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### Consumer Attitude Analysis for Three Albuquerque Mortuaries

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This thesis, directed and approved by the candidate's committee, has been accepted by the Graduate Committee of The University of New Mexico in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Business Administration

Consumer Attitude Analysis for Three Albuquerque Mortuaries  
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CONSUMER ATTITUDE ANALYSIS  
FOR THREE ALBUQUERQUE MORTUARIES

BY

PAUL A. SMYER, JR.

B.S., University of New Mexico, 1966

THESIS

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Business Administration  
in the Graduate School of  
The University of New Mexico  
Albuquerque, New Mexico

June, 1971

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CONSUMER ATTITUDE ANALYSIS  
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ABSTRACT OF THESIS

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June, 1971

An attitude is the predisposition of an individual to evaluate some symbol or object or aspect of his world in a favorable or unfavorable manner. Attitudes are developed during a process of interaction with the environment and they usually show an evaluative personal reaction. Consumer attitudes toward an individual firm develop in the context of this interaction. The firm by its actions in the administration of its business aids the consumer in his formation of attitudes toward that firm.

Objective methods of observation were employed to identify user attitudes toward three mortuaries in Albuquerque, New Mexico. The data was statistically analyzed to determine each mortuary's attitude profile and also if there were any significant differences among the profiles.

The semantic differential was the primary measuring instrument employed in this study. Ten bipolar adjective pair scales were used in appraising the attitudes of thirty randomly-selected customers from each of the three participating mortuaries. The rating scales were previously verified as measuring the evaluative, potency and activity factors which underlie connotative attitudes. The customer ratings of each of the mortuaries were compared, evaluated and analyzed.

The hypotheses were tested by means of the analysis of variance technique. The following conclusions may be drawn from the research findings:

1. The consumer attitudes toward each of the participating mortuaries

are very similar. This fact cannot be generalized to all mortuaries in the Albuquerque area because of the existence of cultural and other differences among the consumer clientele.

2. The consumer attitudes toward the participating mortuaries are generally positive. The two most pronounced deviations from the "ideal" mortuary are concerned with the size of the establishment and the speed with which business is being conducted.

3. Age, annual family income, religion and frequency of church attendance have no significant bearing on the consumers' attitudes toward the participating mortuaries.



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Certificate of Approval . . . . . i

Title Page . . . . . ii

Acknowledgments . . . . . iii

Abstract Title Page . . . . . iv

Abstract . . . . . v

Contents . . . . .vii

List of Figures . . . . . ix

List of Tables . . . . . x

I The Research Study . . . . . 1

    Introduction . . . . . 1

    The Problem . . . . . 7

    The Objective . . . . . 7

    The Hypotheses . . . . . 8

    The Approach . . . . . 8

    Significance of Study . . . . . 9

II The Research Investigation . . . . . 12

    Attitude Research . . . . . 12

    Sample Selection . . . . . 21

    Additional Information . . . . . 22

    Interview Methods . . . . . 23

III Results and Findings . . . . . 27

    Analysis of Data . . . . . 27

    Analysis of Response . . . . . 27

    Test of the Hypotheses . . . . . 32

The Hypotheses . . . . .	32
Sociological Data Analysis . . . . .	44
Other Factors . . . . .	46
IV Summary and Conclusions . . . . .	51
Summary . . . . .	51
Limitations . . . . .	52
Conclusions . . . . .	55
Appendix I: Sample of Introductory Letter Mailed to Selected Participants . . . . .	58
Appendix II: Example of Interviewer's Letter of Introduction . . . . .	60
Appendix III: The Questionnaire Multiple Choice Cards . .	62
Bibliography . . . . .	70

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Page
1 The Mortuary With Which You Are Most Familiar . . . .	36
2 An "Ideal" Mortuary . . . . .	39
3 "Ideal" Vs. Familiar Mortuary . . . . .	42

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1 Demographic Composition of Survey Sample . . . . .	28
2 Mountain States Region (Statistics) . . . . .	34
3 Consumer Group Ratings for the Concept The Mortuary With Which You Are Most Familiar . . . . .	37
4 Consumer Group Ratings for the Concept An "Ideal" Mortuary . . . . .	40
5 Total Consumer Group Ratings for An "Ideal" Mortuary and the Mortuary With Which You Are Most Familiar . . . . .	41
6 Ratings on the Yielding-Tenacious and Fair-Unfair Scales . . . . .	45
7 Factors Influencing Call to a Particular Mortuary . . . . .	47
8 Summary of General Impressions About Overall Service . . . . .	48
9 "Ideal" vs. Familiar Mortuary . . . . .	54

## I THE RESEARCH STUDY

### Introduction

The funeral industry in the United States of America has been the subject of much unfavorable comment. The press and the clergy have clearly been the most vocal in their expression of this criticism against modern funeral practices.

Bill Davidson's article "The High Cost of Dying", which appeared in Colliers magazine in May, 1951, charged that the funeral industry as a whole is guilty of price-fixing and a continual price-raising. The article also suggested that the industry, through the use of lobbies and other political pressure techniques, is able "to cow a significant number of legislators and jurists and do pretty much as it pleases."<sup>1</sup>

"The ten years following the Colliers article were relatively tranquil ones for the funeral industry, at least so far as the press was a matter of concern."<sup>2</sup> Then "Can You Afford to Die?" by Roul Tunley appeared in The Saturday Evening Post of June 17, 1961. The article was highly critical of the funeral industry. Tunley wrote that "all in all, the final Journey will probably be the most expensive ride you've ever taken."<sup>3</sup>

The criticism from the pulpit charged the funeral directors with playing on the emotions of bereaved families at a time when they cannot "protect" themselves. The Reverend Hugh Stevenson Tigner asserted that "ministers were irked at seeing a small empire of business fattening on death."<sup>4</sup> Archbishop Sebastian Baggio suggested

that the National Funeral Directors Association make an "agonizing reappraisal not only of price structure, but also of pagan customs and trappings that have crept into the industry."<sup>5</sup> Although Reverend Lawrence Cross cautioned against condemning all funeral directors, because there are, he said, "decent sincere people, who pursue their work to the highest ideals..." he went on to criticize, "unfortunately, though of the two kinds of undertaker the expensive kind dominates."<sup>6</sup> There was also a request from the clergy for their greater participation in the funeral arrangements. Clergymen argue it is their place to counsel and advise the sorrowful family during this difficult time rather than the prerogative of the funeral directors in their self-proclaimed "professional role of grief therapists."<sup>7</sup>

"The funeral press reacted, as usual, like a rather inefficient bull confronted with a red flag."<sup>8</sup> The members of the industry "have reacted in what only can be considered a paranoid manner to published comments."<sup>9</sup> These two statements were taken from two of the most articulate critics of the whole funeral industry. Jessica Mitford's The American Way of Death and Ruth Mulvey Harmer's The High Cost of Dying were both published in 1963. Their publications mark a high point in faultfinding with respect to the funeral industry. Both books were best sellers and created substantial alarm within the profession.

Before these two widely-read publications appeared, leaders in the industry realized that the situation required more than the expression of sarcastic and angry rebuttals in the trade journals. In 1958, the Board of Governors of the National Funeral Directors

Association of the United States commissioned Dr. Robert L. Fulton, a Los Angeles State College professor of sociology, to make the first study in a series of three research efforts. Dr. Fulton was "to 'investigate in a systematic way' the nature and extent of charges made in and out of the pulpit by clergymen about the commercial and pagan nature of the American funeral.<sup>10</sup>" For his report, a letter explaining the study and a questionnaire were sent out to 1,990 clergymen representing every church in the country with a membership of half a million or more. "However, because of the failure of several Negro churches to participate in this study the actual number of clergymen selected for this study was 1,802.<sup>11</sup>" To insure adequate regional representation the clergymen were chosen at random from available church directories on a proportional basis from six areas of the United States. Six hundred and thirty-three questionnaires were returned, representing a return of 35%. A percentage return of this magnitude for a mailed questionnaire is considered quite high. This high return indicates a considerable interest on the part of those clergymen surveyed concerning American funeral practices. The study was completed in 1960.

The returned questionnaires were grouped according to three classifications -- Catholic, Protestant and Jewish. Because of the small number of Jewish rabbis involved in the study, their replies were not included in the statistical computations. The results of the study indicate that the Protestant clergy and the Catholic clergy have differing ideas about the purpose of the funeral and the duties of the funeral director. The Catholics found less fault with modern

funeral practices than did the Protestants. The Catholics were also more favorably disposed toward the funeral director. The author suggests that a role conflict exists between the funeral director and the Protestant clergyman. Dr. Fulton also identifies five problem areas which he considers to merit attention by national and local associations of funeral directors.

