Radio as an Instrument of Reducing Personal Insecurity.

By Harold D. Lasswell.

As long as radio reflects the interests of an individualistic society, there will be "psychological" programs, programs devoted to the explanation and handling of human nature. The child who is born into an individualistic society develops acute consciousness of his own ego, since he is trained to compare himself incessantly with all potential rivals. He is taught to discipline his own impulses in the interest of success, and by success is meant the improvement of his control over such values as power, respect and income. In return for work well done, success is said to be sure. (It is no accident that one of the most popular mottoes of the last generation was "Strive and Succeed"; this formula is one of the most characteristic expressions of modern individualism.)

The taste for psychology may be found among all men everywhere, but only among individualistic societies does the taste become a craving that approaches the magnitude of an addiction. Within the general framework of such a culture, there are zones of special emphasis upon individualistic achievement. The child who is reared in a middle class family usually grows to share the middle class aspiration to rise in the world. The middle class child is the quintessential climber in a society of climbers ("climbing" is spoken of technically as "mobility upward", as improvement of status in the distribution of available values in a community).

Whatever conflicts are found in the culture as a whole are brought to burning focus in the lives of middle class children. The ideological structure of our own society is no homogenous unity, since it contains ideals that are difficult to hold in balanced relation to one another. There is great stress upon individual achievement; but this is mitigated by the virtues of service and loyalty. Within the occupational network of our culture are found two sharply contrasting types, one devoted to the pursuit of money, the other to the service of non-pecuniary aims. (Recall, in this connection, the difference between what is expected of a businessman and of a clergyman.)

The double standard of success and service creates enormous difficulties in the lives of middle class boys and girls. If the middle

class is the germinating bed of ambitious climbers, it is also the custodian of morality, of ideals of sacrifice on behalf of values that transcend the limits of the individual ego. The typical conflict within the personality of the middle class youth is between "ambition" and "ideals"; the individual suffers from contradictory emphases that are found throughout the total structure of an individualistic society.

Given the individualistic traditions of American life, we know that the taste for psychology will be particularly active during periods of social difficulty. When they meet rebuff severe crises are generated within the personalities of all who share individualistic traditions. From the earliest days they have been trained to appraise the value of the ego in terms of success and failure. If they proudly accept responsibility for what they achieve, they seem bound to accept the onus of blame for what they do not attain. But they are restive under the onus of responsibility for lack of success. When they are thrown back upon themselves, they seek escape from the keen anxieties that arise from the feelings of futility and guilt. At such times the need of insight, the need of clarification of the position of the person in relation to the whole of experience, is most acute; and "psychology" is one of the symbols of reference to those who claim expert knowledge of human nature. Hence the prominence of "psychology" in the interest scale of insecure people; hence the truth in the prediction that as long as the media of mass communication in an individualistic society reflect popular sentiment, they will concern themselves with psychology—to some extent at all times; to a greater extent in times of general insecurity.

Explanations of human nature, popular or scientific, fall in three convenient categories. Stress may be put upon the impulses and ideas of the person, upon the environment to which he is exposed, or upon a balance of internal and external factors. Strictly speaking, there is a continuous gradation from one extreme to the other, hence there are varying degrees of balance and imbalance in between. For the sake of clarity we may speak of Type A, concerned with the internal environment, Type B, descriptive of the external environment, and Type C, presenting a balance of the two sets of factors. The scientific point of view is Type C. It is, of course, taken for granted that there are large degrees of difference in the amount of stress put upon internal or external factors among various groups of specialists.

Type A may be illustrated by the following excerpt from a broadcast by the present writer:[1]

[1]Number 12, *Human Nature in Action*, Sustaining Program of the National Broadcasting Company, April 5, 1940. The script collaborator was Albert N. Williams of NBC.

(In accordance with the plan of the series, the "Dictator" type of personality is shown from four successive standpoints: conventional, intimate, unconscious, formative. An example of characterization from the conventional standpoint):

MAN: (FADE ON) Well—let me tell you one thing. You may be Mayor of this town—but you don't any more run this town than you run my business—my business is this town. . . .

