

apparent bias. This book is fitting for a field of study that should, at the least, rely on objective data. Kocsis and his authors steadfastly deliver on that goal.

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## **Parental Alienation: Science and Law**

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*Parental Alienation: Science and Law* was edited by Demosthenes Lorandos, PhD, JD, and William Bernet, MD. There are 14 other individual authors. The book comprises 13 chapters divided into two larger sections. Section One, consisting of six chapters, is titled “Clinical Considerations and Research.” Section Two, consisting of the remaining chapters, is titled “Legal Issues.” The purpose of *Parental Alienation: Science and Law* is to provide a thorough analysis and history of parental alienation and parental alienation syndrome. In conjunction, editors and contributors articulate potential solutions to address this psychological phenomenon adequately.

Parental alienation (PA) theory has gained traction in the United States and internationally, with early references dating back to English common law in 1804. The book’s authors define the concept as a mental condition in which a child allies strongly with one parent while rejecting the other parent without legitimate cause. Emphasis is placed on the last portion of the definition, “without legitimate cause.” If there is evidence of abuse or neglect from the nonpreferred parent, the more appropriate term is parental estrangement. This distinction is crucial when determining the best course of action regarding the psychological and physical well-being of the child.

Although many attorneys and mental health professionals recognize PA as a form of psychological abuse and parental alienation syndrome as a mental condition, the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of

Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition (DSM-5) does not recognize PA as a diagnosis, and introduction of PA concepts in courtroom proceedings is subject to expert witness scrutiny. The authors of *Parental Alienation: Science and Law* cite multiple studies measuring alienating behaviors in children and by parents or caregivers. The authors outline specific psychological consequences of parental alienation, such as higher incidences of depression and personality disorder pathologies. Additionally, the text’s authors criticize the adversarial family court system, which they argue increases the propensity for parental alienation. Finally, in the chapter titled “Public Policy Initiatives Related to Parental Alienation,” the authors recommend solutions to reduce parental alienation cases within the United States.

The text’s authors provide readers with an in-depth analysis of the five-factor model, a tool to structure the investigation and assessment of parental alienation (not to be confused with the five-factor model of personality assessment). The five-factor model of parental alienation syndrome consists of the following five components: contact refusal by the child; the presence of a prior positive relationship between the child and the rejected parent; the absence of abuse or neglect by the rejected parent; the use of multiple alienating behaviors on the part of the favored parent; and the child’s exhibiting several of the behavioral manifestations of alienation (i.e., lack of ambivalence, an absence of guilt for harsh treatment of the alienated parent, rejection of extended family, etc.).

In Chapter 2, “The Psychosocial Assessment of Contact Refusal,” the reader is given an illustration of a typical assessment procedure for contact refusal for mental health providers. Contact refusal can occur for a broad range of reasons including, but not limited to, parental alienation syndrome. Chapter 2 describes the various external and internal motivators for contact refusal and outlines the appropriate intervention. Examples of these internal and external motivators include loyalty conflict, the child’s normal preference, and the child’s avoiding conflict. In Chapter 4, “Parental Alienation: How to Prevent, Manage, and Remedy It,” the authors focus specifically on parental alienation itself and describe a thorough approach to reduce its prevalence and incidence. This approach involves the implementation of psychotherapy for parents and children, education programs for children and parents, and effective enforcement of court orders. Forensic psychiatrists, child psychiatrists, and

other mental health clinicians can use these assessment tools and interventions to diagnose, prevent, and treat parental alienation syndrome adequately.

In Chapter 6 the authors outline references and position statements from numerous professional organizations regarding parental alienation, including the American Bar Association, American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, the American Academy of Pediatrics, and the American Psychological Association. Notably, the American Academy of Psychiatry and the Law and the American Psychiatric Association are absent.

In the last section, the authors invite several experienced scholars to contribute short articles that pertain to public policy related to parental alienation. These articles discuss prevention of parental alienation, the recognition of parental alienation by government agencies, and the educational development of mental health and legal professionals. Regarding the prevention of parental alienation, scholars argue that the adversarial nature of family court pro-

ceedings encourages the development and perpetuation of parental alienation and thus parental alienation syndrome. Scholars declare that “high-conflict separation and divorce is the breeding ground for parental alienation” (p 504). Ashish Joshi, LL.M., focuses on increasing training and education for lawyers and guardians *ad litem*, specifically regarding the recognition of manipulation and intimidation of children.

In conclusion, the authors of *Parental Alienation: Science and Law* illustrate the concept of parental alienation syndrome by providing a thorough examination and in-depth analysis. Moreover, the authors give detailed descriptions of research studies, historical accounts, and legal cases involving parental alienation. Finally, the authors include systemic solutions in the form of public policy initiatives. The text is a solid foundation for both mental health and legal professionals to navigate parental alienation syndrome successfully within the family court system.

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