

EDUCATIONAL ASPECTS ON THE PHENOMENON OF PARENTAL ALIENATION IN THE COURSE OF A DIVORCE PROCESS- QUALITATIVE STUDY

Alina SIRBU¹, Ph.D.,
Mona VINTILA, Ph.D.,
Roxana TOMA, Ph.D.,
Otilia Ioana TUDOREL, Ph.D.,
Department of Psychology, West University of Timisoara,
Romania
* mona.vintila@e-uvt.ro

Abstract: *The purpose of the study is to offer educational information on this new, but very hot topic, which is frequently present in our everyday life, affecting parents and children involved in the process of divorce. Little is known about this phenomenon. This qualitative study follows the experience of parenthood for a research group of 20 subjects (ten mothers and ten fathers) who were unable to have normal relationships with their children due to the phenomenon of parental alienation. Data was collected using the narrative method and semi-structured interviews. Processing brought to light four main themes that dominate the lives of these parents whose children refuse all contact with them: the experience of having failed as a parent, a loss of relationship with the child as a result of the harsh intervention of the alienating parent, interference by the mother-in-law to undermine their parental role, and a feeling of hopelessness and powerlessness arising from the perception that there are major deficiencies in the judicial, social protection and mental health systems in Romania.*

Keywords: *parental alienation; qualitative study; alienating parent; parental role*

I. Introduction

After a married couple separate, parent-child relationships go in one of two directions: either the child maintains normal relations with both their parents, or, due to their being caught up in the continuing state of conflict that persists between the parents even post-divorce, their relationship with one parent is affected.

The specialist literature shows that authors speak with one voice when describing the post-divorce effect on the parent-child relationship, even though a number of different terms are used to refer to it, including parental alienation syndrome (Gardner, 1985, 1987, 1992, 1998a, 1998b, 2002, 2004, 2008), alienated child (Fond-Harmant & Gavrilă-Ardelean, 2016; Kelly & Johnston, 2001), parental alienation (Johnston & Kelly, 2001; Johnston 2003, 2004; Baker, 2005, 2007, 2010, Baker & Darnall, 2006, 2007; Baker *et al.*, 2011, 2012; Kelly, 2010; Ben-Ami&Baker, 2012; Godbout & Parent, 2012; Viljoen & van Rensburg, 2014; Lowenstein, 2015, Schwartz, 2015, Baker & Verocchio, 2016; Rowlands, 2018, Balmer, Matthewson & Haines Bernet, 2018), families with an alienated child (Lavadera, Ferracuti, & Togliatti, 2012, *apud* Friedlander & Walters, 2010; Gavrilă-Ardelean, 2008), relationships of domination (Biolley, 2014). It is however clear that parental alienation is the term most frequently employed in the specialist literature to describe the way the parent-child relationship is affected post-divorce or post-separation. It proves to be even more necessary to be careful in the choice of words/terms used by professionals among each other and in communicating with other professionals: lawyers, judges or with the parents. In the last case the terminology should be adapted to the the parents' educational level, cultural and social background etc. (Goian, 2004; Goian, 2010; Goian, 2012).

When parental alienation occurs, we may identify a dichotomy of roles: the alienating parent (ally parent, preferred parent), and the alienated parent (target parent, rejected parent). The alienating parent (Lavadera *et al.*, 2012) is the parent who deliberately and intentionally intervenes in the child's relationship with the other parent with the aim of severing the relationship between the two of them. The alienated parent (target parent) (Baker and Darnall, 2006; Lavadera *et al.*, 2012, *apud* Baker, 2007) is the parent with whom the child refuses to interact, as a result of the deliberate intervention of the other parent (Biolley, 2014), even if prior to the divorce/separation this parent was perceived by the child as a good parent.

Study of the specialist literature shows that there are certain psychological traits that each type of parent possesses. While none of the parental typologies referred to above has been diagnosed with any form of psychopathology on Axis I (Lavadera *et al.*, 2012), it has been found that fathers involved as agents in the process of parental alienation are very rigid, tend to exert pressure on others to behave as they wish (overly constraining), and have difficulty in expressing affection, while mothers who alienate are insecure (Lavadera *et al.*, 2012). The same authors state that alienating parents are psychologically much more defensive than non-alienating ones and that they tend to be more rigid and less able to foresee the consequences of their actions (Siegel & Langford, 1998). In couples where parental

alienation takes place, parents have a tendency to accuse each other of being irresponsible, murderous or dangerous (Lavadera *et al.*, 2012).

Summers & Summers (2006) introduce the term of narcissistic alienating parent (NAP). A parent of this kind is someone extremely focused on their own ego who finds it difficult to conform to the standards and rules of society, who lies and manipulates, who is seriously deficient in the ability to show positive reactions of empathy to their own child, and the kind of parent who systematically deceives the child with promises and turns them into a little abuser (“little abuser proxies”) who acts in the parent’s name (Summers & Summers, 2006).

Balmer *et al.* (2018) state that alienating parents have been described as narcissistic, paranoid and with cognitive disturbances and also as people who find it hard to relate to their families of origin (Balmer *et al.*, 2018, apud Baker, 2005a, 2006, Ellis & Boyan, 2010, Kopetski, 1998a, 1998b; Lorandos, Bernet and Sauber, 2013; Rand, 1997a, 1997b).

Alienated parents are described as rigid and lacking the skills needed for an effective parental style, emotionally detached, distant, passive, and with some problems in handling their feelings (Balmer *et al.*, 2018, apud Baker & Andre, 2008, Drodz & Olesen, 2004, Friedlander & Walters, 2010, Gottlieb, 2012, Johnston, 2003; Rand, 1997a, 1997b; Godbout & Parent, 2012; Kelly & Johnston, 2001). Although earlier studies state that alienated (target) parents have an ambivalent attitude to their need to have a relationship with their children (Balmer *et al.*, 2018, apud Baker & Andre, 2008; Friedlander & Walters, 2010), Balmer (2018) states that alienated parents do nevertheless display a great need to be involved in their children’s lives (Balmer *et al.*, 2018).

A study by Sîrbu and Buică (2019) demonstrates that there are no significant differences in personality structure, in terms of the BIG FIVE model, between alienating and alienated type parents. The results also indicate that both for alienating type parents and for alienated type parents there were significant correlations with post-traumatic stress disorder (Axis I) and with masochist type personality structure (AxisII) (Sîrbu, Buică, 2019).

