

PE1790/J

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PARENTAL ALIENATION

Parental Alienation as Child Abuse and Family Violence

A form of emotional aggression and intimate terrorism.

“Parental Alienating Behaviours: An Unacknowledged Form of Family Violence” (Harman, Kruk, & Hines, 2018), appearing in *Psychological Bulletin*, and “Parental Alienation as a Form of Emotional Child Abuse: Current State of Knowledge and Future Directions for Research” (Kruk, 2018), appearing in the *Family Science Review*—have sought to shed light on the latest research pertaining to parental alienation as child abuse and family violence, and as a form of human emotional aggression.

For violence and abuse to occur, two conditions must be met: there must be a significant human injury, and it must be the result of human action. Parental alienation fits that definition in relation to both child and partner abuse. Two elements that are central to parental alienation as a form of emotional human aggression and abuse are the behaviours of the perpetrator and the effects of these behaviours on.

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Co-Parenting After Divorce

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The articles describe the core elements of parental alienation as a form of child abuse and family violence, and a specific, complex form of either hostile (thoughtless and unplanned) or instrumental (premeditated and intended to harm) human aggression. Parental alienation is manifested through a child’s reluctance or refusal to have a relationship with a parent for illogical, untrue, or exaggerated reasons. It is the result of one parent engaging in the long-term use of a variety of aggressive behaviours that harm, damage, and destroy the relationship between a child and the other parent. The target parent is demonized and undermined as a parent worthy of the child’s love and attention.

Parental alienating behaviours lie on a continuum from mild and subtle forms of badmouthing to more severe forms of aggression and coercive control that can result in the child’s complete rejection and refusal of contact with the target parent. They also span the range from isolated events to an ongoing pattern of abuse aimed at the target parent.

There are no gender differences in regard to who is the perpetrator and who is the target of parental alienation. Custodial status, however, is a strong predictor of who is likely to alienate a child from a parent. Custody and legal possession of a child are fertile ground for abusive parents to act at will against the target parent and witnessing such acts of violence by children constitute a serious form of emotional child abuse.

Previously unacknowledged as a distinct form of abuse, the publication of the two articles signals a shift in psychological science toward the identification and categorization of parental alienation as a form of both child abuse and family violence. This is a significant response to the scientific discovery that parental alienation is more prevalent and damaging than is commonly assumed, affecting millions of children and parents around the globe.

Given the previous lack of acknowledgement of alienation and denial of the phenomenon by many legal and mental health professionals, these articles provide a call to action toward the development and testing of effective educational, mental health, and legal interventions to prevent and mitigate the effects of parental alienation as a form of intimate terrorism.

Both articles provide a comprehensive literature review and research roundup relating to the behaviours of alienating parents, and the impact of these behaviours on children and target parents. Alienating behaviours and impacts are measured by current public health and legal definitions of child abuse and family violence, and the articles provide an index of parental alienating behaviours (a classification of the abusive behaviours of perpetrators) and a categorization of parental alienation effects on victim children and target parents.

Finally, implications for policy and practice in both the legal and mental health fields are discussed, including preventive and treatment strategies. The articles provide a comprehensive overview of parental alienation in regard to identification, etiologic, and intervention.

In addition, the articles discuss the paradigm shift that is occurring in parental alienation prevention and intervention, examine practice implications for mental health professionals, and address professional misunderstandings—first and foremost, the widespread assumption that many cases of parental alienation are nothing but self-estrangement, with victims responsible for their own fate. This implies that the actions of the alienating parent are the targeted parent's fault and are an example of professional victim blaming.

It is worth noting that each case of Parental Alienation has its own intrinsic nuances and by simply stereotyping as a one size fits all conclusion which is so much far from reality.

Reference:

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/gb/blog/co-parenting-after-divorce/201901/parental-alienation-child-abuse-and-family-violence>