

THE EFFECTS OF VIOLENT RADIO NEWS
BROADCASTS ON AGGRESSION

By

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THE EFFECTS OF VIOLENT RADIO NEWS
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PREFACE

The primary objective of this study was to determine whether the presence of news on the radio dealing with some violent action would stimulate a listener who has recently been angered to act out his aggression (i.e., lower his inhibition against aggression), or whether it would have a cathartic effect and alleviate the stored up energy in the aggravated person. Secondly, it was believed that audio reports of violence alone would not be sufficient enough to raise the aggressive level in the listener without any previous aggressive arousal. Lastly, the effect as to sex differences was explored. An analysis of covariance was used in the statistical analysis of the data.

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A special heart-filled thanks is expressed to my parents, Rose and Harold, whose faith, encouragement, and sacrifices made the dream of education a reality.

Finally, I would like to thank my wife, Carol, for her never ending patience, understanding, and sacrifices during my college years. For a more unselfish, loving, and dependable person there will never be.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In a society so preoccupied with peace and love it seems ironic that there is so much publicity for violence. Never a day passes without such news reports as those of riots, mob action, murders, wars, destruction, or forceful overthrows of governments. It seems that the more violent or bizarre an act is the more publicity it receives. The question arises here as to what effects, if any, do these violent news reports, transmitted over and over, day after day, have on the person receiving them.

Although it is believed that any of the three news media, television, newspaper, and radio, could elicit aggressive responses, the scope of this study was limited to radio news reports. The impact of radio upon the daily life of everyone cannot be overemphasized. The New York Times reported that in 1969, 99.7 per cent of the people in the United States had a radio in their home. The influence can be further appreciated when it is considered how many cars are on the road with the radio providing entertainment over the journey. Thus, too, the teenager on the street or on the beach is rarely without a radio nearby. Thus, in regards to the news reaching the people, the "every hour, on the hour" news broadcasts by most radio stations would be most effective.

The present study was designed to explore the possibility that violent news broadcasts would increase the probability of aggressive behavior. The problem explored in the study was to determine whether the presence of news on the radio dealing with some violent action would stimulate a listener who has recently been angered to act out his aggression (i.e., lower his inhibition against aggression) or whether it would have a cathartic effect and alleviate the stored up energy in the aggravated person. On the other hand, does the presence of violence itself tend to raise the aggressive level in the listener without any previous aggressive arousal? Secondly, is the effect the same for women as it is for men?

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Catharsis Hypothesis

Briefly, the catharsis hypothesis of hostility contends that the performance of an aggressive act reduces the tendency to act out aggression. This reduction of aggression, furthermore, does not need to be due to the elimination of the stimulus that elicited the aggression. Dollard, Dobb, Miller, Mowrer, and Sears (1939) contended that the acting out of aggression is followed by a momentary reduction of the inclination to aggression regardless of the aggressive act's effectiveness in removing the frustrator.

In connection with the mass media this hypothesis would state that violence on television, radio, in books, or in the movies would help an angered person get rid of his built-up tension in a socially approved way. A person who had recently been frustrated or insulted would participate vicariously in the violent events transpired in the program in such a way that his hostility would be drained out in the program.

Feshbach (1955) is well known for his study of catharsis with angered college students. Insult was used as the hostile agent. The experimental group was first angered and then given four cards of the TAT which served as a measure of aggression that the insult induced. At the same time, the discussion of the cards was also used as a means of catharsis. The remaining two groups were used as controls; one was

angered but did not take the TAT and the other not angered but took the TAT. It was found that the method of insult produced significantly higher aggressive scores on the TAT over those who were not insulted. A questionnaire involving attitudes toward the experimenter and the experiment significantly demonstrated that the insult (catharsis) group displayed less aggression than the insult control group. Thus, the telling of aggressive stories in the TAT in the presence of anger lowered the tendency to aggress.

In expanding the catharsis hypothesis to the mass media, Klapper (1960) reported that a considerable number of psychiatrists and psychologists interviewed by him in 1953 thought that the display of aggression in the communications media provided an opportunity for hostility catharsis. This catharsis lessens the hostile tendencies which might otherwise be released in asocial behavior.

Opposition to the Catharsis Hypothesis

However, despite the near consensus among these men of science interviewed by Klapper and the result of Feshbach's experiment, the cathartic hypothesis has been seriously challenged. The one investigation supposedly demonstrating the cathartic reduction through the symbolic aggression on the TAT has not withstood the test of replication. Hornberger (1959) attempted to replicate and extend Feshbach's study using the insult procedure and measures of post-cathartic aggression. His results revealed no statistically significant finding for the questionnaire. Also, as Berkowitz (1962) has mentioned, there might have been other factors producing Feshbach's results. Of those mentioned is the possibility that the insult control group might have

experienced some degree of frustration in their task. In addition, Berkowitz states:

There also is the possibility that aggression anxiety arose in the insulted subjects as a consequence of their expressing hostility to the TAT. They could have become aware of their aggressive inclinations in responding to the projective test, thus provoking the guilt or anxiety inhibiting aggression on the final questionnaire [218-219].

Countless numbers of studies have more recently questioned the cathartic value of violence in the mass media. Experiments with television programs, cartoons, and film strips have repeatedly shown that under certain circumstances, witnessed violence can heighten the chances that the observer would act aggressively.

