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AN EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION OF THE EFFECTS OF JOB-SITUATED REFERENCE GROUP INFLUENCE ON GROUP CONFORMITY

by

STANLEY JOEL GARFUNKEL

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8/1/77
date

Leon Schiffman
Professor Leon G. Schiffman
Chairman of Examining Committee

8/1/77
date

M. Wahba
Professor Mahmoud A. Wahba
Deputy Executive Officer

Professor Conrad Berenson

Professor Edward Wolf

Professor George J. Szybillo

Supervisory Committee

The City University of New York

Abstract

AN EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION OF THE EFFECTS OF JOB SITUATED REFERENCE GROUP INFLUENCE ON GROUP CONFORMITY

by

Stanley Joel Garfunkel

Adviser: Professor Leon G. Schiffman

The purpose of this research was to examine job-situated reference groups and to determine whether such groups create environments leading to product usage conformity. Past studies of conformity have used artificially created groups or groups comprised of students or housewives. Co-workers, who spend 35 or more hours per week in close proximity, have never been examined within a consumer behavior conformity context.

A questionnaire was administered to 32 groups of co-workers, with group size ranging from three to five. The total sample size was 106, and each respondent was a female secretarial and/or clerical employee of Queensborough Community College, Bayside, New York. Each of the respondents filled out questionnaires which sought information about herself and her co-workers.

The consumer choice alternative examined in this study was television program viewing. Each subject was asked which TV show she would watch at the 8 P.M. hour on Sunday, Wednesday, and Friday evening. (A list of program alternatives was given to each respondent). Then the respondent had to indicate which program each of her co-workers would select. This information was used in computing conformity scores.

Of the very small number of techniques contained in the consumer behavior literature that may be employed to compute a conformity score, the most recent one, the hyper-geometric model, was used to determine a conformity score for each of the 32 groups examined. But as the data generated by this research was being analyzed, it became apparent that existing conformity measurement models were deficient. It therefore became a major undertaking of this study to develop and illustrate a conformity model that would possess greater conceptual validity than the models already contained in the consumer behavior literature. A new individualized model of conformity (which included knowledge as an integral component) was constructed and then an illustrative example of its use was presented using the same data base as employed in the group analysis. As an additional analytical tool, multidimensional scaling procedures were employed to ascertain the degree of

similarity between the programs broadcast on each of the three evenings studied.

The variables examined in conjunction with TV viewing conformity were both group based (e.g., social interaction, cohesiveness) and individually based (e.g., need for social approval, generalized self-confidence). For both the hypergeometric model and the new individualized conformity model, results were obtained for each of the three days studied as well as a combined all-three-day average.

The major results of this research lie in two directions. First is the finding that the new individualized conformity model appears to be conceptually sound. This is attested to by the results obtained with this model, which indicated the importance of the amount of time the subjects had been co-workers, as well as the social interaction level of the group. Furthermore, both the individualized model and the hypergeometric model yielded more robust results for Wednesday and Friday programs than for Sunday TV shows. (The multidimensional scaling procedure found the programs broadcast on Sunday evening quite dissimilar, whereas both Wednesday programs and Friday programs were to a much greater extent similar).

The second major result is the conclusion that influence of a marketing nature does exist within the confines

of job-situated reference groups. Such groups had never been examined before within the consumer behavior context. The results of this study, therefore, may be useful both in a pragmatic manner to the marketer and to further refine and redefine existing consumer behavior models.

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To the loving and everlasting memory of my father,

JULIUS LEON GARFUNKEL

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Of all the possible sources of interpersonal influence, it has been suggested that the most significant occurs within the confines of the groups to which the individual belongs (Robertson, 1970). These groups (e.g., family, neighbors, friends, club members) which the individual may use to evaluate and guide his own behavior, are often capable of influencing the individual's product and/or brand selection. However, this source of influence upon the consumer decision process has never been examined among groups of individuals who work together. Therefore, the basic tenet for the research study which follows is that job-situated reference group influence leads to product usage conformity on the part of group members.

Study Rationale

There have been a small number of consumer studies dealing with pressures toward conformity in a group setting. Several of these created artificial group situations, using, for example, a college student subject and three of the

experimenter's confederates to compose an artificial four man group (Venkatesan, 1966). Other studies have used on-going groups, such as undergraduate college students (Witt, 1969b) or groups of housewives (Stafford, 1966; Witt and Bruce, 1972). The family, which according to Bennett and Kassarjian (1972) may be the single most influential group in an individual's consumption behavior pattern, has also been studied (Cox, 1975; Davis, 1970; Herr, 1963). But an extensive review of the consumer behavior literature fails to identify a study dealing with consumer purchase conformity among groups of individuals who work together. Work related literature exists primarily outside of the consumer behavior field, and has not dealt with conformity as measured in terms of product usage.

The industrial psychology and social psychology literature contains a number of studies of workers and job-situated groups. But those treating the variable of conformity have been directed toward its effect upon job related characteristics such as leadership (Cartwright and Zander, 1968; Likert, 1961), productivity (Schachter, 1951; Van Zelst, 1952), and status (Kasl and French, 1962; Homans, 1950).

The closest the sociological literature comes to treating conformity as a consumer behavior variable are the several studies of how doctors adopt new medicines (Coleman, Katz and Herbert, 1957) and studies of the diffusion of agricultural innovations among farmers (March and Coleman,

1956). Doctors and farmers, however, do not work in the typical office or factory situation where they are surrounded for most of the day by their peers. Furthermore, drugs to a doctor or fertilizer to a farmer are "tools of the trade" rather than personal consumption items such as coffee, lipstick, or clothing.

It would appear, therefore, that a typical office situation might involve groups of women functioning in clerical or secretarial positions. These working individuals spend more hours surrounded by co-workers in the average 35-40 hour work week than they do surrounded by friends and, in some instances, even family. Furthermore, approximately 30 percent of the current labor force is female, and in the past 20 years the number of working women has increased from less than 20 million to over 30 million. Close to 45 percent of all adult women currently hold either a full or part-time job (Kirkpatrick and Russ, 1974), and "most products and most brands are chosen and purchased by the woman of the family" (Rosenberg, 1977, p. 193). Yet, the overwhelming majority of the aforementioned job-situated studies used male subjects.

This study, as a departure from previous research, examines a heretofore unexplored subject population, making use of job-situated female groups. It is designed to fill a gap existing in the consumer behavior literature because past studies have either examined job-situated groups without regard to consumer behavior using job

characteristic variables, or examined the consumer behavior of groups composed of housewives or students.

Dissertation Objectives

The objective of this research is to explore the influence of job-situated reference groups upon consumer behavior. It endeavors to ascertain the extent to which product usage conformity exists in such groups. Furthermore, it seeks to determine which group related variables are influential in affecting usage conformity.

Questions Examined

Based upon the preceding discussion, the following questions have been explored in this research:

1. Do groups of individuals who worked together exhibit conformity as consumers? To what extent does group cohesiveness foster the emergence of conformity?

2. How does the level of job-situated product related conversation affect conformity? What role does the seeking and/or unsolicited volunteering of product related information play in the emergence of usage conformity?

3. What type of individual is most susceptible in a consumer behavior context to job-situated influence and pressures toward conformity? Do factors such as need for social approval or generalized self-confidence influence the individual's proclivity toward conforming behavior?

4. Does the perceived conspicuousness of the product under examination determine the degree to which the individual exhibited conforming behavior?

5. How do the findings of this study compare with results of studies which have dealt with reference group purchase conformity in a non-job-situated environment? Does this study indicate that the variables affecting group purchase conformity for non-job-situated groups are or are not applicable for job-situated groups?

Scope

This study examined work groups comprised of female secretarial and clerical employees of Queensborough Community College, working in the various departmental and administrative offices of the college. None of the subjects were members of the faculty and any office with less than three qualified workers was eliminated. The subjects were normally in contact with each other for approximately seven hours a day, five days a week. In all probability, they spent more time surrounded by their co-workers than surrounded by friends.

The usage category in which conformity was examined was television viewing. Competing TV shows broadcast during a particular time period constitute a set of consumer choice alternatives similar to the various brands of a product on the supermarket shelf. In addition, the employment of TV

shows as a product category has been used in the consumer behavior context (Lehmann, 1971, pp. 47-55) and does effectively eliminate the need to account for the effect of price.

There were limitations imposed by the research design. Certainly, the results obtained from a group of workers in a single geographic area and working for a service institution may not be representative of all office workers. Furthermore, the use in this research of television viewership as the usage category did not negate the fact that conformity influence may vary across product or usage categories. Neverthelss, prior investigations into the area of usage conformity have had these very same limitations.

Importance

The goal of this research was to add to the existing body of knowledge with regard to the marketing aspects of group behavior in the following ways:

1. It represented an examination of group usage conformity--a topic that has received very limited research effort in past consumer behavior studies.

2. This study did, for the first time, examine marketing related aspects of job-situated reference groups. Past studies have either examined job-situated groups with respect to job characteristic variables, or examined consumer groups composed of housewives or students.

3. Several of the variables used in this study had received very limited treatment within the consumer behavior framework (e.g., need for social approval).

4. It attempted to relate a facet of work related job-situated group behavior, i.e., group cohesiveness, to consumer behavior. Past conformity studies have not attempted to ascertain the extent to which influence or pressure to conform can transcend location.

5. It was believed that the results of this research effort have practical implications for the marketer. It may be advantageous in certain instances to in some way reach individuals with promotional messages while they function as a member of their job-situated reference group.

Organization of the Dissertation

Chapter II presents a review of the relevant literature concerning reference group theory and conformity from both the group and the individual standpoint. The chapter also includes a review of pertinent television related literature.

Chapter III is concerned with a description of the research schematic and field study design, definition and measurement of both the dependent and independent variables, and descriptions of the data analysis approaches employed.

Chapter IV examines group based conformity models and enumerates upon the problems inherent in the use of

this type of methodology. It then presents an illustrative example of the most recent of the group conformity models.

Chapter V presents a new individualized conformity model, explains its advantages, and proffers an illustrative example.

Chapter VI summarizes the problems incurred in the study of conformity and the necessary elements a model of conformity should contain. The chapter also presents a summary of the research, marketing implications, and suggestions for further research.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter begins by examining the concept of reference groups, first from the aspect of group qualities and then from the position occupied by the individual member. Group based as well as individually anchored conformity producing agents are discussed, and a discussion of the importance of social interaction as a part of the process which produces pressures toward conformity is also considered. The final section of this chapter deals with television viewing as a product usage category.

The consumer choice process does not take place within a vacuum. Individuals take notice of what products and brands are used by other people. In a study of the adoption of new farm ideas, for example, friends and neighbors were found to be the most important source of information for the final three stages of the adoption process (Bohlen, Lionberger, Moe and Rogers, 1961). Rogers and Shoemaker (1971) state that "mass media channels are relatively more important at the knowledge function .... interpersonal channels are relatively more important at the persuasion function" (p. 255). And of all sources of

interpersonal influence, the most significant occur within the confines of the groups to which an individual belongs (Robertson, 1970, p. 69).

Definitions of Reference Groups

Many different definitions have been applied to the term "reference group" since Hyman (1942) introduced this concept to indicate a group which influences the attitudes of its members. One of the most widely accepted definitions is Sherif's (1969) who states that "reference groups are those groups to which the individual relates himself as a member or aspires to relate himself psychologically" (p. 418). The individual uses this group as a standard for self-evaluation and as a source of his personal values and goals (Krech, Crutchfield and Ballachey, 1962).

As noted in Sherif's definition, both membership and non-membership groups can serve as reference groups for the individual. Merton (1968) has defined a non-membership group as a group to which a person may or may not aspire to belong (p. 344). If there exists a motivated rejection of the norms of a non-membership group, then the term "negative reference group" is applicable (p. 345). By contrast, a membership group is "one in which a person is recognized by others as belonging" (Newcomb, 1950, p. 225).

Framework for Reference Group Study

There are, according to Kelly (1965), two major types of reference groups. The normative type sets and maintains standards for the individual. Such standards are usually labeled group norms. This function of norm-setting and norm-enforcement can be assumed by a group only when it is capable of delivering rewards and punishments for conformity or non-conformity (p. 212). The second type of reference group provides a frame of comparison to which the individual evaluates himself and others (Merton, 1968, p. 337). Kelly (1965) states that "a group functions as a comparison reference group for an individual to the extent that the behavior, attitudes, circumstances, or other characteristics of its members represent standards or comparison points which he used in making judgments and evaluations" (p. 213). As a final point, both the normative and comparison functions will frequently be served by one and the same group. This will usually be the case with membership groups (p. 213).

Non-membership groups, usually incapable of functioning in the sanction-applying role, are nevertheless quite important from a consumer behavior standpoint. The effect of their comparison function is evidenced when, for example, a celebrity appears in an advertisement or a well-known sports figure indorses a line of sporting equipment.

This "comparative influence depends only upon the influence recipient being attracted to group members or activities" (Cocanougher and Bruce, 1971, p. 379). The term "socially distant reference group" has been used to denote this type of group (pp. 379-381).

An alternative system for classifying the influence function of reference groups has been presented by Turner (1956). In relating the concepts of role-taking and reference groups, he states that problems caused by the generality of the reference group concept can be reduced by recognizing the existence of three distinct types of reference groups--identification groups, interaction groups, and valuation groups. The identification group is the source of the individual's major perspectives and values. Interaction groups, at the opposite extreme, are groups whose members constitute merely conditions to his action. A person must take them into account in order to accomplish his purpose. Lastly, valuation groups are situated between the first two groups and serve as points of comparison to the individual. They "acquire value to the individual because the standpoint of his identification groups designates them as points of reference" (p. 328).

It should be mentioned that Turner's (1956) scheme is not incompatible with the concept of normative and comparative reference groups. Turner's identification groups are normative in quality and valuation groups correspond to comparative groups. Interaction groups also possess some normative qualities, but with much less binding norms.

There exists one discordant viewpoint with the classification system proposed by Turner. Shibutani (1962) has argued that to apply the reference group label to two distinctly separate processes merely adds to the existing confusion (pp. 133-134). It has been Turner's functional breakdown, nevertheless, which has been widely accepted.

Dimensions of Reference Behavior

Reference behavior is characterized by three general dimensions--knowledge, sanctions, and affectivity (Stafford, 1966). These three dimensions are interrelated and, in varying degrees, come into play in all forms of reference behavior.

Knowledge

Merton (1968) has stated that reference group theory "assumes that individuals comparing their own lot with that of others have some knowledge of the situation in which these others find themselves .... Or, if the

individual is taken to be .... oriented towards the norms of a non-membership group, the theory of course assumes that he has some knowledge of these norms" (p. 390). Certainly, "the greater his knowledge concerning the potential referent, the more potentially influential the referent can be" (Merton, 1957, pp. 336-337).

Stafford (1968) has enumerated the possible alternative situations which may exist with regard to the knowledge dimension. An individual may only know the social statuses of others and not the group norms. Alternatively, he may know only the value and normative aspects but the status and behavioral implications may be unclear. Lastly, the type of knowledge usually conveyed in membership groups in which members interact with each other is knowledge of both norms and values, and the accompanying statuses and behavioral patterns (p. 282).

The concept of reference group behavior presupposes some knowledge of the norms and values of the group. Newcomb (1948), in his Bennington study, noted that not all students were aware of the trend away from conservatism as students progressed through college. He states that "obviously, those not aware of the

dominant community trend could not be using the community as a reference group for an attitude" (p. 217).

Sanctions

Potential referents, according to Stafford (1968), become actual referents when they are perceived to possess sanctions which are important to the individual and can be ordered according to the degree of salience of the sanctions associated with each (p. 282). The degree of influence, therefore, is determined by the perceived importance of the positive or negative sanctions involved.

Affectivity

The affect structure of a group may be defined as the patterns of attraction characterizing the regular associations among group members (Secord and Backman, 1964). If a group is not sufficiently attractive to its members, relatively weak influence will be exerted by the group upon its members. The result may be that some other group to which the person belongs may exert a stronger influence upon behavior (Festinger, Schachter and Back, 1950).

Affectivity, therefore, refers to how well each member of the group likes every other member. "The

positive valence of an informal social group .... will be mostly affected by the extent to which one has satisfactory relationships and friendships with other members of the group" (Festinger et al., 1950, pp. 164-165).

The positive end of the affectivity continuum has generally been emphasized in the literature. Shibutani (1962) has stated that persons tend to comply with the norms of the group they find more attractive (p. 140). Merton (1957) suggests that people eligible for group membership and who aspire this membership are more likely to respond to the group's demands (pp. 288-292).

It is noteworthy that negative reference groups also exist. These are groups for which the individual exhibits a motivated rejection of their norms. As early as 1943, Newcomb (1948) had indicated that a person may reject, not merely decline to accept, the norms or standards of a group (pp. 139-155).

Bases of Social Power

Due to the different effects found in studies of social influence, French and Raven (1968) found it necessary to distinguish the major types of social power. Their five bases of social power are: reward power, coercive power, legitimate power, referent power, and expert power (pp. 259-269).

Reward power and coercive power are equivalent to positive and negative sanctions. The use of reward power will tend to increase the individual's attention toward the group. This, in turn, will increase the group's referent power over the individual (p. 263). Coercive power will decrease the attraction of the individual toward the group and the individual may withdraw from the group's range of coercive power unless he perceives other restraining forces or strong valences which induce him to stay (p. 264).

Legitimate power stems from internalized values within the individual which dictate that the group has a legitimate right to influence him and that he has an obligation to accept this influence. The basis for this type of power can stem from cultural values, acceptance of the social structure, and/or designation by a legitimizing agent (p. 265).

Referent power pertains to the degree of identification between the individual and the group. It is always positive in nature (if negative, it would be coercive power) and can be equated with affectivity (pp. 266-267).

The strength of expert power varies with the extent of the knowledge or perception within a given area that the individual attributes to the group or to a particular

referent. Expertness of the group and/or referent may be evaluated in relation to one's own knowledge as well as against an absolute standard. It would appear proper to assume that the greater the degree of expertise the individual attributes to a reference group, the stronger the group influence upon consumer behavior. Finally, the range of expert power is narrower than that of referent power. Expert power is restricted to the cognitive system and the expert is perceived as possessing superior knowledge in only a very specific area (p. 268).

Although all five power dimensions are potentially relevant to consumer behavior, it should be noted that they are not all "bases" of social power (the designation used by French and Raven). Coercion and reward are ways in which power can be exercised, while the other three are powers which exist or are likely to exist under specified conditions (Knight, 1969, p. 9). It is referent and expert power that are likely to have the strongest influence upon consumer behavior.

French and Raven (1968) summarize their discussion of social power by presenting the following six hypotheses:

1. For all five types, the stronger the basis of power the greater the power.

2. For any type of power the size of the range may vary greatly, but in general referent power will have the broadest range.

3. Any attempt to utilize power outside the range of power will tend to reduce the power.

4. A new state of a system produced by reward power or coercive power will be highly dependent on O (social agent), and the more observable P's (person's) conformity the more dependent the state. For the other three types of power, the new state is usually dependent, at least in the beginning, but in any case the level of observability has no effect on the degree of dependence.

5. Coercion results in decreased attraction of P toward O and high resistance; reward power results in increased attraction and low resistance.

6. The more legitimate the coercion the less it will produce resistance and decreased attraction. (p. 268)

Group Influence and Conformity

According to Cartwright and Zander (1968b) "it is a commonplace observation that the members of an enduring group are likely to display a striking homogeneity of beliefs, attitudes, values, and behavior" (p. 139). With this in mind, present discussion focuses upon what conformity is and the group-related variables which in some important respect contribute to its existence and maintenance. This is followed by an examination of how the pressures toward uniformity in groups are affected by the individual differences of the group's memberships.

The concept of conformity is fundamentally predicated upon a two-fold assumption--first, that the individual is aware of the existence of a given group norm, and second, that his behavior is in accordance with that norm, i.e., he is conforming (Hollander, 1958). Rejection of the norm, assuming awareness of its existence, constitutes non-conformity.

Groups can and do apply pressures on their members in order to bring about conformity. The exertion of such pressure, in some groups, is considered to be a legitimate group function. Institutions of socialization, such as churches and families, are expected to influence their members to behave in accordance with specific standards (Cartwright and Zander, 1968, p. 141). French and Raven (1968), as noted previously, use the term legitimate power to refer to this type of social power. Not all groups, however, have or need the explicit justification to demand conformity of their members. Informal groups develop informal group standards, often quite unconsciously, and thereby exert pressures toward uniformity on their members.

Although the process of conformity requires an individual to surrender some of his individuality, this loss is offset by corresponding social rewards. These rewards may take the form of recognition, pride in achievement, and a sense of belonging and approval. Furthermore, groups provide the individual with a frame of reference for perceiving their world, which they might lack alone. Festinger has referred to this form of reference as "social reality" (Hollander and Hunt, 1967, p. 410).

The Sherif and Asch Experiments

Much of the research in the area of conformity stems from or is a continuation of the experiments

conducted by Sherif and Asch. In 1935 Sherif experimented with the autokinetic effect, a name given to the illusion of movement created by an actually stationary pinpoint of light. His subjects were asked to estimate the light's distance of movement. When individually questioned, it became evident that each subject established a norm and range of his own. However, in a group situation (groups of twos and threes), individual norms and ranges converged into shared norms. It was shown, therefore, that the lack of objective standards influenced individuals to move in the direction of conformity (Sherif, 1935). As Katz and Lazarsfeld (1955) note:

> The Sherif study points out for us two basic ideas: first, that individuals turn to and depend on others, when they have to form opinions or make decisions in unclear situations--this we have called the 'social reality' function of groups; and secondly, that individuals interacting with each other relative to a particular problem which concerns all, will develop a collective approach to that problem, and thus create an opinion, an attitude, a decision, or an action which they then will grasp in common (p. 57).

In 1952, Solomon Asch decided to study the ability of a group to force changes in opinion from correct to incorrect, i.e., to determine when an individual would accept the opinion of others when these are contrary to the input from his own senses. Each experimental subject was placed in a group with 2-15 others, all of whom were collaborating with the experimenter. The task involved matching the length of a line with one of a set of three

other lines, only one of which was the same length as the test line. The intentional errors of the confederate majority placed the experimental subject in the position of a minority of one, and resulted in many of these subjects abandoning their own senses and announcing the already stated choice of the confederates as their answer (Asch, 1968, pp. 296-306).

