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Women's perception of fashion comparing viewers and non-viewers of evening soap operas : the cultivation effect

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WOMEN'S PERCEPTION OF FASHION
COMPARING VIEWERS AND NON-VIEWERS OF
EVENING SOAP OPERAS:
THE CULTIVATION EFFECT

A THESIS
Presented to
the Faculty of the Graduate School
University of the Pacific

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by

Elliot Bloom

May 1988

DEDICATION

Dedicated to my parents, David Sander and Rosalind,
who have supported all of my efforts 100%.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I must thank my parents who supported the idea of pursuing my masters degree. Many positive things happened because of this experience. For one, I became aware of the importance of research and now have more respect for researchers of all types. I also had the opportunity to see how well I could perform in the classroom when I gave it my all.

The chairperson of my committee, Dr. Linda Nolan, was invaluable to the entire process of completing my thesis. The time spent correcting her red ink was not only educational but enjoyable for me. Her attitude that writing a thesis should be fun, definitely made the entire experience more enjoyable. Without her help, this paper would still be on a computer.

Dr. Jon Schamber's expertise in organizing questionnaires was a blessing. I felt that the tool used was easy to follow, well organized and complete. Without a good questionnaire the project would have been a flop.

Dr. Carol Ann Hall's excellence in grammar was vital to the writing of this paper. The classes I took from her made clear the importance of spelling and grammar. The attitude of perfection was used when writing this paper.

Lastly, I would like to thank all of the women who participated in the study. Without all of their help, this examination would not have been possible.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The cultivation process which stems from research done by George Gerbner and others, looks at the relationship between audience viewing exposure to certain programming content and the possible resulting distorted view of reality (Nolan and Houlberg, 1987; Buerkel-Rothfuss and Mayes, 1981; Tan, 1981). This type of research has been applied to soap operas, action adventure, and nighttime dramas. According to Buerkel-Rothfuss and Mayes (1981), "there appears to be an important relationship between what a person watches on daytime serials and what he or she believes to be true about those aspects of the 'real world' which tend to be portrayed with exaggerated frequency on soap operas" (p. 114). The cultivation effect is defined as the distorted view of reality which results from the heavy viewing exposure to a certain type of programming content. The assumption behind the cultivation hypothesis is that the more hours an individual exposes himself or herself to a particular type of program content, the more the individual's view of reality will be consistent with the "reality" shown in the program.

It is no mystery that for the past half-century, millions of Americans have made the broadcast soap opera a daily habit. In response to the heavy interest exhibited by this strong audience, social scientists have begun to

systematically study this area of broadcast programming (Nolan and Houlberg, 1987; Newcomb, 1985; Allen, 1985; Cantor and Pingree, 1983; Intintoli, 1984). The purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between women's perceptions of how other women dress based on their amount of viewing exposure to nighttime dramas. In addition, this study will investigate the relationship between viewing exposure and the use of nighttime dramas for fashion information, and the importance of dressing like the characters in the nighttime dramas.

RATIONALE AND PROBLEM:

The cultivation effect has been heavily studied in the past 20 years with many of the studies examining the effects of heavy exposure to daytime soap operas, yet the surge of nighttime soap operas has not been fully examined regarding the cultivation effect. It is the author's contention that nighttime dramas would seem to be able to cultivate viewers' perceptions of reality as do the daytime soap operas. Therefore, it is the author's contention that nighttime dramas should be examined to see if the cultivation effect does take place. Similar to the daytime soaps, the nighttime soaps seem to demonstrate over-exaggerated aspects of reality. "The fascination with the sort of fantasy drama that is presented on daytime soaps has become so popular that evening television offerings are including more and more shows of the typical soap

format, such shows as 'Dynasty' and 'Knots Landing,' for example" (Grady, 1982).

Cultivation of a false reality by soap operas has been empirically demonstrated. One such study was done by Buerkel-Rothfuss and Mayes (1981). Their study showed that heavy viewers of daytime soap operas had higher estimates than non-viewers and light viewers regarding the number of doctors, lawyers, affairs, divorces, illegitimate children, etc. there are in the real world, which reflects the nonrealistic content of the soap opera world.

For the purpose of this study, fashion was the cultivation concept examined. It is the author's contention that nighttime dramas, which include "Dynasty", "Dallas" and "Knots Landing," to name a few, do seem to over-exaggerate how women dress on a daily basis. Thus, the question is, does heavy viewing exposure to these types of programs distort women's perceptions of fashion? To more closely focus on women's fashions, only women were surveyed about their perceptions of how other women dress. It was the author's contention to hold this study strictly to women in order to simplify the study. The author wanted to pinpoint women's perceptions of fashion in this study with the contention that future research could delve into other areas of fashion with regards to the cultivation effect.

The statement that the heavy viewing of soap operas can cause distorted perceptions of reality demonstrates the idea that fashion perceptions may also be affected by heavy exposure to high fashion programming content such as

nighttime dramas. The fact that media can distort viewers' perceptions of reality, which may affect viewers' buying habits of clothing, makes this study worthwhile. If a significant number of the viewers feel that everyday women really do dress like the women in the nighttime dramas, would not this demonstrate, to some degree, that the media have affected these viewers?

It is the author's contention that clothing has to mention the different effects and the importance that clothing can have on the individual. It has been shown by Pinaire (1973), Taylor and Compton (1968), Hendricks, Kelly and Eicher (1968) that clothing has many different effects on people. For example, Pinaire found that clothing acted to some extent as a symbolic indicator of identity, attitudes, values, moods and personality. Taylor and Compton found that students were high in conforming dress behavior in order to maintain harmonious relations with others. Hendricks, Kelly and Eicher observed that clothing influenced a girl's popularity at her school and clothing also played an important role concerning group acceptance.

