



“No, I won't eat that!” Parental self-transformation in clashes of role enactment and children's will



Céline Del Bucchia ^{a,*}, Lisa Peñaloza ^{b,c,1}

^a Department of Marketing, Audencia Nantes School of Management, 8 Route de la Jonelière, BP 31222, 44312 Nantes Cedex 3, France

^b Department of Marketing and Consumer Relations, KEDGE Business School, 680 Cours de la Liberation, 33405 Talence, France

^c EGADE Business School, Tecnológico de Monterrey, Mexico

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 1 November 2014

Received in revised form 1 April 2015

Accepted 1 June 2015

Available online 4 September 2015

Keywords:

Self-transformation

Motherhood

Fatherhood

Gendered Roles

Family Meals

Child consumer

ABSTRACT

This study addresses one aspect of self-transformation, namely, the way consumers develop understandings of themselves through enacting parental roles in the context of everyday family consumption. In-depth interviews are used to examine informants' evolving understanding of themselves as parents in relation to their daily meal practices. Overall, this study extends the literature on parenthood and the negotiation of the self by detailing the dynamics of mothers' and fathers' self-transformation processes as they grapple with contemporary changes in the parental roles they internalize to socialize, accommodate, and please their children. This study shows how the parents' self-transformation process is strongly gendered, inadequately guided by roles, and inflected by the market. It introduces an emerging model of a more pleasure-based form of parenting in consumption, shaped by the market.

© 2015 Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

“One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman.” This famous line by Simone de Beauvoir (1949) highlights the self-transformation process that occurs through practice. However, while de Beauvoir's feminist viewpoint focuses on women's gendered self-transformation in relation to men, we are primarily concerned with parents' self-transformation in their dealings with children. Parenting has changed in recent decades, as more mothers work full time and as more fathers play an increasingly prominent role in caring for their offspring. Consumer researchers have developed insights into self-transformation during transitions in life, and the way individuals use consumption to deal with new roles, suggesting that experiencing parenthood will often differ from the roles imagined in the liminal stages. In particular, children are now able to challenge their parents' projects (Lawlor & Prothero, 2011; Marshall, O'Donohoe, & Kline, 2007). This paper extends the literature on motherhood (Banister, Hogg, & Dixon, 2010; Banister & Hogg, 2006; The Voice Group, 2010a, 2010b; Thomsen & Sørensen, 2006; Cappellini & Parsons, 2013) and fatherhood (Bettany, Kerrane, & Hogg, 2014; Coskuner-Balli & Thompson, 2013) by looking at the process of parents' self-

transformation in the context of everyday family consumption practices. In-depth interviews with mothers and fathers responsible for the daily meals help them to develop reflexive understandings of themselves based on their practices and the tensions they experience. The findings illustrate the micro-dynamics of the parents' self-transformation process in relation to roles in practice, and the tensions and reconciliation of meal practices linked to understandings of the self. The paper investigates how parents grapple with contemporary changes in the parental roles they internalize to accommodate and please their children, the gender issues, and the role of the market in this process.

2. Theoretical background

2.1. Self-transformation for mothers

The literature has shown evidence that role transitions in liminal stages affect the self. During pregnancy, women negotiate with possible selves in their consumption choices (Banister & Hogg, 2006). These potential selves are framed by discourses on good mothering (Banister et al., 2010) and by pervasive cultural discourses (Fischer, Otnes, & Tuncay, 2007). Discourses on good mothering reflect the social construction of motherhood, and are advanced by different actors such as medical and political authorities, media, and market. The market, in particular, adopts and amplifies these motherhood ideologies (Voice Group, 2010b). As these discourses create norms and stipulate

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +33 240 37 45 47; fax: +33 240 37 34 07.

E-mail addresses: cdelbucchia@audencia.com (C. Del Bucchia),

lisa.penaloza@kedgebs.com (L. Peñaloza).

¹ Tel.: +33 556 84 55 23.

appropriate roles, their internalization puts pressure on mothers (Voice Group, 2010b). In opposition to these norms, the pervasive cultural discourse of self-management encourages individuals to develop their own understanding and knowledge in response to the experts' discourse, such as medical discourse (Fischer et al., 2007). With this in mind, Banister et al. (2010) show that mothers in transition to motherhood can reconcile themselves to such discourse on good mothering, resist it, or disengage from it. The strategies they develop in reaction to discourse on good mothering help them to define their own version of the "ideal mothering self." This raises the question of how the "ideal mothering self" transforms in everyday consumption practices. Some researchers suggest that the self continues to evolve in everyday life as women develop their "own ways of knowing" (Banister et al., 2010) because "the birth of a mother does not take place in one dramatic defining moment, but gradually emerges from the cumulative work of the many months that precede and follow the actual birth of a baby" (Stern, Bruschiweiler-Stern, & Freeland, 1998, p.3). So, how do mothers who engage in a role in everyday practices come to understand and transform themselves as a parent?

In a social practice theory of self and identity, the self is formed and apprehended through practice (Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, & Cain, 2001). In everyday family consumption practices, selves are negotiated among the different members of the family (Epp & Price, 2008). What is specific about family consumption is that it includes the child's consumption, in other words, the parents' self-development depends on the child's acceptance or refusal to consume. This raises the question of how mothers derive a sense of self when confronted with the child's will?

