

PEDAGOGY

Teachers take the credit

Education researchers have demonstrated that the success or failure of students is often conditioned by a teacher's preconception of their abilities. Moreover, reports Dr. Linda Beckman, a psychologist at Camarillo State Hospital in California, teachers tend to interpret a student's performance in such a way as to take credit for the successes, while blaming the student for the failures.

Subjects who believed they were giving a series of lessons to children in a laboratory, Dr. Beckman says in the February *JOURNAL OF EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY*, blamed their students if the children's test scores failed to improve or declined. If the scores were good, the subjects attributed the results to their teaching abilities.

Other subjects who were merely observing the experiment agreed in blaming the children for poor scores. But they also gave the credit to the children for good scores.

In real life, Dr. Beckman concludes, if a student is doing poorly, "the teacher concludes the child's motivation is low, and she dispenses negative stimuli." The teacher's negative attitude influences the child to perform even more poorly, and a vicious circle is then created.

DEVELOPMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY

Reflection seems inherent

School-age children, psychologists have shown, characteristically differ in the amount of time they spend reflecting before giving a solution to a problem. Recent experiments, says Dr. Dickon Reppucci, a psychologist at Yale University, suggest this reflection-impulsivity distinction is an inherent tendency.

The amount of reflection that 2½-year-old children demonstrate when solving problems, Dr. Reppucci reports in the March *DEVELOPMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY*, is correlated to the amount of sustained involvement they exhibit when playing with toys. Both in problem-solving and in playing, he notes, the reflective child "considers available information and forms a plan." Impulsive problem-solvers, by contrast, switch toys rapidly.

Dr. Reppucci suspects the impulsivity-reflection dimension is not a function of cognitive development, since "all children have the tools to consider information . . . but this is not the preferred mode of functioning for many of them." To settle the question, he plans to extend his research to children as young as four months of age.

EDUCATION

New intelligence test

The standard intelligence tests are often criticized on numerous grounds. For one thing, it is argued, intelligence is too complex a phenomenon to be represented by a single figure like the IQ score.

For the last five years the British Department of Education and the British Psychological Society have been developing a replacement for the traditional IQ test. To be released late this year or early next year,

the new test will produce not a single score but a profile of a child's abilities in six different categories.

The categories that will be measured are reasoning ability, verbal ability, spatial ability, number ability, memory and ideational fluency. This last category is intended to gauge creative potential: Children will be asked to think of unconventional uses for ordinary objects like bricks and frying pans, or to speculate about unusual events, such as "what would happen if there were no school."

The developers of the test hope that the profile scoring method will discourage teachers from stereotyping their students on the basis of an overly simple IQ figure.

PSYCHOLOGY

Female stereotypes survive

Most people hold stereotyped views of the difference between male and female attributes. A survey of clinical psychologists, psychiatrists and social workers, conducted by researchers at Worcester State Hospital in Massachusetts under the direction of Dr. Inge K. Broverman, suggests that such prejudices influence even scientists who are presumably aware of the dangers of stereotyped thinking.

When asked to describe the attributes characterizing a healthy adult, the subjects responded much as they did when asked to describe a healthy male. Their description of a healthy female, however, was significantly different from that of a healthy adult. Females, it turned out, were permitted more deficiencies in traits like logical ability and independence than were adults in general.

The authors explain the discrepancy on the grounds that clinical workers assume mental health to be a good adjustment to one's environment. Clinicians, they conclude, should "critically examine their attitudes concerning sex-role stereotypes, as well as their position with respect to an adjustment notion of health."

PSYCHOLOGY

Creativity and hypnosis

Some psychological theorists hold that hypnosis can be understood as a regression to relatively primitive modes of thought and experience. Creativity is sometimes interpreted in the same way.

Drs. Kenneth S. Bowers and Sandra J. Van Der Meulen at the University of Waterloo in Canada report in the March *JOURNAL OF PERSONALITY AND SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY* an experiment that lends support to such explanations of both hypnosis and creativity.

Subjects who scored high on tests of their susceptibility to hypnosis, Drs. Bowers and Van Der Meulen found, also scored high on measures of creativity. Low scorers tended to score low in both areas.

The researchers conclude that creativity and hypnotic suggestibility are psychologically related variables. The relationship does not seem to be a simple one, however. The psychologists note that hypnosis appears to be more closely related to perceptual creativity than to other forms of creativity, such as an ability to produce verbal associations in response to a given word.