

Abstract

This paper will examine the possible relationship between domestic terrorism and an early failure to engage in positive object relations. This issue consists of a combination of factors that lead an individual to have barriers to regular interaction with others. Whether it is early childhood abuse, lack of resources, or estrangement from the government, the individual follows down a path that can ultimately direct them to act against the system that has facilitated the process of separation from a primary survival need, consistency. By analyzing the early childhood history of individuals who have perpetrated crimes against society, aka domestic terrorism, this paper will attempt to explain the interplay of early childhood experience with what we deem to be anti-social acts.

Introduction

We live in a time where almost every day, we get bombarded with new information about someone who has recently acted against the better interests of society via acts considered anti-social. Although it is easy to view these acts through the lens of pathology, it is posited that perhaps society itself is a witch's brew that creates these individuals who are predisposed to outlandish acts against the masses.

Through research and anecdotal information, the early childhood experiences of individuals such as Timothy McVeigh and the Columbine perpetrators and more contemporary acts such as the Uvalde school massacre will be analyzed to decipher the exact recipe for building individuals who, based on early childhood experiences, commit crimes against society in the most egregious and violent ways possible. Via the lens of object relations, we will reveal that via early relational deficits with either the primary caregiver or surrogate caregiver, aka government or employer, individuals are created to act out against others to destroy the object they perceive as a threat, the inconsistent object.

Review of the Literature:

Object Relations

Object Relations is a set of theories postulating that relationships, beginning with the mother-infant dyad, are primary and that intrapsychic, interpersonal, and group experiences lay the foundation for developing individual identity. The individual's interpretation of these relationships--both conscious and unconscious--becomes the basis for later relations with others, in friendship, marriage, and raising a family (Frank & Fox, 2003)

Object relations originate from the belief that people are motivated by aggressive and sexual drives. Hence, object relations posits that people are motivated by the need to be in contact with others and relate with them. According to the object relations theory, objects, such as mental representations, are people or inanimate things representing a person or a part of an individual. In most cases, it is a father, mother, or primary caregiver.

Internal objects stand for psychological and emotional impressions of an individual. These representations we hold on to when a person is not physically there. They influence how one views a person in real life. In addition, they affect how one relates with other people.

According to Mills (2020), Freud describes objects as the most critical variable that drives activities. They are often the sources of happiness, pain, fantasy formation, and anxiety, whether real or fantasized. In the psychoanalytic discourse, the main object is typically the mother. However, the father and the significant person the individual has contact with in their psychological development play a critical role. Objects can also be events or a series of them stimulated by external sources, such as societies or cultural institutions.

Object relations theorists emphasize the need for early family interactions, mainly mother-child relationships, in personality development. It is a common belief that infants form a mental picture of their identity through interaction with others. These images they form are internal and affect their future interpersonal relationships. Generally, object relations deal with the mental representation of objects as perceived by an individual, the self in connection to the object, and the relationship between the object and the self. The object relations theories emphasize the importance of early family interactions tallies with attachment theory. Attachment theory similarly cites that an infant's psychological connectedness affects their future relationships.

In object relations theory, an object can be imaginary or conceptual, such as a representation or what equates to internal objects. Internal objects are the attributes or elements of others that are internalized into the psychic structure. They are traits and qualities of others coded and filtered through psychic registers, including the mind and soul. Objects can be preferred, chosen, or desired in what is commonly known as object choice. Objects and their relations occur in the level of personality development and affect interpersonal communication. Object relations are linked to several forms of psychopathology and human suffering. Objects can be deemed good or bad, loved or hated, narcissistic and analytical, neglected, repressed or dissociated, among other traits. Objects could be mourned, fixated, constant, or transitory. Transitory objects, for instance, are mental representations of others and are hooked to non-living things.

Freud initiated the object relations theory as the reason for a drive, as it seeks satisfaction and makes the mother the main object in early psychic development. Other proponents of the object relations theory started to emphasize the object's role in contrast with the unconscious development of the ego (Mills, 2020). As a result, preferences were

accorded to object versus ego and unconscious mental constructs. Various theorists, including Sandler, Klein, and Fairbairn, developed and championed the British school of object relations in connection with these views. Bowlby further widened the role of the object in the development of a child, attachment, and the pediatrics fields.

In understanding why individuals are involved in domestic terrorism, object relations help us uncover these individuals' representations and their early life with their caregivers. Their experiences, including abuse, neglect, or even a lack of resources, have shaped their feelings about who they are and their relationships with others. There is a need to analyze "splitting " needs to understand all this (McHugh, 2022, pp46)." The term describes how an individual could not comprehend their parent's complexity during infancy. As a result, they perceive others as all good or bad and have no room to look at others as both. With time, children can blend how they view their parents and other people they are in a relationship with if they had a good experience with their caregivers or mothers. If they viewed their primary caregivers positively and deemed them supportive, they would likely shift and have less split perception of them. On the contrary, if they do not perceive their primary caregivers as good, they are highly likely to continue to hold splitting to them and others.

Although the definition above can give us a broad view of current thoughts on childhood and the relationship of childhood to the environment, object relations theorists have long posited that family dynamics, family structure, and the influences on early infancy can establish behavior trends for future interaction. Literature even points to the influence of early human interaction on clinicians. For example, Jeffery Applegate (1996) wrote about the parallel paths that exist within most clinicians. In particular, he explored his childhood and how it related not only to his work but also to his career choice. For example, not until he was thirty did he begin to see the correlation between his depression and his murderous impulses. Furthermore, the death of his older sibling at birth had created a deep-seated guilt in which his too-good-to-be-true false self disguised his murderous impulses. Applegate then drew on the parallel between the childhood of Winnicott, one of the founding fathers of object relations, and its effect on his career choice.

