

Response to "Parental Alienation Primer for Advocates"

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The National Center to Advance Peace recently published a paper entitled, "Parental Alienation Primer for Advocates." The primer is a discreditable attack on the phenomenon of parental alienation and the reunification programs relied upon by the Courts for remedy.

Virtually all opinions and recommendations in the primer should be immediately dismissed due to lack of merit. The lack merit includes misinformation and disinformation that is based upon factual errors; logical fallacies; and uncorroborated, biased beliefs.

If the discreditable recommendations in this primer are implemented, the result will

perpetuate the profound harm to alienated children from parental alienation.

Here you will read the discreditable bases for the authors' opinions and how alienated children will be profoundly harmed if the authors' recommendations are implemented.

Definition of Relevant Terms

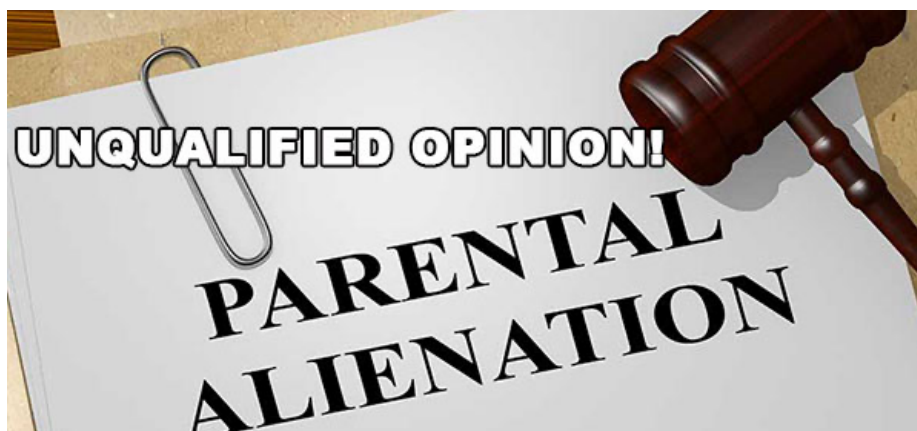
- Factual errors: A falsehood – something that is just not true.
- Logical fallacies: An error in reasoning designed to deceive.
- Belief system: A psychological state in which opinions may not be formed by reason or critical thinking. (A belief requires neutral corroboration before it can claim merit).
- Bias: A typically unfair prejudice that is for or against something.



The Authors Lack Credentials and Training in Parental Alienation

The authors of this primer lack training, education, and experience in parental alienation and in the Court-ordered reunification programs they criticize. They are not qualified to offer credible opinions on these matters.

The authors would be unable – and have been unable – to pass the rigid voir dire examination on parental alienation that my colleagues and I have passed multiple times. Unlike my colleagues and I, the authors and their cited authorities would not be deemed by the Court to be expert witnesses on these matters.



The authors have not provided documentation that they are licensed mental health clinicians in any mental health discipline – let alone in the specialized discipline of family therapy.

The authors have further not provided documentation of the highly specialized training, education, and experience needed to become a specialist in the sub-specialty of parental alienation within the specialized discipline of family therapy.

Unqualified critics should not be given credibility for their opinions about parental alienation. The authors of this paper appear to be engaging in unethical behavior by practicing outside of their area in expertise in that they are offering opinions about parental alienation.

FURTHER READING: [Parental Alienation -Truth Revealed by an Expert](#)

The Authors Lack First-Hand Experience With Alienated Parents & Alienated Children

None of the authors, to my knowledge, have interviewed a single alienated child among the overwhelming number who had had successful reunifications in the treatment programs these authors criticize.

None of the authors have, themselves, assessed or treated an alienated child – let alone a sufficient number to have acquired pattern recognition for an alienated child.

These authors are therefore unqualified to criticize therapists who have been deemed by the Courts to have acquired the status of “specialists” in alienation and in these successful reunification programs.

The authors have not interviewed for their perspective any alienated parents who had participated in the reunification programs they criticize.

These alienated parents would have reported very positive opinions of and satisfactory experiences with the reunification programs in which they had participated.

The authors have therefore also violated the clinical axiom to consider the “total clinical picture” – which means to evaluate the clinical condition in its historical context. This axiom is essential to making accurate clinical findings.

The authors have not reported the findings of the Courts regarding the alienation cases that the Courts had referred to reunification programs.

The Courts’ findings were that the alienating parent was an abusive parent and the alienated parent was a safe, protective parent. This is another example of “confirmation

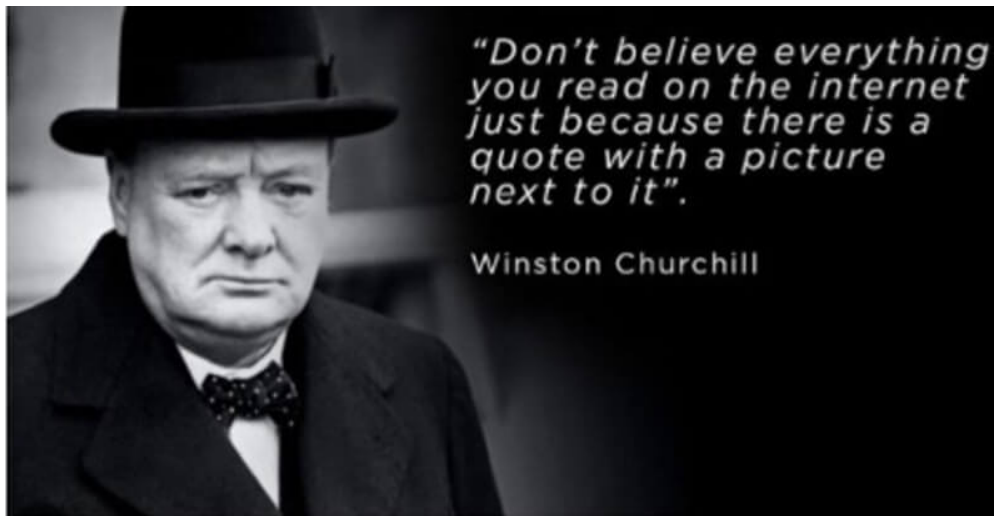
bias."

