

CYNICAL CONSUMERS: DANGEROUS ENEMIES, LOYAL FRIENDS

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Doctor of Philosophy

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by  
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The undersigned, appointed by the dean of the Graduate School, have examined the dissertation entitled

**CYNICAL CONSUMERS:  
DANGEROUS ENEMIES, LOYAL FRIENDS**

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This dissertation is dedicated to my parents,  
who encouraged achievement without pressuring for success,  
who lived as role models without expecting me to fit a mold,  
and, who, without fail, expressed enthusiastic, tireless and  
utterly convincing interest in the topic of consumer cynicism.

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# CYNICAL CONSUMERS: DANGEROUS ENEMIES, LOYAL FRIENDS

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## ABSTRACT

This dissertation introduces and develops the construct of consumer cynicism, characterized by a perception of a pervasive, systemic lack of integrity in the marketplace, and investigates how cynical consumers behave in the marketplace. The goal of the dissertation was to:

- triangulate the findings of a previously completed qualitative study
- develop a scale, laying groundwork for future research
- investigate trait antecedents
- investigate cynics' behavior in the marketplace
- investigate the cynicism-brand loyalty relationship.

The cynicism construct is uniquely suited to explain the underlying psychological processes hinted at in practitioner perceptions of the growing mistrust and consumer research about rebellion behaviors, as well as to offer insight on consumers' response to the increasingly sophisticated market.

The consumer cynicism construct was initially developed through a grounded theory study of in-depth interviews. Interview analysis showed these consumers share a consistent, complex network of marketplace beliefs and negative affect, which shapes their behavior in the marketplace. Based on the qualitative study, consumer cynicism is

defined as a stable, learned attitude toward the marketplace characterized by the perception that pervasive opportunism among firms exists and that this opportunism creates a harmful consumer marketplace.

A series of studies was conducted to develop a scale to measure consumer cynicism. A large-scale national survey provided the final scale validation sample and primary research instrument for testing hypotheses. Nine studies are reported here, establishing internal consistency, invariant unidimensional factor structure, scale norms, test-retest reliability as well as face validity, known-groups validity, convergent validity, discriminant validity and nomological validity. Consumer cynicism is shown to impact marketplace behaviors and perceptions, leading to marketplace shaping or consumer activism and criticism behaviors, marketplace withdrawal, perceptions of purchase risk, and category-specific cynicism. At the level of a particular purchase, category-specific cynicism is shown to be associated with brand support behaviors and with increased importance of trust issues, rather than satisfaction or value, in brand loyalty.

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

*“[R]elationships between companies and consumers are troubled at best. When we talk to people about their lives as consumers ...we hear about the confusing, stressful, insensitive and manipulative marketplace in which they feel trapped and victimized....Customer satisfaction rates are at an all-time low, while complaints, boycotts and other expressions of consumer discontent rise.” – Fournier, Dobscha & Mick (1998, p. 43)*

Although scholars use terms like brand commitment, trust, loyalty and community, some consumers seem to experience their relationships with firms as superficial, commercial, distant, institutional, artificial and manipulative, from birthday cards from a salesperson they can't remember to the fake smile on the clerk's face, from planned obsolescence to bait-and-switch sales, from the car dealer who pretends to bend policy to the waitress who refuses to allow any substitutions.

Practitioners allude to growing cynicism, suspicion, skepticism – even “spinicism” (Lowe, 2003), often as to justify using covert or undercover marketing techniques to reach this jaded consumer. For example, a Nissan campaign involved graffiti scrawled over its street posters advertising the Nissan Altima (Walker, 2003). The graffiti web address lead to a pseudo-independent poetic urban culture website sponsored by Nissan, and the graffiti is done by Nissan itself. As paraphrased by Slate writer Rob Walker, Nissan campaign manager Jon Cropper said the strategy responded to the “‘gray energy’ currently drabbing up American culture at a time of distrust and deceit.”

The Yankelovich Monitor report (Wood, 2004) shows consumer trust declining steadily over the last 30 years; 80 percent agreed that “American business is too concerned about making a profit and not concerned enough about its responsibilities to workers, consumers and the environment.” Similarly, Brand Strategy reported that 54

percent of Europeans believe “most TV advertising is devious,” and 42 percent of British consumers lack trust in brands today (Lidstone, 2005). Russ Lidstone, then of JWT advertising agency, accuses marketer hyperbole of causing the cynicism, suggesting marketers have tended to respond by shouting louder. Instead, he calls for honesty and what he calls “brand humility,” pointing to the success of no-nonsense brands like Ben and Jerry’s. In spite of apparent practitioner interest, consumer scholars have not addressed these issues in a comprehensive manner.

Furthermore, an increasing body of research on consumer rebellion behaviors (culture jamming, marketing heretics) suggests at least some consumers are aggravated enough to fight back (Dobscha, 1998; Fournier et al., 1998; Ritson & Dobscha, 1999; Sharpe & Pollay, 2002; Ward & Ostrom, 2006) or withdraw as in voluntary simplicity (Zavestoski, 2002). The consumer cynicism construct may explain the psychological basis for some of this consumer rebellion; other consumers share their cynicism but express it in less radical ways.

This dissertation encompasses nine studies that introduce and develop the construct of consumer cynicism, characterized by a perception of pervasive, systemic opportunism in the marketplace, and investigates how consumer cynicism impacts marketplace behaviors and perceptions. The goals of this dissertation were to:

- triangulate the findings of my completed qualitative study
- develop a scale, laying groundwork for future research
- investigate trait antecedents
- investigate cynics’ behavior in the marketplace
- investigate the cynicism-brand loyalty relationship.

## **Contributions of the Research**

This research introduces the construct of consumer cynicism, as developed through analysis of in-depth qualitative interviews, develops a consumer cynicism scale, places consumer cynicism within a nomological net, and investigates how this individual difference variable impacts consumers' behavior in the marketplace. The cynicism construct is uniquely suited to explain the underlying psychological processes hinted at in practitioner perceptions of the growing mistrust and consumer research about rebellion behaviors, as well as offering insight on consumers' response to the increasingly sophisticated market.

The Association for Consumer Research Task Force on Transformative Consumer Research has called for further research on consumer resistance (Mick, 2005). Public purpose research has also been identified by the Association for Consumer Research as a research priority, and this dissertation received funding designated for public purpose research as the recipient of the ACR Sheth Foundation Dissertation Award.

## **Defining consumer cynicism**

Informed by cynicism, skepticism and alienation literature in political science, psychology, management and sociology, I initially developed the consumer cynicism construct through a grounded theory study of in-depth interviews with 23 consumers, detailed in Chapter 3 of this dissertation. Interview participants perceived a continuum of different levels of marketplace skepticism or wariness, and, for those at the high end of this continuum, their wariness was an important part of their identity as consumers.

Interview analysis showed these consumers share a consistent, complex network of marketplace beliefs and negative affect, which shapes their behavior in the marketplace. The beliefs, affect and behaviors interview participants described fit well with core elements of the cynicism construct as developed in other contexts but also demonstrate aspects of cynicism particular to the consumer context. Based on the qualitative study, consumer cynicism is defined as a stable, learned attitude toward the marketplace characterized by the perception that pervasive opportunism among firms exists and that this opportunism creates a harmful consumer marketplace.. This dissertation extends this research by developing a scale and further developing understanding of the construct through its relationship to other constructs and behavioral consequences.

### **Antecedents of consumer cynicism**

Interview analysis suggests consumer cynicism is an enduring individual difference variable, but it is still a learned attitude. Cynical consumers can recall a time when they were not cynical and can point to particular incidents which caused them to become cynical, while consumers with more moderate skepticism of the marketplace refer more to a gradual development of persuasion knowledge and consumer sophistication as part of a natural maturation process. The critical incidents cynical consumers described reflect core elements of the cynicism construct: a disillusionment and perception of manipulation. Analysis of the interviews offers insight into the development of consumer cynicism, which helps shape the construct.

This dissertation investigated more basic personality traits associated with consumer cynicism. Because these traits are more basic, they can be seen as antecedents

of consumer cynicism. This study investigated one basic or cardinal trait, negative affectivity, and two central or compound traits: need for cognition and societal cynicism. Only societal cynicism was strongly supported as an antecedent trait.

### **Consequences of consumer cynicism**

Cynical interview participants' marketplace behaviors differed from their less cynical counterparts in several categories. Consistent with behaviors typically associated with cynicism in other contexts such as politics, cynical consumers engaged in marketplace criticism behaviors (e.g. mocking advertisements and commercialism) and withdrawal behaviors (e.g. voluntary simplicity lifestyles and boycotts). In addition, cynical interview participants engaged in two categories of marketplace behaviors particular to the consumption context: risk management efforts (e.g. checking Consumer Reports) and behaviors motivated by a sense of social responsibility (e.g. paying a higher price for a fair-trade brand). Both of these groups of behaviors include forming strong partnerships with trusted brands and stores. Although the initial expectation was that cynical consumers would show less loyalty, cynical interview participants showed *more* enthusiastic brand and store commitment than their less cynical counterparts. A goal of this dissertation was to triangulate these interesting findings through a quantitative survey. This investigation met with mixed results, supporting the underlying principle but not showing a statistically significant direct impact for consumer cynicism.

## **Scale development**

The fourth contribution of this dissertation is a measure of consumer cynicism, developed to rigorous standards of validity and statistical reliability for use in future research.

## **Organization of the Dissertation**

First, literature on cynicism and consumer rebellion is presented to provide a background for the qualitative study (Chapter 2). Second, the qualitative study methodology and the resulting grounded theory framework for the consumer cynicism construct is presented (Chapter 3). Third, related consumer literature is discussed in the context of the consumer cynicism construct as it emerged from the interview analysis (Chapter 4), building a foundation for the research objectives of the dissertation (Chapter 5). Chapter 6 summarizes the extensive series of scale development process and addresses statistical performance and validity issues. Chapter 7 discusses methodology and results of hypothesis testing studies.

## **CHAPTER 2: BACKGROUND LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Cynicism Literature**

Social commentators have been lamenting the rise of cynicism in some form since the early Greek Cynics (Govier, 1997). With titles like “The Culture of Cynicism: American Morality in Decline” (Stivers, 1994), “Everybody Knows: Cynicism in America” (Chaloupka, 1999), and “The Cynical Society” (Goldfarb, 1991), recent commentators claim societal cynicism is reaching crisis proportions. Popular literature discussions of the roots of cynicism often point to Western consumer culture, especially advertising, as a major driver of this shift toward an increasing perception of a cultural hollowness (Goldman, 1996; Stivers, 1994), but the impact of cynicism on the consumption experience itself has not been explored.

Although cynicism has been a philosophical and literary construct for centuries, it has emerged as a social scientific construct only in about the last 50 years. In addition to general or societal cynicism, social scientists have identified specific cynicisms targeted at specific institutions: work (occupational) cynicism, organizational or employee cynicism and organizational change cynicism (Abraham, 2000; Dean, Brandes, & Dhwardkar, 1998). This paper offers consumer cynicism as another specific cynicism and lays the groundwork for future research.

### **Societal and personality cynicism**

Societal cynicism, or cynicism towards society and its institutions, has been conceptualized as a relatively stable, learned attitude, which can be influenced by events.

Abraham (2000) describes this type of cynicism as the product of a breach of social contract between the individual and society. Societal cynicism and the other types are seen as learned attitudes resulting from disconfirmation of expectations. The societal cynicism construct most closely matches modern use of the term in common speech.

Based on a national telephone survey (n=850) specifically focused on cynicism, Kanter and Mirvis (1989) claim 43 percent of Americans were classified as cynical, 41 percent noncynical (“upbeat”), and 16 percent were “wary skeptics.” According to their much-cited popular book *The Cynical Americans* (Kanter & Mirvis, 1989), cynicism is growing, fueled by unrealistically high expectations (fed by media, especially television advertising), disappointment in oneself and others to live up to those expectations, and the resulting disillusionment with the “system.” They cite the Vietnam War, Watergate, the assassinations of President Kennedy, Martin Luther King Jr. and Sen. Robert Kennedy, and the disappointing results of “Reaganomics” as historical contributors to the growing cynicism. Recent events such as the dot.com crash, the Enron scandal, and perceived commercial exploitation of the September 11 tragedies would likely be added to the list today. Interestingly, other scholars using a similar scale found only 2 percent of their college student sample were classified as cynical or very cynical, while 84 percent were in the skeptical realist category (S. J. Guastello, Rieke, Guastello, & Billings, 1992). The addition of a “don’t know” response option may partially explain the difference in findings.

Kanter and Mirvis and later scholars who present cynicism as a learned attitude build on the work of personality psychologists, who presented cynicism as a negative personality trait describing an overall outlook on human nature. The personality scholars

primarily focused on identifying and measuring cynicism as subscales of the Machiavellianism scale, the Cook-Medley Hostility Scale, and the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory MMPI. Although the existence of three established scales might appear to reflect considerable scholarly interest, the development of the general personality scales was the goal of the work – not to specifically investigate the cynicism construct or its implications for human behavior. Cynicism has consistently emerged as a dimension in factor analysis tests of the scales (Clark, 1994; Comrey, 1958; Han, Weed, Calhoun, & Butcher, 1995; Hunter, Gerbing, & Boster, 1982; Lamdan & Lorr, 1975; Vleeming, 1984). Other psychology-based research investigated demographic differences, finding that minorities are generally more cynical than whites and men more cynical than women (Badgett, Fair, & Hunkler, 1974; Moore & Handal, 1980; Witt & Gynther, 1975). Scales developed through personality cynicism research have been used for studies on other types of cynicism, including such items as “No one cares much what happens to you;” “I commonly wonder what hidden reason another person may have for doing something nice for me.” (Abraham, 2000)

For example, Kanter and Mirvis’ cynicism scale ( $\alpha = .83$ ) is derived from the personality scales and is a short version of Wrightsman’s philosophies of human nature scale (Wrightsman, 1991):

- Most people will tell a lie if they can gain by it.
- People claim to have ethical standards, but few stick to them when money is at stake.
- People pretend to care more about one another than they really do.
- The unselfish person is taken advantage of in today’s world.
- Most people are just out for themselves.
- People inwardly dislike putting themselves out to help other people.

## **Specific cynicisms**

Curiously, the primary focus of most social scientific research specifically investigating cynicism has been the relationship between cynicism and attitudes likely to affect performance at work. The exception has been a small number of articles related to politics and/or the media (Gamson, Croteau, Hoynes, & Sasson, 1992; Grabb, 1979; Owens & Capel, 1979; Perloff & Kinsey, 1992; Schudson, 1999; T. L. Wright & Arbuthnot, 1974).

The role of cynicism in work performance began to gain attention with studies of work or occupational cynicism investigating social service workers' emotional stress and burnout. Researchers have focused on such areas as police, nurses, firefighters and corrections officers (e.g. Egan, 1982; Rush, 1991; e.g. Ulmer, 1992), sometimes investigating work cynicism's function as a healthy coping strategy for workers who face highly emotional problems with little hope of success, sometimes considering cynical workers' diminished ability to connect with clients.

Mirvis and Kanter (1992) discussed cynicism in a broad social sense, but their concern was the implication that an increasingly cynical workforce would lose faith in management, work commitment and company loyalty along with faith in human goodwill and American politics. Several studies showed a correlation between general cynicism and other negative work attitudes (D. D. Guastello & Pessig, 1998; S. J. Guastello et al., 1992). Later scholars identified another area of specific cynicism: organizational cynicism (toward one's employer) and a subcategory of organizational change cynicism (toward the employer's efforts to institute change). Andersson (1996) distinguishes between a general or societal cynicism and the specific organizational cynicism. She

defines general cynicism as an attitude of contempt, frustration and distrust toward an object or multiple objects, susceptible to change by exposure to factors in the environment. She defines organizational cynicism as “an attitude characterized by a) the attribution of self-interested behavior to management; b) the assumption that organizational processes operate under these apparent self interests; and c) the belief that these conditions are unlikely to change.” (p. 1400)

Measures of societal cynicism and measures related to specific cynicisms have been shown to behave differently in studies (Abraham, 2000; Adams & John, 1997; S. J. Guastello et al., 1992), which suggests they are distinct constructs. Societal cynicism in particular seems to be associated with positive work and job attitudes, perhaps because low expectations for society as a whole allow the cynic to be pleasantly surprised his own employer is an exception.

Dean et al. (1998) provides a concise and useful definition of the specific organizational cynicism construct based on attitude theory:

*Organizational cynicism is a negative attitude toward one's employing organization comprising three dimensions: 1) a belief that the organization lacks integrity 2) negative affect toward the organization; and 3) tendencies to disparaging and critical behaviors toward the organization that are consistent with these beliefs and affect. (p. 345)*

### **Beyond disappointment: The development of cynicism**

General or specific, cynicism is described as a learned attitude formed through the process Kanter and Mirvis describe: “unrealistic expectations” lead to disappointment, which leads to disillusion, a “sense of being let down or of letting oneself down, and more darkly, the sense of being deceived, betrayed or used by others” (1989, p.3). The first steps of this process correspond to widely accepted expectancy disconfirmation

theory. Satisfaction is determined more by performance in relation to expectations than by performance in any objective sense. Scholars have portrayed negative disconfirmation of expectations as the primary mechanism for customer dissatisfaction (e.g. Oliver & Bearden, 1985). Yet cynics are not merely dissatisfied – they are bitter, angry and resentful. They adopt the cynical attitude to ensure they will not be “taken for suckers” again (Kanter & Mirvis, 1989, p.3). In academic terms, the cynicism attitude is characterized by “negative affect” (Dean et al., 1998).

The anger and resentment may be targeted in part at the people or institutions that disappointed but also may be targeted at a source blamed for setting up the unrealistic expectation or empty promises. Marketers in the business of expectation management may find themselves among those targets.

This notion of empty promises or false appearances is a critical element common to all conceptualizations of cynicism. Although the deliberate creation of unrealistic expectations is not always included in formal definitions of cynicism, references to a fundamental disconnect between a publicly presented image and reality characterize all discussions of cynicism. When people describe themselves as cynical, they typically believe they have seen an unpleasant truth – or even simply an unpleasant emptiness – behind the attractive appearance – they have “seen the wizard behind the curtain” or they have taken off the “rose-colored glasses.” Cynical people can often recall a specific moment when they glimpsed this harsher reality, and may hold the naïve in contempt for their ignorance or wistfully wish they could believe or “buy into” the idealized view once again.

Although the original Greek Cynics' variety of cynicism was more proactive and less mocking, it too focused on making societal hypocrisies apparent. Today, terms such as fakery, false witness to ideals, deception, betrayal, lies, hypocrisy, false images, distrust and disbelief are prevalent in popular and academic cynicism literature. Chaloupka describes cynicism as "the condition of lost belief," opening his book with the words of a popular song "Everybody knows that the boat is leaking; everybody knows the captain lied. Everybody got this broken feeling like their father or their dog just died" (Chaloupka, 1999, p. xiv).

The words of the song point to three other characteristics of cynical disillusionment: ongoing deception, shared cynicism, and the pain of disillusionment. First, the cynic perceives not simply that a deception occurred, but that the deception is ongoing, probably being deliberately perpetuated by someone.

Second, the cynic perceives a fellowship or bond with others who are in on the sick joke; cynicism is shared. Scholars refer to a culture of cynicism (Chaloupka, 1999; Goldfarb, 1991; Stivers, 1994). In common speech, people openly discuss helping the naïve to see the light or trying to gently lower idealists' expectations to minimize the inevitable suffering when illusions are later shattered, or, less kindly, trying to jolt the irritating Pollyanna into selfish bitterness like the rest of us. In fact, *not* sharing the dark truth may be seen as participating in the ongoing deception or cover-up. In the consumer context, the growing presence of anti-commercial groups like Adbusters and Commercial Alert may reflect a growing culture of cynicism.

Third, the song makes an unusually overt reference to the fact that the disillusionment process is painful. Cynics generally seem to act like they are too

sophisticated to care and may even express contempt for those who still find the truth shocking. Social commentators disagree on whether modern cynics are apathetic and unemotional, preferring to mock from the sidelines (Kanter & Mirvis, 1989), or whether they are angry or passionate activists (Chaloupka, 1999). In either case, even when cynics now feel jaded or hardened, they typically recall when they first became a cynic as a sad, angry time period or a loss of innocence. The painful disillusionment process is a common theme in art and literature, such as the television show “American Dreams.”

The fundamental disconnect between the presented image and reality is necessary but not sufficient for cynicism. Cynicism also incorporates a feeling of manipulation or ethical violation, exploiting others for one’s own interest (Chaloupka, 1999). The pretense of unselfishness to mask selfish goals lies at the heart of the cynicism concept.

### **Consequences of cynicism**

Although the development process provides valuable insight on cynicism, cynicism itself is described in most research and social commentary as a relatively stable learned attitude (in some cases personality trait), with little emphasis on where it came from and more emphasis on its effects. Cynicism is an attitude characterized by a belief that “selfishness and fakery” are typical behaviors or motivations of the cynicism target and by negative affect toward the target. Given these beliefs, the cynic protects himself through many different behaviors. The simplest and theoretically most adaptive behavior is to lower expectations to insulate the cynic against further disillusionment. Withdrawal or distancing is probably the most commonly lamented behavior (Chaloupka, 1999; Govier, 1997; Kanter & Mirvis, 1989; Ulmer, 1992). Cynics may disengage by choosing

not to participate or withholding emotional commitment, a strategy that serves to protect the cynic from getting ethically dirty in a corrupt system and to prevent futile effort toward change (thus, avoiding disappointment). Some scholars differentiate between mocking cynics, who passively disengage, and constructive cynics, who work for change, the latter more closely resembling the ancient Greek Cynics (Chaloupka, 1999; Govier, 1997). Cynics may also use their belief in the basic selfishness of others to justify their own manipulative techniques (Goldfarb, 1991). Cynics may also express anger or try to unmask the manipulator. Frequently, cynics do not simply stand by but also mock – and this mocking has the effect of spreading cynicism to others and contributing to a culture of cynicism. The cynicism attitude also tends to spiral within the individual – based on the belief that deception and manipulation are likely, the cynic must be alert for others' hidden motives etc., thus constantly finding real or imagined examples to support the belief.

### **Consumer culture as a cause of societal cynicism**

Cynicism scholars often point to the rise of consumer culture as a root cause of rising cynicism in society, and many of the negative outcomes of consumer culture identified by consumer scholars resemble symptoms or elements of cynicism.

#### *Cultural emphasis on selfish gratification*

“The love of well-being has now become the predominant taste of the nation; the great current of human passions runs in that channel and sweeps everything along in its course,” Alexis de Tocqueville proclaimed in his famous “Democracy in America” in 1835. Many scholars trace the rise of consumer culture to the turn of 19<sup>th</sup> century as the

middle class began to enjoy the fruits of economic surplus and mass production (Bocock, 1993; de Tocqueville, 2000; Stivers, 1994)

Stivers (1994) argues that the modern notion of well-being “turns happiness and health into material values,” a shift from earlier ideas of well-being as “a consequence of moral action and character, a harmony one achieves with oneself and others” (p.44) or “good health, good sense and good conscience” (p.48). He traces this shift to the rise of the bourgeoisie in the 18<sup>th</sup> century: “Social emulation of the nobility by the bourgeoisie and of the bourgeoisie by the working class had become a reality through mass consumption.”

The cultural emphasis on selfishness, while certainly not sufficient to cause cynicism itself, logically could be expected to contribute to the development of cynicism, which perceives selfishness at the “core of human nature,” (Kanter & Mirvis, 1989). Cynicism writers suggest a cultural emphasis on self-interest, rather than societal or community interest as a source of cynicism (Spencer, 1996).

Furthermore, the prevalence of the market exchange paradigm leads to framing other interactions on a market basis, complete with the presumption of self-interest. Government, educational, charitable and even religious institutions are seen as offering something in exchange for something else; participants are seen as choosing a packaged option from an available set to satisfy their needs. This market exchange paradigm emphasizes the selfish aspects of most of public and private life. Increasingly, these nonprofit institutions are employing the language of marketing, making the market exchange paradigm more salient for the lay person.

### *Creation of a false image*

Advertising and other tools of the marketing promotional mix play a starring role in lamentations about society's increasing shift away from substance and toward deliberately created images, eloquently described in Stuart Ewen's *All Consuming Images* (1988). Whether advertising is a cause or a reflection of the social shift, the fact is that advertising and marketing are widely associated with empty images.

Pollay (1986) uses the following quote to summarize his extensive review of advertising-related literature outside the business arena:

*"Many social critics have stated that advertising is essentially concerned with exalting the materialistic virtues of consumption by exploiting achievement drives and emulative anxieties, employing tactics of hidden manipulations, playing on emotions, maximizing appeal and minimizing information, trivializing, eliminating objective considerations, contriving illogical situations, and generally reducing men, women and children to the role of irrational consumer."*

*Many Voices, One World, by Sean MacBride 1980.*

Such harsh viewpoints are not restricted to academics. Beliefs that advertising at best conveys exaggerated or idealistic representations extend to consumers themselves. "Because virtually all citizens seem to recognize this tendency of advertising language to distort, advertising seems to turn us into a community of cynics, and we doubt advertisers, the media and authority in all its forms," Pollay writes (1986), yet he also notes "...we like to think of ourselves as personally immune to advertising's inducements. This is clearly a delusion for some or perhaps many or even most of the public....Advertising operates successfully despite the cynics, virtually all of whom feel sufficiently sophisticated so as to be immune."

Inc.com writer Rob Walker (2004) describes Adbusters founder Kalle Lasn's perspective on branding as offering a false promise of "instant cool": "It's a fleeting cool

– a lie, a concocted image that stands for nothing but profit, manipulation and exploitation.”

Whether societal cynicism can be said to be rising and which of the myriad broad historical changes may be responsible is a complex question that is difficult to address empirically. Consumption culture and marketing tactics may make convenient scapegoats for social critics, but the relationship between perceptions of marketing tactics and elements of the cynicism construct is strong, and it is logical that cynical attitudes would find a target in the marketplace and its players.

## **Evidence of Cynicism in Consumer Literature**

Cynicism has not been studied in the consumption context per se, but research in other areas of consumer behavior suggests consumers may in fact be feeling cynical. The consumer alienation construct incorporates attitudes of distrust toward businesses and a feeling of being manipulated (Allison, 1978; Durand & Lambert, 1985; Lambert, 1980), but also incorporates elements unrelated to cynicism, such as confidence in purchasing skills. Scholars have also found evidence of considerable consumer skepticism toward advertising claims (i.e. Koslow, 2000), which relates to the disbelief component of cynicism but does not encompass the perception of deliberate manipulation or the negative affect of cynicism.

A growing body of research on anti-consumption attitudes, exemplified by the 2002 *Psychology and Marketing* special issue on the topic and the *Culture Jamming* film presented at ACR 2002, suggests at least some consumers are feeling enough discontent to rebel through behaviors ranging from voluntary simplicity to defacing advertisements.

The consumer cynicism construct presented here contributes by providing an underlying psychological explanation for these different expressions of consumer discontent.

Literature on cynicism in other contexts points to two major types of behavioral consequences: Disparaging and withdrawal behaviors.

### *Disparaging behaviors*

Recent consumer research has investigated some intriguing examples of disparaging type behaviors. For example, rebellion against the marketplace, particularly big business and the passive role of the consumer, is a major theme at the Burning Man event. Burning Man participants mask brand names and logos and mock corporations and the consumer (Kozinets, 2002). Adbusters magazine, a forum for critical views on consumerism and advertising, promotes “culture jamming,” or rebellion tactics such as purchasing advertising with anti-advertising or anti-consumption messages, defacing outdoor advertising “billboard liberation,” displaying public art critical of consumption, and organizing boycotts, such as Adbusters’ “Buy Nothing Day.” Adbusters participated in the consumer cynicism scale development as a known groups test. A more radical Canadian group, dissatisfied with Adbusters’ level of resistance, organized “Steal Something Day” (Rumbo, 2002). Similarly, “marketing heretics” alter advertisements and logos to create oppositional messages (Ritson & Dobscha, 1999). Quotes from Burning Man participants and commentary from Adbusters magazine and website reflect attitudes very consistent with the consumer cynicism construct developed here. It is likely that many Burning Man participants, Adbusters subscribers and marketing heretics are consumer cynics.

In their analysis of the Starbucks brandscape, Thompson and Arsel (2004) describe oppositional localists who “feel exploited by a Machiavellian marketing machine,” and state, “Their preferences for local coffee shops are anchored by a steadfast conviction that they possess insight onto the devious and diabolical workings of global corporate capitalism that is lacking among the general population.” (p. 637). A key element of the definition of consumer cynicism can be seen in this characterization: perception of opportunism or extreme self-interest in the marketplace. The sense of being “in the know” also echoes themes from cynicism literature.

Elements of cynicism can also be seen in Ward and Ostrom’s recent article, which analyzes the content of customer-created complaint websites from a protest-framing perspective.

*To convince the public to join them in shunning a firm, consumer complaint site creators: 1) present commercial failures as betrayals of customer rights worthy of public outrage; 2) “amplify” the seriousness of the harm inflicted; 3) stereotype firm executives as evil betrayers of trusting consumers; 4) point to the posted complaints of other consumers to attribute blame to the firm; 5) present themselves as crusaders fighting for the respect due all consumers; 6) encourage other consumers to perceive themselves as a group, united in their opposition to the firm. (Ward & Ostrom, 2006, p. 220)*

Perceived betrayal of trust is the core issue that drives these consumers to take such extreme action as putting up a website at their own expense, dedicated to collecting the complaints of other consumers. Furthermore, these angry consumers characterize the firms’ action as deliberately manipulative and even evil. By taking their complaints to the masses and providing a forum for fellow consumers to vent, a culture of cynicism is created. The consumer-created complaint web sites are motivated by both a desire for retaliation and a desire to improve the marketplace for all consumers.

Besides more globally targeted disparaging behaviors, consumer research has investigated negative or distrustful attitudes toward particular companies (such as anti-brand loyalty or oppositional brand loyalty) and in some cases retaliatory behaviors. For example, Aron (2001) describes some typical forms of retaliation by grudgeholding consumers including establishing or participating in online hate communities, boycotting, threats, lawsuits, and disrupting other customers or creating a scene. Other forms of retaliation include vandalism, making a mess, negative word of mouth, and formal complaints to oversight bodies (Huefner et al., 2002). Grudgeholders and other consumers who rebel against particular companies do not necessarily share the globally targeted consumer cynicism likely felt by Adbusters and Burning Man participants. However, consumer cynics might be more likely to be particularly active when dissatisfied and quick to punish offenders, or, as *Harvard Business Review* put it, to not merely defect but to become “terrorist” defectors (“Apostles and Terrorists: A company’s best friends and worst enemies”, 1995). Looking at these kinds of consumer rebellion behaviors from an individual difference perspective can offer additional insight.

#### *Withdrawal behaviors*

The term voluntary simplicity encompasses many different lifestyles and motivations, many of them more closely tied to altruistic ethical choices rather than a sense of rebellion against the market. But Dobscha notes that the voluntary simplifiers she interviewed are partially motivated by a “deep skepticism of marketing practices,” and Zavestoski noted that some simplifiers join the movement “as a result of disillusionment with the relentless pursuit of wealth for the purpose of consuming material goods in order to create a particular self-image” which then fails to satisfy the

need for authenticity and efficacy (Dobscha, 1998; Zavestoski, 2002). The existence of a structured withdrawal movement suggests there are also many consumers engaging in less formal, less extreme withdrawal behaviors.

In addition to interdisciplinary cynicism literature and a primary qualitative study, this project draws on literature of related but distinct constructs in the consumer behavior literature: advertising skepticism and attitudes toward advertising and marketing (e.g. Boush, Friestad, & Rose, 1994; Obermiller & Spangenberg, 1998; Pollay, 1986), consumer alienation (e.g. Allison, 1978; Lambert, 1980); marketing literature related to trust in consumer and business-to-business contexts (e.g. Doney, 1997; Morgan, 1999; Sirdeshmukh, Singh, & Sabol, 2002); and consumer behavior literature related to brand loyalty, store loyalty, commitment and consumer relationships (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001a; Fournier et al., 1998; Oliver, 1999). This literature will be addressed in conjunction with the conceptual framework and hypotheses.

## **CHAPTER 3: GROUNDED THEORY CONSTRUCT DEVELOPMENT**

### **Objectives of the Qualitative Study**

The conceptual framework outlined here is based on 23 semi-structured interviews conducted in 2003. Existing literature supported the notion that a cynicism-like construct had the potential to explain consumer attitudes and behavior, but the precise nature of this construct was not clear from literature. The qualitative study was conducted in two phases, a pilot study with eight participants followed by a full analysis of those eight plus an additional 15 interviews purposely sampled to target highly cynical consumers.

For the pilot study, the approach was highly exploratory, with research questions in mind such as: Do consumers have attitudes resembling cynicism about the consumption process? What should a cynicism construct look like in the consumption context? What aspects or level of the consumption process is targeted – individual companies? Consumption culture?

The pilot study clearly showed that some consumers do indeed have attitudes that closely resemble cynicism or related constructs – they experience negative affect (sometimes annoyance, sometimes disgust or anger) associated with perceptions of a lack of integrity particularly with regard to pretense and manipulation – suggesting further research was warranted. Analysis of the pilot study also suggested a trait-like attitude would most closely match participants' own views. Research objectives for the full study were to:

1. Develop a rich description of the construct
2. Evaluate whether the consumer construct best fits with alienation, skepticism, dispositional trust or cynicism
3. Identify characteristics which define consumer cynicism
4. Determine whether the general marketplace is the most appropriate target
5. Understand participants' own notions of the cynicism development process
6. Understand the impact of cynicism on market behaviors.

## **Methodology**

### **Sample and procedure**

Interview methodology is appropriate for the subject because cynicism is a conscious, even deliberate attitude. Cynicism is depicted in art and discussed in the public forum and everyday conversation. Although they may use other terms, people reflect on and attempt to manage their own cynicism. Thus, people are well qualified to report on their own cynicism, and their understanding and naïve theories, or marketplace metacognitions (P. Wright, 2002), are an essential part of the construct.

The purpose of the study was conceptual groundwork on consumer trust and cynicism, not to ascertain what proportion of the population is cynical or trusting, a question left for later quantitative research. Consumption-related cynicism could impact any consumer. Community organizations were used to recruit convenience samples. As a token of appreciation, the nonprofit associations were paid \$15 for each interview. Two types of associations were selected. General population groups (Hickman High School Music Boosters and Columbia Jaycees) were selected in the hopes of drawing a broad section of the population with no particular ideology. Of participants in the pilot study,

only two out of eight appeared to be highly distrustful or cynical. Thus, to maximize the likelihood of finding enough cynics to fully develop the theoretical framework, the second type of association was selected to specifically target associations whose members were likely to experience cynicism (Center for Sustainable Living and the Green Party). One important research question for the full study was to explore the relationship between consumer cynicism and macro-level concern about consumption culture (materialism, environmental waste, etc.). These first two groups were selected in order to target individuals who were concerned about macro-level consumption culture issues.

Associations announced the opportunity to their members through a meeting announcement or e-mail according to their usual communication methods. Volunteers from the associations scheduled individual appointments. After each subject had reviewed and signed a written consent form, interviews were conducted based loosely on an interview guide (McCracken, 1988). Interviews typically lasted about an hour. The interviews were recorded on audio cassettes and transcribed.

## **Questionnaire**

The interview guide was revised several times, getting more specific and adjusting the focus with each revision. At all times, leading respondents was of particular concern because of possible social desirability and social contagion effects. Once cynical ideas are presented, participants may jump on the bandwagon in order not to appear naïve. Scholars refer to a culture of cynicism (Chaloupka, 1999; Goldfarb, 1991; Stivers, 1994). To avoid leading respondents, interview questions began with positively valenced

prompts such as asking about trust in a brand or company and used a balance of positive and negative prompts throughout. “Cynicism” or “cynical” are highly charged words laden with inconsistent but strong negative connotations of pessimism as well as the more positive connotations of sophistication. Therefore, the words “cynicism” and “skepticism” were not introduced by the interviewer until near the close of the session, unless subjects themselves spontaneously introduced those terms. This also permitted the participants’ choices to use those terms to serve as an indication of their salience for the participants.

## **Analysis**

The transcripts were analyzed following the grounded theory procedures for open and axial coding outlined by Strauss and Corbin (1998). Although the process was fluid, with multiple types of coding going on simultaneously, coding was loosely organized into phases focusing on increasingly high levels of analysis, similar to the process recommended by McCracken (1988). Initially, transcripts were read carefully line by line and labeled or categorized using open codes. Next, the transcript was read again, with a greater emphasis on code description and consistency. Third, the codes and associated quotations from the text were reviewed (moving up a level of abstraction from the whole text to just the coded quotations), and notes and comments were made on emerging conceptual issues.

For the pilot study, the concept of the trait-like continuum began to emerge about half-way through the coding process; after that point a profile memo was written for each interview subject addressing his or her trust/cynicism outlook. Finally, the analysis

moved up yet another level of abstraction to focus primarily on clustering the codes, describing their properties and dimensions and defining relationships among them using axial coding. Throughout the process, the cynicism literature was used as a point of constant comparison (Strauss & Corbin, 1998), drawing on not only the definitions specified in social scientific journals, but also the varying perspectives on cynicism in social commentary. For the full study, the trait concept from the pilot study was also used as the point of constant comparison. Initial coding was done free form as before. About halfway through the coding process, a set of codes was developed based on the theoretical framework. On a fresh copy of the transcripts, they were coded again using the standardized codes to facilitate comparison. Profile memos were written for each interview subject.

Although a formal audit was not completed, a researcher not involved in the project did conduct an independent open and axial coding analysis on a subset of three interviews. His conclusions were fairly similar, noting similar elements of the trust and cynicism definitions, a cynicism continuum, and a dichotomy between a relationship-specific trust and a more general trust tendency.

## **Findings: Conceptual Framework**

The construct of consumer cynicism as a trait-like attitude toward the marketplace emerged from the data. Based on the qualitative study, consumer cynicism is defined as a stable, learned attitude toward the marketplace characterized by the perception that pervasive opportunism among firms exists and that this opportunism creates a harmful consumer marketplace.

Table 1: Profiles of low, moderate and highly cynical consumers (on page 34) shows characteristics of consumers at varying levels of cynicism. The following interview quotation illustrates the negative affect and perception of pervasive lack of integrity.

*"They are all doing the same thing, they are all issuing rebates. But you have to come home, fill out the paper work, mail the damn stuff off, and what if it gets there and four weeks later somebody opens it and says 'Oh, you didn't put the UPC code in it'? Does it die there? Will they give you a notice? Will you ever see your money?...They hope that you will not send in the rebate so they'll get full price for it. They figure you are too stupid or too forgetful ...I can't really say it is misleading but I think that they are banking on you either being too late or too stupid to do something that you shouldn't have to do. They should just give you the price." (I7)*

Cynical interview participants spoke of a perception of problem in the marketplace system and had some theories about factors contributing to that problem. While the specific contributing factors varied across individuals, cynical consumers' beliefs seemed to fall into three consistent categories.

- There are systemic faults that make it difficult for trustworthy companies or “good” businesses to compete, such as overemphasis on short-term performance, distance between top management and their employees, products and customers, or excessive price consciousness from consumers.
- Protective systems such as the legal system, government agency (FTC, FDA etc.) or industry self-regulation or the free market, are not working effectively or have failed.
- There is a larger marketplace system, and consumers have some responsibility to shape that system by rewarding and punishing firms and socializing other consumers.

Once developed, consumer cynicism functions as a lifestyle trait or secondary disposition (Lastovicka, 1982) to distrust the marketplace and firms within it; trust factors become highly salient in purchase decisions. Cynical consumers perceive a marketplace with a few “good guys” in a sea of “bad guys.” Cynical consumers interpret marketing

interactions differently and are more likely to take precautions and form brand and store partnerships both to minimize risk and to influence the marketplace.

### **The global marketplace as the consumer cynicism target**

Interview participants clearly perceived themselves to have some kind of generalized trust/skepticism/cynicism perspective and see this as a personality trait. They not only had theories about what was wrong with the marketplace, but they also had ideas about their own perceptions and biases and how theirs and others' attitudes developed over time. These theories could be viewed as marketplace metacognition. Placing it among “the most important new research frontiers facing adventurous consumer researchers,” Wright (2002) defines marketplace metacognition as “everyday individuals’ thinking about market-related thinking,” including “people’s beliefs about their own and others’ mental states and processes and their beliefs about other people’s beliefs on those topics as these beliefs pertain to the specific domain of marketplace cooperation and manipulation.” Throughout the interviews participants showed evidence of these theories about the marketplace, and frequently showed more interest in talking about their theories than they did in discussing specific incidents.

Interview questions were phrased in terms of asking consumers to think of specific examples and then asking them to assess whether such an incident was typical of their experience. Other prompts asked their opinions of “most companies.” Instead of responding in terms of perceived frequency of company behavior, participants often spontaneously responded with statements of self-characterization such as:

*“I think I put trust into a company until it’s proven otherwise.” I8*

*“I won’t use companies or I won’t work with people who I distrust and for me I’ve developed sort of a sense that I can – I know when you are putting me on, or when you are real flaky, and I don’t like to do business with people like that. ‘I’m just a sales call away from being your best friend,’ – No, I don’t like people like that.” (I7)*

*“Now I’m certainly not a naïve consumer, but I thought that was pretty interesting yesterday.” I1*

In the full study, I was interested in investigating the validity of the trait approach.

Following some icebreakers, I opened the interview by simply asking them to describe themselves as consumers. For several “cynics” a self-description related to trust issues was their first response.

*“Wary. I’m not enamored with the push of advertising and most of the marketing strategies that I see.” (I13)*

*“I consider myself a rather careful and cautious consumer...”(I15)*

*“Oh, cautious for sure. I’m very distrustful. I don’t believe what people tell me in advertising. I always assume that they’re lying in fact. Not that they’re lying so much as misrepresenting.” (I16)*

More trusting consumers did not refer to trust issues in their self-description.

They described themselves as bargain hunters, as “green” consumers, as socially conscious consumers, price conscious or lazy. Furthermore, trust issues were not the first thing that came to mind for all distrusting consumers. Self-descriptions related to the voluntary simplicity lifestyle were common among the interview subjects recruited through Center for Sustainable Living.

Later in the interview, I asked whether they would characterize themselves as a cautious or trusting consumer. Most responses indicated a clear perception of a continuum.

*“I think I’m still sort of on the cusp. I used to be really trusting. And I’m moving towards being a lot more cautious.” (I14b)*

*[Does the word trusting make sense to you in that context?] “Yes because you have to trust that people aren’t trying to trick you with pricing and saying it’s on sale, but it’s really not ... There’s definitely a good division between people that are always kind of skeptical or trusting.”(I22)*

Interview participants also tended to discuss global attitudes even when asked about specific companies. Incidents were generalized to whole product categories, to marketing practices, to large companies, and to the marketplace in general. Interview participants saw negative incidents as learning experiences which changed their behavior in the future. One company’s failure was generalized to shape expectations for other companies’ behavior. Even noncynical consumers generalized from an incident to a product category, and consumers in this study typically described negative incidents using category terms rather than specific brands.

For example, Interview 3 described an incident shopping with her sister for a computer in which the salesperson recommended a voice recognition package. Later they discovered “in the fine print” that the package did not include all the required hardware – the low price was not such a good deal after all:

*I: So next time, later, if you are in the market to get voice recognition software...*

*R: I’m definitely not going to look for theirs. I mean – I would actually – I don’t remember the name myself because I’m not in the market for it but if I were I’d call up my sister and find out what it was. Because I definitely do remember the experience even though I didn’t associate the name with it.*

*I: What about other software?*

*R: I think it makes you more skeptical about any of it, I mean you want to read the boxes closer and be sure you are getting exactly what you think you are buying.*

*I: What about things other than software? Do you think it would carry over?*

*R: Probably not so much of one experience but I think the more experiences like that that you have with products as you buy – if I also bought panty hose and there was something funny about them and also about something else and you know, I mean, eventually, if you have enough of those experiences then I think it kind of makes you skeptical about everything, but as long as it more of an isolated thing I think it just kind of makes me more skeptical about software in general.*

The literature also shows support for the idea of generalization. Research on the sleeper effect (Gruder & et al., 1978; Pratkanis, Greenwald, Leippe, & Baumgardner, 1988; Wallendorf & Belk, 1989), in which people remember information but disassociate it from the source, provides tangential support for the notion that distinctions among sources may erode over time. Is it likely that consumers would forget exactly which brand was responsible for violating their trust? Some studies do suggest that consumers are capable of becoming confused about brand names (Foxman, Berger, & Cote, 1992; Kapferer, 1995; Wallendorf & Belk, 1989) and about which attributes belong to which brand (Dodds, Monroe, & Grewal, 1991). In the example above, she has already forgotten the specific brand name, even though the incident was recent and her feelings were strong. Research on associative learning also supports the possibility that generalization can occur. Leippe, Greenwald and Baumgardner (1982) found that, when exposed to a series of advertisements including negative and neutral effects about different brands, consumers generalized the negative characteristics to the neutral brands when the brands were similar. This generalization has significant managerial implications – a competitor's violation of trust can impact the whole product category.

### **Cynics and trust in the consumer context**

As previously mentioned, the trust literature typically identifies two dimensions: competence and benevolence. Although consumers in this study mentioned product quality and skill of the company when talking about trust in particular companies or brands, the benevolence dimension seems to be much more salient for cynical consumers, who distinguished between the exceptional trusted companies and norm of opportunistic

companies. When asked to define what the idea of trust in a company meant to them, interview participants emphasized fair treatment and living up to promises:

*"In the sense of the company I think that they would treat me fairly, they would have a good product, a good service behind that product.... if I would have a problem that they would take care of it, they would try to resolve it, they would value me as a customer, and try to do their best to keep my business." (13)*

Cynical interview participants seemed fairly tolerant of problems with the actual products, but saw mishandling of their concerns as central to their concept of trusting in a company.

*[Because so many of the components are not under the manufacturer's control] "you're going to have people and places and things and equipment that do not perform. Now, it's how you handle its effect on your consumer, that is to me what speaks to ethics of doing business." (17)*

## **Cynicism profiles**

During analysis, profiles were written for each interview participant summarizing the cynicism demonstrated, and these profiles were organized into clusters along the continuum, loosely categorized as noncynics, skeptics and cynics. These were not intended to represent hard categories or formal classifications and the boundaries of each category are fluid. Just as the categories were useful for me during the open coding process, a look at three levels of consumer cynicism may help illustrate the construct for the reader.

Table 1: Profiles of low, moderate and highly cynical consumers

	Low Cynicism	Moderate Cynicism	High Cynicism
Perception of marketplace	No perception of opportunism or integrity issues	A few “bad apples” to watch for, but most firms are OK	Pervasive, widespread lack of integrity, most firms dishonest or opportunistic
Salience of trust and integrity issues	Trust not salient, preferences based on satisfaction and convenience	Trust salient for some product categories	Trust highly salient, weighted heavily in purchase decisions
Affect	No negative affect	No negative affect	Negative affect
Beliefs about marketplace safeguards	Little attention paid to safeguards	Confidence in safeguards and protective systems (rather than corporate altruism)	Safeguards and protective systems have failed, systemic problems
Development of cynicism		Gradual, unconscious development	Aware of development of own cynicism, can point to critical incidents

### *Noncynical consumers*

In this study, for consumers clustered at the lowest end of the cynicism continuum, integrity issues seemed to be less salient in the consumption context. Examples of companies or brands they particularly trusted or distrusted did not come to mind readily, and satisfaction issues, rather than trust issues, were mentioned more frequently when asked to explain brand and store preferences.

