

PSYCHOLOGY

Mind-Body Reactions

Current research reported at the Eastern Psychological Association meeting describe such things as the relation between mind and body and the development of perception.

► YOU CAN learn to avoid an annoying noise without being aware of your action.

This "unconscious learning" was reported to the Eastern Psychological Association meeting in Atlantic City, N. J., by Dr. Ralph F. Hefferline of Columbia University.

In Dr. Hefferline's experiment, he told his subjects he was studying changes in body tension when noise was occasionally superimposed on music. Semi-classical music and a loud generator hum were fed through earphones. But he arranged his apparatus so that a small contraction of the right thumb would turn off the noise for 15 seconds.

The effective contraction was too slight to be visible to the experimenter and was not noticed by the subject. Yet after a half hour, subjects learned (were conditioned) so that they sometimes prevented the noise for several consecutive minutes.

Hearing-Personality

► DEAFNESS lowers a person's score on the Rorschach inkblot test of personality, Dr. Carl Eisdorfer of Duke Medical Center, Durham, N. C., told the meeting.

This was shown when 48 elderly people, aged 60 and older, were tested in the Duke Geriatrics Project, Dr. Eisdorfer reported.

Although hearing loss was found to be associated with lowered Rorschach scores, loss of vision accounted for relatively little difference in the level of Rorschach functioning. Individuals with both hearing and vision loss, however, scored slightly below those having a hearing loss alone.

Important for any interpretation of Rorschach performance is a consideration of any loss of hearing by the persons tested, Dr. Eisdorfer warned.

Babies Perceive Depth

► DESPITE the usual opinion of parents, little babies can perceive depth as soon as they can crawl.

This was reported to the Association by Drs. Richard D. Walk and Eleanor J. Gibson of Cornell University.

In their experiment, babies were allowed to crawl on a large sheet of glass. Directly under part of the glass sheet was a pattern of linoleum. Under the rest of the glass sheet, the linoleum was three and a half feet lower. The two sheets of linoleum had the same pattern on them.

The babies would crawl across the linoleum just under the glass sheet but would not cross the other linoleum three and a half feet below them, thus indicating that they were able to see and avoid depth.

► SO FAR as his hearing acuity is concerned, the future space traveler may be placed in his capsule sitting straight up, tilted to one side or the other, lying on his face or his back or on either right or left side.

None of these positions has any real effect on the threshold of his hearing, Drs. John F. Corso and Moira F. LeMay of the Pennsylvania State University reported to the psychologists.

This finding, the investigators said, removes one worry from further consideration by those who are designing space ships and other kinds of vehicles.

The results contradict findings recently reported by Russian investigators.

Alert Lookout

► A REMEDY has been proposed for the deterioration of efficiency when a lookout is watching for something that occurs only once or twice an hour.

Feed the lookout artificial signals even if he can easily distinguish them from the "real thing," urged Dr. F. V. Taylor of the U. S. Naval Research Laboratory, Washington, D. C.

When 96 such artificial signals were presented randomly mixed with the 2.5 real signals, the monitoring performance was improved more than 100% and there was no deterioration during the whole two-hour period, Dr. Taylor reported to scientists at the Eastern Psychological Association meeting.

Heart Beats Faster

► ALTHOUGH a man does not have much control over the speed of his heartbeat, it can be conditioned to beat faster on certain occasions.

Dr. Malcolm R. Westcott of Vassar College told the meeting how this can be done.

Without any learning, a man's heart will naturally beat faster when he receives an electric shock. In Dr. Westcott's experiment, such an electric shock followed immediately after a seven-second buzzer. After ten such trials, the buzzer alone caused the heart to speed up its beating.

Such conditioning of the human heartbeat has been observed before, but because the record of the breathing masked the effects on the heart, the results previously have been contradictory.

Dr. Westcott controlled the breathing so that this factor could be allowed for and the conditioning of the heartbeat clearly demonstrated.

► THE ENGINEER'S IDEA of a creative college is one who is independent of others.

This was discovered when Dr. Thomas B. Sprecher of the Psychological Service of Pittsburgh asked practicing engineers to rate other engineers on their creativity and then had them explain the reasons for their high and low ratings.

He reported his findings to the Psychological Association.

Other traits of the engineer's creative engineer are: production of novel solutions, ability to get a solution, enjoyment of problems, tendency to give practical answers and tendency to analyze a situation.

Science News Letter, April 18, 1959

SCIENCE NEWS LETTER

VOL. 75 APRIL 18, 1959 NO. 16

Edited by WATSON DAVIS

The Weekly Summary of Current Science, published every Saturday by SCIENCE SERVICE, Inc., 1719 N St., N.W., Washington 6, D. C., NORTH 7-2255. Cable Address: SCIENSERV.

Subscription rates: 1 yr., \$5.50; 2 yrs., \$10.00; 3 yrs., \$14.50; ten or more copies in one package to one address, 7½ cents per copy per week; single copy, 15 cents, more than six months old, 25 cents. No charge for foreign postage.

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Printed in U.S.A. Second class postage paid at Washington, D. C. Established in mimeograph form March 13, 1922. Title registered as trademark, U. S. and Canadian Patent Offices. Indexed in Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature, Abridged Guide, and the Engineering Index. Member Audit Bureau of Circulation.



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