The need to play out early relational issues on an ongoing basis influenced Winnicott's life and career choices. Moreover, this need influenced Winnicott's psychoanalytical process, for suppressing the true self was subconsciously suppressed secondary to guilt. The paper

further suggests (1947) that Winnicott's false self, constructed to mask his aggression, compromised his capacity to engage aggression in his work. In his theory, he asserted that, to claim his/her true self, the developing child must "destroy" the subjectively perceived object (p.195). Even with skill and understanding of one's processes, a clinician is vulnerable to re-enacting early object relations (Applegate, 1996). This theory was further articulated in an article by Peter Duckley (2003), which attempted to review twenty years of American psychoanalysis. This attempt to evaluate theories such as self-psychology, relational psychoanalysis, and ego psychology was written to explain these theories' outgrowth from an object relations perspective.

Notably, he posits that early and pervasive empathic failures on the part of the parents lead to self-object failures and developmental arrests. Using techniques that enable the client to release from his unconscious "buried" harmful objects, Kohut (1971) used self-transference to help disentangle the client from the noxious maternal object. Regarding relational psychoanalysis, Buckley (2003) states that the clinical process has always been fundamentally relational. Although there are conclusions about the relations among these different interactional concepts and lines of thought, "it is best understood not as competing theories but the interwoven dimension of relationally" (p.12). Regarding Freudian theory, the author quotes Mitchell (2000), claiming that experience does not process from inside to outside but from outside to inside. Instead, this process happens via the internalization of external patterns. In short, the article explains that all interactions with other humans are relational by default and, therefore, susceptible to object-relational interaction.

A trend from this literature is that how one relates to the outside environment is established early in life. This is further supported by an article by Peery (2002), in which the author reviews Jungian's posited theory of developing the child's psyche. He discusses the inherent differences between the two theorists but applies both of their works to the application of therapy with children. In working with children, he claims that one can use the innate structure that, according to Jung, exists at birth while applying post-Freudian object relations to the actual clinical interaction. He maintains that ego development from the object relation perspective occurs when either internal states or stimulation intrudes upon the infant's universe.

Furthermore, the infant's personality develops due to parental influence, a critical external stimulation. Peery (2002) further explains the theory behind the true self and false self as purported by Winnicott (1947). The child's sense of trust develops if there is a "good enough" match between the child's spontaneous self-expression and the mother's nurturing. If these elements are not in harmony, a false self will emerge to offset the anxiety of not pleasing the parent. If this is applied to the question this paper attempts to answer, an inclination to construct pathology through early social interactions with the primary caregivers will be apparent. According to the article, Jungian theory strays from this point, claiming that the self was independent of the parents and was a root motivation for expressing the ego. This motivation is called primary disintegration, where the self and other archetypes unfold themselves in a latent structure deep inside the psyche. This process starts early in life, most likely in utero (Kolut, 1971).

According to Csatho and Birkas, early childhood experiences are crucial in developing personality and behavior formation. Detrimental childhood experiences characterized by poor parenting and high parent-child conflicts impact the development of undesirable personalities. Paulhus and Williams (2002) further stress that the malevolent personality construct involves three interconnected traits. These include subclinical narcissism and machievellianism. These malevolent personality traits push individuals to wish to do evil to others. This wish includes doing acts of terrorism to harm people.

A child's social being and personality development through interaction with social influences and their representation of the social world and self-interactions with parents, peers, temperament, and extreme life experiences such as abuse and divorce contribute to whom one becomes. These and many other influences on a person's growth characterize social and personality development. Hence, it is correct to say that humans are products of nature and nurture. Understanding personality requires looking at three common perspectives in childhood. First, the social context is where a child forms relationships that provide security, insecurity, and knowledge. The second is biological maturation, which is responsible for forming emotional and social competencies. The final perspective relates to a child developing their representation and the social world.

The collective unconscious archetypes must become accessible because they provide the fundamental organizing component of the human personality. (The archetype is a personality

imprint the organism utilizes to work with the outside world. Some may call it genetic predisposition or thumbprint) Secondary disintegration is also described as the loosening of the ego to accommodate new material presented by outside influence and internal somatic experience. Finally, reintegration occurs when new material joins in the mix with existing ego components. The result is a restructuring of the ego to incorporate the new information. A particular type of nurturing environment must exist for this process. Therefore, although Jung (1954) stated that a child has an inherent ego structure, he did express that the outside environment can influence a child.

Furthermore, Jung was aware of the contaminating effects that parents can have on their children. He stated that children are so deeply involved in the psychological attitude of their parents that "it is no wonder that most disturbances in childhood can be traced back to a disturbed psychic atmosphere in the home" (Jung, 1954). While almost all infants develop some emotional attachments with their caregivers or parents, their feelings of security differ in those attachments. Those children whose parents respond to their needs are securely attached. They are confident because their parents offer them support. Conversely, inconsistent care or neglect leads to insecure attachment in children. The security of children is the chief cornerstone in developing solid and successful friendships and intimate relationships.