ANALYST: We will call this man the hyperaggressive type, which means simply that here is a man who imposes his personality upon other people to an intense degree. This man could have been a dictator. In fact, he is definitely of the stuff from which Napoleans are made. . . .

(From an intimate point of view):

MAN: (FADE ON) Huh! Look down their noses at me because I never went to college. . . . I don't know modern art. . . . I don't know literature. . . . I think I better have my secretary get me some books on modern art and the next time I have a dinner party I'll teach those people a thing or two about their own subjects. . . .

ANALYST: You see what the psychology of this man is? Every time he feels inferior because of a blind spot in his intellectual makeup he immediately takes drastic measures to correct that fact. He is a very imaginative, well-trained man; he is a highly disciplined person who knows his weaknesses, and takes immediate steps to correct them. . . .

(From an unconscious point of view, as reflected in his dreams):

(DREAM TECHNIQUE)

MAN: This art gallery of mine . . . this great art gallery . . . those pictures cost a million dollars . . . each one cost a million dollars . . . they are the greatest pictures in the world and nobody can see them except me . . . ohhh . . . it's pulling off my arms . . . it's pulling off my right arm . . . and ohhh that picture . . . is pulling off my right leg . . . I'm being killed . . . those pictures are pulling off my arms and legs . . . ohhhhhhhh (FADE).

ANALYST: Yes . . . the pattern of his dreams is quite similar . . . great possessions and then final destruction. . . .

The foregoing extracts concentrate attention upon the inner life of the subject, and relate behavior and conduct in the immediate present chiefly to other parts of the internal environment. The dream life is brought prominently into the focus of attention as an index of the incompatible tendencies that are found within the "Dictator's" personality. Taken out of its context, we have here a rather good example of Type A.

The following excerpts deal with the formative years of the same man:

> BOY: (FADE ON) Have to work at a paper stand all day long . . . I can play baseball . . . I can have a good time like the other kids . . . but mother says that I've got to work at a paper stand all day long . . . never have any fun, never have any time to play baseball . . . never any money to go to the movies. . . .
>
> ANALYST: Yes . . . he was a victim of poverty . . . he couldn't enjoy a free life of boyhood, but had to work. . . .

These sentences relate the boy to his external environment, emphasizing both his poverty and the exactions of his mother. Taken by themselves, we would not hesitate to classify them in Type B of the explanations mentioned above. Taken in conjunction, as part of the same script as Type A, they justify the inclusion of the broadcast in Type C, the balanced type.

For the proper study of psychological broadcasts, as of any broadcast, content analysis is essential. If we are to discover the effect of psychological programs upon the listening audience, we must make use of the methods adequate to the task of describing them. In the foregoing example, we have illustrated a very crude variety of content analysis. Excerpts have been selected that answer two opposite specifications: Presentation of the subject as dependent upon his internal environment; presentation of the subject as dependent upon his external environment. More refined methods would make it possible to describe relative degrees of such presentations within the limits of these selected excerpts. The soliloquy about the rebuff at the dinner party obviously refers to an interpersonal situation in the recent past of the subject. The connection of the dream sequence with an external situation involving people is not evident on the face of the record. Hence the dream sequence falls entirely within the category of the subjective event without explicit reference to an immediate feature of the personal environment. (The allusions to the gallery are not explicitly made to people.)[2]

Why is it important to distinguish carefully among the forms of psychological explanation that are current in our society? Chiefly because there are very searching hypotheses about the alleged effect of these various forms upon political and social movements. We have no adequate data at present that enable us to confirm or to disaffirm any seriously held hypothesis about the effects of psychological

[2]It is not within the scope of this article to pursue the problem of content analysis any further. Reference may be made in this connection to H. D. Lasswell, "A Provisional Classification of Symbol Data," *Psychiatry* (1938): 1:197-204.

programs upon those who listen. However, the possibility that research may yield data on significant questions is presumably increased when we guide our investigations by important hypotheses; and with this in mind, we have put in the very forefront of this discussion the classification of programs according to the stress given to internal or external factors in the causation of conduct and behavior.

