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A STUDY OF THE INFLUENCE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN
OPINION LEADERS AND FOLLOWERS

by

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter		
I.	INTRODUCTION	1
II.	STATE OF THE ART	4
	Introduction	4
	Example of Opinion Leader	6
	The Two Step Flow of Communication	8
	Methods for Identifying Opinion Leaders	42
	Opinion Leaders and Perceived Risk	47
III.	ANALYSIS OF THE STATE OF THE ART	51
	Definition of Opinion Leader	51
	Opinion Leader and Innovativeness	54
	Degree of Initiative Accorded the Audience	56
	Lack of Integration with Stages in the Adoption Process	60
	Concept of Perceived Risk	64
	Oversimplification	64
	Obsolescence	66
	Role of Product	66
	Type of Consumer	67
	Effect of Personal Influence on Opinion Leadership	68
	Barriers to the Flow of Influence	69
IV.	NEED FOR FURTHER RESEARCH	72
V.	HYPOTHESIS	76
	The Occurrence of Personal Influence	76
	Other Variables to be Tested	78
VI.	TESTING OF HYPOTHESIS	80
	Testing Procedures	80
	Questionnaire	82
VII.	EMPIRICAL ANALYSES	88
	Discussion Within a Given Time Period	89
	Amount of Fashion Conversation	96
	The Asking of Fashion Opinions	99

Being Asked an Opinion	113
Initiation of Conversation	122
Testing of Other Variables	128
Panel Interviews	134
VIII. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS	138
Two Step Flow Hypothesis	138
Informational Needs of Consumers	143
Perceived Uncertainty versus Perceived Risk	145
IX. IMPLICATIONS	149
Implications for Future Research	149
Implications for Managerial Actions	153
X. CONCLUSIONS	155
APPENDIX A: QUESTIONNAIRE	158
APPENDIX B: RESULTS OF PANEL DISCUSSIONS	171
APPENDIX C: SAMPLE CALCULATIONS FOR CHI SQUARE AND FOR GOODMAN-KRUSKAL COEFFICIENT OF ASSOCIATION, G	175
APPENDIX D: PROCEDURE FOR IDENTIFYING EXTREME LEADERS AND FOLLOWERS	177
BIBLIOGRAPHY	179

LIST OF TABLES

Table

1.	Accounting for the fate of the designated fashion influentials	14
2.	Follow-up interviews with influentials and influencees	15
3.	Opinion leaders read more magazines than non-leaders	30
4.	Opinion leaders read more books than non-leaders	36
5.	The "cosmopolitans" among the opinion leaders are in fashions and public affairs	39
6.	Influence of mass media and other people	41
7A.	Scoring procedure for perceived risk	84
7B.	Scoring procedure for perceived uncertainty with respect to decision making	84
7C.	Scoring procedure for perceived uncertainty with respect to fashion goals	85
7D.	Scoring procedure for perceived uncertainty measured as a component of perceived risk	85
8A.	Perceived uncertainty with respect to decision making and per cent discussing fashions	91
8B.	Perceived uncertainty with respect to fashion goals and the per cent discussing fashions	91
8C.	Perceived risk and the per cent discussing fashions	92
8D.	Perceived uncertainty measured as a component of perceived risk and the per cent discussing fashions	92
9.	Discussion of fashion within previous week versus floor location	95

10A.	Perceived uncertainty and the number of people talked to	97
10B.	Perceived uncertainty and the frequency of discussing fashions	97
10C.	Perceived uncertainty and the recency of discussing fashions	98
11A.	Perceived uncertainty with respect to decision making and the number of people talked to . .	100
11B.	Perceived uncertainty with respect to fashion goals and the number of people talked to . . .	100
11C.	Perceived risk and the number of people talked to	101
11D.	Perceived uncertainty measured as a component of perceived risk and the number of people talked to	101
12A.	Perceived uncertainty with respect to decision making and the frequency of discussing fashions	102
12B.	Perceived uncertainty with respect to fashion goals and the frequency of discussing fashions	102
12C.	Perceived risk and the frequency of discussing fashions	103
12D.	Perceived uncertainty measured as a component of perceived risk and the frequency of discussing fashions	103
13A.	Perceived uncertainty with respect to decision making and the recency of discussing fashions	104
13B.	Perceived uncertainty with respect to fashion goals and the recency of discussing fashions	104
13C.	Perceived risk and the recency of discussing fashions	105
13D.	Perceived uncertainty measured as a component of perceived risk and the recency of discussing fashions	105

14A.	Perceived uncertainty with respect to decision making and the number of people asked for an opinion	107
14B.	Perceived uncertainty with respect to fashion goals and the number of people asked for an opinion	107
14C.	Perceived risk and the number of people asked for an opinion	108
14D.	Perceived uncertainty measured as a component of perceived risk and the number of people asked for an opinion	108
15A.	Perceived uncertainty with respect to decision making and the frequency of asking for a fashion opinion	109
15B.	Perceived uncertainty with respect to fashion goals and the frequency of asking for a fashion opinion	109
15C.	Perceived risk and the frequency of asking for a fashion opinion	110
15D.	Perceived uncertainty measured as a component of perceived risk and the frequency of asking for a fashion opinion	110
16A.	Perceived uncertainty with respect to decision making and the recency of asking for a fashion opinion	111
16B.	Perceived uncertainty with respect to fashion goals and the recency of asking for a fashion opinion	111
16C.	Perceived risk and the recency of asking for a fashion opinion	112
16D.	Perceived uncertainty measured as a component of perceived risk and the recency of asking for a fashion opinion	112
17A.	Perceived uncertainty and the number of people asking respondent for opinions	114
17B.	Perceived uncertainty and the frequency of other people asking respondent for opinions	114
17C.	Perceived uncertainty and the recency of being asked for a fashion opinion	114

18A.	Perceived uncertainty with respect to decision making and the number of people asking respondent for opinion	116
18B.	Perceived uncertainty with respect to fashion goals and the number of people asking respondent for opinion	116
18C.	Perceived risk and the number of people asking respondent for opinion	117
18D.	Perceived uncertainty measured as a component of perceived risk and the number of people asking respondent for opinion	117
19A.	Perceived uncertainty with respect to decision making and the frequency of other people asking respondent for a fashion opinion . . .	118
19B.	Perceived uncertainty with respect to fashion goals and the frequency of other people asking respondent for a fashion opinion	118
19C.	Perceived risk and the frequency of other people asking for a fashion opinion	119
19D.	Perceived uncertainty measured as a component of perceived risk and the frequency of other people asking respondent for a fashion opinion	119
20A.	Perceived uncertainty with respect to decision making and the recency of being asked for a fashion opinion	120
20B.	Perceived uncertainty with respect to fashion goals and the recency of being asked for a fashion opinion	120
20C.	Perceived risk and the recency of being asked for a fashion opinion	121
20D.	Perceived uncertainty measured as a component of perceived risk and the recency of being asked for a fashion opinion	121
21A.	Perceived uncertainty with respect to decision making and the initiation of conversation . .	123
21B.	Perceived uncertainty with respect to fashion goals and the initiation of conversation . . .	123
21C.	Perceived risk and the initiation of conversation	124

21D.	Perceived uncertainty measured as a component of perceived risk and the initiation of conversation	124
22A.	Perceived uncertainty with respect to decision making and the direction of flow of information	126
22B.	Perceived uncertainty with respect to fashion goals and the direction of flow of information	126
22C.	Perceived risk and the direction of flow of information	127
22D.	Perceived uncertainty measured as a component of perceived risk and the direction of flow of information	127
23.	Characteristics of opinion leaders, followers, leaders and followers, and inactives	130

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure

1. Sociogram of discussion relationships
among medical doctors 7
2. Importance of personal influence from peers
by stage in the adoption process for
two innovations 62

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The phenomena of diffusion and adoption of new products, new ideas, and new methods has received accelerated attention from both a research and a managerial point of view during the last two decades. From a research point of view the primary thrust has come from sociologists who have studied the acceptance and rejection of such items as new farm practices, consumer and drug products, candidates for public office, and so on.¹ A large portion of their research findings have been carried over into the marketing literature while at the same time several marketing theorists (Arndt, Cox, King, Cunningham, and Robertson) have allocated a significant portion of their research efforts into this area.²

From a managerial point of view the primary emphasis has been in terms of resources allocated to new product planning, development and introduction. Arndt estimated that fifteen billion dollars are spent yearly on

¹Everett M. Rogers, Diffusion of Innovations (New York: The Free Press, 1962), pp. 4-6.

²Donald F. Cox, ed., Risk Taking and Information Handling in Consumer Behavior (Boston: Division of Research, Graduate School of Business Administration, Harvard University, 1967), pp. 1-5.

these activities.¹ That well-used annual report statement that a large proportion of current revenues are derived from products which were not in existence ten or fifteen years ago is certainly quite applicable. Bluntly stated, "Innovate or die." However, life is not simple for the marketer since most studies show a high percentage of new product failures (twenty to eighty per cent depending upon one's choice of sources).² The problem is not merely to innovate but to innovate profitably.

In order to innovate more profitably it is important for the marketing manager to know who influences whom and what effect this influence has in the consumer decision process. While the term "opinion leader" in itself implies that the flow of influence is from the opinion leader to the follower, there is growing evidence from experimental and other research studies to indicate that this influence flow may not be as significant as the term "opinion leader" implies.³ This study will analyze under what conditions opinion leadership is important, what are the differential characteristics among opinion leaders, followers and non-interactors and whether the opinion leader can indeed lead in terms of inducing change or whether he is a 'sharer' of opinions, that is, acts as a confirming or

¹Johan Arndt, ed., Insights Into Consumer Behavior (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1968), p. 71.

²Philip Kotler, Marketing Management. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1967), p. 315.

³Thomas S. Robertson, Consumer Behavior (Glenview, Illinois: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1970), pp. 83-97.

reinforcing agent for the opinions of his followers.

The phenomenon of the diffusion of an idea has been succinctly analyzed by Rogers into four elements: (1) the innovation, (2) its communication from one individual to another, (3) in a social system, and (4) over time.¹ An innovation is defined as being that which is perceived as new by the individual, and diffusion is defined as the process by which this innovation spreads in the social system over time (elements 2, 3, and 4). Adoption, on the other hand, is an individualistic process and consists of the process by which a single individual decides to accept or reject the new idea. For the most part this study will concentrate on the adoption process and the influence network within the opinion leader/follower dyad.

¹Rogers, Diffusion of Innovations, p. 19.

CHAPTER II

STATE OF THE ART

Introduction

The concept of opinion leadership rests on the basic premise that all individuals are not equally influential with respect to influencing other individuals. Thus, opinion leadership refers to those individuals who exert influence over the acts of others. Personal influence, in turn, refers to man-to-man contact which distinguishes it from impersonal influence such as the mass media. Personal influence can be categorized as either verbal communication such as word-of-mouth and/or non-verbal communication such as facial expressions, eyebrow raising, or even an individual's choice of dress. Nearly all the eminent researchers in the field of diffusion and adoption of innovations have relied on the following basic definition of an opinion leader: Those individuals from whom others seek advice and information¹--a definition which is not entirely consistent with the view of an opinion leader as an individual who exerts influence over the acts of

¹Robertson, Consumer Behavior, p. 83; see also Cox, Risk Taking and Information Handling in Consumer Behavior for a series of studies utilizing this definition; Rogers, Diffusion of Innovations, p. 16.

others. This definition lacks the intellectual appeal of what an opinion leader ought to be. At the very least an opinion leader ought to be able to lay some claim to a change in an individual's attitude or behavior. If this is not the case, then an opinion leader would at best be a reinforcer of the existing opinions and, in addition, the opinion leader would not be worthy of intensive study in marketing areas such as the acceptance of new products--a condition which requires change from existing purchasing behavior. Interestingly enough, although diffusion and adoption researchers have failed to utilize this rigorous definition of opinion leaders, social researchers such as French and Raven have defined power in terms of influence, and influence in terms of psychological change where psychological change is defined as any alteration of the state of some system 'a' over time.¹

It should be emphasized that nearly all of the studies conducted in this relevant area of diffusion and adoption research have utilized the weak--from an influence point of view--definition of an opinion leader, that is, those individuals from whom others seek advice. The only exception that this researcher has been able to uncover was the Revere study where Merton defined opinion leaders in a stronger sense when he asked the influencer, "Who

¹John R.P. French, Jr. and Raven, "The Bases of Social Power," in Studies in Social Power, ed. by D. Cartwright (Institute for Social Research, University of Michigan, 1959), pp. 150-167.

influences you?"¹ Other researchers such as Robertson have recognized the inadequacy of the definition of opinion leaders and have considered other terms but no adequate substitute has been popularized. Robertson's main objection is that the term opinion leaders implies a set of followers which, in turn, makes Robertson uncomfortable since his perceptions of the amount of influence between designated leader and designated follower is, at times, quite small.²

Example of Opinion Leader

An excellent illustration of opinion leaders as defined by "Whom do you go to for advice/information?" is provided in a study of nine medical doctors within a given community.³ All nine doctors were asked, individually, "From whom do you secure information or advice about an innovation?" The results are charted in a sociogram of discussion relationships in Figure 1. Doctor 05 has been identified as the opinion leader since he has by far the greatest number of relationships with other doctors--eight relationships. Doctor 06, the next highest in terms of discussion relationships--three, is

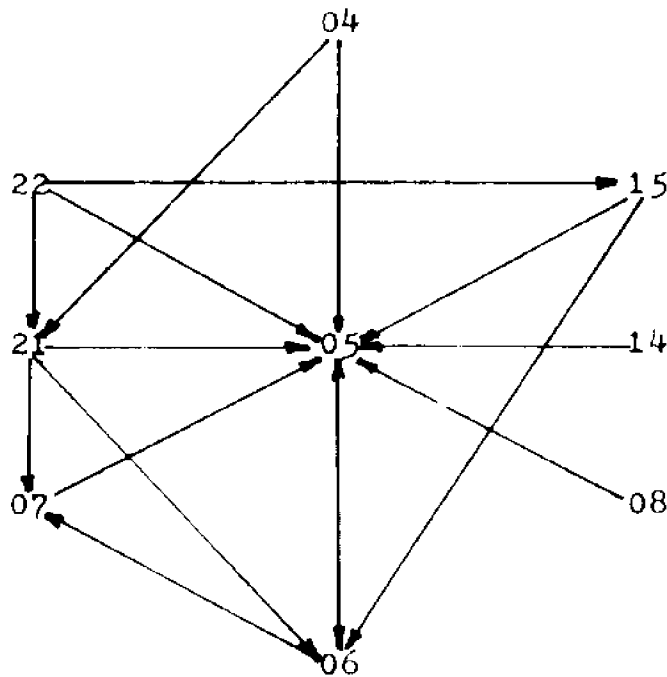
¹R.K. Merton, "Patterns of Influence: A Study of Interpersonal Influence and Communications Behavior in a Local Community," in Communications Research, 1948-49, ed. by P.F. Lazarsfeld and F.N. Stanton (New York: Harper and Row, 1949), pp. 180-219.

²Robertson, Consumer Behavior, p. 53.

³James Coleman, Elihu Katz and Herbert Menzel, "The Diffusion of an Innovation Among Physicians," Sociometry, XX (December, 1957), pp. 253-270.

somewhat less of an opinion leader. This data clearly reveals that the concept of opinion leadership is a matter of degree and not a simple dichotomy of leaders and followers. On the other hand, this data fails to report the amount of influence attempted and the extent to which opinions were either confirmed or changed.

Figure 1--Sociogram of discussion relationships among medical doctors¹



¹Rogers, Diffusion of Innovations, p. 212.

The Two Step Flow of Communication

The genesis of the concept of opinion leaders lies within the two step flow of communication hypothesis which states that communication flows from the mass media to opinion leaders and then to the mass population, that is, the less active sectors of the population. This hypothesis was developed as a result of an analysis of voter decision making during the course of the 1940 presidential election campaigns.¹ The significance of this hypothesis on social researchers' thinking is illustrated when one considers the prevailing view of communications at that time was that of an atomized audience, that is, the mass media's audience was a system of disconnected individuals who had open lines of communication with the mass media but not with each other. This atomized view of the audience was strongly individualistic in nature and de-emphasized the importance of interpersonal relationships while the two step flow of communications emphasized interpersonal relations. This researcher finds difficulty in comprehending the atomized view of the audience given that, at that time, the family structure played a very important role in our culture and also, in the late 1920's and early 1930's considerable attention was given to the famous Hawthorne studies which stressed the role of informal groups and which certainly recognized interpersonal

¹P. F. Lazarsfeld, B. Berelson, and H. Gaudet, The People's Choice (2nd. edition; New York: Columbia University Press, 1948).

relations. It could very well be that the concept of the atomized audience has been established as a polarized view in order to highlight the implications of the two step flow. If this approach is the case, primary researchers in this field such as Katz and Lazarsfeld have not revealed this strategy.

Katz wrote a comprehensive analysis of the shortcomings of the original two step flow hypothesis (People's Choice) and, in addition, analyzed three important studies conducted at the Bureau of Applied Research of Columbia University that were designed to examine the hypothesis and to build upon it.¹ These studies were: Merton's study of interpersonal influence and communications behavior in Revere; the Decatur study of decision-making in marketing, fashion, movie-going and public affairs by Katz and Lazarsfeld; and lastly, the diffusion of a new drug among doctors study by Coleman, Katz, and Menzel.² Katz's comprehensive analysis covers more than a decade of important diffusion and adoption research and his framework of analyses will be utilized so as to illustrate the major implications and shortcomings

¹Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet, The People's Choice; Elihu Katz, "The Two-Step Flow of Communication: An Up-to-Date Report on an Hypothesis," Public Opinion Quarterly, XXI (Spring, 1957), pp. 61-78.

²Merton, "Patterns of Influence"; Elihu Katz and Paul F. Lazarsfeld, Personal Influence (New York: The Free Press, 1955); Coleman, Katz, and Menzel, "Diffusion of Innovation."

of the two step flow hypothesis.

Research Designs of Pertinent Studies

The People's Choice¹

This study was concerned with voters' intentions during the 1940 presidential election and was conducted in Erie County, Ohio. This location was chosen for its research advantages and not for its representativeness of a "typical American county" which may or may not exist. The researchers were basically interested in studying the development of actual votes and not in the distribution of votes. Random sampling was utilized to select an initial group of 3,000 from which four sub-groups of 600, matched by stratified sampling with each other, were selected. One of these sub-groups was chosen as a test group and the other three sub-groups were designated as control groups. The test group was subjected to the so called panel technique of interviewing which consists of repeated interviewing of the same people. Each of the control groups was interviewed only once but at varying times so as to monitor the effect that repeat interviewing might have had on the panel.

This research design enabled the researchers to locate change in test group respondents' voting intentions in a relatively short period of time (maximum of one month) and then to correlate this change with influences

¹ Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet. The People's Choice.

operating on the decision maker. Disadvantages of the research design were that: (1) random sampling of respondents resulted in the total neglect of interpersonal relations and (2) the study did not provide for a comparison of opinion leaders and their respective followers but only of leaders and non-leaders in general. Katz explained the significance of these research shortcomings in the following manner:

But for studying that part of the flow of influence which had to do with contacts among people, the study design fell short, since it called for a random sample of individuals abstracted from their social environment. It is this traditional element in the design of survey research which explains the leap that had to be made from the available data to the hypothesis of the two-step flow of communication. . . .

. . . The data . . . consist only of two statistical groupings: people who said they were advice givers and those who did not. Therefore, the fact that leaders were more interested in the election than non-leaders cannot be taken to mean that influence flows from more interested persons to less interested ones. To state the problem drastically, it may even be that the leaders influence only each other, while the uninterested non-leaders stand outside the influence market altogether. Nevertheless, the temptation to assume that the non-leaders are the followers of the leaders is very great, and while The People's Choice is quite careful about this, it cannot help but succumb. . . .¹

¹ Elihu Katz, "The Two-Step Flow of Communication," in Perspectives in Consumer Behavior, ed. by Harold H. Kassarian and Thomas S. Robertson (Glenview, Illinois: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1968), p. 339.

Revere Study¹

A relatively small sample (n=86) of individuals in a small town were asked, "Whom do you go to for advice and information?" with respect to a variety of matters. Those individuals who were designated four times or more were considered to be opinion leaders and were sought out and interviewed. Significant differences between this research design and The People's Choice research design are (1) the sociometric technique for identifying opinion leaders was used while The People's Choice utilized the self designating technique and (2) this study required four designations so as to be qualified for opinion leader while The People's Choice criterion of self description was so broad that even a wife asking her husband for advice would qualify him as an opinion leader. The Revere study has been criticized for concentrating almost entirely on the designated opinion leaders and failing to explore to any extent the relationship between the follower and leader.²

Decatur Study³

The design for the Decatur study began with a cross section of women and proceeded to identify those individuals who were influential with respect to the respondents. Four areas were investigated: daily household

¹Merton, "Patterns of Influence."

²Katz, "The Two-Step Flow of Communication," p. 341.

³Katz and Lazarsfeld, Personal Influence.

marketing; fashions, specifically dresses, cosmetics, and various beauty treatments; movie attendance; and local public affairs. Each respondent was queried as to whether she recently made a change or reached a decision in any one of these areas. Given either a change and/or a recent decision, the respondent was then queried as to which media and what individuals influenced her. Opinion leaders were identified by utilizing two techniques: the sociometric technique and the self designating technique. With respect to the sociometric technique, that is, "Whom do you go to for advice and information?", many of the individuals chosen as influential were most likely to be outside the sample since only a small portion of the total population of Decatur (60,000) was sampled. These individuals had to be located and investigated in separate interviews. The lack of success in these follow-up interviews is illustrated in Table 1 which was drawn from the area of fashion but was considered fairly typical of other areas as well.

As can be readily detected from Table 1, a sizeable portion of the designated influentials (60 per cent) were not interviewed. Hence, the "flow of influence" data and the "designated influential" data utilizing this technique cannot be considered as representative. Also, an interesting factor which one might expect in the field of fashion is that 16 per cent of the designated opinion leaders were unknown--that is, being influenced by the visual

display of fashion without knowing the identity of the wearer.

TABLE 1.--Accounting for the fate of the designated fashion influentials^a

Interviewing Fate	Number	Per Cent
Interviews	186	41
Did not attempt to reach		
Respondent did not know person	71	16
Incomplete information	28	6
Out of town resident	94	21
Attempted but could not reach		
Moved out of town; died; hospitalized	7	2
Temporarily out of town	13	3
Reached but refused to be interviewed	12	3
Trial interviews; clerical errors	41	8
Total	452	100

^aKatz and Lazarsfeld, Personal Influence, p. 363.

The self designating technique was used to identify the opinion leaders in the original sample. Those individuals who designated themselves as influentials/opinion leaders were asked to indicate the names of the persons whom they influenced. In addition, influencees were asked to indicate the names of the persons who influenced them. Thus, the Decatur researchers were able to monitor the accuracy of their respondents' statements whether the respondents were influentials or influencees. Confirmation of the alleged contacts is illustrated in Table 2, page 15.

TABLE 2.--Follow-up interviews with influentials and influencees^a

	The designated Influential	The designated Influencee
Confirmed	69%	64%
Denied	9	10
Could not recall	22	26
Total (100%)	(337)	(297)

^aKatz and Lazarsfeld, Personal Influence, p. 154.

Only two-thirds of alleged contacts were confirmed placing the researchers in a predicament as to the validity of the respondents reported accounts. Only 10 per cent of the follow-up interviews clearly refuted the accounts while approximately 25 per cent of the sample could not recall. Interestingly enough, the "could not recall" area was the greatest in the area of public affairs (35 per cent), intermediate in fashion opinion (22 per cent), and lowest in marketing (18 per cent). The proportion of denials was reported to remain constant (10 per cent) across all areas.

