Decision Making Among the Young: A Socialization Perspective

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This article examines decision-making patterns among teen-age consumers. Variables associated with several stages in the decision-making process (information seeking, product evaluation, and purchase), as well as "anticipatory" cognitions regarding family decision making are examined within the context of general theories of socialization.

Research on consumer decision making has traditionally dealt with adult consumer behavior (Engel, Blackwell, and Kollat 1978; Davis 1976), with minor attention paid to consumer decisions among the young (Ward 1974). In recent years, however, young people have been recognized as a specialized segment of the market for a variety of products and services, and their behavior as consumers has received increasing attention among marketers, public policy makers, consumer educators, and students of socialization and consumer behavior.

Although some studies have examined variables relevant to decision making of the young consumer, research in this area has primarily been descriptive, fragmented, and based on little theory. Unlike studies of adult consumer decision making, research on decision making of the young has been far from systematic, focusing on a specific stage rather than several stages of the process. For example, some studies have examined adolescent consumer behavior at the information seeking stage (Moore and Stephens 1975), some have focused on the purchase stage (Moschis, Moore, and Stephens 1977), and others have explored evaluative criteria in hypothetical decisions (Cateora 1963). In addition, previous research has not adequately dealt with aspects of decision making that may have implications for adult consumer behavior, such as the formation of brand preferences and sex-role conceptions in family decision making.

This article attempts to fill some of the gaps in the research on consumer decision making among the young by focusing on several different stages of the process. Explanations for behavior at each stage are sought through socialization variables. The socialization perspective is adopted because this approach has recently received increasing emphasis in studies of human behavior in general (Goslin 1969) and consumer behavior in particular (Moore and Stephens 1975; Moschis and Churchill 1978; 1979; Churchill and Moschis 1979; Ward, Wackman, and Wartella 1977).

BACKGROUND

The term socialization refers to the process by which young people acquire various patterns of cognitions and behaviors (e.g., Goslin 1969), while consumer socialization refers specifically to the process of learning consumer-related skills, knowledge, and attitudes (Ward 1974). Socialization explanations of human behavior make the following key assumption: "To understand human behavior we must specify its social origins and the process by which it is learned and maintained" (McLeod and O'Keefe 1972, pp. 127–8).

The use of the socialization approach in consumer research was only recently proposed as a vehicle for the study of consumer behavior (Ward 1974). However, most research on consumer socialization has focused primarily on questions of interest to public policy makers, rather than on the systematic examination of cognitive and behavioral patterns of decision making. While several consumer behavior researchers have pointed to the importance of socialization effects on decision making (Davis 1976; Ferber 1975; Miller 1975; Bagozzi and Van Loo 1978), little is known about such influences.

In previous articles we have outlined a conceptual model of consumer socialization (Moschis and Churchill 1978; Moschis and Moore 1978). Briefly, this con-

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ceptual model consists of five types of variables derived from general socialization theories: socialization agents, learning processes, social structural variables, age or life cycle, and content of learning.

