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Maia Szalavitz and Bruce D Perry, *Born for Love: Why Empathy is Essential and Endangered* (Morrow, 2010)

INTRODUCTION

“It is in our nature to nurture and be nurtured” but you need the right conditions for this capacity to be realized. Empathy is a capacity that evolved due to group nature of humans. P 5: a “gifts of our biology are a potential, not a guarantee.” P 6: high caregiver to infant ratio in band / tribe societies (4:1): “enriched social environment” compared to many infant environments in our society – we’ll see this in Hrdy’s *Mothers and Others*.

Empathy as “ability to read other people’s intentions and to care about their plight.” Both are needed: psychopaths can read intentions (they have Theory of Mind or TOM), but they don’t care, so they don’t have empathy.

Slogan of Mary Gordon: “empathy can’t be taught, but it can be caught.” I take this to mean it’s not a verbal, high-level conscious activity, but a corporeal capacity – parts of the brain are involved of course, but not our high-level language.

Empathy and social conditions: there’s a cycle here: we have to see which social-political practices make empathic development possible. Also, which ones are involved with the “breadth” of empathy: small circle or larger circles? And not just that: some practices / ideological positions argue against empathy as “socialistic,” as a primitivism that needs to be done away with. (Recall the outcry about Obama and Sotomayor.) And others seek to harness empathy to make you a better boss!

CHAPTER ONE: HEAVEN IS OTHER PEOPLE

Roots of Empathy: creating environment for school kids to be exposed to infants and to “catch” empathy.

Key is to link pleasure to caring (9). Good measurable results (10-11).

Power of babies: automatic joy at babies’ smiles (11). “cuteness” as co-evolved (again, see Hrdy). Also interesting stuff on co-evolution of humans and dogs for cross-species empathy.

12: early onset of smiling and imitation.

13: empathy = seeing world from perspective of the other; you feel for the other person; your feelings are keyed into *their* situation; you feel their pain; sorry with them, not for them.

sympathize = understand but don't necessarily feel; but you can be moved

pity = feeling sorry for someone = recognizing their pain but not feeling it

13: brain / stress response / human contact inter-relations

Sociality and life: even down to bacterial sociality. (14) Immune system and self / other scheme (there are other ways to think about immune system). Somewhat crude way of putting "kin selection" idea: we're kind to kin because our genes live in them too. This is a gene-selection viewpoint that explains away altruism. But this is a little picky to complain about in a popular book.

The important thing is the next part: "empathy requires experience ... a lifelong process of relational interaction."

15: Empathy and stress response system: caregivers are the external stress response system for infants; proper care "shapes the neural systems of the stress response to allow self-regulation." We have to be careful here not to think of "self-regulation" of adult as "isolated independence." The point about adulthood is to have flexible resources in our network of relations, not to be alone! We are our network of relations.

16: problems in stress regulation and social relation are intertwined. Social relations are so necessary we can die from rejection and isolation.

16-17: infant pleasure in being imitated; caregiver pleasure in the relation, evoking memories of pleasure in being loved by her nurturing caregivers.

17: homeostasis / stress regulation / pleasure / discomfort / pain are all related.

17-18: multiple organs in brain. "reptilian" / midbrain / cortex: intertwining allows low-level takeovers of cortical function in emergencies (19). Even in normal situations, you never divorce emotion and reason in valuation / moral judgment (Damasio).

20: infants associate attributes of caregiver with pleasure of successful stress regulation; this is basis of empathy: pleasure in social relations that reduce stress. This goes for caregiver too, forming a positive feedback loop.

21: mirror neurons: actions (muscles) / emotions (gut).

22: Adam Smith and moral sentiments / empathy.

23: simulation theory via mirror neurons: we map other's experience onto our body. (There are some technical issues here; there are others who say we don't normally need to do a simulation, that we have direct experience of the other's emotion; locus of emotions is actually between people, not inside bodies.)

23: emotional contagion in infants: they are distressed and cry in response to other babies' crying. Post-6 months, infants can realize they don't have internal bodily stress signals even when listening to other babies crying, so they have some self-control.

23: spontaneous helping behavior among infants (Tomasello will talk about his experiments on this).

26: a wonderful saying: "love grows brains."

CHAPTER TWO: IN YOUR FACE

27-29: Jeremy had been so coddled he never developed his own stress regulation: it was still externalized, in his mother.