In rendering the opinions in this primer, the authors have committed "confirmation bias" and have violated the mandatory clinical axiom to "consider the total clinical picture."

FURTHER READING: [Legendary Steven G. Miller, MD on Parental Alienation](#)

Relying Upon Unqualified Authorities

The authors rely upon the discredited, scant research by Meir and Mercer. Meir and Mercer are also not licensed clinicians and have not had first-hand interactions and experiences with alienated parents and with the many alienated children who successfully reunited with their alienated parent in one of the Court-ordered reunification programs.



APPEAL TO FALSE AUTHORITY

FURTHER READING: [Critiques of the Critics](#)

Attacking the Signifier Does Not Discredit the Signified

The arguments that the authors make in this paper are calculated, self-serving attempts to deceive. A key example of the deception is to erroneously equate the “signified” with the “signifier” and then attack the “signifier.” The “signifier” and the “signified” are not the same.

The authors have committed the “straw man fallacy,” by presenting a distorted version of the argument and then attack that version instead of the original.

The “signifier” is a theoretical concept- a symbol, label, or sign that denotes something. What a signifier denotes is the “signified” – something that is concrete or observable – such an object, behavior, phenomenon, etc.

Labels (signifiers) change over time while the phenomenon denoted (the signified) remains the same.

SIGNIFIER	SIGNIFIED 1	SIGNIFIED 2
“CHILD”		Happy Adorable Innocent

Consider, for example, the mental health disorder labeled “post-traumatic stress disorder” (PTSD). This disorder was born out of the experiences of Civil War soldiers who had become traumatized on the battlefield.

This disorder, however, was not labeled PTSD until 100+ years later, when it was accepted into the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) in 1980.

Before acceptance into the DSM labeled "PTSD", it had gone by various prior signifiers. These various signifiers were "homesickness" "nostalgia," "battle fatigue," "soldier's heart," "irritable heart," and more.

The label (or signifier) history of the phenomenon of parental alienation (the signified) is analogous to the history of PTSD labels (or signifiers). For more than 200 years, phenomenon of parental alienation has been recognized in both psychotherapy and jurisprudence – by various other signifiers.

The relationship between the signifier and signified is an arbitrary relationship: there is no logical connection between them. Signifiers merely serve to establish a common terminology for identification purposes.

The phenomenon now labeled parental alienation could be changed to "meatballs and spaghetti" as long as that label becomes a commonly accepted signifier for the phenomenon of parental alienation.

Note that the authors of the primer do not provide a definition of parental alienation as it is defined in the scientific or clinical literature. Nor do the authors provide a reasonably accurate and complete definition of parental alienation.

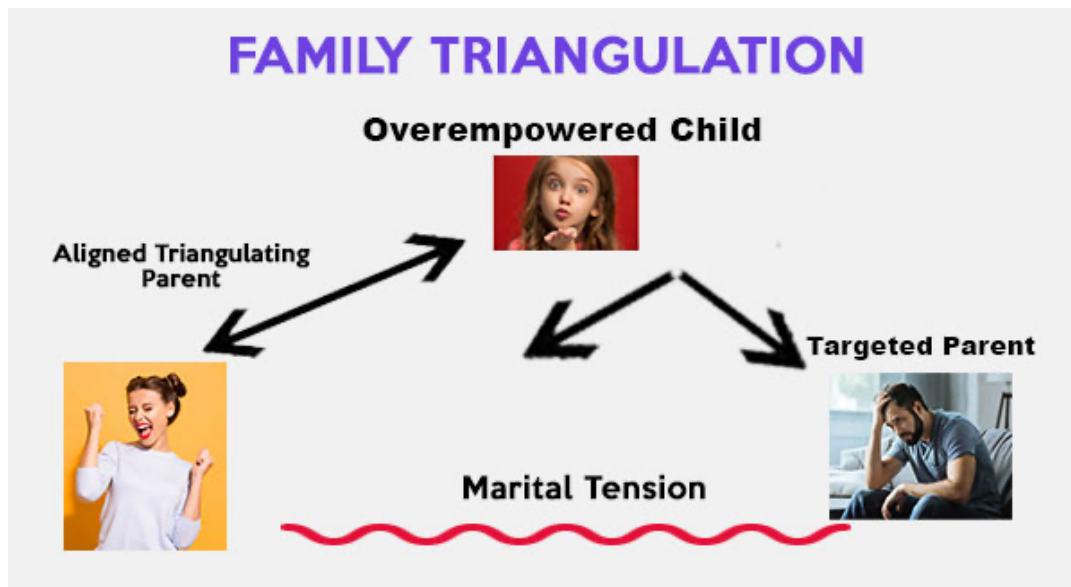
This is intentional on their part. It is easy to criticize what one does not define with generally recognized terminology. Here, the authors have committed the logical fallacy known as the "straw man fallacy."

