

Richard William Olshavsky

It has been the distinct privilege of the Marketing Department of the Kelley School of Business to have Richard Olshavsky, one of the world's leading experts on consumer psychology, as a colleague and friend for more than three decades. After an earlier incarnation as a practicing mechanical engineer, Richard received his graduate training in psychology at Carnegie Mellon University (GSIA), where he earned an M.S. in 1965 and a Ph.D. in 1967, working under the supervision of Herbert Simon, the famous Nobel laureate and artificial intelligence expert. Richard's first academic position was as an assistant professor of psychology at the Georgia Institute of Technology. Three years later his marketing career began when he joined the Marketing Department at IU as an associate professor in 1970.

Perhaps more than any other member of our department, Richard has always been the quintessential scholar. In the course of his distinguished career, he has published over 60 journal articles and book chapters, made more than 70 presentations, and his work has been cited over 1,100 times by scholars in the fields of marketing, psychology, management, economics, and health care policy. This body of work has earned Richard election to fellow status in Division 23 of the American Psychological Association and widespread recognition by his colleagues in the marketing discipline as "one of the best researchers in marketing" (*Marketing News*, 1996).

Throughout his career, Richard's fundamental research interest has been investigating how consumers process information and make decisions. In 1979 he and several colleagues published three influential articles demonstrating the highly contingent nature of consumer information processing and decision making, which had a profound impact on our understanding of consumer decision making (Olshavsky, 1979; Olshavsky and Granbois, 1979; Lussier and Olshavsky, 1979). In the words of a former editor of the *Journal of Consumer Research*, this work of Richard's "led the entire field of consumer behavior to realize more clearly that consumers are highly adaptable, yet often cognitively simplifying, in the processes they use to search and select among product information and brands." Not surprisingly, these articles became instant classics and each was subsequently cited more than 100 times.

Using his earlier work as a springboard, Richard teamed up in the early '80s with several colleagues in psychology to address a major public policy issue: understanding the causes of adolescent smoking behavior. His efforts in this area produced three more classic articles that examined why teenagers decide to smoke (Chassin, Corty, Presson, Olshavsky, Bensenberg, and Sherman, 1981), the role of self-image in the decision making process (Chassin, Presson, Sherman, Corty, and Olshavsky, 1981), and the factors predicting the onset of adolescent smoking (Chassin, Presson, Sherman, Corty, and Olshavsky, 1984). Together these articles played an important role in shaping public policy in this area and were cited by researchers nearly 400 times.

A third major stream of Richard's research on consumer satisfaction had its roots in some of his earliest work on the determinants of consumer perceptions of product quality (Olshavsky and Miller, 1972), but really came to fruition in the last decade of his career with the development of the desires congruency model (Spreng and Olshavsky, 1993; Spreng, MacKenzie, and Olshavsky, 1996). This widely cited and influential work challenged the prevailing view that expectancy disconfirmation was the primary force driving feelings of satisfaction and thereby fundamentally changed our understanding of the determinants of consumer satisfaction. In recognition of this, Richard received the prestigious Harold M. Maynard Award for the best article appearing in the *Journal of Marketing* in 1996.

As a teacher, he has had an exceptional impact on the Ph.D. students with whom he has worked. Most of his students now have successful academic careers of their own, teaching and doing research at universities such as Michigan, Michigan State, MIT, Virginia, Georgia, and others. One student became the editor of the *Journal of Consumer Research* and another is editor of the *Journal of Consumer Psychology*. They will tell you that Richard was tolerant of their views and pushed them to be rigorous, to think on their own, and to be capable of defending their own perspectives. Richard's relationships with his students exemplified the very best in terms of scholar-teacher mentoring. In 1984 the Doctoral Student Association honored him with the Inspiration and Guidance Award in recognition of his work with doctoral students. Richard has co-authored a forthcoming book chapter with a marketing doctoral student, and he has co-written a paper with a former doctoral student for the *Journal of Consumer Research*. He has also been recognized for his teaching excellence at the undergraduate level, receiving the Student Alumni Council's Outstanding Teaching Award in 1981, the Alpha Kappa Psi Alumni Teaching Excellence Award in 1992, and the Teaching Excellence Recognition Award in 1999.

In addition to his contributions as a researcher and teacher, Richard has served Indiana University and the Bloomington community well. He has chaired the Kelley School's Annual Business Conference, and

been a member of the Bloomington Faculty Council, the executive committee of the American Association of University Professors, and the Board of Directors of WIUS, just to mention a few.

His colleagues admire Richard for his academic achievements, and he is respected for his honesty, humility, and quiet demeanor. Richard has never sung his own praises, so we are glad to have this opportunity to recognize his achievements and to thank him for all that he has contributed over his long and fruitful career. Richard has always been supported in his endeavors by his lovely wife, Jill. We hope that we will continue to see them strolling together through their neighborhood, enjoying the fresh air and spring flowers or fall foliage and surely discussing where they will go on their next travel adventure.

Scott MacKenzie
Rosann Spiro