Of course, these ideas are not limited to parental influence on the organism. In an article written by Hill and Hall (2002), they introduce the concept that our view of God and self are intertwined with our early experiences with our primary caregivers. Although there is not much clinical data on the matter under discussion, research suggests that one's capacity for a mature relationship with others predicts one's capacity for a mature relationship with God (Hall & Edwards, 2002). The idea that object relations theory becomes intertwined with a person's understanding of God's image is suggested via four specific areas. "First, each person's distinctive representational world has an important influence on her God-image. Second, God's image is more associated with the mother object representation. Third, the foundation for one's image of God is established in the earliest periods of life. Fourth, the capability of relational maturity with object representations may impact one's image of God " (Hall & Edwards, 2002). In establishing the thread, early interaction with parents and primary caregivers commonly influences future experiences with others, whether real or imagined.

Often, psychoanalytic therapists work to help individuals unleash their unconscious and conscious thoughts. This way, therapists can help them identify repressed fears and conflicts causing them distress. Therapists believe that negative early childhood experiences contribute to individuals repressing their feelings. The repressing behavior often makes one engage in behavior that is harmful to others. Often, this is one way of protecting them from feelings of distress and pain. Some individuals result in commit felonies.

Social Pathology

To further clarify this, it is necessary to investigate relevant literature on social pathology. From where does this arrive? Moreover, what can we do to change it? In an article by Kosson et al. (1994), the authors describe socialization as a process in which societal values are internalized. Individuals' attitudes, behaviors, and standards align with those perceived as appropriate and desirable for their current or future societal role. Several players are involved in socialization, including family, peers, societies, the mass media, religious institutions, and schools (Harms, 2018). These players work and exist together rather than independently. Families are the first players that encounter an infant when born. Therefore, they play a critical role in the socialization of an individual. Children and infants depend on their parents for nurturance and support during their early years.

Moreover, many theorists with diverse backgrounds have proposed that disruptions in this process play a central role in developing anti-social behavior. In particular, children learn anti-social behavior when rewards and punishments are inconsistent or random. In a view very similar to the object relations camp, theorists state that there appears to be a tendency for negative social interactions associated with early childhood trauma. They have found an association between under-socialization and anti-social activity across different periods, geographical regions, and genders. This literature reinforces that early interaction with primary caregivers influences relations with others, God, and self.

An individual's social functioning has essential outcomes for psychosis, yet little is known about its connection to trauma, regardless of the high rates among people with psychosis. As cited by the object relations theory, the early years of life impact how one develops relationships with family and peers. Children who were maltreated in the early years of development suffer

from trauma (Stain et al., 2014). Children's trauma disrupts attachment and leads to interpersonal violence concerning primary relationships. It affects the acquisition of interpersonal-related skills, such as the need for affiliation, and leads to difficulties in social functioning in adulthood.

More than 6 million children in the United States get referred to Child Protective Services for abuse and neglect. Other research on the impact of early life stress and child maltreatment shows that such children are highly likely to develop various social and mental health problems. Both adults and teens who have experienced early adversities like abuse, child abuse, neglect, and deprivation of needs are highly likely to be socially isolated, be involved in crime, and spend time in jail (Harms, 2018). They also develop mental health disorders such as anxiety and depression. The early life effects influence various aspects of brain development that are key to forming cognitive and emotional processes. These, in return, promote positive social relationships. In addition, early life adversities affect the ability of an individual to control their emotions. For instance, children with too much stress have difficulties controlling negative emotions such as anger and anxiety.

Two types of cognitive skills are fundamental to how people function socially. One is the instrumental of learning, which entails learning and updating the connections between one's deeds and the resulting outcomes (Stain, 2013). An example is when one associates the ringing of a bell with someone opening a door. However, it is only sometimes when the ringing of a bell leads to one opening the door. This experience is determined by whether someone is present to open the door. Cognitive flexibility entails one's ability to adjust in certain circumstances.

One study was conducted to determine the impact of stress on teenagers. In the study, half of the participants were abused physically by their caregivers during early childhood. The study sought to determine whether teenagers who were abused during early childhood were good at linking their actions concerning rewards and punishments. Teenagers were asked to look at pictures of everyday objects and link them with either a reward or punishment by ringing the bell (Harms, 2018). They could either win or lose points by ringing the bell. Failure to ring the bell would not result in a win or loss. Along the way, things were switched up such that the pictures that led to a loss led to a win. In this scenario, the participants needed to change their

responses to continue earning points. Those that had been abused had difficulties changing their responses.

The abused teenagers had problems updating their responses and behavior when the situation changed—for example, making changes when an event that led to a reward or punishment changed. These research findings show that early childhood adversities affect how people learn to obtain rewards and punishments. Abuse and stress are very likely to affect the development of the brain's central parts, which help individuals link certain events with either positive or negative outcomes (Harms, 2018). Children who experience early life adversities have trouble learning to achieve positive outcomes, such as avoiding trouble and making friends. As a result, they face either more positive or negative outcomes after the initial stressor has ended. They are at risk of developing more mental health problems, such as depression. Since these learning challenges do not go away, it explains the sleeper effects of early life stress that arises later in life.

When the word childhood is mentioned, it paints a picture of innocence and joy. Childhood is a time to enjoy and feel secure and loved. A mentally stable child is one for the family; the caregivers show love and support. Emotional stability is attained through the formation of healthy relationships with caregivers. However, most children miss out on this, and instability impacts the rest of their lives. A lack of health attachment with primary caregivers causes instability. Trauma during childhood can take the form of sexual abuse, emotional abuse, physical abuse, witnessing a traumatic event such as domestic violence, or extreme events such as refugee trauma. If adults struggle to process such life events, it is even worse for a child to process such nuances. Compared to adults, children do not filter information through the lens of education, life experience, or socialization. As a result, children blame themselves because they do not know why certain events occur.

