

7/4/2023

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To the Honorable Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression:

I want to call to your attention a particular issue of misinformation that is rampant in the media and in legislation across the world. This misinformation promotes gender biases and causes much harm to women, men and children. I am referring to the misrepresentation concerning parental alienation theory.

Parental Alienation (PA) is defined as the efforts on the part of one parent (referred to as the preferred, favored, or alienating parent) to turn the child unjustifiably against the other parent (referred to as the rejected, disfavored, or alienated parent), through the use of parental alienation behaviors or strategies. The child may then add his/her own contributions to the deprecation and rejection of the alienated parent. Research has been published about PA in 10 languages as of December 2020. Hundreds of empirical studies have been conducted about various aspects of PA including its causes, diagnosis, long-term effects and treatment methods (see *Developmental Psychology and the Scientific Status of Parental Alienation*: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/dev0001404>). This research is published in prestigious academic journals. Research has demonstrated that PA affects both fathers and mothers, and sons and daughters.

In spite of PA's scientific foundation, there is core group of PA critics that disseminate misinformation about PA. They claim that PA doesn't really exist and that it is a legal defense that was invented by father's to deflect abuse allegations. These critics ignore relevant scientific research; engage in science denial techniques; and spread considerable misinformation and disinformation in the media and to legislative bodies. This attempt to present PA as a gender dynamic can cause fathers to lose contact with their children. Likewise, many women are alienated parents and they lose contact with their children if PA is explained as a tactic used by fathers to deflect allegations of abuse. Ultimately, the children lose out on a parent and can have long-term emotional damage. In essence, the critics of PA are creating a gender bias that harms all victims of PA.

These critics are primarily comprised of advocates from within the domestic violence industry. They are currently trying to get their platforms enacted into law in the USA and around the

world. Workgroups have been created in several states in the USA to study child custody issues and PA experts are regularly excluded from these workgroups (for example, see https://www.parentalalienationisreal.com/uploads/2/5/5/8/25587179/finalreport_workgroup_to_study_child_custody_court_proceedings_involving_child_abuse_or_domestic_violence.pdf). An international group of researchers recently wrote a critique of the watershed book of the PA critics (*Challenging Parental Alienation: New Directions for Professionals and Parents*). This critique (https://www.academia.edu/100339736/A_Comprehensive_Review_of_Misinformation_and_Other_Inaccuracies_in_Challenging_Parental_Alienation_New_Directions_for_Professionals_and_Parents) discovered literally hundreds of science denial techniques, blatant misquotations, nonexistent citations, plagiarism and considerable misinformation. This type of gender biased information is prevalent on websites, in social media and in the mainstream media as well. See for example the following:

- <https://www.alienationindustry.com/>
- <https://www.nationalsafeparents.org/> (This website mobilizes people to fight PA through legislation. It is filled with misinformation and ad hominem attacks)
- <https://www.facebook.com/onemomsbattle> (This website even tries to defame PA researchers and elected officials such as judges who accept the science of PA. It also encourages mothers to disobey court orders for reunification therapy and mobilizes protesters to stage protests outside of courthouses that are considering ordering reunification therapy.)
- <https://www.law.gwu.edu/national-family-violence-law-center>
- <https://twitter.com/JudicialCenter/status/1672391138043637760>
- <https://twitter.com/SheraFamily>
- <https://www.shera-research.com/search?query=parental+alienation>
- <http://www.leadershipcouncil.org/>

In addition, the campaign against PA has created another type of victim. In order to get media coverage and to get an emotional response from legislators, the PA critics have created “poster children” to dramatize the need for legislation to prevent domestic violence, child abuse, and murder. The pattern is to feature a child who was murdered by a father in that state and to name the law after the child. The mothers of the children are enlisted to testify at bill hearings and speak to the media. The cases are presented as violence by fathers. The legislation that they promote often has nothing to do with the featured case; and most likely, the new legislation would not have prevented the murder. Most of the cases have nothing to do with PA. The mothers are not aware that they are being used as a pawn to help the PA critics pass legislation.

Unfortunately, the United Nations has also contributed to this gender bias. The Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women recently presented a Report to the Human Rights Council which was primarily a diatribe against PA. The Report completely ignored the scientific research about PA and failed to cite any of the submissions that supported the reality of PA. It also failed to consult with any PA experts. This Special Rapporteur is not a scientist and does not have the credentials to rule on the validity of PA. She nevertheless declared in front of the Human Rights Council and later in a press conference that PA is pseudoscience. The critics of PA were quick to pick up on this and to disseminate it throughout the world.

The Report contained so much deliberate misinformation and disinformation, that an international group of researchers wrote an Analysis of the Report which exposes its flaws ([https://www.academia.edu/102761213/An Analysis of the Report by the Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women and Girls Its Causes and Consequences](https://www.academia.edu/102761213/An_Analysis_of_the_Report_by_the_Special_Rapporteur_on_Violence_against_Women_and_Girls_Its_Causes_and_Consequences)). Also, an international group of alienated parents, domestic violence groups, mental health professionals, researchers and more strongly protested this Report to the Human Rights Council and have called upon the HRC to reject the Report as academic fraud.

In response to these efforts to hold the Special Rapporteur on Violence to Women accountable for this gender biased Report, the critics of PA wrote a letter of counter protest to the Special Rapporteur (https://rackmancenter.com/en/collective-expert-academic-response-to-attempts-to-undermine-the-special-rapporteur-on-violence-against-women-and-girls-report-dated-13-april-2023-titled-custody-violence-against-women-and-violence-a/?fbclid=PAAbPU-0dOhvqrdaW62R8Cf5zALG3rhwP8gLQ6I_4lgkgOHkBiTtDLK1Wqo) which claims that proponents of PA are trying to silence opposition. The letter then brings further examples of how PA proponents are attempting to curtail freedom of expression. In a classic display of science denial techniques, this letter creates a grandiose conspiracy theory that even includes the prestigious academic journals that publish PA research. These critics do not attempt to address the misinformation that the Report contains; rather, they engage in further ad hominem attacks.

To date, the Human Rights Council has failed to make a response to the misinformation allegations concerning this Report. This silence has added fuel to the social media and mainstream media attacks against PA and is being used as an impetus to further anti PA legislation.

We strongly urge that the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression take notice of how these critics are trying to silence the voices of both women and men who are alienated parents. Likewise, please take note of how this gender biased agenda is rampant in all forms of media

and even in governmental bodies. In truth, the Human Rights Council should convene a panel of experts on PA to present a balanced picture about what PA really is and the dangers of not addressing this form of emotional child abuse. Parents and children of all genders request that you devote proper attention to the injustice that the misinformation about PA has caused in the ironic name of "gender bias". It is the critics of PA that are creating a detrimental gender bias. Please do your utmost to report this issue accurately to the Human Rights Council and to the nations of the world so that this gender biased agenda against PA can be addressed.

Yours,

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