

The last, and perhaps most important theme to emerge during the needs assessment sessions, was the reticence of the participants to become involved in tax reform efforts. Although most complained about property taxes and wished to see some reductions or alternatives adopted, most had little faith that they were capable of effecting change, either to lessen their own tax burden or to improve the overall system in any meaningful way.

There were several underlying reasons for this skepticism. One was the aforementioned lack of specific knowledge of the tax system. It is difficult to reform procedures or policies that one does not fully understand. Also important as a factor in limiting involvement was distrust of the entire political and governmental system. The interview sessions revealed a deep strain of pessimism; clearly older adults are as disenfranchised with public officials as are other portions of the population. Bitter statements such as, "Politicians are all crooks," or "They don't care what people think," seemed to represent the consensus view at the sessions and expressed deeper doubts as to the responsiveness of the government to pluralistic forces.

The last and most significant factor was the self-images presented, both implicitly and explicitly, by the older adults. Many questioned their own competency and ability to cause change. In part this was tied to themes mentioned already. It was not just that they lacked specific knowledge, but that the subject was "too complicated" for them to grasp. Politicians not only don't care about what constituents feel but they ignore older adults in particular.

Such attitudes are manifestations of broader psycho-social factors which inhibit successful aging. For many older adults, old age has become a time for struggle for survival in an increasingly difficult and alien world. Often they find their health deteriorating, their financial assets losing value, and contact with friends and family declining.

There are also personal crises older people encounter which may erode their sense of efficacy. Crises related to role changes, loss of loved ones, social isolation, and other personal problems may precipitate an extreme sense of loss of control and helplessness. Anxieties attendant with these crises, as well as those in anticipation of such problems strongly interfere with their ability to function effectively in a variety of everyday situations.

In conclusion, however, it should be noted that the interview sessions revealed an untapped potential for older adult involvement in tax reform efforts. Most participants expressed beliefs that citizens should take part in such activities and also indicated that they too might like to become active "if only we could," or "if only I knew how."

This tension between the participants' pessi-

mistic assessment of the tax system and their abilities, and their practical and idealistic desire to get involved if possible, must be addressed by the proposed consumer education program in property tax policy for seniors in New Jersey. The program should increase the participants' knowledge of tax issues and their appreciation of the political and tactical strategies which can be used to achieve reform. However, attitudinal change must be an equally important program goal. The older adults must feel that both as individuals and as a group they can take their new knowledge and use it in an effective manner to improve their own lives and make a contribution to the larger society.

GOAL ATTAINMENT THROUGH THE USE OF CREDIT

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationships among socioeconomic and demographic characteristics, knowledge of credit, credit experience, attitudes and goal attainment. The sample consisted of 178 husband-wife families living in Des Moines, Iowa. Multivariate regression was used to analyze the data. The results partially supported the general hypothesis that knowledge of credit, credit experience, and attitudes toward credit would be more closely associated with goal attainment than socioeconomic factors.

Difficulty in making payments on debts, percentage of monthly income for payment of credit obligations, denial of credit, the wife's feelings about credit, the belief that credit is more of a necessity and the wife's education were found to be significantly related to goal attainment. On the other hand, changes in income and savings, sources contacted for information about credit, knowledge of sources of credit, availability of credit cards and use of credit to cover expenses due to illness were not significantly related to goal attainment.

Introduction

Consumer credit is the financial device through which most Americans acquire what they want when they want it and pay for it out of future earnings. With credit an increasingly important tool in the lives of most citizens today, it is essential for the users of credit as well as for educators to have a real understanding of the importance of decision making in relation to the use of such credit. Intelligent decision making by consumers can be an important means of increasing their purchasing power. The use of credit brings responsibility and wisely used under favorable circumstances, credit can help consumers raise their level of living. Misused credit can bring financial difficulties.

Consumer credit is subdivided between installment credit and noninstallment credit. Installment credit involves purchases of goods and services with the money borrowed paid in installments over a period of time and the consumer is generally charged a fee. Noninstallment credit includes single-payment loans, charge accounts of various kinds, and service credit.

Consumer credit is vital to a progressive economy. Consumer installment credit has become the largest and fastest growing form of debt in

the American economy since World War II, increasing from 2.5 billions to 299.8 billions in 1979 (18, 17). It is increasingly important that consumers make good credit decisions, for their decisions affect the stability of the national economy.

Review of Literature

Households in the American society use credit to maximize their satisfaction from the consumption of goods and services. Consumer credit makes it possible for families and individuals to have the immediate use of goods and services and pay for them out of future income. Credit is primarily middle-income phenomenon and circumstances of young married couples point to their being prime users of credit.

In studying a random sample of 96 young married couples in Des Moines, Iowa, McHugh (8) found that people of high socioeconomic status used credit more frequently, for more purposes, but for shorter duration than low status. Higher status groups tended to use more sources of credit and more types of accounts than those of lower status groups. Mathews and Slocum (10) tried to determine what factors affected the use of commercial bank credit cards. Their findings revealed that lower social classes tend to use their credit cards for installment purposes; upper classes for conveniences. Hendricks, Youmans, and Keller (5) analyzed the data from the Survey Research Center on Family Characteristics of credit users. They found families with low incomes generally did not maintain installment debt balances that were nearly as high relative to their incomes as the balances maintained by middle-income families. Hendricks, Youmans, and Keller pointed out that the characteristics of the household had an impact on consumer durable expenditures and installment credit beyond those associated with income level.

The allocation of income, including that committed to debt, has an effect upon realizing both immediate and long-term goals of all Americans. The findings by Yankelevich, Skelly, and White indicated that large numbers of Americans lack knowledge and skills in financial management and the ability to cope with economic change (20). The results of research done by Juster and Shay (7) showed that most families failed to estimate the interest charge with reasonable degree of accuracy; borrowers generally underestimated their finance costs by a large margin. Older and high-income people knew more about their finance costs than younger, low-income families. Mandell (9) studied consumers' knowledge of the credit market using data from the Survey Research Center at the University of Michigan. He found education and income to be the key determinants of knowledge and under-

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standing of consumer credit. The more education the respondent had, the greater the accuracy and knowledge of credit. As income rose, knowledge increased up to a point and then there was a slight decline. Shay and Schober (14) analyzed the results of the Federal Reserve Surveys of Consumer Awareness of Interest Rates and Finance Charges. Their analysis revealed that the level of consumer awareness of annual percentage rates increased substantially in the 15 month period the interviews were conducted. Respondents who were most aware of the interest rates had higher incomes and some college education. Parker and Shay (11) utilized the data base from the studies undertaken by the Federal Reserve System to determine the characteristics of borrowers which best explained the differences in gains in annual percentage rates awareness. They found that the level of education, knowledge of Truth-in-Lending Law, and income contributed to improved awareness of annual percentage rates. In studying a sample of 643 California heads-of-households, Brandt, Day, and Deutscher (2) found that consumers with lower incomes and less education were more likely to know the finance charges for a purchase but were less informed about interest rates. They also found that there was a higher awareness of annual percentage rates among the more affluent and better educated consumers. Samuels (13) found that awareness of the existence of the Truth-in-Lending Law seemed to increase with education. A survey of consumer awareness of credit costs was conducted by the Federal Reserve Board in 1977. The study revealed that 55 percent of consumers surveyed were aware of the annual percentage rates charged for closed-end credit; 65 percent were aware of rates charged for retail revolving credit; and 71 percent were aware of rates charged for bank credit cards (16).

Brandt, Day, and Deutscher (2) found that credit experience was important in retarding the forgetting of annual percentage rates in their study, and Hull (6) indicated that credit experience was the best predictor of knowledge of credit regulations in her sample. In addition, Ryan and Maynes (12) pointed out that the greatest proportion of debtors in trouble were found among the unmarried, the poor, and those under 25 or 65 years and older.

Slocum and Mathews (15) found upper-income groups hold more favorable attitudes about the use of credit cards than do lower-income groups and were inclined to favor the use of credit cards for luxury purchases. The lower classes frequently limited credit card use to durable and necessity merchandise. Brandt, Day, and Deutscher (2) pointed out that buyers with more favorable attitudes toward the use of credit were less likely to notice or recall the amount of finance charges. Hendricks, Youmans, and Keller (5) indicated that families with favorable attitudes about the use of credit were more likely to be confident about their financial situation. Awh and Waters (1) stated that the cardholders' unfavorable attitudes toward bank credit cards stem primarily from their fear that credit cards may induce them to rely on credit excessively and this was against their beliefs.

Increased labor force participation among women was one of the most significant economic developments in the 1970's. Nearly 43.8 million women 16 years and over were working or looking for work in September 1979 (19). Working women make up 42 percent of all United States workers. Women face particular difficulties in obtaining credit. And as more women became interested in credit, the question drew increasing attention and the result was the Equal Credit Opportunity Act of 1975. The law has given women a legal basis on which to pursue their rights to credit and has forced lenders to deal with credit on a more objective basis. Dunkelberg and Stafford (3) found that if the wife was working the family would increase its debt obligations to finance family expenditures. Goulet (4) found the level of installment debt was higher for the group with a working wife. In addition, Goulet indicated that the debt behavior of female headed families was different from that of one earner male headed families. Goulet concluded that female heads of families were subject to discriminatory treatment because they had not been granted much credit.

The review of literature indicates that credit is an increasingly important experience in the lives of most Americans, today. Consumer credit is an important element in the mass production-mass consumption economy of the United States. It serves to maintain a balance between American's production, distribution and consumption. It makes the obtaining of consumer goods and services more convenient because payments can be budgeted according to income. Consumer credit represents a very important tool in money management. The purpose of this study was to examine the relationships among socioeconomic and demographic characteristics, knowledge of credit, credit experience, attitudes toward credit and goal attainment.

Objectives and Hypothesis

The purpose of the present study was to explore the extent to which the variance in goal attainment may be explained by the differences in knowledge of credit, credit experience, and attitudes toward credit as opposed to socioeconomic characteristics.

The general hypothesis was that knowledge, credit experience and attitudes would be more closely associated with goal attainment than socioeconomic factors.

