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## **The Real Crisis of Parental Alienation and the Ongoing Defensive Tactics of Disinformation by Self-Promoting Deniers**

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On January 11, 2024, Reem Alsalem, the appointed UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women and Girls, hosted a webinar titled: UN Special Report on Parental Alienation and Implications for Canada. She was joined by four panelists, all of whom represent various organizations seeking to eradicate violence against females. This is a worthy pursuit and a goal fully supported by all experts of parental alienation (PA). However:

- the topic of this webinar was parental alienation, not violence against women and girls.
- Alsalem has no research or other expertise in parental alienation that I am aware of
- there were no parental alienation experts on the panel.
- though violence is perpetrated almost equally by women as men in Canada and the United States, there were no *violence against males* group panelists.

Consistent with their familiar false narrative, Alsalem and her panelists reinforced the myth that parental alienation allegations are made by abusive fathers/partners seeking to escape prosecution. The peer-reviewed, scholarly and abundant parental alienation literature concludes otherwise.

Harman, Giancarlo, Lorandos & Ludmer's (2023) *Gender and Child Custody Outcomes Across 16 Years of Judicial Decisions Regarding Abuse and Parental Alienation*, Children and Youth Services Review, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chilyouth.2023.10718> analyzed 500 Canadian trial level cases and found:

- only 10.9% of the 654 [abuse] allegations levied against alienated parents were founded or substantiated...this means that **90% of abuse allegations in cases of parental alienation were determined to be false or otherwise unsubstantiated.**
- **25 “abusive” alienated parents were mothers and 10 were fathers**, so the presumption that “abusive” alienated parents are mostly fathers is not reflected in these data... the base rate for these types of cases was very low (7.0%). Harman & Lorandos (2021) also found a low base rate of 7.9% using 967 U.S. appellate cases, so the two combined studies raise questions about how Meier et al. (2019), a prominent group of PA deniers, selected their cases, and how they obtained a large enough sample to statistically test their hypothesis.
- while **Meier et al. (2019) reported that mothers' allegations of abuse are discredited more often than fathers' allegations of abuse, neither Harman and Lorandos (2021) nor this data-set could replicate or substantiate that claim**
- replication studies **have not found support for Meier et al.'s (2019) argument that their data indicate there is “widespread gender bias in courts' handling of... abuse claims”** (p. 26).

Books such as *Gender and Domestic Violence: Contemporary Legal Practice and Intervention Reforms*, edited by Russell & Hamel (2022), Oxford. <https://doi.org/10.1093/med-psych/9780197564028.001.0001>, clearly indicate that although there has been progress, arrest and intervention policies continue to reflect the gender paradigm, framing domestic violence in terms of male perpetrators and female victims. The book includes scholarly research spanning more than thirty years, highlighting the dire need for criminal justice reform.

And the book, *Parental Alienation -Science and Law*, edited by Lorandos & Bernet (2020), Carles C. Thomas Pub., <https://www.amazon.com/Parental-Alienation-Science-Demosthenes-Lorandos/dp/0398093245>, details the scientific basis for testimony and legal decisions relating to parental alienation. Contributors to this book are mental health and legal experts.

These authors are not advocates; they are scientists. They do not engage in confirmation biases to cherry-pick their “conclusions” but instead rely exclusively on scientific methodology.

Alsalem was wrongfully appointed to report on a subject area in which she lacks professional and scientific competency. More recently, on January 23, 2024, Dr. Suzanne Zaccour, a self-described “feminist researcher and speaker”, sexual assault lawyer and Director of Legal Affairs at the National Association of Women and the Law, said in a press conference that the “*victims of*

*family violence (i.e., women) are being disbelieved, silenced, and punished based on the sexist and unscientific theory of parental alienation”.*

<https://www.ctvnews.ca/canada/ban-parental-alienation-arguments-in-family-law-cases-feminist-coalition-urges-federal-government-1.6738592>

Zaccour wrote a chapter in a book edited by two well-known parental alienation deniers, Mercer & Drew (2021), titled *Parental alienation concepts and the law, an international perspective*. This chapter, and in fact the book’s overarching theme, reflects not only the tired gender paradigm as false narrative but is a dangerous call for men and fathers to be assumed abusers and/or disposable. Zaccour and her colleagues openly dismiss the importance of fathers, especially as equal parents in their child’s life.

Dr. Jennifer Harman subsequently presented a response to Mercer & Drew’s book, *Jennifer Harman - Ideology and Threats to Evidence-Based Decision-Making Regarding Families (2023)* <https://vimeo.com/865476523/635831dc65> and called out Zaccour’s dangerous incompetency in the subject area of parental alienation.

