Advertising's Effect on Young Children: An Exploratory Study of General Influences, External Conflicts, and Inner Frustrations

1974

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ADVERTISING'S EFFECT ON YOUNG CHILDREN: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF GENERAL INFLUENCES, EXTERNAL CONFLICTS, AND INNER FRUSTRATIONS

By

TERRY ANN NEUMAN
B.A., Wayne State University, 1970

THESIS

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Communication in the Graduate Studies Program of Florida Technological University

Orlando, Florida
1974
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my graduate committee, Dr. Milan Meeske, Dr. Thomas Morgan, and Mr. Kenneth Sheinkopf, for all the help and support they have given me.

I would also like to extend my deep appreciation to my mother, Evelyn Schwartz, for interviewing all the mothers in the survey and for running errands and babysitting in order to give me more time to work on my thesis. Without her help, this paper would never have been completed.

I also want to thank my husband, Robert, for his encouragement and his patience throughout all my graduate work.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**LIST OF TABLES** .......................................................... iv  

**Chapter**  

1. **INTRODUCTION** ..................................................... 1  
   - **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM** .................................. 2  
   - External Conflict ............................................... 2  
   - Internal Conflict .............................................. 3  
   - **RESEARCH QUESTIONS** ....................................... 3  
   - **CONTRIBUTORY STUDIES** .................................. 4  
   - **SUMMARY OF CONTRIBUTORY STUDIES** ...................... 19  
   - **METHOD** .................................................. 20  
   - **THE SUBJECTS** ............................................ 22  

2. **RESULTS** ............................................................. 25  
   - **GENERAL UNDERSTANDING OF TELEVISION COMMERCIALS** .... 25  
   - **RELATIVE INFLUENCE OF TELEVISION ADVERTISING** ........ 26  
     - Child Requests for Products ................................ 26  
     - Parental Yielding ........................................... 28  
     - Recent Influence, Specific Request and Parental Yielding .. 31  
   - **EXTERNAL CONFLICT** ....................................... 35  
   - **INTERNAL CONFLICT** ....................................... 38  
     - Inner Conflict When Products are Refused ................ 38  
     - Realistic Representation of Commercials and Products on TV 40
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION ABOUT ADVERTISING</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. SUMMARY</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX I</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX II</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Demographics--Mothers</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Demographics--Children</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Relative Influence of Television Advertising</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Child Requests for Products</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Parental Yielding to Advertised Products</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Working vs. Nonworking Mothers Yielding to Advertised Products</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Married vs. Unmarried Mothers Yielding to Advertised Products</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Recent Influence of Television Commercial with Specific Request and Parental Yielding</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Arguments Over Products Advertised on Television--Mothers vs. Children</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Arguments Over Products Advertised on Television--Working vs. Nonworking Mothers</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Inner Conflict or Anger When Products are Refused</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Realistic Representation of Commercials and Products on Television</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

There have been many studies on television programming and its effect on the child—which shows children are allowed to watch, parents' views of children's programming, and experiments dealing with violence and its effect on the aggressive versus the nonaggressive child. However, it has not been until recently that TV advertising and its effects on children have been studied with any depth or realization of the problem involved.

One of the first investigations of its kind conducted by Ward (1972) consisted of observations and surveys that were exploratory in nature. Atkin and Reinhold (1972) also conducted an exploratory survey where particular variables were only touched upon. Thus, parent-child conflict, which was a small part of the above studies, and real purchase behavior leave many questions for future investigation.

The subjects in both the Ward and Atkin studies were white children from middle and upper-middle class homes. In his major study of advertising and intrafamily influence, Ward only interviewed the mothers while Atkin surveyed 7-12 year olds. With the exception of Neuman, Parr, Cherepow, and Hemphill who replicated the study of Atkin and Reinhold using low-income blacks, this researcher
knows of no study to date that has worked with nonaffluent children and which attempted to interview 5-7 year olds and their mothers.

Advertising and its effects on children is a new area in which researchers are only now beginning to scratch the surface. Thus, every new study is an important addition to a field where billions are spent to influence, but relatively little is known of why or how reactions are obtained.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The present study focuses itself on how well the younger child from a lower income background asserts himself in persuading his mother to buy advertised products for him. Lower income will be operationally defined as those families with incomes under ten thousand dollars a year.

Specifically, the purpose of this study is to explore the prevalence of conflict in the home environment that results from advertised products for children. Both external conflicts, such as frequency of requests and arguments that arise from them, and internal conflicts, such as frustrations and disappointments, will be investigated.

External Conflict

How often is the parent irritated over the child’s requests? How often is the child irritated over the par-
ent's refusal to grant his requests? What is the relationship between frequency of requests and frequency of yielding? Does conflict exist in any one type of environment over another, such as child-centered homes versus non-child centered homes?

**Internal Conflict**

Does the child have a positive identification with the children he sees in TV commercials? Does he feel the children in the ads are happier and have a better home life than he does? How often is the child frustrated or angered when a toy he sees on TV does not work the same when he gets it home? Do the parents feel inadequate when they must deny their children a specific item because of cost? Do the parents feel that the children in the TV commercials represent their child in a true-to-life atmosphere?

**RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

Although external and internal conflict were the problems of this investigation, one must first determine the relative influence of television advertising before one can study the various conflicts involved. Thus, there were three research questions:

1. Are there significant differences in the responses of mothers and children regarding the general influence of television commercials?

2. Are there significant differences in the
responses of mothers and children regarding the prevalence of external conflict in the home that has resulted from advertised products?

3. Are there significant differences in the responses of mothers and children regarding the prevalence of internal conflict in the home that has resulted from advertised products?

CONTRIBUTORY STUDIES

In a year, children in the United States consume enough peanut butter to coat the Empire State Building with a layer three feet thick, enough soft drinks to fill the Queen Mary ten and one-half times, and enough bubble gum to blow a bubble the size of the Rock of Gibraltar.

Between the toys, the snacks and the cereal, children account for several billion dollars spent annually. Yet although it is a market that businessmen have come to know well, there has been little research outside the ad agency to determine the effects of advertising on the child.

The early research in this area concentrated on television violence, why children view programs, and which programs children like to watch. A few of these studies suggest valuable relationships between programming and advertising.

Maccoby (1954) tested the hypothesis that children will spend more time watching television if they are highly frustrated in real life than if they are not. The hypothesis was proven for the upper-middle class children but not for the lower-middle class group. The findings were
explained by relating the life styles of the two groups.

