zaltman (2000, p.425) writes that "the frontiers of knowledge are largely at the intersection of disciplines, not at their core."

In a family of pluralists, most family members will probably agree that the roots and ancestors of each respective discipline have played an important role in the development of consumer research. In fact, roots are still important, especially during difficult times involving conflicts, identity crises, etc. Then, it usually feels good to lean against a shoulder belonging to a family member, whose research you are particularly familiar with. Also, some family members emphasize that strong basic knowledge in a "home" discipline is necessary before conducting interdisciplinary research. While some family members mean that interdisciplinary research should be restricted to post-doctoral research, others are more open to also include doctoral students who have knowledge of certain theories and methods from previous degrees or from their outside minors.

Research Orientations

A critical assessment of the state of the art today makes it possible to suggest future research orientations for coming generations. Regarding the research topics and approaches that ought to appear on the future agenda, what can we expect? As indicated above, Sherry (1991) thinks *consumption* needs to be studied with *alternative perspectives and methods*, not merely related to marketing. He also suggests that *outreach and collaboration* with other disciplines should be encouraged, for example, cross-attendance at conferences, reading of journals outside one's field, and joint sponsorship of conferences and journals. Furthermore, he recommends *new modes of conveying the researcher's understanding* of a phenomenon, in particular when traditional modes are insufficient. Some examples are video recording, photography, stories, drawings, music, etc. These are trends we have seen during the last decade, and trends which are likely to continue in the future. The ACR 2002 Conference in Atlanta, USA presented the Association's first film festival including edited video recordings on topics related to consumer research. An article on the role for poetry in consumer research was recently published (Sherry and Schouten 2002).

In retrospect, there is a lack of *longitudinal work* looking at research phenomena over time. There is also a lack of *cohort studies* studying how certain time periods affect consumption. As already said many times before at family reunions, the majority of studies have been of North-American origin and there is a need for more studies representing consumers of *other cultures*. During the last two decades, we have seen generations of researchers take more contextual approaches to the consumer's life situations. This needs to continue in the future, and to involve more research regarding *consumers' everyday lives.* It would also be interesting to discover how the meaning of markets and more specifically *the meaning of consumer markets* differs among family members with different disciplinary backgrounds, but also within disciplines. Lien (1997) conceptualized "market" by using four metaphors: territorial space, battlefield, environment of natural selection, and flux of transformation providing different perspectives of the exchange process.

How is Research Conducted?

Researchers need also to recognize that consumers' everyday lives might differ from their own and be open to unusual contexts and situations. Richins (2000) writes that priority to studying the literature is given in training doctoral students and that students also need to *practice to observe actual consumer behavior*. She writes: "If there is one thing I could change about doctoral education in our field, it would be that our students be taught to think independently and to observe carefully what consumers really do before planning their research. This, I think, would sharpen their analysis, reduce time spent on fruitless research streams, and perhaps shift their research focus to a broader set of consumer phenomena than we currently study" (Richins 2000, p.2).

Wells (1993) discusses that *myths in consumer research* isolate researchers from reality and need to be forsaken. The myths are students represent consumers, the laboratory represents the environment, statistical significance confers real significance, correlation means causation, and that mentioning limitations makes them go away. The extent to which student samples will be used in the future is probably a provocative issue among family members and is likely to be perceived differently in different cultures and disciplines. Also, access to "real consumers" as well as publication pressure is likely to determine this. Opinions regarding the use of college students in social science research differ dramatically (Peterson 2001). Most family members do hopefully agree that attempting to generalize results based on student samples to the total population is not on the list of what one would like to see in the future. There is still a need to determine when college student samples are appropriate or not in consumer behavior studies (Peterson 2001).

Furthermore, Moorman (1987) discusses that technique orientation can result in that *the human dimension of the consumer being left out*. She states: "Marketers' ideas of 'the consumer' or 'a segment' are constructed by abstracting and quantifying human beings, looking at their perceptions, desires, and values in a very mechanized and exchange-oriented fashion without considering their human dimensions (except as they relate to exchange). Marketing academics have also perpetuated this process. By adhering to logical empiricism, researchers approach human behavior searching for empirical support for theoretical generalizations." This is something which could be discussed further, recognizing and contrasting different family members' approaches to studying for example, needs, desires, values, and the possible effects of such research.

