

Are you seeking sensation?

Erina Ingrassia

Close your eyes. At the count of five I will ask you to open them again.

BANG!
Did you scream? If you did, chances are you're an augmentor. Confusing? Read on.

According to a study performed by doctors Paul Kohn and Michael Cowles of York, there are roughly three types of sensation seekers. In a colloquium entitled "Sensation seeking: Behavioural and Physiological Aspects", the two colleagues presented the current findings of a project whose roots go back to 1979.

"People don't respond similarly to stimulation," began Kohn. "According to Petrie's findings, there are three types of people. Augmentors, are those who amplify stimulation. Reducers are those who dampen, or have no reaction to stimulation. Moderates are where most people are—in the middle."

According to Petrie's study, Augmentors have more difficulty tolerating pain and are more susceptible to fatigue. They tend to seek out non-arousing situations, and, not surprisingly, have to compensate for their low reaction levels to stimulation by seeking out unusually stimulating situations. On the whole, reducers tend to have more friends than augmentors. Petrie's study has also found that juvenile delinquents tend to be in this category of sensation-seekers.

Professors Kohn and Cowles set out to support Petrie's findings in their study.

Kohn divided his half of the study into two sections; the first, psychological. Kohn tested 298 students—117 male and 161 female. Both sexes were tested according to different levels of "sensation seeking" such as: the desire-for-novelty scale, thrill-and-adventure seeking, experience seeking, disinhibition, and boredom susceptibility.

"On the whole," said Kohn, "males tend to be reducers. They scored higher on the physical, and higher on the disinhibition and general-sensation-seeking scale."

The students were also subjected to what Kohn called "alternative models" which asked such questions as: Would you rather eat hot-spicy food or bland food? Subjects also underwent psychologists Allan Vandoe's Reducer-Augmentor Scale.

The second part of Kohn's study

was based on Behavioural measures. He asked for 76 volunteers out of the original 298. These students were then asked to listen to a tape recording of the pop-song "Summer in the City" and were told to set the volume to the level they liked. Decibel readings were recorded for each subject.

They were then asked questions concerning the number of hours of sleep, and the number of caffeine beverages they indulged in. Further, they were given Eysenck's personality inventory test which measures the degrees of introversion, extroversion and neurosis in individuals. Finally, subjects were asked to estimate

the number of randomly arranged dot patterns which were flashed for one-fifth of a second on the screen before them.

