

# Committee on the Rights of the Child

Day of General Discussion

Friday, 28 September 2001 – OHCHR (Palais Wilson, Geneva)

**Violence Against Children within the Family and in Schools**

**Submission by James W. Prescott**

## Ending Violence Against Children and Women World Wide

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The stated objectives of this "Day of General Discussion" is to "increase further the attention given to violations of the right of children to be protected from all forms of violence"; and to "foster a deeper understanding of the contents and implications of the Convention as they relate to specific topics.

### Introduction.

Violence against children cannot be understood nor prevented without an understanding of the roots of violence against the Feminine, the Mother and of Mother Nature itself. The dualities of peace and violence; of good and evil; of the feminine and masculine all share common roots that binds these dualities together for peace or violence. For example:

"Also, as regards male and female, the former is superior, the latter is inferior, the male is ruler, the female is subject" (Aristotle Politics Bk. 1, Ch. 4);

Pythagoras gave explicit moral characteristics to gender:

"There is a good principle which has created order, light and man; and a bad principle which has created chaos, darkness and woman."  
{Quoted in Simone de Beauvoir, The Second Sex (1953).

Many other citations can be given from different human histories and cultures, which document the virtual universality of these cognitive-moral value systems, e.g.

"Woman is the origin of sin, and it is through her that we all die." (Ecclesiasticus 25:24); and

"Withhold not correction from a child: for if thou strike him with the rod, he shall not die. Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and deliver his soul from hell (Proverbs: 23:13-14); and

"As regards the individual nature, woman is defective and misbegotten." (St. Thomas Aquinas. Summa Theologica)

These philosophical and religious world-views have a major role in the structure of violence against women and children, where women are considered inherently unequal, morally inferior and subordinate to males. The role of philosophical/religious beliefs and values in supporting violence against women and children must be recognized and changed, if true prevention of violence against women and children is to be realized. See

<http://www.violence.de/prescott/women/article.html>. The practice of aborting female fetuses but not male fetuses in India and other countries is illustrative of the continuing inherent hostility that exists against the feminine and the value of female life.

Although these philosophical/religious roots of violence are not the subject of this essay, they are cited to provide a broader context for understanding the human transformations that will be necessary for the prevention of violence against women and children. The continuing gender inequality worldwide assures the continuing violence against women and children.

#### Encoding the Developing Brain for Peace or Violence

As a developmental neuropsychologist and cross-cultural psychologist, I have approached the crises of human violence from the perspective of how the developing brain of the infant/child is encoded and programmed for happiness, joy, peace and harmony or its opposite of depression, anger/rage and violence. Indeed, the child is not only the father of the man but is also the mother of culture and the future of humanity.

It is now generally agreed that the answer to the world-wide problem of human violence will not be found in the human genome but rather is to be found in the environment--how we rear our children and whether human equality exists between men and women in society. It is commonly agreed that violence against children is inseparable from violence against women and that women, as mothers and caretakers, have become increasingly violent toward children, as the child abuse homicide statistics indicate, at least for America.

#### Culture Shapes the Developing Brain for Peace or Violence.

Significant scientific advances have been made in understanding the cultures of peace and harmony (matrilineal/matrifocal cultures) and the cultures of war and violence (patrilineal/patrifocal cultures) and how the developing brains of children and youth develop differently in these two kinds of cultures to generate cultures of peace or violence. How the family, community and society shape these developmental processes is the subject of this essay where some of this data can be found at: <http://www.violence.de>.

Insights into these developmental processes have been obtained from controlled laboratory studies in infrahuman primates, which have documented abnormal brain development in violent adult monkeys that were reared separated from their mothers and peers. It is well established that sensory stimulation is essential for normal brain development and that sensory deprivation induces developmental brain-behavioral abnormalities. These relationships are true for all the sensory systems.

Sensory stimulation produces the neurointegrative brain with the neurointegrative behaviors of peace, harmony and happiness; whereas sensory deprivation produces the neurodissociative brain with neurodissociative behaviors of depression, alienation and violence.