Research such as that by Sherif and Asch suggests that conformity to the group norm (in spite of what one's own senses report) is more likely to occur when:

a. The quality of the evidence presented by others is compelling.

b. The stimulus being judged is ambiguous.

c. The subject's confidence in the correctness of his own perception is low.

d. The discrepancy between his own opinion and the opinions of others is large but not too large.

e. The subject knows that others are aware that his opinion differs from theirs (Cartwright and Zander, 1968, p. 140).

Cohesiveness

Within any social group there are pressures operating which lead to uniformity of behavior and attitude. The two major sources of these pressures toward uniformity are social reality and group locomotion.

Social reality refers to the circumstance that on any issue for which there is no empirical referent, the reality of one's own opinion is established by the fact that other

people hold similar opinions. Forces exist to establish uniformity and thus create reality for the opinion. Group locomotion, on the other hand, is a concept indicating that uniformity may be necessary or desirable for the group to locomote toward its goal. Locomotion will be facilitated if all members agree on a particular path to the goal (Schacter, 1951, pp. 190-191).

The cohesiveness of a group in part determines the strength of the pressures toward uniformity that a group can exercise on its members (p. 190). Festinger (1950) has stated that the

> Cohesiveness of a group is the resultant of all the forces acting on the members to remain in the group. These forces may depend on the attractiveness or unattractiveness of either the prestige of the group, members in the group, or the activities in which the group engages (p. 274).

Cohesiveness, therefore, is a measure of the attractiveness of a group to its members. The motive base of this attraction can be the need for prestige, status, affiliation, recognition, security, money, and so forth (Cartwright, 1968, p. 96). Because cohesiveness seems to increase group members' susceptibility to influence from one another, the more cohesive the group, the more effectively it can influence its members (Festinger et al., 1950).

Much of what is known about cohesiveness stems from the research of Festinger, Schachter and Back (1950). They divided the residents of two housing projects, Westgate and

Westgate West, into groups having different levels of cohesiveness. The same tenants' organization served both projects, and the researchers studied the relationships between group cohesiveness and (1) uniformity of attitudes, and (2) uniformity of behavior with regard to the tenants' council. They found that the greater the group's cohesiveness, the greater the group's influence with regard to both the attitudes and behavior of group members.

There exists additional support for the cohesiveness--conformity relationship. Back (1951) created two member groups of high and low cohesiveness, using instructions designed to predetermine the degree of attractiveness each member had for the others. Members of the highly cohesive groups reported (to a significantly greater degree) that they had felt the pressure of their partner's attempt to influence them (pp. 9-23).

Within the consumer behavior framework, cohesiveness has been examined on a limited basis. Hansen (1959) obtained results that "did not support the existence of a relationship between group cohesiveness and conformity" (p. 304). Stafford (1966) also found no relationship between the degree of cohesiveness and the extent and strength of brand loyalty in the group. He states that "in this study, cohesiveness appears to have its most important function in providing an agreeable environment in which informed leaders could effectively operate" (p. 72).

Witt (1969b), however, did find some evidence of a relationship between group cohesiveness and similarity of brand choice with regard to after-shave and beer, but not with respect to cigarettes and deodorant (p. 475). The specific details of the three studies cited above will be presented later in this chapter.

Status and Leadership

A leader has been defined by Hollander (1961) as "an individual with a status that permits him to exercise influence over certain other individuals" (p. 30). In most groups there exists an informal ranking of members, loosely based upon the extent to which they adhere to the norms and values of the group. With increasing adherence comes higher ranking (Berelson and Steiner, 1964, p. 339). They report that "the higher the rank of the member within the group, the more central he will be in the group's interaction and the more influential he will be" (p. 341). Several studies have shown that the high status individual tends to conform more than the group member of low status. Both Berg and Bass (1961) and Homans (1950) have suggested that an individual seeking high status must live up to all the norms of the group.

Sherif and Sherif (1953) have stated that

> The focus of power in the group resides in the leader position....The leader emerges as a result of his relatively greater contribution to the interaction process in areas of consequence to the group (p. 199).

A group has higher aspirations for its leader than it has for the other group members and, in turn, this results in the leader setting higher levels of attainment for himself (Harvey, 1953, pp. 357-367). The leadership role, therefore, carries greater obligation and greater responsibility than the roles occupied by the other members of the group (Whyte, 1943). As long as the leader operates within the limits defined by the group's interactional process he can maintain his position of influence. But if the leader steps outside of this range on a matter of consequence to the group, he may lose his position and find himself lower in the group's status hierarchy (Sherif and Sherif, 1953).

Group Size

There does not exist a plethora of literature dealing with the effect of group size in producing pressures toward conformity. Asch, in his experiment elaborated upon earlier, employed unanimous majorities consisting of two, three, four, eight and ten to fifteen persons. He discovered that conformity influence became measurable with a majority of two (i.e., group size of three) and appeared in full force with a majority of three (i.e., group size of four). Larger majorities did not produce greater conformity (Asch, 1951).

Additional support for the existence of conformity influence in groups composed of a relatively small number of individuals is provided by Goldberg. He had hypothesized

that conformity would be greater when the size of the group is large. This hypothesis was not substantiated; he found his subjects did not conform more to the opinions of groups of four than they did to groups of two (1954, pp. 325-329). Cartwright and Zander (1968b) sum up the issue of group size by stating that "the absolute size of the group appears to make little difference beyond three or four" (p. 140).

The Individual Within the Group

This section will concern itself with the factors that help explain why individuals differ in their susceptibility to group influence. As Crutchfield (1955) has indicated, the individual brings with him into the judgment situation certain tendencies to conform or not conform which may be related to his personality (pp. 191-198).

Generalized Self-Confidence

Generalized self-confidence is a psychological construct which over a period of years has been variously labeled as "self-confidence" or "self-esteem" (Bauer, 1970, p. 256). The concept refers to "a person's ability to make decisions and take action, without respect to the specific product or situation involved" (Kerby, 1975, p. 150). If a person has set certain ideals for himself, the extent to which he has met them should result in a feeling of success or failure. And this feeling of success or failure in any given situation should "generalize to his entire self-percept" (Cohen, 1959, p. 102).

An individual's response to group pressures toward conformity is in part dependent upon the individual's degree of self-confidence. Experimental evidence indicates that individuals who have been urged to stand on their own principles will less readily accept influence from others (Cartwright and Zander, 1960, p. 176). Studies have linked generalized self-confidence (or self-esteem) to persuasibility, with some indicating that persons of high self-confidence would be more resistant to social influence than persons of low self-confidence (Cohen, 1959). However, other research evidence indicates that a curvilinear relationship exists, with subjects of medium self-confidence exhibiting the greatest persuasibility, while both high and low self-confident subjects were less persuasible (Arndt, 1968a; Bell, 1967; Cox and Bauer, 1964). Bauer (1967) tries to explain this inconsistency by stating that when the motivation is to gain social approval, then a relationship between low self-confidence and high persuasibility is found. However, when individuals are trying to solve problems, then people high in self-confidence will most readily accept evidence from others (Robertson, 1971, pp. 194-195).

Based upon the work of Janis and Field (1959), Witt (1970) has stated that self-esteem has been found to be more strongly correlated with persuasibility than any other personality variable studied (pp. 19-20). Other

researchers have also drawn a parallel between self-confidence (or self-esteem) and conformity. Fry (1971) found that "low self-confidence apparently reinforces needs leading to accommodating behavior in cigarette brand choice and suppresses expression of traits that result in non-conformity" (p. 302). In a study relating the self-confidence of group members with their reactions to pressures toward uniformity, Hochbaum (1954) observed that "a person's dependence on social referents is inversely related to his confidence in his competence to judge the issue in question" (p. 679). Similarly, Smith (1961) states that people who place a higher value on their own ability to judge yield less under pressure to conform (pp. 169-171).

Need for Social Approval

Need for social approval is defined as an individual's need to obtain approbation by responding in a culturally appropriate and acceptable manner (Crowne and Marlowe, 1960, p. 353). An individual interested in maintaining and/or improving social relations should be more affected by group influence than the person who is not concerned with securing the approval of others. People must choose between two alternative courses of action. They may select a psychosocial goal aimed at improving social relations, or they may choose to cognitively cope with the specific problem at hand (Wilding and Bauer, 1968, pp. 73-77).

Several studies have explored the relationship between conformity and need for social approval. Janis (1954), after stating that "persons with low self-esteem are predisposed to be more readily influenced than others when exposed to persuasive communications" (pp. 508-509), attempts to explain this experimentally derived conclusion by stating that "excessive fear of social disapproval might give rise to strong facilitating motivations with respect to acceptance of persuasive communications" (p. 515).

Strickland and Crowne (1962) have noted that individuals with a high need for social approval would tend to evaluate themselves in a culturally sanctioned manner when they expect that this need may be satisfied by presenting themselves in a favorable light (p. 171). They state that "if a person is concerned about the consequences of his behavior in regard to obtaining the approval of others, it seems likely that yielding to the perceived demands of social situations becomes crucial for him" (p. 172). Results of the experiment conducted by Strickland and Crowne confirm their hypothesis that subjects with a high need for social approval conform significantly more often (p. 180).

Male Versus Female Conformity

There appear to be male-female differences with regard to the issue of conformity. Crutchfield (1955) found that female students exhibit significantly higher conformity than male students. Adult women, conversely, exhibited

more independence of judgment than adult men. He attributes part of this reversal to the fact that the intellectual level of the adult female professional group was extremely high--much more so than the adult male group (p. 196).

Generally, research evidence indicates that women tend to be more susceptible to social influence than men (McGuire, 1972, p. 147). Janis and Field (1959), for example, note that "on the average, the females in our sample were significantly more persuasible than were the males" (p. 67). However, when correlating persuasibility to personality factors, significant relationships were obtained from the male sample, whereas none were obtained from the female sample (p. 65). McGuire (1972) sums up such findings by noting that "correlations between personality characteristics and influenceability tend to be higher in males than in females" (p. 147).

Relationship of Conformity to Other Personality Variables

Based upon his experiments within the framework of conformity, Crutchfield (1955) provides a list of personality variables for individuals of high and low conforming behavior. He states that those low in conformity can be described by the following traits:

1. Is an effective leader.
2. Takes an ascendant role in his relations with others.

3. Is persuasive; tends to win other people over to his point of view.

4. Is turned to for advice and reassurance.

5. Is efficient, capable, able to mobilize resources easily and effectively.

6. Is active and vigorous.

7. Is an expressive, ebullient person.

8. Seeks and enjoys aesthetic and sensuous impressions.

9. Is natural; free from pretense; unaffected.

10. Is self-reliant; independent in judgment; able to think for himself.

Those high in conformity behavior are characterized as:

1. With respect to authority, is submissive, compliant and overly accepting.

2. Tends to do the things that are prescribed.

3. Has a narrow range of interests.

4. Over-controls his impulses; is inhibited; needlessly delays or denies gratification.

5. Is unable to make decisions without vacillation or delay.

6. Becomes confused, disorganized, and unadaptive under stress.

7. Lacks insight into his own motives and behavior.

8. Is suggestible; overly responsible to other people's evaluations rather than his own (pp. 194-195).

Ostlund (1973) provides additional variables relating to conformity by stating that:

> Studies have been found which indicate that conformity is positively related with the following personality factors: low intelligence (Carment and Miles, 1965; Crutchfield, 1955; Tuddenham, 1959); extroversion (Carment and Miles, 1965); ethnocentrism (Malof and Lott, 1962); weak ego, poor leadership capability, and authoritarianism (Crutchfield, 1955); need for affiliation (Becker and Carroll, 1962); being an only child or first-born (Becker, Lerner and Carroll, 1964, 1966; Becker and Carroll, 1962). Strong conformity has also been found to associate with feelings of personal inferiority or inadequacy, an altogether reasonable finding (Krech, Crutchfield and Ballachey, 1962) (p. 245).

As a final personality trait, Centers and Horowitz (1963) found "other-directed" individuals more susceptible to social influence (pp. 343-349).

Situational Aspects of Conformity

This section reviews the literature pertinent to the situational factors that affect conformity.

Reference Group Relevance

Schachter (1951) has defined relevance as "the ordering, in terms of importance to the group, of the activities over which the internal power of the group extends" (p. 191). The three possible bases for such ordering are (1) the importance of the activity for group locomotion, (2) the value which the group places upon the activity, and (3) some hierarchy of needs common to group members in their roles as group members (p. 190). Witt (1970) has related these bases to the referent selection process and states that an individual will consider both a wider range

of potential referents and the use of multiple referents as the importance of the norm, value, status, or behavior increases (p. 21).

Perceived Product Conspicuousness

Bourne (1957) has written that "the conspicuousness of a product is perhaps the most general attribute bearing on its susceptibility to reference group influence" (p. 211). The product must be conspicuous in the sense that it can be seen and identified by others, and it must have the ability to stand out and be noticed. Once the role of the reference group in influencing the purchase of a particular product is determined, the decision can then be made as to how the product can best be marketed. Some products must be sold to whole social groups and not primarily to individuals (Foundation for Research on Human Behavior, 1956, p. 12).

For any product category in which reference group influence operates, the decision made by an individual whether or not to purchase a particular product or brand is influenced by what others do. It has been found that "consumers are often influenced by what others buy, especially those persons with whom they compare themselves" (p. 8). Therefore the group norm or group standard, if known to the individual, is an extremely important determinant of consumer behavior. If this standard is not maintained by a group member, the group will take punitive sanction against that individual.

The Issue of Stimulus Ambiguity

Research evidence indicates that the more difficult and/or the more ambiguous the stimuli, the greater the resulting conformity. Judging the movement of autokinetic light (Sherif and Sherif, 1956) will produce greater conformity, for example, than the more unambiguous stimulus of judging the length of a line (Asch, 1951). According to Shaw (1971), when a person has little objective evidence about reality, he must rely upon others to validate his opinions. If, however, objective standards are clear, then normative standards are not as readily relied upon.

A study by Blake, Helson and Mouton (1957) provides further evidence. Subjects were asked to express their attitude with regard to statements about war and peace, to solve mathematics problems, and to count the clicks of a metronome. Correct responses were obtained most often in the cases of the metronome and mathematics. The indication was that "strong anchorage of factual content of tasks may outweigh social pressures toward giving wrong responses" (p. 299). Furthermore, conforming responses are more frequent with difficult items than with easy ones (p. 304).

As a final comment regarding the issue of stimulus ambiguity, it would appear obvious that as exposure to a normative value increases, ambiguity should correspondingly decrease. Experimental results by Goldberg (1954) indicate that "Conformity occurred within the first five exposures

to the group norm and that additional exposures were not accompanied by additional conformity" (p. 328).

Social Interaction

Pressures toward uniformity in groups are synonymous with pressures to influence others, which, according to Schachter (1951) are identical with pressures to communicate. Festinger (1950) states that "as the forces to remain in the group increase (given perceived discrepancies in opinion and given a certain relevance of the item to the functioning of the group) the pressures to communicate will increase" (p. 275).

Social interaction increases as the cohesiveness of the group grows (Berelson and Steiner, 1964, p. 346). Data from an experiment by Back confirms this hypothesis. Both low and high-cohesive groups were experimentally created and, in the discussions which ensued, the highly cohesive group attempted to exert greater influence on its members. Furthermore, the highly cohesive group had stronger pressures to communicate than did the group with a lower level of cohesion (Festinger, 1950).

The greater the frequency of interaction among the members of a group, the more correctly they are able to judge the opinions of the group and use them as a guide to proper behavior (Berelson and Steiner, 1964, p. 336). The amount of change in opinion which may result from such communication is a function of the strength of an individual's desire to

remain in the group (Festinger, 1950). A study by Festinger, Schachter and Back (1950) found that the greater the attractiveness of the group for its members, the more successful the group was at exerting influence. In the more cohesive groups, this resulted in greater conformity.

With regard to a particular individual's involvement in the communication process, the following research results may be cited:

1. The force to communicate about a given topic with a particular member of the group increases as the differences in opinion between that member and the communicator increase. This represents an extension of the finding that, in general, pressure to communicate increases as the perceived nonuniformity in the group increases. The works of Schachter (1951) and Festinger and Thibaut (1951) confirm these findings.

2. The amount of opinion change resulting from a communication increases as (a) pressures toward uniformity in the group increase, and (b) as the strength of the resultant force to remain in the group increases. Research findings of both Festinger and Thibaut (1951) and Festinger, Schachter and Back (1950) confirm this hypothesis.

3. Communications within a small group tend to be directed from equal to equal and/or from members of higher rank to members of lower rank (Berelson and Steinger, 1964, p. 348). In total, high-ranking members interact more than members of lower status.

4. Communications increase when group members are in close physical proximity (p. 349).

When treating the issue of communication within the consumer behavior framework, the titles of "informal product related conversation" or "word-of-mouth advertising" apply. This is "oral, person-to-person communication between a receiver and a communicator whom the receiver perceives as non-commercial, concerning a brand, a product or a service" (Arndt, 1967c, p. 3). There exists research evidence showing that informal product related conversations "are most often mentioned as attitude determinants and as the last source of information prior to purchase" (Robertson, 1970, p. 51). Marketer controlled formal channels, such as advertising, are more influential during the earlier stages of the adoption process (Bohlen, et al., 1968). Figure 1 ranks the importance of information sources by stage in the adoption process.

Previous research efforts dealing with informal product-related conversation have been primarily concerned with the adoption and diffusion of a new product. Arndt (1968a), for example, found that 62 percent of the respondents who purchased the new food product under study received at least one word-of-mouth comment prior to purchase (p. 20).

It would appear that the extent of informal product-related conversation is associated with group purchase conformity in that the greater the extent and frequency

Figure 1

Rank Order of Information Sources by Stage in the Adoption Process

Awareness	Interest	Evaluation	Trial	Adoption
Learns about a new idea or practice	Gets more information about it	Tries it out mentally	Uses or tries a little	Accepts it f full scale a continued us
1. Mass media radio, TV, newspapers, magazines	1. Mass media	1. Friends and neighbors	1. Friends and neighbors	1. Friends a neighbors
2. Friends and neighbors--mostly other farmers	2. Friends and neighbors	2. Agriculture agencies	2. Agricultural agencies	1. Agricultu agencies
3. Agricultural agencies, Extension, Vo-Ag., etc.	3. Agricultural agencies	3. Dealers and salesmen	3. Dealers and salesmen	3. Mass medi
4. Dealers and salesmen	4. Dealers and salesmen	4. Mass media	4. Mass media	4. Dealers a salesmen

Source: J. M. Bohlen, C. M. Coughenour, H. F. Lionberger, E. O. Moe and E. M. Rogers. Adopters of new farm ideas. In H. H. Kassarjian and T. S. Robertson (Eds.). Perspective in Consumer Behavior. Glenview, Illinois: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1968, p. 357.

of product-related conversation, the higher the conformity should be. Furthermore, as the amount of informal product-related conversation increases, group cohesiveness should also increase (Arndt, 1967b; Mancuso, 1969; Myers, 1966).

Conformity Within the Consumer Behavior Framework

Conformity, which in the consumer behavior framework may be translated into group purchase conformity, is the dependent variable explored in this study. The amount of research conducted in the area of group influence on product choice has been extremely limited. The several major past research efforts are as follows.

Katz and Lazarsfeld (1955), in studying the flow of information and influence, concluded that an individual's friends had a substantial influence on purchasing behavior. They studied the influence process from both within and without the family. For the non-family situation, influence in marketing (household products) flowed from older to younger women, for fashions there existed no discernible age pattern, and the subject areas of public affairs and movie-going exhibited substantial age homogeneity between the participants of the influence process (pp. 329-330.

Stafford (1966) investigated the issue of whether brand preferences are influenced by the small informal social groups to which an individual belongs. He studied ten groups of women (group size varied from four to five)

and used letters to differentiate loaves of bread. Although all the breads were identical, the participants were led to believe this was not the case.

In this study, Stafford had hypothesized that group cohesiveness and similarity of brand choice were related. Statistically significant relationships were not found; however, it was determined that in the more cohesive groups a significantly higher number of women preferred the same brand as the group leader (pp. 68-75).

An experiment conducted by Venkatesan (1966) brought the methodology employed by Asch into the consumer behavior realm. Male business students were asked to select the best of three suits, after being told that these suits represented different manufacturers and different levels of quality. In reality, all three suits were identical and three of the four individuals in each four person group were confederates of the experimenter. Venkatesan's results showed that without the existence of objective standards which could be used to select among alternatives, subjects tended to conform to group choice (pp. 384-387).

Hansen (1969) studied the conformity of groups of female students at a secretarial school, both when these groups were first formed and eight months later. Although he was unable to establish statistically significant relationships, he did find that some of the brand choice changes which occurred were in the direction of conformity (pp. 300-305).

Two studies of purchase conformity were conducted by Witt. The first study examined 50 groups of undergraduate college students with respect to their brand choices of beer, deodorants, after-shave lotions, and cigarettes. He concluded that the cohesiveness-similarity of brand choice relationship varies among product types (1969a, pp. 473-476). The second study, which employed 25 groups of Texas housewives as a data base, examined and ranked how well specific constructs, such as perceived product conspicuousness and need for social approval, predicted the group purchasing behavior of seven consumer products. Based upon the lack of similarity of the correlates of brand choice across products, it was concluded that the nature and extent of group influence was product-specific (Witt and Bruce, 1972, pp. 440-443).

The effect of group influence upon perceived risk was studied by Woodside (1972). He found that consumers, both individually and as part of a group, were more willing to choose higher perceived risk products after group discussion (pp. 223-225).

Weber and Hansen (1972) conducted a study to determine the effect of dissonant information from a reference group on an individual's preferred brand. They concluded that the weaker the brand preference, the greater the probability of the respondent switching to the group's preferred brand. In addition, the higher the non-preferred

brand was in the individual's preference hierarchy, the greater the chances were of a switch to the reference group's preferred brand.

An investigation of the influence of socially distant reference groups by Cocanougher and Bruce (1971) confirmed the benefits derived from using famous people in advertisements. They found the variable of attraction to group activities significantly correlated with group influence.

Finally, Knight (1974) attempted to determine the relationship between conformity to group judgment, and (a) an individual's personality type, as well as (b) products varying in characteristics. Although his hypotheses failed to be statistically supported, conformity behavior on the socially relevant products was greater than would be expected by chance (pp. 159-160).

