



ANGER AND PROPAGANDA

PSYCHOLOGICAL DIFFERENCES IN REACTIONS TO EXTREMIST MATERIAL

Learning with Purpose



THE PROBLEM

THE ROLE OF PROPAGANDA IN WIDER “EXTREMIST BEHAVIOR”

- Increased prevalence of extremist material on the Internet
- Increased attention to the causal “role” of extremist material online
- While unclear on “how” this material causes “radicalization” it is clear that it plays a role in the eventual move towards terrorism
- Hence, countering the effects of such material is a central counter-terrorism objective

THE PROBLEM

THE ROLE OF PROPAGANDA IN WIDER “EXTREMIST BEHAVIOR”



THE PROBLEM

COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM

- CVE (countering violent extremism) represents a on-going holistic effort to combat the causes of extremism
- One large focus of ongoing CVE has been to counter the persuasive ISIS messages online
- Diverse efforts (including student-driven) to communicate deterrence
- Wild-west of efforts at the moment
- No measures of “effectiveness” – stifle theory and policy.

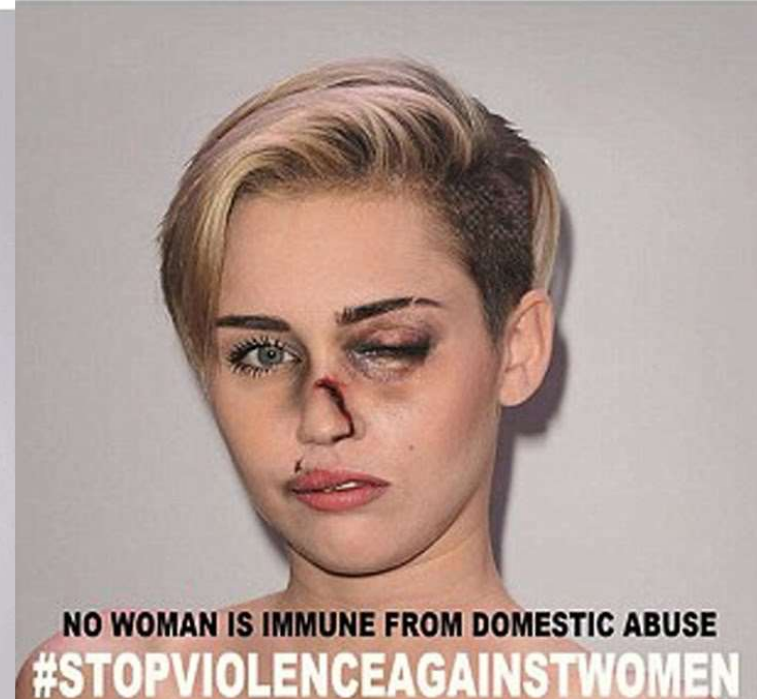


THE PROBLEM

**LIFE CAN BE A FAIRYTALE
IF YOU BREAK THE SILENCE**



**LIFE CAN BE A FAIRYTALE
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STUDY 1

SHORTLAND ET AL., (2016)

- N = 340
- Real vs., Cartoon campaigns of domestic abuse
- Image severity (live abuse, bruised, silenced)
- Male vs., female
- Real vs. Cartoon (< real)
- Severity (curvilinear)
- Female > male

THE PROBLEM

BOOMERANG EFFECT

- Campaigns, if poorly designed, can cause a “boomerang” or “backlash” effect, in which messages aimed at decreasing a given behavior actually increase it.
- The use of highly emotionally charged adverts promoted the male population in a stereotypical, unflattering view, which resulting in a ‘backlash’ effect from the male participants

THE PROBLEM

THE ROLE OF PROPAGANDA IN WIDER “EXTREMIST BEHAVIOR”



THE PROBLEM

Most programmes to stop radicalisation are failing



The scene of a van attack in Finsbury Park, north London, in June 2017
ISABEL INFANTES/GETTY IMAGES

More than 95 per cent of deradicalisation programmes are ineffective, according to a study commissioned by the Home Office that raises questions about the government's Prevent programme.

