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OPTIMUM LEARNING RELATIONSHIPS FOR CHILDREN & ADULTS

2002

Special Edition Home Alone America

Growing up without mothers; the changing roles of women, men, and the impact these changes have on children.

By
Mary Eberstadt

How Culture Shapes the Developing Brain & the Future of Humanity

Research linking brain abnormalities and violence to an absence of nurturing and bonding very early in childhood.

By
James W. Prescott, Ph.D.

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Magical Parent - Magical Child, The Optimum Learning Relationship, by Joseph Chilton Pearce and Michael Mendizza is nearly complete. Special pre-publisher editions are expected in July. See: <http://TTFuture.org/magical>.

Optimum means best possible. Learning implies the discovery and perhaps mastery of new patterns or possibilities. Relationship means connection, interaction, and interdependence. Optimum Learning Relationships are therefore *the* most effective process for transcendence, for self-actualization of children and adults.

Optimum Learning Relationships open the door to the unknown. Something unexpected is always waiting to be discovered. There is no authority, no fixed rules. The child and the adult are moving targets, growing, learning, changing every day. To respond appropriately in such a dynamic relationship, demands sensitive, careful attention. What was appropriate yesterday, or even a few moments ago, may be inappropriate now, this living moment. To give such attention requires care, affection and discipline.

The word *discipline* often implies following one's own or an outside authority, conforming to a pattern. It usually involves coercive or forced action, rewards and punishments, behavior modification. The root meaning of *discipline* is *disciple*, which originally meant *joyful follower*. True discipline involves no coercion, no external rewards or punishments. The disciple joyfully follows the teacher. In Optimum Learning Relationships the adult joyfully follows the child as the child follows joyfully the adult. Each provides the other with the precise model needed to overcome the limitations of their current stage of development.

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The relationship is reciprocal. Adults and children draw the best out of the other as each meets ever-new and increasingly complex challenges, together.

Parenting becomes a spiritual practice as rigorous and demanding as found in any monastery. Optimum Learning Relationships begin with close bonds of trust and affection something many live a lifetime without.

In this special edition we bring you *Home Alone America* by Mary Eberstadt, first published in the Hoover Institution's Policy Review. You will find it to be insightful and very challenging. Describing the essay columnist George F. Will points out, "we are far advanced in a vast experiment in mother-child separation that is essentially off-limits to public debate." By sharing this important information with you, we hope to change that.

Following, deepening and complementing Eberstadt's essay is a stunning summary of the brain/behavioral research associated with children being *Home Alone*. Evidence spanning forty years, summarized by James W. Prescott, Ph.D., demonstrates that children raised without a mother's affectionate touch and nurturing are at risk. Children at risk become societies and cultures at risk. The role of women in America and throughout the world may be changing but the need every child (and adult) has for nurturing remains.

Michael Mendizza

How Culture Shapes the Developing Brain and the Future of Humanity

And what we can do to change it

A brief summary of the research which links brain abnormalities
and violence to an absence of nurturing and bonding
very early in childhood.

James W. Prescott, Ph.D.
Institute of Humanistic Science

James W. Prescott, Ph.D. is a developmental neuropsychologist and cross-cultural psychologist. He joined the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD), National Institutes of Health (NIH), Bethesda, MD where he created the Developmental Behavioral Biology Program of the newly created NICHD and served as its Health Scientist Administrator from 1963-1980. During this period, Dr. Prescott initiated and established a number of basic brain research programs which documented that the early life experiences of mother-infant separation induced a variety of developmental brain abnormalities. Prescott concluded that the failure of bonding in the mother-infant relationship, including insufficient breastfeeding, induces developmental brain abnormalities in the infant/child that results in later depression and violence of suicidal and homicidal behaviors that are of epidemic proportions in America and can account in part for the prevalence of the massive psychiatric medication of the children and youth of America.

The greatest terror a child can have is that he is not loved, and rejection is the hell he fears. I think everyone in the world to a large or small extent has felt rejection. And with rejection comes anger, and with anger some kind of crime in revenge for the rejection, and with the crime guilt—and there is the story of mankind.

