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Psychological maltreatment: Progress achieved

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The devotion of a central article in this special issue and of responses by a variety of researchers indicates that serious scholarly attention is finally being focused on psychological maltreatment. This is a topic of genuine significance to child development and psychopathology research. McGee and Wolfe's (1991) article raises important issues and applies a theoretical focus that are useful in highlighting important aspects of psychological maltreatment.

In this article, we take issue with McGee and Wolfe's conclusion that attempts to define psychological maltreatment have had limited success. We argue that a strong beginning has been made and that some consensus has been achieved toward operationally defining psychological maltreatment. We will first review some of the most recent research on psychological maltreatment (Brassard & Hart, 1989; Brassard, Hart, & Hardy, 1991; Claussen & Crittenden, 1991; Hart & Brassard, 1989–1991) not reviewed by the authors. The remainder of the article, following the outline of topics presented by McGee and Wolfe, will identify points of agreement and areas that we think deserve comment.

Recent Research

In 1986 and 1987, the National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect (NCCAN) funded two research projects on psychological maltreatment. Claussen and Crittenden (1991) compared a sample of 175 maltreated children, 39 children receiving mental health services, and 176 normative controls. They found that psychological maltreatment was present in most cases of physical maltreatment, and that it predicted detrimental outcomes for children, while severity of physical injury did not. They also found that psychological maltreatment can occur alone and that assessments of parental psychologically maltreating behavior and negative child outcomes are highly related. The findings from our work are similar.

In an attempt to establish an adequately operationalized definition of psychological maltreatment, we used a combination of categories of psychological abuse and neglect. These categories had been conceptualized by ourselves and other researchers (Baily & Baily, 1986; Brassard, Germain, & Hart, 1987; Garbarino, Guttman, & Seeley, 1986) and refined by the International Conference on Psychological Abuse of Children and its extensions (Office for the Study of the Psychological Rights of the Child, 1985; *Proceedings*, 1983). We have subsequently empirically identified and articulated the following five distinct subtypes of psychological maltreatment.

Spurning is a type of verbal battering that is a combination of rejection and hostile degradation. The parent may actively refuse to help a child or to even acknowl-

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edge the child's request for help. Spurning also includes calling a child debasing names, labeling the child as inferior, and publicly humiliating the child.

Terrorizing is threatening to physically hurt, kill, or abandon the child if he or she doesn't behave. It also includes exposing a child to violence or threats directed toward loved ones and leaving a young child unattended.

Isolating entails the active isolation of a child by an adult. The child may be locked in a closet or room for an extended length of time, or the adult may limit or refuse to allow any interaction with peers or adults outside the family.

Exploiting/corrupting involves modeling antisocial acts and unrealistic roles or encouraging and condoning deviant standards or beliefs. This includes teaching the child criminal behavior, keeping a child at home in the role of a servant or surrogate parent in lieu of school attendance, or encouraging a child to participate in the production of pornography.

Denying emotional responsiveness includes ignoring a child's attempts to interact and reacting to a child in a mechanistic way that is devoid of affectionate touch, kisses, and talk. Parents who behave this way communicate through acts of omission that they are not interested in the child and are emotionally unavailable.

As part of a 3-year federal grant from the National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect (Hart & Brassard, 1986), we found that psychological maltreatment can be differentiated into distinct subtypes and distinguished from appropriate parenting through the use of multidimensional scaling of parenting practices. As part of this project we developed the Psychological Maltreatment Rating Scales (PMRS).

The PMRS is a 15-item observation rating scale of mother–child interaction that assesses the presence and severity of five subtypes of psychological maltreatment and ten aspects of prosocial parenting. It assesses the three aspects of parenting that emerged from our factor analyses and that have much support in the developmental literature: psychological abuse, quality of emotional support, and facilitation of social and cognitive development. A high score on psychological abuse reflects the presence of an abusive style of parent–child interaction with elements of terrorizing, spurning, or exploiting and corrupting. An absence of any indication of emotional support or facilitation of social or cognitive development reflects psychological neglect. The presence of support or facilitation of development are parenting characteristics that appear to buffer the effects of psychological abuse and that can be supported in treatment.

