

parental alienation belief system and there are NGOs and associations lobbying for further recognition of this belief system (Baker, 2018; Harman et al., 2019; Kruk, 2018). Again, there is no scientific evidence for the parental alienation belief system (Neilson et al., 2019). However, there is evidence that the use of the parental alienation belief system can be harmful to children (Barnett, 2020; Casas Vila, 2020; Doughty et al., 2020; Elizabeth, 2020; Feresin, 2020; Lapierre et al., 2020; Mackenzie et al., 2020). For this reason, there are many scientists, experts and professionals who strongly criticise the use of the parental alienation belief system (Neilson et al., 2019). Due to the enormous number of publications, one may have lost the overview. It is also possible that readers are not aware of the discussions that are going on about this belief system. We believe it is important that judges, lawyers and professionals dealing with separated parents and children are aware of the factual information so that they can make assessments that fit the facts and the most plausible scenarios and that are not based on a controversial belief system for which there is no scientific evidence.

The objectives of this essay are as follows:

- to explain to the reader what the parental alienation belief system presupposes
- to present the relevant scientific findings
- to give the reader insight into the wrong arguments used to defend the belief in parental alienation and the use of the parental alienation belief system. We have also written this essay with the intention of serving as a source of information for parents and children involved in the use of the parental alienation belief system (and/or their lawyers). They could have the essay read by the family judge and other parties involved so that they can still be correctly informed.

The parental alienation belief system

According to the parental alienation belief system, it can happen that a child wrongly rejects one of the parents and prefers the other parent, despite the fact that the child previously had a positive relationship with the rejected parent (Baker, 2018; Harman et al., 2019; Stool, 2018). The child would give weak or bad reasons to reject the parent or even tell lies. The child would not feel guilty for rejecting the parent and would only speak negatively about the parent and often also about family and friends of the parent (Bernet, & Baker, 2013; Baker, 2018; Harman et al., 2019; Stool, 2018).

This would be caused by the actions and statements of the parent the child prefers (Bernet, & Baker, 2013; Baker, 2018; Harman et al., 2019; Stool, 2018). Proponents of the parental alienation belief system assume that it is usually the parent with whom the child lives who alienates the child from the other parent. This parent would do this by repeatedly speaking ill of the other parent and/or telling lies to the child about the other parent like the other parent wouldn't love the child if they did in reality, or that the child would have been sexually abused by the other parent when this is not really the case (Bernet, & Baker, 2013; Baker, 2018; Harman et al., 2019; Stool, 2018). Restricting contact with the other parent and

not allowing the child to express positive feelings about the other parent are also seen as causes of parental alienation (Bernet, & Baker, 2013; Baker, 2018; Harman et al., 2019; Stool, 2018). According to some advocates of the parental alienation belief system, parental alienation can also occur when there is domestic violence by the rejected parent, albeit in hybrid form, because the child has its own reasons for rejecting that parent. Nevertheless, the behaviour of the preferred parent in these cases would contribute to a rejection of the parent by the child and is seen as a bad thing under the parental alienation belief system (Baker, 2018).

The scientific findings

Separated parents (but also parents who are together) can have a negative attitude towards the other parent (Johnston, 2003). Research has shown that a child is not easily brainwashed by a parent and certainly does not reject a parent after a separation when one parent expresses a negative opinion about the other parent (Clemente, & Padilla-Racero, 2020; Fortin et al., 2012; Katz, 2019; McWilliams, & Goodman, 2019). Children generally find negative statements from one parent about another parent unpleasant and also show this (Rowen, & Emery, 2014; Silverberg Koerner et al., 2004). This is also called the 'boomerang effect' (Rowen, & Emery, 2019). At most, a negative attitude of one parent towards another contributes to a more negative reaction of the child if the child has its own reasons for rejecting that parent, such as an experienced lack of emotional warmth (Huff, 2015; Johnston, 2003; Johnston et al., 2005). Conversely, children can reject one parent without the other parent showing parental alienating behaviour (Johnston, 2003; Johnston et al., 2005).