29: Neurotransmitters:

dopamine: desire

endorphins: pleasure

oxytocin: bonding via connecting pleasure and particular features of caregiver

30-31: separation once you're bonding brings anxiety / craving

31: facial expressions: where are emotions?

Most radical position: they are between us;

"phenomenology": they are on the face of the other

3rd person: they are inside the other person

TOM: we decipher external behavior and then logically infer what's inside

Simulation: we run an internal simulation program and read off its results what the other person is feeling inside himself / herself

32: bias toward false positives: it's better to be safe than sorry: better to assume danger and be shown wrong later.

32: there's some questionable paleo-anthropology here about stranger = danger. As far as I know, there's a school of thought that peaceful cross-group contact was quite prevalent via trade, and it wasn't all war all the time. (Fry, Human Potential for Peace I think makes this argument).

32-33 in any case, we do have amazingly good emotional sensitivity / face-reading capacities, and it is true that "pro-social" can mean a strong in-group vs out-group distinction ("tribalism").

33: Jeremy's facial defect broke pleasure of eye contact and shared smiles: even if you're good at acting it's hard to break the initial squinting / pull-back. There's also the difference between the genuine, spontaneous smile and the voluntary smile (different muscles; it's quite easy to tell, really).

34: very important point: *rhythmic* and flexible infant/caregiver interaction: you need breaks as much as contact, because "stress itself is not bad"; in fact it's necessary.

35: the key is the pattern of the stress: small, moderate doses is what's needed for growth. It's analogous to strength training (38-39; 41)

36: all human babies are "premature" and need lots of care

37: cortical-based "downward" control develops, but is still situationally vulnerable, so that in emergencies, "dumber but faster" kicks in; this helps in physical situations where the solution is to run fast, but not so much in social situations which need nuance, negotiation, compromise, etc.

37-38: components of brain functional integration:

1. norepinephrine / dopamine / serotonin neurotransmitters: up to cortex, down to ANS (autonomic nervous system)
2. HPA axis: hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal axis: regulated by the above neurotransmitters: control release of cortisol, an important stress hormone

39: sure, some stress relief techniques (exercise, meditation, solitude) can work, but only in context of a full life with good network of social relations. (I don't want to confine these practices to "stress relief": they have a role in positive flourishing: it's not just about staying stable; it's also about growing, deepening, becoming more related and aware as a person.)

39-40: bad effects of isolation are well-known: horror of solitary confinement in prisons.

40: holding hands, seeing loved one's faces: they have good physiological effects

42-43: importance of the face once again. Empathy and disgust relation: same brain region. So by empathizing with what you feel is painful, you flinch and that is relayed to the person. Overempathy: if you overload someone they will turn inward to reduce their own pain.

44: problem of burnout with empathetic nurses.

CHAPTER THREE: MISSING PEOPLE

46: orphanages as experiments in neglect. Feral children as limit case.

47: particularity of early learning (mommy and daddy love me). Principles as generalizations (people are good) come later.

47: very tight singular bond formed at 8 months; strong preference for primary caregiver; secondary caregivers are only weak / temporary substitutes.

48: Eugenia never got to this strong singular bond stage.

49: unconscious imprinting vs conscious memories; early sensitivity to experience (= "plasticity"); this plasticity is an adaptation and is adaptive.

49: love as necessary: this is a key point of the whole book. It's not that you can satisfy material needs (food, warmth) and then treat love as an extra. No, love is just as important as food.

50-52: disease and orphanages. Mechanistic blame on infections (invasion model of illness). But germ theory backfired by leading to limited skin contact with babies. Far better to have skin contact in dirty environment than be left alone in clean one (prison vs orphanage study). Lack of love is often fatal. Better outcomes for prison kids.

52: link of individual love and growth hormone production: runt of the litter: too small to provoke mother to lick them; they can't suckle hard enough to get noticed. And even if they get the food, they don't metabolize it. The body "realizes" love is necessary, and if it's not getting the love it needs, it shuts down, because it's going to die anyway, food or not.

53: 2007 Romanian orphanage study. Abortion ban led to infant abandonment explosion. No foster care led to big orphanages.

53: counter the early deprivation research, some claimed children don't need individual love. They blamed bad orphanage results on bad genes of the kids. (This is an important example of using "bad genes" to hide bio-social nature of humans.)

54: Romanian study showed all sorts of benefits to foster care vs orphanages: IQ, for instance. Also, younger you left orphanage, the better. Smaller body and head size indicated poor brain development.

