

behavioral sciences

A chapter in man's history

Human community life began in Southwestern Asia as village-farming about 7000 B.C. The remains of domesticated animals (dog, sheep, goat, pig) and plants (wheat, barley, legumes) in unearthened settlements indicate that effective food producing societies existed at that time. However, a transition phase must have preceded this primary phase of food production, and the search for this missing era in man's development has been fruitless until now.

Archaeologists report in the June PROCEEDINGS OF THE NATIONAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCES that a partial breakthrough appears to have been made in the autumn 1970 field campaign at Çayönü Tepesi in southwestern Turkey. By deepening and widening earlier exposures Dr. Robert J. Braidwood of the University of Chicago and his team have spanned the "transition from an almost totally 'wild' inventory of plant and animal food resources to one including domesticates." The domesticates they found include simple metal tools and cement-terrazzo pavement.

Definite evidence for the shift from complete dependence on wild plants and animals to dependence on domesticated food cannot "be reached through the preliminary field study alone," says Dr. Braidwood. But "further specification and more competent examination of the evidence" may shed much light on man's transition from a wild to a community-farming life, he feels.

The neurology of delinquency

"We have seen evidence that many youths become delinquent simply because they cannot perceive or experience the world the way other people do. When such youngsters are properly diagnosed and treated, dramatic success is often possible." This is the statement of Dr. Allen Berman, a psychologist at the University of Rhode Island in Kingston who is also director of the Rhode Island Training Schools' diagnostic and research center to detect brain disorders in delinquent children.

The center, first of its kind in the country, represents a new approach toward rehabilitation of juvenile offenders. In the past it was assumed that delinquency was a result of social or emotional problems and neuropsychological factors were ignored. By extensive testing, the center intends to remedy the lack of neurological information on delinquents and use this information for treatment. "Eventually," say Dr. Berman, "we hope to reach the point where we can use our tests to predict future delinquency problems in our young children."

Alcohol abuse in women

For every woman in the United States who seeks help for problems explicitly related to the use of alcohol there are five or six men seeking the same help. The proportion of women who drink is smaller than the proportion of men who drink. And the women drinkers do so less frequently and consume less alcohol than do their male counterparts. These research findings and clinical observations indicate that the reasons why women drink, and drink to excess, are quite different from the reasons why men do, says Drs. John L. Horn and Kenneth W. Wanberg of the University of Denver.

However, they were surprised to find in a recent study

they conducted at the Alcoholism Division of the Fort Logan Mental Health Center in Denver that symptoms of alcoholism were quite similar in male and female patients. First-time patients (365 females and 1,657 males) were rated, and the similarity of involved factors was striking. These similarities, and previous arguments for gender differences in alcoholism, lead the researchers to state that "we have not yet really gained a proper focus on the problems of describing and diagnosing alcoholism in women." Their findings were presented last week in Washington at the first annual alcoholism conference sponsored by the National Institute of Mental Health.

Parental drinking and adolescents

Adolescent behavior problems have been linked to parental drinking problems. In order to study the specific relationship Dr. Louise Witmer Cureton of the American Institutes of Research in Silver Spring, Md., compared parents' police records for drunkenness with school achievement and behavior problems of their adolescent children.

The tested children were 16,000 students in grades 8 through 12 in a middle-sized city and its surrounding suburban area. Two days of testing produced data on abilities, interests, personality traits and biographies of the students. The arrest records of the parents, located in police files, showed that there were 1,105 parents who had been arrested for drunkenness one or more times: 996 fathers and 109 mothers, including 34 cases in which both parents had been arrested.

Among the children of parents with records of arrest for drunkenness, school dropouts were much more numerous. The study also showed some indication of more juvenile delinquency among these children. But only minor differences in school marks, aptitude and attitude were found. The study was reported at the alcoholism conference in Washington last week.

Adolescent antisocial drinking

In a typical Middle Atlantic community of 15,000 people a battery of tests was given to 104 adolescent males—juniors and seniors in high school. The questionnaire data included measures of drinking and problem drinking, reports of the adolescent's perceptions of child-rearing practices by the mother and father and a battery of true-false questions assessing personality and family characteristics. After the adolescent data were collected the parents were interviewed.

Drs. Robert A. Zucker and Frank H. Barren of Michigan State University in East Lansing reported on the findings of these tests at the alcoholism conference last week in Washington. They concluded that problem drinking among adolescents is but one subtype of a broader class of antisocial or impulsive behaviors (drug use, sexual behavior, excitement and sensation seeking). Their testing leads them to conclude further that "impulsive and antisocial traits have their beginnings in disturbed affectional relationships with others in the primary group." These family relationships are characterized by lack of gratification of dependency needs and lack of appropriate controls and limits.