GEORGE P. MOSCHIS AND ROY L. MOORE

An Analysis of the Acquisition of Some Consumer Competencies Among Adolescents

Recent public policy discussions have focused on the role and influences of television, school, and family in teaching young people various desirable and undesirable consumer-related cognitions and behaviors. This research provides a theoretical and empirical basis useful in resolving such issues. The study examined the influences of television, family, school and peers on the acquisition of specific consumer skills that contribute to the individual's competency and proficiency as a consumer in the marketplace.

In recent years, public-policy makers and consumer educators have shown increasing interest in consumer socialization, that is, the process by which young people acquire consumption-related skills, attitudes, and knowledge.

Public-policy makers need to understand consumer socialization in order to respond effectively to charges made by various consumer groups about the effects of marketing activities on young people. Advertising critics, for example, argue that advertising strongly influences youth and results in undesirable socialization (e.g., nonrational, impulse-oriented buying). On the other hand, defenders of advertising practices respond by stating that advertising simply sets up the agenda for positive parent-child interaction and provides consumption-learning experiences for the child [20].

Because of the recent consumer education movement and the various public policy issues concerning the effects of promotion on young people, consumer educators have also shown a renewed interest in consumer education courses as a means of preparing children for effective interac-

George P. Moschis is Assistant Professor of Marketing, College of Business Administration, Georgia State University.

Roy L. Moore is Assistant Professor, Department of Journalism, Georgia State University.

This study was partly supported by a research grant from the American Marketing Association Research Support Competition. The authors wish to thank the JCA reviewer for his helpful comments and suggestions on an earlier draft of this paper.

tion with the marketplace [1, 25]. However, in spite of the belief by some individuals that school has always been the main learning source of young people's positive consumer behaviors [3, 5, 19], the existing consumer education materials and practices have been criticized on the grounds that they teach young people very little about effective consumer behavior [7, 8, 25].

In spite of the growing interest in and subsequent needs for consumer socialization research, little theoretical and empirical work has been developed on the topic [25]. This article presents a conceptual model for organizing research in the area and provides an empirical basis useful in resolving consumer socialization-related issues. Specifically, the study examines the influence of television, family, peers and school on the acquisition of some specific consumer skills that contribute to the individual's competency and proficiency as a consumer in the marketplace.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Although no single set of concepts, hypotheses, and assumptions has been agreed upon by socialization researchers to guide research in the area of consumer socialization, a rough blueprint does exist indicating that a complete socialization theory must deal with five types of variables [10].

First, a socialization model should include the *learning properties* (cognitions and behaviors) necessary for the performance of a given social behavior pattern such as marital, political and occupational roles [2]. These may include specific behavioral acts as well as cognitive components such as knowledge, skills, and attitudes depending upon the particular role under consideration [2, 23].

Second, sources of influence, commonly known as *socialization agents* or *significant others* are directly involved in socialization because of frequency of contact with the learner, primacy over the individual, and control over rewards and punishments given to the person [10]. For example, one model of socialization includes parents, teachers and friends as sources of influence [6].

A third type of variable includes *learning processes,* that is the ways by which the learner acquires specific values and behaviors from the socialization agents while interacting with them. Learning processes fall into three categories: modeling, reinforcement, and social interaction. Modeling involves imitation of the agent's behavior. Reinforcement involves either reward (positive reinforcement) or punishment (negative

reinforcement). Social interaction is a less specific learning mechanism and it may include a combination of modeling and reinforcement [10]. In a model of educational and occupational achievement, for example, best friends' plans and parental encouragement are viewed as modeling and social interaction processes, respectively, depicting the influence of significant others [6].

The fourth type of variables deals with the *social environment* within which a person's learning takes place. Variables such as socioeconomic status and birth order usually serve as antecedents in socialization research. Although they can affect learning directly, they are particularly important for their indirect effects by influencing learning processes, and they are often used as "control" variables in socialization research [10]. Haller and Portes, for example, related socioeconomic status to interpersonal influences in their model of educational and occupational attainment [6].

Finally, a complete model of socialization must refer to the *time span* in the person's life during which learning is occurring. Because people continuously learn different things from different sources at different stages in their lives, all generalizations are conditional to a particular phase in the developmental process or life cycle, and a different cluster of variables tends to dominate each stage [10].