Television As A Usage Category

As mentioned in Chapter I, the television programs broadcast during a particular time period constitute a set of consumer choice alternatives. The decision the viewer must make, therefore, is similar to a product purchase decision, such as which brand of tuna fish, coffee or toothpaste to buy. Because television is essentially a free good, the problem of brand preference versus price is eliminated. One need not be concerned with the fact that a housewife may prefer Brand A coffee, but she buys Brand

B because it is 20 cents a pound less expensive, or she has a manufacturer's or store's "cents-off" coupon.

There are, however, some problems in using television programs as a usage category. As Lehmann (1971) has pointed out, "desires of family members, overlapping schedules, and a saturation effect (the fourth football game viewed is likely to be less appealing than the first) all make predictions of viewing more difficult. The advantages, however, outweigh the disadvantages" (p. 48).

Lehmann (1971) has successfully employed television show preference as a product usage category. He examined the effectivensss of a preference model based on specific product attributes, and found it substantially more robust than predictions based on demographics. Other researchers have studied and/or used television programs as a basis for investigation, but these efforts have primarily dealt with factor analyzing TV shows to group them into program types (Ehrenberg, 1968; Kirsch, 1962; Swanson, 1967a; Villani, 1975; Wells, 1969).

The Fall 1975 TV Season

The Fall 1975 season brought a new phenomena to United States television--the Family Viewing Hour. From 7 P.M. to 9 P.M. (with the first hour programmed locally), the National Association of Broadcasters decreed that programs be suitable for viewing by the entire family. Prime time network programming, therefore, began at the 8 o'clock hour.

The family viewing hour rule, according to Richard McHugh, a senior vice president at Needham, Harper and Steers

Advertising, "has led to blandness in the programming from 8 to 9 P.M. ... and an over-abundance of cop shows and doctor shows after 9 o'clock" ("Are They Watching TV Less?," 1975, p. 25). Programming restrictions have led to a plethora of game shows from 7:30 P.M. - 8 P.M., and it is believed that this may be driving audiences away from their TV sets (Christopher, 1975).

Early season viewing, which was the period during which this research was conducted, represented a decrease from the prior year. There was a significant six percent reduction in overall viewing from 8 P.M. to 9 P.M. (the family hour) for early Fall 1975, as compared to the same time period in 1974. Although the rating for young viewers was up four percent, there was a seven percent drop in adult men, and a six percent reduction in adult women during the family hour ("Family Hour: Viewing Up for Young, Off for Old," 1975, p. 24). Some industry officials believe the family hour is turning adults off "and there's a lack of prime-time diversity right across the board" ("Are They Watching TV Less?" 1975, p. 25). According to Nielson, there was an overall decrease in homes using TV, with the largest decrease occurring from 8 P.M. to 9 P.M., the family viewing hour.

Summary

This chapter has presented a review of the literature dealing with reference groups and the individual factors which may determine a person's degree of susceptibility to group influence. The various factors which together produce pressures toward conformity--be they situational, personality based, or interactional--have been discussed. Finally, the rationale for the employment of television programs as a usage category was presented. The following chapter introduces the research schematic used in this study, defines and explains the variables employed, and presents the field study design.

CHAPTER III

THE RESEARCH SCHEMATIC AND FIELD STUDY DESIGN

This chapter examines the following aspects of the survey research conducted: (1) the research schematic, (2) definition and measurement of the variables, (3) hypotheses, (4) conduct of the field investigation, and (5) data analysis approach.

The Research Schematic

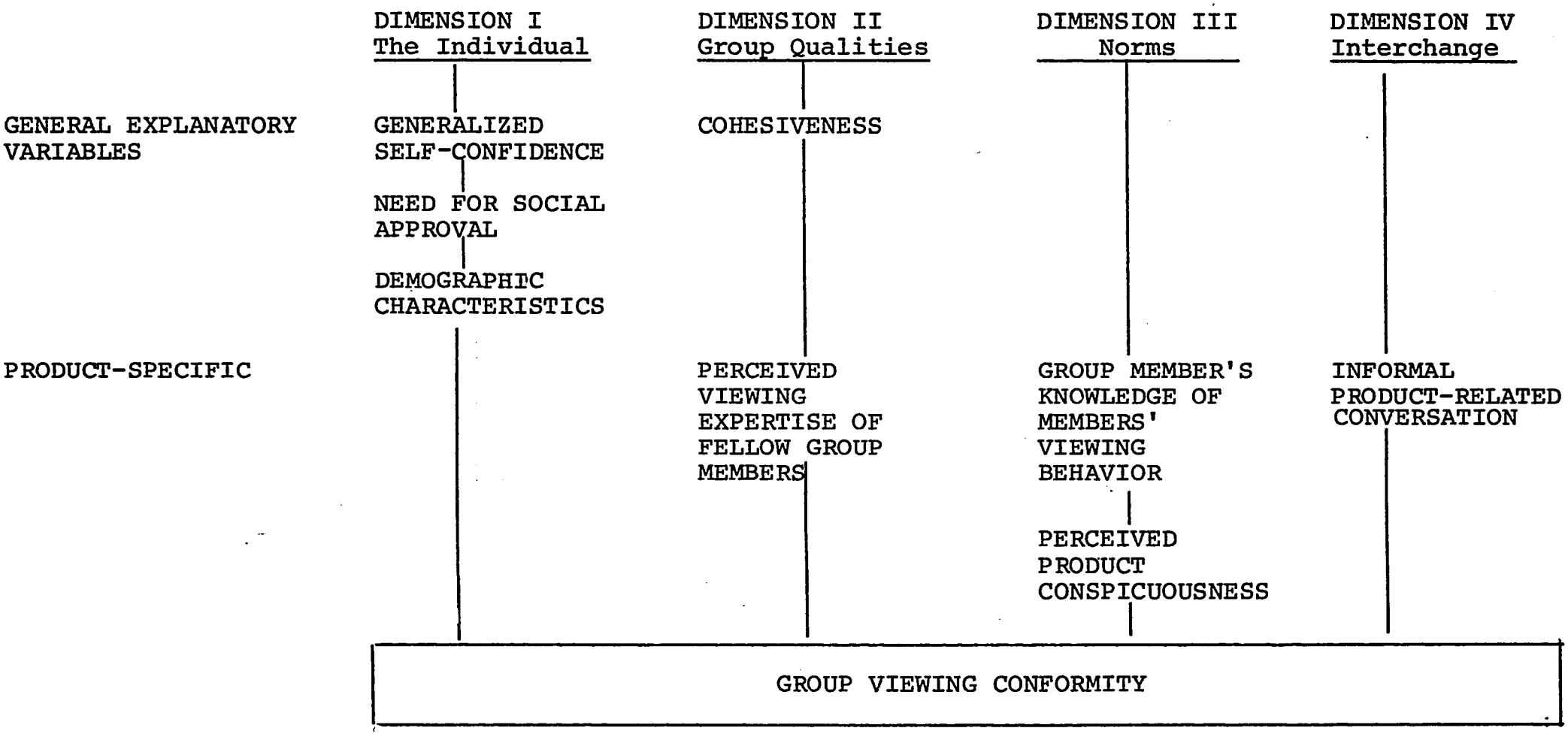
In attempting to synthesize past research efforts, some of which were cited in the previous chapter, Hollander and Hunt (1967) have identified the following four basic dimensions as determinants of the extent of group conformity:

1. the individual and his own characteristics, exemplified by personality
2. the qualities of the group and its setting
3. the nature of the norm itself
4. the past and present interchange between the individual and the others within the situation (p. 410).

Figure 2 shows the four basic dimensions of conformity as outlined by Hollander and Hunt, and indicates the specific behavioral variables which are designed to coincide with this model. The variables in Figure 2 are discussed below.

Figure 2

The Research Schematic



Group Viewing Conformity - The Dependent Variable

Conformity, which in the consumer behavior framework may be translated into group purchase conformity, is the dependent variable explored in this study. As noted in the previous chapter, very little research has been conducted regarding group conformity as measured in terms of product specific behavior. Previous research efforts have defined product purchase conformity as the degree to which members of a group use the same brand of a product (Witt, 1969b).

Witt and Sen (1972) have stated that measurement of group purchase conformity should include:

1. the relevant range of behavior in a given situation
2. differences in group size
3. the probability that a particular behavior will occur in a group, given the empirical distribution of behavior in the total subject-sample (p. 45)

Witt has developed measures of product purchase conformity for groups which consider not only the number of members within the group who purchased the same brand, but also the total number of brands purchased by the group (i.e., degree of variance). For example, if all other factors were equal, and one five member group had three purchasers of Brand A and two who bought Brand B, this group would rate higher in purchase conformity than another five man group wherein three members also purchased Brand A, but one bought Brand B and one bought Brand C.

Also taken into account is a measure of brand market shares, which represents the distribution of brand choices in the respondent sample. Witt and Bruce (1970) have stated that "the lower the probability of a particular brand choice distribution, the more reasonable the conclusion that the brand choices of the group members were not independent and that group influence on member brand choice may have existed" (p. 534).

Witt's early work on a probabilistic measure of conformity employed the multinomial probability distribution (Witt and Bruce, 1970; Witt and Sen, 1972). The measure produced a low probability figure both for a group in which all members exhibited the same behavior and for a group in which all members exhibit different behavior. This conceptual inconsistency was eliminated by Murphy and Witt (1975) when they replaced the multinomial based formulation with one using the cumulative hypergeometric probability distribution. In discussing the hypergeometric probability approach, Murphy and Witt (1975) state that (1) this method "treats the subject sample as a small finite universe affected by trials" (p. 117), and (2) this "measure focuses only on manifestations of congruent behavior, while the multinomial based measure is affected by the behavior of all group members whether or not their behavior manifests congruence" (pp. 117-118).

The hypergeometric probability can be computed by employing the following formula:

$$P(C/N,n,r) = \frac{\binom{N-r}{n-c}\binom{r}{c}}{\binom{N}{n}}$$

Where N is the sample size, n is the size of a given group, r is the number of people in the sample selecting a particular brand, and c is the number of people in a group selecting the brand. When calculated, the lower the probability, as determined by this formula, the greater the group influence on member behavior. As a final point, the hypergeometric probability is calculated only for groups exhibiting some degree of shared brand choice. When all group members select different alternative brands, the probability of 1.0 is assigned to the group (p. 116).

Independent Variables

Dimension I: The Individual and His Own Characteristics, Exemplified by Personality

The first of Hollander and Hunt's four basic dimensions of conformity is the individual and his own characteristics, exemplified by personality. The following three general explanatory variables have been employed in the exploration of this dimension: generalized self-confidence, need for social approval, and demographic characteristics.

Generalized Self-Confidence

Generalized self-confidence, defined and discussed in the previous chapter, has been operationalized, using the Day and Hamblin (1964) ten question measure, which uses Likert scales for the recording of responses. This measurement approach was appealing because it has been used before with good results within the consumer behavior context (Bell, 1967). It is based, in part, on the earlier 23 question measure by Janis (1954) and can be easily interpreted. Those who agree with questions 1, 2, 3, 8 and 10 and disagree with the remaining items are said to exhibit high self-esteem or self-confidence. The opposite responses to these items indicate low self-confidence. Furthermore, because the nature of this research necessitated that the final questionnaire not be excessive in length, this ten question approach was ideal.

The ten questions of this measure are contained in Part I of the take-home version of the questionnaire.[1]

Need for Social Approval

Need for social approval, a concept also discussed in the "Literature Review" chapter, has been measured using the Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale. This scale

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[1]As explained in this chapter under the topic of "Data Collection Method," the length of the questionnaire necessitated that it be divided into two parts--an in-office version and a take-home version.

locates individuals "who describe themselves in favorable, socially desirable terms in order to achieve the approval of others" (Robinson and Shaver, 1970, p. 640). Its internal consistency using the Kuder-Richardson formula is .88 and its test-retest correlation is .89 (Crowne and Marlowe, 1960, p. 350). It is comprised of 33 true-false items.

This scale has previously been employed in marketing related studies by Witt and Bruce (1972) and by Wilding and Bauer (1968) and was therefore attractive for use in this consumer behavior research. The Marlowe-Crowne scale has been widely used by psychological and sociological researchers, is currently in widespread use, and has been used with many different types of subject-groups. The other widely used scale, the Edwards Social-Desirability Scale, was not as appealing for this study because it is lengthier, has never been employed in a marketing related study, and is still subject to criticism regarding its scoring and interpretation (Janis, et al., 1969, p. 744).

The Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale comprises Part III of the take-home questionnaire.

Demographic and Classification Data

The final variables with regard to the individual are the demographic and classification characteristics. The following demographic and classification characteristics were examined:

1. age
2. education
3. income
4. marital status
5. family size
6. length of time employed in the same office
7. number of people in the household
8. number of TV sets in the home
9. number of hours per week the subject views TV

These characteristics have never been examined with regard to group purchase conformity. The few conformity studies dealing with consumer behavior which have been previously cited have employed demographically similar subjects, such as groups of undergraduate college students. Only Seashore (1954) has suggested what the relationship between these characteristics and group purchase or viewing conformity may be. He found that group cohesiveness was positively related to the duration of shared membership on the job, but his prediction that similarities in age and education would be related to cohesiveness was not confirmed (pp. 98-99).

The demographic and classification characteristics were measured using standard marketing research questionnaire procedure.

Dimension II: The Qualities of the Group and Its Setting

The second of the four basic dimensions of conformity, the qualities of the group and its setting, is represented by the variables of cohesiveness and perceived viewing expertise by fellow group members.

Cohesiveness

Cohesiveness, discussed in the previous chapter, has been measured using Seashore's Index of Group Cohesiveness. This index joins three distinct meanings of cohesiveness:

1. identifiable membership in the group
2. attraction to the group or resistance to leaving it
3. perception of the group as being better than others in terms of getting along together, helping each other, and sticking together (Witt, 1969b, p. 475).

Seashore's index uses three questions, the third having three parts. The first two questions can receive a value from one to five. For the three parts of the third question, a value from one to three is assigned. The questions can be found in Part II of the take-home questionnaire.

The measurement instrument is appealing for this study because it was designed for use in an industrial work environment and because with very minor modifications it has been used successfully by Witt (1969b) in a consumer behavior study. Furthermore, an examination of current literature dealing with work groups and cohesiveness shows

that both this measure, and the Seashore study in general, have become the standard references cited with regard to cohesiveness and work groups (e.g., Fulmer, 1974; Hellriegel and Slocum, 1974).

Perceived Viewing Expertise of Fellow Group Members

The consumption specific variable related to the qualities of the group and its setting is perceived viewing expertise of fellow group members. (Consumption specific is used to refer to the fact that group members' average group score for this variable should vary across product categories). This variable has been employed in only one previous consumer behavior study (Witt and Bruce, 1972), although it is believed to be a determinant of social power. French and Raven, in enumerating upon the bases of social power, discuss the effect of expert power (see Chapter II). They imply that each member of a group evaluates another member's expertness in relation to their own knowledge of the subject, as well as against an absolute standard (1968, p. 267).

The degree of expertise attributed by a consumer to a reference group is quite probably an important determinant of the amount of influence that particular groups can have on the individual's brand choice behavior (Witt, 1970, p. 18). Therefore, for any particular product category, the group will act as a referent point to the individual if it is believed that one of the group's qualities is some degree of knowledge and expertise concerning the product category (or consumer choice alternative) in question.

Perceived viewing expertise of fellow group members has been operationalized using a five point Likert scale requiring each group member to evaluate the amount of television viewed by every other group member (see question 4A, in-office questionnaire). To arrive at a score for each group, the responses of all group members were averaged (Witt and Bruce, 1972, p. 441).

Dimension III: The Nature of the Norm Itself

The nature of the norm itself, the third of the model's four dimensions, refers to the operation of group standards, i.e., "the rather well substantiated finding that members of the same face-to-face group exhibit relative uniformity with respect to specified opinions and modes of behavior" (Festinger, et al., 1968, p. 152). This dimension was measured with product specific variables. This was due to the fact that the relationship between group norms and group purchase conformity should be a dynamic, not a static, relationship, i.e., the norm should vary depending upon a product's susceptibility to group influence. The variables explored herein are group member's knowledge of members' viewing behavior and perceived product conspicuousness.

Group Member's Knowledge of Members' Viewing Behavior

Knowledge, one of Stafford's (1966) three general dimensions of reference behavior, has been discussed in Chapter II. Group member's knowledge of members' viewing

behavior has been measured by asking each member of the group to indicate which TV programs she believes each other member is viewing at the 8 P.M. hour on each of the three days of the tested week. A group score was derived by dividing the number of correct answers by the total possible number of correct identifications. The resulting percentage figures were used as the actual predictor variable values. First, however, their decimal equivalents were transformed using the arcsin $\sqrt{p}$ transformation. Such a procedure has been employed within the consumer behavior framework (Witt and Bruce, 1972) and may be represented by the following formula:

$$K_j = \xi_{ij}$$

where K_j is the brand-choice knowledge for group j and K_{ij} is the brand choice knowledge of each member of group j (Witt, 1970). Question 3 on the in-office questionnaire measures this variable.

Perceived Product Conspicuousness

This situational variable, discussed in the previous chapter, was operationalized using a five point Likert Scale indicating the likelihood that fellow group members knew the programs an individual viewed on Sundays, Wednesdays, and Fridays at the 8 o'clock hour. This scale ranged from "definitely does not know which TV shows I watch or would be most likely to watch (1)" to "definitely knows which

TV shows I watch or would be most likely to watch (5)." A group score was derived by averaging the group's responses to this question.

Perceived product conspicuousness has been employed as a variable in previous conformity studies (Witt and Bruce, 1972) and as a part of a psychographic fashion interest scale (Reynolds and Darden, 1971). The measurement approach taken in this research is consonant with its prior usage.

Dimension IV: The Past and Present Interchange Between the Individual and the Others Within the Situation

The final dimension contained in the research schematic is the past and present interchange between the individual and the others within the situation. The variable used to represent this dimension is informal product-related conversation.

Informal Product-Related Conversation

Informal product-related conversation, discussed in the literature review chapter under the umbrella of social interaction, was measured sociometrically for each group. Rogers and Shoemaker (1971) have stated that

> The sociometric method is most applicable to a sampling design where all members of a social system [or in this case, all members of a job-situated reference group] are interviewed, rather than where a small sample within a large population is contacted. Undoubtedly, the sociometric technique is the most valid measure (p. 215).

The self-designating procedure employed herein has been often used within the consumer behavior framework. Examples include Schiffman's (1972) measurement of social interaction

and Reynolds and Darden's (1972a) psychographic investigation of opinion leadership.

Questions 5 through 8 on the in-office questionnaire were used to measure informal product-related conversation. Numbers 5 and 6 dealt with perceived TV interaction, whereas questions 7 and 8 inquired about actual TV interaction. For each of the four questions, the respondent either indicated that no co-worker qualified, or gave the code letter or letters for co-workers who did qualify.

Television Viewing

The utilization of TV programs as a product usage category and the Fall 1975 TV season with Family Hour have been discussed in the preceding chapter. Mention must be made, however, of the reasons behind the selection of the 8 o'clock TV shows broadcast on Sundays, Wednesdays and Fridays as the consumer choice alternatives studied.

The 8 o'clock evening hour was chosen because each channel in the New York Metropolitan area was beginning to broadcast a new program--new in the sense that it was not the second half of a show which began at 7:30 P.M.

The choice of measuring group TV viewing conformity on Sunday, Wednesday and Friday evenings was based upon theoretical assumptions. On Wednesdays, the job-situated reference group has the opportunity to influence viewership through social interaction on the day before, the day of, and the day after the broadcast. On Sundays, influence

and pressure theoretically would occur only after-the-fact, i.e., in the office on Monday morning. For the Friday programs, influence takes place prior to air-time, and no person in the office is going to inquire the next morning if a particular TV show was viewed.

To determine whether attitudinal differences among the program alternatives offered on each day exist, a question was asked which required the respondents to indicate the degree of similarity and dissimilarity between all the possible pairs of shows broadcast during the 8 o'clock hour on a particular day. The use of multidimensional scaling allowed for the comparison between the three days. If a respondent, for example, considers all the programs to be quite similar on a given day, the subject may care very little which show she watches.

The question employed the method of paired comparisons and asked the respondent to indicate the degree to which the TV shows represented by each pair are or are not similar to each other. A five point scale was used for this rating, with "not at all similar" having a value of one and "almost identical" receiving a five.

Because of the length of time involved in answering question 10, it was deemed undesirable to ask each respondent to complete each question three times--once for each day studied. Therefore, a third of the respondents received in-office questionnaires which asked in question 10, about

Sunday's TV programs, a third were asked about Wednesday, and the final third filled out questionnaires listing Friday's TV programs.

Hypotheses

Below are the hypotheses tested in this research project. The following nine hypotheses presented are those which deal with the relationship of the independent variables to group viewing conformity.

Hypotheses Dealing with an Independent Variable's Relationship to Group TV Viewing Conformity

DIMENSION I: the individual and his own characteristics, exemplified by personality

A. Generalized Self-Confidence

1. Each group's TV viewing conformity varies inversely with each group's average generalized self-confidence.

   The lower a group's average generalized self-confidence, the greater group TV viewing conformity should be in order to reduce the risk of making a mistake.

B. Need for Social Approval

2. Group TV viewing conformity varies directly with group need for social approval.

   One method of obtaining the approval of another individual should be by adopting that person's brand.

C. Demographic and Classification Characteristics

3. Group TV viewing conformity varies directly with the average length of time the workers have been employed in the same office.

   The above hypothesis is based on the work of Seashore (1954) and assumes that the longer the

workers have been together, the greater the chances for social interaction.

4. Group TV viewing conformity is not significantly related to the characteristics of age, income, education, marital status, family size, number of people in the household, number of hours per week the subject watches TV or the number of TV sets in the home.

   This hypothesis is based on Seashore's work. He found no relationship between these types of characteristics and cohesiveness.

DIMENSION II: the qualities of the group and its setting

D. Cohesiveness

5. Group TV viewing conformity varies directly with group cohesiveness.

   This hypothesis is based upon the work of Witt (1969), Hansen (1969), and Stafford (1966) who in past studies have examined this relationship.

E. Perceived Viewing Expertise of Fellow Group Members

6. The average group score for group TV viewing conformity varies directly with perceived viewing expertise of fellow group members.

