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THE REPRESSION-SENSITIZATION DIMENSION AND  
LEISURE PREFERENCES

THESIS

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The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship of the repression-sensitization dimension and leisure preferences, specifically threatening versus non-threatening physical activity and television program preferences.

The hypotheses were that sensitizers would prefer threatening (violent) television programs and threatening (competitive) physical activities to a significantly greater degree than repressors.

Sixty college undergraduates were designated repressors, sensitizers, or middle group by their scores on Byrne's Repression-Sensitization Scale. Preference sheets determined subjects' preferences for threatening and non-threatening television programs and physical activities. Simple analyses of variance revealed no significant differences in repressors', sensitizers', or middle group's preferences for threatening television programs or physical activities, and thus the hypotheses were rejected. Non-significant tendencies in the data, in hypothesized directions, suggest further research.

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## THE REPRESSION-SENSITIZATION DIMENSION AND LEISURE PREFERENCES

There has been considerable interest, among psychologists, in the repression-sensitization personality dimension (hereafter referred to as r-s dimension). The r-s dimension is viewed as a continuum, upon which persons are placed according to their characteristic response to threat. The threat may be impending pain, personal failure, or any other stimuli which people generally perceive as threatening. Persons toward the repressor end of the continuum (repressors) employ avoidance defenses, such as denial and repression, when encountering threat. Persons toward the sensitization end of the continuum (sensitizers) utilize approach defenses such as intellectualization which recognize or admit the presence of threat. The implication of the r-s dimension is that by identifying a person as a repressor or sensitizer, that person's response to threat under many different situations may be consistently predicted. The present study will investigate the relationship between the r-s dimension and leisure activity preferences, namely threatening versus nonthreatening physical activities and threatening versus nonthreatening television programs.

The r-s dimension was originally derived from early perceptual defense studies (Bruner and Postman, 1947;

Ericksen, 1952; Gordon, 1957). These perceptual defense studies measured recognition latencies to tachistoscopically presented threatening (e.g. sexual words) and nonthreatening (e.g. nonsexual words) stimuli. Byrne (1961), expanding on the idea of perceptual defense, introduced an instrument (R-S Scale) for measuring the r-s dimension. The scale, comprised of MMPI items, has been extensively utilized in r-s dimension research ever since its introduction (Byrne, 1964).

Past r-s dimension studies have investigated subjects' responses in laboratory situations. However there have been no studies investigating repressors' and sensitizers' preferences in their everyday life situations, such as how they use their leisure time.

#### Statement of the Problem

The purpose of the present study was to investigate the relationship of the r-s dimension and persons' leisure preferences, specifically threatening versus nonthreatening physical activities, and television program preferences.

#### Hypotheses

Two hypotheses were tested:

1. Sensitizers will prefer threatening (violent) television programs to a significantly greater degree than repressors.
2. Sensitizers will prefer threatening (competitive) physical activities to a significantly greater degree than repressors.

### Review of the Literature

For many years, psychologists have been interested in persons' responses to threatening (anxiety producing) stimuli. Persons have been observed engaged in various activities which are designed to control or reduce the anxiety produced by threatening stimuli. These anxiety reducing activities, described as defense mechanisms, have been extensively discussed in psychoanalytic literature (Freud, 1946).

With the advent of the perceptual defense research in the 1940's, there arose a unidimensional description of persons' responses to threatening stimuli: repression-sensitization. This r-s dimension described as repressors, those persons who utilized avoidance type defense mechanisms such as denial and repression. Sensitizers were persons utilizing approach defense mechanisms such as intellectualization. In the perceptual defense studies, repressors displayed longer recognition thresholds, a form of perceptual adaptation, than sensitizers displayed to tachistoscopically presented threatening stimuli. In a typical study, Bruner and Postman (1947) found repressors had longer recognition thresholds than sensitizers, for sexual and violent (threatening) words presented tachistoscopically.

Persons designated repressors rather than sensitizers, on the basis of their recognition thresholds to tachistoscopically presented threatening stimuli, also tended to be

identified as repressors on the basis of their case histories (Lazarus, Eriksen, and Fonda, 1950), remembered successes rather than failures in a scrambled sentences task (Eriksen, 1952), preferred avoidance and forgetting defenses on the Blacky Defense Preferences Inquiry (Nelson, 1955), and exhibited inhibition and constriction on the Rohrshach (Kissin, Gottesfeld, and Dickes, 1957).