Furthermore, the fact that society spends millions and millions of dollars on clothing also demonstrates that fashion is important to society. In addition, there is a serious potential for the cultivation effect resulting from the viewing of nighttime dramas to affect what women buy. Since nighttime dramas seem to over-exaggerate or even create reality, and since fashion is important to society in many different ways, it is the contention of this author that it is important to

see the effects, if any, that these shows have on women's perceptions of how other women dress.

This study will investigate the cultivation effect nighttime dramas may have on women viewers' perceptions of how other women dress. Therefore, the literature review which follows will place an emphasis on studies devoted to soap operas, cultivation effect and clothing articles. This investigation should further the attempts to gain a better understanding of the cultivation effect and how it affects viewers' perceptions of reality.

LITERATURE REVIEW:

In order to achieve a full understanding of the variables involved in this study, a general understanding of each element and its relationship to the other elements is necessary. Hence, the following discussion will focus first on the cultivation effect. From there a review of the relevant soap opera studies will be examined. Lastly, the effects which clothing has on individuals will be discussed.

CULTIVATION RESEARCH:

This section will clarify how television has the ability to distort reality , or cultivate one's perception of reality due to exposure to television's content. While one reads this section, it would help to think about the content in nighttime dramas while reading about the cultivation effect. The cultivation effect is defined as the distorted view of reality which results from heavy viewing exposure to a certain type of programming content.

One study on cultivation by television was done by Gross and Signorielli (1979). This article described how violence played a key role in television's portrayal of the social order. It analyzed the world of television drama which mainly included measures of violence. The analysis was done by determining the extent to which exposure to this symbolic world cultivates conceptions about the real world among viewers. A sample of one week of prime-time dramatic programming and one weekend of daytime (children's) dramatic programming was composed for all three networks. One hundred and eleven television programs and 298 major characters were content analyzed. Levels of violence were measured by determining the prevalence and rate of violent actions and characterizations. It has been established that violence has continued to be an important part of dramatic programming and the findings showed positive associations between patterns of television content and conceptions of social reality held by heavy viewers. Heavy viewers as compared to light viewers were more likely to overestimate the number of people in real life involved in

violence, felt it more dangerous to walk alone at night, had higher mistrust of people and felt police must often use force and violence at a scene of a crime. These findings showed that heavy television viewing cultivated fear of violence.

Another cultivation study was completed by Pingree and Hawkins (1981). This article looked at the cultivation effect of United States television on Australians. The hypothesis was that the amount of television viewing and people's conceptions of reality will appear more like the reality presented on television than the actual reality of the "real world." One thousand two hundred and eighty questionnaires which contained items assessing a variety of opinions, media beliefs and habits, and knowledge were given to second, fifth, eighth and eleventh graders from Perth, the largest city in Western Australia. Two weeks after completing the questionnaires, a four-day diary of television viewing was obtained from 1085 of the original sample. It was found that viewing crime-adventure programs correlated with the television-biased response that the United States was a "mean world." Also, Australian children were influenced by United States crime-adventure programs to believe that this was the social reality for their own country, and to a lesser extent, it being the reality of the United States. In other words, cultivation of beliefs about the world, in this case, does occur even when the messages were brought in from another country.

A third examination of cultivation was explored by Rouner (1984). This article stated that "active television viewing, defined as cognitive and affective

orientations and evaluations relative to specific television content have been explored as viable theoretical constructs having influence on adults' construction of social reality," (p. 169). This article looked at how active (viewer's choice) television viewing might affect the cultivation paradigm of thought. The method consisted of 163 telephone interviews selected by random digit dialing. Questions were asked about prime-time television only, starting with frequency of viewing, and then how active (critical and analytical processing of information obtained from television messages) a viewer each participant was. Active television viewing was tested by asking people to specify what they attend to when they watch television, whether they care about characters, and if they talk about the television messages they watch. One hundred and forty-seven subjects regularly watched primetime television programs which were the sample for the study. Content analysis of primetime television between six and ten p.m. was conducted to determine the amount of violence depicted on these programs which might cultivate a perception of the world as a "mean world." The results indicate that the more of this type of programming that viewers exposed themselves to, the more the viewers believed the world to be a "mean world." However, the more cognitive activity, or actual thinking about the world as it really is, the less likely they were to be cultivated by evening television content about the world as a "mean" place. The data suggest that more passive viewing might lead to subtle absorption of television's content.

Another cultivation study was done by Bryant (1986). This article was a constructive critique on the cultivation hypothesis. For nearly a decade, researchers have examined findings from the cultivation hypothesis, and the cumulative evidence gathered quite regularly has offered support for the cultivation process. Widespread recognition of cultivation research can be found in many ways and for different publics. It was found that out of 100 syllabi from Mass Media and Society courses taught in United States colleges and universities, cultivation was one of three topics receiving detailed examination in more than half the classes. Cultivation was not limited only to the communication discipline. It was found that some basic textbooks in psychology and sociology attribute cultivation to their discipline with some regularity. This article suggested that television has the ability to distort reality and it seemed apparent that cultivation "explains" common subjective observations held by television critics. This suggests, but in no way "proves," that the cultivation process is a sound idea.