   The above hypothesis is based upon the concept that the greater the degree to which a group member believes other members of her group are more expert than she with regard to the product area in question, the greater the probability that she will be influenced by their choice of brand.

DIMENSION III: the nature of the norm itself

F. Group Member's Knowledge of Members' Viewing Behavior

7. For each viewing category, the average group score for group TV viewing conformity varies directly with group member's knowledge of members' viewing behavior.

In the simplest of terms, if an individual has no idea what channels are viewed by the other group members, there can be no pressure toward conformity.

G. Perceived Product Conspicuousness

8. The average group score for group TV viewing conformity varies directly with perceived TV conspicuousness.

According to the Foundation for Research on Human Behavior (1956), a product's conspicuousness is the single most important determinant of whether reference group influence does or does not function with respect to the product in question.

DIMENSION IV: the past and present interchange between the individual and the others within the situation

H. Informal Product-Related Conversation

9. Group TV viewing conformity varies directly with the level of informal product-related conversation.

The greater the extent of informal product-related conversation, the higher the viewing conformity should be because the product is apparently important enough for the respondents to discuss.

Field Study Design and Procedure

The following is a description of the methodology employed in this research. The discussion includes subject group characteristics, data collection approach, questionnaire pretest procedure, and data analysis procedure.

Subject Group Characteristics

The subjects were all female secretarial and clerical employees of Queensborough Community College,

working in the various departmental and administrative offices of the college. None of the subjects were members of the faculty.

There were 33 distinct offices at the college which employed three or more individuals who met the subject group characteristics noted above. Any office with less than three qualified workers was eliminated. In one office, consisting of three workers, one of the women declined to participate. This reduced the number of groups studied to 32. Group size varies between three and five, and the total sample size was 106.

It is appropriate to discuss why this sample meets the necessary parameters. As cited earlier, people who work together are in contact with each other for six to eight hours a day, five days a week. They spend more time surrounded by their co-workers than surrounded by friends. Glueck (1974) has stated that groups provide an identity for the person at work--a place to achieve a feeling of belongingness from which a worker can derive status, recognition and esteem. He says that

> In most large organizations, work groups are the only source of this feeling. One cannot relate closely to General Electric, to the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, to the City University of New York, or to John Hopkins Medical Center. However, one can belong to a work group within each of these organizations and achieve a sense of belongingness (p. 86).

As further justification, Hellriegel and Slocum (1974) state that

> A group may be defined as a unit composed of two or more individuals who come into personal, meaningful, and purposeful contact with one another on somewhat of a continuing basis (p. 356).

Clearly, women employed in a particular department of a college meet this criteria.

It should be noted that "there are various kinds of groups within the workplace, both formal groups (departments, units, bureaus) and informal groups, not formally organized by the hierarchy" (Glueck, 1974, p. 86). This research deals with an informal component, i.e., choice similarities, of the formal group.

Data Collection Method

The data collection instrument, because of its length, was administered in two sections. The researcher went to each qualifying office within the college and administered the in-office section of the questionnaire. Because this section required each respondent to answer questions about her co-workers, a photo cube with a letter was visibly placed on each desk. This system eliminated the need for names on the questionnaires. In a three person office, for example, a photo cube with the letter A was randomly placed in a visible spot on one worker's desk, photo cube B on a second desk, and cube C on the third desk. Each worker, therefore, knew the letter assigned to each of her co-workers.

The office questionnaire also asked the respondents about the various TV programs broadcast on Sunday, Wednesday, and Friday at 8 P.M. Each respondent was handed a five inch by eight inch index card which listed the programs broadcast on each of the three days at 8 P.M. The subjects' memory of shows, thusly, was not an issue.

Upon completing the in-office questionnaire, each respondent received an envelope which contained a copy of the take-home questionnaire. The respondent took this home and completed it. Early the next morning, the researcher returned to the office and collected the completed take-home questionnaires. It should be noted that the take-home questionnaire did not ask about specific television programs; therefore any programs the subject viewed the evening she had the take-home questionnaire at home would in no way have influenced her answers. As in the case of the in-office questionnaire, no names were asked on the take-home version. Each group was assigned a group number and each respondent was given a code letter. The only identification on the questionnaires, therefore, was a group number and an individual code letter.

Pretest Procedure

The questionnaires were pretested for ease of administerability and clarity of direction in offices at both Queensborough Community College and Baruch College.

Only when it was determined that the instruments could be used without difficulty was the actual research begun.

Data Analysis Procedure

The data from the completed questionnaires was transferred to computer cards and tabulated. Multivariate techniques were employed to measure how much variation in the dependent variable was accounted for by each independent variable. Multidimensional scaling techniques were used to ascertain the differences in respondents' perceptions of the television programs broadcast on the different days. The findings and results of the statistical analyses performed, as well as a detailed, step-by-step description of the methods employed, are presented in the next two chapters.

CHAPTER IV

A CRITICAL EVALUATION OF EMPIRICALLY BASED MEASURES OF CONFORMITY

If one were to exclude the laboratory experiments which have concerned themselves with conformity (e.g., Asch, Venkatesan, and so forth) and look instead at studies which have attempted to measure conformity using existing rather than artificially created short-duration groups, the work of Robert Witt dominates the literature. There are three separate methods Witt and his associates have used in order to derive group conformity scores: (1) the Similarity of Brand Choice Model, (2) the Multinomial Model, and (3) the Hypergeometric Model.

This chapter examines Witt's three methods of measuring group conformity and explains why they are all inappropriate for the task assigned to them. After assessing their strengths and limitations, an example of the most recent of these models, the hypergeometric distribution model, is presented and the degree to which this model supports this study's research hypotheses is shown.

Similarity of Brand Choice Model

The original model that Witt (1969a, 1969b, 1970) employed to measure group conformity is referred to as

"similarity of brand choice." The formula for the model is:

$$S_i = K - N_i$$

where S_i is similarity of brand choice for Brand i; K is a constant needed to establish a range of scoring for the brand choice scale; and N_i represents the number of different brands of the product used by the members of the group (1970, p. 28). If, in a group of five, for example, three members use Brand A and the other two use Brand B, the score of this group would be higher than for another five person group in which three people also buy Brand A but one used Brand B and one used Brand C.

The measurement approach has two outstanding weaknesses. First, whether or not a group member has knowledge of the brands purchased by the other group members is not accounted for. The second major weakness is that popularity or market share of the brand is not considered. Conceptually, a group of women using a brand with a low market share would seem to be exhibiting greater conformity than a group using a brand with a very high share of market. But this conformity model does not attempt in any way to account for the market share of the brands under examination.

The Multinomial Model

In order to overcome the problems inherent in the non-consideration of brand market shares, Witt (Witt and Bruce, 1970; Witt and Sen, 1972) devised a similarity of

brand choice model based upon the multinomial probability distribution. Witt and Bruce (1970) as cited in Chapter III, stress the importance of taking market share into account.

The formula for the multinomial conformity model is:

$$P(X_1, X_2, \ldots X_k) = \left[\frac{n!}{X_1! X_2! \ldots X_k!} \right] \Theta_1^{x_1} \Theta_2^{x_2} \ldots \Theta_k^{x_k}$$

X_k is the number of group members selecting a particular brand, n is group size, Θ_i is the probability of selecting the i^{th} brand in the empirical distribution of brand choices of the total subject-sample. A linear transformation is then used so that a high score on the measure represents a relatively greater amount of purchase conformity than would a low score.

Several major problems exist with this conformity measurement model. The conformity score derived for each group is affected by the behavior of all group members, whether or not any conformity behavior is being exhibited (Murphy and Witt, 1975). But if no conformity occurs, it seems more plausible that the group's conformity score computed via a proper model should be zero. The notion of deriving a conformity score for a group showing no conformity appears to be conceptually invalid. This shortcoming in turn, leads to a second problem which is that computation using this methodology will produce an extremely low multinomial probability figure (i.e., indicating high conformity) after linear transformation both for a group in which all

members use different brands with small market shares and for a group in which all members use the same brand (Witt and Bruce, 1970). This factor appears to create serious doubt concerning the conceptual validity of the multinomial distribution based probabilistic model of group conformity.

The Hypergeometric Model

The use of the cumulative hypergeometric probability distribution as a conformity model has been discussed in great detail in Chapter III. It represents the most recent conformity measurement technique found in the literature and overcomes many of the weaknesses inherent in Witt's earlier approaches. Of the several techniques for measuring conformity contained in the literature, the hypergeometric approach is conceptually the most robust. It is, however, far from ideal, as the following section of this chapter explains.

A Theoretical Treatment of Conformity as a Variable

The previous section has discussed the major past attempts to construct a workable measure of conformity. Many of the shortcomings of these methods have been presented; others will be discussed below. But first it is necessary to conceptually discuss the meaning of conformity.

If three strangers buy the same brand of coffee, it would be unsound to group them together and say they have all succumbed to group pressure. Clearly, the three people in

this example are not members of the same group. But what if they were? What if they were neighbors, co-workers, or members of the same club or fraternal organization? The purchase of the identical brand of coffee still does not indicate product usage conformity, merely similarity of brand choice. And this similarity could stem from conformity, chance or market share. The condition that must exist for conformity to take place is knowledge.

Knowledge

The importance of knowledge as a dimension of reference behavior was discussed in Chapter II. To briefly reiterate, one cannot conform to the norms of a group unless one is aware of those norms. The individual must then weigh the benefits of conforming to group norms against the sanctions imposed by the group for non-adherence. It seems evident, therefore, that similarity of brand choice, used by Witt in three separate models, is not an appropriate surrogate for conformity. Similarity of brand choice neglects to account for the necessary condition of knowledge.

Market Share

In addition to knowledge, any measure of purchase or usage conformity should include the probability of selecting a particular brand out of all the brands available for purchase. The woman who views a TV show which has a very high market share, for example, is exhibiting greater

congruence with the population at large than a woman who watches a low rated program. But when measuring conformity on a group basis, the opposite holds true. If a group of women are all viewing a low rated TV program, it is assumed group influence is more likely to have taken place than if all the women were tuned to a highly rated program. Thus, the lower the probability that a woman would independently select a particular alternative (e.g., watch a TV show with a very low rating or select a brand of product with a very low market share) the higher the group conformity is likely to be. This assumes, of course, that two or more group members exhibit the identical behavior. (This presupposes that the individuals exhibiting identical behavior have knowledge of what the other or others do).

Social Interaction

Yet another element that should be considered in constructing a conformity measure is the extent and nature of social interaction within the group. A group with limited social interaction offers precious few chances for the members to become aware of the actions of other group members. This lack of knowledge would reduce the pressures toward conformity and would probably also reduce the severity of sanctions imposed by the group toward the non-conforming member.

Group Pressures

An individual's desire to conform would also have a bearing upon group conformity. People, at any point in time, are members of many primary groups. Each group to which the individual belongs exerts pressures in many areas. When more than a single group exerts pressure in the same area, the individual must determine which group's norm to conform to. The level of interaction as well as the leniency or severity of the group sanction for those who do not conform enter into the decision process.

Legitimacy of Group Pressure

The power of a group norm to influence the behavior of an individual may also be partially determined by the degree to which the individual believes the group has a legitimate right to seek compliance within a particular subject area. Each group member probably determines for himself how broad or narrow he wishes to acknowledge a group's sphere of influence.

Group Size

Group size is another dimension to be considered. If a group is composed of three members and all use different brands, only three of the many brands of the product available for sale have been accounted for. In this size group, a member with complete knowledge of the brands selected by

all group members need only be concerned with the actions of two other individuals. In a group of ten, by comparison, the chance of knowing the brands used by all other group members is lower (due to the greater knowledge requirement imposed by the larger group), but the opportunities for similarity of brand choice are improved, especially if people outnumber brands.

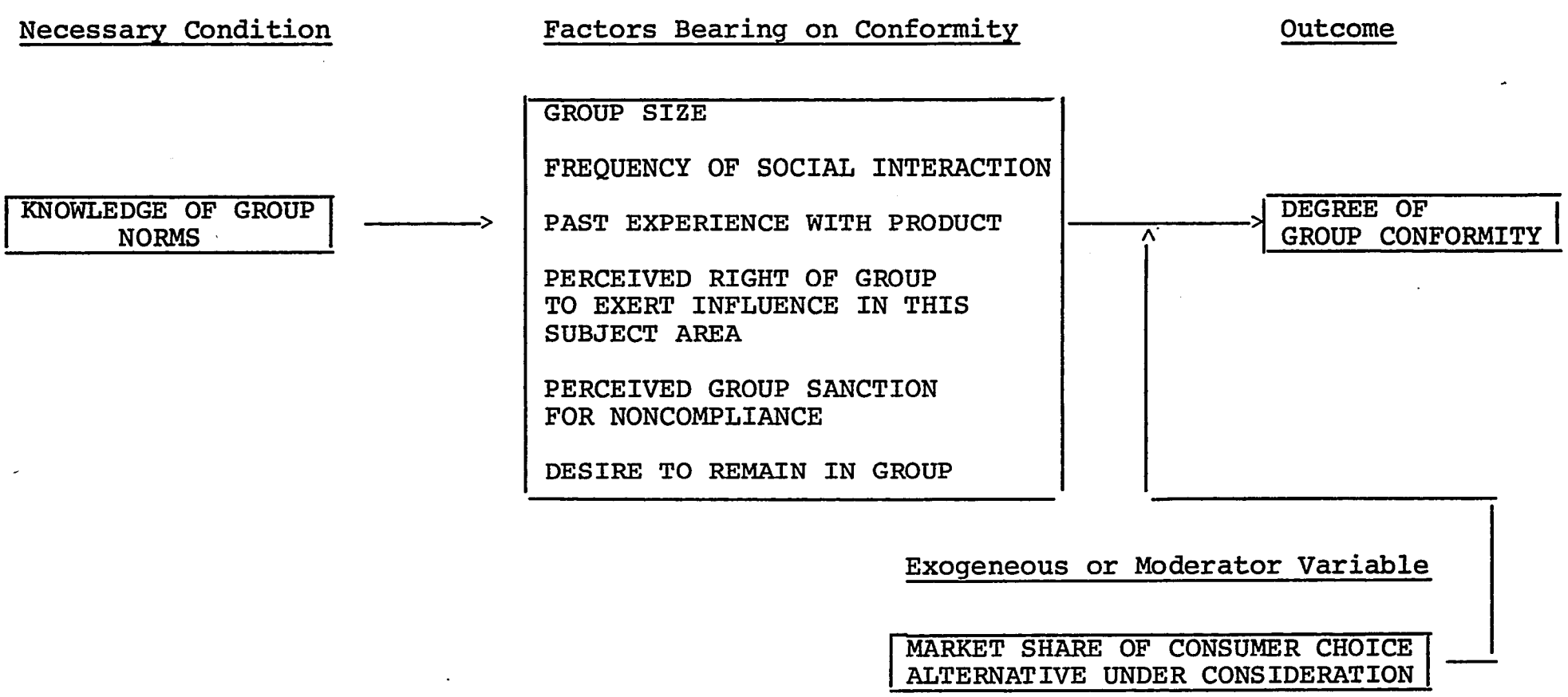
Experience with the Product

The greater an individual's experience is with reference to a particular choice alternative set, the more difficult it should be for the group to change this member's choice pattern. This is because the individual already has a mental "file of information" regarding the product and may have a deeply seated opinion regarding the subject in question.

The foregoing discussion has stressed the tenet that knowledge of group norms is a necessary condition in any measure of conformity. Other factors bearing on conformity include group size, social interaction, experience with the product, and desire to remain in the group. Figure 3 is a representation of what a conformity measure should account for.

Figure 3

The Measurement of Conformity



An Example of Group Conformity Using Existing Methodology

The purpose of this section is to examine job-situated conformity in terms of the hypergeometric model. The methodology used was explained in Chapter III. Hypotheses, also presented in the previous chapter, are examined. In the next chapter, the model will then be compared to a new alternative conformity model to be introduced.

The Study

Data from each of the 32 groups (106 individuals) was arrayed so that an average score could be obtained for each variable and for each of the groups. The group average score was obtained for each variable by adding together the scores of the individual group members and then dividing by the group size. These average group scores then served as the input to the BMD-02R Stepwise Multiple Regression computer program (Dixon, 1973).

Variables that took the form of a proportion or percentage were transformed using the arcsin transformation (Schuessler, 1971):

$$Y = \arcsin \sqrt{p}$$

where p is the proportion of N cases in a given category. According to Witt and Bruce (1972), this transformation is necessary in "order to meet the homoscedasticity constraint of the statistic used in analyzing the study's data (p. 441). Decimal equivalents of the resulting percentage figures were then used as variables.

The program was run separately for each of the three rated days (Sunday, Wednesday and Friday). All three hypergeometric probabilities for each group were then averaged, as was day-specific channel knowledge, and a combined stepwise multiple regression was undertaken.

Table 1 lists the variables used in the group analyses.

Findings: Stepwise Multiple Regression

The following represents an illustrative example of how the hypergeometric model of conformity may be applied to a data base. It is realized that the small sample size employed in this illustration in relation to the number of independent variables examined greatly increases the probability of making Type I errors (Mendenhall, 1968). Furthermore, with the large number of variables examined, the t-tests performed at the 5 percent level are actually being raised to some higher level, causing an increase in the number of significant results (Cochran and Cox, 1957).

Significant stepwise multiple regressions are presented in Table 2, which includes only those variables that increase prediction of the dependent variable at an appropriate t-ratio level ($p<.05$). Table 3 through Table 6 show the individual results obtained in each of the stepwise multiple regression procedures. The resulting multiple

Table 1

List of Variables Used in the 32 Group Analyses

1. Cohesiveness
2. Need for social approval
3. Generalized self-confidence
4. Perceived TV conspicuousness
5. Perceived TV expertise
6. Age
7. Marital status
8. Education level
9. Family income
10. Number of people in household
11. Number of children
12. Length of employment in this office
13. Number of TV sets in the home
14. Number of hours per week view TV
15. Perceived TV interaction
16. Actual TV interaction
17. Group member's knowledge of members' viewing behavior
18. Hypergeometric group viewing conformity

Table 2

Hypergeometric Model

Rank Order for Entry of Significant Variables in Stepwise Regression[a]

Variable	Sunday	Wednesday	Friday	All 3 days
Cohesiveness		2		
Need for social approval		1	2	2
Generalized self-confidence				
Perceived TV conspicuousness				
Perceived TV expertise				
Age	1			
Marital status				
Education level				
Family income				
Number of people in home				
Number of children				
Length of employment in this office				
Number of TV sets in the home				
Number of hours per week view TV				
Perceived TV interaction				
Actual TV interaction				
Group member's knowledege of members' viewing behavior			1	1
R^2 for significant rank order variables	.2045	.3303	.3394	.4870

[a]Variables are included up to step where appropriate t-statistic is significant at the .05 level.

Table 3

Hypergeometric Model

Sunday Stepwise Predictions of Conformity Influencing Variables

Variable[a]	Stepwise R^2[b]	t-Statistic[c]	Regression Coefficient[d]
Age	.2045	2.7768*	.06550
Number of hours per week view TV	.2653	-1.5495	-.01405
Perceived TV interaction	.2963	-1.1101	-.86160
Group member's knowledge of members' viewing behavior	.3262	-1.0961	-.95449
Number of children	.3814	-1.5218	-.64149
Need for social approval	.4089	-1.0793	-.04041
Perceived TV expertise	.4501	1.3406	.42021
Number of people in household	.4697	.9234	.16314
Actual TV interaction	.4834	.7623	.29352
Number of TV sets in the home	.4894	.4995	.10955
Family income	.4956	.4956	.13779
Cohesiveness	.4992	- .3766	-.01732
Length of employment in this office	.5012	- .2766	-.04164
Generalized self-confidence	.5039	.3122	.01421
Perceived TV conspicuousness	.5064	- .2956	-.07483
Education level	.5082	- .1149	-.04169

[a]Listed in order of entry into stepwise regression

[b]The proportion of total variation explained at that step

[c]d.f.=14

[d]negative regression coefficient indicates a direct (rather than inverse) relationship to the dependent variable

*$p<.02$

Table 4

Hypergeometric Model

Wednesday Stepwise Predictions of Conformity Influencing Variables

Variable[a]	Stepwise R^2[b]	t-Statistic[c]	Regression Coefficient[d]
Need for social approval	.1901	-2.6539*	-.05154
Cohesiveness	.3303	-2.4632**	-.14362
Perceived TV conspicuousness	.4110	1.9591	.34540
Number of people in household	.4890	-2.0298***	-.24305
Number of TV sets in the home	.5425	1.7450	.35663
Marital status	.6037	1.9645***	.66411
Family income	.6630	-2.0557***	-.44294
Actual TV interaction	.6979	1.6286	.72630
Perceived TV expertise	.7306	-1.6356***	-.62045
Generalized self-confidence	.7616	1.6503***	.04497
Length of employment in this office	.7859	-1.5064***	-.03557
Number of hours per week view TV	.7980	1.0703	.02382
Perceived TV interaction	.8054	- .8275	-.35226
Age	.8111	- .7153	-.26690
Education level	.8185	- .8060	-.15904
Number of children	.8199	.3413	.06660
Group member's knowledge of members' viewing behavior	.8204	- .2062	-.09739

[a]Listed in order of entry into stepwise regression

[b]The proportion of total variation explained at that step

[c]d.f=14

[d]negative regression coefficient indicates a direct (rather than inverse) relationship to the dependent variable

*p<.01 **p<.025 ***p<.10

Table 5

Hypergeometric Model

Friday Stepwise Predictions of Conformity Influencing Variables

Variable[a]	Stepwise R^2[b]	t-Statistic[c]	Regression Coefficient[d]
Group member's knowledge of members' viewing behavior	.1398	-2.2078*	.75691
Number of people in household	.2399	1.9546***	.23645
Need for social approval	.3394	-2.0541**	-.03208
Family income	.3998	-1.6476	-.38925
Generalized self-confidence	.4203	.9585	.05088
Education level	.4350	- .8067	-.16057
Actual TV interaction	.4668	-1.1969	-.87898
Number of hours per week view TV	.4913	1.0522	.02993
Perceived TV interaction	.5073	.8449	.83799
Number of children	.5187	.7043	.34279
Perceived TV conspicuousness	.5334	- .7962	-.33578
Age	.5515	- .8749	-.21103
Cohesiveness	.5700	.8807	.04745
Perceived TV expertise	.5813	- .6765	-.34620
Length of employment in this office	.5925	- .6624	-.04795
Number of TV sets in the home	.6015	.5815	.14700
Marital status	.6087	.5081	.15522

[a]Listed in order of entry into stepwise regression

[b]The proportion of total variation explained at that step

[c]d.f.=14

[d]Negative regression coefficient indicates a direct (rather than inverse) relationship to the dependent variable

*p<.025 **p<.05 ***p<.10

Table 6

Hypergeometric Model

All-Three-Day Stepwise Predictions of Conformity Influencing Variables

Variable[a]	Stepwise R^2[b]	t-statistic[c]	Regression Coefficient[d]
Group member's knowledge of members' viewing behavior	.3344	-3.8822*	-1.80304
Need for social approval	.4218	-2.0944**	- .02958
Family income	.4870	-1.8861***	- .24695
Number of TV sets in the home	.5263	1.4971	.08601
Marital status	.5627	1.4703	.31511
Generalized self-confidence	.5951	1.4157***	.01895
Perceived TV interaction	.6172	1.1751	.43821
Cohesiveness	.6295	- .8738	-.03253
Age	.6373	- .6880	-.21543
Education level	.6634	-1.2756	-.22711
Number of hours per week view TV	.6831	1.1175	.01309
Length of employment in this office	.6859	.4044	.00797
Number of children	.6871	- .2680	-.02741
Actual TV interaction	.6877	- .1775	-.04752

[a]Listed in order of entry into stepwise regression

[b]The proportion of total variation explained at that step

[c]d.f.=14

[d]Negative regression coefficient indicates a direct (rather than inverse) relationship to the dependent variable

*p .005 **p .05 ***p .10

correlation coefficients ranged from a high of .9058 for Wednesday to a low of .7129 for Sunday.[1]

In Chapter III, mention was made of the rationale for selecting Sunday, Wednesday, and Friday as the time periods for study. It was anticipated that on Wednesday, job-situated reference group influence should be greatest, due to the opportunities for social interaction on the day before, the day of, and the day after the TV program is broadcast. Table 3 through Table 6 bear out that there are a greater number of variables significantly and "suggestively" ($p<.10$) related to the hypergeometric conformity model for Wednesday than for Sunday, Friday, and all-three-days combined.