Although repressors and sensitizers had been differentiated by their recognition thresholds to tachistoscopically presented threatening stimuli, and by their responses on various other tasks and tests, there was not an instrument designed for the purpose of identifying repressors or sensitizers. An instrument was required, which was a measure of the r-s dimension, and of determined reliability and validity. Several attempts were made to devise an r-s dimension scale utilizing MMPI items.

Ullmann (1958) constructed an MMPI scale to measure facilitation-inhibition (r-s). He compared the responses of facilitators (sensitizers) and inhibitors (repressors), on each of the 566 MMPI items. Subjects' facilitation-inhibition categorizations were on the basis of their case records. Forty-four items differentiated facilitators from inhibitors, and were retained as the final Facilitation-Inhibition Scale. Split-half reliability of .96, and test-retest (1-18 months) reliability of .88 were determined for the Facilitation-Inhibition Scale.

Altrocchi, Parsons, and Dickoff (1960) selected three MMPI scales (D, Pt, and Welsh Anxiety) as measures of sensitization, and three other MMPI scales (L, K, and Hy) as measures of repression. A person's r-s dimension score was determined by subtracting the second three scale scores from the first three. No reliability data were reported.

Byrne (1961) attempted to refine Altrocchi's r-s Scale which Byrne noted contained several item overlaps, that is, some items were common to several of the scales. A response on one of these items might contribute to both repressor and sensitizer scores. Overlapping items also were weighted since they were scored more than once. To eliminate these scoring inconsistencies, Byrne eliminated all inconsistently scored items, and scored each item only once. The result was Byrne's R-S Scale comprised of 156 MMPI items, in which high scores indicated sensitization, and low scores indicated repression. Split-half reliability and test-retest reliability were both .88.

In a later study, Byrne, Barry, and Nelson (1963) performed an internal consistency item analysis of the 156 R-S Scale items. One hundred and twenty-seven of the items correlated at the .001 level with the total R-S Scale score in two samples of 370 students each. These 127 items comprise the Revised R-S Scale which is now extensively utilized in r-s dimension research. Byrne found split-half reliability of .94 and test-retest (3 months) of .82 for the revised



R-S Scale, utilizing college students as subjects. Byrne, Barry, and Nelson also presented evidence of construct validity for the R-S Scale, as did a later study (Byrne, 1964). The R-S Scale's place in r-s dimension research appears secure.

The R-S Scale's 127 scorable items, and 55 buffer items are presented as a "Health and Opinion Survey" to subjects in much of the r-s dimension research. However, a study by Simmons (1966) and correspondence with Byrne (D. Byrne, personal communication, July 2, 1974) have established the feasibility of scoring the MMPI, rather than the "Health and Opinion Survey" to obtain the R-S Scale Score. Simmons, using 135 male and 82 female college freshmen and sophomores, administered the nonimbedded "Health and Opinion Survey". The MMPI was administered to 42 males and 27 females. Results indicated that MMPI derived R-S Scale scores were significantly lower for both males and females, and thus there is some risk in equating R-S Scale scores obtained by the two methods. However, Byrne (D. Byrne, personal communication, July 2, 1974) indicates,

. . . it is perfectly all right to use the MMPI for obtaining R-S Scale scores. Though the means appear to differ when the total MMPI is used rather than the separate 'Health and Opinion Survey', there is no reason to expect differences in the relationships between this variable and any other variable.

An important area of r-s dimension research has centered around the investigation of variables that influence r-s responses. The effects of variables such as nature of threat, group interaction effects, age and sex differences have all been studied.

Most importantly, it must be determined just what situations are indeed threatening to the subject. Past r-s dimension studies have determined many stimulus situations to be threatening (anxiety producing) to repressors and sensitizers. Lazarus and Alfert (1964) found that a film depicting a painful operation--a primitive subincision ritual--was threatening to repressors and sensitizers. Increased skin conductance and heartbeat rate (physiological indicators of anxiety) were obtained for repressors and sensitizers during the presentation of the film. Verbal indications of anxiety, in response to the film, were noted also. A relationship of greater physiological anxiety for repressors than sensitizers, and greater verbalized anxiety for sensitizers than repressors was also indicated.