Drug Study¹

This study was primarily concerned with the process by which doctors make decisions concerning the adoption of new drugs. Given the low incidence of doctors

¹Coleman, Katz, and Menzel, "Diffusion of Innovation," pp. 253-270.

(less than one and one-half per 1,000 population), it became evident that an entire community of doctors could be interviewed for certain size cities. In four midwestern cities all the doctors in the relevant specialities were interviewed. In addition to normal questions concerning background, attitudes, drug use, exposure to various sources of information, and so forth each doctor was asked to name the three colleagues he saw most often socially, the three colleagues with whom he talked most frequently about cases, and the three colleagues to whom he looked to for information and advice. This research design provides an excellent framework to study the networks of interpersonal relations and the influencer/influenced dyad. In addition, from a diffusion point of view this design provided for attention to a specific item in the course of gaining acceptance and provided for an objective record (audit of prescriptions on file at the local pharmacies) of the diffusion of this specific item.

Also, the drug study provided an excellent opportunity to monitor the validity of the respondents' comments. The researchers were able to compare the doctor's own testimony about his decisions and the influencers involved, on the one hand, with the more objective record of his decisions and the influencers involved on the other hand.

Research Findings

The People's Choice

Impact of Personal Influence

Individuals who reported that they made their voting decision late in the campaign and those who reported that they changed their decisions during the campaign were more likely than other people to report that personal influence figured in their decisions. In addition, factors such as political homogeneity which characterized everyday groups, for example, families and friends, and the greater frequency of individuals reporting personal discussions of the campaign rather than listening to campaign speeches or reading newspapers led the authors to conclude that personal contacts appear to have been both more frequent and more effective than the mass media in influencing voting decisions.¹

Flow of Personal Influence

The flow of personal influence was determined by identifying opinion leaders. Two identifying questions were used: "Have you recently tried to convince anyone of your political ideas?" and "Has anyone recently asked you for your advice on a political question?" Opinion leaders were found to be more interested than followers in the election, were found to be almost evenly distributed throughout every class and occupation, and were found

¹Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet, The People's Choice, pp. 135-153.

to be frequently mentioned by friends, co-workers, and relatives. From this the authors concluded that opinion leaders are to be found on every level of society and are presumed to be very much like the people they influence.¹

Opinion Leaders and the Mass Media

Opinion leaders as compared to followers were found to be considerably more exposed to the radio, to newspapers, to magazines, and so forth, that is, the mass media at that time.

Katz succinctly combined these findings with the formulation of the two step flow hypothesis in the following statement:

If word-of-mouth is so important, and if word-of-mouth specialists are widely dispersed, and if these specialists are more exposed to the media than the people whom they influence, then perhaps ideas often flow from radio and print to opinion leaders and from these to the less active sections of the population.²

Analysis of Subsequent Research Findings

The format for summarizing these findings will be identical to the format used to summarize the findings of The People's Choice--that is, (1) the impact of personal influence, (2) the flow of personal influence, and (3) opinion leaders and the mass media. Many of the ideas

¹Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet, The People's Choice, pp. 50-51.

²Katz, "The Two-Step Flow of Communication," p. 339.

expressed in this section find their genesis in Katz.¹

The Impact of Personal Influence

Personal and the mass media influences.--The People's Choice concluded that personal influence had a greater impact than did the mass media especially for those individuals who changed their minds during the course of the campaign or made their voting decision late in the campaign. The Decatur study examined this finding in the marketing, fashion, and movie going areas. The Decatur study utilized a special measuring instrument² and the testimony of respondents to evaluate the relative effectiveness of personal and impersonal influence (mass media). The Decatur study findings are summarized in

¹ Katz, "The Two-Step Flow of Communication," pp. 337-350.

² For each respondent, a series of assessments concerning the evaluation of the parts played by personal contacts and by the mass media in a specific decision is available. The result of this assessment is a certain measure of effectiveness--an impact rating--which is assigned to each influence each time it is mentioned. Thus, for each specific factor, e.g., newspaper, a statistical distribution of impact ratings for the whole groups was available. This statistical distribution was expressed in terms of an effectiveness index. First, respondents who had been exposed to a source of influence were grouped and a computation was made of the proportion who considered it most important in their decision. Thus, the Decatur researchers were able to distinguish between more exposure to a medium and its effectiveness given an exposure. Katz and Lazarsfeld, Personal Influence, pp. 173-174.

the following chart:

		Exposure	
		High	Low
Effectiveness	High	Marketing: Personal Contact Movies: Personal Contact	Marketing: Radio
	Low	Movies: Newspapers Fashion: All four sectors	Marketing: Newspapers, Magazines, Salespersons

The dominant role of personal contact becomes evident especially in the areas of marketing and movies where it is above average on both frequency of exposure and effectiveness. However, in fashion, while personal contacts are high with regard to exposure, its index of effectiveness is not pronounced. Thus, fashion represents the only area which is the exception to the general conclusion that the impact of personal contact is greater than that of any other source investigated. Katz and Lazarsfeld interpret their results in terms of two distinct types of influence operating, that is, indirect attraction and control. The formal media is interpreted as providing indirect attraction while the personal contact provides both indirect attraction and control. Control is defined by Katz and Lazarsfeld as carrying out a command largely irrespective of its content; the essential element is the

source of the directive.¹ This personal influence begins to be defined in terms of group pressures, norms, leader's position power, and so on.

Rogers, in reviewing the research cites many research findings involving such diverse products as drugs, new farm innovations, and new fabrics, all of which support the statement that interpersonal influence is more important than any other type of information source in terms of affecting the decision to adopt.²

Arndt, in a thorough analysis of the importance of word-of-mouth advertising, cites three laboratory experiments conducted in the 1930's that tested the differential persuasive power of the various media and twelve field surveys conducted mainly in the 1950's and 1960's in order to support his conclusions.³ Of these fifteen studies all three laboratory experiments showed that the personal address was more effective than printed presentations. Of the remaining twelve field surveys ten surveys supported the finding that personal sources, that is, word-of-mouth, are more important information influences than non personal sources, that is, mass media. The other two studies, which were unpublished Harvard Business School case studies, contained data which was contrary to the supremacy of personal influence findings

¹Katz and Lazarsfeld, Personal Influence, p. 185.

²Rogers, Diffusion of Innovations, pp. 217-219.

³Johan Arndt, Word of Mouth Advertising (New York: Advertising Research Foundation, Inc., 1967), pp. 11-13.

of the previous word-of-mouth studies. These two exceptions had interesting findings in that the first case revealed that exposure to a new toothpaste was predominantly through advertising and point of purchase materials while the second case revealed that direct mail (product unknown) was more important in the purchase decision than was word-of-mouth. The author described these results as interesting because they indicate a major flaw in our method for analyzing the importance of personal influence--situation variables are not considered. This criticism is also congruent with Rogers' criticism of the lack of integration of the two step flow hypothesis with stages in the consumer's decision making process. For example, one could readily expect that the introduction of certain products would be affected more by mass media than personal sources simply because an individual with high certainty about a product need not use the word-of-mouth/personal sources to confirm his decision.

Rogers, on the other hand, considers the situational variables to be of importance and outlines three situations under which he considers personal influence to be most important. These situations are,¹

1. Evaluation Stage--Relative to the other stages in the adoption process, personal influence is most important at this stage. Personal influence from all sources, that is, opinion leaders and peers, is

¹Rogers, Diffusion of Innovations, pp. 219-223.

hypothesized to have its greatest impact at this stage of the adoption process. An analysis conducted by Beal and Rogers provides data to support this contention.¹ (See Figure 2)

2. Later Adopter--Personal influence is more important for relatively later adopters than early adopters. This follows if one concludes that the flow of acceptance of innovations is an ever increasing process with word-of-mouth activity becoming more predominant as acceptance is increased. Thus, one would expect that later adopters would almost be bombarded with word-of-mouth activity, leading to the conclusion that personal influence is more important for relatively later adopters. Conversely, early adopters would have relatively limited exposure to word-of-mouth activity with respect to a particular innovation since by definition there would not be many product users at that time.

3. Uncertain Situations--As compared to clear cut situations, personal influence is more important in uncertain situations. If an individual has adequate information about an innovation, he is less likely to rely on peers and opinion leaders for information. On the other hand, if the individual is in an uncertain situation, he is probably more likely to rely on peers and opinion leaders for both new information and also for

¹G. M. Beal and E. M. Rogers, "Informational Sources in the Adoption Process of New Fabrics," Journal of Home Economics, XLIX (1957), pp. 630-634.

reinforcement of existing opinions. Support for this generalization has been indirectly supplied from a limited number of research studies--the drug study¹ and several agricultural studies.

Another viewpoint, provided by Robertson,² is that certain product characteristics such as conspicuousness, testability, and perceived risk, in addition to consumer characteristics, are major determinants of the individual's susceptibility to personal influence. A conspicuous product such as outer clothing is more susceptible to personal influence than is laundry soap. A product that can be readily tested such as an inexpensive food product would be less susceptible to personal influence than would be a not so conveniently tested product such as a washing machine. Other factors hypothesized to affect the persuasibility of consumers and, hence, susceptibility to personal influence, would be: (1) extent of interpersonal interaction, (2) "other directed" individuals, (3) persons facing new life experiences, (4) individuals aspiring to membership in certain groups, and (5) certain personality characteristics.

Homogeneity of opinion in primary groups.--An index of the effectiveness of personal influence is the degree of homogeneity of opinion within a primary group.

¹Coleman, Katz, and Menzel, "Diffusion," pp. 253-270.

²Robertson, Consumer Behavior, p. 88.

Since the medium of inter-group communication is person to person, a group with a high degree of homogeneity of opinion will be considered to be highly effective in terms of personal influence. The People's Choice findings revealed a high degree of homogeneity of opinion and this was especially true with respect to primary groups consisting of family or friends.

The drug study was able to demonstrate that certain situations existed where similar behavior could be observed. For instance, in situations of uncertainty, for example, a puzzling disease, doctors were likely to prescribe the same drugs as their sociometric colleagues. In addition, with respect to the adoption of a new drug, it was found that the more sociometrically integrated a doctor, the more likely he was to be an early adopter.

The various roles of the media.--The People's Choice assumed that the mass media and personal influence were essentially competitive in nature and that a given decision was influenced by one or the other. The Decatur study tended somewhat toward this position; however, the study did attempt to show that the different media play different roles in the decision making process. For example, along the time continuum from awareness to decision making, the various forms of the media would be expected to play different roles. With respect to movies, newspapers would be expected to provide "facts", books upon which movies were based would provide early awareness, and personal contacts would arouse

favorable dispositions toward attending the movie.¹ The drug study made still another distinction between the media that "informs" and the media that "legitimizes" decisions. In doctors' decisions, professional media, including colleagues, seem to play a legitimizing role, while commercial media play an informing role.

Bauer and Cox² maintain that the mass media proponents consider word-of-mouth conversation about their products to be indicative of a failure of the mass media to convince the consumer to purchase their products and, hence, view the two (mass media and word-of-mouth) to be competitive in nature. On the other hand, Bauer and Cox maintain that if one views the information process from the audience's point of view, one can readily see that both the mass media and word-of-mouth provide complementary sources of information for the consumer. Again, this issue, which may or may not be significant, has not been determined.

The Flow of Personal Influence

Horizontal versus vertical flow.--The findings of The People's Choice indicated the existence of horizontal opinion leadership. That is, each strata, primarily social, generated its own set of opinion leaders. This horizontal view was in direct conflict with the prevailing view of the

¹Katz and Lazarsfeld, Personal Influence, pp. 193-194.

²Donald F. Cox, "The Audience as Communicators," in Toward Scientific Marketing, ed. by Stephen A. Greyser (Proceedings of the Winter Conference of the American Marketing Association, 1963), pp. 172-187.

1940's in which it was generally assumed that opinions were formed by the elite of the community and this opinion trickled down throughout the strata of society (vertical view).

The Decatur study found, in general, that horizontal opinion leadership exists; however, the degree of horizontal versus vertical opinion leadership is highly dependent upon the subject matter.¹ For example, in marketing, almost seven out of every ten influence incidents which were followed up revealed a marketing pair of the same social status. In the realm of fashion six out of every ten influence incidents showed the same social status while in the area of public affairs only 46 per cent of the extra-family influence pairs were peers. The Decatur study also revealed that, when marketing influence did cross status lines, there was no discernible direction, that is, no significant difference in advice giving coming up the social ladder as compared to coming down the social ladder.² In the realm of fashion there was evidence of a slight downward flow, predominantly from women of middle status to women of lower status. In the realm of public affairs a more marked flow occurred.

Age groups.--As far as the flow of influence among age groups, the Decatur study distinguished between intra-family and extra-family influence. Overall, intra-family influence tends to take place between members of different ages while extra-family influence pairs are more likely to be age peers.³ Specifically,

¹Katz and Lazarsfeld, Personal Influence, pp. 330-334.

²Ibid., p. 331. ³Ibid., p. 329.

intra-family influence in the realm of fashion appears to flow somewhat more from the young to the old than from the old to the young; in public affairs the reverse is sharply clear; in marketing a distinction must be made between general marketing products and culturally specialized products. For instance, in general marketing products intra-family influencing tends to go on between kinfolk of the same age while in culturally specialized products such as coffee or cereal which are presumed to be the domain of particular members of the household, husbands and children begin to exert a substantial share of influence. In the realm of movie-going influencing appears to take place between age peers.

Considering extra-family influence between age groups, the following appears to be true: in marketing and fashion there appears to be quite a bit of age crossing. In marketing there is a discernible flow from old to young while in fashion it is difficult to find any pattern. In other areas of public affairs and movie-going the evidence indicates a much greater age homogeneity between influencer and influencee.¹

Concentration of opinion leaders.--With respect to the concentration of opinion leadership the series of studies under review suggest that the subject matter under consideration has a lot to do with who will influence

¹Katz and Lazarsfeld, Personal Influence, pp. 329-330.

whom. The Revere study indicates that within the broad sphere of public affairs one set of influencers is occupied with local affairs and another with cosmopolitan affairs.¹ The Decatur study suggests that in marketing the concentration of opinion leadership is among older women with large families.² These opinion leaders tend to be high on the gregariousness scale, but they do not congregate on any particular social status level--they are fairly evenly spread throughout all status levels. Fashion leaders are concentrated among young women and again high gregariousness plays an important factor. Status is considered as a factor inasmuch as it gives a woman a head start in this area; however, it is not considered as a major factor. Public affairs leaders are more likely to be high status rather than low status women. This finding for this particular area is a major exception to the horizontal system since with opinion leadership and status positively correlated, a vertical system exists. In the area of movie-going the concentration of leadership is among young women. Gregariousness was an important factor in this area while social status was not.³

With respect to explaining why the concentration of opinion leaders appears to be in certain groups, Katz outlines three major determinants of opinion

¹Merton, "Patterns of Influence," pp. 187-188.

²Katz and Lazarsfeld, Personal Influence, pp. 234-246.

³Ibid., pp. 234-308.

leadership: (1) to the personification of certain values (who one is), (2) to competence (what one knows), and (3) to strategic social location (whom one knows).¹

Who one is is related to the fact that influence is often successfully transmitted because the influencee wants to be as much like the influencer as possible. What one knows refers to the situation where expertise/experience is desired. For instance, older women with families are looked upon as marketing experts, and specialists in internal medicine, highly scientific relative to practicing physicians, are viewed as opinion leaders among doctors. Whom one knows refers to being accessible. Competence is not enough, an opinion leader must have a certain amount of accessibility/gregariousness. Katz segments whom one knows into whom one knows within a group and outside the group. Within the group segment one could expect opinion leaders to be socially active, to be based in a center location of interpersonal contacts while outside the group segment, one would expect opinion leaders to be more cosmopolitan. This conclusion about the outside the group segment is well supported, for example, the Elmira study showed that opinion leaders belonged to more organizations and often knew more workers for the political parties than did non-opinion leaders.² The

¹Katz, "The Two-Step Flow of Communication," p. 347.

²B. R. Berelson, P. F. Lazarsfeld, and W. N. McPhee, Voting: A Study of Opinion Formation in a Presidential Campaign (University of Chicago Press, 1954), pp. 55-60.

drug study found that the influential doctors attended more out-of-town meetings.¹

Rogers provides a succinct summary of what is known about opinion leaders.² He states that opinion leaders conform more closely to group norms than do the average member; that opinion leadership does not overlap for different areas, for example, politics, fashion, and marketing; and that opinion leaders differ from followers in terms of information sources, cosmopolitaness, social participation, social status, and innovativeness.

Several marketing studies have arrived at the conclusion that followers tend to seek out opinion leaders who are more knowledgeable than they. For example, King and Summers (fashion),³ Arndt (food products),⁴ and Nicosia (auto insurance)⁵ supported the generalization

¹Coleman, Katz, and Menzel, "Diffusion of Innovation," pp. 253-270.

²Rogers, Diffusion of Innovations, p. 233.

³Charles W. King and John O. Summers, "Dynamics of Interpersonal Communication: The Interaction Dyad," in Risk Taking and Information Handling in Consumer Behavior, ed. by Donald F. Cox (Boston: Division of Research, Graduate School of Business Administration, Harvard University, 1967), pp. 240-264.

⁴Johan Arndt, "Word of Mouth Advertising and Informal Communication," in Risk Taking and Information Handling in Consumer Behavior, ed. by Donald F. Cox (Boston: Division of Research, Graduate School of Business Administration, Harvard University, 1967), pp. 188-239.

⁵Francesco Nicosia, "Opinion Leadership and the Flow of Communication," in Reflections on Progress in Marketing, ed. by George L. Smith (Proceedings of the 1964 Educators' Conference, December, 1964; Chicago: American Marketing Association, 1965), pp. 340-358.

that opinion leaders knew more about a particular area than did their followers. Nicosia, however, warned that relatively non-knowledgeable individuals did influence followers even though they did not know what they were talking about.

Trait Theory versus Situational Nature of Opinion Leadership

Does a general opinion leader exist or are opinion leaders a function of situational variables? The general leader theory rests upon the assumptions that there are certain traits or attributes generally required for leadership, for example, intelligence, physical appearance, verbalness, and so forth, and that in any group under any circumstances these people possessing these traits will emerge as the natural leaders.¹ The situational theory, on the other hand, states that there are certain variables defined by the circumstances which will determine what type of leadership is required and an individual possessing the necessary traits will emerge as the opinion leader; for example, if competence is required, an individual with high competence will emerge as the opinion leader; if socialibility is required, a socially gregarious individual will emerge.²

A means of determining whether general opinion leaders or situational opinion leaders exist is to analyze whether those people who are found to be leaders in any one area are more likely than others to be

¹Katz and Lazarsfeld, Personal Influence, pp. 100-108.

²Ibid., pp. 108-114.

leaders in other areas. For if the opinion leaders are of a general nature then there should be a high probability of occurrence of opinion leadership overlap.

The Decatur data did not support the general opinion leadership theory since nearly 66 per cent of the opinion leaders were confined to one area, 25 per cent overlapped into two areas and less than 19 per cent overlapped in three areas. Using statistical procedures the Decatur researchers compared the actual overlap of opinion leadership as mentioned above with a hypothetical overlap one might expect on the basis of chance. Their final conclusion was that there was no significant difference between the observed and hypothetical proportion of leaders in two areas. The fact that a woman is a leader in one area has no bearing on the likelihood that she will be a leader in another area. An exception to this conclusion was for individuals who were leaders in three areas--the observed proportion of such leaders is five times greater than one would expect by chance alone. These particular leaders were a very small per cent of the total population (3 per cent). Although Katz and Lazarsfeld concluded that the hypothesis of a generalized leader received little support,¹ a re-analysis of their data by Marcus and Bauer challenged this conclusion.² Marcus and Bauer

¹Katz and Lazarsfeld, Personal Influence, p. 334.

²Alan S. Marcus and Raymond A. Bauer, "Yes, There are Generalized Opinion Leaders," Public Opinion Quarterly, XXVIII (Winter, 1964), pp. 628-632.

reported that the number of two and three area opinion leaders was somewhat greater than would be expected under conditions of independence among opinion leadership areas. Robertson and Myers¹ found independence among opinion leadership in three areas (food, clothing, and small appliances) while Myers and Robertson² found significant overlap of opinion leadership for closely related categories. King and Summers³ concluded that a generalized opinion leadership does seem to exist and the overlap is greatest between similar product categories. Overall, this writer's conclusion from these findings is that opinion leadership is product category specific and that the overlap/independence of opinion leadership is a function of overlap/independence of the product categories.

Opinion Leaders and the Mass Media

A major proposition of the two step flow of communication hypothesis is that opinion leaders are more exposed to the mass media than are their followers. The

¹Thomas S. Robertson and James H. Myers, "Personality Correlates of Opinion Leadership and Innovative Buying Behavior," Journal of Marketing Research, VI (May, 1969), pp. 164-168.

²James J. Myers and Thomas S. Robertson, "Dimensions of Opinion Leadership," Working Paper, Graduate School of Business, University of Southern California, 1969.

³Charles W. King and John O. Summers, Interaction Patterns in Interpersonal Communication (Lafayette, Indiana: Institute for Research in the Behavioral, Economic, and Management Sciences, Herman C. Krannert Graduate School of Industrial Administration, Purdue University, Institute Paper No. 168, March, 1967.

Decatur study explicitly tested this aspect and two other related aspects to determine the relationship between the mass media and opinion leaders. The Decatur analyses were: opinion leadership and exposure to mass media, opinion leadership and the content of mass communication, and opinion leadership and mass media effect. Their findings are as follows:

Opinion Leadership and Exposure to Mass Media.--Considering the data on magazine readership (see Table 3) it becomes evident that influencers of every type read more magazines than do non-influencers. This phenomenon appears to hold true for other media; in general, however, when some of these other media are analyzed in detail, several idiosyncracies become apparent. For example, considering Table 4, all leaders exceed non-leaders in terms of exposure; however, the marketing leaders, that is, opinion leaders for food or household products, exceed the non-leaders by a very small amount while the other types of leaders appear to be clearly differentiated from the non-leaders. With respect to radio exposure, leaders tend to exceed non-leaders in number of hours of radio listening; however, the differences are small and not always consistent.¹

¹Katz and Lazarsfeld, Personal Influence, p. 312.

TABLE 3.--Opinion leaders read more magazines than non-leaders^a

LOW EDUCATION					
Number of Magazines	Marketing Leaders	Fashion Leaders	Public Affairs Leaders	Movie Leaders	Non-Leaders
5 or more	41%	58%	60%	58%	30%
Less than 5	59	42	40	42	70
100%=	(91)	(79)	(30)	(64)	(270)
HIGH EDUCATION					
Number of Magazines	Marketing Leaders	Fashion Leaders	Public Affairs Leaders	Movie Leaders	Non-Leaders
5 or more	65%	69%	63%	71%	53%
Less than 5	35	31	37	29	47
100%=	(75)	(80)	(50)	(58)	(146)

Note: "High education" begins with high school graduates; "low education" includes all who have less than a complete high school education

^aKatz and Lazarsfeld, Personal Influence, p. 311.

TABLE 4.--Opinion leaders read more books than non-leaders^a

LOW EDUCATION					
Number of Books/Month	Marketing Leaders	Fashion Leaders	Public Affairs Leaders	Movie Leaders	Non-Leaders
1 or more	25%	47%	38%	38%	20%
Less than 1	75	53	62	62	80
100%=	(81)	(76)	(29)	(61)	(270)
HIGH EDUCATION					
Number of Books/Month	Marketing Leaders	Fashion Leaders	Public Affairs Leaders	Movie Leaders	Non-Leaders
1 or more	39%	42%	57%	51%	34%
Less than 1	61	58	43	49	66
100%=	(74)	(79)	(49)	(55)	(146)

Note: Read "high" and "low" education as in Table 3.

