

Disguising abuse: A genealogy of denial

30 Nov 2020 [karenwoodall](#) Uncategorized [9 comments](#)

The Meier Report (2019) triggered a wave of ideological based narratives, that claims of alienation are only a tool used by abusive men against protective mothers. Amongst those narratives, were, that when alienation is claimed in a case, there is a greater likelihood of the father gaining custody. Fortunately, the reconstruction of the Meier report by [Harman and Lorandos \(2020\)](#), has thoroughly debunked these claims, showing that far from children being handed to abusive fathers, courts take very seriously, any allegations of domestic abuse and that children are not routinely being handed to abusive men who play the ‘alienation card.’

I am grateful for the clarity, depth and detail of the Harman and Lorandos report, not only because their attention to detail in reconstructing the Meier study is so clearly set out, but because they have done this work fearlessly, in an environment where efforts to silence and harm, those of us who do this work, have increased ten fold.

It takes guts to stand up and say that children are being harmed by their parents and that alienation is child abuse, in a world where we are lied about, threatened, stalked and harassed. I am not the only person in this field who suffers these things and that we suffer it because we are raising the reality of abuse of children to light, is what frankly appalls me most.

Alienating a child from their own sense of sovereign self, by triangulating them into adult issues, is an act of child abuse. Whilst many children will suffer a mild degree of this during family separation, there are some who become so badly harmed by this that they are induced to use psychological splitting. I work with children who suffer psychological splitting, it is a horrible defence for a child, in which they are encouraged to believe that a parent who loves them is harmful to them. Leading them into an impossible situation of fear and anxiety, so that they are forced to split off and deny their feelings for that parent.

The ideological hostility to the reality of this abuse of children, is set largely in a political framework which is denigrating of family ties, responsibility of adults to provide healthy care of children and lack of respect for anyone who does not agree with that mindset. Sometimes, it seems to me, that the ideological drivers are so powerful, that children are simply objects to be used to hold up the ideology itself.

I understand how painful family separation is and I understand that there are some families where children reject parents because of what a parent is doing. I also understand however, that in those cases, children’s behaviours are not the same as those where a child is alienated. I have worked with children whose parents have physically abused them, those children are apprehensive when they see a parent but they do not reject them with contempt and disdain. I have also worked with children who are alienated and I see the distinct markers of that split state of mind, in which the child is contemptuous, entitled and denigrating, towards a parent who has hitherto, provided loving care.

Alienation of a child is abusive. Pretending that alienation is not something real, but just something that abusive men claim that women do, in order to gain custody of children, creates false ideological narratives. Perpetrating those ideological narratives which are based upon denial of alienation is, in my view, incitement to further abuse of children.

A genealogy of denial has been created by the Meier report, in which the perpetration of false ideological narratives, underpin campaigns which claim to tell the truth about what is happening in the family courts. They do not.

What is happening in the family courts is that children who are being emotionally and psychologically abused by a parent in divorce and separation, are being identified and that abuse is being stopped.

This has got nothing to do with men's rights and nothing to do with women's rights. Just like the awareness of child sexual abuse developed, child psychological abuse in the form of alienation in divorce and separation, is about protecting children. The Harman and Lorandos report, corrects the false claims made by Meier et al and gives a clear view of what that study really shows us.

We tested a set of findings reported by Meier (2019) related to the use of parental alienation (PA) as a legal defense in cases in which there are allegations of domestic violence and child abuse. A total of 967 appellate reports in which PA was found or alleged were sequentially selected from a legal database search. Nineteen research assistants blind to the study's hypotheses coded the reports for the variables used to test six pre-registered hypotheses using a series of logistic and linear regression models. We failed to find any support for the conclusions made by Meier (2019).

Harman and Lorandos (2020)

Results indicate that the majority of courts carefully weigh allegations of all forms of family violence in their determinations about the best interests of children. These findings, along with several others, raise concerns that the methodological, analytical, and statistical problems we detail about Meier's report (2019) make her conclusions untrustworthy. Discussion focuses on the importance of using open science practices for transparent and rigorous empirical testing of hypotheses and the dangers of misusing scientific findings to mislead influential professionals who affect the well-being of millions of families.

Harman and Lorandos (2020)

In conclusion and after transparently and rigorously testing six pre-registered hypotheses, our results soundly disconfirmed nearly all of the findings we tested from Meier et al' (2019) report or discovered the findings to be in the opposite direction claimed by the authors. We identified 30 very concerning conceptual, methodological and statistical issues with Meier et al's (2019) study and when asked to provide us with appendices and statistical output to evaluate her conclusions, she refused to provide them, questioned the inquirer about who they worked for and what types of clients they represented (mothers or fathers) and referred them to a national archive for the material, where such material was still not available at the time of writing. This response raises concerns about the validity of Meier et al's (2019) data and the conclusions that can be drawn from it.

Harman & Lorandos (2020)

Ideological beliefs about alienation of children, are denial of child abuse.

Harman and Lorandos show us how, by creating a false narrative, this child abuse is hidden. I can only wonder why, those who claim to be against abuse, would want to hide the child's experience.

