

Attitude Uniformity and Role in a Voluntary Organization

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A NUMBER of years ago F. H. Allport (1934) illustrated an approach to the objectification and measurement of institutional behavior. In the years since Allport's first J-curve measurements, social psychologists have become increasingly concerned with the dynamics of conformity in social settings. Group and organizational life are premised on certain uniformities of attitude, value, and behavior. These are the very 'groupness' of a group, according to Sherif and Sherif (1956). Uniformities help to preserve the group; and the group in turn, or rather its importance to members, provides the basis for members' implicit or explicit insistence on uniformity (Allport, 1962).

This paper is concerned with attitudinal uniformities among members in 104 local League of Women Voters' organizations. We focus here on the degree to which these uniformities manifest themselves among members playing three types of role: (a) Officers, including the president and the board of directors; (b) Actives, including minor leaders, such as committee chairmen and discussion leaders, as well as non-leaders who are frequent meeting-attenders; and (c) Inactives, consisting primarily of members who attend meetings rarely or not at all. We predict uniformities to be a function of these roles, with greatest uniformities occurring among the Officers, and least among the Inactives.²

A number of studies have been conducted in organizations and in laboratory groups concerning aspects of the above roles and conformity, but these studies are not entirely consistent in their conclusions. The relevant research and theories can be grouped under three headings broadly defined: Status; Cohesiveness—Potency of Involvement; and Activity. We assume that these characteristics are highly related in voluntary organizations.

Status

Homans has proposed the hypothesis that 'the higher the rank of a person within a group, the more nearly his activities conform to the norms of the group' (1950, p. 141). Although Homans did not test this hypothesis methodically, he saw evidence for it in the results of the Hawthorne studies. Since then the Merei (1949) research and several other studies have been cited as providing some evidence for the special pressures on leaders to conform to group norms and of the resulting

1. This article is part of a program of research on organizations conducted under a grant from the Carnegie Corporation of New York to the Survey Research Center, Institute for Social Research, University of Michigan. The authors are indebted to a number of colleagues for their helpful criticisms of an earlier draft and for their suggestions which are incorporated in this one: Frank Andrews, John R. P. French, Jr., Robert L. Kahn, Martin Patchen, and Clagett G. Smith.

2. We define role in terms of the predictable and unique things members do, or the functions they perform. Although the differences between some Actives and Inactives may be a matter of degree (e.g. some Actives attend only a few more meetings than some Inactives), in general the distinctions between Inactives, Actives, and Officers are sufficiently clear to justify their being defined as separate role categories.

tendency for leaders to be more conformant than rank-and-file members. On the other hand, Dittes and Kelley (1956) have suggested that conformity, particularly relative to publicly expressed views, may be a function of *low* status. Hollander (1958), in reviewing some of the research on this subject, makes a special point of the developmental aspects of leadership and conformity in groups. At early stages, conformity by a member may be instrumental in gaining status (e.g. leadership or hierarchical rank). Having achieved status, however, the member may then be free to behave more idiosyncratically. Hence Officers (and Actives to a lesser extent) may sometimes exercise their prerogative to act deviantly, spending, in this way, what Hollander calls their 'idiosyncrasy credit'. Blau (1960), in a study of deviancy in social work agencies, propounds a similar view.³

Cohesiveness—Potency of Involvement

A number of studies have been concerned with the effects of cohesiveness and related variables on uniformity. Festinger (1950) suggests that a member's attraction to the group will have a positive influence upon his tendencies to communicate with other members, to conform to group demands for opinion change, and to reject non-conformers. Essentially, the same predictions may be derived from balance theory (Cartwright and Harary, 1956; Newcomb, 1953, 1959). In the process of seeking balance and avoiding imbalance, individuals who are positively oriented toward a group will tend to be attracted to each other; and, alternatively, members attracted to each other will tend to develop similar orientations toward relevant objects (such as the group). Basically, the processes implied by these models involve a number of interrelated variables which, in concert, lead to uniformity: attraction to the group, interaction-communication, and the tendency to send and receive influence or 'pressure'.⁴

Allport has proposed *potency of involvement* as the equivalent of cohesiveness in his event-structure theory. Allport's measurement of 'involvement', which we have adopted in this research, is designed to represent 'the individual's "net investment" in, or tendency to maintain, the *collective structure* concerned' (Allport, 1962, p. 29). The event-structure prediction is that individuals high on this variable would manifest in their behavior high total 'effort for consonance' in the collective structure (Allport, 1962, p. 29). Uniformities on 'relevant' attitudes should result.