John Steinbeck—*East of Eden*, 1952

Without love, peace is not possible; depression replaces joy and the anger and rage that escalates into violence, homicide, and suicide become the norm. Steinbeck recognized this fact, which science has abundantly documented. The research however, has been ignored by bureaucratic scientists and the political stewards of society.

How did the human primate become the most violent primate on the planet when our closest genetic relative, the bonobo chimpanzee, who share 99% of our genes, is the most peaceful primate on the planet? For too long the false genetic path for determining and controlling behavior has been pursued.

As De Waal and Lanting (1997) note: *Had bonobos been known earlier, reconstruction of human evolution might have emphasized sexual relations, equality between males and females, and the origin of the family, instead of war, hunting, tool technology, and other masculine fortes. Bonobo society seems ruled by the “Make Love, Not War” slogan of the 1960s rather than the myth of a bloodthirsty killer ape that has dominated textbooks for at least three decades (p.2).*

In *Mother Nature*, Hrdy (1999) has described the nature of mother-infant bonding in the Great Ape:

Great Ape mothers carry their infants wherever they go. Fathers, by comparison, are rarely in direct contact with babies” (p.205). And “It was the mother who continuously carried the infant in skin-to-skin contact-stomach to stomach, chest to breast. Soothed by her heartbeat, nestled in the heat of her body, rocked by her movements, the infant’s entire world was its mother. (p. 98)...and ...no wild monkey or ape mother has ever been observed to deliberately harm her own baby (p.179).

Emphasis added.

What happened along the evolutionary trail where infanticide and injury to the young suddenly appeared in the Great Ape *homo sapiens*? Why is sexual abuse of the prepubertal young unknown in the primate evolutionary record but is common in *homo sapiens*? What genetic or cultural factors could possibly account for this difference? (See: <http://www.violence.de/prescott/reviews/hrdy.html>).

Extensive scientific research in animals and humans have documented, without question, that mother-infant/child separations (loss of bonding/mother love) induces a variety of developmental brain disorders that mediate depression, impulse dyscontrol, chronic stimulus-seeking behaviors that includes self-mutilation, and the violence of homicide and suicide.

(A number of these scientific papers can be found at <http://www.violence.de>. In particular, the Time-Life documentary *Rock-a Bye Baby* that vividly portrays some of these developmental brain-behavioral disorders can be seen at: <http://www.violence.de/tv/rockabye.html> and can be obtained from <http://www.touchthefuture.org>.)

Rock a Bye Baby documented the scientific breakthroughs that were made possible through research supported by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD), NIH in the 1960s and 1970s and was premiered at the 1970 White House Conference on Children and is as relevant today, as it was over 30 years ago.

Based on the Harlow studies (1958) Drs. William Mason and Gershon Berkson (1968, 1975) demonstrated that artificial **body movement** with a “swinging” mother surrogate **could prevent the emotional-social-sexual behavioral pathologies that developed in mother-deprived infant monkeys.** This led to this writer’s development of a brain-behavioral theory of the “maternal-social deprivation” syndrome (SSAD—SomatoSensory Affectional Deprivation) that posited a central role of the cerebellum in the regulation and integration of emotional-social-sexual behaviors. See: <http://www.violence.de/prescott/mp/article.html>

These laboratory findings of depression and violence, consequent to failed bonding in the mother-infant/child relationship, were confirmed by cross-cultural studies on tribal cultures where it was possible to predict with 80% accuracy the peaceful or homicidal violence of 49 tribal cultures from a single measure of mother-infant/child bonding, as demonstrated by continuous baby carrying on the body of mother or a close relative acting as a mother, throughout the day for the first year of life. The peaceful or violent nature of the remaining ten cultures could be predicted from whether youth sexual expression was supported or punished. In short, these two measures of affectional bonding: a) mother-infant/child relationship and b) youth sexual relationships could predict with 100% accuracy the peaceful or violent nature of these 49 tribal cultures distributed throughout the world (<http://www.violence.de/prescott/bulletin/article.html>).

A number of investigators have found increased vulnerability to alcohol and drug abuse in animals and humans with a history of mother-infant separation. Specifically, Barry (1976) reported a high and significant correlation ($r=.77$) between frequency of drunkenness and “high amount of crying during infancy” in tribal cultures that was associated with low mother-infant body contact. In a psychometric study of college students, it was found that alcohol and drugs were preferred to sex that was associated with negative

moral values of sexual pleasure and positive moral values associated with violence and, which were linked to low mother love. See <http://www.violence.de/prescott/bulletin/article.html> <http://www.violence.de/prescott/pppj/article.html>.