Scarpetti (1973) found the anticipation of a painful shock elicited greater skin conductance, and greater anxiety admitted on an anxiety inventory for subjects, than was elicited for a nonpainful control situation. Again, greater physiological threat indicators (skin conductance) and relatively lower verbal threat indicators (anxiety inventory responses) were noted for repressors than sensitizers.

Personal failure was found to be threatening in a study by Tempone (cited in Maher, 1966). Repressors and sensitizers were initially given anagrams to solve in the company of others. The subjects were then tachistoscopically presented correct anagram solutions and neutral words. Repressors who had previously failed to solve most of their anagrams had significantly higher thresholds of recognition for the tachistoscopic anagrams than did repressors which had previously successfully solved most of their anagrams. The reverse of the above relationship was obtained for sensitizers. The change in recognition thresholds for tachistoscopic anagrams by failure versus success groups were considered by Tempone to indicate the threatening nature of personal failure.

A person's negative verbalizations, such as those containing unhappy, angry, or inadequacy material, were hypothesized as threatening (anxiety producing) for the person by Merbaum and Kazaoka (1967) in an r-s dimension study. During interviews, sensitizers mostly indicated their negative verbalizations as significant; repressors mostly indicated their positive (containing joy, happiness, liking material) verbalizations as significant. On the basis of repressors denying and sensitizers admitting their negative verbalizations as significant, Merbaum and Kazaoka concluded that negative verbalizations were threatening. In a related study, Axtell and Cole (1971) found

repressors verbalized less than sensitizers in situations with verbal feedback. Axtell and Cole's repressors and sensitizers were asked to discuss themselves either positively or negatively, with and without feedback. Without feedback, repressors and sensitizers verbalized the same amount. Since repressors and sensitizers respond differentially to threatening situations, feedback appeared to be threatening.

Interaction effects among group members apparently alter how a person will react if he were alone or in a different type of group. A study by Khol and Nickols (1971) confirmed that group-interaction effects apply differentially to repressors and sensitizers. Subjects were given a visual task to perform in a group setting. The task was performed in booths equipped with lights to give feedback to the subject of the group's performance on the task. Actually the feedback was controlled by the experimenter, and not the group's performance, but the subject was not aware of this. Repressors conformed more to large group opposition to their responses than did sensitizers. Conflict between group and individual performance was interpreted as threatening to self esteem. Thus a repressor's and sensitizer's responses to threatening stimuli, when in a group setting, may reflect not only the threatening stimuli manipulated by the experimenter, but also may reflect interactions within the group. Therefore these

group-interaction effects must be noted or controlled by the experimenter.

Several studies have reported age or sex differences among repressors and sensitizers, which infers their inclusion in a study's interpretations of its results. A study by Schwartz (1972) found age and sex differences among repressors and sensitizers. Older and male subjects tended significantly to be repressors, while younger and female subjects tended significantly to be sensitizers.

Similar age differences were noted in a study by Fredericks (1973) which utilized repressor and sensitizer college students and their parents, who were also determined to be repressors or sensitizers, as subjects. No sex differences were noted among repressors and sensitizers for either parents or students. This finding contradicts part of Schwartz's (1972) results. Fredericks also found parents of repressors tended to be repressors and parents of sensitizers tended to be sensitizers. Such results imply that parents teach children behaviors similar to those of the parents, or that the r-s dimension may be related to some genetic trait. These differences don't influence the differential response modes however.

In a study related to Schwartz's (1972) and Fredericks' (1973) studies, Schwartz, Krupp, and Byrne (1971) studied medical patients' diagnoses, and found repressors tended to have purely organic illnesses, whereas sensitizers

received diagnoses involving psychological components.

A variable which appears not to be related to the r-s dimension, and thus needs not to be controlled, is intelligence. Byrne (1961) didn't expect any relationship between the r-s dimension and intelligence, and found none when comparing the performances of repressors and sensitizers on the Shipley-Hartford Scale (a measure of intelligence) and their entrance examination standard scores.

