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CONSUMER DECISION-MAKING BEHAVIOR IN PURCHASING
TEXTILES FOR THE HOME

by

Frances Barnett Buchanan

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Dissertation Adviser

APPROVAL SHEET

This dissertation has been approved by the following committee
of the Faculty of the Graduate School at The University of North
Carolina at Greensboro.

Dissertation
Adviser

Pauline E. Keeney

Oral Examination
Committee Members

Robert H. Eason

Victor S. Salwin

Norman G. Altanese

Mildred B. Johnson

April 13, 1970
Date of Examination

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The major purpose of this study was to investigate consumer decision-making behavior in the purchase of textiles for the home. Specifically, the study was planned to investigate the effect that social class has upon the consumer's use of external search for information as to: (1) the extent to which search is used, (2) the sources of information consulted, (3) the choice of product attributes for which information is sought, and (4) the relation between the sources of information consulted and the product attributes for which information is sought.

Data were obtained for this study through personal interviews from a random sample of one-hundred consumers, fifty from the upper-lower social class and fifty from the lower-lower social class, living within the city limits of Greensboro, North Carolina.

Two types of questionnaires, the dichotomous and the forced-choice, were employed for data collection. The descriptive data were obtained from the interview responses to the dichotomous questionnaire and the inferential data were obtained from the interview responses to the forced-choice questionnaire.

Results from the dichotomous questionnaire indicated that, (1) each household textile item was owned by varying percentages of consumers in both social classes with the percentage of ownership greater in the upper-lower social class than in the lower-lower social class, (2) within the past year, each household textile item had been

purchased by varying percentages of consumers in both social classes, but more purchasing of each textile item had been made by respondents in the upper-lower social class, (3) a high percentage of consumers in both social classes engaged in limited search for product information pertaining to the purchase of household textiles, and the percentage was particularly high among respondents in the lower-lower social class, (4) respondents from both social classes, especially those in the lower-lower social group, desired no additional information from any source in the purchase of household textiles, (5) a high percentage of respondents, particularly in the lower-lower social group, did not want any type of product information in the purchasing of household textiles, and (6) a high percentage of respondents in both social classes expressed satisfaction with their household textile purchases.

Data obtained from the forced-choice questionnaire were analyzed by the Mann-Whitney U Test statistic. The questionnaire was designed to indicate decision-making behavior between consumers of two lower social classes as to the sources of information consulted, and the choice of product attributes in the purchase of sheets and carpets; and the relation of product attributes to sources of information consulted in the purchase of sheets.

Results from the forced-choice questionnaire indicated, (1) significant differences between the two lower social classes in their use of friends and neighbors, and store clerks as sources of information in purchasing sheets, (2) significant differences between the two lower social classes in their choice of each product attribute, price,

quality, performance, style and color in purchasing sheets, (3) significant differences between the two lower social classes in their use of consumer services as a source of information in the purchase of carpets, (4) significant differences between the two lower social classes in the choice of three product attributes, price, quality, and performance in the purchase of carpets, (5) that the source of information had little effect on the choice of product attributes in the purchase of sheets. In the use of three sources of information, advertising, friends and neighbors, and store clerks, significant differences were found between the two social classes in the choice of each of the product attributes, price, quality, performance, style and color. In using consumer services, significant differences were found between the two lower social classes in their choice of three product attributes, quality, performance, style and color.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Ideally, in the American free enterprise economic system all goods and services are produced solely for the well-being of the consumer.¹ In practice, however, the American free enterprise economic system has never been identical to the ideal economy. It is believed that the only time in American history that the economy more nearly approximated that of an ideal economy, was the time between the years 1607-1792. During this Colonial period, the role of the consumer was relatively simple. His major responsibility was that of looking after his own well-being for which, it is assumed, he performed his role adequately.

The modern free enterprise economic system, however, is no longer similar to the ideal economy. Because of this fact, the responsibilities of the American consumer have increased enormously in the past one-hundred and fifty years. In addition to looking after his own well-being, the consumer must, of necessity, perform his role in the economy adequately for the preservation of the free enterprise economic concept. However, literature relating to the consumer, indicates that a large and increasing number of people are failing to

¹Leland J. Gordon and Stewart M. Lee, Economics for Consumers (New York: American Book Company, 1967), p. 9.

perform their roles in the economy adequately in the daily spending of approximately 1.2 billion dollars for goods and services.²

While it is believed that inadequate consumer performance adversely affects the well-being of consumers on all social levels, the effects are more readily discernible and are more seriously felt by people in the lower social classes. In making unwise purchase decisions, the lower class consumer is likely to jeopardize his own well-being by bringing economic privations to himself.

According to authorities in the field of consumer behavior, consumer effectiveness in the economy is largely dependent on the wise use of the decision-making process. This process consists of five stages linked in sequence. The five sequential stages are as follows: (1) problem recognition, (2) external search for information about a product, (3) alternative evaluation, (4) purchasing processes, and (5) post purchase evaluation of the purchased product.³ Wise use of the process is determined primarily by the extent to which purchase decisions involve the use of external search for information, the second stage of the process. It is essential that the consumer seek information concerning the price, performance, and quality of a product from objective sources whenever a failure to do so would jeopardize his own well-being or that of the free enterprise concept.

²Ibid., p. 21.

³James F. Engel and others, Consumer Behavior (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1968), p. 349.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

There are many factors which may account for the failure of consumers to look after their own well-being by engaging in external search, the seeking of information relative to the product being purchased. One such factor is thought to be the social class of the individual. Several studies were found in the literature to indicate the effect social class has on the actual purchase of a product, the fourth stage of the decision-making process. However, no studies were found to indicate the effect social class has upon the consumer's use of external search for product information, the second stage of the decision-making process.

The purchase of textiles for the home is one situation where the effect of social class on consumer use of external search for information may be examined. Such textile products are suited for such an examination because, it is believed, they are purchased by virtually every individual. Furthermore, according to the criteria suggested by Maynes, these items qualify for the use of search; they represent a large portion of the family budget and the variation in price and quality is considerable.⁴

The purpose of this study was to investigate consumer decision-making behavior in the purchase of textiles for the home. Specifically, the study was planned to investigate the effect that social

⁴E. Scott Maynes, "The Payoff for Intelligent Consumer Decision-Making," Journal of Home Economics, LXI (February, 1969), 99.

class has upon the consumer's use of external search for information as to: (1) the extent to which search is used, (2) the sources of information consulted, (3) the choice of product attributes for which information is sought, and (4) the relation between the sources of information consulted and the product attributes for which information is sought. The specific objectives of the study were:

1. To identify the sources whereby a consumer may obtain information pertaining to the purchase of household textiles.
2. To investigate the extent to which consumers of two lower social classes engage in external search for information in the purchase of household textiles.
3. To identify the types and sources of information desired by consumers of two lower social classes in the purchase of household textiles.
4. To determine whether differences exist in decision-making behavior between consumers of two lower social classes, when they purchase sheets and carpets, in regard to:
 - a. The sources of information consulted when external search occurs.
 - b. The choice of product attributes for which information is sought.
 - c. The relationship between the sources of information consulted when external search occurs and the choice of product attributes for which information is sought.

In relation to these objectives, the following hypotheses were tested:

Hypothesis 1. Differences exist between consumers of two lower classes as to the sources of information consulted in the purchase of sheets.

Hypothesis 2. Differences exist between consumers of two lower social classes in their choice of product attributes for which information is sought in the purchase of sheets.

Hypothesis 3. Differences exist between consumers of two lower social classes in relation to the sources of information consulted and the choice of product attributes for which information is sought in the purchase of sheets.

Hypothesis 4. Differences exist between consumers of two lower social classes as to the sources of information consulted in the purchase of carpets.

Hypothesis 5. Differences exist between consumers of two lower social classes in their choice of product attributes for which information is sought in the purchase of carpets.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

The following definitions have been included for clarification of terms used throughout the study:

Consumer. One who uses goods and services for the satisfaction of his material desires.

Consumption. The process in which goods and services are used by consumers.

Consumer Behavior. The patterns of behavior among consumers; specifically those patterns of behavior related to the consumption of goods and services.

Decision-Making Process. A series of sequenced steps used by an individual in solving a problem.

External Search. The conscious effort on the part of the individual to seek information relative to the product being purchased.

Free Enterprise. An economic system having the following

principal characteristics: private ownership of most production, little regulation of consumption or production, and a reliance on the laws of supply, demand and competition to produce a prosperous consumer group.⁵

Process. A sequence of interrelated actions directed to some goal, purpose or end.⁶

Product Attribute. Characteristics of a product such as price, quality, performance, style and appearance.

Social Class. Social division of a fixed nature. The members of each division are determined by a comparison of individuals within the whole society.

Upper-lower and Lower-lower Social Classes. The two lowest divisions in Warner's hierarchy of the social class distribution for Yankee City.⁷

⁵Gordon and Lee, op. cit., pp. 9-11.

⁶Marguerite C. Burk, "An Integrated Approach to Consumer Behavior," Journal of Home Economics, LIX (March, 1967), 156.

⁷W. L. Warner and others, Yankee City (New Haven, Conn: Yale University Press, 1963), p. 43.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Few studies were made of the American consumer prior to the depression of the 1930's. With the depression came an awareness that the consumer was an integral, essential part of the American free enterprise economic system. Consequently, since approximately 1929, vast amounts of literature have been written concerning many aspects of the consumer in the American economy.

This study, however, was concerned with consumer decision-making behavior in the purchase of goods and services. Specifically, it was concerned with the relation of social class to the consumer's use of external search for information, the second stage of the decision-making process. Therefore, the review of literature is a summary of articles most closely related to the above topics.

The review of literature is divided into four parts. Part I includes literature related to the role of a consumer in the American free enterprise economic system. Part II includes literature pertaining to the decision-making process as related to consumer purchasing of goods and services. Part III includes literature related to consumer use of external search for product information. Part IV includes literature related to the influence of social class on consumer purchase decisions.

THE ROLE OF A CONSUMER IN THE AMERICAN FREE ENTERPRISE ECONOMIC SYSTEM

A consumer is an individual who uses goods and services for the satisfaction of his wants and needs. An individual assumes the role of a consumer at the moment of his birth and continues to be a consumer until his death. In using goods and services for the satisfaction of his wants and needs, a consumer is practicing the act of consumption which was begun, though in a passive manner, long before birth.

The Consumer in an Ideal Economy

The consumer is an integral and an important part of a free enterprise economic system. An ideal economy operates solely for the welfare of the consumer and is therefore consumer oriented. From this basic assumption, according to Gordon and Lee, other assumptions are characteristic of the ideal economy. It is assumed that no exploitation will occur between consumer and producer, and that the consumer controls the nature and the extent of production by means of his purchase decisions. Furthermore, it is assumed that consumer decisions are rational and are made on the basis of full knowledge, and that competition assures quality merchandise at a price equal to or close to production costs.¹ In practice, however, the free enterprise economic system has never been identical to the ideal economy. The closest approximation of it was during the Colonial period (1607-1792).

¹Leland J. Gordon and Stewart M. Lee, Economics for Consumers (New York: American Book Company, 1967), p. 9.

The Consumer in the Economy of the Colonial Period

The free enterprise economic system of the Colonial era placed relatively few demands on the consumer. The primary responsibility of the consumer was the continuance of his own existence. For this task, he was more than adequately prepared. His basic needs were met by his own individual production. The comparatively small number of goods that were obtained outside the home were produced in small craft shops operated by local citizens who preferred to produce quality merchandise than face the wrath of a dissatisfied customer.² Consumers, in most instances were knowledgeable enough to judge the price, quality, and quantity of merchandise for themselves. The Colonial view of the relationship between the consumer and the producer may be seen most clearly in the words of Adam Smith, as quoted by Hardwick, who wrote in the eighteenth century that, "Consumption is the sole end and purpose of all production; and the interest of the producer ought to be attended to, only for promoting that of the consumer."³

Even though the Colonial economy was very close to the ideal economy, it still fell short in several ways. For instance, the techniques of deceiving the consumer were even then a well-developed art, and the judgment of our ancestors as to the quality of products may not always have been infallible.⁴ Nevertheless, the Colonial

²Ibid., p. 12.

³C. T. Hardwick, "Consumer Education in the Twentieth Century," Balance Sheet, XXXXVIII (September, 1966), 12.

⁴Gordon and Lee, op. cit., p. 13.

consumer was extremely well-prepared to cope with the responsibilities placed on him by his unsophisticated economic system, and it is believed that he performed his role in the economy remarkably well.

The Consumer in the Modern Economy

The modern free enterprise economic system is no longer similar to the ideal consumer oriented economy. Consequently, the responsibilities of consumers have increased dramatically in the past one-hundred and fifty years. Consumers, in addition to looking after their own well-being, must, of necessity, perform their roles adequately in the economy for the preservation of the free enterprise economic concept. While consumers still have many rights in the modern economy, these rights also carry important responsibilities. Some of these important responsibilities, as stated by Gordon and Lee, are:

A primary responsibility of consumers is to be aware of their role and function in the economy. . . . the responsible consumer . . . in spending his money . . . is engaging in actions which, . . . influence what shall and shall not be produced.

A second consumer responsibility is to perform effectively. . . . In the American economy [,] consumers have an impressive freedom of choice. This freedom is not to be taken lightly or abused. Nor should it be abdicated.

The responsible consumer abhors needless waste. He has a sense of responsibility which embraces his nation, consumers in other nations, and future generations.⁵

Another important consumer responsibility as stated by Hardwick, "Usually without sufficient training and practice, the consumer has

⁵Ibid., p. 23.

the responsibility to select the proper quality in goods and services at a reasonable cost of time, energy, and money."⁶

Demands, as well as responsibilities, have increased enormously for the consumer in the modern economy. In the opinion of O'Brien, one of the greatest demands placed on the consumer by the modern economy is " . . . to purchase goods. He must purchase goods, he is told, in order that the economy keeps going."⁷

Because of the many responsibilities and demands placed on the consumer by the modern economy, Reuter believes that it is " . . . increasingly important for the family to achieve competence in setting up the material foundation under its way of life, within the limits of its resources."⁸ Oxenfeldt, in a study of consumer knowledge, expressed what he considered to be serious results of consumers' inefficiency when they fail to assume responsibilities placed on them by the modern economy:

Efficient operation of a free enterprise system requires that consumers look after their own welfare. Persistent failure of consumers to safeguard their own interests can seriously weaken even the richly endowed economy of the United States. Moreover, consumer ignorance could well be a major cause of the economic privations of the poorest "third of the nation."⁹

⁶Hardwick, op. cit., p. 14.

⁷Carol B. O'Brien, "The Consumer in an Affluent Society," Journal of Home Economics, LIII (February, 1961), 80.

⁸Ralph R. Reuter, "In the Interest of all People as Consumers," Journal of Home Economics, LIV (February, 1962), 94.

⁹Alfred R. Oxenfeldt, "Consumer Knowledge: Its Measurement and Extent," The Review of Economics and Statistics, XII (November, 1950), 300.

Reasons for Inadequate Performance in the Modern Economy

How well is the consumer meeting responsibilities and coping with the demands placed on him by a modern economy? From the literature available, the answer is not very well. Oxenfeldt stated that

. . . consumers, under existing conditions, do not successfully safeguard their own interests. Moreover, producers apparently are not compelled, by an invisible hand or otherwise, to protect consumers either.¹⁰

The obvious question in relation to the short-comings of a modern consumer, is: why are consumers failing to perform adequately in the modern economy? The answer lies in the situation which he now finds himself. Several authorities in the field of consumer behavior express what they consider to be important reasons for inadequate consumer performance. Maynes believes that far too many consumers,

. . . fail to understand that the sellers' interest is not the consumers' interest and that neither an implied fiducial relationship between buyer and seller nor the discipline of markets (as they exist) is sufficient, to ensure optimal outcomes from the consumer's point of view.¹¹

Wilhelms expressed the opinion that the modern consumer is beset by,

. . . the intensification of advertising, the multiplication of specialized goods and services, the growing industrialization of the nation with all its resulting complexities and the swift current of modern change. . . .¹²

¹⁰Ibid., p. 313.

¹¹E. Scott Maynes, "The Payoff for Intelligent Consumer Decision-Making," Journal of Home Economics, LXI (February, 1969), 98.

¹²Fred T. Wilhelms, "Research in Consumer Education," National Business Education Quarterly, XVI (March, 1948), 23.

Beam and Ewing assert that American consumers are confronted with an almost limitless variety of goods and services for which they may spend their incomes. This situation, in their opinion, may account for a large measure of consumer inefficiency so evident in the modern economy.¹³

According to Hardwick, ". . . the consumer faces many involved choices as to the types of stores; varieties of articles and brands; quantities for a day, week, or month's usage; bulk or special packaging. . . ."¹⁴

In the opinion of O'Brien, "much marketing research seems to support the view of a somewhat less than rational consumer who buys on impulse or for reasons not directly connected to the nature of the product purchased. . . ."¹⁵ Certain characteristics of inadequate performance by consumers in their purchase decisions are readily discernible, as pointed out by Hardwick in the following statement:

. . . (1) small-scale buying quantities, (2) lack of specialized and trained buyers, (3) too many nonrational motives or attitudes, (4) habitual selection of places and things to buy, (5) lack of appropriate quality description or specification, (6) lack of testing facilities to measure quality and price, and (7) lack of adequate financial reserves.¹⁶

¹³Eugene R. Beem and John S. Ewing, "Business Appraises Consumer Testing Agencies," Harvard Business Review, XXXIV (March-April, 1956), 113.

¹⁴Hardwick, op. cit., p.

¹⁵O'Brien, loc. cit., p. 13.

