

# behavioral sciences

## COMPARATIVE PSYCHOLOGY

### Cows inherit mildness

Building on the knowledge that cows have a social order of their own in a herd, dairy scientist D. P. Dickson and co-workers at the University of Wisconsin have shown that some cows are temperamental by nature and can transmit their temperamental personalities to their offspring.

They found as well that the milking temperament of cows is inheritable enough so that through a well-planned breeding program, docile, even-tempered cows can be selected on the basis of their mothers' temperament.

Behavioral data on milking temperament and social dominance were obtained from studies of 1,027 cows in 27 Wisconsin Holstein herds. Factors such as age, size, milk production, the stage of lactation and heritability were related to the data by means of statistical analysis.

The researchers found that the place a cow holds in the social hierarchy seems to be unrelated to her milking temperament.

The heritability of social rank appears too low to be of any use to dairy farmers in selecting offspring for herd replacement.

## PSYCHIATRY

### Treating the Whitman syndrome

Doctors working with students displaying the Whitman syndrome—a compulsive desire to be generally destructive or homicidal by persons who often have access to firearms—found it helpful to instill in the patient a feeling that there is some place to go for help. They were led to their conclusion by work with three students who came voluntarily to them for help.

Drs. John L. Kuehn and John Burton, reporting in the May issue of the *AMERICAN JOURNAL OF PSYCHIATRY*, suggest intense initial interviews for management of such students. They feel that consultation with a higher school official is necessary, along with some kind of hospitalization. Emergency psychotherapy, with use of a major tranquilizer, should also be employed.

The doctors found that after the first few days of hospitalization, the students showed an increase in optimism, a decrease in anxiety, use of better psychotic defenses and development of an ability to consider alternatives to their present mode of existence.

The Whitman syndrome is named for Charles Whitman, a student who killed 15 people and wounded 31 in an August, 1966, spree.

## PSYCHOPHYSIOLOGY

### Consciousness in the brain

A theory of the nature of the mind and consciousness, as yet incomplete, challenges previous views that consciousness, by its nature, is a passive by-product of brain function.

The concept, proposed by Dr. Roger W. Sperry of the California Institute of Technology, considers consciousness to be an integral part of the brain process itself and an essential constituent of the action.

Dr. Sperry feels that with his theory, consciousness can no longer be written off as not affecting the "causal

sequence of electro-physico-chemical events in the brain." It is put to work and given a use and a reason for having been evolved.

His theory emerged as a result of work with surgical bisection of the cerebral hemispheres. In some respects, this could leave the patient with two separate minds, each independently conscious. It was here, that Dr. Sperry had to deal repeatedly with the quality and distribution of conscious awareness.

Conscious awareness, says Dr. Sperry, is now "interpreted to be a direct emergent property of cerebral excitation."

## SCHIZOPHRENIA

### Milieu therapy ineffective

A program for schizophrenics in which milieu therapy—therapy emphasizing the importance of environment and social setting—was the only method used for treatment, has proven highly unsuccessful. Milieu therapy has been of increasing interest to psychiatry in the last 10 years.

For this study, schizophrenia was viewed as basically a socially maladaptive illness. No drugs, individual psychotherapy or somatic treatment was used.

Forty-three acute, first-breakdown schizophrenics were studied for two years.

After an average stay of six months, 47 percent of the patients were discharged to the community, 21 of them as unimproved. After seven months another 40 percent were transferred to state hospitals. The remaining 13 percent, after two and a half months, left before treatment was successful.

Drs. Alex J. Spadoni and Jackson A. Smith speculate, in the May *ARCHIVES OF GENERAL PSYCHIATRY*, that the negative results of this particular study may be due to both unsuccessful staff techniques of decoding specific psychotic behavior rather than responding to overt behavior and emphasis on the schizophrenic group government to improve a patient's problem-solving ability.

The doctors feel that the program was generally a "premature and unscientific application of theory to the clinical situation."

## REHABILITATION

### Federal employment for retarded

A special program to place the mentally retarded in Federal employment has proven highly successful. Instituted in 1963, the program encourages the Federal agencies to use the services of State Vocational Rehabilitation Departments in carrying out the hiring authority.

The Department of Health, Education and Welfare says, in an Office of Rehabilitation Services report that, by October 1968, 5,210 placements were made throughout the U.S.

Over 100 different jobs in about 40 Federal agencies are being performed by retarded persons: 31 percent white collar, 69 percent blue collar.

Sixty-two percent of those employed between 1964 and 1966 were still on the job in 1968. Promotions or job reclassifications were made in 40 percent of the cases.