Parental alienation has significant effects on all members of the family, but these are most serious for the alienated parent (the target/rejected parent). He/She may even go through a genuine “post-traumatic stress syndrome” (Biolley, 2014), experiencing high levels of anxiety and depression (Baker, 2010, Balmer *et al.*, 2018), frustration, stress, fear, feelings of loss, weakness, helplessness and rage as a result of constant interaction with the alienating parent (Balmer *et al.*, 2018, apud Baker, 2010a; Baker & Andre, 2008; Baker & Darnall, 2006; Vassiliou & Cartwright, 2001). Going through this process of parental alienation also

involves the alienated parent in a number of unavoidable personal expenses that can leave them both emotionally and financially exhausted (Balmer *et al.*, 2018; Gavrilă-Ardelean, M., & Gavrilă-Ardelean, L., 2017).

Research in the specialist literature suggests that mothers are more predisposed to become alienating parents while fathers experience parental alienation more frequently and more intensely (Balmer *et al.*, 2018, *apud* Bow, Gould, & Flens, 2009; Ellis & Boyan, 2010; Gardner, 2002; Johnston, 2003; Meier, 2009; Nichols, 2013; Rand, 1997a, 1997b; Vassiliou & Cartwright, 2001, Ellis, 2005). Recent data published in a study by Balmer (2018) show that mothers are more predisposed to experience a more severe degree of exposure to parental alienation than fathers (Balmer *et al.*, 2018). The same study also shows that fathers are more aggressive in their attempts to weaken the mother's authority in front of the child (Balmer *et al.*, 2018).

Three studies that investigate the parental experience of parents who could not have normal relationships with their children have been identified as of particular relevance to this research project. One is that by Vassiliou and Cartwright (2001) of a sample composed of an alienated mother and five alienated fathers; it states that these parents' experience was characterised by their experiencing negative feelings and suffering both emotional and financial losses (Vassiliou & Cartwright, 2001).

Kruk (2010) carried out a study of fourteen women who had lost custody of their children following a divorce. The major themes highlighted were attachment and loss, the injustice of the legal system against mothers who fail to match up to the ideal of motherhood, physical and emotional violence within the family, the phenomenon of parental alienation and refusal of access to children, social stigma, poor access to services, and financial loss (Kruk, 2010).

In the third place, Finzi-Dottan *et al.* (2011) carried out a qualitative study on a sample of ten Israeli mothers whose children refused to have any contact with them. This piece of research highlighted as a major theme "fusion versus detachment", which was divided into four sub-themes: marriage that provides the illusion of escaping from an abusive home, the birth of a child as compensation for the chaotic experiences of one's own childhood, the abusive husband who exploits women's feelings of failure as mothers, and the husband and mother-in-law who drive away the mother (Finzi-Dottan *et al.*, 2011).

As may be observed, the phenomenon of parental alienation involves both mothers and fathers as alienated parents, which means that it is necessary to investigate it in its effects on both categories of parents.

II. Aim of the study

The purpose of this qualitative study is to examine the experience of motherhood and fatherhood for alienated mothers and fathers who, despite having joint custody with the other parent, were unable to continue to maintain a normal relationship with their children because they came up against the latter's categorical refusal to have anything more to do with them.

III. Methodology

4.1. Participant

The study involved 20 Romanian participants, ten mothers and ten fathers, with a mean age of 37.5. They qualified for inclusion by:

- Being part of a couple who were divorced or going through a divorce;
- Having at least one child with their partner;
- Identifying themselves as going through a situation of parental alienation (the impossibility of having a normal relationship with their own child because of the deliberate interference of the other parent).

Of the 20 parents, 18 had custody (nine men and nine women, 90%) while for two of them (one man and one woman, 10%) custody of the child/children had not yet been agreed because the divorce process was still ongoing. 18 parents had the right to have the child/children living with them (four fathers and 14 mothers, 90%), while for two subjects (10%) it had not yet been agreed where the child/children should live because the divorce process was still ongoing.

Female subjects represented 50% of the total sample (mean age 35.9) and displayed the following features:

- Marital status: nine mothers were divorced (90%), one going through a divorce (10%);
- Number of children: five mothers – one child (50%), three mothers – two children (30%), two mothers – three children (20%);
- Age of children: between one year old and 17;
- Custody: nine mothers had custody (90%), while in the case of one mother custody had not yet been agreed because she was still going through the divorce (10%);
 - Domicile of child/children: five mothers (50%) had won the right to have their children living with them (but this was not the case, even though there was a court ruling that they should), four mothers (40%) did not have the right to have the child living with them, and in one case (10%) the child's domicile had not yet been fixed by court ruling as being with either parent since the divorce process was not yet finalised.

Male subjects represented 50% of the total sample (mean age 39.1 years) and displayed the following features:

- Marital status: nine fathers were divorced (90%), one going through a divorce (10%);
- Number of children: nine fathers – one child, (90%), one father – two children (10%);
- Age of children: between four and 12;
- Custody: nine fathers had custody (90%), while in the case of one father custody had not yet been agreed because he was still going through the divorce (10%);
- Domicile of child/children: nine fathers (90%) were did not have the right to have the child living with them, while in the case of one father (10%) the child's domicile had not yet been fixed by court ruling as being with either parent since the divorce process was not yet finalised.

Between them, the 20 subjects had 28 children, 16 boys and 12 girls. The women had 17 children, 11 boys and six girls, while the men had 11 children, five boys and six girls.

All 20 parents said that they had been extremely involved in their children's lives before the divorce, with mothers regarding themselves as primary attachment figures for their child/children while fathers stated that they had been active participants in their children's lives through being directly involved in everything connected with their upbringing and care.

All 20 parents reported that post-divorce they had had no further contact with their children, with the latter refusing to be in contact with them for periods ranging from six months and three years. Not one of the parents had contact with their child, either directly (face to face meetings) or indirectly (by telephone or online) during the time the research was being carried out.

Subjects were selected from among people who had taken part in a process of psychological assessment requested by the court with a view to dissolving the marriage (divorce), fixing custody arrangements and/or establishing the child's/children's domicile. The psychological assessment carried out in the course of the psychological assessment showed that in terms of personality type, 13 subjects (65%, six men and seven women) were compulsives while seven subjects (35%, three women and four men) were combined histrionic-compulsives.

All subjects gave written consent to participate in this research project, the data needed for which were collected in the course of the psychological assessment.