¹⁶Hardwick, op. cit., p. 15.

A Comparison of the Colonial and the Modern Consumer

In Hardwick's comparison of the Colonial and the modern consumer, the situation can be seen in clear focus:

1. The typical modern consumer has changed from a farmer to an industrial city worker.
2. Instead of producing what the family needs, the consumer now works for money to buy what he needs from a specialized producer.
3. The factory producing units have become larger and larger and more and more specialized in expert methods of selling the consumer.
4. The larger producer means an extended market area which tends to separate the producer from the ultimate consumer by many "layers of middlemen."
5. The modern consumer spends a great deal of his time and energy learning to earn a bigger income to buy satisfaction of his wants.
6. Even with prosperity and an affluent society, consumers usually lack enough income to satisfy all real or fancied wants.
7. Somehow or other, everybody consumes according to an ancient rule of doing what comes naturally (which is inadequate for today's complex marketing system).¹⁷

The results of these changes have been highly detrimental to consumer welfare, according to the literature. Although prosperity disguises the ill-effects of unwise consumption for a large part of the population, the ill-effects are still there. While inadequate consumer performance seriously affects the well-being of consumers on all social levels, the effects are more readily discernible and are more

¹⁷Ibid., p. 13.

seriously felt by people in the lower social classes. In making unwise purchase decisions, the lower class consumer jeopardizes not only his own well-being, by bringing economic privations to himself, but also jeopardizes the concept of the free enterprise economic system.

Oxenfeldt believed that, ". . . consumer ignorance could well be a major cause of the economic privations of the poorest 'third of the nation.'" ¹⁸ Peterson, in speaking before the group attending a workshop for the poor, sponsored by the American Home Economics Association stated that:

. . . The poor cannot afford to make mistakes as consumers. The margin for financial error is slim--or nonexistent. While we [middle class consumers] may be inconvenienced by an unwise or shoddy purchase, to the poor it can mean real physical suffering, or denial, or financial disaster. ¹⁹

THE CONSUMER DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

One of the newer concepts in the field of consumer behavior, according to Patterson, is that consumer purchasing has come to be regarded as a process rather than a discrete act. Previously, the study of consumer purchasing had focused entirely on the purchase decision itself. No attempt was made to study the steps which the consumer had gone through to arrive at the ultimate purchase decision. Recently, however, Patterson stated that, ". . . the concept of the

¹⁸Oxenfeldt, loc. cit.

¹⁹Esther Peterson, "Consumer Problems of Low-Income Families," Working with Low-Income Families, Proceedings of the AHEA Workshop, Washington: American Home Economics Association Foundation, 1965, 141-142.

process. . . . represents the final purchase decision as the culmination of a series of preliminary steps or stages. . . ."20 This new concept has become known as the consumer decision-making process.

Nature and Steps in the Decision-Making Process

The decision-making process consists of the steps that an individual uses in solving a problem or reaching a decision. According to John Dewey, there are several steps linked in sequence which may be observed in the decision-making process.²¹ The five steps of the process, as revised by Engel, are: ". . . (1) problem recognition; (2) external search; (3) alternative evaluation; (4) purchasing processes; and (5) postpurchase evaluation."²² This formulation attempts to describe the series of steps that are followed by a consumer from the time he recognizes that a decision must be made to purchase a product until the time that the product is actually purchased and evaluated.

Variations in Consumer Use of the Decision-Making Process

Variations, however, occur in the use of the decision-making process. According to Engel, consumer decision-making behavior, in the purchase of products, may be either extended, limited, or habitual.

²⁰James K. Patterson, "Buying As a Process," Business Horizons, VIII-IX (Spring, 1965), 59.

²¹John Dewey, How We Think (New York: D. C. Heath and Company, 1910), p. 72.

²²James F. Engel and others, Consumer Behavior (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1968), p. 349.

Extended behavior involves each of the five steps in the process; whereas, limited behavior excludes external search for information, the second step of the process. Habitual behavior excludes both external search and alternative evaluation, the second and third steps in the process; thus moving directly from the problem recognition step to the actual purchase decision.²³

Admittedly, one does not practice extended decision-making behavior, specifically the use of external search for information, for each purchase, nor is it necessary to do so. However, according to authorities in the field of consumer behavior, wise use of the process is primarily determined by the extent to which purchase decisions involve consumer use of external search for information. It is essential, therefore, that the consumer seek information concerning the price, performance, and quality of a product from objective sources, whenever a failure to do so would jeopardize his own well-being or that of the free enterprise concept.

Assumptions Relative to the Decision-Making Process

There are many assumptions held by American consumers about the decision-making process. Perhaps the most widely held assumption is that the decision-making process is carried out perfectly in its ideal state, by most consumers. There are numerous assumptions corollary to this basic assumption. Canoyer listed five of these:

²³Ibid., pp. 350-354.

1. That the family or individual will know what it wants or needs--and will be in the market for the item highest on its want list [.]
2. That the prospective buyer should know how to seek out all the written sources of information about the product, know all its characteristics, and be able to reflect on those in relation to how he intends to use it [.]
3. That this effort should be followed by a series of comparative shopping experiences--a real search of the market [.]
4. That the above point will be reinforced by checking on friends' or relatives' experience with a similar product, or getting one on trial [.]
5. That eventually the great decision to buy or not to buy will be made [.]²⁴

Oxenfeldt stated a further assumption when he wrote that, " . . . all consumers are assumed to be fully informed about the attributes of all alternative brands of all products."²⁵ In summary, Morgan stated that, "Consumer decisions are theoretically made in full knowledge of all the relevant facts, shrewd appraisal of the future, and careful rules of optimal decisions."²⁶ In practice, however, such may not be the case.

CONSUMER USE OF EXTERNAL SEARCH FOR PRODUCT INFORMATION IN PURCHASE DECISIONS

External search for information, the second step in the

²⁴Helen G. Canoyer, "For the Consumer: What Breakthroughs?", Journal of Home Economics, LVIII (September, 1966), 525.

²⁵Oxenfeldt, op. cit., p. 312.

²⁶James M. Morgan, Consumer Economics (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1955), p. 117.

decision-making process, is defined by Engel as:

. . . the processes and activities whereby the consumer uses various sources of information, including mass media, personal sources, and marketer-dominated sources (advertisements, dealer visits and so on) to learn about the number of alternative solutions to the perceived problem, the characteristics and attributes of these alternatives, and their relative desirability.²⁷

Extent of Use

Although wise use of the decision-making process is largely dependent on the use of external search for information about the attributes of a product from objective sources, Morgan believes that few people use external search but rely on habit. The danger of relying on habit, in his opinion, is that few people sense the need for a change or to realize that their habit patterns were not well-selected in the first place.²⁸

Blake came to a similar conclusion in studying the purchase decisions of consumers who had bought durable goods. The findings from the study revealed that only about one-third of the respondents who were interviewed, consulted even one source of information and that one source was not consulted very extensively. The other two-thirds of the respondents obtained no information whatsoever relative to the products being purchased.²⁹

²⁷Engel, op. cit., p. 378. ²⁸Morgan, op. cit., p. 136.

²⁹James K. Blake, "How Much Thinking Before Buying?" Dun's Review and Modern Industry, LVI (August, 1955), 39.

Maynes cited what he believes to be the underlying reasons why consumers fail to engage in a search for information sufficient for their well-being and that of the free enterprise concept:

The fact that consumers search little is attested by the results of consumer surveys. Why? I would speculate that exposure to formal courses in economics and the folklore of our "free enterprise" economy conspire to oversell people on the effectiveness of competition. People may misremember and misapply what they learned in their long-ago courses in economics. They may remember correctly that "perfect competition" yields a single, lowest price for any product. But they may forget that this result rests on a nonexistent world in which (1) there are a very large number of sellers and buyers of the same product, (2) products are undifferentiated, (3) consumers possess complete and accurate information about all the products and prices, and (4) perfect mobility of resources exists. If [,] and only if [,] all these assumptions hold, one of the operating rules of the naive consumer--that price is an indicator of quality--is correct.

Also contributing to nonsearching by consumers is utter reliance on the integrity of the seller retail sellers--like ordinary consumers--often lack the technical knowledge, the objectivity, and the inclination to evaluate a wide range of products [and] even if they [clerks] were able and wished to make objective appraisals of competing products, the giving of "honest advice" would often require them to act against their own financial self-interest and to recommend the product of a competitor.³⁰

Sources of Information Consulted in Consumer Use of External Search

If a consumer engages in external search for information, the sources of information consulted are of vital importance. It is believed that there are many possible sources whereby a consumer may obtain information to help him perform adequately in the economy. Some of the sources are considered to be beneficial to the consumer as they

³⁰Maynes, op. cit., p. 102.

provide objective and unbiased information. Yet, there are other sources that are in no way beneficial to the consumer as the information which they provide is either partial or biased. Consequently, studies reveal that there is variation in the sources of information consulted by consumers.

The social class of an individual is one factor thought to cause variation in the sources of information chosen by consumers. The primary sources believed to be used by consumers on all social levels, however, are advertising, personal sources, and dealer visits. Consumer services, an objective and unbiased source, is believed to be consulted with much less frequency by consumers than the other sources.

Advertising. Morgan defines advertising as a means employed by a producer to sell products by offering information about the products.³¹ Although, advertising undoubtedly has praise-worthy qualities, none of them appeared in the literature reviewed. This may be partially explained by the fact that the articles were written in behalf of the consumer. Consequently, the writers regarded advertising as a biased source of information for consumers.

Gast, an assistant professor of education at Arizona State University, states that:

. . . We run a treadmill in quest for psychic gratification, laboring hard under the modern-day myth that material goods will satisfy psychic needs - a myth assiduously reinforced by psychic seduction in advertising.³²

³¹Morgan, op. cit., p. 134.

³²David K. Gast, "Consumer Education and the Madison Avenue Morality," Phi Delta Kappan, XXXVIII (June, 1967), 485.

Rueter viewed advertising in somewhat the same manner as expressed in the following statement:

. . . in our dynamic society, consumers are constantly being encouraged to want more than they can "afford" to have. The extent of wanting more than is within financial reach increases the importance in choice-making, and with it the need for fortitude to resist persuasive blandishments that lure people down paths which do not bring them to a satisfying experience, at least under present economic circumstances.³³

In 1957, Packard made a study to investigate how advertisers influence the purchase decisions and thought processes of consumers. He concluded from the findings of the study that fully two-thirds of the largest advertisers in the nation were using strategies based on the mass psycho-analysis concept to sell products, ideas and attitudes. Consequently, he expressed the opinion that consumers are being adversely affected by the use of strategies based on this concept.³⁴

Dealer visits. Dealer visits is another source believed to be used by consumers in their quest for information about a product. The term, dealer visits, as used in the context of this study, refers to those situations in which a consumer receives information about a product while shopping where the product is sold. Generally, the information is received from salesmen, clerks, or fellow shoppers. Such sources are not likely to be completely objective.

Morgan believed that salesmen may be an unbiased source of information providing one asks enough questions and one asks enough

³³Reuter, op. cit., pp. 94-95.

³⁴Vance Packard, The Hidden Persuaders (New York: David McKay Company, Inc., 1957), pp. 3-10.

different salesmen.³⁵ The implication, from this opinion, is that unbiased sources of information should be consulted before one enters the store.

Maynes did not believe that salesmen are a good source of information and has this to say in regard to that opinion,

. . . many consumers in relying on salesmen for product information [,] fail to recognize the bias in salesmen-provided information resulting from the fact that salesmen receive their income from selling their array of products and not for providing accurate consumer information.³⁶

According to a study made by Riter, people tend to rely on the advice of salesmen in their purchase decisions. In making a study to discover and to determine the characteristics of people who had recently purchased color television sets, Riter interviewed salesmen in the stores where these sets had recently been purchased. He found that, in general, most of the salesmen felt that the average consumer was not well-informed about the specifications of a good color television set, and tended to rely heavily on the advice received from them in the store.³⁷

Personal sources. Personal sources consist primarily of word-of-mouth information which is communicated from other people, such as friends, relatives or neighbors. Although this source of information is not regarded as completely objective, most writers agree that it has become increasingly important as a source of information for consumers.

³⁵Morgan, loc. cit. ³⁶Maynes, loc. cit.

³⁷Charles B. Riter, "What Influences Purchases of Color Televisions?", Journal of Retailing, XXXXI-XXXXII (Winter, 1966-1967), 30.

Morgan believed that consumers on all social levels receive their major source of information from either friends, relatives or neighbors. However, he points out that there are two major disadvantages to the use of this source:

First, it is not always true that we know somebody who has bought one of each brand of whatever it is we are considering to buy. Secondly, people have a tendency to like a new thing and tend to overlook its faults.³⁸

Whyte considered the modern economy to be the primary reason which explains the increased use of information from personal sources. He believes that the modern consumer is confronted with a multiplicity of choices in regard to purchase decisions. In many instances, being separated economically, socially, and geographically from preceding generations, information from personal sources serves the important function of keeping people abreast with the events of the moment.³⁹

Consumer services. As previously stated, consumer services, an objective source of information, is believed to be used less frequently by consumers than either advertising, dealer visits, or personal sources. Consumer services is a collective term which includes information from specific sources such as the Consumers Union, Consumers' Research, consumer booklet publications, magazines such as Good Housekeeping, and public service representatives, whereby a consumer may obtain objective information about a product.

According to Morgan, the most concentrated source of objective

³⁸Morgan, op. cit., p. 120.

³⁹William H. Whyte, Jr., "The Web of Word of Mouth," Fortune, L (November, 1954), 140.

information is found in the publications of Consumers Union and Consumers' Research.⁴⁰ However, it is believed that relatively few consumers use information from either of the publications. Beam and Ewing stated that approximately four per cent of consumers read the publication of Consumers Union, while approximately one per cent read the publication of Consumers' Research. These figures reflect a low percentage of consumers who are consulting these publications for any product information. It is doubtful, therefore, that lower class consumers receive any information from the publications of either agency.⁴¹

Choice of product attributes in consumer use of external search.

Product attributes is a term used, in the context of this study, to indicate product characteristics such as price, quality, performance, and style. A consumer who engages in external search is doing so for the purpose of obtaining information about a product. Ideally, a consumer should seek information from objective sources about the price, quality and performance of a product. The literature indicated that far too many consumers, if they engage in external search at all, are failing to seek the kinds of information most helpful for their well-being. In reiterating the opinion of Gordon and Lee, many consumers have fallen ". . . under the influence of habit, custom, fashion and aggressive selling practices."⁴²

⁴⁰Morgan, op. cit., pp. 123-124.

⁴¹Beam and Ewing, op. cit., p. 115.

⁴²Gordon and Lee, op. cit., p. 11.

Blake made a study which had as its underlying assumption, ". . . one aspect of careful deliberation involved seeking price information. A deliberate buyer compares a product in several price ranges before purchasing." The findings from the study revealed that consumers do not seek sufficient price information before purchasing a product. More than half the respondents, it was found, failed to choose between models in more than one price range, and only fourteen per cent of the respondents compared higher and lower priced models, other than the one which they purchased.⁴³

Morgan believed that the seeking of price information is one of the most important ways a consumer can look after his own well-being in a modern economy. He maintained that one of the most commonly perpetuated frauds practiced against consumers is to make them believe that an item is worth more than it really is worth.⁴⁴

The importance of seeking helpful information is stressed by several writers, one of whom is Oxenfeldt who expresses his opinion in the following statement:

. . . individuals can improve their living standards markedly and quickly by taking advantage of the limited product information available. Extension of product information to new products would be relatively inexpensive and would enlarge the scope for consumer gain through well-informed consumption. The rise of personal living standards obtainable by this means, while not measurable, can scarcely be small.

Providing product quality information to low income recipients almost certainly would contribute to a substantial rise in their living standards at a trivial cost to the community. Although families of low income generally buy inexpensive brands and

⁴³Blake, op. cit., p. 40.

⁴⁴Morgan, op. cit., p. 124.

unbranded merchandise that is low in price, it is doubtful whether they get as much for their money as even the average consumer.⁴⁵

The need for American consumers to become more diligent in their quest for objective product information and especially information regarding the quality of a product, is summed up by Packard in the following statement:

Both from the viewpoint of the consumer and the conscientious producer, it seems highly desirable that the U. S. move toward a return to a passion for quality Ideally, he should develop this resolution as a part of his quest for life satisfaction and feel dissatisfied with himself until he achieves this quality.⁴⁶

INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL CLASS ON CONSUMER USE OF EXTERNAL SEARCH FOR PRODUCT INFORMATION

There are many factors believed to account for the failure of consumers to engage in external search for information sufficient for their own well-being and for the preservation of the free enterprise economic concept. However, one of the most frequently mentioned factors occurring in the literature is the social class of the individual.

As defined by Engel, social classes are, ". . . relatively permanent and homogeneous divisions in society into which individuals or families can be categorized when being compared with other individuals or families in the society."⁴⁷

⁴⁵Oxenfeldt, op. cit., p. 312.

⁴⁶Vance Packard, The Waste Makers (New York: David McKay Company, Inc., 1960), pp. 263-264.

⁴⁷Engel, op. cit., p. 264.