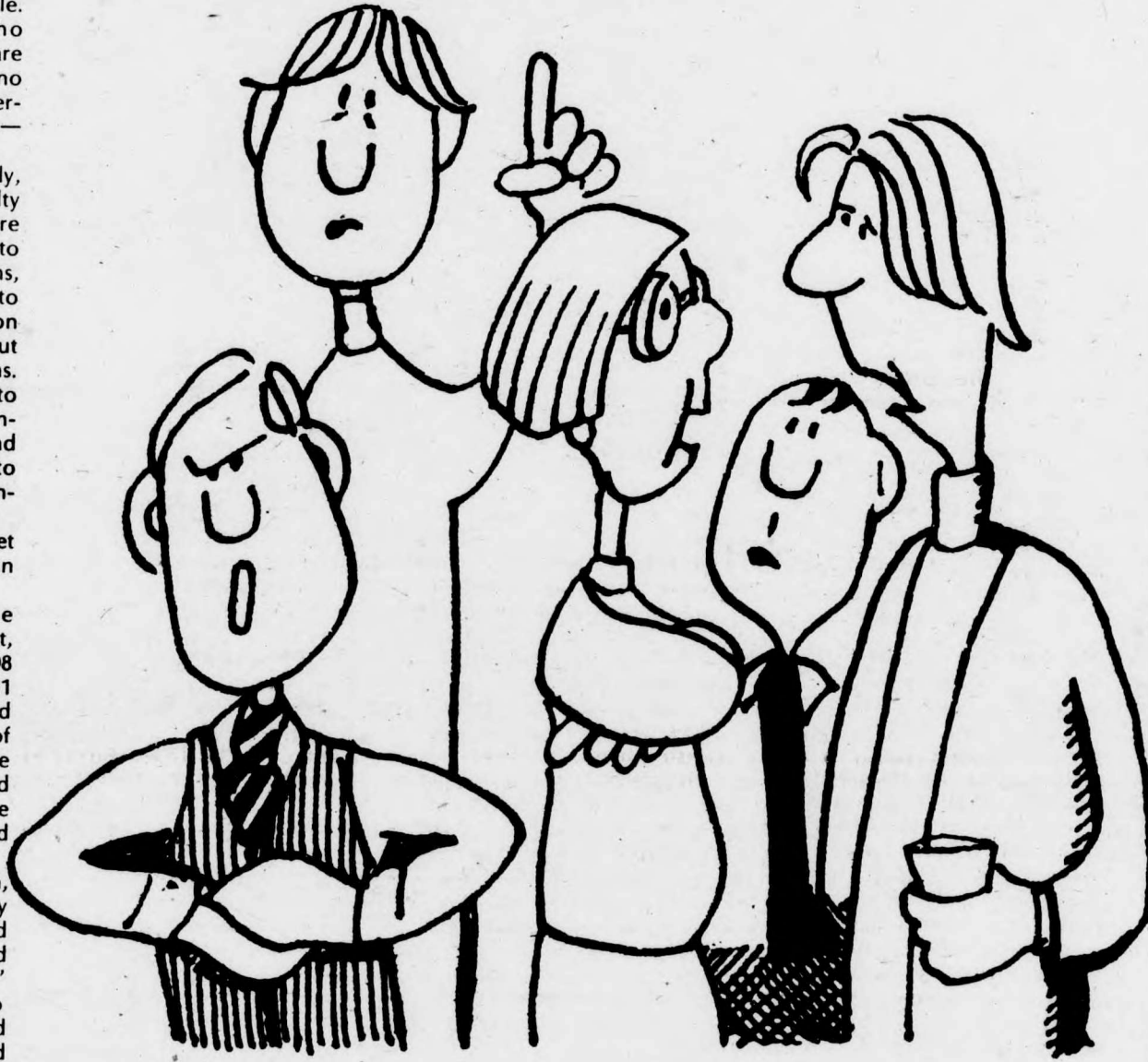
Kohn and Cowles' hypothesis was that reducers would prefer high volumes of music, would be more into caffeine, score high on extraversion on Eysenck's personality test and that augmentors would overestimate the dots, whereas reducers would underestimate.

"Volumes were, in fact, .24 louder for reducers. Reducers also tended to be extroverts," said Kohn. With respect to the dot test, results showed that "women overestimate in relation to men. They are also more consistent in

their over-estimation whereas men progressively underestimate."

Cowles' half of the study concerned physiological measurements such as cardiovascular rates and skin resistance response. Only the extreme groups of the 76 subjects were tested. Among the findings Cowles presented was that males tend to be stable extroverts, whereas females are neurotic extroverts, indicating that females need less sleep.

Said Cowles, "Thus far, the physiological findings support the Vandoe-Petrie findings. That is, that reducers tend to be sensation seekers."



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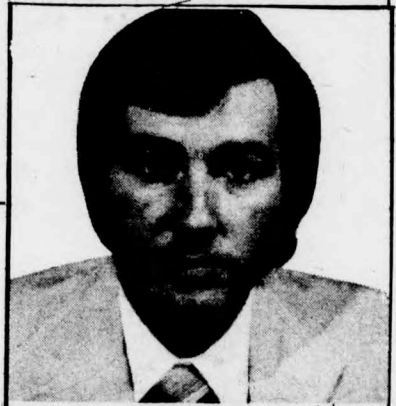
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