4.2. Method

The investigative method employed was the qualitative-phenomenological one particularly useful when researching sensitive subjects (Renzetti & Lee 1993; Thoresen & Øverlien 2009) and areas in which, since there is little theoretical basis, further work is needed (Rosenblatt & Fischer 1993). To be an alienated parent who has lost contact with their own children implies profound feelings of pain and of life no longer having meaning, besides also tending to lead to sufferers being stigmatised by society. Assessing the specialist literature shows that this area has been too little studied up to now. Research studies that do address it rely on small targeted samples made up of limited numbers of informers who are “rich in information”, so that representativeness occupies the foreground to the detriment of depth (Patton 2002; Creswell 2007).

Data was collected using the narrative method and the semi-structured interview, directly and face to face with the subject, as a separate step in the psychological assessment procedure. Each subject was interviewed separately by a principal clinical psychologist and responses were transcribed verbatim. The conversation with each subject lasted two hours.

The first step involved the use of the narrative method, with the subject using their own words to give information about their own childhood, their couple relationship (how the married couple was formed and how it ceased to exist), and about the process of parental alienation to which they had been subjected and the deterioration of their relationship with their child/children.

The second step involved the semi-structured interview, for which an interview guide was prepared, along the lines of the research carried out by Vassiliou & Cartwright, (2010) and Finzi-Dottan *et al.*, (2011). The structure of this interview guide took as its starting-point the nine categories of subjects to be found both in the specialist literature (Vassiliou & Cartwright, 2001, Finzi-Dottan *et al.*, 2011) and in clinical practice, as follows:

1. Shared characteristics of people who face the phenomenon of parental alienation (experience of divorce, violence, or parental alienation in their own families of origin);
2. Shared themes or problems found in the couple relationship that contribute to its breakdown;
3. Shared themes in participants’ perceptions of the process of parental alienation;
4. What the child needs in order to cope better with the situation created by their experience of their parents’ divorce;
5. The subject’s perception of the process that led to the child’s refusal to relate to their parent;
6. The subject’s feelings towards the estranged child;

7. The impact of parental alienation on their feeling of identity as a parent;
8. How the subject perceives their future life in the role of parent;
9. Changes the subject would make if they had the opportunity to do things differently in their couple relationship so as to prevent it ending as it had done.

IV. Results

4.1. Data analysis

Data analysis was performed in an inductive way in conformity with the phenomenological paradigm (Moustakas 1994), the intention being to understand the lived experience of each alienated parent. Two clinical psychologists read each of the transcribed interviews in its entirety for this inductive assessment. The data was organised under the themes that emerged from the descriptive accounts, with each of the psychologists keeping their interpretative notes separate. Following this procedure gives the study greater credibility (Lincoln & Guba 1985).

In order to increase the credibility of the interconnected codificators, the thematic content analysis was carried out separately by each psychologist (Schwandt 2007), both for the content and for the interpretations of different cases given. Subsequently, the two psychologists compared and examined their individual assessments, discussing discrepancies and seeking common ground, thus increasing the degree of consistency between the evaluators. Systematic analysis of data based on the participants' accounts maintained the credibility of the research study (Lincoln & Guba 1985).

Qualitative analysis is an important method that makes it possible to observe the experience a person has been through and their point of view regarding the situation without the interference of external assumptions (Sutton & Austin, 2015). Phenomenology is concerned with studying experience from the perspective of the individual, assumptions, and customary ways of perceiving. Epistemologically, phenomenological approaches are based, in a personal paradigm, on knowledge and subjectivity and underline the importance of personal perspective and interpretation. As such, they are important in providing an understanding of subjective experience, as through them one obtains knowledge about people, their motivations and actions and the viewpoints they come to adopt as a result of the large volume of assumptions they assimilate and the conventional wisdom they encounter (Lester, 1999).

4.2. Findings

The results of the study demonstrate the following points:

- a) Those who face parental alienation in their families after the breakdown of their marriage are people who in their families of origin had to

face divorce (85%), conflicts between their own parents (70%), parental alienation (70%), or physical violence between their parents (60%);

b) Common issues and problems in couple relationships that contribute to their breakdown are damaging levels of conflict pre- and post-divorce (100%), delaying the decision to break up/divorce (100%), involvement of the mother-in-law (90%), infidelity (75%), and physical violence (55%);

c) Common themes in participants' perception of the process of parental alienation are the turning of the child into an ally of the alienating parent (100%), feelings of powerlessness on the part of the alienated parent in relation to their own child (100%), negative feelings (rage and a need for revenge) on the part of the alienating parent against the alienated parent (100%), along with a the excessive leniency of the Romanian legal system towards the actions of the alienating parent and the inadequate understanding of the phenomenon among mental health and social protection specialists (90%)

d) As perceived by the alienated parent, what the child needs in order to cope better with the situation brought about by their parents' divorce are joint custody (90%), a conflict-free relationship between their parents (85%), and their continuing to live in the home to which they are used (80%);

e) The subject's perception of the process that led to the child's refusal to relate to the parent is that the reasons behind this reaction are the clear intervention of the alienating parent in the relationship between the child/children and the alienated parent (100%) and intervention by the mother-in-law (90%);

f) The subject's feelings towards the estranged child are unconditional love (80%) and ambivalence (20%);

g) The impact of parental alienation on subjects' feelings about themselves as parents is reflected in their experiencing such emotions as low self-esteem and self-confidence (90%), a feeling of disappointment in relation to their performance as a parent (85%), feelings of sadness, hopelessness, lack of energy and trust, sleep disturbance and loss of appetite, pessimistic thoughts about their life in the future and problems in imagining that future (85%), self-accusation and self-blame, feelings of a lack of personal worth and of having failed catastrophically in their role as a parent (85%), an inability to take action sooner to oppose the negative influencing of their child by the other parent (75%), negative labelling and criticism from society (50%, exclusively for female subjects);

h) The way subjects perceive their future lives as parents demonstrates that the alienated parent sees their future relationship with the child in a pessimistic way (85%), as a consequence of emotional, physical and financial exhaustion, but that they do not give up trying to re-establish a

normal relationship with their child/children – persevering with legal procedures, visiting the child at school, sending letters and messages, attempting to make contact on the telephone, and going to see the child in public playgrounds (100%);

i) The changes the alienated parent would make if they had the chance to handle their couple relationship differently in order for it not to end as it did are not marrying the same type of partner (100%), initiating moves to separate from the former partner sooner (90%), and seeking early psychological help (85%).