Lovaas (1961) demonstrated that violence in cartoons can enhance aggressive behavior in children. An experimental group saw an aggressive cartoon while a control group watched a more peaceful cartoon. After seeing the film, the children were allowed to play with two mechanical toys which required bar-pressing for their activation. One toy was relatively non-violent while the other required the bar pressure for one doll to strike the other. The results showed that the children in the aggressive cartoon group activated the fighting doll to a significantly greater extent than did the children in the control group.

In the same vein Mussen and Rutherford (1961) used 36 first grade children, half of whom saw an aggressive cartoon while the other half viewed a relatively calm cartoon. The intensity of the child's aggressive impulses was inferred from his tendency to pop or play with a large yellow balloon. The experimental findings also clearly demonstrated that aggressive cartoons can lead to aggressive actions in children.

Walters, Thomas, and Acker (1962) reported similar findings with adults. The study found that male adults who had witnessed a filmed knife-fight scene generally administered more severe electric shocks to a nearby person than did the comparable people who had seen a more innocuous movie.

Taking his study out of the laboratory, Eron (1963) found that there was a strong positive relationship between the violence rating of boys' favorite television programs and their aggressiveness as rated by their peers. Eron discovered that it was not the length of time watching television but the extent of the violence watched that affected real-life aggressive behavior.

A more direct test of the reduction of aggression through violent scenes as depicted by the mass media was performed by Bandura, Ross, and Ross (1963). The experimenters had children who were mildly frustrated watch on film, T.V., or in person an adult who performed aggressive acts to a doll. Instead of the assumed built-up aggression being released through the cathartic effect of watching violence, the children showed higher aggressive behavior (striking the doll) than did the control group that did not witness aggressive behavior. The authors found no significant differences between the viewing conditions (live, film, and T.V.) as to the number of aggressive acts performed. Again, the cathartic effect was not demonstrated. The authors concluded that observation alone can be sufficient to add novel aggressive response patterns to the viewer's behavioral repertoire.

In another study Berkowitz and Green (1966) used male college students who were angered by a peer and shown a brief film. The experimental group was shown an aggressive prize-fight scene, while the

control group saw an exciting but non-aggressive track race. Immediately after the film, each subject was provided with a socially sanctioned opportunity to give electric shocks to the person who had provoked him. The results showed that the prize-fight group tended to give higher shocks than did the race group.

According to investigations of movie violence, under certain conditions observed aggression apparently serves as a cue activating aggressive habits. This is suggested, for example, through the finding of Meyerson (1966). The author found evidence supporting the view that the likelihood of imitation is determined, in part, by the level of cue similarity between the observed material and the real-life situation that the observer later encounters. The experimenter exposed children to a filmed aggressive performance of a model. The Ss were deliberately provoked by a confederate, and were allowed to watch one of three filmed conditions. The first two conditions showed an aggressive prize-fight film in which the actor, Kirk Douglas, received a bad beating. The difference between these conditions was that one depicted the actor as a "bad guy" in which the beating was viewed as proper and justified and the other portrayed him as a "good guy" and the beating was viewed as ethically unjustified. The third group saw the non-aggressive track race scene. Shortly after the film, each S was given the opportunity to shock the person who had angered him, after learning that the accomplice's name was either "Kirk" or "Bob." It was discovered that the accomplice under the name of "Kirk" was attacked more often than when his name did not associate with the violent movie ("Bob"). Also, Ss who were shown the justified film violence generally exhibited the strongest aggression.

From Berkowitz and Green's study and previous studies by Berkowitz (1965), Berkowitz, Corwin, and Heironimus (1963), and Berkowitz and Rawlings (1963), another interesting factor besides the imitative instigators of violent movies is suggested. As Berkowitz (1970, p. 3) so aptly sums up his studies, "It is as if the justified aggression on the screen made their own aggression seem morally proper, thereby temporarily lessening their inhibitions against aggression." A number of other experimenters have also expressed concern that exposure to violence via the mass media has the effect of blunting one's emotional reaction to aggression.

That people do show emotional reactions to observed violence was reported by Himmilwert, Oppenheim, and Vince (1958) who reported that a large proportion of children indicated that they were upset by watching the killings on television. Siegel (1956) likewise found a highly significant increase in the level of rated anxiety in subjects after witnessing an aggressive film. Berger (1962) further demonstrated physiologically that intense emotional reactions are produced in persons who watched someone receive an electric shock.

Effects of Repeated Exposure to Aggression

The question arises, however, as to what happens when these emotional responses are repeated over and over again. Many psychologists and physiologists have long accepted a general principle that repeated elicitation of an emotional response results in a progressive decrease in the strength of that response. These principles have been given various names such as habituation, satiation, adaption, and

accommodation. There is evidence that this kind of emotional satiation takes place with the repeated observation of violence.

In his experiments Berger (1962) noticed that Ss witnessing the shocking of another showed a decrease of emotional arousal progressively throughout the series. Likewise several studies by Lazarus and his colleagues (Lazarus, 1966; Lazarus and Alfert, 1964; Spelsman, Lazarus, Mordkoff, and Davidson, 1964) have measured the physiological responses of adults viewing a subincision tribal ritual in which the victims were subjected to bloody and painful genital mutilation. Again the process of satiation or habituation were apparent as the Ss' emotional reactions showed a marked progressive diminution throughout the series.

Wolpe (1958) also adds light to this lessening of emotional responses by habituation through his desensitization therapy. Briefly, this theory states that repeated progressive presentations of anxiety evoking stimuli in a relaxed and otherwise nonthreatening environment will allow the patient to eventually tolerate direct confrontation of that stimulus without the aversion previously experienced.

