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Letters

Daycare deficiencies

The problem with infant daycare in the United States compared with the multiple-caretaker system of the Efe forest dwellers in Africa ("Foragers challenge key child-care theory" SN: 8/1/92, p.69) has nothing to do with the "disquiet" of the adults. Perhaps if American infants in daycare were held all day and nursed by caretakers who would remain involved in their lives, there wouldn't be a problem. As our system is structured, however, American daycare infants receive neither the emotional nor the physical intimacy that they could potentially enjoy if they stayed with their mothers.

Ideally, the relationship between a mother and her baby is an intense mutual love affair. Suggesting that this can be adequately replaced by good daycare is comparable to implying that if a spouse leaves town for a

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Cover: This Lakota dancer celebrates his tribe's traditions at a modern powwow. Preliminary data suggest that certain Indian tribes run an unusually high risk of heart disease. (Photo: Milt Lee)

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Science Service, a nonprofit corporation founded in 1921, gratefully accepts tax-deductible contributions and requests to assist its efforts to increase the public understanding of science, with special emphasis on young people. More recently, it has included in its mission increasing scientific literacy among members of underrepresented groups. Through its Youth Program it administers the International Science and Engineering Fair, the Science Talent Search for the Westinghouse Science Scholarships, and publishes and distributes the *Directory of Student Science Training Programs for Precollege Students*.

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while, the emotional and physical needs of the other spouse should be able to be met by a well-trained substitute.

Phyllis K. Stein
St. Louis, Mo.

Taxonomic slip-up

In the picture accompanying "From Tough Ruffe to Quagga" (SN: 7/25/92, p.56), you call the sea lamprey an eel. This is incorrect. The sea lamprey (*Petromyzon marinus*) is a primitive jawless animal, in the class Agnatha, while eels are jawed fishes of the class Pisces.

Cheryl A. Stewart
Central, S.C.

Thanks for pointing out the error. According to David G. Smith of the Division of Fishes at the National Museum of Natural History in Washington, D.C., sea lampreys "are sometimes called lamprey eels in the vernacular," but they "are in no way, shape, or form related to eels."

How did we make such a blunder? We trusted Encyclopaedia Britannica, which claims: "The predatory sea lamprey (an eel) migrated into the upper lakes and established spawning populations in the 1930s. . ."

—J. Raloff

Disputes conclusions

After carefully reading and rereading "Lethal weapons: Gun access and suicide" (SN: 8/15/92, p.102), I can find no basis whatever for the researchers' conclusion that "gun-control laws probably suppress the city's suicide rate. . ."

I fear you have been used. Gun-control advocates have for years conducted "studies" that are planted in various legitimate publications so that the gun-control people can then cite "quotes" supporting their position.

Guns are dangerous and can be misused, but they have a special and important constitutional use in the defense of person and state.

P. M. deLaubentfels
Corvallis, Ore.

