THE INFLUENCE OF NEWSPAPER PRESENTATIONS UPON THE GROWTH OF CRIME AND OTHER ANTI-SOCIAL ACTIVITY

FRANCES FENTON
The University of Chicago

CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

(1) STATEMENT OF PROBLEM; (2) EXPLANATION OF STANDPOINT; (3) PRELIMINARY DEFINITIONS

1. The present study is an attempt to investigate the question, How and to what extent do newspaper presentations of crime and other anti-social activities influence the growth of crime and other types of anti-social activity? That is, do people get the idea of, or the impulse to, committing criminal and other anti-social acts from the reading of such acts or similar acts in the newspapers? It is not necessary at this point to define criminal acts any further than to say that, although they vary somewhat in different states and at different times, penal codes adequately define them as "an act or omission to act forbidden by law and punishable upon conviction." The expression, "other anti-social acts" refers to activities not technically criminal, but perhaps immoral in character, and detrimental to group life, which have not yet, and may never, become incorporated in penal codes.

It is not possible, of course, to make a catalogue of these acts here. The following definitions of the term *anti-social* will make its meaning, as here used, clearer. *The Century Dictionary and Encyclopedia,* quoting Giddings,[1] defines *anti-social* as, "Specifically in sociology, pertaining to a class of persons devoid of normal social instincts and showing criminal tendencies," and also, *anti-sociality* as "A quality, act, or habit of an individual, class, or group which is antagonistic to social feeling, habit, or interest. Extreme anti-sociality is crimi-

[1] *Principles of Sociology* (Macmillan, 1896), 72.

nality."[2] In a later chapter the relations as above suggested of anti-social to technically criminal acts will be discussed, and what is meant by "news of crime and other anti-social activities" will be worked out in detail.

The causal relationship implied in the question proposed above, "Do people get the idea of, or the impulse to, committing criminal and other anti-social acts from the reading of such acts or similar acts in the newspapers?" is intended to include in general all the influences of newspapers upon anti-social activity, both conscious and unconscious on the part of the person so influenced, and more specifically those influences coming from the general-news section, to a consideration of which this study is mainly limited.[3] That is, it includes (1) cases of so-called pure suggestion in which the person affected is unaware, in part or wholly, of the part the newspaper account has had in influencing his activity; (2) cases in which the person consciously models his act upon a similar act related or described in the newspaper; and (3) cases in which newspaper accounts have had an influence in the gradual building-up of standards, ideals, images, which are partial, even if only remote, causes of anti-social activity.

The aspect of the newspaper question here dealt with has been distinctly limited to the problem as above stated, and to the attempt to get actual evidence for or against the assumption made so generally today, that the newspaper has an influence, through suggestion, upon the growth of crime and other anti-social activity. Many other phases of newspaper influence as a social factor of immense importance need scientific investigation. But in this particular study no attempt is made to deal with them, nor is any attempt here made to discover what is the chief difficulty with the newspaper, nor the causes of the difficulty or difficulties.

Various aspects of the newspaper problems have been receiving a large share of attention recently in the magazines. There

[2] The definition of *anti-sociality* quoted by the dictionary is taken from the *Amer. Jour. Psych.*, XIII, 586. It is a serious defect in Bliss's *Encyclopaedia of Social Reform* that it contains no definition of *anti-social* or *anti-sociality*.

[3] Cf. Chap. iv.

is a widespread conviction that something is wrong with the newspaper, but a great variety of opinion as to what the core of the trouble is. The newspaper is charged with being "commercial," "sensational," "dishonest," "trivial," "impertinent," "vulgar," "suggestive," etc. Theodore Roosevelt (quoted by J. E. Rogers in *The American Newspaper,* Pref., p. ix) has said that newspapers "habitually and continually and as a matter of business practice every form of mendacity known to man, from the suppression of the truth and the suggestion of the false to the lie direct." Some writers bring all of these indictments mentioned above against the newspaper, while others limit their charges against it to some one of them, such as that it does not give the news, that it is commercially dishonest, etc.[4]

Professor Ross has recently written:

> Most of the criticism launched at our daily newspapers hits the wrong party. Granted they sensationalize vice and crime, "play up" trivialities, exploit the private affairs of prominent people, embroider facts, and offend good taste with screech, blare, and color. But all this may be only the means of meeting the demand of "giving the public what it wants." The newspaper cannot be expected to remain dignified and serious now that it caters to the common millions, instead of, as formerly, to the professional and business classes. To interest errand-boy and factory girl and raw immigrant, it had to become spicy, amusing, emotional, and chromatic. For these, blame then, the American people.
>
> There is *just one* [italics here are mine] deadly, damning count against the daily newspaper as it is coming to be, namely, *It does not give the news.* For all its pretensions, many a daily newspaper is not "giving the public what it wants." . . . . As usual, no one is to blame.[5]

In making this statement, the author of *Social Control* takes a vulnerable position, both sociologically and factually. On the one hand, he falls into the rather common and uncritical popular error of stating that the character of the newspaper of today is the result of a response to popular demand and at the same time contradicts himself by declaring that the one essential criticism of the newspaper is that it does not give the news which the public demands. It is mere conjecture to pick out certain characteristics of newspapers and to assert that they

[4] Cf. John A. Macy, "Our Chromatic Journalism," *Bookman,* XXIV, 127.

[5] "The Suppression of Important News," *Atlantic Monthly,* March, 1910, p. 303.

are what the public wants. The public buys the paper as it is. It is no more possible to show that the public does not want absence of news than to show that it does want sensationalism. Speculation as to what the public wants does not offer a good social criterion of what to give the public.[6]

The suggestive power of the newspaper through its accounts of anti-social activities, through its comic supplements, through its possible influence on children, on the weak and unstable, on women, etc., has been emphasized by a number of writers.[7] The psychology of suggestion has been mentioned in this connection and explained in a popular way.[8] Also on this assumption, various practical steps have been taken to protect certain classes of people mentioned above from the effects of newspaper suggestion to anti-social activity. An example of this is to be found in the following statement from a letter written by Mr. F. G. Pettigrove, President Massachusetts Prison Commission, that "no daily papers are given to prisoners in the state prison or reformatories" of Massachusetts, and also "it is the general policy of penal institutions in America not to admit a daily newspaper."

Mrs. Isabel C. Barrows, in an article entitled "Papers and Magazines in Prisons and Reformatories," says that at first no newspapers were allowed in prisons.

> In old times this was considered a deserved part of his [the prisoner's] punishment. Afterward religious reading was allowed in prisons. Still later some prisons permitted the ordinary newspapers to come within the walls, though the better-managed institutions limited them to the county papers. The sensational yellow journals with their exaggerated delineations of crime, their atrocious stories appealing to scandal-mongers, are not allowed in any well-conducted prison. By their harmful influence they

[6] See "Is an Honest and Sane Newspaper Press Possible?" by an Independent Journalist, *Amer. Jour. Sociology,* November, 1909, p. 321; and "What the Public Wants," *The Dial,* XLVII, 500.

[7] "Crime against American Children—Comic Supplement of Sunday Paper," *Ladies Home Journal,* January, 1909, XXVI, 5; "Are Newspapers Weakening Our National Fibre?" *Current Literature,* XLI, 517; "Newspaper Responsibility for Lawlessness," *Nation,* LXXVII, 151; "Newspapers' Sensations and Suggestions," *Independent,* LXVII, 449–51.

