

behavioral sciences

Drugging the brain

Catecholamines are substances found in nerve tissue throughout the body and especially below the base of the brain. Here they influence the secretion of brain hormones that in turn regulate the secretion of hormones from the pituitary or master gland. The concentrations of brain catecholamines can therefore affect growth, development, reproduction functions and even the state of a person's nerves.

Dr. Joseph Meites, an endocrinologist at Michigan State University in East Lansing, stated last week at the International Psychological Congress in Munich, Germany, that people are changing body functions by the use of drugs. Over-the-counter drugs, alcohol and illegal dope can change the concentrations of brain catecholamines.

An example of brain change is when a person stays on tranquilizers for a long period of time. Often this causes lower than normal levels of brain catecholamines. "Results of such prolonged lowering of catecholamines in women are breast stimulation, lactation and interruption of the menstrual cycle," explains Dr. Meites.

Ultimate values as social indicators

There is a technology gap in the social sciences. Social scientists and public opinion researchers have to concentrate on attitudes—short-range concentrations of values around single incidents or sets of circumstances. Instead, says Dr. Milton Rokeach of Michigan State University in East Lansing, they should be able to concentrate on values—the things people want ultimately to achieve and the ways in which they must behave to achieve them. These, he explains, are far more important in understanding and characterizing a people.

To make the change in procedures possible, Dr. Rokeach has developed and tested two 18-item lists of terminal (ultimate achievement) and instrumental (modes of conduct) values that enable him to identify people by their value systems. With these scales he hopes to assess value changes over a period of time. "This is where the values scale will really prove to be important," says Dr. John C. Scott of the National Science Foundation's Sociology and Social Psychology Program.

Dr. Rokeach intends to repeat the national survey he made in 1968 in an attempt to provide factual information on where the country is and the direction in which it is moving.

By sex obsessed

In 1965 Dr. Martin Sagrera was interrogated five times by the Spanish Guardia Civil because he was conducting a poll on Spanish attitudes toward birth control. In 1969 he was expelled from the national university in Bogotá, Colombia, for taking a public opinion poll on abortion attitudes. Last month his contract at the University of Puerto Rico was canceled by authorities who stated that he was "by sex obsessed."

Dr. Sagrera was conducting a study on the relationship between sexual activity and educational achievement. The computer analysis of the study is not complete but Dr. Sagrera does have the results of 592 questionnaires that were completed by the students. He finds that

those who are married and those who engage in sex frequently have grade averages about 20 percent higher than their fellow students. "These findings appear to contradict the Freudian view that sublimation of sex is a powerful factor in intellectual achievement," says Dr. Sagrera. This fall he plans to teach in Venezuela and continue his work on sexual mores because he feels that this type of work is badly needed in the overpopulated Latin countries—even if "I am considered an evil person."

Paying the psychic wage

Intellectual pursuit, social involvement and personal job satisfaction are part of the psychic wage that has kept many white-collar workers in low-paying positions. But this non-monetary commitment to a job may be on the way out say Drs. Roger Williams and David Guest, occupational psychiatrists at the University of London. They reported last month in *NEW SOCIETY* that they are finding increasing numbers of professional workers who no longer see their job as a "central life interest" and who "are becoming more and more concerned with the relatively low level of their financial rewards."

The researchers believe that these workers are still involved with and take satisfaction from their jobs but that they are "fed up with having to work ludicrous hours for a pittance largely because they were supposed to be dedicated and involved." When these workers do not earn enough to maintain an acceptable life style, "their credibility and their own self-respect may break down," warn the researchers.

Women's liberation in the kibbutz

Many of the aims of the American women's lib movement were first achieved in the Israeli kibbutz. But, says Dr. Manachem Gerson of the Institute of Research in Kibbutz Education in Oranim, Israel, the age-old problems and dissatisfactions of women still persist there.

Dr. Gerson reports in the July *AMERICAN JOURNAL OF ORTHOPSYCHIATRY* on his study of the first three generations of kibbutz women. Despite the fact that fundamental changes in the social status of women have been achieved, many women of the founder generation, now middle aged, are "dissatisfied and disillusioned," Dr. Gerson finds. "In the founding days of the kibbutz, women's striving was toward identification with men, toward an equality that disregarded sex differences and that set forth male qualities as the model for both sexes," he explains.

In Dr. Gerson's view, "this lack of historic understanding was in fact a symptom of erroneous emancipationist approach that would have women be like men; it was a bad foreboding for future developments." Now, he concludes, education in the kibbutz must "play an important role in reshaping the thinking of the young kibbutz members to overcome remnants of traditional rigid sex typing." This could be achieved, he says, by broadening the number of prestigious professions for women and by giving more social prestige to such occupations as child care and services.