^aKatz and Lazarsfeld, Personal Influence, p. 311.

Thus, the generalization emerges that opinion leaders in every realm are more exposed to the mass media than are the respective non-leaders. Arndt, in his review of eleven research studies, comes to the same conclusion.¹ Thus, although the generalization of opinion leaders being more exposed to the mass media than non-opinion leaders seems to hold, it begins to become apparent that variations in media habits of the different opinion leaders' types are present.

Opinion leadership and the content of communication.--As has become apparent from the above results, a specific opinion leader, for example, marketing leader, may be more or less exposed to a given medium than, say, fashion opinion leaders. A classical illustration of this distinction was in the findings of the Revere study² where two types of public affairs leaders in a community were identified--those who were influential in local affairs and those who were influential in national and international affairs. The locals were also local in their communication habits while the cosmopolitans, that is, those concerned particularly with the news of the world outside of their community, relied heavily on the news media which was national and international in scope. The Decatur study analyzed its results along these lines

¹Arndt, Word of Mouth Advertising, p. 35.

²Merton, "Patterns of Influence," pp. 180-219.

of cosmopolitan and local. Their results for the "cosmopolitans" among opinion leaders are shown in Table 5. Considering the "Low Education" line in Table 5, it becomes apparent that fashion and public affairs leaders greatly exceeded non-leaders in cosmopolitan interests, while marketing leaders exceeded non-leaders somewhat and movie leaders and non-leaders showed no significant difference. The same overall pattern, but with not as striking a difference, holds for the more highly educated group. A logical explanation appears to flow from these results insomuch as neither marketing leaders for food and household products nor movie leaders appear to have much need for out-of-town magazines or newspapers in order to exert their influence. However, the cosmopolitan information is in greater need for the fashion and political influencers and these reasons seem self evident.

Opinion leadership and mass media effect.--This section deals with the question as to whether opinion leaders make more "use" of their greater media exposure in their own decisions. In other words, are the opinion leaders not only more exposed to the mass media as compared to the non-leaders but are they also more affected by the mass media? The Decatur researchers reasoned that the relationship between greater media exposure and greater effect on personal decision is not necessarily a positive one. For example, marketing

TABLE 5.--The "cosmopolitans" among the opinion leaders are in fashions and public affairs^a

	Per cent who read both out-of-town newspapers and news in national magazines							
	Marketing		Fashion		Public Affairs		Movie	
	Leaders	Non-Leaders	Leaders	Non-Leaders	Leaders	Non-Leaders	Leaders	Non-Leaders
Low Ed'n	27%	20%	39%	17%	50%	50%	25%	24%
100%=	(88)	(324)	(79)	(330)	(30)	(381)	(64)	(159)
High Ed'n	48%	43%	53%	41%	55%	41%	45%	47%
100%=	(77)	(219)	(81)	(218)	(51)	(247)	(58)	(148)

^aKatz and Lazarsfeld, Personal Influence, p. 314.

leaders with their greater exposure to media may pass this information on to their followers; however, when it comes to making their personal decisions, it is likely that the marketing leaders, like non-leaders, would rely on personal contacts with others and "use" the media only in a supplementary way. In other words, the influence of word-of-mouth ought to affect marketing leaders as well as non-marketing leaders thus possibly subjugating the effect of the mass media.

Fashion or public affairs leaders, on the other hand, would be more expected to rely on the mass media in their personal decisions since the "relevant" environment which the opinion leader must transmit to his group is much less immediate and much more dependent on the media for transmission. Thus, the media carry both "fashion" and "politics"--at least cosmopolitan politics--from the "outside" world to the relevant world of the opinion leader and his followers.

Considering this hypothesis, specifically for the world of fashion, Table 6 summarizes the results. The data is a tabulation of the following question: "Who or what suggested this change to you?" addressed to those individuals who reported some recent change in their clothes, hairdo, make-up style, . . . For each level of education the table indicates to a small but consistent degree that fashion leaders who recently made changes were more influenced in their decisions by the mass media

and less by other people as compared to non-leaders.

TABLE 6.--Influence of mass media and other people^a

"Who or what suggested change?"	Low Education		High Education	
	Fashion Leaders	Non-fashion Leaders	Fashion Leaders	Non-fashion Leaders
Heard or saw somebody	40%	56%	37%	47%
Mass media	42	31	42	33
Other	18	13	21	20
Total influences 100%=	(164)	(308)	(135)	(250)

^aKatz and Lazarsfeld, Personal Influence, p. 318.

Results for the other opinion leaders were: marketing and movie going--inconclusive results--several channels of influence appear to act upon the leader in much the same way as they act upon the non-leader; politics--results were opposite as expected--public opinion leaders did not act like fashion leaders. The researchers reasoned that perhaps their sample of public opinion leaders was heavily weighted toward the "local" as opposed to the "cosmopolitan" leaders. An alternative explanation is that the effect of media in public affairs would become visible if the chain of interpersonal influence were to travel backward in time. In other words, find the opinion leaders of opinion leaders who would presumably have had a greater and more decisive effect by the mass media. However, the drug study revealed that influential doctors were as likely as doctors of lesser influence

to say that colleagues were an important source of information and advice in reaching their decisions. This area of determining the media exposure patterns of opinion leaders and the extent to which their own opinions and decisions are shaped by the media and also the different kinds of uses the media are put to by leaders in each realm appears to be a fruitful area for further research.

Methods for Identifying Opinion Leaders

The three main methods for identifying opinion leaders involve the use of : (1) sociometric techniques, (2) key information techniques, and (3) self-designating techniques.

Sociometric Techniques

Sociometric techniques consist of asking respondents to identify the individual from whom they would seek advice and information about an idea/innovation.¹ Based on an arbitrary cut-off point in terms of number of respondents who designated an individual as an influencer, opinion leaders would be identified and segregated from followers. Follow-up interviews with the designated opinion leaders would then provide raw data. Rogers considers this approach to be applicable in situations where the whole population is being

¹Rogers, Diffusion of Innovations, pp. 228-229.

interviewed rather than the opposite situations where only small samples of the total population are being interviewed.¹ The problem of having an adequate number of designations per opinion leader and the logistic problem of conducting follow-up interviews with designated opinion leaders becomes readily apparent when one considers the situation of small samples in a large population.

Key Information Techniques

Key information techniques consist of asking selected individuals who are "in the know" to designate the opinion leaders.² This technique does not have great popularity or usage by most of the diffusion and adoption researchers regardless of discipline.

Self-designating Techniques

Self-designating techniques consist of asking each respondent a series of questions which are designed to measure his perceived opinion leadership.³ This method is, of course, dependent upon an individual's ability to identify and report his self image with respect to opinion leadership. The advantage of this technique

¹ Rogers, Diffusion of Innovations, p. 228.

² Ibid., p. 229.

³ Ibid., pp. 229-230.

is that statistical samples of the population may be taken and the opinion leaders will be identified with a minimum of cost and time. This method was highly publicized as a result of being used in the 1944 voting studies in which two questions were used to determine opinion leadership: (1) "Have you recently tried to convince anyone of your political ideas?" and (2) "Has anyone recently asked you for your advice on a political question?" Because of the low validity of this limited number of questions in the identification of opinion leaders, Rogers and Cartano have modified and added additional questions. Their self designating opinion leadership technique consists of the following six items:

1. During the past six months have you told anyone about some new farming practice?
2. Compared with your circle of friends are you (a) more or (b) less likely to be asked for advice about new farming practices?
3. Thinking back to your last discussion about some new farming practice, (a) were you asked for your opinion of the new practice or (b) did you ask someone else?
4. When you and your friends discuss new ideas about farm practices, what part do you play?
(a) Mainly listen or (b) try to convince them of your ideas.
5. Which of these happens more often, (a) you tell your neighbors about some new farm practice, or (b) they tell you about a new practice?
6. Do you have the feeling that you are generally regarded by your neighbors as a good source of advice about new farm practices?¹

¹ Everett M. Rogers and David G. Cartano, "Methods of Measuring Opinion Leadership," Public Opinion Quarterly, XXVI (Fall, 1962), pp. 439-440.

Rogers and Cartano¹ report that this scale deals with two components of opinion leadership: (1) the respondent's self image as an opinion leader --questions 2, 3, and 6 and (2) the respondent's perception of past behavior when interacting with others--questions 1, 4, and 5. In addition, a Guttman scale analysis yielding a coefficient of reproducibility of 91.4 indicated that these six items appear to measure a single dimension. With respect to validity Rogers and Cartano compared the self designating technique with the sociometric technique in a number of research studies conducted by themselves and by others. Their correlation findings ranged from a low of +.225 (no significant rating reported) to a high of +.408 (significant at the 1 per cent level). With respect to reliability Rogers and Cartano calculated split halves and test-retest reliability scores from the Katz and Lazarsfeld² data using a two question opinion leadership scale. They then compared the results with the same reliability tests using their six question opinion leadership scale. Their findings confirmed the obvious--that their six question scale was more reliable than the previous two question scale. In spite of somewhat low validity correlations Rogers and Cartano maintain:

¹Rogers and Cartano, "Opinion Leadership," p. 439.

²Katz and Lazarsfeld, Personal Influence, pp. 376-377.

The available evidence indicates that the six-item self-designating opinion leadership scale is reliable, valid, and unidimensional. Other advantages are that it may be administered in less than five minutes in a research interview, and the nature of the items suggests that they might be adapted to studies of any type of opinion leadership.¹

Troldahl and Van Dam developed a seven item scale to measure "perceived opinion leadership."² Their scale concentrated on the perceived nature of opinion leadership and, in addition, combined some of the features of Rogers' and Cartano's six-item and Katz's and Lazarsfeld's two-item scales. Compared to Rogers' and Cartano's scale, Troldahl's and Van Dam's scale has the advantage of being more adaptable to marketing areas such as food, fashions, movies, and so forth; in addition, it provides a more direct measure of the respondent's perception of his being an opinion leader. In terms of validity Troldahl's and Van Dam's scale has a point-biserial correlation of .45 with a reported incidence of opinion leadership within the previous week and a point-biserial correlation of .29 with at least two reported instances of opinion leadership within the previous week or so. Troldahl and Van Dam fail to explain why their measure of perceived opinion leadership decreased in terms of correlation with reported incidents of opinion leadership

¹Rogers and Cartano, "Opinion Leadership," p. 441.

²Verling C. Troldahl and Robert Van Dam, "A New Scale for Identifying Public-Affairs Opinion Leaders," Journalism Quarterly, XLII (Autumn, 1965), pp. 65-78.

as the measure of reported incidents becomes more stringent. Overall, Troidahl's and Van Dam's seven-item scale and Rogers' and Cartano's six-item scale appear to be about equally valid.

Opinion Leaders and Perceived Risk

A new dimension, perceived risk, has been added to the adoption and diffusion process by Cox.¹ His research is based on a basic proposition that, if we know something about the nature and amount of risk perceived by the customer, it will help us understand and predict how and why she acquires, transmits, and processes information while solving problems associated with consumer decision making. The concept of perceived risk has been defined in a variety of ways. For instance, Bauer defines perceived risk in terms of the unanticipated consequences of the purchase decision;² Cox suggests that perceived risk is the extent to which a buyer's goals are not met;³ for example, the cocktail dress may

¹ Donald F. Cox, "Risk Taking and Information Handling in Consumer Behavior," in Risk Taking and Information Handling in Consumer Behavior, ed. by Donald F. Cox (Boston: Division of Research, Graduate School of Business Administration, Harvard University, 1967), p. 604.

² Raymond A. Bauer, "Consumer Behavior as Risk Taking," in Risk Taking and Information Handling in Consumer Behavior, ed. by Donald F. Cox (Boston: Division of Research, Graduate School of Business Administration, Harvard University, 1967), pp. 23-33.

³ Donald F. Cox, "Risk Handling in Consumer Behavior--An Intensive Study of Two Cases," in Risk Taking and Information Handling in Consumer Behavior, ed. by Donald F. Cox (Boston: Division of Research, Graduate School of Business Administration, Harvard University, 1967), pp. 34-81.

be a dud instead of a smash and, hence, negative social consequences rather than positive ones arise; Cunningham conceives of perceived risk as the multiple of two components--uncertainty and consequences.¹ This multiple is very similar in concept to the statistical notion of expected value. Uncertainty refers to the probability of a given state of events which will occur while consequences refers to the values assigned to that event. A common thread throughout all these various definitions is that the perceived nature of risk as opposed to the actual risk is important. If the consumer is to react to risk, it must be perceived, otherwise it will not enter the consumer's domain. In addition, the risk is not only perceived but it is subjective.

Research data does not support any particular generalization concerning opinion leaders and perceived risk,² in fact, conflicting findings have been reported. For example, Cunningham reported that self designated opinion leaders, high in perceived risk, were more likely to engage in word-of-mouth activity than their counterparts.³

¹Scott M. Cunningham, "The Major Dimensions of Perceived Risk," in Risk Taking and Information Handling in Consumer Behavior, ed. by Donald F. Cox (Boston: Division of Research, Graduate School of Business Administration, Harvard University, 1967), pp. 83-84.

²Cox, "Risk Taking," pp. 615-617.

³Scott M. Cunningham, "Perceived Risk as a Factor in Informal Consumer Communications," in Risk Taking and Information Handling in Consumer Behavior, ed. by Donald F. Cox (Boston: Division of Research, Graduate School of Business Administration, Harvard University, 1967), pp. 282-285.

Arndt, on the other hand, reported that sociometrically determined opinion leaders tended to be lower in perceived risk than non-leaders and that individuals low in perceived risk were more likely to engage in word-of-mouth activity than their counterparts.¹ Cox attempted to describe the process by which a high risk consumer acquires information, becomes an expert as a result of this information, and then plays the role of opinion leader.² However, this process must be labeled speculative at this point due to the contradictory empirical findings. In fact, one could, with equal face validity, propose the opposite view that those high in perceived risk would be less likely to be classified as opinion leaders since they would be primarily engaged in information gathering while an influencer would be expected to be primarily engaged in information transmission.

With respect to word-of-mouth activity the general expectation is that individuals high in perceived risk will be more likely to engage in product related discussions than their low perceived risk counterparts.³ The logic being that product related discussions will

¹Johan Arndt, "Perceived Risk, Sociometric Integration, and Word of Mouth in the Adoption of a New Food Product," in Risk Taking and Information Handling in Consumer Behavior, ed. by Donald F. Cox (Boston: Division of Research, Graduate School of Business, Harvard University, 1967), pp. 310-311.

²Cox, "Risk Taking," pp. 614-615.

³Ibid., pp. 604-605.

reduce high perceived risk which is, in turn, viewed as a state of cognitive imbalance. Cunningham specifically examined this expectation for three selected products varying in expected perceived risk: (1) dry spaghetti (low risk), (2) fabric softener (medium risk), and (3) headache remedies (high risk).¹ Cunningham's findings generally confirmed this expectation in that high perceived risk was related to: (1) having discussed the product in the last six months, (2) number of people talked to, and (3) recentness of talking. High perceived risk was not related to the frequency of talking. In addition, Cunningham's findings supported the notion that a high risk perceiver reduced risk by information seeking, that is, high risk perceivers as opposed to low risk perceivers were more likely to have initiated product related conversations and to have requested product information.

With respect to the relationship between perceived risk, generalized self confidence, and product related discussions, Cunningham's data supported the notion that, as generalized self confidence and perceived risk individually and in combination increases, so should the likelihood of product related conversations. Thus, high risk/high confidence individuals were much more likely to have product related conversations than were low risk/low confidence individuals.

¹Cunningham, "Perceived Risk As a Factor in Informal Consumer Communications," pp. 265-288.

CHAPTER III

ANALYSIS OF THE STATE OF THE ART

This chapter analyzes the following aspects of the major research findings concerning the opinion leader and follower: definition of opinion leader, opinion leader and innovativeness, degree of initiative accorded the audience, lack of integration with stages in the adoption process, concept of perceived risk, oversimplification, obsolescence, role of product, type of consumer, effect of personal influence on opinion leadership, and barriers to the flow of influence.

Definition of Opinion Leader

An opinion leader, by definition, exerts personal influence upon the decisions and attitudes of others.¹ How much influence does he exert? The research to date has not established any lower limit for qualification as an opinion leader. Operationally an opinion leader is defined as an individual from whom others seek advice and information.² However, the number of times an individual must be designated as an information/advice source has not been specified. Thus, the initial study, The People's

¹Robertson, Consumer Behavior, p. 81.

²Rogers, Diffusion of Innovations, pp. 228-232.

Choice, permitted an individual to designate himself as an opinion leader even if only one individual asked him for advice or information.¹ In addition, that advice/information asking individual was not restricted in terms of family or any other relationship--it could have been the respondent's wife or his secretary. Later studies using the sociometric approach to identify opinion leaders still asked the same basic question: "Whom do you go to for information or advice?"² Other studies using the self designating approach generally relied on an individual's perception of himself as an opinion leader.³ In addition, researchers such as Troldahl and Van Dam have attempted to synthesize the self designating approach with reported incidence of opinion leadership.⁴ Opinion leadership as it has been generally defined in the literature becomes quite commonplace; for example, Arndt's investigation of coffee promotion revealed approximately 30 per cent of the respondents received one or more opinion leadership designations⁵ while the landmark Decatur study revealed that 41 per cent of a sample of 704 women were designated as opinion leaders.⁶

¹ Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet, The People's Choice, pp. 50-51.

² Rogers, Diffusion of Innovations, pp. 228-232.

³ Ibid., pp. 229-232.

⁴ Troldahl and Van Dam, "New Scale," pp. 50-65.

⁵ Arndt, "Perceived Risk," pp. 289-316.

⁶ Katz and Lazarsfeld, Personal Influence, p. 330.

A test of the degree of influence exerted by the opinion leader would be the resultant effect on the influencee--did his opinion change, was it solidified, or was it reinforced? None of the research studies conducted this type of analysis, thus, we can only speculate as to the degree of influence exerted. French and Raven, in their discussion of the bases of power, define power in terms of influence and influence in terms of change.¹ In this light an opinion leader who exerted sufficient influence so as to bring about change is certainly a different category of leader than the diffusion researcher's opinion leader who is primarily an information/advice source. For marketing communication purposes this researcher proposes that it is important to know where the opinion leader is located in terms of influence--does he have enough power so as to change opinion; if so, he will be an extremely valuable individual in terms of influencing his followers to change from their current product to a new product or does he merely serve the purpose of reinforcing existing opinions and, perhaps, helping to solidify some fluid thinking? If this is the case, then the opinion leader loses some of his marketing importance since the follower is the dominant factor in terms of opinion formation.

Originally, opinion leaders were perceived as the

¹French and Raven, "Basis of Social Power," pp. 150-167.

link between the mass media and the mass population.¹ The nature of this relationship is really not understood too clearly. Two problems appear to account for this lack of clarity. First, opinion leaders have been loosely defined. Thus, basic relationships such as opinion leaders relying more on the mass media than personal contacts since personal contacts should be minimal simply do not hold since, under a loose definition of opinion leaders, personal contacts are not minimal. Second, little or no research has been directed at the opinion leader as an input/output device. Does the opinion leader act as a town crier for the mass media as Rogers implied² or does he select and distort and transmit what he considers to be important? Cox states that we marketers have failed to conceptualize the problem correctly, that we have stressed the viewpoint of the mass media and, hence, have neglected other important parts of reality especially the audience.³

Opinion Leader and Innovativeness

Many studies such as the drug study by Coleman Katz, and Menzel⁴ and Rogers'⁵ analysis in 1962 of farm

¹Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet, The People's Choice, pp. 50-51.

²Rogers, Diffusion of Innovations, p. 208.

³Donald F. Cox, "The Audience as Communicators," in Risk Taking and Information Handling, ed. by Donald F. Cox (Boston: Division of Research, Graduate School of Business Administration, Harvard University, 1967), p. 173.

⁴Coleman, Katz, and Menzel, "Diffusion," pp. 253-270.

⁵Rogers, Diffusion of Innovations, pp. 242-247.

innovation found evidence that supported the notion that opinion leaders are more innovative than followers. This generalization is interesting insomuch as most new product innovations in marketing are failures. This implies that, if opinion leaders are innovative, then their effectiveness in inducing followers to accept the innovation is questionable. The opinion leader's effectiveness has been labelled questionable since one could take the position that, without opinion leaders, the new product acceptance rate would be even lower--a position which has not been researched. On the other hand, if one does consider the opinion leader to have a significant effect upon the follower, then the opinion leader cannot be innovative in light of the high rate of new product failures--a conclusion in opposition to reported research findings. An alternative explanation is that opinion leaders are indeed both effective and innovative in that opinion leaders, for the most part, after evaluating a new product, reject it and influence their followers to reject the product. This alternative explanation is highly speculative on the part of this researcher and is the result of the almost total lack of research with respect to opinion leaders acting as discouragers of change and generally with respect to product failure. Most researchers concentrated much of their analyses on that segment of the population that accepted the product and was involved in personal communication while the non-acceptors and non-interactors were barely analyzed.

Degree of Initiative Accorded the Audience

The two step flow hypothesis has several implications with respect to the passivity of both the opinion leaders and the audience. Recall that the hypothesis states that ideas flow from the mass media to opinion leaders to the less active section of the population. In this formulation opinion leaders do not actively change or reformulate ideas but merely pass on the ideas of the mass media to their followers. The followers are not assigned any degree of activity but serve as mere receptacles of information and ideas. Several theorists, most notably Bauer¹ and Cox² have boldly challenged the passivity premise for the audience and have asserted the initiative of the audience. On the other hand, a review of the research did not reveal one single study where opinion leaders were analyzed as an input-output device in order to determine if the opinion leader merely repeats the mass media message or whether he actively changes or reformulates the message. Several researchers have made reference to the idea of an opinion leader in terms of role theory and, hence, having certain behavioralistic requirements forced upon him if he is to maintain his role of opinion leader.

Concerning the passivity of the audience Bauer asserts that the audience just does not receive messages

¹Raymond Bauer, "The Initiative of the Audience," Journal of Advertising Research, III (1963), pp. 2-7.

²Cox, "Risk Handling," pp. 34-81.

but chooses among messages, evaluates the senders, and where possible, talks back to the sender. Bauer suggests that we ought to view communications as a transactional process in which both audience and communicator take important initiative. The characteristics of a successful communication are: (1) each party gives and takes in a pattern that is acceptable to him and (2) it is usually a good deal for each party. Bauer recognized that the exchange of values of communication may not always be equitable and that deception may occur.¹ However, these factors do not disguise the fact that the audience enters into a relationship with the expectation of at least a fair deal.

Cox provides data to support Bauer's contentions regarding the initiative of the audience. For example, Cox refers to several unpublished commercial studies in which approximately 50 per cent of the product conversations were initiated by the audience.² Other supporting evidence comes from rural sociologists, such as Lionberger,³ who state that the audience may play an active information seeking role in utilizing informal communications channels and, in addition, state that a secondary analysis of the Decatur study data shows approximately 50 per cent of the

¹Bauer, "Initiative of the Audience," pp. 2-7.

²Cox, "The Audience as Communicators," p. 182.