From Wolpe and the above studies by Lazarus, Berger, Siegel, Himmilwert, Berkowitz and their colleagues, it seems safe to propose that that habituation process may very well occur during the repeated presentation of violence by the mass media. The viewer may become less emotionally responsive to repeated observation of violent scenes.

Sears, Maccoby, and Levin (1957) argue that people do not tolerate aggression comfortably, neither their own nor that displayed by others. Aggression evokes too much anxiety. This is further displayed in the above studies by Berger, Siegel, and Himmilwert. If a parallel is made

between Wolpe's therapy procedures and that of the situation of the media viewer who is repeatedly exposed to violence while relaxing at home, in the car, or in the theater, the possibility is suggested that viewers can be "desensitized" to this kind of aggression anxiety. It is suggested that people may be more willing to accept real-life acts of violence (i.e., inhibit anxiety from aggression) and may be less reluctant to engage directly in aggressive action without guilt when provoking circumstances arise.

It seems safe to conclude from the above studies that the cathartic effect with viewed violence does not appear valid. The opposite seems true. The witnessing of aggression seems to elicit still more aggression.

CHAPTER III

PROBLEM

Fiction Versus Nonfiction

Almost all the above studies used fictitious events as the variable producing further aggression. The question arises as to whether a person can get involved in actual reports of nonfictional aggression. In other words, can news reports of violence elicit further aggressive responses in an angered person as did the fantasy aggression?

It seems quite probable that violent news accounts can produce the same cue similarity quality as that reported in the fantasy aggression studies. For instance, persons viewing or listening to the reports of a campus riot may very well imitate some of the aggressive behavior if his campus is thrown in revolt. Mass revolts may itself be instigated from publicity received from other schools or cities which had done the same. This seems plausible when one thinks of how one riot seems to "set off" (i.e., be followed by) a whole chain of riots across the country. Also, a murderer or robber might have learned his style from accounts of a murder or robbery as reported by the news media. Since a great deal of news is state and local in perspective, it may be even easier to pick up more cues similar to real life for more people than would a much narrower restricted film. (Meyerson, 1966, has already demonstrated that the more similar the violence to the setting, the higher the level of imitative aggression.)

Even more important was the possibility that violent news repeated over and over would serve to inhibit the anxiety from aggression. Since news reports generally fall during times of relaxation, such as, dinner time, bed time, or while riding in a car, a desensitizing effect might take place which would inhibit aggression anxiety. Thus, reports of murders and riots (in major cities especially where it is more common) have lost a great deal of its shock value and have become more common place as with the repeated news of war in Vietnam. As a result, people have learned to accept violence and aggression as a part of life and consequently be more apt to "do the natural thing" (act out aggression).

Visual Media Versus the Audio Media

It should also be noticed that all of the aforementioned studies investigated the effects that the visual media had on aggression. Not one of the studies investigated the possibility that violence might not have to be seen to elicit aggression. It is very possible that hearing reports of violence on the radio may just as likely, if not more so, produce aggression under the same circumstances as mentioned by the above experimenters.

Description is one of the major tools of the radio announcer. In order to give an accurate account of some happening, much description has to be used--more so than that of the T.V. newscaster who has the aide of pictures to explain his accounts. It follows then, to describe a violent news story, words depicting hostile acts are required. These "hostile" words may be another factor in reducing one's inhibitions against aggression. Lovaas (1961) and Loew (1967) have investigated

along these lines and concluded that hostile words do in fact have an aggression-eliciting effect. Therefore, where radio loses the visual effect that T.V. and film strips have, it gains in the descriptive category. This gain and loss factor, of course, may not have a balancing effect, and visual stimuli may be found to produce more aggression than auditory cues. However, in regards to the number of people stimulated, audio cues may be more effective since more is left to the imagination (i.e., one report may fit many different situations) than the narrower film strip in which the time, place, and situation is given.

Although there may be a difference in the effectiveness between audio and visual violence, it is believed that either is capable of eliciting violence in an aggravated person. Violent visual stimuli dealing mainly with fantasy aggression have already been tested and proven many times to elicit aggression. The task remains to explore the audio field using factual aggression. For this reason the present study was devised.

Sex Differences on Aggression

Finally the question arises to whether sex differences exist in the display of aggression. It is fairly common knowledge that males are more aggressive than females. Starting right from childhood, boys' play (i.e., army, cowboys, and wrestling) displays more aggression than the typical doll play and jump rope of girls.

Studies of aggression further record the higher aggressive action in males. Jersild and Markey (1953) observed fifteen hundred conflicts among fifty-four nursery school children in free play and found that

girls were more likely to use verbal attacks whereas boys used physical means. Levin and Sears (1956), P. Sears (1951), and Yarrow (1948) observed children's doll play, and likewise reported that boys are more aggressive than girls. Sears (1961) studied the aggression of adolescent children and found that twelve-year-old boys scored higher on a self-report measure of antisocial aggression than did the girls of the same age. Lansky, Cradall, Kagan, and Baker (1961) obtained comparable results using teenagers.

Even more important is that the display of aggression is generally expected of the male and is to an extent socially approved. On the other hand, the female who acts aggressively is looked upon as a "tom boy" and is not viewed as socially acceptable as are the more "ladylike girls." (In extreme cases with older women the label "lesbian" may even be applied.) As a result women learn not to act-out their hostility for to do so would be "unladylike." As Berkowitz (1962, p. 269) states, "Men probably have stronger aggressive habits than do women and thus generally make stronger hostile responses to the evoking cue."