*“I think for them [preferred stores] I look at it more as I like the selection they have, the prices they have and so, I don’t know if I would say it was a trust sort of thing, I guess there’s a certain amount of trust that kind of you know, you trust that they are going to kind of cater to your needs, but, not in the sense that we normally think of trust.” (I3)*

*“I don’t know that I line up companies and say these are trustworthy and these aren’t. As a whole, I just know that I’ve had good experiences with Toyota and most recently got a Ford Explorer and that’s been a real good vehicle for me.” (I5)*

Interview participants in this category made few self-characterization statements related to trust or integrity issues – they did not describe themselves as “skeptical” or “savvy” or “cautious” consumers as more skeptical consumers did.

Interestingly, trusting consumers seemed to have difficulty thinking of companies, brands or stores they particularly trusted or were brand loyal toward. One consumer could only think of one brand she particularly trusted, the diaper brand given to her in the hospital for her new baby. Her youngest child is now 13 years old! Other trusting consumers interpreted the question simply as a question of preference for generic or store brand vs. a “brand-name” product, rather than speaking of particular brands.

Here is one typical response from a trusting consumer when asked if there were any brands she would consider herself brand loyal to:

*“I don’t think so. Not that I can think of ... I just kind of go around and buy what I like to buy and if something is on sale, I go out there and try it.” [What about stores?] “I guess. I mean I shop normally at Gerbes and IGA but that’s more because it’s convenient for me...even with my clothing, I don’t have... I guess there are a couple stores I like a lot, which is Casual Corner and Lerner. But other than that, I don’t have anything, I just seem to buy wherever.” (I22)*

#### *Moderately cynical consumers*

Moderately cynical consumers in this study believe they need to be cautious and on guard against scams, but they don’t indicate much negative affect or resentment, and they perceive opportunism to be less pervasive in the marketplace than cynics. Associated behaviors seem to be limited to precautions – reading the fine print, checking the warranty, shopping around and researching major purchases. Their perception seems to be that there are a few truly unethical companies, but that many companies can be trustworthy.

*“I’m not like overly distrustful of companies I don’t think, but not just you know automatic either... something had to happen to cause me to build a little more trust in one company than the other.”(I6)*

Later, this participant characterized herself as “skeptical,” which she defined as: “A little more cautious about the thinking and checking things out before you just blindly trust.” (I6) In general, the word “skeptical” as used in common speech (not to be confused with the formal advertising skepticism construct in consumer research) is a good fit for the moderately cynical consumers. Skepticism is defined as “an attitude of doubt or a disposition of incredulity either in general or toward a particular object” (*Webster’s*, 1990), but it does not include the presumption of ill intent or negative affect associated with cynicism.

Moderately cynical consumers saw themselves as becoming less trusting or more skeptical overtime, but did not point to specific moments of disillusionment. Instead they referred to a gradual development and also mentioned media stories such as the tobacco companies, pharmaceuticals, and Firestone Tires.

Some moderately cynical consumers in this study saw the market integrity as residing not in the companies themselves, but in external factors that would keep companies in line: competition/the marketplace, the legal system (fear of getting sued), licensing and certification, and government restrictions (FDA), whereas cynics believed this protective mechanisms were failing. Compared to noncynical consumers, moderately cynical consumers seem to be better able to recall specific incidents when trust was built or violated and are more likely to see preferred brands as something they trust.

*“Probably in their customer dealings, they’re pretty good because they would be committing some major business suicide if they weren’t. You only mess up your customers once and they’re probably not going to come back.” (I10)*

In contrast, cynical consumers feel they cannot count on these systems. Look at Interview 17's response when asked if she thought lawsuits or federal agencies kept companies in line:

*"I think that corporations build in a certain amount of money in their operating capital where ... they have lawyers on staff and they'll fight something. It doesn't cost them anything so why not just fight tooth and nail everything that a consumer brings to them. And then, if they have to settle, what's a million dollars to a 45 billion dollar company? Nothing. You know like Tyson, just a couple weeks ago got a 7.5 million dollar fine in Sedalia because they were throwing chicken waste right in the river. And they just consider that a cost of doing business. Unless there are criminal penalties or much, much larger fines by the US government, they don't care. In fact, criminal penalties are about the only thing that's gonna do it because they don't care about the fines. They're willing to pay the fines as long as they can keep doing business the way they've always done it. So, no, I don't think the government regulations are helping." (I17)*

### *Cynical consumers*

About one-fourth of the interview subjects recruited through general organizations could be described as cynical, as could most (but not all) of the interview subjects recruited through the voluntary simplicity associations.

Cynical participants are also skeptical, but, consistent with representations of the cynicism construct in social science literature, cynicism in the consumer context seems to be characterized by a belief in a *pervasive* lack of integrity among consumer companies and negative affect such as bitterness or resentment, as suggested by Interview 7's comment about the rebate process, "It's like I'm this little puppet and they are just manipulating me."

Cynics in this study perceived a pervasive dishonesty or sham and see companies as frequently manipulating consumers. Glimpses of evidence of the sham sparked annoyance.

*“[A department store] has this big sale right now. All of a sudden everything in the store is just ‘oh this is perfect for you’, ‘oh I’ll be sure that I can find it for you,’ ‘I’ll hold it for you.’ It is just a motivation to move the merchandise out of the store ... Like yesterday, I tried on something that is really too small on me and it was really awful. And the clerk said, ‘Oh this looks really great on you!’...I felt very strongly that they have their meetings an hour before the store opens, and they have their motivational talks, and they have sales incentives. And that is the way the world works. Now I’m certainly not a naïve consumer, but I thought that was pretty interesting yesterday.” (II)*

*“I view advertising as their effort to trick you into thinking, ‘Oh yes, that sounds like a good thing.’ It’s like a constant back and forth. What can we try now? What’s the next thing we can try to trick these people into buying our thing? ... and you are on the other side going, ‘Well, I don’t know, that sounds like a lot of BS to me.’” (II2)*

All interview participants indicated that the underlying motive for most, if not all, companies was the bottom line profit. But cynics in this study expressed concern or irritation that businesses’ overeager pursuit of profit would trample other important considerations such as consumer safety, and that emphasis on short-term profits undermines company motivation to really build quality and customer satisfaction.

For cynical consumers in this study, trust and integrity issues were very salient. Descriptions of themselves as consumers emphasized beliefs that companies are untrustworthy and their own tendency to take extra precautions to protect themselves.

### **Consumer cynicism and behavior**

In non-consumer contexts, two categories of behavior are typically associated with cynicism, disparaging and withdrawal behaviors. These behaviors can also be seen in the consumer context. Cynical participants described efforts to socialize others by bringing children up to be critical consumers, getting friends on board for boycotts, and spreading negative word-of-mouth. They also described, of course, avoiding buying from distrusted companies and active “anti-brand loyalty,” but also mentioned trying to reduce

consumption in general, avoiding impulse buys, avoiding negotiation and avoiding shopping.

The cynical participants also described efforts to gain retribution when unfairly treated, whereas, at least in this pilot study, more trusting consumers seemed to be more inclined not to bother. This contrasts with some implications of cynicism literature in other contexts, in which cynics withdraw, see themselves as powerless, and avoid futile efforts to change (Govier, 1997). None of the participants were interested in doing business with companies they didn't trust, but for non-cynics, the motivation seemed to be primarily preventing their own dissatisfaction. For cynics, their avoidance of distrusted companies seemed to be motivated by an additional concern: punishing the company.

*"It was totally unsatisfactory. I went to the Attorney General, I complained to somebody in Illinois where their office was, and I'll do whatever it takes to make sure that I get restitution but I'm fairly savvy but the average guy is going to give up." (I7)*

*"I'm thinking about not shopping there any more even though I have a historical loyalty ... not that they would miss me but I think that you can only accomplish things if you start with one person at a time." (II)*

It is not particularly surprising that these behaviors are associated with cynicism, but the cynicism construct makes a useful theoretical contribution here because it may offer a framework for understanding the psychological processes underlying the many varied consumer rebellion activities which have been recently drawing scholarly attention (Dobscha, 1998; Kozinets, 2002).

### *Partnerships*

In addition to those behaviors typically associated with other types of cynicism, consumer cynicism influences behavior in theoretically interesting ways particular to the consumption context. Cynics' perception of the pervasive lack of integrity in the marketplace drives them to differentiate between the exceptional good companies and the more typical opportunistic companies, and to form partnerships with those few good companies. Cynical consumers interviewed showed enthusiastic brand commitment and store loyalty. This finding was unanticipated and initially seemed counterintuitive, but upon further examination is consistent with previous work showing the increased importance of trust in higher risk purchase situations (Amine, 1998; Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001a, 2002). With the perception that the marketplace is rife with risk and opportunism, comes a need to manage that risk through extensive search, cultivation of interpersonal relationships and brand and store loyalty. Cynical consumers look to develop partnerships with what they see as a few trusted companies in a world of opportunistic competitors. The cynical interview participants described themselves as brand loyal and talked more enthusiastically about the companies, brands, shops and salespeople they especially trusted more than any of the other interview participants. Against the background of so many distrusted companies, these exceptions stood out in sharp relief. For the cynical participants, trust built on previous experience was a primary reason for brand or store preference. They were more aware of specific brand names and seemed to see themselves as having a relationship or "doing business with" their preferred companies. The cynical consumers frequently mentioned relying on a trusted

store or brand as a shortcut to purchase decision research. For example, Interview 7 now limits his car shopping to one dealer – the only used car dealer he feels he can trust.

For cynics interviewed, trust was highly salient when discussing their preferred products and stores, while, for noncynics, satisfaction was more frequently mentioned. Similarly, at the 2003 ACR, Singh and Jayanti (2003) presented initial analysis of a quantitative study showing that in a low-trust service industry, trust was the primary factor in determining loyalty, while in a high-trust service industry, satisfaction was the primary driver of loyalty. More recently (2006), they demonstrated that when collective trust in an industry was high, loyalty toward individual service providers was reduced.

Additionally, cynics have a more developed view of the marketplace than noncynics, with specific ideas about what's wrong with the marketplace and a strong sense of consumer responsibility. As with the punishing behavior, the motivation for the brand loyal behavior seemed to go beyond a desire to ensure their own satisfaction to a sense of rewarding the few trustworthy companies. Cynical interview participants perceive a competitive business environment which discourages integrity in companies. They also saw consumers' own behavior as a major component of that business environment through consumer overemphasis on price (over quality), abuse of exchange and return policies, and failure to research. Perhaps the cynical consumers feel a need to try to counterbalance these other consumers, or perhaps they just feel a need to try to "help" their companies succeed in a competitive world; clearly they feel some responsibility to demonstrate their support of trustworthy companies. Cynics' brand commitment is expressed through willingness to pay higher prices and endure considerable inconvenience to stick with their brand or store, to work to advocate their

brands and stores to others, and to give their brands and stores the benefit of the doubt if anything goes awry. Compared to noncynical consumers interviewed, cynical consumers were more aware of a partnership-type relationship and their own role in it. One cynical consumer interviewed said she had recently turned down an opportunity to relocate, in part because she did not want to start over again on building up relationships with the local shops. These kinds of brand/store support behaviors have been associated with high attitudinal commitment in previous studies, but cynics' heightened sense of consumer responsibility seems to make them particularly strong.

### **Development of cynicism**

The cynicism literature describes a process of disillusionment leading to the development of the learned attitude of cynicism (e.g. Kanter & Mirvis, 1989), but studies do not report individuals' accounts of their experience of this process. Many cynical interview participants did point to specific personal incidents that caused them to increase their feelings of skepticism and could describe a generalization process. The critical incidents they described were not the sole cause of their cynicism, but they recalled them as key turning points. Here are a few of their stories:

*"I can remember a turning point, not so much that happened to me but that happened to a friend of mine. When I was a little boy [about 9 or 10], one of my friends sent out in response to an advertisement in a comic book where you got like 300 Revolutionary War soldiers or something for \$2. They were tiny little things....when he got them....little cheap plastic things." (I15)*

*[How long have you been feeling skeptical about advertising?] "I would say probably since college, since I took some women's studies courses and I saw that "Killing Us Softly" film. They'll show a little girl like five-years old with lipstick and bent over and it will say look at how the girl is sexualized in this advertisement. And I remember watching it, going, "I've been being brainwashed my whole life and I haven't even known it." And that's really when the bells started to go off and I really started to be a critical thinker." (I16)*

*"I grew up on a dairy farm in Wisconsin so I feel very strongly about agriculture issues and that kind of a path that I got to being more aware about everything: from business and consumer choices to politics to everything....It was two things that happened at just about the same time [during high school]. When they pulled out of that local plant and then the price of milk got really high for awhile in the mid-'90's and then they dumped a whole bunch of cheese on the market, so the market just crashed. ...After that, I'm just like, screw 'em. I hate 'em. You know, they lie. USDA does these inventory inspections and because they've cut back so much on the regulatory staff of the USDA, they pretty much just call up the CEO of Kraft and they say, 'How much cheese do you have right now?' and they'll tell them and they kept reporting low, low, low and then the price went up. And then they're like, 'Oh, we found 2 billion barrels of cheese. I don't know how that happened, but here it is.' And so, the milk price went way down. Wisconsin continues to lose between three and five dairy farms a day. I take that personally. So, Kraft is the company I despise the most." (I17)*

Highly cynical consumers could recall a time, although they may have been quite young, when they did not feel as distrustful or skeptical as they now do and could cite reasons they changed their views. Most of them could describe particular incidents or moments in their lives when they had a sense of disillusionment or realization. Less cynical participants acknowledged that there had been a time when they were less skeptical but did not recall particular incidents or reasons and could not really say when they shifted. When they did mention reasons or examples to support their perceptions about the honesty and integrity of consumer companies today, they were more likely to point generally to stories from the news, such as Firestone Tires or tobacco companies, than to describe a personal incident. Highly cynical consumers were likely to describe an incident that happened to themselves or someone they know, or events that they felt a personal reaction to, as in the Wisconsin consumer's story above.

Although consumer cynics interviewed expressed concern about many facets of a perceived lack of corporate integrity – labor practices, environment, consumer interactions, pricing, product safety, etc. – the point of disillusionment in their stories about turning points was typically either a realization that a company had engaged in

some form of lying or misrepresentation or a realization that a company was *deliberately* harming someone for its own gain, perhaps by using deception or a cover-up. Their other concerns about business practices such as wasting environmental resources, encouraging a shallow, appearance-obsessed society, exploiting workers were not mentioned in these disillusionment stories. This suggests the perception of deception and opportunism, or self-interest seeking with guile (Williamson, 1975), lie at the heart of consumer cynicism. This is consistent with the emphasis on seeing through pretense and the sense of manipulation common to discussions of cynicism in other contexts.

Four factors could be contributing to these perceptions: cynics' experience of deceptive events not experienced by others; cynics' perception or awareness of deceptions overlooked by others; cynics' attribution of manipulative motives; or cynics' negative affective reaction. Although it is likely that life experiences contribute to the development of cynicism, the memories cynical consumers described as turning points for them were not exceptionally traumatic consumer experiences. In fact, in response to a separate series of questions, many cynical consumers said they had never felt that they personally had been tricked or ripped off. Consider the stories quoted above. Many consumers can recall being disappointed with a send-away toy as children. Many consumers watched or read some thought-provoking anti-commercialism material in college or high school. The Wisconsin consumer's entire community was exposed to the same media coverage of corporate treatment of the small dairy farmers, yet she was the only one in her family to react by becoming a cynical consumer. Later in the interview she talked about how other members of the family think "she's nuts" but humor her by respecting her Kraft boycott. While the stories reflect common elements, there is not a

simple cause-effect relationship between company actions and the development of cynicism in a particular consumer. It is more likely that other basic personality traits and cumulative life experiences combine in a way that makes these consumers react more strongly to incidents that are not so different from the disappointments and disillusionments encountered by all consumers. Once they begin to cultivate the cynical perspective and view it as part of their consumer identity, it probably becomes more entrenched as they perceive marketplace interactions through that interpretive filter. Life experiences would be extremely challenging to measure through survey methodology, and offer an interesting possibility for future research, perhaps through a critical incident study. This dissertation investigated only personality traits as antecedents of consumer cynicism.

## **CHAPTER 4: CYNICISM AND RELATED CONSTRUCTS IN THE CONSUMER BEHAVIOR LITERATURE**

### **Consumer Constructs Related to Cynicism**

There are two well-developed individual difference constructs in the consumer behavior literature that could be viewed as conceptually close to consumer cynicism: advertising skepticism and consumer alienation. However, there are important conceptual distinctions between these constructs. These constructs were used in the scale development process to establish convergent and discriminant validity.

#### **Advertising skepticism**

Advertising skepticism (Obermiller & Spangenberg, 1998) is a more narrow construct than consumer cynicism, specific to advertising messages rather than the whole marketplace and without the negative affect associated with cynicism. Scholars sometimes use the skepticism term to encompass negative affect and distrust of the marketplace (Forehand & Grier, 2003), but the formal conceptual definition and measures of advertising skepticism do not capture these issues as consumer cynicism does.

Obermiller and Spangenberg (1998) define skepticism toward advertising as a stable, generalizable marketplace belief, a “tendency toward disbelief of advertising claims.” Although they acknowledge that people may be skeptical “not only of the literal truth of ad claims but also of the motives of the advertisers; the value of the information to oneself or society; or the appropriateness of advertising for specific audiences,” they specifically state that their definition is limited to the sense of disbelief and limited to

advertising, which they define as paid, nonpersonal commercial communication. Other definitions of advertising skepticism are slightly broader, including mistrust of motives, and Boush, Friestad and Rose (1994) found disbelief in claims and mistrust of motives loaded on separate factors (although they noted this could be an artifact of the reversed items). Still the focus is exclusively on motives as relevant to credibility and persuasion of advertising. Although it is described as negatively valenced (Boush et al., 1994), advertising skepticism is characterized as a needed consumer skill developed through socialization, and the definitions do not address consumer anger, bitterness or other negative affect.

Besides being more narrowly defined than consumer cynicism, advertising skepticism is more widespread. Based on a compilation of 60 years of survey data, Calfee and Ringold (1994) concluded that a relatively consistent 70 percent of the population expresses skepticism toward advertising claims. *All* of my interview participants, not just cynics, indicated some degree of skepticism toward advertising, sometimes to the point of discounting its claims completely, yet many of them found advertising to be enjoyable and occasionally informative. Even consumers who showed no signs of cynicism were skeptical of some advertising: “It may say that it can clean something and it would be really easy; you'd just squirt, let it rest, then take it off, and it won't do that.” (I2)

### **Consumer alienation**

Consumer alienation (Allison, 1978) is defined as a unidimensional construct with four underlying factors based on societal alienation theory: marketplace powerlessness, normlessness, social isolation (difficulty identifying with today's business practices) and

self-estrangement from the marketplace (difficulty identifying with own consumption role). Lambert (1980) defines a different set of four dimensions of alienation: powerlessness (feeling that one cannot exert influence on a seller's behavior); meaninglessness (low expectation that one can predict the outcomes of behaviors; felt inability to choose wisely); normlessness (feelings of suspicion and mistrust toward marketers); and cultural estrangement (renunciation of commonly valued symbols).

The normlessness (lack of ethical standards) factor closely corresponds to the cynicism construct, but in other respects the conceptual definition for consumer alienation is distinct from consumer cynicism. Interview subjects who were cynical about consumption actually seemed to show a sense of power and responsibility toward the marketplace, in spite of their frustrations. Rather than feeling estranged from the marketplace, several cynical interview participants seemed to enjoy making purchase decisions and developing commercial relationships. Consistent with the image of a cynic as presented in social commentary, cynical consumers considered themselves to be more sophisticated or enlightened than the average consumer and worried about protecting naive others.

Outside of the consumer context, societal cynicism and societal alienation are separate constructs. Estrangement and lack of control are at the core of the alienation construct, and measures emphasize powerlessness, social isolation and loneliness, and meaninglessness (Seeman, 1991). Kanter and Wortzel (1985) found societal cynicism, conceptually defined as suspicion of other people's motives and honesty, and societal alienation, conceptually defined as a feeling of disconnectedness from society, to be discriminant. In fact, they identified a cluster of "independent cynics" who were highly

cynical but not alienated (13 percent of their sample) and clusters of “dropouts” who were both highly alienated and highly cynical (21 percent of their sample).

### **Other research on consumer attitudes toward business**

Hustad and Pessemier (1973) found that anti-business consumers were educated and active, not withdrawn and passive as alienated consumers would be expected to be. The anti-business attitude was defined empirically based on cluster analysis; items distinguishing the anti-business cluster covered topics such as honesty of business, quality of products and services, pollution, business concern for the public, business responsiveness to consumers, and “too many brands and products available today.” Approximately 18 percent of their sample fell in the anti-business cluster. Barksdale and Darden (1972) measured consumer attitudes toward business in four loose categories: philosophy of business, product quality, advertising, and other marketing activities, but the focus was primarily on reporting current levels of attitudes and monitoring societal changes over time, rather than theory or construct development about individuals. However, the philosophy of business items seem consistent with consumer cynicism definition and were included in the consumer cynicism item pool. Only one of the four philosophy of business items was retained in the final consumer cynicism scale.

Singh (1991, p.264) grouped the above studies under the consumer discontent umbrella, claiming the consumer discontent construct is “not based on a sound theoretical framework.” But Lundstrom and Lamont (1976) did introduce consumer discontent as a formally defined academic construct to capture similar attitudes of frustration and opposition to business, and they followed standard scale procedures to develop a scale,

which unfortunately requires 82 items. Conceptual distinctions between consumer discontent and alienation are unclear. When introducing his alienation scale, Allison (1978) noted alienation is distinct from the pre-existing consumer discontent scale because it includes items related to the self and how it relates to the marketplace. Other authors have positioned alienation as a type of discontent (e.g. Lambert & Kniffen, 1975). Singh (1991) empirically demonstrated a lack of discriminant validity between the two constructs.

In my interview study, consumer cynics found among both the target cynic associations (Center for Sustainable Living and Green Party) and the general target associations (Hickman High School Music Boosters and Columbia Jaycees) made anti-business-type statements. They discussed a pervasive lack of business ethics, particularly among big business, shoddy quality and poor service. But they also showed respect and loyalty toward their preferred brands, companies or stores, particularly small businesses and local shops. Cynics also made pro-business statements. Several of them enjoyed shopping and researching purchases, and several seemed to really enjoy their interaction with sellers. More than trusting consumers or skeptics, they seemed to view themselves as consumers, cultivating relationships with a network of suppliers much like a business buyer might. Cynicism is not inherently anti-business or anti-capitalism.

One cynical consumer is a small business owner herself.

*"I'm a capitalist, but I'm also a capitalist with a conscience, so I'm trying to create a business that is successful, but has an ethical foundation with an eye towards something that can continue into the future and not be a great drain of resources of society or the environment...It's ok to be successful, especially when you think you're doing something that you think is a good thing. I wish great success for people who start business and have a good idea and who really want to do it the right way." (116)*

*“I do believe in entrepreneurship like in small local businesses. ...I do believe there needs to be freedom for people to have small businesses because it's like this birthplace for creativity and ingenuity. And I have a very strong value – I put a strong value on that. ... I'm not anti-capitalist, because I am pro entrepreneurial, but the multi-national corporations I guess is where I have the biggest problem.” (I17)*

For the most part, the cynical consumers were also self-confident consumers. They prided themselves on their ability to find bargains, their expertise on company practices and trustworthy brands, their understanding of the pressures of the business environment, and their ability to stand up for themselves in the marketplace. They often described themselves as “savvy.” This suggests cynicism is distinct from consumer alienation.

## Trait Research in Consumer Literature

Although attention to individual differences periodically rises and falls in consumer research, it has continued to intrigue scholars for decades. The term “individual difference” is an umbrella term which encompasses many kinds of psychological constructs, as evidenced by the Blackwell Encyclopedia of Social Psychology claim that individual differences can include “personality, intelligence, temperament, and any psychological process susceptible to individual variation in expression” (Manstead & Hewstone, 1995, p. 319). While the consumer cynicism construct clearly is an individual difference variable, it would be useful to further specify it.

Literature on other specific cynicisms defined them as learned attitudes with specific targets (i.e. organizational cynicism in Dean et al., 1998). Yet, cynicism has also been conceptualized as a personality trait, emerging as a factor on several personality inventories, such as the Machiavellian scale and the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality

Inventory. Kanter and Mirvis (1989) presented societal cynicism as a stable, learned attitude – even though they borrowed many of their scale items from the personality cynicism scales. The consumer cynicism construct is a predisposition of the individual to interpret and respond to situations in a certain way, which seems to fit a trait conceptualization, but it also seems to be a close fit to the attitude-based definition of organizational cynicism. However, consumption is an inescapable and pervasive aspect of living in today's society. The global level of the attitudes expressed by interview participants more closely resembles societal cynicism than the specific cynicisms with more narrow targets such as one's employer. Interview participants also seemed to view their cynicism as part of their identity or personality as consumers.

Amelang and Borkenau (1986) define a trait as a “disposition to act a certain way,” noting that “covariations between pertinent behavioral acts may be said to indicate the trait.” Thus, traits are inferred from behavior. Presuming interpretation and cognition could be seen as a form of behavior, this definition appears to be a perfect fit for the construct. Kline (1993) defines traits as “relatively constant enduring characteristics of an individual,” as distinguished from transitory states. According to his definition, traits can include ability traits (e.g. intelligence) and temperamental personality traits (e.g. extraversion) and dynamic traits or drives.

Initial efforts to investigate the influence of personality on consumer behavior were problematic, as Kassarjian pointed out with his scathing 1971 article. Drawing on empirical results from published studies, he demonstrated personality trait factors could account for only about 10 percent of the variance in any particular behavior. Kassarjian (1971) called for theoretically grounded investigation of consumer thought processes

rather than purchase outcomes and for the development of more narrowly defined trait constructs specific to the consumer context, rather than simply borrowing and haphazardly adapting from psychology traits.

Lastovicka (1982) echoed this call for traits specific to the consumer context. Building on psychologist Gordon Allport's trait theory (1961), Lastovicka called for consumer researchers to investigate lifestyle traits, less abstract traits more directly related to the "acquisition, use and disposition of goods." Following Allport, he outlines three levels of traits: cardinal dispositions (such as agreeableness), central dispositions (such as compulsiveness) and finally secondary dispositions or lifestyle traits, which only apply in limited settings. The consumer cynicism construct also operates at the lifestyle trait level.

Today's consumer literature offers a number of examples of theoretically grounded lifestyle traits developed specifically for the consumer context to rigorous conceptual and operational standards such as: frugality (Lastovicka, Bettencourt, Hughner, & Kuntze, 1999), consumer self-confidence (Bearden, Hardesty, & Rose, 2001), compulsive buying (Faber & O'Guinn, 1992; Mowen & Spears, 2000), and centrality of visual product aesthetics (Bloch, Brunel, & Arnold, 2003). Mowen and Spears' (2000) work on compulsive buying offers a particularly interesting example because they empirically investigated the three hierarchical trait levels as outlined by Allport (1961) and Lastovicka (1982), with compulsive buying as the lifestyle or situational trait, materialism and need for arousal as central traits, and the Big Five personality factors (Goldberg, 1992) as the cardinal traits. As Mowen and Spears note, the advantage of surface trait scales is their close link to behaviors; placing the surface

trait within a trait hierarchy allows the researcher to also develop a deeper understanding of the psychological processes shaping the surface trait. With the introduction of the 3M model, Mowen (2000) takes the hierarchical approach a step further, offering consumer researchers a hierarchical framework as a meta-theory to integrate trait research. Mowen integrates control theory and trait theory to propose four levels of personality traits: elemental, compound, situational and surface.

At the highest level, reference level 4, are elemental traits, defined as “underlying predispositions of individuals that arise from genetics and early learning history” (p. 21). With extensive testing, Mowen developed a 31-item scale capturing eight elemental traits, adding three motivational traits (need for body resources, need for material resources and need for arousal) to the usual big five (emotional instability/neuroticism, extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness and conscientiousness).

At reference level 3 are compound traits, defined as “predispositions that result from the effects of multiple elemental traits, a person’s learning history and culture” (p. 21). These correspond to the central dispositions of Lastovicka’s (1982) hierarchy and are not limited to a particular situation or context. Mowen identified six compound traits relevant for consumer behavior research and developed scales for them: task orientation, need for learning, competitiveness, need for activity, need for play, and self-efficacy.

At reference level 2 are situational traits, which “result from the joint effects of elemental traits, compound traits and the situational context” (p. 21). These correspond to the lifestyle traits of Lastovicka’s hierarchy and might be described as personality traits or enduring dispositions specific to a particular situation or context, such as the consumer context.

At reference level 1 are category-specific surface traits, defined as delineating “the programs of behavior that individuals run in order to complete tasks,” a result of “person by situation by product category interactions.” In practice, these “traits” resemble habits or patterns of behavior. To demonstrate the interplay among the hierarchical levels, Mowen researched in pairs five example situational traits: health motivation, impulsive buying, sports interest, value consciousness, and frugality; and five example surface traits: healthy diet lifestyles, compulsive buying, sports participation, bargaining behavior, and modest-living lifestyle.

Although hailed as a “knight in shining armor” (Sujan, 2001), Mowen’s 3M model (2000) has yet to be established as a widely used metatheory for individual differences research in consumer behavior. However, it does provide a starting point for an overall hierarchical framework, a useful set of elemental and compound traits to draw from, and useful examples of how the hierarchy might be used to enhance understanding of the situational and surface traits which are the subject of much of the current consumer research on individual differences. The concept of the trait hierarchy is well-established in personality psychology and, as Lastovicka (1982) advocated, investigating hierarchical trait antecedents furthers theoretical understanding of consumer traits. Individual difference research in consumer behavior has moved from attempting to use ad hoc adaptations of clinical psychology scales to predict purchase behavior to developing consumption-specific traits that enhance our understanding of consumers’ identity and personality and how those individual differences moderate consumer thought-processes and behaviors. Recent theoretically and methodologically rigorous examples in this vein will serve as a model for this dissertation.

## **CHAPTER 5: RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND HYPOTHESES**

This dissertation further develops the consumer cynicism construct, places it within a trait hierarchy and investigates behavioral consequences, and lays groundwork for future research by developing a reliable and valid scale.

### **Trait Antecedents of Consumer Cynicism: Placing Consumer Cynicism Within a Hierarchical Trait Framework**

Following Lastovicka's (1982) hierarchy and also informed by Mowen's (2000) 3M model, consumer cynicism is defined as a lifestyle or situational trait. According to Mowen, situational traits result from joint effects of elemental traits, compound traits, previous learning history, and the situational context. Interview analysis of consumers' stories of how their cynicism developed provide a glimpse of the previous learning history; a full explanation would be an interesting direction for future research. This dissertation investigated three potential antecedent traits for the lifestyle trait of consumer cynicism: negative affectivity (elemental trait), need for cognition (compound trait) and societal cynicism (compound trait).

#### **H1: Elemental trait: Negative Affectivity**

Elemental traits, or cardinal dispositions, are the basic building blocks of personality. Much of the work in personality psychology has focused on identifying the most parsimonious set of these basic traits (Amelang & Borkenau, 1986), such as the Big Five (neuroticism/negative affectivity, openness to experience, conscientiousness, agreeableness and extraversion). Negative affectivity is consistently conceptualized at

this basic level. Individuals high in negative affectivity (relative to individuals low in negative affectivity) tend to experience higher levels of “negative emotions such as worry, nervousness, guilt and sadness; react more negatively to stressful situations; maintain higher baseline levels of negative affect, even in the absence of stress; focus more on their subjective experiences rather than on objective conditions; and manifest higher levels of physiological and psychological symptoms” (Fortunato & Stone-Romero, 1999, p. 78). Since Mowen incorporated the Big Five traits into his list of eight elemental traits, neuroticism is among them. Negative affectivity or neuroticism has been linked with hostility in prior studies (with personality cynicism as a subdimension of hostility) (Adams & John, 1997; Clark, 1994); thus negative affectivity was expected to also be positively associated with consumer cynicism.

*H1: Negative affectivity is positively associated with consumer cynicism.*

## **H2-H3: Central Dispositions**

Mowen’s concept of compound traits corresponds to Lastovicka’s concept of central dispositions – personality traits which apply broadly (across many situations) but are more complex and more closely linked to behaviors than the most basic elemental traits or cardinal dispositions. Two compound traits were investigated here: societal cynicism and need for cognition.

### *Societal cynicism*

Personality or societal cynicism is conceptualized here as a compound trait contributing to consumer cynicism. All of the consumer cynics interviewed also seemed quite cynical about politics and social institutions in general, although they did consider

themselves to be trusting of individuals. Based on the interviews, one possibility considered was that cynicism about the consumption arena could be simply one possible manifestation of societal or personality cynicism. This relationship would not negate the theoretical insight of the cynicism construct for consumer research, but it would alter the direction of further research, tap into additional antecedents and explanations from other cynicism literatures, and potentially eliminate the need for a new consumer cynicism scale. However, the interviews did not suggest that cynicism about society *must* be applied in the consumption context as well – cynical consumers may be highly likely to be generally cynical, but not all cynics will also be cynical consumers. Cynical individuals, particularly those with low involvement in consumption, may not have engaged cynicism thought processes in the consumption contexts. Therefore, societal cynicism was investigated with the expectation that it would be associated with consumer cynicism but not too closely associated.

*H2: Societal cynicism is associated with (but discriminant from) consumer cynicism.*

Besides the qualitative interviews conducted as part of this series of studies, previous literature provided tentative support for this hypothesis. Kanter and Wortzel (1985) found that personality cynics were more likely to reject testimonial and demonstration advertising approaches than noncynics. Conversely, Boush et al. (1993) found personality cynicism was not associated with mistrust of advertising information, which suggests personality cynicism and consumer cynicism are not one and the same.

Cynicism toward society in general operates at a more basic level than cynicism specific to the consumer situation; thus, the compound trait level is conceptually

appropriate. Adams and John (1997) found that the California Psychological Inventory Hostility scale and the Cook-Medley Hostility scale, both of which include personality cynicism as a dimension, are significantly correlated with several of the big five personality factors: agreeableness (−.19 and −.21 respectively), neuroticism (.14 and .18), and conscientiousness (−.13 and −.20), which further supports its placement at the compound level (elemental traits account for significant variance, following Mowen). Unfortunately, correlations were not reported for the cynicism dimension individually.

#### *Need for cognition*

Cynical interview participants appeared to have done a lot more thinking about marketplace structure, had more to say about particular brand features, more justifications for their preferences, and more references to media. This suggested that higher-level thinking could be necessary to raise the marketplace criticisms associated with consumer cynicism.

Cacioppo and Petty's (1982) need for cognition construct, defined as the "tendency for an individual to engage in and enjoy thinking," captures this well. Cacioppo and Petty (1982) introduced a 34-item scale, generating a substantial stream of research, particularly when integrated with their Elaboration Likelihood Model (Petty & Cacioppo, 1981). The need for cognition construct and measure are widely used and the subsequent research stream includes many applications in consumer research (i.e. Cacioppo, Petty, & Morris, 1983; Haugvedt, Petty, & Cacioppo, 1992) in terms of interpretation and cognitive response to advertising.

*H3: Need for cognition is positively associated with (but discriminant from) consumer cynicism.*

## **Consequences of Consumer Cynicism: Marketplace Behaviors**

### **H4 and H5: Marketplace shaping and withdrawal behaviors**

A cynic perceives a system as corrupt or lacking integrity, and a natural coping response is to distance oneself from that system. One way to distance is to withdraw or limit contact with the system; another is to mock, disparage or in other ways communicate to others that one is separate from the system. Cynical consumers interviewed mentioned numerous behaviors consistent with disparaging or withdrawal. Cynical participants described efforts to socialize others by bringing children up to be critical consumers, getting friends on board for boycotts, and spreading negative word-of-mouth. They described, of course, avoiding buying from distrusted companies and active “anti-brand loyalty,” but also mentioned trying to reduce consumption in general, avoiding impulse buys, avoiding negotiation and avoiding shopping.

In other contexts, cynicism is primarily seen as a hopeless or apathetic attitude; behaviors are rarely directed at changing the corrupt system. But in the consumer context, cynical interview subjects seemed very aware of their role in a larger marketplace system and perceived a responsibility as consumers to shape that system. A perceived consumer role in shaping the system colored many descriptions of disparaging behaviors.

Based on behaviors discussed by interview participants, the following types of withdrawal and disparaging or marketplace shaping behaviors were investigated in pretests with two adult samples: a convenience sample of adult parents of high school and preschool students, and a highly cynical group of Adbusters discussion forum readers.

- Socializing others to be critical, warning others
- Negative word-of-mouth
- Oppositional brand loyalty (Muniz, 2001)
- Boycotting
- Complaints to third parties (e.g. Better Business Bureau)
- Complaints to firm
- Making fun of slogans, brands, advertisements in general or in particular
- Consumer aggressiveness (Richins, 1983)
- Voluntary simplicity (Craig-Lees & Hill, 2002)
- “Culture jamming” – rebellion or sabotage (Sharpe & Pollay, 2002)

Two categories of general marketplace-targeted behavioral outcomes of consumer cynicism were identified:

- 1) Marketplace shaping: Deliberate attempts to influence the marketplace system by rewarding good companies and punishing bad companies and/or by raising consumer awareness of the hypocrisy and opportunism of the marketplace in general and of specific companies as icons of the marketplace.
- 2) Withdrawing: Reducing or minimizing one’s contact with the marketplace in any way.

*H4: Consumer cynicism is positively associated with marketplace shaping.*

*H5: Consumer cynicism is positively associated with marketplace withdrawal.*

## **H6 and H7: Marketplace-level consumer cynicism impacts perceptions about a specific purchase**

Perceptions of pervasive opportunism in the marketplace would logically lead cynical consumers to perceive themselves to be at greater risk of opportunism in their particular consumer interactions. Cynical consumers interviewed did mention a need for caution and concern about being “ripped off” or “taken in,” as this quote illustrates:

*“I feel like if we don’t do extra research, we as consumers, are very likely to being ripped off in this country. I think there is just a lot of smoke and mirrors done by folks who do marketing and advertising. ... Unfortunately, they’ll stop at almost nothing to get you to make that purchasing decision. ... It’s just contemptible.” (II3)*

Do cynical consumers carry their global marketplace perceptions into particular purchase decisions? Most of the prior literature on marketplace perceptions has focused on measuring global marketplace perceptions, monitoring levels of anti-business sentiment in the population, and attempting to understand personality correlates, rather than investigating the impact of these global perceptions on particular purchase decisions or purchase behavior. A distinctive contribution of this paper is to empirically confirm that marketplace-level consumer cynicism is a difference individuals carry with them into their everyday purchase decision-making as well as into their consumer activism.

Comments from cynical interview participants suggest there are many ways their marketplace-level consumer cynicism colors their perceptions and behaviors about specific consumer interactions: their interpretation of marketing communications and interactions, their faith in warranties and guarantees, their attributions about company and employee motives, the risks associated with insufficient search, the consumers' responsibilities for record-keeping and reference-checking, and more. This dissertation investigated two perceptions related to purchases: product category cynicism and perceived purchase risk.

#### Product category cynicism

Perceptions about likelihood of opportunism for a particular purchase are driven by many factors other than generalized perceptions of the marketplace, such as actual past experience in that product category and the consumer's level of comfort and confidence with that type of purchase. However, this research hypothesizes that consumer cynicism toward the marketplace carries over into consumer cynicism toward a particular industry or product category. A situational trait at level 2 of the trait hierarchy,

consumer cynicism is the perception of pervasive opportunism in the marketplace. Category cynicism, a surface trait or habit of behavior at level 1 of the trait hierarchy, is defined as the perception of pervasive opportunism in a particular product category. This study does not attempt to compare perceived characteristics of specific product categories but rather investigates the ability of the cynicism trait at more basic levels of the trait hierarchy to influence cynicism at more context-specific levels of the trait hierarchy. In the proposed model, personality cynicism is an antecedent of marketplace-level consumer cynicism; consumer cynicism in turn is an antecedent of product category cynicism.

During the interviews in Study 1, participants were asked to name some types of companies they felt were particularly trustworthy or untrustworthy. Respondents had no difficulty generating answers to that question and frequently used industry or product category classifications in their responses. As Study 1 interview participants described, consumers make assumptions about many groups of firms that have similar characteristics – for example, they may feel particularly cynical about big box retailers, Asian imports, firms that rely heavily on personal selling or firms that use rebates. Product categories were selected for investigation here because they are widely recognized by consumers, scholars and practitioners, and are somewhat less subjective and idiosyncratic than other possible categorizations about which consumers might make cynical generalizations. Numerous studies have shown that consumers recognize product categories and associate different characteristics and expectations with different product categories (e.g. Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2002; Loken & Ward, 1990; Singh & Jayanti, 2003). Marketplace-level consumer cynicism is one of many antecedents to category cynicism. Because other antecedents, such as personal experience or media coverage,

also influence category cynicism, an individual would have different levels of cynicism for different product categories. Even a highly cynical consumer may have a high regard for the integrity of certain industries; likewise, a consumer who had a particularly disillusioning experience with a product may generalize feelings of cynicism toward an entire product category even if that individual is not very cynical about the marketplace as a whole. On average, however, consumers who are cynical toward the marketplace would tend to also be more cynical about particular product categories and cynical about more product categories than consumers who are not cynical about the marketplace. This effect would likely be strongest in the absence of other antecedents of category cynicism.

*H6: For any given product category, marketplace-level consumer cynicism is positively associated with cynicism about that particular product category.*

#### Perceived purchase risk

In the marketing literature, perceived purchase risk has long been conceptualized as a combination of the perceived potential for negative consequences and the perceived certainty or likelihood that the negative consequences could occur as a result of a specific purchase decision (for a recent review, see Conchar, Zinkhan, Peters, & Olavarrieta, 2004; e.g. Cunningham, 1967; Horton, 1976). These negative consequences can come from many sources, frequently summarized as: financial, performance, physical, psychological and social (Bauer, 1960; Conchar et al., 2004). Opportunism in the marketplace could increase risk in numerous ways. For example, when firms behave opportunistically, consumers could be overcharged, increasing financial risk. Opportunistic firms might be more likely to disregard consumer safety, increasing physical risk, or to cut corners on production quality, increasing performance risk.

Cynicism, defined as a perception of pervasive opportunism in the marketplace, would logically be expected to increase perceived purchase risk. However, purchase risk can result from many sources other than firms' disregard for consumer interests as well, such as high cost, high social visibility, lack of familiarity with the product category, or making choices on others' behalf. Purchase risk is context-specific; the same individual perceives different levels of risk for different purchases.

This study investigated the link between perceptions of opportunism and a very broad interpretation of perceived purchase risk – fear of making the wrong choice. This approach emphasizes brand-choice risk (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2002), or risk of negative consequences that could potentially be alleviated by selecting one brand alternative over another. This study further focuses on product category risk (Dowling & Staelin, 1994), a typical purchase within the product category rather than a specific purchase, addressing inherent risk rather than handled risk. Inherent risk refers to the latent risk associated with a purchase decision for a product class; handled risk refers to the risk a consumer actually feels about a specific purchase (Mitchell, 1999). One way of reducing handled risk is to stick with a trusted brand. Even when a purchase decision is inherently risky, a consumer may feel little handled risk when making a repeat purchase of a favorite brand (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2002; Mitchell, 1999). In that scenario, inherent risk motivates the consumer to brand loyalty, and brand loyalty results in lower handled risk. This study theorizes that consumer cynicism increases inherent risk, motivating consumers to use loyalty so that handled risk remains at an acceptable level.

*H7: For any given product category, category-level consumer cynicism is positively associated with perceived purchase risk for that particular product category.*

### **H8-9: Consumer cynicism effects on brand loyalty**

Initial expectations for the project were that a possible negative effect of cynicism might be a decreased capacity for brand loyalty. But if the predisposition not to trust (as in the case of cynicism) can be overcome, trust is still possible, and, in fact, appears to be highly valued and cultivated. As discussed in Chapter 3, cynical interview participants described themselves as brand loyal and talked enthusiastically about the companies, brands, shops and salespeople they especially trusted. Cynical consumers frequently mentioned being willing to pay more and go out of their way to buy from businesses they trusted and to rely on a trusted store or brand as a shortcut to purchase decision research. Based on the interview analysis, it appears that cynical consumers perceived a marketplace filled with dishonest players and few “good guys” they could trust not to take unfair advantage of them or the system. Thus, not only do cynics perceive a higher level of risk inherent in purchase decisions, but when faced with a particular purchase decision, cynics also perceive a high level of variance in risk among brands, or brand choice risk (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2002), because they perceive significant differences in trustworthiness between one brand or store and another. Brand loyalty to a trusted brand is a way to manage this brand-choice risk or threat of choosing the wrong brand. Thus, one might expect cynics to show more loyalty to their few trusted brands simply as a risk-management tactic.

As with the punishing behavior, the motivation for the brand loyal behavior seemed to go beyond risk-management or a desire to ensure their own satisfaction to a

sense of rewarding the few trustworthy companies, helping their “partners” stay in business, and helping shape a competitive environment in which companies with integrity can succeed. While most consumers, including noncynics, have brand and store preferences and show repeat purchase patterns, interview analysis suggested cynical consumers are particularly enthusiastic and feel a responsibility to show their support through behaviors established in the marketing literature as forms of brand support such as:

- Working harder to promote the brand to others; positive word of mouth (Amine, 1998; Dick & Basu, 1994a; Fournier et al., 1998)
- Interacting with the brand/store by praising, suggesting or constructive complaining (Bearden & Teel, 1983)
- Sticking with the brand/store in spite of price increases or inconveniences
- Maintaining loyalty over time (Baldinger & Joel, 1996)

*H8: Category cynicism is associated with brand support behaviors for brands that have consumers' loyalty.*

A consumer's trust of a brand is subjective and specific to the relationship between that brand and the consumer, shaped by past experience and individual preferences. This study does not attempt to identify particular companies or types of companies that would likely win cynics' trust and gain their loyalty. Insight from the interviews and marketing literature on consumer rebellion suggest that firms perceived as socially responsible or low-hype are likely to be especially appealing for cynical consumers. Identifying the characteristics and marketing approaches that effectively break through cynicism to build trust would be an interesting area for future research.

This dissertation hypothesizes that when cynical consumers are loyal to a brand or store, they are more likely to express that brand commitment through brand support actions than their less cynical counterparts would be even for the same levels of loyalty. Any consumer who is excited about a brand might choose to share the good news with others or pay a premium price, but the cynical consumer has two extra motivations: the need for risk-management and the desire to shape the marketplace.

Besides showing stronger support and commitment to their few trusted brands, consumer cynics likely have a different basis for their loyalty. At the 2003 ACR, Singh and Jayanti (2003) presented initial analysis of a quantitative study showing that in a service industry perceived as untrustworthy, trust was the primary factor in determining loyalty, while in a service industry perceived as trustworthy, satisfaction was the primary driver of loyalty. In Singh and Jayanti's study, the basis for brand loyalty was compared for two industries selected through pretests as widely perceived as trustworthy and untrustworthy respectively.