A child may have a preference for a parent, which is not only true for children of separated parents (Goldberg et al., 2014). The preference for one parent and the rejection of the other parent regularly go hand in hand and are related to a lack of warmth and the presence of violence from the rejected parent (Huff, 2015). Few children reject a parent (or both parents) and when they do, it is often only temporary and for their own reasons (Johnston, & Goldman, 2010; Katz, 2019). If the relationship with a parent is good for the child (i.e. the child is safely attached and experiences warmth and emotional connection), the child will usually not reject this parent (Huff, 2015; Katz, 2019; Sutton, 2018; Szepeswol, & Simpson, 2019; Szymanska et al., 2019). If the relationship is not good for the child, the child will still not always (completely) reject the parent (Clemente, & Padilla-Racero, 2020; Katz, 2019). For example, if the other parent also offers no or insufficient security or if rejection entails a risk of further violence (Katz, 2019). A child is most likely to prefer one parent and reject the other if this is the safest option for the child (Clemente, & Padilla-Racero, 2020; Katz, 2019). In this case, the child also seems to be less receptive to the behaviour of the unsafe parent who tries to undermine the relationship between the child and the other parent (Katz, 2019). This undermining behaviour can be unpleasant, harmful and/or confusing for the child and its relationship with the safe parent, but normally does not lead to the rejection of the warmth in the relationship with the safe parent (Katz, 2019).

When children consistently reject a parent, this is usually the result of a process characterised by disappointment on the part of that parent, who has shown serious problems, such as domestic violence or addiction problems (Johnston, & Goldman, 2010). Research among adults who have no contact with one or both parents shows that they mention the following reasons: mistreatment or abuse in childhood, bad parenting and/or betrayal (including failure to protect the child from violence by others) (Agllias, 2016). Also, a retrospective study of young adults' views on contact after divorce did not show that children had resisted contact with their parent living away from them because they were put under pressure by the parent they were living with (Fortin et al. 2012). Children did not resist contact visits because they were brainwashed, but for their own reasons, often as a reaction to the behaviour of the non-resident parent (Fortin et al., 2012). Examples of reasons for more persistent negative feelings and contact refusal were: not overcoming depression, alcoholism, drug use and violent behaviour by the non-resident parent (Fortinet et al., 2012). In other words: the scientific findings make the parental alienation belief system highly unlikely and make it clear that rejection of a parent by the child can be a signal of (serious) domestic violence and feelings of unsafety with the parent in question.

Research also shows that the parental alienation belief system is often used in complex separations where one parent is accused of domestic violence, such as ex-partner violence, child abuse or sexual abuse of the child (Lapierre et al., 2020; Neilson, 2018). Complex is seen here as separations in which several or lengthy family law proceedings are needed to reach agreements on custody or contact. Only a small proportion of divorces are complex: 5 to a maximum of 20% (Geurts, & Voert, 2014; Tomassen-Van der Lans, 2015). Statistically, the majority of separations that are complex will involve the presence of domestic violence (CSMS, 2019). The prevalence of child abuse varies, depending, for example, on the definition used and the way it is measured. It is estimated that approximately 25% of minors experience child abuse (Moody et al., 2018; Vink et al., 2019). Clear links are found between separation and domestic violence and these separations are often problematic, especially when children are involved. Domestic violence is an important reason for people to leave their partner (De Graaf & Kalmijn, 2006). However, domestic violence often increases during a divorce and sometimes the divorce is the start of domestic violence (Rezey, 2017; Sharon et al., 2015). Children of separated parents report higher rates of domestic violence (Schellingerhout, & Ramakers, 2017). Perpetrators of domestic violence tend to demand more extensive rights of access and custody and are more likely to initiate legal proceedings than parents who do not commit domestic violence (Campbell, 2017). In this way, they try to maintain their power and control (Campbell, 2017). The other parent, on the other hand, will often try to do a lot to protect the children and themselves. It is estimated that more than half, if not almost all, of the complex separations involve domestic violence (CSMS, 2019; Hirst, 2002; Jaffe et al., 2003; Johnston et al., 2005; Trinder et al., 2006). Although the concept of parental alienation is poorly defined and there is no scientifically proven way to determine parental alienation, we find in the literature that adherents of the parental alienation belief system estimate the prevalence at 1% (Von Boch-Galhau, 2018).