Socialization is most commonly studied either as a cognitive development process or as a social learning process. Studies utilizing the cognitive development approach essentially attempt to explain the formation of various learning properties as a function of qualitative stages indexed by the child's age (proxy variable for cognitive development) [18, 25]. The social learning model, on the other hand, seeks explanations for the formation of cognitions and behaviors on forces applied to the child by significant others. Learning is assumed to be taking place during the child's interaction with significant others in specific social settings [10, 25]. Conceptually, cognitions and behaviors may be viewed as dependent variables while social structural factors and age or life cycle may be considered as independent variables. Finally, in the social learning approach, socialization process(es) incorporate two main types of variables (elements): the socialization agent and the learning process(es) actually operating [10]. These processes may be viewed as intervening variables [12].

This study does not address the entire consumer socialization issue. Rather an attempt is made to examine variables representing various

aspects of the general conceptual model in an effort to set the groundwork for future research. Within this broad theoretical and conceptual framework the study examines specific aspects of consumer socialization. We are concerned with the development of the following cognitive properties that contribute to the individual's effectiveness as a consumer in the marketplace: brand knowledge, price accuracy, legal knowledge, and consumer role conceptions. These consumer skills were selected to respectively represent desirable qualities in line with normative theories of consumer behavior in the marketplace [5, 11], including (a) knowledge of available alternatives in the marketplace and ability to evaluate them with some degree of competence, (b) knowledge of one's legal rights and sources of consumer remedy, and (c) socially desirable consumer-role conceptions [17, 21, 24]. We examine how specific significant others [television, parents, peers, and school] affect the acquisition of these consumer skills. These socialization agents were selected not only because they were relevant to consumer socialization issues discussed earlier, but also because of previous theoretical and empirical research which suggested they may play a significant role in consumer socialization [25]. The study focused upon agent-learner interactions without any specific reference to the type of learning that may take place, since a cross-sectional study does not appear to be the best design to study specific learning processes (modeling and reinforcement). This does not appear to be a serious shortcoming in socialization research when the objective is not to examine such processes. Previous cross-sectional studies of consumer socialization have used this approach [12, 13, 14].

Two social structural variables are investigated: sex and social class. Their importance and relevance were suggested by previous research [25]. Finally, we view consumer learning not only as a social process but also as a cognitive psychological process of adjustment to one's environment focusing upon adolescence, which is believed to be a crucial period for socialization [3].

THE STUDY

Sample

Self-administered questionnaires were completed by 607 students in middle schools (sixth, seventh, and eighth grades) and high schools (ninth through twelfth grades) in Kentucky and North Carolina during the Winter of 1975. Although logistics prevented random sampling of sub-

jects, comparison of 1970 census figures with respondent socioeconomic sample means (using Duncan's two-digit-percentile SES index [4]) indicated that from a socioeconomic point of view, the subjects were a fair representation of the youth in each region. The mean Duncan SES for the total sample was 50.2 based on the father's occupation.

Variables were measured by summing appropriate items and using coefficient alpha [16] to assess the reliability of each scale (reliability coefficients of no lower than .50 are recommended for initial research [16, p. 226]).

Criterion Variables

Brand knowledge refers to the extent to which the respondents correctly identify products categories for specific brands. Respondents were asked to list "the kind of product each brand stands for" in the blank beside each of 18 randomly selected brands, such as "Earth Born _____" and Avis _____." Correct answers were summed to form a 0- to 18-point index. The reliability coefficient of this scale was .92, but this high reliability may be due to lack of variability (skewed distribution). This suggests caution in interpreting findings, especially those of regression analysis.

Price accuracy refers to the ability to price selected products and services. Respondents were asked to write how much each item cost in the blank beside each of the following 11 items: gallon of regular gasoline, airmail stamp, Big Mac, tourist-class airplane ticket from New York to Los Angeles, three-minute phone call coast-to-coast during the weekend, Volkswagon Super Beetle, ten-speed racer bicycle, movie ticket for adults, Bic Banana pen, dentist's charges for cleaning teeth, and a year's subscription to *Time* Magazine. A response was scored as correct if it fell approximately within 10 percent of the item's actual price (local merchants were contacted to determine the actual price range of some items). Correct responses were summed to form a 0- to 11-point index. This scale had a reliability coefficient of .38, which is less than desirable levels of reliability.