FURTHER READING: [Understanding Parental Alienation Syndrome, Parental Alienation, and the DSM-5](#)

The Phenomenon of Parental Alienation in Family Psychotherapy

The phenomenon of parental alienation has been recognized in the psychiatric community at least as early as the 1950s. The phenomenon (the signified) was then labeled "triangulation" (the signifier) by the child psychiatrists who founded the family therapy movement.

Triangulation spawned the birth of the family therapy movement in the 1950s when its founding child psychiatrists determined that the psychosis in their child patients had been caused by the family phenomenon they subsequently labeled "triangulation."



Salvador Minuchin, Child Psychiatrist – The Preemptive Founder of the Family Therapy Movement – on Triangulation

Dr. Minuchin (1978)

"In triangulation and parent-child coalitions, the spouse dyad is frankly split in opposition or in conflict, and the child is openly pressed to ally with one parent against the other. In triangulation, the child is put in such a position that she cannot express herself without siding with one parent against the other. In a parent-child coalition, the child tends to move into a stable coalition with one parent against the other." (p. 33)

Dr. Minuchin (1972):

"The rigid triangle can also take the form of a stable coalition. One of the parents joins with the child in a rigidly bounded cross-generational coalition against the other parent....Whenever the child sides with one, he is automatically defined as attacking the other."

Harm to Children From Triangulation

Dr. Minuchin (1981):

"When they must function as autonomous entities, they may face a serious crisis. When the children reach late adolescence and must begin to separate from the family, psychotic breaks and psychosomatic illness can occur." (P. 142.)



Murray Bowen, Child Psychiatrist, on Harm to Children From Triangulation

Dr. Murray Bowen was a colleague of Dr. Minuchin's and a co-founder of the family therapy movement. Dr. Bowen was extremely concerned with how family triangulation causes psychosis in children. Dr. Bowen therefore hospitalized a child's entire nuclear family whenever he hospitalized his child patient.

Dr. Bowen (1978):

"As patterns repeat and repeat in a triangle, the people come to have fixed roles in relation to each other. The best example of this is the father-mother-child triangle. Patterns vary, but one of the most common is the basic tension between the parents....

The mother wins over the child, who moves another step closer toward chronic functional impairment. The pattern is described as the family projection process. Families replay the same triangular game over and over for years, as though the winner were in doubt, but the final result is always the same."

Jay Haley, Family Therapist, on the "Perverse Triangle" and Its Harm to Children

Family therapist, Jay Haley, trained with Dr. Minuchin and was a co-founder of the family therapy movement. He is recognized for describing the severe pathology produced in children from family triangulation.

Jay Haley (1990):

"The people responding to each other in the triangle are not peers, but one of them is of a different generation from the other two... In the process of their interaction together, the person of one generation forms a coalition with the person of the other generation against his peer.

By "coalition" is meant a process of joint action which is *against* the third person... The coalition between the two persons is denied. That is, there is certain behavior which indicates a coalition which, when it is queried, will be denied as a coalition...

In essence, the perverse triangle is one in which the separation of generations is breached in a covert way. When this occurs as a repetitive pattern, the system will be pathological...

A parent-child coalition not only undermines the authority of the other parent but makes the authority of the favoring parent dependent upon support from the child." (pp. 31-48)

FURTHER READING: [Parental Alienation and Child Psychological Abuse in the DSM-5-TR](#)

Some of the Pre-Eminent Founders of the Family Therapy Movement – Beginning in 1950

- Salvador Minuchin
- Nathan Ackerman
- Gregory Bateson
- Don Jackson
- Milton Erickson
- Carl Whitaker
- Murray Bowen
- Ivan Boszormenyi-Nagy
- Jay Haley
- Virginia Satir
- Maurizio Andolfi
- Cloe Madanes
- Marcella De Nichillo
- The Palo Alto Group
- The Milan School
- Lynn Hoffman

Parental Alienation in Judicial History

The dynamics occurring in the phenomenon of parental alienation go back more than 200 years. (Bernet, 2010 *Parental Alienation, the DSM-5, and the ICD11*; Lorandos & Bernet, 2020, *Parental Alienation: Science and Law*).

Demosthenes Lorandos(2020):

"This study was designed to examine the extent to which courts in the United States have found the concept of parental alienation material, probative, relevant and admissible. Thirty-four years of cases were found with a WESTLAW query and analyzed. Cases were selected for study only if the record reflected that a judge or an independent expert found the concept of parental alienation to be of value in the litigation.

Results illustrate increasing awareness of the concept and document its admissibility in every one of the United States. The numbers, sex of the alienating parent and prevalence of significant custody changes are discussed. Limitations inherent in this form of quantitative analysis are also discussed with recommendations for future research." (abstract introduction)



"I regard parental manipulation of children, of which I distressingly see an enormous amount, as exceptionally harmful"

The Honourable Lady Justice Parker
High Court Family Division

HELP US PLEASE!

The graphic features a quote from The Honourable Lady Justice Parker, a judge from the High Court Family Division. The quote is in italics and is followed by the text "HELP US PLEASE!" in bold. To the right of the text is a photograph of a young boy with blonde hair, wearing a light green shirt, crying and leaning over a metal railing outdoors.

"In the thirty-four years since the term PAS was first introduced and then later reformulated, trial and appellate courts across the United States have found the construct PA to be material, probative, relevant to their tasks, admissible, and worthy of discussion, as they have grappled with emotionally abusive parents and damaged children.

Review of the thousands of opinions located by the query reveals that courts understand that there is a distinction between "hen one parent says negative and disparaging things about the other parent to the child," and when an aggressor parent "engage in behavior designed to sabotage the child's relationship with the victim parent.