Procedure

The data for this study were obtained from a sample of 178 husband-wife families in Des Moines, Iowa. Households were eligible for inclusion in the survey if the wife was under 55 years of age and was living with her husband during the interview. The homemaker served as the respondent for the personal interviews, which were conducted by the Statistical Laboratory at Iowa State University in 1977. The survey gathered data about each respondent's knowledge, credit experience, satisfaction, attitudes, history of credit usage,

assets and debts, in addition to specific socioeconomic and demographic variables.

Dependent Variable

The dependent variable was goal attainment through the use of credit. Respondents were asked to determine how the use of credit has helped them in achieving their goals. The response categories consisted of "Did Not Help," "Helped a Little," "Helped Somewhat," "Helped a Lot," coded 0-3.

Independent Variables

The independent variables were selected on the basis of past research and were divided into four categories for purposes of analysis. The categories were: socioeconomic and demographic, knowledge, credit experience, and attitudes toward credit.

Socioeconomic and Demographic. The socioeconomic and demographic category included variables such as age and education of wife, earned income, income adequacy, changes in incomes and savings, wife's employment status, and the husband's occupation.

Knowledge. The knowledge of credit variables were concerned with sources of information contacted, knowledge of sources of credit, credit arrangement, credit rates, contract terms and credit rating.

Credit Experience. The credit experience variables were related to the availability of credit cards, sources of credit contacted, arrangement of credit obligations, denial of credit, percentage of monthly income for payment of credit obligations and bill payment problems.

Attitudes. The attitude variables were concerned with the wife's feelings about installment credit, the belief that credit is more of a necessity, the use of credit to finance the purchase of a car and appliances, to finance education expenses and to cover expenses due to illness.

Method of Analysis

Multivariate regression was used to analyze the data. The independent variables were divided into four categories (socioeconomic and demographic, knowledge, credit experience and attitudes), and either one or two multiple regressions were run on each of the categories for the dependent variable, goal attainment. Variables correlated at .50 or higher were run in separate regressions within each category. Variables that had a t statistic of less than 1.0 in the preliminary regressions were eliminated. The remaining variables were included in the final regression. See Table 1 for definition and coding of variables in the final regression model.

Beta coefficients were used to determine the relative importance of each independent variable in each regression. The t statistic was used to test the significant level of each regression coefficient (beta). The coefficient of multiple determination (R^2) was used to measure the proportion of the original variance in the dependent variable explained by all the independent variables.

Results and Discussion

The significant variables in the final regression were the wife's education, denial of credit, percentage of monthly income for payment of credit obligations, difficulty in making payments on debts, the wife's feelings about credit and the belief that credit is more of a necessity. All six variables were significant at the .05 level or less. The results are shown in Table 2. The independent variables used in the study explained 28 percent of the variance in goal attainment.

Socioeconomic and Demographic

The wife's education was significant at the .01 level but was negatively related to goal attainment. This suggests that in families where the wife had more years of schooling completed, goal attainment is less likely to be achieved through the use of credit. The finding indicates that highly educated women have certain goals and aspirations and the use of credit does not contribute to goal attainment. This suggests an area for further research to determine what factors influence goal attainment of highly educated women. Brandt, Day and Deutscher, Mandell, Parker and Shay, and Samuels (2, 9, 11, 13) found that the education of the respondents was related to the knowledge of credit costs. The study reported here, however, indicates that the wife's education was negatively related to goal attainment.

Two independent variables, changes in incomes and savings were not useful in predicting variation in the dependent variable, goal attainment.

Credit Knowledge

Sources of information contacted, and knowledge of sources of credit were included in the final regression model. However, both variables were not significantly related to goal attainment.

Credit Experience

The percentage of monthly income for payment of credit obligations and difficulty in making payments on debts accounted for more of the difference in goal attainment than did all the other variables. The first result indicates that families who allocate a low percentage of their monthly income for credit purchases are less

likely to achieve their goals compared to families who allocate a high percentage of their monthly income for payment of credit obligations. In other words, families who allocate a high percentage of their monthly income for credit purchases are more likely to attain their goals through the use of credit. To the young couples in this study, credit may be the only economic device through which they can acquire what they want when they want it and pay for it out of future earnings. The second finding suggests that in families where the wife is able to meet debt payment as scheduled, goal attainment is more likely to take place than in families where the wife faces difficulties in making payments on debts. Past research indicates that credit is primarily middle-class phenomenon and circumstances of young married couples point to their being prime users of credit. Forty-six percent of the wives in the study were under 34 years of age, and 34 percent of the families allocated over 26 percent of their monthly income for payment of credit obligations. It is not surprising to find that families who are unable to meet debt payments as scheduled, are less likely to achieve their goals through the use of credit compared to those who do not face similar problems.

Wives who have good credit ratings are more likely to attain the family goals through the use of credit. Denial of credit was significantly related to goal attainment. The result suggests that in families where the wife was not denied credit, goal attainment is more likely to be achieved than in families where the wife was denied credit.

The above findings indicate that credit experience was an important factor in explaining goal attainment. Brandt, Day, and Deutscher (2) found that credit experience was important in retarding the forgetting of annual percentage rates in their study, and Hull (6) indicated that credit experience was the best predictor of knowledge of credit regulations in her sample. In addition, Ryan and Maynes (12) pointed out that the greatest proportion of debtors in trouble were found among the unmarried, the poor, and those under 25 and 65 years and older.

Goal attainment was not influenced by the availability of credit cards; and, thus, the above variable was not significantly related to goal attainment.

Attitudes Toward Credit

Goal attainment was significantly influenced by the wife's attitude toward the use of credit. A wife who has a positive attitude and who believes that credit is more of a necessity than a convenience is more likely to attain the family goals through the use of credit than a wife who has a negative attitude.

Hendricks, Youmans, and Keller (5) indicated that families with favorable attitudes toward the use of credit were more likely to be confident about their financial welfare. Brandt, Day, and

Deutscher (2) found that buyers with more favorable attitudes toward the use of credit were less likely to notice or recall the amount of finance charges.

One independent variable, the use of credit to cover expenses due to illness was not useful in explaining the variation in the dependent variable.

The findings of this study were interpreted in terms of the wives' perceptions of goal attainment. The general hypothesis was that knowledge, credit experience, and attitudes would be more closely associated with goal attainment than socioeconomic factors. The results of the study partially supported the general hypothesis. Credit experience and attitudes were more significantly related to goal attainment than socioeconomic factors. Five variables--in the credit experience and attitudes categories--were significantly related to goal attainment in the final regression. In addition, the final regression model explained 28 percent of the variance in goal attainment.

Summary and Conclusions

This study was concerned with goal attainment through the use of credit as perceived by wives. Respondents were asked to determine how the use of credit has helped them in achieving their goals. The sample consisted of 178 husband-wife families living in Des Moines, Iowa. Multivariate regression was used to analyze the data.

Six variables were significantly related to goal attainment in the final regression model. In terms of beta coefficients, and in order of relative importance these variables were: percentage of monthly income for payment of credit obligations, difficulty in making payments on debts, the belief that credit is more of a necessity, the wife's feelings about credit, the wife's education and denial of credit. On the other hand, income in 1977 compared with income of previous year, savings in 1977 compared with savings of previous year, sources of information contacted, knowledge of sources of credit, availability of credit cards and the use of credit to cover expenses due to illness were not significantly related to goal attainment. The findings partially supported the general hypothesis that knowledge of credit, credit experience, and attitudes toward credit would be more closely associated with goal attainment than socioeconomic factors. In addition, the independent variables used in the study explained 28 percent of the variance in the dependent variable, goal attainment.

The results of the study indicate that the use of credit did help the families in achieving their goals. The findings will be useful in formulating public policy related to consumer use of credit.

TABLE 1. Definition of Variables in Final Regression Model

Variable	Coding of Values	Variable	Coding of Values
Credit helped in attaining goals	0=did not help 1=helped a little 2=helped somewhat 3=helped a lot	Denial of credit	0=yes 1=no
Education of wife	1=less than 12 years 2=12 years 3=13-16 years 4=17 years or more	Percentage of monthly income for credit obligations	1=51% or more 2=26-50% 3=16-25% 4=10-15% 5=less than 10%
Income in 1977 compared with income of previous year	1=lower 2=same 3=higher	Difficulty in making payments on debts	1=got behind 2=got behind & made larger payments 3=as scheduled 4=made larger payments than scheduled
Savings in 1977 compared with savings of previous year	1=less 2=same 3=more	Feelings about credit	1=bad 2=good
Sources of information contacted	0=none 1=one 2=two 3=three 4=four 5=five or more	Credit is more of a necessity	1=strongly disagree 2=disagree 3=agree 4=strongly agree
Knowledge of sources of credit	0=no 1=yes	Use of credit to cover expenses due to illness	1=never 2=seldom 3=sometimes 4=often
Availability of credit cards	0=no 1=yes		

TABLE 2. Final Regression of Goal Attainment

Variable	b value	Beta value	t value
Socioeconomic and Demographic			
1. Education of wife	-.18	-.18	-2.48**
2. Income in 1977 compared with income of previous year	.06	.06	.83
3. Savings in 1977 compared with savings of previous year	.00	.00	.01
Knowledge			
1. Sources of information contacted	.04	.09	1.25
2. Knowledge of sources of credit	-.15	-.10	-1.38
Credit Experience			
1. Availability of credit cards	-.16	-.07	-.89
2. Denial of credit	.23	.13	1.90*
3. Percentage of monthly income for payment of credit obligations	-.15	-.27	-3.66**
4. Difficulty in making payments on debts	.24	.27	3.67**
Attitude			
1. Feelings about installment credit	.32	.19	2.79**
2. Attitude--Credit is more of a necessity	.42	.21	3.03**
3. Attitude--Use of credit to cover expenses due to illness	.08	.05	.72
R ²	.28**		

* Significant at the .05 level

** Significant at the .01 level

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DISCUSSANT REMARKS

Dawn Johnson, Oshkosh High Schools

As a home economics teacher in a secondary school I come with a view of home economics and education -- I cannot speak from a consumer education background, but I am here to learn from consumer education. There is much good to be said about the "good" in all of the presentations we have heard, and I do recognize the limiting time factor for each presenter. However, there are some questions I wish to raise as a home economics teacher looking for direction in what to teach in family home economics. In my role as discussant I wish to consider each of the approaches presented as a secondary classroom teacher looking for decision rules (standards, or a set of guidelines) for what to teach in consumer education. Questions I asked myself in looking for direction include:

- Is the decision rule missing?
- Is the decision rule implied but not clearly conceptualized and/or is the justification not made explicit?
- Does the justification which is made have inappropriate grounds and/or are there points missing in the justification?