The original PMRS version was designed for rating mother–child interaction during a videotaped 15-minute teaching task. Administered to a sample of 110 maltreating and carefully matched controls at three age levels (in 73 cases providing full data), the scales accurately differentiated the maltreatment status of 100% of the infant/toddler sample and 78% of the preschool/school-aged sample. The scales also successfully identified 95% of the infant/toddlers and 84% of the preschool/school-aged children who were at clear developmental risk.

What Is Psychological Maltreatment?

While there might be general acceptance that psychological maltreatment refers to psychological conditions that primarily cause psychological damage, this is not sufficient to direct effective research or practice. McGee and Wolfe present a 2 × 2 matrix table that relates physical acts and psychological acts to physical consequences and psychological consequences. They recognize that others, ourselves included, have suggested that all four cells are relevant to psychological maltreatment. However, they strongly encourage that cell 4, the intersection of purely psychological acts and consequences, be given sole consideration in work on this topic. They argue that, at this time, to do otherwise confuses the issue of psychological maltreatment.

We agree that considering all four cells

to represent psychological maltreatment conditions makes the topic difficult to deal with, but we argue that the topic must be considered in just this way. A dualistic approach that attempts to separate, artificially, physical from psychological conditions overly simplifies the topic and denies reality. Psychological and physical conditions of psychological maltreatment interact and are frequently interdependent. All cells presented by McGee and Wolfe, with the possible exception of cell 1 (the intersection of purely physical acts and consequences), represent established conditions of psychological maltreatment. One might argue that cell 1, in fact, would be an empty cell if it were not for cases of physical maltreatment that on their first instance result in the death of the victim. Additionally, one might argue that reality would be better represented if the acts and consequences were each divided into two categories: (1) physical and psychological, and (2) psychological alone.

McGee and Wolfe give consideration to other definitional issues which deserve comment, specifically (a) the segment of society with definitional interests, (b) the standards of evidence presently and potentially to be applied to decisionmaking, and (c) the significance of mediating variables. They emphasize the importance of constructing clinical and legal definitions: the first serving theory, research, and practice purposes; the second serving practice purposes for involuntary intervention on the part of society. We agree with Aber and Zigler (1981) that it is necessary to have multiple definitions for multiple purposes if we are to be effective in dealing with this topic. At the very least, a third definitional orientation, one expressing community or general societal perspectives on psychological maltreatment, should be developed (Garbarino & Gilliam, 1980; *Proceedings*, 1983). Achieving a popularly supported moral perspective will be necessary if prevention or correction efforts are to succeed.

In regard to standards of evidence, McGee and Wolfe have raised questions about the degree to which it is important to have evidence of acts of psychological maltreatment, and established harm as consequences of psychological maltreatment and/or potential for psychological harm as a consequence of psychological maltreatment. At the present time, it appears that it would be wise to develop standards of evidence for the following three conditions: (a) those in which acts alone would be given weight (evidence to support intervention to reduce threat of harm), (b) those in which negative consequences alone would be given weight (evidence to support therapeutic intervention), and (c) those in which the combination of acts and consequences clearly related would be given weight (evidence to support intervention to prevent further maltreatment and initiate rehabilitation) (Hart & Brassard, 1987).

Parental Acts: Physical or Nonphysical?

McGee and Wolfe recommend that definitions of psychological maltreatment be confined to parental acts that are purely psychological in nature. We believe limiting present research to parental acts makes some sense because it fits present practices of child protective services and current societal views on what justifies intervention in family life. It is important to note, however, that this narrow beginning must eventually be fit into the larger context of psychological maltreatment acts that are a part of broadly defined childrearing, undertaken deliberately or incidentally throughout the various human ecological system levels. For example, if the influences of the broader society are eventually to be applied to psychological maltreatment conditions, in contradiction to McGee and Wolfe, war zone and terrorism environments will need to be included in this context; they contribute to adult actions which teach children to fear, to hate, and to act in ways destructive to others.

Is there justification for excluding physical contact within the domain of psychological maltreatment? We suggest that psychological maltreatment cannot be ade-

quately measured in its pure form at this time, and that we should not encourage sole concentration on acts that are purely psychological in nature. As indicated previously, we consider physical and psychological conditions to be interactive and frequently interdependent. We believe that a psychological maltreatment act of "spurning" is clearly expressed in verbal putdowns, certain facial expressions, physical gestures, pushing a child away, and hitting a child. We have stated repeatedly that sexual abuse is primarily psychological maltreatment. It is not a form of psychological maltreatment, but it is made up of a composite of psychological maltreatment acts or subtypes (e.g., terrorizing, corrupting).