In another study of the r-s dimension and intelligence, Clark (1968) found repressors exceeded sensitizers in general verbal aptitude with no differences between groups on social intelligence or grade point average. Subjects were administered the R-S Scale, three verbal ability tests, five tests from the O'Sullivan and Guilford's Test of intelligence, in addition to compiling grade point averages. Clark hypothesized that the repressors' greater capacity to respond to nonthreatening stimuli and avoid observations about personal concerns permitted a greater level of verbal aptitude than found with sensitizers. No clear relationship between intelligence and the r-s dimension was obtained.

Another important area of investigation has sought to determine if the r-s dimension is a multidimensional variable in its own right, or simply another manifestation of already established concepts such as anxiety,

social desirability, etc.

A study by Lefcourt (1969) reported two types of repressors. Utilizing college students, who were administered the Marlowe Crowne Social Desirability Scales (MC-SDS), R-S Scale, and the Barron Inkblot Test, repressors were found to be both higher and lower than sensitizers in expressiveness, an approach response. High need for approval repressors were least expressive, and low need for approval repressors were most expressive. Kahn and Schill (1971) replicated these results in a similar study.

However, a study by Millimet and Cohen (1973) examined the relationship between the MC-SDS and R-S Scale. The R-S Scale was the measure of the r-s dimension employed by Lefcourt (1969) and Kahn and Schill (1971). Millimet and Cohen found both scales to be correlated to each other, precluding their combination in r-s dimension studies.

Glesser and Ihilevich (1966), while agreeing that the r-s dimension may relate to defense style, question the clinical or research value of a dimension providing information on only two types of defense. They devised the Defense Mechanism Inventory which purports to measure five groups of defense: Hostility out, projection, principalization, hostility in, and reversal.

Lefcourt (1966) hypothesized that repressors' and sensitizers' differential responses were not a reply to

threat, but were an indication of the subject's ". . . evaluations and private interpretations of emotionality." Lefcourt asked undergraduates, who had completed the R-S Scale, what they felt the test measured, and what type of person would complete the test in a manner opposite to the way they completed it. Sensitizers viewed the test as measuring emotionality, while repressors believed the test measured mental illness. Sensitizers viewed repressors as conservative and happy go lucky, while repressors pictured sensitizers as ill or abnormal. Since emotionality meant mental illness to repressors, they tended to deny emotionality, which accounted for their denial responses to threat.

Several studies have represented the r-s dimension as little more than an anxiety dimension. A study by Golin, Herron, Lakota, and Reineck (1967) reported correlations of .87 and .86 for samples of the R-S Scale and Taylor (1953) Manifest Anxiety (MA) Scale. Sullivan and Roberts (1969) obtained correlations of the R-S Scale and MA with common MMPI items removed.

However, Abbott (1972) found both the r-s dimension (R-S Scale) and manifest anxiety (MA) to be correlated with social desirability (Edwards, 1957). Abbott felt both dimensions were confounded, and that social desirability might explain the differential responses to threat. Indeed, Joy (cited in Byrne, 1964) obtained significant correlations between the r-s dimension and several MMPI scales which



measure social desirability. Joy found SD (Edwards, 1957) and K (Hathaway and McKinley, 1951) Scale scores both to be correlated with R-S Scale scores with a coefficient of  $-.91$ . Still, a study by Ullmann and McReynolds (cited in Byrne, 1964) obtained a  $-.50$  correlation between a Facilitation-Inhibition Scale (a dimension similar to the r-s dimension) and ward anxiety ratings for neuropsychiatric patients. With F-I Scale items common to Edwards Social Desirability Scale (SD) (1957) held constant, a significant correlation ( $-.38$ ,  $P = < .01$ ) was still obtained. A significant relationship beyond social desirability still remained. Byrne (1964) felt a r-s dimension construct was consistent with the research.