Logic suggests that when most of the alternatives are perceived to be trustworthy, trust issues will not be very salient in purchase decisions. When opportunism is perceived to be widespread, trust becomes more meaningful. In the qualitative interviews, less cynical consumers rejected the term "trust" as relevant to their consumer decision-making. They described performance, convenience and satisfaction issues as their reasons for preferring or sticking with a particular brand. In this dissertation, individual differences in perception of opportunism across industries are of interest, rather than common perceptions of particular industries. Hypothesis 9 looks at several factors that normally drive brand preference: trust, satisfaction and value. The expectation was that

trust would be rated as relatively more important in brand loyalty for high cynics than low cynics, and that satisfaction and value would be relatively more important in brand loyalty for low cynics than high cynics.

*H9: In situations in which consumers have high brand loyalty, a) cynical consumers will be more likely (than those low in cynicism) to indicate that brand trust is an important basis for their loyalty, and b) this effect is mediated by perceived purchase risk.*

*H9c: For consumers high in cynicism, trust will be a more important predictor of brand loyalty than for consumers low in cynicism.*

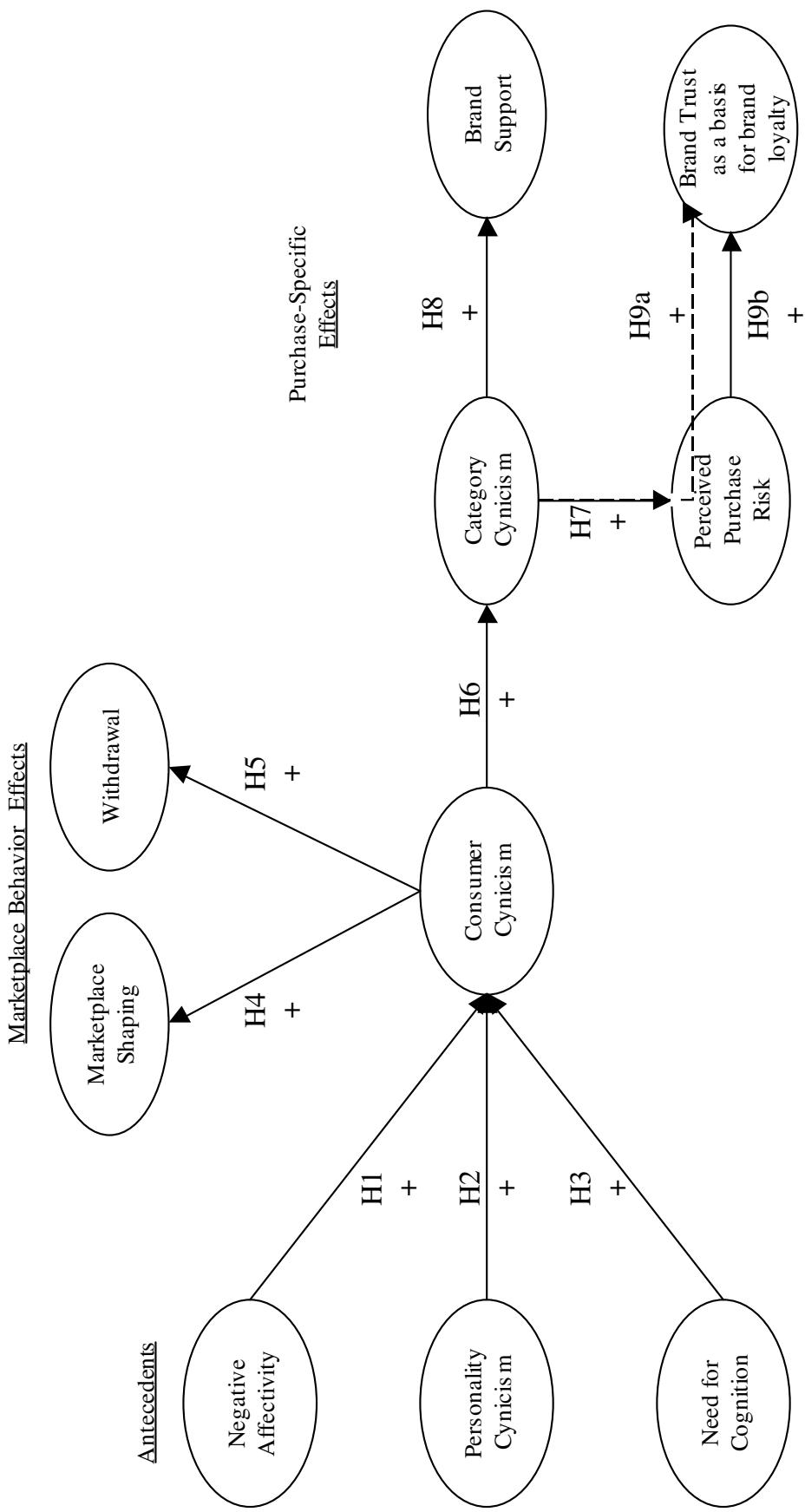
Interestingly, one previous study did look at differences in the basis of brand loyalty based on individual differences in perceptions of an industry, using a construct resembling consumer cynicism (Nijssen, Singh, Sirdeshmukh, & Holzmueller, 2003). Nijssen et al. looked at *valence*, or individual perceptions of an industry, from a consumer alienation or discontent perspective. While decrying the overlapping constructs in the discontent area and calling for a scale development effort in the future, Nijssen et al. used an ad hoc measure consisting of 3 items borrowed from existing scales: consumer sentiment (Barksdale & Darden, 1972; Gaski & Etzel, 1986), consumer discontent (Lundstrom & Lamont, 1976), and consumer alienation (Allison, 1978). This could have resulted in a measure similar to consumer cynicism, but the particular items chosen reflect more general regard or liking for the industry rather than perceptions of opportunism. Nijssen et al. found that, in regressions predicting loyalty, the trust coefficient was larger for individuals with a positive attitude toward the industry. This is the opposite of the relationship predicted in the proposed study. One possible explanation is that the Nijssen et al. study only asked about two product categories. If no firms in a particular category happened to break through a participants' cynicism to win their trust,

it is likely that they were less trusting than participants who had a positive attitude toward the industry. Thus, it is not surprising that a negative industry attitude would be associated with a weak trust-loyalty relationship. The Nijssen et al. study investigated whether valence toward the product category moderated the relationship between level of trust in a brand and level of loyalty to that brand. In contrast, this dissertation only addresses conditions of high loyalty, investigating whether consumer cynicism is associated with rating trust as an important reason for loyalty.

Table 2: Summary of hypotheses

Antecedents
H1: Negative affectivity will be positively associated with consumer cynicism.
H2: Societal cynicism is positively associated with (but discriminant from) consumer cynicism.
H3: Need for cognition is positively associated with (but discriminant from) consumer cynicism.
Consequences of Consumer Cynicism: Marketplace Behaviors & Decision-Making
H4: Consumer cynicism is positively associated with marketplace shaping.
H5: Consumer cynicism is positively associated with marketplace withdrawal.
H6: For any given product category, marketplace-level consumer cynicism is positively associated with cynicism about that particular product category
H7: For any given product category, category-level consumer cynicism is positively associated with perceived purchase risk for that particular product category.
H8: Category cynicism is associated with brand support for brands that have consumers' loyalty.
H9ab: In situations in which consumers have high brand loyalty, a) cynical consumers will be more likely (than those low in cynicism) to indicate that brand trust is an important basis for their loyalty, and b) this effect is mediated by perceived purchase risk.
H9c: For consumers high in cynicism, trust will be a more important predictor of brand loyalty than for consumers low in cynicism.

Figure 1: Hypothesized antecedents and consequences of consumer cynicism



## **CHAPTER 6: SCALE DEVELOPMENT**

Since a major goal of this research was to develop a measure for consumer cynicism, this dissertation consisted of a series of scale development studies. A large-scale national survey provided a representative sample for the final scale validation and was also used to test hypotheses to provide a nomological net for the new consumer cynicism construct and to investigate theoretical relationships with brand loyalty. Table 3 on page 73 provides basic information about these studies at a glance. The consumer cynicism measure was developed following scale development procedures outlined by Churchill (1979), Lastovicka (1982), Rossiter (2002), and Netemeyer, Bearden and Sharma (2003). The goals, methodology, and initial psychometric results of each study are discussed here, with the exception of Study 1, the initial qualitative study, which was detailed in Ch. 3. Hypothesis testing for the theoretical framework is discussed in Chapter 7.

Table 3: Summary of scale development studies

<b>Study 1: Qualitative interview study</b>	Participants: 23	Sample: Adults	Recruitment: Local organizations
<i>This exploratory study developed the construct and theory; transcripts were a source for generating scale items. (detailed in Ch. 3)</i>			
<b>Study 2: Member check</b>	Participants: 3	Sample: Adults	Recruitment: Study 1 participants
<i>Study 1 participants reviewed and discussed a summary of the construct and the items in the initial pool.</i>			
<b>Study 3: Expert rating</b>	Participants: 15	Sample: Consumer scholars	Recruitment: Colleague survey
<i>Faculty and Ph.D. students rated scale items for construct representativeness.</i>			
<b>Study 4: Initial item reduction</b>	Participants: 263	Sample: MU Students	Recruitment: Student organizations
<i>Item reduction, exploratory factor analysis, social desirability check, and discriminant and convergent validity with consumer alienation, societal cynicism, consumer self-confidence, advertising skepticism, and need for cognition. Conclude unidimensionality.</i>			
<b>Study 4a: Bonus sample</b>	Participants: 94	Sample: MU Students	Recruitment: Student organization
<i>This sample consists of participants from Study 4 who completed only the first part of the two-part survey in study 4, completing only the consumer cynicism item pool and the social desirability scale. This sample was used for additional checks on scale performance only.</i>			
<b>Study 5: Scale refinement</b>	Participants: 221	Sample: Adults	Recruitment: Organizations
<i>Item reduction, exploratory factor analysis, discriminant and convergent validity with positive and negative affectivity, consumer alienation, and assertive and aggressive consumer interaction styles; hypothesis testing of marketplace shaping and marketplace withdrawal as consequences of cynicism.</i>			
<b>Study 6: Test-retest</b>	Participants: 77	Sample: MU Business Students	Recruitment: Student organization
<b>Study 7: Known groups validity test</b>	Participants: 61	Sample: Adbusters	Recruitment: Online forum
<b>Study 8: Hypothesis testing pretest</b>	Participants: 67	Sample: UWW Students	Recruitment: UWW classes
<b>Study 9: Hypothesis testing and scale validation</b>	Participants: 561	Sample: Adults	Recruitment: National panel
<i>Scale validation, confirmatory factor analysis, testing of antecedent (need for cognition, societal cynicism) and consequences (marketplace withdrawal, marketplace shaping, brand support, and importance of trust issues in formation of brand loyalty).</i>			

## **Construct Definition and Content Domain**

Consumer cynicism is defined as:

*an individual consumer's stable, learned attitude toward the marketplace characterized by the perception that pervasive opportunism among firms exists and that this opportunism creates a harmful consumer marketplace.*

This definition was grounded in the qualitative interview study but also draws on an extensive body of literature on societal cynicism.

Following the C-OAR-SE model (Rossiter, 2002), the attribute is cynicism (perception of pervasive opportunism); the object or target is the self (self-rating or rating of one's own cynicism); and the rater is a consumer. The object would be classified as abstract formed; the attribute as an eliciting attribute (internal trait or disposition measured reflectively); the raters will be individuals doing self-reports.

Although the final scale was expected to be unidimensional, facets or elements were identified early in the scale development process for two reasons: to ensure that the item pool encompassed the full content domain, and to allow for the possibility of multidimensionality. Three elements were identified:

1. General opportunism: firms seek their own self-interests, without regard for basic principles or eventual consequences (8 items in the initial pool)
2. Opportunism specifically directed toward consumers: firms seek their own self-interests, disregarding eventual consequences even for their own customers (11 items)
3. Deception: forms of opportunism specifically emphasizing deceptive marketing practices (13 items)

A fourth element, “harm,” defined as “actual negative impact on consumers and the ability of the marketplace to satisfy their needs” was initially identified but later rejected based on Study 3 (expert judging) and Study 4 (initial test of items).

### **Item generation**

The consumer cynicism item pool drew in part from comments taken from consumers’ own words in the interviews, as well as items based on the literature. The initial item pool presented in the first scale development studies (Study 2, member check with cynical interview participants, Study 3, expert ratings of content validity, and Study 4, initial item reduction) included 49 items, with the goal of eventually reducing the scale to 10 items or fewer (Netemeyer et al., 2003). A large item pool was used to provide for the possibility of developing a multidimensional scale. Table 4 on page 79 lists the 49 items included in the initial pool as well as summarizing results of Study 3.

## **Content Validity and Dimensionality**

### **Study 2: Member check**

Three former interview participants provided “member checks” of the conceptual development and served as judges for content and face validity of the items. Participants discussed their thought process as they looked at each item in the scale in an informal form of cognitive interviewing (Rossiter, 2002). Interview participants classified in the qualitative analysis process as highly cynical were invited to participate in this small follow-up study. A plain-language summary of the consumer cynicism construct and theoretical framework and a list of the items in the initial pool were e-mailed to

participants, who then scheduled a telephone interview after they had reviewed the material. A copy of the summary is provided in Appendix A.

#### *Member check results*

All three participants felt that the consumer cynicism construct described their own experience. All three enjoyed the description and felt that they came away with a better understanding of themselves. Two of the three felt that it was portrayed a little too negatively. The item-by-item review was not as helpful as expected, as participants did not review the item list much in advance and were reluctant to get specific about each item. In general, participants felt the items were clearly worded and preferred the more strongly worded items. Three items were consistently identified as favorites:

- Most companies don't mind breaking the law; they just see fines and lawsuits as a cost of doing business.
- Companies see consumers as puppets to manipulate.
- Manufacturers don't care what happens once I've bought the product.

They scoffed at most of the reverse-scored items and speculated that no one would be naive enough to agree with them.

One participant disliked a number of items intended to represent the “harm” or consequences facet of consumer cynicism. She felt these items overemphasized specific business consequences and underemphasized the ethical issues behind them. As it turned out, many of the items intended to represent this facet did not perform well on other measures either, including expert ratings of dimension fit. Likewise, the three favorite items also performed well on other scale development procedures and were retained in the final scale.

### **Study 3: Expert judgments of content validity and dimension fit**

Colleagues were asked to rate the items for representativeness of the construct (Netemeyer et al., 2003). Twenty faculty members and upper-level Ph.D. students with an emphasis in consumer behavior were invited to participate and 15 responded (from 12 different universities). Participants read the definition of consumer cynicism and rated each item in terms of how well it represented the overall definition. They also read definitions of the four dimensions or elements, assigned each item to one of those four dimensions, and rated how well it fit the chosen dimension. (Items were presented in random order, mixing the intended dimensions.) A copy of the colleague questionnaire is provided in Appendix A.

Table 4 on the following pages summarizes the results of the expert judging study. This table was used as a reference throughout the process of item reduction. The table is shown here sorted by the mean rating for overall representativeness of the consumer cynicism construct; that is, the items experts rated as best fitting the definition of consumer cynicism are shown at the top. This mean rating is shown in the first column in the table under construct fit. The second column shows the percentage of experts who rated the item as a 4 or 5 for overall fit with the definition of consumer cynicism, and the third column shows the percentage of experts who rated the item as a 1 or 2 (indicating poor fit).

During analysis, these ratings were color-coded by rank. That is, the score in the table for the best-performing items was colored dark green and next-best performers were colored a lighter green. For items with a lower than acceptable score, the score was colored red; marginally acceptable scores were colored orange for caution. Thus, for the

expert rating study, items with a mean rating for overall fit with the cynicism definition of less than 3.0 were literally red-flagged. A similar color-coding system was used on several tables summarizing various studies throughout the iterative process of item reduction. The rating scores in the tables, rather than the items themselves, were color-coded so that a single item could receive many color codes – showing a green light or a red flag for different scale considerations such as expert rating, restricted range, etc. A top-performing item should show green lights across the board; red flags in any category signal candidates for deletion.

In addition to rating how well each item fit the overall definition of consumer cynicism, colleagues were asked to decide which dimension each item fit best and rate how well it fit that dimension. The next set of columns in the table summarizes these results. The “mode” column indicates which of the four dimensions or elements was the most popular choice for the experts participating in this exercise (1=general opportunism, 2=consumer opportunism, 3=deception, 4=harm/consequences). The next column “intended element” shows which of the four dimensions or elements the item was designed to capture. Ideally most colleagues would assign an item to the dimension that item was intended to capture, and the “mode” and “intended element” columns would be the same, as indicated by a 1 in the “mode match” column. A zero in the “mode match” column indicates that most experts classified the item as capturing a dimension other than the one it was intended to capture, i.e. that the most popular answer was “wrong.” Most of the items in the pool passed this simple test; only 13 items were red-flagged.

Table 4: Results of Study 3 expert judging

Item Text	Construct Fit				Elements/Dimensions Classifications					Element Fit Mean Rating for Mode Element
	Mean	% chose 4 or 5	% chose 1 or 2	Mode <sup>1</sup>	Intended Element	Mode Match <sup>2</sup>	# Chose Mode	% Chose Mode	Index <sup>3</sup>	
To make a profit, companies are willing to do whatever they can get away with.*	<b>4.69</b>	100%	0%	1	1	1	12	86%	8%	<b>3.55</b>
Most businesses are more interested in making profits than in serving consumers.	<b>4.54</b>	100%	0%	2	2	1	8	57%	<b>75%</b>	<b>4.83</b>
Sales people will say anything to get you to buy the product.	<b>4.54</b>	100%	0%	3	3	1	12	86%	17%	<b>3.78</b>
A lot of consumers get tipped off by businesses.* <sup>m</sup>	<b>4.46</b>	92%	0%	4	4	1	9	64%	<b>44%</b>	<b>3.92</b>
Most managers would be deeply concerned if they ever thought their product harmed a consumer.	<b>4.46</b>	85%	0%	4	4	1	13	93%	8%	<b>4.00</b>
Consumers are often manipulated by companies.	<b>4.46</b>	92%	0%	3	4	0	9	64%	<b>44%</b>	<b>4.62</b>
"Let the buyer beware" is the guiding philosophy of most businesses.	<b>4.38</b>	92%	8%	1	2	0	6	43%	<b>83%</b>	<b>3.62</b>
What most companies claim about their product can't be trusted.	<b>4.38</b>	85%	0%	3	3	1	13	93%	8%	<b>4.15</b>
Most companies are pretty honest.	<b>4.38</b>	100%	0%	3	3	1	8	57%	<b>75%</b>	<b>3.80</b>
Most companies don't mind breaking the law; they just see fines and lawsuits as a cost of doing business.* <sup>m</sup>	<b>4.31</b>	85%	0%	1	1	1	12	86%	8%	<b>3.25</b>
Most businesses will cut any corner they can to improve profit margins.	<b>4.31</b>	85%	0%	1	1	1	13	93%	8%	<b>3.73</b>
If I want to get my money's worth, I can't believe what a company tells me.*	<b>4.31</b>	92%	8%	3	3	1	14	100%	0%	<b>3.60</b>
Most companies will sacrifice anything to make a profit.	<b>4.23</b>	85%	0%	1	1	1	13	93%	8%	<b>4.33</b>
Most businesses make a reasonable effort to act ethically.	<b>4.23</b>	85%	0%	1	1	1	13	93%	8%	
Most companies try to give honest information about their products.	<b>4.23</b>	92%	0%	3	3	1	14	100%	0%	<b>4.11</b>
If it looks like a bargain, there's probably a catch.	<b>4.15</b>	85%	0%	3	3	1	9	64%	22%	<b>4.23</b>

\* - Item included in final scale; <sup>m</sup> Item was a favorite in member check. <sup>1</sup> Mode (most popular choice) for element/dimension classification by expert rating; <sup>2</sup> I = Mode element classification matched the intended one 0=Most popular expert element classification did not match intended one; <sup>3</sup> Index calculated by the number of people choosing the second-most popular element/dimension classification divided by the number of people selecting the mode

Table 4: Results of Study 3 expert judging, continued

Item Text	Construct Fit						Elements/Dimensions Classifications						Element Fit Mean Rating for Mode Element
	Mean	% chose 4 or 5	% chose 1 or 2	Mode <sup>1</sup>	Intended Element	Mode Match <sup>2</sup>	# Chose Mode	% Chose Mode	Index <sup>3</sup>				
Sales are just a trick to lure you into the store.	<b>4.08</b>	<b>92%</b>	<b>8%</b>	3	3	1	11	<b>79%</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>4.50</b>			
Companies see consumers as puppets to manipulate.* <sup>m</sup>	<b>4.08</b>	<b>77%</b>	<b>8%</b>	2	2	1	7	50%	<b>86%</b>	<b>3.90</b>			
Businesses are willing to throw away long-term customer relationships for short-term profit.*	<b>4.08</b>	<b>69%</b>	<b>0%</b>	2	2	1	9	64%	<b>44%</b>	<b>4.31</b>			
A lot of what companies say is just a sales pitch.	<b>4.08</b>	<b>85%</b>	<b>0%</b>	3	3	1	11	<b>79%</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>2.80</b>			
Except for a few bad apples, most companies are OK.	<b>4.00</b>	<b>77%</b>	<b>8%</b>	1	1	1	14	<b>100%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>3.50</b>			
Most businesses uphold their responsibility to the consumer.	<b>4.00</b>	<b>85%</b>	<b>0%</b>	2	2	1	12	<b>86%</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>3.78</b>			
Companies offer rebates with the hope that a lot of consumers won't cash them in correctly.	<b>4.00</b>	<b>83%</b>	<b>8%</b>	3	3	1	7	50%	<b>43%</b>	<b>4.36</b>			
Manufacturers don't care what happens once I've bought the product.* <sup>m</sup>	<b>4.00</b>	<b>75%</b>	<b>0%</b>	2	2	1	9	64%	22%	<b>4.38</b>			
Putting things on sale is usually just a gimmick.	<b>3.92</b>	<b>77%</b>	<b>8%</b>	3	3	1	13	<b>100%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>3.71</b>			
Successful companies are usually socially responsible.	<b>3.85</b>	<b>62%</b>	<b>15%</b>	1	1	1	13	<b>93%</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>3.44</b>			
Many manufacturers deliberately design products to wear out quickly.	<b>3.85</b>	<b>69%</b>	<b>8%</b>	3	4	<b>0</b>	5	36%	80%	<b>4.11</b>			
Most companies walk a fine line between illegal and legal practices.	<b>3.83</b>	<b>75%</b>	<b>8%</b>	1	1	1	10	<b>77%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>3.86</b>			
Most companies genuinely care about my satisfaction with the product.	<b>3.83</b>	<b>83%</b>	<b>8%</b>	2	2	1	9	64%	<b>33%</b>	<b>4.29</b>			
Product claims on packages are usually accurate.	<b>3.83</b>	<b>67%</b>	<b>0%</b>	3	3	1	13	<b>93%</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>3.00</b>			
Sales people are insincere.	<b>3.77</b>	<b>62%</b>	<b>15%</b>	3	3	1	10	<b>71%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>4.38</b>			
Most companies want to sell a good product at a fair price.	<b>3.77</b>	<b>77%</b>	<b>8%</b>	1	4	<b>0</b>	8	57%	50%	<b>4.58</b>			
The companies that make products I buy don't see product quality as a top priority.	<b>3.77</b>	<b>62%</b>	<b>8%</b>	1	4	<b>0</b>	4	33%	75%	<b>4.56</b>			
If something goes wrong with a product, most companies would try to resolve the problem.	<b>3.75</b>	<b>58%</b>	<b>0%</b>	2	4	<b>0</b>	5	38%	80%	<b>3.13</b>			
Most advertising is pretty harmless.	<b>3.67</b>	<b>58%</b>	<b>17%</b>	4	4	1	9	64%	<b>22%</b>	<b>3.40</b>			

\* - Item included in final scale; <sup>m</sup> Item was a favorite in member check; <sup>1</sup> Mode (most popular choice) for element/dimension classification did not match intended one; <sup>3</sup> Index calculated by the number of people choosing the second-most popular element/dimension classification divided by the number of people selecting the mode

Table 4: Results of Study 3 expert judging, continued

<b>Item text</b>	<b>Construct Fit</b>				<b>Elements/Dimensions Classifications</b>					<b>Element Fit</b> Mean Rating for Mode Element
	Mean	% chose 4 or 5	% chose 1 or 2	Mode <sup>1</sup>	Intended Element	Mode	Match <sup>2</sup>	# Chose Mode	% Chose Mode	
If there is a problem with a product, people can usually count on getting help from either the manufacturer or the store.	<b>3.62</b>	62%	<b>15%</b>	2	4	<b>0</b>	8	57%	50%	<b>4.31</b>
Businesses may cut corners in other areas, but when it comes to dealing with consumers, most companies are OK.	<b>3.58</b>	67%	<b>8%</b>	2	2	<b>1</b>	11	<b>85%</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>3.69</b>
Most companies treat the customer right.	<b>3.55</b>	64%	<b>9%</b>	2	2	<b>1</b>	11	<b>79%</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>3.20</b>
Stores usually try to keep customers satisfied to build long-term loyalty.	<b>3.50</b>	58%	<b>8%</b>	2	2	<b>1</b>	10	<b>71%</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>3.93</b>
Most major brands today work hard to offer consumers a high quality product.	<b>3.42</b>	58%	<b>17%</b>	2	4	<b>0</b>	9	69%	33%	<b>4.00</b>
Store salespeople give unbiased advice about products to suit customer needs.	<b>3.38</b>	<b>54%</b>	<b>31%</b>	3	3	<b>1</b>	10	<b>71%</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>3.70</b>
Long-term customer relationships are a top priority for businesses.	<b>3.33</b>	<b>42%</b>	<b>8%</b>	2	2	<b>1</b>	10	<b>77%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>3.78</b>
It's hard for a honest company to succeed in today's competitive world.	<b>3.31</b>	<b>54%</b>	<b>31%</b>	1	4	<b>0</b>	8	57%	38%	<b>3.36</b>
Most retail stores serve their customers well.	<b>3.17</b>	58%	<b>42%</b>	2	4	<b>0</b>	7	50%	57%	<b>4.15</b>
Products are not made as well as they ought to be.	<b>2.92</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>23%</b>	4	4	<b>1</b>	5	36%	<b>80%</b>	
You have to wade through a lot of hype to find a decent value.	<b>2.91</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>36%</b>	5	4	<b>0</b>	6	43%	100%	<b>4.20</b>
People can usually get good value for the money.	<b>2.83</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>33%</b>	4	4	<b>1</b>	5	36%	<b>80%</b>	<b>3.25</b>
Most consumers can figure out how to get a decent deal.	<b>2.80</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>50%</b>	5	4	<b>0</b>	8	62%	38%	<b>3.36</b>
It takes a lot of time and trouble to get a decent buy.	<b>2.17</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>58%</b>	5	4	<b>0</b>	10	71%	20%	<b>4.67</b>

\* - Item included in final scale; <sup>m</sup> Item was a favorite in member check; <sup>1</sup> Mode (most popular choice) for element/dimension classification by expert rating; <sup>2</sup> 1=Mode element classification matched the intended one 0=Most popular expert element classification did not match intended one; <sup>3</sup> Index calculated by the number of people choosing the second most popular element/dimension classification divided by the number of people selecting the mode

To further evaluate the fit of each item with dimension, the degree of agreement among participating expert raters was considered. The next columns in the table show the number and percentage of participating experts who chose the most popular answer. A higher percentage indicates a higher degree of general agreement among colleagues.

The index column provides a more complete picture of the level of agreement. This was calculated by dividing the number of people who chose the second-most popular answer by the number of people who chose the mode. This flags disagreement resulting from an item tapping into two specific facets, leading to a runner-up mode (a high index). Of course, if only a few people disagreed with the most popular classification, the index would be quite low. An ideal item would score 100 percent for “percent chose mode” and 0 percent for “index.”

For example, the item “If it looks like a bargain, there’s probably a catch,” at the bottom of the first page of the table, shows nine people (64 percent of participating experts) classified it under dimension 3 (deception, as intended). Although five people disagreed, there was no other popular answer; answers (not shown in this summary table) were scattered among the other dimensions. Only two people chose the next-most-popular option, the consumer opportunism dimension. Thus the index was 2 divided by 9 or 22 percent. In contrast, nine people also rated the item “Consumers are often manipulated by companies” as fitting the deception dimension, but almost all of the five who disagreed classified the item as fitting the consumer opportunism dimension, resulting in a higher index of 44 percent. This indicates the item taps into both consumer opportunism and deception.

The last column shows the mean rating for fit of the item with the dimension to which it was assigned; only participants who agreed with the mode classification were included in this calculation. Thus, for the first item in the table, the mode classification was dimension 2, consumer opportunism. Among those who classified that item as dimension 2, the mean rating for fit with dimension 2 was 3.55. Participants who classified the item under one of the other dimensions did not rate its fit for dimension 2, so they could not be included in the mean.

Results from the expert rating study provided some initial guidance for the question of the dimensionality of the consumer cynicism construct.

A key finding from the expert rating study is that the items intended to represent the “harm” or consequences facet did not work well. Many of these items were rated low for representativeness of the overall concept. The expert raters also tended to assign these consequences of opportunism to the relevant opportunism dimensions rather than distinguishing between opportunistic motives and resulting consequences for consumers. In fact, of the 13 items that were red-flagged because experts did not assign them to the intended dimension, 12 were intended to capture the harm or consequences facet. This clearly suggested the fourth element was of limited value and it was dropped from the conceptualization. Specifically, the distinction between consequences and motives was eliminated.

Items intended to represent the other three facets or elements of consumer cynicism, general opportunism, consumer-targeted opportunism, and deception, were mostly consistently assigned to the intended dimensions. However, the level of agreement about fit of items for particular dimensions tells a more complete story. For

several of the items rated most highly for overall representativeness of the consumer cynicism construct, expert raters showed confusion about which dimension or facet was appropriate. Of the top ten items seen as *most* representative of consumer cynicism overall, five were red-flagged as being among the *worst* performers in terms of clear cut dimensionality. This finding is consistent with a unidimensional construct.

Later factor analysis procedures confirmed the expected unidimensionality of the construct. However, the expert judgments of representativeness of each element were still valuable for ensuring full representation of the content domain in the final scale. The final scale includes a mix of items intended to capture each of the three facets.

Items with a mean rating of less than 3 on a 5-point scale for overall representativeness of the consumer cynicism construct were earmarked for likely elimination, and were eliminated from the pool completely following study 4. All the items retained in the final scale had a mean rating of 4.0 or higher for representativeness of the consumer cynicism construct.

#### **Study 4: Initial test on a student sample**

Objectives for this initial test of the scale included:

- Initial item reduction of the consumer cynicism item pool based on item variances, item-to-total correlation, means, internal consistency and exploratory factor analysis;
- Determination of dimensionality of the consumer cynicism construct;
- Confirmation of convergent validity with a self-rating of consumer cynicism;
- Testing for response bias (social desirability);
- Confirming convergent and discriminant validity with related constructs consumer alienation and advertising skepticism;

- Initial hypothesis testing and confirmation of discriminant validity with need for cognition and societal cynicism (detailed in Ch. 7)

#### *Methodology for Study 4*

Study 4 was an online survey including the 49-item consumer cynicism pool and several other measures for scale development procedures. Participants were recruited through a variety of student organizations at the University of Missouri, representing a broad cross-section of the student population: Alpha Phi Omega co-ed service fraternity, Circle K service club, Phi Mu Alpha music fraternity, Pi Kappa Alpha and Delta Sigma Phi social fraternities, Delta Delta Delta social sorority, and the Society of Professional Journalists student chapter. Clubs e-mailed members a link to the survey and received \$3 for each completed pair of surveys. In this way, a total of 852 students were invited to participate, with 274 completing the first survey. In addition, 299 University of Missouri graduate students were randomly selected from the student directory and invited to participate with the incentive of entry into a drawing for Amazon.com gift certificates; 91 completed the first survey. Altogether, the response rate for survey 1 was 32 percent, response rate for survey 2 was 26 percent (83 percent of those who completed survey 1), and 270 usable pairs of surveys were received. This sample is referred to in this dissertation as Study 4.

This study was completed online in two separate sessions. Because of the large size of the consumer cynicism item pool at this stage (49 items), the repetitive nature of the consumer cynicism, advertising skepticism and consumer alienation measures, and the length of the consumer alienation (19 items) and need for cognition scale (18 items), it was determined that participants should complete the survey in two separate sessions to minimize fatigue.

The first survey included the consumer cynicism item pool and a shortened version of the Marlow-Crowne Social Desirability Scale (Bruner, James, & Hensel, 2001). The second survey included Obermiller and Spangenberg's (1998) 9-item scale of consumer skepticism toward advertising, Lambert's (1980) 19-item consumer alienation scale, the persuasion knowledge (6 items) and marketplace interfaces (5 items) dimensions of Bearden et al.'s (2001) consumer self-confidence scale, a 6-item version of Wrightsman's (1991) societal cynicism scale (Kanter & Mirvis, 1989), and, at the end, a definition of consumer cynicism and a self-rating.

Student clubs made an initial announcement to members at club meetings. Next, e-mail invitations were sent by club officers to members with a link to the online survey, with a reminder e-mail one week later. Two weeks after the first survey, another e-mail invitation went out for the second survey (only participants in the first survey were eligible, but since the survey was anonymous, everyone received the second e-mail), followed by a reminder one week later. Surveys were completed online. The survey was anonymous, but participants created their own unique memorable ID number so that the first and second surveys could be matched for each respondent. A total of 94 Part I surveys were received which could not be matched with Part II surveys; this sample was used for limited analyses and is referred to in this dissertation as Study 4a.

Table 5: Consumer cynicism item pool statistics for study 4 student sample

Study 4			Std.		Item-to-total	Item-Self	Expert	
Item	Study 5 Item #/wording	Mean	Dev.	Var.	Range	Correlation	Rating Corr.	Rating
1	01genuinely care about sat	2.73	0.89	0.80	4	<b>0.57</b>	<b>0.42</b>	3.83
4	02long-term top priority	2.65	<b>1.04</b>	<b>1.08</b>	4	0.53	<b>0.29</b>	<b>3.33</b>
5	03claims can't be trusted	<b>2.88</b>	0.87	0.76	4	<b>0.57</b>	<b>0.42</b>	<b>4.38</b>
6	04cost of business*	2.64	<b>0.95</b>	0.90	4	0.54	0.38	<b>4.31</b>
9	05hard for honest to succeed	<b>3.15</b>	<b>1.11</b>	<b>1.23</b>	4	0.51	0.34	<b>3.31</b>
10	06work hard for quality	2.77	0.87	0.76	4	<b>0.57</b>	0.39	<b>3.42</b>
11	07profits over customers*	<b>3.71</b>	0.88	0.77	<b>3</b>	<b>0.57</b>	<b>0.46</b>	<b>4.54</b>
13	08good product, fair price	<b>2.96</b>	0.89	0.79	4	0.53	<b>0.42</b>	3.77
14	09honest information	<b>2.83</b>	<b>0.80</b>	<b>0.64</b>	4	0.54	<b>0.42</b>	<b>4.23</b>
17	10throw away for short-term	<b>2.81</b>	<b>0.98</b>	<b>0.97</b>	4	<b>0.56</b>	<b>0.30</b>	<b>4.08</b>
18	11sat for long-term loyalty	<b>2.52</b>	0.86	0.74	4	0.51	<b>0.26</b>	<b>3.50</b>
20	12lots get ripped off	3.48	0.90	0.80	4	0.53	<b>0.41</b>	<b>4.46</b>
21	13puppets to manipulate*	<b>2.89</b>	<b>0.96</b>	<b>0.92</b>	4	<b>0.67</b>	<b>0.44</b>	<b>4.08</b>
22	14don't care after purchase*	<b>3.10</b>	<b>0.97</b>	<b>0.94</b>	4	<b>0.66</b>	<b>0.43</b>	<b>3.67</b>
23	15package claims accurate	<b>2.82</b>	<b>0.77</b>	<b>0.59</b>	4	<b>0.46</b>	<b>0.30</b>	3.83
24	16most pretty honest	<b>2.88</b>	0.82	<b>0.66</b>	4	<b>0.66</b>	<b>0.52</b>	<b>4.38</b>
25	17try to resolve problem	<b>2.51</b>	0.83	<b>0.69</b>	4	<b>0.55</b>	<b>0.32</b>	3.75
26	18don't believe to get \$ worth*	<b>2.84</b>	0.82	<b>0.67</b>	4	<b>0.65</b>	<b>0.41</b>	<b>4.31</b>
27	19unbiased sales advice	<b>3.52</b>	0.84	0.71	4	<b>0.20</b>	<b>0.19</b>	<b>3.38</b>
28	20hope cust. don't do rebates	<b>3.76</b>	<b>0.96</b>	<b>0.91</b>	4	<b>0.34</b>	<b>0.18</b>	4.00
29	21sales are a trick	<b>3.55</b>	0.86	0.75	4	<b>0.40</b>	<b>0.23</b>	<b>4.08</b>
30	22uphold responsibility	2.66	<b>0.74</b>	<b>0.54</b>	4	<b>0.65</b>	<b>0.43</b>	4.00
31	23sacrifice anything for profit*	<b>2.84</b>	<b>0.92</b>	0.84	4	<b>0.55</b>	<b>0.31</b>	<b>4.23</b>
32	24let the buyer beware	<b>3.05</b>	0.89	0.79	4	0.50	<b>0.25</b>	<b>4.38</b>
33	25fine line	<b>2.90</b>	<b>0.91</b>	0.84	4	0.55	0.37	3.83
34	26quality is top priority	2.70	0.88	0.77	4	0.52	<b>0.27</b>	3.77
38	27bargain = catch	3.42	0.86	0.74	4	<b>0.44</b>	<b>0.32</b>	<b>4.15</b>
39	28cut corners but not for cust.	2.74	0.80	<b>0.65</b>	4	0.50	0.33	<b>3.58</b>
40	29a few bad apples	<b>2.45</b>	0.80	<b>0.64</b>	4	<b>0.62</b>	<b>0.44</b>	4.00
41	31managers concerned	<b>2.42</b>	<b>0.92</b>	0.84	4	<b>0.44</b>	0.32	<b>4.46</b>
42	32whatever can get away with*	<b>2.96</b>	0.89	0.79	4	<b>0.59</b>	<b>0.42</b>	<b>4.69</b>
43	33reasonable effort ethically	<b>2.59</b>	<b>0.80</b>	<b>0.64</b>	4	<b>0.57</b>	<b>0.46</b>	4.23
44	34cut any corner for profit*	<b>3.15</b>	0.90	0.81	4	<b>0.57</b>	0.33	<b>4.31</b>
45	35manipulated	3.48	0.84	0.71	4	0.54	<b>0.47</b>	<b>4.46</b>
46	36ads harmless	<b>3.02</b>	<b>1.12</b>	<b>1.26</b>	4	<b>0.48</b>	0.38	<b>3.67</b>
47	37count on help with problems	2.66	<b>0.91</b>	0.83	4	<b>0.57</b>	0.33	<b>3.62</b>
48	38socially responsible	<b>2.56</b>	<b>0.95</b>	<b>0.91</b>	4	<b>0.49</b>	0.35	3.85
49	39sales people insincere	<b>3.05</b>	<b>0.90</b>	0.82	4	<b>0.42</b>	0.39	3.77
7	time & trouble	3.29	<b>0.99</b>	<b>0.98</b>	4	<b>0.43</b>	<b>0.23</b>	<b>2.17</b>
36	most get decent deal	2.76	<b>0.94</b>	0.88	4	<b>0.44</b>	<b>0.28</b>	<b>2.80</b>
19	can get good value for \$	<b>2.83</b>	0.83	<b>0.69</b>	4	0.52	<b>0.41</b>	<b>2.83</b>
35	wade through hype	3.41	0.87	0.75	4	0.50	0.33	<b>2.91</b>
15	not as well made as ought	<b>3.61</b>	0.90	0.80	4	0.55	<b>0.42</b>	<b>2.92</b>
3	stores serve well	2.64	<b>0.80</b>	<b>0.63</b>	4	<b>0.48</b>	<b>0.25</b>	<b>3.17</b>
12	treat customer right	2.75	<b>0.75</b>	<b>0.57</b>	4	<b>0.63</b>	<b>0.41</b>	<b>3.55</b>
2	deliberate wear out	<b>3.01</b>	<b>0.98</b>	<b>0.97</b>	4	<b>0.55</b>	0.38	3.85
16	sales just a gimmick	<b>3.21</b>	<b>0.99</b>	<b>0.97</b>	4	<b>0.38</b>	<b>0.22</b>	3.92
8	just a sales pitch	<b>3.68</b>	<b>0.79</b>	<b>0.62</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0.50</b>	<b>0.44</b>	<b>4.08</b>
37	sales will say anything	3.45	0.87	0.75	<b>3</b>	<b>0.41</b>	<b>0.27</b>	<b>4.54</b>

n=359; \* Included in final scale; strikethrough indicates eliminated from pool based on study 3 and 4

#### *Analyses for Study 4: Exploratory factor analysis and initial item reduction*

Table 5 on page 87 summarizes descriptive statistics for each item in the Study 4 sample. The color-coded table was used throughout the process of exploratory factor analysis and item reduction to facilitate an iterative process simultaneously considering multiple issues. Means close to the scale midpoint of 3.0, comparatively high standard deviation and variance relative to other items, full range, and high item-to-total correlation were coded green. Means greater than 3.5 or less than 2.5, comparatively low standard deviations and variances, restricted range, and low item-to-total correlations were flagged. To facilitate consideration of content validity along with numeric issues, the table includes two other columns: a self-rating and, from study 3, the expert rating of construct representativeness. The study 4 sample read a definition of consumer cynicism at the close of the survey and rated their own level of cynicism directly; the table reports the correlation between each candidate cynicism item and the self-rating.

Exploratory factor analysis showed that items intended to capture four elements of the consumer cynicism construct did not tend to cluster together in those four groups or any other meaningful groups, suggesting consumer cynicism was most likely best represented as a unidimensional construct. In study 3, fellow consumer behavior scholars who were provided with dimensional definitions were able to correctly assign items to the dimensions they were designed to capture. Study 4 showed that these distinctions were not apparent to the layperson.

Initial factor analysis showed most of the reverse-scored items in the consumer cynicism pool loaded on one factor. These items were excluded from the analysis temporarily. With the reversed items excluded, the initial EFA of the pool showed seven

factors with no clear pattern except that factors 6 and 7 were each based on two items narrowly focused on sales people and promotional sales. There was heavy cross-loading and a .51 correlation among factors, supporting unidimensionality. Next , advertising skepticism and consumer alienation items were added to the EFA, resulting in 14 factors. Advertising skepticism loaded neatly on its own factor as expected; consumer alienation items were more scattered but for the most part clustered on factors separately from cynicism. Only one four-item factor showed a real mix of cynicism and alienation items. This factor included one cynicism item and one alienation item, both dealing specifically with deliberately designing products to wear out quickly. Since this factor appeared to be an artifact of similar wording, that item was eliminated in spite of otherwise good performance (“Many manufacturers deliberately design products to wear out quickly.”)

Next, the following items were eliminated based on their unacceptable expert ratings for construct representativeness in study 3, finally completely eliminating all items that had been red-flagged for a mean rating of less than 3.0:

- Most consumers can figure out how to get a decent deal.
- You have to wade through a lot of hype to find a decent value.
- People can usually get good value for their money.
- Products are not as well made as they ought to be.
- It takes a lot of time and trouble to get a decent buy.

Three more were eliminated due to concerns in multiple categories: expert rating of construct representativeness, mean too far from the scale midpoint, low variance, and low item-to-total correlation. Although the other scale items with similar performance on

any individual consideration were retained, these were selected for elimination because they showed problems in multiple categories:

- Most retail stores serve their customers well.
- Most companies treat the customer right.
- A lot of what companies say is just a sales pitch.

After eliminating those items, an EFA was run on the remaining consumer cynicism items. The item, “Putting things on sale is usually just a gimmick,” was shown to be heavily cross-loaded and the primary driver of factor 6, which was otherwise made up of low loadings from a mix of seemingly unrelated items. It also showed a low correlation with the self rating of cynicism. Thus it was eliminated from the pool.

Although numerous items were flagged as likely candidates for elimination, most items (39) were retained in the pool and tested again with the adult sample in Study 5. In studies 2, 3 and 4, the goal was to evaluate dimensionality and eliminate those few items with unacceptable performance. With analysis of the adult consumer sample in Study 5, the focus shifted toward selecting only the top-performing items for the final scale.

## **Study 5: Item Reduction**

Objectives for this study included:

- Primary item reduction of the consumer cynicism item pool based on item variances, item-to-total correlation, means, internal consistency and exploratory factor analysis with simultaneous consideration of item and scale performance on the study 4 sample (Netemeyer et al., 2003);
- Confirmation of discriminant validity with negative affectivity, consumer alienation, and assertive and aggressive consumer interaction styles;

- Initial hypothesis testing and measure pretesting for marketplace shaping and withdrawal behaviors as consequences of consumer cynicism (detailed in Chapter 7);
- Exploratory research on a broad variety consumer activism and anti-commercial behaviors for future analysis.

## **Study 5 methodology**

This survey was completed online in a single session. Adult consumers were recruited through nonprofit organizations expected to represent a broad cross-section of the population and not associated with any particular ideology. The organizations received \$5 per online survey completed by their members. Four organizations participated: Rockbridge High School athletic booster club in Columbia, Mo. (parents of high school athletes), Hickman High School music booster club in Columbia, Mo. (parents of high school musicians), the Jaycees chapter in Columbia, Mo. (young professionals up to age 35), and parents of children enrolled at a private preschool in Peoria, Ill. Responses rates for each club ranged from 52 to 75 percent, with an overall response rate of 58 percent; a total of 221 responses were received.

Table 6: Demographics of Study 5 participants

<u>Age range</u>	<u>Respondents</u>	<u>Education</u>	<u>Respondents</u>
18-30	11%		
31-40	19%	High school, vocational or associate's degree	21%
41-50	46%		
51-60	21%	College degree	80%
61+	3%		

Household annual income ranges were normally distributed from less than \$20,000 to greater than \$250,000 with the mean in the \$75,000-\$99,000 range.

Participating organizations announced the activity to members and sent an initial e-mail invitation with a link to the online survey. Reminder e-mails were sent at one week and two weeks following the initial e-mail.

The survey consisted of the 39 items remaining in the consumer cynicism item pool and one scale to be used for scale development analyses, Lambert's (1980) 19-item consumer alienation scale. Several other measures were included for hypothesis testing; these are detailed in Chapter 7, Testing Hypotheses.