³Herbert F. Lionberger, "Some Characteristics of Farm Information in a Missouri Community," Rural Sociology, XVIII (December, 1953), pp. 327-338.

two product conversations were initiated by the influencee. Cox concludes that: "Evidence is available which indicates that, when consumer channels are used, information seeking takes place roughly at least as often as does information receiving. The notion of a largely passive audience no longer seems valid."¹

Additional studies by those such as Cunningham,² Troldahl,³ and Engel, Knapp and Knapp⁴ support Bauer's and Cox's contentions that the follower plays an active role and initiates at least 50 per cent of the product related conversations. A major exception to this consensus of finding is Arndt's study of a promotional offer on a new coffee brand.⁵ Arndt reported that only 22 per cent of the conversations were information requests while 60 per cent of the conversations involved volunteered

¹Cox, "The Audience as Communicators," p. 163.

²Cunningham, "The Major Dimensions of Perceived Risk," pp. 82-108.

³Verling C. Troldahl, The Communication of a Horticultural Information and Influence in a Suburban Community, Report No. 10 of the Communication Research Center, Boston University, 1963 (Boston: Boston University, 1963).

⁴James F. Engel, David A. Knapp and Deanne E. Knapp, "Sources of Influence in the Acceptance of New Products for Self-Medication: Preliminary Findings," in Science, Technology, and Marketing, ed. by Raymond M. Hass (Proceedings of the Fall Conference of the American Marketing Association, 1966), pp. 776-784.

⁵Arndt, "Perceived Risk, Sociometric Integration," pp. 289-316.

information.

From the researcher's point of view the concept of a passive audience seems to be ill-founded. Opinion leaders are defined sociometrically by asking a respondent: "Whom do you go to for advice/information about a particular item?" When defined in such a manner, common sense would dictate that the respondent classified as a follower by this question would report a large number of respondent (follower) initiated product conversations. This expectation is also consistent with the search/satisfaction theory as postulated by March and Simon¹ which states that, as an individual's satisfaction decreases, his level of search actually will increase. An individual interested in a product innovation would certainly be harboring some level of dissatisfaction/discontentment with the status quo else it would be hard to conceive of why he was interested. In addition, one would postulate a high level of search activity for dissatisfied individuals and, thus, a high number of product initiated conversations with individuals from whom he seeks advice/information.

Furthermore, as was previously reported by Rogers,² personal influence becomes more important in the evaluation stage. Thus, at this stage when individuals are attempting to assess the merits of the innovation,

¹James G. March and Herbert A. Simon, Organizations (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1958), pp. 48,49.

²Rogers, Diffusion of Innovations, pp. 3, 219, 220.

one would expect a high frequency of product initiated conversations by the designated "follower." All in all, the research consensus in this area indicates that a sizeable portion of the word of mouth conversations are follower initiated. However, there has been a lack of research with respect to this finding and its effect on the flow of personal influence.

Lack of Integration with Stages in the Adoption Process

The concept of stages in the consumer adoption process has been very useful in analyzing the process of consumer decision making, yet the proponents of the two stage hypothesis appear to have ignored this concept. Briefly this concept as stated by Rogers consists of five stages: (1) awareness, (2) interest, (3) evaluation, (4) trial, and (5) adoption.¹ At the awareness stage the individual is exposed to the innovation but he lacks complete information about it. At the interest stage the individual becomes inquisitive and seeks additional information about the innovation. At the evaluation stage the individual mentally weighs the pros and cons of the innovation and then decides whether to try the product or not to try it. At the trial stage the individual uses the innovation and further solidifies his evaluation while the adoption stage refers to the acceptance of the

¹Rogers, Diffusion of Innovations, pp. 81-86.

innovation. Field theorists such as Festinger¹ add a sixth stage called post decision in which psychological factors such as cognitive dissonance come into being and the individual, through decision reinforcement, seeks to retain his cognitive balance or equilibrium. Some marketers have reclassified these above stages into the familiar AIDA process: (1) to get Attention, (2) to hold Interest, (3) to arouse Desire, and (4) to obtain Action. These can be defined in the same fashion as Rogers' five stages described above but marketers have used AIDA mainly in terms of describing the direct selling process.²

Rogers suggests that individuals probably utilize the mass media to a greater extent than personal communication at the awareness stage while personal communications are probably more important at the evaluation stage.³ Beal's and Rogers' study provides evidence for Rogers' suggestion that personal influence varies according to stages in the adoption process.⁴ As illustrated in Figure 2, personal influence is most important at the evaluation stage for both fabrics and antibiotics. Thus, one can conclude that opinion leaders have their greatest influence at this stage of the adoption process. In addition, one could safely

¹Kotler, Marketing Management, pp. 74-75.

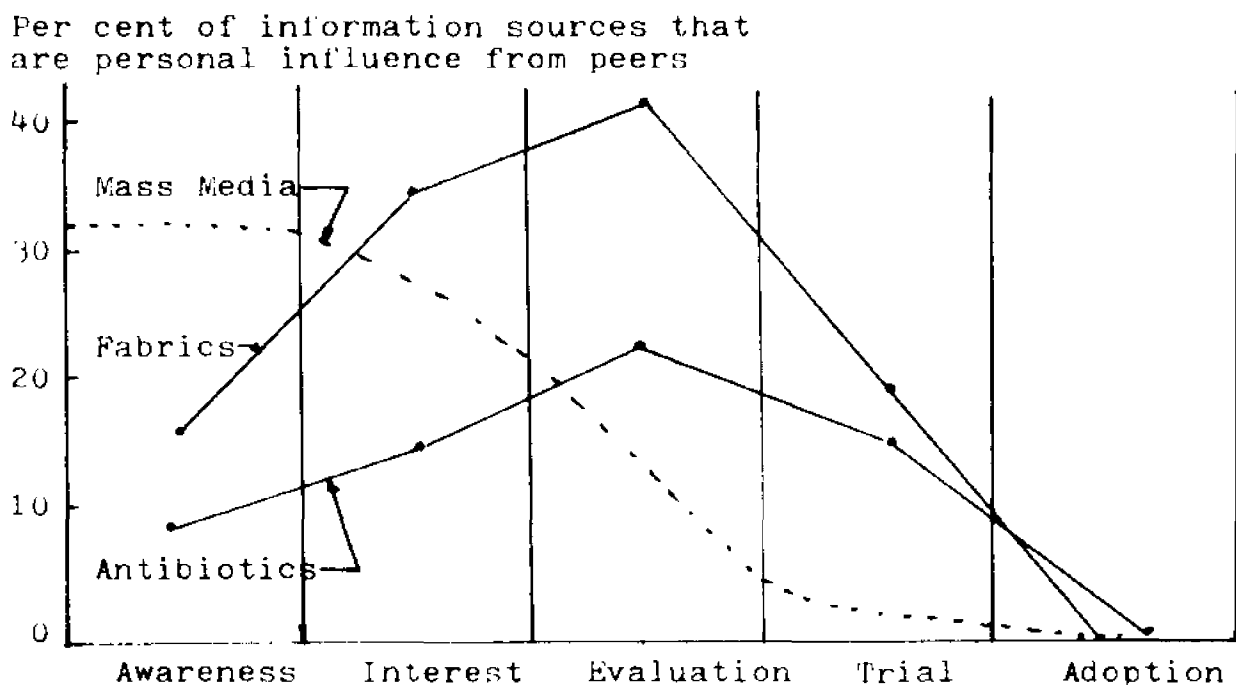
²Jerome E. McCarthy, Basic Marketing: A Managerial Approach (Homewood, Illinois: Richard D. Irwin, Inc., 1968), pp. 459-461.

³Rogers, Diffusion of Innovations, pp. 219-220, 223-224.

⁴Beal and Rogers, "Informational Sources, pp. 630-634.

hypothesize that the influence of mass communication with respect to stages of the adoption process is a downward sloping curve (see Figure 2), that is, mass media has its greatest influence in the awareness stage, then it gradually declines throughout the remaining stages.

FIGURE 2.--Importance of personal influence from peers by stage in the adoption process for two innovations^a



^aRogers, Diffusion of Innovations, p. 221.

This data has several implications--could it be that the two step flow of communication is inoperative for various stages of the adoption process such as awareness, trial, and adoption? Also, are the mass media and interpersonal communications (word-of-mouth) complementary rather than competing sources of information for the

individual from his point of view? Katz and Lazarsfeld recognized that different information sources could play complementing roles; however, they argued that in marketing the consumer's buying decision time is of such short duration that the notion of complements was not relevant.¹ Cox, on the other hand, indicates that unpublished studies have shown that the notion of complements was relevant.² In addition, Cox cites Rogers' notion of impersonal information sources as being the most important at the awareness stage and personal sources being the most important at the evaluation stage as further evidence. With respect to the controversy over complementary roles Bauer has provided some off-hand support for the idea of complementary informational roles. He states that, from the advertiser's point of view, word-of-mouth is a failure in communications but from the audience's point of view word-of-mouth provides a means for obtaining information that they want.³ Thus, word-of-mouth communications, from Bauer's point of view, complements the mass media. In total, this concept of complementary roles between the mass media and word-of-mouth has not been adequately described nor adequately researched.

¹Katz and Lazarsfeld, Personal Influence, p. 195.

²Cox, "The Audience as Communicators," pp. 183-184.

³Bauer, "The Initiative of the Audience," pp. 2-7.

Concept of Perceived Risk

In the last few years the concept of perceived risk has become popular in the research literature. A frequently used definition of perceived risk is Cunningham's version which states that perceived risk is the multiple of two components--uncertainty and consequences.¹ This notion of perceived risk has the following shortcomings:

1. The multiplication of probability of an event occurring and the value of the event (Cunningham's version) is expected value and not perceived risk. Risk would refer to the probability component. Since the consequences of Cunningham's formulation are defined in terms of the degree of danger, Cunningham's perceived risk is really expected danger.

2. If an individual knows the expected value of purchase decisions, he will be in a position to choose among alternatives. Thus, in terms of informational seeking propensities, the state of knowing expected values would negate such propensities rather than stimulate, which, in the final analysis, is opposite to what the practitioners stressing expected value (perceived risk) are hypothesizing.

Oversimplification

The two step flow postulates the flow of influence/information from the mass media to opinion

¹Cunningham, "The Major Dimensions of Perceived Risk," pp. 83-84.

leaders to the audience which is certainly an oversimplification. In nearly all the studies reviewed opinion leaders reported being influenced primarily by other people.¹ Thus, a multi-step flow rather than a two step flow of influence appears to be appropriate. A multi-step flow would hypothesize that personal influence flows through a hierarchy of opinion leaders and then to the followers or perhaps influence flows through a system of interchangeable opinion leaders' and followers' roles, that is, an individual could either be an opinion leader or a follower depending upon his reference group. This latter concept is quite similar to Likert's famous link pin concept of organizational communications which synthesizes both the formal and informal organization.²

Another oversimplification is in researchers viewing the population as a dichotomy of either opinion leaders or followers. A more realistic view is to recognize that, in addition to the above dichotomy, some individuals probably exhibit both behavioral traits while others exhibit neither. Thus, a more representative view of the population would be in terms of interactors (opinion leaders, followers, and combined opinion leaders and followers) and non-interactors.

¹Katz and Lazarsfeld, Personal Influence, p. 318; Arndt, "Word of Mouth Advertising and Informal Communication," p. 218.

²R. Likert, New Patterns of Management (New York: McGraw Hill, 1961), p. 54.

Obsolescence

The two step flow of communication was developed twenty-five to thirty years ago and since then many factors concerning communications have changed. For one thing the amount of money spent on advertising on a per capita basis has increased significantly. The widespread use of television has provided the mass media with the ability to offer great and lively exposure of their products/ideas. The notion of an audience regarding passive and active modes has certainly changed especially with the audiences having greater communication exposure and greater education. The rising tide of consumerism and the excellent reception given to Nader's Unsafe at Any Speed and Packard's The Hidden Persuaders gives rise to the notion of an active and interested audience.¹ All of these factors lead one to conclude that perhaps the two step flow of communication and the concept of opinion leadership may have eroded somewhat in validity.

Role of Product

The role of the product, per se, has been relegated to a secondary role in many studies especially those viewing the influence process as strictly an interpersonal phenomena. For example, the drug study of Coleman, Katz, and Menzel has an overall "sociometric bias" and little

²Robert J. Lavidge and Robert J. Holloway, eds. Marketing and Society (Homewood, Illinois: Richard D. Irwin, Inc., 1969), p. 132.

recognition was given to the characteristics of the new drugs used.¹ Perhaps the most comprehensive analysis of product characteristics is found in Rogers' Diffusion of Innovations wherein he outlines the important product characteristics for farm innovations.² One should be alerted that Rogers visualizes the acceptance or rejection of farm innovations as a very rational process, thus perhaps explaining why Rogers considers these factors. Rogers' factors are (1) relative advantage, (2) compatibility, (3) complexity, (4) divisibility, and (5) communicability.³ Rogers readily admits that these factors are not necessarily mutually exclusive, thus implying that further research is needed in this area. The role of the consumer's perception of these factors is emphasized as well it should. Robertson describes three product factors which ought to affect the occurrence of personal influence: (1) conspicuousness, (2) testability, and (3) perceived risk.⁴ It appears to this researcher that perhaps Rogers' factor of relative advantage ought to be added to Robertson's three factors and these ought to have an effect on the occurrence of personal influence.

Type of Consumer

The type of consumer most likely to be susceptible

¹Coleman, Katz, and Menzel, "Diffusion," pp. 253-270.

²Rogers, Diffusion of Innovations, pp. 124-134.

³Ibid., p. 124.

⁴Robertson, Consumer Behavior, p. 68

to influence has been researched quite frequently.¹ Most of the research has been directed at the relationship between self confidence (generalized and specific) and persuasibility. An inverse relationship has been found in the traditional research for males but not for females. Cox and Bauer suggest that this inverse relationship between self confidence and persuasibility in women does hold under certain conditions and further state that perhaps a curvilinear relationship exists since individuals with very low self confidence become counter persuasible.² Cunningham examined the relationship between perceived risk, generalized self confidence, and product related discussion and found that the greatest percentage of talkers was in the high-medium perceived risk/high generalized self confidence category. The lowest percentage of talkers was found in the low risk/low confidence group.³

Effect of Personal Influence on Opinion Leadership

An unexpected research finding in the flow of influence from the mass media to the opinion leader is that

¹Donald F. Cox and Raymond A. Bauer, "Self-Confidence and Persuasibility in Women," in Risk Taking and Information Handling in Consumer Behavior, ed. by Donald F. Cox (Boston: Division of Research, Graduate School of Business Administration, Harvard University, 1967), pp. 394-410.

²Ibid.

³Cunningham, "Perceived Risk as a Factor in Informal Consumer Communications," p. 255.

the opinion leader, although widely exposed to the mass media, still relies on the interpersonal communication to a large extent when making his decision.¹ This is termed unexpected since opinion leaders, if they are early adopters, should not have many opportunities for interpersonal communications with respect to new products. Alternative explanations are: (1) opinion leaders are so loosely defined and so prevalent (41 per cent of the total respondents in Katz's and Lazarsfeld's landmark Decatur study)² that opportunities for interpersonal communications are many, not few; or (2) opinion leaders talk to each other and the opinion leader/follower dichotomy is a false extrapolation from research data; or (3) to date, research has not investigated the "chain effect" or flow of influence among opinion leaders. What is needed is to find the opinion leaders of the opinion leaders, that is, those individuals who interpret the mass media's messages, innovate in terms of opinion, and pass these opinions on to secondary opinion leaders.

Barriers to the Flow of Influence

A major finding of the research has been that individuals tend to have interpersonal communications with individuals like themselves. Thus, opinion leaders

¹Arndt, "Word of Mouth Advertising and Informal Communication," p. 216.

²Katz and Lazarsfeld, Personal Influence, p. 33.

outside an individual's sphere of reference are not appropriate models and this process results in an inhibition of the flow of influence. For instance, a higher status individual could very well be the best opinion leader in terms of rational choice for a particular individual, however, due to this boundary problem, the interpersonal communication would not occur. Thus, differences in status both up and down will tend to impede the flow of personal influence.

The processes of selective exposure, selective perception, and selective retention are also operative as mediating factors which tend to restrict the flow of both personal and impersonal influence. Rural sociologists, such as Rogers, postulate that personal influence is more likely than impersonal influence (mass media) to overcome these barriers since: (1) exposure to personal influence is often less selective than exposure to the mass media--you do not know exactly in advance what will be discussed with a friend; (2) the process of selective perception, that is, distortion of your personal message, can be quickly detected and corrected in personal communication while the mass media is seldom in a position to do this; and (3) selective retention can be overcome by reminding a friend of the new idea over a period of time.¹

Another major barrier is the norms of the relevant

¹Rogers, Diffusion of Innovations, pp. 224-226.

primary group.¹ If, for example, the group's norms do not support innovativeness in a certain area, then, most likely, the opinion leader will reflect these norms. Thus, primary groups can be classified along the innovativeness continuum from progressive to traditional. Rogers has analyzed farm studies based upon such a classification scheme and has found that followers from the modern category were more likely to be in the same adopter category as their opinion leaders while followers from the traditional category were more likely to seek opinion leaders across the entire range of adopter categories.² These findings for the traditional followers are unexpected in light of the previous research which emphasized that followers and opinion leaders tend to be alike. Research stressing the social support function of the group would hypothesize, all other things being equal, that the well integrated members would be more innovative.

Other factors hypothesized to affect the flow of influence are physical proximity and non-interacting followers. The effect of physical proximity is self evident; however, the effect of non-interacting followers on the flow of influence has not been researched to any significant extent. It would be interesting to determine if there are any significant differences in adoption rates for followers and non-interacting followers.

¹Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations*, pp. 249-250.

²Ibid., p. 299.

CHAPTER IV

NEED FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Do opinion leaders exist? Based on the traditional loose operational definition of, "Whom do you go to for advice and information?" without any restrictions on the number of designations or where the designation comes from--relatives or business associates--the answer is an overwhelming "yes." However, results from this traditional setup lose much of their marketing significance since the opinion leader from the marketing viewpoint ought to be considered as a "change agent." "How effective is the opinion leader in terms of influencing change?" is a highly relevant question for the marketing manager--a question which has not been researched. The ability to induce change is extremely important to the marketing manager when one considers: (1) the high mortality rate of new products (20 to 60 per cent depending upon the source of statistics) which indicates a failure to induce change¹ and (2) the psychological as well as physical importance of the product itself to the buyer.²

¹Kotler, Marketing Management, p. 315.

²ibid., pp. 66-95.

Considering the psychological aspect, Maslow's hierarchy of needs postulates an ever increasing order of needs from basic physiological needs such as food, air, and water to social needs to psychological needs such as self esteem and self fulfillment. As this society increases in affluence, its overall level of need increases to the social and psychological area which, in turn, increases the importance and relevancy of other people's opinions and judgements.

In addition it is proposed that the products of our society are increasing in technological sophistication so that it will become increasingly difficult for a consumer to find a real lay expert for the product in question. Thus, as products fulfill more and more psychological and social needs and as the ability to evaluate a product's physical performance characteristics decreases, how does the consumer go about making purchasing decisions? Does he rationalize away the physical performance risk or does he seek additional sources such as consumer testing agencies and government reports? What about the social and psychological risks? Does the opinion leader play an ever increasing or ever decreasing role in terms of influencing purchase decisions and change?

Thus, in terms of inducing change, existing research is unclear as to the proportion of opinion leaders who are engaged in this process and, in addition, as to what the expected role of the opinion leader ought

to be in the future. Also, the literature is unclear as to what areas opinion leaders ought to have their greatest relevancy to marketing. For instance, if one narrows down the occurrence of opinion leadership to perceived uncertainty--either performance or psychosocial--one can postulate areas where opinion leadership ought to have high and low occurrence. A minor change to a staple such as salt ought to have a low occurrence of opinion leadership while a fashion change such as from the mini to the maxi ought to have a high occurrence of opinion leadership. Thus, if the product is low risk, the introduction campaign ought to forego opinion leaders and concentrate completely on the mass audience; however, if the product is high risk, then the opinion leader would be given increased importance in the promotional campaign. Speaking of promotional campaigns, nearly all the marketing theorists have stressed that it is too costly to direct the campaign to the opinion leaders.¹ This statement appears to be confusing since a very basic characteristic of opinion leaders is that they are more exposed to the mass media than their followers and especially to the mass media relevant to their specialities.² Thus, this researcher would conclude the opposite--that the opinion leaders are the easiest and cheapest to reach and that, in all likelihood, the advertisers' promotional

¹Cox, "The Audience as Communicators," pp. 175-176.

²Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet, The People's Choice, p. 57; Katz and Lazarsfeld, Personal Influence, p. 312; Rogers, Diffusion of Innovations, pp. 238-239.

campaigns are reaching the opinion leaders although little is known of what effect these campaigns are having on the opinion leader.

This researcher believes that much will be gained from a marketing mix strategy point of view if, for particular product areas, it can be determined what role the opinion leader plays, especially in terms of inducing, confirming, or supporting change. Depending upon which action is prevalent, the appropriate marketing strategy can be determined. In addition, much can be gained from a research point of view if the definition of the opinion leader can be operationalized so as to determine what effect the opinion leader does, in fact, have. In addition, opinion leadership, when viewed in the process of change, ought not to be a one dimensional view of promoting change. The opinion leader should also be examined as an agent for discouraging change. This point of view has been completely neglected by the research literature in spite of the fact that most new products fail and that most marketing attempts to induce change are failures.

CHAPTER V

HYPOTHESIS

Two elements of personal influence are postulated to exist. First, there is the occurrence of personal influence and second, there is the effectiveness of personal influence. Together these elements determine the relative importance of personal influence to the marketer. This paper will concentrate on the first element--the occurrence of personal influence.

The Occurrence of Personal Influence

It is hypothesized that the occurrence of personal influence (word-of-mouth activity as measured by frequency, recency, and number of people talked to) is related to the amount of perceived uncertainty about the consequences of the purchase decision.

A significant difference between this hypothesis and other similar studies is in the use of perceived uncertainty as a predictor of word-of-mouth activity rather than perceived risk. This study postulates that perceived uncertainty will be a more sensitive predictor than perceived risk.

Perceived uncertainty will be defined as the lack of knowledge about the consequences of a given purchase

decision--a situation which is highly applicable to the purchases of new products especially those products with a high degree of complexity and/or those without previous consumer related experiences. Information will, in turn, provide for the reduction of this uncertainty. It is postulated that high uncertainty individuals will reduce their uncertainty by seeking advice and information from other people. It should be noted that other methods for reducing uncertainty are available; these methods include technical reports (consumer reports, government reports), previous experiences (brand loyalty, store loyalty), and buying maxims (high price/high quality). Thus, word-of-mouth activity ought to be related to perceived uncertainty but not necessarily with an extremely high correlation.

Perceived risk, as previously explained, has been operationally defined by Cunningham as expected danger¹ which is considered to be more suitable to those situations of decision making under risk where the evoked process would be to choose that alternative with the lowest expected danger. On the other hand, the concept of perceived uncertainty is considered to be more suitable to those situations where the evoked process would be to seek information. Thus, perceived uncertainty has been selected as the more logical concept in terms of information

¹Cunningham, "The Major Dimensions of Perceived Risk," pp. 83-84.

seeking propensities. This study has tested both concepts, perceived uncertainty and perceived risk, empirically for their sensitivity to word-of-mouth activity.