Additionally, problems exist in regard to practical opportunities for research and ethical responsibilities if researchers were to attempt to measure the psychological maltreatment in only its pure form. Populations that have been reported for child abuse and neglect, those more readily available for research purposes, include relatively few cases of pure psychological maltreatment. Populations in which pure forms of psychological maltreatment exist appear more likely to be found outside of populations processed by child protective services (Brassard, Hart, & Hardy, 1991; Claussen & Crittenden, 1991; Hart & Brassard, 1989–1991). The identification of these populations, particularly where severe forms of psychological maltreatment exist, would require, ethically, that they be reported to child protective services, and that could severely limit opportunities for prospective and longitudinal research. Additionally, recent evidence suggests psychological maltreatment associates of physical maltreatment can be isolated in research (Claussen & Crittenden, 1991). Therefore, we believe we should not, at this time, eliminate from research psychological maltreatment cases in which physical contact with the child has occurred. It is our impression that, while consensus in the field has not been reached on this point, there is general agreement with this position (Baily & Baily, 1986; Crittenden & Hart, 1989; Egeland & Erickson, 1987; Garbarino & Vondra, 1987; Hyman, 1987; Navarre, 1987).

What dimensions of psychological maltreatment should be considered in determining the seriousness of an act? McGee and Wolfe identify frequency of maltreatment and the intent of the parent as being important variables to consider in determining the level of severity on the continuum of severity of psychological maltreatment. We agree that frequency could and should be measured, but that intent of the adult perpetrator is probably not measurable and may not be highly relevant to the severity of the maltreatment, but is of clinical importance. It is difficult to assess the child's judgment of the intent of the perpetrator or other aspects of the child's interpretation of the event. This is a critical issue to explore in future research.

As to other determinants of severity, we recommend the variables of intensity, chronicity, and what McGee and Wolfe describe as inconsistent parenting. Chronicity and frequency can be reliably measured. Intensity deserves attention as a variable. (We have used severity ratings that are a combination of frequency and intensity.) Inconsistency in parenting might better be described as the pattern of temporal sequence and balance of positive and negative parenting acts. The results of our research indicate that differences in the balance between positive and negative childrearing or parental acts are associated with different consequences for child development.

Outcomes: Physical or Nonphysical?

McGee and Wolfe advocate defining psychological maltreatment in terms of the topography of parental behavior exhibited and not on the basis of the effects it may have on the child. They do advocate independent measurement of the impact on the child over time to ascertain the degree to which behavior that appears to be harmful actually is. We agree that psychological maltreatment needs to be defined in terms of parental behavior alone at this point in time, but we feel that parental behavior cannot be called maltreatment unless, in general, it has been established to produce a negative impact on child development. Therefore, we advocate concurrent measurement of parental behavior and developmental progress of children. Our whole child protective service system is based on what appears to adults to be harmful to children. Therefore, physical abuse and child sexual abuse are seen as harmful and tend to be dealt with in a fairly firm and straightforward way by society. This is not the case with neglect. Neglect is difficult to define, but all indications are that it is at least as harmful as physical and sexual abuse, if not more harmful in terms of its impact on child development (Crittenden, 1988; Erickson & Egeland, 1987; Gelardo & Sanford, 1987; Wolock & Horowitz, 1984).

Child development research and the study of child maltreatment should be used to create a system of intervention that is empirically based. Judgments about when to intervene in family life should be based on knowledge of the extent to which parental behaviors are likely to result in impairments in most children's developmental status.

McGee and Wolfe mention that there are many factors that may mediate the impact of child maltreatment on child development, including the child's vulnerabilities and strengths. We do not dispute that some children have personal features such as physical attractiveness (Elder, Van Nguyen, & Caspi, 1985) or intelligence (Waters & Sroufe, 1983) that may both protect them and/or allow them to better cope with the adversities that they experience. However, we find striking the degree to which environmental conditions that effect the quality of caregiving account for much of the variability in child outcomes (e.g., mother's social support [Farber & Egeland, 1987], availability of compensatory relationships and birth spacing [Werner, 1988], and survival stressors on parents depending on location of residence [Belsky & Vondra, 1989; Rutter, 1985]). Child characteristics, independent of these factors, appear to account for relatively little.

