



UWL REPOSITORY
repository.uwl.ac.uk

Father's experiences of family breakdown and domestic abuse.

Hine, Ben ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9732-4631> (2024) Father's experiences of family breakdown and domestic abuse. *Psychology of Men & Masculinities*. ISSN 1524-9220 (In Press)

This is a University of West London scholarly output.

Contact open.research@uwl.ac.uk if you have any queries.

Alternative formats: If you require this document in an alternative format, please contact: open.access@uwl.ac.uk

Copyright: [CC.BY.NC license]

Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the public portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

Take down policy: If you believe that this document breaches copyright, please contact us at open.research@uwl.ac.uk providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

Abstract

Previous research has begun to highlight the experiences of men who experience domestic violence and abuse (DVA). However, further exploration, including fathers' experiences of post-separation abuse following family breakdown, is needed. This need is the result of several contextual factors (i.e., reductive parenting stereotypes) and practical issues (i.e., higher likelihood of non-resident parent status) that place fathers at risk for post-separation abuse. The present study examined the testimony of 141 fathers (141 via survey and 30 via interview) who had experienced family breakdown, separation, and divorce (FBSD) within the last five years. Positioned within a wider thematic framework, this manuscript specifically explores themes generated relating to FBSD and DVA, including abuse experienced within the relationship, post-separation abuse, and parental alienation. Results suggest that fathers constitute a vulnerable group post-separation, and that more support is required.

Keywords: Post-separation abuse, family breakdown, domestic violence, parental alienation

Public significance statement: There is very little research on father's experiences of abuse post-separation. This has fueled both a lack of empathy, and practical policy frameworks to support men in this position. It is anticipated that this manuscript, and other work from this project, will help to fill these knowledge gaps and result in meaningful change.

Introduction

Family Breakdown, Separation, and Divorce (FBSD) is typically viewed as a traumatic process for all those involved. Amato's divorce-stress adjustment perspective (2000) proposes the end of marriage as a lasting process during which the signs of dissolution occur over an extended period starting from before the official end of the relationship itself. This is supported by the finding that children start to experience a negative impact prior to the official ending of their parents' relationship (Cherlin et al., 1998; Cherlin et al., 1991; Strohschein, 2005). Conversely, Kluwer et al. (2021) conceptualize the post-divorce journey as *recovering* from a trauma, which entails managing the crisis of the breakup, then processing and understanding the contextual factors of the separation, and ultimately finding closure (Bonach, 2009). However, for many, various factors associated with FBSD, including emotional elements such as resentment, trauma, and fear, and practical elements, including new living arrangements and the challenges of co-parenting following separation, present a situation ripe for abusive behavior.

Both the changing role of fathers and their experiences of abuse can be explained by Family Systems Theory which posits that a family functions as an interconnected system in which each member's actions affect the entire group (Nichols, 2012). This theoretical framework can be particularly insightful when applied to fathers experiencing post-separation abuse within the context of breakdown, as it emphasizes the dynamic interplay between individual family members and the larger family unit, and how the role of fathers subsequently evolves and impacts the family system. As fathers navigate the complexities of separation, their interactions and relationships with their children and ex-partners often undergo significant changes, which can disrupt the equilibrium of the family system. This framework thus allows researchers to examine how these changes influence not only the fathers' roles but also the overall family functioning and the well-being of each member.

Post-Separation Abuse

If a relationship has already included abusive behavior, and even if it has not, the ending of a relationship does not equate to the end of abuse inflicted by that partner (and it may also constitute the beginning). As Spearman et al. outline in their recent reviews

(Spearman et al., 2022; Spearman et al., 2024) it is a common phenomenon, and one well researched for women (Hay et al., 2023)

Increasingly, there is recognition that intimate partner violence (IPV) inflicted on men post-separation is also common (Bates et al., 2022), with Hotton (2001) and Hine et al. (2021) finding approximately a third of their male samples experiencing abuse from an ex-partner after the end of their relationship (32% and 29.7% respectively). Of particular note is Hotton's finding that, of the men who reported post-separation abuse, 24% reported that the violence had, in fact, escalated following the breakup, while 39% reported the violence as having begun only after the relationship had ended. Indeed, the end of the relationship can be a trigger point for abuse perpetrators who wish to continue to control the partner and/or punish the victim for terminating the relationship (Jaffe et al., 2003). Moreover, if FBSD is the result of abusive behavior, fathers leaving these relationships must also navigate negative stereotypes which undermine the visibility of their experiences of IPV (Bates et al., 2019; Hine, 2019).

One of the easiest pathways to enact abusive behaviors is when the couple continue to share responsibility over children and/or finances as these necessitate continued contact (Bates & Hine, 2023), and there is evidence that children are used by abusive ex-partners as a vehicle for continuing to inflict aggression post-separation (Toews & Bermea, 2017). In Clements et al.'s (2022) qualitative study of victims of IPV, the authors found that most participants' abusers had used their children as a method of inflicting abuse within the previous six months. It was reported that abusers used the children for several abusive purposes including to intimidate (72%), monitor (69%), harass (71%) and frighten (69%) their ex-partner, and even to persuade them to agree to resume the relationship (45%). This is supported in research with both mothers (Katz et al., 2020; Monk & Bowen, 2021) and fathers separately (Bates, 2020b; Bates & Hine, 2023). Participants in Clements et al.'s study also cited that their ex-partners attempted to turn their children against them (62%), a form of post-separation abuse known as Parental Alienation.

Parental Alienation

Parental alienation (PA) is defined as "a situation whereby one parent has a negative influence on a child's relationship with the other parent and makes a deliberate effort to intervene and prevent the relationship from developing/continuing or improving" (McCarten, 2022, p. 2). It is different from so-called 'justifiable estrangement', which describes a situation whereby a child rejects a parent for an 'appropriate' reason, including betrayal and major issues with lack of trust or emotional closeness (Linden & Sillence, 2021). As noted by Harman et al. (2018), PA is a form of abuse commonly associated (though not exclusively) with relationship breakdown, and is a form of abusive behavior that has now been extensively empirically researched and supported (Hine, 2024).