Several additional r-s dimension studies have contributed to the rationale of the present study. The feasibility of using a person's preferences for various activities, as a response mode in an r-s dimension study, was indicated by Byrne, Barry, and Nelson (1963). As part of that study, repressors and sensitizers were administered a Hostility Incongruency Test, containing fifty hostile activities. Subjects indicated their preferences for the activities, along with whether they felt the activity was right or wrong or its consequences pleasant. Split-half reliability of preferences was  $.92$ . Incongruencies between preferences, values, and consequences were noted for repressors and sensitizers. Sensitizers had greater

incongruencies than repressors who tended to deny conflictual material (incongruencies). Thus the preferences of repressors and sensitizers were reliable and tended to reflect repressors' and sensitizers' characteristic mode of dealing with threat.

While not dealing specifically with leisure preferences, several r-s dimension studies have utilized activities often encountered during leisure time, such as movie viewing and novel reading. Lazarus and Alfert (1964), as previously noted, presented a threatening movie to repressors and sensitizers. A film of highway accidents was presented to repressors and sensitizers by Unger (1970). After viewing the film, the Multiple Affect Adjective Checklist (MAACL) was administered, with low scores indicating approach defenses. A tendency toward sensitization was significantly correlated with use of approach defenses, but the correlation was small ( $r = .17$ ,  $N = 121$ ).

A study by Woods (1971) investigated repressors' and sensitizers' self reports of emotional reactivity and an autonomic response (pulse rate) to threatening and non-threatening movies. The anticipated relationship of sensitizers displaying more anxiety and repressors less was not observed. MAACL hostility was higher for repressors than sensitizers, leading Woods to hypothesize that repressors might react with more hostility than sensitizers to the experimental manipulations.

Eleven vivid sexual passages (threatening), from various novels, were read by repressors and sensitizers in a research by Byrne and Sheffield (1965). A control group of repressors and sensitizers read nonsexual passages (nonthreatening) from the same novels. Control repressors' and sensitizers' self ratings on anxiety were the same, but sensitizers in the experimental group rated themselves significantly more anxious than experimental repressors did; the experimental group repressors tended to deny anxiety.

### Method

#### Subjects

The subjects were sixty college undergraduates enrolled in colleges in the north Texas area. None of the subjects had completed psychology courses beyond the sophomore level. Thirty-four of the subjects were males, and twenty-six were females. They ranged in age from seventeen to thirty-seven years, with a mean age of 22.52 years.

Fifty-six subjects were North Texas State University students who were members of an introductory psychology course research subject pool. As no additional subject pool members were available at the time, four additional subjects completed the sixty subject sample. These additional subjects, although not subject pool members, had

been enrolled in introductory psychology courses. Three of the additional subjects were enrolled at the University of Texas at Arlington and the fourth at North Texas State University. All sixty subjects were tested between June 18 and September 18, 1974.

### Instruments

The Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI) Form was used to measure the R-S, K, and SD (abbreviated: 35 or 39 items) Scales. The K and SD Scales are measures of an individual's need to make socially desirable responses. Only the first 399 items plus 14 additional items encircled on the form were utilized. The 14 additional items were necessary to score the complete R-S Scale.

An Activity Preference Sheet (APS) was constructed by the author to measure preferences for eight activities (See Appendix A). The activities consisted of bicycling, skating, backpacking, boating, horseshoes, golf, tennis, and bowling. The activities were presented on the APS in all possible pairings.

Although not so indicated on the APS, half of the physical activities (horseshoes, golf, tennis, and bowling) were considered threatening (as explained below) and the remainder nonthreatening. Threatening physical activities are operationally defined as those activities in which a score is regularly maintained. The rationale is that by

virtue of a score being maintained, a division of winner and loser is implied, with losing an indication of failure in a competitive society. Nonthreatening physical activities are defined as those which are not regularly scored.

A Program Preference Sheet (PPS) was derived by the author to measure preferences for eight television programs (See Appendix B). The programs consisted of "Hawaii Five-0", "Flip Wilson Show", "Sanford and Son", and "Maude". The programs were presented in all possible pairings on the PPS. All programs were prime time.

Although not so indicated on the PPS, half of the programs ("Hawaii Five-0", "Mannix", "Cannon", and "Kung Fu") were threatening (violent) and the remainder non-threatening. Threatening television programs are operationally defined as those programs generally regarded by graduate raters as depicting at least one attempted murder, murder or fisticuffs per program. Nonthreatening television programs were defined as those programs generally regarded by graduate raters as not depicting attempted murder, murder, or fisticuffs, but rather audience laughter.