Developmental age is also mentioned by McGee and Wolfe as an important child variable that mediates the impact of psychological maltreatment. We agree that developmental age is an important characteristic and needs to be taken into consideration when deciding upon what constitutes psychological maltreatment and what does not. The Minnesota studies provide evidence for the greater impact of earlier maltreatment over later maltreatment (Sroufe, Egeland, & Kreutzer, 1990). Attachment theory and common sense support this (Bowlby, 1973, 1982). However, we have been surprised by the consistent topography of parental behavior across age levels of children in our own data and that of others. We used three age groups of children in our study and defined child competence differently depending on the child's age. The structure for mother behavior for the three age groups was virtually identical. We were also struck by the fact that Baily and Baily's research produced highly similar concepts across the ages. Additionally, Crittenden's CARE Index (for assessment of infant–mother dyads) uses items that are "relevant across the life-span" such as turn-taking, voice tone, facial expression (Crittenden, 1988a, p. 157). The observation scales developed by the Minnesota group have been employed at various ages as weli (Pianta & Castaldi, 1989). Certainly, different ages demand different skills from parents, but we think that some identifiable general factors emerge across all ages that are relatively independent of the developmental age of the child. This needs further exploration.

The significance to be given to the meaning that the child makes of parental behavior is raised as an issue by McGee and Wolfe and by others (Garbarino & Vondra, 1987; Hart & Brassard, 1987; Navarre, 1987). A variety of mediating variables may influence any of the stages leading to, through, and beyond maltreatment. However, the subjective perspective of the child victim may be the most critical mediating

variable influencing the degree of suffering and extended consequences experienced by the child. McGee and Wolfe recommend that attribution theory be applied to guide research in this area; we concur. At this time, adequate means for determining the meaning a child subscribes to treatment are not available. We have developed a child report version of parental behavior to be used with children between the ages of 8 and 11 to explore with them not only how typical certain types of good, bad, and indifferent parenting are, but also what attributions they make about that behavior. We are currently attempting to apply this procedure in a small study, but we are having difficulty devising instrumentation to get an indication of what meaning a younger child gives to parental behavior.

Some progress has been made in investigating child outcomes from maltreatment in the form of child behavior modeled after parental behavior. Crittenden (1988b) argued for using assessments of the caregiver's behavior because the infant (and young child) use that behavior to develop expectations of the parent as caregiver. Main and Goldwyn (1984) reported that children may exhibit the maladaptive behavioral characteristics of a rejecting mother by as early as 1–3 years of age. This is obviously an area that deserves more attention.

We disagree with McGee and Wolfe that only the effects of harm to children that are psychological in nature should be studied. We feel that children can be physically harmed by parental behavior that is psychological in nature. For example, Corson and Davidson (1987) cited a New York Appellate case in which the judge ruled that a father could no longer have custody of his son because the son had developed ulcers as a result of living with his father, who had murdered his mother. While the perspective of McGee and Wolfe offers theoretical value, we think there is really no completely clear way of separating the effects of psychological maltreatment harm to children into purely physical and nonphysical categories.

McGee and Wolfe also propose that "if we precisely define and measure the extent to which a child has experienced each kind of maltreatment we can determine the unique contribution of each to subsequent maladjustment through statistical procedures" (p. 19). This would be ideal but difficult when studying the behavior that is very secretive in nature because of societal sanctions. As the authors note later in their article, Child Protective Service (CPS) records are notoriously incomplete and often inaccurate. Parents have many reasons to not disclose behavior to CPS workers, and many parents and CPS workers do not seem to be aware of behavior that is psychologically harmful. Getting good information seems to have been a major factor in the success of the Minnesota Longitudinal Study and in Crittenden's work in Virginia and Florida. The ability to develop good relationships that are maintained over time and where frequent visits to homes, in some cases daycare centers or clinics, allow the research team to get good ongoing data about the various forms of maltreatment, so that their differential effects can be examined. Even in these settings, researchers and clinicians are unlikely to see severe physical abuse and/or any forms of child sexual abuse, although behavioral indications may be present.

Subtypes of Psychological Maltreatment

McGee and Wolfe suggest that the subtypes that have been developed have major limitations for research purposes. The first weakness is that some proposed predictors are not distinct from the criterion. They indicate that definitions of psychological maltreatment cannot include any assessment of the harm to the child. We agree. In our work, we limited our definitions to parental behavior, and we independently assessed developmental status.

