

# behavioral sciences

## ARCHEOLOGY

### Modern Stone-Age men

A Russian expedition sponsored by the Soviet Union's Academic Institute of Archeology claims to have found two human skeletons, together with surprisingly modern clothing and tool remnants, dating from the late Stone Age.

The skeletons are apparently those of two boys aged about 9 and 12. The clothing remnants consist of leather trousers and shirts, decorated with beads carved from mammoth tusks, and fur-lined boots. There are also arrows, a spear and a finely carved needle, all of mammoth bone.

The rock strata in which the discoveries were made, some 100 miles east of Moscow, indicate that the remains are approximately 100,000 years old, the Russians report. Dr. Otto Bader, the leader of the expedition, says that the craftsmanship of the clothing and tools suggests that these Stone-Age people may not have been very different from present-day inhabitants of the Far North and Arctic.

## PSYCHOLOGY

### Alcoholics choose their therapies

Alcoholics are notoriously difficult to treat, partly because they tend to become emotionally dependent on the therapist. This dependency can be avoided, says Dr. Ernest W. Klatte, superintendent of the alcoholism treatment center at Mendocino State Hospital in Talmage California, by allowing alcoholics to choose their own form of therapy.

At Mendocino, an alcoholic patient may choose among a wide variety of therapy groups, including work groups and confrontation groups, but he must take the initiative of involving himself in at least one group. "We insist on our patients' taking this responsibility for themselves," Wayne Wilson, a social worker in charge of the program, says in the Dec. 1 ROCHE REPORT: FRONTIERS OF HOSPITAL PSYCHIATRY.

One of the most popular therapy groups, Wilson reports, is the behavioral modification group. Members of the group learn to modify the behavior of rats by conditioning techniques, then discuss the ways in which their own drinking behavior was conditioned, and might be deconditioned.

## EXPERIMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY

### The effectiveness of threats

Although psychologists in the last decade have done a great deal of research into the use of threats as a technique for shaping behavior, there is a major contradiction in their findings. Some researchers report that severe threats are the most persuasive, while others claim that strong appeals to fear arouse debilitating tensions and are less persuasive than mild threats.

Dr. Kenneth L. Higbee, a psychologist at Purdue University, suggests that one way to reconcile the contradiction would be to take into account the probability of the threats. Although conclusive experiments have not yet been devised, Dr. Higbee points out in the December

PSYCHOLOGICAL BULLETIN that, beyond a certain point, the severity of a threat may seem implausible.

For example, you might scare someone into brushing his teeth by dwelling on the horrors of cavities. You could effectively escalate your scare tactics only so far, however. "A highly threatening consequence (for example, paralysis or blindness) may not be seen as too likely to result from not brushing one's teeth," Dr. Higbee notes.

## SOCIOLOGY

### Free will and reaction

Most national surveys indicate that racism among whites has greatly declined in the last 20 years. When polled, whites today are much less likely than they were in the 1940's to say that blacks are biologically inferior or inherently unintelligent.

However, says Dr. Howard Schuman, a sociologist at the University of Michigan, this decline in overtly racist opinions does not mean that whites have come to understand the social problems that blacks face. In a sample of some 2,500 white Americans taken last year, more than half blamed the inferior educational and economic status of blacks on "something about Negroes themselves."

"Lack of motivation," rather than genetic or environmental factors, was offered by 73 percent of the sample as the main problem with blacks, Dr. Schuman reports in the December TRANSACTION. This concept of free will is traditional in American thought, he notes, but in effect it is racist when it implies that blacks "don't try to better themselves."

"In espousing free will," Dr. Schuman believes, "white Americans . . . place the whole burden of black disadvantage on black Americans themselves."

## SOCIOLOGY

### Organization and job satisfaction

The way in which a business is organized is closely related to the employes' feelings of self-actualization and personal growth, says Dr. Newton Margulies of the Graduate School of Administration at the University of California at Irvine.

Two departments of a California business were experimentally reorganized so as to stress group cooperation and to de-emphasize formal authority, Dr. Newton reports in the Oct.-Dec. issue of the JOURNAL OF APPLIED BEHAVIORAL SCIENCE. A special effort was made to allow individual work groups to relate their tasks to the goals of the organization as a whole.

By comparison to the other departments, which continued to be run by traditional assembly-line methods, workers in the experimental departments scored significantly higher on tests for self-actualization. The tests measure such qualities as orientation toward the present, rather than the past or future, and interior as opposed to exterior sources of motivation.

Since feelings of self-actualization are crucial to job satisfaction, Dr. Margulies concludes, the traditional authority hierarchy may be an inefficient system of organization.