

The Weekly Newsmagazine of Science

Science Service Publication Volume 146, No. 12, September 17, 1994

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SCIENCE NEWS (ISSN 0036-8423) is published weekly on Saturday, except the last week in December, for \$44.50 for 1 year or \$78.00 for 2 years (foreign postage \$6.00 additional per year) by Science Service, Inc., 1719 N Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. Service, Inc., 1719 N Street, N.W., Washington, D.C., 20036. Second-class postage paid at Washington, D.C., and additional mailing office. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Science News, P.O. Box 1925, Marion, Ohio 43305. Change of address: Four to six weeks' notice is required — old and new addresses, including zip codes, must be provided.

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Editorial and Business Offices: 1719 N St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036 (202-785-2255)

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Subscription Department: P.O. Box 1925, Marion, Ohio 43305 For new subscriptions only, call 1-800-247-2160. For customer service, call 1-800-347-6969.

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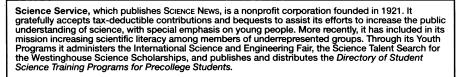
Cover: Mathematical studies and physical experiments reveal new details of how a drum's shape affects its sound. Using computer graphics, researchers can visualize, for example, the vibrations of a drum's fractal membrane. This image represents how rapidly the slope of the drum's surface changes during one of these vibrations. (Image: Griffith et al.)

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# Clarifying poverty-IQ link

"Growing Up Poor" (SN: 7/9/94, p.24) implies that poverty is to blame for a lower than normal IQ in children and for harsher than normal parenting. If that is true, then the cure is to give the poor more money.

However, maybe these results come about because poor parents are, on average, less than normally adept people who find it difficult to provide adequately for themselves or their children. If this is true, programs like Head Start are a better cure because they help compensate for poor parenting.

To believe poverty is the real culprit, there must be observed evidence that children's IQs improve or that parenting becomes less harsh when a family's economic circumstances improve.

Mary-Anne Sillamaa Don Mills, Ontario

Although inheritance plays a large role in an individual's intellectual capacity, persistent poverty — accompanied by developmental risks such as early malnutrition, exposure to toxic substances in the environment, and lack of a stimulating or safe home environment — hinders intellectual development, as reflected in lower average IQ scores in poor children than in their more affluent counterparts.

The issue does not boil down to nature versus nurture. The point is that whether a child starts out with an IQ of 140 or 70, long-term poverty can take a toll on intellectual functioning during childhood. - B. Bower

### Criticizing assumptions

"Faster-than-light time tunnels for photons" (SN: 7/2/94, p.6) makes two amazing statements. The first, "Recent experiments...show that photons tunnel through a barrier at velocities considerably greater than the speed of light in a vacuum." The second, "This result doesn't necessarily violate the notion that cause precedes effect."

What amazes me is the assumption that information traveling faster than c represents violation of causality! Causality simply

means that the cause of an event precedes the effect of the event. In this case, for example, a photon is emitted before it is absorbed in a detector. If the travel time were 1 million times faster than c, the cause would still precede the effect, and causality would not be violated.

Somehow, uncritical acceptance of the theory of relativity has become so great that it is now assumed, even by the physicists testing such effects, that information transfer in excess of c violates causality! All that is actually violated in this case is Einstein's second postulate - that the speed of light is a constant, equal to c.

Curt Renshaw Alpharetta, Ga.

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