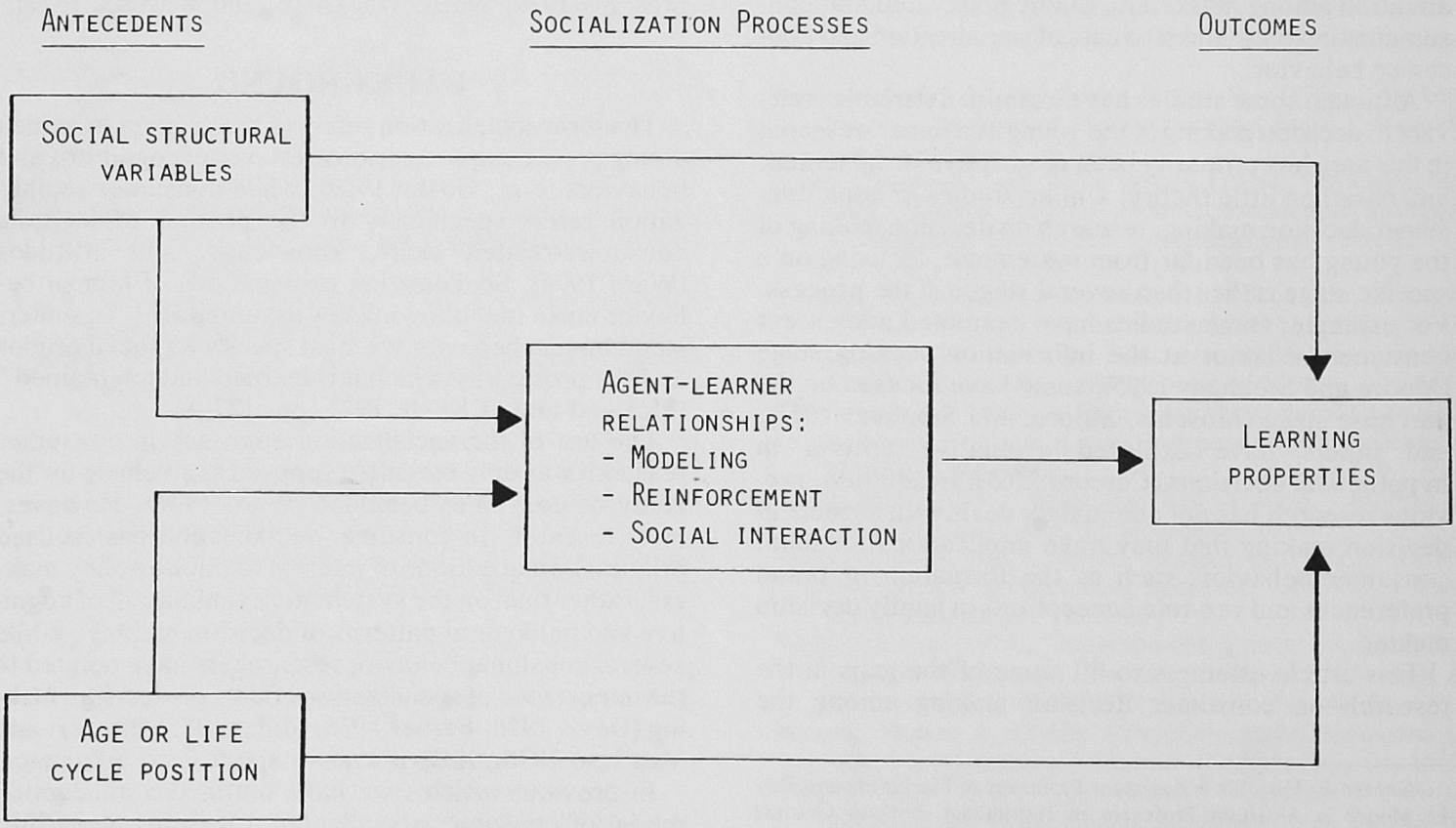
A *socialization agent* may refer to a person or organization. In the life of every person there are a number of people and institutions (e.g., family members, school) directly involved in socialization that have great influence because of their frequency of contact, primacy, and control over rewards and punishments given to the individual. *Learning processes* refer to the mechanisms through which the agent influences the learner. They can be classified into three categories: modeling, reinforcement, and social interaction. Modeling, which is also known as observational learning, involves imitation of the agent's behavior. Reinforcement involves either reward (positive reinforcement) or punishment (negative reinforcement). Social interaction is less specific and it may involve a combination of modeling and reinforcement. *Social structural variables* are factors, such as socioeconomic status, sex, and birth order, that help locate the learner within his/her social environment, where learning takes place. *Age or life cycle* position refers to a person's lifetime span during which learning occurs; it is used to index a person's cognitive development or life cycle stage(s). *Learning properties* refer to a variety of consumer-related cognitions and behaviors that comprise the concept of consumer behavior, such as attitudes toward saving and spending and brand preferences.

The relationships among these general types of variables are shown in the Figure. Social structural variables and age may be viewed as antecedent variables that affect the development of consumer learning properties directly and indirectly through their impact on socialization processes. Socialization refers to specific agent-to-learner relationships, which incorporate both the agent and the specific learning process operating to affect the acquisition of consumer learning properties.

Consumer socialization research is typically based on two models of human learning: the social learning model and the cognitive development model. Studies using the social learning approach attempt to explain socialization as a function of environmental influences applied to the person. Learning is assumed to take place during the individual's interaction with socialization agents in various social (structural) settings. Previous consumer socialization studies, for example, examined the influence of family, television, and peers on the

FIGURE

A CONCEPTUAL MODEL OF CONSUMER SOCIALIZATION



Source: Moschis and Churchill (1978).

development of patterns of consumer decisions, such as information seeking, buying motives, and product evaluations (Moschis 1978; Moore and Stephens 1975; Churchill and Moschis 1979; Ward et al. 1977).

The cognitive development model, on the other hand, seeks explanations for the formation of cognitions and behavior on the basis of qualitative changes (stages) in the cognitive organization occurring between infancy and adulthood. These stages are defined in terms of cognitive structures that a child can use in perceiving and dealing with the environment at different ages (Kohlberg 1969). Learning is viewed as a cognitive-psychological process of adjustment to one's environment. Recent consumer socialization studies, for example, have used the cognitive developmental approach to study some aspects of decision making among children and teen-agers (Ward et al. 1977; Moschis and Churchill 1979).

Because various aspects of consumer behavior may not be equally amenable to one particular theoretical perspective, this study views the formation of decision-making properties not only as a social process, but also as a cognitive developmental process of adjustment to one's environment (Robertson and Feldman 1976). Specifically, the study examines the effects of several socialization agents found to be important sources of consumer learning in earlier studies—mass media (television and newspaper), family, and peers (Moschis and Churchill 1978; Moschis and Moore 1978; Ward 1974). Because the present study is cross-sectional, the way in which these agents transmit decision-making cognitions and behaviors through social interaction processes is examined. Social structural variables include social class and sex, both suggested by previous research (Ward 1974; Moschis and Churchill 1978). The specific period examined is adolescence, a period believed to be crucial in socialization in general and consumer socialization in particular (Campbell 1969; Moore and Stephens 1975).