THE PROBLEM

The Radicalisation Awareness Network's "Communication and Narratives" working group, which aims at exchanging experiences between practitioners to shorten learning curves, has collected some key lessons learned from relevant research and inspiring practices that might be useful when aiming to change someone's mind ([RAN C&N 2018](#)):

- **Do no harm:** don't spread extremist propaganda by trying to prevent extremism. Studies indicate that raising young people's awareness of an issue which authorities disapprove of may actually stimulate interest in the issue rather than dissuade them ([Hornik 2008](#), [Chan 2017](#)). Therefore, highlighting the danger of specific extremist or terrorist groups can prove counterproductive and should only be done in an educational setting ([Cook 2011](#)). Counter-narratives in particular should only target a well-defined and understood audience that is already curious about extremist content.

METHOD

SHORTLAND ET AL., (2017)

- **Two goals**
 - A platform to begin to develop a methodology to test the effectiveness of CVE campaigns
 - A platform to explore individual differences in reactions to extremist material
- **Pre-test measures**
 - Measure of trait Aggression
 - Measure of extremist mindset
 - Measure of empathy
 - Measure of state hostility

METHOD

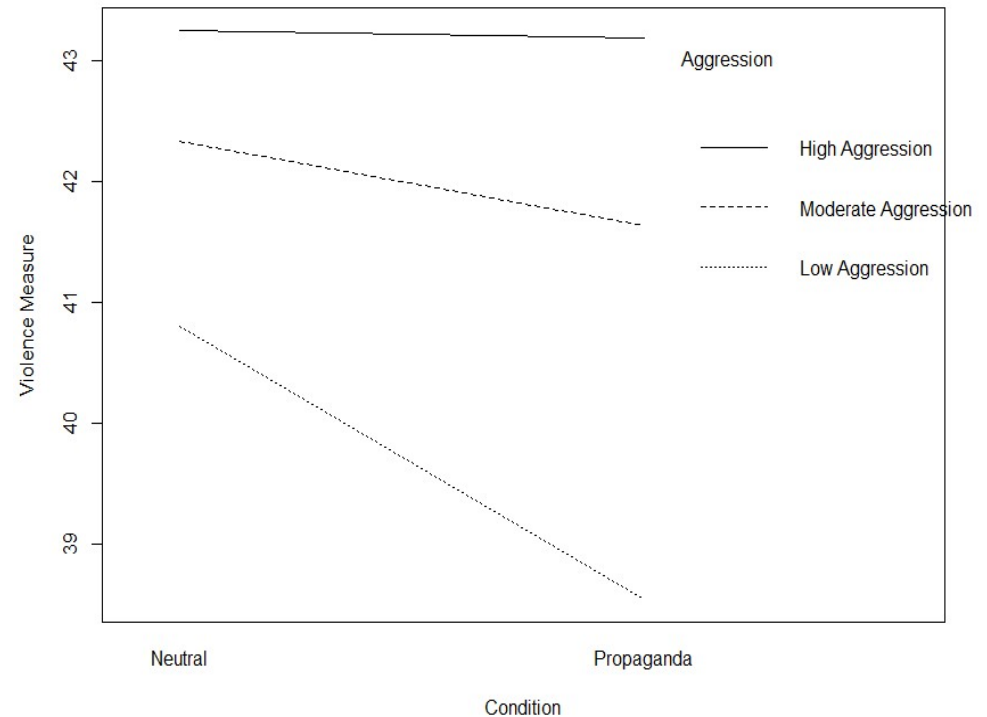
SHORTLAND ET AL., (2017)

- One of three videos (n = 432)
 - Control (a audience waiting for a presentation to start)
 - Non-Violent Prop: threats being made against U.S. and U.K. Government
 - Violent Prop: Tactical training and preparation for battle
- Post test
 - Todd was on his way home from work one evening and he had to break quickly at a yellow light. The person in the car behind him must have thought he was going to run the light and they crashed into the back of his car. Todd got out of his car to inspect the damage.
 - List 20 things Todd might do, think of feel.