Trauma in childhood takes away the child's sense of self. It undermines how they perceive themselves in adulthood. If the trauma was caused by the primary caregiver, such as a nanny or mother, the child develops fear, anxiety, and a lack of trust. It conditions how the child relates with others. They often feel guilty, ashamed, and disconnected. In addition, anger and depression or feelings of rebellion creep in to help suppress what they went through. Some of these children, hence, turn to commit acts of terrorism. A study that investigated the synchrony between parent and child found that positive synchrony between mother and children between

the ages of three and nine months was correlated to increased child compliance by the age of two (Criss & Shaw, 2003). Furthermore, they found synchrony between mother and child to be a significant predictor of children's early childhood behavioral and social competence.

Therefore, we can see the positive effects of early childhood relationships, but what if this does not happen? A study of patterns that lead to self-destructive behaviors in adolescents (Noshpitz, 1994) found that the common thread that resonated within the study was the early adverse events during infancy. These events appeared to instill a presence of harmful ideals. The events, in turn, made for a driven pattern of punishment-seeking and self-injurious behavior, including self-mutilation, drug addiction, and anti-social acts. Furthermore, the experience of rejection, rough handling, abandonment, neglect, and abuse, in turn, can produce equally vivid and intense feelings of loss, injury, fear, despair, a sense of worthlessness, and an overall intonation of profound dismay. Although some children are more resilient and, therefore, more likely to transcend even the worst circumstances, most individuals need the primary caregiver to be more in tune with them to offset some primary relational deficits (Noshpitz, 1994).

Although we see an inclination to develop social disease through disharmonious caregiving, we also need to consider how these issues are exacerbated and how they generate a form of social pathology. According to an article by Lang (1998), children who live in poverty are more apt to live in toxic environments threatening their development on multiple levels. These circumstances also make them vulnerable to feeling left out of the mainstream economy and shame and humiliation because of financial failure. These feelings of shame and humiliation may lead to violence by creating situations in which young people feel threatened with "psychic annihilation" (Lang, 1998); in other words, they are faced with the destruction of who they are and from where they have come. Moreover, Lang (1998) states that "so threatened, these individuals and groups are that they respond with violence to even the slightest provocation, because violence gives them a sense of being that they often lack amidst the exploitation and humiliation of their lives." The author calls for an overall change in the current system, shifting the values to children, economic equality, and eliminating racism.

(Grace, 1995) further emphasized this lack of attachment when they acknowledged that it might lead to aggression, delinquency, withdrawal, anxiety, and depression. He also stressed the importance of the mother figure in the child's development and how the status of the

housewife needs to have liaised dramatically so people can understand the critical importance of the housewife's position in the family to offset future pathological societal interaction. Attachment theory emphasizes various attachment styles' role in developing personality and feelings of security and trust. Insecurely attached children may have unhealthy relationships during their adulthood. When caregivers ignore a child's needs, they grow to be independent even in situations when they opt not to in adulthood (Destination Hope, 2019). Children that live in environments that are not secure, such as homes with domestic violence incidences, develop coping mechanisms. Among the coping mechanisms is walking on eggshells to survive day after day. They learn to cope by withholding their emotions and masking their anger and sadness. As a result, such children will turn to drugs in adulthood or delinquent behavior to mask the internal challenges that they are facing. Research shows a strong connection between childhood trauma and the likelihood of high-risk behaviors like smoking and crime.

As discussed above, this construction of social pathology is not limited to parents but extends to the system as a whole. The welfare process, school systems, and the government continue the patterns of neglect and inconsistency to the point of adopting the role of negligent parent. An article about Rosa Lee, an African American woman who brought into being three generations of petty criminals and social misfits, was written by (McCarthy, 1994). The author states that Rosa's life struggle warrants an investigation into the failure of the systems in place. In particular, she investigates the differences between two children who had adults step into their lives to model and mentor positive interaction and six children who did not have this support. The results were that the two with active participants became stable members of society, and the other six without access to services negatively influenced society.

The author states that this finding is not a criticism of the role of parents but more of the role of other agents, such as welfare agencies and the school systems, for continuing to fall short in picking up where parents have failed in early social interaction. This failure leads to the social pathology detrimental to our current civilization. Of course, this does not eliminate parental responsibility, putting more pressure on the agents for positive social change to step into the mix earlier and with more conviction. Specifically, the author suggests "in a situation where child abuse exists, that the welfare system abandon its antiquated notion that the biological home is the best case scenario for abused children and move to a more proactive approach in

moving children into a safe environment.” (McCarthy 1994). They should do this expeditiously to offset early trauma and begin the reparative process.

Society plays a huge key role in molding people's behaviors, attitudes, and characters. While parents play a vital role, other agents, such as society, can shape how individuals see others and their ethics. While parents can teach children good ethical behavior, the behavior sticks with them for a long time in society. Society includes schools, law, the media, and neighborhoods. The media, for instance, has expanded in the modern world. It is available through social media platforms, video games, and television. Media portrayal of people and events affects children's and teens' views of themselves. In today's world, where news spreads so fast, violence against people of color is always portrayed in media differently than for other races. Black people are portrayed as violent. As a result, they are highly likely to be arrested, and most of them have been murdered. The number of unarmed black people arrested has skyrocketed over the years. The portrayal of hatred towards people of a particular group affects how children view them as they grow up. Intrinsic biases and discrimination become ingrained, and the cycle of racism continues. However, if the media discourages such acts of violence, over time, the children grow to despise such racist oppressions.

