

#### AUTHOR NOTE

The statistics cited in this text were selected on the basis of their accessibility in the public domain by Googling the statistic or going directly to UN or National Department Databases. Academic references were deliberately eschewed because of their inaccessibility to the general public who need to challenge and validate knowledge in order to utilize its power. The aim of using accessible statistics was to allow the validation process to be conducted openly in the public domain and not as a hedged bet behind closed doors. Unusable elite knowledge may be as wasteful of vital resources as environmental degradation. The entire book from which this excerpt is taken is called "Human Life Matters" and is available from amazon.com and other retailers.

#### AUTHOR BIO

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## CHAPTER 8: PRIORITIZING CHILDREN

Human transformation will occur when human wellbeing is prioritized over profit and when barbaric mythology ceases to be the foundation of decision making. In the recent 'economic meltdown' power holders were 'suddenly' able to agree to invest trillions of dollars as a matter of urgency. Why? To defend human rights? Protect women and children? Halt genocide? No. To pump life back into the decaying market Frankenstein. When this happened it became crystal clear that the standard arguments against funding human welfare and wellbeing are simply regurgitation of barbaric priorities. When the 'market' is posed as master it merely means that those with most money will rule, irrespective of their ethic. If their creed is barbaric, people will suffer and humans and the environment will be degraded and destroyed. Currently, barbaric belief systems, like death ghoul, hold humans mesmerized by the Death instinct. Economics cannot be master; it must be placed in service to the central organizing principles of the Life instinct: Preserving human welfare and species advancement.

Prioritizing the market destroys the protective systems and relationships which create the social amniotic fluid and emotional oxygen supply for children. Barbarians peel back the protective layers around children and leave their sensitive inner worlds exposed to the harsh elements of the adult world. Early exposure of small children to aggression and vicious competition before they have protective barriers around their self systems causes their inner world to be flooded with toxins. Bathing the brain in stress hormones and chemicals destroys normal brain homeostatic functioning and can cause the brain to be permanently set at a higher RPM (as with children with ADHD). When facing child developmental delay, learning difficulty or delinquency, barbarians don't consider their contribution to the damaged child but rather 'blame the victim' (Tenet X of the Creed). Thus, we need a more complex system than the barbaric creed for integrating common sense and scientific knowledge in ways that can prioritize the health and wellbeing of humans and assure that the needs of children are met. Any society that cannot take care of its children has a terminal diagnosis.

### What Matters?

#### 1. Infants Matter

As previously discussed, brains require experience to grow. In our infinite wisdom and after billions of dollars spent delving into genetics and genomes, scientists have finally affirmed that the growth of a child's brain is determined much more by the experiences we give them than by their genes. Neuroscience is finally getting hard data explaining why infancy is so important to human development and wellbeing – something we could always have known by looking at a newborn and using common sense.

There are critical periods during which the brain undergoes spurts in development, like an electrical power surge, where specific skills develop rapidly and great damage can be done. Neuroscientists have identified that if an infant is deprived of essential experiences and, particularly experiences within the relationship with the mother, some parts of the child's brain are harmed. In depth brain imaging of infants and mothers has visually demonstrated that experiences given to infants not only affect their brain capacities but can affect their relational capacity for their whole lives. Basically, neuroscience is now recognizing that mothers and small children matter – something caring people have asserted for millennia.

Studies conducted with institutionalized children, such as the brain scans performed on Romanian orphans, pictorially demonstrate aspects of the profound damage inflicted on babies deprived of care. Starving these children of responsive, soothing nurturance, touch and care caused them irreversible damage, specifically, underdevelopment of specific limbic and midbrain sections of their brains – the sections which influence abnormal behaviour and thinking capacity. In effect these children's living selves were mutilated by global adult carelessness. The studies of Romanian orphans provide tangible, graphic evidence for ignorant adults but such scans do not capture the emotional suffering of tiny children as their desperate cries went unheeded and their inner world was painfully maimed. Nor do such studies focus on the role that male control of female bodies played in the births of these babies and their subsequent painful deformation. In Romania, Ceausescu's ban on abortions was followed by Reagan and Bush's Gag rule. Thus, male power games to establish control over females directly contributed to many unwanted births and to the unimaginable suffering these children subsequently experienced.

One of the 'new frontiers' for avid neuroscientists is now considered to be the domain of 'maternal love.' Researchers (predominantly male) are clamouring to be the 'first' to develop brain theories to explain why the mother-child bond is 'so important.' Compassionate mothers through the ages have not required brain scans to know this. A better research question would be: Why have humans ignored the deep knowing of maternal love for so long? Why have the voices of compassionate mothers, the cries of suffering Indigenous mothers and babies as we callously separated them, and the cries of small children, been ignored until (predominantly) old, white men could take pictures of damaged children's brains? Pardon, but our barbarism is showing.

## 2. Emotions Matter

Again, after millions of dollars of neuroscientific research, scientists now not only acknowledge that infancy and childhood **matter** but that how we feel (the emotions generated by our human experience) has great impacts on our brain structuring and our development as people. With complex language, hormonal and blood samples, brain scans and statistics, scientists are trying to say that how people feel matters and specifically, that **how we make children feel matters very much**.

