

Child Raising In Non-violent Cultures

Editor's Pick. Written by Sarah McElroy.

Some cultures on our planet are, or have been, basically non-aggressive, non-violent. That is, adult behavior includes few, if any, examples of war, homicide or intentional injury – physically or psychically – to other human beings. Cooperation, rather than competition, is the *modus operandi*, in contrast to our mainstream Western cultures. Why are there these differences? Is there anything useful we in the modern world can learn from these non-violent cultures?

There are perhaps many reasons for the varying expressions of violence in different cultures, from historic patterns to genetic propensities to economic influences. But whatever the predisposing factors are, there seem to also be some characteristic child rearing practices common to most of the known non-violent cultures. To illustrate this, I will draw on my own two years' experience in East African villages and on the work of a number of other anthropologists contained in Ashley Montagu's anthology, *Learning Non-Aggression: The Experience of Non-Literate Societies* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978).

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