When family members meet in the future, there is also a need to discuss the *imbalance between theory and method.* Sutton and Staw (1995) discuss this in relation to organizational research, but it is also possible to extend the point to consumer behavior research. Sutton and Staw (1995) state that researchers seldom have the skills of both *theory building and theory testing*, and that published papers seldom are strong both in theory and method. They therefore suggest having research teams with complementary skills. Sutton and Staw (1995) also discuss that theory building and crafting of conceptual arguments are not sufficiently emphasized in doctoral programs. The emphasis is on theory testing rather than theory building. For future consumer research, it is important to emphasize theory building as a continuous process in which creative thinking should be considered as an important element. In the future, it is also relevant to discuss the definition and meaning of theory, which is likely to differ among family members representing different perspectives on philosophy of science.

What Determines the Focus of Study?

An older family member, who wants to be anonymous, has indicated that the development in the field has become more competitive over time with a *stronger focus on publish or perish*. To make family work visible seems necessary, but the negative effects of this development need to be discussed, for example the possibility of scientific narrowness. Is it the publication pressure or the research questions which direct the focus of study? What are the merits going to be for judging research in the future? How is contribution to the field examined? Is it the number of publications in highly ranked journals, the research questions studied, or research funds generated which matters? This is a complex issue in that the choice of research questions often depends on the possibility to obtain research funding.

In the future, it is possible that we may see more examples of *external funding*. This can also involve businesses funding research. Opinions regarding this are likely to differ among our family members. Some positive aspects, besides money, could be research related to practical problems, something which often is considered important if doing research in business schools. Negative aspects could be limited academic freedom and subjectivity. Some family members say that written contracts can make it possible to keep individual independence for researchers, while others shake their heads and say that it sounds good, but is it really going to be the case? Furthermore, there are different opinions regarding the emphasis on basic or applied research. The discussion is likely to go on and vary in different cultural contexts. Also, questions related to consumer research seem to evolve around for whom we do conduct research.

For Whom do We Conduct Research?

Peter (1991) thinks that one criterion for measuring the usefulness of research is its *contribution to society and society's welfare* and emphasizes that consumer researchers ignore many social problems. He thinks positivistic views may discourage such research, because "positivistic methods are often not well suited for dealing with highly complex social phenomena in natural settings" (Peter 1991, p.544). Instead he proposes a relativistic view. Different family members have different opinions on whether consumer research has had an impact on public policy. While Sheth (1992) thinks it did during the 1970s, but not anymore, Bagozzi (1992) thinks it still has an impact. Again, the perceptions of these issues are likely to differ among different family members and in different cultural contexts.

Bazerman (2001) discusses that much previous research on consumers was done with a marketing perspective and emphasizes that *research on consumers needs to be consumer-oriented*, by providing consumers with purchasing advice for making wiser decisions. This knowledge needs to reach out to the public in other media than research journals. He gives examples of three areas of research, which are relevant for many consumers in their daily lives: negotiation, financial services, and auctions. A new journal, the *Journal of Research for Consumers* (www.jrconsumers.com), attempt to bridge the gap between consumer researchers and consumers by offering articles to both audiences in the same journal. In other words, it encourages researchers to communicate their research findings to consumers.

Also, related to this is the aspect regarding researchers' *interactions with governments, consumer protection agencies, businesses, and research foundations*. Wells (1993) writes that the founders of ACR wanted to mix academia, business, government, and foundations and that they were also represented in the first proceedings. However, with time, the discipline turned inward and representatives from other disciplines than business were dropping out as well as government and industry. Wells (1993, p.495) describes this as a symptom of success: "When ACR was newborn, it needed outside support. But as ACR prospered, its academic leaders realized that it could stand by itself." As discussed above, different disciplines and relations across scientific borders are needed in order to develop our field of study in the future. Also, there is diversity in the ACR family, because researchers from other disciplines have started to work in marketing departments and marketing researchers also publish outside marketing.

It may be of interest to evaluate today's situation in our family of consumer researchers and to discuss the *consequences of having or not having reciprocal interactions between different agents interested in consumer research*. Different family members have different opinions. Wells (1993) thinks that government and industry inputs have enriched academic consumer research over time. Holbrook (1985) thinks business is bad for consumer research. Another family member, Moorman (1987, p.198) states: "In the push to publish or to meet the "scientific" criteria of the discipline (the desired results for scholars), theories and empirical research remain far from practitioner's need. Researchers seem to have little concern for the real-world implications of their ideas. The repercussions of this divergence are practically unusable research and an increased likelihood for misunderstood or misapplied ideas". Again, the opinions are likely to differ in our family and in different cultures.