Analysis of results demonstrates the existence of four themes that dominate the lives of parents involved in the process of parental alienation, from the point of view of the alienated parent. These are (a) experiencing a sense of having failed as a parent and having negative emotions that affect their well-being, (b) losing their relationship with the child as a consequence of the harsh intervention of the alienating parent (c) the interference of the partner's family of origin and the undermining of their parental role (d) a perception that there are serious gaps in the Romanian legal system and that specialists in the mental health and social protection systems have insufficient knowledge about parental alienation.

(a) Experiencing a sense of having failed as a parent and having negative emotions that affect their well-being

Our study results show that the alienated parent, whether male or female, experiences a feeling of powerlessness in relation to their own child/children and is over-indulgent towards them for fear of angering them and losing their relationship with them. The child is thus the one who fixes the rules of interaction with the alienated parent, who accepts the treatment meted out by the child. The present study also shows that these parents, whether male or female, experience disappointment in relation to their performance as parents, believing that they were incapable of setting boundaries at the right moment in their relationship with their child/children, for fear of being regarded as unloving parents, which made them unable to take earlier action to resist the negative influencing of the child by the alienating parent. These results resemble those reported by Finzi-Dottan *et al.* (2011) and by Vassiliou and Cartwright (2001). The results also demonstrate that the alienated parent experiences low self-esteem and self-confidence, which is in harmony with the findings of Warner (2005) and Middleton (2006), and also that alienated parents exhibit depressive emotions, have difficulty in imagining the future, and experience a constant feeling of sadness (echoing the research findings of Baker (2010), (Biolley, 2014) and Balmer *et al.* (2018). It is likewise observable that alienated parents tend to be self-accusatory and self-blaming, which echoes what

Finzi-Dottan *et al.* (2011) found, and that they experience negative labelling and social ostracism, once again inharmony with the findings of Finzi-Dottan *et al.* (2011).

The words that best describe this theme in the context of the study are *failure, disappointment, fear, regret, depression, sadness, inability, lack of trust, lack of worth, bad parent, and lack of boundaries.*

Mrs P. describes her experience as a parent after approximately three years of no longer having had a normal relationship with her nine-year-old son as follows: “He doesn’t want to see me and I can’t do anything. I go to the school every week and stand outside, watching him through the playground fence playing with his classmates. If he sees me, he shouts at me and calls me a fool, telling me that he never wants to see me again. I feel completely powerless. When I manage to see him at closer range, I only tell him I love him. And when I go away, I cry. I feel I’m a failure as a mother, I ask myself where I went wrong. I know it’s not his fault, because he’s my darling and I love him, and I know that his dad and his dad’s mother tell him all kinds of horrible things about me. I am heartbroken and my life has no meaning since they took him away from me.”

Mr N. describes his experience of being an alienated parent as follows: “I haven’t hugged Ana since she was three. Now she’s five. Every time I go to see her at the kindergarten, she stares at the ground and refuses to say a word. She won’t say anything and I don’t know what to do. If I get too close to her, she runs away and cries, and even the kindergarten teacher won’t let me near her, because she’s under orders from my ex-wife and says she doesn’t want to get in trouble with her. I took the court papers to the head teacher to prove we have joint custody, but it got me nowhere. I feel sad, disappointed and sometimes depressed. I no longer have any confidence in myself and I don’t know if I was a good father. Before the divorce, she used to jump into my arms and be pleased to see me when I got home from work. Now it seems as if I’m the person in the world she’s most afraid of.”

(b) Loss of relationship with the child as a result of the harsh intervention of the alienating parent

Our study results show that alienated parents grasp that the occurrence of the phenomenon of parental alienation is due principally to the deliberate intervention of the alienating parent and also to their feelings and needs, these feelings taking the form of anger and a need for revenge. Intervention by the alienating parent takes the further form of turning the child into an ally of theirs who joins them in breaking off relations with the alienated parent. These results are in agreement with those reported by Vassiliou and Cartwright (2001) and Finzi-Dottan *et al.* (2011), whose research projects demonstrate that the alienating parent intervenes in a

harsh and deliberate way in the relationship between the child/children and the alienated parent to bring about a deep rift in the relations between them (Vassiliou and Cartwright, 2001; Finzi-Dottan *et al.*, 2011).

The words that describe this theme of the study are *influence, loss of control, revenge, ally, powerlessness, helplessness, anger, weaponised child*.

Mrs M. describes as follows how her ex-husband intervened in her relationship with her son, now aged 17: *“I was a housewife, I never went out to work because I had three children. Alex is the oldest and I always had a special relationship with him. I love them all the same, but he was the one who awoke maternal feelings in me. When he was little, everything was OK, even though my ex-husband used to put me down in front of the children. Alex didn’t seem to notice, but when he got bigger he started using exactly the same expressions as his father. He claimed I was stupid, uneducated, uncivilised and an unnatural mother (because I was supposed not to have given him his medicine when he was ill as a small child). It all came to a head at the point when he came to tell me he and his father were divorcing me. He was 14 when he said that. My ex-husband used to treat me very badly; he didn’t hit me, but he subjected me to verbal humiliation, and Alex started doing the same. After the divorce he told me I wasn’t his mother anymore and his father was in the right and I was a failure and he didn’t want to see me again. And that’s how he behaved. For three years now I’ve had almost no news of him; he doesn’t want to speak to me anymore. And his father tells him he’s treating me just right, because I don’t deserve my children.”*

This is how Mr A. relates his experience in his relationship with his child after his divorce: *“Tibi doesn’t want to come near me. He’s six now, but he refuses to see me because he knows I definitely want to kill him. That’s what his mother has told him. That I wanted to kill him before he was born. That it’s my fault his grandfather died. That I’m a murderer and won’t be satisfied until I’ve killed everyone. Before the divorce he enjoyed going out for bike rides with me, playing with Lego with me and joining me in my after-lunch sleep. Now he calls me a murderer. These are not the words of a child of six. His mother has told me that she won’t give up until she’s completely destroyed me. The child is hers, she’s his mother, and I need to disappear from their lives.”*

(c) Interference by the partner’s family of origin and undermining of the parental role

With reference to this theme, study results show that it is perceived by participants as a major factor in destroying the alienated parent’s relationship with the child. Mothers-in-law are perceived by both female

and male subjects as being extremely interfering, and such interference tends to provoke parental alienation. Whether this interference takes place in a subtle way, the professed motive being to help the married couple, or in a harsh way, through criticism of the subject and undercutting their role as a parent, the effect of such behaviour is to provoke the phenomenon of parental alienation. These findings support the results of Finzi-Dottan *et al.* (2011), which demonstrate that mothers-in-law, by undermining the mother's maternal role, intervene in her relationship with the child, which implicitly tends to provoke parental alienation.