[8] S. W. Pennypacker, "Sensational Journalism and the Remedy," *North American Review,* CXC, 590.

help to fill the prisons, but the abnormal taste for such reading is never gratified while men are behind the bars.[9]

She says also, that stories of crime are not included in the papers printed in these institutions.

The present problem is a phase of the general problem of the control of stimuli to activity for the purpose of diminishing crime. It is scarcely necessary to point out the importance of this problem. However, a few general statements will indicate *how* important it is, as well as emphasize its connection with the present study.

We know very little as yet about the way in which habits grow up in the individual. Orthodox psychology, while it has given us many conclusions which are of value for social practice, has centered its attention almost exclusively on conscious processes in the individual and, with the exception of the studies of certain French and American writers[10] who have definitely treated suggestion and hypnotism, but who in only a few cases may be classed as orthodox psychologists, has dealt very slightly with the unconscious and only slightly conscious activities which form so large a part of our conduct.[11] Any valid control of conduct, individual, or social must be based on a knowledge of this unconscious source of our stimuli to activity, as well as on a knowledge of conscious processes.

Little as we know in detail of the way in which habits are unconsciously acquired or grow up in the individual (because we know so little of what the individual starts out in life with), we do know the general fact that habits are unconsciously as well as consciously acquired, and that a part, at any

[9] *Memorial Volume No. 2*, Russell Sage Foundation, Charities Pub. Committee, 1910, p. *227*.

[10] Notably Binet, Janet, Ribot, LeBon and Sidis, Ross, James, Morton Prince.

[11] Cf. William McDougall, *Introduction to Social Psychology* (Methuen & Co., 1908), 3, 15; also *Physiological Psychology* (J. M. Dent & Co., 1905), 1, 2. For statements as to the province of psychology bearing out the above assertion, see James, *Psychology* (Henry Holt, 1889), 1; Wundt, *Outlines of Psych.* (tr. Judd 2d revis. Eng. ed., Wilhelm Engleman, 1902), 3, *23*; Titchener, *Outlines of Psych.* (Macmillan, 1905, 3d revis. ed.), 6; Stout, *Manual of Psych.* (Hinds & Noble, 1889), 4, 5; Thorndike, *Elements of Psych.* (A. G. Seiler, 1907, 2d ed.), 1; H. Höffding, *Outlines of Psych.* (tr. Lowndes, Macmillan, 1893), 1; Angell, *Psychology* (Henry Holt & Co., 1908, 4th ed.), 1.

rate, of the material out of which they grow are the social stimuli with which individuals come in contact—other people's activities, the drama, literature, art, newspapers, etc. We have enough evidence, certainly, to be sure that social control, the control of conduct, is in large part the control of unperceived stimuli to conduct, especially early in the lives of individuals. We are just beginning to evaluate our education, our drama, our novels, and our other forms of art and social stimuli on an objectively social basis and thus on a functional basis. The really preventive and constructive work of the juvenile court and of juvenile protective associations, as well as that of other ameliorative and preventive organizations, such as the New York Society for the Suppression of Vice, is really based on this principle, that of pushing preventive measures as far back in the environment as possible, and thus of controlling the conscious and unconscious formation of habits.

In this process of evaluation, the newspaper as a social factor of immense importance, must be included. For the reason, then, that the newspaper is far-reaching in its influence,[12] and that it repeats and includes stimuli from other sources as well, from the drama, the novel, etc., and because of the general conviction that newspapers do incite to anti-social activity, this study has been undertaken.

2. The general standpoint from which the investigation is made is that of a study of both conscious and unconscious suggestion and the effect of such suggestion from a constructively social point of view.[13] It is necessary here merely to state the fact which has been pointed out above, that much of our conduct is of an unconscious and but dimly conscious sort, as compared with fully conscious and reasoned activity; that it is stimulated by a great variety of suggestions, over which

[12] The number of daily newspapers in the United States reported by Ayer and Sons' *Newspaper Annual and Directory,* 1910, is 2,467. On the basis of figures for 1905, the *Bulletin of the Bureau of the Census,* U. S. Depart. of Commerce and Labor, Table 76, gives the average circulation per issue as 21,079,130. This would allow an average of one paper for every four inhabitants or one paper for every family.

[13] Cf. p. 342. In chap. iii this general standpoint will be discussed in detail as a basis for the whole treatment.

we have, as yet, very little control. The process of stimulus and response between newspaper and human activity, which goes on sometimes consciously and sometimes unconsciously, is the subject of study here.

3. The definitions of anti-social matter[14] which have been adopted in this study are functional definitions from a social, rather than from a juridical or conventional, standpoint, that is, definitions based upon the objective results of news rather than upon intent. This is the only valid or exact criterion that can be made use of, because, in the first place, the intent of a piece of news cannot be determined with any exactness, and in the second place, no matter what the intent, the fact of social importance is the result of the news, the way it is taken or the effect it has. There is no necessary correspondence between the intent and the result. A bad intent usually has a bad effect, but a good intent (especially if accompanied by ignorance of actual conditions) may also have a bad effect. The effect is both the socially important and the calculable element, and has therefore been adopted as the basis of the definitions here used.

The use of this basis for the definition of anti-social matter though new in connection with the newspaper question, is not so new in other connections. It has legal precedent back of it, as well as decisions handed down by the New York and English Courts. The Report of the New York Society for the Suppression of Vice (1895) contains the following:

> The common law of England and America for more than a century and a half has been that "what tends to corrupt society is indictable" (p. 20).
>
> The Penal Code of the State of New York, by the use of six adjectives, in most positive language, declares that "obscene, lewd, lascivious, indecent, filthy, and disgusting books, pictures, pamphlets, papers, etc., shall not be sold, lent, or given away, nor shall anyone have in possession for such purposes" (p. 20).
>
> The Supreme Court, General Term, for this district (N.Y.) and the Court of Appeals in a case where nine photographs, which were conceded to have been copied from works of art, were sold and the seller convicted, has defined the law clearly. It said:
>
> "The statute makes the selling of an obscene and indecent picture a misdemeanor.

[14] Cf. p. 342.

"There is no exception by reason of *any special intent* in making the sale.

"It would, we conceive, be no answer to an indictment under the statute for the sale of an obscene picture, that it was sold to a person not liable to be injured by it, or that it was a picture, in respect to execution, of distinguished merit.—*People* vs. *Miller,* 96 N.Y. 408" (p. 21).

The Lord Chief Justice of England said, in connection with a book alleged by the defendant to be printed in the interests of Protestant religion, "I think the test of *obscenity* is this: Whether the tendency of the matter charged as obscenity is to deprave and corrupt those whose minds are open to such immoral influences, and into whose hands a publication of this sort may fall" (p. 24).

Likewise, Parmelee, in his *Sociology and Anthropology in Relation to Criminal Procedure,*[15] says in discussing a basis for the treatment of the criminal:

Thus gradually moral liberty will be replaced by *dangerousness to society* as a basis for penal responsibility (p. 101). . . . . A study of various kinds of crimes reveals that premeditation and intention do not furnish a complete or universal criterion for crime" (p. 104). . . . . Moral responsibility should be abolished as a fundamental criterion of criminality and should be replaced by the dangerousness of the criminal to society" (p. 212).

