

Chimpanze

F.A. Beach. Animal Research and Psychiatric Theory.
Psychosomatic Medicine, XV, No. 5.1953
p.374-389. p.380/1

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Kahn measured the effects of severe defeat in fighting during early life upon aggression in adulthood. Different mice were attacked and badly beaten by a second individual beginning at 21, 35, or 60 days of age. Fights were staged on three successive days. These animals were tested in adulthood and compared to controls of the same age which had not been attacked previously. In general the adult mice which had been defeated at 21 days of age showed fewer aggressive acts and more defensive responses than their controls. The same difference between experimental and control groups was found in the animals which had been punished at 35 days but the variation between groups was less marked. There were no significant differences in the group which was defeated at 60 days.

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This same generalization is applicable to cognitive behavior. Years ago Kohler studied the problem-solving behavior of chimpanzees and reached the conclusion that animals of this species solve some problems as a result of insight. The process of insightful solutions was interpreted as depending upon perceptual configurations and as being quite different from trial-and-error learning. It was implied that the perceptual processes of the chimpanzee are genetically organized in such a way that the animal can "see" the solution for some problems without having to go through the laborious task of trying one potential solution after another until eventually the successful variant is hit upon. As has been indicated, Kohler thought of this capacity as a product of the individual's genetic constitution and, perhaps, general maturational history, but modern

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evidence encourages a somewhat different interpretation.

Birch has compared the incidence of "insightful" solutions to a given problem in the behavior of two groups of immature chimpanzees. The problem was to gain possession of a piece of preferred food that was lying on the ground near the cage but beyond the animal's reach. The solution was to draw the lure within arms' reach by using a simple T-shaped rake that lay just outside the cage bars. Neither group of young apes had previously been confronted with this specific problem, but all members of one group had been allowed to use long sticks as playthings. The other group had no pre-experimental opportunity to discover the potentialities of a stick as an extension of the arm. In the formal problem tests the "stick-experienced" animals showed a higher frequency of "insightful" solutions than did the naive group. Since Kohler had no exact knowledge

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of the pre-experimental history of his subjects it is quite possible that their fairly sudden insight into the problems devised by Kohler actually involved the application of previously learned habits and can be adequately explained by reference to the ordinary processes of habit formation without necessity of recourse to a new and qualitatively distinct category of intellectual capacity.