Legal knowledge refers to the respondent's accuracy of knowledge with respect to consumer legal rights in the marketplace and sources of consumer remedy. Students were asked to respond to six "True-False-Don't Know" items. To detect any response set bias, half of the items required "false" answers to be correct while the other three required "true" answers. A typical item was "Milk sold at the store must show

the last day it can be sold." Correct responses were summed to form a 0- to 6-point index. The reliability coefficient of this scale was .44, which is also less than desirable levels of reliability.

Because role conceptions include formalized expectations associated with the given social role [22], our *consumer role conceptions* variable refers to the accuracy of "the individual's *cognitions* and *perceptions* of what a [consumer] role consists of in terms of functions, obligations, position, and rights involved in role description" [22, p. 334]. To determine the accuracy of expectations of cognitions and perceptions relating to the consumer role, respondents were asked whether they "agree, disagree, or don't know" if a good consumer does ten different things relating to purchasing and consumption processes such as "shops around before buying anything that costs a lot of money" and "tries not to waste energy." Five of the ten items were stated in such a way that an "agree" response would correspond to what are generally perceived as positive or desirable consumer behaviors and necessary types of cognitive behavior or necessary types of cognitive information. A "disagree" response to the other five items would correspond to "good" consumer behaviors or necessary types of cognitive information. Because of prior theoretical predictions of the direction of correct responses, answers were scored on a three-point scale depending upon the intensity of the respondent's judgment [23]. Answers were summed to form a 10- to 30-point index. The scale had a reliability coefficient of .50.

Independent Variables

Because socialization occurs during the course of interaction of the learner with the socialization agents [10], the extent of adolescent-to-agent interaction with each one of the four consumer socialization agents (parents, media, peers, and school) was measured in accordance with previous research [12, 13, 14] by the frequency with which the respondent interacted with them.

Intrafamily communication about consumption refers to the extent to which the adolescent interacts with his/her parents about consumption matters. Of the nine items used to measure the adolescent's frequency of interaction with parents, factor analysis revealed five items (with a factor loading of .50 or greater) focusing on communication from the adolescent to the parent. A typical item designed to measure *adolescent-parent communication about consumption* was "I tell my parents what I think about things they buy for themselves." This scale had a reliability coeffi-

cient of .60. The remaining four items loaded significantly (.50 or greater) on a second factor focusing on communication from parent to adolescent. A typical item designed to measure *parent-adolescent communication about consumption* was "My parents tell me why they buy something before they buy it." The reliability coefficient was .56. Responses to intrafamily communication items were measured on a five-point "very often–never" scale, and variable scores were obtained by summing across the items making up each respective variable.

The extent of the adolescent's interaction with the television was measured by his/her frequency of viewing the following programs: news, cartoons, sports, movies, talk shows, and police and adventure shows. This measure has been suggested as a more reliable one than simply "time spent" with the medium [10]. Responses to five-point "very often–never" scales were summed across the six items to form the total *amount of television viewing* variable, with a reliability coefficient of .52.

Respondents were also asked about the extent to which they interact with friends about consumption matters. The *peer communication about consumption* variable was constructed by summing "very often–never" responses (measured on a five-point scale) across five items which loaded significantly on the hypothesized factor. A typical item of this scale was "I learn from friends what to look for in buying things." The scale had a reliability coefficient of .75.

The extent of adolescents' interaction with school about consumption matters was defined in terms of the total number of credit units they had completed in consumer education, home economics, economics, environmental science and guidance (job education) classes. The *number of consumer-related courses* was defined as the total number of credit units completed in these classes. The scale had a reliability coefficient of .67.

Finally, *social class* was determined by asking respondents to state the father's occupation; the respondent's social class was measured using Duncan's socioeconomic scale [4].

RESULTS

Age Differences on Dependent Consumer Skills

The first consideration in this study was the examination of age differences on the four consumer skills among younger (sixth through eighth grade) and older (ninth through twelfth grade) adolescents. While socialization may be a life-time process, cognitive development theories

(especially Piaget's theory of intellectual development [18]) suggest that socialization is essentially completed by the age of 15. To the extent to which younger adolescents were at the formal operations stage of cognitive development [18], the researchers expected them to possess the four consumer skills to a significantly lesser extent than their older counterparts.

The data in Table 1 appear to support this line of reasoning. Older adolescents scored significantly higher on the brand knowledge, price accuracy, legal knowledge and role conception measures than did their younger counterparts. These findings suggest that the cognitive developmental model of socialization may explain the acquisition of these consumer skills.