"These problem areas are:

1. The basic nature of the American funeral.
2. The charges by clergymen of exploitation and opportunism on the part of some funeral directors.
3. The role of the clergymen in funeral arrangements.
4. The lack of social contacts between the funeral director and the clergyman.
5. The role of the funeral director in the area of personal counseling.<sup>12</sup>"

In 1962, the second study dealing with attitudes of the American public toward death, grief, funerals and funeral directors was completed. Ten thousand householders "chosen at random from the most recent telephone directories available<sup>13</sup>" were recipients of questionnaires. In addition, members of eleven participating memorial societies were mailed 893 questionnaires. Also, "as a check for representativeness, an additional 360 individuals were selected and personally interviewed by graduate students and/or faculty of 26 departments of sociology throughout the country."<sup>14</sup>

The results of this study indicated that the members of the memorial societies were much less favorably disposed to modern funerals and funeral directors than were the "householders" and the people who were interviewed personally. While there was generally agreement among the groups on the purposes of the funeral, the majority of the



householders agreed that the funeral ceremony successfully met the emotional needs of sorrowing families. "The majority of the memorial group, on the other hand, reported that the funeral failed in its function and purpose.<sup>15</sup>" They suggested changes that should be made. It is interesting to note also, that as with the clergy, "favorable responses toward funerals and funeral directors varied strongly with religious affiliation, with Catholics most often reporting favorable replies followed by Protestants, Jews, non-affiliated, and Unitarians, in that order.<sup>16</sup>"

The final study in the Fulton series, "The Funeral and Funeral Director: A Contemporary Analysis" was completed in 1967. The purpose of this third study was "to determine what the contemporary funeral practices are in the United States<sup>17</sup>" and directly reflected the attitudes of the contemporary funeral director. As in the two previous studies, the mailed questionnaire method was used. Of the 14,144 questionnaires sent out, 3,474 were completed and returned. This represents a return of 24.6% or 1 out of every 4 polled. A 25% reply to a mailed questionnaire is generally considered to be a satisfactory response. However, there is no assurance that the responses are representative of all the funeral directors who were included in the study because there were no built-in controls to insure representativeness. Dr. Fulton also estimated that there are more than 23,000 funeral establishments in the United States. He indicates that his sample might be said to represent 1 out of 6.5 funeral homes in this country. Again the question arises as to how accurately those responding represent the total population of

funeral directors.

Because of the sampling procedures employed, the actual representativeness of Dr. Fulton's three studies is certainly open to question. The study dealing with the clergy does, however, point up some problem areas which require the attention of the whole funeral industry. The second study dealing with the attitudes of the public is open to the most criticism. For instance, can the author's assumptions concerning the rural public be accepted as correct? Because most of the criticism concerning funerals apparently comes from urban areas, "it was decided that a survey of rural attitudes would add little to the purpose of the study.<sup>18</sup>" Does selecting names at random from the "most recent" telephone directories constitute a representative sample of the American urban public? What of those without phones or with unlisted numbers? Does allowing the participating memorial societies to choose for themselves who is to be included in their sample assure true representation? The author does not state how the individuals were chosen in the personal interviewed sample, therefore, no decision can be made about the representativeness of that sample. The third study was basically an exercise in averages as the writer drew up a "model" funeral director and his "firm" from the results of the study.

The mailed questionnaire method of survey research is of itself open to criticism. Its two major defects are "the possible lack of response and the inability to check the responses given. These defects, especially the first, are serious enough to make the mail questionnaire worse than useless, except in highly sophisticated hands.<sup>19</sup>"

Consequently, Dr. Fulton's conclusions, in his three studies, might be suspect and open to challenge.

These studies and a study by Charles Winick (1967) dealing with the "Personality Characteristics of Embalmers" seem to be the only ones reported in the literature. Dr. Fulton's three efforts were national in scope. The Winick study was limited to one large geographical region. There seems to be a notable lack of research dealing with the funeral industry at the local level.

#### The Problem

Three mortuaries in the Albuquerque area are very concerned about their relationship with the public. They want to know what the general consumer attitude is among their clientele toward the funeral home and funeral services. They are interested in a research effort that will aid them in a better understanding of the public's prevailing opinion of the industry. The problem of this study is to determine the current attitudes toward the mortuary held by a random sample of people who have used the professional services of: Fitzgerald and Son, Funeral Directors; French Mortuary; and Strong-Thorne Mortuary, for the period from 10/1/66 to 10/1/67.

#### The Objective

The primary purpose of this study is to measure and examine the prevailing consumer attitudes toward the above mentioned mortuaries. An identification and evaluation of customer attitudes will be presented.

### The Hypotheses

I It is hypothesized that there is no significant difference among consumer attitudes toward each of the individual mortuaries studied.

II It is hypothesized that a client's attitudes toward an "ideal" mortuary do not differ significantly from his attitudes toward the actual mortuary with which he is most familiar.

### The Approach

The descriptive-analytical method of research is used in this study. This method allows the researcher to penetrate the surface and to examine the components that make up the whole. The difference between simple description and descriptive-analysis is one of degree rather than kind. In analysis, a description tends to be much more detailed. There is a concern for inner relationships among components that is lacking in simple description. The emphasis here is upon the internal characteristics and properties of that which is being examined. A knowledge of this internal nature may enable the researcher to modify the inner-relationships and thus predict or control a given outcome.<sup>20</sup>

In social research, analysis allows for the relating of gathered evidence to a proposed hypothesis in a very meaningful way. For these reasons this method is well suited to this research effort. Using this method, information will be marshaled for the verification or non-verification of the previously stated hypotheses.

The data-gathering procedure employed is the Sample Survey. The universe sampled consists of all those individuals who have utilized the services of any one of the three participating mortuaries during

the period 10/1/66 to 10/1/67. This prevents disturbing those who have been most recently bereaved, but, at the same time, keeps the survey reasonably current.

The personal interview was selected as the principal technique in the gathering of data. The research instrument used is the semantic differential. Effective application of the semantic differential technique is best obtained through the use of the personal interview. Detailed information concerning the interview methods and procedures will be discussed in Chapter II.

The general research approach is: (1) to present a discussion of attitudes and attitude research with collection of operational definitions which are relevant to this study; (2) to discuss fully the semantic differential and its use in this study, Chapter II; (3) to discuss in detail the results and findings of this research effort, Chapter III; and (4) to draw conclusions, Chapter IV.

#### Significance of Study

As was noted earlier, there has been only one research effort dealing with the attitudes of the public toward the funeral industry. The approach was general and the scope was national. The purpose of this study is to present a new approach for identifying and analyzing user attitudes toward the industry. We are seeking to pioneer, on a local level, attitude studies toward mortuaries. The findings of this study will not be generalized to the entire industry over the country, but will indicate the local conditions within a predefined universe. Although it is hopefully anticipated that the local funeral homes will profit from the results of our research, it is beyond the scope of

this study to advise the management of the funeral homes on apecific courses of action in order to change or modify user attitudes. The results of this study will point up areas of weakness as well as areas of strength, and the individual mortuaries may choose to adjust their practices accordingly.

## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Jessica Mitford, The American Way of Death (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1963), p.260.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 262.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 270.

<sup>4</sup>Ruth Mulvey Harmer, The High Cost of Dying (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1963), p. 147.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 151.

<sup>6</sup>Mitford, op. cit., p. 249.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 247.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 260.

<sup>9</sup>Harmer, op. cit., p. 141.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 153.

<sup>11</sup>Robert Fulton, A Compilation of Studies of Attitudes Toward Death, Funerals, Funeral Directors (Copyright 1967), p. 2.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 7.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 13.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 14.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 16.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 33.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 14.

<sup>19</sup>Fred N. Kerlinger, Foundations of Behavioral Research (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, Inc., 1964), p. 397

<sup>20</sup>Carter V. Good and Douglas E. Scates, Methods of Research. Educational, Psychological, Sociological (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1957), p. 167.

## II THE RESEARCH INVESTIGATION

### Attitude Research

"The concept of attitude is probably the most distinctive and indispensable concept in contemporary American social psychology.<sup>1</sup>" Thus a wide range of investigation exists in the area of attitude research. There is a great quantity of literature in the journals of psychology, sociology, education and political science dealing with attitudes. Great debates on the theory, definition and nature of attitudes have taken place in the literature. The elements of attitude development and change have been studied. The attitudes of members of different groups have been compared. The relationship between attitudes and other variables, such as personality traits and level of intelligence, has been examined. The influence that attitudes have on such psychological processes as perception, learning and remembering, reasoning and thinking has been investigated. The methods by which attitudes may be measured is also an area of major interest.

This study is concerned with the comparison of attitudes of members of different groups, i.e. customers of different mortuaries, and employs a method of attitude measurement, the semantic differential technique.

An "attitude is the predisposition of the individual to evaluate some symbol or object or aspect of his world in a favorable or unfavorable manner."<sup>2</sup> The above definition is considered to be the one generally or typically adopted in the majority of the current



literature and as such serves as a definition in this study.

"Of all the tasks or purposes of interviews and questionnaires, that of attitude measurement has undergone the greatest amount of technical development. There are a great many ways of assessing peoples' attitudes, the most sophisticated of which are known as attitude scales.<sup>3</sup>"

Diab<sup>4</sup> suggests that the validity of an attitude measure is of primary importance and he lists the following methods as being preferable for use in attitude measurement: (1) conventional attitude scales such as those developed by Thurstone, Likert and Guttman; (2) the social judgment-involvement developed by Sharif and others; and (3) the semantic differential procedure devised by Osgood and others. Kerlinger<sup>5</sup> asserts that attitudes can best be assessed by the use of attitude scales. He lists the following categories: (1) summated rating scales, also called a Likert-type scale; (2) equal-appearing interval scales, the most notable of which was developed by Louis L. Thurstone; and (3) the cumulative or Guttman scale. Ferber, Blankertz and Hollander<sup>6</sup> provide a broader list of methods of attitude measurement: (1) direct open-end questions; (2) direct multiple choice questions; (3) rating scales; (4) the semantic differential ("essentially a large-scale application of rating scales."); (5) ranking; and (6) projective tests, such as (a) word associations, (b) sentence completions and (c) the Thematic Apperception Test (TAT).

Osgood and his associates compared the semantic differential with two of the three types of attitude scales listed by Kerlinger.

