

Pathway to Parental Alienation or Estrangement

The Dynamics that Affect the Well-being of Children after their Parents have Divorced

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Abstract

The behavior of eight residential parents whose children struggle with the visitation-agreements in place after a divorce, has been explored through in-depth interviews.

Visitation- schedules are important areas of conflict in which alienation-inducing parents manifest their contributions. The interviews indicate that the overt behavior of the parents is guided by their feelings, which originated in their past and evolve into their present. The residential parents' feelings towards non-residential parents in this study appear to become mirrored by their children. When this happens this may lead to the child internalizing the feelings of an alienating parent as if they were its own. This could indicate the possible existence of a ninth symptom of parental alienation. The relation between parents' covert and overt behavior is also guided by their environment and the consequences of the parents' behavior. Specific experiences in the past are seen to result in a dynamic routing to parental alienation or estrangement. When parents persist in their fight, their struggle may lead to heavy-lain conflicts for the child. Their behavior was seen to be directed at influencing the child's loyalty against the other parent, resulting in a negative impact on the child's well-being. This outcome can lead to a shifting loyalty of the child, which opens up the way of parental alienation. These findings add to the existing knowledge regarding the triggers, evolution and guiding variables of parental alienation or estrangement.

Het gedrag van acht inwonende ouders, wiens kinderen na de scheiding worstelen met de bezoeksregeling, is middels diepte-interviews geëxploreerd. De bijdrage van een ouder in het verstoten van de andere ouder manifesteert zich in belangrijke mate middels conflictueuze bezoeksregelingen. De interviews wijzen uit dat het overte gedrag van de ouders wordt beïnvloed door hun gevoelens, die zijn ontstaan in hun verleden en die evolueren tot aan hun heden. De emoties en gevoelens van de inwonende ouders jegens de uitwonende ouders in

deze studie lijken gespiegeld te kunnen worden door hun kinderen. Wanneer dit gebeurt, zou het risico kunnen ontstaan dat het kind de gevoelens van een verstotende ouder internaliseert. Dit zou het bestaan van een negende symptoom van ouderverstoting kunnen indiceren. De relatie tussen het coverte en overte gedrag van de ouders wordt beïnvloed door de omgeving en de consequenties van het gedrag van de ouders. Specifieke elementen in het verleden leiden tot een dynamisch pad naar ouderverstoting. Als ouders volharden in hun gevecht, dan kan deze strijd leiden tot een strijd om het kind. Hun overte gedrag zal dan gericht zijn op het beïnvloeden van de loyaliteit van het kind jegens de andere ouder, hetgeen resulteert in negatieve gevolgen voor het welzijn van het kind. Deze uitkomst kan leiden tot een verschuiving in loyaliteit van het kind en dit baant de weg naar ouderverstoting. Deze bevindingen dragen bij aan de bestaande kennis betreffende de aanleidingen, de evolutie en de variabelen die ouderverstoting of –vervreemding beïnvloeden.

Keywords: parental alienation, estrangement, ouderverstoting, echtscheiding, vechtscheiding

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Aim of this Research

The primary aim of this research is to explore the covert behavior (i.e. emotions and feelings) of residential parents (hereinafter “RP”) who struggle, or whose children struggle with the non-residential parent (hereinafter “NRP”) over the visitation agreements in place. A situation which may lead to parental alienation: the child’s manifestation of a campaign of denigration against the NRP, induced by a programming parent (Gardner, 1998).

Covert and Overt Behavior

Cottrell (1971) cites Mead (1913, 1934) who stated that what we perceive as thinking or feeling may be viewed as a covert form of a behavioral process which guide the overt actions accordingly. Thus, for instance, feeling sad (covert behavior) as a result of missing the child when it visits the NRP, the RP may cry (overt behavior) when the child departs with the NRP.

Non-compliance with the Visitation-agreement in Place

As Gardner (1998) described, the visitation-agreement is an important area of conflict in which alienating parents influence their children. Visitation obstruction, so Gardner states, is a very powerful vengeance maneuver of the alienating parent. As time progresses and alienating parent keeps on declaring that the NRP is pushing things too fast regarding the visitation-agreement, the child will lose direct contact with the NRP, opening the pathway of parental alienation.

Parental Alienation Syndrome

The Parental Alienation Syndrome (hereinafter “PAS”) was first defined by Gardner (1998). Gardner described a cluster of eight symptoms that appear in the child that suffers from PAS: 1) there is a campaign of denigration against the alienated parent. 2) the rationalizations for the deprecation are weak, absurd, or frivolous.

- 3) there is a lack of ambivalence on the child's part about its parents: the alienating parent is perceived as all-perfect, whereas the alienated parent is alleged all-bad.
- 4) the "independent-thinker" phenomenon can be observed: the child believes that he or she was not influenced in the decision to reject the alienated parent.
- 5) the child shows a reflexive support of the alienating parent in the parental conflict.
- 6) the child does not experience a sensation of guilt over the cruelty to and/or exploitation of the alienated parent.
- 7) PAS-children make use of borrowed scenarios, as Baker (2007) clarified: "their phrases and ideas are adopted wholesale from the alienating parent" (p. 8).
- 8) The animosity spreads to the family and friends of the alienated parent.

Kelly and Johnston (2001) defined PAS as the result of the child responding to complex and frightening dynamics within the divorce process itself, to an array of parental behaviors, and also to the child's own vulnerabilities that make them susceptible to becoming alienated (p. 254).

Gardner (1998) described three forms in which PAS may occur: mild, moderate or severe. When mild cases progress to moderate or severe, it is highly likely that most (or all) symptoms will be present. Baker (2007) further explained that the mild cases are characterized by some parental programming, but visitation is not seriously affected. In cases of moderate PAS, there is significant parenteral programming and a considerable struggle around visitation. As Baker (2007) clarified: "the child with severe PAS is adamant about his or her hatred of the targeted parent, refusing visitation" (p. 9). Gardner (1998) specifically stated that PAS cannot be diagnosed in situations in which (sexual) abuse or neglect has occurred, especially if the accusation antedated the marital separation. Gardner (1998) also described a multitude of clinical manifestations in the alienating parent, which in the context of lawsuits can be intensified, for example: 1) They may show emotional outbursts and

overreactions; 2) They may assume and dramatize danger when others do not; 3) They may surround themselves with others who sympathize with them, thus entrenching the PAS psychopathology; 4) They may experience states of high emotion that compromise judgment; 5) They may display their anger and grief in a socially acceptable manner, which thus scapegoats others.

Although there is consensus over the fact that alienation is harmful, there is a controversy regarding the term or description of PAS. O'Leary and Moerk (1999) for instance stated that, although the term PAS is often used in literature and is frequently a central issue in contested child custody cases, there is no empirical evidence of a specific syndrome. Kelly and Johnston (2001) found that in high-conflict divorce, many parents engage in indoctrinating behaviors, but only a small proportion of children become alienated. They clearly differentiated between PAS and parental estrangement (hereinafter "PE"), the latter being a consequence of the parent's history of family violence, abuse, or neglect.

PAS is considered a verifiable psychiatric condition according to the Parental Alienation Awareness Organization (PAAO). PAAO is an organization in Ontario whose goal is to educate the general public, schools, police, mental health counsellors, religious leaders, as well as the perpetrators who may be unaware of the effect of alienating behaviors, and how these behaviors harm children. The Parental Alienation Awareness Organisation (2013) cited Bennett (2013): "The actual words "parental alienation syndrome" are not in DSM-5, but there are several diagnoses that can be used in these cases":

1) Parent-child relational problem: cognitive problems in parent-child relational problem "may include negative attributions of the other's intentions, hostility toward or scapegoating of the other, and unwarranted feelings of estrangement."

2) Child psychological abuse: "non-accidental verbal or symbolic acts by a child's parent or caregiver that result, or have reasonable potential to result, in significant psychological harm to the child."

3) Child affected by parental relationship distress: used "when the focus of clinical attention is the negative effects of parental relationship discord (e.g., high levels of conflict, distress, or disparagement) on a child in the family, including effects on the child's mental or other physical disorders.

The short-term Effects of PAS on the Child

According to Johnston, Walters, and Olesen as cited in Kaplan (2008) the obvious short term effects are that the child is deprived of the love, guidance, role-modelling and support of one of its parents, which may lead to hardened stress. The child is suffering from a loyalty conflict, it has to choose between parents, when all the child wants is being able to love both and being loved by both. In cases where the animosity spreads to the family, the child loses and misses love and support from beloved grandparents and other relatives of the alienated parent. The child becomes involved in matters of the divorce that are beyond his or her comprehension and role. The child is not allowed to grieve for the loss of a parent, as an alienating grown-up stated: "Only when my mother lost her father and suffered heavily, I realized that I had never been able to mourn myself". Gardner (1998) mentioned that some mothers will destroy every item that might remember the child of the existence of the NRP, by doing so the RP symbolically destroys the NRP. Straathof (2013) reported that childcare in Amsterdam found that children demonstrate troublesome school behavior and that alcohol abuse is more prevalent. Girls tend to have anorexia problems. Apart from these obvious effects as Kaplan (2008) cited Johnston et al., PAS-children: 1) show significantly more behavioral problems; 2) are inclined to feelings of depression and demonstrate withdrawn

behavior; 3) are less precise and their reasoning is less logical; and 4) their capabilities in finding solutions to problems are less developed in comparison to non PAS-children.

The long-term Effects of PAS on the Child

Realization of the manipulation occurs often years later. As Baker (2007) stated, this is a painful realization but also the beginning of a possibility to reclaiming the lost parent. At the same time however, the awareness of the PAS for most children led to an enhanced degree of conflict in their relationship with the alienating parent. Baker provided five major life-long-term effects of PAS:

- 1) The PAS-adult suffers from a lower self-esteem. As a child they have learned to believe that the alienated parent does not love them anymore, they apparently are not worthy of this love. Some children blame themselves and feel guilty for having been manipulated into alienating the parent and hurting him or her in the process.
- 2) The majority of the PAS-adults suffer from significant episodes of depression, when realizing they have lost the alienated parent. Realization often occurs when the alienated parent has already passed away or the PAS is beyond repair. Furthermore, the loss of time that could have been spent with the alienated parent leads to feelings of depression.
- 3) Many of the PAS-adults are drawn to substance abuse as a way to escape the feelings of pain and loss.
- 4) Lack of trust in themselves and others is a recurrent theme for the PAS-adult.
- 5) The PAS-adults are plagued with a high divorce rate. As a result of the effects of their PAS, many PAS-adults become alienated from their own children themselves, thus repeating their early experience of loss and rejection.

Van Berlo, Van Engen, and Mooren (2006) added to this list that the regulative brain functions can be influenced or even damaged by traumatic events such as PAS in childhood.

The Motives of the RP for Non-compliance with the Visitation-agreement

Children themselves, experiencing a loyalty conflict after a divorce, may express the desire to cease visiting the NRP. The child struggles to adhere to the visitation-agreement as it does not want to endanger the relationship with the RP in its being dependent on the care of its parent (Baker, 2007). Reasons for this struggle may be that the child shifts its loyalty from both parents specifically to the RP, whom it perceives as suffering within the situation, or to prevent RP's anxiousness or anger as a result of persisting loyalty to the NRP.

The RPs tend to overtly justify non-compliance with the visitation-agreement in declaring to their environment and official institutions that the child is damaged through the visits. Ideas such as: "The child is not properly looked after, or is it is neglected when with the NRP" are commonplace. In the situation that the NRP has found a new partner and even becomes part of a new family, sometimes with step-children or new half-siblings, the RP may say: "The child does not feel at home in the new family; it does not like the step-parent, or the other children are being favored above the child". Overt explanations may also be of a superficial nature, as Van Leeuwen (2003) experienced: "The other parent only serves French fries for dinner" In other cases, the RP may not claim direct involvement in the child's apparent decision, but merely support it. "If my child does not want to visit the NRP, how can I deny that?" However, compare this to the child wanting to stop going to school, then the parent would never be as understanding or supportive in such a situation. Gardner (1998) explained this as a reaction "formation mechanism", by which an individual professes the opposite of true feelings.

Covert motives correlate with the feelings of the RP itself, they are not essentially expressed or may not even be conscious to the RP itself. They can be seen to benefit their personal interests. See Gardner (1998) who, although he did not differentiate between covert

and overt motives, mentioned motives for not openly expressing the denegation. For example, “the fury of the scorned woman or man”, economic disparity and power.

Other covert motives may be the wish to start a family with a new partner where the NRP would only be in the way. Or when a RP is the primary care-giver, it may feel lonely or disavowed when the child is with the NRP. Furthermore, jealousy may play a role in cases where the NRP has found a new partner – and jealousy may have been the reason that the marriage ended in the first place. Such negative emotions may also arise through a fear that the child bonds with the new partner of the NRP. The direct environment also can come into play: aversion towards the NRP, or disapproval of its behavior, can enhance the RPs desire to discontinue the visitation-agreement.

Prevalence, Incidence and Risk Factors of the Occurrence of PAS

Very little factual information is available about the prevalence or incidence of PAS in the Netherlands. The average divorce-rate in the Netherlands in 2010 was 36.2%. The CBS (Centraal Bureau voor Statistiek) reports an average of 21.280 annual divorces between 1950 and 2011. From 1950 to 2011, a total of 1,320,000 divorces had taken place. To be noted is that in these numbers, the separations of couples who were not married, but had children are not included. The estimated incidence-rate of PAS consequently varies between 4,000 and 8,000 children. Straathof (2013) stated that childcare institutions in Amsterdam report an alarming increase in bad divorces. Straathof cited the childcare institution in Amsterdam who specified that the children are being used as a tool to hurt the other parent. The parents even go so far as to falsely report sexual child abuse. The University of Utrecht, together with the CBS (central bureau of statistics) are currently performing a study to determine the amount of parents who after a divorce lost contact with their child(ren).

In order to show the urgency of this issue, some observations are provided below. In 2013 in the Netherlands there were cases of three fathers who killed their children as a result

of disagreements concerning the visitation rights after a bad divorce. Afterwards they themselves committed suicide. Vassiliou and Cartwright (2001) reported that in the U.S.A. in 1994, six million children were estimated victims of interfered visitation by their custodial parent. They cited Arditti, who found that as many as 50% of fathers (usually the noncustodial parent) reported that their visitation with their children had been interfered with by their ex-wives. Vassiliou and Cartwright (2001) also cited Kressel who found that of the custodial mothers 40% admitted denying their ex-husband visitation as a means of punishing him. Spruijt, Eikelenboom, Harmeling, Stokkers, and Kormos (2005) studied the occurrence of PAS in The Netherlands. They found that after a parent's divorce about 20% of the children end up not visiting the NRP. Other sources however report that 40% of the children in divorce situations end up having lost contact with one of the parents (Hoefnagels, 2002). Hoefnagels estimated a prevalence of 150,000 PAS-children and adults between one and 45 years old in the Netherlands.

Objectives and Research Questions

As there is no consensus on whether PAS is indeed a syndrome the term parental alienation (in short "PA") is hereinafter used. The primary objectives of this research are:

- 1) Filling in gaps in literature regarding PA by providing insight in the overt and covert motives of the RP in relation to visitation-agreements.
- 2) To discover the participants' main concerns (covert behavior) regarding the visitation-agreement and how they act on these concerns (overt behavior).
- 3) Establishing RP's understanding of the dynamics related to a divorce and the damage it may cause to the child.

The following research questions are addressed in this study:

- 1) Which are the covert motives of the RP for non-compliance with the visitation-agreement?
- 2) Which are the overt motives of the RP for non-compliance with the visitation-agreement?

Method

Grounded Theory Approach

Prior research into the main concern of RPs regarding the visitation-agreement and the (c)overt motives for non-compliance with this visitation-agreement has, to the knowledge of the researcher, not been performed. By making use of grounded theory method as Rennie, Phillips, and Quartaro (1988) cited Glaser, 1978, a theory can be generated from the data in subject areas that are difficult to access with traditional research methods.

Sample and Participant Selection

Participants were found in searching through various internet groups such as within LinkedIn, Facebook or through twitter messages (see Table 1 in the Appendix). The internet-groups were linked to psychology forums and divorce forums. The assistance of professionals who through other contacts had expressed their interest in the effects of a bad divorce cases (for example either on LinkedIn or through personal acquaintance) were requested by a mail message to help in the search (see Appendix B). The platform Vader Kennis Centrum [Father Knowledge Center] provided further support in placing a search text on their Facebook page as well as twitter messages (see Appendix C).

The search motif was simply: “Residential parents who find that their children do not wish to visit the NRP after a divorce.” Some confusion arose as to whether also NRPs, who had lost contact with their children after a divorce, could also participate in this study. Consequently, the search motif was underlined as only to refer to RPs (see Appendix D). Nrps who had expressed their wish to participate as well were sent an email to explain the situation (see Appendix E).

There is no general agreement about sample size in qualitative studies and it was agreed upon that eight to ten respondents should provide the overview and information sufficient for the purposes of this study.

Participants were asked to establish contact either by means of email or by telephone. Nine RPs responded. The telephone numbers of the applicants who contacted the researcher by email were requested in order to establish a personal contact and provide further personal explanations (see Appendix F). The researcher therefore spoke to all participants about the objectives and way forward: i.e. to express their experiences and feelings with regards to their own situation through personal in-depth interviews. Appointments were then set for the interviews. Importantly, the researcher gave details on the length of the interviews (maximum three hours) and the importance of confidentiality, which is guaranteed. Anonymity would be provided for in the final document of the research. Furthermore, all participants would receive the final document by email. Participants were free to choose the location of the interview: for example at their homes or at the Open University or in actual fact any other place they preferred.

Data Collection Method

The interviews were held between May and August 2013, two at the Open University in Amsterdam and seven at the homes of the participants. Parking costs were covered for two participants who chose to meet at the location of the Open University. All participants were shown gratitude for their participation by means of a small box of chocolates (value Euro 2.50). The interviews lasted on average two hours. With the permission of the participants, all interviews were recorded.