Other Variables to be Tested

Opinion Leaders versus Opinion Seekers

Perceived uncertainty with respect to the consequences of the product purchase is hypothesized to be the main distinguishing characteristic. Opinion seekers ought to have high uncertainty and ought to be located primarily at the interest stage of the adoption process while opinion leaders ought to have low uncertainty (high certainty) due either to perceived expertise or product experience. Empirical tests conducted by Cunningham and by Arndt have resulted in conflicting findings with respect to opinion leaders and perceived risk.¹ Cunningham's opinion leaders were high risk perceivers while Arndt's opinion leaders were low risk perceivers. These conflicting findings are difficult to explain when one conceives of perceived risk in terms of uncertainty; however, when one considers perceived risk in terms of Cunningham's formulation of expected danger, one can readily understand these conflicting findings. An opinion leader with high certainty can perceive high expected danger as well as he can perceive low expected

¹Cox, "Risk Taking and Information Handling in Consumer Behavior," pp. 614-615.

danger since the resultant value will be determined by the perceived consequences of the product. Since Arndt's and Cunningham's products were different, the danger consequences attached to these products could be different. If an opinion leader is more of an expert, as many studies have shown, he should have a higher certainty than the opinion seeker who lacks knowledge and information. Thus, the empirical test ought to aid in determining the wisdom of using perceived uncertainty rather than perceived risk (expected danger). In general, the remaining characteristics such as gregariousness, status, mass media exposure, and interest ought to be only slightly higher for the opinion leader since the opinion leader and his followers ought to be very similar in general characteristics.

Interactors (Opinion Leaders and Followers)
versus Non-interactors

Gregariousness is hypothesized to be the main distinguishing characteristic between interactors and non-interactors. Interactors ought to have high gregariousness and non-interactors low gregariousness. With respect to perceived uncertainty, non-interactors could be either high or low but would probably feel uncomfortable being high and being unwilling or unable to reduce the uncertainty. Concerning characteristics such as status, mass media exposure, and interest, the opinion leaders ought to be slightly higher than followers who ought to be slightly higher than non-interactors.

CHAPTER VI

TESTING OF HYPOTHESIS

This hypothesis was tested in the area of women's fashions. Fashion has been selected since it is an area of constant and frequent change, of high occurrence of opinion leadership, of high feminine interest, and where personal influence has been reported to play an important role in the customer's purchase decision. Girls ranging in age from eighteen to twenty-four were selected since prior research has shown this age group to have the greatest incidence of fashion interest and fashion opinion leaders.¹

Testing Procedures

The population has been defined as the women residents of Linden Hall dorms, Fairleigh Dickinson University, Teaneck, New Jersey. Linden Hall consists of eight dorms, four male and four female. Each female dorm contains approximately sixty girls for a total population of 240.

A self-administered paid questionnaire was given to each girl. The head resident for each dorm identified

¹Katz and Lazarsfeld, Personal Influence, pp. 247-249.

each of the respondents as being a resident of her particular dorm. The response rate was as follows:

Population	240
Respondents	<u>222</u>
Non-respondents	18 or 7.5%

The analysis of non-respondents was as follows:

Non-respondents		18
Sick and away from dorm	3	
Away for the day	7	—
Refusals		8 or 3.3%

As can be seen from the above figures, the return rate for the survey questionnaire was excellent.

Following the principal survey, six groups of three girls each were assembled for panel discussions. The purpose of the discussions was to gain further insight into why an individual discusses fashions. For example, does an individual discuss fashion to gain information about the other party to the conversation or does the individual wish to gain information through the other party to the conversation about people external to the conversation? Or does the individual discuss fashions so as to be in a position to emulate the other persons to the conversation and so on?

Of the six groups, three groups consisted of extreme followers; the three remaining groups consisted of extreme leaders. The panel members were identified and

categorized based upon the principal survey.¹ Twenty-seven girls were identified and categorized as either extreme leaders or extreme followers. Of these twenty-seven girls, only one girl refused to participate and the other eight girls were not available due to prior commitments. Each discussion meeting lasted approximately twenty minutes with this researcher conducting all meetings. Each respondent was paid \$2.00 for participating in the discussion group.

Questionnaire

Appendix A is a complete copy of the self administered questionnaire. With the main exception of perceived uncertainty all the measures were used in previous research and were either used as is or were modified slightly. Perceived uncertainty was measured in three independent ways in an effort to find the most sensitive measure. First, perceived uncertainty was measured using Cunningham's measurement of perceived risk where perceived uncertainty is one of the two major components.² Second, perceived uncertainty was measured with respect to the certainty/uncertainty of satisfying

¹Extreme leaders were identified as those respondents who scored high both on Troldahl's and Van Dam's perceived opinion leadership scale and on question 3b (see Appendix A)--number of individuals who asked them for advice. Extreme followers were identified as those respondents who scored high in terms of asking other individuals for advice (question 2b, Appendix A).

²Cunningham, "The Major Dimensions of Perceived Risk," pp. 83-86.

fashion goals.¹ Third, perceived uncertainty was measured in terms of the March and Simon formulation of perceived uncertainty and decision making in which the amount of related past experience and the complexity of the decision determines the amount of uncertainty.²

Scoring for each of these measures of perceived uncertainty and for perceived risk is as illustrated in Tables 7A, 7B, 7C, and 7D. Concerning the independence of these scales, one would expect perceived uncertainty with respect to decision making, perceived uncertainty with respect to goals and perceived risk--each to be relatively independent of each other and for perceived uncertainty as a component of perceived risk to have less relative independence with the perceived risk measures than with the other two measures of perceived uncertainty.

Other comments concerning the questionnaire design are as follows:

1. Questions relating to measures used in previous research were utilized with as much of their original wording as was possible so that valid comparisons could be made with this particular study. This procedure resulted in using certain questions that this researcher would have preferred to change. For instance, in the perceived risk measure (see questionnaire--questions 10 and 11) the original wording was vague insomuch as "new"

¹Cox, "Risk Handling," pp. 37-38.

²March and Simon, Organizations, pp. 119-120.

TABLE 7A.--Scoring procedure for perceived risk^a

Certainty (Question 11)	Degree of Social Danger (Question 10)		
	Great Deal	Some/Not Much	No
Very	Medium*	Low	Low
Usually/Sometimes	High	Medium	Low
Almost never	High	High	Medium

* READ: A respondent reporting a great deal of social danger (Question 10) and also reporting very certain with respect to new fashion purchases (Question 11) would be classified as medium in perceived risk.

^aCunningham, "The Major Dimensions of Perceived Risk," p. 85.

TABLE 7B.--Scoring procedure for perceived uncertainty with respect to decision making^a

Complexity (Question 8)	Degree of Past Experience (Question 7)		
	Great Deal	Some/Very Little	No
Very	Medium*	High	High
Somewhat Complex/ Somewhat Simple	Low	Medium	High
Very Simple	Low	Low	Medium

* READ: A respondent reporting a great deal of past experience with respect to fashion purchases (Question 7) and also reporting fashion purchasing to be very complex (Question 8) would be classified as medium in perceived uncertainty.

^aThis scoring procedure utilizes the basic perceived risk scoring concept but with different variables.

TABLE 7C.--Scoring procedures for perceived uncertainty with respect to fashion goals

Degree of Perceived Certainty with Respect to Satisfying Fashion Goals (Question 9)	Perceived Uncertainty
Very Certain	Low*
Somewhat Certain/Somewhat Uncertain	Medium
Very Uncertain	High

* READ: A respondent reporting to be very certain with respect to fashion purchases satisfying fashion goals (Question 9) would be classified as low in perceived uncertainty.

TABLE 7D.--Scoring procedure for perceived uncertainty measured as a component of perceived risk

Degree of Perceived Certainty that a 'New' Fashion Purchase will Satisfy as well as Present Fashion (Question 11)	Perceived Uncertainty
Very/Usually Certain	Low*
Sometimes Certain	Medium
Almost Never Certain	High

* READ: A respondent reporting to be very certain or usually certain that a 'new' fashion purchase would satisfy as well as a present fashion (Question 11) would be classified as low in perceived uncertainty.

fashions were not specifically defined. This possibly resulted in an array of responses which may or may not have had any correlation with fashion conversations actually experienced.

2. Although the population studied was entirely female, questions 2a and 2b, the asking of fashion opinions, permitted his or her responses since the environment was coeducational and it was anticipated that females, in reducing their perceived uncertainty, would ask males for their opinions on fashions.

3. The questionnaire contained certain segments, for example, hot pants segment--questions 13 to 19, which were not utilized in this study. Data collected from these segments will be utilized in other studies.

Pretesting of Questionnaire

The questionnaire was pretested using twelve coeds in the relevant age range from Baruch College. Results from this pretest indicated: a) that the questionnaire bordered on being lengthy since it took approximately forty minutes to complete, therefore, the subsequent questionnaire was reduced in size so as to be completed within twenty-five minutes; b) that nearly all the respondents reported being engaged in a fashion discussion within the commonly used time period of six months;¹ thus,

¹Cunningham, "The Major Dimensions of Perceived Risk," pp. 82-108.

additional and more recent time periods were added; and
c) that the majority of the respondents tended to concentrate in two out of the three perceived uncertainty categories; therefore, the target sample size was increased from 100 to 200 in order to provide for an adequate distribution of respondents among the high, medium, and low perceived uncertainty categories.

CHAPTER VII

EMPIRICAL ANALYSES

The occurrence of personal influence as measured by word-of-mouth activity has been hypothesized to be related to the amount of perceived uncertainty that an individual has about the consequences of a given decision. In other words, an individual with high perceived uncertainty ought to engage in more word-of-mouth activities than would an individual with low perceived uncertainty. It should be noted that this individual with high perceived uncertainty would have many alternative ways in which to reduce that uncertainty. The main point is that uncertainty reduction through product related discussion is but one of the individual's alternative ways of reducing uncertainty. In addition, there are many reasons why people discuss products--for conversational purposes, social reasons, and so forth--again, with information gathering so as to reduce uncertainty being one of the many alternative reasons. Thus, because of the many alternatives associated both with reducing uncertainty and with product related discussions, it is unlikely that extremely high correlations will be obtained between perceived uncertainty and word-of-mouth activity. Although perceived uncertainty is not expected to explain

all the variances in product related discussions, it is, nevertheless, expected to explain a significant portion of that variance.

Therefore, the empirical data ought to present a portrait of high perceived uncertainty individuals differing significantly from low perceived uncertainty individuals in terms of the following: a) discussing of fashions within a given time period, b) the frequency of fashion conversation, c) the recency of conversation, d) the number of people talked to, e) the initiation of conversation, f) the asking of opinions, and g) being asked opinions. The high perceived uncertainty individual is expected to be an active information seeker and to rank high in the above stated variables which indicate active information seeking.

It is also postulated that perceived uncertainty will be a more sensitive measure of an individual's information seeking propensities than perceived risk. Thus, the empirical analyses will compare perceived uncertainty with perceived risks for each of the above mentioned variables concerning information seeking. It should be noted that three different scales were used to measure perceived uncertainty; thus, each variable will be analyzed using the three measures of perceived uncertainty and the one measure of perceived risk.

Discussion Within a Given Time Period

As informational seekers, individuals with high

perceived uncertainty ought to have discussed fashions within the reported time periods of one week to six months. Thus, as a group, they should show a higher percentage of fashion talkers for each of these time periods than a group of individuals with low perceived uncertainty. The empirical data presented in Tables 8A, 8B, 8C, and 8D does not provide any support for this expectation. For each of the measures of perceived uncertainty and perceived risk and for each reported time period--"within the previous week," "within the previous one to two weeks," "within the previous month," and "within the previous six months"--the differences between high, medium, and low perceivers in terms of the percentage of the group discussing fashion within these time periods are not statistically significant.

These initial findings deal a severe blow to the use of either perceived uncertainty or perceived risk as a predictor of verbal information seeking activity in the population under analysis since in the previous research this analysis provides the best support for the use of perceived risk as a predictor of verbal information seeking activity.¹

An explanation for these unexpected findings is that since fashion is such a frequent topic of conversation, as the various percentages for each of the time periods in Tables 8A, 8B, 8C, and 8D indicate, it becomes very

¹Cunningham, "Perceived Risk," pp. 82-108.

TABLE 8A.--Perceived uncertainty with respect to decision making and per cent discussing fashions

Time Period	Perceived Uncertainty							
	Low		Medium		High		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Within a week	25	63*	75	52	15	65	115	56 ^a
Within 1-2 weeks	32	80	115	80	20	87	167	81
Within a month	35	88	135	95	20	87	191	93
Within 6 months	35	88	137	96	21	91	193	94

*READ: Of the respondents classified as low in perceived uncertainty 63 per cent discussed fashions within the previous week.

^aChi Square= 1.03--not significant at the .05 level (d. f.= 2).

TABLE 8B.--Perceived uncertainty with respect to fashion goals and the per cent discussing fashions

Time Period	Perceived Uncertainty							
	Low		Medium		High		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Within a week	36	55*	79	57	-	-	115	56 ^a
Within 1-2 weeks	54	82	113	81	-	-	167	81
Within a month	61	92	129	92	-	-	190	92
Within 6 months	61	93	131	94	-	-	192	93

*READ: of the respondents classified as low in perceived uncertainty 55 per cent discussed fashions within the previous week.

^aChi Square= .03--not significant at the .05 level (d. f.= 1).

TABLE 8C.--Perceived risk and the per cent discussing fashions

Time Period	Perceived Risk							
	Low		Medium		High		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Within a week	32	60*	75	54	9	53	116	55 ^a
Within 1-2 weeks	42	79	115	83	13	77	170	81
Within a month	48	91	133	95	14	82	195	93
Within 6 months	49	92	133	95	15	86	197	94

*READ: Of the respondents classified as low in perceived risk 60 per cent discussed fashions within the previous week.

^aChi Square= .19--not significant at the .05 level (d. f.= 2).

TABLE 8D.--Perceived uncertainty measured as a component of perceived risk and the per cent discussing fashions

Time Period	Perceived Uncertainty							
	Low		Medium		High		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Within a week	44	53*	63	60	9	41	116	55 ^a
Within 1-2 weeks	71	86	87	83	14	64	172	82
Within a month	79	95	99	94	18	82	196	93
Within 6 months	80	96	100	95	18	82	198	94

*READ: Of the respondents classified as low in perceived uncertainty 53 per cent discussed fashions within the previous week.

^aChi Square= 1.27--not significant at the .05 level (d. f.= 2).

difficult to differentiate between talkers and non-talkers. This explanation appears to be valid for the categories of "within 1-2 weeks," "within a month," and "within six months" since the percentage of the population discussing fashion is high (80 to 94 per cent). However, for the "within a week" category the percentage discussing fashion is 56 per cent and one would expect that perceived uncertainty ought to be able to distinguish between talkers and non-talkers at this level. Thus, this explanation of a high percentage of the population discussing fashion and thus making it difficult to distinguish between talkers and non-talkers does not completely explain the empirical data.

Another explanation is that within a college dorm setting the likelihood of a fashion discussion is highly dependent upon the group setting rather than on the individual's perception of uncertainty. For example, if girls in a given group are discussing fashion, then it is likely that all the girls in that group will engage in a discussion concerning fashion, thus implying that the discussion of fashion within a college dorm is more dependent upon the group setting than upon the individual's perception of uncertainty. Thus, one would expect that, if fashion discussion is somewhat dependent upon group location, for a given level of fashion discussion (such as 56 per cent of the population engage in discussing fashions within the previous week) some groups would be very high in terms of discussing fashion and other groups

would then be very low. In other words, there would be significant differences among groups in terms of discussing fashion.

To test this explanation a group setting was defined as a dorm floor which has the living capacity of twenty-four girls. The population was analyzed with respect to differences among groups (floors) in terms of discussing fashions within the previous week--a time period selected since it contains almost equal portions of talkers and non-talkers. The analysis (see Table 9) showed no significant statistical differences among floors in terms of discussing fashions. Thus, discussion sessions among the members of a floor do not appear to be an over-riding variable; however, this analysis does not definitely disprove this alternative explanation since many groups other than those determined by dorm floor location are operative in a college campus setting. In order to prove or disprove this explanation of group membership over-riding the psychological factors of either uncertainty or risk, these other groups would have to be identified and tested in a similar fashion.

TABLE 9.--Discussion of fashion within previous week
versus floor location

Floor Location	Number Discussing Fashion within Previous Week ^a
1B	5.5
1C	8.5
2A	10.7
2B	10.8
2C	13.2
3A	12.3
3B	9.3
3C	10.0
6B	11.2
6C	10.1
Total	101.6

Average number of individuals per floor discussing
fashions= 10.2

Chi Square= 4.0--not significant at the .05 level (d.f.= 9)

^aAll floors were adjusted to a common basis of
20 individuals.

Amount of Fashion Conversation

An individual with high perceived uncertainty ought to have had a greater amount of fashion discussions within the last six months as compared to an individual with low perceived uncertainty. The amount of fashion discussions will be measured by the number of people talked to, the frequency of discussing fashions, and the recency of the last fashion conversation.

For evaluation purposes Tables 10A, 10B, and 10C indicate the expected relationships in terms of percentages and Goodman-Kruskal coefficients of association¹ for each of the measures of the amount of fashion conversation versus perceived uncertainty. Based on the initial premise that an individual with high perceived uncertainty ought to have a greater amount of fashion discussions than an individual with low perceived uncertainty, the empirical data should tend toward the distribution of percentages indicated in each of the tables. Note that the Goodman-Kruskal coefficient signifies a positive agreement with a G value of 1.0 (plus) and a negative agreement with a G value of -1.0 (minus). In addition, the empirical data, as discussed previously, is not expected to have high agreements with the theoretical distribution. Thus, the empirical data will be analyzed in terms of its tendencies towards these theoretical distributions.

¹Linton C. Freeman, Elementary Applied Statistics (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1965), pp. 79-88.

TABLE 10A.--Perceived uncertainty and the number of people talked to

Number of People Talked to ^a	Perceived Uncertainty		
	Low	Medium	High
0-2	100%		
3-9		100%	
10 or more			100%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Goodman-Kruskal Coefficient, $G = +1.0$

^aThe distribution of the number of people talked to into the three categories of 0-2, 3-9, and 10 or more could be considered as categories of low, medium, and high respectively. These categories were determined by taking the median groupings in which both 3-5 and 6-9 were of similar frequency and classifying these groups as medium. Groups on either side were classified as low or high.

TABLE 10B.--Perceived uncertainty and the frequency of discussing fashions

Frequency ^a	Perceived Uncertainty		
	Low	Medium	High
0-2	100%		
3-9		100%	
10 or more			100%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Goodman-Kruskal Coefficient, $G = +1.0$

^aThe distribution for the frequency of discussing fashion was determined in a manner similar to the determination of the distribution for the number of people talked to (see Table 8A, footnote a).

TABLE 10C.--Perceived uncertainty and the recency of discussing fashions

Recency of Discussing Fashions ^a	Perceived Uncertainty		
	Low	Medium	High
Less than 1 week			100%
1-2 weeks		100%	
A month or longer	100%		
Total	100%	100%	100%

Goodman-Kruskal Coefficient, $G = -1.0$

^aWith respect to the distribution for the recency of discussing fashions, the questionnaire had categories from 1 week to 1-2 weeks to one month to three months to six months. Since very few responses occurred with respect to one month or longer, these responses were summarized into that category while the more recent categories of less than 1 week and 1-2 weeks remained the same as contained in the questionnaire.

Empirical Analyses

The analyses of the empirical data for each of the expected relationships show no significant statistical support--see Tables 11A to 11D (Perceived Uncertainty and Number of People Talked to), Tables 12A to 12D (Perceived Uncertainty and the Frequency of Discussing Fashions), and Tables 13A to 13D (Perceived Uncertainty and the Recency of Discussing Fashions). These non-predicted findings are probably being affected by the same phenomena which affected the previous analysis, The Discussion of Fashions within a Given Time Period, in which two partial but not strong explanations were offered. However, these analyses are revealing that, for the population under study, psychological variables such as either perceived uncertainty or perceived risk appear to have very little effect upon the discussing of fashions within a given time period and, in addition, these psychological variables do not vary significantly with the number of people talked to, the frequency of discussions, and the recency of discussions.

The Asking of Fashion Opinions

An individual with high perceived uncertainty ought to be much more active in terms of asking fashion opinions than an individual with low perceived uncertainty. The degree of asking fashion opinions will be measured by the number of people asked, the number of different times a fashion opinion was asked, and the recency of asking

TABLE 11A.--Perceived uncertainty with respect to decision making and the number of people talked to

Number of People Talked to	Perceived Uncertainty					
	Low		Medium		High	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
0-2	6	16*	18	14	3	14
3-9	21	55	75	59	9	43
10 or more	11	29	34	27	9	43
Total	38	100	127	100	21	100

* READ: Of the respondents classified as low in perceived uncertainty with respect to decision making, 16 per cent discussed fashions with 2 or less persons in the last six months.

Goodman-Kruskal Coefficient, $G = .09$

TABLE 11B.--Perceived uncertainty with respect to fashion goals and the number of people talked to

Number of People Talked to	Perceived Uncertainty					
	Low		Medium		High	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
0-2	8	15*	19	15	-	-
3-9	31	56	73	57	1	-
10 or more	16	29	36	28	-	-
Total	55	100	128	100	1	-

* READ: Of the respondents classified as low in perceived uncertainty with respect to fashion goals, 15 per cent discussed fashions with 2 or less persons in the last six months.

Goodman-Kruskal Coefficient, $G = -.02$

TABLE 11C.--Perceived risk and the number of people talked to

Number of People Talked to	Perceived Risk					
	Low		Medium		High	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
0-2	9	20*	13	10	5	29
3-9	25	54	73	59	8	47
10 or more	12	26	38	31	4	24
Total	46	100	124	100	17	100

* READ: Of the respondents classified as low in perceived risk, 20 per cent discussed fashions with 2 or less persons in the last six months.

Goodman-Kruskal Coefficient, $G = .02$

TABLE 11D.--Perceived uncertainty measured as a component of perceived risk and the number of people talked to

Number of People Talked to	Perceived Uncertainty					
	Low		Medium		High	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
0-2	7	10*	10	11	4	22
3-9	44	65	51	55	11	61
10 or more	17	25	32	34	3	17
Total	68	100	93	100	18	100

* READ: Of the respondents classified as low in perceived uncertainty measured as a component of perceived risk, 10 per cent discussed fashions with 2 or less persons in the last six months.

Goodman-Kruskal Coefficient, $G = -.02$

TABLE 12A.--Perceived uncertainty with respect to decision making and the frequency of discussing fashions

Frequency of Discussing Fashions	Perceived Uncertainty					
	Low		Medium		High	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
0-2	7	18*	14	12	4	20
3-9	18	46	57	49	8	40
10 or more	14	36	45	39	8	40
Total	39	100	116	100	20	100

*READ: Of the respondents classified as low in perceived uncertainty with respect to decision making, 18 per cent discussed fashions 2 or fewer times in the last six months.

Goodman-Kruskal Coefficient, $G = .04$

TABLE 12B.--Perceived uncertainty with respect to fashion goals and the frequency of discussing fashions

Frequency of Discussing Fashions	Perceived Uncertainty					
	Low		Medium		High	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
0-2	8	14*	16	14	1	-
3-9	31	54	57	49	1	-
10 or more	18	32	43	37	-	-
Total	57	100	116	100	2	-

*READ: Of the respondents classified as low in perceived uncertainty with respect to fashion goals, 14 per cent discussed fashions 2 or fewer times in the last six months.

Goodman-Kruskal Coefficient, $G = .03$

TABLE 12C.--Perceived risk and the frequency of discussing fashions

Frequency of Discussing Fashions	Perceived Risk					
	Low		Medium		High	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
0-2	7	17*	14	11	4	27
3-9	21	50	59	48	6	40
10 or more	14	33	50	41	5	33
Total	42	100	123	100	15	100

*READ: Of the respondents classified as low in perceived risk, 17 per cent discussed fashions 2 or fewer times in the last six months.