The impact of parental alienating behaviors (PABs) on targeted parents is one of the most substantiated areas. For example, in their 2022 systematic review, Harman, Warshak, et al. provided a clear overview of the experiences and impact of parental alienation on alienated parents. They listed significant and wide-ranging negative impacts, including anxiety, depression, stress, physical symptoms, and feelings of powerlessness, hopelessness, and being socially isolated (Harman, Warshak, et al., 2022), as well as several studies that had specifically examined the relationship between alienation and these outcomes (e.g., Verrocchio et al., 2019). In 2022, Lee-Maturana et al. summarized ten key findings from their previous work (Lee-Maturana et al., 2020, 2021; Lee-Maturana et al., 2019) highlighting that: parents strongly identified parental alienation as family violence; they experienced disenfranchised grief, and ambiguous loss; they experienced sadness, distress, frustration, anger, guilt, and shame; there was a risk of serious psychological harm, including suicidal ideation; and that they used a variety of mechanisms to cope with parental alienation (Lee-Maturana et al., 2022).

Some researchers have recently chosen to focus on the experiences of fathers, due to their potentially elevated vulnerability to alienating behaviors as the parents most likely to live outside of the home following separation (i.e., the non-resident parent, NRP). For example, recent work by Bates and Hine has highlighted the gendered vulnerabilities of men to parental

alienation due to a) the high likelihood of being the NRP, b) prejudicial stereotypes relating to fatherhood, and c) lack of visibility associated with additional IPV victimisation (Bates & Hine, 2023; Hine & Bates, 2024). Importantly, the work on men's experiences of parental alienation above has highlighted a greatly elevated risk of suicidal ideation and completion, a finding supported by other theoretical work on this specific relationship (Sher, 2015a, 2017), and on men's elevated risk of suicide following family breakdown more broadly (i.e., 11x more likely than women; Evans et al., 2016; Scourfield & Evans, 2014; Sher, 2015b).

Beyond the impact on parents, and fathers specifically, several key studies have highlighted serious consequences for children experiencing parental alienation. Several reviews now exist that detail the profound effect of parental alienation and parental alienating behaviors on the psychological well-being of children (Haines et al., 2020; Harman, Matthewson, et al., 2022; Hine, 2024; Marques et al., 2020; Miralles et al., 2023; Silva, 2021), with some such reviews concluding that outcomes are similar to other forms of severe child abuse (Harman, Warshak, et al., 2022). These reviews are supported by qualitative work with adults alienated as children, such as Verhaar et al. (2022) who found that they suffered from mental health difficulties (including anxiety disorders and trauma reactions), emotional pain, and addiction and substance use (as well as coping mechanisms and a level of developed resilience). Second-hand accounts of the effects on children provided by alienated fathers (Hine & Bates, 2024) and coercively controlled mothers (Monk & Bowen, 2021) provide further support for the significant and wide-ranging psychological impact this form of abuse has on children.

Despite the seriousness of parental alienating behaviors on outcomes for both parents and the children, parent samples report consistent dissatisfaction with the formal systems designed to protect them, including the family court, child support agencies, and mental health services. For example, targeted parents interviewed by Poustie et al. (2018) described these systems as slow and ineffective; uncaring; uninformed; expensive; and even contributing to the alienating parent's attempts at PA. This is supported by further evidence suggesting substantial gender bias against men in law enforcement and legal systems (Andreasson &

Johansson, 2019; Lehr & MacMillan, 2001; Natalier, 2012; Steinbach, 2019), for example in the family court system, where three-quarters of non-resident fathers believe that the legal system is biased against them (Braver & Griffin, 2000). This is reflected in work specifically exploring men's experiences of the family court system (Bates & Hine, 2023; Hine & Bates, 2024; Kruk, 2015), in which they suggest that courts fundamentally devalue their role as fathers, rarely award any level of custody, and ignore their claims of alienation and violence from mothers (Bates & Hine, 2023). Granted, there is still significant confusion and controversy surrounding how parental alienation claims are brought and assessed within legal systems, with concern that it is simply a legal tool to mitigate mother's claims to domestic violence (Hine, 2024). Further research in this area is therefore desperately needed.

The Present Study

It has become increasingly clear that men can, and often do, experience post-separation abuse following FBSD. Moreover, for fathers, many of these behaviors appear to target their relationship with their children, a phenomenon potentially exacerbated by reductive stereotypes about fatherhood which deprioritize the role of fathers in children's lives, as well as the opportunities present to enact these behaviors towards fathers as the overwhelming majority of non-resident parents (Office for National Statistics, 2019). The present study therefore examined the experiences of fathers who have been through FBSD within the last five years, and their associated experiences of abusive behavior relating to this life event. Specific research questions examined in this manuscript include:

1. What abusive behaviors, if any, do fathers experience during FBSD?
2. Are these experiences rooted in abuse present during the relationship when intact?
3. How, if at all, do these experiences involve children (including as vehicles for abuse and as recipients in their own right)?

Method

A total of 140 fathers took part in a qualitative survey (N = 141) with a further 30 of these fathers also agreeing to an interview to understand their experiences of family breakdown, separation, and divorce (FBSD) within the last five years. This manuscript will

specifically explore father's experiences of abuse associated with the breakdown including parental alienation.

Participants - Qualitative Survey

A total of 141 fathers took part in the survey. Participants were aged between 29 and 75 years old ($M_{age} = 45.54$, $SD = 9.22$), mostly White (89.3%, $n = 125$; Asian 5.7%, $n = 8$; Black $n = 5$, 3.5%; Mixed $n = 1$, 0.7%; Other $n = 2$, 1.4%), and mostly identified as heterosexual ($n = 137$, 97.9%; Bisexual $n = 2$, 1.4%; Bi-curious $n = 1$, 0.7%). If/when married, this was for an average of 9.95 years ($SD = 6.38$, $Min = 1.00$, $Max = 32.00$), and when unmarried, the relationship length was an average of 7.70 years ($SD = 5.08$, $Min = .30$, $Max = 22.00$). In relation to current relationship status, a significant proportion were divorced ($n = 56$, 40%), followed by 'separated, not previously married' ($n = 49$, 35%) and 'separated, previously married' ($n = 35$, 25%). Almost all reported not living in the same household as their separated partner ($n = 136$, 97.1%), and most had been in a serious/formal relationship since the breakdown event ($n = 80$, 57.1%). Of those who had been in a formal relationship, most reported still being with that new partner ($n = 69$, 86.2%), and of those men, most were either in a relationship but not living together ($n = 30$, 43.4%) or were in a relationship and cohabiting ($n = 28$, 40.5%; 11 were married, 15.9%). When asked about their experiences of domestic violence, 102 fathers (72.9%) reported abuse whilst in their relationship, and 103 (73.6%) reported abuse after their relationship ended and that they experienced manipulation/coercive control.