And what are the socially significant hypotheses that lay so much emphasis upon the type of psychological explanation? With the greatest succinctness, the hypothesis (a compound hypothesis) is that in an individualistic society in our historical period Type A has reactionary, Type B has revolutionary, and Type C has adjustive effects. Let us consider what is meant by the suggestion that Type A has reactionary results upon the auditing group. It is said that such explanations of human activity lead the individual to concentrate his attention upon the subtleties of private experience, and to divert his gaze from the broad situations in the culture that need change, if more healthy private lives are to be made possible. Explanations of Type B, on the other hand, fix attention upon the broader outlines of the institutions of society, and attaches to them major responsibility for the distortion of human personality. It is predicted that those who accept explanations of the B type are more disposed to participate actively in social and political movements for the fundamental reconstruction of the social order.

In passing, it may be suggested that the first hypothesis is plausible, as stated, only if immediate effects are taken into consideration. It is doubtful if passivity is the enduring response to incessant stress upon subjective factors. On the contrary; if the level of general insecurity continues high, more and more members of the community may be expected to be "fed up" on "little Willie stories," upon childhood memories to account for difficulties that seem plausibly accounted for by the threat of unemployment and of invasion from abroad. If the revulsion against "Hamletism" rises to significant dimensions, the choice of activistic symbols depends upon the alternatives available at the moment (revolutionary, counter-revolutionary).[3]

In any case Types A and B are probably connected with rigid and dogmatic ways of responding to the difficulties of adapting a richly complicated social structure to internal and external stress. Type C is the pattern of psychological explanation that may be expected to

[3]The hypothesis that explanations of Type B necessarily lead to "progressive" political movements is among the unconfirmed, though dogmatically reiterated, assertions of Communists.

nourish and sustain the progressive adjustment of an individualistic society to the needs of the time. In Type C the emphasis is balanced, correcting over-emphasis upon an individualistic ideology without flying to the opposite extreme of dogmatic anti-individualism.

It is not easy to give currency to balanced explanations of the C type. We know only too well that specialists as well as laymen have their difficulties when they try to clarify the complex interrelationships of internal and external environments. Among scientists the inept days of opposing such ambiguities as "heredity" versus "environment" are practically at an end. Yet among laymen echoes of the past continue to resound in the overtones of popular speech. We have not made proper use of our modern instruments of communication to clarify the community as a whole about the nature of human nature, about the complex interrelations between one person and another. We can demonstrate in many instances the connection between timidity and the kind of maternal care received by the individual; yet these distinctions, often corroborated by common experience, are obscure when the layman begins to think about "human nature." He is unprovided with a vocabulary appropriate to the context. Subtle interconnections are dramatized in his mind around crude expressions like "heredity" or "environment"; there is little perception of the variable degrees of effectiveness to be assigned to the internal or the external environment at a given moment. No doubt the use of such expressions as "interpersonal relations" will polarize many realistic associations in the minds of laymen. Eventually it may be possible to talk quietly about different kinds of interpersonal situations, and to estimate the relative influence of internal and external factors upon the adjustment of each participant.

It is necessary to experiment with different ways of bringing language about the internal and the external environment into the same universe of discourse. The present writer has experimented in this direction by inviting attention to focus upon "impulses" and "practices," with special reference to "destructive impulses" and "destructive practices." Human destructiveness is thus expressed in two forms, directly through destructive impulses that are unchecked, and less directly through institutional practices that provoke crises by creating situations in which destructive impulses are sharply stimulated. The task of reducing human destructiveness is to discover and to spread proper methods of controlling destructive impulses, once aroused, and of reducing the occasions that prod them into concentrated life.