The social class of an individual is considered to be highly important in the study of consumer behavior. Rainwater attests to this fact in the following statement:

. . . Americans at the several levels, . . . respond differently to the several symbol systems of our national life, particularly the media of the masses. The print of newspapers and magazines, the pictures and sounds of TV and radio, and the advertising appeals and meanings of the products that are thus communicated are likely to have different significances for the several class levels.⁴⁸

Martineau stated that:

Even in their fantasies, people are governed by class membership. In his day-dreaming and wishful thinking, the Lower-Status individual will aspire in different patterns from the Middle-Class individual.⁴⁹

Social Class Structure in America

There is no universal agreement, according to Engel, as to the actual number of social classes which exist in America. However, some of the social-class distributions most widely used today are those which were developed by Warner, Hollingshead, and the Social Research Institute of Chicago. Typical of these distributions is the one which was developed by Warner and consists of the following social classes: (1) an upper-upper class, (2) a lower-upper class, (3) an upper-middle class, (4) a lower-middle class, (5) an upper-lower class, and (6) a lower-lower class.⁵⁰

⁴⁸Lee Rainwater and others, Workingman's Wife (New York: Oceana Publications, Inc., 1959), pp. v-vi.

⁴⁹Pierre Martineau, "Social Classes and Spending Behavior," The Journal of Marketing, XXIII (October, 1958), 129.

⁵⁰Engel, op. cit., p. 284.

Measurement of Social Class

According to Engel, there are several methods for estimating the social class position of individuals, namely, the reputational, sociometric, subjective, and objective methods. Most consumer researchers use the objective method for assigning an individual to a particular social class. Using the objective method, respondents are assigned to a social class on the basis of a particular variable or variables. The variables which are more often used with this method are occupation, income, education, and possessions. Objective methods may involve the use of a single variable, called single indexes or the use of several variables, called multiple indexes.⁵¹

In the opinion of Engel, single indexes should be used for estimating social class position of individuals only,

. . . when more complex (and costly) methods are not possible. Occupation - the best single indicator of social class - does not exhaust the relevant dimensions of class. In addition, the occupational structure does not always parallel the social class structure. Nor does income, the amount or type of possessions, residence, or any other single indicator.⁵²

Characteristics of Social Classes

Each social class has its own identifying characteristics which are important in studying consumer behavior. According to Engel, consumers in the upper-upper class spend money in a detached manner, as if it were unimportant. While not documented by research, it is believed

⁵¹ Engel, op. cit., pp. 274-279.

⁵² Ibid., p. 280.

that this class may exert considerable influence in the purchase decisions of the lower classes. The lower-upper classes use products as symbolic of their wealth and are overly conspicuous in their consumption patterns. The upper and lower-middle classes are conspicuous, but appear to be more cautious in their purchase decisions.⁵³

The two lower classes were of particular interest to this study. Consequently, their characteristics and consumption patterns were probed in greater depth. The upper-lower individual is characterized by living a routine life and occupying jobs that require manual labor and a minimum amount of education. It is believed that individuals in this group are prone to buy impulsively when purchasing a product for the first time, yet, in the case of repeated purchases, the same individual is likely to rely heavily on brand names. The individuals who make up the lower-lower social class are considered to be "worthless" individuals and usually live in the "slum" areas of any town or city.⁵⁴

Consumption patterns of the lower classes. Although prosperity disguises the ill-effects of unwise consumption for a large portion of the population, the ill-effects are still there. While inadequate performance seriously affects the well-being of consumers on all social levels, it is believed that the effects are more seriously felt by people in the lower social classes. In making unwise purchase

⁵³Engel, op. cit., pp. 287-293. ⁵⁴Ibid.

decisions, the lower class person is likely to bring economic privations to himself and to his family.

Several studies have been made concerning the actual purchase decisions of lower class consumers. These studies include those made by Caplovitz and Rainwater. No studies were found, however, which investigated the relation of social class to consumer use of external search for product information.

Caplovitz, in studying the purchase decisions of urban people in their role as consumers of major durable goods, found that the poor are subjected to high-powered advertising and salesmen. He also found that merchants who sell to low income families have a captive audience because, in general, these consumers do not meet the economic requirements of consumers in the larger bureaucratic market place. As a result, he believes that merchants are able to sell inferior goods because their customers are not as knowledgeable about price and quality as they should be.⁵⁵

The characteristics and consumption patterns of the lower status individual are best summed up by Engel in the following words:

The lower lower often rejects the standards associated with middle class morality and behavior. He "gets his kicks" whenever he can, and this includes buying impulsively. The lack of planning in his purchases often causes him to adopt inferior decision strategies. He pays too much for products, he buys on credit at a high interest rate, and he does not evaluate the quality of the product in the way that middle-class consumers usually do.

⁵⁵David Caplovitz, The Poor Pay More (London: Collier-Macmillan Limited, 1963), p. 19.

The lower lower is likely to be poorly educated and have a low IQ. Thus, he obtains only limited amounts of information because of the restricted flow of communications addressed to him. He has limited power to think abstractly and thus is attracted to simple, concrete illustrations and symbols.⁵⁶

SUMMARY

The modern economy has placed upon the shoulders of the American consumer important responsibilities. In addition to being concerned about his own well-being, the consumer must, of necessity, protect the free enterprise concept. To assume either of these responsibilities, the consumer must perform adequately in the market place.

Based on a review of literature, it was found that a large and increasing number of persons on all social levels are performing inadequately in the market place. Authorities in the field of consumer behavior believe that inadequate performance is due to the failure of consumers to make proper use of the decision-making process in their purchase decisions. Wise use of the process is largely determined by the extent to which consumers engage in external search for product information, the second stage of the process, when purchasing goods and services.

The literature indicated several factors which may be responsible for inadequate consumer performance in the economy. The social class of an individual was one factor mentioned frequently as a possible cause. Authorities were of the opinion that consumers in

⁵⁶Engel, op. cit., p. 295.

the lower social classes perform with considerably less skill in the economy than consumers in the upper social classes. Consequently, it is believed that inadequate consumer performance is jeopardizing not only the well-being of a large and increasing segment of the population, but it is also placing the concept of the American free enterprise economic system in jeopardy.

CHAPTER 3

PROCEDURE

This research study was developed to investigate the influence of social class upon consumer decision-making behavior in purchasing textiles for the home. Interest in this topic was an outgrowth from observations and readings pertaining to the consumer in relation to the free enterprise economic system. From these observations and readings, it became apparent that American consumers, especially consumers in the lower classes, were inadequately performing their vital and essential roles in the economy. Consequently, a research study was conducted to probe the nature of consumer decision-making behavior in greater depth.

This study was divided into the following five phases:

1. Identification of Objective Information Sources.
2. Selection of the Sample.
3. Construction of the Instrument and Pretesting.
4. Data Collection.
5. Analysis of the Data.

IDENTIFICATION OF OBJECTIVE INFORMATION SOURCES

An investigation was made to identify the sources whereby a consumer living within the city limits of Greensboro, North Carolina can obtain objective information in purchasing textiles for the home. A list of non-commercial information centers, which included schools

and colleges, public libraries, agricultural extension services, and other agencies concerned with consumer welfare, was compiled. Telephone calls were made to each of the centers. Individuals in the centers were asked the question, "Do you provide information to consumers about the buying of textiles for the home?" The information received from the telephone calls was recorded immediately upon completion of the call.

SELECTION OF THE SAMPLE

A random sample of one hundred consumers was drawn from two lower social classes living within the city limits of Greensboro, North Carolina.

Choice of Social Class Distribution

The social class distribution which was selected for use in this study was the distribution developed by Warner. This distribution consists of the following social classes: (1) an upper-upper class, (2) a lower-upper class, (3) an upper-middle class, (4) a lower-middle class, (5) an upper-lower class, and (6) a lower-lower class. On the basis of this distribution, the terms upper-lower and lower-lower were used to identify the individuals used in this study.¹

Choice of Method for Estimating Social Class Position

The social class position of individuals used in this study was

¹W. Lloyd Warner and others, Yankee City (New Haven, Conn: Yale University Press, 1963), p. 43.

determined by an objective method using a multiple-item index. The multiple-item index, called Index of Status Characteristics (ISC), selected for this study was developed by Warner. The Index was comprised of four variables: occupation, source of income, house type, and dwelling area.²

Computation of the Social Class Position of Individuals

Information necessary for the computation of the social class position of consumers used in this study was obtained from the latest Greensboro, North Carolina city directory. Beginning with the first page of the directory and continuing through the directory, computations were made until a sample of one hundred consumers had been obtained, fifty from the upper-lower social class and fifty from the lower-lower social class.

Computations for the social class position of the consumers were made in three different steps as recommended by Warner: (1) making the primary ratings of the four variables which comprised the Index, (2) obtaining a weighted total of the ratings, (3) converting the weighted total into a form indicating social class equivalence.³

Making the primary ratings. The social class position was based on ratings from four variables, occupation, source of income, house

²W. Lloyd Warner and others, Social Class in America (Chicago: Science Research Associates, Inc., 1949), pp. 121-129.

³Ibid.

type and dwelling area. Four separate seven point scales, which ranged from a very high rating of "1" to a very low rating of "7", were used to rate each variable.

The scales which were used to obtain the ratings for the variables are shown in Appendix A.

Securing a weighted total. The obtained rating for each variable was multiplied by a predetermined weight to obtain a single numerical total. When information for each variable was available, the obtained ratings were multiplied by weights of 4, 3, 3, and 2 respectively. Whenever information for any one of the variables was missing, the obtained ratings were multiplied by weights of 5, 4, and 3 respectively. When, however, information was missing for any two of the variables, no computation of social class position was made for that individual.

An example of the weights used for computing the social class position of an individual is shown in Appendix A.

Conversion of weighted totals to social class equivalence. The conversion table used in this study for converting weighted totals to social class equivalence was developed by Warner.⁴ An example of the conversion table is shown in Appendix A.

CONSTRUCTION OF THE INSTRUMENT

Construction of the Questionnaire

The instrument designed to collect the data for this study was a

⁴Warner, pp. 121-129.

questionnaire. Part of the questionnaire employed the use of forced-choice questions and a second part employed the use of dichotomous questions.

Forced-choice questionnaire. The forced-choice questions, referred to as the Method of Paired Comparison, were designed to obtain information from the respondents in regard to their use of external search, such as the sources of information consulted and the choice of product attributes.⁵

An example of the forced-choice questionnaire and the record form are shown in Appendix B.

Dichotomous questionnaire. The dichotomous questions, which had two or more specific response alternatives, were designed to elicit answers from the respondents as to the extent to which they engaged in external search; their desire for additional product information; and their evaluation of purchased household textiles.⁶

An example of the dichotomous questionnaire is shown in Appendix B.

Pretesting

Pretesting was utilized to evaluate the interview technique and the questionnaire. A small random sample of lower class consumers were selected for this purpose. The investigator followed the

⁵Robert S. Woodworth and Harold Schlosberg, Experimental Psychology (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1954), p. 252.

⁶J. Stacy Adams, Interviewing Procedures (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1958), p. 51.

principles of interviewing as outlined by Adams.⁷

DATA COLLECTION

Data were collected for this study through personal interviews from a randomly selected sample of one hundred lower social class consumers living within the city limits of Greensboro, North Carolina. The investigator assumed full responsibility for conducting personally the interviews, and followed the principles of interviewing as outlined by Adams.⁸

PRESENTATION OF DATA

Descriptive and inferential statistics were employed in the treatment of the data collected for this study. Descriptive statistics were used for treatment of the data obtained from the use of the dichotomous questionnaire. The Mann-Whitney U test, a nonparametric inferential statistic, was used in the treatment of the data obtained from the use of the forced-choice questionnaire.⁹ Differences between the two social classes were considered significant at the 0.01 level of probability.

⁷Warner, pp. 12-30.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Sidney Siegel, Nonparametric Statistics (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1956), pp. 116-127.

CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION OF DATA

The results of the study will be presented in four parts:

1. Findings concerning the sample and the interviews.
2. Objective information sources available to the consumer in purchasing household textiles.
3. Information regarding the purchase of household textiles by consumers in two lower social classes.
4. Decision-making behavior between consumers of two lower social classes in the purchase of sheets and carpets.

FINDINGS CONCERNING THE SAMPLE AND THE INTERVIEWS

A random sample of one-hundred consumers, living within the city limits of Greensboro, North Carolina, was drawn for this study, fifty from the upper-lower social class and fifty from the lower-lower social class. The sample was comprised of consumers who lived in the southwestern, southern, eastern and northeastern areas of the city. The sample area closely paralleled the lower-priced housing patterns of the city and in doing so, formed a crescent-shaped pattern.

Data for this study were obtained through personal interviews. To eliminate the possibility of a major source of bias, the investigator assumed full responsibility for the interviews. To prevent the possibility of a high refusal rate, no contact was made with the consumers, either by letter or telephone, prior to the home visit. The

results of the interviews are shown in Table 1. It may be noted that out of a sample of one-hundred consumers, forty-three from the upper-lower class and forty from the lower-lower class, agreed to be interviewed, thus making a total of 83 interviews which were completed.

Eighty-three interviews, from a random sample of one-hundred consumers, were completed. Forty-three of those completed were from the upper-lower social class and forty were from the lower-lower social class. The number of completed interviews may be considered high, if consideration is given to the fact that the sample was based on information from the city directory where an unavoidable time lapse ensues between compilation and publication.

Two reasons, "refusals" and "unable to locate", accounted for 14.0 per cent of the 17.0 per cent of incomplete interviews. The refusal rate was highest in the upper-lower class, while those who "could not be located" were highest in the lower-lower group.

The fact that the city directory was used for drawing the sample may account for the rather high percentage of consumers in the lower-lower class who "could not be located," since this group is generally considered transitory in nature. Based on the cooperative attitude of those interviewed, it may be assumed, however, that could these consumers have been located, more interviews would have been completed.

SOURCES OF OBJECTIVE INFORMATION AVAILABLE TO THE CONSUMER IN PURCHASING HOUSEHOLD TEXTILES

A survey was made of non-commercial information centers which

Table 1

Number and Per Cent of Complete and Incomplete Interviews,
and Reasons for Incomplete Interviews

| Interviews | Social Class | | | | | |
|--|--------------|-----|-------------|-----|-------|-----|
| | Upper-Lower | | Lower-Lower | | Total | |
| | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % |
| Size of Sample | 50 | 100 | 50 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| Complete Interviews | 43 | 86 | 40 | 80 | 83 | 83 |
| Incomplete Interviews | 7 | 14 | 10 | 20 | 17 | 17 |
| <u>Reasons for Incomplete Interviews</u> | | | | | | |
| Refusals | 4 | 8 | 2 | 4 | 6 | 6 |
| Not Home | 1** | 2 | 1** | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Moved-unable to locate | 1* | 2 | 7* | 14 | 8 | 8 |
| Deceased | 1* | 2 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| <u>Reasons for Refusals</u> | | | | | | |
| "Didn't have time" | 1** | 2 | - | - | 1 | 1 |
| Too busy | 1* | 2 | - | - | 1 | 1 |
| Not interested | 1* | 2 | - | - | 1 | 1 |
| Apprehensive | 1* | 2 | - | - | 1 | 1 |
| "Have nothing to do with surveys" | - | - | 1* | 2 | 1 | 1 |
| Out of work | - | - | 1* | 2 | 1 | 1 |

* - initial visit

** - third call-back

included schools and colleges, public libraries, agricultural extension services, and other agencies concerned with consumer welfare. Telephone calls were made to each source and the same question was asked of each contact, "Do you provide information to consumers about the buying of household textiles; specifically, the buying of sheets, towels, table linens, draperies and carpets?"

Four centers offered no information to the consumer in the purchase of household textiles. Two centers provided objective publications which the consumer was at liberty to use, but no information by consultation. Three centers indicated they would be pleased to consult with consumers on an individual basis, preferably by appointment, in regard to the purchase of textiles for the home.

INFORMATION REGARDING THE PURCHASE OF HOUSEHOLD TEXTILES BY CONSUMERS IN TWO LOWER SOCIAL CLASSES

The descriptive data which are presented in this section of the findings were obtained from the interview responses to the dichotomous questionnaire. In some instances, the frequencies are greater than the number of respondents, since multiple answers could be given to some of the questions. The percentages in these instances are based on responses rather than the number of respondents. In other instances, the frequencies were less than the number of respondents, since a "no" answer to the first question determined the frequency of the responses to the remaining questions. The percentages, in these instances, were determined by the answer given on the first question.

Ownership of Household Textiles

In response to the question of household textile ownership, Table 2 shows that household textiles were owned by varying percentages of respondents in both classes. One-hundred per cent of the respondents interviewed owned bed linens and towels. Curtains and draperies were owned by one-hundred per cent of the respondents in the upper-lower class and by almost one-hundred per cent in the lower-lower class. Carpets and rugs were owned by a smaller percentage in both classes, and table linens were owned by fewer respondents than either of the other textile items.

Considering the percentage of ownership, it would appear that bed linens and towels were viewed by both groups as essential items. Furthermore, the cost of these items may have been a factor which made ownership both possible and desired.

Even though curtains and draperies are considered rather expensive items, the high percentage of ownership may indicate that these items were viewed as essential in terms of functionality. It may also indicate a desire on the part of consumers to conform to the custom of "dressing windows", which in turn may reveal an outward expression of artistic decoration.

The cost of carpets and rugs may be the factor which accounted for the smaller number of consumers owning these items. Apparently, consumers in the lower classes classify carpets and rugs as "non-essential" or "luxury" items. As evidenced by the low percentage of ownership, table linens were also considered "non-essential" household

Table 2
Number and Per Cent of Consumers Owning
Household Textiles

| Textile Item | Upper-Lower Social Class (N=43) | | Lower-Lower Social Class (N=40) | |
|---------------------------|---------------------------------------|-------|---------------------------------------|-------|
| | No. | % | No. | % |
| Bed linens | 43 | 100.0 | 40 | 100.0 |
| Table linens | 34 | 79.1 | 16 | 40.0 |
| Towels (Bath and Kitchen) | 43 | 100.0 | 40 | 100.0 |
| Curtains and Draperies | 43 | 100.0 | 37 | 92.5 |
| Carpets and Rugs | 35 | 81.4 | 23 | 57.5 |

textile items.