Keeping the Family Together

Levy (1996, p.168) discusses the family dinner as aspiration for everyday family unity and virtue: "The ideal vision is of the family members coming together every evening from their diverse and separate activities to affirm their relatedness and love." The extent to which this represents ideal more than reality is likely to differ across cultures. The family may not always gather for dinner, because different family members have their individual activities and time schedules, which may not fit with the rest of the family. It may, however, not be a problem if family members interact in other ways or settings. If we think of our department as family, then discussion at the departmental seminar is somewhat akin to family dinner conversation. If active participation in research seminars is the main activity for keeping intellectual discussion going, then it could be problematic if family members do not meet there. Another scenario is that a family member just eats quickly and then leaves the dinner table before everybody has finished, without having time for discussion. Some family members consider this to be bad table manners. This could also be the case at conferences. For example, a researcher may fly in just in time to present his/her work and to make it visible for other researchers and his/her c.v., and then leave without any time for informal discussion and mingling with other family members. There may not always be a smooth *balance between giving, sharing, and taking* in families. However, it seems important not to blame an individual family member, but to try to understand the reasons behind his/her behavior. Time pressure appears to be a problem, which needs to be discussed in order to avoid the negative development it might have on the development of our family of researchers. It may in particular be important for children's (including also academic children's) development to have the opportunity to meet and learn from scholars and possible role models.

Today, separations, divorces, co-habitation, remarriages, single parent families, homosexual partnerships, extramarital affairs, remaining single, flings, etc. are reality in the Western world. Even so, the nuclear family is often presented in advertising. It may reflect a nostalgic dream of a family, which is less common in today's society. Also, in the academic world, we may have an illusion of an ideal family or think that family cohesiveness is stronger at other universities or departments. However, *the typical family has never existed*.

Furthermore, in a similar manner to the behavior of an average teenager, it is common that *each generation of researchers criticizes the generation before*. The disrespect we sometimes show for elderly in the Western society can be compared to the lack of respect that we on occasions show earlier consumer researchers. We may neglect the context and the circumstances under which their research was carried out. Instead of being too critical towards their research, we should appreciate what they have done to develop our family and field of research. Also, when thinking of our family, we need to recognize that elderly consumer behavior researchers may still have much to contribute. On the other hand, it is as important that elderly consumer behavior researchers make room for younger researchers, as younger generations often provide fresh ideas**.** Also, the isolation of the solitary aunt or uncle could be replaced with vivid discussions across generations. Furthermore, increasing connections with more distant relatives over scientific borders will affect how research problems are defined. To be open to meet new family members who provide new ideas and influences requires courage. It can offer enjoyment and delight, but maybe at times also frustration.

Finally, the essence of family is cooperation. In the future, it would therefore be interesting to study when and *how family members work together*. For example, is co-authoring more common by older generation researchers or new generation ones? It is good for siblings to keep working together and also a sign of a good doctoral program. Even though new Ph.D.s often publish their dissertations together with their parents, it seems as if co-authoring thereafter happens less often in their academic career. Less emphasis on extended families may coincide with more pressure on assistant professors to produce their own and to have their own research identities. *Co-authoring* involves intellectual interchange and maybe opposites attract. If there is too much commonality, there may be redundancy and little marginal input with co-authoring. Besides the intellectual mix, there is also the joy (or lack thereof) of working with the other person. Some co-authorships are strictly professional, while others are friendship based. Co-authoring is one, but not the only way to keep the family conversation going. Another way to get opinions from family members is through the review process when anonymous family members sometimes dare to be more outspoken than during family gatherings.

SUMMARY

Characteristics of the family metaphor have been used to illustrate processes and aspects of family life in consumer behavior, but also in academic life in general. A family is in this paper defined as a group of individuals with which we have work relations. The history of consumer behavior research has been described building on previous research (Arndt 1986; Belk 1995) as well as additional literature reviews. By relating the family metaphor to the history of our consumer behavior research family, we are likely to better understand the development of consumer behavior as a field of study and its sources of inspiration. The purpose of this paper is to encourage the dynamic development of consumer behavior and to make the relations to our research "family" (or families) a topic for discussion and reflection. The consumer behavior family of today includes a large number of researchers representing different disciplines, generations, topics of study, perspectives, theories, and methods. While some researchers belong to a family representing mainly one discipline (e.g., marketing), others have relations with one or several families including many different disciplines (e.g., anthropology, ethnology, psychology, sociology etc.).

An understanding of how researchers have interacted in the past and interact presently will make us reflect upon the future. A family of pluralists is advocated for developing consumer behavior research also in the future. In our family for generations to come, the discussion about the development of consumer behavior as a field of study is likely to continue. There is a need to discuss, for example, what determines the research questions and for whom we conduct research. The different perceptions among family members contribute to make the family discussion dynamic and vivid. In the future, we also need to discuss what keeps the research family together. When doing this, it is important to identify what makes a research family dysfunctional and how we can prevent this from happening. A well-functioning research family can provide the joy of cohesiveness and at the same time provide opportunities for individual researchers to develop.

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