Activity

Activity is a third major dimension which appears to be related to uniformity within organizations. March (1954) found some support for his hypothesis that

3. Blau suggests that this tendency may be more prevalent in some groups than in others. In groups where members have relatively little free choice as to membership (such as some work groups), this tendency might be important. The low-status member has to conform to be accepted. In groups where members are relatively free to belong or to leave, such as neighborhoods (or voluntary organizations), the low-status member does not have to conform. He can quit.

4. For support of the Festinger hypotheses see Festinger, Schachter, and Back (1950); Back (1951); Schachter (1951). Some of this research has been done in field settings but almost none in organizations. An exception is Seashore's (1954) study of work groups. For another model under the cohesiveness heading, which leads to the same prediction, see French (1956). French employs graph theory in a formal model of social power. The 'disconnected' and 'weakly connected' graphs describe social relations among Inactives in an organization while the 'strongly connected' and 'complete' graphs more nearly describe relations among Actives and Officers.

'the more active members of an organization will tend to exhibit a higher degree of conformity to group norms than will the less active members'. Tannenbaum and Kahn (1958), in a study of four local unions, found that union Actives were more uniform (i.e. lower in variance) than Inactives in certain of their relevant views and behaviors. These studies in organizations are the most direct antecedents of the present research. However, March's study was based on a single group, and Tannenbaum and Kahn were limited to four unions. The present research affords an opportunity to investigate the hypothesis in a relatively large number of organizational units, and it extends the hypothesis to a consideration of Officers as a separate category.

The literature to which we have just referred is concerned in part with group norms; and we believe the present research is pertinent to this issue. However, a distinction is necessary in order to clarify what we are doing here:

A specific organizational norm may be defined in either of two ways, formally or operationally. The former implies an official position for the organization which is recognizable through formal statements or official documents, or it is inferred from knowledge about organizational policy. A norm, defined in this way, represents an official ideal. The researcher knows this ideal in advance and measures the degree to which members' behaviors conform to it.

The second approach makes no assumptions about what the norm should be. It measures members' attitudes along a relevant dimension and infers from observed uniformities the degree to which a norm is manifest. Norms of this kind may represent ideals too, but they are not necessarily *official* ideals; they are the ideals expressed by members. This approach implies that there may be as many norms along a given dimension as there are categories of members that the researcher chooses to define. Whether or not norms do in fact exist for these groups or, more exactly, to what degree norms are manifest, is an empirical question. One might therefore want to leave open the possibility that officers as one group conform to one norm position, while members as a second group conform to another. Then the question arises as to how much these persons conform to the norms of their respective subgroups. We think that this is a meaningful approach to the study of norms in organizations and have premised our research on this conception.

We shall therefore look separately within each of the three subgroups that we have defined and ascertain the degree to which uniformities occur around whatever the mean position for the respective groups may be. This avoids one problem which is implicit in some of the research and thinking on norm formation in groups. If officers are compared with members in their conformity to a single norm based on a total distribution, the former are in danger of being deviant simply by virtue of their minority status. While officers may be a relatively deviant group when they are measured against an overall group standard, they may nevertheless manifest a high degree of uniformity (i.e. normness) within their own category of membership.

METHOD

Research Site and Design

The data for the present study were obtained from 104 local leagues within the League of Women Voters of the United States.⁵ The League of Women Voters of

5. For a more detailed description of the League of Women Voters and of the larger study within which the present analysis has been performed, see Tannenbaum (1961).

the United States includes over 100,000 members organized into about 1,000 relatively autonomous local leagues around the country. These local leagues vary in size from about twenty-five to 3,000 members. A probability sample of 104 leagues was drawn from a complete list of all leagues in the country. A stratification procedure by state and by size of league was employed so as to increase the accuracy of the sample. Each league was assigned a probability of falling into the sample proportional to its size.⁶

A questionnaire was mailed to approximately twenty-five randomly chosen members in each of the sample leagues. The mail questionnaire was considered feasible in view of the high educational level of the members and their expected high interest and motivation to cooperate. A final response rate of 77 per cent was obtained after an elaborate set of follow-up procedures including letters and phone calls by members of the research staff⁷ (Tannenbaum, 1961, pp. 36-9; Tannenbaum and Smith, 1964). In addition to this random sample, a supplementary sample of Officers was drawn from each local league to insure a minimum number of Officers for analysis in each league. Over 95 per cent of these respondents returned their questionnaires completed (Tannenbaum and Donald, 1957).

