



# The Flying Monkey Newsletter

Combating Mental Health Ignorance and  
Mental Health Complicity with Child Abuse

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## The Dark Triad

Research into personality traits has identified a consistent constellation of three socially malevolent personality characteristics, called the **Dark Triad** (Paulhus & Williams, 2002):

1. **Narcissistic** self-absorbed personality traits
2. **Machiavellian** cynical and self-serving manipulation of others
3. **Psychopathy**, the absence of remorse and empathy

A second **Vulnerable Dark Triad** personality has also been identified (Miller, Dir, Gentile, Wilson, Pryor, & Campbell, 2010), consisting of:

1. Vulnerable rather than grandiose narcissism,
2. Manipulative psychopathy,
3. Borderline personality traits.

Research on the Dark Triad has linked it to:

- Vengefulness in romantic relationships (Giammarco & Vernon, 2014; Rasmussen & Boon, 2014)
- The absence of empathy and disregard for the rights of others (Jonason & Krause, 2013; Wai & Tiliopoulos, 2012)
- Deceit, lying, and self-serving fabrication of facts (Baughman, Jonason, Lyons, & Vernon, 2014; Jonason, Lyons, Baughman, & Vernon, 2014)
- High-conflict patterns of communication (Horan, Guinn, & Banghart, 2015)

## Psychological Control

Parental psychological control of children is a recognized and scientifically documented fact. In his book, *Intrusive Parenting: How Psychological Control Affects Children and Adolescents*, published by the American Psychological Association, Brian Barber and his colleague, Elizabeth Harmon, identify and describe **40 empirically validated scientific studies** demonstrating the psychological control of children by parents.

According to Barber and Harmon:

“Psychological control refers to parental behaviors that are intrusive and manipulative of children’s thoughts, feelings, and **attachment to parents.**” (Barber & Harmon, 2002, p. 15; emphasis added)

According to Stone, Buehler, & Barber:

“The central elements of psychological control are intrusion into the child’s psychological world and self-definition and parental attempts to **manipulate the child’s thoughts and feelings** through invoking guilt, shame, and anxiety. Psychological control is distinguished from behavioral control in that the parent attempts to control, through the use of criticism, dominance, and anxiety or guilt induction, the youth’s thoughts and feelings rather than the youth’s behavior.” (Stone, Buehler, and Barber, 2002, p. 57; emphasis added)

In the *Journal of Emotional Abuse*, Kerig describes parental psychological control of the child:

“Rather than telling the child directly what to do or think, as does the behaviorally controlling parent, the psychologically controlling parent uses indirect hints and responds with guilt induction or withdrawal of love if the child refuses to comply. In short, an intrusive parent strives to **manipulate the child’s thoughts and feelings** in such a way that the child’s psyche will conform to the parent’s wishes.” (Kerig, 2005, p. 12; emphasis added)

Parental narcissistic and borderline personality pathology is particularly vulnerable to collapse in response to the rejection and abandonment by the spousal attachment figure which is inherent to divorce. In response to divorce, the narcissistic/borderline personality parent will frequently “triangulate” the child into the spousal conflict through psychological manipulation and control of the child’s **“thoughts, feelings, and attachment to parents”** in order to stabilize the collapsing psychological structure of the narcissistic/borderline parent.



## Justification for Colluding with Child Abuse: Children's Expressed Preference for Parents Following Divorce is Authentic

**The Justification:** This line of argument maintains that children's asserted preference for a particular parent is authentic and is not being influenced by the psychological control of the child by the allied and supposedly "preferred" parent.

**The Truth:** Children love both parents, and children want the love of both parents in return. For a child to express a "preference" in love for his or her parents would be analogous of a healthy parent expressing a "preference" in love between multiple children (i.e., "I love my son more than I love my daughter").

Following divorce, children should remain neutral in the inter-spousal conflict. Children should be allowed to love both parents and receive the love of both parents in return.

When a child expresses a "preference" for one parent over the other, this is a clear indication that the child's neutrality in the spousal conflict has been broken by the supposedly "preferred" parent who is seeking to make the child a "prize to be won" in the inter-spousal conflict.

Healthy parents do not reject their children. Healthy children do not reject their parents. **Spouses reject spouses.**

A child's apparent rejection of a parent following divorce is a clear indication of the imposed intrusion into the child's healthy self-structure development of the *spousal* conflict, "The essential impact of psychological control of the child is to **violate the self-system** of the child." (Barber & Harmon: 2002, p. 24; emphasis added)

### The Narcissistic Parent Uses (manipulates and exploits) the Child

According to Kernberg: "The need to *control* the idealized objects, to use them in attempts to manipulate and exploit the environment and to "destroy potential enemies," is linked with inordinate pride in the "possession" of these perfect objects totally dedicated to the patient." (Kernberg, 1975, p. 33)

The narcissistic parent – the Dark Triad parent - will triangulate the child into the spousal conflict by forcing the child to choose sides in the spousal conflict, using subtle but powerful techniques of psychological control as described in the research literature (e.g., Barber, 2002; Kerig, 2005).