Schools are another institution that plays a crucial role in shaping the mindset and character of children and adolescents. It is a school where teens meet all types of people with whom they interact. According to an article by Secure Teen (2016), friendships that teens form at school are a huge determinant of how they turn out. Friends who are caring, civic, and with good morals improve the kids' behavior. However, engaging with badly behaved friends will likely lead to negative behavior such as drug abuse and criminal activities. This association clearly shows that while the parents can play the role of molding upright and well-behaved children by nurturing them, there are external factors that come into play. The school administration can also shape behavior by setting rules on the required behavior and punishing teens who express unacceptable behavior.

School safety has become an issue of concern not only to the parents but also to the government and society. The number of learners engaging in violent behavior has increased over the years, raising eyebrows in our social systems (Thomas, 2017). As a way of curbing the incidences of violence, most schools are implementing punitive measures instead of preventive

measures. Punitive measures worsen the situation, leading to more anti-social behaviors, aggression, and vandalism. An unhealthy environment increases the likelihood of anti-social behavior such as crime. An interplay of biological and environmental factors causes the development of extreme behaviors among learners. Children abuse, conflicts, abuse, and poverty are examples of the factors.

When the school administration uses punitive measures, they aggravate the situation as some of these students behave in such a manner as an expression of early adversities. Parents and caregivers often punish bad behavior or criticize the offenders but do not reinforce good behavior during early childhood. Thomas (2017) states that harsh punishments can result in anti-social behavior. Besides, teachers who focus on negative behavior may support aggressiveness. Parents and teachers also need to monitor adolescents as lack of it leads to aggression among adolescents. Schools can initiate change by creating a constructive environment where rules and regulations govern conduct.

Application to previous events

As they relate to our experience here and now, the outward manifestation of these early interrelation shortfalls is frequently seen in the media and its affiliates. In particular, recent attacks against our society via violent or anti-social acts. Furthermore, we were to analyze the early family history of Timothy McVeigh or even the students who perpetrated the attacks on Columbine High School. In that case, we could see how vital and influential parents, or even the culture, are in exacerbating or ameliorating relational deficits. Moreover, the government cannot be absolved of the role of an inconsistent caregiver. As articulated earlier in the paper, there is an overall design of inconsistency in how people behave toward each other. If we were to view these issues on a case-by-case basis, we could begin unveiling the overall patterns regarding how they influence what we consider to be social pathology.

In the case of Timothy McVeigh, we see what would be considered by most to be a normal childhood. As he was considered an average child with caring parents, we would be hard-pressed to find reasons for his eventual acts of destruction against others. In fact, according to his unofficial biography, he was the type of person who looked out for the underdog (Michel & Herbeck, 2001). His friends and parents saw him as an exemplary person with drive, focus, and a

penchant for caring. No one could see within his family life a pattern that would lead him to act in such a way against so many innocent people. Of course, the family break-up when his mother left him at fifteen. He claims it did not affect him, but there were signs that it may have been very difficult for him, as he became physically ill shortly after his parents separated. This illness resulted in a temporary reunification of his parents. In the terms used by object relations theorists, there did not appear to be any social instability concerning his primary caregiver that would have indicated any future social and pathological relational issues directly resulting from any negative interaction.

So, how can we understand this perplexing history? Individual pathology results from internal dysfunction or an infusion of negative environmental influences that eventually create a person with a limited capacity for empathy. Moreover, if we view these factors through object relations theory, given a good home and stable parents, a child can become a positive, contributing member of society. We fail to examine the media's and the government's insidious influence in the role of an influential antagonist. It is so easy for society to spin back and label the guilty party as the parents of children or adults who act against the social norms. We must realize that we have children watching, on average, twenty-eight hours of television a week (Herr, 2001).

Furthermore, according to Herr (2001), within this time frame, these children will witness eight thousand murders by the time they get through grade school and twenty thousand acts of violence by the time they graduate from high school. It is not only violence that they are witnessing; they are also absorbing the values and the culture of what they are watching. This influence does not include the Internet, magazines, and movies. Suppose we include the three and a half minutes the children interact in meaningful conversation with their parents weekly. In that case, the media appears to have the upper hand in influencing our children (Furlow, 2017). Recent studies reveal a link between aggression and exposure to violence in media. Exposing children and adolescents to violent media increases their likelihood of aggression and prosocial behavior.

In reviewing McVeigh's history, we see a boy who grew up not in the most perfect of homes but not a home good enough for him to function within the norms of society. There was

no abuse, and his parents lived in the same environment for most of his formative years. However, according to Michel and Herbeck (2001), Timothy did not have much social contact with his parents. He spent most of his time playing war games alone or with friends. In addition, later in his life, he read magazines such as *Fortune* and went hunting with his grandfather, who taught him gun safety and greatly influenced him in other practical matters. His main influences were movies, magazines, and his grandfather. In short, Timothy was a man made up of influences outside the immediate nuclear family.

Later in his life, he would experience the inharmonious manifestation of the U.S. Army as he enlisted to fight social injustice. The injustice is where he found the inconsistent caregiver, in that he saw through Operation Desert Storm how the government was not what he thought it was. His experience with Desert Storm left him with a foul taste. Mitchell and Herbeck (2001) contend that his caring nature and need for honesty were frequently confronted by the Army's need for secrecy and deception. This deception further embittered Timothy and began to breed contempt for the Army and its governmental affiliate.

