



CHILDHOOD MALTREATMENT AND MALEVOLENCE: QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH FINDINGS

Sidney R. Ornduff

Long Island University

ABSTRACT. *This article examines the quantitative research literature that focuses on the object relations sequelae of childhood maltreatment. A review of 12 studies indicates strong support for a relationship between childhood maltreatment and a malevolent object world. This relationship holds despite variations in methodology across studies, including differences in sampling and measurement techniques. This paper defines the construct of malevolence, and proposes that malevolent representations are a central feature of the experience of childhood maltreatment. Implications for diagnosis and treatment are considered, and directions for future research are outlined. © 2000 Elsevier Science Ltd.*

KEY WORDS. Childhood maltreatment, Personality assessment, Malevolence.

THE INTRODUCTION OF the *battered child syndrome* (Kempe, Silverman, Steele, Droegemueller, & Silver, 1962) into the professional literature launched an era of scientific study of the psychological consequences of childhood maltreatment. Countless clinical and empirical reports have been written on the topic since that time, leading to the nearly universal notion that abuse affects victims in deleterious ways. Far-reaching and diverse outcomes have been reported, spanning behavioral, cognitive, and psychosocial realms. In a recent review of the effects of sexual abuse, Kendall-Tackett, Williams, and Finkelhor (1993) concluded that “there is virtually no general domain of symptomatology that has not been associated with a history of sexual abuse” (p. 173). Although this statement summarizes their examination of the sexual abuse literature, it can be applied to the areas of physical abuse and neglect as well (e.g., Ammerman, Cassisi, Hersen, & Van Hasselt, 1986; Erickson & Egeland, 1996; Malinosky-Rummell & Hansen, 1993). As exemplars of the first wave of empirical investigation of the sequelae of childhood maltreatment (Briere, 1992), this body of research has proven

Correspondence should be addressed to Sidney R. Ornduff, Department of Psychology, P.O. Box 3415, Room 135, Biological Sciences, University of Wyoming, Laramie, WY 82071; E-mail: sornduff@uwo.edu

helpful in documenting and describing the damaging effects of child abuse. However, the need for more theory-driven research has been expressed (Briere, 1992; Kendall-Tackett et al., 1993; Wolf & Alpert, 1991). Among the theoretical approaches that might be applied to the problem of child abuse, the phenomenological perspective provided by object relations theory is particularly relevant.

A number of recent studies have examined the self- and object-representations of victims of child abuse. These studies include a series of investigations that we conducted (Freedenfeld, Ornduff, & Kelsey, 1995; Ornduff, Centeno, & Kelsey, 1999; Ornduff, Freedenfeld, Kelsey, & Critelli, 1994; Ornduff & Kelsey, 1996) to examine the object relations of sexually and physically abused children. Our data suggest that malevolence is a salient feature that distinguishes victims of child abuse from nonvictims. The present paper defines the construct of malevolence, reviews the quantitative empirical literature on childhood maltreatment and object relations, and proposes that malevolent representations are a central feature of the experience of child abuse.

THE CONSTRUCT OF MALEVOLENCE

Malevolence is a perceptual-affective stance characterized by a tendency to perceive and expect interpersonal relationships to be threatening, destructive, and overwhelmingly painful. Malevolence represents one extreme anchor of a continuum that has benevolence at its other pole. Malevolence is distinct from the negative expectancies that characterize many depressed individuals (Beck, Rush, Shaw, & Emery, 1979; Nigg, Lohr, Westen, Gold, & Silk, 1992; Westen, Lohr, Silk, Gold, & Kerber, 1990); the negative attributional biases that have been identified in samples of aggressive boys (Dodge & Somberg, 1987), martially distressed couples (Fincham, Beach, & Baucum, 1987), and child-abusing mothers (Larrance & Twentyman, 1983); and the negative descriptions of significant others that have been reported in studies of adolescent and young adult psychiatric patients (Baker, Silk, Westen, Nigg, & Lohr, 1992; Blatt, Stayner, Auerbach, & Behrends, 1996; Blatt, Wein, Chevron, & Quinlan, 1979; Blatt, Wiseman, Prince-Gibson, & Gatt, 1991). Mired with hostility and aggression, malevolence presents with elements of hatred, viciousness, and intense ill will, and with corresponding cognitive distortions that fit its extreme nature. Malevolence can be self- or other-directed, and may characterize or merely color object relations.

As a world view, malevolence serves as an affective apperceptive filter through which human experience is interpreted and understood. As such, it mediates an individual's responses and reactions to people and relationships, and may take the form of hostile and vengeful action or remain as fantasy. A combination of environmental factors (e.g., exposure to violence, subgroup affiliation, parental psychopathology, and stress) and individual differences (e.g., frustration tolerance, impulse control, conscience, physiological arousal, self-regulatory capacities, and information processing) may moderate transformation of malevolent proclivities into hostile destructiveness and violent rage.

OBJECT RELATIONS THEORY, MALTREATMENT, AND MALEVOLENCE

Rooted in classical Freudian theory (Freud, 1957), object relations theory emphasizes an individual's interactions with other human beings, and the processes through which interpersonal relationships are internalized and imbued with personal mean-

متن کامل مقاله

دریافت فوری ←

ISIArticles

مرجع مقالات تخصصی ایران

- ✓ امکان دانلود نسخه تمام متن مقالات انگلیسی
- ✓ امکان دانلود نسخه ترجمه شده مقالات
- ✓ پذیرش سفارش ترجمه تخصصی
- ✓ امکان جستجو در آرشیو جامعی از صدها موضوع و هزاران مقاله
- ✓ امکان دانلود رایگان ۲ صفحه اول هر مقاله
- ✓ امکان پرداخت اینترنتی با کلیه کارت های عضو شتاب
- ✓ دانلود فوری مقاله پس از پرداخت آنلاین
- ✓ پشتیبانی کامل خرید با بهره مندی از سیستم هوشمند رهگیری سفارشات