Words that highlight this theme within the study are *interfering mother-in-law, intervention, suffering, pain, loss.*

Mrs P. says that her relationship with her daughter was deeply influenced in a negative way by her former mother-in-law: "After I gave birth, she moved in with us. I didn't want this, but my husband brought her. She lived with us for three months, night and day, and after that she came every day until we got divorced. She taught Sofia to call her 'Good Mother'. She didn't use to criticise me directly in front of Sofia, but she had a subtle way of making me feel deskilled. Every day I felt that little by little I was losing my child. Sofia became very attached to her and after the divorce she didn't want to come with me. She stayed with her father and grandmother in my former home. *There was absolutely no way I could take her with me. Now she doesn't want to see me. She says that I left her father and that I am a bad mother. In six months I've seen her only once, and that was at the birthday party of some mutual friends. She ran away from me to her grandmother, who picked her up and told me in front of her that I was traumatising the child and that I had better leave.*"

Mr I. describes the way the dynamic of his relationship with his child changed after his former mother-in-law moved to his home: "*She played the victim all the time, but did absolutely everything Vlad wanted. He was two and my wife had to go back to work. The child had no boundaries set for him at all, he used to do exactly as he pleased, and when I tried to put some limits on his behaviour my ex-wife would intervene and undermine my authority. My mother-in-law also made my wife believe I was involved with a neighbour. That's where all the trouble started. There was nothing between us, but my ex-wife was very easily influenced and believed everything her mother told her. Sometimes I think my ex-mother-in-law's aim was to destroy my marriage. I couldn't take it any longer and I moved out. Now I haven't seen Vlăduț for almost a year. He's five, I won joint custody, but his mother says he doesn't want to see me. I tried to take him away by going there with a court official, but my ex-mother-in-law was there; she hit me and called me a murderer in front of the child, who was absolutely terrified. I'm at my wits' end.*"

(d) The perception that there are serious deficiencies in the Romanian legal, mental health and social protection systems

A major theme highlighted by this study is the disappointment alienated parents feel regarding some serious deficiencies in the Romanian legal system. Although the great majority of participants in the study had joint custody, and some of them also still had their children living with them, not one of them had been able to have a normal relationship with their child/children. Their frustration sprang from the fact that even though they had been to court and won a legally binding ruling regarding the way they should continue to have a relationship with their child, the alienating parent had interfered to prevent this, despite the fact that such behaviour was in no way legally sanctioned. A further disappointment has to do with the fact that mental health system specialists and those working in the social services are insufficiently informed about parental alienation. At the point when the alienated parent seeks help from these services they come up against extreme rigidity and a lack of support. These findings are consonant with those of Gardner, 1991, 1992; Clawar & Rivlin, 1991; Dunne & Hedrick, 1994; Girdner, 1985, and Vassiliou & Cartwright (2001).

Words used to describe this theme by participants in the study are *lack of trust, injustice, pessimism, exhaustion, poorly trained experts*.

Mrs H. describes her disappointment with Romanian justice: *“I’m at my wits’ end. I’m exhausted from every point of view – mentally, emotionally, financially. I won all the cases in all the courts: the magistrates’ court / higher court, the Court of Appeal. I’ve got custody and the right to have the child living with me. I’ve been trying to get him away from his father for three years. And nobody does anything. They won’t help me in the least. He was six when we got divorced. My husband cheated on me with his secretary and I didn’t want to stand in his way, I left and took the child with me, but I let him visit him a week later, because I thought it was normal that the child should have contact with his father too. He never brought him back. I have never seen him again and I’ve not been alone with him for three years. Now the child is afraid of me. I’ve been to Child Protection, the Town Hall, to NGOs, but no one can do anything. I’m desperate. I’m dying with the law in my hand, no one does anything to him. He laughs in my face and defies me. I’ve got a definitive, irrevocable court ruling and a fat lot of use it is to me. During these three years he’s brainwashed my child, who now sees me as a monster.”*

Mr L. says that his experience with the legal and social services systems has left him with a bitter taste in his mouth: *“I’m furious, I no longer know what I can try. I’ve got a definitive joint custody ruling and visiting rights laid down by the court and I haven’t seen my child for a year*

and a half. It's a scandal. She doesn't want to let me see him, because – she says – he doesn't want to see me. I've been to the police, I've been to Child Protection, I've made submissions to the Ministry of Justice. No one does anything. And I see the years passing and my child doesn't know me. He was three when we separated. Now he's four and a half and all he knows about me is what his mother tells him. I don't think it's right. But I'm not going to give up. My child needs to know that he's got a father who loves him!"

V. Discussion and conclusions

The aim of this research study was to examine the experience of parenthood for mothers and fathers who are unable to have a normal relationship with their children as a result of the phenomenon of parental alienation. Analysis of the results of the study demonstrated that there are four themes that dominate the lives of parents involved in the process of parental alienation from the perspective of the alienated parent. These are experiencing a sense of failure as a parent and negative emotions that impact their well-being, losing their relationship with their child as a result of the harsh intervention of the alienating parent, the interference of the partner's family of origin and the undermining of their parental role, and a perception that there are serious deficiencies in the legal system in Romania, along with insufficient knowledge about parental alienation among specialists working in the mental health and social protection systems.

With reference to the experience of a sense of failure as a parent and negative emotions that impact their well-being, the study results show that the alienated parent experiences a number of negative emotions, including low self-esteem and self-confidence, constant sadness, depression, self-blame and self-accusation, and disappointment in regard to their performance as a parent. This disappointment comes both from the impossibility of setting clear boundaries for the child, for fear of making them angry, and from the fact that they were not able to act sooner to prevent the child being negatively influenced by the alienating parent. All these results are in harmony with those reported in the specialist literature (Vassiliou & Cartwright, 2001; Warner, 2005; Middleton, 2006; Baker, 2010; Finzi-Dottan *et al.*, 2011; Biolley, 2014; Balmer *et al.*, (2018).