Regarding the object relations perspective, we can draw a parallel between early caregiving voids in his childhood and their exacerbation through the government's actions. In viewing Timothy's early concept of himself as introjected by early interactions with his family influences, i.e., grandfather and parents, we see a standard of principles such as honesty, integrity, and compliance that stuck with him throughout his life. His presentation of his true self as a caring and sensitive overseer of the downtrodden was also hidden by his desire to comply with the rules and regulations. His internal conflict between being compliant and what he felt was right became evident. For instance, when ordered to shoot an Iraqi soldier to protect his battalion, his commanding officer commanded him to kill other Iraqi troop members. However, the Iraqi guns were far from reaching the Americans. This conflict of true versus false self-manifested itself as he initially refused and then complied by shooting toward, but not at, the enemy soldiers. This conflict was just one experience in the Gulf War where he was forced to act against his primary sense of self and began his resentment of the government.

Principally, the government pitted Timothy's false self against his true self. As he continued to become angrier at the inconsistency and lies the government perpetrated, he also showed signs to others around him that he needed to offset the anxiety it produced inside of him. Although the release of this anxiety was horrific, the ingredients that combined to cause

the event were prominent. To further illuminate this point, we must investigate other persons who may have struggled with the same issues as Timothy McVeigh. Although there is not much research about the duo who perpetrated the heinous acts against the children of Columbine High School, there is enough information to view the situation as a pattern of indifference with negative outside influences.

Charles Manson is another example of a criminal who had a messed up childhood. Severe and prolonged trauma is one of the most familiar stories among many notorious serial killers. According to the *Journal of Police and Criminal Psychology*, sexual abuse during childhood was 26% among serial killers. In addition, 36% were physically abused, while 50% experienced psychological abuse during childhood. Charles tortured and murdered Sharon Tate, who was eight months pregnant then, together with seven other victims in 1969. Charles' mother was 16 years old when he gave birth to him. Kathleen was arrested severely. The first time she was arrested for armed robbery, Charles was a young child. She was additionally an alcoholic and a thief. Thus, Charles was brought up in an unpredictable and chaotic environment. He did not know his father and spent most of his time with his relatives in a boys' school where he was also raped. He spent time in juvenile facilities and jail and would later head the Manson Family Cult, a group that executed violent acts. Charles was convicted of several counts of first-degree murder and stayed in prison until 2017, later dying at the age of 8 years.

Aileen Wuornos is another serial killer born in Rochester, Michigan, in 1956. While working as a sex worker, Aileen killed about seven men. Aileen was born to a teenage mother, and her father had schizophrenia. His father later committed suicide after he was convicted of child molestation. Aileen was left under the care of her grandparents. Her grandfather and others extensively sexually abused her. When she was fourteen, she gave birth to a child whose father was her brother. When her grandmother died, they kicked her out of the home. Since then, she has started depending on sex work to cater to her needs. She killed one Richard Mallory, who claimed he wanted to rape her, in self-defense. In 1992, Wuornos received a conviction of first-degree murder. Her history paints a picture of a childhood filled with trauma from neglect, lack of care, resources, and sexual abuse. Her grandfather was her then-guardian and was supposed to protect her, raped her.

Another criminal and serial killer who had a bad childhood is Richard Ramirez. He raped and brutally tortured twenty-four people. Richard murdered about 13 people within two years in the 1980s (Dorwart, 2018). He was the son of Julian and Mercedes Ramirez. His mother was exposed to toxic fumes when she was pregnant with him, which led to him and his siblings developing some defects. According to Richard, his father abused the entire family physically. At a tender age, Richard was exposed to violence and drugs by one of his cousins. The cousin who returned from the Vietnam War showed young Richard photos of mutilated, killed, and raped women. Once, his cousin Michael fought with his wife, leading to him killing her (Dorwart, 2018). He warned him not to mention the same to anyone. Ramirez was later involved in petty crimes and locked up in a juvenile detention center. He later advanced to serial robberies and murder during his young adulthood. In 1989, he was convicted on 46 counts and sentenced to death at 53 years.

The above case studies of criminals with felonies reveal how childhood trauma can lead to undesirable and criminal behavior. Many serial killers are victims of psychological, sexual, and physical abuse. When abused, they develop different thinking patterns than those who are not abused (Dorwart, 2018). This includes how people believe they should relate with others and parenting children. It is highly likely for the incident to occur again because Victims typically interpret incidents of sexual abuse as usual so, thereby having a higher incidence of it happening again.

In an article written one week after the incident at Columbine, Cannon et al. (1999) explored how adults and peers could ignore two teenage boys who manifested overt expressions of discontent. They were called monsters and dangerous, but how did they get that way? Can we apply the same formula to Timothy McVeigh for a couple of malcontents in Colorado? We can answer yes regarding outside influences and a genuine misunderstanding of early relational deficits. Naturally, we need to break down the same concept as it applies to object relations but through a slightly different lens. As it pertains to an individual's internalized sense of self-concept, the assimilation of outside culture falls within the early interaction with the primary caregiver. More specifically, in the first few years of a child's life, a primary caregiver has to be in synchrony with a child's needs and wishes (Criss & Shaw, 2003). Having the caregiver present a perfect sense of social norms allows a child to build on the perfect sense of self. In particular, children learn anti-social behavior when rewards and punishments are inconsistent or

random. There appears to be a tendency for negative societal interactions with early childhood trauma. Criss and Shaw (2003) found an association between under-socialization and anti-social activity across divergent periods, geographical regions, and genders. We can see how children from well-to-do homes manifest negative ego ideals based on inconsistent discipline, not abuse. These children surprise parents and experts alike, as the adverse outcomes are inconsistent with what has been considered good parenting.

