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Letters

A mother's place . . . ?

As an educator, I have suspected a link between below-average academic performance and a home in which both parents are absent due to full-time employment ("From Here to Maternity," SN: 10/1/88, p.220).

We are now aware of a relationship between the high academic performance of Asian students and maternal involvement with the child's education. Could a relationship also exist between a *lack* of direct maternal involvement from an early age and *lowered* performance?

Leslie J. Pond
Huntington Station, N. Y.

I was appalled by the publication of "From Here to Maternity." I subscribe to SCIENCE NEWS because I want to keep up to date on scientific and technological developments. Bruce Bower's article is neither an analysis

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Cover: In a photograph taken in late August, smoke from burning forests drapes the Absoroka Mountains in the southeast section of Yellowstone National Park. Now, as the mountains trade their gray shawl for a mantle of fresh snow, scientists discuss what they learned from the fires of 1988. (Photo: James Peaco/National Park Service)



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nor a review of a scientific issue. It is basically a political polemic suggesting maternity leave legislation should be liberalized. The political thrust is given a thin, quasiscientific veneer by quoting random assertions by a few psychologists. These quotes don't even come close to proving that extended maternal leave is better for babies than quality daycare. They merely assert a few dubious propositions: that daycare "is risky," that parents are too ignorant to judge daycare programs and that quality daycare depends on government regulations at the state level.

SCIENCE NEWS should stick to doing what it does best, reporting on science and technology. We can get our fill of legislative controversies in our newspaper, our TV and radio.

Arthur Mode
Falls Church, Va.

"From Here to Maternity" does not attempt to "prove" that maternal leave is better for babies than quality daycare. In fact, the article refers to

a prior story in SCIENCE NEWS (SN: 7/25/87, p.54) discussing research on the strengths of quality daycare for young children.

Legislative wrangling on maternity leave and daycare does not alter the fact that scientists are closely examining parent-child interaction in the months following birth. Science, including the "technological" variety, does not provide absolute proof and should not be expected to do so.

— B. Bower

The next time you use great art to illustrate a story, please credit the artist, not just the institution and donor. The irony of your failure to credit the woman artist whose work appears on p.221 — given the subject of the story — should be embarrassing.

Mark Roeyer
Lawrence, Kan.

It is. "The Maternal Kiss" was painted by Mary Cassatt (1845-1926). We regret the confusion caused by this omission.

— the editors

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