Three forms of Thurstone scales were used to rate attitude objects. These same objects were then rated using the semantic differential. The reliabilities of the Thurstone scales and the semantic differential were equally high. The results indicated that whatever the Thurstone scales measure, "the evaluative factor of the semantic differential measures just about as well."<sup>7</sup> A fourteen-item Guttman-type scale was used to assess the attitudes of a selected population toward a specific concept. Sometime later, four weeks at most, the subjects rated the same concept using the semantic differential. The results indicated that the evaluative scales of the semantic differential and the Guttman scale essentially measure the same thing. "However, in contrast to the three major types of rating scales, the semantic differential is very simple to apply, and it yields, in a single answer, an indication of both the direction and intensity of attitudes, thereby satisfying additional selection criteria."<sup>8</sup>

Oppenheim<sup>9</sup> suggested the following criteria in evaluating an attitude measurement scale: (1) Unidimensionability or homogeneity -- one thing at a time should be measured; for example, a ruler should measure length and not temperature; (2) Linearity -- equal intervals or equal-appearing intervals are best suited to insuring a straight line method of measurement; (3) Reliability -- this is the indispensable attribute of consistency; (4) Validity -- a scale must measure what it is supposed to measure; (5) Reproductibility -- from an obtained score we can reproduce exactly which units on the scale were covered and which were not. Oppenheim believes that the semantic differential when measured against the above criteria is found to meet

the requirements.

In addition to the previously mentioned criteria, Osgood<sup>10</sup> and his associates evaluate the semantic differential against these other criteria: (1) Objectivity -- the method should yield verifiable, reproducible data which are independent of the idiosyncrasies of the investigator; (2) Sensitivity -- the method should yield differentiation commensurate with the natural units of the material being studied, i.e., it should be able to reflect as fine distinctions in meanings as are typically made in communicating; (3) Comparability -- the method should be applicable to a wide range of phenomena in the field, making possible comparisons among different individuals and groups, different concepts, and so on; (4) Utility -- it should provide information relevant to contemporary theoretical and practical issues in an efficient manner. In evaluating the semantic differential against these additional measurement criteria it was found to be, in general, not lacking in these requirements.

The semantic differential has been found to be a highly generalized technique of measurement which must be adapted to the specific requirements of each research problem to which it is applied. The concepts and scales used in a particular study depend upon the purpose of the research.<sup>11</sup> It is the nature of the problem, then, that chiefly defines the class and form of the concepts and scales to be selected.

An actual semantic differential consists of a number of semantically opposite bipolar adjective pairs with seven scale positions separating them, together with the concepts to be rated by these scales. Each scale measures one and occasionally two of the dimensions that

Osgood and his associates found to be behind the scales. The three underlying factors which are often called clusters of adjectives are the Evaluative cluster, the Potency cluster and the Activity cluster. The Evaluative cluster is the most important and consists of such adjective pairs as "good-bad", "honest-dishonest" and "pleasant-unpleasant". A second cluster, Potency has adjectives which seem to show strength such as "strong-weak" and "rugged-delicate". A third important factor is called Activity because its adjective seems to express motion and action such as "fast-slow" and "hot-cold".

In their 1957 publication, Osgood and his associates present two separate tables of scales which have been thoroughly tested for their factor content.<sup>13</sup> These "factor loadings" indicate which underlying element a given scale measures. The concept being rated is viewed as a stimulus and the act of checking a scaler position is viewed as a response to this stimulus.<sup>14</sup> Thus rating a concept on a validated set of semantic scales presents a rich picture of the meaning of the attitude object being rated.

"Based on sound psychological theory and thoroughly tested and validated in use, the semantic differential technique promulgated by Osgood and his associates seems highly appropriate for use in measuring connotative attitudes.<sup>16</sup>"

The semantic differential technique presents a very general way of getting at certain types of information. As was noted earlier, it is a highly generalized technique of measurement which must be adapted to the requirements of each research problem to which it is applied. There are no standard concepts and no standard scales;

rather the concepts and scales used in a particular study depend upon the purpose of the research.<sup>17</sup> The chief limitation of the semantic differential is actual flexibility with which it may be adapted to a particular research effort. A number of investigators have taken a great liberty in adapting the semantic to their individual studies. Often a thesaurus is used in making up the scales,<sup>18</sup> then the scales are used with little or no pretesting and the results are presented as though they were obtained with a valid semantic differential. Another modification that is often used involves the replacement of polar adjectives with polar phrases.<sup>19</sup> The results obtained with the phrases are then considered to be comparable to those obtained by use of the adjectives alone. It is usually considered in such cases that a high degree of face validity is sufficient. It is not. Pretesting of newly developed scales is mandatory.

Hughes<sup>20</sup> states that the construction of a semantic differential for a particular research problem is expensive if effective pretesting is undertaken to insure the reliability and validity of the instrument. He goes on to say that most researchers avoid this cost by using the adjectives Osgood, Suci and Tannenbaum selected as a result of their comprehensive study.

Osgood and his associates<sup>21</sup> state that the concepts judged against the semantic differential may be varied in nature. However, they go on to caution that the concepts to be judged and the bipolar adjectives to be used in judging them must be clear in meaning to those who are doing the judging. The bipolar adjectives must be relevant to the concepts being judged if the results of a given study are to be meaningful.

Mindak<sup>22</sup> found that some people refuse to use the negative side of the scale while others tend to express a neutral position by constantly selecting the central scaler location. Hill<sup>23</sup> indicates that a person unfamiliar with a given concept would tend to check all the scales toward the center. Hughes<sup>24</sup> found that those who are unfamiliar with the rating scales also tend toward a center position response.

Most of the above problems concerning center position responses are surmounted by the interviewer encouraging more discriminating responses on the part of the interviewee.<sup>25</sup> This is often accomplished by carefully explaining the purpose of the scales and the proper procedure for marking the intervals. Also the concept must be relevant to the respondent. Effective use of the scales requires that the respondent mark his choices quickly. This prevents him from having too much time to deliberate on a given response and compare it with markings on previous scales, thus contaminating his answers.

Careful selection of scales, concepts and interviewers will greatly reduce the problems encountered when using the semantic differential. Mindak<sup>26</sup> suggests that a built in control concept can also be used to stabilize the ratings and increase their relevance for a given respondent. The use of an "ideal" before a concept provides the respondent with a frame of reference which aids him in making careful discriminations in subsequent ratings. Thus a thorough understanding of the semantic differential technique is required if it is to be used as a successful research instrument.

It is true, of course, that in some areas of measurement, for

example, psychological or attitude measurement, particular forms of the differential, with standardized concepts and scales, may be developed.<sup>27</sup> However, at the present time it is necessary to select scales which were tested as to their factor content by Osgood and his associates, and which are deemed relevant to the present research problem.

The concepts must also be relevant to the research problem, "and they must be loaded with connotative attitudinal meaning to the respondents. These concepts must be capable of eliciting varied responses and, thus, large variance ... The scales or adjective pairs selected for use in rating the concepts must be representative of the basic dimensions or factors, and they must be relevant to the concepts rated. In order to insure that the meanings of all the scales are clear to different individuals, the polar adjectives chosen must be easily understood and be clear opposites."<sup>28</sup>

Two concepts were selected in light of the previously stated requirements. The concepts are: an "Ideal" Mortuary and the Mortuary With Which You Are Most Familiar. Each respondent rated both concepts.

The scales selected for use in this study are representative of the three major factors which Osgood and his associates have previously identified. The bipolar adjective pairs used in this study are as follows:

1. Pleasant - Unpleasant
2. Honest - Dishonest
3. Good - Bad

4. Fair - Unfair
5. Active - Passive
6. Fast - Slow
7. Sharp - Dull
8. Yielding - Tenacious
9. Free - Constrained
10. Large - Small

The first four scales represent the Evaluative factor; the next three represent the Activity factor; and the last three scales represent the Potency factor.<sup>29</sup> Since the factor loading of these scales has been previously verified by Osgood and his associates, pretesting of the measurement tool was not undertaken in this research effort.

Both concepts were rated on the same ten scales. The concept, an "Ideal" Mortuary, was always rated first to provide the respondent with a general frame of reference. The position and the polar valence of the scales were altered from one concept to the next in order to inhibit stereotyped responses.

As was noted earlier, a single response on a semantic differential scale yields two essential characteristics of an attitudinal response, intensity and direction. The use of scales which have previously established factor loading enables the respondent to produce a semantic picture of his attitude toward a given concept. The respondent indicates how a concept is related to a given adjective pair by checking an appropriate scaler position. On a seven point scale, position four indicates that the adjectives are neutral, equally related or completely irrelevant to the rated concept. Positions three and five indicate a



slight relationship; positions six and two indicate a close relationship; and positions seven and one indicate a very close relationship. A profile of all responses may be drawn which presents a picture of the meaning of the attitude object or concept as it is viewed by the respondent.

#### Sample Selection

The population from which the sample was selected was composed of those people who meet the following requirements: they live in the Albuquerque area and they have used the professional services of Fitzgerald and Son, Funeral Directors, French Mortuary, or Strong-Thorne Mortuary during the period from October 1, 1966 to October 1, 1967. In order to insure comparability across groups, only those people who had arranged for a full adult service at one of the participating mortuaries were included in the population universe. Special case funerals involving "ship-ins", "ship-outs", welfare and infants were excluded for one or more of the following reasons: (1) the mortuary involved is not fully responsible for all the service involved with a particular case; (2) the family involved does not have a freedom of choice in choosing the type of service they desire; (3) the service rendered is dictated by special circumstances and thus is not a standard type service.

The population universe consisted of two hundred seventy people from mortuary no. 1, one hundred sixty-three people from mortuary no. 2, and three hundred forty-five people from mortuary no. 3. Thirty people were to be interviewed for each of the three mortuaries.