Decision Rules Missing (Lacking)

Langrehr does not suggest as a decision rule in determining what to teach that we would seek to help our students peel away the distortions and taken for granted ideas. Edwards seems to hold this idea as an important one, but she seems to fall short when she suggests that increased attention be given to the macro-economic nature of the interaction between the consumer sector and its environment -- both the government and the business sectors. However, Edwards seems to fall short of putting this idea into practice when she talks about the confusion between the consumer role and its legitimate concerns and the producer role and its legitimate concerns. It seems that she investigates the consumer and both the consumer and producer role, but does not investigate society and its role as consumer and producer. Nor does she investigate the relationship between the four.

None of the presentors seems to see as a decision rule the enabling of our students to become critically minded. Do we indoctrinate rather than educate? Do we teach our students to deal with problems by only treating symptoms rather than questioning and then effecting structural change? Might it not be important today, for our students as a necessary step for their further action to be given the opportunity in seeking to question the immediate and question the underlying assumptions as well?

Decision Rule Implied - Conceptualization and/or Justification Not Explicit.

The decision rule, to help consumers make decisions, seems to be taken for granted. Does it assume that improving ability to make decisions is "good"? Why private decisions first? Why do we think consumers

must improve their ability to make decisions? Are consumers committed to making decisions to get more for their dollar and/or for their time? Are consumers committed to making decisions to be better buyers? There is no conceptual clarity on why decisions. I do not disagree but we need to think about reasons that stand behind the decision rule for decision making or each teacher in the classroom might end up teaching something different. Langrehr goes on to tell us what kind of decisions (i.e. private, rather than social) and reasons for his choice of kind, but does not tell us why this is important. This will not be of much benefit if we do not have the guidelines for why we should help consumers make decisions.

Wilcox and Richardson charge that much of consumer education is based on understanding of the economic system. Is the bottom line in what has been said today still in the economic mode? Are there not other systems such as religious, cultural and political which it seems are also very influential in our lives today? In addition, Wilcox and Richardson advocate a multi-discipline approach using a variety of theoretic disciplines as a background for consumer education. I am not suggesting the adopting of Wilcox and Richardson's view, but I do wonder if underlying all that is said today isn't relying predominately on economics rather than the multi-discipline approach they suggest.

Justification for Decision Rule May Have Inappropriate Grounds and/or Incomplete Information

Langrehr seems to suggest that we should teach people whatever they need to know because it is appropriate. For example, he says consumers have a responsibility to make informed decisions as to the use of dwindling resources. What is it to make an informed decision? The decision rule appears to be that appropriate people should make decisions based on personal satisfaction. Personal satisfaction could mean satisfaction disregarding everything else -- is that really what we want consumers to do? Are there not others besides consumers who are responsible for making decisions regarding resources? Are there not additional standards that we might indeed find more justifiable in showing an increasing moral maturity? It was my understanding that Dickinson intended to provide direction for what to teach, but it seems to me perhaps in actuality she provided direction for determining means for instruction. For example, Dickinson suggested that identification of students in the consumer life cycle and what their needs are likely to be will assist the teacher in determining the means for what the students need to know now, thus providing the means for teaching. Also, I would like to ask if Dickinson is suggesting there is little difference in students throughout the life cycle? Dickinson did introduce the topic for moral decision making, but in her limited time she did not help us to understand her conceptualization of

the idea. Edwards provides justification for authentic participation by consumers and she recognized the complexity of this process. She points out how restrictive some societal and cultural structures are but she does not acknowledge the need for change in these very situations nor the means to go about such change. Dickinson seems to explain the decision rule for what to teach be determined by sequentially arranged competences without limiting what is to be taught. The basis for sequencing is provided, but is there a basis or guidelines for choosing content?

Langrehr and Dickinson seems to hold a much narrower view of participation and consequently a shallower view of participation. Langrehr is suggesting that we enable our students to take action, but individual actions take place in the societal, cultural and political milieu. Is it irresponsible on our part as educators to teach students that perhaps the only way to take action is to begin with and become competent with understanding personal decision-making?

Therefore, the decision rule of what to teach in regard to when to participate appears to be in question. It seems that Langrehr is suggesting that as consumers we participate in the larger societal circle after we have our personal house in order. Edwards says we need to have education to participate in the larger social circles parallel to private decision making, but it is unclear if Edwards conceptualizes the citizens' role as intervening in the marketplace beyond the extent of personal satisfaction. If there is a question beyond personal satisfaction she says the individual has no right to intervene. Dickinson falls back to the advocacy position again as she has previously done and offers us factors to consider in what she thinks is what to teach when in actuality it may be how to teach. However, perhaps it was her intent not to justify. Langrehr seems to suggest that we should teach people whatever they need to know because it is appropriate people should make decisions based on personal satisfaction. May in actuality the decision rule for participation be to enable students to realize that society can be improved through human action and being willing to participate in emancipative action.

In closing, I would like to share that as a teacher I do not wish to have someone dictate the specifics for what I should teach, but I look to the profession to provide some helpful decision-rules or guidelines for what to teach.

There is much good to be said about the good in all three of the presentations, but it has been my intent to concentrate on what needed to be questioned further as I look for guidelines in what to teach.

As a home economics teacher I hold particular views on school and education and on home and family which are based on the highest standards of ethics and logic. I have the highest regard for students as human beings and an accompanying concern for the rights of all students for education to their fullest potential. Just as consumer education does not tell us what to teach in home economics, I have not talked about what we teach in home economics for

this was not the appropriate time and place. The remarks I would make to all home economics people would be more directly related to home economics where we are concerned with students understanding and acting in interest of all families. We do look to the American Council on Consumer Interest for guidelines for teaching family economics.

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CONSUMER RESEARCH AS A PART OF HOME ECONOMICS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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Abstract

This study is an overview of consumer research reported as a part of the Home Economics Research Project Inventory.³ Consumer related projects were 13 percent of the total research reported. Costs ranged to \$89,813.⁴ The former Department of Health, Education and Welfare was the largest funding source. Consumer specialists were most concerned about consumer needs, choice, satisfaction, preference and marketing issues, totaled 6 percent of the personnel and, on the average, had 15 percent more funding per project than home economists in other specialities.

Consumer issues have held a high priority within legislative and educational bodies for a number of years. Professionals interested in solving consumer problems come from a variety of academic disciplines. No one has assessed the exact milieu. ACCI has a stated goal of increasing its influence on policy makers through research activities. (Makela *et al.*, 1979). To aid in this achievement consumer research potential is needed.

Home economics is one of the traditional disciplines from which consumer interest arose (Kroll and Hunt, 1980). The American Home Economics Association assessed its research potential through the Home Economics Research Project Inventory in 1978. The extent of the home economics research related to stipulated consumer issues and the number of consumer specialists within home economics profession are identified. This report highlights the consumer data within the Inventory.

Consumer Research

Categories for research objectives within the Inventory were taken from Home Economics Goals and

Guidelines. (Schlater, 1970). Although no major goal specifies consumer in its title, seven sub-categories are directly concerned with consumer issues: general consumer problems, consumer needs, consumer choice/satisfaction/preferences, marketing, levels of living (lifestyles), consumer behavior and consumer public policy. Housing and clothing economics were included because of the close relationship between economics and consumer concerns. Seldom the major purpose of home economics research, sub-categories were often listed as tangential objectives. Unfortunately a specific economic or consumer sub-category related to food, nutrition or education are not part of the home economics goals and guidelines. It is possible therefore, that some of the consumer research effort was not identified.

In 206 Inventory projects, project leaders listed consumer oriented sub-categories (13 percent of the Inventory's projects). Since consumer issues were often only a part of the total project, conversion to project equivalents were needed. This was done by adding the percentage assigned to the consumer category by the project leader and then dividing by 100. By this method, consumer research totaled about 6 percent of the home economics research effort. Sixty-nine home economics units (53 percent of the reporting units) were involved. The largest number of consumer oriented projects submitted from any one institution was 14. The majority of the units reported only one consumer related project so that the average number of consumer related projects per unit was three. Three institutions which reported only one project had a consumer related project. These three units were not part of the Land-grant/USDA-Cooperative Research System established under the Morrill Acts. None of the 1890 land grant units reported consumer research projects.

Four characteristics of home economics units were studied to determine their influence on research productivity (projects, project leaders or outputs) and funding. These variables were geographic region, type of institution in which the unit was located, and the size and kind of program within the unit. Characteristics of home economics units which reported high levels of funding were not the same as those reporting high productivity. Funding levels were high at units in the north central and southern regions as described by USDA; productivity was high in the northeastern region. Funding was high at units located in 1862 Morrill Act institutions, but productivity was more likely to be higher at an institution established by other than land grant funds. Large size units (those graduating more than 90 home economics students per year) had the most funding while small size units with less than 21 graduates reported the most productivity. Funding was greater when a unit had both a home economics graduate and

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³The Home Economics Research Project Inventory was sponsored by the American Home Economics Association in cooperation with USDA-Science and Education Administration/Cooperative Research. Keiser was an intergovernmental exchange fellow at SEA/CR; Tripple, an AHEA visiting scholar. A monograph reporting the study can be purchased from AHEA.

⁴Statistics are rounded to the nearest whole number as neither the data or the differences warranted greater specificity.

undergraduate program, but a unit with high productivity might have only an undergraduate program.

TABLE 1. Distribution of Projects, Project Equivalents, Dollars and Outputs for Consumer Research by Region, Type, Size and Program of Institution.

Home Economics Unit Characteristics	Projects	Full Project Equiv.	Dollars	Outputs
Percent Distribution				
Region				
NE	4	4	3	52
S	46	42	40	24
NC	35	34	42	18
W	15	20	15	6
Type				
1862	68	65	52	41
Other	32	33	48	59
Size				
Small	1	2	2	48
Medium	24	27	19	14
Large	75	71	78	38
Program				
Graduate	96	95	96	51
Undergraduate Only	4	4	4	49

(N=206) (N=97) (N=\$1,386M) (N=492)

No 1890 unit had consumer research.