### **Conclusions from Study 4 and 5: Primary item reduction**

The student sample from Study 4 and the adult sample from Study 5 were considered simultaneously (Netemeyer et al., 2003) in an iterative process. As with Study 4, item-to-total correlations, means and variances were summarized in a color-coded table along with two indicators of content validity, correlation with the self-rating of consumer cynicism (from Study 4) and colleague ratings of construct validity (from Study 3). This provided a convenient reference to facilitate simultaneous consideration of multiple statistical issues when using exploratory factor analysis to select the best-performing items, as well as simultaneous consideration of factor analyses on two separate samples, as recommended by Netemeyer, Bearden and Sharma (2003). Although the study 4 and study 5 samples were considered during this process, more emphasis was placed on the study 5 sample because this sample of adult consumers is more representative than the student sample used in study 4.

Initially all 39 items remaining in the pool were included in a principal axis factor analysis on the study 5 adult sample with the number of factors unrestrained (Netemeyer

et al., 2003). As occurred in the student sample, reverse scored items loaded on a separate factor and were temporarily excluded from analysis. Factor analysis of the remaining 20 items showed a three-factor solution. Consistent with expectations for a unidimensional factor structure and with performance of the student sample, the first factor accounted for 44 percent of the variance and the second factor only 7 percent..

Table 7: EFA Solution for Study 5  
Sample of Adult Consumers

<b>Item # and wording</b>	Factor loading
32whatever they can get away with	.848
25fine line	.827
13puppets to manipulate	.826
18don't believe to get \$ worth	.785
04cost of business	.771
34cut any corner for profit	.753
12lots get ripped off	.739
23sacrifice anything for profit	.724
03claims can't be trusted	.716
14don't care after purchase	.714
35manipulated	.693
39sales people insincere	.667
07profits over customers	.656
24let the buyer beware	.639
26quality is top priority	.615
05hard for honest to succeed	.567
10throw away for short-term	.565

*Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring,  
loadings less than .1 suppressed, 3 iterations  
required.*

Three items with a lower than .4 loading on the first factor were then dropped from analysis (Items 20, 21 and 27); these items also had shown a low correlation with the self rating in the student sample. This resulted in a unidimensional solution for the Study 5 adult consumer sample, shown in Table 7 with the factor accounting for 54 percent of the variance. The same EFA on the Study 4 student sample shows a muddier picture with a three factor solution with high correlations among the factors.

Table 8: EFA solution for Study 4 student sample

	<u>Factor</u>		
	1	2	3
18don't believe to get \$ worth	.772	-.130	.147
3claims can't be trusted	.715		
10throw away for short-term	.444		-.145
24let the buyer beware	.404	.139	-.252
39sales people insincere	.358		-.167
4cost of business	.351	-.159	-.138
26quality is top priority	.294		-.179
5hard for honest to succeed	.280	-.144	-.183
12lots get ripped off		-.724	.114
35manipulated		-.507	-.239
13puppets to manipulate	.148	-.458	-.229
7profits over customers	.206	-.370	-.199
14don't care after purchase	.328	-.356	
23sacrifice anything for profit			-.667
32whatever they can get away with			-.628
34cut any corner for profit	.116		-.512
25fine line			-.499
Factor correlation matrix			
1	1.000	-.570	-.645
2	-.570	1.000	.491
3	-.645	.491	1.000

Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring, Rotation Method: Oblimin with Kaiser Normalization, rotation converged in 21 iterations, loadings less than .1 suppressed.

Item 3 has one of the highest loadings on factor 1 in the Study 4 sample but a lower loading on the unidimensional factor in the Study 5 sample. Eliminating item 3 results in a cleaner two-factor solution shown in Table 9, with the two factors correlated at -.669. The high negative correlation, high negative factor loadings, and low variance extracted by the second factor suggest it is really a unidimensional scale. The items with the lowest loadings on the first factor were eliminated: items 12 and 35.

Table 9: EFA Study 4 sample after eliminating item 3

Item # and wording	Factor	
	1	2
32whatever they can get away with	.717	
23sacrifice anything for profit	.684	
34cut any corner for profit	.618	
25fine line	.583	
24let the buyer beware (1)	.506	
10throw away for short-term	.378	-.222
39sales people insincere	.375	-.142
26quality is top priority	.345	-.173
5hard for honest to succeed	.330	-.238
4cost of business	.322	-.279
12lots get ripped off	-.162	-.780
14don't care after purchase	.209	-.534
13puppets to manipulate	.263	-.497
18don't believe to get \$ worth	.263	-.444
7profits over customers	.267	-.443
35manipulated	.169	-.431

Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring, Rotation Method: Oblimin with Kaiser Normalization, Rotation converged in 17 iterations, loadings less than .1 suppressed.

Table 10: EFA Solution for Studies 4 and 5 after eliminating items 12 and 35

	Study 5 Sample Factor loading	Study 4 Sample Factor loading	
		1	2
32whatever they can get away with	.791	.632	.197
25fine line	.775	.577	.291
13puppets to manipulate	.736	.659	
4cost of business	.707	.540	
18don't believe to get \$ worth	.703	.648	-.255
34cut any corner for profit	.697	.621	.149
23sacrifice anything for profit	.690	.581	.234
14don't care after purchase	.677	.670	-.322
24let the buyer beware	.640	<b>.474</b>	
26quality is top priority	.639	<b>.474</b>	
7profits over customers	.627	.628	-.123
39sales people insincere	.627	<b>.485</b>	
10throw away for short-term	.590	.571	-.193
5hard for honest to succeed	.543	<b>.518</b>	

Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring, Rotation Method: Oblimin with Kaiser Normalization, loadings less than .1 suppressed

As shown in Table 10, this resulted in a clean one-factor solution in the primary sample, the adult consumer sample from study 5, with the single factor explaining 50 percent of the variance. The study 4 student sample still showed a two-factor solution. Eliminating the two items with the lowest loadings on the first factor in the student sample, items 24 and 26, resulted in a clean single-factor solution in both samples, as shown in Table 11. At that point, 12 items remained in the pool for the consumer cynicism scale. Table 11 on page 97 summarizes various data for those finalist items, including reliability statistics, factor loadings, mean and standard deviation, and two measures of content validity, expert ratings from study 3 and student ratings of their own cynicism based on a plain-language definition (sorted in order of factor loadings for the study 5 sample).

Table 11: Summary of 12 finalist items

	Study 3		Study 5 Adult Consumer Sample				
	Expert rating		Mean	Std. Dev.	Item-to-total correlation	r <sup>2</sup>	Factor loading
32whatever can get away with*	<b>4.69</b>	<b>2.71</b>	0.85	<b>0.74</b>	<b>0.61</b>	<b>0.78</b>	
13puppets to manipulate*m	<b>4.08</b>	<b>2.77</b>	<b>0.93</b>	<b>0.71</b>	<b>0.53</b>	<b>0.75</b>	
18don't believe to get \$ worth*	<b>4.31</b>	<b>2.75</b>	0.83	<b>0.68</b>	0.49	<b>0.71</b>	
04cost of business*m	<b>4.31</b>	2.67	<b>1.01</b>	<b>0.68</b>	0.48	<b>0.71</b>	
34cut any corner for profit*	<b>4.31</b>	<b>2.97</b>	<b>0.91</b>	<b>0.65</b>	0.49	<b>0.69</b>	
23sacrifice anything for profit*	<b>4.23</b>	2.61	0.86	0.64	0.48	<b>0.68</b>	
14don't care after purchase*m	<b>4.00</b>	<b>2.76</b>	<b>0.92</b>	0.64	0.46	<b>0.67</b>	
07profits over customers*	<b>4.54</b>	<b>3.52</b>	<b>0.91</b>	0.62	0.42	<b>0.65</b>	
25fine line	<b>3.83</b>	<b>2.76</b>	0.89	<b>0.72</b>	<b>0.57</b>	<b>0.76</b>	
39sales people insincere	<b>3.77</b>	<b>2.88</b>	0.85	<b>0.59</b>	<b>0.38</b>	<b>0.63</b>	
10throw away for short-term	<b>4.08</b>	<b>2.82</b>	<b>0.91</b>	<b>0.55</b>	<b>0.37</b>	<b>0.59</b>	
05hard for honest to succeed	<b>3.31</b>	<b>2.82</b>	<b>1.12</b>	<b>0.53</b>	<b>0.39</b>	<b>0.55</b>	

Study 4 Student Sample						
	Item-Self Rating Correlation	Mean	Std. Dev.	Item-to-total correlation	r <sup>2</sup>	Factor loading
32whatever can get away with*	<b>0.42</b>	<b>2.96</b>	0.89	0.58	0.38	<b>0.63</b>
13puppets to manipulate*m	<b>0.44</b>	<b>2.89</b>	<b>0.96</b>	<b>0.62</b>	<b>0.41</b>	<b>0.68</b>
18don't believe to get \$ worth*	<b>0.41</b>	<b>2.84</b>	0.82	0.59	<b>0.40</b>	<b>0.64</b>
04cost of business*m	0.38	2.64	<b>0.95</b>	<b>0.50</b>	<b>0.33</b>	<b>0.54</b>
34cut any corner for profit*	0.33	<b>3.15</b>	<b>0.90</b>	0.56	0.35	<b>0.60</b>
23sacrifice anything for profit*	<b>0.31</b>	<b>2.84</b>	<b>0.92</b>	<b>0.53</b>	0.36	<b>0.58</b>
14don't care after purchase*m	<b>0.43</b>	<b>3.10</b>	<b>0.97</b>	<b>0.61</b>	<b>0.43</b>	<b>0.66</b>
07profits over customers*	<b>0.46</b>	<b>3.71</b>	0.88	<b>0.60</b>	0.38	<b>0.65</b>
25fine line	0.37	<b>2.90</b>	<b>0.91</b>	<b>0.53</b>	0.37	<b>0.57</b>
39sales people insincere	0.39	<b>3.05</b>	<b>0.90</b>	<b>0.45</b>	<b>0.24</b>	<b>0.49</b>
10throw away for short-term	<b>0.30</b>	<b>2.81</b>	<b>0.98</b>	<b>0.52</b>	<b>0.33</b>	<b>0.57</b>
05hard for honest to succeed	0.34	<b>3.15</b>	<b>1.11</b>	<b>0.46</b>	<b>0.24</b>	<b>0.50</b>

\*: included in final scale, <sup>m</sup>: rated as a favorite item in the Study 2 member check.

Item-to-total correlation: corrected item-to-total correlation between the item and the scale sum excluding the item

r<sup>2</sup>: Squared multiple correlation: the r<sup>2</sup> for a multiple regression with the item as the dependent variable and the other scale items as predictors

Factor loading: in an EFA of these 12 items, with 1 factor extracted, 4 iterations required

Based on this consideration of the data in Table 11, eight items were tentatively selected for inclusion in the final consumer cynicism scale, summarized in Table 12 below. The final scale items represent all of the three conceptualized elements or facets detailed on page 74: general opportunism (items 4, 23, 32 and 34), consumer opportunism (items 7, 13, 14), and deception (item 18).

Table 12: Consumer cynicism scale items

- 
- 4) Most companies don't mind breaking the law; they just see fines and lawsuits as a cost of doing business.
  - 7) Most businesses are more interested in making profits than in serving consumers.
  - 13) Companies see consumers as puppets to manipulate.
  - 14) Manufacturers don't care what happens once I've bought the product.
  - 18) If I want to get my money's worth, I can't believe what a company tells me.
  - 23) Most companies will sacrifice anything to make a profit.
  - 32) To make a profit, companies are willing to do whatever they can get away with.
  - 34) Most businesses will cut any corner they can to improve profit margins.
- 

Four items from the 12 finalists in Table 11 were rejected based on simultaneous evaluation of several statistical performance indicators. Item 39, “Sales people are insincere,” was eliminated at this point due to the low expert rating for fit with the construct definition and low item-to-total correlations and factor loadings in both samples. Item 25, “Most companies walk a fine line between illegal and legal practices,” was also eliminated due to the low expert rating. Item 10, “Businesses are willing to throw away long-term customer relationships for short-term profit,” and Item 5, “It’s hard for an honest company to succeed in today’s competitive world,” also were earmarked for problems with item-to-total correlation and factor loadings in both samples. Because they

were derived directly from the interviews in Study 1, they had been initially retained in the pool as back-up items. In the interests of keeping the scale short, these two least consistent statistical performers were eliminated as well.

## **Reliability Assessments**

### **Study 6: Test-retest analysis**

Testing and retesting a scale for consistent performance over time can be useful when the attitude being measured is conceptualized as being stable over time, as is the case with consumer cynicism. Although test-retest reliability has been criticized as a scale validation criteria (Churchill Jr., 1979), it is still commonly used, particularly for trait-like constructs.

#### *Study 6 methodology*

The test-retest online survey contained only the consumer cynicism item pool. As with Study 4, students were recruited through student organizations. For study 4, business students, whose experiences and career goals might be associated with consumer cynicism levels, were deliberately *not* recruited, although business students were not ineligible if they happened to be members of unrelated organizations such as the service and social fraternities and sororities. However, finding a representative sample of students was not as important for this test-retest study, because the purpose was solely to evaluate consistency in consumer cynicism scores over time, and not to evaluate relationships between consumer cynicism and other constructs or to establish scale means. Therefore, business majors were used for this study, specifically members of the

MBA Association and members of the Association of Accountancy Students. Club officers sent an e-mail invitation with a link to the Time 1 survey. Reminder e-mails were sent one week following the first e-mail. After two weeks the Time 1 survey was closed. Two weeks following the initial e-mail, club officers sent an e-mail invitation with a link to the Time 2 survey, followed by reminders after one week. The minimum interval between the Time 1 and Time 2 surveys was 14 days, as recommended (Netemeyer et al., 2003); all the surveys were completed within a 21-day interval. The response rates for the Time 1 survey were 60 percent for MBA students and 72 percent for accounting students; for completing both the Time 1 AND Time 2 surveys, response rates were 44 percent and 39 percent respectively.

#### *Test-retest analysis results*

Based on a paired samples T-test for time 1 and time 2 cynicism in this sample, the test-retest reliability correlation for the consumer cynicism scale was calculated at .985, with no statistically significant difference in scores.

#### **Various studies: Internal consistency**

Various measures of internal consistency and structural model fit were assessed on several of the data sets described thus far, and the consumer cynicism scale performed well on nearly all of them. As previously discussed, item reduction was performed based on an iterative process using the samples from Study 4 and Study 5 simultaneously. Once the final scale was determined, it was tested on all the available samples; results are summarized in Table 13 on page 102. Eight samples are discussed in the table and throughout this section, four large samples and two small samples.

The small samples are only discussed as extra information. Those studies were completed with other objectives in mind, such as pretesting, but they provide yet another example of how the scale performs. The sample from Study 4a, a byproduct of Study 4, the main student sample, was detailed on page 85. This sample consists of students who completed only the first part of the survey. Study 6, the test-retest sample, was detailed on page 99.

The large samples provide a more meaningful evaluation of how the scale will perform in formal research studies. These are drawn from three studies. Study 4 (the primary student sample) and Study 5 (the adult consumer sample) have been discussed extensively throughout this chapter. The other two samples come from Study 9, which provided the final test of the consumer cynicism scale with a large national sample of consumers. This was an online survey of a Census-balanced national sample of adult consumers recruited through Survey Sampling International's research panel (n=538). Details about the Study 9 sampling, procedure and survey instrument are provided on page 138.

#### *Internal consistency across six samples*

Table 13 summarizes standard measures of scale performance for the consumer cynicism scale across six samples. Mean, standard deviation, Chronbach's  $\alpha$ , corrected item-to-total correlations and average inter-item correlations were calculated for the final eight-item consumer cynicism scale in SPSS.

Table 13: Performance of consumer cynicism scale across six samples

	Study 4 <sup>a</sup>	Study 4a	Study 5 <sup>b</sup>	Study 6	Study 9a <sup>c</sup>	Study 9b <sup>c</sup>
Participants	Missouri Students	Missouri Students	Mo. & Ill. Adult Consumers	Missouri Students	National Adult Consumers	National Adult Consumers
Sample size	<b>263</b>	94	<b>221</b>	75	<b>251</b>	<b>251</b>
Number of items in pool	<b>49</b>	49	<b>39</b>	49	15	<b>15</b>
Scale mean	<b>3.00</b>	3.00	<b>2.85</b>	2.63	<b>3.27</b>	<b>3.32</b>
Standard deviation	.60	.64	.68	.59	.70	.72
<b>Internal Consistency</b>						
Chronbach's $\alpha^{1,4}$ (Goal >.8)	<b>.83</b>	<b>.84</b>	<b>.89</b>	<b>.85</b>	<b>.92</b>	<b>.90</b>
Lowest corrected item-total correlation <sup>1</sup> (Goal: >.5)	<b>.45<sup>cyn4</sup></b>	.46 <sup>cyn7</sup>	<b>.59</b>	.43 <sup>cyn7</sup>	<b>.66</b>	<b>.60</b>
Average interitem correlation <sup>1</sup> (Goal >.3)	<b>.38</b>	.39	<b>.56</b>	<b>.41</b>	<b>.58</b>	<b>.55</b>
<b>Confirmatory Factor Analysis</b>						
Average standardized loading <sup>1</sup> (Goal: .6-.9)	<b>.61</b>	<b>.62</b>	<b>.70</b>	<b>.64</b>	<b>.76</b>	<b>.74</b>
Composite reliability <sup>1, 2, 3</sup> (Goal: >.8)	<b>.82</b>	<b>.85</b>	.88	.86	<b>.94</b>	<b>.92</b>
Average variance extracted <sup>1, 2, 3</sup> (Goal: >.5; >.45 for new scales)	<b>.38</b>	.40	<b>.50</b>	<b>.44</b>	<b>.59</b>	<b>.55</b>

<sup>a</sup> – Measurement model for Study 4 consisted of consumer cynicism, advertising skepticism, need for cognition, societal cynicism, the persuasion knowledge and marketplace interfaces dimensions of consumer self-confidence.

<sup>b</sup> – Measurement model for Study 5 consisted of consumer cynicism, negative affectivity, marketplace withdrawal, and consumer interaction styles.

<sup>c</sup> – Measurement model for Study 9 consisted of consumer cynicism, need for cognition, marketplace withdrawal, societal cynicism, product category cynicism, perceived purchase risk, brand loyalty to a favorite product, and propensity to be brand loyal. Results here are for a measurement model with loyalty, category cynicism and perceived purchase risk for the first favorite brand and product participants provided; similar results were found for models with the second brand and product and with the favorite store.

<sup>1</sup> (Netemeyer et al., 2003); <sup>2</sup> (Fornell & Larcker, 1981); <sup>3</sup> (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988); <sup>4</sup> (Churchill Jr., 1979)

Next, separate structural measurement models were created for each sample in Amos. Studies 4a and 6 are really too small for structural equation modeling, but the results are still interesting. For the small sample studies, the measurement model consisted only of the unidimensional consumer cynicism construct and its items. These models approached acceptable fit and it is encouraging to note that the consumer cynicism scale met or nearly met most standard scale criteria even on these small samples. The small sample studies are reported in Table 13 in gray italics to remind the reader to consider the small sample size.

For the larger samples, each measurement model was composed of the consumer cynicism scale plus the other latent constructs available for that data set.

The consumer cynicism scale measured up to the most rigorous scale standards in the most important and representative samples, Study 5 (Missouri and Illinois adult consumers) and Study 9 (the national sample of adult consumers). The scale also performed fairly well in the two smaller samples. In all the samples, the scale showed an  $\alpha$  greater than .8 and a composite reliability greater than .8 (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988; Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Netemeyer et al., 2003), and all the samples exceeded the recommended criteria of greater than .3 for average inter-item correlation (Netemeyer et al., 2003). A potential cause for concern is the low average variance extracted for Study 4. This most likely resulted from fatigue since this sample completed the entire 49-item pool of potential consumer cynicism items. Although the survey was broken in two parts, the first survey still consisted of 49 potential consumer cynicism items, and the second survey consisted of the long alienation scale and advertising skepticism, among other measures. Both still consisted of many similar questions. In this sample, the consumer

cynicism scale showed an average variance extracted of only .38, and established scales such as need for cognition, societal cynicism and consumer self-confidence also failed to meet the average variance extracted criteria of .5. The samples perform better as the item pool gets smaller, and the last samples, each completing only the cynicism scale plus a few spare items, meet rigorous standards of scale performance and outperformed some of the established scales used in these studies.

### **Confirmatory factor analysis and invariant factor structure**

Data from Study 5 and from the large national sample from Study 9 were used to evaluate factor structure. Confirmatory factor analysis was used to evaluate the unidimensionality of the scale and test for invariant factor structure across samples. As previously discussed, the large national consumer sample was randomly split to form two separate samples for analysis of factor invariance. A simple measurement model was constructed with the consumer cynicism scale items and consumer cynicism as a first-order factor. Table 14 below shows that the model for each sample individually had an acceptable level of fit.

Table 14: Model fit for CFA of unidimensional consumer cynicism in 3 samples

	Study 5 Mo. & Ill. Consumers	Study 9a National Consumers	Study 9b National Consumers
Sample n	221	269	270
RMR	.026	.030	.026
GFI	.962	.942	.961
NFI	.958	.947	.963
CFI (>.9)	.984	.963	.979
RMSEA (<.08)	.052	.091	.068

To test invariance of factor structure across the three large samples, constraints were added in hierarchical fashion, first testing an unconstrained model across the three larger samples, then constraining the factor loadings, then constraining the factor variance, and finally constraining the error variances (Netemeyer et al., 2003). Results are summarized in Table 15 below. Constraining each of the factor loadings one at a time resulted in no significant changes in  $\chi^2$ , and constraining all of the factor loadings resulted in no significant changes in  $\chi^2$ , even though this result can be difficult to achieve. Thus, the factor loadings are invariant even by the conservative  $\chi^2$  difference test.

Table 15: Factor invariance of consumer cynicism across three samples

	Unconstrained 3-group model	Factor loadings constrained	Variance constrained	Error variance constrained
RMR (<.05)	0.027	0.040	0.052	0.051
GFI	0.954	0.950	0.950	0.938
NFI (>.9)	0.956	0.952	0.951	0.939
CFI (>.9)	0.974	0.974	0.974	0.967
RMSEA (<.08)	0.042	0.038	0.037	0.039
$\chi^2$	141.478	154.176	155.900	196.000
df	60	74	76	92
$\Delta$ df		8	2	16
$\Delta\chi^2$		12.699	1.724	40.100
P value for $\Delta$		0.550	0.422	0.001
<i>Three samples included: Study 5 (Missouri and Illinois consumers, n=221), Study 9a (national consumers, n=269), and Study 9b (national consumers, n=270)</i>				

Constraining all of the variances also resulted in no significant changes in  $\chi^2$ . Constraining the error variances does result in a significant  $\chi^2$  change; however, the  $\chi^2$  difference test has been recognized as a very conservative one. In spite of the significant  $\chi^2$  changes when constraining the variances, it should be noted that even the most constrained model shows an acceptable fit (Netemeyer et al., 2003). This is strong

support for the consistent performance of the consumer cynicism scale across multiple samples.

Finally, in one further test for invariance across samples, the large national consumer sample was split into separate samples based on demographic characteristics (not random): region, gender and age. For each comparison, results were similar to those reported above. There were no statistically significant difference in  $\chi^2$  for models with factor loadings and variances constrained across four U.S. Census regions (Northeast, Midwest, South and West) , or for models with factor loadings and variances constrained across separate samples of men and women, or for models with factor loadings and variances constrained across separate samples for four age groups. Statistically significant  $\chi^2$  differences were found when the error variances were constrained for all three comparisons, regional groups, gender and age. However, the models with error variances constrained still showed acceptable levels of fit. Tables summarizing these analyses are included in Appendix C. All of these analyses of factor invariance show strong evidence of the consistent performance of the consumer cynicism scale across samples.

## **Evaluating Validity of the Consumer Cynicism Scale**

### **Convergent validity**

Three measures were investigated to demonstrate convergent validity: a self-rating of consumer cynicism plus two existing measures of related constructs.

### *Self-rating based on consumer cynicism definition*

At the close of the survey in Study 4, participants read the following definition of consumer cynicism and rated their own cynicism on a scale of 1 to 7:

*“A cynical consumer sees the marketplace system as one in which companies try to take advantage of people. A cynical consumer believes most companies seek their own self-interests without considering ethics or consequences for others, even their own customers. Marketing tactics are frequently intended to deceive and manipulate consumers. Because of this selfish and deceptive behavior, the marketplace system does not serve consumers as well as it should.”*

As previously discussed, study 4 was a two-part survey. The consumer cynicism item pool was administered in the first part, and the self-rating and definition were administered in the second part about one week later. The consumer cynicism scale correlated at .595 with the self rating.

Prior to this study, there were no measures specifically designed to measure consumer cynicism; thus convergent validity was established by investigating the correlation between consumer cynicism and the two most closely related constructs: advertising skepticism and consumer alienation.

### *Skepticism toward advertising*

Obermiller and Spangenberg's (1998) 9-item scale of consumer skepticism toward advertising was selected because it has been subjected to full scale-development procedures. As detailed in Chapter 4 of this dissertation, consumer skepticism toward advertising is narrowly defined as disbelief in advertising claims and is more prevalent than consumer cynicism. Thus, a significant correlation between advertising skepticism and consumer cynicism would be expected, but the constructs should be discriminant. As

expected, Study 4 showed a .465 correlation between consumer cynicism and advertising skepticism.

#### *Normlessness dimension of consumer alienation*

The normlessness dimension was measured by the following three items (Durand & Lambert, 1985; Lambert, 1980):

- Companies are usually out to make a lot of money even if it means violating ethics and taking unfair advantage of consumers.
- Most durable products could be made to last much longer but are made to wear out quickly to necessitate repurchase.
- If people really knew what businesses do to deceive and take advantage of consumers, they would be up-in-arms.

Table 16 below summarizes the correlations between consumer cynicism and the self-rating of consumer cynicism, advertising skepticism and the normlessness dimension of alienation, demonstrating strong evidence of convergent validity.

Table 16: Evidence of convergent validity: Correlations with related constructs

Self-rating of consumer cynicism	
Standardized correlation in Study 4 (n=265)	.595
Disattenuated correlation in study 4 (SEM)	.576
Advertising skepticism	
Standardized correlation in Study 4 (n=265)	.465
Disattenuated correlation in study 4 (SEM)	.548
Normlessness dimension of consumer alienation	
Standardized correlation in Study 4 (n=265)	.602
Disattenuated correlation in Study 4*	.849
Standardized correlation in Study 5 (n=221)	.760
Disattenuated correlation in Study 5*	.987
Standardized correlation in Study 9 (n=538)	.682
Disattenuated correlation in Study 9*	.842

*All correlations are significant at the .001 level.*

*\*Due to poor performance of the alienation scale, this measurement model does not meet typical standards for an acceptable level of fit. Results should be interpreted with caution.*

## **Discriminant Validity**

Three existing constructs were of particular concern as possible threats to the discriminant validity of the consumer cynicism construct. Consumer cynicism was expected to correlate with advertising skepticism, consumer alienation, and cynicism at the societal and product category levels, but not so strongly correlated as to suggest the measures capture the same construct.

### *Advertising skepticism*

The advertising skepticism measure (Obermiller & Spangenberg, 1998) was included in the student sample in Study 4. A measurement model was constructed including consumer cynicism and advertising skepticism. This resulted in a model with an acceptable fit (CFI=.95, RMSEA=.065). In this model, advertising skepticism showed an average variance extracted of .57. Consumer cynicism showed an average variance extracted of .37, and the squared dissattenuated correlation between consumer cynicism and advertising skepticism is .36 ( $r=.596$ ). Because the average variance extracted by consumer cynicism exceeds the squared dissattenuated correlation between advertising skepticism and consumer cynicism, discriminant validity can be concluded (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988; Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Netemeyer et al., 2003). As previously noted, scales did not perform as well in this sample as they did in other samples, most likely due to respondent fatigue with the large item pool. In spite of the low AVE for consumer cynicism in this sample, it still showed discriminant validity from advertising skepticism.

Another recommended test of discriminant validity involves comparing the  $\chi^2$  for the original model and a model with the covariance between the constructs set to 1. A

significant increase in  $\chi^2$  suggests the unconstrained model (the discriminant model) has a statistically significantly better fit (Netemeyer et al., 2003). Consumer cynicism and advertising skepticism passed this test as well. The original measurement model showed  $\chi^2 = 222.216$ , df=117, and the constrained model showed  $\chi^2 = 289.256$ , df=118. Thus, with degrees of freedom changing by only 1 degree, the critical value to exceed would be 3.84. The change in  $\chi^2$  in this case was 67.040 ( $p < .001$ ), evidence of discriminant validity.

### *Societal cynicism*

The societal cynicism measure was included in the student sample in Study 4 and the national adult consumer sample in Study 9. A widely used short version of Wrightsman's (1991) societal cynicism scale (Kanter & Mirvis, 1989) was used in both studies.

#### Societal cynicism measure

Existing societal cynicism scales do not closely match the way the concept is depicted in the rich social commentary literature. Psychologists note that the hostility and MMPI scales are capable of making subtle diagnostic distinctions within a psychiatric population but should be supplemented when used with a normal sample (Costa, Zonderman, McCrae, & Williams, 1985). In these scales, cynicism is a subdimension of negative personality traits or hostility and is conceptualized as a deeply ingrained interpersonal distrust that seems more extreme than what is commonly meant when someone is described as "cynical." Distrust measures, such as Wrightsman's Philosophies of Human Nature (Wrightsman, 1991) seem to tap more interpersonal

issues. Adaptations of Wrightsman's scale are most commonly used to represent societal-level cynicism in other studies (e.g. Boush et al., 1993; D. D. Guastello & Pessig, 1998; S. J. Guastello et al., 1992; Kanter & Mirvis, 1989; Kanter & Wortzel, 1985). Kanter and Wortzel's six-item adaptation of Wrightsman's Revised Philosophies of Human Nature scale was selected for use here:

Table 17: Scale items for societal/personality cynicism

- 
- Most people will tell a lie if they can gain by it.
  - People claim to have ethical standards, but few stick to them when money is at stake.
  - People pretend to care more about one another than they really do.
  - An unselfish person is taken advantage of in today's world.
  - Most people are just out for themselves.
  - People inwardly dislike putting themselves out to help other people.
- 

#### Societal cynicism discriminant validity analysis

Societal cynicism would be expected to be highly correlated with consumer cynicism but has been theoretically proposed as an antecedent of consumer cynicism. Societal cynicism should be a more basic (cardinal) trait, while consumer cynicism is specific to the consumer context. A lack of discriminant validity would signify that a separate measure and construct specific to the consumer context is unnecessary. This was not the case.

Discriminant validity between consumer cynicism and societal cynicism was evaluated on the Study 4 student sample. A measurement model including consumer cynicism and societal cynicism resulted in an acceptable fit. In this model (see Table 18 on page 112), the average variance extracted by consumer cynicism exceeded the squared correlation between consumer cynicism and societal cynicism. Consumer cynicism and societal cynicism passed the constrained model comparison test for the Study 4 sample as

well. The change in  $\chi^2$  in this case was 99.336 ( $p<.001$ ) indicating a statistically significantly worse fit for the constrained model, providing evidence of discriminant validity between societal cynicism and consumer cynicism.

The societal cynicism measure was also included in the national adult consumer sample in Study 9, randomly split into two halves for analysis here. A measurement model was created with consumer cynicism and societal cynicism, and the model achieved an acceptable fit in both samples. Each of the scales showed an average standardized loading of .75, and an average variance extracted above .50 in both samples. The average variance extracted by consumer cynicism exceeded the squared disattenuated correlation between societal and consumer cynicism, indicating discriminant validity as shown in Table 18 below.

Table 18: Discriminant validity between consumer and societal cynicism

	Study 4 Sample	Study 9 Sample 1	Study 9 Sample 2
Model fit: CFI	.95	.927	.936
Model fit: RMSEA	.06	.08	.08
AVE: Consumer cynicism	.38	.58	.55
AVE: Societal cynicism	.36	.56	.54
Squared disattenuated correlation between consumer cynicism and societal cynicism	.33	.29	.40

Consumer cynicism and societal cynicism passed the constrained model comparison test for the two Study 9 samples as well. The change in  $\chi^2$  in this case was 74.765 ( $p<.001$ ) in sample 1 and 64.494 ( $p<.001$ ) indicating a statistically significantly worse fit for the constrained models, providing evidence of discriminant validity between societal cynicism and consumer cynicism.

### *Category cynicism*

Just as consumer cynicism (trait hierarchy level 2) theoretically represents a more context-specific version of societal cynicism, category cynicism (trait hierarchy level 1) represents a more context-specific version of consumer cynicism: cynicism toward firms and the marketplace restricted to a particular product category.

#### Category cynicism measure

This construct was measured using an ad hoc scale of consumer cynicism items adapted to fit the category-specific context. Each respondent answered three versions of this scale, one for each of the product categories and store types respondents provided, with the name of the category from the respondent's previous answer filled in as part of the text of the category cynicism scale item. This customized question format is explained in detail in the hypothesis testing chapter on page 141. These scale items were selected to cover the content domain of consumer cynicism. As previously discussed, consumer cynicism was defined as having three elements: general opportunism (item 1 in Table 19 below), consumer-targeted opportunism (item 2), and deception (item 3).

Table 19: Category cynicism scale items

- 
- Most [sportswear] manufacturers will cut any corner they can to improve profit margins.
  - Most [sportswear] manufacturers don't care what happens once I've bought the product.
  - Most [sportswear] manufacturers are dishonest.
- 

The first two scale items were chosen from among the items included in the final consumer cynicism scale. The final consumer cynicism scale items emphasizing the deception element of consumer cynicism (i.e. "What most companies claim about their

product can't be trusted.'") did not seem to work well in the category cynicism context, so another item from the pool was adapted for this purpose.

Each individual respondent had a different product category or store category in mind. Thus, these scales do not measure aggregate levels of cynicism toward any particular product category or store category. Rather, they reflect examples of individuals' category-level cynicism for three cases.

#### Category cynicism discriminant validity analysis

As with the societal cynicism discriminant validity analysis, the national adult consumer sample in Study 9 was randomly split into two halves, and a measurement model was created including consumer cynicism and the three product category-level cynicisms. The model achieved an acceptable fit in both samples. Each of the scales showed an average standardized loading of .70 or greater, and an average variance extracted above .50 in both samples. The average variance extracted by consumer cynicism exceeded the squared disattenuated correlation between societal and consumer cynicism, indicating discriminant validity as shown in Table 18 on page 112.

Table 20: Discriminant validity between consumer and category cynicism

	Consumer Cynicism	Category Cynicism Product 1	Category Cynicism Product 2	Category Cynicism Store
Sample 1: CFI=.945, RMSEA=.07				
Consumer Cynicism	<b>0.57</b>	0.22	0.24	0.39
Category Cynicism Product 1	65.63	<b>0.53</b>	0.38	0.38
Category Cynicism Product 2	63.50	44.49	<b>0.72</b>	0.43
Category Cynicism Store	51.92	47.74	43.94	<b>0.62</b>
Sample 2: CFI=.915, RMEA=.08				
Consumer Cynicism	<b>0.556</b>	0.32	0.33	0.49
Category Cynicism Product 1	59.71	<b>0.55</b>	0.31	0.33
Category Cynicism Product 2	61.76	52.07	<b>0.61</b>	0.53
Category Cynicism Store	45.11	47.85	37.13	<b>0.54</b>

*Bold-faced numbers on the diagonal represent average variance extracted. Upper matrix represents squared disattenuated correlation between pairs of constructs. If this number does not exceed the average variance extracted, construct measures can be viewed as discriminant. (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988; Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Lower matrix represents  $\chi^2$  difference between the base model and a model constraining the covariance between each pair of constructs to one. All  $\chi^2$  differences were significant with  $p<.001$ , confirming discriminant validity (Netemeyer et al., 2003).*

#### Discriminant validity analysis of three levels of cynicism

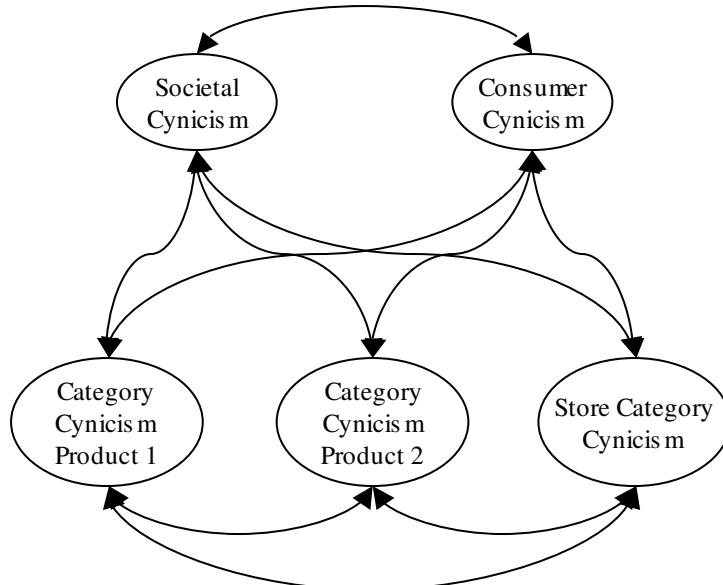
To evaluate discriminant validity among the three levels of cynicism, societal cynicism (compound trait), consumer cynicism toward the marketplace (situational trait), and consumer cynicism toward particular product categories (surface trait), a structural model was created with consumer cynicism, societal cynicism, and the three measures of category cynicism. This model showed acceptable levels of fit (CFI=.922, RMSEA=.07 for sample 1; CFI=.940, RMSEA=.06 for sample 2), and analysis showed all three levels of cynicism to be discriminant, as shown in Table 21 on page 116.

Table 21: Discriminant validity among three levels of cynicism

	Societal cynicism	Consumer Cynicism	Category Cynicism Product 1	Category Cynicism Product 2	Category Cynicism Store
<u>Sample 1: CFI=.922, RMSEA=.07</u>					
Societal cynicism	<b>0.55</b>	0.25	0.12	0.12	0.12
Consumer Cynicism	71.69	<b>0.56</b>	0.269	0.26	0.53
Category Cynicism Product 1	78.03	67.27	<b>0.53</b>	0.38	0.37
Category Cynicism Product 2	78.08	68.25	45.51	<b>0.56</b>	0.42
Category Cynicism Store	76.39	44.19	46.05	41.64	<b>0.58</b>
<u>Sample 2: CFI=.940, RMSEA=.06</u>					
Societal cynicism	<b>0.58</b>	0.37	0.13	0.17	0.15
Consumer Cynicism	62.77	<b>0.56</b>	0.28	0.31	0.35
Category Cynicism Product 1	86.93	58.75	<b>0.54</b>	0.32	0.34
Category Cynicism Product 2	81.85	58.37	51.56	<b>0.61</b>	0.54
Category Cynicism Store	84.87	54.22	50.24	39.50	<b>0.59</b>

*Bold-faced numbers on the diagonal represent average variance extracted. Upper matrix represents squared disattenuated correlation between pairs of constructs. If this number does not exceed the average variance extracted, construct measures can be viewed as discriminant. (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988; Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Lower matrix represents  $\chi^2$  difference between the base model and a model constraining the covariance between each pair of constructs to one. All  $\chi^2$  differences were significant with  $p<.001$ , confirming discriminant validity (Netemeyer et al., 2003).*

Figure 2: Discriminant validity among three levels of cynicism



As further evidence of discriminant validity and appropriateness of the levels of cynicism, adding the marketplace shaping formative index and the marketplace withdrawal scale to the model above shows that only the marketplace-level construct of consumer cynicism impacts marketplace-level behaviors. Neither societal cynicism nor any of the category-level cynicisms show a statistically significant regression weight with marketplace shaping or marketplace withdrawal.

### *Consumer alienation*

As previously discussed in Chapter 4, consumer alienation was conceptualized as comprising four dimensions. The normlessness dimension was expected to be convergent with consumer cynicism, and results were consistent with this expectation. The meaninglessness, powerlessness and cultural estrangement dimensions of consumer alienation should be discriminant.

### Consumer alienation measure

Lambert's (1980) consumer alienation scale was selected because at 19 items, it is slightly shorter than Allison's (1978) 35-item scale. Furthermore, consistent with societal alienation definitions, Allison and subsequent researchers conceptualized consumer alienation as having four dimensions: normlessness, powerlessness, meaninglessness and estrangement. Yet, Allison's factor analysis did not support these four dimensions, and he declared his scale to be unidimensional. Although the item pool was intended to represent the four dimensions, items are not formally assigned to represent the separate facets, and the majority of the items appear to most closely fit the normlessness dimension. Scale development practices have changed since the 35-item 1978 scale was developed. The

Lambert (1980) scale explicitly defines the four dimensions and has been used with the four dimensions in several studies (Durand & Lambert, 1979; Durand & Lambert, 1985; Lambert, 1981; Planchon & James, 1991) . The four dimensions, normlessness, meaninglessness, powerlessness and cultural estrangement, are particularly important here because the normlessness dimension closely resembles cynicism but the other dimensions are expected to be discriminant.

#### Results of discriminant validity analyses for consumer alienation

Data gathered through the consumer alienation scale did not fit well with the model conceptualized by the scale authors, and this made it difficult to use a structural model for the purposes of evaluating discriminant validity. The consumer alienation measure was included in Study 4, Study 5 and Study 9. It did not fit the conceptualized model in any of the samples. Consumer alienation analyses attempted on the national consumer sample in Study 9 are reported here since it is the largest and best sample. The full sample from Study 9 was used for this analysis (n=538).

A measurement model of alienation was constructed as it was conceptualized in the literature as a second-order factor with its four dimensions as shown in Figure 3 on page 119. This model could not be brought to acceptable fit levels without altering the scale substantially. Two of the estrangement items showed a negative loading on the estrangement factor, and two showed a nonsignificant loading. Even after removing a few problematic items, the model did not reach an acceptable fit, shown in Figure 4 on page 120. Removing additional items would leave some dimensions with only one or two items. Attempting to analyze the model in spite of the lack of fit revealed several problems. Several items show a loading below .5 on the designated factor, and the

revised estrangement measure has a loading of only .39 on the alienation second-order factor. Furthermore, as shown in Table 22 on page 120, the average variance extracted for each dimension indicates measurement error accounts for more of the variance than the latent construct (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

Figure 3: Alienation as a second-order factor

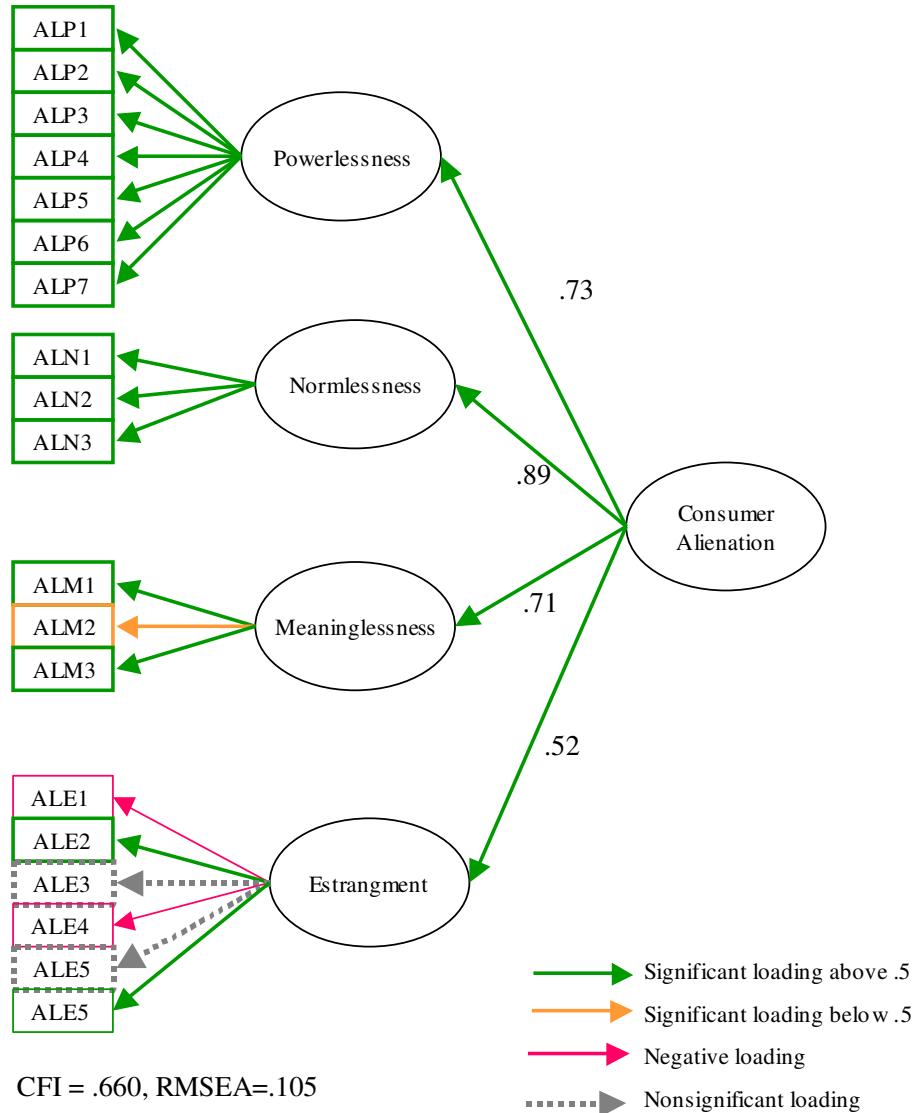


Figure 4: Revised model of alienation as a second-order factor

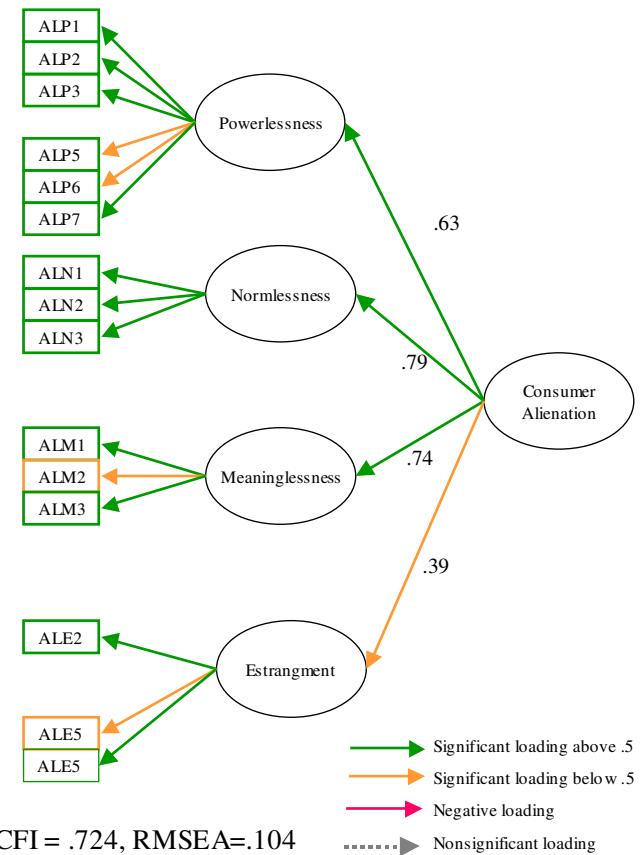


Table 22: Average variance extracted for alienation dimensions

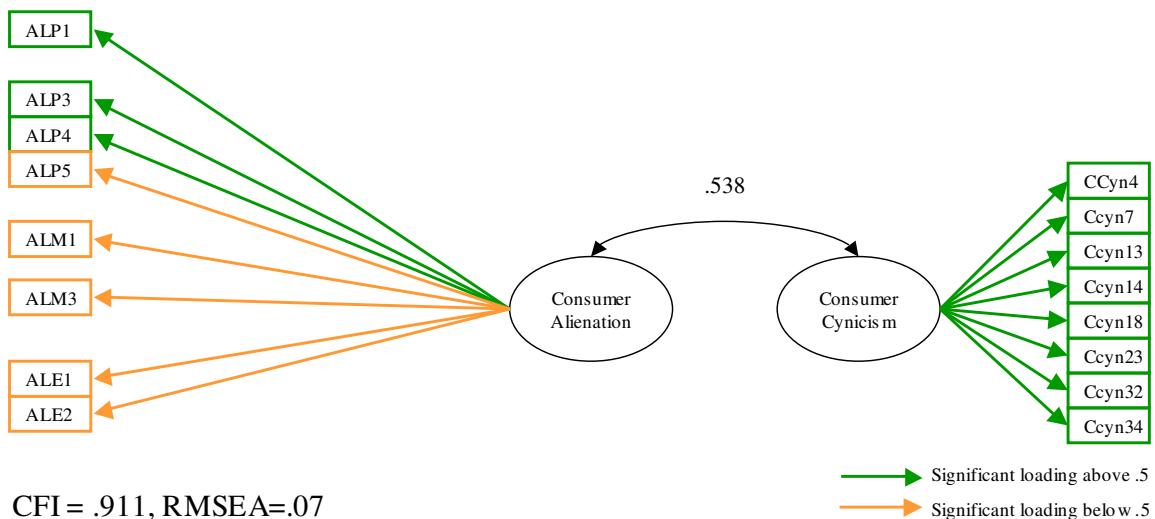
Alienation Dimension	Average Variance Extracted
Normlessness	.26
Powerlessness	.24
Estrangement	.24
Meaninglessness	.15

Modeling alienation as a first-order factor with no dimensions results in an even worse fit (CFI=.595, RMSEA=.130), even after removing the nonsignificant and negatively loaded items. Modeled as a first-order factor, the consumer alienation scale shows a .25 average variance extracted (should be greater than .5) and an average standardized item loading of .46 (should be in the .6 - .9 range, preferably greater than .7).

