

Classification Activity

Glenn T. Seaborg's remarkable account (Policy Forum, 3 June, p. 1410) of his struggle with government officials over the classification of his personal diaries is an important contribution to the public interest. The first step toward overcoming mindless government secrecy is to identify it and to call it what it is. But Seaborg's hopeful conclusion that "the present situation is very much improved" is premature.

According to the latest government statistics, classification activity actually increased in fiscal year 1993 by 1% (1). Meanwhile, declassification activity decreased by 30%, for a substantial net growth in the volume of classified files. In fact, despite the nominal end of the Cold War and the correspondingly diminished threat to national security, more government documents are classified today than ever before in U.S. history.

Besides, the story of Seaborg's Halloween "trick or treat" expedition with his children that was classified by the government poses precisely as big a threat to national security today as it ever did.

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References

1. 1993 Report to the President (Information Security Oversight Office, Washington, DC, 1993).

Violence Research

I attended the two panels on violence research at the February AAAS annual meeting in San Francisco and would like to comment on Charles Mann's report of those panels (Research News, 11 Mar., p. 1375).

True, one panel did attack research on the biological and genetic basis of violence as justifying gross social inequality and racism. But there was not a consensus in the other panel supporting genetic and biological determinism in violent behavior. In fact, only Adrian Raine spoke of genetic or biological factors. Three presenters cited societal factors, including unemployment, racism, poverty, and drugs; the fourth said mass incarceration was futile in reducing violence.

Mann's article also describes Raine as hoping that his results would lead to "'feasible, practical, benign ways' of preventing violence," such as extending prenatal care. In fact, Raine also presented brain scan

data on frontal lobe activity in criminals, which he, Patricia Brennan, and Sarnoff Mednick say bolster their contention that criminality is genetic. Raine's own abstract states his results "give important pointers for psycho-biological interventions on violence, some of which are particularly relevant to under-served, inner-city populations."

The federal agency "Violence Initiative" is high on the government's priorities for mental health funding. Its effect, however, seems to be to blame urban crisis on supposedly defective inner-city residents, especially young black men, rather than on the chronic mass unemployment structurally embedded in the U.S. economy. Opposition has stopped one major conference, "Genetic Factors in Crime," but the government seems determined to force the "Violence Initiative" through. In this context it is important not to overestimate the consensus behind the "Violence Initiative," or to underestimate its potential harm.

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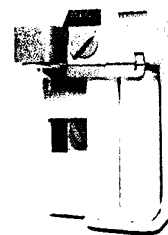
Response: My article did not state or imply that Raine's panel had a "consensus" backing "genetic and biological determinism in violent behavior." In fact, it argued that his findings would be sharply disputed—an accurate prediction, as Lyon's letter demonstrates. In a conversation after the session, Raine told me that in his opinion violence is not genetically and biologically determined, as Lyon would have it. Rather, he argued that it is tied to a complexly interacting weave of economic, social, psychological, historical, and biological factors, with different strands playing different roles in different circumstances. Although few in the post-Holocaust world would argue against the potential danger of pseudoscientific justifications for racist policies, it is worth noting that one of Raine's "psycho-biological interventions on violence" is improved prenatal care.—**Charles C. Mann**

Corrections and Clarifications

In the article "Carbon pools and flux of global forest ecosystems" by R. K. Dixon *et al.* (14 Jan., p. 185), the first sentence in column three on page 187 under the heading "Carbon sources and sinks" should have read, "The net C flux to the atmosphere from the world's forests caused by changes in land use, forest status, and forest C cycling processes was approximately -1.3 to -0.5 Pg year $^{-1}$, with a midpoint of -0.9 Pg year $^{-1}$ (Table 3)."

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