Learning cognitions and behaviors analyzed include a variety of variables related to various stages in the consumer decision-making process (information seeking, product evaluation, and purchase), as well as sex-role conceptions in household decision making. The last type of cognition is considered "anticipatory"[1] (Hess and Torney 1967) in the sense that such cognitions cannot be of use to the adolescent until a later time; yet they may be helpful in understanding the development of various purchasing role structures within the household.

[1]Hess and Torney have described three types of anticipatory socialization: first, the acquisition of attitudes and values about adult roles that have limited relevance to the child, but form the basis for subsequent learning of specific behavior; second, the acquisitions of information not directly applied until later life; and third, learning skills that can be practiced immediately and will be called into play throughout life.

HYPOTHESES

Mass Media

"Mere exposure" theory suggests that repeated symbolic experience with a novel, simple stimulus will lead to greater positive affect for the object portrayed (Zajonc 1968). Support for this thesis has come from a number of studies using a variety of stimulus objects, such as musical compositions, works of art, portraits, and political candidates (Stang 1974; Becker and Doolittle 1975). Resnik and Stern (1977) also suggest that children's brand choice may be influenced by television advertising. Similarly, print advertising may be effective in creating brand preferences (Teel, Teel, and Bearden 1979). As young people interact with the mass media, they are exposed to a variety of advertisements and as a result may develop favorable orientations toward brands.

H1: There is a positive relationship between the amount of television viewing and the extent to which an adolescent has brand preferences.

H2: There is a positive relationship between an adolescent's frequency of reading the newspaper and brand preferences.

Family

Earlier sociologists speculated that young people learn basic "rational" aspects of consumption from their parents (Riesman and Roseborough 1955; Parsons, Bales, and Shils 1953). Recent data on consumer socialization appear to support this contention. For example, research by Ward and Wackman (1973) shows that parents' "general consumer goals" included teaching their children about price-quality relationships. Similarly, Moore and Stephens (1975) show that overall parent-adolescent communication about consumption predicts fairly well a child's knowledge of prices of selected products. These findings suggest that parents may encourage their youngsters to use price as a criterion in evaluating products.

H3: There is a positive relationship between the frequency of family communication about consumption and the extent to which an adolescent uses price in product evaluation.

Peers

Peers are also a significant source of influence (Campbell 1969), especially among adolescents. During the adolescent years a person's need for independence from his/her parents leads him/her into establishing a dependence on peers (Coleman 1961). Some studies have shown that adolescents' preferences for products and brands are influenced by those of their peers (e.g.,

Saunders, Salmi, and Tozier 1973; Ryan 1966; Vener 1957). As an adolescent interacts with his/her peers about consumption matters, s/he is likely to learn about their product preferences and may take them into account in evaluating products.

H4: The more frequently an adolescent interacts with peers about consumption matters, the greater the tendency to use peer preferences in evaluating products.

Social Class

Socioeconomic background may affect decision-making patterns as well as the development of such patterns. From a learning theory point of view, it has been argued that because adolescents from low-income homes have less experience with money, and may be less aware of the range of consumer goods, their learning of some aspects of consumption may be less adequate than that of adolescents from upper-income homes, who have more opportunities for consumption (Ward 1974). Riesman, Glaser, and Denny (1950) also speculated that in the more affluent families, children acquire some understanding of the purchasing processes at a relatively early age. Previous research findings appear to support this line of reasoning, showing that young people from upper socioeconomic backgrounds have greater awareness of, and preference for, commercial stimuli in their consumer environment (Ward 1974; Moschis and Churchill 1978; Moschis and Moore 1978). Specifically, some research suggests that young people from upper social classes may have stronger brand preferences (Guest 1964) and are more likely to seek information prior to decision making (Moschis 1978) than their lower-class counterparts. Similarly, social class is likely to affect perceptions of sex-roles in family decisions. Studies of high school adolescents suggest that lower social class students are more traditional and less egalitarian in various sex-role conceptions than upper class adolescents (Angrist, Mickelsen, and Penna 1977; Bayer 1975; Osmond and Martin 1975). Based on previous findings, the following hypothesis was constructed:

H5: There is a positive relationship between an adolescent's socioeconomic background and (a) strength of brand preferences, (b) amount of information seeking prior to decision making, and (c) perception of egalitarian roles (joint participation) in family decisions.

