



The Flying Monkey Newsletter

Combating Mental Health Ignorance and Mental Health Complicity with Child Abuse

C.A. Childress, Psy.D.

Peer Review of Research

Peer-review of journal articles is applicable to research studies, not diagnostic formulations. Diagnosis involves the application of standard and accepted psychological principles and constructs, that are already fully established through research, to a particular symptom set and pathology.

An attachment-based model for the pathology traditionally called “parental alienation” (an attachment-related pathology), is not a new theory within mental health, it is the application of standard and established psychological constructs to the symptoms displayed by the child. This is called diagnosis.

Furthermore, full clinical formulations regarding pathology are not submitted for peer-reviewed journal publication because clinical formulations of pathology are typically too extensive to be captured in a 10-page journal article. Kohut presented object-relations formulations of clinical pathology in a book. Minuchin presented family systems formulations of pathology in a book. Kernberg described personality disorder pathology in a book.

Clinical theoretical formulations are presented in books, not journal articles, and books are not peer-reviewed. The “peer-review” of clinical formulations of pathology occurs when the book is read by mental health professionals.

Gardner's Failure

In the mid-1980s, a psychiatrist, Richard Gardner identified a pathology in many families going through high-conflict divorce, in which one parent formed a **cross-generational alliance** with the child against the other parent. He called this pathology “parental alienation” and proposed that it represented an entirely new form of pathology within mental health, a “new syndrome,” which he labeled **Parental Alienation Syndrome (PAS)**, and he identified an entirely unique new set of symptom features for this supposedly “new syndrome.”

Gardner was correct in identifying a form of pathology sometimes evident in high-conflict divorce (i.e., a **cross-generational coalition** of the child with one parent against the other parent), but he was wrong in proposing that it represented a new form of pathology that was unique in all of mental health; a “new syndrome.” Gardner was simply a very poor diagnostician.

Rather than remain within standard and established psychological principles and constructs to describe the pathology – a procedure called diagnosis – Gardner too quickly abandoned the professional rigor of diagnosis in proposing a “new syndrome” that was supposedly unique in all of mental health, with an equally unique set of eight symptom identifiers. Gardner skipped the step of diagnosing the pathology from within standard and established psychological principles and constructs.

In response to Gardner’s abdication of the professional rigor necessary for diagnosing the pathology, establishment mental rejected Gardner’s proposal of a “new syndrome” and provided the constructive feedback that all forms of pathology need to be properly diagnosed within standard and established psychological principles and constructs.

An attachment-based model of the “parental alienation” pathology (as described in the book, *Foundations*; Childress, 2015), corrects this initial error of Gardner’s by describing the diagnostic formulation of the pathology of “parental alienation” from entirely within standard and well-established psychological principles and constructs. An attachment-based model of “parental alienation” is not proposing a “new pathology” within mental health; it is the application of standard and well-established psychological principles and constructs to the symptoms displayed by the child. This is called diagnosis.

The argument for “peer-reviewed” research applies only to the review of research methodology and regarding the research support for proposals for new forms of pathology – it does not apply to the application of standard and established psychological principles to a pathology. This is called diagnosis.



Justification for Colluding with Child Abuse: The Attachment-Based Model of “Parental Alienation” is Not Peer-Reviewed

The Justification: This line of argument maintains that an attachment-based model of “parental alienation” represents a “new theory” developed by Dr. Childress that has not been peer-reviewed, and so it has not been accepted by establishment mental health.

The Truth: An attachment-based model of “parental alienation” is NOT a “new theory.” It is the application of well-established and fully accepted psychological principles and constructs to the attachment-related symptoms of the child. This is called diagnosis. The application of standard and established psychological principles and constructs to the diagnostic formulation of clinical pathology does not require “peer-reviewed” journal publication. Diagnosis is based on symptom features, not peer-review.

Established Psychological Principles and Constructs

All of the psychological principles and constructs applied in an attachment-based model of “parental alienation” already have a substantial research foundation and are well-established constructs in the professional literature. Attachment theory is an established construct with a substantial research foundation. Personality disorders are an established construct with a substantial research foundation. Family systems theory is one of the four primary schools of established professional psychology with a substantial foundation in the professional literature. The application of these constructs to child and family pathology is NOT a “new theory” - it is called diagnosis.

Conceptual Formulations of Pathology Are Presented in Books, Not Journals

Clinical formulations and descriptions of pathology are typically too extensive to be presented in a 10-page journal article. Clinical formulations and descriptions of pathology are traditionally presented in a book to allow for the required elaboration of the pathology.

Salvador Minuchin wrote a book, *Families and Family Therapy*, to describe the clinical formulation of family systems pathology. Carl Rogers wrote a book, *On Becoming a Person*, to describe the clinical formulation of humanistic psychology. Heinz Kohut wrote a book, *The Analysis of the Self*, to describe object-relations self-psychology. Otto Kernberg wrote a book, *Borderline Conditions and Pathological Narcissism*, describing personality disorder pathology.