Lastly, Weaver and Wakshlag (1986) completed an examination of cultivation by television. This study tried to determine the impact of the mediated experience on perceptions of personal vulnerability to crime, independent of influence from direct and interpersonal experiences. It looked at the unique and independent influence of information about crime and violence conveyed by television and how this information developed certain perceptions.

The sample consisted of 108 undergraduate students who were enrolled in an intermediate-level communication class. Subjects completed a three part questionnaire, which was designed to classify them into one of three areas of violent crime victimization experiences and to assess television viewing habits and crime-related judgments. The results for the respondents who solely reported the mediated experience showed that crime related viewing was related positively to concerns for personal safety in hypothetical situations similar to those in television drama, and weakly for future personal victimization. This finding suggests that higher exposure to exaggerated depictions of crime on television, in the absence of other more direct sources of information, may lead to the belief that there is a larger likelihood that they will be victims of crime. The data for the group were consistent with the "cultivation" effect.

A summary of the cultivation effect studies reviewed above reveals that heavy viewers as compared to light and non-viewers are more likely to overestimate society as a "mean world." Findings showed that television viewing has the ability to cultivate fear of violence as well as cultivating viewers' social reality as a whole.

SOAP OPERA RESEARCH:

The first article in this literature review which discusses the effects of exposure to soap operas was done by Gerbner (1980). According to this article, images portrayed on daytime soap operas about the elderly cultivate our concept of aging and the age roles we assume. Television, as a distributor of images and a large part of our culture, presents a world of places, people and roles. This research looked at the distribution of age roles in the mediated worlds of prime-time and weekend daytime (children's) network television dramas. The method of study consisted of the periodic content analysis of samples of prime-time and weekend daytime network television dramatic programming, and the analysis of survey data on attitudes and opinions to determine how conceptions of social reality were affected by television viewing habits (cultivation habits). The analysis showed that age was a strong determinant of who appeared and gained most on television. Television programming demonstrated a central age tendency (characters between 25 and 35 years old), and heavily under-represented both young and old people. Older characters were found to be treated with disrespect, with 70 percent of older men and over 80 percent of older women not held in high esteem or treated courteously in television dramas. Survey findings suggest that television cultivated negative images of the elderly. Heavy viewers of these programs compared to light and non-viewers were more likely to think that old

people were not open-minded, not adaptable, not bright or alert, and were a vanishing breed as compared to people between 25 and 35 years old.

Another soap opera study was done by Buerkel-Rothfuss and Mayes (1981). This article looked at the relationship between exposure to soap operas and perceptions about people and events in the real world. Perceived life satisfaction and self-concept were also examined in relation to soap opera viewing. Data were collected from 290 students at a large Southern University. Of the students, 71 percent said they watched at least one episode of one soap opera per week. Items on the survey covered their perceptions of people and events in the world, their own satisfaction with life and their self-concept. The results showed that increased exposure (number of episodes of each soap opera watched in a week) to soap operas was strongly associated with higher estimates of the numbers of doctors, lawyers, affairs, divorces, illegitimate children and abortions in the real world. In general, there were strong indicators that viewers (people who watched at least one soap opera in a "typical week") compared to non-viewers have different "real world" perceptions of professionals and problems. An individual's self-concept appeared to be inversely related to soap opera viewing (the higher self-concept, the lower the amount of viewing exposure), and the life satisfaction index was negatively associated with exposure (the more satisfied one is with his or her life, the less viewing and vice versa), both as predicted.

A third study on soap opera's effects on individuals' reality of the world was done by Grady (1982). This article was about the viewers' fascination with the fantasy drama and how daily soap operas are affecting young people in their beliefs (divorce, incest, doctors, etc.). It was noted that more people tuned in to watch who shot J.R. on the nighttime soap "Dallas", than to watch both the Democratic and Republican Presidential Conventions combined. Information like this can lead one to surmise that the majority of television viewers was more interested in the television world than they were with the "real world." According to this article it is important to see the world as our media present it and to recognize the power of this force in our society. The focus of this study was a case study on the soap opera, "As the World Turns." This study was to examine how a soap opera reflects changes in society over time. It was found that the reality presented by "As the World Turns" was in conflict with a large portion of what society is taught. For example, we are taught to seek the truth, but "As the World Turns" demonstrates that seeking the truth is risky, because the truth can be painful. This study noted that viewers who do not think creatively, analyze the "reality" of the media or question authority are more likely to have a belief in the metaphysical (communication with the ghost of a dead character), which is sometimes represented in soap operas. This article implied that heavy use of television can distort reality, (particularly for those who do not analyze the "reality" of the medium they are watching), so it is suggested that viewers of

viewers of soap operas take a closer look at actual reality, as opposed to the "reality" of television.

Another soap opera study was done by Carveth and Alexander (1985). The purpose of this study was to examine the influence that the amount of soap opera viewing had on the cultivation effect. It was hypothesized that the amount and length of soap opera exposure would be related positively to the overestimations of the size of certain demographic groups (more doctors, more lawyers), and the frequency of occurrence of selected behaviors (such as abortion, divorce, incest) in the "real world." Also studied was the utility of incorporating differences in viewing motives (why someone watches) into the cultivation research framework in order to examine whether certain viewing motives explain additional variance in cultivation answers. For example, a viewer who watches for escapism may have different cultivation scores than a viewer who watches for relaxation. Two hundred and sixty-five college students were given questionnaires to complete about their age, gender, semester standing, SAT scores, their levels of soap opera exposure, how long they had been watching soaps and their level of overall television viewing. It was found that the amount of soap opera viewing related positively to overestimations of the size of certain occupational groups (doctors, lawyers) and the frequency of selected behaviors (divorce, incest, abortion) in the real world. Soap opera viewers gave higher estimates for every cultivation item (more doctors, etc.; more abortions, etc.) as compared to non-viewers. For viewing motives, the

results suggest that viewer motivation (the reason why they view) was strongly related to the manifestation of the cultivation effect. Viewers who frequently and ritualistically select soap operas as an undemanding activity may be most vulnerable to the messages.