Table 2 describes the divisions into sex, average age, age range, average duration parental relationship (in years) and the range of the duration of the parental relationship (in years). Table 3 shows the living areas (provinces) in the Netherlands of the participants. Table 4 describes the divisions of the children into sex, average age, age range, number of half-siblings and number of step-siblings. (See Tables 2, 3 and 4 in the Appendix)

Interview Style

The intention of the interviewer was to find out as much in-depth information as possible from a small group of people. Therefore, the interviews were carried out in an open-ended, discovery-oriented method which was seen as the most appropriate interviewing style. The interviewer could therefore explore the participants' feelings and their perspectives as deeply as possible with regards to their views and conflicts with the visitation-agreements.

A personal introduction of the interviewer and an explanation of the purpose and conditions of the interview preceded each discussion. Participants had the choice not to answer questions, if they found them to be too personal. This however never occurred. Each interview commenced with the same question: "How did the separation occur?"

Open ended questions in the interview were asked in a semi-structured format (see Appendix G). The interview was conversational in manner with questions flowing on from previous responses wherever possible. The interviewer sought understanding and interpretation throughout the interview by listening actively and clearly reflecting upon what the participant was saying. The interviewer tried to interpret what was being said and sought clarity. In the closing stage of the interview, the list of semi-structured questions was used to verify whether all points had been covered. Each interview was closed by thanking the participant.

Data Analysis Methods

One interview was excluded because the complex special situation of this family went beyond the objectives of this study. Therefore, eight interviews remained. The excluded participant was informed by mail (see Appendix H).

The recordings of the interviews were transcribed into computer files and analyzed with the computer based program Kwalitan. Special care was taken by the researcher that the participants, their ex-partners, their children and the place of their homes would not be

identifiable in any subsequent report. All of the interview transcripts were analyzed by the researcher and coded according to a grounded-theory approach to data analysis. In order to establish inter-subjectivity, two independent assistants were asked to verify the accuracy of the category system. One assistant verified all segments, the other assistant verified any inconsistencies derived from the initial verification plus 10% of all segments. After discussion with the assistants, minor modifications were made to the category system.

Findings

Covert Motives of the RP for the Non-compliance with the Visitation Agreement

The first question in the study refers to the association between the non-compliance with the visitation agreement and the covert motives RPs can have in doing this. Nine covert motives for non-compliance by the RP can be seen in Table 6.

Anxiety. Alienating parents may feel danger that others would not feel and are overprotective. In case of *bona fide* abuse or neglect, however, there is no specific programming of the child by the parent (Gardner, 1998). The effect of this (alleged) danger is anxiety and three forms can be distinguished:

Anxiety in relation to the NRP directly. Three RPs (1, 5 and 6) all report feeling anxious when they even think of the NRP. RP 6 explains how she frightened about her child being abducted:

Ik ben heel erg bang geweest in de periode dat hij weg was dat hij zomaar voor de deur kon staan (...) en haar terug zou slepen. (...) [I was very afraid then that he was gone and then that he could suddenly be on my doorstep (...) and drag her away from me. (...)]

RP 1 feared for her own safety and the police gave her an alarm-device to use if she felt in danger through the NRP. After a while, she had to return the device:

Dat is een vreemd gevoel om (...) zonder kastje op straat te lopen, (...) je kijkt tien keer om je heen. Je moet ogen in je rug hebben. [It is a strange feeling to (...) walk on the streets without having the box, you look around ten times. You have to have eyes in your back of your head.]

Anxiety in relation to the child visits to the NRP. RPs 1, 5 and 6 report that when the child visits the NRP, they feel very anxious themselves. RP 5 explains:

Ja, dan slaap ik niet [als het kind bij NRP is]. Dan pak ik twee tot drie uurtjes, dan ben ik wakker en zenuwen, zenuwen. [Yes, then I do not sleep [when the child visits the NRP]. At most two to three hours, then I wake up, and my nerves, my nerves.]

The RP feels anxious in relation to disclosure by NRP of matters related to RP and RP's family. The RP may wish to prevent the NRP expressing information about the RP or the family of the RP: which can be seen as a form of (contra-) programming of the child (Gardner, 1998). In our study, one RP mentions the wish to stop the relaying of any information to this end. RP 1 explains how this frustrates her:

Hoe meer de omganger gingen lopen, hoe zwaarder het voor haar ook werd, want hij gaf haar opdrachten niet tegen mij te praten. Hij vertelde hoe slecht ik was, hoe slecht haar opa en oma zijn en dat zij hem hebben gestoken met messen en kijk maar naar de littekens. Hij heeft helemaal geen littekens (...) maar als ze dan thuiskwam helemaal contra, boos op iedereen en [ze] van zich af ging vechten. (...) [hij vertelde haar] Hoe slecht opa is (...) en hoe slecht mijn broer is. (...) Waardoor zij weer twijfelde. [The more the child visited the NRP, the harder it got for her, because he ordered her not to speak to me. He told her how bad I was, how bad her Granddad and Grandma are and that they had knifed him, look at the scars. He doesn't have any scars (...) but when she came home, she was all full of conflict, angry at everyone and [she] would start a fight. [he told her] how bad Granddad is (...) and how bad my brother is. (...) Which made her doubt again.]

The RP plans a new family. One of the strategies of PA is having the child name another person “Mum” or “Dad” and call the other parent by their first name (Baker, 2007). Gardner (1998) cited Clawar and Rivlin who found that wanting to create a new family is a technique to estrange a parent. Two RPs (1 and 6) have found new partners. Both RPs declare that the child sees the new partner as their Father. The child of RP 6 is adopted by the Stepfather after it stopped seeing the NRP. Gardner (1998) found that “new partners predictably almost always become embroiled in the PAS power struggle” (p. 195):

Vanaf dat ze [dochter] een jaar of negen was, ging hij [NRP] ineens afspraken niet nakomen. (...) Dat heeft bij A [dochter] ervoor gezorgd: ik kan je niet vertrouwen. (...) Vanaf die periode is het een tijd heel slecht contact geweest. We hebben ook daarna een procedure in gang gezet dat mijn tweede man A ging adopteren. (...) Ja, ja, eh, dus plus dat ze mijn tweede man zo volledig accepteerde, eigenlijk zegt ze dat nog steeds: papa [tegen stiefvader] is papa en H (voornaam NRP) is H. [From the time that she [the daughter] was about nine years old he [the NRP] suddenly stopped complying with the agreements. (...) That caused A [the daughter] to not trust him any longer. (...) From that time on, the contact was really bad. We then began the adoption procedure of A through my second husband. (...) She in fact still says that: Daddy is Daddy [to her stepfather] and H [first name father] is H.]

To the question why this adoption process was begun, RP 6 replies:

We hebben al in 1996 een zoon gekregen [een zoon van RP en haar nieuwe partner] en dat [dat de dochter door de partner geadopteerd zou worden] voelde als completer gezin. [A son was born in 1996 [the son of RP with her new partner] and this [that the daughter would be adopted by the new partner] felt more like a complete family.]

The RP experiences jealousy. The RPs 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 experience jealousy of four kinds.

The RP is confronted with the financial inequality between the RP and the NRP.

Economic disparity between the spouses after a separation often leads to a frustration of the deprived partner (Gardner, 1998). Three RPs (3, 4 and 5) show negative emotions when speaking about the fact that the NRP had more financial resources: in their eyes, the NRP apparently buys the love of the child. RP 4 describes:

Dan gaan ze [NRP met zoons] lasergamen, dure dingen. Dat ik denk van: waar betaal je het van? Dat vinden ze heel leuk. Dat ga ik niet doen. Dat vind ik niet goed. Hij koopt ze gewoon om. (...) Ja, hij kan ze met luxe vermaken, dat kan hij zelf niet. Dat is zijn manier om te laten zien dat hij van ze houdt. [Then they [NRP and sons] will play these “laser-games”, expensive things. Then I think: how do you pay for it? They like it a lot. I’m not going to do that. I don’t think it’s right. He just buys them. (...)] Yes, he can get them with luxury, he can’t do it himself. It is his way to show them that he loves them.]

The RP experiences jealousy towards the new partner of NRP and may feel let

down. In six situations (all but parents 1 and 3), the relationship came to an end because the NRP had an affair. Gardner (1998) spoke of “the fury of the scorned woman” (p. 168), a fury that may be enhanced if the RP is rejected because the partner falls in love with someone else. All RPs involved, with exception of RP 8, mention this feeling. RP 4 describes:

Ik merkte dat ik dat helemaal vooruit geschoven had [dat de nieuwe partner van NRP bij hem gaat wonen]. Ik was nog niet gescheiden, dus hoefde ik daar niet over te denken. Toen knalde dat ineens naar binnen. Toen was ik helemaal overstuur daarvan. Toen ging hij de vakantie doen [met de vriendin en de kinderen]. Daar was ik ook helemaal overstuur van. [I realized I had completely ignored that fact [that the new partner of NRP would be moving in with the NRP]. I wasn’t yet divorced, so I didn’t need to even consider this. Then it suddenly hit me. I was so upset. Then he went on holiday [with the new partner and the children]. I was so upset by that as well.]

Jealousy may also arise when the new partner of the NRP starts bonding with the child. RP 4 also gives an insight in these feelings:

Dat eerste weekend dat ze terugkwamen van haar [stiefmoeder], dat weekend, dat ga ik echt niet meer doen op zo'n manier. Het werkt niet (...). Ik was helemaal, ik kon het niet hebben (...). Ik wilde niets horen. Ze zeiden: ze is wel aardig. Ze is wel aardig! Ze moeten haar een klootzak vinden! [That first weekend when they came back from her [Stepmother], that weekend, I am not going to do that again like this. It doesn't work (...). I was completely, I couldn't stand it (...). I didn't want to hear anything. They said: she is really nice. She is really nice! They must think that she is a bitch!]

Also men experience grief and pain in case of an affair. RP 2 explains his vision of the future as the NRP will miss the children:

Ja, ik denk dat ze eerdaags voor de deur staat. (...) Je hebt wel een verleden dat je kwijt bent. (...) Ik heb de geschiedenis wel met de kinderen. [Yes I believe that one day soon she will be knocking on my door. (...) You have a lost past (...) I, however, share that past with the children.]

The NRP is seen as a fun-parent, not involved with the daily issues. Gardner (1998) described some more factors that at work in the development of PAS. Envy can arise when the RP feels that the NRP is playing the fun-parent. The day to day problems of raising a child, telling it to clean the room, asking it to give a helping hand in the housekeeping, etc. can result in irritations between the RP and the child. As the child is only occasionally with the NRP, the NRP wants to make the best of that time together. For two RPs this is an issue (3 and 7). RP 3 describes:

Ja, dan heeft hij [NRP bij bezoek van zoon] ook vrij, dan heeft hij ook niets. Hij [zoon] ziet niet dat als papa aan het werk is, dat hij dan die aandacht ook niet heeft. Dat hij dan ook mee moet draaien met zijn systeem, opstaan, boterhammen smeren en naar school. [...] Je wil ook niet altijd de zuurmoeder zijn.

Als hij alleen maar de leuke dingen met zijn vader heeft, dan ben je dat al gauw. [Yes, then he is free [the NRP – when his son visits him], he has nothing. He [son] does not see that when Daddy is at work, he doesn't get this attention either. That he then would have to contribute to his system, getting up, preparing lunch and getting to school. [...] You don't want to be a bitter Mother all the time. If he only does fun things with his father, you get that however.]

Deceived. Only RP 2 mentions that he feels deceived. This was when he found out that the NRP had an affair: “Ja, een hard gelag, en ja eigenlijk, voel ik me genaaid”. [Yes a rough deal really, and yes I feel screwed.]

Improved parental bonding. Gardner (1998) explained that the residual love of the RP can be fused into programming the children against the NRP. Fathers who were relatively uninvolved with their families were transformed to “fathers of the year” (p. 191), which he calls the *reaction-formation*. In this study, one RP experiences that the relationship with the children much improved after the NRP left home to start a new life with another partner.

RP 2:

Terwijl we [RP en kinderen] vroeger recht tegenover elkaar stonden, dat is nu driekwart jaar redelijk goed omgedraaid. (...) Ja, dat [de relatie met de kinderen] is 80% veranderd, de 20% die ik nog had, is voor de 80% goed gekomen. [In the past we did not see eye to eye, [RP and the children] that has changed quite well in the last three-quarters of the year. (...) Yes, that [the relationship with the children] has changed for 80%, the 20% I had, has improved by 80%.]

The RP experiences loneliness: the child is essential to the well-being of the RP.

Gardner (1998) cited Clawar and Rivlin (1991) who summarized techniques used by the alienating parent to program the children against the NRP. One of these is birthright; “the fact that the woman gave birth to the child and suffered the pain of delivery” (p. 12). Also in this study all RPs describe such a strong bonding to the child that the child becomes almost indispensable (with exception of RP 8, where the issue of the children being absent is not a

problem, because the father does not comply with the visitation-agreement). Furthermore with regards to this claimed birthright, RP 5 explains:

Weet je wat zijn [NRP] droomwens was: dat N [dochter] bij hem woont (...) daar zie je al het verschil in hoe ik hoop dat zij een echte vader in hem kan vinden en hoe hij hoopt dat ik haar ooit echt loslaat. [Do you know what his [NRP's] greatest wish was that N [daughter] would move in with him (...) there you will see the difference in how I hope she can find a real father to him, and how he hopes that I will one day let her go.]

And to the question as to whether she *can* let go, she replies: “Natuurlijk niet, ik heb twee maanden in het ziekenhuis gelegen, haar dan loslaat!” [of course not, I laid for two months in hospital, then let her go!]

Also the fear of losing the child, or missing it too much when they are separated may be covert motives for the RP with regards non-compliance. It may even be a reason for remaining in a marriage that the RP no longer believes in, as RP 7 explains:

Maar ik had gedacht dat wij zouden gaan strijden om de kinderen. Mijn kinderen zijn mijn alles, de gedachte dat ik ze zou moeten missen, vond ik onverdraaglijk. Dat was de reden dat ik bij hem bleef. [But I believed we would fight over the children. My children are my-everything, The thought of missing them was unbearable. That was the reason I remained with him.]

The parent is frustrated. NRP 1, 3, 4, 5 and 7 report feelings of frustration in two sorts.

The RP is confronted with intractable behavior of the child after a visit to NRP. RPs are at times confronted with the intractable behavior of the child after its visiting the NRP, making it hard for the RP to deal with the child. This may be the effect of (contra-) programming of the child by the NRP through a campaign of denigration directed at the RP (Gardner, 1998); or even the differentiation in parenting styles. RPs (1, 3, 4, 5 and 7) mostly

report the child being angry after a visit, as RP 1 and RP 5 respectively explain their frustration:

Ja, dan hoefde ik haar ook niet te corrigeren, of zo, dan was ze [dochter na bezoek NRP] echt verschrikkelijk. (...) Ja, heel boos en brutaal en schreeuwen. [Yes, then I couldn't tell her what is right in any way [the daughter after a visit to the NRP], she was really terrible. (...) Yes really angry, cheeky and screaming.]

Als het te regelloos wordt, [na bezoek NRP] dan is het niet het leukste kind. Ik vind haar leuker als ze regels heeft. [It is like anarchy, [after a visit to NRP] then she is not the nicest of children. I like her better when rules are imposed upon her.]

The NRP is seen as an undesirable role-model for the child. Reaction-formation (Gardner, 1998): residual love for the partner which seems to be turned into hatred, can influence a child of course. When NRPs experience these feelings of hatred towards them and then have to act within such an environment, they become an undesirable role-model in the eyes of the RP. One RP mentions this situation. RP 3 explains her frustration as follows:

Ja, absoluut [op de vraag of geld een issue tussen de ex-partners is geweest] (...) nog steeds. Ik krijg het nu terug van mijn zoon. Geld is macht. Dan zeg ik wel: wat wil je later worden? Miljonair zegt hij dan. [Yes, absolutely [in answer to the question if money was an issue between the ex-partners] (...) it still is. I now get it back from my son. Money is power. Then I ask him: what do you want to become later? A millionaire, he replies.]

In other situations, the child shows undesirable traits of the NRP. Traits that were cause for frustration during the relationship and may have even been a cause for the relationship ending in the first place. RP 3 describes this:

Ja [zoon vergelijkt NRP, die wel werkt met RP], in de zin van: ik ben een vrouw van ik hoor gewoon het huishouden te doen. Afwasmachine uitpakken, die vrouw die thuis is. Ik ben een moeder. Een thuismoeder op dat moment. [Yes [as the son compares the RP with the NRP, who does work for a living], in the sense: I am just a woman, I just do the housekeeping. emptying out the dishwasher, the woman who is at home. I am a mother. A mother at home in that moment.]

The RP experiences a sense of justification. Apart from jealousy, the RP may experience a feeling to justify the pain that was caused by the rejection of the NRP (Gardner, 1998). Two RPs mention this experience (2 and 4). RP 2:

Ik heb alle vrienden nog, de oude en de nieuwe en ik heb mijn kinderen nog (...) Zij staat alleen, ja met hem. Dat is heel zwaar voor haar dat ze geen contact heeft met de kinderen. [I've still got all our friends, the old ones and the new ones and I still have my children (...). She's on her own, yes, with him. It is very hard for her that she lost contact with the children.]