The actual sample was selected by means of a random sample selection program run on the IBM model 360 computer. Thirty-eight people from mortuary no. 1, thirty-five people from mortuary no. 2 and thirty-six people from no. 3 were initially selected to provide a total of ninety interviews. Some people in this original sample were unable or unwilling to participate in the study. For this reason, an additional twenty-five people from mortuary no. 1, sixteen people from mortuary no. 2 and eighteen people from mortuary no. 3 were included in the sample. Thus one hundred sixty-four people were included in the sample. Ninety were interviewed.

#### Additional Information

In addition to the primary classification based on the mortuary with which each respondent had dealt, further classifications were made. The information provided by a sociological data or "fact" sheet (see Appendix) enabled a more extensive analysis of the semantic responses to be made. The following variables were included on the information sheet:

1. Age
2. Sex
3. Annual family income
4. Religion
5. Church attendance
6. Length of residency in Albuquerque

In order to determine if there were any additional variables which would provide further classification possibilities, two open-end

questions were contained in the sociological questioning.

1. What factors influenced you to call this particular mortuary?
2. How did you feel about the overall service?

An analysis of the responses to these questions may furnish additional information relevant to the total study.

### Interview Methods

"The effective utilization of the semantic differential technique requires an immediacy of rating responses, a requirement that is best met through the use of personal interviews.<sup>30</sup>" Three University of New Mexico students and the wife of one of these students were employed as research assistants. All the interviewers had previous interviewing experience as well as experience in administering the semantic differential. The interviewers were given additional training in interviewing techniques by the author. It was anticipated that the previous experience of these interviewers would enable them to conduct their portion of the study in a most efficient manner and thus greatly reduce the occurrence of interviewer error. The research assistants were paid \$2.00 for each completed questionnaire.

Letters (see Appendix) introducing the study were mailed to each member of the selected sample on Wednesday, February 19, 1969. The letter presented an introductory explanation of the study and its intended purpose. It also stated that the recipients would be contacted by a research assistant within a very few days for the purpose of

conducting an interview. The interviewers carried with them letters (see Appendix) of identification which were to be presented upon demand. The introductory letters were printed on Bureau of Business Research letterheads, and they were mailed in College of Business Administration envelopes. Each letter and envelope was individually addressed, and each letter was individually signed. The letters identifying the interviewers were printed on College of Business Administration letterheads.

The interviewing process commenced with the research assistants calling the potential interviewees on the telephone for the purpose of securing an appointment for an interview. The interviewers had fairly flexible time schedules which enabled them to conduct the interviews at almost any time that was convenient for the potential respondents. The interviews were conducted in the respondents' homes and were between fifteen and twenty minutes in length.

As the work progressed, it became evident that the required ninety interviews could not be obtained from the initially selected sample. Therefore, a supplementary random sample was chosen from the population universe. In all, fifty-nine additional people were selected. This number was arrived at by using a simple ratio of completed interviews to contacts attempted in the first sample. A second mailing of introductory letters was undertaken on Friday, March 14. The required ninety interviews were completed by Sunday, April 20, 1969. Ten people out of the one hundred sixty-eight sent letters refused to participate. The others did not participate because of one of the following reasons: they had moved, they had died or they simply could not be reached.

## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Allen L. Edwards, Techniques of Attitude Scale Construction (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1957), p. 17, quoting The Nature of Personality: Collected Papers.

<sup>2</sup>Daniel Katz, "The Functional Approach to the Study of Attitudes," in Psychology in Administration A Research Orientation, by Timothy W. Costello and Sheldon S. Zalkind (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1963), p. 253.

<sup>3</sup>A. N. Oppenheim, Questionnaire Design and Attitude Measurement (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1966), p. 105.

<sup>4</sup>Carolyn W. Sherif and Muzafer Sherif, Attitude Ego-Involvement and Change (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1967), p. 140.

<sup>5</sup>Fred N. Kerlinger, Foundations of Behavioral Research (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, Inc., 1964), pp. 483-487.

<sup>6</sup>Robert Ferber, Donald F. Blankertz and Sidney Hollander, Jr., Marketing Research (New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1964), pp. 290-303.

<sup>7</sup>Charles E. Osgood, George J. Suci and Percy H. Tannenbaum, The Measurement of Meaning (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1957), p. 194.

<sup>8</sup>John H. Zoller, "Measurement And Analysis of the Image of an Automobile Dealership" (unpublished M.B.A. thesis, University of New Mexico, 1967), p. 17.

<sup>9</sup>Oppenheim, op. cit., p. 121.

<sup>10</sup>Osgood, Suci and Tannenbaum, op. cit., p. 11.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 76.

<sup>12</sup>Kerlinger, op. cit., pp. 566-567.

<sup>13</sup>Osgood, Suci and Tannenbaum, op. cit., pp. 37, 53-61.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 77.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 195.

<sup>16</sup>Zoller, op. cit., p. 22.

<sup>17</sup>Osgood, Suci and Tannenbaum, op. cit., p. 76.

<sup>18</sup>William A. Mindak, "Fitting the Semantic Differential to the Marketing Problem," Journal of Marketing, Vol. XXV, No. 2 (April 1961), pp. 28-33.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid.

<sup>20</sup>G. David Hughes, "Selecting Scales to Measure Attitude Change," Journal of Marketing Research, Vol. IV, no. 1 (February 1967), pp. 85-87.

<sup>21</sup>Osgood, Suci and Tannenbaum, op. cit., p. 77.

<sup>22</sup>Mindak, op. cit., p. 29.

<sup>23</sup>Edward W. Hill, "Corporate Images Are Not Stereotyped," Journal of Marketing, Vol. XXVI, No. 1 (January 1962), pp. 72-75.

<sup>24</sup>Hughes, op. cit., p. 86.

<sup>25</sup>Hill, op. cit., p. 74.

<sup>26</sup>Mindak, op. cit., p. 29.

<sup>27</sup>Osgood, Suci and Tannenbaum, op. cit., p. 76.

<sup>28</sup>Zoller, op. cit., p. 32.

<sup>29</sup>Osgood, Suci and Tannenbaum, op. cit., pp. 37, 53-61.

<sup>30</sup>Zoller, op. cit., p. 37.

### III RESULTS AND FINDINGS

#### Analysis of Data

##### Sample Composition

The final sample consisted of ninety people whose demographic characteristics are shown on table no. 1. None of the respondents were under twenty-one years of age nor were any of the Jewish faith. Neither of these conditions was deliberate. The three respondents who refused to answer the question concerning family income were excluded from comparisons using that factor.

#### Analysis of Response

In order to test the hypotheses of this study, comparisons must be made between groups for the same concept or between concepts for the same group. This process requires that numerical values be assigned to rating scales of the semantic differential. This is easily accomplished by assigning the digits one through seven to the seven scaler positions. The numeral one was assigned to the positive end of the scale and the numeral seven was assigned to the negative end of the scale. For example, on the good-bad scale, the position closest to good was assigned a one, and the position closest to bad was assigned a seven. As was noted in Chapter II, the polar valence on some of the scales was altered to inhibit stereotyped responses. This reversal of scaler presentation did not alter the method of numerical assignment. If the scale was bad-good, the position closest to good was still assigned the number one. This

TABLE 1

## DEMOGRAPHIC COMPOSITION OF SURVEY SAMPLE

	Mortuary			Total
	#1	#2	#3	
<b>Sex:</b>				
Male	10	13	12	35
Female	20	17	18	55
<b>Age:</b>				
Under 21	0	0	0	0
21 - 29	2	0	1	3
30 - 39	4	3	2	9
40 - 49	3	11	9	23
50 - 59	8	10	10	28
60 - 64	4	2	1	7
Over 65	9	5	7	21



TABLE 1 - Continued

	Mortuary			Total
	#1	#2	#3	
Religion:				
Baptist	5	2	1	8
Episcopalian	2	3	2	7
Lutheran	2	4	5	11
Methodist	2	9	4	15
Presbyterian	6	5	3	14
Protestant (Other)	6	2	4	12
Roman Catholic	4	4	8	16
Jewish	0	0	0	0
Other Religion	1	1	1	3
No Religious Affiliation	2	0	2	4
Church Attendance:				
Never	2	0	3	5
Occasionally	10	9	10	29
Fairly Often	0	6	2	8
Often	4	5	2	11
Every Week	12	10	12	34

TABLE 1 - Continued

	Mortuary			Total
	#1	#2	#3	
Family Income:				
\$0 - \$2,999.	9	3	4	16
\$3,000. - \$4,999.	5	3	2	10
\$5,000. - \$5,999.	1	0	1	2
\$6,000. - \$6,999.	3	0	4	7
\$7,000. - \$9,999.	5	6	8	19
\$10,000. - \$14,999.	3	9	4	16
\$15,000. - \$24,999.	4	6	5	15
\$25,000. & Over	0	1	1	2

quantification of the scaler ratings enables the data to be statistically analyzed.

A graphic presentation of the data was achieved by averaging the ratings for each adjective pair scale. The means were then plotted across the scales presenting a "profile" of the ratings for the groups and/or concepts. This "profile" is a graphic picture of the ratings obtained in the study. A subjective comparison may be made by observation. By inspection one can determine where the differences or similarities occur. However, the significance of the differences can only be obtained by subjecting the data to appropriate statistical analysis.

The statistical method used in this study is the analysis of variance. The question of whether or not two or more groups are alike or different with respect to certain variables can be answered by the use of the analysis of variance technique. In this study, it is necessary to determine if a measurement of central tendency, the mean, for a given group or concept differs significantly from that same measurement for another group or concept. The use of the analysis of variance method requires the following assumptions: (1) that the variable to be analyzed is normally distributed within classes and (2) that the variable is quantitative. "This would be the case for I.Q., age, achievement, attitude, weight and height."<sup>1</sup> The .05 level of significance was chosen as the appropriate level for this study.

