****

WEAVE Inc

(Women Everywhere Advocating Violence Elimination) National Abuse Free Contact Campaign

**ALIENATION AS A DYNAMIC OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

* Use of denigration of mother is part of the pattern of both child sexual abuse and domestic violence
* Perpetrators of domestic violence use custody litigation as a form of ongoing harassment and abuse of mother
* Alienation theory and its continued use reflects historical and societal denial of the extent of male violence within the family

**PARENTAL ALIENATION – OLD WINE IN NEW BOTTLES**

* Too closely aligned to PAS
* Claims of abuse are automatically treated as highly suspect
* Privileges alienation over abuse as a subject of analysis and as an explanation of children’s problems
* No empirical evidence that alienation causes any long term negative impact to children
* Leads to discounting and marginalising of child abuse and domestic violence and its impact on children
* Proponents of alienation theory acknowledge that it is rare and a “very minor problem for the Courts”
* Based on pejorative assumptions about mothers and children
* Sexist – it is mothers who are routinely accused of alienation behaviours

**PARENTAL ALIENATION SYNDROME**

Original theory developed by Richard Gardner (1931-2003)

* Lacks any empirical basis
* Based solely on Gardner’s own clinical experience
* Little objective basis
* Gardner had bizarre beliefs about sexuality. He is quoted as stating that: “adult-child sex need not be intrinsically harmful to children.”
* PAS is grounded in misogynistic views and reflects a mother-blaming ideology

**References**

**Bancroft, L. and Silverman J. (2002) ‘The Batterer as Parent: Addressing the Impact of Domestic Violence on Family Dynamics’ London, Sage**

**Brown, T., Frederico, M., Hewitt, L. and Sheehan, R., (2001) ‘The Child Abuse and Divorce Myth’ *Child Abuse Review,* 10: 113-124.**

**Hume, M., (1996) Child Sexual Abuse Allegations and the Family Court of South Australia, *Masters Thesis: University of South Australia.***

**McInnes, E. 2013 Madness in Family Law: Mothers’ Mental Health in the Australian Family Law System, *Psychiatry, Psychology and Law, March 14 DOI:10.1080/13218719.2013.774688*** [**http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13218719.2013.774688**](http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13218719.2013.774688)

**Meier, Joan S.(2009) A Historical Perspective on Parental Alienation Syndrome and Parental Alienation. *Journal of Child Custody, 6:232-257***

**Meier, Joan S. (2010) Getting Real About Abuse and Alienation: A Critique of Drozd and Olesen’s Decision Tree. *Journal of Child Custody, 7: 219-252***

**Moloney, L., Smyth, B., Weston, R., Richardson, N., Qu, L., and Gray, M., (2007), Allegations of Family Violence and Child Abuse in Family Law Children’s Proceedings, *Research Report No. 15, Melbourne, Australian Institute of Family Studies***

**Thoennes,N & Tjaden, P. (1990) The extent, nature and validity of sexual abuse allegations in custody/visitation disputes. *Child Abuse and Neglect, 14, 151-163***

**Rendell, K., Rathus, Z. and Lynch, A., (2000) An unacceptable risk: A Report on child contact arrangements where there is violence in the family, *Brisbane, Women’s Legal Service***