55: animal studies show similar results, with hopeful sign that improvement is possible.

57: speaking gibberish.

59-61: prairie voles and oxytocin: monogamy and maternal behavior as pair bonding; other social phenomena as well: trust, friendship, stress relief.

62: oxytocin links pleasure and a singular partner; more specifically, it links dopamine (desire) and endorphins (pleasure) to a partner's scent.

63: males need vasopressin as well. They are also in the dopamine and endorphin brain regions.

63: monogamy is not perfect, but leaving partners is only about 33%.

63: questionable stuff about evolution of monogamy. In *Neoliberal Genetics*, anthropologists will argue that marriage customs or better, the "political economy of sex and reproduction and child rearing and family life" is irreducibly symbolic and not very well related to genetic inheritance.

64-65: mother-infant bonding is not immediate; it takes repetition. Infanticide and abandonment can be tied to deformity disruption of cuteness-provoked empathy; but they occur very early, almost immediately after birth, before milk / oxytocin connection.

65: later infanticide usually due to post-partum depression (link to social isolation of the mother).

65: "love is a drug": withdrawal symptoms, anxiety over separation

66: oxytocin connects feelings of stress relief / calm / relaxation with caregivers. It's not an immediate love drug like ecstasy; it needs time.

68: Eugenia's memory problems might be stress-related.

69: Eugenia's "bipolar" condition: on or off; alarmed or numb; hyper-vigilant or dissociated.

69-70: PTSD in adults, but kids seem to mostly be depressed.

70: Eugenia doesn't like to be touched; it's alarming rather than soothing. (We naturally want to hug someone to comfort them.)

70: very important point: E has had to develop “cognitive and intellectual strategies” (using cortex) to bolster lack of spontaneous feelings in social relation.

70: autism connection: forecast of the “intense world” theory in next chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR: INTENSE WORLD

72-74: Autism spectrum; singular conditions on a continuum. Three official symptoms: 1) difficulty w/ social interactions; 2) difficulties with language; 3) repetitive behaviors and obsessions. But also oversensitivity / reduced perception swings.

75: skin conductance tests: sympathetic (fight-or-flight) and parasympathetic (rest and digest). Parasympathetic = “empathetic” system.

76: skin conductance device might help autists who can’t communicate their state of distress; 77: it could provide early warning so another person can intervene.

78-79: autism and occupation choice / aptitude for music and math.

79-81: caring too much and autism. Two aspects of empathy: 1) emotional contagion; 2) understanding of others. TOM and lying / perspective taking.

81-82: “little professors” going on and on: not reading signs of boredom, and hence need to take turns – back to rhythms of interaction in caregiver / infant relation. (All sorts of interesting questions here about attention span and boredom of “normal” people in a fast video world.)

83: depressed people don’t perceive smiles directed at them; sets up cycles and loops.

85-86: intense world theory: VPA rats have great local connectivity yielding increased processing (sensory experience and intelligence boosts) but poor connectivity to other brain parts. So high connectivity within the amygdala (fear conditioning) but lack of contextual understanding bcs low long-distance connectivity. Analogy: fast computer but with slow Internet (outside world) and slow internal wiring; brain can process but it can’t communicate with others or with itself (most brain traffic is internal).

87: so withdrawal and repetition might be attempts to handle sensory overload coupled with intense fear. IOW, “normal” life can be traumatizing for autistic spectrum people.

87-89: language development: you need appropriate stimulation / language exposure in critical periods. But if you’re overloaded and withdraw, you don’t get language interaction: it’s too loud or not loud enough (when you’ve shut down).

89-90: another very important point: developmental disorders can appear “genetic” and fixed. Brain plasticity is greatest in critical windows, and if they are missed, you need very intense and prolonged intervention to kick-start plasticity (see Norman Doidge, *The Brain that Changes Itself* [Viking, 2007]).

91: some devices to help autistics: headphones to dampen sound, etc. keyboards etc for expression.

92-93: interactive DVDs to help teach social expressions and / or provide cues for changing behavior via reading others (supplementing low TOM).

95: loops between social practices and development of individual empathy potentials. Increased isolation; lack of free play – kids learn co-operation and social rule making and enforcing in made up games rather than just obedience to imposed rules in organized sports. Consider creativity (reading others and force fields of games) of soccer of poor kids, 4 on 4 in the street vs leagues of 11 on 11 on full pitch.

