

Humphreys and others say that no one has been able to devise an intelligence test that is correlated with school performance in which the racial differential is eradicated. Efforts to construct such tests, says James Ricks of the Psychological Corporation (producers of the WISC), have come out as "slightly bitter jokes or polemics" that have been built around the subjects' knowledge of black urban argot.

Sociologist Mercer has tried to find a way out of the double bind with the development of a new test called SOMPA, for System of Multicultural Pluralistic Assessment, which is now being marketed by the Psychological Corporation. The new test systematically weights in a child's social and cultural background in coming up with a score, which is called ELP, or estimated learning potential, instead of IQ. In addition to scores from the WISC-R, SOMPA includes the Bender Gestalt test and measures of physical dexterity and auditory and visual acuity. Also contributing to the score is an "adaptive behavior inventory," using information gained from interviews with parents.

SOMPA is obviously much more comprehensive than an IQ test alone. Its most notable use to date has been in Pueblo, Colorado, where a large number of minority children classified as mildly retarded were put back into regular classes. Gordon, however, attacks the test as a piece of "statistical legerdemain" that may well reduce the number of minority children classified as mildly mentally retarded, but may bring about a rebellion by teachers who are forced to deal with children they think should be in special classes.

Larry P. v. Riles clearly ranged far beyond the immediate question of whether the children had indeed been misclassified when they were assigned to EMR classes. Defense lawyer Condas thinks the answer to that is simple: they were not. Before the trial began, the psychologists who brought suit retested the six children (five boys and one girl, now in their teens)\* with the WISC-R. They reported scores ranging from 17 to 38 points above the children's original scores, which put them safely out of the EMR range. The psychologists emphasized establishing rapport with the children and claimed to make allowances for nonstandard answers that nonetheless exhibited an intelligent approach. Condas, however, backed by Donald Ashhurst of the California Department of Education, who retested the children for the court last year, says that testing protocols and scoring procedures were vio-

lated to such an extent as to make the exercise meaningless.

Condas says that why these particular children were selected is a "mystery." She says Ashhurst found that only one of the six, on retesting, appeared to have the capability for independent living.

The psychologists who initiated the suit "went out on a limb," but at the time—1971—"it was a very fashionable limb." Now, she feels that new data on test validity have rendered many of the plaintiffs' arguments "out of date."

Condas believes a case could very well have been made over improper use of IQ testing, but this was not it. "The most unfortunate irony" of the whole thing, she adds, is that by bringing the case the plaintiffs forced an unprecedented amassing of evidence about IQ testing which shows that the pattern of inferior black performance is "consistent and pervasive."

It is hard to escape the conclusion that the IQ test controversy is obscuring much more difficult problems. After all, what would happen if they were eliminated? Judge Peckham noted with some distress at the trial that the disproportion of racial allocation to EMR classes was continuing even after his moratorium. Witnesses for the plaintiffs at the trial did not have any alternatives to offer. Hilliard, for example, told *Science* that "asking for an alternative to tests is like asking for an alternative to poison." After further questioning, he said "sophisticated teaching procedures" were the answer.

The pro-testers think that more rather than fewer children will be wrongly classified if tests are banned. Gordon, whose own way from an orphanage to professionalism was cleared with the help of IQ tests, says, "The IQ test has been the greatest finder of talented kids otherwise neglected and overlooked. It's possible the test keeps kids out of EMR classes rather than puts them in." He agrees that the question remains whether the placements are right, but says "I'd rather know more than less."

\*Boys, by the way, outnumber girls in these classes by about five to one. "Nobody worries" about that fact, complains defense witness Nadeen Lambert. *Science* asked several people why it would not make more sense to launch a class action suit on behalf of boys—after all, the race business would then be eliminated, which would open the way to directly confronting the inadequacies of the educational system. Most people responded that that would be an irrelevant line to pursue because everyone knows boys are bigger behavioral problems than girls. Gordon added that there is evidence that boys, while possessing the same average IQ's as girls, have a greater IQ spread, as evidenced by the fact that there are more boys in homes for the retarded. Condas suggested that the problem is not that there are too many minorities in EMR classes, but too few whites—the implication being that the docile failers are less likely to be referred than the difficult to manage. But this did not apparently become an important issue in the trial.

Those who consider IQ tests useful believe they are being used as the scapegoat for all the frustrations attendant on the inability of school systems to turn out citizens capable of coping with modern society. As one psychologist says, "the fact that the tests can be defended doesn't meet the challenge."

But that is not going to stop the United States from staging more courtroom ordeals on the IQ test. The next major one is scheduled for Chicago. The plaintiffs are bringing suit on almost identical grounds, according to lawyer Jerrold Oppenheim. This case is on behalf of five black and Latin American children and their parents. The children in this case are called educable mentally handicapped instead of EMR. Oppenheim alleges that IQ tests are being used as the only determinant for placement and "we think the test has got to go." But he did not sound so sure that winning the case would solve anything at all.

—CONSTANCE HOLDEN

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## RECENT DEATHS

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**Herbert P. Brioda**, 55; professor of physics, University of California, Santa Barbara; 9 April.

**William C. Casey**, 87; professor emeritus of sociology, Columbia University; 30 April.

**Harold H. Cole**, 81; professor emeritus of animal science, University of California, Davis; 28 May.

**Vernet E. Eaton**, 82; professor emeritus of physics, Wesleyan University; 18 May.

**David R. Griffith**, 47; professor of zoology, Iowa State University; 14 May.

**Sherman W. Hartmann**, 55; clinical professor of surgery, University of Southern California; 17 April.

**Cleveland P. Hickman**, 82; professor emeritus of zoology, De Pauw University; 23 April.

**H. Lawrence Keil**, 79; retired research chemist, Chicago Health Research Foundation; 10 April.

**Allan T. Kenyon**, 77; professor emeritus of medicine, University of Chicago; 26 May.

**Moses Kunitz**, 90; professor emeritus of biochemistry, Rockefeller University; 20 April.

**Kirtley F. Mather**, 90; professor emeritus of geology, Harvard University; 7 May.

**Alexander P. Runciman**, 54; professor of clinical psychology, California State University, Northridge; 2 April.