Upper-middle class adults watch television less than the lower class. Thus, their children are motivated to become interested in other things. However, when frustrated, they escape to television. On the other hand, in the lower class group, adults watch TV a great deal and so do their children, who may watch the tube if they are frustrated or not. It makes no difference.7

Merrill (1961) and Blood (1961) also found that the lower the socio-economic status, the greater the amount of viewing.8 However, James (1971), who conducted a survey using close to fifteen hundred children from grades four through twelve, found no significant relationship by grade level between exposure time to a medium and the youth's attitudes toward that medium's advertising.9

Scott (1958) found that those children who view television most heavily were significantly inferior to their lesser-viewing friends in arithmetic and reading achievement. He also found that children who view television to the greatest extent had significantly lower intelligence and came from those families that are normally considered less favored occupationally.10

However, Thompson (1964) found that low achievement is not caused by televiewing but is simply related to the fact that the less intelligent child prefers to watch television more often. He also found that the number of hours spent televiewing exerts very little effect on the rela-
tionship of knowledge, understanding, and acceptance of the commercials, and the actual use of the advertised product. 11

Most studies in the past have looked at the programs and the children's preferences. Hess and Goldman (1962) sought parental views on the question of the effect of television on children. The authors found that most of the parents were uncritical of the program content their child viewed. 12 This was also substantiated by the Roper Organization (1970) who sought parents' responses to advertising. Parents were given the choice—should there be no commercials on any program or is it all right to have them if they do not take unfair advantage of children? 13

In contrast to this, Parade magazine, which published a questionnaire on children's TV, received more than twenty-five thousand replies. 14 Although Parade admitted that their sample was not random, it was found that parents were overwhelmingly opposed to the current frequency of commercials on children's TV programs.

Nearly 40 percent voted for a policy of no commercials, 23 percent for fewer commercials only at the beginning and end of a program, and 7 percent for various combinations of the foregoing. Only 4 percent favored "no change in the present system." 15

Parents appear to becoming more concerned about the negative effect of TV. In this second and third generation of television children, the novelty of the fifties has worn off, and parents are beginning to realize its widely pervasive and persuasive influence.
According to the 1970 census, 96 percent of American homes were equipped with at least one television set. Stevenson (1972) and Lyle and Hoffman (1972 a and b) all found that although the estimates of the number of hours these sets are on varies, it is known that TV has come to play a significant role in the daily lives of most American families. The authors above studied preschool children and found that the children had specific preferences, could recognize specific television personalities and were able to recognize words and letters learned from television.

Brumbaugh (1954) conducted a study where four hundred children between the ages of six and twelve were asked to list as many products advertised on TV as they could remember.

Time was called in 15 minutes and many remonstrated, saying they knew at least twice as many as they had written. The average number listed by the youngest children was 20 and the 11-year-olds about 50. The total number of products was 597.

Munn (1958), using a questionnaire mailed to parents, studied children from ages two through eight. His purpose was to determine the effect of commercial announcements on children and children's effect on their parents. About 80 percent were preschool children, under six years of age. Munn's findings suggest that almost all children studied were influenced by advertising during children's television programs. Parents, in turn, are influenced by their children who successfully use a variety of effective appeals to promote purchase. Although many parents insist
upon approving the product, parents will quite often purchase the product requested. Munn also found that children's television programs are an effective advertising medium.19

Blatt, Spencer, and Ward (1971) found that children in all age groups could identify the term "commercials," but kindergarten children exhibited confusion and judged the relationship between commercials and reality based on coincidental reasoning or affect. Kindergarteners also could not discriminate between commercials and products, but with increasing age clearer discriminations could be made. By second grade, the children understood that the purpose of an ad was to sell goods.20

It was also found that the younger children do enjoy commercials but begin to become skeptical at an increasing age. As for classes of products recalled, kindergarteners spontaneously remembered food product advertising, second graders recall products with which they can identify (such as toys), fourth graders mention household cleaning products while sixth graders show no consistent pattern of recall.21

McNeal (1964) found that most children are avid television viewers and that all of the children in his study with the exception of two five-year-olds had a keen awareness of TV advertisements. McNeal also found that there was an increasing dislike and mistrust of TV ads as the children increased in age. "Half of the five-and-
seven-year-olds and over three-fourths of the nine-year-olds reported negative feelings toward television commercials.\textsuperscript{22}

Ward, Reale, and Levinson (1972) extended the Blatt, et al. study with a larger sample of children from middle and upper-middle class homes. Although their data was not explicit, it did express a generality of feeling about the truthfulness of advertising.

Most children do not feel advertising always tells the truth. Younger children, in particular, feel many commercials do not tell the truth because they contain elements which do not match the child's literal perception of reality. Older children often suspect the motives of commercials and appear to reason that since commercials are "trying to sell," they do not tell the truth.\textsuperscript{23}

James found that the negative attitudes of students toward all forms of advertising can be attributed to a number of factors although one of the most important is deceptive advertising. "A product that has appeared particularly enticing in an advertisement and has been found less than satisfying in actual use may account for much of the dislike of advertising."\textsuperscript{24}

James also found that students essentially ignore advertising via any medium except television. Almost half of the students reported that they pay the most attention to television advertising although the students also claimed that television presents the least believable of any media advertising.\textsuperscript{25}

Moreover, it was found that children and adolescents exert considerable influence over the expenditures of other family members. In an effort to begin consumer
education as early as possible, parents in many families give children of four or five a say in the family budget. 26

McNeal (1969) who researched the child as a consumer says:

The child learns a great deal about consumer behavior from advertising, particularly that on television. From advertising the child learns about brands, types of stores and pricing. And even though there may be a dislike for television advertising that increases with age, the child readily admits that the advertising does influence his consumer behavior. 27

According to McNeal, the child makes his first independent purchase at the age of five. By nine, the child has gained a simple understanding of the marketing process where he is able to discriminate in making shopping trips. Thus, consumerism is learned quite young and much can be attributed to television advertising.

Berey and Pollay (1968) researched the influencing role of children in family decision making. The authors contended that the extent of the influence a child has on his parents's purchase decision seemed dependent upon two primary factors: the child's assertiveness, and the parent's child-centeredness. In focusing on ready-to-eat cereals, it was thought that the more assertive the child, the more likely the mother will purchase the child's favorite brands. 28

However, it was found that when forty-eight upper-middle class students who attended private school were interviewed along with their mothers, the results were quite opposite from what was expected. "Instead of highly
child-centered mothers showing a greater tendency to purchase their children's favorite cereals, they had a tendency to purchase these cereals less frequently.\textsuperscript{29}

It appeared that the mothers who spent more time with their children had a greater tendency to purchase foods that they felt were more healthful. However, the mother low in child-centeredness may have purchased the brands to placate the child.

The present study focuses itself on how well the younger child from a lower income background asserts himself in persuading his mother to buy advertised products for him and the potential conflicts that result from his requests. What influences him? What are his reactions? How often does he request particular products and how frequently do his parents yield to his requests?