It must be noted that the single tail t-statistic has been applied to test the significance of all variables for which the direction of the relationship between the variable and conformity has been hypothesized (see Chapter III). The remaining variables were tested for significance using the two-tailed t-statistic.

Sunday's regression (Table 3) showed age to be significantly ($p<.05$) and directly related to conformity.

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[1]It must be noted that when adjusted for degrees of freedom, the dominant predictor variables in each of the contexts investigated become zero. This finding is not unexpected considering the large percentage of zero adjusted R^2 values obtained by Murphy and Witt (1975) using the hypergeometric model of conformity.

The results obtained for Wednesday indicated that two variables were significantly related to conformity. As shown in Table 4, these variables were need for social approval and cohesiveness. The direction of this relationship for both variables was direct. Wednesday's results also "suggested" that generalized self-confidence and marital status are inversely related to conformity, with number of people in the household, family income, perceived TV expertise, and length of employment in the same office directly related.

Two variables were significantly related to Friday conformity. Group member's knowledge of members' viewing behavior and need for social approval showed a direct relationship to conformity. The number of people in the household was "suggestively" and inversely related to the dependent variable (Table 5).

Results for all-three-days showed group member's knowledge of members' viewing behavior and need for social approval to be significantly and directly related to conformity (Table 6). Two other variables were "suggestively" ($p<.10$) related. These variables were generalized self-confidence (inverse relationship) and family income (direct relationship).

Hypotheses Treating the Dependent Variable of Group TV Viewing Conformity

In this section, each of the hypotheses introduced in Chapter III is examined.

> Generalized Self-Confidence - H1: Each group's TV viewing conformity varies inversely with each group's average generalized self-confidence.

This hypothesis was not found to be consistent with the data. It should be noted, however, that the regressions for Wednesday (Table 4) and for all three days combined (Table 6) "suggest" (p. 10) that group average generalized self-confidence is inversely related to group TV viewing conformity.

> Need for Social Approval - H2: Group TV viewing conformity varies directly with group need for social approval.

Table 4 through Table 6 show need for social approval to be directly related to group TV viewing conformity for Wednesday, Friday, and for all three days combined. These results are not surprising considering the idea that viewing a TV program knowingly enjoyed by someone an individual works with may help fulfill a need for social approval. Imitation, it has been said, is a form of flattery.

Demographic and Classification Characteristics - H3: Group TV viewing conformity varies directly with the average length of time the workers have been employed in the same office.

Only for Wednesday (Table 4) is there a "suggestion" (p .10) that a direct relationship exists between group TV viewing conformity and length of employment in the same office.

Although it seems logical that the greater the amount of time individuals have worked together should result in greater social interaction, there exist several plausible explanations for the lack of a significant relationship between these variables. It is entirely possible that group averaging clouds a significant relationship between conformity and length of employment. Perhaps a newer worker, in order to establish a rapport with longer tenured co-workers, is more likely to exhibit conforming behavior. If this is true, then the seemingly logical thought that average group length of employment in the same office is related positively to conformity is a spurious notion. Two groups may both have the same group average for length of service, but in one group all the workers may have approximately the same length of service, while in a second group some of the workers may be long tenured and others fairly recent arrivals.

Yet another possibility in attempting to explain the lack of a significant regression relationship is that the effect of length of service on conformity may reach a

maximum fairly early in the job-situated context. The new worker may try to please her co-workers during the first few months on the job, but as greater rapport develops, the individual may feel more at ease to deviate from the norm if desired. If enough social "credits" have been built up, then sanctions for non-compliance should be minimal. It is possible, therefore, that after six months of employment in an office, length of service no longer becomes associated with conformity in a direct relationship.

> H4: Group viewing conformity is not significantly related to the demographic and classification characteristics of age, family income, education level, marital status, family size, number of people in the household, number of TV sets in the home, or the number of hours per week the subject views TV.

This hypothesis is rejected in that two of the demographic or classification variables are significantly related to group TV viewing conformity for the days studied. For Sunday (Table 3), the regression shows age to be significantly related to conformity. Wednesday's regression results "suggest" that married subjects are less likely to exhibit conforming behavior and that both family income and number of people in household are directly related to TV viewing conformity (Table 4). Number of people in household is "suggestively" and inversely related to conformity on Friday (Table 5). For the combination of all-three-days, family income varies directly and "suggestively" with conformity (Table 6).

It is not entirely evident why the number of people in the household should vary inversely with conformity on Friday and directly on Wednesday. A possible explanation may be that the procedure of averaging group scores is clouding the results. It is also possible, considering that both relationships are "suggestive," that this finding is the result of random noise.

Cohesiveness - H5: Group TV viewing conformity varies directly with group cohesiveness.

Only on Wednesday was group cohesiveness significantly related to TV viewing conformity (Table 4). Although somewhat surprising that cohesiveness did not establish itself as a more robust variable, it is logical that it should make itself felt more strongly on Wednesday. As discussed in Chapter III, it was believed prior to conducting this research that Wednesday afforded the members of job-situated reference groups greater opportunity for social interaction than did Sunday and Friday.

Perceived Viewing Expertise of Fellow Group Members - H6: The average group score for group TV viewing conformity varies directly with perceived viewing expertise of fellow group members.

Only Wednesday "suggests" ($p<.10$) a direct relationship between perceived viewing expertise of fellow group members and TV viewing conformity (Table 4). This suggestive relationship may be due to random noise.

Group Member's Knowledge of Members' Viewing Behavior - H7: For each viewing category, the average group score for group TV viewing conformity varies directly with group members' knowledge of members' viewing behavior.

As indicated in Table 5 and Table 6, group member's knowledge of members' viewing behavior is significantly and directly related to TV viewing conformity for Friday and for all three days combined. This finding is not surprising, since, as was noted earlier in this chapter, knowledge is a necessary condition for conformity. Although this variable did not prove significant for Sunday or Wednesday, it is important to realize that overall, with all three days averaged, knowledge proved the most significant variable studied.

Perceived Product Conspicuousness - H8: The average score for group TV viewing conformity varies directly with perceived TV conspicuousness.

No significant relationship was found between perceived TV conspicuousness and TV viewing conformity. The failure of this variable to attain significance in the other regressions is puzzling when one considers the robustness of this variable in Witt's study which used this same hypergeometric model (Murphy and Witt, 1975).

Informal Product-Related Conversation - H9: Group TV viewing conformity varies directly with the level of informal product-related conversation.

Neither actual nor perceived TV interaction was significantly associated with TV viewing conformity.

Conclusion

This chapter has presented an explanation of the problems inherent in the use of existing empirically based conformity measures. It has also demonstrated the best of existing methods, the hypergeometric model, in an illustrative example of its use. The following chapter, using the same data base, presents an alternative to existing conformity measurement approaches, once again presents an illustrative example, and then compares the results obtained in past conformity studies to the results obtained through the use of the new conformity model.

CHAPTER V

AN ALTERNATIVE CONFORMITY MEASUREMENT APPROACH

It is the purpose of this chapter to present an alternative to the previously discussed conformity measurement approaches. The first section presents the new conformity model, explains why it is believed superior to existing methodology, and then, using the same data base as the previous chapter, proffers an illustrative example. A comparison is then made between the results obtained using the new model and both the results cited in the last chapter and previous conformity studies.

The New Conformity Model

The conformity measurement technique about to be presented treats every member of a group as an individual, rather than averaging out all individual scores into a group average. To compute this measure, three conditions must be known:

1. the consumer choice alternative (i.e., TV show, brand of coffee, and so forth) chosen by each group member
2. the market share of each chosen alternative
3. whether each group member knows the alternative chosen by the other members of the group

From the above conditions, four possible alternatives result. First is the situation wherein the subject has no knowledge of what alternative is selected by any other group member. Under this condition, the individual receives a score of zero, regardless of whether or not he has selected the same alternative as another member of his group.

The second alternative condition is that the individual knows and selects the same consumer choice alternative as one or more other members. Under this condition, the individual's conformity score is:

$$C_1 = k \ (\ 1 - m.s. \ ) \qquad (1)$$

where C_1 represents the conformity score and m.s. is the market share of the chosen alternative. The k is the number of other group members the subject knows choose this alternative. Therefore, the individual's conformity score increases as the number of other group members the subject knows he is conforming to increases. And the multiplication of k by (1-m.s.) insures that the greater the market share of the chosen alternative, the lower the resulting conformity score will be. This results in a group of individuals who select a high market share brand receiving a lower conformity score than a group selecting a low market share brand. The rationale for such a procedure was presented in Chapter IV.

As a third possibility is the situation wherein the subject has knowledge of what alternative is selected by one or more group members but the subject chooses an alternative

he is not aware that anyone else has selected. The conformity score thus becomes:

$$C_2=(-k_a)\left[\frac{1}{1+(1-m.s._a)}\right]+(-k_b)\left[\frac{1}{1+(1-m.s._b)}\right]\ldots+(-k_i)\left[\frac{1}{1+(1-m.s._i)}\right] \quad (2$$

where C_2, k_j, and $m.s._j$ are defined as before. In this instance, however, the possibility exists that the nonconforming subject knows the selection of more than one other member and these others may not all be selecting the same alternative. For this case, k_a is the number of members selecting alternative A and $m.s._a$ is the total sample market share of alternative A, and so forth. The k now has become negative to indicate nonconformity and the (1-m.s.) has become:

$$\frac{1}{1+(1-m.s.)} \quad (3)$$

so that the higher the market share of the consumer choice alternative rejected by the subject, the more negative the resulting conformity score will be., i.e., the subject would be exhibiting greater nonconformity. To phrase this in another fashion, a subject nonconforming to a very heavily viewed TV program would be exhibiting greater nonconformity than an individual nonconforming to a TV program with a very small market share.

The final situation is one where the subject has knowledge that one or more group members selected the same alternative and is aware that one or more individuals selected a different alternative. For this case, the

following formula is used:

$$C_3=k(1-m.s.)+(-k_a)\left[\frac{1}{1+(1-m.s._a)}\right]\ldots+(-k_i)\left[\frac{1}{1+(1-m.s._i)}\right] \quad (4)$$

The Advantages of This Alternative Methodology

This section will examine the benefits derived from the use of the conformity measurement approach cited above. To begin with, this model explicitly includes knowledge, rather than merely treating it separately after generating the basic conformity score. It is believed that the explicit treatment of knowledge as a component of the model is proper due to the fact that knowledge, as discussed in the previous chapter, is a necessary condition--a condition without which conformity of behavior cannot take place. A second advantage of this model is the fact that it is a market share based measurement approach. The greater the brand market share of the consumer choice alternative, the lower the resulting conformity score. As explained in Chapter IV, the assumption is being made that a group of women selecting an alternative with a very high market share is exhibiting less conformity than if they all selected an alternative with a relatively low market share. Table 7 presents the total sample market share data for each TV channel and each examined day of the week.

Additionally, one should consider what occurs when in previous studies the scores of all group members were averaged. Specifically, past research efforts (Witt and

Table 7

Percentages Viewing Each Channel

Channel	Sample Market Share		
	Sunday	Wednesday	Friday
2	.24	.29	.07
4	.02	.13	.41
5	.06	.09	.01
7	.21	.09	.05
9	.19	.02	.02
11	.05	.30	.23
13	.25	.09	.23

Bruce, 1972; Murphy and Witt, 1975) have attempted to determine the strength of the relationship between conformity and a host of group averaged variables. But the use of group averages is an insufficient basis for this exploration. Consider, for example, a group score for generalized self-confidence. In one group composed of four individuals, all have "average" generalized self-confidence. In a second group, two women have very high self-confidence and two women score very low on this measure. Yet when an average group generalized self-confidence score is computed, both groups have essentially identical scores for this variable. But the intragroup differences between these two groups might materially affect the pressures toward uniformity. The new model eliminates this problem by employing individual rather than group scores. Figure 4 summarizes the weaknesses of existing conformity measurement models.

An Illustrative Example of the New Model

Employing the same data base as used in the previous chapter,[1] the following is an illustration of the new individualized conformity model. Mention must be made of several modifications to the group runs used in

[1]Of the 106 respondents, there were 12 who had no knowledge of which alternatives the other group members chose on any of the three days studied. These non-communicators were removed from the sample, making the resulting sample size 94. Their removal is justified because the sample was composed of groups that were not formed as a result of affinity, such as would be true of neighbors, housewives, and/or church groups.

Figure 4

A Summary of the Weaknesses of Existing Empirically Based Conformity Models

Similarity of Brand Choice Model

a. excludes group member's knowledge of members' behavior
b. excludes the market share of the brand under consideration
c. uses only group averages which may be misleading

Multinomial Model

a. both conforming and nonconforming groups can obtain a high conformity score
b. excludes knowledge as part of model
c. only uses group averages

Hypergeometric Model

a. excludes knowledge as part of model
b. only uses group averages

the following presentation. The combined three-day measure was treated in two distinct ways. All three days were averaged for each subject (as they were for each group in Chapter IV) and as a second approach, Wednesday was given twice the weight of the other days (i.e., Sunday + (2) Wednesday + Friday / 3). This was done because conceptually there are greater opportunities for conformity to occur Wednesday because the subjects could discuss TV programs both before and after the presentation of the TV show under examination.

The list of variables employed in the Stepwise Multiple Regression phase of this research is the same as the list contained in Table 1, except that in the individualized conformity model there is no variable called "group member's knowledge of members' viewing behavior." Knowledge now has become an integral part of the individualized conformity measure and is multiplied by the market share of the consumer choice alternative (or alternatives) the individual chooses to (or does not choose to) conform with.

Findings: Stepwise Multiple Regression

The following represents an illustrative example of how the individualized conformity model may be applied to a data base. As noted in Chapter IV, it is realized that the small sample size in relation to the number of independent variables examined increases the probability

of making Type I errors (Mendenhall, 1968) and that the t-tests performed at the 5 percent level are actually being raised to some higher level, resulting in an increased number of significant results (Cochran and Cox, 1957).

Table 8 presents significant results obtained for each of the three studied days and for all-three-days combined (using both straight and weighted computational procedures). Results from the individual regressions may be found in Table 9 through Table 13.

Need for social approval demonstrated itself to be significantly and directly related ($p<.05$) to Sunday conformity. Wednesday's regression (Table 10) showed that length of employment in the same office and perceived TV interaction were significant. Results from Wednesday "suggest" a relationship between conformity and generalized self-confidence.

Length of employment in the same office and education level were significantly related to Friday's conformity model. The model "suggested" ($p<.10$) the relationship of conformity to perceived TV interaction (Table 11).

As previously noted, results from all-three-days were treated both in a similar manner to the other individual days and in a weighted fashion. Table 12 presents the unweighted results. It indicates that length of employment in the same office and education level demonstrated themselves to be significantly ($p<.05$) related

Table 8

Rank Order for Entry of Significant Variables in 94 Case Stepwise Regressions[a]

Variable	Sunday	Wednesday	Friday	All Three Days	
				Weighted	Unweighted
Cohesiveness	1				
Need for social approval					
Generalized self-confidence					
Perceived TV conspicuousness					
Perceived TV expertise					
Age					
Marital status					
Education level			2	2	
Family income					
Number of people in home					
Number of children					
Length of employment in this office		1	1	1	1
Number of TV sets in the home					
Number of hours per week view TV					
Perceived TV interaction		2			
Actual TV interaction					
R^2 for significant rank order variables	.0643	.1051	.1047	.1140	.0535

[a]Variables are included up to step where the appropriate t-statistic is significant at the .05 level.

Table 9

Sunday 94 Case Stepwise Predictions of Conformity Influencing Variables

Variable[a]	Stepwise R^2[b]	t-statistic[c]	regression coefficient
Need for social approval	.0643	2.5138*	.00770
Actual TV interaction	.0898	-1.5978	-.03980
Number of hours per week view TV	.1069	-1.3126	-.03574
Number of TV sets in the home	.1200	1.1517	.01580
Number of children	.1347	1.2238	.06272
Education level	.1498	1.2413	.04756
Marital status	.1580	.9127	.02412
Perceived TV interaction	.1640	- .7840	-.06414
Number of people in household	.1704	.8043	.00179
Family income	.1738	- .5888	-.04726
Length of employment in this office	.1774	.5957	.00420
Generalized self-confidence	.1797	.4736	.00139
Cohesiveness	.1805	.2860	.00230
Perceived TV expertise	.1809	.1803	.00769
Perceived TV conspicuousness	.1813	-.2049	-.00654

[a]Listed in order of entry into stepwise regression

[b]The proportion of total variance explained at that step

[c] d.f.=77

*p<.01

Table 10

Wednesday 94 Case Stepwise Prediction of Conformity Influencing Variables

Variable[a]	Stepwise R^2[b]	t-statistic[c]	regression coefficient
Length of employment in this office	.0303	1.6951*	.00745
Generalized self-confidence	.0483	-1.3108**	-.00478
Actual TV interaction	.0662	-1.3168	-.11574
Perceived TV interaction	.1051	1.9648*	.10662
Number of TV sets in the home	.1211	1.2655	.02206
Marital status	.1366	-1.2522	-.03124
Number of hours per week view TV	.1466	-1.0024	-.02151
Perceived TV conspicuousness	.1553	- .9350	-.02488
Family income	.1599	- .6780	-.07253
Cohesiveness	.1660	.7822	.00627
Number of people in household	.1694	- .5781	-.00137
Age	.1721	.5095	.00605
Perceived TV expertise	.1742	.4554	.01199
Number of children	.1744	.1400	.00528

[a]Listed in order of entry into stepwise regression

[b]The proportion of total variance explained at that step

[c]d.f.=77

*p<.05

**p<.10

Table 11

Friday 94 Case Stepwise Predictions of Conforming Influencing Variables

Variable[a]	Stepwise R^2[b]	t-statistic[c]	regression coefficient
Length of employment in this office	.0540	2.2920*	.01514
Education level	.1047	2.2688**	.05958
Perceived TV interaction	.1303	1.6294***	.06820
Age	.1429	1.1421	.01707
Number of hours per week view TV	.1507	- .8987	-.02723
Cohesiveness	.1573	.8255	.00831
Family income	.1628	- .7528	-.07164
Number of TV sets in the home	.1672	- .6684	-.02007
Perceived TV conspicuousness	.1711	- .6326	-.03427
Number of people in household	.1740	- .5357	-.00080
Perceived TV expertise	.1768	.5291	.02115
Actual TV interaction	.1798	.5420	.04917
Need for social approval	.1830	.5587	.00280
Number of children	.1852	.4705	.01958
Generalized self-confidence	.1859	.2482	.00093
Marital status	.1863	-.2000	-.00620

[a]Listed in order of entry into stepwise regression

[b]The proportion of total variance explained at that step

[c]d.f.=77

*p<.025
**p<.05
***p<.10

Table 12

All-Three-Days 94 Case Stepwise Prediction of Conformity Influencing Variables

Variable[a]	Stepwise R^2[b]	t-statistic[c]	regression coefficient
Length of employment in this office	.0709	2.6465*	.01629
Education level	.1140	2.1044**	.05110
Number of hours per week view TV	.1345	-1.4592	-.05383
Need for social approval	.1575	1.5599***	.00741
Perceived TV interaction	.1784	1.4954***	.10061
Family income	.1863	- .9215	-.11685
Cohesiveness	.1947	.9423	.00645
Actual TV interaction	.2006	- .7957	-.05913
Age	.2086	.9196	.01453
Perceived TV conspicuousness	.2111	-.5194	-.03864
Number of children	.2163	.7361	.04517
Perceived TV expertise	.2202	.6363	.02397
Number of TV sets in the home	.2222	.4481	.01498
Marital status	.2237	-.4001	-.01326
Generalized self-confidence	.2240	-.1735	-.00073
Number of people in household	.2242	-.1158	-.00033

[a]Listed in order of entry into stepwise regression

[b]The proportion of total variance explained at that step

[c]d.f.=77

*p<.005
**p<.05
***p<.10

Table 13

Weighted All-Three-Days 94 Case Stepwise Prediction of Conformity Influencing Variables

Variable[a]	Stepwise R^2[b]	t-statistic[c]	regression coefficient
Length of employment in this office	.0535	2.2805*	.01375
Education level	.0768	1.5151	.03251
Number of hours per week view TV	.0919	-1.2224	-.04322
Perceived TV interaction	.1092	1.3148**	.11500
Actual TV interaction	.1352	-1.6284	-.10489
Family income	.1476	-1.1240	-.10772
Cohesiveness	.1603	1.1398	.00778
Number of TV sets in the home	.1655	.7294	.02425
Generalized self-confidence	.1705	- .7082	-.00258
Need for social approval	.1731	.5165	.00352
Age	.1759	.5279	.00924
Perceived TV conspicuousness	.1786	- .5156	-.03151
Number of children	.1816	.5426	.03038
Marital status	.1834	-.4136	-.01917
Perceived TV expertise	.1862	.5185	.01689

[a]Listed in order of entry into stepwise regression

[b]The proportion of total variance explained at that step

[c]d.f.=77

*p<.025

**p<.10

to conformity. In addition, results "suggest" a relationship between both need for social approval and perceived TV interaction to the dependent variable of TV viewing conformity.