Another soap opera study was completed by Alexander (1985). This study examined the influence of duration and amount of adolescent soap opera viewing in relational perceptions (their perceptions of how relationships develop and/or deteriorate). The overall research question addressed in this study was what combination of variables best explain the relationship among adolescents' daytime television serial viewing, motives, and personal experiences in predicting relational perceptions. Questionnaires were collected from 230 students in the sixth and seventh grades that examined the links between soap opera viewing and their perceptions of the nature of relationships. It was found that the typical teen soap opera viewer was female who views for enjoyment and has been viewing for a long time (more than three years). For females, it was shown that the motives of viewing for enjoyment and reality exploration contributed to the perception that talking out problems in relationships is important. It was found that males' perceptions of relationships that were having problems were linked to their current amount of soap opera exposure. The importance of talking out problems in relationships showed a positive correlation to males who viewed soaps for years (long duration).

A final study on soap operas was done by Perse (1986). This study was an extension of Carveth's and Alexander's (1985) work by examining cultivation and television viewing patterns. Perse predicted that the interrelationships among television viewing motives, attitudes, and behaviors would better explain any cultivation effect associated with daytime television soap opera viewing. Questionnaires were given to 458 college students. Areas surveyed were viewing behaviors of soap opera viewers; soap opera viewing motives; soap opera attitudes (perceived realism of what was viewed), and cultivation perceptions (divorce, violence). As a result, ritualistic soap opera viewing, duration, higher soap opera affinity, and lower perceived realism of what they viewed on soap operas were not supported as being strong indicators of the cultivation effect. The cultivation analysis found viewers and non-viewers of soap operas to differ significantly on their cultivation scores. It was found that patterns of soap opera use related to cultivation perceptions. On the whole, it was demonstrated that heavy use of soap operas can lead to a false reality on certain cultivation items (doctors, divorce, etc.). In other words, heavy viewers of soap operas felt that there were more doctors, lawyers, more divorce, etc., in the "real world" than did the non-viewers of soap operas.

A summary of the soap opera studies reviewed in the preceding paragraphs shows that viewers compared to non-viewers have many different perceptions of reality. It is felt that heavy use of soap operas can cultivate a

false reality, so when they are viewing these types of programs, they should question the reality of the television programs they are watching.

CLOTHING AS A NONVERBAL EXPRESSION OF IDENTITY:

This section will give the reader an understanding of the communication effects that clothing has on the individual. One will notice that clothing plays other roles besides warmth and protection from the surrounding elements.

The first study in this review on clothing was done by Taylor and Compton (1968). The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between conformity in dress; preferences for color, design, and texture in fabrics and selected personality characteristics of college women. Four instruments were administered to 35 women enrolled in two classes. It was found that students high in conforming dress behavior were interested in maintaining harmonious relations with others. From the evidence, it seemed that students who conform in their dress do so in order to be accepted by, and liked by those students around them, and not because of an appreciation for form and harmony (color, texture and design).

A second study of the importance of clothing was done by Hendricks, Kelly and Eicher (1968). This article investigated the relationships between group

cohesion and the opinions of twelfth grade girls about clothing, appearance and social acceptance. This examination was a longitudinal study of the same class of high school girls from the ninth grade. One hundred and thirty-eight girls from the same high school were involved in this study. The data were obtained by two instruments: a background questionnaire and an open-ended interview schedule. The background questionnaire obtained personal information and the interview schedule sought the opinions of the girls about their general group acceptance, clothing and appearance. It was found that the girls agreed that clothing influenced a girl's popularity at their school and clothing played an important role concerning group acceptance. This study confirmed that clothing played an important role in the teenager's ability to establish adequate self-identity.

Another study on clothing was completed by Pinaire (1973). This study looked at clothing styles as a symbolic expression of the self, by identifying those traits which were useful in discriminating among wearers of different clothing styles. Four clothing styles were developed for female college students: high-fashion, low-fashion, non-fashion, and counter-fashion. Subjects consisted of a random sample of 400 college women, with 221 respondents. The data were divided into four variable sets; identity, attitude, value, and moods or personality. The findings indicated that wearers of four different clothing styles can be differentiated by their identity, attitude, value, and mood and personality variables. On the whole, the findings indicated that clothing

acted to some extent, as a symbolic indicator of identity, attitudes, values, moods, and personality.

A final study on the importance of fashion was done by Kaiser and Chandler (1985). This article looked at the perceptions of older consumers with respect to portrayals of older adults in the media and to the processing of appearance symbols and fashion information. The method consisted of self-administered questionnaires that were distributed to persons 50 years of age or older. A total of 209 usable questionnaires were returned. Respondents' recollections and perceptions of both clothing seen and older adults' portrayals on television programs and commercials were obtained from open-ended questions. It was found that females, who spent more on clothing, were more likely than males, who spent less, to report some media use for fashion ideas. Males who spent more than 200 dollars a year on clothing were significantly more likely than females, who spent more than 200 dollars a year on clothing, to use television for fashion information. News/talk shows and daytime/evening soap opera shows were mentioned frequently as showing clothes which were liked. Consistent with other studies, older soap opera characters tend to be attractive and well dressed.