A measurement model consisting of consumer cynicism and consumer alienation as a first-order factor is an ill-fitting model ( $CFI=.772$ ,  $RMSEA=.096$ ). In this model, consumer cynicism shows an average variance extracted of .57 and an average standardized item loading of .75, while consumer alienation shows an average variance extracted of .22 and an average standardized item loading of .43. In fact, the only alienation items with a standardized loading greater than .50 are the three items intended to represent the normlessness dimension. Since consumer cynicism was not expected to be statistically discriminant from the normlessness dimension, it is not surprising that squared correlation of .58 ( $r=.729$ ) barely exceeds the average variance extracted by consumer cynicism.

Finally a first-order factor measurement model was made to fit ( $CFI=.911$ ,  $RMSEA=.07$ ) by dropping the three normlessness items from the alienation scale, which improved the relationship between alienation and the other items. This modified scale includes four of the seven powerlessness scale items, two of the three meaninglessness scale items and two of the six estrangement dimension items. In this model, consumer cynicism shows an average variance extracted of .57 and an average standardized item loading of .75; consumer alienation shows an average variance extracted of .32 and an average standardized item loading of .55, below contemporary standards. The standardized disattenuated correlation between consumer alienation and consumer cynicism in this model is .54. The squared correlation is .29, definitely lower than the consumer cynicism AVE of .57 and thus discriminant. Admittedly, this shows consumer cynicism to be discriminant from something quite different from the original alienation scale.

Figure 5: Consumer cynicism with alienation as a first-order factor



Another model with consumer cynicism and alienation that reached acceptable fit levels (CFI=.905, RMSEA=.067) included consumer cynicism and the alienation dimensions of powerlessness, meaninglessness and estrangement each as first-order factors (Figure 6 on page 123), leaving the second-order construct of alienation out of the picture. This model clearly shows consumer cynicism is discriminant from the dimensions of consumer alienation (other than the normlessness dimension) by both the average variance extracted and the  $\chi^2$  difference tests, as shown in Figure 6 and Table 23 on page 123.

Figure 6: Consumer cynicism with dimensions of alienation

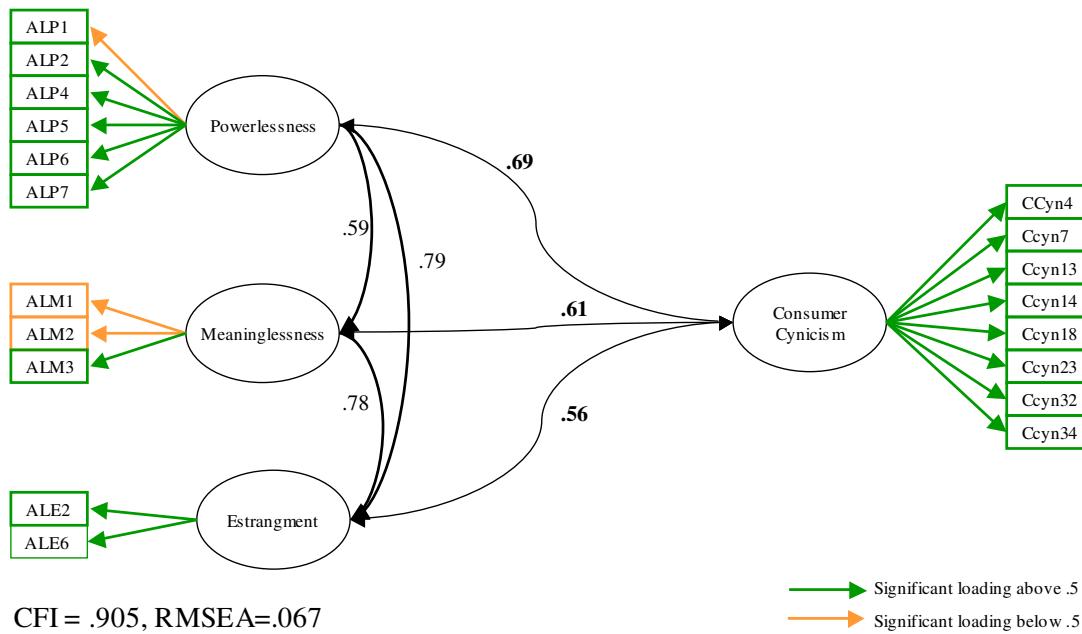


Table 23: Discriminant validity among consumer cynicism and alienation dimensions

	Consumer Cynicism	Alienation: Powerlessness	Alienation: Meaninglessness	Alienation: Estrangement
Consumer Cynicism	<b>0.57</b>	0.32	0.16	0.12
Alienation: Powerlessness	152.115	<b>0.33</b>	0.47	0.06
Alienation: Meaninglessness	228.270	185.323	<b>0.29</b>	0.06
Alienation: Estrangement	196.196	231.486	270.724	<b>0.46</b>

*Bold-faced numbers on the diagonal represent average variance extracted. Upper matrix represents squared disattenuated correlation between pairs of constructs. If this number does not exceed the average variance extracted, construct measures can be viewed as discriminant. (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988; Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Lower matrix represents  $\chi^2$  difference between the base model and a model constraining the covariance between each pair of constructs to one. All  $\chi^2$  differences were significant,  $p<.001$ , confirming discriminant validity (Netemeyer et al., 2003).*

Given the poor performance of the alienation scale it makes perhaps as much sense to conclude that the scale does not perform to current measurement standards as it does to conclude discriminant validity.

#### Alienation and consumer self-confidence

One other piece of evidence to support a distinction between consumer cynicism and consumer alienation is that the two constructs correlated differently with consumer self-confidence. The correlation between consumer cynicism and consumer self-confidence was .21, while the correlation between alienation and consumer self-confidence was -.10.

self-confidence. Because the alienation conceptual definition emphasizes powerlessness and estrangement, whereas cynical interview participants viewed themselves as savvy, it was expected that alienation, but not consumer cynicism, would show a negative association with consumer self confidence. This expectation was supported.

The self-confidence scale (Bearden et al., 2001), developed to rigorous contemporary scale development standards, was included to support the investigation of discriminant validity with alienation. Two dimensions most relevant to alienation and cynicism were measured in the Study 4 student sample, persuasion knowledge and marketplace interfaces, both aspects of the protection aspect of consumer self-confidence. Persuasion knowledge refers to the individual's confidence in his or her ability to understand and to cope with marketing tactics. Marketplace interfaces refers to the ability "to stand up for one's rights and to express one's opinion when dealing with others in the marketplace" (Bearden et al., 2001, p. 123).

The persuasion knowledge dimension of consumer self-confidence did not show a statistically significant correlation with consumer cynicism, consumer alienation (overall), or any of the alienation subdimensions except for meaninglessness ( $r = -.130$ ). The marketplace interfaces dimension of consumer self-confidence showed no statistically significant correlation with consumer cynicism ( $r = -.032$ , nonsignificant) but did correlate inversely with alienation overall and with the subdimensions of alienation, as shown in Table 24 on page 125.

Table 24: Correlations among alienation, cynicism and consumer self-confidence

	<u>Consumer Self Confidence</u>	
	Persuasion Knowledge	Marketplace Interfaces
Consumer Cynicism	-.032	-.088
Alienation Overall	-.094	<b>-.196**</b>
Powerlessness	-.087	<b>-.165**</b>
Meaninglessness	<b>-.130*</b>	<b>-.223**</b>
Estrangement	-.098	<b>-.177**</b>
Normlessness	.047	-.032

\*\* -- significant at the .01 level, \* -- significant at the .05 level

### Study 7: Known Groups Validity with Adbusters

#### *Objectives and methodology*

One method of confirming content validity of a scale is to infer the presence of the trait or attitude from other information, such as group membership, and verify that this group does in fact score higher on the scale (e.g. Bloch et al., 2003; Lastovicka et al., 1999). Adbusters, a nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting culture jamming and anti-commercial activism, was identified as a group likely to appeal strongly to consumer cynics. Adbusters provides a quarterly magazine to members and offers a website with activist information, products and discussion forums. The Adbusters organization was supportive of this project but, due to the nature of their mission, has a strict privacy policy and would not send surveys to the member or subscriber list. Instead, a link to the online survey was posted on Adbusters online discussion forums with Adbusters' encouragement. The Adbusters survey used the same measures as Study 5.

As an incentive, survey participants were offered their choice of a \$10 donation to Adbusters on their behalf or a \$7 Amazon.com gift certificate. 60 completed surveys were received. Most chose the Adbusters donation option, raising \$450 for Adbusters

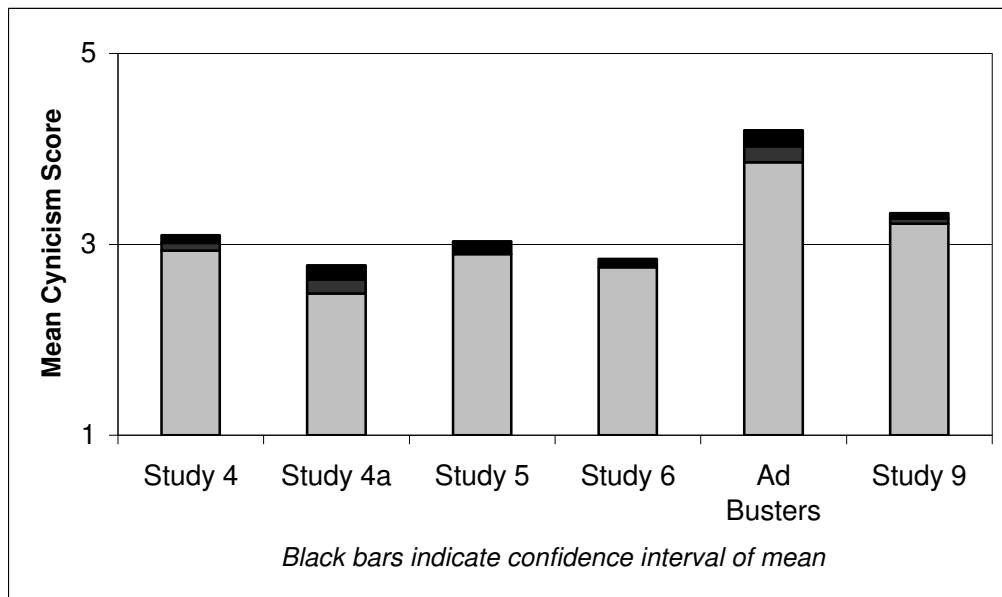
which went toward airing the organization’s “Unbrand America” television commercial on July 4. Several Adbusters survey participants e-mailed me to express their interest in the study and their enthusiasm for the consumer cynicism construct and consumer activism research (at the conclusion of the survey, there was an option to click to find out what the study was about). One cynical participant first posted on the forum his concern that I might be a marketer in disguise, then found me in Google and later replied to his own post saying that I did in fact seem to be a “real” academic researcher!

This was a convenience sample. Calculating a precise response rate is not possible because the survey invitation did not go to a specific list of respondents. Anyone reading the discussion forums between June 20 and July 2 could participate. The Adbusters discussion forums are free and open to the public. Readers and posters are not necessarily Adbusters members, but they would be expected to be more cynical than the average consumer.

### *Conclusions from Study 7*

As expected, the mean consumer cynicism score for the Adbusters sample (4.03 on a 5.0 scale) was substantially and statistically significantly higher than the mean consumer cynicism score for the other samples (2.85), as shown in Figure 7 on page 127 (t-test  $t=-12.040$ ,  $df=279$ ,  $p<.001$ ). The means for other samples tended to be close to the midpoint of the scale. It is perhaps not surprising that the Study 6 sample has a lower mean; this study was the test-retest reliability study with a sample of MBA and accounting students. Although the difference is slight, the mean for the Study 6 sample was statistically significantly lower than the other samples.

Figure 7: Mean consumer cynicism scores across six samples



### Socially Desirable Response Bias

Response bias issues arise when scales show differences in respondents driven by individual differences other than the ones intended for measure, in particular driven by response styles (Jackson, 1986; Paulhus, 1991). Response styles can impact any type of research, but may be a particular concern with individual difference questionnaires because they could confound the target trait, whereas in situational experimental research they would likely be randomized out.

A shortened version of the Marlow-Crowne Social Desirability Scale (Bruner et al., 2001; Paulhus, 1991; Richins & Dawson, 1992) was administered in Study 4. Only one of the items retained in the final consumer cynicism scale was correlated with social desirability (“Most business are more interested in making profits than in serving consumers.”), with a correlation of .10 with social desirability. The overall consumer cynicism scale shows no statistically significant correlation with social desirability

( $r = -.082$ ). Social desirability did show a statistically significant ( $r = -.16$ ) correlation with the self rating of consumer cynicism based on the definition. This suggests that the scale will be a less biased measure than a straight self-rating.

## **Scale Development Summary**

This chapter has discussed the results of eight studies utilized in constructing and validating the consumer cynicism scale. Face validity was established through the member check study with cynical interview participants (study 2) and the expert ratings with consumer behavior colleagues (study 3). Convergent validity was established through the consumer cynicism scale's correlation with the existing constructs of advertising skepticism (study 4) and consumer alienation (study 4, 6 and 9), and with the strong association between consumer cynicism and a self-rating based on the cynicism definition (study 4). Study 7, with Adbusters forum readers, clearly established known groups validity. Discriminant validity between consumer cynicism and similar existing constructs and scales was established by analyzing covariance between consumer cynicism and advertising skepticism, dimensions of consumer alienation, and two other levels of cynicism, societal cynicism and category consumer cynicism. Study 4 confirmed that the consumer cynicism scale is not associated with socially desirable responding, and Study 6 confirmed test-retest reliability.

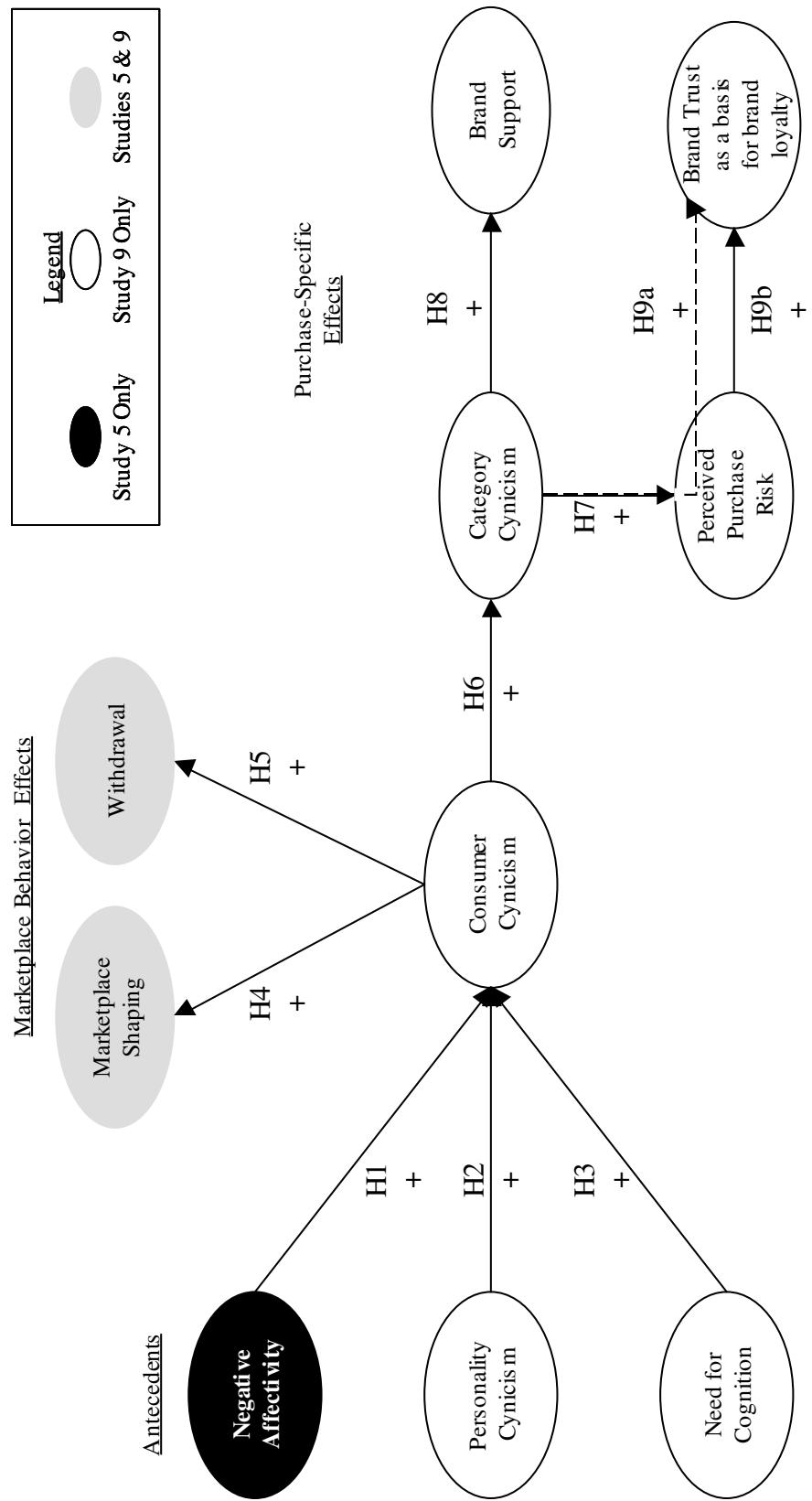
Internal consistency of the scale and consistent performance of the scale across multiple samples was demonstrated through numerous analyses – reliability or Cronbach's  $\alpha$ , average inter-item correlations, confirmatory factor analysis, average variance extracted, composite reliability and average standardized item loading. Except

for a few problems with variance extracted in Study 4, the consumer cynicism scale performed to the most rigorous standards across multiple samples. Nomological validity will be addressed in Chapter 7, which discusses hypothesis testing.

## **CHAPTER 7: TESTING HYPOTHESES**

This dissertation proposed to address nine hypotheses regarding antecedents and consequences of consumer cynicism, with the goals of building a nomological net and taking some first theoretical steps by showing how the consumer cynicism trait could impact attitudes and behaviors for a particular purchase. The hypotheses were introduced and explained in Chapter 5. Only Study 5 and Study 9, the two large general consumer samples, were used to formally investigate hypotheses; other samples were used for pretesting. Figure 8 on page 131 summarizes the hypotheses discussed in Chapter 5 and notes which studies investigated each.

Figure 8: Testing the nomological net



## **Methodology overview**

Hypotheses were tested through online self-report surveys of two samples of consumers, Missouri and Illinois consumers recruited through non-profit organizations in Study 5, and a census-balanced national sample of consumers recruited through Survey Sampling International's Survey Spot panel in Study 9.

Multiple regression was selected as the formal test of hypotheses as the most straightforward analysis of prediction of dependent variables when all the variables are continuous. Regression was used in other recently published studies involving survey methodology (Bearden et al., 2001; Burroughs & Rindfleisch, 2002; Russell, Norman, & Heckler, 2004).

## **Hypothesis Pretesting and Measure Development in Study 5**

### **Study 5 methodology**

Study 5 was an online survey of 221 adult consumers recruited through nonprofit organizations in Missouri and Illinois. Details of the sample and survey procedure were discussed on page 90. Objectives of this study included testing H1 (negative affectivity), testing H4 and H5 (marketplace shaping and withdrawal) using more extensive measures than Study 9, and pretesting measures for testing H4 and H5 in Study 9.

The Study 5 survey consisted of the 39 items remaining in the consumer cynicism item pool at that stage of development, Lambert's (1980) 19-item consumer alienation scale (for scale development analyses), the widely accepted and short PANAS scale for negative affectivity (Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988), and several measures for

exploratory research and hypothesis pretesting: Richins' (1983) aggressive and assertive consumer interaction styles, 13 items representing exit, voice and retaliation responses to consumer dissatisfaction (Huefner et al., 2002), marketplace withdrawal items compiled from voluntary simplicity scales (Iwata, 1999; Leonard-Barton, 1981), and a new set of 11 items designed to capture marketplace shaping behaviors not represented in the exit-voice-retaliation index.

#### *Measure development for marketplace shaping*

Study 5, the Missouri and Illinois adult consumer sample, was designed to investigate the relationship between consumer cynicism and marketplace shaping behaviors and marketplace withdrawal using an extensive index of items, with the goal of also using Study 5 responses to guide selection of just a few of those items to create short measures for marketplace shaping and marketplace withdrawal for formal hypothesis testing in Study 9. The marketplace withdrawal measure is discussed in the next section; marketplace shaping is detailed here.

Marketplace shaping is defined as deliberate attempts to influence the marketplace system by rewarding good companies and punishing bad companies and/or by raising consumer awareness of the hypocrisy and opportunism of the marketplace in general and of specific companies as icons of the marketplace.

The exit, voice and retaliation scale (Huefner et al., 2002) was developed as an index of behavioral responses to customer dissatisfaction. The marketplace shaping concept captures efforts to reward or punish firms or socialize other consumers to improve the marketplace, and is thus characterized more by the motivation behind the behaviors than the behaviors themselves. However, the goal of this study was to show a

link between the consumer cynicism trait and actual behaviors. Marketplace shaping motivations, such as helping the business improve or preventing the incident from happening to others, often underlie customer complaining behavior in addition to a desire for compensation, repair or other personal satisfaction. Many behaviors included in the exit, voice and retaliation index could simultaneously serve both personal satisfaction and marketplace shaping goals, and others, such as complaining to the Better Business Bureau or company headquarters, telling everyone I know, or buying from a competitor (anti-brand loyalty) are more likely to be effective at shaping the marketplace than to achieve compensation or other forms of satisfaction directly to the unhappy consumer.

Thus, while marketplace shaping is not synonymous with complaining behavior, the exit, voice and retaliation index provided a convenient list of behaviors as a starting point. Eleven new items were added to capture other aspects of marketplace shaping behaviors that are especially relevant to consumer cynicism, namely formal activism such as boycotts and anti-commercial events such as Adbusters' Buy Nothing Day, and disparaging or criticism activities directed at influencing other consumers, such as teaching others to be more critical of commercialism or mocking advertisements to friends. Qualitative research on consumer rebellion behaviors (Dobscha, 1998; Fournier et al., 1998; Kozinets, 2002; Ritson & Dobscha, 1999; Rumbo, 2002; Sharpe & Pollay, 2002) was used to generate the new scale items which cover mocking, rebellion, boycotting, anti-brand loyalty and socializing others – behaviors which were not discussed on existing scales.

The existing 13 exit, voice and retaliation scale items were adapted to specify two sources of consumer dissatisfaction or anger: the consumer's own purchase interactions

and larger social concerns. All 13 items were asked once for each source, for a total of 26 items, further enhancing the ability of the index to capture marketplace shaping behavior. The following two prompts were used on the survey to distinguish between personal motivations and larger social concerns:

*Think back to times you have been displeased or angry with businesses due to your personal interactions, such as dissatisfaction with a product or service. Please consider ONLY your personal interactions with companies, not issues you may have read or heard about.*

*Now, consider whether you have taken any of those actions because you were displeased or angry with businesses due to issues you may have heard about or social concerns (e.g. labor practices, environment, safety issues, inappropriate advertising).*

These indices included a number of low-incident behaviors such as “damaged some part of the building or facilities of a business that upset me,” and a major goal of this survey was to pretest these items in order to select a small subset of items to use to measure marketplace shaping and marketplace withdrawal in the national survey. The newly written culture-jamming items also included some low-incident behaviors such as creating an attack webpage or defacing advertisements. Items and sources are provided in Appendix D. These extensive indices were also administered in Study 7 to the sample of Adbusters forum participants so that even low-incident behaviors could be investigated. Those findings are discussed in Appendix E. For purposes of measure development, however, the goal of the Study 5 application of the 26 exit, voice and retaliation items and the 11 new culture-jamming items was to identify a subset of behaviors that were common enough (but not too common) to be statistically useful, weeding out low-incidence behaviors. This was of particular concern because the items call for reports of

actual incidents of behavior within the last six months or month; these were not Likert scale responses and were not likely to have a convenient normal distribution of responses.

It was expected that consumer cynicism would have a stronger impact on behavioral responses to social concerns than on behavioral responses to personal consumer interactions. While this generally held true, the difference was not substantial, and exploratory factor analysis suggested the socially motivated and personally motivated versions of the exit, voice and retaliation behaviors tended to load on the same factors. In the interests of developing a concise measure to capture as much marketplace shaping behavior as possible (in terms of breadth of the construct as well as maximizing incidence), this distinction was dropped in and items were consolidated for Study 9 into the following six items, all on a never-once-twice-three or more times scale:

Table 25: Marketplace shaping behavior index items

- 
- Have you ever participated in an organized boycott?
  - Over the last six months, how many times have you decided to stop buying from a business?
  - Over the last six months, how many times have you decided to stop buying a brand?
  - In the last six months, how many times have you encouraged someone else to avoid buying a product or to avoid a certain brand, company or store?
  - In the last month, how many times have you criticized a brand, store, product or advertisement to friends or acquaintances?
  - In the last six months, how many times have you criticized a brand, store, advertisement or product so that other customers could hear?
- 

These items were selected to avoid low-incidence and to emphasize the behaviors most likely connected with a desire to influence the marketplace and other consumers, rather than to gain personal satisfaction from a consumer interaction or to retaliate or express anger. The Study 9 prompt, “Please think about times when you have been displeased or angry about a company’s treatment of consumers or business practices and

how you have reacted,” was intended to stimulate thinking about both personal consumer interactions and marketplace concerns such as social issues.

#### *Measure development for marketplace withdrawal*

Marketplace withdrawal is defined as deliberately reducing or minimizing one's contact with the marketplace in any way. A 10-item reflective scale for marketplace withdrawal, composed of items from existing voluntary simplicity scales and new items, was administered in both Study 5 (adult consumers, n=221) and Study 7 (Adbusters, n=60), with the goal of providing an initial test of H5 and serving as a pretest to build a short scale for Study 9, the national consumer sample. The Study 7 sample was not necessary for measure development for withdrawal because the reflective Likert scale for withdrawal was minimally influenced by low-incidence issues. Also, highly cynical Adbusters were statistically significantly more likely to withdraw from the marketplace than highly cynical Study 5 participants. The Adbusters sample did show an  $\alpha$  of .87.

The 10-item scale had an  $\alpha$  of .82 in the Study 5 sample. Exploratory factor analysis indicated the 10 items did not load on a single factor. One factor appeared to capture general withdrawal from the marketplace, and most of the items loaded primarily on this factor. Two items loaded on a factor that could best be described as avoidance of advertising, and two items on one that could best be described as avoidance of chains. Four items loading on the general factor were selected for the short marketplace withdrawal scale for Study 9. In the Study 5 sample, this four-item scale had an  $\alpha$  of .77; in the Study 9 sample, the marketplace withdrawal scale had an  $\alpha$  of .80.

Table 26: Marketplace withdrawal scale items

- 
- I try to live a simple life and not to buy articles which are not necessary.
  - I prefer clothing that does not carry a noticeable brand logo.
  - I try to avoid impulse buys.
  - I shop only when I need something specific.
- 

Consumer cynicism showed similar relationships with the avoidance of advertising and avoidance of chains factors and with the four-item withdrawal scale in both samples.

## **Study 9 Methodology**

Study 9 is the primary vehicle for testing hypotheses and providing a nomological net for the consumer cynicism construct.

Objectives for this study included:

- Confirmation of the consumer cynicism scale's unidimensionality;
- Evaluation of the consumer cynicism scale's consistent performance across samples;
- Confirmation of the consumer cynicism scale's statistical performance and establishment of norms with a representative national sample;
- Testing of hypotheses H2-H9.

### **Sample and procedure**

Study 9 was an online survey conducted through Survey Sampling Inc. international marketing research firm. Participants were members of the firm's SurveySpot panel. E-mail invitations were sent to a U.S. census-balanced selection of panel members. Panel members receive less than one invitation per week, and completed surveys enter the participant into a rolling sweepstakes as an incentive. Two reminders

were sent, one in December and one in January, to a pool of 9,190 SurveySpot panel members; 937 responded for a response rate of 10.2 percent. 569 usable surveys were completed. The large national sample was randomly split into two groups to facilitate analysis of the scale's consistent performance. These two groups are reported as separate samples in Table 13 on page 102. Measures for Study 9 will be detailed later in discussions of hypothesis testing.

*Representativeness of the national consumer sample*

Respondents represented a good sample of the U.S. population. As expected with an online survey, the survey sample was a little heavy on college-educated, white, female and Midwestern respondents; these differences between the survey sample and the U.S. population were fairly slight. The sample of survey respondents was also short on both upper-income and very low-income households; this difference was more substantial. Figures comparing the national sample to the population according to the U.S. Census are provided in Appendix B. While the demographic balance is not a perfect match to the U.S. Census, it can be said to be a reasonably good representation of U.S. consumers.

Only three demographics were shown to correlate with consumer cynicism: race (nonwhites are more cynical), income (low-income respondents are more cynical), and age (older people are less cynical). No differences were found between rural and urban populations or between regions of the United States.

Nonwhite respondents have a mean consumer cynicism score of 3.56 on a 5-point scale; white respondents have a mean of 3.24. This difference in means is statistically significant ( $p=.002$ ). Females (mean=3.32) were slightly more cynical than males

(mean=3.20), and a T-test showed this difference to be marginally statistically significant ( $p=.053$ ).

Income shows a statistically significant correlation ( $r = -.132$ ) with consumer cynicism. Consumer cynicism scale means decline as income increases, but the steady decline has a couple of bumps in it. The consumer cynicism scale mean for the lowest income category ( $<\$20,000$ ) is 3.32, and for the highest income category ( $>\$150,000$ ) it is 3.02. Yet, analysis of variance shows no statistically significant differences among income categories, and a T-test comparison of the lowest and highest income groups shows no statistically significant difference.

Age shows a statistically significant correlation with consumer cynicism ( $r = -.22$ ); analysis of variance suggests this is primarily due to seniors (over 60 years old) being less cynical than everyone else.

## **Study 9 instrument**

This study set out to investigate three major groups of hypotheses:

- The central dispositions hypothesized as antecedents of consumer cynicism, H2 personality or societal cynicism and H3 need for cognition;
- Consequences of consumer cynicism in terms of behavior in the marketplace in general (H4 marketplace shaping and H5 marketplace withdrawal)
- Consequences of consumer cynicism in terms of behavior toward a particular purchase (H6-9).

The central disposition antecedents are based on established theory discussed in Chapter 5 and use established measures: Kanter and Mirvis' (1989) short 6-item version of Wrightsman's (1991) societal/personality cynicism scale and Mowen's (2000) short 6-

item version of the need for cognition scale (Cacioppo, Petty, & Kao, 1984).

Development of the measures for the marketplace shaping and marketplace withdrawal consequences was discussed earlier in this chapter as part of Study 5 (page 133).

Investigation of the impact of consumer cynicism, a trait-level attitude toward the marketplace, on specific, concrete purchase decisions was more complex and posed measurement challenges.

#### *Respondent-customized questions about specific purchases*

As previously discussed, the qualitative interviews suggested cynical consumers had a capacity for strong brand loyalty to those few firms that manage to break through their cynicism and win their trust. If, however, no firm has managed to win their trust, cynical consumers would be expected to be less trusting and less loyal than the general population. Capturing those special brand relationships in a quantitative survey posed a challenge. The chances of hitting upon that special relationship for any one individual by asking about any particular brand or product are not good.

A pretest based on asking respondents to identify a favorite brand in each of seven specified product categories showed that even with seven categories such special brand relationships were not likely to be captured, much less with the two or three intended for the full survey. Even though “I’m not loyal to any particular brand” was an option on that pretest, most respondents did not choose that option and instead reported some level of brand preference. After the pretest, some confessed to feigning or inflating brand preference. Thus, it was determined that the only way to ensure that the truly special brand relationships were captured was to ask all participants about favorite brands without restricting this choice to particular product categories. However, even the least

cynical consumers likely have a few favorite brands, and ceiling effects would probably obscure any relationship between consumer cynicism and brand loyalty. Thus, Study 9 set out to investigate differences in the nature of the brand loyalty, specifically brand support behaviors and the basis for that brand loyalty, rather than differences in actual levels of brand loyalty.

The survey invited participants to provide two brands and one store to which they are loyal, and then asked them to provide the product category they had in mind for each of the brands and the type of store. (i.e. “Think of a brand that you are especially loyal to,” and the respondent types in “Purina.” Next, the survey asks, “What product did you have in mind that you like to buy from Purina?” and the respondent types in “pet food.”) The survey then incorporated the actual text respondents had provided for brand and store into three separate batches of questions about brand loyalty, brand support and reasons for that loyalty (i.e. “Purina is trustworthy.”), and the text respondents had provided for the category into three separate batches of questions about perceived purchase risk and category cynicism (i.e. “Most pet food manufacturers will cut any corner they can to improve profit margins.”). A copy of the survey is provided in the Appendix A, with sample brands and categories filled in to illustrate how this worked for participants.

### Study 8: Pretest

This rather unusual question format was pretested in Study 8 to find out what kinds of answers real participants would fill in when asked to specify a favorite brand and the category for that brand and see how subsequent questions would look with the text provided by participants themselves.

Study 8 was an online survey completed by students in marketing classes at the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater, who received extra credit as an incentive for participation. Students received an e-mail link to the survey and had one week to complete it. Of the 100 students who received the e-mail invitation, 67 completed surveys for a response rate of 67 percent. Measures, and the survey instrument itself, were the same as those used in Study 9 except for two changes: 1) Because this was an extra credit opportunity for students, the survey closed with an explanation of the study and quiz about research methodology; 2) the prompts for the preferred brands and product categories were revised while the survey was in progress. As responses came in, the wording of the prompts was adjusted until the majority of the open-ended text responses provided were suitable for insertion into the subsequent survey questions. Based on this revision process, the finalized prompts are shown in Figure 9 and Figure 10, with the prompt for product categories and store types on a separate screen. Minor adjustments were also made in the wording of follow-up questions for the store so that they made sense with the wording respondents typically filled in.

Because the wording of the prompts was changing while the survey was in progress, the survey was not identical for all participants. Thus, this survey was not used for any other analyses except as one more example of consistent performance of the consumer cynicism scale.

Figure 9: Prompt for brands and store with sample responses

Think of a brand that you're especially loyal to.

It can be for any type of product, such as clothing, automotive products, cosmetics, electronic equipment, food or anything else.

Type the name of that brand here:

Kaytee

Here, type another brand you are loyal to:

Again, it can be for any type of product.

Purina

Now, think of a store you are loyal to. Type the name here:

Copp's

Figure 10: Prompt for product and store categories with sample responses

What product did you have in mind that you like to buy from Kaytee?

If you buy several different products from this brand, just pick ONE to talk about here.

State the product in general terms such as soda, jeans, sportswear, pet food etc.

bird food

What product did you have in mind that you like to buy from Purina?

Again, state ONE very general product category.

pet food

What type of store is Copp's?

Again, name the type of store very generally, such as grocery, sports apparel, clothing, department, discount, hardware, garden etc. Imagine you are filling in the blank:

"Copp's is a \_\_\_\_\_ store."

grocery

### *Study 9 measures*

Besides the consumer cynicism scale, the Study 9 survey included seven back-up items from the consumer cynicism item pool, a short form of the need for cognition scale (Mowen, 2000), the consumer alienation scale (Lambert, 1980), the societal cynicism scale (Kanter & Mirvis, 1989), and the marketplace withdrawal and marketplace shaping behavioral indices developed in Study 5. Each participant completed those scales once. In addition, each participant provided two brands to which they were loyal, and the product category for those purchases, and one store to which they were loyal, and the type of

store, in response to the prompts developed in the Study 8 pretest and shown in Figure 9 and Figure 10. Each participant then answered three sets of questions related to the purchase-specific hypotheses. For each brand and store name they supplied, they answered questions with the brand or store name filled in: brand loyalty (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001b), brand support, and importance ratings of reasons for brand loyalty. For each product category and store type they supplied, they answered questions with the category name filled in: perceived purchase risk and category cynicism (adapted from consumer cynicism items).

In spite of the wording adjustments made in the Study 8 pretest, a few respondents still managed to enter in brands or categories that did not provide usable text for the follow-up questions. For example, a few respondents wrote something like “Everything Kraft makes is great,” when asked for a product category. Others left the open-ended questions blank (or perhaps a technical glitch did not take their answers). Cases in which respondents failed to provide a specific brand or store name and a product or store category that would make sense when filled into subsequent questions were dropped from the affected analyses (20 cases or four percent for brand-product category 1, 31 cases or six percent for brand-product category 2, and 24 cases or four percent for store name-store category out of 538 completed surveys).

### Category-level measures

Two constructs were measured at the category level, cynicism and perceived purchase risk. These were measured three times for each participant, for the two product categories the respondent provided and for the one store type. Remember, each participant named two product brands and one store they were loyal to. The category

cynicism and perceived purchase risk measures did not focus on the participant's favorite brand but rather on that *type* of purchase. The three-item category cynicism scale was adapted from items in the marketplace-level consumer cynicism item pool, as detailed on page 113.

#### Perceived purchase risk measure

As previously discussed, consumer cynicism is defined as a perception of pervasive opportunism in the marketplace, and opportunism would logically be expected to increase purchase risk. Perceived purchase risk has been conceptualized for nearly 30 years as having two elements: the perceived severity of possible negative consequences and the perceived likelihood that those negative consequences would occur (e.g. Bettman, 1973; Mitchell, 1999). Pervasive opportunism could increase both.

In this study, brand-choice risk, or perceived risk associated with choosing one brand over another, is the focus. This study focuses on a typical purchase within the product category rather than a specific purchase, addressing inherent risk (latent risk for that type of purchase) rather than handled risk (actually felt for a specific purchase) (Mitchell, 1999). This conceptualization proposes that consumer cynicism increases inherent risk associated with a product class purchase decision, motivating consumers to reduce handled risk through loyalty. Because consumers in this study only answered questions about product categories for which they are loyal to a brand, it is likely that most respondents make repeat purchases of that brand and feel little handled risk for each purchase. Therefore it does not make sense to ask respondents about perceptions of risk for a specific purchase, such as the last time they bought the product.

In spite of a very substantial stream of marketing literature on perceived purchase risk, there is no one established measure. Frequently, risk measures are developed for specific situations and contexts with the goal of identifying key sources of risk for a particular consumer decision or to focus on different types of risk, such as financial, social, psychological, physical and performance. Pervasive opportunism could potentially increase any of these types of risk. Different product categories have been shown to be associated with different levels of risk and different types and sources of risk (Chaudhuri, 1998; Gronhaug, Hem, & Lines, 2002). Since participants would be naming their own product categories, it was impossible to use these kinds of context-specific risk questions.

For Study 9, the risk measure needed to be adaptable for a wide variety of categories – any category the respondent might enter – and it needed to be very concise, since it would be repeated for all three categories. Therefore, perceived purchase risk was measured using three items chosen to represent both the severity and the likelihood of possible negative consequences. The wording is consistent with other studies using the severity and likelihood approach (e.g. Cunningham, 1967; Gronhaug et al., 2002).

Table 27: Perceived purchase risk scale items with sample response for store type

---

- It's important to make the right choice of [grocery] store.
  - Choosing the wrong [grocery] store could be a serious mistake.
  - It would be easy for someone to choose the wrong [grocery] store.
- 

While importance of making the right choice is frequently used for global assessments of risk and could result from either severity or likelihood of negative consequences or both, “serious mistake” refers only to severity, and “easy for someone to choose the wrong \_\_\_\_” refers only to likelihood. In the marketing literature, severity and

likelihood of possible negative consequences are conceptualized as independent, although there is some debate about whether this is an additive or multiplicative effect (Mitchell, 1999). Thus, this is a formative scale rather than a reflective one, scored with a simple scale mean.

Individual's perceptions of perceived purchase risk for each product category and the store type were discriminant from one another; that is, product 1 risk is distinct from product 2 risk and from the store type risk.

Correlations among the means of the risk scales for the two products and the store ranged from .318 to .456, all statistically significant yet reflective of capturing different constructs. Exploratory factor analysis of all the individual scale items for risk (the three items repeated for the two products and the store, for a total of nine risk items) showed three clear factors with the factors corresponding to the two products and the store type.

Table 28: Exploratory factor analysis of perceived purchase risk items

Factor loadings	Factor		
	1	2	3
Store risk item a	.964		
Store risk item c	.734		
Store risk item b	.722		
Product 1 risk item a		.882	
Product 1 risk item b		.696	
Product 1 risk item c		.613	
Product 2 risk item b			-.841
Product 2 risk item a			-.799
Product 2 risk item c			-.742

Factor Correlation Matrix			
Factor 1 (store risk)	1.000	.386	-.516
Factor 2 (product 1)	.386	1.000	-.422
Factor 2 (product 2)	-.516	-.422	1.000

Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring. Rotation Method: Oblimin with Kaiser Normalization  
Rotation converged in 6 iterations, loadings less than .15 suppressed.

### Brand and store-specific measures

For each of the two brands and one store participants reported being loyal to, they rated three constructs: loyalty, brand support behaviors and basis for their brand loyalty.

#### Brand loyalty measure

The survey prompt invited respondents to think of brands and a store they were loyal to. It is very likely that participants typed in the first two brands that came to mind and the first store which came to mind, very possibly choosing their very favorite brands. The expectation was that all participants would be highly loyal to the brands and stores in the survey. Loyalty was directly measured primarily as a manipulation check, and it was expected that ceiling effects would prevent meaningful analyses of actual levels of loyalty.

Consistent with brand loyalty literature, loyalty was conceptualized as encompassing both behavioral and attitudinal components and measured using items adapted from established scales:

Table 29: Brand loyalty scale items with sample respondent-provided brand name

- 
- I am committed to [Purina]. (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001b)
  - I intend to keep buying [Purina]. (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001b)
    - Adapted for stores as: I intend to keep shopping at [Willy Street Co-op].
  - [Purina] is the best choice for me. (Pritchard, Havitz, & Howard, 1999)
  - I consider myself to be a loyal patron of [Purina]. (Pritchard et al., 1999)
- 

Results showed 86 percent of respondents had a mean score of 4.0 or higher on the brand loyalty scale for the first product (78 percent and 77 percent had a mean score of 4.0 or higher for the second product and the store, respectively), clearly demonstrating that the manipulation was effective.

### Brand support measure

This paper conceptualizes brand support as any behaviors motivated by a desire to help a brand succeed, particularly behaviors that go beyond the usual expectation of the customer's role and reflect a higher level of commitment to the brand. Brand support has been conceptualized in marketing literature as a consequence of brand loyalty (Amine, 1998; Dick & Basu, 1994b). Some scale items have been developed to capture positive word of mouth (Athanasopoulos, Gounaris, & Stathakopoulos, 2001). However, no measure has been established which fully captures this broad conceptualization of brand support behaviors. A new ad hoc formative index was created for brand support. Developing an exhaustive formative measure of brand support was beyond the scope of this dissertation but this index captures more of the content domain than existing measures, which focus almost exclusively on positive word of mouth. The measure addresses various specific behaviors, all of which could be considered brand support, but would not necessarily apply in all cases or be expected to cluster together. Therefore this measure was treated as a formative index, using the mean of the scale for analysis.

Table 30: Brand support scale items with sample respondent-provided text

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I try to help <u>[Pepperidge Farm]</u> succeed.</li> <li>• To help <u>[Pepperidge Farm]</u> have more customers, I have recommended it to others.</li> <li>• I would be willing to pay a higher price for <u>[Pepperidge Farm]</u> over other brands. <i>Store version: I would be willing to pay a higher price to shop at <u>[Willy Street Co-Op]</u> over other brands.</i></li> <li>• If <u>[Pepperidge Farm]</u> were sold out, I would buy a different brand of <u>[bread]</u>. (Reversed) <i>Store substitute: I try to do all my <u>[grocery]</u> shopping at <u>[Willy Street Co-Op]</u>.</i></li> <li>• I make a special effort to tell others to use <u>[Pepperidge Farm]</u>. <i>Store version: I make a special effort to tell others to shop at <u>[Willy Street Co-Op]</u>.</i></li> <li>• If a store does not carry <u>[Pepperidge Farm]</u>, I will go to another store to get it. <i>Store version: If <u>[Willy Street Co-Op]</u> moved to a less convenient location, I would still shop there.</i></li> </ul>
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#### Basis for brand loyalty measures

In this dissertation, brand loyalty is conceptualized as having attitudinal (brand commitment) and behavioral (repeat purchase) components, consistent with long-standing tradition in marketing literature (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001b; Day, 1969; Jacoby & Kyner, 1973). Although the prompt did not tell survey participants what kind of loyalty to consider, the open-ended prompt likely lead consumers to list brands that were highly salient to them, which would tap into attitudinal commitment as well as simple repeat purchasing. This expectation was borne out by the manipulation check; participants reported high levels of loyalty as measured by a scale incorporating attitudinal commitment items as well as intentions for future purchases. This kind of attitudinal loyalty is conscious and salient, and consumers can be expected to articulate some reasoning behind it. An infinite number of factors could drive a consumer to become loyal to a particular brand or store. This study focuses on three factors frequently investigated in the marketing literature as antecedents of brand loyalty: trust, satisfaction

and value. These three areas are also among the most important for marketing practitioners, who invest considerable energy in monitoring consumer perceptions of trust, satisfaction and value and creating strategies to improve those perceptions.