Grieving for the lost relationship. Gardner (1998) referred to a pathological maintenance of the marital bond as a sort of glue keeping the relationship together. In a divorce, one of the partners may precede the other in having the desire to stop the relationship as a result of inequality in their (remaining) feelings for each other. This can exacerbated in finding love in someone else, leaving the abandoned partner with feelings of grief and jealousy. Sometimes this is combined with a wish to get back together again or at least to get back on speaking terms again. The children may be set in as pawns in realizing this goal. Four RPs show signs of grief (2, 4, 5 and 7). RP 2 explains his feelings:

Ik zal altijd van haar blijven houden, ik heb 30 jaar van haar gehouden, maar ik weet dat het irreal is om haar terug te nemen. Er hoeft maar iets te gebeuren en het escaleert (...). Dus ik ga wel een leven opbouwen, maar het liefst wil ik dat we aan tafel zitten over (...) de kinderen en financiële dingen (...). Je wil wel met z'n tweeën, desnoods gescheiden besluiten wat je gaat doen. Ik wil op een verjaardag

kunnen komen en zij ook. Dat moet gebeuren. Dit is geen gezonde situatie. (...) Ja, dat denk ik wel [in antwoord op de vraag of nu dat de kinderen nu zo voor hem gekozen hebben, zal helpen ook dat ze weer normaal contact het elkaar hebben] [I will always love her, I loved her 30 years long, but I know it isn't realistic to get her back. The smallest thing will lead to escalation (...). So I will make a new life again, but I would so much want us to sit at the table together and talk about (...) the children and financial matters (...). You want to decide together (...) what you're going to do. I want to go to a birthday party and she does as well. It must happen. This is not a healthy situation. (...) Yes, I think so too [answering the question that the children's siding with him, will help to establish this normal contact between themselves.]

Concern: The RP loses influence when the child is with the NRP. Gardner (1998) cited Clawar and Rivlin (1991) who summarized various factors that contribute a child being programmed against the father. One of these is the belief that men do have the adequate capacities as a parent, for they are biologically and physically inferior to women when it comes to child-bearing. Rp 3 experiences that her child is confronted with the demands of the NRP, without being able to intervene:

Ja, maar als je getrouwd bent, kan je inspringen. Zo van: joh, dat hoeft helemaal niet, als je daar geen zin in hebt. Dan ben je ter plekke, dan kan je hem verdedigen. (...) Maar nu we niet meer samen zijn, de eisen [van NRP] blijven hetzelfde, maar ik kan niets meer doen. [Yes, but when you are married, you can jump in. Like: gee, you don't have to do that, if you don't want to. Then you are right on the spot, then you can defend him. (...). But now that we are no longer together, the demands [of the NRP] remain equal, but I can do nothing about it.]

Table 6

Covert motives for non-compliance with the visitation-agreement as derived from the RP (represented in a number) and the frequency rate it was reported

Covert motives for non-compliance with the visitation-agreement	RP	Rate
The RP experiences anxiety	1-5-6	44
The RP's desire to start a new family	1-6	10
The RP experiences jealousy	2-3-4-5-6-7	47
The RP experiences an improved relationship with the children	2	9
The RP experiences indispensability of child / loneliness	1-2-3-4-5-6-7	20
The RP experiences feelings of frustration	1-3-4-5-7	20
The RP experiences a sense of justification	2-4	13
Grief for the lost relationship	2-4-5-7	19
Concern when the RP loses influence when the child is with the NRP.	3	4

Note. N=8.

Overt Motives of the RP for Non-Compliance with the Visitation Agreement

The second question in the study refers to the association of non-compliance with the visitation agreement and the overt justifications for this by the RP. In two situations (RP 1 and RP 2) the visit to the NRP stopped completely. In one situation (RP 8) it was the NRP who seems not to be complying with the visitation agreement. Seven overt motives for this are mentioned by the RP in this study, also see Table 7.

The RP believes that the child is (sexually) abused. The child-protective services in Amsterdam, as cited by Straathof (2013), stated that parents who in conflict over their children even go so far as to falsely report sexual child abuse. Gardner (1998) also mentioned this phenomena in his first characteristic of PAS: “a campaign of denigration” (p. 278). Gardner (1998) further indicated that alienating parents may see danger when others do not. Bone fide abuse however actually means a victimization of the child. Also within this study, RPs (1, 5 and 6) report child abuse, sexually or mentally. An example of sexual abuse is mentioned by RP 5:

Ja, als ze [dochter] bij me is, dan zegt ze: papa heeft mijn pipi gekneed (...) Ja, [antwoord op de vraag of het ook is prettig als het misbruik bevestigd wordt] dan laat ik hem uit de voogdij zetten, dat kan dan eindelijk. Nu kan ik niets. Op deze gronden [zonder misbruik] wordt niemand uit de voogdij gezet.

[Yes, when she [daughter] is with me, she says: daddy massaged my pipi (....) Yes [answer to the question whether it would be welcomed if abuse were determined] then I can see to it that he loses his rights of custody, I can finally do that. Now I can do nothing. On these grounds [without abuse] nobody loses custody.]

The RP believes that the child disapproves of the conduct of the NRP. The fifth characteristic of PAS (Gardner, 1998) is a reflexive support of the alienating parent in the conflict between the parents. In this study RPs (2, 4 and 8) find that the child disapproves of the conduct of the NRP, a reflexive support of the RP by the child can be seen here. RP 1 for instance cites the children:

Zij [de kinderen] zeggen ook: Je [RP] bent misbruikt door beiden [NRP en nieuwe partner]. Door beiden, al die jaren eigenlijk. [They [the children] say: you [meaning RP] have been abused by both [NRP and her new partner]. By both, all these years really.]

The RP believes that the child dislikes the new partner of NRP. Also in the cases that the child apparently dislikes the new partner of the NRP, a reflective support of the RP (Gardner, 1998) can be determined here. Five parents report this dislike: parents 2, 4, 5, 7 and 8. RP 4 elaborates:

Ja, die van 13 [zoon] is vrij naïef, maar die moet niets van die Russische [nieuwe partner NRP] hebben hoor (...). Als hij [NRP] kaartjes stuurt uit Rusland of Moskou of zo, nou die kaartjes hoeft hij echt niet. We hoeven die allemaal niet. Ze [zoons] gaan hier echt tekeer over haar. [Yes, my thirteen old [son] is quite naïve, but he does not want to have anything to do with the Russian [new partner NRP] (...). If he [NRP] sends postcards from Russia or Moscow, he doesn't want these cards. Neither of us want these cards. They [sons] really spoke terribly about her.]

The RP feels there are conflicting parental values and parenting styles. The child-protective services in Amsterdam as cited by (Straathof, 2013) found that many Caucasian parents, who are highly educated, verbally adept and who have clear views regarding the education of their children, end up in conflict. This is also seen in this study and the differences of values and/or parenting style come up clearly (RPs 3 and 4). Gardner (1998) also indicated that alienating parents allow for grief or jealousy in a manner that is considered socially acceptable. RP 4 explains:

Ja, daar heb ik in het begin bezwaar tegen gehad, [het samenwonen van NRP met nieuwe partner voor het huwelijk] maar hij snapt niet eens waar ik het over heb. Als ik zeg: hoe wil je dat doen in je vakantie? Je hebt je doopbelofte gegeven dat je de kinderen zal opvoeden, dat ze geen seks voor het huwelijk zullen hebben (...) en jij geeft dit voorbeeld! [Yes, I objected to that in the beginning, [that the NRP will live together with his new partner without being married] but he does not understand what I am talking about. When I say: how do you plan to do this on your holiday? You gave your christening vows that you will raise your children to abstain from sex before marriage (...) and this is the example you give!]

The RP feels the child is discriminated compared to half- or step-siblings.

Characteristic number two of PAS as mentioned by Gardner (1998) is the use of superficial rationalizations for the deprecation of the NRP. Some RPs (5, 6 and 7) report that their child feels discriminated by the NRP compared to half- or step-siblings. Whether this feeling is imagined or as a result bona fide neglect could not be established for the child was not interviewed. RP 6 explains:

Ik weet nog dat ze een keer terugkwam [van NRP] en vertelde dat ze had gewandeld (...) en zijn zontjes een verrekijker kregen (...) en zij kreeg geen verrekijker. Zulke dingetjes. Dat stak haar. Dat voelde ze als: het is anders. [I remember when she came back [from the NRP] and told me that they had

gone for a walk (...) and his sons were given a pair of binoculars (...) and she was not given a pair of binoculars. Such things. That hurt her. She felt it as if she is different.]

The RP feels that the child is not properly taken care of by NRP. The alienating parent overreacts and sees danger where others do not (Gardner, 1998). Gardner also mentioned the use of superficial rationalizations (characteristic two). Whether this feeling is superficial or bona fide neglect cannot be established again as the child was not interviewed. Some of the parents (1, 5 and 6) in this study clearly feel that the child is not properly taken care of by the NRP. RP 5 explains:

Toen kreeg ze [de dochter] in één weekend pizza, patat en pannenkoeken [van NRP]. Tot ze bijna kotsend thuis komt. [She [daughter] had eaten pizza, fries and pancakes during one weekend [at NRP's home]. She came home almost throwing up.]

The RP feels that the NRP is indifferent towards the child. When the RP states that the NRP is indifferent towards the feelings of the child, one could deduce that the rationalizations here are superficial as mentioned by Gardner (1998). All RPs with the exception of RP 1 experience this. RP 3 describes:

Ja, want zijn vader denkt dan ineens het is nu 5 uur (...) ik ga stappen. Ga jij maar bij oma slapen. (...) Dan denkt hij: ik word zomaar aan de kant gezet, want papa gaat toch alleen maar zijn eigen ding doen [Yes, then his father suddenly realizes: it is 5 o'clock (...) I am going out. (...) You can sleep at your Grandma's place, then he thinks: I am pushed aside, Daddy is only doing his thing].

Table 7

Overt motives for non-compliance with the visitation-agreement as derived from the RP (represented in a number) and the frequency rate it was reported

Overt motives for non-compliance with the visitation-agreement	RP	Rate
The RP believes that the child is (sexually) abused	1-5-6	11
The child disapproves of the conduct of the NRP	2-4-8	13
The child dislikes the new partner of the NRP	2-4-5-7-8	9
The child is confronted with conflicting values / parenting style	3-4	30
The child experiences discrimination in comparison to step- or half-siblings	5-6-7	8
The child is not properly taken care of by the NRP	1-5-6	27
The NRP shows indifference to the needs of the child	1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8	47

Note. N=8.

Relation and Exclusion of overt and covert Motives of the RP for Non-compliance with the Visitation-Agreement

Feelings of the RP can relate to specific expressed motives for non-compliance with the visitation-agreement, at the same time excluding other expressed motives, see Table 8.

The sub-categories of the covert behavior have been added to this table (they were not mentioned in table 6) as they do not all show the same relation or exclusion.

Relation between covert motives and overt motives for non-compliance with the visitation-agreement.

Anxiety and the wish to start anew. The three forms of anxiety described by RP 1, 5 and 6, and the wish of RP 1 and 6 to start a new family with their current partner, show a strong relation with the overtly expressed motives: 1) the child is not properly taken care of by the NRP; and 2) the child is (sexually) abused by the NRP. These specific feelings exclude all other overt expressions.

Affair. Feelings associated with an affair: 1) jealousy towards the new partner of the NRP; 2) feeling deceived by the ex-spouse; 3) experiencing an improved parental bonding; 4) feeling justified when seeing that the children take one's side; and 5) feeling grief for the lost relationship, all show a strong relation with the overtly expressed statements: 1) the child disapproves of the conduct of the NRP; 2) the child dislikes the new partner of the NRP; and

when there are half- or step-children involved 3) the child feels discriminated in relation to the half- or step-siblings. These specific feelings exclude all other overt expressions.

Different values and parenting styles. The feelings of 1) jealousy regarding the financial inequality between ex-spouses; 2) jealousy of the NRP being a fun-parent; 3) frustration of the NRP being a bad role model; and 4) the feeling of losing influence on the child show a strong relation with the overtly expressed statement that the parents have different values and parenting styles. Other feelings give rise to other overt expressions.

Intractable behavior of the child after a visit to NRP. There is often feeling of frustration when the child returns from a visit to the NRP which consequently leads to the child being hard to handle, shows a relation with the expressed motive that 1) the child is not properly taken care of by the NRP; and 2) the child is (sexually) abused by the NRP. This feeling however also shows a relation with the expressed motive that the parents show different values and parenting styles.

Lack of relation. All RPs, whose child visits the NRP, feel lonely when the child is at the NRP's. All RPs express that the NRP shows indifference to the child's needs or feelings.

Table 8

Relation and exclusion of overt and covert motives for non-compliance with the visitation-agreement of the RP, as derived from the RP (represented in a number)

Covert motives for non-compliance		Overt motives for non-compliance						
		Alleged abuse NRP	Child disapproves conduct NRP	Child dislikes partner NRP	Conflic-ting values	Discrimi-nation step-half siblings	Improper care-taking NRP	NRP shows Indifference
Anxiety: of NRP	1-5-6	1-5-6					1-5-6	All RPs
Anxiety: of visitation	1-5-6	1-5-6					1-5-6	All RPs
Anxiety: of disclosure NRP	1	1-5-6					1-5-6	All RPs
New family wish RP	1-6	1-5-6					1-5-6	All RPs
Jealousy: financial	3-4-5				3-4			All RPs
Jealousy: new partner NRP	2-4-5-6-7		2-4-8	2-4-5-7-8		5-6-7		All RPs
Jealousy: NRP is fun parent	3-7				3-4			All RPs
Jealousy: deceived by NRP	2		2-4-8	2-4-5-7-8				All RPs
Improved parental bonding	2		2-4-8	2-4-5-7-8				All RPs
Loneliness	1-2-3-4-5-6-7							All RPs
Frustration: behavior child	1-3-4-5-7	1-5-6			3-4		1-5-6	All RPs
Frustration: role-model NRP	3				3-4			All RPs
Justification	2-4		2-4-8	2-4-5-7-8				All RPs
Grief	2-4-5-7		2-4-8	2-4-5-7-8				All RPs
Loss of influence	3				3-4			All RPs

Note. N=8.

PATHWAY TO PARENTAL ALIENATION OR ESTRANGEMENT

Additional Findings

New Research Questions

Although not being the primary goal, this study shows factors which may eventually influence the loyalty of the child and lead to PA. Therefore, the category system which came out of the data in this study went further than the initial research questions leading to 10 category headings (see Table 5 in the Appendix). The category headings can be seen within the conceptual model: “Evolution to parental alienation or estrangement” (see Figure 1).

A secondary research question arose which is related to the initial research question (1):

1.1) What are the consequences of the behavior of the NRP?

Further to this secondary research question, two new research question also arose:

2) What are the overt and covert motives of the RP in *complying* with the visitation agreement?

3) Which variables influence the child’s loyalty after a (bad) divorce by the parents, indicating a pathway of parental alienation or estrangement?

Coming out of research question three, the following three secondary questions arose:

3.1) Which specific pathways can be identified, which have common features between the shared history of the ex-spouses and their behavior after a divorce?

3.2) How does the behavior of the parents after a divorce influence the loyalty of the child?

3.3) Which impact does parents’ influencing the loyalty of the child have on the child?

3.4) Do the results of the conduct of the parents on the child lead to shifting loyalty, PA or PE?

3.5) How does the environment mediate the relation between the covert behavior and the overt behavior of the parents?

Consequences of the Behavior of the RP

Research question 1.1 refers to the negative and positive consequences of the behavior of the RP. In this study RPs 1, 5 and 6 describe five consequences (four negative and one positive) of their not wishing to fully comply with the visitation-agreement: see Table 9. These consequences seem to strengthen the (c)overt motives for non-compliance. Arkes and Blumer (1985) explained that people show a greater tendency to continue an endeavor once an investment in money, effort, or time has been made: the so-called “sunk cost effect”. RP 1 explains how she became only more determined in her cause:

Ik ben er gewoon klaar mee [het gevecht], daarom heb ik ook gezegd, geen instanties meer, ik ga bij één persoon [kindercoach] (...) en ik hoop dat er wat te redden valt met haar [dochter], zodat we verder kunnen. Ik doe niet meer mee met een omgang, heb ik aan de raad gezegd, ik ga niet meer alle brokstukken oprapen wat hij [NRP] kapot maakt (...). [I am done with it [the fight], that’s why I said no more institutions, I will go to only one person [coach for the child] (...) and I hope I can save something [improve the situation of the child], so that we can proceed from here on. I will stop the visits all together, I said to the council, I am not going to mend all that he [NRP] is destroying.]

The NRP responds to the non-compliance by the RP with aggression and threats.

RPs 1, 5 and 6 report that the NRP actually threatens the RP when not complying with the visitation-agreement. The NRP can also threaten the people in the close environment of the RP when they side with the RP. RP 1 explains how she feels embarrassed: “Je schaamt jezelf kapot” [you are so deeply embarrassed.] and how NRP threatens her:

Ik werd bedreigd [door NRP], als ik je op straat tegenkom met het kind dan maak ik jullie af, zorg niet dat je buiten komt, want ik pak haar af en je krijgt haar nooit meer terug (...). Bij mijn ouders terroriseren, bij de burens (...) iedereen was bang. Langsrijden, spullen op straat gooien (...) Dus (...) ik kon moeilijk naar buiten toe: (alleen) met mijn vader (...) of met mijn zus. [I was threatened [by NRP], – if I see you somewhere with the child, then I will kill you, you’d better not go outside, I will

take her from you and you will never see her again (...). Terrorizing my parents, the neighbors (...) everybody was afraid. Driving past [the house], throwing things on the street. So (...) I could hardly go outside: [only] with my father (...) or with my sister.]

The RP experiences the negative financial effects of non-compliance. Two RPs (1 and 5) report financial effects. Not complying with the visitation-agreement, when it is imposed by the court, leads to penalties in the Netherlands. RP 1 experiences this:

Daarnaast werd er ook een dwangsom opgelegd dat als je het [meewerken aan door rechter opgelegde bezoeksregeling] niet doet, dan kreeg je 500 euro [boete] per keer [dat er niet aan de bezoeksregeling wordt meegewerkt]. [A penalty sum is imposed upon you if you don't do it [collaborating with the visitation-agreement that the judge had ordered], you then got [a fine of] 500 euro each time [that the visitation-agreement was violated.]