Since aggression is less acceptable for the female, (Sears et al., 1957, discuss this in some detail) it follows that women should have stronger inhibitions against overt aggression than do men. Berkowitz (1962) reported indications (although by no means conclusive evidence) that the women in his study had developed somewhat stronger guilt than did the men after they were allowed to shock the angering confederate for a second time (i.e., women gave significantly fewer shocks during the second trial).

Since the inhibitions against aggression are comparatively strong in women, one might question whether a cathartic effect might take

place in angered women. Although Berkowitz (1962) denied this, his results neatly demonstrated that a cathartic effect might have taken place in the female angered group. (This was not demonstrated in the male group which gave the same amount of shocks on both trials.) It may follow that since their inhibitions are so strong, an angered woman would not use witnessed violence as a cue to act aggressively, but instead use this violence to rid her unacceptable anxiety causing aggressive feelings in a disguised (cathartic) manner.

In summary, it was hypothesized that audio violence on radio news reports would lessen an insulted male S's inhibitions against aggression and allow him to act more aggressively (i.e., raise the level of shocks administered to a confederate). Secondly, it is hypothesized that the presence of audio violence or insult by itself, would not have the same aggressive eliciting power (i.e., the effect of raising the Ss shock level to the insultor). Although this is believed to take place in males, a lack of certainty arises with the less aggressive female who may be more prone to use a catharsis process. Therefore, no predictions were made with this latter group.

CHAPTER IV

METHOD

Forty male and forty female freshmen and sophomore college students from introductory psychology classes were used. All Ss volunteered for the experiment. Each S was tested separately with a confederate who passed as a student from a different class.

The first task of the S was to shock the confederate for incorrect answers on a supposedly "extrasensory learning" experiment. The shock was used to measure the level of aggression in the person before entering the real testing situation. The S was presented with the "shock board" which consisted of ten buttons numbered from one to ten. The wires from this board led to another room to where the confederate was to receive the "shocks." The wires were connected to ten corresponding lights which were numbered accordingly. Thus a record of S's responses would be kept. No shock was actually given. The S was presented with a list of twelve colors (see Appendix B). The task of the S was to press an alert button which signaled the confederate by a light when S was thinking of a color in the predetermined order. The confederate had a list of colors to which he answered to each S (see Appendix C). The list had two correct (matching) colors. The Ss were instructed to press the ready

(alert) lever when thinking of the color in the list. Going in order down the list was stressed. The S was further instructed to give any degree shock desired when a wrong answer was given over the microphone by the subject (confederate) in the other room; and that the shocks ranged from #1 (mild) to #10 (strong), but not strong enough as to seriously hurt anyone (see Appendix A).

After reading the instructions, the experimenter left the room leaving the subject alone to choose any shock desired.

Once the list was completed, the experimenter and the confederate returned to S's room where the second task was given. The task presented to S and the confederate was a multiple choice number test. This task was explained as a test in which both subjects (the S and stooge) will be thinking of the same things. The test consisted of a series of four numbers in which S had to pick the correct reversal of out of four possible answers. There were twenty series presented. A time limit was set at one minute which was impossible to complete with accuracy. The E remained in the room during the task. (See Appendix D for instructions and E for the task.)

Forty students, 20 males and 20 females, took this test without any incident. The remaining Ss were insulted by the confederate who completed the test in the time allowed (since he already knew the correct answers). The confederate (a man in his early twenties) told the tester that the test was an insult to his intelligence and that any idiot could finish it without even thinking. Then he turned to S and asked if he (she) had finished. When S answered in

the negative, the confederate stated that he (she) was not concentrating and was probably thinking about his (her) girl (boy) friend because even his six year old brother could have finished it. Then he repeated that any idiot with "half a brain" could finish that test. The insult was not memorized and held flexible to the answers of the person. However, the basic insults about being an "idiot" and "thinking about a friend" and "my six year old brother" were always included.

In the third task the Ss and the confederate were asked to relax and listen to portions of news broadcasts spliced together on a tape recorder. No further insult was given in that condition. Twenty males and twenty females listened to a tape with violent news reports (i.e., stabbings, a bombing, shootings, and a riot). From this group ten males and females were of the insult group and the remaining twenty were from the no-insult group. The remaining Ss, twenty from the insult and twenty from the no-insult group, listened to relatively calm, non-violent broadcasts (i.e., due date of license plates, a turkey call contest, and an election of an Indian Chief). Both tapes were approximately five minutes in length. The Ss were told that some questions will be asked at the end of the broadcasts. There were three multiple choice questions for each tape. (See Appendix F for complete instructions and Appendices G and H for the Questions.)

After listening to the tape (either calm or violent) the Ss and the stooge were again asked to participate in the "extrasensory learning experiment." Again the E left the room (see Appendix I for instructions).

At the end of the experiment, the E explained the actual purpose of the study to the Ss.

CHAPTER V

DESIGN

The general design for this experiment was a $2 \times 2 \times 2$ analysis of covariance. The three factors under study were the insult condition (insult versus non-insult), type of tape (violent versus non-violent), and sex of subject. For each S two scores were recorded which consisted of the means of the pre- and post-shock task. Ten shocks were given in each task. The mean pre-shock was used as the covariate for each S and the mean post-shock the dependent variable in the analysis.