The peer-review of journal articles applies to research studies in order to verify proper research methodology and the conclusions reached from research studies. The peer-review of clinical formulations of pathology, on the other hand, are conducted when mental health professionals read the book that describes the clinical formulation of the pathology.

This is an Argument Against Gardnerian PAS – Not an Attachment-Based Model

Gardner proposed that there was a unique new form of pathology, with unique new symptom indicators. The argument offered against this proposal of a unique new form of pathology was that there was no research evidence to support Gardner’s proposal of a “new syndrome” in mental health. This was a valid critique of the PAS model.

An attachment-based model, however, makes NO such proposal of a new form of pathology in mental health. An attachment-based model of “parental alienation” applies **well established** and **fully accepted** psychological principles and constructs to the child’s symptom display. This is called diagnosis.



Component Pathology of an Attachment-Based Model of “Parental Alienation”

I believe that this type of pathology exists

I believe that this type of pathology **DOES NOT** exist

Type of Pathology:

Cross-generational coalition

Narcissistic/borderline personality pathology

The pathology of splitting

The pathology of projection

The psychological decompensation of narcissistic/borderline personalities into delusional beliefs under stress

Role-reversal relationships

The attachment system

Internal working models of attachment (schemas)

Attachment trauma (disorganized attachment)

The association of childhood attachment trauma to the formation of narcissistic and borderline personality traits

The reenactment of attachment trauma patterns

The misattribution of anxiety

The misunderstanding of a grief response

An attachment-based model of “parental alienation” represents the application of standard and established psychological principles and constructs to the child’s symptom display. An attachment-based model for the pathology is NOT a “new theory” – it is **diagnosis**.

If anyone wants additional research support for an attachment-based model of “parental alienation,” it is incumbent upon them to specify which component construct or pathology of an attachment-based model they believe requires additional research support.



Quotes from Professional Psychology

Jay Haley:

From Wikipedia: **Jay Douglas Haley** (July 19, 1923 – February 13, 2007) was one of the founding figures of brief and family therapy in general and of the strategic model of psychotherapy, and he was one of the more accomplished teachers, clinical supervisors, and authors in these disciplines.

From Haley, J. (1977). Toward a theory of pathological systems. In P. Watzlawick & J. Weakland (Eds.), *The interactional view* (pp. 31-48). New York: Norton.

“The people responding to each other in the triangle are not peers, but one of them is of a different generation from the other two... In the process of their interaction together, the person of one generation forms a **coalition with the person of the other generation** against his peer. By ‘coalition’ is meant a process of joint action which is *against* the third person... The coalition between the two persons is denied. That is, there is certain behavior which indicates a coalition which, when it is queried, will be denied as a coalition... In essence, the **perverse triangle** is one in which the separation of generations is breached in a covert way. When this occurs as a repetitive pattern, the system will be pathological.” (p. 37; emphasis added)

Salvador Minuchin:

Salvador Minuchin is considered one of the preeminent figures in family systems therapy. He is the founder of structural family systems therapy, which represents one of the central models for family systems therapy.

From: Minuchin, S. (1974). *Families and Family Therapy*. Harvard University Press.

“The boundary between the parental subsystem and the child becomes diffuse, and the boundary around the parents-child triad, which should be diffuse, becomes inappropriately rigid. This type of structure is called a rigid triangle... The rigid triangle can also take the form of a stable coalition. One of the parents joins the child in a rigidly bounded **cross-generational coalition** against the other parent.” (p. 102; emphasis added)

“An inappropriately rigid cross-generational subsystem of mother and son versus father appears, and the boundary around this coalition of mother and son excludes the father. A cross-generational dysfunctional transactional pattern has developed.” (p. 61-62)

“The parents were divorced six months earlier and the father is now living alone... **Two of the children who were very attached to their father, now refuse any contact with him.** The younger children visit their father but express great unhappiness with the situation.” (p. 101; emphasis added)

About the Newsletter

Urban Dictionary: “**In popular psychology, a flying monkey is someone who does the narcissist’s bidding to inflict additional torment to the narcissist’s victim.**”

Too many mental health professionals collude with the pathology of the narcissistic/borderline parent because of professional ignorance and incompetence in the recognition, assessment, and diagnosis of narcissistic and borderline personality pathology as it is being expressed within the family. As a direct consequence of their professional ignorance and incompetence, these mental health persons collude with the **psychological abuse of children**, to the developmental and psychological harm of children and families, and in apparent violation of Standard 3.04 of the APA ethics code and their professional “duty to protect.”

Each edition of the Flying Monkey Newsletter will answer a false and distorted justification offered for **their collusion with child abuse.**