In other chapters also he brings out the necessity for an objective, scientific basis for treatment of crime, as the only adequately social criterion possible.

A more detailed explanation of the definitions used will be given in chap. iv. Chap ii will be devoted to a discussion of previous treatments of the problem.

CHAPTER II

ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM OF PREVIOUS TREATMENTS

The problems of contemporary journalism have so far been treated chiefly in scattered articles in newspapers and magazines. The few books on the subject, such as E. L. Shuman's *Practical Journalism,*[1] and J. L. Given's *Making a Newspaper,*[2] are written from the point of view of newspaper men, and in the main discuss problems from their standpoint rather than from that of the public. They take the current journalistic ideals and

[15] Macmillan, 1908.

[1] D. Appleton & Co., 1909.

[2] Henry Holt & Co., 1907.

aims for granted. In fact they are not critical and constructive. They are, however, significant as showing the aims and methods connected with newspapers and the close relation between these aims and methods and the results in the newspapers themselves. They may be ignored here, however, as not bearing at all directly on the problem of this study. In the following discussion the most important articles which are related in any way to the problem as stated in chap. i will be discussed and criticized. They may be classified under the following heads:

1. Those treatments dealing directly or indirectly with the problem of suggestion in newspapers.

The problem of the effect of suggestion through newspapers has either been neglected or, where recognized, has not been analyzed, so that there are no estimates either of the way in which suggestion from the newspaper operates psychologically, or of its extent.

2. Those treatments in which an analytical study of the papers themselves has been made.

In the first class of treatments the effect of suggestion is merely treated as conjectural, or at least no direct evidence of the effect is presented. The suggestive effect of newspapers is inferred by analogy with the working of suggestion and imitation in connection with other stimuli, or newspaper accounts of such a character as to be suggestive are cited and the effect inferred.[3]

Professor W. I. Thomas, in "The Psychology of Yellow Journalism,"[4] a discussion of the question, Why does yellow journalism prosper? says:

> The yellow journal . . . . is a positive agent for vice and crime. The condition of morality, as well as of mental life, in a community depends on the prevailing copies of the newspaper. A people is profoundly influenced by whatever is persistently brought to its attention. A good illustration of

[3] "Lessons in Crime Fifty Cents per Month," *Outlook*, February, 1908, p. 276; "Are Newspapers Weakening Our National Fibre?" *Current Literature*, XLI, 517; "Newspaper Responsibility for Lawlessness," *Nation*, LXXVII, 131; "Newspapers' Sensations and Suggestions," *Independent*, LXII, 449; "Sensational Journalism and the Remedy," *loc. cit.*; "Criminal Journalism," *Indep.*, LXV, 1256.

[4] *American Magazine*, March, 1908, p. 491.

this is the fact that an article of commerce—a food, a luxury, a medicine, or a stimulant—can always be sold in immense quantities if it can be persistently and largely advertised. In the same way, advertising crime, vice, and vulgarity on a scale unheard of before in the annals of history has the same effect—it increases crime, vice, and vulgarity enormously.

This represents the most direct and psychological statement of the matter that has yet been made. The articles of this first class are themselves simply evidence of the widespread belief that newspapers have an influence in increasing crime, which belief has in all probability at its foundation, in part, a knowledge of actual cases of this influence.

The second class of studies is of a different sort. J. G. Speed[5] has made a comparative study of the Sunday issues of four New York papers for dates in 1881 and 1893, to show changes in the amount of space devoted to different sorts of news. His results were presented in a table entitled "Columns of Reading Matter in New York Newspapers, April 17, 1881, and April 16, 1893," which is as follows:

Subjects	Tribune 1881	Tribune 1893	World 1881	World 1893	Times 1881	Times 1893	Sun 1881	Sun 1893
Editorial	5.00	5.00	4.75	4.00	6.00	5.00	4.00	4.00
Religious	2.00	0.00	0.75	0.00	1.00	0.00	0.50	1.00
Scientific	1.00	0.75	0.00	2.00	1.00	0.00	0.00	2.50
Political	3.00	3.75	0.00	10.50	1.00	4.00	1.00	3.50
Literary	15.00	5.00	1.00	2.00	18.00	12.00	5.75	6.50
Gossip	1.00	23.00	1.00	63.00	0.50	16.75	2.00	13.00
Scandals	0.00	1.50	0.00	1.50	1.00	2.50	0.00	2.00
Sporting	1.00	6.50	2.50	16.50	3.00	10.50	0.50	17.50
Fiction	0.00	7.00	1.50	6.50	1.00	1.50	0.00	11.50
Historical	2.50	2.50	2.75	4.00	2.50	1.50	4.25	14.00
Music and drama	2.50	4.00	1.50	11.00	4.00	7.00	0.00	3.50
Crimes and criminals	0.00	0.50	0.00	6.00	0.00	1.00	0.00	0.00
Art	1.00	1.00	3.00	3.00	2.00	0.00	0.25	1.25

For the problem here being considered the most interesting figures in his table are those showing the change in the number of columns of matter dealing with *crime and criminals* and *scandals* from 1881 to 1893. In every paper, it will be noted, the amount of *scandals* had increased, and in all except the *Sun* the amount of material on *crimes and criminals* had increased. Moreover, Mr. Speed remarks, referring to the papers

[5] "Do Newspapers Now Give the News?" *Forum*, XV, 705.

of 1893,[6] "A great many of these things mentioned as mere gossip and spoken of as scandalous would be totally unfit to reproduce." Thus the figures should be larger to represent a complete estimate of news of *scandal* and *crime and criminals*. A difficulty, however, with Mr. Speed's tables for comparative purposes is that he nowhere defines matter pertaining to *scandals* and to *crimes and criminals*. It is not clear, therefore, what news he includes in and excludes from these categories. Nor does he take as the basis of his classification the objective effect of newspaper matter, but the form in which it appears. Consequently it is possible that matter dealing with scandal, crime and criminals in the form of pictures, editorials, book-reviews, etc., does not appear as *scandal* and *crimes and criminals* in his tables. Any adequate study of the effect of the newspaper must consider all forms of newspaper matter. The conclusion in the article is,

> There is a conventional phrase that is more or less believed in, "A newspaper is the history of the world for a day." . . . . If the New York newspapers ever recorded history accurately and with any appreciation of the significance of the events occurring, they do it less now than heretofore, for now everything is so covered with the millinery of sensationalism that none but the wisest can detect the truth beneath.[7]

The writer's interest, it is clear, is in the truth and falsity of the news rather than in its effect upon the growth of crime and other anti-social activity.

Delos F. Wilcox, in an article on *The American Newspaper*,[8] has made a tabulated and numerical estimate of the matter in 240 newspapers. Of these 240 papers, 136 were in English, 11 were foreign, 147 were analyzed in detail for the same day in June, 1898, and September, 1898, and a few in other months. A full week's issues in September, 1898 and 1899, of the *New York Times* and of the *Chicago Record* were analyzed.

He classified newspaper matter as follows:

1. News: (*a*) War News, (*b*) General News: (1) Foreign, (2) Political, (3) Crime and Vice, (4) Miscellaneous; (*c*) Special: (1) Business, (2) Sporting, (3) Society. 2. Illustrations. 3. Literature. 4. Opinion: (*a*)

[6] *Op. cit.*, 708. [7] *Ibid.*, 711.