It is known that mother-infant separation prevents physical affectional bonding between mother and infant where the sensory deprivation of physical contact between mother and infant induces

developmental brain abnormalities (structural and functional) that mediate depression, impulse dyscontrol and violent behaviors (homicidal and suicidal). A number of these brain-behavioral studies can be found at <http://www.violence.de> under the section SCIENCE.

The sensory deprivation associated with mother-infant/child separation is called somatosensory affectional deprivation (S-SAD) that includes the primary sensory modalities of touch and body movement. The body senses of taste and smell associated with breastfeeding, as well as breastmilk brain nutrients, are also important for how the brain develops and which makes possible the later development of intimate, non-violent behavior in the male-female relationship. (See: <http://www.violence.de/prescott/ttf/article.html>).

It should be noted that sensory deprivation in the visual and auditory sensory modalities, e.g., the congenital blind child, does not result in emotional social disorders provided there is no somatosensory deprivation. See <http://www.violence.de/tv/rockabye.html>.

The Time-Life documentary "Rock a Bye Baby" documents the devastating effects of depression, social alienation and violence consequent to mother-infant separations in both animals and humans. These devastating emotional-social behavioral effects were prevented in the infrahuman primates by providing artificial movement stimulation with a "swinging mother surrogate" rather than being reared with a stationary mother surrogate. This study by Drs. Mason and Berkson can be viewed at <http://www.violence.de/tv/rockabye.html>, which provides convincing evidence for the central role of the vestibular-cerebellar system in the regulation of peaceful and depressive/violent behaviors.

Rock a Bye Baby is a national and international award winning documentary, which was premiered at the 1970 White House Conference on Children.

Cross-Cultural Studies of Tribal Cultures Confirm Laboratory Animal Studies

Cross-cultural studies of 49 tribal cultures were undertaken to validate the findings from the experimental animal laboratory that continuous body-movement sensory stimulation prevented the development of depression, impulse dyscontrol and violent behaviors. The 400-culture sample of Textor (1967) was utilized for this evaluation. Every culture that had joint measures of baby-carrying and the peaceful or violent nature of the adult culture were selected for evaluation. This yielded 49 tribal cultures, which were distributed throughout the world. There were 29 peaceful cultures and 20 violent cultures in the study sample.

Cultures where the mother/caretaker carried the baby on her body throughout the day for the first year of life were compared to those cultures that did not have this child rearing practice. This single measure of bonding in the mother-infant relationship made possible the prediction of the peaceful or violent nature of the adult cultures with 80% accuracy and confirmed the role of the vestibular-cerebellar brain complex in the mediation of peaceful and violent behaviors. The peaceful or violent nature of the remaining 10 cultures could be explained by whether the cultures permitted or punished adolescent sexuality.

Permitted or punished youth sexual affectional relationships, by itself, could predict the peaceful or violent nature of 35 cultures

with 69% accuracy. These findings confirm the importance of a developmental continuum of somatosensory pleasure for maintaining physical affectional bonds in human relationships, which prevents depression and violent behaviors. The developmental neurobiological/neuropsychological mechanisms, which accounts for these effects include the reciprocal inhibitory relationship between pain or pleasure; depression or joy; and peace or violence. Affectional pleasure inhibits depression and violence, particularly if it is integrated pleasure and not dissociative pleasure. See: <http://www.violence.de>.

Breast Milk Nutrients, Brain Development and Behavior

Subsequent studies on the critical role that breastfeeding has upon brain development and behavior has revealed that there is a dysfunctional development of the brain serotonin system when infants/children have not been breastfed because of the significant deficiency or absence of tryptophan in infant formula milk but which is richly present in colostrum and breastmilk. It is well documented that brain serotonin deficits mediate depression, impulse dyscontrol and violence (suicidal and homicidal).