Also an adoption process of the child by the Stepfather is a costly affair. RP 5 explains:

Ja, dat kost geld [adoptie] en je moet er een advocaat voor hebben, dus na alles met elkaar is dat rond (...) 2000 is dat geregeld. [de behoefte tot adoptie door de stiefvader ontstond toen het kind negen jaar oud was, de adoptie vond plaats toen ze twaalf was]. [Yes, that costs money [adoption] and you need a lawyer, so all together it was settled at the beginning of 2000 [the desire to adopt the child by the stepfather was first expressed when she was nine years old, the adoption found place when she was twelve.]

The RP finds the fight time consuming. The NRPs of RPs 1 and 5 are fighting the non-compliance with the visitation-agreement. This leads to court cases, hearings and interventions through the official institutions like the childcare protective services. These conflicts are found to be time consuming. RP 5 explains:

Ja, een of twee keer per maand, heb je een rot afspraak met een stomme organisatie die geen flikker voor je doet, maar alleen maar stress geeft. Heel veel werk bezorgt. Zo'n [gerechtigd] stukje nakijken kost je heel veel emotie en heel veel tijd. [Yes, once or twice monthly, you have a horrible appointment with a stupid organization that doesn't do shit for you, but only brings stress. Means a lot of work. Checking one of these [legal] documents costs you a lot of emotion and a lot of time.]

The RP experiences anxiety as a result of the fight. Two RPs (1 and 5) find themselves in a constant fight for the child. The hearings of the childcare protective unit, the court cases and many appeals cost them much energy and resources. RP 1 shares her feelings:

Ja, bij de raad zeg ik: voor jullie is het een interessant onderwerp een bijzondere casus, voor mij is het een hel. [Yes, at the counsel I say: for you it is an interesting issue, a special case, for me it is hell.]

The RP experiences that she regains trust in herself in the conflict. Fighting the NRP does not always lead to negative consequences. RP 6 finds that the fight actually leads to having more self-confidence:

In de loop der jaren [na strijd met NRP], het begon te groeien, bij de rechter, van hé: ik ben een survivor, ik ben sterk. [Over the years [after having been fighting with the NRP], it started to reveal itself to me, at court, wow: I am a survivor, I am strong.]

Table 9

Consequences for non-compliance with the visitation agreement as derived from the RP (represented in a number) and the frequency rate it was reported

Consequences non-compliance with the visitation-agreement	RP	Rate
The NRP responds to non-compliance with aggression or threats, creating embarrassment for the RP	1-5-6	28
Negative financial effects on the RP	1-6	5
The RP finds the fight over the child time consuming	1-5	5
The RP experiences anxiety as a result of the fight over the child	1-5	14
The RP experiences that she regained trust in herself in the conflict over the child	6	4

Note. N=8.

Covert and Overt Motives of the RP for Compliance with the Visitation-agreement

The research question 2 deals with the (c)overt motives of the RP for *compliance* with the visitation agreement. One overt motives for compliance with the visitation-agreement is found in this study and four covert motives.

Overt motive for compliance with the visitation-agreement. Only one overt motive for compliance is mentioned (by four RPs: 2, 4, 7 and 8).

The child needs both parents. The feeling that the child needs both parents may be genuine but also an indication of the induction through PAS. Gardner (1998) spoke of the reaction-formation in cases that the alienating parents verbally express one thing, whilst deep down they feel quite the opposite. RP 4 explains:

Ik wil wel dat ze later zeggen: mama heeft altijd gestimuleerd dat we gaan, dat het onze vader blijft. (...). Dat heb ik ook tegen hem gezegd: ik zal nooit zeggen dat ze niet naar je toe mogen (...) Ik weet dat de vader belangrijk is voor de kinderen. [I would like them say later: Mummy always encouraged us to go, the rest is down to the Father. I told him that I would never say that they are not allowed to visit you (...). I know that the father is important for the children.]

RP 7: “Ja, ik vind het echt dat er een vader en moeder voor de balans nodig is.” [Yes, I really believe that a father and mother are necessary to get the right balance.]

Covert motives for compliance. In this study four covert motives are identified, see Table 10.

The NRP is afraid that things may backfire. Gardner (1998) referred to the importance of the sense of power that an alienating parent may experience as a result of releasing anger. Children may provide the RP with a compensatory power in their withholding the child from the NRP. Thus, the RP can hurt the NRP. This feeling however may be accompanied with fear as well. If the RP is to yield in expressing this anger and

hurting the NRP, could this backfire at a given time? The fear of then being on the other side and that even the children will choose NRP over the RP is not just a figment of the imagination, as RP 1, 2, 3, 5 and 7 experience. RP 4 explains:

Ik zal nooit voeden dat ze zeggen: ik wil niet naar papa. Dat zal het makkelijkst voor me zijn (...) diep in mijn hart steunt het me wel een beetje dat ze dat zeggen. Maar ik weet ook dat het funest is. Dat dit gewoon niet kan. Maar het is wel verleidelijk. Het haalt het slechtste naar boven. (...) Het tij kan ook tegen jou keren, en dan he! [I will never encourage them to say: I don't want to go to Daddy. That would be the easiest for me (...) deep down in my heart it would be better for me that they say that. But I know it is disastrous. That this cannot be done. But it is tempting. It brings out the worst. (...) The trend could reverse itself, and what then?]

Endangering the new relationship of the NRP. Being envious of the NRP's new relationship (the fury of the scorned parent as Gardner (1998) called it), may be a covert motive for non-compliance. It may however also be a covert motive for *compliance*. When the RP feels that the new Stepparent may not be up to dealing with the day-to-day issues of bringing up children, actually having the children around may endanger the harmony of the new relationship with the NRP. RP 4 expresses this emotion:

Het is maar wachten wanneer hij [NRP] weer de bons krijgt. Of ze [nieuwe vriendin NRP] moet hem wel heel erg leuk vinden. ik vraag me af hoe lang zoiets goed gaat (...) je krijgt ook drie jongens erbij (...) die zijn echt niet lieverdjes hoor, die lopen te vechten en te stoeien en te doen. Dat is echt niet altijd leuk hoor. Dat is gewoon een druk huishouden en dan krijg je dat er gewoon bij? Elk weekend? En door de weeks? [One can wait for him to be dumped again [NRP by the new partner]. Or she must really like him. I wonder how long this can last (...) the three boys come with the deal (...) they are not angels you know, they fight and play around and do their thing. That is not always fun, you know. That is like a full house and that comes with the deal? Every weekend? And during the week?]

The RP can relax, refuel while the children visit NRP. As Gardner (1998) explained there are many factors that are operative in the development of PAS, some will align themselves to it, others will moderate the development. The RP that takes care of the children most of the time is confronted with the daily issues of raising the children. RPs will say that they miss the child when it is with the NRP, but the free time also creates a possibility to refuel and relax. RPs 1, 3, 4, 5 and 7 experience this benefit. RP 4 says:

Als ze [kinderen] vrijdagsavonds weg [bij NRP] zijn, vind ik het soms rottig maar aan de andere kant, ik heb de weekenden nodig om bij te tanken. Dan ben ik blij dat ze weg zijn. Dan is de koek ook op, dan ben ik het gewoon zat. Dan is het tijd dat ze daar heen. gaan. Ik ga iets leuk doen (...). Ik moet gewoon plannen om niets te doen. Ja, ik ervaar nu zijn ze van jou, jij bent de vader, de groeten. [When they [children] are gone [at NRP's] on Friday evening, I sometimes think it's terrible, but on the other hand, I need to refuel. At weekends then, I'm glad they're gone. Then I am done with it, I'm just fed up. Then it's time they go there. Go. I'm going to do something fun (...). I just don't want to do anything. Yes, I feel now they are yours, you are the Father, good luck with it.]

The RP experiences the need to share responsibilities with the NRP. The fact that the RP experiences that it is hard to raise children on your own may be another covert motive that can serve as a moderator in the development of PAS (Gardner, 1998). Only one RP (7) describes this:

Ik heb die vader nodig. Hij kan het wel. Hij zou het voor elkaar kunnen krijgen. Bijvoorbeeld wiskunde, van kan je haar helpen (...) ik kopieer de boeken voor je: nee [antwoordt NRP op de hulpvraag]. [I need that father. He can do it. He could fix it. For instance Maths.: can you help her? (...) I will copy the texts from the books for you: no [answers the NRP to this request for aid.]

Table 10

Covert motives for compliance with the visitation agreement as derived from the RP (represented in a number) and the frequency rate it was reported

Covert motives for compliance with the visitation agreement	RP	Rate
The NRP experiences fear that it may backfire	1-2-4-5-7	17
Endangering the new relationship of the NRP	4	1
The RP can relax, refuel while the children visit the NRP	1-3-4-5-7	10
The RP experiences the need to share responsibilities with the NRP	7	5

Note. N=8.

The Interaction-Model: Evolution of Parental Alienation or Estrangement'

The pathway to parental alienation or estrangement. Research-question 3 refers to the variables that influence the child’s loyalty after a (bad) divorce by the parents, leading to a pathway of parental alienation or estrangement. The analysis of this is summarized in Figure 1 and Table 5 (Appendix 1).

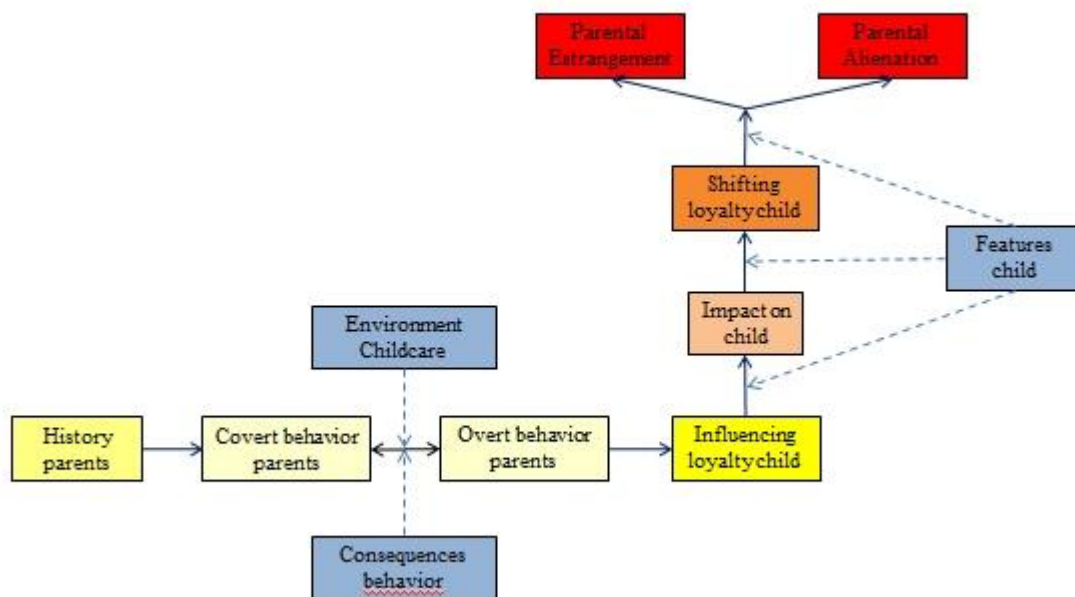


Figure 1. Pathway to parental alienation or estrangement.

The parent’s history influences their covert and consequently overt behavior after a divorce. The parent’s behavior after a bad divorce, directed at influencing the child’s loyalty, has an impact on the child’s well-being. The child may shift its loyalty, thus engaging on the pathway to parental estrangement or alienation.

The relation between the covert behavior and the overt behavior of the parents is governed by the consequences of non-compliance with the visitation-agreement and the influence of the parents' environment. Specific features of the child such as its age, gender or personality traits may play a moderating role in the development of alienation (Kelly & Johnston, 2001).

The Diversity of Pathways: from the History of the Parents to influencing the Child's Loyalty

Each divorce is colored by the history of the parents' relationship. The specific aspects within this history can influence the development of PAS (Gardner, 1998). The research question 3.1 focusses on identifying specific pathways, with common features of the shared history of the ex-spouses going forward to influence their behavior after a divorce. Within this study three different pathways with specific common features have been identified:

- 1) Pathway where a disaffinity between the partners was the case at the beginning of the relationship (RPs 1, 5 and 6). See Table 11 in the Appendix.
- 2) Pathway after an affair (RPs 2, 4, 5, 7 and 8). See Table 12 in the Appendix.
- 3) Pathway after love faded (RP 3). See Table 13 in the Appendix.

Pathway where a Disaffinity between the Partners was the Case at the Beginning

History of the parents who experience disaffinity from the beginning of the relationship.

The relationship is regarded as negative from the beginning. The three relatively short relationships (duration between one and two years) are clearly regarded by these RPs as above as negative from the beginning. This was not the case for the other five relationships. One RP states: "De vechtscheiding is voorafgegaan door een vechtgenoot" [The bad divorce was preceded by a bad husband.]

Threats, aggression and (sexual) abuse in the relationship. The RPs in this group mention physical aggression or (sexual) abuse by the NRPs in the relationship. Gardner (1998) explained that although criticism by the RP may be in reality delusional, the child is brought to believe the validity of the accusations. RP 6 states:

Ik vroeg hem wat hij voor zijn verjaardag wilde hebben. Toen zei hij: ik wil een windbuks en een geschoren kutje (...). Dan kan ik verwachten dat ik een keer een kogeltje krijg. [When I asked him what he wanted for his birthday, he said I want an air gun and a shaven pussy. (...) I could anticipate a bullet at any day.]

Alleged alcohol abuse during the relationship. Gardner (1998) showed various ways in programming the child into a PA campaign. One of the methods he mentioned is in the exaggerating of minor psychological problems of the NRP. Drinking too much one time would be referred to as 'being an alcoholic'. Only RP 1 speaks of alcohol abuse: "Dan was er een kater". [Then he was hung-over.]

Covert behavior of the parents who experience disaffinity from the beginning of the relationship.

The covert motives for non-compliance with the visitation agreement. The motives mentioned are: 1) anxiety 2) the desire to start a new family, and the unmentioned motive is: 'grief for the lost relationship' (see the covert motives for non-compliance with the visitation-agreement and Table 6).

The covert motives for compliance with the visitation agreement. Covert motives for compliance with the visitation agreement are not specifically significant for this pathway (see Table 10).

Overt behavior of the parents who experience disaffinity from the beginning of the relationship.

Overt motives for non-compliance with the visitation-agreement. The two specific overt motives for non-compliance are: 1) accusations about (sexual) abuse of the child; and 2) accusations that the RP does not take proper care of the child (see Table 7). These accusations are not only denied by the NRP, but they also reflect on them as being a campaign of alienation. RP 1 experiences public denial of her accusations when she is doing some shopping in a store:

En toen kwam hij [NRP] op me af. Hij heeft me daar zo voor schut gezet en bedreigd en niemand van de winkel die me hielp. (...) Met je kindermishandeling! [het motief waarmee RP het bezoekrecht van NRP wil beïnvloeden] schreeuwde hij in de winkel. [And then he [NRP] came at me. He embarrassed me so much there and threatened me and nobody of the shop helped me. (...) With your child abuse! [the motive RP uses for influencing visitation rights of the NRP] he screamed in the shop.]

NRP 6 feels that the RP had tried to alienate the child from him: she explains: “Hij [NRP] heeft het afgeschilderd naar haar [dochter] dat ik haar totaal afgesneden heb, of afgekapt heb”. [He [NRP] gave her [daughter] the impression that I had cut her off completely, or had cut her down.]

Overt motives for compliance with the visitation-agreement. None of these three RPs mention that the children need both parents, which was contrarious to four other RPs.

Additional overt behavior. RPs 1, 5 and 6 report specific behavior that the other RPs did not mention.

Lying. Both parents may accuse their ex-partner of lying. Gardner (1998) explained that such accusations can be the result of hidden agendas made for convincing the court about things, which are actually not true. RP 5 explains how she was called a liar in the hospital which was asked to examine whether sexual abuse of the child had taken place:

Ik moest [in het ziekenhuis] vertellen wat zij [dochter] vertelt heeft [over seksueel misbruik]. Ik ben maar tot zin drie of zo gekomen en toen stond meneer in mijn persoonlijke ruimte tegen mij te schreeuwen dat ik aan het liegen was. [I had to tell [in hospital] what she [daughter] had told [about the sexual abuse. I only got to my third sentence and then person was screaming at me that I was lying.]

Alleged disorders of the NRP. Just as with the accusation by an alienating parent that her ex-partner who occasionally drinks too much, is an alcoholic, (Gardner, 1998) described that alienating parents may also exaggerate minor psychological problems into bigger disorders. RP 1 and 5 declare that their former partners suffer from a (personality) disorder. RP 1 claims that her ex-partner suffers from bipolar depression and has various psychoses. RP 5 believes her ex-partner is autistic. RP 5 states:

Dat je dan bijna weet dat het ergens iets autistisch bevat. Dat je dat gezien hebt. Met je eigen diagnostische oog. Dat je denkt: die is niet helemaal in de haak. [That you almost know for sure that there is something autistic. That you have seen that. With your own 'diagnostical' eye. That you think: that one is not quite alright.]

Legal proceedings: fighting for the child. Only these three relationships as above ended in situations where visitation-agreements were fought over very hard at court and outside. One RP (1) referred to court cases and appeals 18 times, an example:

Daarna komen er toch rechtszaken, ik kreeg toen een brief van de rechtbank van zijn advocaat (...) hij wilde het kind op de verjaardag, hij wilde weekends, hij wilde dit en dat. [Then the court cases came, I received a letter from his lawyer, (...) he wanted the child on her birthday, he wanted her at the weekends, he wanted all of this and that.]