Participants - Interviews

A total of 30 fathers took part in interviews (and who had previously taken part in the qualitative survey). Participants were aged between 20 and 68 years old ($M_{age} = 43.97$, $SD = 9.76$), mostly White (93.4%, $n = 28$; Asian 3.3%, $n = 1$; Black $n = 1$, 3.3%), and most identified as heterosexual ($n = 29$, 96.7%; Bisexual $n = 1$, 3.3%). If/when married, this was for an average of 8.04 years ($SD = 5.57$, $Min = 0.25$, $Max = 22.00$). In relation to current relationship status, a significant proportion was divorced ($n = 13$, 43.3%), followed by 'separated, not previously married' ($n = 9$, 30.0%) and 'separated, previously married' ($n = 8$, 26.7%). Just over half had

been in a serious/formal relationship since the breakdown event (n = 16, 53.3%). Of those who were in a current relationship (n = 14), most were either in a relationship but not living together (n = 9, 64.2%) or were in a relationship and cohabiting (n = 4, 28.6%; 1 was married, 7.1%). Most resided in England (n = 16, 53.3%; Scotland n = 9, 30%; Northern Ireland n = 4, 13.3%; Republic of Ireland n = 1, 3.3%).

Materials and Procedure – Qualitative Survey

We hosted the survey on Qualtrics. It began by gathering demographic data and family setup details from participants. Open-ended questions then asked about the family breakdown experience, including any abuse and its impact on mental health, family relationships, and other life aspects. Participants also described their interactions with support services and their effectiveness. We generated questions both from previous qualitative studies on men's experiences of post-separation abuse (Bates & Hine, 2023; Hine & Bates, 2023) and as novel questions to probe areas of interest (i.e., post-separation coping). Examples of questions include: "Please describe the events that took place during the end of the relationship", "Did you ever experience any behavior from your ex-partner that you would describe as abusive during your relationship?", "When thinking about all of the experiences described so far related to the end of your relationship and the events following, how would you say this has impacted you?", and "Following the end of your relationship, did you engage in any coping strategies you deem to be 'unhealthy' or maladaptive?".

We advertised the survey on social media platforms like 'X' (formerly Twitter) and through father support organizations. When clicking on the link, we presented participants with an information sheet which clarified the study's purpose and data handling, followed by consent confirmation and an option for participants to create an anonymous pseudonym for data withdrawal before publication.

All participants could enter a prize draw to win one of twenty-five £25 Amazon vouchers. Considering the survey's sensitive nature, it concluded with a debrief sheet offering details on data withdrawal and support organization contacts for fathers and mental health. At the end of the survey, participants were given the option to click a link taking them to a separate survey

to provide an email address should they wish to participate in an interview and discuss their experiences in more detail. In total, 39 fathers clicked this link, and all were invited to interview so as to allow for all and any men who wished to tell their story to do so. As shown previously, 30 fathers completed an interview.

Materials and Procedure – Interviews

The interviews in this study were semi-structured, utilizing a pre-prepared script with additional follow-up questions for clarity and elaboration. To generate the interview script, we engaged in an informal review of the survey responses, to identify areas that would benefit from deeper exploration. We specifically kept this review limited, so as not to compromise our bottom-up approach to final data analysis of all data. The aim of interviews was to thus delve deeper into issues fathers raised in the survey, with questions reflecting survey sections as well as previous research (e.g., Bates & Hine, 2023; Hine & Bates, 2023). Questions covered the following topics: Events encountered during FBSD (e.g., with their ex-partner, with their children, in court), the impact of FBSD on fathers' relationships with their ex-partners and children (including incidences of parent alienation and its role in post-separation abuse and intimate partner violence), the impact of FBSD on fathers' and children's mental health, including suicide, the impact of FBSD on fathers' and children's quality of life (e.g., financial stability, employment, accommodation, social networks), experiences engaging with support services (if any), perceptions of the effectiveness of support provided by these services, and challenges in accessing support. Participants received an email with an information sheet outlining the research purpose, ethical rights, and data management, followed by a digital consent form.

We conducted interviews virtually via Microsoft Teams, lasting 60-90 minutes. At the start, consent for participation and recording was reconfirmed. The interviewer asked open questions from the script, with follow-up prompts as needed. Measures to ensure participant well-being included offering breaks and the option to withdraw or skip questions. At the interview's conclusion, participants were thanked, reminded of their data withdrawal rights, and asked to provide a unique pseudonym different from their survey pseudonym to prevent data

linkage between the two studies. We provided a verbal debrief and a follow-up debrief sheet with support resources.

Each participant received a £25 Amazon voucher as a token of appreciation for their involvement. This study was approved by the school ethics committee at the lead author's institution.

Analytic Plan

Survey responses and interview transcripts were analyzed together as a singular data set using Braun and Clarke's (2019) reflexive thematic analysis (RTA) technique. Survey responses were already assigned pseudonyms, and we anonymized the interviews, transcribed by Trint, using the original participant-chosen pseudonyms and by removing identifiable information. RTA, a modern version of thematic analysis, effectively highlights key experiences in a population and requires the analyst to disclose their relationship with the topic, acknowledging its influence on data interpretation.

The analysis was conducted by both the first and second author. We followed Braun and Clarke's six-stage process: First, we each thoroughly read each survey response and transcript for deep familiarity. Next, we coded relevant excerpts, with labels assigned based on their relevance to the research topic. We then met several times to discuss codes and resolve disagreements; with the first author retaining the principal decision on codes. We then each independently organized codes into themes reflecting common patterns in the data. Through discussion and self-reflection, an iterative process refined these themes, aligning them with the raw data to capture the full range of participants' experiences. NVivo 12 facilitated this analysis.

This manuscript concentrates on themes related to fathers' experiences of abuse relating to FBSD, while other themes are covered in subsequent manuscripts.

Results

During analysis, one theme relating to FBSD, and associated abuse was developed - 'Domestic Violence and Abuse (DVA)'. This had three subthemes – 'During the Relationship', 'Post-separation Abuse and Coercive Control', and 'Parental Alienation'.

Theme 1: Domestic Violence and Abuse (DVA)

Many of the men in the sample reported experiencing abusive behavior both during their relationships and after they had split from their partner. Many spoke of how their relationship with their children was specifically targeted, with many giving examples of parental alienating behaviors (PABs) that resulted in a disruption or rejection of contact (parental alienation).