Frequency of Textile Purchase

The number and per cent of respondents who indicated ownership and who had purchased textiles within the past year are shown in Table 3. During the past year, each textile item had been purchased by a higher percentage of respondents in the upper-lower social class than by those in the lower-lower social class. Bed linens and towels were the two items which had been purchased by a higher number of respondents in the upper-lower social class.

Extent of External Search for Information

The respondents indicating ownership of household textiles were

Table 3
Number and Per Cent of Consumers Who Purchased Household
Textiles Within the Past Year

| Textile Item (N is based on Ownership) | Upper-Lower Social Class | | Lower-Lower Social Class | |
|---|-----------------------------|------|-----------------------------|------|
| | No. | % | No. | % |
| Bed linens | 31 (N=43) | 72.0 | 15 (N=40) | 37.5 |
| Table linens | 13 (N=34) | 38.2 | 1 (N=16) | 6.3 |
| Towels (Bath and Kitchen) | 31 (N=43) | 72.0 | 18 (N=40) | 45.0 |
| Curtains and Draperies | 23 (N=43) | 53.5 | 5 (N=37) | 13.5 |
| Carpets and Rugs | 17 (N=35) | 48.6 | 2 (N=23) | 8.7 |

questioned in regard to the extent to which they had sought information about their purchases. They were asked to indicate whether they had sought "very much," "some," or "very little" information relative to their purchases. The number and per cent of consumers who engaged in external search in varying degrees may be seen in Table 4. Figure 1 shows graphically the extent to which the respondents of the two lower social classes engaged in external search for product information in the purchase of textiles for the home.

The findings from this question indicated that respondents in both classes searched very little for product information pertaining to the purchase of household textiles. However, a greater number of respondents in the upper-lower social class had searched for product

Table 4

Number and Per Cent of the Extent to Which Consumers Engaged in
External Search for Information

| Social Class and Textile Item | Very Much | | Some | | Very Little | |
|----------------------------------|-----------|------|------|------|-------------|------|
| | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % |
| <u>Upper-Lower</u> | | | | | | |
| Bed linens (N=43) | 2 | 4.6 | 22 | 51.6 | 19 | 44.2 |
| Table linens (N=34) | 0 | 0.0 | 8 | 23.5 | 26 | 76.5 |
| Towels (N=43) | 3 | 7.0 | 17 | 39.5 | 23 | 53.5 |
| Curtains and Draperies (N=43) | 5 | 11.6 | 19 | 44.2 | 19 | 44.2 |
| Carpets and Rugs (N=35) | 7 | 20.0 | 16 | 45.7 | 12 | 34.2 |
| <u>Lower-Lower</u> | | | | | | |
| Bed linens (N=40) | 0 | 0.0 | 6 | 15.5 | 34 | 85.0 |
| Table linens (N=16) | 0 | 0.0 | 1 | 6.3 | 15 | 93.7 |
| Towels (N=40) | 0 | 0.0 | 3 | 7.5 | 37 | 92.5 |
| Curtains and Draperies (N=37) | 0 | 0.0 | 8 | 21.6 | 29 | 78.4 |
| Carpets and Rugs (N=23) | 2 | 8.7 | 6 | 26.1 | 15 | 65.2 |

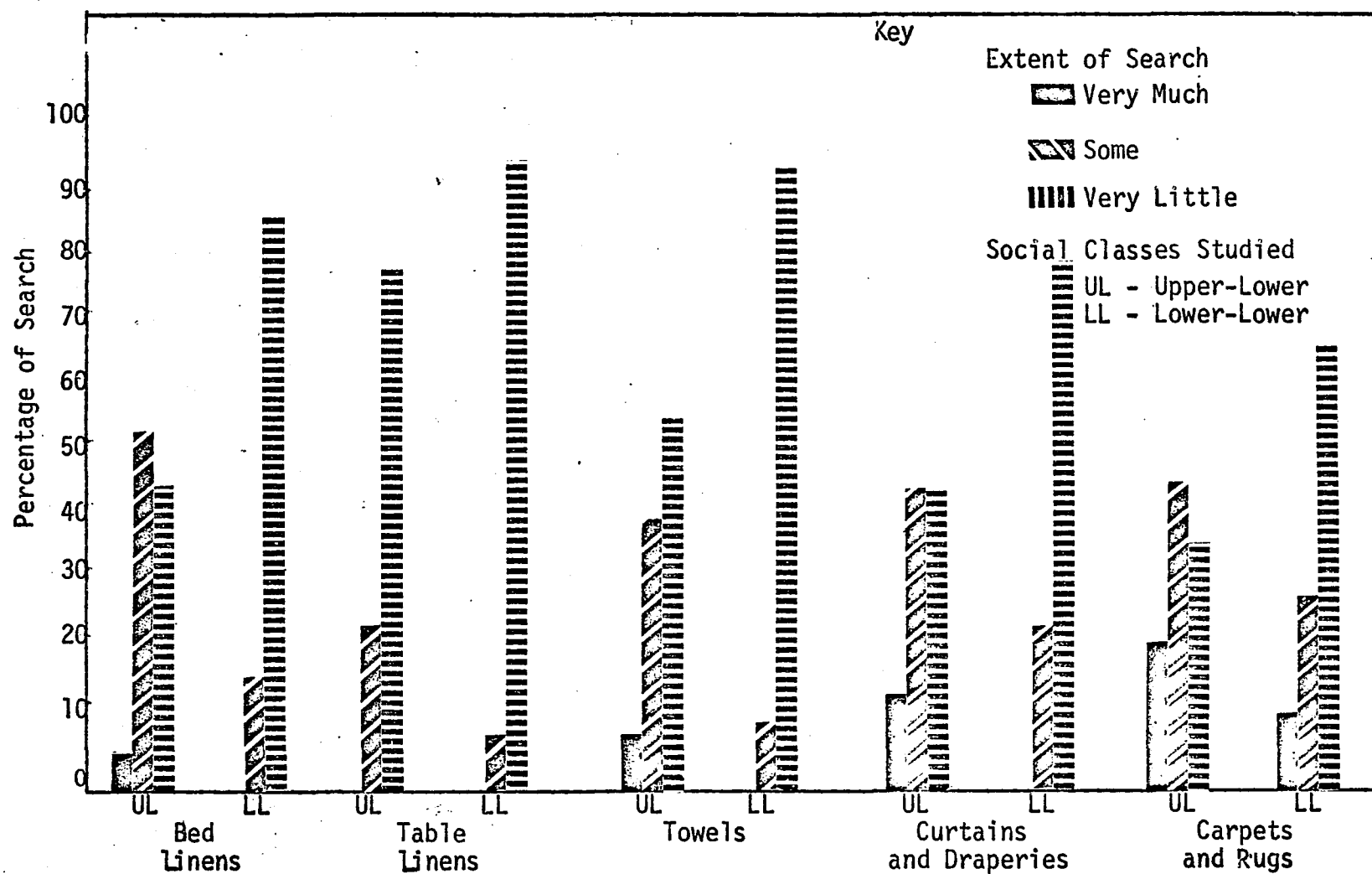


Figure 1
Percentage of the Extent to Which External Search Occurred Among
Consumers of Two Lower Social Classes

information about the purchase of each textile item than had consumers in the lower-lower social class.

Several factors may account for the failure of consumers in the lower classes to engage in extensive search for product information pertaining to household textile purchasing. Many of the consumers may not, (1) realize the value of search; (2) know of the available sources whereby they can obtain objective information; (3) know the kinds of product information to seek; or (4) may have limited facilities, such as the phone or transportation, with which to engage in search.

A trend was noted that the extent of search varied with the cost of the household textile item. In each social class, the extent of search was greatest for carpet and rug purchasing than for the other textile items. What may not be realized by consumers is that savings from many frequently purchased items can often be equal to or greater than savings from the purchase of a single, expensive, infrequently purchased item. Also, the more extensively a consumer engages in search for inexpensive, frequently purchased items, the more adroit he becomes in all of his purchasing.

Sources Desired by Consumers for Additional Information

The respondents were asked if they desired additional information from either friends, advertising, store clerks, consumer services, or "none of these sources". The results of this question are shown in Table 5. The findings from this question indicated that a large number of respondents in both social classes desired no additional information from any source. The fact that the percentage was higher in the lower-

Table 5
Sources Desired by Consumers for Additional Information in
Purchasing Textiles for the Home

| | Advertising | | Friends and Neighbors | | Store Clerks | | Consumer Services | | None of these | |
|---------------------------------|-------------|------|-----------------------|------|--------------|------|-------------------|------|---------------|------|
| | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % |
| <u>Upper-Lower Social Class</u> | | | | | | | | | | |
| Bed linens (N=43) | 5 | 11.7 | 6 | 13.9 | 19 | 44.2 | 4 | 9.3 | 13 | 30.2 |
| Table linens (N=34) | 7 | 20.6 | 4 | 11.8 | 7 | 20.6 | 4 | 11.8 | 14 | 41.2 |
| Towels (N=43) | 4 | 9.3 | 4 | 9.3 | 13 | 30.2 | 6 | 13.9 | 17 | 39.5 |
| Curtains and Draperies (N=43) | 7 | 16.2 | 7 | 16.2 | 16 | 37.2 | 8 | 18.6 | 12 | 28.0 |
| Carpets and Rugs (N=35) | 11 | 31.4 | 5 | 14.3 | 14 | 40.0 | 10 | 28.6 | 7 | 20.0 |
| <u>Lower-Lower Social Class</u> | | | | | | | | | | |
| Bed linens (N=40) | 4 | 10.0 | 5 | 12.5 | 7 | 17.5 | 0 | 0.0 | 26 | 65.0 |
| Table linens (N=16) | 1 | 6.3 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 15 | 93.5 |
| Towels (N=40) | 1 | 2.5 | 3 | 7.5 | 6 | 15.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 32 | 80.0 |
| Curtains and Draperies (N=37) | 4 | 10.8 | 5 | 13.5 | 13 | 35.1 | 1 | 2.7 | 17 | 43.5 |
| Carpets and Rugs (N=23) | 3 | 12.2 | 2 | 8.7 | 14 | 60.9 | 0 | 0.0 | 10 | 43.5 |

lower social class than in the upper-lower social class could possibly indicate an attitude of indifference. It seems highly probable that consumers, especially in the lower-lower social class, do not realize the value of product information.

Of the relatively small number of respondents in both classes who desired additional information, the highest percentage wanted more information from store clerks and fewer respondents wanted information from consumer services. The small percentage in both classes who desired information from consumer services may indicate that the respondents are not fully cognizant of either the availability or the value of this source.

Types of Product Information Desired by Consumers

The respondents were asked to indicate the types of additional information, such as price, quality, quantity, and color, they would like to have in the purchasing of household textiles. The results of this question are shown in Table 6. The data indicated that a large number of consumers in both classes did not want any type of product information, and this percentage was higher in the lower-lower group than in the upper-lower group. Of those who did express a desire for product information, more respondents in the upper-lower social class wanted information about the quality and performance of textiles. A higher percentage of lower-lower respondents wanted information about the price of each household textile.

The fact that a higher percentage of upper-lower social class respondents wanted information about the quality and performance of

Table 6
Types of Product Information Desired by Consumers in
Purchasing Household Textiles

| | Price | | Quality | | Performance | | Style and Color | | None of these | |
|---------------------------------|-------|------|---------|------|-------------|------|-----------------|------|---------------|------|
| | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % |
| <u>Upper-Lower Social Class</u> | | | | | | | | | | |
| Bed linens (N=43) | 4 | 9.3 | 19 | 44.2 | 19 | 44.2 | 1 | 2.3 | 10 | 23.3 |
| Table linens (N=34) | 4 | 11.8 | 17 | 50.0 | 9 | 23.5 | 2 | 5.9 | 13 | 38.2 |
| Towels (N=43) | 5 | 11.7 | 19 | 44.2 | 12 | 28.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 16 | 37.2 |
| Curtains and Draperies (N=43) | 8 | 18.6 | 21 | 48.8 | 17 | 39.5 | 7 | 16.3 | 7 | 16.3 |
| Carpets and Rugs (N=35) | 12 | 34.3 | 19 | 54.3 | 22 | 62.9 | 2 | 5.7 | 6 | 17.1 |
| <u>Lower-Lower Social Class</u> | | | | | | | | | | |
| Bed linens (N=40) | 13 | 32.5 | 7 | 17.5 | 6 | 15.0 | 2 | 5.0 | 22 | 55.0 |
| Table linens (N=16) | 1 | 6.3 | 1 | 6.3 | 1 | 6.3 | 1 | 6.3 | 15 | 93.8 |
| Towels (N=40) | 7 | 17.5 | 1 | 2.5 | 1 | 2.5 | 2 | 5.0 | 30 | 75.0 |
| Curtains and Draperies (N=37) | 15 | 40.5 | 8 | 21.6 | 4 | 10.8 | 5 | 13.5 | 19 | 51.4 |
| Carpets and Rugs (N=23) | 13 | 56.5 | 6 | 26.1 | 3 | 12.2 | 2 | 8.7 | 9 | 39.1 |

household textiles may indicate more economic latitude than was apparent in the lower-lower social group.

Satisfaction of Household Textile Purchases

Respondents were asked to indicate whether they had been satisfied with their household textile purchases. Table 7 shows that a high percentage of consumers in both social classes expressed satisfaction with their household textile purchases.

One-hundred per cent of the upper-lower social class respondents indicated they were satisfied with their purchases of table linens and towels; over ninety per cent were satisfied with their purchase of bed linens and curtains and draperies. A smaller percentage of respondents expressed satisfaction with the purchasing of carpets and rugs than in the purchasing of other items.

In the lower-lower social class, one-hundred per cent of the respondents expressed satisfaction with the purchasing of bed linens, towels, curtains and draperies; 95.7 per cent were satisfied with their purchase of carpets and rugs; and 93.8 per cent were satisfied with their purchase of table linens.

DECISION-MAKING BEHAVIOR OF CONSUMERS OF TWO LOWER SOCIAL CLASSES IN THE PURCHASE OF SHEETS AND CARPETS

The inferential data which is presented in this section of the findings were obtained from the forced-choice questionnaire, and were analyzed by the Mann-Whitney U Test statistic. The formulas used with this statistic were those suggested by Siegel¹ for large samples (when

¹Sidney Siegel, Nonparametric Statistics (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1956), pp. 120-126.

Table 7

Number and Per Cent of Consumers Who Were Satisfied
with Their Household Textile Purchase

| Textile Item | Upper-Lower Social Class | | Lower-Lower Social Class | |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|-------|--------------------------|-------|
| | No. | % | No. | % |
| Bed linens | 42 (N=43) | 97.8 | 40 (N=40) | 100.0 |
| Table linens | 34 (N=34) | 100.0 | 15 (N=16) | 93.8 |
| Towels (Bath and Kitchen) | 43 (N=43) | 100.0 | 40 (N=40) | 100.0 |
| Curtains and Draperies | 39 (N=43) | 90.7 | 37 (N=37) | 100.0 |
| Carpets and Rugs | 24 (N=35) | 68.6 | 22 (N=23) | 95.7 |

n_2 is larger than 20) and are shown as follows:

$$1) U = n_1 n_2 + \frac{n_1 (n_1 + 1) - R_1}{2}$$

$$2) \sum T = \frac{t^3 - t}{12}$$

$$U = \frac{n_1 n_2}{2}$$

$$3) Z = \frac{\sqrt{\left(\frac{n_1 n_2}{N(N-1)}\right) \left(\frac{N^3 - N}{12} - \sum T\right)}$$

Because of the large number of tied observations involving both groups, it was necessary to find the $\sum T$ (sum of tied observations).

This decision was based on Siegel's recommendation that,

If the ties occur between two or more observations in the same group, the value of U is not affected. But if the ties occur between two or more observations involving both groups, the value of U is affected.²

The decision-making behavior between consumers of two lower social classes was studied in relation to the purchasing of two household textile items, sheets and carpets. These two items were chosen because they represent extremes in functionality as well as initial cost.

The statistical data were obtained through the use of the forced-choice questionnaire, called the method of Paired Comparison. In using

²Ibid., p. 124.

this method, each specimen under investigation was paired with every other one, and the number of pairs was $n(n-1)/2$. The respondent was instructed to choose one specimen from each pair which afforded the c score (choice score). Each c score indicated how many times the respondent had chosen a particular specimen. The p score (per cent score) was obtained by dividing each c score by $(n - 1)$ or $p = c/(n-1)$.³ Table 8 shows the relative strength in percentage of sources of information consulted and product attributes chosen in the purchase of sheets and carpets. Table 9 shows the relative strength in percentage of the relationship of product attributes to sources of information consulted in purchasing sheets.

Sources of Information Consulted in the Purchase of Sheets

Four sources - advertising, friends and neighbors, store clerks, and consumer services - were investigated. Respondents were asked to indicate which of these sources they had consulted in the purchase of sheets. The statistical results are shown in Table 10. The relative strength shown in percentage of the sources of information consulted by lower class consumers in the purchase of sheets is shown in Figure 2.

Significant differences, at the 0.01 level of probability, were noted between consumers of the lower classes in their use of friends and neighbors, and store clerks as sources of information in purchasing

³Robert S. Woodworth and Harold Schlosberg, Experimental Psychology (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1954), pp. 252-254.