CHAPTER VI

RESULTS

The results of the analysis of covariance are presented in Table I. The insulted Ss (I) were found to give significantly stronger shocks ($p < .05$) on the post-shock task when compared to the Ss who were in the no-insult (N.I.) condition. Also found was a significant interaction ($p < .01$) between the insult (no-insult) condition and the tape (violent or non-violent) conditions.

Further investigation of the simple main effects for the interaction of the adjusted means (depicted in Figures 1 and 2) showed that: (1a) Ss in the I group gave significantly higher shocks after hearing the violent news tape (V) than those in the I group who heard the non-violent tape (N.V.) ($t = 3.362$, $df = 71$, $p < .05$); whereas, (1b) Ss in the N.I. group gave significantly higher shocks in the N.V. condition than those in the V. condition ($t = 2.067$, $df = 71$, $p < .05$); (2a) Ss in the V. group gave significantly higher shocks in the I condition than those in the N.I. condition ($t = 4.255$, $df = 71$, $p < .05$); however, (2b) no significant difference was found between the I and N.I. condition in the N.V. condition.

TABLE I
 ANALYSIS OF COVARIANCE AND F RATIOS FOR
 AGGRESSION UNDER THREE CONDITIONS

| Source | Adjusted Sum of Squares | df | MS | F |
|------------|----------------------------|----|--------|----------|
| (A) Insult | 7.652 | 1 | 7.652 | 4.628* |
| (B) Tape | 1.536 | 1 | 1.536 | .929 |
| (C) Sex | .720 | 1 | .720 | .435 |
| A X B | 24.602 | 1 | 24.602 | 14.878** |
| A X C | 5.125 | 1 | 5.125 | 3.099 |
| B X C | 1.330 | 1 | 1.330 | .804 |
| A X B X C | .357 | 1 | .357 | .216 |
| Error | 117.404 | 71 | 1.654 | |

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

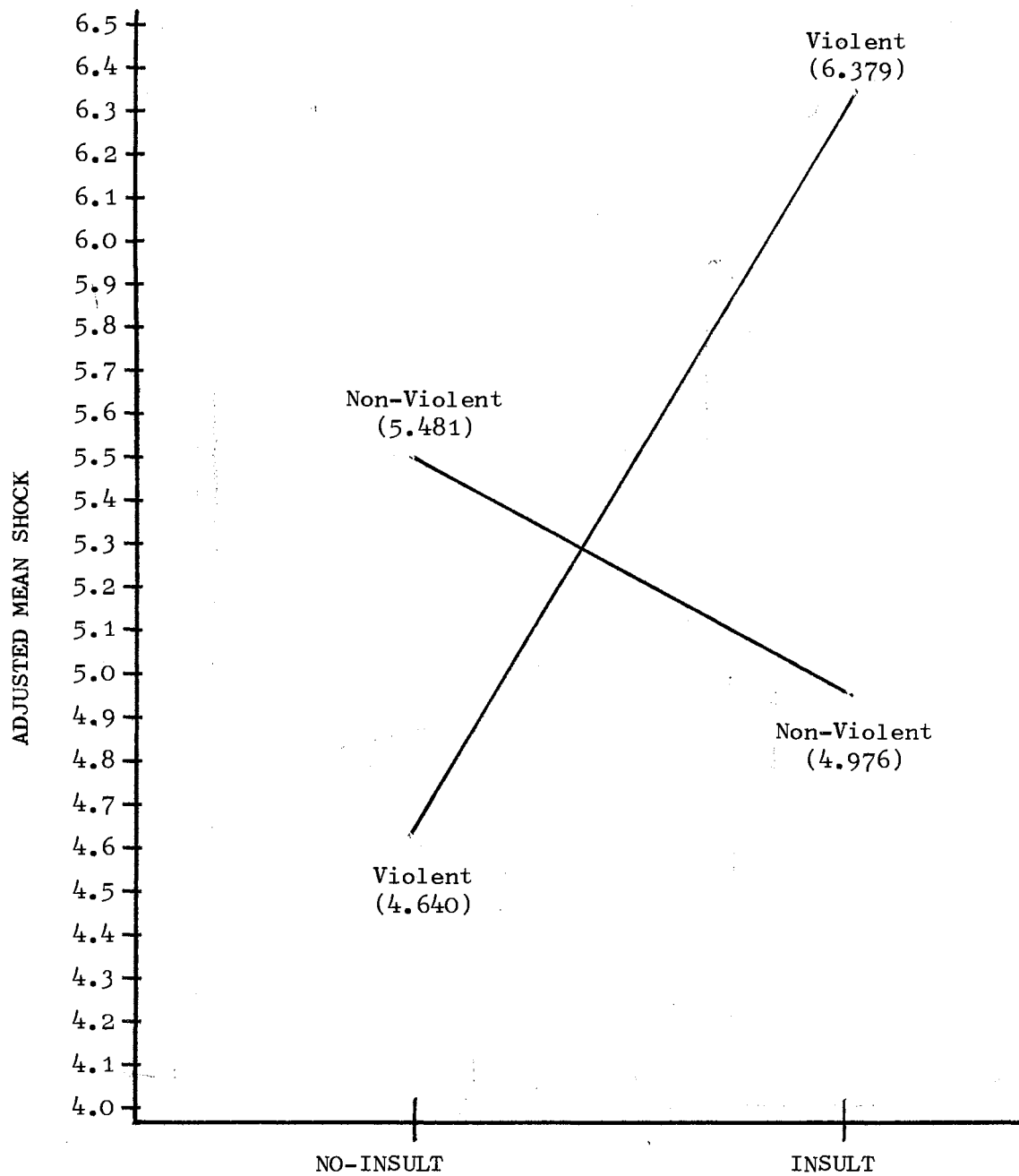


Figure 1. Adjusted Mean Shocks for Insult and No-Insult Condition Under Two Tape Conditions