Dickens and Johnson (1963) interviewed nine and ten year olds to discover where the child hears about particular foods, what foods the child requests, and whether or not requests are granted. The authors found that of the 95 percent of the boys and the 97 percent of the girls who said they had watched television in the last few weeks, 72 percent of the boys and 66 percent of the girls stated that they had heard some food advertised and had asked their mother to buy it. However, it was also found that requests for cereals and snacks were granted less often than requests for other foods.\textsuperscript{30}

Ward and Wackman (1972) conducted one of the first
investigations in studying advertising's effects on children. The focus of their research evolved around three issues: the influence of television advertising on children, children's attempts to influence their mothers' purchases, and the yielding of mothers to these attempts. However, Ward and Wackman surveyed 109 mothers of the upper and upper-middle classes in the Boston area while the children themselves were not interviewed.31

Three age groups were analyzed separately (5-7, 8-10, and 11-12). The data indicated that commercials influence younger children more than older children, and mothers gauged this variable by the frequency of influence attempts. However, while influence attempts decreased with age, yielding to requests increased with age. This could reflect the parents' reliance on the maturity and competence of older children.32

The data also indicated that a positive relationship existed between conflict and influence attempts suggesting that purchase influence attempts may be part of general patterns of disagreement and conflict between parents and children.... However, no relationship is observed between conflict and yielding. Thus, it seems that failure to yield to a child's purchase influence attempts is not usually a mode of "punishment" employed by parents.33

Mothers who spend time watching television have a more positive relation to influence attempts, yielding and perceived influences. However, it was interesting to note that there was no significant relationship between restrictions and the number of the child's requests. "It
seems this form of parental control is not effective in reducing a child's purchase influence attempts.\textsuperscript{34}

Atkin and Reinhold (1972) incorporated the findings from Ward and Wackman in their investigation of the impact of advertising. Two investigations were conducted—a supermarket survey where mothers were interviewed after their food was paid for and bagged, and a school-home study where the authors surveyed both the mother and child.\textsuperscript{35}

Atkin and Reinhold limited their research to middle-income whites. The purpose of the supermarket study was to determine the amount of influence the child exerted over the mother's selection of products at the point of purchase. The interviewer selected only those mothers accompanied by young children.

The authors found that the great majority of the children (81 percent) seemed to be influenced by television ads. Mothers were also asked if their child had asked them to buy anything that day. Only 15 percent said no. Of those who responded in the affirmative, snack foods, cereals, and sweets were frequently requested with cereal asked more often than the others.\textsuperscript{36}

Similar findings were also confirmed by Wells and LoSciuto (1966). The authors found that while in the supermarket, the strongest influences took place at the cereal counter.\textsuperscript{37}

In assessing the extent of parent-child conflict, mothers in the Atkin-Reinhold supermarket study were asked
if their child ever argued with them for food products. This occurred in 86 percent of the mother-child pairs although 62 percent of them said it only occurred "sometimes."  

The school-home study that Atkin and Reinhold conducted with middle and upper-middle class children was replicated by Neuman, et al. (1973) using low income blacks as subjects. The researchers interviewed third, fourth, and fifth graders. These were compared to Atkin and Reinhold's third through sixth grade children. Since both studies concerned the amount of influence, requests, and yielding to the purchase of products advertised on television, both will be discussed simultaneously.

In each of the school-home studies, the children were interviewed in the classroom. In the Atkin study the mothers were personally interviewed, while in the Neuman study they were reached by telephone. The evaluation of the two was divided into three research questions: 1. Are there significant differences in the responses of black children and black parents regarding the influence of television commercials? 2. Are there significant differences in the responses of black and white children regarding the influence of television commercials? 3. Are there significant differences in the responses of black and white mothers regarding the influence of television commercials on their children?

As for the influence of television commercials among black children as compared to their mothers, it
was found that children divided their influence between TV and stores while mothers overwhelmingly perceived TV as the major source of influence. When asked about the child's requests for cereals, snacks, and toys, it was found that with cereals and toys parents perceived significantly more requesting than their children. No significance was found for snacks. In the questions dealing with parental yielding, the children reported more yielding than their mothers although the responses were similar. 40

To assess the extent of disagreement between parent and child concerning products advertised on television, the mothers in each sample were asked, "How often do you argue with your child about buying things that he sees in TV commercials?" A parallel question was asked the students. The question proved quite meaningful, for children reported significantly less arguments than their parents. 41

In the second research question which compared the responses of the black and white children regarding the influences of television commercials, it was found that in every case, the black children asked for things at an appreciably higher rate than the white children. And when both sets of children were asked how often requests were granted across all three categories (cereals, snacks, and toys), black children reported significantly more yielding than white. Black children also reported more arguments with their parents. 42
Children were also asked, "How often does it make you feel bad when you see things on TV commercials that you know your parents won't buy for you?" Although there were no significant differences, black children did have a tendency to regret not having things they wanted over their white counterparts. There were also no differences found when the children were asked their opinions about the quantity and truthfulness of advertising. Most children were skeptical. 43

The third research question compared the responses of the black and white mothers regarding the influence of television commercials on their children. Both groups of mothers were asked where their child gets most of his ideas about the food and toys he wants to have. Although most mothers perceived TV as a major influence, white mothers perceived the influence at a significantly higher rate. 44

When mothers were asked how often their child requested cereals, snacks, and toys, black mothers reported significantly more attempts than white mothers. Black mothers also reported significantly more yielding although there were no significant differences found when mothers were questioned about disagreements with their child. 45

As for attitudes toward TV commercials for children, a significantly greater percentage of white mothers over black mothers replied in the affirmative when asked if there were too many commercials on Saturday morning.
However, there were no significant differences found when asked about government intervention for children's advertising. Most mothers agreed that limits should be set.46

It is evident from the responses given in both school-home studies that television advertising is quite influential in children's lives. It is also evident that black children reported more influences, requests, and yielding, and at a higher rate than their white counterparts. Thus, a consistent pattern emerges—low income black children appear to be significantly more influenced by the media than the affluent white children. It will be interesting to note the differences in this thesis which will help determine where low income whites fall into this spectrum.

It was also found in the school-home studies that white mothers yield less than black mothers. Berey and Pollay reported in child-centered homes, mothers tended to buy less what the child wants and more what she feels is healthful and right. However, in homes which are not child-centered, yielding may mean a way of placating the child. A question in the present survey will determine which mothers work and which stay home and will be compared to the amount of yielding occurring in each group as an important addition to the Berey and Pollay study.

As for conflicts about advertised products, it was found that white children argue more with their parents than blacks. This would seem to be divergent with the
total survey results. However, a possible explanation was given to suggest that the white child spends more time with his mother than the black child and, thus, has developed a relationship which encourages an atmosphere of free interchange between the two. The white child also sees his mother buying things for the home and wants his fair share too.

In contrast, the black child may not be as close to his parents and, hence, cannot speak to them as openly as the white children do. Also, the child may realize that the family has little money and consequently declines to press the point. This problem of external conflict will be a major focus in this present investigation.

The subject of interpersonal communication will also be studied as a way of alleviating conflict in the home. There have been no studies to date that have investigated the relationship between conflicts due to television advertising and interpersonal communication. However, previous studies in other areas have shown that family communication patterns play an important role in influencing and teaching the child social norms.

Chaffee, McLeod and Wackman point out that the home is "the only social institution in which almost every child has been involved since birth." Elkin says the family has a dominant role in the development of basic personality traits and other social attitudes and values. Dawson and Prewitt attribute to the family almost a monopoly on the child during his formative years...."

Thus, this study will investigate the prevalence of family discussions in helping the child understand what
commercials are and how they affect his life.

SUMMARY OF CONTRIBUTORY STUDIES

It has been generally found in the past that advertising extends a pervasive influence on the child and the household although only a relatively small segment of society has been studied thus far.

As for external conflict, the conclusions are few. In all, three exploratory studies have yielded only cursory answers to this problem with two using upper-middle class whites while one replicated one of the two studies using low-income blacks. It was found that there is a positive relationship between conflict and influence attempts with well over 80 percent of the mother-child pairs reporting at least some arguing in the home. It was also found that black children asked for things at an appreciably higher rate than white children although the results suggest that white children argue more with their parents than blacks.