Sex and Socioeconomic Differences

Another concern of this study was to examine the effects on adolescent consumer learning of two social structural factors (sex and socioeconomic status) that locate the young person in his social environment. Social factors may have a direct impact on consumer learning. For example, previous studies suggest that the level of consumer-related knowledge may vary by sex, with males possessing greater amount of such information [9, 14]. Similarly, blue-collar families appear to emphasize different buying criteria than do white-collar families, e.g., in purchasing clothing [15]. Social structural factors may also have an indirect effect on consumer learning by, for example, affecting socialization processes [25]. To the extent that sex and socioeconomic status may directly or indirectly

TABLE 1
Mean Values of Dependent Consumer Skill Measures for Younger and Older Adolescents.

Consumer Skills	Younger Adolescents	Adolescents	t-value
	(N = 205)	(N = 402)	
Brand Knowledge[1]	16.48 (2.07)	17.27 (1.52)	28.22
Price Accuracy[1]	4.11 (1.61)	4.92 (1.54)	35.73
Legal Knowledge[1]	4.28 (1.87)	4.94 (1.27)	41.09
Consumer Role Conceptions[1]	25.29 (3.40)	26.51 (2.78)	22.64

[1]Means are significantly different from each other at .05 level (one-tailed test using normal approximation to sampling distribution). Standard deviations are in parentheses.

TABLE 2
Mean Values of Dependent Consumer Skill and Socialization Processes Measures for Male and Female Adolescents.

	Male Adolescents	Female Adolescents	t-value
	(N = 344)	(N = 263)	
Consumer Skills			
Brand Knowledge	16.93 (1.74)	17.10 (1.80)	1.36
Price Accuracy[1]	4.80 (1.61)	4.46 (1.63)	6.41
Legal Knowledge[1]	4.81 (1.55)	4.61 (1.58)	4.22
Consumer Role Conceptions	26.18 (3.08)	25.99 (3.03)	.59
Socialization Processes			
Television Viewing	21.70 (4.23)	21.16 (3.77)	2.71
Intrafamily Communication re: consumption			
Adolescent-Parent Communication[1]	11.75 (3.35)	12.34 (3.22)	4.85
Parent-Adolescent Communication	13.29 (3.21)	13.31 (3.27)	.01
Peer Communication re: consumption	17.67 (3.75)	17.67 (3.81)	.00
Consumer-Related Courses	2.88 (2.92)	3.08 (2.58)	2.01

[1]Means are significantly different from each other at .05 level (two-tailed test using normal approximation to sampling distribution). Standard deviations are in parentheses.

affect consumer learning, we expected to find differences on the four dependent consumer skill measures and socialization processes.

Table 2 shows mean values of dependent and adolescent-agent interaction variables for male and female adolescents. Male adolescents appear to possess a greater ability to accurately price products/services in the marketplace and a higher level of legal knowledge. With respect to the frequency of adolescent's interaction with the various socialization agents, significant sex differences emerged only for the adolescent-parent communication variable, suggesting that female adolescents talk with their parents about consumption matters more frequently than do male adolescents (Table 2).

Table 3 shows mean values of dependent and adolescent-agent interaction variables for lower-, middle-, and upper-class adolescents. A significant positive relationship appears to exist between the adolescent's social class and the extent to which she/he (a) is aware of available brands in the marketplace; (b) can price products and services; (c) understands consumer-legal matters; and (d) knows socially desirable consumer role expectations. These findings appear to support the contention that young people from low-income homes are less knowledgeable about their con-

TABLE 3
Mean Values of Dependent Consumer Skill and Socialization Process Measures for Lower-, Middle-, and Upper-class Adolescents.

	Lower Class (n = 140)	Middle Class (n = 290)	Upper Class (n = 177)	F-value
Consumer Skills				
Brand Knowledge[1]	16.67 (2.43)	16.93 (1.71)	17.38 (1.02)	6.44
Price Accuracy[1]	4.38 (1.62)	4.55 (1.64)	5.03 (1.55)	7.58
Legal Knowledge[1]	4.50 (1.38)	4.60 (1.32)	5.09 (.90)	11.63
Consumer Role Conceptions[1]	25.83 (3.24)	25.92 (3.21)	26.61 (2.57)	3.48
Socialization Processes				
Television Viewing	21.72 (3.81)	21.57 (4.11)	21.09 (4.11)	1.13
Intrafamily Comm. re: consump.				
Adolescent-Parent Comm.	11.77 (3.41)	11.90 (3.34)	12.36 (3.12)	1.73
Parent-Adolescent Comm.	13.46 (3.56)	13.06 (3.14)	13.58 (3.08)	1.80
Peer Comm. re: consumption[1]	17.22 (3.62)	17.56 (3.86)	18.21 (3.70)	2.90
Consumer-Related Courses	3.08 (3.39)	3.06 (2.70)	2.91 (2.36)	.21