Gathering proof as ammunition for the fight over the child. The PA campaign as Gardner (1998) explained is usually based on fantasy and exaggeration. It has such a weak foundation that it would need the testimony of external parties to support it. In order to gather ammunition for this campaign, parents can go very far. Both RPs 1 and 5, not only gather all kinds of information hoping this may help in their campaign, but also involve others. RP 1 has hired a private detective to check whether the Grandmother did indeed stay with the NRP and the child, which was a court's condition for the visits to the NRP:

Ik bracht haar toch [naar NRP] elke keer. Die 4-8 [4 augustus], ik heb toen een detective ingeschakeld (...) ik wil nu dat er gekeken wordt of oma weggaat of meegaat of niet. Het leek erop dat ik alles moest bewijzen, mijn woord was niet meer voldoende in deze zaak na zolang. Dus ik denk: ik moet dat anders doen. Dus dat heb ik gedaan, de man is toen gaan posten. [I brought her anyway [to the NRP] every time. On 4-8 [August 4th.] I hired a detective (...) I want someone now investigating whether Grandma leaves, or comes along or doesn't. It began to look like I had to prove everything, my word was not enough up to now in this case. So I think: I have to do something different. So I did, that man then posted.]

RP 5 regularly calls the Child Protection Services (AMK) to report wrong-doings by the NRP:

Ik kleed haar altijd uit, want die kleren ruiken naar hen [na een bezoek aan NRP] (...) dus ik stop haar direct in bad als ze terugkomt. Ik kan daar niet tegen. Er moet mijn eigen geurtje aan zitten. (...) En ik kleed haar uit (...) en haar hele rompertje uitgerookt. (...) Toen dacht ik van: 'nah'. Weer het AMK gebeld: mijn kind wordt uitgerookt. [I always undress her, her clothes smell like them [after a visit to the NRP] so I put her in the bath straightaway when she comes back. I can't stand it. She has to smell like me. (...) And I undress her (...) her entire underwear smells like smoke. (...) Then I thought: 'nah'. I called the AMK again: my child is being made to smell like smoke.]

Consequences for the non-compliance with the visitation-agreement for RPs who experience disaffinity from the beginning in their relationships. RPs 1, 5 and 6 exclusively report both negative and positive consequences (see Table 9) for resisting the visitation-agreements.

Pathway after an Affair

Gardner (1998) described that the involvement of a parent (mostly male) with a new partner results often in the jealous rage of the other partner (mostly female). One way of letting vent such jealous emotions is in invoking PA on children against the other parent. This is a way of the partner's dealing with their previous marital problems, but the children mostly have little understanding.

History of the parents' relationship in having an affair. Five RPs (2, 4, 5, 7 and 8) explain how their former spouses came together with new partners during their marriages. The other RPs otherwise did not mention anything about any affairs (see Table 12 in Appendix 1).

The affair. RP 4 describes the affair as follows: "Toen is hij [NRP] in 2009 naar dat congres gegaan. Het eerste beste congres ging hij al vreemd." [Then he [NRP] went to that congress in 2009. At the first opportunity he already cheated on me.]

The NRP lies to hide the fact of an affair. The RP accuses the NRP of lying when they are confronted with having an affair. RP 4 describes this thus:

Hij heeft vreselijk lopen liegen, verdraaien, want ik vroeg heel erg door, hij heeft van alles lopen draaien om dingen recht te praten. [He lied very much, he twisted his stories, because I asked him many, many questions, he twisted all kinds of things to make it look like a good story.]

Covert behavior of the NRPs after an affair.

The covert motives for non-compliance with the visitation agreement. Three specific motives stand out within the covert motives for non-compliance with the visitation agreement as mentioned by RPs 2, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8 (see the covert motives for non-compliance with the visitation-agreement abovementioned and Table 6): 1) jealousy 2) grief 3) an improved parental bonding leading to 4) a sense of justification.

The covert motives for compliance with the visitation agreement. Covert motives for compliance with the visitation agreement, apart from the wish to jeopardize the new relationship with the partner of NRP, are not specifically significant for this pathway (see Table 10).

Overt motives behavior of RPs after an affair.

Overt motives for non-compliance with the visitation agreement. RPs 2, 4 and 8 provide specific overt motives for their non-compliance with the visitation agreement, which the other RPs did not mention: 1) the child disapproves of the conduct of NRP 2) the child dislikes the step-parent 3) the child feels discriminated in relation to its step-siblings. (see the overt motives for non-compliance with the visitation-agreement abovementioned and Table 7).

Overt motives for compliance with the visitation-agreement. Only RPs 4, 7 and 8 express that the child needs both parents.

Additional overt behavior. Two specific additional overt behaviors strike out within this pathway.

Inflexibility regarding the visitation-agreement. Only RPs 4, 5 and 7 report inflexibility with regards to the visitation-agreement, either their own inflexibility or that of the NRP. Gardner (1998) found that “the visitation schedule is an important area of conflict in

which PAS-inducing parents may manifest their contributions” (p. 143). RP 4 explains that she did not wish to grant more flexibility in relation to the visitation-agreement:

De hemel en aarde bewegen dat ik omga [het weekend dat de kinderen naar NRP gaan wisselen met een ander weekend]. Ik ben niet omgegaan (...). Omdat ik niet wilde wisselen [zo gaf NRP aan RP als uitleg], moest hij wel de kinderen in aanraking laten komen met haar [nieuwe partner NRP]. [Moving heaven and earth that I switch [i.e. the weekend with another weekend that the children visit the NRP]. I did not switch (...). Because I did not want to switch [NRP explained to RP], he had to have the children come into contact with her [new partner NRP.]

But also the NRP can show inflexibility regarding the visitation-agreement. RP 7 explains that agreement over holidays is not met, but the NRP spent his holiday with his new partner and her children instead:

Die vakantie heb ik geboekt in overleg met [NRP en zijn nieuwe partner] (...) Vervolgens krijgen we te horen: jullie zijn vier dagen te laat binnen [terug van vakantie] (...). Hij is nog nooit op vakantie geweest met hen [eigen kinderen] en dan zijn ze [NRP met partner en kinderen] ineens vijf weken weg (...). [I booked that holiday after agreeing it [with NRP and his new partner]. (...) Then we are being told: you come back four days too late [back from this holiday] (...). He never spent a holiday with them [his own children] and then they [NRP with his partner and her children] suddenly leave for five weeks (...).]

Involving third parties to intermediate. Parents feel the urge to share their feelings of grief and anger within their own close circles (family, mutual friends or Church) thus enlisting a coterie of supporters (Gardner, 1998). They thus realize further rejection through the environment of the NRP. RP 2 explains how he informed a friend of the NRP:

Ik heb laatst nog een vriendin van haar [NRP] gesproken (...). En die heeft mijn verhaal nooit gehoord natuurlijk. En die zegt: ja als ik het zo hoor, dan zou ik het ook wel zwaar vinden. [I saw a friend of hers

[NRP] (...). She never heard my story of course. And she now says: yes, if I hear it like this, I would find it hard as well.]

RP 4 explains how she involved both the family and the Church:

Ik probeer nog wel eens als dingen echt hoog spelen het via de familie [van NRP] te spelen. (...)

Ik wil dat ze bij alle stappen dat hij doet (...) vragen stellen van: hoe denk jij dat het voor de kinderen zal zijn? [I try to play it through the family [NRP's] when things are really important. (...) I want them to ask him about every step he takes (...): how do you think the children will think about this?]

Ik heb een ouderling uit de kerk opgebeld (...). Ik heb met hem een gesprek gehad. Wat te doen? (...)

Bij ons is altijd de regel als je (...) dit soort gedrag vertoont, dat ze je als kerkenraad gaan waarschuwen: dit leven is niet zoals het hoort. [I called an Elder from the Church (...). I had a conversation with him. What can I do? (...). With us it is always the rule when you (...) behave like this, that they as church council warn you: this life is not as it should be.]

Consequences for non-compliance with the visitation-agreement for RPs after an affair. The RPs within this group do not provide specific consequences for non-compliance with the visitation-agreement (see Table 9).

The Pathway once the Love has Diminished.

History of the parents after their love has diminished. RP 3 explains that both she and her ex-husband found their love had faded at the same time as a result of differing interests and values (see Table 13 in Appendix 1).

Mijn man heeft een bedrijf, is alleen maar geld gericht, zakelijk gericht, ik helemaal niet. Ik ben vanuit mijn hart, mijn gevoel. Dat heeft een paar jaar (...) geduurd en je merkte dat we uit elkaar groeiden. [My husband has his own company, [he] is strictly money-driven, business-driven, I'm not like that at all. I am from my heart, my feeling. That took some years (...) and I could see that we had grown apart.]

Covert behavior of the NRPs after their love has diminished.

The covert motives for non-compliance with the visitation agreement. RP 3 provides a specific covert motive for non-compliance with the visitation agreement, which the other RPs did not mention: i.e. concern that the RP loses influence when the child is with the NRP (see the covert motives for non-compliance with the visitation-agreement abovementioned and Table 6).

The covert motives for compliance with the visitation agreement. Covert motives for compliance with the visitation agreement are not specifically significant for this pathway (see Table 10).

Overt motives and their behavior of the RPs after their love has diminished.

Overt motives for (non)-compliance with the visitation agreement. Overt motives for (non)-compliance with the visitation agreement are not specifically mentioned within this pathway.

Additional overt behavior. Two aspects of additional overt behavior seem specifically significant within this pathway.

The desire for sexual intimacy. The ex-spouses separated as a result of fading love, but not all feelings had vanished. As neither parent had found a new love, some intimacy between the ex-spouses remained, the need for this intimacy, however, was not always mutual:

Een jaar geleden wilde hij wel weer verder gaan met mij. Maar toen zei ik: nee, dat doe ik niet. Hij had (...) geen andere vrouw. En als hij hier kwam, aan me zitten, knuffelen. S [zoon] was dan gewoon in de kamer. Dan zei ik: hou ermee op, dat is raar. [A year ago he wanted to revive the relationship with me. But then I said: no, I don't want that. He (...) did not have another woman. And when he came here, touching me, hugging me. S [son] would simply be in the room. Then I would say: stop it, it is strange.]

RP 3 also explains why she rejected her ex-partner's advances. She receives a social security payment and so her financial situation is not as good as she wished. Her ex-husband has his

own business which results in economic strength, a possible motive for a campaign of alienation (Gardner, 1998). The NRP knows that his ex-wife has little financial room and is willing to pay her something extra in exchange for intimacy:

Ja, voor wat hoort wat. Dus als ik het elke week met je doe, dan krijg ik daar 50 euro of 100 euro voor? [vroeg RP aan NRP]. We kunnen wel een afspraak maken, zei hij. [Yes, one good turn deserves another. So if I do it with you every week, then I will receive 50 or 100 Euro in return? [RP asked NRP]. We can make a deal, he replied.]

RP 3 makes clear how this confused their son:

Dat is ook verwarrend geweest voor S [zoon], dan gingen we een wijntje drinken en liep het verkeerd af. Dan was ik boos en geïrriteerd en liep ik weg. Terwijl papa toch heel erg aardig deed. [That was quite confusing for S [son], then we would be drinking a glass of wine and it all ended up badly. Then I got angry and irritated and walked away. That whilst Daddy was being very kind.]

Revenge. RP 3 is not happy by the way the financial agreements were settled after their separation and reports how she revenges this:

Geen alimentatierecht. Geen alimentatie voor het kind (...). Hij heeft zijn boekhouding zo weten te bewerken, zijn moeder is boekhoudster, dat is allemaal minimum (...). De rechter heeft ook bepaald dat hij geen alimentatie hoeft te betalen. [No right of alimony. No alimony for the child (...). He adapted his bookkeeping in that way, his mother is bookkeeper, that all would be minimal (...). The judge also decided that there is no obligation for him to pay alimony.]

Ik zit nu in de bijstand. Heerlijk. De gemeente belt hem gewoon voor zorgplicht. (...) Ik zeg dat gewoon tegen de gemeente hoor, als hij tien klussen heeft, hoeveel denk je dat er op papier gaan. Vier? Allemaal zwart. Dat is zo in de bouwwereld. [I now receive social security

payments. Fantastic. The municipality just calls on him for his duty to pay [a Dutch law prescribes that when one parent receives social security payments, the other parent has to financially support this parent]. I just say that to the municipality, when he has ten jobs, how much do you think will be legal? Four? All is undeclared, it is like that in the construction business.]

Consequences for non-compliance with the visitation-agreement for RPs after love has diminished. The respective RP within this group did not provide any information on the specific consequences for non-compliance with the visitation-agreement (see Table 9).

Relation and Exclusion of overt and covert Behavior of the Parents combined in the three Pathways

This study outlines strong relations and effects between parent's covert behavior and their overt behavior. Experiencing specific feelings often leads to the exclusion of specific overt behavior. The parent's feelings in their past, during and after the divorce, intertwine with the overt expressions of the child for not complying with the visitation-agreement and the parent's conduct after a divorce, (see Table 18 in the Appendix). The RPs feelings regarding the NRP become mirrored in the child, allowing also the risk of the child internalizing the RPs feelings as if they were its own. This may lead to a shifting loyalty and the risk of developing PA or PE.

Influencing the Loyalty of the Child.

The focus question in our research 3.2 refers to the way the child's loyalty is influenced by the parents after a divorce. All RPs (with the exception of RP 8) provided indications of their influencing the loyalty of the child. (See Table 14 in the Appendix).

Influencing the loyalty of the child by in using the telephone. Gardner (1998) explained how a telephone can be used to manipulate the situation of the child. By calling to the home of the NRP whilst the child is there, asking how it is, the RP implicates there is danger close-by. RP 1 explains that she gave her daughter a mobile telephone so that her child

could call her if anything was going wrong. She also refers to the negative reaction of the NRP:

Ik had haar [dochter] een mobiele telefoon gegeven: je mag me gerust bellen als er iets is, mama belt jou ook wel in de overnachtingsweekenden. Dan belde ik en dan mocht zij niets zeggen. Dan zei ze: mam dat gaat je geen moer aan (...). Dat moest zij [van NRP] zeggen en dan kwam ze thuis, en dan zat ze daar mee, want het is niets voor haar om het zo te doen. [I had given her [daughter] a mobile telephone: you can call me when something is wrong, Mum will call you when you're on the visits at the weekends. Then I called and she was not allowed to say anything. Then she said, Mum, it's none of your business (...). She had to say that [on command of the NRP] and then she came home, and she was confused, because it is not like her to do that.]

Influencing the loyalty of the child by in sharing negative information with the child regarding the NRP. Gardner (1998) showed how that in communicating to the children that the alienated parent is a despicable person, this of course incites the child to the NRP. He further described that the rationalization behind the negation of the NRP were found to be weak, absurd or frivolous. RPs (2, 3, 4, 5 and 6) mention that they had informed their children of their thoughts regarding the negative aspects of the NRPs. RP 5 was asked by her child if she likes the father. Although the RP's environment indicate to her that it is not beneficial for the child to show it that she does not think highly of the NRP, she does not refrain from doing so. She also provides the child with a reason for disliking the NRP:

Dan vraagt ze [dochter]: vind je papa lief? Dan zeg ik: 'mwah'. En dan zeggen mensen dat is fout want dan denkt ze dat je hem niet zo lief vindt. Dan zeg ik: nee hoor, ik kan best uitleggen waarom ik hem soms niet zo lief vind. Hij komt altijd te laat. Klaar. Dan heb ik een reden gegeven waarom ik hem niet zo lief vindt. Omdat hij altijd te laat komt. Daar heb ik een hekel aan. Ik heb zo'n hekel aan mensen die te laat komen. [Then she [daughter] asks: do you think Daddy is sweet? Then I reply: 'baah!' And then the others tell me that this is wrong, because she might believe that you do not think he is sweet. Then I

reply: of course I don't think he is sweet. I can explain why I do not think he is sweet sometimes. He is always late. That's that. Then I have provided a reason for not thinking he is sweet. Because he is always late. I dislike that. I hate people who are always late.

Gardner (1998) also referred to how PA-inducers incline to declare that their child needs psychiatric treatment. RP 3 explains how by means of psychiatric treatment, she influences her son to stand up to the NRP, how the NRP deals with this and what her reply is to the NRP's reaction:

Nu, ik hoop dat (...) hij daar makkelijker ging praten [met behulp van de psycholoog], uiten: ik vind het niet leuk, meer voor zichzelf zou opkomen [bij NRP]. [Well I hope that (...) he can speak easier [with help of the psychologist], to express himself: I don't like it, stand up for himself [at NRP's.]

Dan moet het weer gebeuren zoals hij [NRP] dat wil. Zo voelt S [zoon] dat ook. Maar papa heeft gevraagd of ik kom [zegt S]. Maar als je wat anders wil (...) zeg ik, dan moet je dat aangeven. Maar dat durft hij niet. Want volgende keer zegt papa daar weer wat van: Als je het leuker hebt bij je moeder, dan moet je daar lekker blijven. [Then it has to be like he [NRP] wants it. S [son] feels that too. But Daddy asked if I can come [says S]. But if you want it differently (...) I say, then you must say that. But he does not dare to. Because next time Daddy will say something about that: If you like it better at your Mum's, then stay there.]

Ja, ik zeg hem dat natuurlijk ook, het kan niet alleen maar zijn als hij het wil dat je klaar moet staan (...). Je vader moet er altijd voor je zijn. [Yes, I tell him that of course, it can't just be when he wants it, you have to be ready (...). Your father has to be there for you always.]

Influencing the loyalty of the child by sharing confidential information. Parents may also wish to give details to the children on the parent's separation or other confidential information regarding the parents. Gardner (1998) explained that parents that induce PA will commonly share documents regarding the dispute between the parents with their children as

part of the programming process. RPs 1, 2, 4, 6 and 7 indeed shared confidential information in this way with their children. RP 1 and 6 mention that they have put together divorce-related document and wrote down their stories for future use. RP 6: “Ik heb alles [informatie van de scheiding in een ordner] bewaard voor een moment dat zij [dochter] er naar vragen zou.” [I have kept all [information related to the divorce on file] in case she [daughter] would ask for it.]

