

MISINFORMATION REGARDING PARENTAL ALIENATION – 2020

Article Containing Misinformation

Madelyn S. Milchman, Robert Geffner, & Joan S. Meier (2020). Ideology and rhetoric replace science and reason in some parental alienation literature and advocacy: A critique. *Family Court Review* 58(2):340–361. Full text: <https://doi.org/10.1111/fcre.12476>

Abstract: This article analyzes rhetorical strategies that are often used to legitimize classifying children’s parent rejection as “alienation,” conceived as a mental disorder or diagnosis. Use of evaluative labels or diagnoses instead of descriptions of behavioral functioning is problematic in child custody evaluations. We address Distorted Claims of consensus, Alienation Labeling, Renaming, Proof by Assertion, Misrepresenting Endorsement by Authorities, Reduction Ad Absurdum, and Ad Personam Attacks. Rhetoric distracts from the evidence and observable behaviors required to accurately classify mistreated/alienated children and protective/alienating parents. It creates an ideology that obfuscates the absence of and need for scientific validity studies; reliable prevalence data; non-conclusory assessment of parent–child relationship quality; empirical evidence testing the coaching hypothesis; and valid, objective evaluations of treatment programs. The article concludes with suggestions to improve dialogue between scholars in order to advance research and custody evaluations.

Article Refuting Misinformation

William Bernet (2020). Response to “Ideology and rhetoric replace science and reason in some parental alienation literature and advocacy: A critique,” by Milchman, Geffner, and Meier. *Family Court Review* 58(2):362–367. Full text: <https://doi.org/10.1111/fcre.12489>

Abstract: The author wrote an article, “Parental Alienation and Misinformation Proliferation,” for this Special Issue of *Family Court Review*, which is devoted to various aspects of parental alienation (PA). This short article is a response to the article by Milchman, Geffner, and Meier, which discussed my article and other contributions to the Special Issue. All of these articles represent an attempt by the Editors of the Special Issue to promote “dialogue” among writers who have different perspectives regarding parental alienation. In my view, this is a misguided endeavor, since the publication of cascading criminations, recriminations, and re-recriminations simply creates confusion and consternation for the readers of *Family Court Review*. This new article offers an alternative approach for creating constructive dialogue among PA-promoters and PA-detractors, that is, convene a face-to-face discussion of these individuals and encourage them to write an article together in which they jointly explain their various perspectives regarding PA.