Irving Lorge

With the death on January 23rd of Irving Lorge the Psychometric Society has lost another of its original founders and past presidents, and its members have lost an esteemed colleague and for many of them a valued friend. Professor Lorge, who was 55 years old, died suddenly and entirely unexpectedly from a heart attack. He is survived by his wife, Sarah, and two daughters, Paula Lee and Beatrice Susan.

It was in 1927 that Irving Lorge came to Teachers College to work with my father, Edward L. Thorndike, as a research assistant in the Institute of Psychological Research. Except for a period of government service during World War II, he stayed there the rest of his life. He moved up rapidly from research assistant to valued associate and collaborator in many of my father's enterprises, and went on to become Executive Officer of that same Institute of Psychological Research and Professor in the Department of Psychological Foundations and Services.

The very diversity of Dr. Lorge's interests and activities makes it difficult to type or categorize him. Basically he was interested in research—almost anybody's research on almost anything. Whatever problem was brought to him became for the time, and sometimes for quite a long time, his problem. He was excited about it, and brought to bear upon it a rich background of knowledge and skill. It is perhaps for this reason that he was so widely in demand as a research advisor—both by students at Teachers College and by mature investigators throughout the country. Much of his professional energy was devoted to helping others with their research problems, both in the design and planning of their studies and in the analysis of their data.

In his early days especially, Dr. Lorge's outspoken remarks occasionally infuriated certain of his more venerable and less research-oriented colleagues. On the surface sometimes brusque and even seemingly harsh, he evoked fairly acute anxiety in his initial contact with the more timorous students. But basically he was the kindest and most supporting of men. Thus, though he could be devastating in his criticism of what he considered to be slipshod thinking in a student's research, he was nevertheless extremely generous of his time and counsel in carrying that same student through to a satisfactory outcome. Those with whom he worked were devoted to him.

His own work covered many fields, and it is hard to know which he valued most highly. One major interest was certainly language and communication. He expanded the work on word counts into a count of specific meanings, providing much of the initiative for the Semantic Count of English Words (published with E. L. Thorndike). He became an expert on readability, contributing to the techniques for appraising reading materials and

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educating many in high places on the importance of writing so that others could read.

An early exposure to research on the psychology of the adult led to a continuing interest in the problems of aging. He was convinced that early results showing the decline of ability gave a badly distorted picture, and presented evidence to show how the age curve was related to amount of pressure for speeded performance, on the one hand, and to continuing education, on the other. He continued to contribute both research studies and professional leadership to the field of aging up to the time of his death.

Throughout his life, he always maintained an interest in psychometric techniques and psychometric theory. Much of his early teaching at Teachers College was in statistics, and over the years his teaching-and-service IBM installation at the College provided an introduction to machine data processing for hundreds of students. He helped to develop testing materials for the Air Force and the Army Specialized Training Program during World War II. For many years he carried on a series of testing services for units within Columbia University and in the New York City School System. I was fortunate to be associated with him as a junior author in his major published test series, the Lorge-Thorndike Intelligence Tests.

But these are only a few of his interests, and some might count others as more central. He was deeply interested in the problems of the gifted, and in research about them and educational provision for them. He was for a time something of a rural sociologist, investigating small rural communities during the depression of the 1930's. He has an extensive early bibliography of contributions to the psychology of learning. For a period after World War II he became a social psychologist, directing a series of studies on group problem solving and decision making. There are, I am sure, other types of activities of which I am not even aware.

We who worked most closely with Irving Lorge find it hard to realize that this vital personality will no longer be with us. The Psychometric Society, too, is the poorer for his passing.

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