[8] *Annals Amer. Acad. Polit. and Soc. Sci.*, XVI (July, 1900), 56.

Editorials, (*b*) Letters and Exchange. 5. Advertisements (*a*) Want, (*b*) Retail, (*c*) Medical, (*d*) Political and Legal, (*e*) Miscellaneous, (*f*) Self.

He finds that "news[9] of crime and vice, on account of which the paper is so often denounced, fills on an average only 3.1 per cent of the whole space," though the percentage ranges from 19.8 to 0 in New York City.[10] He defines crime and vice as follows: "News of crime and vice includes accounts of the commission of crimes and of the trial and punishment of criminals, news of suicides, brawls, drunkenness, prostitution, divorce proceedings, etc."[11] It is clear that Professor Wilcox' criterion of news of crime and vice is not that of the objective effect of news, but of the form and content of news.[12] Matter vicious and criminal in effect appearing in literary, editorial, or illustrative form is excluded by him from this category. In conclusion, Wilcox says, "Yet the great mass of the information we get in reading the papers affects our action only vaguely and remotely if at all."[13] Evidently Wilcox' estimate of the effect of the newspaper is conjectural, based, apparently, upon the subjective results in his own and similar cases and not upon a psychological and sufficiently extensive objective study of suggestion in connection with newspapers. His estimate of 3.1 per cent as the average of news of crime and vice[14] for the entire country is not significant in this connection for two reasons: first, because the terms "crime" and "vice" as he uses them are not sufficiently inclusive of the different forms of reading-matter in which they may occur to be socially valuable in estimating newspaper influence; and second, because an average which neglects the matter of circulation is an insufficient indication of a characteristic fact about American newspapers as a whole. The important fact is not that the average

[9] The word "news" is used here instead of the more inclusive terms "matter" or "material" because it is the term employed by the writer under discussion and designates merely "news proper," which he is discussing.

[10] *Op. cit.*, 67. [11] *Ibid.*, 63.

[12] "Under 'news' should be included every item that is a first-hand report of current events."—*Ibid.*, 61.

[13] *Ibid.*, 87.

[14] "Vice," as he uses the term, is an indefinite and inaccurate category.

percentage of news of crime and vice in New York City, for example, is 4.9,[15] but that it ranges from 18.8 per cent to 0, and that it is highest the greater the circulation of the paper.[16]

The Sunday edition of the *Chicago Tribune,* July 25, 1909, contained comparative statistics gathered by Arthur T. Street as to the amount of crime and other news in the American papers for 1908.[17] He defines criminal news from the legal and conventional standpoint, counts by items rather than by inches, and concludes that all is well with the American newspaper, because the percentage of news of crime in it is (on his estimate) low.[18] But we are not told either how many or what newspapers were studied, and the kind of news and crime considered is indefinitely described as "leading news" only. For scientific and constructive purposes, therefore, his tables and the conclusions from them are not useful.

J. E. Rogers has undertaken a popular study of contemporary journalism in this country.[19] He states that 15,000 papers were studied, but not how they were studied, nor are we given exact results of the study, but merely generalizations from the results. We are given no definition of crime and vice, terms which he uses, and thus we do not know what matter is included under this head. We infer that he is considering crime and vice from the juridical and conventional rather than from the

[15] *Op. cit.,* 68. [16] Cf. Chap. v.

[17] "The Truth About the Newspapers. A Remarkable Summary, by Arthur T. Street of American Publications, Proving that Crime and Sensationalism Occupy a Comparatively Small Space in the Volume of the Day's News."

[18] His main table follows

Total crimes and scandals	1,343
Educational and scientific	397
Medical and surgical	268
Religious	390
States and cities	695
Panics, banks, business	442
Railroads	1,140
Foreign news	2,280
President of United States	550
Prominent men	527
Labor	659
Total	7,348

[19] *The American Newspaper* (The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1910).

social viewpoint. The figures which he uses to show relative amounts of news of crime and vice and other news are not the results of his own investigation, but are quoted from Wilcox.[20]

Mr. Rogers and a number of others emphasize the responsibility of the American public for American newspapers. This emphasis is a good one for certain purposes. That is, people could do more than they do to express their disapproval of bad newspapers by not buying that kind. There are, however, other facts in the case. (1) The public is unorganized and therefore is not in a situation to control the newspaper as the newspaper can control it—any more than it has found it easy, or even possible at first, to control large business corporations. (2) Moreover, the public has protested and is protesting all of the time. Rogers' book is one protest, and many articles, some of which have been cited, besides letters, libel suits, and individual protests that never come to light, are others. (3) But it is not merely a question of what the public will buy if sufficiently stimulated, although this is important. The effect on the public of what the newspaper sells them is the important problem.[21] That is, we cannot discuss the taste, the morals, the ideals of the public without including in our discussion the factors that co-operate in fixing and changing taste, morals, and ideals. The old dilemma as to which comes first, demand or supply, the newspaper or people's demand for the newspaper, has given place to a point of view in which we recognize the interaction of demand on supply and of supply on demand. The control by the consumer of the quality of the supply of any commodity, is difficult. In the case of pure food, shoes and hats, and of any article in the region of fashion, the consumer finds it exceedingly difficult to exercise control over supply. Consumers are unorganized and are themselves influenced by advertising. Even when organized, as in the case of the Consumers' League, they accomplish very little relatively. What control of supply has been gained, has been obtained by means of definite legislation.[22] Mr.

[20] Wilcox, *op. cit.*

[21] For a good discussion of this question of what the public wants, see *The Dial, op. cit.*, 500.

[22] Pure food laws, laws against the sale of dangerous drugs, etc., are examples.

Rogers, and others, moreover, ignore the relative circulation of yellow, conservative, and sensational newspapers, in estimating the effect of newspapers. He admits the bad effect of the yellow paper, but since he considers the sensational newspaper the American type, he ignores the importance of the enormous circulation of the yellow journal as affecting American life.[23]

In a recent article on the newspaper in the *Independent*,[24] the purpose is stated to be to determine "about what percentage of the news items are to be approved from an educational point of view." It adds, "This study . . . . embraces the daily issues for a period of three months of the current year" (1909–10).[25] Having eliminated the editorial page and advertisements from his estimate, Mr. Mathews counts the number of items under 177 headings. Items occupying less than an inch of space were not included, nor such as regularly appear under *Died, Matrimonial, Weather,* etc. The headings were then grouped under:

Demoralizing, with 2,289 items, or 22.8 per cent
Unwholesome, with 1,684 items, or 16.8 per cent
Trivial, with 2,124 items, or 21.2 per cent
Worth while, with 3,932 items, or 39.2 per cent

Demoralizing and unwholesome news thus represented 39.6 per cent of the items in a New York daily of wide circulation and described as "acknowledged to be one of the best."[26] But the numerical results obtained by the several studies already given are not comparable because of the varying bases used in estimating the news of crime. Mr. Mathews' purpose, as indicated above, represents a distinct advance over previous treatments of

[23] Rogers quotes from Wilcox to show the increase in the percentage of space occupied by news of crime and vice with increase of circulation, showing that in papers of 40,000 circulation and more this percentage is 4.2, while in papers of 7,500 to 20,000 circulation it is only 3.6. (Rogers, *op. cit.*, 50.) He further says, "Quantitatively, an examination of yellow and conservative papers shows that the former class of papers devote 20 per cent of their space to reports of crime and vice, while the ordinary conservative newspaper gives but 5 per cent" (p. 54).