"Hundreds of opinions illustrating courts confronting "unreasonable negative feelings and beliefs (such as anger, hatred, rejection, and/or fear) toward a parent that are significantly disproportionate to the

child's actual experience with that parent," appellate courts in the United States are having an increase in PA cases and, for the most part, identify the gender of the alienating parent." (p, 330).

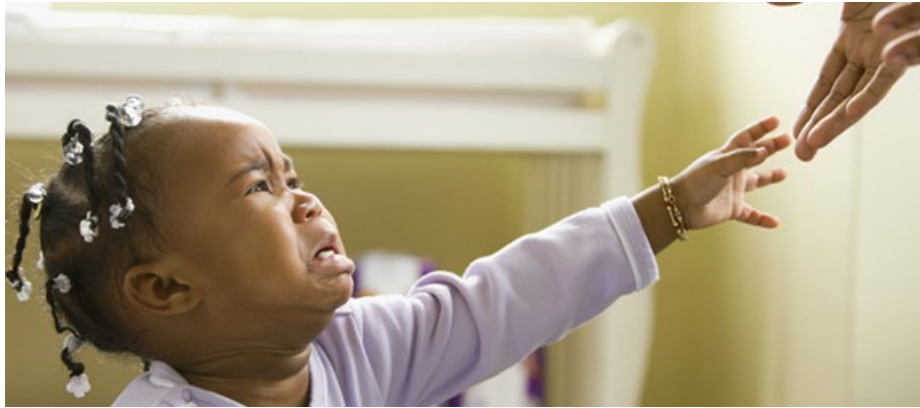
FURTHER READING: [Parental Alienation in US Courts 1985-2018](#)

The Phenomenon of Parental Alienation Has Gone by Many Signifiers

The various signifiers for parental alienation are found in the clinical and legal literature and on the books in all 50 states. These signifiers include but are not limited to:

- Restrictive gatekeeping.
- Unjustified gatekeeping.
- Selfish gatekeeping.
- One parent undermining the relationship between the other parent and their child absent a protective reason.
- Violating Court orders for the other parent's parenting time and parental rights and making the child complicit.
- Failure to support the child's relationship with the other parent absent a protective reason.
- Child psychological abuse – in the DSM-5-TR.
- Child affected by parental relationship distress – in the DSM-5-TR.
- Parent-child relationship problem – in the DSM-5-TR.
- High emotion level in the family – in the DSM-5-TR.
 - domestic violence of child by alienating parent.
 - domestic violence by proxy of child by alienating parent.
- Child or adolescent antisocial behavior – in the DSM-5-TR.

- Grounds for transfer of custody e. g. *Young v. Young*: 212 A.D.2d 114; 628 N.Y.S.2d 957
- Not in the child's best interest – *Maloney v. Maloney*, 208 AD2d 603, 603–604. (New York).



No one can credibly argue that, in the entire history of custody jurisprudence, not a single case involved a parent who had unjustifiably turned the child against the other parent. **Indeed, the authors of this article acknowledge that the dynamic currently signified with the label of “parental alienation” does occur.**

The Authors' Hypocritical Contradiction Undermines Their Argument Denying the Existence of Parental Alienation



The authors state:

"While some parents do engage in such behavior there is little evidence that it actually changes children's attitudes toward the other parent nor that this alone causes long-term harms."

Ignoring the Evidence for the Suggestibility of Children and Programming by an Alienating Parent

In the above statement, the authors of this primer acknowledge that PA does occur at least in some cases. Now the authors are faced with their own self-contradictory comment that undermines their denial of parental alienation. The authors attempt to rehabilitate their contradictory belief system about the existence of alienation by engaging in outright falsehoods.

The authors' lame effort to rehabilitate their contradictory comments about alienation ignores the wealth of research and clinical literature documenting how easily parents can turn their children against the other parent.

I cite here just one research study about the "brainwashing" effectiveness of alienating

parents to gain their children's allegiance to defame and dismiss the other parent. This study is found in a 2017 book published by the American Bar Association.

This book, entitled *Children Held Hostage: Identifying Brainwashed Children, Presenting a Case and Crafting Solutions*, makes the case that the "programming/brainwashing" in alienation is analogous to the programming/brainwashing in a cult.



The authors, psychologist, Stanley Clawar; and clinical social worker, Brynne Rivlin, followed, for 30 years, 1000 children of contentious parental conflict – 700 cases being custody disputes. The authors found that some degree of "brainwashing/programming" by one parent against the other parent occurred in 86% of the cases – that is 860 children out of 1000!

This barely scratches the surface on the suggestibility of children and successful programming by alienating parents. I have listed some of these references at the end of this article.

The Authors' Indifference to Child Abuse



The authors' final point in their statement above is shocking for their cavalier dismissal of alienation because "nor that this alone causes long-term harms" .

*To dismiss alienation because it may merely **contribute** to "long-term harms" to children utterly misses the standards for child protection. For those who claim to be concerned about children, such as the authors of this primer, PA must be recognized for child abuse that it is.*

The rhetorical, pointless debate as to whether the phenomenon of alienation exists, how often it occurs, and the degree of the child abuse that it causes, is a distraction from the court's attention to the issue that really matters.

The issue that really matters to the Court is to determine if parental alienation is occurring in the matter at bar, and, if so, how to implement timely and effective remedy.

FURTHER READING: [Child Maltreatment, Parental Alienation, and the Science of Abuse](#)

The focus for the court in a case when alienation is alleged should be whether the evidence in the case rules in alienation as the cause of the child's rejection of a

parent.