Sex

Sex-role conceptions about family decisions may also differ among young people, by sex. Several sociologists have suggested that power and task responsibility are built into the roles of husband and wife on the basis of cultural norms and controls (Burgess and Locke 1960; Parsons and Bales 1955). There appears to be some degree of marital division of labor, based on gender, with respect to family decisions (Davis 1970; 1976). Previous theory and research suggest that such sex-role ideologies are likely to start developing in early childhood and undergo formation and change throughout a person's life (Davis 1976; Emmerich 1973). Research, for example, suggests that male adolescents are likely to develop "sexist" views and more traditional attitudes than female adolescents about sexual stereotypes, career, and family roles (Angrist, Mickelsen, and Penna 1977; Bayer 1975; Dunn 1960; Hill and Aldous 1969).

H6: Female adolescents are more likely than male adolescents to hold egalitarian sex-role perceptions regarding household consumer decisions.

Maturation

It is believed that adolescents' cognitions and skills in decision making will change with age. Previous studies suggest that cognitive development may contribute to a child's becoming a more sophisticated consumer. Specifically, maturation is associated with increasing skill in using a wide variety of information sources (Moschis 1978), a larger number of attributes in product evaluation (Ward et al. 1977), and stronger brand preferences (Guest 1944). Campbell (1969) also suggests that an adolescent's need for independence as s/he grows older leads him/her psychologically away from his/her parents toward dependence on peers. This need for independence is often reflected in the adolescent's tendency to purchase products without parental supervision (Moschis et al. 1977). Such a need for independence may affect a child's behavior at various stages in the decision process.

H7: As adolescents grow older they tend to (a) use more sources of consumer information prior to decision making, (b) use more attributes in decision making, (c) rely more on peers for information and advice in buying, (d) rely less on parents for information and advice in buying, and (e) prefer purchasing products in absence of parental supervision.

THE STUDY

The sample consisted of 734 adolescents from several cities and towns in six counties in urban, suburban, semirural, and rural Georgia. In each county, self-administered questionnaires were completed by respondents in one middle and one senior high school, during March of 1978. The selection of schools was based on personal interviews with school officials, and attempts were made to select schools representative of their respective regions. The sample was generally rep-

resentative of the demographic makeup, including sex (49 percent males and 51 percent females), age (53 percent in middle school and 47 percent in high school), race (11 percent blacks and 88 percent whites), and socioeconomic status measured on Duncan's (1961) scale (mean = 45.3).

Criterion Variables

Within each main stage of the consumer decision-making process (information seeking, product evaluation, and purchase), several variables were constructed. These variables were measured by summing appropriate items, using the coefficient alpha to assess the resultant reliability of the scales. Reliability coefficients for the scales ranged from 0.65 to 0.81, above the 0.50 to 0.60 often recommended for constructs in the early stages of research (Nunnally 1967).

Information Seeking. In line with previous studies (Moore and Stephens 1975; Moschis 1978), information seeking was defined as an expressed need to consult various sources of consumer information. Respondents were asked to check with the people or places they would rely on most for information and advice before buying eight products: wristwatch, dress shoes, pocket calculator, hair dryer, sunglasses, wallet, flash cubes, and household batteries. Products were selected on the basis of their relevance to the adolescent consumer (e.g., "Pop's Car is (Mostly) What Junior Would Have Chosen, Scholastic Reports" 1962), the amount of perceived risk (high versus low), and the amount of advertising (heavy versus light). Response alternatives were "friends," "TV ads," "*Consumer Reports*," "one or both of my parents," and "newspaper or magazine ads." (Respondents could check more than one source for each product.) Responses were summed across the eight products for each source to form a 0- to 8-point index representing the adolescent's tendency to seek information from that source. All five indices were combined to form a 0- to 40-point scale measuring the total amount of information seeking.

Product Evaluation. Product evaluation refers to the extent to which the adolescents judge products on various criteria. Respondents were asked to indicate how they would evaluate the same eight products (how they could tell which one is best for them to buy). Response alternatives were "one that is on sale," "one that is advertised a lot," "one that my friends like," "one with a well-known brand name," "one that my parents like," and "one sold by a well-known store." These evaluative criteria were selected on the basis of previous research (Cateora 1963). Responses were summed across products to form a 0- to 8-point index representing the adolescent's tendency to evaluate products using a particular criterion. All six indices were combined to form a 0- to 48-point scale representing the respondent's tendency to use several criteria in product evaluation.

Two variables were considered relevant at the purchase stage: 1) independent purchasing role structures and 2) brand preferences. Independent purchasing refers to an individual's social environment during the actual act of purchasing. Respondents were asked to indicate how they would buy each of the same eight products—whether they would buy them alone, with friends, with their parent(s), brother, or sister, or ask someone in the family to buy the item for them. Responses to the first two categories (alone or with friends) were combined to form a 0- to 8-point index representing the respondent's independence in purchasing (Moschis et al. 1977).

Brand Preferences. Brand preferences refer to the extent to which a respondent has favorite brands of products. This variable was measured in line with previous research (Guest 1944; Ward et al. 1977) by asking subjects to write their favorite brand next to 12 different products, or leave the space blank if there was no preference. Products were randomly selected. Half of them were considered relevant to a child's use, half were not; and in each of the two categories, half were heavily advertised, and half lightly advertised. Respondents were assigned scores of 1 if they indicated a brand name, and 0 if they did not, for each product. A 0- to 12-point index was formed to represent the respondent's brand preferences.