Ten graduate students rated the PPS programs as threatening or nonthreatening using the operational definitions. The PPS programs were determined to be threatening or non-threatening by the consensus of these ratings. These ratings are presented as Appendix C.

### Procedure

Each subject took the MMPI, APS, and PPS in a private room. Subjects were told results would not be attributable to them and that there were no right or wrong answers to the tests. They were asked to be frank in their responses, and told there would be no time limits.

The constant-sum method of rating subjective dimensions (Metfessel, 1947; Comrey, 1950; Dudek and Baker, 1956; Dudek and Thoman, 1964), as it applied to the APS and PPS was explained to the subjects. In the constant-sum method, each pair of activities or programs is considered to contain 100 points to be divided among the members of the pair. The more one member of the pair is preferred to the other, the more points the preferred member receives. The other member receives the remainder of the 100 points. Any combination of points, best illustrating the subject's preferences and totaling 100 points, is possible. The constant-sum method was utilized to obtain more information than would be provided by subjects rating pair members as "more preferred" or "less preferred".

After completing the two preference sheets, the subject was administered the MMPI according to standard procedures, with one change. The subject was instructed to complete only the first 399 items plus 14 additional items circled on the form.

The mean preference of repressors for threatening television or threatening physical activities was determined by totaling all points assigned by repressors to all threatening television programs or threatening physical activities on the PPS or APS. The process was repeated for sensitizers and the middle group.

The mean preference of repressors for individual television programs or physical activities was determined by totaling all points assigned by repressors to that particular program or activity on the PPS or APS. The process was repeated for sensitizers and the middle group.

### Results

Persons scoring in the upper third of the sample's R-S Scale scores (R-S scores 45-83) were considered by the author to be sensitizers. Persons scoring in the lower third (R-S scores 10-24) were designated repressors. Persons (hereafter referred to as the middle group) scoring in the middle third of the sample's R-S Scale scores (R-S scores 26-43) were considered to be neither repressors nor sensitizers.

The mean preference scores of repressors, sensitizers, and the middle group for the threatening television programs are reported in Table 1. The more that threatening programs are preferred, the higher is the numerical value of the preference. Means were also calculated for these

three groups for their scores regarding threatening physical activities, using the APS (see Table 1).

There was not a significant ( $P = <.05$ ) relationship (simple analysis of variance- F) of the r-s dimension and preferences for threatening physical activities or television programs (see Table 1). Therefore the hypotheses of sensitizers preferring, to a greater degree than repressors, threatening television programs and threatening physical activities must be rejected. However significant trends in the directions hypothesized may be noted in Table 1.

Table 1

Mean Preference Scores of  
Sensitizers, Repressors,  
and Middle Group

Preference Area	Repressors	Middle	Sensitizers	F
Threatening Television	1375.5	1391.2	1460.7	.758*
Threatening Physical Activities	1216.6	1288.2	1343.8	1.44*

\*=nonsignificant,  $P = <.05$ .

None of the preferences of repressors, sensitizers, and the middle group for each television program and physical activity (see Table 2) differed significantly ( $P = <.05$ ). However, repressors' preferences for individual programs



and activities tended to differ from sensitizers' preferences in the hypothesized directions in all cases except "Maude".

Table 2

Mean Preference Scores for Individual  
Television Programs and  
Physical Activities

Activity or Program	Repressors	Middle	Sensitizers	F
Bicycling	429.7	418.3	407.8	.253*
Skating	288.5	305.8	265.2	.527*
Backpacking	407.8	344.9	343.0	1.34*
Boating	457.5	440.4	440.3	.138*
Horseshoes (T)	212.7	202.0	230.0	.450*
Golf (T)	289.1	304.3	293.0	.047*
Tennis (T)	373.8	406.4	434.6	.464*
Bowling (T)	336.8	375.6	400.9	1.50*
Hawaii 5-0 (T)	355.1	354.9	358.5	.009*
Mannix (T)	305.3	346.5	342.0	.939*
Cannon (T)	315.1	310.0	358.5	1.50*
Kung Fu (T)	400.1	379.8	401.8	.146*
MaryTylerMooreShow	313.2	263.1	308.4	.745*
Flip Wilson Show	362.5	349.3	298.25	2.02*
Sanford and Son	425.1	449.9	388.2	1.82*
Maude	323.9	344.3	344.6	.141*

(T) = Threatening

\* = nonsignificant,  $P < .05$ .