There are serious concerns about the use of the parental alienation belief system in complex separations where there are also allegations or suspicions of domestic violence (Barnett,

2020; Casas Vila, 2020; CSMS, 2019; Doughty et al. , 2020; Elizabeth, 2020; Feresin, 2020; Lapierre et al. , 2020; Mackenzie et al., 2020; Meier , 2020; Rathus, 2020; Sheehy & Boyd, 2020). Because of the parental alienation belief system, it can happen that false accusations are wrongly assumed. It happens that children's statements about domestic violence are not believed and it is assumed that the child is lying or has been brainwashed by a parent (Barnett , 2020; Casas Vila , 2020; Doughty et al., 2020; Elizabeth, 2020; Feresin, 2020; Lapierre et al., 2020; Mackenzie et al., 2020; Meier, 2020; Rathus, 2020; Sheehy & Boyd, 2020). The problem is that because of this disbelief, children who actually experience domestic violence from a parent may be unfairly exposed to unsafe access arrangements and in some cases may even be entrusted entirely to the unsafe parent (Barnett , 2020; Casas Vila, 2020; Doughty et al., 2020; Elizabeth, 2020; Feresin, 2020; Lapierre et al., 2020; Mackenzie et al., 2020; Meier, 2020; Rathus, 2020; Sheehy & Boyd, 2020). This can happen because it is assumed that the other parent is harming the child by not cooperating with the access arrangements or by brainwashing the child. It appears that mothers in particular can lose custody of their children if they are accused of parental alienation (Barnett, 2020; Casas Vila, 2020; Doughty et al., 2020; Elizabeth, 2020; Feresin, 2020; Lapierre et al., 2020; Mackenzie et al., 2020; Meier, 2020; Rathus, 2020; Sheehy & Boyd, 2020). It can have extremely harmful effects on children when family judges entrust them to an unsafe parent, such as depression, suicide and murder (Barnett , 2020; Casas Vila, 2020; Doughty et al., 2020; Elizabeth, 2020; Feresin , 2020; Lapierre et al., 2020; Mackenzie et al., 2020; Meier, 2020; Rathus, 2020; Sheehy & Boyd, 2020; Silberg, & Dallam , 2019) .

Several countries and international conventions stress that children have the right to be protected from domestic violence and the right to be heard (Council of Europe, 2007; 2011; United Nations, 1989). The Council of Europe and its monitoring body "the GREVIO" have pointed out in several publications that their research also shows that the suggestion and accusations of parental alienation are used as a way to continue the exercise of power and control by the perpetrators of violence and in particular by violent fathers through bodies such as youth protection, the Child Protection Council and family courts (GREVIO, 2019abc; Šimonovic et al., 2019). In the light of scientific findings and international conventions, it is the responsibility of child protection and family judges to take seriously accusations and suspicions of domestic violence and to properly investigate them in separation cases, as well as to take decisions that focus on the safety and best interests of children (Council of Europe, 2007; 2011; GREVIO, 2019abc; Kleinman, & Kaplan, 2016; Knowlton, 2015; Šimonovic et al., 2019; United Nations, 1989).

The invalid arguments used to defend the parental alienation belief system

In the absence of scientific evidence, supporters of the parental alienation system try to persuade on the basis of rhetoric. In doing so, they use fallacies, some of which have been discussed and refuted by Milchman et al (2020). We have used a number of recent articles to identify the fallacies (these are: Baker, 2018; Bernet, 2020; Bernet et al., 2020; Harman et

al., 2018; 2019; Stool, 2018; Scharp et al., 2020; Von Boch-Galhau, 2018). The most common fallacies used by the parental alienation belief system advocates will be listed, after which an explanation will be given as to why these arguments are invalid. We will name the types of fallacies because lawyers, psychologists and other professionals have often learned them in their training and have a responsibility to see through them. For the reader who is less familiar with fallacies we refer to <https://iep.utm.edu/fallacy/>.

Incorrect reasoning 1: There is consensus on what parental alienation is and what the causes are

This fallacy is called 'argumentum ad populum': it is assumed that something is true because many people think it is true. The fact that many people think something is true doesn't make it true, especially not when many people think it because they are misinformed. For example, many people think that there are areas of taste on the tongue because they once learned this; whereas in reality this is not true (see: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tongue_map). The popularity of the parental-alienation belief system probably has to do with the propaganda of the father's rights lobby, with the fact that people find it difficult to accept that domestic violence takes place (Saunders et al., 2011; Davies et al., 2014), and with the fact that the parental alienation belief system is consistent with prejudice and myths (Adams, 2006; Behre, 2015; Burman, 2016). An example of this is that people find it difficult to accept that men they see as successful (such as good athletes, people with a high level of education or a good job) would show such bad behaviour (mistreatment or abuse) (Weiser, 2017). Another example is that women are generally portrayed as emotional, illogical and as having changing moods, which also makes it easier to see them as unreliable (Milchman, 2018; Weiser, 2017). Prejudice is not a good reason to assume that the parental alienation belief system is correct.