Projects

Consumer research was fairly evenly distributed among the nine specified consumer goals. Consumer choice, satisfaction or preference studies ranked highest (20 percent). Almost as popular (18 and 17 percent of the projects respectively) were consumer behavior and clothing economics studies. General consumer problems had the fewest percentage of the studies. The specific consumer goal, lifestyle, ranked lowest.

A comparison of full project equivalents to number of projects reported shows that on the average, approximately half (47 percent) of each project was consumer related. Goals with economics in the title, housing or clothing, had the greatest decrease when converted to project equivalents, implying that the consumer objectives were not a major concern of the reported research project.

The words clothing and household fabrics appeared in titles with the greatest frequency (27 projects) followed by housing, energy, education, retailing and aging, counseling, food or equipment in that order. Other topics related to family's economics management, effect of strikes on families, consumption patterns, warranties, teenagers, and money matters and travel problems. Cooperative regional research was highly visible among project titles. Approximately seven percent of the consumer projects were associated with either the southern region "low income" or the north central "quality of life" project. These studies also had housing objectives.

TABLE 2

DISTRIBUTION OF PROJECTS, PROJECT EQUIVALENTS, DOLLARS, AND OUTPUTS FOR CONSUMER RESEARCH BY PROJECT CLASSIFICATION

CONSUMER CLASSIFICATION	PROJECTS	PROJECT EQUIVALENTS	DOLLARS	OUTPUTS
PERCENT DISTRIBUTION				
HOUSING ECONOMICS	14	12	6	3
CLOTHING ECONOMICS	17	16	12	7
GENERAL CONSUMER ISSUES	2	2	6	3
CONSUMER NEEDS	9	9	25	7
CONSUMER CHOICE, PREFERENCE AND SATISFACTION	20	21	24	9
MARKETING	12	12	11	6
LIFESTYLE	3	2	5	1
BEHAVIOR	18	21	11	56
PUBLIC POLICY	5	5	6	7
(N = 206)				(N = 97)
(N = \$1,386,320)				(N = 492)

MAY NOT TOTAL DUE TO ROUNDING.

Funds

A total of \$1,386,320 was reported as support for consumer research projects. Project costs toward consumer objectives ranged from \$86 to \$89,813. This averaged \$20,092 per institution, \$13,292 per full project equivalent and \$9,902 per researcher.

Three funding levels were apparent. The most support was given to objectives related to consumer needs and consumer choice, satisfaction or preference. Twenty-five and 24 percent, respectively, of the funds were reported for these type studies. The next level of support, at 11 and 12 percent, was for clothing economics, marketing and consumer behavior studies. The third level had 5 and 6 percent of the funding and included housing economics, general consumer problems, lifestyle and consumer public policy.

Public sources supported all but one-fifth of the consumer projects. Approximately one-third (35 percent) of the consumer funding was received from the former Department of Health, Education and Welfare. Sixteen percent of the funds were from the Cooperative Research system, 11 percent from the State Agricultural Experiment Stations and 5 percent federal USDA-SEA/CR funds. This in spite of the fact that at the time, USDA earmarked funds for "marketing" studies also a major home economics goal category. The only other federal funding source identified was the National Science Foundation. This support was for two grants totaling less than \$6,000.

Most of the state money (19 percent) was from a university source such as resident instruction, general university funds, graduate school or computer center. There was a large number of projects related to consumer education which no doubt was reflected by State Department of Education support. While this was not a significant per-

TABLE 3. Source of Consumer Research Funds.

Source	%	%
Federal		
USDA-CR	5	
HEW	35	
NSF	1	
Other	3	
Total		44
State		
Agricultural Experiment Station	11	
University	19	
Dept. Ed.	3	
Other	2	
Total		35
University/Alumnae Foundations		2
Personal		
Students	6	
Faculty	1	
Volunteer	5	
Total		12
Miscellaneous		7
Total \$	1,386,320	

centage of the total consumer funding, it did represent more actual dollars than was allocated for education studies in other home economics subject areas.

The largest private source of funds (12 percent) came from personnel - students, faculty and volunteers. Faculty donations, in terms of time expended in addition to that required by university role, were less than 1 percent; much less than in other home economics subject areas. The remainder of the personal funds were almost equally secured from students or volunteers. Approximately 2 percent of the private funding came from university and alumnae foundations. Professional organizations and manufacturer sources were limited and totaled less than 1 percent each.

Outputs

A completed output was described as a report which became part of the public domain. It could be written, oral or a juried show. Consumer outputs accounted for 12 percent of the reported outputs in the Inventory. For approximately one-third of the projects with consumer objectives however, no outputs were reported. This could be due to several factors. Perhaps the reason for lack of outputs was that data had not yet been collected or data was not yet at the reporting stage during the year surveyed as well as, lack of carry through by the researcher.

Most of the outputs were articles in professional publications. Very few (7 percent) were published in consumer type publications such as extension bulletins, magazines or newspapers. Oral presentations given at professional conferences predominated. There were no juried shows.

For most consumer goals the proportion of outputs ranged from 6 to 9 percent.

Researchers

Rank, field of preparation and expertise of project leaders only were requested. There were 140 persons responsible for the 206 consumer related projects. They were from every subject area within home economics except related arts. Other academic disciplines such as agricultural economics and business were listed as areas of expertise. The dominant area was consumer family economics, and is used as the basis for defining a consumer specialist. To be included as a consumer specialist a project leader reported training or expertise in consumer family economics or dual preparation or expertise in consumer family economics and home management, clothing or education. There were 54 persons answering one of these descriptions. Goals for projects reported by some of these specialists did not apply to one of the seven designated as being related to consumer issues and are not, therefore, one of the 206 projects discussed in this report.

Consumer specialists listed economics, education, information/communication and research methodology as fields of science necessary to their research. Also mentioned were psychology and sociology. Knowledge from fields other than consumer-family economics within home economics was not considered essential.

TABLE 4. Academic Preparation and Expertise of Project Leaders Contributing to Consumer Research.

Specialty	Preparation	Expertise
	%	%
Child Development	1	2
Clothing	10	11
Consumer Family Economics	19	24
Family Studies	3	4
Home Economics Education	11	11
Home Management	5	4
Household Equipment	2	4
Housing	8	8
Institution Food Management	2	1
Nutrition	2	4
Textile Science	8	9
Other	28	17
	99.0*	99.0*
	(N = 140)	(N = 140)

*Does not total due to rounding.

Family studies was stated as useful. Researchers from other home economics subject areas did not perceive consumer family economics as an important competency. On the other hand, two-thirds of the researchers whose projects contributed in part to the consumer goals were not consumer specialists. This might imply that more basic academic disciplines than consumer-family economics were perceived as providing the competence to do research related to consumer issues.

Consumer specialists made impact on goals related to consumer choice, satisfaction or preference studies, marketing and consumer needs. They were responsible for all lifestyle studies, few of the housing economics, clothing economics research projects and none of the research listed under general consumer problems.

TABLE 5. Distribution of Projects and Project Equivalents for Consumer Specialists by Project Classification.

Project Class	Consumer Specialists	
	Projects %	Proj. Equiv. %
Housing Economics	8	8
Clothing Economics	3	2
General Consumer Problems	0	0
Consumer Needs	11	12
Consumer Choice Satisfaction	21	25
Marketing	15	15
Lifestyle	8	5
Behavior	29	28
Public Policy	5	5
	100.0	100.0
	(N = 75)	(N = 40)

Key words in project titles of consumer specialists were consumer literacy, competencies, education and adjustment of family resources in relation to economic conditions. Consumer specialists comprise 6 percent of the project leaders, are involved with 6 percent of the projects and produce 6 percent of the outputs, but have 7 percent of the total funding. Funding is approximately 15 percent above that of the average home economics project leader. There is nothing to indicate above average costs for laboratory equipment, special supplies, etc. Productivity per project is the same as for the average home economics project but the consumer specialist does produce more outputs than the average home economics project leader.

Summary

Consumerism is an important aspect of home economics. Most of the subject areas within the home economics field have consumer aspects. Inflation has intensified the need for consumer information. Results could help the family in its battle to adjust to shifting economic conditions.

Three of the major home economics research goals have consumer thrusts or sub-goals. These sub-categories comprised 13 percent of the total home economics research effort. Inasmuch as Goal II, Physiological Health and Development, does not have a sub-category specifying economic or consumer aspects, it is doubtful if all consumer research within home economics units of higher education has been identified. This is emphasized by the 30 percent of the consumer research effort related to other major commodities. On the other hand, only 10 percent of the research with consumer specialists as project leaders were concerned

with commodity issues.

Fifty-four or 6 percent of the home economics project leaders identified consumer-family economics as a specialty. Their projects comprise less than half (44 percent) of the consumer research effort. Their interest is related to consumer choice, satisfaction or preference and consumer behavior studies. These consumer specialists are responsible for all of the lifestyle studies but none of the general consumer problems projects.

The consumer specialist is in the enviable position of being the only subject area specialist within home economics beside those in food and nutrition to have a higher proportion of funding than project equivalents, and higher than average funds to support projects. Furthermore, little funding seems to be the result of investing personal time or money beyond the university role.

The recent Home Economics Assessment, Planning and Project study (HERAPP) indicated a need for 50 full-time researchers to work on consumer issues. (Ritchey, 1978). While the descriptions used for consumer personnel differ somewhat between the Ritchey study and the Inventory, only a limited number of additional consumer research specialists were identified. Other researchers however, whose expertise or training was in a more traditional home economics subject area, have demonstrated an interest in consumer issues as they included consumer aspects in their projects. If consumerism becomes more fashionable than their current area of expertise, these project leaders might emphasize consumer research topics. Still other consumer personnel may be unidentified because of their current duties in academe or because their chief officer was among the 3 percent who did not respond to the Inventory. If job descriptions and/or interest were altered, it would appear the HERAPP projections could be met.

Several danger signals may be perceived. One is the number of specialists at the professorial level. Since quality of performance is required to achieve full professorship, time and perseverance are required. Approximately 34 percent of the consumer specialists are at this level. Some may be approaching retirement. Only one project leader at the instructor level was identified to fill the gap.

