

behavioral sciences

SUICIDOLOGY

San Francisco explored

San Francisco, suicide capital of the nation, also has the highest rate of alcoholism, which helps account for its suicide problem, an expert on suicides concludes after study of the city. Other factors include an older population—San Francisco's median age is eight years above the national median of 29—and a large unmarried population. The city contains 35 percent more unmarried persons than the nation as a whole. Alcoholism, age and single status each correlate with suicide.

Dr. Richard H. Seiden of the University of California at Berkeley, shoots down more glamorous explanations of the city's suicide rate such as the end-of-the-trail thesis. According to this idea, westward migrants must face their conflicts when they reach the Pacific and cannot run any further. Dr. Seiden found that 78 percent of the suicides had been city residents for at least five years.

A second thesis, that of the Pleasure Dome, holds that glamorous cities increase suicides because of the contrast between their promise and an individual's sense of hopelessness. But, says Dr. Seiden, Sacramento is not a showcase city, yet has very high suicide rates. Sacramento is second only to San Francisco in both suicides and alcoholism.

In addition to these factors, San Francisco discovers more suicides than other cities because its coroner autopsies almost every case of death.

ARCHAEOLOGY

Pirate city excavated

A pirate city lying under Caribbean waters near Jamaica will be excavated by a British archaeologist. The city, Port Royal, sank in 1692 during an earthquake which many people—other than pirates—viewed as the cleansing hand of God. It has lain under the sea ever since, visited occasionally by aquatic archaeologists, 12 miles along the south coast from the Jamaican capital of Kingston.

The archaeologist, Philip Mayes of Leeds University, will lead a team of draftsmen, architects and diggers. The aim is to clear away the sand and bring up removable items, and make a detailed plan of the city.

The Jamaican Government would like to rebuild Port Royal as a tourist attraction, reopening the bars and pleasure palaces of the old pirate haven.

"Port Royal was one of the largest towns in the whole of America when it went down, and one of the richest in the world," says Mayes.

RACE RELATIONS

Southern children polled on King

Within days after Dr. Martin Luther King's death, two Florida State University professors surveyed the reactions of several hundred black and white Southern school children, with discomfiting results.

Some 59 percent of the white children expressed elation or indifference at King's death, and about 65

percent of the black children favored some kind of violent, extra-legal death for his assassin.

The children surveyed came from the 7th, 9th and 11th grades in four Florida high schools and included 165 whites and 217 blacks.

Among white students, happiness about or indifference to King's death increased with grade level, say the researchers, James W. Clarke and John W. Soule, so that by the 11th grade, 30 percent of the children wanted his killer set free and 66 percent blamed King for his own death. Only 4 percent of the 7th graders wanted the assassin to go unpunished.

The overwhelming attitude among Negro students was a combination of sorrow and revenge. Although the desire for extra-legal revenge decreased with the student's age, it still remained a majority feeling, say the researchers. "These findings, while only suggestive, certainly provide no basis for optimism in regard to race relations in the South," they add in an analysis published in the October issue of *TRANSACTION*.

DRUG CONTROL

Narcotics Bureau attacked

An Indiana University sociologist strongly attacks the Narcotics Bureau for its "propaganda techniques."

Legislation on dangerous drugs "is tailored to conform to the requests of the bureau, which is controlled by police and prosecutors," says Dr. Alfred R. Lindesmith.

"The influence of social science on this law enforcement establishment is nil and may even be below zero," Dr. Lindesmith charges. He says that testimony hostile to declaring drug use a crime has been barred from Congressional hearings, and declared that the recent opposition of James Goddard, former commissioner of the Food and Drug Administration, to criminal laws on dangerous drugs, was stifled.

Dr. Lindesmith accuses the Narcotics Bureau of statistical fakery. He says: "I cannot think of a single competent person in the academic world who has not reached the conclusion that bureau statistics are distorted, unrealistic, and sometimes manufactured from whole cloth."

MENTAL HEALTH

Manpower situation not desperate

Manpower is not expected to be a problem in the community mental health centers, according to Dr. Alan Levenson, chief of the program at the National Institute of Mental Health.

Psychiatrists fear the massive center program will drain mental health professions, but Dr. Levenson says that only a small proportion of the people trained in these fields will be needed for the centers. In 1970, when the national program should be in full swing, only about 20 percent of psychiatric social workers will be required, and the figure is lower for other fields—11 percent among psychiatrists.

At the Mental Health Hospital Institute meeting this month, Dr. Lawrence Kolb, president of the American Psychiatric Association, backed up this thesis when he said, "Our manpower situation is not desperate."