In the area of internal conflict, only one question had been proposed to study the matter: "How often does it make you feel bad when you see things on TV commercials that you know your parents won't buy you?" Although findings showed no significant differences, black children did have a tendency to regret not having things they wanted over their white counterparts.

Thus, the research in the entire area of adver-
tising's effects on children has been sparse at best, and the variable of conflict has consisted of only the smallest segment of the advertising studies.

**METHOD**

The present study utilized the survey technique, for in order to answer questions concerning parent-child conflicts, one must ask the subjects involved.

The survey consisted of two corresponding questionnaires— one designed for the child (Appendix 1), and one for the mother (Appendix 2). The researchers conducted fifty interviews with five through seven year-old children along with fifty interviews from the children's mothers. Both subjects, however, were interviewed separately and simultaneously by two researchers. This procedure saved time while it also helped establish rapport with the child, for he did not have his mother hovering over him. Moreover, the answers were thought to have less chance of contamination when each of the subjects were questioned individually.

Before commencing the interviews, each mother was handed an "income card." This was an index card which consisted of various income categories listed in a column on the left-hand side of the card. The categories were: $3,000 and under; $3,000-$5,000; $5,000-$7,000; $7,000-$10,000; and $10,000 and over. Next to each income grouping was a corresponding color. Each potential subject was
asked to name the color that applied to her own household. Thus, if a subject said "blue," she was immediately placed in the $5,000-$7,000 category. The only color which disqualified a family was yellow, for it designated an income of $10,000 and over. Once the designated income was accepted, the interview could begin.

In surveying the children, the first question which had to be established was the understanding of commercials themselves. If the child did not understand the word commercial, examples were given to him after which he was asked to give his own example. Thus, at the onset, every child was thought to understand what a commercial was to the satisfaction of the interviewer before the survey was continued.

The questions in the survey itself concentrated on the relative influence of each product category, i.e., cereals, snacks, and toys, external conflict for each product group, and finally internal conflict or anger generated by the denial of advertised goods.

After each interview was completed, the child was given a piece of candy in appreciation for his attention and participation.

The data from both surveys was collected in whole numbers and then converted into percentages. A Chi Square was also computed, when applicable, using $p < 0.05$ as a basis for determining significance between the corresponding answers of mothers to children.
THE SUBJECTS

The subjects were found in lower income housing, such as government projects and mobile home parks. All of the subjects were white. The education of the mothers ranged from those who had attended only grade school to those who had had some college. Most of the mothers interviewed were presently married and one-third worked either full or part time. (Table 1).

The children interviewed ranged in age from five to seven years of age. Through random sampling, there were twenty-six boys and twenty-four girls from kindergarten through third grade. Although most came from families which had one to three children, over 20 percent had four children or more (Tables 1 and 2).
Table 1
Demographics--Mothers*

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<tr>
<th>Total Children in Family:</th>
<th>One</th>
<th>Two</th>
<th>Three</th>
<th>Four</th>
<th>Five or More</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*N=50 Mothers
Table 2
Demographics--Children*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sex:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Five</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Six</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seven</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kind.</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*N=50 children
Chapter 2

RESULTS

The results of the survey will first be discussed in terms of the children's recognition and understanding of television commercials. The subsequent results will be discussed in terms of the three research questions.

GENERAL UNDERSTANDING OF TELEVISION COMMERCIALS

The first question which had to be established for children of this age group was the understanding of commercials themselves. When the children were asked, "Do you know what a commercial is?", only 54 percent were familiar with the term commercial. This was established by asking each child to give an example of a TV ad.

In contrast, when mothers were asked if they thought their child understood what a commercial was, 96 percent of the mothers thought their child did understand with the answers reaching great significance ($X^2 = 21.33, p<.005$).

The children were also asked how many commercials they watched on Saturday morning. The overwhelming majority, or 98 percent, said either a lot or some. Only one boy said he never watched TV on Saturday mornings although he was familiar with all the commercials, and his mother said he did watch TV at this time.
RELATIVE INFLUENCE OF TELEVISION ADVERTISING

1. Are there significant differences in the responses of mothers and children regarding the general influence of television commercials?

The child can be influenced in his desire for products from a number of sources—observation of product use by others, encounters with a product in the store, or remembering a product through advertising. Both mother and child were asked where the child gets most of his ideas about the food and toys he wants to have (Table 3).

In the areas of snacks and toys, the differences were quite significant, for children felt that in both categories, their influences were divided between TV and stores while mothers overwhelmingly perceived TV as a major influence for all sources of food. However, in the area of cereal, there was no significance found, for both mother and child perceived television as the most outstanding influence (Snacks: \( X^2 = 26.93, p < .005 \); Toys: \( X^2 = 32.29, p < .005 \)).

Child Requests for Products

This particular set of questions dealt with the frequency of requests after watching television commercials for the three product classes. Children were asked how often they asked their mother for breakfast cereal, snack foods, and toys. The same set of questions was posed to
### Table 3

Relative Influence of Television Advertising*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sources of Influence:</th>
<th>Children's Answers</th>
<th>Mother's Answers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cereals</td>
<td>Snacks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TV</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Store</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Sources of Influence: | Toys | | |
|-----------------------|------|---|
| TV                    | 44%  | 96%|
| Store                 | 52%  | 4% |
| Friends               | 2%   | 0  |
| Other                 | 2%   | 0  |

*N=50 children and 50 mothers*
the mother (Table 4). Significance was found when the mothers perceived the requests for cereals as "a lot" while the children only reported to ask "sometimes" ($X^2 = 15.32$, $p < .005$).

Significance was also reached in requests for snacks when close to one-third of the mothers claimed that their children never asked for snacks while only a small number of children concurred ($X^2 = 11.48$, $p < .005$).

However, there were no significant differences in requests for toys, for both mothers and children were equally divided between requesting "a lot" and "sometimes."

**Parental Yielding**

Each of the above questions was followed by a question on parental yielding to the child's requests. Both mother and child were asked how often requests were granted for each product class (Table 5). All three groups reported significance.

In the area of cereals, children claimed to receive their requests only "sometimes" while mothers perceived their yielding as "a lot" ($X^2 = 11.78$, $p < .005$). For snacks, however, the opposite occurred with the children perceiving their mothers purchasing the snacks as requested while nearly one-third of the mothers said they never purchased snacks ($X^2 = 7.05$, $p < .05$). As for toys, the children reported less yielding than the mothers ($X^2 = 9.86$, $p < .01$).

