

behavioral sciences

ANTHROPOLOGY

Armenian: a second language?

Humans can travel anywhere in the world but cannot talk to each other when they get there because of the profusion of more than 2,800 different languages.

To help ease these barriers, anthropologist Margaret Mead and graphic symbols expert Rudolf Modley urge the acceptance of a universal second language. The language they suggest is Armenian.

It must be a non-European natural language, not identified with an important political power, ideology or religious position, say the authors in the August-September issue of *NATURAL HISTORY*.

An artificially constructed language like Esperanto does not work because it lacks important features that cannot at present be built into a new language.

The selection of a second language "will be as decisive as putting in a new system of mensuration around the world," the authors advise. "Failure to do so will be terribly expensive, as failure to adopt the metric system proved to be."

Whatever the language chosen, it must be one with enough literate speakers to serve as teachers and translators. A language like Armenian would fulfil these criteria, the authors believe. Dr. Mead is curator of ethnology at the American Museum of Natural History.

ALCOHOLISM

Apes can handle their liquor

Chimpanzees get drunk with ease, but they do not pass out. Orangutans don't even show signs of intoxication—at least not those used in a recent study published by Rutgers University in its quarterly *JOURNAL OF STUDIES ON ALCOHOL*.

Results suggest fundamental differences between apes and men in the way their bodies handle alcohol. Nevertheless, the researchers—Dr. Frances L. Fitz-Gerald of Emory University, M. Ashton Barfield of Mount Holyoke College and R. J. Warrington of England's London Hospital Medical College—draw some correlations with human drinking patterns.

Like humans, the chimps drank alcohol with apparent enthusiasm, especially when it was mixed with fruit juices. Given a choice, they preferred vodka over pure alcohol.

The male chimps drank more and got drunk more often than the females. This suggests, say the authors, that the higher rate of addiction among men may actually have something to do with the physiology of the sexes. Usually a cultural explanation is given for the difference. Also the chimps drank increasing amounts up to age 39 (an old age for chimps) when consumption fell off sharply. Drinking also declines among elderly humans.

DEMOGRAPHY

Aged women: rich and poor

According to popular belief, elderly women are the richest people in the United States. As it turns out, they are also the poorest.

Disparities in income are greater among the aged

than among any other age group in both the United States and Great Britain, says English sociologist Dorothy Wedderburn of the University of London. And the situation of women is worse in both countries.

In the United States, about 30 percent of the elderly couples and 60 percent of the elderly women live below the poverty line. For Great Britain, the figures are: 23 percent among couples and 50 percent among women. Sociologist Wedderburn, whose survey is published in the July *SOCIAL SECURITY BULLETIN*, states that 20 percent of the aged women in the United States receive no government benefits at all, compared to five percent in Great Britain.

PSYCHOLOGY

More on starving the senses

Few areas in psychology have produced more conflicting results and theories than the study of sensory starvation.

Hundreds of volunteers have gone into soundproofed cubicles wearing vision-blocking goggles in efforts to answer the questions: Who can stand sensory deprivation? What is the psychological value of sensation?

Reactions to sustained deprivation range from psychosis to pleasant enjoyment. According to some theorists, those who can stand it have inner resources and ego strength; those who can't tend to be thrill seekers, weak on ego. Other theorists see quite different patterns: the extrovert or concrete thinker is the tolerant one, while the introvert or imaginative person finds deprivation stressful.

The latest addition to the literature comes from Fort Steilacoom, Wash., where researchers tested 62 soldiers, aged 18 to 55. They found that the men most disturbed by loss of sensation were younger, better educated, restless and interested in ideas rather than physical activity. They conclude in the August issue of *ARCHIVES OF GENERAL PSYCHIATRY* that deprivation experiments probably measure sensitivity to monotony rather than psychological health.

SOCIOLOGY

Blue collars looser than white

Factory workers who spend all day tightening bolts on an assembly line may be considerably happier than sociologists have assumed.

A Notre Dame professor draws this conclusion from study of 170 assembly-line workers at an electronic manufacturing plant in Columbus, Ohio. Dr. William P. Sexton, professor of management at the university, says the assembly worker experiences more freedom than his white-collar counterpart.

Freedom stems from the fact that an assembly worker does not have to concentrate on his routine work. The white-collar staff assistant does and his work is also routine. "We must distinguish between monotony and habit," says Dr. Sexton. "The task is not monotonous unless one is forced to concentrate on it."

Dr. Sexton found that assembly workers also feel satisfaction in the security of their jobs and in the achievement of limited, concrete work.

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