A summary of the clothing and fashion studies reviewed above demonstrates that clothing plays an important role for gaining group acceptance. Findings also showed that clothing helps establish one's self-identity and that the style of clothing one wears tells something about that

person. Thus, if the cultivation effect has taken place, heavy viewing of evening soap opera program content could result in the distorted view of reality that other women dress like soap opera characters in an effort to express their self-identity.

HYPOTHESES:

Based on the literature discussed above, the following hypotheses have been formulated for research:

Hypothesis 1: Women viewers of nighttime dramas will report that a larger number of women, in general, dress similarly to the women in nighttime dramas than non-viewers of nighttime dramas.

Hypothesis 2: Women viewers of nighttime dramas will be more likely to report the use of nighttime dramas as a source for fashion information than non-viewers of nighttime dramas.

Hypothesis 3: Women viewers of nighttime dramas will report that it is more important to dress like the characters in nighttime dramas than non-viewers of nighttime dramas.

The procedures used to test the hypotheses will be discussed in Chapter

Two.

Chapter 2

PROCEDURE AND METHODS

Many research studies done on the cultivation effect have been done by conducting surveys. This study followed the survey format as well. The surveys were mailed to the participants living quarters which allowed for privacy and ample time to complete the survey. Thus, this provided a good climate for the participants to carefully consider their answers. This chapter will address the subjects, questionnaire, coding procedures, data analysis and the statistical techniques used in this study.

SUBJECTS:

This study was conducted by randomly surveying 300 women attending a private university in California. A total of 150 surveys were returned, thus providing a response rate of 50%. The subjects ranged from 18-year-old freshmen to a 74-year-old graduate student; the mean age of the sample was 21.2. The sample contained women students both on and off campus, who received a cover letter, a questionnaire and a return envelope.

QUESTIONNAIRE:

The items included in this questionnaire are original and author-created. The questionnaire consisted of five main parts. (see Appendix A.) The first part asked questions to ascertain how much viewing exposure they have had to the nighttime dramas, "Hotel", "L.A. Law", "Dallas", "Dynasty", "Knots Landing" and "Falcon Crest". For example, "During the past week, how many hours during that week did you watch of the above mentioned nighttime dramas?" The second part determined the extent to which viewers perceive that they dressed like the women in nighttime dramas. For example, "How many days during the week do you try to dress like the women in the nighttime dramas?" The third part asked questions to see how the subjects compare how women dress in general compared to the women in the nighttime dramas. For example, "During the day in general, how many women out of ten women do you feel dress like the women in the nighttime dramas mentioned above?" The fourth part asked a question to see if the subjects use the nighttime dramas to see what is in style. For example, "How important are nighttime dramas in helping you determine what is in style?" The fifth part of the questionnaire asked demographic questions.

The items included in this questionnaire followed other soap opera and cultivation studies similar to Buerkel-Rothfuss and Mayes (1981), Perse (1986), Carveth and Alexander (1985), Rouner (1984), and Pingree and Hawkins

(1981). Areas covered were amount of exposure to the programs, frequency of viewing, cultivation questions and demographics.

CODING PROCEDURES:

The independent variable used for the data analysis was question number three on the questionnaire (see Appendix A), "During the past week, how many hours during that week did you watch of the above mentioned nighttime dramas?" Those subjects who marked one, two, three, four, five or six were considered viewers, which were coded as group one. Those subjects who marked zero were considered non-viewers, which were coded as group two.

Question number three was used as the independent variable, because it was constructed to measure the amount of exposure to the nighttime dramas. Since nighttime dramas are series, one can assume that these subjects have seen the show, or shows previous to that week and are viewers of nighttime dramas. Indeed, if a subject checked two hours or more, this would indicate exposure to some combination of these shows depending on viewer convenience (i.e., night of the week they were home).

DATA ANALYSIS:

Each hypothesis was tested as outlined below.

H1--Viewers of nighttime dramas will report that a larger number of women, in general, dress similarly to the women in nighttime dramas than non-viewers of nighttime dramas.

To test this hypothesis, the subject's exposure score was cross-tabulated with her cultivation scores. Question number three was collapsed into two groups, viewers and non-viewers. For each of these two groups the mean exposure scores were compared to see if they were significantly different on their cultivation scores.

H2--Viewers of nighttime dramas were more likely to report the use of nighttime dramas as a source for fashion information than non-viewers of nighttime dramas.

The same item number three was cross-tabulated with "fashion information" scores again by collapsing the population into two groups of subjects who indicated they were either viewers or non-viewers. For each of these two groups the means of the exposure scores were compared to see if they were significantly different on their "fashion information" scores.

H3--Viewers of nighttime dramas will report that it is more important to dress like the characters in nighttime dramas than non-viewers of nighttime dramas.

The same item number three was cross-tabulated with "dress like the character" scores by collapsing the population into two groups of subjects who indicated they were either viewers or non-viewers. For each of these two groups the means of the exposure scores were compared to see if each was significantly different on their "dress like the character" scores.

STATISTICAL TECHNIQUES:

The three hypotheses of this study were tested by the use of T-tests. Alpha was set at .05 for each of the hypothesis employing the T-test.

Chapter Three will discuss the results found in the study.

CHAPTER 3

RESULTS

This chapter will discuss the results found for each hypothesis with a summary of the overall results at the end of the chapter.

Hypothesis 1: Women viewers of nighttime dramas will report that a larger number of women, in general, dress similarly to the women in nighttime dramas than non-viewers of nighttime dramas.