Parental yielding was further subdivided between
Table 4
Child Requests for Products*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requests for Breakfast Cereal:</th>
<th>Children</th>
<th>Mothers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>asks a lot</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sometimes</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>never</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requests for Snack Food:</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>asks a lot</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sometimes</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>never</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requests for Toys</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>asks a lot</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sometimes</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>never</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* N=50 children and 50 mothers
**Table 5**

Parental Yielding to Advertised Products*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parental Yielding to Cereal:</th>
<th>Children</th>
<th>Mothers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a lot</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sometimes</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>never</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parental Yielding to Snacks:</th>
<th>Children</th>
<th>Mothers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a lot</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sometimes</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>never</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parental Yielding to Toys:</th>
<th>Children</th>
<th>Mothers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a lot</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sometimes</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>never</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* N=50 children and 50 mothers
working and nonworking mothers (Table 6), married and unmarried mothers (Table 7). In this study 34 percent of the mothers worked, and although no significance was found in each of the three categories between working and nonworking mothers, a trend toward significance was approached in the areas of cereal and toys. For cereals, working mothers yielded slightly more than nonworking mothers while in the area of toys, working mothers yielded less than nonworking mothers (Cereals: \( X^2 = 4.01, \ p < .10 \); Toys: \( X^2 = 4.95, \ p < .10 \)).

As for the marital status of the mothers and its relation to yielding to the child's requests, it was found that only 16 percent of the mothers surveyed were not presently married and that there were no significant differences across any of the product categories between the two groups.

Recent Influence, Specific Request, and Parental Yielding

In addition to questions about the generalized frequency of influence attempts, the mothers and children were also asked about specific product requests from television influences in the recent past. The children were asked, "In the last few days have you seen something on TV you wanted?" The majority (88 percent) of the children replied in the affirmative (Table 8). When these children were then asked if they had requested the item, the answers were significantly different, for most of the children said they had asked their mothers while most of the mothers
Table 6

Working vs. Nonworking Mothers
Yielding to Advertised Products*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yielding to Cereal:</th>
<th>Working Mothers</th>
<th>Nonworking Mothers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a lot</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sometimes</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>never</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yielding to Snacks:</th>
<th>Working Mothers</th>
<th>Nonworking Mothers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a lot</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sometimes</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>never</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yielding to Toys:</th>
<th>Working Mothers</th>
<th>Nonworking Mothers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a lot</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sometimes</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>never</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*N=17 working mothers and 33 nonworking mothers
Table 7

Married vs. Unmarried Mothers
Yielding to Advertised Products *

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yielding to Cereal:</th>
<th>Married Mothers</th>
<th>Unmarried Mothers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a lot</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sometimes</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>never</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yielding to Snacks:</th>
<th>Married Mothers</th>
<th>Unmarried Mothers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a lot</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sometimes</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>never</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yielding to Toys:</th>
<th>Married Mothers</th>
<th>Unmarried Mothers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a lot</td>
<td>2½%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sometimes</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>never</td>
<td>2½%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*N=42 married mothers and 8 unmarried mothers
Table 8
Recent Influence of Television Commercial with Specific Request and Parental Yielding *

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Children</th>
<th>Mothers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Children who desired specific item:</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Of above percentage those who asked parents to buy it:</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents yielding to request:</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*N=50 children and 50 mothers*
could not remember any request ($X^2=4.01$, $p<.05$). However, when asked if the item was received, there were no significant differences, for both mothers and children reported little yielding.

**EXTERNAL CONFLICT**

2. Are there significant differences in the responses of mothers and children regarding the prevalence of external conflict in the home that has resulted from advertised products?

**Arguments Over Products Advertised on Television**

Each of the questions on the child's requests and yielding in the three product categories was followed by a question asking the child how often he argued with his mother when items were refused. A similar question was posed to the mothers (Table 9). No significant differences were found in any of the product categories although significance was approached in the area of cereals ($X^2=5.21$, $p<.10$).

**Arguments in Homes with Working vs. Nonworking Mothers**

Arguments in the three product categories were also computed for working versus nonworking mothers. And although there were no significant differences in the areas of cereals and toys, nonworking mothers reported significantly more arguments than working mothers in the area of snacks (Table 10; $X^2=7.27$, $p<.05$).
Table 9
Arguments Over Products Advertised on Television
Mothers vs. Children*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Arguments about</th>
<th>Children</th>
<th>Mothers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cereal occur:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a lot</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sometimes</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>never</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Arguments about | Children | Mothers |
| Snacks occur:   |          |         |
| a lot           | 16%      | 24%     |
| sometimes       | 42%      | 30%     |
| never           | 42%      | 46%     |

| Arguments about | Children | Mothers |
| Toys occur:     |          |         |
| a lot           | 28%      | 22%     |
| sometimes       | 28%      | 26%     |
| never           | 44%      | 52%     |

*N=50 children and 50 mothers
Table 10

Arguments Over Products Advertised on Television
Working vs. Nonworking Mothers*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Arguments about</th>
<th>Working Mothers</th>
<th>Nonworking Mothers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cereal occur:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a lot</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sometimes</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>never</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Arguments about</th>
<th>Working Mothers</th>
<th>Nonworking Mothers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Snacks occur:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a lot</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>33 1/3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sometimes</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>33 1/3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>never</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>33 1/3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Arguments about</th>
<th>Working Mothers</th>
<th>Nonworking Mothers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Toys occur:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a lot</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sometimes</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>never</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*N=17 working mothers and 33 nonworking mothers
INTERNAL CONFLICT

3. Are there significant differences in the responses of mothers and children regarding the prevalence of internal conflict in the home that has resulted from advertised products?

**Inner Conflict when Products are Refused**

After each question on external conflict in the home, the children were also asked how often they got mad at their mothers when products for each of the three categories were refused. The responses showed that a large percentage of the children were frustrated, especially when denied requested toys (Table 11).

Both mother and child were asked if either felt bad when an item was refused because of cost. No significance was found, for it appeared that both were equally frustrated as 78 percent of the children and 72 percent of the mothers felt bad when items were denied.

Both mother and child were also asked if the child accepts or argues the fact that the mother cannot afford a certain item that the child had requested. The answers proved highly significant, for 88 percent of the mothers claimed that the child accepted the situation while only 64 percent of the children concurred ($X^2 = 6.63$, $p < .01$).

Mothers alone were asked if their child ever
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 11</th>
<th>Inner Conflict or Anger When Products are Refused*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Children who get mad when cereals are refused:</td>
<td>a lot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>sometimes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>never</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children who get mad when snacks are refused:</td>
<td>a lot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>sometimes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>never</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children who get mad when toys are refused:</td>
<td>a lot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>sometimes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>never</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* N=50 children
cried when items were refused. Most of the mothers (62 percent) replied that their child cried a lot or sometimes. When asked if the child accepts the fact that he will have to wait until Christmas or his birthday to receive a certain toy, only 2 percent said that the child argued with them. Mothers were also asked if their child ever complained of not having something since a friend of his had it. The great majority of the mothers (84 percent) stated that this feeling did indeed occur.

Realistic Representation of Commercials and Products on TV

When both mother and child were questioned on the realistic portrayal of children in TV commercials, no significance was found, for both were equally divided in their opinions on the accuracy of portrayal (Table 12). Moreover, only a trend toward significance was approached when asked if children's products were represented accurately on TV ($X^2=2.04$, $p<.10$).