Sex-Role Conceptions. In family decision making, sex-role conceptions refer to the adolescent's perception of the relative influence of husband and wife in family decisions. Perceptions were measured across twelve different decisions representing different degrees of husband-wife specialization. Using Herbst's (1952) typology, two decisions were selected to represent each one of six possible categories: Husband's Household Duties (HH), Wife's Household Duties (HW), Common Household Duties (HB), Child Control and Care (Ch), Economic Activities (E), and Social Activities (S).

The following question was asked of respondents: "In a family with small children, check who you think should have the *most* say in deciding about the following things." The twelve decisions were then listed with four response alternatives: "husband should have most say," "wife should have most say," "husband and wife should have equal say," and "I don't know." The extent of an adolescent's perceptions of egalitarian sex-roles in family decision making was measured by summing responses to the "husband and wife should have equal say" category, to form a 0- to 12-point index.

Amount of Television Viewing. In line with previous research, amount of television viewing was measured by asking respondents how frequently they watched specific program categories (McLeod and

O'Keefe 1972; Moschis and Churchill 1978). These were national and local news, sports, movies, variety shows, cartoons, and police and adventure shows. The responses were measured on a five-point scale (everyday = 5, never = 1), and summed to form the television viewing index.

Family Communication about Consumption. This variable was operationally defined as overt interaction between parent and adolescent concerning goods and services (Ward and Wackman 1971; Moore and Stephens 1975). It was measured by summing responses to six items. A typical item was "my parents and I talk about buying things," with responses measured on a five-point scale (very often = 5, never = 1).

Peer Communication about Consumption. This variable was operationally defined as overt peer-adolescent interaction concerning goods and services (Churchill and Moschis 1979; Moschis and Churchill 1978; Moore and Moschis 1978). It was measured by summing responses to eight items, such as "my friends and I talk about buying things," again using a five-point scale (very often = 5, never = 1).

Status (class) was measured using Duncan's (1961) SES index. Respondents were asked to state their fathers' and mothers' occupations and places of work. Open-ended responses for father's occupation were used to construct the social class measure. Finally, sex was a dichotomous variable (1 = male, 2 = female).

RESULTS

Descriptive Data

Information source preferences vary by type of product (Table 1). Parents are preferred about twice as much as any other source of consumer information. For products where price, social acceptance, and performance is of great concern (wristwatch, dress shoes, pocket calculator, and hair dryer), preference for parental advice is great. Peers as a source of information appear to be important in buying decisions concerning items important for peer acceptance (sunglasses and wallet), while the mass media rank relatively low and seem to be preferred for items where price, performance, and social acceptance is of little concern (flash cubes and household batteries). These findings tend to be consistent with previous research studies among older adolescents reported by Gilkison (1973).

Although adolescents prefer to consult with their parents and/or rely on information they receive from them, parents do not appear to be as instrumental in the child's decision regarding which product to buy (Table 2). Rather, brand name and reduced prices seem to be the primary considerations in adolescent buying decisions. Surprisingly, peer influence appears to be quite low at the product evaluation stage, nearly as significant as advertisements and store reputation.

The purchasing role structures also appear to differ depending on the product involved. Adolescent products of high socioeconomic and performance risk (wristwatch, dress shoes, pocket calculator, and hair dryer) are likely to be purchased in the presence of family members, whereas products of lower risk are likely to be purchased in the absence of other family members (Table 3). These findings correspond with an earlier research study of purchasing role structures involving broader classes of products consumed by adolescents (Moschis et al. 1977).

To assess the effects of independent variables on the adolescent's development of selected consumer-related skills, simple and multiple regression analyses were used. Table 4 shows regression results for the hypothesized relationships. It is encouraging to note that nearly all the hypothesized relationships are in the right direction, with many of them being statistically significant. Although the statistically significant relationships accounted for only one to eleven percent of the variation in the dependent variables, it should be noted that the amount of variation in each equation is accounted for by the presence of relatively few inde-

TABLE 1

PERCENTAGE OF ADOLESCENTS PREFERRING VARIOUS SOURCES OF INFORMATION IN PURCHASING SELECTED PRODUCTS[a]

Product	Friends	TV ads	*Consumer Reports*	One or both parents	Newspaper or magazine ads
Wristwatch	27.1	15.7	20.6	74.7	15.7
Pair of dress shoes	38.4	13.9	6.0	63.9	19.1
Pocket calculator	19.3	20.6	27.7	58.9	20.2
Hair dryer (blower)	29.2	29.3	17.7	49.9	20.6
Sunglasses	45.4	28.6	8.0	28.6	23.4
Wallet	39.2	15.8	7.8	45.6	24.1
Flash cubes	14.3	32.4	15.1	41.4	25.6
Household batteries	12.5	35.1	16.5	44.6	21.7
Average percent	28.2	23.9	14.9	51.0	21.3

[a]N = 722. Percentages do not sum to 100.0 for each product because of multiple responses.