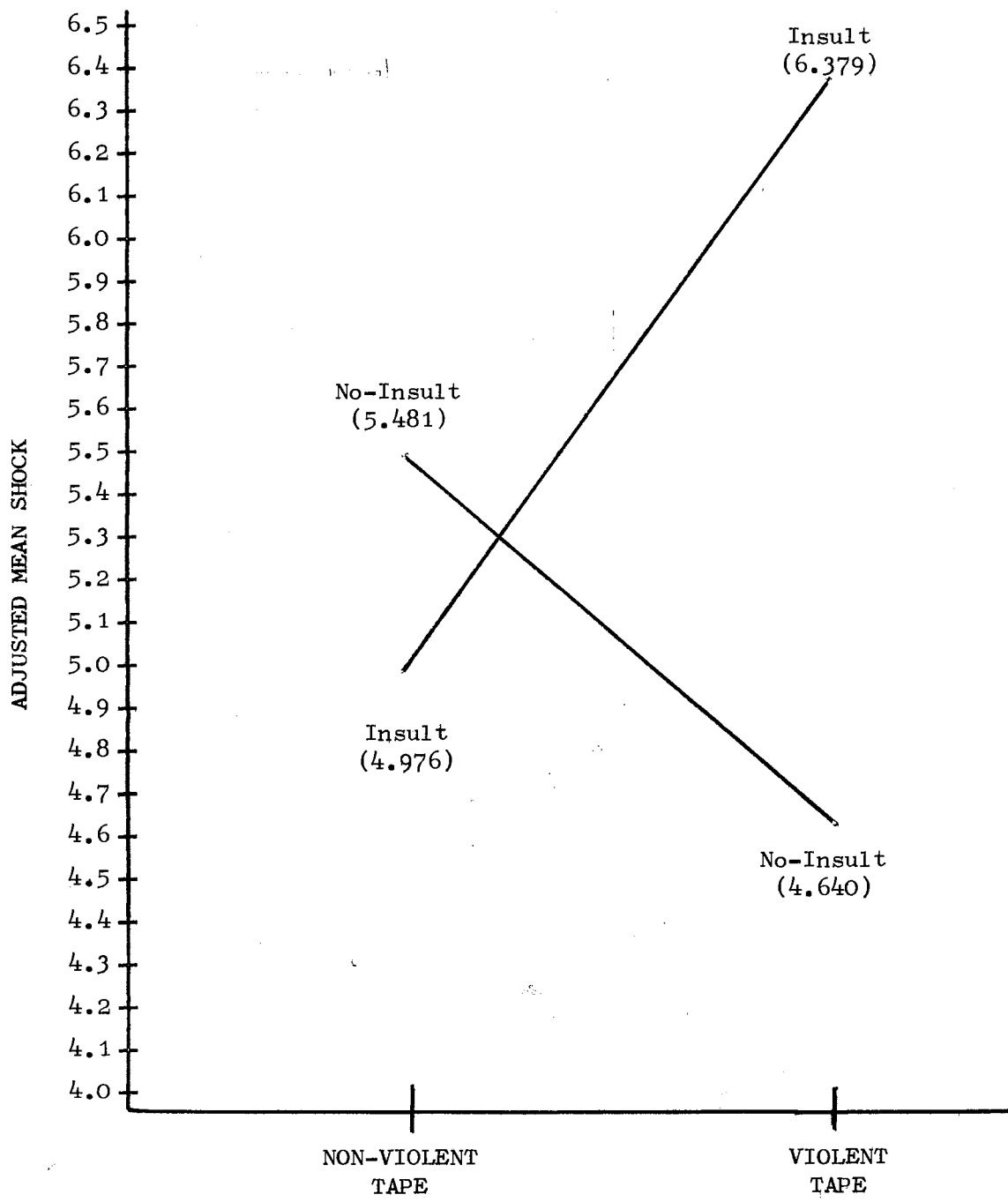


Figure 2. Adjusted Mean Shocks for Non-Violent and Violent Tape Conditions Under Insult and No-Insult Conditions

CHAPTER VII

DISCUSSION

As was hypothesized, the cathartic effect of audio reports of violent news failed to find support. The opposite was found to be the case. When Ss were angered, they displayed more aggression after hearing taped reports of violence. News broadcasts of violent happenings, instead of having a cathartic effect in an angered person and lowering the probability of his acting aggressively, seemed to have the effect of eliciting aggression. This finding is in agreement with Berkowitz (1970) and is in full support of the present hypothesis.

Also as hypothesized, Berkowitz's findings of the eliciting effect of witnessing violence on the movie screen can be extended to reports of factual, real life situations which do not have to be witnessed visually. A question for further study concerns the relative effectiveness of visual and auditory media in eliciting aggression in an aggravated person.

The results of the present study are also in agreement with Berkowitz's (1963) in that exposure to reports of violence by itself was not sufficient to elicit aggression. As was hypothesized by the present author, a predisposition to behave aggressively is necessary. As indicated by analysis of simple main effects for the interaction of the adjusted means, neither insult alone nor exposure to reports of violent news alone had any effect on the level of shock administered.