### The Test of the Hypotheses

All hypotheses are stated in the null form. The hypotheses have been subjected to one-way analysis of variance in order to determine the existence of significant differences between groups and/or concepts. If the statistical measure, in this case the F-ratio or variance ratio, indicated that a significant difference was obtained, then the data was inspected to determine precisely what factors contributed to this difference. If the F-ratio indicated that a difference was not significant, the particular hypothesis being tested was accepted.

### The Hypotheses

#### I.

It is hypothesized that there is no significant difference among consumer attitudes toward each of the individual mortuaries studied.

The Albuquerque area is not typical of the rest of the country with respect to the number and types of funeral homes. The Albuquerque mortuaries can be placed into two categories. Lacking better classification terms, one must resort to the colloquial "anglo" and "Spanish" designations. Although the classifications are not, strictly speaking, mutually exclusive, they are reasonably descriptive. Some overlap in trade does occur. Under the above classification, there are three "anglo" firms and four "Spanish" firms. The "anglo" firms arrange approximately seventy-one percent of the funerals in the Albuquerque area. Another characteristic difference that should be noted is the fact that the smallest "anglo" firm conducts about two hundred eighty

services a year whereas the largest "Spanish" firm conducts about two hundred seventy services. The smallest "Spanish" mortuary conducted seventy-four services last year. According to the N.F.D.A., the average number of services conducted by a firm in the mountain states region was one hundred eighty-two for the year 1968. The mountain states region includes Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, Nevada, Utah, Colorado, Arizona and New Mexico.

A statistical picture of the mountain states region is presented in table no. 2. The figures indicate that the "Spanish" firms in Albuquerque range from the lowest category to the next to the highest in terms of the number of services conducted per year. The other two "anglo" firms conduct over three hundred services per year. Thus the "anglo" firms are concentrated at the upper levels with respect to the number of services conducted per year. This study deals solely with the "anglo" firms as the "Spanish" funeral homes chose not to participate in this research effort.

When compared with other urban areas in the mountain states, Albuquerque has fewer funeral homes per capita. As was noted earlier, there are seven mortuaries in the Albuquerque area. The Phoenix area has over fifty funeral homes and is only two and one-half to three times the size of Albuquerque. Tucson, which is approximately the same size, has eleven. Salt Lake City, also approximately the same size as Albuquerque, has twenty-two. Denver, again two and one-half to three times the size of Albuquerque, has thirty-six establishments, some of which have multiple facilities. Billings, Montana, about one-fifth the size of Albuquerque, has five mortuaries. Las

TABLE 2

## MOUNTAIN STATES REGION

(Statistics)

Group	No. of Services Per Year	Average No. of Services Per Group	Percentage of Total Sample
1	1 - 99	67	36%
2	100 - 199	149	37%
3	200 - 299	252	10%
4	300 & Over	459	17%

Vegas, Nevada, which is less than one-half the size of Albuquerque, also has five funeral homes.

Each of the three "anglo" mortuaries is relatively large. They have equally modern facilities. Their funeral chapels are spacious and attractive. All of their personnel are well trained and competent. They offer a wide variety of services and are very flexible in their ability to meet the desires of the consumer. Because they perform the same service function for the community and they are quite similar, it is hypothesized that the consumer attitudes toward each of them are also quite similar.

The profile of ratings, figure no. 1, suggests that there exists little difference among the three consumer groups in their ratings of the "familiar" mortuaries. Table no. 3 indicates the very slight differences that do exist are not statistically significant. Therefore, the hypothesis that there are no significant differences among consumer attitudes toward each of the individual mortuaries is supported by the available data.

## II.

It is hypothesized that a client's attitudes toward an "ideal" mortuary do not differ significantly from his attitudes toward the actual mortuary with which he is most familiar.

As was noted in Chapter II, the use of an "ideal" before a concept provides the respondent with a frame of reference which aids him in making careful discriminations in subsequent ratings. The ideal concept thus becomes an anchoring device for the rater. The existing mortuary is then rated against this ideal.

FIGURE 1

## THE MORTUARY WITH WHICH YOU ARE MOST FAMILIAR

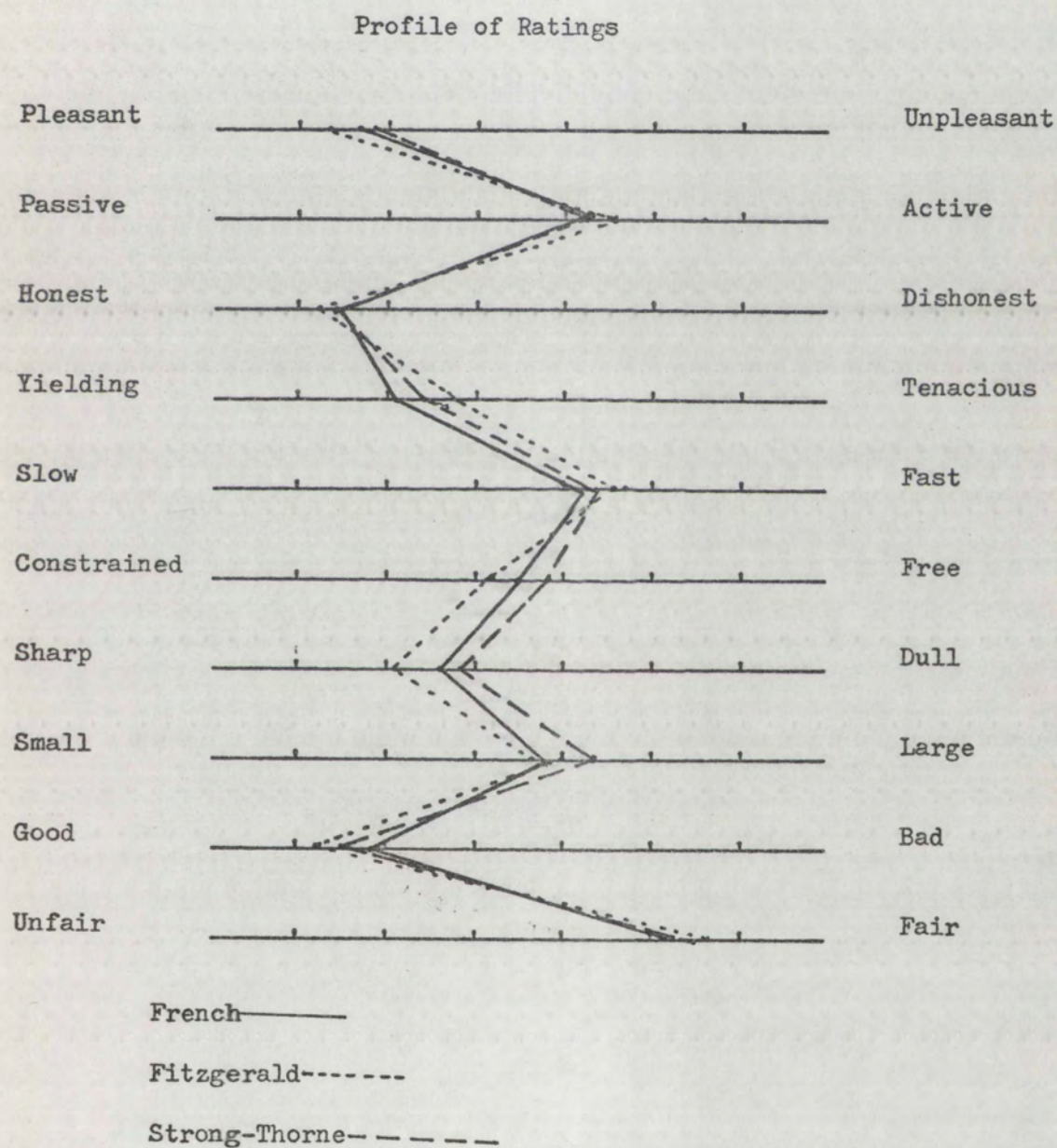




TABLE 3

## CONSUMER GROUP RATINGS FOR THE CONCEPT

## THE MORTUARY WITH WHICH YOU ARE MOST FAMILIAR

Mortuary	#1	#2	#3	
Sample Size	30	30	30	
Scale		Mean		F-ratio
Pleasant - Unpleasant	1.47	1.37	1.67	0.54
Honest - Dishonest	1.30	1.17	1.30	0.28
Good - Bad	1.73	1.23	1.43	1.15
Fair - Unfair	1.53	1.37	1.50	0.14
Active - Passive	2.70	2.43	2.70	0.27
Fast - Slow	2.63	2.43	2.53	0.13
Yielding - Tenacious	2.03	2.70	2.40	1.64
Free - Constrained	3.60	3.83	3.17	1.19
Large - Small	3.23	3.27	2.73	1.02

A comparison was made among consumer groups on how they rated the ideal mortuary. Figure no. 2 suggests that the ratings were quite similar. Table no. 4 shows that there are no significant differences among consumer groups in their rating of the ideal mortuary. Thus it was concluded that the groups' judgments concerning an ideal mortuary are comparable.