We do not rationalise and think when we are babies - **we feel and sense** – and much of our body and emotional regulation is affected by the emotional ponds close to us, most particularly those of our mothers. Humans come into the world as super sensory beings able to pick up non-verbal nuances and communication at subliminal levels. As newborns we are emotional feeling bundles with only our right hemispheric somatosensory body system myelinated (super highways). Everything else is still subcortical (cobblestones). **How we feel when we are small is strongly linked to whether, and how, we are cared for.** Again, lagging far behind the wisdom of compassionate humans through the ages, the 'cutting edge' of psychobiological science is now moving from focus on conscious thoughts and rationality to understanding that emotion is critical to the development of the intact, vital human person. **It is how we are made to feel as children** – not whether or not we can read – which defines the quality of our inner world and much of our adult capacity.

Our early, primary emotional responses are preserved by our brains to reduce the energy needed to deal with any new experience. Emotions we experience as adults are feedback based on the interpretation system set up in early childhood, about how we are succeeding in the external world. If early experience programs body memory and right hemisphere with pleasant, relaxed emotions and happiness, then these are the emotions we feel as we face new or challenging experience. Our left brain is programmed to interpret this

emotional feedback as 'success', irrespective of external reality. Thus, much of our adult calm, confidence and capacity, comes directly from childhood programming.

If our childhood was one of care and positive experience this gives us the psychological advantage of having confidence and of feeling good when we face something new. If we were harmed, threatened, or brutalized in early childhood it gives us enormous disadvantage. If our early experiences programmed fear, anxiety or terror into our brain then we are more likely to perceive ourselves as failing in the social and external world, ~~irrespective of our actual performance~~. Negative early experience means new learning or the unknown evokes dread, terror, expectation and emotional ~~feelings~~ of failure. In an attempt to avoid these negative emotions (emotional pain) we are likely to avoid new experiences. Our damaged capacity to negotiate the external world therefore effectively imprisons us in the damaged environmental conditions with which we are most familiar. Thus the deprivation of the poor child translates into a disadvantaged adulthood and intransigent intergenerational poverty. The children of Indigenous people and others who have suffered collective oppression face a bear trap of intergenerational trauma and disadvantage before they face basic life tasks.

Neuroscience is finding that rational thought has been overvalued in the evaluation of what affects people's behaviour and that, instead, it is feeling that plays the strongest role in affecting daily actions. Emotion, relationship and care are really the core structures for healthy human life. It is these components that foster children's growth into strong, capable adults, not the experience of mansions, money, status or dominance. ~~It is how children are treated and made to feel that matters~~. Again, neuroscientists are clamouring to be the 'first' to identify the physical brain pathways that are activated when we accurately access complex knowledge on the basis of our emotions, or what is known as instinct. It appears in the enlightened 21st-century that instinct is finally going to be scientifically legitimated and validated as a real knowledge access system. We are only 50,000 years behind Aboriginal Australians.

### 3. New Mothers Matter

The emotional pond comprised by a mother's health, safety, social support, sense of self and values strongly influences the feeling system of a baby. Even in the womb the baby is affected by the mother's stress with 40% of the stress cortisol crossing the placenta during the period when the baby's brain amygdala is forming; affecting future well-being. When mothers are depressed or in situations of danger or hostility, the baby is affected because their development draws upon the sensory pond of the 'feel' of the mother's world. Studies have found that calm soothing creates the sense (~~feeling based~~) for the baby that the mother, and therefore the 'external world' is safe. Why then are we not protecting and prioritizing mothers? Civilized cultures have always intuitively respected and protected the vulnerability, primacy and complexity of the bond between mother and baby.

Newborn babies are bundles of highly amplified, sensitized feelings. Their visual capacities are initially poor but their capacities for smell, touch and sensing are highly tuned. The newborn baby knows the mother's smell and sound of her voice distinct from any other. Because only the somatosensory system is myelinated at birth, babies' bodies are highly sensitive to touch, smell and sound and they are processing information from the outside in an inner world, feeling oriented manner.

The subcortical nature of rational systems is reflected in their low impact on a baby who is acutely sensitive to sensory factors of light, warmth, cold, hunger, loud noise or pain but doesn't respond at all to rationale. Keeping a baby's somatosensory system calm relies on

the mother's consistent responses based on her accurate 'reading' of the baby's non-verbal communication. Contrary to popular belief, communication between mother and baby is not simple. It is feeling based and involves complex, nuanced, synergistic reading of each other's nonverbal signals and brain patterns in concurrent and simultaneous feedback loops.

Researchers have found that bonded mother and baby communications are accompanied by the strongest feelings and emotions in the child. The baby needs the mother to minimize their negative feelings and experiences through soothing, and to amplify their positive feelings. In brain terms, when this happens, the brain is being soaked with oxytocin, the baby's stress hormones are dropping and the immune system is being boosted: all ideal brain development conditions. In other words, the baby feels good.

The caring mother is thus the connective link for the intense internal world of the infant to their new external world. Her feelings serve as primary pylons of the bridge which enables safe crossing. To the highly sensitized feeling system which is a new baby, the mother's feelings and reactions are the amniotic fluid of their new world. Familiarity with the mother established within the womb (heartbeat, voice) assists the baby to be calmed in the new environment which assaults their senses. The bond formed with the baby as he or she grew within her, helps the mother deal with the intense work of continually reading, and accurately responding to, the completely dependent, demanding, pre-verbal baby.