Both mother and child were also asked if they had ever purchased a product that did not live up to the expectations advertised on TV (Table 12). Although there was no significance found, significance was approached ($X^2=3.26$, $p<.10$), for close to one-half of the children and over one-half of the mothers claimed that the product purchased had not performed to expectations. Moreover, it was found that when the ads were misleading and the product was purchased for the child, the child subsequently became quite frustrated (Table 12).
Table 12
Realistic Representation of Commercials and Products on Television*  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Realistic Representation of Children in TV Ads:</th>
<th>Children</th>
<th>Mothers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>yes</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sometimes</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Realistic Representation of Products on TV:</th>
<th>Children</th>
<th>Mothers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>yes</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Product Purchased that did not live up to expectations:</th>
<th>Children</th>
<th>Mothers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parent-Child Discussions about Commercials:</th>
<th>Children</th>
<th>Mothers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage of children frustrated when toy doesn't work:</th>
<th>Children</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage of children who accept the commercial as fact:</th>
<th>Children</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*N=50 children and 50 mothers*
Children alone were asked what type of commercial they preferred--those with adults, children, or cartoons. The overwhelming majority (90 percent) preferred cartoons. The overwhelming majority (98 percent) also felt that the children in TV commercials were having a lot of fun.

When asked if they liked to be like them, 88 percent responded in the affirmative. The children were then asked if the children in TV commercials had the same kind of home and family they had. This question brought a negative response, for 56 percent answered that the children on TV did not live like they did.

Moreover, the children were asked if they felt that the children on TV were happier than they were. The majority (56 percent) felt that the children on TV were indeed happier while 14 percent felt they did not know.

INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION ABOUT ADVERTISING

This study also dealt with the subject of interpersonal communication between mother and child on the subject of advertising as a possible way of combating conflict in the home. Both the mothers and the children were asked if they had ever discussed commercials that the child sees on TV. The answers were quite significant, for 62 percent of the children said yes while only 38 percent of the mothers agreed ($X^2=4.84$, p .05).

Mothers were also asked if they had recently dis-
discussed any specific commercial with their child. Once again a minimal amount of discussion was found, for only 22 percent of the mothers remembered talking with their child about a specific ad in the recent past.

A final question was posed to the children on the truthfulness of advertising. The majority of the children, or 56 percent felt that commercials always tell the truth while 44 percent felt that this was not the case.
Chapter 3

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

It is evident from the results that television ads are quite influential in the lives of younger children. Although the term commercial was not always a familiar word that could be readily identified, every child interviewed could remember some cereal, snack, or toy he had seen on TV. For example, all the children interviewed were familiar with Tony the Tiger. Thus, the mothers were probably right in their estimation that their children knew what a commercial was although the term itself was not part of the child's vocabulary.

However, it was interesting to note that the vast majority of the mothers perceived television as the major source of influence while the children divided their influence between television and the store. These results were also found in the Atkin-Reinhold and Neuman, et al. studies. Atkin and Reinhold suggested that perhaps TV is not as important as some parents feel or maybe the children do not realize that the toy they had seen in the toy store was the same one advertised on the previous Saturday.48

Although it is often difficult for adults to remember where their own initial stimulus originated, it is true that children spend more time watching TV than in
the store. Hence, the two appear to reinforce and work in conjunction with one another.

In the previous Neuman and Atkin and Reinhold studies, it appeared that what children perceived to be the number of requests was usually less than what their mothers' perceived. In the present study, however, although the higher rate of requests by children was true for cereals, and while there were no significant differences found for toys, in the area of snacks, the results were quite surprising. Almost one-third of the mothers stated that their children never asked for snacks while the children themselves said that they did make requests.

Since the majority of black families in the previous Neuman study earned five thousand dollars a year or less, which was lower than the families in the present study, one would conjecture that it is not the economic status of the white children that made them reticent on the subject. The survey could have random sampled a disproportionate amount of extremely domineering parents or extremely docile children, but one might also suggest that the younger ages of the children involved might have something to do with the smaller number of requests.

Moreover, most of the mothers interviewed did not prohibit snacks in the home but bought them regularly for themselves and the rest of the family. Thus, the child may have no need to request a box of cookies if snack food is a part of the usual grocery purchase.
As for yielding, the children reported much less than their mothers in the areas of cereals and toys. However, for snacks, once again, the opposite occurred as the children perceived their mothers yielding to their requests while nearly one-third of the mothers said that they never purchased requested snacks.

This particular question leads back to the previous one, for as a number of mothers claimed that their children never asked for snacks, an equal number stated that they never had to yield to their child's requests.

In the areas of cereal and toys, the majority of mothers claimed that their child asked a lot. However, although a substantial percentage (42 percent) of the mothers yielded a lot to the child's requests of cereal, only 2 percent yielded a lot to toys. Thus, there seems to be a relationship between the influence attempts and yielding of cereal but no relationship in the area of toys.

As for recent influence, specific request, and parental yielding, a concise picture of the average day-to-day influences appear, for it was shown that the great majority of the children had found something they had wanted from the television commercials and had indeed requested the item while most of the mothers could not remember any such request.

However, both sides did agree on the fact that there was little yielding. Thus, it is evident that there are often more requests than the parents attend to
or want to attend to. Hence, many are lost and forgotten until they subsequently appear in future demands.

In the areas of working versus nonworking mothers and married versus unmarried mothers, no consistent pattern emerges in the yielding to the child's requests. Berey and Pollay (1968) stated that working mothers yielded to their children significantly more than nonworking mothers. However, in this study no significance was found in any of the three categories. Although a trend toward significance was approached in the areas of cereals and toys, even these findings were not consistent, for working mothers yielded slightly more for cereals but slightly less for toys.

In both the Berey and Pollay and the present study, the subjects consisted of a small population of a limited segment of society. This particular area is ripe for future investigation as the problem could be investigated on a much larger scale in determining any specific significance.

In the area of external conflict, there was no significance found. However, this does not diminish the findings that arguments over products advertised on television are quite prevalent. No significance was reached because both mother and child similarly agreed on the number of arguments that prevailed in the household. And the results showed that these arguments ranged from nearly close to over one-half of the families interviewed. This in
itself helps illustrate the highly persuasive effect of children's advertising on TV.

As for arguments occurring in households with working versus nonworking mothers, significance was found in the area of snacks. This finding coincides with the Berey and Pollay study where it was found that mothers who work tend to give more to their child materialistically as a way of mitigating the guilt of not spending more time with the child. Hence, there tends to be less arguments in the home of the working mother.

On the other hand, in the homes where the mother does not work, there is no need to placate the child because the mother is always there and often determines what is best for the child, which may or may not coincide with what the child wants.

Nevertheless, one must take into consideration the fact that no significance was found in the areas of cereals and toys. The findings show that the number of arguments occurring for these product categories is about equal no matter if the mother remains home or not. This could occur because of the nature of the products themselves.

Cereals are relatively inexpensive, and since the child eats them for breakfast anyway, mothers, whether working or not, usually yield to the child's requests. Thus, both groups of mothers reported fewer arguments in this area.
Toys, on the other hand, are expensive luxuries, and it appears that all mothers have less of a tendency to yield to their child's demands. Hence, there are more arguments in this area. However, snacks are found somewhere in between—they are inexpensive but not needed. Consequently, working mothers could placate the child more readily in this product category by giving in to the child's requests.

As for the relationship between influence attempts and conflict as reflected in the answers of the mothers and children, the results suggest that in the areas of toys and cereals the number of influence attempts do not necessarily lead to conflict. Although 96 percent of the mothers claimed that their children requested toys a lot or sometimes, 52 percent said that the child never argued about toys. Similar results occurred for cereals (Tables 4 and 9).