[24] Byron C. Mathews, "A Study of a New York Daily," *Independent,* January 13, 1910, p. 82.

[25] *Ibid.*, 84.

[26] *Ibid.*, 83.

this question, in that his standpoint has shifted to an objective or educational one. His categories for classifying newspaper matter, however, are far too indefinite and subjective to be strictly dependable: the line between demoralizing and unwholesome is a shifting, not even an approximately stationary, one.

A recent article in the *Outlook*[27] has the most explicit definition of one type of anti-social news that has yet appeared, with the exception possibly of Wilcox'.[28] It gives examples and explains why the news is anti-social. Part of the introduction and typical cases are here given from the article:

> Attention is asked to the following extracts, clipped during one month from one newspaper—one of the best in its state, claiming to be the best in six states—and comprising only those items of news that gave specific directions for committing the crimes reported. There was ten times as much educative material for would-be lawbreakers, that anyone not feeble-minded or insane would interpret by the very act of understanding what was done or attempted; but in these several cases the lesson in crime was patiently and lovingly unfolded and explained, so that anyone so caring to do could add it to his or her repertory.
>
> STRANGER'S VISIT PROVES COSTLY
>
> [September 18]
>
> This begins: "Stephen A. B.———, of — Broadway, has told the police of a new dodge, by which he was relieved of fifty dollars late yesterday afternoon." Here follow minute directions for "relieving" unsuspecting citizens of their spare cash.
>
> STORY OF A FREE RIDE
>
> [September 16]
>
> This is a short story, or "storiette," in the Sunday edition. It is given a very honorable place, and evidently is offered in good faith as an amusing and interesting account of an exploit that would reflect honor on and secure instant sympathy for the doer thereof. An irresponsible scoundrel of the cheerful, good-natured sort thinks up a scheme that beats the railways out of a trans-continental fare, and it is so ingenious, admits of so many possible adaptations, that the whole fraternity of beats and bounders must be extremely grateful for having it explained. It is subtly done; so subtly that even the trained reader will unconsciously take sides with "Billy," and feel rather glad that he got to the Pacific coast, on nothing, successfully, until he harks back to the principles that Mother used to insist upon as the only possible moral baggage for a gentleman. The ninety and nine will

[27] February 2, 1907, p. 276. [28] *Op. cit.*

naturally go by the instinctive feeling so recklessly aroused and subtly appealed to, and file the scheme away for possible usefulness.

POLICE ROUND UP IDLE PERSONS; HIT UPON NEW TRICK

PATROLMAN TELLS HOW THE UNWARY ARE ROBBED OF MONEY AND WATCHES BY SLY PICKPOCKET

[September 19]

We quote: "'Tis a new dodge the rounders have up their sleeve,' said one of the patrolmen concerned in the general ingathering. 'It's this way the trick is turned.'" Step by step, with the painstaking accuracy of a Fagan, the great newspaper proceeds to explain the criminal problem, set forth in letters an inch tall and very black at the head of the article, so that a little child could perfectly understand both the principle worked on and the method of doing the work.

ALLEGED CARD SHARP CAUGHT IN PITTSBURG

[September 19]

"Member of Leading Political Club Detected with—" The cheating device is clearly indicated in the heading, which is that for specially important news, about three inches of column space; following which is a third of a column of text illustrating and driving the lesson home.

This article, however, does not mention the other forms in which these "lessons in crime" appear in the newspaper—such as vivid and detailed pictures of bank robberies, besides detailed word accounts, literature, stories in the literary section of suicide, murder, robbery, sexual misconduct, etc., favorable reviews of books dealing with similar facts, especially with sexual license and immorality.

SUMMARY

The analyses of newspapers included in the second class of treatments are all interesting and, in different degrees, significant. In so far as they show what is in the papers, and the relative space devoted to news of crime and other anti-social activities, or the relative frequency of mention of crime and other anti-social activity as compared with other types of news, they are significant, even on the subjective basis used for making these comparisons. There are, however, certain difficulties in their general standpoint and method which must be pointed out, if we wish to make an estimate of their social utility. These may be summed up as follows.

1. The general standpoint of some of these treatments is not socially constructive, as in the cases of Rogers and Street. That is, either a brief is held for the newspaper or its social effect is ignored or merely mentioned in passing. The importance of suggestion and its entire psychology are not considered.

2. An exclusively juridical definition of criminal and anti-social matter rather than a social one is used, as for example, by Rogers and Street. And thus, a basis for including all anti-social items such as illustrations, book reviews, literary matter, etc., is lacking, although these are just as real sources of anti-social suggestion as what is called "news proper."

For example, book reviews may be extremely anti-social in effect, in giving apparent sanction to certain sorts of immoral conduct therein depicted or suggested, by calling the book "a strong book," or one "taking up in masterly fashion one of the most important problems of our day," or by detailing just enough of the immoral conduct in the book to arouse curiosity and get people to read it.

3. No direct evidence of the effect of the newspaper is offered. The conclusions are based upon analyses of papers and upon opinions as to their effect, as in the studies of Rogers, Street, Wilcox, and Mathews. No matter if the percentage of news of crime and other anti-social acts in newspapers is found to be as low as 5 per cent or even 3 per cent, if it is certain that this percentage is the source of anti-social suggestion, then we can easily say that the percentage is too high. In a progressive society people cannot give their attention to this extent to destructive and non-progressive activities.[29]

4. That the newspapers are what the public want and that the only improvement in them can come through improvement in public taste is a fallacy that appears in most of these studies, as in the case of Rogers and Street. This, however, is not the method on which we operate in other social matters.

[29] "But we forget that in occupying ourselves almost exclusively with the results of social abuses, we use up and exterminate little by little the power of that portion of the population which is still healthy, normal, and hardworking."—Translated from Auguste Forel, *La question sexuelle, exposée aux adultes cultivés* (Paris: G. Steinheil, 1906), 518.

5. An item rather than a uniform-unit basis of measurement is used by some writers for estimating news of crime and other anti-social activities in the papers. Although the number of "mentions" of a subject is significant as indicating the number of times the eye is caught by that subject, it is not an accurate indication of the relative space devoted to that subject as compared with other news. Much more *space* might be given to 1,343 items of criminal matter than to 7,348 items of social value.[80] Tabulation on the basis of a definite unit of measurement indicates the amount of space actually given to anti-social matters.

Consequently, there is need of a more complete scientific study of the influence of newspapers upon the growth of anti-social activity, an analysis of the psychology of this influence, the working-out of an objective social standard for determining what matter in newspapers has an anti-social effect and what has not, an estimate of the amount on this basis, and the gathering of actual cases in which the newspaper is known to have exerted an anti-social influence as direct evidence of this influence. The following chapters will deal with these problems in the order here mentioned.