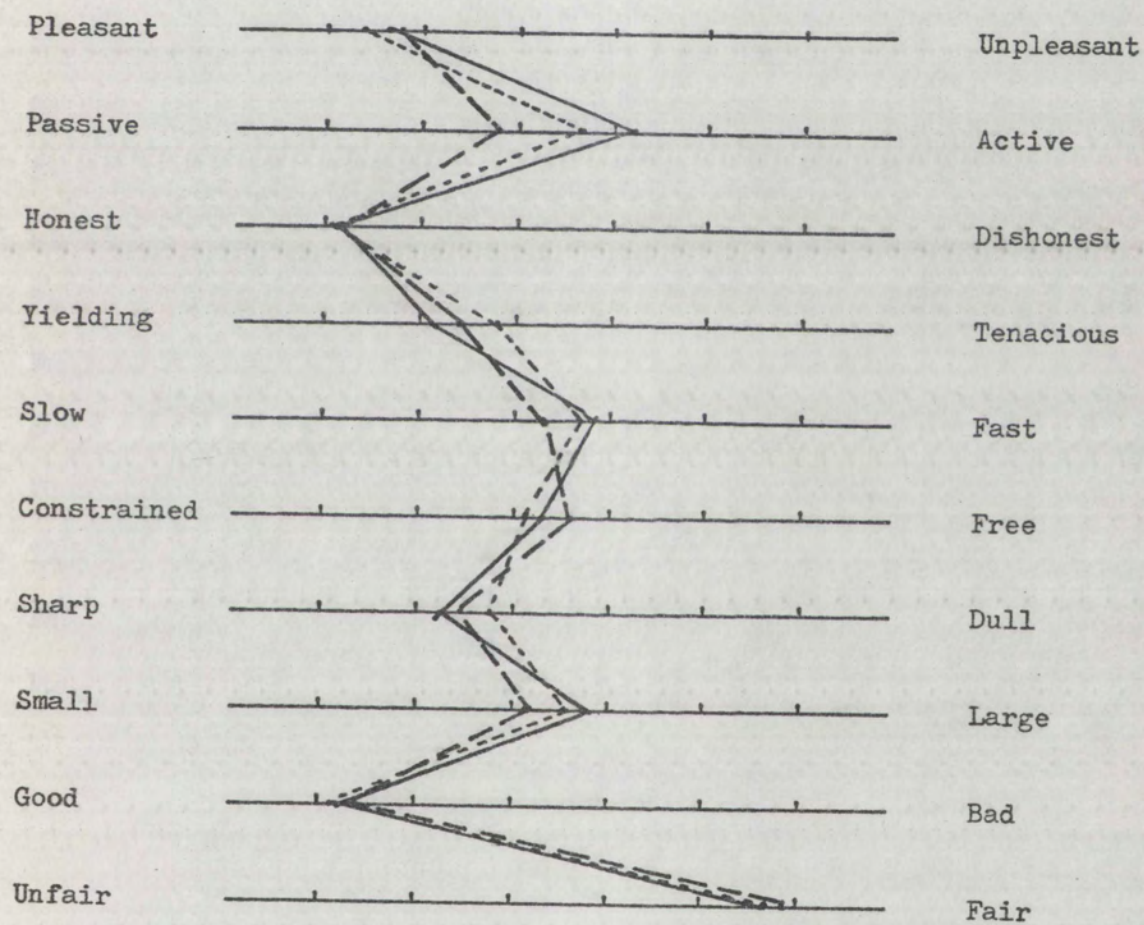
Table no. 5 indicates that there is a significant difference between the ideal and actual ratings on four of the ten scales. Two of the scales, active-passive and slow-fast, are concerned with the activity dimension. The honest-dishonest scale is concerned with the evaluative dimension, and the small-large scale with the potency dimension. Thus all three dimensions are represented in the results. (Although the .05 level of significance was considered appropriate for this research, it should be pointed out that two of the four differences are significant beyond the .01 level.) Figure no. 3 presents a graphic picture of these findings.

The actual or familiar mortuary is judged by the consumer as departing from the ideal on four of the ten scales. The actual mortuary is appraised as being less honest and larger than the "ideal" mortuary. The actual mortuary is considered more dynamic than the "ideal" mortuary. Both the active-passive scale and the slow-fast scale represent the activity dimension. The "ideal" mortuary is slower and less active than the actual mortuary. The "ideal" mortuary is also smaller and more honest than the actual mortuary. Thus, size, honesty and activity are important considerations in consumer attitudes toward a mortuary.

FIGURE 2

## AN "IDEAL" MORTUARY

## Profile of Ratings



French———

Fitzgerald-----

Strong-Thorne- - - - -

TABLE 4

## CONSUMER GROUP RATINGS FOR THE CONCEPT

## AN "IDEAL" MORTUARY

Mortuary	#1	#2	#3	
Sample Size	30	30	30	
Scale		Mean		F-ratio
Pleasant - Unpleasant	1.53	1.43	1.67	0.30
Honest - Dishonest	1.07	1.03	1.10	0.38
Good - Bad	1.27	1.17	1.33	2.17
Fair - Unfair	1.53	1.17	1.03	2.17
Active - Passive	2.93	3.30	3.37	0.49
Fast - Slow	3.20	3.33	3.60	0.43
Yielding - Tenacious	2.17	2.73	2.37	1.40
Free - Constrained	3.53	3.93	3.53	0.50
Large - Small	3.60	3.63	3.90	0.36

TABLE 5

TOTAL CONSUMER GROUP RATINGS FOR AN "IDEAL"  
MORTUARY AND THE MORTUARY WITH WHICH YOU  
ARE MOST FAMILIAR

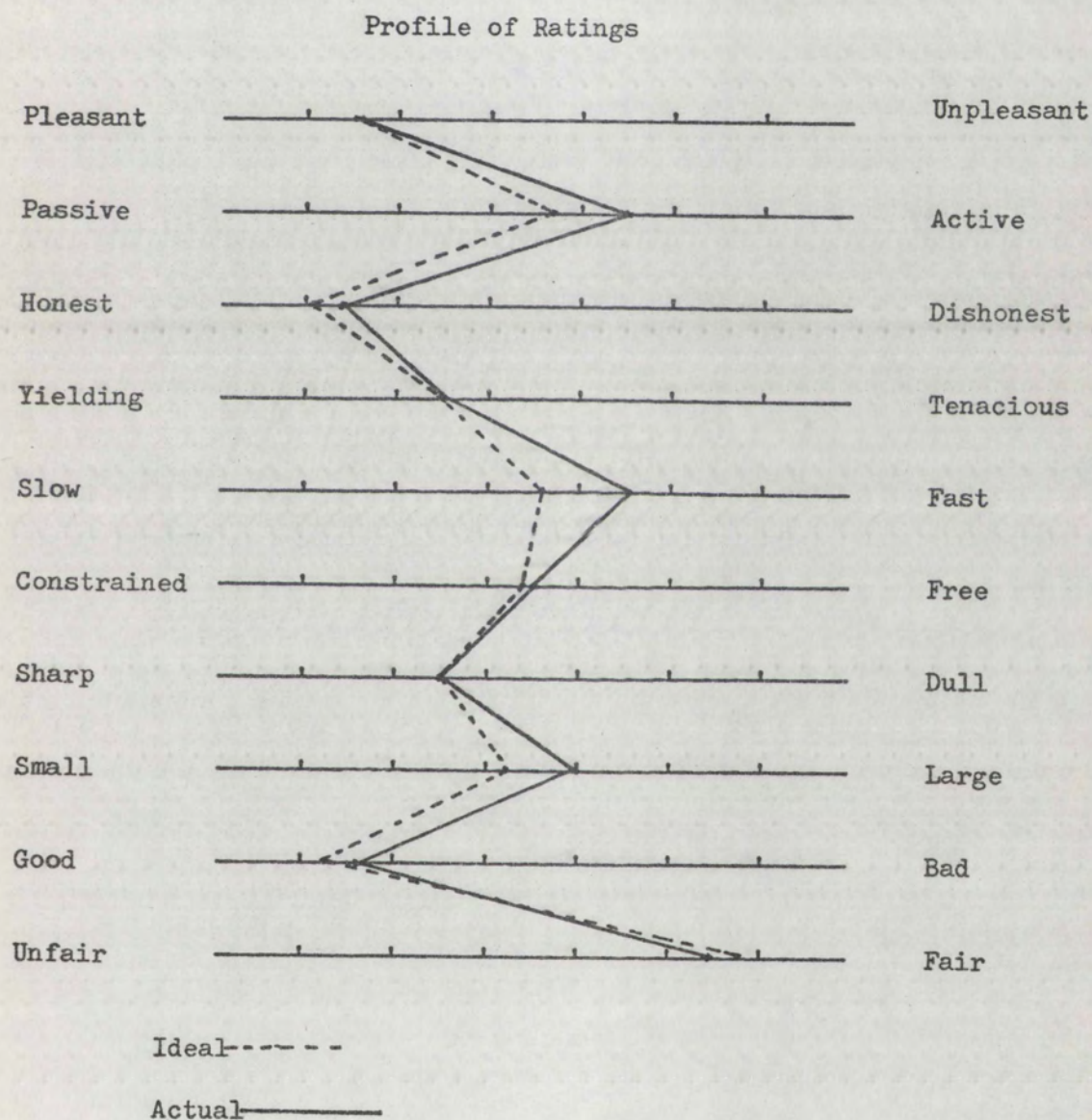
Concept	"Ideal" Mortuary	Familiar Mortuary	
Sample Size	90	90	
Scale		Mean	F-ratio
Pleasant - Unpleasant	1.54	1.50	0.06
Honest - Dishonest	1.07	1.26	4.55*
Good - Bad	1.26	1.47	1.90
Fair - Unfair	1.24	1.47	1.77
Active - Passive	3.2	2.6	5.32*
Fast - Slow	3.38	2.53	12.81**
Yielding - Tenacious	2.42	2.38	0.04
Free - Constrained	3.67	3.53	0.26
Large - Small	3.71	3.01	7.49*

\* - Indicates significance beyond the .05 level

\*\* - Indicates significance beyond the .01 level

FIGURE 3

"IDEAL" VS. FAMILIAR MORTUARY (Total Sample)



In making arrangements for a funeral, the aggrieved is often under considerable emotional stress and tension. The funeral director, in dealing with the consumer, may operate at a pace that is uncomfortably active relative to the emotions of the situation. The consumer may feel he is being pushed into a position over which he does not have any real control. The details of a funeral arrangement are seldom worked out in advance of the immediate need. This is to say the business of a funeral is seldom negotiated until it is suddenly needed rather than ahead of time. The aggrieved must function under time pressure, and at the same time he must assume the role of negotiator or bargainer because he is required to make a purchase determination on the spot. The roles of the aggrieved on the one hand and of a negotiator on the other may be incompatible. The situation may be further aggravated if the consumer feels that his choice of alternatives is too limited. Once he makes a decision to use the services of a particular mortuary, he is automatically locked in by that decision. His alternatives are limited to that particular funeral home. There is nothing to be done in terms of shopping around once the choice of mortuary has been made. The data also indicates that the consumer views the size, that is largeness, of the funeral establishment as a negative factor. The consumer may desire additional attention as well as more personal attention than is possible for a large organization to give. Because of these considerations, the consumer may believe that the treatment he receives is less than ideally honest.