CHAPTER 5: LIES AND CONSEQUENCES

Case study: Danny the lying kid

100: Lying is a positive developmental step: it indicates exercise of perspective-taking capacity.

103: taking too much time to filter out useful information: problem of “ticking time bomb” scenario used to justify interrogational torture.

105: altruism “makes evolutionary sense”: but kin selection arguments presuppose gene-level selection and in effect explain away altruism. There’s a big Cold War aspect to the fight against altruism in evolutionary theory: the “collectivist” commies vs the “individualism = freedom” angle.

106: reciprocal altruism from repeated prisoner’s dilemma (PD) tournaments. Importance of reputation: varying strategies, including “provisional altruists” or “tit-for-tat” players.

107: rewards as effective for inducing co-operation. Garrett Hardin and “tragedy of the commons” assumptions (rational egoists motivated only by self-interest) are defeated by actual study of real people in behavioral economics and “public goods” games. Prevention of free riders and costs of enforcement studied by Ostrom and “governing the commons” or CPR regulation (Common Pool Resources, e.g. fishing grounds, pastures, forests).

JP: note that anthropologists (e.g. Boehm, *Moral Origins*) and philosophers (Sterelny, *Evolved Apprentice*) will claim that detecting free riders in small nomadic forager bands is really not much of a challenge: is it really all that hard to see when someone is not doing their fair share when everyone lives and works together?

108: detecting social cheating; origins of TOM (see also 111).

110: group-bonding and social intelligence through war (but see 175-176 for war vs cooperative breeding hypothesis of Hrdy).

111: unfortunate use of simple “gene” language, also at 127; but see 128 for better “gene expression” framework.

112-13: incorrigible kids: low cortisol, low arousal, low sensitivity: so they are hard to punish, either physically or socially. Such low affect people can turn to thrill-seeking behaviors: anything to get some kind of juice flowing.

114-115: bio-social outlook: environment and stress regulation systems: hyper-alertness can be adaptive in short-term, for individuals, but also destructive in long term for social flourishing: cycles of vengeance, etc.. But that transmission of destructive behaviors can be reduced in different environments.

115-116: Cohen and Nisbett experiment: “culture and biology are deeply intertwined and interactive” – THAT’S THE SLOGAN FOR THE WHOLE COURSE.

117-118: comparison of Sparta and Athens

119: Russian downward spiral in “Dark Ages.”

CHAPTER SIX: NO MERCY

Case study: Ryan the rich kid who never bonded, grew up cold and manipulative, but was rewarded for individual success in academic and athletic competition. His lack of empathy wasn’t noticed, because it wasn’t valued; and it wasn’t valued because it can’t be measured in an individual competition.

122: empathy cannot be reduced to TOM, bcs psychopaths have superior TOM but no empathy

125-27: after having been denied opportunity to bond (which needs lots of repetition with one caregiver – rhythms, smells, etc are singular [126]), Ryan just shut down his caring / relating side.

128-29: epigenetics and gene expression networks are what counts. Hereditary gene = DNA sequence. But that must be transcribed and brought to ribosome for “functional gene” translation into amino acid sequence of a protein (and proteins fold in different ways). Between hereditary and functional gene there’s lots of splicing and editing.

130-34: rat licking experiments: changes in gene expression networks can be passed on, which provides mechanism for already observed behavioral transmission. Basically, the baby rats of high nurture mothers weren’t as stressed out and could soothe themselves.

131: it’s the mother’s behavior that counts, not the hereditary genes; so

132: the DNA is just the data base, it’s the total environment (all the way outside the body to the mother’s action) that regulates gene expression. It’s a multiple, complex, differential system. The environment doesn’t change the data base; it changes the way the data base is used by the total system: it’s not the presence of DNA sequences that counts, it’s when and how fast / slow it’s turned on / off that counts.

132-33: high stress reactivity is adaptive for high stress environments.

133: reward system for the high-nurture mothers: they got dopamine rewards, so that they love to love their babies.

133-34: love capacities are transmitted not in genes but in gene expression networks which extend out into outside the body inputs (the mother’s licking). See also 136.

134: connection of oxytocin, dopamine, and pleasure: you have to have pleasure in loving others and being loved.

135: Without this connection, it’s hard to punish someone: depriving them of something they’re indifferent to (connection) isn’t much of a punishment.