Goodman-Kruskal Coefficient, $G = .04$

TABLE 12D.--Perceived uncertainty measured as a component of perceived risk and the frequency of discussing fashions

Frequency of Discussing Fashions	Perceived Uncertainty					
	Low		Medium		High	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
0-2	7	11*	6	7	6	35
3-9	34	52	45	52	7	41
10 or more	24	37	35	41	4	24
Total	65	100	86	100	17	100

*READ: Of the respondents classified as low in perceived uncertainty measured as a component of perceived risk, 11 per cent discussed fashions 2 or fewer times in the last six months.

Goodman-Kruskal Coefficient, $G = -.09$

TABLE 13A.--Perceived uncertainty with respect to decision making and the recency of discussing fashions

Recency of Discussing Fashions	Perceived Uncertainty					
	Low		Medium		High	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Less than 1 week	25	71*	75	55	15	71
1-2 weeks	7	20	40	29	5	24
A month or longer	3	9	22	16	1	5
Total	35	100	137	100	21	100

*READ: Of the respondents classified as low in perceived uncertainty with respect to decision making, 71 per cent discussed fashion within the previous week.

Goodman-Kruskal Coefficient, $G = .06$

TABLE 13B.--Perceived uncertainty with respect to fashion goals and the recency of discussing fashions

Recency of Discussing Fashions	Perceived Uncertainty					
	Low		Medium		High	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Less than 1 week	36	59*	79	60	-	-
1-2 weeks	17	28	34	26	1	-
A month or longer	8	13	18	14	1	-
Total	61	100	131	100	2	-

*READ: Of the respondents classified as low in perceived uncertainty with respect to fashion goals, 59 per cent discussed fashions within the previous week.

Goodman-Kruskal Coefficient, $G = .02$

TABLE 13C.--Perceived risk and the recency of discussing fashions

Recency of Discussing Fashions	Perceived Risk					
	Low		Medium		High	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Less than 1 week	32	66*	75	56	9	60
1-2 weeks	10	20	41	31	4	27
A month or longer	7	14	17	13	2	13
Total	49	100	133	100	15	100

*READ: Of the respondents classified as low in perceived risk, 66 per cent discussed fashions within the previous week.

Goodman-Kruskal Coefficient, $G = .09$

TABLE 13D.--Perceived uncertainty measured as a component of perceived risk and the recency of discussing fashions

Recency of Discussing Fashions	Perceived Uncertainty					
	Low		Medium		High	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Less than 1 week	44	55*	63	63	9	50
1-2 weeks	27	34	24	24	5	28
A month or longer	9	11	13	13	4	22
Total	80	100	100	100	18	100

*READ: Of the respondents classified as low in perceived uncertainty measured as a component of perceived risk, 55 per cent discussed fashions within the previous week.

Goodman-Kruskal Coefficient, $G = -.02$

fashion opinions. Expected correlations between perceived uncertainty and these variables are the same as discussed in the previous section, Amount of Fashion Conversation.

Empirical Analyses

In general, the empirical analyses provide no significant statistical support for any of the expected relationships--see Tables 14A to 14D (Perceived Uncertainty and the Number of People Asked), Tables 15A to 15D (Perceived Uncertainty and the Frequency of Asking), and Tables 16A to 16D (Perceived Uncertainty and the Recency of Asking). On the positive side, the asking of fashion opinions as measured by the number of people asked had an expected positive relationship with perceived uncertainty measured as a component of perceived risk (Table 14D, $G = .15$) while the recency of fashion opinion had an expected negative relationship with perceived uncertainty with respect to decision making (Table 16A, $G = -.13$). In both cases the coefficient of association, G , was not of sufficient absolute strength so as to provide strong support for the expected relationship. Thus, considering that only two tests out of twelve tests showed limited support for the expected relationships, one can conclude from the population under study that psychological variables such as perceived uncertainty and perceived risk have very little effect upon the asking of fashion opinions as measured by the number of people asked, the number of different times a fashion opinion was asked,

TABLE 14A.--Perceived uncertainty with respect to decision making and the number of people asked for an opinion

Number of People Asked for an Opinion	Perceived Uncertainty					
	Low		Medium		High	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
0-2	5	14*	32	24	5	23
3-9	19	54	77	59	8	36
10 or more	11	32	22	17	9	41
Total	35	100	131	100	22	100

*READ: Of the respondents classified as low in perceived uncertainty with respect to decision making, 14 per cent asked 2 or fewer persons for an opinion about fashions within the last six months.

Goodman-Kruskal Coefficient, $G = .06$

TABLE 14B.--Perceived uncertainty with respect to fashion goals and the number of people asked for an opinion

Number of People Asked for an Opinion	Perceived Uncertainty					
	Low		Medium		High	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
0-2	15	27*	28	21	1	-
3-9	24	44	78	59	-	-
10 or more	16	29	27	20	1	-
Total	55	100	133	100	2	-

*READ: Of the respondents classified as low in perceived risk with respect to fashion goals, 27 per cent asked 2 or fewer persons for an opinion about fashions within the last six months.

Goodman-Kruskal Coefficient, $G = -.03$

TABLE 14C.--Perceived risk and the number of people asked for an opinion

Number of People that You Have Asked	Perceived Risk					
	Low		Medium		High	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
0-2	9	23*	19	15	4	29
3-9	21	54	73	59	8	57
10 or more	9	23	32	26	2	14
Total	39	100	124	100	14	100

* READ: Of the respondents classified as low in perceived risk, 23 per cent asked 2 or fewer persons for an opinion about fashions within the last six months.

Goodman-Kruskal Coefficient, $G = .00$

TABLE 14D.--Perceived uncertainty measured as a component of perceived risk and the number of people asked for an opinion

Number of People that You Have Asked	Perceived Uncertainty					
	Low		Medium		High	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
0-2	17	24*	16	17	1	8
3-9	41	57	52	55	10	84
10 or more	14	19	27	28	1	8
Total	72	100	95	100	12	100

* READ: Of the respondents classified as low in perceived uncertainty measured as a component of perceived risk, 24 per cent asked 2 or fewer persons for an opinion about fashions within the last six months.

Goodman-Kruskal Coefficient, $G = .15$

TABLE 15A.--Perceived uncertainty with respect to decision making and the frequency of asking for a fashion opinion

Frequency	Perceived Uncertainty					
	Low		Medium		High	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
0-2	8	24*	32	26	2	10
3-9	16	47	61	49	11	50
10 or more	10	29	31	25	7	40
Total	34	100	124	100	20	100

*READ: Of the respondents classified as low in perceived uncertainty with respect to decision making, 24 per cent asked for a fashion opinion 2 or fewer times in the last six months.

Goodman-Kruskal Coefficient, $G = .08$

TABLE 15B.--Perceived uncertainty with respect to fashion goals and the frequency of asking for a fashion opinion

Frequency	Perceived Uncertainty					
	Low		Medium		High	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
0-2	11	20*	30	25	1	-
3-9	28	52	60	49	1	-
10 or more	15	28	32	26	-	-
Total	54	100	122	100	2	-

*READ: Of the respondents classified as low in perceived uncertainty with respect to fashion goals, 20 per cent asked for a fashion opinion 2 or fewer times in the last six months.

Goodman-Kruskal Coefficient, $G = -.10$

TABLE 15C.--Perceived risk and the frequency of asking for a fashion opinion

Frequency	Perceived Risk					
	Low		Medium		High	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
0-2	9	25*	18	16	4	31
3-9	17	47	65	56	6	46
10 or more	10	28	33	28	3	23
Total	36	100	116	100	13	100

*READ: Of the respondents classified as low in perceived risk, 25 per cent asked for a fashion opinion 2 or fewer times in the last six months.

Goodman-Kruskal Coefficient, $G = .01$

TABLE 15D.--Perceived uncertainty measured as a component of perceived risk and the frequency of asking for a fashion opinion

Frequency	Perceived Uncertainty					
	Low		Medium		High	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
0-2	12	18*	20	22	1	8
3-9	36	56	43	46	9	75
10 or more	17	26	29	32	2	17
Total	65	100	92	100	12	100

*READ: Of the respondents classified as low in perceived uncertainty measured as a component of perceived risk, 18 per cent asked for a fashion opinion 2 or fewer times in the last six months.

Goodman-Kruskal Coefficient, $G = .02$

TABLE 16A.--Perceived uncertainty with respect to decision making and the recency of asking for a fashion opinion

Recency	Perceived Uncertainty					
	Low		Medium		High	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Less than 1 week	21	64*	71	52	17	85
1-2 weeks	8	24	38	28	3	15
A month or longer	4	12	28	20	-	-
Total	33	100	137	100	20	100

* READ: Of the respondents classified as low in perceived uncertainty with respect to decision making, 64 per cent asked for a fashion opinion within the previous week.

Goodman-Kruskal Coefficient, $G = -.13$

TABLE 16B.--Perceived uncertainty with respect to fashion goals and the recency of asking for a fashion opinion

Recency	Perceived Uncertainty					
	Low		Medium		High	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Less than 1 week	34	55*	76	58	-	-
1-2 weeks	18	30	31	24	-	-
A month or longer	9	15	23	18	-	-
Total	61	100	130	100	-	-

* READ: Of the respondents classified as low in perceived uncertainty with respect to fashion goals, 55 per cent asked for a fashion opinion within the previous week.

Goodman-Kruskal Coefficient, $G = -.02$

TABLE 16C.--Perceived risk and the recency of asking for a fashion opinion

Recency	Perceived Risk					
	Low		Medium		High	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Less than 1 week	25	57*	77	57	8	61
1-2 weeks	13	30	32	24	4	31
A month or longer	6	13	25	19	1	8
Total	44	100	134	100	13	100

*READ: Of those respondents classified as low in perceived risk, 57 per cent asked for a fashion opinion within the previous week.

Goodman-Kruskal Coefficient, $G = -.02$

TABLE 16D.--Perceived uncertainty measured as a component of perceived risk and the recency of asking for a fashion opinion

Recency	Perceived Uncertainty					
	Low		Medium		High	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Less than 1 week	40	52*	63	62	7	54
1-2 weeks	26	34	20	20	3	23
A month or longer	11	14	18	18	3	23
Total	77	100	101	100	13	100

*READ: Of the respondents classified as low in perceived uncertainty measured as a component of perceived risk, 52 per cent asked for a fashion opinion within the previous week.

Goodman-Kruskal Coefficient, $G = -.07$

number of different times a fashion opinion was asked, and the recency of asking fashion opinions.

Being Asked an Opinion

An individual with high perceived uncertainty ought not to be actively sought after by others in terms of his opinion. Although an individual's perception of himself and the way others perceive him may differ, this possibility is being discounted and the above negative relationship between high perceived uncertainty and the amount of asking for one's opinion by others is postulated. The amount of asking for one's opinion will be measured by the number of people asking, by the number of different times a fashion opinion was asked, and by the recency of being asked for one's opinion. Expected percentage distributions and Goodman-Kruskal coefficients of association between perceived uncertainty and these variables are as shown in Tables 17A, 17B, and 17C.

Empirical Analyses

In general, the empirical analyses provide no significant statistical support for each of the expected relationships--see Tables 18A to 18D (Perceived Uncertainty and the Number of People Asking Respondent), Tables 19A to 19D (Perceived Uncertainty and the Frequency of Other People Asking Respondent), and Tables 20A to 20D (Perceived Uncertainty and the Recency of Being Asked for a Fashion Opinion). An interesting finding is that all three

TABLE 17A.--Perceived uncertainty and the number of people asking respondent for opinions

Number of People asking Respondent for Opinions	Perceived Uncertainty		
	Low	Medium	High
0-2			100%
3-9		100%	
10 or more	100%		
Total	100%	100%	100%

Goodman-Kruskal Coefficient, $G = -1.0$

TABLE 17B.--Perceived uncertainty and the frequency of other people asking respondent for opinions

Frequency	Perceived Uncertainty		
	Low	Medium	High
0-2			100%
3-9		100%	
10 or more	100%		
Total	100%	100%	100%

Goodman-Kruskal Coefficient, $G = -1.0$

TABLE 17C.--Perceived uncertainty and the recency of being asked for a fashion opinion

Recency	Perceived Uncertainty		
	Low	Medium	High
Less than 1 week	100%		
1-2 weeks		100%	
A month or longer			100%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Goodman-Kruskal Coefficient, $G = 1.0$

measures of being asked a fashion opinion versus perceived risk showed a slight relationship but in the opposite direction as predicted--see Tables 18C, 19C, and 20C with G values of .13, .15, and -.18 respectively. In addition, perceived uncertainty with respect to decision making versus the recency of asking for a fashion opinion also showed a slight relationship but in the opposite direction as had been predicted--see Table 20A, G value= -.17.

These negative perceived risk findings are consistent with Cunningham's negative finding concerning opinion leaders and perceived risk with opinion leaders found to be high rather than low in terms of perceived risk.¹ A speculative explanation for these negative findings is that, as an individual attains greater expertise he, in turn, becomes aware of more potential dangers, thus increasing his perception of risk while at the same time others perceive him to be an expert and actively seek his opinions. Therefore, a high perceived risk individual's opinions would be actively sought and, thus, he would be designated as an opinion leader. This explanation, however, is contradicted by Table 23 (Characteristics of Opinion Leaders, Followers, Leaders and Followers, and Inactives) insomuch as, for this population under study, followers are higher than both leaders and combined opinion leaders and followers in terms of perceived

¹Cunningham, "Perceived Risk as a Factor," pp. 265-267.

TABLE 18A.--Perceived uncertainty with respect to decision making and the number of people asking respondent for opinion

Number of People Asking Respondent for Opinion	Perceived Uncertainty					
	Low		Medium		High	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
0-2	5	16*	34	28	6	26
3-9	19	61	69	56	8	35
10 or more	7	23	19	16	9	39
Total	31	100	122	100	23	100

*READ: Of the respondents classified as low in perceived uncertainty with respect to decision making, 16 per cent were asked for their fashion opinions by 2 or fewer persons within the last six months.

Goodman-Kruskal Coefficient, $G = .00$

TABLE 18B.--Perceived uncertainty with respect to fashion goals and the number of people asking respondent for opinion

Number of People Asking Respondent for Opinion	Perceived Uncertainty					
	Low		Medium		High	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
0-2	17	32*	32	26	-	-
3-9	22	40	73	59	-	-
10 or more	15	28	19	15	-	-
Total	54	100	124	100	-	-

*READ: Of the respondents classified as low in perceived uncertainty with respect to fashion goals, 32 per cent were asked for their fashion opinions by 2 or fewer persons within the last six months.

Goodman-Kruskal Coefficient, $G = -.07$

TABLE 18C.--Perceived risk and the number of people asking respondent for opinion

Number of People Asking Respondent for Opinion	Perceived Risk					
	Low		Medium		High	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
0-2	11	28*	20	17	4	29
3-9	22	57	71	61	7	50
10 or more	6	15	25	22	3	21
Total	39	100	116	100	14	100

*READ: Of the respondents classified as low in perceived risk, 28 per cent were asked for their fashion opinions by 2 or fewer persons within the last six months.

Goodman-Kruskal Coefficient, $G = .13$

TABLE 18D.--Perceived uncertainty measured as a component of perceived risk and the number of people asking respondent for opinion

Number of People Asking Respondent for Opinion	Perceived Uncertainty					
	Low		Medium		High	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
0-2	13	20*	13	20	3	27
3-9	37	57	53	61	6	55
10 or more	15	23	17	19	2	18
Total	65	100	88	100	11	100

*READ: Of the respondents classified as low in perceived uncertainty measured as a component of perceived risk, 20 per cent were asked for their fashion opinions by 2 or fewer persons within the last six months.

Goodman-Kruskal Coefficient, $G = -.08$

TABLE 19A.--Perceived uncertainty with respect to decision making and the frequency of other people asking respondent for a fashion opinion

Frequency	Perceived Uncertainty					
	Low		Medium		High	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
0-2	4	13*	28	24	3	15
3-9	15	50	59	50	10	50
10 or more	11	37	31	26	7	35
Total	30	100	118	100	20	100

*READ: Of the respondents classified as low in perceived uncertainty with respect to decision making, 13 per cent were asked for their opinions by 2 or fewer persons within the last six months.

Goodman-Kruskal Coefficient, $G = .06$

TABLE 19B.--Perceived uncertainty with respect to fashion goals and the frequency of other people asking respondent for a fashion opinion

Frequency	Perceived Uncertainty					
	Low		Medium		High	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
0-2	13	25*	24	21	-	-
3-9	24	46	57	49	1	-
10 or more	15	29	34	30	-	-
Total	52	100	115	100	1	-

*READ: Of the respondents classified as low in perceived uncertainty with respect to fashion goals, 25 per cent were asked for their opinions by 2 or fewer persons within the last six months.

Goodman-Kruskal Coefficient, $G = .05$

TABLE 19C.--Perceived risk and the frequency of other people asking for a fashion opinion

Frequency	Perceived Risk					
	Low		Medium		High	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
0-2	10	26*	12	11	4	31
3-9	20	51	59	56	5	38
10 or more	9	23	34	32	4	31
Total	39	100	105	100	13	100

* READ: Of the respondents classified as low in perceived risk, 26 per cent were asked for their opinions by 2 or fewer persons within the last six months.

Goodman-Kruskal Coefficient, $G = .15$

TABLE 19D.--Perceived uncertainty measured as a component of perceived risk and the frequency of other people asking respondent for a fashion opinion

Frequency	Perceived Uncertainty					
	Low		Medium		High	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
0-2	10	16*	12	14	2	20
3-9	32	52	45	53	6	60
10 or more	20	32	28	33	2	20
Total	62	100	85	100	10	100

* READ: Of the respondents classified as low in perceived uncertainty measured as a component of perceived risk, 16 per cent were asked for their opinions by 2 or fewer persons within the last six months.

Goodman-Kruskal Coefficient, $G = -.03$

TABLE 20A.--Perceived uncertainty with respect to decision making and the recency of being asked for a fashion opinion

Recency	Perceived Uncertainty					
	Low		Medium		High	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Less than 1 week	15	47*	67	51	14	74
1-2 weeks	15	47	43	33	4	21
A month or longer	2	6	21	16	1	5
Total	32	100	131	100	19	100

*READ: Of the respondents classified as low in perceived uncertainty with respect to decision making, 47 per cent were asked for their fashion opinions within the previous week.

Goodman-Kruskal Coefficient, $G = -.17$

TABLE 20B.--Perceived uncertainty with respect to fashion goals and the recency of being asked for a fashion opinion

Recency	Perceived Uncertainty					
	Low		Medium		High	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Less than 1 week	30	50*	67	56	-	-
1-2 weeks	24	40	35	29	-	-
A month or longer	6	10	18	15	-	-
Total	60	100	120	100	-	-

*READ: Of the respondents classified as low in perceived uncertainty with respect to fashion goals, 50 per cent were asked for their fashion opinions within the previous week.

Goodman-Kruskal Coefficient, $G = .05$

TABLE 20C.--Perceived risk and the recency of being asked for a fashion opinion

Recency	Perceived Risk					
	Low		Medium		High	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Less than 1 week	26	60*	65	52	6	43
1-2 weeks	14	33	40	33	6	43
A month or longer	3	7	18	15	2	14
Total	43	100	123	100	14	100

*READ: Of the respondents classified as low in perceived risk, 60 per cent were asked for their fashion opinions within the previous week.

Goodman-Kruskal Coefficient, $G = -.18$

TABLE 20D.--Perceived uncertainty measured as a component of perceived risk and the recency of being asked for a fashion opinion

Recency	Perceived Uncertainty					
	Low		Medium		High	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Less than 1 week	38	54*	54	57	4	31
1-2 weeks	27	38	27	29	7	54
A month or longer	6	8	13	14	2	15
Total	71	100	94	100	13	100

*READ: Of the respondents classified as low in perceived uncertainty measured as a component of perceived risk, 54 per cent were asked for their fashion opinions within the previous week.

Goodman-Kruskal Coefficient, $G = .08$

risk--.91 versus .86 versus .85. (Note: Since greater than 90 per cent of the population was surveyed, these results can be taken as parameters of the population.) Thus, for this study, the perceived risk data is in conflict and this, in turn, leads one to be skeptical with respect to the validity of perceived risk with respect to information seeking activities.

Initiation of Conversation

Consistent with the portrait of the high perceived uncertainty individual as an information seeker, one would expect that, with respect to her last conversation, a higher percentage of high uncertainty individuals would be more likely to initiate the conversation than would low risk perceivers. In addition, one would expect that, when a high uncertainty perceiver brings up the subject of fashion in a conversation, she would be more likely to ask someone for information rather than to suggest information or to engage in both asking and suggesting.

The data relevant to the first expectation that high uncertainty perceivers would be more likely to initiate the last conversation than low uncertainty perceivers is presented in Tables 21A to 21D. The empirical data provides no significant statistical support for the expectation that high uncertainty perceivers are more likely to initiate fashion conversations than low uncertainty perceivers. The data for all three measures of perceived uncertainty and the measure for perceived risk indicate that the initiation

TABLE 21A.--Perceived uncertainty with respect to decision making and the initiation of conversation

Initiator of Conversation	Perceived Uncertainty							
	Low		Medium		High		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Respondent Initiated	14	50*	51	53	9	69	74	55

*READ: Of the respondents classified as low in perceived uncertainty with respect to decision making, 50 per cent reported they, not the other person, initiated their last fashion conversation.

Chi Square= .06--not significant at the .05 level (d. f.= 2).

TABLE 21B.--Perceived uncertainty with respect to fashion goals and the initiation of conversation

Initiator of Conversation	Perceived Uncertainty							
	Low		Medium		High		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Respondent Initiated	21	58*	53	54	-	-	74	55

*READ: Of the respondents classified as low in perceived uncertainty with respect to fashion goals, 58 per cent reported they, not the other person, initiated their last fashion conversation.

Chi Square= .07--not significant at the .05 level (d. f.= 1).

TABLE 21C.--Perceived risk and the initiation of conversation

Initiator of Conversation	Perceived Risk							
	Low		Medium		High		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Respondent Initiated	18	53*	48	53	6	80	74	55

* READ: Of the respondents classified as low in perceived risk, 53 per cent reported they, not the other person, initiated their last fashion conversation

Chi Square= 1.93--not significant at the .05 level (d. f.= 2).

TABLE 21D.--Perceived uncertainty measured as a component of perceived risk and the initiation of conversation

Initiator of Conversation	Perceived Uncertainty							
	Low		Medium		High		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Respondent Initiated	34	56*	37	57	-	-	71	56

* READ: Of the respondents classified as low in perceived uncertainty measured as a component of perceived risk, 56 per cent reported they, not the other person, initiated their last fashion conversation.

Chi Square= .00--not significant at the .05 level (d. f.= 1).

of a fashion conversation is independent of the individual's perception of uncertainty or risk.

With respect to information asking versus information giving or engaging in both asking and giving information in a fashion conversation, the data consistently revealed for all four measures that 85-90 per cent of the respondents generally engage in both asking and giving information. See Tables 22A to 22D. These findings are consistent with the general notion of a conversation between friends as a give and take affair and are in disagreement with the notion of a high uncertainty perceiver predominantly engaging in the asking of opinions. In addition, these findings question the applicability of previous research such as Cunningham's study¹ in which the respondents were only permitted to choose between either suggesting or asking information in a fashion conversation and were not permitted to choose both asking and suggesting information. Cunningham's restriction, does, in this researcher's opinion, distort what actually happens in a fashion conversation.

¹Cunningham, "The Major Dimensions of Perceived Risk," pp. 82-108.