RESULTS

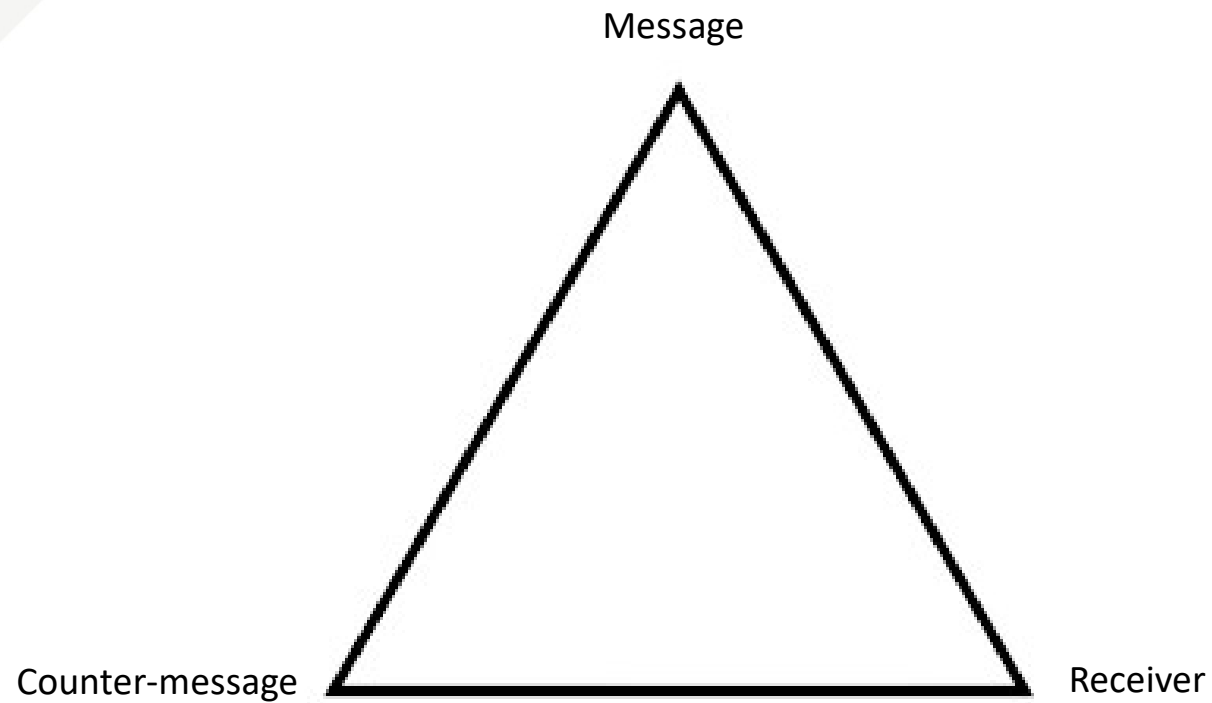
SHORTLAND ET AL., (2017)

- Findings
 - High aggression – higher scores
 - High empathy – lower scores
 - High hostility – higher scores
- Significant interaction effect of aggression



STUDY 3

SHORTLAND ET AL., (FORTHCOMING)



METHODS

SHORTLAND ET AL., (FORTHCOMING)

- **Three goals**
 - To test the effectiveness of CVE campaigns
 - To test the interaction of CVE campaign and personality
 - Validate a series of domain-specific measures of extremist-related cognitions
- **Pre/Post measures**
 - Measure of trait Aggression, empathy and hostility
 - PAQ
 - Extremist Mindset
 - Behavioral Scenarios

METHOD

SHORTLAND ET AL., (2017)

- One of three videos (n = 1111)
 - Control (a audience waiting for a presentation to start)
 - Propaganda: video of threats being made against U.S. and U.K. Government
 - Propaganda and CVE: one of three CVE messages shown before or after extremist propaganda video
- Three types of CVE message
 - Emotional
 - Deterrent
 - Ideological

