

SOCIETY

nation by the husband (A.I.H.) on the grounds that it converted marriage and the home into a biological laboratory. Subsequently, however, many scholars and religious leaders have distinguished between the unitive and the procreative aspects of marriage (which Pius XII deemed inseparable), maintaining that A.I.H. can be seen as completion rather than replacement of sexual intercourse. The Bishop of Cork, for example, has no objection to the test tube method "if there is no other possible way for [childless couples] to have babies."

More specific problems related to *in vitro* fertilization persist, however, according to Hellegers and McCormick. Among them are: the question of zygote loss (gynecologist Dr. Patrick Steptoe estimates that he failed to achieve embryo transfer with 200 fertilized ova before succeeding with Mrs. Brown; "Are these really mini-abortions?" the authors ask); the risk of fetal damage and deformity borne by the child; a growing cultural tolerance of even more radical developments such as "third party" donor insemination and the carriage of the fetus by a surrogate womb; and the diversion of medical effort from more important programs such as basic health care.

In vitro fertilization offers desperate, sterile couples a new hope, but the authors caution that "there just might be benefits we can never enjoy because we cannot get them without being unethical."

Ending Disrespect for Learning

"What's Behind the Drop in Test Scores?"
by Christopher Jencks, in *Working Papers*
(July-Aug. 1978), Center for the Study of
Public Policy, 123 Mt. Auburn St., Cam-
bridge, Mass. 02138.

Widely publicized reports of declining test performance (notably on the Scholastic Aptitude Test, or SAT) by American students since the 1960s have convinced many people that U.S. schools are now turning out illiterates and have prompted new support for a "back-to-basics" movement.

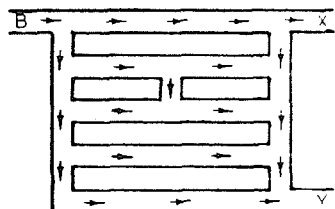
But today's students are not doing worse than their predecessors on tests of *basic* skills, writes Jencks, a Harvard sociologist. The National Assessment of Educational Progress, for example, has reported that 17-year-olds actually scored higher on tests of "basic literacy" in 1974 than in 1971.

Since the observed decline in test performance shows up only after students have completed the fourth or fifth grade, Jencks writes, it indicates a decline in the more complex skills and knowledge that tests like the SAT are designed to measure—i.e., ability to infer and analyze, breadth of reading, and knowledge of literature, history, politics, and science.

Rejecting most of the explanations popular among social scientists (e.g., broken homes, working mothers) and the public (which blames TV and parental permissiveness), Jencks attributes this slump to a "crisis of legitimacy" during the tumultuous 1960s. Bored with traditional academic subjects and losing respect for learning, teen-age stu-

SOCIETY

6. The Figure below represents a network of one-way traffic lanes. If the traffic divides equally at intersections where there are alternative directions, and in one hour 512 cars enter the traffic pattern at point B, how many cars will leave via Y?



(A) 128 (B) 192 (C) 256 (D) 320 (E) 384

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Above is a sample question from the Scholastic Aptitude Test. The correct answer is "(E) 384."

dents began to defy authority more openly than in the past. Educators, seeking to accommodate student whims and to keep schools running smoothly, suffered a "failure of nerve." They, too, began to doubt the legitimacy of traditional academic standards. Teachers and principals became less willing to punish truants and disrupters; some young liberal and radical teachers embraced a "spongy cultural relativism" that treated all ideas as equally defensible. To students, this soon meant that no ideas were worth bothering about.

Since basic skills are not the real problem says Jencks, the "minimum competency" movement will have little impact on the decline in SAT scores. "We must find ways of motivating students to go beyond the basics," he writes. Defending intellectual standards means taking a firm line with students; a school administrator's first priority is to "maintain a climate in which learning is accepted as both necessary and respectable."

Study Now, Pay Later

"The Tuition Dilemma: A New Way to Pay the Bills" by John R. Silber, in *The Atlantic Monthly* (July 1978), Box 1857, Greenwich, Conn. 06835.

A crisis in the financing of higher education has been building relentlessly for the past decade. College tuition costs are soaring, parents and students cheat on applications for financial aid, and the default rate on federal student loans rose in 1977 to 13 percent.

The answer, writes Silber, president of Boston University, is not the controversial tuition tax credit legislation that died in the last session of Congress. A better remedy is the so-called Tuition Advance Fund. The TAF plan was introduced in Congress in April 1978 (by Rep. Michael J. Harrington, D.-Mass., and Sen. Edward M. Kennedy, D.-Mass.). Under this proposal, any student who had completed his first year of college