

BEHAVIOR

'Goot Eeevning'—Arrrgh!

What gets you mad? Throughout the years, the media have periodically afforded the public space and time to sound off on that general theme. Everyone, it seems, had their own pet peeves as well as other anger stimulators that were in common with those of the rest of the population.

Anger and its regulation are believed to play a key role in the development of both healthy and deviant personalities. Yet despite this, "there has been little systematic research on the physiology of anger or the psychological variables involved in its regulation and display," say researchers Walter A. Brown, Donald P. Corriveau and Peter M. Monti of the Providence, R.I., Veterans Administration Hospital.

The team reports in August's *AMERICAN JOURNAL OF PSYCHIATRY* that certain types of movies can trigger "specific and significant anger" in the viewer. Threatening and erotic films previously have been shown to stimulate anxiety or sexual arousal "but have not to our knowledge been used to evoke and study anger in a laboratory setting," say the researchers.

Twenty-two female and 14 male undergraduate volunteers were shown 20-minute clips from one of two Alfred Hitchcock made-for-TV films or two 10-minute documentaries. Both Hitchcock clips were hypothesized to be anger or anxiety-evoking: In "Man from the South," the protagonist is in danger of having his finger chopped off, and in "The Crooked Road" a young couple is unfairly arrested and mistreated by the entire judicial system. The documentaries, on the other hand, had been shown to be as arousing as cottage cheese.

The subjects were tested just before and after viewing with the Profile of Mood States, a questionnaire composed of 65 mood adjectives. The researchers found that anger increased significantly after "The Crooked Road," and tension jumped sharply after "Man from the South." The documentaries produced no mood changes. "These findings," say the researchers, "suggest a potential research and may provide information regarding stimuli for anger provocation."

Social drinking takes its toll

The line between social drinking and alcoholism has never been clearly marked, and now come some new data from the University of California at Irvine to further blur the issue. Researchers Elizabeth S. Parker and Ernest P. Noble report that persons classified as social drinkers suffer intellectual deficits in concept formation, adaptation and the capacity to shift from one idea to another. After testing 102 men on a battery of four cognitive tests, the researchers report in the July *JOURNAL OF STUDIES ON ALCOHOL* that while deficits were greatest in the heaviest drinkers, "even moderate social drinking is inversely related to performance on a test of abstracting and adaptive abilities." They call for research to help better determine "the safe limits of social drinking."

Overprotection and schizophrenia

As the search for precursors to schizophrenia intensifies (SN: 6/18/77, p. 394), researchers are detecting more and more possible contributors to the most prolific of the psychoses. In the July *AMERICAN JOURNAL OF ORTHOPSYCHIATRY*, two Chicago psychologists report that the bond between schizophrenic children and their mothers is symbiotic; the mother is overprotective, but not out of a concern for the child's well-being. Rather, she is threatened by the youngster's independence, report Frank Summers of Northwestern Memorial Hospital and Froma Walsh of Michael Reese Hospital. The youngster, as well as the mother, is responsible for such a relationship because of an abnormal need for attachment, they say. They conclude it is this abnormal bond that possibly contributes to schizophrenia, rather than vice-versa.

BIOMEDICINE

A drug to soup-up sex

Correction of sexual disorders in both men and women has been achieved with a new drug called bromocryptine, according to clinical reports at the recent 11th Acta Endocrinologica Conference in Lausanne, Switzerland.

In one report, from Domenico Fonzi of the University of Torino, Italy, bromocryptine increased sexual libido and restored spermatogenesis and sexual potency in seven male patients.

In another report, from Andrea Genazzani of the University of Siena, Italy, nine women whose menstrual cycles had ceased from 1 to 12 years were put on an oral regimen of bromocryptine. Within 22 days to 4 months after receiving the drug, the women returned to a normal cycle. In two other women who had never had a menstrual cycle, menstruation occurred within 67 to 140 days of receiving the drug. Sexual activity and desire became normal within six months in all 11 women.

Bromocryptine corrects sexual dysfunctioning by inhibiting excessive secretion of the hormone prolactin by the pituitary gland. Thus, it would help only those patients whose sexual problems are due to abnormal amounts of prolactin.

Bromocryptine was synthesized five years ago by Sandoz chemists in Basel, Switzerland. It is already available by prescription in West Germany and Switzerland to treat acromegaly and to inhibit milk production in women. Both conditions are associated with excessive secretion of prolactin.

Altitude and blood pressure

The environment may be even more crucial than genes in determining high blood pressure—at least where altitude is concerned.

Luis Ruiz and Dante Penalzoa of Peruvian University Cayetano Heredia in Lima, Peru, surveyed the blood pressure of persons living in five Peruvian communities. Three of the communities were located above 13,000 feet altitude; two were at sea level. People in all five regions came from a similar ethnic background. Those persons living at high altitude had low blood pressure, the researchers found. Those living at sea level had a much higher pressure, in fact, often a pressure 12 times greater than that of persons at high altitude.

This tremendous difference in pressure, Ruiz and Penalzoa conclude in the July *MAYO CLINIC PROCEEDINGS*, indicates that environment may be more important than genes in determining blood pressure, at least where altitude is concerned. The reason? Probably hypoxia (oxygen deficiency). Hypoxia, the most critical component of high altitudes, is known to alter blood vessels. Dilation of blood vessels in turn would diminish blood pressure.

Pregnancy hormone in other tissues

Human chorionic gonadotropin (HCG) is a hormone made by the placenta during pregnancy. Growing evidence suggests that HCG may also be produced by other kinds of tissues.

In 1975, some researchers reported that HCG extracts could be found in human testes. Yoshio Yoshimoto and his co-workers at the University of California School of Medicine at Torrance have looked for HCG in some other organs as well. By means of two assays, they have found an HCG-like substance in liver and colon extracts taken at autopsy from three patients.

These findings, Yoshimoto and his team conclude in the August 5 *SCIENCE*, suggest that the genes responsible for HCG production are not completely suppressed in nonplacental tissues. The reason HCG in these tissues has little or no activity, they surmise, is that it contains far less sugar than does placental HCG.