The following table contains the results of question numbers 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13 which were used to compare the means of cultivation by viewers and non-viewers of nighttime dramas.

TABLE: 1

Comparison of Means on Cultivation Questions by Viewers and Non-viewers

Questionnaire Item	Mean for Viewers	Mean for Non-viewers	T-value	Two-tailed Probability
Q6	2.3485	1.9625	1.44	0.153
Q7	2.6462	1.9000	*2.32	0.022
Q8	3.3939	2.7125	1.85	0.066
Q9	2.5385	1.7500	*2.66	0.009
Q10	3.2923	1.9750	*4.07	0.000
Q11	4.3939	3.3750	*2.93	0.004
Q12	3.8636	4.2716	*-3.40	0.001
Q13	2.6216	2.1111	*4.15	0.000

Note: * indicates significance. N for viewers = 66; N for non-viewers = 81.

The results indicate that viewers of nighttime dramas compared to non-viewers of nighttime dramas had significantly higher cultivation scores. Six of the eight cultivation questions had statistically significant T-values, where significance was shown when T was greater than 1.96. Although questions six and eight T-values were not greater than 1.96, the means fall in the predicted direction of the hypothesis. Questions numbered six through 11 indicate there were significantly higher cultivation scores with the viewers of nighttime dramas than there were for non-viewers of nighttime dramas. Thus, hypothesis number

1 was confirmed; women viewers of nighttime dramas reported that they believe a larger number of women, in general, dress similarly to the women in nighttime dramas than non-viewers of nighttime dramas.

Hypothesis 2: Women viewers of nighttime dramas will be more likely to report the use of nighttime dramas as a source for fashion information than non-viewers of nighttime dramas.

The following table contains the results of question number 4 which was used to compare the means of fashion styles information by viewers and non-viewers of nighttime dramas.

TABLE 2

Comparison of Means on Fashion Styles Information by Viewers and Non-viewers

Questionnaire Item	Mean for Viewers	Mean for Non-viewers	T-value	Two-tailed Probability
Q14	2.5909	1.7831	*4.58	0.000

NOTE: * indicates significance. N for viewers = 66; N for non-viewers = 83.

The results indicate that women viewers of nighttime dramas use the nighttime dramas more than non-viewers to help them to determine what is in style. The T-value was higher than the necessary value of 1.96. The mean for viewers (2.5909), indicates that viewers feel that nighttime dramas are between unimportant and neither important nor unimportant (see Appendix A, question number 14), in helping them determine what is in style. The mean for the non-viewers indicates that nighttime dramas are between being unimportant and very unimportant in helping them to determine what is in style. Thus, hypothesis number 2 is confirmed; women viewers of nighttime dramas are more likely to report the use of nighttime dramas as a source for fashion information than non-viewers of nighttime dramas.

Hypothesis 3: Women viewers of nighttime dramas will report that it is more important to dress like the characters in nighttime dramas than non-viewers of nighttime dramas.

The following table contains results of question numbers 4, 5, and 15 which were used to compare the means of importance of dressing like the characters in the nighttime dramas for viewers and non-viewers.

TABLE: 3

Comparison of Means on Importance of Dressing Like the Characters in Nighttime Dramas for Viewers and Non-viewers

Questionnaire Item	Mean for Viewers	Mean for Non-viewers	T-value	Two-tailed Probability
Q4	1.9394	1.4691	*3.17	0.002
Q5	0.3939	0.1829	1.51	0.133
Q15	1.9848	1.5181	*3.25	0.001

Note: * indicates significance. N for viewers = 66; N for non-viewers = 81.

The results indicate that women viewers of nighttime dramas try to dress more like the women in the nighttime dramas, and find it more important to dress like the women in nighttime dramas than the non-viewers of nighttime dramas. The T-values were significant for questions four and fifteen (greater than 1.96) but not for number five. But, the means for question number five fall in the predicted direction of the hypothesis. Thus, hypothesis number 3 was confirmed; women viewers of nighttime dramas reported that it was more

important to dress like the characters in nighttime dramas than non-viewers of nighttime dramas.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS:

In summary, results confirmed all three hypotheses of the study; the viewers felt that a larger number of women, in general, dress similarly to the women in nighttime dramas than do non-viewers; the viewers reported they were more likely to use nighttime dramas as a source for fashion information than the non-viewers of nighttime dramas; and the viewers reported that it was more important to dress like the characters in nighttime dramas than the non-viewers of nighttime dramas.

A discussion of these results will be provided in Chapter Four.

CHAPTER FOUR

DISCUSSION

The results of this study do seem to support the author's contention that there is good reason to study fashion as an element of the cultivation effect of nighttime dramas. The discussion in this chapter will focus on each hypothesis in order and then summarize the findings of the study.

It was significant that the women viewers had cultivation scores which indicated that they felt that real world women, in general, dress more like the characters in the nighttime dramas. In addition, findings showed that viewers felt that the characters in nighttime dramas were not overdressed and felt that these shows are better indicators of how women really dress than the non-viewers did. These findings support that nighttime dramas, which seem to over-exaggerate reality, do have an effect on women viewers' perceptions of how women dress in real life. Thus, the application of fashion to the cultivation effect of nighttime dramas becomes important, because it further enables one to understand how exposure to shows which are over-exaggerated facets of reality can cause viewers to have different perceptions of reality than non-viewers.