135: thrill seeking behavior: psychopath’s physical pleasure system is not diminished, just their social pleasure system.

136-38: political side of things. Ryan grew up in a society that only recognized / rewarded individual competitive success. His psychopathy was invisible; sometimes even rewarded (“killer instinct”).

139-42: excused / rewarded bad behavior of high status males: “boys will be boys.” Glen Ridge case; only one boy had a sister. (Gender segregation in friendship.) Gang rape as high status behavior (contra *Natural History of Rape* story where tendency to rape for low-status males is an adaptation.)

142: age segregation and “child illiteracy” / lack of knowledge of development.

143: individual competition / social isolation (too much screen time; too much violence).

CHAPTER SEVEN: RESILIENCE

Trinity's story: early but sporadic love and help from neighbor ("Myrna"; 156) enabled her to develop intelligence and empathy. But obesity as protection from sexual abuse remains with her; binge eating as self-medication.

155: shutting down as trauma response; dissociative state.

157: early onset puberty as adaptive.

159: you can't change bullies by giving them a taste of their own medicine; they are probably themselves being beaten at home by someone bigger than they are; you're just going to make them angry. Hence the fallacy of teen boot camps.

160-61: Trinity's pregnancy: she felt loved by her lover; she ends up with a better partner, Taj.

162: sometimes Trinity isn't as forgiving of herself as she is of others;

162-68: obesity as reaction to abuse; as beneficial, as protective.

CHAPTER EIGHT: THE CHAMELEON

Case study: Alyson, who tried to fit in with a different crowd at each school. She was too relational; she didn't develop a basic, stable pattern of forming and breaking relations (aka, a "personality" or a "character"). Peer pressure.

172-73: emotional contagion and "mass hysteria."

174: in-groups and out-groups: "prosocial" \neq "nice": it entails punishment of non-conformity in the in-group (but it can also entail reform / rehabilitation) and can entail violence toward the out-group.

175: war story for evolution of prosociality; see however Douglas Fry, *The Human Potential for Peace* (Oxford UP, 2006): reviewed here:
<http://www.peacefulsocieties.org/NAR/051222gen.html>.

176: question of origin of warfare: we know there is war when the state, agriculture, class system is established. What was human violence before that time? See Raymond C Kelly,

Warless Societies and the Origin of War (U Michigan Press, 2000):

<http://press.umich.edu/titleDetailDesc.do?id=11589>

176-80: Sarah Hrdy: cooperative child-rearing is greatly increased in humans vs other primates (though again, bonobos are better than chimps in this regard). Increased welfare from other people to help the mother / nuclear family. But with backlash against (middle-class / professional) working mothers (working class mothers always worked outside the home) there was a demonization of daycare.

Co-evolution of infant cuteness and empathy of mothers and others: “a virtuous spiral of escalating altruism” (180).

180: sloppy use of “genes” when we’ve just seen in Ch 6 how it’s gene expression networks reaching out to repeated social practices!

180: teen female behavior: reproduction requires female friends, so that becomes very important.

182: Milgram experiments: situational aspect: a lot of “ethics” depends on situation. Conflict with “character” theories. But this seems an inside / outside dichotomy: we need a better conceptual scheme to deal with our fluid relationality.

186: fluid group identities. Although there seems to be a “natural” racial component to empathy, that can be mitigated by social group identity: “being on same team.” There’s a lot to think about in terms of racial segregation in housing, sports allegiance, and how they intersect. Tigers and Jaguars in Baton Rouge.

187: familiarity reduces unconscious racial biases.

189: peer pressure is “subtle, internal and sometimes unconscious.” Following the crowd can be good; antisociality masquerading as “independence” can be bad. So rather than fight “peer pressure” / conformity, you should use it positively. Don’t segregate all troubled teens in Juvie; you’ll just reinforce gang ties (192; topic of Ch 9). Instead, integrate them in positive supportive social settings with good role models and reinforcement for positive behavior. (Cf Ryan: create situations where empathy is rewarded, not “success.”)

CHAPTER NINE: US VERSUS THEM

Terrell, the little gang member. Gangs as family (202), group identity, hyper-vigilance as adaptive.

195: Linguistic environments can vary in amount and in negative / positive.

197-98: hyper-vigilance; bias toward false positives; high stress reduces rationality and empathy. Brain can fall into habitual states of high reactivity.

199: policy must be towards providing safety for all; nurturing mothers to allow them to nurture.