In addition to a common language that balances internal and external factors in the explanation of human nature in action, there

is need of common language about important specific factors. The writer has experimented in this direction by calling attention to "hurt ego" (alternatively: "damaged self-esteem," "endangered self-respect," "damaged deference," "compromised human dignity" . . .) as a major cause of human destructiveness. This emphasis is in line with the findings of modern psychiatry, and of other branches of specialized research on the dynamics of personality formation.[4] This method of analysis was presented on the radio in two forms, one a series of lectures, and the other a series of dramatizations with analysis.[5]

Quite apart from the question of whether these specific formulations are fortunate or not, the urgency of directing radio research toward the study of the effects of different kinds of psychological broadcasts is great. If any of the basic hypotheses about Types A, B and C are true, they are of the gravest importance for understanding the human consequences of radio as an instrument of communication in American society. It should not be forgotten that psychological explanations are not only given currency over the radio in broadcasts that happen to be called "psychological." In fact, the most important effect of radio upon the popular understanding of psychological causation may take place in "commercial" broadcasts that have never been conceived as disseminating psychological information or misinformation. If, in this discussion, we refer to explicitly labelled "psychological" (or near psychological) programs, we do not lose sight of the total problem of assessing, through any period of time, the total psychological content of the broadcasts to which the listening audience is subjected.

For the guidance of research and policy in reference to psychological broadcasts, let us specify in more detail the objectives to be sought. We assume, at the outset, that the socially significant purpose of these broadcasts is *insecurity reduction.* The reduction of the national level of insecurity can be sought by means of broadcasts that contribute to *insight, recognition,* and *selection.*

---

[4]A recent clarifying statement is by Harry Stack Sullivan, President, The William Alanson White Psychiatric Foundation, Washington, D. C., "Conceptions of Modern Psychiatry," *Psychiatry* (1940) 3:1-117.

[5]The first series of Human Nature in Action began May 17, 1939, and concluded August 9, 1939. The second (dramatized) series began January 12, 1940, and ended December 17, 1940 (with number 46). The writer proposed the idea of combining dramatization with analytic comment some time before the series. He was fortunate in having assigned to him a talented writer and director, Albert N. Williams, who had been experimenting along many new program lines, including the combination of drama with comment. The experiments were undertaken at the instance of James Rowland Angell and Walter Preston, Jr., of NBC. The contrast between the lecture-question method and the drama-analysis pattern may be seen with special clarity by contrasting the last episode of the first series with "The Dictator."

(1) *Insight.* To some extent the anxiety level of individuals can be reduced by insight, rendering them less tense, less worried and irritable, less compulsive in their attitude toward themselves and the world.

(2) *Recognition.* Persons can be trained to recognize personality conditions that require expert assistance. Many tragedies have been averted because someone has had the discrimination to steer individuals into competent hands before destructive breakdown took place.

(3) *Selection.* Assuming that dangerous conditions can be recognized, there is the added step of selecting competent experts.

Patient research is needed to translate these standards into the specifics of practical application. It would be unwise to underestimate the complexity of the problems involved at each step in the inquiry. With reference to insight, for example, we know that there is no one-to-one correspondence between degrees of insight and levels of anxiety, although there is a broad inverse relationship between the two (the greater the insight, the less the anxiety). More refined study shows that the initial phases of an insight process intensify anxiety before they release it. There are subjectively complacent individuals who must endure sharp increases in the level of their anxiety before they can achieve enough insight to bring about a general reduction in anxiety and tension.[6]

Taking it for granted that conscientious and skillful investigation will reduce the ambiguity of these standards, we may take the further step of formulating the characteristics of programs compatible with them.

1. *Cautious Optimism.* Optimism is needed if listeners are to feel reassured about the possibility of freeing themselves (and others) of anxiety. Yet there is need of restraint in reference to the removal of noxious subjective states, since optimism can be carried so far that it arouses incredulity and leads to frustration. False optimism can prepare the way for crushing disillusionment. Hence the need of cautious optimism—for calm, matter-of-factness, for balanced and unexaggerated statement, for emphasis upon slow and steady effort to surmount difficulties, for expert attention to cope with many difficult situations.