It must be noted here that for the total consumer group the familiar mortuary measures up to the "ideal" on the other six scales. This

indicates that the actual mortuary does not deviate from the "ideal" on all measures, but only in certain areas. However, the significant differences that do exist should lead us to reject hypothesis no. II that there are no significant differences between an "ideal" mortuary and the familiar funeral home as rated by a representative sample of consumer clientele.

### Sociological Data Analysis

As was noted in Chapter II, a further analysis of the data using the additional classification provided by the fact sheet (see table no. 1) was deemed appropriate. The classifications allowed for comparisons based upon sex, age, religion, church attendance and annual family income. Statistical analysis of the data based on the sociological classifications showed that with the exception of age there were no significant differences among groups in the rating of the "ideal" and familiar mortuary. The differences which were found to exist when the data was analyzed by age grouping involved two scales. Ratings on the yielding-tenacious scale and the fair-unfair scale were significantly different (see table no. 6). The differences in the yielding-tenacious scale evaluations occurred in rating the "ideal" mortuary, whereas the difference on the fair-unfair scale occurred in rating the familiar mortuary. The twenty-one to twenty-nine age group judged the "ideal" mortuary as being much less yielding than did those over sixty-five. The other age groups were about in the middle of these two extremes. The thirty to thirty-nine age group judged the familiar mortuary to be less fair than did the other age groups. It should be noted that these



TABLE 6

## RATINGS ON THE YIELDING-TENACIOUS AND FAIR-UNFAIR SCALES

Concept: An "Ideal" Mortuary

Independent Variable: Age

Scale: Yielding - Tenacious

	Mean	F-ratio
Under 21		2.88*
21 - 29	3.67	
30 - 39	2.78	
40 - 49	2.46	
50 - 59	2.50	2.
60 - 64	3.29	
65 and Over	1.67	

Concept: The Mortuary With Which You Are Most Familiar

Independent Variable: Age

Scale: Fair - Unfair

	Mean	F-ratio
Under 21	1.	2.89*
21 - 29	1.33	
30 - 39	2.78	
40 - 49	1.59	
50 - 59	1.32	
60 - 64	1.29	
65 and Over	1.05	

\* - Indicates significance beyond the .05 level

differences were significant on only two of the twenty scaler ratings. Since age was not a significant factor on any of the eighteen other scaler ratings, it is unclear as to what the two significant differences actually indicate.

#### Other Factors

Included on the information sheet were two open-ended questions. The first question involved the factors which influenced the respondent to call a particular mortuary. This question was included in the study at the request of the participating mortuaries. Morticians generally do not have access to this information and believed that it would be useful.

The responses resulted in thirteen categorical classifications, one of which is a conglomerate of miscellaneous reasons, and another is a no-response category. Some of those questioned gave more than one reason; thus the total of ninety-seven responses exceeds the total number of interviews. Approximately thirty percent of the responses indicated that personal friendship or an acquaintanceship with the owner or a staff member was an influencing factor in selecting a particular mortuary. Recommendations by others and the location of the mortuary also were frequently cited reasons. Table no. 7 presents these categories and responses.

The second open-ended question had to do with the client's judgment of the services rendered by the funeral home. The consumer was asked how he felt about the over-all service. Table no. 8 lists the six categories that were represented by the responses. Seventy-

TABLE 7

## FACTORS INFLUENCING CALL TO A PARTICULAR MORTUARY

Factors	Mortuary			Total
	#1	#2	#3	
Recommendation by Others	3	5	3	10
Personal Friendship	4	6	1	11
Family Tradition	4	-	4	8
Used Previously	5	1	3	9
Convenient Location	2	6	4	12
Club Affiliation	-	1	2	3
Reputation	-	1	2	3
Religious Affiliation	-	1	1	2
Requested by Deceased	3	1	2	6
Acquaintance with Owner	5	9	4	18
Attended Services There	3	2	1	6
Miscellaneous	2	1	1	4
No Reason Given	1	-	3	4

TABLE 8

SUMMARY OF GENERAL IMPRESSIONS  
ABOUT OVERALL SERVICE

Impressions	Mortuary			Total
	#1	#2	#3	
Excellent	6	10	9	25
Very Good	13	11	8	32
Good	3	6	9	18
Average	7	3	3	13
Poor	-	-	-	-
Unsatisfactory	1	-	1	2

five of the respondents agreed that the services provided by the mortuary were good-to-excellent. Only two of the respondents judged the services to be unsatisfactory. As was noted earlier, the responses on the evaluative dimension of the semantic differential (figure no. 1) were in a positive direction. The responses to the second open-ended question support the positive responses on the semantic differential evaluative dimension which indicates that the consumer has a positive attitude toward the funeral homes in this study.

## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>James G. Cooper, Basic Statistical Analysis for Educational Research (Copyright 1966), p. 17.

#### IV SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

##### Summary

This research effort was concerned with the measurement of consumer attitudes toward three mortuaries in the Albuquerque area. An identification and measurement of customer attitudes was undertaken by use of the semantic differential. It was the primary measuring device. The sample consisted of ninety persons who had used the professional services of one of the three mortuaries during the period October 1, 1966 to October 1, 1967.

The definition of attitude as it was used in this study was as follows: an attitude is a predisposition of an individual to evaluate some symbol, object or aspect of his world in a favorable or unfavorable manner. The semantic differential in this study contained ten adjective pair rating scales. There were two concepts to be rated: an "ideal" mortuary and the mortuary with which the subject was most familiar. The initial grouping of the responses was by mortuary. A statistical analysis on this data was performed; then the data was grouped with respect to the sociological information obtained on the fact sheet of the questionnaire. The statistical analysis involved a measure of central tendency. In this particular study the mean provides the basis for scalar comparisons. Statistical comparisons of identical scales were made, and, in each case, it was noted which one of the three basic factors the individual scale represented. The basic factors as assessed by the semantic differential are the Evaluative, the Activity and the Potency factors. The factors used in this study were previously

verified by Charles Osgood and his associates in a large number of studies.<sup>1</sup> A single response on a semantic differential scale yields two essential characteristics of attitudinal response, intensity and direction.

### Limitations

The implicit purpose of all research designs is to impose controlled restrictions on observations of natural phenomena.<sup>2</sup> The research design indicates what the investigator should or should not do. If a research design is poorly conceived, the results obtained using that design will be of little or no value. Therefore, a carefully devised research design is of primary importance if the results of a study are to receive serious scientific attention. However, it should be recognized that almost no research design is without some limitations.

The results obtained from this study should not lead to generalizations with respect to mortuaries outside the Albuquerque area. As was noted in Chapter III, the funeral homes in this study may not even be representative of the Rocky Mountain Region. Also one cannot accept the findings as being representative of the other Albuquerque mortuaries not included in the study because of the cultural and other differences previously considered.

Sampling error was reduced as much as possible by a random selection of the sample. A random sample is a "finite subset of observational units drawn from a population by a chance process. It is presumed that on each draw all units in the population have had an equal chance of being selected for the subset."<sup>3</sup> The total sample of ninety persons



represents about 11.5% of the total universe considered. An analysis of the data was conducted to determine if the sample size was adequate. The least significant difference was determined for the ten scaler ratings of the "ideal" vs. the familiar mortuary. The least significant difference is that material difference which must exist between ratings if that difference is to be declared significant. As can be seen from table no. 9, the range is from .30 units for the good-bad scale to .56 units for the yielding-tenacious scale. This indicates that the sample size is large enough so that a material difference of .57 scaler positions will be determined significant on the least sensitive of our rating scales. Thus, the sample size is adequate for insuring a highly sensitive study in terms of scaler ratings.

There is a limitation to be considered in the actual responses made by those questioned. A serious problem in consumer surveys is identifying response error. Individuals may give an incorrect response deliberately or simply because of a lack of understanding. In a research effort of this nature, it is impossible to control for deliberate deception. However, adequately trained interviewers can reduce error resulting from misunderstanding.

Researchers using the semantic differential have been cautioned about a central tendency response. The respondents in this study did not demonstrate this tendency. There was also little or no indication of a stereotyped response. However, there was one example of one-sided rating, that is marking all the scales on one side of the page.