TABLE 2

PERCENTAGE OF ADOLESCENTS USING VARIOUS CRITERIA IN EVALUATING SELECTED PRODUCTS[a]

Product	One on sale	One advertised a lot	One friends like	One with a well-known brand name	One parents like	One sold by a well-known store
Wristwatch	32.9	14.6	13.2	60.2	30.7	20.1
Pair of dress shoes	30.8	8.5	22.2	37.5	32.2	22.9
Pocket calculator	44.1	12.7	4.2	55.6	26.5	17.1
Hair dryer (blower)	34.1	18.3	12.1	49.9	23.3	14.5
Sunglasses	44.6	14.9	26.3	30.4	13.0	8.9
Wallet	44.9	8.5	16.9	30.7	17.5	14.3
Flash cubes	48.4	17.5	2.7	41.6	12.4	7.8
Household batteries	48.8	18.8	2.0	37.2	11.2	7.2
Average percent	41.1	14.7	12.4	42.9	20.8	14.1

[a]N = 733. Percentages do not sum to 100.0 because of multiple responses.

pendent variables, while consumer learning may be affected by a large number of variables within the context of the general conceptual framework (see the Figure).

Influence of Socialization Agents

It was expected that the adolescent's frequency of interaction with the mass media would be related to his/her brand preferences. Although the resulting correlation between the amount of television viewing and brand preference was 0.10 ($p < 0.01$), the regression coefficient was not statistically significant ($b = 0.06$) to adequately support Hypothesis 1. However, the amount of newspaper reading was highly related to a child's brand preferences ($b = 0.21$, $p < 0.001$), suggesting that exposure to newspaper advertisements may help to explain the development of brand preferences among teen-agers.

The data did not support Hypothesis 3 regarding parental influence on the decision making of teens. The amount of parent-adolescent communication about consumption was not related to the respondent's propensity to use price (buy products that are on sale) in evaluating the desirability of various products. The data did, however, provide support for Hypothesis 4 regarding peer influence on adolescent product evaluation. The relationship between peer communication about consumption and propensity to use peer preferences in product evaluations was statistically significant at the 0.001 level, suggesting that peer groups may influence the teen-age consumer at the product evaluation stage.

The Effects of Antecedent Variables

The effects of three antecedent variables—social class, sex, and age—were examined, as these factors may influence various aspects of adolescents' decision making. For social class, a positive significant relationship at the 0.05 level was found between the adolescent's socioeconomic background and extent of brand preference for various products, supporting Hypothesis 5a. In contrast, Hypotheses 5b and 5c were not supported. Social class did not correlate significantly with either the amount of information seeking or with the adolescent's perceptions of egalitarian roles (joint participation) in family decision making.

On sex, males were expected to be more traditional than females and, therefore, perceive a larger number of family decisions as specialized activities involving little joint participation. The data in Table 4 support this line of reasoning. However, this seems to be true for only half of the twelve decisions examined (Table 5). Specifically, on Common Household Duties (HB), Economic (E), and Social (S) Activities, female adolescents perceived significantly greater husband-wife in-

TABLE 3

PURCHASING ROLE STRUCTURES FOR SELECTED PRODUCTS THAT ADOLESCENTS USE[a]

Product	Buy alone	Buy with friends	Buy with my parents, brother, or sister	Ask someone in the family to buy
Wristwatch	21.6	10.8	59.7	7.9
Pair of dress shoes	23.6	18.0	50.3	8.1
Pocket calculator	21.5	6.7	60.1	11.6
Hair dryer (blower)	25.2	10.5	48.3	16.0
Sunglasses	59.3	26.4	10.9	3.4
Wallet	61.5	18.0	15.1	5.3
Flash cubes	56.7	10.3	16.0	17.0
Household batteries	58.4	7.9	15.4	18.7
Average percent	41.0	13.6	34.5	10.9

[a]Base is between 712 and 719 for each product.

TABLE 4

REGRESSION ANALYSES FOR HYPOTHESIZED RELATIONSHIPS[a]

	Information seeking			Product evaluation			Purchase		Family role conceptions
	Peers	Parents	Amount	Price	Peers	Evaluative criteria	Brand preferences	Independent purchasing	
Socialization processes									
Television viewing							.06 (.10)		
Newspaper reading							.21[e] (.22)		
Family communication				−.01(R)[b]					
Peer communication					.16[e]				
Social structural variables									
Socioeconomic status			.07 (.09)				.09[c] (.09)		.05 (.05)
Sex									.18[e] (.18)
Age	.19[e]	−.22[e]	.09[c] (.09)			.06		.33[e]	
R^2	.04[e]	.05[d]	.01[d]	.00	.03[e]	.00	.06[e]	.11[e]	.03[e]

[a]Table entries are standardized regression coefficients (betas). Product moment correlations for variables in multiple regression equations are shown in parentheses.
[b]R indicates the relationship is the reverse of that hypothesized.
[c]Significant at 0.05 level.
[d]Significant at 0.01 level.
[e]Significant at 0.001 level.