Another purpose of this study was to compare viewers and non-viewers of nighttime dramas to determine the importance that these shows have in helping

individuals determine what is in style. The findings were significant in that viewers reported nighttime dramas more important for gaining fashion information. On the other hand, the findings indicate that neither viewers nor non-viewers feel that watching nighttime dramas is important to help them to determine what is in style. Although the data indicated that the nighttime dramas were not rated as important in helping viewers determine what is in style, viewers did tend to use the shows for fashion information more than non-viewers.

Evidence indicated that both viewers and non-viewers felt it unimportant to dress like the characters in the nighttime dramas. However, viewers indicated it was "unimportant" while non-viewers indicated it was "very unimportant," thus suggesting that viewers regard the importance and frequency of dressing like the characters as slightly more important than non-viewers. Non-viewers said that they dress like the characters between "very infrequently" and "infrequently" and find it "very unimportant" to dress like the women in nighttime dramas. Although there was a statistically significant difference between viewers and non-viewers, the results indicate that viewers, in general, really don't try to dress like the characters in the nighttime dramas, nor do they find it very important to dress like the characters. In fact, viewers try to dress like the characters less than one half day per week.

CONCLUSIONS:

The major conclusion of the study is that there is good evidence to suggest that exposure to nighttime dramas may cultivate women's perceptions of fashion. Almost every result of the study suggests that viewers are significantly more affected by the nighttime dramas they watch than the non-viewers. It seems evident that viewers find the clothing worn by the women on the nighttime dramas to be more realistic than do the non-viewers. Basically, it seems that the cultivation effect did take place.

There is an assumption that frequent viewers will be more likely to give the "television" answer--basically, the answer that reflects television's view of the world. According to Perse (1986), they will be less likely to give the answer reflecting how the world really is, as seen, for example, in heavy soap opera viewers.

With this past statement in mind and considering the significant findings in this study, women viewers of nighttime dramas feel that more women, in general, dress like the characters in nighttime dramas; viewers use nighttime dramas more as a source for fashion information; and viewers find it more important to dress like the characters in nighttime dramas than do non-viewers, one can see the influence that certain television program content can have on viewers' perceptions of reality.

Secondly, it is the contention of this author that one could seriously see how clothing manufacturers could take advantage of these findings and apply

advertising campaigns during nighttime dramas which could promote similar clothing styles to those worn by the characters on the nighttime dramas.

Basically, if viewers see that the clothing worn by the characters on nighttime dramas can be bought and are given the correct information, it is realistic to believe that some heavy viewers may now have the needed incentive to purchase such styles. In fact, a fragrance called "Forever Krystal" is currently being marketed using television commercials during "Dynasty." Linda Evans, who plays Krystal Carrington in "Dynasty," also does the commercials for the fragrance. Maybe in the near future we will see lead characters promoting the clothes they wear on their shows on television commercials during their nighttime drama.

LIMITATIONS:

The main problem with this study had to do with the questionnaire. The problem the author sees with the questionnaire used was that a good item on the survey was lacking which was needed to better define exposure to nighttime dramas. Question number one on the questionnaire was too vague (see Appendix A), "How many of the nighttime dramas have you ever watched?" A subject could have checked all six programs with the possibility of seeing each show for only five minutes. With that possibility in mind, the question was

dropped as an indicator of a viewer of nighttime dramas, and therefore was not used in the final analysis.

Question number two on the questionnaire was also too vague (see Appendix A), "On the average, how many hours per week do you watch of the above mentioned nighttime dramas?" On the average means that an approximation has to be made. When people have to make guesses, the chance for error is more likely to happen. So to minimize the chance for error, question number two was not used in the final analysis

The question used, (see Appendix A) "During the past week, how many hours during that week did you watch of the above mentioned nighttime dramas?" did help determine that these subjects were exposed to these shows. However, it doesn't say how much exposure they have had to these shows. Also, a "non-viewer" might have missed a week of television viewing due to exams, personal crises or heavy homework. Therefore, it is possible that some of the non-viewers could have actually been heavy viewers of nighttime dramas. The author feels a question which probed their specific viewing habits would have been a better indicator of a viewer of nighttime dramas. For example, "Of the above mentioned nighttime dramas, how many do you try to follow on a regular basis?"

When doing studies involving college students as the subject population, it is already a "given" that the population is biased and cannot be generalizable

beyond that. However, the subjects used in this study attended a high tuition private university. This may have in some respects biased the results due to this subject population's lifestyle, perceptions of reality, and particularly the importance of fashion. This is not to say that the population used in this study was weak. In fact, college students are human beings, and since all human beings share certain common characteristics, it follows that the behavior of college students could suggest patterns that may be found in others (Tucker, Weaver and Berryman Fink, 1981). But for the future, it would seem that using a large sample of women who are out in the "real world" may shed important findings. The author feels that a larger sample size would help to determine the difference between a light and a heavy viewer, which this study did not. Also, sampling women in the "real world" may shed important findings.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH:

The effects that nighttime dramas have on viewers' fashion perceptions of how people dress should be studied for future research. Future studies could look at men's perceptions of how other women dress, women's perceptions of how other men dress and men's perceptions of how other men dress.

IMPLICATIONS:

Knowing that nighttime dramas may cultivate women's fashion perceptions is an excellent beginning for future research in this area. It is the contention of this author that this study has shed some additional valuable information within the field of cultivation research that viewers of nighttime dramas may also be affected by what the characters wear, as well as what they say and do.