The Specious Anti-Syndrome Claim About PAS



The erroneous anti-syndrome claim about PAS that is popularly perpetuated is based upon Kelly and Johnston (2001) deceptively distorted DSM syndrome definition. They made this distorted definition in their article entitled, "The Alienated Child: A Reformulation of Parental Alienation Syndrome."

Here is the true DSM syndrome definition:

"A grouping of signs and symptoms, based on their frequent co-occurrence that may suggest a common underlying pathogenesis, course, familial pattern, or treatment selection." (p.830)

Here is Kelly and Johnston's distorted DSM syndrome definition:

"Because there is no "commonly recognized, or empirically verified pathogenesis, course, familial pattern, or treatment selection" of the problem of PAS, it cannot be properly considered a diagnostic syndrome of the American Psychiatric Association." (p. 249)

What Kelly and Johnston claim to be the necessary criteria of the DSM syndrome definition is false—so utterly false that it meaningfully misrepresents the definition of a syndrome. Each factor subsequent to the word “may” is clearly optional – but Kelly and Johnston erroneously claim the factors are required criteria.

FURTHER READING: [Understanding Parental Alienation Syndrome and the DSM-5](#)

Gardner’s 8 Symptoms of an Alienated Child Meet the DSM and Medical Definition of a Syndrome

The frequency of the co-occurrence of Gardner’s eight manifestations in an alienated child indisputably meet the DSM criteria of a syndrome.

The manifestations do not appear in non-alienated children of divorce. They do not appear in severely physically abused children, who, if any child would reject a parent, it would be severely abused children.

Replicated studies of Gardner’s manifestations confirm their exceedingly low error rate to identify an alienated child and to rule out for non-alienated children of parental separation and divorce.

Cognitive scientist and physician, Steven Miller, MD, rendered the opinion that the manifestations have an error rate of <1%.

FURTHER READING: [Gardner’s Manifestations – <1% error rate by Steven Miller, MD](#)

FURTHER READING: [The Specious Anti-Syndrome Claim about Parental Alienation Syndrome](#)

Scientific Acceptance of Parental Alienation in the Psychiatric & Scientific Communities



The fallacious claim that the DSM-5 task force rejected the concept of PA is emphatically denied by two child psychiatrists who had contributed to the family relational section of the DSM-5. These contributors, Marianne Wamboldt, MD, and William Narrow, MD, affirmed the psychiatric community's acceptance of parental alienation in their 2017 article published in the Journal of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry.

This peer-reviewed article entitled, "Child Affected by Parental Relationship Distress" (CAPRD), was co-authored by my colleague, child psychiatrist, William Bernet, and affirmed that parental alienation, by this signifier, to be an example of CAPRD.

Consider what these child psychiatrists stated in this article:

"When the DSM-5 was in development, there was a proposal to include parental alienation disorder as a new diagnosis. In response, members of the DSM-5 Task Force never said that they doubted the reality or the importance of parental alienation. However, they concluded that parental alienation did not meet the standard definition of a mental disorder, that is, "the requirement that a disorder exists as an internal condition residing within an individual". Task Force members said that parental alienation should be

considered an example of a relational problem because it involves a disturbance in the child's relationship with one or both parents.

Children who experience parental alienation almost always fulfill the definition for CAPRD; that is, the child is affected by conflict between the parents, with the result of forming an enmeshed relationship with one parent and rejecting a relationship with the other parent. Depending on the focus of clinical attention, other DSM-5 conditions may be assigned in cases of parental alienation. If the focus of clinical attention is on the impaired relationship between the child and the target parent, the term "paren-child relational problem" may be used. If the focus of clinical attention is on the parent who caused the child's parental alienation through manipulation and indoctrination, the term "child psychological abuse" may be used." (p. 575)

These three family relational problems are cited in Kaplan and Sadock's Comprehensive Textbook of Psychiatry – the basic textbook of psychiatry. Parental alienation – by that signifier -is listed here under the section entitled "child psychological abuse."

FURTHER READING: [*Child Affected by Parental Relationship Distress \(CAPRD\)*](#)

I have only scratched the surface of parental alienation's recognition in the scientific and psychiatric communities. Please refer to the reference list for some additional – but hardly all – of these references.

Parental alienation, a family phenomenon, has received wide acceptance in the scientific and psychiatric communities. A contemporaneous example of this acceptance is Kaplan and Sadock's Comprehensive Textbook of Psychiatry – the basic textbook relied by psychiatrists throughout their practices.

Further Reading: [*Kaplan and Sadock's Comprehensive Textbook on Psychiatry*](#)

[*Domestic Violence & Unjustified Reasons for Denying Parental Alienation*](#)

Another logical fallacy that the authors of this primer rely upon to deny the phenomenon of alienation is known as “appeal to the consequent.”