Only in the area of snacks are the number of requests and the number of arguments more evenly balanced. Requests for cereals seem to be more easily granted than the other groups. Hence, fewer arguments. Requests for toys, which are asked for quite often but granted less than any of the other groups, also generates fewer conflicts. Perhaps the child realizes the expense of the product, and because requests for toys are granted infrequently, the child is not accustomed to receiving what he wants.

However, in the area of snacks, mothers appear to
be inconsistent. Snacks, more so than toys, appear to be purchased at whim. Since they are relatively inexpensive, the child does not have to wait until his birthday or Christmas to receive it. Snacks are also found in the supermarket where the child often accompanies his mother and which is frequented to a much greater extent than the toy store. Thus, the child sees the item more often, and not only requests it, but pursues the request into a family argument.

Inner conflict is also an area which has emerged as a distinct problem of television advertising in lower income families. Three-quarters of the mothers and children interviewed agreed that frustration occurred when items were refused due to monetary reasons. However, significantly more mothers stated that their children accepted this situation than the children themselves. The age factor involved might account for this difference. Could it be that a child of five to seven years of age is too young to accept the reality of cost when he sees children his own age on TV enjoying the toy he himself was denied.

It would be interesting to see a study of lower income families using older children to determine their reactions to the denial of advertised products. Would a child of ten accept the reality of the situation more readily or become more frustrated due to the pressure of keeping up with one's own peer group.
Inner conflict can also occur because the medium of television is so often unrealistic. However, it appears that the older children of the upper-middle class in the Atkin-Reinhold study and the lower income children of the present group prefer this unreality in the form of cartoons. Cartoons commercials make everything colorful and happy. Children have always been free with their imagination, and this type of commercial probably appeals to them as another means of escape.

However, in the commercials which have filmed real children, it is interesting to note that nearly half of the mothers and over half of the children felt that these commercials were not realistic in the respect that children of all types were not accurately represented. It was not unexpected that mothers should feel that children in commercials are nonrepresentative. Yet it was most unexpected that over half of the children interviewed from five to seven years of age agreed with their mothers.

The great majority of the mothers also claimed that their children cry at least sometimes when items are refused and that they often ask to have something because a friend has recently acquired it. Thus, it appears that anger and frustration are quite prevalent in these children of nonaffluent parents. It also appears that the child becomes frustrated when the toy that was purchased for him does not perform the same as it had on TV. This problem was quite common, for close to one-
half of the children and over one-half of the mothers claimed to have experienced deceptive advertising.

Although many of the advertisements cause a great deal of anger and frustration, even children of this young age group are becoming immuned to the blind acceptance of the steady stream of commercials. It was surprising to find that although more seven year olds were skeptical of commercials than the younger children, still several five and many six year olds claimed that they did not believe everything they viewed on TV. Thus, it is not only the older children who have grown disenchanted with unrealistic representations of products, younger children too have also stated their disbelief.

It was thought at the onset that interpersonal communication can often lead to agreement and alleviate conflict in the home. Hence, questions were included to deal with this subject. However, although it was found that a significant percentage of children claimed to communicate with their mothers, the mothers, in turn, claimed only a minimal amount of discussions.

This question could have been confusing, for when the children were asked if they ever discussed commercials with their mothers, many could have interpreted this to mean a discussion of the products they wanted rather than a discussion of the commercials per se. However, it is evident from the responses of the mothers that discussions on commercials and their purposes do not take place with
any frequency.

The findings also show that the percentage of arguments is much greater than that of interpersonal discussions. Hence, it appears that discussions are usually the exceptions rather than the rule.

The present study has shown that television advertising is quite an effective influence in the lives of younger children. This influence, in turn, becomes the subject of arguments between mother and child and not too infrequently causes anger and frustration for the members involved.

However, more research is needed in the area of conflict in its relationship to personality and environment. In the previous studies, it was found that lower-middle class blacks requested more but argued less than middle and upper-middle class white children. Yet the lower income whites of the present study also argued a great deal. Is the prevalence of conflict related to the age of the child? Is there a relationship between conflict and economic status?

Also, are there any consistent differences between working and nonworking mothers in relation to conflict in the home. And how important is interpersonal communication in helping to alleviate conflict. All the above questions remain for future investigations.
Chapter 4

SUMMARY

The present study explored the prevalence of conflict in the home environment that has resulted from advertised products for children. The research was divided into three areas: the general influence of television advertisements, external conflicts, such as arguments between mother and child, and internal conflicts, such as frustrations and disappointments.

Two corresponding surveys were administered, one designed for the child and one for the mother. Fifty mothers and fifty children were interviewed. The subjects were white and of lower income with families earning under ten thousand dollars a year. The children were of five through seven years of age.

The results showed that television advertising was quite influential in the homes of these children. Significance was found in the children's requests for cereals and snacks but not for toys. Both mothers and children reported more requests for toys than in the other areas. Significance was also found for yielding in all three product categories. There was no significance found for yielding between working and nonworking mothers.

No significance was also found for external conflict between mother and child. It appeared that both
generally agreed on the relative frequency of arguments for each product category. However, significance was found for external conflict in the area of snacks with working versus nonworking mothers.

As for internal conflict, the findings showed that both mother and child felt bad when items were refused for monetary reasons. However, significance was found when mothers perceived their children accepting the situation while most children did not agree.

In the area of realistic representation of children in commercials and the products themselves, it was found that both mother and child agreed that children in TV commercials were not accurately represented and that many of the products purchased did not work the same as they had on TV.

The prevalence of interpersonal communication was studied as a way of alleviating conflict in the home. It was found, however, that discussions on television advertising were the exceptions rather than the rule. Significantly more arguments occurred than discussions on television advertising.
FOOTNOTES


2 Charles K. Atkin and Charles Reinhold, "The Impact of Television Advertising on Children" (paper read at the Advertising Division, Association for Education in Journalism, August, 1972, Carbondale, Illinois).


4 Survey questions in this section are similar to the Atkin-Reinhold study previously cited.


6 Eleanor E. Maccoby, "Why Do Children Watch Television?," Public Opinion Quarterly, 18 (Fall, 1954), 239.

7 Ibid., p. 243.


9 Don L. James, Youth, Media and Advertising (Studies in Marketing, no. 15; Austin: The University of Texas Press, 1971), p. 102.


15 Ibid., p. 23.


21 Ibid.

22 James U. McNeal, Children as Consumers (Austin: Bureau of Business Research, The University of Texas,

24 Don L. James, Youth, Media and Advertising (Studies in Marketing, no. 15; Austin: The University of Texas Press, 1971), p. 105.

25 Ibid., p. 87.

26 Ibid.


29 Ibid., p. 71.


33 Ibid., p. 522.

34 Ibid., p. 523.

35 Charles K. Atkin and Charles Reinhold, "The Impact of Television Advertising on Children" (paper read at the Advertising Division, Association for Education in Journalism, August, 1972, Carbondale, Illinois).