Comparisons with number of researchers in former studies however, show that the number of new researchers with consumer expertise has begun to decrease.⁵ Thus, when a regression line of best fit

⁵This conclusion is based upon comparisons of data presented in unpublished manuscript by the Experiment Station committee on Organization and Policy, Home Economics Research Personnel in Land Grant Institutions, 1963-64, distributed by the Cooperative State Research Service, USDA, Washington, D.C. and Zentner, M. A. and Davis, E. Y. "Home Economics Research Personnel in Land Grant Universities," *Home Economics Research Journal*, June 1976, pp. 260-266.

is applied, an inability to meet the predicted HERAPP needs can be forecast. Nor is there a guarantee that consumer specialists fulfilling other duties within academe can or want to be released from their current duties.

TABLE 6
CHARACTERISTICS OF CONSUMER SPECIALISTS

TYPE OF CONSUMER RESEARCHER	ACADEMIC		RANK			
	PREPARATION	EXPERTISE	INSTRUCTOR	ASSISTANT PROFESSOR	ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR	FULL PROFESSOR
CONSUMER-FAMILY ECONOMISTS	54	75	2	31	18	24
CONSUMER-FAMILY/HOME MANAGEMENT	11	9		2	7	
CONSUMER-FAMILY EDUCATION	2	4		2	2	
CONSUMER-FAMILY CLOTHING	6	6			2	4
OTHER	28	6				6
TOTAL	101 (N = 54)	100 (N = 54)	2 (N = 1)	35 (N = 19)	29 (N = 16)	34 (N = 18)

Recommendations

Several consumer research needs are indicated:

1. Preparation of future researchers. Home economics centers in the north central and southern region seem to be best prepared to undertake this task. The largest number of projects and the most funding are located there. To strengthen this ability, a method of permitting specialists in related academic disciplines as well as consumer specialists in other regions contribute to the training of the new specialists is needed.

2. Improved communication of results. An increased effort to reach their most effective audience, the consumer, is indicated. Greater productivity per leader is also recommended. The current average output of less than one per researcher should be improved. This might occur if separate research reporting sections or poster sessions were included as a regular feature of the ACCI annual program. Abstracts should be distributed to members unable to attend. Research Notes in the Journal of Consumer Affairs is laudable. The JCA however, is published only semi-annually. This is not of sufficient frequency. The ACCI newsletter reaches many more non-researchers so that a goal to reach more consumers might be attained by including research abstracts.

3. Expansion of funding sources. Current funding sources are limited. The former Department of Health, Education and Welfare appears to be the major supporter followed by university sources such as resident instruction, general funds and graduate schools. In view of the broad interest in consumer problems, private sources like foundations and business should be explored and tapped.

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JOB INSIGHTS FOR CONSUMER AFFAIRS GRADUATES

Eleanor M. Kelly, Consumer Information Center¹

I am pleased to be a part of this discussion of job insights for consumer affairs graduates in the government, in business and in academe. This is a time of transition in the Federal Government and the much-publicized uncertainty about the future of many government programs is shared by consumer affairs professionals. Webster defines transition as a "passage from one state or stage to another: change." I see transition or change as a "turning point," or challenge requiring an assessment of past efforts and scrutiny of current programs and budgets while providing opportunities for new approaches and creative consumer affairs strategies.

I am sure many of you have heard of the government-wide hiring freeze ordered by President Reagan shortly after his inauguration. This hiring freeze is now being lifted at individual agencies as they receive their new personnel ceilings from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). These ceilings will permit hiring in some agencies which are "under ceiling" and require reductions in agencies which are "over ceiling". So, at this time and for the foreseeable future, your best source of information about hiring practices will be the individual federal agencies directly. The Office of Personnel Management (OPM), Federal Job Information Centers and your college campus placement office are also good sources for more general hiring information. Let's discuss the federal job application procedure at this point.

Federal Job Application Process

When federal jobs are available, you first need to know how to apply. Let me discuss very briefly some of the general mechanics of seeking a federal job.

- 1) First, you need to know about the Office of Personnel Management (OPM). This is the federal agency responsible for the personnel-related policies and procedures surrounding federal employment. Its headquarters are in Washington, but there are regional offices in ten major cities.
- 2) You should also be aware of the 69 Federal Job Information Centers located throughout the country. You can look for these offices in major metropolitan telephone directories under "U.S. Government." Both the Office of Personnel Management and the Federal Job Information Centers can give you up-to-date and complete details on current job opportunities and application procedures.
- 3) Next, there is a special form required to apply for any Federal civil service position.

This "Personal Qualifications Statement," or Standard Form 171, should be filled in neatly, accurately and thoroughly. Type the original, if possible. Photocopying the 171 is permissible, so it is not necessary to send an original for each job application. Be sure the information on your 171 is presented so as to give the most favorable impression possible.

The 171 does allow you to attach supplemental sheets, but follow the instructions closely, and don't "overload" your application. The 171 form should be sent to the Office of Personnel Management to determine if you are qualified for federal employment.

4) Some jobs require that you take a written examination as part of the application procedure. A review of your previous work and educational experience by OPM will determine if you qualify for either entry-level or mid-level positions. Until recently, most entry-level professional jobs required applicants to take the PACE (Professional and Administrative Career Examination). However, this PACE exam is being phased out over the next three years and replaced with various examinations designed to measure more precisely the skills needed for particular jobs. PACE opponents have argued successfully in lawsuits and in recent negotiated agreements that the exam discriminates against Black and Hispanic Americans. The Office of Personnel Management will be your best source for up-to-date application procedures for specific jobs which interest you.

In general, a college graduate with minimal or no work experience is eligible for a GS-5 or GS-7, with starting salaries of \$12,226 or \$15,193 respectively. With a master's degree and no work experience, you may be eligible for a GS-9 (currently starting at \$18,585), although these grades are not automatic. Your grade eligibility is determined by the Office of Personnel Management and that is why you must contact that agency first to file your 171 and take any required tests. This is a lengthy process, and I suggest that you begin even before you graduate or are actively in the job market. Even in this time of hiring uncertainty, it's a good idea to have the application process completed for future job possibilities.

I'd like to provide an update on federal government consumer affairs activities and highlight the consumer affairs directions indicated by the new administration.

Consumer's Executive Order

In 1979, President Carter issued Executive Order 12160 entitled "Providing for Enhancement and Coordination of Federal Consumer Programs." This Consumer's Executive Order upgraded the consumer affairs programs within each cabinet-level federal

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department and most independent agencies. The Order established a Consumer Affairs Council, chaired by the Special Assistant to the President for Consumer Affairs, which consists of representatives from departments and agencies publishing consumer programs. These agency consumer programs focus on five principle elements: consumer affairs perspective, consumer participation, informational materials, education and training and complaint handling.

These elements of the Consumer's Executive Order and the individual agency consumer programs address the basic functions which Federal consumer affairs offices perform. Staff positions generally fall onto the following functional categories (quite often some of these overlap in a single position):

- 1) analyzing agency policies and programs, and recommending improvements to better serve the consumer interest;
- 2) participating in the legislative process through research or testimony on pending legislation or implementation of actions associated with existing laws;
- 3) developing and conducting consumer information and education activities;
- 4) maintaining liason with consumer interest groups, state and local government consumer officials and private industry, and obtaining their views on the agency's policies;
- 5) responding to consumer complaints through mediation, referral or enforcement action;
- 6) answering public inquiries about the agency and its consumer programs; and
- 7) developing new programs, services, or regulations in response to consumers' needs.

One section of the Consumer's Executive Order directs the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) to consult with the Consumer Affairs Council concerning the needs for a new or revised classification standard for Federal employees doing consumer affairs work. (A classification standard is a description of what a group of Federal workers does; e.g., engineers, chemists, editors, etc. Currently, consumer affairs work is performed by persons classified as writers, public affairs personnel and other miscellaneous categories.)

This part of the Executive Order helps establish consumer affairs as a profession. It will make it easier for consumer affairs professionals to move between agencies and between government and industry. It will also make it easier for agencies to hire and keep college graduates who have studied consumer affairs. It would recognize the importance of consumer affairs and could help agencies set up better consumer programs. OPM is not required to issue a new standard, but the Executive Order says it must give the idea some serious thought.

Late last year, a Council working group talked to OPM about a new consumer affairs standard. However, the group focused mostly on OPM's proposed changes to the existing Public Information Standard (to be retitled Public Affairs) The group

feared that the new Public Information Standard might contain too much "consumer affairs." That might make it much harder to get a full-fledged Consumer Affairs Standard later. OPM released its draft Public Affairs Standard for public comment on August 19, 1980. Comments were due by November 19, 1980. A final standard will come out sometime in the near future.

After the release of the final Public Affairs Standard, OPM has promised to begin the preliminary work for the development of a new Consumer Affairs Standard.

Consumerism in the New Administration

In early March, Mrs. Virginia Knauer was named Special Assistant to the President and Director of the U.S. Office of Consumer Affairs. In addition to her responsibilities in the area of consumer affairs, Mrs. Knauer's expanded portfolio includes the areas of health care, aging, the disabled and safety.

In her first speaking commitment since her appointment, Mrs. Knauer addressed the federal interagency group known as CEIL. CEIL stands for the Consumer Education and Information Liason group which is an informal professional organization of federal consumer educators and information specialists. In her remarks Mrs. Knauer assured the membership of her commitment of continuing the Consumer Affairs Council and to support the Consumer's Executive Order which she sees as an outgrowth of the Consumer Representation Plans which she initiated in 1976. Mrs. Knauer also emphasized her support for consumer education and information activities and consumer complaint handling operations. She particularly emphasized her support for increased cooperation efforts between Federal government agencies and the private sector. She sees that this is the optimum time for corporate and federal consumer affairs professionals to work closely together to best serve the needs of consumers today.

When I spoke earlier of uncertainty, it was not my intention to discourage or dishearten those of you who may be interested in pursuing at least a portion of your consumer affairs career in government. I hope I have painted a realistic and helpful picture of the opportunities in consumer affairs in the federal government. I have enjoyed my various positions and find government consumer affairs experience invaluable. A consumer affairs career in government is always challenging, sometimes frustrating, but very, very rewarding!

