

PSYCHOLOGY

Men Jay-Walkers Thrice As Numerous as Women

Crossing Diagonally Saves Only Twelve Hundredths of Second Yet Men Take Risk; Men Also Run Through Lights

THREE times as many men as women take the added risk of being hit by an automobile by crossing street intersections diagonally instead of at cross-walks in order to save twelve hundredths of a second.

Ninety-five per cent. of the motorists who attempt to "chisel" at stop-and-go traffic signals are men.

These are among traffic facts reported here by A. R. Ellis, president of the Pittsburgh Testing Laboratory, in a survey of pedestrian and motorist behavior conducted as part of the Order of Elks' national safety campaign, aimed at reducing automobile fatalities below the record 39,700 total reached last year.

Stop-watch timing of pedestrians, Mr. Ellis declared, indicated that "it takes the average person about ten and one-half seconds to cross a street, and it takes more than twenty and one-half seconds for the average pedestrian to cross from one corner to another by cutting diagonally through traffic.

"That means that at the risk of being killed or injured, a pedestrian can at best save only a few steps by jay-walking. The tests showed that nearly three times as many men as women took this chance."

Studying the middle-of-the-block jay-

walker, Mr. Ellis and his associates found that "women are just as apt as men to save time by crossing the street in the middle of the block instead of at the corner."

In this case the futility of trying to save time by jay-walking is even more clearly illustrated, for it takes the average pedestrian more than four seconds longer to cross the street in the middle of the block than if he had crossed at a corner.

One driver out of five attempts to cheat at traffic light controlled intersections by continuing across the intersection after the light turns to red, it was further learned. In an effort to gain a second or two one driver out of every ten will beat the traffic light by starting across the intersection before the light turns green.

One reason many pedestrians get caught in cross streams of traffic is that in trying to guess the time the light will change, their estimates vary all the way from two seconds before the light changes to 52 seconds after it changes, according to the tests.

Men were shown to be better guessers than women, their estimates coming about six seconds nearer to the correct time for a traffic light change.

Science News Letter, April 16, 1938

PSYCHOLOGY

Expressions of Emotion Are Dictated by Culture

THE CLENCHED fist of anger and gaping, open mouth of astonishment. These and the many other expressions of emotion are so much a part of ourselves that it is hard to believe that they are not all instinctive but may be a part of culture and tradition just as much as are the lifted hat of deference or the handshake of friendship.

An excursion into the literature of foreign cultures and into their conventions for portraying emotions on the stage re-

veals the fallacy of this assumption. Two of the most famous of Chinese novels were recently searched by Dr. Otto Klineberg, of Columbia University, for what evidence they might hold indicating the Oriental ways of displaying emotion. A Chinese treatise on acting was also read for this purpose, and a book of admonitions to young ladies on propriety of behavior.

When the Chinese fiction character sticks out his tongue he does not mean

what the small American boy does with the same gesture. In China, it means surprise. When it is said of the Chinese heroine that "her eyes grew round and opened wide," the lady was angered, not surprised. When the hero "clapped his hands," he was not joyful but worried. "He would fain have swallowed him at a gulp," means hate and not at all what the American "I could eat you up" implies. When "he laughed a great ho-ho" you needn't expect a hearty good humor, he is, instead, greatly angered.

Expressions of the emotion that depend more upon involuntary action of the body mechanisms are more alike in East and West, Dr. Klineberg found.

"Every one of his hairs stood on end, and the pimples came out on the skin all over his body," "A cold sweat broke forth," "She would fain have shrieked but her mouth was like a mute's" and "His face was red and he went creeping alone outside the village" are understood in any land.

Science News Letter, April 16, 1938

PHYSIOLOGY

Electric Current of Cells Expels Body Fluids

DELVING into the choroid plexus, which is the part of the brain where the spinal fluid is manufactured, Drs. Louis B. Flexner and Robert D. Stiehler of the Johns Hopkins Medical School have discovered that an electric current drives this fluid out of the cell manufacturing plant and propels it into the spinal canal.

While their research applies only to the choroid plexus and the spinal fluid, it is a beginning attack on the unsolved problem of how other substances manufactured by the body cells, hormones for example, are pushed out into the body.

The electric current which does this for the spinal fluid is generated by the energy developed by the cells of the choroid plexus as they use oxygen to burn food for nourishment.

An important feature of this research was the discovery that a complete electric circuit is formed in the body. Previously scientists believed that the circuit could not be complete until they added an electric wire. The Johns Hopkins scientists found that in the choroid plexus the circuit is completed by a membrane which can carry electric current like a wire. This membrane lies between the connective tissue and the outer covering of the structure.

Science News Letter, April 16, 1938