Subtheme 1: During the relationship

A considerable number of men described experiencing emotional and psychological abuse inflicted by their ex-partner. This typically came in the form of “belittling [...] emasculating behaviors” (P1), “downplaying” (P2), “name-calling, humiliating” (P3), and “being criticized [...] on a daily basis” (P3) sometimes “in front of family, friends, children” (P2). Several men described feeling as if they were always “walking on eggshells” (P4, P5) in fear of the “volatile” (P4) environment created by their ex-partner's unpredictable behavior:

“What happened is that when she got quite abusive, at some point things would flip and she would be out of control... It was ultimately the worst part... I was really, really afraid. I was unable to sleep.” (P3)

A number of men also experienced “gaslighting” (P6, P3, P2) whereby their partners at the time “played down” (P7) their own behavior or tried to “confuse you” (P6) by manipulating the narrative of past events, which then further obscured their ability to recognize that they were the victim of abuse and/or coercive control:

“There was a lot of undermining what I was thinking was happening. And ‘No, I didn’t say that’. ‘That never happened’. ‘Oh, I didn’t hit you’. ‘Oh well I hit you, but it was your fault. And it’s because you provoked me’.” (P3)

The emotional and psychological abuse described also co-occurred with receiving verbal abuse from their ex-partners, typically in the form of “shouting” (P2, P8, P3), “provocation” (P3), and “swearing in front of the children” (P8).

Several of the men were also victims of “a whole host of physical abuse” (P8), such as “hitting” (P9, P3), “punching” (P4), “beating” (P4) with objects, “throwing things” (P3), and

“chasing me around with a knife” (P10). This physical abuse varied in intensity depending on the level of injury incurred:

“I woke up and found that she'd handcuffed me to the bedframe. And she then proceeded to torture me for about [...] 40 minutes. [...] in the most appalling way. I still have scars. She poured hot oil and candle wax on my chest... And when she finally let me go [...] I went downstairs and the first thing she said to me was, ‘What's for dinner?’” (P10)

Several men described that during their relationship, their partner at the time was “using family resources for her own benefit” (P2), for example “using my cards to pay for things” (P3):

“She was diverting money away from the family [...] I don't know who would do that. But, you know, she was stealing money from us. And we had some times where financially it was really difficult. We could have lost the house” (P11)

Although not occurring nearly as often as after the relationship had ended, some men reported their ex-partner making “false allegation claims” (P5) against them while they were still in the relationship, often to a health visitor or social services, for example:

“My wife falsely accused me of having tried to commit suicide in front of the children.” (P12)

More than half of the men interviewed reported experiencing some level of coercion or manipulation during the relationship with their ex-partner while they were still together, often summed up as “her way or the highway” (P13, P1, P4):

“She'd assert ways that should be done. Things like you must have 2 showers a day. There was no choice in that... It's my way or the highway.” (P4)

Men described their ex-partner as “very controlling and very dominant and ordering around” (P14) to the extent that there was only “one person ruling the relationship” (P15) and they “couldn't do anything without her approval” (P16). Consequently, they felt they “didn't have a voice” (P14) because “it was just her narrative that I wasn't in a position to really discuss” (P2):

“I had no impact. I had no voice. I had if I dared speak out or speak up about anything, if it didn't align wholly with what her expectations were in her head, I would have absolute hell.” (P13)

Men felt pressured to “comply on several occasions to make things work for the family” (P15). Most commonly this presented as “being isolated from family and friends” (P17), but also came in many other forms, including, but not limited to, the ex-partner's “control over my devices” (P18), restricting activity like “not [being] allowed to have hobbies and interests” (P13), “financial control” (P19), and exerting “control over the way the kids were brought up” (P2) and parented by the father:

“I had no access to any funds. I was actually buying clothes and and items from charity shops because I didn't have access to my funds. You know, all the credit cards and everything else. She'd taken hold of that.” (P8)

“My social life when I was with my ex-partner was curbed under her control.” (P7)

A couple of fathers described how their children were used “as a means of keeping me under control” (P16), particularly for guilt-tripping the father into staying with their partner at the time.

This subtheme supports previous research demonstrating the scope and severity of violence that men can face within relationships and how such violence can place fathers in severe danger but also place strain on their relationships, including with their children.

Subtheme 2: Post-separation Abuse and Coercive Control

A large proportion of the men reported experiencing some form of abuse and/or coercive control from their ex-partner following their divorce or separation. For some, this was a continuation and/or escalation of what they experienced during the relationship. For others, it was only after the end of their relationship that the abusive and/or coercive controlling behavior began.

“Nothing that I can foresee during the relationship. It was when I asked for the divorce and then we separated and then everything else. That's when the side of her I didn't know or didn't think about actually emerged.” (P20)

“Even after separation, even after I'm out of the house, even after divorce, it's still there, it's still present and it's still, you know, she's still absolutely gunning for me.”

(P13)

The types of abuse inflicted on the men by their ex-partners largely mirrored those reported to have occurred during the relationship, including emotional, psychological, verbal, physical, and financial abuse. However, the means through which their ex-partners perpetrated this abuse evolved with the changing nature of their relationship. For example, most of this abuse occurred through necessary post-separation contact, such as through the children or through legal and administrative processes.

Several fathers explained that their children were being used "as pawns" (P5) or "a weapon for getting at me" (P4). The method by which this was achieved was primarily through the ex-partner "putting barriers between them and me or the other way round" (P20) or altogether "preventing access to them" (P8). Fathers commented on the success of this tactic because of how important their children were to them and because of the mother's power for gatekeeping access (very commonly due to her status as the resident parent):

“Money, whatever, this materialistic stuff would never have bothered me but the children. Yeah.” (P14)

“It's the only thing now that she has left to keep beating me over the head with, that she can withdraw access to children at the drop of a hat with the flimsiest of reasons.” (P13)

This tactic was used to effectively inflict various types of abuse on the father. Several fathers described how access to the children was used by the ex-partners as a form of emotional and psychological abuse to “mentally/emotionally hurt me” (P20):

“She's used the children again and again and again to cause, you know, misery, consternation, anxiety. And it really does take a toll just mentally.” (P8)

Some fathers recalled their children were “weaponized” (P13) as retaliation or leverage for when their ex-partner was unhappy with how separation or divorce proceedings were

progressing. Several fathers also recognized the “financial incentive for her to keep diminishing the level of contact” (P13):

“It is all for financial gain, all of it. So, she claimed that I cannot have them overnight, which then makes the child maintenance support payments go up through the roof for her.” (P21)

The legal and administrative systems involved in the family breakdown were cited by the fathers as another vehicle through which their ex-partners could continue or begin to inflict their abuse.