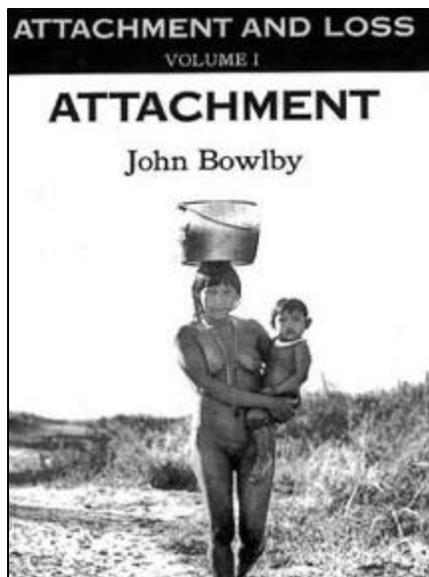
Subsequent studies by this writer on 26 tribal cultures, whose weaning age was 2.5 years or greater, found that 77% of these cultures were rated as low or absent in suicide. **Suicide ratings were significantly different between cultures with weaning age of 2.0 years or less v 2.5 years or greater** (Prescott, 2001). It appears that a vulnerable period in brain development exists at this time to explain this difference. WHO and UNICEF recommend breastfeeding for “two years of age or beyond” (WHO/UNICEF, 1990).

(WHO/UNICEF, 1990).

In America, 6.8% of mothers are breastfeeding at 12 months; 2.7% at 24 months; and 1% at 30 months (From the Third National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey, 1988-94-NHANES 111; Heidiger, 2001; Prescott, 2001). **Normal brain-behavioral development is being compromised through lack of sufficient breastfeeding and the continuing use of infant formula milk** that has the complicit support of the American Academy of Pediatrics, which recommends breastfeeding for only one year and does not actively oppose infant formula milk.

(See <http://www.aap.org/policy/re9729.html>, which does not acknowledge the WHO/UNICEF recommendation of breastfeeding for “two years of age or beyond” nor the well known deficits of the essential amino acid tryptophan in infant formula milk (and other vital brain nutrients) that can only adversely affect the normal development of the brain serotonin system and other brain neurotransmitter systems that mediate the many pathologies of emotional-social-sexual functioning that exist in our society today.)

The suicide prevention effects from breastfeeding are explained by the sensory enrichment of high bonding in these high breastfeeding cultures with the high



levels of the essential amino acid tryptophan (and other vital brain nutrients) that is present in colostrum and breastmilk but has significant deficits in infant formula milk (See Table 1).

Tryptophan is a precursor amino acid that is converted into brain serotonin, deficits of which are known to mediate depression, impulse dyscontrol, drug abuse and the violence of homicide and suicide. It can be expected that other essential amino acids are also deficient in infant formula milk that leads to other brain neurotransmitter system abnormalities, e.g. those that mediate affectional bonding, e.g. tyrosine that is converted into brain dopamine that, in part, makes body pleasure possible.

It is well known that brain dopamine disorders mediate drug addictive behaviors, where drug pleasure is sought in lieu of natural body pleasure that is impaired or lost in failed mother-infant/child bonding and in impaired or failed sexual affectional relationships that begins in the teen years. **Body pleasure that is integrated into higher brain structures inhibits depression, drug abuse and violence, whereas neurodissociative pleasure (self-centered, hedonistic pleasure) mediates depression, drug abuse, sexual exploitation and violence.**

Given the above, it is not surprising to find in our culture the epidemics of depression, psychiatric medications and suicides among our children and youth, where suicides have doubled in the 5-14 year age group over this past generation and where suicide remains the third leading cause of death in the 15-24 year age group over this past generation. **More children/youth (5-24 year age group) have died from suicide over these past ten years (est. 55,000) than have been lost in combat in the ten year Vietnam War (47,355).**

No war memorial exists for these children and youth of suicidal death. **The combination of impaired or failed sensory affectional bonding and limited or no breastfeeding in the mother-infant/child relationship is a lethal combination for the development of depression, social alienation, drug abuse, sexual exploita-**

tion and the violence of suicide and homicide.

