

Child-Interest-Oriented vs. Society-Demand-Oriented: How Parents' Political Ideology Affects Their Purchases of Educational Product

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Abstract:

Does parents' political ideology affect their preferences when purchasing educational products for their children? Across five studies, including laboratory experiments, surveys, and the analysis of a secondary dataset, the authors find that when the educational program is positioned to focus on children's interests (i.e., child-interest-oriented educational purchases), liberal parents exhibit stronger preferences compared to conservative parents. Conversely, when the purchase emphasizes cultivating abilities in society-demanded domains (i.e., society-demand-oriented educational purchases), conservative parents show stronger preferences than liberal parents. Additionally, evidence suggests that these effects stem from differences in both protestant work ethic and social dominance orientation between liberals and conservatives. Two theoretically based moderators test the dual mediation processes. Supporting the mediating role of protestant work ethic, we show that perceived social mobility moderates the effect of political ideology on educational preferences, such that when parents perceive high (vs. low) social mobility, the stronger preference of liberal (vs. conservative) parents for child-interest-oriented purchases over society-demand-oriented purchases is diminished. In addition, supporting the mediating role of social dominance orientation, our findings suggest that when the educational purchase is positioned as status-seeking, liberal (vs. conservative) parents' stronger preferences for child-interest-oriented purchases relative to society-demand-oriented purchases decrease because the status-seeking positioning conflicts with liberals' weak social dominance orientation.

Keywords: Political Ideology, Educational Products, Family Spending

Track: Consumer Behavior