Moreover, in reality, there is a lack of consensus. This is evidenced by the fact that hundreds of scientists and professionals have signed a collective memo of concern to the WHO warning that parental alienation should not be included in ICD-11 due to the lack of empirical support and the damaging decisions that the use of the parental alienation belief system leads to (Neilson et al., 2019). In addition, much has been published about the lack of empirical evidence, the circular reasoning used to try to determine parental alienation, the treatments and decisions that also lack scientific support, etc. (see for example Barnett, 2020; Blizard, & Shaw, 2019; Casas Vila, 2020; Doughty et al, 2020; Elizabeth, 2020; Feresin, 2020; Lapierre et al. , 2020; Mackenzie et al., 2020; Meier, 2020; Mercer, 2019 ; Rathus, 2020; Sheehy & Boyd, 2020; Silberg, & Dallam, 2019). This indicates that there is no consensus.

Incorrect reasoning 2: There are many publications on parental alienation

This is a causal misconception 'non causa pro causa': coming to a conclusion without sufficient evidence. The literature on the parental alienation belief system was initially mainly written by Gardner himself on the basis of his ideas and interpretations (Bruch, 2006;

Campbell, 2017; Meier, 2009; Smith, 2016; Van Horn, & Groves, 2006). Gardner based himself on his clinical experience and not on scientific research (Van Horn, & Groves, 2006; Smith, 2016). A group of supporters of the parental alienation belief system emerged (Smith, 2016). This group constantly refers to their own work and/or presents methodologically weak research and often publishes in the same journals, following a biased or no review process (Bruch, 2006; Campbell, 2017; Meier, 2009; Smith, 2016). Most of these articles do not provide results of empirical research, but an overview of earlier literature, sometimes a meta-analysis of earlier publications, which makes little sense if the earlier publications are insufficiently valid (see for example Bernet, 2008; Warshak, 2015). This makes it unclear and more difficult to ascertain on the basis of which data certain statements are made (see also Bruch, 2006 for a detailed analysis he already made in 2006). Both review articles from the parental alienation belief system and papers describing an empirical study give wrong interpretations of the findings, reflect opinions that have no empirical basis, and present untrue reasoning as facts (Bruch, 2006; Doughty et al., 2020; Milchman, 2019). As explained, the available scientific data do not support the parental alienation belief system.

The argument is also sometimes used as a 'red herring': an irrelevant subject introduced in an argument to distract the attention of listeners or readers from the original publication. Some proponents of the parental alienation belief system summarize some of the opponents' arguments, but do not go into the question of why those arguments would be wrong. Instead, they talk about the fact that many publications have been written about the parental alienation belief system.

[Incorrect reasoning 3: There are questionnaires and other tools to measure parental alienation and/or there are 'experts' who say that there is parental alienation in specific cases.](#)

This is a 'circular reasoning' also called 'circulus in demonstrando'. One's own opinions and theories are used to validate the way parental alienation would be identified. In specific cases, this misconception can lead to a psychological misconception or an 'appeal to false authority': a misconception that arises when an observer assumes that his or her subjective experience reflects the true nature of an event - or when others assume it, for example because someone calls himself or herself an 'expert' in parental alienation. This is very similar to the Dutch advertising slogan 'We from toilet duck advice: toilet duck'. This slogan was used at the end of the twentieth century in advertisements for 'toilet duck': a brand of toilet cleaners. It took on a life of its own after the advertising campaign as an expression that is used when an expert gives advice that is in line with his own interests.

There are also researchers who state that their measuring instrument is very reliable in distinguishing between children who have or have not been alienated (e.g. Bernet et al., 2020). They 'forget' that they have no proof which children reject a parent due to parental alienation and which do not. This is established subjectively or with other instruments whose validity and reliability have not been established either. All kinds of reasoning are

used, none of which has a factual basis. One example is the suggestion that children who reject a parent because of parental alienation have a completely negative image of the parent, while children who rightly reject a parent would still show desires towards that parent. In reality, children who are mistreated by a parent can show ambivalent feelings towards that parent, as well as a total rejection of that parent. (Katz, 2019; Katz et al., 2020). We will discuss this point in more detail in the discussion of the following fallacy.