TABLE 22A.--Perceived uncertainty with respect to decision making and the direction of flow of information

Direction	Perceived Uncertainty					
	Low		Medium		High	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Ask	2	6*	4	3	1	5
Suggest	2	6	13	9	2	10
Both Ask and Suggest	31	88	125	88	17	85
Total	35	100	142	100	20	100

* READ: Of the respondents classified as low in perceived uncertainty with respect to decision making, 6 per cent generally asked for information in a fashion conversation.

TABLE 22B.--Perceived uncertainty with respect to fashion goals and the direction of flow of information

Direction	Perceived Uncertainty					
	Low		Medium		High	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Ask	-	-*	7	5	-	-
Suggest	6	10	11	8	-	-
Both Ask and Suggest	57	90	116	87	-	-
Total	63	100	134	100	-	-

* READ: Of those respondents classified as low in perceived uncertainty with respect to fashion goals, 0 per cent generally asked for information in a fashion conversation.

TABLE 22C.--Perceived risk and the direction of flow of information

Direction	Perceived Risk					
	Low		Medium		High	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Ask	2	4*	4	3	1	7
Suggest	2	4	15	11	-	-
Both Ask and Suggest	43	92	117	86	13	93
Total	47	100	136	100	14	100

*READ: Of the respondents classified as low in perceived risk, 4 per cent generally ask for information in a fashion conversation.

TABLE 22D.--Perceived uncertainty measured as a component of perceived risk and the direction of flow of information

Direction	Perceived Uncertainty					
	Low		Medium		High	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Ask	3	4*	3	3	-	-
Suggest	7	9	8	8	1	7
Both Ask and Suggest	69	87	91	89	13	93
Total	70	100	102	100	14	100

*READ: Of the respondents classified as low in perceived uncertainty as a component of perceived risk, 4 per cent generally ask for information in a fashion conversation.

Testing of Other Variables

Other variables such as exposure to mass media, gregariousness, interest, and income were also tested so as to determine if these were distinguishing characteristics among the participants in the word-of-mouth process. Previous research has found these variables to be distinguishing factors between opinion leaders and followers;¹ however, a major criticism of the previous research was that only two categories of participants were used--opinion leaders and followers. Thus, non-interactors were automatically classified as followers; opinion leaders were generally so numerous (40-45 per cent of the population) so as to cast doubt on the use of the term leader. In this analysis a different scheme was followed, that is, the population was categorized according to the following matrix:

	Opinion leadership	
	Low	High
Opinion	Low	Non-interactors
followers	High	Follower
		Leader
		Leader and follower

Opinion leadership was measured in terms of reported incidence of having other people ask an individual for his opinion (question 3b) while opinion seeking (followers)

¹Katz and Lazarsfeld, Personal Influence, pp. 247-270; King and Simmers, "Dynamics of Interpersonal Communication," pp. 240-264.

were measured in terms of reported incidence of asking another person for his opinion (question 2b). Individuals who reported "don't remember" to either of these two questions were not classified. These individuals numbered 48 or 21 per cent of the population.

This classification scheme resulted in the following distribution:

	Number
Leaders	24
Followers	34
Combined Leaders and Followers	46
Non-interactors	80

Surprisingly, the number of either leaders, approximately 10 per cent of the population, or followers, approximately 15 per cent of the population, was quite low. Non-interactors (those individuals scoring low on both the leadership criteria and the follower criteria) comprised the largest segment--30 per cent--of the population while combined leaders and followers made up 21 per cent of the population.

The characteristic data for each of these categories is presented in Table 23. The patterns that emerged are discussed in the following sections: media exposure, gregariousness, interest, income, uncertainty and perceived risk, and perceived opinion leadership.

Media Exposure

Interactors (leaders, followers, and leaders and

TABLE 23.--Characteristics of opinion leaders, followers, leaders and followers, and inactives

Item	Leaders	Followers	Leaders and Followers	Inactives
Media Exposure				
Newspapers (number regularly read)	1.7	1.1	1.4	1.2
Magazines (number regularly read)	3.2	2.8	3.3	2.5
Radio (average hours per week)	4.2	4.2	3.9	2.8
Television (average hours per week)	2.2	2.7	1.8	1.8
Books (number of books per month)	1.6	1.1	1.3	1.2
Gregariousness (Range 0-2)*	.64	.91	1.06	.62
Interest (Range 0-2)*	1.64	1.67	1.80	1.42
Income (dollars)	24,900	19,100	20,500	17,500
Perceived Uncertainty with Respect to Decision Making (Range 0-2)*	.86	.94	.94	.96
Perceived Uncertainty with Respect to Fashion Goals (Range 0-2)*	.72	.85	.62	.69
Perceived Risk (Range 0-2)*	.86	.91	.85	.82
Perceived Uncertainty measured as a Component of Perceived Risk (Range 0-2)*	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.05
Perceived Opinion Leadership (Range 0-26)	14.7	14.6	17.7	13.3
Total Respondents	14	34	46	80

* Low= 0, Medium= 1, High= 2

followers) are more exposed to the mass media than are non-interactors. Among the interactors, no one category clearly distinguishes itself on all five measures from any of the other categories. This finding is consistent with previous research especially Katz's and Lazarsfeld's Decatur study.

Gregariousness¹

As expected, followers are quite low in gregariousness; however, a non-expected finding is that leaders are also low in gregariousness. This non-expected finding concerning leaders is possibly the result of defining leaders in a passive way, that is, the degree to which other people come to you for advice; however, on the other hand, a person in order to be asked an opinion must be available. Those individuals who act as both leaders and followers were by far the most gregariousness of the four groupings.

Interest²

The data was as expected with non-interactors having relatively low interest and interactors having

¹Katz's and Lazarsfeld's technique for measuring gregariousness was utilized--that is, the number of friendships and the number of organizations were organized into a four cell matrix consisting of highs and lows. Two highs on each of these factors were scored as high in gregariousness, two lows as low in gregariousness and the remaining two cell combinations as medium in gregariousness.

²A modified Katz and Lazarsfeld index for measuring interest was utilized--that is, the number of dresses and other clothing bought within the last six months and the

relatively high interest. Again those individuals with combined leadership and follower traits were the most interested in fashion.

Income

This finding was interesting insomuch as the leaders have a family income which averages 25 per cent more than the nearest grouping. In addition, non-interactors which have low fashion interest and low gregariousness also had low income. It may be that income and fashion interest are not mutually exclusive and that a certain income level is necessary before a fashion interest factor becomes operative.

Uncertainty and Perceived Risk

As was consistent with the previous analyses, uncertainty was measured in three different ways while perceived risk followed the traditional method of measurement. The expected relationship would be for leaders to be low on uncertainty, followers to be high, and combined opinion leaders-followers to be somewhere in between. With respect to the expected relationship between opinion leaders and followers two measures of uncertainty (uncertainty with respect to decision making and with

degree to which one considers fashion to be important were organized into a nine cell matrix consisting of highs, mediums, and lows. The cell comprising two highs for each of these factors plus the adjacent cells were scored as high in interest; the reverse situation was scored as low in interest. The remaining three cells were scored as medium in interest.

respect to goals) and the measure of perceived risk are in the expected direction. However, with respect to combined leaders and followers, no consistent pattern of uncertainty emerges. Interestingly enough, uncertainty measures for non-interactors range from low (.69) to medium (1.05). Since non-interactors are probably determined by other factors such as gregariousness, interest, and other personality traits, it becomes very difficult to predict their level of perceived uncertainty/risk.

Perceived Opinion Leadership

Interactors as a grouping have a higher perceived opinion leadership score than non-interactors and this is to be expected. However, among the interactors, the grouping with combined opinion leadership and follower traits has the highest perceived opinion leadership score and this is somewhat surprising. Another factor to consider is that in the original evaluation of the perceived opinion leadership technique by Troldahl and Van Dam the validity of the perceived opinion leadership scale decreases as the measures for opinion leadership become more rigorous. Perhaps the same phenomenon has occurred with this data.

General Analysis

Interactors have greater media exposure, gregariousness, interests, income, and perceived opinion leadership than do non-interactors. Among the interactors, leaders who do not engage to any great extent in asking

opinions appear to have high interest and income, low gregariousness, low perceived uncertainty/risk, and medium perceived opinion leadership while leaders who engage in opinion asking (that is, combined opinion leaders/followers category) appear to have very high interest, gregariousness, and perceived opinion leadership while having median income. Overall, leaders are more certain, that is, lower in perceived uncertainty and risk, than followers are--a relationship which is as predicted. No discernible pattern with respect to perceived uncertainty and risk exists for combined opinion leaders and followers.

Panel Interviews

Panel interviews were conducted with six groups consisting of three girls each. Each group consisted of either all opinion leaders or opinion followers and was selected so as to represent either extreme leaders or extreme followers.¹ The main purpose of these interviews

¹Extreme opinion followers were consistent with the previous category of opinion followers as presented in Testing of Other Variables in Chapter VII. However, extreme opinion leaders for the panel discussion, when defined in terms of the previous section, could either have been opinion leaders who do not actively seek opinions of others (opinion leaders) or opinion leaders who do actively seek opinions of others (combined opinion leaders and followers). The actual breakdown for the nine opinion leaders for the panel discussion in terms of the previous categories was as follows:

- 1 Opinion leader (not actively seek others' opinions)
- 8 Opinion leaders and followers (actively seek others opinions)

9 Extreme opinion leaders

was to gain further insight into the whys of word-of-mouth conversations. Appendix B is a listing comparing the major reasons why two categories of individuals, opinion leaders and followers, discuss women's fashions.

Analysis of Panel Discussions

Many of the reasons for discussing women's fashions were basically the same for both opinion leaders and followers. Thus, differences were primarily that of degree rather than that of completely different reasons. The greatest noticeable difference was that opinion leaders were able to articulate their reasons and their rationale much more easily than were the followers. The followers, for the most part, were just able to identify the reasons and were not able to go into much detail.

Basically, opinion leaders and followers discuss fashion so as to gain information about what other people think of a particular fashion; while they are seeking this evaluative type of information, they are also seeking approval to some extent. Other informational reasons for discussing fashions are to find out what fashions other people like, to find out what ideas/suggestions other people might have, and to find out what is appropriate for certain occasions.¹

In addition, fashion is discussed for social and conversational reasons. With regards to emulating the

¹This finding was confirmed by the survey inasmuch as a tabulation of the entire population as to why they

opinion leader in terms of dress, both opinion leaders and followers stressed that emulation is of secondary importance and, when it does happen, some differentiation occurs so as to provide an element of individuality. The primary purpose that the leader serves is to provide fashion guidance for the follower. Since a girl's figure is a vital variable in terms of dress, often the follower cannot tastefully emulate the style of the leader. Hopefully, the leader who is viewed as a sincere expert and who dresses as an expert is expected to dress will be able to guide the follower in dressing tastefully.

Another major distinction between leaders and followers was that leaders stressed fashions as an extension of their personalities while followers virtually ignored this aspect. Followers, in turn, stressed the avoidance of

discuss fashion resulted in the following frequency distribution:

<i>Reasons for Discussing Fashions</i>		
	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
To find out, through the other person to the conversation, what other people are wearing	27	11
To find out what the other person to the conversation is wearing	7	3
To find out, through the other person to the conversation, what other people think about a particular fashion	69	29
To find out what the other person to the conversation thinks about a particular fashion	78	34
Just to be sociable	22	9
None of the above	34	14
Total	<u>237*</u>	<u>100</u>

*Total exceeds population sampled due to multiple responses.

a leader who makes one feel inferior while leaders failed to mention this point.

CHAPTER VIII

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

This study has been concerned with the influence relationship between opinion leaders and followers--a relationship which has been defined as personal influence since the participants are assumed to act in a personal, friendly manner without having a vested interest in the selling of a product. On the other hand, commercial interests utilizing influence were defined as impersonal influence--primarily to reflect their vested interests. The major theory which combined both the personal and the impersonal sources of influence was the Two Step Flow Hypothesis as postulated by Katz and Lazarsfeld¹ which in essence states that ideas and information often flow from the mass media (impersonal source) to opinion leaders and then to followers (personal source).

Two Step Flow Hypothesis

The major findings of this study with respect to the underlying theory of the Two Step Flow Hypothesis are as follows:

1. Definition--Opinion leaders have been loosely defined in most studies simply by designating

¹ Katz and Lazarsfeld, Personal Influence, pp. 3-4.

those individuals to whom others go to for advice and information as opinion leaders. This operational definition has resulted in opinion leaders becoming quite common (35-40 per cent of the population). Researchers such as Troldahl and Van Dam¹ have attempted to compile a more comprehensive scale for identifying opinion leaders but for the most part their work has been virtually ignored by researchers in the area of marketing. In essence many of the researchers in the marketing area continue to use the basic definition of the opinion leader as postulated by Katz and Lazarsfeld. The major criticism of this definition aside from the high frequency of opinion leaders which runs counter to one's perception of what the frequency of opinion leaders should be is that the definition does not take into consideration the effectiveness or lack of effectiveness of the opinion leader. The degree of effectiveness of the opinion leader in bringing about change is of primary importance to the marketer especially in the area of new product introduction.

2. Methodological--many of the studies tend toward using a random sample in order to insure representation of the empirical data. However, since opinion leaders and followers form a dyad relationship, random sampling for the most part will result in only one member of the dyad being analyzed. In order to circumvent this problem researchers have attempted to conduct

¹Troldahl and Van Dam, "New Scale," pp. 35-40.

interviews with the missing person in the dyad; however, these efforts have met with a lack of success--perhaps only 50-60 per cent of the missing individuals can be successfully interviewed. Thus, researchers are faced with the dilemma of having only one person to the dyad, designating that person as either leader or follower and then proposing some relationship between the leader and follower. Even though the researchers are aware of the problem, inevitable extrapolations must be made for this relationship between opinion leaders and followers. It could very well be that leaders only interact with leaders and followers with other followers and the proposed relationships between opinion leaders and followers are purely hypothetical.

Another methodological problem is in terms of classifying the population into either leaders or followers. This classification scheme is misleading since it assumes that all individuals interact with other people with regards to the subject matter under investigation and that individuals can be neatly categorized as either opinion leaders or followers. The empirical data from this study clearly refuted these assumptions. First, non-interaction--those individuals who were not frequently asked for fashion opinions nor did they frequently ask others for fashion opinions consisted of nearly one-third of the population and were a distinct group separate from opinion leaders and from followers. Second, a sizeable

segment of the population, 21 per cent, consisted of individuals who exhibited behavioral patterns common to both opinion leaders and followers. The previous research methodology would have categorized both of these groups into either opinion leaders or followers and would have resulted in a classification that is not only incorrect but also misleading.

3. Passivity of opinion leaders and followers--A major implication of the two step flow hypothesis has been with respect to passivity in both the opinion leader and follower. The two step flow hypothesis visualized opinion leaders as passing on to the followers the message that the mass media was communicating. Even though little or no research has been conducted on the opinion leader as an input/output device, this notion of the opinion leader being a parrot does not appear to have much validity. In addition, the two step flow envisioned the follower as being a passive receptacle of the opinion leader's advice and information. Much of the research conducted under the auspices of Bauer¹ at Harvard strongly opposes this assumption of passivity on the part of the follower. Among other things, Bauer and his colleagues have shown that at least 50 per cent of the product related conversations are initiated by the follower and that the follower plays an active role in gathering information.

¹Cox, "Risk Taking," pp. 1-108.

4. Characteristics of opinion leader and follower--The opinion leader and follower have been subjected to much research especially with respect to distinguishing characteristics between these two groups. However, this study, as mentioned previously, seriously questions categorizing the population as either opinion leaders or followers. This researcher proposes that a more basic categorization is between interactors and non-interactors. Interactors, in turn, can be classified into three major groups: pure opinion leaders, pure followers, and combined opinion leaders and followers. When the population is viewed in these groupings, most of the previous research which categorized the population as either opinion leaders or followers and then compared the characteristics of the two groups becomes highly suspect. For instance, this study has shown non-interactors to be low in terms of mass media exposure as compared to the interactors and has also shown that interactors--be they opinion leaders or followers or combined opinion leaders and followers--are not too significantly different from each other in terms of media exposure. This differs significantly from the previous research and is explainable since the previous research would have lumped all the non-interactors, which are a sizeable portion of the population, into the follower category thus diluting the followers' overall exposure to the mass media scores and, hence, showing misleading results.

An underlying trend in the research is to view the relationship of opinion leaders and followers as a personal relationship in which the sociological processes of selective exposure, retention, and bias are at work so that the end result is a pair of friends who are very similar to each other. Thus, instead of major differences between a dyad of opinion leader and follower, a dyad of friends exists with only slight differences. Therefore, the terms opinion leader and follower, which imply a hierarchical relationship, become slightly misleading and better terms would simply be opinion giver and opinion seeker with the full realization that many individuals are not either an opinion seeker or an opinion giver but display a combination of both behavioral patterns. In addition, the term opinion giver as opposed to opinion leader appears to be more consistent with the operational definition which has been used in the research literature--that is "whom do you go to for advice and information?"¹

Informational Needs of Consumers

A major school of thought headed by Bauer and his Harvard colleagues emerged in the 1960's and stressed the informational needs of the consumer. As one examines the new product explosion which has hit the American market place plus the increasing technical sophistication of many of these products, it becomes apparent that the American consumer is, indeed, required to process more

¹Katz and Lazarsfeld, Personal Influence, pp. 146-148.

information in order to make an optimal or even a satisfactory purchase decision. In addition, Bauer and his colleagues have emphasized the necessity for researchers to consider the consumer not merely as a respondent to the communications of the mass media but to view the consumer as being active in these acquisitions and evaluation of information. This group is not saying that, at times, the consumer does not respond passively but is saying that there are many instances in which the consumer wants information and he will become actively involved in the process of acquiring and evaluating information. The major indicator used by these researchers to predict when an individual will actively acquire and evaluate information is the concept of perceived risk. This concept of perceived risk consists of the multiplication of two components--uncertainty and consequences--and has been used with some success in terms of predicting information acquisition and evaluation efforts. This researcher, as has been explained previously, seriously objects to the use of the term perceived risk since in reality the Harvard research group is measuring expected value, not perceived risk. As a result, this study empirically tested the predictive value of perceived risk versus perceived uncertainty. Perceived uncertainty was defined as the lack of knowledge about the consequences of a given decision and was purported to be a more sensitive indicator of word-of-mouth activity than was perceived risk.

Perceived Uncertainty versus Perceived Risk

For the population under study neither perceived uncertainty nor perceived risk was a statistically significant indicator of the occurrence of personal influence as measured by the discussion of fashions within a given time period, the amount of fashion conversation (number of people talked to, frequency and recency of conversation), the asking of fashion opinions, being asked an opinion, and the initiation of conversation. Three measures of perceived uncertainty--uncertainty with respect to decision making, uncertainty with respect to fashion goals, and uncertainty as a component of perceived risk--and one measure of perceived risk were utilized in the analyses. In total, twelve empirical tests for each measure of perceived uncertainty/risk or forty-eight empirical tests were utilized to test the sensitivity of each of these indicators to word-of-mouth activity and also to test their sensitivity with respect to each other.

Of the eight tests evaluated on the basis of chi square analysis (discussion within a given time period and the initiation of conversation) no empirical test was significant at the .05 level. Possible explanations for the lack of sensitivity of these indicators to the discussion of fashions within a given time period were: 1) fashion is such a frequent topic of conversation that it becomes difficult to distinguish between talkers and non-talkers, and 2) that the likelihood of a fashion conversation is

highly dependent upon the group setting rather than an individual's perception of uncertainty. Concerning the latter explanation, a separate analysis was conducted under the assumption that the members of the dorm floors were relevant group members; however, the findings were negative inasmuch as no significant differences were found among groups in terms of discussing fashion.

With respect to the initiation of fashion conversations, the empirical tests indicated that neither perceived uncertainty nor perceived risk was able to distinguish between high and low initiators of conversations. In addition, within a fashion conversation the previous classification by Cunningham and others¹ of a respondent either asking or giving information was not relevant to this study since 85-90 per cent of the population generally engaged in both giving and asking information.

Of the thirty-six tests evaluated on the basis of a Goodman-Kruskal coefficient of association, only six empirical tests had coefficients greater than .13 in absolute value and, in addition, three of these six tests were in the direction opposite to what had been predicted. Interestingly enough, all three of the tests which predicted in the wrong direction were with respect to perceived risk and the being asked a fashion opinion (number of people, frequency, and recency of conversation). Furthermore, these perceived risk findings were further

¹Cunningham, "Perceived Risk as a Factor," pp. 265-288.

contradicted by Characteristic Data, Table 23, insomuch as high perceived risk was associated with being both a follower and an individual whom others actively sought out for fashion opinions.

With respect to the characteristics of the participants engaged in the fashion discussion, a primary split was made between interactors and non-interactors and then interactors were separated into three groups: leaders, followers, and individuals who exhibited both leader and follower traits. Based upon this breakdown, each group was analyzed with respect to perceived uncertainty and perceived risk with the expectation that leaders would be lower than followers with respect to perceived uncertainty/risk and that the group with combined leader and follower traits would be somewhere in between. With respect to the expected relationship between opinion leaders and followers, two measures of uncertainty (uncertainty with respect to decision making and with respect to goals) and the measures of perceived risk were in the expected direction. With respect to the expected relationship with combined leaders and followers, no consistent pattern of perceived uncertainty or perceived risk emerged.

In summary, neither perceived uncertainty nor perceived risk were sensitive indicators of word-of-mouth activity. Thus, a comparison cannot be made of which measure is more sensitive; however, one's skepticism with

respect to the use of perceived risk as an indicator is increased due to the conflicting results generated by perceived risk. While this researcher cannot report a more sensitive measure to replace perceived risk, he can report empirical data in addition to logical reasoning which refutes the usage of perceived risk as it is currently measured.

CHAPTER IX

IMPLICATIONS

Implications have been categorized into two separate sections: Implications for Future Research and Implications for Managerial Actions. A general comment pertaining to both of these areas is that the reported frequency of discussing women's fashions in this study is nearly twice the reported frequency reported by other researchers for other areas such as Cunningham's study of housewives and household products.¹ Thus, this high reported frequency of discussing women's fashions by the population studied makes it a worthy area of study from both a research and a managerial point of view.

Implications for Future Research

Effectiveness of Personal Influence

Given that the occurrence of personal influence was quite prevalent in the area of women's fashions, the next logical question is, "How effective is personal influence?" Can personal influence indeed bring about desired changes in a person's attitudes and/or buying behavior or is personal influence merely a reinforcing

¹Cunningham, "Perceived Risk as a Factor," pp. 265-288.

mechanism which becomes operative after the sociological process of selective exposure, selective retention, and selective bias have occurred? In other words, do individuals seek out other individuals for an honest appraisal of what the best decision should be or do individuals seek out those individuals whom they believe, a priori, will agree with what they want to do? Thus, is personal influence a reinforcing or a change process? In terms of future researchers attempting to evaluate the effectiveness of personal influence certain problems are anticipated. The most serious problem is that the researcher will need to rely heavily on the respondent's testimony, thus introducing the element of protective bias. Perhaps the researcher could negate some of the bias by placing the respondent in different situations, such as the last product purchased, such as a situation of conflicting opinions, such as the last fashion conversation, and then attempt to identify and evaluate the occurrence of personal influence in each of these situations.

Non-interactors

Non-interactors are those individuals who do not frequently engage in word-of-mouth activity and, in addition, tend to be on the low side of media exposure. This group has been virtually ignored by nearly all the diffusion researchers and it is incumbent upon researchers to learn more about non-interactors primarily because non-interactors comprise a significant portion (one-third) of the population and, because by ignoring non-interactors

and the assignment of this distinct group of individuals into the follower category, statements and inferences made about followers are misleading.