2. *Restrained Endorsement of Specific Means.* In a sense this is a sub-category of "cautious optimism," but it is singled out for coordinate emphasis because of the frequency with which it is dis-

[6] "Uncertainty" is a realistic appraisal of a situation whose outcome is indeterminate. "Anxiety" is a dysphoric subjective state that is disproportionate to the external situation.

regarded in current practice. Our dependable knowledge of human nature is regrettably meagre, and restraint is needed in the endorsement of any diagnosis or of any therapeutic expedient. There can be confidence without over-confidence in the efficacy of any specific item.

3. *Balance of Internal and External Factors.* We have dealt extensively above with the need of maintaining a balance between internal and external factors in the explanation of human activity.

4. *Balance of Prestigeful and Non-prestigeful Instances.* There is danger in crippling the usefulness of psychology if it is popularly understood as a system of innuendo. This impression can be gained when psychological explanations are invoked only to account for the Hitlers and never for the Churchills. It is true that we seek psychological insight chiefly to get rid of disturbing personal relations; yet there is a theory of "successes" as well as "distortions."

5. *Guidance to Competent Specialists.* If the listening audience is to act wisely with reference to dangerous human situations, there is need of definite instruction about how to identify such situations, and how to get in touch with competent specialists. But who, it may be asked, are the competent specialists? Our knowledge of human nature has been growing with startling rapidity in recent years, and the onrush of new data has not been critically evaluated and finally assimilated into our social inheritance. No one body of specialized observers can justifiably claim to monopolize useful knowledge of man and his works. Yet there are certain extreme conditions in which it is imperative to establish contact with a qualified physician, and preferably a psychiatrist. Over the years, no doubt, guidance will present less delicate problems than it does today; it is unlikely that we will suffer from another inundation of interpretations and methods quite as extensive as occurred during the past generation. (Contrast Sigmund Freud, for example, with Ivan P. Pavlov.)

Let no one assume that the present writer is under the impression that the series of programs to which reference has been made in this article constitutes a model of conformity to these standards. Without passing judgment upon degree to which the Human Nature in Action broadcasts as a whole measure up to these requirements, certain deficiencies may be specified at once. It is probable that the "optimism score" of some of the broadcasts would be low. "The Dictator," for example, contained little if any explicit suggestion that tendencies toward the formation of dictatorial personalities could be brought under control. To some extent, of course, any balanced explanation of human personality contributes to optimism, since it suggests that what can be understood can be partially directed. Some

of the broadcasts were explicit in suggesting that certain noxious situations had been cleared up by means of proper methods of thought and of adjusting the external environment. But in the main the series was diagnostic, and offered a bare minimum of specific therapeutic suggestions. For this reason the series would obtain a high score on a "restrained endorsement" scale. In fact one irate (and highly exceptional) listener expressed the sentiment of an unknown number of his colleagues when he wrote:

> I would like to be delivered from the recital of case after case of neurotic aberration, from Psychiatry, "our latest experiment in ignorance," into some hope of sanity through mental hygiene,—the only *constructive hope* for relief and upbuilding. From long and close study of the methods of so-called psychiatrists, I am convinced that they tend to *deepen every morbid tendency*—instead of leading out and up and on into sanity and balance. We aren't all morons who wish to swallow such stuff as is dealt out. From dealing with subnormal and diseased, you seem to accept them as typical. Surely there is no hope or uplift on that line.

Probably, too, the broadcasts would rank high on "balance of internal and external factors." There would be a lower score, and possibly a much lower score, on the "balance of prestigeful and nonprestigeful instances," although the second third of the second series had to do with historical personages of some eminence.

We need much careful investigation to determine the effect of psychological programs in general, and of specific patterns in particular, upon various listening audiences. The effect will depend, in part, upon the varied predispositions latent and active in the personalities of those who listen. Indeed, one of the most interesting questions to be raised in connection with psychological broadcasts is who listens to them at all. This is what Paul F. Lazarsfeld calls the preselective effect, the self-selecting not only of radio as a channel of communication, but of specific types of program.