The child's only escape from being triangulated into the spousal conflict will be for the child to surrender to the psychological manipulation and control of the narcissistic Dark Triad parent (or Vulnerable Dark Triad parent). If the child tries to maintain an affectionally bonded relationship with the other parent, the narcissistic parent will continue to apply intense psychological pressure on the child to choose sides.

According to Kerig in the *Journal of Emotional Abuse*: "Rather than telling the child directly what to do or think, as does the behaviorally controlling parent, the psychologically controlling parent uses indirect hints and responds with guilt induction or withdrawal of love if the child refuses to comply. In short, an intrusive parent strives to manipulate the child's thoughts and feelings in such a way that the child's psyche will conform to the parent's wishes." (Kerig, 2005, p. 12)

According to Kerig in the *Journal of Emotional Abuse*: "In order to carve out an island of safety and responsivity in an unpredictable, harsh, and depriving parent-child relationship, children of highly maladaptive parents may become precocious caretakers who are adept at reading the cues and meeting the needs of those around them. The ensuing preoccupied attachment with the parent interferes with the child's development of important ego functions, such as self organization, affect regulation, and emotional object constancy." (Kerig, 2005, p. 14)

Children love their parents – both parents – and children want the love of both parents in return. This is a fact.



## Quotes from Professional Psychology

Barber and Harmon (2002) define parental psychological control of the child:

“Psychological control refers to parental behaviors that are intrusive and manipulative of children’s thoughts, feelings, and **attachment to parents**. These behaviors appear to be associated with disturbances in the psychoemotional boundaries between the child and parent, and hence with the development of an independent sense of self and identity.” (p. 15; emphasis added)

Research by Stone, Buehler, and Barber (2002) establishes the link between parental psychological control of children and marital conflict:

“This study was conducted using two different samples of youth. The first sample consisted of youth living in Knox County, Tennessee. The second sample consisted of youth living in Ogden, Utah.” (p. 62)

“The analyses reveal that variability in psychological control used by parents is not random but it is **linked to interparental conflict**, particularly covert conflict. Higher levels of covert conflict in the marital relationship heighten the likelihood that parents would use psychological control with their children. This might be because both parental psychological control and covert conflict are anxiety-driven. They share defining characteristics, particularly the qualities of intrusiveness, indirectness, and manipulation.” (p. 86; emphasis added)

Stone, Buehler, and Barber (2002) offer an explanation for their finding that intrusive parental psychological control of children is related to high inter-spousal conflict:

“The concept of triangles “describes the way any three people relate to each other and involve others in emotional issues between them” (Bowen, 1989, p. 306). In the anxiety-filled environment of conflict, a third person is triangulated, either temporarily or permanently, to ease the anxious feelings of the conflicting partners. By default, that third person is exposed to an anxiety-provoking and disturbing atmosphere. For example, a child might become the scapegoat or focus of attention, thereby transferring the tension from the marital dyad to the parent-child dyad. Unresolved tension in the marital relationship might spill over to the parent-child relationship through parents’ use of psychological control as a way of securing and maintaining a strong emotional alliance and level of support from the child. As a consequence, the triangulated youth might feel pressured or obliged to listen to or agree with one parents’ complaints against the other. The resulting enmeshment and **cross-generational coalition** would exemplify parents’ use of psychological control to coerce and maintain a parent-youth emotional alliance against the other parent (Haley, 1976; Minuchin, 1974).” (p. 86-87; emphasis added)

Soenens and Vansteenkiste (2010) describe the various methods used to achieve parental psychological control of the child:

“Psychological control can be expressed through a variety of parental tactics, including (a) guilt-induction, which refers to the use of guilt inducing strategies to pressure children to comply with a parental request; (b) contingent love or love withdrawal, where parents make their attention, interest, care, and love contingent upon the children’s attainment of parental standards; (c) instilling anxiety, which refers to the induction of anxiety to make children comply with parental requests; and (d) invalidation of the child’s perspective, which pertains to parental constraining of the child’s spontaneous expression of thoughts and feelings.” (p. 75)

“The insidiously manipulative tactics used by internally controlling parents are relatively more likely to induce feelings of undue loyalty towards parents and other internal pressures to comply with parental authority. Such compliance would be driven by a desire to avoid feeling guilty and by anxiety to lose parents’ love.” (p. 82)



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### 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 by these mental health persons for **their collusion with child abuse**.