199: Terrell's low-development hurt his cortical capacity for self-control. Brief mention of the F-word at bottom of page. Why is that such a strong word for us?

202: trans-generational pattern of gangs making up for family and neighborhood has to be seen in context of de-industrialization post-1980. See the film on the LA Bloods and Crips, *Bastards of the Party*.

203: contemporary child-rearing not like evolutionary pattern.

203: breakdown of good relations and transmission of negative relations. But this isn't just lower-class, as Ryan example shows.

204-09: rhythm as group-bonding and personally rehabilitating. Back to infant – caregiver rhythmic interaction. All cultures have dance / music / rhythm. We will read a great book on this topic later in the course: William McNeill, *Keeping Together in Time: Dance and Drill in Human History*. Empathy and synchrony / entrainment. Military training.

209: dehumanizing language toward the out-group.

210: critique of sending teen offenders to jail / prison.

CHAPTER TEN: GLUED TO THE TUBE

The case study is about Brandon, the little boy whose mom was isolated and depressed, and who learned language from the TV, but no social connection. This shows the information transfer aspect of language is not the whole picture. The chapter then explores research on TV and video games.

214: depression of the mother robbed Brandon of physical affection / play.

215: associating words and pictures is not really learning language, since it neglects the social connection aspect. (“phatic” communication such as “hi,” “what about this weather!,” “how about them Tigers!” etc. are not really about information in the sense of facts, but about creating and reinforcing social relations).

215: “BRAIN IS A SOCIAL ORGAN” IS A GOOD PHRASE. Sociality is just as much a part of our biology as neurotransmitters and hormones. Because, as we've seen, many

of those chemicals are only released due to social relations: caresses, smiles, rocking. This brings us to the notion of interactive rhythm, or dance, which is the preverbal setting up of turn-taking in conversation.

216-17: post-partum depression related to social isolation. Capacity for PPD is possibly an adaptation: cutting investment in a child born in a bad situation might allow survival of the parent and another chance in a better situation.

217: children of depressed parents are withdrawn (mirror neuron hypothesis).

218-19: cold-face experiments are very stressful for mothers and infants. But this doesn't mean you should hover (as with Jeremy in Chapter 2, "In Your Face"). Occasional physical absence is necessary; but Brandon was ignored even while mother was physically present.

220-24: tv and video / computer ("screen time") research: no positive effects; plenty of bad effects from violent content.

224: desensitization. This is positive for medical people, to avoid burnout.

225: military application: killing in close-range combat. I have a paper on this topic here: http://www.protevi.com/john/Cyborg_Killing_final_draft.pdf.

226: distance is an important factor. Boot camp as desensitization practice.

227: multiple small factors working against empathy can add up.

228: vicious spiral: already aggressive kids can get a little more aggressive with exposure to screen violence. It doesn't "create" violence, but it can make a bad situation worse.

228-29: isolation / atomization / TV watching are all self-reinforcing; TV watchers think in terms of individual factors rather than bio-social factors. TV can be linked to depression.

230: against the catharsis hypothesis. "The mind is not a boiler that traps anger and will explode if it is not somehow expressed." Rather, the mind / brain responds to situations and patterns (repeated situations). Reframing of anger-eliciting situations is what's needed, not "catharsis," which just adds to violence pattern. "The brain becomes what it does" is an excellent formula.

231: critique of cognitive only focus schools. Recess and play (supervised only to prevent bullying, but otherwise not organized) are necessary to learn social skills.

CHAPTER 11: ON BABOONS, BRITISH CIVIL SERVANTS, AND THE OSCARS

Social status and bad effects on health of low social status is the theme of this chapter.

234-40: cults and authoritarian leaders.

237: tricks of the trade: repetition / rhythm soothe you; fear and discomfort make you aroused and vulnerable to persuasion; by relieving anxiety you become the source of reward. So beware deliberately induced stress by those that can reward you by relieving that stress.

240-41: evolution of the stress response system and our social nature: we don't appraise the "physical facts" of a situation, but those facts in the context of the social situation. So a very important fact: panic is not very common at all in emergencies. Rather it's group bonding and teamwork; people are often "almost eerily calm." But the group needs someone to take charge and tell people what to do. In those cases, there is very little "every man for himself" behavior; it's co-operation that is revealed in emergencies, not "individual survival."

242: lower you are in hierarchy, the more compliant you are under stress. Stress situations exaggerate tendencies; but these can be shaped over time in cults.

