

behavioral sciences

SOCIAL MODELING

Training lasts

Most of the research on social modeling—the way children imitate their elders or their peers—has focused on short-term acquisition of behavior patterns. For example, a subject is exposed to a social model on an audio-visual screen and shortly thereafter tested to see if he has acquired the displayed behavior.

Dr. Mark Thelen of the University of Missouri in Columbia carried out such an experiment on 38 children, then retested them seven months later to see if the training endured.

He exposed the subjects to a film of a man solving a card-sorting task. When the man failed in his task he responded with self-blame. Children exposed to the film displayed a higher rate of self-blame than a group of control subjects.

In the second test the children were not shown the film; they were simply placed in the task situation. The majority of the children who had been exposed to the social model seven months earlier once again responded with self-blame to a greater extent than the controls, Dr. Thelen reports in the July *DEVELOPMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY JOURNAL*.

COMMUNICATION

Confidence in persuasion

Research in the field of communication and persuasion increasingly indicates that an expression of confidence is the critical factor in determining how effective a persuader a person will be. Dr. Harvey London of Brandeis University and lawyers A. Van C. Lanckton of the Harvard Law School and Philip Meldman of Los Angeles, Calif., studied this process employing the jury method, a technique permitting the analysis of how two persons interact when trying to persuade each other of the validity of their views.

Eleven pairs of women were given opposing legal analyses of a law case and then told to come up with a unanimous decision on the case.

A scoring system analyzing their discussions showed that the statements of the strong persuaders demonstrated self-confidence and high degrees of doubt in the other person. The statements of the subjects whose positions were changed were high in self-doubt and in confidence in the other person. Furthermore the analysis showed that the ability to persuade was not a function of intelligence, conviction before the discussions or volubility.

The researchers report in the summer *PUBLIC OPINION QUARTERLY* that in 10 of the 11 jury pairs, the person whose position was eventually to change spoke first. In 7 of these 10 cases, that person indicated doubt by asking the position of the person who was to become the persuader.

DEMOGRAPHY

Aerial survey of urban change

To test the feasibility of detecting urban changes from earth-orbiting satellites, 26 cities in the United States are now being photographed from aircraft at altitudes exceeding 50,000 feet, the U.S. Geological Survey says.

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Map overlays and geographic grids will be applied to the photo mosaics in order to correlate 1970 census data with 1970 photography.

“Land use interpretation will be added as additional overlays to the basic photo mosaics,” says Dr. Arch Gerlach, chief USGS photographer. “Local planning commissions will be invited to cooperate in this study. Many of them have offered computerized data banks for use in the experiment.” The purpose of the survey will be to identify changes in geographic features, transportation linkages, urban growth and functional changes, and other characteristics and trends that are difficult to observe with conventional aerial photos.

SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

Trust and college students

A credibility gap has been asserted to exist between college students and other sectors of the society, but there has been little research to measure its extent.

Some research by Drs. Dorothy Hochreich of Yale University and Julian Rotter of the University of Connecticut may provide a social indicator of the sense of trust among college students.

The researchers administered their Interpersonal Trust Scale to 4,605 introductory psychology students over the period 1964-69. The test items tap a person's feelings toward social agents such as political figures and institutions, news media, parents, salesmen, the judiciary and people in general.

The test scores have declined from a mean of 73.01 in September of 1964 to 66.64 in September 1969. Dr. Rotter points out in the July *JOURNAL OF PERSONALITY AND SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY* that a genuine drop in trust is indicated not only by the comparison of 1964 and 1969 mean scores but by the consistent decline over the period.

Of the 25 trust items on the test, 14 items decreased in mean score and one increased over the period. The items that decreased could be grouped generally into two categories—those having to do with the establishment (national and international politics, the judiciary, mass media) and those dealing with society in general (hypocrisy, self-seeking and competitiveness).

CRIME STATISTICS

Assaults on police

A growing attitude of disrespect for the police and the failure of citizens to aid officers being attacked on duty are leading to more assaults on policemen, the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Uniform Crime Reports for 1969 says.

The report indicates that such attitudes contribute to the seven percent increase in the rate of assaults on police in 1969 over 1968. Nationally there were 16.9 assaults for every 100 officers in 1969, up from 13.5 in 1967. Since 1962 the number of assaults on police officers has increased 144 percent.

In 1969, 86 police officers were killed by felonious criminal assault. Throughout the last decade 561 officers were killed on duty. The largest number were killed while attempting arrest. But 43 were the victims of ambush or other unprovoked attack.