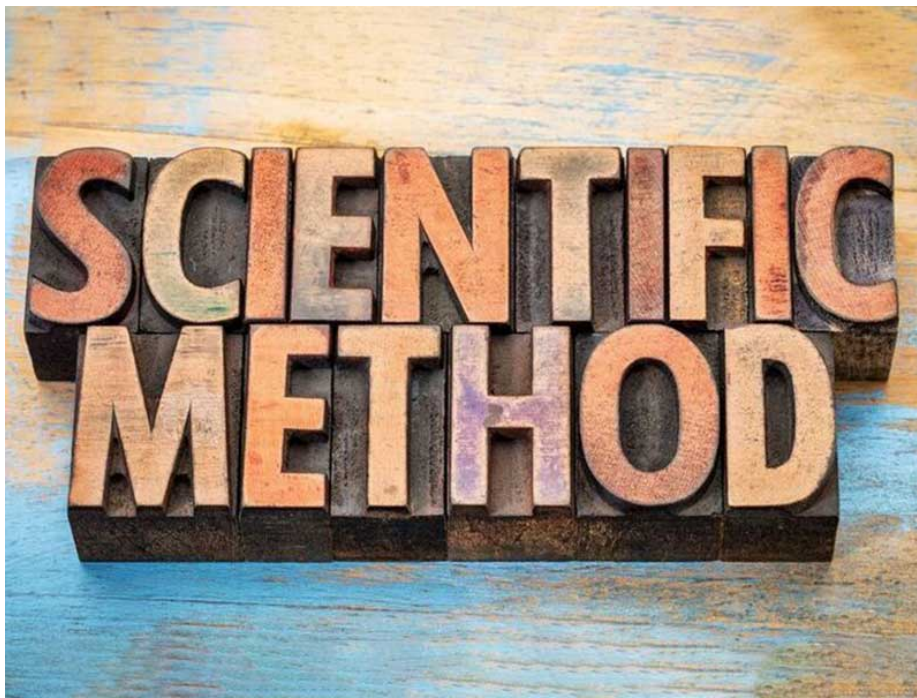
The logical fallacy of “appeal to the consequent” means that the truth of a statement or hypothesis is judged on the basis of its potential for negative/undesirable consequences or positive/desirable consequences. Evidence for the statement itself is not considered.

By implementing medical treatment according to the logical fallacy of “appeal to the consequent,” chemotherapy would be banned because its consequences of nausea and hair loss are undesirable.

What consequence do the authors of this primer fear if parental alienation is recognized in the courts? The consequence they fear is that at least some domestic violence (DV) perpetrators will play the “alienation defense card” as a means to be acquitted of their heinous and unpardonable acts. The authors claim that fathers who have been accused of abuse will attempt to be exonerated by falsely claiming that the mother is engaging in alienation.

I do not doubt that some domestic violence perpetrators do play the DV defense card. I consider DV to be a heinous, unjustifiable behavior under any circumstances. But the appropriate response is to invoke science to rule in DV. To reject parental alienation carte blanche perpetuates the child abuse being committed by the alienating parent and fails to protect alienated children from further harm.

*Professionals who work in parental alienation support all help and accommodations for victims of domestic violence and child abuse allegations **that have been determined to be credible by the scientific method to make clinical findings.***



But this of course is the rub – establishing the validity of the DV and child abuse allegations. It is not sufficient to rely only upon the self-reporting of alienating mothers who have a vested interest in accusing the fathers of child abuse and DV in order to gain an upper hand in custody proceedings. It is also not sufficient to rely upon the word of brainwashed alienated children.

False allegations of child abuse and DV occur to a high degree in severe cases of alienation. Sex abuse allegations are also frequently made even though research shows that the prevalence of sex abuse incidents in contentious custody cases are less than 2% while false allegations may be as high as 35%.

The profound harm to children from believing a false sex abuse incident by a parent is equal to the same psychological harm as if the abuse had actually occurred. This means that these children are subject to the same risk factors for PTSD and other severe psychiatric symptoms as if the abuse had actually occurred. This is all the more reason that sex abuse allegations must be subjected to verification by the scientific method to make clinical findings.

Alienating parents who make knowingly false child sexual abuse allegations against the

other parent, brainwash their children to believe the allegations, and manipulate their children to confirm or create false sex abuse allegations against their alienated parent are inflicting unspeakable child abuse upon their children.

We also challenge the authors of this primer to provide equal support and accommodations for alienated fathers – many of whom are DV victims by their former partners. The DV often includes physical abuse as well as emotional abuse. It is more widespread than reported as alienated fathers are reluctant, out of embarrassment, to come forth with their victimization.

FURTHER READING: [*Child Incest Occurring in Custody Cases – <2% & False Allegations as High as 35%*](#)

Science provides the method to rule in domestic violence just as science provides the method to rule in parental alienation. It is not an either-or situation to protect women or to protect children. Science enables us to do both.

FURTHER READING: [*Assessing Parental Alienation Using the Scientific Method*](#)

Domestic Violence and Domestic Violence by Proxy Committed by Alienating Parents

The authors of the primer are engaging in selective attention regarding incidents of domestic violence and domestic violence by proxy. They are ignoring that these behaviors are being committed by both alienating mothers and alienating fathers in parental alienation cases.

As discussed below, the authors of the primer are ignoring the plight of alienated mothers, who are victims of DV by proxy by their alienated sons. Alienated sons are

emotionally and physically assaulting their alienated mothers at the orchestration of their alienating fathers.

It is outside the focus of this article to discuss in detail the DV and DV by proxy being committed by alienating parents. My colleagues and I have written articles and undertaken research studies specifically focused on this topic. The articles and research are posted on my website and here below.