This study explores the way consumption comes into play in the self-transformation process. In the transition to motherhood, consumption helps mothers to appropriate their new role and to access a desired self (Banister & Hogg, 2006; Sevin & Ladwein, 2008; Thomsen & Sørensen, 2006). However, the idea that consumption enables mothers to be better parents has been somewhat idealized (Voice Group, 2010a). Consumption does not always facilitate the enactment of the self. For example, buying the wrong pram negatively affects their identity (Thomsen & Sørensen, 2006). Mothers-to-be are sometimes unsure of how to consume, which creates feelings of ambivalence (Voice Group, 2010a). So, how do mothers derive a sense of self when their consumption practices conflict with their "ideal mothering self"?

2.2. Self-transformation for fathers

Feminists have helped to institutionalize the notion that fathers should be more involved in the day-to-day care of children. However, how do fathers who adopt a nurturing role, commonly associated with femininity, make sense of themselves? Coskuner-Balli and Thompson (2013) study how stay-at-home fathers negotiate a masculine identity with a nurturing role. They show that fathers' consumption practices differ from the way mothers usually consume. Does this mean that their self-transformation process is different from that of mothers? Researchers have found that, similar to mothers, the early stages of fatherhood experience can differ from the ideal selves imagined before the birth of the child (Bettany et al., 2014). The study by Bettany et al. shows how the fathers' self-transformation emerges as a negotiation between two conflicting roles: the role of the breadwinner and the role of the nurturer that requires greater availability for domestic tasks and care of the baby. In this conflicting situation, fathers in early fathering experiences use consumption to escape their nurturer role, which is enacted with the adoption of technological childcare products (Bettany et al., 2014). To extend these findings to the context of everyday experiences, the present study also looks at the father's self-transformation process: is it limited to negotiating between the two roles? Drawing a parallel with the issue for mothers, how do fathers deal with their children's will?

2.3. Changing gendered roles in the postmodern family

What are roles? In a theoretical study, Akaka and Chandler (2011, p.251) distinguish role expectations and role enactment. For them, role expectations are "the social norms or cues associated with a particular social role." Role enactment is the "acting out of a set of practices associated with a particular social role." The authors analyze how roles act as resources for change in value networks. Their proposal raises new questions about role expectations and role enactment at the level of the individual: how do roles operate in parents' self-transformation?

Parenting roles have changed over recent decades, with more women remaining in the workforce and men adopting an increasingly egalitarian approach to parenting. Consumer researchers have documented evolutions in the different gendered roles. From disciplinary mothers (Poster, 1978), the dominant mothering model has become that of the devotional mother (Cappellini & Parsons, 2013; Miller, 1998). Self-abnegation or giving up ones desires for the sake of the family and to construct the family seems to dominate the debate (Cappellini & Parsons, 2013; DeVault, 1991; Miller, 1998). The experience of working mothers involves the emotional work of negotiating compromises between two ideal models of motherhood: the stay-at-home mother and the supermom (Thompson, 1996), with the inherent feelings of guilt and frustration linked to such compromises. These working mothers use the market to serve family ideals and offer benefits to their children that they could not have afforded otherwise (Thompson, 1996). Consumer researchers highlight how the role of the mother is inextricably linked to her feminine identity, and have shown how mothers use consumption, and choose and transform products to create domesticity (Moisio, Arnould, & Price, 2004; Wallendorf & Arnould, 1991), relate to the child, and express love and care (Miller, 1998; Thompson, 1996). Consumption and family meals are embedded in these evolutions. DeVault (1991)'s focus on mothers' gendered activity in feeding the family highlights how women are judged according to the quality of their dinner, and how serving the male contributes to their subordination to men. Miller (1998) expounds on the way mothers sacrifice their interests and tastes when provisioning for their families, which he explains by the children replacing the partner as recipients of motherly devotion. Cappellini and Parsons (2013) point to mothers' self-sacrifice in family meals as part of their identity as devotional mothers. In daily meals, mothers accommodate to children by squaring what they think is right for the child with what the child wants (Cappellini & Parsons, 2012).

With the rise of dual income families, broad trends suggest that men increasingly participate in their children's life (O'Brien & Shemilt, 2003). Being a dad is no longer simply linked to being a good breadwinner (Brannen & Nilsen, 2006). Changes in fathering are liable to challenge hegemonic forms of masculinity (Connell, 1995), and to offer a multiplicity of possible selves (Marshall, Davis, Hogg, Schneider, & Petersen, 2014). However, while discourse about the involved father is commonplace in Northern Europe (Brannen & Nilsen, 2006), it is a subject of debate in Latin Europe, where women generally remain responsible for childcare issues (De Singly, 2007). In their analysis of stay-at-home fathers in a North American context, Coskuner-Balli and Thompson (2013) explain how fathers delegate meal preparation to the market as they consider this mundane activity—which is labor-intensive with a high emotional load—as feminine.

Some studies note the steady blurring of gendered distinctions between the feminine as the field of the home and consumption, and the masculine as that of the workplace and production (Firat, 1994). Parents may draw from two paradoxical trends. First, with productive consumption trends (Cova & Dalli, 2009), male celebrity and a foodie subculture, masculine meal production (Biraghi, Dalli, & Gambetti, 2015) has often become more inspiring than the traditional grandmothers' and mothers' homemade meals. Second, present-day services (e.g. McDonald's) are less feminine than they were in retail department

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/10492950>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/10492950>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)