The more consistently that soothing response is provided for an infant, the broader the range of wellbeing and positive emotional self that develops. Consistent, caring interactions create actual biological connections between mother and child, mediated through intuitive, synchronous communication in indefinable paths between the inner and outer world. These are chemically and physically powerful enough to regulate the body systems of both mother and baby. The deep relationship between well bonded mother and baby who live, breathe, and reflect one another, occurs with one side of each of their brain's communicating synchronously at a level that seems almost telepathic. The bond occurs at such a deep, complex and sensitive level that this homeostatic connection functions even when sleeping. The complexity of the biological and emotional regulation in a healthy mother-baby bond is the greatest depth of human connection in neuroscientific as well as relational terms. This level of complexity and nuanced sensitivity is beyond all of current neuroscience data and must be approached with respect and great care.

### **The Care of New Mothers**

The mother keeps the complex internal homeostasis of the baby's system intact by regulating the child's environment and providing the immediate emotional resource of herself to soothe in order to soothe and calm the child's internal world. In protecting and soothing the baby's internal/external world connection through loving care and close attention to the baby's signals to accurately interpret needs, the mother fosters the baby's development. While it is obviously not her primary focus, a mother who is bonded to her baby in a relationship of deep love and care, is also growing connections in the child's brain and thus nurturing possibilities for advanced, creative futures for the species.

In effect, mother and child become each other's inner world. Creating high stress for the mother through work and social practices that devalue women and do not factor in the physical and emotional labour of caring for small children, damages the child's developmental resource. We rarely focus on the profound, lifelong damage to children caused by harsh, unfeeling responses to mothers. Overwhelming the adrenal and body systems of women through an unfair labour load drains the infant's resource systems.

This can also happen when the primary carer is forced out of the home without adequate replacement because it deprives the child of the buffering of the soothing, complexly bonded, caregiver. We can create brain damage in children not just through cruelty and violence but also through depleting their environment of critical resources they need. These resources are not only physical but are often emotional and are time, labour and care intensive primarily for mothers. This is an unpaid gift to cultural health drawn directly from individual women's life energy.

Critical psychological learning for a child in the first months of life is: 'When I am under stress someone will respond to me and hence I will manage.' This becomes encoded into body memory to enable future strengths of capacity to self-soothe and healthy emotional range. The defining characteristic of a well balanced, healthy human is broad emotional range. This includes ability to feel and respond to one's own pain and that of others (compassion). The behaviour of the antisocial psychopath seems to spring from a shutdown of the early homeostatic system where the child's system is not soothed and shuts down due to pain overload. The system which shuts to protect the child inures them to their own pain but also to that of others and to happiness. We need to prevent this occurrence by ensuring the care of small children. Protection and social, legal and financial support of mothers is critical to preventing social ills. A well loved baby is placed on the path to compassionate, emotionally intelligent adulthood. The cumulative impact of high stress, domestic violence, poverty, maternal depression and oppression of women on the development of children must be understood. We can't afford to be squeamish about gender on issues affecting children.

#### Uncaring, Unfeeling Responses Afterbirth

In this context we can examine the policies of shortened hospital stays for mothers after birth; inadequate maternity pay forcing mothers back to work before full recovery and decreases in standard care offered to women at birth. Increased male, barbaric, cost oriented approaches to birth in the west means escalating caesarean rates and practices of early discharge of mothers, often 24 hours after birth. Women with a large abdominal wound are sent home post-caesarean without nursing aid and often into a context where they must also care for other children. This is barbaric practice at an extreme. Such lack of care after similar surgical wounding would be considered unconscionable for anyone not birthing. It is as though health care professionals believe that the physical size of the wound is irrelevant because the operation also involved a birth. The fact that the woman's healing must occur in the midst of the labour demands of infant care makes such early discharges doubly negligent. Even half a century ago two weeks of bed rest after birth was a social norm. Many 'developing' cultures still provide assistance to mothers for 30 days but in the west, barbaric norms of lacking pity or compassion; being prepared to act in a merciless manner, and being predisposed to inflict hardship, are all attitudes displayed towards mothers after birth.

Australia is particularly harsh and unfeeling in its treatment of mothers. Public outcry on behalf of mothers in our culture is virtually non-existent. An economic study, conducted in the UK, found that Australian men do less household labour than men in any other OECD nation. The significance of this norm of unfair distribution of labour should not be underestimated and it affects critically women in the post-birth period of sleep deprivation and brings higher depression risk. After childbirth, the addition of household labour to labour intensive tasks of infant care, affects the overall care available for the baby. Social norms of unjust distribution of unpaid labour are a sign of wider, hard hearted, attitudes towards women and children in Australia.

As at the date of this writing Australia and the United States are the only two OECD countries without government-funded paid parental leave, although state based schemes have been providing leave to about half of all American mothers for some time. Canada has 28 weeks, the United Kingdom 39 weeks and Sweden 47 weeks. The decision to provide women 18 weeks at minimum wage beginning in 2011 has had Australian businessmen up in arms. Their outraged response demonstrates, not only low understanding of the work required of females to birth a child for the culture; but low valuation of future citizenry and a hostile aggression about having to share or bear any of the social costs of this work. Anyone who understands the physically draining body work of growing a child within the body, labour and the intensive sleep deprivation and work of caring for a human infant can only be astounded. We need to collectively protest such a petty minded, penny pinching, uneducated approaches to human welfare. Child wellbeing must be prioritized.

#### **The Child's First and Primary Resource**

Globally, the low prioritization of the wellbeing of mothers is reflected in appalling maternal death rates. Every minute in the developing world a woman or girl dies of pregnancy related causes, mostly preventable. Pregnancy is a body risk for human females and labour is a body trauma which requires appropriate care and social prioritization. As we have such calloused attitudes to birthing women in our own cultures it is no wonder that maternal deaths are rarely on the global agenda.

