

behavioral sciences

SOCIOLOGY

Black power

A random sample of 394 whites and 461 blacks was interviewed on the meaning of the term black power by a research team headed up by Drs. Joel Aberbach and Jack Walker of the University of Michigan. The survey was conducted in the fall of 1967 in Detroit following the riots.

Only 11 percent of the whites interpreted black power in favorable terms; nearly 40 percent of the sample believed that the concept means blacks rule over whites. Only 9 percent of the black respondents defined black power in such terms.

The researchers report in the June *AMERICAN POLITICAL SCIENCE REVIEW* that blacks who favor black power do not see the political world as one where blacks can gain only at the expense of whites. Nor do blacks interpret the concept as racism, general black takeover or violence. Yet many whites implicitly fear this.

Blacks were divided in their attitude toward the concept; 42 percent were favorable while 50 percent were unfavorable. Those who favored black power saw it as a "fair share for black people" or "black unity." Blacks who were unfavorable to the concept saw it as empty and meaningless.

SOCIOLOGY

College drug use

A drug usage survey of 26,000 students in Denver and Boulder, Colo., representative of the university population in that area, was conducted by Dr. George Mizner of the University of Colorado Medical School and Dr. James Barter and Paul Werme of Sacramento Mental Health Services.

They report that 14 percent of the sample have used amphetamines without a doctor's prescription, 26 percent have used marijuana and 5 percent have used LSD. Of the 9 institutions surveyed, a medical center placed among the 3 institutions with the highest overall lifetime drug use. For the medical students amphetamine usage was almost as great as marijuana use.

The researchers report in the July *AMERICAN JOURNAL OF PSYCHIATRY* that the main reason for using amphetamines was to study or get through exams. The marijuana users reported that curiosity was the primary reason for their initial use.

SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

Communes

A major purpose of today's communes—organized by such varied movements as hippies, political radicals, religious groups and humanistic psychologists—is to seek a sense of family warmth and intimacy, Dr. Rosabeth Kanter, a sociologist at Brandeis, reports in the July *PSYCHOLOGY TODAY*. Two major forms of the commune are emerging: the anarchistic and the growth center.

She reports that the anarchistic commune tends to be open to all comers at the start and usually lacks any integrating philosophy or economic base. The prospects for such communities are dim. However, she suggests that the small, dissolvable, unstructured commune may

meet its members' needs for a temporary family.

The growth-and-learning centers are more organized, generally around a permanent staff that provides community guests with a sense of intimacy and expressive involvement. The growth centers, of which there are more than 100, usually have evolved from the encounter-group psychologist movement. Dr. Kanter says that these centers tend to create family-like feeling, to use mutual criticism and to organize work communally.

POPULATION

The law and birth rates

Dr. Henry David of the American Institutes for Research, Washington, D.C., suggests that Western countries can benefit from European countries' experience with contraception and abortion legislation.

For example, in Romania the birth rate was 22.9 per 1,000 in 1957. Following the liberalized abortion laws that were passed in 1956 the birth rate dropped to 14.3 per 1,000 in 1966. But late in 1966 legislation restricted abortion and the importation of modern contraceptives. The birth rate jumped dramatically to 39.9 per 1,000 by September of 1967. However by December 1968 it had declined to 21.5 per 1,000 through the use of traditional contraceptive methods, clandestine purchases of modern contraceptives and resort to illegal abortions.

Dr. David says that the birth decline, despite laws restricting abortion and modern contraceptives, indicates that tight laws alone cannot regulate the birth rate.

PSYCHOLOGY

Verbal conditioning

Comments such as "good," "fine," "mmmhmm," in social intercourse are considered verbal reinforcers, and are employed to condition subjects in verbal learning experiments.

Some past research indicates that awareness precedes, and is a necessary condition for, performance gains where the subject is being verbally reinforced for correctly solving tasks.

Dr. Thomas Kennedy of Arizona State University placed subjects in a verbal learning experiment where they had to construct sentences from pronouns and verbs according to a certain principle. Subjects were verbally reinforced according to programmed schedules when they solved tasks in accordance with the principle.

Of 54 experimental subjects, 9 developed awareness of the principle and showed concomitant increases in performance. Another 11 subjects reported a positive but imperfectly correlated hypothesis regarding the principle, and 34 subjects remained unaware of the principle.

Dr. Kennedy says in the June *JOURNAL OF EXPERIMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY* that most of the subjects, aware and unaware, showed increases in performance if the rate of verbal reinforcement was increased. Only those subjects who received no increase in reinforcement and remained unaware of the principle did not improve their performance.

Dr. Kennedy concludes that significant performance gains occur with increased social reinforcement even in the absence of awareness of the principle being conditioned.