Subjects

Within each of the 104 local leagues, respondents were classified into three categories. The first, Officers, were selected on the basis of their responses to a questionnaire indicating membership on the board of directors or being the local president. The remaining members were divided into Actives and Inactives according to their responses to the following questions:

'How many of the following types of league meeting have you attended during the past year?' (The types of meeting that the respondent could check included: study or resource committee meetings; board meetings; other committee meetings; general meetings; unit meetings; county, state, or national meetings.)

'How much time would you say you spend *during the course of an average month* on league affairs?' Include everything, such as telephone calls, travelling time, reading league materials, attending meetings, etc.⁹

These two items were formed into a single index. Members classified as Actives were those whose score on the index was above the mean for all non-officers *in their league*; those below the mean were designated Inactives. The numbers of Officers, Actives, and Inactives fluctuate somewhat from league to league; the median numbers of respondents in each category in each league are eight, seven, and ten respectively.⁸

Measures

Twenty-five questions concerned with opinions about and attitudes toward the league were chosen from a large questionnaire as the basis for the measures of

6. We are indebted to Leslie Kish and Irene Hess for the technical design of the sample.

7. We are indebted to Charles Cannell and Sharon Sommers for their contribution to this phase of the research.

8. Actives and Inactives were selected in this way so as to obtain nearly equal numbers in each category. Selection of Actives on the basis of minor leadership roles would result in so few Actives in some leagues as to preclude comparisons. There were usually more Inactives than Actives by the method of selection employed, since the distribution of activity scores is skewed.

uniformity. These items were selected (prior to any analysis) on the basis of their judged relevance to the organization. Each of the items is described in *Table 2*.

Analysis

The following procedure was carried out separately for each of the twenty-five questionnaire items used:

Within each of the local leagues, the responses of the Officers, Actives, and Inactives were compared using the variance estimate (S^2) as an inverse measure of uniformity.⁹ The hypothesis that uniformity will be greater among the more active members of an organization can be stated operationally as follows:

$$\begin{aligned} S^2 \text{ for Officers} &< S^2 \text{ for Actives} \\ S^2 \text{ for Officers} &< S^2 \text{ for Inactives} \\ S^2 \text{ for Actives} &< S^2 \text{ for Inactives} \end{aligned}$$

Each of the above forms of the hypothesis was tested across the 104 leagues separately for each of the twenty-five items using the sign test. A plus was assigned to each league in which the results conformed to the hypothesis; a minus was assigned to those with contrary results; ties were disregarded.

The Problem of Bias

A serious possible source of bias stems from the relationship between variances and means of response distributions. The variance of the distribution will tend to diminish as the mean value approaches either the upper or lower limit of the scale because these limits restrict the range of responses. In order to determine the effects of this bias, its direction was ascertained for each comparison of variance estimates (i.e. Officers versus Actives, Officers versus Inactives, and Actives versus Inactives). For example, if the mean of the Actives' responses on a particular item was closer to one of the extremes of the scale than the mean of the Inactives' responses, the bias would be favorable to our hypothesis. Analysis did indicate, in fact, a greater tendency for the hypothesis to be supported in those cases where the bias was favorable to it than where it was unfavorable. We shall take this bias into account in the analyses that follow.

RESULTS

We have implied in the introductory rationale that differences exist between Officers, Actives, and Inactives on a number of variables which, we assume, partly underlie the predicted differences in variances. *Table 1* presents the mean scores for Officers, Actives, and Inactives on some of these underlying characteristics as measured through responses to questionnaire items. We see in this table some documentation for the assumption that active members are more likely than inactive members to be high in attraction to the group or potency of involvement, to exercise influence, to exert pressures and to have pressure exerted over them, and to communicate and

9. It is important that the distinction between the variance (σ^2) and the variance estimate (S^2) be clear, since the variance estimate may be used to compare samples of different size. The distinction may be expressed as follows: $S^2 = \sigma^2 \left(\frac{N}{N-1} \right)$.