Returning to our original postulate, we can dissect and begin to see similar patterns of how to build social pathology. In developing a child with a negative ego ideal, the parent has to offset any anxiety within the child without offering any discipline that warrants respect for the caregiver. Before these anti-social acts by young people, many experts believed that spanking or yelling at a child would affect their attachment to the parent and, therefore, affect future social interaction with the disciplinarian. This incongruity creates quite a conundrum for the caregiver, as societal norms force them to change what is instinctual. If a child is terrible, people use corrective measures to put them back in line. However, if we feed their every wish, we build narcissistic, self-absorbed children with little empathy for others unless they feed their needs (Lerner, 1999).

Although this is slightly different from the true- versus false-self perspective stated in the McVeigh case, the absorption of false ideals still comes from the external object. Applying Lerner's theory, by disciplining a child too softly or inconsistently, a child's interaction with the outside world will either lack empathy for it (too soft) or an over-identification with it (inconsistent). If disciplined too harshly, a child will project a false self and limit insight into his anxiety since presenting the true self would limit access to others, thus manifesting an explosive ending to a long-term problem. In the case of Columbine killers, it may be hypothesized that they were the products of a parental discipline that was too lax. Couple this with the introjection of a value system that resonated with their need for self-destruction and anger, and the pattern becomes apparent. Then, of course, they needed access to a synchronic value system from sources outside the capacity of their parents. These values were gained via the Internet and movies, fulfilling their need for unconditional acceptance. The FBI felt that the "Basketball Diaries" by Jim Carroll may have been indirectly responsible for giving these misguided teenagers the idea for the Columbine murder plan (Channel 4000, 2002). In the movie, Carroll's character, played by Leonardo DiCaprio, strides through his school, wearing a

long, black coat, wielding a shotgun, and shooting classmates and teachers. This depiction was so close to the actual scenario that MGM attempted to remove all the videos from the shelves.

Although the Columbine killers were two separate individuals, they did act as one in their attempts to gain respect from the high school jocks who relentlessly teased and picked on them. The idea for the shooting originally came from Eric Harris, who had a history of difficulty interacting with others (Briggs & Blevins, 1999). It is unfair to blame or even assume that Harris' parents' early interaction with him created a long history of relational problems, particularly his mother's. Peering through object relations, we find that the initial mother-child dyad contributes to the child's future social interaction with others. If object relation theorists are correct, then volatile social interactions by this dyad may have been learned in early childhood experiences.

According to one study, juveniles committed about 10% of crimes reported to police officers in 2016. Two-thirds of these crimes were committed by teens aged between fifteen and eighteen. As a way of curbing increased acts of violence, law enforcement officers need to learn how adverse childhood experiences increase the chances that young people will engage in criminal activities (Freeze, 2019). The recognition of adverse childhood experiences (ACE) by law enforcement officers equips them to participate in the community action plan to treat troubled teens to minimize the rate of incarceration. Further research shows that people who commit felonies have the presence of ACEs in their history. However, experiencing ACEs does not indicate that all children experiencing such adversities turn to crime (Freeze, 2019). Nonetheless, there is a high chance that such events need consideration when developing approaches to reducing criminal activities.

Application Today

As reviewed above, disciplinary inconsistency and lack of object constancy have been building blocks for the outward aggression we see in a country and the world. In particular, countries with free speech have become targets for festering and exacerbating this vulnerability via social media. The above is not a statement against free speech but more an observation that when statements and ads are used with the targeted intention to create angst in a person or group, it exposes any vulnerability in object relations deficits. Given the high divorce rates, blended families, and decreased parental influences secondary to smartphone use, more people

are vulnerable to these deficits than ever before. If we look at Trump's 2016 campaign or even Obama's 2008, their use of social media to leverage these issues was masterful. Obama's Campaign did not use it in a manner to create discord and outrage at the level that the Trump campaign did, but they both were able to drive people to the polls by triggering the need to act on object relation deficits via voting.

This mechanism is relatively benign, for voting is a constitutional right. However, if a person were to use this approach for more malevolent purposes, we would start to unveil the byproduct of operationalizing these deficits. For example, the 2nd amendment rights are a consistent argument every time a person commits an act of violence using a gun. Furthermore, the investigation into Russia's influences via the "Bots" within Facebook, aka Meta, is a perfect example of how to trigger this outrage not to set one side against the other but more to create distrust with anyone who thinks or looks differently than us. Right now, a child's conflict in choosing a parent when the parents are fighting mimics our current polarized political world. Social media exacerbates this further, for we must choose a side. What makes this particularly challenging is that the same company's source of income and growth is directly related to the "eyeball" economy. The more people find discord, anger, and frustration and appeal to their belief system, either true or false self, the more engaged they become and the more money the company makes.

Today, adverse childhood experiences are the fuel of the incidences of terrorism. Adverse childhood experiences are not only caused by poor parenting but are also caused by the environment in which a child grows. The Buffalo mass shooting is an example of a present-day act of terrorism. In this incident, Payton Gendron, an eighteen-year-old, was identified as the main suspect in the shooting, leaving about ten people dead and three wounded. According to the FBI investigations, the shooting was racially motivated extremism. The suspect, however, live-streamed the whole incident via Twitch. He was very tactical and wore protective gear to protect himself. The rifle used during the mass shooting had a racial epithet drawn on it with the number 14, which is a symbol of white supremacy.