TABLE 5

SEX-ROLE PERCEPTIONS IN HOUSEHOLD DECISION MAKING AMONG MALE (M) AND FEMALE (F) ADOLESCENTS[a]

Decision[b]	Husband should have most say		Wife should have most say		Husband and wife should have equal say		Significance level
	M	F	M	F	M	F	
What groceries to buy (HB)	2.5%	0.6%	61.8%	51.9%	35.7%	47.6%	.002
What car to buy (HB)	37.6	19.4	1.4	.6	61.0	80.0	.001
What kinds of insurance to buy (E)	33.3	25.1	2.8	2.0	63.9	72.8	.014
What bank to do business with (E)	24.8	17.4	5.4	3.5	69.9	69.1	.006
Where to go on vacation (S)	9.0	1.7	4.5	3.1	86.6	95.1	.001
What movies, theaters, or concerts to attend (S)	6.5	2.5	9.2	6.4	84.2	91.1	.010
What the family should have for dinner (HW)	4.2	2.3	70.0	69.5	25.8	28.2	n.s.
What household cleaning products to buy (HW)	2.8	1.7	90.0	92.6	7.2	5.7	n.s.
Where to have the car fixed (HH)	91.1	88.1	1.1	0.8	7.8	11.0	n.s.
What gardening tools to buy (HH)	54.4	55.3	15.8	12.6	29.8	32.1	n.s.
What children's clothing to buy (Ch)	1.7	0.3	66.2	68.8	32.1	30.1	n.s.
What children's toys to buy for birthdays and holidays (Ch)	3.8	0.3	16.2	15.5	80.0	84.2	n.s.

[a]Base is between 612 and 714 for each decision.
[b]HB = Common Household Duties, HW = Wife's Household Duties, E = Economic Activities, S = Social Activities, HH = Husband's Household Duties, and Ch = Child Control and Care Activities.
NOTE: Significance level is based on χ^2 test after grouping the first two columns to form "specialized role" category. "Don't know" responses and missing values are omitted from calculations. n.s. = not significant.

volvement in decision making than their male counterparts. This was not the case, however, for decisions relating to the Husband's (HH) and Wife's (HW) Household Duties and Child Control and Care (Ch) activities. These data suggest that there is a consensus among adolescents, regardless of sex, on sex roles relating to traditional specialized activities. Differences in perception seem to exist in areas of lesser specialization.

These differences in sex-role perceptions were not significantly related to the adolescent's socioeconomic background. When the effects of social class were taken into account (controlled for SES), sex did have some effect on decisions regarding common duties. Specifically, there were differences in perceptions only among males and females from working classes, with females perceiving greater joint participation in decisions about purchases of groceries and automobiles than their male counterparts ($\chi^2 = 10.08$, $p < 0.001$).

The data in Table 5 further suggest that adolescents hold accurate perceptions of such "anticipatory" cognitions on household decision making, regardless of sex. For example, both male and female adolescents tend to think it is the "man's job" to decide where to have the car fixed and the "woman's job" to decide what household cleaning products to buy.

To further determine how early in a child's life these cognitions are formed, and the extent to which they are likely to change during the adolescent years, such conceptions were analyzed by age. Table 6 shows sex-role perceptions in the twelve decision areas among younger (grades 6 through 8) and older (grades 9 through 12) adolescents. The data in Table 6 suggest that such perceptions are well developed by early adolescence and are not likely to undergo significant changes during this period. The most probable decision areas in which changes appear to take place are economic, with perceptions of sex roles becoming more egalitarian.

The final consideration in this study was the examination of the effects of maturation on decision-making patterns of adolescents. Age was related, at the 0.05 level, to the number of information sources preferred, providing support for Hypothesis 7a. A nonsignificant relationship further emerged between age and the number of evaluative criteria used, providing no support for Hypothesis 7b. Age was related, though, at the 0.001 level, in a positive sense to the adolescent's propensity to prefer "friends" as a source of information, and was related negatively to his/her tendency to rely on parents for information and advice. These results support Hypotheses 7c and 7d. Finally, the data also support Hypothesis 7e regarding a child's independence in shopping. The relationship between age and independent purchasing was 0.33 ($p < 0.001$).