In many of the individual preferences however, the middle group didn't fall between the sensitizers and repressors in their preferences.

Age differences (see Table 3) for repressors and sensitizers and middle group were nonsignificant ( $P < .05$ ). There were tendencies in the data for repressors to be older than sensitizers.

Table 3

Means, Ranges and F for Age of  
Repressors, Sensitizers and  
Middle Group

Group	Mean	Range	F
Sensitizers	21.47 years	18-31	
Middle Group	23.31 years	17-37	2.49*
Repressors	23.63 years	19-28	

\*=nonsignificant,  $P < .05$ .

Sex differences (see Table 4) for repressors and sensitizers were nonsignificant ( $P < .05$ ). There were tendencies in the data, with males tending to be repressors and females tending to be sensitizers.

Table 4  
 Repression-Sensitization Scale Scores  
 for Males and Females

Group	Mean R-S Scale Score	Standard Deviation	<u>t</u> Score
Males	36.35	19.73	.371*
Females	38.19	17.88	df=58

\* = nonsignificant,  $P = < .05$ .

Table 5  
 Social Desirability and Threatening  
 Leisure Preference Scores

Leisure Preference	Group Preference Scores		Group Preference Scores	
	High SD	Mid SD	High K	Mid K
Threatening Television	1385.87	1379.68	1291.38	1451.09
	1461.64		1420.22	
	F = .881*		F = 1.43*	
Threatening Physical Activities	1266.86	1203.03	1237.95	1302.05
	1378.65		1308.20	
	F = 3.50**		F = .573*	

\* = nonsignificant, \*\* = significant,  $P = < .05$ .

The preferences in Table 5 were computed in the same manner as earlier described. However there was a significant relationship ( $F = 3.50$ ,  $P = < .05$ ) between social desirability

(SD) and threatening physical activity preferences, with persons scoring low on the SD Scale most preferring threatening physical activities, middle SD scorers least preferring, and high SD scorers in the middle range of preference for threatening physical activities.

### Discussion

The first hypothesis predicted sensitizers would prefer threatening (violent) television programs to a significant degree over repressors. This hypothesis was not confirmed. A second hypothesis, predicting sensitizers would prefer threatening (competitive) physical activities to a significantly greater degree than repressors was also not confirmed. These results tend to confirm studies (Woods, 1971) which failed to obtain differential responses to threat by repressors and sensitizers.

Interpretation of these nonsignificant differences among repressors and sensitizers raises the possibility, that the threatening programs and activities were not perceived as threatening by the subjects. This would preclude the differential responding to threat of repressors and sensitizers. Thus television programs may be perceived as something differing from the "real" environment. And the physical activities in this study may not be perceived as competitive in the same manner as physical activities in a tournament with possible material and status gain or loss.

Although repressors and sensitizers failed to differ significantly in their preferences for threatening programs or physical activities, there were tendencies in the data (Table 1) in the hypothesized directions. These tendencies prompted the author to investigate whether any of the threatening programs and activities were differentially responded to by repressors and sensitizers. None of the individual programs or physical activities were preferred differentially by repressors or sensitizers to a significant degree. However all threatening programs and activities were more preferred by sensitizers than repressors, although nonsignificantly. In addition, "Maude", a program designated by the author as nonthreatening, displayed a nonsignificantly greater preference by sensitizers than repressors. This suggests, in light of "Maude"'s oftentimes sexual and racial themes, that threats other than violence may have confounded the nonthreatening designation of the nonthreatening programs.

The present study points out the difficulty often encountered in controlling extraneous variables, in "in vivo" studies. The study also points out the difficulty of assuring that stimuli designated threatening by the experimenter are threatening to the subjects.