Table 8

Relative Strength Shown in Percentage of Sources of Information
 Consulted and Product Attributes Chosen in the
 Purchase of Sheets and Carpets

| Sources Consulted and Products Attributes Chosen | Social Class | | | |
|---|--------------|---------|-------------|---------|
| | Upper-Lower | | Lower-Lower | |
| | Sheets | Carpets | Sheets | Carpets |
| | (Per Cent) | | | |
| <u>Sources</u> | | | | |
| Advertising | 74.4 | 61.0 | 70.8 | 66.7 |
| Friends and Neighbors | 65.1 | 54.3 | 85.8 | 58.0 |
| Store Clerks | 55.0 | 55.2 | 44.2 | 58.0 |
| Consumer Services | 5.4 | 17.1 | 0.8 | 0.0 |
| <u>Product Attributes</u> | | | | |
| Price | 25.6 | 34.3 | 61.7 | 75.4 |
| Quality | 83.0 | 65.8 | 50.8 | 47.8 |
| Performance | 60.5 | 59.1 | 30.8 | 40.6 |
| Style and Color | 29.5 | 41.0 | 57.5 | 33.3 |

Table 9
 Relative Strength Shown in Percentage of the Relationship of
 Product Attributes to Sources of Information
 Consulted in Purchasing Sheets

| Product Attributes and Sources of Information | Social Class | |
|---|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| | Upper-Lower Per Cent | Lower-Lower Per Cent |
| <u>Advertising</u> | | |
| Price | 44.2 | 70.8 |
| Quality | 71.3 | 45.0 |
| Performance | 58.1 | 20.8 |
| Style and Color | 26.4 | 63.3 |
| <u>Friends and Neighbors</u> | | |
| Price | 35.7 | 68.3 |
| Quality | 72.1 | 45.0 |
| Performance | 66.7 | 30.8 |
| Style and Color | 24.0 | 55.8 |
| <u>Store Clerks</u> | | |
| Price | 38.8 | 65.0 |
| Quality | 72.1 | 62.5 |
| Performance | 63.6 | 40.8 |
| Style and Color | 26.4 | 53.3 |
| <u>Consumer Services</u> | | |
| Price | 34.9 | 42.5 |
| Quality | 79.1 | 51.7 |
| Performance | 67.4 | 52.5 |
| Style and Color | 17.8 | 53.3 |

Table 10
Sources of Information Consulted in Purchasing Sheets

| Sources | Z Score | Associated Probability ^a |
|-----------------------|------------|--|
| Advertising | 0.86 | 0.1949 |
| Friends and Neighbors | -3.73 | 0.00011* |
| Store Clerks | 3.67 | 0.00016* |
| Consumer Services | 0.82 | 0.2061 |

*Significant at the 0.01 level

^aThe Associated Probability for any Z Score above 4.0 is based on a Z Score of 4.0

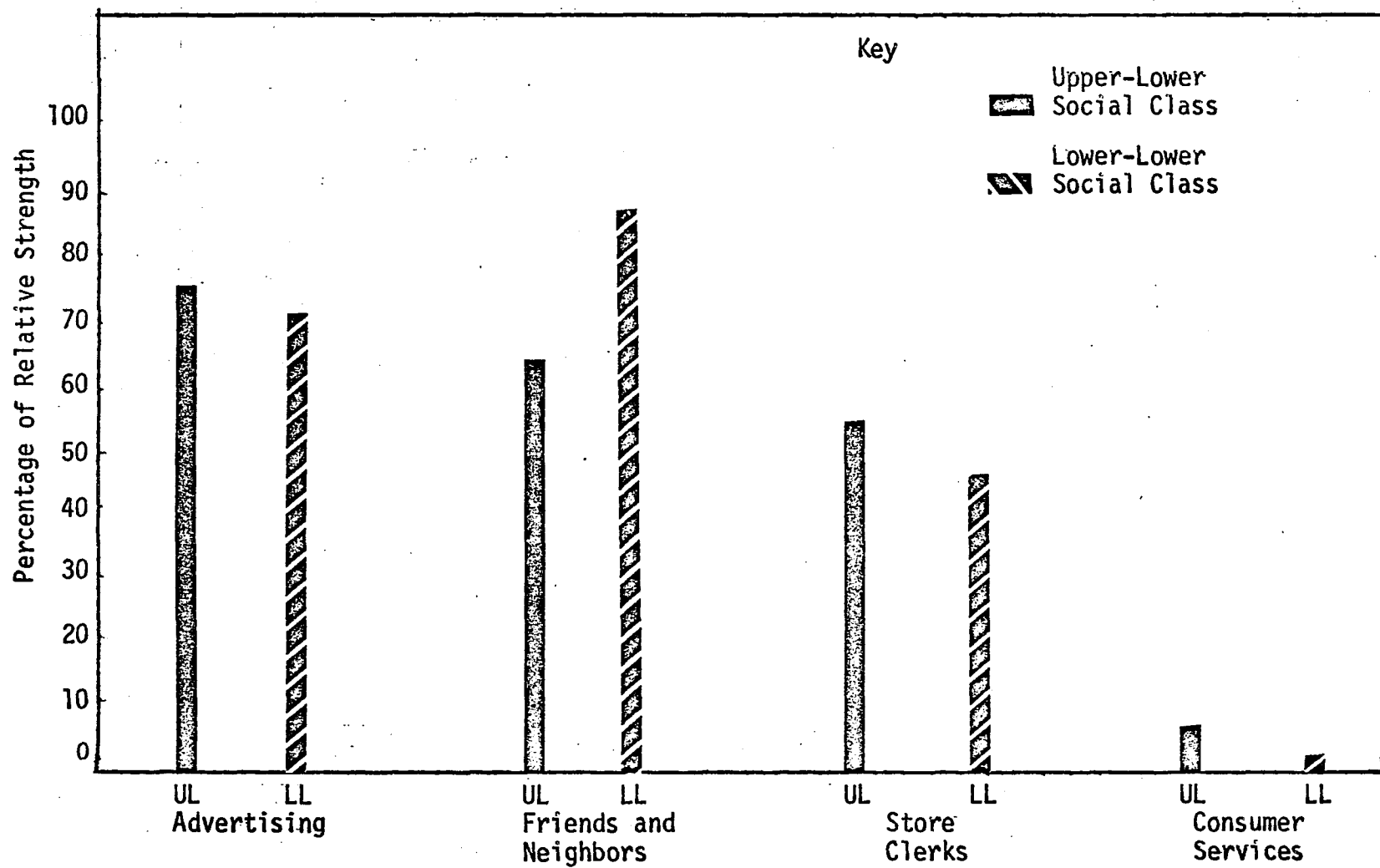


Figure 2

Relative Strength Shown in Percentage of the Sources of Information Consulted
by Lower Class Consumers in the Purchase of Sheets

sheets. More respondents in the upper-lower social class sought information from store clerks; whereas, more respondents in the lower-lower social class sought information from friends and neighbors.

No significant differences were noted between consumers in the lower classes in their use of advertising and consumer services. In both classes, a high percentage sought information from advertising and a small percentage sought information from consumer services.

The use of friends and neighbors as a source of information by the lower-lower respondent in purchasing sheets, may reflect limited resources and limited transportation facilities, thus necessitating the use of a source in closest proximity. Also, it may indicate that their purchases are being made in the market place where few clerks are employed, such as discount houses.

The use of store clerks as a source of information by the upper-lower respondents in the purchase of sheets may indicate some degree of economic latitude, and transportation facilities. It may also indicate that their purchases are being made in the market place where clerks are employed, such as established department stores.

Product Attributes Chosen by Consumers in the Purchase of Sheets

Four product attributes—price, quality, performance, style and color—were investigated. The respondents were asked to indicate which of these product attributes they had sought information about in the purchase of sheets. The statistical results are shown in Table 11. The relative strength shown in percentage of product attributes chosen by lower class consumers seeking information in the purchase of sheets is

Table 11

Product Attributes Chosen in Purchasing Sheets

| Product Attributes | Z Score | Associated Probability ^a |
|--------------------|------------|--|
| Price | -5.58 | 0.00003* |
| Quality | 5.37 | 0.00003* |
| Performance | 3.38 | 0.00005* |
| Style and Color | 4.26 | 0.00003* |

*Significant at the 0.01 level

^aThe Associated Probability for any Z Score above 4.0 is based on a Z Score of 4.0

shown in Figure 3.

Significant differences, at the 0.01 level of probability, were noted between the consumers of the lower classes in their choice of each product attribute, price, quality, performance, style and color. The upper-lower class respondents sought information about the quality and performance of sheets. This fact seems to reflect some degree of shopping sophistication based on economic latitude.

The lower-lower class respondents sought information about the price, style and color of sheets. The concern over price on the part of these consumers may reflect a narrow economic latitude. The pre-occupation with the style and color of sheets is contrary to good buymanship, in the purchase of some items. Yet, this fact may reflect a desire of these consumers to add a little "zest" to an otherwise drab existence. Too, it may reveal a lack of resistance to advertising display since color has become an important factor in the selling of sheets.

Relation of Product Attributes to Sources of Information Consulted in the Purchase of Sheets

Using the same sources and product attributes with the forced-choice questionnaire, the respondents were asked to indicate the product attributes they would choose when using various sources of information in the purchase of sheets.

Advertising. Differences between the two social classes, in their choice of product attributes, price, quality, performance, style and color, when using advertising as a source of information, were all

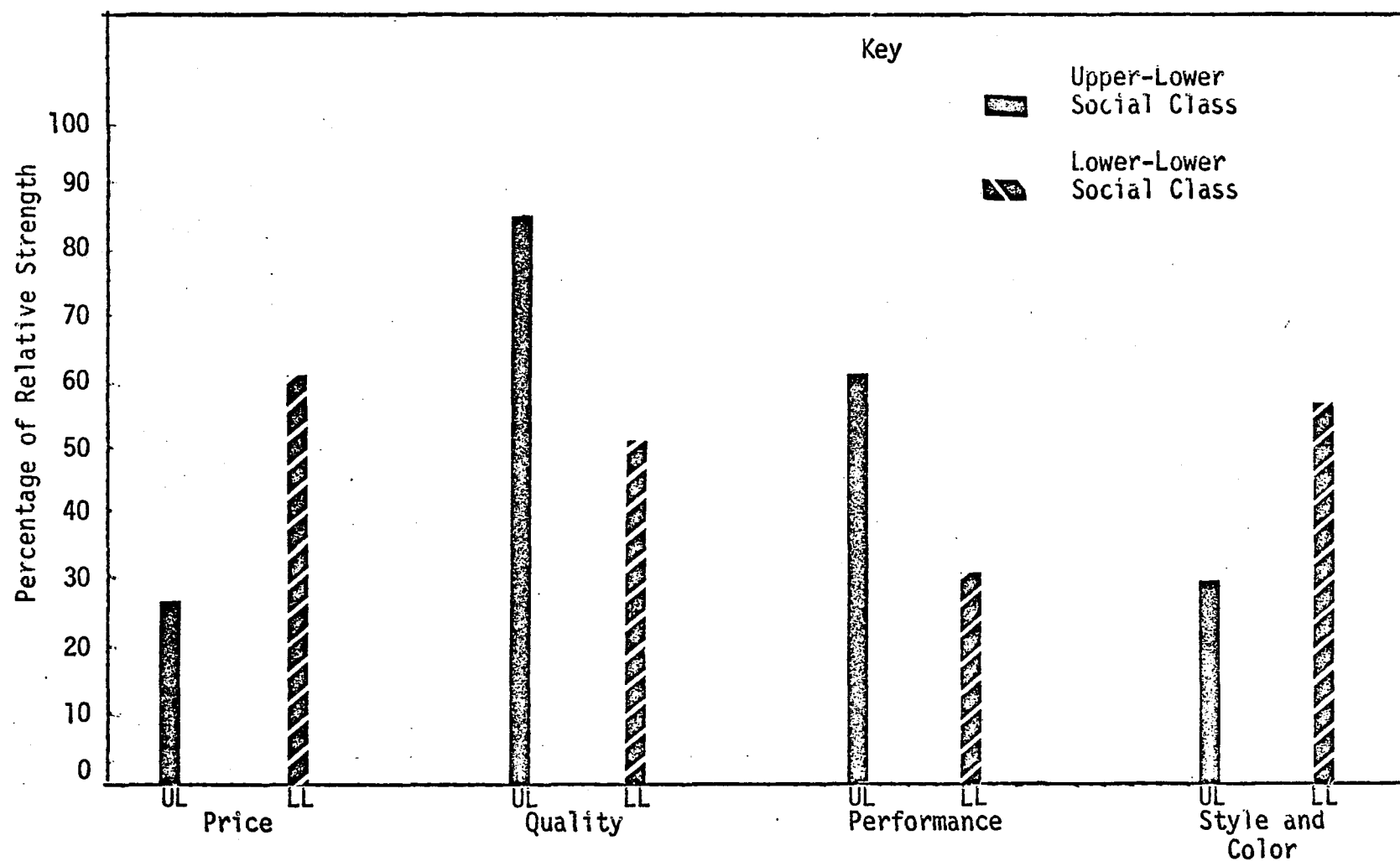


Figure 3

Relative Strength Shown in Percentage of the Product Attributes Chosen by Lower Class Consumers Seeking Information in the Purchase of Sheets

found to be significant at the 0.01 level of probability. The statistical results are shown in Table 12. Figure 4 shows the relative strength expressed in percentage of the product attributes chosen by lower class consumers seeking information from advertising in the purchase of sheets.

Table 12
Relation of Product Attributes to Advertising as a
Source of Information

| Product Attributes | Z Score | Associated Probability ^a |
|--------------------|------------|--|
| Price | -4.33 | 0.00003* |
| Quality | 4.91 | 0.00003* |
| Performance | 5.42 | 0.00003* |
| Style and Color | -6.39 | 0.00003* |

*Significant at the 0.01 level

^aThe Associated Probability for any Z Score above 4.0 is based on a Z Score of 4.0

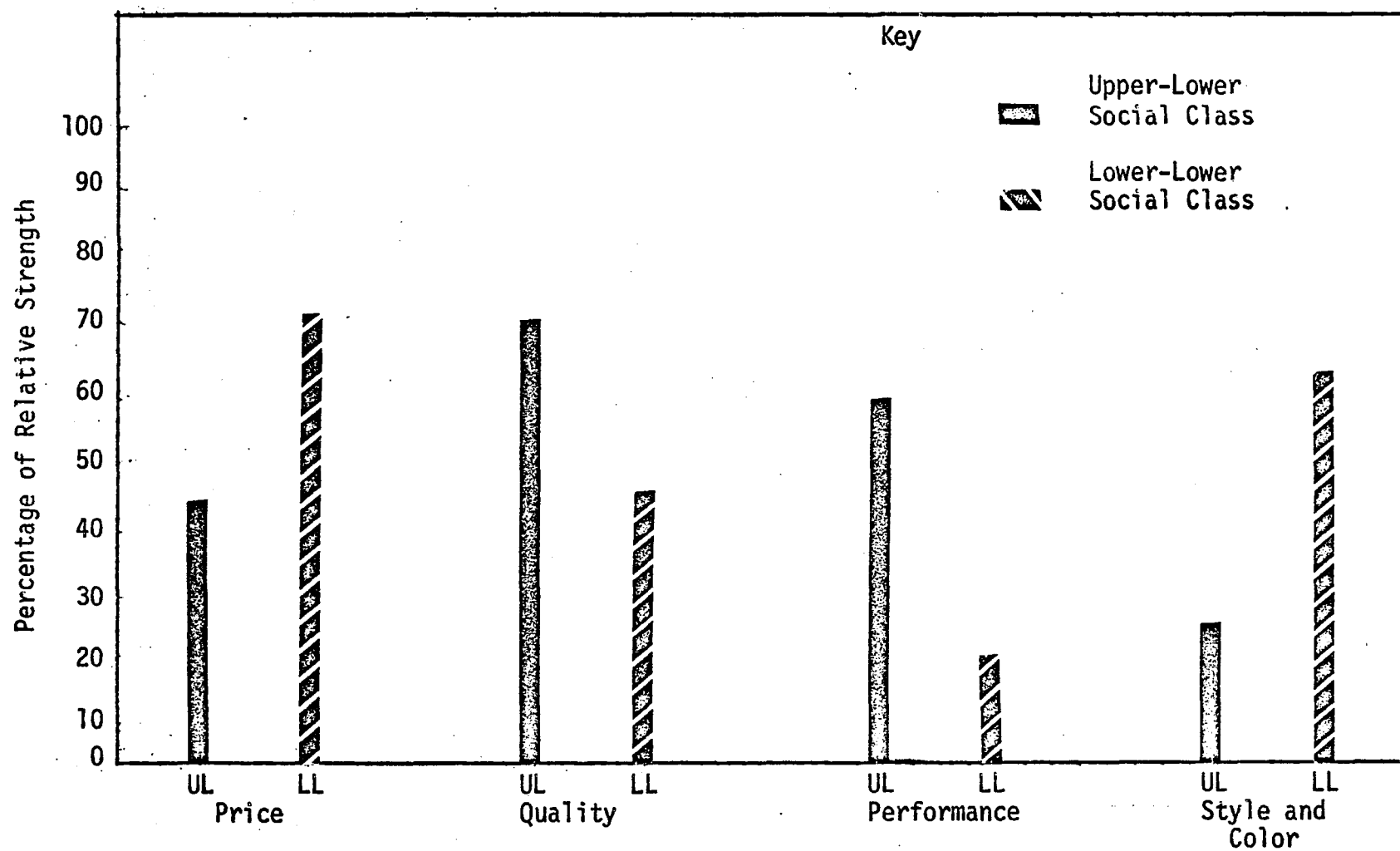


Figure 4

Relative Strength Shown in Percentage of the Product Attributes Chosen by Lower Class
Consumers Seeking Information from Advertising in the Purchase of Sheets

Friends and Neighbors. Differences between the two social classes, in their choice of product attributes, price, quality, performance, style and color, when using friends as a source of information, were all found to be significant at the 0.01 level of probability. Table 13 shows the statistical results. Figure 5 shows the relative strength expressed in percentage of the product attributes chosen by lower class consumers seeking information from friends and neighbors in the purchase of sheets.