This questionnaire is designed to ask you some questions about the nighttime TV drama shows you watch and how you feel about fashion. Please use the following list of programs while answering the questions:

Hotel
L.A. Law
Dallas
Dynasty
Knots Landing
Falcon Crest

1. How many of the above nighttime dramas have you ever watched? (Check all that apply.)

- | | |
|---|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hotel | <input type="checkbox"/> L. A. Law |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dallas | <input type="checkbox"/> Dynasty |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Knot's Landing | <input type="checkbox"/> Falcon Crest |
| <input type="checkbox"/> None of these | |

2. On the average, how many hours per week do you watch of the above mentioned dramas?

- | | |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> one | <input type="checkbox"/> four |
| <input type="checkbox"/> two | <input type="checkbox"/> five |
| <input type="checkbox"/> three | <input type="checkbox"/> six |
| <input type="checkbox"/> zero | |

3. During the past week, how many hours during that week did you watch of the above mentioned nighttime dramas?

- | | |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> one | <input type="checkbox"/> four |
| <input type="checkbox"/> two | <input type="checkbox"/> five |
| <input type="checkbox"/> three | <input type="checkbox"/> six |
| <input type="checkbox"/> zero | |

4. How frequently do you dress like the women in the above mentioned nighttime dramas?

- very frequently
- frequently
- neither frequently nor infrequently
- infrequently
- very infrequently

5. How many days during the average week do you try to dress like the women in the nighttime dramas?

- zero, one, two, three, four, five, six, seven

6. During the day in general, how many out of ten women do you feel dress like the women in the nighttime dramas mentioned above?

- | | | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> zero | <input type="checkbox"/> four | <input type="checkbox"/> eight |
| <input type="checkbox"/> one | <input type="checkbox"/> five | <input type="checkbox"/> nine |
| <input type="checkbox"/> two | <input type="checkbox"/> six | <input type="checkbox"/> ten |
| <input type="checkbox"/> three | <input type="checkbox"/> seven | |

7. Of every ten women, how many do you feel wear evening clothes like the women in the above mentioned nighttime dramas?

- | | | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> zero | <input type="checkbox"/> four | <input type="checkbox"/> eight |
| <input type="checkbox"/> one | <input type="checkbox"/> five | <input type="checkbox"/> nine |
| <input type="checkbox"/> two | <input type="checkbox"/> six | <input type="checkbox"/> ten |
| <input type="checkbox"/> three | <input type="checkbox"/> seven | |

8. Of every ten women, how many do you feel wear outfits at social events (i.e., dinner parties and cocktail parties) like the women in the nighttime dramas mentioned above?

- | | | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> zero | <input type="checkbox"/> four | <input type="checkbox"/> eight |
| <input type="checkbox"/> one | <input type="checkbox"/> five | <input type="checkbox"/> nine |
| <input type="checkbox"/> two | <input type="checkbox"/> six | <input type="checkbox"/> ten |
| <input type="checkbox"/> three | <input type="checkbox"/> seven | |

9. Of every ten women, how many do you feel wear sleeping attire like the women in the above nighttime dramas?

- | | | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> zero | <input type="checkbox"/> four | <input type="checkbox"/> eight |
| <input type="checkbox"/> one | <input type="checkbox"/> five | <input type="checkbox"/> nine |
| <input type="checkbox"/> two | <input type="checkbox"/> six | <input type="checkbox"/> ten |
| <input type="checkbox"/> three | <input type="checkbox"/> seven | |

10. Of every ten women, how many do you feel wear clothes at informal outdoor settings (i.e., tennis matches, picnics) like the women in the nighttime dramas mentioned above?

- | | | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> zero | <input type="checkbox"/> four | <input type="checkbox"/> eight |
| <input type="checkbox"/> one | <input type="checkbox"/> five | <input type="checkbox"/> nine |
| <input type="checkbox"/> two | <input type="checkbox"/> six | <input type="checkbox"/> ten |
| <input type="checkbox"/> three | <input type="checkbox"/> seven | |

11. Of every ten women, how many do you feel wear professional working clothes like the women in the nighttime dramas mentioned above?

- | | | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> zero | <input type="checkbox"/> four | <input type="checkbox"/> eight |
| <input type="checkbox"/> one | <input type="checkbox"/> five | <input type="checkbox"/> nine |
| <input type="checkbox"/> two | <input type="checkbox"/> six | <input type="checkbox"/> ten |
| <input type="checkbox"/> three | <input type="checkbox"/> seven | |

12. Considering the nighttime dramas mentioned above, do you find the women:

- very overdressed
- overdressed
- neither overdressed nor underdressed
- underdressed
- very underdressed

13. In general, do you feel that the nighttime dramas mentioned above are:

- very good indicators of how women really dress
- good indicators of how women really dress
- neither good nor bad indicators of how women really dress
- bad indicators of how women really dress
- very bad indicators of how women really dress

14. How important are nighttime dramas in helping you determine what is in style?

- very important
- important
- neither important nor unimportant
- unimportant
- very unimportant

15. How important is it to you to dress like the women in the nighttime dramas mentioned above?

- very important.
- important
- neither important nor unimportant
- unimportant
- very unimportant

16. Do you use programs other than the ones mentioned above for fashion information? Please specify:

17. What year are you in school?

- Freshman
- Sophomore
- Junior
- Senior
- Graduate Student

18. What is your major? _____

19. What is your race or ethnic background?

- Black
- Hispanic
- Oriental
- Caucasian
- Other _____

20. What is your citizenship?

- U.S.A.
- Foreign Country

21. What is your age? _____

22. What is your marital status?

- Single
- Married
- Separated
- Divorced
- Widowed

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