EDUCATION

Claim Unfair Treatment For Low-Income Students

➤ THE AMERICAN public school system discriminates against children from low-income families and helps build social and economic class barriers, a New York sociologist believes.

The findings of Mrs. Patricia Sexton, assistant professor of educational sociology at New York University, are based on her study of school policies in an unnamed Midwestern "Big City," described as one of the country's largest.

Mrs. Sexton opposes use of IQ tests to segregate class work by determining which students are "slow" and which "fast." IQ scores rise as incomes rise, but there is no proof that the tests are "valid measures of native intelligence." She said wording of questions is biased because it assumes reading and vocabulary skills low-income youngsters cannot acquire, with no books at home and no one to read to them.

Commenting on a picture identification test given at "Big City," Mrs. Sexton said, "It would be an extremely rare child from a low-income neighborhood who would know about and be able to recognize pictures of a castle, a steeple, a lighthouse, a dwarf, a violin, or most of the other objects."

She is also critical of special courses for "gifted" children and other courses aimed only at preparing low-income children for low-paying "blue-collar" jobs.

Mrs. Sexton's book is titled, "Education and Income: Inequalities in Our Public Schools." (See p. 380, SNL, June 17, 1961.)

• Science News Letter, 79:395 June 24, 1961

BIOCHEMISTRY

Soil Microbe Enzyme Removes Hair From Hides

➤ AN ENZYME that removes natural hair from hides and produces a better quality leather has been discovered by scientists at the Rutgers Institute of Microbiology in New Brunswick, N. J.

Dr. Walter J. Nickerson and Dr. Joseph J. Noval reported that keratinase, a complex enzyme, speeds up the digestion of proteins, in this case hair, wool and feathers.

The enzyme is produced by *Streptomyces fradiae,* a microorganism found in soil. The process by which this organism digests wool is strikingly similar to the digestion of wool by the clothes moth.

The enzyme, recently extracted in pure crystalline form, does its job of dehairing by attacking the base of the hair shaft, a spot particularly sensitive to the dissolving-digesting action.

The new enzymatic approach to hair removal is superior to the traditional lime and sulfide method because it does not damage the hide and eliminates the problem of what to do with the chemical wastes produced by the older technique.

Keratinase is now being field tested by Merck & Co., Inc., and will be marketed under the trade name "M-ZYME" within a few months.

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