The mental health and resources of the mother are critical to healthy child development. At-risk mothers who face multiple disadvantages, stresses and stigma should be the focus of health resourcing. This includes Aboriginal mothers, single mothers, mothers from low SES, young mothers and women who have experienced addictions, domestic violence, or other exclusion criteria. Ongoing mental health disorders are precipitated mainly by early childhood neglect and trauma. The fact that mothers are not given adequate support and are such a low cultural priority attests to our barbarism but also to our low cultural intelligence.

Brain science takes too long...it is too slow. Even from a narrow economic perspective, early childhood is the best investment period for developing the next generation. Why do we tolerate such profound social wastefulness in a manner not countenanced in the financial world?

#### **4. The Bond between Mother and Child Matters**

##### **Incursions of the Intimate**

Throughout history, any culture that heartlessly separated mother and baby was considered depraved. Instinctively, healthy cultures have protected the mother child bond by calling it sacred and acted to prevent unnecessary separation of small children from their mothers. Ancient cultures did not have access to neuroscientific findings but used common sense and principles of human dignity and compassion. Any society that has overridden this wisdom has experienced social decay and devolution. Even Spartan society, arguably the most disciplined military society that has ever existed, did not separate boys from their mothers until age 7. Irrespective, calloused so-called 'experts' in the 21<sup>st</sup> century have felt free to blithely disregard the record of human progress to assert that the mother child relationship is unnecessary, easily replaceable and even damaging to the child. They have neither scientific nor cultural evidence to back such an assertion but often have significant political power and the support of powerful barbaric potentates.

Barbarians have no way of understanding, let alone measuring, the invisible and irreplaceable treasure of the deep attachment between a caring mother and child. This was evidenced in Australia in the barbaric removal of Aboriginal children from their mothers and the cruelty with which the cries of mother and child were silenced. The decimation to Aboriginal people should be enough evidence of the devastation that can be caused when arrogant potentates privilege intellectual theories over the bonds of love. Barbarians of the time cited social Darwinism and genetics to justify the child removal policy and suggested that Aboriginal mothers, as a race, were 'less attached' to their children than whites, and in fact, 'forgot' their children. This was a ploy to distract the complicit public, and to absolve decision makers from their responsibility for the atrocity being perpetuated. The ongoing evidence that this was a human atrocity continues to be minimised, distorted and ignored in Australian culture even as it is statistically validated in every research conducted. From early death and suicide, to alcoholism and domestic violence, the evidence of intergenerational damage caused by the severance of the bonds between Aboriginal mother and child, child and community, is incontrovertible. The suicide rate of Aboriginal people is seven times higher than the general population; they represent 41% of all children in corrective institutions, as adults, are jailed at 14 to 20 times the rate of other Australians, a life expectancy twenty years less and babies twice as likely to die at birth. What other evidence do we need? In our culture, the consequences of severing mother and baby and deep bonds of connection, are rarely acknowledged, despite the statistics. As a society can we afford to allow barbarians to continue to dismiss evidence on no other basis than their own dogmatic creed?

Besides the obvious barbarian reluctance to have to pay damages (cost-cutting) if damage caused by removing children from their mothers be acknowledged, the more disturbing possibility is that barbarians have not progressed at all in their understanding about human relationships, attachments and the value of human bonds. Historically societies have used common sense to understand the centrality of the relationship of mother and child and have protected children's rights to access to the mother. Witnessing the distress of mother and child when separated was enough evidence for most societies to be able to adhere to basic principles that preserved mental health and wellbeing.

#### Beyond Solomon: Carving Up the Child

The fact that we now understand the complexity of early bonding which results in the connection of the inner world of mother and child by the transfer of inner world 'maps' with embedded communication codes and complex, multi-lateral routes to each others' brains; should foster, not detract from, our protection of this precious resource. In humane societies the relationship between mother and child is protected, not on the basis of power but on the basis of the wellbeing of the child.

Our most advanced neurobiological studies have uncovered only a small corner of the deep human and brain connections fostered in the caring relationship between mother and child. We do know that compassionate responsivity is focussed at such a level that the mother and infant are responsive to each other, even in sleep, and that the healthy mother's capacity to read her baby's nonverbal signals is so refined it appears akin to reading the baby's brain waves in the moment. Babies must be left in the care of those who have developed the capacity to do this. Care for the infant is made evident through adult sacrifices of body, time, career and personal physical, social, emotional resources for the baby's wellbeing. The deeply bonded relationship of mother and infant contains great intersection of inner worlds. When the bond is ruptured by long periods of enforced separation both inner worlds are seriously damaged. The child's future resources of sanity,



emotional wellbeing, sense of safety and capacity can be devastated with hurricane like ferocity.

The mother-child bond formed in the early years is a unique human relationship developed over time through care and attention. The mother's body changes with all of the biological and chemical antecedents of the baby growing inside her; the pain and labour of birthing the baby; and the constant, energy intensive and focussed demands made by an infant after birth, all require loyal commitment. Focus and commitment of the mother's personal energy and resources is required for deep healthy attachment. Once these relational resources have been lovingly invested over time they provide the developing child with soothing and stabilizing resources for his or her inner world. These child resources exist within the mother's inner world, in the person self of the mother. When the small child is being denied access to the mother in a way that traumatizes child and mother this destabilizes and destroys critical inner and outer world resources of the child. Besides the suffering and misery of the small child, the trauma of enforced separation destroys their sense of safety. This is a precious internal resource that can only be rebuilt painstakingly over much time. When a child is repetitively removed from their primary soothing relationship in a manner adverse to mother or child, the damage is compounded, becomes more extensive and may become permanent. Such statements are not politically popular but it does not serve the species well to ignore small children's needs for their primary caregiver and for their primary bond relationship while they are pre-verbal or partially articulate.

