



Parental Alienating Behaviors are Family Violence

What is family violence?

Family violence refers to all types of abuse that occur in families, including physical, sexual, psychological, and financial abuse, as well as neglect.

Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2013; Tolan, Gorman-Smith, & Henry, 2006

What are parental alienating behaviors?

Parental alienating behaviors are a parent's persistent use of patterns of behaviors over time to harm the child's relationship with their other parent. Alienating parents use many different behaviors, such as badmouthing the alienated parent to the child and others, interfering with their contact, and enlisting the child as an "ally" against them.

Baker, 2020; Harman, Kruk, & Hines, 2018; Harman & Matthewson, 2020

Parental alienating behaviors are child abuse

Making a child believe a parent abandoned and does not love them, or that the parent is dangerous or bad, is psychological abuse. Alienated children's developmental needs are also often neglected by alienating parents. In severe cases, children need protection from these psychologically abusive behaviors.

Baker, 2020; Warshak, 2015

Parental alienating behaviors are intimate partner violence

Parental alienating behaviors are direct and indirect attacks made by an alienating parent toward the alienated parent to harm and control them. The children are used as weapons in these attacks, and they become collateral damage in the process. Domestic violence researchers label these *same behaviors* as a form of coercive control.

Harman, Kruk & Hines, 2018; Harman & Matthewson, 2020

Parental alienating behaviors are coercively controlling

The alienating parent's intent is to manipulate and control the alienated parent's actions and outcomes. The alienated parent experiences negative outcomes if they do not comply with the alienating parent's demands or threats, such as not being able to see their children. The coercively controlling behavior of the alienating parent leads to their having greater control and dominance over the alienated parent, limits the alienated parent's ability to make decisions, and undermines their parental authority.

Hamberger, Larsen, & Lehrner, 2017; Harman & Matthewson, 2020

Most families affected by parental alienation are not "hybrid cases"

Compared to other forms of abuse, coercive controlling behaviors are not often reciprocated by the victim. This form of abuse creates power imbalances such that the victim has little power or influence in the family. Describing such families as "hybrids" implies that both parents are to blame—the alienated parent is then blamed for being the victim of the alienating parent's coercive controlling behaviors.

Harman, Leder-Elder, & Biringen, 2019; Hines & Douglas, 2018

Annotated References

Reference	Type of paper/methods used	General findings/conclusions
Baker, A. J. L. (2020). Parental alienation and empirical research. In D. Lorandos and William Bernet (Eds.), <i>Parental Alienation- Science and Law</i> , pp. 207-253. Springfield, IL: Charles C Thomas Publisher.	Book chapter reviewing the empirical literature that supports the use of the Five-Factor Model for the assessment and consequences of PA, and to address misinformation about PA.	The extant literature supports the core tenets of PA theory, that a child should be considered alienated only when all five factors of the Five-Factor Model are present in a family, and that PA is child psychological abuse.
Hamberger, L. K., Larsen, S. E., & Lehrner, A. (2017). Coercive control in intimate partner violence. <i>Aggression & Violence Behavior, 37</i> , 1-11.	A literature review of how coercive control has been conceptualized, defined, operationalized, and measured. Summary and critique of measures used to assess coercive control in intimate partner violence research.	At least three facets of coercive control are identified: 1) intentionality or goal orientation in the abuser (versus motivation), 2) a negative perception of the controlling behavior by the victim, and 3) the ability of the abuser to obtain control through the deployment of a credible threat.
Harman, J. J., Kruk, E., & Hines, D. (2018). Parental alienating behaviors: An unacknowledged form of family violence. <i>Psychological Bulletin, 144</i> , 1275-1299.	Systematic review of the scientific literature on parental alienation and the behaviors that cause it.	Parental alienating behaviors that have been documented in the scientific literature meet criteria for definitions of family violence: both intimate partner violence (IPV) and child abuse.
Harman, J. J., Leder-Elder, S., & Biringer, Z. (2019). Prevalence of adults who are the targets of parental alienating behaviors and their impact: Results from three national polls. <i>Child & Youth Services Review, 106</i> , 1-13.	Three national polls in the U.S. and Canada using survey panels selected to represent the nations' demographic characteristics.	Parents who were the <i>non-reciprocating</i> target of parental alienating behaviors were more likely to be moderately to severely alienated from a child than those who were the primary perpetrators or were mutually engaged in the behaviors.
Harman, J. J., & Matthewson, M. (2020). Parental alienating behaviors. In D. Lorandos and W. Bernet (Eds.), <i>Parental Alienation- Science and Law</i> , pp. 82-141. Springfield, IL: Charles C Thomas Publisher.	Review of parental alienating behaviors using the Duluth Model Power and Control Wheel as a framework.	Parental alienating behaviors that have been documented in the scholarly literature fit clearly into power and control wheel categories that detail coercive controlling behaviors of abusive parents. Alienating parents are abusive parents towards children and the other parent.
Hines, D. A., & Douglas, E. M. (2018). Influence of intimate terrorism, situational couple violence, and mutual control on male victims. <i>Psychology of Men & Masculinity, 19</i> , 612-623.	A critical review of research on victims of different forms of intimate partner violence: intimate terrorism, situational couple violence, and mutual control. Two studies were reported on the impact of violence on male victims.	Intimate terrorism (aka coercively controlling violence) is characterized by abusive behaviors that are low in mutuality. Men who are victims of intimate terrorism were found to have worse outcomes than those who reciprocated the abuse.
Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development. (2013). SF3.4: Family violence. Retrieved from https://www.oecd.org/els/soc/SF3_4_Family_violence_Jan2013.pdf	Summary of International Crime Victims Survey and national surveys on forms of family violence, including physical sexual, psychological, and financial abuse, as well as neglect.	International incidents of violence vary by country and populations. Less than 2% of the population overall report intimate partner violence in the countries surveyed. Women and men both suffer from violent acts inflicted by their partner.
Tolan, P., Gorman-Smith, D., & Henry, D. (2006). Family violence. <i>Annual Review of Psychology, 57</i> , 557-583.	Review of the scientific literature on all forms of family violence (e.g., domestic violence, elder abuse, child abuse), their patterns, risk factors, and interventions.	Research on major forms of family violence has been largely segregated and preoccupied with controversies about conceptualization, definition, and assessment within areas, and have largely ignored overlapping similarities and issues.
Warshak, R. A. (2015). Ten parental alienation fallacies that compromise decisions in court and in therapy. <i>Professional Psychology: Research & Practice, 46</i> , 235-249.	Detailed description of common myths about PA and the empirical support that refutes them.	In severe cases of PA, courts have acted to protect children from abuse by requiring supervision or monitoring of the child's contacts with the alienating parent.

The Parental Alienation Study Group (PASG) is a large organization of international scholars, practitioners, and civil society members devoted to developing and promoting research on parental alienation. The National Parents Organization (NPO) is a large organization of advocates for the promotion of shared parenting and family court reform with chapters across the U.S. The International Council on Shared Parenting (ICSP) is a council representing scientists, mental health professionals, and civil society members devoted to the dissemination of scientific knowledge about the needs and rights of children whose parents live apart and to formulate recommendations about the implementation of shared parenting initiatives. Parental Alienation Syndrome International (PASI) is a large non-profit dedicated to addressing parental alienation, custodial interference, coercive control, and hostile and aggressive parenting. VictimToHero.com is a platform that provides resources and support for alienated parents and raises public awareness on parental alienation.