

behavioral sciences

PSYCHOSOMATIC MEDICINE

Evaluating pain

It is a truism among medical researchers that part of the pain that accompanies illness is of psychological rather than physical origin. In fact, an international research team reports, patients who consider themselves exceptionally ill and in pain may have more difficulty getting pain-reducing medicines from a hospital staff than patients who do not consider themselves so ill.

Drs. Ivan Pilowsky and M.R. Bond of the psychiatry departments of the University of Sydney in Australia and the University of Sheffield in England, asked the patients in the radiotherapy wards of a general hospital such questions as "Are you always ill and unhappy?" and "Do you wear yourself out worrying about your health?" Hospital staff members were asked to keep track of how often pain-relieving medication was administered.

When patients frequently complained of pain, Drs. Pilowsky and Bond report in the September-October *PSYCHOSOMATIC MEDICINE*, the staff was reluctant to administer pain-relievers stronger than aspirin.

SOCIAL ECONOMICS

Trends in inequality

In spite of the Government's programs to combat poverty, the share of the total national income going to the poorest 20 percent of the country has increased very little in the past 20 years, reports Pamela Roby, a sociologist at New York University.

"Individuals judge their level of living in comparison with the standard of living of others around them," Miss Roby says in September *ANNALS OF THE AMERICAN ACADEMY OF POLITICAL AND SOCIAL SCIENCE*. The income of the bottom fifth of the country has risen only from 5.1 to 5.4 percent of the national total between 1947 and 1967.

The proportion of the low-earning group that is nonwhite has remained at about 21 percent, which is more than twice the proportion of nonwhite families in the country as a whole. And census figures reveal that a greater proportion of the bottom fifth (approximately 44 percent) continue to reside in the South.

At the present rate of progress, Miss Roby reports, an average black income will be about 89 percent of a white income by 1979.

CHILD PSYCHOLOGY

Learning hypocrisy

Children who observe acts of hypocrisy in adults show no moral outrage whatsoever, but pay more attention to an adult's actual behavior than to his verbal protestations, according to Dr. James H. Bryan, a psychologist at Northwestern University.

A group of school children in grades three through five was invited to play a series of games with adults: the players could either keep their winnings or place them in a box marked "donations for the poor children." The percentage of children who donated their winnings tended to vary according to the example of the

adult who was playing with them, but not according to the adult's verbal exhortations alone, Dr. Bryan reports in the December *PSYCHOLOGY TODAY*.

On the other hand, when the children were asked to express moral opinions about the adults involved in the games, they based their opinions on the adults' verbal behavior. Thus, the children would rate favorably an adult who acted selfishly while proclaiming altruism, and would rate unfavorably an altruistic adult who expressed antisocial sentiments.

PSYCHOLOGY

Teen-age drivers

The reasons juvenile drivers have an above average accident rate may be that they are especially inclined to look out for their own welfare at the expense of others, Dr. Edward Levonian of the University of California at Los Angeles claims.

Students in driver-education classes in Los Angeles high schools were given a personality questionnaire to measure such traits as "determination," "adaptiveness," "defensiveness," and "expediency." The questionnaire results then were compared with county records to see how many traffic violations each student had committed.

The only personality trait that correlated with the number of traffic violations received was "expediency," Dr. Levonian reports.

As a result, he suggests, driver education courses should stress the purely expedient and self-serving benefits that result from careful driving.

SOCIOLOGY

Black matriarch reconsidered

The popular idea that Negro culture is matriarchal may be mistaken, say sociologists Herbert H. Hyman of Wesleyan University at Middletown, Conn., and John Shelton Reed of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

The mere fact that families without fathers are more common among Negroes, as census figures show, does not necessarily mean that Negro mothers are more dominant than white mothers even when fathers are present, Drs. Hyman and Reed argue in the November issue of *PUBLIC OPINION QUARTERLY*. An analysis of surveys made by the National Opinion Research Center, the Gallup Poll and the Survey Research Center reveals, they say, no significant difference between black and white families on such issues as whether the father or the mother is the more important influence on the children and makes the important family decisions.

For example, 73 percent of the black respondents in the Gallup survey said their mothers were the major influence on them when they were growing up. This sounds like black matriarchy, except for the fact that 69 percent of the whites in the same survey also listed their mothers as the dominant influence.

Although their findings are admittedly inconclusive, Drs. Hyman and Reed feel that there is "little evidence for any . . . pattern of matriarchy peculiarly characteristic of the Negro family, on the basis of which social theorizing or social policy could be formulated."