By far, the most common form of abuse reported by fathers to have occurred after the family breakdown was “false allegations” (P12, P16, P10, P7, P3) made by the ex-partner often in an attempt “to reduce contact” with the children (P22). Although a few fathers reported that they had false allegations made against them during the relationship, this was far more common post-divorce or post-separation:

“What makes me angry is there's women out there being in horrible abusive relationships. And my wife is trying to class herself as one of those poor women. Like shame on her, absolute shame on her.” (P14)

“I'm mature enough and sensible enough to know that if I'd abused my children and abused my wife, I'd deserve this. I'm that sensible. I'm not just saying it, but it's true. But I haven't. I don't deserve this. It's completely and utterly unjust.” (P21)

“And the police come to the door. The police said your ex-partner and her partner have accused you of assaulting them and we're arresting you. So, I ended up in a cell that night.” (P9)

Participants explained how they now engaged in thorough record-keeping of their lives to protect themselves from any potential false allegations made in the future:

“I record the audio on my phone during the contact so that I could be protected against allegations that I was abusive.” (P23)

“I keep a diary now of events, and any little thing, I write it down.” (P17)

Court orders were also used to antagonize the father and further restrict them from seeing their children.

“There was another non-molestation order thrown in along the way. I regularly get threatened with non-molestation orders if something happens that she doesn't like.” (P23)

Fathers also argued that their ex-partners would work with their solicitor to use tactics to keep the process going as long as possible to stop the fathers from seeing their children and/or emotionally and financially hurt them. The fathers would have to keep paying thousands of pounds or the ongoing court process while the mother had legal aid and could therefore drag out the process with no (or less) cost to her:

“Maybe it's just my ex's solicitor. But they're very, very good at stretching things out, that end up costing me a lot of money and I'm like, well, I just want to get these things sorted” (P24)

A subset of men still reported some direct and indirect physical violence. This would often occur during interactions in which they were still required to interact with their ex-partner, for example during handovers with the children or when their ex-partner requested, they come over to help with childcare:

“And on handover, his mum refused to hand him over and actually assaulted me” (P18)

“When I was over collecting the children, who were very young at the time, [...] she went in and got a kitchen, big kitchen knife, brought it out and stabbed three of the tires of the car with the kitchen knife and said, ‘You'll not be able to go anywhere in it now.’ [...] And she then said, ‘Oh I'll tell the police that you done that.’” (P23)

“I would be called over because [our daughter]'s not feeling well and then I would leave after she's calling me names and throwing glasses and things at me.” (P16)

This subtheme helps to rebuke misleading stereotypes regarding post-separation abuse which places this as a distinctly female phenomenon and catalogues the type of

abuse enacted by ex-partners towards fathers in an attempt to continue abusive patterns and exert controlling behavior.

Subtheme 3: Parental Alienation

Approximately a third of participants alluded to some degree of attempt at parental alienation from their ex-partner:

“She's trying to sabotage the image that they have of me, and the role that I can play.” (P2)

“But the reality is that for as long as my children, or me, or my ex-partner are alive, she's going to do her damnest to make life a living hell and to diminish, minimize, and destroy whatever relationship and contact I have with my children. I can't do anything about that.” (P13)

“I know there's a lot of debate from some circles whether or not parental alienation's a thing, but I can tell you, hand on heart, it absolutely is a thing. It's absolutely something that happened.” (P16)

Some examples were given by fathers with alienating behaviors clearly representing coercive control after the relationship had ended. This was achieved via various methods, including isolation from social networks (typically through defamation), threats and, most worryingly, using the children:

“I think she went into the whole divorce thing with this enormous sense of entitlement. Everything had to go her way or there would be hell to pay. That's just her character.” (P13)

“Friends and family were turned against me.” (P3)

In some cases, the children were used as a vehicle of control, e.g., using contact as leverage or using them as informants on the father's activity:

“She also said, ‘If you don't like it, you can see me in court and I'll keep the kids until we've settled this’. Despite knowing the fact that the court case would take at least a year. So basically, it was it was a gun to my head to say, ‘Accept this or you won't see your children.’” (P24)

Many examples of other parental alienating behaviors (PABs) were provided, for example, badmouthing and fed negativity:

“The atrocities that their mother has been saying while they are in her care. And then the children, sometimes they were even telling us some of the comments that she was making to them.” (P15)

“My daughter literally came away with a couple of weeks ago, ‘Mummy sometimes calls you a bad word that begins with a’. And I was like, ‘So your mum thinks I’m an asshole in front of you. That’s good’.” (P24)

“And my son would come up to me, and he would actually, because he’s the older one, several times, ‘Dad, mum said something, that you did something that doesn’t sound like you. Did you really do that?’ And I would have to say, “No, no, no, I didn’t.” So that was tricky. And there is parental alienation.” (P3)

“Her language towards me in front of the kids was using insults [...] and then the children were starting to repeat it as they heard it from the other parent. [...] When I was trying to tell my youngest not to do something, [...] she was even entering the nursery and she, in front of other parents, she said, ‘Shut up, you stupid.’” (P15)

Instilling fear of the father:

“But [son] said at contact me, [...] ‘Mummy says that we are not to be alone with you in case something happens.’ Now that is abuse of children” (P23)

“Her mother had told her that I killed our dog. And if little one told me about mum’s new boyfriend, I’d come round and kill their dog. [...] It was all complete and utter rubbish designed to make her scared.” (P10)

“She makes it very clear to my son. She tells him that it’s not safe for him to be with me.” (P4)

Having a secret phone:

“So, one of the things she did was bought a cheap phone, gave it to her so that they could text all the time. And, you know, she put in our son’s number, her number, one of our daughter’s friend’s phone number, and that was it.” (P11)

Withholding medical information about the children

“The winter of 2020, our eldest daughter was hospitalized with an autoimmune response to COVID. She was seriously ill. And my ex-wife didn't tell me that the day before she called an ambulance. [...] She kept withholding information ...”
(P12)

“The only information that will be passed to me is information she wants to tell me, which is usually virtually nothing. If I ask any questions, for example, medical things [...] I've subsequently found out that my eldest has been put on to a Ritalin derivative medicine with no consultation, with no discussion. I find out this about three months after taking place second hand.” (P13)

Creating dependency on the mother:

“Her mom would constantly send over little keepsakes and not in a way to help soothe [daughter], but in a way to constantly remind her of where loyalty should lay.” (P16)

And commanding the children not to interact with the father:

“If there's any sports or any things like that, I go there to support him, and you can see he can only give me a little quick wave or something unless she tells him to come over to me. Otherwise, he's, you can see he's not allowed to. And I don't want to push it because there's going to be repercussions for him.” (P6)

This subtheme supports a burgeoning body of literature outlining the experiences of men (and women) in having their relationships with their children manipulated and attacked by an ex-partner, and the damage this can do to both the fathers and children involved.