[1]Means are significantly different at .05 level using F-test. Standard deviations are in parentheses.

sumer environment than youngsters from upper-income homes who have more opportunities for consumption [25]. With respect to the frequency of the adolescent's interaction with the various socialization agents, the data in Table 3 show significant differences only for communication with peers. Upper-class adolescents interacted with their peers about consumption matters more frequently than did lower-class adolescents.

Influence of Television, Family, Peers, and School

The final consideration in this study was to examine the influence of the four specific sources of consumer information (significant others) on the acquisition of the skills and knowledge of interest in this research, independent of the influence of demographic characteristics. To accomplish this objective, age, sex, and SES were included as control variables in a multiple regression analysis. To the extent to which adolescents interact with the various significant others, it was expected that the amount of this interaction would lead to the learning of the four consumer skills. Table 4 shows relationships among each of the consumer skills measures and all independent variables. The relationships are expressed as standardized regression coefficients (beta-weights), showing the relative impact of each independent variable in the respective equation.

Television. The adolescent's exposure to television related significantly only to the consumer role conceptions measure ($b = .09$, $p < .01$).

Thus, adolescents appear to learn from television what socially desirable consumer behaviors and cognitions consist of. The relationship between television exposure and brand knowledge approached significance ($b = .07$, $p < .10$), suggesting that the adolescent's awareness of brands and products may increase as she/he is exposed to a greater number of commercials.

Family. The adolescent's interaction with family members (parents) about consumption matters did not significantly relate to any of the four consumer skills. Communication from parent to adolescent was weakly associated with the child's legal knowledge ($b = .07$, $p < .10$), suggesting that parents may be concerned with their youngsters' consumer behavior and may attempt to teach them purchasing skills and legal knowledge.

Peers. The data from this research indicated that peers are the most significant source of acquisition of the four consumer-related skills for adolescents. Interaction with peers apparently leads to the adolescent's awareness about brands in the marketplace ($b = .18$, $p < .001$), the cost of such goods and services ($b = .13$, $p < .001$), and to greater legal knowledge ($b = .08$, $p < .05$). Unfortunately, our data did not allow us to answer questions regarding the processes of such learning, for example,

TABLE 4
Regression Analyses of Consumer Skill Measures.[1]

	Brand Knowledge	Price Accuracy	Legal Knowledge	Role Conceptions
Socialization Processes				
Television Viewing	.07	−.05	.04	.09*
Intrafamily Communication re: consumption				
Adolescent-Parent	.01	.05	−.00	−.01
Parent-Adolescent	.06	.02	.07	.05
Peer Communication re: consumption	.18***	.13***	.08*	.06
Consumer-Related Courses	−.05	−.06	−.04	−.06
Maturational Development	.15***	.25***	.18***	.09*
Social Structural Variables				
Sex	.06	−.09*	−.08*	.02
Social Class	.11**	.10**	.17***	.09*
Multiple Correlation (R)	.32	.36	.20	.28

[1]Table entries are standardized regression coefficients (beta-weights) between the independent variables and the four dependent measures.

*$p < .05$
**$p < .01$
***$p < .001$

whether younger adolescents learn consumer skills from older adolescents.

School. The adolescent's formal consumer education at school did not relate significantly to any of the dependent consumer skill measures in this study. These findings suggest that children may learn very little at school about consumption matters and socially desirable consumer behaviors such as those used in this research.

DISCUSSION

In response to public concern about the role and influences of significant others on teaching young people consumer-related thoughts and behaviors, this article has outlined a conceptual model of consumer socialization that can hopefully serve as a blueprint for subsequent research. The empirical study reported here examined specific aspects of adolescent consumer learning within the general conceptual framework of consumer socialization.

The study findings suggest that demographic characteristics of adolescents may be a significant factor affecting the acquisition of consumer skills similar to those examined in this research. The influence was found in this study to be mainly direct. Perhaps such antecedent variables affect consumer learning indirectly by influencing other types of learning processes, but this remains a task of future research.