It is important for judges and youth protectionists to realise that there is no evidence of the parental alienation belief system, nor is there a 'magic' means of determining whether a child wrongly rejects a parent under the influence of the other parent. There is no education or course that can make people 'experts' in parental alienation so that they can use indirect means, impressions or opinions to indicate whether the rejection of the parents is unjustified and caused by a hate campaign by the other parent. Especially if someone claims that allegations of domestic violence are false and that parental alienation takes place, one has to be very careful. After all, there is an obligation to protect children from domestic violence, and so it is to be expected that, when accusations of domestic violence are made, professionals will do everything they can to check carefully what signals and evidence are there and that they will make every effort to make the best possible assessment. It is not appropriate to easily assume that there is parental alienation and/or to perceive parental alienation as an explanation for the accusations.

[Incorrect reasoning 4: Complete rejection of a parent is evidence of parental alienation](#)

As has just been discussed, it is sometimes thought that children who are actually abused would never completely reject this parent. It is therefore thought that children who completely reject a parent, without feeling guilty, are not abused. This is a 'dicto secundum quid ad dictum simpliciter': an unrepresentative sample is used as a basis for too broad a generalisation. When children grow up with abuse and have no experience of appropriate care by a parent, and no possibility or experience of escaping it, they may adapt to it (Lubit, 2019). Out of self-protection and/or because they develop a wrong worldview, the relationship can be maintained. However, there are also children who run away from home or try to get away from violence or even revenge in other ways (Överlien, 2016; Katz, 2016). The situation for children of separated parents is one in which there is more room to reject a violent parent; especially if the other parent offers security (Katz, 2016; Lubit, 2019). In other words, there are children who do not (completely) reject a violent parent or who show ambivalent feelings towards that parent. Nevertheless, complete rejection of a violent parent can also occur, especially if the child has other options, such as after the separation of the parents (Fortin et al., 2012).

Incorrect reasoning 5: If there is no (conclusive) evidence of domestic violence, it is parental alienation

This is a 'false dilemma' and an 'appeal to ignorance' (argumentum ad ignorantiam). Let's start with the false dilemma part: it is suggested that there are only two options, whereas in reality are more options. Children may have various reasons to (temporarily) reject a parent and/or friends and family of that parent (Fortin et al., 2012). In the absence of domestic violence, a child who rejects a parent therefore still does not imply that this is caused by the behaviour of the other parent and/or that the rejection is wrong.

The invoking of ignorance concerns the lack of convincing evidence. Domestic violence has a hidden character. It can be very difficult to prove that domestic violence has taken place, because the only witnesses are often the victims. The lack of evidence is often wrongly used as an argument that there was no domestic violence (as explained earlier, e.g. by Barnett, 2020; Sheehy & Boyd, 2020). While the lack of evidence in criminal courts means that a suspect cannot be found guilty, in child protection cases and in family law there is an obligation to find solutions and measures that best serve the rights and interests of all parties and especially those of children. This is an entirely different starting point. Therefore, signals and testimonies of domestic violence cannot and must not be ignored (Council of Europe, 2011).

Incorrect reasoning 6: An irrational campaign of denigration and hatred and/or unjustified, absurd reasons for the attitude of rejection are symptoms of parental alienation

This misconception is called 'petitio principii': Claim X assumes that X is true. Claim X is therefore true. You say your starting point twice in different words, but do not give any actual proof or substantiation. You assume precisely what has yet to be proven. A few examples to make this clear:

"Pete speaks the truth because Pete says he speaks the truth." The fact that Pete says he is telling the truth does not, of course, prove that he is.

And "Susan is not a nice woman, because she has nasty opinions". Both that the opinions of Susan are unpleasant, and that she is not a nice woman, are the opinion of the speaker here, and this does not prove anything.

In the relevant reasoning from the parental alienation belief system, it says nothing other than that those symptoms they themselves have formulated as being parental alienation are seen as evidence of parental alienation. Whether it is an irrational campaign of denigration and hatred or wrong reasons remains an opinion and proves nothing. The real questions are: how do you determine whether it is an irrational campaign, how do you determine whether the reasons for rejection are unjustified or absurd and whether one causes the other?

In any case, research shows that in particular mothers and children who accuse fathers of domestic violence are often not believed and that these mothers are blamed for an irrational hate campaign, without this being proven (Barnett, 2020; Casas Vila ,2020; Doughty et al., 2020; Elizabeth, 2020; Feresin, 2020; Lapierre et al., 2020; Mackenzie, et al., 2020; Meier, 2020; Rathus, 2020; Sheehy & Boyd, 2020). Furthermore, there is no clear directive to determine whether reasons are absurd or unjustified. Nor would an invalid rejection prove that it was caused by the other parent. What makes this point even more complicated is that children do not always talk about abuse with counsellors and sometimes give other reasons why they avoid contact with a particular person (e.g. that someone snores as a reason for not wanting to spend the night, because the child is afraid to reveal sexual abuse) (Alnock, & Miller, 2013).