Discussion

This study is the first to comprehensively explore experiences of abuse by separated fathers, and to do so spanning the whole trajectory of the relationship – from before breakup, to post-separation abuse. It does so with a sizeable qualitative sample, revealing that fathers

frequently experience post-separation abuse, specifically that which targets the parent-child relationship.

Findings from sub-theme one support previous research on men's experiences of IPV, in highlighting both its prevalence and variability (Hines & Douglas, 2022) and specifically answer research question two regarding how abusive behaviors manifest within intact relationships that eventually result in FBSD. Specific findings for fathers relating to coercive control support a growing literature examining the experiences of men, and provide additional context on avenues for this abuse, specifically children (Powney & Graham-Kevan, 2022). Findings on financial abuse are novel, and demonstrate that the conceptualization of this form of violence in relation to female victims (Eriksson & Ulmestig, 2021) may not be appropriate for men, or may need gender-sensitive interpretations. For example, whilst some testimonies spoke of financial control (well documented by female survivors), other men spoke about coercive pressure associated with the provider role, and partners running up debts with their income, which may constitute more 'male' forms of this type of abuse.

Sub-theme two supports a growing literature on men's experiences of post-separation abuse (Bates et al., 2022), with almost all men in the sample describing either continuation or origination of abusive behavior once the relationship had broken down. These results also help to answer research question one, which questioned the types of abuse fathers experience during and after FBSD, and research question three, asking how children form part of this abuse. Relevant to fathers specifically is the revelation of children as a specific tool for control, with mothers potentially utilizing their position as 'primary' parent, rooted in powerful parental role stereotypes, echoing previous preliminary work in this area (Bates & Hine, 2023; Lysova et al., 2023). There was also support in this study for mothers' use of systems against fathers, again utilizing their powerful 'mother' role, as termed legal and administrative aggression by other researchers (Tilbrook et al., 2010) and evidenced in previous work (Bates & Hine, 2023).

Finally, the evidence provided on experiences of parental alienation in this study supports previous work examining this phenomenon in fathers specifically (Bates & Hine, 2023; Hine & Hine, 2022; Taylor et al., 2022) and in targeted parents of both sexes (Hine,

2024). These results provide further answer to research question three, by focusing specifically on abuse attacking the parent-child relationship. Results also provided support for a number of PABs, lending support to new models of parental alienation and the listed PABs within them (i.e., the five-factor model; Bernet & Greenhill, 2022). Specific to this study was how fathers spoke about these behaviors in the language of control, lending support to the positioning of parental alienation as a form of coercive control in its own right (Harman et al., 2018). It appears clear that experiences of alienation, and post-separation abuse more broadly, may be a contributing factor to men's mental health issues following FBSD (Evans et al., 2016; Hine & Bates, 2024; Scourfield & Evans, 2015; Sher, 2015a, 2015b, 2017).

Implications

It is evident from this study that fathers experience abuse associated with FBSD, both as a continuation from within their intact relationships, and as original post-separation violence upon termination. The most immediate implication is therefore increased awareness, as male victims of IPV, including as fathers specifically, are chronically overlooked both in the academic literature and within service provision (Bates & Douglas, 2020). Subsequently, and with this increased awareness, secondary implications relate to the provision of appropriate support for fathers in this position. Current services for fathers experiencing FBSD in the UK (where we conducted this study) is scant, and forms part of a wider lack of recognition of the needs of men across a broad range of issues (i.e., mental health). The results from this study suggest that, when commissioning services to support men (and families) with FBSD (in itself an urgent requirement), provision to address abusive behavior within such services is clearly crucial. Moreover, specific issues with family court processes are worthy of urgent attention, and these are explored in greater detail in recent reviews (Hine, 2024) and individual studies (Bates & Hine, 2023).

Limitations

There are several important limitations to recognize when interpreting the results of this study. First, the sample is somewhat self-selecting, as participants were recruited through both organizations that support men experiencing FBSD and through social media. This may have

attracted men who have had a particularly poor experience of FBSD or who are particularly aggrieved or traumatized, thus skewing this sample. However, it is worth noting that this population are typically identified as 'hard to reach' or 'seldom heard', and that the research team therefore had to accept those who were willing to share their experiences. Nonetheless, future research may wish to try to explore the experiences of a more heterogenous sample. It is also worth noting the large age range of participants in this study, and that future research might seek to explore the unique experiences of younger versus older fathers.

Second, the participants invited for interview were drawn from those who had taken part in the survey, and so, whilst there was then more detail gained around these experiences, some of the experiences may have been 'doubled reported'. Steps were taken to however, to pair interview testimony with survey testimony through the use of a unique identifier used across both accounts. Results should therefore accurately reflect the experiences of the sample as a whole.

Conclusion

Fathers, like many mothers, are susceptible to abusive behaviors resulting from the complicated situations often arising following FBSD. For fathers specifically, the influence of parenting and gendered stereotypes, biases within systems, and practical issues (such as commonly holding non-resident parent status) all potentially exacerbate the potential for these experiences and their subsequent impact. Such findings suggest an urgent need for further provision for families, but fathers in particular following FBSD.

