

SOCIOLOGY

Writers Target of Critics

"Culture-personality" writers are accused of oversimplification and circularity of thinking. Emphasis on the part of infant care in character formation is also overdone.

► SHARP criticism is leveled at "culture-personality writers" by Drs. Alfred R. Lindesmith and Anselm L. Strauss, sociologists of Indiana University, in a communication to the *AMERICAN SOCIOLOGICAL REVIEW* (Oct.).

"Culture-personality writers" are those who describe a personality as typical of a certain people and explain this character as a product of cultural influences especially in early childhood.

Included in the target aimed at is Geoffrey Gorer, anthropologist author of a recently published book on the *PEOPLE OF GREAT RUSSIA*, in which he explains Russian character as traceable in part to the Russian custom of swaddling infants. (See *SNL*, Sept. 2, p. 147).

Other writers in the group are Dr. Ruth Benedict, author of the much-discussed *RACES OF MANKIND*, Dr. Margaret Mead, author of a discussion of Americans in *KEEP YOUR POWDER DRY*, and other well-known anthropologists.

Over-simplification is one charge made against these writers by Drs. Lindesmith and Strauss. The procedure of these writers raises the question that they may have selected evidence that fits in with their theories and neglected inconsistent data, the sociologists say.

Circularity of thinking is another accusation. The writers, it is charged, deduce a kind of personality from behavior in specific situations, and then explain the behavior in terms of the deduced personality.

In discussions of non-Western peoples, the writers are influenced by Western biases, it is indicated. Anthropologists themselves have warned of the danger that "Western biases must inevitably find expression in the inferences made about the psychological characteristics of given peoples.

"This warning has not been taken into account in anything like its full implications by culture-personality writers," the report charges.

Singled out for special criticism is the emphasis on the character-forming efficacy of infant care—bowel and bladder training, nursing, weaning, mothering, restraint of motion, punishment, etc.

There is no body of evidence to support some of the assertions made, the report indicates.

"Most psychologists and social scientists agree," the report admits, "that there is a special significance attached to first or early learning. . . . What we do not know, and are unable to discover from the culture-personality writings, is what precisely

it is that is learned in early infancy and what its exact significance may be for later training."

In making their explanations of the de-

PHYSICS

"Long-Distance" Seeding

► METEOROLOGISTS of the United States Weather Bureau are expected to disagree with Nobel Prize Winner Dr. Irving Langmuir who said that cloud seeding in the Southwest last winter may have caused heavy rains in the Southeast. Dr. Langmuir was the closing speaker at the meeting of the National Academy of Sciences in Schenectady, N. Y.

Pointing out that much seeding with silver iodide has been going on in the Southwest, Dr. Langmuir declared that during the winter in the Southwest there is insufficient moisture and convection activity for the silver iodide to be carried into clouds where ice crystals could form. The prevailing winds, he went on, therefore carry it over the Mississippi Valley where it meets moist air from the Gulf.

When showers occurred last winter in the Southeast as a result of this silver iodide, Dr. Langmuir said, the heat liberated by the condensation of the water in the atmosphere drew in moist Gulf air and north-west winds.

Thus, he said, drought in the Southwest and heavy rains in the Southeast may have resulted from changes in the synoptic weather conditions induced by seeding in the Southwest. During the summer, however, there is enough Gulf air in the Southwest to make seeding effective in giving rain to that region, he stated.

Weather Bureau scientists, who have not agreed with many of Dr. Langmuir's claims, have been pointing to drought in parts of New Mexico where seeding was started in March as an indication that artificial rain-making is not all that its originators claim it to be.

Although Dr. Langmuir's talk gives an explanation of what might have happened to silver iodide particles released into the air in the Southwest last winter, government weathermen are still less prepared to accept the theory that seeding can cause rain hundreds of miles from the point of seeding.

They claim that nature almost always provides enough particles to make it rain

development and fixation of personality in early infancy, these writers make little direct study of infants to determine whether the reactions attributed to them actually occur. It is assumed that the reaction of infants to a given type of treatment "must be" of a certain character.

Some writers, the report states, stress not only that culture shapes personality, but also that personality affects culture, and even advance the idea that institutions could be altered indirectly through changes in child-rearing practices.

Science News Letter, October 21, 1950

when other conditions are right. Dr. Langmuir and other rainmaking advocates claim that there is sometimes a lack of natural particles and that therefore artificial particles introduced by man will make it rain.

There has as yet been no general agreement on a method to be used in counting natural particles in the air.

Science News Letter, October 21, 1950

MINING

Importance of Salvaging Scrap Metals Emphasized

► OVER one-third the lead obtained in the United States during 1949 was from scrap and approximately one-fifth the tin was salvaged from a similar source.

The United States must rely heavily upon scrap to meet defense needs for non-ferrous metals, according to Charles W. Merrill of the U. S. Bureau of Mines. Reviewing recent developments in copper, brass, aluminum, lead and zinc, he stated that in view of rising prices and scarcity of major nonferrous metals, scrap must be salvaged.

Due to heavy demands for metals since the end of World War II, most developed and equipped mines in this country are producing to capacity.

If price advances or federal aid make it feasible to exploit low-grade deposits, development will take considerable time. The demands of reconstruction abroad and foreign trade policies of many countries make imports of metals uncertain. Such developments accentuate the importance of scrap, he declared.

"As industrial and military power are so largely dependent on an abundance of metals, the importance to national security of our vast metal accumulation is obvious," he stated. "The scrap metal industry through reclamation helps us to make full use of this pool of metal without undue wastage."

Science News Letter, October 21, 1950