Study 9 adapted existing measures of levels of brand trust, customer satisfaction and perceived value to measure the perceived importance of those issues in brand loyalty. The scale for the importance of brand trust was adapted from Chaudhuri and Holbrook's four-item brand trust scale (2001b): I trust this brand; I rely on this brand; This is an honest brand; This brand is safe. The satisfaction items were inspired by Mano and Oliver's satisfaction scale (1993) and Keller and Aaker's quality scale (1992); the value items were inspired by Lichtenstein and Bearden's scale for measuring perceived value of an offer (Lichtenstein & Bearden, 1989) and Dodds, Monroe and Grewal's scale for measuring perceived value of a product (1991).

As intended by the study design and as indicated by the manipulation check loyalty measure, most respondents had a high level of attitudinal commitment to the brands in question. Thus, this study did not purport to ask about the extent to which a participant trusted a brand or thought it offered good value for the money, as most brand trust, satisfaction and value measures are designed to do. That approach would likely have resulted in ceiling effects when most participants rated their favorite brands as reliable, honest, high quality, a good value, etc. Instead, new measures were created to focus on rating importance of trust, satisfaction, and value as reasons for brand loyalty. Two different approaches were used, a check ranking and a Likert scale rating of importance. Items comprising the three scales were randomly mixed up and presented to participants simply as possible reasons for brand loyalty. First, participants read a list of

possible reasons for brand loyalty and checked the two most important reasons. Second, participants responded to a list of possible reasons for brand loyalty by rating “How important is this reason in your loyalty to [brand name]?” on a scale ranging from least important to most important. With the rating version of the measure, nothing prevented respondents from rating all the reasons as important, and many did so. The checklist version of the measure was designed to force respondents to prioritize.

Exploratory factor analysis supported the categorization of the reason items as intended into trust, satisfaction and value. One item, “fits my needs,” was dropped due to cross-loading.

Table 31: Basis for brand loyalty items

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Brand trust

- [The Body Shop] is trustworthy. <sup>✉</sup>
- [The Body Shop] is reliable.
- [The Body Shop] is an honest brand.
- [The Body Shop] is safe.
- [The Body Shop] cares about the consumer. <sup>✉</sup>
- [The Body Shop] is ethical. <sup>✉</sup>

Satisfaction

- [The Body Shop] performs best. <sup>✉</sup>
- [The Body Shop] is high quality. <sup>✉</sup>
- [The Body Shop] fits my needs. <sup>✉</sup>
- [The Body Shop] offers a good selection of merchandise.<sup>s</sup>

Value

- [The Body Shop] offers good value for the money. <sup>✉</sup>
- [The Body Shop] is a good buy.
- [The Body Shop] has good prices or good sales.<sup>s</sup>

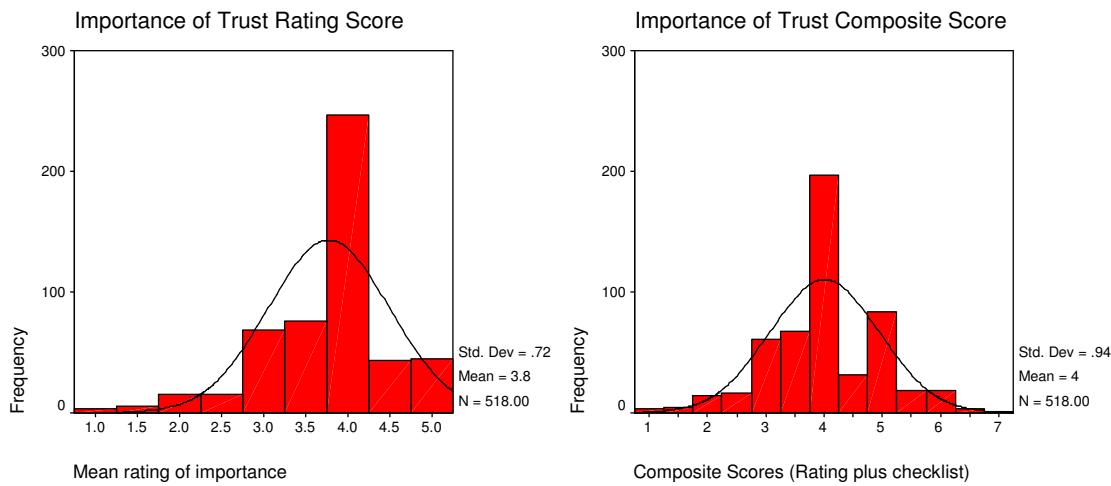
<sup>✉</sup>: Item used in checklist as well as rating measure

<sup>s</sup>: Item used for stores only, not for products.

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The dichotomous checklist items are by nature of limited value statistically. Unfortunately, the importance rating items also had limited range and variance. Most participants rated all the reasons as most important or somewhat important, producing a heavily skewed distribution. The two measures were combined to achieve a normally distributed measure of importance. Adding the relevant checklist items to the mean of the importance rating scales effectively gives extra weight to those who checked the item as one of the two most important reasons for their loyalty. For example, to create this composite score for brand trust, the mean was calculated for each respondent on the brand trust items with the rating scale response set. Next, a sum was created for the trust-relevant reasons from the checklist response set (check the two most important reasons). There were three trust reasons in the checklist: “[brand] is trustworthy;” “[brand] cares about the consumer;” and “[brand] is ethical.” Thus, a respondent who checked one of those reasons as one of the “two reasons that are most important to you in your loyalty to [brand]” would receive a checklist score for trust of 1. A respondent who checked two of these items (meaning they used all of their allotted two checkmarks on trust-relevant reasons) would receive a score of 2. This sum score was added to the mean of the rating scale items for trust. The same procedure was followed for satisfaction and value. Trust and satisfaction had maximum “bonus” scores of 2; value had a maximum “bonus” score of 1. The resulting composite reason scores were normally distributed; trust scores are shown as an example in Figure 11 on page 155; results were similar for satisfaction and value.

Figure 11: Distribution of Trust Rating Mean and Composite Scores



### Other measures

#### Need for cognition measure

Cacioppo and Petty's (1984) 18-item revised scale of need for cognition is the established standard and was preferred for this study because of the rigorous scale development procedures and widespread use. However, Mowen (2000) also developed a 6-item reduced version of the scale with an alpha of .81 which correlated at .92 with the full 18-item scale. The full 18-item scale was used with the student sample in Study 4 for discriminant validity analysis. That sample showed a .90 correlation between the shortened scale and the full scale. The student pretest also showed a nonsignificant near-zero correlation between consumer cynicism and need for cognition as measured by both the short and the full-length scale, strongly suggesting H3 would not be supported. In an effort to avoid rejecting H3 based solely on a college student sample while also avoiding using up 18 items testing a relationship that likely did not exist, the six-item scale was included in Study 9 for a formal test of the hypothesis.

Table 32: Scale items for need for cognition

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- I like to have the responsibility of handling a situation that requires a lot of thinking.
  - Thinking is not my idea of fun.
  - I would rather do something that requires little thought than something that is sure to challenge my thinking abilities.
  - I only think as hard as I have to.
  - I feel relief rather than satisfaction after completing a task that required a lot of mental effort.
  - Learning new ways to think doesn't excite me very much.
-

Table 33: Summary of Study 9 Measures

Hypothesis	Measure Description and Sample Items
<b>H2</b> $\alpha = .88$ Avg. standardized loading: .75	Kanter and Mirvis' (1989) short 6-item version of Wrightsman's (1991) societal/personality cynicism scale (page 110) “An unselfish person is taken advantage of in today’s world.”
<b>H3</b> $\alpha = .87$ Avg. standardized loading: .69	Mowen's (2000) short 6-item version of the need for cognition scale (Cacioppo et al., 1984) (page 155) “I like to have the responsibility of handling a situation that requires a lot of thinking.”
<b>H4</b> Formative (no $\alpha$ )	A new 6-item formative index of marketplace shaping behaviors based on the pretest in Study 5 (page 133) “Over the last six months, how many times have you encouraged someone else to avoid buying a product or to avoid a certain brand, company or store?”
<b>H5</b> $\alpha = .83$ Avg. standardized loading: .74	A 4-item marketplace withdrawal scale based on existing voluntary simplicity measures and the Study 5 pretest (page 137) “I try to live a simple life and not to buy articles that are not necessary.”
<b>H6</b> $\alpha = .73^1, .79^2, .80^3$ Avg. standardized loading: .72 <sup>1</sup> , .79 <sup>2</sup> , .77 <sup>3</sup>	A 3-item ad hoc category cynicism scale consisting of three consumer cynicism items adapted for the category-specific context, pretested in Study 8. This measure is repeated for the two product categories and the store type, with the respondent’s own text filled in for the category. (page 113) “Most cat food manufacturers don’t care what happens once I’ve bought the product.”
<b>H7</b> Formative (no $\alpha$ )	A 3-item ad hoc perceived purchase risk scale based on existing measures and definitions of perceived purchase risk, pretested in Study 8. This measure is repeated for the two product categories and the store type with the respondent’s own text filled in for the category. “Choosing the wrong cat food could be a serious mistake.”
<b>H8</b> Formative (no $\alpha$ )	A 6-item brand support scale based on existing measures, pretested in Study 8. This measure is repeated for the two loyal brands and the loyal store with the respondent’s own text filled in for the brand name. “If a store does not carry Purina, I will go to another store to get it.”
<b>H9ab</b> $\alpha = .83^1, .89^2, .91^3$ Avg. standardized loading: .72 <sup>1</sup> , .79 <sup>2</sup> , .77 <sup>3</sup>	A 6-item scale rating trust issues as an important reason for brand loyalty, based on the brand trust scale (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001b) plus two new items intended to tap into trust issues particularly relevant to cynicism. “Purina is an honest brand.” “Purina cares about the consumer.” “Purina is ethical.”
<b>H9c</b>	A 3-item ad hoc scale rating satisfaction issues as important reasons for brand loyalty (4-items for the store). “Purina performs best.” A 2-item ad hoc scale rating value issues as important reasons for brand loyalty (3 items for the store) “Purina offers good value for the money.”

<sup>1</sup>: calculated for the first loyal brand and product category listed, <sup>2</sup>: calculated for the second loyal brand and product category listed, <sup>3</sup>: calculated for the loyal store and store category.

Average standardized loadings were calculated based on measurement models including all the available latent constructs using AMOS.

## **Results**

### **Antecedents of consumer cynicism**

#### *H1: Negative affectivity*

H1 was tested with the Study 5 sample using the widely accepted and short PANAS scale for negative affectivity (Watson et al., 1988):

*H1: Negative affectivity will be positively associated with consumer cynicism.*

Negative affectivity was posed as an antecedent of consumer cynicism. This relationship was analyzed through linear regression. The negative affectivity scale showed an  $\alpha$  of .83; the mean of the scale was used as the scale score. Regressing the mean of the negative affectivity scale on the dependent variable of consumer cynicism shows a statistically significant relationship with a standardized regression coefficient of .192 ( $p = .005$ ) and an  $r^2$  of .037. Thus, H1 is supported.

#### *H2: Societal cynicism*

*H2: Societal cynicism is positively associated with (but discriminant from) consumer cynicism*

H2 was tested with the Study 9 sample. Societal cynicism was measured by Kanter and Mirvis' short version (1989) of the Wrightsman (1991) cynicism scale. In the study 9 national consumer sample, this societal cynicism scale was unidimensional and had an  $\alpha$  of .88. As discussed in Chapter 6 (page 110), societal cynicism was found to be highly correlated with but discriminant from consumer cynicism as expected.

A linear regression model of antecedents of consumer cynicism was created using the scale mean for societal cynicism. First, demographic variables were entered as control variables. Only age and income showed a statistically significant change in  $r^2$ , and thus gender, education and region were dropped from the model.

Next, societal cynicism was added sequentially. The resulting antecedent model shows an adjusted r-square of .294, with societal cynicism as the primary antecedent of consumer cynicism with a standardized coefficient of .495 ( $p<.001$ ). Age and income add only a little explanatory value with standardized coefficients of  $-.116$  ( $p=.003$ ) and  $-.080$  ( $p=.036$ ) respectively. Thus, H2 is strongly supported.

### *H3: Need for cognition*

Need for cognition was measured in Study 9 by Mowen's (2000) shortened 6-item version of Cacioppo and Petty's (1984) well established 18-item need for cognition scale.

### *H3: Need for cognition is positively associated with (but discriminant from) consumer cynicism*

As for H2, a linear regression model of antecedents of consumer cynicism was created using the scale mean for need for cognition. First, demographic variables were entered as control variables. Only age and income showed a statistically significant change in  $r^2$ , and thus gender, education and region were dropped from the model.

Next, need for cognition was added sequentially. Adding need for cognition to the model did not result in a significant change in  $r^2$ , and need for cognition and consumer cynicism show a nonsignificant near-zero correlation. Thus, H3 was not supported.

Of course, this model does not attempt to represent a full picture of consumer cynicism antecedents. For example, consumer experiences would likely play a major role

in the development of consumer cynicism and would be an interesting direction for further research.

### **Marketplace Consequences of Consumer Cynicism: H4-5**

#### *H4: Marketplace shaping in Study 5*

Although the Study 9 sample is more representative of the general population, additional tests of H4 and H5 on the Study 5 sample are valuable because they are based on more comprehensive measure of marketplace shaping and marketplace withdrawal behaviors. The extensive measures used in Study 5 offer many opportunities to explore the relationship between consumer cynicism and behaviors. In general, analyses show a significant positive correlation between consumer cynicism and several varieties of marketplace activism, providing strong support for H4. This exploration is detailed in Appendix E.

The best test of H4 is the overall marketplace shaping index, which is the mean of all the behaviors except that low-incident behaviors were consolidated into two items, extreme retaliation and extreme activism. Further details about the composition of this index are discussed in Appendix E.

A simple linear regression with the overall marketplace shaping index as the dependent variable shows consumer cynicism to be a statistically significant predictor in the Study 5 sample, with a standardized regression coefficient of .405 ( $r^2=.160$ ). Thus, H4 was supported.

*H4: Consumer cynicism is positively associated with marketplace shaping.*

This relationship is noteworthy because it represents a link between an individual difference variable involving global marketplace attitudes and reports of actual behaviors within the last six months.

#### *H4: Marketplace shaping in Study 9*

In Study 9 with the national consumer sample, marketplace shaping was measured with a six-item formative index based on Study 5 as described on page 133. A simple linear regression with the mean of the marketplace shaping scale as the dependent variable and consumer cynicism as the predictor shows a statistically significant standardized regression coefficient of .252 ( $p < .001$ ). Thus, H4 is supported.

Including other predictors in the model shows that consumer cynicism explains additional variance in marketplace shaping beyond that explained by gender (males did more marketplace shaping) and societal cynicism. Societal cynicism primarily influences marketplace shaping through its role as an antecedent of consumer cynicism; it has a statistically significant standardized coefficient of .183 but drops out of the model once consumer cynicism is added to the model (consumer cynicism fully mediates). Other possible control variables, income, race and age, showed no statistically significant impact on marketplace shaping even when regressed as sole predictors.

#### *H5: Marketplace withdrawal in Study 5*

A simple linear regression with the mean of the 10-item withdrawal scale as the dependent variable shows consumer cynicism to be a statistically significant predictor in the Study 5 sample, with a standardized regression coefficient of .328 ( $r^2 = .104$ ). Thus, H5 was supported.

*H5: Consumer cynicism is positively associated with marketplace withdrawal.*

Table 34: Regression tests of H4 and H5 in the national consumer sample

Dependent variable	<u>One-predictor model</u>			Model with other predictors, with consumer cynicism entered last			
	Adj. r <sup>2</sup>	β for consumer cynicism	p	Predictors	Adj. r <sup>2</sup>	β	p
Marketplace Shaping	.063	.252	<.001	Consumer cynicism Gender Societal cynicism	.076	.262 -.122 <i>nonsig.</i>	<.001 .003
Marketplace Withdrawal	.055	.239	<.001	Consumer cynicism Age Income Societal cynicism	.097	.264 .214 <i>nonsig.</i> <i>nonsig.</i>	<.001 <.001

*H5: Marketplace withdrawal in Study 9*

In Study 9 with the national consumer sample (n=538), marketplace withdrawal was measured with a four-item reflective scale based on Study 5 as described on page 137. A simple linear regression with the mean of the marketplace withdrawal scale as the dependent variable and consumer cynicism as the predictor shows a statistically significant standardized regression coefficient of .239 ( $p < .001$ ). H5 is supported.

Including other predictors in the model shows that consumer cynicism explains additional variance in marketplace withdrawal beyond that explained by age, income and societal cynicism, as shown in Table 34 above. Other possible control variables, race and gender, showed no statistically significant impact on marketplace withdrawal even when regressed as sole predictors.

## **Consequences of Consumer Cynicism for a Particular Purchase**

Hypotheses 6 through 9 involve attitudes about a specific purchase and were all tested with the Study 9 national consumer sample. Respondents answered questions about brand loyalty, reasons for that loyalty, brand support, purchase risk and category cynicism three times – for two products and one store. Two products were used in order to ensure the special brand loyalty relationship was captured. When testing hypotheses 7 through 9, the brand and product for which each respondent reported the higher level of loyalty was used. Results are reported separately for product and store.

### *H6: Consumer cynicism and category cynicism*

In the study 9 national consumer sample (n=538), category cynicism was measured using three items adapted from the consumer cynicism scale to focus on a particular product category. The name of the product category was supplied by the participant at the beginning of the survey. As discussed in Chapter 7 on page 113, each of these three narrowly defined category consumer cynicism measures was found to be discriminant from the others. Marketplace-level consumer cynicism most definitely did influence consumer cynicism about a particular product category, providing strong support for H6.

### *H6: For any given product category, marketplace-level consumer cynicism is positively associated with cynicism about that particular product category.*

Results for separate linear regression models with each category cynicism as the dependent variable and consumer cynicism as the only predictor are shown in Table 35

below. None of the other individual difference variables in the study predicted category cynicism.

Table 35: Regression tests of H6: Consumer cynicism and category cynicism

Dependent variable	<u>One-predictor model</u>		
	Adjusted r <sup>2</sup>	β for consumer cynicism	p
Category cynicism: product	.231	.482	<.001
Category cynicism: store	.321	.574	<.001

*H7: Consumer cynicism and perceived purchase risk*

H7 predicted that category-level cynicism would increase perceived purchase risk for that product category.

*H7: For any given product category, category-level consumer cynicism is positively associated with perceived purchase risk for that particular product category.*

The formative perceived purchase risk scale consisted of three items chosen to represent both the severity and the likelihood of possible negative consequences as detailed on page 146. Results for linear regression models (one for product, one for store) with the mean of each formative risk scale as the dependent variable and category cynicism as the predictor are shown in Table 36 on page 165. Thus, H7 is clearly supported for both the product and the store.

Table 36: Regression tests of H7: Cynicism and perceived purchase risk

Dependent variable	<u>One-predictor model</u>		
	Adjusted $r^2$	$\beta$ for category cynicism	p
Perceived risk: product	.068	.285	<.001
Perceived risk: store	.093	.294	<.001

*H8: Consumer cynicism and brand support*

H8 proposed that cynical consumers would be more likely to engage in brand support behaviors for trusted brands. Regression analyses show a statistically significant effect of category cynicism on brand support behaviors for products, but not stores.

*H8: Category cynicism is associated with brand support for brands that have consumers' loyalty.*

The survey prompted all participants to focus on two brands and one store to which they were “especially loyal,” and the manipulation check measure of brand loyalty clearly showed the prompt was effective. Even among this sample of highly loyal customers, however, only about 30 percent scored 4.0 or higher on the brand support index for each of the three measures – suggesting loyalty is not necessarily associated with brand support. Consumers who were cynical toward the product category were more likely to express their loyalty through brand support behaviors such as positive word of mouth, paying a higher price, and not buying from the competitor even when the preferred brand is out of stock. However, these effects did not hold for the store type. Categories may be less clearly perceived for store type.

Thus, H8 is partially supported.

Table 37: Regression tests of H8: Cynicism and brand support behaviors

Dependent variable	<u>One-predictor model</u>		
	Adjusted r <sup>2</sup>	β for category cynicism	p
Brand support: product	.013	.121	.006
Brand support: store	<i>-.001</i>	<i>.033</i>	<i>nonsig.</i>

H8 is also supported for products when using a T-test comparing high and low category cynics. The high-low split for category cynicism was based on terciles with the middle tercile excluded from analysis.

Table 38: T-test of H8: High cynics are more likely to engage in brand support

Dependent variable: Importance of Trust	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Low Category Cynicism	3.528	.6391	147
High Category Cynicism	3.714	.7546	172

Mean difference:  $-.186$ ,  $t=-2.351$ ,  $df=317$ ,  $p=.019$

#### *H9: Consumer cynicism and importance of trust*

*H9a: In situations in which consumers have high brand loyalty, cynical consumers will be more likely (than those low in cynicism) to indicate that brand trust is an important basis for their loyalty.*

This hypothesis was tested through a T-test comparing high and low cynics on the mean importance rating for trust as a reason for brand loyalty (composite rating detailed on page 154). The high-low split for category cynicism was based on terciles with the middle tercile excluded from analysis.

Table 39: T-test of H9a: Trust is more important for high cynics

Dependent variable: Importance of Trust						
Category Cynicism	Product			Store		
	Mean	Std. Deviation	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Low	3.941	.9047	147	3.984	.7822	205
High	4.291	.9354	172	4.194	.9530	170
Difference: $.3497$ , $t=-3.378$ , $df=317$ , $p=.001$			Difference: $.2097$ , $t=-2.341$ , $df=373$ , $p=.020$			

H9a is also supported for both the product and the store using the only the checkbox rating instead of the composite importance rating. For the product, when asked to check the two most important reasons for their brand loyalty, 27.3 percent of participants with high category cynicism checked a trust-related reason, compared with 17.7 percent of participants low in cynicism; a Pearson chi-square test shows this difference to be statistically significant ( $p=.041$ ). For the store, when asked to check the two most important reasons for their brand loyalty, 20.6 percent of participants with high category cynicism checked a trust-related reason, compared with 10.2 percent of participants low in cynicism; a Pearson chi-square test shows this difference to be statistically significant ( $p=.005$ ).

*H9b: Cynical consumers will be more likely (than those low in cynicism) to indicate that brand trust is an important basis for their loyalty, and this effect is mediated by perceived purchase risk.*

To test this hypothesis, category cynicism and risk were regressed on importance ratings of trust as a reason for brand loyalty. Category cynicism and perceived purchase risk were added one at a time in that order as predictors. Category-level cynicism does predict rating trust as an important reason for brand loyalty for both products and the store.

Table 40: Regression test of H9b: Importance of trust is associated with cynicism

Dependent Variable	One-predictor Model (H9a)		Two-Predictor Model (H9b)		Perceived Risk
	Category	Cynicism	Category	Cynicism	
<b><u>Product: Importance of...</u></b>					
Trust	.136	.002	<i>nonsig.</i>	.283	<.001
<b>Store</b>					
Trust	.077	.084	<i>nonsig.</i>	.251	<.001

*All statistically significant relationships reported showed a statistically significant change in  $r^2$  when the new variable was added to the model.*

Once perceived purchase risk is added to the model, the predictive power of cynicism decreases or disappears, suggesting the impact of cynicism on rating trust as an important reason for brand loyalty is mediated by perceived purchase risk. Or, to put it another way, the impact of consumer cynicism on importance of trust is primarily through its role as an antecedent of perceived purchase risk, supporting H9b.

This supports the overall conceptualization that cynicism, which centers on perceptions of an opportunistic marketplace, creates a heightened sense of risk, and that trust provides a way for consumers to manage that risk.

All participants in Study 9 were answering questions about brands to which they are relatively loyal. Hypothesis 9c proposed that, for cynical consumers, brand trust would be a more important driver of brand loyalty than for consumers low in cynicism, whereas other drivers of brand loyalty, namely satisfaction and value issues, would be relatively more important drivers of brand loyalty for less cynical consumers.

*H9c: For consumers high in cynicism, trust will be a more important predictor of brand loyalty than for consumers low in cynicism.*

This regression analysis looks at brand loyalty itself as the dependent variable, with importance ratings of trust, satisfaction and value as predictors. This one analysis uses loyalty as a dependent variable, but the study as a whole was designed to maximize

loyalty, leading to a limited variance for loyalty. Thus, for this extra analysis (not in the model), the product with lowest loyalty rating was used in order to maximize variance of loyalty. Even so the restricted range for loyalty makes this a conservative test; it is noteworthy that statistically significant effects were found.

A positive coefficient in this model indicates that rating, for example, trust as an important reason for loyalty predicted higher levels of brand loyalty. Here we see that for products, satisfaction, rather than trust or value, was the primary driver of brand loyalty for the whole sample (as indicated by the larger standardized coefficient). For stores, trust was the primary driver of store loyalty, followed by satisfaction and value, as shown in Table 41 on page 170. These main effects of the importance ratings tell us something about the relative influence of satisfaction, value and trust on loyalty, but do not tell us whether this combination of influences is any different for cynical and noncynical consumers. Next, interaction variables were created by multiplying the standardized score for category cynicism by the standardized score for each of the importance ratings, and these were added one at a time to the model.

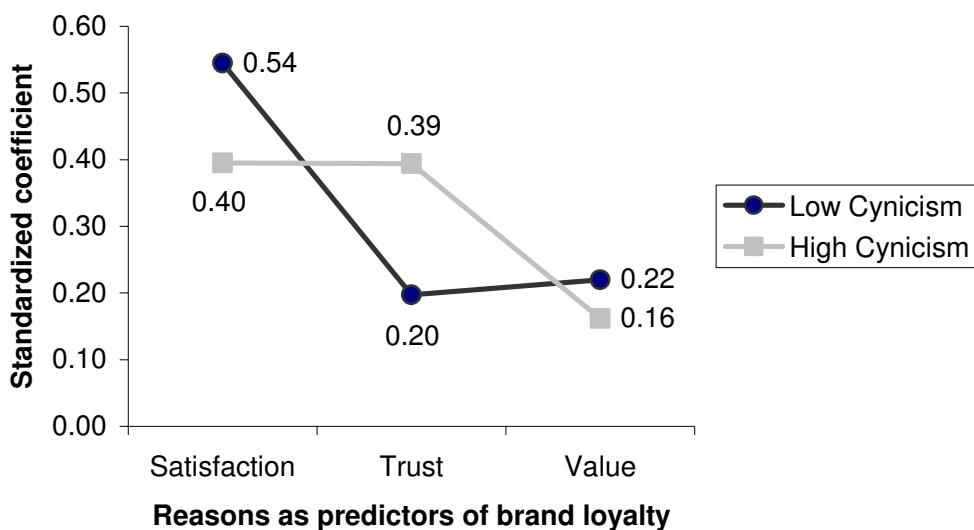
For the product, the interaction of category cynicism and trust as a reason for loyalty is statistically significant, indicating that the influence of trust is significantly different for different levels of cynicism. Specifically, the positive standardized coefficient for trust indicates that rating trust as the basis for brand loyalty was associated with higher loyalty levels for cynics than for noncynics, while the negative standardized coefficient for satisfaction indicates that rating satisfaction as the basis for brand loyalty was associated with lower levels of loyalty for cynics.

Table 41: Relative importance of trust, satisfaction and value: Regression results

Adjusted r2	Dependent Variable:		Product Brand Loyalty		Store Loyalty			
	$\beta$	p	$\beta$	p	$\beta$	p		
<b>Cynicism main effects</b>								
$\beta$ Category Cynicism	<i>Nonsig.</i>				<i>Nonsig.</i>			
<b>Importance ratings main effects</b>								
$\beta$ Satisfaction Importance	.446	<.001	.231	<.001				
$\beta$ Value Importance	.198	<.001	.238	<.001				
$\beta$ Trust Importance	.223	<.001	.330	<.001				
<b>Category cynicism X importance ratings interactions</b>								
$\beta$ Category Cynicism X Satisfaction	-.105	.015	<i>Nonsig.</i>					
$\beta$ Category Cynicism X Value	<i>Nonsig.</i>				<i>Nonsig.</i>			
$\beta$ Category Cynicism X Trust	.097	.012	<i>Nonsig.</i>					
<i>Variables were added one at a time in the order listed above; standardized coefficients are reported only for the complete model including all the variables. For all the statistically significant coefficients reported above, there was a statistically significant change in <math>r^2</math> when that variable was initially added to the model.</i>								

In order to illustrate this interaction effect visually, the following graph summarizes two separate regression models for high and low cynics (group comparison for the linear regression model with brand loyalty as the dependent variable and importance ratings for trust, satisfaction and value as predictors).

Figure 12: Visual representation of interaction effect based on separate regression models for high and low cynicism groups



The cynicism interaction effects were not significant for the favorite store, as shown in Table 41. This was most likely because, for stores, trust was the primary driver of loyalty for the whole population, not just for cynical consumers, as indicated by the main effects for trust, satisfaction, and value. For favorite stores, higher loyalty was associated with a basis in trust for everyone, not just when cynicism was present.

Adding perceived purchase risk into the models reported in Table 41 does not statistically significantly improve  $r^2$  or cancel out the significant effects reported. Thus, the interaction of category cynicism and importance of trust explains variance in loyalty beyond that explained by purchase risk.

In summary, all the hypotheses were supported to some degree except need for cognition (H3). Three antecedents were hypothesized for consumer cynicism: negative affectivity (cardinal disposition), societal cynicism (central disposition) and need for cognition (central disposition). Together the proposed antecedents form a theoretical trait hierarchy for consumer cynicism. A strong relationship was found between consumer cynicism and societal cynicism, although not so strong as to be one and the same – discriminant validity was confirmed as detailed in Chapter 6. The elemental trait, negative affectivity, did show a statistically significant positive relationship with consumer cynicism, although the standardized regression coefficient was only .192. H3, which proposed need for cognition as an antecedent of consumer cynicism was not supported.

The theoretical model proposed two marketplace-level consequences of consumer cynicism, marketplace shaping (H4) and marketplace withdrawal (H5). Both hypotheses were strongly supported, triangulating findings from the qualitative study. Cynical

consumers do express their disillusionment by trying to withdraw from the marketplace, by reducing spending and marketing exposure, and they also try to reshape the marketplace system they perceive as corrupt, through boycotting, socially conscious purchase decisions, retaliation against firms they see as harmful, and conscious efforts to make other consumers more aware.

Marketplace-level consumer cynicism also impacted specific purchases, primarily through its role in the surface trait of category-specific consumer cynicism. Marketplace-level cynicism was a strong predictor of product category-level cynicism (H6) and perceived purchase risk (H7). Cynicism at the category level was associated with increased brand support behavior (H8) for preferred brands, suggesting firms who manage to break through cynicism to build bonds of trust will find cynical consumers to be loyal supporters. The theoretical model proposed that cynical consumers would have a heightened sense of purchase risk because of the perceived prevalence of opportunism in the marketplace. With this heightened distrust of most brands comes an increased emphasis on trust as the basis for brand loyalty (H9). H8 and H9 were both supported, although not as strongly as expected. Chapter 8 concludes with a discussion of the implications of these findings and summary of research contributions. A correlation matrix is provided in Appendix F1.

Table 42: Summary of hypothesis results

Conclusion	Antecedents
Supported	H1: Negative affectivity will be positively associated with consumer cynicism.
Supported	H2: Societal cynicism is positively associated with (but discriminant from) consumer cynicism.
Not supported	H3: Need for cognition is positively associated with (but discriminant from) consumer cynicism.
<b>Consequences of Consumer Cynicism: Marketplace Behaviors &amp; Decision-Making</b>	
Supported	H4: Consumer cynicism is positively associated with marketplace shaping.
Supported	H5: Consumer cynicism is positively associated with marketplace withdrawal.
Supported	H6: For any given product category, marketplace-level consumer cynicism is positively associated with cynicism about that particular product category..
Supported	H7: For any given product category, category-level consumer cynicism is positively associated with perceived purchase risk for that particular product category..
Supported	H8: Category cynicism is associated with brand support for brands that have consumers' loyalty.
Supported	H9: Consumer cynicism is associated with importance of brand trust as a basis for brand loyalty.

## CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSION

### Contributions

This study defines and quantifies the consumer cynicism phenomenon that consumer advocates celebrate and marketing practitioners lament. The survey studies reported in this dissertation triangulate the basic principles found in the qualitative interviews: Consumer cynicism exists, and cynical consumers are a force in the marketplace. They are likely to go out of their way to punish and reward companies as part of their perceived role as marketplace shapers. They are likely to engage in consumer activism and they are likely to pull away from the marketplace. But the national consumer survey in this dissertation focused on the role of cynical consumers as potential friends. When firms manage to break through that cynicism and are able to establish a relationship of trust, they *can* earn cynical consumers' loyalty. In fact, those who perceived the business entities in a product category to be more opportunistic were more likely to emphasize the importance of trust in establishing a brand relationship in that category and more likely to engage in brand support.

The primary contribution of this dissertation is the consumer cynicism grounded-theory based construct and scale. This construct has been developed painstakingly through state-of-the-art construct development methodologies (Netemeyer et al., 2003), beginning with an in-depth qualitative study, moving through an extensive series of scale development studies, and culminating in a scale validation on a large, representative national consumer sample. The scale performed to the highest statistical standards in the

key representative samples, demonstrating test-retest reliability, internal consistency, and invariant unidimensional factor structure across multiple samples.

Face validity was established through pretesting on seven samples, the member check with cynical interview participants (Study 2), and ratings of construct representativeness by consumer behavior scholars who served as expert judges (Study 3). Convergent validity was established through demonstrating correlations with a self-rating of consumer cynicism based on reading a definition (Study 4) and with existing similar constructs, advertising skepticism and consumer alienation. Although consumer cynicism is conceptually related to advertising skepticism and consumer alienation, it is not conceptually identical.

Discriminant validity tests indicate that the consumer cynicism measure is statistically distinct from extant measures of these concepts as well. It should be noted, however, that the consumer alienation measure did not perform well enough statistically to run the SEM measurement models necessary to fully test and conclude discriminant validity. However, it remains clear that the consumer cynicism scale will offer a more useful measure for today's methodological techniques. Discriminant validity was also demonstrated at three levels of the cynicism construct, between general societal-level cynicism and marketplace-level consumer cynicism and between marketplace-level consumer cynicism and the more specific category-level consumer cynicism. As expected, marketplace-level consumer cynicism (situational trait) was the best predictor of marketplace-level behaviors such as marketplace shaping and withdrawal, and category-level cynicism (surface trait) predicted purchase-specific effects.

Nomological validity was established through placing consumer cynicism within a nomological net of antecedents and consequences. As expected, societal cynicism was found to be an antecedent of consumer cynicism, and consequences included marketplace shaping and marketplace withdrawal behaviors. Marketplace shaping behavior in particular was measured based on actual reported behaviors over the last six months. These consequent behaviors demonstrate that cynical consumers are a force in the marketplace.

Testing of theoretical hypotheses provides strong support that marketplace-level consumer cynicism impacts perceptions for particular purchase situations. This demonstrates that the broad trait does influence specific behaviors and thus offers a useful tool for explaining real market behavior. With their tendency toward activism and retaliation, cynical consumers can be dangerous enemies for firms that are perceived as lacking integrity. But when they do become loyal, they are more likely to express that loyalty through behaviors that support the firm, such as paying a premium price, putting up with inconvenience in order to remain loyal (not switching when the preferred brand is out of stock), helping other customers, providing constructive complaints, and engaging in positive word of mouth. The dissertation also offers empirical support for the theoretical explanation of how and why these effects occur. One motivation is self-interest –they see higher risk of opportunism, and they can manage that risk by sticking with a trusted brand. In addition, they are motivated to help out or reward their preferred brands as part of their desire to shape the marketplace. This dissertation also demonstrated that trust is a more important basis for brand loyalty for cynical consumers than for less cynical consumers. If companies can find a way to break through their

cynicism to build trusting relationships, the cynical consumer may be a loyal and valued friend.

## **Limitations**

Two of the antecedent hypotheses were weaker than expected. H1 (negative affectivity as an antecedent of consumer cynicism) was weakly supported, and H3 (need for cognition as an antecedent of consumer cynicism) was not supported. This lack of support is not a substantive theoretical concern. Discourse with colleagues at conference presentations and in conversation indicated a popular objection to the consumer cynicism construct was that it was simply a reflection of more basic traits – “Couldn’t these cynical consumers just be negative people generally?” “Couldn’t they just be people who think more?” Thus, negative affectivity and need for cognition were selected for inclusion in the surveys in order to head off discriminant validity concerns early in the process. Clearly, discriminant validity is not a concern as evidence of a significant relationship could barely be found. In the interests of establishing a base of antecedents, these two basic personality traits were formally posed as hypotheses for empirical testing. They are not central to the conceptualization of the consumer cynicism construct.

Among the many possible consequences of consumer cynicism for marketplace behavior, this dissertation selected investigation of brand support behaviors and basis for brand loyalty as a particularly interesting issue and one reasonably well-suited to testing in a survey along with the final scale validation. Hypotheses 8 (consumer category cynicism leads to higher brand support) and 9 (trust is rated as more important relative to satisfaction and value) were partially supported. Hypotheses 8 and 9 represented an

ambitious test for several reasons. First, the effects of trait-level consumer cynicism will more likely be seen in mental processes. Individual difference variables interact with situational influences to determine behavior, and they will be more likely to be seen in behavioral tendencies over time than in a particular behavior.

Secondly, the theoretical framework based on the qualitative study and brand loyalty literature suggests that cynical consumers will tend to be less trusting and less enthusiastic about the marketplace in general, which would be expected to be associated with more negative images of marketing, branding and brand relationships. However, when a firm manages to break through that cynicism and win their trust, cynical consumers would be expected to show high levels of loyalty and support, in part motivated by their desire to shape the marketplace by rewarding good companies, and in part motivated by self-interest. Sticking with a trusted firm can be a way to manage purchase risk. The challenge then in testing H8 and H9 lies in capturing this rare special relationship in a survey format.

Third, in an attempt to meet that challenge, this study took the unconventional approach of letting survey respondents supply their own favorite brands and a store. This helped ensure that specific special brand relationships were captured. Yet this approach has two significant drawbacks as well. One issue is that participants themselves supplied the brand names and the product categories and store types. Thus, there was no control over how participants defined these product categories and no consistency in terms of the types of brands, products or stores selected. Responses for Product 1 do not represent responses for a particular product but simply for the first product survey participants filled in. One respondent's Product 1 would be a Honda car while another's was Folger's

coffee. One respondent might have defined the product category for Honda as “energy efficient car” and another as “automobile.” This may have muddied results and weakened power. Another issue is that ceiling effects were created for loyalty by including only brands to which participants considered themselves loyal in the study. This was expected and thus loyalty itself was not included in the model but measured only as a manipulation check. Still, the limited range on loyalty may have also restricted variance on related measures. Brand support was normally distributed, but the ratings of importance of trust, satisfaction and value as reasons for loyalty were all high as previously discussed.

Combining the two response sets, the importance rating and the checklist of the two most important reasons for loyalty, produced more normally distributed variables for the regression analyses but is an unorthodox approach. With these considerations in mind, the somewhat weak support for H8 and H9 is disappointing, but not surprising. The additional analyses discussed in Chapter 7 show promise that consumer cynicism does have an impact on particular purchases and that cynicism is associated with increasing importance of trust in marketing relationships. Overall, it is clear that further study of the consumer cynicism construct is warranted.

This dissertation presents a conceptual model showing consumer cynicism leading to category cynicism, which in turn leads to risk, brand support and an emphasis on trust. A weakness of the study is that the one-time survey cannot address causality empirically. It might be argued that the causality works in the opposite direction. For example, a consumer who is loyal to a brand might become cynical about other brands as a way to mentally justify the need for that loyalty and brand support. While this might be a plausible explanation for the relationship between category cynicism and brand support

or between category cynicism and perceived purchase risk, it is not a very plausible explanation for the more macro-levels of cynicism. The strong relationship among the three levels of cynicism – personality, consumer and category – and the fact that the marketplace consequences of cynicism correspond as expected with marketplace level consumer cynicism, while the purchase-specific consequences correspond with the surface trait category-level cynicism suggest that the trait hierarchy is functioning as expected. It is unlikely that marketplace-level consumer cynicism would result from a consumer's justification of loyalty toward a particular brand or that a survey participant would feel compelled to bring more global attitudes in line with the category-specific ones. Constructs were presented in the survey beginning with the dependent variables related to the specific purchase to minimize any tendencies to adjust specific attitudes to match more globally held general attitudes. In addition, the test-retest study confirmed that marketplace-level consumer cynicism is quite stable over time, and thus unlikely to be heavily influenced by purchase-specific answers.

## **Managerial Implications**

### **Macro-level issues**

Several different longitudinal panel studies suggest there may be empirical evidence that consumer cynicism is becoming more prevalent (e.g. E. Keller, 2003; e.g. Lidstone, 2005). The cross-sectional surveys in this dissertation do not address trends, and existing longitudinal measures do not correspond exactly to consumer cynicism. But many practitioners believe cynicism is rising, and with organizations like Ad Busters, No Logo and Commercial Alert, the cynical consumer movement seems to be getting more

organized. Cynical consumers' role in the marketplace suggests they should be taken seriously by marketing managers as well as by consumer behavior scholars.

Cynical consumers' desire to withdraw from the marketplace means they are difficult to reach, skeptical and sometimes reluctant to spend. They are consumer activism leaders and vote with their dollars, and they are also more likely to retaliate against companies they feel have crossed ethical lines. This means marketing communication becomes both more important and more difficult. Public relations campaigns highlighting the socially responsible behavior of firms (and successful crisis management when firm behaviors are seen as less than socially responsible) will be particularly important.

*"In an age when corporations are either guilty or suspected of protecting profits at any cost, it takes a lot more to successfully manage a brand. Indeed, business executives must realize that to counter consumer cynicism, a company's communication program must work overtime." (Canfield, 2003)*

Practitioners point to consumer cynicism as a reason for increased honesty and social responsibility from businesses and/or increased communication of the socially responsible activities firms are already doing, not merely as an altruistic social need but as a business imperative necessary to satisfy consumers who now demand honesty and integrity along with personal choice and high performance.

On the other hand, practitioners also cite rising cynicism as one of many reasons for using a rapidly growing area of nontraditional marketing communications tactics known as stealth marketing, covert marketing, guerilla marketing or undercover marketing. These controversial tactics seek to get marketing messages across to

consumers in ways that are not clearly identifiable as sponsored marketing messages.

This Time magazine passage provides some examples:

*Sony Ericsson has hired a troupe of actors this summer to pose as tourists in New York City and Los Angeles and to ask passers-by to take their picture with the company's new T68i, a combination cell phone and digital camera. Vespa promoted U.S. sales of its scooters last summer with a biker gang of beautiful people who were paid to ride them around such cities as Los Angeles and Houston.*

*Meanwhile, Big Fat Promotions, a stealth-marketing pioneer based in New York City, says (without naming its clients) that it has paid bar "leaners" to casually talk up the merits of certain liquors, doormen to pile up packages from a particular online catalog company in the lobby of their building, mothers to talk about a new laundry detergent at their kids' little-league games and commuters to play with a new PDA on the train home.(Eisenberg, 2002)*

Consumer cynicism (along with media fragmentation and advertising clutter) is frequently cited as the reason for this shift. If the message can be slipped in under the radar, the audience won't treat it with the usual skepticism reserved for advertising.

Stealth tactics may in fact be very effective for audiences, cynical and noncynical alike, who are exposed to the marketing messages without being aware they are marketing messages. However, some stealth tactics, particularly seemingly social interpersonal interactions such as the Sony Ericsson "tourists" described above, are viewed as deceptive by some consumers and practitioners. At the macro level long-term, the approach may backfire as consumers learn more about the tactics, weakening consumers' trust in the marketplace as a whole and the firms operating within it (whether or not they use the tactics) and further contributing to the rise of consumer cynicism.

### **Firm-level implications**

This dissertation empirically demonstrated that consumer cynicism is not necessarily bad news for those firms that manage to break through that cynicism to build trust. In fact, cynicism gives consumers an additional incentive to stick by their trusted

brand, to engage in brand support for the trusted brand, and possibly even to engage in activism or retaliation directed at distrusted competitors, actions which the trusted and socially responsible firm might view as a form of brand support. Future research should investigate how firms can break through such cynicism to build trust.

Consumer cynicism or category cynicism may serve as a useful market segmentation tool. Trust is more important for cynical consumers than it is for other less cynical consumers. Cynical consumers may respond differently to marketing materials and may require different tactics that emphasize trust and avoid distrusted marketing tactics such as rebates. Consumer cynicism or category cynicism could also be used to profile key target audiences. If a firm's key target audiences tend to be cynical, then an approach emphasizing a firm's honesty and trustworthiness relative to competitors could be very effective. Finding a trustworthy brand helps the cynical consumer manage risk, and could also help alleviate ethical discomfort with their own participation in the system they perceive as corrupt. For example, purchasing a trusted "fair trade" coffee may ease guilt about a high-profile social problem and permit the consumer to focus on enjoying the coffee instead of on the plantation-worker exploitation issue. The trusted, socially responsible brand can help the consumer bridge the gap between conflicting desires to consume and to be socially responsible. Cynical consumers may be defensive and skeptical, but they are also motivated to find trustworthy brand partners and may even seek them out. When consumers are cynical, honesty and integrity could provide an excellent platform for sustainable brand differentiation. Other tactics such as stealth marketing might be effective at getting messages past the defenses of cynical consumers,

but only a consistent image of brand integrity backed up by compelling evidence is likely to successfully win trust and capture the high levels of loyalty seen in this study.

Could it ever make sense for a firm to deliberately create cynicism about competitors so that it can stand out as the honest alternative? This possibly would be an effective tactic. Cynical consumers may see a firm's references to opportunistic tendencies in the marketplace or product category as evidence of that firm's honesty and realism. A firm's acknowledgement of the cynical perspective shows the firm and the audience share in the culture of cynicism, often a witty, mocking, hip culture. Similarly, noncynical consumers may see the firm's willingness to disclose what might be viewed as an unpleasant message as a sign of honesty, while at the same time becoming more cynical themselves. As long as the firm is able to differentiate itself convincingly as an honest alternative, this approach could work. If, however, the brand differentiation erodes over time, the firm may find itself painted with the cynical brush it intended for competitors.

Research about negative political advertising – which often attacks the integrity of the opponent and other political insiders – may provide some insight as to the effectiveness of this approach. Negative political advertising has been shown to increase recall and improve attitudes toward the candidate but also to contribute to negative attitudes toward the race and politics in general and, particularly over time, to decrease voter turnout (Kaid, 2004). While negative political ads are often effective in the particular race for which they are designed, they have negative effects on attitudes toward the political process and ultimately can lead to withdrawal from that process. Similarly, we may find that raising cynicism about one's product category or one's competitors may

be effective for an individual firm but over time may contribute to rising cynicism in the marketplace.

