

Special Issue: Parent-Child Contact Problems: Concepts, Controversies, & Conundrums

## Parental Alienation in U.S. Courts, 1985 to 2018

[Demosthenes Lorandos](#)

First published: 28 April 2020

<https://doi.org/10.1111/fcre.12475>

<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/fcre.12475>

FAMILY COURT REVIEW, Vol. 58 No. 2, April 2020 322-339

© 2020 Association of Family and Conciliation Courts

### Abstract

Courts have been dealing with alienating behaviors in high conflict family litigation for hundreds of years. Experts in the behavioral sciences have been writing about mothers and fathers manipulating their children to disparage the other parent for more than seventy years. But in the last two decades some social scientists and legal professionals have questioned the legitimacy of parental alienation as a concept and its admissibility in child abuse and child custody litigation. This study was designed to examine the extent to which courts in the United States have found the concept of parental alienation material, probative, relevant and admissible. Thirty-four years of cases were found with a WESTLAW query and analyzed. Cases were selected for study only if the record reflected that a judge or an independent expert found the concept of parental alienation to be of value in the litigation. Results illustrate increasing awareness of the concept and document its admissibility in every one of the United States. The numbers, sex of the alienating parent and prevalence of significant custody changes are discussed. Limitations inherent in this form of quantitative analysis are also discussed with recommendations for future research.