In examining the effects of significant others on the four consumer skill measures, some significant relationships were found. The data suggest that peers may serve as a significant source of consumer information from which the adolescent may acquire knowledge about available brands in the marketplace and their attributes as well as knowledge about legal matters. Television may also be a significant source of learning some normative aspects of consumer behavior. Parents and school apparently contribute little to the development of the four skills; perhaps they are more instrumental in teaching youngsters *other* types of consumer skills (e.g., socially desirable consumer behaviors) as the findings of one recent study suggest [14]. It is also possible that young people may learn consumer skills by means of different socialization processes, for example, through observation of parent's behaviors [26].

In analyzing the relative influence of all explanatory variables on each consumer skill measure, we found that demographics account for most of the variance in each model. This finding is consistent with Haller's study of educational and occupational attainment [6]. However, the relative

influence of demographics in relation to socialization processes cannot be completely assessed until additional socialization agents and processes are studied for similar as well as other variables that measure consumer behavior in the marketplace.

The findings further suggest that the youth's level of competency on various consumer skills such as those examined in this study may vary according to demographic and social characteristics. Thus consumer educators may do well to tailor their education programs and materials to the specific needs of students. For example, the findings of this research suggest that consumer educators in the middle and high schools could focus more effort on lower-class and female adolescents since they appear to lag behind their upper class and male counterparts in learning certain consumer skills.

The findings should be interpreted in light of some limitations of the study. While the measures of the independent variables were fairly reliable, most dependent variables had reliability coefficients at or near acceptable levels. This suggests that conclusions on the influence of the significant others should be tentative. In addition, the effects of various significant others cannot be fully assessed until one develops measures of the several learning processes and examines such influences over time. Finally, before the issues of consumer competency and consumer socialization can be addressed, several types of consumer skills must be measured. Our study was concerned only with specific cognitive skills, ignoring other cognitive components (e.g., motivations) and behaviors.

Future research in this area should develop and purify measures of a variety of consumer skills. Ideally, the construction of these variables should be based upon theoretical notions of socialization. Research on role acquisition in other disciplinary areas could be helpful here. Path analysis may be a useful method in examining the interrelationships among the various types of consumer socialization variables. Much of the empirical work in socialization, especially the work of Haller *et al.* [6], has proceeded in this manner. This study, while limited, is hopefully a positive step toward understanding the important and complex process of consumer socialization.

REFERENCES

1. Bloom, Paul N. and Mark J. Silver, "Consumer Education: Marketers Take Heed," *Harvard Business Review*, Vol. 54 (January–February 1976), 32–42, 149–150.
2. Brim, Orville G., "Socialization Through the Life Cycle," In *Socialization After Childhood*, pp. 3–49, in O. Brim and S. Wheeler, (eds.), New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1966.