As was the case with the unweighted all-three-day regression, the weighted stepwise regression found length of employment in the same office not only significantly related to conformity but also the first variable to enter the stepwise equation (Table 13). Perceived TV interaction was "suggested" as being relevant to conformity in this weighted all-three-day regression.

Hypotheses Treating the Dependent Variable of Individual TV Viewing Conformity

This section will reexamine the hypotheses discussed in Chapter IV. All have been transformed into hypotheses dealing with individuals rather than groups.

Generalized Self-Confidence - H1: TV viewing conformity varies inversely with a person's average generalized self-confidence.

Table 8 shows generalized self-confidence to not be significantly related to conformity, thus indicating the above hypothesis to be false. Wednesday's results (Table 12), however, "suggest" ($p<.10$) the existence of an inverse relationship in this particular case.

Need for Social Approval - H2: TV viewing conformity varies directly with an individual's need for social approval.

Only on Sunday does need for social approval relate significantly (and directly) with conformity (Table 9). The unweighted all-three-day regression "suggests" the existence of a relationship between this variable and conformity in the hypothesized direction.

Demographic and Classification Characteristics - H3: TV viewing conformity varies directly with the average length of time the workers have been employed in the same office.

Of all the variables examined in the 94 observation context, length of employment in the same office showed itself to be the most robust. Of the five separate regressions employed in examining individual factors, this variable was the first to enter the stepwise procedure four times (Table 8). The relationship, furthermore, was always in the hypothesized direction.

It is of interest to observe that the case wherein this variable showed itself to be insignificant was the Sunday regression. Sunday, it should be remembered, differs from the other days studied in that interaction among the subjects regarding TV viewing cannot take place either the day of or the day before the TV program is broadcast. Furthermore, Sunday may be more of a family night than any other evening of the week; a night to relax and retire early because the new work and school week begins the following morning.

H4: TV viewing conformity is not significantly related to the demographic and classification characteristics of age, family income, education level, marital status, family size, number of people in the household, number of TV sets in the home, or the number of hours per week the subject views TV.

The strength of this hypothesis varies according to which regression results are examined. In two instances, education level was directly and significantly related to conformity. These are the Friday regression and the all-three-day unweighted case (Table 11 and Table 12). The two cases are not independent of one another in that Friday's data influences the all-three-day measure.

Cohesiveness - H5: TV viewing conformity varies directly with group cohesiveness.

This hypothesis was not confirmed in any of the regressions and therefore no link between an individual's score on the Seashore group cohesiveness measure and on the new individual conformity model was established. Such a result is consistent with the group analysis contained in the previous chapter.

Perceived TV Expertise of Fellow Group Members - H6: TV viewing conformity varies directly with an individual's perception of the TV expertise of fellow group members.

This hypothesis is rejected because not a single regression either significantly or even "suggestively" indicated a relationship between perceived TV expertise and TV viewing conformity. Results of the 32 group

analysis, presented in Chapter IV, also failed to establish a significant relationship for this hypothesis.

Group Member's Knowledge of Members' Viewing Behavior - H7: TV viewing conformity varies directly with an individual's knowledge of members' viewing behavior.

This is no longer an applicable hypothesis when phrased in micro-fashion because knowledge is an integral part of the new conformity model, rather than a separate variable.

Perceived TV Conspicuousness - H8: TV viewing conformity varies directly with perceived TV conspicuousness.

As indicated in Table 8 through Table 13, not a single significant or even "suggestive" relationship was found between conformity and perceived TV conspicuousness.

Informal Product-Related Conversation - H9: TV viewing conformity varies directly with the level of informal product-related conversation (includes both perceived and actual TV interaction).

Perceived TV interaction demonstrated itself to be significantly related to conformity in Wednesday's regression (Table 10). Furthermore, the importance of perceived TV interaction is "suggested" ($p<.10$) by Friday's regression (Table 11), and the unweighted and weighted all-three-day regressions (Table 12 and Table 13).

Comparison of Group Versus Individual Results

It is not an easy task to attempt to compare group and individual results. Perhaps the largest single problem area is the fact that such results are conceptually different. Results in the individual case are dependent upon the factors that impel or do not impel a person to conform to the TV viewing behavior of the other members of her job-situated reference group. The group results, however, do not conceptually possess identical meaning. Group results represent the outcome of inserting into the regression procedure group averages for each of the examined variables. Therefore, an individual whose score with regard to a particular variable differs markedly from the other group members does not appear very different because this score is tempered by including and averaging it with those of the other group members.

It might be argued, for example, that the group model is superior due to the higher R^2 values it produces. But it should be remembered that for any given sample, R^2 values of grouped means will be higher than those of individual observations due entirely to the effect of grouping. The higher R^2 values of group means indicates only that such means "tend to be less dispersed around the fitted regression line than the individual observations" (Roscoe, LeClaire and Schiffman, 1977, p. 70). Therefore, had the

individualized model of conformity yielded higher R^2 values than the hypergeometric model, the results would have been suspect.

Returning to a comparison of results, as shown in Table 14, several comments can be made. The single day with the least number of significant variables is Sunday, and this is true for both the group and individual regressions. Two factors may account for this finding. First, as mentioned earlier, Sunday differs from the other days studied in that (1) it is impossible for the subjects to discuss Sunday TV programs on the day of or the day before the shows are aired, and (2) Sunday is a "family" night. Second, as will be discussed later in this chapter, the subjects indicated their belief that the alternatives offered for viewing on Sunday were more dissimilar to each other than those offered on Wednesday and Friday. These factors may account for the finding that several variables that were significant on Wednesday, Friday and all-three-days are not significantly or even "suggestively" related to conformity on Sunday. (This is true for both the group and individual models). If products, rather than TV programs had been used as consumer choice alternatives, the familiar term "varies among or across product categories" could be used to explain the findings.

The phraseology "varies across product categories" has been used often within the consumer behavior framework. As previously noted, Witt has employed this terminology

Table 14

Comparison of Group Stepwise Multiple Regression Results to 94 Case Results

Variable	32 Group Results				94 Case Results				
	Sun	Wed	Fri	All	Sun	Wed	Fri	All-Three-Days Unweighted	All-Three-Days Weighted
Cohesiveness		*							
Need for social approval		*	*	*	*			#	
Generalized self-confidence		#		#		#			
Perceived TV conspicuousness									
Perceived TV expertise		#							
Age	*								
Marital status		#							
Education level							*	*	
Family income		#		#					
Number of people in household		#	#						
Number of children									
Length of employment in this office		#				*	*	*	*
Number of TV sets in the home									
Number of hours per week view TV									
Perceived TV interaction						*	#	#	#
Actual TV interaction									
Group member's knowledge of members' viewing behavior			*	*	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA

*Significant relationship ($p<.05$)
#Suggestive relationship ($p<.10$)
NA=Not applicable

to refer to the significant factors associated with brand choice similarities. It has also been used to refer to the effects of opinion leadership (King and Summers, 1970). No attempt has been made, however, to determine what causes one product to vary from another with regard to brand choice similarity. In an attempt to understand the cause of this variance, the TV programs broadcast on the three days studied were measured with regard to their similarity and dissimilarity. It would appear logical that the less similar the programs being broadcast during the particular time period, the more important it would be for a subject to view a particular channel (i.e., if all the programs were believed very similar, then it would probably not be too important which show you view).

In order to operationalize this phase of the study, each respondent was asked to indicate on a five point scale the degree of similarity between pairs of TV shows for a specific day. The scale ranged from "not at all similar" to "almost identical." The seven channels on New York TV resulted in each respondent rating 21 pairs of shows.

Each day's results were analyzed via the MD scale (Version 5M) multidimensional scaling procedure (Kruskal and Carmone, 1969). The results for the three days, as shown in Figures 5 through 7, indicate that the majority of the programs broadcast between 8 P.M. and 8:30 P.M. on Wednesdays and Fridays are much more similar to each