36 Ibid., p. 10.


38 Atkin and Reinhold, op. cit., p. 12.

40 Ibid., pp. 13-16.

41 Ibid., p. 18.

42 Ibid., p. 20.

43 Ibid., p. 22.

44 Ibid., p. 23.

45 Ibid.

46 Ibid., p. 24.


APPENDIX I

Mother’s Questionnaire

Hello, My name is _______. I am (or I am helping) a graduate student at Florida Tech University. We are conducting a graduate study on advertising’s effects on children and would like to interview 5-7 year olds and their mothers.

Boy_______ Girl_______

Age_______ Grade_______

How many children in the family?_______

1. Where do you think your child gets most of his/her ideas about the food he/she wants you to buy?
   a. TV
   b. supermarket
   c. friends
   d. other

2. After watching TV, how often does your child ask you to buy breakfast cereals?
   a. a lot
   b. sometimes
   c. never

3. How often do you buy the cereals he/she asks for?
   a. a lot
   b. sometimes
   c. Never

4. After watching TV, how often does your child ask you to buy candy or snacks for him/her?
   a. a lot
   b. sometimes
   c. never

5. How often do you buy the candy he/she asks for?
   a. a lot
   b. sometimes
   c. never
6. Where do you think your child gets most of his/her ideas about the toys he/she wants to have?
   a. TV
   b. store
   c. friends
   d. others

7. After watching TV, how often does your child ask you to buy toys for him/her?
   a. a lot
   b. sometimes
   c. never

8. How often do you buy the toys he/she asks for?
   a. a lot
   b. sometimes
   c. never

9. In the last few days has your child requested any specific product?
   a. yes
   b. no

10. (If yes) what was it?

11. Did you buy it for him/her?

12. How often does your child argue with you for the cereals he/she wants?
   a. a lot
   b. sometimes
   c. never

13. How often does your child argue with you for the candy or snacks he/she wants?
   a. a lot
   b. sometimes
   c. never

14. How often does your child argue with you for the toys he/she wants?
   a. a lot
   b. sometimes
   c. never
15. Does your child ever cry when items are refused?
   a. a lot
   b. sometimes
   c. never

16. Does your child ever ask why he cannot have something since a friend of his has it?
   a. yes
   b. no

17. If you tell your child you cannot afford a certain item, how does he/she react?
   a. accepts it
   b. argues

18. If you tell your child that you will give him/her a certain toy for Christmas or his/her birthday, how does he/she react?
   a. accepts it
   b. argues

19. Does it ever make you feel bad that you cannot buy your child a specific item because of cost?
   a. yes
   b. no

20. Do you think the children on TV commercials are realistic in the extent that they are like your own child?
   a. yes
   b. no

21. Do you think the children's products are represented accurately?
   a. yes
   b. no

22. Is there any product you bought for your child after you or your child saw it on TV that did not live up to its expectations?
   a. yes
   b. no
23. Do you ever talk to your child about what advertising is?
   a. yes
   b. no

24. Do you think your child understands what a commercial is?
   a. yes
   b. no

25. Have you recently talked about any specific commercial with your child?
   a. yes
   b. no

   (If yes) which one?

(Demographics) Now I would just like to ask you a couple questions about yourself.

Do you work?
   a. yes
   b. no

   (If yes) full time _______ part time _______

Are your hours during the day or night?
   a. day
   b. night

Are you presently married?
   a. yes    widowed _______
   b. no     separated _______
              divorced _______

How much education have you had?
   a. grade school
   b. junior high
   c. some high school
   d. high school graduate
   e. some college
   f. college graduate
APPENDIX II

Children's Questionnaire

Hello, my name is ______ and I would like to ask you a few questions about things you see on TV.

Boy_________  Girl_________

Age_________  Grade_______

1. Do you watch TV on Saturday mornings?
   a. yes
   b. no

2. What is your favorite TV show?

3. Do you know what a commercial is? (Have them explain it. If they are unable to tell you, explain it to them).

4. When the Saturday morning commercials come on, how many do you watch?
   a. a lot
   b. some
   c. none

5. Where do you get most of your ideas about the cereal you want your mother to buy?
   a. TV
   b. store
   c. friends
   d. other

6. How often do you ask your mother to buy cereal for you?
   a. a lot
   b. sometimes
   c. never

7. How often does your mother buy the cereal you ask for?
   a. a lot
   b. sometimes
   c. never
8. When your mother won't buy the cereal you want, how often do you argue with her?
   a. a lot
   b. sometimes
   c. never

9. How often do you get mad at her for not buying the cereal you want?
   a. a lot
   b. sometimes
   c. never

10. Where do you get most of your ideas about the snacks you want your mother to buy?
    a. TV
    b. store
    c. friends
    d. other

11. How often do you ask your mother to buy cookies and candy for you?
    a. a lot
    b. sometimes
    c. never

12. How often does your mother buy the cookies and candy you ask for?
    a. a lot
    b. sometimes
    c. never

13. When your mother won't buy the cookies and candy you want, how often do you argue with her?
    a. a lot
    b. sometimes
    c. never

14. How often do you get mad at her for not buying the cookies and candy you want?
    a. a lot
    b. sometimes
    c. never
15. Where do you get most of your ideas about the toys you want your mother to buy?
   a. TV
   b. store
   c. friends
   d. other

16. How often do you ask your mother to buy toys for you?
   a. a lot
   b. sometimes
   c. never

17. How often does your mother buy the toys you ask for?
   a. a lot
   b. sometimes
   c. never

18. When your mother won't buy the toys you want, how often do you argue with her?
   a. a lot
   b. sometimes
   c. never

19. How often do you get mad at her for not buying the toys you want?
   a. a lot
   b. sometimes
   c. never

20. In the last few days have you seen something on TV you wanted?
   a. yes
   b. no

   (If yes) what was it?

Did you ask your mother to buy it for you?
   a. a lot
   b. sometimes
   c. never

Did she?
   a. yes
   b. no
21. Is there anything you have seen on TV that you want a lot but know you can’t have?
   a. yes
   b. no
   
   (If yes) what was it?

22. Does it make you feel bad when your mother can’t buy you something because it is too much money?
   a. yes
   b. no

23. Do you get mad at her when she says it is too much money?
   a. yes
   b. no

24. What do you like better, seeing commercials with grown-ups, with children, or with cartoons?
   a. grown-ups
   b. children
   c. cartoons

25. When you see children playing in the commercials on TV do you think they are having a lot of fun?
   a. yes
   b. no

26. Would you like to be like them?
   a. yes
   b. no

27. Do you think the children in TV commercials have the same kind of home and family you have?
   a. yes
   b. no

28. Do you think they are happier than you are?
   a. yes
   b. no
29. After you get something that you saw on TV, do you think you have as much fun as the children on TV had?
   a. yes
   b. no

30. Does the toy you saw on TV always work the same after you get it home?
   a. yes
   b. no

   (If no) does this happen a lot to you?

31. Do you get mad when the toy doesn't work the way it should?
   a. yes
   b. no

32. Do you ever talk to your mother about commercials you see on TV?
   a. yes
   b. no

33. Do you think that commercials always tell the truth?
   a. yes
   b. no


Maccoby, Eleanor E. "Why Do Children Watch Television?" Public Opinion Quarterly, 18 (Fall, 1954), 239-44.


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