As regards the alienated parent's loss of their relationship with the child as a result of the harsh intervention of the alienating parent, our study results show that alienated parents are aware of the fact that parental alienation is largely caused by the deliberate intervention of the alienating parent and also owes something to that parent's feelings and needs, these feelings being ones of rage and a need for revenge, but that it also results from the child being turned by the alienating parent into an ally of theirs who plays his/her part in

breaking off relations with the alienated parent (results which echo those of Vassiliou and Cartwright, 2001).

When it comes to the interference of the partner's family of origin and the undermining of the subject's role as a parent, the study results show that this is perceived by participants as a major factor in breaking the alienated parent's relationship with the child. Mothers-in-law are perceived by both female and male subjects as being extremely interfering, and this interference provokes the onset of parental alienation. Our result in this regard are in harmony with those of Finzi-Dottan *et al.* (2011) and Gardner (1992, 1998).

A major theme that emerges from this study is the disappointment alienated parents feel about the existence of serious deficiencies in the Romanian legal system. 90% of subjects said that although they had won custody of their children through definitive court orders, they were unable to have a normal relationship with them as a result of the phenomenon of parental alienation, and that neither the courts nor the social services nor mental health experts had been able to identify constructive ways forward for them. More than that, 50% of subjects stated that although they both had custody and had won the right to have the child living with them – rights awarded by a definitive court ruling – in fact they had had no kind of relationship with their child/children (for periods ranging from six months to three years) and had no way of bringing further legal pressure to bear on the situation. All these parents stated that they had addressed themselves both to the courts and to the branch of the social services concerned with children's rights but had not been given any support that had actually remedied the situation. The bodies that provide social services blame a gap in the law that prevents them from intervening in an effective way to prevent and combat parental alienation. This is why an alienated parent who seeks help from these services comes up against so much rigidity and lack of support. These findings agree with those of Gardner, 1991, 1992; Clawar and Rivlin, 1991; Dunne and Hedrick, 1994; Gardner, 1985), and Vassiliou and Cartwright (2001).

In conclusion, our study results show that there are no significant differences between mothers and fathers in the way they perceive and experience parental alienation in the role of alienated parent. The experience is a devastating one for both, with effects on their self-perception and self-confidence, on the way they perceive their strengths as a parent, and above all on the way they feel when, with every day that sees no change in their position, they slowly but surely lose more of their connection with their child/children and their chances of having a normal relationship with them. The campaign of denigration that the alienating parent wages against them, with the harsh and interfering way they interpose themselves between the

alienated parent and their child/children, mean that the image the child has of that parent becomes increasingly distorted, which implicitly means that he/she is deprived of the chance of building and experiencing an authentic relationship with their mother or father. All these forms of denigration are the more frustrating for the alienated parent the less there is of a well-founded basis for them. These alienated parents were, until a certain point in time, authority figures for their children, involved in an appropriate way in their upbringing and education and not exhibiting dangerous or incorrect behaviour towards them. One of the most painful things these parents experience is their consciousness that the gap in their child/children's life/lives left by their absence, plus the negative image they have of them, may have a serious negative impact on the future development of these young children.

This qualitative study demonstrates that there are common themes and perceptions that alienated parents share, even though they have never met in real life and have not told each other their personal experiences. This indicates the existence of a number of aspects that are general characteristics of the phenomenon of parental alienation, aspects that can make a contribution to defining and highlighting this phenomenon, the ends in view being both identification and prevention.

VI. Limitations and future research directions

This project is the first piece of research carried out in Romania to have studied, from a qualitative point of view, the impact of parental alienation on the alienated parent by means of assessing the situation on the ground and gathering responses from 20 people in situations of alienation with regard to their own child. In addition, in relation to gender, this is a qualitative study that brings together responses from equal numbers of alienated fathers and alienated mothers, in an attempt to capture any gender-dependent differences in perception. Earlier research studies focused exclusively on women, on mothers (Kruk, 2010, Finzi-Dottan *et al.*, 2011), or, if they took both genders into account, did not have the same number of participants from each (Vassiliou & Cartwright, 2001 – five fathers and one mother).

While the results obtained in the present study did not indicate any marked differences between how mothers and fathers perceive the effects on them of parental alienation, this work opens up the way for future research projects to look at issues regarding different perceptions of alienation depending on the gender of the parent.

One of the significant limitations of the study has to do with its sample size, which means we must be cautious in interpreting and generalising the results. Given the sensitiveness of the subject, it was quite hard to identify

potential participants and to obtain the agreement of very many of them to participate.

This being a qualitative study, it lacks the objectivity of empirical quantitative studies; such objectivity would have made it possible to make comparisons with subjects who had ended their couple relationships in a non-conflictual and amicable way and to establish whether significant differences could be identified between these two categories of subjects. However, it is known that qualitative studies could lead to a better understanding of the concept (Swami et al., 2020), in our case, the parental alienation. A further limitation is the fact that the subjects in the sample all live in Romania and suffered the consequences of the joint custody enforced by Romanian law – a point that means that we need to be extremely cautious about applying these results to people in general. Also, our study had samples were self-selecting which can reduce the generalizability of the findings (Swami et al., 2019).

This study can be a jumping-off point for future studies aiming at analysing the impact parental alienation has on the alienated parent in terms of its effect on their psychological well-being, since, at least at the level of day-to-day practical reality, situations of this kind are becoming increasingly common in Romania.