References

- Amato, P. R. (2000). The consequences of divorce for adults and children. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 62(4), 1269-1287. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-3737.2000.01269.x>
- Andreasson, J., & Johansson, T. (2019). Becoming a half-time parent: Fatherhood after divorce. *Journal of Family Studies*, 25(1), 2-17. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1080/13229400.2016.1195277>
- Bates, E. A. (2020a). "No one would ever believe me": An exploration of the impact of partner intimate partner violence victimization on men. *Psychology of Men and Masculinities*, 21, 497-507. <https://doi.org/10.1037/men0000206>
- Bates, E. A. (2020b). "Walking on egg shells": A qualitative examination of men's experiences of intimate partner violence. *Psychology of Men and Masculinities*, 21, 13-24. <https://doi.org/10.1037/men0000203>
- Bates, E. A., & Douglas, E. M. (2020). Services for domestic violence victims in the United Kingdom and United States: Where are we today? *Partner Abuse*, 11, 349-381. <https://doi.org/10.1891/PA-2020-0019>
- Bates, E. A., & Hine, B. A. (2023). "I was told when I could hold, talk with or kiss our daughter": Exploring fathers' experiences of parental alienation within the context of intimate partner violence. *Partner Abuse*, 14(2), 157-186. <https://doi.org/10.1891/PA-2022-0021>
- Bates, E. A., Taylor, J. C., & Harper, E. I. (2022). Post-separation experiences of abuse. In E. A. Bates & J. C. Taylor (Eds.), *Domestic violence against men and boys: Experiences of male victims of intimate partner violence*. Routledge.
- Bernet, W., & Greenhill, L. L. (2022). The five-factor model for the diagnosis of parental alienation. *Journal of the American academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry*, 61, 591-594. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jaac.2021.11.026>

- Bonach, K. (2009). Empirical support for the application of the Forgiveness Intervention Model to postdivorce coparenting. *Journal of Divorce & Remarriage*, 50, 38–54.
<https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1080/10502550802365631>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2019). Reflecting on reflexive thematic analysis. *Qualitative research in sport, exercise and health*, 11, 589-597.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/2159676X.2019.1628806>
- Braver, S. L., & Griffin, W. A. (2000). Engaging fathers in the post-divorce family. *Marriage & Family Review*, 29(4), 247-267.
https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1300/J002v29n04_02
- Cherlin, A. J., Chase-Lansdale, P. L., & McRae, C. (1998). Effects of parental divorce on mental health throughout the life course. *American Sociological Review*, 63(2), 239-249. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.2307/2657325>
- Cherlin, A. J., Furstenberg Jr, F. F., Chase-Lansdale, P. L., Kiernan, K. E., Robins, P. K., Morrison, D. R., & Teitler, J. O. (1991). Longitudinal studies of effects of divorce on children in Great Britain and the United States. *Science*, 252(5011), 1386-1389.
<https://doi.org/10.1126/science.204785>
- Clements, C. M., Moore, B. C., Laajala–Lozano, A., & Casanave, K. (2022). Victim and perpetrator acknowledgement of intimate partner violence and victim psychopathology. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 37(19-20), NP17182-NP17204.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/08862605211028289>
- Eriksson, M., & Ulmestig, R. (2021). “It’s not all about money”: Toward a more comprehensive understanding of financial abuse in the context of VAW. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 36, NP1625-NP1651. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260517743547>
- Evans, R., Scourfield, J., & Moore, G. (2016). Gender, relationship breakdown, and suicide risk: A review of research in Western countries. *Journal of Family Issues*, 37, 2239-2264. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0192513X14562608>
- Haines, J., Matthewson, M., & Turnbull, M. (2020). *Understanding and managing parental alienation: A guide to assessment and intervention*. Routledge.

- Harman, J. J., Kruk, E., & Hines, D. A. (2018). Parental alienating behaviors: An unacknowledged form of family violence. *Psychological Bulletin*, *144*, 1275-1299. <https://doi.org/10.1037/bul0000175>
- Harman, J. J., Matthewson, M., & Baker, A. J. L. (2022). Losses experienced by children alienated from a parent. *Current Opinion in Psychology*, *43*, 7-12. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.copsyc.2021.05.002>
- Harman, J. J., Warshak, R., Lorandos, D., & Florian, M. J. (2022). Developmental psychology and the scientific status of parental alienation. *Developmental Psychology*, *58*(10), 1887-1911. <https://doi.org/10.1037/dev0001404>
- Hay, C., Grobbelaar, M., & Guggisberg, M. (2023). Mothers' post-separation experiences of male partner abuse: An exploratory study. *Journal of Family Issues*, *44*, 1276-1300. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0192513X211057541>
- Hine, B. A. (2019). 'It can't be that bad, I mean, he's a guy': Exploring judgements towards domestic violence scenarios varying on perpetrator and victim gender, and abuse type. In E. A. Bates & J. C. Taylor (Eds.), *Intimate Partner Violence: New Perspectives in Research and Practice* (pp. 43-57). Routledge.
- Hine, B. A. (2024). Parental Alienation – What do we know, and what do we (urgently) need to know? A narrative review. *Partner Abuse*, *15*(3). <https://doi.org/10.1891/PA-2023-0015>
- Hine, B. A., & Bates, E. A. (2024). “There is no part of my life that hasn't been destroyed”: The impact of parental alienation and intimate partner violence on fathers. *Partner Abuse*, *15*(1). <https://doi.org/10.1891/PA-2022-0058>
- Hine, B. A., & Hine, I. J. (2022). Fathers and Intimate Partner Violence: An Autoethnographic Analysis of Current Literature on Men's experiences of Parental Alienation In E. A. Bates & J. C. Taylor (Eds.), *Domestic Violence Against Men and Boys: Experiences of Male Victims of Intimate Partner Violence*. Routledge.
- Hine, B. A., Wallace, S., & Bates, E. A. (2021). Understanding the profile and needs of abused men: Exploring call data from a male domestic violence charity in the United

- Kingdom. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 37(17-18), NP16992-NP17022.
https://doi.org/10.1177_08862605211028014
- Hines, D. A., & Douglas, E. M. (2022). Men's experiences of female-perpetrated intimate partner violence. In E. A. Bates & J. C. Taylor (Eds.), *Domestic violence against men and boys: Experiences of male victims of intimate partner violence*. Routledge.
- Hotton, T. (2001). Spousal violence after marital separation [1999 data]. *Juristat: Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics*, 21(7), 1. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/pub/85-002-x/85-002-x2001007-eng.pdf?st=-uXu9cbb>
- Jaffe, P. G., Crooks, C. V., & Poisson, S. E. (2003). Common misconceptions in addressing domestic violence in child custody disputes. *Juvenile and Family Court Journal*, 54, 57-67. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1755-6988.2003.tb00086.x>
- Katz, E., Nikupeteri, A., & Laitinen, M. (2020). When coercive control continues to harm children: Post-separation fathering, stalking and domestic violence. *Child Abuse Review*, 29, 310-324. <https://doi.org/10.1002/car.2611>
- Kluwer, E. S., van der Wal, R. C., Visser, M., & Finkenauer, C. (2021). Predictors of forgiveness among divorced parents. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 35(4), 566. [https://doi.org/DOI: 10.1037/fam0000799](https://doi.org/DOI:10.1037/fam0000799)
- Kruk, E. (2015). The lived experiences of non-custodial parents in Canada: A comparison of mothers and fathers. *International Journal for Family Research and Policy*, 1, 80-95.
- Lee-Maturana, S., Matthewson, M., & Dwan, C. (2020). Targeted parents surviving Parental Alienation: Consequences of the alienation and coping strategies. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 29, 2268-2280. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10826-020-01725-1>
- Lee-Maturana, S., Matthewson, M., & Dwan, C. (2021). Understanding targeted parents' experience of parental alienation: A qualitative description from their own perspective. *The American Journal of Family Therapy*, 49, 499-516. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01926187.2020.1837035>

