Parental Nurturance and Violence: A Re-Examination

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➢The impetus for this study was the completion of a new code on "parental nurturance" for the 186 societies in the Standard Cross-Cultural Sample (SCCS).

➢The *parental nurturance* code was developed by Joel Aronoff and his coding scores will appear shortly (Aronoff, n.d.)

➢In my work with Mel on violence over the last 20 years, we tested many theories about violence, some of which were about parental socialization. We had expected that frustrating socialization would predict more aggression, but we were surprised that we found very little effect.

➢The appearance of this new code has given us the ability to re-evaluate some of the previous Ember and Ember findings.

➢With this in mind, the central question of this paper is:

➢**Does the new Aronoff parental nurturance code add to predictions of warfare and other forms of violence?**

➢In particular, we revisit the Ember and Ember (1992a) findings on warfare and the Ember and Ember (2002) findings on homicide/assault.

Aronoff's Parental Nurturance Code

There are several key differences between the earlier approaches on parenting and Aronoff's approach. For example:

1. The new codes create a multi-faceted measure of parental nurturance that combines all the dimensions described by Rohner and Rohner. This also permits codes to be obtained on a larger proportion of the SCCS societies.

2. Societies that had only minimal information on child-rearing such as a casual remark "they were very fond of children" were not coded.

3. the aim was to integrate more of the recent theory and research about parent-child interaction and home environment that might encourage or impede psychological development

4. Following present developmentalists' opinion, the control dimension was defined as curvilinear rather than linear
   - "firm control" (i.e., authoritative control) was part of the *most positive parenting style*
   - both "lax" control and "rigid" control (authoritarian control) were part of the *most negative parental style*

1. The compound judgment used many different types of behaviors found in an ethnographic report. The task was difficult and was carried out by Aronoff, alone.

2. To control for possible personal biases, all the information on parenting that was found in each ethnography will be published

3. a general paper will be published in *Cross-Cultural Research*; details will be in *World Cultures*).

How does the Aronoff parental nurturance code compare to previous codes?

Compared to the Rohner and Rohner (1981) scales of parental acceptance/rejection the Aronoff code is:

- significantly related to
  - overall warmth and affection (rho=.54 p=.000; n=79)
  - overall hostility and aggression of caretakers (rho= -.36, p = .000; n=93)

- not significantly related to
  - control by caretakers or indifference of caretakers

Compared to Barry codes (Barry and Paxson 1971; Barry et al. 1977 codes) the Aronoff code is

- significantly related to
    - affection variables (rhos range from .39 to .46)
    - other possible high need satisfaction variables
        - trust (rho=.51)
        - honesty (rho=.39)
    - but weak correlations with
        - corporal punishment (rhos range from -.23 to -.29)
        - childhood pain infliction (rho= -.20)
        - general indulgence (rho=.20)
        - permissiveness (rhos range from .18 to .22)
        - evaluation by society (rhos range from .18 to .27)

➢In sum there is a moderate amount of correspondence between some of the parenting variables in the earlier codes with the new codes.

➢Major exception is with control variables, but this is not surprising because the Aronoff code considered control to be curvilinear (very lax parenting was not high on parental nurturance)

➢Let's first look at some of the bivariate correlations with violence variables.

Does Low Parental Nurturance Predict Violence?

Let's first look at some of the bivariate correlations

	Parental Nurturance
overall war frequency[ab]	*-.35** (N=74)*
homicide[b]	*-.38** (N=73)*
assault[b]	*-.32* (N=71)*
theft[b]	*-.33* (N=71)*

*p < .01, one tail
**p < .001, one tail

[a]Code from Ember and Ember 1992b; pacified or partially pacified societies are omitted from the overall war frequency correlation.
[b]Less reliable scores are omitted (Reliability >6 omitted)

Bivariate Relationships:

➢Parental nurturance is significantly related to overall warfare frequency, homicide, assault and theft (the violence variables from Ember and Ember 1992b)

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Predicting war frequency

- The Ember and Ember (1992a) study examined a large number of possible predictors (causes) of warfare in nonpacified societies. *These factors had little support in multivariate analyses*
  - social complexity
  - father-absence
  - harsh socialization
  - chronic scarcity
- *Main predictors* of overall warfare frequency
  - resource unpredictability as measured by frequency of natural disasters that seriously destroyed food supplies
  - socialization for trust (code from Barry et al. 1977)

➢Now let us look at the multivariate model on overall warfare frequency (Ember and Ember 1992a) to see if parental nurturance adds to the model

Adding Parental Nurturance to Ember and Ember Predictors of Overall Warfare Frequency—all societies

	Original Result	Adding Parental
Natural Disasters	*.591 (p=.000)*	*.522 (p=.011)*
Socialization for	*-.296 (p=.042)*	*-.310 (p=.141)*
Parental Nurturance		*-.096b(ns.)*
N	*30*	*21*
R	*.707 (p=.000)*	*.695 (p=.009)*

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Socialization for Trust was originally chosen from a number of variables Marc Ross (19xx) had identified as belonging to a socialization factor he called "low warmth and affection." It was chosen because it had the highest bivariate relationship to overall warfare frequency.