Further investigations revealed that the perpetrator published some racist writings before the shooting. While some people who commit domestic terrorism have adverse childhood experiences, others' criminal behavior is shaped by the environment they grow in. His feelings and beliefs fueled the actions Payton held against people of color. Moreso, trauma

explains the cause of his behavior. Before the shooting, he found a stray cat attacking his own. He stabbed the cat several times and chopped his head off. He did not feel remorseful for his deed, only for him to later commit the atrocity and shoot others at Buffalo shooting.

The Uvalde act of terror is also a recent occurrence that involved an 18-year-old slipping into Robb Elementary through an unlocked door and attacking the learners. Rolando Ramos sneaked into adjoining classes and told the learners in grade four that it was time to die before he shot a teacher, killing him. The next mission was to shoot students. The attack took too long, so he had time to torture his victims. A total of 19 students were murdered, plus two teachers and seventeen others were left wounded. The mother was shocked, claiming he was a loner and always kept to himself. He was never violent. She denied claims that they had a toxic relationship. However, his mother was an alcoholic, pushing him to live with his grandparents. Living with alcoholic parents is one of the causes of trauma and is linked to felonies. Keeping to himself and being a loner indicates that Ramos was traumatized.

Conclusion

Although we do not have the details of the true catalyst for acting in such a pathological manner, there appears to be a correlation between early object relations deficits and social pathology. In the case of Timothy McVeigh, we see the conflict of true versus false self. The early absorption of a value system based on honesty, sincerity, and integrity directly conflicted with what he saw as the government's inherent deception and cruelty. His exemplary work in the armed forces was a presentation of his false self, as his true self did not believe in the principles of government intervention in Iraq or Waco, Texas. When he could no longer contain his anxiety, he exploded in anger against the antagonist of his true self.

Regarding the Columbine attacks, we see two teenagers who used outside mediums to reduce the anxiety of non-acceptance. The early lack of positive, realistic lessons from the primary caregivers left these children vulnerable to high school life's intense scrutiny and pressures. By not adequately preparing them to experience non-acceptance outside of social norms during early development, their caregivers did not help them develop empathy or the capacity to deal with a conflict against the narcissistic self (Lerner, 1999). All children have pressures placed on them, but how one deals with them has to do with early experiences with the primary caregiver. In addition, object relation theorists discuss the influence of parents on

children's capacity to relate with others. In the case of the absentee parent, this is a distinct contribution to the formation of pathological interaction with others.

Moreover, any antagonist can exacerbate these early relation deficits via inconsistent and harsh punishment against the true self. As they relate to social work, we need to know how early experiences can manifest themselves in future relational patterns. These patterns do not mean that a childhood devoid of synchronous interaction with the primary caregiver is doomed to a life of volatile and unsatisfying relationships. It is more about being cognizant of how early relational deprivation can leave one susceptible to reliving those experiences in the present. Instead of profiling people who fit a particular criterion, we need to work toward educating parents, teachers, and the government in explaining how young people can become marginalized secondary to an authority's needs instead of theirs. This alienation can bring about the perfect combination to create a chain reaction that ultimately leads to the calamities we now see in our current age.

As parents and governmental authorities, we now have the tools and understanding via our data-driven society to assess and reestablish the defunct relations we participate in and create to develop a deeper approach to the work that allows for more relational approaches to our interactions with those with whom we care. No longer using the excuses that we did not see this coming, we now can see that society as a whole has become the catalyst for the explosive behavior given the object relations deficits we have unintentionally manifested. This perspective, in turn, can give greater tools to solve this now common action against the masses via destructive means by individuals to resolve the anxiety within them. In particular, the ongoing polarization of our current U.S. government set forth by the ultimate inconsistent object has created a monumental shift that the media and its influences have exacerbated. Social media, which did not exist at the time of the origins of this paper, has further polarized, ostracized, and fundamentally alienated our youth to the point that they engage in self-harm in some ways that could ultimately lead to suicide or acting out behavior. As stated earlier, outside influences are far more impactful than ever before, and our children are subjected to them 24 hours a day just by reaching for their phones.

In addition, the increase in social media and television has further contributed to harmful or criminal behavior. While social sites offer a platform for teens and adults to interact, they are also a haven for introverts. Children with childhood trauma can all be victims of

cyberbullying, which further aggravates feelings of unworthiness, self-image, and perception of others. Abused people who experience further cyberbullying may become suicidal and likely murder someone out of the frustrations of the bullying. The responsibility of instilling the proper morals and nurturing should not be left entirely to the parents. Besides it being overwhelming, the external environment influences teen behavior. Schools and other institutions can also help shape behavior and ensure children are attached securely during childhood to reduce the risk of exacerbating early object relations deficits.

Finally, although we see this distinct connection between object relations deficits or inconsistencies and acting out on others, there is a chance to make positive changes. Suppose we, society, were to look at its ongoing assault on the young, impressionable minds and psyches with sensitivity as to how we impact these initial relational challenges. If this were the case, we might be more likely not to exacerbate them. No longer to be surprised, we would see this acting out behavior as a symptom of the root cause of our society versus blaming the victim. Moreover, looking at our contribution to these maladies would be better than looking outward to blame others. A more stable world comes from a more stable environment that creates a safe place in synchronicity with our children so they can learn what empathy feels like and how to demonstrate it to others. This is harder than it looks, for we must also heal ourselves and those around us of the object relations deficits we have learned. There is an opportunity to make this change here, so we should take it.

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