CHAPTER III

THE PRINCIPLES OF SUGGESTION WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE NEWSPAPER

The problem of this study is that of the general connection between the newspaper and crime and other anti-social activity. The emphasis in this chapter is upon an analysis of the activity as it goes on, rather than upon the types of sources, that is, sections of the newspaper, from which stimuli to that activity come. The standpoint in the most general sense is that of suggestion, if the latter be taken in its broadest meaning to cover all stimulus and response relations, such as are included in the definition of suggestion given in the *Dictionary of Philosophy and Psychology:* "The coming into the mind from without of a presentation, idea, or any sort of intimation having meaning for

[80] Cf. Speed, *loc cit.*

consciousness which effects a lodgment and takes the place it would have if internally aroused by association."[1] Within this field there are all types and gradations of stimulus and response relations, from so-called pure suggestion, in which there is no perception by the actor of the relation between stimulus and response up to so-called reasoned activity, in which there is such consciousness of this connection. We are accustomed to think chiefly of this latter type in connection with the newspaper and similar stimuli because we are used to thinking of activity as consciously caused, and because we can get direct introspective evidence of the connection from the actor, that is, the person involved can tell of the stimulus and connection in such cases. The other class of cases at the opposite pole from these, we are not accustomed to connect with the newspaper, cases of so-called pure suggestion or unconscious suggestion, in which there is no perception of the relation between stimulus and response and regarding which, therefore, we can get no direct introspective evidence from the person concerned. Nevertheless, for reasons which will be set forth, these latter cases form a very important share of all cases of newspaper suggestion. It is unconscious suggestion, or suggestion as it is commonly understood, that constitutes a large number of the cases of newspaper influence on crime and other anti-social activity. As yet these cases are an unexplored portion of the field of suggestion and cannot be analyzed introspectively because they elude introspection by their very nature; and, finally, they enter into the other less purely suggested acts and even into reasoned acts as part content of those acts. It is necessary, therefore, to make an objective study

[1] The word "consciousness" as here used, if the writer is consistent, must connote merely mental processes as such, and not necessarily consciousness of, or attention to, the particular relation of stimulus and image. In other words, "entrance into consciousness" here means simply the process of setting off an activity. The word "consciousness" is, of course, an ambiguous term to all but psychologists. As a matter of fact, we have no adequate definition of consciousness. Nervous terms, terms of stimulus and response, are the nearest ones in which we can express it, and we call conscious acts those in which more than one stimulus is present, and in which therefore there is necessity for inhibition or selection of stimuli. In this discussion "consciousness" is not used in any metaphysical sense, but merely to denote "attention" or "inhibition."

of cases of unconscious newspaper suggestion. In no other way can we gain a control of it, and of the stimuli to it.

The only kind of activity stimulated by the newspaper that admits of introspective evidence is that in which there is some degree of conscious planning, and in which, therefore, the person remembers where he got his model or idea. Activity in which unconscious suggestion plays a large part cannot be checked up, except indirectly by the employment of objective methods of analysis, that is, for example, where a resemblance is noted between a newspaper account and the act by some third person, or where, as in cases of suicide, robbery, etc., a marked account of a similar act is found in the person's room or on his person. But all acts are mixtures, complexes of many activities, and suggested parts enter also even into those acts in which conscious planning is the predominant element.

In a later chapter cases of reasoned activities, which constitute direct introspective evidence of suggestion, will be analyzed in detail and it will be shown just how the act goes on. Here, the preliminary theoretical basis for that analysis will be laid by dealing in some detail with the psychology of this more narrowly suggested type of activity for which there is no direct introspective evidence, and which enters into the reasoned type. Suggestion, in this narrower sense, will be defined here and its operation described and illustrated with especial reference to the newspaper.

The first question, then, is, What is unconscious suggestion? The orthodox textbooks on psychology, such as those of James, Angell, Judd, Titchener, Royce, and others, do not contain explicit definitions of suggestion. The facts of suggestion, when treated in them at all, are dealt with as part of the subject of hypnotism. Consequently these writers cannot be cited in this connection. Definitions of suggestion must be drawn from those who have actually treated this matter. Binet says of suggestion:

Suggestion when successful, consists of an idea impressed upon a person and reigning dominant in the consciousness[2] of that person; reason, critical power and will are impotent to restrain it. . . . . For suggestion to develop itself accordingly, it is necessary that the subject's field of consciousness do not contain too many antagonistic ideas.[3]

[2] "Consciousness" is apparently here used broadly as in the first definition cited.

[3] *On Double Consciousness,* Open Court Pub. Co. (1894), 70, 71.

The first part of this definition is too ideational. Ideas are not the only things that can be "impressed" upon a person. Images and bare impulsive tendencies as well may be thus impressed. Otherwise, however, the definition does point out the unitary character of activity in suggestion. Moll says,

> The externally suggested idea of a movement, induces the movement; the idea of an object causes a corresponding sense-delusion. . . . . Ideas aroused in us have an effect which sometimes shows itself as other concepts (ideas, sensations, etc.), and sometimes externally as movement; in many cases, perhaps in all, there is both an internal and an external effect. What effect appears, what idea, what feeling, what movement will be induced by the first concept, depends upon the individuality of the person, upon his imagery, upon his character, his habits, and upon the species of the concept.[4]

Moll is here considering suggestion chiefly in connection with hypnotism as a method of producing an effect. Nevertheless, this definition does point out the close relation between stimulus and response (idea and movement), and the external source of the stimulus.

In his *Psychotherapy*,[5] Münsterberg makes the following statement among others, regarding suggestion,

> A suggestion is, we might say at first, an idea which has a power in our mind to suppress the opposite idea. A suggestion is an idea which in itself is not different from other ideas, but the way in which it takes possession of the mind reduces the chances of any opposite ideas; it inhibits them. Every suggestion is thus ultimately a suggestion of activity.[6] . . . . By small steps, suggestion shades over into ordinary exchange of ideas, propositions, and impressions, just as attention shades over into a neutral perception.[7]

This definition also limits suggestion to an ideational process, but it brings out its quick going-over into activity, its inhibitory character with relation to other ideas, and the fact that the line between suggestion and what we call ordinary stimulus and response relations is not exact.

"'Suggestion' is only another name for the power of ideas, *so far as they prove efficacious over belief and conduct*," says James in his *Varieties of Religious Experience*.[8]

[4] *Hypnotism*, 63; (tr. Hopkirk), 4th enlarged ed. Scribner, 1909.

[5] Moffat, Yard & Co., 1909, p. 86.

[6] *Ibid.*, 104.

[7] *Ibid.*, 106.

[8] Longmans, Green & Co. (1902), p. 112.

To take a more involved definition:

> The question of suggestion becomes, then, that of the mechanism of attention in working three results: (1) the narrowing of consciousness[9] upon the suggested idea, (2) the consequent narrowing of the motor impulses to simpler lines of discharge, and (3) the consequent inhibition of the discriminating and selective attitude which constitutes belief in reality.[10]

This definition also limits suggestion to an ideational process, and in so far it is too narrow, but it emphasizes the unitary character of the activity, as does the definition of Binet, and it makes explicit the part of inhibition in suggestion, that is, the absence of conflict of stimuli. Although the third point, as stated, simply means absence of inhibition, it serves to emphasize the uncritical attitude in suggestion.

Boris Sidis says, By suggestion is meant the intrusion into the mind of an idea; met with more or less opposition by the persons; accepted uncritically at last; and realized unreflectively, almost automatically.[11] This definition is bound up with Sidis' theory of double consciousness, or disaggregation of consciousness (for which he has been much criticized), which comes out in the phrase, "met with more or less opposition." Otherwise, barring its limitation to "idea" this definition covers the facts of suggestion.