The devaluation of human caring under the barbarian creed has fostered the myth that individuals are exchangeable with one another. Only through this distorted lens is it possible to think that the unique mother-child bond is equal to, and transposable with, other relationships. The barbarian error has to been to consider relationships as non-specific and exchangeable, much as a machine part. Humans are unique and not interchangeable. Early bonding has no simple substitute and can not be effortlessly reproduced. Just as an old growth forest cannot be replaced by new saplings without time for growth, attachment bonds take time to grow. The massive tree of old growth attachment bonds cannot be replaced by slender saplings of care. Nonetheless, during the recent barbaric insurgency in Australia, John Howard, in a behind-the-door handshake move between himself and the politically powerful men's movement, overthrew children's rights and radically dismembered Family Law. Modifications were made in the face of, and contrary to, all evidence documenting the centrality of the primary carer to child wellbeing

Hard-hearted dismissal of the needs of children was evident in a 1996 'repeal' which enforced the rupturing of early child attachment. The changed law has resulted in cases where breastfeeding babies have been forcibly taken from mothers. In Australia it has been culturally normative for mothers to be the primary caregivers of small children. Young families are the most likely to break up, with half having a child under 3 and only 7% having children older than 12. Family Law thus affects families with very young children where the overwhelming majority, more than 95%, of primary caregivers are the mother ie: 95:5. In Australia, there is now a split of children after relational breakdown, which treats them as property and ignores pre-separation caregiving roles. Howard's law fiddling was in response to demands made by political and powerfully allied mens' groups. Thus the 96 law changes boil down to a simple re-imposition of the centuries' old position of male ownership of children, irrespective of relationship or child needs. This notion of child ownership is problematic. If we don't own children then the bond of relationship and care become our only tie and real claim to them.

## Nineteenth Century Ownership of Children

Any cursory examination of the massive body of psychological evidence in relation to child development clearly highlights the damage caused by rupturing primary attachment bonds. Howard's men's movement experiment has set Australian society back two centuries and effectively removed the capacity of the Family Court to act in the best interests of the child, regardless of adult demands. Most concerning is the enforcement of the 50:50 split when the male has enacted violence towards their partner and had no previous caregiving responsibility for the child. The vast amount of empirical research on the trauma and damage inflicted on small children when they are forcibly removed from their primary caregiver, let alone placed with a non-caregiver or dangerous individual is ignored. Judges are now forced to separate mother and child unless there are extreme, documented cases of abuse. Even then, judges must demonstrate willingness to privilege adult males to avoid being in contravention of Howard's "reform."

Small children are the majority of those affected by parental separation in Australia. They are mainly non-verbal or partially verbal and need their primary caregiver to interpret their language: a skill developed during the complex attachment work of infancy. They also need a caregiver who, over time, has developed the capacity to withstand the labour intensive demands of using the brain to constantly monitor child feeling state and needs. This constant monitoring preserves the child's optimal homeostatic state (and wellbeing) but is draining and demanding work. In the first 12 months of a child's life it is work which is unpaid, unrecognized and which continues 24 hours a day, 365 days of the year. Only an adult who is complexly bonded to, knowing of, and deeply caring for, the unique child is willing or able to do this intense work of constantly monitoring and accurately caring in a manner that fosters the child's development. When the child's base of consistently living with their primary carer at home is removed, they are harmed. If they are removed from a mother with whom they share an inner world, the removal ravages the inner landscape of both mother and child. The deeply bonded mother has her own internal world linked to the child's inner feeling state to provide her with motivation and accurate signals to care for her child. When the child is cared for, her own world is soothed; if the child is being harmed, the mother suffers. The screams of Aboriginal mothers as their babies were torn from them, echo through time. We need to learn from the past.

If we can separate from the gender (and therefore emotion laden) bias of this issue and approach it using analysis of the barbaric code we see that, because the role of carer requires sacrifice of career and other assets, females are unlikely to be dominant financially or legally. Dominants have been able to assert adult interests and to remorselessly over-ride the child's need to have the emotional safety of being with the primary caregiver who has developed the skill to accurately read and compassionately respond to their critical developmental needs. In January of 2010 three reports were released to the government – each reporting that the threat of violence for mothers and children is increasing. One of these was a 1200 page evaluation of the impact of Howard's law experiment on children. The report raised clear concerns and recommended that effective immediately, children under 2 be exempt from the 50:50 split. The Men's Movement swung into high gear and the news was inundated with headings such as, 'Fathers Fury on Custody.' As a result of this politically powerful outpouring The Australian reported in 2010 on January 13<sup>th</sup>,

'The Australian understands that the report highlights SIGNIFICANT PROBLEMS with the Howard Government's law but, given that it is an ELECTION YEAR, and that any changes would be interpreted as a roll back of the shared parenting law and would certainly ignite the FIRE OF MEN'S RIGHTS GROUPS, no changes are likely to go before parliament before first being referred to a committee for ANOTHER LONG EXAMINATION' [Emphasis added].

The traumatisation of children was thereby sanctioned and their wellbeing again subordinated to the interests of the politically powerful.