Figure 5

Multidimentional Scaling Similarity-Dissimilarity of Su

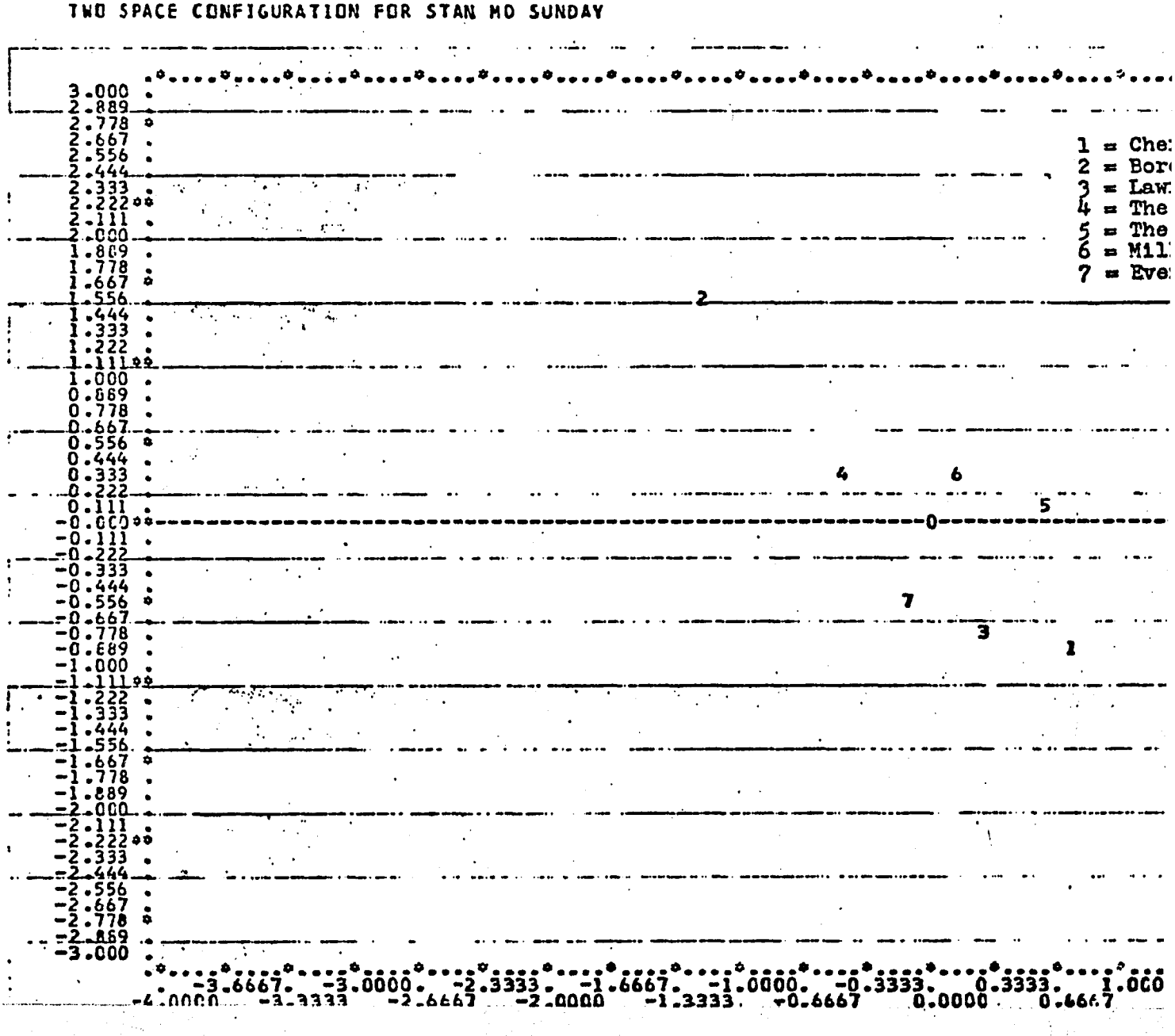


Figure 5

Similarity-Dissimilarity of Sunday TV Programs

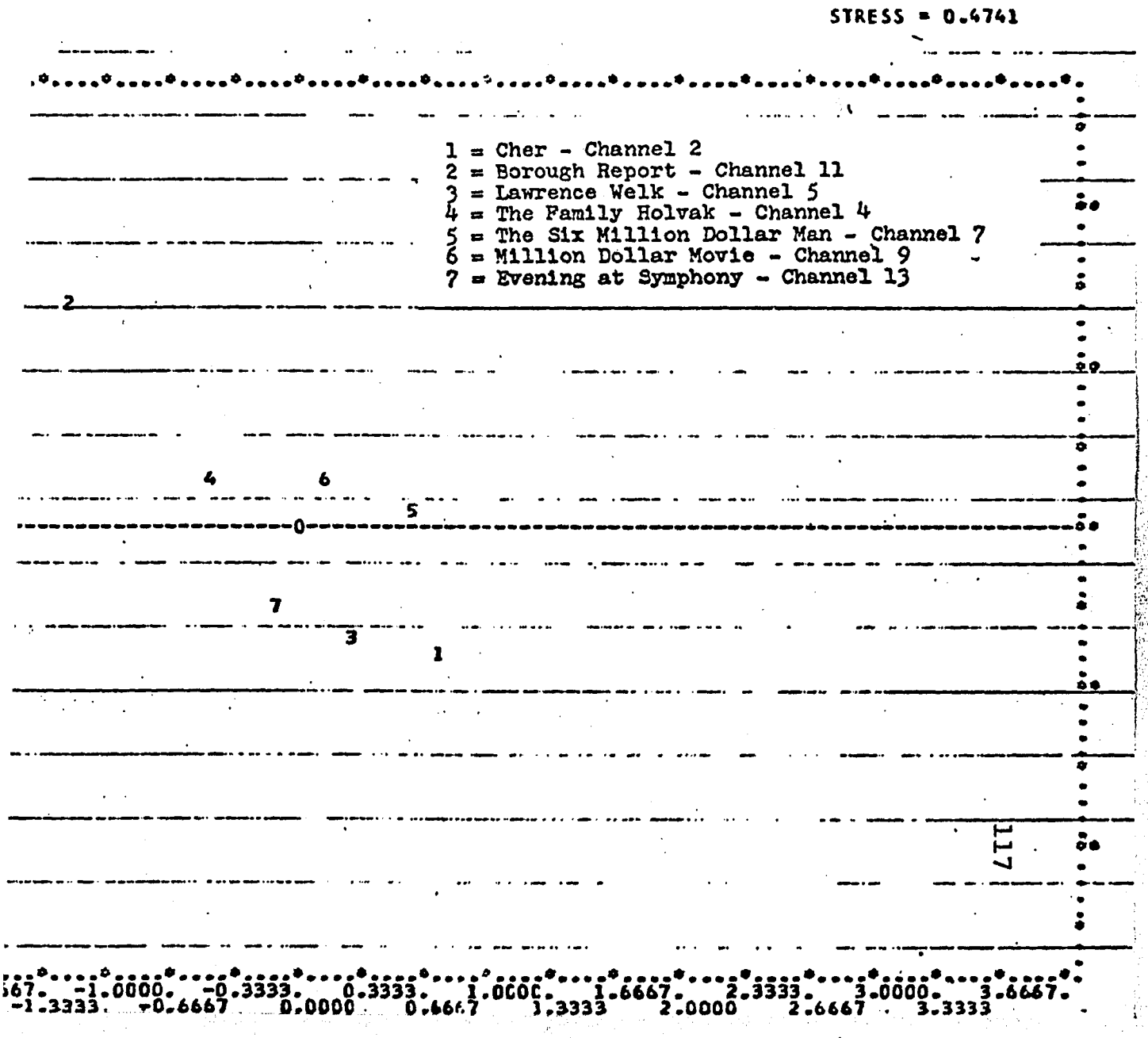


Figure 6

Multidimentional Scaling Similarity-Dissimilarity

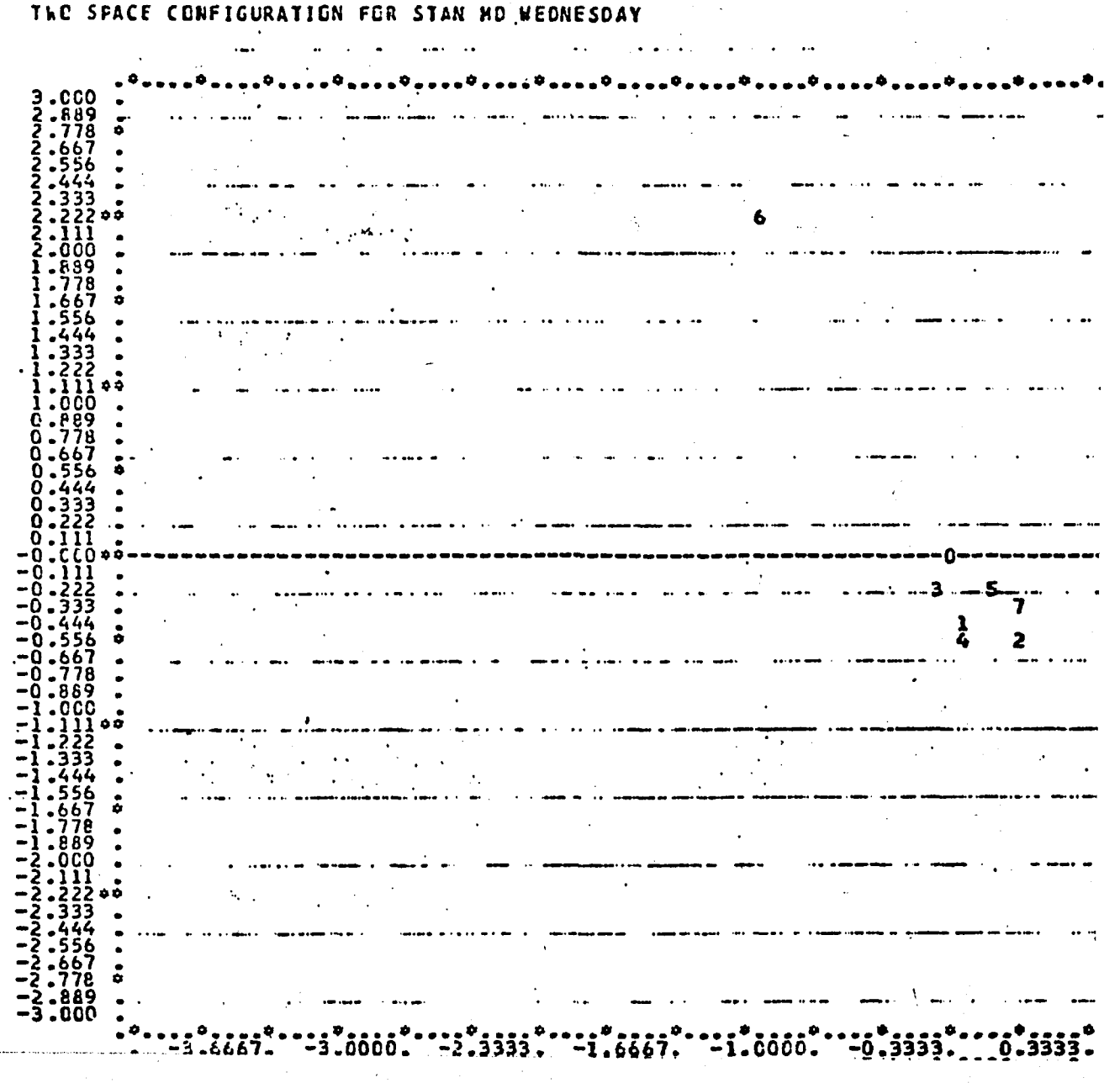


Figure 6

g Similarity-Dissimilarity of Wednesday TV Programs

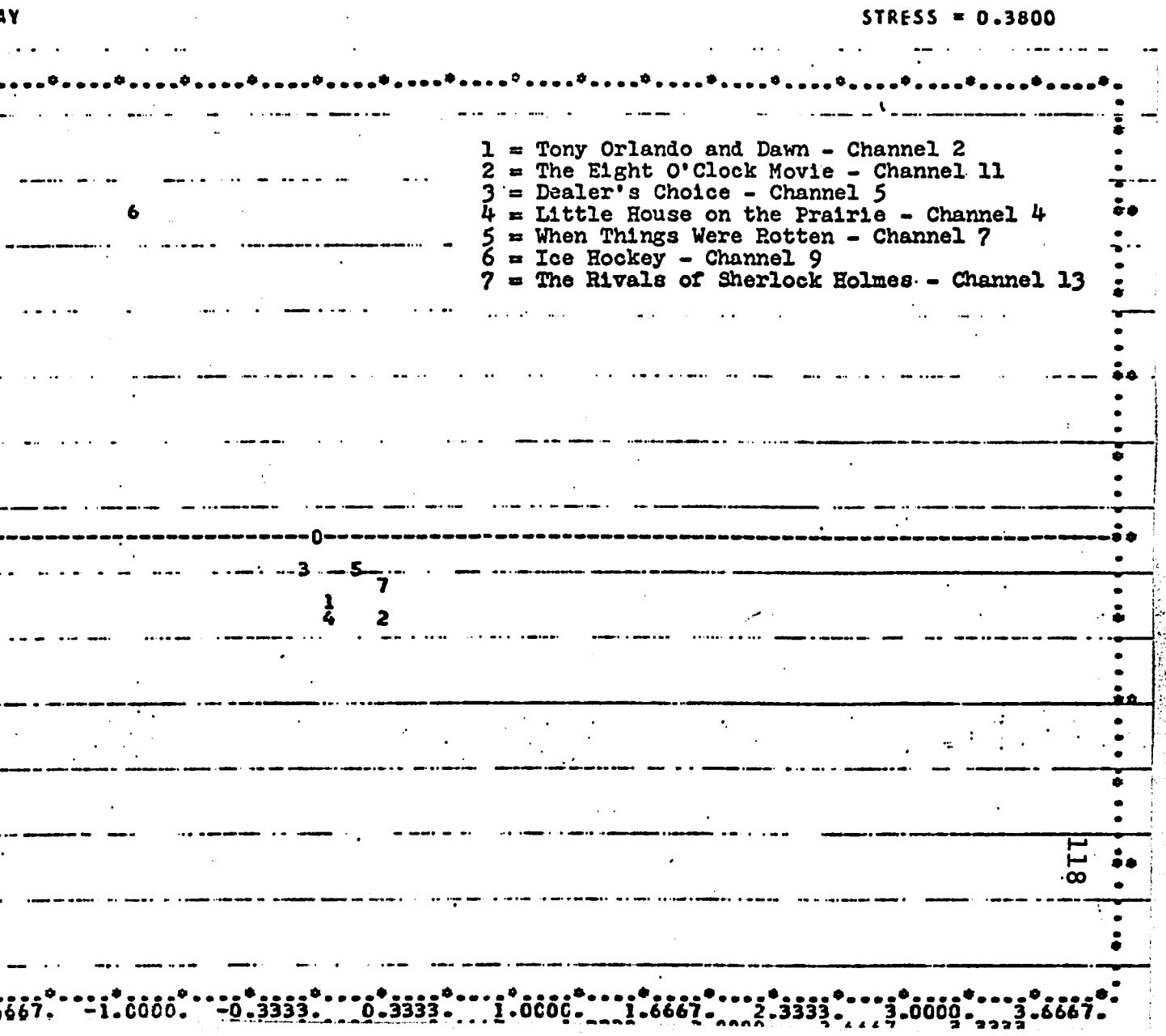


Figure 7

Multidimentional Scaling Similarity-Dissimilarity c

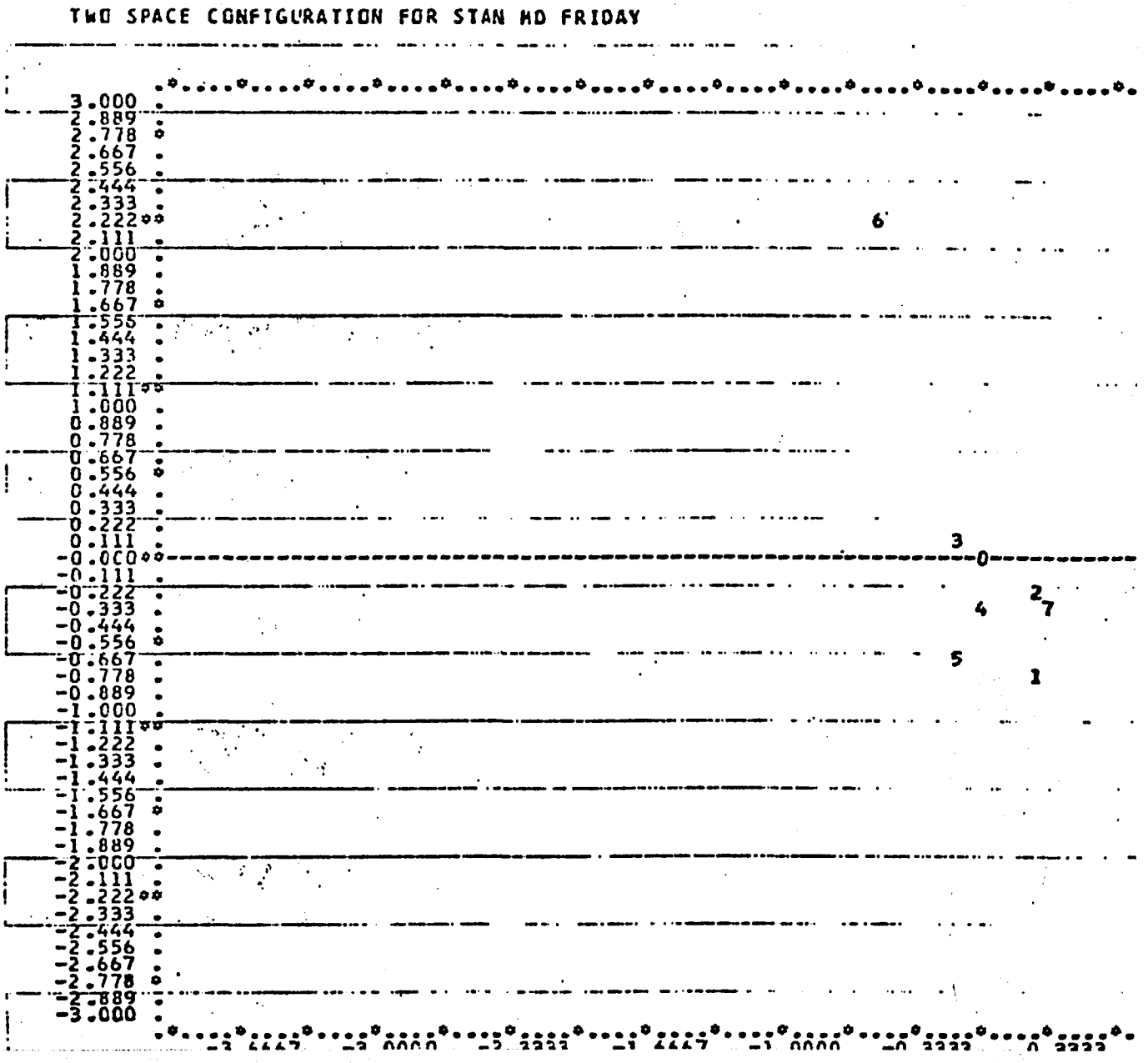
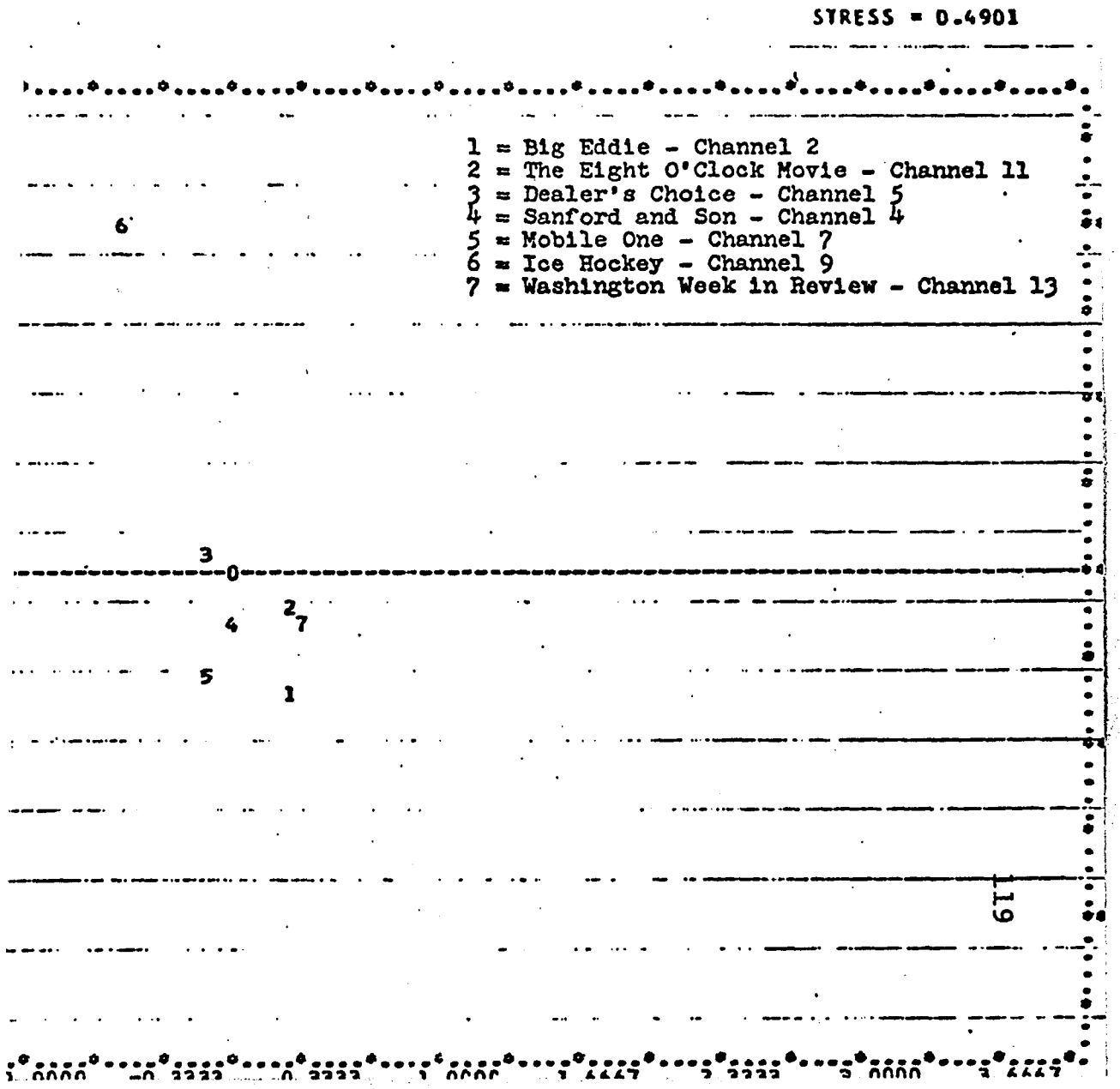


Figure 7

rity-Dissimilarity of Friday TV Programs



other than the Sunday evening programs. On both Wednesday and Friday, the single show which is very dissimilar from the others is ice hockey (New York Rangers). The Sunday programs appear to be much less similar than those of the other two days.

The day of the week with the most similar programs is Wednesday. As Table 14 indicates, for the 32 group stepwise multiple regression procedure, Wednesday's results yielded far more significant and "suggestive" variables than did the other two days. Perhaps this is due to the fact that if shows are essentially similar in the minds of group members, then it is easier for pressures toward uniformity to work. This seems entirely feasible because the group member, believing all the shows alike, would not have a strong attachment to one particular channel and could more easily be persuaded to watch the same program as other group members.

When examining the group results, the most robust variable was need for social approval. No single variable demonstrated itself to be significant or even "suggestive" across all three days. This lack of significance across all three days also manifests itself in the case of the new model of conformity presented earlier in this chapter. Using the new model, the variable with the greatest significance was length of employment in this office. Second

in robustness was the variable perceived TV interaction. And, as shown on Table 14, the variables of education level and need for social approval were also associated with conformity.

Comparison of This Research to Previous Studies

The only studies that this research can most directly be compared with are Witt's probabilistic conformity measurement approaches. The first study's (Witt, 1970) major finding was that similarity of brand choice varied across product types. This study further found that group cohesiveness had a statistically significant relationship to cigarette and beer brand choice but not to deodorants. In a more recent study, Witt (1972) dealt with seven consumer products and sought to determine for 25 groups of housewives (three member groups) which variables were related to brand choice congruence. For the seven products studied, five different predictor variables proved dominant. Perceived conspicuousness and perceived product expertise proved the dominant predictor variables in two cases each, with the other three products being most susceptible to product knowledge, need for social approval, and affectivity. For the seven products studied, the R^2s of the dominant predictor variable ranged from a high of .41 to a low of .04 (p. 442). Thus, Witt has once again illustrated that the factors determining the extent of group influence

involved in the purchase of a product varies among products. But no attempt was made to ascertain what qualities of a product determine which are the factors influencing brand choice congruence.

The results of this study are in some ways similar to Witt's. No single variable tended to be a constant dominant factor in predicting brand choice congruence. The only possible exception to this statement was the variable length of employment in the same office, which was significant in three of the four individualized regressions. This finding is understandable and consonant with previous conformity research when one remembers that Witt chose groups of individuals who had already established a strong relationship amongst themselves, whereas workers in the same office, if they had recently been hired or transferred, would not have such a relationship.

The finding that variables tend not to be significant across Sunday, Wednesday, and Friday is also compatible with Witt's past research efforts. Using as consumer choice alternatives different products, Witt (1969b, 1972) concluded that the correlates of brand choice vary among products. It is not surprising, therefore, that in the present research the correlates of choice vary among days.

Conclusion

The chapter has presented an alternative model to the measures of conformity employed in previous studies. It is believed that this new model overcomes many of the problems inherent in the older measurement approaches. Justification for this measure was given earlier in the chapter and then an illustrative example of its use has been presented. The following chapter contains a summary of this research as well as suggestions for the future.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY AND OVERVIEW

Introduction

The purpose of this research effort has been to examine job-situated reference groups and determine whether such groups create environments leading to product usage conformity. Chapter II presented the theoretical foundation upon which the expectation of espying consumer choice conformity in such groups was based. But as the data generated by this research was being analyzed, it became apparent that existing conformity measurement models were deficient. It therefore became a major undertaking of this study to develop and illustrate a conformity model that would possess greater conceptual validity than the conformity models already contained in the consumer behavior literature.

The Problems Inherent in the Study of Conformity

There exist many factors that make group conformity a difficult area to investigate. As Knight (1974) has concluded:

> The relationships between group influence and conformity behavior with respect to product preference decisions are likely to be multivariate, highly interactive, and manifested at product-specific, group-specific, and individual-specific levels (p. 155).

To further complicate matters, individuals are all members of several reference groups and therefore must determine for themselves which group, if any, they wish to conform to regarding a particular consumer choice alternative (e.g., food, fashion, movies, TV programs). The result of such considerations is that the reasons why an individual chooses to conform or not to conform may vary across choice categories, personality types, and the nature of the groups to which the individual belongs. This means that it may not be possible at present to determine for a consumer choice alternative why more than one particular individual chooses to conform, but also that given a different choice category, a new set of determinates manifest themselves.

To further confound the operationalization of conformity are the various past approaches to the study of conformity which have neglected to consider and account for some of the critically important determinates of behavioral conformity.

The Assessment of Previous Approaches to the Study of Conformity

Prior research efforts have dealt with conformity in both the laboratory and non-laboratory environments. The laboratory situation, it is believed, is especially unsuited for examining conformity within the consumer behavior context. Such experiments (e.g., Knight, 1974 and Venkatesan, 1966) took their subjects away from their usual surroundings and associates and placed them in artificial situations which necessitated reliance upon strangers who were the experimenter's confederates. The attempt to attribute to the real world situation the results of laboratory situated conformity experiments involves the transversing of a large and unwarranted crevasse.

If one turns to the non-laboratory conformity research, a different, though not necessarily improved, situation exists. Some researchers have used existing groups but manipulated the object being used as the consumer choice alternative. Stafford (1966), for example, used packages of bread branded with different letters of the alphabet. But when an individual purchases a loaf of bread in the real-world situation, factors such as advertising and price must be considered.

The only studies which have examined actual rather than artificially created groups and used real-world brands are those by Witt and his several co-authors (1969b, 1970,

1972, 1975). His three conformity measurement models, the Similarity of Brand Choice Model, the Multinomial Model, and the Hypergeometric Model, have been analyzed and their strengths and limitations noted in Chapter IV. Their most serious weaknesses, as cited earlier in this research, are the problems of using only group averaged data in the measurement score and the exclusion of knowledge as an integral part of the conformity measurement model. These limitations necessitated the development of a new model, an individualized conformity model.

Necessary Elements of a Model of Conformity

As enumerated in Chapter IV, the condition which must necessarily exist in order to measure conformity is knowledge. Regardless of whether an individual selects or does not select the same consumer choice alternative as one or more other group members, if a person has no information about the choices made by others in the group then no conformity or nonconformity of behavior can be said to exist. Once this necessary condition has been satisfied, one must examine the other factors bearing on conformity. The relevant factors are:

- group size
- social interaction
- product experience

- legitimacy of the group to exert influence regarding a particular subject area
- group sanctions for noncompliance
- the individual's desire to remain in the group

The above factors should all be considered when attempting to construct a suitable conformity measurement model. Several of these factors, however, would be difficult if not impossible to translate into quantifiable terms. For example, how can the researcher measure the perceived group sanction for noncompliance? And it should also be remembered that each individual belongs to several reference groups. How can a researcher examine such associations and ascertain in quantitative notation the individual's perceptions regarding which group, if any, exerts pressures towards conformity for a particular subject area?

As a final consideration regarding the construction of a conformity measurement model, the market share of each consumer choice alternative under study must be determined. The benefits of a market share based conformity model have been demonstrated by Witt (1972, 1975) in his multinomial and hypergeometric models and discussed at length in Chapter IV.

It is important that an elaboration of the necessary elements a model of conformity should consider the nature of the consumer choice alternative category under examination. As mentioned in Chapter V, one way to explain the lack of

consistency of results in past research efforts is to employ phraseology such as "conformity influence varies across product categories." Somehow, the moderating effect of a consumer choice alternative's susceptibility to conformity influence and conformity pressures must be accounted for. Rather than merely attributing variation across product categories as an explanation of differences in results between, for example, conformity with regard to cigarettes and deodorants, a conformity model should investigate the products themselves to determine exactly how they differ (e.g., conspicuousness, word-of-mouth activity, and so forth).

Summary of Findings

Rather than treat the specific hypotheses that were discussed at length in Chapters IV and V, this section will present an overall evaluation of the results obtained in this research effort. As a starting point, perhaps the most significant portion of this research is the new individualized conformity model presented in the previous chapter. The inclusion of knowledge as an integral part of the model overcomes a conceptual weakness found in previous models of conformity. It might be argued, though, that this individualized conformity model is less "sensitive" than the grouped hypergeometric model (as evidenced by the lower R^2 values). The greater conceptual validity

of the individualized conformity model, it is believed, more than offsets the greater sensitivity of the hypergeometric model. [A similar conclusion was reached by Murphy and Witt (1975) regarding the hypergeometric model's conceptual superiority over the multinomial model).

Another rather interesting finding stems from the results of the multidimensional scaling program. For both Wednesday and Friday the television programs for each day demonstrated themselves (except in each case for ice hockey) to be quite similar to one another. Sunday's programs were much less similar with two major groupings evident. The three musical programs on Sunday evening lie below the horizontal axis whereas the three drama shows all lie above. The one distinctly different program on Sunday evening, "Borough Report," occupies a scale position distant from the other programs.

Bearing in mind the above multidimensional scaling results, an examination of Table 14 indicates that of the three days studied, the least significant results were obtained on Sunday. For both the group and individualized conformity models, Wednesday and Friday results were decidedly more robust.

An additional factor demonstrated by Table 14 is worthy of citing here. The 94 case results confirm the importance of the amount of time the subjects have been co-workers as well as the social interaction level of

the group. This finding appears, in light of the discussion presented earlier, to lend credence to the merit of the new individualized conformity model developed and illustrated as a part of this research effort.

Marketing Implications

The results and insights obtained from this research have several potential avenues of application within the context of consumer behavior. Marketers, for example, should investigate methods of product promotion that have the ability to generate intragroup social interaction. A current television commercial for Sanka brand coffee explicitly depicts such interaction. It shows a group of business men ordering dessert and coffee after what appears to have been a business meal, and one of the men asks for Sanka. Immediately, several of the other group members follow suit.

The Sanka commercial highlights the association and proximity of conformity, the subject of this research, to opinion leadership, another area of marketing concern. Conformity appears to be tangential to opinion leadership in that several of the conditions necessary for the existence of one are also necessary for the other's operation. Specifically, both conformity and opinion leadership require social interaction in order to function. And the subject area of physical proximity has been demonstrated important to the facilitation of both social interaction and the

operation of opinion leadership (Whyte, 1954; Feldman and Spencer, 1965; Feldman, 1966; Schiffman, 1972). The positive relationship between social interaction and physical proximity supports the notion that pressures to conformity can and do occur within the confines of job-situated reference groups. Members of such groups are in close proximity to one another for 35 or more hours each week.

Previous research into the area of risk may also be related to conformity. Donald Cox (1964) has divided perceived risk into two separate components. The functional part is related to product performance, but the psychosocial element refers to how other people will rate the individual with regard to a particular subject area. If the individual selects the choice alternative preferred by others within the group, psychosocial risk can be reduced.

The area of cognitive dissonance has been investigated by marketers for many years. Consumer product instruction manuals often begin by congratulating the purchaser on the intelligence of his selection. Such a procedure may tend to reduce the purchaser's cognitive dissonance. Dichter (1966) has stated that individuals may "talk up" recently purchased products in order to reduce their own post-purchase dissonance. It would seem appropriate that the job-situated reference group may be one of the forums the individual selects for this task.

It would also appear important that marketers monitor consumer attitudes with respect to the similarity or dissimilarity of the various brands of a product found in the marketplace. The possibility exists that if several of the brands are perceived as being quite similar, individuals may be more willing to conform by accepting substitues. The pressure to do this may come not only from inside the group but also from outside forces such as advertising. Furthermore, because it has been determined that reference group influence may be strong or weak with regard to product category and/or brand (Foundation for Human Behavior, 1956), the marketer must determine where his product stands within this framework so that he may better evaluate the payoffs of the various applicable alternative marketing mixes.

The decision the individual makes regarding a particular consumer choice alternative is subject to the pressures toward conformity existing within the groups to which the individual belongs. One of these many groups appears to be that which exists at the individual's place of employment, i.e., the job-situated reference group. It is necessary, therefore, to include such job-situated groups within the conformity and opinion leadership context and desist from the common practice of considering these concepts only in terms of groups composed of housewives

and friends. Such a finding hopefully moves the marketing theoretician another step closer to a more pragmatic and comprehensive model of consumer behavior.

Suggestions for Further Research

The individualized conformity model developed as part of this research is viewed not as the end of a search but rather as a beginning. It is hoped that in the future the framework established by this model can be refined and developed further to account for a larger number of conformity influencing factors.

As noted throughout this dissertation, the literature of consumer behavior continually resorts to explaining the findings of various studies with the phraseology "varies across product categories." This study has made a start regarding the decoding of such terminology by suggesting that one possible explanation may be the similarity or dissimilarity of the competing consumer choice alternatives. But this is merely one factor that may or may not be applicable over the broad spectrum of consumer products. Researchers should investigate other dimensions of the variation over product categories. At some future date, hopefully, it will be possible to account for this variation in a conformity model.

