# Omega Graduate School

# Dissertation Research Prospectus (Pre-Proposal)

Sabrina Haid

# Problem Statement

The problem is the existence of parental alienation (PA) and custodial contact problems (CCP) among non-custodial fathers because fathers are parents too, and children need their fathers (Farrell & Gray, 2018).

# Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study is to explore the lived experiences of non-custodial fathers experiencing PA/CCP to discover how they define PA/CCP, how it affects them, and what coping skills are beneficial to getting through PA/CCP.

# Background of the Problem (1-2 pages)

I am providing the outline of my current dissertation (V.25). I know I will be revising a lot within this version due to several changes and adaptations, but the general outline will be staying consistent.

1. History of parental alienation (PA) and the 21st century family
   1. PA overview
   2. Terminology
   3. What happened to the traditional family
   4. Divorce, separation, and the rise in cohabitation
   5. Global issue
2. Mental health issues
   1. DSM-V inclusion/exclusion
      1. Also the European equivalent
      2. PA can fall into several categories already in the DSM-V
   2. Diagnostic based behaviors
      1. Child focused – if child does not exhibit behaviors, there is no PA
      2. Alienating behaviors – can be identified but are not used for diagnosis
      3. Does not address expected behaviors from the targeted parent (TP)
   3. The difference between Parental Alienation (PA) and Parental Alienation Syndrome (PAS)
   4. Emerging literature on adult children and PA
   5. Fatherless epidemic and fathers’ rights
   6. Opposing viewpoints
3. Legalities
   1. Family Court is not like any other court
      1. No jury of your peers
      2. Judge is dictator and final say
      3. Family Court is a business
   2. Title IV-D
      1. Child support
      2. Funding for the court
   3. Perception that the mothers are favored
      1. Tender Years Doctrine holdover
      2. Laws about naming a father on birth certificate (bc)
      3. Resources available for mothers but not for fathers
      4. “Dead bead dad” perception still prevalent
   4. Adversarial environment
      1. He said / she said
      2. False allegations
      3. Win/loose instead of a win-win
   5. Lack of accountability
      1. Minimal recourse for bad legal representation
      2. No recourse if disagree with judge’s decision or have issues with the judge
      3. Minimal accountability for mothers if not following parenting plan
      4. No real enforcement of the parenting plan
   6. Minimal resources for men
      1. Minimal legal aid
      2. Less than 10 shelters for male headed families without mothers
      3. Even fewer abuse shelters

# Significance

This study will contribute to the gap in research about PA /CCP by identifying the targeted fathers’ perspective, lived experiences, and coping skills as well as help clarify colloquial definitions and understanding of PA/CCP.

# Research Questions

RQ1: How do non-custodial, targeted fathers experiencing PA/CCP define PA/CCP?

RQ2: How do non-custodial, targeted fathers describe their experiences of PA/CCP?

RQ3: How do non-custodial, targeted fathers experiencing PA/CCP describe their coping skills?

# Research Methodology

This study will utilize a qualitative methodology because research questions will be answered through inductive coding and exploratory thematic analysis. It will follow a case study approach during the data collection and discovery process. The participants will share their experiences through interviews with interview questions that have been vetted and verified through field testing with subject matter experts. The data will be compiled to discover themes, commonalities, outliers, and other various notable findings.

# Theoretical/Conceptual Framework

This study is framed by Bowen’s Family Systems Theory because this theory identifies the different ways individual family members react and behave based on the attitudes, behaviors, and choices of others within the family (Hall, 2016).

# Instrumentation

Researcher-developed and field-tested interview protocol (qualitative)...

This study will utilize a field-tested researcher-developed interview protocol validated by feedback from 5-7 subject matter experts.

Interview Question 1: What color is the sky? (RQ1)

Approximately 10 open-ended questions (aim for about 60 minutes in length)

# Research Design

Basic Qualitative: explore emergent themes from open-ended participant responses (qualitative, inductive)

This qualitative study will utilize a basic qualitative design because it will explore perceptions and lived experiences of parental alienation (PA) and custodial contact problems (CCP) among non-custodial fathers.

# Population and Sampling

The target population for this study will be non-custodial fathers who are experiencing or have experienced PA/CCP in the United States. Snowball sampling will be utilized on social media platforms. The sample size will be 15-20 participants meeting the inclusion criteria. Inclusion criteria are being a non-custodial father experiencing custodial contact problems within the past five years.

# Data Analysis Plan

Qualitative:

This study will utilize manual coding and Creswell and Poth’s Data Analysis Spiral for data analysis: Step One: Managing and organizing the data (data preparation), Step Two: Reading and memoing emergent ideas, Step Three: Describing and classifying codes into themes, Step Four: Developing and assessing interpretations, Step Five: Representing and visualizing the data.

References

Hall, M. C. (2016). *The Bowen Family Theory and its uses: Theoretical perspectives*. International Psychotherapy Institute. https://www.freepsychotherapybooks.org/ebook/theoretical-perspectives/

Farrell, W., & Gray, J. (2018). *The boy crisis*. BenBella Books.