The following is a snapshot of Zaccour’s chapter (her words in italics):

**p. 194:**

- criticizes the shared parenting paradigm for its statement that each parent is equally important and responsible for the child.
- calls PA a “*belief system supported by a minority of people and not supported by scientific evidence*”.
- then says that “*this belief system has benefited from the empirically dubious idea that fathers’ involvement should be increased and that children benefit from frequent and regular contact with both parents*”.
- says fathers’ rights groups have adopted the “*PA vocabulary*” and “*managed to convey in popular discourse the myth that fathers are the underdogs in custody litigation and that this is a grave injustice to be redressed*”.
- and “*people’s desire to make the world a simpler place is what leads to this reasoning (i.e., that a shared parenting paradigm is valid); science is not so definitive*”.

**-p. 195-196:**

- “*as the social science literature concludes*” - there is no explanation of what literature Zaccour is referring to.
- says children do not do better in shared custody than in sole custody and some children, those in high-conflict situations fare worse, “*in other words, courts are preventing children from seeing their mothers under the pretext that children need both parents*”.

\*Of note, both Zaccour and Joan Meier have not, to date, responded when asked by a real parental alienation expert (i.e., and psychiatrist) to provide the “social science literature” which they claim exists, nor provided Meier et al.’s (2019) “study” dataset and statistical model.

Other authors who contributed to Mercer & Drew’s (2021) edited book were Doughty and Drew, both lawyers and advocates for eradication of violence against women. They claim on **p. 26** that *parental alienation researchers use a strategy called “nefarious intent”, meaning these true PA scientists must have some wicked intent to cause harm.* Doughty and Drew even claim that *PA researchers appropriated Cold War language about brainwashing and mind-control to enliven Gardner’s (an early PA researcher) idea that some mothers induced false memories and beliefs in their children.*

\*Of note, in reality, science has NO intent but to pursue truth. And children ARE highly suggestible, similar to cult indoctrination effects and Stockholm syndrome.

The editors Mercer and Drew (**p. 14**) claim that parental alienation researchers *often assign sinister intentions to mothers, thus discrediting the mother before she can have the opportunity to fully present her case to the court.*

And Meier’s chapter states that *no one should question why a mother is using alienating behaviors to undermine a child’s relationship with its father. A mother must have a good reason for doing so as mothers only act in self defense and to protect their child.*

\*Of note, in a blatant double standard, Meier holds that a father can be assumed to be abusive if a mother has engaged in alienating him from their child.

Below are two current rigorous reviews and a citation analysis of misinformation and disinformation about parental alienation:

1. *A comprehensive review of misinformation and other inaccuracies in Challenging Parental Alienation* (the Mercer Drew book above)

-2023 PASG and GARI-PA (Global Action for Research Integrity in Parental Alienation)

<https://www.pasg.info/external-resources/a-comprehensive-review-of-misinformation-and-other-inaccuracies-in-challenging-parental-alienation>

2. *Exposing Misinformation and Public Policy Deception contained in Child Safety First: Preventing Child Homicides during Divorce, Separation & Child Custody Disputes - Recommendations for Reforming U.S. Family Courts*

-2023 PASG & GARI-PA

<https://www.pasg.info/external-resources/child-safety-first-preventing-child-homicides-during-divorce-separation-and-child-custody-disputes>

3. *Scholarly rumors: Citation analysis of vast misinformation regarding parental alienation theory* (2022). Bernet & Xu. -peer reviewed paper

<https://doi.org/10.1002/bsl.2605>

Parental alienation is ubiquitous and deadly; its consequences are observed by teachers, professors, and mental health and legal experts on a daily basis. Children carry their trauma, guilt, and insecurities into adulthood, believing that their alienated parent did not love them. Or that the rejected parent was dangerous, incapable and/or unlovable. In my own experience over 32 years of university teaching, I have frequently heard from students still suffering from their undeserved and unnecessary fractured relationship with a parent. Children do not “grow out of it” (i.e., PA), nor do they usually reunite with that lost parent. Instead, they have lost 50% of themselves for much or all of their lives. Children DO need both parents; parents who are mentally healthy and safe. Parental alienators are child and former partner abusers; they engage in family violence and both fathers and mothers can be perpetrators, or victims.

On behalf of science, integrity and the urgent necessity to eradicate the massive social crisis of parental alienation, I urge the retraction of published fraudulent “research”, pseudo-scientific claims, media platforms that promote ignorance and damage, and false credentials by pretend experts.