[Incorrect reasoning 7: If someone agrees on some points with both the supporters of the parental alienation belief system as well as with the opponents, this advice can be taken more seriously](#)

This is an argumentum 'ad temperantiam'. It is an argument that wrongly assumes that when two different positions are propagated as factually correct, the compromise between them reflects the truth. Suppose somebody says the grass is green and somebody else says it is red. A third person says the grass is red, but in some places it is green. That would not make the third person more correct.

This misconception can also be seen in case-specific reasoning. For example, there are youth protectors who argue that domestic violence from one parent was the cause of parental alienation from the other parent and that both parents therefore do not treat the child well. It also happens that, despite the evidence for the presence of domestic violence, parental alienation is also taken seriously and even carries more weight in court, entrusting the children to the perpetrator of the domestic violence in order to 'protect' them from the supposed parental alienation of the other parent (Mackenzie et al., 2020).

[Incorrect reasoning 8: Parental alienation is similar to or closely related to other psychological concepts or diagnoses](#)

This is a 'false equation': it is falsely claimed that two or more things are equivalent simply because, in theory, they have some characteristics in common. For example, parental alienation is assumed to be equivalent to child abuse. The reasoning then is that, just like child abuse, parental alienation would relate to damage caused by another human being. This, of course, cannot be claimed without proof of the parental alienation belief system and the alleged harm. A circular reasoning arises because one equates parental alienation with abuse and then states that parental alienation is harmful because abuse is harmful. It also happens that parental alienation is assumed to be related to other concepts that have no empirical basis, especially those from contextual therapy (for a full discussion of the lack of empirical basis of this theory, see CSMS, 2020).

Incorrect reasoning 9: The preferred parent and the child talk the same and/or use the same words ('borrowed scenarios'), so the child has been manipulated

This reasoning is an example of a 'false invocation of causality': because a certain cause can have an effect, it is assumed to be this cause, without taking other scenarios into account. To explain it a little more concretely: when it rains, the pavement gets wet. However, if the pavement is wet, this does not mean that it has been proven to have rained. After all, someone may have cleaned the pavement, someone may have spilled water, and so on.

In this case, the condition leading to a consequence is the following: If a person would successfully manipulate another person to say something, it would be more likely that the other person would use similar words and/or content. However, the opposite cannot be said. When two people say something similar, it does not necessarily mean that one person has manipulated the other, as there are other possible explanations. To illustrate this, suppose a child is exposed to child abuse by his father and tells this to his mother. It would make sense for the mother to say the same thing as the child when she discusses the abuse with others. Another example would be when a child who experiences abuse or domestic violence finds words for it in conversations with the safe parent, as is the case with many topics. In the same way, children learn to find words for pain and emotions (McWilliams, & Goodman, 2019). This is not manipulation: the pain and emotions are really felt, just like the abuse and violence. In short, there can be different logical explanations, other than manipulation, why a child and a parent say the same things, even with the same words.

Incorrect reasoning 10: Figures and criteria are known

This is called 'deception'. Lists and figures can be convincing and suggest that they are facts. This strategy is also often used in advertisements. However, the criteria mentioned in the lists for parental alienation are extremely problematic because they often contain circular reasoning and do not provide an objective way to establish the theoretical concept of parental alienation and distinguish parental alienation from other reasons the child has for rejecting a parent. The figures are also problematic because they are either based on invalid methods of measuring parental alienation or on figures about concepts that are believed to be related to parental alienation.

Conclusion

In this essay, we explained that it is highly unlikely that children would wrongly reject one parent because of a hate campaign by another. In most complex separations in which children reject a parent, other issues play a role, such as domestic violence by the rejected parent. This highlights the importance of not looking at accusations of domestic violence and children who resist a parent in a divorce context from the perspective of the parental alienation belief system. Instead, very careful consideration should be given to how to provide safety for the child and signs of domestic violence should be taken seriously. As we have explained, there are various misconceptions used by adherents of the parental

alienation belief system. The parties involved can use this essay to see through these fallacies. Prejudices and incorrect reasoning must give way to scientific findings and careful judgement.

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