Also information regarding extramarital affairs are often shared. RP 4 explains how she had done this, although she had read that this information is harmful for the children, she informed her children anyway about the NRP's affairs:

Toen hebben we het met z'n allen [aan de kinderen] verteld (....) We hebben toen wel gezegd dat hij een ander had. (....) Toen zeiden ze: is dat één vrouw geweest? Toen heb ik gezegd: nee het zijn meerdere vrouwen geweest. ik heb het wel verteld. Je leest wel eens boekjes dat je het helemaal niet moet vertellen aan kinderen, maar ik ben het daar niet mee eens. [Then we told it all, all of us [to the children]. We then decided to tell them about him having another woman. (....) Then they said: was that just one woman? Then I said: no, there were more women. I did tell them. You sometimes read somewhere that you must not tell that to your children at all. But I do not agree with that.]

Information regarding the financial settlements also becomes a topic of conversation between the RP and the children. RP 2 elucidates:

Ik heb met de meeste dingen er met hen [kinderen] over. Het is ook hun toekomst. Ik schotel ze dingen voor van hoe ik het ga aanpakken [in de afwikkeling van de scheiding]. Ze zeggen dan: je bent veel te goed weer. (....) Ik laat ze veel zien, financieel. [I speak to them [children] about most things. It concerns their future as well. I show them how I shall tackle things [regarding the settlement of the divorce]. They then reply: you are far too nice again. (....) I show them a lot, concerning the finances.]

The disclosure about sensitive events in the past of the NRP are also open to discussion with the children as well. RP 2 again:

Ja, mijn zoon wist het. [dat de vader van de NRP zelf ook vreemd is gegaan en dat zijn vrouw daarna zelfmoord heeft gepleegd] (...) In januari (...) heb ik het ook meteen tegen mijn dochter verteld. (...) Mijn vrouw zei: dat had ik graag willen vertellen, dat is mijn ding. [Yes, my son knew. [that the Father of the NRP had had an affair as well and that his wife had then committed suicide] (...) In January, I told my daughter right then. (...) My wife said: I would have liked to tell that myself, that concerns me.]

Influencing the loyalty of the child through religion. Gardner (1998) revealed parents who after a separation became stringently committed to the religion. The child, so he explained, is made to believe that the way the NRP experiences religion has become objectionable. RP 4 finds that after the separation her former husband seemed to have turned his back on their once shared beliefs and how this influenced the children:

Maar je wereld wordt zo verschillend [doordat hij zich van de kerk afwendt]. Het verschil tussen mama en papa wordt steeds groter. (...) Weet je, ze zijn hier lid van de gemeente en van papa mogen ze alles. (...) Dat is voor hen heel lastig. Want: waar hoor je nu bij uiteindelijk? [But your world becomes so different [as he turns his back on the Church]. The difference between Mum and Dad become bigger every time. (...) You know, they are members of the Church here and Daddy allows them everything. (...) That is very hard on them. Because: where do you really belong?]

Influencing the loyalty of the child in showing sad or anxious emotions. Gardner (1998) explained that showing a feeling of victimization by the PA-inducing parent is not uncommon. The background of doing so is to enjoy what the attention this behavior brings about. Self-pity, as he explained, provides the PA inducer with a sense of gratification. RPs 4, 5 and 6 find it hard to hide their feelings, RP 4 explained:

Ik wil mijn kinderen er niet bij betrekken, maar ik merk wel dat het op mijn humeur speelt (...). Dan zeg ik het ook maar tegen de kinderen: ik vind het voor jullie heel moeilijk en lastig (...) maar ik ben nu een beetje van de leg. Dat snappen ze dat ook wel weer. Ze zijn ook wel heel lief. [I don't want to involve my children, but I notice how it gets to me (...). Then I tell the children: It is quite hard and difficult for you (...) but right now I am quite upset. They understand that. They are very sweet indeed.]

Influencing the loyalty of the child by in showing despise for the step-parent.

Gardner (1998) explained that PA-inducing mothers influence the way their children may feel towards the new woman-friend of the Father. The Mother may call the new lady names and make clear that she is a home-breaker. RP 4 overtly shows her great sadness when the children come home from a visit to the NRP where they had first met the new stepmother and actually liked her. The influence this had on the child leads to an expression of rejection of the NRP:

Dat eerste weekend dat ze terugkwamen van haar [stiefmoeder] (...) Ik zat te janken. Toen zei de middelste [als RP zegt;] Ik vind het zo vervelend, ik wil gewoon sterk zijn als jullie terugkomen. Mam zegt hij: je hoeft toch niet altijd de sterkste te zijn. je mag ook wel iets niet leuk vinden Hier merk ik echter dat ze reageren van: stomme papa en dit en dat. [That first weekend when they came back from her [Stepmother]. (...) I was howling. Then the middle one said [replying to his Mother who had said:] I find it so terrible, I just want to be strong when you come back. Mum, he said: you don't have to always be the strongest. You can sometimes feel bad about something. Then I find that they respond to this like: stupid daddy and this and that.]

Influencing the loyalty of the child by projecting the own alienation campaign to the

NRP. Gardner (1998) spoke of projection as one of the mechanisms of inducing PAS. By projection, the PA inducing parents attribute tendencies and practices to their ex-spouses that are unlikely, reflecting actually their own indoctrination in these areas. Both RP 1 and 5

report that the NRP is influencing the loyalty of the child by making the child say or do awful things to the RP. RP 5:

Ze zegt; ik moet stom doen tegen jou, want dat wil papa. Ik moest je aan het huilen maken van papa. Papa vindt het leuk als er iets kapot gaat van jou. Ik moest je schoppen van papa. Ik moest je slaan van papa. Ik weet niet of hij dat allemaal echt zegt, maar ze voelt het wel zo. [She says: I have to behave badly to you, because Daddy wants that. Daddy told me to make you cry. Daddy likes it if something of you breaks. Daddy told me to kick you. Daddy told me to beat you. I don't know if he actually says that all, but it feels that way.]

Influencing the loyalty of the child in explaining the law forces it to visit the NRP.

Gardner (1998) described the PA inducing parents telling their children that visiting the alienated parent is an obligation to do so, induced by law. This parent will claim this to be the only reason for the visits, thus denying the positive benefits for the child of seeing the alienated parent. RP 5 explains to her daughter why she had to visit the NRP when her child proclaimed her not wanting to go:

Dat zegt ze 'middags als hij komt: ik wil niet dat hij komt, ik wil bij jou blijven. Dan zeg ik ook: het moet, de wet heeft het besloten. Het moet van de rechter. (...) een moeder kan ook zeggen van: papa wil je graag zien. Maar dat zeg ik niet dat is iets van hem. [Then she says in the afternoon, when he comes: I don't want him to come, I want to stay with you. Then I will reply: it must be so, the law has decided this. The judge wants it. (...) a mother can also say: Daddy likes to see you. But I won't say that, that is his affair.]

Influencing the loyalty in telling the child that the NRP does not have time for it.

Gardner (1998) described parents who tell their children that the alienated parent calls the child negative things like "stupid". More subtle ways of showing that the NRP does not care

for the child is telling it for example that the NRP simply does not have time for the child because the RP is too busy with his other children. RP 4:

Dan zeg ik ook wel eens tegen haar: papa is er nooit (...). Ik zeg ook vaak: hij moet terug naar zijn andere kindjes. Dan staat ze te dreinen (...) dan wil ze dat hij blijft (...) dan zeg ik ook (...) we gaan nu naar binnen en naar papa zwaaien, want hij moet terug naar zijn andere kindjes. Dat voer ik wel op als redder. [I sometimes say to her: Daddy is never here (...). I often say: he must go back to his other children. When she starts whimpering, wanting him to stay (...) then I will say (...) we now go inside and wave at Daddy, because he has to return to his other little children.]

Influencing the loyalty in telling the child that the NRP does not pay for it. Gardner (1998) explained that a common way of criticism a PAS-inducing parent has, is to inform the child that the alienated parent does not provide (enough) for the child. RP 6 informs her child that an important reason that the NRP agreed to the adoption process by the Stepfather is that he is freed of the obligation to pay alimony. The child, believing this, breaks with the NRP. When years later the child resumed contact with the NRP she does not want to hear any more that the NRP did not want to pay the alimony.

Uiteindelijk heeft het haar [dochter] veel gedaan dat het zo gemakkelijk ging [de adoptie] en hij [NRP] er geen weerwoord op gaf. Een hele poos is ze niet bij hem geweest. [Eventually it meant a lot to her [daughter] that it all went so smoothly [the adoption process] and he [NRP] did not go against this. For quite a while she did not go to him.]

Dat soort dingen [dat NRP wel eens financiële baten zou kunnen hebben gehad bij de adoptie], daar wil ze [dochter] zich helemaal niet in verdiepen. [These things [that the NRP might have had financial profit from the adoption], she [daughter] doesn't want to think about.]

Experiencing a dilemma. Parents can be aware that their behavior influences the loyalty of their children and wish to refrain from doing so. They then experience a dilemma between their negative feelings towards the NRP and their wish to spare the child from the loyalty conflict. RPs 3, 4 and 7 experience such conflicts, RP 7 explains:

Ik zit ook vaak in die spagaat. Dan inderdaad, ik heb ook mijn oordelen (...). Heel duidelijk, ik probeer het bij hen [kinderen] weg te halen, maar ongewild bedoeld, of net zo'n moment van onoplettendheid en (...) daar is het weer. En daar belast ik hun mee. [I often find myself balancing myself. Then indeed, I have my judgments (...). Very clearly, I try to keep it away from them [children], but unwillingly, or just in a moment of carelessness and (...) there it is again. And I burden them with it.]

The Impact on the Child

Research question 3.3 refers to the impact which the behavior of the parents after a divorce has on the child. Baker (2007) described a number of long-term effects of PA to this end, but the effects derived out of this study are more short-term as described by the RP itself, (see Table 15 in the Appendix).

Anxiety. Gardner (1998) explained how an over-protective parent can give the child the feeling that it is only safe at the RP's side. The RPs 1, 4, 5, 7 and 8 experience how their child feels anxiety on visiting the NRPs. RP 1 explains that when she brings her child to the NRP, it does not want to be parted from the RP:

Het lijkt me niet zo'n goed idee [zegt RP tegen NRP], je ziet hoe ze nu is, we moeten het [bezoek] niet forceren. (...)P [dochter] wilde niet, ze bleef vastgeklampt bij mij staan. [I don't think this is a good idea, [Rp said to NRP], you can see how she now is [the child clung to RP], we must not force it [visit]. P [daughter] did not want to, she clings onto me.]

Anger and/or aggression. Baker (2007) found that anger and bitterness are long-term effects of PA. All RPs (with exclusion of RP 6) report them to be short-term effects as well. RP 1 explains how her daughter shows aggressive behavior and needs to talk about her worries. Anything regarding the NRP however is not open for discussion:

Ja en als het komt, dan is het een beetje agressief gedrag bij haar en dan merk ik het wel. (...) Ja en dan zit P [dochter] met iets, en dan wil ze erover praten. Dan zeg ik: wat is er dan? Niet over hem! [NRP], want ik wil het absoluut niet over hem hebben. [Yes and when it comes to it then she shows somewhat aggressive behavior and then I notice it. (...) Yes, then P [daughter] worries over something and she wants to talk about it. Then I say: what's the matter? But not about him! [NRP], I don't want to talk about him at all.]

Confusion. Lack of trust is accepted as having a long-term negative impact through PA (Baker, 2007). Adult children report being confused and unsure of their love-worthiness. The RPs 1, 3, 4 and 7 report various forms of confusion. RP 4 experiences how her daughter is unsure of the love of the NRP: “Ze [oudste dochter] zegt ook wel eens: mama (...) houdt papa wel van mij?” [She [elder daughter] sometimes says: Mummy (...) does Daddy love me?] Also ambiguous feelings towards the NRP are reported. RP 4: “Nu ja, die [jongste zoon] vindt hem [NRP] stom. Maar als hij zijn vader ziet, vliegt hij hem om zijn hals.” [Well, he [youngest son] thinks he [NRP] is stupid. But when he sees his Father, he runs in his arms.]

Grief. Baker (2007) found that the majority of PAS adult children suffer significant periods of depression. The RPs 1, 2, 5, 6, 7 and 8 report that their children grieve and are saddened. RP 1 reports grief at being caught in the middle: “Ze heeft ook verdriet, want ze zit ook in tweestrijd.” [she feels grief, because she experiences a sense of bifurcation.]. It also can be grieving for the lost relationship with the NRP, RP 7:

Dan zit ze [oudste dochter] huilend te vertellen. Mijn moederhart brak. Hoe erg ze papa miste, hoe graag ze zou willen dat papa meer met haar belde of sms-te, mailde (...) dat ze hem zo mist. [Then she [elder daughter] begins speaking and crying. My mother's heart broke. How much she missed her Daddy, how much she would like it if Daddy were to call her more often or to text her, or mail her. (...), there she misses him so much.]

Insomnia. One of the criteria for depression is insomnia (Van der Molen, Perreijn, & Van den Hout, 2007). Three RPs (1, 4 and 7) report that their children find it hard to sleep on occasion: “Niet slapen, 's nachts wakker liggen.” [Not being able to sleep, being awake at nights.]

Withdrawal. Psychomotor retardation, a visible slowing of physical and emotional reactions, is another sign of depression (Van der Molen et al., 2007). Five RPs report that their children withdraw and act in an introverted way, thus closing off the contact between the RP and the child. RP 4: “Soms is ze bijna contact-loos, dan hoort ze je niet.” [Sometimes she is almost beyond contact, then she doesn't hear you.]

Deterioration of school-results. Four RPs report that their children's school results deteriorated. This may bring about a lower self-esteem, one of the long-term impacts on PA (Baker, 2007). RP 4 explains how her son reacts when he has to repeat a class: “Hij voelt dat hij een sukkel is.” [He believes he is a loser.]

Psychological treatment. RPs 1, 3, 4, 7 and 8 feel that their child is so affected by the situation that they put their child under psychological treatment.

Signs of shifting Loyalty, PA or PE

The research question 3.4 refers to signs of shifting loyalty, PA or PE resulting from the conduct of the parents on the child, (see Table 16 in the Appendix).

Signs of shifting loyalty. Kelly and Johnston (2001) spoke of a continuum of child-parent relationships after separation and divorce. At its best, they explain, most separated

children have positive relationships with both parents after separation or divorce. Further along the continuum are children who have developed so-called alliances with one parent but who do not completely reject the other parent nor seek to terminate all contact. RPs 1, 3, 4 and 7 realize how their reactions to statements by their children which engender negative or sad feelings in the RP can influence their children's loyalties. However much they wish to prevent doing so, it occasionally just overcomes them. RP 4 explains:

Dat is lastig (...). Ze vertellen veel. Dat hij een auto gaat kopen, terwijl hij bij mij loopt te zeiken over het geld (...) Dan vind ik het erg, je moet ze het verhaal laten vertellen. Maar dan je mening binnen te houden, dat vind ik heel lastig. (...) Je bent wel mens. Er is jou van alles aan gedaan. [That is hard (...). They tell you a lot. That he is about to buy a car, whilst at the same time he is nagging about the money (...). It bothers me, you have to let them tell their story. But keeping your opinion for yourself, that's hard. (...). You are a human being. You have been wronged.]

All RPs report various signs of shifting loyalty. The child may, for example, wish to reassure the parent of its loyalty in a subtle way. The following is an example of this (RP 3):

Dan zegt hij [zoon]: je denkt toch niet dat ik helemaal blij ben om daarheen [op vakantie met NRP en neefjes] te gaan? Ik moet alleen maar op de neefjes op te passen. [Then he [son] says: you don't believe I want to go there [on holiday with NRP and his nephews]? I only have to go there to there to look after the nephews.]

Clearer signs of shifting loyalty, combined with a feeling of confusion is shown by RP 4:

Als ze [kinderen] hier zijn dan zeggen ze dat ze het niet goed vinden van papa (...). Van het liegen. (...) Maar als ze hem zien, dan is het gewoon papa. [When they [the children] are here then they say that it isn't right what Dad did (...) The lying. (...) But when they see him, it is just Daddy.]

Signs of PA. Gardner (1998) described eight symptoms which appear in the child that is suffering from PA:

Campaign of denigration. Gardner (1998) spoke of the campaign of denigration where the child becomes obsessed with the bitter feelings of the alienated parent. There are also direct ways of expressing the shifting loyalty and PA as shown by RP 4:

Hier [nadat RP huult omdat de kinderen gezegd hebben de stiefmoeder wel aardig te vinden] merk ik echter dat ze reageren van: stomme papa en dit en dat. [Here [after RP cries because the children told her they like their stepmother] I notice that they respond like: stupid Daddy and this and that.]

Weak, superficial or absurd rationalizations for the deprecation. RP 2 explains how his son reacted after he received a letter from his mother, whom he stopped seeing after he found out that his mother had had an affair: “Ook het type hoe ze schrijft, net als een puber, het lijkt of ze helemaal de weg kwijt is”. [Well, the way she writes is like a teenager, it looks like she completely lost her way.]

Lack of ambivalence. A lack of ambivalence can be seen when the child pictures the targeted parent as completely bad whilst the alienating parent is all good. RP 2 explains how his children feel about their parents after they found out that their mother had had an affair:

Die zeggen: voor ons is het heel duidelijk pa, alles wat je hebt gedaan [is goed], alles wat mama heeft gedaan, dat kan gewoon niet.[They say: for us it is clear Dad, all you have done [is good], all Mum has done is just not right.]