Children are now killing children; children are raping children; and the massive psychiatric medication of our children and youth (Zito, et. al., 2000)—that was unheard of a generation ago—all indicate the disintegration of America from within.

The report of the NICHD (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development) Study of Early Child Care (SECC) found that **infants and very young children who spend more than 30 hours a week in child care “are far more demanding, more noncompliant, and they are more aggressive” and “They scored higher on things like gets in lots of fights, cruelty, bullying, meanness as well as talking too much, demands must be met immediately”, according to Dr. Belsky, one of the principle investigators” (Stolberg, New York Times, April 19, 2001)**

Dr. Sarah Friedman, NICHD Scientific Project Officer was reported as saying “We cannot and should not hide the findings but I don’t want to create a mass hysteria when I don’t know what explains these results” (Stolberg, 2001).

No measures of biological stress disorders were incorporated into this study nor was there an awareness of the early NICHD studies which documented these behaviors in the maternally deprived young. John Bowlby (1951), Peter Cook (1996) and Joseph Chilton Pearce (1977) provide strong warnings of the dangers of institutional day care. Further, the abandonment by the NICHD of its agency responsibility to support continued research on child abuse and neglect in the late 1970s has retarded scientific advances in understanding the origins of violence and has prevented the establishment of national health programs that are known to prevent depression, drug abuse and violence.

It has yet to be recognized that cruelty, bullying and meanness that terrorizes so many of our children and youth in our elementary schools and

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high schools have their roots in the emotional trauma of mother-infant/child separations associated with illness and institutionalized day care. These collective emotional-social traumas in infancy/childhood, particularly when combined with child/teen sexual abuse, are sufficiently great to impair teen coping behaviors to emotional stress and to drive many students to despair and the violent acts of homicide and suicide. It is estimated that some 20% of our nation's students have contemplated suicide at one time or another.

Dr. Belsky, a member of the research team of the NICHD-SECC, has published his most recent findings and conclusions regarding the damaging emotional-social effects of infant and early child day care. It is inexplicable that there is no mention of this history of NICHD research in "From Neurons to Neighborhoods," (National Academy of Sciences) nor cited by Dr. Berman, President, American Academy of Pediatrics, that urges pediatricians to foster early brain development in children (Belsky, 2001; Berman, 2001).

We also need to recognize the role of theological/religious systems that makes an enemy of body pleasure—as sinful and immoral—and which equates pain, suffering and deprivation as being morally virtuous. These aberrant moral value systems oppose millions of years of evolutionary biology (pain = avoidance; pleasure = attraction) and which have equated the feminine with sin, wickedness and immorality. These false moral/religious values have turned our body against itself; male against female; parents against children; and children against parents.

We now know that integrated pleasure is the "glue" of bonding and is necessary for the development of the moral person and of moral behaviors. If natural body pleasure is denied, depression and the artificial and destructive pleasures of drugs and sexual violence often follow.

Past is Prologue—Report to the President 1970 White House Conference on Children

Never has this White House Conference come at a time of greater national questioning... The Conference can and will define problems, seek new knowledge, evaluate past successes and failures, and outline alternative courses of action.

President Richard M. Nixon December 5, 1969

Minority Report of Forum 15. Chairman, Urie Bronfenbrenner.

I take issue with the accompanying document on two major counts. First, the report, in my judgment fails to convey the urgency and severity of the problem confronting the nation's families and their children. Second, the document underestimates and consequently fails to alert the reader to the critical role played by business and industry—both private and public—in determining the life style of the American family and the manner in which parent and children are treated in American society.

The working draft of the original Forum 15 Task Force report began with the following statement:

America's families, and their children, are in trouble, trouble so deep and pervasive as to threaten the future of our nation. The source of the trouble is nothing less than a national neglect of children and those primarily engaged in their care—America's parents.

The Editorial Committee objected to this statement on the grounds that it applied only to a minority of the nation's children and that, therefore, no note of urgency was justified. I strongly disagree

(p. 252) (Bronfenbrenner, 1970).

Not much has changed from 1970 to 2002 in terms of acting on this research and the urgency for reform.