TABLE 6

SEX-ROLE PERCEPTIONS IN HOUSEHOLD DECISION MAKING AMONG YOUNGER (Y) AND OLDER (O) ADOLESCENTS[a]

Decision[b]	Husband should have most say		Wife should have most say		Husband and wife should have equal say		Significance level
	Y	O	Y	O	Y	O	
What groceries to buy (HB)	1.9%	1.2%	58.6%	54.9%	39.5%	43.9%	n.s.
What car to buy (HB)	29.7	27.7	1.1	0.9	69.2	71.4	n.s.
What kinds of insurance to buy (E)	31.3	27.3	3.2	1.5	65.5	71.2	n.s.
What bank to do business with (E)	23.4	18.9	5.2	3.6	71.5	77.5	n.s.
Where to go on vacation (S)	7.5	3.0	6.0	1.2	86.3	95.8	.001
What movies, theaters, or concerts to attend (S)	6.1	2.8	12.0	3.4	81.9	93.8	.001
What the family should have for dinner (HW)	4.1	2.4	71.7	67.4	24.2	30.2	n.s.
What household cleaning products to buy (HW)	2.9	1.5	90.1	92.3	6.9	6.2	n.s.
Where to have the car fixed (HH)	90.2	89.1	1.1	0.9	8.7	10.1	n.s.
What gardening tools to buy (HH)	52.8	56.8	17.9	10.0	29.3	33.2	n.s.
What children's clothing to buy (Ch)	1.4	0.6	70.4	64.0	28.3	35.3	n.s.
What children's toys to buy for birthdays and holidays (Ch)	3.3	0.6	16.9	14.7	79.8	84.7	n.s.

[a]Base is between 663 and 717 for each decision.

[b]HB = Common Household Duties, HW = Wife's Household Duties, E = Economic Activities, S = Social Activities, HH = Husband's Household Duties, and Ch = Child Control and Care Activities.

NOTE: Significance level is based upon χ^2 test after grouping the first two columns to form "specialized role" category. "Don't know" responses and missing values are omitted from calculations. n.s. = not significant.

DISCUSSION

The results suggest that young people have acquired fairly sophisticated decision-making cognitions and skills by the time they reach early adolescence. The data suggest that adolescents tend to rely more on personal sources for information on products of high socioeconomic and performance risk, and on mass media for information on products perceived as low for such risk. These findings are similar to those from adult consumer research (e.g., Engel et al. 1978).

One unexpected finding was the relatively low influence of significant others (parents and peers) at the product evaluation stage of the decision process. Price ("sales") and brand name were perceived as the most important evaluative criteria. Apparently, perceived product attributes at this stage outweigh social influences, although the relative importance of these factors seems to depend on the type of product being evaluated. The failure to find much social influence may simply be a measurement problem. Social influence is apparently a concept that is difficult to define, explicate, and measure (Robertson and Ward 1973). Whether social influence should be viewed as a process or is situation specific has not yet been determined.

At the purchase stage, the adolescent's social environment is also likely to vary across different products. This may be partly a function of the adolescent's orientation or purchase motives. For example, the need for social approval in purchasing sunglasses (buying a pair that friends like) may influence his/her purchase plans, i.e., cause him/her to buy such a product in the presence of friends. Overall, however, the data are consistent with those in a previous study of purchasing role structures (Moschis et al. 1977).

Individual differences across various decision-making patterns were examined using explanatory variables derived from socialization theories. The results suggest that different variables may affect the development of various aspects of consumer decision-making cognitions. Newspaper advertising may significantly affect formation of brand preferences, even though this agent was perceived low in credibility in decision making. In addition, the more frequently the adolescent interacts with his/her peers about consumption matters, the greater the likelihood of his/her taking peer preferences into account in evaluating products.

However, interaction with the parents was not related to the child's use of price as an evaluative criterion. Perhaps parents attempt to teach children how to judge products on the basis of price, rather than to buy only that which is on sale.

Socioeconomic background and brand preference appear to be related, suggesting that children from higher socioeconomic backgrounds have more opportunities for consumption and are more aware of their consumer environment, including the availability of products in the marketplace, than children of lower socioeconomic backgrounds. The findings of this study and the data reported by Moschis and Churchill (1978) tend to support this line of reasoning.

The data also suggest that young people have developed clear sex-role perceptions by the time they reach adolescence. Specifically, adolescents of both sexes have accurate sex-role perceptions regarding the responsibility for decision making in traditional male or female activities. The sex of the respondent, however, does have some effect on his/her perception of spouse involvement in household decisions regarding economic, social, and common household activities (areas of less specialization). These cognitions are unlikely to undergo significant changes during adolescence.

Examination of the effects of maturation on teenagers' decision-making patterns showed significant differences in the number of information sources preferred, but age had no impact on the number of attributes used in decision making. However, the data do show changes in the types of information sources preferred with age (peer versus parents). Similarly, although adolescents do not seem to use an increasing number of attributes or criteria in decision making with age, they may emphasize different available product attributes. For example, age correlated with the respondent's tendency to evaluate a product by brand name ($r = 0.14, p < 0.001$), suggesting that young people may be developing efficiency in shopping using brand name as a "summary" of a larger number of attributes, such as price, performance, and warranty.

A single study such as ours can only deal with a relatively small number of variables derived from the general conceptual framework. Obviously, other antecedent variables and socialization processes are likely to affect the development of consumer decision-making patterns. The findings of this study seem to be encouraging enough to warrant future research in the area using socialization perspectives.

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