References:

- Baker, A. J. L. (2005). *Parent alienation strategies: A qualitative study of adults who experienced parental alienation as a child*. *American Journal of Forensic Psychology*, 23(4), 41–63. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01926180500301444>
- Baker, A. J. L. (2007). *Knowledge and attitudes about the parental alienation syndrome: A survey of custody evaluators*. *American Journal of Family Therapy*, 35(1), 1–20. doi:10.1080/01926180600698368
- Baker, A. (2010). *Adult Recall of Parental Alienation in a Community Sample: Prevalence and Associations With Psychological Maltreatment*. *Journal of Divorce & Remarriage*. Jan. 2010, 51 Issue 1, p16-35. Charts. DOI: 10. 1080/10502550903423206
- Baker, A. J. L. & Darnall, D. C. (2006). *Behaviors and Strategies Employed in Parental Alienation*. *Journal of Divorce & Remarriage* 45(1-2):97-124 https://www.researchgate.net/publication/233228321_Behaviors_and_Strategies_Employed_in_Parental_Alienation
- Baker, A. J. L., & Darnall, D. C. (2007). *A construct study of the eight symptoms of severe parental alienation syndrome*. *Journal of Divorce & Remarriage*, 47(1–2), 55–75. doi:10.1300/J087v47n01_04
- Baker, A. J. L., Burkhard, B., & Albertson-Kelly, J. (2012). *Differentiating Alienated From Not Alienated Children: A Pilot Study*. *Journal of Divorce*

- & Remarriage, 53(3), 178–193.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10502556.2012.663266>
- Baker, A. J. L. & Chambers, J (2011) . *Adult Recall of Childhood Exposure to Parental Conflict: Unpacking the Black Box of Parental Alienation*. January 2011 *Journal of Divorce & Remarriage* 52(1):55-76 DOI: 10.1080/10502556.2011.534396
- Baker, A. J. L., Verocchio M.A. (2016). *Exposure to Parental Alienation and Subsequent Anxiety and Depression in Italian Adults*. *The American Journal of Family Therapy* 2016, vol. 44, no. 5, 255–271, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01926187.2016.1230480>
- Balmer, S., Matthewson, M., Haines, J (2018). *Parental alienation: Targeted parent perspective*. *Australian Journal of Psychology* 2018; 70: 91–99 doi: 10.1111/ajpy.12159
- Ben-Ami, N., & Baker, A. J. L. (2012). *The Long-Term Correlates of Childhood Exposure to Parental Alienation on Adult Self-Sufficiency and Well-Being*. *The American Journal of Family Therapy*, 40(2), 169–183. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01926187.2011.601206>
- Biolley, J. (2014). *Copilul și Divorțul. Cum ne protejăm copiii de efectele divorțului. [The Child and Divorce. How we can protect our children from the effects of divorce.]* Editura Philobia. ISBN 978-606-8560-19-9
- Brandes, J (2000). *PARENTAL ALIENATION. NEW YORK LAW JOURNAL*. <https://www.fact.on.ca/Info/pas/brande00.htm>
- Clawar, S. S., & Rivlin, B. V. (1991). *Children held hostage: Dealing with programmed and brainwashed children*. Chicago: American Bar Association.
- Creswell, J.W. (2007) *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among Five Traditions*, 2nd edn. Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA.
- Dunne, J., & Hedrick, M. (1994). *The parental alienation syndrome: An analysis of sixteen cases*. *Journal of Divorce and Remarriage*, 21(3/4), 21–38.
- Finzi-Dottan, R.F, Goldblatt, H., Cohen-Masica, O (2011). *The experience of motherhood for alienated mothers*. *Child & Family Social Work* doi:10.1111/j.1365-2206.2011.00782.x 316.
- Fond-Harmant, L., & Gavrilă-Ardelean, M. (2016). *The contribution of the human development theory for the education and mental health of the child*, *Educația Plus* 14 (3), 174-181.
- Gardner, R. A. (1985). *Recent trends in divorce and custody litigation*. *The Academy Forum*, 29(2), 3–7. New York: The American Academy of Psychoanalysis.
- Gardner, R. (1987). *The Parental Alienation Syndrome and the Differentiation between Fabricated and Genuine Child Sex Abuse*. Creative Therapeutics. © 1987

- Gardner, R. (1992). *The parental alienation syndrome: A guide for mental health and legal professionals*. Cresskill, NJ: Creative Therapeutics.
- Gardner, R. A. (1998a). *The parental alienation syndrome: A guide for mental health and legal professionals (2nd ed.)*. Cresskill, NJ: Creative Therapeutics.
- Gardner, R. A. (1998b). "The parental alienation syndrome: What is it and what data support it?": Comment509. *Child Maltreatment*, 3(4), 309–312. doi:10.1177/1077559598003004001
- Gardner, R. (2002). *Parental Alienation Syndrome vs. Parental Alienation: Which Diagnosis Should Evaluators Use in Child-Custody Disputes?* *The American Journal of Family Therapy*, 30(2), 93–115. <https://doi.org/10.1080/019261802753573821>.
- Gardner, R. A. (2002). *Denial of the parental alienation syndrome also harms women*. *The American Journal of Family Therapy*, 30(3), 191–202. <https://doi.org/10.1080/019261802753577520>
- Gardner, R. (2004). *The relationship between the parental alienation syndrome and the false memory syndrome*. *The American Journal of Family Therapy*, 32, 79–99. doi:10.1080/01926180490424181.
- Gardner, R. (2008). *Recommendations for Dealing with Parents who Induce a Parental Alienation Syndrome in their Children*. *Journal of Divorce & Remarriage* ISSN: 1050-2556 (Print) 1540-4811 (Online) Journal homepage: <https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/wjdr20>
- Gavrila-Ardelean, M., & Gavrila-Ardelean, L. (2017). *Review of Need For Health Education In The Bio-Psycho-Social Approach Of Mental Health*, *Journal Plus Education* 17 (1), 276-285.
- Gavrila-Ardelean, M. (2008). *Mental Health Education*, *Agora Psycho-Pragmatica* 2 (4), 58.
- Girdner, L. K. (1985). *Strategies of conflict: Custody litigation in the United States*. *Journal of Divorce and Remarriage*, 9(1), 1–15.
- Godbout, E., & Parent, C. (2012). *The Life Paths and Lived Experiences of Adults Who Have Experienced Parental Alienation: A Retrospective Study*. *Journal of Divorce & Remarriage*, 53(1), 34–54. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10502556.2012.635967>
- Goian, C. (2004). *Deprinderi in Asistenta Sociala*, Institutul European.
- Goian, C. (2010). Zece categorii de inconsecvente semantice prezente in limbajul asistentei sociale din spatula romanesc. *Revista de Asistenta Sociala*, nr 1/2010,79-90.
- Goian, C. (2012). Semantic analysis of the dynamics of the social work language applied in Romania, Pro Universitaria.
- Johnston, J. R. (2003). *Parental alignments and rejection: An empirical study of alienation in children of divorce*. *Journal of the American Academy of Psychiatry and the Law*, 31(2), 158–170.