The “independent-thinker” phenomenon. PA children seemingly state of their own accord that it is their decision to reject the alienated parent. The RP 2 reflects on his children saying: “Ik wil mama niet zien.” [I don’t want to see Mum.]

Reflexive support of the alienating parent in a parental conflict. RP 1 explains how her four year old daughter chose her side on going to a visit to the NRP:

Toen ging de omgang mis bij de overdracht. Toen heeft hij [NRP] mijn moeder geslagen (...), P [dochter] was toen vier, zij was erbij. Zij heeft haar oma en mij willen beschermen, ze heeft hem toen geschopt als klein meisje. [Then things went bad when I brought the child [to NRP]. Then he hit my Mother (...)] P [daughter] was then four years old and she was there. She wanted to protect Grandma and myself, she kicked him, being as small as she was.]

Absence of guilt over cruelty to and/or exploitation of the alienated parent. RP 2 explains how his children support RP fighting the NRP for what he believes are his rights: “Ik heb teveel toegegeven (....) Mijn kinderen zeggen ook: dat moet je niet doen, klaar. Haar keuze”. [I gave in too much. (....) My children say: you shouldn’t do that at all. It’s her choice.]

The appearance of borrowed scenarios. Another symptom of PA is the appearance of borrowed scenarios. This occurs when the child uses words and phrases, which they do not usually use (Gardner, 1998). RP 4 explains how her five year old daughter calls her Father: “Ze [dochter] noemt hem [NRP] ook een aanwaaipapa.” [She [daughter] calls him [NRP] a drop-by-Daddy.]

Passing on the animosity to the friends and/or extended family of the alienated parent. The eighth sign of PA is that the animosity felt by the RP being passed on to the extended family of the alienated parent. RP 3 explains how she reacted to the way NRP responded when an Uncle of the NRP passed away:

Er was ook een oom [van NRP] overleden. (....) Dus ik zei: daar hoeft je niet heen hoor. We sturen gewoon een kaart. (....) Maar P [NRP] was heel boos op S [zoon] dat hij er niet was. Iedereen was er behalve hij. [An uncle [NRP’s] had died. (....) So I say: you don’t have to go there. We will just send a

postcard. (...) But P [NRP] was very angry with S [son] that he wasn't there. Everybody was there, except him.]

Internalizing the emotions of the alienating parent. This study looks into the possible existence of a ninth sign of PA, whereby the child mirrors the emotions and feelings of the alienating parent. A process of internalization of these emotions can be seen in this study. RP 1 explains how her child reacted after it was told that the court decided that the NRP has visiting rights again: “Ik heb politie nodig” [I need the police].

Signs of PE. RP 8 describes how the NRP was not complying with the visitation-agreement after the separation, which had resulted from his many affairs. The youngest son felt grief for missing his Father: “De jongste miste hem heel erg. Die wilde heel graag weer contact.” [The youngest missed him badly. He so wanted to restore the contact.]. After just one visit to the NRP however, the youngest son completely changed his position, showing signs of withdrawal and the RP could not understand the reasons for it:

Toen het contact er was [met NRP], was de jongste echt ziek als hij hem op kwam halen. Ik weet niet of er wat gebeurd is. Je krijgt het er ook niet uit bij de jongste. In het begin vond hij het geweldig. En in één keer was het afgelopen. When contact was restored [with NRP], the youngest one was really sick when he came to pick him up. I don't know what happened. You can't get it out of him. In the beginning he was really thrilled. And then the next time, it was all over.]

The RP explains how the NRP responded with a legal proceeding after a foolish reaction of the third son towards the new partner of the NRP:

Mijn derde zoon (...) die heeft in een woede een foto van haar [nieuwe partner NRP] op zijn Facebook pagina gezet. Die had hij wat bewerkt [hoerig gemaakt]. (...) Dat heeft er nog geen vier uur opgestaan. Maar zijn vader en zijn vriendin hebben gelijk aangifte gedaan bij de politie. [My third born son (...) put a photograph of her [new partner NRP] on his Facebook page. He had edited it a little [made her

look tarty]. (...) It was only four hours online. But his Father and his girlfriend immediately pressed charges at the police.]

RP 8 also describes the effect of PE to the NRP's behavior on her sons:

Nee [op de vraag of de anderen kinderen NRP missen] helemaal niet. Die zeiden later: we hebben nooit een band met hem gehad. Nee en wij hebben nooit meer iets van hem gehoord, hij doet niets voor de kinderen. (...) Die zijn er klaar mee (...) Hij heeft ons financieel helemaal laten zitten. De oudste draait voor de kosten op. [No, [to the question whether the other children miss the NRP] not at all. They later said: we never were close to him. No, and we never heard from him, he does nothing for the children. (...) They are done with it (...). He completely left us in the cold financially. The eldest has to cover the costs.]

The Role of the Environment

The research question 3.5 refers to the role that the environment plays in the development of PAS – (see Table 17 in the Appendix). Gardner (1998) spoke of the enlistment of a coterie of supporters (new partners, friends and relatives) for the RP. In most cases in this research, the environment of the RP supports the RP. Either supporting or non-supporting the RP can moderate the relation of the behavior of the parents in reinforcing (or not) their feelings and consequently the actions of the parents.

Denunciation of the behavior of NRP. RPs 2, 4, 5 and 6 refer to the environment as not in support of the conduct of the NRP. RP 1 experiences how her brother came to her aid and paid a visit to NRP. A visit that ended up in a fight after which the brother was punished and sentenced by the court. Such visits provide the NRP with ammunition for the courts:

Op een gegeven moment was mijn broer het [het gedrag van NRP] ook zat. Die heeft hem toen opgezocht (...) mijn broer heeft toen een wel een klap verkocht (...) Daar is een zaak van geweest en mijn broer heeft een taakstraf voor gekregen en een boete moest mijn broer betalen. (...) Die gebruikt hij [NRP] nu nog in elke zaak. [At some point, my brother was fed up with his [NRP's] behavior. He

went to see him up (...) and my brother hit him. (...) This ended up in a court case and my brother was sentenced to do community service and he had to pay a penalty fine. He [NRP] now uses this in each court case.]

Disapproval of the new partner of the NRP. After an affair, the people in the environment may find it hard to accept the new partner of the NRP as RP 4 experiences: “Ze [ouders NRP] willen haar niet echt als schoondochter accepteren.” [They [parents NRP] don’t want to accept her as their new daughter in law at all.]

Support for the non-compliance with the visitation-agreement. RPs 1, 2, 5 and 6 find that their environment-situation agrees with their non-compliance with the visitation-agreement. RP 6: “Er zijn ook heel veel mensen die zeggen: hij heeft vier andere kinderen, waarom laat hij N [dochter] niet met rust?” [There are many people who say: he has four other kids, why can’t he leave N [daughter] in peace?]

Support for the behavior of the RP. Giving emotional support to the RP may lead the RP to believe that its behavior is appropriate. RPs 2, 4, 5 and 8 feel that their environmental-situation confirmed to them that they are on the right track. RP two: “Het is mijn enige troost dat ik het goed heb gedaan. Dat zeggen de meeste vrienden van mij ook. (...) Dat zeggen de meesten wel: je moet wel voor jezelf opkomen!” [It is my only consolation that I have done it the right way. Most friends of mine say so. (...) Most people say: you must stand up for yourself!]

The position of the partner of the RP. How the new partners feel about the NRP can influence the feelings and consequently the behavior of the RP. RP 1 explains how the fight over the child takes a toll on the relationship: “het is zwaar voor de relatie.” [It is hard on the relationship.] The new partner of RP 6 adopts the child: “Dus ze was rond negen dat dat idee ontstond van: laten we haar adopteren.” [When she was about nine years old, the idea came to adopt her.]

Support of the NRP. Only twice in this study the environmental-situation of the RP actually disapproved of the conduct of the RP (RP 2 and RP 5). RP 2 explains:

Ik heb het er ook wel eens met mijn zuster over. Maar die denkt er toch weer anders over (...) dan mijn kinderen. Ze zegt; je moet een bepaalde harmonie naar de moeder hebben. [I sometimes speak about it with my sister. But she feels differently about it (...) then my children do. She says: you must find some harmony with the Mother.]

The Role of the official Institutions. Official institutions like (family) judges, childcare units and doctors play an important role after a divorce. They become involved when the parents fight for the visitation-agreements and rights.

Judicial verdicts. In the family's 1, 5 and 6, the visitation-agreement is fought out very extremely by the parents. In these cases, the judges try to find a solution for visitation-agreement between child and the NRP, although they often have resulted in more appeals. RP 1 states:

Dan komt er een rechtszitting en dan wordt er bepaald dat er een omgang moet komen". (...) De rechtszaak van het hof kwam in juni (...) het hof heeft toen gezegd: de omgang blijft zoals hij nu is, en in de tussentijd doen we een onderzoek. [Then there is a hearing and it is decided that a visitation-agreement has to be drawn up. The appeal case was in June, the court decided that the visitation-agreement will not be changed, and we then start up an investigation.]

Involvement of childcare units. Childcare units are involved with three families (1, 5 and 6). They try to mediate between the parents, but not always to the satisfaction of the RPs. RP 5 explains that because of the dynamic approach of the childcare protective services, the RP rejected this and stood in the way of the visitation-settlement.

Toen ze een half jaar was, kwam er voor het eerst iemand van de kinderbescherming. Die dame ging zitten en trok haar agenda, zo we gaan even een afspraak maken. Ze [dochter] moet op bezoek [bij NRP]. (...) Toen had ik zoiets van: dan zet ik mijn hakken in het zand. De vechtscheiding is mede debet aan die dame. [When she was a half year old, someone from childcare came for the first time. The lady sat down, pulled her agenda, like wanting to make an appointment. She [daughter] has to visit the [NRP]. (...) Then I felt like: I'm going to sit hard on this one. The bad divorce is partly to blame for this lady.]

Involvement of the medical system. RP 4 reports (sexual) abuse. The doctors find it hard to find proof of her accusations on abuse by the NRP and relay to her that she may imagine her findings as revenge:

Ja, als ze [dochter] bij me is, dan zegt ze: papa heeft mijn pipi gekneed. (...) Dus ik ga de dokter bellen. (...) Ja, het is wel een beetje rood [stelt de dokter], maar dat kan ook van een kruisbesmetting zijn of van te hard afvegen. Bij het WKZ [ziekenhuis] (...) staat letterlijk dat er een vermoeden van vaders zijde is dat ik (...) het verzonnen heb om hem een hak te zetten. [Yes, when she [daughter] is with me, she says: Daddy pressed on my pipi. (...) So I call the doctor. (...) Yes, it is a little red [diagnosed the doctor] but that can also be infection or that she wiped herself too hard. At the WKZ [hospital] (...), the father clearly believes that I (...) had made it up to spite him.]

Dissatisfaction with the support of the official institutions. The RPs that had to work with the official support institutions report being unhappy with the assistance given by them. They feel that they are not supportive and only make things worse. RP 1 declares:

Het zijn de organisaties die je moeten helpen, maar ze doen helemaal niets Ze maken je alleen maar gestrest en zorgen dat je achter ze aan moet rennen. Ze hebben voor mijn dochter ook niets gedaan. [The organizations are supposed to help you, but they don't do anything at all. They only cause stress and make sure that you have to run after them. They didn't do anything for my daughter either.]

Discussion

Aim of this Research and its Initial Research Question

As researcher of this study, I primarily aimed to explore the behavior of RPs, who have conflict with the NRPs and the respective visitation agreements in place. The initial research questions concerning the RP's motives for non-compliance with the visitation-agreement led to a determination of overt and covert motives for non-compliance *and* for compliance with the visitation-agreement.

Objectives of this Research

In providing the enumeration and determination of the overt and covert motives of the interviewed RPs in relation to their respective visitation-agreements, the objectives I had for filling in the gaps in accorded literature regarding these motives as well as providing insight into the participants' main concerns regarding the respective visitation-agreements were realized. In providing a copy of this study to all of the participants, I trust this may help the RPs in understanding the dynamics related to a divorce and the damage it may cause to the child (the objective number 3).

Limitations of this Research

The sample size of N=8 means that the enumeration and determination of findings in this study is providing only an indication and generalization of the findings is not applicable. The participants in this study came voluntarily into the research. The covert motivation for attending this research cannot be established and this may have influenced their reporting. Any biases resulting from possible socially accepted reports cannot be eliminated either.

It is not the intention of this research to diagnose PA or PE or establish scientific explanations for the child who acts against a non-residential parent through any influence of the residential parent. Some of the statements made by the RPs can indeed indicate the occurrence of PA or PE and some can be seen to resemble the specific emotional reactions of

the alienating parent as Gardner (1998) described. In this study, however, the statements are not derived from the child or the NRP directly and thus PA or PE cannot be diagnosed. In none of the cases within this study was it possible to distinguish bona fide abuse – coming from actual victimization of the child – from PA or PE. This is due to the fact that all information is one-sided, from one perspective as it is provided by the RP only.

The study seems to indicate the children's vulnerabilities which can make them susceptible to becoming alienated. Some children of one family seemed more impressionable than others. There also seemed to be a difference in susceptibility between the children of the various families. As the statements of short term impact, shifting loyalty and PA or PE are not derived from the children directly, a clear insight into the possibility of a moderation effect of the features of the children heading for PA or PE cannot be provided for.

This is a qualitative research and the significance of any found relation or causality cannot be established.

The Perspective of this Study led to New Findings

As this research was focussed on the perspective of the RP, information, which in accordance with the knowledge of myself as researcher as non-existing in other literature sources, was compiled.

Motives for (non-)compliance with the visitation-agreement. It became clear that parents, apart from their obstructing the regulations of the respective visitation-agreements, also had motives for complying with them. The motives were found to be firstly overtly expressed as being in the best interest of the child, or covertly felt as beneficial to themselves.

Ambiguous feelings of the parents: how to inform the child. RPs struggle inwardly with themselves, realizing that their behavior does indeed influence the child negatively, but their being human-beings, it was seen that negative feelings resulting in according negative statements about the NRPs simply sometimes just overcame them. They also had clear

difficulties in dealing with questions from their children asked for details on the reasons for the divorce. Do they have to tell the children everything and remain truthful, or should they protect the children from this information?

Dynamic Pathway to PA or PE.

It became clear that there are specific variables that influence the behavior of the parents after a (bad) divorce. A clear course to PA or PE became apparent through these. This study outlines strong relations and effects between parent's covert behavior and their overt behavior. Experiencing specific feelings often leads to the exclusion of specific overt behavior. The RPs feelings regarding the NRP in this study appear to become mirrored in the child. If this is so it allows the risk of the child internalizing the feelings of an alienating parent as if they were its own, indicating a possible existence of a ninth symptom of parental alienation.

Future Research

In order to realize a comprehensive coverage of the influences on the way to PA or PE and to establish possible interactions and causality on this pathway, further research is required in order to provide the environment of the parents with adequate means to prevent negative impacts (short and long term) on the child.

- 1) Future research should establish more insight regarding the existence of the ninth symptom of PA, the variation of pathways to the PA and PE and should indicate if the PA and PE follow the same pathway.
- 2) More profound knowledge of the occurrence and prevalence of PA and PE and of possible moderating effects on the child on the pathway to PA or PA is required.
- 3) More insight in the long-term impact on alienated children is required, thus establishing whether parental alienation is a syndrome or not.

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Footnotes

¹ 1 RP 5 found herself in a special situation: she experienced both a bad relation from the outset of her relationship and her former spouse found new love in the early stages of their marriage.

Appendices

Table 1

Recruitment of participants

Recruitment media	Specification	Response of participants
LinkedIn	CJG Centra voor Jeugd en Gezin [Centre for youth and family]	6
LinkedIn	Familierecht - Echtscheiding – Scheidingsmediation [Family law – Divorce – Divorce mediation]	0
LinkedIn	Scheiding en kinderen [Divorce and children]	0
LinkedIn	Psychologie voor Professionals [Psychology for Professionals]	0
LinkedIn	NIP - Nederlands Instituut van Psychologen [Dutch Institution of psychologists]	0
LinkedIn	Jeugd SUBGROUP [youth SUBGROUP]	0
Mail	Professionals: lawyers, psychologists, pedagogues and mediators	2
Twitter	Vader Kennis Centrum [Father Knowledge Centre]	1
Facebook	Vader Kennis Centrum [Father Knowledge Centre]	0

Note. N=8.

Table 2

Distribution of the sample used in the study into sex, average age, age range, average duration parental relationship (in years) and the range of the duration of the parental relationship (in years)

Number participants	Number males	Number females	Average age	Age range	Average duration relation	Range duration relation
8	1	7	42.25	28-51	14.06	1-30

Note. N=8.

Table 3

Distribution of the sample used in the study in living areas (provinces) in the Netherlands

Number participants	Province
1	Noord Holland
1	Brabant
1	Overijssel
2	Utrecht
1	Groningen
2	Friesland

Note. N=8.

Table 4

Distribution of the children of the sample used in the study into sex, average age, age range, number of half siblings and number of stepsiblings

Number children	Number boys	Number of girls	Average age	Age range	Number half siblings	Number step siblings
15	10	5	14.13	5-23	7	5

Note. N=8.

Table 5

Category headings of the pathway to PA or PE

Category headings	Rate
History of the relationship of the former spouses	63
The covert behavior	219
The overt behavior	249
The behavior of the parents of influencing loyalty of the child	116
Impact of the behavior of the parents on the child	112
Signs of shifting loyalty of the child	28
Signs of PA	22
Signs of PE	5
Moderating influence of the consequences non-compliance	56
Moderating influence of the environment	43

Note. N=8.