3. Campbell, Earnest Q., "Adolescent Socialization," in D. A. Goslin (ed.), *Handbook for Socialization Theory and Research*. Chicago: Rand McNally, 1969.
4. Duncan, Otis D., "A Socioeconomic Index for All Occupations," in Albert J. Reiss, Jr. (ed.), *Occupations and Social Status*. New York: Free Press, 1961.
5. Gavian, Ruth W. and Louis C. Nanassy, "Economic Competence as Goal of Elementary School Education," *Elementary School Journal*, Vol. 55 (January 1955), 270–73.
6. Haller, Archibald O. and Alejandro Portes, "Status Attainment Processes," *Sociology of Education*, 46 (Winter 1973), 51–91.
7. Hawkins, Calvin H., "A Study of the Uses of Consumer Education Concepts by High School Graduates," *Journal of Consumer Affairs*, 11 (Summer 1977), 122–127.
8. "How Kids Use What They Learn," *The National Observer*, April 2, 1977, p. 6.
9. Maccoby, Eleanor E. and Carol N. Jacklin, *The Psychology of Sex Differences*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1974.
10. McLeod, Jack M. and Garret J. O'Keefe, Jr., "The Socialization Perspective and Communication Behavior," in G. Kline and P. Tichenor (eds.), *Current Perspectives in Mass Communication Research*. Beverly Hills, California: Sage, 1972.
11. Metzen, Edward J., "Ratings of Consumer Competencies on Young Women and Consumer Education Experts, and Implications for Consumer Education," *Journal of Consumer Affairs*, Vol. 1 (Summer 1967), 66–78.
12. Moore, Roy L. and Lowndes F. Stephens, "Some Communication and Demographic Determinants of Adolescent Consumer Learning," *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 2 (September 1975), 80–92.
13. Moore, Roy L., Lowndes F. Stephens, and George P. Moschis, "Mass Media and Interpersonal Influence in Adolescent Consumer Socialization," Paper presented to International Communication Association Conference, Portland, 1976.
14. Moschis, George P., "Acquisition of the Consumer Role by Adolescents," Unpublished doctoral dissertation, School of Business, University of Wisconsin, Madison, 1976.
15. North Central Research Committee NC-24, *Adolescent Girls' Skirts, Part I: Mothers' and Daughters' Opinion of School Skirts*. Station Bulletin 478, NCR Research Pub-169. St. Paul: Agricultural Experiment Station, University of Minnesota, 1965.
16. Nunnally, J. C. *Psychometric Theory*, New York: McGraw-Hill Company, Inc., 1967.
17. Padberg, D. I., "Today's Consumer," in L. L. Mather, (ed.), *Economics of Consumer Protection*. Danville, Ill.: The Interstate Printers and Publishers, Inc., 1971.
18. Piaget, Jean. "The Stages of the Intellectual Development of the Child," and "Piaget's Theory," in Mussen, Conger and Kogan (eds.). *Readings in Child Development and Personality* (2nd edition), New York: Harper and Row, 1970.
19. Reisman, David and Howard Roseborough, "Careers and Consumer Behavior," in L. Clark (ed.), *Consumer Behavior*, Vol. II, *The Life Cycle and Consumer Behavior*. New York: New York University Press, 1955.
20. Robertson, Thomas S. The Impact of Television Advertising on Children," *Wharton Quarterly*, Vol. 6 (Summer, 1972), 38–41.
21. Schnapper, Eric, "Consumer Legislation and the Poor," *The Yale Law Journal*, Vol. 76 (1971), 745–68.
22. Shaw, M. E. and P. R. Costanzo. *Theories of Social Psychology*, New York: McGraw-Hill, 1970.
23. Tannenbaum, Percy H. and Jack M. McLeod, "On the Measurement of Socialization," *Public Opinion Quarterly*, Vol. XXXI (Spring 1967), 27–37.
24. Uhl, J. N. "Consumer Education and Protection," in L. L. Mather (ed.), *Economics of Consumer Protection*. Danville, Ill.: The Interstate Printers and Publishers, Inc., 1971, 11–21.

25. Ward, Scott, "Consumer Socialization," *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 1 (September 1974), 1-14.
26. Ward, Scott L. and Daniel B. Wackman, "Effects of Television Advertising on Consumer Socialization," Working Paper, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Marketing Science Institute, 1973.

LEONARD W. PRESTWICH

Consumer Attitudes Toward Shoplifting

This paper reports the findings of a consumer survey on shoplifting conducted during October, 1976 in three shopping centers in Omaha, Nebraska. It explores consumer awareness of shoplifting, attitudes toward shoplifting, and factors affecting attitudes toward shoplifting. It concludes that an educational program to inform and change attitudes would be in the consumer interest.

Shoplifting has been designated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation as the fastest growing larceny in the nation [6]. The F.B.I. estimates that it increased 221 percent between 1960 and 1970 [10] and other estimates indicate that it has continued to increase at a rapid rate. The U.S. Department of Commerce recently estimated that "ordinary" crimes against business, which includes shoplifting, increased 75 percent between 1971 and 1976 [1].

Since retailers raise prices to cover both shoplifting losses and the cost of store security, and since some anti-shoplifting measures cause inconvenience to customers, shoplifting results in significant costs, both in dollars and inconvenience to nonshoplifting consumers. It has been estimated that in Nevada, with shoplifting amounting to $13.2 million annually, consumers were subsidizing shoplifters in the amount of $5,500 per business hour [6]. According to William J. Brown, Ohio Attorney General, shoplifting losses in that state in the year 1973 cost each family of four $150 [5].[1] Inconveniences to customers include such restrictions and problems as less open access to merchandise for inspection and study, limits on the number of garments which may be taken into a dressing room, unavailability of shopping bags because of concern that they could aid in concealing stolen merchandise, and the general discomfort of being watched and suspected.

The purpose of this study was to explore the degree to which consum-

Leonard W. Prestwich is Professor of Marketing, University of Nebraska at Omaha.

[1]Apparently this figure considers only the direct cost of goods shoplifted, not the cost of anti-shoplifting measures employed by stores.