

# Behavioral Sciences Notes

## PSYCHOLOGY

### TV violence arouses children

Violence on television most likely arouses aggression in children, according to observations of children at play after they had watched aggressive episodes on film.

Dr. Ralph Garry, professor of educational psychology at Boston University and a specialist in the psychological effects of television, reports that the results of several studies suggest that "given a normal population of children possessed of a typical range of motives, the effect of aggression in films is to arouse rather than discharge aggressive impulses."

Laboratory tests on college students suggest the same effect, said Dr. Garry in a publication "Children and TV," put out by the Association for Childhood Education International.

However, it is not known how much, if at all, these aroused feelings will be acted upon in real life.

Dr. Garry said the old-fashioned Western with its "barroom brawls, charging cavalry, Indian attacks and all the other trappings" is a clear-cut ritual "much less disturbing to children than crime and detective programs where the motives are complex, the characters close to life, the settings familiar, violence realistic and the conflicts not clearly resolved."

## PSYCHIATRY

### New thinking on human aggression

U. S. psychiatrists have been steadily discarding, or at least modifying, the old "aggressive instinct" theory of human nature.

An indication of how far they have moved away from Freud on this matter came in a poll of 313 psychiatrists, conducted by the drug magazine, SK & F PSYCHIATRIC REPORTER.

Only 39 percent of the psychiatrists still agreed with Freud that man has a basic fund of more or less irreducible aggression and hostility. Some 27 percent thought he has no inborn aggression at all. The rest conceded some aggressive instinct, but gave equal emphasis to generous, constructive motives in human nature.

A very high proportion of the psychiatrists (81 percent) agreed that violence is not simply a matter of individual psychology, but that when the environment tolerates violence, violence is likely to happen.

Said one psychiatrist: "Individuals take their cues from president, governor, mayor, chief of police and boss."

## RACE RELATIONS

### Prejudice over-rated?

A Harvard psychiatrist challenges the idea that prejudice, in a psychological sense, is the crucial issue in the current U.S. racial crisis.

He also questions whether American Negroes have been emotionally scarred by oppression and whether white Americans have been made ill by fear of the Negro.

Dr. Robert Coles, a research psychiatrist and specialist on race, says that through years of studying children,

both black and white, he finds in them an astonishing potential for overcoming adversity and meeting challenge.

How is it, he asks, referring to New Orleans Negroes, that "some little children . . . from homes now called disadvantaged can walk through mobs and endure unspeakable insults, only to grow into the solid, hard-working and undisturbed youths I now find them to be?"

Further, Dr. Coles says, he has evidence from children of militant Southern segregationists showing that legal changes toward integration have rapidly become changes of the mind.

In the October issue of TRANS-ACTION, Dr. Coles says these things are "a reminder that the U.S. problem is a psychological one only because it continues to be a social and political one.

"There is nothing in the minds of any group of Americans that necessarily compels our present problems to continue. I find that fact both hopeful and particularly depressing."

## HEALTH STATISTICS

### Guns still choice in suicide

Methods of committing suicide have changed slightly since 1950 when firearms and explosives ranked far and above any other means. In the past 17 years, poisoning by drugs, usually sleeping pills, has become more common although it still accounts for only a minority of the suicides.

In 1964, 48 percent of U.S. suicides were by gunshot wounds. Hanging and strangulation ranked second with 15 percent and drugs third with 12 percent.

The figures, the latest available, were compiled by the National Center for Health Statistics.

## STERILIZATION

### Poor women denied operations

Indigent mothers who want to be sterilized are being denied the operation in most New York City municipal hospitals.

Except for a very few, all hospitals have policies on sterilization ranging from moderately restrictive to outright refusal to grant the operation, charges the Association for Voluntary Sterilization, Inc., which recently completed a survey of 41 New York public hospitals.

Only six of the 41 follow the permissive practice recommended by the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, said AVS medical chairman, Dr. Helen Edey.

Dr. Edey cited the case of a 42-year-old woman expecting her ninth child who asked to be sterilized. The physician refused and suggested contraceptives. The woman is now expecting her tenth and has been denied the operation again at another hospital.

When queried on his attitude by AVS, Dr. Harvey Gollance, deputy commissioner of hospitals in New York stated: "It is the policy of the department of hospitals to perform sterilizations for therapeutic reasons only."

Women with means can get the operation easily at a private hospital, Dr. Edey pointed out. "It is time that New York City hospitals . . . reexamined their policies."