A WORLDVIEW OF THE CONSUMER
MOVEMENT SEEN AS COLLECTIVE
CONSUMER SEARCH CAPITAL

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Abstract

Consumers can improve the effectiveness of their decisions by making use of a stock of information and of searching strategies. This stock can be increased by the private effort of the consumer if this investment is worthwhile, and the accumulated stock yields services over time. It therefore represents a form of capital here called "consumers search capital" (CSK). It is also possible to form public CSK as government consumer agencies through collective effort. The national consumers association is also one form of collective CSK and over the last three decades the accumulation of this type of CSK has taken place at a steady pace - increasing from three units to about fifty national associations at this time. The CSK approach provides additional tools for consumer analysis and suggests possibilities for theoretical and for policy research.

Introduction

Rare indeed is the consumer who can make a purchase based on the perfect information assumed by our textbooks. But equally rare is a consumer with no information at all, for perfect ignorance - that state alleged to be bliss - is at least difficult to attain as perfect information. If reality is between these two states of perfection, we can recognize that a consumer ordinarily starts with some accumulated stock of facts and of searching strategies, and this stock often has usefulness beyond the current period. A "fact" may be specific to a product, time, and place, but consumer strategies of the types outlined by Maynes (8, pp. 13-49, 84-106) have value on into the future. We can therefore recognize that the accumulation of what the consumer knows has the two essential characteristics of capital - it is an accumulated stock, and it yields services over time. In some recent work I have defined the concept of consumers search capital (CSK) as the accumulated stock of decision-making principles and data which can be used to increase the effec-

tiveness of consumer decisions (6). This paper contends that it is both reasonable and fruitful to assume the consumer has some, but not all, of the information needed, and secondly, that the search capital model allows us to adapt much of what is known in capital theory to novel and productive applications in consumer economics.

1. Private CSK and Public CSK

It is extremely useful to see the distinction between private CSK and public CSK. Private capital - the type we are familiar with - is increased by the individual's own investment, a process which occurs when the individual sees a private return which justifies the investment. For example, a consumer new to a community may find it worth investing a few hours of time to learn which dentist is suitable. More interesting perhaps, is public CSK which is created through collective investment by a community with a common interest. The rationale for public CSK is provided by (a) the existence of third party benefits (externalities) or (b) significant cost advantages from sharing the expense of searching for information. Sometimes it will not be worthwhile for an individual to undertake such an investment, yet from the overall social point of view that investment does repay its cost. For example, it is extremely expensive for an individual consumer to set up a lab to test different brands of drug and to discover unit costs, yet this price-quality information might be valuable enough to repay the search expense if the cost is shared over a large number of consumers. The pure food inspectorate is an example of collective consumers search capital and one which seems likely to benefit from receiving scrutiny under the CSK approach.

2. Advantages of the CSK Approach

The CSK model has the initial advantage of being more consistent with reality than some of the alternative methods of analysis. In certain circumstances it will surely prove to be superior to the marginalist approach we sometimes use. The example given in the next section outlines how the capital stock adjustment model might be applied to consumer theory. In addition, the concept of public CSK has considerable use in helping us understand how the social resources available to consumers complement individual attempts to improve the level of well being. Overall, the capital model changes the way one views the consumer decision. Instead of seeing each decision as an isolate with its own information requirements one sees a stock of accumulated information which is sometimes adequate for decision-making and which sometimes needs to be augmented. One practical

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application of the model will be made in section five below. On the theoretical side, the approach brings to consumer theory the conceptual framework already developed for capital theory. Some features will not apply, but other aspects will be adapted to consumer theory to give us powerful techniques. A single example is outlined in the next section

3. An Example From Capital Theory: The Capital-Stock Adjustment Principle

The capital stock adjustment principle is one method of explaining changes to the stock of capital. It has the virtue of recognizing that during a short period of time (say a year) individuals are able to make only a partial adjustment to bring their stock of CSK closer to, but not right to, the desired level. Further, this adjustment is based on the size of the gap between the current stock of capital and the desired stock. This uses the plausible notion that the further the consumer is from the desired stock, the greater will be the adjustment made in the current period (10). The algebraic development is given in Appendix 1. It seems prudent to recognize that the stock of CSK depreciates - most importantly from "forgetting", secondly, from changes in circumstances, and thirdly through the efforts of some sellers. This complicates the model very little if the stock depreciates at a constant proportional rate. When that is the case the change can be incorporated by adjusting the constants. Further research is certain to enrich this approach by providing additional determinants of the desired stock of CSK. No doubt these will include the availability of goods and services, the technical complexity of goods including the "cost" of their hazards, the quantity of complementary search resources, the variability of price, and the effort-cost of adding to the stock of CSK.

Fortunately the paradigm itself provides useful insight because capital is notoriously difficult to measure. One of the reasons why it is so hard to determine "the" optimal stock of CSK is that capital is an input used jointly with other inputs, so the desired stock must depend upon the quantities and prices of other complements and substitutes. Nor is it possible to transform capital costlessly from one type to another. In the literature on capital theory the idea that capital can be transformed is known as the assumption of "malleability". But in reality, CSK is embodied in one or another form. For example, search capital useful for verifying the title to a house is not malleable enough to be used to test for the toxicity of a chemical additive to rice. The upshot of the recognition that capital is "embodied" is a sharp increase in the difficulty of measuring the optimal stock of CSK. We must first know how any item fits in with the other complementary inputs.

Despite obvious difficulties, let us press on to try to get a rough and ready measure of the

adjustment to the world's stock of CSK embodied in the form of consumers associations. If we accept the notion that countries are economic trading zones then we can argue that from a worldwide point of view a consumer in any country should have access to a stock of CSK which is appropriate to his or her economic zone. That is a consumer can be better off in country X if that consumer has the option of using collective CSK in the form of a national association familiar with the laws, institutions and markets of country X. If that supposition is accepted, then the desired stock of CSK of this sort can be set at the number of countries in the world. The actual stock of CSK at a point in time will then be the number of countries with national associations.

4. Consumers Associations as CSK

A voluntary association of consumers embodies a collection of facts, research methods and techniques for discovering information, and its services are rendered over time. As noted, the consumers association has these two characteristics of capital. In technical terms, a consumers association is a pure form of a "public good" somewhat like a lighthouse. According to one frequently used definition, the distinguishing characteristic of a public good is based upon the fact that the consumption by one individual does not reduce the prospect for consumption by another individual. When one ship's captain sees a lighthouse and recognizes that a rock is located there this does not prevent another ship's captain from learning the same piece of information; the information is not "used up" the same way an apple is when it is consumed. Likewise for the consumers association: when one consumer learns that brand B is inferior this does not prevent another consumer from using the same piece of information. Where the consumers association is financed by volunteers (or by members) there is a small problem concerning its inability to exclude non-members ... to keep persons who have not paid for the information from using it. This however is not a serious problem where the volunteers or members are willing to have the information shared more broadly.

There are at least two functions which can be performed by this type of collective consumer search capital. First, it can exist to provide resources such as searching techniques and consumer information (CI), a function which has been outlined in considerable detail in the work of Thorelli and others (15). Second, consumer organizations can attempt to exert framework pressures (FP) to change the rules of the game to get a better deal for the consumer. This FP function is relatively more important in industrializing countries which do not yet have all the institutions required to ensure that the fruits of industrialization are shared fairly. In many countries in the world it is possible that more economic welfare gains can be gleaned from FP which effects changes to the institutional structure than from efforts to distribute CI

within a framework which gives virtually no protection to buyers. For Singapore and other countries Professor Rajaratnam has argued that "... the consumer movement's ultimate strength does lie in its membership numbers in influencing, or exerting pressure on government towards consumer objectives." (12, p. 25). But no matter whether FP or CI is sought, a consumer in a country with a large accumulation of CSK has more resources to deploy in his or her attempt to make effective consumer decisions. The rest of this paper is an initial attempt to take the dimensions of the stock of CSK in the form of national consumers associations throughout the world. It is worth repeating that this is by no means the only form of collective CSK and that a useful alternative would be to measure the stock of resources which governments themselves devote to the formation of collective consumer search capital.

5. The Measure of Collective CSK Embodied in National Consumers Associations

As an institution, the consumers' association probably dates from the inception of the exchange economy. Product testing is no doubt much older. In Italy, at the time of the Renaissance, powerful princes sent product testers across the countryside to sample the caves of different vineyards to discover which wines were meritorious enough to deserve being plundered. But product testing of a nature which is even less democratic dates to antiquity: it took the form of results collected for kings or for certain religious leaders who employed "tasters". Presumably the occupation existed because some of these unselfish semi-dieties did not want to risk leaving the flock untended, as would be occasioned by a premature ascension.

Our interest here is only in CSK which is available to any consumer, CSK embodied in broad purpose consumer associations able to co-ordinate CI and to put FP on national governments in the interest of consumer protection, and these associations are of very recent origin. It is therefore proposed to look at national consumers' associations, though this is a very modest objective. Excluded are hundreds of associations which exist for local issues (for example, rate-payers' groups) and hundreds of groups directed toward one specific objective. There are "testing only" organisations - both public and private versions - general public interest groups, co-operative groups, labour organs, government sponsored consumer groups, volunteers, and paid professionals, and virtually every combination of these types is in existence in one country or another. Excellent examples of the rich diversity of organisational types are provided in a survey by Cas (2), and in an international review by the United Nations (16, pp. 28-35), and brief discussions of the different forms are in (7) and (13).

Despite occasional visibility in the national media, the typical consumers association in a developing country is a fairly small operation, one which has few office workers or paid professionals and a somewhat larger pool of resources in the form of volunteers; and the operation is usually fragile in a financial sense, largely because of the free rider problem. Public finance is rarely available in poorer areas; and if a consumers' association tried to model itself on the type of organisation existing in developed countries - that is one which pays its way by testing consumer goods, it would be irrelevant to the bulk of third-world consumers who live in grinding poverty and who have urgent problems of a more basic sort. In these circumstances it is highly likely that the voluntary component is vital to organizational success (16, 7).