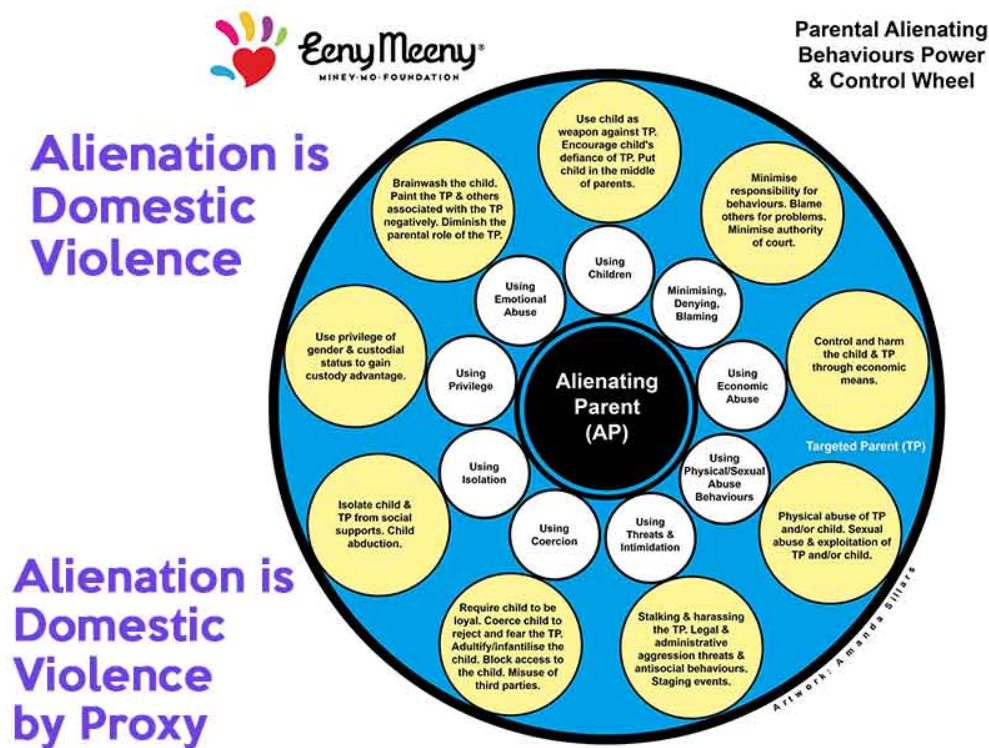


But just briefly, I point out here that alienating parents must use extreme coercive control behaviors to manipulate their children to override the child's powerful survival instinct to have and need a parent. This results in alienated children hurting, defying, emotionally abusing, and rejecting their alienated parent. These behaviors meet the criteria of DV.

When alienating parents manipulate their children to physically assault their alienated parent, this meets the criteria of domestic violence by proxy.

Alienating parents are sowing the seeds of an antisocial personality disorder in their alienated children. I reproduce here the DV power and control wheel occurring in alienation and which mimics the Duluth power and control wheel that DV groups rely

upon.



FURTHER READING: *Alienating Parents Are Raising Antisocial Kids*

The Authors' Erroneous Claim of Money-Aggrandizement

The authors' cruelest erroneous claim is that the professionals who work in parental alienation are indifferent to child abuse and DV and are instead motivated by money.

The basis for the erroneous claims that my colleagues and I are motivated solely by money is the ad **hominem logical fallacy** – which is engaging in character assassination when your argument lacks evidence.

Like all professionals, we are compensated commensurately our work. Compensation is for the extensive education and experience that is required first for our degrees and then for our licenses. Compensation is also for ongoing years of study, training, experience, collaboration with other specialists. Compensation is for the preparation of the continuing

education credits regarding parental alienation that we provide to judges, lawyers, mental health practitioners, and other professionals who intervene in child welfare.

The authors have committed the logical fallacies of “ad hominem attacks” and “appeal to emotion.”

FURTHER READING: [*Lies Perpetuated by the Alienating Parents’ Industry*](#)

Dearth of Quality Evidence for the Claim that Parental Alienation Disadvantages and Discriminates Against Mothers

The authors of this primer assert the factual error that parental alienation was manufactured by child psychiatrist, Richard Gardner, to “discredit mothers’ and children’s abuse claims against fathers.”

Dr. Gardner did not ever use parental alienation for this purpose – which is why those who make this claim fail to reference a single statement by Dr. Gardner to this effect. Dr. Gardner was an avid protector of children. That is why he was so concerned about the harm children suffer from parental alienation.

*Parental alienation has never been used by parental alienation specialists to **uncritically** discredit allegations of abuse by alienating mothers, alienating fathers, and alienated children. No specialist in alienation would make a finding for alienation if abusive behavior by the rejected parent is confirmed by the **scientific method to make clinical findings**.*

By definition, a case cannot be one of alienation if the rejected parent is abusive or seriously neglectful.

The authors also assert the factual error that mother's are discriminated against and are disadvantaged in court proceedings when alienation is alleged. The authors falsely assert that mothers are "disbelieved and lose custody even more often when they are alleging child physical or sexual abuse."

The "evidence" that the authors of this primer provide for their claim of parental alienation's discrimination against mothers is based upon one questionable study by Joan Meir.

The study has not been replicated and has been debunked for manipulation of data on several levels. See the critiques below by child psychiatrist, William Bernet, and research psychologist, Jennifer Harman of Meir's study.

Also see the critiques below of Joan Mercer's "studies" of her unsubstantiated claims that alienation disadvantages and discriminates against mothers.

The "Red Herring" & "Appeal to Emotion" & "Appeal to Intuition" Logical Fallacies

The authors claim that domestic violence is not properly recognized or addressed when parental alienation is alleged in cases. They erroneously claim that judges and professionals do not appreciate or recognize the horrific harm to children who are caught up in these abusive family dynamics.

*The authors are diverting attention from the key issue that is in play when DV and child abuse are alleged. **The real issue is the validity of the allegations. The real issue is not the allegations themselves.** By diverting the Court's attention from validity of the allegation to merely the unproven allegation itself, the authors are engaging in the "red herring," "appeal to emotion," and "appeal to intuition" logical fallacies.*

These logical fallacy are a deceptive diversion from the real issue. The real issue is how to

scientifically assess for merit the allegations of child abuse and DV – that are, to repeat, frequently falsely alleged in alienation cases.