Very few facts are known about those who listen to psychological broadcasts. From the general theory of response, however, we may propose certain hypotheses as a guide to future study. Any response is a function of two sets of factors, environmental and predispositional (R is a function of E and P. P is equivalent to the expression "internal environment" used above). The probability of a positive rather than a negative response to any given environment is increased if past response to the dominant features of the environment have been followed by gains rather than losses (if the environment has changed indulgently rather than deprivationally to the responder). Now who are the people who may be said to be predisposed toward

listening to a psychological program? (Whether they keep it up or not can be predicted on the same principle; if the listening is followed by gains, the probability of further listening is increased.)

Certainly we may expect that one listening group will be composed of (1) *those who talk or want to talk about psychology.* By watching the technique of the broadcast, they hope to improve their own skill in talking about the subject. In the past they have often gained vocabulary by exposing themselves to the language of others about psychology; hence we may expect them to continue until their gains drop down. (It should be noted that the responses that affect predisposition may be the focussing of attention upon the successful responses of others.)

The following references to those who listened to the Human Nature in action programs are intended to add concreteness to general hypotheses here outlined about the preselective effects of psychological broadcasts. It was not possible to study the listening audience with enough care to create an inclusive picture.

One listening group was composed of colleagues in various universities who were interested in the problem of talking about psychology to laymen, and who wanted to form a first-hand impression of the drama-analysis technique of presentation. (I may also add, in all candor, that some of them, acquainted with some of my technical publications, listened out of sheer incredulity that the writer could deliver a simple and popular lecture.) The writer received a steady trickle of criticisms from these colleagues, many of whom were not personally known to him. Often the suggestions were very penetrating. One distinguished psychiatrist and social psychologist wrote as follows:

> Unfortunately I heard only three so far but I think that is enough to get some impression of the whole. What I want to say is that I found the ones I heard very good indeed. It seems to me that the idea of blending theoretical explanation with slight dramatization is an excellent one. It makes the whole thing very much alive and at the same time in no way cheapens it. Your theoretical comment and the examples chosen seem to me excellent and I should think that they attain the purpose of giving knowledge and of suggesting thought to a wide range of people. . . . I think it might be a good idea to emphasize somewhat more that given such and such childhood background, this background is not the simple "cause" for a specific outcome but that certain other factors which complicate the picture and which cannot be dealt with in the broadcast make for the one or other outcome. In other words, I feel that although one should show the listener the general lines of development, one should also make him feel how complex the causal relationship between early experiences and later personality development is.

Another social psychologist with psychoanalytical training found much to praise in the method of presentation, but he, too, wanted more explicit references to the part of the social structure in which the child was reared. He was inclined to the view that the use of "psychological" language obscured the correlation of the conduct discussed with facts of social structure. Thus some of the situations depicted in the broadcasts were typical of lower middle class families in which an ambitious mother believes that she has married "beneath her position," and strives to realize through the children the career that she "threw away." And in the text of the analytical comments there were no explicit references made to these important facts about the position of the family in the structure of society.

These remarks, it will be noted, bear on the all-important question of the proper balance between internal and external factors, and they reflect judgments made during the first series and the first half of the second series, when the facts of the internal environment were conspicuous.[6a]

Incidentally such appraisals show how broadcasts on psychology can be critically used for educational purposes. It would be a mistake to imagine that radio broadcasts can substitute for textbook or lecture in the classroom (as some over-enthusiasts have occasionally suggested). The chief role of the psychological broadcast in relation to classroom work is supplementary in two directions. To some extent the broadcast can enliven the interest of some classes in the subject, and confer a sense of vivid reality upon some of the words in the text, or in the lecture delivered by a familiar teacher. Of more importance is the critical study of the material included (and excluded) in the broadcast. To what extent is a balance held between internal and external factors? To what extent is the terminology chosen consistent with particular schools of systematic thought? To what degree is the vocabulary clarifying to the layman, and consistent with a scientifically defensible framework?

Some teachers wrote in to report on discussions with colleagues who listened to the broadcasts, or to tell about the result of classroom discussion after a broadcast.

Among the many specialists who communicated with the writer were sociologists, social psychologists, psychologists, political scientists, anthropologists, economists, philosophers, psychiatrists, physicians, social workers, adult educators, army morale officers, educational directors in CCC camps; college, junior college, and high school administrators; high school teachers of the social studies;

[6a] See footnote 5.

clergymen; librarians; graphologists; nurses; students (many in search of "term paper" material).