- Johnston, J. R. (2004). *Rejoinder to Gardner's "Commentary on Kelly and Johnston's 'The Alienated Child: A Reformulation of Parental Alienation Syndrome.'*" Family Court Review, 42(4), 622–628. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1531244504268658>
- Kelly, J. B. & Johnston, J. R. (2001). *The alienated child: A reformulation of parental alienation syndrome*. Family Court Review, 39(3), 249–266. doi:10.1111/j.174-1617.2001.tb00609.x.
- Kelly, J. B. (2010). *Commentary on "Family Bridges: Using Insights From Social Science To Reconnect Parents and Alienated Children"* (Warshak, 2010). Family Court Review, 48(1), 81–90. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1744-1617.2009.01289.x>
- Kruk, E.(2010). *Collateral Damage: The Lived Experiences of Divorced Mothers Without Custody*.*Journal of Divorce & Remarriage*, 51:526–543, 2010 Copyright © Taylor & Francis Group, LLC ISSN: 1050-2556 print/1540-4811 online DOI: 10.1080/10502556.2010.504103
- Lavadera, A. L., Ferracuti, S. & Togliatti, M. M. (2012). *Parental Alienation Syndrome in Italian legal judgments: An exploratory study*. International Journal of Law and Psychiatry, 35(4), 334-342. doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.ijlp.2012.04.005>.
- Lowenstein, L. (2015). *How Can the Process of Parental Alienation and the Alienator Be Effectively Treated?* *Journal of Divorce & Remarriage*, 56:657–662, 2015 Copyright © Taylor & Francis Group, LLC ISSN: 1050-2556 print/1540-4811 online DOI: 10.1080/10502556.2015.1060821
- Lester, S. (1999). *An introduction to phenomenological research*. <https://www.rgs.org/CMSPages/GetFile.aspx?nodeguid=7ad9b8d4-6a93-4269-94d2-585983364b51&lang=en-GB>
- Lincoln, Y.S. & Guba, E.G. (1985). *Naturalistic Inquiry*. Sage, Newbury Park, CA.
- Middleton, A. (2006) *Mothering under duress: examining the inclusiveness of feminist mothering theory*. Journal of the Association for Research on Mothering, 8 (1–2), 55–71.
- Moustakas, C.E. (1994) *Phenomenological Research Methods*. Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA.
- Patton, M.Q. (2002) *Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods*, 3rd edn. Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA.
- Renzetti, C.M. & Lee, R.M. (1993). *The problems of researching sensitive topics: an overview and introduction*. In: *Researching Sensitive Topics*. (eds C.M. Renzetti & R.M. Lee) pp. 3–13. Sage, Newbury Park, CA.
- Rosenblatt, P.C. & Fischer, L.R. (1993). *Qualitative family research*. In: *Sourcebook of Family Theories and Methods: A Contextual Approach* (eds P.G. Boss, W.J. Doherty, R. LaRossa, W.R. Schumm & S.K. Steinmetz), pp. 167–177. PlenumPress, NewYork.

- Rowlands, G.A. (2018). *Parental Alienation: A Measurement Tool*. Journal of Divorce & Remarriage, DOI: 10.1080/10502556.2018.1546031
- Schwandt, T.A. (2007). *The Sage Dictionary of Qualitative Inquiry*, 3rd edn. Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA.
- Siegel, Jeffrey C. & Langford, Joseph S. *MMPI-2 Validity Scales and Suspected Parental Alienation Syndrome (1998)*. American Journal of Forensic Psychology, Volume 16, Number 4, 1998, p. 5-14, https://canadiancrc.com/Parental_Alienation_Syndrome_Canada/MMPI2_VValidity_Scales_and_Suspected_Parental_Alienation_Syndrome.aspx
- Schwartz, Kelly (2015). *The kids are not all right: Using the best interest standard to prevent parental alienation and a therapeutic intervention approach to provide relief*. Boston College Law Review. 2015. Vol 56 Issue 2, p803-840.38 p. Database: Academic Search Complete
- Sîrbu, A., Buică, D. (2018). *Parental alienation from the perspective of personality structure and disorders of divorced couples*. Agora Psycho-Pragmatica, pp. 248-262. <https://www.uav.ro/jour/index.php/app/article/view/1296>
- Sutton, J, Austin, Z., (2015). *Qualitative Research: Data Collection, Analysis, and Management*. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4485510/>
- Summers, D. M., Summers, C.C.(2006). *Unadulterated Arrogance: Autopsy of the Narcissistic Parental Alienator*. The American Journal of Family Therapy, 34:399–428, 2006 Copyright © Taylor & Francis Group, LLC ISSN: 0192-6187 print / 1521-0383 online DOI: 10.1080/01926180600817885
- Swami, V., Mohd. Khatib, N. A., Vidal-Mollón, J., Vintila, M., Barron, D., Goian, C., Mayoral, O., Lin Toh, E. K., Tudorel, O., Vazirani, S., & Zahari, H. S. (2019). Visits to Natural Environments Improve State Body Appreciation: Evidence from Malaysia, Romania, and Spain. *Ecopsychology*.
- Swami, V., Tran, U. S., Barron, D., Afhami, R., Aimé, A., Almenara, C. A., Alp Dal, N., Amaral, A. C. S., Andrianto, S., Anjum, G., Argyrides, M., Atari, M., Aziz, M., Banai, B., Borowiec, J., Brewis, A., Cakir Kocak, Y., Campos, J. A. D. B., Carmona, C., ... Voracek, M. (2020). The Breast Size Satisfaction Survey (BSSS): Breast size dissatisfaction and its antecedents and outcomes in women from 40 nations. *Body Image*, 32, 199–217. <https://doi.org/10.1016/J.BODYIM.2020.01.006>
- Thoresen, S. & Øverlien, C. (2009). *Trauma victim: yes or no? Why it may be difficult to answer questions regarding violence, sexual abuse, and other traumatic events*. *Violence Against Women*, 15, 699–719.
- Vassiliou, D., Cartwright, G.F.(2001). *The Lost Parents' Perspective on Parental Alienation Syndrome*. The American Journal of Family Therapy,

29:181–191, 2001 Copyright ©2001 Brunner-Routledge 0192-6187/01
\$12.00 + .00

Viljoen, M., van Rensburg, E. (2014). *Exploring the Lived Experiences of Psychologists Working With Parental Alienation Syndrome*. *Journal of Divorce & Remarriage*, 55(4), 253–275.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10502556.2014.901833>

Warner, J. (2005). *Perfect Madness: Motherhood in the Age of Anxiety*. Riverhead Books, New York.