

PAS: A Modern-day Witch Hunt  
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What else is woman but a foe to friendship, an unescapable punishment, a necessary evil, a natural temptation, a desirable calamity, domestic danger, a delectable detriment, an evil nature, painted with fair colours. ... Women are by nature instruments of Satan -- they are by nature carnal, a structural defect rooted in the original creation." Malleus maleficarum (1485)

For three centuries, Europeans blamed problems such as bad weather, poor crops and diseases on "witches," the majority of whom were female because most thought women capable of such evil. The witch hunt resulted in biased trials, new and creative torture techniques and the execution of tens of thousands of innocent daughters, mothers and grandmothers. This all took place against a backdrop of rapid social, economic and religious transformation, according to experts.

Nowadays, we use the term witch hunt to describe the persecution of innocent people, when fear, prejudice or panic are the motivating factors. It's where myths or stereotypes have more power than facts do and the hunt itself results in punishment for a purported "crime."

Today, the current witch hunt is taking place in family courts across the US (as well as in several other countries). A term called parental alienation syndrome (PAS) or simply PA is being used with devastating results. The term refers to a parent, most often the mother, "poisoning" the mind of a child against the other parent.

The term lacks scientific backing, just as claims of witch craft relied on the supernatural rather than facts. The American Psychological Association (APA) says PAS "lacks evidence." The National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges condemns the use of PAS as a "discredited" syndrome. The American Prosecutor's Research Institute says, "In short, PAS is an untested theory that, unchallenged, can have far-reaching consequences for children seeking protection and legal vindication in courts of law." Despite the fact that this term lacks the backing of the APA or the American Medical Association, it is still widely used – predominantly against women.

all of us have some pedophilia within us' – Dr. Richard Gardner

The term PAS was coined by a scientist who: used misogynist terms to describe women, defended males who molested children and never published his studies in peer-reviewed journals. Indeed, I refer to PAS as "pedophile acting as scientist." Why his term has endured in courtrooms across the country is surely a sign of the deeply-rooted misogyny that still exists in society today and often seeks to scapegoat women for damages that, often enough, are out of their control.

PAS is considered to be part of the Malicious Mother Syndrome. It's also frequently associated with Hostile Aggressive Parenting. (There's also Lying Litigant Syndrome.) These terms are founded on the stereotype that women are malicious, vindictive liars that manipulate courts to get their way. Of course, women must be lying, right? Actually, research (see: Bala and Schuman) finds more men than women make intentionally false accusations in family court, but stereotypes can be branded more easily than boring old facts can any day.

The problem is that courts believe these stereotypes, too -- just as they did in the witch hunts. Often, when women make claims of abuse they are not believed. Instead, they are punished with fines, jail time or loss of custody, an arsenal of torture devices, for making so-called false allegations. Make a claim of abuse? Well, it's off to the dungeons you go! Worse, these protective moms often lose custody of the children they're trying to protect.

The mother is very convincing in her desperation and vivid in her descriptions. The clincher is that the alienated child collaborates with the mother by saying, "Yes, I am afraid of my father." "Yes, my father did touch me down there." "Yes, he does beat me." From [www.splitintwo.com](http://www.splitintwo.com)

PAS is not only bad because it was created by a pro-pedophile "doctor" who hated women. It is bad because it is a simplistic term that ignores other possible reasons for a strained or damaged relationship between a parent and child. Divorce is difficult for children and they may be hostile or depressed during this time. Also, children may be reacting to the conflict and violence they've witnessed in their parent's marriage.

But there is another possible explanation. The child may have been abused and, as a result, fears or shows hostility towards the "target" parent. Indeed, many men accused of abuse have countered these accusations with PAS...and have won custody. The Leadership Council on Child Abuse estimates that over 58,000 children a year get turned over to abusive parents in unsupervised visits or custody decisions. Thanks to PAS, the "abuse excuse," many of these abusers have received the court's blessings to continue inflicting harm and control. In fact, a group called the Courageous Kids Network have banned together to educate judges about harmful courtroom decisions that impact children's safety and well-being.

For sure, proponents of PAS will claim that mothers really do turn their children against loving fathers. I have no doubt that this occurs in a very small percentage of cases. However, through several years of research now (and meeting protective parents), I have found that the use of this term is grossly inflated in what can only be described as a witch hunt. PAS is more often than not associated with child abuse and scapegoating. Fathers, like Alec Baldwin, do damage all their own to relationships (he called his daughter a little pig), without the help of women. Parental accountability is often the term that should be used in place of parental alienation.

Yet despite all the evidence to the contrary, courts across this country continue to accept that women "put a spell" on children in bogus claims of PAS. Our family court system should not be the place where junk science is used to persecute women and where fines, jail time and loss of custody are the torture devices used to punish women for making claims of abuse in good faith. It's time to put a stop to this modern-day witch hunt.

"False memory, false sexual abuse claims, vengeance, are all the diseases of women" -  
<http://www.canlaw.com/rights/fathers.htm>

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<http://mediamisses.wordpress.com>

Resources:

American Psychological Association  
<http://www.apa.org/releases/passyndrome.html>

Center for Judicial Excellence  
<http://www.centerforjudicialexcellence.org/home.htm>

Courageous Kids Network  
<http://www.courageouskids.net/>

Justice for Children  
<http://www.jfcadvocacy.org/pas.asp>

The Leadership Council  
[www.leadershipcouncil.org](http://www.leadershipcouncil.org)

Malicious Mother Syndrome  
<http://www.fact.on.ca/Info/pas/turkat95.htm>

Mothers Against Sexual Abuse  
<http://www.againstsexualabuse.org/docs/ParentalAlienation.asp>

Parental Alienation Syndrome  
<http://cincinnatiapas.com/richardgardner-pas.html>

Stop Family Violence  
[www.stopfamilyviolence.org](http://www.stopfamilyviolence.org)

Cases:  
<http://www.apa.org/monitor/2009/04/alienation.html>

<http://www.newsreview.com/sacramento/content?oid=11355>

[http://www.sacramentopress.com/headline/5631/Grandparent\\_Alienation\\_New\\_Syndrome\\_Janelle\\_Burrill\\_is\\_back\\_in\\_the\\_House](http://www.sacramentopress.com/headline/5631/Grandparent_Alienation_New_Syndrome_Janelle_Burrill_is_back_in_the_House)

<http://www.lvrj.com/news/31247194.html>

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<http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,25197,25267128-2702,00.html>

<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/servlet/story/RTGAM.20090124.wcustody24/BNStory/National/?page=rss&id=RTGAM.20090124.wcustody24>

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