Unless we regain common sense about human life, including the real needs of small children and the invisible but powerful bonds that occur in the early attachment period, we have no way of dealing with the social ills we now face. Unless we gain greater clarity about the need to protect and defend relationships and other intangible but precious life resources, we have no way of defending our families, our lives, and our world from barbarian incursion.

#### **Money, Money, Money**

Children are not in a position to advocate for themselves. This law “reform” was made on the basis of which gender had the most political power during a conservative regime. In Australia, this was unquestionably adult males. Critically, and most significantly, the 50:50 split relieved men of having to pay child support when they leave a partner. For males who advance their career during their children’s early years using the unpaid home labour of their partner this represents an economic goldmine. In effect, Australia has legalized the exploitation of the unpaid female labour of pregnancy and childcare. Individual women are required to bear the financial and career losses of pregnancy, infancy and early childhood, but do not have commensurate caregiver rights.

A relational framework marks unpaid labour within a culture as socially problematic. Once relationship becomes the basis on which human affairs are weighted and principles of dignity and mutual respect are the scales, then the option of exploiting other humans is removed because individuals are held accountable to not take more than they give. Unpaid labour has to be balanced by respect, protection, social privilege, care and real power if the delicate balance of justice is to be maintained. Without justice there can be no human advancement. If women are to be the unpaid carers of children then the laws and norms of society must privilege that caring relationship to respect the social contribution of unpaid labour, and more importantly childrens’ safety, wellbeing, and understanding of justice vis-à-vis caring and gender. Is it any wonder that barbarism continues to be perpetuated when both boys and girls are indoctrinated that caring and relationship are of no import and that dominance is the ultimate scale?

#### **Legalisation of Violence Against Children and Mothers**

In Australia men constitute approximately 90% of all homicide offenders. When children are murdered the mothers are often young and in a hostile relationship with, or separated from, the male. While our child homicide statistics are similar to the UK, Wales or Canada the exception is that Australia has a higher number of fathers than mothers as offenders. 70% of all the children murdered are murdered at home. If you google ‘Australian fathers murder children’ you will get many entries reflecting the reality that meddling with Family Law has made the courts a site where violence against mothers and children is legalised. Ominously, you will get an even greater number of posts from economically powerful men’s groups advocating for the rights of adult males and systematically flooding the media with propaganda. Mothers caring for children have neither the time nor the energy and resources for this level of political manoeuvring. Australian media is virtually silent about mothers. Mothers’ rights and the rights of their children have been quietly overridden.

It is because humans, at this historical time, have a poor understanding of the realms of the sacred and the invisible treasures of human life, that the needs of babies and small children have been able to be pillaged and subordinated to the financial and emotional

demands of adults. The faddish idea of splitting a child between households doesn't attend to any of the stability, routine, and regularity needs of small children, nor acknowledge how such predictability soothes them and helps them to deal with all their major developmental tasks, including schooling.

### **The Ultimate Revenge: Dismembering the Child**

Retrogressive changes to Family Law have also given violent males a vehicle to continue bloodying a past partner. Punishing a former partner through murdering the children has become all too common since the imposition of the so-called 96 'reform'. Child murders, where clearly disturbed and violent men have still been given half time care of a child have been a rude shock to Australians. Court inability to identify these men and to protect children is a reflection of court naivete' about power relations between men and women and the dynamics of relationship abuse. Males are aware of the power the 50:50 split gives. In one example, a four year old was killed when her estranged father threw her off a bridge on the day she was to begin school. The mother had tried on many occasions to have the father's access limited but was ignored. The family's comments after the death reflect the inability of the hamstrung Family Court to ensure children's welfare: 'For the past two years, the various authorities have been made aware of our fear for the safety of the children and unfortunately no one would listen... We feel the judicial system has failed our family.'

This is not to say that divorce is a problem as a concept. It is the acceptance of barbarism within intimate relationship, and barbaric merchandising as a substitute for intimate relationship that is the problem. In a barbaric culture it is important that aggressive, exploitative, hostile or abusive relationships be terminated. Given the ignorance we foster in young women (Chapter 7) it is inevitable that many of them will end up pregnant to exploitative, abusive males. When women take the courage to leave such relationships they should not be forced to send their children back into them. Children need to be protected from being raised in aggressive environments if we are to effect social change. It is the use of the law to enable vicious males to continue violence through removal of, and damage to, children that is the problem. For mothers who deeply care for their children, this is the ultimate punishment.

The domineering, aggressive or violent partner and the wealthy octogenarian share the same philosophy about the disposability of nonconforming partners. We cannot afford to enshrine the use of people as objects. The child-support payment record demonstrates that the so-called legal reforms have primarily enabled males to evade financial responsibility for children. The use of children to punish former partners must be halted and the best way to do this is to leave children with their primary caregivers when there is relationship breakdown.

### **Dumbing Down Emotionally**

Those who adhere to the Barbaric Creed go so far as to suggest that the cries and distress of small children when separated from their primary caregiver are not 'real'. The distress, suffering, and subsequent evidence of trauma in small children, is often explained away using 'parental alienation syndrome' (PAS). There are major concerns about the use of this notion. The first relates to its veracity. It is an unsubstantiated idea which was not drawn from scientific or neurobiological data but from theories made for extramarital affairs. The notion of 'Parental Alienation Syndrome' has never been validated by research or the APA. It is therefore astonishing that it has become the basis for so many court judgments. It is perplexing that an idea that has been referred to as 'junk science' should even be referred to in a system which prides itself on its evidential base. A second concern is that the overwhelming mode in which this notion has been used within the courts has been as a justification to separate children from their mother. It is used in a strongly gendered manner to advantage maleness in the Court

system. This is of great concern within the legal system - our primary cultural mechanism to ensure justice and meant to be based upon fact and to act without prejudice.