However, it seems to us that socialization for trust as it is defined represents not the nurturance of parents but rather the degree to which people in the community trust each other—that is, it is a social relationship variable, rather than a parent-child relationship variables

Low need satisfaction was presumably the original dimension tapped by socialization for trust. If we leave out socialization for trust since it might be redundant with parental nurturance, it [the latter] still does not predict significantly

Adding Parental Nurturance to Ember and Ember Predictors of Overall Warfare Frequency—Nonstate Societies

	Original Result	Adding Parental
Natural Disasters	*.631 (p=.001)*	*.520 (p=.016)*
Socialization for	*-.352 (p=029)*	*-.516 (p=.016)*
Parental		*-.028 (ns.)*
N	*20*	*14*
R	*.816 (p=.000)*	*.847 (p=.004)*

Conclusion regarding overall warfare frequency:

While parental nurturance may be correlated with overall warfare frequency bivariately, it has no independent effect on warfare frequency

Now let us turn to predicting homicide/assault cross-culturally

- Ember and Ember published two worldwide comparisons on homicide and assault (a summary score of two separate, but highly correlated measures) using their own measures from a previous warfare project (Ember and Ember 1992b)
  - In the first paper (1994), they presented evidence that although socialization for aggression in boys (late childhood—measured by Barry et al.) was highly correlated with higher homicide and assault, three strands of evidence pointed to such socialization being a *consequence of warfare*, not a cause
  - in the first paper, the Embers found little evidence of other socialization effects even though they thought that frustrating socialization and father-absence should have effects
  - in the second paper, the Embers found more evidence of low father salience playing a role, especially in nonmatrilocal societies and in societies with more than occasional warfare (consistent with B. Whiting's suggestion that defensive masculinity would only occur if aggression were part of the male role and males are clearly dominant in society)
  - we are going to look at this second model

Adding Parental Nurturance to previous predictors of homicide/assault

	(1) Original result—all cases	(1) Adding Parental Nurturance	(2) Original result—omitting matrilocal societies	(2) Adding Parental Nurturance
Socialization for aggression (late boys—Barry et al.)	.645 (p=.000)	.549 (p=.000)	.671 (p=.000)	.581 (p=.001)
Father sleeping distance (low to high- coded by C. Ember)	.315 (p=.016)	.215 (p=.040)	.317 (p=.022)	.297 (p=.030)
Parental Nurturance (Aronoff code)		-.382 (p=.004)		-.439 (p=.006)
N	38	33	26	21
R	.683 (p=.000)	.773 (p=.000)	.707 (p=.000)	.814 (p=.000)

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Note: In original homicide/assault study, we also looked at corporal punishment of children, expecting that higher corporal punishment would predict more homicide and assault.
> ➢to our surprise it had no effect on homicide and assault, but when we broke it apart and looked at mother's frequency of corporal punishment and father's frequency of corporal punishment, father punishment had an effect, but in the opposite direction
> ➢that is, *the more father was a corporal punisher, the less homicide/ assault*. This was counter-intuitive and we can't explain it.
> ➢However, even adding these two other variables, mother's frequency of corporal punishment and father's frequency of corporal punishment, parental nurturance still is a significant predictor.

Conclusions

➢ Parental nurturance does not add to the model predicting overall warfare frequency, but it does add significantly to predictors of homicide and assault.

➢ Why the difference?
  ➢ Homicide and assault are aggregated individual behaviors and might be more likely to be impacted by upbringing.
  ➢ An extraordinary amount of research has documented links between dysfunctional families, poor parenting, observing violence in the home, and greater amounts of individual violence later in life.
  ➢ Even though warfare in many of the world's societies is very small-scale, warfare is more institutional and less apt to be influenced by psychological factors.

➢And yet, we found that socialization for trust was a minor, but significant predictor of warfare. What's the difference?

➢As we noted before, trust seems more of an interpersonal relationship variable or perhaps a cultural belief. If your parents convey that neighbors are not to be trusted, why would you trust people in other communities to resolve disputes peacefully?

➢In addition, warfare appears to be largely predicted by ecological factors—in this case, a response to unpredictable natural disasters in nonstate societies. Perhaps this is why it is less responsive to parental nurturance.

Next steps

➢What predicts parental nurturance? We know that parental nurturance is predicted somewhat by cultural complexity, but the results are fairly weak (-.28 highest correlation).

➢But it is not clear what about complexity is predictive

➢We will next turn to other possible predictors, looking at life stressors that might make it difficult for parents to have positive parental styles.

Acknowledgements

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