

## The global child development corps

Gerald H Katzman \*

Clinical Associate Professor, Department of Pediatrics, Wayne State University School of Medicine, USA

### Abstract

Based on present knowledge of the growth and development of children and the origins of various types of conflicts, a Global Child Development Corps (GCDC) is proposed. Such an effort should ultimately improve the lives of children and lessen enmities worldwide.

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\*E-mail: GeraldKTZM@aol.com

### Editorial

Almost half a century ago, President John F. Kennedy developed the concept of the Peace Corps. Largely, this involved a contact between cultures, various educational initiatives and a conscious effort to promote the economic advancement of underdeveloped countries. Certainly, many positive results can be attributed to this program worldwide. Many USA citizens took pride in their participation in the Peace Corps and acted as goodwill ambassadors whose efforts were appreciated [1]. An adjunct to the Peace Corps or a separate effort can now be proposed to further contribute to the goal of world peace.

Over the last several decades, new information has accumulated regarding the optimization of the growth and development of children and their future propensity to conduct themselves in a non-violent manner [2]. Such a propensity begins with authoritative child rearing. This type of parenting is embellished with the modeling of caring behavior inside and outside the family [3]. Beginning with preschool [4], educational systems can contribute to character development through the vehicle of Human Relations Programs for Children [5] that are designed to enhance social/emotional learning. Children raised in such a non-abusive, non-authoritarian atmosphere are less likely to be involved in the perpetration of violence and to have learned to resolve conflict in a non-violent manner [2]. Such behavior clearly provides an atmosphere

for societal advancement without being inhibited by the destructive sequelae of domestic or inter-regional conflicts [6].

Unfortunately, globally, there still exists the widespread practice to treat children in a manner that causes them to suffer various forms of physical, psychological and sexual abuse [7]. Present studies clearly establish the relationship of these “adverse child experiences (ACEs)” and the future perpetration of violent acts. From the psychoanalytic point of view, the process involves two stages [8,9]. First, there is the fear and anger manifested in the psyches of children exposed to various forms of abuse. These emotions are repressed, due to the certain knowledge of immediate severe retribution should they be expressed. Subsequently, as the child grows older, the repressed fear and anger are projected on domestic or societally endorsed targets. These targets are often developed via false narratives that certain cultures and societies promote for a variety of reasons. Such “reasons” may include promoting conquest and dominance over other groups, depicting one group as a victim of another, the heretical nature of certain groups and undermining the humanity of those to be victimized [10].

Clearly, “parenting for a peaceful world” [2] and minimizing inter-group conflicts can be achieved by a three-stage process. First, there needs to be education so that authoritative parenting becomes the model by which children are raised worldwide.

Second, as the child matures, the educational system and culture need to reinforce the social/emotional learning initially derived from parenting. Lastly, there must be teams of respected scholars and teachers organized to publicly debunk false narratives that underlie animosities between societies and often form the “rationale” for wars.

Are the goals to enhance peaceful [1] coexistence among societies “pie in the sky” and without merit or are they achievable? I would maintain that present knowledge regarding the healthy growth and development of children and the origins of inter-individual and inter-group animosities and violence make such an effort eminently practical. As in many efforts involving children, prevention is the most effective approach. Therefore, efforts to identify societies where poor parenting practices are carried out and social/emotional learning stifled need to be pursued. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child” [11] could provide such a vehicle. Once deficient parenting is identified, teams of parenting consultants could be organized to change the counterproductive behaviors of poorly oriented parents. Classes where parenting skills are taught could also be provided during the prenatal period. Over a period of time, a change in the behaviors of societies to the non-violent resolution of conflict and indeed, the lessening of the incidence of conflicts would likely be seen [6].

This would then define the mission of the Global Child Development Corps whose main goals would be to train instructors to teach authoritative parenting and develop the resources to provide ongoing social/emotional learning, as children mature. The GCDC would also be responsible for coordinating the personnel and logistics for such a detailed and far reaching program. Trained GCDC

team members would be sent to places where the needs for enhancing childrearing skills and social/emotional learning have been identified. A support group would be necessary to maximize the impact of instructors and provide for their security. All that is necessary is the political will and significant resources necessary to develop such a program globally. Based on present knowledge of human behavior, there can be little doubt about the future salutary results of such a program [2]. Hopefully, there is still time to move forward.

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