TABLE 1 MEAN SCORES FOR OFFICERS, ACTIVES, AND INACTIVES ON INFLUENCE, ATTRACTION TO THE GROUP, PRESSURES, AND COMMUNICATION VARIABLES

| <i>Question Content</i> | <i>Mean Responses^a</i> | | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------|------------------|
| | <i>Officers</i> | <i>Actives</i> | <i>Inactives</i> |
| COHESIVENESS—POTENCY OF INVOLVEMENT | | | |
| (a) Suppose that as a result of strong opposition your local league were in real danger of folding up. How much effort would you be willing to spend in order to prevent that? (1, a very great deal; 5, none) | 1.59 | <1.99 | <2.65 |
| (b) Suppose that as a result of general member disinterest your local league were in real danger of folding up. How much effort would you be willing to spend to prevent this? (1, a very great deal; 5, none) | 1.85 | <2.31 | <3.00 |
| INFLUENCE | | | |
| (a) How much influence do you personally have in determining policies and actions of your local league? (1, no influence; 5, a great deal of influence) | 2.57 | >2.06 | >1.51 |
| (b) In general, how much influence do you personally have on what the following groups or persons do in your local league? (1, no influence; 5, a very great deal) | | | |
| on what the president does | 2.43 | >1.55 | >1.23 |
| on what the board of directors does | 2.70 | >1.60 | >1.25 |
| on what the members as a whole do | 2.39 | >1.70 | >1.30 |
| PRESSURE | | | |
| (a) If you were not to participate in league affairs, how likely is it that a league member would let you know that you should? (1, some would certainly let me know; 5, no one would let me know) | 2.08 | <2.39 | <2.92 |
| (b) If you knew a member who did not participate in league affairs, how likely is it that you would let her know that she should? (1, I would certainly let her know; 5, I would not let her know) | 2.71 | <2.99 | <3.73 |
| COMMUNICATION—INTERACTION | | | |
| (a) How often do you give information concerning league matters to the following persons? (1, never; 5, several times a month or more often) | | | |
| your local president | 4.12 | >2.52 | >1.39 |
| members of your board | 4.08 | >2.67 | >1.67 |
| other members | 3.65 | >3.10 | >1.96 |
| (b) How often do the following persons give you information concerning league matters? (1, never; 5, several times a month or more often) | | | |
| your local president | 4.32 | >3.00 | >2.36 |
| members of your board | 4.26 | >3.17 | >2.44 |
| other members | 3.54 | >3.37 | >2.61 |

^a For all questions the Officers, Actives, and Inactives differ from each other significantly ($p < .01$; sign test, two-tailed)

TABLE 2 COMPARISONS OF UNIFORMITY AMONG OFFICERS, ACTIVES, AND INACTIVES

| <i>Question Content</i> | <i>Variance Comparison^a</i> | | |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|
| | <i>Officers vs. Actives</i> | <i>Officers vs. Inactives</i> | <i>Actives vs. Inactives</i> |
| How much effort would you be willing to spend to prevent your local league from folding up as a result of: ^b | | | |
| strong opposition within your community? | (71*) | (85*) | (76*) |
| general member disinterest? | (63*) | (74*) | (71*) |
| How much opportunity do you think the league should provide for sociability among the members? ^c | 64* | 73* | 60* |
| How important do you think it is that your local league should avoid doing things which bring it into conflict with the following? | | | |
| certain other organizations in your community ^e | 58 | 63* | 56 |
| certain influential persons in your community ^e | 61* | 66* | 52 |
| your community at large | 62* | (67*) | 64* |
| your state league | (60*) | (67*) | (57) |
| the national league | (60*) | (66*) | (62*) |
| To what extent should the league emphasize its study functions, and to what extent its functions as an action or pressure group? ^e | 57 | 67* | 58 |
| How serious a loss to your community, your state, your nation (respectively) do you personally think it would be if: | | | |
| your local league ceased to function? | 54 | (65*) | (61*) |
| your state league ceased to function? ^e | 48 | 60* | 63* |
| the League of Women Voters of the United States ceased to function? | (55) | (67*) | (62*) |
| How much care do you personally think a league board member should exercise in keeping out of partisan politics? | [50] | [57] | [55] |
| In your opinion, how much influence do you think each of these groups <i>should have</i> in determining the policies and actions of your local league? | | | |
| your local president | 53 | 55 | (67*) |
| your local board as a group | (62*) | (59) | 48 |
| your local membership as a whole ^e | 54 | 55 | 59 |
| the state board ^e | 61* | 50 | 47 |
| the national board ^e | 51 | 59 | 48 |
| you, personally | 50 | [65*] | [67*] |
| In general, how much influence do you think the following groups <i>should have</i> in determining the policies and actions of the League of Women Voters of the United States? | | | |
| the national board ^e | 54 | 50 | 40* |
| your state league ^e | 46 | 48 | 46 |
| your local league ^e | 55 | 49 | 46 |
| all the local leagues as a group | (61*) | (65*) | (57) |

