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Letters

Fallout production estimation

Apropos "Fission confusion" (SN: 10/9/82, p. 237), while the exact weight of fission products may be classified (and, in fact, is irrelevant), the production of fallout can be estimated.

Theodore Taylor, quoted in *The Curve of Binding Energy*, stated that as a rule of thumb, a nuclear weapon would vaporize its yield, i.e., a 20 kt [kiloton] weapon would, in a ground burst, vaporize roughly 20 kt of material. Of course this does not apply to an air burst.

Daniel Burstein
New York, N.Y.

Juvenile crime

As a juvenile judge, I was quite amused to read the article "Scared crooked" by Wray Herbert (SN: 9/11/82, p. 167). Mr. Herbert alleged statistics from Racine, Wis., showing that juvenile delinquency is quite normal and that juvenile delinquents should be kept out of the court system whenever possible.

I assisted in getting the juvenile law toughened up about two years ago and since judges can now punish juveniles, juvenile murder, rape, robbery, burglary and arson have dropped about 50 percent in this county. Punishment

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Cover: White children have scored consistently higher than children of racial minorities on the most commonly used IQ tests, and the testing industry has been beleaguered by charges of racism. A new intelligence test, standardized on a racially mixed sample of children and designed to minimize the effects of culture, promises racial parity. (Illustration by Donna Ward)

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does the job and word gets around, thereby preventing other people from getting involved.

I claim the national record for separating juveniles from their driver's licenses per 1,000 cases!!!

Philip G. Nourse
Fort Pierce, Fla.

Please allow me to express my astonishment and disbelief at the report of research of L. W. Shannon on juvenile delinquency.

I am a licensed psychologist who does some work with the public defender in the State of Florida. Further, I taught general psychology to inmates at Florida's second largest prison for four college terms. These inmates ranged in age from 19 to 42 with about 95 percent being below 30. The average sentence was for over 19 years. This is a maximum security prison for serious offenders. I estimate my informal "sample" at being approximately 100. All of these men, without exception, said they repeatedly broke the law in their early years and observed no unpleasant consequences for themselves. They all expressed shock when the "system" finally jolted them with a severe sentence.

Shannon, through his indirect quotations, seems to be implying behavioristically that if

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... Letters

antisocial juvenile conduct is ignored by society it (the anti-social behavior) would become extinguished. Skinner, and others, maintain that behavior which is positively reinforced is likely to be repeated. Skinner would also agree that ignoring behavior tends to extinguish it.

If Shannon is implying that society should ignore juvenile misconduct, I would argue he may be scientifically and psychologically naive. My prisoner-students' perception was that they were obtaining sex, through intimidation or rape, money and property through strong arm robbery, burglary or theft, and the "payoff" was very desirable. They experienced only good consequences, not bad, and, therefore, positive reinforcement for behavior.

In the past years I have evaluated about 75 persons for the Florida courts. They were male and female, black and white, sane and insane and all were charged with serious felonies. I do not recall a single one where somebody suddenly "went bad" at 20, 25, or 30 years of age. On the contrary, they all showed early and serious signs of being "different" from the general population.

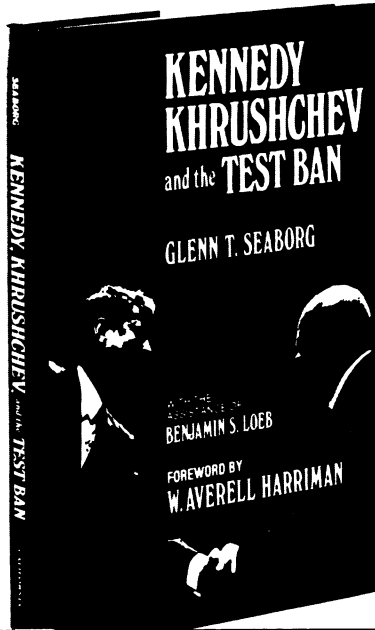
I would like to know more about the design, sample and statistics in Shannon's study. Has Shannon proposed to study adults convicted of serious crimes in Wisconsin on a retrospective basis? More than mere "common sense" is at stake here!

*James R. Fisher, Ed.D.
Eustis, Fla.*

Correction: Li-Tsun Chen ("Petri dish" mouse embryos go halfway through normal gestation" SN: 10/2/82, p. 213) is an associate professor of anatomy at the University of South Florida College of Medicine in Tampa.

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