This section attempts to outline the current dimensions and recent growth of national associations as adjustments to the world's stock of CSK. The data used are from the Directory of the International Organization of Consumers' Unions (IOCU) published in 1980 (3). IOCU was founded in 1960 by five consumers' organisations (of the USA, UK, Australia, Netherlands and Belgium) originally for the limited purpose of exchanging information on test methods. Which countries have collective CSK in the form of independent national consumers' associations?

To examine the question we need a definition of a national consumers' association suitable for the purpose at hand. These associations must be free enough from governmental and industrial influence to disseminate CI in the consumers' interest (as determined by consumers themselves) and also free enough to exert FP on their governmental bureaucracies and on their politicians. In its own classification scheme IOCU strives to reach the distinction required. IOCU has "full" and "associate" members who are to be independent by meeting the conditions of article three of its constitution, reproduced here as Appendix 2. IOCU makes no judgement on "corresponding members". I have attempted to define national associations which are "financially and administratively independent" (FAI associations) by (a) accepting IOCU's appraisal on its full and associate members, and adding to that list corresponding members except for (b) those judged to be completely dependent on government sources for their operating revenue, and also excluding (c) those whose chief executive officers were appointed by government. These exclusions were made because it seems unlikely that government-controlled groups are in a position to exert FP on their masters. The results of this exercise are presented in Table 1.

The results show that the consumers' association in this form is of rather recent origin. Only three countries have FAI associations with founding dates prior to 1950. It must be added that many local consumer organisations pre-date the nationals shown in Table 1 by several years, and some of the national associations reported there

TABLE 1

Founding Dates of National Consumers' Associations for Countries Which Were Full or Associate Members of IOCU, or Which Were Corresponding Members of IOCU and Judged to be Financially and Administratively Independent* for Associations Affiliated With IOCU at January 1, 1978, by Continent, and Proportionate Population by Continent as at 1980.

Continent	Date of Foundation of Association (a)				Proportion of continent's population in countries with consumers' associations as at Spring 1980
	Prior to 1950	1950 - 1959	1960 - 1969	1970 - 1979	
Africa		Kenya 1952*	Mauritius 1967* Nigeria 1965*		20%
North America	Canada 1947 U.S.A. 1936		Jamaica 1966 Puerto Rico 1965 Trinidad/ Tobago 1964*	Barbados 1970* (b) Mexico 1972* Montserrat 1972* (b)	87.6%
South America			Venezuela 1968*	Brazil 1977* Guyana 1971*	57.2%
Asia (c)		Israel 1955	India 1966 Japan 1961 Malaysia 1965 S. Korea 1964*	Hong Kong 1974 Philippines 1973 Singapore 1971 Indonesia 1973 Sri Lanka 1973* Thailand 1973*	72.1%
Europe (d)	Denmark 1947	Belgium 1957 France 1951 F.R. Germany 1953 Iceland 1953 Netherlands 1953 Norway 1953 Switzerland 1959 United Kingdom 1957 Italy 1955*	Austria 1961 Ireland 1966 Luxemburg 1961 Finland 1965* Spain 1967	Greece 1972* Portugal 1974*	66.3%
Oceania		Australia 1959 New Zealand 1959		Fiji 1971*	80%
China and U.S.S.R.					--
Number of Countries	3	13	15	14	
Proportion of					
(i) World population 1980					46%
(ii) World population excluding China and U.S.S.R.					65%

Sources: Consumer Directory 1980, The Hague; International Organisation of Consumers' Unions. Population statistics are from 1980 World Population Data Sheet, Washington: Population Reference Bureau Inc. and are for 1980.

* Countries noted without an asterisk were Full or Associate Members of I.O.C.U. Those marked with an asterisk are the "Corresponding Members" of I.O.C.U. which have been judged, on the basis of information submitted to the Consumers' Directory 1980 (I.O.C.U.) to be financially and administratively independent from government and business. Generally, country organisations were excluded where 100% of operating revenue came from government sources, or where chief executives were appointed by government. Excluded countries which, on alternative definitions might well be included, are: Argentina, Bangladesh, Egypt, Hungary, Iran, Poland, South Africa, Sweden, Taiwan, Turkey and Yugoslavia.

- (a) In cases where one country had two or more consumers' associations affiliated with I.O.C.U. in 1980, the date of the association which was founded first is reported in the table.
- (b) Barbados and Monserrat are Corresponding Members through the Caribbean Consumers' Union.
- (c) Excluding China and the USSR which are shown separately, but including both Asian and European portions of Turkey.
- (d) Excluding the USSR which is shown separately, and excluding both Asian and European portions of Turkey.

have roots in other organisation which were founded much earlier. The second last row of the table shows our measure of the adjustment to the world's stock of CSK: the increase in the number of countries with FAI associations. There were three by 1950, 16 by 1960, 31 by 1970 and 46 countries by February 1981. If a stock adjustment mechanism is at work, these results suggest an adjustment coefficient of about .12 per decade.

Most of the larger countries in Europe have national FAI consumers' associations dating from the 1950's, as have the larger countries in Oceania. Of interest too are the populous Asian countries where consumer problems can be most urgent. Most of these have national FAI associations founded in the mid-sixties and seventies. But those Asian countries do have associations - not so in Africa where the World Food Council has identified a number of countries with critical food problems (17); and not so in South America where only three countries have FAI associations, using our criteria.

Of the world's 160 countries, 46 have FAI associations, yet as the bottom row of Table 1 shows, about half of the world's population is in countries with these consumer organisations. This is a long way from saying that half the world's population belongs to these organisations. Maynes reports that only about 1 percent of the population buys consumer periodicals - though readership extends to 5 percent of the population (9, p. 26). For Asia and the Pacific, Rajaratnam reports that "A rough calculation shows that only one in two thousand of the population in this region is represented in some form or other either as an individual member or by an institution or affiliated to a consumer movement." (12, p. 25.) It should be remembered, though, that for building the stock of search capital and for the framework policies discussed above, it is FP which is relatively more important in industrialising countries and the existence of a national, independent, consumers' association is therefore a critical matter. It means that there is an organisation whose primary commitment is to consumer protection and to the changes required to bring this about. Adjustment to the framework, such as changes in laws on credit, in the detection of food adulteration, or in the safety to manufactured cooking stoves are, fundamentally, changes in the exercise of economic power, and these may well be disproportionately important to the poor.

Consider the right hand column of Table 1 from the point of view of uncovering where national FAI consumers' associations do not yet exist. On the population basis, a remarkably high proportion of the population of Asia is in countries with FAI associations: 72 percent. This is the only area with a regional office of IOCU, as office financed by voluntary extra contributions from associations in the United States, United Kingdom, Belgium, the Netherlands, and New Zealand (19, p. 3). The

existence of the Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific does account for an increase in the sharing of, and delivery of, consumer activity in the region. But it does not account for the high figure for national associations there because it did not provide on-site national leadership in the countries concerned, and the office was established only in 1974 while, as Table 1 shows, most national associations in the region predate that. The Regional Office represents a sharp improvement in consumer efficiency as a direct result of the regular sharing of information, as experience to date has shown so clearly (4, 5). But our purpose here is not to evaluate "capital-deepening" within countries but merely to get a tally of the accumulation of CSK as evidenced by independent national associations, and this much has been achieved.

Conclusions

Over the last three decades the national consumers association has been created in country after country at a remarkably steady pace. Most of the larger countries have resources of this type, and in general this form of collective CSK is more readily apparent in Asia and Europe than in Africa and South America. And the concept of collective CSK has quite a number of provocative implications, only a few of which have been outlined above.

Appendix 1

The Optimal Stock of CSK

If Q_t is the stock this year and Q_{t-1} last year, and Q_t^D is the desired stock, we have

$$Q_t - Q_{t-1} = c (Q_t^D - Q_{t-1}) \quad (1)$$

where the left hand side measures the change in the stock this year and the right side shows the desired change $Q_t^D - Q_{t-1}$ modified by the constant proportion c , a number between zero and one. The actual change is therefore a portion of the desired change as given by c , the coefficient of stock adjustment.

It is Q_t we wish to know, so the expression is rearranged as

$$Q_t = cQ_t^D + (1-c) Q_{t-1} \quad (2)$$

The desired stock of CSK is determined as a proportion of the consumers fundamental budget of time -- that is the proportion of time the consumer wishes to allocate to the formation of CSK. In an adaptation of Becker's work (1) total time T can be used either directly to form CSK or it can be used indirectly by working to earn income to pay for expert capital. In its simplest version we have

$$Q_t^D = kT \quad (3)$$

where k , the proportion, is a number between zero and one. If this is substituted into (2) then

$$Q_t = ckT + (1-c) Q_{t-1} \quad (4)$$

If forgetting occurs at a constant proportional rate f

$$Q_t = ckT + (1-c+f) Q_{t-1} \quad (5)$$

or, simplifying the constants,

$$Q_t = a_1T + a_2Q_{t-1} \quad (6)$$

Which states that the stock of CSK at the end of this year depends on T (the time resources available) and on the stock in existence last year, where the latter is modified by an adjustment constant which allows for depreciation and the net adjustment to be made.

Appendix 2

Article 3 of the International Organization of Consumers Unions' Articles of Association

National and regional bodies are eligible to be Associates of IOCU if they comply with all the following qualifications:

- (a) that they are active exclusively on behalf of the interests of the consumer;
- (b) that they are totally unconcerned with the advancement of commercial or party political causes;
- (c) that they are non-profit-making in character;
- (d) that they do not accept for any commercial purpose advertisements in their publications;
- (e) that they do not allow selective commercial exploitation of the information and advice they give to consumers;
- (f) that their independence of action and comment is in no way influenced or qualified by the receipt of subsidies;
- (g) that they pay such financial dues to IOCU as are laid down from time to time; and
- (h) that they comply with such other requirements as may be laid down by the Council from time to time.

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ABSTRACT
USERS RATE THEIR INFORMATION SOURCES
FOR MICROWAVE OVEN COOKERY

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The study related the use of and satisfaction with eight sources of microwave cookery information to satisfaction with the microwave oven and with characteristics of food prepared in the oven. The eight cookery information sources considered were: two types of cookbooks--manufacturers and those from other sources; three categories of mass media--magazines, newspapers, and radio and television; and three personal contact sources--other microwave oven users, demonstrations, and cooking classes.