Their second objection is that some subtypes are not discrete. They use the example of a single behavior (refusing to let a child eat dinner with the family) as being both isolating and rejecting. We found through our scaling work we could define each subtype such that it could be sorted by both mental health professionals and by parents differing in their caregiving quality into distinct, nonoverlapping categories with 80% agreement or better. We also found that the final observational rating scales had only moderate correlations between each scale. For example, correlations ranged from .37 to .66 with a median correlation of .47, and interrater exact agreement ranged from 46% to 100% with a median of 80%.

Our work indicates that the subtypes are conceptually distinct not only from each other but also from adequate parenting. We agree with their proposition that a single parental behavior could indicate a number of different things to a child, but this does not limit the degree to which a distinct behavior can be identified with a high degree of interrator agreement.

The authors' third concern is that the subtypes that have been recommended do not include inconsistent parenting that has been clearly tied to the development of conduct disorders in children. This is a good point. In our work, we have not assessed the temporal quality of behavior over time, although our measures do assess both positive and negative parenting. Thus, we have been able to examine the differences in developmental status among children who have parents who provide, during one observation, consistent and mixed, positive and negative, forms of psychological treatment. Repeated measures would be necessary to obtain both types of data.

Their fourth concern is that the categories of psychological maltreatment that have been proposed are too heterogeneous in terms of theoretical focus. We think that their critique applies to past work but not to the current status of research in the field. We found that, while Baily and Baily's 18 categories were not mutually exclusive, their work informed our work. We took the different types of behavior that we considered to be adequate parenting and different levels of severity for previously refined subtypes of psychological maltreatment and had mental health professionals sort the items to the various Baily and Baily categories. We found that their 16 categories collapsed very nicely into 5 categories. On the basis of this and the other sorting work, we found that rejection was an indistinct category that could very precisely be broken down into a kind of a hostile pushing away and putting down, which we labeled spurning, and into a psychologically unavailable unresponsive form of caregiving that we had already created. Recent cross-cultural work has also found that rejection does not represent a distinct category (Bayraktar, 1990). These results confirmed our decision to merge exploiting and corrupting into one category.

McGee and Wolfe criticize that there is no continuum implied from mildly inadequate to severely inadequate parenting in the subtypes that have been proposed. Again, the work we have done with these subtypes has evolved to the point of producing scaled gradations in our observation scales. They also complain that the whole issue of neglect is a difficult one. They propose that psychological neglect be defined as the absence of positive parental attention. This would allow researchers to identify inconsistent parents who engage in both positive and negative behaviors. This is a good point, and it actually occurred in our research. We developed a scale to assess emotionally unresponsive caregiving. In the factor analysis, it loaded to a high degree ($-.82$ for the mothers of infant/toddlers and $-.74$ for the mothers of preschool/school-aged children) on the Factor Quality Emotional Support that a mother provided to a child. It did not load on the Psychological Abuse Factor with terrorizing, spurning, and corrupting/exploiting. Thus, we agree that it has a high negative relationship with positive parenting and that the best way to define neglect is as an absence of positive parental attention.

We have also found agency labels to be extremely unsatisfactory. In our infant sample, we found that the control group well babies were more psychologically maltreated and received less positive parental attention than did our maltreatment group.

The well babies were not well babies. When we looked at our measures of psychological maltreatment, we were able to sort children regardless of maltreatment status into competent and incompetent groups on the basis of the PMRS. This is similar to the results obtained by Claussen and Crittenden (1991) in their Miami sample, which included a control group exhibiting high rates of psychological maltreatment as well. They also found that it was psychological maltreatment, not physical maltreatment, that accounted for the apparent developmental delays in both the control and maltreatment samples.

McGee and Wolfe suggest that instead of using the different subtypes of psychological maltreatment, researchers should examine patterns of communication that undermine a child's resolution of developmental tasks. They include parental behavior that is unresponsive, inconsistent, and actively rejecting, and that maladaptively socializes emotion. This would include assessments of the emotional tenor of everyday communication, verbal aggression, threats and commission of frightening acts, and, as children age, the verbal content of what is actually conveyed to children. We agree that these are all important. We think, with the exception of inconsistent parenting (temporally defined), that these are subsumed by the PMRS. This is not to suggest that the PMRS is the ideal measure.