It was only when the two conditions were presented together (i.e., the insult followed by exposure to taped radio news reports of violent happenings) that the shock level was raised.

Support is also indicated for the author's hypothesis that listening to radio news reports of violence will tend to lessen the listener's inhibition against aggression. Ss in the present study angered by insult increased their level of aggression only after listening to taped reports of violence. The fact that there was no significant increase in aggression when Ss were insulted and exposed to reports of a more calm nature seems to indicate that their inhibitions were still in effect. During informal post-test questioning, many Ss in this group expressed contempt for the insulter, but reported they were able to control their anger.

An interesting finding in the present study was that female Ss were just as aggressive as male Ss. Although no specific hypothesis were made regarding sex differences, these results appear contradictory to the reported findings of Jersild and Markey (1953), Levin and Sears (1951), Yarrow (1948), Berkowitz (1962), and Sears (1957) that females are less aggressive than males. It may be, however, that the exposure to actual radio reports of factual events as used in the present study was "powerful enough" to break through their stronger inhibitions. Like the males, insulted women raised their level of aggression after hearing news of violence. In fact, female Ss tended to give on the average half a shock higher than their male counterparts in the insult-violent news condition. It seems clear that women do not use violent news reports as a means of catharsis.

A question is raised here as to whether similar results would be found if the insultor were a woman. Since all insultors in the present study were males, possible interaction effects between sex of insultor and sex of S were not investigated. It seems plausible that such effects could exist due to possible differences in the stimulus value of same sex or opposite sex insultors in arousal potential and ability to break through inhibitions.

A totally unexpected finding was that Ss who were not insulted displayed significantly more aggression after hearing taped broadcasts of non-violent occurrences than those who were likewise not insulted but later exposed to taped broadcasts of violent news. At first, this finding may appear to support the catharsis hypothesis. However, it should be recalled that the catharsis model involves displacement of aggression. In the no-insult condition, no anger was instilled in Ss. Informal post-test questioning revealed that many Ss in the no-insult, non-violent tape conditions were annoyed over failure of the confederate to demonstrate improvement on the "extra-sensory learning" task and therefore increased the level of shock administered for incorrect responses. Such annoyance did not seem as pronounced in post-test questioning of Ss in the no-insult, violent tape conditions suggesting the possibility that these Ss may have been distracted from the "extra-sensory learning" task by exposure to the actual reports of violence.

Although generalizations from such laboratory studies are always tenuous, the overall findings of the present study seem to seriously question the "shock value" or the value of "learning from another's mistakes" explanations which are frequently used by the press to defend the use of vast publicity of violence. Rather, the findings suggest

that reported violence can unleash more aggression, especially in this time and age when predispositions to anger and hate are so prevalent.

CHAPTER VIII

SUMMARY

Forty male and forty female college students were used in the study to test the hypothesis that reported violence on radio news broadcasts would lessen a previously angered male S's inhibitions against aggression and allow him to act more aggressively. Secondly, it was believed that audio reports of violence or insult by itself would not have the same aggressive eliciting power. No hypothesis was made for the female Ss.

The findings support both hypothesis. The results significantly demonstrate that radio news broadcasts depicting violence, instead of having a cathartic effect and lowering an angered S's tendency toward acting aggressively, seemed to have an aggressive eliciting effect on the subjects. Also, as was hypothesized, neither insult alone nor violence alone had any significant effect on increasing the Ss aggression. As was hypothesized by the author, in order for the violent events reported on the radio to have an effect on aggression, the person has to have a pre-disposition to anger. No significant sex differences were found. An unexpected finding was that the Ss who were not insulted, displayed significantly more aggression after hearing a non-violent tape than those who later hear the violent reports.

Possible application to future research are: (1) the question concerning the relative effectiveness of visual and auditory media in

eliciting aggression in an aggravated person; (2) repeating the experiment using a female insulator; (3) investigation as to why the non-violent news tape elicited more aggression than the violent news recording in non-insulted subjects.

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APPENDIX A

INSTRUCTIONS FOR FIRST SHOCK TASK

"I would like you to participate in an experiment in 'Extrasensory Learning.' We have some evidence to indicate that most people can learn to develop the extrasensory ability if they are properly motivated. Extrasensory perception is the ability to know what somebody else is thinking. In a previous experiment we have found that when a person is threatened with electric shock his extrasensory ability goes up. The electric shock was varied from mild to strong, but it was never so high as to really seriously hurt anyone. I know that this is quite unusual, but I greatly appreciate your help.

"Let's see. You be the medium (point to the subject) and you (the confederate) the subject."

(To the Subject when the confederate is in the other room.)

"In front of you is a shock board with levers numbered from one to ten. The shocks range from #1 mild to #10 strong. Your task is to push the single lever marked ready and think of the color on the list in front of you. You must go in order. The subject will then respond over the speaker with a color. If he is right you don't shock him. If he is wrong you can give him any degree of shock you wish. Once the lever is depressed the shock will automatically cut off after one second. Are there any questions? We will have two practice trials in which no shock will be given."

