

Social-Behavioral Characteristics Of Affectionate/Nurturant And Non-Affectionate/Non-Nurturant Primitive Cultures

by James W. Prescott

SOCIETAL CHARACTERISTICS

HIGH AFFECTIONATE/NURTURANT CULTURES

1. **Matrilineal**
2. **Polygyny has low incidence**
3. Women's status not inferior
4. Low avoidance of In-Laws
5. Low incidence of Mother-Child households
6. Small community size
7. Low societal complexity
8. Large extended family
9. Wives are not purchased
10. Slavery absent
11. Grand-parental authority over parents is absent
12. Subsistence is primarily by food gathering
13. Low class stratification
14. Political integration at community and family level
15. Metal working is absent

LOW AFFECTIONATE/NURTURANT CULTURES

1. **Patrilineal**
2. **Polygyny has high incidence**
3. Women's status inferior
4. High avoidance of In-Laws
5. High incidence of Mother-Child households
6. High community size
7. High societal complexity
8. Small extended family
9. Wives are purchased
10. Slavery present
11. Grand-parental authority over parents is present
12. Subsistence is primarily by food production
13. High class stratification
14. Political integration at state level
15. Metal working is present

INFANT/CHILD CHARACTERISTICS

HIGH AFFECTIONATE/NURTURANT CULTURES

16. **High infant physical affection**
17. **Low infant physical pain**
18. High infant indulgence
19. High reduction of infant needs
20. Immediate reduction of infant needs
21. Low infant/child crying
22. Prolonged breast-feeding over 2½ years
23. Low child anxiety over performance of responsible behavior
24. Low child anxiety over performance of obedient behavior
25. High smiling, laughter, humor
26. Low anxiety over transition: infancy/childhood
27. High number of food taboos during pregnancy
28. Abortion permitted
29. Strength of desire for children is low

LOW AFFECTIONATE/NURTURANT CULTURES

16. **Low infant physical affection**
17. **High infant physical pain**
18. Low infant indulgence
19. Low reduction of infant needs
20. Delayed reduction of infant needs
21. High infant/child crying
22. Breast-feeding less than 2½ years
23. High child anxiety over performance of responsible behavior
24. High child anxiety over performance of obedient behavior
25. Low smiling, laughter, humor
26. High anxiety over transition: infancy/childhood
27. Low or no food taboos during pregnancy
28. Abortion highly punished
29. Strength of desire for children is high

SEXUAL BEHAVIORAL CHARACTERISTICS

HIGH AFFECTIONATE/NURTURANT CULTURES

30. **Premarital coitus permitted**
31. **Extramarital coitus permitted**
32. Post-partum sex taboo less than one month
33. Sex disability absent
34. Castration anxiety is low
35. Low sex anxiety
36. Narcissicism is low
37. Low exhibitionistic dancing

LOW AFFECTIONATE/NURTURANT CULTURES

30. **Premarital coitus punished**
31. **Extramarital coitus punished**
32. Post-partum sex taboo greater than one month
33. Sex disability present
34. Castration anxiety is high
35. High sex anxiety
36. Narcissism is high
37. High exhibitionistic dancing

WAR/VIOLENCE/CRIME CHARACTERISTICS

HIGH AFFECTIONATE/NURTURANT CULTURES

- 38. **Low adult physical violence**
- 39. **Low or no warfare**
- 40. Low military glory
- 41. Bellicosity is low
- 42. Low or absent killing, torture, mutilation
- 43. Low personal crime
- 44. Incidence of theft is low

LOW AFFECTIONATE/NURTURANT CULTURES

- 38. **High adult physical violence**
- 39. **High warfare**
- 40. Military glory emphasized
- 41. Bellicosity is extreme
- 42. High killing, torture, mutilation
- 43. High personal crime
- 44. Incidence of theft is high

JUSTICE/RELIGIOUS/SUPERNATURAL CHARACTERISTICS

HIGH AFFECTIONATE/NURTURANT CULTURES

- 45. **High God is mainly absent**
- 46. **Low or no religious activity**
- 47. Superordinate justice absent
- 48. Supernaturals are benevolent
- 49. Fear of humans rather than fear of supernatural
- 50. Belief in reincarnation absent
- 51. Low asceticism in mourning
- 52. Witchcraft low or absent
- 53. Religious specialists are part-time

LOW AFFECTIONATE/NURTURANT CULTURES

- 45. **High God is present**
- 46. **High religious activity**
- 47. Superordinate justice present
- 48. Supernaturals are aggressive
- 49. Fear of supernatural rather than fear of humans
- 50. Belief in reincarnation present
- 51. High asceticism in mourning
- 52. Witchcraft highly present
- 53. Religious specialists are full time

NOTE: The above social-behavioral characteristics of primitive cultures have been derived from: R.B. Textor (1967) *A Cross-Cultural Summary*, HRAF Press New Haven. Matrilineal cultures are those where inheritance follows the female line; Polygynous cultures are those where men have several wives and is a measure of sexual exploitation and control of women by men; High desire for children is a measure that reflects exploitation of children: high value of

male and female fertility; and use of children as economic resource, thus, its linkage with abortion being punished. Presence of a Supernatural (High God) with high religious activity in low affectionate/nurturant cultures reflects the need for "divine love" when human love is absent or significantly diminished. Similarly, God is made unto the image and likeness of man — violent cultures have violent Gods; peaceful cultures have peaceful/benevolent Gods.

James W. Prescott is a developmental neuropsychologist and a cross-cultural psychologist who received his doctorate in psychology from McGill University, Montreal, P.Q. Canada. He served as Assistant Head, Physiological Psychology Branch, Office of Naval Research (1963-1966); as Health Scientist Administrator, Developmental Behavioral Biology Program, National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, NIH (1966-1980); and President, Maryland Psychological Association (1970-1971).

He was the recipient of the "Outstanding Contributions To Psychology Award, Maryland Psychological Association (1977); the CINE GOLDEN EAGLE AWARD for his contributions, as Scientific Director, to the award winning Time-Life film, "Rock A Bye Baby" (1971); and has given expert testimony on the origins of human violence, particularly domestic violence, before the Senate of Canada; the U.S. Congress; and many other legislative and professional organizations.

Dr. Prescott is currently President, BioBehavioral Systems; Director, Institute of Humanistic Science; Editor, *THE TRUTH SEEKER*; and is residing in San Diego, CA.