From the foregoing listeners who use or want to use language about psychology, we pass over to a group (2) that is *aware of the problem of manipulating other people* (without necessarily wanting to talk about the theory of it). This group is separated by a gentle slope, rather than a sharp cliff, from the first group here described (and detailed study might show that the persons referred to here belong in the first class). The manipulators (who may actually avoid shop talk about psychology, for fear of arousing the "guinea pig response") include public relations counsels, advertising men, display consultants, salesmen, playwrights, lawyers, receptionists, dentists, teachers of music and art.

The last group (3) in the present list includes the enormous total of those who suffer from *anxiety or uncertainty about the self or others*. In this group are some of the patients in mental and other hospitals, mothers left behind by their children, jilted suitors and partners in marital splits, elderly persons concerned about senescence, young parents (prospective, actual), disturbed adolescents, anxious bachelor women (more often than men), and the like.

Systematic study would enable us to locate the zones in the social structure that, at a given time, give rise to the most disturbed personalities. We have already called attention to the conflictful middle classes; but an inclusive survey would explore all the classes distinguished according to power, respect, income, safety.[7]

What are the forms of response available to the groups that preselect psychological programs? Since we have selected insecurity reduction as the social purpose of psychological broadcasting, it is convenient to consider responses as follows:

(1) Immediate or eventual reduction of anxiety in the self, (a) with the reduction of anxiety in others, (b) with the increase of anxiety in others;
(2) Immediate or eventual increase of anxiety in the self, (a) with increased anxiety in others, (b) with decreased anxiety in others.

From case studies we know that the reduction of anxiety in one person is not invariably followed by reductions in the anxiety of those whom he affects. If a timid husband becomes more assertive as he

[7]A suggestive inventory by a contemporary psychiatrist is by James S. Plant, *Personality and the Cultural Pattern*, New York, 1937. For a more comprehensive and systematic picture, consult Karl Mannheim, *Man and Society in an Age of Reconstruction; Studies in Modern Social Structure*, New York, 1940.

overcomes certain internal limitations, he may precipitate severe difficulties in the personality of his wife, if she is unstably integrated. We know, too, that increasing anxiety may reduce anxiety in others, if the effect of augmented anxiety is to reduce the provocative intimidation of another person.

Reliable data about the effects of psychological broadcasts must come from observers who obtain a total, intensive view of persons who preselect such radio programs.[8] It is futile to attempt to infer effects from the classification of the mail received from the listening audience. We do not know who writes, as distinguished from who listens and does not write; and we do not know what connection there is between what is written, and the effect of the broadcast upon the level of anxiety.

However, the mail received from the radio audience need not be ignored entirely, since we may classify it into groups and undertake to do the field work needed to discover the correlation between the manner of man who writes in a given vein, and the total effect of the broadcast.

It is convenient to separate the mail received from the listening audience into those containing *no special requests* and *special requests.* Another interesting classification is according to *plus* or *minus* references to the speaker and the program.

(Since an example of extremely adverse criticism was given above, this may be balanced by instances of extremely favorable criticism. The following is by Bob Landry, able radio editor of VARIETY (February 7, 1940), who had this to say in the exuberant language of the showman's journal:

> A professor of social psychology, Harold Lasswell, has de-jinxed the well-known but little-loved "educational program" and is proving on Friday nights at 10:45 over the NBC red that a touch of showmanship will transform the potentially dull into the vividly engrossing. . . . He has evolved the lecture-with-dramatic-flashbacks. And it's highly stimulating as an authentic advance in the art of radio. The formula is as flexible as an Arabian acrobat.
>
> The Lasswell series is called "Human Nature in Action" and deals with problems of neurosis (queer birds to you, muggs!), which is a subject that can get lost in the fog of big words in no time if the professor lets himself go. Lasswell not only keeps his theme in sharp focus all the way, but by the use of professional actors to illustrate his points is able to make the jump from the academic to the specific and, better than that, the dramatic fade-in and fade-out puts human sympathy and compassion into a subject that is often discussed as if sensitive human souls were so many pieces of rhinoceros skin.

