

behavioral sciences

LEARNING

Malnutrition not a unique factor

Tests show that malnutrition in early life permanently impairs the functioning of the nervous system and results in loss of learning ability. According to Dr. Ernesto Pollitt of Yale University School of Medicine, this is an incomplete picture.

The learning ability of the malnourished child should not be judged solely on the basis of nutritional background, he says.

When considering malnutrition—protein-calorie deficiency—and poor test performance in children, other factors may very well come into play. Dr. Pollitt considers two variables: an appropriate measure of nutritional history is often very difficult to find, and biological and social factors affect the overall development of a malnourished child and it is often difficult separating these from the nutritional component.

When animal studies are undertaken, the results are often incomplete or different from human studies. Dr. Pollitt, in the May-June, 1969 issue of *PSYCHOSOMATIC MEDICINE*, establishes the need for more research in the field—studies involving the use of affected cases as their own controls.

SCHIZOPHRENIA

Lower class label

The term schizophrenia may be merely a middle-class judgment made about lower class individuals, a University of Manitoba psychologist suggests.

Research has found that lower socioeconomic groups develop schizophrenia at a greater rate than higher socioeconomic groups. Dr. Marvin Brodsky of Winnipeg suggests "there may not be any condition which we have come to call schizophrenia, but rather just a class judgment."

He claims that mental health workers come from the middle class and data may be interpreted as implying that the middle class is in some way judging the lower classes.

Although Dr. Brodsky says further study is needed, there is also evidence that there may be something in common—some underlying variable—between schizophrenia and social class.

Low esteem, absence of drive, dependency and other parallels had been observed for both lower socioeconomic individuals and schizophrenics.

SOCIAL BEHAVIOR

TV violence under study

A study has been undertaken to determine the relationship between televised crime and violence and its effects on human behavior, with emphasis on children.

The Surgeon General's Scientific Advisory Committee on Television and Social Behavior will continue for at least one year.

A budget of \$1 million is slated for development and selection of research projects. Two phases of research are to be undertaken: one of short term to give more immediate answers and another, longer, more comprehen-

sive examination of the process of child development and the impact of television on social behavior.

The first progress report is expected in October.

Psychologists are divided on whether violence in TV provokes or inhibits real-life violence. Some contend that it stimulates and condones violence, while others hold that it acts as an escape valve.

REHABILITATION

Disabled poor to be helped

A new, concentrated effort is being made to aid disadvantaged and disabled persons.

A special eight-man task force of the Social and Rehabilitative Service of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare has been set up to focus on utilizing all available programs for this doubly disadvantaged group.

They will aim at both new and expanded programs: rehabilitation services, research and demonstration, training of rehabilitation personnel, construction of rehabilitation facilities, and consultative services from state and local agencies, the colleges and industry.

PSYCHOBIOLOGY

Memory and protein synthesis

Researchers at the University of Pennsylvania have shown in tests with mice that memory probably does not depend on continuing synthesis of protein.

Previous research with the antibiotic puromycin—a drug which interrupts protein synthesis—resulted in loss of memory of test animals (SN: 1/1/66, p. 3). This suggested to Dr. Lewis B. Flexner that protein synthesis in the brain was necessary for memory.

But experiments with other antibiotics brought no memory loss, although they did interrupt protein synthesis. Since these experiments seemed to negate the theory of protein synthesis affecting memory, the investigators are looking for other areas of the brain affected by the puromycin.

Although study is not complete, it appears, says Dr. Flexner, that the abnormal molecules created by the puromycin may be the real reason the mice lose their memory. These molecules may somehow interfere with the functioning of the nerve cells in the brain.

LSD

Possible link to leukemia

A second reported case of leukemia developing after use of LSD suggests a possible cause and effect relationship, according to two Australian researchers.

They report that although the two cases differ, there is enough evidence to suggest a causal relationship. The chromosome abnormalities are similar to the chromosome breakage described in cases of LSD users (SN: 6/3/67, p. 518). The first case was reported in 1968.

O. Margaret Garson and Meryl K. Robson of the University of Melbourne, reporting in the June 28 *BRITISH MEDICAL JOURNAL*, urge that any other cases of leukemia found after use of LSD be reported so that a causal relationship may be further investigated.

july 12, 1969/vol. 96/science news/31