Table 13
Relation of Product Attributes to Friends and Neighbors as
a Source of Information

| Product Attributes | Z Score | Associated Probability ^a |
|--------------------|------------|--|
| Price | -5.58 | 0.00003* |
| Quality | 4.41 | 0.00003* |
| Performance | 5.91 | 0.00003* |
| Style and Color | -5.41 | 0.00003* |

*Significant at the 0.01 level

^aThe Associated Probability for any Z Score above 4.0 is based on a Z Score of 4.0

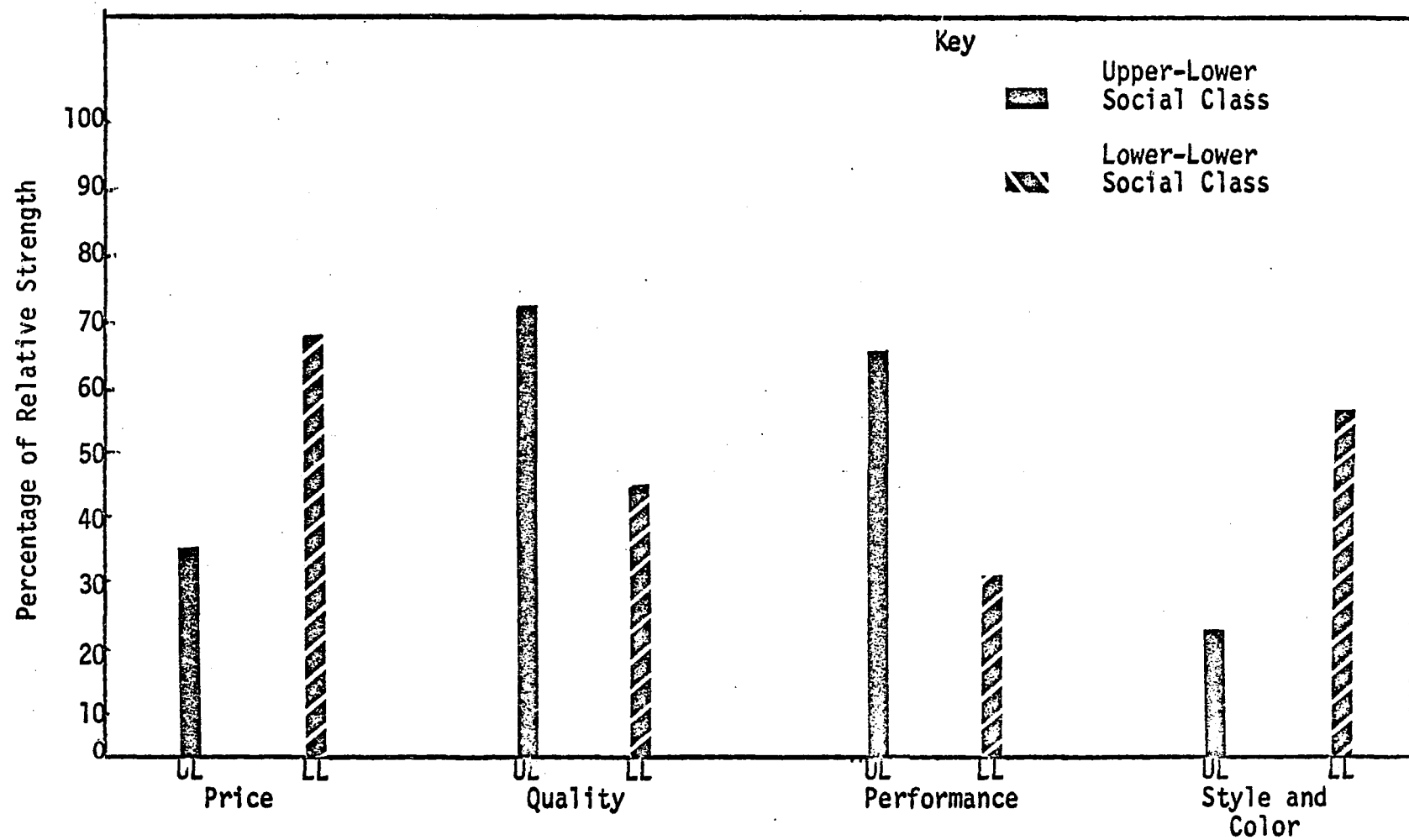


Figure 5

Relative Strength Shown in Percentage of the Product Attributes Chosen by Lower Class Consumers Seeking Information from Friends and Neighbors in the Purchase of Sheets

Store clerks. Differences between the two social classes, in their choice of product attributes, price, quality, performance, style and color, when using store clerks as a source of information, were all found to be significant at the 0.01 level of probability. The statistical results are shown in Table 14. The relative strength expressed in percentage of the product attributes chosen by lower class consumers seeking information from store clerks in the purchase of sheets is shown in Figure 6.

Table 14

Relation of Product Attributes to Store Clerks
as a Source of Information

| Product Attributes | Z Score | Associated Probability ^a |
|--------------------|---------|-------------------------------------|
| Price | -5.34 | 0.00003* |
| Quality | 3.95 | 0.00005* |
| Performance | 4.55 | 0.00003* |
| Style and Color | -5.56 | 0.00003* |

*Significant at the 0.01 level

^aThe Associated Probability for any Z Score above 4.0 is based on a Z Score of 4.0

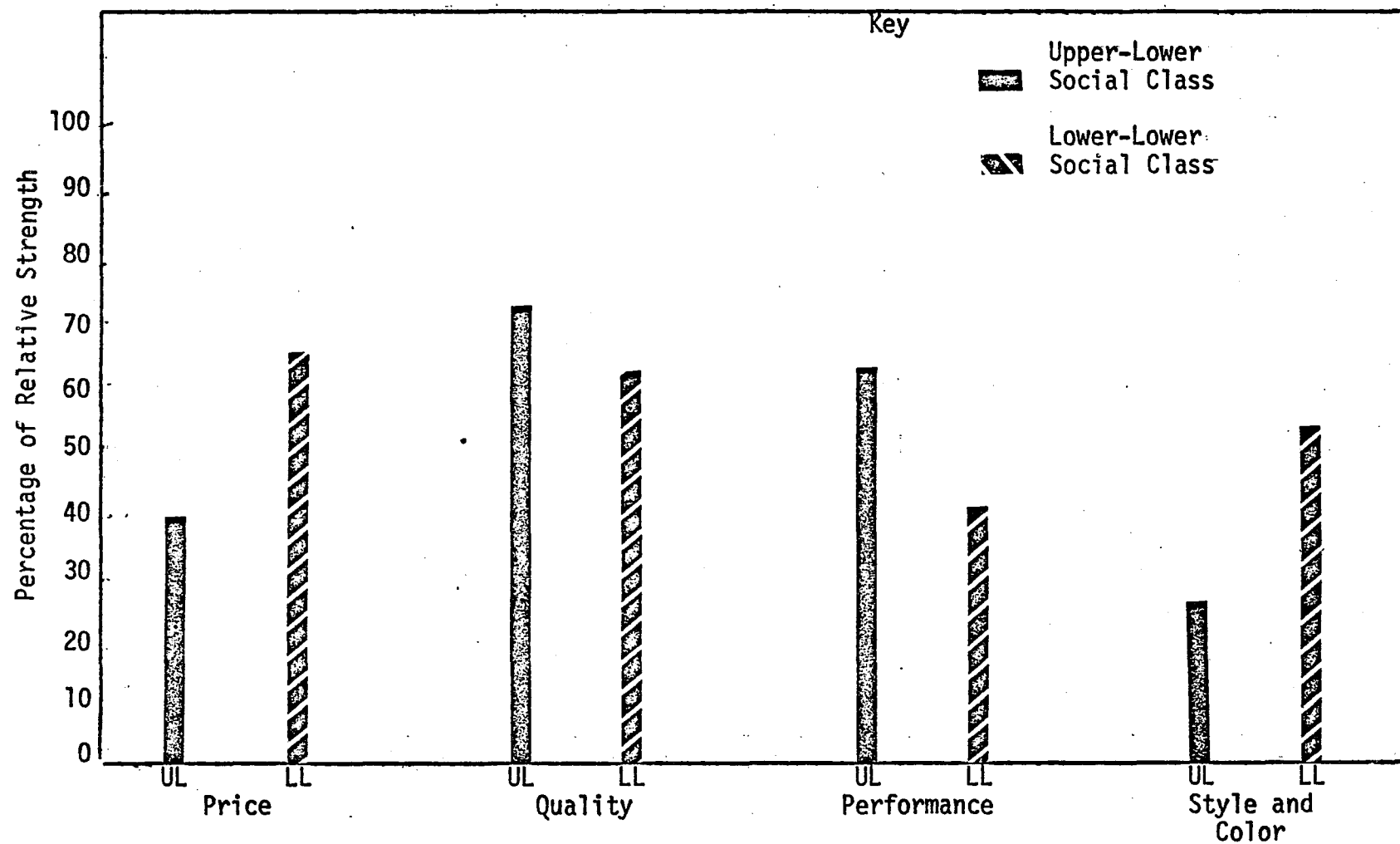


Figure 6

Relative Strength Shown in Percentage of the Product Attributes Chosen by Lower Class Consumers Seeking Information from Store Clerks in the Purchase of Sheets

Consumer services. Differences between the two social classes, in their choice of product attributes, quality, performance, style and color, when using consumer services as a source of information, were each found to be significant at the 0.01 level of probability. Table 15 shows the statistical results. Figure 7 shows graphically the relative strength expressed in percentage of the product attributes chosen by lower class consumers seeking information from consumer services in the purchase of sheets.

Table 15
Relation of Product Attributes to Consumer
Services as a Source of Information

| Product Attributes | Z Score | Associated Probability ^a |
|--------------------|---------|-------------------------------------|
| Price | -1.90 | 0.0287 |
| Quality | 3.98 | 0.00005* |
| Performance | 2.97 | 0.0015* |
| Style and Color | -6.23 | 0.00003* |

*Significant at the 0.01 level

^aThe Associated Probability for any Z Score above 4.0 is based on a Z Score of 4.0

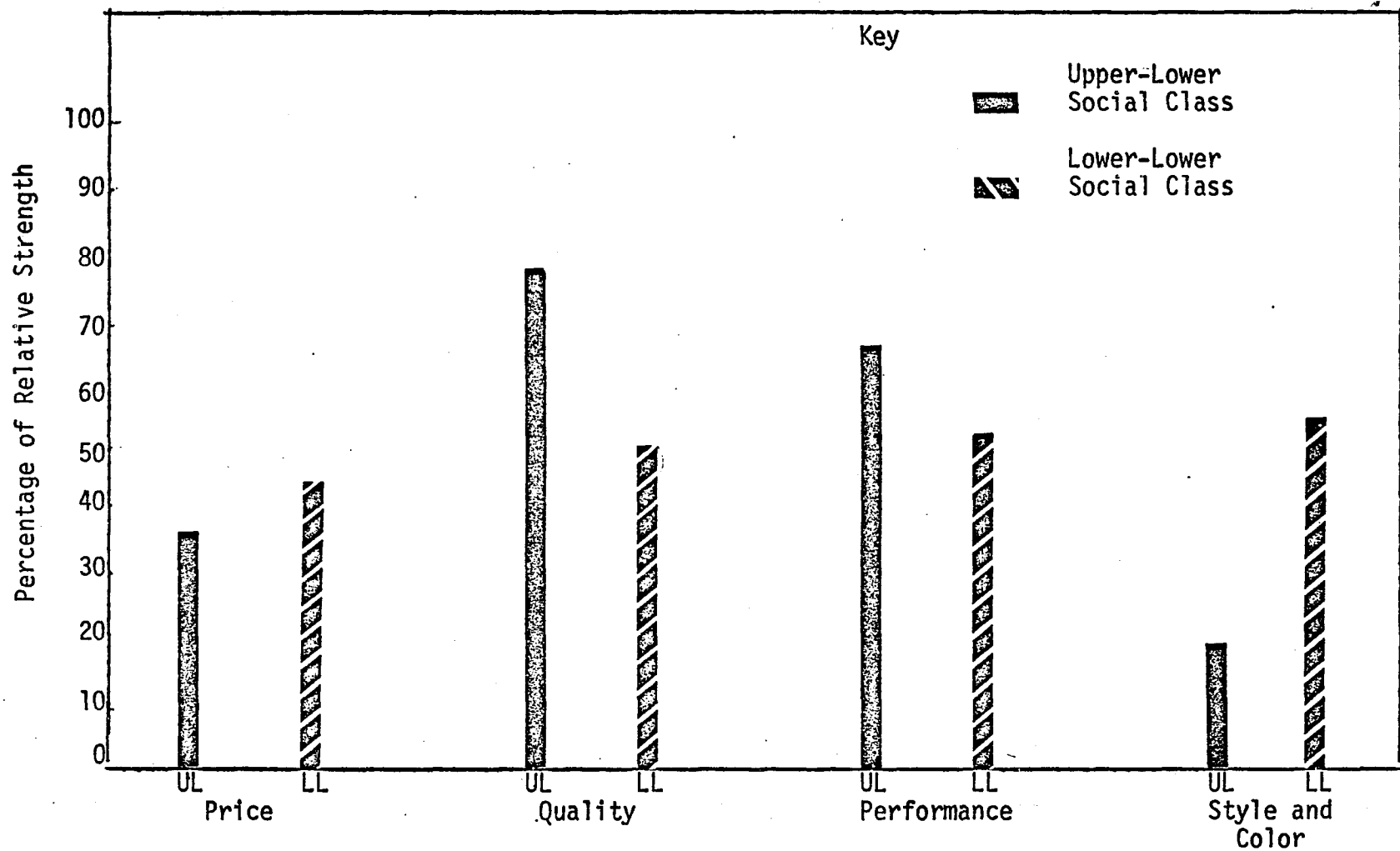


Figure 7

Relative Strength Shown in Percentage of the Product Attributes Chosen by Lower Class Consumers Seeking Information from Consumer Services in the Purchase of Sheets

Summarization of the Relation of Product Attributes to Sources of Information

Significant differences, at the 0.01 level of probability were noted for each of the product attributes whether the respondent was using advertising, friends and neighbors, or store clerks, as sources of information in purchasing sheets. The upper-lower social class respondents were concerned with information about the quality and performance of sheets from each of the three sources, while the lower-lower social class respondents were concerned with information about the price, style and color from these same three sources. The same reasons as previously cited may be attributed to their choice of product attributes when using various sources to obtain information.

In using consumer services as a source of information, significant differences between the two social groups, at the 0.01 level of probability, were found in their choice of three product attributes, quality, performance, style and color, but no significance in the choice of the fourth attribute, price. The upper-lower group was concerned with information about the quality and performance of sheets, and the lower-lower group was concerned with style and color information about sheets from this source. Both groups were concerned with information about the price of sheets from this source.

From the findings of this question, it appears that the source of information does not have any influence on the product attributes chosen by the respondents. Respondents in the upper-lower social class primarily wanted information about the quality and performance of sheets

regardless of source, while the lower-lower social class respondents primarily wanted information about the price, and the style and color of sheets regardless of the source.

Sources of Information Consulted in the Purchase of Carpets

Differences between the two social groups, in their use of consumer services, as a source of information, were found to be significant at the 0.01 level of probability. Statistical results are shown in Table 16. The relative strength expressed in percentage of the source of information consulted by lower class consumers in the purchase of carpets is shown graphically in Figure 8.