Implications for Developmental Psychopathology

We take issue with McGee and Wolfe's conclusion that attempts to define psychological maltreatment have had limited success. We argue that while much work remains to be done, a very strong beginning and some consensus have been achieved in terms of how to go about defining psychological maltreatment (Crittenden & Hart, 1989). On the basis of the work of Claussen and Crittenden and of ourselves, and building on the research of others in the field, we think that psychological maltreatment is a variable that can be distinctly identified as a form of maltreatment, it can be independently assessed from other forms of maltreatment, and, thus, it is a viable research concept and one that has major implications for developmental psychopathology. We find the organizational theoretical model emphasized by McGee and Wolfe (Cicchetti & Braunwald, 1984; Sroufe, 1979) to be useful in conceptualizing psychological maltreatment conditions but believe that there are additional models that should be applied, individually and in combination, to the study of this concept (e.g., basic human needs, coercion, and prisoner of war models) (Hart & Brassard, 1989–1991).

It is time to apply our understanding of child development and our growing knowledge of environmental interactions to gain an understanding of what constitutes a minimally adequate developmental context for children as they grow in home, schools, and daycare centers. The research of the Minnesota group (Egeland & Erickson, 1987) has prospectively related psychologically unavailable caregiving and verbal hostile caregiving to the development of child deviance and delay. The work of Claussen, Crittenden, and ourselves has demonstrated high concurrent correlations between psychological maltreatment and developmental delay in young children. In the Claussen and Crittenden work, these correlations hold even when physical abuse is controlled for. In our work, we obtained very high classification rates relative to child competence using our measures of psychological maltreatment both when examining maltreatment and control groups and when looking at child outcomes irrelevant of initial group status. The analysis of our measures indicate three clear factors that relate with other research and developmental psychopathology. These three factors are quality and degree of emotional support, facilitation of a child's social and cognitive development, and child psychological abuse. Our ability to observationally assess these factors is developed to the point that work should now move from laboratory ratings to real time assessments by child protective service workers in the home. An observer measure designed for child protective service case workers, usable during repeated home visits, could address this concern. An observer measure for the field would have to be highly correlated with the videotaped ratings, have acceptable interrater agreement, and be validated against measures of child developmental status.

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Defining psychological maltreatment: A prelude to research or an outcome of research?

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In commenting on the controversy surrounding the nomination of Samuel Huntington to the National Academy of Sciences, Diamond (1987) noted the disparate problems faced by scientists as they operationalize the concepts they use in their research. Diamond proposed that the process of operationalization was much more complex in the "soft" social sciences than in the "hard" physical sciences. Based on the level of this complexity, he concluded that the dichotomization of the sciences into hard and soft was incorrect. He suggested that they should be classified as hard and easy, with the social sciences comprising the hard category and the physical sciences the easy category.

The many thoughtful attempts of researchers, mental health professionals, lawyers, legislators, and others to define the various forms of child maltreatment are clear examples of the "hardness" of the science in which we are engaged. McGee and Wolfe (1991) are to be congratulated for their willingness to struggle with the issue of defining psychological maltreatment and for helping us to see more clearly the problems that arise in this process. A particular strength of their article is the discussion of the interconnectedness of physical and psychological maltreatment, and the definitional problems that can ensue when this interconnectedness is not recognized and addressed.

My commentary on their article will focus on two issues. The first issue is my disagreement with their conclusion that we can and should develop a "research" definition of psychological maltreatment. The second issue involves the most appropriate method for defining psychological maltreatment. I agree with McGee and Wolfe's conclusion that we should eventually base the definition on the harmful nature of certain parent–child interactions. However, I suggest an alternative process for defining psychological maltreatment. McGee and Wolfe propose that the process can be "reduced to two primary questions," both of which are related to the meaning of "psychological." I argue that the process is not so much linked to the meaning of "psychological," but rather to the meaning of "maltreatment." I explore the ways in which the meaning of maltreatment will influence the timing and form of the definition of psychological maltreatment.

I fully agree that defining psychological maltreatment is an important task. Many children suffer from the consequences of psychological maltreatment, and the study of this form of child abuse is an important step to reducing these consequences. There are several methods by which the concept of psychological maltreatment can be de-

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