[8]Concerning intensive and extensive standpoints of observation, see Harold D. Lasswell, "Person, Personality, Group, Culture," *Psychiatry* (1939) 2:533-561.

> Mrs. Drudge, a gal with a tangled personality, was examined by the professor from the standpoint of what she is outwardly, privately, subconsciously, and, in retrospect, what influences moulded her. The actress who played Mrs. Drudge was excellent, and the whole effort stacked up as basic drama, viz., putting the human ego under a microscope and then magnifying it for the whole radio world. In its way it was as significant as the headlines from Finland.
>
> To disarm his listeners, Lasswell has, with Confucius-like wisdom, omitted both "professor" and "doctor" from his billing.

Among those who make *no special requests,* several responses may be distinguished. Some go no further than to note examples of the types described by the speaker. Often the writer says no more than that he, himself, or someone known to him, is a "perfect example."

Sometimes the correspondent raises a general question that bears no avowed or obvious relationship to a worry. The problem is posed in the general spirit of intellectual inquiry; and there may be original disquisitions upon problems touched upon, or suggested by, the speaker.

Often the dominant trend of the letter seems to be self-justification. One example is a pencilled note from a New England farmer's wife:

> You be careful what you say of the woman who can't make up her mind, the silly talking woman. She isn't as silly as you think. Just her way of doing business is with her heart and intuition which sounds pretty foolish to a hard headed business man. I graduated at 21 and tried every way to be a business woman. After six years I decided I was getting nowhere fast. At the time I had three or four men friends, and so I selected the one I thought would make a good husband and father. We were married. He is a smart young man and I have done everything to push him ahead. We own our own home and have three beautiful children. Perhaps you will call me a drudge. If so, I still like it. I don't like the little social clubs. They push me around too much and I haven't the time or it isn't worth the energy to push them around. Then I stay at home a lot. I have plenty of work. . . . Your radio program is fine. Keep up the good work. (Name and address.)

The *special request* communications ask for discussions or replies over the air, by special correspondence, or by personal consultation. (Sometimes there are requests to get the writer a job, or there are lecture and other invitations.)

One group poses a problem for discussion that is apparently not a problem that disturbs the writer, but is intellectually stimulating. One woman from a high income group, active in civic affairs, writes to suggest the analysis of two fellow townsmen, whom she describes

in friendly, and somewhat puzzled, fashion. A receptionist describes a fellow worker in detail, exhibiting no animus, and betraying no concern about the other worker as a serious problem.

Some write of problems in the handling of others (sometimes disguising the fact that the type described constitutes a specific problem to the writer). Representative is this terse, straightforward letter of a cultured woman from a farm community in the West:

> Because of a problem which is confronting me—the problem of a young woman who, though she seems normal in other respects, has a tendency to literally fall in love with other women (and at present with my young daughter, a perfectly normal girl) I am writing for any available books, pamphlets, or printed information on the subject of perversion of this kind. I want, if possible, to help this strange young woman to understand herself, and in order to do so, I need information myself. If you can help me in any way by sending such information if you have it, or by directing me to any source where it can be obtained, I shall be glad to pay for your service, and for the material I may receive.

Much of the special request correspondence asks help in relation to the self as the dominant problem. Sometimes there is a slight disguise—as in the case of an acloholic who called up over the long-distance telephone during a broadcast to ask for a discussion of the psychology of alcoholism, which he assured us would be of great benefit to the whole world (thus including himself).

Using these various categories of correspondence, it will be possible to select subjects from among those who respond to future psychological broadcasts, and to learn more about the impact of these programs upon determinate portions of the population. Such full knowledge of representative persons will enable us to test the revolutionary, reactionary, or adjustive effect of psychological programs of Types A, B, and C. Only when further investigation has been done can we translate general program standards into the specifics of effective policy, and embark with certainty upon the fundamental task of reducing the level of personal insecurity by the proper articulation of radio with every agency of mass communication.