Table 16

Sources of Information Consulted in Purchasing Carpets

| Sources | Z Score | Associated Probability ^a |
|-----------------------|---------|-------------------------------------|
| Advertising | -0.81 | 0.2090 |
| Friends and Neighbors | -1.56 | 0.0594 |
| Store Clerks | -0.28 | 0.3897 |
| Consumer Services | 2.78 | 0.0027* |

*Significant at the 0.01 level

^aThe Associated Probability for any Z Score above 4.0 is based on a Z Score of 4.0

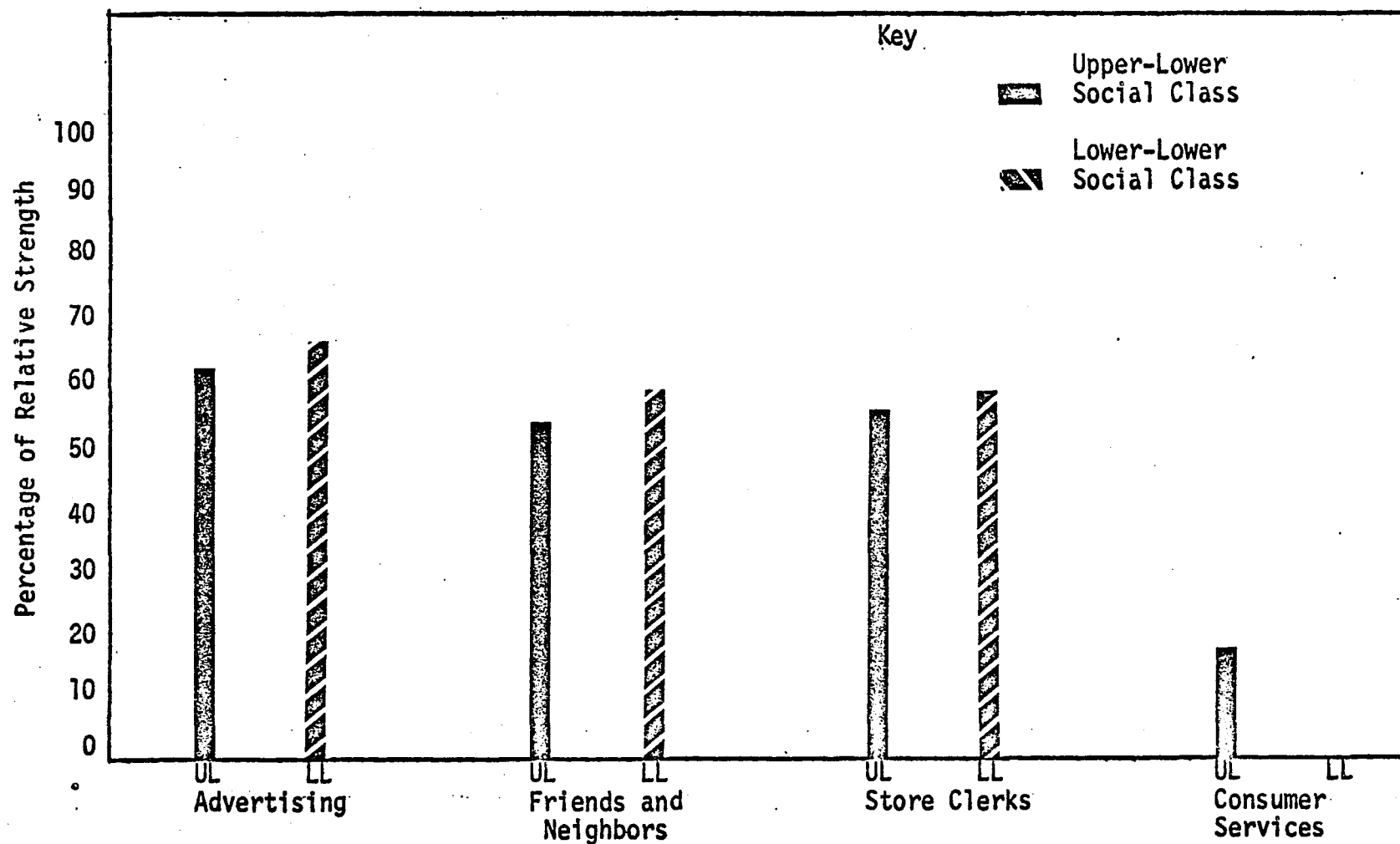


Figure 8

Relative Strength Shown in Percentage of the Sources of Information Consulted by Lower Class

Consumers in the Purchase of Carpets

More respondents in the upper-lower social class sought information from consumer services than did those in the lower-lower social class. No significant differences were found between consumers in the use of advertising, friends and neighbors, and store clerks as sources of information in purchasing carpets.

Apparently, the fact that upper-lower respondents used consumer services in purchasing carpets may have indicated that the cost of the item warranted a search for unbiased information. Furthermore, they may have perceived a greater amount of risk in making an unwise decision by failing to learn everything they could about carpets.

Since respondents in both groups used each of the sources, advertising, friends and neighbors, and store clerks in purchasing carpets, this fact indicated that the extent of search increased as the cost of the textile item increased.

Product Attributes Chosen by Consumers in the Purchase of Carpets

Differences between the two social classes, in their choice of product attributes, price, quality, and performance were each found to be significant at the 0.01 level of probability. No significance between the two classes was found in the choice of fourth attribute, style and color. Statistical results are shown in Table 17. The relative strength expressed in percentage of the product attributes chosen by lower class consumers seeking information in the purchase of carpets is shown graphically in Figure 9.

Table 17
Product Attributes Chosen in Purchasing Carpets

| Product Attributes | Z Score | Associated Probability ^a |
|--------------------|---------|-------------------------------------|
| Price | -6.16 | 0.00003* |
| Quality | 2.86 | 0.0021 * |
| Performance | 3.54 | 0.00023* |
| Style and Color | 1.42 | 0.0778 |

*Significant at the 0.01 level

^aThe Associated Probability for any Z Score above 4.0 is based on a Z Score of 4.0

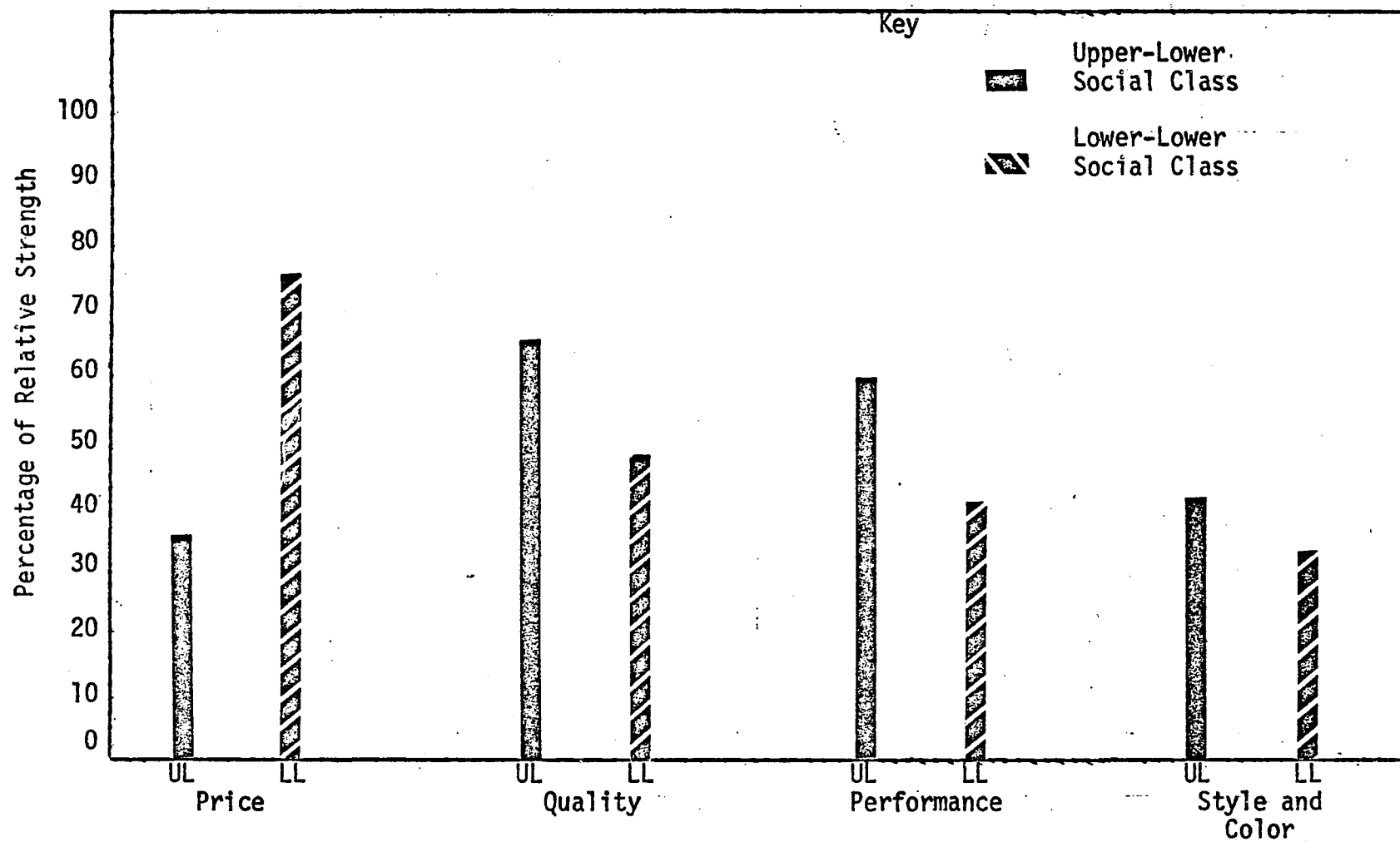


Figure 9

Relative Strength Shown in Percentage of the Product Attributes Chosen by Lower Class Consumers Seeking Information in the Purchase of Carpets

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This investigation was an outgrowth of an interest aroused by readings and observations pertaining to the consumer in relation to the free enterprise economic system. From these observations and readings, it was apparent that a large and increasing number of consumers, especially consumers in the lower social classes, were placing both their own well-being and the survival of the free enterprise concept in jeopardy by performing inadequately in the economic system.

The present study, therefore, was designed to investigate consumer performance in the free enterprise economic system. Specifically, it was designed to investigate the influence of social class on consumer decision-making behavior in purchasing textiles for the home. The study was divided into the following four phases:

1. The sample and the interviews.
2. Sources of objective information available to the consumer in purchasing household textiles.
3. Information regarding the general nature of household textile purchasing by consumers in two lower social classes.
4. Decision-making behavior between consumers of two lower social classes in the purchase of sheets and carpets.

The summary and conclusions are presented for each of the four phases of the study.

The Sample and the Interviews

From a random sample of one-hundred consumers, fifty from the upper-lower social class and fifty from the lower-lower social class, eighty-three agreed to personal interviews for the collection of the data for this study. Forty-three of the respondents were from the upper-lower social class and forty were from the lower-lower social class.

Two reasons, "refusals" and "unable to locate" accounted for 14.0 per cent of the 17.0 per cent of the incomplete interviews. The percentage of "refusals" was higher in the upper-lower social class than in the lower-lower social class, while the percentage of those who "could not be located" was higher in the lower-lower social class. No definite trend or pattern was noted in the reasons given by the consumers for their unwillingness to be interviewed.

From the results of the interviews, it may be concluded that respondents in both social classes were cooperative, congenial and eager to be of assistance in acquiring the data for this study.

Identification of Objective Information Sources

A survey was made of non-commercial information centers which included schools and colleges, public libraries, agricultural extension services, and other agencies concerned with consumer welfare. Telephone calls were made to each source and the same question was asked of each contact, "Do you provide information to consumers about the buying of household textiles; specifically, the buying of sheets, towels, table linens, draperies and carpets?"

Four centers offered no information to the consumer in the purchase of household textiles. Two centers provided objective publications which the consumer was at liberty to use, but no information by consultation. Three centers indicated they would be pleased to consult with consumers on an individual basis, preferably by appointment, in regard to the purchase of textiles for the home.

Two conclusions may be drawn from the results of this small survey: (1) a limited number of objective sources are available to the consumer in purchasing household textiles, (2) the consumer must assume the full responsibility for seeking out the available sources, and of availing himself to the source once it is located.

Information Regarding the General Nature of Household Textile Purchasing by Consumers in Two Lower Social Classes

The purpose of the dichotomous questionnaire was to obtain information pertaining to the general nature of household textile purchasing; specifically, bed linens, table linens, towels, curtains, draperies, and carpets and rugs.

Ownership of household textiles. In answer to this question, it was found that each household textile item was owned by varying percentages of consumers in both classes. One-hundred per cent of the respondents interviewed owned bed linens and towels. Curtains and draperies were owned by one-hundred per cent of the respondents in the upper-lower social class and slightly fewer than one-hundred per cent in the lower-lower social class. Carpets and rugs were owned by a smaller percentage of respondents in both classes, but the percentage

of ownership was higher in the upper-lower social class than in the lower-lower social class. In both classes, however, table linens were owned by fewer respondents than either of the other textile items.

It was evident from the findings of this question that household textile ownership was higher in the upper-lower social class than in the lower-lower social class. Two items, bed linens and towels were owned by one-hundred per cent of the respondents. Furthermore, it was found that as the cost of the item increased, the percentage of ownership decreased. Also, as the functionality of the household item decreased, percentage of ownership decreased, as evidenced by the number of respondents owning table linens.

Frequency of household textile purchasing. It is an accepted principle of good buymanship that all purchasing should be planned and part of the planning involves periodic replacement of certain household textile items. The respondents were asked whether they had made purchases "within the past year", or "more than a year ago."

It was found that during the past year, each household textile item had been purchased by varying percentages of consumers in both classes. However, more purchasing of each textile item had been done by the upper-lower social class respondents. Bed linens and towels were purchased by the highest percentage of respondents within the past year; carpets and rugs, and table linens by the smallest percentage of respondents.

Extent of external search for information. Limited search for product information by consumers, particularly in the lower classes, is

viewed by those in consumer behavior as one of the underlying reasons for inadequate consumer behavior in the market place.

The data from this question clearly substantiated this view. A large number of respondents in both classes, but especially in the lower-lower group, engaged in limited search for product information pertaining to the purchase of household textiles. However, it was noted that the extent of search varied with the cost as well as the functionality of the item. As the cost of the household textile item increased, the extent of the search increased. Also, as the functionality of the item decreased, the extent of search decreased.

Sources desired by consumers for additional information. Results from this question indicated that the desire for additional information from various sources varied with the textile item and the social class of the individual.

A large number of respondents from both classes did not want any additional information in purchasing household textiles from either of the sources. The highest percentage desiring no additional information was in the lower-lower group.

Of the relatively small number of respondents in both classes desiring additional information, the highest percentage desired information from store clerks; the smallest percentage desired information from consumer services.

Generally, there was a relationship between the cost and functionality of the item and the desire for information. As the cost of the item increased, the desire for additional information increased.

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Generally, there was a relationship between the cost and functionality of the item and the desire for information. As the cost of the item increased, the desire for additional information increased.

And as the functionality of the item decreased, the desire for additional information decreased.

Types of product information desired by consumers. The respondents were asked if they preferred to have more product information (price, quality, performance, style and color) in the purchasing of household textiles, and if so, to indicate the type or types preferred.

It was found that a large number of consumers did not want any type of product information in purchasing household textiles. The percentage of those who did not want any product information was higher in the lower-lower social class than in the upper-lower social class.

Of these who did express a desire for product information, a higher percentage of upper-lower respondents desired information about the quality and performance of all household textile items. A high percentage of the lower-lower respondents wanted information about the price of all household textile items.

Satisfaction of household textile purchases. Respondents were asked to indicate whether they had been satisfied in the purchase of each household textile item. The data from this question revealed that a high percentage of consumers expressed satisfaction with their household textile purchases. In both groups, complete satisfaction was expressed in the purchase of bed linens and towels. Less satisfaction was more evident in the upper-lower social class than in the lower-lower social class.

Decision-Making Behavior Between Consumers of Two Lower Classes in the Purchase of Sheets and Carpets

The inferential data were obtained from the use of the forced-choice questionnaire and were analyzed by the Mann-Whitney U Test statistic. The questionnaire was designed to indicate decision-making behavior between consumers of two lower classes as to the sources of information consulted, the choice of product attributes, and the relation of product attributes to sources of information consulted.

Based on the hypotheses tested, the following conclusions were drawn:

Hypothesis 1: Differences exist between consumers of two lower classes as to the sources of information consulted in the purchase of sheets.

Significant differences, at the 0.01 level of probability, were found between the two lower classes in their use of friends and neighbors, and store clerks as sources of information in purchasing sheets.

No significance was found between the two lower classes in their use of advertising and consumer services as sources of information in purchasing sheets.

Hypothesis 2: Differences exist between consumers of two lower social classes in their choice of product attributes for which information is sought in the purchase of sheets.

Significant differences, at the 0.01 level of probability, were found between the two lower classes in their choice of each product

attribute, price, quality, performance, style and color.

Hypothesis 3: Differences exist between consumers of two lower classes in relation to the sources of information consulted and the choice of product attributes for which information is sought in the purchase of sheets.

Significant differences in the use of three sources, advertising, friends and neighbors, and store clerks, at the 0.01 level of probability, were found in the choice of each of the product attributes, price, quality, performance, style and color.

Significant differences in the use of consumer services, at the 0.01 level of probability, were found in their choice of three product attributes, quality, performance, style and color.

No significance, in using consumer services, was found between the two classes in their choice of the product attribute, price.

Hypothesis 4: Differences exist between consumers of two lower classes as to the sources of information consulted in the purchase of carpets.

Significant differences, at the 0.01 level of probability, were found between consumers of the two lower classes in their use of consumer services as a source of information in purchasing carpets and rugs.

No significance was found between consumers of the two lower groups in their use of advertising, friends and neighbors, and store clerks as sources of information in purchasing carpets and rugs.

Hypothesis 5: Differences exist between consumers of two lower social classes in their choice of product attributes for which

information is sought in the purchase of carpets and rugs.

Significant differences, at the 0.01 level of probability, were found between consumers of two lower social classes in the choice of product attributes, price, quality, and performance in the purchase of carpets and rugs.

No significant differences were found between the two classes in the choice of the product attributes, style and color in their purchase of carpets and rugs.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

Further research in the area of consumer decision-making behavior is recommended as a result of this study.

1. Study the decision-making behavior of the middle and upper social classes in the purchasing of household textiles.
2. Study the decision-making behavior of various social groups in regard to the purchasing of textile apparel items.
3. Study the effect of advertising on all social groups in the purchase of household textiles.
4. Investigate ways and means by which product information can be more easily understood by consumers in the lower social classes.