The idea of a "Parental Alienation Syndrome" was, in fact, the theory of a man called Richard Gardner. He speculated from systems theory to come up with the notion that children are 'triangulated' between mother and father, (as in the role of a mistress) and therefore that all suffering expressed by the child is directly caused by the 'selfish' mother manipulating the child. Gardner, himself divorced, believed that many child sex abuse claims were fabricated. He suicided in 2003. His notions are widely cited and used in Family Law as if they were gold standard drawn from evidence based trials. Of greatest concern is the fact that this idea has been used within the legal system as if it were substantiated. Gardner's mumpsimus has deadly effect within the court system because it silences small children by demonizing the only communication non-verbal children they have: their emotions. His opinion is used as though it had an evidential base weighty enough to justify the traumatisation suffered by a small child forcibly separated from his or her mother.

Gardner did not draw upon any neurological development or attachment bond research. His theory of 'parental alienation' was never validated by evidence, placed in the DSM or acknowledged by the American Psychological Association, so why has it been so widely used and heavily cited in the legal system? It is a theory which privileges adult males and places the blame for child distress squarely on mothers. It is an opinion which, when enforced, enables women to be legally punished for refusing to condition the child (through harsh treatment) to submit to enforced separation without showing distress.

Our legal system has no business using unsubstantiated notions as the basis for judgments. Legally enforceable changes to childrens' lives, emotional security and resources must be made with due care and on the basis of the rigorous evidence base of child wellbeing and development. Conjecture should not be used to justify separating children from their primary carers. Because it deals with child wellbeing, the Family Court must develop greater capacity to assess human care relationships. Legal systems based on power and precedence lack the expertise to distinguish between caring and uncaring adults but this is no excuse. Instead, the Family Law Court advocates programs such as 'Mums and Dads Forever' which assert equal parenting responsibility without acknowledging any differential in pre-separation commitment, experience or skill in taking care of the child's needs. Currently, the Australian Family Law Court causes damage to children by lightly dismissing child distress as 'parental alienation'; using unsubstantiated theories to place the blame for child suffering onto mothers who were primary caretakers before separation (blaming the victim) and enforcing the rupturing of attachment bonds. Statutorily enforcing the separation of a mother and child who share deep attachment bonds is not an appropriate function for law within civilized democracy. Law is being used, not for citizen wellbeing, but to enforce damage to vulnerable citizens.

Australian women are increasingly subjected to psychological tests ordered by courts and ex-partners with the express aim of demonstrating that they are 'unstable.' Such tests are also being used inappropriately to pathologize any distress women express when they are separated from children with whom they have deep bonds. Instead of pathologizing the mother, the child, and the mother-child bond; the courts should identify which parent has been primary caregiver, interpret the child's distress from this perspective, and seek to maintain regularity, routine, soothing and safety for the child. As previously stated, when small children are removed from their externalized source of safety and soothing (their primary caregiver), they suffer profound damage. If the adult world will not attend to their need for

care or their cries of distress then the external world becomes a very unsafe space for the child. If the adult world violates the attachment bonds which give a child safety then the child has no hope.

Law has no business rupturing the relational bonds of children or severing them from their critical resources of established care. The 50:50 split not only ignores cultural norms but takes women from the 95:5 caregiving role after the primary load of unpaid labour has been donated by the individual female (pregnancy, infant care, care of small child). Women with small children forced back into primary workforce identity are behind male counterparts due to their unpaid work of bearing and caring for children, and are likely to be forced into lower pay, less stable work. With their unpaid labour ignored and effectively socially exploited and dismissed, women must work at double the pace to try to catch up to peers who have not made this social contribution. This further damages the child's care base and resources, and further disadvantages the child.

In an equitable system, males who have been career oriented could take a year or more to work as unpaid carers to demonstrate commitment to the skill development and complex responsivity that the new role of half time care of a child would demand. Such a system, which would generate mass outrage and aggression from powerful males, would, in fact, be placing the developmental and emotional needs of the child before the demands of adults.

#### 5. People Matter

In barbaric cultures relationships become superficial or impermanent and easily severed. We are encouraged to act as if people didn't matter. Whole communities can be torn apart for financial profit with the same uncaring cruel heartlessness and refusal to heed cries of distress, seen when separating mother and child. We must stand against the rupturing of human bonds for the mere purposes of profit or power. Inner and outer world destruction can be repaired but this takes precious resources and time. The calloused barbarian may not 'waste' time with grief but when we attach and truly care for, others we risk loss, and being hurt. The capacity to be hurt by another and to grieve, seen by barbarians as weakness, is in fact, a sign of a healthy human heart.

In a barbaric society, loyalty in relationship becomes relative to, and subordinated to, whether or not one can get a 'better deal' elsewhere, regardless of loyalty and resources already committed to the relationship by the other party. This applies as equally to corporations which heartlessly dismiss long term employees simply to increase profit as it does to the divorce of older wives by husbands seeking younger bodies. We underestimate the centrality of relationships of safety and loyalty to human civilization. We must address the myth of the disposable, replaceable female. As the Jesse James-Sandra Bullock example illustrated, even the most wealthy and powerful of women are not safe from cultural normalization of male use of multiple female bodies and devaluation of the unique female self. People are unique, not replaceable; and the resources of relationship, kinship, caring, belonging and loyalty matter. These are the connections barbarians sever, in order to more easily access and exploit more resources.

