

Social Sciences Notes

PSYCHOLOGY

Sarcastic Humor Reduces Anger

Humor of any kind reduces anger, but sarcastic humor does it best, according to a Rochester University experiment on 30 students.

Psychologist Jay S. Efran and graduate student Earl Dworkin made their subjects good and mad, then played tapes from well-known comedians, preselected for hostile and nonhostile jokes.

Ten students who heard the sarcastic humor were almost drained of anger, as reflected in a test of hostility. Ten who heard the nonhostile jokes lost only half as much anger, and the rest who listened to music changed hardly at all.

Dr. Efran believes that the biting humor of white-baiting Negro comedian Dick Gregory may serve a function in lowering Negro anger toward whites.

SPEECH THERAPY

Obturator with Accents

An Australian dentist offers made-to-order accents with his artificial palate-substitutes, called obturators.

An obturator is a device placed in the roof of the mouth to correct a cleft palate.

Dr. Clive Dennis of the University of Melbourne reports he can shape obturators to give any one of three basic accents: English cultivated, general Australian—run-on speech ending in a high note—and broad Australian or nasal.

By analyzing a patient's speech pattern and measuring his mouth, Dr. Dennis shapes the obturators to give the desired accent. He said he once helped a patient who verged on suicidal depression, until fitted with the right speech pattern.

Dr. Dennis estimates that such devices will be unnecessary in 20 or 30 years with the growth of surgical techniques.

DEMOGRAPHY

Small Cities Due to Grow Fastest

Middle Atlantic states can expect to continue losing population to the Western part of the country for another ten years, according to projections by the National Planning Association.

But with the exception of the Far West, those areas slated to grow most rapidly do not now have large metropolitan populations.

Fast-growing cities will include such places as Macon, Ga.; Tallahassee, Fla.; Reno and Las Vegas, Nev.; Provo-Orem, Utah; Texarkana, Tex.; and Phoenix, Ariz.

Of these, the NPA estimates Las Vegas will grow the fastest, with yearly growth rates of 4.2 percent. Tallahassee follows with 3.8 percent.

By contrast, the pace of growth in major metropolitan areas should slow to an annual increase of 2.2 percent by 1975.

In the Middle Atlantic States, Binghamton, N.Y. and Baltimore, Md., should grow the fastest with a rate of about 2.4 percent.

The NPA, in its first examination of each of the United States' 224 metropolitan areas, concludes that an "industry mix" is related to growth. In fast-growing cities, the importance of factory employment declines somewhat in favor of job opportunities in non-product areas such as transportation, trade, finance, and services.

The New York-New Jersey metropolitan area—14.7 million in 1960—should contain more than 17 million people by 1975, the NPA predicts.

ANTHROPOLOGY

Relocation of Peoples

An erupting volcano won't keep people away from their homes for long, but a government welfare program will, according to a six-year study titled "Cultural Change and Stability of Displaced Communities."

Despite the dangers, people forced from their homes by a blazing volcano want to return, even after sixteen years of relocation, reports Dr. Homer G. Barnett, a University of Oregon anthropologist. But people relocated by government persuasion choose to adapt. They get a taste of government paternalism and they like it, says Dr. Barnett.

He studied 19 relocations in the Pacific Islands, three of which concerned volcanic eruptions in New Guinea, New Hebrides and the Philippines. In other cases, remote people were relocated by their governments. Dr. Barnett also studied the relocated inhabitants of Bikini, where the United States exploded its hydrogen bomb.

In the case of natural disaster, people maintain a sentimental attachment to home. Also the rich volcanic soil calls them back, said Dr. Barnett.

Dr. Barnett's final report is due next year at the National Science Foundation, which has supported the study with close to \$250,000.

SCHIZOPHRENIA

Womb Conditions Promote Illness

Two Washington scientists have traced mental illness back to the womb, at least where identical twins are concerned.

Born of the same egg and possessing the same genes, identical twins rarely split into one psychotic and one normal individual. Only 100 cases exist in the world's scientific literature.

Drs. William Pollin and James Stabenau of the National Institute of Mental Health studied the birth histories of 61 such cases and found the schizophrenic twin was the lighter one at birth in 41 instances.

The finding supports the researchers' own work on 15 sets of twins at NIMH. The mentally ill twin was lighter weight and also appeared to have had a less active thyroid gland at birth in 12 cases, report the psychiatrists.

They believe that unfavorable conditions in the womb—a poorer position or nutritional differences—may draw out a genetic potential for mental illness in one twin, while the other remains safe.

After birth, this disadvantage snowballs into severe mental illness when parents see the difference and reinforce the tendency by treating the less mature twin as less competent.

22 July 1967 / Vol. 92 / SCIENCE NEWS 95