Cooley says of suggestion: "The word is here used to denote an influence that works in a comparatively mechanical and reflex way, without calling out that higher selective activity of mind implied in choice or will."[12] This definition implies the main facts of suggestion; its unconscious character, the absence of conscious selection and choice, that is, of attention. and consequently its quick going-over into action.

In short, for the purposes of this study, suggestion is the process by which ideas, images, impulsive tendencies, or any sort of stimulus, enter from without into the composition of the neural make-up or disposition and, at times more or less

[9] Cf. note at beginning of the chapter.

[10] J. M. Baldwin, *Mental Development in the Child and the Race* (Macmillan, 1906), 3d ed., 104.

[11] *The Psychology of Suggestion* (D. Appleton & Co., 1898), 15.

[12] *Human Nature and the Social Order* (Scribner, 1902), 14.

in the focus of consciousness, at other times not in the focus at all, are transformed into activity by the agency of a stimulus which bears an effective though unrecognized relation or similarity to the image or neural set, and in which there is in large part, or wholly, failure to anticipate the results of the suggested act. For example, when one reads an account of a murder he images it visually, or auditorially, or in whatever terms are characteristic of his type of imagery. These images and motor tendencies stay in his mind, that is, in his neural disposition, and later, when they are called up by some new stimulus, they may become cues, causes, of immediate activity, as appears from the following account of an act. Professor Woodworth says,

> The complete determinant of a voluntary motor act—that which specifies exactly what it shall be—is nothing less than the total set of the nervous system at the moment. The set is determined partly by factors of long standing, instincts and habits, partly by the sensations of the moment, partly by recent perceptions of the situation and by other thoughts lately present in consciousness; at the moment, however, these factors, though they contribute essentially to the set of the system, are for the most part present in consciousness only as a background or "fringe," if at all, while the attention is occupied by the thought of some particular change to be effected in the situation. The thought may be clothed in sensorial images . . . . but these are after all only clothes, and a naked thought can perfectly well perform its function of starting the motor machinery in action and determining the point and object of its application.[18]

The fact that the reading of the murder case, as referred to above, was the source of the initial imagery, or that there is a connection between the present stimulus and the image, is not recognized in this type of suggestion, and the activity follows unreflectively upon the calling up of the image; while in reasoned activity this source is remembered and a high degree of consciousness of the relation between stimulus and image exists. This does not mean that the overt activity in the case of pure or unconscious suggestion is a totally unconscious activity, but only that the relation between stimulus and response is unperceived immediately by the actor. Very intense consciousness

[18] "The Cause of Voluntary Movement," *Studies in Philosophy and Psychology* (Garman Memorial Volume; Houghton, Mifflin Co., 1906), 391, 392.

may arise in connection with carrying out the activity, that is, wherever anything problematical arises in the adjustment that is being made of means to ends. But consciousness is present only when there is some conflict of stimuli, and in the type of suggestion under discussion there is no such conflict of stimuli, only one stimulus being present as stimulus. This is what the "narrowing of consciousness [or attention] upon the suggested idea," referred to by Baldwin, means.

It is clear from the above account and from Woodworth's description of the act that the newspaper can function in suggestion in various ways, in all the ways, in fact, in which it can influence the nervous set. In any one act it may have entered into the constitution of the nervous set as "a factor of long standing," in the composition of a "habit"; it may constitute one or more of the "sensations of the moment," or complex of these sensations; it may be present as a "recent perception," or as a "thought lately present in consciousness." The newspaper as stimulus may be, therefore: (1) either the source of initial images or ideas that have now come to constitute either part of the fringe of a present act or the focus of a present act; or (2) it may be a present stimulus calling up images, ideas, already in the nervous set, as where a present newspaper account of a crime sets the person to committing that crime, or, when he has determined upon a crime, gives him his method. In the former of the two phases of newspaper influence the idea or motor tendency may lie dormant and not come into consciousness at all, or it may take the form of a fixed idea, in which case the person frequently even seeks stimuli which bear upon it.[14]

But acts of pure suggestion not only form a large number of the cases of suggestion, but, as was stated in the beginning of this chapter, enter into less purely suggested acts and into reasoned acts. The difference between a suggested act and a reasoned act, neurologically speaking, is the absence or presence of conflicting stimuli-processes. Every act, however, is a complex of many previous acts, and, as has been pointed out,

[14] Well-known examples of this unconscious suggestion are to be found in epidemics of crime of various sorts, suicide epidemics, murders, highway and bank robberies, etc. See latter part of chap. vi.

involves, at any one moment, the total set of the nervous system of that moment. The neural set, as described by Woodworth, includes a complex of past and present neural experiences into which suggestion has entered more or less frequently.[15]

Suggestion, consequently, is a process that is continually going on in the form of responses to surrounding stimuli. "The fact is," to quote Cooley, "that the main current of our thought is made up of impulses absorbed without deliberate choice from the life about us or else arising from hereditary instinct or from habit."[16] And this again is built up "without deliberate choice from the life about us."

The questions of social importance here are: Under what conditions is suggestion likely to occur? That is, (1) In what sorts of people is this process frequent and habitual; (2) What sorts of stimuli are apt to be suggestive and in what form or through what medium? That is to say, a psychological analysis of objective social conditions as stimuli and of the subjective individual to whom these are stimuli must be made.

Psychology has some evidence as to the kind of stimuli that are likely to set up associations. In general, the more concrete the stimulus the more likely it is to be remembered and to be responded to. More definitely still, frequency, vividness, recency, coexistence, are the objective conditions which have been found experimentally to be most conducive to suggestion.[17] In a later chapter it will be pointed out in greater detail how these conditions operate in the daily newspaper, through its featuring, in the use of varieties of type, wording, position, coloring, illustration, etc.

[15] "There are numbers of people in the community who feel the temptation to approach the brink of crime who need only a slight incentive to convert the impulse into action. The man who killed the Duke of Buckingham happened to be passing a hardware store and saw displayed in the window a huge knife with a keen edge. It was enough. He bought the knife and flayed the duke."—S. W. Pennypacker, *op. cit.*, 590.

The phrase "feel the temptation to approach the brink of crime" does not mean that people are conscious of such a feeling, but merely that in the presence of a stimulus to certain criminal acts they have an impulse to perform them.

[16] *Op. cit.*, 30.

[17] Boris Sidis, *op. cit.*, 28; also E. B. Titchener, *Experimental Psychology* (Students' Qualitative Manual; Macmillan, 1896), 201.

We have now to consider what types of people, external factors, suggestions, can incite to anti-social acts. Given the objective conditions already mentioned, whether a person exposed to them gets a suggestion or not depends, in general, upon the type of person he is—whether his previously ingrained experience is of such a character as to leave him open to such stimuli.[18] It will leave him open to anti-social stimuli if the rest of the stimulation in his experience has been of a similar character, or if he has had no strong counter-stimulation or training in evaluating stimuli. In other words, the objective and subjective conditions of suggestion revolve themselves, first into a question of how the attention can be attracted, how the eye or ear can be caught. And here, psychology tells us that novel stimuli, stimuli that appeal to organic appetites or native instincts, stimuli that appeal to special acquired interests, are the ones that catch the attention and thus enable the first step toward suggested activity to be taken.[19]

The objective and subjective conditions of suggestion revolve themselves, secondly, into a question of how these stimuli are evaluated, that is, related to social standards. Whether, the attention once caught, these stimuli *are* evaluated by the individual depends, as has been shown, upon his training for such evalua-

[18] A. Moll, *op. cit.*, 68.