## Future Research Directions

This dissertation developed a reliable measure of consumer cynicism and laid the theoretical groundwork for further study. In addition to research focusing on consumer cynicism itself, it is expected that the consumer cynicism scale will be of value as a control variable in numerous other studies, particularly in the areas of consumer resistance, consumer environmentalism and materialism, areas which have been identified as research priorities by the Task Force on Transformative Consumer Research recently established by the Association for Consumer Research (Mick, 2005). The *Journal of Consumer Research* is also planning a special issue centered on these research priorities for 2008 (Deighton, 2005).

A separate study by this author is an example of an exploratory study linking consumer cynicism and consumer resistance through the example of consumer reactions to a consumer resistance documentary, *The Corporation*. Results showed cynical consumers processed the film differently from those who were not cynical, were more likely to see a link between their behavior as individual consumers and the macro-level marketplace, were more likely to intentionally use the film as a platform for cultivating a culture of cynicism, and were more likely to increase their own activism following the film (Helm & Hunt, working paper).

There are also numerous opportunities to further develop the cynicism construct and understand its impact on consumer behavior through future research such as:

- Investigating differences in the way cynical consumers process marketing messages;
- Identifying integrated marketing communications triggers that raise cynics' suspicion;
- Defining attributes and behaviors that help firms break through cynicism to establish trust;
- Investigating marketing applications of consumer cynicism in industries where category-level consumer cynicism is very widespread;
- Understanding how cynicism affects attributions in consumer interactions;
- Understanding ways cynical consumers manage risk, such as extensive search.

In conclusion, consumer cynicism has the potential to further understanding of a broad spectrum of issues in consumer behavior and offers a promising framework for future research.

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## **VITA**

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## Appendix A 1: Construct summary used in member check study 2

### CYNICAL CONSUMERS: DANGEROUS ENEMIES, LOYAL FRIENDS

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The pretense of unselfishness to mask selfish goals lies at the heart of the cynicism concept and also at the heart of social criticisms of marketing and advertising. Based on interviews I conducted with you and 22 other consumers last year, I developed the concept of consumer cynicism. My official definition for consumer cynicism is:

*An individual consumer's stable, learned attitude toward the marketplace characterized by a perception of pervasive opportunism among firms that creates a harmful consumer marketplace*

Cynical consumers share four basic beliefs:

1. Most firms behave opportunistically – that is, they seek their own self-interests, without regard for basic principles or eventual consequences.
2. Firms extend this selfish disregard even to their own customers.
3. Marketing and advertising tactics are frequently intended to deceive and manipulate consumers.
4. These problems have negative consequences for consumers, society, and/or the ability of the marketplace to satisfy consumer and society needs.

Cynical consumers perceive a marketplace with a few “good guys” in a sea of “bad guys.” Cynical consumers are not necessarily anti-business; rather they see that there is something wrong with the way business is typically practiced in the U.S. today. When business is done right, they may even enjoy it more than the average consumer. They may pride themselves on their ability to make wise purchase decisions and to build relationships with good companies, stores or sales staff. The profiles of low, moderate and high cynicism on the next page may help clarify the concept through example. I did not formally rate interview participants on their level of cynicism, but I did expect that you would be a moderate or a high cynic.

**Why are consumers cynical?** In general, cynicism is about disillusionment, realizing that reality does not measure up to ideals. We talk about taking off the rose-colored glasses or seeing the wizard behind the curtain. Consumer cynicism is a reaction to marketing and business tactics. Cynical consumers became disillusioned with the consumer marketplace, either through growing awareness of broad social concerns, through personal experiences of being disappointed or tricked, or both. Cynics see themselves as realists. Non-cynics see cynics as pessimists. The question of whether there is truly “too much” opportunism and deception in the marketplace is beyond the scope of this study, but certainly there is opportunism and deception.

**Why are some people more cynical than others?** One explanation is that cynical consumers had especially bad experiences in the marketplace. While this may be partly true, it is more likely that cynical consumers reacted differently to their experiences. Many children sent away for the toy soldier promotion and were disappointed with the cheap quality when the package arrived, but not all children viewed it as an example of a deceptive marketplace. Cynical consumers probably think more about consumption and the marketplace than noncynics. In some ways, they may be more idealistic — they may expect higher ethical standards than the general population expects; thus they are more likely to find the marketplace falls short.

**How do cynics behave?** I identified four common ways consumers may cope with their cynicism

- any one cynic does not necessarily do all of them.

1. Mocking and disparaging. Similar to the original Greek “cynics,” who used clever humor to call attention to society’s hypocrisy and corruption, consumer cynics often mock ads and corporations.
2. Withdrawning from the marketplace: Unlike political cynics, who can easily stop voting, it is hard to avoid being a consumer in today’s society. Those who try to withdraw from the marketplace may boycott particular companies, try to reduce consumption in general, avoid impulse buys, avoid negotiation and avoid shopping.
3. Taking precautions: A marketplace full of opportunism and deception is a risky one. Cynics reduce this risk by researching more carefully – read the fine print, get references, check consumer reports. Or, they stick with the few brands, stores or sales staff they trust.
4. Marketplace shaping: Cynics have specific ideas about what’s wrong with the marketplace and see a role for consumers in fixing it. They reward good companies and punish bad ones, voting with their dollars. For a good company, they are willing to pay higher prices, put up with inconvenience, become advocates for their brands and stores, and are more forgiving of their trusted partners if anything goes awry.

**Cynicism and voluntary simplicity/sustainable living:** Some of the interview participants were recruited because they try to practice a voluntary simplicity lifestyle, meaning they try to cut back on consumption and buying. While voluntary simplifiers are probably more likely to be consumer cynics than the general population, not all consumer cynics are voluntary simplifiers, and not all voluntary simplifiers are cynical consumers. There are other motivations for voluntary simplicity such as concern for the environment or a desire to live on less income in order to enjoy more leisure time.

Appendix A 2: Profiles of cynicism used in member check Study 2

	<b>Low Cynicism</b>	<b>Moderate Cynicism</b>	<b>High Cynicism</b>
<b>Perceived marketplace integrity</b>	No perception of integrity issues	A few “bad apples” to watch for, but most firms are OK	Pervasive, widespread lack of integrity, most firms dishonest or opportunistic
<b>Importance of trust in purchase decisions</b>	Trust not important, preferences based on satisfaction and convenience	Trust important in certain product categories	Trust very important, weighted heavily in purchase decisions
<b>Emotional attitude toward the marketplace</b>	Neutral or positive	Neutral or positive	Negative
<b>Perceived role of marketplace safeguards (such as competition, Better Business Bureau, government agencies, laws, etc.)</b> A3	Little concern for safeguards	Confidence in safeguards and protective systems have failed or are inadequate. Cynics have their own theories about what's causing problems in the marketplace system, such as too much hierarchy or overemphasis on short-term profit. Companies cut corners and figure fines and lawsuits are just part of the cost of doing business.	<i>“Probably in their customer dealings, they’re pretty good because they’d be ripped off in this country. I think there is just a lot of smoke and mirrors done by sort of thing. I guess there’s a certain amount of trust — you trust that they’re going to come back.”</i>
<b>Sample quotes from interview participants</b>	<i>“I think for them [preferred stores] I look at it more as I like the selection they have, the prices they have and so, I committing some major business don’t know if I would say it was a trust suicide if they weren’t. You only mess up your customers once and they’re not folks who do marketing and advertising...they’ll stop at almost nothing to get you to make that purchasing decision...It’s just contemptible.”</i>		

### Appendix A 3: Definitions used in expert judging Study 3



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***Colleagues: Please review this definition of consumer cynicism and the four dimensions, then use the enclosed judging form to rate each scale item according to fit with this definition.***

#### ***Definition of consumer cynicism:***

*An individual consumer's stable, learned attitude toward the marketplace characterized by a perception of pervasive opportunism among firms that creates a harmful consumer marketplace*

This attitude can be further broken down into the following four belief dimensions or characteristics:

1. General opportunism (GO on your item judging sheet)  
Most firms behave opportunistically – they seek their own self-interests, without regard for basic principles or eventual consequences
2. Opportunism toward consumers (CO on your item judging sheet)  
Firms behave with selfish disregard for consumers' interests and are willing to disregard basic principles specifically in their treatment of consumers
3. Deception (D on your item judging sheet)  
Marketing tactics are frequently intended to deceive and manipulate consumers.
4. Harm (H on your item judging sheet)  
Opportunistic treatment of consumers actually has a negative impact on consumers and the ability of the marketplace to satisfy their needs.

**Appendix A 4: Study 3 Expert judging form and consumer cynicism item pool**

**Directions:** Please circle the best answer for each of the three questions for each item.

Scale items would have a Likert scale response set, strongly disagree to strongly agree. Reverse-scored items are indicated with a (R).

Example: A lousy item loosely fitting the Deception dimension of consumer cynicism.

How well does the item represent the overall definition?	Which <b>dimension</b> does the item best represent? If "can't tell," skip next question. →	How well does the item fit the dimension you selected?	Optional Comments: Anything unclear, any suggestions or remarks; also feel free to mark on the items themselves
Weak fit	Close fit	Weak fit	Close fit
1 (2) 3 4 5	GO CO (D)	H CT	1 (2) 3 4 5 <i>Use another word</i>
Most companies genuinely care about my satisfaction with the product. (R)	1 2 3 4 5 GO CO D H CT	1 2 3 4 5 Harm Opposition Consumer Opportunity	
Many manufacturers deliberately design products to wear out quickly.	1 2 3 4 5 GO CO D H CT	1 2 3 4 5 Can't tell	
Most retail stores serve their customers well. (R)	1 2 3 4 5 GO CO D H CT	1 2 3 4 5 Harm Opposition Consumer Opportunity	
Long-term customer relationships are a top priority for businesses. (R)	1 2 3 4 5 GO CO D H CT	1 2 3 4 5 Harm Opposition Consumer Opportunity	
What most companies claim about their product can't be trusted.	1 2 3 4 5 GO CO D H CT	1 2 3 4 5 Harm Opposition Consumer Opportunity	
Most companies don't mind breaking the law; they just see fines and lawsuits as a cost of doing business.	1 2 3 4 5 GO CO D H CT	1 2 3 4 5 Harm Opposition Consumer Opportunity	
It takes a lot of time and trouble to get a decent buy.	1 2 3 4 5 GO CO D H CT	1 2 3 4 5 Harm Opposition Consumer Opportunity	
A lot of what companies say is just a sales pitch.	1 2 3 4 5 GO CO D H CT	1 2 3 4 5 Harm Opposition Consumer Opportunity	
It's hard for a honest company to succeed in today's competitive world.	1 2 3 4 5 GO CO D H CT	1 2 3 4 5 Harm Opposition Consumer Opportunity	
Most major brands today work hard to offer consumers a high quality product. (R)	1 2 3 4 5 GO CO D H CT	1 2 3 4 5 Harm Opposition Consumer Opportunity	
Most businesses are more interested in making profits than in serving consumers.	1 2 3 4 5 GO CO D H CT	1 2 3 4 5 Harm Opposition Consumer Opportunity	
Most companies treat the customer right. (R)	1 2 3 4 5 GO CO D H CT	1 2 3 4 5 Harm Opposition Consumer Opportunity	

Appendix A 4: Study 3 expert judging form and consumer cynicism item pool

**Directions:**

Please circle the best answer for each of the three questions for each item.

How well does the item represent the <b>overall definition?</b>	Which <i>dimension</i> does the item best represent?			How well does the item fit the dimension you selected?			Comments: Anything unclear, any suggestions or remarks
	Weak fit	Close fit	General opportunity	Consumer opportunism	Deception	Harassment	
Most companies want to sell a good product at a fair price. (R)	1	2	3	4	5	GO CO D H CT	1 2 3 4 5
Most companies try to give honest information about their products. (R)	1	2	3	4	5	GO CO D H CT	1 2 3 4 5
Products are not made as well as they ought to be.	1	2	3	4	5	GO CO D H CT	1 2 3 4 5
Putting things on sale is usually just a gimmick.	1	2	3	4	5	GO CO D H CT	1 2 3 4 5
Businesses are willing to throw away long-term customer relationships for short-term profit.	1	2	3	4	5	GO CO D H CT	1 2 3 4 5
Stores usually try to keep customers satisfied to build long-term loyalty. (R)	1	2	3	4	5	GO CO D H CT	1 2 3 4 5
People can usually get good value for the money. (R)	1	2	3	4	5	GO CO D H CT	1 2 3 4 5
A lot of consumers get ripped off by businesses.	1	2	3	4	5	GO CO D H CT	1 2 3 4 5
Companies see consumers as puppets to manipulate.	1	2	3	4	5	GO CO D H CT	1 2 3 4 5
Manufacturers don't care what happens once I've bought the product.	1	2	3	4	5	GO CO D H CT	1 2 3 4 5
Product claims on packages are usually accurate. (R)	1	2	3	4	5	GO CO D H CT	1 2 3 4 5
Most companies are pretty honest. (R)	1	2	3	4	5	GO CO D H CT	1 2 3 4 5
If something goes wrong with a product, most companies would try to resolve the problem. (R)	1	2	3	4	5	GO CO D H CT	1 2 3 4 5
If I want to get my money's worth, I can't believe what a company tells me.	1	2	3	4	5	GO CO D H CT	1 2 3 4 5
Store salespeople give unbiased advice about products to suit customer needs. (R)	1	2	3	4	5	GO CO D H CT	1 2 3 4 5

**Appendix A 4: Study 3 expert judging form and consumer cynicism item pool**

**Directions:**

Please circle the best answer for each of the three questions for each item.

How well does the item represent the <b>Overall definition?</b>	Which dimension does the item best represent?	How well does the item fit the dimension you selected?					Comments: Anything unclear, any suggestions or remarks
		Weak mt	Close mt	General Opportunism	Consumer Opportunism	Deception	
Companies offer rebates with the hope that a lot of consumers won't cash them in correctly.	1 2 3 4 5	GO	CO	D	H	CT	1 2 3 4 5
Sales are just a trick to lure you into the store.	1 2 3 4 5	GO	CO	D	H	CT	1 2 3 4 5
Most businesses uphold their responsibility to the consumer. (R)	1 2 3 4 5	GO	CO	D	H	CT	1 2 3 4 5
Most companies will sacrifice anything to make a profit.	1 2 3 4 5	GO	CO	D	H	CT	1 2 3 4 5
"Let the buyer beware" is the guiding philosophy of most businesses.	1 2 3 4 5	GO	CO	D	H	CT	1 2 3 4 5
Most companies walk a fine line between illegal and legal practices.	1 2 3 4 5	GO	CO	D	H	CT	1 2 3 4 5
Most companies don't care enough about how their products perform.	1 2 3 4 5	GO	CO	D	H	CT	1 2 3 4 5
You have to wade through a lot of hype to find a decent value.	1 2 3 4 5	GO	CO	D	H	CT	1 2 3 4 5
Most consumers can figure out how to get a decent deal.	1 2 3 4 5	GO	CO	D	H	CT	1 2 3 4 5
Sales people will say anything to get you to buy the product.	1 2 3 4 5	GO	CO	D	H	CT	1 2 3 4 5
If it looks like a bargain, there's probably a catch.	1 2 3 4 5	GO	CO	D	H	CT	1 2 3 4 5
Businesses may cut corners in other areas, but when it comes to dealing with consumers, most companies are OK. (R)	1 2 3 4 5	GO	CO	D	H	CT	1 2 3 4 5
Except for a few bad apples, most companies are OK. (R)	1 2 3 4 5	GO	CO	D	H	CT	1 2 3 4 5
Most managers would be deeply concerned if they ever thought their product harmed a consumer. (R)	1 2 3 4 5	GO	CO	D	H	CT	1 2 3 4 5

**Appendix A 4: Study 3 expert judging form and consumer cynicism item pool**

**Directions:**

Please circle the best answer for each of the three questions for each item.

<b>How well does the item represent the <i>Overall</i> definition?</b>	Weak fit Close fit	<b>Which dimension does the item best represent?</b>	<b>How well does the item fit the dimension you selected?</b>					<b>Optional Comments: Anything unclear, any suggestions or remarks</b>
			General opportunity	Consumer opportunity	Deception	Harm	Weak fit	
To make a profit, companies are willing to do whatever they can get away with.	1 2 3 4 5	GO CO D H CT	1 2 3 4 5					
Most businesses make a reasonable effort to act ethically. (R)	1 2 3 4 5	GO CO D H CT	1 2 3 4 5					
Most businesses will cut any corner they can to improve profit margins.	1 2 3 4 5	GO CO D H CT	1 2 3 4 5					
Consumers are often manipulated by companies.	1 2 3 4 5	GO CO D H CT	1 2 3 4 5					
Most advertising is pretty harmless. (R)	1 2 3 4 5	GO CO D H CT	1 2 3 4 5					
If there is a problem with a product, people can usually count on getting help from either the manufacturer or the store. (R)	1 2 3 4 5	GO CO D H CT	1 2 3 4 5					
Successful companies are usually socially responsible. (R)	1 2 3 4 5	GO CO D H CT	1 2 3 4 5					
Sales people are insincere.	1 2 3 4 5	GO CO D H CT	1 2 3 4 5					

## Appendix A 5: Study 5 Survey

## Appendix A5: Study 5 Survey

### Consumer Attitudes Survey -- Hickman Music Boosters

#### Welcome to the survey.

Your completion of this survey raises money for Hickman High School Music Boosters! You will also have the chance at the end to enter your e-mail into a drawing for Amazon.com gift certificates. One \$25 gift certificate will be awarded for every 25 surveys received from Hickman Music Boosters. We'll start with some very general questions about feelings and emotions.

Each word describes a different feeling or emotion. Indicate the extent to which you generally feel that way, that is, how you feel on average.

	very slightly or not at all	a little	moderately	quite a bit	extremely
distressed	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
upset	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
guilty	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
scared	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
hostile	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
irritable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
ashamed	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
nervous	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
jittery	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
afraid	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

[Continue](#)

## Appendix A5: Study 5 Survey

### Consumer Attitudes Survey -- Hickman Music Boosters

**Next, think about your general attitude toward businesses.**

Please choose the response that best represents your reaction toward each statement about most businesses. Think about what is typical in the business world today.

#### Section 1

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Most companies genuinely care about my satisfaction with the product.	<input type="radio"/>				
Long-term customer relationships are a top priority for businesses.	<input type="radio"/>				
What most companies claim about their product can't be trusted.	<input type="radio"/>				
Most companies don't mind breaking the law; they just see fines and lawsuits as a cost of doing business.	<input type="radio"/>				
If it's hard for a honest company to succeed in today's competitive world.	<input type="radio"/>				
Most major brands today work hard to offer consumers a high quality product.	<input type="radio"/>				
Most businesses are more interested in making profits than in serving consumers.	<input type="radio"/>				
Most companies want to sell a good product at a fair price.	<input type="radio"/>				
Most companies try to give honest information about their products.	<input type="radio"/>				
Businesses are willing to throw away long-term customer relationships for short-term profit.	<input type="radio"/>				
Stores usually try to keep customers satisfied to build long-term loyalty.	<input type="radio"/>				
A lot of consumers get ripped off by businesses.	<input type="radio"/>				

#### Section 3

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Companies see consumers as puppets to manipulate.	<input type="radio"/>				
Manufacturers don't care what happens once I've bought the product.	<input type="radio"/>				
Product claims on packages are usually accurate.	<input type="radio"/>				
Most companies are pretty honest.	<input type="radio"/>				
If something goes wrong with a product, most companies would try to resolve the problem.	<input type="radio"/>				
If I want to get my money's worth, I can't believe what a company tells me.	<input type="radio"/>				

## Appendix A5: Study 5 Survey

Store salespeople give unbiased advice about products to suit customer needs.	<input type="radio"/>				
Companies offer rebates with the hope that a lot of consumers won't cash them in correctly.	<input type="radio"/>				
Sales are just a trick to lure you into the store.	<input type="radio"/>				
Most businesses uphold their responsibility to the consumer.	<input type="radio"/>				

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## Consumer Attitudes Survey -- Hickman Music Boosters

Please choose the response that best represents your reaction toward each statement about most businesses.

Think about what is typical in the business world today.

### Section 4

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Most companies will sacrifice anything to make a profit.	<input type="radio"/>				
"Let the buyer beware" is the guiding philosophy of most businesses.	<input type="radio"/>				
Most companies walk a fine line between illegal and legal practices.	<input type="radio"/>				
The companies that make products I buy don't see product quality as a top priority.	<input type="radio"/>				
If it looks like a bargain, there's probably a catch.	<input type="radio"/>				
Businesses may cut corners in other areas, but when it comes to dealing with consumers, most companies are OK.	<input type="radio"/>				
Except for a few bad apples, most companies are OK.	<input type="radio"/>				
Most businesses operate on the philosophy that the customer is always right.	<input type="radio"/>				

### Section 5

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Most managers would be deeply concerned if they ever thought their product harmed a consumer.	<input type="radio"/>				
To make a profit, companies are willing to do whatever they can get away with.	<input type="radio"/>				
Most businesses make a reasonable effort to act ethically.	<input type="radio"/>				
Most businesses will cut any corner they can to improve profit margins.	<input type="radio"/>				
Consumers are often manipulated by companies.	<input type="radio"/>				
Most advertising is pretty harmless.	<input type="radio"/>				
If there is a problem with a product, people can usually count on getting help from either the manufacturer or the store.	<input type="radio"/>				
Successful companies are usually socially responsible.	<input type="radio"/>				
Sales people are insincere.	<input type="radio"/>				

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### Section 6

## Appendix A5: Study 5 Survey

	*	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
If something unordinary occurs in dealing with a company, the firm generally handles it quickly as a special situation to satisfy and please me.		<input type="radio"/>				
Consumer like myself generally can get companies to make changes to better serve our needs and desires.		<input type="radio"/>				
When dealing with a company, consumers like myself generally can pressure it into doing what is right and fair for the consumer.		<input type="radio"/>				
Most company employees won't go out of their way to help or satisfy a customer.		<input type="radio"/>				
As an average consumer there is little use in writing complaint letters to company officials.		<input type="radio"/>				
When a product is defective or shoddy, usually there is not much a consumer like myself can do if the company refuses to make it right.		<input type="radio"/>				
When dealing with a company, I am often treated as just another body rather than a person with specific needs and desires.		<input type="radio"/>				
In the face of all the advertising claims, generally it is hard to know what to believe about different brands.		<input type="radio"/>				
When buying most products, I usually have enough information to be confident of choosing a good brand.		<input type="radio"/>				
Generally companies provide enough information so a person like myself can make a wise choice.		<input type="radio"/>				
Companies are usually out to make a lot of money even if it means violating ethics and taking unfair advantage of consumers.		<input type="radio"/>				
Most durable products could be made to last much longer but are made to wear out quickly to necessitate repurchase.		<input type="radio"/>				
If people really knew what businesses do to deceive and take advantage of consumers, they would be up-in-arms.		<input type="radio"/>				
The variety in the market enables a consumer like myself to express my own personality and tastes.		<input type="radio"/>				
Our society would be a lot better if people were less concerned with money and more interested in others' welfare.		<input type="radio"/>				
Any enjoyment I get from buying new products disappears quickly even when they work as advertised.		<input type="radio"/>				
For the most part, advertising is insulting to good taste and judgment.		<input type="radio"/>				
I enjoy buying something new that I have not owned before.		<input type="radio"/>				
Materialism is one of the things wrong with our society.		<input type="radio"/>				

Continue

## Appendix A5: Study 5 Survey

Now, please answer these questions about your behavior as a consumer.

	Never	Once	Twice	Three or more times
Have you ever participated in an organized boycott?	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
In the last six months, how many times do you recall encouraging friends to avoid buying a certain product or from a certain company, brand or store?	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Have you ever participated in anti-commercial events such as TV Turnoff Week or Buy Nothing Day?	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Have you ever created a webpage attacking a company, brand, store, product or advertisement?	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Have you ever defaced advertisements, posters or billboards?	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
In the last month, how many times have you made fun of a brand, store, product or advertisement to friends?	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
In the last six months, how many times have you made fun of a brand, store, advertisement or product so that other customers could hear?	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
In the last month, how many times can you recall pointing out to others that an advertisement is offensive (sexist, violent, materialistic)?	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
In the last six months, how often have you complained about a company, brand, store, product or advertisement or posted negative reviews?	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
In the last six months, have you tried to teach others to be more critical of consumerism (e.g. friends, children)?	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
In the last year, In the last year, how many times do you recall surfing anti-commercialism websites (e.g. Ad Busters, NoLogo) or reading anti-commercialism books or magazines?	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Think back to times you have been displeased or angry with businesses recently due to your personal interactions, such as dissatisfaction with a product or service. Please consider ONLY your personal interactions with companies, not issues you may have read or heard about.

Please indicate how many times, OVER THE LAST SIX MONTHS, have you....

	Never	Once	Twice	Three or more times
...complained to the store clerk.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...warned friends and family so they wouldn't have the same problem.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...complained to the store manager.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...stopped buying at that business and have never gone back.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

... stopped buying for a while, but have since gone back.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...stopped buying a brand and have never bought it again.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...complained to regional or national headquarters.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
... made a formal complaint to the Better Business Bureau or other agency.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...made an effort to only shop at that store when I have absolutely have to.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...damaged some part of the building or facilities of a business that upset me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...left a mess or in some way tried to create extra work for employees.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...told everyone I could about the problem.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...deliberately bought a competitor's products to hurt a company.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

[Continue](#)

## Appendix A5: Study 5 Survey

Now, consider whether you have taken any of those actions because you were displeased or angry with businesses due to issues you may have heard about, social concerns (e.g. labor practices, environment, safety issues, inappropriate advertising).

Please indicate how many times, OVER THE LAST SIX MONTHS, due to social concerns, have you....

	Never	Once	Twice	Three or more times
...complained to the store clerk.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...warned friends and family so they wouldn't have the same problem.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...complained to the store manager.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...stopped buying from that business and have never gone back.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
... stopped buying for a while, but have since gone back.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...stopped buying a brand and have never bought it again.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...complained to regional or national headquarters.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
... made a formal complaint to the Better Business Bureau or other agency.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...made an effort to only shop at that store when I have absolutely have to.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...damaged some part of the building or facilities of a business that upset me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...left a mess or in some way tried to create extra work for employees.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...told everyone I could about the problem.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...deliberately bought a competitor's products to hurt a company.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please indicate the response that best represents your behavior.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
I try to live a simple life and not to buy articles which are not necessary.	<input type="radio"/>				
I prefer clothing that does not carry a noticeable brand logo.	<input type="radio"/>				
I try to avoid impulse buys.	<input type="radio"/>				
I avoid certain media because there is too much advertising.	<input type="radio"/>				
I try to minimize the amount of advertising I see.	<input type="radio"/>				
I make things myself to avoid buying commercial products.	<input type="radio"/>				
I avoid store chains or brands I see as excessively commercial.	<input type="radio"/>				
I avoid chain stores and restaurants.	<input type="radio"/>				
I purchase second-hand or used products.	<input type="radio"/>				
I shop only when I need something specific.	<input type="radio"/>				

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## Appendix A5: Study 5 Survey

...Almost done!

Now, describe how you typically handle problems with companies.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
I have on occasion told salespeople I thought they were too rude.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
On occasion, I have tried to get a complaint taken care of by causing a stir which attracts the attention of other customers.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I get a certain amount of satisfaction from putting a discourteous salesperson in his place.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sometimes being nasty is the best way to get a complaint taken care of.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I'll make a scene at the store if necessary to get a complaint handled to my satisfaction.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Salespeople need to be told off when they are rude.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have no trouble getting off the phone when called by a person selling something I don't want.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I really don't know how to deal with aggressive salespeople.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
More often than I would like, I end up buying something I don't want because I have a hard time saying no to the salesperson.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am uncomfortable asking store employees where products are located in the store.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
In signing a sales contract or credit agreement, I am reluctant to ask for an explanation of everything I don't understand.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If a defective product is inexpensive, I usually keep it rather than put up a fuss or complain.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am probably more likely to return an unsatisfactory product than most people I know.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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## Consumer Attitudes Survey -- Hickman Music Boosters

Finally, we'll wrap up with a few quick questions about your background.

Are you...

- Male  Female

Which category best represents your age?

- 18-30  31-40  41-50  51-60  61 +

What is the highest level of education you've had?

- Less than  
high school  High  
school  Some  
college  Associate's or  
vocational degree  Bachelor's  
degree  Graduate  
degree

Which category best represents your annual household income?

- < \$20,000  
 \$20,000 - \$34,900  
 \$35,000 - \$49,900  
 \$50,000 - \$74,900  
 \$75,000 - \$99,900  
 \$100,000 - \$124,900  
 \$125,000 - \$149,900  
 \$150,000 - \$199,900  
 \$200,000 - \$249,900  
 \$250,000 +

Technical problems? E-mail: [ahelm@missouri.edu](mailto:ahelm@missouri.edu)

[Complete Survey](#)

### Consumer Attitudes Survey -- Hickman Music Boosters

**Thank you for taking the consumer attitudes survey!**

As a token of appreciation for your time and insight, \$4 will be donated on your behalf to Hickman High School Music Boosters.

And there's something in it for you personally, too! Click here to [enter your e-mail address](#) into a drawing for Amazon.com gift certificates. One \$25 gift certificate for every 25 surveys completed. This link takes you to a separate website, so your survey is still anonymous. This is optional; if you prefer not to disclose your e-mail address, you cannot be in the drawing for the gift certificates, but your participation in the survey will still help raise funds for the booster club.

*This survey is part of the dissertation for University of Missouri Ph.D. student Amanda Helm. This project looks at consumer cynicism and how cynical consumers might behave in the marketplace. Consumer cynicism is defined as a perception of pervasive opportunism among firms that creates a harmful consumer marketplace. Cynical consumers perceive a marketplace with a few "good guys" in a sea of "bad guys." They are not necessarily anti-business; rather they see that there is something wrong with the way business is typically practiced in the U.S. today. They have specific ideas about what's wrong with the marketplace and a strong sense of consumer responsibility. In particular, this study looks at how consumer cynicism relates to various kinds of consumer activism.*

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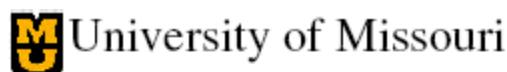
[Review Response](#)

[Delete Response](#)

## Appendix A5: Study 5 Survey

Appendix A 6: Study 9 Survey (with sample responses)

## Consumer Attitudes Survey -- Survey Spot Panel



You have been invited to participate in a consumer attitudes survey. By completing this survey, you will have a chance to participate in your Survey Spot cash drawings.

- This survey is voluntary.
- This survey is anonymous. (Survey Spot will know who completed a survey, but the University of Missouri won't.)
- It takes about 15 minutes to complete this online survey.
- At the end, you will log in to Survey Spot for your cash drawings.

Click "continue" to start the survey!

For more information about this survey:  
Amanda Helm  
Ph.D. Student  
University of Missouri  
[ahelm@missouri.edu](mailto:ahelm@missouri.edu)

For more information about your rights as a research participant:  
Michelle Rezinecek  
Compliance Officer  
MU Institutional Review Board  
573-882-9585

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## Consumer Attitudes Survey -- Survey Spot Panel

### Welcome to the survey.

Thank you for helping with this survey. This is part of an academic study being conducted by the University of Missouri.

**In the first section of the survey, you will be asked to name two favorite brands and a favorite store.**

Then you will be asked a short series of questions about each brand and product. There are no right or wrong answers! The main focus is your opinions about the brand and category, not your ability to correctly name a brand.

[Continue](#)

## Appendix A 6: Study 9 Survey

### Consumer Attitudes Survey -- Survey Spot Panel

**Think of a brand that you're especially loyal to.**

It can be for any type of product, such as clothing, automotive products, cosmetics, electronic equipment, food, or anything else.

Type the name of that brand here:

Kaytee

Here, type another brand you are loyal to:

Again, it can be for any type of product.

Purina

Now, think of a store you are loyal to. Type the name here.

Copp's

Technical problems or questions about the study? E-mail: [aheLM@missouri.edu](mailto:aheLM@missouri.edu)

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### Consumer Attitudes Survey -- Survey Spot Panel

**What product did you have in mind that you like to buy from Kaytee?**

If you buy several different products from this brand, just pick ONE to talk about here. State the product in general terms such as soda, jeans, sportswear, pet food, etc.

bird food

**What product did you have in mind that you like to buy from Purina?**

Again, state ONE very general product category.

pet food

**What type of store is Copp's?**

Again, name the type of store very generally, such as grocery, sports apparel, clothing, department, discount, hardware, garden, etc. Imagine you are filling in the blank: "Copp's is a \_\_\_\_\_ store."

grocery

Technical problems or questions about the study? E-mail: [aheLM@missouri.edu](mailto:aheLM@missouri.edu)

[Continue](#)

## Appendix A 6: Study 9 Survey

In this section, think about the first product you mentioned, bird seed.

### Why are you loyal to Kaytee?

There are many different reasons people are loyal to a particular brand. Please list all the reasons you are loyal to Kaytee here.

Technical problems or questions about the study? E-mail: [ahehm@missouri.edu](mailto:ahehm@missouri.edu)

[Continue](#)

---

This section has more questions about the first product you mentioned, bird seed.

People are loyal to brands for different reasons. Please read the list of reasons below and check the TWO reasons that are most important to you in your loyalty to Kaytee.

- Kaytee performs best.
- Kaytee is high quality.
- Kaytee is trustworthy.
- Kaytee fits my needs.
- Kaytee is a good value.
- Kaytee cares about the consumer.
- Kaytee is ethical.

Look at these possible reasons for brand loyalty. Rate how important each reason is in your loyalty to Kaytee.

	How important is this reason in your loyalty to Kaytee?				
	Least important	A little important	Somewhat important	Very important	Most important
Kaytee is trustworthy.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Kaytee is reliable.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Kaytee is an honest brand.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Kaytee is safe.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Kaytee cares about the consumer.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Kaytee performs best.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Kaytee fits my needs.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Kaytee is high quality.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Kaytee offers good value for the money.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Kaytee is a good buy.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Kaytee is ethical.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## Appendix A 6: Study 9 Survey

Next, think about your actual behavior regarding Kaytee.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
I am committed to Kaytee.	<input type="radio"/>				
I consider myself to be a loyal patron of Kaytee.	<input type="radio"/>				
Kaytee is the best choice for me.	<input type="radio"/>				
I intend to keep buying Kaytee's bird seed.	<input type="radio"/>				
I would be willing to pay a higher price for Kaytee over other brands.	<input type="radio"/>				
If Kaytee were sold out, I would buy a different brand of bird seed.	<input type="radio"/>				
I try to help Kaytee succeed.	<input type="radio"/>				
To help Kaytee have more customers, I have recommended it to others.	<input type="radio"/>				
I make a special effort to tell others to use Kaytee.	<input type="radio"/>				
If a store does not carry Kaytee, I will go to another store to get it.	<input type="radio"/>				

Think about other bird seed manufacturers, NOT your preferred brand.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Most bird seed manufacturers don't care what happens once I've bought the product.	<input type="radio"/>				
Most bird seed manufacturers are dishonest.	<input type="radio"/>				
Most bird seed manufacturers will cut any corner they can to improve profit margins.	<input type="radio"/>				
Choosing the wrong bird seed could be a serious mistake.	<input type="radio"/>				
It's important to make the right choice of bird seed.	<input type="radio"/>				
It would be easy for someone to choose the wrong bird seed.	<input type="radio"/>				

Technical problems or questions about the study? E-mail: [ahelm@missouri.edu](mailto:ahelm@missouri.edu)

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## Appendix A 6: Study 9 Survey

In this section, think about the second product you mentioned, cat food.

### Why are you loyal to Purina?

There are many different reasons people are loyal to a particular brand. Please list all the reasons you are loyal to Purina here.

Technical problems or questions about the study? E-mail: [ahelm@missouri.edu](mailto:ahelm@missouri.edu)

[Continue](#)

---

This section has more questions about the second product you mentioned, cat food.

People are loyal to brands for different reasons. Please read the list of reasons below and check the TWO reasons that are most important to you in your loyalty to Purina.

- Purina performs best.
- Purina is high quality.
- Purina is trustworthy.
- Purina fits my needs.
- Purina is a good value.
- Purina cares about the consumer.
- Purina is ethical.

Look at these possible reasons for brand loyalty. Rate how important each reason is in your loyalty to Purina.

	How important is this reason in your loyalty to Purina?				
	Least important	A little important	Somewhat important	Very important	Most important
Purina is trustworthy.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Purina is reliable.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Purina is an honest brand.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Purina is safe.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Purina cares about the consumer.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Purina performs best.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Purina fits my needs.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Purina is high quality.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Purina offers good value for the money.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Purina is a good buy.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Purina is ethical.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## Appendix A 6: Study 9 Survey

Next, think about your actual behavior regarding Purina.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
I am committed to Purina.	<input type="radio"/>				
I consider myself to be a loyal patron of Purina.	<input type="radio"/>				
Purina is the best choice for me.	<input type="radio"/>				
I intend to keep buying Purina's cat food.	<input type="radio"/>				
I would be willing to pay a higher price for Purina over other brands.	<input type="radio"/>				
If Purina were sold out, I would buy a different brand of cat food.	<input type="radio"/>				
I try to help Purina succeed.	<input type="radio"/>				
To help Purina have more customers, I have recommended it to others.	<input type="radio"/>				
I make a special effort to tell others to use Purina.	<input type="radio"/>				
If a store does not carry Purina, I will go to another store to get it.	<input type="radio"/>				

Think about other cat food manufacturers, NOT your preferred brand.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Most cat food manufacturers don't care what happens once I've bought the product.	<input type="radio"/>				
Most cat food manufacturers are dishonest.	<input type="radio"/>				
Most cat food manufacturers will cut any corner they can to improve profit margins.	<input type="radio"/>				
Choosing the wrong cat food could be a serious mistake.	<input type="radio"/>				
It's important to make the right choice of cat food.	<input type="radio"/>				
It would be easy for someone to choose the wrong cat food.	<input type="radio"/>				

Technical problems or questions about the study? E-mail: [ahelm@missouri.edu](mailto:ahelm@missouri.edu)

[Continue](#)

## Appendix A 6: Study 9 Survey

In this section, think about the grocery store you mentioned.

### Why are you loyal to Copp's?

There are many different reasons people are loyal to a particular store. Please list all the reasons you are loyal to Copp's here.

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[Continue](#)

This section has more questions about the grocery store you mentioned.

People are loyal to stores for different reasons. Please read the list of reasons below and check the TWO reasons that are most important to you in your loyalty to Copp's.

- Copp's has a convenient location.
- Copp's carries high quality products.
- Copp's is trustworthy.
- Copp's fits my needs.
- Copp's offers good value.
- Copp's cares about the consumer.
- Copp's is ethical.
- Copp's has convenient hours.
- Copp's makes it easy to find what I need.
- Copp's has a good selection of merchandise.
- Copp's has good customer service.

Look at these possible reasons for store loyalty. Rate how important each reason is in your loyalty to Copp's.

	How important is this reason in your loyalty to Copp's?				
	Least important	A little important	Somewhat important	Very important	Most important
Copp's is trustworthy.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Copp's is reliable.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Copp's is an honest store.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Copp's is safe.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Copp's cares about the consumer.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Copp's is ethical.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Copp's fits my needs.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Copp's offers high quality products.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Copp's offers a good selection of merchandise.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Copp's has a convenient location.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Copp's has convenient hours.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Copp's offers good value for the money.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Copp's offers good buys.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## Appendix A 6: Study 9 Survey

Copp's has good prices or good sales.	<input type="radio"/>				
Copp's has good customer service.	<input type="radio"/>				
Copp's makes it easy to find what I need.	<input type="radio"/>				

Next, think about your actual behavior regarding Copp's.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
I am committed to Copp's.	<input type="radio"/>				
I consider myself to be a loyal patron of Copp's.	<input type="radio"/>				
Copp's is the best choice for me.	<input type="radio"/>				
I intend to keep shopping at Copp's.	<input type="radio"/>				
I would be willing to pay a higher price to shop at Copp's.	<input type="radio"/>				
If Copp's moved to a less convenient location, I would still shop there.	<input type="radio"/>				
I try to help Copp's succeed.	<input type="radio"/>				
To help Copp's have more customers, I have recommended it to others.	<input type="radio"/>				
I make a special effort to tell others to shop at Copp's.	<input type="radio"/>				
I try to do all of my grocery shopping at Copp's.	<input type="radio"/>				

Think about grocery stores in general, NOT Copp's.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Most grocery stores don't care what happens once I've bought the product.	<input type="radio"/>				
Most grocery stores are dishonest.	<input type="radio"/>				
Most grocery stores will cut any corner they can to improve profit margins.	<input type="radio"/>				
Choosing the wrong grocery store could be a serious mistake.	<input type="radio"/>				
It's important to make the right choice of grocery store.	<input type="radio"/>				
It would be easy for someone to choose the wrong grocery store.	<input type="radio"/>				

Technical problems or questions about the study? E-mail: [ahelm@missouri.edu](mailto:ahelm@missouri.edu)

[Continue](#)

## Consumer Attitudes Survey -- Survey Spot Panel

**Next, think about your general attitude toward businesses.**

Please choose the response that best represents your reaction toward each statement about most businesses. Think about what is typical in the business world today.

### Part 2

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Most businesses are more interested in making profits than in serving consumers.	<input type="radio"/>				
Companies see consumers as puppets to manipulate.	<input type="radio"/>				
To make a profit, companies are willing to do whatever they can get away with.	<input type="radio"/>				
It's hard for an honest company to succeed in today's competitive world.	<input type="radio"/>				
If I want to get my money's worth, I can't believe what a company tells me.	<input type="radio"/>				
What most companies claim about their product can't be trusted.	<input type="radio"/>				
Except for a few bad apples, most companies are OK.	<input type="radio"/>				
A lot of consumers get ripped off by businesses.	<input type="radio"/>				
Businesses are willing to throw away long-term customer relationships for short-term profit.	<input type="radio"/>				
Most companies will sacrifice anything to make a profit.	<input type="radio"/>				
Manufacturers don't care what happens once I've bought the product.	<input type="radio"/>				
Most companies don't mind breaking the law; they just see fines and lawsuits as a cost of doing business.	<input type="radio"/>				
Most companies are pretty honest.	<input type="radio"/>				
Most companies don't see product quality as a top priority.	<input type="radio"/>				
Most businesses will cut any corner they can to improve profit margins.	<input type="radio"/>				

Technical problems or questions about the study? E-mail: [ahe1m@missouri.edu](mailto:ahe1m@missouri.edu)

[Continue](#)

## Appendix A 6: Study 9 Survey

### Consumer Attitudes Survey -- Survey Spot Panel

#### Part 3

In this section, think about your general behavior as a consumer.

	strongly disagree	disagree	neutral	agree	strongly agree
Once I find a brand I like, I tend to stick with it.	<input type="radio"/>				
I try to be loyal to my preferred brands.	<input type="radio"/>				
When I find a brand that works for me, I don't consider other brands anymore	<input type="radio"/>				
I tend to stick with a familiar brand rather than try something new.	<input type="radio"/>				

#### Part 4

In this section, think about your general behavior as a consumer.

	strongly disagree	disagree	neutral	agree	strongly agree
I try to live a simple life and not to buy articles that are not necessary.	<input type="radio"/>				
I prefer clothing that does not carry a noticeable brand logo.	<input type="radio"/>				
I try to avoid impulse buys.	<input type="radio"/>				
I shop only when I need something specific.	<input type="radio"/>				

As you answer these questions, please think about times when you have been displeased or angry about a company's treatment of consumers or business practices and how you have reacted.

#### Part 5

	Never	Once	Twice	Three or more times
Have you EVER participated in an organized boycott?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Over the last SIX months (since February), how many times have you decided to stop buying from a business?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Over the last SIX months, how many times have you decided to stop buying a brand?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
In the last SIX months, how many times have you encouraged someone else to avoid buying a product or to avoid a certain brand, company or store?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
In the last MONTH, how many times have you criticized a brand, store, product or advertisement to friends or acquaintances?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
In the last SIX months, how many times have you criticized a brand, store, advertisement or product so that other customers could hear?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Technical problems or questions about the study? E-mail: [ahelm@missouri.edu](mailto:ahelm@missouri.edu)

[Continue](#)

## Consumer Attitudes Survey -- Survey Spot Panel

Almost done! This section has a few questions about your general outlook.

## Part 6

	strongly disagree	disagree	neutral	agree	strongly agree
I like to have the responsibility of handling a situation that requires a lot of thinking.	<input type="radio"/>				
Thinking is not my idea of fun.	<input type="radio"/>				
I would rather do something that requires little thought than something that is sure to challenge my thinking abilities.	<input type="radio"/>				
I only think as hard as I have to.	<input type="radio"/>				
I feel relief rather than satisfaction after completing a task that required a lot of mental effort.	<input type="radio"/>				
Learning new ways to think doesn't excite me very much.	<input type="radio"/>				

## Part 7

	strongly disagree	disagree	neutral	agree	strongly agree
Most people will tell a lie if they can gain by it.	<input type="radio"/>				
People claim to have ethical standards, but few stick to them when money is at stake.	<input type="radio"/>				
People pretend to care more about one another than they really do.	<input type="radio"/>				
An unselfish person is taken advantage of in today's world.	<input type="radio"/>				
Most people are just out for themselves.	<input type="radio"/>				
People inwardly dislike putting themselves out to help other people.	<input type="radio"/>				

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[Continue](#)

## Consumer Attitudes Survey -- Survey Spot Panel

**Last page! Please choose the response that best represents your reaction toward each statement about most businesses.**

Think about what is typical in the business world today.