These findings must raise questions about the insufficiency of other essential amino acids in infant formula milk that would impair the development of other brain neurotransmitter systems with their consequences for the physical and emotional health of infants and children and ultimately adults. See <http://www.violence.de/prescott/ttf/article.html> and enclosed materials.

The relationship between duration of breastfeeding and suicidal behaviors was examined in the 400 culture sample of Textor (1967) where it was found that 77% of cultures that breastfeed for 2.5 years or longer were rated low or absent in suicide. The cultural exceptions could be accounted for by whether these high breastfeeding cultures also inflicted pain upon the infant/child. The inability of the infant brain/mind to reconcile pain and pleasure with love from its mother is proposed to account for why those few high breastfeeding cultures were also rated as high in suicide.

It was not possible to contrast this high breastfeeding group of tribal cultures with cultures that do not breastfeed since such cultures do not exist in tribal cultures. The Textor comparison group involved cultures that breastfed for less than 2.5 years, which was not an adequate contrast group. These preliminary data call for a systematic evaluation of high breastfed youth/adults to no breastfeeding or insufficient breastfeeding to later depressive/suicidal behaviors in contemporary cultures, as well as comparing highly bonded children with low bonded children in the genesis of later depressive and violent behaviors.

The recent NICHD study on infant and early child day care found that children in kindergarten who had experienced 30 or more hours of day care were more aggressive, depressed, cruel and bullying than children with less duration of day care. The lack of physical affectional bonding between these children and their mothers--nor with anyone else in the stranger day care environment--is predicted to account for these emotional-behavioral effects which, undoubtedly, influences adult behaviors. These factors are compounded by the necessary failure of breastfeeding in day care environments. Only 16 % of American mothers are breastfeeding at one year of age, when

WHO/UNICEF recommend breastfeeding for "two years of age or beyond" (Innocenti Declaration, 1990).

The finding that suicide rates have doubled in the 5-14 year age group of Americans over this past generation must sound a strong alarm that something is drastically wrong with the American culture that generates so much suicidal violence among our children and youth. It is clear that the American national policies and practices, which compel separation of infants and very young children from their mothers as required by the American Welfare Reform Act of 1996, and by the increase of infant and early child day care industries, must be changed. The epidemic of the psychiatric medication of American children also reflects the crises of the American culture that can, hopefully, serve as a warning to other nation states of the developmental roots for depression and violence.

It is apparent from these data that if society supported mothers being nurturing mothers that involve the specific child rearing practices listed below the result would be peaceful, happy and loving cultures rather than the violent, depressed, drug-abusing, and hateful cultures that are now the dominant culture of many world societies.

- a) baby- carrying on the body of mother throughout the day during the first year of life;
- b) breastfeeding for "two years of age or beyond", as recommended by WHO/UNICEF;
- c) the absence of inflicting pain upon the infant/child; and
- d) supporting natural affectional sexual relationships during adolescent development

Enclosed is a 13 minute video documentary (PAL format) "The Origins of Love & Violence: Early Nurturing & The Developing Brain" that was recently co-produced with Michael Mendizza, Touch the Future that provides a dramatic overview of these issues and which we believe would benefit the participants of your meeting on "Violence Against Children within the Family and Schools". You are free to duplicate this video documentary for distribution to your associates, as you may deem this to be helpful to facilitate the objectives of your "Day of General Discussion".

I would be remiss in not mentioning another developmental factor that contributes to the genesis of violence and impaired sexual affectional relationships in human societies and that is the genital mutilation of children--the first violent sexual abuse of children. This is a subject matter that deserves systematic study and discussion in its own right and we have called for its immediate abolishment worldwide, as it has been proposed in the Ashley Montagu Resolution To End the Genital Mutilation of Children World Wide: An Appeal to the World Court, The Hague.

This resolution can be viewed at  
<http://www.nocirc.org/symposia/fourth/prescott.html>.