Perceived Uncertainty/Risk versus
Word-of-Mouth Activity

This study has shown that empirically perceived uncertainty/risk are not sensitive indicators of word-of-mouth activity. Since much of the logic expressed in this study appears to be valid, further research ought to continue but in a different direction. Survey research has its limits in terms of the type of information which can be gathered and analyzed and, for this particular research area, survey research probably has revealed most of the findings of which it is capable. Therefore, the new approach ought to be in the direction of in-depth interviews with a limited number of individuals who are extremes in terms of the above psychological variables. This proposed in-depth study should preferably be conducted on a longitudinal basis since a learning curve for reducing perceived uncertainty/risk is hypothesized to exist. This approach, which was used in this study on a limited basis for extreme leaders and followers, has shown that it can reveal insight and ideas which are not readily noticeable. For example, the limited in-depth study of extreme leaders and followers revealed that both articulation and social exchange were important variables; however, neither of these variables have been mentioned in the

relevant research conducted over the last thirty years. New hypotheses generated by this proposed in-depth study could be empirically tested by survey research techniques.

The Relationship Between Social Recognition and Opinion Leadership

A phenomenon that became apparent during the panel discussion was that followers gave the opinion leaders social recognition in return for fashion advice and information. Social recognition, in turn, seemed to encourage the opinion leaders to place themselves in a position so as to gain more social recognition. For instance, the opinion leaders indirectly sought social recognition by acquiring those qualities which the follow was seeking--fashion knowledge and good fashion taste. In addition, it appears inappropriate for opinion leaders to seek social recognition directly by actively trying to influence followers.

What is needed is for the researcher to understand this process of social exchange which appears to be occurring, to understand what rules and regulations have evolved, and to determine the constraints under which both the opinion leader and follower operate. Hopefully, by understanding this process of social exchange, greater insight into how to tap into the word-of-mouth process will become available.

Implications for Managerial Actions

Promotional Strategies

This study has shown that for the population studied word-of-mouth activity with respect to fashion occurs quite frequently. Since this finding is consistent with previous findings,¹ it can "safely" be extrapolated to other similar populations. In addition, other studies have shown word-of-mouth activity to be very effective in terms of decision making.² For marketers attempting to sell women's fashions to these populations, it would appear to be a fruitful promotional strategy to simulate word-of-mouth activity. In order to simulate word-of-mouth activity the marketer would first have to monitor word-of-mouth activity to determine what types of information are being sought and then he would need to communicate this information to the target market by stressing the type of people who are requesting this information. By filling this informational void, perhaps the marketer will be able to steer word-of-mouth activity so as to generate favorable responses for his product.

Non-interactors

Non-interactors represent a sizeable portion of the population and do not appear very responsive to the

¹Katz and Lazarsfeld, Personal Influence, pp. 247-270; King and Summers, "Dynamics of Interpersonal Communications," pp. 249-264.

²Katz and Lazarsfeld, Ibid.; Rogers, Diffusion of Innovations, pp. 217-223.

influence either of the mass media or of other people. This group should be examined from an economic point of view in terms of potential sales, profits, and alternative ways of reaching them. If this market proves to have sizeable profit potential, market research ought to be conducted in terms of what or who influences the purchase decisions of these people, what information do they seek and where do they get it, and how can the firm assist these individuals in terms of making a purchase decision.

CHAPTER X

CONCLUSIONS

The major conclusions of this study are as follows:

1. Opinion Leaders and Followers--This study has shown that the dichotomy of opinion leaders and followers is not only false but is also misleading. A sizeable portion of the population which in previous studies would have been labelled as followers has been analyzed and found not to be followers but simply non-interactors--individuals who do not engage to any significant extent in product related discussions. To categorize these non-interactors as followers as did the previous research has resulted in misleading characteristics for the follower group since this study has shown followers and non-interactors to be separate and distinct groups especially in the area of media exposure. Also, many individuals displayed behavioral characteristics common to both opinion leaders and followers and to categorize these individuals as either followers or leaders would be misleading.

While this study has shown that the occurrence of personal influence is very high in the area of women's fashions, this study has not analyzed the effectiveness

of personal influence in bringing about change in personal attitudes or buying behavior. This task remains to be done. While personal influence implies an element of change, opinion leaders have not been defined in terms of ability to exert change. Thus, the term leader is misleading. It would be much more realistic simply to label the individual as an opinion giver since this term is more in line with the research methodology that has been used. Opinion givers and opinion seekers are more realistic terms than are the terms opinion leader and opinion follower.

2. Perceived Uncertainty versus Perceived Risk--Neither perceived uncertainty nor perceived risk were sensitive indicators of word-of-mouth activity; in fact, the empirical conclusion from this study would be that word-of-mouth activity generally occurs independently of the psychological variables. Several alternative explanations were examined to determine if other variables such as group setting within a college dorm were overriding the sensitivity of these psychological variables; however, the empirical analysis was negative. In general, since much of the logic behind the use of these psychological variables appears to be sound, this researcher recommends further study but of an in-depth nature in order to determine their applicability.

3. Mass Media versus Word-of-Mouth--While much of the research has centered on whether the mass

media and word-of-mouth are complementary or competitive in nature, a more basic issue from a managerial point of view is why is the mass media so relatively ineffective at the evaluation stage of the consumer decision process? With this stage being so important it is incumbent upon the manager not to leave this stage up to the chance happenings of the word-of-mouth process but to attempt to manage it. For those products which show high word-of-mouth effectiveness at the evaluation stage perhaps the most efficient approach to increasing the effectiveness of the mass media would be for the mass media to simulate word-of-mouth activity by converting their promotional campaigns from a one way communications approach to a two way communications approach with feedback and a consumer learning process.

FASHION SURVEY

IDENTIFICATION:

Name _____ Phone Number _____

Major _____ Class _____

We are conducting a survey to determine prevailing attitudes and purchasing practices with regard to women's fashions. By women's fashions we mean such things as wearing apparel, hairdos, shoes, cosmetics, and so forth. This survey will refer to conversations you may have had with other people concerning women's fashions. The questions that follow apply whether you discussed women's fashions with someone else or whether someone else discussed them with you.

Your responses to this questionnaire will be accumulated with many other responses and the results will be analyzed in summary form thus assuring you of complete privacy.

Your objectivity and candidness in answering these questions are of utmost importance.

Please check the appropriate answer in the space provided.

PLEASE NOTE: THERE WILL BE A \$2.00 REIMBURSEMENT FOR EACH COMPLETED QUESTIONNAIRE.

- 1.0 Within the last six months have you discussed women's fashions with other people?
 Note: By discussion we mean a conversation in which the pros and/or cons were mentioned.

Yes _____ Continue with question 1a.
 No _____ Go to question 2, page 5
 Don't remember _____ Go to question 2, page 5

- 1a. With how many people have you discussed women's fashions in the last six months?

1-2 _____ 15-20 _____
 3-5 _____ 21-27 _____
 6-9 _____ More than 28 _____
 10-14 _____ Don't remember _____

- 1b. How many different times have you discussed women's fashions in the last six months?

1-2 _____ 15-20 _____
 3-5 _____ 21-27 _____
 6-9 _____ More than 28 _____
 10-14 _____ Don't remember _____

- 1c. When was the last time you discussed women's fashions with someone?

Less than 1 week ago _____ About 3 months ago _____
 1-2 weeks ago _____ About 6 months ago _____
 About 1 month ago _____ Don't remember _____

- 1d. Thinking back to this last conversation, did you first bring up the subject of fashions or did the other person?

You brought up the subject _____
 Other person brought up the subject _____
 Don't remember _____

- 1e. If you bring up the subject of fashion, do you generally ask someone else for information or do you suggest helpful information from your own experience?

Ask someone else for information _____
 Suggest helpful information _____
 Both ask and suggest _____
 Never bring up the subject _____
 Don't know _____

- 1f. Thinking back to this last conversation about fashion, was it one in which both parties asked each other for their opinions and advice or was it a conversation in which one person primarily gave advice and the other party primarily listened?

Both parties gave advice _____
 One party gave advice, the other party listened _____
 Don't remember _____

- 1g. Would you state what your reasons are for discussing women's fashions with other people?

- 1g₁. If you have more than one reason for discussing woman's fashions, please state the most important reason.

- 1g₂. Other individuals, in response to this question of why they discuss women's fashion, have stated the following reasons:

Please check that reason which is nearest to your own view.

- To find out, through the other person to the conversation, what other people are wearing _____
- To find out what the other person to the conversation is wearing _____
- To find out, through the other person to the conversation, what other people think about a particular fashion _____
- To find out what the other person to the conversation thinks about a particular fashion _____
- Just to be sociable _____
- None of the above _____

- 1h. Concerning those individual(s) with whom you discuss fashion, is there anything about these individual(s) that appeals to you?

Yes _____ Go to question 1h₁

No _____ Go to question 2, page 5

- 1h₁. Please state the most important factor about the other person that appeals to you.

- 1h₂. Other individuals, in response to this question about the most important factor, have stated the following:

Please check the factor that is nearest to your own view.

- The other person knows a lot about fashions, styles, and so forth _____
- I like the way the other person dresses _____
- Neither _____
- Both _____

2.0 Within the last six months have you asked anyone for his or her opinion concerning women's fashions?

Yes _____ Continue with question 2a
 No _____ Go to question 3
 Don't remember _____ Go to question 3

2a. When was the last time you asked someone for his or her opinion concerning women's fashions?

Less than 1 week ago _____ About 3 months ago _____
 1-2 weeks ago _____ About 6 months ago _____
 About 1 month ago _____ Don't remember _____

2b. Within the last six months how many people have you asked for their opinions concerning women's fashions?

1-2 _____ 15-20 _____
 3-5 _____ 21-27 _____
 6-9 _____ More than 28 _____
 10-14 _____ Don't remember _____

2c. Within the last six months how many different times have you asked anyone for his or her opinion concerning women's fashions?

1-2 _____ 15-20 _____
 3-5 _____ 21-27 _____
 6-9 _____ More than 28 _____
 10-14 _____ Don't remember _____

3.0 Within the last six months has anyone asked you for your opinion concerning women's fashions?

Yes _____ Continue with question 3a
 No _____ Go to question 4, page 6
 Don't remember _____ Go to question 4, page 6

3a. When was the last time someone asked for your opinion concerning women's fashions?

Less than 1 week ago _____ About 3 months ago _____
 1-2 weeks ago _____ About 6 months ago _____
 About 1 month ago _____ Don't remember _____

3b. Within the last six months how many people have asked you for your opinion concerning women's fashions?

1-2 _____	15-20 _____
3-5 _____	21-27 _____
6-9 _____	More than 28 _____
10-14 _____	Don't remember _____

3c. Within the last six months how many different times have you been asked for your opinion concerning women's fashions?

1-2 _____	15-20 _____
3-5 _____	21-27 _____
6-9 _____	More than 28 _____
10-14 _____	Don't remember _____

4.0 Within the last six months have you intentionally tried to influence anyone with respect to your fashion ideas?

Yes _____	Continue with question 4a.
No _____	Go to question 5 , page 7.
Don't remember _____	Go to question 5 , page 7.

4a. When was the last time you intentionally tried to influence someone else with respect to your fashion ideas?

Less than 1 week ago _____	About 3 months ago _____
1-2 weeks ago _____	About 6 months ago _____
About 1 month ago _____	Don't remember _____

4b. Within the last six months how many people have you intentionally tried to influence with respect to your fashion ideas?

1-2 _____	15-20 _____
3-5 _____	21-27 _____
6-9 _____	More than 28 _____
10-14 _____	Don't remember _____

- 4c. Within the last six months how many different times have you intentionally tried to influence anyone with respect to your fashion ideas?

1-2 _____	15-20 _____
3-5 _____	21-27 _____
6-9 _____	more than 28 _____
10-14 _____	Don't remember _____

5. Do you feel it is very important, moderately important, or not important at all to be in style?

Very important _____
Moderately important _____
Not important at all _____

6. What is the total number of dresses and pants suits that you have bought, made, or borrowed since the beginning of last summer?

1-2 _____	10-15 _____
3-5 _____	more than 16 _____
6-9 _____	Don't remember _____

7. With respect to purchases of fashionable items for social occasions, how much past experience do you consider yourself to have?

A great deal of past experience _____
Some past experience _____
Very little past experience _____
No past experience _____

8. In general, when deciding what fashionable items to buy, how complex do you find your purchasing decision to be?

Very complex _____
Somewhat complex _____
Somewhat simple _____
Very simple _____

9. In general, how certain are you that your planned 'fashion' purchases will satisfy your fashion goals?

Very certain _____
 Somewhat certain _____
 Somewhat uncertain _____
 Very uncertain _____

10. We all know that not all fashions are as attractive as others. Compared to your present fashions, how much social danger would you say there is in your wearing a fashion new to you?

Note: By social danger we mean embarrassment or other negative social consequences.

A great deal of social danger _____
 Some social danger _____
 Not much social danger _____
 No social danger _____

11. How certain are you that any 'new' fashion that you haven't tried will satisfy you as well as your present fashions?

Very certain _____
 Usually certain _____
 Sometimes certain _____
 Almost never certain _____

12. Say you were interested in evaluating a new dress fashion as a likely purchase for your own use; what actions, if any, would you take before coming to a final decision as whether to purchase or not purchase?

Please specify. _____

13. With respect to purchasing 'hot pants', how much past experience do you consider yourself to have?

A great deal of past experience _____
 Some past experience _____
 Very little past experience _____
 No past experience _____

14. When deciding whether to buy a fashionable item such as "Hot Pants", how complex will you find your purchasing decision to be?

Very complex _____
 Somewhat complex _____
 Somewhat simple _____
 Very simple _____

15. How certain are you, at this moment, that "Hot Pants" will or will not satisfy your fashion goals?

Very certain _____
 Somewhat certain _____
 Somewhat uncertain _____
 Very uncertain _____

16. Have you purchased a pair of "Hot Pants" in the last six months?

Yes _____
 No _____

17. Say you were interested in evaluating "Hot Pants" as a likely fashion purchase for your own use, what actions, if any, would you take before coming to a final decision as whether to purchase or not purchase?

Please specify. _____

18. We all know that not all fashions are as attractive as others. Compared to your present fashions, how much social danger would you say there is in your wearing "Hot Pants"?

Note: By social danger we mean embarrassment or other negative social consequences.

A great deal of social danger _____
 Some social danger _____
 Not much social danger _____
 No social danger _____

19. How certain are you that "Hot Pants" will satisfy you as well as your present fashions?

Very certain _____
 Usually certain _____
 Sometimes certain _____
 Almost never certain _____

Now I'd like to ask you a few questions about your interests and activities.

20. About how often would you say people ask you for your opinion on fashions?

Several times a week _____
 About once a week _____
 Once or twice a month _____
 Less than once a month _____

21. About how many people do you know that look to you for opinions on fashions?

4 or more persons _____
 1 to 3 persons _____
 No one _____

22. If someone you know . . . said that he depended a great deal on your judgement regarding fashions . . . would you believe him?

Surely _____
 Probably _____
 Don't know _____
 Probably not _____
 Definitely not _____

23. Would you like to be thought of as a person whom others depend upon in making up their own minds about fashions?

Unqualified "Yes" _____
 "I guess so" _____
 Don't know _____
 "Probably not" _____
 Unqualified "No" _____

24. Compared with your circle of friends, are you more likely or less likely to be asked for opinions on fashions?

More likely _____
 About the same _____
 Less likely _____
 Don't know _____

25. When you and your friends discuss fashions, what part do you play in the discussion?

Try to convince them _____
 Mainly listen _____
 Both parts, try to convince and to listen _____
 Don't know _____

26. How important is it for you to be considered a person whose opinions on fashions are well founded?

Very important _____
 Fairly important _____
 Not very important _____
 Not at all important _____

27. How many people are there with whom you are friendly and talk with fairly often not only about fashions but about anything in general?

1-2 _____	15-20 _____
3-5 _____	21-26 _____
6-9 _____	27 or more _____
10-14 _____	

28. What organizations, clubs, religious, or discussion groups do you actively belong to in terms of regularly attending their meetings? By regularly we mean attending at least every other meeting.

Please list.

1 _____	5 _____
2 _____	6 _____
3 _____	7 _____
4 _____	8 _____

29. What newspapers do you more or less regularly read?
By regularly we mean newspapers that you read at least 3 times a week.

1 _____
2 _____
3 _____
4 _____

30. What magazines do you more or less regularly read?
By regularly we mean magazines that you read at least every other issue and that you read at least one article in the magazine.

1 _____
2 _____
3 _____
4 _____
5 _____

31. Do you listen to the radio?

If Yes _____ Go to question 31a
If No _____ Go to question 32

- 31a. About how many hours do you listen to the radio on an average week day?

Less than 1 hour _____ 4-6 hours _____
1 hour _____ More than 7 hours _____
2-3 hours _____

32. Do you watch television?

If Yes _____ Go to question 32a
If No _____ Go to question 33

- 32a. About how many hours do you watch television on an average week day?

Less than 1 hour _____ 4-6 hours _____
1 hour _____ More than 7 hours _____
2-3 hours _____

33. Do you read books outside of required course readings?

If Yes _____ Go to question 33a, page 13
If No _____ Go to question 34, page 13

APPENDIX B

RESULTS OF PANEL DISCUSSIONS

Leaders

Reasons for Discussing Fashions

1. To get other people's opinions on what the opinion seeker is about to purchase and/or what the opinion seeker is wearing or planning to wear. Pre-purchase opinion seeking is sought after with an earnest desire for a sincere evaluation while post purchase opinion seeking is a combination of seeking a sincere evaluation and the seeking of approval. Post purchase discussion contains an element of cognitive dissonance.

The opinion seeker wants an opinion on how she looks in a particular fashion even though she thinks she looks good in it since she is never 100 per cent certain. The opinion seeker likes the security of knowing she looks good in it.

2. To get other people's opinions, views/ideas on what they like, on how they feel about a particular style.

3. By talking about fashions, one learns a lot about the personality of a particular person. Fashion is thought to be an extension of a person's personality. Visual effect is a major part of this evaluation.

4. Just to be sociable; for conversational purposes.

5. To find out for particular occasions, such as concerts, get togethers, and so forth, what particular type of dress is appropriate.

Qualities of Opinion Giver

1. An individual viewed as a friend with good fashion judgement, taste, and knowledge. One who knows about fashion; one who knows what is becoming. Knowledge and taste about fashion is often predetermined by the way an individual dresses. This combination of knowledge and friendship is very important since it implies an honest and accurate appraisal of what looks good on the opinion seeker.

2. One who wears a style primarily because it looks good rather than primarily because it is in style.

Other Comments

1. Direct emulation of the fashion style of the opinion giver is not sought after, rather the opinion seeker primarily looks to the opinion giver as being able to tell the opinion seeker what styles are most appropriate for the opinion seeker's figure, tastes, and so forth. When emulation of the fashion style of opinion giver does take place, disguised emulation occurs. Opinion seekers will copy fashions but will differentiate in some respect so as to be able to express some individuality.

2. Opinion givers get a tremendous social

satisfaction from being asked their opinions. This satisfaction in turn appears to increase their tendencies to become more fashion conscious, more knowledgeable, and more tasteful so as to increase the probability of their being asked again for their opinions. An exchange system might be working in which the opinion seeker gives the opinion giver social satisfaction in return for an expert appraisal.

3. Opinion givers report that sincerity is very important and that sincerity and an honest appraisal do increase with degree of friendship, that is, the greater the friendship the more likely an honest appraisal especially when the negative factor is present.

4. The opinion leaders were quite articulate with respect to fashion.

Followers

Reasons for Discussing Fashions

1. To get other people's opinions. To find out how well you look plus gaining approval to some extent.

2. To find out what other people think looks good on me.

3. To find out what is in style, what other people like/dislike.

4. To find out what ideas/suggestions other people might have.

5. To persuade myself that this fashion is what

I want.

6. For conversational purposes.
7. To find out what is appropriate for certain occasions.
8. Just to be sociable.

Qualities of Opinion Giver

1. A person who dresses smartly, who dresses in such a way as to reflect fashion interest, taste, and ability.
2. A sincere friend with sound judgement.

Other Comments

1. Will not ask an opinion from an individual who makes you feel inferior.
2. A snobbish but smart dresser will be appraised visually but will not be conversed with. Opinion seekers may emulate a snobbish person in their dress but will not give the snobbish person the satisfaction of knowing it.
3. Opinion seekers had a very difficult time in terms of articulating why they discuss fashions.

APPENDIX C

SAMPLE CALCULATIONS FOR CHI SQUARE AND FOR GOODMAN-KRUSKAL
COEFFICIENT OF ASSOCIATION, G

Chi Square

TABLE 8A.--Perceived uncertainty with respect to decision
making and per cent discussing fashions

Time Period: Within a week

	<u>r</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>(r-F)</u>	<u>(r-F)²</u>	<u>(r-F)²</u>
	25	22 ^a	3	9	.41
	75	80 ^b	-5	25	.31
	15	13 ^c	2	4	.31
Total	<u>115</u>	<u>115</u>	<u>0</u>		<u>1.03</u>

$$a = .50 \times 40$$

$$b = .56 \times 143$$

$$c = .56 \times 33$$

Chi Square = 1.03--not significant at the .05
level (d. f. = 2)

Goodman-Kruskal Coefficient of Association, G

TABLE 11A.--Perceived uncertainty with respect to decision making and the number of people talked to

Number of People Talked To	Perceived Uncertainty					
	Low		Medium		High	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
0-2	6	16	18	14	3	14
3-9	21	55	75	59	9	43
10 or more	11	29	34	27	9	43
Total	38	100	127	100	21	100

$$G^1 = \frac{f_a - f_i}{f_a + f_i} = \frac{2664 - 2229}{2664 + 2229} = .09$$

where $f_a = 6(75+9+34+9)+18(9+9)+21(34+9)+75(9) = 2664$

$$f_i = 18(21+11)+3(21+75+11+34)+75(11)+9(11+34) = 2229$$

¹L. C. Freeman, Elementary Applied Statistics, pp. 79-88.

APPENDIX D

PROCEDURE FOR IDENTIFYING EXTREME LEADERS
AND FOLLOWERSExtreme Leaders

Extreme leaders were defined to be the top 5 per cent of the population both in terms of other people asking for their advice and in terms of having a high perceived opinion leadership score. Other people asking for advice was measured in terms of recency and frequency (questions 3a and 3b). Since most of the high frequency individuals were asked within the previous week, frequency was the determining factor. Perceived opinion leadership factors were measured using Troldahl's and Van Dam's scale¹ for identifying opinion leaders (questions 20-26 inclusive).

For each of these factors, other people asking for advice and high perceived opinion leadership, the top 10 per cent of the population was tabulated. Those individuals which appeared in both groups were termed extreme leaders and numbered approximately 5 per cent of the population or 12 individuals.

Extreme Followers

Extreme followers were identified as the top

¹Troldahl and Van Dam, "A New Scale," pp. 35-40.

5 per cent of the population in terms of asking other individuals for advice. Since Troldahl's and Van Dam's scale was designed to identify opinion leaders, it was uncertain as to whether the converse of their scale was very accurate. Therefore, their scale was not used for identifying extreme followers. Asking other people for advice was measured in terms of recency and frequency (questions 2a and 2b). Since most of the high frequency individuals asked for advice within the previous week, frequency was the determining factor. The top 5 per cent, in this case 14 individuals, in terms of frequency of asking other individuals for advice were identified and defined as extreme followers.

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