242-43: unconscious appraisals of power differentials: size, weapons are obvious (but see research on false positives in cross-race situations).

244: highly stratified countries have worse overall health, even among those on top (though of course it's even worse for those on bottom).

245: "social gradient" in health, from Whitehall Study.

246: puncturing the "being the boss is stressful" myth: being responsible w/o any chance to influence outcome is the most stressful.

247: flow of mood contagion from top to bottom of a social gradient: baboon studies.

248-9: animal studies on stress; you can get stress at the top in fluid, competitive structures (betas always plotting against the alpha).

250-52: egalitarian societies have flatter social health gradients.

253: maladaptive situation for our evolved stress response system. It's good for when stresses are rare but big events, and when lots of social soothing is available (you have to fight, but then you have fun afterwards); it's not good today for us with chronic low-level stress and social isolation (when was the last time you were hugged?).

253-58: various biochemical reactions to stress and relation to “modern” diseases (cardiovascular, depression). Depression and glutamate effects on the hippocampus.

256: you can die of a broken heart.

256-57: depression as adaptation; chemistry of subordination; keeps you from trying to fight an unwinnable battle; projecting signals of accepting defeat. (fight or flight is not the only intra-species option; “signal and submit” are also very common; question of bluffing comes up here).

258: it’s not so much stress as it’s lack of control in a stressful situation that makes the health gradient worse.

CHAPTER TWELVE: WARM AS ICELAND

259-61: social safety net in Iceland: healthcare, parental leave, daycare. It’s important not to think of this as “nanny state” paternalism. This is the people of Iceland democratically deciding to provide services for everyone. The government is just the organized expression of that that popular desire; it’s not something over and above the people doing things “for” the people.

261: The feedback between social structure and people’s desires produces and reinforces an environment in which empathy can develop.

263: New investigations in economics: relation of empathy and trust and national economic performance. For example, you need trust for a modern, capitalist economy: just think about renting and driving a car and all the trust that involves. (266: lack of trust is like a tax on each transaction).

264: we need to become aware of all this “hidden in plain sight” trust and empathy.

265: two types of social capital: 1) bonding (familial and in-group) and bridging (outside family and in-group).

266: markets can discourage trust and empathy; reinforce individualism. As can modern screen technologies. Also, advertising can prey on your insecurities (and offer commodities rather than relationships as the solution to the fears that they create / exacerbate; we can even get to the point where we pay for opportunities to meet people, so lonely and cut off we can become).

267-69: brain chemistry of trust relies on oxytocin. Neuroeconomics research.

269: behavioral economics (study of real people) yields results that are not predicted by classical microeconomics assumption of rational egoists. (See notes here on Elinor Ostrom's work: <http://www.protevi.com/john/Morality/Ostrom.pdf>).

269-70: paradoxical / vicious spiral: your empathetic perspective-taking can mislead you into thinking that everyone is selfish. But we also have a tendency toward fairness in transactions, as the ultimatum game research shows: rational egoists should take any amount in a split, even \$10 or worse, but people often refuse that to punish the person making the greedy offer.

270: "social capital" at the national level is subject to ups and downs of history. Iceland was well-prepared for the banking crisis in this respect.

272-73: Iceland's ethnic homogeneity played a role in its social capital; USA is multicultural, but periods in our recent past with less wealth discrepancy helped our social cohesion; we know historically that high wealth differences create unstable societies.

274-76: Wendell Potter and health care; he was insulated; he never met face-to-face with the people affected by his decisions. Only when he met them did he realize (277).

277: VERY IMPORTANT: there's a feedback loop between physical and emotional distance. Being in the physical presence of, and seeing the face of people affected by your decisions, is very important, but lots of our daily architecture, geography, housing patterns, socializing, etc. creates lots of class segregation (to go along with the age and gender segregation we talked about). In fact, race is less of a barrier to social relations than class is, provided we can live next to and talk with people of other races (not always easy, given housing patterns).

278-79: American attitudes toward class: denial it exists, insistence on the "American Dream," individualism, blaming-the-victim (or facile rejections of social analyses as "blaming 'society'"). We just haven't been paying attention to the explosion in wealth inequality since 1980, or to its acceleration since 2000. Inequality is linked with lack of trust.

280: stratification of popular institutions (e.g., public school); atomization by screen time.

280: cynicism is an important factor that needs attention. It's important to expose the ways in which the system is rigged; but you can't lapse into a cynical denial of altruism, trust, empathy.