The authors are typically violating the clinical axiom to “use proper reasoning,” which requires that intuitive reasoning be corroborated with analytical reasoning. DV workers typically fail to verify the mother’s self-reporting with neutral, corroborative evidence. In other words, the mother’s reporting is intuitively accepted, *prima facie*, that she is reporting truthfully and accurately.

This is also the approach to the reporting of brainwashed children – accept their *prima facie* reporting without neutral corroboration.

The authors fail to consider the clinical literature and the evidence-based practices of specialists in alienation that affirm the exceedingly high rate of false DV and child abuse allegations made by severely alienating parents.

FURTHER READING: [Kayden’s Law](#), [Kyra’s Law](#), [Piqui’s Law](#) – Not a Child’s Best Interest

Parental Alienation is an Equal Opportunity Victimizer

Parental alienation is an equal opportunity victimizer. Alienated mothers comprise 50% of my caseload and of many of my colleagues’ caseloads.



Alienated mothers, themselves, are victims of domestic violence by proxy. They are being routinely physically battered by their sons – and sometimes by their daughters – at the behest of alienating fathers.

Alienated mothers feel abandoned by the groups that intervene to protect women from DV.

FURTHER READING: [No Evidence that PA Discriminates Against Mothers](#)

What Alienated Mothers Want From Domestic Violence Professionals

Alienated mothers wish for their sons to get the desperate help they need to relinquish their antisocial, battering behaviors and have the expectation for becoming law-abiding, socially responsible adults.

Alienated mothers are desperately attempting to save their physically violent sons from themselves and from the influence by their alienating fathers.

Alienated mothers fear that if their sons do not get preventive help in their youth, they will grow up to be the next generation of perpetrators of DV in their intimate relationships.



Alienated Mothers' Cry for Help for Their Abusive Sons & Daughters

The concerns of alienated mothers are screaming for remedy.

By denying the very real existence of parental alienation, a generation of potential adult DV perpetrators is being promoted and produced – however unintended – by the very professionals committed to end DV. These include the authors of this primer.

It is incomprehensible to me that so many of these professionals, who have made the protection of women their life's work, yet ignore the potential conflagration of minor boys – and even daughters – becoming adult DV perpetrators.

Prevention of the perpetuation of DV begins with recognition that parental alienation is real, is abusive of mothers as well as of fathers, and is most of all abusive of alienated children for whom DV behaviors are being normalized by their alienating parents.

FURTHER READING: [Alienating Parents Are Causing Psychosomatic Symptoms in Their Kids Behaviors](#)

Urgent Need for Training About Domestic Violence

My colleagues and I agree with the authors of the primer that there is an urgent need for widespread and comprehensive training in domestic violence among all professionals who intervene in child welfare.

*The professionals who must partake in DV training **include** those who are working in DV prevention and treatment programs as well as the authors of this primer. They are equally lacking in a **sufficient** understanding of DV just as many professionals in the judicial and mental health systems are so lacking.*

Tragically for alienated children, the domestic violence and domestic violence by proxy inflicted upon children by their alienating parents are largely unrecognized or ignored by DV groups and the authors of this primer.

*Sadly for an entire generation of children, the DV groups and the authors of this primer are turning a blind eye to the horrific plight of alienated children. Alienated children are being **proficiently** trained and educated by their alienating parents to become adult DV perpetrators.*

What makes the DV and DV by proxy so exceedingly harmful to children is that alienating parents are planting the seeds in their children of an antisocial personality disorder. An antisocial personality disorder is a very serious, untreatable disorder that can become characterological as early as adolescence.

The Truth About Reunification Programs

The authors of this primer provide utterly false and deceptive information about reunification programs – beginning with the made-up name of “reunification camps.” The authors make utterly false claims that the programs are abusive of children and are ineffective.

The reunification programs that are relied upon by the courts to protect children and remedy the harm from alienation have undergone peer-reviewed research studies. Studies have found these reunifications programs to be safe and more than 95% effective in reuniting child with an unjustifiably rejected parent.

The fraction of the unsuccessful reunifications is because alienating parents had violated the Court-ordered no-contact period with their children.

The authors of this primer do not report the positive findings of these research studies on reunification programs.



Reunification programs work with only one family at time in a family or family-like setting.

The children participate in enjoyable activities commensurate with their ages.

The no-contact period between alienating parents and their children is ordered by the Court and is a protective removal from parents whom the court found to be abusive. The courts determine the length of the no-contact period and whether to extend it.

As with any other case of child abuse, the Court restores contact if and when the alienating parent relinquishes the child-abusive behaviors.



Childhood + Divorce Should Not Become Mental Illness

But Alienating Parents Do Exactly That

The authors of this primer do not have first-hand knowledge about the reunification programs they criticize. None of the therapists have been interviewed about their interventions. None of the alienated parents have been interviewed for their perspective on the therapy they had received. None of the overwhelming majority of alienated children who successfully reunited with their unreasonably rejected parent have been interviewed.

The authors make their criticisms of reunification programs based upon hearsay

reporting twice and thrice removed and in the absence of first-hand credible information.

FURTHER READING: [Reunification Camp Misinformation Harms Children](#)

Conclusion

The authors of this primer have provided no evidence for their egregiously erroneous claims about parental alienation and the Court-ordered reunification programs designed to heal alienated children.

On the other hand, overwhelming research and the clinical literature confirm profound harm to children from parental alienation – for a lifetime. The recommendations in this primer should be rejected.

Serious attention by the mental health and judicial communities must be given to protecting children from becoming alienated and helping the estimated 250,000 children who are currently being alienated.

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