RESULTS

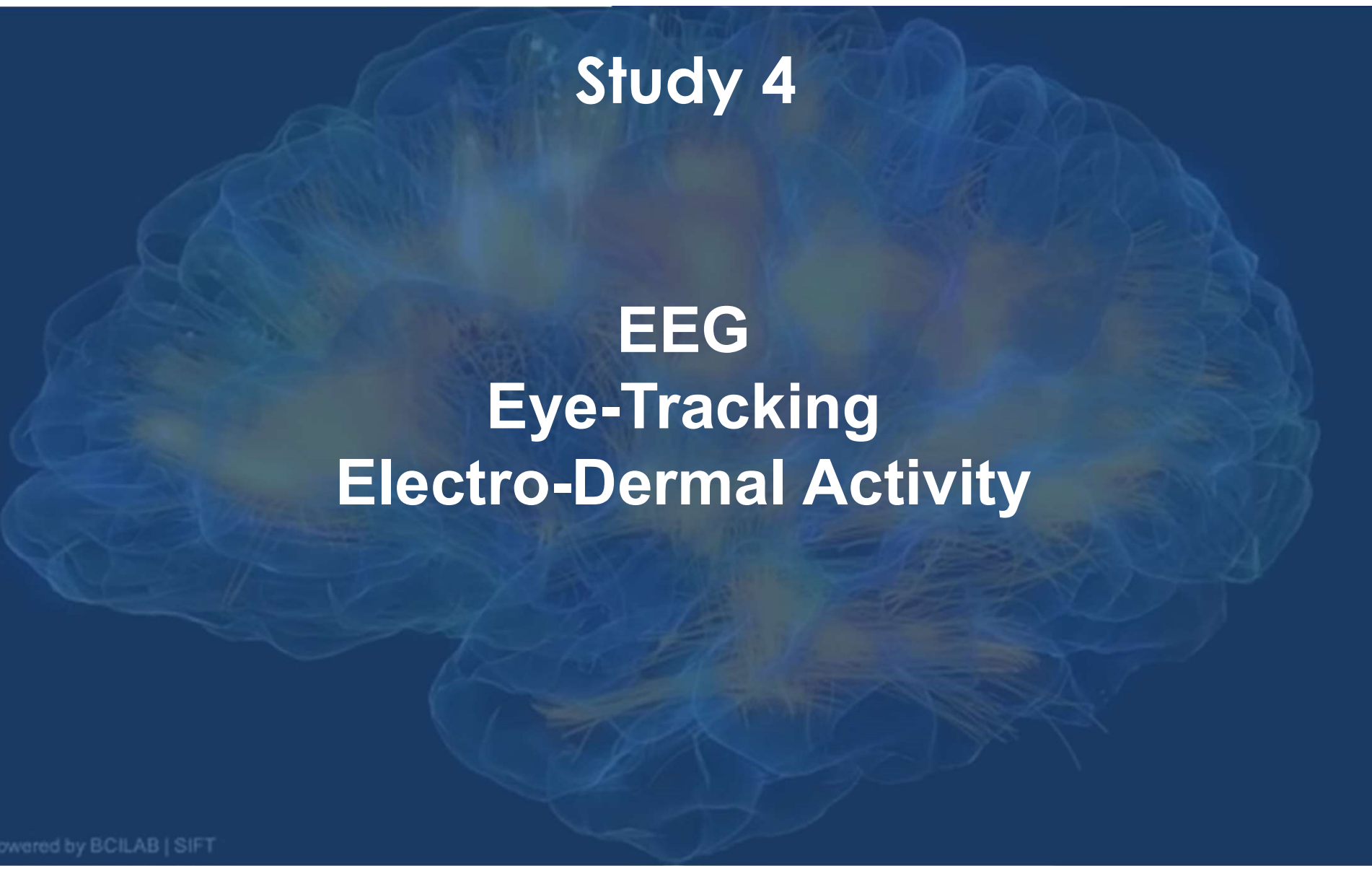
SHORTLAND ET AL., (FORTHCOMING)

- Findings
 - High aggression – higher scores
 - High empathy – lower scores
 - High hostility – higher scores
- Significant interaction effect of aggression

RESULTS

SHORTLAND ET AL., (FORTHCOMING)

- Findings
 - High aggression – higher PAQ and Extremist Mindset
 - High hostility – higher PAQ and Extremist Mindset
- Significant interaction personality and CVE type
 - Deterrent CVE mediated relationship between hostility and extremist mindset
 - Ideological CVE mediated relationship between aggression and extremist mindset
- Scenario-based outcomes
 - Exposure to CVE made individuals more likely to report a friend to family (rather than authorities).



Study 4

EEG Eye-Tracking Electro-Dermal Activity

QUESTIONS



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