THE FUTURE HUMAN

The human brain is the organ of our emotions, social relationships, moral values and cognitive/intellective development. The developing brain of the infant/child is encoded or programmed either for depression or joy/happiness; for peace or violence and for human equality or inequality. These are learned behaviors rooted in the biology of our early life experiences (Montagu, 1971).

The transformation of a violent culture to a peaceful culture begins with the transformation of the individual who, as an infant/child, is placed on a life path of acceptance rather than rejection; of joy and happiness rather than depression; of love rather than hate; of peace rather than violence. This transformation of the individual requires the building of a new cultural brain, one that embodies and expresses naturally peace, love and happiness.

TABLE 1. ESTIMATED DAILY REQUIREMENTS (MG/KG) OF THE ESSENTIAL AMINO ACIDS FOR INFANT, CHILD AND ADULT

<i>Amino Acid</i>	<i>Adult</i>	<i>Infant</i>	<i>% Adult</i>	<i>Child</i>
<i>Histidine</i>	16	26	163	19
<i>Isoleucine</i>	13	46	354	28
<i>Leucine</i>	19	93	489	44
<i>Lycine</i>	16	66	247	44
<i>Methionine/Cystine</i>	17	42	235	22
<i>Phenylalanine &</i>				
<i>Tyrosine</i>	19	72	379	22
<i>Threonine</i>	09	43	478	28
<i>Tryptophan</i>	05	17	340	09
<i>Valine</i>	13	56	431	25

FROM: The Merck Manual. Nutritional and Metabolic Disorders. P. 920. Fifteenth Edition. 1987. Infant percent value of adult requirements were calculated and added to Table.

References to this article and more extended articles on this subject can be found at: www.TTFuture.org/Prescott. Additional scientific papers can be found at: www.violence.de.

John Bowlby (1951), Peter Cook (1996) and Joseph Chilton Pearce (1977) and others give strong warnings of the dangers of institutional day care. The abandonment by the NICHD of its agency responsibility to support continued research on child abuse and neglect in the late 1970s has retarded scientific advances in understanding the origins of violence and has prevented the establishment of national health programs that are known to prevent depression, drug abuse and violence.

The following changes are essential if this new cultural brain of the infant/child/teen is to be developed:

1. Society must encourage and support mothers to be nurturing mothers which includes breastfeeding for 2.5 years or beyond.
2. Society must encourage and support mothers (and fathers) in being nurturing parents by supporting the carrying of the infant on the body of mother/father throughout the day during the first year of life.
3. All forms of intentional infliction of physical/emotional pain and punishment must be eliminated from the life of the infant/child that begins in many male infants with circumcision. www.montagunocircpetition.org
4. Society must support the emerging sexuality of children and youth and support them in the natural expression of their inherent sexuality, free from exploitation and punishment.

The above four principles are distilled from the authors *Ten Principles of Mother-Infant Bonding For Health, Happiness and Harmony* which state:

1. Every Pregnancy Is A Wanted Pregnancy
2. Every Pregnancy Has Proper Nutrition & Prenatal Care
3. Natural Birthing
4. No Circumcision
5. Breastfeeding on Demand and for "two years of age or beyond"

6. Intimate Body Contact—Baby Carrying During First Year of Life

7. Immediate Comforting—No Prolonged Crying.

8. Infants and Children Are For Hugging—No Physical Punishment or Humiliation

9. Infants and Children Are Honored—No Emotional Abuse; Emerging Sexuality is Respected

10. Mothers Must Be Honored and Supported As Nurturing Mothers—No Infant/Early Child Day Care

The implementation of these Ten Principles would provide for a greater comprehensive structure of cultural change for the assurance of peaceful individuals and cultures. Clearly, these changes are not possible without a restructuring of culture in ways that support and enable mothers to be nurturing mothers.

National legislation that interferes with mother-infant/child bonding must be replaced with legislation that supports nurturing. Nursing mothers should be exempt from the 1996 Welfare Reform Act, which prevents breastfeeding and bonding in thousands of families. The need for infant and early institutional child day care could be radically reduced if public funds now utilized to support these commercial enterprises were used to support mothers and fathers directly, a policy whose proven effectiveness has been well established in Scandinavian countries.

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