THE BEHAVIOUR OF CHILDREN WITH AND WITHOUT UPPER CNS LESIONS

by

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(With 13 Figures)

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INTRODUCTION

The direct relevance of animal studies to the study of child behaviour has long been recognised (e.g. KELLER, 1950; BOWLBY, 1957) and some attempts have been made to compare directly the behaviour of young children with that of primates in similar situations (e.g. KELLOGG, 1933; MORIYA, 1937; SCHUSTERMAN, 1963). Few investigators, however, have studied children in a situation analogous to the 'free-field' employed in studies of exploratory behaviour in animals, i.e. an environment of which the physical dimensions are fixed, but within which the animal is free to behave as he pleases. The present report describes the behaviour of two groups of children in such an environment, and the changes which occur as the environment is structured in various ways. Much of our knowledge of child development is obtained from studies where an adult is part of the environment, in either an active or a passive role. One aim of this study therefore was to investigate how much the presence of an adult actually modified the child's behaviour, by comparing it with the behaviour observed when the child was alone in an unfurnished room or with a toy. The children with upper CNS damage were studied as these are a group frequently unsuited to investigation by more traditional psychological techniques, and it was thought that the present approach was particularly suitable for their study.

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MATERIALS AND METHOD

The two groups consisted of 12 brain-damaged and 12 undamaged children. They were matched for age and sex. Children were classified as brain-damaged only when at least 2 of the following 3 conditions were present:

(i) classical neurological signs,
(ii) history of gross cerebral insult,
(iii) specific EEG abnormalities.

In practice they were children who had had illnesses such as measles-encephalitis, meningitis, and so on. The clinical classifications and behavioural observations were made independently of each other.

The non-damaged group consisted of children with no evidence of cerebral lesions. These children were in hospital for treatment of behaviour disorders such as enuresis, school refusing. They were all seen at the end of their stay in hospital, i.e. after recovery. This group of children without upper CNS lesions, for the purpose of this paper, will be subsequently referred to as the 'normal' group. (Although it might be argued that these children were

![Fig. 1. A plan of the room.](image)