The barbarian focus of moving quickly to the next conquest is one of the signs of a calloused heart, and of damaged ability to care. The increased prevalence of barbarism in our cultures has lowered levels of feeling, care and attachment in relationships with accompanying effects on intimacy. People are seen as disposable and replaceable. We cannot afford a society in which any of its members are considered disposable. When we derogate one another in this manner we derogate our own humanity.

The barbarian worldview has no way of understanding love, intimacy, and care. None of these activities generate profit, and therefore they don't exist in the barbarian value system. Barbarians see the intangible resources that give quality to human life as expendable and purchasable. The wealthy octogenarian can purchase a new wife, loyalty and a new family if he so desires. The barbaric overtones of this behaviour are too often ignored in our cultures. The implications such behaviours broadcast about the disposability of humans and the impermanence of human relationship, ravage our sense of what intimate relationship can be. Individual actions of wealthy elites have cultural and social ramifications because they legitimate detached, exploitative behaviour between humans. They denigrate human capacities for deep care and relationship. When this detachment is admired at a social level and envied, the same behaviours are fostered at every level of the culture - to our detriment.

#### 6. Human Relationships and Deep, Loyal Bonds Matter

By 2020 WHO estimates that mental health disorder will account for nearly 15% of disability-adjusted life-years lost to illness and that this suffering is largely preventable through the implementation of low cost, low technology interventions. In other words, technology isn't going to save us. In Australia mental health is the leading killer and cause of disability for people under 45. If emotions matter, then human relationships and how humans relate to one another are the new 'technology' that needs exploration and deeper, more penetrative understanding.

In profit oriented cultures, the concept of relationship has been dumbed down to the superficial notion of 'networking' and the claim of instantaneous 'depth.' This quick access and utilization of the resources of the other with no long term commitment required. Once 'networked', a participant might feel free to ask for significant access to information or resources, simply on the basis of having met another at a gathering. The normalization of 'networking' reflects diminished depth in the relational work and social world.

- Work matters some, but not as much as people.
- Industrial production matters much less than we think.
- Money matters only insofar as it facilitates human life and joyous human living.
- Human life matters.

In a humane system (that is, one that responds well to humans and human need) deep bonds of care are able to be forged between people with the expectancy of loyalty, love and respect remaining over time. People adhere to codes of interpersonal loyalty that dignify the other person and are based on humane concepts of caring, knowing and reciprocity over time. Community life becomes a web of caring where individual people are accorded the rank of belonging and where people's lives are noticed. People are nested in webs of care that accord their individual life merit and respect. Human life matters.

Vive La Resistance!

Caring relationship is as essential to human development and survival as potable drinking water and as needful of protection. We need radical relationship revolution. We can resist cruel and heartless behaviour and the notion that superficial exploitation is an adequate framework for human societies and systems. We can insist on societies based on deep, authentic bonds which respect the inherent dignity of the human person and honor the reality that loyal, caring relational bonds formed between humans should not be violated or dismissed lightly. Where authentic bonds of care exist between people we can refuse to sanction aggression used to rupture those bonds.

We can refuse to participate in movements that exploit bonds of care for financial profiteering. We can resist the notion of cruel, heartless behaviour as an acceptable social standard and insist that family and community relational life be respected. Ultimately, we can have the courage to identify barbaric acts as violent and refuse to accept them as necessary. We can refuse to accept interpersonal aggression from governments, corporations or individuals, and protest when relationships of care (such as communities or effective carers) are being exploited for financial profit. We can refuse to conceptualize this as tolerable.

We can forge deep bonds of authentic care in our own lives and resist the penetration of barbaric norms of cruelty and hard heartedness into our family and personal lives. We can nurture and be deeply caring for all members of our own family and intimate circle and be fiercely loyal to this circle. We can act protectively and non-apologetically when people in authority act barbarically or with aggression towards our children or vulnerable people in our circle of influence. We can increase our circle of influence and advocate, and extend care to, as many other humans as we can. We can actively, verbally and publicly, identify barbarism in its many forms wherever and whenever we see it. We can politely and firmly refuse to accept interpersonal aggression from others. We can form communities of solidarity to resist barbarism in the public domain and refuse to remain silent when barbarians are using aggression to assert dominance in any domain. We can refuse to acknowledge barbarism as a superior philosophy and highlight flaws in the creed.

We can rationally draw attention to instances of barbarism in the public arena and remind others that there are multiple other rational and far more effective options available to us. We can refuse to accept the current status quo as inevitable and challenge any such propaganda.

We can act every day in tens and hundreds of small ways. In every way, at every opportunity, and in every choice we make we can resist barbaric incursion into our intimate relationships, our family lives, our work lives, our communities, our systems, our culture, and every circle in which we move. Instead of apathetically accepting barbarism as the normative standard for human relationship we can constantly and gently remind all of those around us of the many options and ongoing opportunities for change. In small and big ways, on a constant and sustainable basis, we can refuse to accept barbarism as inevitable. We can support ourselves and all those we come into contact with, to conceptualize and action other futures and to refuse to act barbarically towards other humans.

We can become resolute, obstinate, educated blocks to barbaric imperialism and refuse to accept the roll-out of the creed in our families, communities and systems.

We can become quietly, effectively, humanely radical.