

# behavioral sciences

## The Staccato syndrome

In the past few years Leon Tec at the Mid-Fairfield Child Guidance Center in Norwalk, Conn., has been baffled by certain disturbed teenagers whose symptoms did not fit a known diagnostic label. The symptoms resemble schizophrenia to some extent but the patient is able to maintain peer relationships. If the patients hallucinate, they do so sporadically. Temper tantrums are occasional but unpredictable. Verbal communication fluctuates and behavior is bizarre only at unexpected moments. The syndrome is characterized by its disjointed or staccato manner. Tec calls it the Staccato syndrome.

In the November *AMERICAN JOURNAL OF PSYCHIATRY* Tec describes three case histories and notes similarities. He says these young people have experimented with marijuana, LSD and amphetamines. The picture that emerges is a blend of childhood restlessness and adolescent turmoil complicated by multiple drug abuse. The Staccato syndrome differs from the usual reaction to drugs because it continues after drug use has stopped and it is unpredictable.

In conclusion Tec says, "If my observations are confirmed we will be in a position to devote time and effort to providing better therapeutic services for these young people. It goes without saying that good treatment cannot be efficient without the proper diagnosis."

## The birth dearth

Statistics from the 1970 National Fertility Study, the Census Bureau and the National Center for Health Statistics show that the total number of births for July and August in the United States was so low that the resulting fertility rate neared the zero population growth figure of 2.11 children per family. American women are staying single longer and having fewer babies when they do marry. In 1960 one-third of all 21-year-old women were single. Now almost one-half are single at 21. When they marry they intend to have an average of 2.53 children. This is down from the 3.03 average of 1965.

The 1970 population was 204.8 million. In 1967 the Census Bureau forecast a maximum population of 361 million by the year 2000. The revised maximum forecast is 322 million. And if the zero population growth rate is reached and maintained the population could be as low as 271 million.

Experts do not know if this trend will continue, but they do feel that a slowed-down economy, legalized abortion and environmental and population propaganda (SN: 8/14/71, p. 114) have combined to produce these dramatic results.

## First-borns and fear

Parents often interact differently with first-born children. This may be responsible for greater school achievement (SN: 3/13/71, p. 182) but it may also cause the development of extreme fears in the children. Psychologists Frank H. Farley of the University of Wisconsin and Wallace L. Mealiea of Indiana State University find that birth order is a major factor in the development of fears. They asked 148 college students to rate their fears of such things as parting from friends, taking tests, fear of worms and being alone. The first-borns and only children did not differ greatly from later-borns in general

level of fear but they expressed more extreme fears.

"First-borns show the greatest difference in extreme fears in social and interpersonal situations such as being alone and parting from friends," says Farley. And this seems to support other research indicating first-borns are more anxious, more likely to conform to group pressures and more dependent on others.

Although the researchers cite no single reason for these fears, Farley notes that parents usually have greater expectations of first-borns and there is therefore greater pressure on them to succeed. Also, parents are usually over-anxious with a first child and communicate their fears and anxieties to the child.

## Consumer attitudes as economic predictors

The state of the economy indicates that the state of the art of economics is less than it should be. Jay Schmiedeskamp, an economist for the Survey Research Center at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, says that in recent years "economists have been wrong more often than they have been right." He feels that economic trends are more accurately gauged by consumer attitudes and reactions than by economic theories. For example, economists thought that fear of inflation would induce public spending—before inflation sets in—and thereby bolster the economy. SRC polls of consumer attitudes show that just the opposite happened. Awareness and fear of inflation caused the consumer to spend less, put more into savings and reinforce the recession by taking more money out of circulation.

Traditional economic indicators say 1972 will be a good year, but the latest SRC poll indicates consumer uncertainty and confusion about President Nixon's Phase II policies. If this is so, a restoration of confidence to pre-recession levels, a sharp drop in the personal saving rate and a corresponding surge in spending are not in sight. Schmiedeskamp suggests that unless the Government does something to stimulate spending there will be no decrease in unemployment or inflation in 1972.

## From marijuana to heroin

Marijuana smoking may or may not lead to heroin addiction. In the Nov. 8 *JOURNAL OF THE AMERICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION* researchers Albert S. Carlin and Robin D. Post of the University of Washington in Seattle say that it rarely does.

They contacted 106 male experienced marijuana users (about three times per week) and found that only six percent reported experimenting with heroin or morphine. Twenty-seven percent said they had smoked opium—generally 10 or fewer times. Nearly 75 percent said they had taken psychedelics such as LSD and mescaline. And all 106 denied having developed either a physical or psychological dependency to the drugs.

This type of self-reporting has its drawbacks because there is no way to verify the information given, but Carlin says "these people were interviewed face-to-face and I have no reason to distrust what they told me." The fact that they volunteered for the study indicates that they are high-risk takers and, Carlin says, the proportion who reported heroin use is probably higher than for all marijuana users.