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A
SCALES AND PROCEDURES FOR COMPUTATION OF SOCIAL CLASS POSITION

| Occupation | | | | | | | |
|-------------------------------|---|---|--|--|----------------|---|--------------------------------|
| Rating Assigned to Occupation | Professionals | Proprietors and Managers | Business Men | Clerks and Kindred Workers, Etc. | Manual Workers | Protective and Service Workers | Farmers |
| 1 | Lawyers, doctors, dentists, engineers, judges, high-school superintendents, veterinarians, ministers (graduated from divinity school), chemists, etc. with post-graduate training, architects | Businesses valued at \$75,000 and over | Regional and divisional managers of large financial and industrial enterprises | Certified Public Accountants | | | Gentleman farmers |
| 2 | High-school teachers, trained nurses, chiropodists, chiropractors, undertakers, ministers (some training), newspaper editors, librarians (graduate) | Businesses valued at \$20,000 to \$75,000 | Assistant managers and office and department managers of large businesses, assistants to executives, etc. | Accountants, salesmen of real estate, of insurance, postmasters | | | Large farm owners, farm owners |
| 3 | Social workers, grade-school teachers, optometrists, librarians (not graduate), undertaker's assistants, ministers (no training) | Businesses valued at \$5,000 to \$20,000 | All minor officials of businesses | Auto salesmen, bank clerks and cashiers, postal clerks, secretaries to executives, supervisors of railroad, telephone, etc., justices of the peace | Contractors | | |
| 4 | | Businesses Valued at \$2,000 to \$5,000 | Stenographers, bookkeepers, rural mail clerks, railroad ticket agents, sales people in dry goods store, etc. | Factory foremen, electricians, plumbers, carpenters, watchmakers | | Dry cleaners, butchers, sheriffs, railroad engineers and conductors | |
| 5 | | Businesses valued at \$500 to \$2,000 | Dime store clerks, hardware salesmen, beauty operators, telephone operators | Carpenters, plumbers, electricians (apprentice), timekeepers, linemen, telephone or telegraph, radio repairmen, medium-skill workers | | Barbers, firemen, butcher's apprentices, practical nurses, policemen, seamstresses, cooks in restaurant, bartenders | Tenant farmers |
| 6 | | Businesses valued at less than \$500 | | Molders, semi-skilled workers, assistants to carpenter, etc. | | Baggage men, night policemen and watchmen, taxi and truck drivers, gas station attendants, waitresses in restaurant | Small tenant farmers |
| 7 | | | | Heavy labor, migrant work, odd-job men, miners | | Janitors, scrub-women, newsboys | Migrant farm laborers |

W. Lloyd Warner and others, *Social Class in America* (Chicago: Science Research Associates, Inc., 1949), pp. 140-141.

Source of Income

1. Inherited Wealth.

- a) Money from previous generations (old money).
- b) Money from savings, investments, business enterprises inherited from an earlier generation.

2. Earned Wealth.

- a) Living on savings or investments earned by present generation.

3. Profits and Fees.

- a) Money paid to professionals for their service and advice.
- b) Money paid to owners of businesses.
- c) Money paid to writers, musicians.

4. Salary.

- a) Regular income paid on monthly or yearly basis.
- b) Commission paid to salesmen.

5. Wages.

- a) Amount of money is determined by an hourly, daily or weekly rate.

6. Private Relief.

- a) Money paid by friends, relatives.
- b) Money given by churches, associations (agency does not reveal names of those getting help).

7. Public Relief and Non-respectable Income.

- a) Money from government agency or semi-public organization (names are revealed).
- b) Money from gambling, prostitution, bootlegging.²

²Ibid., pp. 141-142.

House Type

1. Excellent Houses.
 - a) Large, single-family dwellings in good repair.
 - b) Large, beautifully landscaped lawns and yards.
2. Very Good Houses.
 - a) All houses that do not measure up to first category.
 - b) Smaller than above but larger than utility demands for average family.
3. Good Houses.
 - a) Slightly larger than utility demands.
 - b) More conventional.
4. Average Houses.
 - a) One and a half to two-story wood frame and brick single-family dwellings.
 - b) Conventional styles--lawns well cared for but not landscaped.
5. Fair Houses.
 - a) Houses whose conditions are not quite as good as those given a four rating.
 - b) Includes smaller houses in excellent condition.
6. Poor Houses.
 - a) Size is less important than condition in determining evaluation.
 - b) Badly run-down, but not beyond repair.
 - c) Suffer from lack of care--does not have profusion of debris as in lowest category.
7. Very Poor Houses.
 - a) Beyond repair.
 - b) All buildings were not intended to be lived in.
 - c) Halls and yards littered with junk.
 - d) May have bad odor.

3

³Warner, pp. 149-150.

Dwelling Area

1. Very High.

- a) Includes only one area.
- b) Best houses in town.
- c) Streets are wide, clean, many trees.

2. High.

- a) Dwellings are superior--well above average but below the top.
- b) Fewer mansions and pretentious houses.

3. Above Average.

- a) Nice but not pretentious houses.
- b) Streets are clean--houses are well cared for.
- c) Nice place to live--but society doesn't live here.

4. Average.

- a) Workingmen's homes.
- b) Small, unpretentious--neat.
- c) Respectable people--who don't amount to much, but never give anybody any trouble.

5. Below Average.

- a) Undesirable--close to factories.
- b) Located in business section of town.
- c) Close to railroad.
- d) Run-down--people don't know how to take care of things.
- e) Congested--heterogenous.
- f) All kinds of people live here--you don't know who your neighbor is.

6. Low.

- a) Run-down--semi-slums.
- b) Set close together.
- c) Yards often filled with debris--streets may not be paved.

7. Very Low.

- a) Slum districts.
- b) Poorest reputation in town.
- c) Unhealthy geographical positions--near garbage dump or swamp.

- d) Houses are little better than shacks.
- e) People are thought to be lazy, shiftless, ignorant and immoral. ⁴

⁴Warner, pp. 153-154.

Securing a Weighted Total from Primary Ratings

The procedure recommended by Warner was used to determine the weighted total. An example of this method is as follows:

The four products should then be added to secure a weighted total. For example, if the ratings for a given individual or family were 5, 5, 7 and 6, for occupation, source of income, house type, and dwelling area respectively, the weighted total would be secured as follows:

| Characteristics | Rating | Weight | Product |
|---------------------------|--------|--------|---------|
| Occupation. | 5 | x 4 | 20 |
| Source of Income. | 5 | x 3 | 15 |
| House Type. | 7 | x 3 | 21 |
| Dwelling Area | 6 | x 2 | 12 |
| Weighted Total | | | 68 |

The weighted total may be any number from 12 to 84 inclusive. If the ratings for any individual were all 1's, he would get a 12 (the highest rating in the upper class). If they were all 7's, he would rate an 84 (the lowest in the lower class).

If the data for any of the four ratings are not available, the proper weights for the other three ratings may be obtained from Table 5. Thus, if the rating on occupation were missing, the other three ratings would be multiplied by 5, 4, and 3 respectively. The three products would then be totaled to secure a "weighted total" which would be comparable to that secured from four weighted products; this may also be any number from 12 to 84, inclusive.

TABLE 5
Weights for Computation of I.S.C

| Status Characteristic | Weights to be Used if all Ratings Avail- able | Weights to be Used if Ratings on one Characteristic Missing | | | |
|----------------------------|---|--|--------------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------|
| | | Occupation Missing | Source of Income Missing | House Type Missing | Dwelling Area Missing |
| Occupation. . . | 4 | - | 5 | 5 | 5 |
| Source of Income. . . . | 3 | 5 | - | 4 | 4 |
| House Type. . . | 3 | 4 | 4 | - | 3 |
| Dwelling Area. | 2 | 3 | 3 | 3 | - |
| | | | | | 5 |

⁵Warner, p. 124.

Conversion of Weighted Totals to Social Class Equivalence

| <u>Weighted Total</u> | <u>Social-Class Equivalents</u> |
|-----------------------|---|
| 12-17 | Upper Class |
| 18-22 | Upper Class probably, may be Upper-Middle Class |
| 23-24 | Upper Class probably, may be Upper-Middle Class |
| 25-33 | Upper-Middle Class |
| 34-37 | Not definite--either Upper-Middle or Lower-Middle Class |
| 38-50 | Lower Middle Class |
| 51-53 | Not definite--either Lower-Middle or Upper-Middle Class |
| 54-62 | Upper-Lower Class |
| 63-66 | Not definite--either Upper-Lower or Lower-Lower Class |
| 67-69 | Lower-Lower Class probably, may be Upper-Lower Class |
| 70-84 | Lower-Lower Class ⁶ |

⁶Warner, p. 127.

APPENDIX B
QUESTIONNAIRES USED FOR COLLECTION OF DATA
Forced-Choice Questionnaire

Bed Linens

Series I

The last time you bought bed linens (sheets, pillow cases, blankets), which sources of information did you use? (Please choose one letter from each card).

Card 1

A

Newspapers
Circulars
Magazines
Television
Radio

B

Friends
Relatives
Neighbors

Card 2

A

Newspapers
Circulars
Magazines
Television
Radio

C

Clerks
Fellow Shoppers

Card 3

A

Newspapers
Circulars
Magazines
Television
Radio

D

Consumer Bulletin
Consumer Reports
Extension Services
Better Business Bureau
Library

Card 4

B

Friends
 Relatives
 Neighbors

C

Clerks
 Fellow Shoppers

Card 5

B

Friends
 Relatives
 Neighbors

D

Consumer Bulletin
 Consumer Reports
 Extension Service
 Better Business Bureau
 Library

Card 6

C

Clerks
 Fellow Shoppers

D

Consumer Bulletin
 Consumer Reports
 Extension Services
 Better Business Bureau
 Library

Series II

When you bought these bed linens, what kinds of information did you obtain about them? (Please choose one letter from each card).

Card 1

A

Price

B

Quality

Card 2

A

Price

C

Style or Color

Card 3

A
Price

D
Performance

Card 4

B
Quality

C
Performance

Card 5

B
Quality

D
Style or Color

Card 6

C
Performance

D
Style or Color

Series III

When using advertising as a source of information for buying bed linens, what kinds of information do you want to obtain from this source? (Please choose one letter from each card).

Card 1

A
Price

B
Quality

Card 2

A
Price

C
Performance

Card 3

A
Price

D
Style or Color

Card 4

B
Quality

C
Performance

Card 5

B
Quality

D
Style or Color

Card 6

C
Performance

D
Style or Color

Series IV

When using friends, relatives or neighbors as a source of information for buying bed linens, what kinds of information do you want to obtain from this source? (Please choose one letter from each card).

Card 1

A
Price

B
Quality

Card 2

A
Price

C
Performance

Card 3

A
Price

D
Style or Color

Card 4

B
Quality

C
Performance

Card 5

B
Quality

D
Style or Color

Card 6

C
Performance

D
Style or Color

Series V

When using store clerks to obtain information for buying bed linens, what kinds of information do you want to receive from this source? (Please choose one letter from each card);

Card 1

A
Price

B
Quality

Card 2

A
Price

C
Performance

Card 3

A
Price

D
Style or Color

Card 4

B
Quality

C
Performance

Card 5

B
Quality

D
Style or Color

Card 6

C
Performance

D
Style or Color

Series VI

When using consumer services to obtain information for buying bed linens, what kinds of information do you want to receive from this source? (Please choose one letter from each card).

Card 1

A
Price

B
Quality

Card 2

A
Price

C
Performance

Card 3

A
Price

D
Style or Color

Card 4

B
Quality

C
Performance

Card 5

B
Quality

D
Style or Color

Card 6

C
Performance

D
Style or Color

Floor Coverings

(soft carpets and rugs)

Series I

The last time you bought soft rugs or carpets, which sources of information did you use? (Please choose one letter from each card).

Card 1

A
Newspapers
Magazines
Circulars
Television
Radio

B
Friends
Relatives
Neighbors

Card 2

A
Newspapers
Magazines
Circulars
Television
Radio

C
Clerks
Fellow Shoppers

Card 3

A

Newspapers
Magazines
Circulars
Television
Radio

D

Consumer Bulletin
Consumer Reports
Extension Services
Better Business Bureau
Library

Card 4

B

Friends
Relatives
Neighbors

C

Clerks
Fellow Shoppers

Card 5

B

Friends
Relatives
Neighbors

D

Consumer Bulletin
Consumer Reports
Extension Service
Better Business Bureau
Library

Card 6

C

Clerks
Fellow Shoppers

D

Consumer Bulletin
Consumer Reports
Extension Service
Better Business Bureau
Library

Series II

When you bought these soft rugs or carpets, what kinds of information did you obtain about them? (Please choose one letter from each card).

Card 1

A
Price

B
Quality

Card 2

A
Price

C
Performance

Card 3

A
Price

D
Style or Color

Card 4

B
Quality

C
Performance

Card 5

B
Quality

D
Style or Color

Card 6

C
Performance

D
Style or Color

Record Form for the Forced-Choice Questionnaire

BED LINENS

| <u>Sources</u> | | Series I | |
|----------------|---|----------|---|
| A | B | C | D |
| A - | | | |
| B - | - | | |
| C - | - | - | |
| D - | - | - | - |
| C Score | | | |

| <u>Product Attributes</u> | | Series II | |
|---------------------------|---|-----------|---|
| A | B | C | D |
| A - | | | |
| B - | - | | |
| C - | - | - | |
| D - | - | - | - |
| C Score | | | |

| <u>Advertising</u> | | Series III | |
|--------------------|---|------------|---|
| A | B | C | D |
| A - | | | |
| B - | - | | |
| C - | - | - | |
| D - | - | - | - |
| C Score | | | |

| <u>Personal Sources</u> | | Series IV | |
|-------------------------|---|-----------|---|
| A | B | C | D |
| A - | | | |
| B - | - | | |
| C - | - | - | |
| D - | - | - | - |
| C Score | | | |

| <u>Dealer Visits</u> | | Series V | |
|----------------------|---|----------|---|
| A | B | C | D |
| A - | | | |
| B - | - | | |
| C - | - | - | |
| D - | - | - | - |
| C Score | | | |

| <u>Consumer Services</u> | | Series VI | |
|--------------------------|---|-----------|---|
| A | B | C | D |
| A - | | | |
| B - | - | | |
| C - | - | - | |
| D - | - | - | - |
| C Score | | | |

FLOOR COVERINGS

| <u>Sources</u> | | Series I | |
|----------------|---|----------|---|
| A | B | C | D |
| A - | | | |
| B - | - | | |
| C - | - | - | |
| D - | - | - | - |
| C Score | | | |

| <u>Product Attributes</u> | | Series II | |
|---------------------------|---|-----------|---|
| A | B | C | D |
| A - | | | |
| B - | - | | |
| C - | - | - | |
| D - | - | - | - |
| C Score | | | |

Dichotomous Questionnaire

Please answer the following questions by checking the
appropriate blank or blanks

BED LINENS

(Sheets, pillow cases, blankets)

1. Do you presently own bed linens?

Yes _____ No _____

2. When did you last buy bed linens?

Within last year _____ More than a year ago _____

3. How much information did you get before you purchased the bed
linens?

Very much _____ Some _____ Very little _____

4. Would you have liked more information about bed linens from any
of these sources?

Advertising _____ Friends and neighbors _____ Store clerks _____

Consumer services _____ None of these _____

5. Would more information about bed linens have been helpful to you,
such as:

Price _____ Quality _____ Performance _____ Style or Color _____

None of these _____

6. Have you been satisfied with your purchase?

Yes _____ No _____

TABLE LINENS

(Table cloths, napkins, etc.)

1. Do you presently own
- table linens
- ?

Yes _____ No _____

2. When did you last buy
- table linens
- ?

Within last year _____ More than a year ago _____

3. How much information did you get before you bought your last
- table linens
- ?

Very much _____ Some _____ Very little _____

4. Would you have liked more information about
- table linens
- from any of these sources?

Advertising _____ Friends or neighbors _____ Store clerks _____

Consumer Services _____ None of these _____

5. Would more information about
- table linens
- have been helpful to you, such as:

Price _____ Quality _____ Performance _____ Style or color _____

None of these _____

6. Have you been satisfied with your purchase?

Yes _____ No _____

BATH AND KITCHEN

(Towels, wash cloths, etc.)

1. Do you presently own
- bath and kitchen towels
- ?

Yes _____ No _____

2. When did you last buy bath and kitchen towels?
Within last year_____ More than a year ago_____
3. How much information did you get before you bought your last bath and kitchen towels?
Very much_____ Some_____ Very little_____
4. Would you have liked more information about bath and kitchen towels from any of these sources?
Advertising_____ Friends or neighbors_____ Store clerks_____
Consumer services_____ None of these_____
5. Would more information about bath and kitchen towels have been helpful to you, such as:
Price_____ Quality_____ Performance_____ Style or color_____
None of these_____
6. Have you been satisfied with your purchase?
Yes_____ No_____

WINDOW COVERINGS

(Draperies, Curtains)

1. Do you presently own draperies and curtains?
Yes_____ No_____
2. When did you last buy draperies and curtains?
Within last year_____ More than a year ago_____
3. How much information did you get before you bought your last draperies and curtains?
Very much_____ Some_____ Very little_____

4. Would you have liked more information about draperies and curtains from any of these sources?

Advertising_____ Friends or neighbors_____ Store clerks_____

Consumer services_____ None of these_____

5. Would more information about draperies and curtains have been helpful to you, such as:

Price_____ Quality_____ Performance_____ Style or color_____

None of these_____

6. Have you been satisfied with your purchase?

Yes_____ No_____

FLOOR COVERINGS

(Carpets and Rugs)

1. Do you presently own carpets and rugs?

Yes_____ No_____

2. When did you last buy carpets and rugs?

Within last year_____ More than a year ago_____

3. How much information did you get before you bought your last carpets and rugs?

Very much_____ Some_____ Very little_____

4. Would you have liked more information about carpets and rugs from any of these sources?

Advertising_____ Friends or neighbors_____ Store clerks_____

Consumer services_____ None of these_____

5. Would more information about carpets and rugs have been helpful to you, such as:

Price_____ Quality_____ Performance_____ Style or color_____

None of these_____

6. Have you been satisfied with your purchase?

Yes_____ No_____