- Lee-Maturana, S., Matthewson, M., & Dwan, C. (2022). Ten key findings on targeted parents' experience: Towards a broader definition of Parental Alienation. *Journal of Family Issues*, 43, 2672-2700. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0192513X211032664>
- Lee-Maturana, S., Matthewson, M., Dwan, C., & Norris, K. (2019). Characteristics and experiences of targeted parents of parental alienation from their own perspective: A systematic literature review. *Australian Journal of Psychology*, 71, 83-91. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ajpy.12226>
- Lehr, R., & MacMillan, P. (2001). The psychological and emotional impact of divorce: The noncustodial fathers' perspective. *Families in Society*, 82(4), 373-382. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1606/1044-3894.186>
- Linden, A. H., & Sillence, E. (2021). "I'm finally allowed to be me": parent-child estrangement and psychological wellbeing. *Families, Relationships and Societies: An international journal of research and debate*, 10, 325-341. <https://doi.org/10.1332/204674319X15647593365505>
- Lysova, A., Hanson, K., & Hines, D. A. (2023). "How can I be a victim when I have children?" Abused men's perceptions of their children's exposure to domestic violence. *Journal of Aggression, Maltreatment & Trauma*, 33(1), 67-84. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10926771.2023.2186300>
- Marques, T. M., Narciso, I., & FERreira, L. C. (2020). Empirical research on parental alienation: A descriptive literature review. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 119, 1-12. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2020.105572>
- McCarten, D. (2022). *Parental alienation: An evidence-based approach*. Routledge.
- Miralles, P., Godoy, C., & Hidalgo, M. D. (2023). Long-term emotional consequences of parental alienation exposure in children of divorced parents: A systematic review. *Current Psychology*, 42, 12055-12069. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-021-02537-2>
- Monk, L., & Bowen, E. (2021). Coercive control of women as mothers via strategic mother-child separation. *Journal of Gender-Based Violence*, 5, 23-42. <https://doi.org/10.1332/239868020X15913793920878>

- Natalier, K. A. (2012). Descriptions of loss and resilience among fathers paying child support. *Journal of Family Studies*, 18(2-3), 246-255.
<https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1080/13229400.2012.11004107>
- Nichols, M. P. (2012). *Family therapy: Concepts and methods*. Pearson Higher Ed.
- Office for National Statistics. (2019). *Families and households in the UK: 2018*.
<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/families/bulletins/familiesandhouseholds/2018>
- Poustie, C., Matthewson, M., & Balmer, S. (2018). The forgotten parent: The targeted parent perspective of parental alienation. *Journal of Family Issues*, 39, 3298-3323.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0192513X18777867>
- Powney, D., & Graham-Kevan, N. (2022). In their own words: The impact of intimate partner violence and coercive control on male victims. In E. A. Bates & J. C. Taylor (Eds.), *Domestic violence against men and boys: Experiences of male victims of intimate partner violence*. Routledge.
- Scourfield, J., & Evans, R. (2014). Why might men be more at risk of suicide after a relationship breakdown? Sociological insights. *American Journal of Men's Health*, 9, 380-384. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1557988314546395>
- Scourfield, J., & Evans, R. (2015). Why might men be more at risk of suicide after a relationship breakdown? Sociological insights. *American Journal of Men's Health*, 9(5), 380-384. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1557988314546395>
- Sher, L. (2015a). Parental alienation and suicide in men. *Psychiatria Danubina*, 27, 289.
- Sher, L. (2015b). Suicide in men. *The Journal of Clinical Psychiatry*, 76, 20430.
<https://doi.org/10.4088/JCP.14com09554>
- Sher, L. (2017). Parental alienation: the impact on men's mental health. *International Journal of Adolescent Medicine and Health*, 29(3), 20150083. <https://doi.org/10.1515/ijamh-2015-0083>
- Silva, T. (2021). Parental Alienation: In the child's worst interest. In S. A. Samadi (Ed.), *Parenting - Challenges of Child Rearing in a Changing Society*. IntechOpen.

- Spearman, K. J., Hardesty, J. L., & Campbell, J. (2022). Post-separation abuse: A concept analysis. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 79, 1225-1246.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/jan.15310>
- Spearman, K. J., Vaughan-Eden, V., Hardesty, J. L., & Campbell, J. (2024). Post-separation abuse: A literature review connecting tactics to harm. *Journal of Family Trauma, Child Custody & Child Development*, 21(2), 145-164.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/26904586.2023.2177233>
- Steinbach, A. (2019). Children's and parents' well-being in joint physical custody: A literature review. *Family Process*, 58(2), 353-369.
<https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1111/famp.12372>
- Strohschein, L. (2005). Parental divorce and child mental health trajectories. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 67(5), 1286-1300. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-3737.2005.00217.x>
- Taylor, J. C., Bates, E. A., Colosi, A., & Creer, A. J. (2022). "She used our only child as pawn to control me." Barriers to men's help-seeking for intimate partner violence. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 37, NP18417-NP18444.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/08862605211035870>
- Tilbrook, E., Allan, A., & Dear, G. (2010). *Intimate partner abuse of men*. Men's Advisory Network.
- Toews, M. L., & Bermea, A. M. (2017). "I was naive in thinking, 'I divorced this man, he is out of my life'": A qualitative exploration of post-separation power and control tactics experienced by women. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 32(14), 2166-2189.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260515591278>
- Verhaar, S., Matthewson, M., & Bentley, C. (2022). The impact of parental alienating behaviours on the mental health of adults alienated in childhood. *Children*, 9, 475.
<https://doi.org/10.3390/children9040475>
- Verrocchio, M. C., Marchetti, D., Carrozzino, D., Compare, A., & Fulcheri, M. (2019). Depression and quality of life in adults perceiving exposure to parental alienation

behaviors. *Health and Quality of Life Outcomes*, 17, 1-9.

<https://doi.org/10.1186/s12955-019-1080-6>