Table 11

Pathway after dis-affinity from the outset as derived from the RP (represented in a number) and the frequency rate it was reported

Variables	Sub-variables	RP	Rate
History parents	Bad relation between spouses from onset	1-5-6	8
	Threats, aggression and abuse in the relationship	1-5-6	21
	Alcohol abuse	1	4
Covert behavior	Anxiety	1-5-6	44
	Desire to start anew	1-6	10
Overt behavior	Accusation of sexual abuse (by RP)	1-5-6	11
	Accusation of child not being taken care of properly (by RP)	1-5-6	27
	Denial of accusations (by NRP)	1-5-6	6
	Lying (mutual)	5	3
	Alleged disorder (of NRP)	1-5-6	10
	Legal proceedings (mutual)	1-5-6	27
	Gathering proof for the fight over the child (by NRP)	1-5-6	13
	Consequences non-compliance	See Table 10	1-5-6

Note. N=8.

Table 12

Pathway after an extramarital affair as derived from the RP (represented in a number) and the frequency rate it was reported

Variables	Sub-variables	RP	Rate
History parents	Extramarital affair	2-4-5-7-8	16
	Lying	2-4-7-8	11
Covert behavior	Jealousy	2-3-4-5-6-7	47
	Grief	2-4-7	19
	Experiencing improved parental bonding	2	9
	Feeling a sense of justification	2-4	13
	Jeopardizing the new relationship of NRP	4	1
Overt behavior	The child disapproves of the conduct of NRP	2-4-8	13
	The child dislikes the Stepparent (partner NRP)	2-4-5-7-8	9
	The child feels discriminated compared to step- half siblings	5-6-7	8
	Child needs both parents	2-4-7-8	5
	Inflexibility regarding visitation-agreement	4-5-7	12
	Involving of third parties	2-4	9

Note. N=8.

Table 13

Pathway after falling out of love by both partners simultaneously as derived from the RP (represented in a number) and the frequency rate it was reported

Variables	Sub-variables	RP	Rate
History parents	Simultaneously diminished love	3	3
Covert behavior	Concern when the RP loses influence	3	4
Overt behavior	The desire for sexual intimacy	3	6
	Revenge	3	2

Note. N=8.

Table 14

Influencing the loyalty of the child as derived from the RP (represented in a number) and the frequency rate it was reported

Variables influencing the child's loyalty	RP	Rate
By using the telephone	1	1
By means of sharing negative information about the NRP	2-3-4-5-6	13
By sharing confidential information of the parents	1-2-4-6-7	17
Through religion	4	3
By showing sad or anxious emotions	4-5-6	3
By showing hatred towards the Stepparent	4	4
By projecting the own alienation campaign to the NRP	1-5	9
By telling the child that the law forces it to visit the NRP	5	1
By telling the child that the NRP does not have time for it	5	1
By telling the child that the NRP does not pay for it	6	2

Note. N=8.

Table 15

Short-term effects of the behavior of the parents-on the child as derived from the RP (represented in a number) and the frequency rate it was reported

Short term effects on the child	RP	Rate
Anxiety	1-4-5-7-8	21
Anger / aggression	1-2-3-4-5-7-8	34
Confusion	1-3-4-7	4
Grief	1-2-5-6-7-8	15
Insomnia	1-4-7	4
Withdrawal	2-3-5-7-8	7
Deterioration of school results	1-4-7-8	8
Psychological treatment	1-3-4-7-8	4

Note. N=8.

Table 16

Signs of shifting loyalty, PA or PE as derived from the RP (represented in a number) and the frequency rate it was reported

Reported signs of shifting loyalty, PA or PE	RP	Rate
Shifting loyalty	1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8	28
PA: campaign of denigration	4	1
PA: weak rationalizations for the deprecation	2	1
PA: lack of ambivalence	2	9
PA: independent thinker phenomenon	1	1
PA: reflective support of the alienating parent	1	3
PA: absence of guilt over cruelty	2	2
PA: presence of borrowed scenarios	1-5	4
PA: spread of animosity	3	1
PA: internalizing the emotions of the alienating parent	1-2-4	9
PE	8	5

Note. N=8.

Table 17

The influencing role of the environment as derived from the RP (represented in a number) and the frequency rate it was reported

Short term effects on the child	RP	Rate
Denunciation of the conduct of the NRP	1-2-4-5-6	15
Disapproval of the new partner of the NRP	2	2
Supports non-compliance with the visitation-agreement	1-2-5-6	9
Supports RP	2-4-5-8	10
The position of the partner of the RP	1-6	5
Supports NRP	2-5	2
Judicial verdicts	1-5-6	28
Involvement of childcare protective units	1-5	7
Involvement of the medical system	5	8
Dissatisfaction with the official institutions	1-5-6-7-8	16

Note. N=8.

Table 18

Relation and exclusion of overt and covert behavior of the parents combined in the three pathways

RP 1-5-6	RP 2-4-5-7	RP 3		
Pathway disaffinity at the start	Pathway extramarital affair	Pathway diminished love	Covert behavior	Overt behavior
x			Anxiety	History: threats
x			Desire to start anew	History: alcohol abuse
x			Alleged disorder NRP	Alleged abuse of child
x			Negative financial effects	Improper caretaking
x			Fight is time consuming	Denial of accusations by NRP
x			Fight causes anxiety	Legal proceedings
x			Regained trust in oneself	Gathering proof
x				NRP responses with aggression
	x		Jealousy: affair	History: lying by NRP
	x		Grief for lost relationship	Child disapproves of conduct NRP
	x		Improved parental bonding	Child dislikes stepparent
	x		Justification	Child feels discriminated
	x		Endangering affair	Inflexibility visitation-agreement
	x		Child needs both parents	Involving third parties
		x	Fear of losing influence	Showing desire for sexual intimacy
		x		Revenge
x	x	x	Loneliness	NRP shows indifference
x	x	x	Frustration of child's behavior after visit	
x	x	x	Fear of backfiring	
x	x	x	Need to relax	

Note. N=8.

Appendix A

Momenteel ben ik, als student psychologie aan de Open Universiteit, bezig met een onderzoek naar de gevolgen van een (v)chtscheiding op kinderen en hun ouders. Hiertoe wil ik interviews houden met inwonende/verzorgende ouders die na de scheiding ervaren dat hun kind de uitwonende ouder niet meer wil zien. Uiteraard geldt dat de gegevens anoniem verwerkt worden en dat de betrokken inwonende/verzorgende ouder achteraf inzage in het onderzoek kan krijgen. De bedoeling van dit onderzoek is dat de inwonende/verzorgende ouder zijn of haar ervaringen en gevoelens toelicht, zodat meer inzicht verkregen wordt in deze complexe situatie, die in Nederland nog niet veel aandacht van de wetenschap heeft gekregen. Ik schat in dat de (persoonlijke) interviews maximaal drie uur in beslag nemen. De locatie van het onderzoek hangt af van de wensen van de ouder. Het interview kan plaatsvinden bij de ouder, of bij een nabijgelegen studiecetrum van de Open Universiteit, of op een andere locatie waar de ouder zich prettig bij voelt.

Indien je zelf een inwonende/verzorgende ouder bent die ervaart dat het kind de uitwonende ouder niet meer wil zien en je wilt aan dit onderzoek deelnemen, wil je dit dan aan mij doorgeven? Indien je iemand zakelijk of persoonlijk kent die ervaart dat het kind de uitwonende ouder niet meer wil zien, mag ik je dan vragen om hem of haar op dit onderzoek te wijzen? Indien je nog vragen hebt hierover, laat je me dat dan weten?

Graag bedank ik je in ieder geval voor je aandacht!

Mijn contactgegevens zijn:

Email adres: hskoppejan@gmail.com

Telefoon: 06-12577473

Met hartelijke groet,

Heleen Koppejan-Luitze

Appendix B

Beste [voornaam],

Enige tijd geleden hebben wij contact met elkaar gelegd omdat wij samen de interesse delen voor de gevolgen van een (vecht)scheiding op kinderen en hun ouders.

Momenteel ben ik, als student psychologie, bezig met een onderzoek naar dit onderwerp.

Hiertoe wil ik interviews houden met ouders die na de scheiding ervaren dat hun kind de andere ouder niet meer wil zien.

De bedoeling van dit interview is dat de ouder zijn of haar ervaringen/gevoelens toelicht. Ik schat in dat de interviews ongeveer 3 uur in beslag nemen. Uiteraard geldt dat hun gegevens anoniem worden verwerkt en dat zij achteraf inzage in het onderzoek krijgen.

Heel graag zou ik je hulp hierbij willen invoeren, vandaar dat ik me tot jou richt.

Indien jij in jouw praktijk ouders hebt die ervaren dat het kind de andere ouder niet meer wil zien, zou jij dan aan hen willen vragen of zij mee willen werken aan mijn onderzoek?

Indien je nog vragen hebt hierover, laat je me dat dan weten?

Mag ik je in ieder geval al bedanken voor je aandacht?

Met hartelijke groet,

Heleen Koppejan-Luitze

Appendix C

Het Vader Kennis Centrum biedt mij een prachtige gelegenheid om mijn onderzoek onder uw aandacht te brengen. Momenteel ben ik, als student psychologie aan de Open Universiteit, bezig met een onderzoek naar de gevolgen van een (v)chtscheiding op kinderen en hun ouders. Het is de bedoeling dat dit onderzoek eind dit jaar afgerond is. Hiertoe wil ik interviews houden met ouders die na de scheiding ervaren dat hun kind de andere ouder niet meer wil zien. Uiteraard geldt dat de gegevens anoniem verwerkt worden en dat de betrokken ouder achteraf inzage in het onderzoek kan krijgen. De resultaten van dit onderzoek stel ik, wanneer ik klaar ben, heel graag beschikbaar aan de Vader Kennis Centrum website.

De bedoeling van dit onderzoek is dat de ouder zijn of haar ervaringen en gevoelens toelicht, zodat meer inzicht verkregen wordt in deze complexe situatie, die in Nederland nog niet veel aandacht van de wetenschap heeft gekregen. Ik schat in dat de (persoonlijke) interviews ongeveer drie uur in beslag nemen. De locatie van het onderzoek hangt af van de wensen van de ouder. Het interview kan plaatsvinden bij de ouder, of bij een nabijgelegen studiecentrum van de Open Universiteit, of op een andere locatie waar de ouder zich prettig bij voelt.

Indien u zelf een ouder bent die ervaart dat het kind de andere ouder niet meer wil zien en u wilt aan dit onderzoek deelnemen, wilt u dit dan aan mij doorgeven?

Indien u iemand zakelijk of persoonlijk kent die ervaart dat het kind de andere ouder niet meer wil zien, mag ik u dan vragen om hem of haar op dit onderzoek te wijzen? Indien u nog vragen hebt hierover, laat u me dat dan weten?

Graag bedank ik u in ieder geval voor uw aandacht!

Mijn contactgegevens zijn:

Email adres: hskoppejan@gmail.com; Telefoon: 06-12577473

Met hartelijke groet,

Heleen Koppejan-Luitze

Appendix D

Momenteel ben ik, als student psychologie aan de Open Universiteit, bezig met een onderzoek naar de gevolgen van een (v)chtscheiding op kinderen en hun ouders.

Ik ben er echter op gewezen dat mijn eerder geplaatste verzoek om hulp bij mijn onderzoek op verschillende manieren geïnterpreteerd kon worden. Dit heeft geleid tot onduidelijkheid, daarvoor mijn excuses. Ik heb het oude verzoek verwijderd, hierbij plaats ik een nieuwe melding. In mijn onderzoek wil ik interviews houden met inwonende/verzorgende ouders die na de scheiding ervaren dat hun kind de uitwonende ouder niet meer wil zien. Dit onderzoek richt zich dus niet op de ouder die het kind niet meer ziet, maar op de ouder waarbij het kind woont. De bedoeling van dit onderzoek is dat de inwonende/verzorgende ouder zijn of haar ervaringen en gevoelens toelicht, zodat meer inzicht verkregen wordt in deze complexe situatie, die in Nederland nog niet veel aandacht van de wetenschap heeft gekregen.

Ik schat in dat de (persoonlijke) interviews maximaal drie uur in beslag nemen.

De locatie van het onderzoek hangt af van de wensen van de ouder. Het interview kan plaatsvinden bij de ouder, of bij een nabijgelegen studiecentrum van de Open Universiteit, of op een andere locatie waar de ouder zich prettig bij voelt. Uiteraard geldt dat de gegevens anoniem verwerkt worden en dat de betrokken ouder achteraf inzage in het onderzoek kan krijgen.

Indien je iemand in je praktijk kent die ervaart dat het kind de andere ouder niet meer wil zien, mag ik je dan vragen om hem of haar op dit onderzoek te wijzen? Indien je nog vragen hebt hierover, laat je me dat dan weten?

Graag bedank ik je in ieder geval voor je aandacht!

Mijn contactgegevens zijn:

Email adres: hskoppejan@gmail.com; Telefoon: 06-12577473

Met hartelijke groet, Heleen Koppejan-Luitze

Appendix E

Beste voornaam,

Graag wil ik je allereerst bedanken voor je bereidwilligheid om aan onderzoek deel te nemen!

Ik realiseer me nu dat mijn oproep tot deelname aan mijn onderzoek op verschillende manieren gelezen kan worden, daarvoor mijn excuses. In dit onderzoek wil ik me richten op de ouder die ervaart dat het kind de andere ouder niet meer wil zien.

Ik lees uit jouw reactie dat het contact is verloren tussen jou en je kind. Dat is vreselijk. Mijn oprechte medeleven.

In de toekomst hoop ik meer onderzoek te kunnen doen naar de gevolgen van (v)chtscheidingen. Dan zal ik zeker ook willen praten met mensen die ervaren dat zijzelf hun kind na de scheiding niet meer zien.

Zou ik je mogen vragen om jouw contactgegevens te bewaren? Wellicht kunnen we dan in de toekomst jouw situatie bespreken?

Ik wens je heel veel sterkte,

Hartelijke groet,

Heleen Koppejan

Appendix F

Beste voornaam,

Graag wil ik je allereerst bedanken voor je bereidwilligheid om aan dit onderzoek deel te nemen!

Wellicht is het een idee dat ik je wat meer toelichting geef, alvorens wij een afspraak maken?

Mag ik je daartoe bellen? Kan je me aangeven wanneer dit jou het best uitkomt?

Graag hoor ik van je,

Hartelijke groet,

Heleen Koppejan-Luitze

Appendix G

Aanvang:

- Mag ik het gesprek opnemen?
- Melding: vragen stellen die persoonlijk zijn ⇒ niet hoeven te antwoorden.
- Melding: korte aantekeningen maken ⇒ eventueel later op terugkomen.
- Geboortedatum?
- Beroep: nu /voor de scheiding / aantal uur?
- Aantal kinderen: jongens/meisjes; leeftijd?
- Aantal jaren getrouwd / samen?

Nu:

- Reden scheiding, vechtscheiding? / nieuwe partner? ⇒ beslissing tot scheiding?
- Hoe was de reactie van het kind op de scheiding? / gedragsveranderingen?
- Nieuwe gezinssamenstelling: NRP /RP / stief-half broertjes – zusjes?
- Bezoekregeling Frequentie/duur?
- Hoe is het kind voordat het naar NRP gaat? / als het terugkomt?

Bezoekregeling gaat niet goed:

- N|RP nog zien? / niet zien? / bellen? / hoe voelt het kind zich?
- Om welke redenen staat de RP achter de beslissing van het kind de NRP niet te zien?

Terug naar voor de scheidingstijd:

- Hoe was de band van de NRP met de kinderen voor de scheiding?

RP voor en tijdens scheiding:

- Was er voor de scheiding veel ruzie? Kind de ruzies meegemaakt? / reactie?
- Gevoelens de RP bij scheiding? Wat voelt ze nu voor de NRP?

RP bij bezoeken:

- Wat doet RP met de vrije tijd?

- Welke voordelen / nadelen heeft de RP als het kind bij de NRP is?
- Hoe voelt de RP zich als het kind er niet is?

Omgeving:

- Hoe reageert de omgeving als het kind niet bij de RP is? Familie / vrienden / school?
- Hoe reageert de omgeving nu het kind de NRP niet wil zien: mee eens / oneens?

Financiën:

- Alimentatie Tevreden? / ontevreden ⇒ wat voelt RP hierbij?

Stiefgezin:

- Wat vindt de stief-RP van de opvoeding van de NRP / dat het kind de NRP niet wil zien?
- Hoe ervaart de RP contact tussen kind NRP-moeder? / opvoedingskwaliteiten?
- Hoe voelt RP zich t.o.v. stief- of halfbroertjes-zusjes?

Afronding

- Zijn er andere factoren die een invloed hebben op de RP?
- Heeft de RP nog andere informatie die ze wil delen?
- Wil de RP de uitwerking van het onderzoek gemaild krijgen?

Appendix H

Beste [voornaam],

Graag meld ik me even met de stand van zaken betreffende mijn onderzoek.

Op 5 juli 2013 hebben wij ons gesprek gehad, waarbij ik je ook gemeld had dat ik verwachtte november of december vorig jaar gereed te zijn met mijn onderzoek.

Helaas heb ik me echter vergist in de grote hoeveelheid werk die bij het uitwerken van de gesprekken kwam kijken en is zo de ingeschatte eindtermijn verschoven.

Inmiddels is het uitwerken van de gesprekken gereed.

Nu dit deel afgerond is, kom ik tot de conclusie dat de complexe situatie waar jij in je gezin mee geconfronteerd zijn, die zich ook heel sterk richt op problematiek met de hulpverleningsinstanties, voorbij gaat aan het (beperkte) thema van dit onderzoek en daardoor inhoudelijk aansluiting mist.

Ik heb er dan ook voor gekozen om jouw verhaal, dat anders binnen mijn onderzoek niet tot zijn recht zal komen, niet op te nemen.

Mag ik je toch heel erg bedanken voor je bereidwilligheid om je beschikbaar te stellen en het vertrouwen dat je me hebt gegeven?

Hartelijke groet,

Heleen Koppejan-Luitze