continues

| Question Content | Variance Comparison ^a | | |
|--------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| | Officers vs. Actives | Officers vs. Inactives | Actives vs. Inactives |
| | Do you personally agree or disagree with the choice of: individual liberties as the first national agenda item? | 48 | (50) |
| conservation as the second national agenda item? | 51 | (52) | 45 |

^a The cell entries indicate the percentage of local leagues in which the direction of results was consistent with our hypothesis. An asterisk indicates an effect significant at the .05 level (sign test, two-tailed). Those comparisons which are subject to consistent bias (greater than 60%) in favor of the hypothesis are enclosed in parentheses; those subject to bias against the hypothesis are enclosed in square brackets (see text).

^b These items are included among the items of *Table 1*.

^c These items were combined to make a single, essentially unbiased index (see text).

be communicated to. All of the differences are clearly significant beyond the .01 level, using the sign test.

Table 2 presents the results of the sign test applied to the comparison of variance estimates. The cell entries indicate the percentage of local leagues in which the results are in the predicted direction. The proportion expected by chance is 50 per cent. Fifty-seven of the seventy-five comparisons are favorable to the hypothesis; thirty-four of these, indicated by an asterisk, are significant at the .05 level (two-tailed sign test). Only one of the seventy-five comparisons proves significant in a direction opposite to that predicted.¹⁰ A number of comparisons, however, are subject to the problem of bias.

We have defined the problem of bias in terms of the possible relationship between mean and variance scores on an item. Operationally, a comparison is considered subject to bias if, for the item under consideration, one group (e.g. Actives) has more extreme scores than the other with which it is being compared in more than 60 per cent of the leagues. Parentheses designate these comparisons in *Table 2* that are subject to bias favorable to the hypothesis; square brackets denote those comparisons that may be biased against the hypothesis. Twenty-six of the comparisons are subject to a favorable bias. All of these yield results in the predicted direction; and twenty are significant. Unfortunately, we cannot know whether this high rate of support for the hypothesis relative to these items is artificial or legitimate.¹¹ However, all of the five comparisons that are subject to an 'unfavorable' bias are also in the predicted direction; and two of these comparisons are significant. Of the remaining comparisons which are free of bias, twelve are significant in the predicted direction whereas only one is significant in the opposite direction. In so far as these unbiased items are concerned, it is unlikely that the variance differences are attributable to differences in mean scores.¹²

10. Although directional predictions were made, it was not clear that the effect would in fact occur for each of the twenty-five items used. The two-tailed test was applied in order to permit a statistical evaluation of any differences that might occur in a direction opposite to that predicted. When the individual items were combined to form an index (see below), a one-tailed test was applied.

11. It is possible that those items that are subject to bias are those that are most relevant to the hypothesis in the first place. The more extreme scores for Actives on these items, which create the bias problem, may reflect the greater pressures relative to these items toward uniformity.

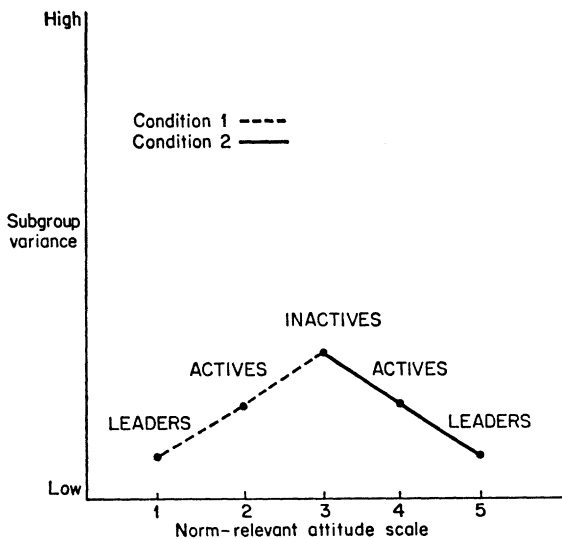
12. One might suspect an *incipient* bias among these 'unbiased' comparisons, i.e. they might all tend in the biased direction—although not so strongly as to meet our 60 per cent criterion. However, of the forty-four comparisons classified as unbiased, twenty-one show this 'incipient' bias