While acknowledging the possible lack of threat or the presence of unaccounted threat in the programs and activities, the author investigated the data for age and

sexual differences in repressors and sensitizers. No significant differences were found for repressors' or sensitizers' age or sex, contrary to Schwartz (1972) and partially confirming Fredericks (1973).

Social desirability measures (SD, K) were significantly correlated with the R-S Scale, confirming findings of Joy (1963) and Abbott (1972), and raising the question of whether the same concept is measured by the R-S, SD, and K Scales. A significant relationship ( $P < .05$ ) between SD scores and threatening physical activity preferences was obtained which suggests that SD may measure some factor absent in the R-S Scale.

Although no hypotheses were confirmed (Table 1), trends in the data imply the utility of additional study in the area of leisure preferences and the r-s dimension. The present study suggests a need for future control refinements.

#### Summary and Conclusions

This study attempted to determine if sensitizers would prefer threatening television programs and physical activities to a greater degree than repressors.

Sixty college undergraduates were administered the Repression-Sensitization Scale, a television program preference sheet, and a physical activity preference sheet. The data indicated no significant differences in repressors' and sensitizers' preferences for threatening

(violent) television programs and threatening (competitive) physical activities. The possibly nonthreatening nature of stimuli designated by the author as threatening, and the possible presence of extraneous variables was discussed.

Nonsignificant trends in the data suggest future research with leisure preferences, utilizing additional control measures can provide additional data concerning the repression-sensitization dimension and personality theory.

## Appendix A

ACTIVITY PREFERENCE SHEET		BICYCLING-SKATING
BOWLING-HORSESHOES	BACKPACKING-BOWLING	GOLF-BOWLING
BICYCLING-BOWLING	BOATING-TENNIS	HORSESHOES-GOLF
SKATING-GOLF	GOLF-TENNIS	SKATING-BOATING
BOATING-SKATING	TENNIS-BACKPACKING	BACKPACKING-BOATING
TENNIS-BICYCLING	BACKPACKING-SKATING	BOATING-HORSESHOES
HORSESHOES-SKATING	BACKPACKING-GOLF	BACKPACKING-BICYCLING
TENNIS-SKATING	BOATING-GOLF	BOWLING-BOATING
TENNIS-BOWLING	HORSESHOES-BACKPACKING	BICYCLING-HORSESHOES
HORSESHOES-TENNIS	BOATING-BICYCLING	BICYCLING-GOLF



## Appendix B

PROGRAM PREFERENCE SHEET		MARY TYLER-SANFORD MOORE SHOW AND SON	
HAWAII - KUNG FU FIVE O	MAUDE - HAWAII FIVE O	MANNIX	HAWAII FIVE O
MARY TYLER - HAWAII MOORE SHOW FIVE O	CANNON - FLIP WILSON SHOW	KUNG FU -	MANNIX
SANFORD - MANNIX AND SON	MANNIX - FLIP WILSON SHOW	SANFORD - HAWAII AND SON FIVE O	
CANNON - SANFORD AND SON	FLIP WILSON - MAUDE SHOW	MAUDE -	CANNON
FLIP WILSON - MARY TYLER SHOW MOORE SHOW	MAUDE - SANFORD AND SON	CANNON -	KUNG FU
KUNG FU - SANFORD AND SON	MANNIX - MARY TYLER MOORE SHOW	MAUDE -	MANNIX
MAUDE - MARY TYLER MOORE SHOW	FLIP WILSON - SANFORD SHOW AND SON	CANNON -	MANNIX
HAWAII - CANNON FIVE O	FLIP WILSON - HAWAII SHOW FIVE O	KUNG FU -	MAUDE
MARY TYLER - KUNG FU MOORE SHOW	KUNG FU - FLIP WILSON SHOW	CANNON -	MARY TYLER MOORE SHOW

Appendix C  
 Graduate Student Television  
 Program Ratings

Program	Rating		
	T	N	NT
Hawaii Five-0	10	0	0
Mannix	10	0	0
Cannon	10	0	0
Kung Fu	10	0	0
Maude	0	0	10
Mary Tyler Moore Show	0	1	9
Flip Wilson Show	0	1	9
Sanford and Son	0	1	9

T=Threatening    N=Neither    NT=Nonthreatening

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