### Part 8

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
If something unordinary occurs in dealing with a company, the firm generally handles it quickly as a special situation to satisfy and please me.	<input type="radio"/>				
Consumer like myself generally can get companies to make changes to better serve our needs and desires.	<input type="radio"/>				
When dealing with a company, consumers like myself generally can pressure it into doing what is right and fair for the consumer.	<input type="radio"/>				
Most company employees won't go out of their way to help or satisfy a customer.	<input type="radio"/>				
As an average consumer there is little use in writing complaint letters to company officials.	<input type="radio"/>				
When a product is defective or shoddy, usually there is not much a consumer like myself can do if the company refuses to make it right.	<input type="radio"/>				
When dealing with a company, I am often treated as just another body rather than a person with specific needs and desires.	<input type="radio"/>				
In the face of all the advertising claims, generally it is hard to know what to believe about different brands.	<input type="radio"/>				
When buying most products, I usually have enough information to be confident of choosing a good brand.	<input type="radio"/>				
Generally companies provide enough information so a person like myself can make a wise choice.	<input type="radio"/>				
Companies are usually out to make a lot of money even if it means violating ethics and taking unfair advantage of consumers.	<input type="radio"/>				
Most durable products could be made to last much longer but are made to wear out quickly to necessitate repurchase.	<input type="radio"/>				
If people really knew what businesses do to deceive and take advantage of consumers, they would be up-in-arms.	<input type="radio"/>				
The variety in the market enables a consumer like myself to express my own personality and tastes.	<input type="radio"/>				
Our society would be a lot better if people were less concerned with money and more interested in others' welfare.	<input type="radio"/>				
Any enjoyment I get from buying new products disappears quickly even when they work as advertised.	<input type="radio"/>				
For the most part, advertising is insulting to good taste and judgment.	<input type="radio"/>				
I enjoy buying something new that I have not owned before.	<input type="radio"/>				
Materialism is one of the things wrong with our society.	<input type="radio"/>				

Technical problems or questions about the study? E-mail: [ahelm@missouri.edu](mailto:ahelm@missouri.edu)

[Complete Survey](#)

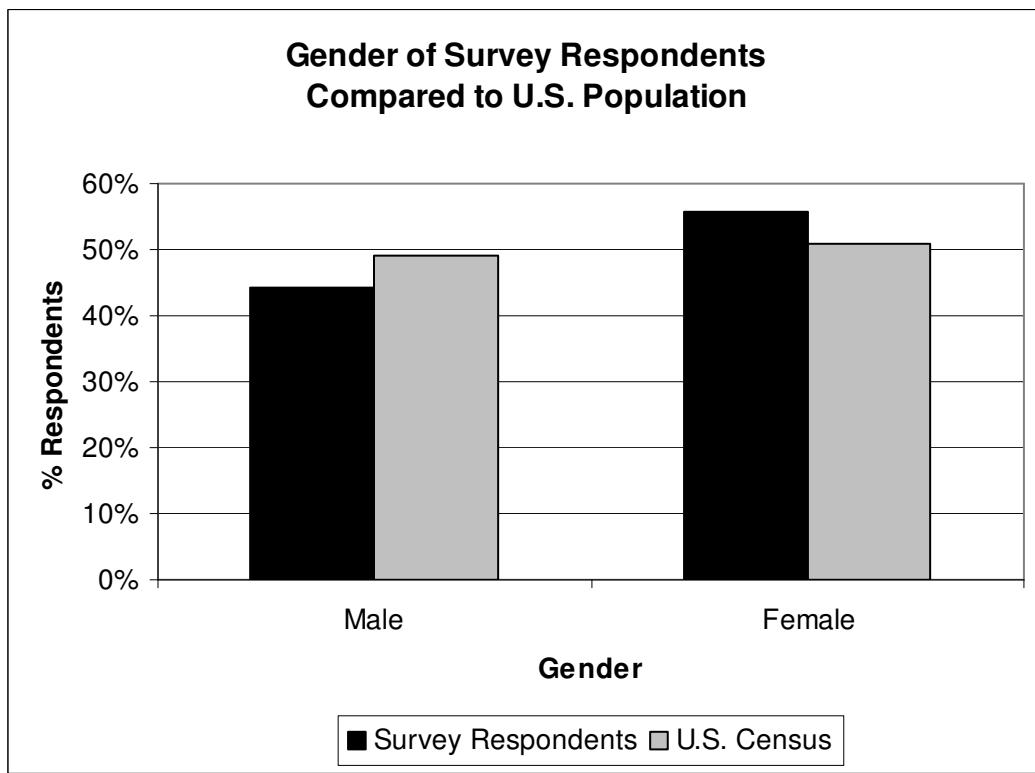
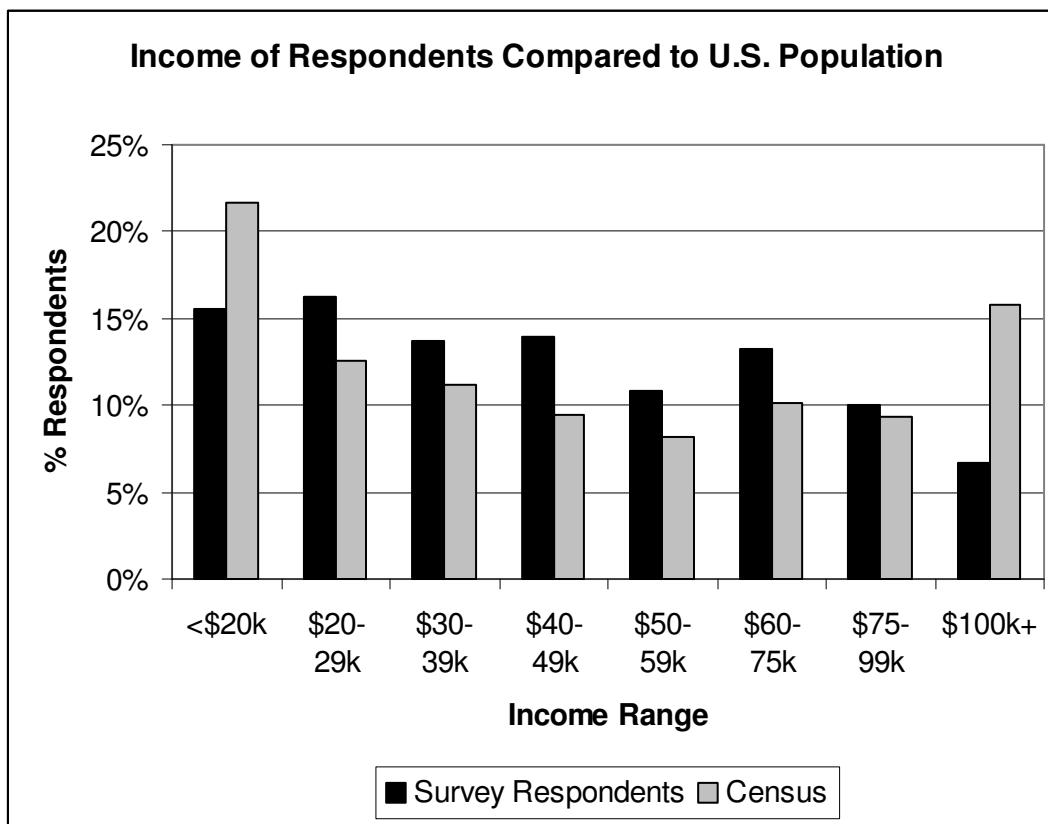
## Appendix A 6: Study 9 Survey

Your input is much appreciated!

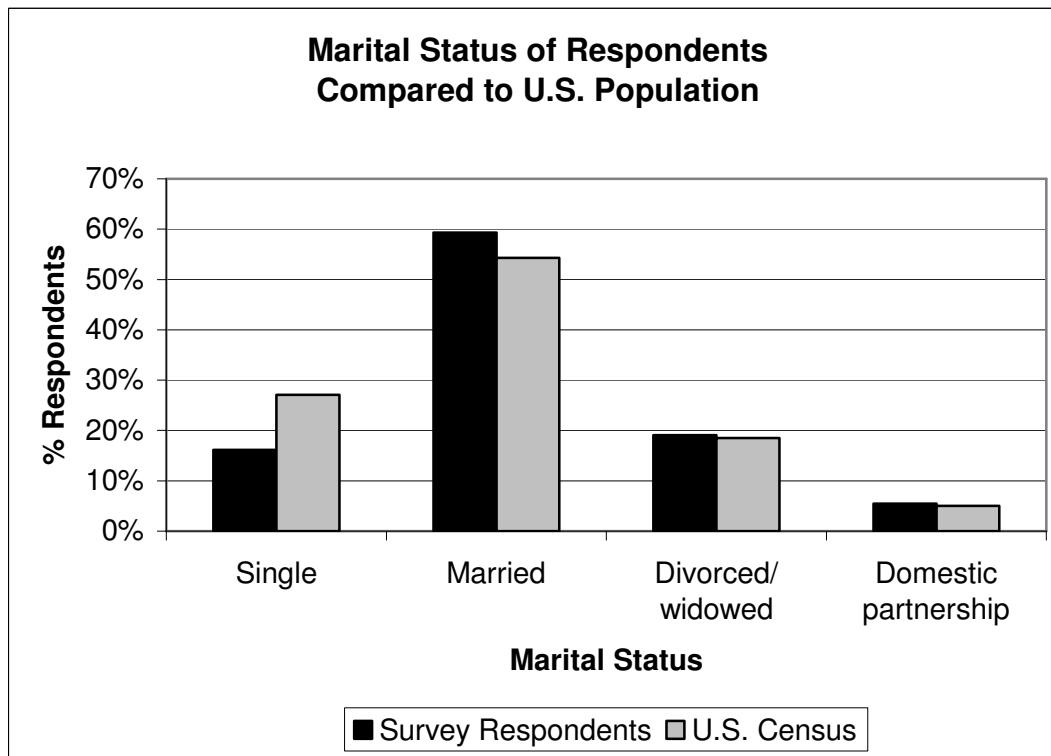
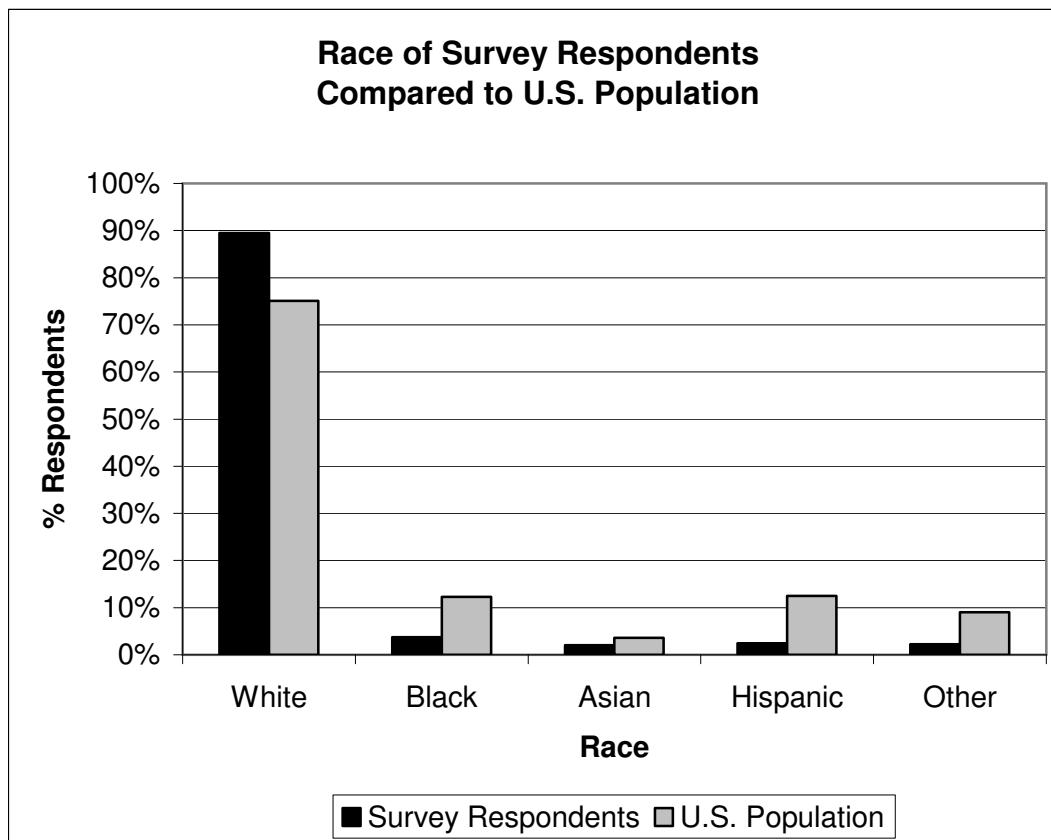
[Please click here to complete the survey and be rewarded.](#)

This is a study about consumer cynicism. The expectation is that increasing presence and sophistication of commercial messages makes consumers more skeptical and suspicious of companies. Cynical consumers are more activist consumers but also more loyal to the few brands and companies that do manage to earn their trust.

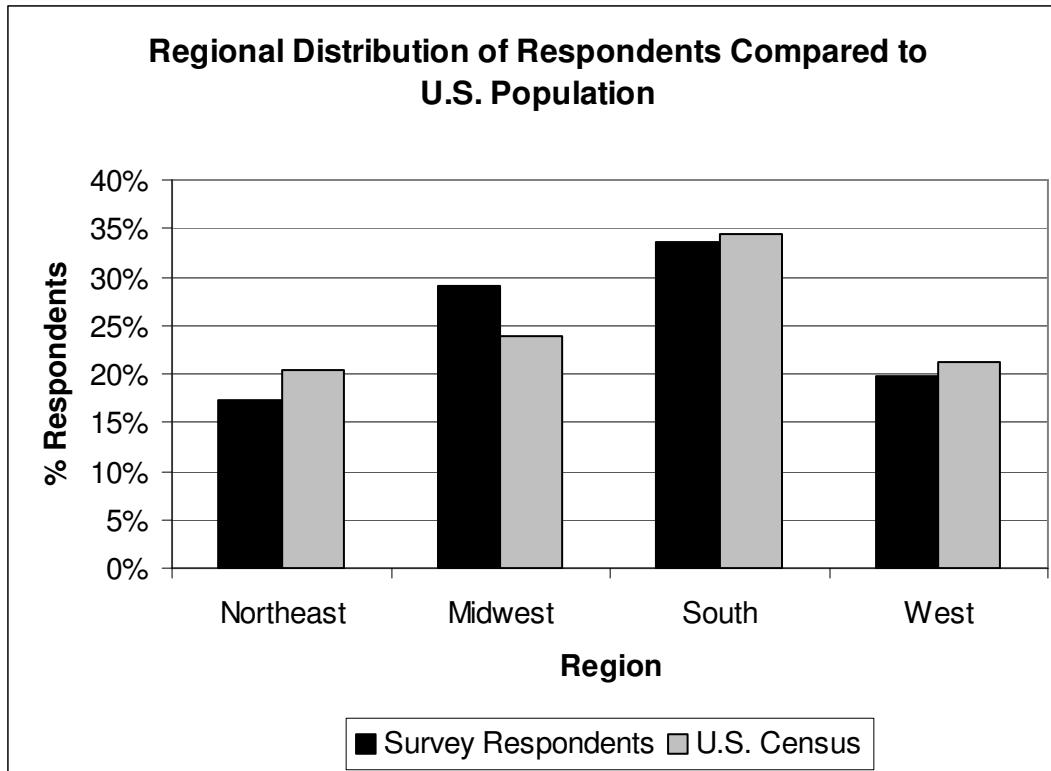
Appendix B 1: Demographic comparisons of Study 9 sample to U.S. Census



Appendix B 1: Demographic comparisons of Study 9 sample to U.S. Census



Appendix B 1: Demographic comparisons of Study 9 sample to U.S. Census



### Appendix C 1: Factor invariance of consumer cynicism across gender groups

	Unconstrained 2-group model	Factor loadings constrained	Variance constrained	Error variance constrained
RMR (<.05)	0.029	0.065	0.090	0.091
GFI	0.944	0.942	0.941	0.932
NFI (>.9)	0.947	0.948	0.944	0.932
CFI (>.9)	0.963	0.963	0.963	0.956
RMSEA (<.08)	0.064	0.059	0.059	0.059
$\chi^2$	127.825	133.914	136.656	160.710
Df	40	47	48	56
$\Delta df$		7	1	8
$\Delta\chi^2$		6.089	2.743	24.053
P value for $\Delta$		0.529	0.098	0.002
<i>Two samples included: females from the national consumer sample recruited through SSI marketing research firm (n=298, and males from the national consumer sample recruited through SSI marketing research firm (n=236).</i>				

### Appendix C 2: Factor invariance of consumer cynicism across regional groups

	Unconstrained 4-group model	Factor loadings constrained	Variance constrained	Error variance constrained
RMR (<.05)	0.037	0.055	0.076	0.077
GFI	0.919	0.913	0.912	0.899
NFI (>.9)	0.923	0.917	0.916	0.900
CFI (>.9)	0.952	0.954	0.955	0.948
RMSEA (<.08)	0.052	0.046	0.045	0.043
$\chi^2$	195.871	211.956	214.267	254.959
Df	80	101	104	128
$\Delta df$		21	3	24
$\Delta\chi^2$		16.086	2.310	40.963
P value for $\Delta$		0.765	0.511	0.018
<i>Four samples included from the national consumer sample recruited through SSI marketing research firm: Northeastern participants (n=90), Midwestern participants (n=163), Southern participants (n=173), and Western participants (n=107).</i>				

### Appendix C 3: Factor invariance of consumer cynicism across age groups

	Unconstrained 4-group model	Factor loadings constrained	Variance constrained	Error variance constrained
RMR (<.05)	0.036	0.061	0.094	0.096
GFI	0.923	0.914	0.12	0.888
NFI (>.9)	0.928	0.918	0.916	0.893
CFI (>.9)	0.965	0.965	0.965	0.9538
RMSEA (<.08)	0.052	0.046	0.045	0.043
$\chi^2$	148.897	168.694	173.109	220.679
Df	80	101	104	128
$\Delta df$		21	3	24
$\Delta\chi^2$		19.797	4.415	47.570
P value for $\Delta$		0.534	0.220	0.003
<i>Four samples included from the national consumer sample recruited through SSI marketing research firm: 18-35 (n=107), 36-46 (n=113), 47-56 (n=105), 57-68 (n=111).</i>				

## Appendix D 1: Study 6 marketplace behavior measures and sources

### Marketplace Shaping Index Item Pool

Prompt for Huefner et al exit, voice, retaliation index:

Think back to times you have been displeased or angry with businesses recently due to a personal problem (such as dissatisfaction with a product or service). Using a **circle** around the best response, please indicate how many times, ***over the last six months***, have you....  
*(repeated twice, once for personal problem, once for social issues)*

*[Response set for all index items: Never, once, twice, 3 or more times]*

		<u>Source</u>
Voice		
	...complained to the store clerk.	Huefner et al 2002
	...complained to the store manager.	Huefner et al 2002
	...complained to regional or national headquarters.	Huefner et al 2002
Negative word-of-mouth		
MS	...warned friends and family so they wouldn't have the same problem.	Huefner et al 2002
	In the last six months, how often have you complained about a company, brand, store, product or advertisement or posted negative reviews?	new,culture jamming!
Exit		
MS	...stopped buying at that business and have never gone back.	Huefner et al 2002
	... stopped buying for a while, but have since gone back.	Huefner et al 2002
MS	...stopped buying a brand and have never bought it again.	Huefner et al 2002
MS	...made an effort to only shop at that store when I have absolutely have to.	Huefner et al 2002
MS	Have you ever participated in an organized boycott?	new,culture jamming!
Retaliation		
MS	...deliberately bought a competitor's products to hurt a particular company.	new,culture jamming!
MS	...told everyone I could about the problem.	Huefner et al 2002
	...damaged some part of the building or facilities of a business that upset me.	Huefner et al 2002
	...left a mess or in some way tried to create extra work for employees.	Huefner et al 2002

## Appendix D 1: Study 6 marketplace behavior measures and sources

### Disparaging to others

<i>MS</i>	In the last month, how many times have you made fun of a brand, store, product or advertisement to friends?	new,culture jammingl
<i>MS</i>	In the last month, how many times can you recall pointing out to others that an advertisement is offensive (sexist, violent, materialistic)?	new,culture jammingl
<i>MS</i>	In the last six months, have you tried to teach others to be more critical of consumerism (e.g. friends, children)?	new,culture jammingl
<i>MS</i>	In the last six months, how many times do you recall encouraging friends to avoid buying a certain product or from a certain company, brand or store?	new,culture jammingl
Extreme Retaliation (Low-incident, <20% ever did it) <i>MS as condensed item</i>		
	...left a mess or in some way tried to create extra work for employees.	Retaliation Huefner et al 2002
	...damaged some part of the building or facilities of a business that upset me.	Retaliation Huefner et al 2002
	Have you ever created a webpage attacking a company, brand, store, product or advertisement?	Retaliation new,culture jammingl
	Have you ever defaced advertisements, posters or billboards?	Retaliation new,culture jammingl
Extreme Activist (Low-incident, <20% ever did it) <i>MS as condensed item</i>		
	...complained to the store clerk. <sup>s</sup>	Voice Huefner et al 2002
	...complained to the store manager. <sup>s</sup>	Voice Huefner et al 2002
	...complained to regional or national headquarters. <sup>s</sup>	Voice Huefner et al 2002
	... made a formal complaint to the Better Business Bureau or other agency. <sup>s,p</sup>	Voice/WOM Huefner et al 2002
	Have you ever participated in anti-commercial events such as TV Turnoff Week or Buy Nothing Day?	Disparaging new,culture jammingl
	In the last year, how many times do you recall surfing anti-commercialism websites (e.g. Ad Busters, NoLogo) or reading anti-commercialism books or magazines?	Disparaging new,culture jammingl

## Marketplace Withdrawal Item Pool

Response set: Strongly disagree- Strongly agree

- |  |                         |
|--|-------------------------|
| 1 I prefer clothing which does not carry a noticeable brand logo.              | new,culture jamming lit |
| 2 I avoid chain stores or restaurants.   | new,culture jamming lit |
| 3 I avoid store chains or brands I see as excessively commercial.              | new,culture jamming lit |
| 4 I avoid certain media because there is too much advertising.                 | new,culture jamming lit |
| 5 I try to minimize the amount of advertising I see.                           | new,culture jamming lit |
| 6 I try to live a simple life and not to buy articles which are not necessary. | Iwata 1999              |
| 7 I do not do impulse buying.  | Iwata 1999              |
| 8 I shop only when I need something specific.                                  | Iwata 1999              |
| 9 I make things myself to avoid buying commercial products.                    | Leonard-Barton 1981     |
| 10 I purchase second-hand or used products.                                    | Leonard-Barton 1981     |

## Appendix D 2: Marketplace Shaping Item Statistics

Marketplace Shaping Index	Sub- category	Item abbreviation	Corr. with consumer cynicism			Std. Dev.	Skew	Kurtosis	Frequency Study 5 Sample		
			Mean	Std. Dev.	Skew				0	1	2
MS	D	Tell friends to avoid	<b>0.17</b>	2.23	1.12	0.42	-1.19	73	69	33	<b>45</b>
MS	D	Mock to friends	<b>0.20</b>	2.38	1.19	0.16	-1.50	73	48	43	<b>57</b>
MS	D	Mock to customers	<i>0.12</i>	1.62	1.03	1.43	0.58	149	39	16	25
MS	D	Offensive ad	<b>0.18</b>	2.33	1.22	0.24	-1.52	80	47	35	<b>59</b>
MS	D	Teach	<b>0.21</b>	2.15	1.25	0.46	-1.47	104	33	30	<b>54</b>
MS	E	stop/never P	<b>0.25</b>	1.73	0.81	1.05	0.69	101	89	21	10
MS	E	stop/brand P	<b>0.28</b>	1.82	0.89	0.91	0.04	97	81	29	14
MS	E	only have to P	<b>0.13</b>	1.64	0.87	1.40	1.34	121	73	12	15
MS	E	stop/never S	<b>0.28</b>	1.38	0.74	2.20	4.52	162	43	7	9
MS	E	stop/brand S	<b>0.25</b>	1.39	0.73	2.18	4.66	158	49	5	9
MS	E	only have to S	<b>0.26</b>	1.43	0.80	2.03	3.53	156	46	7	12
MS	E	Organized boycott	<b>0.14</b>	1.36	0.72	2.12	4.00	<b>167</b>	35	13	6
MS	R	competitor P	<b>0.23</b>	1.24	0.68	3.13	9.22	<b>190</b>	18	4	9
MS	R	competitor S	<b>0.24</b>	1.16	0.57	<b>4.02</b>	<b>16.06</b>	<b>201</b>	11	3	6
MS	R/V	told everyone P	<b>0.33</b>	1.58	0.95	1.50	1.00	148	36	19	18
MS	R/V	told everyone S	<b>0.39</b>	1.34	0.81	2.45	4.91	<b>179</b>	22	6	14
MS	V	tell headqts P	<b>0.21</b>	1.35	0.61	1.80	3.15	158	51	10	2
MS	V	Complained	<b>0.21</b>	2.10	1.10	0.52	-1.10	89	56	42	34
MS	V	warn friends P	<b>0.21</b>	2.22	1.05	0.36	-1.08	69	69	49	34
MS	V	warn friends S	<b>0.33</b>	1.56	0.93	1.56	1.26	148	39	17	17

P: Hueffner et al item with personal problem prompt; S: Hueffner et al item with social issue prompt

MS: included in the overall marketplace shaping index for the Study 5 and Study 7 sample

XA: low-incident behaviors consolidated into the extreme activism item for the overall marketplace shaping index

XR: low-incident behaviors consolidated into the extreme retaliation item for the overall marketplace shaping index

E: exit subcategory, V=voice subcategory, R=retaliation subcategory, D=Disparaging to others subcategory

**Bold = statistically significant**

*Black italics = marginally significant*

*Gray = nonsignificant*

Marketplace Shaping Index	Sub-category	Item abbreviation	Corr. with consumer cynicism	Mean	Std. Dev.	Skew	Kurtosis	Frequency		
								Study 5 Sample	0	1
XA	D	AntiEvents	<b>0.18</b>	1.32	0.80	2.55	5.31	<b>185</b>	15	8
XA	D	antilearn	<i>0.11</i>	1.13	0.50	<b>4.19</b>	<b>17.81</b>	<b>204</b>	8	6
XA	V	told clerk S	<i>0.09</i>	1.30	0.65	2.46	6.07	<b>173</b>	35	8
XA	V	tell manager S	<b>0.15</b>	1.26	0.64	2.72	7.36	<b>181</b>	27	8
XA	V	tell headqrts S	<b>0.16</b>	1.14	0.45	<b>3.89</b>	<b>17.38</b>	<b>197</b>	19	3
XA	V/R	tell BBB P	<i>0.01</i>	1.08	0.32	<b>5.09</b>	<b>34.02</b>	<b>205</b>	15	0
XA	V/R	tell BBB S	<i>0.07</i>	1.04	0.22	<b>5.91</b>	<b>38.28</b>	<b>213</b>	7	1
XR	R	damaged P	<i>0.04</i>	1.03	0.26	<b>9.38</b>	<b>94.68</b>	<b>217</b>	2	1
XR	R	mess P	<b>0.20</b>	1.05	0.32	<b>7.83</b>	<b>66.74</b>	<b>214</b>	5	0
XR	R	damaged S	<i>0.01</i>	1.03	0.25	<b>10.14</b>	<b>108.13</b>	<b>218</b>	1	1
XR	R	mess S	<b>0.24</b>	1.03	0.23	<b>10.67</b>	<b>127.32</b>	<b>217</b>	3	0
XR	R	AttackWeb	<i>0.08</i>	1.03	0.28	<b>9.02</b>	<b>83.42</b>	<b>218</b>	0	2
XR	R	Defaced	<i>0.06</i>	1.03	0.25	<b>10.14</b>	<b>108.13</b>	<b>218</b>	1	1
dropped, unclear	E	stop/while P	<i>0.02</i>	1.37	0.62	1.80	3.49	153	57	8
dropped, not shaping	V	stop/while S	<i>0.12</i>	1.20	0.49	2.63	7.59	<b>183</b>	32	5
	V	told clerk P	<i>0.12</i>	2.16	0.96	0.44	-0.75	62	86	25
	V	tell manager P	<i>0.13</i>	1.64	0.78	1.14	0.88	114	80	7

P: Hueffner et al item with personal problem prompt; S: Hueffner et al item with social issue prompt

MS: included in the overall marketplace shaping index for the Study 5 and Study 7 sample

XA: low-incident behaviors consolidated into the extreme activism item for the overall marketplace shaping index

XR: low-incident behaviors consolidated into the extreme retaliation item for the overall marketplace shaping index

E: exit subcategory, V=voice subcategory, R=retaliation subcategory, D=Disparaging to others subcategory

**Bold = statistically significant**

*Black italics = marginally significant*

*Gray = nonsignificant*

## Appendix E 1: Exploration of marketplace shaping and withdrawal behaviors in Study 5 and 7

### **Exploration of marketplace shaping behaviors: Study 5 and 7**

Study 5, the Missouri and Illinois adult consumer sample, tested hypotheses regarding marketplace withdrawal and marketplace shaping behaviors with a more extensive set of measures than was used for the primary test of H4 and H5 in Study 9, the national consumer sample. This additional preliminary test of H4 and H5 permits exploratory analyses of the relationship between consumer cynicism and marketplace shaping and withdrawal. This appendix provides additional details about this analysis.

#### *Adbusters sample*

In addition, Adbusters participants (Study 7) completed the same survey at the same time as the Study 5 participants. The major reason for reviewing Adbusters' results here is that it permits analysis of low-incident activist behavior so that the views of extreme cynics can be captured. For example, in the Study 5 sample, only 24 percent of respondents have ever participated in any organized boycott, and only 17 (8 percent) of the participants had a cynicism score of 4.0 or higher on the 5.0 consumer cynicism scale. In the Adbusters sample, 63 percent had at least once participated in an organized boycott and 37 respondents (62 percent) scored 4.0 or higher for consumer cynicism.

When analyzed alone, the Adbusters sample shows many nonsignificant relationships between consumer cynicism and consumer activism behaviors, because the Adbusters sample included mostly highly cynical and activist participants and thus suffered statistically from limited variance and range. Including the Adbusters sample along with the samples recruited through the more general Missouri and Illinois

organizations creates a sample that is essentially normally distributed but overrepresents highly cynical consumers. This facilitates analysis of extreme consumer cynicism and extremist behaviors.

On the other hand, combining the two samples is done warily. Although invariant factor structure of the consumer cynicism scale was demonstrated across the two samples, more complex analyses of the appropriateness of combining them statistically is not feasible with the small sample size of the Adbusters group, and the heavy use of formative scales (not suited for CFA) in this study. Furthermore, it could certainly be argued that, by nature of their readership of the Adbusters online forum, the Adbusters sample represents a sample of activist consumers as well as cynical consumers. T-tests comparing means of Adbusters' highly cynical respondents with highly cynical respondents from Study 5 (4.0 or above on the cynicism scale) for each of the 37 marketplace shaping items reveals a statistically significant difference between the two groups for only six items. Five of these are extreme low-incident behaviors. Still, concerns about combining the two samples are certainly valid. Thus, two sets of regression results are reported in Table 1, one for the Study 5 sample alone and one for the combined sample.

Results of linear regression with several separate indices of different marketplace shaping behaviors as dependent variables and consumer cynicism as the predictor variable are shown in Table 1 on page 46. With very few exceptions, analyses show consumer cynicism to be a significant predictor of marketplace shaping behaviors in both samples, providing strong support for H4.

### *Subcategories of marketplace shaping behaviors*

An index of consumer responses to dissatisfaction (Huefner et al., 2002) was used as a convenient list of behaviors. This index was originally intended to include items representing exit, voice and retaliation behaviors. It was repeated twice with an adaptation to capture responses to personal consumer interactions and responses to social concerns separately. “Voice” refers to efforts to complain to the firm itself, with separate items for complaints to the clerk, manager and headquarters. Negative word-of-mouth is often classified with voice but was broken out for this analysis because telling others can serve many goals – presenting oneself to others, retaliating against the firm for emotional satisfaction, or punishing the firm in the hope of shaping future behavior. Exit refers to ceasing to purchase from that firm whether through a formal boycott or a personal decision. Retaliation consists of extreme behaviors which are unlikely to bring about resolution between the customer and the firm and are primarily motivated by a desire to punish, such as deliberately making a mess for workers to clean up or damaging property.

In addition to the adapted exit-voice-retaliation index, new items were added to capture culture jamming behaviors and the mocking and disparaging behaviors typically associated with cynicism in other contexts: encouraging friends to stop buying, mocking a store, brand, advertisement or product to friends or other customers, pointing out to others that an advertisement is offensive and teaching others to be more critical of consumerism. These behaviors exemplify in the consumer context the culture of cynicism concept from the societal cynicism literature. They are summarized as “Disparaging to others” in Table 1. A list of the item wording and sources and the subcategory groups of

retaliation, voice, negative word-of-mouth and disparaging to others is provided in Appendix D1.

#### *Consolidating low-incident items into an extreme behavior index*

For several items in the behavior index, fewer than 20 percent of respondents had ever engaged in the behavior at all. These behaviors were separated into two categories, retaliation (making a mess for workers, damaging property, creating an attack web page and defacing advertising) and activism behaviors (telling a local clerk or manager about a social concern, telling company headquarters about a social concern, contacting the Better Business Bureau or other consumer agency, reading up on consumer activism or anti-commercial issues and participating in anti-commercial events such as Buy Nothing Day). A sum was calculated for each of the two categories and scores were categorized by quartile on a four-point scale (to match the 1-4 scale of the other marketplace shaping behaviors), effectively converting the separate items into two items capturing participants' involvement in any of the extreme activities. Consumer cynicism was a statistically significant predictor of these two indices as well, as shown under "low-incident behaviors" in Table 1 on page 46. Item statistics are provided in Appendix D2.

#### *Overall marketplace shaping: H4*

The most straightforward test of H4 is the overall marketplace shaping index, which is the mean of all the behaviors with two exceptions: 1) The consolidated low-incident behavior scores described above were treated as two items in the overall marketplace shaping index (extreme retaliation and extreme activism). 2) Complaints to clerk and manager due to dissatisfaction with one's personal consumer interactions were

excluded as these behaviors are more likely to be motivated by a desire for personal satisfaction rather than a desire to influence the marketplace. Exploratory factor analysis suggested complaints to clerks and managers did not cluster with the other behaviors, and they correlated with an assertive consumer interaction style.

Table 1: Consumer cynicism as a predictor of marketplace shaping behaviors

Dependent variable	Study 5 sample Model with consumer cynicism as the only predictor			Model with aggressive interaction style, then consumer cynicism as predictors				
	Adjusted $r^2$	$\beta$ for consumer cynicism	Adjusted $r^2$	$\beta$ for aggressive interaction style	$\beta$ for consumer cynicism			
<b>Personal interactions</b> (Huefner et al., 2002)								
Voice (to firm)	.031	.188	.081	.237	.141			
Negative WOM <sup>a</sup>	.093	.312	.128	.200	.273			
Exit	.072	.268	.090	.139	.241			
Retaliation <sup>a,b</sup>	.062	.258	.115	.243	.211			
<b>Social</b>								
Voice (to firm) <sup>b</sup>	.025	.158	.090	.260	<i>Nonsig.</i>			
Negative WOM	.150	.392	.179	.184	<i>.356</i>			
Exit (boycott)	.097	.318	.103	.104	<i>.297</i>			
Retaliation <sup>b</sup>	.051	.235	.114	.264	<i>.183</i>			
<b>Disparaging to others</b>	.078	.286	.085	.107	<i>.265</i>			
<b>Low-incident behaviors</b>								
Retaliation	.028	.180	.077	.234	<i>.134</i>			
Activist	.054	.242	.087	.197	<i>.204</i>			
<b>Overall Marketplace Shaping Index</b>	.160	.405	.192	.191	<i>.368</i>			
 <i>With Adbusters included</i>								
Dependent variable	Model with consumer cynicism as the only predictor			Model with aggressive interaction style, then consumer cynicism as predictors				
	Adjusted $r^2$	$\beta$ for consumer cynicism	Adjusted $r^2$	$\beta$ for aggressive interaction style	$\beta$ for consumer cynicism			
<b>Personal interactions</b> (Huefner et al., 2002)								
Voice (to firm)	.006	<i>Nonsig.</i>	.046	.224	<i>Nonsig.</i>			
Negative WOM	.180	.428	.226	.210	<i>.352</i>			
Exit	.209	.460	.220	.126	<i>.414</i>			
Retaliation	.132	.368	.173	.224	<i>.286</i>			
<b>Social concerns</b>								
Voice (to firm) <sup>b</sup>	.270	.522	.097	.234	<i>.138</i>			
Negative WOM	.269	.521	.289	.158	<i>.464</i>			
Exit (boycott)	.117	.347	.273	.088	<i>.489</i>			
Retaliation			.158	.224	<i>.266</i>			
<b>Disparaging to others</b>	.253	.506	.259	<i>Nonsig.</i>	<i>.469</i>			
<b>Low-incident behaviors</b>								
Retaliation	.215	.466	.236	.165	<i>.407</i>			
Activist	.213	.464	.243	.193	<i>.394</i>			
<b>Overall Marketplace Shaping Index</b>	.369	.609	.390	.163	<i>.550</i>			

### *Assertive and aggressive consumer interaction styles*

Regression models were also created including an aggressive consumer interaction style as an additional predictor of marketplace shaping behavior. The aggressive and assertive consumer interaction style scales were designed to measure consumers' interpersonal interaction with employees (Richins, 1983). Since many of the marketplace shaping behaviors included in the indices involve interpersonal interaction with employees or represent reactions to interpersonal interactions with employees, it would be logical to expect that an aggressive interaction style would be another individual difference variable besides cynicism that would influence these behaviors. Furthermore, Richins found aggressive interaction style to be correlated with negative attitudes toward business, and the Study 5 sample showed a statistically significant correlation between consumer cynicism and an aggressive interaction style ( $r=.195$ ) – small enough to be clearly discriminant, but large enough to raise questions about the need for another similar individual difference construct. With this in mind, the aggressive interaction style is included as a predictor in the model. The consumer cynicism measure, which attempts to capture a global perception of the marketplace, should offer additional explanatory power beyond aggressive interaction styles. If it did not, this would raise questions about the need for a new scale, and, more significantly, about the validity of the consumer cynicism construct as a complex philosophy of the marketplace. Results show that consumer cynicism does add explanatory power (Table 1 on page 46).

As expected, consumer cynicism is a stronger predictor (relative to aggressive interaction style) for those behavioral indices that emphasize marketplace activism, such

as negative word of mouth (complaining to others, including third parties such as the Better Business Bureau), exit and boycotting behavior and disparaging behavior (mocking and denouncing companies and commercialism to others). Aggressive interaction style, on the other hand, is a stronger predictor of voice (complaining to clerks, managers and headquarters) and retaliation behaviors. For the Study 5 sample, the summaries of low-incident behaviors clearly show aggressive interaction style as a stronger predictor of retaliation and consumer cynicism as the stronger predictor of positive activist behaviors.

Assertive interaction style was measured in Study 5 and 7 as well. Richins found assertive interaction style to be correlated with positive attitudes toward business rather than negative; similarly the Study 5 sample showed a nonsignificant near-zero correlation between consumer cynicism and assertive interaction style. Assertive interaction style was a statistically significant predictor of only one of the marketplace shaping indices, voice (complaints directly to the firm) for personal consumer interactions. This is not surprising because complaints directly to the firm are probably the action most likely to result in resolving the individual consumer's problem. It should be noted that a significantly shortened version of the assertive interaction style scale was used in this study since it was not the primary research focus.

#### *Study 5 data informs measure selection for Study 9*

It was expected that consumer cynicism would have a stronger impact on behavioral responses to social concerns than on behavioral responses to personal consumer interactions. While this generally held true, the difference was not substantial (as shown in Table 1), and exploratory factor analysis suggested the socially motivated

and personally motivated versions of the exit, voice and retaliation behaviors tended to load on the same factors. In the interests of developing a concise measure to capture as much marketplace shaping behavior as possible (in terms of breadth of the construct as well as maximizing incidence), this distinction was dropped in and items were revised and consolidated for Study 9 into the following six items, all on a never-once-twice-three or more times scale:

- Have you ever participated in an organized boycott?
- Over the last six months, how many times have you decided to stop buying from a business?
- Over the last six months, how many times have you decided to stop buying a brand?
- In the last six months, how many times have you encouraged someone else to avoid buying a product or to avoid a certain brand, company or store?
- In the last month, how many times have you criticized a brand, store, product or advertisement to friends or acquaintances?
- In the last six months, how many times have you criticized a brand, store, advertisement or product so that other customers could hear?

These items were selected to avoid low-incidence and to emphasize the behaviors most likely connected with a desire to influence the marketplace and other consumers, rather than to gain personal satisfaction from a consumer interaction or to retaliate or express anger. Statistics for each item in the marketplace shaping pool are shown in Appendix D2. The revised Study 9 prompt, “Please think about times when you have been displeased or angry about a company’s treatment of consumers or business practices and how you have reacted,” was intended to stimulate thinking about *both* personal consumer interactions and marketplace concerns such as social issues.

## **Exploration of withdrawal behaviors: Study 5 and Study 7**

A 10-item reflective scale for marketplace withdrawal, composed of items from existing voluntary simplicity scales and new items, was administered in both Study 5 (adult consumers, n=221) and Study 7 (Adbusters, n=60), with the goal of providing an initial test of H5 and serving as a pretest to build a short scale for Study 9, the national consumer sample. Marketplace withdrawal is defined as reducing or minimizing one's contact with the marketplace in any way.

The Study 5 and Study 7 samples were not combined for this analysis because the reflective Likert scale for withdrawal was minimally influenced by low-incidence issues. Furthermore, highly cynical Adbusters were statistically significantly more likely to withdraw from the marketplace than highly cynical Study 5 participants.

A simple linear regression with the mean of the 10-item withdrawal scale as the dependent variable shows consumer cynicism to be a statistically significant predictor in both samples, with a standardized regression coefficient of .328 and .524 for Study 5 and Study 7 respectively ( $r^2=.104$  and  $.262$ ). Thus, H5 was supported.

*H5: Consumer cynicism will be positively associated with marketplace withdrawal.*

Marketplace withdrawal is defined as reducing or minimizing one's contact with the marketplace in any way. A 10-item reflective scale for marketplace withdrawal, composed of items from existing voluntary simplicity scales and new items, was administered in both Study 5 (adult consumers, n=221) and Study 7 (Adbusters, n=60), with the goal of providing an initial test of H5 and serving as a pretest to build a short scale for Study 9, the national consumer sample.

The 10-item scale had an  $\alpha$  of .82 in the Study 5 sample and .87 in the Study 7 sample. Exploratory factor analysis indicated the 10 items did not load on a single factor. One factor appeared to capture general withdrawal from the marketplace, and most of the items loaded primarily on this factor. Two items loaded on a factor that could best be described as avoidance of advertising, and two items on one that could best be described as avoidance of chains. Four items loading on the general factor were selected for the marketplace withdrawal scale for Study 9.

- I try to live a simple life and not to buy articles which are not necessary.
- I prefer clothing that does not carry a noticeable brand logo.
- I try to avoid impulse buys.
- I shop only when I need something specific.

Consumer cynicism showed similar relationships with the avoidance of advertising and avoidance of chains factors and with the four-item withdrawal scale in both samples.

Appendix F 1: Correlation Matrix for Study 9

		Consumer				Market				Store				Product									
		Cynicism	Need for Cognition	Societal Cynicism	Market Shaping	Market Withdrawal	Cynicism	Purchase Risk	Store Support	Store Loyalty	Satisfaction	Importance in Loyalty	Trust	Brand Support	Importance in Loyalty	Brand Loyalty							
		Category	Category	Category	Category	Category	Category	Category	Category	Category	Category	Category	Category	Category	Category	Category							
Consumer Cynicism	1.00	-0.04	0.52 **	0.25 **	0.23 **	0.58 **	0.21 **	-0.03	-0.01	0.02	0.08	-0.03	0.48 **	0.10 *	0.08	0.06	-0.01	0.04	0.03				
Need for Cognition	-0.04	1.00	-0.13 **	0.21 **	0.05	-0.09 *	-0.04	0.01	0.02	0.07	-0.01	0.01	-0.05	0.02	0.10 *	-0.04	-0.04	0.13 **	0.08				
Personality Cynicism	0.52 **	-0.13 **	1.00	0.18 **	0.11 **	0.36 **	0.10 *	-0.01	0.02	0.01	0.06	0.04	0.33 **	0.04	0.06	0.07	0.03	-0.03	0.04				
Marketplace Shaping	0.25 **	0.21 **	0.18 **	1.00	0.05	0.17 **	0.05	-0.01	0.02	0.01	0.01	0.03	0.17 **	0.11 **	0.07	0.10 *	-0.01	-0.01	0.04				
Marketplace Withdrawal	0.23 **	0.05	0.11 **	0.05	1.00	0.11 *	0.03	-0.05	0.03	-0.08	-0.02	0.01	0.17 **	0.11 *	-0.01	-0.05	0.02	0.00	-0.03				
Store		Category				Cynicism	0.36 **	0.17 **	0.11 *	1.00	0.31 **	0.03	0.00	-0.01	-0.02	0.05	0.52 **	0.12 **	0.12 **	0.06	-0.05	0.04	0.08
Purchase		Risk	0.21 **	-0.04	0.10 *	0.05	0.03	0.31 **	1.00	0.26 **	0.19 **	0.16 **	0.10 *	0.26 **	0.12 **	0.29 **	0.18 **	0.22 **	0.11 **	0.01	0.16 **		
Support		Support	-0.03	0.01	-0.01	-0.05	0.03	0.26 **	1.00	0.69 **	0.38 **	0.16 **	0.51 **	0.01	0.14 **	0.44 **	0.27 **	0.08	0.10 *	0.28 **			
Loyalty		Loyalty	-0.01	0.02	0.02	0.03	0.00	0.19 **	0.69 **	1.00	0.40 **	0.30 **	0.46 **	0.05	0.18 **	0.31 **	0.22 **	0.09 *	0.19 **	0.43 **			
Satisfaction		Satisfaction	0.02	0.07	0.01	0.01	-0.08	-0.01	0.16 **	0.38 **	0.40 **	1.00	0.15 **	0.40 **	-0.01	0.17 **	0.24 **	0.26 **	0.04	0.21 **	0.27 **		
Value		Value	0.08	-0.01	0.06	0.01	-0.02	-0.02	0.10 *	0.16 **	0.30 **	0.15 **	1.00	0.14 **	-0.05	0.05	0.06	0.10 *	0.20 **	0.11 *	0.17 **		
Trust		Trust	-0.03	0.01	0.04	0.03	0.01	0.05	0.26 **	0.51 **	0.46 **	0.40 **	0.14 **	1.00	0.03	0.14 **	0.24 **	0.36 **	0.08	0.14 **	0.22 **		
Product		Category	Cynicism	-0.09 *	0.36 **	0.17 **	0.11 *	1.00	0.31 **	0.03	0.00	-0.01	-0.02	0.05	0.52 **	0.12 **	0.12 **	0.06	-0.05	0.04	0.08		
		Risk	Purchase	Risk	0.10 *	0.02	0.04	0.11 *	0.11 *	0.12 **	0.14 **	0.18 **	0.17 **	0.05	0.14 **	0.27 **	1.00	0.36 **	0.30 **	0.18 **	0.15 **	0.28 **	
		Support	Support	Support	0.08	0.10 *	0.05	0.07	-0.01	0.12 **	0.18 **	0.44 **	0.31 **	0.24 **	0.06	0.24 **	0.12 **	0.36 **	1.00	0.36 **	0.31 **	0.61 **	
		Trust	Trust	Trust	0.06	-0.04	0.07	0.10 *	-0.05	0.06	0.22 **	0.27 **	0.22 **	0.26 **	0.10 *	0.36 **	0.14 **	0.30 **	0.36 **	1.00	0.15 **	0.04	0.24 **
		Value	Value	Value	-0.01	-0.04	0.03	-0.01	0.02	-0.05	0.11 *	0.08	0.09 *	0.04	0.20 **	0.08	0.00	0.18 **	0.06	0.15 **	1.00	-0.05	0.11 *
		Satisfaction	Satisfaction	Satisfaction	0.04	0.13 **	-0.03	-0.01	0.00	0.04	0.01	0.10 *	0.19 **	0.21 **	0.11 *	0.14 **	0.00	0.15 **	0.31 **	0.04	-0.05	0.00	0.33 **
		Loyalty	Loyalty	Loyalty	0.03	0.08	0.04	0.04	-0.03	0.08	0.16 **	0.28 **	0.43 **	0.27 **	0.17 **	0.22 **	0.05	0.28 **	0.61 **	0.24 **	0.11 *	0.33 **	1.00

\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).  
\*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).