The interviewer must be considered as another source of error or bias. To reduce this possibility, there are two courses of action which

TABLE 9

## IDEAL VS. FAMILIAR MORTUARY

Scale	Least Significant Difference
Pleasant - Unpleasant	.33
Active - Passive	.51
Honest - Dishonest	.55
Yielding - Tenacious	.56
Fast - Slow	.47
Free - Constrained	.51
Sharp - Dull	.41
Large - Small	.46
Good - Bad	.30
Fair - Unfair	.33

should be taken. The interviewers must be adequately trained, as they were in this study (note previous discussion, Chapter II, page 23). And, as was done in this study also, the interview schedule can be structured or standardized. Although there was every attempt to eliminate all possible bias on the interviewer's part, it is only reasonable to conclude that some still existed.

### Conclusions

The findings of this study indicate that the consumer attitudes toward the participating mortuaries were generally positive. The two most pronounced deviations from the "ideal" as it was perceived by the consumer were concerned with the size of the establishment and the speed with which business was being conducted. The data suggests that the consumer would have preferred a slower pace and a smaller establishment. The managements of the participating mortuaries may want to take a look at their operating policies and procedures to determine if they can be modified to further satisfy the consumer. As was noted previously, the time press and the role conflict pose some real problems for the funeral director. This research effort is only the first step in the identification of consumer attitude toward the participating mortuaries. The specific "whys" behind the attitudes can only be reached through more intensive research. In-depth interviews and the use of projective techniques may probe more deeply into the problem areas identified by the semantic differential.

This study presents a new approach for identifying and analyzing user attitudes toward the funeral industry on a localized basis. The

findings cannot be generalized to the industry as a whole, but indicate local conditions within a predefined universe. It would seem appropriate to use the semantic differential in conducting additional studies to identify and examine consumer attitudes.

## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Fred N. Kerlinger, Foundations of Behavioral Research (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, Inc., 1964), p. 301.

<sup>2</sup>Arthur E. Mace, Sample - Size Determination (New York: Rinehold Publishing Corporation, 1964), p. 2.

THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO

SCHOOL OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

Albuquerque, New Mexico 87131

Mrs.

Carol H. E.

Albuquerque, New Mexico 87131

Dear Mrs. E:

APPENDIX I

SAMPLE OF INTRODUCTORY LETTER

MAILED TO SELECTED PARTICIPANTS

Our present study requires your participation

in this study because you are a member of the

you arranged for a hospital service during

period from October 1, 1966 to October 31, 1966.

Good position to express your interest in this study.

In a very few days a research assistant will contact you

appointment at your convenience. He will explain the

During this brief period, he will explain the study to you

simply by completing a short questionnaire.

In this study it is not necessary for you to

individually identified in any way. Your responses will

types, intermingled with a great many other responses.

Your voluntary and helpful cooperation is appreciated.

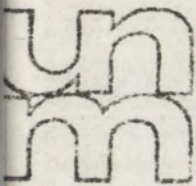
Sincerely yours,

Paul A. Snyer, Jr.

Special Study Director

255-6461

PAS:pd



THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO | ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO 87106  
B U R E A U O F B U S I N E S S R E S E A R C H

505 277-2216

Institute for Social Research and Development

February 19, 1969

Mrs.

Caqua N. E.

Albuquerque, New Mexico 87110

Dear Mrs.

Research in the field of business is an important function of the University of New Mexico, through the School of Business and Administrative Sciences and the Bureau of Business Research. This type of research favorably affects the economies of Albuquerque and New Mexico.

Our present study concerns mortuaries, and you are being asked to participate in this study because, according to the records of a participating mortuary, you arranged for a funeral service or were responsible for one during the period from October 1, 1966 to October 1, 1967. Therefore, you are in a good position to express your opinion about funeral service in Albuquerque.

In a very few days a research assistant will telephone you to arrange for an appointment, at your convenience, for not more than 20 minutes of your time. During this brief period, he will ask you to participate in our opinion survey simply by completing a short questionnaire.

In this study it is not necessary, nor even desirable, that your opinions be individually identified in any way. Your responses will be completely anonymous, intermingled with a great many others.

Your voluntary and helpful cooperation in this study will be deeply appreciated.

Sincerely yours,

Paul A. Smyer, Jr.  
Special Study Director  
255-6481

PAS:cgd

APPENDIX II  
EXAMPLE OF INTERVIEWER'S  
LETTER OF INTRODUCTION





THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO | ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO 87106

COLLEGE OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

This letter introduces Mr. Newman Peery and identifies him as a research assistant engaged in a special study concerning mortuaries, a study of which you have already been informed.

As a further means of identification, Mr. Peery is to present his University of New Mexico Identification Card for your examination.

If you desire further verification of Mr. Peery's identity, or if he is unable to answer any question you may have concerning this study, please, feel free to call the Special Study Director, Mr. Paul A. Smyer, Jr. at 255-6481.

This letter is to be void and have no effect on and after April 1, 1969.

Your helpful cooperation in this study is deeply appreciated!

Sincerely yours,

Paul A. Smyer, Jr.  
Special Study Director

APPENDIX III  
THE QUESTIONNAIRE  
MULTIPLE CHOICE CARDS

## INTRODUCTION TO QUESTIONNAIRE

The first page of this questionnaire is a simple information sheet. The items on this page are strictly for classification and analytical purposes. Please, answer these questions as accurately as possible. We are not interested in identifying anyone by name, and individual responses will remain anonymous.

## INFORMATION SHEET

Your sex:                                      Male: \_\_\_\_\_                                      Female: \_\_\_\_\_

(Recorded by interviewer)

Your age: (Show Card A)

1. \_\_\_\_\_ 2. \_\_\_\_\_ 3. \_\_\_\_\_ 4. \_\_\_\_\_ 5. \_\_\_\_\_ 6. \_\_\_\_\_ 7. \_\_\_\_\_

Your annual family income: (Show Card B)

1. \_\_\_\_\_ 2. \_\_\_\_\_ 3. \_\_\_\_\_ 4. \_\_\_\_\_ 5. \_\_\_\_\_ 6. \_\_\_\_\_  
7. \_\_\_\_\_ 8. \_\_\_\_\_

Your religion: (Show Card C)

1. \_\_\_\_\_ 2. \_\_\_\_\_ 3. \_\_\_\_\_ 4. \_\_\_\_\_ 5. \_\_\_\_\_ 6. \_\_\_\_\_  
7. \_\_\_\_\_ 8. \_\_\_\_\_ 9. \_\_\_\_\_ 10. \_\_\_\_\_

Church attendance: (Show Card D)

1. \_\_\_\_\_ 2. \_\_\_\_\_ 3. \_\_\_\_\_ 4. \_\_\_\_\_ 5. \_\_\_\_\_

How long have you lived in Albuquerque?

What factors influenced you to call this particular mortuary?

How did you feel about the overall service?

## INSTRUCTIONS

The following pages consist of an opinion questionnaire. There are no right nor wrong answers. We are interested only in your opinion or how you feel. You are asked to rate two concepts, or thoughts, on ten different scales. The scales consist of two adjectives opposite in meaning with seven intervals between them. The position you indicate on each scale reflects how you feel about the main thought with reference to these two opposite-meaning words. For example, if you were asked to rate three words -- ROCKET, BICYCLE, and TURTLE -- on a "FAST-SLOW" scale, you might place an "X" much closer to the "FAST" position for ROCKET, somewhat closer to the "SLOW" position for BICYCLE, and an "X" quite close to the "SLOW" position for TURTLE. Rate your feelings on the scales below.

ROCKET

FAST \_\_\_\_\_ SLOW

BICYCLE

FAST \_\_\_\_\_ SLOW

TURTLE

FAST \_\_\_\_\_ SLOW

Please, rate each concept on every scale, proceeding rapidly through the ratings, not thinking of those you have already rated nor of those yet to be rated.

Do you have any questions?

## AN "IDEAL" MORTUARY

PLEASANT	_____	UNPLEASANT
PASSIVE	_____	ACTIVE
HONEST	_____	DISHONEST
YIELDING	_____	TENACIOUS
SLOW	_____	FAST
CONSTRAINED	_____	FREE
SHARP	_____	DULL
SMALL	_____	LARGE
GOOD	_____	BAD
UNFAIR	_____	FAIR

## THE MORTUARY WITH WHICH YOU ARE MOST FAMILIAR

PLEASANT \_\_\_\_\_ UNPLEASANT

UNFAIR \_\_\_\_\_ FAIR

HONEST \_\_\_\_\_ DISHONEST

YIELDING \_\_\_\_\_ TENACIOUS

FAST \_\_\_\_\_ SLOW

CONSTRAINED \_\_\_\_\_ FREE

SHARP \_\_\_\_\_ DULL

LARGE \_\_\_\_\_ SMALL

PASSIVE \_\_\_\_\_ ACTIVE

GOOD \_\_\_\_\_ BAD

## CARD A

1. UNDER 21 YEARS.
2. 21 -- 29 YEARS.
3. 30 -- 39 YEARS.
4. 40 -- 49 YEARS.
5. 50 -- 59 YEARS.
6. 60 -- 64 YEARS.
7. 65 YEARS AND OVER.

## CARD B

1. \$0 -- \$2,999.
2. \$3,000. -- \$4,999.
3. \$5,000. -- \$5,999.
4. \$6,000. -- \$6,999.
5. \$7,000. -- \$9,999.
6. \$10,000. -- \$14,999.
7. \$15,000. -- \$24,999.
8. \$25,000. AND OVER.



## CARD C

1. BAPTIST.
2. EPISCOPALIAN.
3. LUTHERAN.
4. METHODIST.
5. PRESBYTERIAN.
6. OTHER PROTESTANT.
7. ROMAN CATHOLIC.
8. JEWISH.
9. OTHER RELIGION.
10. NO RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION.

## CARD D

1. NEVER.
2. OCCASIONALLY.
3. FAIRLY OFTEN.
4. OFTEN.
5. EVERY WEEK.

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