Although the results seem preponderantly favorable to the hypothesis, the twenty-five items presented in *Table 2* are not independent. Because of this, a definite overall statistical evaluation cannot be made on the basis of the analyses presented so far. This problem of independence was overcome by reducing the eleven unbiased items to a single index. For each league a single score (plus or minus) was derived for each of the three comparisons: Officers versus Actives, Officers versus Inactives, and Actives versus Inactives. Taking each of the above comparisons separately, a plus indicates that a majority of the eleven items is favorable to the hypothesis; a minus indicates that a majority is unfavorable. Employing a one-tailed sign test, we find that Officers are more uniform in their responses than either Actives ($p < .01$) or Inactives ($p < .01$), and that Actives tend to be more uniform than Inactives ($p = .08$). Thus it appears that the data support the hypothesis even when we restrict ourselves to unbiased items.

DISCUSSION

The results of the above analysis are in general consistent with the proposed hypothesis: Officers appear to be most uniform on relevant attitudes and Inactives least uniform. At the same time, the data in *Table 2* show that in twenty-six comparisons the more involved or active members take significantly more extreme positions on the attitude scales, while in only five comparisons are the less active members more extreme. Leaders in particular are more likely to be deviant relative to an overall group standard than are members. We thus see some support for two hypotheses which may have seemed contradictory, but need not be. Leaders are

FIGURE 1 VARIANCE AND ATTITUDE SCALE POSITIONS FOR LEADERS, ACTIVES, AND INACTIVES UNDER TWO CONDITIONS



favorable to the hypothesis, and twenty-one are unfavorable (with the remaining two cases tied). Thus the results cannot be attributed to this sort of bias.

more likely to be deviant (or idiosyncratic) in the total group, while they are likely to be more conformant as a group within their own category of membership.

In *Figure 1* we have idealized this relationship as suggested by our data. Two conditions are shown: those for which the correlation between relevant attitude score and activity (or status or involvement) is negative (dashed line), and those for which it is positive (solid line). In either case, leaders as a subgroup are more extreme and deviant, while at the same time they are more uniform among themselves.

Since we are employing a cross-sectional survey design, we are faced with the usual limitations of that method relative to drawing inferences about causality. It seems safe to conclude that the relationships we have observed may occur by either (or, perhaps more likely, by a combination) of the following general routes: (a) The attitudes of members may *change* in the direction of greater uniformity as a result of activity in the organization. (b) Members may be selected into and out of the organization—or an active role in the organization—because of their attitudes. Most theoretical statements about conformity or about norms propose some combination of these processes (e.g. group cohesiveness is said to involve greater pressures toward conformity along with a greater likelihood of rejecting deviates).¹³

The relationships observed in this study, while consistent with the initial hypothesis, are not sharp. There may be several theoretical reasons for this apart from possible methodological limitations:

1. We have already mentioned the arguments of Hollander (1958) and of Blau (1960), which suggest greater deviance among higher-status group members. Tendencies of this kind occur in sufficient strength to weaken the relationships we predicted but not to eliminate them completely or to reverse them.

2. We have assumed the existence of a standard represented by a point on our attitude scale around which uniformity becomes established as a norm. This implies an optimum position on the scale for Actives (or Inactives). Positions above or below this point imply some degree of deviancy. March (1964) refers to this as a 'preferred value norm'. However, on some issues attitudinal deviance may be tolerated or even rewarded on one side of the modal point but not on the other. 'Attainable-ideal' and 'unattainable-ideal' norms have this characteristic (March, 1954).¹⁴ Actives may be more likely than Inactives to deviate toward unattainable goals or to exceed attainable ones, contributing variance in this way to their distribution of attitudes.

3. The items of *Table 2* were chosen because they were judged to refer to issues around which norms are most likely to develop. However, the basis for this choice is not always clear, and it is possible that the items chosen were not, after all, the best ones. This problem illustrates a general weakness in theories of norms, none of which is explicit about the criteria that distinguish those issues concerning which norms are likely to develop and all others. Norms are said develop about 'anything and everything which is of shared interest . . .' (Newcomb, 1951), or norms develop around issues which are somehow 'relevant' to the group (Festinger, 1957).

13. A longitudinal study might make it possible to determine the extent to which the greater uniformity among Actives was caused by changes in individuals' views, or by loss or rejection of individuals holding discrepant views.