[19] Illustrations of how the attention is got in these various ways are to be found, for example, in the yellow journal which represents an appeal both to organic appetites and to a desire for the novel (W. I. Thomas, *op. cit.*); in various forms of advertising, such as pictures of women on cigar boxes, suggestive pictures of women in the windows and on the walls of saloons, billboard signs, notably the illustration for *The Girl from Rector's,* played in Chicago in 1909, which some members of the Chicago Women's Club and of the Juvenile Protective Association took measures to have removed, a very suggestive picture advertising *The Girl in the Taxi,* and others. In addition, a number of advertisements in newspapers are based upon this same appeal. A Colorado paper displayed a picture of Ruth St. Denys dancing followed by the statement that "Some people have called this dancing immoral," and other remarks to that effect, ending with "But whatever you think about the dancing, groceries at ——— are the ones you want." Book reviews of the type of those generally written by Jeannette Gilder are apparently based on the same principle. Books, such as *Elizabeth's Visits to America* and *Lady Cardigan's Recollections,* are reviewed in the daily papers at some length by her, in advance of their publication. The suggestive and immoral portions are liberally quoted and dwelt upon, with the result that there is usually a wide demand for the books when they appear.

tion. Young people whose habits and ideas are in process of formation, the weak and unstable of all ages, are not in a position to estimate these stimuli critically. McDougall says,

> The suggestibility of any subject is not of the same degree at all times; it varies not only according to the topic and according to the source from which the proposition is communicated [he is speaking here of verbal suggestion only], but also with the condition of the subject's brain from hour to hour. The least degree of suggestibility is that of a wide-awake, self-reliant man of settled convictions, possessing a large store of systematically organized knowledge which he habitually brings to bear in criticism of all statements made to him. Greater degrees of suggestibility are due in the main to conditions of four kinds: (1) abnormal states of the brain, of which the relative dissociation obtaining in hysteria, hypnosis, normal sleep, and fatigue, is the most important; (2) deficiency of knowledge or convictions relating to the topic in regard to which the suggestion is made, and imperfect organization of knowledge; (3) the impressive character of the source from which the suggested proposition is communicated ["prestige suggestion"]; (4) peculiarities of the character and native disposition of the subject.[20]

It is not to be understood that suggestibility is here considered as an abnormal quality. It is as necessary to social as to anti-social activity. It is when all of a person's stimuli are of one character and at the same time anti-social, as in a mob or lynching party, or in regions in which pictures, papers, theaters, books, and people are all, or nearly all, of the anti-social character, or when one has no means of distinguishing the relative social values of one or another kind of acts, that suggestibility becomes a great power for danger. "It is not mentally deficient people who are thus accessible to ideas. There is in every man a gap where these ideas can enter," says Moll (*op. cit.*, 242). Or, to put it more strongly, every man is highly suggestible in the direction of his main interest or his habitual activity, while the weak and unstable are suggestible in practically any direction, owing to the lack of organization in their activity.

It is also true that people are differently suggestible, according to their types of imagery.[21] But the newspaper includes

[20] *Introduction to Social Psychology*, 98.

[21] W. D. Scott, "Difference in Suggestibility," *Psych. Rev.* (March, 1910), 147–54.

more than one type of suggestion. And this again increases its influence i.e., where more than one sensation area is stimulated, there is more likelihood of response. There are verbal suggestion, which contains indirect suggestions of other types, and visual suggestion in the form of illustrations, colors, differences in the form and size of type, etc.[22] In short, the modern newspaper, especially the so-called yellow and sensational elements in the modern newspaper, represent a mechanics of expression, a world of sensuous appeal, to eye, and ear, which has grown up slowly in other times and in other situations and which is a distinct excitant in ways which frequently are no longer socially useful. Anything which dramatizes, makes for a break in monotony, such as the patrol-wagon, policeman, etc., is a stimulus, is exciting, and is apt to be suggestive to the small boy or to older people of the mental pattern of the small boy. The motor or activity stimuli in the modern newspaper are of just this sort, and, on account of the important part they have played in the development of the race, make a strong appeal.[23]

On the basis of the psychology of suggestion as above developed, a direct causal connection may be established between the newspaper and crime and other anti-social activities.

It is not possible to measure this influence quantitatively, but

[22] There is no experimental evidence in psychology to show through which of the senses people are more commonly or easily suggestible, but it is an admitted fact that in modern life the eye has come to be the most important organ for picking up and mediating impressions. A common illustration of this fact is to be found in the effect of certain pictures, such as those representing abnormal activities, which often produce kinesthetic or activity effects in the person viewing them.

[23] "For the great majority of the public the emotion felt in connection with the brutal and exact details with which the press describes the most atrocious crimes vanishes after the first moment of astonishment and horror and we return tranquilly to our own thoughts and affairs; but for the lowest minority, the thing does not end so soon. A few—the predisposed, the degenerates—feel this emotion for a long time; the crime described so minutely has strongly impressed them; they think about it incessantly, it becomes a nightmare; and some day they give way to the obsession as the assassin Lemaire did, who after having stabbed a child to death, said calmly to a police agent who arrested him: "I read in a newspaper the description of an act similar to that which I have performed, and I wished to imitate it."—Scipio Sighèle, *Literature et criminalité* (Giard & Brière, Paris, 1908), 210.

it is none the less real because it cannot be so measured, as can, for example, the numerical results of advertising suggestion,[24] which is an analogous case of the influence of suggestion.

It is necessary, therefore, to make, on the one hand, a careful estimate of the matter dealing with crime and other anti-social activities in the newspapers, and on the other hand an analysis of actual and typical cases in which the newspaper is known to have suggested criminal and other anti-social acts. In the following chapter the method of analysis used in tabulating the matter in the newspapers will be discussed.

[24] "The actual effort of modern advertising is not so much to convince as to suggest . . . . the idea is suggested by the advertisement and the impulsiveness of human nature enforces the suggested idea, hence the desired result follows in a way unknown to the purchaser [unconscious suggestion]."—W. D. Scott, *Psychology of Advertising* (Small, Maynard & Co., 1908), 83.

"Advertisers are, in general, wise business men and are usually able to tell whether their advertising pays or not. If it pays, they continue it; if it does not, they cease advertising," says Professor Scott (*ibid*, 180). The brewers spend enormous sums in advertising to show, on physicians' and even on preachers' authority, that beer is nutritious and non-poisonous. They make a close calculation as to approximately how much money this suggestion will cost them and profit them. They advertise especially during local option and anti-saloon agitations, as a means of contra-suggestion. Advertising here has a direct causal connection with the sale of beer. Mail-order houses and department stores advertise only in papers of large general circulation and in those which circulate among certain classes of people, different in the two cases. Also certain forms of "fake" and other miscellaneous advertisements are known to be carried principally, or wholly, by the cheap literary papers which circulate in the rural districts. Cf. *Success Magazine* (June, 1909), 412.

[*To be continued*]