281: inequality and corruption; inequality and bad effects on mental and physical health; infant death rates; overall mortality.

282: big inequality means bottom people have high stress / low control, a bad combination. Even among rich, it's worse in terms of health to live in a very unequal society.

283-84: Iceland has a high divorce rate; but the people are still healthy and happy. How? It's because of the great social capital (both kinds, familial and social).

285: Sarah Hrdy: it's all about the social network; it's better to have a single parent with a big loving supportive network than to have mom and dad alone in an apartment or house.

286-87: Global Financial Crisis: turning banking system over to financiers and cutting it loose from regulation was a disaster.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN: ALL TOGETHER NOW

288: what is relation of parenting and policy? You need right environment to nurture our capacity for empathy, and that environment is bio-social, reaching below the person into the physiology and above into the society.

289: great line: "the brain becomes what it does most frequently"; so we need to practice empathy.

290: we have to pay attention to our evolved bio-social nature to create environments that are "respectful of our biological gifts."

291: when we talk about "human nature" we have to beware crude bio-racism / sexism; we have to instead recognize bio-sociality: vulnerable potentials for pro-sociality need recognition of interdependence. We can then understand how giving benefits the giver; how stress is a killer; how money and success don't bring happiness; how the greatest joys and greatest pains come from our relationships.

292: collapse of social structures supporting empathy breeds cynicism.

293-94: shrinking family size, when coupled to smaller, weaker networks = more isolation; less friends.

295: lack of free unstructured play; preying upon fears about "safety"; daycare scandals.

295-96: prison-industrial complex

296: increasing screen time

297: we lose bridging social capital (265), which puts even more stress on bonding (family) social capital; but trust is needed for the economy!

298-300: we can't overlook differences; there's no public torture (although there's lots of it on screens); percentage killed in warfare is less; fall in murder rates.

300: our evolved bio-sociality points us toward empathy, freedom, equality, justice, shared humanity; "relationally rich, minimally hierarchal";

301: in-group vs out-group is a perpetual problem.

301-302: are we really serious about wanting empathy?

302: childcare agencies – case workers, foster care, juvenile justice – are all terrible for children: "create and replicate the chaos, threat, humiliation, trauma and attachment disruptions that brought children into the system in the first place." Stress of being on bottom of a highly unequal society is felt in the children too.

303: empathy even seems to be demonized: Obama and Sotomayor.

303-04: empathy disdained even in psychology: "tough love"; "co-dependency" etc.

305: even schizophrenia responds to deep relational rebuilding, so sending troubled teens away to residential facilities instead of working with families and networks to build better relations is counter-productive.

306-7: suspicion of the "do-gooder"; we don't recognize the fun and benefits of positive social relations, and that benefits go to the giver as well as recipient.

308: WHAT CAN WE DO TO BUILD EMPATHY?

308: empathy is not just a feeling; it's necessary for highly interconnected society like ours; it's not just maternal and female;

309: but we have to be able to talk about public policy; it's not an individual or family matter: health care and child care; education; family leave; prison: these are social issues.

310: family matters: prenatal, perinatal and childhood nurture (information and support for mothers and parents);

311: we have to learn about stress, learning, and health

312: kids need lots of everyday time, not "quality time"

312-13: reading has to be fun, affective bonding experience; it's not primarily a cognitive achievement; fiction is particularly important in promoting perspective-taking aspect of

empathy; you have to empathize with and nurture empathetic capacities of bullies: “discipline by reasoning, perspective taking, consistency of appropriate consequences, and above all, love.”

314: development of verbal capacities relative to empathy: not words as weapons, but words as means of relation.

315: childcare has to be a social priority; and unstructured play has to be a big part of that.

316-18: schools have to become more developmentally attuned; break up age segregation, allow recess and gym and free time; eliminate bullying. “boys will be boys” is an outdated excuse, and besides, it’s false; boys will be the kind of boys social practices and institutions allow them to be. And girls too. Need multicultural diversity; this needs to be managed to avoid cliques and “self-segregation”

319-22: concluding narrative about healthy community, Roseto PA: nothing in the water; it was the social relations and multigenerational households that “encouraged cooperation and sharing rather than competition.” [There’s nothing wrong with good healthy competition in a structure of mutual respect; it’s the surrounding practices that allows competition to be practiced in mutually beneficial ways.]