14. A man cannot be too saintly (unattainable goal) for a priestly group. A halfback need run with the ball only as far as the goal line (attainable); running further is acceptable but not necessary (March, 1954).

In defining the notion of relevance for the purposes of this study we accepted the view of Allport (1962) that norms serve the function of helping to preserve the group or to maintain for members relationships that are important to them. Items were selected on the basis of our judgement that uniformity among members on the items was necessary for the continued existence of the group. Our judgement was a dichotomous one; an item was either relevant or not relevant. Perhaps we can learn something about the dimension of 'relevance' by observing which kinds of issue yield the largest differences in variance between Actives and Inactives. This assumes that Actives are, in fact, more uniform than Inactives and that the uniformity differences are greater for the more relevant issues.

The items in *Table 2* are arranged roughly in the order of their success in supporting the initial hypothesis. This ordering is very crude because of the bias problem; nevertheless, the arrangement may be revealing. Items near the top of the list are presumably the most relevant. These appear to be issues concerning which shared views are most important to the maintenance and success of the local league as an organization. The first pair of items concerns the willingness of members to stand behind their local organization in the face of a threat to it. The second item concerns the question of the league's basic purpose; in effect, whether it is to be a social club or a (non-partisan) political organization. Disagreement on these issues among members (particularly among Officers and Actives) could be damaging to the group's continued existence. The third set of items concerns conflicts which might be considered a threat to the existence of the local league. Shared views regarding the issues near the bottom of the list, however, may not be so essential to the maintenance of the group. This is probably most evident for the question concerning agreement with individual liberties and conservation as agenda items. These are ephemeral issues for the organization, which are the subject of legitimate debate. Agenda items change every couple of years and disagreement about them does not imply a threat to the organization in general.

Implications for the Theory of Groups

The data of this study, we believe, have some general implications for the theory of groups (and of organizations). The definitional criteria of a group suggest that groups may vary in their degree of 'groupness' or structuredness. The important elements of group life which contribute to the group's coherence, to its orderliness and predictability, to the effective coordination of individual behaviors into some form of concerted or integrated action, vary from one group to another.

But a group itself may be heterogeneous with respect to the qualities that imply groupness. Regions within a group, when construed in field theoretical terms, can be seen to differ in the intensity or density of those characteristics that define the group as a social entity. Some regions are more organized, structured, predictable, are more information-laden and higher in negative entropy than others.¹⁵ More specifically, as we move through the field along a dimension defined in terms of activity level of members, we go from regions that are low in indicia of groupness to regions that are high. We have seen in the data of this study some evidence of these gradients, and propose that others exist as well. Thus the group is more 'cohesive' in the more active regions, more dense in interactions among members,

15. See Tannenbaum and Kahn (1958, pp. 203-4) for a brief discussion of uniformity in groups in relation to the concepts of entropy and information.

higher in influences and 'pressures' on and by members relative to defining and achieving 'group goals'. The higher levels of influence, pressure, and communication imply a greater degree of interdependence and feedback in the active region and a greater manifestation of coordinated, 'goal-directed' behavior. We have, in *graph theory* terms, more 'connectedness' (French, 1956) and this is reflected in the relative uniformity which characterizes the active region. More group things get done here, and they get done with more certainty. There is less randomness in relevant attitudes and probably in relevant behaviors too.

One can extend this field theory analysis to encompass the group's environment of potential members. Some members are members only nominally and cannot easily be distinguished from many non-members who endorse the league's goals, give financial support, and feel some sense of identification with the league. Thus, where the group picks up and where it leaves off are not clear dynamically, although they may be clear pheno-typically when the group is defined simply in terms of card-carrying members. If we were to measure the relevant attitudes of 'fellow-traveling' non-members, we would expect some resemblance to those of formal members. But we would also expect less uniformity among these potential members than that found within our least active region. Thus the group looks more like a group in certain regions, less like a group in others, and it may even manifest some semblance of groupness in regions that, formally speaking, are not part of the group.

The narrowed variance implicit in Allport's J-curve is a characteristic of institutionalized behavior. In organizations or in groups it reflects one aspect of degree of organization, or of 'groupness'. We have taken attitudinal uniformities on 'relevant' issues as one index of this groupness and have noted one way in which it might vary within a group. It would be interesting to learn more about the gradients of groupness that apply within groups as well as the variations in groupness between them.

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