Additional documentation for the abolition of male genital mutilation can be found at: <http://www.icgi.org/>;  
<http://www.icgi.org/Downloads/Humanist.pdf>; <http://www.nocirc.org>. David Levy in a 1945 study on the "Psychic Trauma of Operations in Children" reported on three cases of male circumcision at ages 12 months (2 cases) and at 6 years. Psychological trauma included the development of night terrors, temper tantrums and rage. In the 6 year old suicidal impulses developed.

Levy reports:

"... a circumcision at the age of 6 years 7 months, was preceded by a struggle of the patient with his father and the anesthetist before they overpowered him. Immediately after the anesthesia wore off, he said over and over, "They cut my penis. I wish I were dead." The rest of the day the patient never left his mother's side. Thereafter his previous temper tantrums developed into destructive rages. During the treatment he played numerous killing games, in which his father was the principal victim. The operation represented a castration by his father." (p. 10).

It is unknown to what extent male genital mutilation, that is combined with other developmental factors, contributes to increased depression and violence later in life. See:  
<http://www.violence.de/prescott/truthseeker/genpl.html>

Hopefully, this communication will be helpful to you in your efforts to bring an end to violence against children and women worldwide. The enclosed 13 minute video documentary makes clear that without affectional bonding in the mother-infant/child relationship--the first love relationship that establishes the foundation for all future love relationships and the future of brain-behavioral development--there is little hope that violence against children or women can be ended.

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## TEN PRINCIPLES OF MOTHER-INFANT BONDING FOR HEALTH, HAPPINESS and HARMONY

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- I. Every Pregnancy Is A Wanted Pregnancy. Every Child Is A Wanted Child**  
Unwanted children are typically unloved, abused and neglected who become the next generation of delinquents, violent offenders and alcohol/drug abusers and addicts.
- II. Every Pregnancy Has Proper Nutrition & Prenatal Care**--medical and psychological --and is free from alcohol, drugs, tobacco and other harmful agents of stress.
- III. Natural Birthing**--avoid wherever possible obstetrical medications, forceps & induced labor with no episiotomy nor premature cutting of umbilical cord. Mother controls birthing position with *no separation of newborn from mother*. Newborn maintains intimate body contact with mother for breastfeeding and nurturance.
- IV. No Circumcision** of newborn. The traumatic pain of newborn circumcision adversely affects normal brain development, impairs affectional bonding with mother and has long lasting effects upon how pain and pleasure are experienced in life.
- V. Breastfeeding On Demand** by newborn/infant/child and for “two years or beyond”, as recommended by the *World Health Organization* (WHO) and UNICEF. Failure to breastfeed results in positive harm to normal brain development & to the immunological health of the newborn, infant and child. Encoding the developing brain with the smell of mother’s body through breastfeeding is essential for the later development of intimate sexuality.
- VI. Intimate Body Contact** is maintained between mother and newborn/infant by being carried continuously on the body of the mother for the first year of life. Such continuous gentle body movement stimulation of the newborn/infant promotes optimal brain development and “Basic Trust” for peaceful/happy behaviors. Mother-infant co-sleeping is encouraged for “two years or beyond”. Mother-infant/child body contact can also be optimized with daily infant/child massage. The Father must also learn to affectionately bond with his infant and child by being an additional source of physical affection.
- VII. Immediate Comforting** is given to infants and children who are crying. No infant/child should ever be permitted to cry itself to sleep.
- VIII. Infants and Children Are For Hugging** and should never be physically hit for any reason. Merging childhood parental love with parental violent pain helps create adult violent love.
- IX. Infants and Children Are Honored** and should never be humiliated nor emotionally abused for any reason. The emerging sexuality of every child is respected.
- X. Mothers Must Be Honored** and not replaced by Institutional Day Care which emotionally harms children before three years of age. Mother-Infant/Child Community Development Centers must replace Institutionalized Day Care.

***THE CHILD IS THE FATHER OF THE MAN  
THE CHILD IS THE MOTHER OF CULTURE  
THE CHILD IS THE FUTURE OF HUMANITY***