APPENDIX B

SUBJECT'S COLOR LIST IN "E.S.P. EXPERIMENT"

Practice

A. Blue

DO NOT SHOCK

B. Red

-
- 1 - Yellow
 - 2 - Pink
 - 3 - Green
 - 4 - Blue
 - 5 - Orange
 - 6 - Red
 - 7 - Purple
 - 8 - White
 - 9 - Red
 - 10 - Brown
 - 11 - Gold
 - 12 - Green

APPENDIX C

CONFEDERATE'S RESPONSES TO E.S.P. TASKS

Practice

A. Green

DO NOT SHOCK

B. Yellow

| 1st Test | 2nd Test |
|-------------|----------|
| 1 - Green | Red |
| 2 - Blue | Orange |
| 3 - Red | Blue |
| 4 - Blue* | Pink |
| 5 - Pink | Orange* |
| 6 - Gold | Gold |
| 7 - Purple* | Blue |
| 8 - Red | Green |
| 9 - Silver | Red* |
| 10 - Green | Green |
| 11 - Orange | Blue |
| 12 - Blue | Red |

* Correct Response

APPENDIX D

THE INSTRUCTIONS FOR NUMBER TEST

"We will now have another learning task in which both of you will be taking the same test. There is no real purpose for this test except that you will be thinking of the same things. However, I would appreciate if you do as many as you can in the time allowed and be as accurate as possible. On the papers you are about to receive there will be a series of numbers. Your task will be to pick from the four possible choices, lettered A, B, C, and D, the one that correctly has the numbers written in reversed order. For example: (placing the paper in front of both subjects) The first number is 1349; the correct reversal of the number would be "C" (9431). Look at the second series of numbers in the example. What would be the reversal of 2978 (pause)? Right! The correct answer is "A" (8792). Are there any questions? You will have one minute. Ready, begin."

APPENDIX E

NUMBER TASK

Practice

1349

- A. 1493
- B. 9413
- *C. 9431
- D. 9341

| | | | | |
|------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 2978 | A. 8792 | B. 8927 | C. 7982 | D. 8269 |
| 2442 | A. 2424 | B. 4224 | C. 2422 | D. 2422 |
| 6314 | A. 4361 | B. 4163 | C. 4136 | D. 4631 |
| 8577 | A. 8577 | B. 7785 | C. 7758 | D. 7585 |
| 5432 | A. 1234 | B. 2345 | C. 2354 | D. 5324 |
| 7698 | A. 8967 | B. 8976 | C. 6987 | D. 9768 |
| 2657 | A. 7652 | B. 7526 | C. 7552 | D. 7562 |
| 1832 | A. 3182 | B. 2388 | C. 2381 | D. 2318 |
| 5721 | A. 1234 | B. 5721 | C. 5271 | D. 1275 |
| 3684 | A. 4683 | B. 4836 | C. 4863 | D. 6834 |
| 4433 | A. 4343 | B. 4433 | C. 3343 | D. 3344 |
| 5831 | A. 1358 | B. 1538 | C. 1385 | D. 3581 |
| 9783 | A. 3879 | B. 3897 | C. 3877 | D. 3783 |
| 8235 | A. 5382 | B. 5328 | C. 5283 | D. 5823 |
| 1561 | A. 5611 | B. 1561 | C. 1651 | D. 6151 |
| 3456 | A. 4653 | B. 5643 | C. 6543 | D. 3654 |
| 8541 | A. 1458 | B. 1485 | C. 1444 | D. 1488 |
| 5347 | A. 7453 | B. 7447 | C. 7435 | D. 7547 |
| 7218 | A. 2187 | B. 7218 | C. 8127 | D. 8172 |
| 5244 | A. 4435 | B. 4445 | C. 4425 | D. 3333 |
| 1539 | A. 5193 | B. 3915 | C. 3951 | D. 9351 |

APPENDIX F

INSTRUCTIONS FOR RADIO LISTENING TASK

"The next test that I have is the learning test of current events. I want you to relax and listen carefully to the news report recording. When it is completed I will ask you to answer some questions about the broadcast. Just sit back, relax, and listen. We have put together a number of separate broadcasts, so listen carefully. Any questions?"

APPENDIX G

QUESTIONS FOR VIOLENT TAPE RECORDING

1. Following a wind drug party:

- A - A raid by state police was conducted
- B - A girl was shot in head and chest
- C - A man was knifed

2. East Berlin:

- A - Celebrated the 10th anniversary of the Berlin Wall
- B - Tore down the wall
- C - Do not try to kill escapees anymore

3. During a football game:

- A - A man was struck by lightning
- B - A man was shot by a man dressed in green
- C - The north end of the stadium collapsed

APPENDIX H

QUESTIONS FOR THE NONVIOLENT TAPE RECORDING

1. Application for Personalized tags are due:
 - A. Tomorrow
 - B. Before October 1st
 - C. Before October 31st.

2. 3,000 people celebrated the birthday of:
 - A. Sen. Bellman
 - B. Gov. Bellman
 - C. Judge Bellman

3. The two Big Eight teams picked to rank in the top 10 of the nation are:
 - A. Nebraska and Missouri
 - B. Notre Dame and O.S.U.
 - C. Nebraska and Univ. of Okla.

APPENDIX I

INSTRUCTIONS FOR SECOND SHOCK TASK

"For the last task I would like you to repeat the extrasensory learning experiment to see if your thinking together in the other tasks have enhanced the ability to perceive the other's thoughts. You (pointing to the confederate) go to the other room and get set up."

(To the subject when the stooge had left?)

"Remember that you shock the wrong answers only. The shocks range from #1 mild to #10 strong. Push the signal button when you are thinking of the color on the list. You must go in order. We will again have two practice trials."

VITA

William Harold Scharff

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