There are other areas worthy of further research. Additional effort is needed to determine which characteristics of conformity are group situated and which are

individually situated. Perhaps some future conformity model will use a group average for certain components and an individual score for others, based upon research evidence which has indicated the validity of such an approach. And, as a final suggestion, research is needed to explain the criteria an individual uses in choosing which of his several reference groups he will conform to regarding a particular choice alternative.

Conclusion

It was the purpose of this research to examine job-situated reference groups and determine their influence upon consumer behavior. It was determined that no truly suitable model of conformity existed for such a task and this necessitated the establishment and presentation of a new individualized conformity measurement model. Although the results obtained in the illustrative examples presented in this research may lack impressive statistical significance, it is believed that this research has demonstrated the value of a new individualized conformity model and has established that influence of a consumer behavior nature does exist within job-situated reference groups.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Prof. Stanley Garfunkel
Department of Business
Ext. 6246 Room H-324

GROUP NUMBER _____

PARTICIPANT LETTER _____

IN-OFFICE TELEVISION VIEWING QUESTIONNAIRE

This questionnaire is interested in the television programs that you and your co-workers in this office watch. The purpose is to better understand some of the influences which may determine the TV programs an individual decides to view. There are no "right" or "wrong" answers to the questions that follow. The success and value of this research project depend on your care and frankness in answering the questions.

Your answers will be held in strict confidence. Each of you has been assigned a code letter and you are not asked to put your name on either this questionnaire or on the take-home portion.

I thank you for your cooperation.

1. Please indicate for the following days and time periods the TV programs you currently view or would be most likely to view if you were watching television at the time. Write the channel number of the show on the "currently view" line if you actually watch the television program. If you do not watch TV during the time period asked about, then leave the "currently view" line empty but insert the channel number of the TV show you would be most likely to view on the appropriate line. Please refer to the card you have been given for a listing of the television programs broadcast on each channel during the time periods you are being asked about.

Day and Time	Channel Currently View	Channel Would Most Likely View
Sunday 8-8:30 p.m.	_____	_____
Wednesday 8-8:30 p.m.	_____	_____
Friday 8-8:30 p.m.	_____	_____

PLEASE CONTINUE TO THE NEXT PAGE

2. We would like to find out whether you believe your co-workers know which TV shows you watch or would be most likely to watch on Sundays, Wednesdays, and Fridays from 8-8:30 p.m. Separately, for each co-worker, circle the appropriate scale number in the space provided. For example, if you believe co-worker A probably does not know which TV shows you view or would be most likely to view on Sundays, Wednesdays, and Fridays from 8-8:30 p.m., you would circle number 2 for co-worker A. If you feel co-worker D definitely knows which TV shows you watch or would be most likely to watch during the days and time periods asked about, then circle number 5 for co-worker D. The scale numbers are:

   1= definitely does not know which TV shows I watch or would be most likely to watch
   2= probably does not know which TV shows I watch or would be most likely to watch
   3= uncertain
   4= probably knows which TV shows I watch or would be most likely to watch
   5= definitely knows which TV shows I watch or would be most likely to watch

	definitely does not know	probably does not know	uncertain	probably knows	definitely knows
Co-worker A:	1	2	3	4	5
Co-worker B:	1	2	3	4	5
Co-worker C:	1	2	3	4	5
Co-worker D:	1	2	3	4	5
Co-worker E:	1	2	3	4	5

3. Please indicate which TV show during the following time slots you believe each member of your group watches or would be most likely to watch. Write the channel number of the TV show on the appropriate line. Please refer to the card you have been given for a listing of the TV programs broadcast on each channel during the time periods you are being asked about.

	Channel Number
Co-worker A:	
Sunday 8-8:30 p.m.	_____
Wednesday 8-8:30 p.m.	_____
Friday 8-8:30 p.m.	_____
Co-worker B:	
Sunday 8-8:30 p.m.	_____
Wednesday 8-8:30 p.m.	_____
Friday 8-8:30 p.m.	_____

	Channel Number
Co-worker C:	
Sunday 8-8:30 p.m.	_____
Wednesday 8-8:30 p.m.	_____
Friday 8-8:30 p.m.	_____
Co-worker D:	
Sunday 8-8:30 p.m.	_____
Wednesday 8-8:30 p.m.	_____
Friday 8-8:30 p.m.	_____
Co-worker E:	
Sunday 8-8:30 p.m.	_____
Wednesday 8-8:30 p.m.	_____
Friday 8-8:30 p.m.	_____

4A. On the scale below, please circle the number from 1-5 that indicates your estimation of the amount of TV your co-workers watch:

	Almost never watches TV	Watches a below average amount of TV	Watches an average amount of TV	Watches an above average amount of TV	Watches a great amoun of TV
Co-worker A:	1	2	3	4	5
Co-worker B:	1	2	3	4	5
Co-worker C:	1	2	3	4	5
Co-worker D:	1	2	3	4	5
Co-worker E:	1	2	3	4	5

4B. Using the same numerical scale you have just used for question 4A, please circle the number below that indicates the amount of TV you watch:

Almost never watch TV	Watch a below average amount of TV	Watch an average amount of TV	Watch an above average amount of TV	Watch a great amount of TV
1	2	3	4	5

5. Of the people filling out this questionnaire with you right now, please insert the code letter(s) of any individual(s) with whom you would be particularly likely to start a discussion regarding a TV program:

CODE LETTER(S) _____ IF NONE, CHECK HERE _____

6. Of the people filling out this questionnaire with you right now, who would be particularly likely to start a conversation with you regarding a TV program?:

CODE LETTER(S) _____ IF NONE, CHECK HERE _____

7. Of the people filling out this questionnaire with you right now, has anyone recently started a conversation with you regarding a TV program?:

YES _____ NO _____

If YES, insert the code letter(s) of the individual(s) who has recently started a conversation with you regarding a TV program: _____

If YES, but don't remember who, check here _____

8. Of the people filling out this questionnaire with you right now, have you recently started a conversation with anyone regarding a TV program?:

YES _____ NO _____

If YES, insert the code letter(s) of the individual(s) you have recently started a conversation with regarding a TV program: _____

If YES, but don't remember who, check here _____

9. Below is a listing of the seven TV programs broadcast on Sunday evenings from 8-8:30 p.m. Indicate your interest in viewing each show by putting a 1 before the program you would be most interested in viewing, a 2 before your second choice, a 3 before your third choice, etc., until you finally place a 7 before the TV show you would be least interested in viewing:

_____ Cher

_____ Borough Report

_____ The Lawrence Welk Show

_____ The Family Holvak

_____ The Six Million Dollar Man

_____ Million Dollar Movie

_____ Evening at Symphony

5

10. We are also interested in finding out how similar or dissimilar you consider each of the following pairs of TV shows. Please indicate your feeling about <u>each</u> pair by circling the appropriate scale number to the right of each pair.

	not at all similar	dissimilar in many ways	uncertain	similar in many ways	almos ident
Cher / The Family Holvak.....	1	2	3	4	5
Borough Report / The Six Million Dollar Man.	1	2	3	4	5
The Lawrence Welk Show / Million Dollar Movie	1	2	3	4	5
The Family Holvak / Evening at Symphony.....	1	2	3	4	5
The Six Million Dollar Man / Cher.....	1	2	3	4	5
Million Dollar Movie / Borough Report.....	1	2	3	4	5
Evening at Symphony / The Six Million Dollar Man.....	1	2	3	4	5
Cher / The Lawrence Welk Show.....	1	2	3	4	5
Borough Report / The Family Holvak.....	1	2	3	4	5
The Lawrence Welk Show / The Six Million Dollar Man.....	1	2	3	4	5
The Family Holvak / Million Dollar Movie....	1	2	3	4	5
The Six Million Dollar Man / The Family Holvak.....	1	2	3	4	5
Million Dollar Movie / Cher.....	1	2	3	4	5
Evening at Symphony / The Lawrence Welk Show	1	2	3	4	5
Cher / Evening at Symphony.....	1	2	3	4	5
Borough Report / Cher.....	1	2	3	4	5
The Lawrence Welk Show / Borough Report.....	1	2	3	4	5
The Family Holvak / The Lawrence Welk Show..	1	2	3	4	5
The Six Million Dollar Man / Million Dollar Movie.....	1	2	3	4	5
Million Dollar Movie / Evening at Symphony..	1	2	3	4	5
Evening at Symphony / Borough Report.....	1	2	3	4	5

APPENDIX B

6. Of the people filling out this questionnaire with you right now, who would be particularly likely to start a conversation with you regarding a TV program?:

CODE LETTER(S) _____ IF NONE, CHECK HERE _____

7. Of the people filling out this questionnaire with you right now, has anyone recently started a conversation with you regarding a TV program?:

YES _____ NO _____

If YES, insert the code letter(s) of the individual(s) who has recently started a conversation with you regarding a TV program: _____

If YES, but don't remember who, check here _____

8. Of the people filling out this questionnaire with you right now, have you recently started a conversation with anyone regarding a TV program?:

YES _____ NO _____

If YES, insert the code letter(s) of the individual(s) you have recently started a conversation with regarding a TV program: _____

If YES, but don't remember who, check here _____

9. Below is a listing of the seven TV programs broadcast on Wednesday evenings from 8-8:30 p.m. Indicate your interest in viewing each show by putting a 1 before the program you would be most interested in viewing, a 2 before your second choice, a 3 before your third choice, etc., until you finally place a 7 before the TV show you would be least interested in viewing:

_____ Tony Orlando and Dawn

_____ The Eight O'Clock Movie

_____ Dealer's Choice

_____ Little House on the Prairie

_____ When Things Were Rotten

_____ Hockey

_____ The Rivals of Sherlock Holmes

5

10. We are also interested in finding out how similar or dissimilar you consider each of the following pairs of TV shows. Please indicate your feeling about <u>each</u> pair by circling the appropriate scale number to the right of each pair.

	not at all similar	dissimilar in many ways	uncertain	similar in many ways	almost identical
Tony Orlando and Dawn / Little House on the Prairie.....	1	2	3	4	5
The Eight O'Clock Movie / When Things Were Rotten.....	1	2	3	4	5
Dealer's Choice / Hockey.....	1	2	3	4	5
Little House on the Prairie / The Rivals of Sherlock Holmes.....	1	2	3	4	5
When Things Were Rotten / Tony Orlando and Dawn.....	1	2	3	4	5
Hockey / The Eight O'Clock Movie.....	1	2	3	4	5
The Rivals of Sherlock Holmes / When Things Were Rotten.....	1	2	3	4	5
Tony Orlando and Dawn / Dealer's Choice.....	1	2	3	4	5
The Eight O'Clock Movie / Little House on the Prairie.....	1	2	3	4	5
Dealer's Choice / When Things Were Rotten...	1	2	3	4	5
Little House on the Prairie / Hockey.....	1	2	3	4	5
When Things Were Rotten / Little House on the Prairie.....	1	2	3	4	5
Hockey / Tony Orlando and Dawn.....	1	2	3	4	5
The Rivals of Sherlock Holmes / Dealer's Choice.....	1	2	3	4	5
Tony Orlando and Dawn / The Rivals of Sherlock Holmes.....	1	2	3	4	5
The Eight O'Clock Movie / Tony Orlando and Dawn.....	1	2	3	4	5
Dealer's Choice / The Eight O'Clock Movie...	1	2	3	4	5

6

	not at all similar	dissimilar in many ways	uncertain	similar in many ways	almost identical
Little House on the Prairie / Dealer's Choice.....	1	2	3	4	5
When Things Were Rotten / Hockey.....	1	2	3	4	5
Hockey / The Rivals of Sherlock Holmes.....	1	2	3	4	5
The Rivals of Sherlock Holmes / The Eight O'Clock Movie.....	1	2	3	4	5

APPENDIX C

6. Of the people filling out this questionnaire with you right now, who would be particularly likely to start a conversation with you regarding a TV program?:

CODE LETTER(S) _____ IF NONE, CHECK HERE _____

7. Of the people filling out this questionnaire with you right now, has anyone recently started a conversation with you regarding a TV program?:

YES _____ NO _____

If YES, insert the code letter(s) of the individual(s) who has recently started a conversation with you regarding a TV program: _____

If YES, but don't remember who, check here _____

8. Of the people filling out this questionnaire with you right now, have you recently started a conversation with anyone regarding a TV program?:

YES _____ NO _____

If YES, insert the code letter(s) of the individual(s) you have recently started a conversation with regarding a TV program: _____

If YES, but don't remember who, check here _____

9. Below is a listing of the seven TV programs broadcast on Friday evenings from 8-8:30 p.m. Indicate your interest in viewing each show by putting a 1 before the program you would be most interested in viewing, a 2 before your second choice, a 3 before your third choice, etc., until you finally place a 7 before the TV show you would be least interested in viewing:

_____ Big Eddie

_____ The Eight O'Clock Movie

_____ Dealer's Choice

_____ Sanford & Son

_____ Mobile One

_____ Hockey

_____ Washington Week in Review

5

10. We are also interested in finding out how similar or dissimilar you consider each of the following pairs of TV shows. Please indicate your feeling about <u>each</u> pair by circling the appropriate scale number to the right of each pair.

	not at all similar	dissimilar in many ways	uncertain	similar in many ways	almost identical
Big Eddie / Sanford & Son.....	1	2	3	4	5
The Eight O'Clock Movie / Mobile One.....	1	2	3	4	5
Dealer's Choice / Hockey.....	1	2	3	4	5
Sanford & Son / Washington Week in Review...	1	2	3	4	5
Mobile One / Big Eddie.....	1	2	3	4	5
Hockey / The Eight O'Clock Movie.....	1	2	3	4	5
Washington Week in Review / Mobile One.....	1	2	3	4	5
Big Eddie / Dealer's Choice.....	1	2	3	4	5
The Eight O'Clock Movie / Sanford & Son.....	1	2	3	4	5
Dealer's Choice / Mobile One.....	1	2	3	4	5
Sanford & Son / Hockey.....	1	2	3	4	5
Mobile One / Sanford & Son.....	1	2	3	4	5
Hockey / Big Eddie.....	1	2	3	4	5
Washington Week in Review / Dealer's Choice.	1	2	3	4	5
Big Eddie / Washington Week in Review.....	1	2	3	4	5
The Eight O'Clock Movie / Big Eddie.....	1	2	3	4	5
Dealer's Choice / The Eight O'Clock Movie...	1	2	3	4	5
Sanford & Son / Dealer's Choice.....	1	2	3	4	5
Mobile One / Hockey.....	1	2	3	4	5
Hockey / Washington Week in Review.....	1	2	3	4	5
Washington Week in Review / The Eight O'Clock Movie.....	1	2	3	4	5

APPENDIX D

Prof. Stanley Garfunkel
Department of Business
Ext. 6246 Room H-324

GROUP NUMBER _____

PARTICIPANT LETTER _____

TELEVISION VIEWING QUESTIONNAIRE

TAKE-HOME SECTION

This questionnaire is part of the research project you participated in earlier today. There are no correct or incorrect answers to the questions that follow, but the success of this project does depend upon your care and frankness in answering the following questions. Your answers will be held in strict confidence and you will not be asked to put your name anywhere on this questionnaire.

When you have completed the questionnaire, please check to make sure you have answered all the questions. Then seal the questionnaire inside of the envelope provided. Someone will pick up the envelope from your office tomorrow morning.

Thank you for your cooperation.

PART I: PERSONAL OPINIONS

Please read each of the following statements. To the right of each statement, put a mark indicating the phrase which most closely expresses how you feel. Whatever your opinion, you can be sure that other people feel the same way as you.

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Uncertain	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I feel capable of handling myself in most social situations.....	___	___	___	___	___
I seldom fear my actions will cause others to have a low opinion of me.	___	___	___	___	___
It doesn't bother me to have to enter a room where other people have already gathered and are talking...	___	___	___	___	___
In group discussions I usually feel that my opinions are inferior.....	___	___	___	___	___
I don't make a very favorable first impression on people.....	___	___	___	___	___
When confronted by a group of strangers, my first reaction is always one of shyness and inferiority.....	___	___	___	___	___
It is extremely uncomfortable to accidentally go to a formal party in street clothes.....	___	___	___	___	___

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Uncertain	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I don't spend much time worrying about what people think of me.....	____	____	____	____	____
When in a group, I very rarely express an opinion for fear of being thought ridiculous.....	____	____	____	____	____
I am never at a loss for words when I am introduced to someone.....	____	____	____	____	____

PART II: YOU AND YOUR GROUP

Read each of the following statements and alternative answers. After you have read a statement and the alternative answers under it, select the answer which best describes your feelings about the matter and place a mark on the line in front of this answer. If none of the possible answers to a question describe your feelings, select the answer which comes closest to the way you feel. In all questions, the term "group" refers to the co-workers who participated with you earlier today in filling out the questionnaire administered to you in your office.

1. Do you feel that you are really a part of your work group?

_____really a part of my work group
_____included in most ways
_____included in some ways, but not in others
_____don't feel I really belong
_____don't work with any one group of people

2. If you had a chance to do the same kind of work for the same pay, in another work group, how would you feel about moving?

_____would want very much to move
_____would rather move than stay where I am
_____would make no difference to me
_____would rather stay where I am than move
_____would want very much to stay where I am

3. How does your work group compare with other work groups at Queensborough on each of the following points?

	better than most	about the same as most	not as good as most
The way the women get along together	____	____	____
The way the women stick together	____	____	____
The way the women help each other on the job	____	____	____

PART III: ATTITUDES

Listed below are a number of statements concerning personal attitudes and traits. Read each item and decide whether the statement is true or false as it pertains to you personally. Place a mark on the appropriate line to the right of each question.

	True	False
Before voting, I thoroughly investigate the qualifications of all the candidates	___	___
I never hesitate to go out of my way to help someone in trouble	___	___
It is sometimes hard for me to go on with my work if I am not encouraged	___	___
I have never intensely disliked anyone	___	___
On occasion I have had doubts about my ability to succeed in life	___	___
I sometimes feel resentful when I don't get my way	___	___
I am always careful about my manner of dress	___	___
My table manners at home are as good as when I eat out in a restaurant	___	___
If I could get into a movie without paying for it and be sure I was not seen, I would probably do it	___	___
On a few occasions, I have given up doing something because I thought too little of my ability	___	___
I like to gossip at times	___	___
There have been times when I felt like rebelling against people in authority even though I knew they were right	___	___
No matter who I'm talking to, I'm always a good listener	___	___
I can remember "playing sick" to get out of something	___	___
There have been occasions when I took advantage of someone	___	___
I'm always willing to admit it when I make a mistake	___	___
I always try to practice what I preach	___	___
I don't find it particularly difficult to get along with loud mouthed, obnoxious people	___	___
I sometimes try to get even, rather than forgive and forget	___	___
When I don't know something I don't at all mind admitting it	___	___
I am always courteous, even to people who are disagreeable	___	___
At times I have really insisted on having things my own way	___	___
There have been occasions when I felt like smashing things	___	___
I would never think of letting someone else be punished for my wrongdoings	___	___
I never resent being asked to return a favor	___	___
I have never been irked when people expressed ideas very different from my own	___	___
I never make a long trip without checking the safety of my car	___	___
There have been times when I was quite jealous of the good fortune of others	___	___
I have almost never felt the urge to tell someone off	___	___
I am sometimes irritated by people who ask favors of me	___	___
I have never felt that I was punished without cause	___	___
I sometimes think when people have a misfortune they only got what they deserved	___	___
I have never deliberately said something that hurt someone's feelings.	___	___

PART IV: TV INFORMATION

1. We want to know the number and types of television sets you have in your home. Please insert the appropriate number(s) on the lines below:

number of color TV sets _____

number of black & white TV sets _____

2. The following is a list of the rooms in a typical home. Please place a check on the appropriate line of any room in which you have a TV set:

____kitchen	____master bedroom	____living room
____basement	____2nd bedroom	____dining room
____den	____3rd bedroom	____other (insert)
	____4th bedroom	

3. What is your best estimate of the total number of hours during the average 7 day week you watch TV:

_____ hours

4. In the space below, please write-in the name of your favorite TV program:

_____

PART V: GENERAL INFORMATION

The following questions are about you and your family. They will be used only for the statistical analysis of the previous data.

1. What is your age?

____under 25	____45-54
____25-34	____55-65
____35-44	____over 65

2. What is your current marital status?

____Married ____Single ____Widowed, separated, or divorced

3. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

____grade school	____some college
____some high school	____completed college
____completed high school	____some graduate studies
	____completed graduate studies

4. Approximately what is your total family income?

____under $7,500	____$20,000-$24,999
____$7,500-$11,999	____$25,000-$29,999
____$12,000-$15,999	____$30,000-$34,999
____$16,000-$19,999	____over $35,000

5. How many individuals (both adults and children) generally reside in your household? Do not consider visitors, but please include children away at school. Be sure you include yourself in the number you insert below:

_____

6. How many children do you have?

____none	____4
____1	____5
____2	____6
____3	____7 or more

7. How long have you been employed in this office?

____ years ____ months

8. What is your civil service (Gittleson) grade?

____A ____B ____C

9. Turning to your childhood, what was your birth order in your family?

____first born	____fourth born
____second born	____fifth born
____third born	____born (insert)

10. How large was your family?

number of brothers _____ (including deceased other than stillborn)

number of sisters _____ (including deceased other than stillborn)

total number of brother(s) and sister(s) _____ (including deceased other than stillborn)

APPENDIX E

SUNDAY 8-8:30 P.M.

Channel 2: Cher
4: The Family Holvak
5: The Lawrence Welk Show
7: The Six Million Dollar Man
9: Million Dollar Movie
11: Borough Report
13: Evening at Symphony

WEDNESDAY - 8-8:30 P.M.

Channel 2: Tony Orlando and Dawn
4: Little House on the Prairie
5: Dealer's Choice
7: When Things Were Rotten
9: Hockey
11: The Eight O'Clock Movie
13: The Rivals of Sherlock Holmes

FRIDAY - 8-8:30 P.M.

Channel 2: Big Eddie
4: Sanford and Son
5: Dealer's Choice
7: Mobile One
9: Hockey
11: The Eight O'Clock Movie
13: Washington Week in Review

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