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COVER: With food outlets spreading faster than soft margarine, it's not easy for Americans to control their weight these days. But it's more difficult for some than others. Research indicates that the reasons for obesity in many cases are not strictly biological, psychological or social — but rather a "biopsychosocial" combination of the three. See p. 188. (Illustration by Annie Lunsford)

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LETTERS

What's in a name?

My attention has been called to an article on fractals by Lynn Arthur Steen (SN: 8/20/77, p. 122).

It is an excellent article, but I feel obliged to correct the statement that (Nils Fabian) Helge von Koch was a German. From 1911 until his death in 1924 he was the professor of pure mathematics at what later became the Stockholm University. The family Koch has lived in Sweden for at least two centuries, and when one of them became a nobleman some 165 years ago he inserted the "von" in the name which probably misled Prof. Steen into thinking that HvK was a German. The preposition "von" (definitely German) was commonly used at the time to indicate nobility when the name itself did not suggest it. The alternative would be the Swedish preposition "af" (then spelled "av"). It was also used, but less often.

Einar Hille
La Jolla, Calif.

You are what you eat

As regards the current research with lecithin at MIT (SN: 2/11/78, p. 85), it should be pointed out that previous research has shown a lack of choline to cause an underproduction of the nerve transmitter acetylcholine. The relevant research is cited by Adelle Davis in Chapter 24 of *Let's Get Well*, and is reported by E. L. Hove, et al., in the *JOURNAL OF NUTRITION* (Vol. 53, p. 377). The research was done in regards to myasthenia gravis.

In Chapter 5 of the same book, Adelle Davis cites numerous studies indicating that lecithin can lower blood cholesterol and is useful in treatment of atherosclerosis. I believe that this condition has, in turn, been linked to mental disorders, including senility.

Heeding Adelle Davis's good advice, we health food "freaks" have long used lecithin to decrease blood cholesterol levels. Perhaps we have been doing our brains a favor as well.

Martha Balslem
Philadelphia, Pa.

That environmental influence

Regarding "That mothering influence" (SN: 2/11/78, p. 88), repeated experiments have shown that adult rat brain physio-chemical development (and possibly that of the other organs as well) is influenced by the degree of environmental enrichment available. A rat nest is a highly restricted, normally static environment. Even if it were physically enriched, a rat pup's extreme physical immaturity severely limits its ability to initiate much interreaction. However, any forced interreaction would probably be as stimulating as self-initiated activity is to the adult rat. Without some kind of nonma-

ternal involvement that would have approximated the same degree of physical experience (perhaps a gentle nest rocking?), it is impossible to state whether the increased odc activity was due to the "mothering" or to increased learning opportunity.

Fran Tabor
Kalispell, Mont.

Just drifting along

For years I have been fascinated by the continental drift theory, which finally seems acceptable to most. Oil deposits are closely associated with the crust movement, since the oil acts as a hydraulic buffer. Once pumped out, the vector of movement changes and the crust movement of some areas jolt forward causing massive earthquakes. Oil deposits are always found at critical points of the crust. Just check the oil deposits with the landmasses and their direction on a globe. Seems we better leave the "off shore" oil alone, at least at the West Coast deposits.

Dietrich F. Luedtke
Santa Fe, N.M.

Take a look at Sweden

I was surprised to find a serious error in your recent article "GNP vs. energy: Take a look at Germany" (SN: 11/26/77, p. 361). The statement, "The widespread impression that Sweden can achieve higher per capita GNP with low energy consumption is a myth," is simply incorrect. As of 1973, Sweden achieved a higher per capita GNP than the United States, even though the per capita energy consumption is only about 60 percent of that in the United States.¹

The data which the Arizona study addresses appeared in a 1975 Berkeley study.² The only conclusion which can be drawn from the data is that, at the margin, in both the United States and Sweden it takes about the same increase in energy consumption for a given increase in GNP. The point that your article overlooked is that for these marginal increases Sweden is starting from a point approximately 60 percent as high in per capita energy consumption as the United States. Changes in governmental policies and the prices of energy in the United States could lower per capita energy consumption without lowering per capita GNP. Several studies (e.g. footnote 1) indicate in fact that lowering per capita energy consumption would boost per capita GNP. Energy conservation would actually help the economy and the standard of living in the United States, as measured by per capita GNP.

Dr. Don G. Scroggin
Yale University
New Haven, Conn.

References:

1. Scroggin, D. G., "Energy Conservation in the U.S.," 51 *YALE SCIENTIFIC*, April 1977, pp. 9-13.
2. Shipper, L., "Energy Conservation: Its Nature, Hidden Benefits and Hidden Barriers," Energy and Resources Group, University of California at Berkeley, 1975.

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