Consumer satisfaction with their microwave oven included satisfaction with the microwave oven as a whole and satisfaction with several food related characteristics. Those characteristics were food appearance, flavor, and texture; and the variety and quantity of food which could be prepared in the microwave oven.

Methodology

The data were collected in the fall of 1978 through a mailed questionnaire. The non-random sample consists of 373 respondents who were primary users of the microwave oven in their homes. Their names were acquired from appliance dealers, as well as from those attending microwave oven cookery demonstrations, and those identified by friends, neighbors, and business associates. The respondents were limited to the Midwest states of Illinois, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska, Ohio, and Wisconsin. Only those with their first microwave oven were analyzed.

Analyses were accomplished through frequency distributions and cross-tabulation. The chi square statistic was used to determine probability of significant relationships. The level of significance selected for the chi square statistic was .05.

Univariate Analysis

Univariate analysis showed that consumers frequently had used their cookbooks, but the majority never used radio and television as a cookery information source. The majority of the sample had sought cookery information from other microwave oven users at least once a month, although the majority had never attended a demonstration or cookery class.

Satisfaction with information sources was highest for the two cookbook sources, manufacturers'

cookbooks and other cookbooks. Information from other microwave oven users had the third highest satisfaction score. Respondents reported the lowest satisfaction for mass media as an information source, with radio and television faring worse than did either magazines or newspapers.

Overall, consumers are highly satisfied with their microwave oven. The quantity of food that can be cooked in the microwave oven, although rated as satisfactory, had the lowest satisfaction score of any food related characteristic.

Bivariate Analysis

There are 13 significant relationships between use of information sources and satisfaction with food characteristics and the oven itself. There are 27 significant relationships between satisfaction with information sources and satisfaction with food characteristics and the oven itself. Thus, there are a larger number of significant relationships involving satisfaction with information sources than there are involving use of information.

Use of radio and television was not related to any of the satisfaction with food characteristics variables. However, satisfaction with radio and television was related to satisfaction with food appearance, texture, and flavor.

Conclusion

Use of and satisfaction with information sources for microwave oven cookery were studied. It was found that an information source may be used even though satisfaction with that information source is not high. Also, even though consumers may be highly satisfied with an information source, they may not use that source frequently.

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THE NEW CONSUMERISM*

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Abstract

Consumerism was almost universally hailed throughout much of the 1970's as a movement which would continue to grow in prominence in the foreseeable future. However, some recent trends have caused many to believe that the movement is now declining. The authors contend that traditional consumerism is, in fact, declining, but that the seeds of a new consumerism are developing. The characteristics of traditional consumerism are discussed as are some of the trends which are eroding its support. A more comprehensive rationale for the movement is then offered as an attempt to reconcile traditional ideology with an ever evolving environment.

When the landmark Sentry Insurance study of consumerism concluded that "... The consumer movement is here to stay and, in fact, is growing stronger..." even the opposition had little reason to believe otherwise (MSI, 1977). However, in the short time since, the movement has been shaken by several disconcerting events.

The defeat of the most recent bill for the establishment of a federal consumer agency was among the first shocks. Furthermore, that failure may be just representative of a growing trend toward questioning the net benefits of all government protection of the consumer (Time, 1978). Consumer agencies have been increasingly requested to justify their regulations in terms of cost/benefit analyses. The FTC's consumer protection efforts in particular have been the focus of debilitating criticism in Congress for what many perceive as excessive marketplace interference.

Another apparent contradiction to the Sentry study's conclusion has been that consumerism's most identifiable leader, Ralph Nader, has since experienced a notable drop in influence with the press, legislators, and the general public. His deteriorating leadership in a movement with seemingly deteriorating support for its ideology was perhaps best evidenced by the response to "Big Business Day." The anti-big business activities planned for the day were the beginning of an effort to get Congress to

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pass the "Corporate Democracy Act." The proposed bill would require a majority of independent directors on corporate boards, public disclosure of pollutant emissions and on the job injuries, and a two-year notice for plant closings. The reaction to "Big Business Day" according to Time was: "...a fairly big yawn...", "...sparse crowds...", and for the bill "...little chance of passage soon." (Time, 1980)

The apparent blows to the movement as exemplified by the above have led at least some to believe the Sentry conclusion is already obsolete. As one confidential business advisory put it, consumerism is "...somewhat out of fashion." The authors of this paper will argue that a more accurate statement may be that the traditional consumerism of this century is somewhat out of fashion, but that a new consumerism is taking its place.

Characteristics of the Traditional Consumerism

Consumerism in this century has largely been viewed as a movement precipitated by excessive business power in buyer-seller relationships. Herrmann, for instance, has described it as:

"...a reaction to three persisting problem areas: 1) ill-considered applications of new technology (i.e., by business) which result in dangerous or unreliable products; 2) changing conceptions of the social responsibilities of business and 3) the operations of a dishonest fringe and the occasional lapses of others in the business community (Hermann, 1978, p. 35).

Kotler, in an even more recent description of the traditional consumer movement, sees it as "... an organized movement of concerned citizens and government to enhance the rights and power of buyers in relation to sellers" (Kotler, 1972, p. 50).

In addition to being a largely anti-business abuse movement, consumerism, at least until recently, has tended to be associated with non-economic issues (e.g., safety and health) as opposed to economic ones (e.g., taxes, competition, and inflation). Such muckraking literature as The Jungle, 100,000,000 Guinea Pigs, Unsafe at Any Speed have typified the safety-oriented spirit of each of the waves of the movement in this century.

Another characteristic of the traditional movement has been its acceptance of benefit rights solutions to consumer problems as well as opportunity rights solutions. An "opportunity right" is defined here as one which improves the opportunity for effective exercise of individual responsibility in securing benefits. The right to information and choice are thus opportunity rights since benefits only accrue to the extent that individual responsibility is

exercised successfully. "Benefit rights", on the other hand, are those which provide benefits to members of some group without the possibility of free choice and the exercise of individual responsibility. Mandated safety standards in autos and other products, then, are examples of benefit rights in that they offer safety benefits to purchasers on a non-discretionary basis. Throughout this century, the traditional impetus seems to have been toward greater use of benefit rights solutions imposed by government regulators with the support and even insistence of consumer leaders (Winter, 1972).

Still another characteristic of the movement has been an implicit assumption of monolithic support or non-support of specific consumer issues and remedies or of the movement itself. In other words, very little recognition has been given to the possibility of distinct types of consumer supporters and/or non-supporters. Reflecting this implicit assumption, typical studies of attitudes toward consumerism issues have largely focused on the differences between businessmen and consumers in general (Barksdale and Darden, 1972; Hustad and Pessimier, 1973; MSI, 1977). Few have attempted to determine consistent differences in groups of consumers concerning either perceived antagonist groups (e.g., business, government, unions), issues of interest (e.g., economic vs. non-economic), or solution preferences (e.g., opportunity rights vs. benefit rights).

Characteristics of the Evolving Movement

An earlier attempt to incorporate the potential abuse of consumers by participants other than business (e.g., government, labor unions, farmers) into the ideology of the movement may have been a harbinger of its future. In the very first issue of the Journal of Consumer Affairs, Schooler implied that consumerism should be conceived as a struggle for power vis a vis big unions and government as well as business (Schooler, 1967). In rebuttal, Margolius took a position that has long been more representative of consumer leaders, if not consumers. He stressed the common interests of consumers and big unions in using government as a vehicle in transferring power from business to consumers (Margolius, 1967). Schooler's position, however, now seems to be more representative of evolving public sentiment.

The expanding conceptual usage of the term "consumer" by consumer educators and consumer scientists as well as by the press and public is an indication of this trend in sentiment. All non-producer personal economic roles including those dealing with non-business entities such as that of taxpayer and one who evaluates government consumer policy are increasingly referred to as "consumer" roles (Krolland Hunt, 1980; Parade, 1978).

The growing concern with government as opposed to business power alluded to above can be supported by research evidence as well. The Sentry study itself, for instance, revealed some seeds of public deviation from traditional consumerist doctrine. In response to a question asking

consumers to choose from among various consumer priorities for the Carter administration, the number one choice was "Keeping inflation under control" at 51%, while the number three choice was "Keeping spending by the federal government under control" at 34%. On the other hand, "Curbing big business abuses", the cornerstone concern of traditional consumerism, was the number twelve choice at 12% (MSI, 1977).

The study thereafter adopted a traditional perspective and did not pursue consumer attitudes toward specific monetary and fiscal policies. The traditional posture of assuming business to be the sole antagonist of the movement was reflected in questions such as:

Most companies do a good job of providing reasonable products at fair prices: Agree (or) Disagree (?)

Furthermore, the divergence between the response to the above by consumers and consumer activists may be another indication of decline in support for the traditional ideology. Consumers by a 2 to 1 margin (52% to 26%) agreed with the statement while a majority of consumer activists (40% to 37%) disagreed with it (MSI, 1977).

In addition to the shifting of consumer sentiment from a strictly anti-business orientation, it may thus also be shifting in terms of types of issues which are of interest, and in terms of types of solutions which are preferred. As stated previously, economic issues such as inflation, deficit spending, and taxation have recently overshadowed the more traditional health, safety, and quality issues. Traditional advocates of the movement as exemplified by Ralph Nader, have not usually been actively concerned with the former issue types. Such consumerists are likely to perceive a contradiction between reducing government spending prerogatives while seeking greater government involvement in the traditional business abuse issues. Many people, therefore, have not yet associated the growing sentiment against government's role in inflation with the consumer movement.

Likewise the seeming growth in pro-opportunity rights sentiment (e.g., support for the availability of such substances as laetrille and saccharin) is not usually thought of as being part of the consumer movement. Traditional consumerists are likely to perceive such a trend as being in conflict with the movement's standard benefit rights (i.e., mandated safety) approach to health issues.

As implied above, public sentiment toward marketplace participants, specific issues, and solution approaches, may have changed quite markedly within a few years. One can reasonably hypothesize, however, that within the total public exist a core of fairly stable subgroups who take consistently diverse approaches to consumer problems. Yet, as previously stated, the traditional movement has largely conceived of supporters as a homogeneous group. They have been viewed essentially as anti-business, interested in safety, quality, and health issues, and in support of benefit rights solutions to consumer problems. Anyone not basically fitting